

# A Study on the Communication Path and Acceptance of the Dream of Red Mansions among Young People in the Era of Smart Media: The Multi-dimensional Influence of Fragmented Information Transmission on the Acceptance of Classic Literature

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## ABSTRACT

This study explores how Dream of the Red Mansions (Honglou Meng) is perceived by the young audience in the smart media age; especially how the fragmented information format influences the audience's comprehension and engagement. Fragmented information formats refer to shortened and decontextualized content, such as memes, short videos, and social media snippets, designed for quick consumption but may oversimplify complex narratives. The COM-B model is used to assess three factors influencing behavior: *Capability* (e.g., the servants' limited education and autonomy), *Opportunity* (e.g., societal and hierarchical constraints), and *Motivation* (e.g., deeply ingrained Confucian values). The study utilizes a systematic literature review (SLR) methodology in synthesizing scholarly findings to provide a multi-dimensional perspective. However, results demonstrate that digital platforms facilitate greater access, yet the novel's complex narrative and cultural themes are oversimplified, hindering comprehension. Audiences are fragmented through the media formats, but the narrative is lost. In the context of the COM-B model, it emphasizes that the behavior of female servants is based on a lack of capacities and limited opportunities. It was due to deeply ingrained cultural motivations rooted in Confucian values, reinforcing ethical conformity. The study emphasizes that the adaptations must be balanced digital adaptations, which represent cultural complexity yet appeal to their contemporary audience. It also argues for the use of educational strategies and interactive designs that enhance the reader's appreciation of literature without diminishing the cultural and ethical richness of the novel.

**Keywords:** Dream of Red Mansion, Female Servants, Communication Pathways, Fragmented Information, Classic Literature.

## INTRODUCTION

### Research Background

The evolution of literature in the digital age is a global phenomenon. Literary classics are being fragmented and shortened into digital content across cultures, starting with memes and expanding to social media clips, from Shakespeare's plays to Cervantes' Don Quixote. Literary consumption becomes more condensed and lacks depth and cultural richness as this shift in literary consumption occurs this way all across the world. Analyzing "Dream of the Red Mansions" as a smart media case sheds light on how the transformation of classical texts shapes their transnational distribution and access, as well as their preservation of ethical and cultural nuances. This research

extends important debates within media studies, literary adaptation, and communication theories by exploring the consequences of interdisciplinary formats of text on readers' engagement with these texts.

The novel "Dream of the Red Mansions" or "Honglou Meng", is a monumental work in Chinese classic literature and is considered one of the 'Four Great Classical Novels of China'. It was written by Cao Xueqin in the 18th century during the Qing Dynasty and tells a rich narrative of Chinese society, culture, and familial dynamics through a story concerning the noble Jia family (Ryan, Zhang, & Ling, 2008). Much like a literary masterpiece, it is also a subject of several adaptations including tourism and television that shape global perceptions of Chinese culture (Chan, Lew, & Wu Tong, 2001). The novel also reflects how societal transformations occurred from late imperial China to the contemporary era, and highlights its relevance in cultural studies (G. Ma, M. Wang, & Wang, 2019).

Smart media have emerged and have revolutionized communication channels, influencing how classic literature is accessed and read by young audiences. Smart media is an evolving communication form characterized by multimedia and fragmented content that accesses classic texts (Larsen, 2023), yet is often decontextualized. The transformation from traditional to digital media now affects how young people address literary works, that is, they tend to devote their energy to short, engaging, interactive content in the style of contemporary media (Hoechsmann & Poyntz, 2012). The digital adaptation is how young readers encounter classic literature, such as "Dream of the Red Mansions," through dynamic digital interfaces (Macnamara, 2010).

"Dream of the Red Mansions" is affected by the increasing use of fragmented information formats in use in digital media such as short videos and memes in the comprehension of complex narratives. However, these formats help to make content more accessible, but come at the expense of contextual depth and one misses out on the intricate nuances of themes and character arcs (Menéndez Cuesta, 2021). It accentuates quick, visual consumption over deep reading, opposing classical literary engagement (Boucher, 2022). These decontextualized media experiences can cloud the receptive interpretation of the cultural narratives making it difficult to read from an ethical point of view (Teasdale, 2022).

### **Problem Statement**

Due to the transition of traditional literary engagement towards digital and fragmented media consumption, there are significant challenges posed by how classic works such as Dream of the Red Mansions are received and understood by a contemporary young audience. Fragmented media formats, such as short videos and memes, have also been revealed in several studies to oversimplify complex literary narratives and alter the work's original themes and cultural richness (Boucher, 2022; Menéndez Cuesta, 2021). Additionally, the digital adaptations of the novel's intricate narrative structure and rich cultural and ethical themes have an inferior portrayal by the literature and often fail to communicate the themes adequately to readers (Larsen, 2023; Hoechsmann & Poyntz, 2012). Furthermore, the absence of comprehensive behavioral and ethical analysis of important characters of the novel such as female servants fails to address the role played by societal norms and constraints in shaping their actions and motivations, as perceived in contemporary theoretical models, such as the COM-B framework (Fan et al., 2018; D. Cheng, 2018). To fill these gaps, this research systematically looks at communication pathways, the effects of over-fragmented information on literary reception, and the ethical aspects of character behavior from a multidimensional angle.

### **Significance of Research**

This research is important because the link between classic Chinese literature and modern digital media is drawn to show how smart media affects the structure and depth of young readers' engagement with such complex and abstract works as "Dream of the Red Mansions." This research examines the fragmented information formats on comprehension to understand the emergent form of literary consumption in the digital age. As a contribution to communication studies, literary analysis, and media adaptation theories, it provides methods to educators, media developers, and scholars for making classic literature more accessible and interesting to the junior audience without losing its ethical and cultural identity.

### **Research Objectives**

The objectives of this study are:

1. To explore the Communication Pathways of "Dream of the Red Mansions" among young readers in the Era of Smart Media.
2. To investigate the Acceptance of Classic Literature among Young People in the Context of Fragmented Information Transmissions such as decontextualized formats, memes, short videos, and social media content.
3. To Synthesize the Ethical and Behavioural Analysis of Female Servants Using Literary Ethics and the COM-B Model.

