

A Pilot Study on the Impact of ICT and New Media on Society and Culture

Neesha Rajkarnikar

School of Development and Social Engineering,
Pokhara University, Pokhara, Nepal
neesha_rk@hotmail.com

Deepanjali Shrestha

School of Business, Pokhara University
Pokhara, Nepal

ABSTRACT

Communication is vital for human existence. In all social structures and cultural practices, communication is very important. The development of culture and society is greatly influenced by how individuals interact, interpret information, and communicate with one another. The last few years have seen significant development in the field of Information and Communication Systems. These systems have changed the way people communicated a few years back. It is not only the communication pattern but these systems have immense capacity to create, capture, compute and distort information just in a matter of seconds. This has posed a big challenge to existing society and culture. As with every change in the way we consume and communicate information, there is a new struggle over meaning, significance, knowledge, and power. Old rules, orders, and beliefs cannot be applied perfectly under the new regime and thus formations of power, significance, and meaning of knowledge are all under threat from these changes. This work is an attempt to study these new means of information and communication systems in terms of their impact on our society and culture. The study is concentrated on understanding how ICT, New media, and Internet are playing their roles in our cultural formation and adaptation of society. The concluding part of this work is to see the role of these technologies in the current scenario and draw conclusions from them.

Keywords

ICT, New Media, Society, Culture, Positive role, Negative role.

1. INTRODUCTION

Culture is a complex term that encompasses knowledge, folk tales, language, rules, rituals, habits, lifestyles, attitudes, beliefs, and customs that link and give a common identity to a particular group of people at a specific point in time [1]. It acts subconsciously and whatever we see and perceive, seems to be normal and natural in cultural practices. All social units develop culture. It develops between individuals, groups, organizations, and any social entities that interact [2]. Even two-person in relationships, a culture develops over time. Groups, organizations, and many small social units develop their own culture with time [3]. Culture is an ever-evolving phenomenon that changes over time. As in the words of O'Neil culture are a powerful human tool for survival and a fragile phenomenon [3]. It is constantly changing and easily lost because it exists only in our minds. As the change in the knowledge base, practice and beliefs occur, a culture also changes. Many forces play a vital role in the change

of culture. Social forces, technical forces, economical forces are key elements that bring a change to a culture. It is not these above forces but influence from other cultures, the role of mass media, and the availability of information (knowledge) that are also vital in a changing culture [4]. The degree and amount of change are greatly determined by communication medium and communication technology. Moreover, a particular culture is influenced by all the above factors and there is the probability of it changing.

Society on the other hand can be defined as a population that occupies the same territory, is subject to the same political authority, and participates in a common culture. In other words, society must occupy a common territory, share the same government or other political authority and to some extent have a common culture and a sense of membership in it [5]. In an e-journal, Knowledge rush, society is defined as "A group of humans that form a semi-closed system, in which most interactions are with other people belonging to the group". A society is a network of relationships between people and an interdependent community [5]. Society gives content, direction, and meaning to our lives, and we, in turn, in countless ways, reshape the society that we leave to the next generation. The society serves as a base for social interaction and cultural plays for human existence. It is a space where individuals from different cultures, come nearby and get in consensus to practice a common culture, share equal rights and treat all equally within a defined space [6]. Society is not a rigid structure but changes and adapts itself with time and space. The political forces, economical forces, technological forces, and social demands bring a change to society. The amount or pace of change greatly depends on communication medium and communication technology. Society and culture are interrelated structures as society defines a social group at different levels and the culture becomes a part of practice in that particular society. Society brings people together and culture is developed between the individuals of a society over a duration of time that is the outcome of their social interaction and needs [7]. The oxford university press relates the two as in society's people tend to form particular cultures, formed of the ideas, customs, and social behaviors that make one society distinct from another. They both supplement each other and the existence of one without the other is not possible. Though subtly different, these are interdependent structures that form a social arena.

