



UWL REPOSITORY

repository.uwl.ac.uk

European Cultures in Business Communication (2025). Abstracts of the EUKO 2025 Conference: Storytelling -- The Power of Stories and Narratives in Business Communication and Media Discourses

Olsen, Dennis European Cultures in Business Communication (2025). Abstracts of the EUKO 2025 Conference: Storytelling -- The Power of Stories and Narratives in Business Communication and Media Discourses. In: EUKO Annual Conference 2025: Storytelling in Business Communication, 23-25 October 2025, London, UK.

<https://doi.org/10.36828/conf.319>

This is the Published Version of the final output.

UWL repository link: <https://repository.uwl.ac.uk/id/eprint/14196/>

Alternative formats: If you require this document in an alternative format, please contact: open.research@uwl.ac.uk

Copyright:

Copyright and moral rights for the publications made accessible in the public portal are retained by the authors and/or other copyright owners and it is a condition of accessing publications that users recognise and abide by the legal requirements associated with these rights.

Take down policy: If you believe that this document breaches copyright, please contact us at open.research@uwl.ac.uk providing details, and we will remove access to the work immediately and investigate your claim.

EUROPEAN CULTURES IN BUSINESS COMMUNICATION

EUKO 2025

STORYTELLING: THE POWER OF
STORIES & NARRATIVES IN BUSINESS
COMMUNICATION & MEDIA DISCOURSES



Foreword

Storytelling is one of the oldest and most powerful tools of human communication. It shapes how we understand the world, how we connect with one another and how we imagine what comes next. In business and media cultures, storytelling has evolved into a strategic practice; one that moves beyond persuasion to foster emotional resonance, cultural relevance and ethical reflection.

The EUKO 2025 conference, held under the theme “**Storytelling: The power of stories and narratives in business communication and media discourses**”, brings together scholars, practitioners and creatives to explore the mechanisms, meanings and futures of narrative in professional contexts. Over three days, the University of West London is proud to host this jubilee edition of the European Cultures in Business Communication conference – and to welcome it to London for the very first time in its history.

As a young and modern university, the University of West London strives to make a real-world difference through its education and research. Conferences like EUKO embody what we value most: dialogue across borders, collaboration between disciplines and the exchange of ideas that lead to new insights and lasting partnerships.

With 32 presentations and over 70 speakers from across academia and industry – from Europe and beyond – EUKO 2025 offers a rich and diverse programme of insights, provocations and collaborative exchange. This abstract booklet captures the breadth of contributions, from empirical research and strategic frameworks to experimental media practices and conceptual provocations.

We hope this collection continues to inspire reflection and dialogue long after the conference itself; and that it serves as a testament to the enduring power of storytelling in shaping cultures, brands and communities.

Professor Dennis Olsen
Conference Chair, EUKO 2025
University of West London

STORY TELLING

EUROPEAN CULTURES IN BUSINESS COMMUNICATION

EUKO 2025

STORYTELLING: THE POWER OF
STORIES & NARRATIVES IN BUSINESS
COMMUNICATION & MEDIA DISCOURSES

Keynote Panels

STORY
TELLING

EUROPEAN CULTURES IN BUSINESS COMMUNICATION

EUKO 2025

STORYTELLING: THE POWER OF
STORIES & NARRATIVES IN BUSINESS
COMMUNICATION & MEDIA DISCOURSES

Panel 1: The (His)Story of Brand Britain – Storytelling Across Time

Panellists: David Clampin (History of Advertising Trust), Alice Kain and Alexis Cline (Museum of Brands)

Chair: Dennis Olsen

This keynote panel explores how British brands have told their stories across generations and how those narratives continue to shape national identity today. Featuring the History of Advertising Trust and the Museum of Brands, the discussion will highlight case studies from festive advertising traditions to the upcoming Brand Britain exhibition. Together, we will examine how heritage and innovation intersect in branding and ask whether nostalgia is a strength or a challenge for Brand Britain in a global market. Expect visual examples, lively debate and insights into the future of British storytelling.

Panel 2: Formulas for Success – Best Practice in Today's Communications Environment

Panellists: Paul Brown (Creative X), Hannah Ryan (Clarion), Caspar Mason (Jack Morton Worldwide)

Chair: Kristin Brewe

In this panel discussion, you will hear from expert perspectives on storytelling across media – from digital campaigns to experiential activations, from press coverage to word-of-mouth strategies. Our panellists will share insights into contemporary best practices for promotional storytelling across sectors and audiences, while challenging some of the conventional wisdom around persuasion. The session will conclude with a Q&A, giving audiences the chance to explore how agencies and brands are approaching storytelling in today's fast-changing communications landscape.

STORY TELLING

EUROPEAN CULTURES IN BUSINESS COMMUNICATION

EUKO 2025

STORYTELLING: THE POWER OF
STORIES & NARRATIVES IN BUSINESS
COMMUNICATION & MEDIA DISCOURSES

Presentation | Abstracts

STORY
TELLING

EUROPEAN CULTURES IN BUSINESS COMMUNICATION

EUKO 2025

STORYTELLING: THE POWER OF
STORIES & NARRATIVES IN BUSINESS
COMMUNICATION & MEDIA DISCOURSES

Framing Stories, Shaping Places: Literary Pilgrimages and Models for Audience Engagement

Vidya Allemann-Ravi, Lucerne University of Applied Sciences and Arts (HSLU)
Douglas MacKevett, Lucerne University of Applied Sciences and Arts (HSLU)
Richard Moist, Lucerne University of Applied Sciences and Arts (HSLU)

This presentation investigates how literary heritage can be harnessed to create immersive and culturally meaningful experiences within the experience industry. While many forms of cultural production have embraced hybrid and interactive formats, literature – particularly heritage literature – remains an underutilised resource in destination storytelling. The project explores how stories rooted in place can be transformed into compelling visitor experiences that foster emotional and cultural engagement.

Over the past year, the Literary Pilgrimages initiative at HSLU has examined how destinations can activate intangible cultural heritage through literature. Case studies include Meiringen, which has successfully built a visitor experience around Sherlock Holmes and Geneva, which has yet to fully leverage its connection to Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*. These examples highlight the varying degrees to which destinations engage with literary narratives, shaped by local priorities, resources and cultural associations.

The research introduces the “three Is” framework – imagination, inspiration and insight – as a flexible model for developing narrative-driven experiences. This framework supports the creation of hybrid storytelling formats that resonate with audiences while remaining adaptable to different contexts. Whether used collectively or independently, the three modes offer strategic pathways for embedding literature into destination branding and visitor engagement.

Beyond tourism, the framework has broader applications in business communication, offering principles for crafting emotionally resonant and culturally authentic narratives. By drawing parallels between literary pilgrimages and organisational storytelling, the presentation demonstrates how narrative frameworks can motivate action, foster connection and shape meaningful experiences across sectors.

EUROPEAN CULTURES IN BUSINESS COMMUNICATION

EUKO 2025

STORYTELLING: THE POWER OF
STORIES & NARRATIVES IN BUSINESS
COMMUNICATION & MEDIA DISCOURSES

STORY
TELLING

Narrative as Design Pedagogy: Storytelling in Live Projects for Community Engagement and Brand Experience

Doina Carter, University of West London

This paper explores how storytelling operates as both a pedagogical method and a strategic communication tool within two live design projects conducted at the University of West London. Collaborations with Barons Court Theatre and Pitzhanger Manor and Gallery enabled MA Interior Environment Design students to engage with real-world challenges in branding, audience development and stakeholder communication through narrative-led design briefs.

