



Content Analysis of Comics on Line Webtoon

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Abstract

Technological advances produce a different culture of readers, there is a new culture of comic readers who change the way readers read comics, as a result of technological advances it created a digital platform published online called LINE Webtoon, so that it can be identified the purpose in this article to know the presentation of comic content on LINE webtoon or “website” and “cartoon” by facilitating readers who no longer read without having to buy comics in physical form but already using the application. This research uses a descriptive qualitative method by looking at LINE webtoon to find out the presentation of comic content on LINE webtoon, which is supported using McCloud's Making Comic theory. The results of this study suggest that the experience of reading comics on LINE Webtoon has a variety of attractions, readers' factors in reading comics can also be influenced by social and cultural interactions around them, for example if a comic is trending or widely discussed on social media, readers tend to be interested in trying to read it as well as being influenced by comic content and comic authors themselves such as with emotionally evocative storylines and strong characters, tend to be more captivating and make readers come back to read the next episode, by paying attention to these aspects, it can be seen how works of fine art in the form of comics can create interesting comic content.

Keywords: LINE Webtoon, digital comics, visual characters

1. Introduction

The development of information and communication technology has changed the way individuals communicate with individuals. Over time and technology, social media has evolved from a friendship network to a platform for sharing photos, music, videos, and media services, one of the services offered by social media is comics (Putri 2018). With this advancement in information technology, it has great potential to facilitate various activities (Subejo et al. 2021).

One form of media that effectively communicates ideas through illustrative graphics is comic books, where images function as plot models that have visual devices (Eisner 1985). Fictional or fictitious stories can also be found in comics. Comics use space in image media to place images to form a storyline. According to Scott McCloud (2012) comics are images and other symbols that point to a stapposition (adjacent, opposite) in a certain order that aims to provide information and aesthetic response from readers (McCloud 2012).

As a result of technological advances, publishing channels can publish their works through digital media. A well-known digital platform for comic book publication is LINE Webtoon or “website” and “cartoon” founded by Kim Junkoo in 2004 in South Korea (Acuna 2016). Webtoon contains a collection of storytelling images (comics) published online (Cho 2016). According to Luthfi (2020), webcomics are a new type of two-way communication that promotes the creation of public opinion through the dissemination of criticism and recommendations through comic stories (Luthfi 2020).

LINE Webtoon is also part of social media, in which the service has the characteristics proposed by Mayfield (2008), namely participation, openness, community and interconnectedness (Mayfield 2008). Users can provide feedback to the service by participating in LINE Webtoon, a social media platform that welcomes user input and involvement (Duncan, Smith, and Levitz 2015), just as research conducted by Imawan (2019) says the production of text, photo images, and audio visuals can be done by anyone (Imawan 2019).

Based on previous research conducted by Zagita & Sukandar (2021) on “Indonesian People's Views on South Korean Culture, Through a Case Study of Manhwa Noblesse on the LINE Webtoon application” shows opinions that

arise related to the characters, messages conveyed, content and storyline as well as some reader expectations, revealing that readers' opinions are in line with McCloud's theory (2001) which describes the success of a comic (Zagita and Sukandar 2021).

Andriyanti & Azis (2023) on "Visual Review of Save Me Webtoon" in terms of visual elements, namely character design, facial expressions and body language using Scott McCloud's theory. Based on the results of the comparison, Webtoon Save Me has a good visual study of Scott McCloud's theory (Andriyanti, Bright, and Azis 2023).

Hengrisky (2023) examined "Analysis of Public Preferences in Choosing Comics as Reading." Based on the initial hypothesis that most readers only follow the latest trends or are influenced by their social environment, the research findings show that people's preferences are influenced by various other factors, including the reader's relationship with the comics they choose (Hengrisky 2024).

A study entitled "Visual Study of Comic Ujang and Bapaknya Based on Scott McCloud's Theory" was conducted by Sinurat and Sihite. According to Scott McCloud, the characteristics of the comic "Si Ujang dan Bapaknya" have applied the principle of clarity by describing based on interpretation and determining the content of elements based on quantity, such as moments, frames, images, words, and flow. This is based on the results of research on the principle of clarity (Sinurat and Sihite 2023).

Similar research on "Motives of LINE Webtoon Application Users (Quantitative Descriptive Study on LINE ID Official Account Followers)" conducted by Medina, Christin, and Malau. The findings showed that diversion or entertainment motives were in a very high category compared to information, personal identity, and integration motives (Medina, Christin, and Malau 2016).

