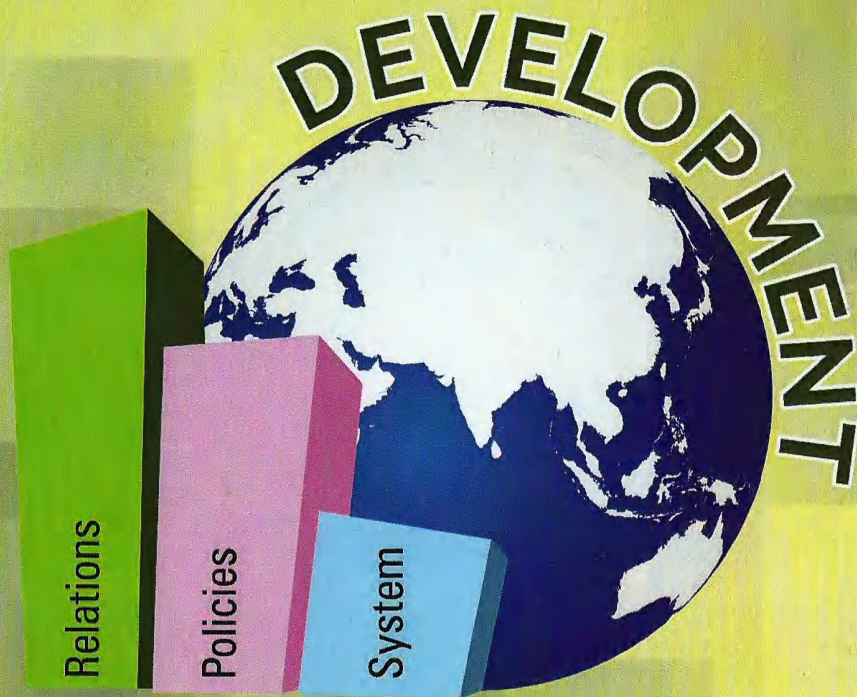


# Development of Economies

Relations, Policies & System



Dr Kanwaljit Kaur  
Shad Ahmad Khan

# **DEVELOPMENT OF ECONOMIES**

**Relations, Policies and System**

**Editors**

Dr. Kanwaljit Kaur

Shad Ahmad Khan

**Madaan Publishing House**

**Patiala**

# **DEVELOPMENT OF ECONOMIES: Relations, Policies and System**

## **Editors**

Dr. Kanwaljit Kaur & Shad Ahmad Khan

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others evaluate the policies, on ecology, education, rural development, agriculture and defend it as a basic of growth.

Overall, the papers advocate that not only the economy should grow but also it should grow through sustainable practices and vision. The economic development should mean a happy, prosperous, and peaceful society which can later transform into a world family.

We acknowledge the contribution of all the contributors (India and Abroad) for their valuable contribution for the success of this book. Our special thanks to M/S Madaan Publishing House for accepting the work for publication in a very short notice.

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# **Interplay between tradition and modernity**

## **– Bhutan’s visual representation on Instagram**

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### ***Abstract***

*Bhutan for centuries remained in a self-imposed isolation, developing unique traditions and customs. In the 1950's King Jigme Singye Wangchuck, seeing Chinese invasion of neighbouring Tibet, brought his country on the path of modernisation, that had its peak with the introduction of television and Internet in 1999. Later reforms such as opening media market to private investors and changing political system from absolute to constitutional monarchy truly democratized the nation. With the new possibilities, Bhutanese became keen users of new technology, and smartphone is as ubiquitous as in other countries of the world. This paper examines how Bhutan is presented on Instagram, and how tradition and modernity are portrayed on that new medium. Obviously, photographs with Bhutanese context are not only made by its citizens, but the global community could participate in creating Bhutanese imprint on this platform. Therefore, it is interesting to see that pictures taken by the foreigners often bear strong influence of the Last Shangri-La. The age-old customs, traditions and the dress could be seen on picture shared with the world. Research is based mostly, on most popular hashtags associated with the Himalayan Kingdom, such as #Bhutan #GNH #Bhutanese. The aim of this text is also to distinguish categories of posts that are published Instagram, i.e. royal, tourist, government, and others.*

### **Introduction.**

Bhutan for centuries remained in a self-imposed isolation, and only with the Chinese aggression on Tibet, the Third King of

this Himalayan Kingdom – Jigme Singye Wangchuck reached to India to receive help with the modernisation of his country (Conlon, 2002, pp. 68–69). Educational, political and communication reforms have started. Kuensel, first a government bulletin, then a daily newspaper was established in 1967; Radio NYAB started broadcasting in 1972 (Muppidi, 2012, p. 177) and eventually, as one of the last countries in the world Bhutan introduced Television and the Internet in 1999 (Avieson, 2015, p. 232). The adoption of new media was quick, especially among the youngest generation for which a smartphone became a ubiquitous device, that enabled access to social media, one of which is Instagram.

