



INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF LAW,
GOVERNMENT AND
COMMUNICATION
(IJLGC)
www.ijlgc.com



KEEPING IT REAL: DELIBERATE DISTORTION MECHANISM TO PRESERVE AUTHENTICITY AND DYNAMICS OF ORGANIZATIONAL COMMUNICATION MESSAGES IN AI- MEDIATED COMMUNICATION

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Article Info:

Article history:

Received date: 19.10.2025

Revised date: 06.11.2025

Accepted date: 21.12.2015

Published date: 31.12.2025

To cite this document:

Samsudin, S., & Dani, E. H. (2025). Keeping It Real: Deliberate Distortion Mechanism to Preserve Authenticity and Dynamics of Organizational Communication Messages in Ai-Mediated Communication. *International Journal of Law, Government and Communication*, 10 (42), 370-383.

DOI: 10.35631/IJLGC.1042026

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Abstract:

The prevalence of artificial intelligence (AI) in the form of easy-to-use tools poses both opportunities and challenges towards organizational communication. The focus of this paper is on AI's emerging role as a meta-medium, which is its capacity of transforming, generating, and integrating multiple media forms prior to their circulation through established channels. The analysis explores AI's influence on message structure, stylistic choices, tone of voice, and the potential introduction of bias. In addition, this paper explores the theoretical implications of AI's ever-increasing integration into the communicative environment. The discussion illustrates the potential for enhanced efficiency in message transmission while improving message clarity. However, it is hypothesized that this may also diminish message authenticity, reduce variability in daily conversations, and hinder personal expression. Drawing from McLuhan (1964) notion that "the medium is the message", this paper integrates AI into the communication framework and proposed the Deliberate Distortion Mechanism (DDM) as a tool to enhance authenticity and individuality of AI-assisted communication. Parallels from past technological adoption suggest that mass AI adoption in the organizations is inevitable.

Keywords:

Organizational Communication, Artificial Intelligence, Meta-Medium, Communication Medium, Message Authenticity

Introduction

In the few years following the explosion in popularity of ChatGPT which was developed and introduced by OpenAI on 30th November 2022, Artificial Intelligence (AI) had impacted many aspects of how an organizational communication functions. There are many studies that have been conducted to address AI-related issues in various organizations such as increasing and enhancing automation in operations (Murire, 2024; Ekuma, 2024; Helo & Hao, 2022) and enhancing decision-making processes using larger datasets (Bankins et al. (2024). However, there is a more subtle transformation that is happening within organizations, particularly regarding organizational communication. One example is the use of chatbots and virtual assistants which are powered by AI is increasingly influencing how employees, teams and managers interact with one another and as well as for customer service. This subtle shift is often not given the attention it deserves. The subtle shift is currently redefining traditional communication practices in various ways such as increasing efficiency but also makes us question the authenticity of our interpersonal connections in the workplace.

The dynamic nature of organizational communication stems from the participants which define what we call an organization. An 'organization' can be thought of as a simplified term, with the full definition being, an organization of humans (Townsend & Romme, 2024). The evolution of organizational communication as a field is parallel to the advancement of human civilizations, often, this evolution is not uniform. Organizations evolve in different ways depending on the constituents of the organization which are normally their stakeholders (Jones, Harrison & Felps (2022). Hence, many factors are influencing the style of top-down, bottom-up or multidirectional communication flow by organizations which vary from one organization to the other.

This dynamism or changing of forms of communication within an organization can be traced back to a few catalysts. Firstly, the advent of new technologies, giving new capabilities to employees and managers to practice communication in ways that were not feasible before. Secondly, the realization by managers of the value of information from employees fuels the relatively recent shift toward a flatter organizational hierarchy. This movement had been credited to Elton Mayo and his work in Mayo (1933) which emphasized worker feedback. Thirdly, the evolution of organizational communication practices is also fueled by the changing demographic characteristics of employees. A key source of this enhanced diversity within organizations can be attributed to the increasing workforce mobility and the arguably claimed of deglobalization (Farndale et al., 2020) by certain world leaders.