Florens Debora Patricia also conducted a study "Semiotics Analysis of Visual Communication of Scott McCloud's 'Understanding Comics' Book" found a classification of visual narrative, visual language and visual implications behind Scott McCloud's "Understanding Comics" book, using Roland Barthes' semiotics analysis of visual communication, which is based on his work (Patricia 2018).

Based on the research presented, both discuss aspects of comics in how readers understand stories, maintain reading interest in the LINE Webtoon application, and reasons for reading on LINE Webtoon, then the difference between previous research and the research to be carried out lies in the focus, object of research, and research context.

In the end, the researcher aims to choose LINE Webtoon as the object of research because LINE Webtoon is one of the online comic platforms that is very popular and many people use it, this platform also has complete features, and is practical which makes LINE Webtoon very interesting to study in the context of analyzing comic content on LINE webtoon.

2. Literature Review

Previous research conducted by Zagita & Sukandar (2021) on "Indonesian People's Views on South Korean Culture: Case Study of Manhwa Noblesse on the LINE Webtoon Application" this study aims to determine the opinions of Indonesian people on the penetration of South Korean culture through manhwa in the webtoon application, with a qualitative method case study approach and using the theory of Understanding comics: the invisible art, McCloud. The results of this study show opinions related to characters, messages conveyed, content, storyline, and reader expectations, this reveals that readers' opinions are in line with McCloud's (2001) theory which describes the success of a comic (Zagita and Sukandar 2021).

Similar to the research conducted by Andriyanti & Azis (2023) entitled "Visual Review of Save Me Webtoon" the purpose of this study was to examine the Save Me Webtoon in terms of its visual elements, namely character design, facial expressions and body language using the theory of Making comics, Scott McCloud, with a qualitative descriptive method with an evaluative approach (Andriyanti, Bright, and Azis 2023).

In addition, Hengrisky's research (2023) entitled "Analysis of Community Preferences in Choosing Comics as Reading" aims to analyze community preferences in choosing types of comics as reading using quantitative methods by collecting questionnaires and using the theory of Making comics, McCloud. Based on the results of the initial hypothesis, most readers only follow the latest trends or are influenced by their social environment, the research findings show that people's preferences are influenced by various emotional factors, including the reader's relationship with the comics they choose. Aspects of comic selection due to people's preferences from a personal, psychological, stylistic, and emotional perspective have a sense of similarity or closeness (Hengrisky 2024).

Similarly, Sinurat and Sihite's research entitled "Visual Study of Comics Si Ujang Dan Tuannya Based on Scott McCloud's Theory" The purpose of this study was to examine the comic "Si Ujang dan Bapaknya" based on the formulation of evaluative questions about "How is the application of the Clarity principle with a qualitative descriptive method evaluative approach and using the Reinventing Comics theory, McCloud. According to Scott McCloud, the characteristics of the comic "Si Ujang dan Bapaknya" have applied the principle of clarity by describing based on interpretation and determining the content of elements based on quantity, such as moments, frames, images, words, and flow (Sinurat and Sihite 2023).

Medina, Christin, and Malau also conducted a similar research on “Motives of LINE Webtoon Application Users (Quantitative Descriptive Study on LINE ID Official Account Followers)”. The reason this research was conducted was the change in lifestyle that occurred in society due to the development of the media. The method used in this research is a survey method with descriptive analysis and quantitative approach and uses McQuail's motive study theory. The results showed that diversion or entertainment motives were in a very high category compared to information, personal identity, and integration motives (Medina et al. 2016).

Florens Debora Patricia also conducted a study “Semiotics Analysis of Visual Communication of Scott McCloud's ‘Understanding Comics’ Book” aimed at examining the Semiotics of Visual Communication of Scott McCloud's “Understanding Comics” Book through Roland Barthes' semiotics analysis of visual communication, using a qualitative-interpretative semiotic method approach and using Roland Barthes' semiotic theory. The results of this study found a visual narrative classification that requires narrative elements with visual forms according to the characteristics of comics, the visual language of abstraction is easy to learn by readers and visual implications deserve a position as a reference material or source (Patricia 2018).

3. Materials and Methods

The method used in this research “Content Analysis Of Comics On Line Webtoon” uses a qualitative descriptive method in an effort to analyze content, especially LINE Webtoon. The qualitative research process produces descriptive data about concepts, perceptions, meanings, reasoning, views, or beliefs, as well as observable behavior. This data can be expressed orally or in writing (Moleong 2009). Descriptive research aims to explain, clarify, and provide interpretations of something, such as relationships or situations, developing points of view, ongoing procedures, or the effects that arise from the phenomenon under study (Lestari 2019).

