ICT Adoption on Cultural Preservation Amongst Indian Youth in Selangor, Malaysia

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Abstract

This paper presents the significant role of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) on cultural preservation among Indian Youth in Selangor, Malaysia. A middle-class youth group aged 18 to 35 years old participated in the study in Subang Jaya, Selangor. In-depth interviews, which were used as a qualitative data collection method, helped the researchers in developing a comprehensive understanding of how ICT is used to preserve culture. Usage of multiple and variety of ICT devices in daily life gave the space and opportunity to know about culture. However, some informants feel that socialization and parents imparting knowledge about culture still play an important role. It is hoped that the findings of this study will contribute to the existing literature on how ICT can play a role in preserving culture in the future and among the coming younger generation who will be leaving life in a world surrounded by ICT. Despite being a minority in Malaysia, the Indian community should be given equal rights and access to ICT to carry out their daily functions, including developing their cultural capital and cultural preservation

Keywords: ICT, Indian, Youth, Culture, Preservation

Introduction

Malaysia has prioritized the growth of its ICT sector due to increased worldwide advancement and rivalry in the field. The Malaysian government has established a number of implementation plans, as well as a significant funding allocation, to encourage digital development, especially in rural areas.

Changes in attitude and desire of the people in the use of ICT, Malaysia also revealed the increased use of ICT is due to active use among youth. Techno-culture is a youth culture that is based on the increasing use of technology such as the internet, computers, and technological devices wirelessly (Samsudin, 2017). The evidence, most youths have been exposed to the development of ICT (Dzuhailmi et al., 2011). For the younger generation, technology is not just a gadget or information, but it is a requirement and a must to be part

of their lives (Samsudin, 2017). They seem cannot function without technology facilities, especially the youth who are more aware, active, and efficient in using ICT (Saifudeen, 2003). This is caused by the younger generation growing up in a media-rich environment. They treat the media as a normal thing to be an integral part of their lives. Meanwhile, the media has become an integral part of the lives of young people, there is no denying that in most of their daily life, they will receive and process information from the media (Samsudin, 2017).

While ICT has been integrated into people's daily lives, ethnic minorities should not be left behind in terms of ICT participation. This is due to the government's implementation of various development plans to ensure that all citizens have access to ICT (Fang et al., 2021). Therefore, ethnic minorities should also share such development and be brought to participate in all national mainstream development. Among the most common way used to bring ethnic minorities to join the national ICT development is through participation in the education system. A research conducted by Sarjit et al (2012) focused on six ethnic minorities in Peninsular Malaysia found that ethnic minorities view ICT as an important tool in sustaining their cultural identity (The Star Online, 2015). On contrary, mostly native people in Peninsular Malaysia are still experiencing digital divide, mainly because most native villages still do not have easy access to facilitate and encourage aboriginal people to use ICT (Sarjit *et al*., 2009).

Selangor as the leading and advanced state in Malaysia is highly focused on the implementation of ICT development. To what extent the implementation of the ICT development policy and programs have contributed to developing the digital community among the ethnic minority such as the Indians in Selangor? To what extent the adoption of ICT has impacted the sustainability of the Indian youth's cultural identity? These pertinent questions are to be studied in line with the government's efforts to build a digital and inclusive community as stated in the Shared Prosperity Vision (SPV) 2030, which aims to ensure that no Malaysian is left behind in the country's development.

Literature Review
Indian's Culture
Since the beginning of the first century, when Indians interacted with the local community, Indian culture began to permeate the Malay Archipelago. Because Malaya was rich in gold, silver, spices, rubber, cinnamon, and other commodities, this interaction is based on economics and trade interests (Singam, 1968). According to Arasaratnam (1970), Chola Rajas from India also ruled Malaya. Chandis in Kedah's Bujang Valley and pots, kitchen tools, and ornaments from India are living proof.

The development of the Srivijaya government as a powerful maritime empire in the 9th century allowed Indian traders to travel from South India and conduct trade activities in Kedah, known at the time as 'Kadaram' (Nayagam, 1966).

Aside from trading, religious beliefs from the Indian subcontinent seep into local culture. This is clearly stated in the establishment of Sanskrit written stones and 'Pallava Grantha' in the Old Kedah Inscription, which demonstrates the spread of Hindu-Buddhism by merchants (Netto, 1961).

The Indians who arrived in Malaya during the British colonial period in the late 1800s and early 1900s were forced labourers (Sandhu, 1969). According to Janakey Raman in his research report (2012), the Indians arrival began in 1786, following the British capture of Penang. Initially, Indian labourers were brought in to work on Penang's sugarcane and coffee plantations (Chandragantham, 2008).

Modern migration had improved the attractive composition of Malaya's Indian population. Tamils account for 77 percent of the Indian community in Malaya and Singapore (Rajeswary, 1981) Malayans and Telegu make up 14 percent of the total Indian community, with Punjabis, Bengalis, Gujeratis, and Sindhis making up the rest. Tamils, according to Rajeswary (1981), are concentrated in Perak, Selangor, and Negeri Sembilan, as well as a small portion of Penang and Singapore.

