
Reconfiguring Narratology in the Digital Age: Podcasts, Technology, and the Transformation of Indian Storytelling

Dr. Seema Sharma

Associate Professor & Head, Department of English
Maharaja Ganga Singh University, Bikaner

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Abstract

The advent of the digital era has reshaped the art of storytelling, bringing about substantial changes in the creation, sharing, presentation and experience of stories. Digital Storytelling includes various forms, from multimedia stories on websites to audio narratives like podcasts, and even immersive experiences using AI, augmented and virtual reality. Unlike digital storytelling, which is often non-linear, the traditional storytelling is characterized by a linear and straightforward narrator's voice, and audience's engagement. with the text are usually linear and straightforward. Innovative digital storytelling methods focus on the study of 'how narratives are structured' and 'how they carry meaning.' They are truly transforming the field of 'narratology,' and its dynamics making it more involving and engaging. The paper examines how digital storytelling engages and modifies essential narratological elements such as focalization, narrative voice, and temporal structure. It also explores how digital storytelling, especially through emerging technologies and podcasts, engages with and transforms traditional narratological concepts, expanding the narrative possibilities and interactions between storyteller and audience, with specific attention to the growing landscape of Indian digital storytelling.

Keywords: Storytelling, Podcasts, Narratology, Digital, Technology

Introduction

The art of storytelling has been a vital part of human culture since time immemorial. Stories have always been a powerful way to spark imagination, share information, and bring people together. They have evolved from oral traditions passed down through generations to written works and visual arts. In the digital age,

storytelling has adapted to new platforms and technologies, creating immersive and collaborative experiences, unlike traditional storytelling, which is linear, digital platforms allow for non-linear, multifaceted, and fragmented storytelling with greater audience engagement and interaction. Podcasts are a prime example of this digital evolution, offering an immersive listening experience with audio and video components presented in episodes.

Narratology provides a lens for understanding changes and shifts in storytelling. The classical narratological framework, influenced by theorists such as Gérard Genette and Mikhail Bakhtin, traditionally examines narrative elements such as voice, focalization, and spatial framework (Genette 180; Bakhtin 84). Digital storytelling also applies these elements but with some nuances by intensifying the narrative possibilities and establishing the connection between listener and story, making them engaging by pushing the restrictions of traditional narratives and deepening with the audience connection.

Theories of Narratology: Understanding the Building Blocks of Story

Narratology aims to uncover the underlying structures and conventions that define stories. It examines how narratives are crafted and how they convey meaning. The main perceptions in this field include narrative voice (who tells the story), focalization (the perspective through which we experience events), and the intricate interplay of time and space within the narrative. While these ideas provide a compact foundation, the unique traits of digital storytelling reshape understanding of these elements.

Gérard Genette's theory of narrative time serves as a fundamental aspect for the examination of conventional narratives. He distinguishes between story time (*histoire*), narrative time (*récit*, which refers to the duration required to convey the story), and narrating time (narration, the actual time spent telling the story) (33). This framework has significantly impacted both literary and digital storytelling, providing a basis for exploring how time is manipulated within narratives. In digital platforms-storytelling elements such as interactive choices, hyperlinks, and multi-threaded narratives present innovative methods for understanding the interplay between time and narrative structure.

Another vital concept in narratology is focalization, which relates to the perspective from which a narrative is presented. In traditional forms of media, the author or filmmaker typically governs focalization. Conversely, in digital storytelling, particularly through interactive platforms and podcasts, the audience

may have the ability to influence focalization. This engagement allows a participatory storytelling experience for fostering more dynamic focalization.

Ryan's (2015) notion of narrative as a "virtual reality" further elucidates how digital narratology transcends traditional models. She posits that all narratives encourage the audience to mentally create and inhabit story worlds, but digital media enhance this process by making it more explicit and interactive, thereby facilitating deeper immersion and agency within these constructed environments. (13) The virtual space is deliberately crafted by its creators to become a specific kind of place, designed to evoke a particular atmosphere, emotional responses, and meaning (Kazlauskaitė 3).

