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Posted Date: 5 September 2025

doi: 10.20944/preprints202509.0543.v1

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*Review*

# McLuhan Today: AI as Medium, Shaping the Global Village and Extending Human Intellect

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## Abstract

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is rapidly transforming media and communication, not merely as a technological tool but as an active, generative medium that shapes authorship, content, and perception. This literature review examines AI through the lens of Marshall McLuhan's media theories, including the medium is the message, media as extensions of man, and the global village, to assess their relevance in contemporary AI-mediated communication. While McLuhan's framework provides foundational insights, it underestimates media that exhibit agency-like qualities, such as AI systems that generate, filter, and dynamically modify content. Building on this critique, we propose a conceptualization of AI as an active medium, functioning as a co-creator, a cognitive environment, and an autonomous participant in meaning-making. The review explores the implications of generative AI tools, algorithmic curation, and real-time personalization, highlighting both opportunities for extended human cognition and creativity and challenges related to bias, misinformation, and ethical accountability. In addition, this medium reflects AI within the debate on contemporary scholars on morality and data colonialism, and emphasizes the requirement for the updated theoretical structure responsible for the unique abilities of AI. This study contributes to media and communication research by integrating the basic ideas of McLuhan with the developed role of AI, and offers an important perspective that informs future empirical research, moral ideas and the development of AI as a socially responsible medium.

**Keywords:** artificial intelligence; media theory; McLuhan; generative AI; algorithmic curation; active medium; human cognition

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## Introduction

In today's rapidly developed media scenario, artificial intelligence (AI) has become a transformation communication medium instead of just a technical equipment. I think it is important to understand AI in this way because it not only automatically, but shapes the production, the spread and the reception of information. I see AI as a medium that expands human intellectual abilities, and reflects McLuhan's insight that the media is its own extensions, but in those ways McLuhan could not be completely exposed. This literature review examines McLuhan's principles in relation to AI, and checks that their basic views - such as "medium messages" - can help us understand the widespread effect of AI on modern communication. AI technologies, such as chatgpt and dall · e, describe the power of the medium to generate the material to generate materials in media production, creativity and traditional prerequisites for rights. (Gruetzemacher, 2022). I think this change has a deep implication for communication science because it not only produces materials, but also changes how the audience also happens. In addition, the AI-powered platforms are appointed to algorithms, to determine what information is presented to users, and emphasizes some stories, images or approaches to others. I see it as a continuity and intensity of the argument from McLuhan that the medium size experience: With AI, even the medium participates in a structured perception, prefers information flow from methods affecting cognition and social interaction.(Hohenstein et al., 2021).

In addition, the privatization of the material through AI-Medieval FEED represents a new range in the engagement from the audience. I believe this development highlights the double nature of AI as a medium: it can expand human intelligence by strengthening both selective exposure and algorithm bias and by interrupting understanding as well as by interrupting understanding. In other words, AI actively conveys the environment as a medium that contains communication, not only the message, but also affects the pattern of thoughts and social interaction. This observation is in accordance with the widespread claims from McLuhan that the media is not neutral capacitor, but is transformational forces that restructure human opinion, but it also states that AI agency introduces challenges as a suicide medium spread beyond their original structure.

By examining AI through McLuhanian theory, I aim to show that contemporary media scholars must consider both the cognitive and societal implications of AI as a medium. This perspective allows me to analyze AI not only as a tool for content creation but as an active participant in communication ecosystems, shaping what knowledge is accessible, how it spreads, and how audiences interpret it. Ultimately, I see McLuhan's ideas as a valuable lens for understanding the significance of AI in communication studies, while also recognizing the need to adapt his framework to account for the unprecedented capabilities and agency that AI introduces into media systems.

## I. Background

Marshall McLuhan's seminal work in media theory laid the foundation for understanding the profound effects of media on human perception and society. In his 1964 book, *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man*, McLuhan introduced the concept that "the medium is the message," emphasizing that the medium through which content is conveyed significantly influences human experiences and societal structures (McLuhan, 1964). He argued that media are extensions of human senses and faculties, reshaping how individuals perceive and interact with the world. This perspective is particularly pertinent in the digital age, where artificial intelligence (AI) has emerged as a transformative medium in media and communication.

The evolution of AI from a theoretical concept to a practical tool has significantly impacted media practices. Initially, AI's role in media was limited to data processing and automation. However, advancements in machine learning and natural language processing have enabled AI systems to generate content, personalize user experiences, and facilitate communication in ways that were previously unimaginable. For instance, generative AI models like OpenAI's GPT-3 can produce coherent and contextually relevant text, while platforms such as DALL-E generate images from textual descriptions, demonstrating AI's capacity to create and mediate content (Gruetzemacher, 2022). Algorithms now considerably define what news we watch, discuss, or interact with more actively... media plays a role whenever news is broken and personalized to fit people's choice (Cheriti, Mehiri, & Saiti, 2025).

