Social Media And Youth Subculture: A Sociological Study

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Abstract

The contemporary society is marked by the advent of new technologies in the world society; most importantly the internet and social media that is accessible to a large audience. Today communication and information technologies have enabled people to share the information instantly. Millions of people from almost everywhere in the world are connected to each other through the communication technologies that include various forms of mass media devices such as electronic media, print media and the internet. In the contemporary society, social media plays a major role in the lives of people, especially the youth. Sites like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and WhatsApp are common amongst the youngsters. The swift espousal of social networking sites is creating a subculture among youth. It is changing the way young people meet, express and exchange views, form opinion and choose their life patterns. The present study is based on primary sources of data and seeks to analyze the role of social media in creating a new youth subculture in Jaipur city.

Keywords: Social media, Youth, Subculture

Introduction

In contemporary society communication and information technologies have enabled the people to share information instantly. Millions of people from almost everywhere in the world are connected to each other through these communication technologies that include various forms of mass media devices such as electronic media, print media and the internet. They are referred to as mass media because they help to communicate with a large number of people instantly. These forms of media have undergone a rapid change. People can now read newspapers online just by installing an application in their mobile phones or laptop. Information technology has altered the form of human communication. What began as an interaction between people has occupied a public domain. People are engaged in diverse activities on social media; from cultivating friends on Facebook to following and connecting with people on Twitter, Instragram and WhatsApp. While doing so, they constantly upgrade their profiles to maintain the interest of their friends and followers. Social media is also proving to be a financial asset for those engaged in businesses as it helps them to advertise as well as draw potential customers. Further, social media is becoming a platform for social awareness and political debates. In other words, social media has affected almost every age group of society who use it as a platform for diverse activities. It has driven the human communication to a level where face to face

communication is neither important, nor necessary; as people all over the globe can be engaged through social networking sites. Such engagements facilitate new power dynamics where some are heard loud and better due to greater visibility. It is thus evident that social media has created a whole new sociological world that needs to be explored and revisited. With this background, the current study has been conducted keeping the following objectives in mind:

- To identify the extent of use of Social media amongst the youth of Jaipur city.
- To examine the role of social media in facilitating the spread of new subculture among the youth.

Social Media and Youth Subculture: Conceptual Framework

Social media is defined as, "a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, and that allow the creation and exchange of user-generated content" (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2012)¹. The Technopedia defines Social Media as 'a catch-all term for a variety of Internet applications that allow users to create content and interact with each other. This interaction can take many forms but some common types include:

- Sharing links to interesting content produced by third parties.
- Public updates to a profile, including information on current activities and even location data.
- Sharing photos, videos and posts.
- Commenting on the photos, posts, updates, videos and links shared by the people.²

The shift of society from agrarian to industrial and then information society has ushered in a new era where boundaries are disappearing. The boundless use of internet technology has already shrunken the world into a 'global village'3. The trends which newly emerge at any stage of society lead to future changes in the society. The evolution of technology is shaping the values, attitudes, social relationships, and behavioural patterns of people, especially the younger generation which has been the fastest to acquire the digital media traits. Nodes and networks of connection are the main basis of information society. Networks are basically a set of interconnected nodes, which promote financial flows with the help of technologies. Almost all the developing and developed countries have witnessed the emergence of network society. There is a very thin blurred line between real and virtual world due to which new possibilities have emerged in social and cultural realms. The advent of internet has given rise to social media which enables the people to stay connected with each other. The interactive feature of this media combined with cameras, search engines and notebooks leads to an increasing demand of communication devices. With the increase in the usage of Social media it has become part of daily life of people. In modern society, media is not only limited to the feature of broadcasting but also interactivity, multimedia and multitasking. Messages can be sent to the people

in real time which can result in changes in attitude. Technology has become instrumental in shaping public opinion. Social media is a platform for the people to stay connected with the friends, reconnect with the old friends and can also create real life friendships with the people one has never met or with the people who are living far away by sharing similar interests, hobbies and views. All over the world people are spending much of their time on social media through smart phones. The easy availability of smart phones makes it easy for people to use social media. This is increasing the number of users day by day. Social media impacts the youth in almost every aspect of their life cultivating distinct styles, behaviours and interests; offering them a sub cultural identity separate from their ascribed identity.

