

# ***HEROINE COMPLEX***

***REINVENTING THE PRINTED COMIC BOOK:  
LEARNING FROM WEBCOMICS***

BACHELOR THESIS BY PIA VON HUELSEN









Fig.01: photographic documentation of the end product (covers)

“Reinventing the Printed Comic Book: Learning from Webcomics”

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### EHRENWOERTLICHE ERKLAERUNG

Hiermit versichere ich, dass ich meine Bachelorarbeit selbständig und ohne fremde Hilfe angefertigt habe.

Ich habe keine anderen als die angegebenen Quellen, Hilfsmittel und Ressourcen benutzt. Alle Personen, die mich bei der Anfertigung der Arbeit unterstützt haben, sind im schriftlichen Teil der Bachelorarbeit namentlich erwähnt und ihr Anteil am Gesamtwerk im Einzelnen aufgeführt.

Mir ist bekannt, dass Täuschung bei der Anfertigung der Bachelorarbeit nach §9 und § 20 StuPrO DHBW Wirtschaft zum Nichtbestehen der Prüfungsleistung und nachträglich noch zur Aberkennung des Hochschulgrades führen kann.

Pia von Hülsen

Ravensburg, 15.09.2021

## **Thank you**

... to my parents for unwavering support in all things.

... to Jojo and Karl for kicking my ass when I needed it.

... to Anika for noticing the little details.

... to Luisa for reminding me I am not alone.

... to Michael for reminding me that it is okay to ask for help.

... to Elena for her endless patience with the camera's autofocus.

... to Daniel, Cody, Alex and Coco for supplying me with cat pictures.

This project wouldn't be what it is without you. Thank you for being a part of my life.





"OUR ATTEMPTS TO DEFINE COMICS ARE AN ON-GOING PROCESS WHICH WON'T END ANY TIME SOON. A NEW GENERATION WILL NO DOUBT REJECT WHATEVER THIS ONE FINALLY DECIDES TO ACCEPT AND TRY ONCE MORE TO RE-INVENT COMICS! AND SO THEY SHOULD. HERE'S TO THE GREAT DEBATE!"

- SCOTT MCCLLOUD <sup>1</sup>

1: McCloud, Scott; "Reinventing Comics: The Evolution of an Art Form", HarperCollins, US-NY, 2000, pg. 23

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# ***1. THE CURRENT PRINTED COMIC BOOK***

## ***1.1. INTRODUCTION***

The Comic is a well-known and widely accepted storytelling medium. Comics have long freed themselves of being stereotyped as a simple entertainment medium for children and have since been rapidly evolving into new styles, interfaces and genres.

The printed Comic book, while certainly being reinvented regularly by the use of new graphic and iconic languages through its subcategories, like the Graphic Novel, has not seen any substantial changes to its interfaces, the printed book, for the past decades.

In a non-academic blog article, Illustrator Salgood Sam<sup>2</sup> has collected a number of common Comic book formats from around the world. He defines pages of printed Comic media to generally be in a vertical format sized between 10,2cm to 21,6cm (4" to 8.5") in width and 12,7cm to 29,5cm (5" to 11.6") in height. Printed Comic books, much like novels, also adhere to a two-page sheet of paper as well as having just one binding on a vertical side: On the left side for left-to-right reading and on the right side for right-to-left reading. Generally, printed books of everyday use are heavily limited by economic efficiency.

2: Salgood Sam; "Page aspect ratios & templates" in: "Making Comics with Salgood Sam", [makingcomics.spilt-ink.org/pgtemplates](http://makingcomics.spilt-ink.org/pgtemplates), May 2015



## 1.2. THE STAGNATION OF PRINTED COMIC BOOKS

A comparison to webcomics: Since the first webcomics were distributed via online file transfer systems like CompuServe just three and a half decades ago<sup>3</sup>, Webcomics have been on the forefront of digital media development, spreading to their own dedicated websites in desktop browsers and later to the mobile pages of Social Media and webcomic Publishers like Webtoon<sup>4</sup> or Tapas<sup>5</sup>. They adapted to various interfaces as to enable satisfactory reading experiences.

But what about their analogue counterparts? As the world is trying to find a delicate balance between digital and analogue media, the rapid development of webcomics stands in contrast to most printed Comic books, which have shown little development in the later years. Even though it seems unlikely that print media will completely die out because of contending digital media advancements, the role of print will continuously have to be re-mediated. Books may be bought by different or even more specific target groups as well as for different or more specific reasons - So how can the printed Comic books stay relevant?



Fig.02: Webtoon Logo

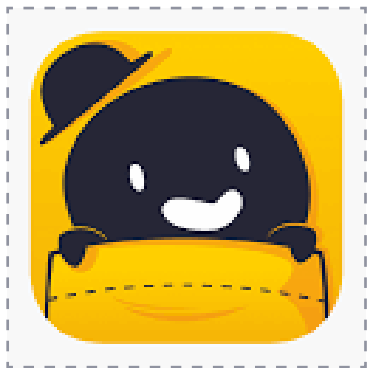


Fig.03: Tapas Logo

3: Garrity, Shaenon; "The History of Webcomics." in; "The Comics Journal", [www.tcj.com/the-history-of-webcomics/](http://www.tcj.com/the-history-of-webcomics/), 2011

4: Webtoon Entertainment Inc.; [www.webtoons.com/](http://www.webtoons.com/), est. 2004

5: Tapas Media; [tapas.io/](http://tapas.io/), est. 2012

### **1.3. WHERE TO GO FROM HERE?**

Håvard Knutsen Nøding states in “The tools of Webcomics: The “infinite canvas” and other innovations” that “Webcomics will often look quite a lot like print Comics but have one or two things about them which are different from anything print could do.”<sup>6</sup> This thesis argues it is not the possibilities of the print medium, but instead the economic norm set for printed Comic books which are holding back the development of the Comic book.

To re-mediate these norms and reinvent the printed Comic book, this thesis will analyze the many ways in which Webcomics have not only adapted to, but incorporated the possibilities of their new interfaces and how this has changed the web-comic reading experience. Matching the effects of those Webcomic techniques to the effects of already-known print techniques, new methods will be developed to expand our understanding on what a print Comic book can be. This will lead to the implementation of those print techniques into Comic books which have not been used to their full potential in Comic books as they may be in other categories of print.

It is hypothesized that applying these techniques to a Comic book will lead to a variance in Media Richness (see: Media Richness Theory<sup>7</sup>) as well as a new reading experience of a sort which would not be possible to recreate in web-comics due to the inherent differences between digital and analogue media.

For the purpose of testing and evaluating the results, a printed Comic book will be created using the theoretical solutions found in this thesis. The novel “Heroine Complex” by Sarah Kuhn has been chosen as the base story on which to create the Comic.

6: Nøding, Håvard Knutsen; “The tools of Webcomic: The “infinite canvas” and other innovations”, Oslo NOR, 2020, pg. 8

7: Daft, Richard L. & Lengel, Robert H.; “Organizational Information Requirements, Media Richness and Structural Design” in “Management Science” issue 32, Catonsville US-MD, May 1986





## 2. DEFINING PROJECT OUTLINES

### 2.1. TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

#### 2.1.1. COMICS

A widely accepted definition of Comic media is Scott McCloud's understanding of Comics as "Juxtaposed pictorial and other images in deliberate sequence, intended to convey information and/or to produce an aesthetic response in the viewer."<sup>8</sup> Comics, as following this definition, are understood as a widely encompassing medium not bound by form as much as by its content, which has led to the development of different Comic categories all over the world, e.g. western Comic, Manga, Manhwa, Graphic Novels, Visual Novels, Webcomics, Webtoons and more.

#### 2.1.2. COMIC STRIPS, COMIC BOOKS AND COMIC STORIES

As for this thesis, however, a clear distinction has to be made between two types of Comics that differ in volume.

Comic strips are described by Dennis Kogel in "Rethinking Webcomics"<sup>9</sup> as "brief, humorous, self-contained works with a rigid layout that does not differ from strip to strip to fit newspaper layout". They are most well known to be printed in magazines and papers or distributed digitally via Social Media. While a collection of Comic strips can form an overarching storyline, every issue can be understood on its own without context. Due to this short nature, Comic strips have developed a different approach to long-term storytelling than "Comic books", which are categorized by longer issues spanning a larger number of sequential panels and creating a complex story within one issue.

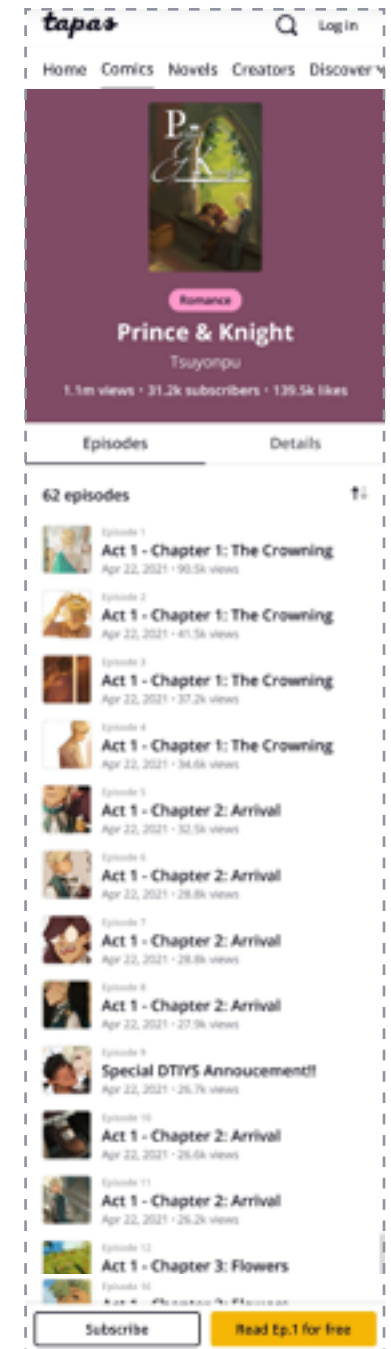


Fig. 04: exemplary Comic Strip by Hannah Hillam on Instagram @hannahhillam, instagram.com/p/CRGRjeelzLL/, July 2021

Fig. 05: Chapter overview of Tsuyonpu's "Prince & Knight" on Tapas (see right)

8: McCloud, Scott; "Understanding Comics", Tundra Publishing, US-MA, 1993, pg. 20

9: Kogel, Dennis; "Rethinking Webcomics: Webcomics as a Screen Based Medium", Jyväskylä FIN, January 2013, pg.14



According to Kogel, Comics scholars Joseph Witek, Randy Duncan and Matthew J. Smith concord that “Strips and books exist for different reasons and serve different audiences and purposes”<sup>10</sup>.

As to avoid confusion, for the duration of this thesis, the term “Comic story” will be used instead to describe what has been termed a “Comic book” above. The terms “Comic book” and “printed Comic book” consider the physical medium of the Comic in a printed book format as opposed to magazine-issued printed Comics and web based Comic media.

### 2.1.3. WEBCOMICS

Definitions of what constitutes a webcomic (or attempts thereof, as collected in “Rethinking Webcomics: Webcomics as a Screen Based Medium” chapter 2<sup>11</sup>) of just a few years age have already been rendered partly false, especially those related to the specific interface and distribution channels. Marianne Hicks, for example, includes into her definition that webcomics ought to be “made by an independent creator or creators, without an original, print version‘ or corporate sponsorship”<sup>12</sup>. Nowadays, curated and sponsored webcomics are a regular occurrence. This can be observed in Webtoon’s “Originals” program and Tapas‘ “Premium” program.

Thus, the definition of webcomics used in this thesis remains to incorporate only the least common denominator: An umbrella term to include all those Comics made specifically to be read on any digital interface. Per the aim of this thesis, eReaders will be excluded from the term of digital interfaces, as their purpose is to recreate a user experience similar to known printed book formats.

10: Kogel; “Rethinking Webcomics”, 2013, pg. 49

11: Kogel; “Rethinking Webcomics”, 2013, pg. 4 and following

12: Hicks, Marianne; “Teh Futar: The Power of the Webcomic and the Potential of Web 2.0” in “Drawing the Line: Using Cartoons as Historical Evidence”, Monash University Press, Clayton AUS, 2009; as cited in: Kogel; “Rethinking Webcomics”, 2013

## 2.2. APPLICATION TO “HEROINE COMPLEX”

### 2.2.1. TARGET GROUP

The novel “Heroine Complex”<sup>13</sup> has been written for a Young Adult Audience, which is thus the target group for a Comic of the same content. This is also supported by Webtoon’s analysis of their readership, according to which the main target group consists of Teenagers and Young Adults. On their “Webtoon Ads Media Kit”<sup>14</sup>, Webtoon offers a diagram showing 60% of their viewers to be between the ages of 12 and 24 years and a total of 95% of their viewers to be younger than 36 years of age. As a consequence one can define the target group between 12 and 36 years. Tapas states on their website [studiotapas.com](http://studiotapas.com) that 82% of their viewership are Millennials and thus of a near identical age group as Webtoon’s readers<sup>15</sup>.

While definitions of Young Adult literature start as early as the age of 12, this does not account for the actual book content. By local customs this project will adhere to the age ratings of the “Freiwillige Selbstkontrolle der Filmwirtschaft” (FSK)<sup>16</sup>. While those content guidelines were originally created for film media, they can be easily fitted to different media categories, as they focus on content rather than the medial presentation of this content. According to FSK guidelines, the “Heroine Complex” novel adheres to an age rating of 16+ years, making this project’s target group aged 16 to 36 years. Furthermore, the target group should be familiar with both print Comic stories and webcomic stories to be able to discern differences in the reading experiences of those Comic media versus the newly created printed Comic book.

