Satisfaction and the Use of Social Media in Geographically Distant Relationships

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Abstract

Geographically distant relationships have mainly been studied in the context of satisfaction. This study takes geographically distant relationship satisfaction a step further by analyzing the influence social media has on a romantic partner’s satisfaction in the relationship. Respondents (N=95) in a geographically distant relationship reported their level of satisfaction with social media use in their relationship. Qualitative findings reported that romantic partners did not find the use of social media to be a significant contributor in maintaining relational satisfaction. However, it was found that social media helps provide multiple communication outlets in the relationship. Qualitative findings show that there are common themes reported from participants. This study provides a foundation for further research in the field of social media use in geographically distant relationships.

*Keywords: Social Media, Satisfaction; Geographically Distant Relationships; Social Exchange Theory; Face-to-Face Interaction*
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Research has documented that the use of social media in a romantic relationship affects the satisfaction between romantic partners (Miller-Ott, Kelly & Duran, 2012). For romantic relationships with minimal physical person-to-person interaction, social media has helped maintain closeness and increase satisfaction (Kujath, 2011). Partners involved in a close-distance relationship use social media sites as an additional form of communication. Texting, instant messaging, Facebook use, Facetime, and other forms of social media have helped maintain closeness and increased satisfaction in relationships (Blackburn, Hawks, Parker & Perry, 2013).

However, when romantic partners are physically separated from each other by significant geographic distance, social media becomes a crucial form of communication in maintaining a relationship. As technology plays an important influence in maintaining relationships (Guerrero, Anderson & Afifi, 2011), the presented study goes further in determining the role technology plays in the satisfaction of geographically distant relationships. This is an important topic to study in today’s society because of the increased accessibility to technology and social media, potentially changes the possibility the commitment of geographically distant relationship. If romantic partners are able to use social media to help maintain relationship satisfaction in a geographically distant relationship, then it could potentially increase the likelihood for future geographically distant relationships to be successful. Through analyzing previously conducted research involving variations of social media, geographically distant relationships, and the measurement of satisfaction, this study intends to apply the presented variables to answer our research question.
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Review of Literature

Theoretical Approach

Social exchange theory is applied when analyzing the costs and benefits in a geographically distant relationship. The theory proposes that social behavior is the result of an exchange process—to maximize benefits and minimize costs. According to the social exchange theory, people weigh the potential gains and costs of relationships. When the risks outweigh the rewards, relationships often result in termination. In a geographically distant relationship, romantic partners experience relational costs such as physical intimacy, face-to-face in person interaction, and miscommunication; however, if the benefits of the relationship, such as marriage and career fulfillment, outweigh the costs, then the relationship can be successful. Applying this theoretical approach to the presented study, we are able to see if social media beneficially contributes to geographically distant relational satisfaction.

Social Media

Many people today use various forms of social media to maintain different types of relationships. Previous research has shown that people use the Internet to socialize with others (Baym et. al, 2007). The quality of a relationship in which two people use the Internet to socialize with each other is dependent on the gender of the people. Two people of the same gender tend to have more satisfying relationships compared to people of the opposite gender socializing online. The medium of the communication tends to not affect relational quality. (Baym et al., 2007).

Previous literature has shown that in geographically romantic distant relationships, couples use email, social networking sites, and instant messaging (Coyne, Stockdale, Busby, Iverson, & Grant, 2011). A recent study found that email is used to help romantic partners stay in
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touch (Johnson, Haigh, Becker, Craig, & Wigley, 2008). This study also found that emails between romantic partners feature a high degree of openness, which helps romantic partners maintain intimacy in their relationship (Johnson et al., 2008). Affection between romantic partners is expressed frequently through social media (Coyne, Stockdale, Busby, Iverson, & Grant, 2011). Another study found that when men use social media in their relationships, they tend to create sexual tension and decrease relational satisfaction for their partner (Tosun, 2012). At the same time, when women use social media in their relationships, they create positive sexual and relational satisfaction (Tosun, 2012). In romantic couples, cell phones were used most frequently to communicate and express affection (Coyne, Stockdale, Busby, Iverson, & Grant, 2011). Couples use their cell phones not only to call and text each other but also to access their email, Facetime, Instagram, Snapchat, and other mobile social networking and dating sites. This indicates that geographically distant partners can access mass mediated messages at anytime when away from their partner.