Subculture can be understood as that social group within a group with a lifestyle that is different from the culture of the group as a whole. The members of these groups have different tastes of dressing, music and lifestyle. But they are not totally different from the other members of the society. People have a choice to become a member of a specific youth culture. Subcultures can be seen as important sources of social identity. The internet and social media is nowadays an important instrument of change in the lives of people. There is no doubt that new technology is significantly impacting the culture .The rapid advancements in the digital technology has brought netizens 4 closer together. Social media facilitates the interaction between people of different cultures. It is emerging as a platform for the easy exchange of ideas, cultural values and views. It provides a platform to people to communicate with family, friends, casual acquaintances and even strangers. This technology is also used in a profound way by social and political movements to promote their cause. The culture of everyday life is now extremely intertwining with the social media. The introduction of online dating sites is changing the way people construct their significant relationships. Social networking sites such as Facebook, Twitter and Instagram help in bringing together people with different backgrounds and cultures and hence are responsible for creating a new culture. The growing importance of virtual world is impacting the way men and women conduct their everyday affairs. It has become prominent in the modern world because it facilitates convenient and efficient communication with the people around the world. The joining of the virtual with the real is the reality of the contemporary culture. The impact of internet especially social media has significantly transformed the lives of the youth.

Social Media and Youth subculture: Theoretical framework

Social media has become an indispensable part of the life of today's youth. It is a penetrative force that has an intense influence on the youth. Various terms are used to describe the youth of this generation like *net generation, millennium generation* and *digital natives*. These tags denote a large group of people especially who grew up in the period which witnessed the expansion of internet and the media-rich environment, with social media becoming the most influential. By

using these spaces the youth are gradually becoming empowered. They are able to overcome the geographical limitations by reaching out to the people of specific interests. Social media is thus used for social interaction, online shopping, dating, online gaming, business promotion, etc. Through their innovative presentations on the internet they act as co-producers for the large and global audiences. Online activity is somewhat different from one's offline activities. The youth who is a part of an online community may be geographically dispersed (experiences different hours at different locations) but shares common interests, identical activities and sense of belongingness. By using this virtual space, they can express their real or inner selves because of the anonymity of the internet. People use internet to do old things in new ways. The advent of new media increases the active participation and creation of media content. People are the passive consumers of the content and online information. The online experience of doing certain activities is bringing cultural changes or the emergence of new subculture amongst the youth. The paper examines the impact of social media on the youth within the framework of the Cultivation theory given by Gerbner.

Cultivation Theory

Developed by George Gerbner in 1967, the Cultivation theory states that the continuous exposure of media has great impact on people and can even alter their perception of everyday lives. The viewers of television get influenced through media messages very easily and follow the messages in their real life. According to Gerbner, viewers use media to confirm the way things are. Media's images cultivate the tendencies which are dominant in nature such as cultural beliefs, ideologies and views. The supporters of this theory believe that television viewing can have long-term impact that gradually affects the audience. Large numbers of television viewers are thought to be 'cultivating' attitudes that seem to believe that the world created by it is an accurate portrayal of the real world. These theorists divided the effects of cultivation into two different levels: first is a general belief about the real world, and second is a specific attitude, such as a hatred or respect for law and order, etc. This cultivation of attitudes is based on what is already present in the society and media takes those attitudes which are already present and re-presents them in different ways to their audiences. Many times the audience is unaware of the extent to which they cultivate media. The theory was initially developed to analyze the effects of television on its audience but it can also be applied in contemporary society which harbours different forms of media, especially the social media. Social media has become a major part of people's lives. It has dramatically changed the daily schedule of the people who spend a good amount of time on social media. People absorb the dominant images, styles and the messages from social media. Constant use of social media leads to the 'cultivation' of its customs and culture in the people. They integrate them into their real-world perceptions and judgments.

