



The role of social media as information infrastructure for the integration and information practices of migrant communities

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Abstract

Background: Chin migration from Myanmar to Mizoram has intensified due to political instability. Understanding how displaced populations develop information practices and navigate information barriers through digital platforms addresses critical gaps in Library and Information Science (LIS) research within migration contexts.

Purpose: This study investigates information practices of Chin migrants in Aizawl, examining how social media platforms function as alternative information infrastructure supporting everyday life information seeking (ELIS), information literacy development, and participation in transnational information communities.

Methods: Convergent mixed-methods research employed questionnaire surveys of 256 Chin migrants (206 adolescents aged 13–18; 50 adults aged 19+) selected via purposive and snowball sampling across four Aizawl localities, supplemented by five semi-structured key informant interviews. Quantitative data were analyzed using SPSS; qualitative data underwent thematic analysis following Braun and Clarke's framework.

Results: YouTube (100%), WhatsApp (93%), and Instagram (88.8%) emerged as primary information sources among adolescents, functioning as hybrid information ecosystems. Social media facilitated information-mediated integration: 68.4% reported digital platforms enabled access to local cultural information, while 71% acquired Mizo cultural knowledge through informal digital channels. However, significant barriers persist, including limited information literacy competencies, constrained device access, misinformation exposure, and language-based exclusion.

Conclusions: Social media operates as alternative information infrastructure where migrants develop sophisticated information practices to navigate complex information landscapes under displacement conditions. Findings demonstrate how marginalized populations construct information resilience when formal institutions remain inaccessible. Effective information services for displaced populations require: recognition of social media as legitimate infrastructure; mobile-optimized multilingual resources; community-based information literacy instruction; and library-NGO-community partnerships addressing systemic access barriers.

Keywords:

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Everyday life information
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INTRODUCTION

Migration creates complex information needs requiring displaced populations to develop adaptive information practices to navigate unfamiliar information environments, access critical survival and settlement information, and construct information literacy competencies necessary for integration (Lloyd, 2017; Martzoukou & Burnett, 2018). From a Library and Information Science (LIS) perspective, understanding how migrants seek, evaluate, and utilize information across formal and informal sources addresses fundamental questions about information behavior under conditions of displacement, information access barriers faced by marginalized populations, and the role of digital technologies in transforming information landscapes (Fisher et al., 2016b). This study examines the information practices of Chin migrants from Myanmar in Aizawl, Mizoram, investigating how social media platforms function as alternative information infrastructure supporting everyday life information seeking (ELIS), information literacy development, and participation in transnational information communities that bridge heritage and host cultures.

Mizoram, situated in Northeast India, shares a 722-kilometer border with Myanmar and Bangladesh. Chin displacement to Mizoram has intensified since the 1990s due to political turmoil following the 1988 military takeover, with migration accelerating dramatically after the 2021 military coup. According to the 2011 census, international migrants in Mizoram numbered 15,370, with 76%

originating from Myanmar (Pautunthang, 2021). This migration phenomenon is facilitated by geographic proximity and shared ethnic identity between Chin and Mizo peoples, who share common social structures, traditions, and cultural practices (Zonunmawia, 2020). However, despite cultural affinity, Chin migrants face significant information challenges including language barriers limiting access to local information resources, limited formal education affecting information literacy competencies, economic precarity constraining device ownership and internet connectivity, and absence of culturally responsive information services from formal institutions such as libraries and government agencies (Lloyd, 2017).

Within the LIS framework, this study addresses critical gaps in understanding how marginalized migrant communities construct informal information infrastructures through social media platforms when formal information institutions fail to provide accessible, culturally appropriate information services. Existing migration research emphasizes socio-political and economic dimensions, with insufficient examination of information behavior, information literacy development, and everyday life information seeking (ELIS) practices among displaced populations, particularly in Global South contexts (Lloyd, 2017; Martzoukou & Burnett, 2018; Savolainen, 2016). This study contributes to LIS scholarship by investigating how migrants utilize digital platforms as information sources addressing diverse information needs (survival, integration, educational, heritage); how they develop information

literacy practices including source evaluation, credibility assessment, and information sharing strategies; how they participate in information communities spanning geographic and cultural boundaries; and what information barriers (technological, linguistic, economic, social) impede full information participation and integration.

Historically, migration across the Indo-Myanmar border was bidirectional; however, recent years have witnessed predominantly unidirectional movement, with increasing numbers of Chin from Sagaing Division and Chin State relocating to Mizoram. The majority fled Myanmar's military regime, characterized by severe ethnic and religious persecution. By the early 2000s, approximately 100,000 Chin—roughly ten percent of Mizoram's population—resided in the state (Mcconnachie, 2018). From an information perspective, undocumented status creates profound information vulnerability: migrants lack access to formal government information services, fear seeking information from official sources due to deportation risks, and rely heavily on informal information networks within migrant communities that may provide incomplete or inaccurate information (Fisher et al., 2016a; Oduntan & Ruthven, 2017). Despite shared ancestry between Mizo and Chin communities, migrants are often stigmatized as foreigners and blamed for social issues, creating hostile information environments where migrants experience information exclusion, encounter misinformation and stereotyping in local media and social discourse, and face barriers to participating in community information spaces (Lloyd,

2010; Martzoukou & Burnett, 2018).

