Reading the Visual Narrative: Webtoons as a Pathway for Literacy Development and Social Entrepreneurship

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Abstract

This article examines the impact of webtoons on readers, with a specific focus on their potential to enhance reading comprehension and emotional engagement. Webtoons are a form of digital comics that originated in South Korea and have become increasingly popular worldwide. They are characterized by their vertical scrolling format, multimedia elements, and interactive features. Prior studies have shown that webtoons can be practical tools for promoting literacy development. They can help readers improve their comprehension skills by providing visual cues and engaging narratives. Webtoons can also help readers connect emotionally with the characters and stories, enhancing their engagement. The popular webtoon 'Lookism' is examined as a case study to demonstrate how webtoons can be used to teach while entertaining. This analysis highlights the defining features of webtoons, their multimodal scaffolding advantages, and their capacity to teach cultural understandings, the way webtoons can create an enabling environment for social entrepreneurship among youth. Overall, the findings of this review suggest that webtoons are a valuable educational resource that can make reading more appealing and meaningful for modern digital audiences and carry the potential to inculcate conducive environment for social change. This review also identifies critical areas for further research, such as the optimal instructional applications of webtoons and their effectiveness in different cultural contexts.

***Keywords*:** webtoons, digital comics, reading comprehension, emotional engagement, children's learning psychology, social entrepreneurship, social change

1. Introduction

The rise of digital media presents both opportunities and challenges for literacy education. While today's youth are immersed in technology, their engagement with traditional print texts has declined (Gambrell, 2015). Educators thus face the imperative of promoting reading motivation and skills development among digitally oriented learners. Harnessing the appeal of multimodal digital content may provide an effective solution. In particular, the emergent medium of webtoons offers educators a novel tool to advance literacy goals while connecting with students' digital interests.

Webtoons are digital comics designed for online and mobile reading. Originating in South Korea in the early 2000s, webtoons have become a global phenomenon with the proliferation of smartphone use (Cho, 2021). Accessible through apps or websites, these vertical-scrolling comics utilize distinctive digital platforms. Infinite canvas allows for lengthy episodic narratives optimized for smartphone interfaces. Multimedia effects like motion, sound, and zooming add immersive dimensions. Interactive features such as comment sections facilitate engagement (Cimmermanová, 2021; Yun, 2019).

With diverse genres, compelling visual storytelling, and bite-sized installments released rapidly, webtoons have become a daily entertainment source for millions of youth worldwide. Tapas Media reports over 60 million global monthly users while leading webtoon platforms like Solo Leveling and Lore Olympus exceed one billion views (Stephen, 2022). In Korea, prominent webtoon portals Daum and Naver register over 50 million domestic users alone (Yun, 2019).

Significantly, webtoons and digital comics are also gaining traction as educational tools. Multimodal webtoons integrate textual, visual, and design elements that facilitate comprehension and engagement, especially for struggling and reluctant readers (Sullivan, 2019). Beyond entertainment, this medium offers multiliteracies development, including visual, digital, cultural, and critical analysis skills vital for interpreting contemporary media (Jacobs, 2007). Educators have thus begun leveraging webtoons' inherent appeal to promote literacy engagement and learning.

However, studies analyzing the efficacy of webtoons in literacy education still need to be expanded (Dos Santon, 2022; Liu, 2004). Existing research has focused on Korean and Indonesian contexts, with little exploration in Western settings. Studies comparing webtoons to traditional texts have found advantages for engagement and comprehension, but investigations into optimal instructional applications are still needed. This literature review synthesizes findings on webtoons' benefits and effective practices to inform integration in reading curricula while highlighting critical areas for further research.

The popular webtoon Lookism will be examined as a case study of the medium's literary and instructional potential. As webtoons gain global popularity, understanding this emergent form is critical for leveraging its appeal among students with digital interests. This analysis will elucidate webtoons' defining features, multimodal scaffolding advantages, and capacity to teach cultural understandings – establishing implications for materials selection and lesson design.

