

# Study the Phenomenon of Cross-Media between Video Media and Webtoon

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## Abstract

*Cross-media phenomenon, which is a remediation of webtoon as original to movie and soap opera, has been becoming more active since the mid 2000s. As the story is complete and its contents are amusing, the remediation of webtoon has been increasingly becoming active. However, it has rarely become a high-grossing movie or received high viewer ratings. This study derived success factors through an comparison of the narrative structures and visual factors of "Secretly, Greatly", which became the highest-grossing film and "Misaeng", which got high viewer ratings and got a reputation as well-made soap opera, with the webtoon as the original. However, it has rarely become a high-grossing movie or received high viewer ratings. This study derived success factors through an comparison of the narrative structures and visual factors of "Secretly, Greatly", which became the highest-grossing film and "Misaeng", which got high viewer ratings and got a reputation as well-made soap opera, with the webtoon as the original.*

**Keywords:** *cross-media, remediation of webtoon, movie and soap opera*

## 1. Introduction

As the types of media become diversified and the competitions for contents production become steep, cross-media phenomenon, which is a remediation of successful contents to other media, is emerging as the center of new attention. The typical original contents leading the phenomenon is none other than webtoon.

Webtoon is a compound word of 'web' of website and 'cartoon'. It has developed into 'internet cartoon', 'digital cartoon', 'online cartoon' and 'mobile cartoon' with technological advances and refers to the entire cartoon content published in the internet media in a broad sense.

Since the 2000s, the structure of the cartoon industry has changed with the depression in the comic book industry and the media environment has transformed due to the development of the high-speed internet. Webtoon was created in this background and has positioned itself as a unique cartoon genre in Korea.

Webtoon changing rapidly with its interactions with different media is not the same in the context any more as the existing cartoon, but needs to be recognized as a new genre. Further, it is necessary to discuss webtoon as contents evolving continuously. In comparison with comic books, the biggest difference in webtoon is the way of starting the cartoonist career. The comic book writers can only release their works through contests or newspapers and magazines or book publishing, while the webtoonists can post their works on their blogs or the webtoon section on the portal websites. Therefore, there are many amateur comic book writers working as a webtoonist, producing creative results. This can be a good source for the producers who are looking for the novel stories with unique materials and content.

The media conversion of webtoon into movie that started with the filming of "Apartment" and "Dasepo Naughty Girl" by Kang Full in 2006 became more active due to the success of a film "Moss" that drew about 3.4 million viewers in 2010 [1].

The webtoon, "I love you" (2007) by Kang Full on the old age love story gained popularity after being converted into various media genres including play, movie and drama [2]. "Secretly Greatly" released in 2013 attracted 7 million audiences and joined the ranks of successful movies.

**Table 1. Korean Movie Adaptations of Webtoon Since 2000**

Release Year	Movie	Original Webtoon	Webtoonist	No. of Audience
2006	Apartment	Apartment	Kang Pool	644,893
2006	Dasepo Naughty Girl	Dasepo Naughty Girl	B Class Dal-gung	561,803
2008	Ba:Bo	Ba:Bo	Kang Pool	974,554
2008	Hello Schoolgirl	Hello Schoolgirl	Kang Pool	730,343
2010	Moss	Moss	YoonTae-ho	3,408,144
2011	I love you	I love you	Kang Pool	1,645,126
2011	Pain	Pain	Kang Pool	700,272
2012	The Neighbors	The Neighbors	Kang Pool	2,434,149
2012	26Years	26Years	Kang Pool	2,963,449
2012	Fist of Legend	Fist of Legend	Lee Jong-gyu	1,744,589
2013	Secretly Greatly	Secretly Greatly	Hun	6,959,126
2013	The Fives	The Fives	Jeong Yeon-sik	731,212
2014	Fashion King	Fashion King	Gian 84	594,813
2015	The Cat Funeral	The Cat Funeral	Hongjakga	2,865
2015	Inside Men	Inside Men	Yoon Tae-ho	-

As shown in [Table 1], Kang Full's webtoons were the most adapted to movies but the movie adaptations were not ended with a success except for "Moss" by Yoon Tae-ho.