## METHODOLOGY

### Research Method and Design

The systematic literature review method is used in this study to answer the research questions associated with communication pathways and acceptance of classic literature in China. Also, this method is used to examine the behavior of female slaves in "Dream of Red Mansion". A systematic literature review is suitable because it gives an in-depth understanding of the topic of research by synthesizing the literature which is highly relevant and objective according to the topic of focus in the research (Snyder, 2019). The qualitative method is therefore being used in this study because it provides an in-depth perceptive and enables to study of the multiple attributes of a single phenomenon (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). Furthermore, the COM-B model was applied for the evaluation of the character's ethical and behavioral dimensions of Dream of the Red Mansions. By focusing on Capability, Opportunity, Motivation, and Behavior this model allowed for a structured analysis of how societal constraints and media adaptations shape character actions, especially the representation of female servants. The review process was guided by the COM-B framework mapping behavioral science principles to digital media formats of classical literature reception. The process of systematic literature review involves inclusion and exclusion criteria and assessment of the quality of the studies and sources identified. This approach provides a comprehensive, explainable, and reproducible review for others to understand the study execution, results, and subsequent recommendations (Kitchenham & Charters, 2007).

### Data Collection Method

#### Searching Techniques

Searching techniques involve the 3 methods, keywords research, databases research, and Boolean operators.

#### *Keywords Research*

Keywords such as Smart media, youth engagement, fragmented information, ethical literary criticism, and COM-B model, are used to retrieve as much literature as possible. Moreover, the synonyms of the keywords and related terms are also used to extract the literature.

#### *Databases*

The search involves several databases such as Google Scholar, JSTOR, and SCOPUS. The databases are academic and selected due to the availability of a huge number of peer-reviewed articles related to every field.

#### *Boolean Operators*

More advanced techniques to narrow down the research include Boolean operators (AND, OR, NOT). These operators help to retrieve the specific research that includes the code provided. For example; for objective 1 of this study, the following search code is used;

("Dream of the Red Mansions" OR "Dream of the Red Chamber" OR "Honglou Meng") AND ("smart media" OR "digital communication" OR "social media" OR "digital platforms" OR "multimedia" OR "online adaptation") AND ("youth engagement" OR "young readers" OR "digital audience" OR "young people")

#### Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

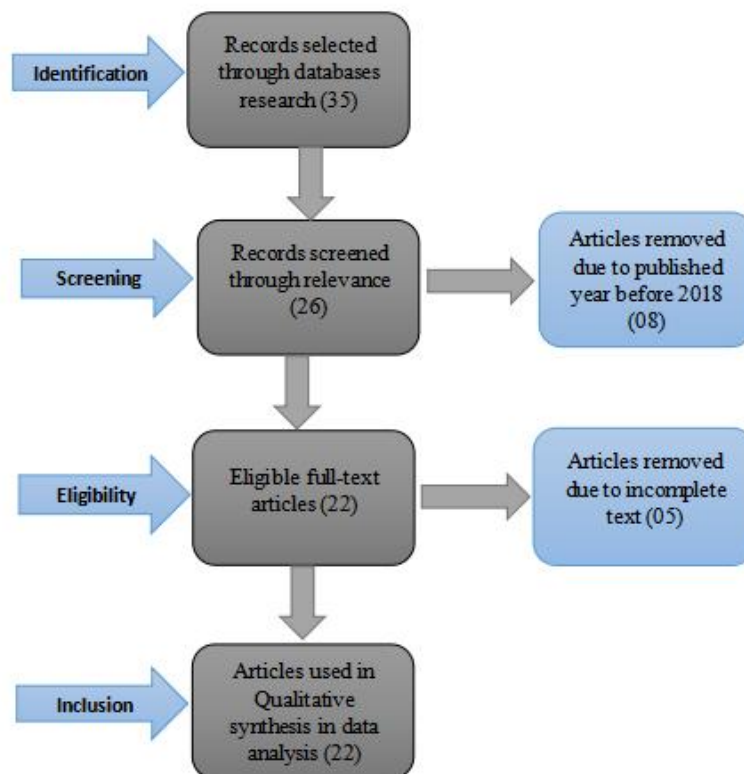
Inclusion and exclusion criteria are used to systemize the literature or studies selected which is shown in **Table 1**.

**Table 1.** Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria for Study Selection

Criteria	Inclusion	Exclusion
Publication	All the articles published from 2018 onwards (Rise of smart media, digital adaptations, fragmented content formats)	Articles published before 2018
Research type	Peer-reviewed articles and empirical studies	Non-empirical studies, editorial, and opinion articles
Language	Articles written in English	Articles written in languages other than English
Focus	Studies focusing on classical literature and novels in China	Studies focusing on non-classical literature in China

### Selection of Papers through the PRISMA Framework

30 articles were included in the initial selection. These papers are further screened based on the inclusion and exclusion criteria to refine the list of papers. Abstracts and full-text have been read and re-read to ensure that the selected papers meet the objectives of this study. After this examination, a total of 22 papers were used in the analysis. Thus, purposive sampling guarantees that only those studies that give a clear picture of classical literature and novels and their communication pathways and acceptance among youth in the present era have been included. Figure 1 below represents PRISMA Framework diagram.

**Figure 1.** PRISMA Framework

### Data Analysis Method

To compare and analyze the studies selected, thematic analysis is used. Thematic analysis is a type of qualitative analysis and can be used in identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns within the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The thematic analysis involves the following steps as shown in [Table 2](#).

**Table 2.** Thematic Analysis Process Steps

Steps	Description
Familiarization	It includes reading and re-reading all the collected dates.
Initial Codes	After familiarization, several codes are generated based on the context of the data such as "communication pathways" "fragmented information formats" and "behavioral motivation".
Initial Themes	Codes are then grouped to develop the broader themes.
Reviewing Themes	Themes are reviewed to ensure that they are not distracted from the original research focus and objectives.
Defining and Naming Themes	The focus of the data collected includes defining and naming themes according to the context of the content of the articles selected.
Producing the Report	Utilize these themes in data analysis and discussion.

### Ethical Considerations

Transparency, integrity, and respect for intellectual property are the ethical considerations that are prioritized in this Systematic Literature review (SLR). It has been ensured to properly attribute for original contributions of the authors to avoid plagiarism (Snyder, 2019). Documentation of the methodology, inclusion/exclusion criteria, and search strategy builds on their transparency, therefore it supports their replicability. Predefined criteria were used to guide the selection of studies resulting in minimal bias and objectivity. The contextually significant novel, 'Dream of the Red Mansions,' has been interpreted subtly to avoid misrepresentation. Since the research is limited to secondary data, ethical protocols to access data have been adhered to, involved with no personal, or sensitive data.

