



# Digital Intertextuality Theory: A New Approach to Explore Textual Connections with Multimodal

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**Abstract**— *The digitalization has created a huge impact not only on various aspects of life but also on literature. Earlier, a traditional approach was used to analyze texts with the help of intertextuality, but due to the introduction of novel technologies like multimedia, AI-generated text, algorithms, and virtual reality, it has become complicated to effectively interpret works. Due to this, a new approach is required, i.e., digital intertextuality theory. It connects old concepts with new ones to explore this new digital literary age. Moreover, it can aid us in finding how conventional intertextuality combines with the new technology of user interactions to provide a thorough understanding of how stories are created and analysed in the 21st century. With this new perspective, the gap between conventional and contemporary can be bridged. It can assist scholars, students, researchers, and critics in comprehending the baffling world of new literature. It will also expand and give new areas for research by creating an impact beyond the literature fields.*



**Keywords**— *Digital Intertextuality Theory, Digital Literature, Intertextuality, Contemporary Era, Literary Theory*

## I. INTRODUCTION

The advancement in AI has created an enormous impact not only on various aspects of life but also on literature. Earlier, a traditional approach was used to analyze texts with the help of intertextuality, but due to the introduction of novel technologies like multimedia, AI-generated text, algorithms, and virtual reality, it has become complicated to effectively interpret works. Due to this, a new approach is required, i.e., digital intertextuality theory. It connects old concepts with new ones to explore this new digital literary age. Moreover, it can aid us in finding how conventional intertextuality combines with the new technology of user interactions to provide a thorough understanding of how stories are created and analysed in the 21st century. With this new perspective, the gap between conventional and contemporary can be bridged. It can assist scholars, students, researchers, and critics in comprehending the baffling world of new literature. It will also expand and give new areas for research by creating an impact beyond the literature fields.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Intertextuality is used to explore the interconnectedness between different texts and how they impact each other. Barthes (1967) and Kristeva (1986) first introduced the concept of intertextuality which focused on the merging of various texts with new ones and the death of the Digital Intertextuality Theory: A New Approach to Explore Textual Connections with Multimodals 2 author. However, Miller (2014) points out that the aforementioned concepts proved to be inadequate in explaining the complex nature of digital literature. With the advent of digital literature, scholars like Landow (2006) have started exploring hypermedia and non-linear stories which represented that theories were not sufficient for understanding and to bridge this gap a new methodology digital ethnography was introduced to analyse how people create, share and understand texts online. Meanwhile, AI also plays a crucial role in analysing the connection between different texts

(Jones, 2018) it gave the reason to learn more about how humans and machines can work together in understanding intertextuality. Due to the globalised literature, it is important to acknowledge the methods of intertextuality in different cultures so teachers must also alter their teaching strategies to prepare pupils for this ever-evolving literary environment by introducing digital literacy and intertextuality into their curriculum (Barton, 2019). Despite this fact, challenges are still present that are overlooked and thus, need to be overcome due to rapid growth in digital technology like ethical issues around AI and over usage of the information so it becomes crucial to deal with such issues in context with old literary theories. Apart from this, research in secondary ELA learning environments presents that using a digital multimodal approach to examine literature can help learners in improving their understanding of themes, literary techniques, and characterization. These studies let students find out about several aspects and concepts via digital projects (Hoglund, 2017). Moreover, digital literature gives opportunities to follow individual interests and make intertextuality links (Dalton and Grisham, 2020). For instance, during continuous silent reading, students can read digital texts that align with their interests. Likewise, digital literacy research has made significant contributions to the advancement of the English language and literature (Marlatt and Sulzer, 2019).

### III. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

#### Multimodal Texts and Their Impact

The texts of multimodal are not restricted to the words that are written in traditional forms. However, present texts include several types of media like images, videos, and sounds to develop a more affluent and engaging story. Its difficulty heightens the intertextuality as the relation between texts is not confined to written expressions but also involves visual and auditory elements.

#### User-generated content and Collaborative Storytelling

The digital era holds the power to make anyone a creator. Therefore, Intertextuality has got significant attention from user-generated content including social media posts to fan fiction. Furthermore, the engaging nature of social platforms lets authors collaborate for storytelling which portrays continuous interactions and alteration rendering the boundaries between texts and making them more flexible in comparison to earlier times.

#### Algorithmic Influences on Literature

The expansion of AI and machine learning has contributed to the rising impact of algorithms on writing. They can write original stories, recommend books for us to read

next, or even write texts themselves. Since algorithms can identify and establish links between texts that people might not be able to. Yet it also highlights the issues of authenticity and authorship if a work is produced by an algorithm, then who is the true author?

