

Mass Media and its Impact on Mizo Society

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Abstract

In today's world social media has become so popular that it is not possible to live without it. The virtual world exists and many people spend time in this world through their devices. This paper looks into the impact that social media brings about in the society. Is social media helping today's youth in Education, does the use of social media deteriorates social benchmarks, does social media act negatively in the Education of youth? Social media often promotes unethical pictures, video clips and images among youth, anti-religious post and links creates hatred among peoples of different communities, Negative use of social media is deteriorating the relationship among the countries, social media is playing a key role to create political awareness among youth. This paper looks into its impact amongst the Mizo people.

Keywords: Culture, Media, Sports, Lifestyle, Role model

Introduction

Media in Mizoram had taken a very long and winding road to reach to the state of today. Print media is very much linked with the political situation of Mizoram. Where growth of political awareness can be seen, there is a parallel growth of newspaper. The newspaper is always the medium of spreading political awareness, whether it is questioning the ruling government or is being used as a tool to spread government policies. Print media has played a very important role initially as this was the only means of spreading ideologies, news, medium of entertainment and creating awareness.

From the time the missionaries came to Mizoram, they were aware that with growth of greater number of educated and literate Mizos, a medium of information would make more impact in the mind of the people and the society. However, real initiatives were taken by few church elders like R. Dala, Zakunga, Lianhmingthanga, Dohnuna, Suaka, Thangrual, Dala and Zotawka. This group of elders came to a decision that the most effective means of spreading the gospel was by writing about it. At first, since they did not have a means to publish newsletter,

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they were reluctant and discouraged, but fortunately, one of the Missionaries Dr. Fraser had a hand press with him and this was used to print the first issue of the Kristian Tlangau (Christian Herald). In 1911 the first issue of Kristian Tlangau was printed. Unfortunately, the following year in 1912 Dr. Fraser was transferred to Lakhipur and since he took his hand press with him, it created a problem for the printing of the Kristian Tlangau. The superintendent of that time Col. C.E. Locke presented the church with a Treadle Machine which was worth 4500 rupees at the time. From 1916 onwards this machine printed the issues of the Kristian Tlangau. Initially, 500 copies were printed but now the number has gone up to 25,500 (Lalrambuatsaiha, 2012). From then on, in Mizoram with high rate of literacy, literature and Print Media in all fields prosper. The growth of media can be seen in every decade as it rode the wave of development.

Objectives

Considering the growth of usage of social media, the objectives of this article are:

- To learn the impact of the mass media on the various areas of the society
- To explore the area of influence of mass media on the youth culture

Methodology

The present paper is a qualitative research article; therefore, the sources are primary and secondary. The data were collected through observation, available literature and intensive interviews with journalists and political leaders.

Social Media and the Mizo Social Culture

The internet has brought in what is known as the social network. There are many social networking sites, the Mizo people being very sociable by nature are well acquainted with it. Sites such as Facebook, Instagram, Tumblr are all social network sites and apps can be accessed through computers and through smart phones. There are many applications in the smart phones such as WhatsApp, We-chat, Telegram etc., which are social networking applications. These sites and applications allow the users to communicate and interact using these devices. Because of all this virtual socializing and its popularity, the traditional mode of socializing has taken a back seat. Before such cable networks and social networks came to be known, the youths did not have many means of entertainment. Usually, they would gather at a friend's house and sing songs playing guitar or a young man would visit his girlfriend at her home a tradition called 'Nula Rim'. Though this culture is still prevalent, it is not so popular anymore. It is true that the Mizo people by nature like to sing and play guitar for instance, a young man was assumed to know how to play a guitar by nature. Gathering at a friend's house and singing was the favourite pastime of the youths. Now, it is observed that the favourite pastime of the youth is to play video game from the computer or in groups (Interview with Vanneihluanga, 2010, September 3). Video games are networked which makes it easier for socialising through the game using their devices. socializing virtually and keeping oneself busy watching TV

and going online is the trend today. The Virtual world provides a space for socialising, an additional realm for the Mizo people. This can have a negative impact where it leads one to 'social withdrawal'. There is a lack of physical connection, trust and devaluing of friendship is a possibility. However, it cannot be denied that the social media has united a larger number of people on a broad platform where they can participate and engage in a discourse with various issues concerning the Society (Vannehtluanga, 2010).

Impact on Lifestyle and Fashion Trend

Lifestyle is affected in a lot of ways; the people of Mizoram are inspired by what they see on media. Architecture and the interior designs of many houses in Mizoram are very modern and stylish as influenced by the lifestyle and even homes of people from a more developed place. When there is a demand, supply has to follow and therefore, we see mushrooming of business houses which sell modern furniture and household goods. All this is definitely media effect. E-commerce has grown tremendously. The physical footfall in a shop is not as important as it used to be. The media provides a limit space in the virtual world for business to grow. For instance, pages are being made in the Instagram where anyone can sell their products and market them. This has lessened the need for physical shop. This new mode of marketing has led to the rise of the delivery system of goods. It can be said that due to pandemic the delivering of goods and other items at the doorstep has boomed yet, the system has not slowed down. With all these, there is a fear that this impact will bring with it materialism, greed, laziness which may lead to a negative impact on the society as a whole. Another area of influence is the taste buds of the Mizo youth. In the place of '*Chhangban*' (sicky rice), '*Sawhchiar*' (a food item made of rice), '*Chow Satuleih*' (a soupy noodle) which were traditionally the Mizo food items, burgers, pizzas and French fries have taken over the taste buds of the young Mizo. Many Cafes and Restaurants have come up, this is also another impact of media, learning to take up new ventures in businesses.

