

***A Study of Fanpage Creators of Text/Illustration in Taiwan, in Particular with
Their Creative Process***

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Abstract

With the popularity of high-speed internet, the number of using mobile phones has been increased in this generation, also known as high-tech generation. Nowadays, using mobile phone has become an irreplaceable part of our daily life. By using mobile phone, long description of sentences or words are difficult for understanding the meaning immediately. However, presented with a simple picture or image, reader can understand easily. Therefore, the rise of creators by using text and illustration to present their opinions in funny or satirical ways has been much increased in recent years. The illustrators who use facebook fanpage to present their works, in the study will be called as “fanpage creator of text/illustration”. The works created by those illustrators mainly draw an image and add text to the image. The image usually created by free hand drawing showing a careless style, giving a sense of humor to express feelings. This study will apply qualitative method to gain an insight of those popular creators, to understand the working processes, analyzing the working process from concept, sketch to drawing and thoughts while create an illustration.

Keywords: facebook, fanpage creator of text/illustration, creative process

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Introduction

Swiping on one's mobile phone has become an activity in itself in modern life. As lengthy texts are difficult for viewers to understand in short periods of time, the presentation of simple images enables them to recognize the meaning immediately, even responding with a knowing smile. Thus, there has been a trend in the use of humor or satirical statements by creators of text/illustration; these creators must have not only a certain degree of artistic ability but also a keen eye for the world around them, as only by melding their works with current affairs are they able to elicit favorable responses from the viewers. As viewers "like" and "share" the works of text/illustration creators on social media, their works can become known to more people. As a result, the popularity of the creators increases as their fanpages or works collect more likes. According to the social media monitoring platform database of Taiwan's Institute for Information Industry (III), among the categories of online celebrities, there is an extraordinary number of fans of online illustrators; in the ranking of Taiwan's top ten internet celebrities, the Facebook fanpages of creators of text/illustration occupied the seventh and ninth places (Carat Media, 2014).

In recent years, there has been a rise in the use of Facebook fanpages by illustrators to publish their works; in this study, we call these artists "Fanpage creators of text/illustration." The creative content of this type of creator is centered on drawings, supplemented with text; these drawings are often presented casually using line drafts, with a straightforward creative method. The content of these works is generally humorous, with their satirical nature eliciting an emotional venting effect. Furthermore, they use today's most popular free social media site, "Facebook," as their development platform. This study uses the DailyView internet popularity tool to survey the "Top Ten Illustrators Most Loved by Netizens" (2010), as calculated by online big data, and the "Popular Taiwanese Online Illustrators" proposed by the UBeauty website (Venus, 2014). By combining the data with the number of fans of fanpages as collected by the researchers, and creating a ranking based on the number of fans, we have selected subjects suitable for interviews. Through qualitative interviews and an in-depth discussion of the creators' creative processes, we attempt to analyze the thinking of Facebook fanpage creators of text/illustration during their creative process as a means of conducting an in-depth study of topics related to fanpages. The objective of this study is as follow:

To analyze the creative process of Facebook fanpage creators of text/illustration:

To understand the creative processes of highly popular creators of text/illustration, and analyze their conception in the period of creation, in addition to changes in thinking during the sketch and implementation phases of creation

Emergence of Fanpage Creators of Text/Illustration

In the Web2.0 world, online blogs are platforms that emphasize the sharing of ideas. In addition to having basic functions for the exchange of information, they also provide web users with a convenient platform for debate. Compared with the previous traditional forms of mass media, blogs are more effective with regard to both viewer interaction and feedback. Previously, because of the high popularity of illustrators on blogs, such as Wan Wan, many illustrators were attracted to the platform in hoping

that they could share their works through the social media platform, and follow Wan Wan's footsteps. However, following the rapidly increasing number of Facebook users, by 2009, 62% of the Taiwanese public used Facebook (Chen 2009). Furthermore, according to Liang Youmei, Facebook's manager for the Greater China region, "up to 2014, in Taiwan, an average of 11 million people were logging into Facebook each day, and an average of 15 million people logging in each month (Yang, 2014). This trend has also encouraged illustrators who previously shared their works on blogs to shift gradually to the use of Facebook as a sharing platform to gain popularity more quickly.