In this context, AI refers to the role of artificial intelligence in the design of communication processes and material construction as a medium, and acts as a broker that not only affects the material but is also distributed and considered as messages. The specific is the most generative AI, which includes creating new material based on the pattern learned from current data, such as lessons, images or music, which traditionally demonstrates AI's ability to produce creative outputs. It is the concept of closely related algorithms, which describes the use of algorithms to users to select and introduce the materials, often correspond to individual preferences and behaviors, which affect public discourse, shaped consumption of knowledge, and potentially selective risk or resonance assets are reinforced. Together, these words provide a framework for understanding how AI acts as an active medium in modern media and communication systems. McLuhan argued that media function as extensions of human faculties (McLuhan, 1964). For example, smartphones are not merely passive tools for calling; they are gateways to an entire universe of information, entertainment, and interaction. In a similar way, AI now extends human cognition and creativity, acting as an intellectual partner in producing and interpreting media content (Cheriti, 2025, p. 9).

Understanding these concepts is crucial for analyzing the implications of AI in media and communication. AI's integration into media practices raises questions about authorship, authenticity, and the ethical considerations of machine-generated content. Moreover, the personalization of content through algorithmic curation can lead to echo chambers, where users are exposed primarily to information that aligns with their existing beliefs, potentially limiting diverse perspectives and critical engagement (Abiri & Farrokhi, 2025).

The relevance of this topic is emphasized by the increasing spread of AI in media and communication industries. From automated journalism to personal advertising, AI explains how information is produced, distributed and consumed. This change requires the restoration of existing media principles and contours, which is responsible for the unique characteristics and challenges that AI is presented as a medium. In the following sections, this review will find out how to understand the principles of McLuhan to understand AI's role in contemporary media and communication, to investigate the implications of human cognition, social structures and moral ideas that arise in this new media scenario.

## II. Thematic Review

Marshall McLuhan's media theories offer profound insights into how technologies reshape human perception and society. His concepts—"the medium is the message," media as extensions of man, and the global village—provide a framework for understanding the transformative role of artificial intelligence (AI) in contemporary communication.

### *A) The Medium Is the Message*

McLuhan's assertion that "the medium is the message" emphasizes that the medium through which content is conveyed profoundly influences human experiences and societal structures, often more so than the content itself (McLuhan, 1964). This perspective is particularly relevant in the digital age, where AI functions as a pervasive medium in media and communication. AI systems, such as generative models and algorithmic curation, not only deliver content but also shape the form, delivery, and reception of messages. For instance, AI-generated content can influence public discourse by determining which narratives are amplified or suppressed, thereby affecting collective consciousness and societal norms (Havers, 2025).

### *b) Media as Extensions of Man*

McLuhan said the media is expanding human faculties, increases our abilities and changes our conversation with the world (McLuhan, 1964). In this context, AI expands human feeling and creativity, and acts as an external cognitive partner. AI's ability to process large amounts of information and generate new content examples this expansion. However, this relationship raises the ability to convey human idea processes for author, agency and AI, possibly changing the nature and intellectual commitment of creativity (Havers, 2025).

### *c) The Global Village*

The term from global village refers to the way of compressing electronic media time and location, causing a sense of interaction between individuals around the world (McLuhan, 1964). AI accelerates this phenomenon through personalization and automation of real-time, enables immediate communication and sewn material delivery. This connection promotes a shared global experience, but also presents challenges related to privacy, information grants and erosion of traditional cultural boundaries. (Havers, 2025).

We believe McLuhan's theories provide a valuable lens for examining the impact of AI on media and communication. By viewing AI as a medium that extends human faculties and facilitates a global village, we can better understand its role in shaping contemporary society. However, this perspective



also necessitates critical examination of the ethical, social, and cognitive implications of AI's pervasive presence in our media landscape.

### III. AI as a Medium in Contemporary Research

Artificial Intelligence (AI) has emerged as a transformative medium in media and communication, reshaping authorship, content curation, and ethical considerations. This section explores the multifaceted impact of AI, focusing on generative AI, algorithmic curation, ethical concerns, and scholarly debates. AI has become capable of analyzing, synthesizing, and generating content that reflects and competes with human intellectual processes... This challenges the traditional notion of originality and authorship (Cheriti, 2025, p. 204).