Narrative was used to frame client identities, communicate institutional values and guide students in developing spatial experiences that resonate with diverse audiences. Drawing on situated and experiential learning theories, the projects demonstrate how storytelling can enhance emotional engagement, foster brand authenticity and support inclusive communication strategies. These live briefs positioned students as co-creators in shaping the public-facing narratives of cultural institutions, aligning design outcomes with each client's ethos and aspirations.

Students employed literary and mythological narratives to reimagine physical spaces, using storytelling to translate abstract brand values into tangible, immersive experiences. This approach not only enriched the design process but also helped clients articulate their brand stories more effectively, strengthening their connection with local communities and potential audiences.

The paper argues that embedding storytelling in design pedagogy cultivates creativity, critical thinking and communication skills essential for contemporary design practice. It contributes to the discourse on narrative branding, experiential communication and the role of design education in shaping culturally embedded brand experiences. By integrating storytelling into live projects, the work highlights how design education can serve as a powerful platform for knowledge exchange and business communication innovation.

STORY TELLING

EUROPEAN CULTURES IN BUSINESS COMMUNICATION

EUKO 2025

STORYTELLING: THE POWER OF
STORIES & NARRATIVES IN BUSINESS
COMMUNICATION & MEDIA DISCOURSES

Collateral Damage in the War for Talent? On Power and Ethics of Storytelling in Employer Branding

Marianne Ditlevsen, Aarhus University
Peter Kastberg, Aalborg University

This paper explores the ethical dimensions of storytelling in employer branding, focusing on how narrative strategies shape identity formation before individuals even enter the workplace. In the context of the ongoing “war for talent,” organisations increasingly rely on storytelling to construct desirable employer identities and attract prospective employees. These stories, often embedded in testimonials and promotional content, serve as anticipatory socialisation tools – framing expectations, values and cultural norms.

The study examines how employer branding narratives influence the alignment between organisational and individual identity. Drawing on a small stories analysis of employee testimonials from an international organisation, the research investigates how storytelling functions as a strategic mechanism for identity construction. These narratives often blur the boundaries between personal and corporate identity, raising ethical concerns about autonomy, authenticity and the colonisation of the employee’s lifeworld.

By shifting focus from onboarding to the pre-employment stage, the paper highlights how storytelling operates not only as a recruitment tool but as a form of symbolic power. It critiques the conflation of individual and organisational identity, questioning the implications of presenting alignment as a prerequisite for belonging. The analysis reveals how employer branding narratives can simultaneously foster inclusion and enforce conformity.

The paper argues for a more critical and ethically aware approach to storytelling in strategic HR communication. It offers insights into how organisations can balance persuasive narrative with respect for individual agency and calls for greater transparency in how identity is framed and negotiated through employer branding.

STORY TELLING

EUROPEAN CULTURES IN BUSINESS COMMUNICATION

EUKO 2025

STORYTELLING: THE POWER OF
STORIES & NARRATIVES IN BUSINESS
COMMUNICATION & MEDIA DISCOURSES

The Moral Turn in Brand Storytelling: How Authenticity Narratives Reshape Identity Construction in Postmodern Consumer Culture

Bernardo Guzmán, Universidad Antonio Ruiz de Montoya
Catarina Lélis, Universidade de Aveiro
Dennis Olsen, University of West London

In an era of cultural fragmentation and digital saturation, brands increasingly position themselves not merely as commercial entities but as moral frameworks for identity construction. This paper explores how contemporary brand storytelling operationalises Charles Taylor's concept of the *Moral Ideal of Authenticity*, offering audiences – particularly Millennials and Gen Z – narrative spaces for self-definition and communal belonging. Through a multi-method qualitative approach combining visual semiotic analysis, hermeneutic phenomenology and practitioner ethnography, the study examines iconic campaigns from Johnnie Walker, Marmite and Coca-Cola to uncover how brands scaffold moral identity through storytelling.

The research introduces a new analytical framework integrating Taylor's moral philosophy, Holt's cultural branding theory and Neumeier's design-led branding approach. It identifies five dimensions through which brands establish moral authority: self-awareness construction, communal validation, value internalisation, moral authority building and ethical imperative formation. These dimensions reveal how brands navigate the paradox of authenticity – balancing strategic narrative construction with consumer co-creation of meaning.

Key findings include the emergence of 'hermeneutic sincerity' as a narrative strategy by Johnnie Walker, Marmite's use of antagonistic storytelling to validate moral agency and Coca-Cola's deployment of personalised design to foster recognition and belonging. The study also highlights risks of 'moral commodification', where ethical narratives are appropriated for commercial gain without substantive commitment.

This work contributes to business communication by reframing brand storytelling as a form of moral architecture, challenging traditional models of promotional messaging. It offers practical implications for brand strategists through the proposed *Authenticity Matrix* and theoretical advancements for consumer culture theory by introducing a third, dialogic mode of authenticity. Ultimately, the paper invites critical reflection on storytelling's double edge – its power to unite or manipulate – in an age of algorithmic persuasion.

EUROPEAN CULTURES IN BUSINESS COMMUNICATION

EUKO 2025

STORYTELLING: THE POWER OF
STORIES & NARRATIVES IN BUSINESS
COMMUNICATION & MEDIA DISCOURSES

STORY
TELLING

The Relationship Between People Analytics and Organisational Performance. A Systematic Literature Review on the Relevance of Data Analytics in HR for Strategic Business Management

Stefan Hinterstoißer, Salzburg University of Applied Sciences
Herbert Gölzner, Salzburg University of Applied Sciences
Arno Kinzinger, Salzburg University of Applied Sciences

This paper explores how storytelling can enhance the strategic application of People Analytics in Human Resource Management. In data-driven organisations, analytical insights often remain abstract unless translated into compelling narratives that resonate with decision-makers. Storytelling, in this context, becomes a vital tool for making complex data comprehensible, memorable and actionable – particularly when aligning HR practices with broader organisational goals.

The study investigates the relationship between People Analytics and organisational performance through a systematic literature review. While analytics is well-established in domains such as finance and marketing, its strategic contribution within HR remains underexplored. The review aims to clarify this link by developing a conceptual model grounded in the Resource-Based View, positioning People Analytics as a potential strategic resource.

A structured database search yielded 283 publications, narrowed to 22 empirical studies through formal and content-based criteria. These studies suggest a generally positive, though often indirect, relationship between analytics and performance. Within HR, however, the impact is typically assessed at an aggregated level, lacking differentiation across analytical types.

The paper argues that distinguishing between Descriptive, Predictive and Prescriptive Analytics provides a clearer understanding of how People Analytics influences organisational outcomes. It proposes a model in which Evidence-Based Management mediates the relationship between analytics and performance, emphasising the importance of purposeful application over mere technological availability.

By integrating data with narrative, the study highlights how People Analytics can evolve from a technical function into a strategic storytelling tool – one that supports informed decision-making and drives organisational success. Several hypotheses derived from the model are outlined for future empirical testing.

