

**DIGITAL STORYTELLING TO EMPOWER
DISADVANTAGED COMMUNITIES**

Student: Denise C. Speck - S4326636

Supervisor: Dr. Thomas B. Long

Co-Assessor: Eric M. Fath-Kolmes, P.Eng., MBA

University of Groningen

Campus Fryslân

Wirdumerdijk 34, 8911 CE Leeuwarden

Tel: 050 288 2132

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ABSTRACT

Rapid technological advancements contributed to the emergence of *Digital Storytelling*, which received increased interest among scholars and social entrepreneurship (SE) practitioners to empower marginalized communities. This study aims to explore the phenomenon of Digital Storytelling and investigate the drivers, activities, and barriers of SE practitioners applying digital narratives in a developing country context. Thereby, the goal is to explore *how* SE contributes to the empowerment of disadvantaged communities through Digital Storytelling. Twelve qualitative, semi-structured interviews are conducted with Digital Storytelling experts in the context of SE. These inquiries yield insights concerning the outcomes of Digital Storytelling, essential elements to curate an empowering story, the role of the storyteller, and the challenges encountered; thereby advancing theory by enabling a cross-disciplinary perspective of Digital Storytelling and contributing to practice by providing eight practical recommendations for SE practitioners. The aim of these recommendations is to increase value for disadvantaged communities through Digital Storytelling.

INTRODUCTION

Past and contemporary globalization left impactful traces on social, environmental, and economic developments around the world. Amongst others, it increased the levels of inequality and neglected the voices of the less-privileged ones (Stephan et al., 2016; Williams et al., 2003). Despite the growing emergence of *social entrepreneurship* (herein referred to as SE), disadvantaged communities¹ remain trapped in a vicious cycle of poverty, in which "the social structure of poverty reproduces poverty" (Anderson & Obeng, 2017:30). But why do the poor remain poor? Mair & Seelos (2007) accuse an absence of resources and weak institutional arrangements. An array of researchers investigated the reasons behind growing inequalities and referred to the concept of *empowerment* as a possible solution to increasing social value (Stanton-Salazar, 2011). Particularly, storytelling received increased attention among scholars as a tool to empower marginalized voices (Rouhani, 2019; Staley & Freeman, 2017; Matthews & Sunderland, 2017; Williams et al., 2003).

Dating back to the 19th century, storytelling was practiced by folklorists through "oral, written [and] visual" narratives to understand societies' norms and behaviors (Sanchez, 2014). Since the 20th century, storytelling has emerged within different disciplines, explaining its empirical richness (Chautard & Collin-Lachaud, 2019). Within business literature, the role of storytelling is to improve brand awareness and foster sales (Delgado-Ballester & Fernández-Sabiote, 2016). Psychoanalysts analyse patients' stories in the form of dreams "as a window into their subconscious" (Chautard & Collin-Lachaud, 2019). Moreover, both sociologists and anthropologists consider narratives of individual identities and collective cultures to foster empowerment (Staley & Freeman, 2017; Williams et al., 2003). In this regard, storytelling for

¹ According to the CPUC (2021), a disadvantaged community is a group of people "which most suffers from a combination of economic, health, and environmental burdens. The burdens include poverty, high unemployment, air and water pollution, presence of hazardous wastes as well as high incidence of asthma and heart disease".

empowerment is broadly defined as "[...] a time-honoured way in which people in cultures across the world gain understanding of themselves and their lives" (Rouhani, 2019:574). It enables one to understand "[...] what we do as humans to make sense of the world" (Lambert & Hessler, 2018:5). However, rising globalization and rapid technological advancements (Nambisan et al., 2019; Geneske, 2014) stimulated a digitalization that enabled a novel form of narratives – *Digital Storytelling*. As the name indicates, Digital Storytelling combines traditional storytelling with modern technologies (Rouhani, 2019).

From a more practical viewpoint, SE practitioners, such as *100cameras* or *StoryCenter*, share common characteristics – they all recognize the power of Digital Storytelling and strive towards a shared mission of using visual narratives to create social value and change the world. However, although such organizations are exemplary for the intervening role between Digital Storytelling and empowerment, it remains unclear *how* SE empowers disadvantaged communities through Digital Storytelling. Therefore, the purpose of this paper is to provide a theoretical understanding of how Digital Storytelling can empower underprivileged communities. Thereby, the drivers, activities, and challenges of Digital Storytelling are investigated within the broader context of SE to ultimately provide practical recommendations to practitioners on how Digital Storytelling can empower disadvantaged communities within SE.

An abductive research design shed light on the phenomenon of Digital Storytelling from the perspective of SE – to determine why it is used (drivers), how it can be used as a viable approach for empowerment (activities), and what burdens might impact the success of a story (challenges). Thereby, the qualitative primary data inquiry with twelve key informants helped to explore the phenomenon to answer the research question: '*How can social entrepreneurship contribute to the empowerment of disadvantaged communities through Digital Storytelling?*'

Theoretical contributions alter the understanding of Digital Storytelling and provide a cross-disciplinary lens of digital storytelling by investigating a social phenomenon from an

entrepreneurial perspective. Thereby, Digital Storytelling is analysed from a social entrepreneurial stance. Finally, practical contributions offer recommendations for SE practitioners to overcome challenges and create an empowering digital narrative.

The structure of the paper is as follows. First, the literature review contains scholarly insight on the linkage between empowerment and SE and Digital Storytelling for empowerment. The subsequent chapter offers an overview of the research methods applied within this study. Next, the results of the qualitative interviews yield insights in terms of drivers, activities, and challenges experienced by the respondents. Lastly, the discussions include a conclusion of the findings, recommendations for SE practitioners, limitations of the study, and suggestions for future research.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Empowerment Through Social Entrepreneurship

Throughout time and space, SE underwent a "conceptual muddle" (Schneider, 2016:421). Its ancient and global heritage led to different schools of thought² persistent in and within varying contexts (Portales, 2019). Consequently, scholarly interest just recently grew in conceptualizing entrepreneurship as a social value creation progress.

Within this research, SE is understood as a process "to discover, define and exploit opportunities" (Zahra et al., 2009:519) by creating long-term, social value through innovations and knowledge-sharing networks (Schneider, 2016; Seelos & Mair, 2014; Fowler, 2000) to enhance sustainable development (Pacheco, 2010; Hall et al., 2010) to groups in need (Fowler, 2000). Thereby, SE innovatively combines resources to address social needs to ultimately alter social structures (Mair & Martí, 2006).

Also, empowerment is complex, multi-faced, and contextual (Budig et al., 2018; Stanton & Salzar, 2011). Maton & Salem (1995) define empowerment as "the active participatory process of gaining resources or competencies needed to increase control over one's life and accomplish important life goals" (p.632). Inherent to SE and empowerment are similar traits; both represent context-dependent, participatory processes aiming at increasing resources and capabilities through networking and innovations – SE provides empowerment mechanisms that decrease stakeholder dependencies and increase agency (Maguierre et al., 2016).

All in all, the literature emphasizes the link between SE and empowerment; therefore, this research further investigates empowerment through Digital Storytelling in the context of SE.

² According to Basq and Janssen (2011) SE has a long heritage, but just recently received increased interest among scholars to theoretically and empirically understand. Although, the main schools of thought are rooted in the United States and Europe, regional differences persist which lead to a coexistence of varying conceptions of social entrepreneurship.

Digital Storytelling

Storytelling is essential to humankind; Its first traces were found in cave engravings of prehistoric times (Nguyen, 2011). However, globalization (Stephan et al., 2016; Williams et al., 2003) and technological advancements (Nambisan et al., 2019) stimulated the emergence of *Digital Storytelling* - combining both oral storytelling techniques and modern technologies (Rouhani, 2019; Nguyen, 2011). In other words, it synergizes "the art of telling stories with a variety of digital multimedia" (Robin, 2006:709) such as voice, music, photography, and videos to shed light on topics (Nguyen, 2011) that reflect personal narratives³, historical events, or specific themes (Robin, 2006).

