

The Power of Digital Storytelling: How Technology Navigated Folklores during the Pandemic

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Abstract

Digital storytelling is the new form of self-expression that merges modern digital platforms with the traditional sharing of personal or societal narratives. The digital space opens the door for storytellers fostering social dialogues and outreach beyond imagination. The pandemic changed human behaviours, directed new adjustments, and forged digital connections and communications. Smartphones, Tablets, Facebook, Twitter, other social media platforms, and wireless internet connections are the new technologies that have entrenched our culture and our storytelling abilities. Traditional storytellers, however, argue that computer-intervening communications and cyberspaces are incompatible in generating human responses to literary art and folklores. They do not provide a clear picture in the study of folklore yet, and the digital world is not fully equipped to generate, transmit, perform, and archive vernacular culture. However, new media observers explore the vast space of emergent cultural scenes and expressive folklore, finding expressions beyond imagination. As a result, new and digital media has drastically changed peoples learning, sharing, participating, and engaging abilities. People adopt technologies that complement and supplement traditional means of vernacular expression. The digital form of storytelling has thus enhanced traditional forms of storytelling skills compounding it with new technologies such as the text merged with images, sound, video, and even the voice of the creator himself. The interactive genre transcends linear narrative by involving the receiver-user techniques in the textual content.

The research paper delves deep into present-day storytelling forms and how the new media increased the engagement of ordinary people making storytelling a participatory

experience during the pandemic. The new media has also played a significant role in expanding the boundaries of cultures by the simple use of digital tools. For example, a Sri Lankan singer Yohani's song "Manike Mage Hithe" went viral in India leading to the audience dancing to a tune they did not follow, while an unknown peanut seller's Kachha Badam song from the tribal Bolpur area in West Bengal created an online rage, even among non-Bengali speaking celebrities and led them to move to his tunes. A personal tale of Baba's Dhaba shot by a travel vlogger in east Delhi in June 2021 provided support for an old couple, and collaborative performances by famous artists during the pandemic generated millions for charity.

Through a structured qualitative survey of digital celebrities and audiences, the research will exposition the genre theory of storytelling and document stories of social impacts during the pandemic when the digital platforms were the only means of connecting and disseminating stories. This research paper investigates the following three aspects of digital storytelling.

- Did digital storytelling serve as an equalizing platform for vernacular cultures and folklores?
- Did technological interface disrupt audience responses to folklores?
- Did digital storytelling dilute "creativity" by introducing new pathways to literary criticism?

Keywords: *Digital Storytelling, Folklores, Creativity, Technological Interface, Audience Analysis, and Digital Platforms, Social Media, Multi-Media, Videos, Communication Theory, Narratives*



The Literature Review

Digital Storytelling

Digital Storytelling is the new form of folklore genre (Blank, 2007) and does not fully capture the complexity and dynamism of storytelling. At the same time, this transition connects the collective, historical, and generic dimensions of the diverse culture of folklores in India and the subcontinent and explains the social actions created by digital platforms of storytelling during the pandemic. Even the extant research does not capture the intricacy, strength, and speed of digital storytelling as dialectically associated with the historical and generic forms of the cultural practice of storytelling. This paper instead explores the connections between cultural tools and structures of storytelling that bring collective, historical, and creative knowledge from folklores and the impacts of digital storytelling on a virtual story-listening audience. The focus here is based on the Genre Theory, where discourses, persons, tools, activities, and practices are configured to achieve specific rhetorical and social goals. As a category of historically formulated and stabilized cultural tools, genres tend to encode the expressive potentials of cultural practices, which get cycled, recycled, and remade through contingent discursive processes. As such, the genre is a lens through which one also observes the most mundane and non-literary aspects of human experiences, such as a job interview, a market visit, a hospital consultation, or an airplane taking off (Bazerman, *The Languages of Edison's Light*, 1999)

Supporting a social historian's orientation to locate short-lived, discrete, and local instances of human activity within the framework of the historically accumulated, collective, and a broader range of enterprises and practices, this genre settles in between historical and present-day activities. It provides factual information about how historically

accumulated epistemological and experiential knowledge is realized through contingent social-cultural practices in a genre theory in perspective on digital storytelling. (Xiqiao, 2013)

The Genre Theory and its Three Dimensions

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This paper oversees the three dimensions of genre theory by connecting the sociohistorical conception of storytelling with digital storytelling by plugging in technical tools that help primarily in outreach, more extensive dissemination, and creating polished messages. Firstly, the research draws on social and rhetorical theories of the genre to re-examine digital storytelling as a secondary genre, which organizes persons, texts, tools, activities, and practices in response to recurrent social situations. This view's core is the social conception of language as an embedded dimension of human activities. (Millier, 2018)

Secondly, the paper highlights the notion of systems of genres as discursive structuring devices (Bazerman, *Systems of genres and the enactment of social intentions*, 1994). Finally, it suggests how a well-orchestrated set of genres and generic activities coordinate, organize, regulate, and amplify the message.

