

Transmedia Storytelling: Fan Arts and Social Media in Gundala

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Abstract

Transmedia storytelling is a new way to tell stories. One of its crucial elements is active audiences or fans in order to gain maximum information and enjoyment. This preliminary study wanted to examine the utilization of a website and social media by Gundala's fans in fulfilling their needs to exhibit their artworks and to engage in social interaction. This qualitative study collects data by interviewing transmedia professionals and examining the website and social media related to Gundala. The result indicates that Gundala's fans were very active and dynamic in social media. In this virtual space, they exhibited the creative fan arts and expressed themselves in social interaction enthusiastically. Since this is a preliminary study, conducting further studies on Gundala's fan arts and social media with a broader range of data is necessary.

Keywords: *transmedia storytelling, fan arts, social media, Gundala.*

Abstrak

Transmedia storytelling adalah cara baru bercerita. Salah satu kriterianya adalah penonton wajib aktif mencari informasi, bersosialisasi dan berkreasi agar dapat menikmati cerita dengan utuh. Penelitian awal ini bertujuan untuk mengetahui pemanfaatan website dan media sosial oleh fans Gundala untuk memamerkan fan arts mereka dan berinteraksi sosial dengan sesama fans. Pengumpulan data dilakukan dari wawancara dengan profesional transmedia storytelling dan pengamatan website dan media sosial yang terkait dengan Gundala. Hasil penelitian ini mengindikasikan bahwa fans Gundala sangat aktif dan dinamis di media sosial. Mereka membuat dan memamerkan fan arts yang kreatif dan secara antusias berinteraksi sosial melalui media sosial. Dari penelitian awal ini, disarankan untuk dilakukan penelitian lanjutan dengan data yang lebih luas.

Kata kunci: *transmedia storytelling, fan arts, media sosial, Gundala.*

INTRODUCTION

Recently, the Gundala feature-length film was released in the theatre and received an exceptional response from the Indonesian audience. This film was watched by more than 1,6 million audiences and received outstanding hype from its fans and media. ("Data Penonton", Oct. 28, 2019) Gundala also held an international premiere in The Toronto International Film Festival (TIFF) and gained excellent audience response. ("Gundala received", Sept. 13, 2019)

Gundala is an Intellectual Property (IP) under PT Bumilangit (Bumilangit) and developed as a transmedia storytelling project (TS). In addition to the feature-length film, Gundala was presented in the form of various printed and online comics, a short animation film, many live events for promotional purposes and merchandise. (Sujivo, interview, Aug. 2, 2019) This research would like to examine the utilization of the Bumilangit website and social media by the fans in fulfilling their needs. The research question is how fans use the Bumilangit website and social media to accomplish their needs.

Gundala Putra Petir (Son of Lightning) is originally a comic character created by the late Harya Suryaminata, well known as Hasmi in 1969. Hasmi wrote and drew 23 titles of Gundala black and white comic series. (Ismono, 2019, p.v) They became very popular nationally at that time and had many fanatic fans. PT Bumilangit republished several of Hasmi's comic books with the same panel and drawing as the original. This effort was successful in re-introducing the Gundala Son of Lightning and regaining his fans' attention. (Sujivo, interview, Aug. 2, 2019)

TS is "a new process of storytelling where integral elements of a fiction get dispersed systematically across multiple delivery channels to create a unified and coordinated entertainment experience". (Jenkins, 2007, para.2) One of the three significant elements of TS is Participatory Culture. It breaks the wall between media producer and audience since both of them are participants who interact with each other based on the "new set of rules that none of us fully understand". (Jenkins, 2006, p.3) TS requires the audience to be active in finding information and expressing themselves through various creative activities, including fan arts.

Creating and share fan arts makes fans involved deeper in their interests. (Hetrick, 2013, p.57) There are some reasons for fans to create fan arts. In reading books (or watching films) fans often imagine what might happen next or what happened before the story begins. This "unshown" scene might be realized as fan arts. In this case, fans "take a leap from speculation to creation. They use their talent to fill the gaps, to create alternative timelines, and mix universes" (Brenner, 2013, p.33) Sharing creation to people with the same popular visual culture interests may prove bond-building (Hetrick, p.62).

