



VIRION SERIES

A series of visual and interactive content for children using webtoon and gamification approach to increase engagement, reading experience, and make materials easier to be digested.

What Did We Do?

- Create a series of visual and interactive content about Covid-19, titled Virion, for children.
- The series, so far, consists of three webtoons and a news game. Two more webtoons will be uploaded in the end of April and May.
- All episodes of the series are about Covid-19. The first three are about the science of Covid-19, the following three are about the social impact of Covid-19.
- All contents were upload on Visual Interaktif Kompas (VIK) channel of Kompas.com.

List of Published Contents

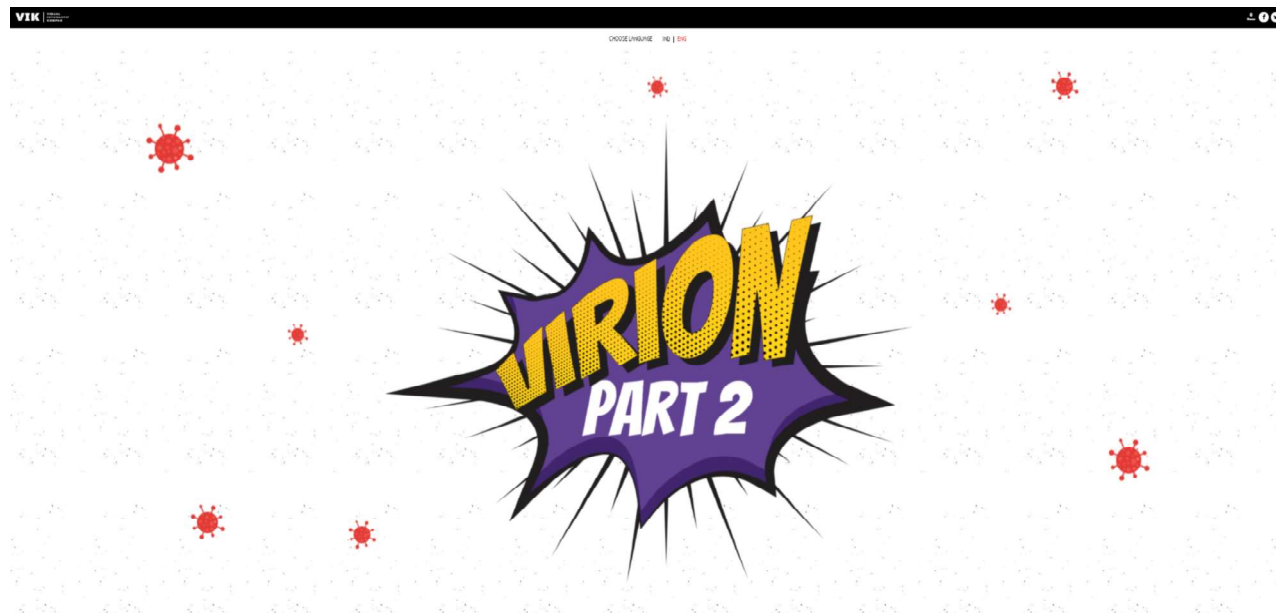
Virion: A Tale of Coronavirus for Old School Comic Fans



<https://vik.kompas.com/viruscorona/en.html>

This episode told the audience about the history of Coronavirus, its diversity and impact on human.

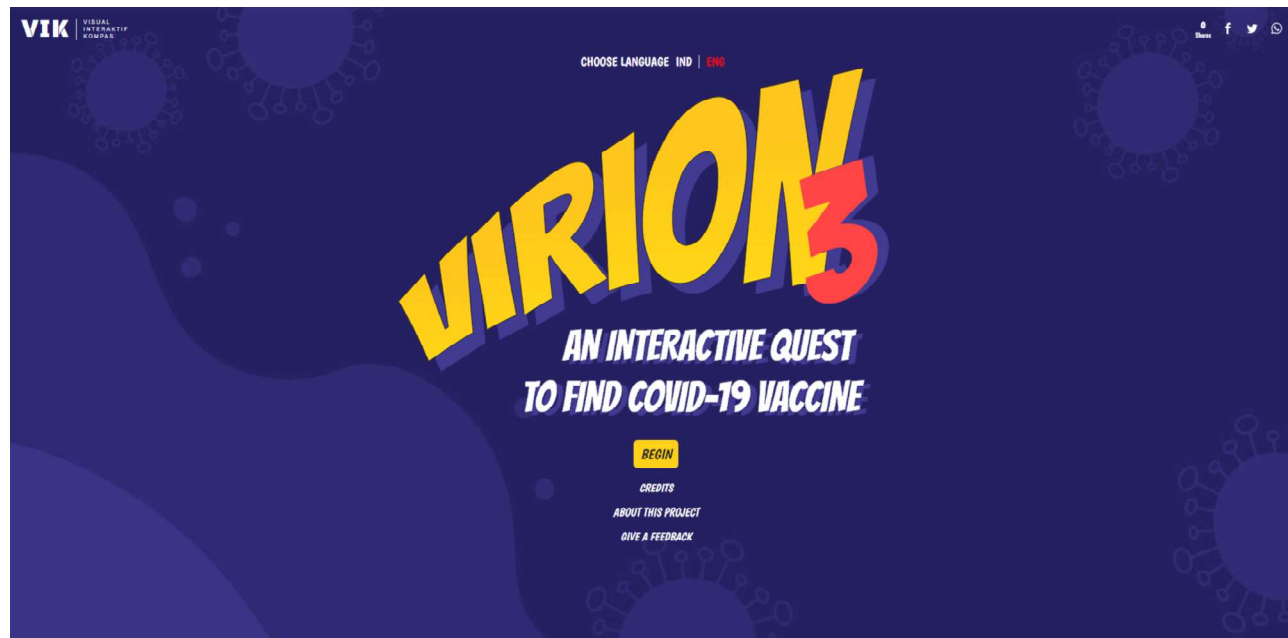
Virion: A Tale of Coronavirus for Old School Comic Fans - Part 2



