

Digital Storytelling and the Promotion of Community-Led Development Initiatives in Urban Slums

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ABSTRACT

This conceptual research explores the potential of digital storytelling in promoting community-led development initiatives in urban slums. The conceptual research examines the impact of using digital storytelling platforms and processes as tools for community engagement and empowerment, and how they contribute to the promotion of sustainable development practices in those communities. To achieve its objectives, the study focuses on case studies from several cities in the Global South, where community-based organisations and Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) have used digital storytelling to raise awareness about the social, political, economic and environmental conditions in slums; advocate for policy reform as well as promote community-led solutions to poverty, violence, and environmental degradation. The findings of the study suggest that digital storytelling formats and processes are effective means of engaging diverse stakeholders in urban development, generating new knowledge and perspectives, and fostering participatory decision-making processes that empower slum dwellers to shape their own future. However, the paper also identifies several challenges and limitations associated with digital storytelling, including issues of representation, power asymmetries, and sustainability.

INTRODUCTION

In recent times, digital storytelling has gained significant recognition as a powerful communication tool for promoting development. Digital storytelling (DST) has its roots in the traditional art of storytelling, which dates back to ancient times. As people have always been fascinated by stories, and storytelling has been an important means of transmitting knowledge, culture, and beliefs from one generation to the next. The concept of digital storytelling emerged in the late 20th Century with the advent of digital technology, particularly, the internet and personal computers. DST as we practice and teach it grew out of the work of Joe Lambert and Dana Atchley at the Center for Digital Storytelling at U.C. Berkeley in 1993. The community of practice that has evolved from this work is based on the premise that everyone has a story to tell. Digital technologies offer particularly powerful means of conveying these stories (Bull & Kajder, 2004).

According to McLellan (2006, pp. 26), 'digital storytelling is the art and craft of exploring different media and software applications to communicate stories in new and powerful ways using digital media.' Digital Storytelling (DST) entails telling stories using digital means, processes or platforms. 'By antecedence, it has been initially applied for diverse purposes, including community development initiatives, therapeutic benefits, and serving as an aid in teaching and learning' (Musfira, Ibrahim & Harun, 2022, pp. 1591).

Lambert (2010) and Robin (2012) are of the opinion that digital stories can be considered as short stories of two to five minutes which combine traditional story narration modes with a wide variety of multimedia tools, such as graphs, audio, video, and animation. Rebmann (2014, pp. 30) sees DST as a highly-regarded form of communication that places participants at the center of the production of digital, personal narratives. It is the practice of using digital tools and technologies to create and share narratives. It involves combining different media formats such as texts, images, audio, and video to create a compelling and engaging story. Digital storytelling can take many forms, including social media posts, podcasts, videos, blogs, interactive web experiences, and more 'Digital storytelling, in the most general sense, is the process of creating a story with digital media such as images, text, music, and audio narration' (Snelson & Sheffield, 2009, pp. 159). Digital storytelling allows people to tell their stories in new and creative ways, and it has become increasingly popular in recent years with the rise of social media and other digital platforms. It can be used for a wide range of purposes, including education, marketing, activism, entertainment, and more. Bull & Kajder (op cit.) notes that the goal of digital storytelling is to allow a writer to experience the power of personal expression. It is not just about the technology used, but also the skills and creativity required to craft a compelling narrative that resonates with the audience. Effective digital storytelling requires a deep understanding of the audience, the message being conveyed, and the medium being used. Dana Atchley (1993 in Bull & Kajder, 2004, pp.48) stresses that "...digital storytelling combines the best of two worlds: the "new world" of digitised video, photography and art, and the "old world" of telling stories." Digital storytelling can be a powerful tool for promoting community-led development initiatives in urban slums. McLellan (op cit.) observes, stories offer

an ancient tool for promoting learning; media offer new strategies for deploying stories. Community-led development (CLD) initiatives in urban slums refer to programmes and projects that are designed and implemented by residents of slums themselves, with the goal of improving their living conditions and addressing the challenges they face. These initiatives are driven by the recognition that residents of slums have the knowledge, skills, and creativity to identify and address the problems they face, and that they are best positioned to understand the needs and aspirations of their communities. Rather than relying on external actors such as governments or NGOs, community-led development initiatives seek to empower slum dwellers to take control of their own development and to become agents of change in their own communities.

Moreover, by using digital media, such as videos, photos, and social media, community members can share their experiences and perspectives with a broader audience, including policymakers, donors, and the general public. Musfira, Ibrahim & Harun (2022, pp. 1591) observes that, 'when people view a story, either a conventional story or a digital story, they learn about other people from different facets.' This can help to raise awareness of the challenges faced by urban slum communities, and highlight the successes and innovations that are emerging from within these communities. Davis & Foley (2016, pp. 317) observes, 'smartphones and dissemination platforms like YouTube have given rise to an unprecedented explosion in participatory digital storytelling by non-professionals.' At the heart of community-led development is the idea that local people are the best agents of change in their own communities. Digital storytelling can help to amplify these voices, providing a platform for community members to share their ideas and solutions with others. By engaging with a wider audience, communities can also build networks of support and collaboration, which can help to mobilize resources and create positive change. Capri (2011, pp. 5) holds that digital stories 'provide information; and it is through providing information, in the form of stories, that the greater public gains knowledge that individuals can choose to use in order to transform themselves and to make informed decisions. Whether these stories take the form of daily news, a great novel, a biography, a movie, a sitcom, talk show topics or even a reality TV series, stories create shared knowledge and the possibility of community.