In addition, there is an increasing number of such creators who are beginning to operate text/illustration based fanpages because of various reasons: looking to the future development of text/illustration, in view of the cost-free nature of the Facebook platform, and driven by personal interest or the encouragement of friends. Generally, fanpage creators of text/illustration initially only rely on "likes" and "shares" from their Facebook friends, expanding gradually their group of viewers and accumulating fans. However, only when a certain degree of fame is attained is it possible to make physical versions of their creations available to the public for purchase. As regards the age distribution of Facebook users, those aged between 25 and 34 and 18 and 24 make up the bulk of users, comprising 42.2% and 36.2% of total users, respectively (Business Next, 2009). We can see that based on this distribution, Facebook fanpage creators of text/illustration are generally relatively young; for example, Cherng and Baibai Jiujiu were born between 1981 and 1990. Furthermore, there is an increasing number of fanpage creators of text/illustration whose works are expanded and shared by other Facebook users as they accumulate more likes, for example, Duncan, Mr. H.H, and the Funny Tattoo Shop.

However, the characteristics of fanpage creators of text/illustration differ from traditional illustrators in certain ways; in addition to being shared on different platforms, there are also a number of differences in modes of creation and style: (1) The process of creation has been condensed. Creators of text/illustration have shortened the creative process to adapt to the high rate of elimination within the Facebook platform; if they are able to share multiple works in a short period of time, it is easier to attract a stable following of fans. (2) Textual content is more realistic and satirical. Typically, works with particularly satirical content, or content particularly pertinent to current events, more closely match the thoughts of viewers; as a result, it is easier to resonate with viewers and attract fans. (3) Image presentation methods are transformed. The presentation of images can be divided into two types: single image presentation, which causes viewers to recognize immediately the meaning of the text/illustration creator, as in Figure 1; or dialogue presentation, for example, though a narrative presented in continuous images, as in Figure 2. (4) The use of simple colors and black-and-white line drawings are introduced. To reduce the duration of the creative process, many fanpage creators of text/illustration have a habit of using extremely simple black-and-white line drawings paired with simple colors as their main method of creation, and use basic color blocks to represent their desired color pattern.



Figure 1: Single Image Presentation (QiaohuTIGER Facebook Fanpage, 2016)













Figure 2: Continuous Dialogic Images (Allcaneat Facebook Fanpage, 2016)

Research Method

As the highly popular fanpage creators of text/illustration explored in this study form a niche profession, this study has chosen to conduct qualitative interviews as a research method to understand the relationship between the way of thinking of the creator at the moment of creation. After ranking fanpage creators according to the DailyView Current Big Data Analysis (2014) and the highly popular fanpage creators of text/illustration proposed by the UBeauty website in 2014 (Venus, 2014), this list serves as the original list of interview subjects for this study. However, because a number of creators of text/illustration could not participate owing to personal factors or refusal, we have supplemented this original list of interviewees with creators of text/illustration whose fanpages had at least 140,000 fans as of October 30, 2016. Below, we assign a code beginning with “F” (Facebook, Fanpage) to interviewees, ranking them by number of fans, and explaining briefly the content of their works, as shown in Table 1:

Table 1: Top 10 Fanpage Creators of Text/Illustration, Number of Fans, Description, and Works