Overall, this review addresses calls for more extensive research on instructional uses of graphic novels and comics to inform disciplinary literacy practices (Carter, 2007; Monnin, 2010). Jacobs (2007) argues that comics represent an

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evolution of literary systems requiring new interpretive skills, necessitating their incorporation in English language arts curricula. Drawing connections between webtoons' attributes and traditional literacy development principles establishes an agenda for effective integration.

2. Literature Review
2.1. Multimodal Theory and Multiple Literacies

Multimodal theoretical perspectives illuminate vital elements of webtoons for literacy development. Multimodality emphasizes how communication integrates semiotic resources, including visual, textual, auditory, and spatial modes (Kress, 2003). Meaning arises from the interplay between these modes in richly diverse combinations (Serafini, 2014). Multimodal texts thus require active interpretation of the relationships between various sign systems.

As multimodal compositions, webtoons leverage the complementary applications of visual narratives and written text to enhance comprehension and engagement. The interdependent interaction of these modes fosters the development of multiliteracies needed to fully participate in increasingly multimodal digital environments (Jacobs, 2007; Dalloway et al., 2013).

The New London Group (1996) introduced the theory of multiliteracies to account for two key social shifts: 1) increasing cultural and linguistic diversity and 2) rapid growth in digital media forms requiring novel interpretive skills. Multiliteracies pedagogy emphasizes developing students' social, cultural, and critical literacies to equip them to communicate, interpret, and create meaning effectively across globalized digital landscapes (Mills, 2009; Cope & Kalantzis, 2009).

Comics and graphic novels have been highlighted as an engaging path to develop these 21st-century multiliteracies, spurring recent interest in their educational applications (Jacobs, 2007; Monnin, 2010). The graphic novel format scaffolds sense-making by building the literary knowledge required to understand multimodal texts (Connors, 2015). Students must actively coordinate textual, visual, and design elements to construct narrative meaning, developing multimodal analysis skills transferable to interpreting new media (Serafini, 2014).

Moreover, engaging with characters' viewpoints promotes cultural understandings and critical thinking, while creative production fosters multimodal composition skills (Jacobs, 2007; Monnin, 2010). As an increasingly prevalent multimodal genre, webtoons thus offer rich multiliteracies development opportunities highly relevant to contemporary digital participation.

2.2. Literacy Motivation and Engagement

Multimodal webtoons also leverage key engagement attributes that can enhance literacy motivation. Research demonstrates strong links between motivation and achievement in literacy (Gambrell, 2015; Guthrie et al., 2009). Increased engagement and enjoyment sustain reading activity and provide crucial practice in developing skills. Key motivating factors include relevance, accessibility, interaction, and agency (Guthrie et al., 2006).

With youth-oriented themes, contemporary settings, and relatable characters, webtoons provide highly relevant content matching adolescents' interests and values (Carter, 2007). Their digital accessibility through mobile devices aligns with students' lifestyle preferences—interactive features like scrolling and commenting offer enhanced control and investment. Furthermore, webtoons' entertaining narratives, compelling visuals, and emotional connections stimulate engaging reading experiences – avoiding disengagement associated with complex traditional texts (Carter, 2007).

2.3. Cognitive Load Theory and Multimedia Learning

This theoretical perspective highlights webtoons' potential benefits concerning cognitive learning. Cognitive load theory examines the role of working memory limitations in managing cognitive processes (Sweller, 2005). Effective instructional materials optimize cognitive load by leveraging multimedia to expand working memory capacity.

Mayer's (2009) principles of multimedia learning highlight the role of dual coding in processing verbal and visual representations. Learners can actively build mental connections between complementary verbal and pictorial elements to construct an integrated mental model, deepening their capacity to understand things easily. Aligning with this dual coding, webtoons' multimodal mix of text and graphics enhances understanding compared to text alone by expanding cognitive capacity (Liu, 2004).

Visual scaffolds also help manage the intrinsic load associated with difficult content by providing helpful contextualization (Juniu, 2011). Webtoons' narrative artwork offers visual signs about characters, settings, and actions to support deciphering literary themes and complex language. This facilitates successful comprehension, especially for struggling readers (McVicker, 2007).