Movie adaptations of comic books or webtoons recorded poor results unlike the expectations in the beginning. It was "Moss" when movie adaptations of webtoons started achieve a success. While the previous movie adaptations of cartoons overlooked the characteristics of cartoons, "Moss" organizes the scenes in the visual format that maximized the images of the original cartoon based on the vertical scroll-based presentation method unlike the previous movie adaptations [3]. Since the release of "Moss", the movies adaptations of cartoons were produced by emphasizing the characteristics of cartoons and expand the attractions of cartoons. After the movie, "Secretly Greatly", recorded the highest number of audiences in 2013, becoming the trigger of movie adaptations of cartoons.

While "Fashion King" by Kean 84 was released with expectations in 2014, it failed to meet the expectations by drawing 600,000 audiences and "The Cat Funeral" by Hongjakga released in the first half of 2015 made a miserable result with 2,865 audiences.

"The Great Catsby" serially uploaded by Kang Do-ha onto Daum, which is a portal site, was aired as a 24-part namesake soap opera on tvN, which was the beginning of the media conversion of webtoon into soap opera.

**Table 2. Soap Opera Adaptations of Webtoons**

Broadcast Year	Soap Opera	Original Webtoon	Webtoonist	Broadcast Station
2007	The Great Catsby	The Great Catsby	Kang Do-ha	tvN
2010	Mary stayed out all night	Mary stayed out all night	Won Soo-yeon	KBS2
2012	Dadd is a Pervert	Dadd is a Pervert	Gwak In-geun	KBS2
2012	A Family Photograph	A Family Photograph	Jeong Byeong-sik	SBS
2012	I Love you	I love you	Kang Full	SBS Plus

2013	Pretty boy	Pretty boy	Chun Kye-young	KBS2
2013	Flower boy next door	Flower boy next door	You Hyun-sook	tvN
2014	Her lovely heels	Her lovely heels	Park Yoon-young	SBS Plus
2014	Puberty medley	Puberty medley	Gwak In-geun	KBS2
2014	Misaeng	Misaeng	Yoon Tae-ho	tvN
2014	Dr. Frost	Dr. Frost	Lee Jong-beom	tvN
2015	Hyde, Jekyll and I	Dr.Jekyll is Mr. Hyde	Lee Choong-ho	SBS
2015	Fool's Love	Fool's Love	You Hyun-sook	tvN
2015	Girl who can see smells	Girl who can see smells	Man Chwi	SBS
2015	Orange Mamalade	Orange Mamalade	Seok Woo	KBS2
2015	Last	Last	Kang Hyeong-gyu	JTBC
2015	Awl	Awl	Choi Kyu-seok	JTBC

After "Mary Stayed Out All Night" by Won Soo-yeon was broadcast in 2010, two to three soap opera adaptations of webtoons were produced on a steady basis. With "Misaeng" by Yoon Tae-ho gained a huge popularity in October 2014, many webtoons were adapted to soap operas. In 2015, "Dr. Frost" (tvN), "Hyde, Jekyll and I" (SBS), "Fool's Love" (tvN), "Girl Who Sees Smell" (SBS), "Orange Marmalade" (KBS), "Last" (JTBC) "Awl" (JTBC) and "Scholar Who Walks the Night"(MBC), which is not a webtoon but a comic book, were adapted to soap opera.

As 'Cross-media storytelling' across media has achieved success, academical interests are increasing about how original contents are converted and remediated according to media characteristics.

As mentioned in the above example, the academic interests are given to 'cross-media storytelling' because not all media conversion of the content is achieved. It can be achieved only when the content is converged to meet the characteristics and the acceptance environment of the media.[4]

Thus, this study intends to review how a remediation is carried out in the process of conversion of webtoon into movie or soap opera, through an comparison of the narrative structures and visual factors, and to discuss it in the interrelations with the characteristics of each media.