Communication is the means that individuals or groups in society use to share their experiences, knowledge, and beliefs. A change in the way we communicate certainly affects our culture and society. The tools, methods, and ways we use to communicate have a serious role to play in our social and cultural developments. In the words of Macquail, communication

technology has many implications for the way we may come to know our social world and our place in it [9]. The role of communication cannot be ignored in social and cultural developments. The last few years have seen significant and steady growth in technology. This growth is mainly concentrated in technological innovation that is related to information production and information communication systems. The computing systems, satellite communication systems, radio link systems, digital cameras, camcorders, fiber optics, mobile communications, the Internet, and the World Wide Web are all some of the examples of these systems [10]. These innovations provide new means for individuals and groups to communicate. It is not only communication but these technological tools also have enormous power to collect, create, capture, compute and distribute enormous information just in a matter of seconds [10]. These systems have brought a radical shift in the way information is consumed and communicated. Due to their capacity in terms of information collection and distribution over a global space, these systems have posed a big challenge to the cultural beliefs of individuals and challenged existing social structures. The current technological advancements, the rise of new media, and the growth of the World Wide Web have changed the traditional mode of communication and information-consuming patterns [11]. These systems have become so powerful that they form an important part of the formation of our culture and identity today. These systems though in just thirty to forty years of their existence have already started giving serious implications to our society and culture [12]. It has become important that these new technologies, new methods, and new modes of communication must be continuously studied and assessed to understand their implication in our society and culture. A good understanding of the fundamental aspects of these systems will help to grasp an understanding of the current and future implications of these systems in our society and culture.

2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

2.1 Research Objectives

The specific objectives of the study include:

- Analyze the role of ICT and New Media in Nepalese Culture.
- Analyze the role of ICT and New Media in Nepalese Society
- Identify the changes observed in society and culture.
- Analyze the perception of Nepalese citizens towards the use of ICT and New Media technologies.

2.2 Research Approach

A descriptive, as well as exploratory research design, is used for the research. The characteristics and opinions of the respondents were collected through a set of questionnaires. An explanation was made to the sample under study in case they found some confusion in understanding the questions. The samples consist of respondents of Pokhara and Kathmandu, who were interviewed from October 2018 to - November 2018. Only respondents, who are techno-oriented and use technology on daily basis are considered. The age of 18 years is considered for the study. The convenience sampling method is used for simplicity and to minimize time and costs associated with the study. A total number of 200 questionnaires were distributed and 150 provided the complete data. The study considered males and females as well as all age groups equally for better results.

2.3 Method of Data Analysis

Data is analyzed using the statistical tool SPSS and interpretation is done for the quantitative information. To comply with the research objectives, this research focused mainly on primary data, which were obtained from a field survey. The data is assumed considered reliable and valid since the questionnaires were filled up under the direct supervision of the researcher and cross-validated using secondary sources.

3. DATA ANALYSIS AND INFERENCE

The data analysis and inference from the study were made based on the computation of the data that was collected from the respondents of the study. The first question traced out the usability attribute of the ICT and New Media, which included computer systems, social applications, the internet, etc. running on the internet. It was seen that all the samples under study were using the ICT technologies and New media applications in their life daily as shown in figure 1.

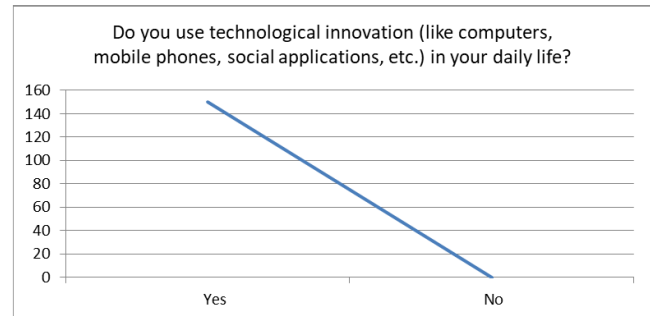


Figure 1: Survey data depicting the use of technological innovations and social applications