2.4. Scaffolding and Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development

Scaffolding theory based on Vygotsky's zone of proximal development model suggests multimedia visual aids enable readers to interpret challenging texts beyond their independent level (Wood et al., 1976). Webtoons provide learners with developmentally appropriate scaffolding through multimodal context. The interplay between written narrative and visual illustrations allows comprehension of advanced content. As skills improve, the scaffolds can be progressively withdrawn.

Integrating theoretical foundations regarding multimedia learning, cognitive load management, and scaffolding establishes a strong rationale for webtoons' instructional benefits for diverse learners. Aligning attributes with established principles enables purposeful integration practices.

3. Methodology

This article utilizes a qualitative case study approach to provide greater insight into the application of webtoons for literacy instruction. Case study research enables an in-depth exploration of a bounded system, clout multiple sources of data to illuminate a phenomenon in context (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

This method was selected to conduct an informed analysis of the popular Korean webtoon Lookism as an exemplar case. Examining this authentic text in depth demonstrates the literary, cultural, and pedagogical elements that confer webtoons' educational value.

Data collected for this qualitative case study included:

- The full catalog of Lookism webtoon episodes and images to analyze its literary features, themes, and visual composition.
- Academic literature situating Lookism within broader contexts of Korean society.
- Existing interviews with the webtoon creator regarding his inspirations and aims.
- Public reception and reviews of Lookism analyzing its social impact.
- Examples of educational resources and lesson plans using Lookism.

Through an integrated analysis of these diverse sources, this case study illuminates the way Lookism leverages webtoons' unique approach to engage readers while providing commentary on social issues relevant to youth. This demonstrates the potential applications of webtoons like Lookism for impactful literary analysis and cross-cultural learning.

The qualitative case study method enables a holistic understanding of the interplay between the literary text, cultural contexts, and pedagogical practices that confer value on webtoons as an emergent narrative form for digital classrooms. The richness of insights from this analytical approach enriches the discussion of webtoons' role in multiliteracies education and social entrepreneurship.

3.1. Webtoons, Learning and Empirical Evidence: An Overview

Multimodal webtoons represent an evolution in graphic literary systems requiring new multiliteracies. As multimodal compositions, webtoons integrate textual, visual, and design elements that facilitate comprehension and engagement. The empirical evidence demonstrates webtoons' benefits for promoting reading development compared to traditional texts. The analysis is situated within multimodal and multimedia learning theories. Key areas addressed include comprehension, motivation, critical analysis, and multiliteracies.

3.2. Comprehension Development

Research consistently highlights the advantages of webtoons for reading comprehension over conventional materials. Multimodal webtoons facilitate comprehension through a synergistic interplay between visual and verbal modes. Sequential artwork creates a coherent mental representation, enhancing recall and understanding (Liu, 2004). Illustrations provide contextual clues about the setting, characters, and actions that help decipher challenging vocabulary and complex language (Cimermanová, 2021). This multimedia format accommodates diverse learning styles and abilities by harnessing visual and verbal channels (Jacobs, 2007).

Empirical studies demonstrate significant comprehension gains from webtoon reading interventions across educational contexts. Park (2016) found that Korean ESL students improved reading scores after a 12-week webtoon program, outperforming those using traditional texts. Similarly, Indonesian students showed greater narrative text comprehension when reading webtoons than conventional materials (Khotimah et al., 2019). Webtoons also enhance reading skills for Indonesian EFL students beyond traditional texts (Puspitasari, 2017).

Researchers suggest cognitive theory explaining these advantages. Dual-coding multimedia strengthens the complementary strengths of visual and verbal processing (Mayer, 2009). Learners actively build mental connections between text and graphics to construct an integrated representation. This expands the cognitive capacity for comprehending complex concepts beyond either mode alone (Liu, 2004). Aligning with Vygotsky's zone of proximal development, visual scaffolds provide contextual support to understand challenging literary themes and language (McVicker, 2007).

