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Visual and Technological Transformation Analysis in the Adaptation of the Digital Comic "Lookism" Into Animation

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Abstract

The development of digital technology make changes in the process of adapting visual artworks to other media, especially from webtoons to animation. Animated adaptations not only emphasize similarities to the original work, but also about representing the story experience using digital technology, including motion graphics, sound effects, as well as animation techniques. This research aims to analyze visual transformation and technological innovation in the process of adapting webtoons to animation. This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach through observation and literature study. The results of the study show that digital technology acts as a mediator that expands the experience of presenting stories through increasing the rhythm of the story and the emotional involvement of the audience. However, the use of technology also poses challenges related to the equalization of animation with the originality of the work and the adjustment of visual elements to the animation medium. The transfer of rides from webtoons to animation is a creative process that makes the medium of work more diverse.
Keywords: *Digital Comic, Animation, Media Adaption*

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INTRODUCTION

The development of digital media has encouraged the emergence of increasingly complex forms of visual storytelling, one of which is webtoons as digital comics based on online platforms. (Nadifah et al. 2025) Explained that Webtoon offers a vertical scroll format that is adaptive to mobile devices, updates regularly, there is a choice to read in multiple languages, and on some platforms there are ad-free facilities. (Park et al. 2019) explained that webtoons are a source of transformation or adaptation across media. Webtoons are often adapted into drama or animated series. This is influenced by various factors, such as the story of the webtoon already having a fan base, reducing production risk and becoming an IP monetization strategy. This transformation shows the existence of cross-media practices that show the close relationship between digital technology and the creative industry. This phenomenon confirms that webtoons are an important source of content in the production of modern mobile media.

Webtoon platforms are very diverse, such as LINE Webtoon, KakaoPage, MangaToon, WeComics, and others. LINE webtoon is a digital comic platform launched by Naver Corporation. This platform allows users to read vertical comics (webtoons) for free or for a

fee through smartphones. The service provides a wide range of genres such as romance, fantasy, and horror. One of the popular titles on the LINE webtoon is "Lookism". This webtoon has reached 10 billion views in total readers since it was first released. This webtoon has the theme of the main story about bullying in school and the phenomenon of social judgment on a person's appearance.

This webtoon was later adapted into an animation(Park et al. 2019). Visual narratives in webtoons offer a powerful and flexible source of storytelling to be developed to various media platforms(Jang and Song 2024; Kim 2023). The panel structure, character expressions, and storytelling rhythm make the translation process to animation easier. This makes webtoons a medium that is highly compatible with moving visual adaptations (Park et al. 2019). Webtoon as a global creative industry is a source of audiovisual content development. The position of webtoons is also as a storytelling IP that can be expanded into animation (Kim et al. 2024). The adaptation of webtoons to animation marks a paradigm shift in visual narrative production from static media to more immersive mobile media. The practice of adaptation involves not only changing formats, but also reconstructing visual and narrative experiences through animation technology. Thus, this transformation shows a close relationship between visual design, storytelling, and technological innovation. Cross-media adaptation plays an important role in building a webtoon-based digital creative industry.

The transformation of media from comics to animation can be understood as a process of visual adaptation that involves changes in narrative structure, narrative rhythm, and character representation. Animation allows for an exploration of motion, sound, and cinematography that is not present in digital comics. This adaptation triggered a conflict between fidelity and artistic interpretation due to differences in cultural perspectives. Adaptations can change, eliminate or retain certain visual elements. There is a risk of misrepresentation when fidelity is not balanced with creativity (Abdullah and Abdullah 2020). Adapting webtoons to animation requires a complex creative and technological process. The techniques and technologies applied in making animations are certainly different from webtoons.

In addition to the visual aspect, the narrative experience in the adaptation of webtoons to animation is also influenced by the integration of digital technology. The digital technology used in the animation production process will form a different narrative experience than static media. This is an important factor in adapting to animation and storytelling across media (Yoon 2024). When adapted into animation, the elements of the webtoon are changed in the editing process, camera movement, and sound design. This transformation shows that technology acts as a mediator between the source media and the adaptation media. Studies on digital horror webtoons confirm that technology affects the sensory and emotional experiences of audiences (Nimi 2025).

In the production process of vehicle transfer, of course, there is a visual and technological transformation that occurs. This is because the characteristics between different rides require different visual approaches. Based on this description, the adaptation of webtoons into animation is a phenomenon that involves visual transformation,

technology, and narrative strategies across media. In this study, we will discuss the transformation that occurs when webtoons are transformed into an animated work.