However, there are also potential challenges and limitations to using digital storytelling in the context of community-led development in urban slums. For example, access to technology and digital literacy skills may be limited in these contexts, which could limit the participation of certain community members. In addition, there may be issues of representation and power dynamics, with some voices being prioritized over others in the digital storytelling process. In all, digital storytelling has the potential to be a powerful tool for promoting community-led development initiatives in urban slums, but it is important to approach this tool with a critical lens, ensuring that it is inclusive, equitable, and empowering for all community members. Further, storytelling would encourage user participation in various ways (Thöny et al., 2018).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Digital Storytelling: History and Evolution

Digital storytelling has a relatively short history, but it has rapidly evolved over the past few decades. It started as a way for people to tell their personal stories using digital media (such as images, audio, video, interactive media, etc.) and has since expanded to include many different forms and applications. As McLellan (2006, pp. 26) explains: The term 'digital storytelling' was coined by Dana Atchley. In the 1980s, Atchley performing as a storyteller, saw the potential of computers and multimedia. He began using multimedia as a prop in his performances, and went on to adapt storytelling techniques in several creative ways.

Davis & Foley (2016, pp. 318) add that, 'digital storytelling as a phrase denoting an organized practice arose from the collaboration of Dana Atchley and Joe Lambert in California in the 1990s; culminating in the founding of the Center for Digital Storytelling (CDS) in Berkeley in 1998' (Lambert, 2006 cited in Davis & Foley, op cit.). Here is a brief history and evolution of digital storytelling:

Early Digital Storytelling (1980s-1990s): The first digital storytelling projects were created using early personal computers, video cameras, and non-linear editing systems. These early projects were often educational in nature, and they were used to teach students how to use digital media to tell stories.

Emergence of the Web (1990s-2000s): With the emergence of the web in the mid-1990s, digital storytelling began to move online. Websites like Geocities and Tripod allowed people to create personal websites with multimedia content. This era also saw the emergence of blogs, which allowed people to share their personal stories online. Robin and McNeill (2019) also pointed out that digital stories were usually uploaded to the web, where they could be viewed using a web browser.

Social Media (2000s-2010s): The rise of social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram in the 2000s and 2010s transformed digital storytelling. These platforms allowed people to easily share their stories with a wider audience, and they also facilitated the creation of new forms of digital storytelling, such as microblogging and livestreaming. The emergence of the Social Web or Web 2.0, and the use of social media and new mobile devices (tablets and smartphones) has fostered a new participation ecology (Jenkins et al., 2009 cited in Hurtado, et al., 2022). DST has become successful because of the phenomenal growth of digital resources like blogs, YouTube, and other social media (Sandesh & Srinivasa, 2017). The growth of the internet has considerably influenced the creation of stories, especially on social media (Page & Thomas, 2017).

Mobile Devices (2010s-Present): Terrel (2015) notes, many free mobile apps help learners to create digital stories in a variety of formats. They provide students with incredible tools and options for creating their stories. With the widespread adoption of smartphones and tablets, digital storytelling has become even more accessible and ubiquitous. Mobile devices have allowed people to capture and share their stories on the go, and they have also facilitated the creation of new forms of digital storytelling, such as augmented reality and virtual reality experiences. Another major trend in digital storytelling has been the integration of artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning technologies. These tools allow for more sophisticated and personalized storytelling experiences that can adapt to individual users' interests and preferences. Terrel (op cit.) confirms, 'the tools we use to capture the content for digital stories influence the production of these stories.' Evidently, digital storytelling has come a long way since its early days, and it continues to evolve with new technologies and platforms. As more people have access to digital tools and platforms, the possibilities for digital storytelling are endless.

Key Elements of Effective Digital Storytelling

According to Gubrium (2014, pp. 1606), 'certain story characteristics are more likely to influence attitude, belief, and behavior changes.' Digital storytelling is the art of combining digital media, such as images, videos, and audio, with storytelling techniques to convey a message or tell a story.

Here are the nine (9) elements of digital storytelling:

- i. Point of View:** The perspective or angle from which the story is told. It can be first-person, third-person, or even second-person point of view.
- ii. Plot:** The storyline or sequence of events that make up the story. It should have a clear beginning, middle, and end.
- iii. Characters:** The people, animals, or objects that appear in the story. They should be well-developed and relatable.
- iv. Conflict:** Conflict is the tension or problem that arises within the story. It is what creates interest and keeps the audience engaged.
- v. Setting:** The time and place in which the story takes place. It should be described in enough detail to help the audience imagine the story's environment.
- vi. Theme:** The underlying message or idea behind the story. It should be universal and resonate with the audience.

vii. Media: The digital assets used to tell the story, such as images, videos, and sound effects. They should be carefully selected to enhance the story.

viii. Audience: The audience is the group of people for whom the story is intended. Understanding the audience is critical for effective digital storytelling, as it helps to determine the tone, style, and message of the story.

ix. Interactivity: The degree to which the audience can interact with the story. It can include elements such as clickable links, quizzes, and polls.

