

CARETAKER: Using Masking Effect and Amplification Thru Simplification to Nurture Readers' Empathy Towards the Victims of Cyber-Mobbing Using Digital Comic

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Abstract

Research stated that individuals with mob mentality tend to follow the crowd and agree with whatever their point of view is on something. Mob mentality is not synonymous with negative aspects but over-reliance on the mob prompts ignorance and discourages critical thinking. As a result of this mentality, the mob blindly bashes innocent victims with inaccurate information and their over-generalized claims. My multimedia project is a single-issue digital comic story that depicts a victim of cyber-mobbing over inaccurate information. It utilizes two visual techniques that is theorized by Scott McCloud to nurture readers empathy towards the protagonist of *CARETAKER*: Amplification through Simplification and Masking Effect. It is comprised of modified digital photos and digital drawings that tells a story about a generous caretaker Oslo. While my research paper primarily aims to analyze and investigate if "Amplification by Simplification" and "Making Effect" are beneficial in nurturing readers' empathy, its output have raised readers' awareness of the influence mob mentality has on social media. Accordingly, I was able to learn more about the said visual techniques based on their comments and feedback.

Keywords: Digital comic, masking effect, amplification through simplification, Anthropomorphism, mob mentality, cyber-mobbing

Introduction

Cyber-mobbing is online shaming influenced by the mentality of a mob in social media (TED, 2015; Zhong et al., 2021). It occurs when an issue is converged by groups of people on social media over perceived violations of social norms or other apparent wrongdoings (Blevins & Lee, 2021; Muir et al, 2021). I believe it is worse than cyberbullying because it involves more than one individual or online aggressor. According to Blevins & Lee (2021), it is a tragic event where people gang up on someone using rumor, innuendo, discrediting, isolating, threatening, and making it appear as if the shamed person is guilty. With a flood of insults, arguments, and memes, the mob trolls that individual relentlessly or dominates the discussions of the issue. In this event, genuine criminality is no longer required; rather, perceived moral transgressions and social norm violations (Klonick, 2016) are sufficient to be publicly mocked worldwide. According to Jon Ronson, the usual target of this event is people with fame, strong influence, or power which he called "Giants." This suggests the tendency of mobs to create rumors or implications about the victim having a high status for them to be in sync

with one another, tilting at giants and benefiting from the unity that comes from their accomplishments. Unfortunately, in all the social recognition that mobs grant each other, the victim's well-being is disregarded or degraded (Norlock, 2017).

Comics can address relevant situations, persuading, and informing (Mason, n.d.). It is stated that the medium is as viable as others, such as books, television, and films (Juniewicz, 2009.). Its effectiveness as a medium to boost reader's engagement and aid learning has led to being acknowledged as an educational tool by both teachers and psychologists (Farinella, 2018). Based on several studies that I found in terms of knowledge acquisition, results stated that comics are as equal as textbooks, but more effective at engaging and motivating students if done correctly. Like literature, comics are a hybrid art form that uses narratives, but combined with visual art (Pratt, 2009). According to Scott McCloud's *Understanding Comics*, a comic is a deliberate sequence of juxtaposed visual and other representations designed to communicate information and/or generate an aesthetic reaction in the viewer (Cohn, 2005). I believe comics are an effective tool to represent the victim of cyber-mobbing over inaccurate information considering the fundamentality of characters in this medium. Farinella (2018), states that characters in comics provide the foundation for emotional attachment, self-reference, and the creation of new memories.

Mostly, "Amplification through Simplification" is behind the reason of characters' effectiveness in comics, a visual technique addressed in "Understanding Comics" described by a comic theorist, Scott McCloud. It helped me a lot representing the victim of cyber-mobbing because it allowed me to freely use my own creativity. McCloud stated that the simplified, unrealistic, or cartoonish appearance of the characters in comics allows artists to amplify their visual representation due to their minimally detailed appearance; supporting the visual message that the characters express. In other words, it steps further to reality, the more it approaches artistic subjectivity (Nolan, 2010). However, I did not exactly utilize "Amplification through Simplification" for the main character of my digital comic, instead I used anthropomorphism, the attribution of human characteristics to animal characters or non-human characters, like the principle of "Amplification through Simplification." Per Burke and Copenhaver (n.d.) because of the potential of animal characters as a representation to address any topics due to their *incongruity*, the artist, reader, writer, or the speaker will partake in the conversation by using them to perform the acting and mistake-making.

