Exploring Storytelling for Relationship Building in Offshore Outsourced Projects: An Action Research Investigation

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Abstract

Over recent years, more and more companies have come to recognise the utility of storytelling in the workplace. Stories are thought to be an effective means of sharing information and can fulfill a range of knowledge management functions. Furthermore, storytelling can contribute to social bonds between co-workers because stories allow the audience to create impressions about the attitudes and beliefs of the storyteller. The potential of storytelling in global virtual teams has received minimal research focus to date. In this paper we adopt an action research approach to investigate storytelling used as a knowledge transfer technique in offshore outsourced projects and observe the influence on team relationship development. Findings suggest that storytelling by recorded video can be an effective form of communication in the early stages of projects and helps overcome the challenge of relationship development in offshore outsourced projects.

1. Introduction

As many organizations that have implemented a global sourcing strategy have discovered, outsourcing complex projects is not straightforward [1-3]. A particular challenge is integrating a disparate group of individuals into an effective team [4, 5]. Offshore outsourcing involves a particular type of global virtual team, comprising individuals of two or more separate companies working together on joint tasks.

For complex offshore outsourced tasks like software development, effective relationships among team members are critical [6, 7]. Software development is a complex, collaborative process that relies on effective knowledge transfer and unstructured information flow between partners [3, 8]. If partners do not have a personal, trusting relationship, they will be less inclined to communicate openly, and knowledge transfer is impeded [9]. Social relationships between members benefit teams by alleviating conflicts, achieving satisfaction, and improving adaptation [10].

Building effective relationships in the context of offshore outsourcing is challenging because such teams often comprise culturally diverse individuals, brought together on an ad-hoc basis [3]. Furthermore, projects are inevitably subject to pressurised schedules, and the time for team integration and development is limited [11]. Strategies to overcome the challenge of team integration in distributed work settings in the literature include implementing an initial face-to-face session to prepare members for working together [4-6], intercultural training of project staff [12, 13], and taking into account communication capabilities when planning first contact between partners [14].

In this paper we investigate storytelling as a potential strategy for assisting team building in offshore outsourced software development projects. Over recent years there has been increased interest in the use of stories in business settings [15]. Storytelling is recognized as an effective means of disseminating and sharing knowledge and can fulfill a range of knowledge management functions in companies [16]. Furthermore, stories allow the audience to create impressions about the attitudes and beliefs of the storyteller, which can add meaning to the information and contribute to the development of a relationship between storyteller and listener [17].

The potential of storytelling in offshore outsourcing, or inter-organizational communication in general, has had minimal research focus to date. Moreover, research work on practical experiences concerning the use of stories is rare [18].

We adopt an action-research approach to investigate the use of storytelling as a knowledge transfer technique in two projects and observe the effects on team integration and relationship development. As part of a wider research program, another paper focuses on the potential of storytelling as a knowledge transfer tool specifically [19].

2. Storytelling

Due to narrative’s roots in literary research and its multiple applications across various other disciplines, no binding definition of narrative exists [20]. Leblanc and Hogg [21] propose that storytelling can be broadly
defined as the communication of ideas, beliefs, personal histories, and life lessons [21]. Others suggest that sequencing, either in time or thematically, is a minimum requirement for a narrative [20]. Stories generally comprise 1) accounts of action formulated from real or imagined events [22]; 2) characters; and 3) a structure comprising a beginning, middle, and an end, 4) which is held together by a plot [15]. Stories transform singular situated experiences and events into a framework of successive events with causal linkages so that they make sense out of the complex situation for tellers and listeners [16]. There is some evidence to show that stories may enhance our ability to remember [15, 23], and storytelling possesses great potential as a teaching and learning tool [21]. In business and other organisational settings, storytelling is a common and naturally occurring phenomenon [16]. Colleagues naturally adopt a narrative approach to recounting events and sharing information [16].

Beyond this type of naturally occurring story, more companies are realising that stories can be adopted for communicative functions that cannot be achieved well by other means [15]. A key value of stories is the contextualisation of information. Contextualisation is central to theories of comprehension and is necessary for improved problem-solving performance. The practice of building context into a message decreases the likelihood of misunderstanding and thereby increases the probability of accomplishing the goal of thinking collectively [24]. Some claim that stories can complement or may even outperform codified knowledge in modern organisational settings [16].