## RESULTS

This section will provide a detailed analysis of all the studies chosen/selected systematically. Table 3 represents key themes for analysis.

**Table 3.** Key Themes Identified for Analysis

Themes	Description
Communication Pathways in Smart Media	This theme is designed to analyze how the novel "Dream of Red Mansion" has been communicated through various channels or platforms such as digital media, multimedia adaptations, and websites).
Fragmented Information and Acceptance of Classic Literature	This theme focuses on how fragmented information formats such as memes, excerpts, and short videos affect the emotional and cognitive engagement of young readers with the novel.
Behavior of Female Servants in "Dream of Red Mansion"	This theme will synthesize how the COM-B model, has been used in the existing literature to emphasize female servants' actions, motivations, focussing on how digital media interpretation shapes character analysis.

### Theme 1: Communication Pathways in Smart Media

**Table 4** contains the core element of each article or study by giving an overview of each paper's aims, method, analysis results, and conclusion on communication pathways in smart media particularly focussing on the communication pathways for young readers to study classical literature.

**Table 4.** Summary of Reviewed Studies on Digital Adaptation of Classical Literature

In-text citation	Objectives and Aims	Research Method	Data Analysis Results	Conclusion
Kang (2020)	To investigate the adaptation and promotion of classic literature in new	This paper presents a qualitative analysis of various	Engagement improved through digital platforms,	Digital platforms help to augment and mobilize

In-text citation	Objectives and Aims	Research Method	Data Analysis Results	Conclusion
	digital media.	social media adaptation strategies.	however, narratives became more simplified.	broader young readers' participation in classical literature.
Liberovskaya (2020)	To explore the use of digital media to convey artistic concepts via multimedia adaptation.	Comparative analysis of different digital media and multimedia platforms.	Artistic themes were preserved due to multimedia adaptations but altered the original contexts.	Adaptations in digital media enhanced the artistic concepts.
Nogueira (2023)	To analyze literature to a social media adaptation through digital platforms.	Use of media to analyze the adaptations of literature to social media.	Social media adaptations expanded reader interaction at the expense of narrative complexity.	Social media enhances the interaction between classic literature and the audience.
Strauss (2019)	To evaluate the impact of multimedia narratives on literature communication.	A qualitative study of digital media bards and multimedia storytelling.	Engagement was enhanced, however, the story was distorted in portions through multimedia storytelling.	Interactive adaptations enhance classical text adaptability.
Cobelo & Milton (2023)	To explore the methods used to design the translation of classical texts for digital media users through interaction.	The case study method was employed to study the digital adaptations of classic literary works.	Classic texts became more accessible with the use of interactive methods, although they were often oversimplified.	Interactive adaptations increase the accessibility of the classical text.
Stubbs (2023)	To examine the practicality of adapting classic literature into new forms of journalism and screen fiction.	Textual analysis of literature adapted from classic literature.	New interpretations, however, were introduced through adaptations into journalism and missed literary nuances.	Digital journalism represents new practices in classic productions.
Gualandris (2019)	To explore the role of digital media interactions in bringing story worlds to life.	This study includes a qualitative analysis of different strategies for social media adaptation.	Digital media interaction enhances engagement but results in the misinterpretation of characters.	Digital media interactions result in the enhancement of narrative construction.
Dutta (2020)	To examine the role of network fictional narratives in media and television.	Thematic analysis of the narrative of digital media serialized data.	Multimedia storytelling enhanced engagement but caused partial narrative fragmentation.	Classical text adaptability is enhanced by interactive adaptations.
Meng and	To analyze short-	Qualitative	Short-form	Enhance

In-text citation	Objectives and Aims	Research Method	Data Analysis Results	Conclusion
Zhao (2023)	form video trends in China and their cognitive impact on media consumption patterns.	content analysis of 300+ videos from TikTok/Kuaishou and interviews with frequent viewers.	videos improve accessibility but reduce long-term narrative processing and critical thinking.	accessibility but compromise cognitive depth; contextual enrichment is needed.
McNulty (2022)	To explore the emotional and cultural impacts of viral media (memes, videos) on classical literature.	Comparative analysis of viral adaptations; surveys on emotional/cultural engagement.	Emotional engagement was shallow, focusing on humor, while cultural depth and narrative connections suffered.	Viral media capture attention but fail to sustain emotional or cultural engagement; layered adaptations are required.

The examination of the channels of digital communication shows that, with the help of social media and multimedia transformations, the novel has opened a vast array of opportunities in the perception of young readers. However, these digital formats reduce the complexities of the novel and give readers a partial appreciation of the novel's cultural and narrative essence. The role of communication pathways in engagement is explained by looking at the advantages and disadvantages of using digital media regarding literary communication in response to the research question.

## Theme 2: Fragmented Information and Acceptance of Classic Literature

**Table 5** encapsulates the core elements of all the studies by providing the aims, methodology, data analysis results, and conclusions related to fragmented information and acceptance of classic literature among young readers in the present era.

**Table 5.** Cognitive and Psychological Effects of Fragmented Narratives in Literature

In-Text Citation	Research Objective	Research Methodology	Data Analysis Results	Conclusion
Arnavas (2018)	To explore the reader's cognitive engagement in fragmented narratological formats.	Narrative analysis of fragmented literature formats.	The fragmented narratives provoked cognitive engagement, but emotional depth was limited.	Fragmented formats increase cognitive engagement but reduce emotional depth.
Cheng (2019)	To investigate the psychological implications of literary imagination for fragmented narratives.	Analysis of the psychological basis of literary imagination.	Understanding of complex themes was reduced, but psychological engagement was enhanced.	Fragmented narratives limit psychological engagement with the complexity of the cultural group.
Fang (2022)	To analyze spatial patterning in fragmented literary narratives.	Literature on cognitive mapping and spatial analysis.	The more fragmented the narratives, and the more spatially patterned, the more the visualization of	Engagement is aided by cognitive mapping but at the expense of narrative coherence.