Digital Storytelling and New Narrative

Digital storytelling serves as a potent medium for expressing narratives through the integration of multimedia components such as images, videos, and audio. By merging these various formats, digital storytelling enhances the immersive quality, engagement, and emotional resonance of stories. This approach transcends conventional storytelling by allowing creators to develop interactive and visually captivating narratives. Digital storytelling emerged from a democratization movement rooted in 1960s activism, fundamentally challenging traditional author-audience relationships (Piredddu 105). The evolution of digital storytelling was significantly influenced by Ivan Illich's ideas presented in "Tools for Conviviality" (1975) and the activities of the Center for Digital Storytelling at the University of California, Berkeley (Ivan Illich and Conviviality). Joe Lambert's widely-cited framework identifies seven fundamental elements of digital storytelling: Point of View, Dramatic Question, Emotional Content, Gift of Voice, Power of Soundtrack, Economy, and Pacing." (107) Meadows emphasizes that "the essential component of narrative is perspective—choosing what to tell, as well as how to tell it and in what order" (107). This multimedia approach represents a significant departure from traditional linear storytelling, as 'every aspect of storytelling, structure, plot, character, pace, voice, timing, and setting has the potential to be morphed by digital media.'

Modern digital storytelling increasingly utilizes transmedia strategies that extend storylines across several media formats to construct cohesive, intricate media landscapes. This method transcends individual mediums by utilizing podcasts, mobile applications, live events, and other platforms, enabling viewers to explore narrative universes across several media channels. It utilizes multiple layers of multimedia elements and allows audiences to explore and unfold stories freely.

Digital storytelling is transforming with the change, facilitated by digital storytelling tools and methods. Adopting multimedia storytelling, interactive storytelling, and transmedia storytelling not only heightens engagement but also extends the creative boundaries of storytellers.

With evolving digital technology, the future of digital storytelling has immense promise, allowing storytellers to engage readers in new and compelling ways. In podcasts, many series are episodic, and the story unfolds over time; it provides the audience the opportunity to participate and make predictions or change the plot. Episodes also take unexpected turns while creating suspense to foster a sense of continuity and involvement. Sometimes multimedia components also enhance narrative depth. It integrates sound effects, music, and voice alterations to enrich the storytelling experience. This multi-sensory interaction in spoken, written, and visual form makes it more engaging than traditional print storytelling. The digital platform provided more avenues of interaction between the audience and the story through comments, brainstorming, and discussions on social media, making it more interactive and attentive.

Jenkins' notion of "convergence culture" is especially relevant in this context, as it illustrates how storytelling spans multiple platforms, with audiences proactively searching for and assembling narrative components from diverse media channels (Jenkins 2-3). This approach to transmedia storytelling has gained noteworthy attention in the digital realm, as franchises and creators intentionally craft narratives that develop across various platforms. Using technology, storytellers can reach a worldwide audience, promote a sense of connection, and understand across cultures.

Podcasts and Digital Narratives: Structure Analysis

Podcasts, a prominent digital storytelling genre, present a specific form of sound experience and interaction. Through voice performance, audio prompts, and sound, they create atmosphere, convey emotion, establish ambience, and develop the story. Their specific narrative structure sets them apart from other types of narratives. The episodic character of podcast narrative tends to disrupt linear development, with each episode potentially bringing new plot twists or turns in perspective. In popular narrative podcasts such as *Serial* -the narrative is divided into various episodes, building suspense and anticipation for the next release. The episodic format looks like the release of television series, encouraging viewers to come back regularly to follow the running story.

Indian podcasts such as "The Sandip Roy Show" illustrate the way the platform can craft culture-specific stories by combining tradition with modernity. The

show adopts traditional interviews combined with ambient noise and background sound to build rich audio texture and evoke nostalgia, as well as relevance to modern times. It is a term known as 'Cultural Hybridity' (Homi K Bhabha) in a story form that talks directly to Indians but is accessible to Global Listeners. Digital technologies and platforms not only enable but also accelerate the creation and dissemination of hybrid narratives, making hybridity a central characteristic of digital culture today. Homi K. Bhabha's concept of the "third space" is central to understanding hybridity in digital narratives. (55) Digital spaces act as liminal or "in-between" zones where cultural negotiation and innovation occur, allowing for the emergence of new, hybrid identities that challenge traditional boundaries.

Podcasts tend to utilize multiple narrative threads, with more than one character or event being explored or focused on simultaneously. This multi-layered format offers a possibility of rich storytelling where listeners may listen to individual narrative threads based on their interests or preferences. It also presents opportunities for deep character development over the long term, as individual episodes can go deeper, and examine the motivations and experiences of varied characters.