The literature describes *Digital Storytelling* as dynamic, cross-disciplinary, multi-levelled, and transformative. Its dynamic nature is mirrored in "individual-social negotiation in narrating life, the manifestation of human nature as telling story, and the means through which humans understand their world and their relationships with their [world]" (Nguyen, 2011:12). Its cross-disciplinarity is represented within education (Nguyen, 2011), health care (Matthews & Sunderland, 2017), and community development (Rouhani, 2019). A participatory field research⁴ of Beninese's women reveals a rise in individuals' identity and community cohesion (Rouhani, 2019). Thus, narratives contain both individual and collectivistic traits and hence, are multi-levelled in nature. Lastly, an array of literature recognizes its transformative power (Rouhani, 2019; Lambert & Hessler, 2018; Matthews & Sunderland, 2017; Staley & Freeman, 2017; Nguyen, 2011; Williams et al., 2003). Thereby, storytelling stimulates co-creation,

³ Personal narratives are a "part of oral storytelling tradition" and deal with personal experiences in which the teller regards himself/herself as the "representative of the truth" (Stahl, 1977:18). According to Robin (2006), personal narratives are the most common motivations to create digital stories. In the context of group settings, the sharing of personal narratives can serve multiple reasons: (1) it enhances empathy and awareness of others' situations, (2) it draws attention to shared issues, and (3) it reduces distance to peers.

⁴ The participatory research design was chosen because this type of "research that gives back to the people involved" (Rouhani, 2019:577).

collaboration, and shared awareness of the issue within communities to respective decision-makers.

Considering the information mentioned above, Digital Storytelling appears a feasible approach for empowerment – it is dynamic, cross-disciplinary, multi-levelled, and transformative in nature. Therefore, literature is investigated on Digital Storytelling approaches.

Approaches to Digital Storytelling

Literature recognizes two pathways of Digital Storytelling: the StoryCenter approach and the Photovoice methodology (Nguyen, 2011).

The StoryCenter Approach

The StoryCenter provides a guide to *Digital Storytelling*. A significant element of the StoryCenter approach is the Story Circle which is limited to participants and facilitators and encourages sharing (Rouhani, 2019; Lambert & Hessler, 2018) and listening (Matthews & Sunderland, 2017; Williams et al., 2003). For example, in a case study of marginalized communities in New Zealand, it was emphasized the skills of listening and being present with "the emotional content" (Williams et al., 2003:37) instead of judging underlying assumptions. In addition, participants were encouraged to listen emphatically to others' stories and share what the story has touched in them as a gesture of giving back to the creator. Rouhani (2019) further notes that the Story Circle helped collectively identify issues and share them with respective stakeholders to draw awareness on problems. Also, prompts⁵ stimulate participants' storytelling capabilities (Rouhani, 2019; Lambert & Hessler, 2018; Staley & Freeman, 2017; Matthews &

⁵ Through prompts, facilitators inquire participants to "tell the story of a time when..." (Lambert & Hessler, 2018:96)

Sunderland, 2017). More insights about the StoryCenter approach are presented in Appendix A on page 42.

The Photovoice Approach

Photovoice is a tool for visual narratives where participants document and reflect the community's concerns and strengths through photography. Dialogues about photographs enhance collective understandings about problems and facilitate access to policymakers (Wang & Burris, 1997; Romer, 2017) to strengthen disadvantaged communities⁶ (Budig et al., 2018). Moreover, it enables individuals to share stories of their photographs, or as Romer (2017) phrased it: "It is through the eyes and voice of participants that others begin to see and learn what may not have been evident prior" (p.17). Photography serves as means for documentaries and artistic expressions on several levels⁷ (Romer, 2017) and can be tailored to specific contexts (Romer, 2017; Wang & Burris, 1997). This contextual and multi-levelled element appears relevant for the dynamic environment of SE (de Bruin et al., 2017).

Within a participatory action research with village women in the Yunnan region in rural China, the women's contextual embeddedness was found crucial (Wang & Burris, 1997). The facilitators were required to be accountable, sensitive to politics, culture, and ethics, acknowledge personal biases, be supportive, provide training on camera usage, and enhance a dialogue within the community and stakeholders. Nevertheless, the roles of participants and facilitators were not mutually exclusive; Training locals to become facilitators strengthened community empowerment, encouraged collaboration between community and organization, improved the communities' infrastructure, legitimized the project within the community, and

⁶ In a case study by Budig et al. (2018) about female empowerment in a Spanish community the *photovoice* methodology strengthened both community- and individual-levels through increased awareness of their situations, perceptions about themselves and networking opportunities to policymakers.

⁷ According to Romer (2017) the process of photographing tackles the individual level, whereas the photographs are interpreted by a collective.

fostered grassroots workers' capabilities. In addition, returning photographs to the community expressed appreciation and respect (Wang & Burris, 1997).

Challenges of Both Approaches

The constructs' methodological elements create several challenges. Most literature refers to technological challenges (Nguyen, 2011) and the struggle to align the technical methodology (e.g., audiotapes) with reality. Also, facilitators' interventions and personal judgments may influence outcomes (Wang & Burris, 1997), and prompts may further intensify interventions (Rouhani, 2019). Generally, ethics are essential in participatory research, and its consequences, visual images, and confidentiality are the researcher's responsibility. Other challenges encountered are limitations in communication, transportation, and finances (Rouhani, 2019).

Concluding Remarks

All in all, it is expected that Digital Storytelling and empowerment are closely interlinked and relevant within the context of SE; they are context-dependent, multi-levelled, participatory processes aiming at increasing resources and capabilities through networking. The significant elements enhancing empowerment within Digital Storytelling are contextual embeddedness, sharing and listening through Story Circles, prompts to enhance participants' creativity, and training opportunities. Thus, it appears relevant for SE practitioners to engage in storytelling practices to foster the empowerment of disadvantaged communities. Furthermore, Digital Storytelling activities are expected to face challenges regarding technology, ethics, communication, transportation, and finances. However, a gap in literature prevents further understanding of *how* the Digital Storytelling process develops. Therefore, primary data insights aim at understanding *why* SE practitioners apply Digital Storytelling to empower communities (drivers), *how* Digital Storytelling fosters an empowering narrative,

including the critical factors and the role of the storyteller, and *what* challenges impact the success of Digital Storytelling. Consequently, primary data insights aim to verify the existing linkage between the concepts and shed more light on the phenomenon of Digital Storytelling to provide practical contributions to SE practitioners.

METHODS

Research Design

In broad terms, the paper attempted to answer the research question '*how can SE contribute to the empowerment of disadvantaged communities through Digital Storytelling?*'. Since little was known about the phenomenon of nascent theory, an open-ended '*how*' question served to explore how Digital Storytelling can be used as a viable approach for empowerment. As a result, qualitative research produced more legitimate outcomes and expanded knowledge (Edmondson & McManus, 2007). In narrower terms, the study aimed at understanding the processes – drivers, activities, and barriers – to explore the linkage between Digital Storytelling and empowerment in the context of SE. The approach followed an abductive, qualitative research design with twelve semi-structured interviews. By doing so, literature revealed conceptual definitions and respective linkages were inductively build upon. In addition, theory served as a foundation for the coding themes (see Appendix B, p.43) and the interview guide (see Appendix C, p.45). Finally, the respondents' insight was inductively analysed to answer the research question and establish a more refined theory.

Research Methods

In line with the chosen research design, qualitative interviews yield valuable in-depth insights (Bell et al., 2019). Thereby, semi-structured interviews presented a helpful approach since it allowed to build an interview guide on specific themes yet leaving enough space to steer responses. Furthermore, both flexibility and open-mindedness of semi-structured interviews allow for adjustments during the interview so that new insights and theories can emerge from participants' data (Bell et al., 2019). Thereby, emphasis was placed on understanding the phenomenon from the perspective of the interviewee. Although qualitative interviews entail

several limitations⁸, semi-structured interviews decrease such drawbacks while ensuring rich answers and cross-case comparability (Bell et al., 2019; Leech, 2002).

