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Mapping Online Reading Behaviour of University Students: A Case Study of Mizoram University, Aizawl

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1. Introduction

Journalism has become one of the chief factors in the world's affairs. The dissemination of information often measures the progress of a society. The technological progress and the arrival of the internet during the mid-1990s have made a lot of changes in journalism. This study attempts to examine the media habits and the online reading behaviour of University students in Mizoram.

With the fast growing of technology and the fast dissemination of information, Mizos are also heavily reliant upon online media. Although online media plays an important role in Mizo society, Mizoram has limited online newspapers or magazines.

The present study will try to explore the media habits of University students with special reference to online reading.

1.1 Mizoram University

Mizoram University is a blooming academic community with its green scenic hills, situated in Tanhril in the western area of Aizawl, Mizoram. The university has 39 departments offering UG, PG, and M.Phil. and Ph.D. programmes and 9 schools of studies. There are 60 Professors, 15 Associate Professors, and 125 Assistant Professors currently working at the university. During the last five years, the university has awarded 277 Ph.D. degrees in different disciplines. The Library of the University is fully automated running web OPAC. They installed RFID in the central library for security. There are 35 affiliated colleges and 1 constituent College, i.e. "Pachhunga University College" under Mizoram University. Mizoram University has signed a Memorandum of Understanding with various National and International Institute for research collaborations and exchange programmes.

(Source: https://www.mzu.edu.in/index.php/downloads/106-admission)

2. Review of Literature

Whenever there has been a moment of considerable social, economic, and technological development, a revolution in news has followed, according to Kovach and Rosenstiel (2014). This occurred in the 1830s to 40s with the onset of telegraph; the 1880s with a decline in paper prices and flow of immigration; with radio and the rise of gossip and celebrity culture in the 1920s and in the 1950 at the start of Cold War and television and broadband internet and mobile technologies triggered the latest changes in news.

Thomas (2013) in her work "The Development of Journalism in The Face of Social Media" mentions that the rise of social media has made a noteworthy impact on the news reporting practices of traditional journalists as they started taking an advanced role using social media as both a way to convey and to endorse their work.

According to Mark Deuze (2003), various types of online journalism are mainstream news sites, index and category sites, meta- and comment sites and share and discussion sites. The characteristics of online journalism are hyper-textuality, multimodal and interactivity.

Brian L. Massey and Mark R. Levy (1999) studied interactivity on online journalism in Asia while analyzing dependency theory. Brian and Mark said that there are five dimensions in online journalism which are 1) Complexity of choice available 2) Responsiveness to the user 3) Ease of adding information to the system 4) Facilitation of interpersonal communication 5) Immediacy of content.

According to Sengupta (2006), interactive media have grabbed the attention of communication researchers in the latter half of the 1990s.

Pratish K. Mathur (2009) in his book "21st Century Media Environment" stated that the popularity of online newspapers began from the 1940s itself as some radio stations in the US send newspapers to home fax machines and also attempt to deliver them over phone lines to the user's home.

Manninen (2019) answers the question, "Are the sourcing techniques in Finnish Internet journalism trustworthy?" Here, trustworthiness is operationalized as the fulfilment of audience expectations regarding sourcing practises. To this goal, young Finnish individuals (aged 18–28) had their expectations contrasted to the practises of Finnish Online journalists. 36 news articles were studied (from 12 journalists in three newsrooms, published between 2013 and 2017). According to the findings, internet journalists' sourcing procedures rarely meet the expectations of this audience. The audience, in particular, expects a more thorough study and verification than what is typical of online journalism.

Nelson (2020) examined a year's worth of online news consumption data from the United States to show that, despite the proliferation of digital native news providers, traditional news brands continue to dominate the most popular news sites. He found that the future of digital news companies is not solely determined by their ability to innovate and adapt. It's also a question of their capacity to battle a powerful, tenacious force: the habits of the people they want to reach, as well as their competitors' vast finances.

