

An Evaluation of the Effects of Social Media on Romantic Relationships

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ABSTRACT

Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) have brought about a paradigm shift in the way individuals communicate and access information across all spheres. These ICT platforms include mobile and social media platforms, which have enhanced the day-to-day interaction among individuals. Social media platforms play key roles in various forms of personal relations, including romantic relationships (dating, cohabiting and married individuals). Social media has on the one hand opened the communication obstacles between romantic partners, while on the other hand posed great threat to the sustainability of relationships on the other hand.

This research investigated the influence of social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and Snapchat on romantic relationships. Sampling ($n = 376$) university students (EMU) from over 110 countries across the continent, the study collected quantitative data to investigate how social media use facilitates satisfaction between romantic partners. Questionnaires were distributed to participants where the responses received provided insight in to whether social media use may lead to monitoring, trust, infidelity and distraction in romantic relationships. The study also sought to investigate if monitoring, trust, infidelity and distraction will mediate the positive relationship between social media use and gratifications in romantic relationships.

Findings in the study affirmed that social media use is a significant predictor to gratifications in romantic relationships. In addition, statistical findings revealed that social media use enhances monitoring of the romantic partner, with monitoring

eliciting gratifications in romantic relationships. The findings further revealed that social media use does not have a statistical relationship with distractions, trust and infidelity. Quite importantly, research findings revealed that none of the variables mediated the positive relationship between social media use and gratifications in romantic relationships. The research further affirms and expands existing knowledge on the Media Multiplexity Theory and the Uses and Gratifications Theory. Conclusions are drawn from the findings and suggestions are made for further research.

Keywords: social media; romantic relationship, relationship gratification; uses and gratifications theory; media multiplexity theory

ÖZ

Bilgi ve İletişim Teknolojileri (BİT), bireylerin tüm alanlarda bilgi iletişimine ve bilgiye erişme biçiminde bir paradigma değişikliği getirmiştir. Bu BİT platformları, bireyler arasında günlük etkileşimi de geliştiren mobil ve sosyal medya platformlarını içermektedir. Sosyal medya platformları, romantik ilişkiler de dahil olmak üzere (buluşma, birlikte yaşama ve evli bireyler de dahil olmak üzere) çeşitli kişisel ilişki biçimlerinde kilit rol oynar. Sosyal medya, bir yandan romantik ilişkiler arasındaki iletişim engellerini aşarken, diğer yandan ilişkilerin sürdürülebilirliği için de büyük tehdit oluşturdu.

Bu araştırma, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram ve Snapchat gibi sosyal medya platformlarının romantik ilişkiler üzerindeki etkisini araştırdı. Dünyada 110'dan fazla ülkeden örnekleme (n = 376) Doğu Akdeniz Üniversitesi öğrencisi, bu çalışmada sosyal medyanın romantik ortaklar arasında nasıl bir memnuniyet sağladığını araştırmak için nicel veriler toplandı. Katılımcılara verilen anketlere verilen yanıtlar sosyal medya kullanımının romantik ilişkilerde izlemeye, güvene, sadakatsizliğe ve dikkat dağıtmaya yol açıp açamayacağına dair bir görüş sağlamak içindi.

Araştırmada elde edilen bulgular, sosyal medya kullanımının romantik ilişkilerde memnuniyet elde etmek için önemli bir belirleyici olduğunu doğrulamıştır. Buna ek olarak, istatistiksel bulgular, sosyal medya kullanımının romantik ortağın izlenmesini ve romantik ilişkilerde takdir edilmesini geliştirdiğini ortaya koydu. Bulgular ayrıca, sosyal medya kullanımının dikkat dağıtıcı, güven ve sadakatsizlikle istatistiksel bir ilişkisi olmadığını ortaya koydu. Oldukça önemlisi, araştırma bulguları, hiçbir

değişkenin sosyal medya kullanımı ile romantik ilişkilerle memnuniyetler arasındaki pozitif ilişkiyi göstermediğini ortaya koydu. Araştırma ayrıca, Medya Çokluluk Teorisi ile Kullanımlar ve Doyumlar Teorisi hakkındaki mevcut bilgileri doğrular ve genişletmektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: sosyal medya; romantik ilişki, ilişki tatmini; kullanımlar ve doyumlar teorisi; medya çokluğu teorisi

DEDICATION

To my parents late Alhaja Ma'rufah Omorilewa Arikewuyo, Alhaji Rasheed Atanda Arikewuyo, my delectable wife Doctor Halima Oluwaseyi Arikewuyo and my most precious daughter, Ma'rufah Omorilewa Arikewuyo, you all have led me to light.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

DRR	Distractions in Romantic Relationships
EMU	Eastern Mediterranean University
EFA	Exploratory Factor Analysis
FGTRPP	Frequency of going through Romantic Partner's Social Media Platforms
FSMUCRP	Frequency of Social Media in Communicating with Romantic Partner
IRR	Infidelity in Romantic Relationships
MRR	Monitoring in Romantic Relationships
SM	Social Media
SMU	Social Media Use
SRR	Satisfaction in Romantic Relationships
TRR	Trust in Romantic Relationships

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

Social media have become a household platform, helping to build, sustain, and enhance various forms of relationships in the society. It has created an avenue for communication to thrive at various levels including interpersonal and group communication. This study seeks to evaluate the effect of social media on romantic relationships. This chapter provides background information to the main variable in the study as well as showing a clear line of direction of the study. The chapter gives the overall objectives and focus of the research. This thesis studies how the use of platforms like Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat and Twitter have influenced or altered the relationship patterns of romantic partners.

1.1 Background of the Study

The word romance, which sometimes is intertwined with the word love, can be traced back to the word vernacular (Hales, 2004). Romance is also traced to a Latin word “romanicus” which may be translated to mean “roman style” (Findon, 1908). Historically, the word may also be traced to Spain and Italy where it signified being adventurous and brave (Frazzetto, 2011). Romantic relationship on its part involves the presence of emotional feelings or attachment towards another person, however, it may apply to an opposite or same gender. When an individual is in love, they express romantic feelings that may directly or indirectly relay their romantic message (Kutulas, 2010).

Romantic relationships in the early years were not pre-arranged, however, as time developed, individuals were being set up for romantic meetings consciously and otherwise to initiate a romantic relationship (Stevens & O'Hanlon, 2018). However, both pre-arranged and otherwise romantic dates are still much in existence. However, the possibility of such relationships coming to fusion significantly depends on whether the individuals concerned find each other attractive (i.e. physically, financially, emotionally, mentally, psychotically, etc.) (Kundrus & Szobar, 2002). Interestingly, a significant number of romantic relationships before the 18th century was developed out of volition of the individuals and without a third-party involvement (Korenman, & Neumark, 1991).

In the early years of romantic relationships, partners had high levels of trust and mutual intimacy (Simpson, Collins, & Salvatore, 2011). Romantic partners were noted for settling their disputes or conflicts without a third party while relationships were presumed to last longer (Stevens & O'Hanlon, 2018). However, the 21st century romantic relationship is mixed with its pros and cons. This may be significantly associated with the drastic development of technological innovations like social media platforms (Karandashev, 2018).

The mode and pattern of romantic relationships vary due to cultural, religious, historical and personal beliefs (Stevens & O'Hanlon, 2018). While some cultures believe their citizens should be in intra-cultural relationships, others believe in inter-cultural relationships, however, they do not object intra-cultural relationships as well. The 21st century romantic relationships have in recent time, significantly put aside cultural or religious beliefs, while focusing on love and mutual attraction that exist between the individuals. This affirms the belief that love is significantly a personal

phenomenon and can only be explained by the individuals involved, as such, romantic relationship is mutual (Soller, 2014). However, the ultimate goal of individuals in romantic relationships is to find love and happiness therein.

As technology emerged, the mode and pattern through which human beings relate began to change, even in their romantic relationships (Stables, 2009). Technological innovations ushered in interactivity in the pattern in which individuals and romantic partners communicate (Hertlein, 2013). The interactivity that arose from the emergence of Web 2.0 also paved way for the invention of more social media platforms. Kaufmann (2015) gives further justification to the link between Web 2.0 and social media stating that social media has created a platform for establishing relationships, interaction, and communication (Gill, 2004).

Social media has become a global phenomenon and has continued to influence the lives of its users in different ways (Walton & Leukes, 2013). The flexibility of the platforms has made communication and information dissemination seamless and easy. Quite importantly, social media continues to affect the lives of the youth in the society due to its adaptability and ease of use. Social media has become highly influential in the lives of its users (Fuchs, 2012), including their relationships. For instance, Prensky (2001) describes users who find it easy to operate social media or technological platforms as *digital natives*. This is because of their speed in adapting to technological innovations. Prensky further describes the category of individuals who finds it quite difficult migrating when there is an innovation as *digital immigrants*. However, social media may not have a significantly negative effect in the romantic relationship of the *digital immigrants* due to their low use (Hüsing, & Selhofer, 2002).

Social media has significantly influenced the mode and pattern through which romantic partners communicate privately and publicly (Vaterlaus, Tulane, Porter, & Beckert, 2018). For instance, before the emergence of social media, romantic partners were more involved in close-ended relationship where partners interacted in private (Cingel, Lauricella, & Wa, 2013). However, the emergence of social media has transferred communication in relationships to the public domain (Johnson, & Kaye, 2004). Individuals now post pictures about their romantic partners online, while others discuss their relationship via the platforms. Social media has also brought about an atmosphere where individuals pay less attention to one another even when on a romantic or friendship date due to online distractions.

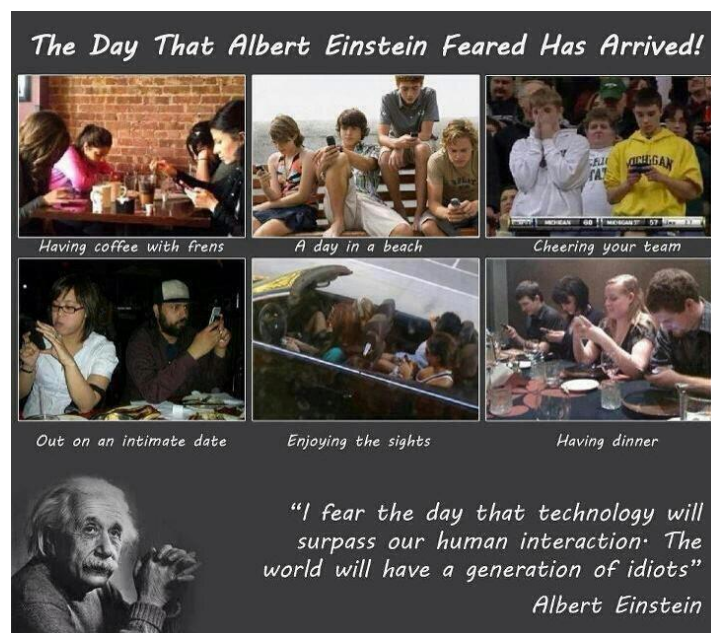


Figure 1: Albert Einstein’s description of the negative impacts of technological innovations like social media

1.2 Statement of Research Problem

The unprecedented technological development has ushered mixed feelings into romantic relationships. This is also due to the addictive nature of social media

platforms. However, social media has continued to influence how romantic partners show love to each other, communicate and break up when the need arises. Social media has been attributed to facilitating conflict, chaos as well as infidelity in some cases. Interestingly, social media has also been ascribed to changing the face of interactions between would-be, existing, and even past romantic partners. This is because the platforms facilitate ex partners to keep up with or monitor each other. One significant question that comes to mind is; how well has social media been able to create a long-lasting, effective, productive and thriving relationship between romantic partners? Quite a number of literature exists on romantic relationships and social media, but none exists on helping to identify the problems and effects of social media platforms on romantic relationships with a combined investigation into trust, monitoring, distraction and infidelity. In addition, literature is yet to identify how certain factors like infidelity, monitoring romantic partners, and monitoring among others, influence gratification in romantic relationships. All the above-mentioned create a gap in which this study ultimately seeks to investigate. As such, this research will find out how social media facilitate gratification in romantic relationships.

1.3 Motivation for the Study

Romantic relationships have been an area of research interest to me for some time; this is based on the nature of the topic as well as its practicability. This study is of great importance to me based on quite a number of factors. Over the years, I have monitored how social media facilitate breakup in romantic relationships as well as its role in helping romantic partners show love to each other while facilitating effective communication. Upon commencing my PhD programme, I wanted to study social media use in political communication. However, after taking courses, I developed interest in other areas of study. As I embarked on more research, I observed the impact

of social media use in marriages and relationships; I proceeded to research more into the area of relationships.

Interestingly I also I remembered some of my discussions, experiences, and interactions with my wife Dr. Halima Arikewuyo about the use of social media. One significant motivation in this research is also my experience in radio and television presentations, most especially my radio programmes about love and relationships. These factors motivated me to conclude to study romantic relationships in general and most specifically the effect and use of communication therein.

For weeks, I surfed the web in search of academic journals and materials that will guide me in choosing a topic that will be worthy and researchable for my Ph.D. programme. Due to the rich library of materials available in the university, I was able to make a profound decision to study how social media affect romantic relationships in positive and negative ways.

1.4 Aims and Objectives of the Study

The ultimate aim of the present study is to evaluate the roles of the various social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and Snapchat in romantic relationships.

Therefore, the study seeks to:

- i. Explore if social media use will advance gratification in romantic relationships.
- ii. Investigate whether social media use will enhance monitoring in romantic relationships.
- iii. Research into if social media use will facilitate distraction in romantic relationships.

- iv. Investigate whether social media use will influence trust in romantic relationships.
- v. Find out if social media use will lead to infidelity in romantic relationships.
- vi. Examine if (a) monitoring (b) distraction, (c) trust, and (d) infidelity will facilitate gratification in romantic relationships.
- vii. Evaluate if (a) monitoring (b) distraction, (c) trust, and (d) infidelity will mediate between social media use and gratification in romantic relationships.

1.5 Research Questions

Social media continues to play important roles in the society and influence personal relationships. The effects of social media on romantic relationships however cannot be overemphasised. The research was carried out within year 2017 and 2019 at the EMU.

Therefore, the following questions will provide a direction in this research;

- i. Is there a positive relationship between social media use and gratification obtained in romantic relationships?
- ii. Is there a positive relationship between social media use and monitoring romantic partners?
- iii. Is there a positive relationship between social media use and distraction in romantic relationships?
- iv. Is there a positive relationship between social media use and trust in romantic relationships?
- v. Is there a positive relationship between social media use and infidelity in romantic relationships?
- vi. Will (a) monitoring (b) distraction, (c) trust, and (d) infidelity be positively associated with gratification in romantic relationships?

- vii. Will (a) monitoring (b) distraction, (c) trust, and (d) infidelity mediate between social media use and gratification in romantic relationships?

1.6 Research Hypotheses

The following hypothesis will be considered in this study.

- i. **H1:** Social media use will be positively associated with satisfaction in romantic relationships.
- ii. **H2:** Social media use will be positively associated monitoring romantic partners.
- iii. **H3:** Social media use will be positively associated distrust in romantic relationships.
- iv. **H4:** Social media use will be positively associated distraction in romantic relationships.
- v. **H5:** Social media use will be positively associated infidelity in romantic relationships.
- vi. **H6:** (a) monitoring, (b) distrust, (c) distractions and (d) infidelity will be positively associated with gratification in romantic relationships.
- vii. **H7:** (a) monitoring, (b) distrust, (c) distractions and (d) infidelity will mediate the positive relationship between social media use and gratification in romantic relationships.

1.7 Significance of the Study

There have been quite a number of studies and literature on social media, social networking sites, internet, and technology. No doubt, these technological developments have at one time or the other affected our lives. Romance has also become an inevitable part of our lives. This is because a large number of people get involved in romance at different stages of their lives. This study will help in finding

out the impact and contributions technological developments (social media) make in our lives and their future prospects. It will also provide an avenue for those who read this research work to understand how to manage their romantic lives with the emerging technological trends. The study will also be able to provide an insight to some of the problems and challenges individuals experience in romantic relationships and provide possible ways of enhancing romantic relationships while avoiding conflicts and breakups due to technology. This research could, therefore, be said to be new and with potentials for breaking new grounds, findings, and pave the way for a new beginning of further research. The study will also strengthen collaborative research between the field of psychology and communication and media studies. Most importantly, the research will increase understanding of social media uses and effects.

1.8 Limitations of the Study

For every research work, there would be a number of limitations, which would serve as obstructions or challenges for the full accomplishment of the work. These include but not limited to;

1. **Time Factor:** Time is a challenge in this study because there is a frame for the submission of this research work which must be met and as such I would have to work within the frame and produce a well-grounded and quality research. This study was carried out within 20017 and 2019, as such, there was a limit to time and deadlines had to be met.
2. **Place:** Though the place of study is one of the motivations for this research, it also serves as a limitation. This is because primarily, this research is conducted at the Eastern Mediterranean University, which only reflects the view of limited respondents.

3. **Respondents:** Respondents of this study are made up of only registered students of EMU, this is a limitation to the study as the study could be richer if other members of the community are included. Also, respondents are students, as such, it may be somewhat difficult to generalise the results on non-students.
4. **Cost:** The cost of carrying out a quality research is quite expensive. Due to limited financial resources, carrying out this research was not an easy task.

1.9 Definition of Key Words

I attempt to provide conceptual definitions to some of the most significant keywords in this research. These definitions form a significant part of this research, as they would be the basic instruments to understanding this study, thereby providing smooth reading and comprehension.

Social Media: Social Media are technologically driven applications that aid interpersonal, group and self-mass communication (Castells, 2007). The social media platforms/applications that are of primary importance in this study include Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and Snapchat.

Romance: This is a form of intimacy that exists between the male and female gender. The conception of romance in this study involves acts that males and females' carry out that could involve sex among others.

Relationship: This may be described as the mutual, cordial and intimate interaction between two people. The people involved engage in a number of activities that involves romance, sex, and intimacy.

Romantic Relationship: Romantic relationship may be described as a mutual and intimate relationship that exists between two people thereby facilitating love, affection and sexual intimacy between them (Cornwell & Lundgren, 2001).

Marriage: Marriage is a form of romantic relationship, however, it is more intimate and individuals expect that they will produce offspring (Korenman, & Neumark, 1991).

Infidelity: This is an action or an act that involves a romantic partner having a mutual relationship with another unlawful partner.

Monitoring: This is a continuous process where an individual is watching after the online and off line activities of another person, most especially a romantic partner.

Distractions: This is a process where an individual's attention is taken away by an activity (online or offline) and as such not being able to accord his/her partner the required mutual time and attention.

Stalking: This may be classified as an act of monitoring without the individual's consent.

Trust: Trust is the act of according another individual, total confidence and belief in his/her activities (online/offline).

Interpersonal Communication: Interpersonal communication may be referred to as the act of communication that exists between two people.

Chapter 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter reviews the relevant literature for this study; it starts with reviewing the concept of communication, social media, its characteristics, differences between social media and mainstream media. Then major concepts all included in this study are explicitly discussed. They include romantic relationships, satisfaction in romantic relationships, social media use etc. In addition, I reviewed the Uses and Gratifications Theory, and Media Multiplicity Theory. These theories form the theoretical basis for this study. Lastly, research into these theories with respect to romantic relationships are covered.

