


THE CULTURAL IDENTITY OF MIEN ETHNIC GROUP IN A DIGITAL ERA

Niracharapa Tongdhamachart ^A, Asmidah Alwi ^B



ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
<p>Article history:</p> <p>Received 14 November 2022</p> <p>Accepted 16 January 2023</p>	<p>Purpose: The study aimed to identify the cultural identity of the Mien ethnic group and their adaptation to dominant society.</p>
<p>Keywords:</p> <p>Hill Tribe; Cultural Identity; Mien Ethnicity; Digital Media.</p>	<p>Theoretical Framework: The study was conducted physically at Mae Yao District of Chiang Rai Province, located in the northern part of Thailand.</p>
	<p>Methodology: The qualitative study employed Esser model of social integration. Primary data was collected from focus groups, in-depth interviews, on-site observations, and secondary data from related documents and research work.</p>
	<p>Findings: As part of Thailand's rural population, hill tribes were considered as vulnerable group of society, who mainly depends on slash and burn subsistence farming lifestyle with low-income employment, socially distanced, low education, and poverty. Through the Royal Project of King Rama IX initiatives, issues concerning hill tribe livelihood, including quality of life and cultural preservation have been addressed.</p>
	<p>Research, Practical & Social Implications: Socio-economic status and socio-cultural mingling in dominant society for their livelihood are the most significant factors that consequently impact upon their thinking patterns of the individuals and community. Although technology such as mobile phones and the Internet has played an explicit role in the community today, preserving the traditional way of life without oblivion still exists. Digital culture therefore becomes an essential aspect of the community's way of life with the influence of digital media.</p>
	<p>Originality: This study provides important impacts to a better identification of the Mien ethnic group cultural and their adaptation to dominant society.</p>
	<p>Doi: https://doi.org/10.26668/businessreview/2023.v8i1.1256</p>

^A Lecturer, College of Hospitality Industry Management, Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University, Bangkok, Thailand. E-mail: niracharapa.to@ssru.ac.th Orcid: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4131-9782>

^B Lecturer, School of Creative Industry Management and Performing Arts University Utara Malaysia, Sintok, Malaysia. E-mail: asmidah@uum.edu.my Orcid: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6040-0255>

A IDENTIDADE CULTURAL DO GRUPO ÉTNICO MIEN EM UMA ERA DIGITA

Objetivo: O estudo visava identificar a identidade cultural do grupo étnico Mien e sua adaptação à sociedade dominante.

Estrutura teórica: O estudo foi realizado fisicamente no distrito de Mae Yao, na província de Chiang Rai, localizada na parte norte da Tailândia.

Metodologia: O estudo qualitativo empregou o modelo Esser de integração social. Os dados primários foram coletados de grupos focais, entrevistas em profundidade, observações in loco e dados secundários de documentos e trabalhos de pesquisa relacionados.

Descobertas: Como parte da população rural da Tailândia, as tribos das montanhas foram consideradas como grupo vulnerável da sociedade, que depende principalmente do corte e queima do estilo de vida agrícola de subsistência com empregos de baixa renda, socialmente distantes, baixa educação e pobreza. Através do Projeto Real do Rei Rama IX, questões relativas à subsistência das tribos das colinas, incluindo qualidade de vida e preservação cultural, foram abordadas.

Pesquisa, Implicações Práticas e Sociais: O status sócio-econômico e a mistura sócio-cultural na sociedade dominante para sua subsistência são os fatores mais significativos que conseqüentemente impactam em seus padrões de pensamento dos indivíduos e da comunidade. Embora a tecnologia, como os telefones celulares e a Internet, tenha desempenhado um papel explícito na comunidade hoje, a preservação do modo de vida tradicional sem esquecimento ainda existe. A cultura digital, portanto, torna-se um aspecto essencial do modo de vida da comunidade com a influência da mídia digital.

Originalidade: Este estudo proporciona impactos importantes para uma melhor identificação da cultura do grupo étnico Mien e sua adaptação à sociedade dominante.