Another important area of influence is the fashion trend. The Mizo people by nature are stylish and fashion conscious. They were highly influenced by the western culture in the 50s and 60s. But with the influx of media, the influence of the South East Asian culture and predominantly South Korea is very strong. Even internationally, there is a strong Korean wave or rather what is known as the K-pop has taken the world over. The Mizo Youth clad themselves in such as trendy fashion as if they were to walk down the streets of New-York and they look like they belong there (Renthlei, 2012). Since the Mizos have peeked through the window of media to the world, they have more knowledge about the world outside so much that there is fear of not being aware of the reality of the Mizo society, that one may be filled with much envy and longing for another kind of culture. There can exist the '*Inti-changkang*' (elites mentality) which may keep one far away from reality that may even result in depression. Depression is another word which is made familiar via the media.

A Change in Role Models

The youth are easily influenced by what they see and hear from the media. When chieftainship was abolished because it imposed a kind of slavery on the people it was in

correspondence to abolition of slavery in the west. Today, because the world is obsessed with the ideology of capitalism, the mindset of the youth leans towards a more liberal social and political setting.¹ The media has made the youth aware of the development of the world and made them covet the modern world. It has given them new role models and made them more interested in the international scenario. There is a shift of role models from the sons of our soil; pass the national heroes to international celebrities, which resulted in the existence of youths who do not even know the names of their own traditional Heroes, Mizo Civil Servants, Great Politicians and people who have achieved so much in different fields (Lalruatkimi, 2012). There is a lack of appreciation shown towards the hard works of our past leaders in all fields. The influencers that's the social media make known have inspired the youth today. This leads to growth of admiration for media celebrity and sportsman. Adolescents said that they admired role models' skill, physical appearance and achievement, the effect of role model not only the imitation stage but also in transformation stage. Therefore, the role models are more on the globalised scale.

Impact on Sports

One of the very important impacts of media is in the field of sports and how sports have impacted the social and political policies is an interesting fact. The cable networks now air many channels. There are numbers of news channels, music channels, movie channels, sports channels etc. For a long time now, while cricket has been the game that was obsessed by the people of mainland, football in spite of the absence of football grounds, is the one sport which interests Mizos the most. In the past, the football world cup tournaments were very popular, even when there were not many television sets to watch, people would gather in the houses of those who own television and even if they were aired at odd hours (since most matches were played in Europe, there was a big-time difference) this would not stop them from watching it. Time has changed with the cable network, everyone interested in football even from the remotest village in Mizoram can watch the football match from the comfort of his own house. Not only the World Cup which comes around once in four years but also of the European Cup called the 'Euro', the UEFA Champions' League or the English Premier league can be watched for those interested in the game. The power of the media is such that, the person in the remotest corner of Mizoram can now share the same interest and be a fan of a European football team along with the person in the most urban part of Mizoram or Europe for that matter (Vanlalmuana, 2012). Such impact on the sports has motivated the young men of different part of the state to pursue a career in this field. This has also made an impact on the policy makers to take steps in building facilities which would be more helpful to those who aspire to become sportsman be it in the field of football or judo. It cannot be denied that it is all an impact of the media.

Impact on NEWS

Journalism is now a social responsibility. The public news environment and new media technologies have enabled a participation in the news process. There is a new term which

defines this new phenomenon of participation called the user-generated content or, citizen journalism and community media to name a few. It is not the citizens who report the news and event and Facebook provides a platform for such participation. This is a very important forum for the users to voice their opinion on latest issues which is discussed within the State. The responsibility of the people has also become bigger in the field of reporting an incident or talking about an issue or even commenting on an issue (Lalruatkimi, 2012). The media ethics are also important to know for the user. ‘What? When? Where? Whom? How?’ should be reported. In spite of the growth of information technologies, the press still remains the fourth estate but it has to work harder in maintaining its status quo. Facebook has now become the main link between major institutions and the mass. It is a platform for anyone to voice their opinion and therefore, the social media power now rests in the hands of every user, it is now evident that it can be used to change the society in many ways (Lalthantluanga, 2013).

Way Forward

It is not possible to live in this era without the knowledge of social media. It has touched every sphere of our lives. This study investigates the effects of social media on youth. Social media has contributed to positive impact of lives in various ways, for instance they provide leaning and job opportunities. It is used for communicating with friends and families. Sometimes, there is a fear that it will affect physical health and cultures. Social media and networking are now mis-used by many and have become necessary evils in a number of ways. In this context, some recommendations for improvement in the use of social media can be made as follows:

- Social media should be encouraged for positive purposes only
- They should be used for informative way to enhance skills and abilities
- To minimize its negative effects, Government has to take strict actions.
- Government should keep a check with its policies and cyber policing should be mandatory.
- Government should make a policy to check out unfair reporting of media which ruin the society.
- Everyone should be cautious on how they use their time; they should not waste their time on social media networks like WhatsApp, Twitter, Facebook and YouTube.
- To secure the future of children, teachers and parents should check out what they are actually doing on social media (Jeesmitha, 2019).

Nonetheless, in today’s world social media are used to document memories, learn about and explore things, advertise one-self and form friendships. For instance, they claim that the communication through Internet based services can be done more privately than in real life (Harchekar, 2017).

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