Narrative AI Strategies for Media, Ethics and Higher Education

Impulse Perspectives from Practice Based Media Education

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Abstract. The transformation of narrative creation, authorship, and authenticity in the age of Generative AI is not merely a technological shift, but a cultural, epistemic, and ethical realignment. This paper argues that this transformation requires a threefold competence profile—technical proficiency, narrative design capability, and ethical reflexivity—cultivated in both higher education and corporate practice. This motive connects interdisciplinary teaching with strategic implications for communication, marketing, and oragnisational governance, bridging theory and real-world applications.

Keywords: GenAI, narrative creation, media ethics, higher education, corporate communication

1 Introduction and Motivation

The widespread adoption of Generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI) technologies is reshaping core paradigms of narration, authorship, and authenticity in both media and academic discourse. As digital transformation accelerates, higher education institutions are not only challenged to incorporate GenAI technically, but also to reflect on its ethical, epistemic, and didactic implications. This short paper draws on practice-based teaching experiences from interdisciplinary media and business programs at International School of Management (ISM) Munich. It presents a conceptual and exploratory framework for integrating GenAI tools (e.g., GPT-5, Midjourney, ElevenLabs, Elicit, Perplexity) in educational formats that foster narrative literacy, media ethics, and innovation capability. This article pursues a multi-method conceptual approach based on media ethics, AI governance, and narrative theory. This threefold concept (see info box in chapter 4) covers (1) conceptual foundations, (2) practical applications in academic education, and (3) narrative implications for business practice.

The aim of this paper is to stimulate discussion and initiate empirical research in the future. The text itself, however, merely aims to provide a conceptual framework for more in-depth scientific studies.

2 Conceptual Foundations

Media shape human thinking and perception. It is not the content of a medium that is decisive, but the medium itself that changes how we think and communicate [1]. This means an unconscious, gradual shaping of consciousness: media determine which of our senses become more pronounced and which become "impoverished." When a sensory ability is technologically outsourced, the corresponding sensory capacity in humans often atrophies. For example, the cognitive ability to remember declines with the cultural technique of writing, as memory is externalized as a "data set." The new "medium" GenAI is already influencing the way we think and how we perceive content.

In this article, we understand GenAI as systems that generate new content based on existing training data: text, images, videos, sound. They are characterized by pattern recognition and operate with statistical models of probability distribution. The decisive factor is that the creative act is no longer performed purely by humans, but co-productively with machines. This raises the question of the role of humans in the future creation of content. Specifically, we must ask: How does GenAI change expectations regarding authenticity, authorship, and meaning in narrative areas?

The fact that human intelligence cannot (yet) be replaced by AI is also evident in Douglas R. Hofstadter's concept of narrative cognition [2]. According to Hofstadter, human thinking and understanding are based essentially on the formation and recognition of analogies and categories – that is, our consciousness constructs meaning by understanding experiences as stories and patterns and linking them together. Hofstadter sees analogy as the foundation of human cognition: when we experience new situations, we constantly draw on previous experiences by making analogies and thus linking new concepts with familiar ones. Every term and concept is "woven" from a multitude of unconscious analogies that shape our understanding of the world. Language, concept formation, and understanding are not clearly defined, fixed processes, but dynamic, context-dependent, and narrative: words, meanings, and categories are fluid and ascend from relationships, not from static definitions. Meaning arises from a combination of thinking, remembering, and categorizing, from the "continuous formation of analogies, from patterns", and from "narratives" (structures that develop over time) [3]. Meaning and consciousness are not a rigid sum of information, but rather the work of dynamic narrative connections—the telling, recognizing, and reinterpreting of patterns is at the heart of the human mind.

GenAI is not like a human entity, but works with a predefined set of training data and defined rules that are processed. Such Information systems change how knowledge is generated, disseminated, and validated. This is where Luciano Floridi comes in with his epistemological reflections. Floridi understands information as a structural entity, not merely as a representation of facts. He describes information as "well-formed, meaningful, and truthful data" [4]. This definition allows for a clear distinction between raw data and epistemically relevant information. Floridi introduces the term "infosphere," which encompasses the totality of all information-processing entities, processes, and environments—i.e., humans, machines, and digital infrastructures.

This means that information systems are not just tools, but part of our cognitive environment. They influence how we access the world and construct knowledge. Floridi

emphasizes that in modern information systems, knowledge is increasingly generated in a decentralized manner. This is evident in the phenomenon of distributed cognition, where knowledge no longer arises exclusively within the human mind, but emerges from the interaction between humans and machines. Search engines, AI systems, and recommendation algorithms, for example, play an active role in shaping what we know and how we think. At the same time, the concept of epistemic delegation highlights our growing tendency to transfer epistemic tasks—such as recognizing patterns, classifying data, or evaluating information—to technological systems. In doing so, we rely on these systems not only to provide information, but also to perform parts of the reasoning process itself, thereby reshaping the very nature of human knowledge production.