Mob mentality, also known as herd mentality in psychological terms, has roots of social pressure where it influences people to follow trends, purchase merchandise and perform or adopt certain behaviors based on their circle of influence (Sison 2015). *Deindividuation* is the process in psychological term where a person loses his/her identity or self-awareness in a crowd or group context to which they feel a part of, adjusting their behavior to conform to the group norm (Davidson et al., 2020), which can lead to mob mentality. However, I believe it can get channeled in a positive way such as donating a charity, volunteering to plant trees to combat climate change, and political rallying an issue, that is when individuals establish a group based on the intention to be a positive influence (*deindividuation*, 2019). It can also be helpful in coping with emergency circumstances such as evacuations after catastrophe (Greco, 2019). However, mob mentality is always described in a harmful aspect such as bullying and violence because when people over-rely on the mob, they lose individualism, causing inhibition and restraints that prompts ignorance and distorts the information they use to make decision (Seeker, 2015).

It is stated that de-individuated mobs are said to make people feel less guilty, less judged, and more supported when they are in a crowd (Greco, 2019; Seeker, 2015), this suggests why mob mentality prompts ignorance and discourages critical thinking because they assume that everyone has made an informed judgment that is valuable but, everyone has based their judgement on the mob (Intermittent Diversion, 2019). It is also stated by neurobiologists that when people participate in a group especially in a mob setting, their brain produces chemicals that reduce their normal thought pattern to a more primitive level (Greyson, 2017). In terms of cyber-mobbing's effect on victims, it has been stated that victims may experience fear, worry, distress, social anxiety disorder, eating disorder, drug or alcohol addiction, criminal activity, and chaotic or anxious interpersonal interactions. In addition to social and psychological distress, some victims may experience aggressive behavior, antisocial behavior, emotional distress, or even suicide (Lee & Wu, 2018; Oravec, 2012).

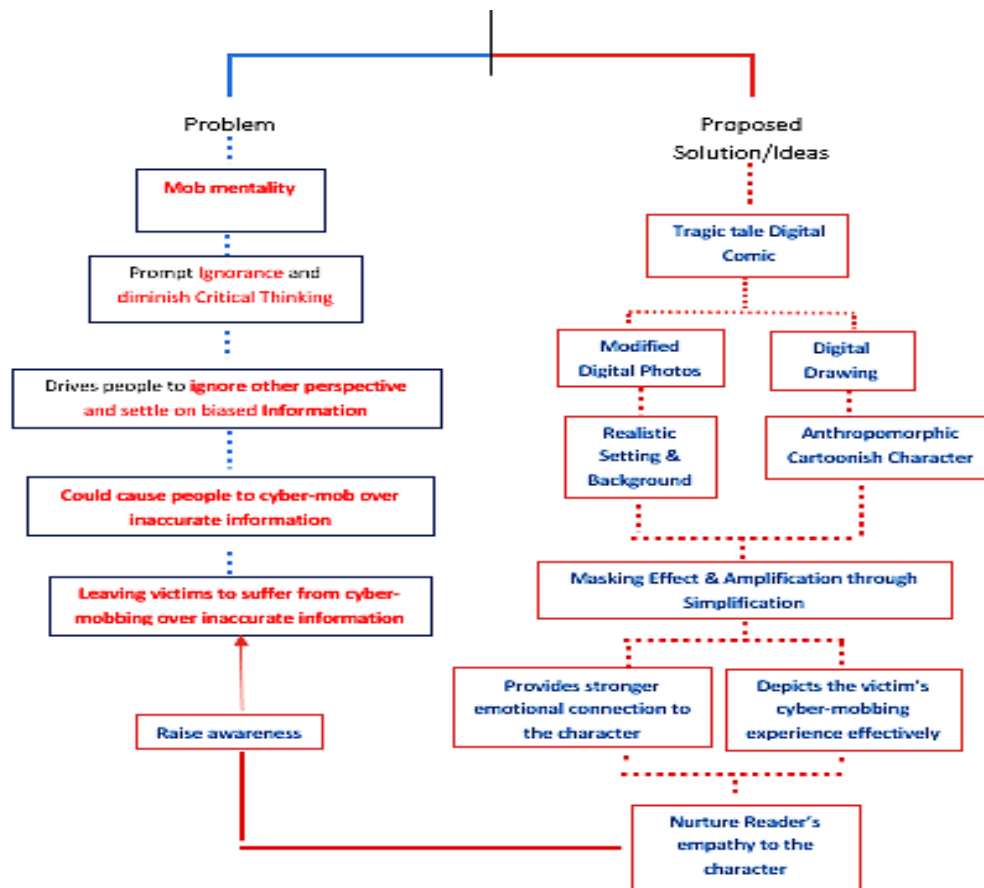
My composed digital comic is a one-shot multi-panel type of comic that contains twenty-eight (28) pages. It focuses on providing awareness surrounding the impact of mob mentality by nurturing readers' empathy towards the victims of cyber-mobbing over fake news using anthropomorphism, a non-human character with human characteristics whose suffering from the public shaming of mob in social media. It features the concept "Amplification through Simplification" along with "The Masking Effect," accomplished by layering the character comprised in digital drawings on top of the modified digital photos; another visual technique described by Scott McCloud in his *Understanding Comics* that combines realistic backgrounds and cartoonish character. Masking effect is a form that provides projective identification that allows a stronger emotional connection to the character due to its minimal design and contrast to the realistic background. It is my main asset for nurturing readers' empathy towards the said victims and the main investigation of this research along with "Amplification through Simplification" whether these visual techniques are effective in nurturing readers' empathy towards the main character.