By observing and acknowledging the dynamic nature of organizational communication, work must be done to prepare ourselves for the ever-growing integration of AI into our work lives, as AI will surely influence and ultimately change how we communicate internally and externally within our organizations. The technical aspect of AI is well documented, and one could see the progression of this technology from even before the groundbreaking contribution of Geoffrey E. Hinton (which was peaked at around 2012) and other pioneers of AI.

Literature Review

The Meta-Medium

McLuhan (1964) had coined the phrase "the medium is the message". In his influential work titled 'Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man', Marshall McLuhan, a Canadian media

theorist had pointed to the importance of analyzing the medium which we use to communicate. He concluded that the tools which we use to disseminate information play a crucial role in forming the audience's perception of the message, how they process and ultimately understand the information sent by the sender of the original message (Rashid & Khan, 2024). McLuhan went far enough even to say that, in certain cases, the medium is more important and influential in conveying messages than the underlying message itself. The intended information, usually in the form of text or spoken words, if sent through the wrong medium, would ultimately be lost in its meaning in the conversion process. Building from this foundational insight that the medium significantly influences messages reception, Rashid and Khan (2024) describe that in emergent digital environments (e.g., the metaverse), the medium of communication itself frames user cognition and meaning, making it more powerful than the content itself. Similarly, Li (2024) emphasizes that media technologies play the role as an environment that restructure human perception and understanding.

In this section, we will explore the effects of AI acting as a 'meta-medium'. In our quest to better understand AI and its influences on organizational communication, we must first grasp the influence of the medium through which a message is passed to the listener or audience. Below are a few instances where we can observe the influence of the medium on the audience:

Television Broadcast of News vs. Printed Newspapers

The differences between the televised news reporting that we watched on our television and the news that we read in the newspapers are stark. On the one hand, we have television news shows that utilize fast-paced video cuts, live reporting from the field and well-trained news reporters which convey their own personal touch into the news reporting. Television emphasizes fast-paced reporting and visual effects which could produce more emotional reactions from the audiences. On the other hand, we have printed news where slow and deliberate reading is more natural, and this often gives the reader a chance to grasp the news with more detail and insight. Although some tabloid or attention seeking printed news reports incorporates visual and fast-paced writing as television had used, generally, printed newspapers are geared toward an audience seeking to spend some time to grab the newspaper and sitting and reading (Vailati et al. (2025). Even if the material used by both mediums is the exact same, the television format provokes a sense of urgency and emotional response, while the newspaper format enables the readers to think about the material and analyze it. As we can see, the 'medium' of television is potently shaping the audience's reception of the 'message' in a different way than the printed newspaper does.

Microblogs vs. Blogs

Nowadays, we can easily differentiate between a full fledge online blog post and its counterparts, the social media platforms with brand names such as X, Instagram or TikTok. On X, the limited character counts force the users or senders of information to be brief with their messages which obviously had led to short, attention-grabbing messages. These microblog posts are geared towards gaining quick reactions and short-lived discussions from the readers. A full fledge online blog post, however, is a long-form text which encourages a more nuanced discussion and understanding. The characteristics of the tool which we use to convey the message will shape the type and depth of communication (Han & al, 2023). Often, these tools shape communication more than the message itself.

Movies vs. Live Theater

Our experience watching a movie is far different from our experience attending a live theater performance. Movies are filled with cinematic visual effects that can catch our attention. They utilize close-ups, special effects and mesmerizing locations and backgrounds to cultivate the audience's immersion into the storyline (Yilmaz et al., 2023). Theater on the other hand, takes place in the same room that we are in, and the experience is limited to the physical props and the energy of the live actors. This medium encourages a personal connection and enhanced imaginative effort on the part of the audience. The medium of cinema, with its visual manipulations, is radically different from what the theater has to offer from its real-life performances (D'Andrea & D'Ulizia (2025). This in turn cultivates different experiences, even if the storyline or script is the same. Even the movie studios acknowledge this as many popular animations have been re-enacted in the form of live musical performances to present the audience with a radically different experience, even though the underlying material is the same.