Research Procedures

Sample Selection and Recruitment

Twelve participants were selected through *purposive sampling* based on their expertise in storytelling and community empowerment through SE (see Table 1, p.14). *Snowball sampling* enabled further insights through contacting interviewees recommended by participants (Bell et al., 2019). The recruitment took place through LinkedIn and Instagram messages and email communication. Within this process, participants were informed about the researcher's background, the purpose and benefit of the study, the date, and the interview duration (Bell et al., 2019). Eleven interviews took place via *Google Meet*, and one interview was conducted face-to-face in the office of the participant.

Data Analysis

Firstly, the English interviews were transcribed with the software *otter.ai*, and the German interviews were manually transcribed with *Word* (see Appendix D, p.46). The transcripts were then thematically analysed based on codes (Gioia et al., 2013). Corresponding with Gioia et al. (2013), the first set of codes emerged from the literature and the second set became apparent after analysing the data (see Appendix B). Continuously re-adjusting codes reduced the risk of "losing the context of what has been said" (Bell et al., 2019: 533). Finally, the interviews were analysed on reoccurring themes, differences, and similarities with *Atlas.ti*. The focus was placed on identifying the drivers, activities, and challenges within Digital Storytelling processes. Consequently, primary data findings were compared to the secondary

⁸ According to Bell et al. (2019) qualitative, unstructured interviews run the risk of several limitations such as less structure, reliability, and validity.

data outcomes to draw conclusions respectively. These conclusions provided the foundations to answer the research question and to provide suggestions for future research.

Validity and Reliability

Several elements augmented the trustworthiness of this research. First, the interview guide reduced misperceptions and increased reliability throughout the research process (Gustafsson, 2017; Yazan, 2015). Next, the *triangulation* of data sources increased the understanding of the phenomenon under study, further increasing credibility (Bell et al., 2019). Therefore, the interviews were conducted with respondents of different positions, such as directors, founders, managers, and freelancers (see Table 1, p.14), and different cultural and corporate backgrounds; This improved the transferability of findings across different contexts (Eisenhardt, 2021), thus, "[addressing] a larger audience" (Gioia et al., 2013:24). Third, analytical techniques, such as cross-case synthesis, helped create patterns between data outcomes (Eisenhardt, 2021). Therefore, data were analysed on similarities and differences to alter theory-building while simultaneously enhancing generalizability (Eisenhardt, 2021). Lastly, applying first- and second-order coding improved the qualitative rigor (Gioia et al., 2013), enabling a more profound understanding of patterns and advancing both theory and practice.

Ethical Issues

According to Bell et al. (2019), qualitative studies lack confidentiality and anonymity; thus, several principles helped minimize ethical issues, such as avoiding harm, informed consent, and privacy. Although participants could choose whether they wished anonymity, none of the respondents inclined, and a uniform approach was applied by publicly referring to the participants. Also, an informed consent was shared with participants, informing them about recording equipment and their confidentiality (see Appendix D, p.46). Lastly, reciprocity and

trust have been essential elements (Leech, 2002). Consequently, the research benefits were communicated to participants to understand the mutual benefits for participants, theory, and practice, and findings were shared accordingly.

TABLE 1
Overview of Interviewees

Code	Interviewee	Position	Organization	Description of Organization
I-1	Chris Hoffman	Board of Director	Sawa World	Sawa World is a non-profit organization based in Uganda, with the mission to provide "local solutions to end global poverty" (Sawa World, 2020). Thereby, Sawa World was established in 2007 and provides access to training to youths in Uganda with entrepreneurial ideas. Their business and management skills training increases income to spark the flame and help them alleviate poverty.
I-2	Wakanyi Hoffman	Founder	The African Folktales Project (AFP)	AFP "a rich resource of indigenous wisdom and knowledge passed down as stories from the first human civilizations in Africa to the present. AFP is founded on the notion that we are all ancestors of the future and the custodians of knowledge vital to our continued co-existence with our natural world. This project is a continuous dialogue about how the individual choices we make today will impact the survival of tomorrow's civilizations on our shared planet. Through a careful selection of courses on offer, we provide access to a digital curriculum of African Indigenous Knowledge Education that is carefully designed to provide holistic solutions to the challenges of achieving the sustainable development goals (SDGs). We use oral storytelling as the pedagogical approach to passing down this knowledge. The AFP folktales have been re-invented to inspire all learners and educators to re-imagine a future where all citizens of the world work together to promote sustainable development and protect our natural landscapes." (African Folktales Project, 2020)
I-3	Andrea Hooymans	Founder and Art & Business Director	NonFiction Photo (NFP)	"NonFiction Photo produces locally themed exhibitions and presents existing ones like the World Press Photo Exhibition. These exhibitions enter into dialogue as part of the NonFiction Photo Festival; the very best in press photography from around the globe meets local answers". But it also "believes in the power of exhibitions, education, talent and entrepreneurship" and offers diverse talent programs, and academy programs. (NonFiction Photo, 2021).
I-4	Tom MacGregor	Co-Founder	Azizi Life	Azizi Life is a social enterprise that was founded in 2008 as a Christian organization in Rwanda with the mission "to participate in local initiatives for the development of Rwandan communities, working towards physical and spiritual wholeness for all" (Azizi Life, 2021). Thereby, Azizi Life helps artisans within rural communities develop artisan products and market them for a fair price overseas.
I-5	Dr Elizabeth Lindsey Crowley	National Geographic Explorer	National Geographic	Dr Elizabeth Lindsey Crowley is a national geographic explorer, filmmaker, anthropologist, and storyteller. She travelled to some of the most remote regions in the world to remember the wisdom of indigenous cultures. Her movie "Then There Where None" is about the extinction of native Hawai'ians and won several awards. In addition to that, Elizabeth is "the recipient of the United Nations Visionary Award and has served as an advisor to global organizations, including the Tibet Fund for His Holiness, the Dalai Lama and with UN Ambassadors on behalf of environmental refugees faced with the punishing realities of the climate crisis" (Elizabeth Lindsey, 2020).

I-6	Maria Barikhina	Head of Marketing and Brand	Algrano Coffee	Algrano is a Swiss technology and coffee start-up to revolutionize the coffee industry by facilitating direct trade between coffee farmers in the origin and coffee roasters. Through their platform, Algrano aims to create more transparency in the coffee industry by helping farmers directly sell their coffee beans for a fair price to roasters without worrying about the logistics.
I-7	Mohammed Omar Lemar	Freelance Photographer and Founder	Omar Foundation and Insandosti Helmand	Mohammed Omar Lemar is a 26-year-old, Afghani photographer. He has been working with international organizations such as ISHKAR and the Everyday Afghanistan Project and founded the OMAR Foundation to provide educational training, combining both Islamic Traditions and modern competencies to children. Furthermore, he founded a Charity, Insandosti Helmand, that offers entrepreneurial opportunities to generate income for families that lost a family member in the conflicts. To do so, Insandosti makes videos of the family pre-and after intervening and provides consultancy on entrepreneurial opportunities to generate income. The video pre-intervention is used for crowdfunding campaigns in the UK to start the entrepreneurial project. Past workshops enabled families to sew clothing, knot carpets, and set up a little farm.
I-8	Robin Alkema	Director	Brownies & Downies	Brownies&Downies is a Dutch Horeca chain that has franchise lunchrooms all over The Netherlands employing people with disabilities that are usually excluded from the labour market.
I-9	Maria Brendle	Freelancer	Ala Kachuu – take and run	Ala Kachuu – Take and Run is a short documentary aiming to shed light on bride robbery in Kyrgyzstan. The Swiss short documentary has been filmed in Kirgizstan. It is about a young Kyrgyz woman that wants to move from the countryside to Bishkek, the capital, to study at the university. Arrived in Bishkek, she is kidnapped by a group of young men and forced to marry. Ala Kachuu has been awarded 16 times and will be streamed at 21 film festivals around the world.
I-10	Nathalie Paarlberg	Country Director Myanmar	Turquoise Mountain Trust (TMT)	TMT was established by HRH the Prince of Wales in 2006 to help protect and revive cultural heritage, generate jobs, and provide skills and empowerment of marginalized communities. Turquoise Mountain Trust is active in Afghanistan, Myanmar, Jordan, and Saudi Arabia, "supporting a new generation of artisan entrepreneurs who will not only drive economic development but also preserve their unique cultures and traditions." (turquoisemountain.org, 2020)
I-11	Nico-Klein Allemann	Co-Founder	Art Meets Education (AME)	AME is a Berlin-based non-profit organization that aims at providing school education for children in underdeveloped regions. AME has been active in the Philippines, Berlin and aims to expand its operations to Kenia in the coming year. To do so, AME organizes photography workshops for children and sells their photography and additional merch to pay for 12 years of school expenses, ranging from primary school to high school.
I-12	Ellen Tacoma	Co-Founder	Women on Wings (WOW)	Women on Wings is a Dutch non-profit organization aiming at creating 1 million jobs for women in rural India. WoW partners up with social enterprises in rural India and shares their knowledge to grow their organization and provide employment to women.

