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Editorial Note

Research is a crucial component in our lives that permeates through the realms of higher education. It aids in the advancement of knowledge, improved pedagogy, the enhancement of institutional reputation, and promotes funding which are crucial to the overall growth of an institution. Within the experience of empirical studies, the researcher, be it student or teacher, finds better scope to hone a wide spectrum of skills. The immense benefits of a consistent and vibrant research environment are the impetus behind the publication of the annual multidisciplinary Dimapur Government College Journal.

Providing a wide platform for the avid scholar, this issue contains twelve papers ranging from topics as diverse as food crops, pre-colonial Naga society, issues of identity, midwives, gender, role of media, different aspects of literature, sexual health of students and the implementation of the NEP 2020 and FYUGP. They have been written by writers across academia. We are confident that readers will find these papers relevant, thought-provoking and practical.

The papers have been thoroughly assessed by qualified reviewers for whose contributions the editorial board remains grateful.

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10. Examining Media's role as a Change Agent in the Age of Information Explosion

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Abstract:

Media has long played a pivotal role in shaping societies, influencing public opinion, and serving as a tool for empowerment and control. In the digital age, information flows across multiple platforms at an unprecedented speed, reshaping how individuals engage with society, politics and culture - both positively and negatively. This paper examines the dual role of media in socio-political transformation, exploring its potential to strengthen democratic discourse while also highlighting the associated risks. Additionally, it specifically focuses on Nagaland, analysing the evolving media landscape and its influence on public perception. The study further examines whether media in Nagaland fosters socio-political awareness or contributes to infotainment excess and selective narratives. In doing so, it questions whether the state's evolving media landscape can lay a strong foundation for socio-political change or merely serve as yet another tool of oppression.

Keywords: Media, social media, digital media, infotainment, digi- literacy.

INTRODUCTION:

The mass production of books became possible with the printing press. This widened access to information and democratised knowledge. Anderson (1991) argues that the formation of nation-states and nationalism is also attributed to the rise of "print capitalism" which made possible the imagination of a shared national identity among disparate and distant communities. The development of various other media over the years and their use has a bearing on the way history has unfolded. What the invention of paper and proliferation of vernacular literature was to renaissance, the World Wide Web and social media is to the modern age. History is repeating itself.

Media, in its multifaceted forms - from the printing press to digital platforms has long occupied a prominent role in society, functioning simultaneously as an agent of transformation and an apparatus of control. Historically, media has been instrumental in mobilising public opinion, shaping cultural norms, and facilitating political reform. The invention of the printing press in the 15th century, for example, enabled the rapid dissemination of ideas, fuelling movements such as the Protestant Reformation and the Enlightenment (Eisenstein, 1979). Similarly, in the 20th century, broadcast media played a critical role in galvanising civil rights activism and anti-colonial resistance, exemplified by the use of radio in post-war Africa to articulate nationalist ideologies (Spitulnik, 2000).

Conversely, media has also served as a mechanism of surveillance, propaganda, and ideological enforcement. Even in democratic societies, media institutions have been critiqued for perpetuating hegemonic narratives and marginalising dissenting voices (Herman & Chomsky, 1988). With the advent of digital technologies, this dual function persists, as social media platforms simultaneously enable grassroots activism and data driven manipulation (Zuboff, 2019).

This duality underscores the need for critical engagement with media as both a site of emancipation and a domain of control. Understanding this complex dynamic is essential to evaluating media's evolving role in contemporary socio-political contexts.

Large media corporations frequently operate with intertwined commercial and political interests, prioritising glamour and entertainment while marginalising critical issues such as poverty, rural realities, and the struggles of marginalised and oppressed communities. At their most problematic, such media entities may actively distort facts, presenting corrupt governments and unethical corporations in a favourable light. In this context of perceived media injustice and imbalance, critical questions arise regarding the role and agency of audiences. The proliferation of affordable recording technologies and the widespread use of social media suggest new possibilities for both individual and collective expression and activism. Can these tools truly empower the public to challenge dominant narratives?