From an information science perspective, technological advancements have fundamentally transformed how migrants access information, maintain transnational information networks, and develop information literacy competencies. Social media has become central to migration dynamics, offering real-time information access crucial for refugees and migrants navigating displacement, providing platforms for informal learning and cultural knowledge acquisition, and enabling participation in information communities that transcend geographic boundaries (Alencar et al., 2019; Borkert et al., 2018; Gillespie et al., 2018).

Beyond facilitating communication, digital platforms support information literacy development by enabling migrants to explore identity information, access educational resources through informal channels such as YouTube tutorials and online learning communities, develop critical evaluation skills through exposure to diverse information sources, and participate in collaborative information practices within peer networks (Díaz Andrade & Doolin, 2019; Martzoukou & Burnett, 2018; Udwan et al., 2020). During acculturation, migrants engage in everyday life information seeking (ELIS) to understand host country social norms, access practical settlement information, and construct coherent sense of identity bridging heritage and host cultures (Alam & Imran, 2015; Kutscher & Kreß, 2018).

From an LIS perspective, integration is fundamentally information-mediated: successful integration requires access to accurate, timely information about available

services and resources; development of information literacy competencies to navigate complex bureaucratic systems; participation in local information communities that provide social capital and practical knowledge; and ability to evaluate information credibility and identify misinformation (Oduntan & Ruthven, 2017). To facilitate integration while preserving access to heritage information, migrants utilize platforms like YouTube for native-language entertainment while gaining exposure to host country language and cultural information through the same platforms (Merisalo & Jauhiainen, 2020). This dual information practice reflects what Lloyd (2017) describes as “information resilience”—the capacity to navigate multiple information landscapes simultaneously, synthesize information from diverse cultural sources, and construct hybrid information practices that support transcultural identity formation. The interactive nature of these platforms supports collaborative information practices, collective meaning-making, and participation in communities of practice that span cultures and territories (Leurs & Smets, 2018; Lingel, 2015).

This study is theoretically grounded in Savolainen’s (2016, 2017) Everyday Life Information Seeking (ELIS) framework, which emphasizes how individuals seek and use information to solve everyday problems, maintain coherent life patterns, and construct sense of mastery over their environments. For migrants, everyday information needs encompass survival information, integration information, and identity maintenance information. Additionally, the study draws on Lloyd’s

(2010, 2017) information landscape and information literacy in practice concepts, which recognize that information exists across social, physical, and textual modalities, requiring individuals to develop situated information literacy practices appropriate to specific contexts. From a network perspective, this research applies Castells’s (2023) Network Society theory, which highlights how information flows within digital networks shape social integration, resource access, and identity formation in contemporary societies.

This research addresses the following objectives grounded in LIS theory and practice: (1) to examine the information-seeking patterns, information source preferences, and platform usage behaviors of Chin migrants across age groups; (2) to analyze how social media platforms support migrants in accessing different types of information and maintaining transnational information networks; (3) to investigate the extent to which social media contributes to information-mediated integration; (4) to explore the role of social media in preserving cultural identity through access to heritage information resources; and (5) to identify information barriers that impede full information participation and gather qualitative insights into personal integration experiences.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study investigates the information practices and information-seeking behavior of Chin migrants in Mizoram, specifically examining how social media platforms function as information infrastructure supporting diverse information needs

related to integration, cultural maintenance, and everyday life. The research design employs a convergent mixed-methods approach, integrating quantitative survey data with qualitative interview insights to provide comprehensive understanding of migrants' information experiences, information literacy development, and participation in formal and informal information networks (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). This methodological approach aligns with established LIS research traditions that recognize the value of combining numerical data on information behaviors with rich qualitative accounts of lived information experiences.

A survey was conducted among 256 migrants residing in Ramhlun South, Zuangtui, Bethlehem Vengthlang, and Mualpui localities of Aizawl. Responses were obtained from 206 adolescents (aged 13–18) and 50 adults (aged 19 and above). The sample composition reflects the demographic reality of recent Chin migration patterns, where younger populations constitute the majority of recent arrivals following the 2021 Myanmar military coup. This demographic distribution has implications for information practices, as younger migrants typically demonstrate higher digital literacy, greater comfort with social media platforms, and different information needs compared to older migrants (Martzoukou & Burnett, 2018). However, this uneven age distribution introduces potential sampling bias, as adult perspectives—particularly those of older adults who may face greater information barriers—may be underrepresented.

The 256 migrants were selected using purposive sampling complemented by

snowball sampling structure. Purposive sampling is a non-probability sampling method appropriate for research focusing on specific populations with specialized knowledge or experiences—in this case, Chin migrants navigating information challenges in a displacement context (Tongco, 2007). Snowball sampling complements this by leveraging social networks to reach additional participants, particularly valuable for accessing hard-to-reach or marginalized populations. While these sampling methods are appropriate for exploratory research with hidden populations, the researchers recognize inherent limitations including potential bias toward more digitally connected individuals, possible exclusion of isolated migrants lacking social connections or digital access, and limited statistical generalizability beyond the study context.