RESULTS

Based on the theoretical insights, twelve qualitative semi-structured interviews were conducted with SE practitioners (see Table 1, p.14) and yielded insights concerning drivers, activities, and challenges experienced by the respondents. Table 2 provides an overview of the results.

TABLE 2

Overview of Data Analysis Results

Digital Storytelling Drivers	Digital Storytelling Activities	Digital Storytelling Challenges
1. Awareness	<i>Success factors:</i>	1. Context
2. Changing perceptions and behavior	1. Relevancy	2. Finances
3. Connection	2. Structure	3. Technology
4. Understanding oneself	3. Sharing	4. Time
	4. Multimedia tools	5. Scale-up
	<i>The role of the storyteller:</i>	6. Performance measurement
	1. Contextual embeddedness	7. Content
	2. Sharing and listening	8. Ethics
	3. Cooperation	
	4. Responsibility	

The respondents apply different storytelling strategies. An overview is provided in Table 6 (Appendix E, p.47). Primarily, photographs and written text are published on social media channels to target a larger audience. Also, films and short documentaries are created to draw attention to prevalent issues, such as bridge robbery in Kyrgyzstan or the loss of ancient wisdom of indigenous tribes. NFP offers workshops to improve visual literacy, and AME provides photography training to children to foster income generation through sold prints that enable school education for children in the Philippines. TMT partakes in exhibitions to change the current war-associated perception of Afghanistan. TAF publishes folktales through podcasts on Spotify and audiobooks on digital platforms. Lastly, Algrano provides visual origin tours

where farmers and roasters connect through Instagram live streams and share experiences to learn from each other.

Digital Storytelling Drivers

The research aimed to better understand specific drivers that motivated SE practitioners to apply Digital Storytelling and advance empowerment; These drivers help better comprehend the usability of Digital Storytelling and its expected outcomes.

The respondents repeatedly mention spreading awareness of organizational practices to keep the audience informed of organizational changes and make them understand the problem. For instance, I-9 explains that the purpose of Ala Kachuu is "to create awareness on the things that are going wrong" and to reach policymakers that may ultimately change prevailing systems. I-4 aims at "[spreading] word" of Azizi Life's mission to reach a larger audience. Within Algrano, I-6 mentions that storytelling helps "keep [people] informed over all the changes ...". Her storytelling is about making people aware of specific problems and what this problem means to them (more about relevancy on page 18).

In the case of two participants whose activities are embedded in Afghanistan, the theme of changing perceptions became apparent. I-7 became a storyteller "to show people their own country and their own community," thereby influencing the perception of Afghani people about the Helmand region. I-10 refers to the role of storytelling "to change [the] perception about Afghanistan and to showcase that it is also a country of great creativity of beautiful and ancient craft traditions." This effect should ultimately support local artisans to connect to the international trade market. Furthermore, the respondents emphasize the goal of changing behaviour. Within Algrano, I-6 states that "the product [of a story] is about behavioural change." Also, I-2 notes that she wants the beneficiaries to be aware that "there is value to be placed in a certain way of being" because only then "they will actually change their behaviour or change the way that they do things."

One noticeable element is creating connections through creating linkages between generations and time-spheres. Notably, oral storytelling receives attention as a tool to connect generations. As stated by I-12, "specifically in India, but also in Uganda, the oral part is very important in giving information from one generation to another." Also, I-5 emphasizes that her task is to return all the footage to the community "that they have all of the documentation for future generations", highlighting a two-way feedback stream as a foundation of connection. Within the AFP, I-2 announces that "[she is] trying to create linkages between these children and their grandparents who no longer tell stories, but probably have the stories in their heads." She emphasizes that "we need to invite indigenous communities onto the platforms where we are all engaging and [listen] to them, because [...] there is a lot that helps us, propels us into the future that we do not even know about". So, storytelling connects generations and times by tying the past, present, and future.

Lastly, the research reveals that storytelling enables understanding of oneself. As I-5 says, "story is humanity's DNA." I-6 refers to it as a tool for "self-reflection," because as I-2 emphasizes, understanding one's personal story can be deeply transformational for children; She says, "I want kids to start seeing themselves as active citizens, active participants of the story of us, all of us; not spectators to be fed everything and not actually be able to own." Once you own your past, your story, and your space, "then it is easy to create space for others" and give rise to "mutual understanding... to see each other not as opposites, but as part of the story". So, understanding oneself is preliminary to understanding others and empathize with their circumstances.

All in all, the research reveals that Digital Storytelling has the potential (1) to foster awareness that keeps the audience informed, (2) to change perceptions and behaviours of people, (3) to create connections between generations and times, and (4) to understand oneself to emphasize with others.

Digital Storytelling Activities

The previous section revealed the main drivers of applying Digital Storytelling strategies within the context of SE. Next, data is analysed to understand the critical success factors for producing impactful stories and what role the storyteller plays in enhancing empowerment.

The Success Factors

To begin with, the respondents refer to the element of relevancy. I-2, for instance, talks about how she tied the folktales' indigenous wisdom to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to point out the relevance for a big target audience. Also, I-3 notes that a compelling visual narrative "does not have to [contain] lots of images, as long as the story is right, which is about things that are happening in our society right now." Within NFP, she applies the SDGs to develop the exhibitions' themes and ensure relevancy. Also, I-6 highlights the value of knowing the audience's needs to create relevant stories for Algrano's stakeholders.

Also, the structure received attention throughout the inquiries. I-6 highlights that "in the end, the story should still have an arc." I-2 refers to it as a beginning, a middle, and an end. Furthermore, I-9 notes that reality must be portrayed with the dramatological rules of storytelling while ensuring that a story is captivating enough to grasp interest. Within Sawa World, I-1 notes that the solution videos are mainly about how Ugandan entrepreneurs create products but less about personal background information. I-10, on the other hand, highlights that TMT's storytelling contents are always concerned with "...3Ps of people, places, and product." Inherent to the structure, authenticity was emphasized to ensure a story empowers disadvantaged communities; I-5 emphasizes that storytellers often come to disadvantaged communities and are too busy with creating the story they had in mind that "they miss the point" and publish inaccurate stories which, in turn, may harm communities. Another strategy found is positivity. I-10 speaks about how TMT's messages are always empowering. She emphasizes

that "we are never trying to get people to feel sympathy for the artist. Also, I-11 notes that positive messages are essential to motivate people to join AME's mission. Therefore, visual storytelling is a communication craft that is mediated by a structured storyline (arch), a viewpoint (the storyteller), and a strategy to captivate the audience.

Next, I-2 mentions the power of sharing circles to create a story that empowers its creators through mutual understanding and a collective narrative. She notes that "it is amazing what emerges out of these circles, because everybody has got an experience that is so meaningful to them, or that is so painful, and they need to bring it out to the circles." Also, I-5 acknowledges that it is crucial to share the stories by returning all recorded footage to the community to provide them with cultural heritage to share with future generations.

Lastly, I-3 refers to the importance of multimedia tools to create an impactful story. According to her, the richest storytelling experience is created when combining multiple multimedia tools, such as photography, written text, videos, and audio. She adds that storytelling is about creating a customer journey when people see photographs on social media, visit an exhibition, join tours, read related articles, and share their experiences with others. Therefore, applying various tools can help to enrich the storytelling experience.