EUROPEAN CULTURES IN BUSINESS COMMUNICATION

EUKO 2025

STORYTELLING: THE POWER OF
STORIES & NARRATIVES IN BUSINESS
COMMUNICATION & MEDIA DISCOURSES

STORY
TELLING

Using Time-Based Visualisations to Reveal the Cultural Narratives of Footwear Brands

Irma Huzova, University of West London
Ben Dunning, University of West London

This paper explores how time-based visual storytelling can reveal the cultural narratives embedded in iconic footwear brands. While brand stories are often shaped by strategic communication, this study highlights how consumer adoption, historical context and social movements contribute to the evolution of brand mythology. Footwear items frequently transcend their commercial origins to become cultural artefacts associated with national identity, youth subcultures and underrepresented communities.

Focusing on three well-known footwear brands, the research traces how these products have become embedded in collective memory and symbolic meaning. These associations extend beyond their original function, transforming the items into vessels of shared cultural history that resist reduction to marketing or PR strategies.

The study employs animation and sound-based visualisation techniques to map the evolution of these brand stories over time. This approach reveals how reinterpretation, cultural appropriation and emotional resonance shape brand identity and consumer perception. By animating these trajectories, the project offers a compelling lens through which to understand the dynamic relationship between consumer culture and brand storytelling.

Contributing to design-led brand analysis, the paper demonstrates how visual media can uncover the socio-cultural dimensions of everyday products. It invites reflection on how brands become part of our cultural fabric and how design practice can critically engage with the storytelling potential of commercial objects.

STORY TELLING

EUROPEAN CULTURES IN BUSINESS COMMUNICATION

EUKO 2025

STORYTELLING: THE POWER OF
STORIES & NARRATIVES IN BUSINESS
COMMUNICATION & MEDIA DISCOURSES

When Customers Tell the Story: Customer Storytelling in C2C Interactions and Its Relevance for Service Providers

Hong Ngoc Nguyen, TU Dresden
Janek Mücksch, TU Dresden
Florian U. Siems, TU Dresden

This paper explores the role of customer storytelling in service environments, focusing on Customer-to-Customer (C2C) interactions and their impact on brand perception. While service research traditionally emphasises Business-to-Consumer (B2C) exchanges, this study highlights the significance of interactions between customers themselves – particularly in physical service settings where such encounters can shape individual experiences and influence future behaviour.

The research investigates how customers perceive and narrate disruptive behaviour by others during service encounters. Drawing on ten qualitative in-depth interviews, the study examines emotionally charged narratives in which participants recount moments of tension, discomfort, or conflict. These stories reveal not only the nature of the incidents but also the underlying motives and emotional responses that make them memorable.

By analysing how customers become storytellers, the paper sheds light on a form of narrative that originates outside corporate control yet holds considerable influence over brand reputation. These customer-generated stories offer insights into expectations, frustrations and social dynamics within service environments, presenting both risks and opportunities for service providers.

The findings suggest that C2C interactions are a vital dimension of customer experience management. When customers share stories about their encounters, they contribute to a collective narrative that can shape public perception. The paper argues that service providers must learn to listen to these stories – not only to understand customer needs more deeply but also to respond with empathy and strategic communication. In doing so, storytelling becomes a tool for both insight and engagement in service design.

STORY TELLING

EUROPEAN CULTURES IN BUSINESS COMMUNICATION

EUKO 2025

STORYTELLING: THE POWER OF
STORIES & NARRATIVES IN BUSINESS
COMMUNICATION & MEDIA DISCOURSES

Country-of-Origin as Storytelling Content – Theory and Results of an Empirical Study about Denmark as the Country of Origin for German Target Groups

Hong Ngoc Nguyen, TU Dresden
Martin Nielsen, Aarhus University
Mariam Bellger, TU Dresden
Pauline Arnold, TU Dresden
Theres Rüger, TU Dresden
Florian U. Siems, TU Dresden

This paper explores how country-of-origin functions as a narrative device in brand storytelling, focusing on the perception of Denmark among German target audiences. While strategic communication increasingly relies on storytelling to differentiate brands, the country-of-origin effect offers a quasi-natural narrative framework – where a brand's origin itself conveys meaning and value.

The study presents findings from a qualitative research project examining how German consumers interpret the “Made in Denmark” label. Drawing on interviews and thematic analysis, the research identifies key associations linked to Danish products, including a perceived balance between price and quality and a design aesthetic described as simple and natural. These surface-level perceptions are further unpacked through a Hierarchical Map, which connects product attributes to deeper cultural and geographical associations.

The analysis reveals that consumer interpretations are shaped not only by contemporary branding but also by broader cultural narratives, such as Denmark's climate and historical imagery. These findings suggest that country-of-origin can be a powerful and authentic component of brand storytelling – one that resonates more deeply than artificially constructed brand attributes.

The paper also reflects on the limitations of this approach, including gaps in consumer knowledge about service affiliations and the potential for oversimplification. Nonetheless, the study offers valuable insights for cross-cultural marketing communication, highlighting how origin-based narratives can enhance brand identity and emotional engagement across borders.

STORY TELLING

EUROPEAN CULTURES IN BUSINESS COMMUNICATION

EUKO 2025

STORYTELLING: THE POWER OF
STORIES & NARRATIVES IN BUSINESS
COMMUNICATION & MEDIA DISCOURSES

Born on Coal: Brand Storytelling of a Football Club

Martin Nielsen, Aarhus University

This paper explores how storytelling is used to construct and sustain the brand identity of German football club Schalke 04, deeply rooted in the industrial heritage of the Ruhr region. Football clubs, as unique sport organisations, often rely on emotionally resonant narratives to build loyalty, express values and foster a sense of belonging. Schalke 04 exemplifies this through a master narrative that draws on decades of local history, working-class symbolism and cultural memory.

Using a single case study approach, the research analyses a wide range of storytelling elements – textual, visual and physical – across analogue and digital media. These include street naming, architectural design and brand alliances, all of which contribute to a layered narrative that extends beyond traditional promotional content. The study reveals how Schalke 04's identity is continuously reconstructed through stories that emphasise authenticity, integrity, hard work and local embeddedness.

The paper also examines how the club has woven corporate social responsibility into its narrative, adding a contemporary thread to its historical brand story. This dynamic interplay between past and present allows Schalke 04 to maintain a consistent and recognisable identity while adapting to changing cultural and commercial contexts.

Critically, the paper reflects on the paradox of worker-club branding in modern football, where players and executives earn salaries far removed from the working-class image they represent. It argues that storytelling, while powerful, must be understood as both a strategic and ethical practice – capable of shaping perception, but also of masking contradictions.

STORY TELLING

EUROPEAN CULTURES IN BUSINESS COMMUNICATION

EUKO 2025

STORYTELLING: THE POWER OF
STORIES & NARRATIVES IN BUSINESS
COMMUNICATION & MEDIA DISCOURSES

Archetypal Discourses on an Ageing Society: A Cross-Cultural Analysis of UK and Finnish Media Discourses

Dennis Olsen, University of West London
Christopher Schmidt, Åbo Akademi University

This paper explores how archetypal storytelling shapes public discourses on ageing across different cultural contexts. As European societies undergo similar demographic shifts – with a growing proportion of citizens aged 65 and over – the social, economic and communicative significance of this age group continues to rise. While the demographic parameters may be broadly comparable, the cultural frameworks through which ageing is understood and represented vary considerably.