Palavras-chave: Tribo Hill, Identidade Cultural, Etnia Mien, Mídia Digital.

LA IDENTIDAD CULTURAL DE LA ETNIA MIEN EN LA ERA DIGITAL

Propósito: El estudio pretendía identificar la identidad cultural del grupo étnico mien y su adaptación a la sociedad dominante.

Marco teórico: El estudio se realizó físicamente en el distrito de Mae Yao de la provincia de Chiang Rai, situada en el norte de Tailandia.

Metodología: El estudio cualitativo empleó el modelo Esser de integración social. Se recogieron datos primarios de grupos de discusión, entrevistas en profundidad y observaciones in situ, y datos secundarios de documentos y trabajos de investigación relacionados.

Resultados: Como parte de la población rural tailandesa, las tribus de las colinas se consideraban un grupo vulnerable de la sociedad, que depende principalmente de un estilo de vida agrícola de subsistencia de tala y quema, con empleos de bajos ingresos, socialmente distanciados, baja educación y pobreza. Gracias a las iniciativas del Proyecto Real del Rey Rama IX, se han abordado cuestiones relativas a los medios de subsistencia de las tribus de las colinas, como la calidad de vida y la preservación cultural.

Investigación, implicaciones prácticas y sociales: El estatus socioeconómico y la mezcla sociocultural en la sociedad dominante para su subsistencia son los factores más significativos que, en consecuencia, repercuten en los patrones de pensamiento de los individuos y la comunidad. Aunque la tecnología, como los teléfonos móviles e Internet, ha desempeñado un papel explícito en la comunidad actual, la preservación del modo de vida tradicional sin olvido sigue existiendo. Por lo tanto, la cultura digital se convierte en un aspecto esencial del modo de vida de la comunidad con la influencia de los medios digitales.

Originalidad: Este estudio aporta impactos importantes para una mejor identificación de la etnia Mien cultural y su adaptación a la sociedad dominante.

Palabras clave: Tribu de la colina, identidad cultural, etnia mien, medios digitales.

INTRODUCTION

Ethnic groups are people who have a more historical connection with Thai society from the past. They have their own culture and tradition scattered around 67 provinces with approximately 6,100,000 people, or 9.68 percent of the national population (Ministry of Social

Development and Human Security, 2015). There are four types of settlement classify as highland or hill tribe groups on the plains; whose lifestyle is in harmony with the general Thai people through agriculture. The Chaoley who are situated along the coast and the group in the forest survived by hunting and collecting wild things. The way of life of ethnic groups in Thailand is diverse, with some similar and different lifestyles.

The development of ethnic groups in Thailand, especially the hill tribe has arisen from several reasons: drug problems, deforestation, shifting cultivation, border security, population growth rate, and land settlement. His Majesty King Rama IX called the hill tribe as "Being Thai, but on the hill" by initiating supports and developments since 1963 and established the "Royal Project" in 1969 for better livings and poverty reduction. Moreover, his Majesty has brought self-sufficiency economy as a new way of living. Therefore, sustainability is the pivotal thrust. Consequently, the government has been using the unified policy as the basis for hill tribe people to be good citizens and sustain themselves. The policy also serves humanitarian issues, drug problems, social disparity, poverty, reforestation, education, land settlement, Thai citizenship, legal right, and border security.

Since the last 20 years, the hill tribes changed dramatically particularly in the 20th century regarding their socio-economic and geo-economic activities. This has foreseen the Miens ethnicity to become the most well-being hill tribe ethnic group in Maeyao district, Chiang Rai, compared to other ethnicities. The objective of this work is to study and identify the adaptation of their way of life in a digital society by analyzing their historical migration and cultural identity.

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Cultural identity

Cultural Identity is regarded as a sense of belonging, a shared sense of beliefs, interest, and basic principles of living and companionship (Wakhdi & Wright 2011). The cultural identity distinguished or recognized those who have similar traditions, language, and basic belief systems. Every group had its own cultural identity performing characteristic and the uniqueness their ethnicity (Okatavianus, 2019; Nagel, 1994). The landscape of cultural identity is very complex and dynamic. Furthermore, cultural *identity* also defined by values, beliefs, expectations, worldviews, symbols, behaviors, and acceptance in a meaningful way; whereby it identified race, gender, age, social class, religion, sexual orientation, language, mental and physical ability (Fujioka, 2002).