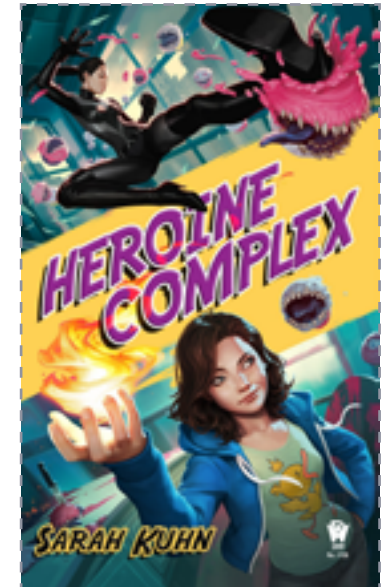


Fig. 06: “Heroine Complex” novel cover

13: Kuhn, Sarah; “Heroine Complex”, DAW Books, US-NY, July 2016

14: Webtoon Entertainment Inc.; “Webtoon Ads Media Kit”, [www.webtoons.com/en/advertising/media-kit/](http://www.webtoons.com/en/advertising/media-kit/), February 2021

15: Tapas Media; [studiotapas.com/partnerships/](http://studiotapas.com/partnerships/)

16: Freiwillige Selbstkontrolle der Filmwirtschaft; [www.fsk.de/](http://www.fsk.de/), Wiesbaden DE, est. 1949

### **2.2.2. SUPERHERO COMICS AND SOCIAL RELEVANCE**

“Superheroes have delighted and inspired decades of Comics readers, but they have also embodied inequalities of gender, race, ethnicity, class, sexuality, and ability. As with positions of power across various political, economic, and social institutions, certain demographic groups have been over-represented while those from more marginalized groups have been under-represented and stereotyped. Female superheroes exemplify this under-representation and stereotyping, but also have the potential to destabilize norms and binaries to serve as empowering figures.” says Carolyn Cocca in the abstract to “Reproducing Inequality and Representing Diversity: The Politics of Gender in Superhero Comics”<sup>17</sup>.

Many superhero-genre print Comic franchises, like those of Marvel and DC, are to this day struggling to reach a sense of equality in their iconic heroes’ representation.

The novel “Heroine Complex” is often praised for its two asian-american protagonist heroines, whose cultural experiences are quite important to the story. Using it as a base novel to design a new Comic book creates a chance as well as a challenge to become aware of these issues and reinforce contemporary views on equality, feminism as well as body positivity.

17: Cocca, Carolyn; “Reproducing Inequality and Representing Diversity: The Politics of Gender in Superhero Comics” in: “Spaces Between”, Springer VS, Wiesbaden DE, 2020

### **2.2.3. THE SERIALIZED APPROACH**

With 367 novel pages, “Heroine Complex” encompasses a complex story. To create one Comic book with this much content will not only lead to the book being of enormous size and amount of pages, but also exceed the scope of this Thesis and accompanying project.

Thus, “Heroine Complex” will make use of a serialized approach. While printed Comic books are often published in issues spanning multiple chapters, webcomics have developed more flexible “upload schedules” as they are not bound by printing processes and costs. An appropriate approach for “Heroine Complex” will be mediated after a closer look at both print- and webcomics.







## ***3. DESIGN THEORY CONTEXT***

### ***3.1. THE EVOLUTION OF WEBCOMICS***

“The printed page of a traditional Comic book is much more restrictive than what can be done on the internet, while the potential of the internet Comics is similar to what McCloud describes as the “original” Comics, or at least historical relics and artworks which he sees as Comics. These works were much freer than a printed Comics page, in that they were not restricted to a predetermined and quite small canvas.”, describes Nøding pg. 61, referencing McCloud’s “Understanding Comics”. Nøding elaborates further: “Printing changed the design of Comics through restricting them to the page they would be printed on. There was no longer infinite three-dimensional space to create in, but a restrictive (as in small), flat piece of paper.”<sup>18</sup>

Webcomics have evolved to be their own, independent category of Comics. Kogel describes them as “one new possibility how Comics can be created, that would be unavailable if it were not for the possibilities and the constraints of the web.”<sup>19</sup>

Webcomics are a digital, cross-medial variant of printed Comics. During webcomic’s existence, they have changed to incorporate multiple new possibilities of the web and many different interfaces.

18: Nøding; “The tools of Webcomic”, 2020, pg. 61; referencing: McCloud; “Understanding Comics”, 1993  
19: Kogel; “Rethinking Webcomics”, 2013, pg. 3

Shaenon Garrity defines the greatest changes and “eras” of webcomics in her 2011 article “The History of Webcomics” (with support of T. Campbell, who published a book of the same name in 2006)<sup>20</sup>. According to Garrity, this history can be described in five eras: The “Stone Age” (1985–1992) in which the first Comics are distributed on various sites across the internet.

The “Bronze Age” (1993–1995) in which the possibilities of the Web were manifesting. Webcomics were able to exist on their own web pages and started spreading rapidly. It was also in this time that, according to Nøding<sup>21</sup>, “A Comic named “Jax & Co” was the first to introduce a “page turning interface” which allowed the reader to read one page of a story at a time”.

The “Singularity” (1996–2000), constituting of a sudden boom in the amounts of webcomics available. It was around this time that webcomics first became profitable. Comic scholars first got wind of this “new” Comic category. Scott McCloud’s “Reinventing Comics”<sup>22</sup> is noted as one of the most influential theoretical works on webcomics.

The “Age of Shit Getting Real” (2001–2006) describes a time of experimentation within the medium. Different Comic categories and story genres were each translated into webcomic counterparts. With the possibility to make a living of webcomic art, many indie artists abandoned the printed Comic altogether. During this time, it was the norm for a webcomic to be published on its own website.

The latest of Garrity’s eras is “The Age of This Whole App Thing” (2007-2011, possibly further), which saw webcomics adapting to the new interfaces of Social Media as well as mobile devices.

20: Garrity, Shaenon; “The History of Webcomics” in “The Comics Journal”; [www.tcj.com/the-history-of-webcomics/](http://www.tcj.com/the-history-of-webcomics/), 2011

21: Nøding; “The tools of Webcomic”, 2020, pg. 12

22: McCloud; “Reinventing Comics”, 2000

Previous papers on webcomics have argued that webcomics were profiting from the freedom of independent self-publishing as well as its new interfaces. This freedom has been severely impacted by companies like Tapas and Webtoon, two popular platforms for reading and publishing webcomics. Companies like these streamline the reading experience for webcomics, taking away from the aforementioned independence of webcomics. These platforms offer creators an existing audience, technical support on multiple platforms and licensing, but restrict the possibilities of webcomics considering format and layout, interaction, issue size and more. These recent shifts in the presentation and distribution of webcomics may constitute a new, sixth era to add to Garrity’s “History of Webcomics”.

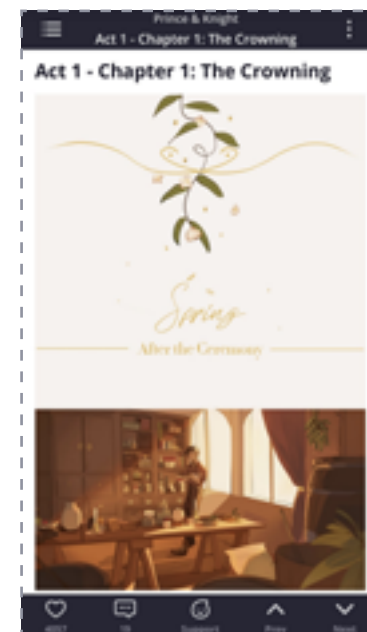


Fig. 07: Tapas mobile reader interface showing the beginning of “Prince & Knight” by Tsuyonpu

## ***3.2. TRANSPOSING FROM WEB TO PRINT***

### **3.2.1. THE POSSIBILITIES OF BOOKS**

Rather than a defined and conclusive definition of what books can and can not be, this chapter is to be seen as an incomplete list of possible features without context. It serves as a reminder on what books can be outside of economic limitations and inspiration to think outside of the norm. All features listed are described in a brief and truncated manner with the intention of expanding on those relevant for this thesis at a later point (see chapter 4.1.).

The first norm to be debunked is that of a sheet of paper necessarily consisting of only two pages: Depending on how a sheet may be folded and cut, it constitutes of at least two, possibly many pages.

A book is also not limited by its size: It is still a book whether its pages are the size of a thumb or a meter high. The same goes for its page amount: A book with 10 pages is as much a book as one spanning a few hundred pages. Book pages may vary in size, structure or content on their own, in chapters or even in separate bindings. They can be cut, stamped, embossed, perforated, folded, creased and more.

Nearly any thin material can constitute a page: While there are many different types of paper and paper-like materials, a book page could just as well be made from different materials, for example leather, clear plastic or even a thin sheet of metal. “Art of the Book”<sup>23</sup>; a book featuring many fascinating print projects, names the following exemplary materials for pages as well as binding and finishing: Letterpress paper, Offset paper, Newsprint, Transparent paper, Iridescent paper, Wood and Metal.

23: Gengli, Lin & Bailey, Paul; Art of the book: [structure, materials, technique], Gingko Press/Send-Points, US-CA/Hong Kong, 2015, pg. 101-102

There are a number of print methods to choose from when printing a book. Differing from the “norm” of digital printing and offset printing, books may be screen printed, letterpressed, a mixture of techniques or printed in a different way entirely. This also constitutes printing in different colour ranges and using special colours, like neons, fluorescents or clear coats.

Though a book is generally understood as a print medium encompassing multiple sheets of content and binding them together, this binding may consist of a thread stitching, saddle stitching or “perfect binding”, but it may as well consist of the pages being screwed together as visible in different issues of the “Zwischenablage”, a DHBW student project<sup>24</sup>, or simply held by a rubber band.

Individual parts of a book may be bound separately, but connected to the book through a second binding. Books may also come with cases, banderoles and jackets.

24: Various Authors; “Zwischenablage” issues 003 & 006, [www.behance.net/gallery/45234207/Zwischenablage-003/](http://www.behance.net/gallery/45234207/Zwischenablage-003/) & [www.behance.net/gallery/85445841/Zwischenablage-006/](http://www.behance.net/gallery/85445841/Zwischenablage-006/), 2016 & 2019

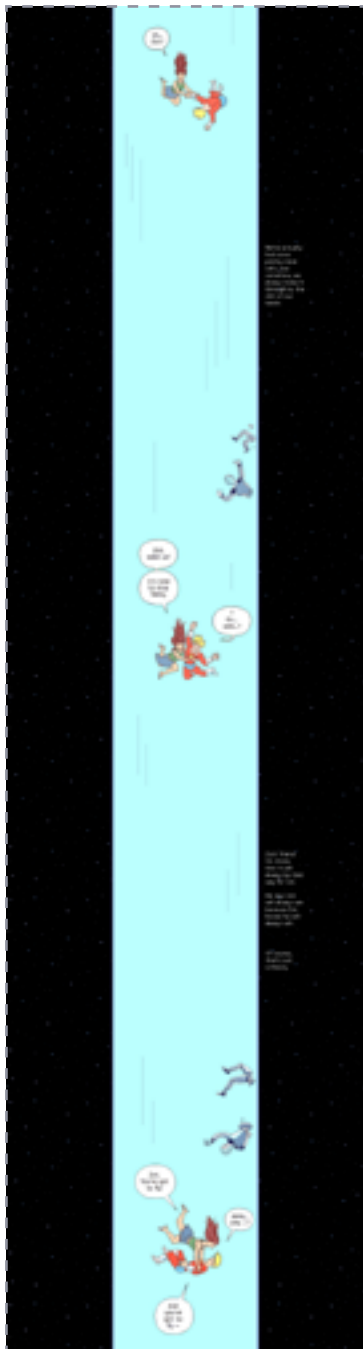


Fig. 08: excerpt of one panel using the Infinite Canvas, “Zot!”, ch. 3

25: Horton, Steve & Romero, Sam; “Webcomics 2.0: An Insider’s Guide to Writing, Drawing, and Promoting Your Own Webcomics”, Boston MA, 2008; as cited in: Kogel; “Rethinking Webcomics”, 2013, pg. 55

26: McCloud, Scott; “Infinite Canvas”, [scottmcccloud.com/4-inventions/canvas/](http://scottmcccloud.com/4-inventions/canvas/), February 2009

27: McCloud, Scott; “Zot! Online: Hearts & Minds”, [scottmcccloud.com/1-webcomics/zot/index.html/](http://scottmcccloud.com/1-webcomics/zot/index.html/), 2000

28: Kogel; “Rethinking Webcomics”, 2013, pg. 69 and following

## 3.2.2. BETWEEN WEB AND PRINT: A THEORETICAL APPROACH

### 3.2.2.1. Pages and structure

While it has already been established that print page sizes are flexible, this has not been represented in typical printed Comic books. Depending on the print and binding techniques, Comic books may also be restricted in the amount and quality of paper sheets used.”Unlike a print Comic book or graphic novel, webcomics have no finite page count. Your beginning, middle, and end need not fit between the staples of a 22-page Comic book. You don’t need to write a story that’s exactly six issues in length to fit into a trade paperback”, state Steve Horton and Sam Romero in “Webcomics 2.0” as cited by Kogel<sup>25</sup>.

Scott McCloud has coined the term “Infinite Canvas”<sup>26</sup> as a conceptual part of the future of webcomics and experimented with it in his own webcomic “Zot! Online: Hearts & Minds”<sup>27</sup> in 2000. The Infinite Canvas describes total freedom from the restraints of page size. A Comic story could, for example, be presented on one single canvas: Instead of turning a page (or clicking “next page” on a website), the Comic is read by scrolling over the whole page, horizontally, vertically, diagonally or in mixed directions.

Kogel interprets this as such: “McCloud did not call for Comics shaped like infinite scrolls in a browser, but for Comics that could take any shape an artist deemed necessary”<sup>28</sup>. He backs this up with multiple webcomics by Emily Carroll, making use of different shaped canvases as well as different forms of navigation across canvases.



Another example of an unusual, but well executed Infinite Canvas is the “xkcd” Comic issue “Click and Drag” as analysed by Nøding<sup>29</sup>. Current webcomics, especially those made for mobile devices such as smartphones and Tablet PCs, make regular use of the Infinite Canvas by implementing a downwards-scrolling page layout, depicting a whole chapter on one single canvas.

A notable trend in these vertical-read Infinite Canvas Comics is that their reading direction is straight downwards instead of print-typical upper-left-to-lower-right (or upper-right-to-lower-left respectively) reading. This method of reading is, while partially enabled through the use of the Infinite Canvas, mostly a byproduct of webcomics created specifically to be read on mobile devices: A slim smartphone screen not implementing any sideways scrolling does not offer the space to put multiple panels next to each other. Even though this vertical reading structure results in the loss of panel grids, it enables panel distributions to freely switch between left-, right- and center-aligned panels without disturbing the reading flow as demonstrated in Fig. 09, a scene from the webcomic “God of Blackfield”<sup>30</sup>, chapter 25.