2.1 Studies on Social Media

This information included in this section is organised chronologically and divided into four (4) concerning the different spheres in which social media is used.

2.1.1 Developments from 1999 to 2003

Web platforms were quite popular in the years before the millennium (Craig , 1999). These platforms were one way and did not usually allow online audience send feedback. However, blogging platforms began gaining momentum, as online users were able to access news and information easily online (Hyde, 2000). It however grew and with further developments, users were able to follow one another online and interact.

With the launch of LunarStorm in the year 2000, a signal of further development in the social media industry was shown (Robinson, Kestnbaum, Neustadt, & Alvarez, 2000). However, it also ushered in online advertisement in the social media industry. In addition, the launch of Wikipedia in year 2001 also signalled a drastic development as its contribution to the social networking and information platforms cannot be over emphasised (Saye & Brush, 2002). However, Wikipedia was not completely considered as a social media platform, it provided an opportunity for online users with similar goals and objectives to connect. Furthermore, LinkedIn emerged in the year 2003; it however further enhanced the opportunity for online networking and socialisation (Misra, Moller, & Karides, 2003).

2.1.2 Developments from 2004 to 2009

Social media platforms began to gain momentum with the development of Facebook in year 2004. Since its invention in 2004, "Web 2.0." has continued to change the mode of online transmission of information while it continues to engage and motivate its audience to become more active online (Couldry, 2004). It has enabled imperativeness which has also increased its popularity and fan base as such, now widely used in networking communities like Facebook, WhatsApp, Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat, 2go etc.

When discussing technology and its global impact, it is important to refer to the words of Marshall McLuhan in 1964 when he propounded that the world would become a "global village", thereby easing the mode of communication and interaction (Marchessault, 2004). However, we may argue that the global village has outlived its time as the world has transformed to become a global room where communication is made even easier than envisaged by the great scholar.

Technology has facilitated a twist in communication, thereby bringing about a society that is technology dependent (Hennessy, & Martin, 2006). However, the media may be described as one of the greatest beneficiaries of technological developments. Media access has now become easier due to the rise in technological innovation, thereby leading to an increase in the use of the internet (Lemire, Sicotte, & Paré, 2008). The developments in technology have changed to the social aspects of life with the invention of Social Networking Sites and Social Media Platforms.

Deliberations have over the years been about the impact of technological innovations on the media development and specifically the advent of the Social Networking Sites or Social Media Platforms (Mbinjama, 2009). The growing number of internet users may be attributed to the increase and devotion of interest by scholars who have decided to research into understanding and analysing the social media in the last couple of years (Denecke & Nejd, 2009). Quite importantly, communication has now become seamless due to the change in the development of technology across the globe (Mangold & Faulds, 2009).

2.1.3 Developments from 2010 to 2015

Social media has now become an indispensable mode of information and communication in the lives of many. Therefore, it is evident that social media has enhanced communication amongst individuals, groups and the society (Eckler, Worsowicz, & Rayburn, 2010). The innovations and technological developments have now resulted in the drastic change of the media industry. In addition, media audience can now watch TV, listen to the radio or read newspapers and magazines anywhere and anytime with the aid of the internet (Idemudia, 2010). For instance, the internet has changed the mode and pattern newspaper organisations use in gathering and

disseminating information (Kosonen & Ellonen, 2010). This has increased their scope, enabling them to reach out to a more global audience.

While diffusing the roles, actions and primary functions of social media, two primary actions are quite clear: social media are means of sharing (which could be education, information or otherwise) and socialization. Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) argues that social media establishes a means for interpersonal communication among a small and large group of people while enumerating that business owners and organisations are able to establish a communication link with their existing and prospective clients.

Social media have shifted out of the old form of website processes and included audience participation and interaction therein, thereby creating a platform for the audience to voice their opinion and views (Eckler, Worsowicz, & Rayburn, 2010). Social media has also enhanced the "real-time setting", as such, communication has now become even more interesting (Bassell, 2010). This accounts for why many citizens subscribe to social media as a medium of communication and interaction. Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) argue further that social media has brought about dynamism in communication as individuals could share pictures on Instagram, short videos on Snapchat, create a discussion forum on Facebook amongst others.

This indicates that its subscribers actively use social media platforms. As such, the higher the use the more likely the platforms influence on the users' communication patterns and behaviour (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). However, different social media platforms have been found to appeal to users at variance depending on its appeal and use. (Eckler, Worsowicz, & Rayburn, 2010). For instance, Instagram is seen to appeal more to the youths while Twitter is more relevant in online public debates. This may

be due to the communication and information flexibility social media affords its users (Bakke, 2010; Scafelf, Scafelf, & Larson, 2010; Horst, 2011).

Social media has continued to play a vital role in the development of the home as it helps relieve depression and loneliness (Sapolsky, 2004). However, Williams and Merten (2011) are of the opinion that social media has kept the family apart when they are supposed to spend time together. For example, when on a family outing or get together, members of the family are usually engaged with their mobile phone instead of spending time together.

Social media plays a key role in broadening social connection as well as the development of technical skills (McBride, 2011). However, it is responsible for the high rate of cyberbullying, which has dominated the society and has led to psychological problems of its users (Caligtan & Dykes, 2011). With of technology, the world has moved from becoming a global village to becoming a global room. This has enhanced a digitisation, thereby easing business transactions, meetings and most importantly communication (Lober & Flowers, 2011). This has also afforded users quick and prompt access to information on the go. With the continued development of these technological devices, there is an unimaginable future for human communication and interaction through social media (Wolpin & Stewart, 2011).

Based on its numerous benefits, social media has continued to become a dependable tool for all forms of communication including interpersonal, group and self-mass communication (Jent, et al., 2011). It has helped foster relationships at work, school, business and even romance. With the series of social media features such as texting, calling, sharing pictures and videos, the world is fast becoming highly interactive and

spontaneous. Individuals can engage themselves and receive instant feedbacks that would provide substantial gratification as much as direct or face-to-face conversation (Hanna, Rohm, & Crittenden, 2011). In addition, social media has continued to play influential roles in human lives, business, and marriage. It has also become an essential tool for advertisers while helping small and large scale businesses improve on their coverage or reach. It has also been very instrumental in framing and opinion moulding about issues, products, and societal affairs (Druckman, & Bolsen, 2011). Social media has also influenced not only the governed, it has played a major role on how government formulate policies and as well become a faster and easier means of creating an interactive government with the people. For instance, Andersen, Medaglia, and Henriksen, (2012) argue that;

The uptake of social media is leading to potential changes in how governments design, implement and manage digital services. Web 2.0 tools, such as social networking platforms, wikis, and microblogging, hold the potential to reshape the way citizens can interact with government, and perhaps more importantly, with each other (p. 462).

Social media has been used as a tool for protests and global rallies; as such, there has been a call for the control and appropriate regulation. Tufekci and Wilson (2012) elaborate further that; social media platforms such as Facebook have taken over the political space as it has created an avenue for political campaigns and accountability to the electorates. However, governments in Iran and China etc. have banned the use of the platform to control political revolution and its ability to give the citizens a voice of their own. In addition, it has also enhanced connectivity at a significant level. Dijck (2012) elucidates that social media is a powerful tool in establishing, sustaining and enhancing human communication.

Authoritarian governments continue to put up stringent measures that limit public use of social media especially in criticising the government. However, the platforms continue to receive public support globally (Sakr, 2012). Furthermore, social media platforms have been used as information seeking platforms, where people who are in need of specific information on health politics, family etc. consult to gratify their needs (Bull, Levine, Black, Schmiede, & Santelli, 2012), while also providing people the opportunity to make online consultations (AlGhamdi & Moussab, 2012). Griffiths, et al. (2012) argue that the health sector has subscribed to the use of social media platforms because it enhances interaction and consultation between the physician and patient.

The roles of the social media in the political arena can also be said to be under scrutiny as it sometimes poses a threat to the stability of the system (Larsson, 2013). This is because quite a number of citizens and politicians use social media to carry fake news, thereby heating up the polity (Weeks & Holbert1, 2013). However, it has also provided the opportunity for users and citizens to challenge what they see and ask questions. Wolfsfeld, Segev, and Sheafer (2013) are all of the opinion that social media plays a pivotal role in organising mass rallies and protests due to its ability to connect people and disseminate information within a short time.

Social media has played quite a vital role in a number of civil disturbances and protests globally (Brett & Maharaj, 2013) while serving as a great tool for seeking relief by citizens who are in need of urgent help. For example, with just one post on Facebook or Twitter and within just a few seconds, social media active users could help in retweeting or re-broadcasting the message until it gets to the desired destination. This

is because of the inexplicable features and strengths of the social media (Walton & Leukes, 2013).

Due to the growing media dependent society, the social media has continued to play an important role in the sustainability of human lives (Ahn & Shin, 2013). Citizens now depend on the social media for their everyday activity such as the provision of weather forecast, traffic reports and updates as well as appointment updates (Niekerk, & Maharaj, 2013). Newspaper organisations post their major headlines and cover page on several platforms to attract their potential audience and provide brief information (Canter, 2013). They also provide a unique opportunity to examine the public mind set on issues and debates by creating comment boxes (Kuebler, Yom-Tov, Pelleg, Puhl, & Muennig, 2013). Social media afford its users the opportunity to multi-task, as such individuals can simultaneously use two or more devices at the same time (Rosen, Whaling, Rab, Carrier, & Cheever, 2013). A user can simultaneously listen to music, text, and view pictures or videos. Though this somewhat creates a form of distraction as the user is not able to concentrate on a particular activity.

Non-profit organizations have continued to use social media as a tool of advocacy, mobilisation, and campaign on particular issues and themes (Paeka, Hovea, Jung, & Cole, 2013). With the interactive feature of the platforms, individuals have been able to use the medium to seek relief when they require such, this, the early technologies could not provide. For example, Web 1.0 technologies did not provide a platform for interaction or feedback, but with advancements in technology, users are now able to communicate seamlessly (Merolli, Gray, & Martin-Sanchez, 2013).

Social media has also proved to be a vital tool for conducting research globally. It has become a way of getting across to the youth as they have become familiar with the various platforms (Bobkowski & Smith, 2013). Though, youth have now become addicted to social media platforms and have to an extent paid less attention to the disadvantages of the platforms, they have continued to expose their private life and affairs on social media as such, making it become a matter of public debate. Due to its rise in popularity, social media has become a toast of the media world as such; the mainstream platforms have also keyed into it and adopted it as a way of promoting themselves (Hille & Bakker, 2013). Facebook offers its users the opportunity to live stream TV and radio programmes.

Social media has also enhanced the ways citizens communicate with one another (Cho & Park, 2013), though it does not possess absolute ability to pass the messages appropriately as sometimes the actual intention may be lost. Sometimes, the receiver has a different perception to the message other than the actual intention of the sender (Cooley & Jones, 2013). Its ability to enrol its users as content producers are one of the features that have left its audience actively engaged until date (Weeks & Holbert, 2013).

The social media has been used by the developed countries to frame the minds of people of the developing countries against their leaders, thereby causing citizens in various countries to protest against their leaders, which has resulted in series of deaths. The level of privacy that is achievable on social media is also under contention. This is based on the unlimited access and right the various service providers have over the medium (Yuan, Feng, & Danowski, 2013).

Due to its influence on users and thereafter the society, social media has continued to show the importance of the media in the everyday human life and most importantly in the development and sustenance of the society (Kim, Hsu, & Gil de Zuñiga, 2013). Social media has helped significantly in breaking communication barriers (Madianou, 2013). This is because of its ability to eliminate all forms of intermediaries, opinion leaders, third party, control or undue censorship. It has also been able to facilitate discoveries and generation of innovation. In addition, parents use social media as a means of monitoring their wards and children. However, research has shown that children avoid being friends with their parents on social media. This is to ensure freedom on the platform as children believe that being friends with their parents will not facilitate freedom in commenting, liking and uploading pictures online, thereby making them passive social media users (Özad & Gümüş, 2014). Jin, Liu, and Austi (2014) explain that social media has become inevitable for small and large scale organisations as it has become an integral requirement of being successful in doing business. As such, the medium has become a platform for solving and managing organisational crisis and a highly useful tool in community relations and crisis management (Hopkins, 2014).

Social media has offered its audience an opportunity to select what media content they access and at what time (Messing & Westwood, 2014). With its distinctive features, it has afforded users the ability to keep and access valuable media content in order to consume at a convenient time. These come in form of podcast, short films, and videos. They are however unlike the mainstream media that is fleeting and transient (Tully & Ekdale, 2014). Social media has also proven to be a means of entertainment among its users who can then use it to gratify any of their social desires or otherwise.

Social media has contributed to the intellectual development and building of communication skills among children. Research has shown that there is quite a significant amount of advantages and disadvantages of the use of social media among children (Livingstone, 2014), therefore, the need to monitor, guide and direct children's use towards maintaining a useful and intellectual building purpose. Bazarova and Choi (2014) also explain that social media has created an opportunity for global networking and information sharing among the younger generation.

Sporting activities have also been boosted and promoted through the active use of social media (Creedon, 2014). Team clubs form a global supporters' online community where they communicate, debate, and even predict future competitions. They update and mobilise members of their group. Over the years, arguments have sprung up on social media's ability to grant its audience access to unlimited content, while others say users will only have access to people with whom they share same ideology (Lee, Choi, Kim, & Kim, 2014). This is because social media gives the opportunity to its users to select what content they want and at the same time the community in which they wish to belong.

Research has shown that social media does not afford its users the opportunity to fully make decisions on their own due to its strength in influencing opinion through content priming (Storsul, 2014). However, one of the advantages of social media over mainstream media is its cost-effectiveness (Khan, Yoon, & Park, 2014). Social media has proven to be cheap and affordable. With the availability and access to quality internet service, communication through social media has become the toast of the century.

The political circle is witnessing a radical change due to technological advancements like social media (Fiadino, Schiavone, & Casas, 2015). This has given room for unimaginable transformations in the mode and patterns of campaign, debates, opinion pools and accountability among others (Arikewuyo & Abdulrauf-Salau, 2015). Social media has begun to move away from an ordinary means of communication or interaction. However, it has reached a stage where it is used as a means of creating humour in our day-to-day life (Fraustino & Ma, 2015). The platforms have added humour to the lives of its users due to its unique features such as emojis and bitmojis (Ruiter, 2015).

Social media serves as a means of self-generation and construction of ideas for individuals (Kavada, 2015). This occurs when users generate with ideas or ideologies and promote them through the platforms until they are widely publicised and accepted (Yin, Feng, & Wang, 2015). Social media has facilitated growth in friendships, which may begin virtually and eventually transcend offline. However, social media has continued to intrude into the mainstream media, which has strengthened its two-way communication flow, increased its active audience capacity and become more conversational rather than instructional (Dijck & Poell, 2015).

Social media has become a veritable tool for fostering religious harmony in various ramifications (Abdulbaqi & Arikewuyo, 2015). It has become a vehicle through which religious views and opinions are expressed. Users depend on social media to get a large chunk of their activities, news, entertainment, fashion, and political updates (Kaufmann, 2015). One major criticism against the social media however is its ability to spread unsolicited/unreliable news and rumour fast (Bode & Vraga, 2015). Because

of its ability to self-mass communicate it has contributed to raising false alarm and transmitting rumours, thereby creating tension and apprehension in the society.

The change in the virtual space due to social media use has become quite radical and sporadic (Weiss, 2015). However, social media have been criticised as a capitalist means of operation and controlling the internet space (Fuchs, 2015).

2.1.4 Development of from 2016 to 2019

Social media has become an instrument of defamation most especially in the political space (Koc-Michalska, Lilleker, Smith, & Weissmann, 2016). Due to the high level of youth presence on social media, it has become a more convincing and effective way of reaching out to youth in the society (Dumitrica, 2016). Social media helps in socializing, interacting and forming a community of their own (Chu, Windels, & Kamal 2016). As such, political office holders, institutions and organisations whose primary audience are the youth find it more productive to use the social media in reaching out (Abdulrazzaq & Hamad, 2016). Social media has provided the youth with an opportunity to speak with one voice and unite (Mercea, 2016). It affords them the platform to debate about issues, sample one another's opinion about matters of public interest and unite. Youth also use it to popularise matters of interests to them through hashtags and trends etc. social media has given the weak, oppressed and marginalised a voice of their own (Graaf, 2016; Donelan, 2016). Through social media, citizens can seek help and raise their voice in times of distress.

Although there is growing concern about information overload and the tendency to share information with the inappropriate persons, social media has also promoted large information sharing (Valkenburg, 2017). Propagation of women's right has been enhanced through social media platforms. Women organizations and individuals have

taken drastic steps in providing appropriate orientation for other women and girls to prevent female harassment (Arikewuyo, Özad, & Abdulbaqi, 2017).

Berry, Emsley, Lobban, and Bucci (2018) argue that when individuals post about their current state of mind or feelings, it is usually as a result of low mood or low self-esteem; however, they are able to escape from their current state of mind when they view entertaining contents on social media. Kircaburun, Griffiths, Şahin, Bahtiyar, Atmaca, and Tosuntaş, (2018) further state that social media users sometimes get doubt about their self-confidence due to their exposure to social media. Sutcliffe, Binder, and Dunbar (2018) also state that social media use increases the online networking base of an individual, which sometimes transcends offline. However, social media may also be used to increase an individual fan base or support group.

Recent studies have traced social media not only as a means of establishing and fostering relationships but also as a means of cyberbullying which has contributed to emotional trauma, depression and low self-esteem among users (Kircaburun, Demetrovics, Király, & Griffiths 2018). Though social media has continued to sever many useful purposes, it has become a means of cyberbullying and cyberstalking, which has continued to affect the psychological stability of its users (Nikken 2019). Lau, Randall, Duran, & Tao (2019) also assert that couples now use social media as a means of easing stress within their relationships; this occurs through effective communication and use of emotions. However, when messages on social media are misconstrued by either the sender or receiver, it may become a means of initiating conflict between the individuals (Morin, Mercier, & Atlani-Duault, 2019).

Literature have researched the uses and effects of social media in marketing, government, education, and health as well as how it works "pari passu" with the mainstream media. Though there are arguments for and against the platforms, there is the need to look more into the effects and use of social in romantic relationships. This area is quite unpopular especially in communication and media studies as well as in social science research. This study therefore, contributes to literature in a number of ways and as well intends to fill the following gaps in literature. First, the study helps to understand the roles and effects of social media in romantic relationships. Second, it will help discover some of the challenges and threat social media pose to romantic relationships and third, the study provides a holistic understanding on how romantic partners use social media to gratify their relationships. It is quite important to state that social media evolved with the discovery of the World Wide Web (www) in 1989, and has now reached a stage where there exists a number of platforms.