The study investigates whether culturally specific conceptualisations of ageing emerge in media and public discourse, and how these are used as persuasive strategies to influence perception and behaviour. Drawing on Pearson's archetypal model, rooted in Jungian theory, the paper analyses how symbolic narratives are constructed around older people and their lived realities.

Using a cross-cultural comparative approach, the research examines two corpora – one from the United Kingdom and one from Finland – each comprising approximately 15,000 words. Text types include blogs, websites, magazine articles and public campaigns. Thematic domains explored are: *Care*, *What Does It Mean to Be Old?*, *Age and Illness* and *Vulnerability*. The analysis combines deep narrative structures with surface-level linguistic features such as metaphor, rhetorical strategies, terminology, evaluative language and modes of audience address.

By mapping archetypal patterns across culturally distinct texts, the paper offers insights into how ageing is framed symbolically and persuasively. It positions discourse as a form of archetypal storytelling, shaped by cultural traditions and communicative intent, and contributes to a deeper understanding of how ageing is narrated in contemporary society.

STORY TELLING

EUROPEAN CULTURES IN BUSINESS COMMUNICATION

EUKO 2025

STORYTELLING: THE POWER OF
STORIES & NARRATIVES IN BUSINESS
COMMUNICATION & MEDIA DISCOURSES

Telling Futures Together: Co-Designing Disability Justice with a Socially Conscious Business

Isil Onol, University of West London
Caglar Kimyoncu, Filmpro CIC

This paper examines how storytelling can drive equity and social change through a co-designed initiative titled Design Futures for Disability Justice. Developed as a Knowledge Exchange partnership between the University of West London and Filmpro CIC, the project engaged disabled creatives in Ealing through a series of participatory workshops. Using speculative design, photography and storyboarding, the initiative aimed to challenge dominant narratives and imagine more inclusive futures.

Storytelling was approached not as a commercial tool, but as a collaborative and justice-driven practice. The research adopts a practice-led design methodology, positioning co-design as both a method and an outcome. Sensory and affective experiences were central to the process, offering alternative ways of knowing and creating that move beyond conventional design approaches.

Ethical reflexivity was embedded throughout, with iterative consent and community accountability guiding both the development and potential dissemination of outputs. The paper reflects on how the project sought to co-design not only design solutions but also the co-design process itself – centering marginalised voices and rejecting tokenistic inclusion.

The partnership offers a model for values-led branding and ethical business communication, prioritising community agency and long-term impact over persuasion or profit. It also raises critical questions about how justice-oriented projects are presented within business contexts: How can storytelling remain accountable to the communities it represents? What does it mean to brand a project without compromising its integrity?

Through visual and narrative outputs, the paper offers insights into how co-creation can reframe design as a space for collective transformation.

STORY TELLING

EUROPEAN CULTURES IN BUSINESS COMMUNICATION

EUKO 2025

STORYTELLING: THE POWER OF
STORIES & NARRATIVES IN BUSINESS
COMMUNICATION & MEDIA DISCOURSES

Progressive Muscle Relaxation in Virtual Reality: An Immersive Intervention to Enhance Relaxation

Franziska Pfannerstill, Paris-Lodron University Salzburg
Anna Regner, Salzburg University of Applied Sciences
Arno Kinzinger, Salzburg University of Applied Sciences

This paper explores how storytelling can be embedded within immersive environments to enhance the effectiveness of relaxation techniques. Focusing on Progressive Muscle Relaxation (PMR) delivered through virtual reality (VR), the study investigates how narrative structure and sensory immersion can transform a therapeutic exercise into a personalised experience of calm and emotional release.

PMR involves the deliberate tensing and relaxing of muscle groups in short intervals and has long been recognised for its benefits in reducing psychological and physical tension. However, in high-pressure work environments – such as tourism – access to quiet, private spaces for such practices is often limited. VR offers an alternative: a secluded, virtual setting where relaxation can be guided through immersive storytelling and contextualised instruction.

The research examines whether PMR in VR can replicate the psychological benefits of real-world interventions. Using an experimental mixed-methods design, the study evaluates changes in relaxation, distress and emotional affect among participants exposed to VR-based PMR. Preliminary findings suggest that the virtual format enhances relaxation and reduces negative affect, indicating the potential of immersive technologies to support mental well-being.

The paper also considers how VR can frame therapeutic instructions as narrative experiences, enhancing emotional engagement and receptivity. Differences across professional contexts are explored, offering insights into how immersive storytelling can be tailored to diverse user needs.

By integrating body-oriented techniques with digital storytelling, the study contributes to emerging conversations on how virtual environments can support health communication, emotional regulation and experiential design.

STORY TELLING

EUROPEAN CULTURES IN BUSINESS COMMUNICATION

EUKO 2025

STORYTELLING: THE POWER OF
STORIES & NARRATIVES IN BUSINESS
COMMUNICATION & MEDIA DISCOURSES

Bridging Cultures Through Song: Storytelling, Copla and the Migrant Voice at the Edinburgh Fringe

Alejandro Postigo, University of West London

This paper explores how traditional Spanish songform can be reimagined as a vehicle for intercultural storytelling, focusing on *Copla: A Spanish Cabaret*, a bilingual and participatory theatre production staged at the Edinburgh Fringe. Rooted in early 20th-century Spain, copla is characterised by narrative-driven songs that unfold as compact theatrical stories rich in drama, characterisation and moral ambiguity. The production adapts this legacy artform through a queer, migrant lens, offering UK audiences a personal and emotionally resonant experience.

The study examines how the show's storytelling strategy draws on branding principles such as tonal consistency, bilingual accessibility and audience co-creation. Spectators are invited to rewrite censored lyrics and share personal memories, transforming passive reception into active engagement. This participatory approach fosters a shared experiential space that deepens audience immersion and post-performance dialogue.

Beyond the stage, the production extends its narrative through visual identity, marketing materials and community outreach, including workshops with LGBTQ+ migrants and open-mic events with elderly Spanish communities. These touchpoints reinforce the show's cultural impact and broaden its reach across diverse audience segments.

The paper argues that *Copla: A Spanish Cabaret* offers a replicable model for heritage-based storytelling in cultural and business communication. By balancing authenticity with adaptation and positioning cultural specificity as a branding strength, the production demonstrates how traditional narratives can be strategically reframed for contemporary audiences. The Edinburgh Fringe serves as both a testing ground and a global showcase, enabling the copla tradition to reach new markets while maintaining artistic integrity.

STORY TELLING

EUROPEAN CULTURES IN BUSINESS COMMUNICATION

EUKO 2025

STORYTELLING: THE POWER OF
STORIES & NARRATIVES IN BUSINESS
COMMUNICATION & MEDIA DISCOURSES

Storytelling for Activist Brands: Navigating Digital Dialogue and Narrative Authenticity

Theres Rüger, TU Dresden

This paper explores how storytelling functions as a strategic tool for activist brands seeking to engage audiences and drive social change. In a climate of increasing public expectation for corporate responsibility, brands such as Ben & Jerry's and Patagonia have positioned themselves as vocal advocates on issues ranging from climate justice to diversity. Their storytelling practices are central to how they communicate values, build emotional resonance and mobilise communities.