In particular, generative AI tools like ChatGPT and MidJourney have revolutionized content creation by enabling machines to produce text, images, and multimedia. This shift challenges traditional notions of authorship and creativity. Studies indicate that AI-generated content can influence audience perceptions of authenticity and emotional engagement. For example, AI-generated emotional messages have been found to reduce positive word-of-mouth and customer loyalty, highlighting concerns about the authenticity of machine-generated communications (Kirk, 2025). Furthermore, the integration of AI in academic writing raises questions about academic integrity and the value of human intellect in scholarly work (Bozkurt, 2024). Moreover, AI algorithms play a pivotal role in shaping information consumption by personalizing news feeds and trending topics. While this personalization enhances user experience, it also contributes to the formation of filter bubbles—environments where individuals are exposed primarily to information that aligns with their existing beliefs. Research has shown that such algorithmic curation can reinforce political biases and limit exposure to diverse viewpoints, thereby influencing public discourse and democratic engagement (Ekström, 2022). The prioritization of engagement metrics over content diversity further exacerbates the spread of misinformation and the polarization of audiences.

In addition, the distribution of AI technologies raises important moral issues. A great concern is algorithm bias, where the AI system reflects and eliminates the existing social prejudices present in training data. This can lead to discriminatory consequences in areas such as employment, loans and law enforcement. In addition, DeepFec hyper-Relictic is a threat to arrival, privacy, consent and authenticity of media content. Abuse of Deepfac for political manipulation and defamation has become a press issue, which motivates calls for strict rules and moral guidelines (Al-kfairy, 2024). Moreover, the proliferation of misinformation facilitated by AI-generated content underscores the need for robust mechanisms to ensure the credibility and accountability of AI systems. Furthermore, scholars have critically examined the societal implications of AI, particularly concerning the concept of "data colonialism." Couldry and Mejías (2024) argue that the extraction and commodification of personal data by tech corporations constitute a new form of colonialism, where individuals' digital footprints are exploited without adequate consent or compensation. This perspective challenges traditional frameworks of media ethics, urging a reevaluation of power dynamics in the digital age. The integration of AI into media practices necessitates the development of ethical standards that address issues of consent, ownership, and the equitable distribution of benefits derived from data utilization.

### IV. Applying McLuhan to AI

His concept of Marshall McLuhan's media theory, especially "the medium is the message" and "global village" provides intensive insight into the transformative role of artificial intelligence (AI) in modern media and communication. In the digital age, the effect of AI spreads beyond the formation of material, and the form of the media through which the information is spread and experiences.

McLuhan's assertion that "the medium is the message" emphasizes that the medium itself significantly impacts human experiences and societal structures, often more so than the content it conveys (McLuhan, 1964). This perspective is particularly relevant in the context of AI, where the

medium—such as AI-generated text, personalized algorithms, or predictive analytics—fundamentally alters how individuals interact with information. For instance, AI-driven platforms like ChatGPT and MidJourney not only produce content but also shape the manner in which users engage with and perceive that content, highlighting the medium's role in influencing user experience and societal norms.

Furthermore, In addition, the concept of Media McCelis matches as an extension of human faculties with the integration of AI into different aspects of life. AI acts as an extension of human recognition, memory and creativity, improves our abilities and replaces our interaction with the world (Sokolovsky and Ershova, 2022). This extension is clear in applications ranging from A-assisted writing and image generation to the prepaid algorithm that estimates the user's needs and preferences. These

Moreover, In addition, the idea of McLuhan's "global village" describes a world where electronic media collapses time and location, enabling immediate communication and mutual relationships (McLuhan, 1964). AI reinforces this phenomenon by facilitating the interaction between real -time and personal experiences in the global network. However, this context also introduces challenges, such as the creation of algorithms and filter bubbles, where individuals are mainly exposed to information that matches their current beliefs. This dynamic can fragment the global village, which can reflect the chambers and strengthen existing prejudices, which affect public discourse and democratic involvement (Socolowski and Ershova, 2022).

## V. For a New Theory of AI as Medium

While McLuhan's theories have been foundational in understanding the impact of media on society, we believe they require significant reconsideration in the context of artificial intelligence. McLuhan famously argued that "the medium is the message," emphasizing that the characteristics of a medium shape perception and societal structures beyond the content it conveys (McLuhan, 1964). However, in our view, AI challenges this framework because it is far from a neutral channel of communication. Unlike traditional media such as television or print, AI systems not only transmit information but also generate, filter, and sometimes decide the content itself. In essence, AI functions simultaneously as both channel and actor, introducing an agency-like quality that McLuhan did not account for.

From this perspective, we see a gap in McLuhan's framework. While it helps us understand the ways media shape human perception, it falls short of capturing the participatory and generative nature of AI. Unlike passive media, AI actively participates in meaning-making, influencing what is communicated, how it is structured, and how audiences interpret it. This observation suggests the need for an updated theory that acknowledges media with intrinsic generative agency.