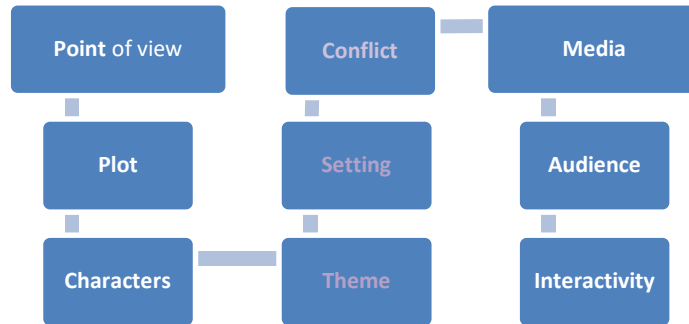


Figure I: The Nine Elements of Digital Storytelling

Source: Udoudom 2023.

The Center for Digital Storytelling (CDS) in Berkeley, California is known for developing and disseminating the Seven Elements of Digital Storytelling, which are often cited as a useful starting point as one begins to work with digital stories.

1. **Point of View:** What is the main point of the story and what is the perspective of the author?
2. **A Dramatic Question:** A key question that keeps the viewer's attention and will be answered by the end of the story.
3. **Emotional Content:** Serious issues that come alive in a personal and powerful way and connects the audience to the story.
4. **The Gift of Your Voice:** A way to personalise the story to help the audience understand the context.
5. **The Power of the Soundtrack:** Music or other sounds that support and embellish the story.
6. **Economy:** Using just enough content to tell the story without overloading the viewer.
7. **Pacing:** The rhythm of the story and how slowly or quickly it progresses (University of Houston, 2023).

Effective digital storytelling involves several key elements that differ slightly from the original seven, including narrative structure, multimedia content, and audience targeting. Here are some details on each of these elements:

i. Narrative Structure: Digital storytelling should follow a clear and engaging narrative structure that guides the audience through the story. This includes an introduction that sets the scene and introduces the main characters, a middle section that builds tension or drama, and a resolution or conclusion that brings the story to a satisfying end. Effective digital storytelling may also incorporate elements like foreshadowing, flashbacks, or multiple perspectives to create a more complex narrative structure.

ii. Multimedia Content: Effective digital storytelling should incorporate a variety of multimedia content, including text, images, videos, and audio. Each of these elements can be used to enhance the story and create a more immersive experience for the audience. For example, images and videos can help to illustrate the setting and characters, while audio can add emotional depth and help to create a sense of atmosphere.

iii. Audience Targeting: Digital storytelling should be targeted to the specific audience you are trying to reach. This includes understanding their interests, needs, and preferences, and tailoring the story to appeal to them. For example, a story targeted at children might use bright colors and simple language, while a story targeted at adults might use more complex language and themes. In addition to these key elements, effective digital storytelling should also be well-paced, visually appealing, and emotionally engaging. By combining these elements in a thoughtful and strategic way, digital storytellers can create content that resonates with their audience and delivers their message in a memorable and impactful way. 'A classic digital story takes the form of a personal narrative presented as a short movie using a series of images, first-person audio narration, and sometimes a music sound track' (Lambert, 2007 in Snelson & Sheffield, 2009, pp. 160).

Ethical Considerations in Digital Storytelling

Gubrium (2017, pp. 9) observes that, 'digital stories can misrepresent communities and/or reify stereotypes. Exposing illegal or illicit activity might endanger storytellers or subjects.' Digital storytelling can have a powerful impact on audiences and can shape how people view the world around them. As such, it is important to consider the ethical implications of digital storytelling. Some of the key ethical considerations in digital storytelling include:

Table 1. Ethical Considerations in Digital Storytelling

Ethical Items	Description
<i>Accuracy and truthfulness</i>	Digital storytellers should strive to present accurate and truthful information. They should fact-check their content and ensure that it is not misleading or deceptive.
<i>Respect for privacy</i>	Digital storytellers should respect the privacy of their subjects and obtain their informed consent before sharing personal information or images. They should also be mindful of how their content may affect the privacy and safety of others.
<i>Avoiding harm</i>	Digital storytellers should avoid creating content that may harm their subjects or their audience. They should be aware potential impact of their content and take steps to minimize any negative consequences.
<i>Cultural sensitivity</i>	Digital storytellers should be culturally sensitive and respectful Of diverse perspectives and experiences. They should avoid perpetuating stereotypes or perpetrating cultural appropriation.
<i>Transparency and attribution</i>	Digital storytellers should clearly disclose their sources and give credit where credit is due. They should be transparent about their methods and intentions, and avoid presenting their content as objective when it is subjective.
<i>Engagement with communities</i>	Digital storytellers should engage with the communities they are representing or discussing. They should seek input and feedback from members of those communities and ensure that their content accurately reflects their perspectives experiences. By considering these ethical considerations, digital storytellers can create content that is impactful, respectful, and responsible.

Types of Digital Storytelling

There are several types of digital storytelling, including:

Table 2. Types of Digital Storytelling

Types	Description
<i>Video storytelling</i>	This type of digital storytelling involves using video clips, images, and audio to create a narrative.
<i>Audio storytelling</i>	This type of digital storytelling involves using audio recordings, such as podcasts or radio shows, to tell a story.
<i>Interactive storytelling</i>	This type of digital storytelling involves using interactive media, such as games or virtual reality experiences, to create an immersive and engaging narrative.
<i>Social media storytelling</i>	This type of digital storytelling involves using social media platforms, such as Instagram or TikTok, to tell a story through images, videos, and text.
<i>Animation storytelling</i>	This type of digital storytelling involves using animation techniques, such as 2D or 3D animation, to create a visual story.
<i>Graphic storytelling</i>	This type of digital storytelling involves using graphic design tools, such as infographics or comic strips, to tell a story visually.
<i>Data storytelling</i>	This type of digital storytelling involves using data visualization tools, such as charts and graphs, to tell a story using data.