The sound design greatly enhances the storytelling experience in the Podcasts. Sound elements like music, effects, and voice modulation etc add depth and participation to the emotional impact of the story. These auditory elements also serve to impart information that may otherwise be visualized in other forms of media, thus making podcasts a sensorially immersive medium for storytelling. Through this, they illustrate the capability of digital storytelling to address multiple senses and establish an atmosphere that immerses listeners into the world of the story.

McHale's recent studies of 'audio narratology' have explored how the lack of visual presence in podcasts engenders a unique mode of "cognitive listening," whereby listeners play an active role in the co-creation of the story using sound-based cues (107). The strategy engenders what he describes as "collaborative imagination," a form of interaction distinct from other narrative styles. While primarily an audio medium, many podcasts now incorporate multimedia elements, eg- vodcasts (video podcasts). This integration allows for richer storytelling and engagement, as producers combine audio with visual content to enhance the listener's experience. This evolution in production methods reflects the changing preferences of audiences who seek more dynamic content. (Berry 1-5). The use of AI is opening new avenues in the podcasting industry for scriptwriting, voiced hosts, and sound design, posing ethical, legal, and creative challenges. (Morris).

Different case studies demonstrate the potential of digital storytelling and the evolving dynamics of narratology. One of the most prominent examples is the podcast *Serial* based on a 1999 murder case, which revolutionized the podcasting landscape and broadened narrative possibilities in the digital age. Through mesmerizing narratives and an in-depth examination of the evidence, *Serial* captivates listeners and viewers with its multi-episode investigation. The format of the podcast---serial episodes interspersed with dramatic pauses and cliffhangers---invites listeners to emotionally immerse themselves in the story as it develops. *Serial* is highlighted as a purely auditory medium, which distinguishes it from traditional forms of storytelling. The podcast utilizes a compilation of audio clips, such as conversations and interrogations, to create a coherent narrative. This method aligns with oral storytelling traditions, emphasizing the importance of sound in conveying the story. Sarah Koenig, the host of *Serial*, plays a crucial role in shaping the narrative. Her direct engagement with the audience and her investigative efforts are central to the storytelling process. This interaction, although not live, creates a sense of intimacy and connection with the listeners. (DeMair 24-38) Regardless of genre or mode of storytelling, these programs can have the potential to educate audiences about bigger-picture flaws in the criminal justice system that affect everyone. (Keeler 132)

Case Studies in Digital Narratology in Indian landscape

India, characterized by its varied culture and profound storytelling heritage, has experienced a significant rise in the podcasting landscape. Featuring insightful dialogues and enthralling narratives, there exists a multitude of Indian podcasts that are sure to engage audience interest and maintain their focus without the need for visual elements. Indian podcasts serve a broad spectrum of listeners and provide an extensive array of engaging content. India is already the third-largest podcast listening market in the world, after China and the US, with over 57.6 million listeners. (The rise of podcasting in India) Social media gives previously underrepresented populations and voices a platform to tell their stories and express their opinions to a global audience .

Podcasts in India cover a wide array of genres, including true crime, storytelling, comedy, and self-improvement (Aryan 2). Notable examples include "The Ranveer Show," "Cyrus Says," and "The Musafir Stories," which showcase the rich diversity of Indian podcasting.

Nikesh Murali's "Indian Noir" exemplifies 'how digital storytelling can combine traditional and modern narrative styles in the Indian podcast scene'. He presents captivating crime fiction by incorporating elements of Indian storytelling,

locales, and characters, as well as Western noir conventions. It grabs the attention and enthrals the audience through immersive audio plays and by combining superb sound design with regional linguistic features.

The genre's capacity to use complex narrative techniques to address both universal and local issues indicates that transcultural storytelling will remain a significant component of modern media production, pushing the boundaries between domestic and international filmmaking while opening new avenues for artistic innovation and cross-cultural interaction. Digital platforms have also facilitated global distribution of Indian Noir content, enabling transcultural exchange and international audience engagement with distinctly Indian stories. This technological shift represents more than mere distribution; it constitutes a fundamental reimagining of how Indian crime narratives can be constructed and consumed.

The Podcast "Books & Beyond" is hosted by Tara Khandelwal and Michelle D'costa, who bring Indian and global authors to share their writing journeys. They often veer into discussions on identity, migration, and cultural hybridity which furthermore fall under the rubric of "Third Space." As proposed by Homi K. Bhabha—third space being that hybrid cultural arena where fixed identities are subverted to denounce newer forms of expressions." In this third space, the writers perform the dance between tradition and modernity, local and global influences thereby allowing reinvention of self and nation through literature. By placing such transnational and transcultural intersections at the forefront, this podcast becomes an engaged and prosthetic dialogic site questioning every essence of identity (Bhabha 55).