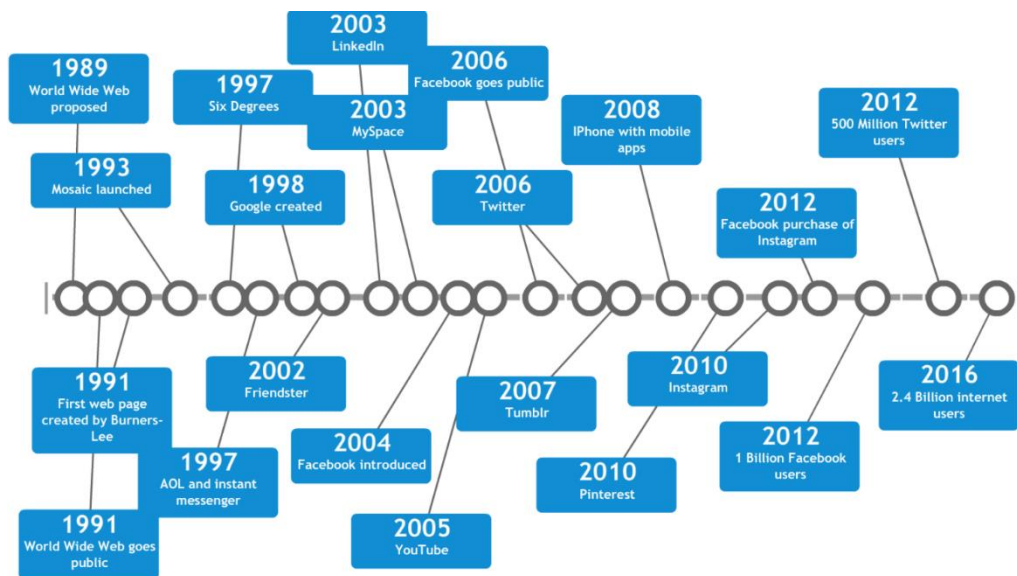


Figure 2: A graphical representation of social media evolvement

2.2 Social Media Platforms

This part of the research provides a clear understanding of the various social media platforms being studied in this thesis. They include; Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and Snapchat. These social media platforms may be categorised as important for this study because of their importance and frequency of use by romantic partners. These social media platforms are mostly used by youth who Prensky (2001), describes as digital natives based on their adaptiveness and promptness at responding and using new technologies as soon as they are launched or made available.

2.2.1 Facebook

Facebook started in 2004 as a pen project of a university student, and since then, Facebook has continued to attract a high level subscription across the globe (Sørensen, 2016; Moreria De Sa, 2015). Being one of the most subscribed social media platforms, Facebook usage has become inevitable among politicians, socialites, celebrities, communication experts, consultants, business experts, and academics among others. The comfort in which Facebook brings to these sectors has made life easy for its audience and potential clients. As at May 2012, Facebook had recorded over 900 million active users, which accorded it the most subscribed social media platform, however, the traffic rose to over 2 billion subscribers in 2018 (Hille & Bakker, 2013). Facebook has become one of the main instruments used in electoral campaigns and as well a form of interaction between the people and their representatives (Iskander, 2011). In the 2008 American presidential election, Facebook was strongly used by the immediate past American president Barak Obama and his campaign team (Hille & Bakker, 2013).

Facebook processes the ability to make users the generators of their contents (Lee, 2014). Facebook creates an avenue where users create contents on the platform for other users to view, like and react. These contents range from news, quotes, feedbacks to events, pictures, shorts videos, graphics and other multimedia contents. This also gives users the opportunity to generate commercial contents and reach out to their potential customers. Facebook gives its users the opportunity to establish interpersonal, group and self-mass communication with the public (Castells, 2007). Haenschen (2016), explains further by stating that Facebook allows users to see the activities and actions of other users (Fischer, 2016). The platform also has ability to transmit messages to a large, scattered and heterogeneous people which is one of the features of mass communication. Facebook also allows users to establish an online identity for themselves through the kind of information and image they portray to their audience (Dijck, 2013).

With its distinctive features such as real-time message, comments, live videos etc., Facebook has continued to connect millions of people across the world, helping them establish long-lasting relationships (Goodings & Tucker, 2015). Facebook has continued to gain more popularity by offering its users the opportunity to incorporate mainstream broadcasting into its platform with its "Live" feature, which many television stations have taken advantage of to attract more views and in turn boost their commercial drive (Dubrofsky, 2011).

Facebook has contributed immensely to global Web use and as such, Web hosts and users share links to their Web pages on the social networking platform (Hunt, 2015). As such, the platform has continued to grow. Celebrities, politicians and public figures have continued to grow and maintain relevance through the effective use of social

media platforms like Facebook (Larsson & Kalsnes, 2014; Reinecke, Vorderer, & Knop, 2014), while young as well as up and coming celebrities use the platform to gain popularity and boost their fan base (Waterhouse-Watson, 2014). These they do by registering their presence on the platform and posting series of updates on their timeline ranging from day-to-day activities and gossips, while generating debates through their opinion to topical issues.

However, there are criticisms against the Facebook platforms as it is described as a technological way of transmitting old messages (Ross, Fountaine, & Comrie, 2015). Facebook has also prompted its users and boosted the urge in them to make public, comments that are meant to be consumed privately (Moe, 2013), thereby bringing about tension in the society and heating up the polity. This may be through the transmission of fake news.

Facebook has established different forms of relationships globally including romantic relationships. This usually starts with becoming friends on the platform as it creates an avenue to become virtual friends with anyone who is also on the platform, thereby giving access to a global connection of users (Marwick & Ellison, 2012). This then develops to viewing each other's pictures and profile then to romantic feelings which may be enhanced by the frequency in communication (Ledbetter, et al., 2011).



Figure 3: The homepage of Facebook

Communication is enhanced based on the opportunity of direct or interpersonal communication that Facebook provides. The users are usually at ease discussing and may further their conversations with voice or video calls through the platform. With Facebook, expressing romantic affection has become easy as individuals feel quite comfortable using the platform to show love (Mansson & Myers, 2001). This is because Facebook offers different features such as emojis and bitmojis that help in the easy transmission of the intended message. No doubt, Facebook may be classified as a platform that has contributed to facilitating romantic relationships.

Social media platforms have made expressions of love, affection, and disappointment between romantic partners simple and seamless. However, Prensky (2001) noted that some people, who may be referred to as Digital Natives, are familiar with the language of the computer, games and social media, while others, the Digital Immigrants, are struggling to learn it. The Digital Natives have been able to decode the technicalities associated with the various social media platforms, even with their recondite features, so they find communication pleasurable (Li & Wu, 2018). The use of social media amuses its devotees and has immense effects on them (Iskander, 2011). Though digital immigrants on their part struggle to familiarise themselves with innovations, they usually adapt over time due to frequent training and use.

The need for fast, easy and seamless communication prompted the use of shorthand while typing on social media platforms. The shorthand was devoid of any form of humor, excitement or (in more intimate conversations) romance, and still generated debate because of Digital Immigrants' difficulties with understanding and decoding it during interpersonal conversations. Emojis (Emojis are pictorial symbols available on the various social media platforms. They enable users to send messages with the use of signs) and smileys (Smileys are facial representations of emotions. They are popularly used in social media applications) were introduced to generate excitement and to enable users to communicate with signs and symbols, but they are also assumed to be problematic because many receivers (and not a few senders) have difficulty decoding them (Zappavigna & Martin, 2018). Thereby, reading (or passing on) a wrong or unintended message becomes salient. Emojis and smileys may, therefore, fail to reflect the real identity and intention of senders.

Bitmojis (Bitmojis are more flexible and easier to understand than emojis. Although they serve the same purpose, bitmojis can be customized while emojis cannot) are one of the newest sign-and-symbol applications used to communicate in social media platforms. Each instance of a bitmoji is potentially unique because the user can customize the bitmoji symbol in different ways, including customizations of dress, hairstyle, facial features, footwear, eye color, eye size, and eyebrow appearance. Bitmojis have grown to become popular on all social media platforms and are frequently used by romantic partners in conversation (Miller et al., 2016). Many studies on emojis exist (Stark & Crawford, 2015; Vidal, Ares, & Jaeger, 2016).

2.2.2 Instagram

As technological innovations continue to change the face of global communication due to frequent discoveries, social media has undoubtedly enhanced the way media audience see and do things. Over the years, the technological rise has birthed the rise of online networking sites such as Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Instagram, Snapchat, Flickr etc., which are now among the most frequently used social networking sites (Reddy , Deepika, & Madhavi, 2016). It has provided better access to timely information dissemination as well as increased the level of socialisation and relationships among its users.

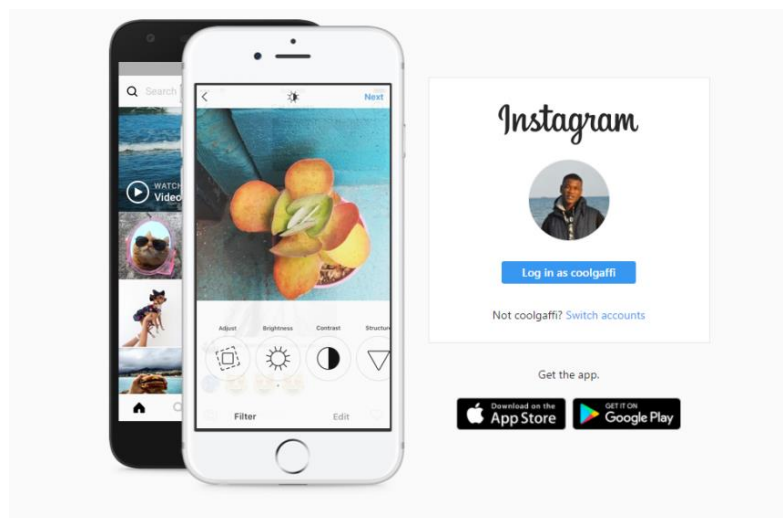


Figure 4: Homepage of Instagram

The invention of Instagram into the social media platforms changed the perception of media users as pictures are now used to tell stories millions of words would not have been able to tell. Instagram was incorporated into the market officially in 2010 with the intention to change the face of social media, as such, it adopted the use of pictures in telling its stories (Lee, Lee, Moon, & Sung, 2015). Instagram creates a platform for its users to take pictures and create everlasting memories with them through filters. (Hochman & Schwartz, 2012). The application has changed and it has become a

multimedia platform using not only pictures but incorporating video, voice note, live videos, chats and other interactive features to attract users. Alper (2014) further elucidates that due to its unique features and financial strength Facebook bought over Instagram in 2012 for US\$1 billion.

The unique and creative features of Instagram have made it a toast of organizations, groups, companies, business owners, and most importantly individuals who have made it a priority among social networking applications. Instagram began receiving more boost after its acquisition by Facebook. This has increased its connectivity and attractiveness (Ting, Ming, Cyril de Run, & Choo, 2015). Instagram has enhanced the active media audience. This is because of the fact that the media audience can now create content of their own. Hochman and Manovich (2013) support this assertion as they state that the trend has shifted from internet creating contents for its audience to the audience creating what they consume by themselves.

Over 150 million daily Instagram users generate over 1.2 billion pictures, thereby, boosting the status of the use of pictures, which has enhanced the dissemination of information, socialising, connecting among others through sharing of pictures (Bakhshi, Shamma, & Gilbert, 2014). Instagram has also helped create various aesthetic and creative effects on pictures, thereby facilitating fun, excitement, and entertainment through picture sharing. It may not be impossible to predict that an average social media user spends more time on Instagram to other social media platforms. This is because of the several unique features and filters the platform provides. Instagram also provides a live broadcast feature, where users can show followers their activities without limitation. Users therefore have the opportunity to

view, like, and drop comments as the live broadcasts are going on (Sheldon & Bryant, 2016).

According to the findings in a study by Pittman and Reich (2016), Instagram facilitates gratification, happiness, fulfilment, and entertains its users due to its ability to create fun with pictures. These findings concur with the focus of this research and help explain further that social media gratifies users' need to be active and engaged especially during their lonely times. It also helps create further understanding to the fact that social media is an essential tool in establishing relationships of all kinds (Sanvenero, 2013). This is due to the interactive features Instagram provide for its users.

The use of Instagram has influenced individuals especially the mode of interaction and communication. Instagram has also put in place various measures to protect the interest of its users and their privacy. Its terms and conditions help the company delete or block accounts that infringe on other people's rights or privacy thereby protecting them from obscene and unnecessary pictures or graphics (Jang, Han, & Lee, 2015).

Instagram also serves as a means of self-mass communicating, as users are responsible for generating, commenting, liking and sharing the various contents therein. Due to its photo-sharing features, Instagram has been linked with Twitter and a few other social media platforms (Ferrara, Interdonato, & Tagarelli, 2014). With its numerous photo filter features, Instagram has changed the face of digital photography, thereby enhancing and giving a new meaning to modes and patterns of taking pictures for online consumption (Djerf-Pierre, Gherseti, & Hedman, 2016; Yoo & Lee, 2015). Instagram among many other mobile applications has ushered in a photo-oriented

society where every member of the society is now seen taking selfies at almost every instance and location (Caoduro, 2014).

Instagram has continued to play a unifying role among friends, families and even romantic partners; it has not only served as a means of sharing pictures but as an effective way of communicating (Abdulrazzaq & Hamad, 2016). The platform is also an effective marketing tool, as companies, multinationals, and political office holders use it as a means of selling their products, services, and personalities (Dylko, 2016). The picture feature has helped to boost this due to its ability to offer the prospective clients an opportunity of visualising their choice product. The multi-media features and flexibility of the platform has boosted its status among other social media platforms. (Zappavigna, 2016, p. 273).

2.2.3 Twitter

Social media platforms have in recent years become an inevitable tool among all strata of human endeavours while enhancing interpersonal and group communication. Twitter, a microblogging platform creates a new way of sharing ideas and opinions in the modern day communication pattern (Elavsky, Mislán, & Elavsky, 2011). Twitter is an interactive web application that permits users to text, share pictures and videos within a limited timeline (Arceneaux & Weiss, 2010). Twitter allows users to generate and share not more than 280 text characters at a time, otherwise known as tweets (Palmer, 2013). The invention of Twitter brought about a new face of organizational Public Relations, as it became easier to reach out to a specific public of an organization and manage crisis (Muralidharan, Rasmussen, Patterson, & Shin, 2011).

Launched in 2006, Twitter has grown very fast among the intellectual community. For example, the platform permits political office holders to interact, inform and give an

account of their stewardship to the people (Bekafigo & McBride, 2013). The Twitter generation has also brought about the influx of text data, where users generate a huge number of text-based communication pattern, thereby enhancing access to information from a global community (Archambault, Greene, Cunningham, & Hurley, 2011). The platform has grown significantly as it now has millions of accounts generating series of tweets per second (Sumner, Byers, Boochever, & Park, 2012).

Twitter serves as a means of establishing a connection with a limitless number of people from a diverse, large and wide location while serving the basic functions of the media (inform, educate and entertain) (Chen, 2011). Twitter is also a major instrument in the political circle. It has been described as a means of providing information and also a platform where people gratify their social networking needs (Quan-Haase, Martin, & McCay-Peet, 2015).

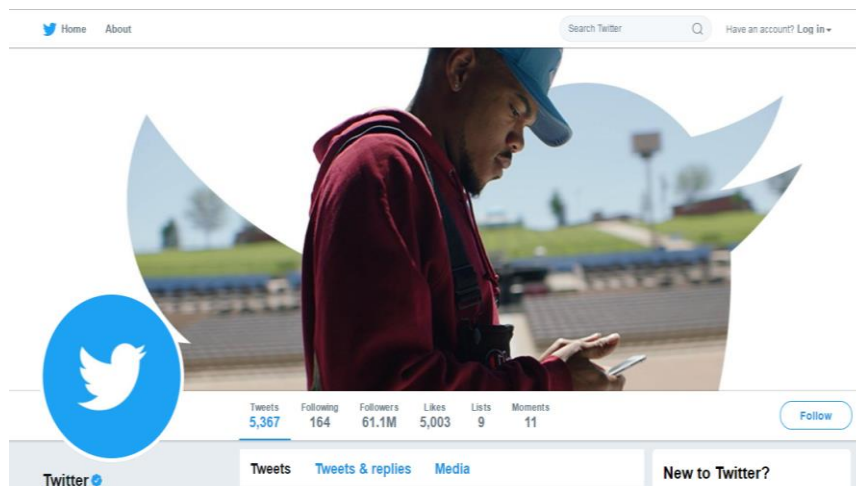


Figure 5: Twitter Communication Platform

Twitter serves as a tool for public protest, citizens use the platform to generate issues of national and international debate as well as voice out their opinion about issues and government system (Hull & Schmittel, 2015). While organisations and companies use Twitter to engage their customers and clients, the platform is also used by citizens to lodge complaints about products or services (Pentina, Basmanova, & Zhang, 2016). Twitter is a platform that promotes free speech in the society where users can express their opinion without limitation (Shepherd, Harvey, Jordan, Srauy, & Miltner, 2015).

Twitter has been linked to other social media platforms such as Instagram and Facebook; this has helped increase its popularity and usage. As such, users can post texts of more than 280 characters on Facebook, after which hyperlinks to such texts/images are displayed on the individual's tweeter feed (Wessel, Ziemkiewicz, & Sauda, 2016). Over time, Twitter has become more flexible, where it provides its users the opportunity to post short videos and images on their feeds (Jahng, & Littau, 2016).

In addition, with the arrival of social media platforms like Twitter, there are assumptions that these platforms are signals of the eradication of the mainstream media. The mainstream media remains as relevant as the social media however; they complement each other with their features (Ott, 2017). Twitter has been used by celebrities to increase their online fan base as well as maintain and sustain their relevance in the society (Thomas, 2014). However, the online presence of the mainstream platforms will continue to announce their societal relevance while they contribute to issues of global interest.

2.2.4 Snapchat

Social networking applications have continued to grow and change the face of global communication. As new platforms continue to emerge with highly innovative features,

communication also becomes easier and more interesting. Snapchat was launched in 2011 by students at Stanford University, since then, social media communication has further been boosted (Charteris, Gregory, & Masters, 2014). Though relatively new compared to other platforms, the social media application has surpassed some other applications that came before it. This is because of its unique and humorous features.

Unlike other applications which do not place preference on copyright and owner's consent, the Snapchat leaves a notification for the user whose picture has been copied by other users with or without permission (Faklaris & Hook, 2016). In addition, Piwek and Joinson (2016) give further explanation of the modus operandi of how images and videos are shared on Snapchat, which enhances the platform to others. They state that the application allows users to record short videos and pictures for display within a limited time. The picture is displayed on the sender's profile after posting for a maximum of 24 hours after which it automatically clears.

With over 100 million users per month, Snapchat has become not only a platform for individuals but corporations and organizations (Sashittal, DeMar, & Jassawalla, 2016). For instance, celebrities, public figures as well as other mainstream media platforms use Snapchat to connect with their followers and fans. This could be because of the dynamics in picture taking brought by Snapchat. The application provides an opportunity to meet new people, follow the lifestyle of favourite public figures and socialise (Champion, 2012).

