Influence of Digital Storytelling: a study of behavioural change among youth in india

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ABSTRACT This research aims at analysing popularity of digital media among youth for information sharing and generating support for social movements. The user-friendly technology, reduced cost of production of digital content, and spread of internet in peri-urban areas have changed the sender and the receiver position dramatically. Once the receivers of the media content are now actively involved in the production and dissemination of digital content. The concept of gatekeeper is not relevant to the new media content as most of the matter comes directly from the users. The majority of the content is uploaded to various social networking sites without interference of gatekeepers. The digital media have empowered common man and provided them another platform to share and express their views on various issues of public interest. It seems that this forum has great potential to help in strengthening democratic movements in India by promoting multiple voices on several issues of public interest, that too, without the interference of any gate-keeper.

Introduction

The last few decades had shown us the path of creating a multi polar world. The advent of new media and its quick spread across the globe would help to create a world with multiple sources of voices. Information will come from those who are not only consumers, but producing it as well. Recent technological development has dramatically reduced the cost of production of digital content. Anna Hazare's agitation against corruption gained momentum with the support of youth and digital media. Annas' talking head recorded by Kiran Bedi, which she uploaded to the social networking sites like, face book, twitter, you tube, etc. reached to millions and billions of people across the globe. Nirbhya's case is another example of growing influence of new media for getting support and bringing people particularly youth together for a common cause. It shows reach, effectiveness, and popularity of digital story telling among youth in India to disseminate digital content to public.

Digital storytelling has been presented as personal stories told and made public using digital media, which fit into a short format. It has also been presented as a media practice that aims at creating opportunities to connect with others through conversational production. In the Centre for Digital Storytelling (CDS) Berkeley, a digital story is "a short, first-person video-narrative created by combining recorded voice, still and moving images, and music or other sounds", and a digital storyteller is "anyone who has a desire to document life experience, ideas, or feelings through the use of story and digital media".[1]

In terms of content, the digital story telling is very close to the documentary film making or first person films. The New digital media practices have changed the sender and receivers position dramatically. The receiver (The erstwhile consumer of media content) has now become an active participant of communication process. He is not only receiving media content, but producing it as well.

Research Objectives

1. To analyse contents uploaded by youth to support various social movements.

2. To know about the nature and type of tools used for content creation.

3. To analyse the impact of digital stories uploaded on various social networking sites by youth.

Hypotheses

H1: Facebook is the most popular social networking sites among youth.

H2: Mobile is the most popular tool for creating and uploading digital contents.

H3: The digital stories have generated sympathy and support for social agitations.

Methodology

The present study aims at analysing various tools used by youth for uploading and sharing digital stories on various social networking sites about different social agitations particularly Anna Hazare's and Nirbhya's cases, which many people in media and political circle termed as second freedom-fight to establish a transparent and accountable government. The study will also focus on the nature and type of the content uploaded by youth in support of these agitations. The turning point of these agitations was support of young people particularly students from various universities, colleges and schools, across the globe. Support for Anna's agitation had come from all corners of the world and it created a lot of pressure on the government to come on dialogue table. Similarly in Nirbhya's case also the youth and common man came together and supported the agitation. The government was forced to act due to the pressure built-up by the youth and stories uploaded by common people on social media.

The research was carried out in two universities namely Lovely Professional University and Punjabi University, Patiala. For the purpose of this study, survey method was chosen and a questionnaire was prepared for data collection. A sample of 200 students was selected from bachelor and masters courses of both the Universities.

Theoretical Framework

It is a well established principle that media content is generated by some people (Reporter, Correspondents, etc.) and final decision about its placement, size, etc. is taken by a gatekeeper (Editor, Owner of the Media House). No matter what you have written, the final text, visual, is the vision of a gatekeeper. He is the one who decides the fate of a report.

The technological innovations have given us new media of communication. The new media is relatively free of gate keeping and the traditional position of sender and receiver has changed dramatically. In the earlier media of communication the role of sender was very important as it determined the nature of the content. The delivery of information was mostly one sided and the receiving of the content was also fixed.

Review of Literature

Digital storytelling is commonly used by people to tell their own stories, and it also allows users a chance to create a social community around these stories. This use has grown because of the relatively low

cost of digital devices, the ease of learning to create digital stories, and the availability of many sites on the web where stories may be displayed and shared.[2] Digital story telling has gained momentum in recent time. Now reaching out to people to share information is very easy and cheap. Various social networking sites have given ample scope to the common man to share visual and video, that too, without any gatekeeper. If you look at other media of mass communication, it is controlled by big business houses and they run it with a motive to earn money. Even if, you are a reporter or editor in a media organisation, your freedom is restricted by organisational rules and gatekeepers. It simply means that information given by various print and electronic media is governed by certain motives. A reporter or editor will lose his/her job if he or she goes against the established policy of the organisation or gatekeeper.