Thirdly, theorizing digital storytelling as a genre, also is Bakhtin's (Bakhtin, 1986) conception of secondary genres as complexly organized and developed ways of using language to serve socio-political, artistic, ideological, and epistemological ends (p.61). Underlying Bakhtin's distinction between more "homely" speech genres and more complex genres is acknowledging that all forms of discourses are valid and significant because they all result from meaningful acts of fulfilling social issues or highlighting social discourses. Compared to primary genres, those directly derived from and giving form to everyday communicative activities, such as short rejoinders of everyday dialogue

or a family member telling a joke, secondary genres result from social institutions' processing the complexity of discourses. Also, forming a secondary genre always involves integrating and altering primary genres, which acquire different characters when they enter into a complex secondary genre. However, the practice-oriented approach to genre provides proper frames for understanding digital storytelling as a unique cultural practice that is helping primarily in engaging the audience. To explain the analytical forms of storytelling in India, this paper introduces the genre theory to complement theoretical and social impacts that fill specific conceptual gaps in extant literature. This paper explains the genre as a construct with a proper analytical facility for exploring digital storytelling as a situated, mediated, and distributed socio-historical phenomenon. From this perspective, we investigate digital storytelling as taking place within the typified, historical, and generic methods of stories and folklores. This paper elaborates on the dialectical copresence of the individual and the cultural practice, mediated by a system of genres and genre practices, namely the typified coalescences of persons, activities, institutions, artifacts, and practices. Here, the term genre is used in a rather expansive way to categorize discourse solely by their formal, thematic, organizational, and stylistic format that incites social messages and generate responses of the audience. The use of genre describes typified ways in which songs, memes, and videos of culturally diverse language and artistry generate discourses, empathies, sympathies, and likes from a completely unknown unorganised audience or listener. The discourse here highlights persons, tools, activities, and practices configured to achieve specific rhetorical and social goals that recur in the country during the pandemic and engages the public effortlessly.

The Vichian Theory and the Social Action

Storytelling is considered as something archaic or something that simpler cultures engage in. However, storytelling swirls about us in our sophisticated and highly technological world though we may not always recognize it. (Ribeiro, *Digital Storytelling: An integrated Approach to Language learnign for the 21st Century*, 2015). This paper looks at the phenomenon of digital storytelling that creates like-minded communities and likable content that influences social changes on the Internet and in the physical world. In order to ground this phenomenon in theory, the literature uses the works of Giambattista Vico, the 18 -century Neapolitan philosopher/rhetorician who lived on the cusp of the Renaissance and the Age of Enlightenment. Furthermore, as a teacher of rhetoric to youth, Vico warned young people to study the arts of poetry, painting, and oratory that could generate action and reaction in societies and have large, lasting impacts on societies (Pierotti K. E., 2006).

Moreover, when these art forms were lugged into the use of the digital medium with the storyline, visuals, and voice-over to reach larger communities, it significantly increased community responses. Digital storytelling is thus a form of dissemination of stories backed by technology. Therefore, it reaches more people because these arts are easily understood and accepted by people of all ages and education across borders and have a considerable impact for social action.

Marshall McLuhan, the 20 -century famed Canadian scholar, remained a critic of the technology and culture while anticipating behaviour of the Internet. Marshal McLuhan, communication theory is known for the statement “the medium is the message” as he believed that the media modified or disrupted the message when it was conveyed. He stressed about the modification and development of the views and senses due to altering channels of communication. (McLuhan)

McLuhan used Vichian theory as the primary basis for his writings on technology. This study synthesizes and connects McLuhan's writings on technology and the particular technology used for digital storytelling. The new technologies bring back a secondary orality and more visual communication such as the radio and television in a print or text saturated culture. Today we live in a world where writing, the spoken word and music, and visual images blend in the digital milieu of the Internet (Pierotti K. , *Digital Storytelling: The Application of Vichian Theory*, 2014). The web offers space for public performances in the same way cafés, salons and college lecture halls have provided space for literary readings. With an unfixed content, the reader cannot describe the boundaries of line, stanza, paragraph, or chapter let alone the boundaries of text, image, page and book on which traditional readings depend (Dasgupta, 2017). Digital storytelling is thus just one way that technology is being used to enhance an ancient genre of folklore and storytelling. As one of its goals is to create communities and initiate community action and reaction, this genre tries to achieve what McLuhan suggested in the coming together of a global village. (Pierotti K. , *Digital Storytelling: The Application of Vichian Theory*, 2014)

Genres emerge and develop because language-mediated social practices develop their stable and recognizable ways of using language over time. Because social practices remain relatively stable, genres also remain stable, offering formal, thematic, and compositional conventions. For example, we have acquired, through experiences, tacit knowledge about the culturally appropriate and socially expected ways of doing communicative work in scenarios such as "a grandmother reading a bedtime story to her grandchild," "a military commander giving an order to soldiers," or "a patient seeing a doctor for the first time." Because people respond to numerous enactments of such comparable situations in similar ways, speech genres embody social practices in concrete ways.

Genre theorists have used social situations to describe social practices that invite discourse production, entail activities, engage persons, events, objects, and traditions. (Bitzer, 1968). Accordingly, the typified ways of using language are always intertwined with the material and practical structures embedded in the social practice. The social relations of participants, the purposes and goals, social expectations, conventional ways of using technical tools, and specific ways of making material arrangements all affect typified constructions of texts. Certain social situations, such as a visit to the hospital or telling a personal story, present similar configurations of the constituents mentioned above, where people can recognize a social practice and produce comparable responses accordingly. Genres, or rather discursive structures, enter into partnership with material and practical structures to encode the functions, purposes, and goals of the social practice. Implicit in social theories of the genre is the idea that the combined effects of these stabilized structures orient individuals toward recognizable ways of making meanings, solving problems, building relationships, and evoking emotions. In terms of further theorizing digital storytelling as a genre, Bakhtin's (1986) conception of secondary genres as complexly organized and developed ways of using language to serve socio-political, artistic, ideological, and epistemological ends (p.61).