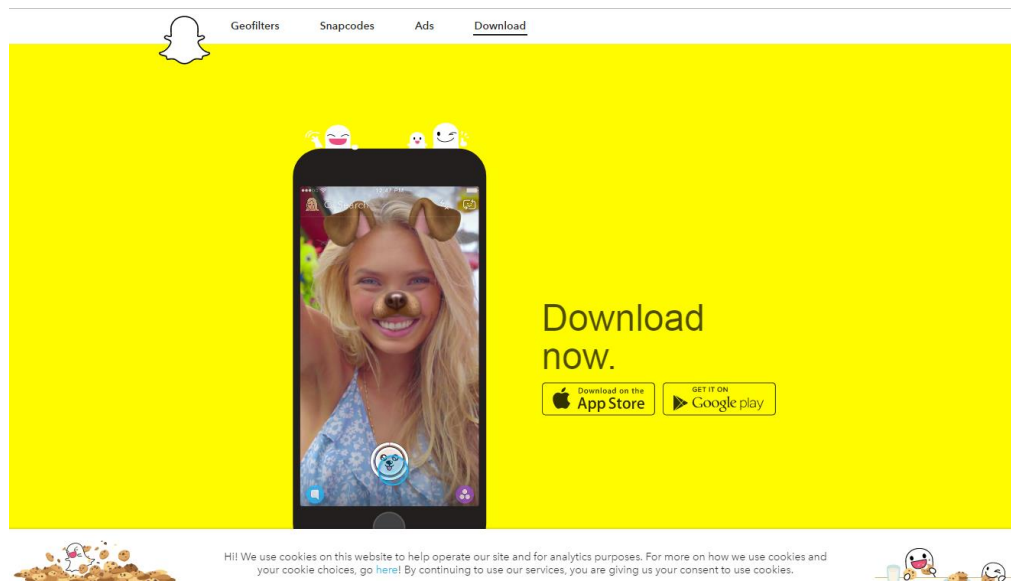


Figure 6: Homepage of Snapchat

Snapchat offers its users an opportunity to share videos and images of their activities during their active periods. The application remains the toast of the youth in the 21st century (Wargo, 2015). However, there have been strong reservations about the use of Snapchat by the youth, as it is believed that the platform is used for pornographic purposes due to its closed circuit use (Piwek, 2016). This is because the platform is not as popular as others like Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram.

Snapchat opened a platform for the youth to create their own community where they communicate and share memories (Anderson, 2015). This could be a reason for the images and videos, which feature on the snaps but do not on other platforms. For instance, quite a number of youth find it more interesting to post on Snapchat to Facebook or other platforms. Youth see Snapchat as more private to other platforms. This is also affirmed in a study carried out by Kusá and Záziková (2016) stating that Instagram and Snapchat are some of the least popular social media site with Instagram recording 52% and Snapchat 41%. The application also enables individuals to control friends who watch their snap and for how long. Phua, Jin, and Kim (2017) further state

that snapchat is one of the most popular social media platforms where users pass time, thereby becoming a dependable platform for entertainment.

As the application continues to develop and with the innovation of new trends like snap location, the number of users have continued to increase. For instance, the application enables its users to set location whereby friends on their list and beyond can be opportune to discover their location. The app also enables users to find friends according to location, as such, the user can choose the country where they want to make friends and know more about the lifestyle of other people. This no doubt expands friend zone and increases access to interpersonal socialisation. With Snapchat, users can send direct pictures or videos to friends and fans; other social media networking platforms are also adopting this (Alhabash & Ma, 2013). With the current trends as of the year 2019 and in addition to real life communication, almost everyone in the lucky side of the digital divide has at least one or more social media account and communicate with people not only near them but globally.

2.3 Interpersonal Communication

The advent of mobile communication has created an unimaginable opportunity for seamless interpersonal communication globally. Stamp (1999) describes interpersonal communication as the communication that exists between two people. However, social media has created various forms of interpersonal communication among its users, thereby, establishing an uninterrupted communication chain among the global citizens. Bakke (2010) supports this assertion by stating that technology has facilitated communication in different ramifications. This has afforded communication scholars and academics in other fields the opportunity to study the uses and effects of technology on its audience.

These technological innovations have aided communication and most importantly interpersonal communication which has facilitated satisfaction in human communication wants and needs. According to Berger (2005), communication research has taken a broader step due to the new ways and patterns facilitated by technology. Johnson, Haigh, Becker, Craig, and Wigley (2008) explain further that research on interpersonal communication have now focused more on how internet users establish, maintain and foster relationship through online communication. This research evaluates the impact of new technologies and most importantly the internet on communication and relationships.

Computer-Mediated Communication (CMC) like social media has been highly instrumental in enhancing interpersonal communication (Muhtaseb & Frey, 2008). On the one hand, Soffer (2010) is of an opposing view, stating that Computer-Mediated Communication has eliminated some crucial parts of the face-to-face form of interpersonal communication. This is because of the virtual nature of the Computer-Mediated Communication. On the other hand, Computer-Mediated Communication offers an opportunity to have an interpersonal communication with a wider, larger and unknown audience (Rains & Scott, 2007). It is pertinent to state that CMC possesses great advantages.

The invention of internet cannot be overemphasised when describing its roles in achieving computer-mediated communication. Over a period, research has concentrated on studying and analysing social media uses, mobile phone text messaging as well as instant messaging patterns. Ruppel and Burke (2014) corroborates this assertion stating that interpersonal communication could take different forms such as direct messaging, voice note, exchange of videos, and graphics

amongst others. Interpersonal communication is an essential part of human life as the roles in which it plays cannot be overemphasised. Interpersonal communication aids proper parenting, as there is an establishment of smooth and cordial interaction between the parents and children (Chevrette, 2013). As such, it facilitates effective communication between parents to child. This is supported by Clark (2011) while elaborating on the parental mediation theory stating that in order to prevent their children from imbibing the negativities in the media, parents employ different interpersonal communication strategies.

Interpersonal communication has been said to facilitate intimacy in various relationships and conversations, thereby enhancing mutual relationships (Jiang, Bazarova, & Hancock, 2010), and sometimes deception (Burgoon, 2015). This is most achievable through computer-mediated interpersonal communication. It occurs when there is no establishment of physical interaction, as such, any of the parties might not reveal the true or appropriate identity thereby leading to deception. Individuals thereby set up fake social media accounts and hide their real personalities. This has also contributed to a number of disappointments and failures in various relationships thereby leading to complications. Interpersonal communication has been described as a great approach to influence communication, direct human behaviour and persuasion as there is the ability to directly work on the emotional perception of the receiver most especially in the political sphere (Hopmann, 2012; Feaster, 2010), and marketplace (Galeotti, 2010).

Social media has become one of the most common forms through which interpersonal communication thrives. Its ability to enable users to enjoy one-on-one or direct communication has become a phenomenal breakthrough in the global media world.

Technological development and most specifically the discovery of internet has also contributed in a significant way to enhancing virtual interpersonal communication (Beaudoin, 2008). This has therefore enhanced internet use and specifically for various forms of interaction. Interpersonal communication has facilitated trust at various degrees of human interactions, as well as contributed to relationship conflicts (Aloia & Solomon, 2015). Computer-mediated communication has also enhanced interpersonal communication, as such, establishing a link through which relationship of various kinds can be established (Altschuller & Benbunan-Fich, 2010), including romantic relationships.

Social media has enhanced interpersonal communications between romantic partners. As such, with the aid of different bitmojis, emojis, emoticons, and smileys, individuals are able to express emotions during their conversations (Bente, Ruggenberg, Kramer, & Eschenburg, 2008). Bitmojis, emojis, emoticons, and smileys have also helped in enhancing interpersonal interactions, thereby adding life, humour and easing communication between romantic partners. Interpersonal communication is being facilitated through face-to-face interactions and mediated communication with the development of technology. Interpersonal communication channels have offered a variety of information sources for people (Chen, Lee, Straubhaar, & Spence, 2014). While both patterns of communication have their merits and demerits, Feaster (2010) states that sometimes, mediated interpersonal communication facilitates tension between the sender and receiver.

Interpersonal communication is also an integral part of education, entertainment, and information (Literat & Chen, 2014). The concerned parties are opportune to have a direct and uninterrupted communication process, as such, getting satisfaction for their

desired information by seeking further clarification when the need arises. Interpersonal communication is also of importance in the professional settings. As such, experts are able to establish a one-on-one communication pattern, thereby fostering a cordial relationship. During mediated interpersonal communication, emotions are expressed as much as they are during face-to-face communication (Maubane & Oudtshoorn, 2011). Interpersonal communication is also a strong tool for effective and efficient media propagation and campaigns.

Research has been able to establish that interpersonal communication through the various social media platforms has proven to keep individuals online almost throughout the day. Therefore, they spend a substantial part of their time communicating online with various people directly without any form of interruption. (Park, Kimb, & Leec, 2014). Based on its directness and spontaneity, interpersonal communication has become an effective way of ensuring effective message delivery and reception. As the world continues to witness development in different ramifications, interpersonal communication continues to take different forms, shapes, and patterns (Southwell & Yzer, 2009). Interpersonal communication also affords the parties involved the opportunity to control communication speed, time and pattern (Schuster, et al. 2006).

2.4 Romantic Relationships

When an individual develops interest due to sexual, physical, emotional and psychological gratification, romantic relationship is about to come to fusion (Liu, 2012). Romantic relationships are mutual relationships involving ongoing or anticipated sexual, physical, mental, emotional, and psychological attraction between individuals (Conley, Moors, Matsick, & Ziegler, 2013; Len-Ríos et al., 2016).

However, when a romantic relationship is about to be initiated, certain criteria such as religious belief, cultural affiliation, race, physical appearance, psychological and emotional stability always play considerable roles (Jensen, & Rauer, 2014).

Romantic relationships may also be categorised as a form of close relationships where individuals involved are intimate and at liberty to share any form of physical or non-physical relationship (Leone & Hawkins, 2006). In a romantic relationship, there is a strong tie between the individuals as their communication and interactions are accorded a significant level of intimacy (Haythornthwaite, 2005).

One of the most important elements of romantic relationships is the existence of mutual and unconditional love between the individuals involved (Feeney & Noller, 1990). Love in romantic relationships however facilitate various degrees of commitment, support, attachment, and care even when unsolicited. Romantic relationships also involve a process where individuals decipher special feelings for one another in order to build unconditional love (Hazan & Shaver, 1987).

In romantic relationships, individuals are attached to each other with various degrees of physical, psychological, and sexual emotion which creates a long-lasting attraction between them (Sailor, 2013). Romance in relationships grow whenever there is high-level commitment between two people. The gender of the individuals may vary from male and female, female and female or male etc. (Conley, Moors, Matsick, & Ziegler, 2013). This is because romance does not ultimately exist between individuals of opposite gender.

Though some literature state that romantic relationships occur mostly at adolescent (Heifetz, Connolly, Pepler, & Craig, 2010), it is important to emphasise that romantic relationships may occur anytime from the age of reasoning. This is because romantic relationships are mutual, and to categorise any relationship as romantic, it must include certain mutual characteristics, which must be with the consent of individuals involved (Espinosa-Hernández, Bissell-Havran, Duzor, & Halgunseth, 2017).

2.5 Social Media and Romantic Relationships

Social media has become an instrument of establishing, fostering and maintaining romantic relationships across human spheres. Social media has also been able to create relief in romantic partners during the times of distress in their romantic relationships (Vallade & Dillow, 2014). Research also state that social media is one of the causes of the major challenges experienced in romantic relationships (Aloia & Solomon, 2015). This ranges from social media infidelity, conflict, posting unpleasant pictures etc. (Gudelunas, 2012).

Research also indicate that romantic partners may sometimes use social media to ease off emotional or other forms of stress they experience in their relationship, as this usually helps them escape from thinking about their current stress (Romo, 2015). Sometimes, individuals who are unhappy in their relationships due to one or more forms of discomfort with their partners get relief through social media (Theiss & Knobloch, 2009). Youth are now largely dependent on social media as a facilitator of their romantic relationships; this is due to the role of social media acting as an intermediary between the sender and receiver (Schade, Sandberg, Bean, Busby, & Coyne, 2013).

Social media has also been used to play advisory roles for romantic partners in relationships (Zhang & Merolla, 2006). There are series of social media platforms that serve as relationship sites, blogs and platforms that provide the avenue for current, past and would-be romantic partners to share their relationship experiences, challenges and problems. Some serve as means of connecting or establishing new romantic relationships. However, these are not without challenges (Utz, Muscanell, & Khalid, 2015). Also, social media has been able to connect individuals who are in need of romantic partners, thereby becoming a platform where people find love. Based on its ability to portray the world according to individual perspective, individuals portray their relationships as perfect on social media even with its numerous challenges (Aubrey, Rhea, Olson, & Fine, 2013). This mostly happens to celebrities and public figures where social media is used to depict the opposite of their marriage (Karney, & Gauer, 2010). It is also important to state that social media has been responsible for the disruption of a number of relationships.

Individuals sometimes find it quite interesting meeting and interacting with other social media users in order to establish relationships (Cronin-Davis, Butler, & Mayers, 2009). Social media use has also been described as a way of establishing intimacy among other users, which may lead to romantic intimacy (Su, 2016). This is because mobile devices offer users an opportunity to stay connected online.

Based on its virtual nature, social media has contributed to the emotional trauma individuals experience whenever they are rejected by online friends (McLaren, Solomon, & Priem, 2011). This may mentally affect the rejected person thereby leading to psychological complications. Research has also proven that females are

usually faster at frowning at it when their romantic partners are frequent online (Olson, 2002).

Different social media platforms have also been used by individuals in monitoring their romantic partners, as such these individuals follow their partners for certain reasons among which is monitoring attachment and surveillance (Furman, Simon, Shaffer, & Bouchey, 2002). However, there is no doubt that social media continues to play a major role in various romantic relationships (Seidman, 2013). Romantic partners sometimes feel comfortable discussing certain issues with their partners online, especially at the early stage of their relationship.

Conflicts may be settled between romantic partners on social media through chatting or other forms of interpersonal communication. However, romantic partners may also look after each other during their work hours or at leisure time. This facilitates love and intimacy in such relationship. In addition, romantic partners may also find it more convenient and comfortable to initiate a break-up through social media. This is because of the desire to avoid physical contacts with each other (LeFebvre, Blackburn, & Brody, 2015).

Parker (1997) states that use of social media in romantic relationships propels romantic partners to become jealous and feel insecure, thereby posing great threats to the relationship. Social media has also become a veritable tool as romantic partners use the platform as a means of encouraging each other and boosting their love (Merrill & Afifi, 2017). This they do through direct interpersonal communication such as voice notes, inspirational videos, pictures, texts and graphics among others.

Social media platforms also provide a platform where individuals can learn from other people's experience, challenges and general lifestyle especially in romantic relationships (Anderegg, Dale, & Fox, 2014). The platforms also sometimes serve as relationship counselling avenue, providing solutions through various Facebook, Instagram, Twitter handles and Blogs.

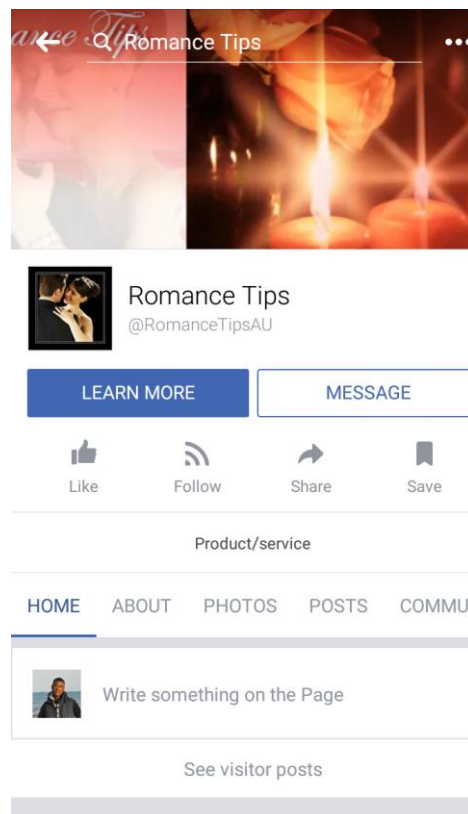


Figure 7: Romantic Relationship Instagram Handle

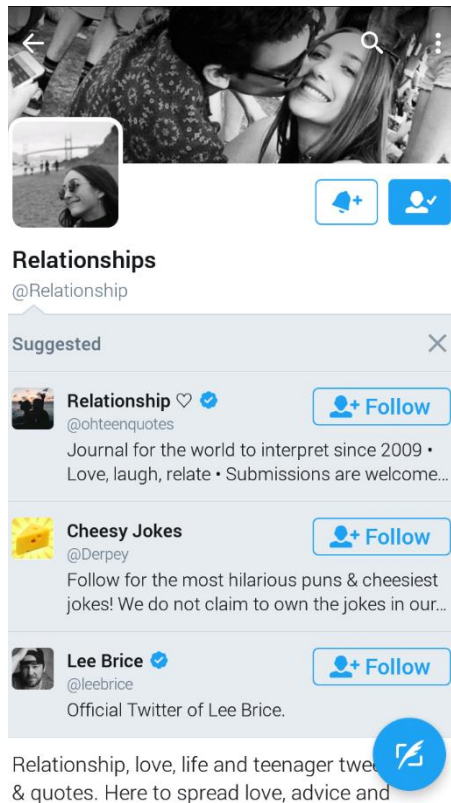


Figure 8: Romantic Relationship Twitter Handle

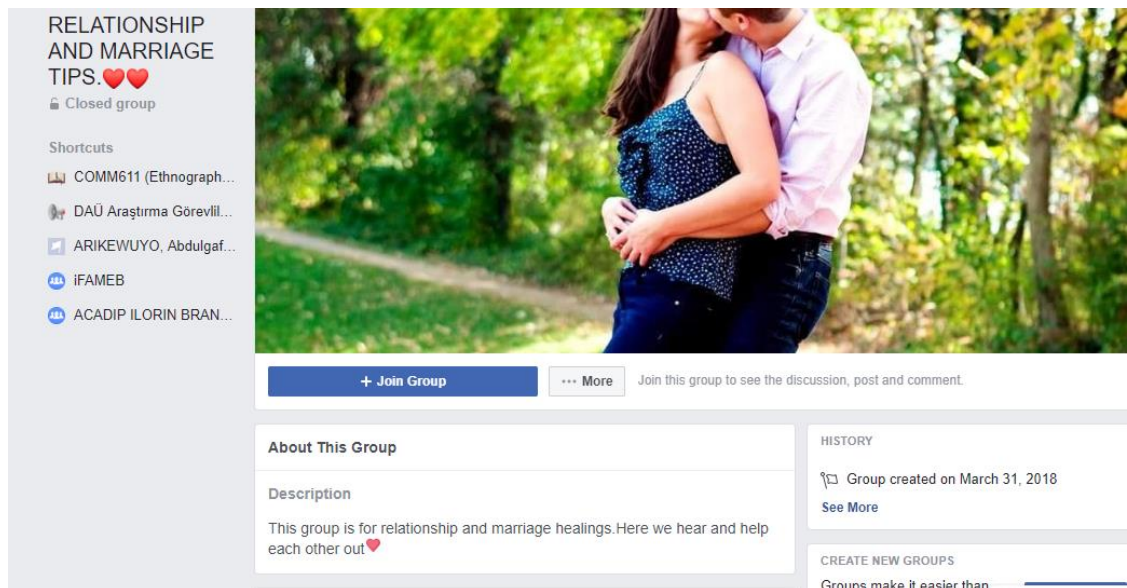


Figure 9: Romantic Relationship Facebook Handle

Figure 7, 8 and 9 are Instagram, Twitter and Facebook handles dedicated for romantic relationship issues. This indicates that romantic relationships have over the years used technology in fostering their relationships (Ledbetter, 2014). The pages through E-Mails or Direct Messages receive complaints on relationship problems from followers and then post it on their timelines. In most cases the individuals involved usually like to be anonymous thereby, giving the opportunity for the individuals involved (sender) to receive comments from a wide range of audience. These platforms have over the years been productive and helpful, giving romantic relationships the opportunity to thrive as well become one of the strongest roles social media plays in positively affecting in romantic relationships. This is also supported by Song and Fox (2016) where they affirm that “romantic media often depict love as powerful, unwavering, and able to overcome all obstacles” (p. 198).

