

# Visual Storytelling of Infographic Design in News Media: A Comparative Study on Online Media Platforms in Indonesia

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**Abstract**— One of the most emerging methods employed by news media platform to present interesting information is through infographic design. Infographic is a form of storytelling which contains graphs, images and/or illustrations that can be accompanied with narration. In the context of visual or pictorial news, infographics not only display visuals, but also contain data, facts, and reflective reality. The presence of infographics in news platform is to clarify information and condition the readers on the actual event through visual storytelling. This study is intended to elaborate how the visual storytelling style used by online news platform in Indonesia in news delivery through infographics. The infographics were studied comparatively and reviewed how certain storytelling styles carried out through the depth of informative visual forms.

**Keywords**— visual design; storytelling; infographic; online news

## I. INTRODUCTION

In this era of technological acceleration, the media are demanded to be fast yet clear in providing information to the public; as public have limited time, it requires media to provide information that is compact and easy to understand, which is intended specifically to manage the chronology of the event presented through statistical data [1].

Regarding information delivery to the public, information and mostly news carried out in the last decade, have utilized *infographics*, which is believed to be popular and effective for visualizing data and conveying information to the audience more clearly and interestingly [2]. Research has stated that 93% of human communication is visual, and 90% of which is processed in the brain in the form of visual. In addition, when users visit online news sites, on average they only read 28% of posts in one visit, and it is believed to increase by 14% when the page displays images in them [3].

An infographic is a form of data presentation method with a visual concept, consisting of both texts and illustrative images that are intended either to attract the audience or increase the interests of the viewers. In the infographics, there is a depth of visual messages, juxtaposed in such style as storytelling and chronological order about the information or news, and they

are designed in the form of symbols and graphs instead of words [4]. In general, the final result of an infographic has a higher percentage of visual images and graphs compared to texts. An infographic is considered to provide many benefits compared with the conventional data presentation because an interesting infographic should provide an interesting storytelling in terms of visual illustrations while at the same time still displaying the validity and credibility of the data presented in it [5].

Visual storytelling style in the context of the infographics is not just about how an infographic is designed, but how to make readers understand the meaning described [6]. A good data display should have smooth flow of information, as if it is able to tell a story; this, not just only to fulfil the obligations as a media to present the information, but it is more into making the readers understand information chronologically and involving them into the stories.

In relation with the principles of storytelling, the information displayed through visual storytelling in the infographics should employ such structures that can be translated either vertically down or horizontally to the side. The strength of the visual storytelling in an infographic lies in its three main key features, called *The Art of Storytelling*, namely introduction as the oundation, *Ah-Ha!* as the main event, and conclusion to call for an action [7].

In the Introduction stage, it contains important information that hooks and makes the reader curious. This is the basic section that connects the infographic with the story. The next part is *Ah-Ha!* Section, which is the main event that covers new and valuable information to read; it is generally dominated by a sequence of numbers or certain statistical information. In general, this section also exposes a large image and represents the overall information that is usually on the side or bottom of the image. The last part is the conclusion or a *call for an action* section which is designed as a reference of which the infographic was made, who made the infographic, and the following steps in realization of the main agenda that can provide concrete solutions to the subject matter presented [7].

As part of the news media, an infographic is expected to be an alternative tool to help audiences understand functional,

beautiful, and insightful information. The infographic should also be able to accommodate the audience in searching for deep facts in complex data and certain context [8].

Nowadays, as part of online journalism, the utilization of infographics has become key success to share information and news effectively so that the readers are more interested in news and understand facts and data easily. In Indonesia, for example, some prominent online media portals utilize infographics as their alternative news presentation with certain characteristics as part of their strategy to accommodate current trend of younger audience and digital news platform. This descriptive study is intended to observe and elaborate the characteristics of storytelling strategies employed by some notable online news platforms in Indonesia. There are some storytelling styles employed by the news portals in Indonesia; the styles might be different for each news portal. Basically, the ideology of the media is reflected in the content of the news and the way it is delivered, and when the media uses infographics then it is likely that storytelling will also differ.

## II. METHODS

This is a descriptive qualitative study employing social comparative paradigm to analyze certain patterns in relation with visual storytelling styles of infographics employed by some popular online news or media portals ( $N=5$ ) in Indonesia. The online news portals were selected purposively depending on the popularity and market segmentation in Indonesian society, namely *Tirto*, *Mojok*, *Tempo*, *Kompas*, and *Detik*. In addition, the selection of online media was based on their consistency on the use of infographics in delivering the news information. The selected infographics of these media platforms were analyzed visually both in terms of layout, color, image or illustration, and storytelling techniques used.

