


# Interactive Documentary Practices as an Emerging Tool for Development Communication

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## ABSTRACT

Interactive documentary is an evolving form of filmmaking that has the potential to become an influential development communication tool to facilitate social change because of its participatory nature. The study explores how the medium of interactive documentary can create participatory interaction that can be used as a tool for development communication and how components of interactive documentaries help in making an effective development communication intervention. The study also identifies technological advancements that have made i-docs as a potential tool for social change. The i-doc is an innovative form of documentary films that is interactive, multilinear, and participatory. The i-doc film projects selected are analysed from a participatory development communication approach specifically. Through content analysis of selected i-docs from a development communication lens, recommendations are made for the filmmakers, change-makers, and development communication specialists to apply interactive documentary form as a successful development communications tool.

## KEYWORDS

Communication, Development Communication, Documentary, Interactive, Interactive Documentary, Media, Multilinear, Participatory

## INTRODUCTION

The documentary has always been a source of critical social expression. A documentary acts as a catalyst for social change in society. It originated in 1930 based on the technologies of The Lumiere Brothers and Thomas Edison. The internet is fostering conditions that have transformed the notions of the documentary form. The new genre of documentaries is using a participatory and interactive approach. The interactive documentary can be looked at as a cross-media innovation in the present time. It is an evolved model for communication that is multidirectional as the viewers play the roles of both consumer and producer in a social activism environment. These i-docs not only inform, educate, and raise issues in the society but also mobilize citizens to act after getting involved with the

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interactive documentary. Interactive documentary enabled theorists to reimagine the role of narrative in films. Philosophical approach has been adopted by Paul Ricoeur to understand the importance of narrative (Reeder 2020).

The internet has changed its position from being a platform of secondary delivery for videos and films to becoming a fundamental platform for producing them. The smartphone-driven world that gives us access to content on the move in a matter of seconds is no longer a set of static pages instead hosts dynamic and highly networked content that is created by not only specialists but for any individual on the digital space. In such a socio-cultural and technologically networked environment, the people who are interested in information and facts-based documentaries are moving towards new media as an upcoming multimedia platform rather than watching broadcast television and films that were earlier dominated by traditional media-based documentary filmmakers. But the new emerging form of interactive documentary filmmaking involves interactivity that has changed the form of this medium; it has changed from a linear narrative to a non-linear narrative form. It has become a more collaborative form than an authored form. It is no longer only audio-video based medium but has become a multimedia based medium for documentaries. The emerging new terminologies like trans-media docs, web-docs, docu-games, alternate reality docs have emerged in the interactive documentary form of filmmaking. These forms are different from traditional ones in terms of engagement, participation, interaction, viewer involvement in the narrative, and content control by the creator.

Interactive documentaries are relational entities because they are interdependent on components like technology, culture, and society. The interactive nature of these documentaries requires participation that makes the user an internal part of the system. This conversational interactivity where the user acts and reacts is the core of the interactive documentary. The research will assess the effectiveness of this form as a tool for development communication and understand how the audience participates, shapes, and gets shaped by interactive documentaries. The research explores the unique characteristics of interactive documentaries that can help to develop it into an effective tool for both social advocacy groups and nonprofits to reach their targeted community. It will help in developing campaigns to create social change in society.

## **REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

### **Understanding Interactive Documentary**

(Nichols 1991) indicates that defining documentary is debatable and it is subject to change with time. His understanding of documentary is dependent on three basic ideas: text, film maker and the viewers. Bill argues that reality is subjective. A documentary inherently claims to be a representation of reality defined as the truth. Historically documentary films have been used as tools to facilitate propaganda. Therefore, the documentary is a product of both artistic expressions as well as the reflection of truth. (Grierson 1933) defines documentary filmmaking as a “creative treatment of actuality”. He believed that documentaries, in particular, could only be successful in encouraging social change through shared connection and aid by the organised forces of social growth like corporations, government, media, NGOs and unions. They can spark conversation and even give birth to social movements. Development practitioners have been using documentary films in myriad ways to influence the government bodies, mobilise the community and attract media. The documentary can be considered an appropriate communication strategy for NGOs and advocacy groups for three specific reasons: intent, content, and effect.

Interactive documentary is an evolving form of documentary filmmaking and its definition changes with changing technology. According to Galloway “any documentary that uses interactivity as a core part of its delivery mechanism”. Interactivity changes the film production process in all stages. Therefore, interactivity is not just a delivery mechanism but should be considered a ‘condition of being’ (Galloway, McAlpine, and Harris 2007)

(Gifreu 2011) has defined i-doc as an interactive modus operandi of applying online or offline. These applications are executed with their own mechanisms to portray the reality through navigation, and it also takes account of the level of participation. Gifreu's definition only takes into consideration the screen-based digital documentaries and does not take account of locative documentaries (that use GPS and mobile phones) or computer and internet-based docu-games.

The interactive documentary can also be defined as an online documentary film that makes the viewer an important player of the process as he navigates and becomes an active participant as he decides to select the paths of the main story. There exists three stages of partnership in the production of an interactive documentary based on a social issue; the filmmaker, the viewer and the subject community (Scott-Stevenson 2011).

Kate Nash, Media Lecturer argues that interactive documentary is 'multimedia and interactive based body of documentary work that is distributed through the internet'. Hence the web becomes the central platform and acts as a distributing channel-specific for an interactive documentary (Whitelaw 2002).

It is important to channelize this technology for effective development communication intervention. Stevenson (2011) advocates for making of successful social documentaries:

1. The more limited type of narratives is appropriate to online conveyance, given the previously mentioned ocean of substance, as watchers can plunge in and out and access a scope of substance on the double instead of focusing on survey the long-structure piece.
2. Seriality is a methodology yet to be broadly tried locally, yet it can possibly prompt continuous commitment and association with the issue, which is vital to the social change in the local area focused on bringing issues to light and activity.
3. It is crucial to create a community of people online around the key issue becoming important for viewers' engagement and 'personal connectedness' on social media (Whiteman 2004).