Cultural identity is a consequence of the cultural diffusion process, under the rigorous flow of core beliefs and practices from one generation to another over time; it is learned and shared (Wahab, Odunsi & Ajiboye, 2012). Cultural identity concocted factors and influences both negative and positive; and direct and indirect. Additionally, Marilena et al. (2017) suggest intangible cultural heritage as a representation of cultural identity that expressed through culture and practices; hence cultural heritage is recognized as a distinct aspect of identity by the community.

Hill tribes in the northern part of Thailand

The term "hill tribes" refers to ethnic minorities of Thailand, the majority of whom live in the country's isolated highlands counted to 3527 hill tribal communities in Thailand spread over 20 provinces with Karen as the most populous tribal group, followed by Hmong and Lahu (Fujioka 2002). The hill tribes are considered to be the indigenous people of Thailand and the adjoining neighboring countries particularly Myanmar and Laos. Chiang Mai has the highest hill tribe population compared to all other provinces in Thailand. Historically, hill tribes were driven out of China, Tibet, Myanmar, Laos, and Vietnam in the last 200 years due to the civil war. The term hill tribe, so-called Chao Khao (means those who live on high land) in Thai has been officially used since 1959 by the Central Hill Tribe Committee (CHTC) which was established by the Thai government (Bhruksasri 1989). This committee has taken the responsibility to address the matters of the recognized hill tribes which include Lua (Lawa), Htin (H'tin, Mal, or Prai), Khamu, Meo (Miao, Hmong), Yao (Lu Mien, Mien), Akha (Ekaw), Lahu (Mussur), Lisu (Lisaw) and Karen (Kariang, Yang) (Reigner 2000; Fujioka 2002 and Bhruksasri 1989).

Figure 1. Hill Tribe in Thailand (Source: ITD international.org)



However, the "Highland Thais" inhabited the northern part of Thailand represent six main groups: Akha, Karen, Hmong, Mien, Lahu, and Lisu with a combined population of over 1 million people (Kwanchewan, 2006). In the past, they distinguished themselves from others in terms of race, language, tradition, social structure, beliefs, and religion. Previously, people regarded them as a minority group in Thailand. However, through King Rama IX's efforts, the tribes have intermingled and well accepted into Thai society, with a better well-being (Fujioka, 2002).

MIEN

Historical Migration

The ethnicity of Iu Mien, which means human, traced back to over 2000 BC. Miens first started living in Yunnan, Guangdong, Guangxi, and Guizhou (Britannica, 2015). There were four major groups of Mien, the Phan (Bienh), the Bunu, the Cha Sun, and Ping Ti. Out of the four groups, the Phan (Bienh) group had the most workforce continually moving from place to place (Ian Ord, 2011). They called themselves Iu Mien or Mien, or Yao. Iu Mien's meaning has changed from human to jade while the term Moyao appeared in Tang Dynasty became Yao without explicit references.

A legendary scroll written in Chinese called "King Ping's Charter" tells a common mythology concerning Yao (Iu Mien) origin. According to legend, King Ping of the Ch'u Kingdom (528-516 B.C.) pledged to marry one of his daughters to anyone who could rid him of his enemy, King Kao. P'an Hu, a multicoloured dog succeeded in bringing King Kao's head back and marrying the princess, giving birth to six sons and six daughters, who are said to be the forefathers of the twelve Yao tribes (Saeteurn, 2021).