Rajorshi Das presents "Queerness and Storytelling in India" is an endeavour that brings together writers, artists, and activists to discuss queer narratives in the Indian context. The podcast/termed as platform now is in fact a space of intersectional discourses in which Kimberle Crenshaw's theory of intersectionality becomes crucial for understanding how subjectivities such as queerness, caste, language, and postcoloniality coalesce to shape lived experiences (Crenshaw 1242). This meeting point of multiple marks of identity would also represent what Bhabha refers to when he says "liminality" that is, a threshold space within which binary categorizations crumble to allow for the coming into existence of new hybridities (Bhabha 2). Queer, Dalit, and Diasporic subjectivities radically dismantle hegemonic narrative frameworks and retrieve their voices, adopting the terms of Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak: "marginalized" (Spivak 90).

Another podcast, "The Book People", presented by Aishwarya Javalekar, interviews publishing professionals and authors and subjects to discussions on the literature industry, particularly on the politics of representation within the Indian literary landscape. It informs how cultural capital belonging to Pierre Bourdieu takes shape in publishing, approving narratives that are contested and/or circulated (Bourdieu 70). It shows how market dynamics and editorial decisions make certain cultural hegemonies visible while excluding others. This does much well to provoke questions of gatekeeping, such as defining which narratives of transculturation are granted visibility (Bourdieu 71). By highlighting 'underrepresented voices or marginalized' and complex cultural experiences, the podcast stands in relation to the counter public sphere that criticizes dominant ideologies while expanding the borders wherein literary production is defined (Spivak 104).

"Maed in India," another podcast features independent Indian musicians through live performances and interviews. This blend of cultural storytelling and modern technology not only entertains but also fosters a sense of community among listeners. It encourages dialogue and connection across diverse backgrounds. This dynamic interplay between technology and storytelling highlights 'how podcasts serve as a vital medium for cultural expression' in India, bridging gaps between tradition and contemporary issues. Dan Shen's *Dual Narrative Dynamics* offers a more theoretical lens, exploring how dual narratives can operate on both **overt plot development** and **covert thematic progression**, enriching the reader's interpretive experience. (49) This method illustrates how some semiotic systems can be incorporated into digital storytelling to produce multi-layered, rich, and intricate narrative experiences. "...the potential of podcast creation to enable learners to: reconnect through personal stories and music with experiences that can inform personally meaningful knowledge construction; exercise creativity and self-expression through building and sharing unique representations of learning and of selves; connect to others and collaboratively develop knowledge; combine text and music to find and communicate meaning within the disparate elements; and expand mental capacity through thinking aloud and repeatedly listening to their own words." (Bolden et al.19)

"The Tastes of India Podcast" presents yet another example, employing food as a subject and a metaphor to delve into cultural narratives. The hosts, Puja, and Anushree, incorporate cooking instructions with listener queries, cultural insights, and personal stories. They use culinary narratology"---stories that use food preparation as both content and a structuring device. While developing a broader

meta-narrative about Indian cultural identity through food, the episodic format enables the examination of regional cuisines as distinct narratives. Roland Barthes, a prominent semiotician, analyzes the symbolic significance of food in his work "Mythologies." Barthes states, "Eating is a language" and "the whole system of food is a language" (16). This theory highlights how food choices, ingredients, and culinary practices communicate cultural meanings and values.

The podcast "Welcome to Foodies World" adopts an adventurous stance in examining Indian cuisine by showcasing the convergence of traditional recipes and contemporary culinary trends. It introduces innovative recipes and fusion dishes that embody the dynamic nature of Indian cuisine where audience can anticipate a novel viewpoint on incorporating Indian flavors into daily cooking, rendering it an essential tool for individuals seeking to enhance their culinary abilities with an Indian touch. The realm of Indian food podcasters mirrors the diversity of the cuisine, featuring a blend of skilled chefs, enthusiastic home cooks, and daring food enthusiasts who express their admiration for the colourful landscape of Indian cuisine.

The "Kitchen postcards Podcast" presents personal culinary narratives and recipes sourced from various regions of India. The hosts welcome listeners into their kitchens, allowing them to engage with genuine Indian culinary practices, enriched with nostalgic recollections and delightful results. This podcast serves as a platform for listeners to discover diverse cooking methods and delve into regional cuisines, rendering it an essential tool for cuisines in pursuit of authentic experiences directly from their kitchens.