Advantages of Digital Storytelling

A study by MacDonald (1998 cited in Bouchrika, 2022) detailed that societies have used storytelling to teach key principles throughout millennia. Likewise, Andrews et al. (2009) in Bouchrika (2022) explain that storytelling has been used as an information medium in education of all types. Digital storytelling is a powerful tool that can be used in community development to bring people together, build relationships, and create positive change. Here are some advantages of using digital storytelling in community development:

- i. Encourages community engagement:** Digital storytelling is a great way to encourage community members to become more engaged and active in the development process. By sharing their personal stories, community members can feel more connected to the community and more invested in its future.
- ii. Facilitates knowledge sharing:** Digital storytelling can be used to share knowledge and information about the community, its history, culture, and traditions. This can help to promote understanding and respect between different groups in the community, and foster a sense of unity and common purpose.
- iii. Amplifies voices of marginalized groups:** Digital storytelling provides a platform for people who may not have had a voice in the past to share their stories and perspectives. This can help to amplify the voices of marginalized groups, and create more inclusive and diverse communities.

iv. Builds empathy and understanding: Digital storytelling can be a powerful way to build empathy and understanding between people. By hearing each other's stories, people can gain a greater appreciation for each other's struggles, triumphs, and experiences.

v. Fosters creativity: Digital storytelling allows community members to express themselves in creative and innovative ways. This can help to foster a culture of creativity and innovation within the community, and encourage people to think outside the box when it comes to community development.

Digital storytelling empowers people to be confident communicators and creators of media as they gain essential 21st-century literacy skills and reach deeper understanding in all areas of their narratives (Saponaro, 2014). DST is a valuable tool for community development, as it can help to bring people together, build relationships, and create positive change in the community.

Community-Led Development Initiatives in Urban Slums

Community-led development initiatives in urban slums refer to programs and projects designed and implemented by members of the slum community to address the challenges they face. These initiatives are often aimed at improving living conditions, providing basic services, and promoting socio-economic development.

Some examples of community-led development initiatives in urban slums include:

i. Community-Based Organizations (CBOs): These are groups of individuals who work together to identify community needs and find solutions. CBOs can undertake a wide range of activities, such as providing education and health services, promoting income-generation activities, and advocating for better living conditions.

ii. Community-Led Infrastructure Projects: In some cases, slum communities take the initiative to build their own infrastructure, such as roads, drainage systems, and water supply networks. These projects are often carried out through collective action, with members of the community contributing labor, materials, and funds.

iii. Microfinance Programmes: Microfinance programs provide small loans and financial services to low-income individuals and communities. These programs can help slum residents start their own businesses, generate income, and improve their standard of living.

iv. Participatory Budgeting: Participatory budgeting involves giving community members a say in how public funds are allocated. This can be an effective way to ensure that public resources are used to address community needs.

v. Skill Development and Training Programmes: These programs provide training and skills development opportunities to slum residents, helping them acquire the skills needed to improve their livelihoods.

Bijoux (2015) noted that CLD encourages the mobilization of community action and effort with 'place' as a core focus. Community-led development (CLD) initiatives can be effective in promoting sustainable development in urban slums. By involving community members in the design and implementation of projects, these initiatives can help ensure that they meet the needs of the community and are supported by the people they are intended to benefit.

Importance of CLD in Urban Slums

According Samper (2010, pp. 4) 'Community-led development allows people to participate in and feel ownership for their own development. Communities perceive development projects as most successful when they include community involvement, build consensus, and galvanize a strong sense of community ownership.' Community-led development initiatives are essential for promoting development in urban slums. These initiatives are important because they empower residents to take ownership of their communities, identify their own needs and priorities, and develop solutions to address them. Here are some reasons why community-led development initiatives are important in urban slums:

i. Local Knowledge and Expertise: Community-led development initiatives are built on the knowledge and expertise of the residents who live in the community. These residents have a deep understanding of the challenges they face and the resources available to them. By engaging them in the development process, community-led initiatives can tap into this local knowledge and expertise to develop solutions that are context-specific and effective.

ii. Sustainability: Community-led development initiatives are often more sustainable than top-down approaches because they are designed and implemented with the active participation of the community. When residents are involved in decision-making and implementation, they are more invested in the success of the initiative and more likely to continue supporting it over the long term.

iii. Empowerment: Community-led development initiatives empower residents by giving them a voice and a sense of agency in shaping their own communities. This can lead to increased social capital, stronger social networks, and greater collective action, all of which can help build resilient communities.

iv. Innovation: Community-led development initiatives are often more innovative than top-down approaches because they draw on the creativity and problem-solving skills of the community. By engaging residents in the development process, these initiatives can identify and implement solutions that may not have been considered by external actors.

v. Local Ownership: Community-led development initiatives promote local ownership and control of development projects. This can help ensure that the benefits of development are distributed more equitably and that the needs of the community are better served.

Torjman & Makhoul (2012, pp.3) note that 'every community can start from a position of strength despite the fact that it typically is viewed from the perspective of its weaknesses.' In summary, community-led development initiatives are important in urban slums because they draw on local knowledge and expertise, promote sustainability, empower residents, foster innovation, and promote local ownership and control of development projects.