Data collection techniques in this study were carried out by (1) Interviews and documentation, (2) Researchers conducted in-depth observations of readers and authors on LINE Webtoon, (3) Literature Study, reviewing books, scientific journals, and articles related to the theory used in this study, namely McCloud's theory, Making Comics (2006) says character design, expression, and gesture are three elements that can contribute to the image is the most important aspect in comics that make the image more alive. (McCloud, 2006).

4. Results and Discussion

This research focuses on Content Presentation on LINE Webtoon by observing the experience and preferences in reading comics on LINE Webtoon, LINE Webtoon is an official digital platform or application used to read various comics online, Webtoon itself comes from the words “website” and “cartoon” founded by Kim Junkoo and developed by Naver Corporation in 2004 in South Korea (Norin, 2018). Readers emphasize their interest in reading on LINE Webtoon because they find the experience exciting, the features complete, and the practicality of the platform, especially because they can read without having to buy physical comics. As a research data study, the researcher conducted data search activities through interviews. This study examines readers' opinions on LINE Webtoon regarding the factors that contribute to the images in comics that make them more vivid. The three factors are character design, expression, and gesture, which can be used to produce a comic and provide a unique color for readers. The following is the relationship between these three factors and the analysis results of this research:

4.1. Character Design

In character design, readers like character designs such as detailed, subtle, realistic character designs, sharp facial features, and expressiveness that can show emotions clearly because webtoons are different from novels where the depiction is detailed through writing, while webtoons are only through visual images which are more difficult for some readers if they skip some of the image details, therefore a subtle and realistic style will help readers (Arianti 2019), making the story more vivid so that readers get into the story, for example as follows:



Figure 1: Webtoon cover Iseop's Romance

Source: LINE Webtoon, Anna Kim

“This webtoon has subtle coloring, the depiction of the characters' emotions is not rigid, the realistic style is detailed, the main male and female characters have beautiful visuals among other characters.” (Cindy, May 10, 2024)

Anna Kim's Iseop's Romance webtoon is a romance genre that tells the journey of Lee Seop Tae's love story with his secretary named Minkyung. Judging from the visual appearance, this webtoon uses a semi-realist drawing style with smooth coloring, not too bright or dark, According to Aryanto and Pradesta (2020) the semirealist style is a combination of realist and cartoon styles, generally semi-realist images are made to resemble their original form but there are also parts that use style. In its use, the semirealist style has quite broad limits in the field of illustration so that this style can still be explored into various character design options. From some of these visual styles, the author chooses semirealist in creating the work so that the visuals produced seem close to the original form, but still look more attractive and are expected to be liked by all ages.

Character design does not only use attractive images, it also uses references to the target audience, readers' interests, and eye-catching coloring. These components will eventually form the basic identity of the character, which is then reinforced with visual representations in the form of accessories and clothing choices. Personalization, characteristics, or personality are added to the character after the character has been aesthetically constructed. Shape, clothing, accessories, and personality all work together to create a new, more vibrant character (Febriani Setiawati Prasetya and Lani Anggapuspa 2022). The coloring of this webtoon has its own charm, for example, as in the main character in this webtoon, Lee Seop Tae.



Figure 2: Lee Seop Tae in the webtoon Iseop's Romance

Source: LINE Webtoon, Anna Kim

Lee Seop Tae is the main character in Iseop's Romance webtoon. Lee Seop Tae's visual character in the Iseop's Romance webtoon has a tall and upright posture, a broad chest, with a thick black hairstyle, thick eyebrows and sharp eyes because in the eye design, the author adds details such as the under-eye line and several strands of lower eyelashes, then the shape of the thick lower lip, these aspects make Lee Seop Tae's character design likable, because of its detailed depiction such as lines on the face, coloring that is not too bold, and appropriate posture. Lee Seop Tae's personality character in the webtoon Iseop's Romance, is the son of a conglomerate who is famous for being 'mageran' or lazy to move, has a relaxed attitude, but on the other hand, Lee Seop Tae begins to show another side of himself who is more caring and serious at work, this makes readers continue to be curious about each chapter that opens because this webtoon provides significant character development.



Figure 3: Webtoon cover Kosan 95!