The meaning of Moyao was the privileged rights without subjecting to labor. Until the 15th-16th century, the Mien ethnic group spread throughout northern Vietnam, Laos, and Thailand from Southern China to avoid tax-paying and searching for new land for living and livelihood. As such, they often mingled with different ethnicities. The Miens migrated to Thailand and settled down in Chiang Rai in the first place in the 19th century or around more than 200 years on the uplands for opium with other crops growing and later spread to several provinces as Payao, Nan, Lampang, Tak, Sukhothai, and Chiang Mai (Ministry of Social Development and Human Security, 2015). The Mien economy was previously dependent upon shifting cultivation of dry rice and corn. Today, the Mien have domesticated animals, farms, paddy fields, and cornfields.

Beliefs and practices

China has a significant influence on Mien culture and society. The family typically extended with the patriarchal social system. The Miens consider themselves the aristocrats of the hill tribes by having the Mien chief who runs the village and maintains culture, identity, language, cultural norms, and rituals (Nam, 2019). Their culture depends on a hierarchy of ancestral spirits. It was believed that such practices appear to have been influenced by Taoist beliefs in the 13-14th century (Kandre, n.d). At the same time, shamans cure the sickness affected by natural spirits.

Mien cultures and beliefs cling to the Chinese, in which sacred Taoist-script-texts passed down from their ancestors, which could be traced back to the 12th century around the lower Yangzi River (Chamberlain 2008). They have only verbal language and borrow alphabets following Hun Chinese characters and religion regarding medieval Taoism, although some have converted to Christianity and Buddhism. In short, the Mien rely on oral traditions, myths, and religious practicing that combines Taoism, animism, and ancestor worship. A worship shelf is to pay respect to ancestors and natural spirits. The Mien people have adapted well to the new environment but still maintain their traditional way of life, culture, and traditions; especially wearing tribal clothing with exquisite embroidery and customary silver jewelry.

Iu Mien's cosmological system causes the Mien people to work diligently to make a living in return for their parents. Getting wealth for happiness and prestige is a collection of merit for life after death. Today, most of the Mien people work in the city. With money as a critical factor in achieving these things, Chinese language knowledge is a significant social capital that encourages them to adapt to the market economy (Lepreecha, 2019). However, it is unfortunate that Mien ethnicity in Thailand no longer aware of the written language of Mien. Only elders, especially the shamans who performed religious rites and rituals, still reading this written language.

The Miens believe strongly in the spirit world. They worship their ancestors' spirits. During merit-making and house blessing ceremonies, the "sai mien," or the spirit's priest, performs the ceremony to bless the house and invite the right spirit to stay in their house (Eric, 2016). They believe this will help protect them from illnesses and or tragedies done by the evil spirits. The house owner then pays the service to the ritual priest who officiates. That is why the spirit altar is built in the house, from the main door signifying their deceased ancestor's list. However, some well-off Mien families usually put pictures instead of a list of names. When someone dies, the ritual priest will perform a ceremony to separate the person's body from sin to have a peaceful rest. To do the ceremonial washing, he will use water to perform a ceremony

to remove the person's dead body's evil spirit (Nam, 2019). The priest will then perform to ensure that the dead person will have a happy life in the spirit world and the new generation to come since they believe in reincarnation.

Figure 2. Mien traditional clothes



Source: Prepared by the authors (2022).

While Mien ethnicity wears short pants and shirts made from navy blue cotton or black cotton, women wore long black pants with many beautiful stripes decorated with silver accessories. However, depending on the patterns' details, the stripes took a long time to make, like 1-5 years (Niracharapa & Berry, 2019). Figure 2 depicts the custom dress of the Mien ethnicity. On the other hand, *Bamboo* is the tree that the Miens always use for food, musical instrument, and amusement. For example, they make bamboo soup with pork bones. The kids' amusements for boys and girls include a topspin made from bamboo and a long leg to walk. Other games were bamboo guns, the pump, string trestles, and marbles (Arizawa, 2015). Musical instruments are flutes, drums and gong, and cymbal.

Digital technology

Since Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz proposed the mathematical concepts on a binary computing system, the digital age has affected the world's ecosystem. Digital technology has advanced more rapidly and transforming societies at large. Technology becomes a dynamic mechanism by enhancing connectivity, financial inclusion, access to trade, and public services. Technological revolutions create new forms to different changes, which have profound impacts upon numerous activities.