Code	Name of Fanpage	No. of Fans	Description	Work
F01	Allcaneat	562,434	The creator of “Allcaneat” use a round-faced, chubby, short-haired boy as his protagonist. His creations involve events encountered in life, and use humorous techniques and detailed descriptions of everyday life phenomena.	
F02	QiaohuTIGER	466,175	The creator of “QiaohuTIGER” use an anthropomorphic “chicken-sister” as his protagonist. He describes a phenomenon encountered by service industry staff, and has a humorous drawing style and narrative technique, winning acclaim from many department store service staff members.	
F03	Funny Tattoo Shop	348,416	The creator of “Funny Tattoo Shop” use a particularly Taiwanese black-and-white “Ah-Bei,” wearing a pair of underwear as his protagonist. The creator’s family has opened a Chinese medicine clinic, and uses a pen to draw black-and-white line drawings easily in his spare time at work, creating a precise Taiwanese “Ah-Bei,” wearing only his underwear, to convey sarcastic and humorous content.	
F04	Yellow Book	327,365	The creator of “Yellow Book” created the pen-name “Yellow Book” as a result of his love for black-and-white humor. Initially, his works were primarily humorous, but he shifted gradually toward the expression of real-to-life logic through their comics.	

F05	2bau	488,570	The creator of “2bau” is a mother of twins, a vegetable and a meat bun. She uses fine lines and a variety of colors to draw the interesting events that occur with her sons.	
F06	Jokeman	411,463	The creator of “Jokeman” uses a brown-skinned “Tuitui Bear” as his protagonist; the fanpage primarily tells jokes, which are expressed through interpersonal dialogue.	
F07	Lousy Girlfriend	372,984	The works of the creator of “Lousy Girlfriend” became popular as stickers for the Line messaging app. The works use warm, soft colors, and fine lines, and show subtle everyday interactions between boyfriend and girlfriend.	
F08	Mr. Doumiao	213,022	The creator of “Mr. Doumiao” is still a university student, and his protagonist is a figure with two leaves growing from its head. The creator likes to use green colors in his works, illustrating interesting events in everyday life.	
F09	I Wanna Hate You for Five Mins	192,621	The creator of “I Wanna Hate You for Five Mins” use a black-and-white character, with an oval hairstyle as her protagonist. Most of her works are in black and white, at times, including few color blocks. The content of these works often breaks taboos in discussing current or political topics.	
F10	Wei, Wei	140,414	The creator of “Wei, Wei” uses a blue, smiling wizard as his protagonist. The creator prefers to use watercolors to paint his works, which often have childlike and soothing content, and differ from typical works of creators of text/illustration.	

Data Source: This study

Data Discussion

Characteristics of the formation of Facebook text/illustration

Establishment of fanpages:

The reasons for the establishment of fanpages are not all the same; a number of the interviewees stated that they started their page based on the recommendations or encouragement of friends (F06, F09), whereas one interviewee stated that he thought he should find something to do while studying in the university: "When I had just started university, for a while, I felt like I was wasting my time and that I should find something to do, so I started the page" (F08). Other respondents said that they established their pages for reasons, such as ease of employment (F04) or to sell products (F10). Many respondents expressed that they began their page during their time in university (F01, F08, F09, F10), showing that students have more time to focus on the management of a fanpage. Furthermore, it is easy to get inspiration from daily life and classmates: "If I hadn't been a student when I started, I don't think that I would be able to think of many things. I think that my time as a student was a good opportunity to start" (F01). There were also a number of the interviewees who believed that if they had managed their fanpage while being employed, they might not have been able to devote full attention to the stable quality of their fanpage; therefore, they could not consider it as a full-time work: "If I were a worker now, although I really enjoy drawing, because of the instability of the fanpage, I wouldn't be able to become a professional illustrator" (F08).