Discourses can help to improve problem-solving competencies, generating “thick descriptions” of contexts, thereby providing actors with an adequate understanding of the complex nature of practical situations, setting up the basis for practical knowing [16]. Roles of stories mentioned in the business and organisational literature include creation and description of social constructs in organizations, preservation and conveyance of organizational culture, and transferring and saving of (implicit) knowledge [18]. Leadership literature notes several roles that stories can fulfill from a management perspective, including sparking action, communicating brand identity, transmitting values, fostering collaboration, sharing knowledge, and leading people into the future [25]. Orr (1990) suggests calling narratives that focus on challenging problems and workable solutions “war stories” [26]. They report on mastering problematic situations or failures and flops [16].

The format and structure of the story are thought to be fundamental to their success. Escalas and Bettman (2000) and McGregor and Holmes (1999) note that memories are more easily stored and retrieved in story form, particularly when they encompass a goal, action, and some kind of resolution [27, 28]. Sole (2002) contends that good knowledge-sharing stories offer a streamlined, surrogate experience, in the sense that the story depicts a situation that the reader/listener can imagine experiencing in reality [29]. Some researchers characterise storytelling as a fundamentally oral phenomenon and note that the performance of the story may be as important as the content. Denning (2006) asserts that “the non-verbal aspects of performance are critical—the tone of voice, the facial expression and the accompanying gestures. The way a story is performed can radically change its emotional tone in the mind of the listener’ [30].

A paper by Wende et al. (2008) investigated storytelling as a knowledge transfer tool in offshore outsourced projects. Through case study analysis, this paper found that brief written stories can be a practical means of initiating the knowledge transfer process and transferring tacit project knowledge in particular [31].

3. Relationship building in globally outsourced projects

Building relationships and establishing trust are widely recognized as critical success factors for distributed teams [9, 10, 32]. Satisfaction with relationships is believed to be a primary determinant of the success or failure of client–service provider collaboration[32]. The development of relationships and trust between partners is associated with the amount and quality of communication between those partners [10]. Meaningful communication is a necessary antecedent of trust, and the regularity of exchanges provides the medium through which team members can slowly begin to change their relationship—for example, from contractual to cooperative [33]. It is only through on-going exchanges of information that either side can achieve expectations and satisfaction, avoid conflicts, and reduce uncertainty levels [10, 33]. Te’eni (2001) identifies relationships as a fundamental outcome of the communication process.

Successful knowledge exchange and acquisition has a positive influence on team development. Conversely, indications of failed knowledge exchange, such as requirements uncertainty, has a negative influence on relationships [32].

With offshore outsourced projects, relationships between team members tend to be less intensive and involve less personal commitment than with co-located projects [10]. Offshore teams can struggle to develop the kind of trust and relationships needed for effective
collaboration [34]. There are many reasons for this difference [35]. There is commonly much less communication and less effective communication than in co-located scenarios [36]. In offshore outsourced software development projects, people communicate with fewer people at distant sites than at their own site, and the communication is much less frequent [37].

Greater cultural distance between partners and fewer common experiences and frames of reference mean that establishing communication is more difficult. Globally outsourced projects frequently comprise ad-hoc teams of individuals that do not share a common set of norms, values, or experiences [38]. Furthermore, strong internal hierarchy, which is common in many Asian service provider teams, can influence the level of interaction between operational (i.e., non-managerial) team members particularly. When internal hierarchy is strong, junior team members are less likely to participate actively in communication, and in some cases, all interaction is mediated through the service provider project manager, which can inhibit the development of relationships [39].

A major problem which has emerged in this area is that too often, the implementation of an outsourcing or offshoring strategy has been seen as simply the replication of those strategies which are implemented for co-located software development [3, 40]. Clients sometimes attempt to manage communication and team development in much the same way that they would manage an in-house or locally outsourced project [39, 41]. This can be problematic because clients and service providers can have differing communication styles [42], contrasting ways of conveying information [43], and differing expectations about how partners will respond to certain situations. For example, in service provider teams with a strong internal hierarchy, junior team members are sometimes reluctant to ask questions, particularly if this might reveal a lack of understanding [39]. Such difficulties can lead to team members struggling with cross-cultural communication, which negatively impacts team development and performance [44].