## 2. Remediation of Webtoon to Image

### 2.1 Formal Remediation of Webtoon

At the early stage, there were many attempts to understand the format of webtoon which mainly described the everyday life stories on the personal websites or community pages as a new concept of "essaytoon (essay+cartoon)" and "digitoon (digital photo+cartoon)" unlike the existing format of cartoon. Later, as the webtoon with different characteristics from the early-stage webtoon, such as essaytoon, appeared, it was attempted to distinguish such webtoon. The early-stage essaytoons were categorized as 'webtoon', the cartoons showing the drawing style and plot structure of comic books on the web were categorized as 'webcomics', and the cartoons which integrated the webtoon's unique drawing style of essaytoon into the plot structure of comic books were categorized as 'webmic'. [5] Such categorization can be understood as a process where the newly emerged early-stage webtoon seeks for its mediality.

There was also an attempt to compare webtoon with comic books as well as similar visual media including movies and animations and conceptualize webtoon's unique outstanding directing style and acceptance method as mediality. By accepting and changing the characteristics of other visual media, webtoon established its mediality with the vertical scroll-based presentation method, generalization of the use of CG and color

images and the use of sound and animation. [6] The generalization of the vertical scroll-based presentation method of webtoon is highly affected by the generalization of a wheel mouse designed to explore or read the web pages more conveniently. A wheel mouse is an improved version of three-button mouse to optimize to the web environment. It was possible to resolve inconveniences by scrolling down the web pages after dragging the scroll bar using the wheel at the center. As many parts of our life have been absorbed in the web, cartoons have also been advanced to adapt to the web environment. At the early stage when cartoons started to be provided online, the service was mainly provided in the scanned format of comic books. This method retained the unique format of turning the pages through the exclusive viewer program. It required a quite complicated control for enlargement and reduction. Cartoons have changed from the inconvenient method of turning pages to be easily readable with the vertical scrolls like many other web pages. Therefore, the images were listed vertically and the time concept called scroll was involved to read the images. This method is fundamentally different from the scanned comic books serviced on the web [7].

Readers have the possibility of choice about webtoon platform such as PC, smartphone and tablet and reading methods such as reading the whole series and automatic and manual scrolling, which is the important factor in defining the mediality of webtoon. In particular, a presentation method considering two factors such as vertical scroll-based presentation method and readers' choice of reading method has been positioned as a typical mediality of webtoon only.

The readers slowly scroll down the pages on the parts that deliver the information with 'texts' including lines and narration, and quickly scroll down the pages on the parts only with 'images'. This was actively used. [8] Various presentation methods were attempted using the 'critical scene' to control the readers' scrolling speed in the pages of 'images' to equate with the characters and draw empathy, create suspenses and maximize the action expression [9]. In addition, webtoon uses the presentation method of movie for more effective presentation of storytelling. This is possible because webtoon mainly uses the vertical scroll-based method different from the existing horizontal-based format of cartoon. This is remarkably beneficial to present the space and express the flow of time.

The camera techniques for webtoon can be divided into space presentation technique and time presentation techniques. The space presentation techniques include pan and tilt, and zoom-in and out focus techniques. Pan is a technique to shoot the subject by moving from left to right with camera fixed and tilt is a technique to shoot the subject by moving up and down. Zoom-in is a technique to make a screen effect to be close to or far from the subject without controlling the actual distance with the subject using the zoom lens of camera. The out focus technique is used to emphasize the characters or express the feelings and adds focus to the screen. The time presentation techniques typically have the dissolve effect and movement expression. The dissolve effect refers to reduce or increase the density for a smooth change from one screen to another and movement expression makes the scenes with the movement. The rack focus technique where the focus moves from one character to another and the motion blur technique that expresses the movement of moving objects are the representative filming techniques used in webtoon.[10]

## **2.2 Remediation of Webtoon to Storytelling**

Generally, webtoon shows an aspect of its remediation to movie and soap opera. Webtoon builds up its own readers, usually updated on web sites on a week-cycle basis. Those works are classified into story webtoon and omnibus webtoon depending on storytelling method. According to Nam Seung-hee's paper (2010)[11], soap opera is classified into serial type soap opera and series type soap opera based on the existing studies. Considering Nam Seung-hee's and others' opinions overall, it can be said that serial type is "to complete one story through an organical connection of each episode" and "to have a continuous structure in the content", and that series type means "each episode having individually completed story structure with the repetition of situational factors such as character and background".