This webcomic also uses its panel structures to illustrate the speed in which a scene plays: Switching the regular, rectangular panels (Fig. 10) for odd-shaped panels with diagonal lines in dynamic and fast-paced scenes (Fig. 09) highlights the motion of the latter.

A further difference from the norms of printed Comic books is webcomic’s more liberal use of gutter space. While Graphic Novels have been promoting the use of bigger images and free space in print Comics over the last years. webcomics do not need to adhere to a specific page size and page amount at all. This leaves webcomic creators free to explore the amount of content visible in one instance.

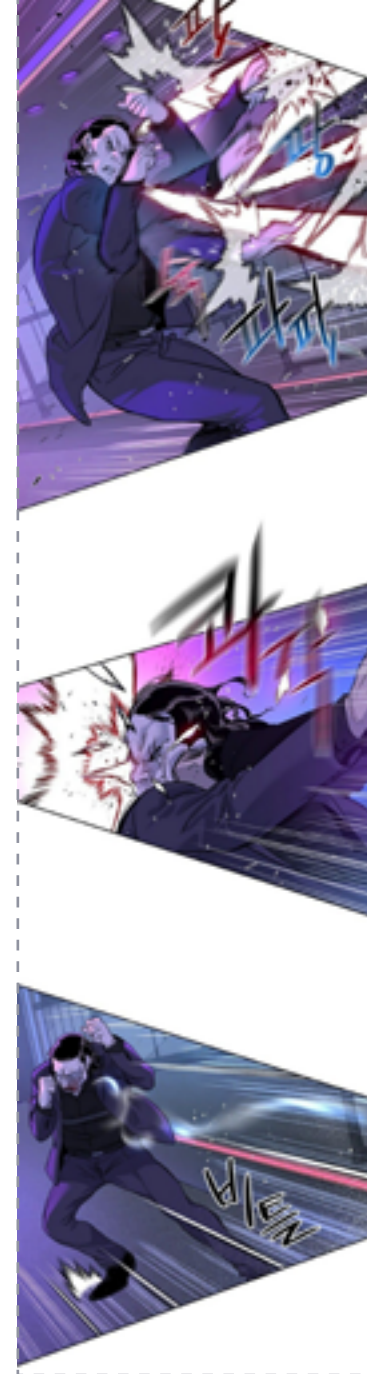


Fig. 09:irregular panels in “God of Blackfield”ch. 25



Fig. 10:rectangular panels in “God of Blackfield” ch. 23

29: Nøding; “The tools of Webcomic”, 2020, pg. 37 and following

30: Un & Shin Inseong & Mujang; “God of Blackfield”, tapas.io/episode/2210295, 2021

In some cases, webcomics explore big gutter spaces with just one or two panels visible at once, while in other instances two panels are pushed right against each other – oftentimes both extremes are used within the same webcomic. Nøding explains<sup>31</sup> that the reading direction, as well as the gutter space, work to “both deliver this information in a deliberate sequence, as well as keeping the reader from being overwhelmed by it at any time. This is crucial in regard to retaining control of the reader.”

One feature of printed Comics, which had barely been seen translated until recent webcomics is the concept of the “double page spread”: A single panel covering the entirety of a double page. Due to the lack of a clear page structure, this feature was quite difficult to translate on browser-based webcomics. With the rise of mobile devices and their smaller interfaces, webcomics have begun creating panels of a size as big or slightly bigger than the visible Comic instance. Unlike its print predecessors, webcomic “spreads” are often used for establishing shots and detailed images rather than iconic, poster-like page spreads.

It is also important to note that a webcomic can not exist outside of the web site or application into which the webcomic images are implemented. Where the perception of a print medium is regulated by the print quality as well as the medium it is printed on, a webcomic is just as much influenced by its surrounding interface. This includes modes of input and control as well as surrounding content and background. While webcomics viewed on their respective websites had full control over the surrounding content and background, this is not the case for streamlined webcomic platforms.

31: Nøding; “The tools of Webcomic”, 2020, pg. 70

### 3.2.2.2. Interactivity

The main interactive element of a book is page turning. The reader closes one page to get to the next, with the effect of quickly perceiving the main elements of all newly revealed space. “As comics theorist Thierry Groensteen notes a reader always perceives the whole comic page [...] forcing creators to place surprising elements on the next page” Kogel cites Groensteen’s “System of Comics”<sup>32</sup>. This page-turning process can be re-mediated into the web by working on a canvas that is small enough to be displayed fully on one interface instance, then switching between canvases via a button or a drag-and-drop mechanism, tugging the “pages” to turn them over. In contrast to these methods, scrolling web pages releases the content at a controllable rate. It plays with the reader’s content perception.

One of the most prominent interactive features of webcomics are Tool-tip messages, often referred to as “alt text” by their form of implementation: Alt text is a meta data feature of a web image supposed to summarize the image’s content in case it cannot be displayed properly or to be read out by a Screen Reader.

Yet, Tool-tip messages in Comics are not always used to convey the summarized contents. Instead, Kogel describes several cases of alt text and as well as other meta data, like image titles, in use: The additional information, while not necessary to understand the Comic itself, can be used to provide additional context, change the tone of the Comic’s content, include a second punchline or for the author to converse with their readers. This method’s main issue is its device compatibilities: a tool-tip message that is activated by mouse-over animation will not be visible on a mobile device.

32: Groensteen, Thierry; “The System of Comics” original title: “Système de la bande dessinée”, Presses universitaires de France, Paris FRA, 1999, pg. 61; as cited in: Kogel; “Rethinking Webcomics”, 2013, pg. 13

The Comic strip webcomic “A Softer World” circumvents this by having the tool-tip messages also appear by clicking (on mobile devices: tapping) the image. In its print edition, “A Softer World” includes its tool-tip messages under its relating Comic, but flipped<sup>33</sup>. The reader thus has to interact by turning the book to read it.

The concept of additional content can and has been expanded onto whole images that appear by interacting with the Comic. Kogel describes this on the example of “AmazingSuperPowers”<sup>34</sup>, another Comic strip webcomic. Clicking on a question mark on the upper right corner leads the reader to discover additional content related to the main Comic. In its print edition, “AmazingSuperPowers” tries to emulate this exploratory element by adding all additional content in the very back of the book.

“The hidden Comic spreads at the end of the book foster a disconnect between main and hidden Comic”, criticizes Kogel<sup>35</sup>. “The printed equivalent might be something like a Comic with optional fold-out sections”, theorizes Nøding<sup>36</sup> on a comparable example of internal links in webcomics leading to additional or re-contextualizing content.

It is also important to note that the situation of webcomics inside a website or Application also allows for the existence external links: “The webcomic cartoonist can provide hyperlinks to just about anything he/she wants to for the readers to follow. These optional texts include different sections, such as other writings by the author, guest strips, other webcomics, and even thoughts and writings that they believe have their own place outside the blog page.”, cites Kogel from Gabriel E. Romaguera’s “Piecing the parts: An analysis of narrative strategies and textual elements in microserialized webcomics”<sup>37</sup>.

33: Kogel; “Rethinking Webcomics”, 2013, pg. 24

34: Kogel; “Rethinking Webcomics”, 2013, pg. 30

35: Kogel; “Rethinking Webcomics”, 2013, pg. 31

36: Nøding; “The tools of Webcomic”, 2020, pg. 50

37: Romaguera, Gabriel E.; “Piecing the parts: An analysis of narrative strategies and textual elements in microserialized webcomics”, Puerto Rico, 2010; as cited by Kogel; “Rethinking Webcomics”, 2013, pg. 51

Webcomic’s surroundings can also feature “elements that help creators connect with readers such as forums, blogs, frequently asked questions (FAQ) or shops.” (Kogel pg. 53). This Community aspect has also been taken up by bigger webcomic platforms by incorporating likes, subscriptions, comment sections and similar platforms for reader feedback. Not only does this allow creators to engage in conversation with their audience, it also allows interaction within the audience itself. The effect of audience interaction on the creative process of webcomics may be worth exploring in further research.

### 3.2.2.3. Sensory possibilities

A book is a material object that can not only be seen, but also touched: The texture of a page adds to the reading experience of a book mostly without conscious input. So do the weight, handling and other sensory perceptions, like smell and sound.

While there are solutions for print media containing music, for example in postcards, the webcomic has a certain advantage over print: Its interface is almost always connected to an audio output (speakers or earphones). Webcomics like “Brass & Sass”<sup>38</sup> (Fig. 11) use the possibilities of its medium to play music in specific scenes of the webcomic. This heightens the immersive experience for the reader.

Luna Darko attempted to include music in her novel “Vergessene Kinder”<sup>39</sup> by printing music suggestions on the sideways margins. Unlike webcomics however, the reader has to look up from the novel and put on the music themselves before continuing to read.

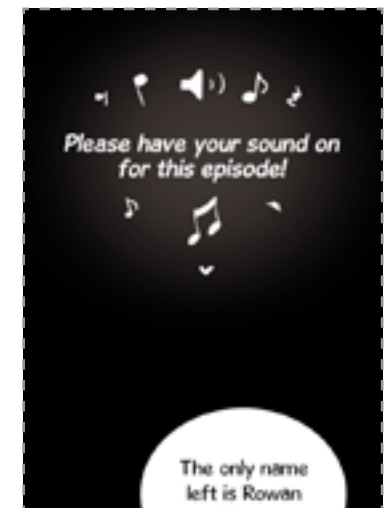


Fig. 11: Beginning of “Brass & Sass” episode 91

38: antlerella; “Brass & Sass”, [www.webtoons.com/en/romance/brass-and-sass/list?title\\_no=1652/](http://www.webtoons.com/en/romance/brass-and-sass/list?title_no=1652/), 2019

39: Darko, Luna, “Vergessene Kinder”, Bastei Lübbe, Germany, 2017

#### 3.2.2.4. Time and movement

Nøding, who explores time in webcomics by analysing multiple different webcomics in “The tools of Webcomics”, describes animation as “the other major tool of time and motion in webcomics, second only to the “infinite canvas”<sup>40</sup>. The most prominent use of movement in webcomics, though arguably not the most used, is the implementation of looping, short animation in single panels. This type of animation is often referred to as Flash animation or GIF animation, regardless of actual image file format. The merits of its use are pointed out by Kogel: “looping GIF-panels [...] can be used to indicate conditions or constant motion.”<sup>41</sup>

Nøding goes on to list very slow animation (referring to the “xkcd” Comic “Time” analysed by Nøding earlier on page 29 and following) and page turning as other modes of animation. “Animated” pictures in print may be achieved by implementing pop-up elements, folding pages or flip-book elements. Where pop-up elements make use of the three dimensional space by moving outward from the book, digital media would have to make use of additional gadgets like 3D-glasses. Optical illusions, meanwhile, work both in print and in web media.

Nøding also argues that movement is not to be used synonymous with animation. The argument referred to Eisner’s “Comics and Sequential Art”<sup>42</sup>, in which it is “[pointed out] that a similar effect can be achieved with a tilted image of a train car”: Movement can just as well be inferred by the image itself. This is true for printed Comics as much as webcomics. It is thus up to the Comic creators to decide how much sense an animation makes in each case.

40: Nøding; “The tools of Webcomic”, 2020, pg. 36 and following & 29 and following

41: Kogel; “Rethinking Webcomics”, 2013, pg. 76-77

42: Eisner, Will, “Comics and Sequential Art”, Poorhouse Press, US, 1985



Webcomics also give their creators the exclusive possibility of revisiting uploaded Comics and updating or re-uploading frames. While this is practical in use as a creator can fix any mistakes even after the Comic is published, Kogel comments on this: “The editability [...] can [also] be used for innovative narrative strategies, for example when a webcomic artist edits earlier pages to confuse the audience or make fun of the webcomic’s setting such as a humorous retcon”<sup>43</sup>.

43: Kogel; “Rethinking Webcomics”, 2013, pg. 13

### 3.2.3. COMIC ARTISTS ABOUT PRINT AND WEB

#### 3.2.3.1 Questions and Method

Two Comic Artists working in both web- and print Comics as well as creating printed versions of their existing webcomics were questioned about their experiences in each of these fields as well as their experiences on differences between web- and print Comics as well as meta content and their awareness of the possibilities of print.

Due to technical reasons, the questions had to be asked in the form of a written survey. Where possible, the questions were written to leave latitude for the artist's personal experiences. Detailed answers were clearly encouraged.

#### 3.2.3.2. About the Artists

Sam Owens is the creator of “Man Time!”, a comedic Comic strip series following the everyday adventures of three trans men. “Man Time!” is published on several Social Media platforms as well as Tapas and is available as a print-on-demand print book since 2020. A second book issue is being planned.

Tsuyonpu has created two independent Comic stories. The first of these Comics was “Broken Glass”, created in collaboration with friend and published under the pen name “Saito Ikiru”. “Broken Glass” was first published on Tapas and later made into a print book. Tsuyonpu's recent and ongoing webcomic “Prince & Knight”, published on both Tapas and Webtoon, is set to be printed in 2022. Tsuyonpu also has experience in magazine printing and art printing.

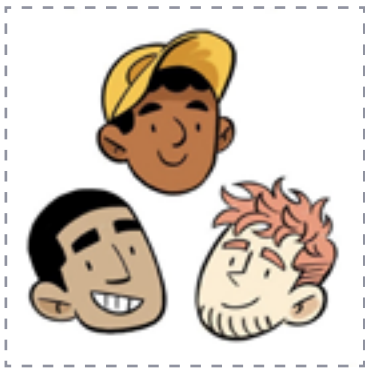


Fig.12: Sam Owens' Instagram profile picture (@mantimecomic)

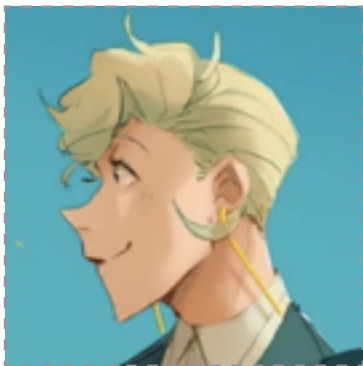


Fig.13: Tsuyonpu's Instagram profile picture (@tsuyonpu)

### **3.2.3.3. Evaluation of findings**

Both artists have stated to have considered different reading interfaces when creating their webcomics. Though Tsuyonpu states not having used the Infinite Canvas in their Comics before, they later write about using prolonged pages. It is to be inferred that the use of vertically prolonged pages is seen as the norm for webcomics and thus not recognized as one of many forms of Infinite Canvas.