<https://vik.kompas.com/viruscorona-2/en.html>

This episode were about how people and science respond, as well as change, during the pandemic.

Virion: An Interactive Quest To Find Covid-19 Vaccine



<https://vik.kompas.com/viruscorona-3/en.html>

Through this content, Kompas.com invited young audience to understand the complexity to find Covid-19 vaccine.

Virion: Guru Avan



<https://vik.kompas.com/virion-guru-avan/en.html>

It is about Guru Avan, a school teacher in Madura, Indonesia, who has to visit his students one by one during the pandemic. Through this story, Kompas.com would like to communicate about digital divide.

How Did We Do The Project?

Collaboration, collaboration, collaboration...

To produce contents, news department collaborated with creative and IT department. News department were responsible to research and find interesting stories as well as designed the approach in producing content. This include, but not limited to, read scientific journals and created the concept of visualization.

Creative department were responsible to create storyboard, design interaction as well as visualization. Meanwhile, the IT department were responsible in the coding part.

Empower Freelancer

During pandemic, many freelancers are struggle to get a job. Kompas.com hire freelancer to do visual illustrations. This allows Kompas.com to produce better visualizations without adding permanent staff illustrator. Thus, we did it with less budget as well as give benefit to others.

Find a Funding

Kompas.com produced the first three episodes of Virion using its own funding. In the end of 2020, Kompas.com secured funding from National Geographic Society to produce three more episodes.

Why Did We Do It?

- Everyone has the right to learn about the complexity of Covid-19 pandemic, including children. However, contents about pandemic for children, particularly in Indonesian language, are still limited.
- Young Indonesian, many of them are children, are consumers of webtoon. Line Webtoon, the largest webtoon platform in Indonesia, has 60 million users. Kakao Page, another webtoon platform, also has millions readers. However, serious digital contents for children that use webtoon as a format are still limited. Through Virion Series, Kompas.com tried to innovate and use webtoon to communicate science.

- Based on 2017 data, Indonesia has 43.7 million gamers and many of them are children. There are many effort in using game approach for journalism. But until 2020 there was no news game content in Indonesia.
- Of all news game content that have been produced by news organization, many target adults. Number of news game for children are very limited. Through Virion Series, Kompas.com explore the use of game approach to communicate complex issues: finding vaccine.
- Through Virion Series, Kompas.com tried to innovate and explore the power of webtoon format and game approach to engage children, both direct (children as readers) and indirect (by engage their parents and teachers).

Impact

- Our contents were used for teaching materials by some teachers. Three teachers contacted us and they said that the materials were very useful. Three teachers may be too little but their responses made us optimistic that the impact may be bigger if we continue this initiative.
- Our contents were shared globally by Teach311.org (through their Twitter account), a collaborative effort of educators, researchers, and students in empathetic endeavors across disciplinary and linguistics boundaries to learn about disaster. Also by Kansas Citizen for Science (kcfs.org) through their Twitter account.
- Our contents were recognized by American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) and The Kavli Foundation. We received Silver for Children Science News in the 2020 AAAS Kavli Science Journalism Awards.
- Our contents were recognized by National Geographic Society. We received funding to continue Virion Series.

- The success of Virion Series attracts a number of organizations. We received another funding from Pulitzer Center - Rainforest Journalism Fund. Virion Series made us able to produce children content on another serious issues: peatland forest and sustainable farming.
- We conducted survey to know the response of journalism experts. Around 18 Indonesian journalism experts gave responses. Opinion are mixed. But some of them said that Virion Series is a good start to develop the future digital science contents for children.
- Although the contents were targetted for children, many adults read it. The first and second episodes of Virion Series were read by more than 50,000 readers. Based on our survey, many said that the visual contents were more enjoyable, easier to be digested, and make them less bored.

What's Next for Kompas.com?

We will continue and advance the initiative to produce journalism contents for children. We are doing it now with funding from National Geographic Society and Pulitzer Center. Kompas.com will seek other opportunities to collaborate with organizations who believe that communicate complex problems to children is a good start to answer many challenging world's problem. We will use VIK channel to continue the initiatives.

How Can Other Organizations Do Similar Effort?

- Identify how children consume information as well as entertainment. Which format works well? Television, Youtube Video, Comics, Game? Choose one that is suitable.
- Start a collaboration. Perhaps with illustrator, game designer, or students.
- Empower freelancers. There are many freelance illustrators and designers who seek for opportunities to work on meaningful project. Reach to them and ask for a possibility to collaborate.
- If you don't have funding, start with your own budget first. Think about the strength of your team. Create concept of contents that you and your team are able to execute.