Ultimately, we must ask: are we, as media consumers,

active participants capable of shaping media discourse, or merely passive recipients within a content-saturated environment curated by powerful media and cultural industries? These questions are complex and demand thoughtful engagement.

Exploitation of public communication platforms

Media is often exploited for political propaganda with devastating consequences. Authoritarian regimes have historically co-opted media to consolidate power, exemplified by the Nazi regimes exploitation of radio and film to propagate totalitarian ideology (Herf, 2006). The British Empire in colonial India prohibited any content considered detrimental or showed them in poor light to reach the masses. Hence print, radio and cinema were regulated by the British administration backed by various Acts such as The Indian Press Act, 1910, The Indian Telegraph Act, 1885 and The Cinematograph Act, 1918. The National Television Doordarshan and All India Radio which are still running albeit with some modifications, were mobilised in the service of the nation after independence. By producing programmes that address the nation, each member of the audience is incorporated into the idea of India as an entity. This becomes pronounced during the broadcasting of international sports events and in times of war when the national public is imagined to root for the nation (Kuotsu & Siam, 2023). Radio and TV still have their relevance in rural India. They can be used to build public opinion and for knowledge building. Programmes targeting youth and women empowerment can promote social change.

In contemporary times, the era of state monopoly over media is increasingly being challenged by the emergence of new communication technologies and the broader processes of economic liberalisation.

Proliferation of Mass media and Digital media

The advent of mass media in India is intricately linked to the process of Westernisation, a phenomenon marked by the introduction and adaptation of Western cultural, political and technological norms. Media technologies such as satellite television and the internet have rapidly expanded the informational and entertainment landscape, embedding India within a transnational media universe. This proliferation, however, should not be celebrated uncritically. While the media environment has undoubtedly become more saturated, this growth is predominantly quantitative rather than qualitative in nature. The spread of media technologies holds the potential to disseminate knowledge and shape public attitudes swiftly and widely. Effective communication, particularly in a digital context, depends on its capacity to circulate. The digital age exemplifies this principle: media content thrives on virality, multiplicity, and user engagement.

Today's media user faces an overwhelming abundance of choices. Digital newspapers, satellite broadcasting services, online platforms, chat rooms, software repositories, and mobile applications are readily accessible and constantly evolving. According to a 2023 report by the Internet and Mobile Association of India

(IAMAI), India had over 750 million internet users, many of whom rely heavily on mobile phones as their primary medium of connectivity. In such a context, the question arises: who or what can regulate this boundless media ecosystem?

This complexity is further intensified by the emergence of interactive formats, particularly in "reality TV" shows which increasingly require the active participation of viewers. In such formats, audiences are transformed into consuming masses, enmeshed in a triadic relationship between media corporations, telecom service providers, and advertisers. This commodification of attention and participation portends a dystopian future, wherein users are reduced to data points and market segments. The central question remains: is there a possibility of redemption within this heavily corporatised and saturated media culture? The answers may lie in fostering media literacy, supporting independent content creators, and advocating for regulatory frameworks that prioritise democratic values over profit motives.

Mainstream communication channels and roles

The transformative power of media in shaping social realities and cultural identities has been widely acknowledge in media theory. Canadian media theorist Marshall McLuhan (1964) argued that different forms of media exert distinct effects on society. The rise of electronic media has led to the formation of a global village, in which events occurring anywhere in the world are instantly accessible to global audiences, fostering

both conscious and subconscious forms of participation. Whether it involves natural disasters, political crises, or cultural trends, media enables collective engagement across geographic boundaries.

This development is accompanied by a broader process of convergence in the production, distribution, and consumption of information. One notable example of this convergence is the increasing consumption of South Korean popular culture in Northeast India, particularly in Nagaland. This phenomenon can be interpreted as an alternative mode of engaging with modernity, existing alongside the influences of Hollywood and Bollywood (Kuotsu, 2013).