Both artists are aware of webcomic's meta content possibilities and cite their publishing platforms as a reason for not exploring several of them. They also have not used sound nor animation in their webcomics, though stating interest in exploring the subject within the possibilities of their publishing platforms. Sam Owens believes that sounds are not relevant to his work and thus would not help further the story.

The printed Comic books published by both of them follow the norm of Comic Books in size as well as binding. They are aware of the possibilities of print, but have used few. Sam Owens explains this is due to higher production cost, while Tsuyonpu states the material and emotional value of the Comic Book as their reason behind implementing some of print's possibilities.

Sam Owens states that no difficulties occurred when transposing his regular-sized pages with a strong panel grid into a print book. There were no major changes made to the structure of the Comic once it was placed on a vertical paper page. Even though he was aware of the possibilities of the print book, Sam Owens chose to use none of them.

Tsuyonpu's longer Comic stories had to be heavily re-mediated due to their usage of the Infinite Canvas. Tsuyonpu states the printed version of their Comics uses less gutter space and places more panels on one page. In relation to this issue, they made use of double page spreads. They also state an awareness in choosing paper for its haptic abilities as well as printing with special colours.

Both artists believed all inquired techniques could further a Comic's reading experience with the exception of one vote for "unsure" concerning hidden text in a webcomic context. Notably, the only field both artists have rated the same is the sparing use of sound effects.

In conclusion, Sam Owens is right in his assumption that the usage of each method depends heavily on the Comic's form and content. Both artists have stated to be intrigued to further explore several methods in both web- and print Comics. This may be the first step to further spreading the usage of these methods as explained in this Thesis.

### 3.2.4. ANALYSING EXEMPLARY PROJECTS

#### 3.2.4.1. “CmdE” by DHBW Ravensburg, Media Design faculty

Made by Media Design students, this book<sup>44</sup> uses a lot of different print techniques. From screen printing in neon pink to the usage of different paper structures and multiple bindings, this book keeps its readers on their toes by introducing something new at just about every turn.

While it is a wonderful example of the possibilities of print books and certainly worth a read, its many different methods and haptic inputs can also distract from its content. Within its short, article-like content formats, this does not pose an issue, but adding this much input to a longer story can disturb the reading flow. Because of this, “CmdE” is both a positive example for the creative use of print techniques and a warning call to not over-design the Comic Book.



Fig.14: “CmdE” issue 2

44: DHBW Ravensburg; “CmdE - Magazin des Studiengangs Mediendesign Ravensburg” issue 2, Ravensburg GER, 2018



Fig. 15: Print pre-order announcement for “Magical Boy”

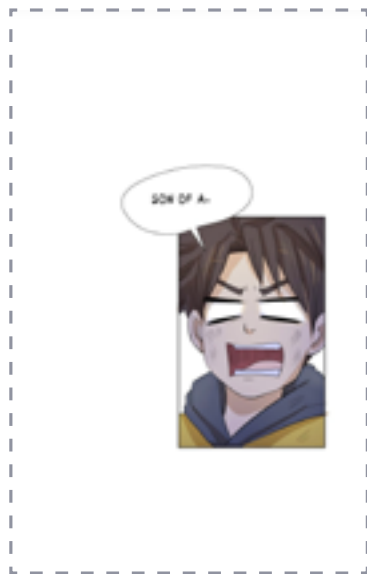


Fig. 16: Gutter space in “Magical Boy”

Fig. 17: clustered panels in “Magical Boy” (see right)

45: TheKao; “Magical Boy”, studio-tapas.com/portfolio/magical-boy/, Tapas Premium, 2018



### 3.2.4.2. “Magical Boy” by TheKao

Published as a Tapas Premium webcomic, the Comic story “Magical Boy”<sup>45</sup> follows a ftm transgender teenager dealing with his apparent “destiny of being a Magical girl”.

The layout of “Magical Boy” constitutes a typical use case of a purely vertical page structure and straight-downwards panel layout. “Magical Boy” is to be noted for its exemplary use of gutter space: It makes use of both those instances of just one small frame, creating suspension for the reader, as well as instances where panels flow into each other without clear boundaries. (Fig. 16 & 17)

The use of the latter technique is especially interesting to note here, as Fig. 17 merges seven individual images into one cluster, completely re-imagining the concept of Comic panels along the way.

“Magical Boy” is being adapted into a print version at the time of writing this thesis. It was not possible to get in contact with the author, but it may be worth coming back later to see how “Magical Boy” adapted its vertical reading flow into a printed Comic book.



### 3.2.5. REQUIREMENTS OF THE APPLICATION TO "HEROINE COMPLEX"

Concluding from the research up until this point, there are many possible ways to re-think the printed Comic book in relation to webcomics. To create one single new Comic book out of all these possibilities would overwhelm the readers. In the following chapter, clear methods will be outlined, which the "Heroine Complex" Comic book will then follow across its issues, chapter instances and page instances.

The printed Comic book created as the final version of this project will appear to be the first issue of a hypothetical series of Comic books, which in sum are telling the full story of the "Heroine Complex" novel. Two full chapters of this Comic book will be created to have ample content for a later testing. As to show the concept's versatility, two chapters with a high contrast in mood and content will be created. Chapter 1 and 6 have been chosen for the following reasons: As the novel's exposition, chapter one provides the reader with most context needed to understand the following story. The characters are shown in their everyday, demon-fighting life. In stark contrast to that, chapter 6 sees the main protagonist, Evie, in a situation rather unfamiliar and frightening to her. Chapter 6 culminates in a moment of panic as well as flashbacks. These shifts in time and emotion create the playing field and boundaries in which the Comic book's new methods will be displayed.



# 4. DESIGNING A NEW COMIC BOOK

## 4.1. TRANSPOSING METHODS

### 4.1.1. LAYOUT AND STRUCTURE

The concept of the Infinite Canvas is the polar opposite of a medium with pages that all have the same shape and size. To break up the “book norm” page structure, “Heroine Complex” will make use of a technique called “French fold”, in which folded sheets of paper are bound at their open side, creating tubes or pouches instead of single pages. Used in a tube shape, the French fold allows the content of one page to spread over to the next without a cut in content. If this technique were to be combined with a binding on the top side of the book, this Comic book’s format is quite closely related to the look of vertically-read webcomics.

As the goal is not to copy a webcomic perfectly into print, but to create a new and unfamiliar reading experience, “Heroine Complex” will not use the vertical format. Instead the Comic book will be sideways bound, but differs from Comic book expectation by using a long and thin horizontal (main) page format. It then continues to make use of the possibilities of the medium by creating extra-long pages and folding them into the tube of the French fold. This way, instead of perceiving the whole double page format at once, the reader’s expectations are diverted onto the “additional” page.

Because “Heroine Complex” will have a relatively short page height but a theoretically infinite page length, it will take inspiration from webcomics in dissolving the panel grid. “Heroine Complex”, while not wholly able to dissolve the readers’ patterns of perceiving a page from top to bottom, will deal with rather horizontally-tringed panels.

#### 4.1.2. BEHIND THE IMAGE: DEVELOPING THE SCENE FROM THE INSIDE

The usage of the French Fold allows for another space that is able to contain information: The inside of each tube. While this “inside” subconsciously acts as a backdrop for each outer page, it can also be used to include additional content, like webcomic’s tool-tip texts or other meta-content. Just like those content structures, the inside pages will also communicate secondary content to further the understanding of the Comic, or more specifically, the protagonist: Mapping these methods onto “Heroine Complex”, the inside pages may be used to convey Evie’s thoughts. As she is the novel’s narrator, the reader gets easily acquainted with her thoughts. Keeping these thoughts on the space behind the panel creates a sense of privacy on the protagonist’s thoughts and emotions. They are shared only with the reader, not with the characters who Evie is interacting with.

In later scenes, Evie goes through multiple flashbacks to different stages of her life. In these instances, the page’s content can literally be turned “inside out” and “dive into” the protagonist’s mind. Once on the “inside”, the Comic may shortly pause its French Fold structure. Once the flashback ends and the French fold starts again, the reader will no longer be on the “inside” and can again only peek into the protagonist’s thoughts by opening the fold tubes. By bringing the main story to the inside of the pages only where it is important, readers will be able to decide each for themselves how much additional content they want to perceive by interacting with the tube folds.

### 4.1.3. INBETWEENS AND PAPER STRUCTURE

Another feature of the “Heroine Comic” novel is that it adds contextualizing content inbetween its main chapters: Blog articles and Flyers help the reader understand connections between plot points or motivations behind a character’s words. This is an interesting method in novel form, to break up the reading flow and rewarding the readers with a more immersive experience. By designing images around the content - a newspaper page for articles, an actual flyer on stronger paper, Smartphone screens in a vertical page format - these features will be even more pronounced.

### 4.1.4. MAKING IT POP

As the reader is already emotionally involved with the protagonist by reading her thoughts and emotions from the inside pages, the logical choice would be for story’s perspective to closely follow Evie’s perceptions as well.

In the case of “Heroine Complex”, multiple action scenes see items flying or being thrown in the general direction of the protagonist. In these cases, as the reader’s perception is closely interwoven with Evie’s perception, Elements will be flying towards the reader. By creating these items as pop-up images, the idea of them hurtling towards the reader is amplified. Pop-out images also create a surprising break in the flow quite similar to the methods described above.

## 4.2. DESIGN METHODS

### 4.2.1. CHARACTER DESIGN

In a set of diverse and body-positive characters, protagonist Aveda Jupiter is the exact opposite: She is described as a young, asian-american woman working as a superhero. This job sees Aveda working to stay fit, but also rather vain: One of the main plot points of Chapter one is her getting angry over a zit on her face. In light of this characterization, Aveda Jupiter was given a very thin body, lithe but muscular. Of all characters, in “Heroine Complex”, she is by far the most stereotypical.

The second protagonist, arguably the more important of both as the novel is told completely from her perspective, is Evelyn “Evie” Tanaka. As she is able to pose as Aveda in chapter 6, their body types have to remain similar. Evie is less muscular and not just as thin, but the biggest contrast between their designs is their clothing: Aveda, who is confident and has worked hard for her body, wears rather tight clothing to show off her stature. Meanwhile, the more insecure Evie hides most of her silhouette in baggy clothing.

The character of Lucy Valdez is present throughout most of the first and sixth chapter. She is described as a ginger-haired, lively young woman. Lucy is the first character to be described in detail on page 4 of the novel. Yet, just like the two protagonists, Lucy is said to be “of tiny stature” and depicted on the book cover of her spin-off, “Unsung Heroine”, with a very thin body type. As changing her intended design is not of significance to the story, Lucy was turned into a tall and not as thin woman.



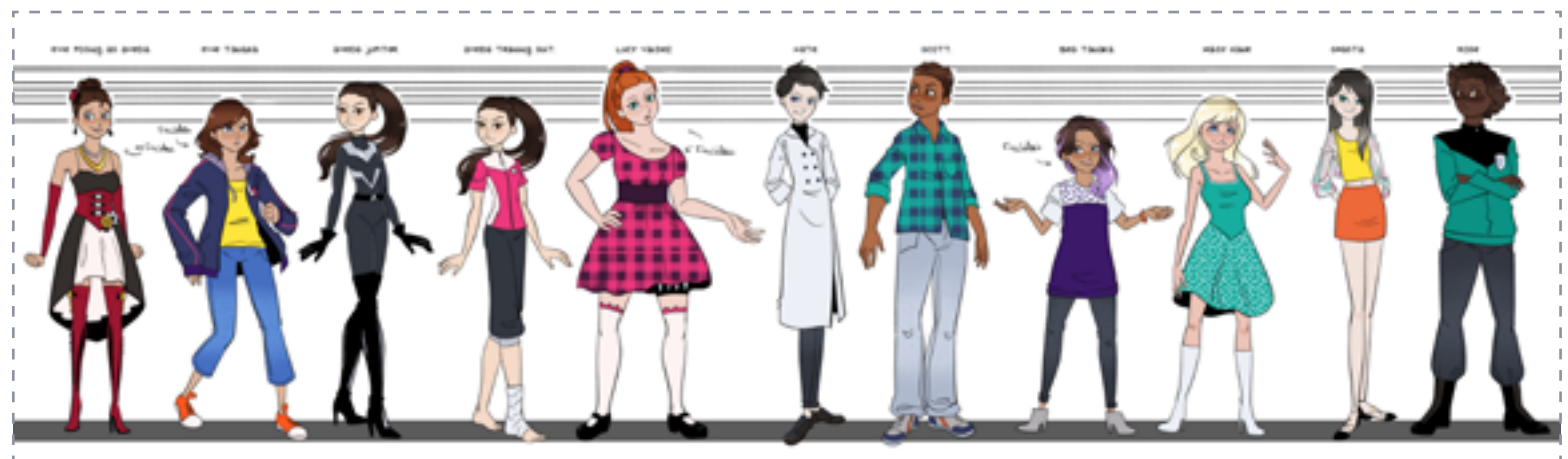




Most characters within the novel are not described by detailed looks, so character creation consisted of a rather open process of trial and error to create a crew of diverse characters. Nate was described as a person who does not leave the basement often. As such, he earned a unhealthy white skin tone. Evie's little sister Beatrice is described as well as depicted on the book cover of the third book of the series, "Heroine's Journey", with colourful strands of hair. Quite late in the "Heroine Complex" novel, the reader learns that Nate and the silent and awkward business owner Shasta are related. This is referred to by the fact that both Nate and Shasta have the same body type, with their long limbs adding to the perceived awkwardness of their characters.