Other research has shown that the use of Facebook maintenance behaviors positively affects relationship satisfaction (Dainton, 2013). Research has also found that Facebook is important in the beginning stages of a romantic relationship (Fox, Warber, & Makstaller, 2013). Many geographically distant couples use Facebook and find it to be a positive social networking site while other new couples tend to feel pressured to promote their relationship status via Facebook (Fox, Warber, & Makstaller, 2013).

Results on social media and relationship satisfaction have also found that intimacy mediates the relationship between online use and relationship satisfaction as a whole (Hand, Thomas, Buboltz, Deemer, & Buyanjargal, 2013). Research on social networks such as MySpace and Facebook conclude that these sites are used in relationships where face-to-face interaction is
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minimal (Kujath, 2011). The use of these networks help geographically distant couples maintain intimacy even when face-to-face interaction is minimal (Kujath, 2011). Social networks being used today are having positive impacts on couples around the world. Partners in geographically distant relationships are being able to experience higher feelings of closeness and intimacy with their partners due to social media. Social media is allowing couples to see each other virtually when face-to-face interaction is limited. Geographically distant partners are benefiting from all the tools and applications social media and social networks have to offer.

Satisfaction

Satisfaction is a major factor not only in geographically distant romantic relationships, but also human relationships as a whole (Guerrero, Anderson & Afifi, 2011). However, romantic relationships are considered a core to human existence (Guerrero et al., 2011). Previous literature has made it clear that people are willing to subject themselves to anything in order to find satisfaction in romantic relationships (Blackburn, Hawks, Parker & Perry, 2013). Studies have found that texting, instant messaging, Facebook use, and Facetime have helped maintain closeness and increase satisfaction in relationships (Blackburn et al., 2013). This study also found that texting or even sexting can be a way for couples to create a sense of connection and increase intimacy; the secrecy of texting or instant messaging can lead to the possibility of couples having more flirtatious conversations with each other (Blackburn et al., 2013).

In many situations, it’s easier for people to express their true selves over texting or other social media mediums because they don’t have to worry as much about rejection. True self is considered to be the degree of ability to express fully the real self in a social environment (Bridges, & Morokoff, 2011). Expressing one’s true self is imperative to satisfaction in a relationship, because when you’re not expressing yourself, you’re expressing someone else and
therefore, it will take away from your relational joy and satisfaction (Bridges, & Morokoff, 2011). However, if someone were to become overly dependent on social media to reach relational satisfaction, the satisfaction would be coming from the social media and not the relationship (Hall, & Baym, 2012). Dependence on social media increases relational satisfaction, but over dependence decreases satisfaction (Hall, & Baym, 2012).

It has been found that in regards to cell phone use, non-geographically distant couples enjoyed having the ability to communicate with one another on a constant basis, but were more satisfied with their relationship when there was an absence of cell phone rules (Miller-Ott, Kelly & Duran, 2012). Overall, the use of social media impacts satisfaction in romantic relationships in both positive and negative ways (Miller-Ott et al., 2012).

Geographically Distant Relationships

Actively maintaining a relationship is important for any type of relationship but can be said to be even more critical in a geographically distant relationship. In general, the population would believe that maintaining a long-distance relationship would lead to a higher dissolution rate than a geographically close relationship however, researchers have found the opposite. (Kelmer, Rhoades, Stanley, Markman, 2013) Past studies have found that, compared to those in close-proximity relationships, individuals in long-distance relationships would report higher levels of relationship adjustment, sexual satisfaction, love, fun with partner, and conversational quality. (Kelmer, Rhoades, Stanley, Markman, 2013) While this may be difficult to understand, geographically distant relations must actively work on maintaining the relationships in order to compensate for the distance. It is also important to examine how the “engagement of maintenance activities” correlates to the intimacy, relational satisfaction, and stress in a long-distance relationship. (Merolla, 2012) Researchers concluded that engaging in maintenance
activities positively correlates to intimacy and relational satisfaction. (Merolla, 2012) While this is informational in examining long-distance relationship, it will be more beneficial to look at how specifically social media is used for relational maintenance and satisfaction.