Interactivity is the core component of the interactive documentary. According to Gaudenzi (2009) categorised modes of interactivity as hypertext, conversational, participative, and experimental mode. The ability of interactive documentary medium to be an accessible and do it yourself (DIY) form of filmmaking, where the users can produce, reproduce and disseminate content easily (Zafra 2020).

The availability of video and live data at our fingertips where the viewer becomes a participant is an example of how content is getting transformed to create a better educational and cultural experience for everyone. Interactive documentary filmmakers or authors have built new models towards advocacy efforts by drawing from Grierson's definition and theory of civil duty. Whiteman (2004) proposed the coalition model that encourages filmmakers to work in collaboration with NGOs, advocacy groups, unions and other stakeholders in the pre-production, production, and post-production level in the filmmaking process to work towards intended impact. The targeted beneficiaries can also volunteer to be part of the production process and once the documentary is produced, the documentary can be used to start conversations around the issue raised and mobilize people to act. The rise of digital technology, interactivity and online communication has a significant role in transforming aspects of the development sector and is empowering users with unexplored potential of the combination of HyperText Markup Language (HTML) and CSS (Mikelli 2021). Hence the interactive documentary as a medium enables the user to be an active participant.

### **Interactive Documentary and Scope of Participation**

Most early approaches to development communication in the 1970s were based on transmission models of communication where the communication strategy was a one-way monologue. The major shift and change from the hierarchical top-down approach of communication to a two-way process which is more collaborative, interactive, and participatory in nature can be observed since the 1980s

and 1990s. The concept of Participatory development communication uses mass communication and traditional ways of interpersonal communication to empower communities to aspire to discover new avenues and solutions to their development problems and issues by addressing specific needs and priorities relevant to their community and at the same time assisting in their empowerment. Development communication theories and practices essentially involve people in the decision-making process for development interventions by using communication mediums to share knowledge, information, and perceptions in a two-way process. It ensures development projects sustainability and gives ownership to the beneficiaries of the project. Development Communication practitioners believe that the concept of community participation as an educational process that enables community people to identify problems, issues and needs and become their agents of change and development with help of facilitators or changemakers.

Gaudenzi (2013) discusses participation in interactive documentaries in a variety of ways. The internet-based terminologies like user-generated content, open-source, peer sourcing or crowdsourcing are used for specific digital products like website, blog, encyclopedia, or software but do not apply to the documentary praxis. Therefore, to understand the process of participation in interactive documentaries, she considers questioning the impact of collaboration on the production process of i-doc. Questions on chosen collaborators, freedom of participation, questioning the editing choices of the artist and when once can participate with respect to the production process. Thusly, an intelligent narrative is a social substance that doesn't exist autonomously but instead depends vigorously on connection and cooperation of the client, creator, and framework. The extent of cooperation in an intelligent narrative relies upon the degree to which the clients have an office concerning the issues tended to in the undertaking.

Basing on the above discussions the study explored the following research questions:

1. How can the medium of interactive documentary create a space of participatory interaction that can be used as a tool for development communication?
2. How does interactive documentary enable the users' participation for effective interventions in development communication?

This research study aims to find the guidelines for making interactive documentaries as a tool for development communication, so we develop an overview of this form through literature review and analyse different types of interactive documentaries selected for the research. The following objectives are proposed for the research:

1. To analyse interactive documentaries as an emerging tool for development communication.
2. To understand the process of user participation in interactive documentaries.
3. To study the possibilities of interactive documentaries as a tool to facilitate change in the society.
4. To identify and analyse the key components of interactive documentaries.

## METHODOLOGY

The study employed a qualitative method as the data collected is non-numerical, descriptive, uses interactive documentaries, and applies reasoning and observation to analyse interactive documentary practices as a tool for development communication. It is exploratory in nature as it analyses the components of interactive documentary as a potential participatory tool for development communication. In the current context, Since the study is exploratory in nature, employing qualitative research methods and tools are of utmost requirement. Qualitative research methods are best suited methods which attempt to understand and analyses the modes of interaction in the digital interactive documentary, interactivity and participation and conceptual model of interactive documentary films.

The field of development communication and i-docs studies dealt with human emotions and sensory reactions, to study and analyses qualitative content analysis is more suitable than quantitative methods.

## **Content Analysis**

Content analysis is a research tool used to determine the presence of certain words, themes, or concepts within some given qualitative data (i.e., text). Using content analysis, researchers can quantify and analyze the presence, meanings and relationships of such certain words, themes, or concepts. Moreover, qualitative content analysis can be defined as “a research method for the subjective interpretation of the content of text data through the systematic classification process of coding and identifying themes or patterns” (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005, p.1278). Moreover, such content analysis moved out of simply enumerating words or extracting objective content from texts to investigate the meanings, themes and certain patterns that might be there in the manifested or latent contents. Such analysis enables the researchers to understand the underlying dimensions to understand and examine social reality in a subjective manner yet in scientific tempo. Since the current study intends to explore the essence and practicality of interactive documentary in the light of providing impetus to the theory and praxis pertaining to development communication, qualitative content analysis remains an apt method. Moreover, qualitative content analysis is a suitable method for probing and analysing various aspects including the modes of interaction in the digital interactive documentary, interactivity and participation and conceptual model of interactive documentary films.

Qualitative content analysis is used for the study. As a first step in the procedure shortlisted the i-doc's and categorized according to the theme, technique used and kind of participatory approach used in the interactive documentary by engaging closely with the selected interactive documentaries.

The procedure followed for the analysis includes close reading of the interactive documentaries with the help of the set parameters for analysis.

## **Parameters for Content Analysis**

The following are the parameters to analyse the interactive documentaries:

- Modes of Interaction in the digital interactive documentary.
- Interactivity and participation.
- Conceptual model of interactive documentary.

### ***Modes of Interaction***

The following mode of interaction is adopted from Sandra Gaudenzi (2009), where she classifies it in to conversational, hypertext, participative and experimental. These four interactions are studies with respect to i-doc, logic of interactivity, the function of the user and the role of the author.

