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The Content Analysis of Visual Storytelling Elements for Social Media Education Tools

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Abstract

The rise of learning innovation suggested that multimedia content are practical tools of communication to support teaching and learning. However, despite increasing learning innovations, visual storytelling approaches have been lacking in Malaysian education, especially social media platforms. This paper aims to identify visual storytelling elements from literature reviews and scholars. This research employs a qualitative method using the content analysis process to identify the visual storytelling elements from the textual documents in various fields. The findings of this paper are the elements of visual storytelling that are significant in creating educational content for social media. This paper contributes a new guideline for future researchers and designers to use in other fields that feed the grounds.

Keywords: Visual Storytelling, Teaching and Learning, Multimedia

Introduction

Storytelling is the art of telling a story that communicates ideas, beliefs, personal histories, and life lessons and can be defined as an autonomous or series of related events and can be conveyed in written or oral (Stein, 1982). According to LeBlanc & Hogg (2006), a story can be fiction or non-fiction and usually follows a plot structure starting with the beginning, middle, and ending (Hayne, 2009). In addition, storytelling is an effective approach to effective learning. Since the beginning of human existence, we have relied on visual images for relaying communication and information. Visual storytelling has been a powerful tool to educate, share, and communicate ideas. According to Caputo (2003), visual storytelling is a method of delivering a story through media that use still or moving visuals and graphic images. Visual storytelling enhances material via images, graphics, illustrations, films, and audio, such as music, voice, and sound effects (Caputo, 2003). The application of visual storytelling is expanding in various fields, such as digital media and film, marketing, advertising, and education, specifically internationally. However, the usage of visual storytelling in Malaysia is limited, and there is a knowledge gap in the online learning field focusing on social media platforms. Significantly, the Malaysian Blueprint of Education 2013 – 2025 emphasizes educational innovation, especially in science and mathematics subjects (STEM), in online learning in Malaysia (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2013).

The rapid change in technologies makes the world of communication expand, especially on social media toward education. According to Google 2010 statistics, the average user visits 89 websites per month, and the user commonly has seven social media accounts. The previous statement indicates higher usage of online platforms and can be seen as an effective medium to deliver information in various fields. The rise of online social media usage reflects Malaysian users, where 89 percent of Malaysian using social media platforms in 2022. The percentage shows an increase of up to 43 percent from 2016. There is also a growth of 8 percent in social media users from 2021 to 2022.

The new generation has become accustomed to using technology from a younger age, and their way of understanding and digesting information has changed. This study aims to identify visual storytelling elements based on experts and scholars for education tools through social media. This research is important in the educational field where it can serve as a guideline to educators in creating educational social media content based on visual storytelling techniques. Understanding this may lead to better visual content development in the education field and creates engagement of the audience.

Literature Review

The Background of Visual Storytelling

Visual storytelling has been a form of non-verbal human communication since the Prehistoric era when humans did cave paintings to record their achievements and experience. Through this visual, we can trace the history, culture, and lifestyle. Since then, visual storytelling has kept evolving, from hieroglyphics as visual images to tell the story, Chinese tapestries, statues, canvases, photographs, film, television, and multimedia. The visual storytelling is the art of communicating a series of messages using visual multimedia. Today's visual storytelling involves using graphics, images, pictures, and videos (Scherman, 2016). The use of visual storytelling can be seen in film, video production, advertising, marketing, and online learning. In general, the essential aspect of visual storytelling is determining the right way to represent the information to the audience rather than pairing the content with images without any purpose. The right visuals and intention can create the most powerful impact on the audience and evoke their emotions.

Visual Storytelling Education

From the educational perspective, a large portion of the human brain is related to image processing, visual interpretation, and synthesis (Paivio, 2010). The cognitive science literature confirms that, regardless of various context-based factors, such as idiosyncratic learning experiences, humans still learn to retain and comprehend best when information is disseminated in multimedia. The format is aural and visual, unlike strict prose, such as text (Mayer, 1997). Visual storytelling can aid conventional text-based learning as visual storytelling can facilitate the comprehension of complicated narratives and provide a more persuasive message. It renders narratives imaginative, relevant, and relevant to readers.

There is little research on visual storytelling usage in education that has been discussed in past research. Soltani et al.'s (2015) study investigated the effect of using pictorial storytelling as a new method for language teaching and it is related to what the students watch, listen to, and think. It was examined in a pre and post-test quasi-experimental design. The result of their study confirmed that pictorial storytelling helped the improvement of vocabulary learning for EFL learners. Hermanto (2019), in his research, a book format has

been improvised through a pictorial story known as a picture book combining visual and verbal narratives. This research aimed at young children through text and sequential images. His research assesses picture storybooks as one of the effective media in the process of storytelling, where the study explores the content of character values that can be conveyed through a visual image in a children's storybook. From this research, Hermanto (2019) concludes that picture stories become an interesting visual storytelling medium if supported by strong stories and illustrations.