The study further interviewed the use of the application under six categories which included communication with friends and family, reading news and getting information updates, buying products and services, entertainment quotient, posting and reading opinions, and other related activities. It was observed that communicating with family and friends was carried out by the complete population with entertainment about 90% of them agreeing to it. News and updates around were popular among 85% of the population. The samples were actively involved in posting and reading opinions, searching and buying products, and using the technological innovations for other services like medical consultation, education and mass meeting, etc. as depicted in figure 2.

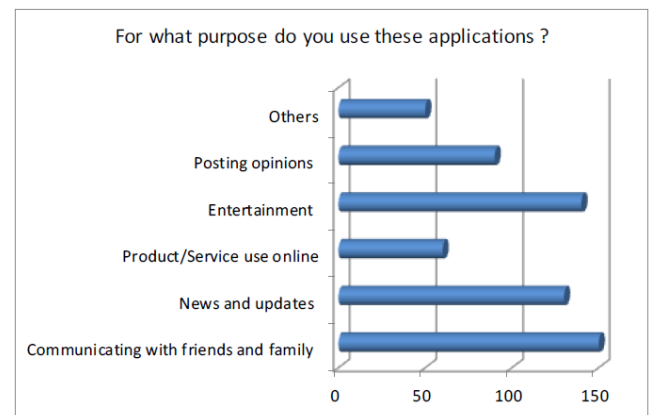


Figure 2: Survey data showing the purpose of use of ICT and New Media

The next set of questions revolved around exploring the role (both positive and negative) of ICT and New Media on the population. The respondent was asked to provide the role technology is playing in their lives. They were asked to answer in three scales as positive role, negative role, or both. It was seen that 60% of the population agreed that ICT and New Media have positive in their life as seen in figure 3.

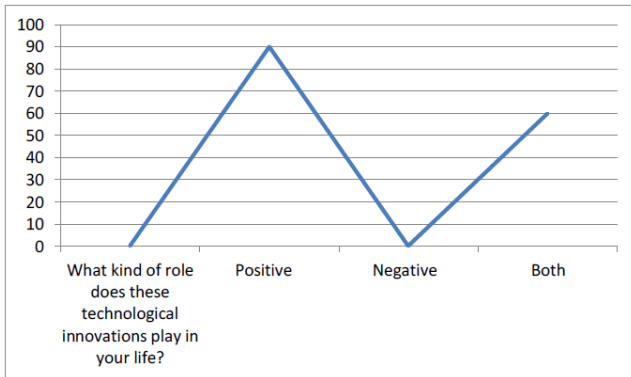


Figure 3: Survey data showing the role played by ICT and New Media

The data also depicted that 40% of the population agreed that technology plays both positive and negative roles in their lives. The positive roles according to the respondents were awareness and participation, reach and accessibility, affordable time and space, better quality of life, global connectivity, twenty-four hours availability, expression of thoughts and beliefs. The study revealed that 80% and above population witnessed a positive role in terms of entertainment, information sharing, as a medium of expression, availability, connectivity, quality of life, time and space, accessibility, and participation as shown in figure 4.

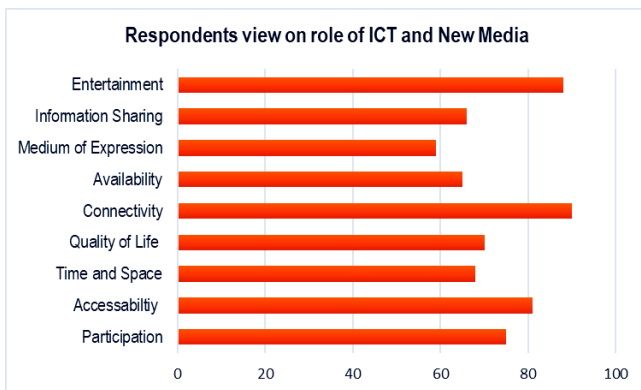


Figure 4: Survey data showing the positive role of ICT and New Media

The study also explored the negative role of ICT and New media and it was noted that the negative roles included misleading information like fake news and articles, time-consuming, leading to addiction, impact on health, access to negative content, fraud, and cheating practices. The majority of the population worried about the negative and sensitive information that can be accessed by use of this technology was severe. Moreover, time consumption, problems with health, and misleading information

