

The role of social media in the expression and transmission of specific cultural elements among college students in Tamil Nadu.

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Abstract

Media and communication serve as an effective tool for expressing, transmitting and preserving culture of any society. In the internet era, social media with their user-friendly tools and accessibility, have become bedrock of expressing the popular culture among its users. Social media are embedded in lives of young students through which they share or exchange a number of cultural aspects like food, taste, dressing, language, lifestyle, signs and symbols, rites and rituals etc. Expression of these cultural elements have two-fold objectives: they want to establish the uniqueness and speciality of their culture and to affirm the cultural identity. Social networking sites also play a constructive role in fashioning the way we perceive, understand and construct meanings of our perspectives of reality. This paper makes an attempt to study how college-going students who largely use social media on a daily basis express their cultural elements and find out how they prove the uniqueness of the culture and their cultural identity. This study is done by using online ethnography model and impression management theory.

Keywords: Social media, cultural elements, cultural identity, expression and transmission.

I.Introduction

After the growth of internet-based communication, social media became very popular among young people who are using it for their daily interaction. Social media like whatsapp, twitter, Facebook, Instagram, TikTok are ruling the minds of the young college-going students. In a way social networking sites have drastically changed the way the students interact and communicate with one another. They use social media for exchanging and sharing of information, ideas, thoughts and feelings with their online friends. They rely upon social media heavily even for sharing ordinary things. They come to know others and understand other's feelings only the constant use of social media and allow others to understand them mutually. Thus, they have moved from on-ground socialisation to online socialisation. When they share about their nature of work, life style and other skills, they unconsciously share about cultural background. This is a big paradigm shift in the digital world. So, social media have become a platform for expressing and transmitting the specific cultural elements. They share about their language, food, dress, celebrations, festivals, religious rites, rituals, place of worship, art forms etc.

Social media has become important tool for the young adults to express themselves in modern society. It is sufficiently versatile as medium that it can fill the changing needs of individual as well as the broad requirements of the generation as a whole. Although social media is a powerful tool to exchange information, it is far from ideal for communication information about oneself in the complicated context present in networks of human relationship. The largest difference in usage seems to be caused by age and the background of their experiences. The younger users tend to have visually busier profiles, prominently displaying their tastes, hobbies and personal preferences. In contrast, older users usually have simpler profiles, focused more on their friends and ongoing messages between members of their social groups.

Social media have opened the doors of freedom of expression in terms of interpersonal relationship. The college-going students have explored greater possibilities in social media to initiate and develop interpersonal relationship with old friends of their school days and new friends who are of the same age, same academic ventures and in similar professions. It is not merely developing interpersonal relationships for their emotional satisfaction, but it goes beyond getting them connected online to share information, exchange views, hold discussion, upload photos and videos, and not the least of online activities like internet banking and whole lot of other commercial activities.

These online activities have really empowered the college-students in many respects. For example, the students who are using social media actually create their own content and post them in their Facebook page. This content creation in social media really boosts their self-image. They create a content featuring their cultural aspects in their regular postings. We can say two things about the relationship between online and physical-world cultures at this time. First, the growth of interaction on digital networks influences “traditional” cultures. Second, longstanding cultural traditions are influencing digital culture as it takes shape. The ethics and norms established in the physical world shape our views about behavior and values in digital networks. The term norm refers to a behavioral standard. This paper makes an attempt to analyse how social media users express their cultural elements in their social media page and take pride in transmitting the same with the online users.

II. Review of Literature

Social media have captured the attention of college-going students because it serves as a big platform for making friendship and novel form of social interaction. They have not only changed the modes of human interaction, but they have also showed a new direction to young people to search for constructing identity online. They are able to get a personal space for self-expression. Many young people today are living within the two distinct yet interconnected worlds of the real and virtual. The real world consists of a life lived offline, (actual reality) while the virtual world constitutes a life online (computer mediated reality).

In the words of Gustav S. Mesch, (2009) Internet culture is defined as a social space in its own right, exploring the forms of consumption and content production and the patterns of online communication and social interaction, expression and identity formation that are produced within this digital social space, as well as how they are sustained by the resources available within the online setting. This review of literature looks at the various studies which have been done on connection with social media providing the individuals free space for expressing their specific cultural aspects.