Using Digital Storytelling to Promote Community-Led Development Initiatives in Urban Slums

According to Davis & Foley (2016, pp. 308), 'a more focused historical meaning of the term digital storytelling refers to a grassroots movement that used multi-media digital tools to help ordinary people tell their own "true stories," especially people who lacked access to the equipment and technical expertise required to produce and disseminate such stories in the not distant past.' Digital storytelling can be an effective tool for promoting community-led development initiatives in urban slums. Here are some ways in which digital storytelling can be used to empower communities and promote positive change: Sharing success stories to inspire others to take action and empower them to make positive changes, amplifying voices to raise awareness about the issues facing these communities and encourage policymakers to take action; this can help to challenge negative stereotypes and misconceptions about slum communities and promote a more nuanced understanding of their needs and aspirations, Fostering collaboration to bring together people from different communities and backgrounds to collaborate on development initiatives; this can help to build trust and promote collective action. Encouraging participation by sharing stories of successful projects and the positive impact they have had, more people may be motivated to get involved and contribute their skills and resources. Building skills and confidence to share their stories and experiences in a meaningful way and become more effective advocates for themselves and their communities. Engaging stakeholders: DST can engage a wide range of stakeholders, including residents, community leaders, NGOs, government officials, and donors, in community-led development initiatives. By sharing stories of successful initiatives and their impact on the lives of residents, digital storytelling can help to build support and momentum for further development efforts. Facilitating advocacy: Digital storytelling can be used to advocate for policy changes and increased investment in slum communities. By sharing stories of the challenges and barriers faced by residents, as well as their strengths and resilience, digital storytelling can create a compelling case for action and build momentum for change.

Hence, digital storytelling can be a powerful tool for promoting community-led development initiatives in urban slums. By sharing stories, amplifying voices, fostering collaboration, empowering individuals, and encouraging participation, digital storytelling can help to create positive change and improve the lives of people living in these communities.

Strategies for Effective DST

Digital storytelling can be a powerful tool for community-led development initiatives. Hilson (2022) observes that people have been using storytelling to share information and make valuable connections for as long as anyone can remember. Here are some strategies for effectively using digital storytelling in these efforts:

Table 3. Strategies for Effective Digital Storytelling

Strategies	Description
<i>Identify the community's needs and goals</i>	Start by identifying the community's needs and goals. Use this information to determine the focus of your digital storytelling project.
<i>Engage the community</i>	Engage the community in the storytelling process. Encourage community members to share their stories and perspectives. This can be done through workshops, focus groups, or other community engagement activities. This will ensure that the initiative meets the needs of the community and that the stories being told are relevant and meaningful to them.
<i>Choose the right platform</i>	Choose a platform that is accessible and easy to use for the community. This can be a website, social media platform, or other digital platform.
<i>Develop a storytelling plan</i>	Develop a storytelling plan that includes the goals, audience, content, format, and distribution of your digital storytelling project.
<i>Culturally sensitive storytelling</i>	When creating digital storytelling initiatives, it is important to be culturally sensitive and respectful of the community's values and beliefs. Storytellers should be encouraged to share their stories in a way that is authentic and respectful to their culture and traditions.
<i>Use a participatory approach</i>	Use a participatory approach to digital storytelling. Involve community members in every stage of the project, from planning to distribution. This will allow for a diversity of perspectives and experiences to be shared and will create a more holistic portrayal of life in the urban slums.
<i>Measure impact</i>	Measure the impact of your digital storytelling project. This can be done through surveys, focus groups, or other evaluation methods. Use this information to refine your storytelling approach and improve future projects.
<i>Access to technology</i>	Digital storytelling initiatives require access to technology, such as smartphones, computers, and cameras. However, many people living in urban slums may not have access to these resources. It is essential to provide access to technology and training on how to use it to ensure that everyone can participate.
<i>Ethical considerations</i>	When sharing stories digitally, it is important to consider

	ethical issues such as privacy and informed consent. It is important to obtain permission from the storytellers and ensure that their identities and personal information are protected.
<i>Amplify voices</i>	Once the stories are created, it is important to amplify the voices of the storytellers by sharing the stories through social media, online platforms, and other channels. This will ensure that the stories are heard by a wider audience and can create a positive impact.
<i>Sustainable initiatives</i>	Digital storytelling initiatives should be designed to be Sustainable over the long term. This can be achieved by training community members to continue creating and sharing stories independently, or by creating partnerships with local organizations to continue the initiative beyond its initial phase.

By using these strategies, digital storytelling can be an effective tool for community-led development initiatives, helping to amplify the voices of community members and empower them to create positive change.

Challenges and Limitations of Using Digital Storytelling

Digital storytelling is an increasingly popular tool in community-led development initiatives in urban slums. However, there are several challenges and limitations that need to be considered when using this tool:

Table 4. Challenges & Limitations of Using DST

Challenges	Analysis
<i>Access to technology</i>	One of the primary challenges in using digital storytelling in urban slums is the lack of access to technology. Many residents of these communities do not have access to smartphones or computers, making it difficult to participate in digital storytelling initiatives.
<i>Digital literacy</i>	Even if people have access to technology, there may be a lack of digital literacy skills among community members. Digital storytelling requires knowledge of various digital tools and platforms, may not be readily available to people in urban slums.
<i>Language barriers</i>	Urban slums are often home to people from diverse linguistic backgrounds. Language barriers can make it difficult for community members to participate in digital storytelling initiatives, particularly if the initiative is not offered in their native language.
<i>Power dynamics</i>	Digital storytelling can be a powerful tool for amplifying the voices of marginalized communities. However, power dynamics within the community may prevent some individuals from participating or sharing their stories. Those who have more influence seen as more important in the community may dominate the storytelling process.