Source: LINE Webtoon, Didiwalker

“KOSAN 95! One of the comics that is interesting in terms of depiction, the illustrations displayed are brightly colored, because with bright coloring it will look fun to read and make the character designs more alive.” (Ghina, May 15, 2024)

A good visual design can communicate information appropriately to everyone who sees it and can convey messages to readers appropriately as well as the visual design of webtoon characters, one example of another visual character design is in the character design of the Kosan 95 Webtoon! Didiwalker's work in the drama genre which is a local webtoon with the theme of life in boarding houses, in this webtoon using a cartoon-like drawing style, and the illustrations displayed are brightly colored, readers like several characters from this webtoon because they have their own characteristics, including:



Figure 4: Jaya in the webtoon Kosan 95!

Source: LINE Webtoon, Didiwalker

Indra Satriya Jaya is the second main character of the KOSAN 95! webtoon Rena's sibling of the main character, and is the owner of kosan 95. Indra's visual character is described as having green eyes and olive skin tone. His eyebrows are thick and there is a long scratch scar on his right forehead. There is a mole on the bottom of his left lip. She often wears elegant formal and semi-formal clothes, wears sunglasses as accessories, and does neat styling on her hair. On the little finger of his left hand Indra wears a ring inherited from the Jaya family, signifying his position as head of the family. In addition, Indra is a very smart and astute person, he can read situations and analyze a person's personality quickly and accurately. He is someone who often suppresses his own feelings and thoughts and is a vindictive person. Indra has a high moral awareness but that doesn't mean he will hesitate to act on what he thinks is right, even if it might go against the views of others around him. Even so, Indra can clearly separate personal and professional matters. He will not do something rashly or out of selfishness, especially if it is done without careful consideration and planning.



Figure 5: Rena in the webtoon *Kosan 95!*
Source: LINE Webtoon, Didiwalker

Rena or Indy Sri Jaya is the main character of the *KOSAN 95!* webtoon. Her visual character is described as a girl with greenish-brown hair that she often ties in a ponytail. Her appearance features are green eyes, thick eyebrows, and a mole on the right-bottom of her lip. Rena has a forgiving nature and always wants to help people. Although she tends to be naive, she is good at observing situations. Rena doesn't like to tell her problems to anyone.



Figure 5: Dadang in the webtoon *Kosan 95!*
Source: LINE Webtoon, Didiwalker

Dadang or Diki is a male supporting character from the *Kosan 95!* Webtoon. Who is the resident of *Kosan 95* number 6, Dadang's visual design has its own characteristics, namely looking like a woman because of his long hair. Dadang has gray eyes with blue highlights and salmon pink shoulder-length hair that is often left loose. His appearance and hair tend to be messy, and he often wears red-rimmed glasses and a red sweater as his trademark. When in the office, he likes to cover his face with a turquoise green mask with a mustache print. Dadang's character in this webtoon is a person who is known for being rude and often making a scene, but he began to maintain his attitude. Even though he tends to look rough, he cares about the people he trusts.

From the description above, it shows that designing visual characters needs to be carefully considered in order to attract readers. Visual character design requires not only a visual process, but also a process of analyzing various elements to produce a new character with a unique design and strong personality. In short, character visual design is the first thing that attracts readers' attention and creates an impression of the webtoon in their minds. (Maharani, Suryati, and Manalullaili 2024).

4.2. Gesture

Gesture is an important factor in comics to form non-verbal communication with body actions that communicate certain messages, either a substitute for speech or parallel to words, parallel to words is also called special effects or special effects (abbreviated as SFX) in this case readers say that this special effect is very important, because it enhances dialog in comics, helps to understand the content of the story, brings emotions to life in the story, and builds tension in the story. Examples of webtoons with SFX are as follows:



Figure 5: Webtoon panel Tower of God
Source: LINE Webtoon, Siu

“This webtoon has an interesting plot and depiction, the story is complex, deep and emotional, the illustrations are very cool so that it can convey well the atmosphere in the story to the reader.” (Ima, May 15, 2024)

The Tower Of God comic follows the story of a boy named Twenty-Fifth Bam. One day, he enters a mysterious and dangerous tower in search of his missing friend Rachel. This tower itself is a mysterious dangerous tower. Where, this tower has a massive structure full of countless floors, each with its own challenges and obstacles. Not only alone, when Bam begins his journey up the tower, he meets many diverse characters. These include the cunning Khun Aguero Agnes and the mighty and loyal Rak Wraithraiser. Together, they navigate the various floors of the tower, which become more dangerous the higher they go. They must reach the top to uncover the mystery hidden within. The comic itself will feature tons of powerful creatures to eccentric individuals. The Tower Of God comic also provides themes of strength, friendship, and sacrifice as Ba explores the dangerous and deadly world of the tower.