Digital technology has transformed the cultural scene concerning new forms of creation, production, and distribution. Digitization brought both opportunities and challenges to the culture of people around the globe. The emergence of social media facilitates the sharing of

ideas, thoughts, and information through virtual networks and communities (Hu et al., 2020). Social media like Facebook has played a preeminent role in the news and information lives of all Millennials across ethnic groups (Mittelstädt & Odag 2015). Thus, it has a pivotal impact on the cultural scene.

Multilingual social media engagement with mainstream culture was associated with changes in acculturation expectations, attitudes, and resource which motivated or constrained the ethnic minority (Chun Lai et al., 2020). The increase in media consumption has positively and negatively influenced individuals' perceptions and attitudes with no regard to their groups (Hoffman, 2018). Furthermore, Thailand is in the process of driving digital transformation and utilizing innovation to become a cutting-edge economic powerhouse. The country's digitization journey begins with the "Thailand 4.0" economic model, which concentrates on significant advancements and digital improvements to enhance the Thai people's quality of life, productivity, and efficiency. As a result, the digital economy plays a crucial role in every sector and estimates to contribute 25% to Thailand's GDP by 2027 (BOI, 2019).

METHODOLOGY

The study used a framing theory to analyze data collected from the Mae Yao District in Chiang Rai Province, the northern part of Thailand. The study employed qualitatively descriptive analysis, which was suitable for research to look more deeply at how the media disseminates information about the issues in focus. Meanwhile, framing theory was usually in the state of two situations: first, a frame in communication' or 'a media frame' refers to images or descriptions, phrases, and presentation styles, which was appropriate to use social culture or the media to convey information on an issue or event to the community and second, a frame in thought depends on the individual's wishes, including understanding the given situation (Scheufele, 1999; Druckman, 2001). Therefore, the matter emphasizes what the audience believes about a framed issue's most salient and salient aspects. As such, this framing theory focuses on how digital media draws ethical attention to cultural and social issues. In a way, this theory is used to assist researchers in collecting, selecting, organizing information. Framing theory is seen through a more systematic and in-depth analysis, especially when it comes to the selection process of establishing and maintaining mutually beneficial relationships between organizations and the communities that depend on them. Establishing a general frame of reference on topics or issues of mutual concern is necessary for establishing effective relationships with Esser's dimensions (Esser & Stromback, 2009). Hence, if cultural issues are related to the development of digital technology, then the paradigm will be more likely to shift.

The study uses descriptive analysis from data collection, both primary and secondary. Researchers conducted three main phases throughout the study; the study selects method, data retrieval method, and code categorization method 'coding categories.' Encoder privileges background and knowledge in the field of ethnic and digital media.

Population groups under investigation were specified to the Ban Huai Mae Sai community, where the Mien ethnic group live. Throughout this research, primary data used in-depth interviews of young and old generations and the executive from local government organizations regarding government support. A structured interview schedule was designed and used as a research instrument to elicit appropriate responses on their migration background, cultural identity, and thinking patterns. The study interviewed 23 people, consisting of 22 people from the Mien or Yao ethnic group, from age 18 to age 75, and Mae Yao Sub-district Municipality executive. In addition, a focus group of Mien and local government officers emphasize the study for a proper finding, including thoughts, demands from local government, problems, and obstacles. In addition, the study collected secondary data from texts or other printed materials and reviewed related documents and research.

The study's analysis determined certain words, themes, concepts, meanings, and relationships based on Esser's model, in which he identified four different strategies in dealing with cultural change and social integration (Zhang & Goodson 2011). Acculturation or socialization is how an individual acquires the knowledge, cultural standards, and competencies needed to interact in society. Placement refers individual gaining a position in society, including educational or economic systems, occupation, or citizenship. Interaction is the formation of relationships by individuals, including friendships, marriages, or more general membership of social groups. Lastly, identification refers to an individual's identification with a social system.

