Abstract

This study aims to find and distinguish the ways of reading between two types of comics that are presented differently in two different media, namely print and digital media. This different way of reading changes how the story is conveyed and told visually, and it has differences in the order of seeing, rhythm of reading, and its tempo of delivering information. Because by changing the way of presenting information, the emphasis and the highlighted points in that body of information will change. This plays a role in the communication process.

This study compares how information is presented in printed comics and digital comics in webtoon format. Samples were taken from action genre comics, namely Noblesse by Jeho Son and Kwangsu Lee and Angel Hearts by Tsukasa Hojo. To present action, a dynamic rhythm is needed and clear clarification between scenes is very important. By taking samples from comics that are in the action genre, the way information is conveyed is seen and distinguished from the tempo, reading direction and rhythm in the panel arranged in the format of the media.

Keywords

Panel, how to read, tempo, rhythm
Introduction

Comicbooks as a print media is a form of sequential storytelling that has been around for quite some time. This way of storytelling is been around since the early of 20th century, and the older form of this sequential art is been around even longer. Tempered by time and creativity, this form of storytelling is arguably very mature, easy to follow, and deliver the message quite well. So many various ways to tell stories, starting from graphic to its the writing have been explored to support the various ways of telling stories.

In recent years, other comic forms have been born. With the growth of communication media that uses the internet, comics also adapt to occupy this new platform called internet. In the early years, the comics we got in the internet is just the scan version of the prints. After being scanned and cleaned, the just shows it the way its after being translated. No graphics alteration aside from cleaning and translation.

Mangascan site mangafox

I remember the way it was in the 2006. This scanlation comics websites, mostly manga, emerge in the internet. They works on the popular japanese manga just like Naruto, Bleach, Elfen Lied and many more. This wave of translating comics is mostly motored by fans around the world. The time of release for the new chapter is very close to the real publication. There is a new episode every week, so this manga fans also releasing new chapter in their translation site every week. Thanks to this fans scanlation site, manga fans around the world have no need to wait months for official translation in their country.
Since 2010s, there’s a way that’s been used as a standard in online comics formats. Popularized by the digital comic platform Webtoon from South Korea, this format quickly gaining popularity and was well received by other digital platforms such as Comico from Japan and Ciayo from Indonesia. For simplicity, let’s call this format the webtoon format.

**Webtoon**

The format of the webtoon has become the standard of storytelling in the South Korean comic industry, and has now well received and used in the world market. This comic has a digital format its way of storytelling is arranged the panel extensively downward, in other words it does not use the page format. Readers simply open one chapter and to read it to completion, simply move the page down. And so on for each chapter.

This format is quite beneficial for the reader, because the readers doesn’t need to wait for the loading screen to read the next page just like they do when reading scanlated printed comics, or when the internet connection is not smooth. With this format, the reader can just wait a few seconds at the beginning to read one chapter. After that, all the chapters can be read smoothly without the nuisances of turning pages.

Lately I felt there were things that were different in the way webtoon reads. I think this method was intended to facilitate simplistic reading, but it seems that differences in storytelling appear compared to the printed comic format in general. I will take the example the of the comics from action genre.
No Spread

According to Art Spiegelman, comics are a medium that expresses time by using space arranged and organized on the page.\(^1\) In this case printed comics and webtoons have a different way of telling stories and by then the way of scenes being told is completely different. One striking thing is that printed comics are read horizontally while the webtoon is vertical. There are things that are not used in webtoon comics, one of them is spread.

Spread, also called double page spread is a double page that is connected when we read it. This technique is used in modern Japanese comics, to make reading easy to follow, interesting and flowing. According to the editor of Silent Manga Audition, Taiyo Nakashima, readers will definitely see two pages at a time and each time they open two pages of comics. In addition to the first and last pages, readers must open two pages. The way the readers read is to concentrate on one panel, then flow to the other panel. This way of reading builds tension from beginning to end.

A skillful comic artist has the ability to direct the reader’s eyes, to read the comic in the order he wants. Will Eisner, in his book Comics and Sequential Art, says there is no way for creators to prevent readers from reading the last panel before the first panel. Therefore, creators must have the ability to ‘persuade’ readers to read in the right order.

Taiyo Nakashima also explained the role of the panel in providing smooth reading and delivery of information in *manga*. According to Taiyo a well-arranged panel can provide

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stories that flow smooth and easy to understand.

