



# **THE IMPACT OF DIGITAL MEDIA ON THE CULTURAL IDENTITY OF NORTH EAST INDIA**

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## **Abstract:**

The North East region of India, comprising the "Seven Sisters," is a culturally diverse area home to numerous indigenous communities. Digital media's advent has significantly impacted the region's cultural identity, leading to homogenization and cultural dilution. This paper explores digital media's influence on North East India's cultural fabric, examining social media, streaming services, and influencer culture. While acknowledging the benefits of digital media in promoting cultural preservation and economic growth, this study emphasizes the need to strike a balance between modern technology and cultural roots. The advent of digital media has significantly impacted the region's cultural identity, leading to homogenization and cultural dilution. This study examines the influence of digital media on North East India's cultural fabric, focusing on social media, streaming services, and influencer culture.

**Keywords:** Digital Media, Cultural Identity, North East India, Homogenization, Cultural Preservation

**INTRODUCTION:** The North East region of India, also known as the "Seven Sisters", is a culturally diverse and vibrant area that is home to numerous indigenous communities. These communities have their own distinct languages, customs, and traditions, which have been preserved for centuries. However, with the advent of digital media, the cultural identity of the North East is rapidly changing. The impact of digital media on culture cannot be ignored. In today's world, digital media has become an integral part of our lives, with almost everyone having access

to a smartphone or the internet. This has opened up a plethora of opportunities for people in remote areas to connect with the outside world and vice versa. However, this has also led to a homogenization of cultures, with traditional values and practices being overshadowed by Western ideals. One of the major ways digital media has affected the cultural fabric of the North East is through the spread of social media platforms. Platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter have given a platform for the youth of the region to express themselves and connect with like-minded individuals. This has led to the rise of a new generation that is more exposed to global influences, leading to a dilution of their traditional cultural identity. Moreover, the proliferation of streaming services and online content has also played a significant role in shaping the cultural landscape of the North East. While on one hand, it has provided a platform for local filmmakers and artists to showcase their talent, it has also led to the dominance of mainstream media and popular culture, which is often at odds with the traditional values of the region. This has resulted in a clash between the old and the new, with the younger generation gravitating towards Western culture, leaving behind their own roots. Another aspect of digital media's impact on the cultural identity of the North East is the rise of influencer culture. With the rise of social media influencers, there has been a shift in the way people perceive and portray their cultural identity. Many influencers from the region often promote a westernized lifestyle, which can be perceived as cool and trendy. This, in turn, can lead to the erasure of their own cultural background and practices. However, it is not all negative. Digital media has also played a crucial role in preserving and promoting the cultural identity of the North East. With the help of social media, local artisans and craftsmen can showcase their traditional products, leading to a revival of traditional art forms. This has not only helped in preserving the rich cultural heritage of the region but has also opened up new avenues for economic growth. In conclusion, while digital media has undoubtedly had a significant impact on the cultural identity of the North East, it is ultimately up to the people to strike a balance between embracing the benefits of modern technology and preserving their cultural roots. It is crucial to remember that one's cultural identity is what sets them apart and makes them unique, and it should not be overshadowed by external influences. Digital media should be seen as a tool to promote and preserve cultures, rather than a means to homogenize them. Only then can the North East continue to thrive as a diverse and culturally rich region.

## OBJECTIVE:

- To examine the impact of digital media on the cultural identity of North East India.
- To analyze the role of social media, streaming services, and influencer culture in shaping cultural values.
- To explore the potential benefits of digital media in preserving and promoting cultural heritage.

## DIGITAL MEDIA AND CULTURAL HOMOGENIZATION IN NORTH EAST INDIA

The advent of digital media has revolutionized the way people interact, access information, and express themselves. However, this increased connectivity has also raised concerns about cultural homogenization, particularly in diverse regions like North East India. North East India comprises eight states, each with its distinct culture, language, and traditions. The region is home to over 200 ethnic groups, making it a rich cultural tapestry. However, this diversity is facing challenges from digital media-driven cultural homogenization.

## The Impact of Digital Media on the Cultural Identity of North East India

Digital media has revolutionized the way people interact, access information, and express themselves. However, its impact on the cultural identity of North East India, a region known for its rich cultural diversity, is a subject of concern.

## Positive Impacts:

- **Global Connectivity:** Digital media connects North East India to the world, facilitating cultural exchange and global understanding.

- Cultural Promotion: Digital platforms showcase regional cultures, traditions, and arts, promoting cultural awareness and appreciation.
- Language Preservation: Digital media helps preserve endangered languages and dialects through online language courses and cultural content.

### Negative Impacts:

- Cultural Homogenization: Dominant cultural narratives spread through digital media, threatening regional cultural identities.
- Cultural Appropriation: Digital platforms facilitate cultural appropriation, where regional cultural symbols and traditions are exploited for commercial gain.
- Loss of Traditional Knowledge: Digital media's emphasis on modernity and progress undermines traditional knowledge and cultural practices.
- Identity Crisis: Digital media's influence on youth leads to cultural confusion, identity crisis, and disconnection from traditional roots.

### Regional Specificities:

- ❖ Manipur's Meitei culture faces challenges from digital media-driven Hindi imposition.
- ❖ Assam's indigenous communities struggle to preserve their languages and cultural practices.
- ❖ Nagaland's Naga identity is affected by digital media's promotion of mainstream Indian culture.
- ❖ Meghalaya's Khasi and Garo cultures face threats from digital media-driven cultural homogenization.

