

Role of New Media in enhancing Multiculturalism and Diversity in Assam and Bihar

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Abstract: *Multiculturalism is a cultural diversity of communities where two or more community merges with each other for establishing a new community. In this, the various streams of world cultures combine to form new currents of human interactions, a global perspective and development of a multicultural person. The perspective and worldview of multicultural person transcend the indigenous culture developed from complex of social, political, economic and educational interactions. Such person had an international frame of references rather than specific knowledge or interest in global affairs.*

Besides this, cultural diversity can be understood by knowing the term global culture. An ideal global culture is where the voices of all cultures and people are heard with equal clarity, where no culture should overshadow one another and where pride in one's own culture only increases respect for the cultures of others; and the diversity of cultures would express different visions of the world.

And for making and maintaining the international frame of reference and spreading global culture new communication and information technologies helped a lot. Cultures have become more visible, vocal and global through exposure to media technologies. Therefore, even though we may not have chance to visit or interact with the world, but we feel we know it. Such an interaction is facilitated by development in media technologies.

In current times the computers, internet, telecommunications with advance functions, cable television and satellite communications are shaping societies differently and giving more intercultural and inter-societal connectivity. This resulted as a new phenomenon of cultural convergence. It need not end in the submerging of all difference among the previously distinct societies. It may combine cultural diversity with cultural sharing. In fact, it is inadvisable for a group of societies that converge in their mutual interest to seek to obliterate cultural differences. This not ends on the crisis of cultural identity.

So, New Media plays a very important role in enhancing the multiculturalism and diversity. It is the new media which opens up a new sky of popular culture in which the words of Marshal McLuhan that "medium is the message" became true and the global village came in existence with a new culture because of the expansion of the New Media.

Key Words: *Multiculturalism, Diversity, New Media, Globalization, Community.*

1. INTRODUCTION:

New Media is known by several names – Digital Media, Cyber Media, Web Media, Online Media, Internet Media, Virtual Media, and Convergence Media. All possessing the same qualities and functioning but called by different name at different places, as per its characteristics. This technological occurrence is believed to be the future of media. Without sticking to a particular media, technology or mode of communication, academicians and researchers over the world have agreed to name this as New Media. This world gives glamorous connotation to something new as New Media.

It is a term meant to encompass the emergence of digital, computerized or networked information and communication technologies in the latter part of the 20th century. Most technologies described as "new media" are digital, often having characteristics of being manipulable, net-workable, dense, compressible and impartial. The level of interactivity is instantaneous and extremely high in new media. This feature makes new media more active that gives its use enormous opportunities to participate in content formation. The commentators therefore, call this medium more democratic and friendly. All earlier media provides facility of one or two levels of communication. Whereas, by using new media we can communicate at different levels at the same time. This makes the new media, the medium of multiple communications.

On the other hand, culture is defined as shared manners, customs, beliefs, rituals, ceremonies, laws, ideas, thought patterns, arts, tool, social institutions, religious beliefs, myths, facts, knowledge, values, concept of self, morals, ideals and accepted ways of behaving. Culture involves the social acquisitions and transmission of patterns of customs, beliefs and behavior through symbols and widely shared meanings. Culture enables people of a given society to adapt one another's customs and their physical & social environment. It involves learned responses and a system of ready-made solutions to the problems people face. Culture is the way we do things.

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Here, cultural diversity can be understood by knowing the term global culture. An ideal global culture is where the voices of all cultures and people are heard with equal clarity, where no culture should over-shadow one another and where pride in one's own culture only increases respect for the cultures of others; and the diversity of cultures would express different visions of the world.

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Innis Harold (1950) through his theory of Technological Determinism propounded that the fundamental breakthroughs in technology are first applied to the process of communication. The forms of social organizations, stages of society, and the characteristics of the society are determined by the medium of the time.

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2. LITERATURE REVIEW:

Neumannova, Radka, 2007, Multiculturalism and cultural diversity in modern nation state, university of Economics, Prague Czech Republic:

The aim of this research paper is to critically explore these two concepts of multiculturalism and to point out their dilemmas in addressing the equality in plural-cultural societies. For this, he in the established political system of liberal nation-states built up on a principle of coherence between culture and nation as territorially defined groups, the occurrence of cultural differences has brought to the dissolution of this formula crucial for a unity of a nation-state. Nationalism holds that cultural differences are results of a hierarchy between "us" and "them" and consequently the existence of cultural differences was interpreted as differences among cultures as closed units. During recent years the politics has been confronted with various demands for recognition of cultural and ethnic plurality coming from groups of citizens, cultural and ethnic minorities. In this respect the interest in the issues of multiculturalism has increase both on scholar and public level.

