



**INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY
ADOPTION AND ITS IMPACT ON CULTURAL
PRESERVATION AMONG INDIAN YOUTH IN
SELANGOR, MALAYSIA**

By

THURAIVELOO A/L OOSLAPPAN

**Thesis Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies,
Universiti Putra Malaysia, in Fulfilment of the
Requirements for the Degree of Master of Science**

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Abstract of thesis presented to the Senate of University Putra Malaysia in fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Master of Science

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January 2024

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Information and Communication Technology (ICT) plays a pivotal role in today's knowledge-based digital era. It has become an integral component of the daily lives of all societal members. The pervasive integration of ICT in contemporary society has precipitated notable transformations in the way individuals engage in communication and social interactions. The pervasive impact of ICT-driven developments on social development is evident across all aspects of human life. A considerable body of research has been dedicated to investigating the implementation of ICT. However, most of these studies have mostly focused on prevalent societal concerns, particularly in the domains of economics, organizations, and education. Nevertheless, the extent to which the adoption of ICT influences the preservation of culture, particularly among the Indian youth in Malaysia, remains a topic that has received scant scholarly attention. ICT is frequently regarded as a dual-edged

instrument for minority cultures, subject to criticism due to its propensity to introduce foreign ideals that undermine local customs. However, it is also acknowledged as a vital mechanism for preserving endangered minority cultures. Therefore, a qualitative case study was employed to explore the ICT adoption and its impacts on cultural preservation amongst Indian youth in Selangor, Malaysia. Eight informants who participated in this study met the selection criteria and were recruited through purposive sampling technique. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews. Thematic analysis is used to analyze the data of the study. Firstly, the findings of the study demonstrated that ICT plays important role in the Indian youth livelihood particularly in education, communication, transaction, and entertainment. Second, the findings showed that there are three major factors influencing the adoption of ICT among the Indian community such as digital literacy, and skills, individual motivation and determination, perceived ease of use of the ICT. Finally, the findings unveiled the impacts of ICT on the preservation of culture. These impacts encompass the enhancing of cultural knowledge and learning, the expanding of cultural awareness, the strengthening of social connections and cultural engagement, the transformation of cultural consumption, and the improvement of cultural visibility. In terms of theoretical implication, the findings align with Cultural Ecology Theory, suggesting that cultures adapt to their environment over time. Specifically, the findings revealed that the Indian youth in Malaysia is adapting to the digital environment facilitated by ICT, which serves as a new ecological niche for transmitting and transforming cultural practices. This emphasizes the significance of considering technological factors alongside traditional

ecological factors in understanding cultural adaptation. The findings indicated that Indian youth have successfully maintained core elements of their cultural heritage while integrating ICT, showcasing the community's ability to sustain its culture amidst modernization. In terms of practical implication, the findings of the study will be beneficial to policy makers, the community, researchers, and non-governmental organization in their attempts to implement and manage ICT initiatives among the Indian community in Malaysia. It is hoped that this study can provide valuable insights for evaluating the National Culture Policy by acknowledging and supporting cultural knowledge systems within the Indian community, specifically in domains like traditional medicine, handicraft, and the performing arts. This may encompass endeavors to digitally document and preserve traditional knowledge, alongside efforts to encourage the sustainable utilization of cultural traditions and products among the Indian community in Malaysia.

Keywords: *Culture, ICT, Indian youth, preservation, Malaysia*

SDG: GOAL 10: Reduced Inequalities

Abstrak tesis yang dikemukakan kepada Senat Universiti Putra Malaysia
sebagai memenuhi keperluan untuk Ijazah Master Sains

**PENERIMAGUNAAN TEKNOLOGI MAKLUMAT DAN KOMUNIKASI
SERTA IMPAKNYA TERHADAP PEMELIHARAAN BUDAYA DALAM
KALANGAN BELIA INDIA DI SELANGOR, MALAYSIA**