### ***Conceptual Model of Interactive Documentary***

Alkarimeh and Boutin (2017) proposed a three-structure model to analyse interactive documentary using three main aspects:

1. “Interactivity as a communication process;
2. User as perceived interactivity and physical involvement;
3. Documentary film as authorship and narrative.”

### ***Interactivity and Participation: Parameters and Characterisation***

The model parameter developed by Vázquez-Herrero, Negreira-Rey, and Pereira-Fariña (2017) is adopted for the study to analyse each i-doc. The parameters include five types of interactivity, which

includes selective, immersive, social, generative and physical. These parameters are studied with reference to their characteristics and what they indicate.

## Sample

Keeping the development communication perspective, a review of theirty interactive documentaries were short listed. To mention some of them, including Journey at the End of the Coal (2009), The Iron Curtain Diary 1989-2009 (2009), Interview Project (2009), Out my window (2010), Undesired (2010), One-Millionth Tower (2011), In Situ (2011), Bear 71 (2012), Welcome to the Pine Point (2011), Soul Patron (2010), A Journal of Insomnia (2013), Alma, a Tale of Violence (2012), Quipu Project (2015), and Breves de Trottoir (2010), and others. A sample of four interactive documentaries were shortlisted for the study with the following criterion of selection.

## Selection of the Interactive Documentaries

The criteria for selection of interactive documentaries have been developed after viewing of interactive documentary projects made by numerous public and private institutions including the National Film Board of Canada (NFB), France 24 (who has been offering annual web-documentary prize), International Documentary Film Festival, Amsterdam (IDFA), DocLab (Showcase for new forms of digital documentary storytelling since 2007) and Franco-German TV network (ARTE). The interactive documentaries that had the maximum scope for user participation, collaboration and interaction were selected. The worry box project (2011), Life in a day(2011), Notes on blindness (2011), High rise: One millionth tower (2011).

## DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS

See Table 1.

## THE WORRY BOX PROJECT

The artist Lusztig (2013); the creator of *The Worry Box Project* describes it as an initiative taken to archive, catalogue and make the concerns to be apparent that women tend to keep them in the

Table 1. Table of selected interactive documentaries

I-DOC	YEAR	COUNTRY	AUTHOR	PRODUCER	URL
THE WORRY BOX PROJECT	2011	UNITED STATES	IRENE LUSZTIG	UCSC Arts Research Institute	<a href="http://www.worryboxproject.net/">http://www.worryboxproject.net/</a>
LIFE IN A DAY	2011	UNITED KINGDOM	KEVIN MACDONALD	Scott Free Production, Youtube, Inc., and LG Corp	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JaFVr_cJJY&amp;t=359s">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JaFVr_cJJY&amp;t=359s</a>
NOTES ON BLINDNESS VR	2016	FRANCE	LUSZTIG ARNAUD COLINART, AMAURY LA BURTHE, PETER MIDDLETON, JAMES SPINNEY	Arnaud Colinart for Ex Nihilo	<a href="https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.Arte.NoB">https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.Arte.NoB</a>
HIGHRISE: ONE MILLIONTH TOWER	2011	CANADA	KATRINA CIZEK	National Film Board of Canada	<a href="http://highrise.nfb.ca/onemillionthtower/1mt_webgl.php">http://highrise.nfb.ca/onemillionthtower/1mt_webgl.php</a>

latent mode. The project was created with the partnership of author and designer, Irene Lusztig and technical collaborator, Noah Pedrini. It concept originated from a personal maternal experience of anxiety throughout the pregnancy period of the author. While confessing her fears she felt a need for creating a safe space for mothers to share their fears and anxieties that are suppressed. The positive constructions built around motherhood makes it difficult for mothers to express their true maternal feelings, apprehensions, and beliefs. This participatory interactive documentary project is inspired by the concept of a collective worry box. The users who visit this website can submit anonymously any worry or anxiety that they have, which could be any dreaming or waking anxiety. The visitors can also view the worries of other women on the webpage. The anonymous anxieties that are collected are transcribed on scrolls and are placed in a physical box. The database of the project is revised with new anxiety entering the box every day till it gets full. The handwriting process of each anxiety or worry is documented in a video format and the finished videos are returned to cyberspace for all the online viewers. The public spaces associated with the collecting yearnings and wishing rituals like the Wailing Wall were the key inspirations for the project. This project brings back nostalgia about those spaces of hopeful iteration with its virtual worry box experience that fetches safety in public space for which women tend to articulate their very private concerns, experiences, fears, and obstructive feelings about motherhood. It promises a safe public space for all mothers. The interface of the website gestures towards the idea of making the virtual more human like, where women can find an intimate and communal experience. The website has a beautiful interface that lets the visitor explore freely by entering in by opening the box and then using the side tabs to navigate through the project and allows the user to submit waking or dreaming worries in the form of a text that is submitted anonymously as it does not take your private information. The slider below the box lets you scroll through the history of the project and once you start picking the paper scrolls one by one in the box, one can unlock the viewing mode that enables the user to read the worries submitted by other users of the website. One can also browse the worries using the available measuring tape as it lets you browse categories of worries received on the website. The digital project will finish when the worry box fills up completely. It is also a companionship piece for the Motherhood Archive (Sidi 2017).

## Analysis Using the Conceptual Model of the Interactive Documentary

The artist Lusztig I., (2013) uses various interactive ways to create a multi-linear engagement for the users. The *Worry Box Project* relies on the idea of using a special way to collect the worries inside a rolled paper scroll that is dropped into the worry box. All the users can understand the issues of other

Table 2. Modes of interaction (Gaudenzi 2009)

<b>THE WORRY BOX PROJECT</b>	<b>Logic of interactivity</b>	<b>The function of the user</b>	<b>Role of the author</b>
<b>CONVERSATIONAL MODE</b>	Not applicable as no feedback or dialogue possible.	Users can explore the platform and submit a worry but cannot get feedback.	To create a world, its rules and the user's agency
<b>HYPERTEXT MODE</b>	Applicable	Explorative	To create possible paths within a closed database
<b>PARTICIPATIVE MODE</b>	Applicable	Explorative and configurative	The project creates the condition to populate a database.
<b>EXPERIENTIAL MODE</b>	Applicable	Explorative experiential and	The user experiences a dynamic environment.