The manner in which projects and teams are initiated is critical to team development. The way in which technology-mediated team processes unfold in the beginning may create or avert persistent deficiencies as the team matures [5]. In offshore outsourced projects, an ineffective opening exchange is sometimes associated with media selection that is insensitive to the communication capabilities and diversity of team members [39]. For example, in an opening exchange by video conference, the high feedback speed (high synchronicity) creates a pressurised interaction. Unfamiliar accents, a lack of common norms or expectations, and an inability to rehearse (plan, practice) or reprocess (review) [45] messages can quickly lead to information overload or communication breakdown [39].

4. Methodology

In this research we collaborated with an IT company based in Germany to investigate storytelling adopted as a communication form in new offshore outsourced software development projects in an effort to improve team relationship development. Action research was well suited to this investigation as it is a collaborative research paradigm in which practitioners and

Figure 1. Research Process (adapted from Saunders, 2007, p.141)
researchers work together [46] to improve a process or resolve a problem whilst also contributing to an understanding that could have wider significance [47]. Action research is typically cyclic. Later cycles are used to challenge and refine the results of earlier cycles [48]. The action research spiral commences within a specific context and with a clear purpose [49]. Diagnosis is undertaken to enable planning and decisions about the actions to be taken. They are then taken and the actions evaluated (cycle 1). Subsequent cycles involve further diagnosis, taking into account previous evaluations, planning further actions, taking these actions, and evaluating [47]. Action research is well suited to real-world research in which the situation may be too ambiguous to frame a precise research question [48].

The context of the investigation was defined by the literature review and by experiences of the German IT company. The investigation comprised two cycles involving real offshore outsourced software development projects.

Both projects had the same German client (although different individuals) and separate service providers. Project 1 involved a service provider in India, and project 2 involved a Vietnamese service provider. Both projects were small-scale pilot projects which comprised the first collaboration between client and service provider. The projects had a one-month timeframe, with the first week designated for knowledge transfer. The team composition was (on the client side) the Client Project Manager and Business Analyst and (on the service provider side) the Service Provider Project Manager, Senior Developer, and Developer.

We (the researchers) were located with the client teams for the duration of the projects, so we were able to observe the progress of the projects on a daily basis. We worked together with the client in diagnosing, planning, and evaluating projects. Evaluation was informed primarily by observation and interviews with the client and service provider team members during and following the projects. Interviews were semi-structured, reflecting the exploratory nature of the research [47].

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<td><strong>Client location / employees</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Service provider location / employees</strong></td>
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5. Cycle 1

5.1. Diagnosing

To help us better understand and diagnose the challenge of relationship development in team settings, we turn to the cognitive-affective model of organisational communication [24]. This model is devised primarily to explain intra-organisational communication. We nevertheless find it to be applicable to our area of research. The model identifies relationship between communication partners as an outcome of the communication process and sets out the fundamental elements of the communication process and its inputs and outputs, which are highly relevant to communication in offshore outsourced teams. Inputs to the communication process are task ('characteristics of the task situation: analyzability, variety, and temporal demands'), distance ('the relative situations of sender and receiver: cognitive and affective'), and values and norms ('stocks of knowledge that guide behavior of communicators belonging to that culture: independence-interdependence'). The communication process itself comprises goals ('the sender’s intended impact of communication on the receiver'), addressed by strategies ('methods of coping with communication complexity to achieve communication goal'), facilitated by the form ('characteristics of the information communicated') and medium ('characteristics of the physical medium on which the message is transmitted') [24].

Using this model we can categorise some of the phenomena described in the literature review. As noted, project managers often attempt to manage projects in the same way that they might manage a locally sourced project, which can result in problems. The cognitive-affective model implies that in this instance, project managers are failing to take into account key communication inputs, such as the distance and differing values and norms between participants. This failure is then reflected in aspects of the communication process being inappropriate to the situation. For instance, if the communication goal is to introduce project requirements, implementing a strategy identical to that used with a co-located, culturally homogenous team may result in information overload and/or communication breakdown. The model highlights the importance of media selection to the communication process, which, as noted, is an important consideration for distributed work teams. Inappropriate decisions in the communication process can result in poor communication outcomes in terms of
low levels of mutual understanding and poor relationship development.

By breaking down the communication process into constituent parts, the model provides a structure for conceptualising where storytelling might sit in the communication process and for designing the projects for this research. In both projects 1 and 2, the communication inputs were similar. The task was a small-scale software development project. The distance between participants was significant (Germany–India and Germany–Vietnam), and face-to-face contact was not possible at any stage of the project. Furthermore, it was assumed that the values and norms of participants in the different locations varied according to differing cultural backgrounds and memberships.