According to Hamid, Bukhari, Ravana, Norman & Ijab (2016), the information-seeking behaviour of international students with regard to social media as a source of information was emphasised as a result of their study. This study examines international students' information demands and categorise them based on the roles performed by social media in meeting those requirements. Systematic literature survey was used for methodology and 71 articles were selected for this study.

Shukla and Sharma (2018) use two approaches to examine the prevalence of media multitasking behaviour among Indian college students and its link with their emotions: self-report and the 'Affective Media Landscape Survey,' an android-based application. The study provides insight into developing behavioural patterns, which may assist communities to meet the requirements of young media consumers.

Arpachi (2020) in his study used complementary structural equation modelling (SEM) and artificial intelligence method to look at the determinants of online self-disclosure behaviour on social media. The information was gathered from 300 undergraduates. The findings revealed that privacy and security are strongly linked to trust, explaining a major portion of the variation in attitudes.

Liu & Huang (2008) explored gender differences in the online reading environment. Female readers show a higher preference for paper as a reading medium than male readers, but male readers are more satisfied with online reading than females, according to the survey results.

Rose (2011) also learned about university students' experiences reading digitised materials like e-books and Portable Document Format files.

Divya and Haneefa (2020) studied the preference of students for reading print and digital materials. The study was conducted using a questionnaire survey with a stratified random sample of 700 postgraduate students from universities in Kerala, India. This work contributes to the development of better online reading interfaces and the improvement of students' online reading capabilities.

Antunovic, Parsons and Cooke (2016) looked at the emerging processes of news consumption among college students, using focus group interviews to further examine how they go about obtaining news. From this study they suggested continued research in the interaction of a changing media ecology with generational adoption of news habits and the implications of this interaction for news and news engagement.

There are only a few studies in online journalism in Mizoram and there is a huge research gap to be filled. The primary objectives of the study are -

a). to map the media habits of university students

b). to study the reading behaviour of university students

b). to find out online news reading behaviour of university students.

3. Methodology

We employed a survey method as the major research method in this study. Questionnaire was the tool used to collect survey data. We divided the questionnaire into four sections. The first section contained socio-demographic information. The second section dealt with media habits. The third section dealt with questions for studying reading behavior of the respondents whilst the last section contained questions about news consumption for studying respondents' news consuming behavior.

The researchers selected Mizoram University as the population for the study and we chose ten samples from each 26 departments of the Mizoram University using simple random sampling. We sent out 260 questionnaires and received back 230.

4. Data Analysis

4.1.1 Socio-demographic information

Table 1. Respondents		
SEX	**FREQUENCY**	**PERCENTAGE**
MALE	124	54
FEMALE	106	46
TRANSGENDER	0	0
TOTAL	230	100

230 students took part in this study. Among the respondents, 125 of them (53.9%) were males and the remaining of 106 respondents (46%) were females (**Table 1**). There is an even spread of a distribution of age of the participants across 18-30 years old, 45% were between 23- 25 years old and the rest of the respondents were between 18-22years old or 26-30 years old. 80.9% of the respondents were undergraduate and another 16.5% were postgraduate. Of all the respondents, 52.2% lived with their families, 40% stayed in a hostel, 3.9% stayed alone, 3% stayed with relatives and 0.9% did not respond.

4.1.2 Media habits

The respondents were asked about their media habits. In order to understand their media habits, 25 questions were in the second section of the questionnaire.

The result shows that 46.1% read news regularly while 47% do not. Local newspaper Vanglaini was read by 82% of the respondents and more than half of the respondents subscribe to newspapers and 70% of them read newspapers at home (Table 2).

Table 2. Newspapers Read		
NEWSPAPER	**FREQUENCY**	**PERCENTAGE**
Vanglaini	190	62.7
The Aizawl Post	9	3.9
The Hindu	12	5.2
The Zozam Times	5	2.2
The Times of India	10	4.3
The Telegraph	2	0.9
The Express	2	0.9

Sports news readers are largest in numbers (30.9%), followed by entertainment news readers (27.4%), politics news readers (21.7%) while 13.5% read others (Table 3).