**Table 3. The Worry Box Project analysis (Vázquez-Herrero et al. 2017)**

Parameter	Characteristics	Indicating
Selective interactivity	The Worry Box project calls to action for decisions like choosing from the options available in the interface for submitting either a waking worry or dreaming worry.	The user is an active participant who can control her action.
<b>Immersive interactivity</b>	The user enters a gamification immersive environment where the user can control her actions and reactions.	The user gets the feeling of being part of a community that understands her.
<b>Social interactivity</b>	No personal or social media data is collected.	Giving voice to the user's feelings of belonging to a community of women at the platform and sharing similar anxieties without revealing the identity.
<b>Generative interactivity</b>	The user contributes to the worry box by submitting a personal note of anxiety.	The user plays the role of a producer as without the user's contribution of notes the worry box will remain empty and the project will fail.
<b>Physical interactivity</b>	The user experiences physical immersion with the platform.	Personal experience of contributing to the box by virtually engaging with the platform.

women in a sequential manner or by sliding through the keywords. Irene's hand writes and records each submission and places them into the worry box. She records the video of her writing each scroll and then she uploads it on the website. When the user opens the webpage, a dark and mysterious interface welcomes the user. The background colour is black and you notice an option to turn on the voice, once you turn it on, the music adds to the ambience, mood, and tonality of the project. Once you click the button on the screen, a hand appears that opens the box and we see a lot of scrolls in the box. On the right-hand side of the box, there are four round buttons; the first button is for submitting a 'waking worry', the second one is for adding a 'dreaming worry', the third button is for opening the 'about' section and the fourth one is for 'people' who made the project. The buttons are designed like coins that allow the user to choose between the option to submit a waking or dreaming worry that is added to the box. In terms of communication, the project lacks social media integration that limits the advocacy of the project as social media can give this project more recognition and reach. The project does not have any option to give feedback or solution to the users or provide a forum to discuss their fears or anxieties and work through it as a community.

### **User as Perceived Interactivity and Physical Involvement**

To understand the role of the user in this interactive documentary project, one needs to view the website from a user perspective. When the user opens the project, she gets a lot of options to best view the project like turn on the audio, viewing it on full-screen mode and to watch it on the computer screen. The first interaction with the webpage lets the user into a mysterious and dim page where the user can see a physical box with a picture of a mother and baby. It appears to be an old monochrome picture from a family album but if you look at the picture closely you will notice that the emotion on the mother's face is not happy and this introduces the user to the concept of *The Worry Box Project*. The first step that the user makes when she enters the project is the opening of the box to have an interactive experience. Then the user can use the right-hand side to choose between different options that are available in the form of buttons. User can also watch the content of other women's waking on dreaming worries in addition to the submission of their own problems. The user can look at the worries in chronological order or can use the tape to scroll through different types of worries submitted on the website. There are few problems in terms of the interactive experience for the user. Firstly, the

user can only view the project on a computer with an updated flash version, it cannot be viewed on phone or tablets. Secondly, the font used is handwritten by the artist and hence not readable enough for the viewers especially for those whose first language is not English. Thirdly, although the music matches the project, it can sound terrorizing or depressing for some of the users. The last drawback is its lack of social media influence limits the exposure and reach of the project.

### **Documentary Film as Authorship and Narrative**

*The Worry Box Project* is an interactive documentary that focuses on bringing a textual substantiality to the anxieties of motherhood. It lets its users anonymously submit their anxieties and fears of motherhood that one feels both in dreams or in reality. The worry box is filled with hundreds of scrolls written by people from around the world. The project is an online archive that catalogues anxieties of motherhood and the narrative of the interactive documentary through its power of storytelling and theme of belongingness help in creating a community. The author provides a safe haven for hundreds of motherhood fears through this interactive documentary. The project is participatory and poetic as it is built on the power of micro-narratives by drawing insights into the lives of hundreds of women. It uniquely unifies women by their worries rather than their achievements. It creates a sense of belongingness through a cathartic experience of relating personal fears to the fears of others. It offers a new window for sharing the social confines of parenting and challenging the social ideals of motherhood. The theme that is created through photographic imagery is feminine and has a historical influence. It makes the users feel as if they are part of a collective moment in history. The author limits this project by deciding to end the project when the worry box gets completely filled.

### **LIFE IN A DAY**

*Life in a day* is a 90 minutes participatory interactive documentary, representing a normal day in the life of the world that has a video camera and internet connection. This project is an experiment in crowdsourcing and it is one of a solely user-generated kind documentary. The executive producers and the director in collaboration with YouTube solicited videos shot by volunteers around the globe on July 24, 2010. It was a testimony for the people to know how it was like to be alive on that day. For the videos, the average duration of 3-4 minutes was given to the people with some basic starting point questions like - What are you afraid of the most? What's in your pocket? And What do you love the most? The Director received an outstanding response to these questions. There were about 81,000 clips that were received by YouTube; representing various parts of the world and universality of emotions. The audience can see some of the most compelling scenes, a girl climbing to the top of a human tower with a helmet cam,, a humorous travelogue from Kabul, an emotional record of the family in the shadow of cancer, shots of a family living on a boat, like a man and his son praying before a photograph of an absent woman, heartwarming singing from Angola were among many other beautiful records of human experiences submitted by the contributors. The filmmaker was searching for a way to represent the less developed world by making the project truly global. Therefore, the team bought around 400 cameras that were sent to around 40 countries. They were distributed in remote areas by social sector organisations. The contributors were given a week to upload the videos. The team received around 81, 000 videos that amounted to about 4,500 hours of video footage coming from 192 countries. The director received an outstanding response to these questions. The director also created *Life in a Day* as an 'Interactive Gallery'. Interactive gallery means the interactive online version of the film. The aim was to highlight the crowdsourcing strategies. The gallery allowed collaborators to change the interactive framework, which resulted in engagement with the participants in the design of the final interface. When various numbers of participants contribute to a predetermined database, it results in an evolution of documentary and becomes a living documentary. Therefore, it grows with time, changes with person to person and forms its unique identity every time.