Youth and Culture
While Selangor is progressing well in building the state into a thriving, sustainable and prosperous region, art and culture are crucial drivers of society and constitute an integral element of Smart Selangor 2025. Selangor, which has a sizable youth population, should encourage young people to serve as cultural bridge builders and key agents in promoting peace and intercultural understanding.

Culture has the ability to transform entire societies, strengthen local communities, and instill a sense of identity and belonging in people of all ages. Culture, as a vehicle for youth development and civic engagement, is critical in promoting long-term social and economic development for future generations.

The media of the twenty-first century is altering when, where, what, and how young people learn. As ICT advances, the community will benefit more from learning about other cultures while also promoting and preserving their own. As we progress toward a network society, we must always ensure that cultural legacies, especially those of indigenous peoples, are preserved and passed down to future generations. Traditional culture, according to King (1993), is not necessarily an impediment to change, nor will it simply succumb to modernity. These changes could be implemented in a way that promotes modernization while also respecting community values and practices.

Several studies on technology acceptance among individuals and organisations for various uses have been conducted, but only a few have highlighted the use of ICT for cultural preservation. Sarjit, Talib, Choo, and Puvaneswaran (2016) discovered that ethnic minorities view ICT as an important tool in sustaining their cultural identity in a study of six ethnic minorities in Peninsular Malaysia. The study's limitation is that it does not focus on Indians in Malaysia, specifically in the state of Selangor.

Discussions about the social identity of the Indian community in Malaysia must be limited in scope because the Indian community in Malaysia is not a homogeneous society. They have a significant division of sub-ethnics in terms of culture, language, religion, and other factors.

One of the arguments to be made here is that technological advancement can help in the process of cultural transmission and preservation. Modern technologies, on the other hand,

cannot replace human interaction when it comes to cultural transmission because the process involves cognitive and emotional processes. Because it lacks empathy and the four C's – creative thinking, creativity, communication, and collaboration (Alrassi et al., 2020) technology is irreplaceable for humans. Humans have five sensory organs that help us coordinate our daily activities, whereas technology does not. As a result, the limitations of technology in conveying nonverbal communication frequently lead to misinterpretation (Hidayanto & Sarwono, 2021). While culture is a phenomenology process, it requires one to participate, experience and learn about the meaning of the culture.

ICT Development in Selangor
Many initiatives have been launched in Malaysia to increase ICT adoption among Malaysians. Unfortunately, while ICT development has been extensive, it has been rather selective, focusing more on urban areas, resulting in a digital divide among the rural community, where a significant number of Indian populations has been residing since colonial times when they were socially divided to work in rural plantations (Govindasamy, 2010).

With its existing physical infrastructure and a focus on enabling more service-based industries, Selangor has remained Malaysia's economic powerhouse, resulting in the highest GDP growth among all other states. The state has also recognised that disruptive digital technologies have the potential to render most of Selangor's traditional strengths obsolete if appropriate initiatives to embrace and leverage these disruptive technologies are not put in place. Hence, Smart Selangor is a Selangor state government initiative with the goal of making Selangor a liveable Smart State in ASEAN by 2025. As reported by MCMC in the first quarter of 2020, Selangor is among the states that recorded a high mobile penetration rate of 125.9%. This also indicates that Selangor's ICT coverage is well developed and accommodating to people's usage.

Methodology
The main intention of this study is to explore the contemporary issues on the role of ICT in cultural preservation among Indian Youth in Selangor, Malaysia. According to the Department of Statistics Malaysia, Selangor is home to approximately 20% of Malaysia's population (6.53 million out of 32.7 million in 2019) of various ethnic backgrounds. It has a young population, with more than 69 percent of the population under the age of 40.

Thus, in this study, data was gathered using a qualitative approach. An in-depth interview technique was used to collect data. The snowball sampling technique was used to select the informants. Data saturation was used to determine the number of informants to the study by employing a theoretical sampling method. The informants are the middle-class youth group from age 18 until 35 years old in Subang Jaya, Malaysia. Data were analyzed using the thematic analysis technique.

Findings and Discussions
This study included eight youth informants, with an equal number of male and female informants. Two informants were under the age of 20, four were in their twenties, and two were over 30. Six of the informants attended national schools (Sekolah Kebangsaan), while the others attended Tamil vernacular schools (Sekolah Jenis Kebangsaan). In terms of education, two were in pre-university, two were in university, and the rest were working adults. Every informant owned at least one gadget, such as a smartphone, laptop, or tablet.

Religious Preservation
Indian culture is embedded with Hindu religious and spiritual aspects because religion is a way of life. Thus, few informants indicated clearly that they use ICT to seek spiritual knowledge.