These podcasters offer distinct viewpoints, ranging from delving into and disseminating the rich heritage of Indian culinary traditions to presenting innovative, contemporary interpretations that enchant taste buds globally. They foster a community that unites listeners through collective food narratives and a shared culinary enthusiasm, motivating a new wave of food aficionados to delve into and value the extensive variety and richness of Indian cuisine.

"The Mythpat podcast", hosted by the gamer Mithilesh Patankar, known as Mythpat, presents an exhilarating insight into the gaming industry and the digital landscape. As a dedicated gaming podcast, it ensures that listeners remain informed about the latest developments within the gaming community and beyond. Mythpat captivates and educates his audience through engaging interviews with prominent gamers and influencers. In addition to these discussions, he generously shares insightful advice on how to succeed as a content creator. Moreover, Mythpat vividly

illustrates the influencer lifestyle by recounting his own experiences, providing listeners with a direct glimpse into this vibrant domain.

Recently, interactive storytelling technologies and tools are developed for branching stories, and granting control over the development of the plot into the hands of audience. For-eg- Twine. "Depression Quest" (2013) and "80 Days" (2014) Games utilize these platforms to develop narratives to respond according to player choices and decisions, showcasing how digital storytelling can engage with intricate themes through interactive participation. Narrative creation supported by AI is one step addition to the rise of storytelling. AI Supported like -GPT, Claude, Perplexity, Winsome along with tools like AI Dungeon and many others offer dynamic narrative experiences to make the storyline more involving and interesting. These AI-driven stories signify a fundamentally new approach to narrative co-creation, where the distinctions between author, audience, and algorithmic systems become increasingly converge. Podcasts are redefining narrative structures and engaging listeners in innovative ways, while maintaining radio's status as the preferred source for news and audio entertainment. (Mbai et al. 1)

Impact on Storytellers and Audience Engagement

Digital storytelling, particularly through podcasts, has opened new avenues for storytellers to connect with their audiences and enhance accessibility and reduce production costs, enabling a wider array of voices and narratives to emerge. In the past, storytelling was often limited to established media institutions, such as publishing houses or film studios whereas at present, anyone equipped with a recording device and internet access can create and disseminate their narratives.

The Indian podcast landscape illustrates how digital platforms can amplify voices that have been traditionally marginalized in mainstream media. Audiomatic investigates the links between science, culture, and society in modern India through a journalistic lens that prioritizes everyday voices and experiences in "The Intersection". Likewise, "The Musafir Stories" showcases traveller narratives from across India, bringing narratives and emphasizing perspectives and locations frequently ignored in commercial travel media. Digital communication networks, including social media, messaging apps, and video-sharing platforms, serve as digital public spaces where individuals both perform and observe, albeit within predefined structural constraints. These structural changes in digital public spaces reflect the characteristics of the "new populist era" and its evolving trends, with implications for understanding contemporary politics. (Mankulam 596). "Community narratives throw up the reality of spatial divisions and bring alive relationships which are fast

disappearing in an urban world. These narratives are vibrant and keep alive values of human sympathy, compassion and understanding, while urban narratives become fragmented, temporary, fluid and are compartmentalised through technology and the fluidity of spaces.” (Jain 18)

Podcasts have additionally influenced culture and society in diverse ways, together with supplying education, leisure, statistics, suggestions, and social connections for people globally. Podcasts enables more variety of contents to its listeners. It is giving voice to marginalized community and their views which are neglected by mainstream media. (Venkatesh and Sripriya 403) Podcasts provide an alternative space for articulating lived experiences and challenging racialized disenfranchisement, offering new forms of social affiliation and anti-racism for marginalized communities. (5) By examining the perspectives of podcast media practitioners, we can see that the podcast space is “much more than a site of deprivation [...] that it is also the site of radical possibility, which hooks called “a space of resistance” . (qtd in Photini Vrikki et al. 5)

Challenges and Criticism

Digital storytelling provides a variety of benefits, but it also encounters several criticisms and challenges. Although digital platforms enhance accessibility, they are frequently influenced by commercial interests to favour popular or marketable stories over more diverse or innovative storytelling approaches. Sometimes individuals find it more challenging to gain recognition. Another significant issue is the potential marginalization of certain voices within digital storytelling. Furthermore, dependence on technology can create obstacles for specific audiences, particularly those lacking access to digital devices or reliable internet connections. (Bakhtiary and Behzadi)

The country India, where substantial portion of the population does not have consistent internet access or digital literacy cannot take advantage of it. While urban, English-speaking audiences enjoy a vast array of digital content, rural and regional language communities frequently remain underserved, reinforcing existing cultural hierarchies. The examination of digital divides and narrative exclusions within Indian podcasting uncovers a multifaceted environment where the democratization of technology meets enduring structural inequalities.