Utilizing these sampling methods, researchers first consulted with student leaders and NGO representatives working with Chin communities, who function as trusted information intermediaries and community gatekeepers. This approach aligns with information grounds theory (Evangelista & Hasan, 2021) which recognizes that community organizations serve as critical sites where information exchange occurs naturally within social interaction. These intermediaries subsequently introduced researchers to various student and NGO WhatsApp groups, which function as digital information grounds where community members share information, coordinate activities, and provide mutual support (Evangelista & Hasan, 2021; Udwan et al., 2020). An online questionnaire was

distributed through these groups to reach dispersed individuals.

The questionnaire was developed using Google Forms in English, structured around four key information domains grounded in LIS theory: (1) demographic and migration background information; (2) social media access patterns, device ownership, and platform usage behaviors; (3) information-seeking behavior, information needs, information source preferences, and information evaluation practices; and (4) perceived role of social media in information-mediated integration, cultural identity maintenance, information literacy development, and participation in transnational information communities. The instrument included both closed-ended questions (Likert scales, multiple choice questions) and open-ended questions to capture nuanced information experiences, barriers, and strategies that quantitative measures alone cannot reveal.

The questionnaire design was informed by established LIS frameworks, including Savolainen's (2016, 2017) ELIS model, Lloyd's (2017) information literacy in practice approach, and Fisher et al.'s (2004) information grounds theory. Questions elicited information about types of information sought across different life domains, information sources used, information evaluation practices, information sharing behaviors, and barriers to information access. Prior to distribution, the questionnaire was pilot-tested with five Chin migrants representing different age groups and migration experiences to ensure clarity, cultural appropriateness, and linguistic comprehension. Minor revisions were made based on pilot feedback.

The questionnaire included a formal declaration explaining that the survey was for academic research purposes only, that participation was voluntary, that responses would be kept confidential, and that data would be used solely for research analysis and publication. Informed consent was obtained from all participants through explicit agreement before proceeding. For adolescent participants aged 13-17, given practical challenges of reaching parents and the sensitive nature of migration status, verbal assent was obtained from adolescent participants themselves, with oversight and approval from community leaders, NGO representatives, and church officials who serve in loco parentis roles within the Chin migrant community. All participants were informed of their rights, and participation was entirely voluntary with no incentives that might constitute coercion.

The study also sought to explore migrants' information experiences through five semi-structured interviews with key informants purposively selected to represent diverse perspectives: adolescent migrants, adult migrants with longer residence duration, NGO leaders, student leaders, and social workers. Interviews focused on everyday information practices, information challenges and barriers, role of social media in accessing information, information literacy development, strategies for navigating information landscapes, and participation in information communities. Interviews were conducted in participants' preferred language (Chin, Mizo, or English), audio-recorded with permission, and transcribed for analysis.

Data were collected over a four-month period between January and April 2024.

Qualitative data were subjected to thematic analysis following Braun & Clarke’s (2019) six-phase framework. Coding focused explicitly on information-related themes including information sources, information needs, information barriers, information literacy practices, and information community participation. Inter-coder reliability was established through independent coding by two researchers of a subset of transcripts, with discrepancies resolved through discussion.

Quantitative data were analyzed descriptively using SPSS software version 25. Descriptive statistics (frequencies, percentages, means, standard deviations) were calculated for demographic variables, social media usage patterns, information source preferences, and integration indicators. Cross-tabulations were performed to examine relationships between age groups, duration of residence, educational attainment, and information-seeking behaviors. The integration of qualitative and quantitative data occurred at the interpretation stage, where themes from interviews were used to contextualize and explain survey findings, providing deeper understanding of statistical patterns through lived information experiences (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Among the 206 adolescent respondents, 112 (54.4%) were male and 94 (45.6%) were female. Notably, 85 respondents (41.3%) had resided in Aizawl for one to three years, while 40 (19.4%) had been present for less than one year. This temporal distribution indicates that the majority migrated following the 2021 military coup in Myanmar, representing a population in early stages of navigating unfamiliar information landscapes and developing information literacy competencies necessary for integration. From an LIS perspective, duration of residence correlates significantly with information familiarity, development of local information networks, knowledge of available information resources and services, and ability to evaluate information credibility within the local context (Lloyd, 2017; Savolainen, 2016). Recent arrivals face more acute information needs across all domains—survival information for immediate settlement, integration information for cultural adaptation, and practical information for navigating daily life—while simultaneously experiencing greater information barriers due to limited local knowledge, undeveloped social

Table 1. Research Informant Data

No.	Initials	Role in Research	Code in Article
1.	LH	Chin Migrant, Adolescent	Informant 1
2.	RK	Chin Migrant, Adult	Informant 2
3.	VM	Chin NGO Leader	Informant 3
4.	TZ	Chin Student	Informant 4
5.	PS	Social Worker	Informant 5

Source: Research Data, 2024

networks, and unfamiliarity with local information systems (Fisher et al., 2016b; Martzoukou & Burnett, 2018; Oduntan & Ruthven, 2017).

