

## Techno-promotional Dimensions of Mizo Blogs

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### Abstract

*The present paper focuses on the Mizo blogs and the technical aspects of their blogs. The first part of the article looks at the meaning of blogs. The second part of this article briefly analyzes the different kinds of software platform and the templates used by the Mizo bloggers. The study also highlights the ways in which Mizo bloggers promote their newly updated blogs. The kind of software and templates used would indicate the level of technical skills of the Mizo bloggers when it comes to blogging.*

**Keywords:** Mizo blogs, Mizo bloggers, software, templates and promotion.

### Introduction

The advent of digital technology and internet in the 21<sup>st</sup> century witnessed dramatic changes in the societal life and has created a positive impact on the societies. It made easy and convenient for the people to create their own content in various forms such as images, words, audio and video which can be in-housed through blogs. This is primarily intended to share their own resources, personal things to a specific and identified group of individuals or public in general those could be transmitted on Internet. It may be mentioned that before 10 years, only the technical people were capable of creating their own contents and maintain their own websites which however, has done away with due to proliferation of digital technologies and literacy among the societies especially among the young

groups in the society. They could further advance in the digital scenario to share with the recent emergence of free blogs service providers, various forms of self presentations and autobiographical writings have redefined the form of social media.

Somolu (2007) in her article explored how African women have embraced the blogging phenomenon, and how blogs can be used to promote women's equality and empowerment. One of the reasons frequently cited for a lack of interest by African women in information and communications technologies (ICTs) is the lack of content available that is relevant to their needs. Blogging provides a way for these women to become active creators and disseminators of knowledge, writing about what is important to them. Kitzmann (2003) viewed that blogs

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represent the emergence of the “modern individual self,” a claim that is also made with regard to the literary genre of autobiography. This represents the diary as ‘a place or medium in which the Self is at the centre of all meaning—the place from which the world is examined, interpreted, and remembered.’ Some bloggers find this very aspect of ‘broadcasting one’s private life’ as ‘powerful.’ There are awards for best writer, best design, best new journal etc. This is perhaps the ‘most extreme example’ of wanting to be ‘mediatised.’ Reed (2005) suggested the ability of individuals to produce texts free and easily on their weblog without the permission of an editor or publisher who may transform journalism and thus, democratise the current mainstream media environment. B.A., D.L (2005) in his thesis explored the patterns of blogging, blogging motivations, and the roles of motivations as well as demographics as predictors for blogging behaviours. He stated that there is a transition of people from being traditional message consumers to message producers. Names of influential bloggers start to show up on news stories and be mentioned by news anchors. He also observed that bloggers have complete control over content and form and that the only drawbacks are information technology and imagination.

## I

### **Definition of blog**

Barger (1997) coined the term “Weblog” on 17 December, 1997 and

Peter Merholz started popularizing the word ‘blog’ when he broke the term ‘Weblog’ into ‘we blog’ on his blog sidebar in 1999. People started using the word blog both as a noun and as a verb since then.

Blog has been defined in many ways and Wikipedia defines it as a website which is usually maintained by an individual or an institution with regular entries of commentary, descriptions of events, or other material such as graphics or video. Entries are commonly displayed in reverse-chronological order. Presently, it is used both as a noun and a verb, where the former refers to the content notes and the latter refers to the act of writing or editing weblogs. It got into the Webster dictionary in 2001. Blogger.com defines blog as a personal diary, daily pulpit, collaborative space, political soapbox, breaking-news outlet, collection of links and share private thoughts.

Trammell and Keshelashvili (2005) have defined ‘Blog’ as merely a nomenclature for a technology that allows people to communicate their ideas and experiences. A blog in its simplest form is a personal space on the internet. It is a collection of every day entries about the individual’s life and his or her opinions on various issues. It is an interactive medium where people leave comments on the posts. Thus, blog happens to be a platform primarily to provide information service, express thought and opinion, legitimize the expertise, and stay active in the knowledge domain.

Enzer, (2004) defined the activity of updating a blog as “blogging” and someone who keeps a blog as a “blogger”. Blogging is a relatively new phenomenon in cyberspace and it is one the fastest growing phenomenon among the users of Internet. Blogging has become one of the most significant facets of social media. A person can now become both a producer and consumer of media. It enables every individual’s information to be globally accessible. It is probably the personal touch of the author on various issues which makes them immensely popular. The very act of ownership gives a creative freedom to the author.

#### **Significance and Scope of the study:**

As the popularity of blogging is on the rise, blogs can become a great participatory tool for communication especially in today’s information society. Radloff (2004) has expressed that blogs provide arenas for discussion, dissent, and debate, which precipitate to knowledge, and a feeling of empowerment that is critical for social transformation and development. According to a country wide report published in 2012 by Open Society Foundations, the two of the Top 10 social media sites in India, as of 13 July 2011, are Blogspot, Wordpress.com and Wordpress.org which are all blog platforms. Blogspot has a total of 31,764,272 users in India. Wordpress.com has 8,743,508 and Wordpress.org has a total of 2,540,195 Internet users. (Mapping Digital Media: India, 2012)