This ties in with the ideas of Ted Striphas, who describes a fundamental transformation of cultural processes through the growing influence of algorithms with his concept of algorithmic culture [5]. Whereas in the past, people (e.g., editors, PR professionals, marketers) made cultural selection decisions, algorithm-based systems are increasingly taking over this role. Accordingly, social discourse today is increasingly shaped by algorithmic systems that structure processes such as curation, selection, classification, and circulation of content. Algorithms not only act as technical tools, but also decide what is considered relevant, visible, and significant. Algorithms define trends, shape attitudes and opinions, and change cultural practices. They become carriers of meanings and norms and influence how people orient themselves in the digital world. In doing so, they operate in a non-transparent manner and as a kind of black box, which limits users' ability to critique and reflect.

Against this backdrop, the question of professional and ethical training in an academic context arises anew. What skills and abilities will university graduates need in the future when dealing with GenAI? How will they be enabled to assess the quality of AI-generated content and consider its ethical implications? We will explore these questions in the following two chapters, first by establishing links to teaching practice at universities and then by addressing the changed conditions in business practice.

3 Practical relevance in academic education

Several recent studies explore the role of GenAI in higher education. Singh and Huang [6] compare human and AI-generated content in marketing storyboards: while humans bring depth, adaptability, and emotional nuance, AI delivers speed, scalability, and consistency — but struggles with contextual interpretation and transparency. Pirjan and Petroşanu [7] find that large language models in seminars can boost engagement and critical thinking if combined with human oversight to mitigate bias, inaccuracies, and privacy concerns. Stoyanova and Angelova [8] emphasize that adaptive AI learning systems improve engagement but require governance and ethical safeguards. Slepchuk and John [9], Flink et al. [10], and Sihi and Ryan [11] contribute further perspectives on AI's effective and responsible integration in teaching and career development.

Beyond these findings, our teaching experience suggests that academic programs should shift focus from if to how GenAI is used — specifically, on the skills graduates must acquire to thrive in AI-augmented professions. According to the World Economic

Forum [12], GenAI can readily replace tasks such as translations, summaries, simple design, data analysis, and basic coding. More resistant to automation are capabilities like strategic thinking, situational judgement, creativity, emotional intelligence, and physical-world interactions (e.g., coaching, consulting). From this follows a competency profile for graduates in marketing and communication (see table 1).

Table 1. Competency profile for graduates (marketing & communication)

Dimension	Description	Examples / Reference
Creativity & Strategic Thinking	Ability to design novel, context-aware solutions; think beyond templates.	Campaign ideation, brand storytelling.
Curiosity & Openness to Technology	Proactive exploration of AI tools and workflows.	Piloting new GenAI-based content systems.
Critical Reflection	Assessing AI outputs for accuracy, bias, and ethical soundness.	Fact-checking, bias detection.
Data-Sensitive Mindset	Understanding and respecting data privacy, security, and governance rules.	GDPR compliance, secure data handling.
Media Literacy	Reflecting on media, recognizing production conditions, and designing own messages.	Media criticism, design projects.
Prompt Literacy	Crafting precise, context-sensitive prompts; managing prompt libraries.	Creative briefs, multi-step task prompts.
Post-Processing Skills	Refining AI-generated text, images, and datasets for final delivery.	Editing, visual adaptation.
Cybersecurity Awareness	Recognizing vulnerabilities in AI workflows.	Secure collaboration tools.

Thus, University curricula should address four developmental dimensions:

1. Understanding — Basic knowledge of how GenAI systems function.
2. Application — Intentional control and use of GenAI in creative, collaborative processes.
3. Reflection — Critical review, post-processing, and quality assurance of AI outputs.
4. Co-creation — Building prompt libraries, adapting AI tools to specific contexts.

Integrating GenAI into education inevitably raises ethical and legal questions [13][14]. Key teaching topics include:

- Sustainability of AI use (e.g., energy consumption).
- Accessibility and inclusion.
- Competition and market diversity.
- Privacy protection, data security, and transparency of data use.
- AI content labelling.
- Copyright and intellectual property of training data and outputs.
- Distribution of value from AI-generated content.
- Liability and risk management for AI-related legal violations.

4 Narrative Implications for Business Practice

4.1 Strategic Shift: From Production to Narrative Orchestration

GenAI is transforming marketing and corporate communication by automating a wide range of repetitive tasks — from standard copy to basic image editing and routine reports [15] The traditional paradigm, which rewarded manual production skills such as writing press releases, designing websites, or producing product imagery, is giving way to a model in which strategic value lies in story design, ethical framing, and the orchestration of coherent narrative worlds. As documented by AG CommTech [16], this shift replaces linear, content-driven workflows with adaptive, data-informed storytelling ecosystems in which human creativity and machine intelligence operate in tandem.