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

The study's content analysis used framework theory based on Esser's social integration dimensions, including acculturation, interaction, identification, and placement (Esser, 2001). as presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Analysis of Mien’s Adaptation based on Esser’s dimensions and framing theory (Esser, 2001)

Dimensions	Findings
Acculturation	Royal projects/Government support Thai education/upskill Thai language Mien language
Interaction	Physical landscape Culture/Religion Community infrastructure
Placement	Own land occupation Individualism Legal right
Identification	Sense of belonging in Thai society Thai citizenship Mingle of Values of ethnic culture and dominant culture Mien community

The study found that the Mien ethnic group at Mae Yao sub-district is still underway to change their socio-economic status. Their traditional way of life did not somehow fit in with the present socio-economic and geographical conditions. Mien had the smallest number of ethnic populations at Mae Yao sub-district than other ethnics such as Lahu or Akha. However, their idea and thinking patterns have rapidly changed after shifting their physical landscape from highlands to lowlands for over 75 years due to economic factors and poverty eradication. Instead of relying on slash and burn farming, they have now turned to plantation of rice, corn, and pineapple as the main occupation; and some has become successful entrepreneurs.

Besides that, the study also reveals that their sense of individualism seems apparent after receiving education in Thai schools and government training. Their proficiency in Thai language has also significantly help in upgrading their lifestyle. The support of the Royal projects has made a better living. They have broader views compared to other ethnicities at Mae Yao. Some family members even work abroad in the US, Malaysia, Korea, and Taiwan.

It is also found that every household of Mien ethnicity has mobile phones. Hence, they are exposed to digital applications, mainly social media like Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube. This has indirectly impacted their way of life and adaptation to the dominant culture. New generations of Mien have Facebook and Instagram to post their public and private activities and events and YouTube accounts to learn new things and present their expertise and culture, including migration history, traditional food, and some festivals. The digital application, particularly LINE, is prevalent in the community to communicate routinely with family and community members inside and outside the community, old and young.

Although digital technology and infrastructure have penetrated the area, the Miens still stay together as a community. They have a community chief as the respectful leader of the community. A community chief is still a man looking after the community. The Miens including the young generation are still proud of their race and speak their language. However, mastering the written language remain one of the issue. Regarding religion, *Buddhism* is the main religion mingled with animism to respect and worship spirits and shamans. They believed that the shaman is the key person who helps communicate with their ancestors whether they are happy after the death. Therefore, they are strict with ancestor worship rites and Chinese New Year.

King Rama IX and the government initiatives, including his philosophy so-called self-sufficiency economy, have impacted the Mien community at Maeyao district to have a better livelihood. Growing paddy fields, corn plantations, and winter crops replaced slash and burnt farming through time and efforts by upskilling their knowledge, career, and vocation. As a result, the Miens have better socio-economic status than other hill tribes. They have more of their life experiences, socialization, knowledge, education, skills, and technology. They have been using e-commerce through Lazada, Facebook, and LINE applications for business transactions and activities to gain more income. They also gain new knowledge through YouTube for a better living. The driving forces of their cultural adaptations and assimilation in a digital era are economics, Thai society, thinking patterns, government support, and their legal right to live in Thailand as Thai citizens. Hence, digital media is a crucial tool in a massive impact on their cultural adaptation, integration, and identity.

DISCUSSIONS

Due to the advancement of technology in globalization, digital media spread to large masses at the identity dimensions. Technology allows Mien populations to adapt themselves for entry into the dominant society. Social networks create them to chat, share values, ideas, and experiences to have broader views. Individualism seemingly addresses their identity for their adaptation. This change is essential for their social and economic sustainability. According to Goffman, perception is crucial for individuals, and they create identities that they think others would feel pleasant and acceptable (Mihaela, 2018). Individuals build their identity due to the environment they surround. The new patterns of behavior generate and reinforce a shift of ethnic identity is induced by digital technology which functions as digital culture accelerators or boosters (Deuze, 2006) as illustrated in Figure 3. This has also foreseen the change of Thai citizenship in increasingly voices their demands in society through the global and local

connectivity interactions, from a community view to a global view. In addition, new media allows independent and citizenship participation in social and political activities.