Across diverse cultural contexts, young people frequently emulate the fashion styles of their favourite pop artistes and film celebrities. While such behaviour may appear to be superficial or or driven purely by consumer trends, it often carries deeper sociocultural significance. Fashion serves not only as a mode of aesthetic expression but also as a potent medium through which youth assert identity, challenge norms, and explore gender presentation. In some instances, youth may consciously adopt androgynous styles, using clothing and appearance as subtle or overt strategies to disrupt traditional gender binaries. These expressions, however, are often misunderstood or trivialised, particularly in societies where discussions on sexuality and gender identity remain taboo or are met with discomfort (Kuotsu & Siam, 2023).

The rapid growth of mass media, particularly news

outlets, is increasingly dominated by multinational corporations and powerful business conglomerates, raising concerns about media ownership and content integrity. This concentration of ownership often results in the marginalisation of critical social issues, as editorial priorities are influenced by corporate interests rather than public welfare (Bagdikian, 2004). Consequently, coverage may be skewed towards sensationalism or entertainment-oriented stories that hold limited relevance for the broader population. This phenomenon is evident in the tabloid press, which tends to prioritize celebrity culture over substantive reporting. Moreover the rise of digital communication platforms such as Facebook, Whatsapp and others has not only altered modes of interpersonal interaction but has also led to increasing concerns over digital addiction and cybercrime, including the misuse of fake identities. Large media conglomerates also function as agenda setters, influencing public discourse by selectively amplifying certain narratives while marginalising others (McCombs & Shaw, 1972).

In the contemporary era, human interaction has been revolutionised by unprecedented levels of mobility and digital connectivity. While global exchange through trade, warfare, and travel has historical precedence, the speed and scale of today's interactions are unparalleled. The convergence of media technologies into multi functional devices- combining the features of telephones, camera, and computers has empowered users with the versatile tools for communication and content creation. This is a rather potent tool in the hands of users (Kuotsu & Siam, 2023). Nowadays almost anyone can be a citizen journalist

and for the more enterprising and adventurous, an independent film maker. The internet has also become more versatile making it easy to share and respond to text, images and videos on blogs, YouTube, and social media. Today, ordinary individuals can create their own content and disseminate it to a potentially limitless and global audience. However the possibility of exposure to information, opinions and beliefs that align with the preference of the content creator is possible. This can sometimes contribute to misinformation, polarization and resistance to new ideas.

It would be beneficial to consider not only the merits of a media saturated world but also its potential dangers. The world remains deeply unequal, often marginalising and suppressing minority groups and vulnerable sections of society. Although exploring how these social hierarchies manifest in local media and the digital sphere is important, it lies beyond the focus of this discussion. A key concern is the lack of accountability in social media platforms regarding the content they host or disseminate. Unlike traditional or industrial media- which refers to large scale media organisations requiring substantial financial investment and professional infrastructure- social media comprises relatively low cost digital tools that allow virtually anyone to create, share, or access content. While social media appear free from conflicts of interest, its public value is increasingly compromised by the growing influence of public relations campaigns, and advertising networks. These entities can distort the authenticity and neutrality of online discourse. Importantly, industrial media is typically held accountable to the public for the

quality and impact of its content, emphasising principles like public interest, editorial independence, and social responsibility. In contrast, social media platforms with far less oversight and are not usually held to the same ethical or editorial standards.

All media designed to influence human behaviour is fundamentally rooted in communication processes, with the intended behavioural outcomes falling within the domain of psychology. Consequently, the study of media and communication psychology-an increasingly prominent interdisciplinary field is essential for comprehending the individual and societal impacts of media (Pathak, 2016). Luskin (as cited in Pathak, 2016), a psychologist specialising in media and learning, introduced the concept of the socio-psycho media effect, which underscores the sociocultural implications of media on both society and human behaviour.