Meehthild Maczewski (2004) made a study on how youth view their experiences of online interactions. Three main themes had emerged in the study. First is the notion of vowness- experiencing excitement and expansion. Second is the experience of freedom, power and connectedness. And, third is the exploring self and identities through virtual relationships. He had an interesting finding that the youth who are engaged in online activity do not primarily engage in one activity but multiple activities often at the same time. They were chatting with friends, hosting chats themselves, producing their own magazines, designing their website, finding information, engaging in political activism, playing games and many more. In all these online activities they experience excitement and expansion of relationship.

Going online was not only very convenient to youth but also it made them feel very relaxed and feel free. They defined online space as a space of their own, where they were connected with people and they felt that they could really talk to and engage in similar interests with their friends. Personal space is important for exploration of self and identities. In her analysis, she had described how youth online found such a space in social media, because they were able to express themselves in ways not found for themselves in traditional media. From the responses of the youth, the researcher was able to find out the differences between online experiences and on-ground experiences. In their on-ground world, they thought that they did not express themselves honestly. Whereas, in online situation, they were free to express themselves honestly.

Sherry Trukle, (1995) theorized that our experiences online challenged our culture’s traditional notion of identity. Internet, linking millions of people together across the globe, has significantly changed the way we think about our identity. Unlike face-to-face interaction, online interaction provided an opportunity for people to be anonymous, invisible, and multiple. Identity has come to be thought in terms of multiplicity and flexibility. Users have the opportunity to express the unexplored aspects of the self.

Treasa Correa *et al.* (2013) suggested that there was an influence of these social media on social interactions. Most of the adults made use of social networking sites in their routine life. The results of the study also showed that people who were more open to new experiences were more likely to rely on social media. Also, the fact that more extroverts used social media and that they got connected with people they already knew than the introverts. Dennis Mazalin and Susan Moore, (2004) examined the relationship between times spent online and other aspects of wellbeing. They also studied connection between social relationship and social anxiety. Increase in the social media usage was found to be associated with the decline in the size of a person’s social circle. It also led to depression and loneliness. The lack of intimacy in relationship was assumed to be a direct result of too much time being spent online; social media addiction physically moved away them from peer group relations. There was a correlation between social anxieties and internet use more with men than women.

Social media provided various online activities to its users such as leisure activities (gaming), social activities (chatting, uploading photos), and information activities (newspaper and journals) which were said to be the functions of personality. Lisa J. Orchard and Chris Fullword (2010) suggested that the use of social media might vary from person to person depending on their personalities. Some preferred face-to-face interaction with their friends. And some preferred chat rooms to interact. For example, introverts favoured chat rooms for social interaction. On the other hand, the extroverts preferred social media as supplementary tools to strengthen existing friendship and to communicate with others.

Celia Lam (2013) examined how online interactions played a role in the expression of national and cultural identities. The results of the study revealed a highly nuanced expression of self-hood where National and Cultural identities were enacted as major components of a holistic personal online identity. Cultural identity was part of one's personal identity. With regard to national Identity, the study indicated that students responded to iconic imagery typically associated with Australia in their online representation of a National identity. Possibly because, the study was based in Sydney and thus participants had a heightened awareness of Sydney icons, the Sydney Harbour Bridge etc. To express cultural identity, the respondents used both visual (photos/picture, cultural attire) and aural (music) components of their online profiles.

Zorana Ivcevic and Nalini Ambady (2012) stated that Facebook users uploaded a profile pictures and shared a variety of self-descriptive information in categories such as interests, favourite music, movies and quotes. In every day context all these information could reveal one's personality. They revealed that identity claims on Facebook pages left relatively consistent impressions on others.

According to Kevada A. (2009) the reciprocity, interactivity were important features of social media. These elements helped Facebook users both for their bonding and for the development of an individual identity or collective identity. This meant that it was important for the social media user to be active on social media sites. He/she must constantly post pictures, photos and comments and follow their friends keeping track of their feedback.

Nelly Elias and Dafna Lemish (2009) found that social media provided young adolescent migrants with valuable social, cultural and emotional resources for over all empowerment. This happened to them in a critical period of major material and social disadvantages of immigration. When they initially settled down in a new place after immigration, they found satisfaction through online interaction in social media. The study brought out the unique characteristics of social media, such as cultural and linguistic diversity, accessibility, interactivity and anonymity. Thus the review of literature reveals that how young students use social media as a platform to express their cultural elements by doing a number of online activities.

III. Research Question

How do the college-going students make use of social media for expressing and transmitting their specific cultural aspects through the interaction with the online friends?