Podcasts vs. Radio Talk Shows

The medium of an original 'podcasts' is offering an on-demand listening experience, with longer recording sessions and the ability to pause, rewind or skip to the next content. 'Podcasters' often create a feeling that the content produced is tailored to the preferences of the audiences and cultivate a direct connection with the host and inclusion in the discussion Meidina & Kurniasari (2022). Traditional radio channels, on the other hand, are often live and scheduled. These differences in the medium influence how the program is structured and how the audience engages with its content.

These examples showcase the influence of the medium itself. The difference between the mediums, such as the various constraints of the mediums, the capabilities inherent in the mediums and the availability of the medium directly influences how messages are received, interpreted, digested and emotionally processed by the audiences. McLuhan's insight on the importance of the medium begs us to critically consider the medium to convey the message. Below this paper provides a graphical representation of the medium reshaping the original message as described in McLuhan (1964).

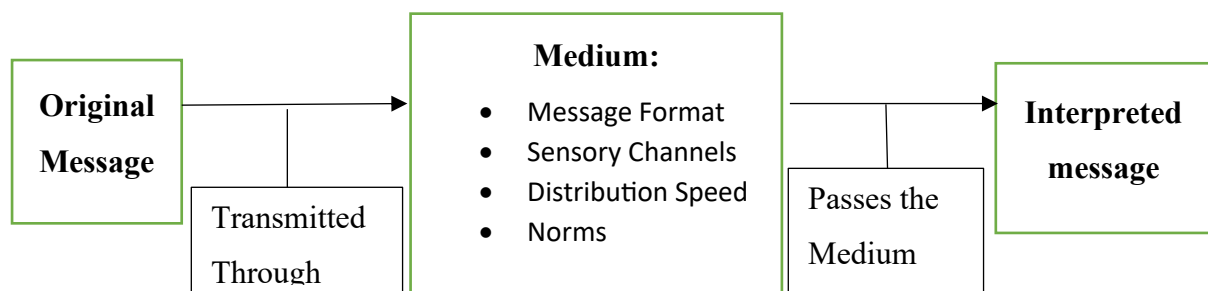


Figure 1: A Model Proposed by McLuhan (1964)

This is a simplified graphical representation of the idea expressed in McLuhan (1964). Figure 1 above captures the essence of the statement 'the medium is the message'. The original message is the text decided by the sender to be transmitted through an undetermined medium. This final text would contain the original words, style and biases from the sender. From the sender's perspective, this text would convey the information in a way that would reflect his or her original intent. However, the sender must then choose a medium. There will be no

communication when there is no medium. As discussed in the examples presented above, face-to-face conversations are also a form of communication medium.

Now that we are clear that medium selection is non-optional and we cannot simply remove the medium to negate distortions in our original message, we must understand how a medium alters the message before it gets to the receiver. A medium carries traits which affect the message differently from other mediums (Bini, 2024). As discussed previously, the selection of a medium, be it television, radio, social media, podcasts or others, will change how the message is received by the intended audience. There are a few elements which constantly vary as the medium varies. Here we proposed four elements. However, this list is not exhaustive, and in our opinion, there are other elements which can be included in this list.

First is how the message will be packaged or formatted. Information will be encoded in varying formats depending on the medium. This change is typically in terms of text, visual, audio or any addition of interaction or immediate audience feedback element into the presentation of the information.

Secondly, different mediums focus on different sensory channels. For example, televised news coverage focuses on the vision of the audience, by having reporters get as close to the action or accident as possible to enhance this visual effect. Printed news will focus on the details of the news and the reading experience of the audience, usually by utilizing carefully selected words and terminology to portray the message as intended by the sender. Another comparison would be that sound quality would not be as great of a concern for the television news crew as with podcasters or even movies in the cinema.

Thirdly, the dissemination speed and area. Social media nowadays is the gold standard when it comes to speed and coverage. Each medium comes with a specific speed of information transmission capability. However, if we observe more closely, the medium which had become dominant throughout historical phases is the medium which is the best in terms of speed and reach of coverage area. This is regardless of the deficiency of the medium such as not being able to convey enough detail or context of the message, less able to convey the deep emotions of the sender or highly prone to third party manipulations.

