

## Western Media Consumption and Influence Among Mizo Youth

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### Introduction

As western media is taking over the world film and music industry, it is no surprise that even a small state in Northeast India Mizoram is affected by American culture from what is portrayed in movies, music video and different social media platforms. The study aims to study the influence of western media particularly by films and music in Mizo youth values and lifestyle, how the Mizo culture is becoming westernized through the times and which factors are related with. It will further aims to understand the meaning of people's experiences when they come in contact with western media. From the 1950s, with the development of mass media and intercultural exchange, the foreign films started to appear on Mizoram's cinema/media. There has been rapid progress in the development of electronic media (Radio, T.V/Cable TVs) during the past few decades. This poured American films and T.V Shows into local channel and many people became a fan of it.

### Western Media

Western media is the mass media of the western world. During the Cold War, western media contrasted with Soviet media. Western media has gradually expanded into developing countries (non-Western countries) (Kalyani & Anandam 2000).

### Culture

What has been termed the classic definition of culture was provided by the 19th-century English anthropologist Edward Burnett Tylor in the first paragraph of his *Primitive Culture* (1871): "Culture . . . is that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society."

### Subculture

A subculture is a group of people within a culture that differentiates itself from the parent culture to which it belongs, often maintaining some of its founding principles. Subcultures develop their own norms and values regarding cultural, political and sexual matters. Subcultures are part of society while keeping their specific characteristics intact. Examples of subcultures include hippies, goths and bikers. The concept of subcultures was developed in sociology and cultural studies.

### Mizoram and the people

Mizoram state occupies the north eastern most tip of the Indian sub-continent having a population according to provisional census 2011, 8,88,573 out of which 4,59,109 are males and 4,29,464 are females, within an area of 21,087 sq.km. The density of population is 42 per sq Km. The literacy percentage is 88.8%. The state is bounded on the west by Tripura, on the north by Assam and on the east by Manipur. Besides, it has an international border length of 404 km with Myanmar in the southeast and south and 318 km with Bangladesh in the south west. With the advent of the British missionaries towards the close of the nineteenth century in 1894, all people wholeheartedly embraced Christianity (Lloyd, 1991).

The term 'mizo' is a generic term applied to all the Mizos living within and outside the state of Mizoram, whose culture, way of life, traditions, dialects and origin are the same. Etymologically, the word 'Mizo' is a compound of 'Mi' and 'Zo' while Mi means Man or people and 'Zo' means hills or high altitude with moderate climate. 'Zo' also

signifies health and pleasantness. The most popular understanding of the term Mizo therefore means hill man or highlander. Ethnically, the Mizos are of Mongoloid stock and their language belongs to Tibeto-Burman family of languages. They are broadly classified into 'Lusei' and 'Awzia'. 'Awzia' simply means those who speak dialects other than 'Lusei'. (Verghese & Thanzawna 1997).

### **Review of Literature**

The public concern about mass communication focuses mainly on the potential effects on audience members of the mass media material. Parents are worried and conceal their kids from the repercussions presumed exposure to comprehensive media portrayals of 'sex and violence;' self-appointed guardians of public morality set themselves up as watchdogs, Targeted at protecting society from the negative effects of less savory media Fabrics. Indeed, the mass media control their viewers considerably; that they are strong in this context. It would therefore seem self-evident that a priority goal of communication research would be to study the impact on people's world view of the vast amount of time they spend watching Television, listening to the radio, going to movies and reading newspapers and magazines (Bennett, 1982).

Morley and Robins (2013) argue that, given the fact that the flow of global information mostly comes from the West, our knowledge of the "Other" is created from the Western perspective, and we often see ourselves through "Western eyes" (p. 223).

Thusu argues that people are detaching from their national cultures, and realigning with the universal principles of international consumer culture. Some researchers even argue that in today's globalized world one cannot say that there is a true national cultural identity anymore; cultural identities are being eroded by the global cultural supermarket, whose aspects, such as the American pop tunes on radio, CocaCola, and McDonald's, can be seen around the world (Mathews, 2002).

In 1946, Robin Hood was the first movie ever screened in Aizawl at Sainghinga Building, Babutlang, Aizawl. But the first cinema hall in Mizoram was 'Krishna Talkies' owned by a non-

Mizo Businessman Mr. Bomraj around 1950. In the early cinema in Aizawl, majority of the movies were western, a few Hindi movies were also shown. The food and eating habits as seen in western movies did not have much effect in Mizo society whereas the fashion and lifestyle of Mizo youth was deeply affected by the western movies. During the rise of Cinema, the cowboy styles were imitated so much by Mizo youth. They made a fake revolver that a cowboy used to carry with them. And wear belts, jeans, A-cut cowboy boots, hats, waist coat and scarf. They also tried the style of gunslingers of the American old west; the Mizo youth followed the fast draw or the quick draw and gun spinning. They even tried the lassos from scenes from the cowboy movies where lassos were thrown around the neck and tightened to kill. (Lalmalsawma, 2018).