## III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Each online media portal in delivering infographics has certain and different pattern of visual-speaking style. As the characteristics of the media are different based on either their ideology, market segmentation, or political affiliation, it may implied into the strategy of the information visualization.

In designing an infographic, the context of the news, texts, and statistical inquiry are converted into visual forms, presenting in meaningful symbols. These elements can be in the form of icons, cartoons, caricatures, or graphs and charts to the use of photographs with all forms of digital and video engineering. Visual elements are the keys to infographic design exploration, such as the use of colors, composition, directional lines, curves, photographs, diagrams, tables [9].

The visual infographic text is processed in such a way as to adjust the news content to be displayed. In terms of the iconic element, for example, it will usually be adjusted to the characteristics of the online media. Not all infographics utilize certain icons as if they were speaking to an audience. In certain media whose media characteristics are more serious and formal in news content, sometimes news portals which are affiliated with business and political content, they are likely to put

common, formal, and reasonable characters. On the other hand, the media platforms which are closely related to entertainment and lifestyle tend to use more typical and funny icons because they are expected to give more relaxed information and data presentation to segmented audience, such as younger readers.

In terms of color, the infographic design of online news media portals is to use scientific association colors where the object figures and backgrounds are depicted in colors similar to the original [10]. For illustration techniques, they use more flat-design style (two-dimensional style instead of three-dimensional style) of which the colors are used evenly and not graded (solid color). In the concept of the flow of the storytelling, the styles which are commonly employed are those that have flow from top to bottom or left to right [11]. The flow of the story telling stills refers to the principles that important information should be placed at the very top of the page, and the less significant or additional information is presented in the lower position.

In detail, this study describes visually the infographics selected from five major online media platforms in Indonesia, such as in terms of several aspects, namely visual elements consisting of illustrations, colors, backgrounds, fonts (typography), and overall frame composition, and other aspect of storytelling styles used by the media to present the information to the audience.

### A. Detik.com

*Detik.com* is one of the pioneers of online media portals in Indonesia, and it is still becoming one of the most popular online news portal in this country. The characteristics of *Detik.com* as an online media is to present the latest news (breaking news) and popular news by having various topics and news features from technology, sports, and entertainment.



Figure 1. Infographics taken from *Detik.com*

Visually, the visual depiction of illustrations and backgrounds adopts solid colors, while the color of the characters in the illustration are lighter and brighter with clear color lines, and thick shapes for each character. Overall, the colors used in one frame are solid colors with warm shades. Solid colors with the warm nuances, in relation with the characteristics of the media, it infers that *Detik.com* wants to display the contemporary, popular, and modern characteristics. These attached characters are supported with the trends covered in the information that *Detik.com* are likely to share light and up-to-date news instead of deep analyses in politic or business.

In terms of typography, *Detik.com* varies its display for the sizes and colors, symbolizing the dynamic characters and information covered. The composition of the fonts is presented in balance with the visualization of the illustrations. Statistical data information is delivered shorter and more focused on the main points; therefore, it does not have longer and complex narration in the infographic.

The storytelling presentation is put with clear and easy-to-follow pattern from top to bottom, with depictions of the plot, focusing more on the points than the long narration. The illustrated theme used is visualizing the contents of the news presented. This style puts emphasis on the easiness instead of the compact content of information.

## B. Tempo



Figure 2. Infographics taken from *Tempo*

Tempo is leading news media which focuses on in-depth news and investigation for a long time in Indonesia. In terms of the use of infographic for news presentation, however, *Tempo* has played its role as online media and the utilization of infographics just in recent years; its online media platform has grown rapidly since then. As a media of which of the focus is delivering a more critical and serious news, *Tempo* is likely to convey complex and compact information with vivid and straightforward languages.

Visually, the infographics presented by *Tempo* places more emphasis on the content of information presented in more straightforward and official languages, accompanied by statistical data. The narrative used is longer and more rigid to explain in detail about the content of the news.

The visual composition used by *Tempo* mostly dark colored backgrounds contrasted with light colored fonts. Bright colors are only used in parts of writing that contain information, the



type of font used in the title and contents also tend to use straightforward and non-decorative fonts. There are no specific characters or icons that represent *Tempo*, but use images in the form of original photos that are composed by collage or traced techniques in certain graphic fields that are adapted to news themes; the use of images is more likely than the use of icons.

Storytelling styles employed by *Tempo* are linear pattern delivered with flow from left to right with the title placed at the top left. Overall, if observed, the proportion and readability of *Tempo* in terms of the data presentation as it appears in the infographics is not too ideal as the main news content is visualized with a somewhat smaller amount than in general. This makes the reader need more time to understand the contents of infographics; otherwise, they are required to search and refer to the original sources of the media like websites or printed versions.