Fig. 18: final Character Design for Evie Tanaka and Aveda Jupiter (see left)

Fig. 19: All Character Designs for the "Heroine Complex" Comic Book (see below)



#### 4.2.2. KEEPING COOL: COLOUR CONCEPT

A colour concept in line with Evie's emotions will be used to further Evie's perspective and her relatability. It is stated in "Heroine Complex" that Evie's ability to control her powers is connected to her emotional state. As Evie is repressing her powers, and thus a part of herself, the colour schemes will reflect this imbalance: As long as Evie feels "in control", the Comic will follow a "cool" colour scheme with cold blue hues. As the story's tension rises and Evie becomes more and more uncomfortable, the colour scheme changes towards warm orange hues: The uncontrollable heat Evie fears. Warm colours are often associated with activity and dynamic, while Evie tries very hard to stay passive, as underlined by her job as an assistant.

The change of "temperature" within the Comic can happen both very slowly and very suddenly, surprising the reader. Nøding writes about a similar effect in OOTS: "Since the colour schemes are so different between this sequence and the normal plot the change back to normal becomes quite jarring"<sup>47</sup>. This can heighten sudden changes in the Comic's storyline by underlining them with a change in colour scheme.

### 4.2.3. TYPOGRAPHY

The “Heroine Complex” novel is set in Times New Roman. While Times New is a great font for long texts and paragraphs, it is not as well attuned for shorter paragraphs such as Comic speech bubbles. Times New Roman can be of use in the Comic book by setting it in appropriate context: It may be implemented in appropriate in-between pages as described in chapter 4.1.3 as well as its usage as an accent type. Times New Roman may also be used to further the contrast between the main Comic pages and the content Behind the Image.

Fonts used in Comic speech bubbles, headed by the precisely named Comic Sans, can generally be categorized as round, even handwriting-style fonts with either high x-heights or generally used in all capital letters. As to choose a font that harmonizes with the lineart style as well as incorporates as many line weights as needed, a font in six line weights was created from the Comic artist’s handwriting. This font, as it is used in the speech bubbles, will constitute the largest part of text used in the Comic book. The many line weights and ability to extend styles and letters as needed allow for a dynamic use: The line weight used will be in direct reference to the presence, the “volume of sound” of its written word.

Regrettably, the font used on the “Heroine Complex” novel cover image of the novel cover could not be identified. It is reminiscent of fonts often used for typographic sound effects in superhero Comics. As a homage to both the novel base as well as the superhero Comic genre, the similar font Battlecry by Comiccraft will be used in those instances.

## **4.3. PROOF OF CONCEPT**

### **4.3.1. TEST GROUP AND PREPARATION**

Four people were independently shown a prototype of eight Comic page spreads, bound by paper clips. The prototype was created in the correct size and included most elements as described in chapter 4. The four testers were asked a total of 13 questions.

As Comic readers from ages 18 to 25, all testers were of target group age. One test person had not read webcomics before, but qualified due to specific knowledge of print media. Of all four testers, three were well versed in reading webcomics and two people had proficient knowledge of print media.

### **4.3.2. RESULTS**

As was to be expected, all testers characterized “typical” Comic books to be of the sizes Din A5 to Din A4, usually vertically arranged. They were also of accord that printed Comic books are not necessarily printed in full colour, but often switch between colour pages and grey-scale pages. Image panels are situated close together and usually follow a soft grid or pattern. Spoken text is kept short and set firmly within the boundaries of lined bubbles, while typographic sound effects are more versatile and make use of display fonts described as “bubbly” and “graffiti-style”. Two of four testers also described Comic Books to be made with rather thin paper. It is interesting to note that upon being asked to describe Comic Books, three testers admitted to imagining Disney and Marvel Comic Books as well as Manga.

Upon being asked to imagine and describe webcomics, the consensus was that webcomics consist of horizontal “one pager” structures (see: Infinite Canvas). It was noted that webcomics not only look different, but work differently as well, with shorter upload schedules than book releases and different browsing mechanisms to find a Comic to read (Tags and web search versus book stores and Libraries). It was also implied on multiple occasions across questions that the more linear reading direction as well as the enlarged gutter space implemented by webcomics and “Heroine Complex” makes for an easier understanding and reading “flow”.

Being shown the title page of “Heroine Complex”, all test people were able to easily identify the Comic to be a superhero story and characterize the two protagonists as the active (“sassy”) and passive (“shy”) roles they inherit in the beginning of the novel. It was also noted that the book’s vertical page alignment was seen as unusual and even surprising.

It was pointed out that the most feasible difference between this Comic and existing Comic categories are its modes of interaction. While generally positive about these augmentations of known Comic Media, the following aspects were pointed out in particular:

The “Page in a Page”, as three people termed it, method works really well and adds a surprise element to the process of turning pages. A Pop-Up element in Chapter one prompted comparisons to children’s media. One test person described “Heroine Complex” as “children’s books, but for teenagers and young adults”. All testers stated they enjoyed this playful interaction.



Fig. 20: first Prototype (used for Proof of Concept interviews)



Fig. 21: final Prototype (used for Testing surveys)



Fig.22: photographic documentation of the end product (covers)

While three testers did not notice the additional content on the inner side of the paper sheets right away, all of them attributed a sense of discovery, exploration and more immersive experience after being introduced to the method. It was suggested a thinner paper with less integral stability could further the easy and timely discovery of inside content.

The newspaper article was, out of context as it was, not understood as an element furthering the story. Rather, two testers believed it would constitute a distant summary of the events already described in the Comic.

As for the colour concept, the contrast between the warm and cool tones was generally understood as an emotional contrast, though it was also pointed out that the cool colours, associated more with passivity, dominate the action-laden first chapter pages, while the warm tones, associated with activity, are presented in a scene where most turmoil is emotional.

Without knowledge of this thesis' goals, one test person stated that "Heroine Complex" "sets new standards for Comic books". All testers would continue reading a Comic book made in this or a similar style.



## **4.4. PRODUCTION**

Apart from a near complete affirmation of concept, the testing the Concept with an early prototype gave an indication on changes to be made on future prints.

By cutting out a piece of an early page in chapter one, the readers will be confronted with the “Behind the Image” content early on. The suggestion of using thinner paper to make the discovery easier was not included, as it posed a difficulties for some pages, like pages with cutouts and specifically the burnt page in chapter 6. A stronger paper minimizes the danger of tearing.

To further the understanding of the newspaper pages as part of the whole story, the sheet will be edited to look like it has been cut out of a bigger newspaper page.

When comparing the page turning behaviors of the protptype held by clamps and one made with a perfect binding (glued), the strong spine of the clamped book had more appeal; it is also an unusual spine for Comic books which usually have a soft cover and perfect binding. For this reason, the Comic book will recieve a japanese binding. Using a pliable carton for the cover improves the page turning behavior while also serving as a nod to the well-known softcover Comic books. Yet the textured cover of “Heroine Complex” still contrasts with the expected smooth and coated softcover papers.

Combining the french fold pages and japanese binding negates the possibility of a final cut along the pages' edges. As such, the Comic will have slightly irregular page sizes, furthering the notion that it is unlike the "usual" Comic book. This gives each book a more hand-made, unique feel.

While creating the individual illustrations for the Comic, the artist (author of this thesis) was helped by two unpaid colorists, who filled in the colors and textures of only the characters to the character design specifications as shown in chapter 4.2.1., Fig. 19, under the artist's direct supervision. Both Anika Büchel and Jojo Stahl are credited in the Comic book.



Fig.23: photographic documentation of the end product (burnt page)





# ***5. EVALUATING THE FINDINGS***

## ***5.1. TESTING***

### **5.1.1. QUESTIONS, METHOD AND PARTICIPATION**

Bound by the proximity to the product, the Testing had to be in-person. For reasons of having an orderly recording, all testers were asked to fill out the questionnaire in Google forms.

All twelve test persons were informed of and judged themselves to fit into the required target group.

The survey was conducted in two sections: “Before reading “ (the Heroine Complex Comic book) and “After reading” (the Heroine Complex Comic book). The questions in “Before reading” are all introductory questions, meant for the testers to think about their own expectations. This process is very important as there is no single printed Comic book and single webcomic to compare “Heroine Complex” to, but instead the expectations of readers formed by the Comics they consume regularly.

The testers were then handed the “Heroine Complex “Comic book (final prototype) to read. The survey’s second section, “After reading”, then asks the testers to describe their experience and compare it to their ex- pectations of both web-and print Comics.

### 5.1.2. EVALUATION OF FINDINGS

Expectations of both web- and printed Comics were congruent with statements made in this thesis in terms of format, binding, handling, amount of content per page and page structure. They associated positive emotions to the experience of interactive elements, moving/shifting elements and sensory elements in printed Comics, while being more sceptical and/or stating they have not had sufficient experience with these elements in webcomics. One tester gave a detailed analysis of their experience on digital page turning (see Appendix Pg. 82).

Looking at and touching the “Heroine Complex” book from the outside, testers noticed a clear difference in format and design. Expectations about high quality interactivity and a sense of novelty were raised.

Concerns about the understand ability of the newspaper pages were not diminished since the Proof of Concept. Readers also admitted they found the story confusing and hard to follow, which can be attributed to the five missing chapters which would be needed to fully understand the Comic story. The testers confirmed that the page structure is easy to follow.

The amount of content per page was perceived as rather spaced, which is in line with expectations of webcomics. Similarity, in comparison to their experiences with web- and print Comics, testers admitted a big difference to both, with 0% believing it is the same as a print Comic and 27,3% the same as webcomics.



Interactive, moving/shifting and sensory elements were all perceived as positive, which is in line with the tester's expectations of printed comic books. Yet, there is still a 0% vote on the reading experience being just like print Comics and only 8,3% of the testers believe the experience to be no different than a webcomic. Testers believe "Heroine Complex" to generally make good use of the possibilities of the book medium and contribute a good reading experience to this unusual Comic book.

## ***5.2. CONCLUSION***

In comparing web- and print Media, this thesis has proven that there are multiple advantages and disadvantages to both Comic categories. In directly comparing relating aspects of their media, this Thesis, especially chapter 3, has become an open list of possible methods. Further Comic artists and scholars will be able to add to this list, specify and work in more detail on individual methods or simply use the existing research as inspiration to create their own Comics outside of the “norm”.

The testing has also shown that varying the medium in the amount of content as well as its means of clear communication (two of four variables of the Media Richness Theory <sup>46</sup>; feedback and trustworthiness are irrelevant in the present case) leads to a different reading experience. Being categorized as a little closer to web-comics than printed Comic books, “Heroine Complex” has a distinct own reading experience which would be hard, if not impossible, to emulate in a web format.

This project as both strengthened and weakened by its choice to base the Comic story around a base novel. While it made for a clear base on which to apply design methods, it also meant that the possibilities of those applications was limited by the story’s progression. If one were to create a Comic story specifically for this new category of Comic media, they have more liberties in when, where and how often to use said design methods. Artists are encouraged to take inspiration from this thesis and create their own, new Comic formats: Break the norm!

46: Daft & Lengel; “Organizational Information Requirements, Media Richness and Structural Design”, 1986





# APPENDIX

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# SURVEY: WEB VERSUS PRINT AS SEEN BY A COMIC ARTIST

SAM OWENS

Antworten können nicht bearbeitet werden

## Web versus Print as seen by a Comic Artist

Qualitative Survey on the Differences between Webcomics and Print Comics. Time approx. 12 min

\* Erforderlich

### Introduction

Hello there!

My name is Pia von Hülsen and I'm working on my BA Media Design Thesis called "Reinventing the Print Comic Book". My goal is to analyze the differences between Webcomics and Print Comics and conclude methods and print techniques that can be used, but haven't been used, in a Print Comic Book.

You have been chosen for this survey as you have published both Web- and Print Comics before. This is a qualitative survey, meaning it is answered by few experts instead of the broad masses. Please answer the following questions to the best of your personal experiences in creating Comics. There will be free commentary fields after every chapter so that you can add anything you feel I might have missed.

At your wish, I will send you the parts of my thesis concerning this survey. Your information will not be used in any context other than the survey and its evaluation.

Now, let's get started.  
First, as this is a survey used for a mediascientific Thesis, please tell me how exactly you want to be credited.

What name do you want to be credited as? (Alias, real name, both...)\*

Sam Owens

Additional information about you that you wish to be shared (Pronouns, Age, Country...)

He/Him, 30, USA

Please list all Web- and Print Comic projects you have published and the years they were published in. You may include ones that are currently being produced with the intention of publishing them.\*

Man Time issue #1, Man Time issue #2

Are there any additional facts to qualify you as an expert in the sense of this Thesis?

Free Commentary

### Webcomics

On what Site have you published Webcomics?\*

Instagram, Facebook, Tapes, Tumblr

Which interface did you create your Webcomics to be read on?\*

- Smartphone
- Tablet PC and other Smart Devices
- Laptop or PC Browsers

Are you aware of the concept of Infinite Canvas?\*

Yes

No

### The Infinite Canvas

"The basic premise is that there's no reason that long form comics have to be split into pages when moving online. Pages are an option—and they can work well when screen shapes are taken into account—but the advantages of putting all panels together on a single "canvas" are significant and worth exploiting." - Scott McCloud, <http://scottmcccloud.com/4-inventions/canvas/>, last checked 09.08.2021

The idea of the Infinite Canvas has become a norm for many webcomics created to be read on a mobile surface, such as a smartphone, which often have chapters of horizontal content without a visible "page" break.

Have you used the Infinite Canvas in your Webcomic project/s? \*

- Yes  
 No

Which of these concepts of content and meta-content (the content of the webpage- or app-interface surrounding a Webcomic) are you aware of? \*

	I was not aware of this.	Aware, but have not used it.	I have used this!
tooltip text ("alt text")	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
image titles	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>
surrounding space / background	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>
sound effects / background music	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
moving pictures (GIF & similar formats)	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
external links to other sites	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>
internal links to other pages/chapters	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

On the points you were aware of but haven't made use of it yet: What are the reasons you decided against it?

All text is not available on most social media platforms, sound effects aren't relevant to the work I make. Animated images are something that I may explore using in the future.