METHOD

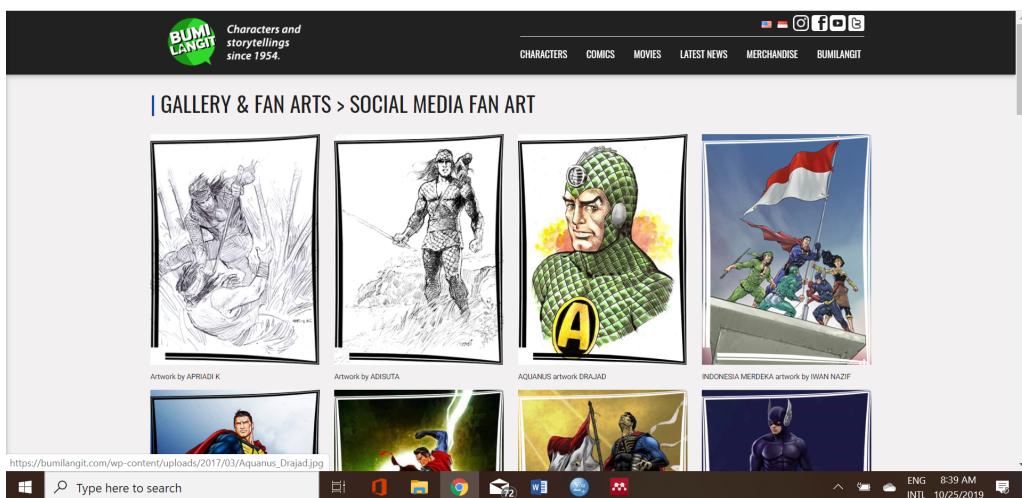
This qualitative research is supported by references from books, journal articles, experts' blogs, websites, social media, and other resources. Data was collected from interviews with transmedia professionals, websites and social media. To be specific and focused, the research is limited to the analysis of how fans use the Bumilangit website and social media to accomplish their needs. The result shows that Gundala fans are very active and dynamic to utilize the Bumilangit website and social media to meet their needs to exhibit their fan arts and to engage in social interaction.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A limited number of various forms of Gundala fan arts, mostly digital paintings, are exhibited in the Bumilangit website. They are the selected fan arts from the submission to the Fan Art Competition conducted by Bumilangit. The rest are in Bumilangit Instagram, Facebook, Youtube, and Twitter. By September 12, 2019, Bumilangit has accepted 4,150 Gundala fan arts. The number of fan arts submitted shows the popularity of Gundala character among his fans as well as the enthusiasm of the fans in taking part in the Gundala celebration. ("Gundala fanart", September 12, 2019)

Bumilangit Website

Bumilangit website is simple in design yet contains much publishable information. It functions as the “front office” of Bumilangit which shows characters of Bumilangit, information on its comic books, fan arts, movie, news, merchandise and the management team of Bumilangit. (“Bumilangit”, October 28, 2019) Therefore, there is no website nor social media fully dedicated to Gundala’s character. The website is focusing on the company and not the character. Consequently, the hype in the Bumilangit website depends on the character prepared for release. This system doesn’t give a chance to Gundala’s fans to be faithful to the character continuously. They are expected to become fans of other prepared characters since Gundala is “not in season”.



Picture 1: Fan Art in Bumilangit website
<https://bumilangit.com/en/gallery/soc-med-fan-art/#>

The Bumilangit website does not provide interactive facilities for fans, and it is for display only. The interactive feature of Bumilangit goes to the four social media attached to the website. It links to many vibrant and active official Bumilangit social media. (“Bumilangit”, October 28, 2019)

Bumilangit Social Media

Bumilangit communicates closely with the fans through several official social media: Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and Youtube. Among the four, Instagram has the most significant number of followers, 115K by October 27, 2019. (“Bumilangitofficial”, October 28, 2019) The content of each social media is about the same. Mostly are announcements of a Bumilangit work or product release, events, Bumilangit artist, and Gundala fan arts. All social media are very active. Instagram, for example, each posted character at Bumilangit Instagram receives 1,000 to 5,000 likes. (“Bumilangitofficial”, October 28, 2019)

Fan Arts

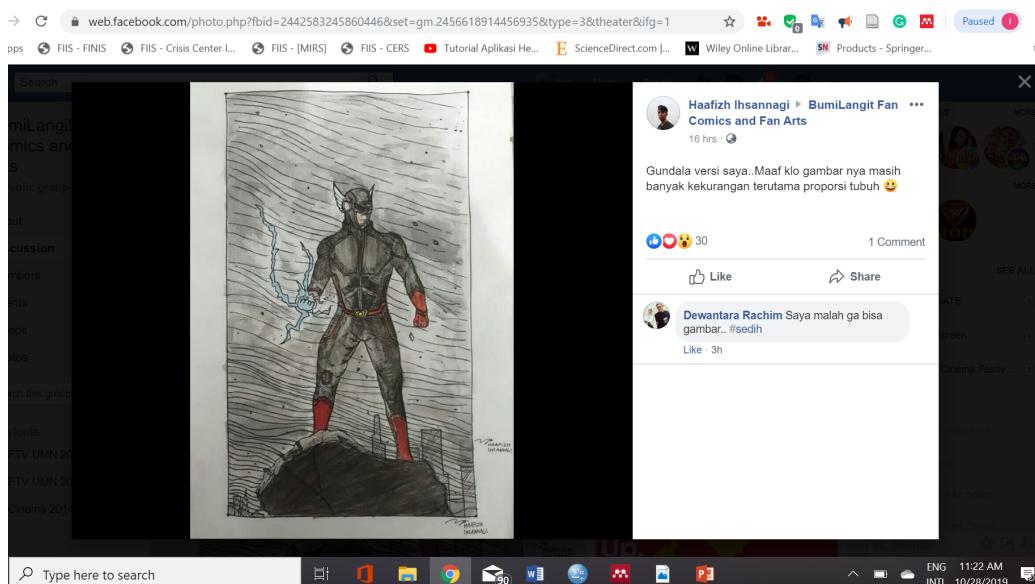
Creating fan arts and share of information and ideas makes them more involved in Gundala (Herrick, 2013, p.57). The fans may join enthusiastic discussions and other rewarding activities in the Gundala social media to create bonding. The social media

