

Selfie: Redefining Culture of Narcissism

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Abstract : "Pictures speak more than a thousand words". It is the power of image which can have multiple meanings the way it is read by the viewers. This research article is an outcome of the extensive study of the phenomenon of 'selfie culture' and dire need of self-constructed virtual identity among youths. In the recent times, there has been a revolutionary change in the concept of photography in terms of both techniques and applications. The popularity of 'self-portraits' mainly depend on the temporal space and time created on social networking sites like Facebook, Instagram. With reference to Stuart's Hall encoding and decoding process, the article studies the behavior of the users who post photographs online. The photographic messages (Roland Barthes) are interpreted differently by different viewers. The notion of 'self', 'self-love and practice of looking (Marita Sturken) and ways of seeing (John Berger) got new definition and dimensional together. After Oscars Night, show host Ellen DeGeneres's selfie created the most buzz and hype in the social media. The term was judged the word of 2013, and has earned its place in the dictionary. "In November 2013, the word "selfie" was announced as being the "word of the year" by the Oxford English Dictionary. By the end of 2012, Time magazine considered selfie one of the "top 10 buzzwords" of that year; although selfies had existed long before, it was in 2012 that the term "really hit the big time an Australian origin. The present study was carried to understand the concept of 'selfie-bug' and the phenomenon it has created among youth (especially students) at large in developing a pseudo-image of its own. The topic was relevant and gave a platform to discuss about the cultural, psychological and sociological implications of selfie in the age of digital technology. At the first level, content analysis of the primary and secondary sources including newspapers articles and online resources was carried out followed by a small online survey conducted with the help of questionnaire to find out the student's view on selfie and its social and psychological effects. The newspapers reports and online resources confirmed that selfie is a new trend in the digital media and it has redefined the notion of beauty and self-love. The Facebook and Instagram are the major platforms used to express one-self and creation of virtual identity. The findings clearly reflected the active participation of female students in comparison to male students. The study of the photographs of few selected respondents revealed the difference of attitude and image building among male and female users. The study underlines some basic questions about the desire of reconstruction of identity among young generation, such as - are they becoming culturally narcissist; responsible factors for cultural, social and moral changes in the society, psychological and technological effects caused by Smartphone as well, culminating into a big question mark whether the selfie is a social signifier of identity construction.

Keywords : Culture, Narcissist, Photographs, Selfie

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