Instagram is a platform created in 2012 that allows users to share pictures, short video loops, comments and likes (Instagram, 2017). Its huge global phenomenon also brought it to Bhutan. Both tourist visiting that country and Bhutanese themselves started using this platform to share important moments of their lives (Zylinski, 2016).

This paper tries to answer the question how tradition and modernity intertwine on various Bhutanese profiles and posts; how age-old traditions and customs clashed with modern media hold up in present times; and what could be done to strengthen the presence and recognition of certain qualities online.

## **Methodology**

Researching new media is quite often a difficult task because such studies are not well established yet. “Despite all the information on what social media analytics is capable of, there is so much misinformation, fragmentation, and confusion within the marketplace today that is very difficult to know how to choose the right platforms and how to set up the right processes to achieve our goals” (Sponder, 2013, p. 9). Another scholar adds that research on social media is “challenging because to measure effectively, you must not only understand the mechanical of the digital properties and be able to evaluate data with statistical rigor, but you must also comprehend the desired outcome of your efforts from a strategic business point of view” (Lovett, 2011, p. 6).

Taking above into consideration, both quantitative and qualitative methods in the analysis are used. It was necessary to count all the occasions when a certain hashtag appeared on Instagram, and how certain key words are used in tagging pictures. Moreover, Instagram is a visual medium, therefore the

necessary narrative is accompanied by the screen shots taken from the website.

To supplement findings, a professional online tool - www.websta.me was used. It is an analytics website that provides users with relevant data that can be used to perceive greater insight of published posts('WEBSTA - Instagram Analytics', n.d.).

## Results

The perfect, and at the same time the most common tool to research any subject on Instagram is a hashtag - # short link preceded by the pound sign (Hiscott, n.d.).When we search for #bhutan 288 172 results are displayed, and when the adjective #bhutanese is typed into search window 25 174 results are provided<sup>11</sup>. Moreover, when one writes #bhutanese, Instagram shows you other similar hashtags and number of posts that fall into each category. It portrays the popularity of each category. In the provided sample, I only included posts that have 20 or more mentions (Table 1). Posts below that threshold are not relevant to this study.

Name of the hashtag #	Number of posts	Name of the hashtag #	Number of posts
bhutanese	25174	bhutanesecovers	46
bhutanesearchitecture	2305	bhutaneseactor	41
bhutanesefood	1155	bhutaneseroyalfamily	41
bhutaneseeculture	412	bhutaneseecinema	39
bhutaneseart	368	bhutaneseoneyear	35
bhutaneseecuisine	350	bhutaneseeclothing	35
bhutaneseecphotographer	315	bhutaneseetemple	34
bhutaneseegirl	262	bhutaneseeredrice	32
bhutaneseetextile	190	bhutaneseegirls	30
bhutaneseedish	174	bhutaneseattire	29
bhutanesebeastylod	167	bhutanese_ig	29
bhutaneseestyle	162	bhutaneseedog	29
bhutaneseedress	150	bhutaneseekids	28
bhutanesepeople	121	bhutaneseewine	26
bhutaneseartist	105	bhutaneseebaby	26
bhutanesehouse	84	bhutaneseefashion	26
bhutanesebuddhism	71	bhutaneseerefugees	26

<sup>11</sup> Both hashtags were accessed on 24.05.2017.

bhutaneseboy	63	bhutaneseaway	25
bhutanese textiles	59	bhutanese coverartist	25
bhutanese writers	58	bhutanese in bangkok	24
bhutanese films	54	bhutanese life	23
bhutanese dogs	51	bhutanese monks	22
bhutanese murals	50	bhutanese paper	22
bhutanese women	46	bhutanese women	21

Table. 1 Popularity of hashtags that contain “Bhutanese” element.  
Source: Self-reported data.

The categories of posts published above say what subjects are important to Instagram users, and how the country presents itself in that medium. The three most popular hashtags not counting the main one, are architecture, food, and culture. All the others might fall into those categories. Definitely, Bhutanese architecture is unique on the world scale, and the Royal Government of Bhutan pays close attention to issuing building permits only to those who strictly adhere to the traditional guidelines. From the Instagram feed, we see that this is the most popular feature of that country so eagerly shared on new media. Also, the uniqueness of Bhutanese food catches the attention of photographers. The overwhelming spiciness of chili peppers in different forms (dried on rooftops, stored in bags or simply as a part of national dish Ema Datsi) is presented on a multitude of visual materials. Lastly, we have Bhutanese culture as the hashtag with as many as 412 mentions. Various festivals, dance, celebration and religious rituals are presented on pictures. Tourists keenly share their experience on this platform.

