**Singapore – The Modern Society**

With the aid of **technological advancement** and other facets of modernization, Singapore has transformed from a third world country to a first world cosmopolitan society in the past 52 years. We have worked to develop our society in many aspects, **transforming our cultural heritage, education process, political empowerment, socialization and religious and ideological beliefs**.

As a result of these changes, the average Singaporean and his family are greatly affected by modernization and are often entrapped in dilemmas and conflicts. Our way of life is now more comfortable and convenient as we enjoy a higher level of standard of living brought upon by modernization.

However, the drastic and fast-paced changes in the modern society is equally challenging and disturbing as the detriments disrupt our way of life, values, beliefs and behaviours, destabilizing our multicultural fabrics.

**1. Technology and its impact on Singapore [Science & Technology]**

**(a) What are the technological development we have embraced**

* Emergence of a gig/sharing economy
  + Ride-sharing services (Grab/Uber)
  + Online food delivery (Deliveroo/UberEats/FoodPanda)
* Increased usage of online services
  + E-Learning (AsknLearn)
  + Online Shopping (Zalora)
* Newer and faster modes of communication
  + Instant Communication (WhatsApp/Telegram)
  + Social Media Platforms (Facebook)

**(b) How it has enriched our society [Positive Impacts]**

* Provides convenience and comfort to individuals → faster and easier communication and transportation means
  + Changi Airport Group (CAG) partners Singapore Airlines and its regional wing, SilkAir on their Fast and Seamless Travel (FAST) check-in trial.
  + The Kuala Lumpur-Singapore High-Speed Rail (HSR) project is expected to reduce travelling time between Singapore’s Jurong East and Kuala Lumpur’s Bandar Malaysia to 90 minutes.
    - Also, the HSR is expected to contribute S$6.7 billion in Gross Domestic Product to both countries and create 111,000 jobs by 2060.
* Promotes efficiency and productivity → promote economic growth
  + In 2015, the government launched S$2.2 billion worth of ICT tenders in digital, data and web services, and IT infrastructure. The government is also investing and promoting cloud computing in order to make work in Singapore more efficient.
* Resource utility maximisation → Better resource management in areas such as capital and labour
  + Singapore invested $19 billion in the Research, Innovation and Enterprise 2020 Plan to develop sufficient and sustainable sources of energy, create more space for future development, and ensure an active and healthy elderly population
  + Desalination plants and NEWater created to overcome water constraints

**(c) How it has undermined our society [Negative Impacts]**

* Cultivates a culture of convenience → affects social behaviours
  + The increased usage of vending machines for various purposes, like the purchase of food and merchandise, has influenced people to become accustomed to the convenience. For example, VendCafes are set up in housing estates and MRT stations.
* Disruption of current industries → unemployment
  + Land Transport Authority data revealed that in the first 11 months of 2016, the average rate of taxis that were unhired was 5.9 per cent, up from 4.2 per cent in 2015.
* Technological divide between the tech-savvy and tech-deprived groups
  + The Silver IT Fest IT Classes train seniors to pick up new skills to lead a digital lifestyle.

**2. The modern socialization and communication process [Social]**

**(a) The modern way of socialization and communication**

* Business people connect through Linkedin
* Friends connect through Facebook
* Politicians connect to voters through Facebook, Instagram and Twitter

**(b) We are more connected and linked**

* Greater and freer flow of information
  + The Government Technology Agency of Singapore (GovTech) has set up an API (Application Programming Interface) exchange called APEX. APEX serves as a centralised data sharing platform for government agencies to exchange data conveniently and securely.
* Further reaching to the public
  + GovTech has set up ‘eCitizen Ideas!’ a crowdsourcing platform for the public to participate and share ideas with government agencies.
  + The April 27 Bukit Batok by-election had PAP’s Murali Pillai and SDP’s Dr Chee Soon Juan competing on social media, particularly on Facebook where both candidates have been posting a steady barrage of photos, videos and even “live” commentary.

**(c) Are we more connected and linked?**

* Minimised face to face interaction
  + According to study findings released by the HDB and the National University of Singapore Centre of Sustainable Asian Cities and Sociology department, residents' interactions also tend to be "incidental and minimal". Respondents were asked to score their frequency of interactions with neighbours, from a score of one (never) to five (daily). Overall, they ranked "exchange of greetings/ small talk" as the most frequent activity, with a mean score of 3.47
* Loss of personal touch
  + According to a 2016 study by think-tank DQ Institute and Nanyang Technological University (NTU), twelve-year-olds spend 6.5 hours daily on electronic devices. Also, the study concluded that the prolonged use of mobile devices can impede children’s ability to connect socially with people offline.

