



From Cinema to Screen Space: Interactive Possibilities in Malayalam OTT Storytelling

¹Jose Babu & ²Ashkar Shaji

¹Assistant Professor, Department of English

St. Paul's College, Kalamassery

²III BA Economics

St. Paul's College, Kalamassery



Open Access

Manuscript ID:

BIJ-SPL4-Mar26-ES-073

Subject: English Studies

Received: 23.12.2025

Accepted: 13.01.2026

Published: 17.03.2026

DOI: 10.64938/bij.v10si4.26.Mar073

Copy Right:



This work is licensed under
a Creative Commons Attribution-
ShareAlike 4.0 International License.

Abstract

Malayalam OTT stories are attaining bigger audience views as they emerge with different interactivities over the time. It is now a digitally mediated screen environment that allows for new kinds of audience interaction rather than the traditional way of theatre screening. Malayalam OTT stories are attaining bigger audience views as they emerge with different interactivities over the time. While the film world debates on the clear choices and trending new narratives, Malayalam film and narrative styles always brings wonders with interpretation, ethics, and shared cultural ideas and conversations. This paper studies on how Malayalam OTT storytelling uses narrative forms to create interaction. Looking at *C U Soon* (2020), *Minnal Murali* (2021), and *Pharma* (2025) through the lens of transmedia storytelling and participatory culture, it claims that these stories build a space where viewers engage themselves both mentally and emotionally. It also shows how local theatres are adapting general digital patterns to the local narrative traditions.

Keywords: malayalam cinema, OTT platforms, interactive storytelling, transmedia, screen space, mollywood

Introduction

An innumerable influence has been put on the modern media culture because of the emergence of the so-called over-the-top (OTT) platforms. The fast increase in the number of digital streaming sources, even the pandemic has changed the distribution of films and the viewing habits of the population in a significant proportion. The cinema has opened the time to travel through using mobile devices and personal gadgets, using digital interfaces of all varieties. The world change has not left the Indian

media industry out. The Malayalam cinema has not been an exception as it has had to evolve drastically and necessarily as it had to survive. The Malayalam films were ever thought of as a source of realist narration, richness of literature and in the long run a devotion of social and political criticism and now have found a new medium of exhibition in OTT and have been finding a new medium of narrative and formal exploration. Malayalam OTT narrations reflected the social and economic living, social issues in the society and wrong choices and it is a new



beginning unlike mainstream cinema cognitions that is more about acting, star-driven narration or franchise-driven developments. This cinematic adaptation of the novel elicits some sort of attachment in the viewer. In contrast to the traditional OTT portals, Malayalam OTT narrative is a series of uninhibited model based on exposition, self-explorations and structures of acceptance rooted in the culture.

The Malayalam over-the-top (OTT) narratives referred to in this paper can be defined as the way of redemption of cinematic gaze into the screen space, the digital space, where to have intercourse as a way of significant dialogues, moral considerations, and rational action. As it was revealed in this paper, the analysis of C U Soon, Minnal Murali, and Pharma reveals that Malayalam OTT films can make the audience engage with assistance of moral ambiguity, multimedia transmission and narrative ambiguities rather than actual exchanging systems. Interactive storytelling Interactive storytelling Digital games, hypertext literature and experimental cinema Research literature Interactive storytelling has always been based on interactive digital games, hypertext literature and experimental cinema, where the agency of the user is mostly the defining feature of the reciprocity characteristic, and non-linear storytelling forms. This has been applied to interactive audio-visual stories due to the success of streaming service, after a viral release of the Black Mirror: Bandersnatch. Those experiments have been criticized to give agency to the audience in deceitful way or even simulation of choice in strictly determined narrative sense. This idea of transmedia storytelling by Henry Jenkins offers a closer look at the element of interaction by placing more emphasis on the culture of participation as opposed to the technological alternative. Jenkins explains that the very presence of the already existing narratives being stretched to the other media platforms assumes that the audience will be stimulated to construct the story worlds via devotion and growth. The perspective lays a lot of stress on the fans, audience labour and cultural circulation as the elements of the narrative experience.