Communication styles and quality varies immensely between geographically distant and geographically close relationships. Past researchers have examined the relationship between how distance affects the amount and quality of communication in an intimate relationship. (Jiang & Hancock, 2013) Researchers found that people in geographically distant relationships self-disclosed more often than couples in geographically close relationships did, which led to greater intimacy for couples engaged in geographically distant relationships. (Jiang & Hancock, 2013) Studies have also concluded that people in geographically distant relationships define their everyday talk as being more intimate than those in geographically close relationships. (Stafford, 2010) Whereas geographically close relationships may have more face-to-face communication, geographically distant relationships must rely more on other forms of communication. This may also be why studies have found that partners in a long distance relationship will adjust their communication, by engaging in more self-disclosure and meaningful conversation, to adapt to the distance. (Stafford, 2010)

It can also be said that there are other components in maintaining a relationship other than communication. Personality traits are also vital components in determining the satisfaction of a geographically distant relationship. Past studies have found that not all long-distance couples need to worry about their relationship except those that have men with high negativity affectivity and low relational security. (Cameron & Ross, 2007) Other than personality traits, researchers have also found that “the best predictors of relationship outcomes are the interactions between situational context and enduring vulnerabilities” (Cameron & Ross, 2007) While there are many
aspects that need to be examined when determining the satisfaction of a geographically distant relationship, our study will attempt to understand specifically what role social media plays in relational communication and satisfaction. The research question that will guide this study is:

RQ: How does the use of social media contribute to the satisfaction of geographically distant relationships?

Method

Participants

A convenience sample of 135 individuals participated in this study. Participants were recruited by clicking on a survey link posted on the Facebook pages of the research team members. Participants were asked to complete the survey only if they were currently involved in a geographically distant romantic relationship. Upon entering the survey, each participant was presented with an informed consent form, which had been approved by the university’s institutional research review board. The form indicated that (1) the study concerned attitudes toward satisfaction and the use of social media in geographically distant romantic relationships, (2) the students were not required to participate, and (3) if they did participate, they could withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. Participation in this study was anonymous.

The first part of the survey consisted of demographic questions about the participants, their significant other and their target relationship.

Of the 135 individuals who participated, 95 completed the entire survey. Of these 95 participants, 22 (23.2%) were male and 73 (76.8%) were female. Age ranged from 16 to 30 years with a mean of 21.75, a median of 22 and standard deviation of 2.207. 51 (53.7%) participants were full-time students, 18 (18.9%) were part-time students and 26 (27.4%) were non-students. 40 (42.1%) participants were full-time employees, 35 (36.8%) were part-time employees and 20
(21.1%) were unemployed. 78 (83.9%) participants were White/Caucasion, 3 (3.2%) were Black/African-American, 10 (10.8%) Hispanic/Latino/a, 1 (1.1%) was Pacific Islander and 1 (1.1%) was Native American. 90 (95.7%) participants were heterosexual, 3 (3.2%) were bisexual and 1 (1.1%) was lesbian. When asked the reason for their geographically distant relationship, 59 (67.8%) participants marked school, 14 (16.1%) marked career and 14 (16.1%) marked military. Geographic distance ranged from 30 miles to 17,000 miles with a mean of 1,594.74, median of 450 and a standard deviation of 2,521.143. Number of total months together ranged from 2 to 156 months with a mean of 23.38, a median of 15 and a standard deviation of 23.178. Number of months together before the relationship became distant ranged from 0 to 53 months with a mean of 11.34, a median of 7 and a standard deviation of 12.550. When asked how many times they had seen their significant other in person over the last six months, answers ranged from 0 to 100 times with a mean of 11.44, a median of 5 and a standard deviation of 18.057. When asked if they had a planned end date to their geographically distant relationship, 51 (53.7%) participants said yes and 44 (46.3%) said no. When asked which was their preferred social media form used to connect with their significant other, 5 (3.7%) participants marked Facebook, 33 (24.4%) marked Facetime/Skype, 18 (13.3%) marked Texting, 26 (19.3%) marked Phone Calls, 1 (0.7%) marked E-mail and 1 (0.7%) marked Other. Lastly, when asked how often they used social media to communicate with their significant other per day, frequency ranged from 0 to 15 times with a mean of 5.34 and a standard deviation of 4.333.

