PARTICIPATORY CULTURE OF COLLEGE STUDENTS OF SALEM IN SOCIAL MEDIA

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ABSTRACT -- *Computer assisted technologies help in the creation and dissemination of information, thoughts, career interests and other forms of manifestations through virtual communities and networks are commonly referred as social media. Studies show that social media usage especially, among the youth, is increasing at an alarming rate. People use social media differently for a range of purposes. Several are active users of social media as some are participatory users. This paper utilised primary data to find out the participatory culture in social media among the college students in Salem district, Tamil Nadu. The study was conducted among the Arts and Science college students in Salem city. 200 students in the age group of 18 to 21 years were randomly selected as a sample. The findings of the study show that 81 percent of the respondents are 'active users' of social media and 19% are 'participatory users' who are involved in the process of content creation through media. The content creators are also found to be involved in social activities in their respective communities.*

Keywords- -Participatory Culture, Social Media, Active Users,

I.   INTRODUCTION

The Internet culture is mushrooming at a rapid pace across time and space. In the early stages, the core rationale of the internet was information access, but it rapidly turned out to be the key basis of information dissemination and a platform for exchange and influencing people's opinions. The advancement of internet-based communication tools like e-mails, instant messaging, blogs, social networking sites commonly called 'new media' has resulted in engaging and encouraging applications that are being adopted on a massive scale. These communication tools have made people, especially youth, more tech-savvy; more connected and made the world much more networked and inter-connected.

Internet and Mobile Association of India (IAMAI) reported that there were 246 million internet users in urban areas and 129 million in rural areas in 2015 which recorded a growth of 43% and 28% respectively. The report also indicates that around 209 million among the urban populace and 108 million among the rural populace were active monthly users of the internet. There is substantial growth among Mobile internet users with 197 million users in urban areas and 80 million in rural areas. The report further predicts that the number of internet users in India would reach 500 million by 2019 with around 400 million of them being mobile internet users. It obviously denotes the onset of a digital era in India which is certain to get established in diverse ways on

civic culture and social engagement. The association between the new media and technology has created a communication platform for 'netizens' that has become a cross-cultural space for social mobilization through 'participatory culture' [1].

The 'participatory culture' endorsed by the users of these tools either as individuals or in communities, in the form of content generators, or opinion disseminators are manipulating the agenda and are functioning of the society [2]. At present, there is a reasonable increase in the online activity of the youth through social media applications such as Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube. These platforms have been increasingly adopted by the youth as a means of engaging, organizing and communicating with people across the globe leading to public participation [3]. The major activities of today's youth in the internet platforms include connecting and communicating through instant messaging with their friends, downloading and sharing music/videos, playing online games, watching videos on YouTube, searching or creating new content, looking for jobs, writing and commenting on blogs, and much more [4].

II.   PARTICIPATORY CULTURE

Participation is termed as people's involvement in the process of decision-making through self–organized action [5]. The participation of people can be in a number of ways: ranging from providing information, consultation, interaction, self – organization and also reduced passive participation where individuals are informed about the happenings [6]. Though the participatory culture is evident in print and electronic media, new media has opened a wide space for participation and created a new culture by itself.

Elaborating further, 'participatory culture' is defined 'as one with relatively little obstacles to artistic expression and civic commitment, strong support for creating and sharing content with others, having informal mentorship whereby what is known by the most experienced is passed along to others who have not experienced it, in which affiliates believe that their contributions matter and members feel a degree of social association with one another [7]. The same participatory culture when looked through the prism of social media is analyzed as people involved in social activities through online software that aid people in creating new content, sharing new or existing content, connecting with people across time zones and spatial boundaries. Online participation has emerged as the new trend and people's involvement in it has also increased. It creates a virtual space for people who are interested in online participation. New groups were formed through the web-connected network and made viable the act of participation [8]. The combination of information along with the option to choose what information together encourages the use of generated content. This activity becomes a big advantage of participatory culture online. Participatory culture is emerging as the new media technology tool which enables its users to produce, update, rearrange, appropriate, re-circulate and raise alternate voices through the generation of media content or user-generated content by way of affiliations, expressions and collaborative problem solving [9].

Mirko Tobias Schafer [10] stated that participation can be identified as explicit and implicit. Explicit participation means the conscious and active involvement of users in groups like fan communities, youth clubs, etc. Implicit participation is more refined and discloses information without the user's knowledge. Implicit participation is achieved through easy and attractive user interface designs. The ease of access, speed, and

efficiency of online mediums garnering support from friends and peer groups and having a positive feeling about oneself encourage people to participate implicitly rather than an affinity for a particular cause.