**Table 4. Modes of interaction (Gaudenzi 2009)**

<b>LIFE IN A DAY</b>	<b>Logic of interactivity</b>	<b>of The function of the user</b>	<b>Role of the author</b>
<b>CONVERSATIONAL MODE</b>	Not applicable	User-generated videos as the contribution to the making of the interactive documentary.	The author starts a social experiment and crowdsources videos by creating a platform to submit videos.
<b>HYPERTEXT MODE</b>	Not Applicable	No function of the user	YouTube is the only platform to view the interactive documentary.
<b>PARTICIPATIVE MODE</b>	Applicable	Evolving database  Evolution of the interactive gallery	The project creates the condition to populate a database with video submissions.
<b>EXPERIENTIAL MODE</b>	Applicable	Limited memory and time resource.  Experiential in terms of visual experience.	The user experience of shooting and submitting the video.

**Table 5. Life in a Day analysis (Vázquez-Herrero et al. 2017)**

<b>Parameter</b>	<b>Characteristics</b>	<b>Indicating</b>
<b>Selective interactivity</b>	The user can interact through the YouTube platform as a contributor to the project or as a viewer.	The user is an active participant as he/she can volunteer to shoot and submit the video.
<b>Immersive interactivity</b>	The role of the user as a director of their own story and submit it to be part of a large database.	The user gets the feeling of being part of a global community.
<b>Social interactivity</b>	The user can have a conversation using <a href="#">Youtube</a> and enable social sharing and giving personal details.	Giving representation to the user and the feeling of belonging to a global community.
<b>Generative interactivity</b>	The user's contributions as video footage count as user-generated content that becomes part of the interactive documentary.	The user plays the role of co-producer, co-director, and contributor in the process of making the documentary.
<b>Physical interactivity</b>	Creation of an interactive globe with all the videos gives a global experience to each volunteer.	Personal experience of sharing one's story in the form of video footage and getting world recognition.

## Analysis Using the Conceptual Model of the Interactive Documentary

The interactive documentary *Life in a Day* is a brainchild of the director, Kevin McDonald and produced by Ridley and Tony Scott. The project asks for the sharing of personal narratives by the participants as the project seeks to address issues of the social and the political representation through individual narratives and personal stories by the people from around the world. The preponderance of the submitted videos was playful, optimistic, and positive. This project is highly dependent on the number of participants for the creation of the artefact, without participation this project is meaningless.

To initiate participation, the invitation given by the directors for submissions was based on only one goal to represent the world as widely as possible and to reach out to as many people as possible to get diversity and representation of the whole world. The director's participatory and interactive approach encouraged user-generated content through contributions from around the world to show lives across the world in a day. It followed a participatory production process by creating a snapshot of the world on 24th July 2010. The kind of engagement and involvement possible in constructing the representations of different parts of the world using the participatory pre-production process opens up the discourse of inclusion and empowerment for the documentary. How much can the participant participate in the production process as the conventional power structure remains in the project as to what goes in the film is decided by the director?

### **User as Perceived Interactivity and Physical Involvement**

*Life in a Day* is an experimental project-driven at its best by the Internet, where connectivity among the population of the planet has become a reality. The project *Life in a Day* distributed 400 cameras to parts of the developing world as a part of outreach which resulted in 5,000 clips submitted that helped in bringing global perspectives and was a step to realise claims to inclusion and a wide representation of the world. Looking at *Life in a Day* YouTube channel one can find a continuous dialogue online with participants and audiences for over a year since the project was launched. The limitation for the participants is that the contributor should have a camera and access to the internet to be able to contribute to the project. This limits the goal of the project as it cannot serve as an exact representation of the world because it only represents the people with a movie camera and who has access to the internet. The contributors of videos have no say in the editing and organisation of materials within the documentary. The interactivity depends on the kind of invitation and guidance given to the participants to engage with the project, it draws the boundaries and practices of any participatory documentary. The agency of the user lies only to the extent of being invited and being able to participate in the process of making the documentary. Therefore, there is little to unsettle who is telling stories and ways in which these stories can be told. The authorship in this interactive documentary remains in the hands of the director as he decides which video will get into the final film. Hence the user's role and once he is done submitting the video.

### **Documentary Film as an Authorship and a Narrative**

The narrative of the documentary documents the happenings of the day. It begins at midnight, with the full moon viewed from various perspectives around the globe. The documentary moves from routine functions of greeting a new day starting with the brushing of teeth, shaving, evacuating the bowels, playing, and working. Breakfast is served lunch and dinner as people go about shooting the ordinary and extraordinary of their day. The viewers can see the recordings of both staged and natural actions in the documentary. YouTube asked all the volunteers to answer personal questions about their lives like open "what do you love?" or "what's in your pocket?" People shared videos with their lovers, pets, food, travelling and family. The latter elicits responses with videos where the people are taking out guns, keys, wallets, drugs, and other weapons from their pockets. The tragedy of love parade makes it into the day's video. There were also questions like "what are you afraid of or fear the most?" which received one of the most troubling moments of the documentary. An Afghan man answered this question by replying by saying leaving home. The documentary and brilliantly with the young American women rushing to meet the midnight deadline and realising that nothing happened in her day, making her feel lonely and disconnected in some way from the world which she feels is full of amazing events. The sound design for the documentary was done by Harry Gregson Williams and Matthew Herbert. They beautifully weaved together the music and overlapping sound effects with the footage that had been taken from the most massive raw material collection received by the project.