Focusing on narrative authenticity, the study examines how activist brands construct stories that are perceived as credible, consistent and emotionally compelling. In contrast to traditional brand messaging, these narratives often address controversial socio-political topics, requiring a delicate balance between persuasion and sincerity. The paper argues that storytelling enables brands to simplify complex issues, foster empathy and inspire action – provided the stories are grounded in genuine commitment.

The research also considers the role of digital technologies, particularly AI chatbots, in expanding the reach and interactivity of brand storytelling. These tools can act as narrative agents, delivering personalised messages and guiding users through cause-related actions such as donations or advocacy. By integrating chatbot-driven storytelling into broader communication strategies, activist brands can enhance engagement while maintaining narrative coherence.

The paper proposes a conceptual model that positions chatbots within the storytelling ecosystem of activist branding. It offers insights into how digital dialogue can support strategic communication goals, strengthen brand identity and promote meaningful participation. Ultimately, the study highlights storytelling as a dynamic and ethically charged practice at the intersection of technology, activism and brand communication.

STORY TELLING

EUROPEAN CULTURES IN BUSINESS COMMUNICATION

EUKO 2025

STORYTELLING: THE POWER OF
STORIES & NARRATIVES IN BUSINESS
COMMUNICATION & MEDIA DISCOURSES

Making the Invisible Visible: Visual Thinking in Change Communication. Case Studies and Practitioner Perspectives Informed by Research

Dana Rulf, speakture GmbH

This paper investigates how visual thinking can enhance organisational change communication, particularly in complex and fast-evolving environments. As organisations face increasing demands for clarity, engagement and alignment during transformation processes, visual storytelling emerges as a powerful tool for making abstract concepts tangible and emotionally resonant.

Drawing on qualitative interviews with two senior visual practitioners, the study examines how images, metaphors, symbols and graphic formats are used to guide employees through critical phases of change, including strategy development, stakeholder alignment and navigating uncertainty. Special emphasis is placed on visual storytelling techniques, such as metaphor creation and the hero's journey framework, which help build coherent and relatable narratives that foster shared understanding and emotional connection.

In addition to practitioner insights, the paper outlines the design of an ongoing quantitative survey among members of Swiss, European and international visual practitioner networks. This survey aims to map common fields of application, recurring challenges and emerging best practices across sectors and organisational contexts.

By combining research-informed reflection with practice-based evidence, the paper offers concrete recommendations for organisations seeking to strengthen internal communication and change management strategies through visual thinking. It contributes to the professionalisation of the visual practitioner field and provides a nuanced understanding of how visual storytelling can connect, inspire and drive meaningful transformation within organisations.

STORY TELLING

EUROPEAN CULTURES IN BUSINESS COMMUNICATION

EUKO 2025

STORYTELLING: THE POWER OF
STORIES & NARRATIVES IN BUSINESS
COMMUNICATION & MEDIA DISCOURSES

Storytelling in Educational Contexts: A Professionalisation Tool for Vocational Language Development

Isa-Lou Sander, RWTH Aachen University
Christian Efing, RWTH Aachen University

This paper examines the didactic potential of storytelling as a method for promoting communicative competence in vocational and workplace-related language education. In professional communication contexts, storytelling is gaining traction not only as a tool for management and marketing, but also as a pedagogical strategy to support learners in mastering complex, situation-specific and audience-appropriate workplace interactions.

The presentation first discusses scenario-based teaching approaches as forms of storytelling, with reference to current developments in applied linguistics and vocational education. It then introduces the project *DigitalWorkStory*, situated at the intersection of language education, vocational training and digital learning. The project centres on the development of a digital learning platform in which trainees present and reflect on key workplace communication scenarios through self-produced short videos. These narrative scenarios serve as instructional material, particularly for learners with language support needs, to prepare for typical communicative situations in professional settings.

The paper highlights how storytelling can be used to foster register competence and provide narrative insight into workplace practices. It also explores the potential of combining storytelling with digital formats to enhance its pedagogical impact. By integrating digital storytelling into vocational language education, the study demonstrates how narrative-based methods can support professionalisation and communicative readiness in diverse learning environments.

STORY TELLING

EUROPEAN CULTURES IN BUSINESS COMMUNICATION

EUKO 2025

STORYTELLING: THE POWER OF
STORIES & NARRATIVES IN BUSINESS
COMMUNICATION & MEDIA DISCOURSES

Good for you, good for the planet – The discursive figuration of something worth buying for in CSR communication from Barilla

Niklas Simon, TU Darmstadt

This paper examines how corporate storytelling constructs the planet as a discursive figure within sustainability communication. Focusing on the Italian food company Barilla and its long-standing slogan Good for you, good for the planet, the study explores how environmental themes are narratively framed to create value-driven relationships between brand, consumer and the wider world.

Drawing on a corpus of digital texts published by Barilla between 2010 and 2022 – including sustainability reports, promotional videos and interactive web content – the research investigates how the planet is represented as a meaningful actor in corporate social responsibility (CSR) narratives. These representations are not fixed but emerge through a flexible and often ambiguous figuration that blends references to global humanity, climate change, ecosystems and non-human life.

The analysis reveals how this composite figure of the planet is strategically positioned alongside the corporation and the consumer, enabling emotional and ethical connections that support Barilla's brand purpose. By aligning personal health and well-being with environmental care, the narrative reinforces a cultural logic in which consumption becomes a moral act.

The paper argues that this discursive strategy allows CSR communication to move beyond factual reporting, embedding sustainability within a broader story of shared responsibility and aspirational living. It offers insights into how corporate narratives can shape perceptions of value and agency and how storytelling serves as a tool for constructing persuasive and culturally resonant meanings around sustainability.

STORY TELLING

EUROPEAN CULTURES IN BUSINESS COMMUNICATION

EUKO 2025

STORYTELLING: THE POWER OF
STORIES & NARRATIVES IN BUSINESS
COMMUNICATION & MEDIA DISCOURSES

Consistency in Corporate Storytelling: A Comparative Case Study Approach

Ralf Spiller, Macromedia University of Applied Sciences

Sebastian Meissner, Macromedia University of Applied Sciences

Ellen Martin, comdaily GmbH

David Wiestner, comdaily GmbH

Mahir Hassan, comdaily GmbH

Ayoub Bouchedoub, comdaily GmbH

This paper investigates how consistently companies communicate their corporate story across multiple media channels. While storytelling has long been recognised as a powerful tool for shaping memory and meaning, its systematic use in corporate communication is a relatively recent development. Despite its growing prominence, there remains limited research into how effectively organisations maintain narrative coherence across platforms and over time.

To address this gap, the study applies a brand psychology framework to assess narrative consistency in two companies known for strong brand identities: Coca-Cola and Patagonia. Core values were extracted from each company's official communications – such as mission statements and brand histories – and used as benchmarks for analysis. Coca-Cola's values were identified as “friendly, modern, contemporary”, while Patagonia's included “close to nature, reliable, sincere, hard-working.”

Using an automated content analysis tool powered by a large language model, the research examined how these values are reflected across corporate websites and digital content. Findings suggest that Coca-Cola maintains a high level of consistency in its storytelling, though sustainability themes are less prominent than expected. In contrast, Patagonia communicates a broader range of values, which may dilute the clarity of its core narrative.