Research Methodology

The area selected for the study is urban Jaipur city. The reason for selection is that Jaipur is a hub of major educational and technological institutions and many youngsters are enrolled in these institutions. Therefore, it is an appropriate place to fulfil the purpose of studying the impact of social media on youth. The universe includes youth in the age group of 18-30 years. The sample size comprises of 250 respondents; both males and females. Purposive sampling method has been used. Both primary and secondary sources for data collection were used. The primary data has been collected through structured questionnaire. The research questions for the study are as follows:

- Q1. What is the extent of usage of Social networking sites by the youth?
- Q.2. Whether Social media is promoting new cultural patterns in Indian society?

The findings of the study are given below:

Sample characteristics

The age of the respondents ranges from a minimum of 18 years to the maximum of 30 years. 30 percent respondents belong to the age group of 18-21years, 26 percent belong to age group of 21-24 years, 23.20 percent belong to the age group of 24-27 years and 20.80 percent belong to the age group of 27-30 years. 10percent of the users belong to low-income category i.e., with a monthly family income of below Rs.20,000, 25 percent belong to monthly income category of Rs. 20,000-50,000, 25 percent respondents belong to the monthly income category of Rs. 50,000-80,000 and 40 percent respondents belong to the income category of Rs. 80,000 and above. It was also found that 39 percent respondents have more than 900 friends on their social media account. Earlier the number of friends was much smaller (15-20) as compared to this figure. Before the advent of social media, friendships existed in real world. These have been replaced by virtual experiences with no roots. (Baudrillard: 1983) ⁶.

I) Extent of usage

80 76 67 67 40 34 20 Facebook Watsapp Instagram Twitter

Diagram 1.1: Popular Social networking sites

Diagram 1.1 represents that WhatsApp is the most popular texting app amongst youth today with 76 percent respondents as its active users. It gives its users the ability to connect with each other instantly using the phone. WhatsApp call feature is an added advantage, as it can be used for both national and international calling. Instagram is a close favourite, with 67 percent respondents using it, while twitter usage is less as only 38 percent respondents use it. The younger respondents are more active on Facebook (50 percent users). This response is in line with the greater desire of youngsters to share their interests and express their creativity, for which Instagram is a great platform. Also, responses indicate that people are more likely to seek newer and lesser known sites on the Internet such as telegram, viber and hike etc.

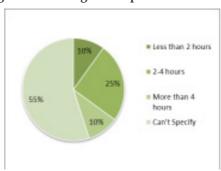


Diagram 1.2: Average time spent on Social media

Diagram 1.2 reveals that 55 percent respondents could not specify the average time spent by them on social media. This means that there is a large section of the younger generation that needs to reassess its social media habits. The fact that 45 percent respondents spend minimum of 2 hours on social media indicates that social media is a visible part of people's life; it is not an inescapable addiction for most. The number of hours spent on social media indicates wide use of social media amongst youth.

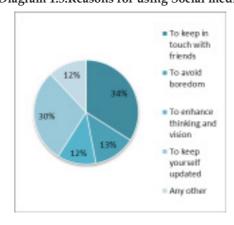


Diagram 1.3:Reasons for using Social media

Diagram 1.3, reveals that 30 percent respondents use social media because they wish to stay updated; social platforms makes them aware of the activities around them (i.e., the current status of their favourite celebrities, employment updates, latest trends, social, political and economic developments, etc.). 34 percent respondents use social media to stay connected with family and friends, which implies that the primary objective of social media, human connectivity, is of more value to the respondents. Many respondents also consider social media as a means to enhance their thinking and vision. 12 percent use social media for other activities, like, playing games, making money through Youtube channels and Instagram promotions, learning various skills etc.

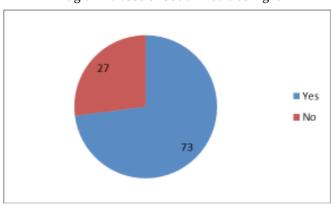


Diagram 1.4:Use of Social media at night

From figure 1.4, it is evident that 73percent of the respondents access Social media at night. Although none of the respondents complained of adverse physical symptoms due to late night use of social media, it is being increasingly proved that late night use of Social media increases sleep deprivation and impaired functioning. It also tends to worsen moods by creating a feeling of wasted time.