was also of concern. The population felt that the content displayed using new media and ICT technologies had a high degree of quality interactivity that sometimes makes people carried away. The content is displayed in a fashion that generates hate groups and negative approaches for the concerned topic or person talked about. They did agree that a reverse mechanism is also prevalent but both of the aspects lead to extreme situations and are therefore not good as shown in figure 5.

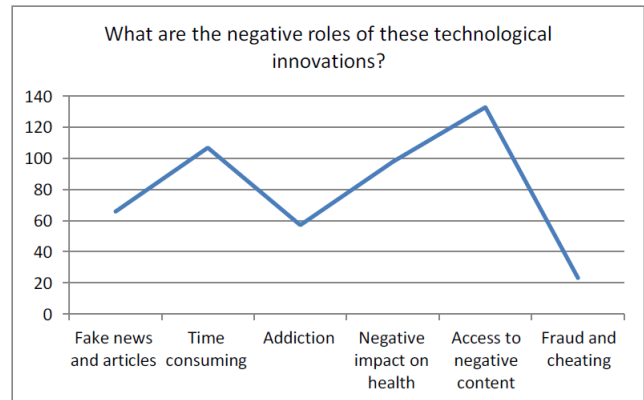


Figure 5: Survey data showing the negative role of ICT and New Media

To investigate the role of ICT and New media in society, the respondents were asked to mention the positive factors that were contributed. The positive factors that were listed as the top in the survey include the birth of an open society and culture, knowledgeable society, awareness, and improvement in the quality of life. The other factors that were listed were, individuals and groups have more expressive quality and were more attacking in terms of their participation in social and cultural domains. Individuals were seen sharing content, generating content that is related to social awareness or cultural awareness. Further, it was noted that ICT and New media have improved quality of life as people are seen sharing their happy moments, talking about their social and cultural lives, and getting inspired from other countries and cultures.

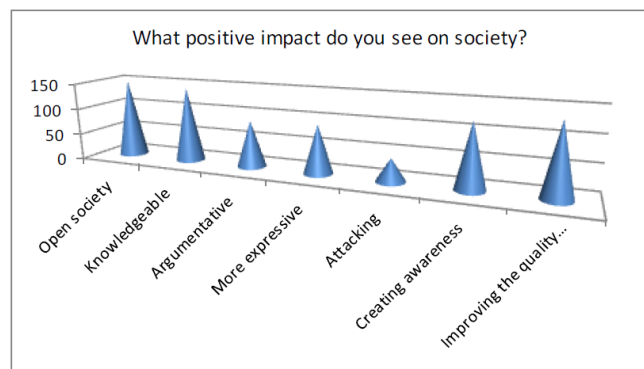


Figure 6: Survey data showing the positive impact of ICT and New Media

The close and secretive society has changed to more open and free. There is a mix of cultures witnessed in the urban centers where the urban youth flock to celebrate global trends and

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festivals. The celebration culture has moved from global to local where even the local and traditional festivals are practiced differently today. People synchronize their events, follow national trends and celebrate their festivals as a mass community festival or national festival. The people have now tried to gather information about their festivals, the ways of celebrating them and how to educate the coming generations about them. The current youths and old people find value in their celebrations by posting their content and evaluating them with the likes and comments appearing in their postings and the number of followers. The surveyed data depicted that the impact discussed above were profound and the sample under investigation agreed in the majority that ICT and New media is powerful tool in the current form of society as shown in figure 6.