How do you experience the influence of meta content on your Webcomics? \*



### Free Commentary

Meta content can be useful. Alt text is great for accessibility and links to other pages are useful for helping people find your work elsewhere and buy books. Other content such as sound effects and animation can be cool for certain types of comics but I don't feel that it's very necessary for my work specifically.

### Print Comics

#### Regular Comic Book Formats

In a blog article, illustrator Salgeed Sam has collected a number of common Comic Book formats from around the world. He defines pages of printed comic media to generally be in a vertical format sized between 10,2cm to 21,6cm (4" to 8.5") in width and 12,7cm to 29,5cm (5" to 11.6") in height.

Do your Print Comic Book/s adhere to these Regular Comic Book Formats? If not, what format do they have? \*

- Yes  
 Sonstiges: \_\_\_\_\_

Which of these concepts of content and meta-content (the additional content added by the book medium) are you aware of? \*

	I was not aware of this.	Aware, but have not used it.	I have used this!
Haptic experience of paper structures	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Double page spreads	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Folding pages and extra large pages	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Cut pages and extra small pages	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Printing with special colors	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Screen printing and alternative methods	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Alternative bindings and spines	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

How do you experience the influence of meta content on your Print Comics? \*

no influence    1    2    3    4    5    strong influence

#### Free Commentary

I would like to use some of these methods to make my books stand out and try some more creative things. But as of now, I've been sticking to the standard comic format and standard way of printing. The expense of printing is usually higher when you add some of these aspects into your printed comics.

#### Printing Webcomics

About the process of creating a Print Book out of an existing Webcomic.

Which parts of the Webcomics could not be directly copied into a Print Book due to differences in their medium (Layout, technical possibilities, ...)? \*

I only do 4 or 6-panel comics, so my work doesn't have any issues when it comes to transferring the digital medium to print.

How does the Print Comic Book differ from its Webcomic Counterpart in terms of gutter space (the space outside of panels)? \*

- less space
- the same amount of space
- more space

How does the Print Comic Book differ from its Webcomic Counterpart in the amount of panels visible at once (on one open page or on one digital interface (e.g. smartphone screen) respectively)? \*

- less panels visible at once
- the same amount of panels visible
- more panels visible at once

Did you reposition the panels to fit differently onto the new page format? \*

No, the structure stayed.    1    2    3    4    5    Yes, they were heavily repositioned.



Were you aware of the ability to use the following print techniques in creating the Print Version of your Webcomics? \*

	I was not aware of this.	Aware, but have not used it.	I have used that
Haptic experience of paper structures	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Double Page Spreads	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Folding pages and extra large pages	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Cut pages and extra small pages	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Printing with special colors	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Screen printing and alternative methods	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Alternative bindings and spines	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Free Commentary

---

### Web versus Print

Comparing the experiences of creating a Webcomic and creating a Print Comic.

How do your Print Comics differ from your Webcomics in terms of gutter space (the space outside of panels)? \*

- less space
- the same amount of space
- more space

How do your Print Comics differ from your Webcomics in the amount of panels visible at once (on one open page or on one digital interface (e.g. smartphone screen) respectively)? \*

- less panels visible at once
- the same amount of panels visible
- more panels visible at once

Do your Print Comics differ from your Webcomics in the layout of panels? \*

- No, the panel- and page structure is the same between media.
- The layout has changed to fit the medium.

Do you believe the following techniques can enhance the Comic's reading experience? \*

	Yes	Yes, used sparingly.	Unsure	No
open page sizes and infinite Canvas	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
hidden text (tooltip-text, image Titles)	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
surrounding interface, background	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Haptic experiences of paper structures	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
sound effects / background music	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
moving pictures in print (Pop-Out, flipbook effects)	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
moving pictures in web (GIF & similar formats)	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Printing with special colors	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Screen printing and alternative methods	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Alternative bindings and spines	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

#### Free Commentary

It's very subjective. Whether or not you use any of these methods depends on the type of comics you make and what you want the reading experience to be. I do think that sound effects and animated images should be used sparingly. They can become too much if used a lot.

Thank you!

#### You have reached the end of the survey!

Thank you for taking the time to answer these questions. You have helped me a lot!  
Please don't forget to submit your answers on the bottom of the page.

I hope you have a great day!

Pia von Hülse,  
Studying Media Design at  
Duale Hochschule Baden-Württemberg, Ravensburg  
[yonhuelse@stud.dhbw-ravensburg.de](mailto:yonhuelse@stud.dhbw-ravensburg.de)

If you wish to be informed about the usage of this survey in my thesis, please add how you would like to be contacted:

\_\_\_\_\_

Geendet: 12.08.21, 00:50

# SURVEY: WEB VERSUS PRINT AS SEEN BY A COMIC ARTIST

TSUYONPU

Antworten können nicht bearbeitet werden

## Web versus Print as seen by a Comic Artist

Qualitative Survey on the Differences between Webcomics and Print Comics. Time approx. 12 min

**\* Erforderlich**

### Introduction

Hello there!

My name is Pia von Hülsen and I'm working on my BA Media Design Thesis called "Reinventing the Print Comic Book". My goal is to analyze the differences between Webcomics and Print Comics and conclude methods and print techniques that can be used, but haven't been used, in a Print Comic Book.

You have been chosen for this survey as you have published both Web- and Print Comics before. This is a qualitative survey, meaning it is answered by few experts instead of the broad masses. Please answer the following questions to the best of your personal experiences in creating Comics. There will be free commentary fields after every chapter so that you can add anything you feel I might have missed.

At your wish, I will send you the parts of my thesis concerning this survey. Your information will not be used in any context other than the survey and its evaluation.

Now, let's get started.  
First, as this is a survey used for a mediascientific Thesis, please tell me how exactly you want to be credited.

What name do you want to be credited as? (Alias, real name, both...) \*

Izzy N. / Tsuyonpu

Additional information about you that you wish to be shared (Pronouns, Age, Country...)  
(if being referred to, use they / them)

Please list all Web- and Print Comic projects you have published and the years they were published in. You may include ones that are currently being produced with the intention of publishing them. \*

Broken Glass 2017 Web & Print (self publishing)  
Prince & Knight 2020 Web, 2022 print (self publishing)

Are there any additional facts to qualify you as an expert in the sense of this Thesis?

Free Commentary

Other than Comics I have also published various Artbooks and Zine Projects I have self published.

### Webcomics

On what Site have you published Webcomics? \*

Tapes & Webtoon

Which interface did you create your Webcomics to be read on? \*

- Smartphone
- Tablet PC and other Smart Devices
- Laptop or PC Browsers

Are you aware of the concept of infinite Canvas? \*

- Yes
- No

### The Infinite Canvas

"The basic premise is that there's no reason that long-term comics have to be split into pages when moving online. Pages are an option—and they can work well when screen shapes are taken into account—but the advantages of putting all panels together on a single "canvas" are significant and worth exploiting." - Scott McCloud, <http://scottmcccloud.com/6-inventions/canvas/>, last checked 09.08.2021

The idea of the Infinite Canvas has become a norm for many webcomics created to be read on a mobile surface, such as a smartphone, which often have chapters of horizontal content without a visible "page" break.

Have you used the Infinite Canvas in your Webcomic project/s? \*

Yes

No

Which of these concepts of content and meta-content (the content of the webpage- or app-interface surrounding a Webcomic) are you aware of? \*

	I was not aware of this.	Aware, but have not used it.	I have used this!
tooltip-text ("alt text")	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
image titles	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
surrounding space / background	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>
sound effects / background music	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
moving pictures (GIF & similar formats)	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
external links to other sites	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>
internal links to other pages/chapters	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>

On the points you were aware of but haven't made use of it yet: What are the reasons you decided against it?

Especially moving images or sound effects / background music, can be pretty time consuming and even though I have found myself thinking "oh that might work with my comic" I never had the time to look into it and make everything match and work like I would want it to. For most of these it's also important on where you publish. Tapas allows a lot of links and extra functions, while on Webtoon you can't add any of those things. Even Links don't work.

How do you experience the influence of meta content on your Webcomic/s? \*



Free Commentary

### Print Comics

#### Regular Comic Book Formats

In a blog article, Illustrator Salgood Sans has collected a number of common Comic Book formats from around the world. He defines pages of printed comic media to generally be in a vertical format sized between 10,2cm to 21,6cm (4" to 8.5") in width and 12,7cm to 29,5cm (5" to 11.6") in height.

Do your Print Comic Book/s adhere to these Regular Comic Book Formats? If not, what format do they have? \*

Yes

Sonstiges: Din A4 / A5 format

Which of these concepts of content and meta-content (the additional content added by the book medium) are you aware of? \*

	I was not aware of this.	Aware, but have not used it.	I have used this!
Haptic experience of paper structures	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Double page spreads	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>
Folding pages and extra large pages	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>
Cut pages and extra small pages	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Printing with special colors	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>
Screen printing and alternative methods	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Alternative bindings and spines	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

How do you experience the influence of meta content on your Print Comics? \*

no influence    1    2    3    4    5    strong influence

#### Free Commentary

I think while on digital comics (that are free to read) things are easy to scroll by, people consume content way too fast. But for a book (that someone might purchase), you can actually hold in your hands, the feeling of nice paper or having the cover have a relief print or gold foil (for example) these things can make a difference when deciding if you would purchase a book.

#### Printing Webcomics

About the process of creating a Print Book out of an existing Webcomic.

Which parts of the Webcomics could not be directly copied into a Print Book due to differences in their medium (Layout, technical possibilities, ...)? \*

Creating space, tension, drama or time by stretching the vertical layout.

How does the Print Comic Book differ from its Webcomic Counterpart in terms of gutter space (the space outside of panels)? \*

- less space
- the same amount of space
- more space

How does the Print Comic Book differ from its Webcomic Counterpart in the amount of panels visible at once (on one open page or on one digital interface (e.g. smartphone screen) respectively)? \*

- less panels visible at once
- the same amount of panels visible
- more panels visible at once

Did you reposition the panels to fit differently onto the new page format? \*

No, the structure stayed.    1    2    3    4    5    Yes, they were heavily repositioned.

Were you aware of the ability to use the following print techniques in creating the Print Version of your Webcomics? \*

	I was not aware of this.	Aware, but have not used it.	I have used this!
Haptic experience of paper structures	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>
Double Page Spreads	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>
Folding pages and extra large pages	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Cut pages and extra small pages	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Printing with special colors	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>
Screen printing and alternative methods	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Alternative bindings and spines	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Free Commentary

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### Web versus Print

Comparing the experiences of creating a Webcomic and creating a Print Comic.

How do your Print Comics differ from your Webcomics in terms of gutter space (the space outside of panels)? \*

- less space
- the same amount of space
- more space

How do your Print Comics differ from your Webcomics in the amount of panels visible at once (on one open page or on one digital interface (e.g. smartphone screen) respectively)? \*

- less panels visible at once
- the same amount of panels visible
- more panels visible at once

Do your Print Comics differ from your Webcomics in the layout of panels? \*

- No, the panel- and page structure is the same between media.
- The layout has changed to fit the medium.

Do you believe the following techniques can enhance the Comic's reading experience? \*

	Yes	Yes, used sparingly.	Unsure	No
open page sizes and infinite Canvas	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
hidden text (tooltip-text, image titles)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
surrounding interface, background	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Haptic experiences of paper structures	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
sound effects / background music	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
moving pictures in print (Pop-Out, flipbook effects)	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
moving pictures in web (GIF & similar formats)	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>



Printing with special colors	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Screen printing and alternative methods	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Alternative bindings and spines	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Free Commentary

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Thank you!

**You have reached the end of the survey!**

Thank you for taking the time to answer these questions. You have helped me a lot!  
Please don't forget to submit your answers on the bottom of the page.

I hope you have a great day!

Pia von Hülsen,  
Studying Media Design at  
Duale Hochschule Baden-Württemberg, Ravensburg  
[vonhuelser@stud.dhbw-svrensberg.de](mailto:vonhuelser@stud.dhbw-svrensberg.de)

If you wish to be informed about the usage of this survey in my thesis, please add how you would like to be contacted:

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Gesendet: 12.08.21, 11:20

## ***INTERVIEW: PROOF OF CONTEXT***

1. Imagine a typical comic book. Shortly describe your image. Thinking size & shape, page structure & content, paper, colour, typography...