## ONE MILLIONTH TOWER

*Highrise* (Cizek 2011) is an interactive documentary based on the idea of interdisciplinary collaboration. Directed by Katerina Cizek, it involves collaboration with architects, sound designers, civil servants, urban planners, academics, landlords, authorities, animators, web developers, art directors, creative technologists, and the residents of High Rise. *Highrise: One-Millionth Tower*, was an initiative by animators and architects to visualize the image of the residents of the high rise. They suggested a basketball court and community garden which was lacking in the high rise based in Toronto. All the improvements were designed to foster community and included suggestions from the residents about the current state of the building as well as the potential for transformation. This interactive documentary used HTML5, WebGL, Mozilla's Popcorn.js and other javascript libraries to create 3-D experiences. It was one of the first online documentaries to create a three-dimensional environment without Adobe Flash. The project also includes a variety of application programming interfaces, taking media from Flickr, Google Street View and even Yahoo weather to enrich the user experience. *One Millionth Tower* discusses the global urban landscape. Presently, there are about one billion people who reside in 'Vertical Homes'. Most of the urban dwellings, especially vertical buildings are falling apart and are in a state of dilapidation. The creator with the help of a one of a kind collaboration pieced together a visual story that unfolds in a 3D virtual environment. The users can explore how urban designs through participation can transform minds, spaces and places. *One Millionth Tower* can also be considered as a 'Hyper-Local' documentary. The reason behind this, it is initiated by a particular community of residents of High Rise on Kipling Avenue, Toronto, Canada. It emerged out of many hallmark problems faced by the residents; some of the problems were related to both physical, cultural and political separation from the downtown and the deteriorating conditions of the building; poor access to social services and commerce; poor public transport facility and long distance traveling, resulting in dependence on cars and long commute duration; little or no community centre or space for the young ones or residents, and lack of community space or playground for children. *One Millionth Tower* focused on addressing such problems and suggested that some creativity and imagination is needed to solve all the problems. The strategy behind this interactive documentary touches upon the subject who explores the aesthetics side of the subject. It also has additional features which make it different from other interactive documentaries. It features international examples of tower revitalization and explores the open technology for the creation of the project.

Table 6. Modes of interaction (Gaudenzi 2009)

<b>HIGHRISE: ONE MILLIONTH TOWER</b>	<b>Logic of interactivity</b>	<b>The function of the user</b>	<b>Role of the author</b>
<b>CONVERSATIONAL MODE</b>	Applicable	Infinite database Explorative	The author creates a virtual landscape and sets the rules for the user's agency.
<b>HYPERTEXT MODE</b>	Applicable	Explorative Configuration	The author offers an evolving database to give representation to the participant's imagination and suggestions.
<b>PARTICIPATIVE MODE</b>	Applicable	Evolving database Participatory	The author creates conditions to populate the database with resources and designs the database.
<b>EXPERIENTIAL MODE</b>	Applicable	Experiential virtual platform	The author creates a virtual landscape that users can experience and explore in their own.

Table 7. Highrise: One Millionth Tower (Vázquez-Herrero et al. 2017)

Parameter	Characteristics	Indicating
<b>Selective interactivity</b>	The user can interact by exploration, paths, and options available on the webpage.	The user is an active participant as he/she can contribute suggestions for the <u>HighRise</u> .
<b>Immersive interactivity</b>	The role of the user as a controller his actions on the webpage and engage with the 3D space created.	The user feels part of the creation.
<b>Social interactivity</b>	The user can have a conversation using social media and also get involved with the project.	Giving representation to the user's imagination and ideas and recognising their contribution with participation.
<b>Generative interactivity</b>	The user can contribute to the evolving database.	The user plays the role of
<b>Physical interactivity</b>	The users can take a journey through the virtual landscape and experience transforming spaces and lives.	The user experiences the dynamic environment and the 3D space created by the platform.

## Analysis Using the Conceptual Model of the Interactive Documentary

The project aims to make an impact on the lives of the subject, not the artefact. This interactive documentary is unique because the content is the navigation itself. The platform uses highly hypertextual aesthetics that are controlled using choices and routes. The interface uses a 360-degree view of content. The user can click on various images and the stories start appearing with the background sounds. The personal stories and memories are told with details to give an accurate representation of the subject's narrative. The process of collaboration involved the residents, designers, architects, and authorities. The collaborators were asked to reimagine the possibilities of the building and the spaces by taking ideas from the residents, architects, and the authorities. The collected material was edited together by the director and her team before the final architecture and design of the website was created for launching the project. This initiative was for both physical and virtual cause, as a result of the collaboration, tower block's playground was rebuilt and other ideas that came from the project fed into the platform's 3D visualisation space. The interactive documentary became a polished, sleek, and successful initiative for change.

## User as Perceived Interactivity and Physical Involvement

The interface of this interactive documentary uses hypertext logic where the user can control his actions and click to reveal the content and get involved in the highly participative production process. The participants or the subjects take the responsibility to bring about change and start a dialogue with the authorities and shoot for the project. The project lets residents collaborate with experts. The subjects become an active participant in the pre-production process. The user is placed in a three-dimensional world of high rise neighbourhood, where the user can interact with the environment and re-envision and re-imagine the space for the community. The visitors of the website can explore the role of participatory urban design in the transformation of spaces, places, and mind. The National Film Board of Canada has made the source code available for the users who want to dig deeper into the project. The user can also see behind the scene documentary videos of the high rise neighbourhoods of almost all the countries in the world with the help of Google Street View and satellite imagery.

## Documentary Film as Authorship and Narrative

The *Highrise: One Millionth Tower* was launched at Mozilla festival in London and is considered as the world's first web-based interactive documentary that creatively blends together the digital tools like video, 3D Modelling and animation, sound, and social media to create a virtual imaginary world. It is a technological first interactive documentary that is built with open-source HTML5 and web that runs on the web browser. Over a billion people live in vertical homes that are falling apart into disrepair. The project encourages collaboration of high rise residents, architects, designers, animators, and authorities to re-envision their vertical homes. They together magically bring the sketches to life through the interactive documentary on the web browser. *One Millionth Tower* has a global mission that aims to tell a story with global implications, power of imagination and collaboration to transform the urban spaces both physically and virtually for the global community.

