The Ethical Implications of Generative AI Use in Content Creation

An exploration by Christian Jeter

New Technology, New Problems

With the introduction of generative artificial intelligence (Gen AI) into the public sphere, it has become increasingly popular to use such digital tools to boost workflow and creative output in various industries. One industry that has seen some of the most innovations, and most pitfalls, by Gen AI is that of online content creation. Whether it be by an individual digital influencer, or a multi-billion corporation, using Gen AI has become a great representative of how new technologies can offer numerous benefits and drawbacks at the same time. AI tools can prove quicker and more accessible, such as with rapidly generating graphic designs or brainstorming ideas. However, problems within the ethical usage of generated materials can negatively impact how future online content is created in terms of problems in plagiaristic and quality-based standards.

What is Content Creation?

According to Indeed, *content creation* is defined as "the process of brainstorming and writing relevant content pieces and publishing them in different content forms, like blog posts, infographics, white papers and eBooks (Indeed)." There are also other more unorthodox opportunities for content, such as with creating online videos or designing interactive systems such as video games or mobile device applications. Content creation revolves around choosing a specific subject, optimizing your research for your audience and relaying relevant and interesting information in a format that an individual will enjoy and share. With the increasing prevalence of AI in content-oriented spaces, there are various opportunities and potential pitfalls that might be explored in years to come.

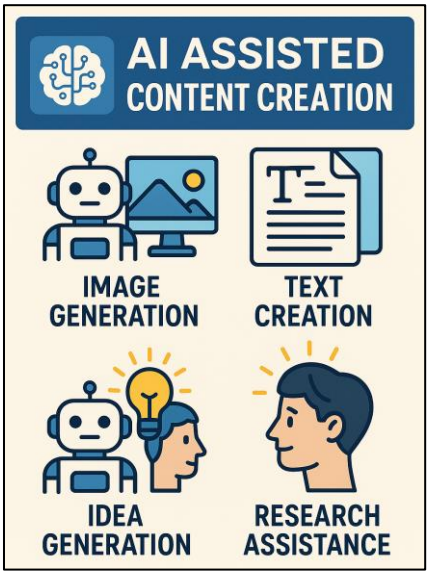


Gen AI, Content Creation Opportunities

As mentioned previously, one of the most prominent aspects of content creation revolves around the brainstorming and optimization process. These moments are often the most time-consuming parts of the content cycle, making it a highly inefficient usage of time for individuals and employers alike. Researching ideas, fact checking known sources, and deciding on what topics will serve best in grabbing an audience's attention are some of the most prominent components of said cycle. These elements can pose some of the riskiest endeavors in projects due to troublesome variables like poor data or low user engagement.

Quicker Output

In assisting with this situation, Gen AI can gather data in a very sufficient manner whilst also optimizing the information to be used by content creators. Rather than an individual searching through webpages, forums, and search engine optimization (SEO) tools, sending in a prompt to an AI platform, such as ChatGPT which houses models built for quick research, can gather all the necessary data in a fraction of the time it would normally take for a human user. This automated system of attaining data means there is less time in the research phase and more time in the content creation phase – ultimately making the timely output of content more efficient.



More Accessibility

Another way that AI tools can be utilized to better assist the content creation process is in graphic generation and editing. Platforms such as ChatGPT or Microsoft Copilot can quickly create photorealistic images that may be used in online thumbnails, social media posts, or other content-based avenues. Along with said images, applications like CapCut or Canva have built-in AI editing software that can assist creators in optimizing their media for the best viewing and comprehensive experiences (Meltwater). This accessibility to newly automated tools means that creators will no longer have to take the time to pick up graphic and editing skills or outsource themselves to professional designers or editors instead, creating a cheaper and more convenient environment for said creators.

Gen AI, Content Creation Pitfalls

Even with the expansion of opportunities for content creators to be more efficient and find more accessible options for their subject matters, just as many potential problems have appeared in how AI may affect more ethical spheres. In specific, there are two major issues that apply to the ethics and legality, as well as rhetorical effectiveness, of using AI tools: **Plagiarism** and **Quality Material**.

Plagiarizing Platforms

As it is defined by the Oxford Dictionary, *plagiarism* is "the practice of taking someone else's work or ideas and passing them off as one's own (Oxford)." With this definition in mind, most if not all Gen AI platforms, such as ChatGPT, rely on scouring numerous amounts of data from various sources to create cohesive and effective material for users. However, because these models use the work of other creators to analyze and decipher certain styles of creating content, ideas that are generated by an AI software could potentially be a direct plagiarism of somebody else's work.

For content creators, the ethical implication alone of direct or indirect plagiarism of someone else's ideas, work, or projects could be lethal Thieving the work of somebody else, whose publications solely depend on accessible and digital media, could tarnish entire reputations and careers in a matter of days (Indeed). This is not even to mention the fact that creation hubs, such as YouTube and Instagram, have specific anti-piracy guidelines that could be enacted if such plagiarism was accused and found guilty upon.

With these implications in mind, along with the large grey area of Gen AI's potential to plagiarize other materials, choosing to use such platforms could prove risky in regard to one's career or reputation. The ethical drawbacks to using AI, in terms of lacking originality or outright stealing the ideas of another, could easily disrupt the business of content creator on a level that could see them evicted from media platforms. Furthermore, the legality of AI usage, which is still yet to be fully explored, in content creation could lead to easily made cases against creators for breaking copyright infringements and other piracy safeguards.



Rhetorical Reproach

One of the more overlooked aspects of AI-based content creation falls into the category of how said material is used and found. As mentioned previously, it has become more accessible for creators to use AI-powered platforms to design videos, thumbnails, posts, and more. Yet, in doing so, there is an inherent drawback on less **quality content** being produced and available. Given that Gen AI runs predominantly on gathering and analyzing the work of humans on the internet (ChatGPT), the more AI-generated content there is means there will be a more ill-proportionate ratio of AI and human work – meaning AI could start generating graphic and images based on AI – which could substantially limit innovation due to current artificial limitations.

Potential Solutions

As has been highlighted, there are numerous doors that have been opened for content creators to streamline their workflow and create quicker, more efficient publications. However, problems such as potential inherent plagiarism and less human-based quality material could see just as many pitfalls appear as benefits. Yet, there are a few ways that some of these drawbacks may be limited in their potential damage or effect.

To better control plagiarism in content creation, social media and publication platforms should seek to maintain a high level of human observance (BioMed). Training employees to have a keen eye for AI-based content can help to assist in detecting plagiarized work (there could also be a benefit to training non-Gen AI platforms, such as AI algorithms, to check for AI content in the works of others.

As for lower quality output, instead of it being encouraged for users to quickly generate and post Gen AI products, there should be a stronger emphasis on using AI to develop new content-based skills. Using ChatGPT creation tools to learn to use Adobe Spark or Photoshop may prove more fruitful in designing human images with the efficiency of AI learning.

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(Author's note: ChatGPT was only used to generate the 3 graphics used in this assignment and provide a primary source for Gen AI function in the "Rhetorical Reproach" paragraph. **NO TEXT** in this paper was AI-generated or AI-assisted).