Choice of drawing style:

In response to the rapid pace of transmission, the overwhelming majority of fanpage creators of text/illustration opted to use internet drawings to create their works. A number of the interviewees expressed that because the first drawing tool that they encountered was digital drawing board, they were used to manipulating computers for drawing; however, it was impossible to draw correctly on the first try when using pen and paper. As shown in Figure 3 below, interviewee F09 drew her protagonist quickly during the interview using a drawing tablet. Still, a number of the interviewees stated two situations in which they would first use pencil for sketching: 1. When they have little faith in the content; one interviewee stated that when they were faced with a content in which they had little faith, they would try to figure out what to do: "When making a work, I use a pencil or don't use a pencil; when I don't use a pencil, I have a better grasp of the composition or drawing style" (F03). 2. When works must be created carefully, such as in collaborative projects for businesses (F02, F06, F07); Because collaborative projects for businesses must be discussed with the manufacturer and amended, drawing using a pencil is more appropriate for the creator of text/illustration: "I've used a pencil to draw, but that was for collaborative projects with businesses, because the client wanted a draft" (F06). Indeed, not all respondents used digital drawing boards; others used traditional drawing methods as their main methods of creation (F07, F10). As interviewee F10 expressed, "I prefer watercolors; they have a more temperate feeling, and fewer people paint by hand." This gives this interviewee's works a hand-painted warmth.

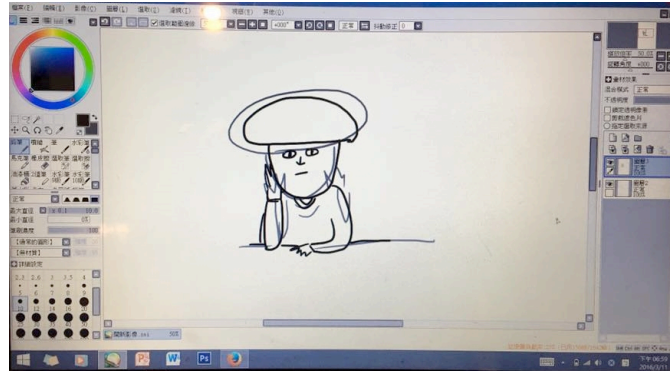


Figure 3: The creator of the page “I Wanna Hate You for Five Mins” use a computer to draw their works directly.

**Data source: Screenshot of one of the creators’ computer screen.
March 11, 2016; Retrieved from: Interview process**

Conception: Gathering interesting “stems”

“Stems” from surroundings:

The “stems” of creative inspiration mostly come from the surroundings of the creator; many interviewees indicated that their inspiration came from their personal experiences or conversations with others (F01, F03, F06, F07). “Sometimes, my creations come mostly from experience,” said interviewee F03. With regard to how to comply with the rapid replacement rate of the Facebook platform and the successful attraction of the attention of users within short periods of time, these factors constrict the time that creators of text/illustration have to create their works; hence, most interviewees expressed that they would share a work of text/illustration to their fanpages almost every day (F03, F05, F09): “I post something almost every day, and if a post is relatively popular, I can rest for two or three days” (F03). However, sources of creative inspiration are not endless, and so when creators do not have an interesting topic inspired from their life or surroundings, they have expressed that: “if I don’t have a stem of inspiration and don’t know what to draw, I will take a break” (F02).

Taking notes to avoid forgetting:

With regard to fleeting inspiration, most interviewees take notes to avoid forgetting their ideas (F05, F06, F07, F08, F09); “if I observe something that I’d like to draw when I’m walking down the street, I’ll write it down and draw it when I get home” (F09). Still, when converting collected sources of inspiration into useful “stems,” a careful consideration is required: “I think that an inspiration is easy to grasp when it initially comes, but afterwards, inspiration needs to be collected and considered” (F07). Furthermore, interviewees think that if there is no way to be present in such environments, this will affect their sources of inspiration: “When I’m not in the place of inspiration while working, I think that my stems have diminished” (F02). Because it is necessary to share a work of text/illustration nearly every day, when “stems” have diminished in number, most creators feel a significant pressure; however, one interviewee noted that they will seek out their friends and other people with whom they can speak to seek out inspiration. Then, from the content of their discussions, they will form mental compositions, finally applying them within the content of their works, as shown in the composition process below of interviewee F03.