In the Indian context for generations, folklores have been the means of cultural storytelling, religion, custom, and practices. From marriage ceremonies to festivals to pep up the sick during the pandemic, indigenous ways of storytelling have had impressionable impacts on society. For example, be it the Mahabharata or the Ramayana, oral forms of storytelling crafted religious epics that deeply ingrained influences and structures of Indian societies since time immemorial. Moral teaching and community action have been the key to building societies through folklores passed on from one generation to another in songs, texts, stories, etc.



The Digital Storytelling Genres

Digital storytelling addresses the commonality and continuity of the human need to make sense of and learn from personal experiences to obtain voice and social status for their experiences. The idea is to entertain and be creative, seek empathy, bond with others emotionally and experientially, re-invent and imagine new possibilities for the self, and exert change through sharing experiences. In this vein, digital stories conceptual and experiential content cannot be wholly new, and they necessarily draw from, build upon, and transform existing genres of meaning-making in different modes and media. For example, a quick survey of digital stories hosted by the major media enterprises reveals a relatively limited set of sub-genres of personal stories. The forms and genres picked up from folklores reflect deeply in the sub-genre. They can be termed as hybridization of folklore digital storytelling.

These sub-genres have naturally emerged for the very reason that digital storytelling involves discursive attempts made to address longstanding recurrent rhetorical needs. The thousands of personal narratives inevitably come down to addressing specific universal themes of human experiences, including life lesson and character stories (about how one overcame a life challenge and grew from such an experience), love stories (about relationships), recovery stories (healing from diseases and losses), discovery stories (recounting or interpreting a pivotal moment or event), memorial and memory stories (about places, adventures, and persons), our efforts for change stories (reflecting upon community issues and imagining possibilities for changes) (Glynda A. Hull, July 2010); (Ribeiro, *Digital Storytelling: An Integrated Approach To Language Learning for the 21st Century Student*, 2015). From this perspective, digital storytelling is not a genre that affords limitless possibilities for self-expression. Instead, the social and practice-oriented nature of digital storytelling does place constraints upon what kind of stories are told

through the performance of the practice. On the other hand, our shared historical moment presents new conditions for markedly different ways of enacting and sharing meaning to folklores and storytelling. Literacy scholars now argue that new literacy practices have arisen to provide a new set of "ethos" and "technical support" (Lankshear, 2007) as the result of responses to changes in the epistemological spheres of our historical moments. Our historical moment is marked by a global media culture that is increasingly influenced by user-generated content and design, the rise of enabling technologies that facilitate grass-roots production and management of content, the rise of new collaborative production models based on massive participation, bottom-up and interest-based construction and maintenance of virtual communities, and content production based on experimentation and hybridization rather than "ingenious" creation (Lankeshear, 2006). When digital storytelling is considered from this perspective, it can be observed that ways of being and acting are enacted to realize the possibilities of new technologies, modes, and media. For example, digital storytelling involves amateurs in the creative remix of multimodal semiotic resources for large, authentic audiences that can be reached through diverse publishing venues. It is also a practice that disrupts the established boundaries and power structures that exclude and silence the novice, ordinary, and amateur. In many ways, digital storytelling arises as cultural practice in response to the new ways in which the ordinary, everyday individual seeks alignment and association with the mainstream, global, and massive. This essay claims digital storytelling is a distinct genre/cultural practice in this context.

Digital storytelling, like any other genre, has subgenres. Not all digital storytelling includes multimedia and tells stories of how organizations working on digital storytelling train people. The method of storytelling depends on what the organization or community wants to achieve and the limitations of the technology used. The method also depends on

the technical skills and access to technology-backed devices of the user (author) and its target audience.

In other words, it depends on the rhetorical situation. Gaming, MOOs (a text-based online virtual reality system to which multiple users (players) connect simultaneously), blogging, psychogeography, and the multimedia stories generated by users are all involved in digital storytelling. However, they use different technologies and have different goals. Psychogeography is closer to the multimedia digital story genre; therefore, this essay will give more detail into this form of digital storytelling and only briefly mention gaming and MOOs.

Psychogeography elicits and encourages people to tell folklores and local stories rather than something being told spontaneously or generated through interactive game playing within a smaller enclave.

MOO: There are several acronyms for various forms of communication on the Internet. MOO comes from MUD Object-Oriented, which has another acronym (MUD) embedded into it. MUD stands for Multi-User Dungeon/Domain/Dimension. A MOO, according to Wikipedia (Wikipedia, n.d.), the web encyclopaedia, is a text-based online virtual reality system to which multiple users connect at the same time." The encyclopaedia entry continues "MOOs are network accessible, multi-user, programmable, interactive systems designed to construct text-based adventure games, conferencing systems, and other collaborative software". Though they are commonly used for virtual reality games, they are also used for distance education and collaboration.

In the discursive scene of digital storytelling, we observe for the recurrence of the typified ways of using multimodal resources; such as laying digital images of oneself and family on top of a running narrative, or the use of storyboards as an anchoring device) to achieve particular rhetorical/social goals — inviting the audience to relate emotionally, moving people toward social change, or achieving closure from a loss, etc.).