2.6 Monitoring Romantic Partners

Monitoring romantic partners may be classified as an act of surveillance in romantic relationships (Fox & Warber, 2014). However, when in romantic relationships, individuals develop the zeal of wanting to know all activities of their romantic partner. In addition, ineffective communication in relationships may also facilitate romantic partners to monitor each other’s online and offline activities, which may facilitate conflict (Muise, 2014).

Social media has enhanced the act of monitoring among romantic partners (Muise, 2014). For instance, when romantic partners are friends on social media, they may begin to monitor whose pictures their partner likes, what they post, on whose profile they comment, and what comment they make amongst others. For romantic partners, direct and indirect monitoring/surveillance is one of the most common activities they

engage in on social media. Some romantic partners may open fake social media account in order to intensify monitoring (Ouytsel, Ponnet, & Walrave, 2018). However, monitoring has become quite easy on social media due to lack of privacy online.

When romantic partners begin to monitor each other, the romantic relationship is bound to suffer from imminent collapse as well as various degrees of physical and mental violence (Stonard, Bowen, Walker, & Price, 2017). However, monitoring may also take another dimension. Individuals may begin to monitor the activities of their ex-partners, most especially on social media, this may occur when such individuals still have emotional and psychological attachment for such ex-partner (Fox & Tokunaga, 2015). Such act may further compound the emotional trauma experienced due to the recent breakup.

Some individuals monitor their romantic partners in order to caution their online activities and guide them whenever they are about to lose track (Ouytsel, Gool, Walrave, & Ponnet, 2016). For example, romantic partners may consciously share their passwords with their partners; this on one hand helps to build trust, while on the other hand helps prevent partner monitoring or surveillance. Individuals may also create a scenario where they are prompted upon every new online activity of their partner (Darvell, Walsh, & White, 2011). This may somewhat be attributed to lack of trust or jealousy.

Individuals may begin to monitor their romantic partner when such partner portrays suspicious activities mostly when using social media. For instance, individuals may monitor their partner's addictiveness to social media or overprotectiveness of social

media accounts. Sometimes, when individuals monitor their partner, they make it obvious by reacting (positively or negatively) to a significant number of their partner's social media activities (Marcum, Higgins, & Jason, 2017). However, it is assumed that these activities have a number of negative effects on romantic relationships.

2.7 Distraction in Romantic Relationships

Quite a number of users have become addicted to the various social media platforms. This is because of the many unique and entertaining features the platforms offer. This may be one of the major causes of distractions in romantic relationships. Distractions have been attributed to lead the individuals and romantic partners to paying more attention to their digital and social media platforms to their partners (Younger, Aron, Parke, Chatterjee, & Mackey, 2010). Due to the frequency of romantic partners online presence, social media has been described as a cause of distractions in romantic relationships. (Abbasi & Alghamdi, 2018)

In addition, individuals may sometimes pay more attention to texting and chatting with friends, which may lead to ignoring their romantic partner's needs or pay less attention to their partner (Halpern & Katz, 2017). For example, an individual may be engaged online with a friend, colleague, or associate while the partner requires attention over an issue. However, because of the ongoing conversation online, such individual may not be able to give the required attention due to distraction. This may sometimes lead to conflict.

Social media has invariably encouraged romantic partners to pay less attention to each other due to online distractions. However, this has become a common phenomenon in many relationships. Roberts and David (2016) state that social media distractions have

become a major phenomenon facilitating romantic relationship dissatisfaction which sometimes lead to breakup. Sometimes, when romantic partners go on a romantic date or are together at home, their frequent use of social media distracts them. In addition, such act has affected the quality of relationships, as romantic partners are unable to have intimate and productive conversations when together.

Findings in a study conducted by Morgan, et al., (2017) state that romantic partners usually get frustrated with the significant level of attention their partner accord social media. The study explains that individuals get addicted to the use of social media and sometimes are distracted by computer-generated realities. This has created a form of distraction in romantic relationships and as well affected the quality of such relationships.

2.8 Trust in Romantic Relationships

Trust is an important phenomenon that drives romantic relationships. When a romantic relationship is bedevilled with issues of trust, romantic partners may place little or no priority on issues such as commitment, emotional or financial support (Muise, Christofides, & Desmarais, 2009). Research suggest that when romantic partners are becoming less satisfied with the physical attraction of their partners, they begin to lose interest and trust in their partner (Juarez & Pritchard, 2012). Essentially, when trust is lacking in romantic relationship it may facilitate dissatisfaction.

To facilitate trust in romantic relationships, there is the need for romantic partners to be open to each other and discuss their past activities (negative or positive) as well as their future aspirations (Uysal, Lin, & Bush, 2012). Discussing such issues and activities may sometimes strengthen love and trust in relationships. In addition, when

romantic partners find out mostly about their partners' negative activities, it may generate conflict and reduce the level of trust in the relationship (Gabbay, Lafontaine, & Bourque, 2012). Individuals who have experienced a violent/conflict driven relationship in the past may have a major challenge in trusting their current romantic partner due previous relationship/s (Norona, Welsh, Olmstead, & Bliton, 2017). This has been a common phenomenon that has not only facilitated distrust in relationships but has also contributed to romantic partners staying in a relationship with fear.

Trust has been attributed to influence various areas of a romantic relationship. For instance, trust helps build a stronger and more vibrant relationship, it also increases love and facilitates a more robust and vibrant relationship where commitment and loyalty thrive (Towner, Dolcini, & Harper, 2015). When an individual does not significantly trust his/her romantic partner, there are indications that such relationship may experience conflict where distrust will provoke conflict (Kim, et al., 2015). Such act may also lead to the breakup of such relationship.

Trust is important in maintaining, sustaining, and enhancing romantic relationships. Based on the nature of sexual intimacy, romantic partners may have trust issues in their relationship (Gabbay & Lafontaine, 2017). When romantic partners have issues with trusting each other, it may facilitate a major form of violence, thereby generating dissatisfaction in the relationship (Williams, 2014). For example, distrust may facilitate individuals to always watch out for their partner's mistakes in order to begin an argument.

Quite importantly, romantic relationships that lack trust may be preoccupied with various issues and complications such as distractions and lack of affection (Carnelley,

Hepper, Hicks, & Turner, 2011). When there is high level of trust in a relationship, romantic partners will most likely enjoy high intimacy where they share everything around them. This also significantly enhances the quantum of love and friendship in such relationships (Laborde, Dommelen-Gonzalez, & Minnis, 2014).

To establish trust, individuals begin by giving a positive impression about themselves to potential partners. Individuals ensure they are at the best of their behaviours in order to attract a potential or existing romantic partner (Øverup & Neighbors, 2016). According to Rodriguez, DiBello, Øverup, & Neighbors (2015) when jealousy is present in a relationship it may be due to inadequate trust, however, this may also be due to anxiety.

2.9 Infidelity in Romantic Relationships

Hackathorn, Mattingly, Clark, and Mattingly (2011), conceptualise infidelity as a process of being secretly involved sexually with another person other than one's romantic partner. Infidelity on the social media can therefore be described as a process of gratifying one's sexual needs and desires through the various social media platforms (Docan-Morgan & Docan, 2007). This could be through sexual interactions or conversations with another person, which may be in form of sending and receiving pictures, video clips, audio conversations or voice notes, provocative or hot sexual content etc. (Kaestle, & Halpern, 2005).

Social media has also been used as instruments of sex scandals, thereby causing broken relationships and homes (Correa, 2016; Leonard, 2017). For instance, in the early period of 2017, a sexual scandal/blackmail trended over the social media platforms about the infidelity that occurred between a prominent Nigerian Pastor, Apostle

Johnson Suleiman, founder of the Omega Fire Ministries World Wide and Miss Stephanie Otobo, a 23-year-old lady who claimed that the apostle had an affair with her. One important thing to note was that Stephanie Otobo had substantial evidence against the apostle varying from their texts, chats, pictures and Snapchat conversations which were all on the social media. However, she accused the apostle of using his powers to subdue the matter. This is in relationship with the findings of Lammers, Stoker, Jordan, Pollmann and Stapel (2011), where they state “power is associated with increased self-reported infidelity and with increased intentions of engaging in infidelity” (p. 1195).

One important factor to note is that the increase in the number of times individuals spend on social media will most likely increase their social media friendship base, which may become a threat to their relationships. Nabi, Finnerty, Domschke and Hull (2006), affirm that some of the users of social media primarily use the social media to gratify some aspects of their sexual desires by using the social media frequently, thereby increasing their online presence and as such increasing the number of friends they have. Social media also provides its users access to sexual content, thereby influencing them to develop interest in sexual contents, which may lead to seeking pleasure outside their primary relationship (Al-Sayed & Gunter, 2012).

Romantic partners who use social media, device several means of gratifying each other with the social media contents. This they do by tagging each other on their platforms like Instagram and Twitter, sending romantic pictures and as well sending romantic web links. Evers, Albury, Byron and Crawford (2013), explain that youth engage in activities such as flirting, romance, break-up or divorce, online dating, distance relationships and even online sex. Social media also is used to draw people’s attention

to one's self attribute or looks (Chan-Olmsted,, Cho, & Lee, 2013). As such, certain people use the platforms to attract others based on their sexual needs and desires. They do this by posting sexually attractive or provocative pictures on their status, page or profile.

Social media has also contributed to increased sexual communication, which usually involves conversations about sex intent and desires. This also includes misconstrued messages by the male gender as there is usually a belief that when a woman initiates a conversation online, there is a sexual desire or will behind it. This is also affirmed by La France, Henningsen, Oates and Shaw (2009) argue that “when women verbally initiated a first date, men interpreted that verbal communication cue sexually” (p. 265). Infidelity over the social media has proven to be one of the factors that has caused serious problems or indeed broken many romantic relationships. This has also led to quite a number of sexual harassment and violence (Keyton & Rhodes, 1999).

2.10 Theoretical Framework

The major theories used in this study are the Uses and Gratification and Media Multiplexity theories. This is because many of the various social media users have several needs from entertainment, education, information to finding a partner or lover on social media. Also, the multiplexity of social media platforms have been described to contribute to the gratifications received in relationships.

2.10.1 Uses and Gratifications Theory

In order to give a clear understanding of how social media affects the various forms of interpersonal relationships in which a romantic relationship can be categorised as one, this study adopts the U&G as a distinctive theory. Bracken and Lombard (2001), capture the background of the U&G Theory as thus;

The approach emerged during the 1940s in response to failed attempts to measure powerful, direct effects that the mass media were alleged to have on their audiences. The approach is based on the assumption that audience members are active, rational, and self-aware. Media consumption is seen as an attempt to satisfy a variety of important human needs and researchers investigate the extent to which people attempt to use the media to fulfil these needs and the extent to which those attempts are successful. (p. 103)

The theory established an understanding on the reasons for which citizens use the mainstream and social media platforms. The theory originates as a grounded theory approach. The U> revolves around the audience, by understanding how the media audience make use of the media platforms for individual gratification, thereby creating an active audience media environment (Sundar & Limperos, 2013). This is further affirmed by Luo (2002) stating that;

The U> originated from the functionalist perspective on mass media communication. It was first developed in research on the effectiveness of the radio medium in the 1940s. Basically, it focuses on the explanations for audience members' motivations and associated behaviours. (p. 34-35)

The U> can also be described as a theory that helps establish a clear understanding of how human beings make use of technological devices to seek gratification. Papacharissi and Rubin (2000) explain further that “this is especially the case for how people use technologies to negotiate their identities, social positions, and emotional lives” (p. 176).

U> could be applied to quite a number of contexts in the media and are mainly aimed at understanding the various ways in which media gratification affects the users (Katz, Haas, & Gurevitch, 1973). “U> researchers can continue to use categories such as surveillance, entertainment and diversion, interpersonal utility, and para-social

interaction to test people's attitudes toward media consumption (Ruggiero, 2000, p. 17).

Due to the advent of internet, the U> has gained more strength due to the availability of interactivity (Ko, Cho, & Roberts, 2005). The internet has thereby provided a means of accessing instant feedback, which has further enhanced the U> this also provided a form of mediated interpersonal communication. Researches have continued to associate the U> to the internet due to unlimited reasons behind the use of social media platforms. Therefore, Smock, Ellison, Lampe and Wohn (2011) assert "U> is a theoretical framework that is used to study how media, including social media, are utilized to fulfil the needs of individual users with different goals" (p. 2323).

U> is applicable to all forms of media (mainstream and social media) as it has created a more conducive environment for the application of the theory based on the ability of the users to choose the most suitable platform to seek gratification at a time of their choice.

One of the most significant audience research theory that enhances audience's reasons for the use of the media, according to Payne, Dozier, Nomai and Yagade (2003) is the UGT. Some audience use the media to seek information about current news trends, weather forecast and traffic update, while others use the media to gratify their entertainment needs and desires. As such, they stay glued to their preferred media platform to watch their choice movies, music and pictures. In addition, while one section of audience uses the media as a form of interaction and a means of staying in

touch; the other users derive one form of educational or instructional gratification from their various uses of the media (Correa, Hinsley, & Zúñiga, 2010).

As the U> maintain that media audience have shifted from being passive to active, the theory has also shifted from being a mainstream dominant theory to become a technological oriented theory and social media to be specific. For instance, an individual who finds it difficult to approach another person in proposal of a romantic relationship or one who is in need of frequent update about the latest discoveries on a particular health issue may decide to stay glued to social media channels that would provide accurate information about the particular desire and need of the individual (Anderson, 2011).

Furthermore, the audience is able to make choices of which media is most important, what information to be exposed to, how to be exposed to it, when to be exposed to such information and most importantly decide on the level of influence such information should have on them due to the frequency of exposure.

In some instances, social media users seek instant gratification form the platform (Arbuthnott, 2010). In this research, the social interaction aspect of McQuail's categorization of the Uses and Gratifications Theory would be of most significant benefit. "Studies have shown that audience gratifications can be derived from at least three distinct sources: media content, exposure to the media per se, and the social context that typifies the situation of exposure to different media" (Katz, Blumler, & Gurevitch, 1974, p. 514). Based on the presumptions of the theory, this theory is most applicable to this study as individuals use social media to seek or gratify their desires in their romantic relationships. The social media is also used as a means of gratifying

the need to establish, mention, foster and sustain their various romantic relationship desires.

According to Katz, Haas & Gurevitch (1973), the media has been described as a means through which its audience satisfy their various needs and desires ranging from physical, psychological, social, and emotional etc. They further stated that these needs help the audience in making certain decisions that affect their personal lives as well as that of the people around them. Also of importance is the gratification social media provides in areas of making new friends, communicating with romantic partners and most importantly using the platforms to develop and mend the various aspects of their romantic relationships.

Technology has upgraded the use and application of the Uses and Gratifications Theory, however, there is need to continuously examine the applicability of the theory to new trends and disciplines to give it more relevance and affirmation.

2.10.1.1 Related research in uses and gratifications with respect to the influence of social media and romantic relationship

Adopting the postulations of the Uses and Gratifications Theory, Liu, et al., (2017) investigated how individuals use Facebook to seek gratifications in their relationships. The study found out that social media platforms have become a means through which individuals build new friends. The study also found out that social media has become a means through which romantic partners keep one another's company thereby gratifying the need to communicate.

In another study Gallego, Bueno, and Noyes (2016) sought to find out how Social Virtual Worlds (SVWs) platforms created opportunities for users to establish

relationships with individuals who share the same interest and ideology with them. While upholding the postulations of the Uses and Gratifications Theory, findings in the study stated that Social Virtual Worlds (SVWs) platforms have become platforms where users not only seek entertainment and education but creating and sustaining new and existing relationships.

Ishii, Rife, and Kagawa (2017) sought to find out how university students use messaging platforms to gratify their need to establish and maintain communication with close allies. Results indicated that individuals who use technology to gratify their communication needs are more likely to value the richness of these platforms than others who do not.

All of these scholars have conducted research into the uses and gratifications theory, however, none has applied the theory into social media use in romantic relationship gratifications with relations to trust, infidelity, monitoring, and distractions. This, therefore, makes this research novel, thereby creates a gap for investigation

2.10.2 Media Multiplexity Theory

The core assumption of the Media Multiplexity Theory is based on the strength of relationship that exists between two individuals (Haythornthwaite, 2001). The theory states that when the relationship between two people is strong, it may be classified as strong ties, while referring to individuals whose relationship strength is weak as weak ties (Haythornthwaite, 2005). For example, based on the level of intimacy that exists between romantic partners, mother-son, or father-daughter, it may be classified as strong ties, however, the relationship between classmates, teacher and student, or office colleagues may fall under the category of weak ties (Taylor & Ledbetter, 2017).

The MMT is based on three core assumptions, 1) the strength of the tie that exists between individuals will predict the platform and mode at which communication takes place, 2) when communication is mediated, there is the possibility of media influence on the current tie that exists, and 3) the status quo of the ties, predicts the form of communication (Haythornthwaite, 2005). The assumption of the MMT that the more individuals engage in communication, the stronger the ties grow has been made possible with the advancement in technology, which has facilitated the creation of social media platforms (Ledbetter & Mazer, 2014). For example, when romantic partners engage in constant communication through different ICT platforms, their relationship tends to grow.

The tie strength, which is the major focus of the MMT explains the level of emotional, physical, and psychological intimacy between individual to determine the ties between them (Haythornthwaite, 2000). The theory is further based on the individuals communicating with each other, what they talk about, and through which medium, stating that strong ties make use of any platform available to maintain communication (Ledbetter, Taylor, & Mazer, 2016). For example, romantic partners may communicate on any social media or instant messaging platform, while colleagues at work may restrict communication to emails (Church, & Oliveira, 2013).

The MMT further explains how communication between two people is strengthened due to the mode, platform and frequency of communication (Ledbetter, 2010). This further illustrates that for individuals with stronger ties to maintain or sustain a relationship, there is need for communication. For example, communication between close allies may fade over time if there is no constant communication. For romantic partners who do not maintain constant communication, the ties that exists between

them may fade. Therefore, individuals with stronger ties require constant communication to sustain the intimacy between them. The theory further elaborates that though communication may take place on any platform, the most important is constant communication (Ledbetter, 2009).

As an elaborate theory, the MMT expands our horizon on how interpersonal communication takes place and how it is further boosted (Haythornthwaite 2001). The MMT further expands that interpersonal communication is significantly based on the ties that exists between the individuals and not the medium (Miczo, Mariani, & Donahue, 2011). For instance, the level of intimacy that exists may predict the platform as the platform cannot predict the intimacy. However, the platform may enhance the intimacy over time.

MMT places premium on communication, as it is the instrument that helps establish, maintain, and enhance the existing ties (Ledbetter & Kuznekoff, 2012). In addition, the mode and manner of communication is quite relevant as it provides the platform the opportunity to strengthen the ties (Garton, Haythornthwaite, & Well, 1997). The theory, no doubt, provides further illumination on how family, sexual, or romantic relationships are maintained and strengthened.