Therefore, the research yields several success factors in creating an empowering narrative, such as (1) drawing out the relevancy to the stakeholders, (2) following a structured storyline, (3) stimulating sharing activities, and (4) applying several multimedia tools to enhance the storytelling experience.

The Role of The Storyteller

Besides the analysis of a story's critical success factors, it is crucial to understand the role of the storyteller to understand the underlying activities of Digital Storytelling.

Several informants highlight the storyteller's close embeddedness within the community. For example, I-12 notes that it is preliminary to "understanding the local

culture...from that region". I-5 gained value from collaborating with a local professor who masters the local language and has close ties to the indigenous community. Their partnership was essential because "they trust [the professor], they know her, they love her, and my coming in as an associate of hers allowed me to be welcomed in that community." Also, in AFP, WOW, and TMT, local embeddedness and language proficiency are acknowledged. I-2 shares that "it does truly require being engaged and having... an intimate interaction with where you are" to create an empowering narrative.

Most interviewees note the storyteller's role to stimulate sharing and listening environments. For example, I-5 mentions that her role as a storyteller is "to amplify [the] voices" of indigenous tribes to ensure their wisdom serves humanity. Other respondents refer to the need for stimulating discussions to providing feedback mechanisms. Also, I-3 notes that facilitators should stimulate discussion through *artful thinking*, which enhances critical thinking skills. Within oral storytelling, I-2 mentions that "there is a lot of heated arguments and then there is a lot of understanding... we begin to see each other not as opposites, but as part of the story". Thereby, she points out the need to generate peer-to-peer dialogues that are centred on trust. Also, I-9 aims at offering podium discussions that allow a discussion with the audience about prevalent issues.

Several respondents communicate the necessity of collaboration with a team and the community. For example, I-6 emphasizes that "the foundation of [creating an empowering story] is bringing the right people on board... who share the same beliefs...". For I-5, this means cooperating with a team of filmmakers to create a professional digital story. Also, I-2 collaborates with an illustrator that creates canvas paintings for the folktales. To generate a more significant reach, I-11 recommends working together with ambassadors. Finally, I-2 points out that "we need to invite indigenous communities onto the platforms where we are all engaging and listening to them because [...] there is a lot there that helps us", thus, stressing the importance of cooperating with the community.

Lastly, the respondents highlight the storyteller's responsibility throughout the inquiries. I-2 declares that it is the storyteller's role "to find wisdom [...] embedded in [the] folktale". I-5 emphasizes that the role of the storyteller is to "be cognizant of the power of stories" when working with vulnerable groups. Consequently, "stories can be deeply nourishing, or they can cause a breakdown, depending on the wisdom of the storyteller." Thereby, it is essential "that none of the footage is misrepresented in any way." Moreover, I-6 adds that it is imperative to recognize "the potential impact [the] story can have on the target group."

Concluding, the respondents reveal several elements inherent to the role of the storyteller, such as (1) being embedded within the context, (2) stimulating sharing and listening environments, (3) collaborating with a team and the community, and (4) being responsible for the potential impact of Digital Storytelling.

Digital Storytelling Challenges

The previous sections yielded insight about the drivers, the success factors, and the role of the storyteller. The following section tackles the Digital Storytelling challenges encountered by the respondents. These insights aim to better understand Digital Storytelling's dynamics and provide more valuable recommendations to SE practitioners.

Firstly, the context presents a significant challenge because I-6 identifies that different storytelling trends persist within different cultures; Thus, stories must be adjusted to the demands of a specific context. Also, I-12 notes that "[the Indian women's] normal day looks extremely different from our normal day." Therefore, the challenge lies in understanding the local context and working with it accordingly. Additionally, one should not "...misunderstand the travel duration if you are coming from South India to Delhi"; In such contexts, it is tough to foster collaborative environments. Moreover, I-4 reveals that disadvantaged communities often struggle to access international markets, yet I-10 acknowledged a general misconception of middlemen "...because to some people, that sounds like there is someone else trying to take

a slice from the pie and then less money ends up with the weaver". Also, I-7 mentions that ongoing political instabilities in Afghanistan impacted people's mentality. Consequently, he faced issues photographing people and telling their stories because "if [their] picture got published... someone will kill [them]". Also, I-9 faced challenges finding appropriate cultural behaviour when interacting with Kirgiz's women and directing them on set.

In terms of communication barriers, I-5 notes that it is essential "that there is nothing lost in the communication." Also, I-2 mentions regarding translating her folktales to other contexts that "language is a very delicate balance because we have transcended the language barriers." Lastly, I-4 emphasized that mastering the local language is very important when interacting within the context.

Furthermore, the respondents point out financial constraints. For example, I-9 faced difficulties acquiring sufficient funding since the funding institutions doubted her ability to create an authentic story without cultural background. I-3 mentioned that NFP relies on yearly funding, bringing about financial insecurities and dependencies on donors. Additionally, Azizi Life and Sawa World refer to the high investment of filmmaking and photography equipment. Generally, most respondents experienced a tension between satisfying their social and economic mission.

Moreover, technology presents a challenge for some respondents. In many underdeveloped areas, access to technology is still limited, influencing the communities' possibilities to access international markets and create awareness of a larger audience. Consequently, most communities depend on middlemen to access resources and capabilities and establish long-term relationships between artisans and international markets. Additionally, I-5 points out that overstimulation on digital platforms complicates the selective filtering of relevant information. She states that "we are getting distracted on shiny objects, and it catches our attention, and then we go down rabbit holes, and we completely lose our centre." Furthermore, I-2 notes difficulties in establishing a digital sharing circle that allows for dynamic

feedback mechanisms. Lastly, the respondents highlighted that a compelling visual narrative requires skills and high-quality outputs. For example, I-3 reveals that professional photographs are fundamental to NFP's exhibitions. Also, within Azizi Life and Sawa World, the challenge is to equip disadvantaged communities with professional gear and technical know-how to create high-quality content.

Another challenge emphasized by the respondents is time. For example, I-6 noted that time constraints impacted the quality of storytelling projects. Also, I-3 mentions that facilitators had too little time to immerse fully in the program, forcing them to leave out elements and impacting the students' enthusiasm to participate. Lastly, I-9 experienced time issues regarding Ala Kachuu. Thereby, she describes the preparation phase of four years as very lengthy, whereas financial constraints forced her to shoot the film within 13 days.

Furthermore, I-5 notes the challenge of generating more impact, "I am just one person, and our crew is small, and I cannot get to a lot of places... it will never reach the number of people." Also, I-3 refers to the challenge of upscaling and moving the operation of NFP to other places, "...we would either have to pick a team from here and travel there, but it would be better, of course, to have a team there – a local team". Nonetheless, creativity and the will to create social value are not sufficient to fuel empowerment; I-12 notes, "if you want to let it fly, you need to understand the total package" and have expertise in business operations too.

Next, the participants indicate the difficulty of evaluating performances. For example, I-3 refers to the struggle of assessing visual literacy. Also, I-9 notes the challenge of evaluating the impact of Ala Kachuu since there is little insight on how the documentary may change perceptions and behaviours.

Regarding the structure, I-6 mentions that "the challenge is to understand what is it that is relevant at this moment... [with] the right level of detail" matching the audiences' interest without provoking "banner blindness"; This occurs when information gets too repetitive. Moreover, I-3 refers to the difficulty of providing enough objectivity within a story to leave

space for interpretation. Also, I-9 refers to the difficulty of authentically portraying reality while following dramatological rules of storytelling. Finally, I-7 experienced a similar dilemma of creating a positive narrative while remaining authentic to the context, particularly in a conflict area in Afghanistan.