In terms of the series storytelling format, it is not difficult to understand the story without the episodes in order due to the segmentation of each episode despite the same characters and world view. However, the serial format has the characteristics of the tight narrative structure that cannot be understood without watching the previous episodes. TV drama also has this narrative structure. In many cases, the western soap operas use the series storytelling format while the Korean ones use the serial format. This applies to webtoon and cartoon with remediation. In the U.S., large production companies including Marvel Comics and DC Comics mainly produce comic books, mostly in the series format. On the other hand, the comic books in Korea and Japan are produced in the serial format describing the serial stories in dozens of books. This is assumed to be caused by the cultural differences between the West and the Orient, as an issue worth dealing with in the follow-up researches.

### **3. Analysis of Success Factors in a Film, “Secretly, Greatly” and Soap Opera, “Misaeng”**

Since the mid-2000s, webtoons have been adapted to movies in full-scale. Although there were slightly differences between the webtoons depending on the material or production scope, movie adaptations of webtoons have not been so successful in terms of the box office record. For example, while a webtoon received good reviews from the readers causing a sensation, its movie adaptation often fails to gain as much popularity and interests as the original webtoon in every aspect including evaluation and box office record. In this trend, "Secretly, Greatly" turned on the green light in movie adaptations of webtoons by attracting 7 million audiences, it served as a trigger to produce movies based on the story of webtoon. [12] In terms of soap operas, two to three drama adaptations of webtoons have been produced on a steady basis since the release of "The Great Gatsby" in 2007 but failed to receive much attention. After the huge sensation of "Misaeng", broadcast on tvN in 2014, 6 drama adaptations were or have been being broadcast as of October 2015. This is a lot higher than the number of movie adaptations of webtoons.

After the release of movie "Secretly, Greatly" and soap opera "Misaeng", many webtoons were adapted to movies or dramas but have yet to achieve extraordinary results. Therefore, this study holds significance to come up with the success factors by analyzing the narrative structure and visual elements of the above-mentioned two works.

#### **3.1 Analysis of Narrative Structure**

The narrative structure of movies or soap operas should be different. No matter how long the story is, movies should be ended in about two hours. However, soap operas have basically 20 episodes and are broadcast for three months by broadcasting two episodes a week. In other words, the flow of story is different.

In terms of the U.S. movies, which are called to be Hollywood movies, the movie adaptations of cartoons are guaranteed a success worldwide. "Superman Series", "Batman Series", "Spiderman Series", "Iron Man Series" and the collection of super heroes "Avengers Series" made a big hit. Since the narrative structure of American cartoons is in the 'series format composed of the episodes with individually complete story structures', it is suitable for movies that focus on one story in one episode. However, Korean cartoons and webtoons are often produced in the 'serial format where each episode connects with each other to complete one story.' In other words, most of the Korean webtoons are in the serial format with the narrative structure suitable for serial soap operas.

A webtoon, “Secretly, Greatly” and a film, “Secretly, Greatly” are progressed with a plot of three act structure in terms of the plot of narrative structure. Webtoon and movie arrange core incidents composed of the plot, the same way.

In scene 1, the main characters of Won Ryoo-hwan (Dong-goo), Seo Sang-goo, Soon Im and Lee Hae-rang were introduced and the event to trigger the story happened. As Lee Hye-jin from North Korea appeared in front of Won Ryoo-hwan, the conflict started to arise. Scene 1 and 2 were connected with the event when the suicidal order was sent from

North Korea (plot point 1). Scene 2 described the conflicts between Won Ryoo-hwan, Lee Hae-rang, Lee Hye-jin and Seo Soo-hyeok over the suicidal order. The midpoint of scene 2 was the event where Kim Tae-won came down to South Korea to get rid of the team leaders. Won Ryoo-hwan finished the life in Seoul by saying goodbye to Soon-im who cared him. Scene 2 and 3 were connected with the event that Won Ryoo-hwan who checked the GPS tracker met Kim Tae-won and identified whether his mother was alive (plot point 2). In scene 3, the final fight on the rainy construction site of apartment was set as a climax and the final flashback became the ending scene. The content and arrangement of key events in the plot structure were the same with the original webtoon because the webtoon had the linear plot structure that was favorable for media conversion to movie.

