

"Enhancing Storyboarding for Viral Content: Closing the Research Gap in Interactive Storytelling on Digital Platforms"

Asti Hayuningtyas

Akademi Komunikasi SAE Indonesia

E-mail: asti.hanintyas@nextakademi.id

Abstrak

The rise of digital technology and social media platforms has transformed the creation of animated content, especially in storyboarding for viral projects. This study aims to identify and develop an effective storyboarding method tailored for viral content on digital platforms. The research method emphasizes audience interactivity, the integration of cutting-edge technology, and adaptation to global cultural differences. Using a qualitative approach, this research conducts content analysis and case studies of viral content across platforms like TikTok, Instagram, and YouTube. A key finding of this research is that storyboarding digital content must be flexible and sensitive to cultural variations. Additionally, it should accommodate diverse storylines that can evolve based on audience interactions. The study also reveals that technologies such as AI can enhance the relevance and efficiency of the storyboard creation process. Ultimately, it offers a practical guide for the creative industry to address the challenges associated with dynamic and cross-cultural content production.

Keywords: audience interactivity, cultural adaptation, digital technology, storyboarding, viral content,

A. INTRODUCTION

In the visual and animation media sector, advancements in digital technology have significantly influenced production processes. Story creation and storyboarding are essential components of animation, shaping the storyline and determining the emotional impact of the production. With the rise of digital platforms, particularly social media and streaming services, new challenges have emerged in developing and adapting stories for a broader, more interactive, and culturally diverse audience. Successful viral content on these platforms often relies on effective, fast, and flexible storytelling that adapts quickly to audience preferences and trends.

With today's technological advancements, audiences no longer passively consume stories; they are often shaped by user interactivity and engagement. This shift opens the door to new storyboarding and development methods that cater to a more diverse and dynamic audience. Consequently, research into optimizing storyboarding for viral content on digital platforms, particularly regarding interactive stories, has become increasingly important.

Storyboarding plays a vital role in shaping the visual narrative in producing an animated film. Sullivan (2013) explains in his book, “Ideas for the Animated Short,” that storyboarding helps filmmakers organize the storyline visually. Furthermore, the book “Prepare to Board!” highlights that storyboarding includes emotional and psychological aspects that must be considered when developing characters and stories.

Many studies have explored the development of stories in animation; however, there are still gaps regarding how these stories can adapt to technological advances and digital platforms. Platforms like TikTok, YouTube, and Instagram present new challenges and opportunities for short, interactive story formats heavily influenced by content distribution algorithms. Previous studies, such as those conducted by Asgari and Hurt ¹, focused on driven storyboarding but did not address the inclusion of emotional elements that could enhance the audience's experience.

Storyboarding and storytelling in the animation industry face several new challenges as digital platforms continue to evolve. One key issue is adapting to these platforms, which often favor very short content formats, such as TikTok videos or Instagram reels. Despite these shorter formats, the challenge lies in maintaining the quality and appeal of stories. Another important consideration is audience interaction and engagement. How can audiences actively shape storylines, and how can this participation be integrated into the storyboarding process to create a more personalized and dynamic experience? Lastly, there is the challenge of adapting stories globally: how can narratives be modified to meet diverse cultural standards while remaining appealing to an increasingly varied digital audience? There is a distinction between current research and what should be implemented in theory and practice. While ample research addresses storyboarding and storytelling methods in animation, some areas still require further investigation, particularly the adaptation to dynamic digital platforms. Existing studies have not sufficiently explored how storyboarding and storytelling can be optimized for social media and streaming platforms, which often demand stories to be presented in a shorter and more direct format. The second area of

¹ “A Design Language for Prototyping and Storyboarding Data-Driven Stories,” *Applied Sciences (Switzerland)* 14, no. 4 (2024), <https://doi.org/10.3390/app14041387>.

concern is audience interactivity. Most studies do not examine how direct audience interactions with a story, such as choices or reactions, can influence the storyline or how these elements can be integrated into the storyboarding process. Lastly, due to globalization, stories must be adaptable to various cultural norms and beliefs, an aspect that has not been thoroughly discussed in previous research. The impact of culture on storyboarding and methods for structuring stories to remain relevant to diverse audiences is also underexplored

Current research indicates that, despite significant advancements in storyboarding methods, there is still limited exploration of how these methods can be integrated with more interactive and culturally diverse digital platforms. For instance, while Sullivan (2013) and Beiman ² thoroughly discuss the fundamental principles and techniques of storyboarding, they do not address how to adapt these concepts for digital and interactive environments. On the other hand, Asgari and Hurtut ³ propose the notion of data-driven storyboarding; however, their focus is primarily on the use of data, neglecting the increasingly important elements of interaction and emotion in the digital realm.