Local Context

The efficacy of online activism is not without its limitations. Possessing digital tools alone does not guarantee meaningful change. The challenge lies in translating virtual engagement into sustained action on the ground. Moreover the composition of many social media groups tends to be skewed - often dominated by urban, male, and literate participants - thereby pushing rural, female and less educated voices to the background. This divide risks reinforcing existing inequalities. For example, in India, despite high social media penetration in cities, rural women often face barriers to participation due to cultural norms and less access to technology.

There are also darker undercurrents: these platforms can become breeding grounds for hate speech, misinformation and gender based abuse. The trolling of female journalists and activists on Indian twitter is a case in point, where digital abuse often silences critical voices. To harness the constructive potential of social media, users must develop ethical awareness and inclusive communication practices. Ethical digital literacy- learning to engage respectfully, verify information, and understand diverse perspectives is essential. At the same time, critical questions must be asked: who moderates these platforms? What kind of content is censored, and whose voices are amplified or silenced?

In essence, while social media offers a powerful avenue for civic participation and resistance, its effectiveness depends on how consciously and inclusively it is used. The challenge lies in bridging the gap between digital discourse and ground realities, ensuring that these platforms serve as true vehicles of democratic engagement rather than mere forums of protest.

In recent years, social media groups within the region have emerged as significant platforms for socio-political engagement. A notable example is the mobilisation of public discourse against the informal taxation by Naga Political Groups, which many users have termed as extortion. This represents a transformative shift from previous decade's dominated by fear, silence and limited avenues for free expression. The democratisation of digital communication has empowered individuals- especially the urban youth to voice dissent, raise awareness, and

rally support for causes that were once suppressed. The Black Lives Matter movement in the United States gained unprecedented momentum through platforms like Twitter and Instagram, showing how digital tools can amplify marginalized voices.

In Nagaland, the media is predominantly shaped by local newspapers, although electronic platforms have seen some growth. Coverage of pressing issues such as corruption, rural distress, government inefficiency, and the misuse of the Armed Forces Special Powers Act, including actions by self styled "national workers" remains sparse. Despite the opaque nature of the Naga political situation, the conflicts among various political groups occasionally provide a semblance of public debate in the media. However, local media often find themselves constrained, compelled to publish these groups' inflammatory exchanges and undignified language.

In an environment where dissent is frequently labelled "anti- national" by powerful actors, the need to cultivate democratic spaces becomes urgent. Universities and digital media platforms must serve as arenas for reasoned, open dialogues free from censorship and fear. As Socrates once affirmed, the freedom to question and discuss is fundamental to a meaningful life - its absence, he argued, renders existence devoid of purpose.

Conclusion:

Media in its various forms functions as a double edged sword, offering both opportunities and challenges. On one hand, it facilitates innovation, political mobilisation,

and efforts to bridge the digital divide. These benefits, especially evident in emerging democracies, underscore the transformative potential of media. Yet, media also represents an unregulated force of power, and its decentralisation from the state to the individual carries uncertain outcomes. Whether media is appropriated for social progress or manipulated for regressive ends depends largely on the rational and ethical outlook of individuals and communities. The critical question, then is whether this agent of change can lay the foundation for genuine socio-political transformation, or if it risks becoming merely another instrument of control and oppression.

The challenges are particularly evident in regional contexts such as Nagaland, where electronic media is on the rise but remains expensive to operate, yielding less return. Moreover internet penetration is a work in progress especially in rural areas and demands not only basic literacy but also digi-literacy - the ability to access, interpret, and critically engage with media content.

As media becomes increasingly embedded in educational systems, children are encouraged to use technological tools from an early age and are expected to possess a functional knowledge of various media forms (Poonia, 2009). While this marks progress, it also creates a growing divide between media haves and have nots. For those with unrestricted access, the overabundance of infotainment can desensitise individuals to social realities. This concern echoes Neil Postman's critical observation that modern society may be "amusing itself to death" as entertainment eclipses meaningful civic discourse (Postman, 2005).

In light of all these, media literacy and ethical engagement emerge as vital components of a healthy democratic culture ensuring that the power of media is harnessed not for distraction or domination, but for critical reflection, inclusion and empowerment.

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