But from the perspective of psychogeography, fandom-based media production, meme production, digital storytelling, and vlogs may take on a similar form as the multimodal, creative enterprises that surface through the same digital venues of dissemination. However, as distinct cultural practices, these art forms are considered for their unique ways and represent differently typified categories of meaning associated with distinct, historically developed values, attitudes, relationships, and expectations.

In other words, it is not the use of digital tools that signal that digital storytelling is taking place. Instead, the particular way of making some meaning defines the cultural practice and folklore work in the digital ecosystem. So the digital storytelling genre, when conceived as social action, provides proper frames for describing the particular configuration of persons, tools, texts, activities, and epistemologies in pursuit of a shared objective. A complexly developed and organized secondary genre, a digital story involves integrating and altering a multiplicity of primary genres that codify various tangible aspects of everyday communicative activities.

Pertinent primary genres might include oral storytelling or everyday conversations. However, integrating rejoinders and oral narratives in digital storytelling is more of an artistic event than a realistic representation of everyday life. Additionally, digital storytelling is often built through the dynamic integration, alteration, and remix of a range of familiar/mundane genres of cultural and communicative practices. For example, a digital storyteller may make selective and adaptive use of genres of writing (essays, narrative, persuasive writing, poetry, autobiography), popular culture (commercial movies, radio programs, mainstream news broadcasting, and journalistic reports), conventional communicative practices (oral storytelling, communal stories, legends, and myths), and cultural practices of making family artifacts (scrap-books, home videos, family albums). As such, digital storytelling is a complexly organized and developed secondary genre that integrates and makes references to multiple genres to respond to the particular social

exigencies built into the social practice—to entertain, to preserve memories, to communicate complex ideas or to enact change of perspectives and attitudes.

From this perspective, digital storytelling is never an individual enterprise as previously researched but is a distributed phenomenon that involves the complex interaction and collaboration among individuals, mediating artifacts, and other components of the social material environment. Along that line, the cognitive work performed in digital storytelling involves the coordinated and mediated work of a “functional system,” a typified and dynamic configuration of people, artifacts, practices, institutions, communities, and ecologies around some array of objectives (Caroll, 2003). For this enterprise, understanding the dynamism of this complexity provides an inroad to framing an expansive view that moves beyond the individual author to encompass a range of other agents.

In important ways, learning of the functions, structures, and ways of symbolic artifacts is essential to one's learning of a complex contemporary activity. In terms of discursive work, a fundamental assumption is that language is an integral part of human's cultural functions by enabling access to spatially and temporally dispersed, collective experiences that are otherwise inaccessible (Vygotsky, 1978). Tool use is such an essential dimension of human activities. Tools facilitate the performance of activities, such as using a hammer to pound in nails and regulate one's interaction with and manipulation of the material world. For example, in Hutchin's (Hutchins, 1995) discussion of the management of a ship's navigation, the task of reaching a specific geographic location is achieved through the coordinated construction and interpretation of data through participants' proper use of the different representational tools. As of now, most digital storytelling typically begins with prompting and scripting activities, which educate the individual about the

genre and practice of digital storytelling and initiate research and thinking about potential story ideas. Digital authors also engage in recursive resource-building activities.

The individual uses appropriate digital tools to collect, digitize, and manage multimodal resources following a growing story. The production stage involves scripting, storyboarding, editing, and responding activities, which often involve the collaborative work of partners. Finally, when storytellers, family members, and community members gather to provide digital authors with acknowledgment and feedback, digital storytellers share their stories in a public premiere. The critical idea here is that these activities are not carried out randomly, but even done with not the same intention can instigate traceable responses from the audience.

Instead, the persons, texts, tasks, and activities are organized in rather routinized ways by the clubhouse model and other locally developed routines. From the genre perspective, these discursive, material, and practical structures embody the conceptual and practical conditions of realizing the core values and meanings specific to digital storytelling. These generic structures represent typified ways of coordinating persons, texts, tools, activities, and institutions to realize digital storytelling's functions, meanings, and purposes. For example, digital storytelling often involves certain activities that the digital author or creator invites to create multimodal resources about the self and society. To do so, they use folklores, other existing resources, old photos from family albums, retrieve old family videos, and use digital cameras or digital video cameras to create something in a completely new format on the spot. To process, convert, edit, and manage multimodal resources, one needs to learn to use various digital tools - the basics of digital camera and digital video camera, scanner, photoshop, video editing software, etc., to process, convert, edit, and manage multimodal resources. In this rather generic activity, individuals, tools, multimodal texts, and tasks are configured according to certain norms to partially fulfill the epistemological and ideological values associated with digital storytelling, emphasizing the individual voice and personal experiences. In this scenario,

the individual is not creating something wholly original but is working within a framework that informs and constrains what one accomplishes.

These ideas are particularly important to this paper because it provides the background for a distributed form of analysis that pushes against the narrow, celebratory stance towards individual creativity and agency. Rather than focusing on the individual as the sole agent contributing to and gaining from the digital storytelling experience, we observe how the digital author is just an agent in a typified yet dynamic configuration of persons (instructors, researchers, digital storytellers), artifacts (software interface, technological tools, model texts, genre descriptions), institutions (CDS, DUSTY, other international media initiatives), whose collaborative effort is realized through the performance of a well-orchestrated system of genres and generic activities. Finally, this paper argues that digital storytelling occurs in a discursive environment structured through a repertoire of historically developed genres and practices, such as the use of folklores and other stories to be used and created in a new form.