On one hand there are liberal theories promoting multiculturalism as a model of defense of cultural rights having its source in the universal right of an individual. From the liberal viewpoint, multiculturalism aims to promote the recognition of cultural and ethnic plurality but still this plurality is intended as a plurality of cultures as closed units. Such concepts of multiculturalism has been criticized to endorse existing differences and to perpetuate existing cultural stereotypes by using "culture" as a mean to solve the social and political inequalities.

On the other hand cultural relativism demonstrates that liberal concept of a nation-state ignored for many decades the idea of culture as a system based on a multiple relations and meanings, which go beyond nation-states boundaries and where cultural differences are intended as variations existing side by side.

Lakhendra, Bala, A Study on the influence of Mass Media on the Culture and Tradition of Singpho Tribe in Tinsukia district of Assam, India, Blue Ocean Research Journal, Vol.3, No.-2(2014)

This paper endeavors to examine the influence of mass media on the Culture and Tradition of Singpho Tribe in Tinsukia district of Assam. In the last 50 years the media influence has grown exponentially with the advance of technology, first there was the telegraph, then the radio, the newspaper, magazines, television and now the internet. We live in a society that depends on information and communication to keep moving in the right direction and do our

daily activities like work, entertainment, health care, education, personal relationships, traveling and anything else that we have to do.

The Singpho are a hilly tribe of Mongoloid origin. Though their site of preoccupation is not known, the story goes that their abode was in the hills Singra-Boom in Tibet and from there formed several groups. Out of these groups, one went to China, one to Burma (now Myanmar), and the rest came over to India and settled in the hilly region. They have their own tradition and culture like other tribes. As culture is defined as the beliefs, values, or other frameworks of reference by which we make sense of our experiences. It also concerns how we communicate these values and ideas. Mass media are centrally involved in the production of modern culture. Media production, media texts and media reception are like a series of interlinked circuits. What is produced is influenced by cultural values; how the texts are formed and represented is influenced in the same way and the readings of the texts are also subject to both abstract and particular cultural viewpoints.

It was found that watching more television has changed their mind set in some cases like previously they used to give the traditional names to their children's but today it was not followed any more today they also allow their children's to marry in some other communities. Thus it can be said that the new media has broaden the outlook of the Singpho people in the region of Ketetong. This paper seeks to explain and understand the cultural influences of mass media on the Culture and Tradition of Singpho Tribe in Tinsukia district of Assam.

Bouvier, Gwen, How facebook users select identity categories for self-presentation, journal of multicultural discourses, 01/2012, pg.37-57

This paper focuses on the display of identity on Facebook, and more specifically on how undergraduate students in Cardiff, Wales, say they express identity on their profiles. The theoretical context of this study is observed processes of change in the way we play out identity through what have been described as globalization, deterritorialisation and the rise of lifestyle consumer society. The paper is based on an analysis of responses from a questionnaire and interviews with 100 students from Media and Communication degrees at the University of Glamorgan. The data collection is designed to indicate what kinds of self-categorization are used. These data are analyzed using Social Actor Analysis developed by Machine and Van Leeuwen. The paper shows that we find a range of identity categories, some that are based around a biological model of national identity, while others focus on a belonging to a territory, others on national cultural activities and yet others link to lifestyle identity. What is most notable in this Welsh sample is the high use of nationalist identity categories and biological ethnic classification alongside other lifestyle identities.

3. GLOBALIZATION AND NEW MEDIA:

The New Media have five distinctive characteristics: digitality, convergency, interactivity, hypertextuality, and virtuality (Chen & Zhang, 2010; Flew, 2005; Lister, Dovere, Giddings, Grant, & Kelly, 2009). First, digitalization is the most prominent feature of new media. New media or digital media dematerializes media text by converting data from analog into digital form, which allows all kind of mathematical operations. New media also makes it possible for a large amount of information to be retrieved, manipulated, and stored in a very limited space.

Second, New Media converge the forms and functions of information, media, electronic communication, and electronic computing. The convergence power of new media can be easily demonstrated by the emergence of the Internet in terms of its powerful function embedded in computer information technologies and broadband communication networks. This also leads to the industry convergence displayed by the constant merger of big media companies and the product and service convergence evidenced by the successful connection and combination of media's material, product, and service in the media industry.