also functions as a “gallery” for the fans to exhibit their fan arts to receive feedback from other fans and to build social interaction. Many and frequent posts make social media traffic-heavy, dynamic, and alive.

Exhibition

Having posted on the official Bumilangit website or Instagram, fan art is exhibited to the public. This is an achievement that makes the creator (fans) proud. He might be surprised and contented since many other fans will appreciate his work and the Admin of Bumilangit and his status has raised to the level of author or creator. Duffett (2013, p.383) and Garcia (2016, p.111) mentions a fan as a layman that becomes an author. He is grateful for that recognition and would like to create more fan arts. Aby.jr.99 is very thankful for this honor when his fan art was posted. He said, “*Terima kasih atas kesempatannya @bumilangit untuk mengijinkan saya mempublikasikan ke khalayak yang lebih luas.*” (Thank you, Bumilangit, for the opportunity to allow me to publish my work to the wider audience) (“Bumilangitofficial”, October 17, 2019) Many similar expressions are posted by the fans whose works posted.

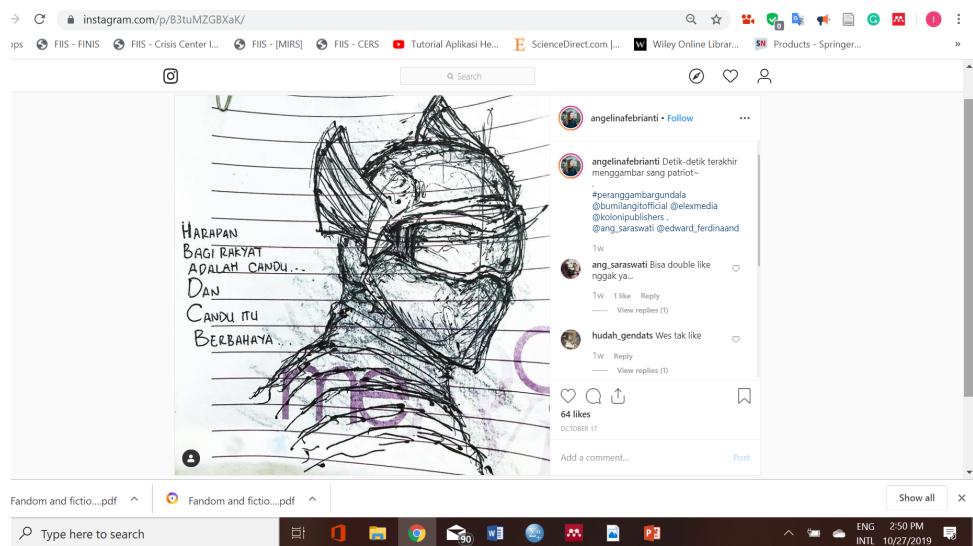
Some fans got shy when his fan art exhibited since he thinks that his work was not good enough. He should be encouraged to gain self-confidence. Haadizh Ihsannagi posted his version of Gundala. He wrote, “*Gundala versi saya. Maaf kalau gambar nya masih banyak kekurangan terutama proporsi tubuh.*” (My version of Gundala. Sorry for the poor drawing, especially body proportion.) Dewantara Rachim, “*Saya malah ga bisa gambar #sedih*” (I cannot even draw #sad). (“Bumilangitofficial”, October 27, 2019) This simple conversation on Bumilangit Facebook reflects the idea of bodybuilding. “Sharing creation to people with the same popular visual culture interests may prove bond-building”. (Herrick, p.62) Haadizh’s drawing is good, but he was not confident with his drawing skill. Then Dewantara, another Gundala fan who does not know him encourages him by saying that he cannot even draw and that is sad. His reply shows sincerity which may lead to bonding.