Fourth, the inherent audience perception of the medium varies from one medium to the other. Audience perception or expectation of the information passed through the medium at hand changes from medium to medium (Koliska et al., 2021). One example would be the varying audience perception of the identical information presented in a reputable, peer-reviewed academic journal as compared to it being presented in a social media posting.

As we understand these few ways in which the medium alters the audience's perception of the message, we would be wary of the medium we choose to transmit a message. Admittedly, there are other aspects which change the message based on the medium, but the four mentioned above would suffice to make a point regarding the importance of medium selection. The information that passes through a medium would carry with it additional elements which filter, restructure or even change the original information. This enhanced or modified interpretation of the message alters the impact, credibility, emotional context and the general meaning for the audience.

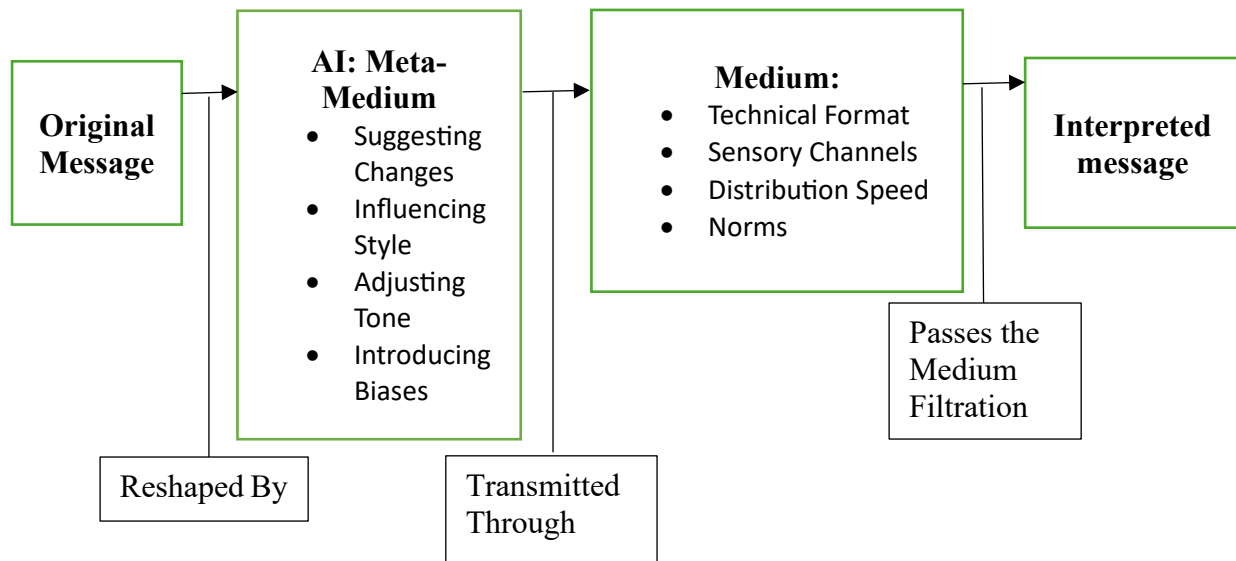


Figure 2: Integrating AI into McLuhan (1964)

Figure 2 above portrays how AI is expected to be integrated into the process described in McLuhan (1964). AI acting as a precursor to the medium bears great importance in determining how the final message influences the audience. There are many roles which AI perform as the meta-medium such as refining the language of the original author, proposing narrative-changing structures, enhancing clarity, reducing inconsistencies in language and ideas and other functions. However, we are going to explore into four of these possible roles of AI as the meta-medium.

First, when AI acts as the meta-medium, AI provides suggestions in terms of content, structure, language, refining the given narrative or making conflicting interpretations of the complex ideas in the original message (Pereira et al., 2023). These AI interventions would impact creativity and reduce variation in ideas generated naturally from senders. For example, AI might not understand subtleties in the text which might require certain inherent traits in the audience to understand it. AI will 'smooth' these subtleties out which can reduce the value of the information to that specific receiver or even change the original idea. These 'efficiencies' from utilizing AI would impact authenticity. Fast AI edits would make homogenization of narrative a prevalence among works produced in this age. This is arguably the likely future outcome, especially in terms of mundane, day-to-day message creation. As we had discussed before, the success of any mass technological adoption depends on whether it makes life easier for the end user.