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Teknologi Maklumat dan Komunikasi (ICT) memainkan peranan penting dalam era digital yang berasaskan pengetahuan pada masa kini. Ia telah menjadi komponen penting dalam kehidupan seharian semua anggota masyarakat. Integrasi ICT secara meluas dalam masyarakat kontemporari telah menyebabkan transformasi yang ketara dalam cara individu terlibat dalam komunikasi dan interaksi sosial. Kesan pembangunan secara meluas yang dipacu ICT terhadap perkembangan sosial adalah jelas dalam semua aspek kehidupan manusia. Sebahagian besar kajian telah dijalankan untuk mengkaji pelaksanaan ICT. Namun begitu, kebanyakan kajian ini lebih tertumpu kepada isu-isu masyarakat yang dominan, terutamanya dalam bidang ekonomi, organisasi, dan pendidikan. Namun begitu, sejauh manakah penerimgunaan ICT mempengaruhi pemeliharaan budaya, khususnya dalam kalangan belia India di Malaysia, masih merupakan topik yang kurang

mendapat perhatian ilmiah. ICT sering dianggap sebagai instrumen dua mata untuk budaya minoriti, tertakluk kepada kritikan kerana kecenderungannya untuk memperkenalkan ideal-ideal asing yang menjejaskan adat resam tempatan. Walau bagaimanapun, ia juga dianggap sebagai mekanisme penting untuk memelihara budaya minoriti yang terancam. Oleh itu, satu kajian kes kualitatif telah digunakan untuk meneroka penerimgunaan ICT dan kesannya terhadap pemeliharaan budaya dalam kalangan belia India di Selangor, Malaysia. Lapan informan yang mengambil bahagian dalam kajian ini memenuhi kriteria pemilihan dan dipilih melalui teknik persampelan bertujuan. Data dikumpul melalui temu bual berstruktur separa. Analisis tematik digunakan untuk menganalisis data kajian. Pertama, dapatan kajian menunjukkan bahawa ICT memainkan peranan penting dalam kehidupan belia India terutamanya dalam pendidikan, komunikasi, transaksi dan hiburan. Kedua, dapatan kajian menunjukkan terdapat tiga faktor utama yang mempengaruhi penerimgunaan ICT dalam kalangan belia India seperti literasi digital dan kemahiran, motivasi dan keazaman individu, persepsi kemudahan penggunaan ICT. Akhirnya, penemuan mendedahkan kesan ICT terhadap pemeliharaan budaya. Kesan ini merangkumi peningkatan pengetahuan dan pembelajaran budaya, peningkatan kesedaran budaya, pengukuhan hubungan sosial dan penglibatan budaya, transformasi penggunaan budaya, dan peningkatan keterlihatan budaya. Dari segi implikasi teori, dapatan kajian ini sejajar dengan Teori Ekologi Budaya dengan mencadangkan bahawa budaya mengalami penyesuaian dengan persekitarannya dari semasa ke semasa. Secara khusus, dapatan kajian ini mendedahkan bahawa belia India di Malaysia menyesuaikan diri dengan

persekitaran digital yang difasilitasi oleh ICT yang berfungsi sebagai niche ekologi baru untuk menyebarkan dan mengubah amalan budaya. Hal ini menekankan kepentingan mempertimbangkan faktor teknologi bersama faktor ekologi tradisional dalam memahami penyesuaian budaya. Dapatan kajian ini menunjukkan bahawa belia India telah berjaya mengekalkan elemen teras warisan budaya mereka sambil mengintegrasikan ICT serta mempamerkan keupayaan masyarakat untuk mengekalkan budayanya dalam arus pemodenan. Dari segi implikasi praktikal, dapatan kajian ini dapat memberi manfaat kepada penggubal dasar, komuniti, penyelidik, dan pertubuhan bukan kerajaan dalam usaha mereka untuk melaksanakan dan mengurus inisiatif ICT dalam kalangan masyarakat India di Malaysia. Kajian ini diharapkan dapat memberikan pandangan yang berharga untuk menilai Dasar Kebudayaan Kebangsaan dengan mengiktiraf dan menyokong sistem pengetahuan budaya dalam kalangan masyarakat India, khususnya dalam domain seperti perubatan tradisional, kraftangan, dan seni persembahan. Ini mungkin merangkumi usaha untuk mendokumentasikan dan memelihara pengetahuan tradisional secara digital, di samping usaha untuk menggalakkan penggunaan produk budaya dan tradisi secara mampan dalam kalangan masyarakat India di Malaysia.