In-Text Citation	Research Objective	Research Methodology	Data Analysis Results	Conclusion
Eisenstadt, Spanga, and Stroessner (2024)	To explore the effects of visual mental imagery in the stereotyping of fragmented information.	To assess the influence of vivid mental imagery on stereotype formation from incomplete content, a mixed methods design was used, with experiments and surveys.	the space increased Particles of content spawned vivid mental imagery, which biased participants' incomplete thinking, reinforcing stereotypes.	Vivid imagery is generated by fragmented narratives, which simplifies and often reinforces stereotypes and points out the cognitive risks inherent to defragmented content.
Mikkonen (2021)	To understand cognitive engagement with philosophical narratives in literature.	A philosophical analysis of cognitive engagement within literature.	Comprehension decreased with increased philosophical engagement.	While the depth of comprehension is limited, the level of philosophical engagement is improved.
Anthony (2018)	To study the desires and the narrative construction of "Dream of the Red Chamber" through fragmented storytelling.	Narrative analysis of fragmented narrative construction.	The interest increases through fragmented storytelling but simplifies complex themes, specifically in "Dream of Red Mansion".	'Dream of the Red Chamber' uses fragmented storytelling to simplify complex themes.

The data supports the argument that breaking up information into short forms like videos and memes captures young audiences' attention, but at the expense of constructing comprehensible and moving storylines. According to the observations, although these formats contribute towards the creation of initial interest and compelling emotions, they negatively affect any serious understanding of such themes and relations. This responds well to the research question as to how eradicating fragmented information affects the cognitive and emotional makeup of the community as well as calling for balanced media.

### Theme 3: Behavioral of Female Servants in Dream of Red Mansion

**Table 6** contains the core elements of all the studies by providing the aims, methodology, data analysis results, and conclusion related to the ethical and behavioral analysis of Female servants in Dream of Red Mansion.

**Table 6.** Behavioral, Psychological, and Cultural Analysis of Characters in *Dream of Red Mansions*

In-Text Citation	Research Objective	Research Methodology	Data Analysis Results	Conclusion
Fan et al. (2018)	To analyze personality disorders and behavior of 'Dream of Red Mansions' characters, using a psychological approach.	Psychological analysis of character behavior and personality disorders.	It revealed complex traits and behavior, which were driven by societal norms.	The psychological and sociological influences are closely tied to the character's behavior in the novel 'Dream of Red Mansions'.
D. Cheng (2018)	To investigate philosophical interpretations	The themes of dream, illusion, and void in	Highlighted philosophical layers of the novel,	The themes present in 'Dream of Red Mansions' tap into

In-Text Citation	Research Objective	Research Methodology	Data Analysis Results	Conclusion
	of 'Dream of Red Mansions', especially the notions of dream, illusion, and void.	philosophical analysis.	connecting human experiences with concepts of dream, illusion, and void.	higher philosophies of human experiences.
Lei and Duan (2018)	To investigate the use of multimodal metaphor in the etiquette mapping of 'Dream of Red Mansion'.	Etiquette mapping was explored through multimodal metaphor analysis.	Illustrated how multimodal metaphors can clarify the understanding of feudal etiquette.	New perspectives for analyzing etiquette in the novel are offered by multimodal metaphors.
Yingqun Wang, Zhang, Li, and Chen (2018)	To explore the analysis of psychological traits of Jia Baoyu's character in 'Dream of Red Mansions' from the behavioral perspective.	A behavioral psychology analysis of Jia Baoyu's character traits.	Jia Baoyu's behavior was found to be influenced by anti-era psychology.	The psychological traits of Jia Baoyu show his anti-era character as in 'Dream of Red Mansions'.
Chen (2023)	They explore the cultural aspect and behavior between 'Dream of Red Mansions' and 'The Tales of Genji'.	Comparative analysis of characters of the two tales using historical context focussing on culture.	A comparison of character behavior found similarities and differences in cultural behavior between the two novels.	Character actions and societal roles are influenced by culture in classic literature.
Jialin Wang (2022)	To explore cross-cultural elements and behavioral dynamics among some characters in 'Dream of Red Mansions'.	Comparative analysis of characters' actions and their societal roles with a cultural focus.	It showed how cultural origins correlate to character actions and societal roles.	The cross-cultural analysis provides a broader understanding of character behavior within classic literature.

The COM-B model analysis shows limited capability, limited opportunity, and cultural relevance in the choice motivation of female servants in Dream of the Red Mansions. These factors build up ethical compliance and obedience to the feudalism system. The research question concerning the ethical and behavioral motivations of the characters is solved by revealing how they are influenced by the observed limited agency and following the norms of society.

## DISCUSSION

### Discussion of the Communication Pathways in Smart Media

"Communication Pathways in Smart Media," focuses on how the classic literature and novel such as Dream of the Red Mansions is adapted and communicated through various digital channels, including social media, multimedia adaptations, and websites. The studies on this theme reveal positive and significant challenges in meeting the needs of readers who seek to explore classic literature in the context of digital media as the rise of digital media transforms how classic literature is presented and consumed. In general, the studies agree that digital adaptations of classic texts have made them more accessible to young readers by doing things like memes, videos, and interactive content. But this continually shifting to digital consumption makes it easy to simplify complex narratives, changing original themes and contexts. This accords with previous scholarly concerns that

digital adaptations do not adequately preserve the cultural and literary depth of classic works. This critical discussion of the theme examines how findings from different selected studies were aligned and how they deviated from another scholarly work to add more to it on how digital communication affects the reading of classic literature.

As Kang (2020) points out, social media and digital platforms make classical literature, like *Dream of the Red Mansions*, more accessible to young readers through its simplification and dissemination. Since, Yiwen Wang (2022) argues, such transmedia adaptations tend to flatten historical and cultural specificity in favor of the broadest possible global reach. While multimedia formats attract widespread audiences, Wang argues that they tend to favor visual entertainment over faithful representation of traditional values. Yiwen Wang, however, emphasizes that oversimplification of this sort will not help to appreciate the historical and cultural context of the text, in stark contrast with Kang's positive perspective about the effects of increased engagement. Both studies agree on the extension of reach help from digital tools but disagree regarding the influence on narrative depth. Thus, the need for more culture-conscious digital adaptations becomes clear from this contrast.