The paper discusses the methodological challenges of measuring narrative consistency and reflects on the implications for brand strategy and communication quality. It proposes refinements to sampling strategies and calls for further research into how brand personality can be reliably assessed across diverse media environments.

STORY TELLING

EUROPEAN CULTURES IN BUSINESS COMMUNICATION

EUKO 2025

STORYTELLING: THE POWER OF
STORIES & NARRATIVES IN BUSINESS
COMMUNICATION & MEDIA DISCOURSES

Between Stimulus Overload and Memory Gaps: How Storytelling Enhances Advertising for People with ADHD

Marcus Stumpf, FOM Hochschule für Oekonomie & Management
Viviane Dreide, FOM Hochschule für Oekonomie & Management

This paper investigates how storytelling can improve the effectiveness of digital advertising for individuals with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), particularly in environments characterised by high stimulus density. As digitalisation and marketing automation increase the volume of advertising impressions, consumers are exposed to a constant stream of messages; often resulting in reduced attention, lower recall and diminished advertising impact.

ADHD is a neurodevelopmental condition marked by inattention, impulsivity and, in many cases, hyperactivity. Neurological studies indicate altered stimulus processing in individuals with ADHD, including reduced activity in the prefrontal cortex and heightened sensitivity to visual, spatial and motor stimuli. These differences can impair the ability to process cross-modal sensory input, leading to longer reaction times and increased distractibility.

The study explores how advertising can be adapted to better reach this target group. Drawing on theoretical models of advertising effectiveness, including the Elaboration Likelihood Model, the paper presents empirical findings from expert interviews and user testing. A central focus is the use of storytelling as a strategy to embed information in emotionally resonant and contextually meaningful narratives. This approach supports knowledge transfer and learning more effectively than conventional advertising formats.

Based on the findings, the paper offers practical and research-based recommendations for designing low-stimulus yet impactful advertising tailored to the needs of individuals with ADHD. The study contributes to inclusive marketing practices by highlighting how narrative techniques can bridge cognitive differences and enhance message retention in overstimulated digital environments.

STORY TELLING

EUROPEAN CULTURES IN BUSINESS COMMUNICATION

EUKO 2025

STORYTELLING: THE POWER OF
STORIES & NARRATIVES IN BUSINESS
COMMUNICATION & MEDIA DISCOURSES

The Persuasive Potential of Storytelling in Multimodal Employer Branding

Iwona Szwed, University of Rzeszów

Hans Giessen, University of Kielce / Saarland University

This paper explores the persuasive power of storytelling in multimodal employer branding, particularly in the context of digital media. In light of ongoing labour and skills shortages, companies increasingly rely on employer branding strategies to attract talent – going beyond promises of good working conditions or competitive salaries. On corporate career websites, storytelling is embedded in a network of multimodal communication, combining language, static and moving images, sound and music to create emotionally engaging narratives.

The study investigates how storytelling on the career pages of leading Polish and German companies fosters long-term employee engagement and trust. These platforms use immersive techniques and identification strategies to emotionally persuade potential applicants. Success stories, work-life balance portrayals and interactive modules invite users to become co-creators of the employer narrative, enhancing the participatory dimension of the communication.

The paper also examines how digital tools and human-machine interaction contribute to a new form of interactivity in hypertextual professional communication. A key focus is the cultural comparison between Polish and German employer branding practices, analysing whether companies emphasise dynamism and fast-paced lifestyles or prioritise family life and work-life balance.

The analysis is grounded in media linguistics and combines a multimodal analysis of text-image integration with a content analysis of employee success story videos. The study identifies staging strategies used in these videos and evaluates their potential to evoke targeted emotional responses. The findings offer insights into intercultural business communication and the construction of employer identity through narrative.

STORY TELLING

EUROPEAN CULTURES IN BUSINESS COMMUNICATION

EUKO 2025

STORYTELLING: THE POWER OF
STORIES & NARRATIVES IN BUSINESS
COMMUNICATION & MEDIA DISCOURSES

Animating Empathy: Ethos, Pathos and Logos in the Story of Mansour from Egypt's 57357 Children's Cancer Hospital 2022 Advertisement

Lamia Tewfik, Sadat Academy

This paper examines the rhetorical and emotional strategies employed in a widely circulated animated advertisement supporting Egypt's 57357 Children's Cancer Hospital, aired in April 2022. Centred on the story of Mansour, a young boy from a traditional Upper Egyptian village who is diagnosed with cancer, the ad follows his journey to recovery at the Cairo-based hospital. Upon regaining his health, Mansour donates a symbolic pound to the hospital, reinforcing the narrative of communal support and gratitude.

The advertisement is framed through a culturally resonant mawal – a traditional Sa'idi vocal improvisation – accompanied by the rababa, a string instrument deeply rooted in Egyptian musical heritage. This auditory landscape, paired with visual transitions from rural village life to the hospital's modern facilities, creates a compelling cultural narrative that fosters audience identification and emotional engagement.

The analysis draws on Aristotle's rhetorical triad – ethos, pathos and logos – to unpack how credibility, emotional resonance and logical clarity are interwoven throughout the ad. The use of animation allows for sensitive storytelling without exploiting real-life imagery, while still maintaining a high level of viewer empathy. The narrative avoids sensationalism, instead offering an uplifting portrayal of recovery and collective responsibility.

By embedding the story within familiar cultural forms and values, the advertisement achieves a persuasive balance between emotional appeal and ethical storytelling. The paper argues that this approach not only enhances the credibility of the hospital's message but also reflects a broader national ethos, inviting continued public support through a shared sense of identity and purpose.

STORY TELLING

EUROPEAN CULTURES IN BUSINESS COMMUNICATION

EUKO 2025

STORYTELLING: THE POWER OF
STORIES & NARRATIVES IN BUSINESS
COMMUNICATION & MEDIA DISCOURSES

From Stories to Sustainability: Exploring Tourism Narratives in Portugal's Inland Regions

Maria Vasconcelos, Universidade de Aveiro
Catarina Lélis, Universidade de Aveiro
Rui Costa, Universidade de Aveiro

This paper investigates how storytelling is used to promote sustainable tourism in Portugal's inland regions, focusing on how narrative strategies can foster emotional connection, cultural identity and responsible travel. In areas often overlooked by mainstream tourism – despite their rich heritage and environmental value – storytelling becomes a vital tool for visibility, engagement and long-term development.

The study examines two case studies in central Portugal: *Story Studio*, a narrative-driven accommodation brand operating in the Historical Villages, and *ADRMAG*, a regional development association promoting the Magic Mountains network. Both initiatives use storytelling to communicate local values, traditions and landscapes, aiming to strengthen territorial identity and encourage sustainable practices.

Using a qualitative methodology, the research draws on semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders and an observational analysis of storytelling materials, including websites, social media and promotional content. Findings suggest that while current storytelling practices are sometimes fragmented or informal, they play a significant role in shaping perceptions of place and fostering emotional bonds between visitors and destinations.

The paper argues for the development of more cohesive, multi-layered storytelling approaches that integrate various media platforms to enhance reach and resonance. It highlights the potential of narrative to bridge gaps between heritage and innovation, and between local communities and global audiences.