Din a5, coloured and grey-scale pages (title page always in colour), Comic Sans, short speech bubbles, more images than text; LTB, Din A5, around 100 pages, very thin paper, CMYK but cheap print, approx. 6 panels per page, same panel layouts, classic outlines, flat colours, Taschenbuch; colourful cover, bright or dramatic colours, panels have different shapes and sizes, clear structure of speech bubbles, sounds in typography (graffiti- or bubbly type), Din A5 or A4 vertical format; thin paper, small images, Din A5, not overly saturated, not necessarily in colour

2. What do you expect to read in “Heroine Complex” judging from the book cover?

Superhero falls in love with a normal girl, sass, chaotic lesbians; try out different binding, horizontal is unusual, surprising, target audience around 16 years, superheroes, two protagonists, I expect this book to try and surprise me, intrigued because it's different; “heroine” can be misunderstood as drug, aveda characterized as the hero, active (helping), evie as the shy insecure girl

3. Now read the comic book. Share your thoughts & findings.

The first page only has hands?, muffin pop-out is great, surprised by the mini pages, newspaper page very random, fire “effect” is nice; unusual format, pop up is cool and reminds of pop up kids books but not in a bad way, pages inside of pages are surprising, very interactive, like making a children's book but with an adult story, explorative and full of easter eggs; phone perspective is unusual, 6th chapter feels like a story climax, newspaper article could be skipped by assuming it is the text form of something already shown in the comic, mini pages are cool, really colourful, cool gimmicks (pop up), haven't found the inner page without prompting

4. In what ways does it differ from your expectations of a Comic book?

The pages in the pages and mini pages and burn, its amazing and intriguing and sets new standards; horizontal format, french fold, art style is more manga- and realism-influenced than a typical Disney comic, bare minimum backgrounds, gradients are unusual; format, coloured inner pages, dissolving the process of page turning, dissolving the page format;

5. Imagine a typical web-comic. what makes it different from a printed Comic book?

Webcomic has easier story flow but these effects are so cool!; one pager, episodes/chapters are structured differently because books take long to produce but they publish a lot of content at once, many webcomics have a 2010's Anime inspired style, customer promise: digital tags work better than blurb; linkability of webcomics, animations (but is that still comic?), music;

6. Now read the comic book again. Have you noticed anything you didn't see the first time?

burned page could be unstable, the inside pages' content has to be at the upper or lower edge for it to be easily readable, it is not obvious that there is content on the inside, camera perspective clings to evie as the main protagonist (can be seen as positive or negative);

7. What makes this comic book different from and similar to webcomics?

Images are bigger, less panels, flow is slower but better art appreciation, exploration, "easier" reading, you don't miss any important stuff; similar: long scroller pages, different: sideways not downwards and interface, print has way less gutter space, but fire scene does that too, actually space between all panels, no zigzag reading like in usual print (more like webcomic), sideways page turning is more pleasant than vertical page turning, playful typography is unusual for print but well-practiced in webcomic and Mangas; amount of interactivity from webcomics (but different kinds); interactivity makes the story more immersive, more gutter space than print, no visible grid, no zigzag reading;

8. Was the comic easy to read & follow?

Yes, easier than "normal" comics; yes; yes, the mini pages are irritating in the beginning when one is not used to it;

9. Compared to prints- & webcomics: Is this format boring or exciting?

Exciting, interaction, surprise! extra content and easter eggs, burned page; exciting, but the potential price is scary, further tests required for each method, supports quick reading, explorative inner pages make for re-reading potential; exciting, catches the eye;

10. How does your perception of the story change between the cool tones of chapter 1 and the warm tones of chapter 6?

Cold looks faster, more action oriented, warm is more emotive; cool = wild and hectic action scenes, warm = associated with positive mood but scene still conveys that is not the case; cool = still and sad, warm = heated mood, dramatic; cool = distance between the characters

11. Do you perceive the changing page sizes as a feature or distraction?

Feature! very exciting; newspaper and smartphone pages are without context; can be a distraction, but positively: the reader does a double take but stays immersed in the story; feature

12. How did you perceive the content on the "inside" of the pages?

I like the idea; stay at the outside, use for easter eggs, not too stiff paper or it wont be found; supporting function for the intensive perception of the main story

13. Would you continue reading a book in this format independently of story/genre etc.?

Heck Yes; if the price is okay yes, because it is more interesting than a "normal" comic; yes, though I would not read it "on the road" - rather at home or in a library; yes

# SURVEY: THE READING EXPERIENCE OF HEROINE COMPLEX

Antworten können nicht bearbeitet werden

## The reading experience of Heroine Complex

Testing as part of my Bachelor Thesis: "Reinventing the Printed Comic Book: Learning from Webcomics"  
 Pia von Hülsen, September 2021  
 Duale Hochschule Baden-Württemberg Ravensburg, Supervising Professor: Andrea Hennig

Time est. for filling out this survey: 10 min + reading time

**Thank you for filling out this survey!**  
 In front of you is the most recent prototype of my Comic Book. Before you take a closer look at it, please answer the following questions in the section "Before Reading". The survey will then inform you to start reading.

**Before reading**

**Print Comic Books**

What do you expect in terms of format, binding and handling?  
 11 Antworten

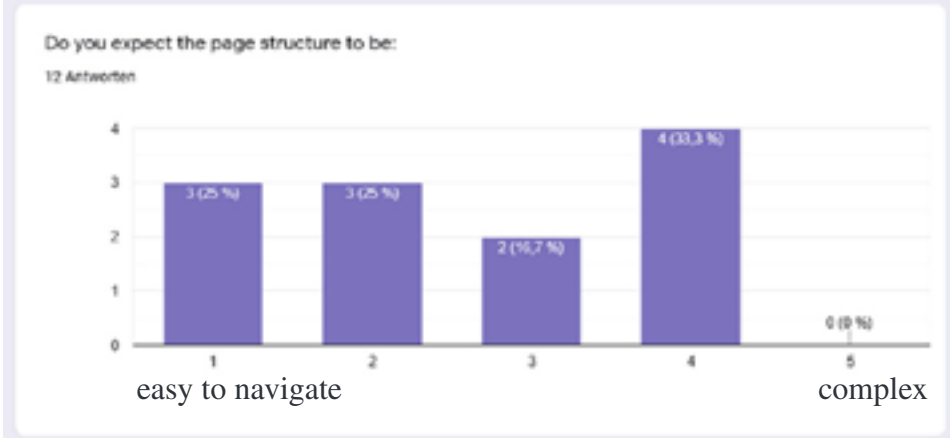
- A4 Comic Heft mit Rückstichheftung und relativ dünnes Papier
- Magazin Format, Klebebindung, Taschenbuch
- Klein, handlich, so dass mans mitnehmen kann
- Din A4 oder Taschenbuchformat, Klebebindung,
- A neat comic, with high quality - something rather unusual than the 'regular comicbook'
- A5 Taschenbuch, ~150 Seiten
- smaller than A4, soft cover for more comfort

Mostly Vertical A4 or A5 with a soft cover

I expect a portrait format, adhesive binding, soft cover

Ich bin sehr gespannt, was passieren wird

Compact Format, Vertical



How do you experience interactive elements (e.g. page turning, exploration, DIY elements, ...) in Print Comic Books?

11 Antworten

Gibt es relativ wenig, meistens aber nicht unbedingt qualitativ gut

Easy?

angenehm und interessant

I enjoy exploring the book to its full capacity, which means I will take more time to actually read it and experience it.

page turning is identical to novels, small scale exploration can be necessary for complex panels

if they have structure and fit the context I like them.

I think they can be fun und bring life to a story, if used mindfully.

I love it. It adds to the experience and I feel like I'm part of it. Also it makes me think more and be in the moment and focus on the story

Sehr spannendes Konzept

Super cool

Love it

If and how do you experience moving/shifting elements (e.g. pop-outs, color-shifting foil, ...) in Print Comic Books?

11 Antworten

Habe bisher keine Erfahrung damit gehabt

Kenne ich nicht bei Comic Büchern

als special cool außer es wird zu viel

I think they are pretty interesting and they make the experience more exiting and valuable

never encountered it

It's rare but makes the experience more special and connects the story world with reality a bit better.

They can add to a story or be a cool effect, but aren't necessary in my opinion

It makes me look at it for a longer time and interact with it

Teilweise etwas zu wenig für meinen Geschmack. Mir gefallen die Elemente sehr gut.

Fun to use

Joyful

If and how do you experience sensory elements (e.g. haptic, sound, ...) in Print Comic Books?

11 Antworten

Habe bisher keine Erfahrung damit gehabt

Kenne ich nicht bei Comic Büchern

kenn ich nicht

I love to take a moment to analyse and feel them

never encountered it, bzw nur die haptik des papiers

apart from the occasional glossy page I've never experienced different haptic in one book but I've read a comic book accompanied by a playlist. that enhanced the experience for sure.

They are great to support the situation pictured

I feel more engaged, I observe the pages for a longer time and maybe even come back to certain pages

Haptic ist sehr angenehm und gut

Fühlt sich robust an

Haptic is really important, quality

## Webcomics

What do you expect in terms of format, interface and handling?

11 Antworten

Habe bisher keine Erfahrung damit gehabt

Scrolling, Printig

Hochformat, angepasst auf tablets

1920x1080

Not a lot - just focusing on the content of the Comic, nothing else

Onepager optimized for mobile phones

one page scrolling, slide scrolling, sometimes the format doesn't work well with the screen, colors pop.

Probably a less interactive Version that just goes on and on (scrolling)

Display format, menu followed by comics pages. It can be either pages a I have to click through or I have to scroll down to read more

Spannendes Format und angenehmes Papier

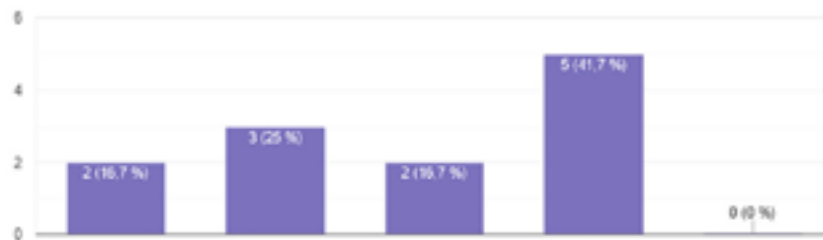
Good loading time, big, screenformat

spaced

crammed

Do you expect the content on a page (interface instance) to be:

12 Antworten

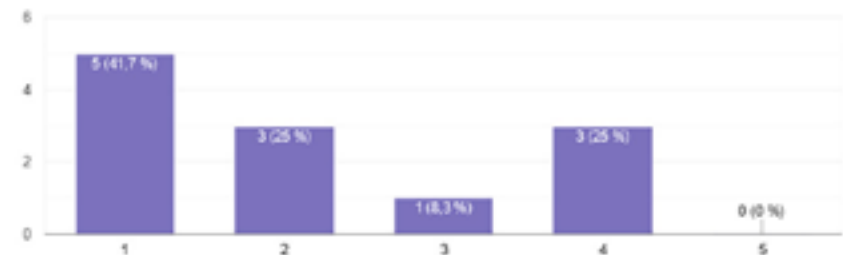


spaced

crammed

Do you expect the page structure to be:

12 Antworten



easy to navigate

complex

How do you experience interactive elements (e.g. page turning, exploration, weblinks, ...) in Webcomics?

11 Antworten

Habe bisher keine Erfahrung damit gehabt

No

hab ich noch nie erlebt

If they are done well they can be interesting. Otherwise I'd say they don't really Excite me.

(aus der perspektive eines lesers am handy) digitalisierte printcomics sind je nach reader unangenehm zu lesen, entweder gibt es sie als onepager, dann reicht die gröÙe des smartphone bildschirms nicht aus (zoomen ist pain) oder die seiten sind mit einer kindle-inspirierten umblättermechanik verbunden (die bewegung ist für die hand mehr pain, als einfach nach unten zu wischen). als hochkant onepager angelegte webcomics sind deutlich angenehmer zu durchqueren. exploration ist nonexistent, links gibt es in den zusammenfassungen aber selten auf den panels/seiten selbst, die sind meist nur als jpg ohne verlinkung im browser

depending on the site it can be annoying but the one page scrolling makes everything easier.

I dont think there is much page turning happening, but i have little experience in this matter.

It depends. It can also be distracting if i land on a different page

Gefällt mir sehr gut. Papier auf den letzten Seiten sehr geil

I liked

Important



If and how do you experience moving/shifting elements (e.g. GIF animation, ...) in Webcomics?

9 Antworten

Habe bisher keine Erfahrung damit gehabt

Dont

hab ich noch nie erlebt

I think it's rather distracting

never encountered it

I have never seen a web comic with movement sadly, but once I read a comic with a background parallax

They can bring a Comic to live, but also take away from the idea of a comic in itself.

Again, it can be distracting but it can also add to the story

Nice Adon

If and how do you experience sensory elements (e.g. haptic, sound, ...) in Webcomics?

10 Antworten

Habe bisher keine Erfahrung damit gehabt

Dont

hab ich noch nie erlebt

Especially sound negatively (since I am not expecting it)

never encountered it

I have not experienced that yet

Is it possible to integrate them into Web Comics?

I don't expect there to be a haptic experience and sound would be distracting to me as well I think

Haptic ist sehr gut

It's not so important for me

## Before reading

Judging from the format, binding and handling: What do you expect from this Comic Book?

11 Antworten

Fühlt sich sehr hochwertig an, anders als die typische Erwartung an ein Comic. Durch die Bindung wirkt es handgemacht und sehr persönlich. Es wirkt nicht ganz so stabil.

Ein anderer Ansatz an Comic Büchern. In der Machart.

Mit beiden händen halten, besonderes/ungewöhnliches Format -> besonderer inhalt

ungewöhnliches Format -> Erwartung: interessante und neue Gestaltung eines Comics

interesting to look at, high quality. interesting storyline.

querformat weid?

something fresh and new, the background style seems a bit vintage but the character design is modern so there might be an interesting merge going on. the format is unusual but cool, and the binding gives it a soul.

It's probably a fun comic focussing on a womans role in the heroic world

I expect it to be interactive and educational

Ich freue mich aufs Lesen

interesting content, high quality , big screen but compact

## After reading

What surprised you / was unexpected while reading?

12 Antworten

Die unüblichen Gestaltungsmittel und die Möglichkeit Ding in dem comic zu entdecken

Pop-ups, Papier, Format und Einschübe

Die kleineren seiten und pop ups, wechsel von papier

die Seiten zwischen den Seiten

The pop up elements, the newspaper parts aswell as the pages that can be turned to find contents on there

loots of space between panels

The page insides were cool and suprising. I also liked the shortend pages.

The binding, the split pages, the landscape format

Sollten Zeitungsartikel auch gelesen werden ?

Die pop out Elemente, sehr spannend

Hidden content, lot of caring details

What, if anything, confused or frustrated you while reading?

12 Antworten

Manchmal war nicht 100% klar wer was sagt. Anfangs war es etwas verwirrend, warum die Seiten als Schlaufen angelegt sind, in die man nur von der Seite sehen kann

Schade, dass die Innovation nicht auch im Style (Look, Charakter und Font) aufgegriffen wurde.

-

Mehr Szenen darstellen, damit man besser in die Welt eintauchen kann

Nothing

ins innere der schlauchbindung gucken erfordert nicht vorhandene feinmotorik

there was an insert of a text message only once, maybe if there had been more that would have made more sense?

I didnt quite understand the story and the charakter roles and also that I wasn't able to tell if there was something inside all of the inside pages.

I didn't know if there were things hidden inside the pages but it made me curious to discover

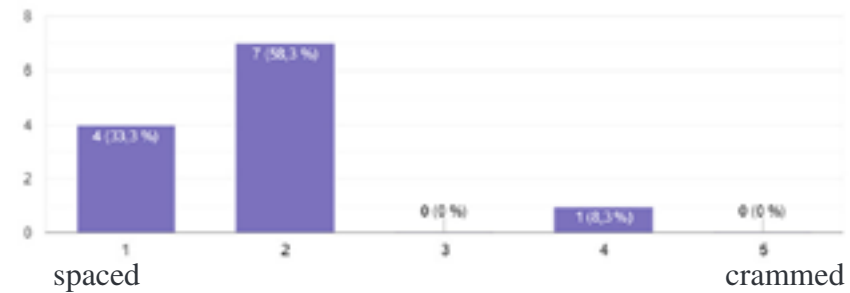
Die Zeitungsartikel haben frustriert

The story ist bisschen kompliziert

Want to read more

How did you experience the amount of content per page?