Instagram is a medium highly popular with celebrities all around the world (‘Selena Gomez is revealed as Instagram’s most popular celebrity in 2016 - BBC Newsbeat’, n.d.), and what celebrities are more popular in Bhutan, then the King and Queen of Bhutan. Both of them have accounts, and interestingly both of them only follow one person – they follow each other. Such exclusivity plays very well on the modern medium, that shortens the relation between the sender and receiver. It also plays well in terms of tradition where the ruler is inaccessible to the masses. Judging from the lack of interaction and publication of curated pictures which are taken by the professional photographer I suspect that both profiles are run by the staff at Royal Office for Media.

Interestingly the majority of King's and Queen's pictures are the same, and even the same picture is equally popular on both profiles (Table 2). Despite those similarities, it is the Queen Jetsun Pema that gathers more followers - 45 500 (her\_majesty\_queen\_of\_bhutan, n.d.), compared with Her partner 35 500 (his\_majesty\_king\_of\_bhutan, n.d.).

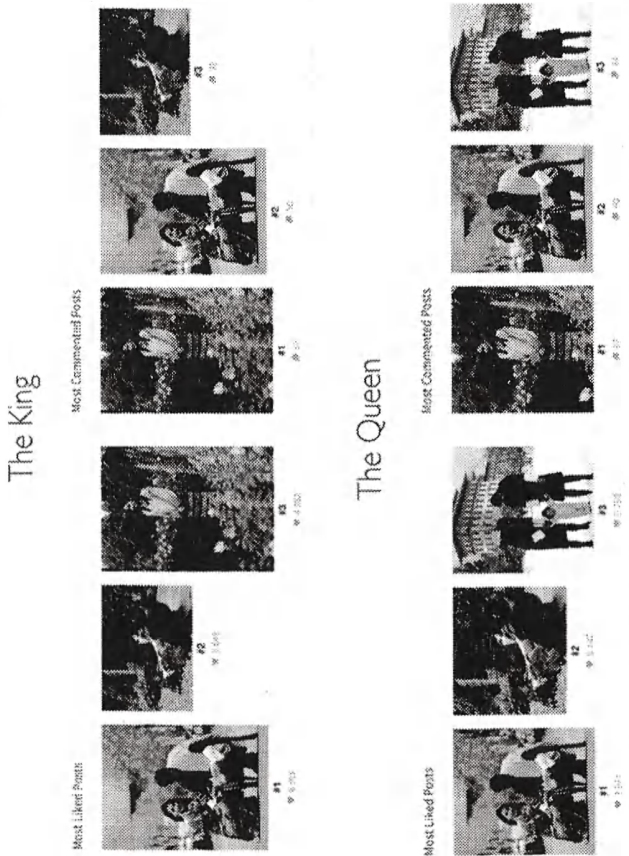


Table 2. Comparison of the most liked pictures and most commented postpublished on King's and Queen's Instagram Profiles.

Source: Profiles analysed on websta.com, [https://websta.me/search/his\\_majesty\\_king\\_of\\_bhutan](https://websta.me/search/his_majesty_king_of_bhutan), [https://websta.me/search/his\\_majesty\\_queen\\_of\\_bhutan](https://websta.me/search/his_majesty_queen_of_bhutan)

Gross National Happiness (GNH) is a concept, conceived in Bhutan by the King Jigme Singye Wangchuck, that measure the progress of the society not in the monetary terms but in a more holistic way taking into consideration individual happiness (GNH Centre, 2017).

On Instagram #grossnationalhappiness yields 2828 posts and here pictures are accurate and represent all aspects of that concept. However, the abbreviation GNH brings different, not always welcomed visual materials, such as add for G&H cosmetics made by global corporation Amway (ndpa28, 2017), a hotel (worldtravelista1, 2017), or a bar (scoggthing, 2017) (see Table 3). It is also worth noting that #gnh yields 6 589 results.