In general, multimodal webtoons enable diverse readers to construct meaning from interconnected written and visual content. The medium transcends traditional text, expanding literacy development through multimedia comprehension processes.

3.3. Engagement and Motivation

In addition to cognitive benefits, researchers emphasize webtoons' ability to increase student engagement and motivation - critical predictors of reading achievement. Webtoons provide an engrossing, entertaining experience through compelling visual narratives and bite-sized installments (McVicker, 2007). This immersive reading fosters increased reading time to practice and develop skills (Seyfried, 2008).

Studies globally demonstrate webtoons' motivational advantages. Indonesian teachers reported increased enthusiasm and participation when integrating webtoons in reading lessons (Khotimah et al., 2019). Korean high schoolers also expressed higher intrinsic motivation to read webtoons over books (Park et al., 2017). Motivational factors include enjoyable and emotionally engaging storylines and contemporary themes relevant to students' lives (Cimermanová, 2021). Relatable characters and events stimulate interest while avoiding potential disengagement with complex traditional literature.

Research consistently highlights webtoons' capacity to provide relevant, appealing reading experiences that capture student attention. Harnessing engagement and motivation can provide crucial literacy development support for digital learners.

3.4. Critical Analysis and Multiliteracies

Research also indicates that webtoons support higher-order analysis and 21st-century multiliteracies. As multimodal texts, webtoons require interpreting relationships between diverse sign systems to construct meaning (Serafini, 2011). Students must actively coordinate visual, textual, and design elements to build narrative comprehension. This strengthens visual literacy and critical thinking to evaluate the author's choices in conveying implied meanings.

Literary techniques in webtoons can be analyzed to enrich cultural understandings and critical perspectives on society and diversity (Carter, 2007). Students learn to recognize literary elements like theme, narrative arc, symbolism, and characterization in webtoon storylines. Comparing diverse global webtoons fosters perspectives on social issues and human nature.

Furthermore, webtoons provide an opportunity to apply and advance multiliteracies needed for contemporary digital participation (Jacobs, 2007). Students already construct meaning from multimodal internet content daily. Webtoons curriculum integrates these new media analysis skills with literary development. This bridges students' out-of-school literacies with academic outcomes (Ranker, 2007).

In summation, webtoons offer multilayered potential for literary sense-making. Students cultivate traditional interpretation skills alongside analysis of multimodal meanings. This dual development prepares students to actively produce and consume diverse meanings in globally connected digital environments.

3.5. Webtoons and Social Entrepreneurship

Integrating webtoons strategically in education aligns with several principles of social entrepreneurship. Socially conscious webtoons can spread stories furthering positive societal change, fulfilling the social innovation ethos (Kim & Kim, 2021). Improving youth literacy and critical engagement through webtoons also builds capacity to address social issues, fitting with social entrepreneurship's empowerment objectives (Bornstein & Davis, 2010). Webtoons' accessibility for diverse learners embodies inclusive innovation ideals by reducing barriers and mainstreaming multiliteracies development (Sullivan, 2019; Seelos & Mair, 2017). Furthermore, webtoon creation programs cultivate youth entrepreneurship by teaching 21st century literacies needed for economic opportunity in the digital economy (Jacobs, 2007; Sahut et al., 2021). Overall, purposeful integration of webtoons in education provides a pathway to advance academic outcomes while imparting broader societal benefits.

Specifically, webtoons provide a platform for stories promoting positive social change on issues like poverty, equity, and sustainability. The global accessibility of webtoons enables these socially conscious narratives to reach wide audiences and have enhanced impact (Rall, 2014). Educators can promote socially driven webtoons in the classroom to raise awareness while fostering critical conversation and analytical skills (Agosto, 2013). This demonstrates how strategic webtoon integration unites academic and social entrepreneurship objectives.