After three local channels namely LPS Vision, Skylinks and Zonet were established in Mizoram, with the rise of local singers the making of music videos became very popular among the Mizos. Those local celebrities and rising stars made more than 800 music videos during the year 2005. In the same year there were a number of Video editing studios and also more than 40 recording studios in Mizoram. During this period around the year 2005 music video had become very popular far more than making full feature movies as making of music videos takes less time and effort with fewer budgets than movies. While there were more than 800 Mizo music videos released in the year 2005, there were 50 Mizo films. Mizo music videos have an upper hand over Mizo movies or films and it rules over the entertainment sector during those times (Lalrozami, 2012).

'The Camera as witness: A social history of Mizoram' finds out how the mass were able to contact western cinemas and music in the 1950's. The Mizos were introduced to silent movies through 'Krishna Talkies' a movie hall opened around 1950 at Aijal by a non-Mizo named Bomraj. This helped popularize such names as Mario Lanza, Bing Crosby, Frank Sinatra, Perry Como, Doris Day, and their numerous hit songs, which were in turn sung with flair and elan by their fathers. They emulate not only the songs of the west, but their dress-code as well (Pachauu, 2014).

The lifestyles of the Mizos regarding fashion and food in the 80s were not at all affected by the movies or T.V. series being broadcasted because there were very less in number and viewers just watched them for sheer entertainment with bewilderment and astonishment. It was much later in the 90s that the lifestyles depicted in the movies were being gradually copied, after the coming of the cable operators with more channels and when television began to completely take up the role of giving infotainment to the masses (Ratna & Laldinfeli, 2016).

### **Objectives of the Study**

1. To find out the western media consumption habits of Mizo youth.
2. To understand the influence of American film and music among Mizo youth.
3. To find out if Mizo youth accept and practice American cultures and values, that they are exposed to through Hollywood films.
4. To study whether exposed to western media effects the eating habits of Mizo youth.
5. To examine whether Mizo youth are affected by American Fashion and lifestyle.

### **Sampling**

Simple random sampling is adopted for the study and the profiles of respondents are Mizo youth age between 15 and 30 years.

### **Research Method**

This study is quantitative in nature and survey method is employed for the study. The researchers developed and designed a questionnaire for the survey study and the researcher used both open-ended and closed-ended questions to gain richness in the data collected. For closed ended questions the researcher used multiple-choice question 454 samples of youth aged between 15 – 30 years were chosen using simple random sampling. An online questionnaire was sent out to students from various schools, colleges and University in Aizawl City. Although 380 sample sizes is an ideal sample size to study Aizawl, here in this study, 454 questionnaires gets filled and SPSS (Statistical

Package for the Social Sciences) is employed to analysed the data collected.

### **Theoretical Framework**

This study is anchored on the basis of Reception theory which is a version of reader response literary theory that emphasizes each particular reader's reception or interpretation in making meaning from a literary text. Reception theory is generally referred to as audience reception in the analysis of communications models. The cultural theorist Stuart Hall has been one of the main proponents of reception theory, first developed in his 1973 essay 'Encoding and Decoding in the Television Discourse'. His model claims that television and other media audiences are presented with messages that are decoded, or interpreted in different ways depending on an individual's cultural background, economic standing, and personal experiences. In contrast to other media theories that disempowered audiences, Hall proposed that audience members can play an active role in decoding messages as they rely on their own social contexts, and might be capable of changing messages themselves through collective action.

Stuart Hall states that audience members adopt one of the following three positions when they decode the text: Dominant, or Preferred Reading - how the producer wants the audience to view the media text. Audience members will take this position if the messages are clear and if the audience member is the same age and culture; if it has an easy to follow narrative and if it deals with themes that are relevant to the audience. Oppositional Reading - when the audience rejects the preferred reading, and creates their own meaning for the text. This can happen if the media contains controversial themes that the audience member disagrees with. It can also arise when the media has a complex narrative structure perhaps not dealing with themes in modern society. Oppositional reading can also occur if the audience member has different beliefs or is of a different age or a different culture. Negotiated Reading - a compromise between the dominant and oppositional readings, where the audience accepts parts of the producer's views, but has their own views on parts as well. This can occur if there is a

combination of some of the above e.g. audience member likes the media, is of the same age as you and understands some of the messages, but the narrative is complex and this inhibits full understanding. Many factors could affect whether

the audience take the dominant, oppositional or negotiated reading; Age, Beliefs, Culture, Gender, Life experience and Mood at the time of viewing (revisionworld.com).