**Measures**

The second part of the survey consisted of a Likert-type measure to assess different factors relating to geographically distant romantic relationships. Participants were asked to rate each item on a seven-point scale from 1 (strongly agree) to 7 (strongly disagree). The first six
items measured attitudes toward the relationship using a modified version Norton’s (1983) Quality Marriage Index (QMI). Although designed for assessing marital satisfaction, research shows that the QMI is a successful measure in non-marital relationships as well. Thus, the QMI was adjusted to reflect relational satisfaction in dating couples rather than married couples. While Norton did not provide any information on the reliability of the QMI, later research reported a Cronbach alpha of .95 (Baxter, 1990). In regards to validity, research shows a positive correlation between relationship commitment and satisfaction (Baxter & Bullis, 1986). Previous research shows that the QMI appears to be a reliable and valid means of assessing relational satisfaction (Baxter & Bullis, 1986). Participants were also asked to rate each of the following items on a seven-point scale from 1 (strongly agree) to 7 (strongly disagree): (1) We have a good relationship, (2) My relationship with my partner is very stable, (3) Our relationship is strong, (4) My relationship with my partner makes me happy, (5) I really feel like part of a team with my partner and (6) The degree of happiness, everything considered, in your relationship. The next 21 items measure attitudes toward the use of social media using the Cell Phone Satisfaction Scale (CPSS) (Miller-Ott et al., 2012). The Cronbach alpha was measured at .90 (Miller-Ott et al., 2012). Participants were asked to rate each of the following items on a seven-point scale from 1 (strongly agree) to 7 (strongly disagree): (1) I’m happy with the use of cell phones in our relationship, (2) Our use of cell phones is fine, (3) Cell phones are a source of conflict in our relationship, (4) We have arguments over how we use the cell phone, (5) I am satisfied with the way my partner and I use cell phones in our relationship, (6) A lot of our relationship arguments are about the use of our cell phones and (7) I’d like to change some things about our use of cell phones with each other. These questions were asked again for each medium, including face-to-face video interaction and Facebook.
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The third part of the survey asked participants to choose his or her preferred social media platform used to connect with his or her significant other. Options included Facebook, Facetime/Skype, Texting, Phone calls, E-mail and Other.

The fourth and final part of the survey contained five open-ended questions regarding the use of social media. Questions included: (1) Please indicate how often you use social media to communicate with your significant other per day, (2) How does social media help your geographically distant relationship, (3) How does social media hurt your geographically distant relationship, (4) In what ways do you think communicating with your significant other via social media is different than communicating with them face to face and (5) If you had any suggestions on how to best use social media for a couple just beginning a long distance relationship, what would they be?