Secondly, the author's own style would be impacted. As mentioned before, AI's suggestions, either accepted unknowingly or intentionally, may result in the alteration of the authors' style of language used and words choice in delivering the message. This is especially true when the author is deliberately trying to introduce unusual style of communication in the message. An example of this is when the author's deliberate choice of using poetic language is smoothed out by AI.

Thirdly, the tone of the author is also at risk when AI is unchecked as the meta-medium. The tone of writing here might not be the same as the senders' tone. The author might have wanted to convey emotions such as sadness, anger, joy, thrill, anxiousness or even urgency, while the AI edits might not reflect this. AI might 'tone down' these emotions and might even convey the wrong emotions.

Fourth, AI will reflect the biases contained in the data that it was trained on, assuming that no other biases were incorporated into the model intentionally. These biases normally include cultural, racial or political biases. For example, the data which the AI had been trained on might contain paternalistic biases and will automatically use male pronouns when referring to figures of authority, or in describing masculine traits such as charisma or bravery. One of the most dangerous effects of this is the possible erosion of voices and perspectives of authors from the minority population.

In the table below we try to summarize the examples presented above regarding the possible unwanted side effects of leaving this meta-medium unchecked by the sender of the original message.

Table 1: Examples Of Unintended Side Effects of AI As the Meta-Medium

Elements of the Original Message	Aspect of AI Alteration	Example of the Original Message	Example of the AI-Filtered Message
1. Suggesting Changes	Content and Flow	Ali loves mathematics, even though he sometimes fails his mathematics tests, which he learned from his math teacher at school.	Ali learned mathematics from his math teacher and loved it, even if he sometimes failed his mathematics tests
2. Influencing Style	Authors' Unique Voice	The students tried to stay up all night, trying to complete their assignments.	The students poured over books and roamed the internet, burning the midnight oil and drinking ungodly amount of coffee in the quest to complete their assignments
3. Adjusting Tone	Emotions	Abu looked at his newly broken leg. Nothing matters anymore. He was never going to play football again.	Abu looked and smiled at his newly broken leg. It doesn't matter. He can now focus on completing his degree.
4. Introducing Biases	Norms	The Dean of the Sallehuddin Medical School of University Utara Malaysia addressed the undergraduates, encouraging them to strive for a better future.	The Dean of Sallehuddin Medical School of University Utara Malaysia, delivered an address to the undergraduate, inspiring them to work towards a brighter future.

As observed in the examples provided in Table 1 above, in many instances such as the one observed in ‘suggesting changes’ row, AI as the meta-medium enhances the original text, making it clearer. This can be a positive aspect to look forward to. The point of concern is with the originality of the text which reflects the author’s voice. With that original text, the readers, listeners, viewers, or even live audiences can get a sense of the state or condition of the author when writing the original text. The language, structure, style and tone can reflect the author’s mental and physical state at the time of writing. With AI as the meta-medium, this can be lost, if the final text is left unchecked by the original author and permitted to be transmitted through the medium (Al Hosni, 2025). In an organizational context, we are used to assume that every communicative text sent by the sender are the words and language of the sender, or at least, of another human being. With AI as the meta-medium, this may not be the case. Hence, when a sender sends a message, there will be an element of scepticism for the receiver who are aware of this new meta-medium, and the emotional and human connection of reading, listening or watching a message will be disturbed.

Theoretical Effects of AI Integration on Organizational Communication

In this section, we would explore possible outcomes of AI integration into the organizational setting. Our goal is to present the possible outcomes of AI integration based on the degree of the integration and the corresponding human or social reaction. Below is the graphical representation of the relationship between the degree of AI integration within an organization and the corresponding effects on communication-related activities.

The focus of Figure 3 is the aspect of authenticity, variability of the messages, efficiency and clarity. As usual, these aspects are not exhaustive. It is intended to generally illustrate the relationship between the degree of AI integration and the four aspects. Two are positively related, meaning that it increases as the degree of AI integration increases and the two others are negatively related. Let us discuss the negatively related aspects first.