**Demographic Profile of the respondents**

<b>Table 1.1 Gender of respondents</b>					
		Frequency	Percent %	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Male	204	44.9	44.9	44.9
	Female	247	54.4	54.4	99.3
	Prefer not to say	3	.7	.7	100.0
	Total	454	100.0	100.0	

From the table above, we can observe that 247 of the respondents are female which account for 54.4%, 247 of the respondents are male which

accounts for 44.9% while 3 of the respondents prefer not to say their gender.

<b>Table 1.2 Educational Qualification of Respondents</b>					
		Frequency	Percent %	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	High School	9	2.0	2.0	2.0
	Higher Sec. School	99	21.8	21.8	23.8
	Bachelor's Degree	222	48.9	48.9	72.7
	Master's Degree	108	23.8	23.8	96.5
	Doctoral Degree	16	3.5	3.5	100.0
	Total	454	100.0	100.0	

The table above depicts the educational qualification of the respondents. From this table we can observe that the participants are generally from the Bachelor's Degree with 222 participants

and followed by Master's Degree with 108 participants (23.8%) and followed by Higher Sec. School (21.8%), Doctoral Degree (3.5%) and High School (2.0%) with the lowest participants.

<b>Table 1.3 Age of respondents</b>					
		Frequency	Percent %	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	15-20	121	26.7	26.8	26.8
	21-25	217	47.8	48.1	74.9
	26-30	113	24.9	25.1	100.0
	Total	451	99.3	100.0	
Missing	99.00	3	.7		
Total		454	100.0		

The above table depicts the age of the respondents; from this table we can observe that out of 251 responses, 121 participants fall under the age

group between 15 – 20 years of age, and 217 participants aged between 21-25 yrs. And 113 participants fall under the age group between 26-

30. (Note : Even though the sum total of responses shown in the table may be counted 454, in the analysis process, only the valid responses were counted. Therefore, out of 454 responses, 3

particular responses were invalid and were classified as 'Missing'.)

**Western media consumption habits of Mizo youth**

Table 1.4 Frequency of watching American Films					
		Frequency	Percent %	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	445	98.0	98.0	98.0
	No	9	2.0	2.0	100.0
	Total	454	100.0	100.0	

The following particular table show the responses regards with whether the participants watched Americans Films or not. And from the above analysis, out of the total responses (454), 445

(98%) participants watched Americans films and 9 (2%) participants claimed that they have never engaged with American films.

**Table 1.5. American Movies watched by respondents**

Genre	Frequency	Percent %
Action	286	21
Comedy	274	20
Romance	210	15
Thriller	187	14
Serial	155	11
Drama	153	11
Gangster/Mafia	114	8

The above table implies that most of the respondent 21% (286) watch Action movies, comedy 20% (274), Romance 15% (210), Thriller

14% (187) Serial 11% (155), Drama 11% 153 and Gangster/mafia movies only 8% (114).

Table 1.6 Frequency of watching American series					
No. of days in a week		Frequency	Percent %	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1.00	55	12.1	12.1	12.1
	2.00	79	17.4	17.4	29.5
	3.00	102	22.5	22.5	52.0
	4.00	88	19.4	19.4	71.4
	5.00	65	14.3	14.3	85.7
	6.00	33	7.3	7.3	93.0
	7.00	32	7.0	7.0	100.0
	Total	454	100.0	100.0	

The above table shows the average days spent on watching American series, most of the respondents

of 22.5% (102) spend 3 days a week, and 19.4% (88) respondents spend 4 days in a week. Only

7.0% (32) respondents spend 7 days watching American series in a week.

		Frequency	Percent %	Valid Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
Valid	Yes	215	47.4	47.4	47.4
	No	239	52.6	52.6	100.0
	Total	454	100.0	100.0	

The above table shows whether pandemic change their film consumption pattern, 52.6% (239) respondents said that the pandemic did not change their film consumption pattern whereas 47.4 (215)

said that pandemic changed their film consumption pattern.

### Western Influence in Lifestyle, Fashion and Food

		Frequency	Percent %	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	KFC	300	66.1	66.7	66.7
	Subway	10	2.2	2.2	68.9
	McDonald's	19	4.2	4.2	73.1
	Others	121	26.7	26.9	100.0
	Total	450	99.1	100.0	
Missing	System	4	.9		
Total		454	100.0		

The above table depicts American fast food habits where a whopping 66.7% of the respondents said they eat KFC the most and only 4.2% and 2.2% for

McDonald's and Subway, 26.9% respondents also opt for others.