However, all plot incidents in a webtoon, "Secretly, Greatly" and a film, "Secretly, Greatly" are not the same. Core incidents, which are the frame of plot structure, are the same, but detailed plot incidents are different. In movie, some parts of detailed plot incidents were omitted.

Given the characteristics of movie as a media that delivers the story within the limited time, this seems to be a realistic choice. Most of the specific plot events omitted in the movie adaptation, <Secretly, Greatly>, are the parts to introduce the characters. [13] They are the parts where the balance between the plot and characters in the original webtoon started to be lost under the media conversion to movie. In this case, the audience cannot properly understand the behaviors and psychology of the characters without reading the webtoon first.

Plot is the sequence of events. It emphasizes a certain events in the story, induce the readers or audience to interpret certain content and closely deal with the process of event arrangement. [14] Therefore, in the process of convergence from one text to another in a different genre, the plot structure adds and emphasizes certain events, or drops or reduces certain episodes.

In a film "Secretly, Greatly", plots were omitted and reduced, and in soap opera "Misaeng", narration was extended through the addition and emphasis of incidents.

The webtoon, "Misaeng", has a relatively simple plot that describes the growth process of Jang Geu-rae who struggles to survive as a contract worker of a large general trading company after failing to become a professional Baduk player and daily life and sorrows of ordinary office workers through deputy head Oh, the team leader of sales team 3 where Jang Geu-rae is belong to and his colleagues. However, the TV drama adaptation of the webtoon expanded the narrative structure by changing the unlinear plot to a complicated one. The major plots were the growth process of the contract worker Jang Geu-rae as well as the story of deputy head Oh of sales team 3 opposed to the fierce in-house politics and distorted corporate culture of a large company. In addition, the subsidiary plots included sexual discrimination and harassment by the head of department and male seniors on Ahn Young-e, who joined the company at the same time with Jang Geu-rae as a heroine of the soap opera and her story to adapt to the situation and the story of deputy head Seon who struggles to balance work and family as a working mom and overcomes the issues. In addition, while the original webtoon did not describe the romantic narration between Jang Geu-rae and Ahn Young-e and Ahn Young-e and Jang Baeg-gi, who also joined the company at the same time with Jang Geu-rae, the soap opera adaptation had another key plot of the hidden nuanced emotions and tension among Jang Geu-rae, Ahn Young-e and Jang Baeg-gi and the romantic narrative between Jang Geu-rae and the kindergarten teacher who actively tried to win the heart of Jang Geu-rae. [15] While the movie adaptation, <Secretly, Greatly>, reduced the narrative by omitting the plot of introduction of the characters, drama adaptation "Misaeng" expanded the narration by describing the personality of the characters in three dimensions and adding the stories of the characters.

In webtoon "Misaeng", the importance of Jang Baeg-gi, Ahn Young-e and Han Seok-ryul was not very great, and the story was progressed centered on Jang Geu-rae and Sales Division 3, while in soap opera "Misaeng", Jang Baeg-gi, Ahn Young-e and Han Seok-ryul were major characters who caused troubles with Jang Geu-rae or seniors in every part, tackled them and took the initiative in story. As confirmed in "Secretly, Greatly" and

"Misaeng", both of two stories have a plot with relatively simple linear structure. it is found that a simple linear structure is more advantageous in the remediation of webtoon to movie or soap opera than a complex plot structure intermingled with different factors.

In particular, most of the webtoons adapted to movies or soap operas have the complete stories already enjoyed by many netizens. Therefore, the webtoons in the genre of thriller or mystery with dramatic reversals should be avoided because they cannot give a dramatic excitement to the audience or viewers as visual images. "Moss" by Yoon Tae-ho has achieved a success after overcoming such disadvantage but this is an extremely unusual case.