## NOTES ON BLINDNESS: INTO DARKNESS

*Notes on Blindness: Into Darkness* is categorised as an immersive virtual reality (VR) interactive documentary project. It is inspired from Hull (2017) sensory and psychological experience of being blind person. John Hull lost his sight completely in 1983 after years of steady deterioration. He wanted to make sense of life around him. Therefore, he began to document his experiences on audio cassettes and recorded over 16 hours of material. This collection of recordings became the basis of this interactive project. This project is an emotional journey of a personal experience of blindness brought together using storytelling, art direction, graphic design, singular immersion, a digital universe, movement tracking, sound design and controller interactions. His testimony is a documentation of his feelings of loss, renewal, rebirth into the world of blindness. The interactive project consists of a short film, a virtual reality experience and a documentary. The user enters into a world without images and how does it feel emotionally and cognitively to be blind. It is divided into six chapters, each one focusing on Hull's specific memory or experience of day to day activities like a day in the park, passing of vehicles, chirping of birds, people walking and chatting. One can experience this incredible journey using the app; the user can follow things around the landscape and play with the VR gear to interact. For a blind person hearing becomes an important ability to make a visual image in his mind, he needs to concentrate and rely on hearing to imagine his surroundings. For instance, Hull describes a deep fear of getting lost in a world without sensory input, for example walking in the snow creates a sound blanket that causes confusion and anxiety because his auditory ability is silent due to snow. It is incredible how the app can create a feeling of restlessness in the user like a blind person. Each scene is linked with a sound activity; the user experiences tiny particles, ghostly images, glitches as vanishing visual memories. This interactive project proves how VR technology can enable users to experience a foreign world which no other medium can offer.

## Analysis Using the Conceptual Model of the I-Doc

The i-doc, *Notes on Blindness: Into Darkness* communicates through its VR experience and its unique sound design, how it feels to be a blind person in the most immersive and experiential way possible. The VR experience is available in three languages, French, German and English for its worldwide audience. It is based on the cognitive and emotional experience of Hull, who suffered through decades of gradual deterioration of his seeing ability until he completely went blind in his late 40s. The six parts VR experience takes the user into different scenes which present certain memories and special moments from the life of John Hull. The story of his blindness is conveyed through 3D animated figures of blue light, whirling around the user like glowing stardust guided by recordings from Hull's audio diary, this creates a unique experience of a world without sight for the viewers.

Table 8. Modes of interaction used (Gaudenzi 2009)

<b>NOTES ON BLINDNESS: INTO DARKNESS</b>	<b>Logic of interactivity</b>	<b>The function of the user</b>	<b>Role of the author</b>
<b>CONVERSATIONAL MODE</b>	Not Applicable	-	-
<b>HYPERTEXT MODE</b>	Applicable	Navigation Configuration Explorative	The user can navigate through the virtual work with audio instructions and explore the virtual environment.
<b>PARTICIPATIVE MODE</b>	Applicable	Fixed database Exploratory	The project creates the condition to experience a new world through VR experience.
<b>EXPERIENTIAL MODE</b>	Applicable	Experiential in terms of VR experience.	The user's experience of being in a world without sight.

Table 9. Notes on Blindness: Into the Darkness analysis (Vázquez-Herrero et al. 2017)

<b>Parameter</b>	<b>Characteristics</b>	<b>Indicating</b>
<b>Selective interactivity</b>	The user can choose the paths and explore freely the virtual space.	The user has control over his actions but not over the environment he is put into.
<b>Immersive interactivity</b>	The user experiences an immersive environment where he can control his actions using VR gear.	The user feels part of the life of John Hull and experiences his world through his voice.
<b>Social interactivity</b>	The interactive documentary can be shared on social media platforms but requires VR gear to fully experience it.	The user gets the feeling of entering another world without sight.
<b>Generative interactivity</b>	The user can only generate a personal experience of interacting with the documentary; he cannot generate something in the platform.	The user plays the role of a participant and user in the interactive documentary.
<b>Physical interactivity</b>	The user experiences the physical environment through virtual reality and physical immersion with the interactive documentary.	The interactive documentary offers a personal experience of understanding how it feels to be a blind person.
<b>Physical interactivity</b>	The user experiences the physical environment through virtual reality and physical immersion with the interactive documentary.	The interactive documentary offers a personal experience of understanding how it feels to be a blind person.

## User as Perceived Interactivity and Physical Involvement

This project borrows its inspiration from John M Hull autobiographical sound notes. He was diagnosed with cataract at a very early age of 13 and he also went through many surgeries that initially restored his sight but slowly resulted in complete blindness at the age of 48. Hull's autobiographical notes recount his memories and experiences of acquired blindness which he calls the 'deep blindness'. The

VR project uses his original records of sound notes to tell the story as the participant experiences his journey into his perceptual reality essentially through his audio prompts and feels as if the user is inside another world or space. The idea of experiencing a world without images is the key element of this project. The narrative of the documentary starts with chapter 1 where the user is relatively at home and standing at the edges of a dark field as Hull starts narrating the story in an acoustic space. The user witnesses small glowing lights that form the boundary of observable space in synchronisation with the sound of his voice. The users slowly start to experience the paradox of being able to see what it is like to be blind. The first two chapters help in gradually acclimating to the VR space. The third chapter makes the user starts feeling as if he or she is thrown into a galactic outer space, as one finds himself surrounded by black space and flickers of glowing stardusts whirling around the user, at this moment the users start to feel what it is like to be blind with a feeling of bewilderment. The interactive VR experience raises the user's awareness about understanding blindness as a paradoxical gift and an entry into a new and deep form of being.