The conceptual foundation draws on narrative cognition [2], media philosophy [1][3], the epistemology of information [4][17], and algorithmic culture [5][6], following the threefold guiding structure: Thesis → Education → Practice (see table 2)

Table 2. The Red Treat – From Theory to Practice

Dimension	Focus & Application	Key References
Thesis [Narrative cognition & media logic explain why GenAI shifts meaning production.]	Narrative cognition and media logic explain why GenAI shifts meaning production. Cognitive and media-theoretical foundations show how AI alters meaning-making, demanding new interpretive and design frameworks.	Hofstadter & Sander (2013); McLuhan (2001); Floridi (2005, 2021); Striphas (2015)
Education [Competencies in higher education]	Competencies in higher education: development of prompt literacy, reflective practice, co-creation skills, and ethical/governance awareness within academic curricula. These skills prepare graduates for AI-augmented communication environments.	AG CommTech (2025); UNESCO (2025)
Practice [Translation into business applications.]	Translation into business applications: narrative orchestration through worldbuilding, content operations, and role-play ethics—anchored in measurable processes (KPIs) and governance frameworks.	AG CommTech (2025); Singh & Huang (2025)

4.2 Core Competencies in the AI-Augmented Era

Three interlinked capabilities are essential for thriving in AI-augmented communication:

- **Worldbuilding**: Organizations leverage GenAI to architect immersive narrative universes, ensuring thematic consistency across all touchpoints. This supports strategic brand leadership but must be grounded in authentic corporate practice to avoid

"marketing myths." Participatory worldbuilding fosters engagement and authenticity, while speculative storytelling enables strategic foresight.

- **Prompt Literacy**: Crafting precise, context-aware prompts is now a foundational skill, analogous to traditional literacy. Prompt libraries and guidelines help maintain brand voice and content quality. However, over-standardization risks stifling creativity and fostering dependence on proprietary AI platforms. Educational initiatives increasingly integrate prompt engineering as a core competency [19]).
- **Ethical Framing**: Ethics-by-design is promoted via role-play and simulation, modeling diverse stakeholder perspectives before message release. Robust governance, transparency, and ethical leadership are critical for responsible AI use [17] [18] Simulations and experiential labs in higher education enhance crisis readiness and ethical awareness. Trust depends on human oversight and clear governance frameworks.

4.3 Applied Use Case: Story Lenses

Building upon the conceptual and educational foundations outlined above, the following use case illustrates how these competencies are operationalized in a software-intensive environment. The Story Lenses project exemplifies how the conceptual triad of worldbuilding, prompt literacy, and ethical framing can be operationalized within a software-intensive communication environment. Developed as part of an applied research initiative at the International School of Management (ISM Munich), the non-commercial beta platform Story Lenses (storylenses.app/de) explores narrative cognition and AI-assisted communication design. Drawing on Hofstadter's theory of analogy and recursive cognition, the system iteratively compares AI-generated and human-authored drafts. This recursive feedback fosters narrative self-reflection, turning human–machine interaction into a loop of adaptation and refinement.

The underlying architecture integrates three interlinked layers: (1) a narrative-linguistic layer capturing contextual meaning and intertextual coherence; (2) a cognitive-analytical layer modeling iteration and analogy for adaptive learning; and (3) an ethical-simulation layer providing feedback from multiple stakeholder perspectives (e.g., recruiter, peer, audience) to train judgment and reflective communication ethics.

Story Lenses follows a classical communication journey, progressing from self-definition and problem framing to dialogue, persuasive presentation and reflective integration.

Table 3. Dimensions of the Story Lenses Use Case

Dimension	Description	Relevance to ICSOB-Framework
Technology	GPT-based text & semantics engine, multimodal prompting	Demonstrates software-intensive design
Didactics	Interactive feedback for narrative reflection	Operationalizes prompt literacy
Ethics	Role-play simulation of stakeholder views	Embodies ethical framing

Metrics	Narrative Coherence Index, Prompt Efficiency Score, AI-Human Delta	Enables empirical validation
Transfer	Career centers, universities, corporate communication	Connects theory and practice

5 Limitations and Outlook

This discussion paper remains conceptual and exploratory in nature. It outlines an applied framework rather than presenting empirical validation. Future research should take an interdisciplinary approach—at the intersection of communication science, AI ethics, media education, and management studies. Key desiderata are (1) the development of valid competence models for AI augmentation, (2) the measurement of "narrative authenticity" in the interaction between humans and machines, and (3) the establishment of empirically based governance frameworks. This can contribute to a sustainable paradigm shift: from the instrumental use of artificial intelligence to a reflective, responsible, and creative co-evolution of humans and technology.

The evolution of narrative creation in the age of generative AI demonstrates technological acceleration amplifies, rather than replaces, human meaning-making. Throughout this paper, the intersection of technical proficiency, narrative design capability, and ethical reflexivity has been identified as the competence triad connecting education, communication, and organizational strategy.

In practice, hybrid competence ecosystems are required — AI systems can support but never substitute human judgment. Future curricula must therefore integrate prompt literacy, ethical framing, and reflective governance as foundational literacies across disciplines. For organizations, sustainable value depends on aligning machine intelligence with narrative coherence, cultural awareness, and ethical transparency.

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