Moreover, improving literacy engagement and critical thinking capacities through webtoons contributes to social entrepreneurship aims of community empowerment. As students advance their abilities to interpret multimodal texts, assess implicit meanings, and understand diverse perspectives, they develop transferable competencies to recognize and devise solutions for pressing societal issues (Jacobs, 2007). Equipping youth with these multiliteracies through webtoons instruction makes them better prepared to lead social innovation and progress (Fisher, 2005).

Webtoons further align with ideals of inclusive innovation by providing accessible reading opportunities for traditionally marginalized groups like struggling readers, ELL students, and visual learners (Sullivan, 2019). The multimedia webtoon format dismantles barriers to engagement and comprehension faced by diverse students when using conventional texts (Cimermanová, 2021). Mainstreaming webtoons in instruction ensures that multiliteracies development benefits reach all students equitably. This commitment to inclusion mirrors social entrepreneurship values (Seelos & Mair, 2017).

The relationship between webtoons and social entrepreneurship is rich and multifaceted. Webtoons, with their visually engaging and accessible format, serve as a potent educational medium (Fayolle & Gailly, 2015). They enable the conveyance of social entrepreneurship concepts and skills, shaping attitudes and intentions towards entrepreneurship (Fayolle & Gailly, 2015). Moreover, webtoons are a compelling tool for storytelling and advocacy, raising awareness about critical social issues and motivating individuals to be active participants in social change (Saraceni, 2015). They offer relatable role models, inspiring readers to embark on their entrepreneurial journeys aimed at addressing societal challenges (Mair & Noboa, 2006). Webtoons, characterized by their youth-friendly format, are well-suited to engage and

mobilize the younger generation, harnessing their energy and enthusiasm for social entrepreneurship (Austin et al., 2006). Moreover, webtoons provide a unique platform to promote and highlight the work of social enterprises, increasing their visibility and support from the public (Nicholls & Cho, 2006). In conclusion, webtoons play a pivotal role in advancing social entrepreneurship by educating, inspiring, engaging, and promoting social ventures, contributing to the collective efforts to address pressing societal challenges.

In essence, webtoons possess distinctive qualities that align seamlessly with the fundamental objectives of social entrepreneurship education from various perspectives. They have the capacity to effectively disseminate compelling narratives centred around social missions, foster a range of skills essential for driving positive change, offer innovative and inclusive educational approaches, and cultivate a culture of youth engagement in social entrepreneurship. To fully harness these synergies, a deliberate, research-driven integration approach focused on achieving social impact is necessary. When strategically incorporated, webtoons emerge as a conduit for advancing both academic learning and the development of social entrepreneurship skills, particularly within a digitally immersed student population. This underscores the versatile nature of webtoons as a form of storytelling, an educational technology, and an empowerment tool that holds great relevance in today's dynamic world.

3.6. Lookism Webtoon - A Case Study

The webtoon 'Lookism' provides a compelling case study to examine this emerging narrative form's literary and instructional potential. Lookism is one of the most popular Korean webtoons, with over 4 billion global views across digital platforms like Line Webtoon, YouTube, and Netflix (Jung et al., 2021). This hugely successful series exemplifies critical attributes contributing to webtoons' appeal and effectiveness in engaging young digital readers.

A closer analysis of Lookism's themes, literary elements, cultural insights, and pedagogical applications provides a model to inform the instructional use of webtoons. Evaluating an authentic text aligns with discipline-based literacy approaches advocating analysis of real-world genres (Brown, 2016). This case study analyzes Lookism's literary features, sociocultural commentaries, and educational application through close appraisal informed by criticism.

3.7. Summary and Themes

Lookism, launched in 2014, focuses on high school student Park Hyung Suk. After being bullied over his overweight appearance, Hyung Suk mysteriously acquires the ability to switch between two bodies – an unattractive "ugly" form and a traditionally handsome "perfect" form (Jung et al., 2021). This fantastical device drives the narrative arc, exploring how people judge and treat others based on appearance.

Switching between two bodies illuminates the stark contrasts in how the same individual is perceived. Hyung Suk faces constant bullying, social exclusion, and romantic rejection in his original overweight form. After transitioning to a tall, thin, clear-skinned body adhering to conventional attractiveness standards, he immediately gains popularity at school, romantic attention, and social privileges (Jung et al., 2021).

