

Research on McLuhan's Media Theory

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Abstract: McLuhan is a master of media theory in the 20th century, who put forward influential media theories such as "Global Village", "The medium is the message", "The medium is an extension of the human being". He put forward influential media theories such as "Global Village", "Media is Information", "Media is an Extension of Human", and so on. McLuhan's profound insights and interdisciplinary thinking have had a profound impact on contemporary communication and art theories, and have helped to understand the interaction between the media and human beings in modern society. This paper examines McLuhan's media theory and consists of three parts: an introduction, two main chapters and a conclusion. The introduction part mainly explains the origin of the selected topic, and clarifies the innovation of this paper's research as well as the research methodology. The first chapter of the main text part discusses the relationship between media and communication, and the division of hot and cold media in turn. The second chapter discusses the dialectical relationship between media and contemporary art and technology from the perspectives of epistemology of media technology and media aesthetics, which is of great practical significance for us to correctly understand the relationship between media technology and human beings and society. The conclusion part summarizes the inevitability of McLuhan's media theory ideas, and further composes and elaborates that McLuhan's media theory is somewhat innovative.

Keywords: Marshall McLuhan, Media, Art

1. Introduction

Marshall McLuhan is the most important founder and master of the Media Ecology, he is known as the "prophet" of the electronic world of the information society, and has had a significant impact on the development of communication in the twentieth century with his unique media theory. His concepts and propositions, such as "The Earth is a small 'global village'", "The medium is the message", "Media is the extension of man", "Cold and hot media", etc., have had a significant impact on the development of communication science in the twentieth century. Concepts and propositions such as "Cold Media and Hot Media" have long been a household name, making him one of the most important original media theorists and thinkers of the twentieth century. With the development of science and technology, the means of media has undergone several changes, and McLuhan's media thought is still worthy of attention and reflection in the new era. Nowadays, the arrival of 5G era, the use of artificial intelligence and virtual reality technology has formed a new "media" pattern, and the development of media and technology continues to affect and change people. The interaction between

media, technology and society will have a dialectical impact on people and society. The impact of new media technology on people and society is of great practical significance to our correct understanding of the relationship between media technology and people. McLuhan's media thought on the renewal of human perceptual experience, contemporary society McLuhan media view of the impact of the new media technology, the relationship between media and communication are the focus of this paper, but also the current development of the new media technology in the process of the real problems that must be solved.

This paper takes McLuhan as the research object, combs and elaborates McLuhan's unique media theory, and discusses the update of McLuhan's media thought on human sensual experience from the level of new media technology. The media is a force that drives the development of society, and the evolution of the media has produced a great counteraction to society, greatly promoting the progress of society and human civilization, so that the relationship between the development of human society has risen to an unprecedented height. In this era of media innovation, it is all the more important for us to scrutinize and review, to look at the theories of our predecessors with a developmental perspective, and to think about the application of media theories in modern society.

2. Media and Communication

2.1. Definition of Media

"The medium is the message" is McLuhan's high level generalization of the position and role of communication media in the development of human society. "Medium" is derived from Latin and means "middle". As a communication interpretation of the medium is a material tool, used to disseminate information, but McLuhan redefined the medium in a narrow sense and a broad sense. The medium in a broad sense refers to what we can think of or abstract things, such as ships, Chinese characters, etc., and the medium in a narrow sense is basically the same as the mainstream academic definition of the medium, which refers to the media that can be seen everywhere in our daily lives. The meaning of "medium is message" is that the medium itself is the real meaningful message. It is only through the possession of a medium that human beings can engage in communication and other social activities appropriate to it. The most important role of the medium is to "influence our habits of understanding and thinking". Thus, the truly meaningful and valuable "message" for society is not what the media of each age suggest to people, but the nature of the communication tools used in that age, the possibilities it opens up, and the social changes it brings about.

In McLuhan's view, each new medium creates a new way of social life and behavior, and the media are the basic driving force of social development and the mark of distinction between different social forms. "History is a history of the development of media forms".

Under the agrarian civilization, human beings created a tribalized ritual society through spoken and written language. Thanks to the invention of Gutenberg's printing press, societies were reshaped into juridical societies separated by geographical boundaries. Electronic media has changed the meaning of time and space for human interaction [1]. Electronic and network media have formed a hyper-real society that separates time and space; artificial intelligence sings the melody of the future, McLuhan's "everything is a medium" is gradually moving towards people's daily life, and the interconnection of everything is likely to become the trend of the future society. While "the medium is the message" seems to discuss the relationship between the medium and the message, it actually refers to the relationship between human beings and the medium, as well as the relationship between society and technology. The evolving media technology influences the way of human perception and human society with its unique technical rules [2]. To summarize, the development of society cannot be separated from the innovation and progress of media technology, and the interactive development of media and technology provides a strong impetus to the formation of society.