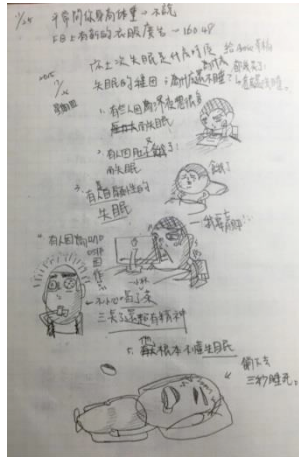


Figure 4: One of the creator of “Allcaneat” use conversations with others to form mental compositions.

Data source: Allcaneat. March 8, 2016. Retrieved from: Interview process

Sketching: a nonessential process

Platform characteristics, a short creation period:

When compared with the works of traditional illustrators, it is necessary for the creator of text/illustration to share their works as they are created because of the rapid nature of updates to fanpages. As a result, creators do not have enough time to work on the fine details of their creations; as both interviewees F01 and F05 expressed: “If I work quickly, I can finish a work in only over 10 minutes;” “If I’m more focused on my drawing, it takes 15 to 20 minutes.” An interviewee stated directly that “because posting text/illustration on Facebook requires speed, it isn’t necessary to draw with great detail” (F02). Meanwhile, creators may spend over an hour on a work only when it is necessary to draw relatively complex or important projects (F06, F09). Interviewee F09 stated that “it depends on the level of complexity; simple projects can be completed within 10 minutes. I once completed a work in one minute, then left, so quick jobs can be completed quickly. Slow works have more details, and may take up to an hour to complete.”

“Rough Drafts” have become an optional step:

For fanpage creators of text/illustration, rough drafts become gradually a dispensable process. A number of the interviewees expressed that they would use their computers to draw rough drafts (F01, F04, F09), stating, “I only use my computer for rough drafts” (F04). In contrast, others expressed that because they use their computers for drawing, they would skip the rough draft step altogether (F05, F07). F07 stated, “I basically only use my digital drawing tablet, and so I don’t draw rough drafts anymore.” Whether or not the creator decides to omit the rough draft process is closely related to the complexity of the work or whether it is part of a corporate cooperation (F02, F05, F06, F08, F09). From Figure 5 below, we can see that when text/illustration creator F02 works on pieces to publish in his physical book, he first uses a pencil to draw and make detailed revisions, then publishes the piece. This is a relatively cautious process compared with works generally shared on Facebook fanpages.

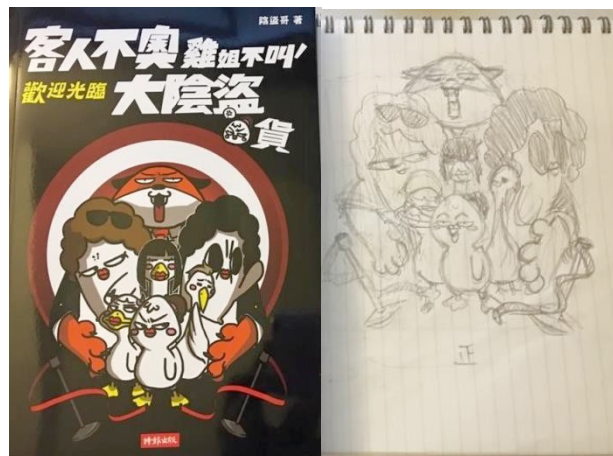


Figure 5: A sketch for the published works of one of the creator of “QiaohuTIGER”

Data source: Provided by QiaohuTIGER. February 17, 2016. Retrieved from: Interview process

Execution: determining characters and image presentation

Determining characters:

Fanpage creators of text/illustration often establish a specific form that impresses fans; most interviewees used real events from their daily lives in their creative content, and project themselves onto their protagonist (F05, F07, F08, F09). “The original form of this protagonist was me; 80% of my stories are things that occurred around me” (F09). Interestingly, one interviewee did not realize that he was creating text/illustration related to himself, but someone else alerted him to this fact: “My works were my own stories all along” (F03). Another interviewee’s protagonist was created through trial and error (F02). Furthermore, an interviewee created his protagonist to meet the needs of a manufacturer: “I had been drawing at random continuously, and wasn’t thinking much during the creative process; the protagonist just emerged” (F10).