#### Virtual and Augmented Reality Narratives

Virtual and Augmented Reality (VR and AR) provide a new vision to experience stories. Readers no longer have to read a piece of writing passively; instead, they can take an active role in the tale by examining different routes and points of view. It changes our approach to perceiving and creating intertextuality as every reader's pattern throughout the story can affect how they understand and relate to other texts. e.

#### Interconnectedness of Modalities

The Digital Intertextuality Theory deeply understands that all these elements such as multimodal texts, user-generated content and algorithmic influences have a connection among them. Their connectivity is crucial for figuring out present intertextuality as it shows that the links between texts are not linear but rather a sophisticated network of connections among several modalities. They cannot be observed in solo; rather, they continually interact and affect one another.

## IV. CASE STUDY ANALYSIS

### 2.1 2.1 "Black Mirror Bandersnatch" by Netflix

With this active movie, audiences may decide what happens to the main character and how this story develops. It's a great example of a multimodal text, in which the story is shaped by user choice and computational factors (Netflix, 2018).

### 2.2 "Fortnite" by Epic Games

In this internet-based video game, participants may communicate with one another and interact with their surroundings in an interconnected reality. User-generated material, such as dances and skins, permeates the gaming experience's culture and shapes its continuing story (Fortnite, 2017).

### 2.3 "Instagram" Platform

Instagram is a social networking site that lets users make and share short videos. Every user has a unique, specific story experience depending on the material that is suggested to them by the algorithm of the platform (Instagram).

### 2.4 "The Martian" by Andy Weir

The novel illustrates the power of user-generated content as it was initially independently published chapter by

chapter on the writer's website. Following every chapter, readers were able to leave comments, which the author then included in the narrative. It serves as a case study of participatory storytelling and how it may affect the way a tale develops (Weir, 2011).

### 2.5 Augmented Reality Art Exhibits

AR technology is being used by several institutions and artists to produce thrilling experiences that combine digital and physical media. With the ability for visitors to engage with the tale through physical interaction, these displays provide an innovative perspective on storytelling.

### 2.6 Westworld by HBO

The futuristic science fictional television show "Westworld" has a challenging multifaceted storyline. It challenges reality, investigates the idea of artificial intelligence, and creates a complex and multilayered tale. Numerous fan opinions and online debates have been sparked by the show which is evidence of its influence on viewers (HBO, 2016). People interact with the plot, characters, and ideas through these conversations, resulting in the development of an environment of user-generated material that goes beyond the TV show. As a result of this, "Westworld" is a perfect case study to comprehend how traditional and digital story forms connect, as well as how viewer interactions may influence and broaden the narrative environment.

### 2.7 Among Us by InnerSloth

It's an internet-based multiplayer game that plays on the social patterns of lying and loyalty. The group of player connections, which are further enhanced by memes, fan art, and online debates, modify and spread the story process. Because of this, the story is always changing, giving different viewpoints on how stories might progress in a shared digital context. We may gain a better understanding of how digital platforms could promote engagement and story growth by looking at these mechanisms (Innersloth, 2023).

### 2.8 Reddit Platform

Another example of how digital texts are interrelated is a website called Reddit, which is built on user-generated content. Often, threads make references to other threads, outside information, and social settings, building an extensive network of intertextual relationships. In this constantly changing setting, where users interact, converse, and expand upon old stories, digital intertextuality can be examined in real-time. As a result, Reddit provides insight into the workings of digital intertextuality, in which story-related knowledge is developed through the interaction of numerous texts.

### 2.9 Inception by Christopher Nolan

The film "Inception" impressed viewers with its detailed deep story. The plot of the movie resulted in a great deal of web-based debate and fan theories by taking its tale beyond the original structure (Nolan, 2010). Digital intertextuality can be understood most effectively through the way the movie and the conversation around it connect. Through an analysis of this, we are going to see how viewers engage with and shape tales in the digital age, as well as how digital structures facilitate story growth.

### 2.10 Wikipedia Platform

Wikipedia is an excellent source of knowledge because it is a user generated content system. Texts often include references to and links to one another, which strengthens their interconnection. These connections can offer important insights into the creation and growth of digital systems since they replicate the interconnectedness of information itself. We can learn more about how digital networks operate by examining the sources used and how they advance a wider comprehension of the topic. These works represent different facets of digital intertextuality, from user-generated content to algorithmic influences and VR/AR narratives. By analyzing these case studies, we can gain a deeper understanding of how digital intertextuality works in practice and how it's shaping our narrative landscape.