**ndpa28** Close

ndpa28 Hí hí Đồi Bùn Vượt Năng - sữa tắm và lotion #GnH giúp vượt qua cơn nắng chói chang mùa này ☀️  
 Vừa làm mát da vừa không bắt nắng  
 Thoá lotion sáng và tối còn giúp da sáng lên nữa  
 Còn ai đi biển bị đen thì kết hợp 2 em này là nhá nhanh hơn nè  
 Thích toáááá 🙌

👍 🗨

Liczba polubień: 11  
 8 foto 52369

Obserwuj komentarze...



**worldtravelista1** Follow  
 Great Northern Hotel

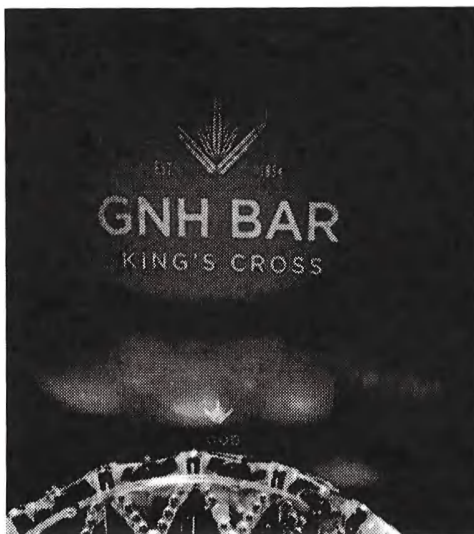
worldtravelista1 Ever go to a hotel that just gets you? For me, this is that hotel. I love pretty much everything about @gnhotel. Fantastic location, great bar & restaurant, cozy rooms, and a staff that genuinely welcomes & appreciates you. 🍷  
 #spglite

worldtravelista1 #wanderlust #travelgram #instatravel #instagood #theglobalwanderer #livetoreachannel #welltravelled #traveltheworld #globetrotter #neverstopexploring #letsgeverywhere #traveldeeper #worldtraveler #travelfolic #lovestotravel #traveladdict #thisisLondon

👍 🗨

79 likes  
 MAY 16

Add a comment...



scogthing  
GNH Bar

Obserwuj

scogthing Martini O'Clock! ? #martini  
#gnh #thursdaynightdrinks  
#martinioclock #londonlife #gnhbar  
#drinksbycandlelight #oweamartiniortwo

♡ Q

56 wyświetleń

24 MAR 2018

Dodaj komentarz...

Table 3. Example of erroneous use of #gnh.

Source: <https://www.instagram.com/p/BUd92dNFxQh/>,  
<https://www.instagram.com/p/BUKRPphF2oS/>,  
[https://www.instagram.com/p/BR\\_9Y1OFUOW/](https://www.instagram.com/p/BR_9Y1OFUOW/)

Another aspect worth touching upon is Bhutan's marketing as a country. Nowadays most information is gathered from the internet, therefore careful curation of the message sent to the potential tourists is a must. "Happiness is a place" is a slogan of Tourism Council of Bhutan (TCB) and as such, it should be curated carefully by this organization, first and foremost by using it as a hashtag. Even though TCB is present on social media (on Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest, YouTube, Google+) as they advertise on their website they should also be present on Instagram, where their slogan accompanies only 3326 often irrelevant posts.

On the crossroad of tradition and modernity are also Bhutanese media and their presence on Instagram. Out of 20 media outlets, only five are present on Instagram (Table 4).

	link to Instagram profile	number of posts	number of followers	following
Kuensel	<a href="https://www.instagram.com/kuenselonline/">https://www.instagram.com/kuenselonline/</a>	13	5578	2
Radio Valley	<a href="https://www.instagram.com/radiovalley/">https://www.instagram.com/radiovalley/</a>	32	1947	112
Yeewong	<a href="https://www.instagram.com/yeewongmagazineofficial/">https://www.instagram.com/yeewongmagazineofficial/</a>	214	1834	207
Business Bhutan	<a href="https://www.instagram.com/businessbhutan/">https://www.instagram.com/businessbhutan/</a>	12	48	23
Yiga Radio	<a href="https://www.instagram.com/yigaradio/">https://www.instagram.com/yigaradio/</a>	2	0	1

Table 4. Presence of Bhutanese media on Instagram.  
Source: self-reported data.

Kuensel published 13 posts and has 5578 followers (kuenselonline, n.d.). All posts were published in April 2015, and it seems that someone had an idea to create an account for Kuensel, but eventually did not follow up with it. Such huge number of followers is a lost opportunity in reaching readers of this most popular newspaper in Bhutan.