Creative Framework

Cyber-mobbing Under the Influence of Mob Mentality in Social Media

Figure 1

Cyber-mobbing Under the Influence of Mob Mentality in Social Media



The output of my project is a single-issue multiple panel sequences digital comic that consist of twenty-eight (28) pages. It is published via social media and other online media viewing platforms. To encourage readers' empathy towards the main character of the said narrative, my primary goal, I used the concept called "Masking effect" theorized by Scott McCloud, an integration of cartoonish character and realistic backgrounds that allows readers to connect with them and then "mask" oneself within them to immerse themselves in the world of the presented characters. The simplicity of cartoons contributes to their efficacy and beauty. In theory, because cartoon characters are not typically highly detailed or realistic, readers may recognize and stretch themselves to become or relate to them, strengthening their emotional connection. I accomplished this concept by layering a digital drawing on top of the modified digital photos that I captured with digital camera.

My main target audiences are the netizens in social media, especially those who heavily rely on mainstream media and superficial news headlines for information. Along with these audiences are the victims of cyberbullying and online-shaming because they are what the main character represents in the composed digital comic. Since the output of this study is a multimedia art project, it will also benefit students and teachers or professors who are under a bachelor of multimedia arts for it could be used as a reference for their future multimedia art project or discussion. It will also benefit future digital comic book writers who will attempt to spread awareness about certain issues like the contents of my paper's output since it can also be used as their reference for writing a book, comic book, or other similar mediums. Also, this multimedia art project would also benefit illustrators since the project contains creative processes and techniques that could prompt new approaches to producing illustration. It will also benefit writers and educators because it could inspire them to write, inform, or educate with a visual narrative approach to further assess their writing and informing abilities.

The diagram shown above serves as a visualization of my assessment for the topic, and method for the proposed idea to meet the expected outcome of this multimedia art project. My primary goal is to spread awareness among target readers about how mob mentality, specifically in social media, prompts ignorance by nurturing their empathy towards the character through digital comics. In terms of gathering data, I used quantitative method using online survey or some sort of post-reading where readers reflect on what they have just read and give insights about it. Based on their comments and feedbacks, I was able to gather general opinions, feelings, qualities, and understandings about "Amplification through Simplification" and "The Masking Effect" and whether these visual techniques effective in nurturing readers empathy towards the character and effective in depicting certain people such as the victims of cyber-mobbing over inaccurate information. To sum it up, this research aims to use the said visual techniques to nurture readers empathy towards the victims of cyber-mobbing over fake news through digital comic.

The multimedia output of this research is a single-issue digital comic with multiple panels sequences that will consist of 28 pages. It is comprised of a combination of digital photography and digital drawing. However, digital photos that are captured with digital cameras will be edited and illustrated in Adobe Photoshop; these modified digital photos serve as a background for the panels of the composed digital comic. On the other hand, the main character that is portrayed as a cartoonish animal that operates in the principle of "Amplification through Simplification" is comprised in digital drawing by using the same software, Adobe Photoshop, with the support of drawing tablet; the character will be layered on the top of the backgrounds. The story concerns *Oslo*, an anthropomorphic cartoonish character that represents the victim of cyber-mobbing over inaccurate information of the netizens. It is written in a non-linear narrative that is told in a tragic tale form, a genre that depicts human suffering and the tragic or sorrowful circumstances that befall the main character. The composed digital comic will be published through social media such as Facebook, specifically on a page.

Pre-production Phase

During the pre-production stage of the project, which is a period of preparation, I made the initial character designs and sketches and established the Gantt Chart and production schedules. Additionally, because the constructed digital comic has multiple panel sequences, I structure the panels and write scripts during pre-production. It is also during this time that I gather sources for the visual style of the output.