In the Indian context, the study of the OTT platforms has been dominated by the Indian-Language, its contents and the alterations on industry that render the local cinemas unnecessary. The Malayalam OTT consumption (used in the current study) implies that the local audience attributes importance to the richness of the story, realism and culture. Nevertheless, the how must be subjected to critical analysis, which is a time-consuming task. Malayalam OTTs lack the conceptual ideas and interactivity is not excessive. The paper shall seek to fill this gap by comparing the entrenchment of the interactive opportunities within the culture with the technology oriented attributes. This study is based on the three theoretical perspectives that are related to one another. To begin with, Transmedia as concepts of storytelling is a model in which the person would take the subject of how stories can cross over the medium, and how they can be extended and packaged to the audience using the mediums. Secondly, the interactive media theory makes it possible to differentiate the traditional version of interactivity where the user input causes the alteration of the outcome of the narrative and the illustrative one where the cognitive and emotional investment is in the priority. Third, the cultural studies strategies of tracing and labelling the means of the audience to communicate and discursively, broadcasting on social media, and dispensing the cultural concepts. The integration of both of these strategies at the same time allows taking Malayalam OTT narration, which locates the interaction culturally in a particular situation, practice and is not the result of technological determinism.

The research methodology to be embraced in this paper is qualitative research that is founded on humanities. The texts have been selected based on their cultural meanings, formal adjustment and topical arrangement and interactivity in narration of the stories. The analysis of the text is performed based on the structure of narration, attractive and beautiful strategies and central themes and the cultural interpretations are combined. The paratextual texts of the audience discourse,



promotional materials, and interviews are also taken into consideration in order to understand the ways, in which the narratives exceed the major work. According to the critical approaches to film and media analysis, the interpretation is given more emphasis to interpretative patterns and narrative approaches than to quantitative indicators.

Screen Life and Interpretive Interactivity in C U Soon

Released in the period of the COVID-19 pandemic, C U Soon became a significant event in the Malayalam OTT storytelling. The movie entirely conveys its plot with digital interfaces which include laptop screens, video calls, emails, and messaging software. The film is not relying on the technology as an instrument, but mediation through digital means becomes the focus of the narrative. The story is presented by pieces of information, sluggish responses, and incomplete disclosure which reveal themselves on the screen. Due to this arrangement, the audience has to be attentive to minor visual and temporal prompts that are incorporated into the digital space. Meaning does not come out of thin air but it is formed slowly as the audience tries to link the fragments of information. By doing so, C U Soon makes viewers passive interpreters who construct the story based on several fragments. Communication is thus done at the level of cognition, demonstrating the extent to which a seemingly limited storytelling method can stimulate interaction in the absence of providing definite technological options.

Transmedia World-Building in Minnal Murali

Another instance of how Malayalam cinema is finding out a new way to engage the audience is the superhero film Minnal Murali. Despite the fact that the movie is mostly linear in its plot, the story world of the movie extends outside of the film through numerous types of transmedia circulation. Promotional comics, artwork, interviews and fan generated material enable viewers to keep being involved with the story even after the screen goes off. Notably, this growth is not pegged on strict

franchise arrangements. Rather, Minnal Murali is a flexible and open world. The fans are actively involved in the process of creating and developing the narrative universe through discussions, creative works, and other forms of interaction on the Internet. In this case, interactivity is not induced by manipulating the plot, but through cultural involvement and shared imagination. This is just one of the ways Malayalam cinema can change a world-recognized genre and still stay very local and sensual. Pharma Moral Engagement and Ethical Interactivity. The Malayalam OTT show Pharma presents a new variant of interactivity by concentrating on the ethical dilemmas. The series takes place in the pharmaceutical industry to interrogate the issue of corporate power, medical ethics, and individual responsibility. Instead of providing definite moral judgments, the story does not provide a solution to most of the problems, making the viewers seek ways to clarify their role in ethics. Viewing Pharma does not necessarily end with the episode, especially due to the possibility of discussions and debate about the ethical issues discussed in the story on the Internet. This type of engagement works on the level of moral thinking, which makes the viewers think critically about the systemic injustice and personal responsibility. In this regard, Pharma does not merely offer audiences as observers but rather as the participants that are actually involved in the ethical aspects of the story.