Visual storytelling can be integrated with other technology tools, such as augmented reality (AR), a growing trend among companies, mobile computing, and education. The integration of AR with visual storytelling among the researcher was done by Tyurina (2021) and presented about understanding the scientific research. She mentioned the difficulty of the public and communities to comprehend scientific information as the public lacks knowledge and understanding of science. Visual storytelling in AR allows science communicators to communicate and comprehend information more effectively. She stated that visual storytelling in AR has the potential to strengthen the relationship between the general public and scientists while engaging the large community in comprehending scientific findings. In addition, this study affirmed the potential to broaden design theory and practice in the field of science communication by engaging design communities with scientific disciplines. It also can contribute to integrating design with STEAM in the approach to learning.

Visual Storytelling Advertising and Marketing

The integration of visual storytelling in advertising and marketing has shown a significant improvement and positive impact. Keleher (2021) statement mentioned the involvement of visual storytelling in advertising and marketing as a tool by incorporating video elements to deliver a narrative. He explained that the most iconic and memorable brand campaign is due to visual storytelling. Visual storytelling is a practical marketing tool as it can convey information in less time, and imagery can capture attention more quickly than text.

Visual Storytelling Elements

Videos, infographics, and presentations from an image are the popularity and unprecedented usage of visuals that have resulted in a social media era that rewards creativity. Visual content storytelling usually uses images, graphs, drawings, user-generated images, photo collages, images with texts overlays, captions, quotes and stats, postcards and e-cards, word photos, memes, cartoons, GIFs, infographics, videos, presentations, and aggregators. Similarly to how people build relationships with each other, visual storytelling can give a meaningful opportunity to deliver positive experiences that construct brand awareness, trust, loyalty, and engaged communities. In order to develop and implement a successful visual storytelling strategy, marketers must focus on the following elements.

There are specific element that has been discussed by the experts when developing or designing visual storytelling. Walter & Gioglio (2014), in a book titled "The Power of Visual Storytelling", explain the types, guidelines, and strategies of visual marketing through visual storytelling. There are seven elements of visual storytelling design, personalization, usefulness, personality, storytelling, share-worthiness, and real-time amplification. In the same field, marketing and advertising (Walter & Gioglio, 2014; Park, 2021; El-Desouky, 2020) shared their practice element of visual storytelling. Park (2021) stated seven elements of

visual storytelling: scene and settings, characters, style and tone, animation and movement, visual thinking, connection, and the script and sound. In addition, El-Desouky (2020) also claimed five elements of visual storytelling that should be implemented into marketing content design: visual metaphor, color psychology, familiar images, lighting, and story. Ghaddar (2022) stated in his research that the suitable visual storytelling elements for the educational field are content and typography, pairing colors, iconography, data visualization, and using the right image. Producing a film and video production by implementing visual storytelling needs some vital aspects such as framing, lighting, camera movement, and editing (Script, 2020). In addition, Grula(2009) shared more detailed elements of visual storytelling in creating a video production: still picture, music, narration, interviews, dialogue, sound effects, natural sound, pacing, graphics, lighting, special effects, editing transitions, and character. Based on the explanation from most experts and scholars in various fields, visual storytelling elements are mostly used in marketing and advertising. Limited educational and video production guidelines need to be expanded, especially for visual storytelling elements in online learning through social media.

Methodology

In this study, the qualitative method through content analysis was applied. It is an approach to quantifying qualitative information by systematically sorting and comparing items of information in order to summarise them. Often this process entails turning a large set of raw data into useable evidence through data reduction methods. There are five steps in the content analysis process i) identify data, ii) develop categories, iii) code data, iv) assess reliability v) analyze results (Forman & Damschroder, 2007). In identifying data with appropriate data sources, decide upon the unit of analysis as items to be coded and decide on the selection of items. All the data will be established on whether the items should be coded to one category or multiple categories based on a preliminary review of data and coding. In this study, all the contextual review documents were assessed thoroughly and coded according to categories. The processes were discussed thoroughly with expert academicians, and all the data was analyzed to get findings.