A study conducted by the Pew Internet and American Life project in 2005, highlighted that youth were considered to be the most involved group in online participation and they were the major content creators which provide the proof that youth are involved in online participation in large numbers. Livingstone [11] elucidated that while adults use the internet mainly for surfing, youth use it for communication and connecting with friends through email, chat, games. These communications and entertainment-focused online activities contrast with the traditional information-focused or the media creating roles that are linked to public and policy agendas.

According to Gladwell [12] social networking sites, services and content-sharing sites have introduced the opportunity for wide-scale online social participation. Only a meagre number gets to know about the benefits of social involvement like social activism via social media. He also suggested that thorough research into computer-mediated social participation needs to be conducted especially to measure the benefits of using the medium and unintended negative effects through low-cost, low-risk technology-mediated participation. It is generally accepted that social media participation raises awareness and creates knowledge about social issues.

III.   HYPOTHESIS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This paper proposes the hypothesis that the social media as a communication medium has increased the 'active participation' of youth individually and socially in the media content when compared to other forms of media.

Internet tools especially social media tools have increased the interactivity between the communities, thereby increasing the communication competence of individuals, initiating a self-organized action and influencing decision making process. This has resulted in the emergence of 'participative culture' which can result in collective and active social participation of all forms of groups in the society.

In this backdrop, the paper studies the difference between an 'active user' and a 'participative user'. It also analyses whether participatory culture results in social action. The paper also aims to study the spread of participatory culture through the Internet in terms of use and application of 'social media software' for instant messaging, blogs, social networks by users, content creation and sharing, social promotion and increase of collective action among the participants.

IV.   METHODS AND TECHNIQUES OF SAMPLING

The study adopted a quantitative survey method for collecting data. The study was conducted among the Arts and Science college students in Salem city. 200 students in the age group of 18 to 21 years were randomly selected as a sample. The selected college for the study is named Government Arts and Science to ensure the best possible and practical geographical coverage of the population of Salem city. A systematic random sampling technique was adopted to select the sample. A structured questionnaire with closed-ended questions on social media usage habits, usage types, knowledge in using the social media tool and participation attributes like sharing and creating content was framed to analyze the level and the nature of the usage of social media.

V.   SOCIAL MEDIA USAGE HABITS

Today's youth consider social media to be the best place to get updated with new trends and information. It is found that more than 74% of the youth agree that social media is an apt tool that helps them to share information and keep them updated. It also confirms the findings of previous studies that social media usage habits influence the lifestyle of the youth. This habit influences and lifestyle modifications are major cultural changes that were seen across the globe. Due to this reason, various elements of our culture are already wiped out. Social media usage habits are identified by the type of social media users and the amount of time spent on social media. It is a fact that the lifestyle choices, likes, and dislikes of the youth are being fashioned by social media. An increase in usage habits makes them rely on social media for their information requirements.

VI.   TYPES OF SOCIAL MEDIA USAGE

Types of Social networking usages are identified by different forms of websites and platforms to one accesses who online. There are online platforms that allow people to connect through groups, find people to communicate and share interests. Facebook, Google+ and LinkedIn are some of the common examples of such platforms. Micro blogging is another popular social media platform. The micro blogging sites help to post short entries online. Twitter and Tumblr are popular micro blogging sites where users subscribe to other users' content, send messages to users and reply publicly. Blogging is another online platform where users post articles, photos, and many more things online. Users need to learn a little about the technical aspects of blogging when compared to other platforms. Word press and E- Blogger are the best known blogging sites. Another major use of the online platform is to share photos and videos either publically or privately.

VII.   KNOWLEDGE IN USING SOCIAL MEDIA

The quantum of knowledge that users have in using social media can be understood as the actual amount of knowledge known by users in using social media. Most of the popular social media platforms do not need much technical knowledge to use them, but it is necessary to know about the technical aspects of any social media platform to ensure hassle-free and secure access and sharing. The enhanced knowledge of social media will enable the users to understand the basic nature of the media with its pros and cons which helps them to create quality content and ensure secure and safe sharing of information.

VIII.   PARTICIPATION ATTRIBUTES

The popular social media sites such as email, wikis and blogs, are arenas where young people can design, create, and post their own material. These social media sites provide young people with opportunities not only to transfer information but to encourage them with content creation. [13] reported that more than 60% of the U.S teens were engaged in some type of content creation activities, such as writing blogs, developing websites, and smashing online contents into new creations. Content creators were also found to engage in more communication activities than non-content creators. This suggests that content creation may result in more social interaction and

may help with teens' social development [14] while many studies have focused on the social use of technology in young people's content creation on social media ([15]; [16]; [17]; the present study examines the extent to which young students engaged in content creation activities and the factors influencing such activities.