We observe an individual's digital storytelling as involving the appropriation of these discursive and material structures through the lens of genre. The cultural practice is enacted through its typified configuration of persons, practices, cultural artifacts, and norms. A distributed frame of inquiry also helps us see an individual's storytelling as richer and more complex than previous scholarships suggested. For example, when we begin to conceive digital storytelling from the lens of the genre, generic structures and their utilities stand out. This distributed frame of inquiry positions the individual in concert with other human and non-human agents, sometimes coherently and other times are creating tensions. As we revise our vision of digital storytelling as a distributed and mediated phenomenon, we begin to observe the discursive phenomenon resulting from the enactment of many highly structured and regulated activities that give familiar, recognizable, and formative shape to the social practice they embody. In this vein, what is achievable by an individual depends on how effectively one comes to terms with the

discursive environment of digital storytelling and how well one socially and discursively aligns with other agents at play.

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The Emergence of Digital Storytelling in Folklores

With the dependence on the internet, particularly during the pandemic, even as technology became established and new technologies supporting it became accessible, it has become not just a giant encyclopaedia with a huge collection of facts and figures but a venue where stories are told using multimedia technologies for a global audience. No longer do computers remain the fancy fads of urban India, but it is now a handy tool of connectivity, education, messaging, and communications.

With the proliferation of the internet in ordinary homes in middle and low-income countries such as India and the neighbourhood and its emerging cultures and the relative access to sophisticated usable multimedia technologies, more and more people are able to express themselves through digital storytelling. Storytelling on the internet seems to evolve naturally as people begin to explore the ease and comfort of digital communication. For example, anecdotes that are told via emails or blogs are disseminated widely on an informal basis, but there are also more formal forms of telling stories in the digital world in which multimedia is used in a more sophisticated manner. (Pierotti K. , “Digital Storytelling: The Application of Vichian Theory”, 2006)The sophisticated and new avatars of stories are categorized as digital stories. However, digital storytelling is an umbrella that covers a variety of different genres of storytelling that use digital technology to not just create content but distribute them evenly. The digital story genres in this paper are those that are specifically organized to create responses in communities, stir them, and are viewed and appreciated widely.

The idea of creating and activating the global community through storytelling is as necessary today as it has been for thousands of years, but digital storytelling also has to deal with the new technologies. There is a strong feeling that new technologies alienates people from others because they are in the hands of a few people. For example, in the European medieval chirographic or script and print media times, only an elite few had access to books that consequently gave them power over the majority of people. A few founder members of the Center for Digital Storytelling (CDS), a non-profit organization in the United States working to develop forms of digital storytelling recognized that multimedia today was also limited in the hands of an elite few, in particular corporations and government institutions. Joe Lambert sums up by saying that people use media, ironically, to overcome the more troublesome residual effects of our consumer media culture. He adds that digital storytelling community has described the internet and new media explosion as a release to a century of pent-up frustration at being involved in a one-way discourse just as electronic media speaks at us, but we could not talk back. (Lambart, 2018)

The limits to technical skills and purposes, in countries such as India, despite the challenges of technology knowhow and access to connectivity, digital storytelling grew exponentially.

Here are their top selected tools for the digital storytelling tools (Gonzales, 2019) that helped individual authors to generate digital content and create the secondary complex genre of digital storytelling:

Gifs (Graphic Interchange format) - a GIF is a lossless format for image files that supports both animated and static images. Here are a few examples.

- *GiphyCam* ([Android](#) | [iOS](#)) - Record and stylize gifs directly within this user-friendly app. (Amara Aguilar & Vince Gonzales)
- *Loopsie* ([Android](#) | [iOS](#)) - Record living photos with motion effects.

- *Cinemagraph* ([iOS only](#)) - Still photo with a moving element.
- *Giffer* ([iOS only](#)) - Timelapse, slideshows, cinemagraphs and more.
- *GIF X* ([iOS only](#)) - Gifs with effects.

Video

- *Adobe Premiere Clip* ([Android](#) | [iOS](#)) - Mobile video editor with built-in music options.
- *Quik (GoPro)* ([Android](#) | [iOS](#)) - This is a kind of mobile video editor with built-in music options.
- *Apple Clips* ([iOS only](#)) - This adds filters, in-app animated stickers and other extra elements to video. It has the option to record 360-degree videos.

Graphic Design

- *Adobe Spark Post* ([Android](#) | [iOS](#)) - Create graphic design elements using templates.
- *Ripl* ([Android](#) | [iOS](#)) - Create slideshows, animations and other short videos. (“Your Mobile Production Toolkit for Digital Storytelling ...”)
- *Story Wave* ([iOS only](#)) - Add animated text to videos, photos and music. (“Your Mobile Production Toolkit for Digital Storytelling ...”)

Podcasting

- *Anchor* ([Android](#) | [iOS](#)) - Record, edit, share and host unlimited episodes of your podcast.
- *Audiogram* ([iOS only](#)) - Record, edit and share your podcast with options to optimize for different social media platforms.

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The Indian Context: Scope of Digital Storytelling During the Pandemic

Kamal Purti called himself a modern-day "Madari." In June 2020, the IT professional turned digital storyteller curated "*Confused Bhagwan* to engage with school

students through a hyperactive, spiky Coronavirus that came out from a character's head. The online act generated an unprecedented impact of ambling conversation. School children sitting thousands of kilometres away were hooked to their computer screen, listening to the theatre artist when the world was completely shut.