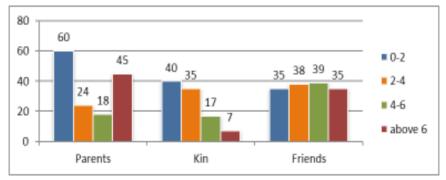


Diagram 1.5: Average time spent before joining Social media (in percentage)

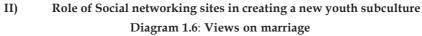
(Figures overlap because respondents have given more than one answers)

70 58 60 50 ■ 0-2 38 32 35 36 32 34 40 2-4 30 18 **4-6** 16 20 above 6 10 0 0 **Parents** Kin Friends

Average time spent after joining Social media (in percentage)

(Figures overlap because respondents have given more than one answers)

Diagram 1.5 reveals that 60 percent respondents used to spend around 0-2 hours with their parents before joining Social media and after joining Social media 58percent of respondents still spend 0-2 hours with their parents. 24percent respondents said that they used to spend 2-4 hours with their parents before joining Social media and 22 percent of the respondents still spend around 2-4 hours with their parents after joining Social media, 18 percent used to spend 4-6 hours with their parents and after joining Social media 16percent spend 4-6 hours with the parents.45 percent of the users used to spend more than 6 hours with the parents but after joining social media only 38percent spend more than 6 hours with the parents. Before joining Social media 40percent respondents spent around 0-2 hours with their kins but after joining social media 32percent spend 0-2 hours with their kins. Before joining Social media 35percent spent around 0-2 hours with the family and after joining Social media 32percent spend around 0-2 hours with the family members,39 percent of the users spent 4-6 hours with their friends before joining Social media but after joining Social media 36percent of respondents spend 4-6 hours with their friends which has reduced .It is evident from the data that there is no significant reduction of time spent with family & friends as a result of use of social media. However it was found that excessive use of social media is resulting in reduced interpersonal face to face interaction resulting in loneliness, anxiety and even depression. This is because despite physical proximity, the communication has reduced drastically.



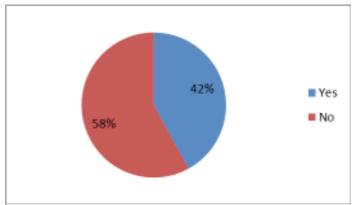


Diagram 1.6 shows that 58 percent respondents do not want to get married because career and freedom are important for them For some , commitment is scary and casual dating is the best alternative. They even opt to live together instead of getting married .Accessibility to apps like Tinder, truly madly and Happn provide an easier option for quick hook-ups. Although the social media offers a large market for relationships through dating and other sites, it is felt that casual dating, live in relationships and liberal atmosphere has dissipated the need for marriage. Since a sizeable number of youth is against the very idea of marriage, it can be concluded that social media has become a powerful force in shaping marital decisions.

Diagram 1.7: Views on Procreation

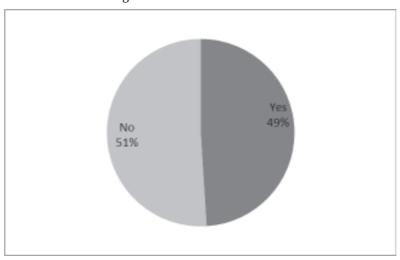


Diagram 1.7 depicts, that 51 percent youth are against procreation. They find it important to pursue their career rather than to have children and compromise. They believe procreation can create hurdles in their professional lives. Social media is also promoting such ideas by publishing posts that are anti-natal and propagate moral movements of this nature. However, 49 percent of respondents want to get married and have children. They want to have stable families as they consider family as the most important social institution.

32% Yes No

Diagram 1.8:Use of Social media for educational purpose

Diagram 1.8 reveals that 68percent youth use Social media for education purposes. Use of Social media for educational purpose includes the ability to use information, to connect with learning groups and other educational institutions. Social media helps them to access various lectures recorded by the experts, helping the learners to connect and communicate both inside and outside the classroom .Social media has extended formal education beyond traditional delivery. Social media thus offers a platform to enhance learning experience.