Lastly, the respondents refer to the challenge of ethical behaviour. In her work with indigenous communities, I-5 highlights that it is fundamental to not interfere with their traditions and be conscious about their influence. She says that "especially those that are in need, we find that their narratives can become disempowering and victimizing." Instead of walking a humble path and telling the communities' stories, storytellers place their ideas upon them. Consequently, their stories are inaccurate and lead to misinformation – "they have no long-lasting relationship with the community itself." I-6 refers to the risk of subconscious manipulation. She adds that "just because you have the skills that some people might not have, it does not mean that you should use them to benefit from those by manipulating people and make them do something they do not want." She emphasizes that stories should leave space for choices, thus, providing sufficient objectivity. Objectivity, however, is a delicate act as most storytellers are biased within their reality. Also, I-3 emphasizes that "there is a lot of psychology involved" when creating a story adjusted to the audience's needs. Therefore, it is important not to intervene in privacy to manipulate the audience.

All in all, the analysis yields several challenges in the process of Digital Storytelling. These are related to (1) the context, (2) costs, (3) technology, (4) time, (5) scaling-up, (6) performance evaluation, (7) structure, and (8) ethics.

DISCUSSION

Conclusion

This research aimed to investigate how SE contributes to the empowerment of disadvantaged communities through Digital Storytelling. Therefore, semi-structured interviews were conducted with twelve key informants (see Table 2, p.16) to gain insight into the phenomenon of Digital Storytelling within the overarching context of SE. In addition, this study investigated Digital Storytelling from a social entrepreneurial stance to grasp the underlying characteristics that influence empowerment. The findings provided a rich set of novel contributions to a field of nascent theory, providing valuable insights concerning the drivers, activities, and challenges of Digital Storytelling. Consequently, this section presents the main findings, recommendations for practitioners, limitations, and possible pathways for future research.

The findings confirmed the linkage between Digital Storytelling and empowerment within the context of SE. Therefore, the SE practitioners applied different types of Digital Storytelling within their activities that ultimately aimed at empowering beneficiaries. Interestingly, the respondents approached different strategies, and their understanding of Digital Storytelling varied largely; Thus, some were conscious of its empowering qualities in disadvantaged communities, whereas others perceived it as a marketing tool to verify practices. Moreover, this research contributed to literature by further emphasizing the dynamic nature of Digital Storytelling. Consequently, the Digital Storytelling approaches were not mutually exclusive; Both oral and visual storytelling was essential to collect data, and the digital feature appeared necessary to target a broader audience.

In terms of drivers, this research revealed that respondents primarily regarded Digital Storytelling as a tool to draw awareness to prevalent issues or promote and verify practices. Therefore, storytelling was appreciated across multiple levels. However, instead of

differentiating between individual and collective levels (Rouhani, 2019), the findings revealed a connection between different generations and time. This provides insight that ancient wisdom can be used to collectively protect cultural heritage and develop innovative solutions to global issues. Consequently, Digital Storytelling may have a significant potential to inform policy and solutions.

Furthermore, the research revealed that Digital Storytelling could alter perceptions and behaviours, which, in turn, stimulate partnerships and enable underdeveloped areas to access international markets. For instance, within the context of conflict areas, narratives have the potential to counter the unjust reports of the media and invite a more authentic perspective, leading to more objective awareness and autonomous decision-making of communities and society at large.

Lastly, Digital Storytelling can alter personal transformation (Rouhani, 2019; Lambert & Hessler, 2018; Matthews & Sunderland, 2017; Staley & Freeman, 2017; Nguyen, 2011; Williams et al., 2003). Therefore, this study revealed that understanding oneself is essential to empowerment as it sets the foundation of mutual understanding and support.

Bearing in mind the drivers, it was aimed to better understand the activities of Digital Storytelling. Literature provided the StoryCenter approach and the Photovoice methodology (Lambert & Hessler, 2018; Wang & Burris, 1997). Although elements of both were mirrored in the participants' responses, none applied either of the methodologies. Moreover, the findings did not provide evidence that prompts were essential to stimulate the creativity of participants. This mismatch might have been because most respondents did not initiate a specific project but integrated storytelling as part of their social business model. Nevertheless, the research yielded several critical success factors of an empowering story.

Corresponding with literature, participatory action research contains several benefits (Rouhani, 2019) by returning footage to the community and enabling a two-sided feedback

loop. Additionally, the research confirmed the value of applying various multimedia tools, such as photography, films, voice, and written text, to elevate the storytelling experience (Lambert & Hessler, 2018; Nguyen, 2011; Robin, 2006).

Moreover, the findings approved the importance of sharing to create a compelling story. One interviewee referred to traditional techniques of African indigenous communities, such as *Ubuntu Friendship Circles*, further validating the strength of Story Circles to enhance empowerment (Rouhani, 2019; Lambert & Hessler, 2018). Interestingly, Story Circles were only used in oral storytelling settings and were generally not as prevalently used as one would have expected. One reason could be that mainly external storytellers and not the community itself practiced storytelling.

Further novel contributions regarding success factors were as follows. Particularly, relevancy was identified as a critical factor and linked to the SDGs as a validated framework; This ensured the narrative entailed value for a broad audience. Also, the structure of the story received attention. Therefore, visual storytelling is a communication craft. The story holds truth but is mediated by a structured storyline (arch), a viewpoint (the storyteller), and a strategy to captivate the audience. Concerning the latter, respondents emphasized the strategy of creating a positive narrative to increase impact.

Corresponding with literature, this research pointed out the critical role of the storyteller in creating an empowering story (Rouhani, 2019; Romer, 2017; Wang & Burris, 1997). In most cases, the storyteller was either the entrepreneur or an external photographer and filmmaker. Only AME encouraged children to take photographs to finance their school education, and integrated previous participants as facilitators of workshops to strengthen the community further (Wang & Burris, 1997). Training opportunities varied largely and included workshops on visual literacy, photography, or oral storytelling. In contrast to literature, training

opportunities were mostly found within the general social business model activities and less related to the storytelling itself.

Moreover, the research acknowledged the storyteller's contextual embeddedness to understanding the local culture and language (Wang & Burris, 1994), and to creating sharing and listening environments (Romer, 2017). Particularly, dialogues were helpful to alter understanding and stimulate critical thinking capabilities of beneficiaries.

Furthermore, important when creating a digital story is both responsibility and sensitivity of the storyteller (Rouhani, 2019). The study revealed that the storyteller's role is to prevent misinformation and manipulation. In other words, I-5 said that "the story is the medicine; the storyteller is the shaman. So, [one must] understand that stories can be deeply nourishing, or they can cause a breakdown, depending on the wisdom of the storyteller". Although referred to as wisdom, it appears necessary to ensure cultural, political, and ethical appropriation and acknowledge personal bias (Rouhani, 2019; Wang & Burris, 1997).

Lastly, this research yielded novel insights regarding cooperation. Thus, cooperation and bringing together the right people was an essential role of the storyteller. The cooperation with a crew of professionals was essential to creating a professional digital story while collaborating with brand ambassadors increased the story's reach.

After having gained insights regarding the motivations, the key factors of a compelling story, and the role of the storyteller, the research investigated the challenges within Digital Storytelling. As referred to in literature, the findings show that Digital Storytelling may be hindered by technology, the context, finances, and ethics (Rouhani, 2019; Nguyen, 2011; Wang & Burris, 1997). In addition, primary data revealed that practitioners struggled to reach a broader audience, evaluate the performance of their storytelling activities, and develop content for their narratives. More detailed information on how practitioners may overcome such challenges is presented in the recommendations.

Recommendation

This study aimed to explore the phenomenon of Digital Storytelling and investigate the drivers, activities, and barriers of SE practitioners applying digital narratives in a developing country context. The previous chapters drew out the prerequisites to better understanding how Digital Storytelling contributes to the empowerment of disadvantaged communities. This section provides practical guidelines to SE practitioners on *how* Digital Storytelling can be applied to reach more impact within such communities and provides an answer to the main research question on '*how can SE contribute to the empowerment of disadvantaged communities through Digital Storytelling?*'. As shown in Table 3 (p.31), practitioners are recommended to (1) create awareness, (2) understand the context, (3) apply a variety of multimedia tools to enrich storytelling experiences, (4) draw out the relevancy of narratives, (5) stimulate dialogues within communities and the storyteller, (6) create positive narratives, (7) be wise in the process of storytelling within vulnerable groups, and (8) focus on creating long-term impact instead of short-term intervention. These guidelines will ultimately benefit SE practitioners to empower disadvantaged communities through Digital Storytelling.