METHOD

This research aims to explain how visual and technological transformation from digital comics to animation. Animation has the ability to present a narrative in a more engaging way through the addition of visual effects and cinematic elements. However, creating quality animation that is able to attract the attention of the audience requires the application of a variety of specific production techniques.

This research using descriptive qualitative approach(Kim et al. 2017). The research stage begins with the process of data collection and observation. Data collection was found by searching for information about the process of transforming Lookism's digital comics into animation. And then observations are made through direct comparisons between scenes in digital comics and their animated versions. The comparison includes cinematic aspects, including character expression, animation color, camera angles, sound effect, voice over, and background music in animation.

The research further collected data through literature studies relevant to the transformation of comics to animation, including a discussion of production techniques and the challenges commonly faced in the adaptation process. Findings from observations and literature studies were then used to answer the research questions.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Lookism is a digital comic from South Korea that created by Park Tae-joon. This digital comic debuted on the LINE Webtoon platform in 2014. This webtoon combines the genres of drama, action, and teen life stories with a primary focus on social criticism of beauty standards and discriminatory treatment based on physical appearance. The narrative show high school life which is full of social conflicts and the dynamics of social relations that reflect the conditions of contemporary society.

The story focuses on Park Hyung-seok, a teenager that become victim of bullying due to his physical condition. His life changed when he acquired the mysterious ability to have two bodies with very contrasting characteristics. The two bodies are the ideal appearance and athleticism, and less attractive body. This duality of the body serves as an important narrative element that highlights the influence of appearance on social interaction, identity formation, and life opportunities.

From a visual point of view, this webtoon features energetic illustrations with a semi-realistic approach typical of modern Korean comics. The scroll-based vertical panel format provides a cinematic narrative rhythm, especially in action scenes and emotional moments. Detailed character expressions, perspective exploration, and digital coloring also strengthen the atmosphere of the story and increase reader engagement.

The popularity of these webtoons continues to grow globally because of the power of storytelling and visuals that are in tune with the digital ecosystem. This success opened up opportunities for cross-media expansion, including animated adaptations, which confirmed

the potential of webtoons as a source of transmedia content. Therefore, this artwork not only serves as entertainment, but also becomes a relevant research object in the field of visual communication design, especially related to visual transformation and digital media adaptation.

Visual transformation in the transfer of digital comic rides to animation in Lookism is an adaptation process that involves changing visual language from static to audiovisual medium. These changes not only bring motion, but also include adjustments to the visual aesthetic to match the characteristics of the animation. The digital comic medium relies on panels as the main visual unit, while animation uses continuously moving frames. The difference in the characteristics of the medium requires a visual strategy that is able to maintain the identity of the work while improving the viewer's experience. Therefore, visual transformation is an important aspect to make sure the cross-media adaptation process is success. Here's a further explanation of the visual transformation in this animation:

1. Character Depiction Transformation

There is any change in visual transformations, that is the line art and illustration details. In digital comics, the lines of illustration tend to be more complex because the reader has time to observe each panels in depth. However, in animation, the complexity of lines are simplified to support production efficiency and maintain consistency of character movement. This simplification does not mean eliminating the visual characteristics, but rather adapting them to the needs of dynamic animations. Thus, the transformation of line art reflects a compromise between the aesthetics of comics and the technical needs of animation.

The next transformation is in the coloring and visual atmosphere aspects. Digital comics usually use static colors that reinforce the aesthetics of the panel and help reader understand the atmosphere in the scene. In animation, color is developed through more varied color grading techniques to create stronger emotional nuances. The use of dynamic lighting, moving shadows, and changes in color tone allows the animation to build a more dramatic atmosphere. In addition, the color variations in the animation also help to emphasize the visual focus as well as the hierarchy of information in the scene. This shows that color transformation plays an important role in enriching the visual experience of viewers.

Picture 1. *Character in webtoon*

Picture 2. *Character in animation*

Character design is another element that undergoes a significant transformation in the adaptation process. In digital comics, character designs often display proportions that vary according to the aesthetic needs of the panel. However, in animation, the proportions of the characters are adjusted to support more natural and consistent body movements. This adjustment allows the character to appear more alive without losing their original visual identity. In addition, the details of the costumes and character attributes have also been simplified to make the animation process easier. The transformation of character design shows how visual aesthetics must adapt to the needs of motion in the animation medium.

The character's facial expressions also undergo important changes in the visual transformation process. Digital comics represent expression through a single static image that relies on illustrative details to convey emotions. Meanwhile, animation allows for a gradual transition of expression through changes in facial movements and animation timing. These changes result in more complex and realistic representations of emotions. In addition, the animation allows the use of micro-expressions that enrich the depth of the characters. This transformation of expression shows how animation is able to improve the quality of emotional communication in storytelling.