Liberovskaya (2020) emphasizes why the artistic themes of multimedia adaptations are rendered while their narrative structures are altered to fit digital formats as a progressive development in literary communication. On the other hand, Dicecco (2015) complains about the "ends of adaptation," which involves the fact that digital culture often undermines the literary performance of complex narratives in their fragmented forms. While Liberovskaya stresses the creation potentials of intermediality in engaging audiences, Dicecco warns of how algorithmic preferences and audience-driven formats cripple adaptations losing their contextual richness and originality. Both of the studies agree on the transformative power of digital media but disagree on the consequences. Comparing Dicecco's critique with that regarding the issues of narrative distortion in *Dream of the Red Mansions*, his concerns are the most pertinent here and generate an interesting counterpoint to Liberovskaya's positivistic approach to multimedia adaptation.

According to Nogueira (2023), social media adaptations are changing young reader's involvement with classic literature in China, which increases engagement and interaction but decreases narrative complexity. This matches the findings of Rodríguez, García-Jiménez, Massó-Guijarro, and Cruz-González (2021), who found that digital storytelling is best used in education because simplified narratives encourage faster cognitive engagement but restrain deeper comprehension. Also, Hammond (2015) observed that digital literature can quickly engage readers but does not maintain reader interest over time, since the contextual depth is reduced. Nogueira's observations correspond with Cartmell (2009), who maintains that while digital media may facilitate literature's accessibility, it also contributes to a more superficial delivery of the text, frequently stripping complex thematic components into easily digestible content.

While multimedia storytelling can enhance engagement, Strauss (2019) highlights the partial narrative distortions that create a significant drawback. Hu (2022) also finds similar results in her analysis of cross-media adaptations of *Journey to the West*, another Chinese classic, for which a multimedia format features action rather than depth, resulting in distorted character interpretations. Strauss and Hu both argue that multimedia storytelling is good at spreading beyond a story's intended audience, but also tends to focus on spectacle over thematic coherence. In addition, Phillips and Williams (2004) contends that this focus on visual appeal can alter the audience's perception of the original work's character dynamics, including efforts to maintain narrative integrity in digital adaptations. This analysis highlights a common trend in adaptation to the digital: engagement frequently comes at the expense of thematic and character fidelity.

Cobelo and Milton (2019) investigates the option of digital adaptations of classic texts as a vehicle to make these texts digitally accessible via interactive and engaging means, such as through gamification and user-driven narratives. However, Babaryka (2024) complains about these interactivities with a critique that 21st-century digital media has pushed for immediacy and entertainment at the expense of narrative coherence and depth. For Cobelo, the democratization of literature through digital platforms is wonderful, but for Babaryka, these adaptations all too easily give way to the reduction of works of literature to shallow experiences, without their weight at the level of emotion and philosophy. However, while both studies look at how digital formats transform literary engagement, they diverge over their implications. Babaryka's critique aligns with the problems of oversimplification of *Dream of the Red Mansions* and questions how far simplification is a price worth paying for accessibility.

Concerning journalism adaptations of Chinese classic literature, Wang et al., (2022) argues that the adaptations frequently provide new interpretations while exhibiting little literary nuance. This echoes Pressman (2014) who contends that journalistic forms tend to privilege newsworthiness over literary fidelity and narrow the scope of interpretation of classic works. Barton Palmer (2009) encountered similar results when he noted that adaptations of classic literature to digital news distorted the ethical and thematic complexities of a given work to

meet short consumption formats. Stubbs and Pressman agree that while digital adaptations of classic literature make the topic more relatable to contemporary audiences, they often relegate a text's complexity to easy digestibility and overlook the limitations of digital adaptations in preserving orifice narrative depth.

Consistent with Bacchilega's (2013) account of digital adaptations in fairy tales, Gualandris (2019) observed that digital media interactions that promote conversation also reduce narrative immersion and lead to the misrepresentation of character dynamics. Bacchilega proposes that character arcs are frequently reshaped in digital formats to fit modern cultural expectations, introducing changes to original character motivations. This observation is further supported by Yee (1995) that digital adaptations of Chinese classics tend to portray characters in diminished form to suit modern audiences, corrupting the original representations of the character. Both studies highlight a necessity to better characterize the adaptive strategies to maintain narrative authenticity when digital media facilitates greater immersive potential.

As noted by Dutta (2020), serialized narratives are accessible but fragmentary. This parallels Barton Palmer (2007), who posits that serialized adaptations of classic literature fragment elaborate narratives into more digestible chunks, resulting in thematic loss. This finding also is supported by Zhou (2013), who asserts that serialized formats in classic texts often interrupt the pacing and structure of the original work so that it is unable to be fully comprehended. Both Dutta and Wong highlight how serialization of the classics makes the works more engaging to younger audiences but at the same time creates challenges when attempting to maintain narrative continuity.

### Implications

These findings have implications for educators and media developers involved in the digital preservation of classic literature, as well as for literary scholars seeking to maintain the integrity of classic literature in digital formats. While digital adaptations are a great entry point for young readers, they should augment adaptations with supplementary materials that facilitate a deeper understanding of the complexity of the narrative and provide students with historical and cultural context. Tools like video annotations, discussion forums, and guided readings can be used to enrich understanding and maintain the thematic integrity of works like *Dream of the Red Mansions*. The studies for media developers show the need for highly sophisticated models of both engagement and depth in adaptation. As developers integrate layered storytelling approaches, including branching narratives and interactive footnotes, users can be encouraged to explore the full richness of classic texts. For literary scholars, these findings ultimately point to the need to develop adaptation frameworks that emphasize the fidelity to narrative and culture. These standards and guidelines can aid in encouraging scholars to contribute to adaptation theory by creating that preserves the thematic and character complexities of classic literature while exploiting the interactive capacity of digital media.

### Discussion of Fragmented Information and Acceptance of Classic Literature

This theme focuses on how contemporary Chinese readers read classic Chinese literature in the presence of fragmented information such as the form of memes, short stories, and visual content. The benefits and limitations of these formats are presented in the studies from the SLR, in a trade-off against thematic depth and increased accessibility. Further critical analysis of this theme relates alignment and divergence of findings from these selected studies to other scholarly work that considers broader ramifications of the fragmented format in young readers' cognitive and emotional involvement with Chinese classic literature.

Fragmented storytelling attracts readers by breaking complex themes, but detracts due to emotional shallowness from fragmented storytelling (Arnavas, 2018). This is what Damm (2007) supports by showing that the fragmented content format makes classical Chinese narrative easier, yet often results in oversimplification that undermines the immersive experience. In the same way, Shan (2021) investigated fragmented translations of Chinese classics while showing that these adaptations appeal to younger readers, but omit the essential emotional undertones that are crucial to a complete literary experience. Taken together, these studies suggest that readers will find fragmented formats appealing while also signaling the potential for a shallow reading experience that lacks emotional depth.