Kata Kunci: Belia India, budaya, ICT, Malaysia, pemeliharaan

SDG: *GOAL 10: Reduced Inequalities*

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ICT	Information and communication Technology
MCO	Movement Control Order
UNESCO Culture	United Nations Organization for Education, Science and Culture



CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to present an overview of the study's concepts. It starts with providing the background of the study and problem statement, followed by outlining the significance of the study and the research objectives. The chapter also contains sections that explain the theoretical perspectives used as a guide in this study. In addition, it includes a discussion of the definitions of concepts used to clarify the terms examined in the study. Finally, the chapter ends with a summary of the structure of the thesis.

1.2 Background of the Study

The adoption of information and communication technology (ICT) has become increasingly pervasive across the globe, impacting various aspects of life, including cultural practices and heritage. This phenomenon is particularly evident in multicultural societies such as Malaysia, where a diverse range of ethnic groups reside. The Indian community in Malaysia, which has a rich cultural heritage, is also undergoing significant changes in its socio-cultural practices due to the widespread use of ICT. While the adoption of ICT has brought about numerous benefits, it has also led to concerns regarding the potential loss of cultural heritage and practices.

The Indian community in Malaysia comprises several sub-ethnic groups such as Tamils, Telugus, Malayalees, and Punjabis, each with distinct cultural traditions and customs. The community has a rich cultural heritage that is deeply intertwined with its socio-religious practices. Nonetheless, the ethnic minority groups in Malaysia are confronted with the peril of cultural identity erosion because of diverse assimilation mechanisms into the dominant society (Gill et al., 2015; Lasimbang, 2004; Lee, 2011; Masron et al., 2013). The situation becomes more challenging as the rapid adoption of ICT has led to significant changes in the community's way of life, with many of its traditional practices being replaced by modern technologies. For instance, the use of social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and WhatsApp have become increasingly popular among the younger generation, leading to a decline in face-to-face interactions and a shift in communication patterns.

The adoption of ICT has also impacted the community's cultural practices, particularly in the areas of music, dance, and religious rituals. For example, the use of digital music players and audio streaming services has led to a decline in the practice of traditional music forms such as Carnatic music, which were typically passed down from generation to generation through oral traditions. Similarly, the availability of digital dance tutorials and online classes has led to a reduction in the number of students learning traditional dance forms such as *Bharatanatyam* and *Kuchipudi*. Additionally, the adoption of ICT has also led to concerns regarding the potential loss of cultural heritage and practices. One of the main challenges is the preservation of cultural artifacts and documents, which may be lost or damaged over time.

Additionally, the digitization of cultural artifacts and documents can lead to the loss of the physicality and authenticity of the objects. Moreover, the adoption of ICT can also lead to the commodification of cultural heritage, whereby traditional practices and objects are marketed as tourist attractions, leading to the loss of their cultural value.

Despite these changes, the Indian community also leveraged ICT to promote and preserve its cultural heritage in Malaysia. For example, social media platforms have become a useful tool for disseminating information about cultural events and festivals, enabling the community to reach a wider audience. Moreover, the availability of online resources has made it easier for individuals to learn about their cultural heritage and traditions, which may have otherwise been inaccessible. Therefore, the adoption of ICT has had both positive and negative impacts on cultural preservation among the Indian community in Malaysia. While it has enabled the community to promote and disseminate its cultural heritage, it has also led to concerns regarding the potential loss of cultural practices and artifacts. Therefore, this study is crucial for gaining a detailed understanding of how technology and culture interact, by examining both the difficulties and advantages offered by ICT. Its focus is to explore how the adoption of ICT has impacted social and cultural norms, investigating changes in traditional customs and the influence of digital platforms and online resources on cultural forms of expression. Ultimately, this study is essential for developing nuanced approaches to balance the integration of ICT with the preservation of Indian cultural heritage, especially within diverse societies like Malaysia.