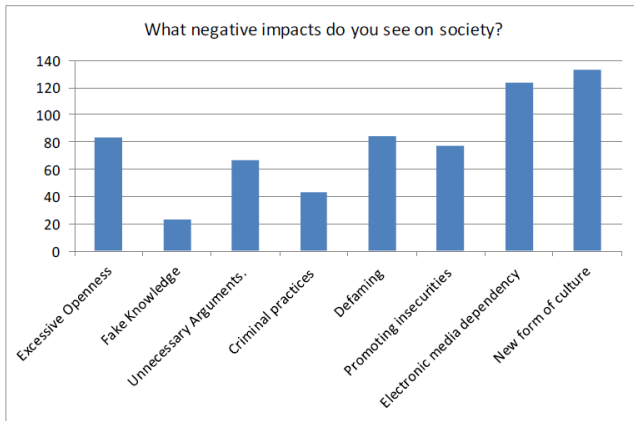


Figure 7: Survey data showing the negative impact of ICT and New Media on society

The negative impact of the survey was seen in the form of excessive openness, fake knowledge, unnecessary arguments, criminal practices, defaming, promoting insecurities, electronic media dependency, a new form of culture. The majority of the people answering the questions felt that though open culture is good but openness beyond the cultural values is not appreciable. The hate that gets generated in a minute due to wrong information, fake information, and fake content can put a threat to a person, society, and an institution. They felt that due to the global reach of the technology the impact is over the globe and can even hit an image of the subject badly. The samples under study felt that due to the availability of the information in all forms, the discussion nowadays turns into heated arguments and the extreme presentations have led to revolution, hate, and disagreement among the people. Figure 7 survey data shows the list of negative impacts provided by the respondents. The new form of culture has brought insecurities in relationships as individuals can be tracked and spied, captured in odd situations, and even personal matters become public due to the advancement of technology. The respondents felt that technology is promoting insecurity among people and the young generation is getting highly dependent on the technology. The ICT and New media have given rise to a new form of culture, the electronic culture that has taken humans away from real life, and they are bound to get attracted to more virtual systems.

The survey showed that culture was also influenced by ICT and New media. The answered to the question on how technological innovations have made an impact on the culture, the respondents answered that a new culture that was more open and dependent mostly on the electronic form was in practice. The new form of electronic usage has given birth to a new type of electronic

interaction which challenges the traditional form of culture and challenges the norms and values of it, making its thought and beliefs blur. People love to post their life events on social media, share their experiences on blogs, and use mobile as a technological device to disseminate data. The thirst to be popular has induced wrong pictures of cultures and practices appearing in the public forums. The respondents cited the example of circulation of personal photographs and videos of people in their personal spaces, celebrities using social media with over display of public life, and political leaders making use of the technology to gain cheap popularity. The transition is also seen in the way traditional cultural practices have a mix of western influences in celebrations. The recent time has seen the rise of Valentine's Day, English new year's celebration, Halloween, and Easter celebrations. The respondents felt that the influence is on the rise and may overcome the traditional cultural practice and blur the social norms, promoting the pseudo-culture as depicted in figure 8.

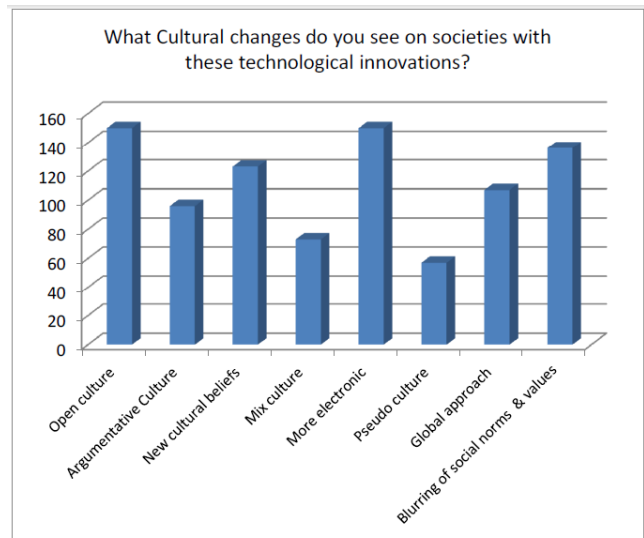


Figure 8: Survey data showing cultural changes due to ICT and New Media.