Firstly, as the degree of AI integration increases, the perceived authenticity decreases. Messages which were crafted with heavy AI influence, which also suggest minimal human input, would lack nuanced or subtle cues and emotions which is what we usually received from messages sent by other individuals. This erosion of personal touches might be intended for clarity, efficiency or to increase standardization and professionalism. However, other members of the organization might perceive interactions to be less genuine because of the less authenticity (Hwang et al., 2024).

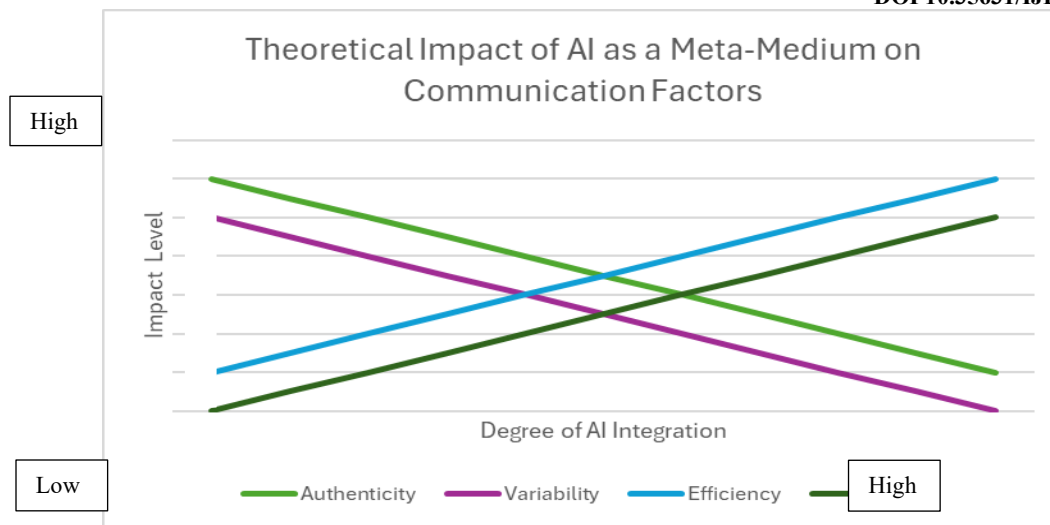


Figure 3: Theoretical Impact of AI As a Meta-Medium on Communication Factors

The second negative correlation is that the higher the degree of AI integration within an organization, the less variable are the messages and responses. Variability in human interaction depends on the personalisation of the messages (Wickord & Quaiser-Pohl, 2025). With high AI usage in the crafting of messages, the personal connection and the variability of messages based on organizational seniority, interpersonal dynamics and other variable aspects would diminish.

Next, we would discuss the two other relationships which are positively related to the degree of AI integration. First, undoubtedly, AI would increase efficiency, particularly in the time taken to craft messages. This efficiency entails automation in specific parts of the communication process for organizations use, for example, in drafting, editing and research. As a result, a message can be quickly created and be ready to be disseminate. The result is faster feedback from the receiver and reduce mistakes, either in language, format or specific organizational guidelines.

The second positively related aspect is the ability of AI to clarify or simplify complex messages which leads to better understanding of the messages. AI could analyse the language of the sender and spot potential misunderstandings which could arise from the message. These potential misunderstandings can be reframed for enhanced clarity. One possible area where this function could make a difference is its application in the communications of a multinational organization. However, oversimplification is a constant when using AI to enhanced clarity.

Hence, the balance between efficiency and clarity with authenticity and variability requires careful judgements from the members of the organisation, especially the management. As seen in diagram 3 previously, there is a possible moderation depicted in the intersection between the two pairs. This means that we able to pick which aspect to enhance and which aspect to damper and are not bound to choosing the extremes of each pair.

Introducing the Deliberate Distortion Mechanism (DDM)

As mentioned previously that these negative effects or concerns regarding the use of meta-medium can be mitigated if the original sender of the message check the message before transmitting it through the medium (King & Escobari, 2025).

Figure 4 is the graphical representation of the re-evaluation phase, to secure this precautionary step in the meta-medium discussion. Furthermore, as a precursor or catalyst to ensure that there would be a re-evaluation phase, we suggest the inclusion of what we call the deliberate distortion mechanism (DDM).