1.3 Statement of the Problem

In this digital age, ICT is considered inextricably linked to an ethnic minority culture. The adoption of ICT and its impact on ethnic minority culture has been contested for decades. As a result of globalization, the cultures of ethnic minorities have faced considerable difficulties (Ali, 2010). ICT has long been blamed for undermining ethnic cultural identities. This stems from the idea that ethnic identities and cultures are under crisis as quick advancements and technologies imbued with a range of foreign values seek to impose undesirable foreign values on local minority groups (Dyson, 2004; Mustafa, 2006). Massive exposure to ICT has been identified as a likely factor that has been used to support and accelerate the dominant influence of Western-based modes of thought, information, values, and cultures, resulting in indigenous peoples having few opportunities to strengthen their cultural legacy and language, as well as a decline in their cultural identity (Resta, 2011).

Despite the fact that ICT has long been associated with cultural erosion, some researchers claim that it has made significant contributions to cultural preservation and upkeep. According to Lieberman (2003), while ICT will inevitably clash with local traditions, it can also be used to protect, promote, and strengthen minority languages and cultures. This is crucial because minorities' knowledge is on the verge of extinction owing to preservation challenges, and there is an urgent need to conserve minorities' knowledge utilizing ICT (Ngcobo & Obono, 2013). This is consistent with Michael and

Dunn (2006), who asserted that the potential uses of ICT in crucial sectors are critical to the culture's survival. According to Nickerson and Kaufman (2005), if used effectively, ICT may play a critical role in cultural and linguistic preservation and promotion in novel and interesting ways. For example, Zabecki (2019) discovered that video games can promote and maintain indigenous cultures by changing stereotypical images and unfavorable attitudes about indigenous populations and assisting in the incorporation of their languages into games.

ICT has arisen as a critical platform for the community to access, study, and share cultural content. The COVID-19 pandemic has jeopardized human lives in a variety of ways, sending an unsettling message that humans must have a backup plan for increasing cultural preservation in order to maintain its long-term viability. It is not intended to replace or diminish the value of in-person cultural transmission, but rather as an option to maximize the distribution of ethnic minority culture, so improving their cultural sustainability (Khong et al., 2021). ICT appears to be an important alternative solution that provides a digital platform for Malaysian ethnic minorities to exchange their ideas, opinions, and knowledge about their culture, which is extremely valuable in conserving and promoting their culture (Khong, 2015).

The percentage of Malaysians aged 15 and above utilizing computers increased from 80.0 percent in 2020 to 83.5 percent in 2021 (Department of Statistics Malaysia, 2022). According to 2022 ICT Use and Access by Individuals and Households Survey Report, the percentage of Malaysians

aged 15 and above utilizing the Internet rose from 96.8 percent in 2021 to 97.4 percent in 2022 (The Star, 2023). The primary online engagement in Malaysia was found to be participation in social networks. According to Devi (2023), youth are increasingly reliant on social media, dedicating more time to it compared to other age demographics. This excessive engagement with social media is likely to impact the lifestyle and behavioral patterns of youth (Bhati & Bansal, 2019; Dar & Nagrath, 2022).

Panigrahi (2019) highlighted that numerous gaps and issues arise from the discrepancy between the material culture introduced by social media and the traditional Indian immaterial culture entrenched in age-old values. Therefore, there is a necessity for shifts in attitudes, perspectives, and the surrounding social framework to accommodate the emergence of social media and its resultant alterations in both material and immaterial culture. Mu'alifah and Jumino (2021) suggested that it is essential for youth, who are key players in cultural preservation, to possess the capability to safeguard cultural heritage. Utilizing electronic information media becomes imperative for distributing information about cultural heritage, allowing direct access for the public and garnering appreciation from them. Nonetheless, there is still lacking studies focuses on the adoption of ICT for cultural preservation among Indian youth in Malaysia. Hence, it is imperative to focus on examining the role of ICT and the factors that influence its adoption among the Indian youth in Malaysia.