Third, the interactive function of new media, i.e., between users and the system regarding the use of information resources, provides users a great freedom in producing and reproducing the content and form of the information during the interaction. In addition, the interactivity of new media makes the interaction among different networks and the retrieving of information through different operational systems, both available and convenient. The freedom in controlling the information endows new media a great power in the process of human communication.

Fourth, the hypertextuality of new media brings forth a global network center in which information can freely move around and spontaneously interconnect. This global network phenomenon has begun to rebuild a new life experience for human beings, which in turn will lead the transformation of economic activities, cultural patterns, interactional styles, and other aspects of human society (Castells, 2000).

Finally, the cyberspace formed by new media allows people to generate virtual experience and reality. The invisible cyberspace not only induces a gap between reality and virtuality, but also effectuates the free alternation of one's gender, personality, appearance, and occupation. The formation of virtual community that crosses all the boundaries of human society definitely will challenge the way we perceive reality and have traditionally defined identity. (Jones, 1995).¹

¹ Chen Ming Guo, Impact of New Media on Intercultural Communication, 2012,8(2), China Media Research,

These salient features of New Media push the trend of Multiculturalism and Diversity in which Globalization acts as a catalyst. As defined by Steger (2009), globalization “refers to the expansion and intensification of social relations and consciousness across world-time and world-space” (p. 15). In other words, globalization is “a social process in which the constraints of geography on social and cultural arrangements recede and people become increasingly aware that they are receding” (Waters, 1995, p. 3). It involves the expansion, stretching, intensification, and acceleration of social activities in both objective/material and subjective/ human consciousness levels, or different levels of human society, including the entire world, a specific nation, a specific industry or organization, and an individual (Govindarajan & Gupta, 1997). The powerful impact of globalization, enhanced by the advent of new media, is revealed in its dynamic, pervasive, interconnected, hybridized, and individually powerful attributes (Chen, 2005; Chen & Zhang, 2010).

First, globalization is a dialectically dynamic process, which is caused by the pushing and pulling between the two forces of cultural identity and cultural diversity, or between localization and universalization. Second, globalization is universally pervasive. It moves like air penetrating into every aspect of human society and influences the way we live, think, and behave. Third, globalization is holistically interconnected. It builds a huge matrix in which all components are interconnected with networks. Fourth, globalization represents a culturally hybridized state, which allows cultural transmission via new media to take place at a very rapid rate by permeating and dissolving human boundaries.

Finally, globalization increases individual power in the new media society, which pluralizes the world by recognizing the ability and importance of individual components. Together, the dialectically dynamic, universally pervasive, holistically interconnected, culturally hybridized, and individually powerful characteristics of globalization enhanced and deepened by the stimulus and push of the emergence of new media has led to revolutionary changes in people’s thinking and behaviors, redefined the sense of community, and restructured human society.

The impact of the integration of new media and globalization can be summarized into five precise effects, namely, a shrinking world, the compression of time and space, close interaction in different aspects of society, global connectivity, and accelerated local/global competition/cooperation (Chen & Starosta, 2000).

In other words, boundaries of human societies in terms of space, time, scope, structure, geography, function, profession, value, and beliefs are swiftly changing and transforming into a new pattern of similarities and interconnectedness. Nevertheless, although the interdependent relationship of new media and globalization is evident, the specific connection between the five distinctive characteristics of new media (i.e., digitality, convergency, interactivity, hypertextuality, and virtuality), and the five manifest features of globalization (i.e., dialectically dynamic, universally pervasive, holistically interconnected, culturally hybridized, and individually powerful), remain a valuable research topic for scholars to further pursue. This paper only focuses on the discussion of the relationship between new media, Multiculturalism and Diversity. The next section first delineates the impact of new media on human communication, especially from the multicultural communication perspective, and discusses the present research on the impact of new media on Multiculturalism and Diversity.