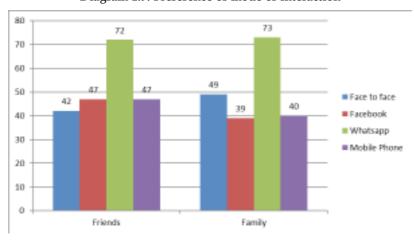


Diagram 1.9: Preference of mode of interaction

The diagram 1.9 shows that 42percent youth prefer to interact with friends in a face-to-face situation.47 percent prefer to communicate through Facebook, 72percent prefer to interact through WhatsApp while 47percent prefer to interact through mobile phones. Similarly, 49percent youth prefer to interact in person with their family members, 39percent prefer to interact through Facebook, 73percent use WhatsApp to interact with family members & 40percent of the respondents prefer to interact through mobile phones with their family members. Social media is dominantly replacing interpersonal face to face communication. This is leading to a decrease in real world personal connection and an increase in virtual relationships. The youth is becoming more typative and less talkative. There is a sharp rise in alternate communication means; indicating a cultural transition.

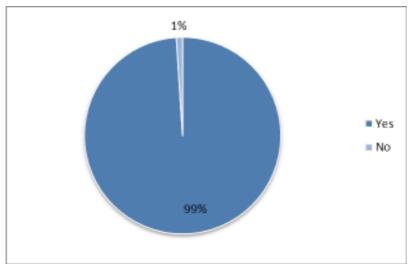


Diagram 1.10: Usage of online shopping sites

A study conducted in Jaipur city concludes that buying behaviour is changing rapidly among youth of Jaipur City and is largely based on social media (Chaturvedi: 2017)⁷. Diagram 1.10 shows that online shopping has gained ground due to various shopping sites available on social media. People tend to prefer online shopping because of its convenient use. Shortage of time and attractive offers are the two main factors boosting online shopping stores. Social media plays an important role in influencing the buying behaviour. Social network sites like Facebook offer a vast market to the potential consumer i.e., the youth. Buying decisions and choices are thus being influenced by social media especially amongst the youth as they have both access and knowledge of online markets.

Diagram 1.11: Use of Emoticons

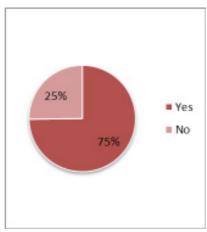


Diagram 1.11 reveals that 75percent respondents use emoticons and acronyms for communicating through Social media while 25percent of respondents do not use emoticons and acronyms. The reason behind using emoticons is the feeling that emoticons and smileys can convey their messages meaningfully .Use of Emoticons gives them a feel of real conversations. It also lightens the mood by enhancing sarcasm and humour. Emotions are thus emerging as a new language being used primarily by the youth.

Diagram 1.12: Use of Acronyms

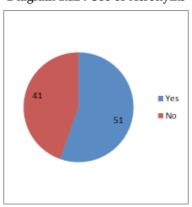


Diagram 1.12 depicts that 51 percent of the respondents use slang words or short forms while texting on Social media. The use of acronyms like *TTYL*, *LOL*, *OMG* indicate how social media is lessening long and cumbersome phrases. It also communicates the crux of meaning or emotion better than formal language. However, the use of acronyms destroys formal language .The fact that a large section of youth is using slang words denotes a rise in alternate communication genres.

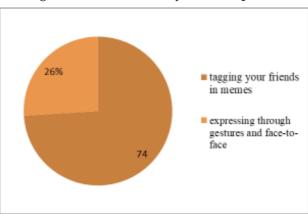


Diagram 1.13: Memes as a symbol of expression

Diagram 1.13 shows that 74percent of the respondents prefer to express themselves by tagging in memes. Tagging in memes is being portrayed as a symbol of true friendship/relationship Memes are altering communication patterns and bringing a cultural evolution.

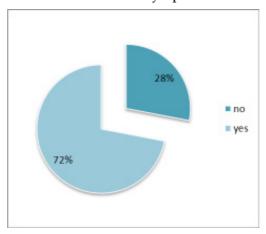


Diagram 1.14 Imitation of lifestyle patterns of Celebrities

Diagram 1.14 shows that 72percent of the respondents use social media to stalk their favourite celebrities' lifestyle patterns. Majorly used Social media site to stalk is Instagram .People not only stalk their favourite celebrities on Instagram, they also try to transform themselves by imitating their lifestyles and activities. Advent of social media has changed the idea of leisure. Bicycle tours, nature activities, swimming and various outdoor activities which were previously considered leisure are now being replaced by the use of Social networking sites.