Cheng (2019) examined the psychological implications of literary imagination in fragmented narratives by suggesting increased psychological engagement but such an understanding of complex themes remains limited. Xie, Rost, F. X. Wang, Wang, and Monk (2021) also found similar patterns in social media content where fragmented formats facilitate quick psychological connection, but do not support sustained cognitive engagement necessary to understand the classics. In addition, Tickell (2023) considered that though fragmented adaptations can capture the attention of new readers, they distort the intertextual and thematic features of the classic literature. The results of these studies suggest that although the fragmented formats initially stimulate interest, they do not facilitate a more comprehensive understanding of complex themes.

In fragmented literary narratives, Fang (2022) examined cognitive mapping and spatial analysis and found that fragmented formats facilitate cognitive visualization but may undermine narrative coherence. This finding is consistent with M. C. Ma (2006), who analyzed spatial patterning in *The Story of the Western Wing* and found that fragmented content helps visualize isolated scenes, but not cohesive narrative engagement. As Anthony (2018) observes, spatial fragmentation increased Honglou Meng's exposure to its readers, however, these interpretations fragmented the whole narrative of the text. Together, these studies show that fragmentation enhances the cognitive benefits of visual engagement, but comes at the expense of a holistic understanding of the text.

Eisenstadt et al. (2024) demonstrate how fragmented content increases vivid visual mental imagery, which while engaging, results in the reinforcement of stereotypes. This is consistent with Li (2019) who argued that although Chinese classical literature adapts of the literature are more accessible than highly literal translations, such adaptations fragment the continuous narrative that is necessary for deep engagement, but it also exacerbates the cognitive bias. Chow (2004) also adds to this, as he discusses the weakness of modern Chinese literature against classic Chinese literature: the former has a broader audience but its narratives are fragmented without the cultural and thematic consistency of the classic texts. These studies demonstrate that visual and fragmented adaptations enable engagement but compromise expressiveness and the continuity and coherence that are necessary to appreciate classic literature for its depth.

Mikkonen (2021) explored how cognitive engagement with philosophical narratives is mediated by different formats, and fragmented format has been found to increase accessibility and reduce the depth of comprehension. This is exactly what Denton (1996) has also noted in Chinese classics' fragmented adaptations, where readers prefer short-form adaptations and fail to comprehend the complex philosophical underpinnings. Inwood (2020) also corroborates this view when analyzing Chinese transmedia fiction and fragmented storytelling, showing the smart drive to engage readers with scattered formats, but also showing how this can lead to oversimplifying philosophical narratives and thus reduce their interpretive value. Collectively, these studies support the idea that in return for offering fragmented formats of philosophical and classic literature, one may sacrifice thematic richness and depth.

Anthony (2018) further states that fragmented formats increase interest and reduce the degree of complexity of the themes in *Dream of the Red Chamber*. Jiayao Wang (2020) reiterates this point, that fragmented narrative formats are means to access instant narration but the fragmented format does not help the reader understand the intricacies of the text's themes and character relations. Hsia (2016) also pointed out that *Dream of the Red Chamber* is fragmented, appealing to the current young readers, but weak in realizing the sophisticated understanding of *Dream of the Red Chamber's* cultural and thematic aspects. Together, these studies show that fragmented formats are a valid tool for engagement but have a side effect with an oversimplified reading experience on behalf of the ultimate richness of the complete original narrative.

Ghafar et al. (2023) are interested in the application of microlearning, a modular learning mechanism, for language learning. It explains that the simplest, easily digestible content facilitates cognitive interactivity, according to Meng and Zhao's (2023) view about short videos being more helpful in this regard. However, Ghafar et al. propose a more systematic and pedagogically aware approach, and thus reveal the potential of microlearning for supporting cognitive engagement over time through gradually increasing the level of difficulty. On the other hand, Meng and Zhao observe that short-form videos are characterized by shallow thinking because of the short attention spans. Although both research works support the accessibility benefits, Ghafar et al. recommend integrating microlearning with the learning objective structure to overcome the issues that fragmented media pose to critical thinking raised by Meng & Zhao. Together, they propose that accessibility features should be allied with designed affordances in a way that sustains cognitive complexity in digital translations.

Pósfai (2020) reflects on the transformation of reading practices and reveals the movement from immersive engagement to transitive relationships. The findings are consistent with McNulty's (2022) finding that viral media, such as memes, videos, etc. lead to shallow emotional resonance and superficial cultural depth. The main theme of the first study is that digital tools value immediacy over sustained engagement with complex narratives, while the second shows the ways that digital tools work to address users' immediate demands for products online. But Pósfai takes this even further, studying the social ramifications of this shift: digital adaptations change readers' collective understanding of literary works. But McNulty focuses instead on how the accessibility of that character reshapes its charge to character relationships and themes. Where McNulty deals with the depth of the literary, Pósfai is concerned with more general societal changes in reading habits. Taken together these critiques highlight the importance of multiple storytelling which balances narrative and emotional complexity with accessibility.

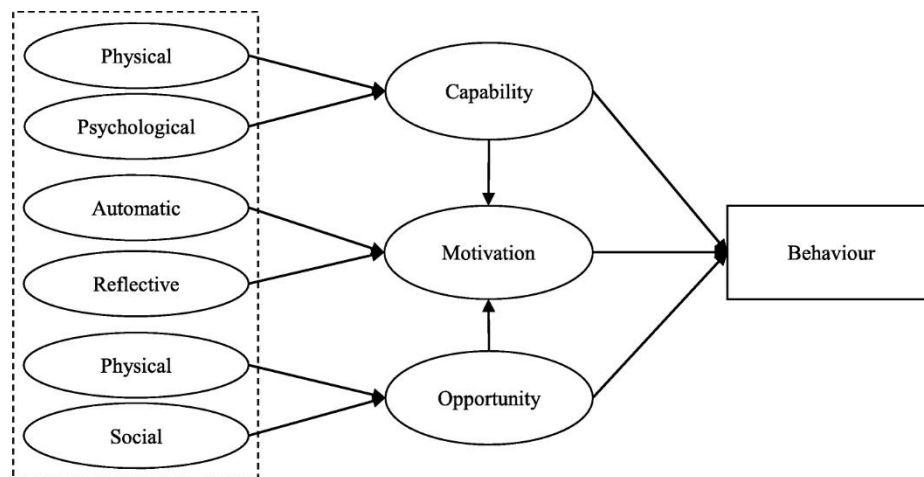
### Implications

Practical methods of digital delivery of classic literature are found to increase the engagement of young readers while simultaneously maintaining thematic depth. Educational programs offering complex texts allow

multimedia content into these programs, such as introducing them with guides and/or annotated resources to enhance the overall knowledge about the content. Interactive formats offer digital publishers the opportunity to digitally publish a limited adaptation alongside supporting devices such as a contextual explanation or extended readings, allowing readers the opportunity for cognitive engagement without sacrificing narrative integrity. The hybrid model could allow for the balance of cognitive depth required for full appreciation of classical literature while remaining accessible.