Recent research on the cultural adaptation of prevention programs has utilized storyboarding; however, it does not adequately address the challenges that arise when tailoring stories for global audiences with diverse cultural backgrounds. To fill this gap, this study will examine how storyboarding for viral content on digital platforms can effectively incorporate digital elements, interactivity, and cultural adaptation. The research will concentrate on audience interactivity, cultural adaptation, and the latest technological advancements. Furthermore, the study seeks to develop a new storyboarding method that enhances story creation for dynamic and highly interactive digital platforms. Finally, it will provide practical guidelines for the creative industry, particularly in the realm of creative media education, to improve their understanding

² *Prepare to Board!, Prepare to Board!*, 2017, <https://doi.org/10.1201/9781315156248>.

³ “A Design Language for Prototyping and Storyboarding Data-Driven Stories.”

and application of effective storyboarding techniques for digital and cross-cultural viral content.⁴

B. RESEARCH METHODS

This research employs a qualitative approach that focuses on content analysis and case studies. It will examine recent instances of viral content on digital platforms such as YouTube, TikTok, and Instagram to understand how storyboarding techniques are used to craft stories that are engaging, relevant, and adaptable to a broader audience. Additionally, the study will include interviews with experts in the animation and digital media industries to gain firsthand insights into the challenges they face in meeting the needs of an increasingly diverse and dynamic audience. The research design comprises three primary stages. First, a literature review will investigate existing theories related to storyboarding and narratives, as well as advancements in digital technology that enable storytelling. Next, case studies will analyze recent examples of viral content and the storyboarding methods employed to achieve them, emphasizing interactivity and cultural adaptation. This study aims to develop new storyboarding models or techniques that enhance the interactivity and responsiveness of viral content. The findings from the literature review and case analysis will form the basis for this model development. Ultimately, this research is expected to significantly influence the fields of creative media education and the animation industry by updating techniques to address contemporary digital challenges.

C. RESULTS OF DISCUSSION

1. Adapting to Change Platforms

Animation and story creators are facing new challenges in adapting traditional storyboarding methods thanks to the rapid development of digital platforms, particularly social media like TikTok, Instagram Reels, and YouTube Shorts. These platforms rely heavily on very short videos, which must effectively convey messages

⁴ Tori S. Simenec et al., “A Novel Blueprint Storyboarding Method Using Digitization for Efficient Cultural Adaptation of Prevention Programs to Serve Diverse Youth and Communities,” *Prevention Science* 24, no. 4 (2023): 688–700, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11121-022-01460-7>.

while maintaining audience engagement. As a result, creators need to produce content that is faster, shorter, and more dynamic. Storyboarding is the process of planning the visual and emotional elements in animated stories, as noted by Sullivan and Schumer ⁵. Given that story formats are becoming shorter, there is a need for a new approach. Content creators must effectively manage their time to convey a strong message within a limited duration. This involves condensing the story to fit a shorter format while still maintaining the quality of the narrative and the emotions that resonate with the audience.

To convey information effectively and promptly, Beiman ⁶ stressed the importance of summarizing and clarifying character descriptions and psychological elements. In such scenarios, characters should have distinctive and recognizable designs so that the audience can quickly establish an emotional connection with them. This adaptation not only shortens the story but also preserves the quality of the narrative and emotions, allowing the audience to connect with them quickly. Therefore, storyboarding for these platforms should focus on efficient visual selection and a concise narrative structure, while still conveying a strong message to the audience. According to Asgari and Hurtut ⁷, data-driven storyboarding can be used to optimize story structures based on the dynamic behavior of digital audiences. By leveraging data to map storylines and adjust visual elements that capture attention quickly, content creators can enhance their chances of producing viral content. This approach enables storytellers to gain a better understanding of audience preferences, leading to the creation of more relevant and engaging content. From generating ideas to designing panel layouts, AI can assist animators in various stages of storyboarding, including analyzing scripts and images. This support can significantly speed up the creative process and enhance efficiency. A notable example is "Spider-Man: Into the Spider-Verse," which utilizes artificial intelligence to create storyboards featuring a distinctive visual style. Innovation in

⁵ Katrina Falkner, Rebecca Vivian, and Nickolas Falkner, "The Australian Digital Technologies Curriculum: Challenge and Opportunity," *Conferences in Research and Practice in Information Technology Series* 148 (2014): 3–12.

