

# Empowering Women Through Digital Storytelling for Viksit Bharat: A Review Based Study

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## Abstract:

In the digital era, storytelling has emerged as a powerful tool for empowerment, particularly for marginalized groups such as women. This paper presents a comprehensive review-based study presents an overview of Digital Storytelling. In addition, information is presented about the steps of creating a digital story and its different types. The article also includes a discussion of challenges and other important considerations that society should be aware of before implementing the use of Digital Storytelling to empower the women for Viksit Bharat by 2047 and concludes with an overview of the research that has been and needs to be conducted on the effectiveness of Digital Storytelling in empowering women within the context of Viksit Bharat.

**Keywords:** Digital Storytelling, Women Empowerment, Communication, Viksit Bharat

## Introduction:

In the rapidly evolving landscape of digital communication, storytelling has emerged as a powerful means of empowerment, particularly for marginalized groups such as women. In the context of Viksit Bharat (Developing India), where gender disparities persist despite ongoing efforts towards social and economic progress, the role of digital storytelling in advancing women's empowerment warrants careful examination.

Viksit Bharat embodies a vision of inclusive development, striving to address longstanding challenges such as gender inequality, limited access to education and healthcare, and restricted economic opportunities for women. Within this framework, digital storytelling offers a unique avenue for women to share their experiences, voice their aspirations, and advocate for change. By harnessing digital platforms and narrative techniques, storytelling initiatives have the capacity to transcend traditional barriers of access and amplify the voices of women from diverse backgrounds across Viksit Bharat.

Through digital mediums such as social media, websites, and mobile applications, women are able to craft and disseminate stories that challenge stereotypes, inspire solidarity, and catalyze collective action. These narratives not only document the lived realities of women in Viksit Bharat but also serve as vehicles for social critique, advocacy, and community building.

Moreover, digital storytelling has the potential to enhance women's agency and self-representation in public discourse. By providing platforms for women to reclaim their narratives and assert their rights,

digital storytelling initiatives empower them to challenge existing power structures and shape the narratives of their own lives. Through participatory storytelling processes, women become active agents of change, co-creating narratives that reflect their diverse experiences and aspirations for a more equitable and inclusive society.

### Objectives:

1. To study the challenges and limitations of creating the Digital Storytelling.
2. To analyse the role of digital storytelling to empower the women for Viksit Bharat.

### Literature Review:

**Anderson et al.<sup>[1]</sup> (2017)** explores the use of digital storytelling as a group narrative method for positive identity development in the case of African American youth residing in economically disadvantaged, urban areas. Factors such as ethnicity, socioeconomic status, and/or violence exposure may heighten normal youth challenges and affect identity development. Further, the main objective of **Daniels et al.<sup>[2]</sup> (2023)** research was to establish what skills and attributes would be required for someone to autonomously “tell” a serious digital story in a resource constrained environment. **Liguori et al.<sup>[7]</sup> (2023)** summarises that digital storytelling will be embraced by the new generations of researchers as a sustainable practice all the more, as its many disruptions will generate spaces for co-creation and self-representation to emerge, and will stimulate everyone involved in the research process to challenge their own way of thinking and to go beyond what was codified by others and by their own practice too.

**Martin et al.<sup>[8]</sup> (2019)** highlights the methods used, specifically an adapted version of digital storytelling as a potential empowerment research methodology with a small group of young women exposed to dating violence. The aim of this research paper was to provide a systematic review of digital storytelling in research. Although digital storytelling provides a ready-made knowledge translation product, few research projects employed the digital stories generated to this end. Across research projects, participants reported several benefits of digital storytelling. While some disadvantages were noted, overall, these were outweighed by the benefits of using a respectful, participatory research practice **Fogarty et al.<sup>[4]</sup> (2017)**. **Narayana et al.<sup>[9]</sup> (2016)** in their study ‘Role of media in accelerating women empowerment’, analysed and identified the powerful and positive role that the media can play in the empowerment of women and gender equality.

**Sharma (2024)<sup>[11]</sup>** in her study ‘Forging Trails for Women's Collective Empowerment: A Diverse Strategy in Advancing Viksit Bharat’ delves into the intricate nuances of women's empowerment within the dynamic tapestry of Viksit Bharat.