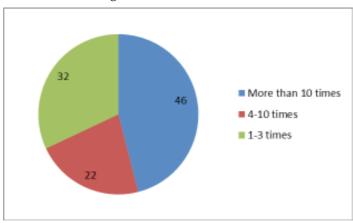


Diagram 1.15:The Selfie culture

Diagram 1.15 indicates that 32 percent respondents take selfies around 1-3 times a day, 22 percent respondents take selfie 4-10 times a day, while 46percent take selfie more than 10 times a day. Clicking selfies and sharing them on social networking sites like Instagram, Facebook, Tumblr, Snapchat, is indicative of self-expression. Selfies are taken for a wide variety of reasons. According to some, they are taken to celebrate an occasion or a moment or to share an event or achievement; while for others, it is a symbol of narcissism. Selfies have become the new way to document lives.

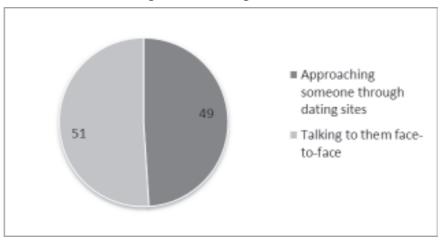


Diagram 1.16: Dating Preference

With multiple dating apps and a wide social media platform, meeting new people for striking a romantic connection is becoming both accessible and desirable. Diagram 1.16 shows that 49percent respondents prefer approaching

the opposite sex through dating sites such as Tinder etc. Dating has acquired a new dimension as the process is screen based rather than face to face. However, 51percent still prefer face-to-face interactions as they feel that 'in person' relations lead to stronger bonds, build trust and are long lasting.

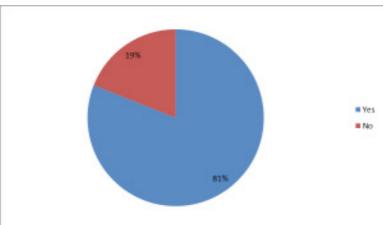


Diagram 1.17 : Cyber bullying

Diagram 1.17 shows that 82 percent respondents intentionally or unintentionally get involved in cyber bullying perpetuated on these sites. This includes posting abusive comments, making fake profiles, hacking accounts and online frauds. The nature of crime is thus changing from *traditional* to *digital*; the youth being both the perpetrator as well as the victim of criminal activities.

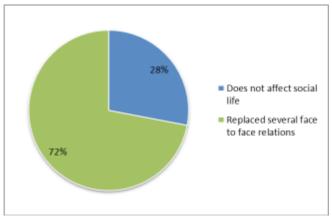


Diagram 1.18: Impact on Social life

Diagram 1.18 reveals that 72 percent of the respondents feel that Social networking sites such as Facebook, Twitter and Instagram have adversely affected their social life. However, 28percent report otherwise. In fact, they feel that they

are more connected with each other because of Social networking sites. Even though social media platforms such as Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter etc. provide easy access to information (by the click of a button), digital relations lack the intimacy of the real world. Social media has replaced face-to-face relationships with digital relationships.

Conclusion

Social media is as a web-based technology that promotes and facilitates interaction amongst people through a common network; primarily internet. Since social media has been integrated into the daily lives of the increasing number of people, it has vast impact on the activities, social relationships and worldview of the younger generation. The study conducted on selected youth of Jaipur city reveals that social media is emerging as a major facilitator in building and managing relationships. Social Networking sites like WhatsApp (76percent users) and Instagram (67percent users) are the most popular sites among youth, followed by facebook and twitter with 50percent and 34percent users respectively. The extensive use of social media has a direct impact on interpersonal relationships. The quality of interaction with close groups has deteriorated resulting in poor communication and fragmented relationships. Use of social media is affecting social institutions like marriage, family, polity and education. With the spread of liberal value system, the institutional value of marriage is decreasing giving way to alternate forms of co-habitation. Anti-Natalist philosophy is spreading among the youth for whom procreating is now only an option and not a requirement. The social media is being used as a platform for spreading such ideas. Education too has lost its traditional fervour as there is a huge paradigm shift in the world of education. Teaching-Learning is no longer spatially restricted; social media acts as an important source of global knowledge dissemination. Social media is not just a platform to learn but also a platform to voice opinions, raise issues and concerns. It has also redefined political engagement of the youth who have found a stage to display and propagate their political preferences.