2.10.2.1 Related research in media multiplexity with respect to the influence of social media and romantic relationship

With the aid of the Media Multiplexity Theory, Ledbetter, Taylor, and Mazer (2016) investigated the rate at which a user enjoys using a platform and the frequency at which they communicate through certain social media platforms correlates with their frequency of using social media platforms. Results supported that multiple uses of media platforms such as cell phone, social media platforms, and emails among others

enhances communication with close family as well as strengthens the ties. Specifically, the study findings added that the lower individuals in relationships communicate, the lower the tie strength.

Guided by the Media Multiplexity Theory, Taylor and Ledbetter (2017) conducted a study to experimental study to investigate individuals' changes in media use with their close families. Findings further supported the Media Multiplexity Theory stating that tie strength will have an indirect relationship with the frequency at which individuals communicate. In addition, the study found out that the nature and strength of a relationship, predicts the media channel through which individuals communicate.

Furthermore, Ruppel, Burke, and Cherney (2018) investigated the use of communication technology devices (like social media platforms among others) in long distance relationships. The study found out that individuals prefer to connect through phone calls and voice messages rather than texting. The study further states that the use of multiple channels avails the individuals the opportunity to strengthen their ties.

These studies and others have applied the media Multiplexity theory into different spheres and disciplines. Interestingly, none has investigated the theory in the context of social media use and romantic relationships with relations to trust, infidelity, monitoring, and distractions. This hereby creates a gap for this study to fill, thereby making the study novel.

2.11 Gratification in Romantic Relationships

Social media platforms have been described as essential in the development of romantic relationships among partners. For instance, some of the platforms give its users the opportunity to provide information about their romantic relationship status

as well as tag or mention their partners in order to publicly display them on their platforms such as Facebook and Instagram (Robards & Lincoln, 2016). Users also upload pictures of their partners without hesitation and attach romantic captions in order to express love and affection.

Technology has generally been characterised as a means of initiating, maintaining, and enhancing gratification in romantic relationships. Ji and Fu (2013) argue that the use of social media is a distinctive way of facilitating gratification in romantic relationships. For example, with the aid of social media platforms and their various Emojis, romantic partners are able to express love between themselves, as such, ultimately leading to gratification in their relationships.

Romantic partners are able to use technology driven platforms like social media to gratify their romantic relationships (Ishii, Rife, & Kagawa, 2017). For example, individuals may randomly send affectionate and romantic messages to their partner; in order to rekindle and enhance their love, this in turn facilitate gratification in the relationships.

Dainton and Stokes (2015) state that one of the significant gratification functions social media perform is its ability to help maintain and sustain romantic relationships. For example, individuals who are engaged in distant relationships may use the social media to maintain communication, thereby enhance confidence and trust which in turn results to gratification.

Romero-Canyas, Downey, Berenson, Ayduk, and Kang (2010) argue that for gratification to exist in a relationship there has to be a mutual and significant dedication

in the relationship. As such, both individuals have to possess high commitment and work effectively to satisfy their partner's needs and wants (Punyanunt-Carter & De La Cruz , 2017). For example, individuals have to accede to their partner's sexual, financial, psychological and emotional needs when necessary. When romantic partners are able to access such needs and more, the level of gratification may increase.

To maintain a healthy and purposeful relationship, romantic partners have to derive a significant level of gratification in their relationship (Schmit & Bell, 2017). However, there are a number of important issues that may lead to dissatisfaction or thereafter alter the gratification received in a relationship. When romantic partners engage in issues that do not increase their attraction, it may lead to low level of gratification (Jonason, 2013). However, individuals are able to secure their relationship through joint measures, thereby enhancing gratification. As such, this research intends to investigate how social media use positively facilitates gratification in romantic relationships.

Chapter 3

METHODOLOGY

This chapter provides a description of the research paradigm, methodology, research approach, study population, sample size, sampling technique, data collection, research procedure, and ethical consideration.

3.1 Research Paradigm

The process of conducting research is related to exploring a type of reality that can be categorised into ontology, epistemology, and methodology. Antwi and Hamza (2015) explain that quantitative research being a positivist paradigm may be classified as the process of philosophically exploring social reality based on the ideology of French Philosopher August Comte. Krauss (2005) explains that in order to predict, understand and control the world, positivist paradigm is based on the truth, which may be in alienation with science.

Because science has given premium to quantification, quantitative studies are thereby categorised under the positivist era. This creates a basic understanding that quantitative methodology being domiciled under the positivist paradigm is based on truth, which is aimed at predicting, understanding and controlling the world. However, Willis and Broom (2007) argue that positivist paradigm produces and maintains reality through an objective and rigorous process.

The survey approach adopted in this study is a positivist approach, which is centred on the first paradigm of research methodology. According to this paradigm, research was done mathematically and there was only one way of doing things (Krauss 2005). Literature in this paradigm were not distinctive, but it is quite clear that there are positivists, post-positivists, and the multiple paradigms. These paradigms brought about dynamism into research, thereby clarifying that research can be carried out in several correct ways (McGregor & Murnane, 2010). Though the paradigm of the approach I adopt in this research is in line with positivism, I take into consideration that scholarship has transcended to the multiple paradigms and therefore, expand the horizon and scope of this study.

3.2 Research Design

Formulating a research design is one of the most critical and important parts of any research work. Research design provides an outline, which will help in stating the plan of attack for the research. However, the present study has been planned as a case study (i.e. a case study of EMU Students). According to Galletta (2013) research strength is not solely based on how clear the research focuses, but how much it goes in articulating its dependent and independent variables. As such, the research design in this study has been well articulated and well thought out in order to provide adequate and appropriate analysis, which will help address the research questions and eventually lead to acceptable findings. The research questions were also well thought out and carefully formulated. This is to provide adequate opportunity for the study to make grounded findings and contributions.

The research design is important as it will influence the outcome of any study (Maxwel, 2012). It is instrumental in establishing a link between the collected data in

this study and the eventual outcome of the research questions and/or hypothesis (Black, 1999). However, there is no absolute way to achieve the targeted result, but choosing the most appropriate design will guide the study. Also choosing the most appropriate population and the sample will as well help avoid any form of bias in the study. This study also adopts survey approach under the quantitative methodology as part of its research design. Vaus (2013) further expands that adopting an appropriate research design will facilitate appropriate result, which will help in supporting the model designed for the study.

Based on the methodology and design of this study, the outcome of this research would be generalizable. As such, there is need to minimise the level of problems associated with validity and reliability which could bring about flaws in a research (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2009). This is also due to the careful selection of population and sample. It is important to note that this study is also driven by the design of a well-structured questionnaire, which will serve as the instrument of obtaining data from the field.

Survey helps to give an appropriate description to the characteristics of a set of cases (Fowler, 2009). For instance, the survey approach in this study will help describe the extent to which social media or ICT influence romantic relationships. Usually, survey design gives a quantitative or numeric description of some fraction of the population (Marsden & Wright, 2010). This allows the researcher to determine the variables and constructs as well as providing responses that can be generalized (Sapsford, 2006). Survey also has the ability to replicate and objectively compare responses from different groups, times and places. Survey is the most widely used method of research in communication, sociology, psychology, and other related disciplines (Punch, 2003).

In addition, this study made use of the purposive random sampling because respondents must be in a romantic relationship.

3.3 Population and Sample

The intent of this research is to understand, evaluate and analyse the effects of social media on romantic relationships while examining young adults who are university students. To determine the population, I considered the entire population of registered students at the Eastern Mediterranean University (EMU), North Cyprus in the 2018/19 academic session. Significant number of students can be regarded as digital natives (Prensky, 2001). In other words, I narrowed my population to the students of EMU.

EMU is a state university located in the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC). Approximately, TRNC has an estimated population of 300, 000 inhabitants. TRNC is a predominantly Muslim Island however, a much lesser population practice other religions. EMU has a population of about 20, 000 registered students which is made up of Turkish, Cypriot including a significant number of International Students from over 106 countries globally. This research is conducted in the Fall Semester of the 2018/19 academic session among the registered students of the EMU.

Determining a sample size for such a study could be cumbersome and quite complex. One important factor to note is that the sample drawn from the population of registered students at the EMU is to serve as a representative of the entire population. It is of importance also to note that students from the Eastern Mediterranean University are of over 106 different nationalities. This will also help in giving the research a global acceptance based on the variance in the participants in this study. In addition, the

sample of the study is made of up of only students who can speak and understand English.

However, due to that fact that this study is done in the multi-paradigmatic era, sample size may vary based on the study or focus of the research and most importantly based on the population of the study (Wimmer & Dominick, 2003). From the population of this research work, I align with the sample size table of Krejcie & Morgan (1970), to determine the sample size which is three hundred and seventy-seven (377) respondent, however, after the distribution of the questionnaires, only 376 ere recovered. Therefore $n = 376$. The survey was thereby administered to three hundred and seventy-seven respondents. Therefore, a 95% confidence level ($\alpha = 0.05$) and a margin of r ($E = 1$) was adopted in this study, this is to help test the reliability of the sample size of this study.

3.4 Data Collection Instrument

A systematic survey approach was employed for the process of data collection and this was done through purposive sampling. An in-house questionnaire was designed for gathering data for the study. The questionnaire serves as a communication platform between the researcher and respondents as it helps protect the personality and identity of the respondent (Brace, 2008). The researcher carefully drafted the questionnaire in order to help answer the research questions in the study. It will also provide a clear understanding of the aims and objective of the research. Questionnaires can be in an open-ended or close-ended format. The close-ended questionnaire somewhat limits the respondent but helps the researcher get precise responses according to the design and pattern while the open-ended provide the respondents with ample opportunity to answer the questions according to their perspective. When designing a questionnaire,

the researcher must ensure that the items in the questionnaire appropriately addresses all the research questions as well as help nullify or affirm the research hypothesis (Burgess, 2001).

3.4.1 Questionnaire Items and Measures

The items in the questionnaire were carefully designed in order to provide the most appropriate answers to the research questions. The questions were carefully framed to elicit responses that provided answers to the research questions and aid measurement of the relationship between the variables raised in the hypothesis. Measures were adopted from various scholarly studies. In all, the questionnaire had seventy-two (72) questions and divided into seven (7) sections. The questions were carefully designed for easy understanding of the respondents.

The first section is the demographics and measures which was made up of 11 questions. This consisted of gender, age group, marital status, level of social media use and most preferred social media platform. The section also sought to inquire how long the respondents have been in a romantic relationship, level of satisfaction of the respondent in the current romantic relationship. In addition, the study sought to inquire if the respondents go through their romantic partner's social media platform as well as seeking to know if having an intimate conversation with the opposite gender on social media is cheating.

The second section consisted of questions to assess social media use in romantic relationships. Items to address the use of social media in romantic relationships were adopted from the works of (Young, Len-Ríos, & Young, 2017). The twelve (12) items measured the individual use of social media. They included "To find a lot of information about things that are going on", "To keep up with what my friends are

doing”, “To see what others are talking about”, “To follow a romantic crush”, “To monitor what someone I'm romantically interested in is doing”. The items were measured on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree).

The third section consisted of questions to assess monitoring in romantic relationships. Monitoring in Romantic Relationships was accessed using (Tokunaga, 2011), which had fifteen (15) items. The items included, “I visit my partner’s social networking site page often”, “When visiting my partner’s social networking site page, I read the new posts of his/her friends”, “I often spend time looking through my partner’s social networking site pictures”, “I pay particularly close attention to news feeds that concern my partner”. The items were measured on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree).

The fourth section consisted of questions to assess distractions in romantic relationships. Items to address distractions in romantic relationships were built in line with the study of (Arikewuyo & Ozad, In Press). However, this study made a few changes in order to suit the purpose of this research. The measure consisted of 6 items which include “I get distracted by social media when with my romantic partner” social media makes me miss important dates with my romantic partner”. Others include “The things I see on social media make my romantic relationship less attractive, “I spend more times taking pictures for social media than for my romantic partner”, “I spend more time making comments on social media than discussing with my romantic partner”, and “I spend time on chatting with social media friends to my romantic partner”. The measures were developed on a 5 point Likert Scale (1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree).

The fifth section consisted of questions to assess trust in romantic relationships. A four (4)-item scale previously developed by (Gabbay, Lafontaine, & Leta Bo, 2012) was adopted to measure trust in romantic relationships. Respondents were in each of the items expected to measure the level of trust in their romantic relationship. The items included “My partner is primarily interested in his (her) own welfare”, “My partner is truly sincere in his (her) promises” and “I feel that my partner can be counted on to help me”. The items were evaluated using a 7-point Likert scale (1 = Very Strongly Disagree to 7 = Very Strongly Agree).

The sixth section consisted of questions to assess infidelity in romantic relationships. To assess infidelity in romantic relationships, this study adopted the items previously used by (Whitty, 2003). The eight (8)-item section required respondents to rate the level at which they classify the items as infidelity in romantic relationships. They included “Viewing porn sent via an email”, “Engaging in hot (sexual) chat with strangers online”, “Engaging in hot (sexual) chat regularly with the same person online”. Also, “Engaging in hot chat with a stranger”, “Just the once, engaging in cybersex with strangers online”, “Engaging in cybersex with a stranger”, “Engaging in cybersex regularly with the same person online” and “Engaging in intercourse/sexual acts offline”. The measures were developed on a 5-point Likert Scale (1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree).

The sixth section consisted of questions to assess gratifications in romantic relationships. Gratification in romantic relationships was measured with a five (5)-item section developed by (Hendrick, 1988). However, a few changes were made and two questions were eliminated in order to suit the research purpose. The items include “How well does your partner meet your needs?”, “In general, how satisfied are you

with your relationship?”, “How good is your relationship compared to most?”, “To what extent has your relationship met your original expectation?”, “How much do you love your partner?” The measures were developed on a 5-point Likert Scale (1 = Not at all to 5 = Completely).

3.5 Data Analysis

Data in this study are analysed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences SPSS. I made use of the descriptive and inferential statistics. In this study, six hypotheses were tested. A hypothesis helps a research give an assumptive or temporary explanation to facts with the intention of testing whether they can be rejected or affirmed (Kothari, 2004). It is important to note that a researcher must be able to uphold or falsify a hypothesis; this will show its scientific nature and display its dependent and independent variable.

In addition, research questions were used in order to help give an in-depth understanding of the research topic as well as advance the discussion on the effects of social media platforms on romantic relationships. The level of significance for these tests was 0.05. In addition to the hypothesis testing, descriptive statistics was conducted in order to support the quantitative data used in this study. Correlation analysis, regression analysis and Sobel test were used to test the research hypothesis. These analyses will help in determining the level of positive or negative relationship between the variables, as well as the effect of the mediating variables with the independent and dependent variables. The study also tested for outliers.

3.6 Validity and Reliability of Research Instrument

In order to ensure validity and reliability of the data used in the research, a pilot study was initially conducted. A pilot study can be described as an assessment or test running

of the practicality of the instrument (Teijlingen & Hundley, 2001). Pilot studies are not in any way used to test research hypothesis or questions. Its main function among others is to check that;

- i. The researcher has a firm grasp and proper understanding;
- ii. The researcher has the required skills in carrying out the research,
- iii. Words used in the survey instrument conforms to standards and is well understood by the would-be respondents,
- iv. Ensure reliability and validity of the results as well as to ensure that the task of carrying out an in-depth statistical analysis is seamless (Goodman, Meltzer, & Bailey, 2003).

The pilot study also helps forecast if there might be any problem what so ever, thereby giving warnings of possible challenges and where it may arise (Teijlingen & Hundley, 2001). The pilot study also helps in affirming if the proposed method is appropriate or less complicated. Therefore, a pilot test was firstly conducted with 50 random respondents ($n = 50$). These participants were Ph.D. students of Eastern Mediterranean University.

After the pilot study, a reliability test was then carried out. Reliability is the act of measuring the level of consistency. Reliability helps to show the level of authenticity and fairness of the instrument while ensuring that the measurement is consistent across time and the various items in the instrument of study. This is also affirmed by Fink and Litwin (1995) stating that reliability helps give a picture of the level of understanding of the research instrument by the respondents. According to Carmines and Zeller (1979) the ability to arrive at the same findings or result signifies that the

instrument or the entire study is reliable which is the main reason for carrying out a reliability test.

To ensure that appropriate validity was done, the instrument passed through series of vetting by various communication scholars. In addition, inspirations were drawn from previous works conducted in the field of communication (Perry, 1996). The focus of validity is to ensure that findings in a study are in conformity with what they seem to be about, as well as ensure that the relationship between two variables is causal. Validity is another word for quality control as it also helps in generalising findings and results of the final (Baumgarten, 2013). A Cronbach Alpha of $\alpha .92$ was generated from the overall reliability test. Finally, Exploratory Factor Analysis was carried out on all the items in the construct (see Table 10).

3.7 Research Model

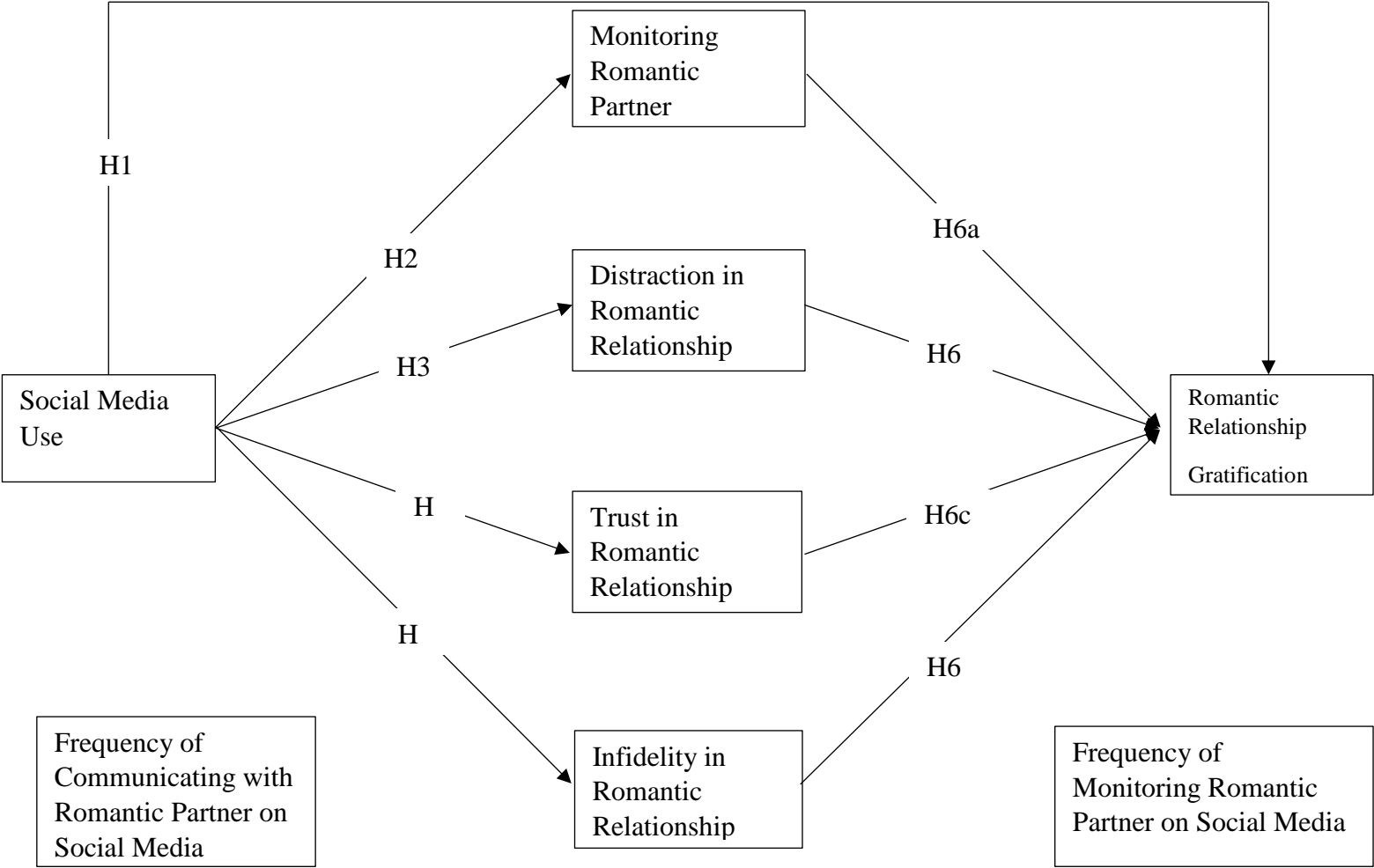


Figure 10: Research Model

3.8 Research Procedures

Based on these complexities involved in a Ph.D. thesis, this research was carried out within a period of eighteen months. Though there are un-documented periods, which could be categorised as the preliminary stages, this involves conceptualization, the perfection of the research topic and the process of outlining.