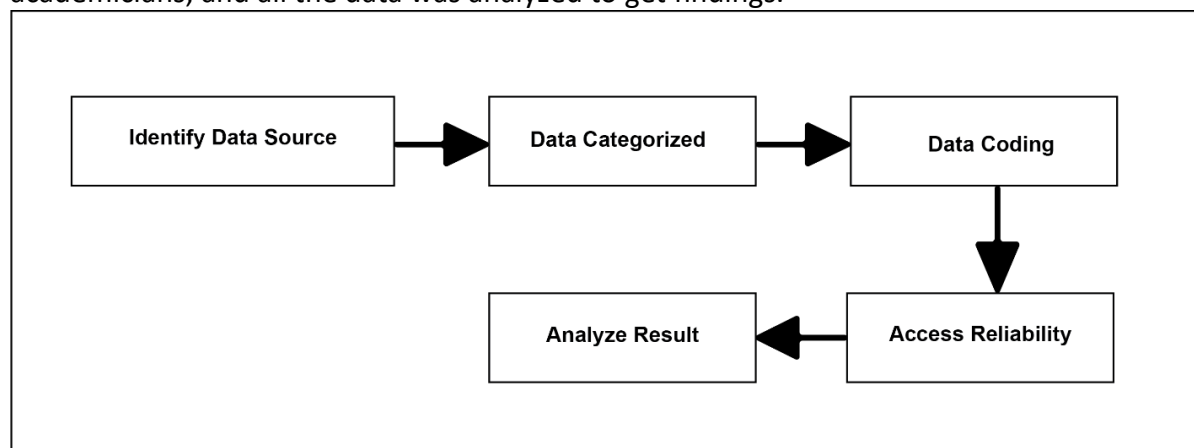


Figure 1 Content Analysis Process

Finding, Results, and Discussion

Through the content analysis from five experts (Walter & Gioglio, 2014; Park, 2021; El-Desouky, 2020; Ghaddar, 2022), 38 visual storytelling elements have been categorized according to similarity and most used in various fields. Figure 2 shows the visual storytelling

elements derived from the content analysis. There is a total of five elements that have been identified as suitable visual storytelling elements based on the most used among experts.

Visual Storytelling Elements	Description
Storytelling	In every story should have three main parts: beginning, middle, and end.
Infographic	An infographic is a collection of imagery, data visualisations like pie charts and bar graphs, and minimum text that gives an easy-to-understand overview of a topic. An example below, infographics use striking, engaging visuals to communicate information quickly and crystal clear.
Animate & Motion	A character's facial movement and expression and a motion prop strengthen the engagement and entertainment of visual storytelling.
Colour	Colour sets the style and tone of the piece; the right colour combination relays different meanings and can stimulate the senses. Colour psychology should be based on demographic groups.
Sound	Sound involves background music, Sound Effects (SFX), Voiceover and Ambience Sound.

Figure 2 Five elements of visual storytelling

Storytelling is the first essential element in visual storytelling and is a strong tool to evoke emotions and insights. It depicts ideas, opinions, and individual experiences through stories or narratives. The usage of storytelling in social media plays a vital role in catching audiences' attention. According to El-Desouky (2020), every story should have three main parts: beginning, middle, and end. The ending must give closure and convince the audience to act upon the content. Walter & Gioglio (2014) stated that a successful visual marketing strategy through social media platforms requires the content's storytelling element, which is as important as the use of visuals. The second element is the infographic is a combination of images and data visualizations like pie charts and bar graphs with minimal text that provides a clear overview of a subject. Infographics combine the best of data and visuals to craft a story (Walter & Gioglio, 2014). Infographics can deliver faster information to the audience as the human brain is programmed for visual patterns instead of text. However, using the right image is crucial in representing ideas by considering the different cognitive and cultural perspectives (Ghaddar, 2022). The third element is that animation and motion enhance the engagement of visual storytelling that, helps to guide the viewer through the story, and draws their attention to the details. Humour and charm in the motion can offer more engagement to the audience. If the visual narrative is animated, this might be done by animating a character's expression or a prop's motion. Features like these can increase how entertaining and engaging visual storytelling is (Park, 2021). The fourth element is color, which discusses the style and tone that are important elements in visual storytelling that can help you create emotion and set moods (Park, 2021).

According to Ghaddar (2022); El-Desouky (2020), the right combination of colors can stimulate the senses as it relays different meanings and helps to attract the audience. There is a need to consider color psychology when choosing the right combination of colors to

deliver impactful messages. Moreover, consistent color can increase brand recognition and aid in focusing and prioritizing the information (Ghaddar, 2022). The fifth element of visual storytelling is sound. It usually involves background music, sound Effect (SFX), voiceover and ambiance sound. Music and sound effects can add impact and engagement in delivering critical information. It makes visuals more entertaining and creates a mood or humor (Park, 2021; Grula, 2009). One of the simplest methods to pack the visual with information for viewers is through narration. It is vital to have a good script and voiceover artist to create an impactful tone and style for the audience.

From the finding, all five elements of visual storytelling discussed can aid academicians in developing educational content through social media. All the elements that are important in developing good visual storytelling have been mentioned by Mayer (1997) as the best way to comprehend information when it is categorized into multimedia formats through aural and visual. The statement supported by Hermanto (2019); Soltani et al (2015) stated that storytelling could improve better understanding and comprehension in learning. All visual storytelling elements significantly improve multimedia content in educational fields.

Conclusion

Social media has become more prevalent in communities, especially among young people. Social media is not only served as a place for informal communication but has become a platform where educators, students, and communities constantly lookout for information and knowledge to help them expand their skills. Hence, social media can be viewed as an important platform for developing educational content. This research discussed the usage of visual storytelling and its elements in several fields of education, advertising, and marketing. From the discussion, the finding has revealed five elements of visual storytelling that are significant in creating educational content for social media which are identified as storytelling, infographic, motion and animation, color, and sound. Based on these elements, educators can create impactful educational visual storytelling content for social media that can improve students' interest and engagement. This research contributes as a guideline for educators to develop online learning content on social media platforms using visual storytelling as well as supporting Malaysian Education Blueprint 2013-2025, social media platforms for teaching and learning can be great potential for active learning and a student-centered approach.

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