PREFACE

Gone are the days when the Mizoram households had to settle for a simple lifestyle. Parents groomed their children with Keokarpin hair oils; clad them with local tailor-sewn shirts and pants with clothes bought from the tailor himself; mothers had to settle with the only available brand of tinned mustard oil for her cooking. By watching the ever-so-hazy Doordarshan TV programmes in Hindi on black and white TV sets, the Mizo households were monotonously subjected to advertisements like washing powder Nirma and Lifebuoy kaha hai, thandurust raha hai soap. Some locations were blessed with reception of occasional English transmissions from Bangladesh. Radio was the only electronic media popular with the Mizos which makes sense for the Mizos with no proficiency in Hindi, that too airing few hours a day. The one-page local newspapers did not carry many details about products and advertisements; perhaps, the commerce of advertisements was not that significant for the readers and the business community. The customers had very few brand options as they were in sellers’ markets. Almost all shops carry identical products, coming from the neighbouring State of Assam and neighbouring countries such as Myanmar and Thailand. Durable products like colour TV, video players and two-wheelers were owned by very few families who were financially privileged.

The advent of the new millennium brought with it a flood of multiple choice goods and services, from indigenous and MNCs sources alike, propagated by the revolution of fast-paced media penetrating virtually every household in Mizoram. Entry of choice in the form of consumer goods, both durable and nondurable has painted a colourful depiction in the otherwise grey-scaled commercial scenario of the Mizoram State. The presence and effect of options and fashion was felt even
in rural areas of Mizoram and have been intensified and magnified with a steady inclination. Opening of exclusive showrooms for international brands like Reebok, Adidas, Puma and Nike denote the existence of market for such premium priced fashion wear. The recent Korean pop culture influence increases the sale of hair fixers and styling gels to help emulate and maintain their hair styles. Recent mushrooming of new shops for mobile phones indicates the changing lifestyle of Mizos even in rural areas. Computer shops displaying up-to-date computer sets with the latest peripherals are now a common sight in urban Mizoram. General stores evolved into stacked supermarkets, carrying fast moving consumer products of Indian and foreign make, of countless varieties. Famous brands like Wellhome brought their fine range of housecare products to the remote State of Mizoram. Custom-made kitchen appliances and layouts can be readily bought from such stores like Abigail.

Such is the complexity of choice and options luring the Mizoram households unlike the yesteryears. How many times throughout the day do the modern Mizos make product decisions? What should they wear? What should they eat? How should they think? How far the rural customer is different from her urban counterpart? Today’s fashion in Aizawl will be the fad in Thingsulthliah. It is not uncommon to see teenaged girls in a peripheral village running excitedly to buy a gift for her valentine on Valentine’s Day! These herald the pacing evolution of dynamic changes in both urban and rural Mizoram. We can see many cellular towers even in remote villages, but, ironically, at the same time, the rural housewife finds it difficult to manage her kitchen responsibilities without LPG stove. Some of the rural households are fortunate to have enough disposable income to go for LCD TV but they don’t have access to electricity which
compelled them to go for solar powered TV sets served by Direct-To-Home subscription. As Mizoram has international borders, the Mizo families find it easy to procure a Korean CD from nearby shop on the pavement to spend their weekends. At the same time, the family finds it hard to get a medicine of gentamycin eyedrops even from the leading drug stores. Such paradoxical situations in Mizo society are not uncommon. It is expected that the present study would enable the business community, prospective entrepreneurs, and policy makers in the government and nongovernment organisations to understand the ground realities and identify the grey areas where the marketers and governments are underperforming.

The thesis is divided into seven chapters.

Chapter One depicts the problem of enquiry and the design adopted thereof.

Chapter Two presents an overview of the State of Mizoram in terms of geography, demography, history, culture, political and administrative, commerce and trade, and economy and infrastructure.

Chapter Three deals with the socioeconomic characteristics of household customers and the type of durable products owned by them.

Chapter Four analyses the external influences in terms of sociocultural and marketing efforts of the firms on the household customer. It further identifies the factors influencing the purchase of nondurable and durable products.

Chapter Five attempts to deal with some aspects relating to the consumer decision making, and the postdecision behaviour of the household customers in Mizoram.

Chapter Six traces out the media scenario in Mizoram and the media consumption habits of the customers.
Lastly, the thesis concludes with the summary of the findings and suggestions in *Chapter Seven*.

The Questionnaire used in the customer survey is given in the *Annexure 1*, followed by Chi Square Table (*Annexure 2*), T-Table (*Annexure 3*) and Pearson Product Critical Value (*Annexure 4*). The circulation of newspapers and magazines published from different districts of Mizoram and the subscriber base of cable TV are presented in *Annexure 5*, followed by Bibliography.