**3. The impact of modernization on our cultures [Culture]**

**(a) How modernization shapes our Singapore culture**

* The reinforcement of values and ideologies → meritocracy, pragmatism, democracy, equality, social justice
* Exchange of cultural ideas, practices and traditions → alternation of cultural and national identities

**(b) Modernization enriches our Singapore culture**

* Facilitates cultural preservation
  + The National Heritage Board (NHB) seeks to preserve and celebrate the shared cultural heritage of the diverse Singapore communities. It conducts heritage programmes and exhibitions to raise public awareness on the importance of cultural preservation. For example, Geylang Serai was marked as a historic site.
* Influx of foreign cultures → evolution of cultures
  + Singapore’s ‘Open Door policy’ has enabled the inflow of individuals that bring along their cultural practices and traditions. The Singapore Department of Statistics have reported that one in five marriages were inter-ethnic, including those with foreign nationalities.

**(c) Modernization is the cause of degradation of Singapore culture**

* Demise of local cuisines → internationalisation of cultures
  + Shutdown of hawker centres as locals appeal to foreign cuisines such as Italian, French and Vietnamese etc
  + Rising rental costs in a land-scarce Singapore has led to the decline of hawker food heritage. Furthermore, existing hawker owners are unable to find anyone to replace them, thus causing these businesses to wind up.
* Declining of art culture
  + Nearly a third of the 17 Gillman Barracks galleries have decided not to renew their leases, citing low human traffic, poor sales and a "slow start" as reasons for their exit.
* Commercialization of cultures
  + Although conservation efforts were made to preserve Kampong Glam’s unique heritage, commercial development in the neighbourhood, seen in terms of the setting up of restaurants and cafes, has stripped away its cultural identity.

**4. First World Nation, First Class Education [Education]**

**(a) Features of a world-class education**

* Inculcation of IT knowledge and skills → Empowering the youth with programming skills to prepare for the technological workforce
* Inclusion of e-learning alternatives → Offering an online education that students can depend on at home, thereby promoting independent learning
* Integrated and interdisciplinary education

**(b) Our education will prepare the youths for the future**

* Early coding education
  + In April 2014, Infocomm Development Authority of Singapore launched Code@SG to spark youth interest in coding. It offers enrichment classes teaching the basics of programming to young people, along with up to 63 courses offered to members of infocomm clubs, a co-curricular activity for those interested in honing their coding skills.
* Interdisciplinary education
  + In secondary schools and junior colleges, it is mandatory for students to take up contrasting subjects along with their main subject combination to diversify their learning and increase knowledge exposure.

**(c) There are still faults in our education system**

* Excess focus in academics
  + The survey of 500 parents, conducted by The Straits Times and research company Nexus Link, found that seven in 10 enrolled their children in extra classes.
  + Nearly 40 per cent of parents with children in pre-schools have tuition for them. When asked why, the top two reasons given were to improve their children's grades and to help them keep up with others.
* Rising stress levels amongst youths
  + According to Straits Times, latest figures show that 2015, there were 27 suicides among 10- to 19-year-olds - a 15-year high. This was double the 2014 figure, despite a drop in the overall number of suicides.
* Social divide
  + According the Singapore children’s society, data showed that nearly 41 per cent of IP/GEP secondary school students came from families with a monthly household income that exceeded $10,000, compared to 7 per cent in government schools. About 54 per cent of IP/GEP students had at least one parent with university education, compared to 17 per cent in government schools.
  + Higher Socio-Economic Status children are more likely to be in IP/GEP schools, and being in these schools makes them more likely to have high confidence in attaining at least a university degree, thereby promoting a social divide between the rich and the poor
* Stifled creativity
  + “The Effects of Cosmopolitan Culture, Competitiveness and Need for Cognitive Closure on Creativity” - a research by SMU Assistant Professor Cheng Chi-Ying has shown that kiasu singaporeans who had a strong sense of conformity exhibited the least creativity among all while the highest creativity scores came from those who were primed to think of their culture and did not mention kiasuism.