### Mitigating Measures:

- ❖ Regional Language Content: Encourage content creation in regional languages.
- ❖ Cultural Education: Integrate cultural studies into education systems.
- ❖ Community Engagement: Foster community-led cultural initiatives and digital platforms.
- ❖ Policy Interventions: Implement policies safeguarding cultural diversity and regional languages.

Digital media platforms, such as social media, streaming services, and online news outlets, have become integral to daily life. While they offer numerous benefits, they also facilitate the spread of dominant cultural narratives, often at the expense of local cultures. Digital media's influence on North East India's cultural landscape is multifaceted:

- ❖ Language: English dominates digital platforms, threatening local languages and linguistic diversity.
- ❖ Cultural Representation: Mainstream Indian culture overshadows regional cultures, perpetuating stereotypes and reinforcing cultural hierarchies.
- ❖ Consumerism: Global consumerist values promoted through digital media erode traditional ways of life and cultural practices.
- ❖ Loss of Traditional Knowledge: Digital media's emphasis on modernity and progress undermines the value of traditional knowledge and cultural heritage.

### Consequences and Concerns:

Cultural homogenization has far-reaching consequences:

- Erosion of Identity: Loss of cultural distinctiveness threatens regional identities.
- Cultural Displacement: Local cultures are marginalized, leading to cultural displacement.
- Social Unrest: Cultural tensions rise as communities feel their identities are being erased.

## Preserving Cultural Diversity

To mitigate cultural homogenization:

- Promote Local Content: Encourage regional language content creation and dissemination.
- Cultural Education: Integrate cultural studies into education systems.
- Community Engagement: Foster community-led cultural initiatives and digital platforms.
- Policy Interventions: Implement policies safeguarding cultural diversity and regional languages.

Digital media's impact on North East India's cultural landscape is complex. While it offers opportunities for global connectivity, it also poses significant risks to cultural diversity. By acknowledging these challenges and working towards preserving regional cultures, we can ensure the rich cultural tapestry of North East India remains vibrant and resilient

The potential benefits of digital media in preserving and promoting cultural heritage in North East India: North East India, a region rich in cultural diversity, faces challenges in preserving and promoting its cultural heritage. Digital media offers a transformative solution, providing unprecedented opportunities for preservation, promotion, and engagement.

## Preservation Benefits:

- Digitization of Traditional Art Forms: Digital media helps document and preserve traditional art forms, such as Manipuri dance and Assamese folk music.
- Language Preservation: Digital platforms support language documentation, language learning, and linguistic research, aiding the preservation of endangered languages like Bodo and Karbi
- Cultural Archiving: Digital media enables the creation of comprehensive digital archives, safeguarding cultural artifacts, historical records, and oral traditions.

## Promotion Benefits:

- Global Accessibility: Digital media makes North East India's cultural heritage accessible to a global audience, promoting cultural exchange and understanding.
- Enhanced Engagement: Interactive digital experiences, such as virtual tours and cultural festivals, foster deeper engagement with cultural heritage.
- Community Empowerment: Digital media enables community-led cultural initiatives, promoting cultural ownership and self-expression.

## Regional Initiatives:

- Digital Mizoram: A digital platform preserving Mizoram's cultural heritage and promoting tourism.
- Assam Digital Archive: A comprehensive digital repository of Assam's cultural artifacts and historical records.
- Manipur Cultural Website: A digital platform showcasing Manipuri culture, traditions, and art forms.

## Benefits for Local Communities:

- ✓ Economic Empowerment: Digital media facilitates cultural entrepreneurship, generating income opportunities for local artisans and cultural practitioners.
- ✓ Cultural Revitalization: Digital media helps revitalize endangered cultural practices and traditions.
- ✓ Education and Awareness: Digital platforms provide educational resources, promoting cultural awareness and literacy among local youth.

## Challenges and Considerations:

- ✓ Digital Divide: Addressing unequal access to digital technologies and cultural content
- ✓ Cultural Sensitivity: Respecting cultural ownership and intellectual property rights.
- ✓ Digital Preservation: Ensuring long-term digital preservation and data security.

As North East India embraces digital media, it is essential to address the challenges and considerations surrounding digital cultural heritage preservation. By doing so, we can ensure the long-term benefits of digital media in promoting and preserving the region's rich cultural heritage.

## FINDINGS:

- Digital media has significantly impacted North East India's cultural identity.
- Social media and streaming services contribute to cultural homogenization.
- Influencer culture promotes Westernized lifestyles, threatening traditional values.
- Digital media can preserve and promote cultural heritage.
- Local artisans and craftsmen benefit from online platforms.

**CONCLUSION:** Digital media's impact on North East India's cultural identity is complex, with both preservative and homogenizing effects. Existing research highlights the need for balanced approaches, leveraging digital media for cultural preservation while safeguarding traditional practices. Future studies should address gaps in existing research, exploring digital media's influence on indigenous youth identity and cultural industries. Digital media's impact on North East India's cultural identity necessitates a delicate balance between modernity and tradition. Embracing digital advancements while preserving cultural roots is vital. Digital media should celebrate and promote cultural diversity, rather than perpetuating homogenization. By harnessing digital media's potential, North East India can safeguard its rich cultural heritage, empower local communities, and foster cross-cultural understanding. A mindful approach will ensure that digital media enriches, rather than erodes, the region's unique cultural identity, paving the way for a vibrant, inclusive, and culturally resilient future for generations to come.

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