Although podcasting presents unparalleled opportunities for varied storytelling and grassroots narrative development, access politics influenced by algorithmic gatekeeping, economic limitations, geographic obstacles, and social

exclusion persist in restricting which voices are amplified and which stories achieve prominence.

The difficulties recognized in the Indian podcasting landscape mirror wider trends of digital exclusion that function across various dimensions - ranging from fundamental infrastructure access to the cultural capital required for significant digital engagement. The digital divide in India operates on multiple levels, encompassing not only physical access to technology but also the skills, resources, and cultural capital necessary to effectively utilize digital platforms for narrative creation and dissemination. The perceived democratization of digital storytelling often masks new forms of exclusion based on class, language, and geographic factors.

Digital storytelling presents both positive and negative aspects. Some podcasts are fostering an environment for diverse voices and perspectives while tackling complex issues related to language, accessibility, and cultural representation. At the same time, others are driven primarily by commercial interests, resulting in a shift toward what Susan Greenberg refers to as "*slow journalism*," which emphasizes depth and nuance over sensationalism and immediacy (Greenberg). Podcasting journalists are increasingly understanding podcasting as a form of slow journalism, consciously employing such techniques to conceptualize podcasts as a necessary break from the relentless pace of contemporary news cycles (Mehendale et al. 247). Language also presents a significant challenge in the Indian podcasting arena. Although English-language podcasts such as "The Internet Said So" and "Cyrus Says" have attained notable commercial success, those in regional languages like Hindi, Tamil, Telugu, and Marathi often struggle to gain visibility and financial viability, despite reflecting the linguistic reality of most Indians. Digital storytelling fosters community engagement by allowing local voices to contribute to the narrative, enriching the cultural heritage experience for both residents and tourists. This co-creation process strengthens local authenticity and fosters a sense of belonging, enhancing the overall engagement with cultural heritage sites (Zhiyong 205). This linguistic divide illustrates what Gupta and Verma refers to as the "digital bhasha divide," where technological platforms perpetuate and sometimes exacerbate existing linguistic hierarchies (167). Digital storytelling presents audiences with innovative methods to engage with content. Podcasts enable listeners to enjoy stories at their convenience, often while participating in daily activities such as commuting or exercising. This level of accessibility has contributed to a democratization of storytelling, granting individuals greater control over their narrative experiences.

The “new patronage model” suggests that instead of relying on traditional institutions like publishers or studios, creators now often receive direct support from their audiences through platforms like Patreon, YouTube memberships, or Substack. This model empowers creators to maintain creative control and build more intimate, loyal communities around their work. (Singh)

Digital storytelling offers numerous benefits, but it also faces various criticisms and challenges. A primary concern is the risk of oversaturation. With the increasing number of podcasts and digital narratives, it becomes more challenging for individual stories to gain prominence. Consequently, the quality of content may decline as creators hastily produce material to meet rising demand. This huge gap in computer knowledge, usage of computer & internet also known as skill divides are overlapping with previously persisting social and economic marginalities in India. Despite, assuming equal materialistic possession of information technology, unequal distribution of general literacy and digital literacy remains a main challenge in reaping the benefits of information technology. The lack of a formal peer review process can lead to variability in content quality, potentially misleading audiences. Recent findings by Voinea, have emphasized that algorithmic curation on digital platforms can perpetuate prevailing narrative biases, favouring commercially viable stories while sidelining alternative viewpoints. She stressed on a rethinking of accountability—when an algorithm filters out important information or an AI story misleads, who is responsible and how do we address it? (Voinea,16) Podcasting “taps into something fundamental about oral communication, argument and even the tension between subjective and objective knowledge that has been amplified in digital age” (Llinares, Fox, and Berry 1).

The transient nature of digital content presents an additional challenge for digital storytelling. In contrast to physical books that can endure for centuries, digital narratives are susceptible to technological obsolescence, platform closures, and content removal. This impermanence prompts critical inquiries regarding preservation and archiving in the digital era, as significant narratives risk being lost to future generations without effective preservation measures (Punday 133).

