

INSIGHTS

Medium is the Message: AI is the Medium?

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Introduction

The global introduction of Artificial Intelligence (AI) has been viewed as a moment of celebration or a significant breakthrough for humanity. However, the celebration or belief that AI will bring about progress and development has primarily been associated with the context, text, or image that AI can generate for the user, i.e., the AI message. Regardless of the cast, the article believes viewing AI as the message rather than the context is more beneficial. Following the infamous Canadian philosopher and media theorist Marshall McLuhan, the scholar coined the phrase medium is the message, which essentially stated that since the twentieth century, medium or technology has shaped human perception, behaviour, and society as a whole, with context coming in second. It is understandable that AI-generated content can be used for various purposes; however, without AI, the content that people praise becomes null and void. With that understanding in mind, the article will look at Marshal McLuhan's theory to provide a new perspective on AI and its impact on and in society. It may also provide insight into the consequences of AI governance, which should not be solely based on context.

Marshal McLuhan's theory and AI

Marshal McLuhan, often labelled as a technological determinist, is known for his unique focus on the tool, technology, or medium rather than the content and social effects that influence the creation of technology (Jan et al., 2020). This article, instead of delving into the ongoing debate, aims to apply McLuhan's theory in a novel way. It offers an alternative perspective where the roles of tool, technology, and medium are frequently muted, silenced, and viewed as an intermediary and facilitator of the message.

First, Marshal McLuhan coined the phrase "the medium is the message," which is central to the article's argument. The phrase "the medium is the message" refers to how the medium changes how humans behave after they adopt it (McLuhan, 2013). For example, AI has already shaped how information is processed due to its speed and ability to provide comprehensive information in response to user questions. To put it in perspective, students will require time to read information on Google or books or to seek advice from their teacher; however, with AI, the interaction changes; students may be more information-rich than teachers due to the use of AI; students may not as ask questions to the teacher or ask complicated questions due to the use of AI; and students may choose not to read through books or journals because of the

complicated and broad information received (Seo et al., 2021). This example shows how AI has changed the way information is exchanged or received, which has an impact not only on the student in this case but could also be applied to other aspects of life.

Marshal McLuhan went on to explain that the medium, in this case, AI, can affect human senses, resulting in sensory paralysis or narcissus narcosis (Zhu, 2022). With AI, such as augmented reality or virtual reality, as well as natural language processing, human senses are changing and adapting to the AI-created reality (Sumon et al., 2024). In other words, human interaction began with oral communication, which required face-to-face technology before the advent of technology, and people could communicate and receive information through writing, then mass printing, radio, television, electronic media, and finally, AI. Throughout this evolution, it is clear that the medium will evolve, and something new will emerge to serve the convenience of the human senses. Oral communication is direct; there is no time for the brain to imagine, nor is writing required; writing is intensively focused by the eyes and brain to imagine, but it is linear and constructive according to the author's structure; radio is only hearing, leaving room for the image; TV, electronic media, and AI offer information that is becoming increasingly fast-paced, incomplete, and significantly affecting the emotions of the audience. Listening to war news through books, radio, TV, and live broadcasting through electronic media and AI will undoubtedly differ, with live broadcasting through electronic media and AI having the most significant impact on human senses, with the possibility of seeing a lot of real-time graphic images or video (Deer, 2021).

In contrast, TV, radio, and books will be less and less graphic, thereby shaping human sense behaviour differently. On the other hand, book or peer-reviewed material may be more accurate in comparison to electronic media or AI, which is driven by user preference, with the algorithm set to show information and things that the audience prefers, resulting in satisfaction and numbness and potentially leading to reliance on AI due to sensory paralysis (Zhu et al., 2022). One example is that the user may push the information provided by AI because they mistakenly believe that AI has been fed with a plethora of data. However, doing so reduces the user's sense of critical thinking, making it more likely to accept potentially incorrect information (Fui-Hoon Nah et al., 2023). It is reasonable to argue that AI is not merely a tool or machine for transmitting information, but AI is a force that alters society's experience and culture.

Conclusion

The Marshall McLuhan theory can provide an alternative perspective to the hype surrounding AI's breakthrough in content creation. The message from AI does not change or transform individuals or societies, but AI itself possesses this power. The impact of AI on human perception and how it can cause sensory paralysis provide additional insight that could be critical for policymakers and all stakeholders seeking to regulate AI. Following this, it is critical to recognise that, regardless of the content, how technology is designed and developed, such as data processing, decision-making and algorithms, and a user-centric approach, may all significantly impact society, behaviour, culture, and tradition. As a result, it is critical to emphasise and improve AI literacy so that individuals remain critical and recognise or awaken from the numbness caused by AI. On the other hand, AI governments must base their decisions on the content they generate and how AI is developed, which should be moral and ethical.

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