5.2. Planning

In collaboration with the client, we planned how storytelling could be used to improve team relationship building in the project. Based on the understanding that the effectiveness of communication and quality of relationships in distributed teams often depend on how processes develop at initial meetings [5], we planned to use storytelling for key communication functions at the outset of the project.

Stories were adopted for the opening communication between partners in place of typical project-initiation strategies, such as a project inception meeting (or kick-off meeting). It was unusual not to have a meeting at the beginning of the collaboration, but it allowed us to observe the influence of initiating the projects with storytelling as the main form of communication.

Based on the cognitive-affective model, we defined the goal, strategy, form, and medium for two types of story. The goal of the first story was to describe project requirements. This was addressed by the strategies of contextualising and attention focusing. The story aimed to contextualise end-user requirements by describing their perspective. In this way we determined that the story should be a knowledge sharing story [25] which offered a streamlined surrogate experience [29] of the end users’ point of view. As such, it was intended to focus attention on the core purpose of the project. Furthermore, we determined that the story should encompass a goal, action, and some kind of resolution, which are believed to make the information more memorable [27, 28].

The goal of the second story was to describe expected working practices. The strategies to address this were recounting and attention focusing. This story sought to foster collaboration [25]. We determined that it should fulfil the purpose of Orr’s “war stories” [26], in that it should recount a previous problematic project and focus attention on how things should be done differently.

For cycle 1 we chose a text document as the medium for story transmission. To avoid problems of information overload and communication breakdown noted in the literature, we wanted to use a medium that would create a low pressure initial ‘exchange’ and enable rehearsability and reproducibility of information. Furthermore, we were motivated to test the influence of stories sent by text document on relationship development as this was found to be effective for initial knowledge transfer in previous research [31].

5.3. Action and evaluation

The project involved a German client and an Indian service provider based in Bangalore. The core task that the client outsourced to the service provider was to refactor an existing web application, then extend the application with several new features. Refactoring involves restructuring an existing body of code, which necessitates gaining a thorough understanding of the software and requirements. As such, successful knowledge transfer and establishing effective collaboration between client and the service provider were fundamentally important to the project. The web application in question was the shop system of an online pharmacy. For the service provider to adequately upgrade the software, it was essential that the developer and senior developer gained detailed knowledge relating to how end users (pharmacy customers) would use the website. Much of this knowledge is contextually/culturally specific.

We prepared the story together with the client. Story 1 took the perspective of a fictitious end user and described the end user’s use of the software. In so

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<td>Story 1</td>
<td>Describe project requirements</td>
<td>Contextualizing, attention focusing</td>
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<td>Story 2</td>
<td>Describe expected working practices</td>
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doing the intended functions of the software (and therein the core purpose of the project) were transferred to the service provider in a manner that communicated contextual information such as typical end-user actions, expectations, and motivations. Story 2 recounted a previous outsourced software development project experienced by the client project manager (CPM) in which team interaction was stalled and ineffective, thereby focusing attention on problem areas (e.g., the tendency for operational team members not to interrupt seniors to ask for clarification when they do not understand something). The CPM hoped that the story would thereby highlight behaviours to be avoided and solutions to problems. The stories were each one page long and were sent by email within the first three days of the project, before there had been any direct interaction between operational team members (the CPM had previously been in contact with the service provider project manager by telephone). Following transmission of the stories, team members were instructed to interact as normal. Service provider team members were encouraged to ask any clarification questions as needed.

Feedback about the perceived value of the stories themselves was mixed and somewhat contradictory, particularly in relation to story 1. The service provider project manager indicated that story 1 was helpful in conveying key project requirements: ‘Through the story, we knew exactly what the priorities of the project were, and we were able to work accordingly’. However, the developer reported that the utility of the story would have been greater if it had contained more information about the project context. Moreover, the CPM indicated that story 1 was not as beneficial for operational team members as he had hoped, stating, ‘From the developer’s understanding of the fundamentals of the project, it didn’t appear that he had read the story very thoroughly, or he forgot it quickly’. It therefore appeared that story 1 had only a limited value with respect to the communication goal of describing project requirements.

Observation and feedback from deployment of story 2 were also somewhat mixed. It appeared that the story had a positive influence on service provider behaviour by encouraging operational team members to interact with the client directly. There were a few instances in the knowledge transfer process when the service provider operational team members asked clarification questions when they were unclear on a certain point (as the story suggested they should). The CPM commented, ‘The offshore team took on-board the message of the second story pretty well…I think it was significant that their project manager did not try to control the communication from their side’.

