

# Hot and Cold Media Presentation

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# Marshall McLuhan

Decades ago, a media theorist named Marshall McLuhan asserted that media falls into one of two categories:

**HOT media**

and

**COLD media.**

Media are classified into these categories based on two main criteria: their *definition* and *participation* level.





# Definition

The first criteria of media is known as its *definition*. There are high definition and low definition media.



# High Definition



McLuhan describes *high definition* as the state of being well filled with data. Which in modern language translates to being saturated with lots of visual-auditory or other sensory information.



## Low Definition

A *low definition* on the other hand means that there's less information. Consumers are inundated with less overwhelming information overall.



## Low Definition (continued)

A *low definition* can also mean that audiences get distracted by other things while engaging with the media because there's not enough definition.

CRITERIA #1:

*definition*

Hot Media =  
HIGH DEFINITION

Cold Media =  
LOW DEFINITION

**Hot** media is high-definition while **Cold** media is low-definition.





# Participation

And this feeds directly into our second criteria of *participation*. McLuhan was not thinking of participation the way that we think of it now. He wasn't referring to it whether it had buttons or needed you to operate it for it to function.



## Low Participation

Rather he was referring to a need for completion by the audience.

Something that is *low participation* speaks for itself and doesn't need the audience to complete it.



## High Participation

*High participation* media, on the other hand, requires more of the audience they must complete in order to understand it or work with it.

CRITERIA #2:

*participation*

Hot Media =  
LESS PARTICIPATION

Cold Media =  
MORE PARTICIPATION

Hot media is low participation and Cold media calls for more participation.

# Summary

**Hot media** is high definition meaning that there's a lot of sensory data, and low participation meaning that the media speaks for itself and requires little of the audience.

**Cold media** on the other hand is low definition meaning that it has less complete information, and higher participation meaning that it requires more of the audience.



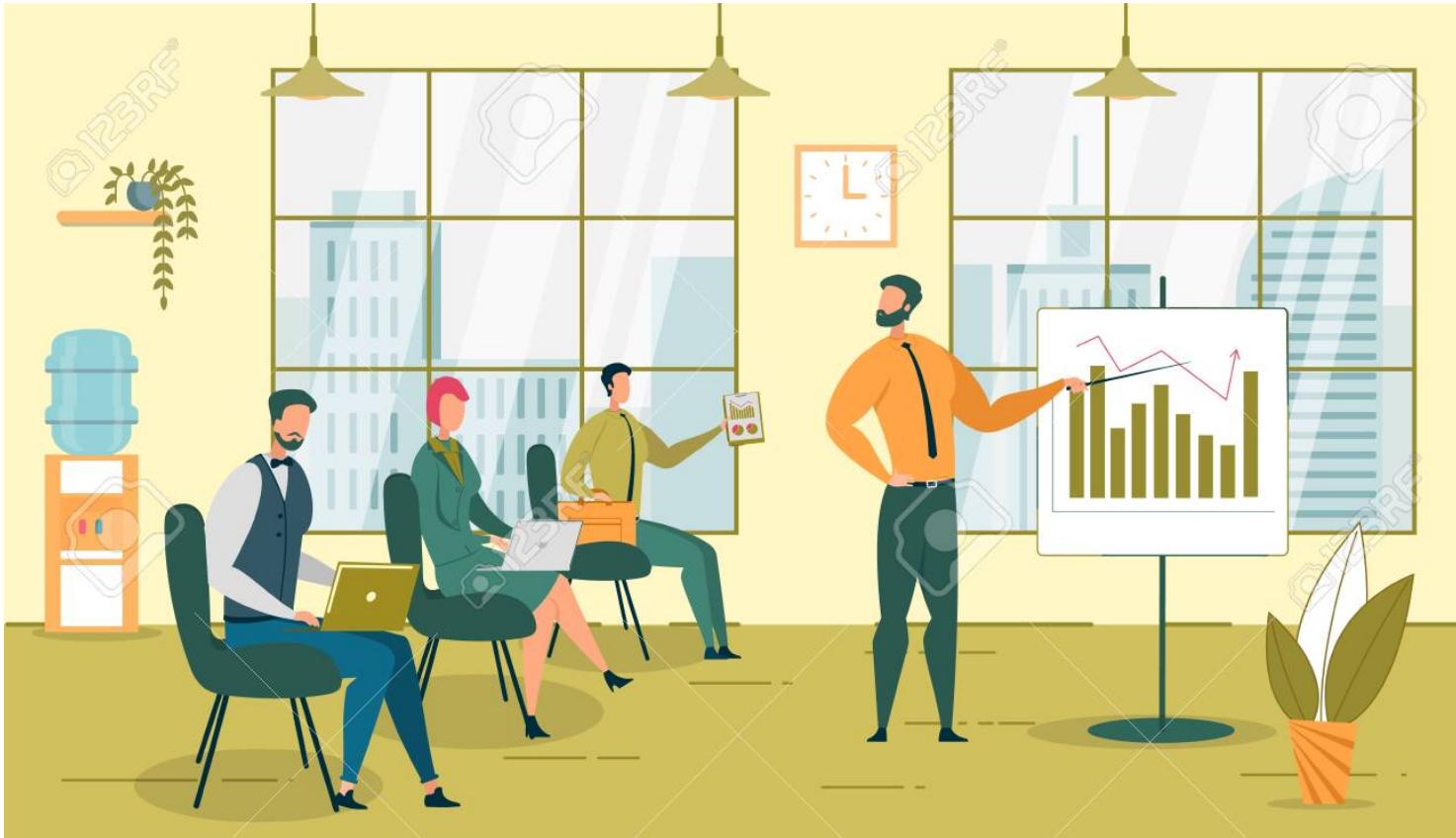


# Example 1

Take a lecture class, for example.

In a lecture, lots of information is provided completely without interruption, which means that it is high definition.

In addition, the information speaks for itself and involves fewer distractions or involvement from the audience. This means that it's lower participation. High definition and low participation mean that this is hot media.



## Example 2

Now think of a seminar class. In a seminar class, less information is explicitly provided, which means that it is a low definition.

In addition, students must be more active in participating with the material in order to make sense of it. There are more interjections and distractions. This means that it calls for more participation.

Therefore this is cold media because it's a low definition and requires more participation.