



Introducing Communication Theory: Analysis and Application

Fourth Edition

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Media Ecology Theory

Chapter Overview

- MET at a Glance
- Introduction
- Assumptions of MET
- Making Media History and Making “Sense”
- The Medium Is the Message
- Gauging the Temperature: Hot and Cool Media
- The Circle is Complete: The Tetrad
- Carrying the McLuhan Banner
- Integration and Critique

MET at a Glance

- Society evolves as technology evolves
- The medium is the message
- Laws of media demonstrate that technology affects communication
- Society cannot escape the influence of technology

Introduction

- Developed to understand the influence of technology
- Symbiotic relationship between people and mediated technology
- Social order is based upon ability to deal with technology

Introduction

- McLuhan's work is based on the thinking of his mentor, Harold Innis
 - Great empires were built by those in control of the written word
 - Elites use communication technology to build economic empires
 - Bias of communication

Assumptions of MET

- Media infuse every act and action in society
 - Broad definition of media
 - Traditional media plus numbers, games, and money

Assumptions of MET

- Media fix our perceptions and organize our experiences
 - Media influence our views of the world
 - Media may influence behavior modifications

Assumptions of MET

- Media tie the world together
 - “Global village”
 - Consistent with systems perspective

Making Media History and Making “Sense”

- The media of an era defines the essence of society
- Epochs in media history:
 - The Tribal Era
 - The Literate Era
 - The Print Era
 - The Electronic Era

Making Media History and Making “Sense”

Historical Epoch	Prominent Technology	Dominant Sense
Tribal Era	Face-to-Face Contact	Hearing
Literate Era	Phonetic Alphabet	Seeing
Print Era	Printing Press	Seeing
Electronic Era	Computer	Seeing, Hearing Touching

The Medium Is the Message

- The medium, not the content, influences society
 - The content gets attention
 - The effect of the medium is subconscious

Gauging the Temperature: Hot and Cool Media

- Hot
 - High-definition forms
 - Demand little involvement

- Cool
 - Low-definition forms
 - Demand active involvement

Gauging the Temperature: Hot and Cool Media

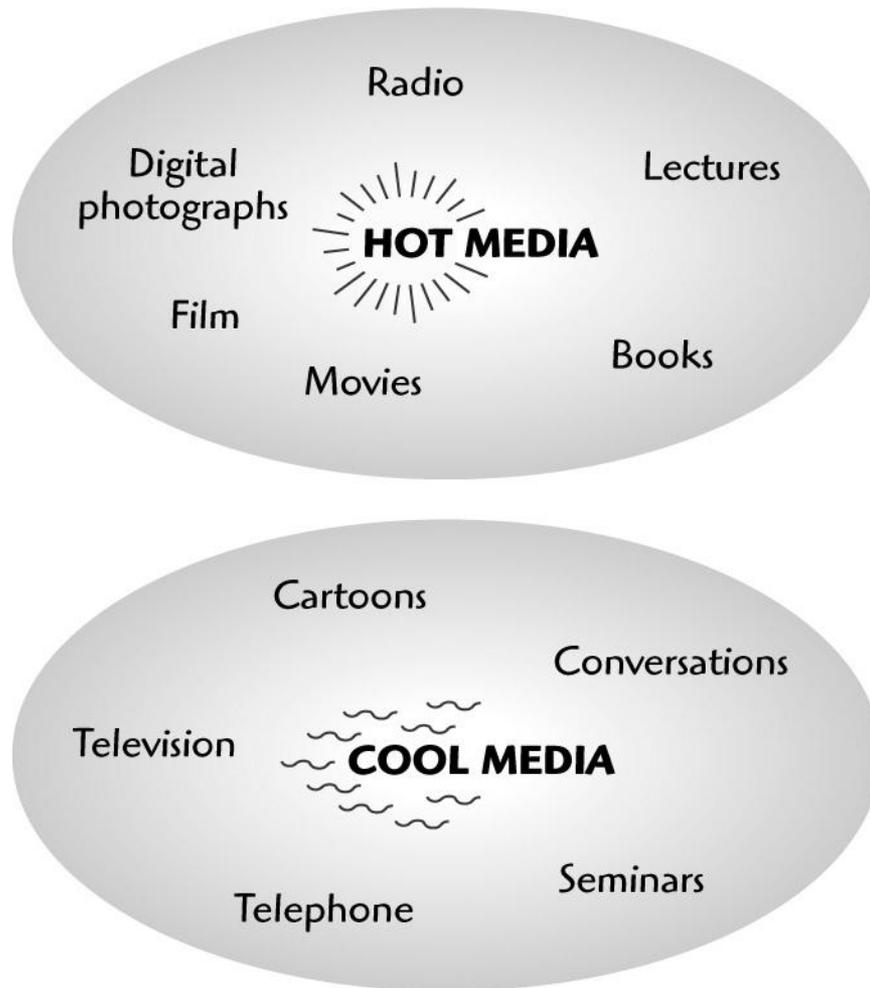


Figure 25.1
Examples of
McLuhan's Hot
and Cool Media

The Circle is Complete: The Tetrad

- Added a discussion of the laws of media
 - As a response to critics claiming a lack of scientific grounding
- Explains past, present and current effects of media

The Circle is Complete: The Tetrad

- Theory is brought full circle
 - Technology affects communication through new technology
 - The impact of new technology affects society
 - The changes in society cause further changes in technology

The Circle is Complete: The Tetrad

- Laws of media
 - Enhancement
 - Obsolescence
 - Retrieval
 - Reversal

Carrying the McLuhan Banner: Postman and Meyrowitz

- Technopoly (Neil Postman, 1993)
 - We trust technology will bring safety and salvation
- Media blurs roles and places (Meyrowitz, 1985)
 - Always connected

Integration

- Communication traditions
 - Socio-cultural
 - Critical
- Communication context
 - Mass/media
- Approach to knowing
 - Critical

Evaluating MET

- Logical Consistency
 - Overly optimistic about technology's role in society
- Testability
 - Concepts are difficult to understand, so difficult to test
- Heurism
 - Used in many areas of research