Results

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics

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Table 1 is a chart on the descriptive statistics of our study. A scale that ranges from 1 to 7, 1 standing for strongly agree to 7 standing for strongly disagree was used. The Research Question stated: How does the use of social media contribute to the satisfaction of
geographically distant relationships? The results found that the mean amount of months people, between the ages of 18 and 25 years old, in geographically distant relationships have been together for is 23.38 months (SD=23.178). This study also sought to find out on average how many months partners in a geographically distant relationship were together before they became geographically distant. The results concluded that most couples between the ages of 18 and 25 years old have been in geographically close relationships for 11.34 months (SD=12.55) before distance was involved. The mean amount of times that a person in a geographically distant relationship has seen their partner over the last 6 months is 11.44 times. On average, the distance between young adult couples and their partners is 1594.74 miles. The mean age of a person in a geographically distant relationship is 21.75 years. The mean age of a person’s significant other is 22.12 years.

F2F Sat was significantly correlated with cell phone satisfaction (r=.48, p=.00); and Facebook satisfaction (r=.44, p=.00); and age (r=-.19, p=.08). Relationship satisfaction was significantly correlated with significant other’s age (r=-.27, p=.02); months together (r=-.23, p=.04). Months together and months before in geographically distant relationships (r=.56, p=.000).

Qualitative Analysis

A thematic analysis was utilized to analyze the qualitative data. Participants in the study were asked to answer the question of “How social media helps their geographically distant relationship.” The themes that emerged from this study ranged from helping just a small amount, to allowing for more regular contact, to no help at all. To help organize the total responses, five categories were created. The categories included social media allowing for: 1.) Slight Interaction (12%), 2.) Long Distance Face to Face Interaction (16%), 3.) Regular Contact (36%), 4.) Shared
Lives (31%), and 5.) No Help (4%). The most common responses of category one [Slight Interaction] was “social media helps a bit” or “it’s better than nothing.” In the second theme [Long Distance Face to Face Interaction], respondents replied by saying things like “it helps us see each other” and “I can look at pictures from his unit online, and also read updates on him as well.” Participants also like the way that social media helps with staying connected throughout the day [Regular Contact]. Examples of answers in this theme look like these: “it assists in keeping contact with each other” as well as “it allows us to communicate constantly even though he is 2.5 hours away” and also, “in a perfect world where outside sources would not interfere, it would be great; it gives us the ability to communicate; without it we would be stuck writing letters.” The participants answered in a much more personal manner under the theme Shared Lives. An example of this is shown here: “Being able to see my boyfriend’s face and talk to him every day made the long distance less painful. It was almost like we were still hanging out together except that we couldn’t touch. For example, sometimes we Skyped as we were falling asleep to simulate the feeling of falling asleep next to each other; it was nice to be able to open my drowsy eyes and see him snoring like normal. I also mailed him half of a Guess Who set so we could play a board game together over Skype.” The last theme that this question was broken into was No Help. Answers under this topic were not significant and looked like “it doesn’t help.”

When asked, “How does social media hurt your geographically distant relationship,” a majority of respondents (44%) replied that social media does not, in any way, hurt their geographically distant relationship. However, some respondents believe that social media has a negative effect on their relationship by causing jealousy between partners (10%). Participants believed social media such as Facebook and Instagram may be a cause of jealousy due to the
nature of the pictures or statuses that are made public. Couples might feel uncomfortable with the content of these pictures or statuses, which may lead to interpersonal conflicts. Respondents also believed social media lacked an emotional connection between individuals (10%).

Social media seems to lack the capability to create an emotional connection that many geographically distant couples desire. One participant expressed that “Social media takes away from the emotional aspect of our relationship.” One of the major findings was the belief that social media causes miscommunications between couples (25%), Miscommunication was a dominant reason as to why social media hurt geographically distant relationships. As one participant stated, “There are things that don’t translate through social media.” Misinterpretations and miscommunications are a common struggle in face-to-face communication; they are only increased when communicating through social media. Lastly participants felt that using social media simply intensified their feelings of missing their significant others more than if they did not use social media (11%)

This, in turn, made their geographically distant relationship even more difficult. One participant felt, “Sometimes seeing my partner but not being able to physically hold their hand or hug them makes me miss them more.” Although there were many cases that believed social media was detrimental to their relationship, a significant majority believed that social media did not hurt their relationship.