Among the 50 adult respondents, 58% (29) were female and 42% (21) were male. The largest age group was 21–30 years (36%), followed by those aged 51 and above (22%). Regarding educational attainment—a critical factor influencing information literacy competencies, digital skills, and capacity to navigate complex information systems—66% of adult respondents (33 out of 50) reported middle school qualification or less. This limited formal education background has profound implications for information access and information practices, as it affects language proficiency necessary for accessing information resources in Mizo or English, digital literacy skills required for effectively using online information sources, critical evaluation competencies for assessing information credibility and identifying misinformation, ability to navigate complex bureaucratic information systems, and confidence in seeking information from formal institutional sources (Lloyd, 2017; Martzoukou & Burnett, 2018). Educational limitations create structural information disadvantages that compound displacement challenges, requiring migrants to rely heavily on informal information networks, peer information sharing, and trial-and-error learning rather than formal information services.

Economic data showed that 72% of respondents earned between ₹7,000–15,000 monthly, and 64% were married. These demographic findings characterize the Chin migrant population in Aizawl

as predominantly young, possessing relatively low formal education levels, and experiencing economic precarity—factors that fundamentally constrain their information access infrastructure and create conditions of information poverty (Alam & Imran, 2015; Merisalo & Jauhiainen, 2020). Economic constraints limit ability to purchase devices necessary for digital information access, maintain stable internet connectivity required for consistent online information seeking, afford data plans for mobile internet access, and access fee-based information resources or services. This demographic profile establishes the context for understanding information practices: Chin migrants must develop resourceful, adaptive information-seeking strategies within significant structural constraints, relying on free or low-cost information sources, shared devices, community information intermediaries, and informal information networks to meet their information needs.

YouTube emerged as the universal information platform among Chin migrant adolescents in Aizawl, achieving 100% usage. From an information behavior perspective, this absolute adoption reflects YouTube's role as a primary gateway for multimodal information access—combining visual, auditory, and textual information modalities that reduce language barriers, support informal learning through demonstration and observation, and provide culturally relevant content in both heritage and host languages (Lloyd, 2017; Yafi et al., 2018). For populations navigating linguistic transitions and developing language competencies in a new environment, video-based information sources provide

contextual cues, visual demonstrations, and nonverbal communication that text-based resources cannot offer, making YouTube particularly valuable for learning practical skills through tutorial videos, understanding cultural practices through observation of performances and rituals, accessing entertainment information in heritage languages that maintains cultural connection, learning host language through exposure to local content, and informal education through educational channels covering diverse topics (Díaz Andrade & Doolin, 2019; Fisher et al., 2016a).

Following closely, WhatsApp was identified as the second most utilized platform at 93%, functioning not merely as a social communication application but as critical information infrastructure for maintaining transnational information networks with family members remaining in Myanmar and building local information communities in Aizawl that provide practical information, social support, and cultural connection (Alencar et al., 2019; Borkert et al., 2018). WhatsApp's group messaging features enable participation in information-sharing communities organized around churches, schools, neighborhoods, ethnic associations, and NGOs—creating what Lloyd et al. (2013) term “information grounds” where information exchange occurs naturally within social interaction rather than through formal information-seeking episodes. These digital information grounds serve multiple functions: sharing practical information about housing, employment, and services; coordinating community activities and events; providing emotional support and advice; disseminating news

from Myanmar; and facilitating collective problem-solving around shared challenges.

Instagram followed at 88.8% (183 respondents), reflecting Generation Z's preference for mobile-first, visually immersive platforms for social networking, identity expression, and monitoring contemporary trends in both heritage and host cultures. In stark contrast, Snapchat was utilized by only 32% (66 respondents), indicating that its ephemeral messaging model lacks functional resonance for populations requiring persistent information access, archival communication records for reference, and ability to revisit information multiple times for comprehension and learning. Notably, X (formerly Twitter) and Facebook were least utilized among adolescents, at 28.2% and 16% respectively. The marginalization of Facebook among younger cohorts suggests a significant generational shift in information platform preferences, where Facebook is perceived as a legacy space for older demographics rather than a relevant information source for youth. This finding has important implications for information service design and outreach: interventions targeting adolescent migrants should prioritize YouTube, WhatsApp, and Instagram rather than assuming Facebook dominance, while services for adult migrants may appropriately emphasize Facebook given different generational preferences (Martzoukou & Burnett, 2018).

Regarding intensity of information engagement, the majority of respondents reported spending between one to four hours daily on these platforms. In the LIS framework, this intensive usage indicates that social media serves as a “hybrid

information ecosystem” (Lloyd, 2017) where boundaries between formal and informal information, entertainment and education, social connection and information seeking, and heritage and host culture information are fluid and overlapping. These digital spaces transcend mere recreation, functioning as primary sources for informal education through tutorial videos and peer information exchange, social bridging through connections with Mizo peers and local institutions, cultural information access including both Chin heritage content and Mizo cultural information, practical information about services and opportunities, and emotional support through maintenance of transnational family connections (Alencar, 2018; Udwan et al., 2020).