TABLE 3
Overview of Recommendations

Recommendation	Description
Create awareness	SE practitioners should use storytelling practices to inform society about prevailing conditions (e.g., creativity of Afghani artisans) and activities (e.g., fair-trade) within disadvantaged communities that create awareness and motivate the audience to change perceptions and behaviour that promote empowering actions. The integration of factual knowledge through storytelling can enhance the communities and the overall society's awareness and enhance a more autonomous and objective perspective on issues within disadvantaged communities. To do so, social media channels, exhibitions, and collaborations with ambassadors are recommended to reach a larger audience.
Understand the context	SE practitioners should understand the local context of the community to increase the impact generated through storytelling. Additionally, local embeddedness is crucial to prevent misinformation and avoid ethical issues. Therefore, SE practitioners are recommended to be conscious of the context's culture and speak the local language or cooperate with translators to produce high-quality translations. This increases the likeability of generating trust and being respected within the community.
Use a variety of tools	Next, research has shown the value of multimedia tools that correspond with the audience's needs. Therefore, SE practitioners are suggested to use various means, such as photography, films, audio content, and written text. Also, new technologies, such as VR, could be valuable in creating a richer and more empowering narrative.
Draw out relevancy	SE practitioners are recommended to acknowledge the power of relevancy and create storytelling themes in line with the SDGs. By doing so, the practitioner ensures the content is relevant to present times and the context. However, it is suggested to bear in mind that content does not get too repetitive to cause audiences' disinterest.
Create dialogue	SE practitioners are recommended to create two-way feedback streams through sharing activities between the community and the storyteller and within the community. These dialogues can be stimulated through Story Circles. In addition, the use of prompts may alter participants' creativity and critical thinking skills. These, in turn, help to create mutual understanding between generations and time-spheres, enhance networking capabilities, and offer innovative solutions that empower communities in need.
Produce positive narratives	SE practitioners are suggested to make use of positive narratives when creating a narrative that aims at altering misperceptions and driving an audience to generate long-term impact.
Be wise	SE practitioners are recommended to be responsible and sensitive in interacting with vulnerable groups and walking a humble path of patience and listening. This will reduce the risk of spreading misinformation and disempowering communities. In line with this, stories should provide certain objectivity to ensure the audience has a choice and does not feel manipulated.
Create long-term impact	SE practitioners should develop strategies and build partnerships that have similar missions and aim to empower communities in the long run.

Limitation

The study faced several limitations. Firstly, Bell et al. (2019) note that qualitative research runs the risk of being too subjective and may provide limited insight into a social phenomenon since it relies on the researcher's judgment and relationships with key informants. This subjective decision-making in combination with limited transparency may hinder the replicability of the study.

Secondly, time constraints limited the understanding of the complexity of the phenomenon. Therefore, longitudinal, transdisciplinary action research within a particular community yielded richer insights to comprehend what has changed over time and how and why it changed (Carduff et al., 2015) to investigate whether certain Digital Storytelling practices may differ in empowerment during specific periods.

Next, Digital Storytelling and its empowering qualities were analysed linearly from the stance of the respondent; Thus, the position of the storyteller presented another limitation. In most cases, the respondent was the storyteller or employed external partners to document the stories. This stance inhibits limitations regarding the objectivity of empowerment outcomes within the community itself. Therefore, it was suggested to incorporate more viewpoints into the data gathering process (see *future research* on page 26).

Lastly, COVID-19 measures implied that most interviews were conducted through Google Meet. According to Bell et al. (2019), online interviews may impact rapport, and visual cues may bias answers. Additionally, technological issues influence the connectivity, which complicates mutual understanding and leads to poor quality recordings, impacting the transcription of the interviews.

Future Research

The multi-dimensionality and novelty of Digital Storytelling for empowerment within the context of SE provides an array of future research pathways. Firstly, research is needed to decipher more concrete boundaries of Digital Storytelling. Therefore, research could focus on specific disciplines, such as brand marketing, folktale tradition, or community empowerment, to better grasp the dynamics of Digital Storytelling. This focus helped to establish more refined theories and provide tailored recommendations for practitioners.

Next, research could investigate community empowerment more comprehensively by employing a longitudinal, participatory action research (Rouhani, 2019; Romer, 2017; Wang & Burris, 1997). This approach could explore the multi-dimensional construct from several perspectives, thereby integrating SE practitioners and the communities' perception. For example, it was interesting to better understand the empowering mechanisms when community members become actual storytellers. Additionally, a longitudinal approach yielded richer insights to comprehend what, how, and why certain things changed over time (Carduff et al., 2015).

Moreover, research revealed the importance of long-term impact when intervening in the context of disadvantaged communities. Thus, future research could delve deeper into the dynamics of long-term impact and provide more insights into how Digital Storytelling may enhance long-term empowerment.

Additionally, the research revealed the importance of positive messages to create an empowering narrative. However, previous works by photographers, such as Brent Stirton and Neil Aldrige⁹ are exemplary that shock and hope can be helpful strategies to create captivating

⁹ The photographs of Brent Stirton and Neil Aldrige were part of the past World Press Photo exhibitions and demonstrated two photographs of hippopotamus that provide an example of shocking and hopeful strategies. Examples of their artworks can be accessed through the following hyperlinks:

<https://www.worldpressphoto.org/collection/photo/2017/28782/1/2017-Brent-Stirton-NAS1-EJ>

[https://www.worldpressphoto.org/collection/photo/2018/28815/1/2018-Neil-Aldridge-EN-\(1\)](https://www.worldpressphoto.org/collection/photo/2018/28815/1/2018-Neil-Aldridge-EN-(1))

narratives too. Thus, research could delve deeper in the different strategies and investigate how they may enhance empowerment.

Furthermore, the research provided valuable insights into cultural wisdom referring to ancient African concepts such as the *Ubuntu Friendship Circles*. Future research could investigate the different forms and qualities of sharing within storytelling practices and investigate whether ancient traditions may enhance more effective exchange environments.

Lastly, the theme of trust became relevant within this research. Therefore, research could investigate how trust is generated when working with underdeveloped communities and which role Digital Storytelling may play to enhance it.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: StoryCenter Approach

The structure of the workshop by Lambert & Hessler (2018) is as follows: On the first day, participants are introduced to the seven steps, a Story Circle is formed, participants are supported with their scripts, the image selection, the ideas for storyboards, and the first audio recordings. To stimulate inspiration on themes, facilitators are advised to inquire participants to "tell the story of a time when..." (Lambert & Hessler, 2018:96). This approach is a viable method to inspire participants' storytelling capabilities (Rouhani, 2019; Lambert & Hessler, 2018; Staley & Freeman, 2017; Matthews & Sunderland, 2017). On the second day, participants complete their scripts, voiceover recordings, get acquainted with software tutorials, complete the image selection, and finish a rough edit of their story. On the third day, participants are supported with the final edits of their story, which are then screened to others. Lambert & Hessler (2018) emphasize the power of a Story Circle for *Digital Storytelling*. The Story Circle is limited to participants and facilitators of the project. Two elements of the Story Circle have been found very important for Digital Storytelling and empowerment – the art of sharing (Rouhani, 2019; Lambert & Hessler, 2018) and listening (Matthews & Sunderland, 2017; Williams et al., 2003).

Staley and Freeman (2017) completed the workshop within six weeks. Each week the teacher introduces new tasks. In the first week, topics and examples are presented, prompts stimulate inspiration, and students begin brainstorming and preparing the scripts. In the second week, students continue to work on their projects. In the third week, the 'Creative Commons' is introduced as a source for licensed images. In the fourth week, the 'Movie Maker' is presented as a tool for creating videos. Finally, in the fifth and sixth weeks, the digital story is finalized and reflected upon. Compared to the StoryCenter approach, this project took longer, and photos were provided to the students.