The elements that have a big influence on the formation of the Tower Of God comic include text, gestures and illustrations which are the main elements that play an important role because in addition to playing a lot of roles, these elements are the most frequently used elements in fantasy and action genre comics such as the Tower Of God comic. Action includes movement, not just ordinary, everyday movement, but significant movement such as action. The phrase can also refer to thrilling situations or events in fiction, where the focus is on the thrilling antics of the characters, rather than on character growth or narrative. The prominence of visual elements of comics related to gesture can create an emotional attachment in the reader so that the message is conveyed. Gestures in the story are very influential in supporting the story, for example, if the character is angry then it is not uncommon for his hand gestures to be clenched to show he is angry. The depiction of this webtoon has its own charm, for example, as in the main character in this webtoon, namely twenty fifth bam.



Figure 6: Twenty Fifth Bam in the webtoon Tower of God
Source: LINE Webtoon, Siu

4.3. Expression

Readers mentioned that lively expressions that can build emotions of tension or humor are detailed line drawings on the face, appropriate body movements, hair, and the look in the eyes, in reading the character's expression can also

be judged from the dialogue, and a good expression is one that can make the reader feel the character's emotions. One example is:



Figure 7: Webtoon cover *Girl's World*
Source: LINE Webtoon, Morangji

“In terms of this webtoon story, the plot is not mainstream and the storyline is not too slow, besides that the depiction is also unique, and the depiction of character expressions can build humor for readers.” (Gladys Regina, May 11, 2024)

This webtoon tells the story of Oh Nari and her 3 female friends. Im Yoona the beauty from a rich family, Seo Mirae the German girl, and the beautiful Im Sunji. At first Nari feels like a duck in the middle of the swans. As the story progresses, it turns out that Nari's “perfectly beautiful” friends also have their own wounds, and they slowly heal because of their sincere friendship with Nari. Nari may be “ordinary” when compared to her friends, but the longer we follow the story, we can feel that Nari's inner beauty is no joke. This webtoon teaches us to let go of our insecurities about our flaws, and also teaches us to love ourselves.

A character's emotions and personality are often conveyed through their facial expressions, body language, and how they interact with other characters. Every individual has a unique personality and characters are no different. Their personality not only determines how they interact with the environment and other individuals, but also how they react to various situations they encounter. One expression can convey a wide range of emotions or feelings. Readers are automatically focused on the design and expression of the characters as well as the colors used to express and convey emotions in comics, even in the absence of dialogue or word balloons. Expressions in comic books still allow the reader to understand the story and the messages being conveyed to the reader.



Figure 7: Nari in the webtoon *Girl's World*
Source: LINE Webtoon, Morangji

Nari is one of the characters in the *Girl's World* webtoon who has an extroverted character. She can make friends with anyone and can make anyone feel comfortable around her. The cheerful expression depicted on Nari in the *Girl's World* webtoon allows readers to feel the joy contained in the story. Nari who used to be a nobody but wants to change herself for the better and contribute a lot to her school and friends who will be curious about the next episode.

5. Conclusion

Based on the discussion of the results of interviews with readers, it can be concluded that the experience of reading comics on LINE Webtoon has a variety of attractions for each individual, for example, illustrations and character expressions can affect the attractiveness of a comic and readers' interest in continuing to follow the storyline, by paying attention to these aspects, it can be seen how works of art in the form of comics can create a deep reading experience for readers, then the characters in the story are not just appearance, but also describe personalities and behaviors that help readers understand the plot or storyline. Through facial expressions, gestures, and interactions with other characters, readers can understand the emotions and motivations of each character, as well as provide a deeper understanding of the conflicts, resolutions, and moral messages that the comic is trying to convey. Although certain reasons may be the main determining factor in choosing a comic, such as an interesting storyline, good depiction, or ease of access, the overall experience of reading comics is very subjective and depends on the preferences of each reader, therefore, it is important for platforms such as LINE Webtoon to continue to provide a wide variety of comics with good quality and pay attention to reader feedback and preferences so that their reading experience remains satisfying. Comic reading factors can be influenced by surrounding social and cultural interactions, for example, if a comic is trending or widely talked about on social media, readers are likely to be interested in trying to read it. This reflects the dynamics of popular culture and how social influences can affect preferences in reading comics on LINE Webtoon. Comic reading factors can also be influenced by the comic content itself. Interesting comics, with emotionally evocative storylines and strong characters, tend to captivate readers more and keep them coming back to read the next episode. Thus, the quality of comic content is also an important factor in the presentation of comic content on LINE Webtoon.

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