⁶ *Prep. to Board!*

⁷ "A Design Language for Prototyping and Storyboarding Data-Driven Stories."

storyboarding methods is necessary to adapt to the constantly changing internet platform. Content creators must blend proficiency with innovation to create a compelling story in a limited time.

2. Audience Interaction and Engagement

In digital storytelling, interactivity has become increasingly important. In this context, the audience not only receives information but also actively participates in shaping their narrative experience. This leads to a unique and dynamic engagement, where the audience feels both intellectually and emotionally invested in the story. The concept of interactivity presents new challenges for storyboarding, as it allows for various story routes influenced by the audience's decisions. Story creators should design a flexible flow that enables audiences to select their own storylines, a technique that has been effectively utilized in video games. However, there remains significant potential for developing this idea within simpler short video formats ⁸

Interactivity in storyboarding allows the audience to modify the storyline by breaking it into smaller segments. Consequently, storytelling techniques must be more flexible. This necessitates storytellers to create multiple storylines for the audience, leading to a more dynamic experience where they can choose their preferred options paths⁹.

Bancroft (2013) states that the animated storyboarding method requires a deep understanding of audience psychology. This understanding becomes even more complex when considering interaction. Today, audiences not only follow the storyline but can also influence how the story unfolds. This presents a challenge for story creators, who must design various storylines that can be customized based on audience interactions. For instance, viewers often have the option to alter the storyline in interactive video games or films. This enhances their experience and provides a sense of control over the narrative. The process of creating a digital story involves several stages, from concept development to audience feedback. However, this concept can also be

⁸ Birgitta Bestari Puspita and Paulus A. Edvra, "Eksplorasi Elemen Digital Storytelling Dalam Konten Gaming Youtube Kids," *Komuniti : Jurnal Komunikasi Dan Teknologi Informasi* 16, no. 1 (2024): 75–105, <https://doi.org/10.23917/komuniti.v16i1.4543>.

⁹ Endang Fatmawati, "IR-Media Baru Digital Storytelling," *Jurnal* 4, no. 2 (2015): 105–17.

simplified and effectively implemented in a shorter video format.¹⁰ To create an effective narrative, storytellers must take into account various aspects¹¹ The inclusion of interactive elements in digital storytelling enhances audience engagement and provides content creators with new storytelling methods.

3. Global Cultural Adaptation

Now, digital content can be accessed and watched by audiences from different cultural backgrounds in the era of growing globalization. Therefore, storytellers need to consider aspects of cultural adaptation when they create stories and storyboarding because this creates challenges and opportunities to create work that is not only engaging but also widely acceptable. A widely accepted story should have culturally relevant principles and remain appealing to everyone.

Creating engaging and relevant content becomes a complex challenge. Cultural adaptation in prevention programs requires a storyboarding approach that is more sensitive to cultural differences, according to Simenec¹² research focusing on creating relevant stories for different cultural groups. For example, when creating health campaigns worldwide, it is crucial to understand how different cultures perceive health values. A direct approach may be considered too aggressive in some cultures, but in others, it may be considered a form of genuine concern. Therefore, storyboarding must be designed with this perspective in mind so that diverse audiences can receive the message.

Creating viral content that is cross-cultural requires flexibility. Storyboarding must be understandable to audiences from different cultural backgrounds. For example, certain colors can have different meanings in different cultures. In one culture, red can symbolize courage, but in another, it can mean danger or anger. Therefore, if the story creator wants to ensure that the visual elements used are not only interesting but also not offensive or mismeaningful.

¹⁰ Rachel Ayrton, "The Case for Creative, Visual and Multimodal Methods in Operationalising Concepts in Research Design: An Examination of Storyboarding Trust Stories," *Sociological Review* 68, no. 6 (2020): 1229–49, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0038026120903918>.

¹¹ (Fatmawati, 2015).

¹² 's (2023)

According to Asgari and Hurtut ¹³ it is important for data-driven storyboarding to consider social and cultural aspects that are relevant to the intended audience. This means that story creators must collect and analyze information about their audience. This information should include relevant cultural habits, preferences, and standards. The challenge to overcome is adapting stories that are sensitive to cultural standards without compromising their universal appeal. Adapting story themes that can resonate with audiences from different cultures or countries, the use of non-offensive visual language, and the management of characters that reflect cultural diversity are all examples of this.