Production Phase

In the project's production phase, I started experimenting with Adobe Photoshop's features to determine the visual aesthetic of the composed digital comic based on the gathered reference materials while doing the primary production. During this time, I began using my digital camera to take pictures, filtering, retouching, and adding textures to the pictures I took, and then layering digital drawings on top of them.

Post-production Phase

In this phase, I started making the pages for my digital comic, organized the photographs I had altered into numerous panel sequences based on the pre-production layout I had designed, and added the dialogues and text balloons for the composed digital comic's story. It's also where I began sharing the digital comic on websites like Tapas and other online viewing options such as Facebook and Instagram.

Review of Related Literature

This section will discuss relevant literature concerning cyber-mobbing influenced by mob mentality of the people in social media, as well its effects on individuals. The utilization of anthropomorphic cartoonish character as a representation through digital comic, which will also be discussed in the following paragraphs, will serve as an asset to nurture readers' empathy towards the victim of cyber-mobbing over inaccurate information.

Distortion of ethical decisions due to Mob Mentality

People who continue to join a crowd that engages in a particular behavior encourage others to do the same. Usually, the mob believes that everyone has made an informed decision that has value, but everyone has based their decision on the decision of the mob. As a result, their decision lacks real value information, creating distorted signal chain (Intermittent Diversion, 2019). Because of this behavior, people have ignored their own information, other perspectives and ethical or critical thinking (Greco, 2019), prompting events such as cyber-mobbing an individual over inaccurate information due to ignorance and bigotry of the crowded netizens. This behavior is known as mob mentality.

Those who participate in a crowd are frequently referred to as a mob. They all share the same decision or opinion and lack individuality. Deindividuation is the essence of mob mentality; it refers to the process of erasing an individual's identity or generating anonymity. Groups utilize it to convince members into a wider "whole" in which group rules are redefined. Because group norms might differ

widely from mainstream norms, this process strips away the individual's identity, allowing the group identity to take its place, making it simpler to act immorally (Harris, 2006). Having this knowledge supports my research multimedia output's depiction of the consequence of mob mentality behavior through digital comic.

Impact of Online Shaming on Victims

In the shoes of those who harass an individual through social media, according to Jon Ronson's reports, they expressed conviction that the one they shamed is fine and has suffered no long-term effects. At the same time, he also reports on the experiences of the shamed of their longer-term losses of jobs and incomes, personal security, feelings of safety and trust, and reputations (Norlock, 2017). The conviction that the victim of online shaming is fine suggests the ignorance that mob mentality causes. According to Greyson (2017), when people are in a group setting, it decreases their normal thought pattern to a more primitive state (Greyson, 2017).

Bullying and mobbing, according to Oravec (2012), are frequently linked to increased stress. In certain cases, increased stress might lead to personal health issues. To some degree, these victims are always vulnerable to this kind of incident, but this can be mediated by a variety of circumstances and factors (Ortega et al., 2012). When victims can protect themselves, as many are trying to do, adverse effects may be minimal. However, when they are alone, and the harassment continues for an extended length of time, the effect on the victim can be unpleasant and severely harmful to their mental health (Ortega et al, 2012). One of the aspects of this study's output is the depiction of the emotional impact that cyber-mobbing prompts to its victims. With the help of "Amplification through Simplification," this will serve as an expression that the main character of the composed digital comic will convey.

Comics As a Medium

Many studies have concluded (Farinella, 2018) that comics are almost as informative as textbooks, however, due to the medium's potential to engage readers, comics are more effective at engaging people to learn more about the specific topic. Comics are a hybrid art form that combines narrative strategies from literature and other pictorial narrative media (Pratt, 2009). A trans medium that crosses all lines of performance, representation, replication, and inscription in search of new audiences, themes, and modes of expression (Mitchelle, 2014, p. 259). Therefore, the medium is capable of being a form of information, encouragement, and persuasion because it is translatable and impermanent, changing into surprising new forms.

Although comics are approachable medium, their effectiveness will depend on the artist. According to Pratt (2009), the artist's style provides us with narrative information. The way texts and sound effects are rendered, character design, inking, and color choices (if appropriate), all contribute to the storytelling purposes. They enable the artist to set an atmosphere, provide an emotional context for a scene or tale, heighten, or lower the drama of a scene, etc. Knowing its potential, I used comic digitally as a medium to address the impact of mob mentality in social media that is expected to spread awareness about its consequences.