### C. Kompas

Kompas is another example of one of the most leading news media in Indonesia which is well-known for its elegant presentation. With the trend of online media, Kompas also plays significant roles to present actual and critical news, with the specific characteristics of firm and straightforward language. The infographics by Kompas are presented in longer form narratives and details about news content. Information is presented in more detail and packed in a more formal discussion.

The visual composition of the infographics by Kompas is likely with brighter colors with minimalist color hierarchy. Background colors use solid colors and do not use much graphics or additional ornaments such as icons or characters that represent *Kompas*. This might be because the characters of Kompas which tends to more serious and maintains its elegant trend through bright and simple display. The news theme is visualized with a more minimalist illustration with illustration techniques that resemble the original form.

Storytelling visualized in the infographics are more complete with less long narrative, containing information and explanations to be conveyed. In one frame, the design style used is minimalist so it does not utilize too many symbols and color combinations. In composition, the proportions of the image and narration are balanced and do not use various and decorative font types. The colors selected for the infographics are more neutral and not too flashy.

Overall, the storytelling style adapted by Kompas in the infographics is top-to-bottom flow. The other common pattern, however, is presented in the form of long narrative and written in detail, the font selection tends to be smaller than usual; as the consequence, from a certain distance it is rather difficult to read quickly. Similar to *Tempo*, it might be part of the requirement to the audience to refer again to the original sources like the websites or printed version.



Figure 3. Infographics taken from Kompas

### D. Tirto

*Tirto* is specialized into online media platform with its typical character that presents in-depth information. The news is mostly presented in a more narrative and detailed form. In presenting the infographics, however, *Tirto* presents them in a more simple form without too much narration, in contradiction to the main news contents accessed on the websites.

With its simple form, the visual composition of the infographic by *Tirto* is presented more dynamically using shades of bright shades. *Tirto* does not provide a lot of statistical data but is rather a chronological explanation of how news is informed. The illustration by *Tirto* uses a typical icon in the form of a man wearing Javanese head cover (*blangkon*), which mostly appears in every infographic as if he is the messenger of the information who speaks to the audiences. *Tirto*'s distinctive icon characters are combined in a nuanced composition, and typography that is easy to read, simple and clear.

The storytelling style adapted by *Tirto* is presented in a more hilarious way which is reflected in the opinions expressed by *blangkon* character. However, despite the informal and funny package, the information in it is presented in reasonable and informative language. Numbers and statistical data are also illustrated but in small proportions, while the main information is presented straightforwardly.



Figure 4. Infographics taken from Tirto

#### E. Mojok

Mojok is a new online media platform in Indonesia, representing millennial style and presenting news information in the form of opinion with a hilarious style. The information raised is also lighter in nature, with the topics are likely close to daily life, particularly among younger generation.

Visually, the infographics displayed by *Mojok* are composed with lighter composition by not incorporating many elements of the image area. *Mojok* is believed to have one specific illustration style that characterizes each of its infographics by displaying unique characters. The character icon is almost always present in every theme even in the form of a different portrayal of roles. The colors used are more solid, brighter, and contrast. The font used is more minimalist and not too decorative so it is easy to read even in fast conditions.

The styles of the stories adapted by *Mojok* are informal and funny with informal or slang language styles, depending on the theme of the news; in the case of most recent issues, Mojok would also employ the most recent jargons used among the

community. Some selected funny jargons and terms are used as it is viral in the society or the Internet.



Figure 5. Infographics taken from Tirto

#### IV. CONCLUSION

Each online media portal utilizes infographics in different styles in presenting news information. The difference is visible in terms of the storytelling styles adapted by the media, covering the characters of each media, visualization, and also the composition. In addition, different themes covered by certain media may also affect the visual presentation in the infographics, thus different storytelling styles are possible from the online media portals.

Media that are typically to cover in-depth analyses of serious and formal topics like business and social political issues, the storytelling styles adapted by the media in presenting information in the infographics tend to be more simple, minimalist, without many images or graphs, contrast colors, and illustration. On the other hand, the information is presented in the form of long and rigid narrative texts with simple font selection without decorative effect, which pragmatically to tell analyses (content factor) instead of attention (visually-interesting factor).

Meanwhile, for the media with its typical light and youthful content, the storytelling style used in the infographics is simpler and more hilarious. For some more contemporary media, they even use special characters that reflect the media's distinctive icons. The visual composition is put in certain strategy which is more diverse and dynamic in terms of images, illustrations, font types, and colors used in the main areas and backgrounds.

In terms of the storytelling, diverse infographics with visually-appealing composition ultimately become one of the attractions for the audiences to better understand the content of the news delivered. In the future, the design of the infographics should be more developed, especially in terms of creativity and characteristics of the media, so that visual storytelling is expected to deliver better relevant news content.

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