Building on this critique, we propose a conceptualization of AI as an active medium with co-creative and cognitive capacities. First, AI can be seen as a co-creator, where the medium itself collaborates with humans in generating content. In this framework, the traditional notion of authorship is expanded: the medium is not merely a conduit for human ideas but a co-author in the communicative process. Second, AI functions as a cognitive environment, creating shared synthetic spaces in which ideas, narratives, and knowledge are generated, explored, and modified in real time. Here, AI extends beyond merely enhancing human faculties—it actively shapes the structure of thought and communication within these digital spaces. Finally, AI can be understood as an active medium, capable of dynamically modifying content based on interaction patterns, feedback, and learned behaviors, effectively producing messages as it transmits them. The communicator remains responsible for the meaning conveyed in this message, whether it is intended or not (Cheriti, 2024, p. 914).

In positioning this theory, we argue that AI requires us to rethink media as entities that can extend themselves into human cognition, rather than solely extending human faculties as McLuhan suggested. Where McLuhan's framework emphasizes human extensions, our perspective frames AI as an autonomous, generative medium that actively shapes the message, the audience, and the

broader communicative environment. By conceptualizing AI in this way, we can better understand its transformative role in contemporary media and communication, acknowledging both its creative potential and the ethical, social, and epistemic challenges it introduces.

## Discussion

Marshall McLuhan's media theory provides a valuable lens through which to understand AI as a transformative medium in contemporary communication. I see his assertion that "the medium is the message" as particularly useful for analyzing AI because it highlights how the medium itself—not just its content—reshapes social interaction, perception, and cognition. AI, as a generative and algorithmically driven medium, mediates communication in ways that are immediate, personalized, and interactive, thereby altering the patterns of human engagement and community formation. From this perspective, McLuhan's insights help explain the fundamental social changes induced by AI, such as how personalized news feeds, chatbots, and creative AI tools shape both individual behavior and collective discourse. In short, AI does not merely convey information; it actively structures the communicative environment, much like McLuhan predicted for earlier electronic media.

However, McLuhan's framework has limitations when applied to AI. His theories were developed in an era before autonomous, self-learning systems, and therefore did not anticipate algorithmic agency—the capacity of AI to act on its own, adaptively shaping content and interaction without direct human oversight. Unlike traditional media, AI systems are not just extensions of human faculties; they possess quasi-agential capacities that influence outcomes independently of the user's intentions. This gap in McLuhan's theory necessitates engagement with contemporary scholarship that addresses the unique characteristics of AI as a medium.

Shoshana Zuboff's concept of Surveillance Capitalism (2019) is particularly relevant, as it examines how AI-driven platforms commodify human behavior and manipulate attention, raising ethical concerns that McLuhan could not foresee. Luciano Floridi's Philosophy of Information (2014) offers a framework for understanding AI-mediated knowledge and informational ethics, emphasizing the moral responsibilities embedded in the design and deployment of intelligent systems. Similarly, Kate Crawford's work in *Atlas of AI* (2021) highlights the political, environmental, and ethical dimensions of AI infrastructures, demonstrating how these technologies exert societal influence far beyond mere communication. The comfort with which AI can generate convincing fake videos... poses a significant threat to the integrity of information and news... The concept of 'truth' becomes risky in an environment saturated with AI-generated content (Cheriti, 2025, p. 210).

Integrating these contemporary perspectives with McLuhan's theories allows for a more nuanced understanding of AI as a medium. While McLuhan provides a foundational lens for examining the social and perceptual effects of media, modern scholarship addresses AI's autonomy, ethical implications, and systemic power dynamics. Together, these frameworks offer a richer, multidimensional view of AI in communication, bridging classical media theory with current technological realities.

We see McLuhan's lens as an essential starting point for exploring AI's transformative effects, but it must be supplemented with contemporary ethical and philosophical analyses to fully capture the complexities of AI as a medium. This combination enables scholars to critically assess not only how AI shapes communication but also how it interacts with societal, cognitive, and political dimensions in ways that extend beyond traditional media theory.

## Conclusion

This literature review has examined AI as a transformative medium through the lens of McLuhan's media theories, highlighting its role as an active, generative, and cognitively extending force. While McLuhan's framework—the medium is the message, media as extensions of man, and the global village—provides valuable insights into the societal and perceptual impact of media, AI challenges and expands these ideas. Unlike traditional media, AI does not merely transmit

information; it generates content, filters messages, and actively participates in shaping meaning. This review proposes that AI should be conceptualized as an active medium, a co-creator, and a cognitive environment that both extends human faculties and exerts its own agency in communication processes. Recognizing AI in this way allows scholars to better understand its impact on creativity, authorship, information dissemination, and social interaction, while also highlighting ethical and epistemic concerns associated with algorithmic curation and machine-generated content.

**Disclosure Statement:** The author declares no conflicts of interest related to this study.

**Funding Statement:** This research received no financial support or grants from universities, government agencies, funding organizations, or other entities.

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