The Potential of Anthropomorphic Characters

In children's literature, animal characters or anthropomorphic characters are the most common representatives that fill the story. This is because of its potential to explore sensitive and emotional topics such as race, death, bullying etc. By filling a non-human character that has a human characteristic in children's book (Epley et al., 2007), authors can safely address cultural biases using that character as their counterpart (Kelley and Sotirovska, 2020). This is because anthropomorphic characters operate in the principle of "amplification through simplification" where cartoon characters operate. Because animal characters' appearance is universal and incongruent, it allows the artists or authors of the book to bend its meaning in a way a realistic art cannot.

Simply put, simplified art can concentrate on the precise representative details of an object or person, whereas realistic art must show all the intricacies (Nolan, 2010). This suggests that the more minimal or cartoonish the design of character's appearance, the more it becomes universal, supporting the artist to rely on their own artistic subjectivity. To spread awareness about the impact of mob mentality in social media by nurturing readers' empathy to the main character of the digital comic output, I used cartoonish anthropomorphic character that operates in the principle of "Amplification through Simplification" to depict the said victims' suffering effectively with my own creativity.

Relevant Cases How Mob Mentality in Social Media Prompt Ignorance in the Philippines

Christine Dacera, an airline flight attendant, was found dead in a bathtub in a Makati City hotel around 12:25 p.m. on New Year's Day. Dacera died of a ruptured aortic aneurysm, according to postmortem results, however the family disputes this. Due to detected injuries on Dacera's body, the Philippine National Police (PNP) initially classified the case as "rape-slay," implying that Dacera had been assaulted despite the lack of a medical report (Maradarang, 2021). However, according to the autopsy report, there were no signs of being raped, suffocated, or beaten (Tulfo, 2021). Following the news of Dacera's death, based on the all-male composition of Dacera's group, the hashtags #JusticeForChristineDacera, #StopVictimBlaming, and #ProtectDrunkGirls quickly dominated local Twitter conversations, along with phrases like "rape is rape" and "men are trash." As a result, despite the reports of autopsy that Dacera's death was not rape-slay, friends of Dacera were still accused and got cyber-mobbed by the crowd because of their involvement in their friend's death (Maradarang, 2021).

Another case where the crowd publicly shamed an individual over inaccurate information and over-generalized story was the case of Narding Floro. An 80-year-old senior who was arrested for stealing three (3) sacks of mangoes from the caretaker, Robert Hong, with the help of unidentified buyers that picked the mangoes under illegal consent. According to Lacson (2022), Narding Flores sold the mangoes in the local "talipapa." The case was followed by vloggers, spreading the news quickly. Because of the biased information about the case and how one-sided mainstream media took this issue, the netizens attack the caretaker of the fruit mangoes to the point that it destroys his career and his family without knowing the two sides of the whole story. This suggests how the behavior of mob mentality causes ignorance due to the belief that everyone has made a piece of educated and valuable information, but in truth, everyone has based their source of data on the mob's information, leaving their information inaccurate and lack actual value (Greco, 2019; Intermittent Diversion, 2019). The purpose of my study's output is to raise awareness about how mob mentality prompts ignorance,

which could lead people to settle on false information and start publicly humiliating someone online over inaccurate information.

Review of Related Works

This section discusses various works related to my creative process, visual technique, design of the character, and the purpose of the composed digital comic of this project. The mentioned works will serve as a comprehensive examination of what makes these work preferences a useful reference for achieving the result for my study's output that will serve as an awareness of how mob mentality prompts ignorance by nurturing readers' empathy towards the main character who will represent the victim of cyber-mobbing.