Survey results confirmed a multidimensional information motivation structure grounded in diverse information needs: (1) affective information needs—

maintaining emotional connection through familial communication, accessing heritage culture information that supports identity maintenance, and participating in supportive community networks; (2) cognitive information needs—accessing educational information via online tutorials, study groups, and skill development content; and (3) integrative information needs—acquiring host culture knowledge, local event information, social norms understanding, and practical settlement information that facilitate adaptation and integration (Savolainen, 2016). This multidimensional information behavior describes as “everyday life information seeking” (ELIS), where information practices are embedded in daily routines, serve multiple simultaneous purposes, and are shaped by life circumstances, social networks, and habitual patterns rather than formal information system design.

These findings align with research by

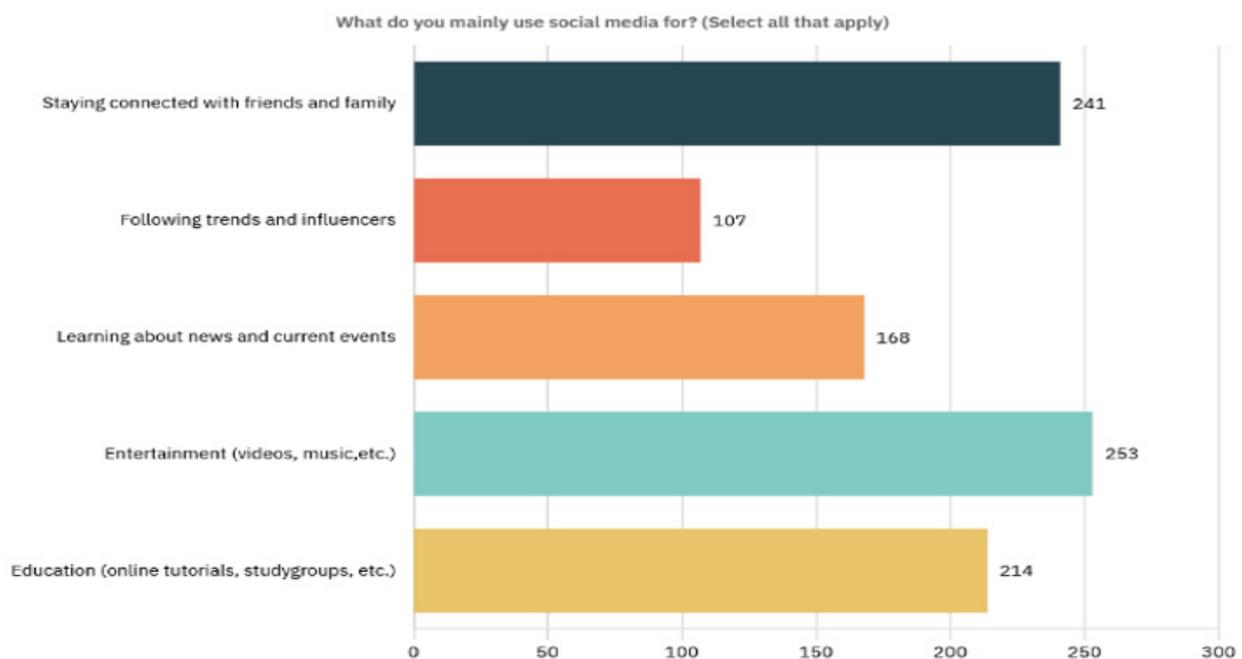


Figure 1. Purpose of social media usage among adolescent Chin Migrants in Aizawl

Source: Result research, 2024

Veronis et al. (2018) on Syrian refugees in Canada, who observed that young refugees strategically utilize social media to construct “transcultural information spaces” essential for resettlement, where they maintain connections to heritage information while simultaneously accessing host culture information and building new social networks. This study confirms that for Chin migrants in Aizawl, digital platforms serve as sophisticated tools for negotiating displacement complexities through strategic information access and exchange across multiple cultural contexts. In the LIS context, these patterns reflect highly complex information-seeking behaviors where migrants must skillfully navigate fragmented information landscapes comprising diverse formal and informal information sources, evaluate information credibility across cultural contexts, synthesize sometimes contradictory information from different sources, and develop adaptive information practices to satisfy multifaceted needs under conditions of uncertainty and limited resources (Lloyd, 2017; Martzoukou & Burnett, 2018).

Quantitatively, the impact on information-mediated integration is significant: 64.1% of respondents agreed that social media directly supports their integration into Mizoram through provision of local cultural information essential for understanding social norms and expectations, practical settlement information about services and resources, and social connection opportunities with both Mizo peers and other Chin migrants. This digital information mediation is further evidenced by the 71% (146 respondents) who reported learning about Mizo cultural

practices, social norms, and etiquette through digital information channels rather than formal institutional sources—including YouTube videos demonstrating traditional dances and cultural practices, Facebook posts about local festivals and their significance, Instagram content showcasing contemporary Mizo youth culture, and WhatsApp messages from peers explaining community expectations and appropriate behaviors (Borkert et al., 2018; Veronis et al., 2018).