However, it is reasonable to assert that this suggestion would have meaningful applications where it is critical that the original sender's authentic voice is transmitted and not distorted by the meta-medium. With the idea of preserving the authenticity of the text being transmitted through the medium, the paper proposes a counterbalance towards the homogenizing effect of the meta-medium, which is somehow to programme the AI to incorporate minor errors in the AI-generated output. This idea or approach was inspired by the common behaviour of deliberately adding 10 minutes to our watches, so that we could 'trick' ourselves to be 10 minutes earlier in conducting our various tasks. We, in fact, know that the time had been distorted, in this case, 10 minutes earlier than the real time. Nevertheless, this acts as a behavioural nudge, encouraging and helping us to be punctual.

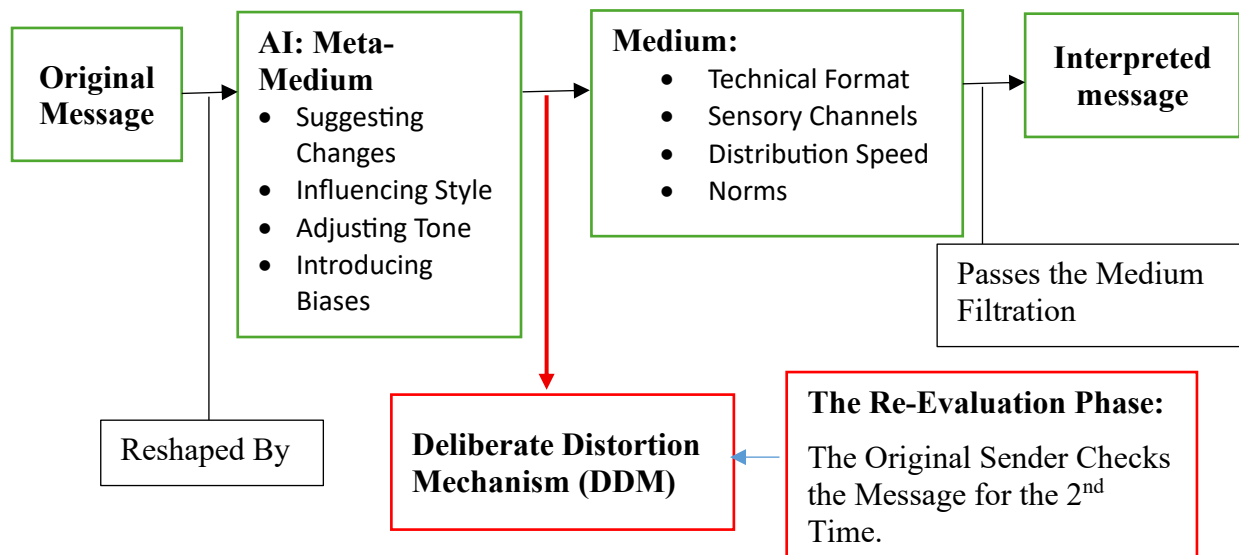


Figure 4: Formalization Of the Re-Evaluation Phase and the Deliberate Distortion Mechanism (DDM)

Hence, taking inspiration from this, by incorporating minor inaccuracies, such as typographical errors, slight inconsistencies or syntactic errors into AI-generated text, we could actively nudge the users or organizational members to consciously re-evaluate and refine the content before its transmission through the medium. This conscious re-evaluation of the final text would offer the authors a chance to enhance the personalisation of the text and restore some authenticity that might be lost due to the use of the meta-medium (Lee, 2025).

From a practical perspective, organizations can customize the specific DDM in the meta-medium in use in their respective environments. An example of a DDM is the errors in spelling and language to ensure that the users had carefully read the text before its final transmission. The act of detecting and correcting these errors caused by DDM is hoped to reinforce the sender's authenticity and overall ownership of the final message.

This paper would like to explain the difference between a DDM and the usual AI hallucination. AI hallucination happens by accident — the system produces wrong or made-up information without intention. It is a system-wide issue, not linked to how one organization uses AI.