Figure 2

Inio Asano, Goodnight Punpun, 2007

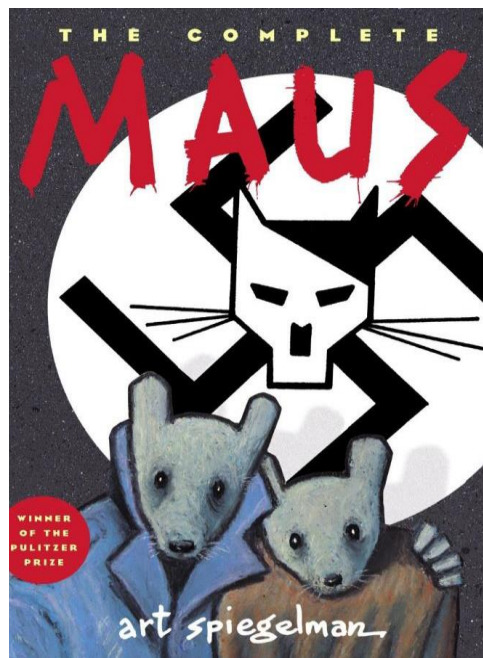


Goodnight Punpun is a serialized manga written and drawn by *Inio Asano* that was published between March 2007 and November 2013. It consists of 147 chapters compiled in thirteen volumes. It is a type of manga that should not be judged by its appearance. Unlike the other characters in this manga drawn in a human form and the realistic backgrounds, the main character, Punpun, is depicted as a cartoonish scrawled bird and his family. However, unlike the readers of this manga, the characters see Punpun and his family in a human form. This is because the creator, *Inio Asano*, wanted to give the readers who avoid complicated stories an impression that the manga is simple and lighthearted, only to learn later that *Goodnight Punpun* is far more serious.

What Asano did here is an example of “The Masking effect” technique theorized by Scott McCloud in his *Understanding Comics*. The idea of masking in this manga is that the readers have a very iconic representation in the main character, and everything that surrounds that scrawled bird character is more realistic; affecting the readers enter the world through the mask of *Punpun*. The idea of using cartoonish scrawled anthropomorphic character like what Asano did in the main character of this manga is what I heavily took inspiration from for the main character design of this project’s digital comic output.

Figure 3

Art Spiegelman, Maus, 1980



Maus depicts Spiegelman interviewing his father about his experiences as a Polish Jew and Holocaust survivor. *Maus* is one of the good examples that utilizes anthropomorphic characters which serves several important purposes. The Holocaust is such a serious topic that the artist is obliged to feel very strongly about it. By employing *animal faces*, he removes the *starkness* of the tragedy, giving himself and the readers a safe area to explore the story without being emotionally distressed. By bringing a sense of detachment and comedy to a severe and terrible incident, Spiegelman has enabled the narrative to be told. What Spiegelman did here was one of the aspects of Amplification through Simplification principle described by Scott McCloud. Spiegelman's numerous explorations of racial identity, particularly that of his own family, reflect his perspective of race as a farce while acknowledging the influence of racial heritage on his own and others' identities. I also heavily took inspiration from the technique that Spiegelman did in terms of removing the starkness of the tragedy by using animal as the character of the story in which it operates in the principle of “Amplification through Simplification.”

Figure 4

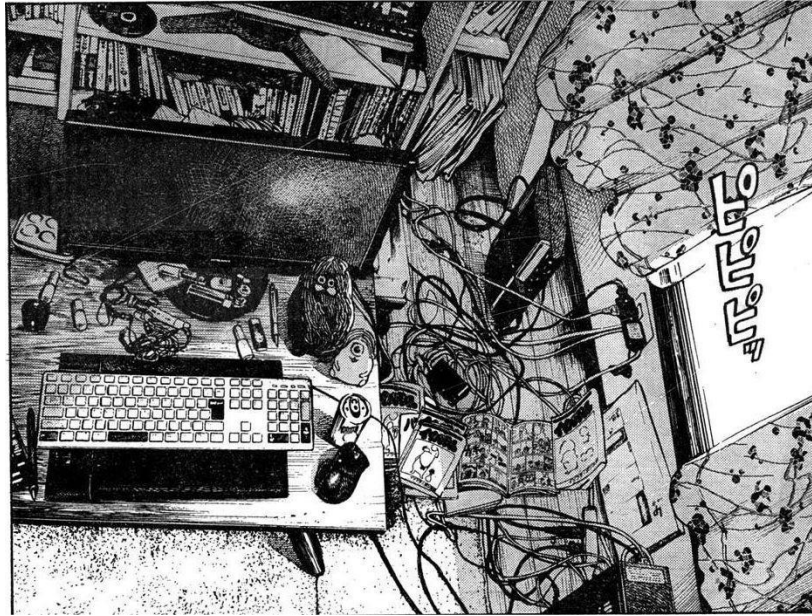
Olyvia Rakshit, Nene Raju Nene Mantri in Comicflix Format, n.d



Nene Raju Nene Mantri is an Indian film around 2017, and it's one of the many films that has been converted into comics through Olyvia Rakshit's start-up ComicFlix. Rather than the time-consuming process of hand-drawing each scene, ComicFlix automates the process, allowing it to convert hundreds of movies into comics quickly. Instead of making use of existing films, I captured digital photos and modified them in a desired comic illustration like the idea of converting films to comics that Rakshit came up.