The Malaysians currently residing within a diverse and heterogeneous society, have undergone significant cultural assimilation in their daily lives

(Punitha & Kumaran, 2014). This assimilation of Tamil people's cultural elements into the dominant society including language, literature, beliefs, customs, and traditions (Punitha & Kumaran, 2014). Ethnic minorities in Malaysia have significant hurdles in maintaining and preserving their culture and identity (Gill et al., 2015; Kaur et al., 2022; Lee, 2008). One pressing issue is the endangerment of many ethnic minority languages, with the risk of extinction due to factors such as migration, changing attitudes, education, and socio-economic pressures (Ali, 2010). The preservation of one's mother tongue in a multilingual culture presents a notable obstacle, particularly in cases when languages such as Malay, English, and Chinese provide economic benefits that surpass those associated with Tamil (Rajan, 2018; Sinayah et al., 2017). The situation becomes more critical when considering the Indian community, as an ethnic minority group in Malaysia, show poor advancement in terms of education, social and economic status compared to the Malays and Chinese communities (Rajantharan et al., 2012; Xavier et al., 2020).

The importance of preserving cultural identity for ethnic minorities is heightened in increasingly diverse societies. The safeguarding of cultural heritage is a complex and multifarious issue that requires the adoption of innovative and effective approaches to ensure the preservation of cultural identity for future generations. The adoption of ICT in cultural preservation has gained significant attention in recent years, as it offers new and innovative ways to preserve and promote cultural heritage (Castleton, 2018; Chai-Arayalert et al., 2021). However, many studies conducted on the Indian

community in Malaysia centers around topics pertaining to immigration and settlement, labor disputes, political economics, and sociocultural activism (Kailasam, 2015). The adoption of ICT impacts on culture and identity among the Indian community in Malaysia is yet to be explored in-depth (Prasad & Balraj, 2006). Hence, this study constitutes a groundbreaking endeavor to introduce a comprehensive perspective by focusing some of the significant aspects that have emerged in previous studies concerning the Indian community in Malaysia. This has led to the following research questions to be addressed in this study:

1. What is the role of ICT towards the Indian youth livelihood in Selangor?
2. What are the factors that influence ICT adoption among the Indian youth in Selangor?
3. What are the impacts of ICT adoption on cultural preservation of the Indian youth in Selangor?

1.4 Research Objectives

General Objective

The primary objective of this study is to explore the adoption of ICT and its impact on the preservation of culture among Indian youth residing in the state of Selangor.

Specific Objectives

The specific objectives of this study are:

1. To explore the role of ICT towards the Indian youth livelihood in Selangor.

2. To explore the factors influences the ICT adoption among the Indian youth in Selangor.
3. To examine the impacts of ICT adoption on the preservation of culture among the Indian youth in Selangor.

1.5 Significance of the Study

Many developed countries are adopting ICT effectively for developmental purposes, unlike developing countries where the adoption of ICT is still low. At present, the scope of ICT adoption in Malaysia especially the Indian ethnic minority is still under-researched. Therefore, this study is particularly important in providing an empirically grounded understanding to help various stakeholders including the Indian communities, policy makers, academicians, and non-government organizations for some immediate interventions. It is important to note that this study does not attempt to enrich existing prominent theories of adoption; instead, it aims at developing a more explanatory framework that lays a foundation for studying ICT adoption and development from a cultural perspective. This study aims to enrich the existing body of knowledge in the field of community development, particularly concerning the adoption of ICT and the preservation of culture. The discovery of novel factors is expected to significantly enhance the literature pertaining to cultural preservation via ICT. Furthermore, it is hoped that future studies will delve deeper into the impacts of ICT on cultural preservation, thereby advancing community development beyond mere economic considerations.