This reinforces conceptualization of social media as a primary agent in information-mediated integration, where access to cultural information through informal digital channels facilitates adaptation and reduces cultural friction in daily interactions. However, this information-based integration is not characterized by total abandonment of heritage information access or cultural assimilation. The fact that 85% of respondents continue to actively follow social media accounts related to native Chin culture suggests that adolescent migrants engage in sophisticated “information multitasking” across cultural contexts (Lloyd, 2017). They simultaneously seek to maintain access to heritage information and “bonding informational capital” that connects them to cultural roots and family networks, while building “bridging informational capital” through access to host culture information and connections with Mizo peers that support adaptation to host environments, and develop “transcultural information literacy” that enables navigation of multiple cultural information systems and synthesis of diverse cultural knowledge into coherent hybrid identities.

This dual-track information behavior allows creation of hybrid identities, where the digital realm acts as a safe space for transcultural information experimentation, identity negotiation, and construction of belonging that bridges rather than chooses between heritage and host cultures.

Data from adult respondents (Figure 2) mirrored these general trends but highlighted important generational shifts in information platform preferences, usage patterns, and information practices. Adults utilized social media primarily for maintaining transnational family information networks through regular communication with relatives in Myanmar and accessing entertainment information in heritage languages. Notably, all adult respondents accessed social media exclusively via mobile phones, eschewing laptops or desktops. This mobile-only information access pattern is attributable to smartphone affordability relative to

computers, perceived utility and portability of mobile devices, and lack of computer literacy skills among populations with limited formal education. However, mobile-only access also constrains information practices in significant ways—limiting ability to engage with complex information resources requiring larger screens and full keyboards, restricting content creation to simple formats, preventing use of productivity applications that support formal learning or employment, and creating dependence on mobile-optimized information sources that may not include comprehensive or authoritative resources (Alam & Imran, 2015).

Among adults, 90% (45 respondents) viewed Facebook as the most effective communication and information tool, contrasting sharply with adolescent preference for more diverse platform portfolios emphasizing YouTube and Instagram. This generational discrepancy

How much do you agree with the following statements? Social media helps me feel connected to people from my native culture.

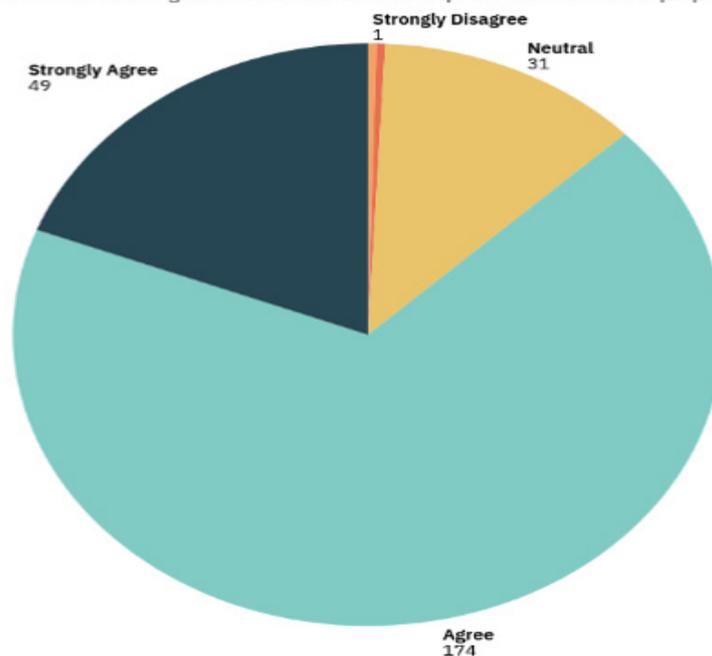


Figure 2 Chin Migrants' perception of the role of social media in cultural connection and integration

Source: Result research, 2024

reflects evolution of the social media information ecosystem over time, with different age cohorts adopting platforms that were dominant during their formative years, and underscores importance of age-based segmentation in studies of information-seeking behavior and in design of information services (Martzoukou & Burnett, 2018).

The majority of respondents demonstrated high social engagement, actively participating in local community structures including church congregations and Mizo Youth Association (YMA) activities within their respective localities. From an information perspective, such institutional acceptance is significant because these organizations serve as vital information intermediaries—providing practical settlement information about housing, employment, and services; facilitating social connections that build informational social capital; offering cultural orientation that formal government services often do not provide; and creating information grounds where migrants can ask questions, share experiences, and learn from peers in supportive environments (Lloyd, 2017). Churches and community organizations function as trusted information sources that compensate for migrants' limited access to formal information institutions and their hesitancy to seek information from government sources due to documentation concerns.

However, the economic landscape remains challenging; employment is predominantly concentrated in informal sectors such as traditional weaving, construction labor, domestic work, and subsistence trade of Burmese goods.

This economic precarity has direct and profound implications for information access: limited income constrains device ownership to basic smartphones rather than more capable devices, restricts internet connectivity to intermittent mobile data rather than stable broadband, limits data plans forcing selective information seeking to conserve data, and reduces time available for information seeking beyond immediate survival needs as migrants work long hours in informal employment (Alam & Imran, 2015; Merisalo & Jauhiainen, 2020). This economic necessity has forced some children to discontinue formal education to contribute to household income through employment. From an information perspective, educational discontinuation represents multiple lost opportunities: formal information literacy instruction that schools provide, institutional information access through school libraries and computer labs, peer information networks that support integration, and development of critical evaluation skills through academic training.