### Discussion of Ethical and Behavioral Analysis of Female Servants in Dream of Red Mansion using COM-B model

In 2011, the COM-B model was developed by Susan Michie and colleagues to be a means to understand and influence behavior. Behaviors can occur due to a combination of Capability, Opportunity, and Motivation. This model is used as part of the Behavior Change Wheel, a broader system for interventions of behavior change (Willmott, Pang, & Rundle-Thiele, 2021). COM-B model is widely used in behavioral and social psychology, and in health and social research to identify and deal with the factors involved in behavior. It serves as a basis for designing interventions avoiding specific components such as education in terms of raising the psychological capacity, or social opportunities that open opportunities for desired behavior (Jatau et al., 2019). The 'crux' of the model is that capability, motivation, and opportunity work together to enable the behavior (Figure 2). With the help of the COM-B model, literary analysis is enabled to understand the behavior of the characters in a structured manner. The model can be shown in Dream of the Red Mansions to illustrate how the social environment, the human endowment, and the related motivation determine a character's behavioral pattern, especially for female servants, who settle in a nailed social legal network.



Note. Adapted from: "The behaviour change wheel: A new method for characterising and designing behaviour change interventions," by S. Michie et al., 2011, *Implementation Science*, 6(1) p.42.

**Figure 2.** The COM-B Model

Source: <https://bmcpublikealth.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s12889-021-11019-w/figures/1>

Fan et al. (2018) analyzed the social norms and moral education that shaped the limited psychological and physical capabilities of female servants. Edwards (1990) also supports this by looking at how the purity and moral virtue of women are over-emphasized in Honglou Meng. Their restricted education and psychological conditioning were to keep them from being able to act without being told. Its reliance on male authority was inoculated as with all subjugated females, with Confucian stereotypes and passive acceptance of suffering through their upbringing. In terms of Capability, the female servants were unable to develop educated minds capable of critical thinking as well as education, thus remaining subservient regarding the established norms, according to the COM-B model. Constrained opportunity in a society which functioned on strict rules and little interaction away from the household. The voice in them served very internalized, they were very motivated deeply, and they believed serving is a moral and an ethical duty, so they depended on the voice ringing in them. This validates their alignment with societal expectations and their failure to change behavior.

However, D. Cheng (2018) examines the confined social interactions in the Jia household. Zhou (2011) investigates how the role of religious practices works to reinforce these constraints. Additionally, embedding a very strict ethical framework, religious spaces, and clerical authority limited female autonomy as well. Both studies point out that female servants' behavior was conditioned by their confinement and the ideal machine they

had been subject to, which maintained subservience and further restricted their vision. According to the COM-B model, restrictions from the spatial and social confines of the Jia household and religious practices prevented any opportunities. There was minimal education, diverse teaching experiences, and the overall incapability of exploring other ethical frameworks. Servants were motivated to align with appropriate behaviors in fear of divine punishment as well as a sense of religious duty. The lack of opportunity and psychological capability led to a cycle of ethical conformity.

Lei and Duan (2018) also find the motivation to be key in driving behavior as they study the conflict between cultural duty and personal loyalty. Lee (1997) also mentions in his study "Honglou Meng" how female characters often gave up their own emotions for the well-being of the family to the extent of ignoring personal desires. Overall, the findings of both studies show that employees' actions in opposition to their well-being were motivated by the cultural expectation of preserving the family and social harmony. In this case, Motivation was the most driving factor of this case using the COM-B model because servants put loyalty to the family above their ethical beliefs. To some extent, cultural teachings limit acting autonomously by embracing self-sacrifice. However, virtually nil opportunity existed for these norms to be challenged due to societal and familial constraints. It therefore emphasises the ingrained choice between duty and personal ethics, wherein the former is often sacrificed for the latter just to please familial loyalty.

Chen (2023) emphasized the role of mentorship in ethical development. Continuing, Zhou (2011) further argued that religious mentorship further conformed female servants to their roles, enabling them to continue adhering to traditional values. Both studies also revealed that female characters didn't have their actions but were controlled, they were instructed to act the same way to establish social hierarchy and gender exchange norms. According to the COM-B model, the almost negligible capacity to make autonomous decisions was still dependent on social norms about what is acceptable behavior. Social and familial structures are imposed by compliance, thereby curtailing opportunity for autonomy. Servants were encouraged to do what was expected in traditional terms because it was considered a duty, and there would be social repercussions if they disobeyed. Combined with limited capability and opportunity, this limits supine and prescriptive behavior.

Jialin Wang (2022) examined the conflict between personal ethics and family loyalty was examined. Edwards (1995) has also examined similar themes: societal expectations often require characters to disregard personal values for the good of the family. Both studies emphasize noting that female servants were caught in a web of cultural demands that dictated they act the same way they would according to their moral understanding rather than by the family in which they lived. COM-B Model suggests that motivation was the main driver and that cultural and family pressures were important in behavior. The ingrained sense of duty and loyalty overshadowed the ability to act independently. The rigid structure of the family and fear of social ostracism limited the opportunity for deviation from these norms. The analysis demonstrates how the motivation, derived from cultural values, influenced behavior and inhibited discernment of personal ethical considerations.

Finally, the application of the COM-B model to the female servants' behavior in Honglou Meng can be understood as poor Capacity, limited Opportunity, and very strong cultural Motivation. Female servants were restrained from independent decision-making by educational and psychosocial resources. They only knew ethics as it was being taught to them by society. Religious doctrines, rigid social structures, and economic dependency made them disadvantaged in acting beyond the norms of society. The physical and social environments to which the Jia household was exposed restricted it to exposure to alternative ethical perspectives. Internalized Confucian values and family loyalty that highly shaped behavior acted as a motivation behind behavior and that behavior was congruent with society's expectations. Yet, despite their awareness of the psychological conditioning, lack of opportunity and overpowering motivation allowed the cycle of subservience and ethical conformity to perpetuate.