IV. Objectives of the study

1. To study how internet-based digital technology has changed the mode of daily interaction among college-going students.
2. To study the general usage pattern of social media among college-going students
3. To examine how do social media become an instrument providing a personal space for self- expression.
4. To investigate how social media play an instrumental role in expressing the specific cultural elements with the online community.

V. Methodology

Online ethnography model is employed in this study. It involves the researcher to minutely attending to the details of online user's movements in social media. The online ethnographer is immersed in an online environment with the students. He closely watches, observes the subjects to be studied and he keeps a diary noting down their behaviors, thoughts, ideas, opinions and other kinds of activity they do in social media. He also observes all postings namely profile, information, Likes and Comments, photographs, pictures, type of language used, expression of feelings and online chat.

VI. Tool for data collection

As part of the study, the researcher selected 80 students who are regularly using FacebookWhatsapp and Instagram. They also became friends with the researcher in these social media. With their prior consent, he observed their Facebook pages daily two hours in the morning and two hours in the evening. It lasted for one month. He closely observed five variables in Facebook namely, profile information, profile name, timeline activity, Likes and Comments and status updates. Among other social media, Facebook was chosen for online ethnographic study because it was used by many of the college-going students and it has more interactive tools than other social media. All the activities done in Facebook were taken note of. They were later classified and analyzed.

During the observation period of one month, the investigator had an online chat with students who were alive online. This was done mainly to clarify certain issues on their online activities and the real motivation behind the activities. Since their phone numbers or emails were available, it was easy to contact them again to listen to their experiences in Facebook. So, the researcher, based on the need, contacted the students through mobile phones, had a long chat with them and collected many details which were not visibly available in Facebook pages.

VII. Analysis and Discussion

Profile information could be seen as form of digital body in which individuals described themselves in detail. Through the profiles, teenagers and adults could express salient aspects of their identity for others to see and interpret. In the *Contact and Basic Info* column, boys gave details about their birthdays, interests, languages known, and how to contact them. For example, they gave their personal interests, skills and hobbies such as photography, sports, drawing, drama, music, videos and driving. They were free to express their religious and political views. For instance, Prabakaran Boss said that humanism was his religion and he was an opposition party to all political parties. Tamizh Joe said that God is love; so, we should love each other. In *Family Relationships* column, boys gave information about their family status and family members. Since all of them were students they said that they remained single. And they were happy to give the names of family members and relatives with photos. Father, mother, brothers, sisters, uncle, brother-in-law, sister-in-law and other relatives were listed. During online chat, the boys said that their openness and willingness to share their personal details with others would get them many friends. The also said that when others appreciated their profile information, they felt that they were recognized. Most of the girls hesitated to give all their personal details in the profile information. It was observed that girls filled in 55% of details about them in the given seven fields. Other 45 % columns remained vacant. They gave only minimum personal details. The overview category itself showed that many of the fields were not filled in. 63% of girls did not give their phone numbers, email address and postal address in the contact and basic information field. When asked about their unwillingness to share the contact information, they said that the boys traced them and gave them repeated friend requests. And, some boys called them over phone to speak unwanted things.

Profile Name

The user's profile name should be the same as he or she is known in offline world. This would help the old friends to identify them and get reunited using the social media as a platform. It becomes a key element of one's self-introduction to the online friends. According to Shanyang Zhao (2005), self-description begins with the selection of a *screen name* for oneself. The dressing sense of a person, his facial expression, his appearance and the way one speaks etc. in the offline context gives the first impression to others. Similarly, a screen name in social media generates first impression of a person to online friends.

Boys were more comfortable using their real names. Girls did not give their original names in social media, because they wanted to be recognized only by known friends. Some of the girls said that the unknown people misused the name, unnecessarily chased them and threatened them. For example, Bhuvi Kool had such experiences of threat from unknown friends. The investigator observed that there was an element of creativity and novelty in coining profile names. Social media users had their own reasons for creating innovative names. The reason they articulated was that they became playful as they shifted from offline conversation to online conversation. They liked their online names and kept as dear to them. These creative names were pet names, nicknames, or in the way their close friends called them in offline reality.

These names also brought out the unique character, special interests and talents of an individual. For example, a boy has kept *Ram Kumar Hockey* as his profile name. It was learnt that he was a hockey player and he loved hockey more than anything else. He also wanted to reach a greater height in hockey. So he kept his profile name as *Ram Kumar Hockey*.