Emerging Technologies and Future Directions

The landscape of digital storytelling is undergoing evolution due to the introduction of new technologies. Artificial Intelligence, Virtual reality (VR) and Augmented reality (AR) are opening new avenues and groundbreaking opportunities for immersive storytelling, effectively blurring the lines between narrative and experience. These technologies allow audiences to participate actively in and inhabit

narrative spaces, resulting in what Jones terms "embodied narratology"---stories that are not just told but are experienced tangibly (Jones 51). Modern game storytelling techniques harness digital capabilities, allowing for broader story arcs and more profound character development, resulting in highly immersive experiences. (Modern Game Storytelling Techniques)

In India, companies like Queppelin and Meraki Labs are at the forefront of developing augmented reality (AR) storytelling applications that merge digital narratives with real-world locations, crafting site-specific stories that blend historical facts with fictional elements. Projects such as "Realities of Mumbai" utilize AR to reveal the hidden histories of urban settings, allowing users to engage with intricate narratives of urban environments enabling users to connect the past with the present. These innovations present considerable opportunities in India, where traditional storytelling methods can be rejuvenated through contemporary technological innovations. Additionally, artificial intelligence is transforming digital storytelling, with AI technologies more capable of generating narrative content, customizing stories to fit audience preferences, and even creating interactive characters. These developments raise important questions about authorship, creativity, and the future of human storytelling in an increasingly automated world (Zhang and López 183). The Indian startup Vernacular.ai has launched AI voice technologies that can produce natural-sounding speech in multiple Indian languages, potentially revolutionizing audio storytelling by improving accessibility for diverse linguistic groups. Initiatives like "AI Kathakaar" are investigating AI-generated narratives that reinterpret traditional folktales from diverse Indian cultural contexts, leading to what Raman describes as "algorithmic storytelling" (Raman 82).

Moreover, Blockchain technology is emerging as a disruptive force, fundamentally altering conventional paradigms, and presenting innovative methods for content creation, distribution, and consumption. Non-fungible tokens (NFTs) have surfaced as groundbreaking tools for defining ownership and value within digital storytelling, which may pave the way for the evolution of new economic frameworks for digital creators. The implementation of Non-Fungible Tokens in this context associates a distinct hash with every artwork, enabling differentiation. Creators or originators of original pieces can embed their signature within the digital tokens, thus enhancing the authenticity of the content produced. While duplications of the digital art can be created, NFTs guarantee that each copy is uniquely owned by the purchaser, making it non-interchangeable with any other copy, which increases its appeal to both amateur art collectors and investors. (Rehman et al. 4)

Indian artists and storytellers, are increasingly utilizing NFTs to create and monetize digital narratives that frequently draw upon traditional cultural themes and mythologies. This creative strategy opens new revenue generation for digital storytellers, raising significant concerns about cultural appropriation and the commercialization of collective heritage. These technologies present both opportunities and challenges in the evolving and dynamic realm of Indian digital storytelling.

Conclusion

Digital storytelling has significantly impacted the field of narratology, offering novel opportunities for engaging audiences and fostering creative expression. It has emerged as a dynamic and transformative medium that bridges the gap between ancient narrative traditions and modern digital technologies. It provides new avenues for audience engagement and creative expression and facilitate more dynamic, interactive, and multi-sensory narratives, challenging traditional storytelling conventions. As this medium continues to evolve, the audience's influence and involvement in shaping narratives are anticipated to grow increasingly important. Its' ability to engage diverse audiences, foster cultural understanding, and amplify underrepresented voices has become a cornerstone of contemporary communication. The integration of artificial intelligence, virtual reality, augmented reality, immersive technologies, and advanced distribution platforms indicates that we are merely at the initial stage of exploring the potential of digital narratives. New storytelling formats will emerge with the advancement, further transforming the relationships between creators, audiences, and narratives. However, the rise of digital storytelling raises important considerations regarding commercial interests, accessibility, and the risk of narrative fragmentation. It is important to continuously examine these changes and their implications for the future of storytelling, ensuring that the democratic and creative potential of digital narratives remains accessible to a diverse range of voices and perspectives. The Indian experience presents the importance of addressing linguistic, technological, and economic barriers to ensure that digital storytelling fulfils its democratizing across cultural contexts.

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