By exploring how stories are told, shared and experienced in inland tourism, the study contributes to both academic and practical understandings of sustainable communication. It offers actionable insights for stakeholders seeking to revitalise lesser-known regions through meaningful, place-based storytelling.

STORY TELLING

EUROPEAN CULTURES IN BUSINESS COMMUNICATION

EUKO 2025

STORYTELLING: THE POWER OF
STORIES & NARRATIVES IN BUSINESS
COMMUNICATION & MEDIA DISCOURSES

Framing the Narrative: Storyboarding Past, Present and Prompted

Mischa Welsh, Regent's University London

This paper explores the evolving role of storyboarding in business communication and branded storytelling, examining how it functions as a medium for shaping narrative intent, guiding interpretation and negotiating authorship. Once a practical tool for planning films and advertisements, the storyboard now operates as a site of negotiation between clarity and control, especially in collaborative environments.

Drawing on professional and educational practice, the study reflects on how storyboards facilitate creative dialogue, particularly when working with clients or teams who may not be visually fluent. The level of finish – whether a rough sketch or a polished frame – can influence production decisions, set expectations and shape how stories unfold. Storyboarding is shown to support improvisation, creative freedom and narrative structure.

The paper also examines the rise of generative image tools and their impact on visual storytelling. These technologies offer new possibilities by removing barriers such as drawing skill, but they also introduce challenges around consistency, sequencing and narrative logic. The reliance on written prompts to generate images raises questions about how visual output is shaped and understood.

Central to the discussion is the continued use of language-based frameworks to describe visual storytelling. Terms like grammar, literacy and fluency suggest a persistent pattern in how visual thinking is conceptualised. The paper considers whether this reliance on textual framing affects our understanding of visual authorship and how it might be reconciled with creative intent.

Ultimately, the study positions storyboarding as a versatile and enduring tool for narrative clarity, creative agency and strategic communication.

STORY TELLING

EUROPEAN CULTURES IN BUSINESS COMMUNICATION

EUKO 2025

STORYTELLING: THE POWER OF
STORIES & NARRATIVES IN BUSINESS
COMMUNICATION & MEDIA DISCOURSES

Storytelling for the Development and Communication of the Employer Value Proposition (EVP)

Philip Wölki, Hochschule Fresenius

This paper explores the strategic role of storytelling in shaping and communicating the Employer Value Proposition (EVP) – the core promise an organisation makes to current and prospective employees. As employer branding becomes increasingly central to talent acquisition and retention, storytelling offers a compelling way to convey organisational values, culture and identity in an emotionally resonant and memorable format.

The research examines how storytelling supports two key elements of EVP communication: the articulation of employee benefits and the substantiation of those benefits through credible, authentic narratives. Rather than listing attributes, organisations can embed their value proposition within consistent stories and anecdotes that differentiate them from competitors and foster emotional connection.

Beyond communication, storytelling also plays a vital role in the development of the EVP itself. By collecting and analysing stories from within the organisation – a process known as story listening – companies can uncover lived experiences, authentic values and cultural traits that form the foundation of their employer brand. This participatory approach engages both employees and leadership, offering insights into the organisation's 'true DNA' and supporting the emergence of genuine brand ambassadors.

The paper presents a methodology for integrating storytelling into EVP strategy, combining narrative development with internal cultural analysis. It argues that storytelling not only enhances the visibility and appeal of the employer brand but also ensures that the EVP reflects the real, everyday experiences of the workforce. In doing so, it positions storytelling as a bridge between organisational identity and employee engagement.

STORY TELLING

EUROPEAN CULTURES IN BUSINESS COMMUNICATION

EUKO 2025

STORYTELLING: THE POWER OF
STORIES & NARRATIVES IN BUSINESS
COMMUNICATION & MEDIA DISCOURSES

The Dropout: Engaging Founder Stories to Teach Entrepreneurship Within the Academy

Naomi Wynter-Vincent, Northeastern University London

This paper explores how storytelling – particularly the mythologised narrative of the entrepreneurial dropout – can be used as a pedagogical tool in university-level entrepreneurship education. The dropout founder story, popularised by figures such as Steve Jobs, Bill Gates and Mark Zuckerberg, positions the entrepreneur as a visionary outsider who rejects institutional frameworks in pursuit of innovation. This narrative, deeply embedded in American entrepreneurial culture, presents a challenge to formal education programmes that aim to teach entrepreneurship within structured, assessed environments.

Drawing on teaching experiences with American undergraduates in London, the paper reflects on how the dropout myth intersects with the realities of academic instruction. It considers how educators – especially those who are neither entrepreneurs nor dropouts themselves – can engage with this narrative to foster critical thinking, creativity and self-reflection among students. The paper examines how storytelling can be used to interrogate the appeal of risk-taking and non-conformity, while also positioning formal education as a space for experimentation and identity formation.

Through a blend of theoretical reflection and classroom practice, the study explores how founder stories can be reframed to support entrepreneurial learning. It argues that rather than dismissing the dropout trope, educators can use it to provoke discussion about legitimacy, value and the diverse pathways to innovation. The paper offers insights into how storytelling can bridge the gap between myth and method, helping students navigate the tension between entrepreneurial aspiration and academic structure.

STORY TELLING

EUROPEAN CULTURES IN BUSINESS COMMUNICATION

EUKO 2025

STORYTELLING: THE POWER OF
STORIES & NARRATIVES IN BUSINESS
COMMUNICATION & MEDIA DISCOURSES

Storytelling in Branded Entertainment: Emotional Narratives of Place in Destination Marketing

Hyunsun Yoon, City St George's, University of London

Insub Song, Goldsmiths, University of London

Jinmyoung Lim, City St George's, University of London

This paper explores storytelling in branded entertainment, focusing on music videos as strategic media for destination marketing. Through case studies from Singapore, Seoul, Yeosu, and Bogotá, the research examines how emotionally resonant narratives and cinematic aesthetics shape perceptions of place and cultural identity.

Rather than serving as conventional promotional tools, music videos construct immersive experiences that align with national branding while fostering authentic emotional connections. Jisoo's portrayal of Singapore's Rainforest Wild Asia evokes ecological wonder; Coldplay's Marina Bay visuals suggest youthfulness and unity; Jin's romantic journey through Singapore landmarks builds cultural resonance. In Seoul, BTS's collaborations reflect official branding strategies, while Busker Busker's *Yeosu Bam-bada* reimagines Yeosu through sentimental everyday scenes. Pillar Point's *Dove* contrasts Bogotá's high-brow image with mundane urban spaces.

Analysed through destination image theory, the paper argues that branded entertainment offers a transmedia model for tourism promotion. These emotionally charged stories transcend celebrity endorsement, enabling cultural relevance and global visibility.

By positioning music videos as narrative branding tools, the research contributes to evolving discourse on destination marketing and branded entertainment, highlighting storytelling's power to transform places into emotionally meaningful experiences.

STORY TELLING

EUROPEAN CULTURES IN BUSINESS COMMUNICATION

EUKO 2025

STORYTELLING: THE POWER OF
STORIES & NARRATIVES IN BUSINESS
COMMUNICATION & MEDIA DISCOURSES

VR Storytelling in Higher Education: A Strategic Communication Tool for Gen Z Engagement?