Table 3. Types of news read		
NEWS TYPES	**FREQUENCY**	**PERCENTAGE**
Politics	50	21.7
Sports	71	30.9
Entertainment	63	27.4
Health	2	0.9
Classified	13	5.7
Others	31	13.5
Total	230	100

77.8% of the respondents claimed they were not regular television viewers. Large numbers of the respondents (75.9%) said they watch television news regularly. Televisions news program is the most watched program among the respondents while more than half of the respondents claimed they did not listen to radio. 55.2% have news applications in their mobile phones and 55.7% have news alerts in their phones. 66.1% played mobile games and 46.9% played online games.

Nearly almost all respondents access the internet on their mobile phones (81.7%) as show in the table below (Table 4) -

Table 4. Mode of Internet Access		
Mode of Internet Access	**FREQUENCY**	**PERCENTAGE**
Mobile	188	81.7
Home	42	18.3
Office	0	0
Internet Cafe	0	0
TOTAL	230	100

Of all the respondents 87.8% have a Facebook account and 97% access whatsapp. 84.8% of the respondents have a computer at home and 87.8% have internet connection at home and 81.7% choose to access the internet on their mobile phone rather than a computer.

4.1.3 Reading behavior of respondents

The result indicates that 48% of the respondents spend less than 1 hour reading, 31.7% spend 1-2 hours reading and 2.6% spend more than 4 hours reading per day.

Majority of the respondents prefer to read internet materials (63%). This is followed by textbooks (15.7%), novels/stories (9.6%), emails (3.9%), newspapers (3.0%), magazines, dictionaries and journals as shown in the table below (Table 5).

Table 5. Preferred online reading		
READING MATERIALS	**FREQUENCY**	**PERCENTAGE**
Internet materials	145	63.0
Emails	9	3.9
Text Books	36	15.7
Dictionary	3	1.3
Novels/Story Books	22	9.6
Journals	2	0.9
Newspapers	7	3.0
Magazines	6	2.6
TOTAL	230	100

A total of 73% of the respondents claimed that the reason for their reading was for studying, 33% for pleasure and 29% for other reasons. The result indicates that the average score for the attitude of enjoyment is high (67%) which indicates that the majority of the respondents agree that reading is an enjoyable activity.

This study showed that 68.3% prefer to read in English compared to other languages. 29.6% chose to read in Mizo. Very few respondents choose to read in Hindi (see Table 6).

Table 6. Preferred Language

LANGUAGE	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
English	157	68.3
Hindi	4	1.7
Mizo	68	29.6
Others	1	0.4
TOTAL	230	100

59% of the respondents prefer to read all kinds of information, 25.7% choose to read entertainment news, 20% choose educational news and 10.4% development news. Details shown below on table 7.

Table 7. Preferred Information to Read Online		
INFORMATION	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
1. Entertainment	56	24.3
2. Development	26	10.4
3. Education	46	20.0
4. Features	6	2.6
5. Health	11	4.8
6. Politics	9	4.0
7. Sports	13	5.7
8. Crime	0	0
9. Business	1	0.4
10. Defense related news	0	0
11. All kinds	59	25.7
12. Others	5	2.1

TOTAL	*230*	*100*

33% spent more than 4 hours surfing the internet and 12.6% of the respondents spent less than 1 hour surfing the internet (Table 8).

Table 8. Amount of Time Spent on Internet		
TIME	**FREQUENCY**	**PERCENTAGE**
Less than 1 hour	29	12.6
1-2 hours	45	19.6
2-3 hours	37	16.1
3-4 hours	43	18.7
More than 4 hours	76	33.0

4.1.4 News reading behavior of the respondents

Online sources of information played a major role in the respondents' lives that 63.4% choose to read online while 37.4% choose to read offline.