On this page, the *manga* tell the details and opening scenes using a structured panel.

Then the tempo and intensity of the story increases. As we can see this scene is happened so fast.


Then the climax arrived with one large image on the spread page.
Taiyo also added that drawing a spread page by adjusting the direction of the reader reading the *manga* can also give the impression of a very fast and intense time. An example is the page below.

Note that on this page, the protagonist fires a gun in the direction of Japanese manga reading, which is from right to left. The scene on the large panel is an intense climax, while the small panel lined up below clarifies the details that occur during after the scene, by not reducing the speed that takes place in the story.

Different things happened to the webtoon comic. Webtoon format has a story telling that is completely different and unique because of its vertical format. This makes them unable to use horizontal page-telling methods, such as using spreads. In webtoon you read by scrolling the panel. There is no separation of pages so the readers have the liberty to see each pane exclusively, not being “forced” to see a page with a several panel in it.

This way of reading makes the eyes of the reader unable to “play” anywhere on a page. In a screen that only adds a relatively few panels, ang often one panel only, there is no flow of layout between panels that force you to follow it. For example, we can see the Noblesse fantasy action comic by Jeho Son and Kwangsu Lee. The following is the opening scene in the comic.
From this way of telling stories, we see that the webtoon doesn’t use a storytelling method that maximizes the arrangement of panels in page format. Panels are arranged in general by putting it one by one vertically. The reader just needs to read it in sequence to find out the story, without having to confuse by the flow of the panel because there is only one way to read it.

This can make reading easier, but also makes some elements non-existent. Without panels arranged together there is no difference in panel size in the reading space, which in this case is a monitor. That is, when panels are read one by one they do not appear with sizes and rhythms that contrastly different each other. This is the elements that can be explored only when the several panels displayed together. In webtoon each panel can be said to be independent. Although the story made the panels has a relation with the previous one that came before it, these panels do not have contrastly different size and image that can only be capture by putting it together with the previous panel. Because there is no contrast size that is clearly visible when the panel appears individually. The intensity of the image is solely displayed from the camera angle and the size of the panel to the screen, not the size of the panel to the other panel.

**Gutter as the Sign of Time**

Gutter is an empty space left in between one and and another. Gutter, other than those intended to separate images also apply as time markers. Interestingly, Gutter in print comics are rarely used maximally as a time marker, while on this webtoon it is crucial. The webtoon’s gutter tends to be wider and bigger, aiming to isolate one panel from another. Its additional functions as time markers are also maximized. With a big gutter like the Noblesse comic scene above, we can capture the impression that time has passed slowly when this scene occurred. With a large gutter, this scene is slowing down and becomes more intense. In addition, readers can enjoy the webtoon casually, because the isolation of the panels from one another is very tight because of the use of large gutter. While we do not need to think about the relation between one panel to another as a way of reading, these images have indeed been arranged in sequence.
The disadvantage is that with large gutter and isolated images, it is difficult to give the strong impression that this action scene is an action that happens together. The scene in the second panel of the fight above seems to occur sometime after the first picture, even though based on the story I read, this is a very fast scene when these two characters reply to one move with a quick reaction, almost simultaneously.

In addition to the time that is slowing down due to the tight isolation of the images from each other, the speed element in the action is also determined by the direction of reading. Just like the print comic, webtoon also shows the intensity of the battle to the fullest when it shows action that flows vertically, just like how to read it. We can see this in the picture above. The two character going at each other’s neck, and with vertical action, the blow is more intense.
In the end, when a story undergoes a change in the way its delivered, it will also change the taste within it. In this case the webtoon format has a simplification between its scenes, but to do that webtoon loses most of the intensity of the printed comics that plays with the flow and contrast of the panel size.

By reducing the visual elements that usually present in printed comics, webtoon became simpler and easier to read. Readers simply view the image-by-image format that has been carefully displayed, without the need to follow the flow of a complex panel arrangement, because the webtoon is only arranged in one direction. This provides advantages in the form of simplification and focus on reading that is much lighter. However, with the disappearance of the complex element, the dramatic scenes that happened between the panels that were put together were lost. This kind of drama and rhythm could only appear when one panel did not only stand alone, but together, as happened in printed comics. Either way, both format deliver its best comics when one knows how to deliver stories with the strengths and weaknesses of each media.

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