### Background of the study:

#### Digital Storytelling

Digital storytelling is a modern narrative technique that involves using digital media, such as videos, images, audio, and interactive elements, to tell a story or convey information. It combines the art of storytelling with technology, enabling creators to engage audiences in more immersive and interactive ways.

**Joe Lambert** is known for disseminating the Seven Elements of Digital Storytelling (2003), which was first proposed in the early 1990s and is still cited as a useful starting point to begin working with digital stories. The seven elements are: (i) point of view (of the author), (ii) a dramatic question, (iii) emotional

content, (iv) the gift of your voice (narration), (v) the power of the soundtrack (to support the storyline), (vi) economy (of length), and (vii) pacing of the story. **Lambert (2010)** later updated the Seven Elements to the Seven Steps of Digital Storytelling as shown in Table 1.

**Table 1 The Seven Steps of Digital Storytelling**

1. Owning your insight	finding your story
2. Owning your emotions	identifying and conveying personal content
3. Finding the moment	identifying the moment of change in your story
4. Seeing your story	visualizing, locating, and understanding the images
5. Hearing your story	adding your voice, music, sound effects
6. Assembling your story	using structure, pacing, and economy
7. Sharing your story	presenting your story to an audience

## Women Empowerment

Women empowerment is a multifaceted concept that encompasses various dimensions of social, economic, political, and cultural empowerment aimed at achieving gender equality. At its core, women empowerment involves empowering women to have control over their lives, exercise their rights, and access opportunities on an equal basis with men.

Key elements of women empowerment include:

- a. Equal Rights and Opportunities:** Women empowerment entails ensuring that women have the same rights and opportunities as men in all aspects of life, including education, employment, healthcare, and participation in decision-making processes.
- b. Access to Education:** Education is a fundamental tool for empowering women and girls. Women empowerment efforts often focus on ensuring equal access to quality education for females, as education not only enhances their knowledge and skills but also increases their confidence and ability to participate fully in society.
- c. Economic Empowerment:** Economic empowerment involves enabling women to participate in the economy on an equal footing with men. This includes access to employment, entrepreneurship opportunities, financial resources, and ownership of property and assets.
- d. Health and Well-being:** Women empowerment includes ensuring women's access to healthcare services, including reproductive health services, and addressing issues such as maternal mortality, gender-based violence, and access to essential healthcare resources.
- e. Political Participation and Representation:** Empowering women politically involves increasing their participation and representation in political processes, leadership roles, and decision-making bodies at all levels of government. This includes advocating for policies and measures that promote gender equality and women's rights.
- f. Social and Cultural Empowerment:** Women empowerment efforts also aim to challenge and change societal norms, attitudes, and cultural practices that perpetuate gender inequality and discrimination against women. This may involve promoting gender-sensitive education, raising awareness about women's rights, and challenging stereotypes and prejudices.

## Viksit Bharat

Viksit Bharat, which translates to "Developed India" in Hindi, is the vision of Prime Minister Narendra Modi for India's future by the year 2047, the 100th anniversary of the country's independence. It's envisioned as a comprehensive plan, not just a slogan, to make India a prosperous nation.

Focus on Women-Led Development is one of the important aspects of Viksit Bharat. There's a shift from just women's development to women leading the development process. This empowers women and leverages their strengths. Several initiatives promote women's participation in various sectors. For instance, the "Saksham Naari, Sashakht Bharat" program focuses on women's role in the workforce for a Viksit Bharat.

## Digital Storytelling as an effective tool for Women Empowerment

Digital storytelling has become a potent and successful instrument for women's empowerment in a variety of global situations. With technology permeating every part of our lives in the digital age, storytelling has evolved beyond its historical limitations to become a vehicle for advocacy, self-expression, and societal change. Women have always been marginalised and silenced, but digital storytelling provides them a voice to share their own tales, challenge stereotypes, and defend their rights.

The accessibility and inclusion of digital storytelling is one of its main advantages. With the widespread availability of digital devices and internet connectivity, women from all backgrounds may engage with audiences beyond cultural and geographical barriers and share their stories. Women now have a greater voice in public discourse on a range of issues, from gender equality and reproductive rights to education and economic empowerment, thanks to digital storytelling. Multimedia projects, social media platforms, podcasts, and blogs can all be used for this.