The respondents were finally asked to rate the impact of technological innovation in various aspects. The different aspects include Internet Technologies, Social Network Sites, Mobile Technologies, World Wide Web, Digital Payment Systems, Online and Internet Banking, Point of Sale in Sale Stores, Digital Technologies in Politics, Digital Technologies in Society, Digital Technologies in Cultural Events, Digital Technologies in Education, Technological Impact on Youth, Technological Impact on Middle-Aged People, Technological Impact on Old Aged People, Technology in Governance and Technology in Awareness and Social Movements. The respondents had to rate the above aspects as a highly positive impact, moderate positive impact, neutral, negative impact, or highly negative impact. It is seen from the data that respondents felt that Computer Systems, Digital Payment Systems, Online and Internet Banking Systems, Point of Sale had a high positive impact. The respondents had a mixed response for Technological Impact on Middle-Aged People, Technological Impact on Old-Aged People, and Technology in Governance. The other aspects were rated as having a moderate positive impact on society and culture. It can be seen from data that the respondents on the majority side agreed that technology

has a more positive impact and it has created this in all major social, economic, and cultural systems as shown in figure 9.

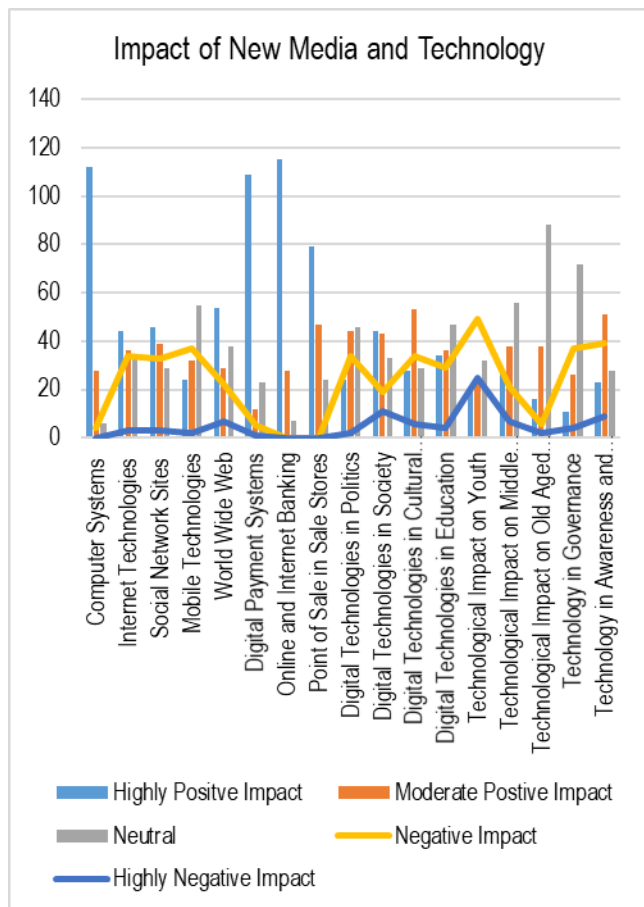


Figure 9: Survey data showing the Overall impact of ICT and New Media

4. DISCUSSIONS

People build their lives in small groups initially, the family, friendships, workgroups, and later educational and religious organizations. These small circles introduce practices that are learned from the environment, personal histories, and shared beliefs between the two individuals or groups which results in information of a particular culture. The people of different cultures get together in a social bond to share their beliefs, enjoy their customs, and share a common territory which results in the formation of a society. In both the above two cases communication plays a vital role.