Ligita Zailskaitė-Jakštė, Kauno Kolegija Higher Education Institution

This paper explores how storytelling, when delivered through Virtual Reality (VR), can serve as a strategic communication tool for higher education institutions (HEIs) seeking to engage Gen Z audiences. As traditional promotional formats – such as brochures, websites and open days – struggle to convey the full atmosphere and identity of an institution, VR storytelling offers a more immersive and emotionally resonant alternative.

By combining narrative structure with interactive technology, VR allows prospective students to virtually explore campus spaces, encounter authentic stories from students, academics and alumni, and experience a “day in the life” of university life. These cinematic, first-person narratives blend factual information with emotional cues, fostering a deeper connection between the viewer and the institution.

The study investigates the potential and limitations of VR storytelling as a promotional and strategic branding tool. Drawing on research data, it examines how institutional image influences Gen Z decision-making and compares these insights with current applications of VR in higher education promotional strategies. Particular attention is given to narrative design, technological implementation and the adaptability of VR content across platforms.

The findings suggest that VR storytelling can enhance engagement, strengthen brand identity and support recruitment efforts at local, national and international levels. For digitally native audiences, the format meets expectations for interactivity, authenticity and personalisation. Moreover, VR content can be repurposed for virtual open days, social media campaigns and outreach events.

Ultimately, the paper positions VR storytelling as a forward-looking strategy for HEIs aiming to differentiate themselves in an increasingly competitive global education landscape.

STORY TELLING

EUROPEAN CULTURES IN BUSINESS COMMUNICATION

EUKO 2025

STORYTELLING: THE POWER OF
STORIES & NARRATIVES IN BUSINESS
COMMUNICATION & MEDIA DISCOURSES

Conceptual Mediated Storytelling | Abstracts

STORY
TELLING

EUROPEAN CULTURES IN BUSINESS COMMUNICATION

EUKO 2025

STORYTELLING: THE POWER OF
STORIES & NARRATIVES IN BUSINESS
COMMUNICATION & MEDIA DISCOURSES

Fathoming the Palimpsest: Videopoetry, Superimposition and Associative Thinking

Marcus Nicholls, University of West London

This videopoem explores storytelling at the threshold of narrative and non-narrative, using the metaphor of the palimpsest to rethink how stories can be experienced in different forms of communication. Rather than linear progression, Fathom constructs meaning through layered impressions – text, image and sound interwoven in dynamic superimpositions. These layers invite viewers to engage actively, forming personal interpretations through juxtaposition and resonance. Drawing on Tom Konyves' manifesto for videopoetry and Tarkovsky's associative cinema, the work demonstrates how poetic logic, such as memory, simultaneity and ambiguity, can create immersive experiences that challenge conventional persuasive narratives. In an era where audiences seek authenticity and emotional depth, this approach suggests alternative strategies for visual storytelling: ones that privilege openness, affect and co-creation over prescriptive messaging. The accompanying discussion will consider videopoetry as a research method and creative practice, asking how palimpsestic structures can inspire new forms of storytelling.

STORY TELLING

EUROPEAN CULTURES IN BUSINESS COMMUNICATION

EUKO 2025

STORYTELLING: THE POWER OF
STORIES & NARRATIVES IN BUSINESS
COMMUNICATION & MEDIA DISCOURSES

Women of an Uncertain Age: Visual Narratives of Midlife Transition

Sukey Parnell Johnson, photographic artist and actress

This exhibition and dialogue investigate how photography can challenge dominant narratives of ageing and femininity in contemporary culture. Sukey's long-term project portrays women aged 40–65; a cohort often rendered invisible by what Kathleen Woodward calls “the youthful structure of the gaze”. Through portraits and accompanying texts, the work reframes midlife not as decline but as a complex, culturally charged transition. These visual stories interrogate norms of beauty, power and identity, asking whether invisibility is chosen or imposed and how women navigate pressures to “look good at any age”. In doing so, the project demonstrates storytelling's role in shaping – and contesting – social scripts. Photography becomes a narrative tool, extending the categories of what is “worthy of view” and proposing alternative aesthetics for ageing. This presentation includes an exhibition viewing and conversation with the artist, exploring how visual storytelling can disrupt stereotypes and open space for new cultural narratives.

STORY TELLING

EUROPEAN CULTURES IN BUSINESS COMMUNICATION

EUKO 2025

STORYTELLING: THE POWER OF
STORIES & NARRATIVES IN BUSINESS
COMMUNICATION & MEDIA DISCOURSES

The Golden Mile: A Road Movie in Curved Time

Sotirios Varsamis, University of West London
Ståle Eriksen, architectural photographer
Robin Morrison, composer & sound designer

This short film transforms Brentford's *Golden Mile* in West London into a narrative experiment, exploring how urban space and time can become storytelling devices. Following a lone cyclist departing from the historic Gillette factory, the film traces two journeys – one into the past, one into the future – mapping the architectural and cultural layers of this iconic industrial corridor. The screen itself becomes an eye-shaped lattice of events and echoes, where paired incidents unfold in reverse or anticipation, inviting viewers to ride through memory and possibility simultaneously. The original score, composed from treated site-specific sounds, deepens this immersive experience, turning the Golden Mile into a sonic and visual palimpsest. Conceived as a research-led creative project, the film asks how urban environments can host narratives that connect heritage with innovation; a question central to persuasive communication and identity in a changing cultural landscape. After the screening, the filmmakers will discuss how visual form and associative storytelling can reframe place as a medium for narrative.

STORY
TELLING

EUROPEAN CULTURES IN BUSINESS COMMUNICATION

EUKO 2025

STORYTELLING: THE POWER OF
STORIES & NARRATIVES IN BUSINESS
COMMUNICATION & MEDIA DISCOURSES

Acknowledgements

EUKO 2025 was made possible through the generous support of the London School of Film, Media and Design at the University of West London. We extend our heartfelt thanks to all those who contributed their time, expertise and creativity to ensure the success of this jubilee edition.

A special note of appreciation goes to the colleagues and collaborators whose commitment and hard work shaped this conference:

Ben Dunning, University of West London
Marilyn Forkan, University of West London
Carl Rohumaa, University of West London
Daniel Silas, University of West London
Kristin Brewe, University of West London
Sumaya Alnahed, University of West London
Sotirios Varsamis, University of West London
Abi Ruffles, University of West London
Christopher Schmidt, Åbo Akademi University
Martin Nielsen, Aarhus University
Catarina Lélis, Universidade de Aveiro
Vidya Allemann-Ravi, Lucerne University of Applied Sciences and Arts (HSLU)
Arno Kinzinger, Salzburg University of Applied Sciences
Florian U. Siems, TU Dresden

To all speakers, chairs and participants – thank you for bringing your insights and energy to EUKO 2025. Your contributions have made this event a truly memorable celebration of storytelling in business communication.

European Cultures in Business Communication (2025). *Abstracts of the EUKO Conference 2025: Storytelling – The Power of Stories and Narratives in Business Communication and Media Discourses*. London: University of West London. DOI: 10.36828/conf.319

EUROPEAN CULTURES IN BUSINESS COMMUNICATION
EUKO 2025
STORYTELLING: THE POWER OF STORIES & NARRATIVES IN BUSINESS COMMUNICATION & MEDIA DISCOURSES

STORY
TELLING