Picture 2: Fan Art in Bumilangit website
Web.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid

Social Interaction

Social media offer an opportunity for social interaction. A discussion of the posted artwork usually opens the conversation. It may continue with sharing an idea, knowledge, and events. A newcomer who feels comfortable with the responses will be attached. When the members can sustain their interests over a long period, when each person feels comfortable, they can stay in that social media for a long time. (Duffett, 2013, p.449)



Picture 3: Fan Art Gundala

<https://www.instagram.com/p/B3tuMZGBXaK/>

A comfortable relation can be built online. Angelinafebrianti: (posted her fan art) "Detik-detik terakhir menggambar sang patriot~" (Last minute before the deadline of the Drawing Competition, drew the hero -). Ang_Saraswati: "Bisa double like nggak ya..." (Can I double click...?) Saraskamil: "Gambare kok lucu " (Cute picture). Reply: "lucu dong, yg bikin juga lucu...btw yg produksi gambar ni mbaak @edward_ferdinaand" (surely cute, the artist also cute... there he is @edward_ferdinaand). Van_Christi: "Akhir e di publish setelah sekian waktu hanya menggantung di kalender" (Published, at last, after hanging on the calendar for quite some time) Putrayonathan: "Aku ajarin bikin gambar kek gitu dong kaka" (Teach me to draw it, Sist.) ("Bumilangitofficial", October 17, 2019)

A fan art posted at the Bumilangit Instagram by Angelinafebrianti. Van Christy seems to know Angelinafebrianti in person since she comments on the picture hanging on the calendar. The other two commentators might be strangers. Ang Saraswati seems like the picture very much so that she would like to vote twice. Of course, she couldn't because the system doesn't allow her to. However, Angel explained further that the person drawing the fan art is Edward Ferdinaand, not her. He is as cute as the drawing. The commentators seem to have acquainted comfortably. However, they might know each other through this Bumilangit Instagram, but their comments show closeness.

Quote and line Sharing

Gundala film has many quotes, and people like to mention it. A quote is words that someone else has said or written. (Cambridge Dictionary, online, October 29, 2019)

Mentioning quotes in the comment of social media is a way to remind audiences of its meaningful message of the film. It also encourages people to memorize it.

Desiratna posted “*Jangan pernah campur urusan orang lain kalau enggak mau hidup lo sulit.*” (Do not be nosy if you need peace) (“Gundala hashtag”, October 27, 2019). This is Awang’s line as a reminder for young Sancaka not to do so. Young Sancaka was once homeless. Awang, a homeless teenager who protected him from street gang members. Pusandingartworks posted: “*Rakyat harus terus bodoh, kalau kalian mau dunia aman.*” (People should stay uneducated if you want a peaceful world.) (“Gundala hashtag”, October 27, 2019) This is Pengkor’s motto (the villain) to keep his illegal business run well. The last one is Kesareddyasena’s post on his drawing which is also the tagline of the film, “*Negeri ini butuh patriot*” (*This country needs a hero*). (“Gundala”, July 3, 2019) That quote accurately depicts the situation in the film where corruption and crime become common practice and people are haunted by criminals. Sharing these quotes as significant themes of the Gundala film shows that these fans comprehend the message of the film well, and they want to share it to encourage people to do so. That is a robust social interaction activity.

The audience memorizes many memorable lines in the film, and they post them on social media. Since the following lines are delivered at the awkward moment between Sancaka and his neighbour Wulan, people remember and would like to express it. This phenomenon is seen as Abimana Arya (the actor of Gundala) comments on his Instagram, “*Kok pakai rok?*” (Why is she wearing a skirt?). His post “rings the bell” of the fans. Then someone posts Teddy’s line, “*Karena dia lagi suka sama kamu*” (Because she likes you).

Moreover, some others continue to comment. (Aryasatya, September 15, 2019) This short conversation shows that the audience noticed the moment well. This is the moment when Wulan seems to be attracted to Sancaka, and she dresses femininely when visiting him. Sancaka does not notice it, but Teddy does. This short dialogue explains that in social media, the hierarchy gets shorter. The distance between the lead actor and the fans is only “a finger touch away”.

CONCLUSION

As transmedia storytelling suggests, Gundala’s fans are very active and dynamic. They create creative fan arts and build the bond through Bumilangit social media. Gundala fans use those facilities to fulfil their basic needs, to exhibit their fan arts and to engage in social interaction. Since this is a preliminary study, conducting further research on Gundala’s fan arts and social media with a broader range of data is necessary to draw more accurate results. Another suggested topic is on the Gundala fans’ reaction and activities when Gundala’s hype has declined due to the Bumilangit shifting focus to another superhero.

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