Figure 3: The shifting of ethnicity due to digital technology (Deuze, 2006)



Ethnicity and digital technology become apparent that this combination touches upon essential issues regarding a digital age and the identity of individuals and groups. It challenges existing social and cultural structures and undoubtedly will continue in the future, influencing the norms and codes embed within a group's traditions, laws, customs, arts, and literature. These will continue to persist with the appearance of new media. Digital culture becomes a typical form of life by using technology taking more place in daily life in every ethnicity. Technology development and digitization have caused the digital culture to emerge; the individual transforms social identity into digital identity contracted in the digital era and adds new qualities. Hence, social media functions as a mediatic virtual public sphere.

CONCLUSIONS

Cultural identity is how an individual performs a self in a social environment and the social adaptation process of an individual in different situations and groups. Certain factors and aspects are having an impact upon cultural identity elements. These include an interaction of the larger group's intermingling, the understanding and learning of the roles of a more dominant portion of society, and socio-economic status. It is undeniable that the individuals' preferences and choices also lead to the oblivion or disappearance of cultural identity. Every ethnicity has very distinctive and aesthetic character, traditions, culture, and language, which should not be left behind over some time. In a digital era, digital media in the form of 3D, virtual reality, or augmented reality can recognize cultural heritage's aesthetic and expressions as accurate could be a robust tool in preserving the beauty of the cultural heritage of ethnicity since digital technologies have played a prominent role in shaping up appreciation, behaviors, performances, societies, communities, cultures, and individuals. These have the potential to revolutionize the ways in which we preserve, create, access and experience culture. Adapting to the new digital landscape is one of the main frontier issues that will ensure that culture remains significant for all. Therefore, cultural policies are vital in safeguarding the cultural heritage for future

generations by developing diverse, vibrant ecosystems to ensure that expanding more access to culture is a vehicle tool for cultural preservation and social integration. Social integration offers society potential benefits in economic growth and stronger community resilience.

The limitations of the study include the populations who are capable of providing information and other sources such as the cultural artifacts of the Mien ethnicity because their way of life has been changed from time to time. As the consequence, digital media will be a vital tool to valuable foundation of unfolding the beauty of Mien identity. The recommendation of further study should be on the development of digital media to unfold the Mien's culture and how social media influences the cultural patterns of the ethnic group in Thailand

REFERENCES

- Arizawa, T. (2015). Aspects of language change in Iu Mien and their implication for language maintenance: A case study of the Iu Mien students' story writing workshop. *Journal of Perspectives on Development Policy in the Greater Mekong Region*, 3(1).
- Bhruksasri, W. (1989). Government policy: Highland ethnic minorities. In McKinnon, John; Vienne, Bernard (Eds.), *Hill Tribes Today* (Pp. 5-31). Bangkok: Golden Lotus.
- Board of Investment. (2019). Digital, creative and startup ecosystem. Bangkok, Thailand: BOI
- Britannica, The Editors of Encyclopedia. "Mien". *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 2 Nov. 2015, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Mien>. Accessed 29 August 2021.
- Chamberlain, J. R. (2008). Social Impact Assessment of Additional Financing of SUFORD. Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, Lao's People Democratic Republic. World Bank.org <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/fr/316151468041110524/pdf/E195500EA0P1085050Box1334043B01PUBLIC1.pdf> (Accessed 26 August 2021).
- Chun, L., Mingyue, G., Fang, G., & JoJo, S. Y. (2020). Motivational mechanisms of ethnic minorities' social media engagement with mainstream culture, *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development*, DOI: 10.1080/01434632.2020.1738442
- Deuze, M. (2006). *Collaboration, Participation and the Media*. London: Sage Publications.
- Druckman, J. (2001). The Implications of Framing Effects for Citizen Competence. *Springer*, V 23 p 225-256.
- Eric, T. (2016). 7 Hill tribes of Thailand. Thailand hill tribe holidays.com.
- Esser, H. (2001). *Integration und Ethnische Schichtung [Integration and Ethnic Stratification]*. Mannheim: Mannheimer Zentrum für Europäische Sozialforschung
- Esser, H., & Stromback J. (2009). *Mediatization, concept changes, consequences*. Peterlang.
- Fujioka, R. (2002). *Case Study on Education Opportunities for the Hill Tribes in Northern Thailand: Implications for Sustainable Rural Development*. Food & Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. Bangkok, Thailand.