Another girl gave her profile names as *Pavi Feministo*. She expressed that she was influenced by feminist ideology. Her original name was Pavithra. She was called by her close friends as Pavi. So she kept as Pavi Feministo. It was noted that unlike boys, a majority of girl respondents added their father's name as second name. For example, Jisha Miranda, Uma Chinnanan, Jansi Devasahayam, Kaiser Rjeswaran, Suhirha Michael, Leena Irudayaraj, Elakiya Ilangovan, Gayathiri Jayaraman and Valli Selvaraj were noticed as profile names. This is the example of typical Tamil culture which has the tradition that girls before marriage keep their father's name as surname and after marriage it is replaced by husband's name. The girl's freedom is curtailed by the cultural practice. This is not the case with boys. They are always proud to have their original names.

The students have also mentioned that how they like to be addressed during online chat, or posting a comment in social media. For example, among boys, Arun Ikran wanted to be called *Aabyam*. Eswara Sinagm had his other name as *Eshan*. Saravanaperumal wanted to be called *Romantic Saravana*. Vijayaragavan liked to be called as Ragav. Girls also had variety of other names. For example, Jansi Devasahayam was her original name. But she expressed that she liked to be called as *Janu* not Jansi. These pet names are once again the clear expression of cultural element which stands for closeness.

Timeline Activity

Timeline activity is the frequency with which a social media user visits his or her page and carries out various activities which could be reviewed at any time. It helped the users to reveal who they were in social media. They defined online space as a space of their own, where they were connected with people; they felt that they could really talk to friends and engage with people with similar interests in online context.

It was observed that they visited their social media account daily for four reasons. First, they wanted to see how many Likes they had received for their latest posting. For instance, Eswara Singam posted a poster on the theme 'hard work' which he designed in his social media page in the previous day. The next day he eagerly opened his page to look at the number of Likes and comments he had received for the poster he uploaded. He received more than hundred likes and positive comments. Those Likes and comments made him feel very happy. He said that he was encouraged to upload such posters regularly. Tamizh Joe used to share a thought or reflection on love, friendship and marriage daily in the morning. When he opened his social media page either in the afternoon or in the evening, he was happy to look at the number of Likes and comments for his postings. Che Quvera Arockiam uploaded Tamil poems written by him on various themes such as love, friendship, love failure, marriage etc. He was always very enthusiastic to see how many Likes and Comments he received for his poems. He said that he wanted to get his friends' opinion regarding his poems. He also got an idea to publish these poems in form of a book based on the comments received from his online friends.

The second reason for daily timeline activity was found to be the respondents' eagerness to look at what other online friends posted with their Likes and Comments to them. For example, Dixon Sebas who was interested in drama, make-up and photography said that he was always interested in looking at creative, artistic photos in social media; if his expectations were fulfilled by his own group friends, he was happy to give Likes and positive comments. Similarly, Jansi Devasahayam was very much interested in cooking. Naturally when some of her online friends posted photos of new dishes, cakes, food items, she gave Likes and gave a good appreciation for the postings.

The third reason was that they wanted to wish their online friends on their birthdays, anniversaries, and other occasions. They designed birthday cards to their relatives, peer group friends well in advance for posting it on the day of their birthdays. It was observed that they prepared those cards. Siva Daksh said

that before social media came into existence, friends bought readymade greeting cards and sent them by post.

Likes and Comments are yet other key components which are measureable in terms of number of counts, words, statements and phrases in social media. Likes could be counted just by clicking 'Like' button. And, *Comments* could be taken into account in terms of the quality of the words used. The number of Likes are shown down under the photos or pictures posted by an individual.

They expressed that more number of Likes and comments made them feel happy, relaxed, excited, surprised and satisfied because they made a right choice of photos or good textual messages to upload in Facebook which brought them many Likes. Less number of Likes from the online friends made them dull, unhappy and dissatisfied. They also said that more number of Likes gave them a sense of pride. They felt that they were recognized by the online friends.

They also said that they were anxious to look at the number of Likes received for their postings. They tried to make a guess what kind of photos or pictures would bring them more Likes and what not. If a good-looking photo of an individual could bring maximum number of Likes, he or she was happy. For example, Prasanth said that more number of Likes he received for his photos really boosted his image among his peer group. If he did not get many Likes for a particular posting, naturally he would remove it.