Qualitative evidence strongly supports these observations. One informant articulated the necessity of these information tools for psychological and social survival: "Social media is vital for us. Through Facebook and WhatsApp, we stay connected with family in Myanmar and receive news from home, but we also learn about Mizo culture and what is happening here. Joining local WhatsApp groups helps us feel part of the community and know about events and opportunities" (Informant 1, Interviewed, February 15, 2024). This sentiment highlights how platforms like WhatsApp act as "digital information

anchors” for displaced populations, providing both emotional connection through family communication and practical information through community group participation, while simultaneously supporting integration through access to local information and social connection opportunities (Borkert et al., 2018).

Another participant focused on multimedia information’s role in linguistic acculturation and cultural learning: *“YouTube helps me learn the Mizo language through songs and dances. I can watch videos many times until I understand. It makes me feel more comfortable at school because I know some of the culture”* (Informant 4, Interviewed, March 22, 2024). By engaging with local popular culture information through accessible video formats, the migrant adolescent reduces “information friction” encountered in daily institutional settings like schools, where cultural knowledge gaps can create social barriers, misunderstandings, and educational challenges. This informal information-based language learning complements or substitutes for formal instruction that may be unavailable or inaccessible, demonstrating how migrants leverage available information resources creatively to address learning needs when formal educational services are inadequate (Lloyd, 2017; Martzoukou & Burnett, 2018).

Despite manifest benefits of digital information connectivity, informants identified systemic information barriers that significantly impede integration processes and limit full information participation. A primary obstacle is pronounced lack of digital literacy among older migrants—the skills necessary to effectively access,

evaluate, and utilize digital information resources including basic device operation, application navigation, search strategies, and critical evaluation of online information (Martzoukou & Burnett, 2018). This digital literacy gap, coupled with limited device access due to economic constraints, creates internal information divide within the community, where younger, more digitally competent members serve as “information intermediaries” for older family members, translating, locating, and interpreting information on their behalf. While this intergenerational information brokering provides some access, it also limits older adults’ information autonomy, creates dependence on younger family members’ availability and willingness to assist, filters information through intermediaries’ perspectives and priorities, and prevents development of independent information literacy competencies.

Reliance on shared hardware—often a single smartphone for an entire household—restricts consistent information access, limits individual capacity to pursue personal information needs independently, creates competition for device use among family members, and prevents simultaneous information seeking by multiple household members. This technological bottleneck is further exacerbated by intersection of low formal education, limited income preventing device acquisition and internet connectivity, and lack of digital skills training opportunities (Alam & Imran, 2015).

Beyond technical constraints, the socio-digital information environment presents its own significant challenges. Informants expressed profound distress

over occasional negative discourse regarding migrants on social media platforms, where sensationalized reporting of crimes or social problems often leads to stigmatization of entire Chin population. One informant emphasized that “*informational social capital*” that migrants attempt to build through digital engagement (Informant 3, Interviewed, March 10, 2024). This hostile information environment creates what Lloyd (2017) terms “information exclusion,” where marginalized groups are discouraged from participating in information communities and accessing information resources due to discrimination and stigmatization.

Furthermore, proliferation of misinformation and “fake news” within digital information spaces poses significant challenges for migrant populations with limited information literacy competencies, increasing community anxiety through false rumors about immigration enforcement or policy changes, distorting public perception of migrants through inaccurate or sensationalized information, and creating confusion about important settlement information such as legal rights, available services, and policy changes (Informant 5, Interviewed, April 5, 2024). Migrants often lack information literacy skills necessary to critically evaluate information credibility, identify misinformation through source verification and cross-checking, recognize bias and agenda in information sources, and verify information from authoritative sources—skills that are essential for navigating complex digital information landscapes but are rarely taught to populations with limited formal education (Martzoukou & Burnett, 2018).

Linguistic nuances also serve as persistent information barriers; although Mizo and Chin languages share common roots and some mutual intelligibility, subtle differences in vocabulary, syntax, and idiomatic expressions on platforms like Facebook often result in critical misunderstandings of important information. Additionally, much local information—including government announcements, service information, educational resources, and employment opportunities—is available only in Mizo or English, creating language-based information exclusion for those with limited proficiency in these languages. This linguistic barrier is particularly acute for older migrants and recent arrivals who have not yet developed language competencies, effectively excluding them from formal information systems and creating dependence on informal translation and interpretation by bilingual community members (Lloyd et al., 2013).