This dichotomy highlights the injustice of biases and discrimination based on physical looks. By experiencing drastically differential treatment firsthand, Hyung Suk critiques rigid societal beauty standards and superficial judgments. Ultimately, Lookism advocates recognizing inner worth and integrity as paramount over outward appearance (Jung et al., 2021).

3.8. Literary Elements and Techniques

Lookism influence core literary elements and techniques to convey its perspective on appearance-based discrimination. The character element is central, as readers experience the narratives through the protagonist Hyung Suk's point of view in alternating forms (Freeman, 2014). This first-person perspective fosters an understanding of how social biases surrounding appearance affect individuals psychologically.

The dual protagonist structure also facilitates comparison and contrast analysis. As the same character inhabits two bodies, direct parallels can be drawn regarding others' reactions in each scenario (Jung et al., 2021). This invites critique of why such dramatic differences occur, revealing the absurdity and injustice of appearance-biased behaviors.

In addition, the exaggerated dichotomy between the "perfect" versus "ugly" forms utilizes hyperbole to underscore the themes (Freeman, 2014). By intensifying the contrast well beyond realism, the absurdity of judging based on looks becomes clearer. This satirizes rigid societal beauty standards by showing their damaging effects when taken to extremes.

Other literary elements like imagery, symbolism, and motifs reinforce the themes regarding self-perception and inner versus outward identities (Jung et al., 2021). For example, masks are a recurring visual motif, symbolizing the concealment of one's true self beneath superficial appearances. This sophisticated use of literary devices elevates Lookism artistically beyond realistic fiction.

3.9. Sociocultural Commentary

Beyond literary artistry, Lookism provides meaningful social commentary on contemporary issues in South Korean society. Lookism critiques rigid societal beauty standards, particularly for thin, pale, flawless appearances and intense conformity pressures (Jung et al., 2021). Discrimination based on weight and skin tone is highlighted as a pervasive issue.

The story also highlights the problems of school bullying and its impacts on self-esteem. Scenes portraying the exclusion and taunting of the protagonist in his original body provide impactful examples of bullying behaviors. This psychologically grounds the story in real-world teen experiences, even within the peculiar plot.

Ultimately, Lookism advocates for recognizing inner beauty, integrity, and strength of character as most important - not superficial outward qualities subject to arbitrary social judgments. Appreciating diversity in appearances is valued over conforming to idealized homogenous standards. This positive messaging promotes self-acceptance and anti-discrimination.

While set in Korea, Lookism's examination of appearance biases resonates with any society coping with conformity pressures and discrimination - providing a culturally authentic text to spur social critiques through a literary lens (Jung et al., 2021). Students can gain global perspectives on diversity and ethics through cross-cultural comparisons.

3.10. Pedagogical Applications

Pedagogically, Lookism offers rich opportunities to promote critical interdisciplinary learning. Thematically, teachers could use Lookism to explore issues related to body image, bullying, and self-esteem through ethical discussions (Chun, 2009). Students might research the impacts of societal beauty standards and conformity pressures on mental health. Creative writing activities involve composing narrative scenes about experiences facing appearance-related biases or crafting empowering messages promoting self-acceptance.

Rationally, Lookism provides a model to analyze elements like theme, characterization, point of view, imagery, and symbolism in culturally authentic texts (Freeman, 2014). Students could interpret how these elements develop the commentary on discrimination. Comparing Lookism's social critique genre to satirical traditions would build literary knowledge. Analyzing the webtoon medium's application for conveying themes could strengthen multimodal literacy.

From sociocultural point of view, Lookism offers insights into South Korean society and global issues around social biases. Students might research Korean beauty standards for cross-cultural comparisons of body image and conformity pressures. Contrasting Lookism's perspective with portrayed diversity in American media could highlight cross-cultural differences in identity. Evaluating personal experiences and biases also fosters self-awareness of global ethics.