DDM, however, is done on purpose. It introduces small, controlled errors to encourage human checking and input. While AI hallucination comes from the system's technical limits, DDM is a planned feature built for an organization's specific needs. Its goal is to make the content more authentic and keep the original author's voice.

DDM and the subsequent re-evaluation phase can be seen as a compromise between utilizing the meta-medium and preserving the authenticity of human communication. The role of AI as a meta-medium should be supported by a framework that ensures dynamic authenticity and communication, especially for organization practices.

Let us discuss a few possible risks related to DDM implementation. As discussed previously, AI hallucinations have some commonalities to DDM, and if the distinction between the two is not clearly understood by the user, then this will erode trust and confidence in using the meta-medium. Another possible risk of implementing DDM is that DDM is over implemented. If DDM does not act as a nudge, which is a gentle, non-coercive trigger for a change in behaviour, then DDM is likely being overused. This could lead to cognitive fatigue due to excessive re-evaluation, which undermines the use of AI as the meta-medium in the first place. Next, we would recommend a few safeguards to be included in the implementation of DDM, if ever the technicalities of this mechanism can be realised. First, to ensure a successful DDM implementation, organizations should explicitly communicate the presence and purpose of DDM as part of AI literacy within the organization. End users need to know that these distortions are intentional, controlled and temporary. Secondly, we would suggest that the DDM should be context dependent. Some activities require higher DDM intervention while others require less, or no DDM at all.

As mentioned by Harari (2015), the outcome or usage of any technological innovation will be determined by the user of the new technology. The misuse of AI as the current 'new technology' can be assured. Some people will misuse this technology sooner or later. Issues regarding privacy and lack of human supervision and over-reliance on AI will have to be addressed by all organizations (Reuel & Undheim, 2024; Gill et al., 2022). Hence, members of organizations have the choice of either to have a completely liberal policy when it comes to AI usage or to apply some form of AI screening. AI normalization must become the reality that we live in, which means, the complete ban of AI utilization is impossible.

Conclusion

This paper intends to provide discussions on the integration of AI with regards to its role as a meta-medium in organizational communication practices. The idea builds on McLuhan's (1964) concepts and incorporates AI as an essential component. With AI as a meta-medium, the paper discussed how messages passed through it can contain structural changes to the message, changes in tone and style of the original message. If these changes are not carefully monitored, the authenticity, value, and dynamics of communication may be compromised. As discussed earlier, as AI becomes more integrated into daily organizational communication, organizations will experience an increase in efficiency and faster message transmission along with fewer misunderstandings. Nevertheless, this improvement is accompanied by a reduction

in personal expression and subtle nuances in interactions (Gulbrandsen & Just, 2025; Sharma, 2025).

To balance the positive and negative aspects of AI integration in organizational communication, this paper proposed utilizing the Deliberate Distortion Mechanism (DDM) which could encourage human re-evaluation and consequently restoring the human element in the communication process. AI, if used widely and blindly, will inadvertently cause homogenization in our daily communication. DDM is our suggestion to counter this effect. Incorporating DDM is hoped to induce re-evaluation by the original sender of the message and therefore, increasing personalization of messages.

Future studies and experiments on DDM are also encouraged, as empirical evidence is needed to validate its effectiveness and practicality. The future research should focus on realizing such mechanisms as DDM. Currently DDM is an idea and there are no AI products which offer such mechanisms other than that research on holistic AI integration in organizational communication must continue to ensure our humanistic aspects are enhanced by AI rather than AI changing it.

To conclude, the dawn of AI as a meta-medium is causing organizational communication to evolve. To harness its potential benefits while preserving the human aspect of communication, users must critically examine its effects and implement measures such as the proposed DDM. As this paper deals mostly with theoretical ideas, we hope that empirical studies and social experiments can be conducted by future researchers with regards to the meta-medium and its effects especially on organizational communication.

Acknowledgements

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to the School of Multimedia Technology and Communication, Universiti Utara Malaysia, for their support and encouragement. My special appreciation to those granting me this opportunity to be part of this publication and all individuals who have contributed to the successful completion of this paper. Without your guidance and assistance, this accomplishment would not have been possible.

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