Digital storytelling has gained popularity through the use of web-based tools and blogs among almost every age group in several countries around the world. You can upload your story, share video and audio, without support of any media house and also there is no fear of a gate keeper who will edit your story. The gate keeping media theory now has no relevance because social networking sites are providing unedited stories uploaded by the users.[2] Digital story telling is gaining popularity in not only sharing information but also educating students about various things in an interesting manner.

Story Bank Project

The UK Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council in the UK recently funded four ICT-for development research projects. All these projects are multidisciplinary with partners in some of the poorest parts of the world. They are strongly committed to a participative design process which leads to a sustainable technology intervention of real value to end users.

The project is started in the rural community in South India with an objective of developing interest for information sharing through digital stories in developing world. The motivation behind this project has come from West where digital story telling has been used to empower communities. The power of two minutes audio-visual content is felt across many countries in the west. The aim of the project is to make audiovisual story creation and sharing accessible to a poor rural community, and to test its value for empowerment and information sharing.

One of the earliest large-scale digital storytelling projects is sponsored by the BBC to capture and share stories from around the United Kingdom that reflect different local histories and cultures. A similar initiative out of San Francisco public radio station KQED solicits digital stories from high school students about how they came to live in California, exposing them to the tools and skills of short-movie creation while eliciting a compelling personal story.

Faculty in the College of Education at the University of Houston lead a digital storytelling effort that strives to expose instructors and students to the educational opportunities that the technique provides. Among the initiative's stated goals are, for faculty, to facilitate various learning styles and connect to students' interest in technology, and, for students, to develop their ability to appropriately evaluate and use online content and electronic tools as a means of personal expression. Carleton College sponsors educational uses of digital stories and has developed a rubric to help faculty evaluate the various aspects of a digital story. The college has also applied digital storytelling techniques to present critical analyses. Many institutions, including Maricopa Community Colleges, offer courses in digital storytelling, and the College of Communication, Information, and Media at Ball State University offers an MA in telecommunications with an emphasis in digital storytelling.[3]

Elements of Digital Stories

The Centre for Digital Storytelling (2010) has been very influential in identifying the major components of a digital story by breaking the creative process into seven steps. This process, known as "The Seven Elements of Digital Storytelling" includes the following components: (i) *Point of View* shows the purpose and author's perspective of the story, (ii) *A Dramatic Question* arouses the audience's curiosity and will be given an explanation by the end of the story, (iii) *Emotional Content* involves the audience in the story, (iv) *The Gift of Voice* helps the audience understand the story through personalization of the narration, (v) *The Power of Soundtrack* supports the story with appropriate music, (6) *Economy* avoids overloading the viewer with excessive use of visuals and/or audio, and (7) *Pacing* provides a rhythm to the story and deals with how slowly or quickly the story is told.[4]

Use of Digital Stories in India

I Paid a Bribe (www.ipaidbribe.com) is an online forum which reports corruption cases mainly bribe given to many government authorities in various parts of India. This forum has reported many cases of bribe. The objective of this forum is to motivate people to tell their stories. This online forum has got 7,68,002 hits till sometime now which shows the popularity of this site in India. People through digital stories, blogs, etc. have told many stories of bribe and the amount that is given as bribe in various cities is as under:

Bribe Reports: 14,490
Total value of bribe given: 497,923,868 rupees.
Top five Indian cities (Bribe amount in Lakh ruppes)

Bangaluru:	1100
New Delhi:	910
Lucknow:	574
Mumbai:	431
Hyderabad:	174

Source: www/I Paid a Bribe.com

The amount reported by the website indicates about the acceptability of bribe in various parts of our life. The online forums like you tube; face book, twitter, ipaidabribe.com, etc. have given opportunity to common man to share their stories. The stories reported on ipaidbribe.com are not a complete picture of bribe cases in India. But this forum will certainly help in developing awareness about reporting of bribe cases using digital media. This development, one day, will have a definite influence on government agencies and policy makers to act against those who are exposed by the online community.