<i>Limited resources</i>	Community-led development initiatives in urban slums often have limited resources. Digital storytelling initiatives can require significant resources, including equipment, software, and technical support, which may not be available.
<i>Sustainability</i>	Digital storytelling initiatives require ongoing maintenance and support. Without a plan for sustainability, these initiatives may not be able to continue beyond their initial implementation, limiting their impact.
<i>Privacy and security concerns</i>	Sharing personal stories online can raise privacy and security concerns, particularly in communities where trust in authorities or technology is low. Without proper safeguards, community members may be hesitant to participate in digital storytelling initiatives.

DST can be a powerful tool in community-led development initiatives in urban slums. However, the challenges and limitations outlined above need to be carefully considered and addressed to ensure the success and sustainability of these initiatives.

METHODOLOGY

This study adopted an exploratory research method. Exploratory research method was deployed to collect, review, and analyse documented data and information in books, academic journals, extant literatures, search engines, digital platforms, digital libraries, newspapers, magazines, online databases, reports, official gazettes, etc. rather than collecting primary data using questionnaire as is the usual practice in survey researches.

Objectives of the Research

The major aim of this paper was to highlight the potentials of digital storytelling as a powerful tool for community development in urban slums and to offer insights into how it can be effectively harnessed to bring about lasting social change. The paper was specifically aimed to:

1. examine the challenges faced by urban slum communities, and how digital storytelling can be harnessed to address these challenges.
2. analyse the role of digital storytelling in promoting community participation, engagement, and empowerment, and how it can help to amplify the voices of marginalised communities.
3. evaluate the effectiveness of digital storytelling in fostering social change, promoting social justice, and contributing to sustainable development in urban slums.
4. provide case studies of digital storytelling initiatives in urban slums, highlighting their successes, challenges, and lessons learned; and to.
5. identify the key factors that contribute to the success of digital storytelling initiatives in urban slums, including the role of technology, community partnerships, and the support of government and non-governmental organisations.

Analysis and Discourse

Discourse Paradigm One: What are the challenges faced by urban slum communities, and how can DST be harnessed to address these challenges?

The data on table 5 answered this discourse paradigm.

Table 5. Challenges in Urban Slum Communities

Challenges	Analysis
<i>Overcrowding</i>	Many people are forced to live in small, cramped spaces, with large families often sharing a single room with inadequate sanitation facilities. This leads to poor health outcomes, including increased rates of infectious diseases such as diarrhea and respiratory infections.
<i>Inadequate healthcare</i>	Slum communities often lack access to basic healthcare services, including vaccinations and maternal health services. This can lead to poor health outcomes for residents, particularly women and children.
<i>Inadequate housing</i>	Homes in slums are often made from makeshift materials such as corrugated iron, plastic sheets, and scrap wood, and lack basic amenities such as running water, toilets, and proper ventilation.
<i>Lack of basic services</i>	Slum dwellers often lack access to basic services such as clean water, electricity, and sanitation facilities, leading to high rates of disease and poor living conditions.
<i>Limited access to education</i>	Children living in slums often lack access to quality education, which can limit their opportunities and perpetuate the cycle of poverty.
<i>Poverty/Limited access to economic opportunities</i>	Slum dwellers are often some of the poorest people in a city or town, with limited opportunities for education and employment. Many slum dwellers work in informal, low-paying jobs without job security or benefits. This can make it difficult to earn a reliable income and provide for their families.
<i>Informal settlements</i>	Slums are often formed as a result of people settling on land without permission or legal ownership, and as such, are often seen as illegal or informal settlements.
<i>Social exclusion</i>	Slum dwellers are often socially excluded from the rest of society, with limited access to services, education, and job opportunities.
<i>Exposure to violence & Crime</i>	Slum communities are often characterized by high levels of crime and violence, including gang activity and domestic violence. This can lead to physical and emotional trauma for residents.

Table 5 above shows that urban slum communities face a range of challenges, including poverty among others. In general, urban slums are a reflection of the deep inequalities that exist within society, and the failure of governments and policymakers to address these issues.

Digital storytelling can be harnessed to address these challenges in several ways:

I. Amplifying Voices: Digital storytelling can provide a platform for the residents of slum communities to share their stories, experiences, and perspectives with a wider audience. This can help to challenge stereotypes and stigmas associated with living in slums, and raise awareness of the challenges faced by these communities.

II. Advocacy and Awareness: Digital storytelling can be used to advocate for policy changes that address the root causes of poverty and inequality in slum communities. By sharing stories of the challenges faced by residents, digital storytelling can help to mobilize support for policy changes that improve access to basic services, create economic opportunities, and improve living conditions.

III. Community Building: Digital storytelling can help to build stronger communities within slum areas by facilitating connections between residents and creating a sense of shared identity and purpose. By encouraging residents to share their stories and experiences, digital storytelling can help to foster a sense of solidarity and collective action.