- Hoffman, H. E. (2018). The media effect and the implication for racial minority group. Student Publications: Gettysburg College.
- Hu, S., Liu, H., Zhang, S., & Wang, G. (2020). Proactive personality and cross-cultural adjustment: Roles of social media usage and cultural intelligence. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 74, 42-57. 10.1016/j.ijintrel.2019.10.002.
- Ian, O. (2011). Thai hill tribe people? Available at Wheresidewalksend.com/Thai-hill-tribes-debate (accessed: September 20th, 2020).
- Kandre, P. K. (n.d.). Yao (Iu Mien) Supernaturalism, Language, and Ethnicity. *Changing Identities in Modern Southeast Asia*. doi:10.1515/9783110809930.171
- Kwanchewan, B. (2006). The rise and fall of the Tribal Research Institute: Hill tribe policy and studies in Thailand. *Southeast Asia Studies*, 44(3), 359-384
- Leepreecha, P. (2019). Becoming indigenous peoples in Thailand. *Journal of Southeast Asia Studies*, 50 (1), pp 32-50
- Marilena et al. (2017). *Mixed reality and gamification for cultural heritage*. New York, U.S.A: Springer Cham Publisher.
- Mihaela R. (2018). *Refugees and social integration in Europe*. New York: United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA) Division for Social Policy and Development.
- Ministry of Social Development and Human Security. (2015). *Hill Tribe in Thailand*. Bangkok, Thailand: Annual Report of Department of Social Development and Welfare.
- Mittelstädt, A., & Odag, Ö. (2015). Social Media Use and Social Integration of Ethnic Minorities in Germany: A New Interdisciplinary Framework. *Athens Journal of Mass Media and Communications*, 2(1), 21-32. <https://doi.org/10.30958/ajmmc.2.1.2>
- Nagel, J. (1994). Constructing Ethnicity: Creating and Recreating Ethnic Identity and Culture. *Social Problems*, 41(1), 152-176. doi:10.2307/3096847
- Nam, S. (2019). *Hill tribe in Thailand: The people, ethnical Concerns*. Bangkok, Thailand: Dotdash Publishing Family.
- Niracharapa T., & Berry L. (2019). An experimental analysis of the Royal project on highland. *International Journal of Innovative and Exploring Engineer*, 8(83)
- Oktavianus, B. (2019). Landscape of cultural identity at Rumah Makan Minang. *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 24(2), 155-175.
- Reinger, B. (2000). Hill tribes. Tribal Research Institute in Chiangmai. Available at www.sefut.uni-freiburg.de (accessed: September 25, 2020)
- Saeteurn, F. (2021). Iu-Mien History: From China to the U.S. Iu-Mien Community Services. <https://www.unitediumien.org/IuMienHistory.html> Accessed 29 August 2021.

Scheufele, D. (1999). Framing as a Theory of Media Effects. *Journal of Communication* 49(1), pp 103-122.

Wahab, E. O., Odunsi, S. O., & Ajiboye, O. E. (2012). Causes and Consequences of Rapid Erosion of Cultural Values in a Traditional African Society. *Journal of Anthropology*, 2012, 1–7. doi:10.1155/2012/327061

Wakhdi, A., & Wright, P. (2011). Negotiating cultural identity through the arts: Fitting in third space and cultural memory. *Journal of Arts and Communities* 3(1), 89-104.

Zhang, J., & Goodson, P. (2011). "Acculturation and psychosocial adjustment of Chinese international students: examining mediation and moderation effects. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, Vol. 35 No. 5, pp. 614-627.