4. RESEARCH QUESTIONS:

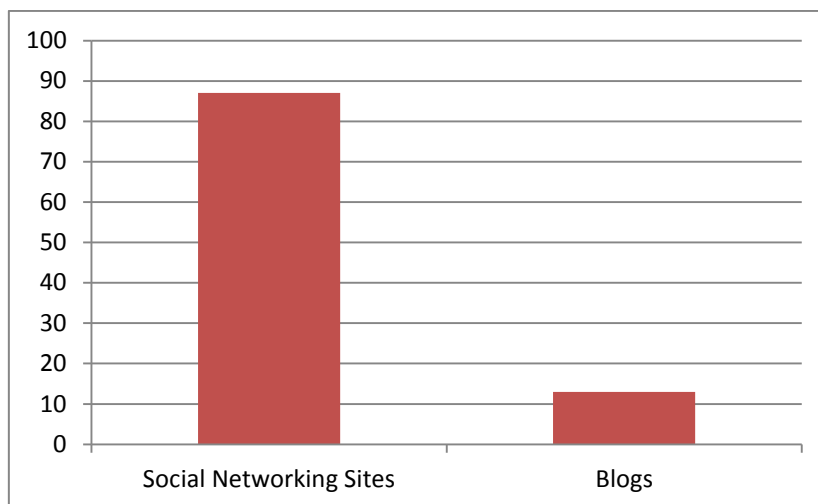
1. Is the information getting through new media influenced people to change their decision regarding their cultural believes?
2. What kind of Cultural changes happens because of New Media in the people?
3. Do New Media enhance Multiculturalism and Diversity?

5. METHODOLOGY:

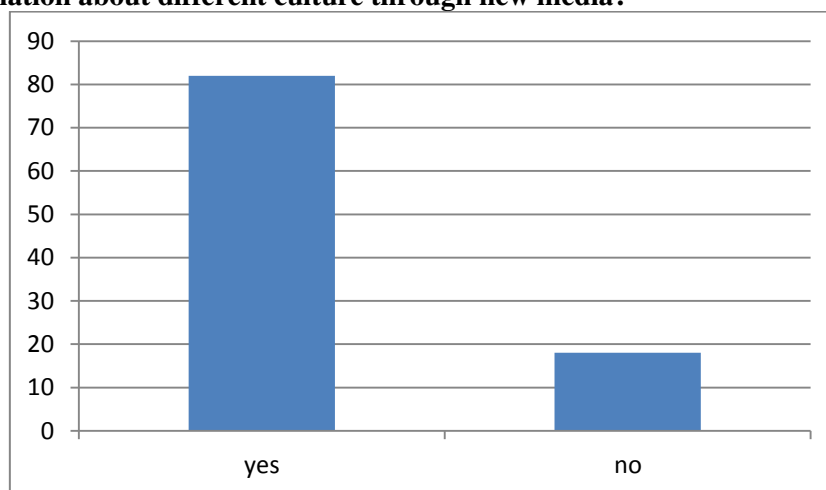
For collecting Primary data, the area chosen for this research is Assam and Bihar as these states having a diverse culture and ethnicity. For finding the results survey method is used. In this I have use questionnaire as a research tool. I administered my questionnaire to a sample of 100 respondents who are Post Graduate students of Tezpur University and Patna University. The population for this research is users of New Media. They were chosen through Purposive Sampling technique. Besides this, secondary data is also used for analyzing the context of multiculturalism and diversity posses in Assam and Bihar.

Data Interpretation and Analysis:

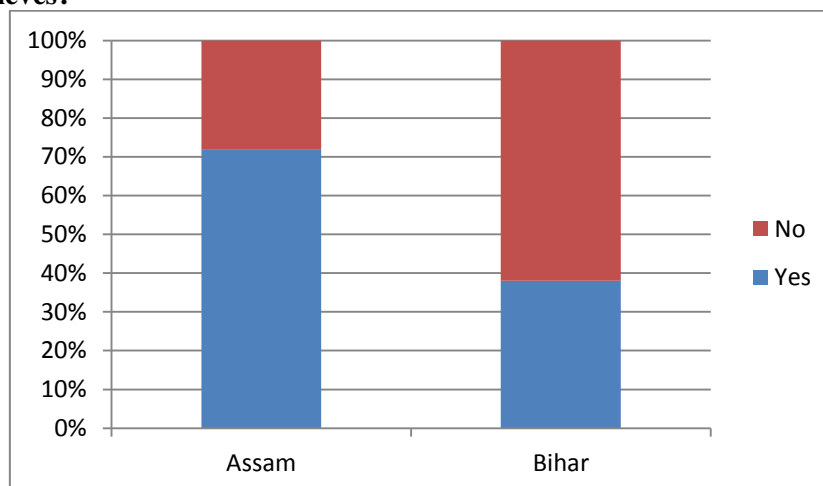
Q.1 Which form of new media you use most?

**Graph 1**

Graph1 shows that 87% people uses Social Networking Sites (SNS) and only 13% were used Blog. This means that SNS were more popular among youngster than Blog.