2. Layout Transformation

The transformation of visual composition is also seen in the switch from scroll-based vertical panels to cinematic framing. Digital comics set the rhythm of the story through the division of panels that direct the reader's reading flow in a linear manner. Instead, animation uses camera framing, character blocking, and depth of field to control the audience's focus. This change results in a more immersive visual experience as the audience no longer controls the visual tempo independently. In addition, the composition in the animation allows for a wider exploration of space than the comic panel. This transformation of composition shows how the medium of animation opens up new opportunities in the delivery of visual narratives.

Picture 3. *Webtoon layout*

Picture 4. *Animation layout*

3. Cinematography Transformation

Visual transformation is also seen in the application of cinematography in animation. Digital comics have limitations for presenting perspective movement because they rely on static panel. But, animation utilizes camera techniques such as pan, tilt, zoom, and tracking to create visual dynamics. These techniques help create tension and dramatization. Additionally, using varied camera angles allows for richer perspective exploration. This cinematographic transformation shows the contribution of the animation medium in expanding the possibilities of visual storytelling.

Digital visual effects are an aspect of transformation that cannot be ignored. Digital comics use illustrative effects to depict movement or energy in action scenes. However, animations present effects such as motion blur, particle effects, and dynamic lighting that give the impression of visual realism. This effect plays a role in strengthening the intensity of the scene as well as increasing visual appeal. In addition, the integration of digital effects also helps clarify the space, depth, and interaction between objects. This transformation of visual effects shows the role of technology in enriching the visual representation of adaptation.

The transformation of the visual narrative rhythm is another significant change. In digital comics, the reader has complete control over the reading tempo and visual interpretation of each panel. Instead, animation sets the rhythm through editing, motion timing, and transitions between scenes. This rhythm arrangement affects the way the audience understands the storyline and feels the emotional intensity. In addition, the rhythm of the animation allows for the construction of suspense and more structured dramatization.

The transformation of visual rhythm shows how the medium of animation fundamentally changes the experience of narrative consumption.

Picture 5. *Zoom in effect in animation*

Overall, the visual transformation in the adaption of digital comic to animation is a complex process. Change the line art, color, composition, character design, expression, cinematography and visual effects show efforts to optimize the potential of the animation medium. This transformation not only aims to maintain the identity of the original work, but also create a more dynamic and immersive visual experience. In addition, the adaptation process shows a close relationship between visual aesthetics and the development of animation technology. Thus, visual transformation is an important indicator in assessing the success of digital comics adaptation to animation medium.

In the context of technology, limitations also arise in the aspect of animation production that requires large resources. The animation process takes many time, effort, and cost compared to digital comic production. This can affect the visual decisions made in adaptation. In addition, certain technical limitations can limit the visual complexiti. This challenge show that technology is also an opportunity and a limitation in adaptation. Visual transformation serves as an adaptation strategy that allows the translation of visual language between mediums. Technology plays a key supporting factor in building great storytelling experiences. Meanwhile, the advantages and limitations of adaptation reflect a compromise between creative potential and technical constraints.

CONCLUSIONS

The conclusion of the research on visual and technological transformation analysis in the adaptation of the digital comic *lookism* into animation shows that media adaptation is a complex and strategic process of visual language reconstruction. Visual transformation involves not only aesthetic changes, but also the adjustment of the visual narrative structure to suit the characteristics of the dynamic animation medium. The change of style of illustration, composition, layout, character design, and cinematography are the main indicators of the visual adaptation process. This transformation is going to maintain the visual identity of the original artwork while improving the audiovisual experience of viewers. Visual adaptation can be understood as a creative process that integrates aesthetic and media innovation.

The role of technology in animated adaptations has proven to make a significant contribution to building a more immersive narrative experience. Animation technology allows for the integration of motion, sound, and visual effects that reinforce the emotional and dramatic dimensions of the story. In addition, the development of animation software opens up wider and more flexible visual exploration opportunities. Technology also facilitates the application of digital cinematography that enriches the dynamics of visual storytelling. Therefore, technology not only serves as a means of production, but also as a medium of creative expression in the process of adaptation.

Despite having various advantages, animated adaptations also face limitations related to aesthetic and technical compromises. Visual simplification and limitations in animation duration have the potential to reduce the narrative details contained in digital comics. In addition, the complex animation production process demands large resources that influence visual decisions in adaptations. However, the advantages of animation in presenting a dynamic and emotional visual experience still make it an effective medium in conveying narratives across media. Overall, this study confirms that visual transformation, technological support, and the balance between the advantages and limitations of adaptation are key factors in the successful transition of digital comic vehicles to animation.

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