



DIGITAL MEDIA ECOLOGY: THE USES AND GRATIFICATIONS OF SOCIAL MEDIA FROM A MCLUHANIAN PERSPECTIVE

*Sameera Tilakawardana**

Centre for Educational Technology and Media, The Open University of Sri Lanka

This review paper attempts to explore the applicability of 20th century theories with special emphasis on the McLuhanian perspective to the contemporary social media sphere, and the relevant trends and developments. The research establishes 20th century theories as the moment of understanding and introduces the social media ecology as the moment of instability to create a discourse and subsequently to develop a speculative moment to explore the rationale for uses and effects of social media and its futures. The McLuhanian perspective looks at media as an extension of man and an ecological system within which human culture grows. Theodor Adornoidentified this as a consumer culture that makes the individual isolated, facilitating the capitalist mechanism. Digital convergence and web 2.0 has created a media environment with attributes that are different to traditional media environments. Web 2.0 is able to facilitate interactivity, information sharing, collaboration, among other things to develop an active and participatory social media environment that even a Marxian would appreciate. On the surface, the social media environment tends to comply with the 20th century media theory and results in a more productive and user centered ecological system creating a societal culture. But, when its explored in depth it reveals that hidden algorithms and big data manipulations draw a different picture; a culture of control, surveillance, individualization and manipulation.

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**Corresponding author: sthil@ou.ac.lk*