Social media has been instrumental in transforming expression and lifestyle patterns. A new social media language is on the rise that includes acronyms, emoticons and memes to express various moods. Even the market society that is the consequence of globalization has gained momentum through social media and has changed the very face and nature of markets. Social media is not just making products available at doorsteps but is also largely influencing the buying choices and buying behaviour of the youth. Besides, sites like Facebook and Instagram allows them to take a sneak peek into the lives and lifestyles of celebrities who become their role models for restyling their taste and restructuring their wardrobes. The most striking outcome of social media is the *Selfie Culture* that has added a new dimension to the cultural dimension. Social media has provided a platform to the youth to present their different versions based on different moods. The hi-tech smart phones and social media together have become a tool for *identity formation* of the youth. It is evident thus, that social media is tremendously instrumental in shaping the values, attitudes and patterns of social

behaviour of the youth. The findings of the study are in the consonance with the cultivation theory given by Gerbner (1967) which states that the constant exposure of media affects the people and also alters their perception . Weber (2006) also viewed that rationalization would lead to dehumanized and alienated society where technology will take over the intelligence and emotions of a human being. Social media is turning today's youth into passive recipients of knowledge and information who is mostly unwilling to challenge its content. The humanly created Social media has begun to exert dominance over its creator. Social media has been successful in creating a global village in which people of different cultures can connect with each other within seconds. Besides, it has changed people's lifestyle, language, opinions and nature of interpersonal relationships giving rise to new set of values and beliefs. It can be concluded that social media has emerged as a powerful tool of change. The proliferation of social media has revolutionised communication strategies and lifestyle patterns; especially among youth, giving way to new strains of cultural thoughts and practices.

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 (&) instead of the word "and" when listing multiple authors of a single work. e.g. Smith, J. D., & Jones,
 M.
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Books

Frank, R. H., & Bernanke, B. (2007). Principles of macro-economics (3rd ed.). Boston, MA: McGraw-Hill/Irwin.

Edited book

 $\label{eq:Gibbs, J. T., & Huang, L. N. (Eds.). (2001). Children of color: Psychological interventions with culturally diverse youth. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.$

Journal article

Almeida, L. (1990). Morphological differences between American and Brazilian Pig Latin constructions. Piggiotica, 13, 946-987.

Journal article, accessed online

 $Ku, G. \ (2008). \ Learning to de-escalate: The effects of regret in escalation of commitment. Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes, 105(2), 221-232. \\ doi:10.1016/j.obhdp.2007.08.002$

Dissertation

Knight, A. (2001). Exercise and osteoarthritis of the knee (Unpublished master's dissertation). Auckland University of Technology, Auckland, New Zealand.

Dissertation, accessed online

Young, R. F. (2007). Crossing boundaries in urban ecology: Pathways to sustainable cities (Doctoral dissertation). Available from ProQuest Dissertations & Theses database. (UMI No. 327681)

Essays or chapters in edited books

Labajo, J. (2003). Body and voice: The construction of gender in flamenco. In T. Magrini (Ed.), Music and gender: perspectives from the Mediterranean (pp. 67-86). Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Encyclopedia set or dictionary

Sadie, S., & Tyrrell, J. (Eds.). (2002). The new Grove dictionary of music and musicians (2nd ed., Vols. 1-29). New York, NY: Grove.

Data set from a database

 $Bloomberg\ L.P.\ (2008).\ Return\ on\ capital\ for\ Hewitt\ Packard\ 12/31/90\ to\ 09/30/08.\ Retrieved\ Dec.\ 3,2008, from\ Bloomberg\ database.$

Central Statistics Office of the Republic of Botswana. (2008). Gross domestic product per capita 06/01/1994 to 06/01/2008 [statistics]. Available from CEIC Data database.

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