		Frequency	Percent %	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	116	25.6	25.7	25.7
	No	335	73.8	74.3	100.0
	Total	451	99.3	100.0	
Missing	System	3	.7		
Total		454	100.0		

As regards 73.8% (335) respondents said that their daily diet and food preferences are not influenced by movies and series they have watched.

		Frequency	Percent %	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	American	277	61.0	61.4	61.4
	British	174	38.3	38.6	100.0
	Total	451	99.3	100.0	
Missing	System	3	.7		
Total		454	100.0		

The above table shows that majority of the respondents of 61.4% said that they prefer American English than British English.

		Frequency	Percent %	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	299	65.9	66.0	66.0
	No	154	33.9	34.0	100.0
	Total	453	99.8	100.0	
Missing	System	1	.2		
Total		454	100.0		

The above table shows that majority of the respondents 66% (299) imitate someone's

gesture/lifestyle/dress code while 33.9% (154) respondents says they do not imitate.

		Frequency	Percent %	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Agree	18	4.0	4.0	4.0
	Agree	123	27.1	27.1	31.1
	Neutral	223	49.1	49.1	80.2
	Disagree	78	17.2	17.2	97.4
	Strongly Disagree	12	2.6	2.6	100.0
	Total	454	100.0	100.0	

The above table shows that majority of the respondents 27.1% (123) agree that Hollywood

films shape their attitudes and general lifestyles whereas 49.1% (78) respondents disagree.

		Frequency	Percent %	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Agree	25	5.5	5.5	5.5

	Agree	143	31.5	31.5	37.0
	Neutral	248	54.6	54.6	91.6
	Disagree	33	7.3	7.3	98.9
	Strongly Disagree	5	1.1	1.1	100.0
	Total	454	100.0	100.0	

The above table shows that 31% (143) respondents agreed that accept and practice western cultures when they are exposed to through Hollywood films whereas only 7.3 % (33) respondents disagree.

### Findings

The total number of respondents are 454, and 247 of the respondents are female which account for 54.4%, 247 of the respondents are male which accounts for 44.9% while 3 of the respondents prefer not to say their gender. The participants are generally from the Bachelor’s Degree with 222 participants and followed by Master’s Degree with 108 participants (23.8%) and followed by Higher Sec. School (21.8%), Doctoral Degree (3.5%) and High School (2.0%) with the lowest participants. 121 participant’s fall under the age group between 15 – 20 years of age, and 217 participants aged between 21-25 yrs. And 113 participants fall under the age group between 26 and 30.

### Summary of Key Findings

- The movie genre mostly watch by the participants was Action movies followed by comedy.
- On average, most of the participants spend 3 days a week watching American series.
- Most of the participants changed their film consumption pattern due to pandemic.
- Among American fast food, majority of them like KFC.
- The daily diet and food preferences of the participants are not influenced by movies and series they have watched.
- Majority of the participants prefer American accent over British accent.
- Majority of the participants imitate someone's gesture/lifestyle/dress code

and agreed that Hollywood films shape their attitudes and general lifestyles.

- Majority of the participants accepted and practiced western cultures exposed to through Hollywood films.

### Conclusion

Influences coming from America can be seen in every part of Mizo society, from what they watch, to how they live their lives, what they eat, what they listen to, or the ways they think.

Since the participants accepted and practiced western cultures in their life, this does not mean that every Mizo youth are moving away from their traditional practices and follow western culture, moreover, Mizo youth tend to strictly belief and follow indigenous Mizo tradition even though they are exposed to modern lifestyle including western media and popular culture. Inwardly, it seems that they want to follow Mizo ethos and way of life but outwardly, this study shows that they also enjoy modernity through western media, imitate their fashion and lifestyle. This imitation started with western missionaries and extended to western media and popular culture. The Mizo youth are negotiating with their western encounters and their life co-exists with both indigeneity and modernity. So, it can be concluded that the micro youth tend to be negotiated readers. Instead of spending a lot of money like purchasing branded costly shoes, clothes and consuming western food. The youths are vital segment of the society who could uplift and promote Mizo culture products and traditions but the youth tend to follow western trend which could lead to cultural distortion and erosion among Mizo youth. Western media thrives on capitalism; they need advertising revenue for their functioning of media industry. Some of the Mizo youth are also dominant readers and beliefs this constructed reality as the real world.

Therefore, it is suggested that micro youth are given proper media studies from an early age.



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