Communication is vital for human beings and social structures to exist. A change in the way we communicate and what we communicate plays a vital role in the formation and evolution of society and culture. Social structures are bound to information they get from external entities. Effective communication is vital in bringing a mass movement, challenging cultural norms, and witnessing new practices in a society. Communication is at the heart of socio-cultural patterns. The last few years have seen a dynamic change in the way people communicate around the world. The high-tech artifacts are not only blessed with the best

communication ability but are also capable of producing, storing, and manipulating information. Internet, mobile systems, high-tech digital networks, satellite communications, etc. have re-defined the communication pattern in our society. The Internet has become the basic tool of communication and exchange of cultural artifacts. Society is witnessing the evolution of a universal interconnected network of audio, video, and electronic text communications that have blurred the distinction between interpersonal and mass communication and between public and private communication. The current state of ICT and new media has started protruding its impact on our society and culture [13]. The contemporary patterns of society are already under the challenge of this new form of media and they have started providing unpredictable outcomes. New Media has also found a use with less radical social movements such as the Free Huge Campaign with the use of websites, blogs, and online videos to demonstrate the effectiveness of the movement itself. The use of high-volume blogs has allowed numerous views and practices to be more widespread and gain more public attention. Another social change seen coming from New Media is trends in fashion and the emergence of subcultures such as Text Speak, Cyberpunk, Cyberdelic, and various others. The Internet has increased the density of social networks [14]. People use the Internet for communication in the form of writing e-mails, virtual chats, and online conferences. It is helpful to maintain the relations which due to the separation in a geographic location otherwise could be lost. As a result of the Internet there is almost nothing that cannot be accomplished from the comfort of one's own home; grocery shopping, buying merchandise, paying the bills, researching for term papers, and even striking up relationships with people halfway across the world.

Communication, which once consisted of putting pen to paper, has now been reduced to a few keystrokes and a click of a mouse; indeed, people can correspond via E-mail faster and easier than traditional mail services could ever hope to offer. The Internet is a whole new world emerging after the 20th century. Every day, the Internet expands by the social, political, and economic activities of people all over the world, and its impact grows exponentially [14]. In this new world, there is no geographical separation and there are no borders, and all people are encouraged to participate and contribute drawing on their experiences and resources. In cyberspace actions and reactions are essentially instantaneous, and this is why the Internet is so gratifying and attractive [14]. This is why it has impacted our society in almost all areas of human endeavor. The easy accessibility of information has made cultures advance in many ways. Education is a way in which the advancement of cultures has occurred. People can now learn about anything using the internet as a means of information. Cultures have also advanced economically because the internet allows for marketing and sales transactions. Marketers now have a whole new way of advertising and selling products or services. They can now post something on the internet and anyone, anywhere at any point in time can see that ad. This leads to an increase in business. Businesses are also growing because the internet allows for businesses to be internet-based. They can solely run on the internet (Facebook) or they can have a land business and increase exposure with a website and/or internet business as well. Worldwide organizations are now able to exist and run with ease because of the advancement of communication by the internet [16].

