

Bennett Inman
COME 384
Dr. Glantz
11 March 2022

Tetrads of Media Effects: TRUTH Social

Introduction:

The Politics of the United States has had an increased number of people participating in things like elections, engagement and overall having an opinion about the current state of our nation. With the increase of participation social media has been at the forefront of where everyday citizens most often chose to engage in discourse. We all know people that do this on apps like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and so on.

Many people have had a problem recently with getting censored or banned on mainstream social media platforms, so a group of individuals with the support of former President Donald Trump have created a new social media called TRUTH Social. The app is very similar to twitter, and is used by Trump to reach his base as he has been kicked off most major platforms (Cohen, 2022) The goal of this new medium is “encourages an open, free, and honest global conversation without discriminating against political ideology” (TRUTHsocial, 2022). In this paper I will use Marshall McLuhan’s idea of Tetrad of media effects on TRUTH Social as a new form of social media.

Theory:

Marshall McLuhan, a Canadian philosopher, studied media and technology and the effect that it had on humans as a whole. One of his most famous pieces of work is his ideas in his book “Laws of Media” where he explained his ideas on a theory called Tetrad of media effects. These effects are seen at a mass level and with the understanding of media being an “extension of ourselves” (Glantz, 2022).

The 4 parts of the tetrad show how the new media enhances, retrieves, flips and makes obsolete. When thinking about enhancement McLuhan would look at what the media is giving out. For example, a newspaper is enhancing the news and information to people. When thinking about retrieving McLuhan would look at what the original form on the medium was. For example, the car is a representation of a wagon. When thinking about obsolescence you must think about what makes the new medium make obsolete. For example, the cell phone makes the landline much less used. Finally, reversal or flip, McLuhan would look at when thinking about what the medium does when it is pushed to its limits and what it does to people as a whole. For example, we are in an age of a ton of information that we can gain from the internet, yet we are still very uninformed on many things (McLuhan and McLuhan, 1988).

Enhancement:

TRUTH social looks to offer new and better things than other social media networks that are available all around the world. TRUTH social's biggest selling point is that you can post whatever you want and you will not be banned. This is what is supposed to be enhanced from other mainstream social media sites like facebook and twitter, yet some other websites that are around provide this same kind of information and platform for the same demographic of people. These apps are Gab, Parler and Telegram (Cohen, 2022) offer very similar things for the Trump following, and other spaces like 4chan and 8chan also offer similar promises of keeping open lines of communication, no matter the political leaning.

The best enhancement that can be seen from the application TRUTH social is the fact that former President Trump is one of the people laying the groundwork, alongside former Trump ally and former Congressman Devin Nunes (who is now the company's CEO). Overall, the

enhancements are going to be made in comparison to social media apps like facebook and twitter, but there is a market existing for what TRUTH social is trying to accomplish.

Obsolescence:

Any social media site has already done what TRUTH social has done and that is making other forms of old media become much more obsolete. For example, social media and the ability to get news on social media apps, often taken away from the use of newspapers and even television news, as people can now cater what news they want to hear and how often they hear it. The same is true with TRUTH social. They are looking to have a large group of people engage with the application and to not use other forms of old media like the radio, newspapers or TV.

This also helps as many people that join TRUTH social are a part of the “anti-woke” movement (Cohen, 2022) and are looking to move away from these old ways. The goal of TRUTH social is to also make other social media platforms like twitter and facebook obsolete, as well. Only time will tell if this will be the case, even though it will be hard to move millions of consumers from one application to another and go head to head with a tech industry that has an endless amount of money.

Retrieve:

The information that TRUTH social is trying to get at is a very long and complex road to think about where and how we participate in democracy and how it has been advanced throughout time. Overall, what the application is trying to do is open up free conversation (TRUTHsocial, 2022) and believes that this value has been lost in all of the technological advancement that we have had since the founding of the United States government, and the ratification of the constitution.

The biggest connections that I can make for what is being retrieved in this new age are principles outlined in the Declaration of Independence and principles outlined in the United States Constitution, specifically the 1st amendment. The connection between the Declaration of Independence and what is happening today is very simple to the people that will choose to participate on TRUTH social. It all comes down to “Freedom.” The connection can be made that the people that are switching over to TRUTH social feel that freedom’s have been trampled on other applications, just as the 13 colonies were by the British Empire.

The other connection can be made to the Constitution of the United States of America, most specifically the 1st Amendment. First, they are using a platform as a version of speech, and expect that they are able to express themselves with this speech. The other place that this can be compared to is the freedom of press, as people could see themselves as a press member, as they are providing information to others in order to better educate them.

Reversal:

Reversal can be one of the hardest things to put a finger on when talking about McLuhan’s work, but it also can be the most significant if you can find out what we reverse back into. The biggest fear that I have with TRUTH social is that people that join will be looking to spread information freely, but will go back to before the landmark case of *Brandenburg V. Ohio*, where we established that speech is not always protected, expressly when it incites imminent lawless action (*Brandenburg V. Ohio*. 1969). The place that people could fall back into is a place of posting or saying things that are not true, for no reason, and in turn insisting violence because of it. It should be the goal of TRUTH social to anticipate this happening, and making a plan on how to make sure that people understand what is happening with this misinformation and what is that real story that happened.

Evaluation:

As a strong defender of the United States constitution and with a deep understanding and love for political discourse I hope that TRUTH social can help some people that see themselves as disenfranchised from what is happening in the world and state of politics today. However, with the analysis that I have done on TRUTH social, and the understanding of the political demographic that are engaging with former President Trump's new application, I am worried about the effectiveness of this application, and what it will do for the overall betterment of our polarization as a nation.

This application seems to be preaching one thing and doing the other. They are talking about open lines of communication with all free thinkers, but the vast majority of people that are joining TRUTH social are the people that are in what I would call the "Trumpublican" camp. I am afraid that there will be an echo chamber effect (Cinelli et al., 2021) with the information that is put out on this application and this will not help people become more informed about the issues at hand, but will send them deeper into their very own ideas and beliefs. I do not think that so called "Big Tech" is doing a great job with who to ban and who to let speak, but I would currently say that TRUTH social is also not the correct response.

Conclusion:

TRUTH social is a new social media, trying to emulate existing social media like facebook and twitter but trying to cast a wider net when it comes to letting people freely express any political opinions they want. Through the process of Marshall McLuhan's idea of Tetrad of media effects I have explored how new media enhances, retrieves, flips and makes obsolete, and with these ideas at hand, I do not think TRUTH social is productive for the greater good.

Work Cited:

Brandenburg Vs. Ohio (Oyez February 27, 1969).

Cinelli, M., De Francisci Morales, G., Galeazzi, A., Quattrociocchi, W., & Starnini, M. (2021). The Echo Chamber Effect on social media. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 118(9). <https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.2023301118>

Cohen, J. (2022, February 21). *What is truth social? all you need to know about Donald Trump's social network*. PCMAG. Retrieved March 10, 2022, from <https://www.pcmag.com/how-to/what-is-truth-social-donald-trumps-social-network-explained>

Glantz, M. (2022). *McLuhan's Tetrads of Media Effects*. Lecture.

Kelly, O. (n.d.). *McLuhan's tetrads: What they are and how they work*. owenkellynet. Retrieved March 10, 2022, from <https://www.owenkelly.net/984/mcluhans-tetrads/>

McLuhan, M., & McLuhan, E. (1988). *Laws of media the new science*. McLuhan Associates.

Social, T. (n.d.). *Truth social*. TRUTH Social | Truth Social. Retrieved March 10, 2022, from <https://truthsocial.com/>