However, the level of interaction between team members was reportedly significantly lower than in a typical in-house or locally outsourced project, and there was minimal informal small talk among team members in the first two weeks of the project. In this period, interaction tended to be project-focused and very generic. For example, when the CPM asked for updates on a certain aspect of work, the response was typically a brief answer that everything was going fine. When asked about levels of trust in the project, the CPM commented, ‘We never got the sense that they [the service provider] could be fully relied upon’. Significantly, it appeared that the use of storytelling in the project contributed little to the development of relationships among partners. The CPM reported, ‘No team cohesiveness developed until much later [in the project], and was probably down to dialogue between staff, rather than the stories themselves’.

Interview responses from both client and service provider following the project corroborated our observation of the projects. Adopting storytelling showed no clear benefits to building relationships or establishing communication in the project. Indeed, the CPM was sceptical that the narrative nature of the content contributed to either of the communication goals. Nevertheless, he believed that exploring alternatives to the standard kick-off meeting had merit. He said, ‘Not having a kick-off meeting was a bit unusual, but it avoided any serious [comprehension/communication] problems at the beginning of the collaboration. I think it’s worth exploring the possibilities further’.

6. Cycle 2

6.1. Diagnosing and planning

Based on observation and feedback from project 1, we sought to adapt aspects of the approach then re-deploy it in an additional offshore outsourced software development project. For the second cycle, we altered the medium from text document to recorded video. In so doing, the medium was able to be rehearsed and reprocessed but gained much more social presence. It was hoped that this higher social presence would make the information in the stories more engaging and memorable (in response to feedback from Story 1 that it appeared the developer had not read the story thoroughly, or forgot it quickly). Furthermore, in response to the CPM’s comments about team cohesiveness, we wanted to investigate whether sending stories via a medium with high social presence would have a positive influence on team development. A further motivation for testing a medium with high
social presence was Denning’s (2006) assertion that the way a story is performed can radically change its emotional tone in the mind of the listener [30]. As noted, the non-verbal aspects of performance are critical—the tone of voice, the facial expressions, and the accompanying gestures.

In stories 3 and 4, we maintained the same goals and strategies as those adopted in stories 1 and 2.

### 6.2. Action and evaluation

Project 2 was an offshore outsourced software development project with the same German client company working with a Vietnamese service provider based in Ho Chi Minh City. The project comprised a refactoring task that was similar in complexity to the first project. As in the first project, the two stories were sent within the first three days of the project, before there had been any direct interaction among the operational team members. The stories were in the form of recorded videos, which (at some point) featured all members of the client team. They included spoken information as well as an on-screen demonstration of web content. With a standard video application downloaded to her computer, she was able to record herself on the built-in camera and microphone. In addition, the application allowed her to demonstrate software components easily by showing her screen, including mouse movements and typing, which were highlighted to make them easy to follow. After recording the videos, she was able to review and edit them within the same application. Producing each video took approximately 30 minutes and was reportedly straightforward and convenient.

The stories were not identical to those used in cycle 1, but the content was similar in terms of length, subjects, and language used. Furthermore, the content retained narrative form, with characters and sequential plot-like structure, comprising a beginning, middle, and end. Corresponding with cycle 1, story 3 took the perspective of a fictitious end user to describe use of the software, expectations, and motivations. Story 4 recounted a real, previous, offshore outsourced software development project in which team interaction was stalled and ineffective, thereby focusing attention on problem areas. In addition, story 4 showed some interaction between the CPM and the business analyst, which was open and informal and intended to show the type of interaction expected in the project.

The initial response to the video stories from the service provider was a pleasant surprise, with the service provider project manager reporting, ‘The developers were pleased and surprised by the video clips’. Story 3 was valued by the developer and senior developer as a source of knowledge for the project, with the service provider project manager reporting, ‘They have viewed the video at least 5 times and have taken notes…’. This indicates that the reprocessability of the videos was key to their utility value. The CPM believed that the narrative description of the typical user interactions with the web application were particularly effective, commenting, ‘This is an area that the video was really good. It would have been almost impossible to describe the [web application] user interactions in a document…and it worked, the developer appeared to understand the required functionality very well’.