IX. DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF THE RESPONDENTS

Table 1: Age wise distribution

Age Group	No of Internet Users	Percentage
18-19	100	50%
20-21	100	50%
Total	200	100%

The study shows the age group of college students engaged in the frequency of internet usage. The aged of the respondents is strongly correlated with internet usage. The respondents are equally distributed among both the age groups: where 50% of the respondents belong to the 18 -19 years age group and the remaining 50% belong to the age group of 20-21 years. The reason for choosing this age group is that they have more time for learning new insights and in doing so they are actively participating by creating a new trend now known as the participatory culture.

Table 2: Internet usage

Periodicity of Internet use	No of Internet Users	Percentage
Once a week	34	17%
2-3 times a week	78	39%
Daily	88	44%
Total	200	100%

This evidence pertains mainly to internet access and says little about the social consequences of use. The students increased their usage of internet culture for their academic purposes. The most internet usage indicates that a larger proportion of respondents regularly (44%) use the internet on a daily basis on college-going times while 39% access 2-3 times a week and a minority (17%) accesses it once in a week on college holidays (such as Saturday or Sunday) day.

Table 3: Popular Online activities

Online Activity	No. of Internet Users	% of Internet Users
Send or Read E-Mail.	200	100%
Internet Surfing	200	100%
Watching Videos	178	89%
Search routes	171	85.5%

Friendship / Contacts	169	84.5%
Job Search	168	84%
E-Greetings	154	77%
Join in Social Networks	149	74.5%
Download Music	138	69%
Cinema Content	137	68.5%
Send Instant Messages	134	67%
Online shopping	133	66.5%
Online Chatting	132	66%
Online Education	128	64%
Read Online News	122	61%
Post in a Blog	116	58%
Pay Bills Online	103	51.5%
Play Online Games	102	51%
Astrology	92	46%
Bank online	56	28%
Download Podcasts	41	20.5%

Social networking sites allow people to connect, interact, converse and cluster in online communities. Activities like customizing one's space in a social hub like Facebook, adding music, uploading videos, registering oneself in LinkedIn, finding people and connecting with them, posting opinions, creating blogs, updating information, writing news on the web, etc. can be regarded as activities connected to social media software. Social engineering is an art of manipulating people so they give up confidential information. The types of information these criminals are seeking can vary, but when individuals are targeted the criminals are usually trying to trick you to give them your passwords or bank information or access your computer to secretly install malicious software that will give them access to your passwords and bank information as well as giving them control over your computer. There is a lot of reference to this topic. Nowadays, a lot of people are turning into social engineering especially youth.

Table 3 indicates the respondents' use of the internet for various online activities. It is clear from the table that a major proportion of respondents spends their time online on various activities including checking email, surfing online, and job search, downloads, and online payments. This reflects as greater awareness and also exploring their interests in online activities in a diverse way like connecting with friends, job search, e-greetings, joining social networks groups, downloading screen savers/wallpapers, music, and cinema content, sending instant messages, shopping, chatting, education, reading news, blogging, paying bills and playing games.

Table 4: Type of online activity

Activities percentage	Type of activity
100%	Send or Read E-Mail, Use a Search engine

51% to 99%	Watch Videos, Search routes, Friendship / contacts, Job Search, Matrimony, E-Greetings, Join in Social Networks, Join in Social Networks, PC to Mobile SMS, Download Music, Cinema Content, Send Instant Messages, online shopping, Online Chatting, Online Education, Read Online News, Post in a Blog, Pay Bills Online, Play Online Games.
0 to 50%	Astrology, Bank online, Download Podcasts.

It is clear from Table 4 that all the respondents in the study send or read email and use search engines for their online activities while about a half amongst the respondents were online for downloading music, playing online games and cinema content and so on while the remaining used the internet for bank payments and astrology. This reflects a trend wherein the youth are trying to network and connect for various purposes which would help them in the long term process.

Table 5: Content Creation

Content creation activity	Number of users	Percentage
Uploading photos/videos and tagging	38	19%
Shooting Video, editing, uploading on the internet and sharing	24	12%
Writing news articles, opinion articles in online	13	6.5%
Encoding cinema DVD and placing it for downloading	8	4%
Creating Podcast and delivering through internet	5	2.5%
Creating websites for information, entertainment	2	1%
Writing blog	1	0.5%

It is interesting to note that uploading photos/ videos were the most preferred activity in content creation by a greater number of respondents, which may reveal the interests of the youth. This reflects a greater preoccupation with music and cinema and spending time with friends in terms of sharing photos and videos. Having fun and enjoying oneself appear to be the criteria in terms of specific online activities. The content-creating activities are a preoccupation with a limited number of users due to a lack of knowledge of the process. More than a lack of knowledge it's not their priority. Their age group is more into a peer group acceptance-based activity. The creation of online content needs expertise in the relevant subject and originality in content needs to be ensured. The communication competence of the users depends on the knowledge, skill of the medium in which the user is operating. Only a limited number of internet users possess such skills.