3.9 Ethical Considerations

Appropriate ethical consideration and approval were taken into consideration in the process of writing this thesis. All information provided by the respondents were kept confidential. Considering the level of sensitivity and the nature of this thesis, I made sure that all the rights of the respondents were duly protected and as well not unduly infringe into their privacy. The questionnaires were administered based on Institutional Research Board approval (see Appendix A).

Chapter 4

DATA ANALYSIS

This chapter presents the descriptive and inferential statistical analysis of the research work. The chapter helps provide quantitative answers to the research questions and hypothesis. Analysis are presented in tables with descriptive explanations.

4.1 Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

With a sample size of three hundred and seventy-six (376), this section presents the descriptive findings of the respondents in the study. The descriptive findings will aid understanding of the research work entirely as well as the inferential analysis.

Table 2: Demographic of Respondents

	Category	Frequency	Percentage %
Gender	Female	212	56.4
	Male	164	43.6
Age	18-23	173	46.0
	24-29	166	44.1
	30-35	37	9.8
Region	African	319	84.8
	American	15	4.0
	Asian	30	8.0
	European	9	2.4
	Oceanian	3	.8
Educational Background	Undergraduate	221	58.8
	Masters	129	34.3

	Ph.D.	26	6.9
Faculty	Architecture	23	6.1
	Arts & Sciences	37	9.8
	Business & Economics	97	25.8
	Communication and Media Studies	117	31.1
	Engineering	45	12.0
	Pharmacy	33	6.8
	Tourism	24	6.4
Marital status	In a relationship	192	51.1
	Engaged	184	48.9
How long have you been in a romantic relationship	Less than 1 year	104	22.7
	1-5 years	208	55.3
	6-10 years	64	17.0
How often do you use social media?	Almost never	2	.5
	Sometimes	79	21.0
	Almost every time	171	45.5
	Frequently use	124	33.0
Which SM platform do you frequently use?	Facebook	187	49.7
	Instagram	107	28.5
	Snapchat	22	5.9
	Twitter	60	16.0

n = 376

Table 4.1.1 shows the descriptive demographic analysis of respondents in the study. Findings reveal that majority of the respondents are females with 56.4% (*n* = 212), while males are 43.6% (*n* = 164). About the age distribution of the respondents, 46% (*n* = 173) are within 18-23, 44.1% (*n* = 166) fall within 24-28, while 9.8% (*n* = 37) are within 30-35 years. Respondents' distribution are African 84.8% (*n* = 319), American 4% (*n* = 15), Asian 8% (*n* = 30), European 2.4% (*n* = 9), and Oceanian .8% (*n* = 3). In

addition, respondents' educational background includes Undergraduate 58.8% ($n = 221$), Masters 34.3% ($n = 129$), and Ph.D. 6.9% ($n = 26$). A significant number of the respondents are in a relationship 51.1% ($n = 192$), while others are engaged 48.9% ($n = 184$), however, all the respondents are currently in a romantic relationship.

The distribution of respondents' faculties are as follows Architecture 6.1% ($n = 23$), Arts and Science 9.8% ($n = 37$), Business and Economics 25.8% ($n = 97$), Communication and Media Studies 31.1% ($n = 117$), Engineering 12.0% ($n = 45$), Pharmacy 6.8% ($n = 33$), and Tourism 6.4% ($n = 24$). While responding to their length of being in a romantic relationship, 22.7% ($n = 104$) say they have been in a relationship less than a year, 55.3% ($n = 208$), have been in a relationship within 1-5 years and 17% ($n = 64$) say they have been in a relationship within 6 and 10 years.

Concerning respondents' frequency of SM use .5% ($n = 2$) say they almost never use, 21% ($n = 79$) responded they sometimes use, 45.5% ($n = 171$) say they use almost every time while 33% ($n = 124$) also responded they frequently use. Also, 49.7% ($n = 187$) say they use Facebook most often, 28.5% ($n = 107$) use Instagram, 5.9% ($n = 22$) often use Snapchat while 16% ($n = 60$) often use Twitter.

4.2 Control Variables

Table 3: Results of Control Variables

	Category	Frequency	Percentage %
How often do you use SM in communicating with your romantic partner?	Almost never	36	9.6
	Sometimes	70	18.6
	Almost every time	127	33.8
	Always	143	38.0
How often do you go through your partner's SM platforms?	Never	2	.5
	Almost never	92	24.5
	Sometimes	208	55.3
	Almost every time	63	16.8
	Frequently	11	2.9

$n = 376$

Respondents were asked how often they use social media in communicating with their romantic partners, 9.6% ($n = 36$) Almost never, 18.6% ($n = 70$) sometimes, 33.8% ($n = 127$) almost every time, and 38% ($n = 143$) frequently use. While responding to how often respondents go through their romantic partner's social media platform .5% ($n = 2$) Never, 24.5% ($n = 92$) Almost never, 55.3% ($n = 208$) sometimes, 16.8% ($n = 63$) almost every time, and 2.9% ($n = 11$) frequently go through their partner's SM platforms.

4.3 Descriptive Analysis of Research Variables

To measure the mean and attitudes of the respondents I adopted the measurement suggested by Balci (2004), where 1 = Strongly Agree, (1-1.79), 2 = Agree, (1.80-2.59), 3 = Undecided, (2.60-3.39), 4 = Disagree (3.40-4.19), and 5 = Strongly Disagree (4.20-5).

Table 4: Means and Attitude of SM Use in Romantic Relationship

Items	Mean	Attitude
I use social media to		
Develop a romantic relationship	2.78	U
Find more interesting people than in real life	2.87	U
To facilitate meeting in person someone who I met on the Internet	3.03	D
Find companionship	2.82	U
Meet new friends	3.73	D

Table 4.3.2 measures the Means and Attitudes of social media use in romantic relationship variable, respondents' responses are as follows, I use SM to; "Develop a romantic relationship" ($M = 2.78$, Attitude = Undecided), "Find more interesting people than in real life" ($M = 2.87$, Attitude = Undecided). Others are, "To facilitate meeting in person someone who I met on the Internet" ($M = 3.03$, Attitude = Disagree), "Find companionship" ($M = 2.82$, Attitude = Undecided), "Meet new friends" ($M = 3.73$, Attitude = Disagree).

Table 5: Means and Attitudes of Monitoring in Romantic Relationships

Items	Mean	Attitude
I visit my partner's SM page often	2.91	U
When visiting my partner's SM page, I read the new posts of his/her friends	2.86	U
I often spend time looking through my partner's SM pictures	2.85	U
I pay particularly close attention to news feeds that concern my partner	2.93	U
I notice when my partner updates his/her SM page	3.36	U
I am generally aware of the relationships between my partner and his/her SM friends	2.85	D
If there are messages on my partner's wall I don't understand, I try to investigate it through others' social media	2.40	A
I try to read comments my partner posts on mutual friends' walls	2.81	U
I peruse my partner's SM page to see what s/he's up to	2.68	U
I see the friends my partner keeps on his SM page	2.91	U
I explore my partner's SM page to see if there is anything new or exciting	2.87	U

Results displayed in Table 4.3.2 displays the means and attitude of monitoring in romantic relationships. Respondents state, "I visit my partner's social media page often" with a mean of 2.91 and Attitude = Undecided, "When visiting my partner's social media page, I read the new posts of his/her friends" with a mean of 2.86 and Attitude = Undecided, and "I often spend time looking through my partner's social media pictures" ($M = 2.86$ and Attitude = Undecided).

Also, "I pay particularly close attention to news feeds that concern my partner" ($M = 2.93$ and Attitude = Undecided), "I notice when my partner updates his/her social

media page” ($M = 3.36$ and Attitude = Undecided), “I am generally aware of the relationships between my partner and his/her SM friends” ($M = 2.85$ and Attitude = Disagree), and “If there are messages on my partner’s wall I don’t understand, I try to investigate it through others’ social media” ($M = 2.40$ and Attitude = Agree).

Others include, “I try to read comments my partner posts on mutual friends’ walls” ($M = 2.81$ and Attitude = Undecided), “I peruse my partner’s SM page to see what s/he’s up to” ($M = 2.68$ and Attitude = Undecided), “I see the friends my partner keeps on his SM page” ($M = 2.91$ and Attitude = Undecided), “I explore my partner’s SM page to see if there is anything new or exciting” ($M = 2.91$ and Attitude = Undecided).

Table 6: Means and Attitude of Distraction in Romantic Relationships

Items	Mean	Attitude
I get distracted by SM when with my partner	2.59	A
The things I see on SM make my relationship less attractive	1.97	A
I spend more times taking pictures for SM than for my partner	2.03	A
I spend more time making comments on SM than discussing with my partner	1.89	A
I spend time on chatting with SM friends to my partner	2.00	A

Table 4.3.3 shows the mean and attitude of distraction in romantic relationships among the respondents. From the responses received, ($M = 2.59$, Attitude = Agree) was reported for “I get distracted by social media when with my partner” reported; ($M = 1.89$, Attitude = Agree) was reported for “The things I see on social media make my relationship less attractive”.

Others include: ($M = 2.03$, Attitude = Agree) for “I spend more times taking pictures for social media than for my partner”, ($M = 1.89$, Attitude = Agree) for “I spend more time making comments on social media than discussing with my partner”; and ($M = 2.00$, Attitude = Agree) for “I spend time on chatting with social media friends to my partner”.

Table 7: Means and Attitudes of Trust in Romantic Relationships

Items	Mean	Attitude
My partner is perfectly honest and truthful with me.	3.60	D
I feel that I can trust my partner completely.	3.59	D
My partner is truly sincere in his (her) promises.	3.75	D
I feel that my partner can be counted on to help me.	4.10	SD

Table 4.3.4 is the means and attitude of trust in romantic relationships according to the respondents. The responses include ($M = 3.60$, Attitude = Disagree) for “My partner is perfectly honest and truthful with me”; ($M = 3.59$, Attitude = Disagree), for “I feel that I can trust my partner completely”; ($M = 3.75$, Attitude = Disagree), for “My partner is truly sincere in his (her) promises”; and ($M = 4.10$, Attitude = Strongly Disagree) for “I feel that my partner can be counted on to help me”.

Table 8: Means and Attitude of Infidelity in Romantic Relationships

Items	Mean	Attitude
The following are acts of infidelity in a romantic relationship		
Viewing porn sent via an email	2.89	U
Engaging in hot (sexual) chat with strangers online	3.49	D
Engaging in hot (sexual) chat regularly with the same person online	3.60	D
Engaging in hot (sexual) chat with a stranger	3.53	D
Engaging in hot (sexual) chat with a stranger	3.49	D
Engaging in cybersex with a stranger just the once	3.58	D
Engaging in cybersex regularly with the same person online	3.63	D
Engaging in intercourse/sexual acts offline	3.53	D

The means and attitude of infidelity in romantic relationships are displayed in Table 4.3.5. Responses include “Viewing porn sent via an email” ($M = 3.49$, Attitude = Undecided), “Engaging in hot (sexual) chat with strangers online” ($M = 3.49$, Attitude = Disagree), and “Engaging in hot (sexual) chat regularly with the same person online” ($M = 3.60$, Attitude = Disagree).

Others include Engaging in hot (sexual) chat with a stranger ($M = 3.53$, Attitude = Disagree), “Engaging in hot (sexual) chat with a stranger” ($M = 3.49$, Attitude = Disagree), “Engaging in cybersex with a stranger just the once” ($M = 3.58$, Attitude = Disagree), “Engaging in cybersex regularly with the same person online” ($M = 3.63$, Attitude = Disagree), and “Engaging in intercourse/sexual acts offline” ($M = 3.53$, Attitude = Disagree).

4.4 Inferential Analysis

This section of the study presents inferential analysis which helps in using regression analysis to measure the relationship between the variables.

4.4.1 Preliminary Analysis

Table 9: Reliability Test of Variables

Variables	Pilot Study Sample (50)		Final Distribution Sample (376)	
	Cronbach Alpha α	Number of Items	Cronbach Alpha α	Number of Items
Social Media Use (SMU)	.78	12	.78	12
Monitoring in Romantic Relationships (MRR)	.95	11	.93	11
Trust in Romantic Relationships (TRR)	.34	8	.84	4
Distractions in Romantic Relationships (DRR)	.86	6	.83	6
Infidelity in Romantic Relationships (IRR)	.95	8	.97	8
Satisfaction in Romantic Relationships (SRR)	.87	5	.89	5

A pilot study was initially conducted among 50 Masters and Ph.D. students of Eastern Mediterranean students, as presented in table 4.4.1. The Cronbach Alpha of all the 6 variables except 1 were above the threshold of .750. In addition, Exploratory Factor Analysis was conducted on all the items during the pilot study. I therefore deleted all the items that did not load accordingly in the EFA. After the final distribution of the questionnaires, I ran another EFA to find out if the respondents understand the questions accordingly, at this stage, all the items loaded appropriately (See Table

4.4.1.2). Then I checked the Cronbach Alpha of all the variables again, this time, all the variables loaded above .75.

Table 10: Exploratory Factor Analysis of Variables

	Loading	Eigenvalue	Variance
Social Media Use in Romantic Relationships (SMU)		2.480	5.392
To find a lot of information about things that are going on	.539		
To keep up with what my friends are doing	.598		
To see what others are talking about	.810		
To tell other people about the things I'm doing	.687		
It's an automatic habit to check updates	.593		
To follow a romantic crush	.816		
To monitor what someone I'm romantically interested in is doing	.598		
To find something to talk about	.810		
To get feedback and support from others	.743		
To feel like I belong to a group	.823		
To find a way to pass the time"	.675		
Develop a romantic relationship	.730		
Monitoring in Romantic Relationships (MRR)		8.759	19.042
I visit my partner's SM page often	.777		
When visiting my partner's SM page, I read the new posts of his/her friends	.804		
I often spend time looking through my partner's SM pictures	.809		
I pay particularly close attention to news feeds that concern my partner	.818		
I notice when my partner updates his/her SM page	.698		
I am generally aware of the relationships between my partner and his/her SM friends	.694		

If there are messages on my partner's wall I don't understand, I try to investigate it through others' social media	.745		
I try to read comments my partner posts on mutual friends' walls	.773		
I peruse my partner's SM page to see what s/he's up to	.805		
I see the friends my partner keeps on his SM page	.714		
I explore my partner's SM page to see if there is anything new or exciting	.641		
Trust in Romantic Relationships (TRR)		1.414	3.074
My partner is perfectly honest and truthful with me.	.844		
I feel that I can trust my partner completely.	.824		
My partner is truly sincere in his (her) promises.	.728		
I feel that my partner can be counted on to help me.	.721		
Distractions in Romantic Relationships (DRR)		3.050	6.631
I get distracted by SM when with my partner	.642		
SM makes me forget my discussions with my partner	.833		
The things I see on SM make my relationship less attractive	.568		
I spend more times taking pictures for SM than for my partner	.634		
I spend more time making comments on SM than discussing with my partner	.699		
I spend time on chatting with SM friends to my partner	.771		
Infidelity in Romantic Relationships (IRR)		7.189	15.628
Viewing porn sent via an email	.718		

Engaging in hot (sexual) chat with strangers online	.943		
Engaging in hot (sexual) chat regularly with the same person online	.968		
Engaging in hot (sexual) chat with a stranger	.962		
Just the once, engaging in cybersex with strangers online	.948		
Engaging in cybersex with a stranger just the once	.969		
Engaging in cybersex regularly with the same person online	.942		
Engaging in intercourse/sexual acts offline	.785		
Satisfaction in Romantic Relationships (SRR)		5.564	12.095
How well does your partner meet your needs?	.798		
In general, how satisfied are you with your relationship?	.834		
How good is your relationship compared to most?	.820		
To what extent has your relationship met your original expectation?	.873		
How much do you love your partner?	.708		

Total variance explained 61.861%

Table 4.4.1.2 is the result of exploratory factor analysis of variables that displays the factor loadings, Eigenvalue, and variance of the major loadings. Results indicate that all the items in the variables loaded appropriately. This indicates a good understanding and response from the respondents. Also 61.86% of the variance was explained which also brings about a good result for the study. (See Table 4.4.2 for details)

4.4.2 Correlation Analysis

Table 11: Correlation Analysis, Means and Standard Deviations among Variables

	SMU	MRR	DRR	TRR	IRR	GRR	<i>MEAN</i>	<i>SD</i>
Social Media Use in Romantic Relationships (SMU)	1						3.73	.71
Monitoring in Romantic Relationships (MRR)	.309**	1					2.86	.90
Distractions in Romantic Relationships (DRR)	.027	.070	1				3.76	.85
Trust in Romantic Relationships (TRR)	-.040	.302**	-.337**	1			2.06	.69
Infidelity in Romantic Relationships (IRR)	.068**	.004**	.150*	-.154**	1		3.47	1.40

Gratification in Romantic Relationships (GRR)	.347**	.462**	.074	.244**	-.146**	1	3.03	.80
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$p = ** \geq .01$; $p = * \geq .05$

Table 4.4.2.1 presents a correlation analysis, mean and standard deviations among the 6 major variables in the study. Correlation analysis result indicates that among the 15 analysis ran, 11 were significant ($p = ** \geq .01$; $p = * \geq .05$). This analysis served as a prelude to the regression analysis as seen in Tables 4.4.4, 4.4.5, 4.4.6, and 4.4.7.

4.4.3 Regression Analysis

To determine if the dependent variables (monitoring, trust, distraction and infidelity) significantly act as mediators between social media use and gratification in romantic relationships, the research employed the suggestions provided by Baron and Kenny's (1986) for testing mediation on the procedures for regression analysis (i.e. $a + b$, $a + c$, and $b + c$). These researchers facilitated our understanding in testing for mediation.