Participants were asked, “In what ways do you think communicating with your significant other via social media is different than communicating with them face-to-face?” The first theme that emerged was that there was no physical component (30%). Common responses included “It is different in that we are not able to touch, hold hands or kiss as we would if we were face-to-face” and “It makes us sad that we can see each other’s faces but can’t touch or hold each other.” The second theme that emerged was that there was less nonverbal
communication (21%). Common responses included “I can’t always read his expression, body language, tone or feelings” and “We can’t use body language to communicate so our verbal communication needs to be much more clear.” The third theme that emerged was greater misinterpretation (17%). Common responses included “Anything written can always be misread and silences over the phone can be misinterpreted” and “Social media can easily distort your message and what you meant to say has the potential to be misinterpreted.” The fourth theme that emerged was that there was no personal component (16%). Common responses included “It is less personal and more public using social media vs. face-to-face” and “Via social media, everyone in the world could potentially see our interaction.” The final theme that emerged was that there was less overall satisfaction (12%). Common responses included “I still miss my partner when communicating via social media” and “Using social media is not the same as being with my significant other.” Less than 4% of participants said that communication via social media was as beneficial as face-to-face communication.

Participants had the opportunity to write an open-ended response giving advice to others in a geographically distant relationship. Out of the total responses, five themes were created to separate the responses, including utilizing face-to-face technology (31%), communicating goals prior and during the span of the relationship (18%), frequency of communication (17%), keeping relational communication private (17%), and patience (12%). Face-to-face technological communication was the most common advice with examples like “I would advise Skype and Facetime. If anything it is better to see them than to just hear your voice” or “There is nothing better than hearing the voice and seeing the face of that special someone you can’t physically be with.” Communicating goals is also a common theme when giving advice. A few responses include, “I would recommend communicating your goals with your partner and what is
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expected” and “Make sure the couple is on the same page about their feelings of using social media to communicate.” Frequency responses ranged from “Use social media as regularly as possible with each other” to “Use as much as possible. It is easy to hang out for hours with social media, watch movies, and even leave it on while you sleep.” It was also important for surveyors to keep communication private rather than public to keep the relationship personal and intimate. Several responses included “Keep things between your relationship, the world doesn’t need to know everything” and “Keep your relationship details between the two of you.” Lastly, there was a common theme in advice to keep patience when in a geographically distant relationship. Surveyors advised those to “Be patient with one another. Love will last if it’s meant to be” and “Don’t get anxious when responses aren’t instant. Be patient with your partner and remind yourself that life happens.” Overall, the advice given presents common themes that could help support or create further research when analyzing geographically distant relationship satisfaction.

Discussion

The results from this study in general found that there was no significant correlation between the usage of social media and satisfaction in geographically distant relationships. We found that the qualitative results of this study were more significant than the quantitative results. An interesting finding in the study was that the mean amount of time people, between the ages of 18 and 25 years old, in geographically distant relationships have been together for is about one year. Results show that it is possible for young adults to have long lasting geographically distant relationships. It is also very interesting that the age of two people in a geographically distant relationship is very similar. The results show that on average, young adults in geographically distant relationships are only about .37 years different in their age.
When the participants were asked “How social media helps their geographically distant relationship,” we were unsure of the response that we would receive. In previous literature, it has been found that texting, instant messaging, Facebook use, and Facetime have helped maintain closeness and increase satisfaction in relationships (Blackburn et al., 2013) So, based on the quantitative data, it would seem that participants would have answered in a consistent manner; responding in such a way as “it helps a little bit,” or “we can talk to each other.” However, when the answers to this question were broken down, it was observed that there was a very large variance as to exactly how social media plays a role. Obviously, there are certain restraints with social media, as will be discussed later; but the vast majority of participants had at least one way in which social media benefited their geographically distant relationship. There were some participants that discussed how being able just to see or hear their significant other’s voice was enough to close the gap between them. Others discussed how it made them feel as though they were involved in the everyday lives of their significant other, whether that was because they were constantly texting throughout the day, or seeing posted pictures on Facebook. However, out of the eighty-three responses only four people responded by saying social media played absolutely no role in their relationship.