Indian digital storytellers recorded this period with personalized and customized stories in history. They modified their medium and content to provide entertainment and talk therapy to restive kids and adults.

Several noted celebrities agreed that digital theatre and storytelling medium created a deeper divide in India and produced compromised art forms. However, unknown faces found an audience and fame for their art (Priyadershini, 2020). As discussed above, the digital storytelling ecosystem remained unstructured and uncontrollable and created unprecedented content as a secondary genre.

Rituparna Ghosh founded "Your Story Bag" in 2015. However, she teamed up with eight members of "The Delhi Storytellers Tribe" to raise funds for "The Kutumb Foundation," a not-for-profit providing COVID-relief to underserved communities in Noida. The social impact from the effort created a campaign to raise funds for COVID relief. The stories constituted a locked-up society's livelihood, joy, skills, and artistry. It also helped people during the crisis to be connected and engaged.

Many people rediscovered their voices and found channels to amplify them. The Delhi Storytellers tribe told stories of *Septopasher Khide (The Hunger of the Pitcher Plant)* by Satyajit Ray, in the digital format in which children from India and worldwide participated.

Individuals such as Yogita Bansal Ahuja founded Story Circle by INM Learning Services and offered a 15-hour certification course. The course to "create consciousness about storytelling and waking people to its power. Another effort was the "Weekly Story Soup" that collaborated with storytellers from the North, South, West, and East India to create bonding while overcoming language barriers.

Chennai-based South Indian film actor Janaki Sabesh, began by recording stories and sing-a-long on audio cassettes in 1995. Along with Avanti Natarajan's "Lil Trails", she ran a creative campaign on Instagram. She moved to a bigger platform with Zoom for World Autism Day.

Bangalore based "We Storytellers" tell the stories of companies and their brands, a well-established marketing strategy.

Mapping impacts of user-generated stories told in a participatory format, the research paper traced the path of twenty-five unknown/lesser-known artists who shot to fame overnight. They leave behind digital footprints that will stay till the life of the internet for audiences.

Methodology

In this study, a digital survey was conducted during the pandemic from May 2020- to February 2022 with random celebrities and audiences. These people reproduced local and digital content and made a mark of their art with little or no structured knowledge of digital storytelling abilities.

The artists used a phone and simple digital storytelling tools to tell their stories. Neither one was a chaste technology expert nor an established master of the art. Yet, they found fame and disrupted the creative critic circles with their stories, simple messaging, personal branding, and community communications. These are the results of digital storytelling artwork considered a hybrid form of folklore genre, not wholly indigenous but a mix of technology, stories, and audience.

The methodology used was the mixed method for this research. Mixed methods research represents the kind of research work involving collecting, analyzing, and interpreting quantitative and qualitative data in a single study to investigate the same underlying phenomenon. (Onwuegbuzie, 2009). In this method, we designed the research with philosophical assumptions and methods of inquiry. The methodology involved

philosophical assumptions giving us the direction of the collection of digital stories and the analytical conclusion of the data through a single study. The central premise was to use quantitative and qualitative approaches. In combination, it provided a better understanding of research problems that either approach alone could not have helped achieve. The purpose of the study is to position mixed-method research to offer pragmatism in understanding the research questions.

Quantitative Input

The data reported here are based on a survey of a random sample of artists and audiences to understand the popular cause and tools of digital storytelling during the pandemic. It gives a fair idea of how small-time artists are using the internet, social media, and other digital technologies to share and communicate content with patrons and manage their artwork and objectives. During survey development, it was kept in mind to reach out for solicited input from a diverse group of ordinary artists, the audience, and the medium aligning with McLuhan's theory of "the medium is the message ."Even without their expectations and knowledge, the artist/author who shot to fame overnight used easy digital tools personally or through collaborators for their creations.

Qualitative input

The participants provided feedback on survey content, focus and language, and technical skills. Their input was invaluable in shaping a survey that captured the experiences of a wide range of artists/audiences and the collaborators who tasted the impact of going viral overnight. Different genres, such as songs, short videos, memes, etc., were studied for their reach, impact, and retention.

Survey Sample

The survey results reported here are based on a handpicked national, non-probability sample of 1,000 random respondents who agreed to take the survey. The sample given here is not a probability sample of all viral videos in India because it was not practical to assemble such a sampling frame. Instead, the idea was to explore the unorganised sector of digital storytellers, their skills, their tools and the future of such work. The plan was to assess if ways of digital storytelling itself is an emerging genre or it was too complex to analyse the impact of digital storytelling while reproducing quality folklores and culture artwork.

In an effort to obtain the highest possible response rate to the survey, advance emails and telephonic messages, WhatsApp messages were sent to the creators and subscribers of the topmost viral videos to 1000 people explaining the purpose of the survey and that their responses will be individually recorded. The messages posed five questions for the respondents to answer them in short answers or in affirmation:

- Are you an artist or a critic?
- Did you seek technical help in curating your story?
- Did you expect to go viral?
- Would you recreate more such productions using local folklores and cultures?
- What was your major take away?

This survey did not identify the source of the viral videos but identified the medium that led it to go viral and appreciated by unlimited number of respondents. Out of the twenty-five viral stories, the top ten viral videos and their trends are recorded here for readers to understand the complexity in the ecosystem. To deeply understand the pattern, the study first traced twenty five such videos on different platforms but for the purpose to map the trend and the social impact during the time of the pandemic, only top trending ten videos were selected.