Saisutha Chakarapani said that she compared the number of Likes she received with the number of Likes her peer group members received. If her Likes were less, she felt unhappy. It was learnt that the students mainly compared the number of Likes with that of their peer group members. This comparison took place because, each one wanted to prove who was popular among them based on the number of Likes they received.

Students said consistently that if they got hundreds of Likes for their posting than other friends, then it was a credit to their personality. They felt that they were great like heroes, and they were somebody. For example, Tony Arockiaraj was interested in photography. He clicked many photos on the streets. He uploaded some of the selected photographs in his social media page with caption street photos. He received 150 Likes from his friends and he felt encouraged to take more photos in the future.

Generally, posting good photographs, nice quotes, poems, punch dialogues, and timely comments on various issues received immediate response at least from some of the online friends. For instance, John Anto uploaded many quotations on friendship, love, companionship, forgiveness, success and failures. He was excited, happy that he got 200 Likes for all his postings. When an individual received an academic award, medals in sports, or any other contests, he/she immediately shared that information along with relevant photographs in their social media pages.

Uploading of Photos

Facebook allows its users to upload photos by way of sharing information with online friends. It has many provisions to upload photos in each one's page and those photos could be accessed not only by the friends in the list but any other social media user. They upload photos of all that happened in their daily life in Facebook and Instagram. They focus mainly in their dress, food, visiting places, special skills, achievements and important events like festivals, birthdays, parties etc. Some of the boys edited the photos which they had already taken and uploaded them as profile photos. If they were not able to edit, they sought the help of others who were familiar with Photoshop software, and did all the possible editing to make the photograph look better. For example, Prabakaran Boss from Coimbatore said that he did his visual communication course. He loved Photography as his special subject. So, he clicked good photos and edited them to make them look more appealing and attractive. He also edited the photographs of others to their satisfaction before uploading in Facebook.

Status updates served respondents as a platform to read the pulse of online friends. For instance, Dixon Sebas, uploaded an informal photo as a status update, it received many Likes and comments recognizing his unique talent as an actor. He kept that photo as his profile photo. He said that many wished him to become a big cine actor in the days to come after looking at the informal photos. He said that he was well-

recognized and well-accepted. One third of the boys changed their profile photos once a week. Others changed the profile photos depending upon their moods. They also changed the profile photos as and when they took photos with friends, visiting important places etc.

Girls used cute and adorable visuals like babes, cartoons, flowers, toys, *mehanti*, religious symbols and nice quotations as profile images. When asked for reasons, they gave two reasons. First, they said that all their close friends knew their identity. So, they were very comfortable in getting touch with them even without the profile photos. Secondly, they were able to avoid problems by not uploading their photos. Without the profile photos, they felt safe, free and comfortable in Facebook and Instagram. All the girls do not feel comfortable with their original photos to be uploaded. This is the reflection of unsafe feeling in the day-to-day reality outside.

Some religious symbols as profile images were noticeable in some of the girls' social media pages. For example, Gayathiri Jayaraman uploaded the image of Lord Murugan as profile photo. And Melba Balasingam uploaded Bible verse and Jesus as her profile image. When asked for reasons they said that they wanted to identify as a Hindu and a Christian respectively. They said that their friends respected the religious symbols in social media. It was interesting to note photos of *mehanti* as profile images in girls' social media pages. For example, Monisha Raj uploaded a picture of *mehanti* in her hand as profile image for which she received many likes from her friends.

Boys took a lot of interest in uploading cover photos which reflected their special interests. For example, Ram Kumar's cover photos showed him holding a trophy in a group. He said that he was more interested in sports and wanted to achieve greater things in sports. Prasanth Arun kept a photo which captured him sitting in the midst of plants and trees with a caption underneath 'Indian Botanist'. He expressed that he wanted to become a great botanist in the future. That was his dream. Tony Arockiaraj who was a visual communication student uploaded good and thematic photos which brought out his unique photographic talents. He said that all his friends not only appreciated him but also recognized him as a good photographer. Another 25% of boys uploaded rare photos with nice quotations, mostly on the values of friendship, love, relationship etc.

Ashok Pandian used a picture of bull fight (*Jallikattu- a veera vlaiyaattu*) as his cover photo. He expressed that he wanted to identify with this Jallikattu for two reasons. First of all, it reminded him of ancient Tamil tradition. And he wanted to identify himself with the region (Madurai) which is his native place. Also he wanted to tell his friends that Madurai is a place where the traditional bull fight was regularly conducted every year in Tamil Nadu.