IV. Empowerment: Digital storytelling can be a powerful tool for empowering residents of slum communities by providing them with a platform to express themselves and take control of their narratives. By telling their own stories, residents can challenge negative stereotypes and assert their own agency and resilience.

The discourse above shows how digital storytelling can be a powerful tool for addressing the challenges faced by urban slum communities. By amplifying voices, raising awareness, building community, and empowering residents, digital storytelling can help to create a more equitable and just society.

Discourse Paradigm Two: What are the roles of digital storytelling in promoting community participation, engagement, and empowerment, and how can it help to amplify the voices of marginalised communities?

Digital storytelling can play a significant role in promoting community participation, engagement, and empowerment, particularly for marginalized communities. Some ways in which digital storytelling can help are presented in the table below:

The data on table 6 answered this discourse paradigm.

Table 6. Roles of Digital Storytelling

Roles	Analysis
<i>Sharing of diverse perspectives</i>	Digital storytelling allows individuals from marginalized communities to share their stories and perspectives with a broader audience. By sharing their experiences, these individuals can highlight issues that are not typically covered by mainstream media, and this can help to create a more comprehensive understanding of the challenges faced by marginalized communities.
<i>Building empathy</i>	When individuals from marginalized communities share their stories, it can help to build empathy among those who may not have had similar experiences. This can help to break down barriers and stereotypes and foster a greater sense of community.
<i>Amplifying Marginalized voices</i>	Digital storytelling can provide a platform for marginalized communities to have their voices heard. This can help to empower these communities and give them a sense of agency, as they are able to share their experiences and perspectives with a broader audience.
<i>Engaging communities in social issues</i>	Digital storytelling can be a powerful tool for engaging communities in social issues. By sharing stories about the challenges faced by marginalized communities, digital storytelling can inspire people to take action and get involved in efforts to address these issues.
<i>Facilitating dialogue and collaboration</i>	Digital storytelling can help to facilitate dialogue and collaboration between different communities. By sharing stories and perspectives, individuals from different backgrounds can learn from each other and work together to create positive change.

The discourse on table 6 above shows that digital storytelling can be a powerful tool for promoting community participation, engagement, and empowerment, and for amplifying the voices of marginalized communities. By providing a platform for individuals to share their stories and perspectives, digital storytelling can help to create a more inclusive and empathetic society.

Discourse Paradigm Three: How effective is DST in fostering social change, promoting social justice, and contributing to sustainable development in urban slums?

Digital storytelling can be a powerful tool in fostering social change, promoting social justice, and contributing to sustainable development in urban slums. Some ways in which DST can be effective are presented in the table below:

The data on table 7 answered this discourse paradigm.

Table 7. Effectiveness of Digital Storytelling

Effectiveness	Analysis
<i>Giving a voice to Marginalized communities</i>	Digital storytelling can provide a platform for people living in urban slums to tell their own stories and share their experiences. This can help to raise awareness about the challenges they face and the solutions they have developed, as well as give them a sense of agency and empowerment.
<i>Creating empathy and understanding</i>	By sharing personal stories and experiences, digital storytelling can help to create empathy and understanding among people who may not have direct experience with urban slums. This can help to break down stereotypes and promote more inclusive attitudes and policies.
<i>Mobilizing action</i>	Digital storytelling can be a powerful tool for mobilizing action and advocating for change. By sharing stories of injustice and inequality, digital storytellers can inspire others to take action and work towards solutions.
<i>Amplifying marginalized voices</i>	Digital storytelling can help to amplify the voices of marginalized communities and bring their stories to a wider audience. By sharing their stories through digital media, individuals and communities can raise awareness about issues affecting them and advocate for change. This can help to build support for social change and promote sustainable development in urban slums.
<i>Engaging Communities</i>	Digital storytelling can also be a powerful tool for community engagement. It can bring people together to collaborate on creating stories and help to build a sense of community around shared experiences and values.
<i>Advocacy and Awareness</i>	Digital storytelling can raise awareness about social justice issues and promote advocacy efforts to bring about change. Stories can be shared on social media platforms, blogs, and other online forums to reach a wider audience and engage individuals who may not have been aware of the issue.
<i>Education and Empowerment</i>	Digital storytelling can also be used as an educational tool to empower individuals and communities with knowledge and skills. By sharing stories and experiences, individuals can learn from each other and develop the skills and knowledge needed to address the challenges they face.
<i>Sustainable Development</i>	Digital storytelling can contribute to sustainable development by promoting community-led initiatives and highlighting the importance of sustainable practices. By sharing stories of successful sustainable development projects, communities can inspire others and create momentum for change.

The discourse on table 7 shows that digital storytelling can be a highly effective tool for promoting social change, promoting social justice, and contributing to sustainable development in urban slums. However, it is important to recognize that it is just one tool among many, and that lasting change requires a comprehensive approach that involves community participation, policy change, and sustainable development strategies.

Discourse Paradigm Four: What are the major examples of digital storytelling initiatives in urban slums?

There are a number of digital storytelling initiatives that have taken place in urban slums in Nigeria over the years, each with their own unique successes, challenges, and lessons learned. Here are a few examples:

i. "**Slum Chronicles**" by the Nigerian Slum / Informal Settlement Federation (Federation) **Successes:** "Slum Chronicles" is a multimedia project that aims to share the stories of people living in slums and informal settlements across Nigeria. Through photos, videos, and written narratives, the project seeks to humanize the experiences of those who live in these communities and raise awareness about the issues they face. The project has been successful in garnering attention from both local and international media outlets, and has helped to elevate the voices of slum dwellers in discussions around urban development and policy.