### 3.2 Analysis of Visual Elements

Although there are no specifically identified surveys on the movie, "Secretly, Greatly", most of the audience who watched the movie in the beginning of the release read the original webtoon, given the articles and comments on the internet. Of course, there must be the 'ticket power' of popular actor Kim Soo-hyun but it can be said that the power of the fans of the original webtoon. On the other hand, the comic book, "Misaeng", became the bestseller after broadcasting the drama adaptation as many fans of the soap opera read the original webtoon and bought the comic book.

Kim Soo-hyun, who played Won Ryoo-hwan as the lead character in "Secretly, Greatly", received the reviews that he matched the original character 100% and other characters almost identically matched the original images, accounting for the biggest part of the movie adaptation.

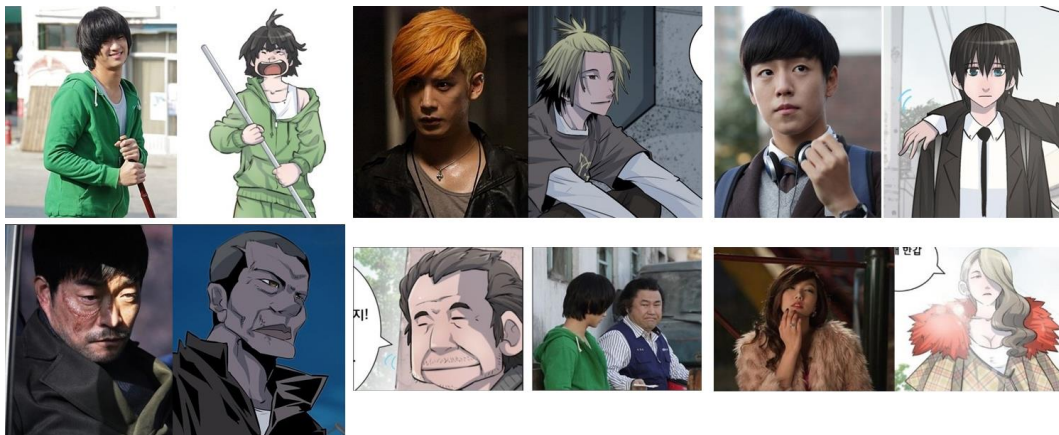


Figure 1. The Characters of "Secretly, Greatly"

As to the soap opera adaptation, "Misaeng", the actors and actresses did not match the original characters to the amazing level like "Secretly, Greatly" but 'senior manager Kim', who was the immediate superior of hero Jang Geu-rae, perfectly matched the original character and became the hot topic during the entire episodes of the drama.



Figure 2. The Characters of "Misaeng"

## 4. Conclusion

Cross-media phenomenon, which is a remediation of webtoon as original to movie and soap opera, has been becoming more active since the mid-2000s. As the story is complete and its contents are amusing, the remediation of webtoon has been increasingly becoming active. However, it has rarely become a high-grossing movie or received high viewer ratings. This study derived success factors through an comparison of the narrative structures and visual factors of “Secretly, Greatly”, which became the highest-grossing film and “Misaeng”, which got high viewer ratings and got a reputation as well-made soap opera, with the webtoon as the original.

This study comes to a conclusion that the narration of webtoon as original composed of simple linear plot structure are favorable. The structure of simple narration has a strong point that it enables to easily reduce and extend narrations suitably for movie, where story should be completed within about two hours, and soap opera, where story is progressed in a long series of about 20 parts. It is found that thrillers and detective things which provide dramatic turn of the events to viewers who know of the whole story are not favorable.

It is found that, in terms of visual factor, a factor which viewers first respond to is a synchronization between a character in webtoon and an actor who actually plays an acting. This means that, when a characters in webtoon corresponds visually to a character in movie or soap opera based on webtoon, the likelihood of success is high.

Through case study, it can be known that it is necessary to select an actor corresponding visually to text configuration strategy optimized for media conversion based on full understanding of the mediality of webtoon and movie, and webtoon and soap opera.

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