The blogging phenomenon is widespread and even reaches remote places such as the North East of India and consequently among the Mizos. Blogging started becoming popular among the Mizos (mostly Non Resident Mizos) from around 2004. According to a blog directory made by Kima, a Mizo blogger who has more than 60,000 visitors since December 2004, more than 300 members have registered. There is no doubt that there are 50 or more which are not registered in the particular directory with new blogs being created every day. This global rising phenomenon has hit the small state of Mizoram with a population of 10.97 lakhs (2011 Census). We may mention that, on a worldwide scale, Technorati (2007), the most notable blog Internet search engine, tracks 70 million blogs, and records the creation of 120,000 new blogs internationally every day. There is an obvious need to pay closer attention to the trend of blogging and its impact on Mizo society as a whole and particularly on the youth and what it means to the communication process. The available literature also shows that there is a huge research gap regarding the techno-promotional dimensions of blogging among the Mizos.

#### **Objectives & Methodology**

This study employed Survey and Interview, quantitative and qualitative research methods respectively. Triangulation is a powerful technique that facilitates validation of data through cross verification from two or more sources. In

particular, it refers to the application and combination of several research methods in the study of the same phenomenon. Altrichter et al. (2008) contend that triangulation “gives a more detailed and balanced picture of the situation.” According to Denzin (1978), there are four types of triangulation and this Methodological triangulation involves using more than one method to gather data, such as interviews, observations, questionnaires, and documents.

A structured questionnaire relating to the study has been distributed to target population of 252 Mizo bloggers which is 75% out of the total number of 336 registered bloggers as on 16<sup>th</sup> April 2014, in the *Facebook* directory called Mizo Bloggers, residing both within and outside Mizoram, so as to make the study more transparent. A total of 177 bloggers have responded the questionnaire based on which findings have been derived and follow up questions which need more explanation were asked in the form of an interview with 20 bloggers selected by convenience.

The main objective for this particular study is to find out the different kinds of software platform used by the bloggers. The study also highlights the ways in which Mizo bloggers promote their newly updated blogs.

## II

### **Overview of Media in Mizoram**

Mizoram (21,087 sq. Km.) belongs to one of the north eastern states of India and

has the population of 10.97 lakhs according to the population census of 2011. The main form of media includes print (local newspapers and magazines), audio (radio), visual (local cable networks) and the internet. The media language is dominantly Mizo. The internet media is the most recent form of media in Mizoram. Its reach is still limited to the urban population. For instance, Aizawl, the capital of Mizoram set up the first cyber café “Sparkle” in November, 2000. Today, there are cyber cafés in almost all the localities in Aizawl. There are 26 community information centres run by the state government in Mizoram. These centres are equipped with internet facilities. BSNL is the main provider of internet, telecom and mobile connection. It has given out approximately 33265 broadband Internet connections till 2012 (Economic Survey Mizoram 2012-2013).

There has been an emerging trend in the state where local newspapers and magazines started incorporating the internet to post their online journals. There is a question as to why this trend has started in recent years. The reason may be to expand the readership to the cognate tribes living outside Mizoram. There are numerous Mizo websites that are registered online from Mizoram. At the same time, there are websites published by non resident Mizos (NRM). Their purpose may be to keep in touch with the issues concerning with their native place. In this process, blogging started becoming popular among the Mizo cyber community from around 2004.

## Techno-promotional Dimensions of Mizo Blogs

This particular study focused on the technical aspects of blogging activity by the Mizo bloggers. It is imperative to find out the different kinds of software platform used by the bloggers and the ways in which Mizo bloggers promote their newly updated blogs. For this study, an online structured questionnaire was developed with the help of Google Docs, free Google software for creating an online survey. The study finds that there are 119 male bloggers and 58 female bloggers from the total 177 respondents.

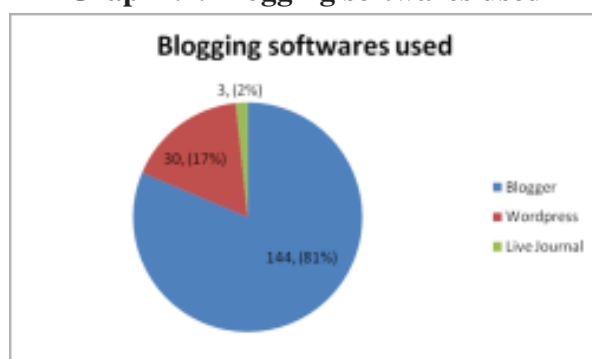
### 1. Blog softwares used

Table 1.1 mentions the types of blogging platform used by the Mizo bloggers. These mentioned blogging platform are all free of cost. There are six options given for the respondents to choose. The blogging softwares mentioned are Blogger, Wordpress, Live Journal, Typepad and Movable Type. The respondent also has the option of mentioning any other blogging software used which may not be in the given options. These software platforms are generally easy to use but every blogger has his or her own preferences depending on technical knowhow and ease of use.

**Table 1.1: Blog softwares used**

Sl.No	Name of Blogging software	No. Of bloggers	Percentage %
1	Blogger	144	81
2	Wordpress	30	17
3	Live Journal	3	2
4	Typepad	0	0
5	Movable Type	0	0
6	Other	0	0
		177	100

**Graph1.1. Blogging softwares used**



*Source : Computed*