Media is the extension of man: This is a concept put forward by McLuhan in *Understanding Media: On the Extension of Man*. McLuhan argued that the medium is an extension or extension of man's sensory faculties. This is what McLuhan analyzed and summarized on the basis of the theoretical experience of his predecessors, such as Freud, who proposed that "communication technology is an extension of the human senses", Bergson, who proposed that "human consciousness is also an extension of man", and Mumford, who proposed that "tools are originally derived from the imitation of humans", and Hall suggested that "technology is an extension of human interaction with the environment." McKnight, who is also the author of the book *The Human Senses*, has written that "communication technology is an extension of human senses" [3]. McLuhan argued that no medium is anything more than an extension or extension of the human senses and sensibilities, and that this extension is a magnification and augmentation of the functions of the human body. The pen is an extension of the hand, the car is an extension of the foot, the clothes are an extension of the skin, and an extension of any part of the human body, be it the hand, the foot, or the skin affects the whole of the mind and society. Therefore, the history of the development of media and society is also the history of "tribalization-detribalization-retribalization" of human sensory capabilities, that is to say, the history of unification-differentiation-re-unification.

2.2. Relationship Between the Media and Communication

"Media hot and cold" is one of the most controversial of Marshall McLuhan's media theory ideas. However, McLuhan himself did not define it explicitly, and people only speculate on the basis of his account. The definitions of cold and hot media are mainly based on the clarity and unambiguity of the information provided by the media, as well as the degree of imagination of the message receiver and the degree of participation in the activity of receiving the information. In general, McLuhan argues that hot media exclude and cold media include.

Cold media means that it conveys a small and vague amount of information and requires the mobilization of multiple senses and a rich imagination in its comprehension. McLuhan believed that low-definition media, such as manuscripts, telephones, television, and the spoken word, are "cold media". Because of their low clarity, they require the audience to use multiple senses to experience them, and they require rich associations and participation. The ambiguity of the message mobilizes the possibility of reinvention. The term "hot media" is used in relation to "cold media". A "hot medium" is one in which the message is clear and unambiguous, and can be understood by the receiver without mobilizing more senses and associative activities; it is "hot" in itself, and people do not have to "warm up" when processing information. Warm-up exercises". McLuhan considered books, newspapers, radio, silent movies, photographs, etc. to be "hot media" because they all act on one sense and do not require more association. But McLuhan's categorization of hot and cold media was not consistent and was logically contradictory. For example, McLuhan argued that television was a cold medium and film was a hot medium because the television image was a mosaic network, whereas film could provide a more complete, high-definition image. McLuhan's view was influenced by the television broadcasting technology at that time. With the improvement of television technology, when the clarity of television reaches the clarity of movies, can we also regard television as a hot medium? Therefore, some people say that the classification of "hot and cold media" itself does not have much scientific and practical value, but the important thing is that it gives us a revelation: different media act on people in different ways, causing psychological and behavioral responses are also unique, the study of media should also take these factors into account [4].

Driven by the rapid development of electronic media technology, McLuhan's prophecy of the "global village" has gradually become a reality, and the way of human perception and lifestyle has also changed. According to Chen Jinsong, the emergence of the Internet has destroyed all the rights of the traditional mass media based on dictatorship with an unstoppable momentum [5]. Each era

promotes development through media technology, and electronic media is the synthesis of all traditional media, which breaks the traditional view of space and time and brings people a more holistic and aggregated feeling. The Internet has truly realized McLuhan's "global village" on a global level. As the germ of the theory of globalization, the "global village" promotes the development of global economic integration, strengthens the connection and understanding between people and the world, and lays a theoretical foundation for the study of globalization [4].

New media and old media are often seen as opposing sides, but in fact they are inextricably linked. The first stage of a new medium's emergence is often to standardize its development by imitating the old medium. The second stage is when the new medium develops its own characteristics and becomes a new medium in the true sense of the word. The third stage is when the new medium outstrips the old one, triggering the old medium to imitate and adapt to the new one. The last stage is a relatively continuous stage. Paul Levinson, an American media theorist, put forward the "three-part theory", in which he believed that all media, no matter old or new, are in fact time-binding or space-binding. The so-called "new" and "old" are relative, and each era has a new medium belonging to each era.