Lookism aligns with discipline-based literacy approaches, situating reading and analysis of culturally authentic texts within broader learning contexts, leveraging interdisciplinary links to build knowledge (Brown, 2016). This multilayered critical engagement fulfills key literacy goals for active meaning-making, cultural perspectives, critical thinking, and social empowerment.

3.11. Relevance to Social Entrepreneurship

The concept of 'lookism' encompasses discrimination and prejudice based on physical appearance, a deeply rooted issue in society. While not inherently associated with social entrepreneurship, it holds significant potential for addressing these challenges through entrepreneurial endeavours. Social entrepreneurs can play a pivotal role in combating lookism by implementing a multifaceted approach.

Firstly, they can establish initiatives or organizations that actively promote inclusivity and diversity in various domains, such as the workplace, challenging biased norms and fostering more equitable opportunities for individuals regardless of their looks (Lazaroiu, 2015). Secondly, social entrepreneurs can create platforms and services providing mental health and self-esteem support to individuals who have experienced the detrimental effects of lookism, helping them build resilience and confidence (Jackson et al., 2019). Thirdly, educational programs and campaigns can be developed to raise awareness about the harmful consequences of lookism and promote empathy and acceptance, targeting schools, workplaces, and communities to cultivate a culture of inclusivity (Tiggemann et al., 2014).

Moreover, social entrepreneurs can engage in advocacy efforts, collaborating with policymakers and advocacy groups to influence policies and legislation that combat lookism and discrimination based on physical appearance, thereby driving systemic change (Sass et al., 2016). Lastly, they can establish businesses within the alternative beauty and fashion industry, challenging conventional beauty norms and promoting diverse beauty standards by providing opportunities for models and designers who defy conventional appearance expectations (Haas & Amend, 2017).

4. Conclusion

As multimodal texts are evolving, digital webtoons require new literacy instruction approaches tailored to their attributes and applications. This article reviews and synthesizes empirical studies demonstrating webtoons' benefits over traditional texts for advancing reading comprehension, motivation, critical analysis, and multiliteracies. Multimodal theoretical perspectives highlight how webtoons leverage visual-verbal interplay to enhance cognitive and emotional engagement. The analysis provides implications for integration to promote multilayered reading development, including traditional comprehension alongside higher-order visual and critical literacies.

While studies have established quantitative comprehension and engagement advantages in Asian contexts, research in Western settings remains limited. Investigating implementation factors like selection criteria, activity design, and connections to curricula would strengthen pedagogical foundations. Teacher education should also address multimodal

knowledge gaps and build webtoon literacy confidence through formal training. Longitudinal studies tracking the multiliteracies impacts of sustained webtoon integration would provide more profound understanding.

The integration of webtoons into education not only enhances academic outcomes but also aligns strategically with principles of social entrepreneurship. Webtoons serve as a potent medium for disseminating stories that promote positive societal change, embodying the ethos of social innovation. By improving literacy, critical thinking, and accessibility for diverse learners, webtoons empower students to address pressing social issues, in line with social entrepreneurship's empowerment objectives. They also provide a unique platform to promote social enterprises. In essence, the deliberate integration of webtoons into education offers a pathway to advance academic achievement while imparting broader societal benefits, serving as a dynamic tool for advocacy, inspiration, and youth engagement in social entrepreneurship. In conclusion, webtoons offer an innovative literary system with untapped potential for 21st century literacy goals. As digital media evolves, narratives like webtoons that resonate with youth cultures become channels to advance traditional skills, critical thinking, and multiliteracies in relevant contexts. Just as classic literature has served as a timeless pillar of reading instruction through evolving pedagogies, new graphic narrative forms may inspire next-generation approaches tailored to era-defining texts. The global reach and youth appeal of webtoons offers educators a tool to meaningfully link literacy instruction with social innovation. Additional research in this area would be valuable to guide translational practice and further develop synergies between multiliteracies education and social change. Through careful implementation, webtoons present an engaging medium to promote both academic and social entrepreneurship among digitally immersed youth.

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