Most respondents used a variety of sources to access various kinds of news. 49.1% of the participants valued online media and claimed it as the best news source, print media were said to be the best source by 28.7%, radio by 11.3% and television by 10.9%. (see table 9 below)

Table 9. Preferred News Source		
NEWS SOURCE	**FREQUENCY**	**PERCENTAGE**
Print Media	66	28.7
Radio	26	11.3

Television	25	10.9
Online	113	49.1
TOTAL	230	100

80.4% subscribed to online newspapers while 19.6% did not subscribe. 61.8% respondents willing to subscribe to online newspapers paid while the others 38.2% did not. Majority of the respondents shared news with friends (81.3%) and the rest (18.7%) did not share news with friends.

Most of the respondents (64.8%) like the easy availability of online news. While 29.3% like the 24x7 news updates, 10% like the low cost features and 1.3% like the fact that online news gives in-depth news for the readers. 28.3% of the online news respondents' readers read politics news, 26.5% read entertainment, 21.8% read all kinds of news and 10.4% read sports news.

Of all the respondents 29.5% of respondents claimed that they did not visit online news sites even once a day. 47% visited two or three times a day, 7% visited more than 4 times a day and 3.9% visited three to four times.

60.4% of the respondents claimed that leisure time was the best time for visiting online news sites. While 11.8% said office time is the right time to visit online news sites and the rest (27.8%) choose the others.

26% respondents write comments on online news while more than half of the respondents (74%) did not write. Respondents of 55.7% used online news as primary source and the other 44.3% used it as secondary source. More than half of the respondents (548%) paid more concentration on international news; the others are distributed to national news (20.4%), regional news (6.6%) and local news (18.2%). Majority of the respondents (34.8%) read online news through WhatsApp

and 28.3% choose Vanglaini, 27% choose the others and the rest were evenly spread across others sites.

Almost all respondents read from social networking sites (97.3%) only 2.7% did not read news from social networking sites stating that they are not reliable. Facebook is the most used social network for reading news among respondents as 51.7% used it, 2.7% read it from twitter, 1.7% used blogs for reading news and the other 43.7 % used other social media which were not mentioned.

5. Conclusion

Online journalism is a method that has been used by newspapers and television networks for many years. The extensive use of digital or online journalism is due to a variety of computer networking technologies. It can be in text, audio or video form and it has been considered faster than traditional media.

As per the findings of this research, online journalism plays a deep role among the students of Mizoram University. According to the findings from the questionnaire, the respondents choose online media more than traditional media and the majority of them visit online news sites at least two times a day.

Looking at the media habits of the respondents in this study, 46.1% of the respondents read news on a regular basis and a local newspaper called Vanglaini is the most read newspaper. Sports news readers are largest in numbers. 75.9% of the respondents watch television news regularly while they also claim that they are not regular television viewers, considering all news channels as a

whole. It is found that half of the respondents are having news applications in their mobile phones and most of them choose to access the internet through their phones.

Majority of the respondents (63%) prefer to read internet materials and less than half (48%) spend less than one hour reading. The main reason for their reading is to study and also the majority of the respondents claim that they enjoy reading. More than half of the respondents (68.3%) prefer to read in English language and there are very few who prefer Hindi (1.7%). This is mainly because Mizo online media consumers are lacking Mizo online news sites or magazines which is why they are forced to go for English sites. Vanglaini, a local newspaper has its online version but articles and editorial contents need to be purchased and the only Mizo news website is regularly visited by 65% of the respondents.

In terms of the news reading behaviour, 49% of the respondents claim that online media is the best news source. 28.7% accept print media as the best source and 10.9% claim television news. Most of the respondents (80.4%) subscribe to online newspapers and 64.8% like the easy availability of online news. 47% of the respondents visit online news sites two or three times a day and more than half (60.4% claim that leisure time is best for visiting these online sites. 97.3% use social networking sites to read online news and 51.7% use Facebook and others use WhatsApp, Twitter etc. This shows that rather than visiting different media websites, the majority of the students are accessing news through the social media accounts of media houses. This study clearly shows that online journalism has a better scope in Mizoram and also clearly shows the need for more news applications or websites in the local language, that is, Mizo.

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