12 Antworten



Were you able to easily follow the story through its page structure?

12 Antworten



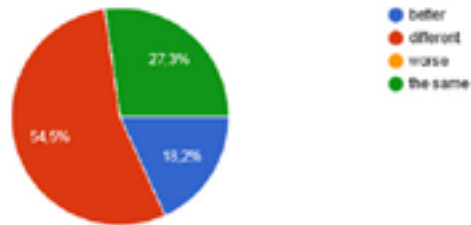
Your reading experience concerning the amount of content and page structure was ... than the typical Print Comic Book.

12 Antworten



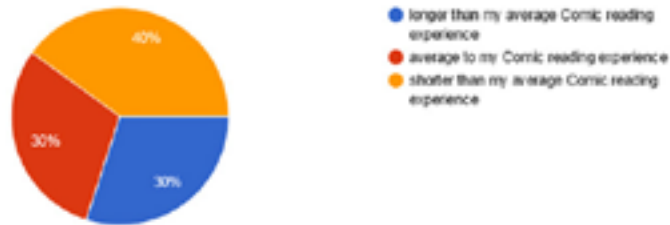
Your reading experience concerning the amount of content and page structure was ... than the typical Webcomic.

11 Antworten



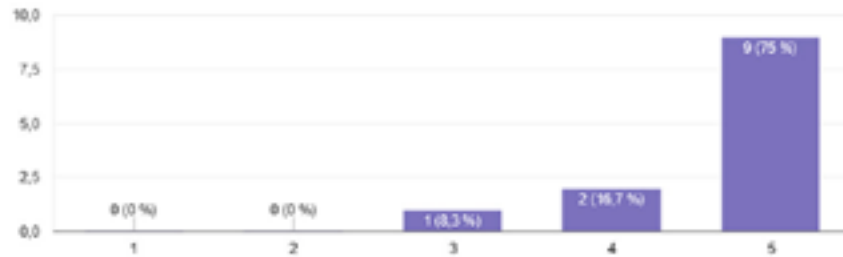
How long did you experience the time it took to read Heroine Complex?

10 Antworten



How did you experience the book's interactive elements? (Mini Pages, exploration of the inner pages, ...)

12 Antworten

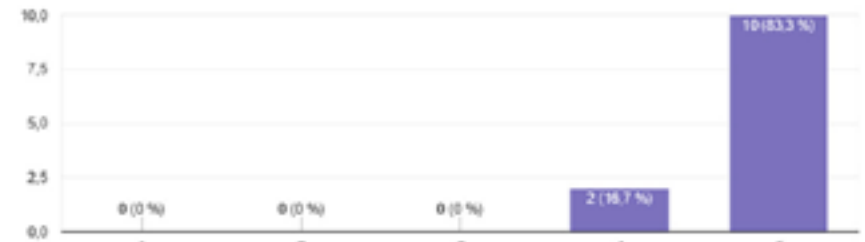


distracting

positive

How did you experience the book's moving elements? (pop-outs)

12 Antworten

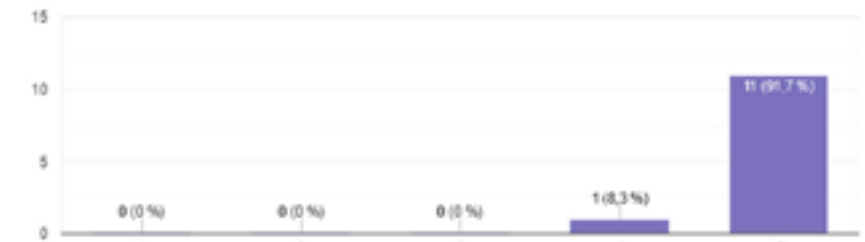


distracting

positive

How did you experience the book's sensory elements? (paper structures, burned paper, ...)

12 Antworten

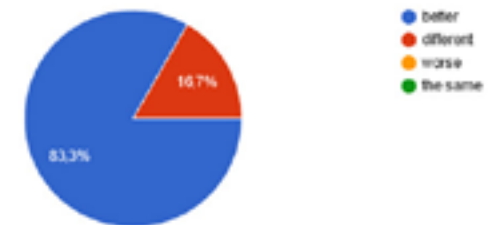


distracting

positive

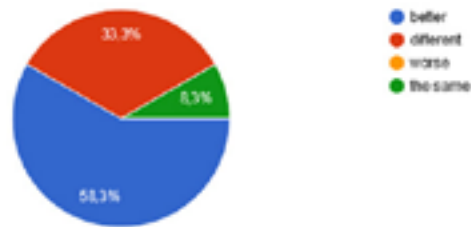
Your reading experience concerning the interactive, moving and sensory elements was ... than the typical Print Comic Book.

12 Antworten



Your reading experience concerning the interactive, moving and sensory elements was ... than the typical Webcomic.

12 Antworten



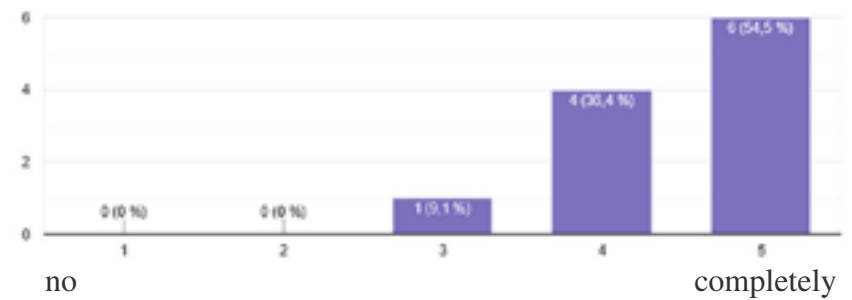
Imagine Heroine Complex was created as a Webcomic. Which parts would be hard to transpose?

10 Antworten

- Die interaktiven Dinge, die man entdecken kann und besonders mit den Händen untersuchen kann.
- Die Einschübe
- Die Seiten zwischen den Seiten
- Especially the pop up parts, pages and the whole haptic - it was pretty pleasing to feel the quality of the pages, aswell as many elements surprised me positively. I think that could be very hard to reproduce in a webcomic
- Inner pages & newspaper
- the burned page, the haptic part could be harder but doable
- The hidden pages.
- Different paper structures, pop outs and double paper layout
- Teilweise die Zeitung
- Feeling of paper, finding the hidden content, quality

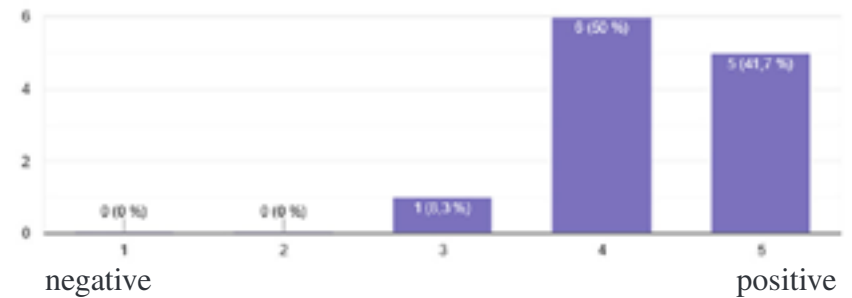
Do you believe Heroine Complex made good use of the possibilities of the book medium?

11 Antworten



How was your overall experience reading this Comic Book?

12 Antworten



You have reached the end!

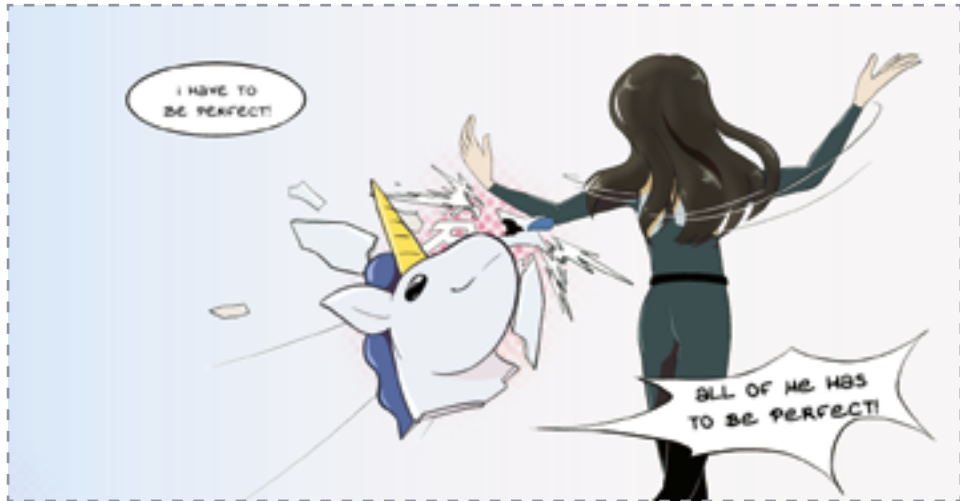
Thank you so much for filling out this survey!  
Please don't forget to submit it below.

# HEROINE COMPLEX COMIC EXEMPLARY PAGES

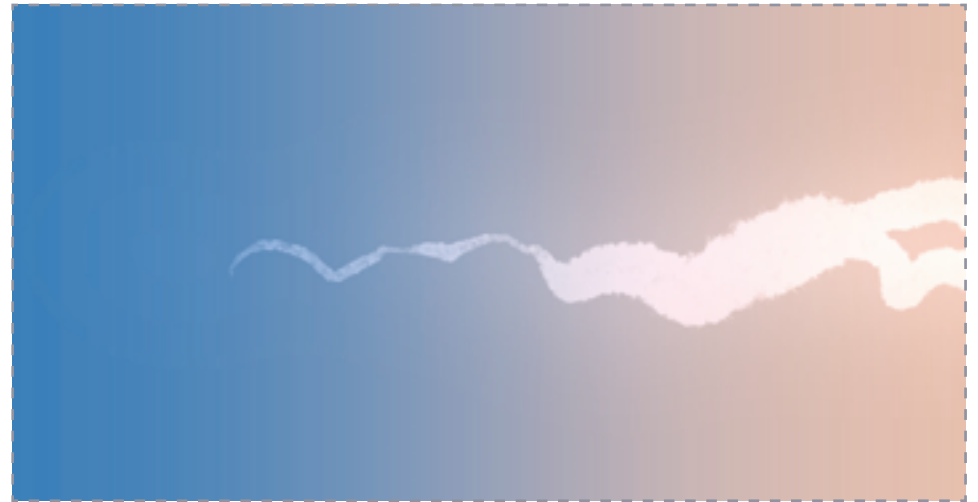




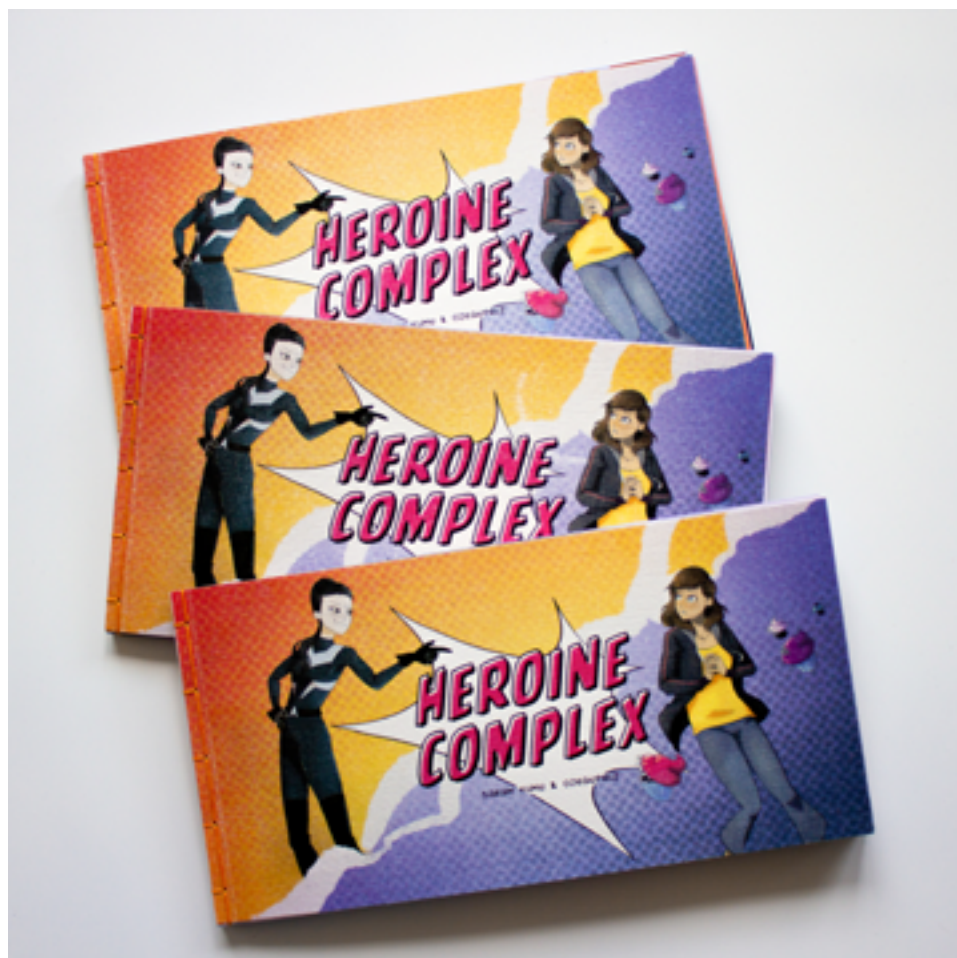








# HEROINE COMPLEX COMIC PHOTOGRAPHIC DOCUMENTATION















Page 96 - APPENDIX



REINVENTING THE PRINTED COMIC BOOK: LEARNING FROM WEBCOMICS - PIA VON HUELSEN