These findings are interpreted through Savolainen’s (2016, 2017) Everyday Life Information Seeking (ELIS) framework and Lloyd’s, (2010, 2017) information landscape and information literacy in practice theories, and Castells’s (2023) Network Society theory. Social media has created what Castells describes as “spaces of information flows” allowing Chin migrants to maintain homeland information connections through transnational digital networks while simultaneously building new information networks in Aizawl that support integration and adaptation. In LIS terms, this extends understanding of information-seeking behavior in migration contexts beyond simple information

retrieval to recognize that information seeking is not merely a practical act of locating specific facts, but a fundamental tool for identity construction, cultural negotiation, and navigation of complex transcultural landscapes; information practices are deeply embedded in social relationships and community participation rather than individual cognitive processes; and information literacy develops through situated practice within communities rather than abstract skill acquisition (Andrade & Doolin, 2019)

The study demonstrates that information practices are fundamentally social and situated within specific cultural, economic, and material contexts rather than universal or context-independent. Migrants develop information literacy not primarily through formal instruction in library or classroom settings, but through everyday practice of navigating information challenges, learning from community members through observation and participation, adapting strategies to available resources and constraints, and building information resilience through repeated experience. (Oduntan & Ruthven, 2017). This “information resilience” enables survival and adaptation despite significant structural constraints, demonstrating human capacity for creative problem-solving and adaptive learning under adverse conditions.

From a library and information service perspective, these findings suggest that traditional service models focused on physical collections, in-person reference services, and facility-based programs may be insufficient or inappropriate for displaced populations who rely primarily

on mobile digital information access, lack transportation or documentation to visit physical library facilities, require multilingual services that most libraries do not provide, need culturally responsive services delivered by trusted intermediaries, and seek practical survival and integration information rather than recreational reading or academic research support. There is critical need for reconceptualizing library and information services for migrant populations through: (1) developing mobile-optimized information resources and services accessible via smartphones that migrants already use; (2) providing multilingual information provision in Chin, Mizo, and English to address language barriers; (3) delivering community-based information literacy programs through trusted intermediaries like churches and NGOs rather than library facilities; (4) creating partnerships between libraries and community organizations to create inclusive information spaces where migrants feel welcome; and (5) recognizing social media as legitimate information infrastructure requiring professional curation, evaluation support, and critical literacy instruction rather than dismissing it as recreational or inferior to traditional information sources (Martzoukou & Burnett, 2018; Oduntan & Ruthven, 2017).

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that social media functions as critical alternative information infrastructure enabling Chin migrants in Aizawl to navigate displacement complexities through strategic information access and participation in transnational

information communities that bridge heritage and host cultures. YouTube, WhatsApp, and Instagram serve as primary platforms through which migrants simultaneously maintain connections to Chin cultural heritage while acquiring essential knowledge about Mizo society, enabling them to access settlement information, learn host-culture norms through informal channels, and construct hybrid transcultural identities rather than abandoning their cultural roots for complete assimilation. The research reveals that migrants develop sophisticated information practices characterized by multitasking across cultural contexts, critical evaluation of diverse sources despite limited formal instruction, and strategic information sharing within community networks that builds collective resilience under conditions of displacement and economic precarity. However, significant barriers persist including limited digital literacy particularly among older migrants, economic constraints restricting device ownership and connectivity, language exclusion from resources available only in Mizo or English, exposure to misinformation without adequate critical evaluation competencies, and hostile online discourse that stigmatizes the community and discourages participation in local digital spaces. These findings extend Library and Information Science theory by demonstrating how marginalized populations construct information resilience through everyday practices when formal institutions remain inaccessible, highlighting the fundamentally social, situated, and practice-based nature of information literacy development.

The study underscores that traditional library service models are insufficient for displaced populations and require fundamental reconceptualization to embrace mobile-optimized multilingual resources, recognize social media as legitimate information infrastructure, deliver community-based literacy programs through trusted intermediaries, and address systemic barriers through multi-sector collaboration, positioning information access as a fundamental dimension of social justice and human rights essential for enabling full participation in diverse and digitally mediated societies. This study has limitations including uneven age distribution with adolescents overrepresented, non-probability sampling limiting generalizability, potential underrepresentation of the most isolated migrants, cross-sectional design capturing practices at a single point rather than tracking evolution over time, and context-specific factors that may limit transferability to other settings. Future research should address these through longitudinal studies tracking information practice evolution throughout integration, comparative research across different migrant populations and contexts, intergenerational studies examining age-related differences, intervention research evaluating service effectiveness, focused investigation of the most marginalized migrants, and participatory action research involving migrants as co-researchers to ensure culturally appropriate and empowering service design.

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Author Contributions

Conceptualization, L, R.K, and R.V; Data curation, R.K; Formal analysis, L, and R.K; Investigation, L and R.K; Methodology, L; Project administration, R.K and L; Resources, L. and R.K; Supervision, R.K. and R.V; Visualization, L; Writing - original draft, L, R.K. and R.V; Writing - review & editing, L and R.V. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

AI Declaration

The authors declare that artificial intelligence (AI) tools, such as ChatGPT (OpenAI) and Gemini, were used solely to assist with language editing, grammar correction, and improving the clarity of the manuscript, and were not involved in the study design, data collection, analysis, interpretation, or generation of scientific conclusions; all AI-assisted content was carefully reviewed and validated by the authors, who take full responsibility for the integrity and accuracy of the work.

Data Availability Statement

The data is available by request to the author.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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