When analyzing how social media hurt participants’ geographically distant relationships, there was an overwhelming response that social media actually does not seem to hurt GDR’s. These findings were consistent with previous research that stated social media improved satisfaction in geographically distant relationships. (Blackburn, Hawks, Parker & Perry, 2013) However, our qualitative research also found that using social media made some individuals simply miss their significant other more. This is understandable because using face-to-face social media such as Skype or Facetime is meant to simulate in person face-to-face interactions;
however, it is simply a simulation severely lacking the same emotional connection that in-person interactions can provide. Another significant finding was the miscommunications that are caused by social media, which lead to conflicts in geographically distant relationships. These miscommunications can be caused by social media technical difficulties such as dropped calls, unclear reception, etc. However, miscommunications can also be result of misinterpreting the way things are said through social media. As we mentioned earlier, social media lacks nonverbal cues and emotion, which can lead to, misunderstandings and ultimately conflicts between GDR couples. Although there were some negative aspects of using social media in geographically distant relationships, a majority of participants did not believe that it hurt their relationships and instead improved them.

When analyzing the open-ended responses to the question “In what ways do you think communicating with your significant other via social media is different than communicating with the face-to-face?” there was a common response that communication via social media lacks the physical component of face-to-face communication and is therefore less satisfying. Our qualitative results show that although many participants were less satisfied with communication via social media than they were with face-to-face interaction, they were thankful for technology and were more satisfied in their GDR when using social media to stay connected. Participants agree that social media lacks physical touch, lacks nonverbal cues and emotion, meaning can be easily misinterpreted, and is less personal and therefore less satisfying than face-to-face communication. Although the majority preferred face-to-face communication, participants expressed gratitude for social media, as it is an accessible tool used to stay connected no matter the distance. Social media allows couples to see each other virtually when face-to-face interaction is limited. This information ties in with Social Exchange Theory in that participants
were willing to utilize social media to remain in their romantic relationship regardless of their preference for face-to-face communication. Because rewards are still present, such as being able to hear their significant other’s voice or see their significant other’s face through a video screen, couples show signs of satisfaction even when miles apart. Data collected from this open-ended question is useful for further research regarding GDR and social media use.

The primary purpose of the present research was to identify the level of satisfaction social media plays into for geographically distant relationships (GDR). When analyzing the open-ended answers requesting advice from participants to other couples entering or considering a GDR, there was a common response in advising those to use face-to-face social media (i.e. Facetime, Skype). Though our quantitative findings weren’t significant, our qualitative results show that by using face-to-face social media platforms, the relationship would progress, and consequently cause satisfaction in the relationship. Other advice on outlets to a satisfied relationship were given, showing that it takes more than only social media to maintain a GDR. Factors including privacy, goals, frequency, and patience, were all common responses in the open-ended question. Although the study was not specifically directed to what factors make up a satisfied relationship, the participants’ responses are useful for further research when studying geographically distant relationships.

**Conclusion**

Several limitations existed within this study. First, the survey was only available on SurveyMonkey.com for a short amount of time. With the short amount of time, only 95 participants were able to participate. In the future, allowing more time for people to take this survey would allow us to have more respondents and therefore more applicable results. A second limitation was that a majority of participants were women and only few participants were men.
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There were a total of 73 female participants and 22 males participants. The results found could possibly represent gender differences in the use of social media and relationship satisfaction for geographically distant relationships. In the future, having a more even number of male and female participants could allow our data to show a more accurate representation of how males and females believe social media affects relationship satisfaction in geographically distant relationships. A final limitation was that this study focused on a narrow age group from the ages 18-25. For the 18 to 25 year old age group, a convenience sample could only provide 95 respondents. In the future, doing a random sample versus a convenience sample would allow us to find more people in geographically distant relationships that are between the ages of 18 and 25.
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