> *"Now my cultural search is mostly religiously based, I read Mahabharata, Vedas, and Bhagavad Gita using the Internet". Most of the information, which is in book form, now on the Internet. I read my e-book on the Internet."* (Liven, 18 years old, male)

> *"I have been using the ICT platform to learn culture because I am ignorant. Recently I am unable to attend any religious classes, so I am going through online and seeking things I don't know. Many things which didn't catch my interest earlier are catching my interest now."* (Neeru, 35 years old, female)

The informants have access to religious materials, including e-books, by browsing the internet. With access to ICT, informants can easily attend religious classes via an online platform. Online religious classes are more interesting and appealing than traditional classroom settings.

Festivals Preservation
According to the informants, ICT is also well utilized for festival celebration purposes. During the major cultural events such as Deepavali and Thaipusam, the usage of ICT is evident.

> *"I like sending my cultural event wishes on an auspicious day like Deepavali or Ponggal using social media to family and friends using ICT. I also get to know about my culture and auspicious day using the Internet. Some years Deepavali in October and some of the years in November, so the right information can be obtained using the Internet."* (Neha, 18 years old, female)

The use of social media has enabled informants to connect with family and friends, particularly during important festivals. Seasonal greetings can be easily sent via social media platforms. Furthermore, the internet can easily provide accurate information.

> *"Most of my culture comes from my parents as I am brought up in a Hindu household. I am not a very cultured person. Anyway, I do use ICT to find out about when is events like Deepavali and Thaipusam taking place."* (Tivan, 27 years old, male)

> *"I get a lot of information about my culture from ICT, such as the day of a certain festival like Ponggal, Deepavali, Tamil New Year and auspicious time and day to celebrate it. All this info can get it online."* (Theva, age 34 years old, female)

The findings revealed rich interactions with social media content that not only captured and enriched app users' personal festival experiences, but also elicited points of reflection that influenced how they shared their festival experiences with friends, family members, and online community members (Shih et al., 2015).

Traditional Clothing Preservation
The utilization of ICT in clothing preservation is done by buying online and propagating the traditional attire on social media. According to Durham (2013), people should perceive culture as a process through which human beings are obliged constantly to produce and utilize cultural goods to be able to act in society.

> *"Almost everything is online now, so we can buy Saree, dhoti, and jewelry sets online.* (Neha, 8 years old, Female).

They will be able to use cultural goods and preserve the culture when they purchase traditional clothing online. The use of ICT makes the process of obtaining cultural goods more convenient, making it more affordable and accessible to people (Gachenge, 2020).

Spiritual practices preservation
ICT is regarded as a tool used for changing world values and making society a knowledge-based environment where things are processed electronically (Hassan & Siyanbola, 2006). This finding co-relates with what was said by one of the informants;

> *"I would say ICT or to be specific social media has been playing an important role when it comes to new information and aspects about culture, which even my parents didn't teach me in the first place. I read and listen to some post, talks or speech which explains a certain aspect of the culture, makes me understand more about it."* (Ari, 19 years old, male)

According to King (1993), so-called traditional culture is not necessarily an impediment to change, nor will it simply succumb to modernity. These changes could be implemented in a way that facilitates the modernization process while also accommodating community values and practices. Respondent echo's the same thought by saying;

> *"Although I learn cultural aspects through parents and family, as I grew up, I look up to information on ICT about the culture which I don't understand from parents teaching. I look for information and reason on why we are practicing some cultural activities."* (San, 25 years old, female)

They seem cannot function without technology facilities, especially the youth who are more aware, active, and efficient in using ICT (Saifudeen, 2003). Saifudeen's finding is very much relevant to the information given by one of the informants.

> *"From my childhood time my parents guided with all my cultural things, but as I grew up and entered university, I look for some reasons for cultural practice using ICT."* (Meera 28 years old, Female).

Conclusion
This investigation shows that the Indian youth group used ICT to learn about Tamil culture. This group believes that online cultural information is essential for learning about their culture. Some of them believe that ICT information about their culture is comprehensive and trustworthy. Most of them believe that cultural information is easily accessible via ICT. Although

most people learn about culture from their parents, the way they were raised, and socialising, ICT is still important for learning more and in depth. In this digital age, ICT plays an important role in community development.

The diversity of culture within the community must be recognised and respected when discussing and debating community development. Several studies have found that ICT is a catalyst for cultural erosion, but this study proves otherwise. The preservation of cultural attributes by the Indian youth group can be viewed as a positive cultural adoption. This youth community, on the other hand, believes that ICT is not the only agent of cultural preservation. Socialization, family influence, and mediatization are other factors to consider.

The findings show that ICT facilitates the expression, exploration, and experimentation of one's identity, which is a natural part of the human experience. Without a doubt, ICT has become an essential part of every human's life. Despite being a minority in Malaysia, the Indian community should be given equal rights and access to ICT to carry out their daily functions, including developing their cultural capital and cultural preservation

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