It was found that the girls' cover photos were more creative, trendy, innovative, and reflective than boys. Majority of the girl respondents said that they were more interested in creating an ideal self. In this research, 25% of girls had group photos of friends and relatives as cover photos. Those photos depicted mainly their close friends, classmates and hostel mates. For example, Sugirtha Michael and Jhansi Devasahayam uploaded group photos of their friends. They said that they valued their friendship.

It was observed that when boys uploaded their individual photos in their status updates. There was a tendency to present themselves as a hero, powerful, magnificent, valiant, achiever etc. For this, they shot photos in different backgrounds, in different angles and in different lighting.

In addition to birthdays, it was observed that the respondents wished each other on the common celebrations like New Year, Pongal, Diwali, Christmas and Valentine's day etc. It so happened that Valentine's Day also came during the online ethnographic study. On that day many posted prepared greetings on Valentine's Day. Mostly boys wished girls on this occasion. All the greetings were found to be very creative, trendy and innovative. They all emphasized the importance of love and friendship. Photos taken in close-up shots super-imposing the individual person were noticeable in almost 70% of the boys' Facebook accounts. They said that those photos have helped them to create a new image in the online context.

Also photos expressing different feelings and emotions like happiness, sadness, excitement, surprise, failure and depression were uploaded in boys' Facebook pages. Some boys uploaded photos which cherished good memories. For example, photos taken with VIPs, picnic spots, tourist places, seashore, temples and big shopping malls were found in Facebook, Whatsapp and Instagram. When the girls wore a new *saree* or *chudithar*, they uploaded photos with that new dress to the opinion of their online friends. Among many photos, they chose the best, good-looking photos which presented them well. They also uploaded photos when they drew *mehanti* or tattoos in their hands. A majority of girls said in online chat that they wanted to be more beautiful, clever, and intelligent in online context because it helped them to boost their self-confidence.

Girls also uploaded useful information on health, food items, environmental issues, and education for which they got positive comments. For example, Jansi Devasahayam said that she got good feedback for all her information on preparing new dishes, cakes and other food items. She said that the feedback recognized her talent and it helped her to explore more items. Kaiser Rajeswaran expressed that she shared many information on education, job opportunities for which she received much appreciation from her online friends. As youngsters involved themselves in fan club activities of their own favorite heroes and heroines in the offline context, Facebook users also projected their favorite heroes and heroines in their postings.

And, they gave reviews of the films or tagged film reviews published by magazines for others to read. A few of them uploaded the pictures and news items of heroes and heroines who were in media hype during that week. At times, there were online fights among the fans. They exchanged of war of words in Facebook. For example, if Vijay's fans made a negative comment on film actor Ajith, all Ajith fans joined together and used harsh words on Vijay fans. For example, Gopi Fasanat's social media page had many actors' photographs such as Vijay, Karthi Santhanam etc. David Chelladurai uploaded many photos of Ajith.

VIII. Major findings

1. The young college going students are using social media extensively for building relationship and exchanging information with their online friends.
2. They are attracted towards wide variety of social media, because they provide them with personal space for self-expression.
3. When they share information about their daily life, they specifically bring out many cultural aspects such as regional language (slang) food variety, dress, festivities, symbols, art forms etc.
4. There is a significant difference between boys and girls in the form and content of expression of cultural aspects. Although boys were more active in social media than girls in terms of variety of online activities, girls are more creative in their cultural expression than boys.
5. Uploading of photos take precedence over among all other online activities which stand as unique tools for the expression of cultural elements in social media.

IX. Conclusion and Recommendations

The internet-based communication has almost made a revolution in the lives of youngsters. Social media in particular have become a new tool for online social interaction with their old and new friends. A whole lot of exchange of personal sharing and information relating to their academic pursuit has taken place continuously. Social media have provided them a virtual space which is a coherent social space existing entirely within a computer space for social interaction. This study has shown that the college-going youth have experimented a number ways to express their personal ideas and opinions in social media. They seemed to more free to express online than in offline situation for the simple reason social media provide them space for maintaining anonymity. In offline context they face lot of barriers to express themselves.

In the process of expressing themselves freely, they consciously and unconsciously express the unique features of their culture. Since young college students are more concerned about their life style, adaptation of innovative

things, they express the same in the social media pages. Therefore, social media have become a larger platform for expression and transmission of cultural element specific to Tamil Culture. This paper also recommends to investigate how social media have become a tool for influencing the local culture positively and negatively.

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