Radio Valley, the first private radio station in Bhutan, presence on Instagram is rather novel because its account was started on 09.02.2016 which coincided with the receiving the cake from His Majesty on the occasion of Losar 2016 (radiovalley, 2016 a). Pictures are published in irregular intervals compared to other social media outlets this station utilizes. In terms of content, there is a variety of topics. Starting with Bhutanese customs such as chewing doma (radiovalley, 2016 b), architecture or local landscapes (radiovalley, 2016 c), royal family (radiovalley, 2016 d), and last but not least pictures strictly connected with the radio activities such as promotion of international and local stars that are broadcasted on air. Definitely, there are too few of those, and the whole profile lacks consistency and aim. If only individuals responsible for creating content for Radio Valley's other social



media would focus more on Instagram it could become very popular and influential medium.

Almost ex aequo with Radio Valley – Yeewong, first Bhutanese magazine for-women, is very active on Instagram. With 214 posts published regularly they gathered interactive audience (yeewongmagazineofficial, n.d.). This magazine is concise with the materials published online. On most pictures, women are main characters either presenting clothes (yeewongmagazineofficial, 2017 a), shown in the official environments (yeewongmagazineofficial, 2016 a) or advertising products – offering giveaways (yeewongmagazineofficial, 2016 b).

Obviously, pictures of the Royal Family are part of the uploaded materials (yeewongmagazineofficial, 2016 c).

Peculiar presence on Instagram characterizes first Bhutanese newspaper dedicated to economy – Business Bhutan. Its profile is very odd, because there are only 12 posts and all of them are Government Tenders published in March and April 2016 (businessbhutan, n.d.). The posts are liked by just one person, and it seems that the marketing team at this newspaper promised publication on social media, and dutifully did so.

Lastly, Radio Yiga with only two posts is irrelevant in this research. It just seems that the profile had been “reserved” for upcoming purposes and perhaps will be revived in future.

## **Discussion**

Judging from a number of posts that contain #bhutan or #bhutanese and its derivatives I may say that Instagram is still not very popular in this Himalayan Kingdom. Also, engagement of local traditional media in this new medium is infinitesimal. Therefore, there is a niche which could be occupied by a skilled player on the market.

Such team is the King and Queen of Bhutan, whose Instagram accounts are run with proficiency, talent, and skill. Pictures shared with the world are taken by a professional photographer. They are well described (sometime even too long for this instant medium) with proper hashtags. Such measures taken to produce a quality content yield high number of followers.

The Royal Family with the most recent addition – a Prince, is the biggest part of all Instagram communication. They are emissaries of Bhutan in the real as well as in the virtual world of beautiful pictures. Interestingly, media whose presence on Instagram could be much bigger also post photos of the revered

rulers. There is no propaganda or calculated profit, Bhutanese citizens simply love their King and Queen.

Foreigners, on the other hand, focus more on the local architecture, food, and culture. Posted photographs are accompanied by the hashtags that enable procuring a table with the most popular ones. Some of them are synonymous and for example #bhutanese food and #bhutanese cuisine, or #bhutanese films and #bhutanese cinema could be grouped together because they represent the same topic.

Some governmental agencies such as Tourism Council of Bhutan that is responsible for advertising the country to the global tourist first and foremost should incorporate all available social media channels to convey the message to travellers and through great photography invite them to visit Bhutan. Secondly, they should invent their own hashtag and publish it in all their promotional materials as well as in the internet communication. Such hashtag should be the key word that immediately positions TCB highly in all the searches.

The lack of strong hashtag, except the #bhutan that out of definition is a solid one, causes confusion among users. Such a great concept as Gross National Happiness in the form of #gnh quite often yields inadequate results. Only better curation and stronger connection with the brand that is caused by the more often use can bring results that no one would use GNH as a name for their beauty products or a bar.

Also, Bhutanese media are poorly present on Instagram and in such a small market they should grasp every opportunity to present themselves online. Out of over 20 media outlets, only five have Instagram accounts and only Radio Valley and Yeewong Magazine are active on that platform. There is an enormous niche that could be filled by anyone who has the skill how to use Instagram to promote themselves. Slow Instagram popularity among Bhutanese may be caused by the expensive data packages, however the research shows that the prices of internet connection is and will drop drastically.

Bhutan's presence on Instagram despite many shortcomings mentioned above and lack of incorporation by the local institutions ideally blends together tradition and modernity. Tradition in terms of presented materials, and modernity in terms of incorporated technology. This amalgam will only evolve, and I think it's worth mentioning that with the better infrastructure and dropping price of internet connection other media that used more data, such as YouTube or Snapchat will become popular. Those

who will jump on the running wagon and seize the chance of presenting themselves or the medium they work for, will win the game of engaging users and present Bhutan and all its aspects in the light that is appropriate for them.

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