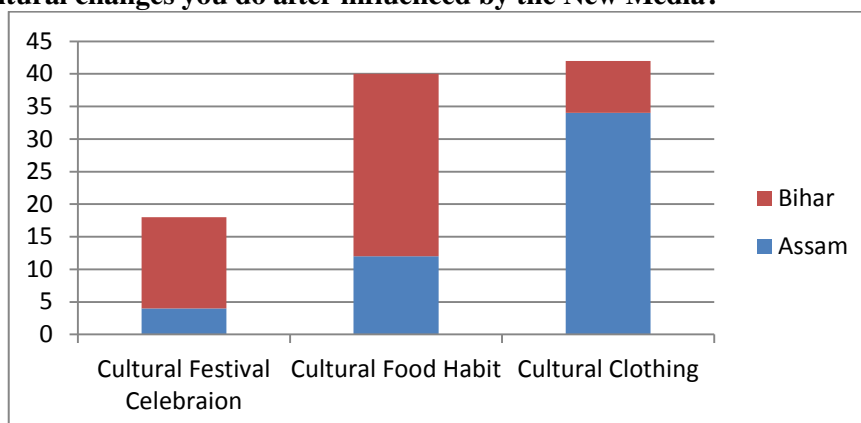
Q.2 Do you get information about different culture through new media?**Graph 2**

Graph 2 illustrates that 82% people were get information about different culture through new media but 18% people were not agree with this. This means that people may get information about different culture through other sources also. It is not only the New Media which disseminate information regarding culture.

Q.3 Is the information getting through new media influenced you to make decision about your cultural believes?**Graph 3**

Graph 3 shows that 36% people who belongs to Assam and 14% People who belongs to Bihar agrees with this. But 19% of Assam and 31% of Bihar disagrees. This shows that people of Assam gets more influenced by New media while taking their decision about cultural believes than the people of Bihar.

Q.4 What kind of cultural changes you do after influenced by the New Media?



Graph 4

Graph 4 illustrates that 4 % people who belongs to Assam and 14% people of Bihar agrees that they were get influenced by new media and make changes in their way of Cultural Festival Celebration. Changes seen in Food habit of 12% people of Assam and 28% people of Bihar where as 34% people of Assam and 8% people of Bihar make changes in their clothing habit after influenced by using New Media. This means that changes because of New Media is seen in both the state. But in Assam New Media influenced more to people for make changes in their clothing habit and in Bihar this influence of multiculturalism is seen in their food habit.

5. DISCUSSION:

One of the earliest modern uses of the term, multiculturalism derives from the adjective multicultural, in particular as used in the phrases ‘multicultural curriculum’, ‘multicultural education’, and multicultural society. The last term appears to give rise to the first two. What it denotes is a society in which there exist several cultures. The question of what precisely constitutes a culture is generally begged in this usage—though if pressed, those who use the phrase would probably speak of cultures as referring to a common language, a shared history, a shared set of religious beliefs and moral values, and a shared geographical origin, all of which taken together define a sense of belonging to a specific group (Watson, p. 1)². And with the rise of New Media the sense of belongingness to a particular group arouses. The distinct features of new media make easier way for converting the whole world into a “Global Village”. That’s why the interactions between “cultural diversity” and “new media” develop in a complex matrix, the salient points of which are set through the terms “culture”, “society”, “media” and “technology”. As far as “society” is concerned, the conditions of influence of social subsystems, the way organizations work and the interaction opportunities of individuals all change in connection with the transformation of their cultural foundations through the extensive use of new media. It is not the sum of the changes in all fields of interaction and life that is decisive but primarily also the changing relationship of penetration and delimitation between “life-world” and “systemic” references of communication and action.

6. CONCLUSION:

Globalization changes the situation of cultural diversity of India into multiculturalism to only some extent. But it is not fully transformed as a Melting Pot. The term, *melting pot* referred to the manner in which immigrants who came to the United States at the end of the ninetieth century were encouraged to think of themselves as Americans, gradually abandoning their cultures of origin until, as in the action of the melting pot, they eventually became fully a part of the bright new alloy. Through a process of assimilation, then, facilitated by the state, all develop into Americans sharing a single common culture. But the scenario of Bihar and Assam is not like this. The people of these states were not started to act as western society despite using the new media. This media changes their lifestyle culture but unable to transform it into a new western society.

² Watson, C.W. (2002) *Multiculturalism*. Buckingham : Open University Press.

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