1.6 Theoretical Perspectives

The researcher adopts the perspectives of Cultural Ecology Theory as one of the theoretical perspectives for this study. This theory frequently attributed to Julian Steward, investigates the interplay between culture and the environment. The primary focus of the theory is the examination of how societies undergo adaptation and engage in interactions with their physical and social surroundings (Steward, 2006). Within the context of this study, the theory serves to broaden the understanding of the term "environment" by encompassing not only the physical surroundings but also the socio-cultural background. The incorporation of ICT has engendered a novel sociocultural milieu among the Indian community in Malaysia. This includes alterations in communication patterns, access to information, and exposure to external influences.

Cultural Ecology Theory is important in examining the evolution of cultures in response to environmental changes (Sutton & Anderson, 2010). In the context of this study, the increasing integration of ICT into the daily lives of Indian youth in Malaysia has resulted in significant transformations in their traditional lifestyle. By employing the theory, it helps the researcher to examine the way the Indian community in Malaysia has adapted to the "ICT environment", which is crucial to enhance comprehension regarding the integration of ICT tools and platforms into their everyday routines, as well as the resultant impacts on their cultural preservation. The theory offers a distinctive viewpoint for comprehending the complex networks of

interconnections and influences that propel social and technical developments, which helps to better understand the adoption of ICT and its impacts on cultural preservation among the Indian youth in Selangor.

1.7 Definition of Concepts

Based on the understanding of the existing concepts from past studies, several concepts which are relevant to this study need to be defined from the researcher's own interpretation. These concepts include ICT, adoption, culture, and youth as stated below.

Information and Communication Technology (ICT): ICT refers to communication technology that comes from two concepts which are technology and communication. Information technology is a tool, equipment, and software involved in the generation, management, dissemination, management, and storage of information that is not restricted to writing or text only. ICT encompasses hardware, software, content, applications, materials, and products that have or carry messages, information, or knowledge that can be accessed and used (Hassan, 2008). The operational definition of ICT in this study referred to smartphones, computers, tablets, laptops, applications, social media, and the Internet.

ICT Adoption: Adoption encompasses the practice, mental and human feelings which include aspects of the purchase, acquisition, and consumerism that involve complex relationships and involvement of various objects and

experiences (Hassan, 2008). Operationally, ICT adoption in this study is described as the adoption of ICT to learn, disseminate, promote, and pass the culture to the next generation.

Culture: ‘Culture refers to the ways of life of the members of a society, or of groups within a society that comprises both intangible aspects—the beliefs, ideas and values which form the content of the culture—and tangible aspects—the objects, symbols or technology which represent that content’ (Giddens, 2001). In this study, culture is described as Indian culture accompanies daily life, festivals, food, religion, clothing, literature, and others.

Youth: The Department of Statistics Malaysia (DoSM) defines youth as persons between 15-24 years. Ministry of Youth and Sports Malaysia defines youth as persons between 15 to 30 years old. While young people in the Member States of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) are defined based on each country's law and regulations, the organization classifies youth as anyone aged between 15-35. In this study, the operational definition of youth is described as those who aged from 18 to 35 years old.

1.8 Organization of the Thesis

In general, this chapter begins with a brief introduction and background of the study. The current style of Indian youths adopting ICT to preserve their culture. The research objectives were established in answering the research questions followed by the significance of this study. Furthermore, this chapter

also presented the theoretical framework that constructs the conceptual framework with a more understanding of the terminology definition that will be used in this thesis. Following a thorough examination of the primary issues addressed in this study, it is pertinent that the subsequent chapter centers its attention on the literature review pertaining to the Indian youth's adoption of ICT as a means of cultural preservation. Subsequently, the thesis elucidates the research methodology employed in Chapter 3 and deliberates about the findings and discussions in Chapter 4. Finally, the thesis will conclude by discussing the consequences of the research findings and providing constructive suggestions for future studies.

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