Malayalam OTT and Idea of Screen Space

In all these three instances, we can see that there is a common trend. OTT narration Malayalam storytelling provides the viewers with the opportunities to engage in interpretation, moral thinking, and transmedia. Instead of remaining purely technological in his or her interactivity or the control of the user, these stories will invite the audience to participate in the story in more interpretive and cultural terms. This method contrasts with most of the aggressive Western models of interactive media which tend to conceptualize interactivity primarily in terms of technological



decision. Instead, Malayalam OTT stories emphasize on the interpretations of the audience, familiarity with a culture, and participation in a story. The above examples hinted that interactivity is not just an attribute of technology but a culturally conditioned experience that is formed through the interaction between the audience, narratives, and circumstances under which they are perceived.

Conclusion

This paper demonstrates that Malayalam movies on OTT sites increase the concept of interactivity in storytelling. These films do not leave the audience to be interacted with by direct technology, but encourage them to interact with them through interpretations, ethical understanding and cultural involvement. Through the analysis of such films as *C U Soon*, *Minnal Murali*, and *Pharma*, the paper shows how Malayalam cinema can adjust worldwide OTT storytelling practices to regional plots and viewer demands. The notion of screen space that is analysed in this study focuses on the participation of the viewers. Instead of merely responding to the technology, the audience is involved in a more significant task of interpreting the narrative, applying it to cultural situations and answering the moral queries. With OTT platforms and their influence on the modern media environment still in flux, the case of Malayalam cinema can be seen as a valuable opportunity to explore how interactive storytelling can be modified to still be attached to the local culture and storytelling.

Works Cited

1. Athique, Adrian, and Vibodh Parthasarathi. "Platformisation of Indian Media: OTT

- Platforms and the Transformation of Cultural Production." *Media, Culture & Society*, vol. 42, nos. 7–8, 2020, pp. 1155–1172.
2. *C U Soon*. Directed by Mahesh Narayanan, Amazon Prime Video, 2020.
3. D'Aloia, Adriano. "Against Interactivity: Phenomenological Notes on *Black Mirror: Bandersnatch*." *Series: International Journal of TV Serial Narratives*, vol. 6, no. 2, 2020, pp. 21–32.
4. "The Dichotomy of Doors: An Analysis of *C U Soon*." *ShodhKosh: Journal of Visual and Performing Arts*, Granthaalayah Publication, 2023.
5. Jenkins, Henry. *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide*. New York University Press, 2006.
6. KUEY Research Group. "What Kerala Youth Prefers on OTT Platforms: A Study." *Kerala University E-Journal*, 2025.
7. Kumar, R. M. "A New Wave Revives the Golden Age of Malayalam Cinema." *The Indian Express*, 8 Sept. 2021, indianexpress.com/article/entertainment/malayalam/the-revival-of-the-golden-age-in-malayalam-cinema-7470969/.
8. *Minnal Murali*. Directed by Basil Joseph, Netflix, 2021.
9. *Pharma*. Directed by P. R. Arun, performance by Nivin Pauly, JioHotstar, 2025.
10. Roth, Christian, and Hartmut Koenitz. "Bandersnatch, Yea or Nay? Reception and User Experience of an Interactive Digital Narrative Video." *Proceedings of the ACM International Conference on Interactive Experiences for TV and Online Video (TVX '19)*, ACM, 2019.