**As Davis (2005) highlights**, stories serve as symbolic instruments for the development of identity, and the act of narrating can influence a person's sense of self, which can eventually result in self-awareness and self-reliance. Further, according to **Simsek (2012)** who documented the use of DST with women in Turkey, DST has the potential to be a force for change by fostering female autonomy and self-expression as well as by making the public sphere more approachable in ways that encourage women to participate in it. Specifically, DST can create engaged spaces for voices that are not often heard (**Wexler- Love et al, 2011**).

Moreover, digital storytelling enables women to engage in participatory processes of narrative creation, where they can co-author and co-produce content that reflects their lived experiences and perspectives. By involving women as active agents in the storytelling process, digital initiatives foster a sense of agency, ownership, and empowerment. Through collaborative storytelling, women not only gain a platform to share their stories but also develop skills in communication, digital literacy, and advocacy that are essential for navigating the digital world and effecting social change.

Additionally, women's collective action and community building are stimulated by digital storytelling. Women can find like-minded people to engage with, find support for, and rally around common causes through online forums, virtual networks, and social media communities. Women in the internet sphere build a feeling of community and sisterhood by sharing their experiences and stories, which opens up forums for discussion, empowerment, and support from one another.

## Challenges and limitations

Digital storytelling offers numerous opportunities for empowerment and social change, it also presents

several challenges and limitations that must be addressed:

**Digital Divide:** The difference between those who have access to digital technologies and those who do not is known as the "digital divide," and it is one of the biggest problems. The inability of women living in remote or underdeveloped locations to access computers, smartphones, or dependable internet connectivity restricts their engagement with digital storytelling platforms.

**Limited Digital Literacy:** Creating high-quality digital material and navigating complicated digital platforms can be difficult for many women due to their low levels of digital literacy. Their ability to engage in digital storytelling projects may be hindered in the absence of sufficient training and assistance.

**Cultural Barriers:** Women's engagement in digital storytelling may face obstacles due to cultural norms and beliefs, especially in conservative or patriarchal societies where women's voices are frequently suppressed or marginalised. Women may be discouraged from publicly sharing their stories online if they fear societal stigma or negative reactions.

**Online Harassment and Privacy Concerns:** Women who take part in digital storytelling projects run the risk of experiencing cyberbullying, trolling, and online harassment, all of which can be harmful to their mental health and general wellbeing. Furthermore, women may be discouraged from sharing private or sensitive information online due to worries about privacy and data security.

**Representation and Diversity:** Initiatives aimed at promoting digital storytelling can find it difficult to fairly depict the variety of women's viewpoints and experiences. In the digital sphere, there is a risk that some narratives will be given more weight than others, perpetuating current power dynamics and marginalising voices who are already marginalised.

**Technological Constraints:** Digital storytelling projects may face difficulties due to technological limitations, such as old gear or inadequate bandwidth, especially in areas with minimal resources. Participants' trust in digital technology can be damaged by technical issues or platform malfunctions that interfere with the storytelling process.

### **Recommendations:**

It's critical to acknowledge the power of digital storytelling as a social change agent and to find programmes that advance women's empowerment in Viksit Bharat. Together, policymakers, non-governmental organisations, and other interested parties need to close the digital divide, promote digital literacy, and establish supportive settings where women can use storytelling as a tool for social change. Furthermore, to determine the best ways to maximise the efficacy of digital storytelling treatments and to determine the influence they have on women's empowerment outcomes, more study and evaluation are required.

### **Conclusion:**

Digital storytelling serves as a powerful tool for women's empowerment in Viksit Bharat by providing avenues for self-expression, community engagement, and advocacy. By leveraging digital platforms and narrative techniques, women have been able to share their experiences, articulate their aspirations, and mobilize collective action towards gender equality and inclusive development. Digital storytelling is good and practical means to increase, through the dissemination of healthy concepts of being woman, of what is the role of women in modern society.

The digital storytelling has always had an unconscious impact on how society thinks and behaves. Despite the derogatory portrayal of women in the media, success stories of well-known, successful, and established

women should take centre stage. Given its significance in the socialisation process that shapes gender roles, its systems of gender-neutral checks and balances must be reinforced. In order to prevent portraying women negatively, the digital media should support the projection of women in a respectable and dignified manner. Youth must be made aware of gender issues, and those who can portray women in a positive light may be eligible for prizes. To combat this threat and ensure that women are viewed as human beings with rights and dignity rather than as commodities, a concerted legislative effort and a broad social consciousness of morals and ethics are required.

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