The viral digital stories in forms of short videos, music, folklores, culture talks supported by new technologies are listed below:

Fig:1: Viral Videos

Viral Videos	Weblinks	Social Impact
<p>Kachh a Badam : A peanut sellers song to sell his peanuts in a remote village in Bolpur, West Bengal in December 2022.</p>	<p>https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I1xTDV2hh8</p>	<p>It was recorded on smart phone by a traveller.</p>
<p>Bhivp anchi Garaz na' (<i>There is no need to fear</i>) — Konkani song of the pandemic.</p>	<p>https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W1rYhrXwCLQ Konkani Song https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/goa/photos-goas-women-immortalise-covid-pandemic-in-their-folk-songs/photostory/89961810.cms?picid=89962084</p>	<p>Offi cial video was released after rural women sang the song and Chief</p>

		Minister of Goa Pramod Sawant picked it up
Hitesh Rawal 'Chothi aayo corona' deals with the pandemic. Gujrati artist's sang for her community people.	https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/ahmedabad/chothi-aayo-corona-artists-belt-out-topical-viral-tunes/articleshow/74753024.cms	The videos first used TikTok platform and then was shared as WhatsApp message.
Nagal and Ministers and MLA Sang Gospel Hymn to Spread Hope amid Covid- 19 Pandemic, their video go viral	https://www.news18.com/news/buzz/nagaland-ministers-and-mla-sing-gospel-hymn-to-spread-hope-amid-covid-19-pandemic-video-goes-viral-3858650.html	Cre ated buzz over as was shared by the governmen t's handle. It created confidence among people in

		times of uncertainty due to the pandemic.
Ranu Mondal, a Bengali singer was picked up in 2019, by someone. She went viral again	https://www.indiatoday.in/trending-news/story/remember-ranu-mondal-who-went-viral-in-2019-here-s-why-she-is-trending-again-1859029-2021-09-30	Ranu Mandal kept coming back with new versions of her songs.
A mashup of Allu Arjun's Srivalli and Kashmiri folk music is viral.	https://www.indiatoday.in/trending-news/story/man-infuses-allu-arjun-s-srivalli-with-kashmiri-folk-music-in-viral-video-seen-it-yet-1907594-2022-02-02 <i>The man singing in the video has identified himself as Tasleem is seen singing Srivalli while playing a Harmonium.</i>	The viral video had an element of cross cultures.
Bhojpur Singer, Neha Singh	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M52bUa9kqbA	The rapper used popular

<p>Rathore on elections</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M52bUa9kqbA</p> <p style="text-align: center;">965,693 views on one day on 23 Sept 2020</p>	<p>language to raise issues of poll in Bihar and U.P.</p>
<p>Patients broke into flash mob by asymptomatic COVID-19 patients in Ballari, Karnataka, hospital spreads cheer patients.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P6XG0AMOSGA</p> <p style="text-align: center;">It generated 18,077 views on 20 Jul 2020.</p>	<p>Later several doctors used ways of dancing and singing to bring hope and humour among patients.</p>
<p>Medical Students from Kerala's Thrissur medical college broke into</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P_JZ_9V6wc</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Medical students Naveen K Razak and Janaki Omkumar dance to Boney M's 1978 hit song Rasputin. ("Viral video of Kerala medical students dancing takes a ...") They were in their college corridor in casual outfit. They were later</p>	<p>This was at a time when the nation was debating communal hate.</p>

synchronized dance.	joined by other doctors and it became an instant hit after it was posted on social media.	
Doctors danced to "Seeti Maar" from Salman Khan's latest film 'Radhe'	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aA8MsT-AJ9nI https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aA8MsT-AJ9nI	The viral clip was to boost the confidence of patients by omicron virus.

As discussed above the overall goal of the survey was to measure the different ways common people were still unaware of the power of digital technologies but used tools of digital storytelling to further their missions, messaging and connections. And how did they and critics see their work now?

Number of People/author/artist/audience/critic invited to take the survey : 1000;
 84.3% people approached responded to the survey.

Number of respondents: 843

Fig: 2: Survey Result

Identified themselves as author/creators of the video	84	9.9%
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Identified seeking collaboration to recreate digital content	541	64.1%
Identified themselves as re-user to recreate digital content	233	27.6%
Identified themselves as new learners of digital medium for digital storytelling	456	54%
Identified as more skilled in digital platforms than folklores	540	64%
Identified as not having a plan to re-tell and reproduce digital stories	611	72.4%
Identified as wanting to tell their stories but did not know how on digital platforms	268	31.7%
Identified as being surprised by the popularity of the viral videos	666	79%

Identified themselves as sole owners of the digital videos.	567	67.2%
Identified wanting to learn to monetize their digital content	669	79.3%

Fig: 3: Digital Ecosystem

Chart to depict the unruly digital ecosystem of user generated content:

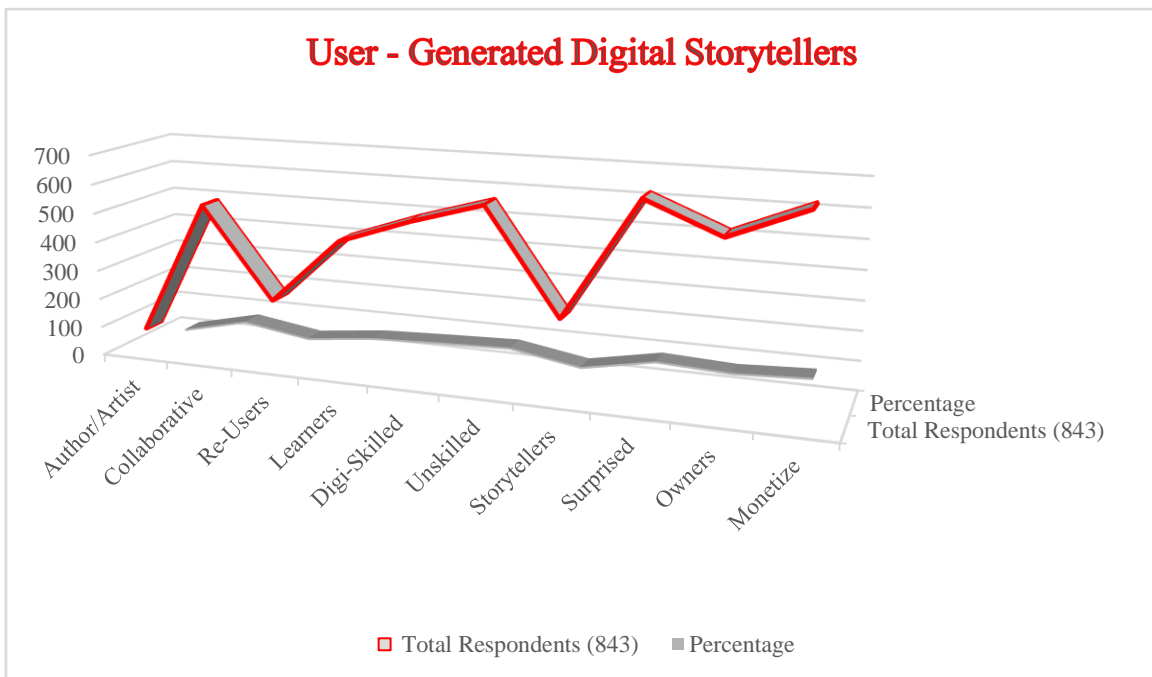


Fig: 3 Observations

The survey revealed the following lessons:

- 9.96% respondents called themselves as the source/author of the videos, such as in the case of Neha Singh Rathore who rapped in local Bhopuri lyrics for election related awareness.

- 64.1% respondents said they were seeking collaborations to go digital and needed a technical person to help them.
- 67.2% respondents felt they were the sole owner of the story, because they used digital platforms effectively to curate them. One such case identified here was the case of a video travel blogger Gaurav Wasan who highlighted the story of Kanta Prasad, the owner of Baba ka Dhaba at Malviya nagar, Delhi. The hardships of the couple was shown on several social media platforms and together they generated funds to support the roadside eatery of the couple. Later the blogger and the story teller accused each other of fund embezzlement because they could not reach into an agreement as to who was the real author/creator of the stories -the Dhaba owner who narrated his story or the vlogger who recorded it and disseminated it.
- The survey highlighted some eye elements that the creators of digital stories were not necessarily artists or storytellers. 67.2 % identified themselves as digital platform experts, and accepted that culture and folklores on digital platforms lacked and lost originality and artistic work in the digital platform.
- The respondents also highlighted that technology made it easier for recreation while diluting creativity. 79.3% wanted to use the digital skills to monetize digital content but did not know how to and believed digital storytelling is a hybrid form for folklores.
- 79% of the creators/authors/respondents thought that their viral presence was one -off case and might not have the longevity of artwork and shelf life.

Conclusion

The study thus validates key aspects of the Marshall McLuhan's (McCLUHAN, *The Medium is the Message*, 1964) theory that "medium is the message". He said, "In a culture like ours, long accustomed to splitting and dividing all things as a means of control, it is sometimes a bit of a shock to be reminded that, in operational and practical

fact, the medium is the message”. Following the Vichian theory that the personal and social consequences of any medium used for folklores or culture, remains an extension of ourselves and results from the new scale that is introduced into our affairs by the extension of ourselves, or any new technology. The multi-disciplinary research explains the power of digital, interactive or participatory storytelling to influence human behaviour in the context of social messaging during uncertain times. It addressed the three related questions:

RQ1: If digital storytelling served as an equalizing platform for vernacular cultures and folklores?

RQ2: If the technological interface disrupted audience responses to folklores?

RQ3: If digital storytelling dilute “creativity” by introducing new pathways to literary criticism?

The linked qualitative studies conducted provided a scoping review, in-depth interviews with 843 digital storytellers, twenty five case studies of ‘digital storytelling designed to bring social impact’ and even the non-participating audience. The research found that:

RA1: Digital storytelling does provide a level playing ground to digital storytellers because that remains the medium to showcase talent and expression. The response of the audience can be due to several related issues unrecognisable at this point but that it generates huge acknowledgement to storytellers provides the equaliser effect.

RA2: Digital storytelling did appear to influence people by engaging them as never before deepening emphatical, emotional and non-conscious levels. Monetizing the platforms appear to be a goal to understand and embrace this power but cultural art forms and folklores still rely on traditional uni-directional, non-participatory messaging allowing critics to analyse the beauty of the stories more deeply appealing to people’s cognition. So it presents threats and opportunities both to folklores.

RA3: The 'digital storytelling framework', its literary retention value, social impact, speed and accessibility remains to be deeply evaluated further.

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