Image presentation:

Most interviewees used digital drawing tablets and presented their works in pure black and white; because the presentation style of line drawings is relatively easy for creators of text/illustration, the drawings can be understood quickly by fans. However, with regard to color choices, a number of the respondents expressed that they use black and white as their main color of choice (F01, F02, F09); in addition to convenience, interviewee F09 stated the following reason for this: “I think that now, the typical creator of text/illustration frequently uses the black-and-white style because it is relatively fast and simple.” However, there were also interviewees who expressed that they chose to use multiple colors (F04, F06, F07, F08, F10), generally because of personal preferences. “I personally like the color green in particular; when I began, I thought that this was a good fit” (F08).

Research Conclusions

Today's Facebook fanpage creators of text/illustration are no longer solely focused on single modes of operation but have rather chosen a diverse platform to augment their popularities and reputations. Creators use fanpages as their primary platform possibly because of encouragement from their friends, the ease of finding employment when posting works on the platform, or to market their products. Although the reasons and motives for establishing their pages vary, this study found that beginning to operate fanpages during the creators' time as students would benefit them, because they are better able to devote sufficient time to operation and have fewer economic pressures to worry about. This also contributes to the interesting phenomenon that many creators of text/illustration established their fanpages while studying. Furthermore, because this young generation of text/illustration creators has been in contact with computers since the beginning of their lives, computers have become their primary tool for creation. It is interesting that when these young creators began sharing their works on Facebook, the characteristics of the creators are often projected onto the protagonists of their works. Also, some creators were gradually formed without any specific intention, and the creators must sometimes be alerted to the nature of their characters by others: "All along, the people that I've been drawing were playing out my own story."

The works of creators of text/illustration do not particularly emphasize superlative drawing techniques, but rather focus on which "stem" is more able to attract the attention of viewers; as a result, creators must be constantly observant of their surroundings to gather interesting material. Furthermore, the number of "stems" may gradually diminish as working days accumulate or when in different creative environments. Thus, this study found that creators of text/illustration have ways of responding to their control over "stems"; for example, when a creator has run out of "stems," certain individuals will go outside to gather ideas, or chat with friends to find sources of "stems." Meanwhile, certain creators will choose to rest for a few days, and resume working when they have come up with ideas. Still, a number of creators of text/illustration will rest for a day if their work has generated a relatively large number of likes. For this reason, when it is necessary to frequently maintain the attractive power of a fanpage toward fans, the effective use of "stems" by creators for fanpage management is crucial.

When compared with previous traditional illustrators, modern creators of text/illustration generally use computers as a replacement for traditional pencil-and-paper drawing. Because creators had been in contact with digital drawing methods from the beginning in their lives, the use of computers in their creative process has become a drawing habit; combined with the rapid changes of social media platforms, the ability to complete works rapidly has become an important factor in this choice. This study found that spending additional time on "sketching" has gradually become a dispensable step, as it concerns fanpage creators of text/illustration. Still, when facing a project in which the creator has little confidence, or a project that must be worked upon carefully in cooperation with a commercial partner, "sketch" drawings will then be used; otherwise, the "sketching" step is omitted generally for works that are shared on fanpages. Additionally, to complete works rapidly, many creators of text/illustration use simple line drawings with color blocks to complete their drawings easily. This is because the emphasis of

text/illustration works lies in how to present interesting “stems,” rather than the delicate complexity of the drawing in the work.

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