McLuhan lived in the era of the rise and development of radio and television technology, McLuhan in Media Theory explained more than twenty kinds of media, but only up to the television technology. After that, the development of Internet information technology has transformed human society in an unprecedented way. Take cell phone as an example, cell phone is more compact and portable compared to TV, and at the same time it covers the qualities of newspaper, TV, radio, camera, computer and other media. The development of cell phones has changed the nature of social interaction, allowing people to communicate and connect anytime, anywhere, breaking the limits of time and space. Artificial intelligence, virtual reality, big data, cloud computing, etc. have become the new media of the current era, and they have more or less retained some of the qualities of the old media. In the era of constant change of old and new media, McLuhan's view of media has been gradually proved, and the dialectical view and application of the emerging new media technology can help us better grasp the new media era.

3. Media, Technology and Art

3.1. Epistemology of Media Technology

Media and technology are closely related concepts. Mediums are the means by which information or communication is conveyed, while technologies are the tools or methods by which these mediums are realized. In modern society, media and technology are becoming increasingly inseparable. With the development of science and technology, new media and new technologies are constantly emerging, changing people's lifestyles and social structures. Discussed from the perspective of recognizing the roots of data dissemination, McLuhan points out that the truly meaningful message is the medium itself, not the content disseminated by the medium. [That is to say, it is not the fleeting message but the ever-innovating media technology that has an impact on human society. Therefore, we can extend "medium is message" to "technology is medium".

At the same time, McLuhan argues that "the medium is the message" can also be expressed as "the medium is the environment". "Medium-as-environment" is a central idea in media environmentalism, which emphasizes that the medium of communication is not neutral, but has a prescriptive role in influencing the encoding, transmission, decoding, and storage of messages, as well as the physical equipment that supports these communication processes. This theoretical perspective argues that innovations in media technology create a new service environment, and that human beings create change and social change in such technologically shaped environments. People's lives are now surrounded by new media such as big data and the Internet of Things, creating entirely new data-driven environments. These environments are influenced by communication media with biases such

as ideological-emotional bias, spatio-temporal and perceptual bias, political bias, social bias, metaphysical bias, content bias, and epistemological bias [6].

The concept of "implosion" is also important in McLuhan's theory of media. "Implosion" is the extension of mechanical technology to the human body, the human organs of sensory or functional amplification, expansion and explosion. McLuhan argues that in fact the relationship between electronic media and human beings is extended to a certain boundary from "implosion" to "implosion". From the perspective of examining the impact of the new media age on the human condition, McLuhan's theory of "implosion" can be divided into the "implosion" of the environment and "implosion" as perception. Aspects.

3.2. Media and Art

Defining media with "human being" as the reference point is the underlying color and logic of McLuhan's understanding of media. However, the theory of media under the framework of "anthropocentrism" is not sufficient to summarize the relationship between media and human beings, because the evolution of media technology is getting faster and faster, and it is inevitable that new environments will be created [1]. Under the influence of economic development and productivity, the media has become a tool for human senses. As an extension of our sensory functions, the media is constantly involved in our ways of perception and aesthetic experience. In the age of tribalization, communication between people is realized through the unmediated link of presence, an effective use of the full range of collective perception without discrimination [6]. In the post-textual era, imagination is an extension of the textual medium. Later radio and newspapers also have a different focus on perception, and people are inducted into aesthetics in the regulated operation of perceptual ratios.

The medium is an object of emotion, and in the extension of everything, it brings people different aesthetic sensations through the medium [6]. Generally, technological objects either serve as an element of the process of emotional practice or as a directed object of emotional practice activities, and their own nature does not have a great impact on emotion. However, media technology itself also has a certain emotional bias, making it necessary to incorporate the morphological analysis of media technology itself into media affective practice. The emotional bias of digital media is the most obvious, which extends the scope of emotional expression of traditional symbolic forms, can characterize most of the emotional elements in daily life, and plays an important emotional role in daily life. Digital media practices are important forms for evoking emotions. Digital media shape an emotionally stimulating media practice environment, in which the circulating content is itself an emotion. New digital media products are designed to evoke emotions rather than merely convey information. Under the influence of environment, content and product, people's digital media practice is a typical emotional practice. The change of time and the innovation of media technology make McLuhan's ideas constantly discussed, and the continuous research of media theory provides new horizons for the development of aesthetics [7].

4. Conclusion

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