Table 6: Reasons for not indulging in content creating activities

Reasons for not creating Content	Number of users	Percentage
Lacking technical knowledge and skill in performing	106	53%

such functions		
Lack of necessary software or technology, tools,	25	12.5%
Lack of individual computers (desktops, laptops)	26	13%
Lack of interest and time	5	2.5%
Total	162	81%

Lack of technical knowledge and skills appears to be a major reason for the respondents in limited content creation, whilst the lack of requisite software and also computers were stated by a less number of respondents. It can be inferred from Table 6 that there are sound reasons for respondents' inability to do something creative.

Looking at table 6 Statistics depicted on the sheets throw the researcher's thoughts into various dimensions. "The content creating activities is a preoccupation with a limited number of users due to lack of knowledge of process". The researcher believes there is an element of priorities and psychological factors. Considering the age group of samples; a peer group acceptance would be more of a dominant need. This age group is at the epitome of their curiosity; is something interests them; they will find every means and method to know it and master it. It is an assumption based argument which does not have any proof in this study

Table 7: Active users and Participatory users

Type of users	Number of users	Percentage
Active Users	162	81%
Participatory users	38	19%
Total	200	100%

It is observed from Table 7 that 162 (81%) out of 200 respondents were involved in various internet-based activities and they are considered as 'Active users' and they do not involve in content creation activities. Only 36 (19%) respondents were involved in online content creation activities and they are considered as 'Participatory users'. Thus, it is clear that online participation among youth is limited to being active users rather than participatory users.

Table 8: Social action of internet users

Social participation of 'participatory internet users'	Number of users	Percentage
Members in social or community clubs	77	38.5%
Participation in online campaigns	102	51%
Participation in the field activities	21	11%

Among the total number of respondents, 38.5 percent were in some social or community clubs like environmental clubs, social organizations, and NGOs. 51% of the respondents participated in online campaigns and involved in social activism. A minimum of 11% has participated in the field action by joining the campaign

demonstrations, strikes or awareness campaigns, etc. It is to be noted that those respondents who participated in field programs are also the content creators.

X.   DISCUSSION

On the basis of internet usage in terms of hours spent on the net and type of activities engaged, the respondents were classified as Active users and Participative users. An active user is one who uses the internet for more hours especially 2-3 hours daily apart from engaging in many of the activities through affiliations in the form of memberships, formal and informal, in online communities cantered on various forms of application tools like Facebook, message boards and MySpace. An average youth spends more than 4 hours daily on the internet. A participative user can be one who is able to participate in content creation and dissemination by giving space to new forms of expression, opinion, dissent or support through various platforms. Apart from this, users are also involved in collaborative problem-solving activities through working together in teams formal and informal, to complete tasks and to develop new knowledge.

The numbers of active users are more, which contributes to 81% of the total respondents. Hence, it is evident that the active participation of the Indian youth in online activities is more and supports the study hypothesis. This paper found that social media as a communication medium has increased the 'active participation' of Indian youth individually and socially. The result shows that the working hypothesis of this study is correct with valid data. The Indian youth with the expansion of the Internet user base actively participates in Internet-related online activities especially active participation in social media. Few users (19%) were only involved in content creation, the rest of the users actively interacted in social media.

The increase in the number of online or internet-based activities indicates a rise in the public engagement of people through social media. The results indicate that 81% of the respondents are 'Active users' and 19 percent are 'Participatory users' who engage in activities involving content creation. The content creators also participated in the field programs corroborating with the earlier research findings that created a link between competent net users and their possibility of applying their community networks in real-life situations. The data supports the hypothesis that participatory culture can result in social action by empowering people especially the youth in the decision-making process.

XI.   CONCLUSION

In a nutshell, the foregoing analysis is indicative of the growing trend of a phenomenal increase in internet usage by educated youth. Being active online is here to stay, yet there is a growing incidence of youth who are participating in various content creating activities which may be game-changing in the years to come. It is heartening to note that college students are finding ways to express themselves and raise their voices on various issues in diverse ways at various levels. It is hoped that the present study encourages similar studies and aid government and media think tanks in streamlining and harnessing the potential of youth in utilizing the participatory potential of the youth for the progress of the country.

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