During a group videoconference several days after the videos were sent, the CPM undertook a spontaneous re-briefing exercise, whereby she asked the developer and senior developer to report back what they had learnt. The CPM was impressed with the amount and accuracy of information recall, reporting that this was as good or better than she would expect with a locally outsourced provider. This successful uptake of knowledge by the service provider appeared to contribute significantly to the CPM’s perception of the offshore developers as trustworthy team members. She reported, ‘From the feedback in the Skype session I knew that the communication with the Vietnam team was working. I knew I could rely on them to understand what I was saying’.

From a team development point of view, the CPM also believed that introducing the project and client team to operational members of the service provider team via a non-interactive form of communication was beneficial, stating, ‘I think the videos really helped engage the service provider team in the project…when we did Skype calls later on, they [the developer and senior developer] seemed to be very interested and proactive, even compared with locally outsourced projects that I’ve worked on’.

The establishment of dialogue between client and service provider appeared to enhance the relationship

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among partners. Unlike in cycle 1, interaction among team members was fairly relaxed and usually involved some small talk at the beginning. Significantly, the narrative nature of content appeared to assist in communicating the client’s expectations of the service provider. In an interview following the project, the developer said that it was useful to hear about the client’s experience in a previous project (story 4) as this helped clarify what was expected of him.

A further benefit of using video as opposed to a text document for story transmission was that the CPM believed communicating key project information as a video afforded greater control over how operational team members engaged with the information. By choosing what information to include in the video stories, the CPM was, in effect, able to dictate the amount of time and attention that the service provider spent on certain pieces of information relative to others. As the CPM commented, ‘You can’t skim read a video’.

7. Discussion and Conclusions

This research is rare in its investigation of storytelling in the context of offshore outsourcing. Furthermore, we believe it is the first research to investigate storytelling via recorded video in this context. Whilst this is a small-scale study, we have found some interesting indicative results which create a sound basis for further research in the area of video storytelling for knowledge exchange and team development in distributed work settings.

The positive findings from cycle 2 imply that adopting storytelling by recorded video at the outset of offshore projects can have a positive influence on relationships between partners and ultimately project outcomes. The development of relationships and trust between partners surpassed client expectations and was similar to what the client would expect with a locally outsourced project.

In keeping with the findings of Goo (2007), it appeared that effective knowledge exchange in the project had a positive influence on the building of relationships and trust in the team. The video stories were a practical way of transmitting project requirements in a manner that included background and contextual details, which appeared to enhance the service provider’s understanding of the project. Video stories proved to be an effective teaching and learning tool [21] in this context.

Considering Te’eni’s (2001) model of the communication process, it appears that video stories contributed to positive communication outcomes in the project. For the project partners, separated by significant distance and diverse values and norms, the combination of stories (form) and recorded video (medium) contributed to the outcomes of mutual understanding and relationship.

Projects 1 and 2 were undertaken with different people in significantly different contexts (India and Vietnam). As such, the differing characteristics and dispositions of the individuals involved influenced the findings. Therefore, drawing firm conclusions based on a comparison of projects would be inappropriate.

Nevertheless, it appears that the choice of media could potentially be a significant factor in the effectiveness of storytelling, suggesting that the manner in which the story is ‘performed’ is indeed significant [30]. Further research is needed to verify this finding, but the combination of high social presence, low synchronicity, and narrative content appeared to be an effective way of initiating the project. Transmitting the stories via video appeared to make the transmission of project requirements more engaging and memorable and led to better project outcomes.

Although not relevant to the narrative nature of content, the greater richness and higher social presence of the recorded video stories appeared to contribute directly to relationship development among partners by enabling the service provider to more rapidly develop a sense of familiarity with the client. This appeared to provide a head start in relationship development, which was beneficial later when the partners engaged in synchronous communication.

The positive early findings suggest that recorded video stories could be a new way of initiating offshore outsourced projects effectively. Video storytelling potentially addresses the problem of clients attempting to manage offshore outsourced projects in much the same way that they would manage an in-house or locally outsourced project [39, 41] by offering clients an effective, alternative method for initiating their projects.

This research has several obvious limitations. It is based on only two projects and investigates storytelling in only two contexts: German–Indian and German–Vietnamese offshore outsourced software development partnerships. Furthermore, only two stories were used in each project. Further research is planned to test the findings in this paper and to investigate the potential of video storytelling in other cultural settings and other industries, the limitations of storytelling, and the use of storytelling at other stages in the project cycle.

8. References


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