### Implications

Using the COM-B model to explain the behavioral and ethical dynamics of female servants in Dream of the Red Mansions provides a comprehensive view of the application of the model. This analysis can help educators to know the behavior of the characters and the teaching methods used by them which bring into focus the relationship of context and literature. In addition, the relevance of the findings extends to the current adaption of literature classics by also the essentials like abiding strictness with the complexities in the character's motivation to retain historical values. Moreover, this analysis illustrates avenues through which behavior change interventions, such as increasing autonomy or offering educational opportunities, can enable individuals to retain their capabilities in constrained environments.

### Challenges and Opportunities

The Digital adaptations of the Dream of the Red Mansions certainly provide challenges and opportunities to engage the young with classical literature. In one way, social media, short videos, and multimedia adaptations

have made their content visually captivating and Interactive, which subsequently increases accessibility along with engagement (Kang, 2020; Nogueira, 2023). Quick consumption and cognitive visualization of fragmented media formats such as literary works make them more approachable to readers unfamiliar with traditional texts (Fang, 2022). Interactive storytelling and annotated digital editions (Rodríguez et al., 2021) allow for the preservation of cultural works but, alongside this noteworthy feature, there is an issue of thematic richness versus accessibility. Yet, these adaptations also make the stories easier and much less complex than classical literature (Shan, 2021; Eisenstadt et al., 2024). Many times, the visual appeal is valued more than the original themes and character arcs Fan et al. (2018). Thoughtful integration of multimedia annotations, interactive guides, and historical context can help to bridge these gaps yet maintain a balance between engagement and narrative integrity.

## CONCLUSION

This paper examined the reception and reinterpretation of *Dream of the Red Mansions* (or *Honglou Meng*) in the era of smart media among young audiences. The research utilized a systematic literature review (SLR) approach to determine communication pathways, and the effects of information format fragmentation, and an ethical and behavioral analysis of female servants were analyzed utilizing the COM-B model. This methodology brought together the contours of how classic Chinese literature is engaged within modern digital platforms, as well as the psychological and ethical dilemmas of the novel.

Results from Theme 1 focus on communication pathways, showed that digital platforms enhance access and engagement for a wider audience for *Honglou Meng*. But this accessibility can cost in narrative complexity and cultural depth. Digital adaptations and multimedia formats simplify the novel's themes, risking diluting its rich cultural context and rendering it difficult for readers to fully grasp its intricate story. This simplification affects how young audiences perceive and appreciate the novel's literary and cultural significance.

Theme 2 looked into how the fragmenting of information formats such as memes and short videos affects the acceptance and understanding of modern literature. The results showed that these formats increase levels of emotional engagement with readers, but also diminish narrative coherence, reducing readers' ability to understand complex themes and character arcs. Fragmented content emphasizes immediacy and entertainment at the expense of the depth and contemplative nature of the original text. The study found that, while young audiences are attracted to short, visually appealing content, this approach to engaging them is not at the level of a more authoritative understanding of classic literature.

Theme 3 applied the COM-B model to the ethical and behavioral actions of female servants in *Honglou Meng*. These results highlighted how these behaviors were heavily influenced by limited capabilities (e.g. lack of education and autonomy), constrained opportunities (driven by societal and hierarchical structures), and motivated by strong values and social expectations being shaped by Confucian values. The study revealed that in the interest of cultural norms and familial duties, female servants, on many occasions, undermined their desires and personal ethical autonomy. In addition to mentorship and social structures, these behaviors were reinforced and encouraged through compliance and subservience.

Educators and media developers can fill this gap between accessibility and narrative complexity by developing practical strategies to keep the integrity of classical literature and draw modern audiences. Hybrid learning techniques (sometimes referred to as blended learning) take a carefully orchestrated use of multimedia tools such as short videos, annotated excerpts from a full novel, guided readings, and interactive discussions to explore deeper themes and character arcs. Supplemental resources will help students make the connections between fragments of adaptations and the complexity of the novel. Project-based activities like producing multimedia adaptations i.e., video essays encourage creative expression and respect for cultural and thematic fidelity. For media developers, these layered adaptations can start with simple content that links to more explanatory material, background, and cultural annotations. Interactive digital editions can be developed with embedded multimedia tools such as a pop-up annotation or character motivation, to enhance user engagement. Collaborations with educational platforms to advance algorithms that create content that maintains literary depth to shareability. Through their application, educators and developers alike can stand on a safe middle ground in accessing cultural richness while remaining accessible.

In general, the study found that smart media platforms offer new alternatives to interact with the classic literature, while at the same time, they create new complications by simplifying and fragmenting elaborated narratives. The examination of the character actions of female servants in *Honglou Meng* demonstrates how historical and cultural factors shape character actions; modern adaptations have to carefully consider these

influences into account to keep the novel's integrity.

## **LIMITATIONS**

The study does not explore how fragmented media affects young audiences versus older age groups, it leaves gaps in understanding how *Dream of the Red Mansions* might differ according to different generation groups. The COM-B model could traditionally be used to analyze the real world, but its usage for the literary characters is limited. Its use of textual interpretation rather than empirically reasoned data is based upon the fact that characters' actions are determined from fictional settings and cultural contexts, not physical evidence. For example, the analysis of the motivations of female servants in *Dream of the Red Mansions* is being interpreted with insight into the Confucian values in the society. Though the model itself has limited predictive skill, it is useful for deconstructing behaviors down into Capability, Opportunity, and Motivation to gain insight into societal and psychological influences. Combined with methods of literary analysis, it allows a structured search for ethical dilemmas in classical literature.

## **FUTURE DIRECTIONS**

In future research, the psychological impact of fragmented media should be studied in a broader demographic range, and engagement with *Dream of the Red Mansions* should be examined across age groups and cultural backgrounds. Furthermore, comparative studies could explore how classic literature is processed and interpreted in different international contexts as part of exploring cultural factors that shape literary interaction in the digital age. In addition, investigation on the extent to which visual aesthetics and multimedia features are helping or hindering narrative comprehension and emotional engagement.

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