Also, Rouhani (2019) applied the StoryCenter approach and hosted five half-day workshops in both Beninese communities with seven and six participants and two research assistants. Similarly, the first day consisted of an introduction where prompts helped foster participants' inspiration. The second day was used for a Story Circle (Rouhani, 2018; Lambert & Hessler, 2018) to identify critical issues collectively. Next, the third day was used to edit scripts and voiceovers, provide photography training, and print photographs for the storyboard. The fourth day served to record the voiceovers. Lastly, the fifth day was used to screen the stories and initiate a dialogue among participants to reflect on the stories. Two weeks after, the digital stories were shown to critical stakeholders to improve awareness.

Similarly, Williams et al. (2003) applied the StoryCenter approach within a marginalized community in New Zealand. Therefore, women are individually interviewed about their identity, cultural values, life back at home, and the experience of living in New Zealand to facilitate inspiration. Participants are encouraged to share their stories with the facilitator before telling them to others; thereby, it is vital to enabling a space of trust and safety. After sharing the stories, each group member gives a 'gift' back by saying what the story touched inside of them. Focus is placed on listening "and being with the emotional content rather than critiquing and analysing the underlying structural determinant..." (Williams et al., 2003:37).

Appendix B: Coding Scheme

TABLE 4
Coding Scheme

	1st Order codes	2nd Order codes
Drivers		Awareness Changing perceptions and behaviour Connection Understanding oneself
Activities	Sharing and Listening (Story Circles) Prompts Training Contextual embeddedness	<i>Success factors</i> Relevancy Authenticity Structure Multimedia tools <i>Storyteller's role</i> Cooperation Responsibility
Challenges	Context Technology Finances Ethics	Scale-up Performance measurement Content

Appendix C: Interview Guide

TABLE 5
Interview Guide

Themes	
General	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What is your mission? Did you experience a tension integrating both social and economic mission? - Who is your target group? - What type of intervention do you offer? - What has been your driver? - How embedded are you in the community? - Do you employ locals as facilitators? - What challenges have you encountered? - What is especially important when it comes to business operations in emerging markets? (Underdeveloped contexts)
Digital Storytelling Drivers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What is the role of narratives / digital storytelling in your organization? - Whom do you target through your stories? - What benefits (outcomes) do the stories bring to your organization and the community?
Digital Storytelling Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - How does your digital storytelling procedure look? - What makes a story a good story? What, in your opinion, are necessary elements to create a captivating story that has the potential to drive impact? - How do you give voice to the community? - Which mediums do you use? - Who is involved? - Who are the facilitators? What is the facilitator's role?
Digital Storytelling Challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What challenges have you encountered? - What are your future plans? / How does your ideal storytelling process look?

Appendix D: Interview Transcripts and Informed Consent

The interview transcripts and informed consent sheets of the primary data collection can be accessed through the following link. Access is permitted to the supervisor and co-assessor of the paper.

https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1d7XtXtJOGCBccfCIah_uNkZO9H0vTfr8?usp=sharing

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Appendix E: Results of Digital Storytelling Types

TABLE 6

Types of Digital Storytelling within Social Entrepreneurship

Interviewee	Types of Digital Storytelling
Chris Hoffman	Chris Hoffman speaks about creating solution videos; These videos are created by a professional filmmaker, documenting the Ugandan entrepreneur's new business possibility, the way the product is made with little insights about the entrepreneur's background. By innovatively applying technological innovation, Sawa World streams the solution videos on Learn Kernels, which look like small video cards, to reach a larger audience that can learn from the entrepreneur's solution.
Wakanyi Hoffman	Wakanyi Hoffman uses different storytelling techniques. On the one hand, she promotes traditional oral storytelling gatherings and presents her stories as podcasts on Spotify, a blog on the project's homepage, and plans to create an audiobook in the future. In addition to that, she works closely with an environmental artist who provides paintings to her stories.
Andrea Hooymans	Andrea Hooymans notes that NFP applies Digital Storytelling in different forms. On the one hand, Digital Storytelling is widely represented throughout their exhibitions, where photographs are presented with written background information. On the other hand, NFP developed an educational pack for schools to improve visual literacy. Within the program, pupils are encouraged to create their own digital stories.
Tom MacGregor	Tom MacGregor described two forms of Digital Storytelling within Azizi Life. First, in cooperation with various photographers and organizations like <i>Photographers Without Borders</i> , photos are taken, and stories in the form of interviews about the artisans are collected by the organization's Story Team and presented on social media and blogs. In addition, Azizi Life offers experience tours that allow visitors to spend a day in a local context and being shown around by an artisan. Tom MacGregor

	notes that a new branch of storytelling emerged from this form of engagement since tourists return with all the information and create blogs and stories, telling about their experience with Azizi Life.
Dr. Elizabeth Lindsey Crowley	Dr. Elizabeth Lindsey Crowley applies the idea of Digital Storytelling by making films about indigenous tribes. Thereby, she works together with a filmmaking crew and travels to the community's places, creating footage that authentically represents ancient wisdom which is not only given back to the community to provide knowledge for future generations but is also streamed publicly to increase global awareness and serve humanity.
Maria Barikhina	Maria Barikhina is passionate about storytelling in her free time and within the marketing department of Algrano Coffee. By doing so, she utilizes photographic documentation, video content, and live streams of both growers and roasters that are streamed on Algrano's social media channels. In addition, she integrates storytelling content within Country Reports provided to both growers and roasters to educate them about current trends and happenings on the global market. Furthermore, Algrano offers Virtual Origin Tours through live streams on social media channels. Here coffee farmers show the audience around and engage in interactive Q&As to create an educational and connecting experience.
Mohammed Omar Lemar	Mohammed Omar Lemar is an Afghani photographer who creates digital stories in the form of photographs that he publishes with a description of the photo on social media platforms such as Instagram. In addition, he sells his prints through a UK-based social organization called ISHKAR, which sells the prints together with a description of them. Next to that, Omar established a charity foundation that helps Afghani people who lost loved ones in the fights to create their entrepreneurial activity to generate income and provide a decent life to their families. Within the charity, Omar makes videos of the families before and after the intervention and shares them with donors. This serves as a form of evaluation measurement and generates trust.
Robin Alkema	Within Brownies&Downies, Digital Storytelling happens mainly through photographs that are then being published on social media channels to generate awareness. Robin Alkema mentions that the headquarter of the organization provides weekly

	content calendars with pictures and descriptions. Additionally, a beneficiary of Brownies&Downies identifies herself as a photographer and takes photographs throughout the day.
Maria Brendle	Similarly, Maria Brendle is a regisseur and director of Ala Kachuu – Take and Run, where she created a digital story in the form of a short documentary. To do so, she travels to Kirgizstan to better understand the local culture and collect first-hand inside from affected women in a women's refuge in Bishkek, Kirgizstan.
Nathalie Paarlberg	In Turquoise Mountain Trust, storytelling is a fundamental part of their business. Therefore, photographs, video content, and interviews are being collected of the organization's operations and then shared on their social media platforms and presented in various exhibitions worldwide. As Nathalie Paarlberg notes, "[TMT] hosted an exhibition at the Smithsonian Institution that was called <i>Artists Transforming Afghanistan</i> ." Thereby, she adds that their stories are always created about the 4 P's, "people, places, process, and product."
Nico-Klein Allemann	AME applies two forms of Digital Storytelling. On the one hand, the founder Nico Klein-Allemann himself is photographing and taking videos of the project's happenings which serve as social media and website content and show the emotions and people behind the project. On the other hand, photography workshops are given to children to learn how to handle a camera and take photographs. Within the photograph evaluation, a discussion is stimulated around the photo and the children's opinion. These photographs and the children's stories are then presented in AME's shop and sold to finance the children's education.
Ellen Tacoma	Lastly, Ellen Tacoma refers to Digital Storytelling within WOW in the form of photographs and beneficiary interviews. By doing so, women are inquired about their work and the impact the work has brought about, serving as a tool for performance evaluation of the organization's operations. These materials are then being shared on social media and in the organization's annual report.