Data Interpretation and Conclusion

Digital stories are fast becoming popular among net users in India. The average time spent on net surfing has gone up. The technological changes have provided information and entertainment on many platforms. The most striking change occurred in mobile communication. The number of mobile users has gone up.

Table 1. Time devoted for internet surfing

	0-1 hour	1-2 hour	2-3 hour	3-4 hour	More than 4 hour
Male	10	22	40	15	13
Female	16	34	30	10	10
Total	26	56	70	25	23

Surveys conducted in several countries in the world show that the internet addiction is on rise. In China the number of young Internet addicts had soared to 24 million by 2009, almost double the figure for 2005, It is very much evident from the data that youth particularly in the Indian university have been devoting a lot of time in content generation and dissemination on internet. Overall, 71 million users accessed Internet in year 2009, with 52 Million "active" users who accessed it atleast once in a month. If we look at global users on internet India is on 4th position but it may change very soon the moment it will reach to the rural population of the India.

Table 2. Internet usage

Position	Country	Internet Users Million
1	USA	220
2	China	210
3	Japan	88.1
4	India	81
5	Brazil	53

Source: Internet & Mobile Association of India and IMRB

In India the growth of internet is mainly in urban centers and school & college students itself contribute to more than 44% of all Internet usage that happens in India – Overall 72% of young people access Internet on regular basis.

Table 3. Have you seen Anna Hazare's video?

	Yes	No
Male	95	05
Female	84	16
Total	179	21

It is quite evident from the data that majority of the youth have seen Anna Hazare's Video. Almost 90% of the respondents said that they watched video of Anna Hazare which was recorded by Kiran Bedi in Tihar Jail. It played a crucial role in shifting emotions towards Anna's side. This is one example of influence of digital stories uploaded on social networking sites. What was most remarkable that unedited story reached to many people and media gatekeepers were not able to stop the flow of information.

Table 4. Most popular tool for content generation

	Video camera	Still camera	Mobile phone
Male	30	14	56
Female	10	26	64
Total	40	40	120

Mobile is the most popular medium for content generation. Not only is that mobile a very popular mode of internet surfing among youth in India but the trend is more or less same across the globe. The Opera Mini, most widely downloaded mobile application has released the number of Mobile Internet usage. The report is quite significant in terms of mobile internet usage in the world. The top five countries in Opera Mini Usage are: Russia, Indonesia, India, China, and Ukraine. (IAMAI and IMRB)

Rise of 'We Media'

The growth and spread of mobile communication has developed another form of journalism called "we media". The revered profession of journalism finds itself at a rare moment in history where, for the first time, its hegemony as gatekeeper of the news is threatened by not just new technology and competitors but, potentially, by the audience it serves.

The concept of citizen journalism is also a kind of do-it-yourself journalism where receivers of media content have become source or content generator. People have flooded media organization with content ranging from eyewitness account to news features and digital stories. And the tool that helped in generating these contents is mobile phone.

Table 5. Have you participated in any agitation after seeing Anna Hazare's video?

	Yes	No
Male	80	20
Female	73	27
Total	153	47

The data above indicate that majority of the respondents have participated in the different agitations after seeing the Anna's video. In fact, many of the columnists in their columns' mentioned the impact of new media and particularly internet on strengthening the movement. The use of mobile phones for sharing information has both positive and negative effects. Just a few months back in London, when a riot broke out the police was not able to control the riots. One of the major reasons of spread of riots was extensive use of Black berry phone and MMS shared by rioters. It shows that technology can be used for good and bad causes.

People are inherently social creatures. We develop and maintain complex social networks of friends, family and acquaintances through various means of communication. The web has now become an integral part of our lives.

Table 6. Which is your favourite social networking site where you upload or share content?

	Facebook	Orkut	Youtube	Any other
Male	40	15	30	15
Female	47	19	22	12
Total	87	34	52	27

In the last 10 years since its mass adoption, the Web has quickly become a reflection of our elaborate social networks. It has evolved into a powerful medium for communication and collaboration, as evidenced by the hypertext links of more than 10 billion documents authored by millions of people and organizations around the world. Participatory journalism provides media companies with the potential to develop a more loyal and trustworthy relationship with their audiences. This can happen, for example, with a reporter who writes a weblog, asking the audience to fuel her efforts by providing tips, feedback and first-hand accounts that confirm a story's premise or that take it in a different direction. We Media can also provide the audience a deeper level of understanding about the reporting process by illustrating, for example, how a reporter must balance competing interests. This communication can lead to a lasting trust.[5]

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