Challenges: One of the biggest challenges facing the project is funding. The Federation is a grassroots organization that relies heavily on donations and volunteer efforts to keep its initiatives running. As a result, the project has been slow to scale up and expand beyond its current reach.

Lessons Learned: The success of "Slum Chronicles" highlights the importance of community-driven storytelling initiatives that prioritize the voices and experiences of those directly affected by urban development issues. However, it also underscores the need for sustainable funding models that can support such initiatives over the long term.

ii. "**Life in My City**" by the African Centre for Leadership, Strategy & Development (Centre)

Successes: "Life in My City" is a digital storytelling project that aims to document the lives and experiences of young people living in urban slums in Nigeria. Through photos, videos, and written narratives, the project seeks to provide a platform for these youth to share their perspectives and ideas about how to improve their communities. The project has been successful in engaging a wide range of young people, many of whom have gone on to become advocates for social change in their communities.

Challenges: One of the biggest challenges facing the project is the lack of access to technology and internet connectivity in many of the communities it serves. This has made it difficult to reach a wider audience and share the stories collected through the project. Additionally, the project has struggled to find sustainable funding models to support its ongoing operations.

Lessons Learned: "Life in My City" highlights the importance of engaging with young people in urban slums and empowering them to take action in their communities. However, it also underscores the need for creative solutions to overcome barriers to technology and internet connectivity, as well as the importance of building sustainable funding models to support ongoing operations.

iii. **"Mapping Slums"** by the Heinrich Böll Foundation (Foundation)

Successes: "Mapping Slums" is a digital storytelling project that uses maps and data to document the lives and experiences of people living in urban slums in Nigeria. Through a combination of on-the-ground research and community engagement, the project has been successful in creating detailed maps and visualizations of the physical and social landscape of these communities. These maps have been used to inform policy discussions and advocacy efforts around issues such as housing, infrastructure, and community development.

Challenges: One of the biggest challenges facing the project is the complex and dynamic nature of urban slums. Many of these communities are constantly evolving, with new residents moving in and out, and infrastructure and housing needs shifting over time. This has made it difficult to create accurate and up-to-date maps that reflect the current realities of these communities.

Lessons learned: "Mapping Slums" highlights the importance of using data and technology to inform policy and advocacy efforts around urban development issues. However, it also underscores the need for ongoing research and engagement with local communities to ensure that data and maps accurately reflect the realities on the ground.

Discourse Paradigm Five: What are the key factors that contribute to the success of digital storytelling initiatives in urban slums?

Digital storytelling initiatives can be effective in urban slums to empower marginalized communities by providing them with a platform to share their stories and experiences. Some key factors that contribute to the success of these initiatives are presented in the table below:

The data on table 8 answered this discourse paradigm.

Table 8. Factors that Contribute to DST

Factors	Analysis
<i>Community participation and involvement</i>	It is important to involve the community in the digital storytelling process to ensure that their voices are heard and their stories are accurately represented. Community members should be involved in all stages of the process, from identifying the stories to be told to the creation and dissemination of the final product.
<i>Access to technology and digital media</i>	Access to technology and digital media is critical for the success of digital storytelling initiatives. This includes access to cameras, computers, and software for editing and producing digital content. It is important to ensure that community members have access to these resources and are trained in how to use them.
<i>Cultural sensitivity and understanding</i>	To be successful, digital storytelling initiatives must be culturally sensitive and respectful of the community's values, beliefs, and customs. It is important to work closely with community members to understand their culture and ensure that their stories are told in a way that is appropriate and respectful.
<i>Collaboration and partnerships</i>	Collaboration and partnerships with local organizations and stakeholders can help to increase the impact and reach of digital storytelling initiatives. Working with local NGOs, community-based organizations, and government agencies can help to mobilize resources and increase support for the initiative.
<i>Sustainability and long-term planning</i>	Sustainability and long-term planning are critical for the success of digital storytelling initiatives. It is important to develop a plan for sustaining the initiative beyond the initial implementation phase and to ensure that community members have the skills and resources to continue creating and sharing their stories.

The discourse on table 8 shows that the success of digital storytelling initiatives in urban slums requires a holistic approach that incorporates technological, social, cultural, and political factors. By addressing these key factors, digital storytelling initiatives can effectively capture and amplify the voices and perspectives of urban slum communities, promote social change, and foster greater empathy and understanding across diverse communities.

CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, digital storytelling has emerged as a powerful tool for promoting community-led initiatives in urban slums. It provides a platform for marginalized voices to be heard, raises awareness about the challenges faced by slum communities, and highlights the resilience and creativity of community-led initiatives. Digital storytelling can help break down negative stereotypes and support the creation of more inclusive and equitable urban environments.

Moreover, digital storytelling empowers communities to take ownership of their own narratives and promotes a sense of agency and pride. It can also facilitate partnerships between slum communities, civil society organizations, and local governments, leading to more effective and sustainable solutions to the challenges faced by urban slums. Evidently, digital storytelling can play a critical role in amplifying the voices of those who are often marginalized and overlooked in urban development processes. By highlighting the unique perspectives and experiences of slum communities, digital storytelling can promote greater understanding, empathy, and solidarity, and contribute to the creation of more just and inclusive cities.

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