Figure 5

Inio Asano, Dead dead Demon's Dededededestruction, 2014



“Dead dead Demon’s Dededededestruction” is another serialized manga written and drawn by Inio Asano. It is an ongoing series that started around September 2014. In this frame that is coming from the serialized manga, Inio Asano’s creative process behind this was a hand-drawn element with digital processing. According to him, whenever he wanted to create a realistic background, he would modify a photo and draw a manga illustration of it.

Asano is reliant on photographs where he takes digital photos through his digital camera and later uploads it into Photoshop. He modifies it, turns it into black and white, and manually adds lines or cross hatching in the image where textures are missing or not exposed enough. The reason for this creative process is because, for him, the background is important for embellishing a character by indicating where the character is and what kind of room they live in, that is why he uses a photo to convey what kind of person the character is. Another inspiration I drew from Inio Asano for my study's multimedia output was the method and creative process of using digital photos as a background.

Figure 6

The Human Society of the United States, Save Ralph, 2021



Save Ralph is written and directed by Spencer Susser, a stop motion mockumentary animated short film. The plot revolves around an interview with Ralph (Waititi), a rabbit who describes his life as the subject of animal experiments and the injuries he has sustained as a result. Ralph is a bunny. He discusses his experience as a "tester" for cosmetics. Save Ralph depicts the story of every rabbit or other animal who has been subjected to cosmetic chemical testing in a laboratory. The purpose of this short film was to encourage viewers to get behind Human Society International's campaign. To pressure governments worldwide to change laws and ban what Ralph was experiencing once and for all, which was done by nurturing viewers empathy towards the character by depicting Ralph's suffering as a subject experiment. Like how this short, animated film spreads awareness about animal experiments by nurturing people's empathy towards Ralph, the goal of my composed digital comic is also to nurture readers' empathy towards the character who is suffering instead from cyber-mobbing to spread awareness about how mob mentality prompts ignorance.

Results and Discussion

The study's data was gathered from two types of surveys: preliminary and postliminary. On the preliminary, it identifies how victims and non-victims feel about cyber-mobbing; this is where I based the main character of the composed digital comic's visual representation of cyber-mobbing over inaccurate information. Postliminary on the other hand identifies the feedback of readers and if their empathy got nurtured towards the main character after reading the digital comic. Both preliminary and postliminary were conducted via social media using forms.

Preliminary Survey

Preliminary survey includes questions asking victims how they feel and what they know about their experience as victims of cyber-mobbing, as well as questions for non-victims that asks their opinion and what they feel about the cyber-mobbing and its victims. The minority of the participants, about sixteen (16) out of thirty-six (36), are victims of cyber-mobbing. Surprisingly, based on their extensive comments and opinions to the given questions, the non-victims of cyber-mobbing appear to empathize with what the victims of cyber-mobbing felt during their experience. Unsurprisingly, non-victims' comments are not as intense as those of participants who experienced cyber-mobbing. All the victims portrayed cyber-mobbing in a negative way based on their comments in which it includes terms such trauma, anger, anxiety, insecurity, and distress.

Postliminary Survey

In postliminary survey, I was able to draw hundreds of viewers to read the composed digital comic, however, only thirty-one (31) of them participated in post-reading. A postliminary survey asked readers of the composed digital comic about their feedback, insights, and if the comic was able to nurture their empathy towards the main character. According to their feedbacks based on the given questions, most of them admired the narrative and the art of the comic and have empathized with the main character in which the visual techniques, amplification through simplification and masking effect, had a huge role of it.

Production Results

Even though photography was used in the project's creation to create realistic backgrounds in a short amount of time for my digital comic output, it still took me a long time to create these backgrounds because of the photo modification process. The problem was because I struggled making the backgrounds of the digital comic identical; it required numerous modifications to get the backgrounds look consistent. This is since the photos I took were not shot on the same day or at the same hour, resulting in varied lighting patterns and vibrance in each photo. Because of this, it took me hours editing the images due to the challenge of making these images look consistent to each other.

On the other hand, it also took me a long time to make the characters that are comprised of digital drawings look consistent with the backgrounds while layering them on top of the backgrounds. This is due to the stark contrast between the color palette and design of the characters and the backgrounds. However, during my editing process, I discovered a quick way to make the character blend in with the backgrounds while still being strikingly different for the sake of the concept of “The Masking Effect,” that is by layering the character in the same Photoshop file as the images. Before I discovered the solution, my creative process was layering the characters to an exported JPEG file of the modified background, disregarding the background's textures. The key here was to keep the character looking consistent with the background, and the solution by doing so is by managing them in the same Photoshop file and layering them with the same textures.