**5. Modernization changes our beliefs [Religion]**

**(a) Modernization affects our religious beliefs**

* Modernisation has offered alternative beliefs, like materialism and humanism, in a fast-paced life
  + [Materialism] In a poll done by local business consultancy aAdvantage and Britain-based Barrett Values Centre, the society is largely seen as being competitive, materialistic and kiasu by the 2,000 residents surveyed.
  + [Humanism] A 2015 Department of Statistics’ General Household Survey shown that 18.5% of resident population has no religion. In view of this growing trend, the Humanist Society was set up in 2010 to represent Singapore’s non-religious population. The Humanist Society advocates human-centric beliefs via the use of an ethnic and rational approach.
* Facts-centered and scientific beliefs
  + Singapore Buddhist Federation president Seck Kwang Phing believes the youthful face of the non-religious group ties in with a change in attitudes among the young, who have become more independent in their thinking.  They become exposed to a range of ideologies, which results in a spectrum of views within the non-religious category.

**(b) Why we still need religion?**

* Need for a moral compass to guide individuals in a modern society
  + Reverend Dominic Yeo, the general superintendent of the Assemblies of God of Singapore, said that religion teaches its followers to be moral and adds that “We need to guard our nation, our children and the next generation against moral decadence."
* Foster positive social behaviour
  + NUS sociologist Paulin Straughan posits that disparities in religious ideology could result in intergenerational fault lines and a widening gap "because religion, when it is functional, pulls families together".

**6. Who we are in this modern society [National Identity]**

**(a) How Singaporeans have changed in the modern society**

* How behaviour, attitudes and values are changed
  + The young have "less hunger" compared to employees 20 or more years ago, according to feedback from employers, which the Deputy Prime Minister Tharman said was "common and widespread".

**(b) As we modernize, we improve**

* Cultivation of a gracious society
  + According to a 2015 Singapore Kindness Movement survey, respondents indicated that the Singapore society is perceived as becoming more gracious and courteous to one another.
* Educated
  + According to Department of Statistics Singapore, Diploma and Professional Qualifications rose from 202,300 in 2000 to 411,500 in 2016 while University Qualifications rose from 249,900 in 2000 to 814,200 in 2016.
* Empathy
  + The office of the Commissioner of Charities (COC) revealed this in its annual report in 2015 that there is a 12 percent rise in tax-deductible donations to charity from the year before, hitting $1.1 billion worth of donations.
* Efficiency-based mindset
  + The Productivity and Innovation Credit (“PIC”) Scheme was introduced in Budget 2010 for 5 years from YA 2011 to YA 2015 to encourage businesses to invest in productivity and innovation. This included training of employees and Acquisition and leasing of PIC IT and Automation Equipment, thereby raising business efficiency and productivity.
* Success-oriented / Career Driven
  + Out of 95 employees polled in an online global survey by international business company Regus, 19 per cent of them said they have worked eleven or more hours a day. This is 9 percentage points higher than the global average and 5 percentage points more than Japan, which took the second spot.

**(c) Degradation of the modern Singaporeans**

* Self-centered, Kiasu mentality (afraid to lose)
  + According to a joint survey by aAdvantage Consulting Group & Barrett Values Centre, 57.7% out of 2000 Singaporean respondents  have chosen’ Kiasu’ within their top 10 perceptions of Singapore society. 41.15% included the characteristic 'competitive,' while 32.65% included 'self-centred.'
* ‘Complaint and blame’ culture
  + Unwillingness to bear responsibility + tendency to push the blame to government agencies on various problems → politicization of problems
* ‘Chope’ culture
  + It is a common practice for Singaporeans to reserve seats in food centres by placing items, like tissue packets and umbrellas. However, this practice has led to quarrels and patrons deprived of seats.
* Social vigilantism → via the use of social media and online forums
  + Publish shaming and harassment of wrongdoers, like Anton Casey and Amy Cheong, have caused Singaporeans to be perceived as harsh and unforgiving.
    - Anton Casey’s insensitive remarks on the workshop services to wash ‘stench of public transport’ off his Porsche sparked anger online from Singaporeans → netizens revealed Mr Casey’s personal information and encouraged people to harass him → eventually, Mr Casey apologised and fled Singapore
* Narcissism
  + According to Ms Belinda Ang, founder and director of thinkBIG Communications, Singaporean youths seek validation through attention-seeking behaviour, such as the Ice Bucket Challenge.

**7. Are we more knitted in the modern society?**

(a) Features of a modern Singapore family

(b) Closer and Closer

(c) Disunited and Isolated

**8. Modernization shapes our economy**

(a) Positive Impacts

(b) Negative Impacts

* Traditional stores face stiffer competition against fast food alternatives
  + In October 2017, McDonald’s Singapore and UberEATS announced their joint partnership to allow customers to order their fast food meals via the UberEATS app.
  + The growing popularity of vending machine meals, such as Chef-in-Box, has undermined the businesses of traditional hawker stalls. There are over 100 Chef-in-Box machines islandwide, at housing estates and MRT stations.