Character management becomes a very important component in this situation. The characters in the story should be interesting and represent various cultural backgrounds. For example, the main characters in an animated story aimed at a worldwide audience can be from various cultures, making the audience feel connected to them. It is essential to use visual language that is inclusive and non-offensive. Story writers should ensure that images, symbols and other visual elements do not contain stereotypes or connotations that disadvantage certain people.

In addition, according to Beiman ¹⁴ it is primarily important to emphasize universal themes such as human relationships, struggle, or hope when creating animated stories that can be accepted across different cultures. These themes can be understood and accepted by audiences from different cultural backgrounds. These themes are unique and can bridge cultural differences. To succeed in this context, effective storyboarding must have the ability to adapt those elements while maintaining the core of the story. For example, the author of a story about friendship can show the different ways people from different cultures show affection and support, giving the audience a deeper understanding of the theme.

Testing with various audiences is essential during the story creation and storyboarding process. This testing helps the storyteller know how the story is received by different cultural groups. These opinions can be used to make necessary changes to

¹³ (2024),

¹⁴ *Prep. to Board!*

make the story more resonant and have a greater impact. This approach allows storytellers to create content that is not only engaging, but can also build connections between different cultures.

Storytellers should take the aspect of cultural adaptation seriously when creating stories and storyboarding in an era of globalization marked by cultural diversity. Storytellers can create works that are not only interesting, but also acceptable to audiences around the world by understanding and appreciating cultural differences while emphasizing universal themes. The stories created can bridge cultural differences and create stronger connections between creators and their audiences through in-depth research, inclusive character management, and sensitive use of visual elements. The difficulties of creating cross-cultural content can be overcome, and the result is a truly relevant and universal work.

D. CONCLUSION

This research focuses on optimizing storyboarding to create viral content on evolving digital platforms, emphasizing three main elements: audience interactivity, global cultural adaptation, and utilization of the latest digital technologies. Content creators must change their storyboarding methods to meet the demands of modern platforms such as TikTok, Instagram, and YouTube, which prioritize short and fast content. This is necessary due to the dynamic digital context. Stories should be more flexible to increase audience interactivity. This means content creators should create multiple story paths, allowing audiences to choose. Conversely, as the cultural audience is increasingly diverse, it is important for stories to adapt to different cultural standards while still having universal appeal. A successful storyboarding method should be able to incorporate visual and narrative elements that are sensitive to cultural differences while highlighting universal themes that audiences around the world can accept.

REFERENCE:

- Asgari, Morteza, and Thomas Hurtut. "A Design Language for Prototyping and Storyboarding Data-Driven Stories." *Applied Sciences (Switzerland)* 14, no. 4 (2024). <https://doi.org/10.3390/app14041387>.
- Ayrton, Rachel. "The Case for Creative, Visual and Multimodal Methods in Operationalising Concepts in Research Design: An Examination of Storyboarding Trust Stories." *Sociological Review* 68, no. 6 (2020): 1229–49. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0038026120903918>.
- Beiman, Nancy. *Prepare to Board! Prepare to Board!*, 2017. <https://doi.org/10.1201/9781315156248>.
- Falkner, Katrina, Rebecca Vivian, and Nickolas Falkner. "The Australian Digital Technologies Curriculum: Challenge and Opportunity." *Conferences in Research and Practice in Information Technology Series* 148 (2014): 3–12.
- Fatmawati, Endang. "IR-Media Baru Digital Storytelling." *Jurnal* 4, no. 2 (2015): 105–17.
- Puspita, Birgitta Bestari, and Paulus A. Edvra. "Eksplorasi Elemen Digital Storytelling Dalam Konten Gaming Youtube Kids." *Komuniti: Jurnal Komunikasi Dan Teknologi Informasi* 16, no. 1 (2024): 75–105. <https://doi.org/10.23917/komuniti.v16i1.4543>.
- Simenec, Tori S., Sarah Gillespie, H. R. Hodges, Salma A. Ibrahim, Sarah Eckerstorfer, and Gail M. Ferguson. "A Novel Blueprint Storyboarding Method Using Digitization for Efficient Cultural Adaptation of Prevention Programs to Serve Diverse Youth and Communities." *Prevention Science* 24, no. 4 (2023): 688–700. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11121-022-01460-7>.
- Sullivan, K., & Schumer, G. (2013). *Ideas for the Animated Short: Finding and Building Stories* (2nd ed.). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780240818825>
- Bancroft, T. (2013). *Directing for Animation: Everything You Didn't Learn in Art School*. Routledge.