Conclusion

According to the results of research and preliminary survey, concerning the effect of cyber-mobbing on the victims, its impact does lead to mental issues. Among all the negative results of this event, “traumatizing” is the most common impact of cyber mobbing based on research and preliminary survey results. However, some of the said survey’s results concluded that the effects of cyber-mobbing could be contingent on the individual who experienced it because thirteen percent (13%) of the respondents out of eighty-eight percent (88%) resulted positively. The visual representation of emotion of the main character of the said comic was based on the preliminary survey results and research. Because of the involvement of the perspective of both victims and non-victims of cyber-mobbing over inaccurate information, I was able to capture the struggle and emotions of the victim of cyber-mobbing over fake news accurately through digital comic despite relying on my own artistic subjectivity.

The single-issue digital comic story was presented in multimedia arts exhibit and social media. Along with the utilization of “The Masking Effect” technique to make the main character of the said comic identifiable, the story of the comic depicts the experience of the victim of cyber-mobbing over inaccurate information using amplification through simplification. The comic was admired due to its concise visual representation of the story and its art style. Because of how strong the main character’s visual expression, mood, or emotion stood out throughout the panels of the said comic wherein the “Amplification through Simplification” and “The Masking Effect,” in which it utilizes cartoonish animal character, had a huge role of it, the readers were able to empathize with the main character who represents a victim of cyber-mobbing over inaccurate information. However, the said visual techniques are not the only reasons that nurtured readers’ empathy towards the main character. Based on the results of postliminary survey, some readers only empathize with the main character due to storyline of the said comic and the struggles that the protagonist conveyed in the story. In conclusion, while the concept of “The Masking Effect” technique does provide stronger emotional connection towards the character by juxtaposing it to a more realistic setting, it still requires a pinch of narrative to make the readers empathized with the main character. The effectiveness of “Amplification through Simplification,” on the other hand, is totally dependent on the artist's creativity. Because the approach only allowed me to enhance the visual expression of a picture by eliminating its "meaning" through simplicity, it may be ineffective if my creativity is lacking.

Recommendations

Research Topic

Obtaining more publications relating to the issue is recommended for overall improvement of this study. It is also a good idea to investigate other people who are involved in this area, particularly celebrities, who are usual victims of cyber-mobbing. In terms of data collection, rather of surveying both victim and non-victim respondents, I suggest having an interview if the goal is to learn about the experience of being a victim of cyber-mobbing. However, it would be wiser if the interview was conducted only to the victims because non-victims' responses to questions on the emotions that cyber-mobbing causes are simply based on their perceptions, not personal experience. On the other hand, visual techniques mentioned in this study were solely used as a visual style of storytelling to give a stronger emotional connection to the main character, and to safely address the topic while relying on my own artistic subjectivity. However, these visual approaches were not tested whole, such as examining whether the masking effect technique provides a stronger emotional connection to the character when compared to other visual approaches. On a related note, it is also important to consider the psychological effect of anthropomorphism in this study, which also facilitates masking effect and amplification through simplification.

Creative Process

The most crucial factor to consider is the sequence in which the creative process takes and the amount of time it takes. The creative process should always begin with narrative and scriptwriting before moving on to storyboarding. I advised that the storyboard be finished as soon as possible before going on to the shooting stage, as it will serve as the basis for your photographs' aspect, in which it will act as the backgrounds of digital comic output. Along with the storyboard, the visual style of the narrative should be established as soon as possible also since it determines the tools and filters that will be used to manipulate the images into a comic illustration perspective. If the prescribed sequence of the creative process is not followed, difficulties will arise, consuming a significant amount of time due to repeated concept changes and due to unfinalized storyboard; this suggests why time is also crucial in this matter if ever complications occur. When taking digital photos during the photoshoot stage, make sure they are all taken at the same hour to maintain consistency, because if they are not, photos will look differ in terms of their vibrance and lighting, making the next stage of the creative process, editing, more time consuming due to the process of making the photos that are captured in different hour look identical. There are still many rooms to explore regarding the utilization of "The Masking Effect" technique. Generally, the method of the said visual technique is comprised of a mixture of realistic backgrounds and cartoonish characters, however, the whole point of this technique is to make the character easily identifiable by juxtaposing it to a more detailed object. In other words, realistic backgrounds are not a strict rule.

This implies many possible concepts and creative processes to use this technique. On the other hand, "Amplification through Simplification" is at it is. Its effectiveness depends solely on the artistic subjectivity of the artist because the visual technique, in which the artist utilizes visual simplicity to remove the image's "baggage," only provides artists opportunities to think in his/her own way. In other words, the technique is futile if the artists' creativity is low.

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