## V. DATA COLLECTION

The data is collected through a mixed method approach of qualitative and digital ethnography to conduct this research. We have effectively analyzed and studied the chosen case studies and observed the engagement of users along with the changes in storytelling techniques. Additionally, the writing style and stories on platforms like Reddit and Wikipedia are examined to understand deeply the cross-textual connection with implications. We have observed user-generated videos, internet debates, and fan fiction for "Westworld," "Among Us," and "Inception." This data is characterized by the type of intertextual relations such as an algorithmic suggestion, user-generated material, or a reference to another text and the platform on which it is represented e.g., online conversation, in-game engagement, article editing). For this, patterns, and trends are studied with a focus on the growth of intertextual relationships and how these relations affect the story overall. It helps in the advancement of the Digital Intertextuality Theory by supporting us in gaining an in-depth knowledge of digital intertextuality.

## VI. RESULTS AND FINDINGS

Through this research it is clear that contemporary literature increasingly uses visual imagery, audio, and

interactive content, to make the stories creative and appealing. It provides readers with new ways to interpret the text. It reflects how digital technology is reshaping the literature domain by offering new ways to tell stories and increase engagement. The consequences of algorithms on reading actions were additionally examined in this study. Studies showed that readers' decisions are greatly influenced by algorithm recommendations, like those present in online bookshops and reading sites. These algorithms produce a customized reading list that is compatible with a reader's tastes by choosing books based on previous choices. Nonetheless, it also highlights how being exposed to a variety of categories and writers might be restricted to the creation of a reading "echo chamber." Moreover, the increasing use of mixed and virtual reality in storytelling was another interesting discovery. With the help of these tools, readers may be completely lost in a story. They give readers fresh opportunities to connect with the story by transforming novels into engaging experiences. This study also indicates that more investigation is necessary to fully understand how these tools affect our perception and comprehension of narratives. All of the results suggest that story construction and consumption in the digital age have gone through a major change. The field of literature is changing, and novel approaches to interacting with stories are being presented by multimedia aspects, algorithmic effects, and virtual reality technologies. In addition to bringing exciting storytelling opportunities, these changes also bring challenges with them that need attention.

The changing environment of literature has seen an increase in the usage of multimodal elements, algorithmic power, and virtual reality technologies which presents a challenge for literary criticism. The traditional methods of text-based analysis are no longer enough to fully take in the complexities of the digitally produced literature. To effectively evaluate new-era literature, critics must adopt more comprehensive approaches. They must acknowledge the impact of multimedia elements, interactive features, and the experience of virtual reality. These dimensions require a new level of interpretation as well as a shift in established methodologies. The hype in multimodal and interactive texts focuses on the limitations of traditional literary theories. These old theories are oftentimes not sufficient to capture the essence of digital storytelling.

As a result, there is a need for new theoretical perspectives that can work better with digital works. This new concept takes into account how language is created and understood, as well as our understanding of what makes a piece of writing. It is impossible to over-generalize how technology shapes our understanding of literature. For example, algorithms determine what we read, which

indirectly shapes interpretation, whereas virtual and augmenting reality techniques directly impact how we perceive the stories. It also means that our awareness of literature is a result of the written material itself and the digital environment through which it is delivered. It makes analyzing literature more difficult and demands a modification of our theoretical frameworks.

## VII. CONCLUSION

The implementation of digital intertextuality theory brings both challenges and opportunities. On the one hand, it demands a shift in our understanding and analysis of narratives, which can be a complex process requiring new skills and competencies from readers and critics alike. On the other hand, the integration of digital elements into narratives opens up new avenues for exploration and engagement. This not only offers a more engaging and immersive reading experience but also has the potential to enrich our understanding and appreciation of literature. By providing a more holistic perspective of narratives in the digital age, the implementation of digital intertextuality theory can revolutionize the way we perceive and analyze literature.

The key findings highlighted how these elements are reshaping the narrative experience, demanding a redefinition of 'text' and how it's interpreted. Critically, it was found that traditional literary theories and analytical methods are proving inadequate for this new form of literature, underscoring the need for a fresh theoretical framework.

The concept of 'digital intertextuality' emerged as a potential candidate for this role, given its capacity to account for the interactive, multimodal, and immersive aspects of modern narratives. This research has significant conceptual relevance. It challenges accepted ideas about what makes a text, as well as how meaning is formed and understood within it, and eventually suggests the creation of an innovative theoretical structure. In real life, this study impacts writers, readers, reviewers, and educators alike. Further studies may examine the further development of particular methods within the suggested framework of digital intertextuality. The educational consequences of this innovative literary genre can also be the subject of future investigation.

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