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In the light of cultural impact, cultures can more easily explore other cultures with the help of the internet. To learn about a culture one can just use a search engine and quickly access information about the desired culture. Before the internet, a person would have had to either travel to where the culture was or find a book that entailed information about that culture. Both of these ways are time-consuming and have the potential to be very expensive. Another benefit to using the internet for cultural information is that one can learn about the beliefs of that culture before experiencing it if he/she is interested in going there. An example is learning what that culture finds offensive so that he/she does not make the mistake of acting or speaking in a way that offends the people of that culture. This helps with business transactions and any kind of intercultural travel. The Internet has provided a newfound exploration of cultures; cultural uniqueness has decreased because people see there are other possible ways of living life. A person of one culture may like the way another culture does something and then start to do that thing themselves. This can spread throughout the culture and soon the two cultures will contain fewer differences. An easy example of this is cultural food. In the United States, we have Chinese, Mexican, Japanese, Italian, and Thai restaurants. This is because we have learned about the different foods from these cultures, liked them, and started eating them ourselves. The internet makes this process very easy by providing recipes from these cultures online. Cultural homogenization will continue to occur as the number of cultures on the internet increases and the diversity of the internet's content grows. The Internet has provided individuals; organizations and cultures to come together on the internet because of a shared interest or goal. We find lots of Indian cinema websites frequented by Nepalese, Pakistani, and other southeast Asian countries. The Nepalese film industry and the fashion world are highly inspired by Indian cinema. This gives a chance to other cultures to learn about each other and adopt ideas from one another eventually leading to an alteration in ways of life.

The internet allows information to freely flow from one network to another. Cultural communication is easier now because the information from one culture can be posted on the internet and looked at by another culture. This can be through journals, websites and anything else included with the internet. Cultural trends include using Facebook, instant messaging, Myspace, blogs, and other devices like these to communicate [15]. Cultures can directly communicate with other cultures through these services. It has greatly benefitted from the invention and use of the internet. It has advanced in education, marketing, communication, and cultural practices. It is not only on the positive side but unfortunately, its benefits can also be viewed as its weaknesses [16]. Education can be adversely affected because of the high amounts of incorrect information on the internet. Marketing may offend culture and start tensions between cultures. Communication could also start tensions if persons from different cultures engage in disputes on the internet. Cultural uniqueness and identities can be impacted negatively by the homogenization of cultures. Cultures can slowly lose their traditions and this may hide different possibilities of ways of living. It can also lead to discrimination against a minority group who doesn't participate in new global culture trends. Another limitation of the internet is the availability of subversive material. Examples are pornography that is now available for children to see and recipes for making bombs. These are ever-threatening postings that can have a significant negative effect on culture. Even though the effects of subversive material may be negative, it may be far more negative to limit knowledge that can be obtained from the internet.

The heavy use of digital cameras, digital network systems, satellite communication systems, to monitor the activity of all individuals all through the clock has affected the personal identity of a person and endangered his private life as well as data [18]. Someone is always watching YouTube [19] has become a reality today. The individuals visiting airports, shopping malls, public areas, parks, etc. are all monitored all the time and this has affected their free movements which are a new cultural implication due to technology as compared to older times [15]. The Internet not only has the above-mentioned implications but also introduced an invasion of western cultures into the homes of unsuspecting parents, which has led to a loss of one's own culture and adoption of a new foreign one [14]. The adoption of a new culture has caused the general public to resist this change, thus the consequences have led the youth to feel rejected and further amplified the already existing social problem of alienation from society as a whole.

5. CONCLUSION

Thus to conclude ICT, New Media, and Internet have come up as vital tools in the 21st century. They have taken up the post-industrial era to the informational era. The growth of online culture, online activism, social networks, emails, instant messaging clearly shows the demands of the system today. The Internet has given birth to new terms like Cyberculture, e-culture, Popular culture, Participatory culture, Media culture, Virtual culture, and Online culture which show its growth on daily basis. Cyberpunk, Cyberdelic, etc are all trends that are growing and becoming popular in the same way as in contemporary culture. The new ways of interacting and sharing through social sites, blogs, and forums mark the start of new social movements in society. Hence, we can conclude that not fully but ICT, New Media, and Internet has made their presence in the mind of people and they are extensively used as primary media in many developed societies and are slowly taking up in underdeveloped societies. This media has appeared as a new means of socializing and interacting among people introducing an e-culture in our society today. The pilot survey also supported a profound impact of ICT and New media on society and culture with growing influence and participation in the coming days.

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