### **Documentary Film as Authorship and Narrative**

John Hull, a theologian who went blind in adulthood is the main subject of interactive documentary and the VR experience. He went completely blind at the age of 45 and wrote 'Touching the Rock: his autobiography about what he went through as a blind person. The VR experience uses his memoirs and recordings from his personal journal as jumping-off points to explain the psychological effects of blindness on a person. The project emphasizes the multisensory experience of losing sight. It lets you navigate as a blind person and locate objects by listening to the sound they make when the wind hits them. one of the most poignant scenes of the documentary is the celebration of the experience of hearing and feeling the rain. The treatment of the documentary does not ask its users to show pity towards the blind people rather it insists on recognizing their humanity. The project is an experimental art designed to start affinity for the marginalized afflicted. John's diary had a lot of pages about the awakening of the acoustic space through sound. The VR can mimic the sensory experience of moving throughout the world and this project conveys the psychological state of a blind man as proof of humanity as the project successfully works well in making users experience what it feels like to be Hull for the duration of 6 chapter experience through the interactive documentary.

### **CONCLUSION**

In this research work, the researcher has suggested that the participation of users in the interactive documentary can be used as a participatory development communication strategy for development projects. The researcher has found strategies of participation with the help of an analysis of the selected documentaries. The involvement and collaboration of a participant in the interactive documentary has been assessed by taking into account the user's impact in the project.

### **Participants and Participation**

When the participants involved with the interactive documentary are like the mass of volunteers who may not have prior experience of it and share the audio visual footage on the case of *Life in Day*, then such collaborators are called 'crowd producers' of an evolving database, the interactive gallery keeps growing in scale till the time contributions are coming or stopped. When the participants are the subject of the interactive documentary-like in the case of *Highrise: One Millionth Tower* but they also have the freedom to participate then they are called 'subject-producers'. When the participant remains anonymous but contributes to the database like in the case *The Worry Box Project* then they are called 'anonymous producers' as they are adding to the database by contributing to the worry box. In the case of VR based interactive documentary, the participant can experience the world created using the VR gear and control his actions in the virtual environment but cannot make changes to the interactive documentary-like in the case of *Notes on Blindness: Into the Darkness*. The author decides

what kind of involvement he wants with the users; Katerina Cizek involves her subjects in the change-making process, Kevin Macdonald opts for crowdsourcing to represent multiple voices of the world, Irene Luzstig provides a safe space to share their anxieties and creates a feeling of belongingness for the users. Amaurya La Burthe provides an immersive virtual world without sight to experience for its viewers and creates awareness about how it feels like to be a blind person. Development communication projects can define the role of the beneficiary in the interactive documentary project according to the goal of the development initiative and design the interactive documentary according to the level of participation needed to achieve the goals of the project.

The author decides what degree of freedom can be given to the participants. Can the participant only speak about herself like in the case of *The Worry Box Project*, the contributors to the worry box can only submit anxiety or worry, they do not have the option to discuss, comment or resolve worries on the platform. How much does the interface change when the participant adds content to the database? The degree of power and the individual position was given to the user to use his agency in the process of making the interactive documentary also is decided by the author. The *Highrise* project gives the maximum agency to the user to contribute to the social change process among the selected interactive documentaries. The development communication partitioners, changemakers, filmmakers, and authors can decide the role of the user or participant according to the expected impact or outcome of the project. The interactive documentary creates different exchangeable forms for the roles of message, sender, and the receiver. i-doc has its own life cycles, and usage decreased after few years. The continuous updating of the documentary is required in the light of changing mobile interface (Podara et al. 2021).

## The Collaboration

The interactive documentaries that open up the production process to its participants, subjects, or peers accept external inputs from them but becomes a highly authored project by the time it reaches the execution phase like *Life in Day*, *Highrise: One Millionth Tower*, and *The Worry Box Project*. When the participant accepts the contributions after the release of the interactive documentary-like submission of worries in the box, getting involved in the visualisation and execution of the buildings and spaces are examples of possible collaborations after the post-production. The authors can challenge the degree of the modes of interactivity, production, and definition of authorship. The artist/author uses his or her authorship in a way that creates opportunities to collaborate for crowd-producers, anonymous-producers, peer-producers, or subject-producers and make it a living documentary. As observed by (Nash 2021) The audio interactive documentary project The 'Quipu Project' on forced sterilization of citizen in Peru could be able to achieve the intended political mobilization and attention. This is possible due to the collaborative work of non-government organization, women's groups and victims.

The research concludes the research by stating the possibilities of the medium of interactive documentary to create participatory interaction that can be used as a tool for development communication as in interactive documentary the audience or the user gets the opportunity to pursue their narrative and goals as they can participate through the documentary. The interactive documentary allows the participants or users or audiences to speak for themselves; it has a dual voice of the author and the user as it provides means, tools and possibilities that will let others speak for themselves and will provide a context in which they may be heard through its platform. It becomes an important media development as this form is an early adopter of the new technology. Rather than only depending on film to tell a narrative or put across a message, the interactive documentary presents the audience or the user with an experience that makes them feel empowered by giving them control over the narrative and asks them to play an active part in telling the stories they are consuming through interaction and participation. This new technological innovation extends the reach and scope of a traditional documentary. The representation of the actuality is the main delivery mechanism of the interactive documentary. The different kinds of interactivity characteristics offered by the interactive documentary as a form can be used as tools for different communication settings in a mediated environment to convey

the message to the user the most effective way. Therefore, interactivity becomes both ‘condition of being’ and also the ‘delivery mechanism.’ An interactive documentary is an evolving form that needs to objectively assess the relationship between the documentary and the extent of stakes of users in the subject or issue dealt in the i-doc.

It has also extended the scope of documentary from an instrument of storytelling for change to a potential form to create measurable social impact. Authorship is the framing of interaction and participation in an interactive documentary; it lets the author frame the audience action in terms of engagement with the platform and the content. The change makers, filmmakers and development communication practitioners can take authorship of interactive documentaries for their development initiatives to create participatory interaction with their beneficiaries. Using the participatory action research (Mikelli 2021) successful could able to engage the teenagers engage them using i-doc to bring them out from the social isolation. The project aimed to improve the media literacy with among youth with the help of i-doc.

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