Table 12: Hierarchical Multiple Regression Analyses Assessing the Mediating Effect of Social Media Use for Monitoring and Gratification in Romantic Relationships

	MRR		GRR		
	Step1	Step2	Step1	Step2	Step3
1. Control Variable					
<i>Age</i>	-.062		.176**		
<i>Gender</i>	-.195**		-.199		
<i>FSMUCRP</i>	.099		.072		
<i>FGTRPP</i>	.138**		.035		
2. Predicting Variable SMU	.268**			.348**	.247**
3. Mediating Variable MRR					.376**
R ²	.090	.156	.080	.192	.311
R ² Change	–	.145	–	.180	.299
<i>F</i>	8.915**	13.331**	7.855**	17.061**	27.004**
Sobel Test Result		Z = 0.861			
SMU → MRR → GRR					

Note: ** $p < .001$; SMU = Social Media Use in Romantic Relationships; MRR = Monitoring in Romantic Relationships; FSMUCRP = Frequency of SM in communicating with your romantic partner; FGTRPP = Frequency of going through romantic partner's social media platforms.

Table 4.4.3.1 provide results of hierarchical multiple regression analysis to predict if social media use is a significant predictor to achieving gratification in romantic relationships, however, a significant regression analysis equation was found. ($\beta = .348$, $SE = .055$, $p < .001$). In addition, the regression analysis predicted monitoring is based on SM use in romantic relationships ($\beta = .268$, $SE = .064$, $p < .001$), while also predicting that gratification in romantic relationships is based on monitoring ($\beta = .376$, $SE = .042$, $p < .001$).

Table 13: Hierarchical Multiple Regression Analyses Assessing the Mediating Effect of Social Media Use for Distraction and Gratification in Romantic Relationships

	DRR		GRR		
	Step1	Step2	Step1	Step2	Step3
1. Control Variable					
<i>Age</i>	-.078		.176**		
<i>Gender</i>	-.039		-.199		
<i>FSMUCRP</i>	.068		.072**		
<i>FGTRPP</i>	-.088		.035**		
2. Predicting Variable				.348**	.348**
SMU		.000			
3. Mediating Variable					
DRR					.083
R ²	.017	.006	.080	.192	.198
R ² Change	–	.003	–	.180	.198
<i>F</i>	1.556	1.241	7.855**	17.061**	14.798**
Sobel Test Result		Z = 0			
SMU → DRR → GRR					

Note: ** $p < .001$; SMU = Social Media Use in Romantic Relationships; DRR = Distraction in Romantic Relationships; GRR = Gratification in Romantic Relationships; FSMUCRP = Frequency of SM in communicating with your romantic partner; FGTRPP = Frequency of going through romantic partner's SM platforms

As shown in Table 4.4.3.2, results of the hierarchical multiple regression analyses predict an association between distraction based on SM use in romantic relationships.

As such, there was no significant equation ($\beta = .000$, $SE = .065$, $p = .995$). Results did not also reveal a significant association between gratification in romantic relationships based on distraction ($\beta = .083$, $SE = .042$, $p = .084$).

Table 14: Hierarchical Multiple Regression Analyses Assessing the Mediating Effect of Social Media Use for Trust and Gratification in Romantic Relationships

	TRR		GRR		
	Step1	Step2	Step1	Step2	Step3
1.Control Variable					
<i>Age</i>	.059		.176**		
<i>Gender</i>	.036		-.199**		
<i>FSMUCRP</i>	.007		.072		
<i>FGTRPP</i>	.159**		.035		
2.Predicting Variable					
SMU	-.010		.348**		.351**
3.Mediating Variable					
TRR					.260**
R ²	.028	.028	.080	.192	.257
R ² Change	–	.014	–	.180	.245
<i>F</i>	2.554	2.045	7.855**	17.061*	20.729*
Sobel Test Result		Z = -0.034			
SMU → TRR → GRR					

Note: ** $p < .001$; SMU = Social Media Use in Romantic Relationships; TRR = Trust in Romantic Relationships; FSMUCRP = Frequency of social media in communicating with your romantic partner; FGTRPP = Frequency of going through romantic partner’s SM platforms.

Hierarchical multiple regression analysis as shown in Table 4.4.3.3 tests if there is an association between trust based on social media use in romantic relationships. Findings revealed there was no significant equation between the variables ($\beta = -.010$, $SE = .053$, $p = .852$), however, findings predict gratification in romantic relationships based on trust ($\beta = .260$, $SE = .052$, $p < .001$).

Table 15: Hierarchical Multiple Regression Analysis Assessing the Mediating Effect of Social Media Use for Infidelity and Gratification in Romantic Relationships

	IRR		GRR		
	Step1	Step2	Step1	Step2	Step3
1. Control Variable					
<i>Age</i>	-.190**		.176**		
<i>Gender</i>	-.066		-.199		
<i>FSMUCRP</i>	-.178**		.072		
<i>FGTRPP</i>	.131**		.035		
2. Predicting Variable SMU		.049		.348**	.355**
3. Mediating Variable IRR					-.136**
R ²	.078	.080	.080	.192	.209
R ² Change	–	.068	–	.180	.195
<i>F</i>	7.650**	6.294**	7.885**	17.061**	15.768**
Sobel Test Result		Z = 1.251			
SMU → IRR → GRR					

Note: ** $p < .001$; SMU = Social Media Use in Romantic Relationships; IRR = Infidelity in Romantic Relationships; GRR = Gratification in Romantic Relationships; FSMUCRP = Frequency of SM in communicating with your romantic partner; FGTRPP = Frequency of going through romantic partner's social media platforms.

Table 4.4.3.4 shows the result of hierarchical multiple regression analysis to predict infidelity based on SM use. A significant regression was now found ($\beta = .049$, SE = .099, $p = .349$), however, there was a negative prediction of gratification based on infidelity ($\beta = -.136$, SE = .027, $p < .001$)

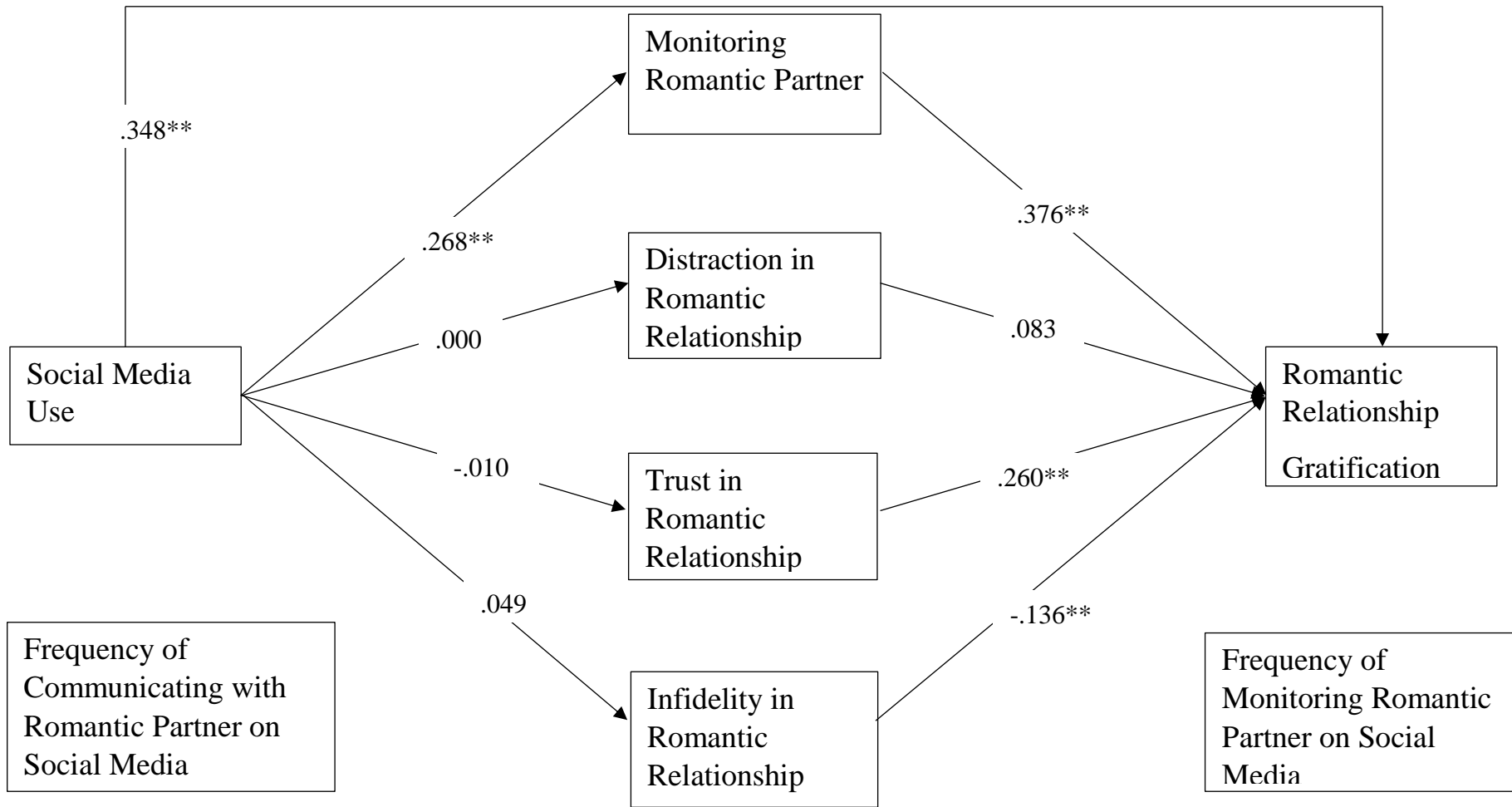


Figure 11: Mediation analysis of relationship of SM use and romantic relationship gratification through monitoring romantic partner, distrust, distraction, and infidelity.

4.4.4: Mediation Analysis

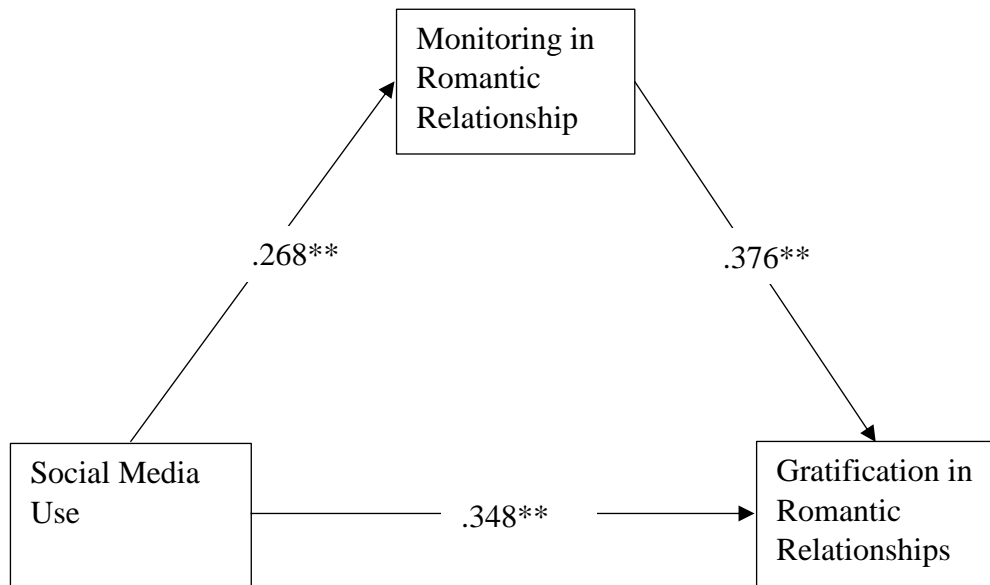


Figure 12: Mediation analysis of the relationship between social media use, monitoring, and gratification in romantic relationships

A Sobel test was conducted to determine if monitoring significantly explained that gratification in romantic relationships was determined by social media use with the help of monitoring in romantic relationship (See Figure 4.4.4.1). Results reveal that monitoring in romantic relationships does not significantly explain that gratification in romantic relationships were determined by social media use $Z = 0.861$, $SE = 0.025$, ($p = 0.390$). Therefore, monitoring romantic partner is not a mediator between social media use and gratification in romantic relationships.

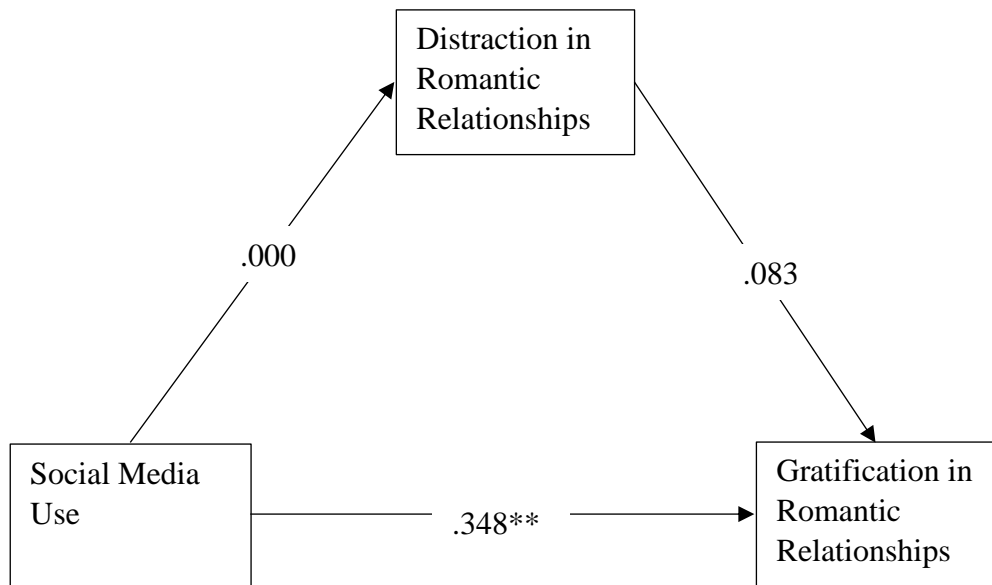


Figure 13: Mediation analysis of the relationship between SM use, distraction, and gratification in romantic relationships.

Figure 4.4.4.2 illustrates the role of trust in explaining if gratification in romantic relationships were determined by social media use with the help of distraction in romantic relationship. Sobel test results reveal that distraction in romantic relationships does not significantly explain that gratification in romantic relationships were determined by social media use $Z = 0$, $SE = 0.004$, $(p = 1)$.

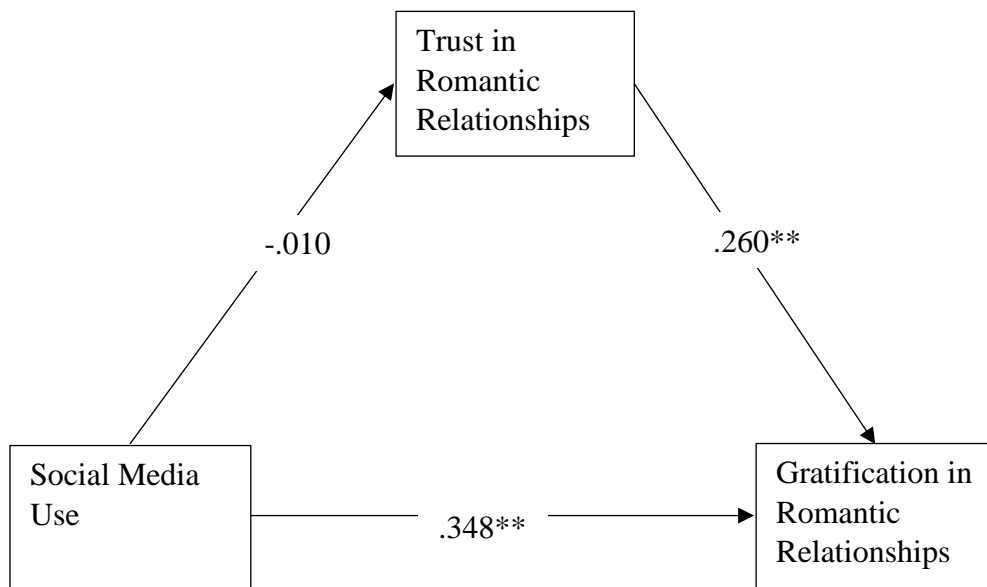


Figure 14: Mediation analysis of the relationship between SM use, trust and gratification in romantic relationships

To find out if trust significantly explained that gratification in romantic relationships were determined by SM use with the help of distractions, Sobel test revealed a non-significant result, stating that trust does not significantly explain that gratification in romantic relationships was determined by SM use $Z = -0.034$, $SE = 0.016$, ($p = 0.973$).

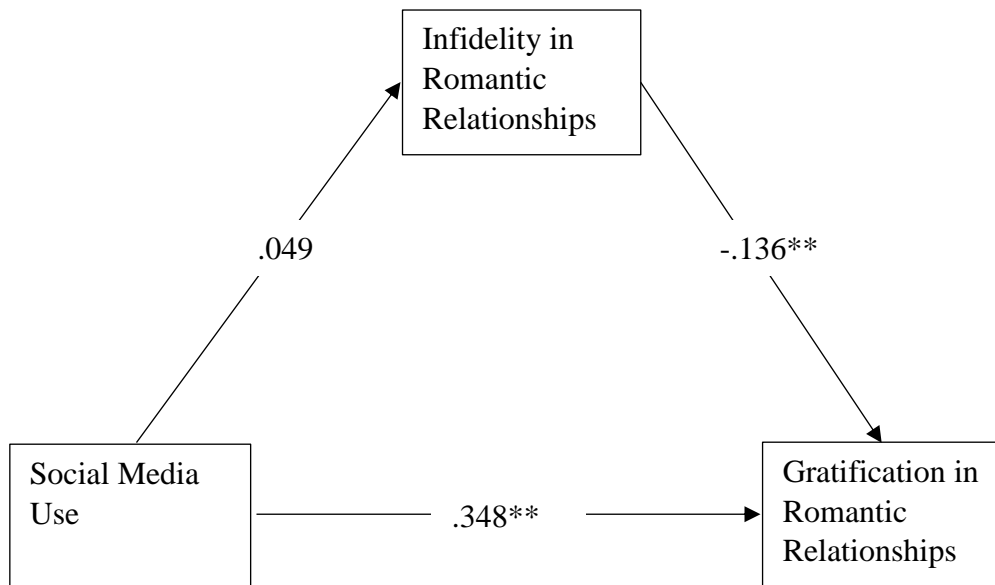


Figure 15: Mediation analysis of the relationship between SM use, infidelity and gratification in romantic relationships.

A Sobel test was conducted to determine if infidelity significantly explained that gratification in romantic relationships was determined by SM use with the help of infidelity in romantic relationship (See Figure 4.4.4.4). Results reveal that infidelity in romantic relationships does not significantly explain that gratification in romantic relationships was determined by SM use $Z = 1.251$, $SE = 0.008$, ($p = 0.211$).

4.4.5 Hypothesis Results

Table 16: Summary of Tested Hypothesis

Hypothesis	Relationships	β Value	SE	T Value	P Value	Remarks
H1	SMU→GRR	.348	.055	7.046	***	Supported
H2	SMU→MRR	.268	.064	5.319	***	Supported
H3	SMU→DRR	.000	.065	.006	.995	Not Supported
H4	SMU→TRR	-.010	.053	.187	.852	Not Supported
H5	SMU→IRR	.049	.160	.938	.349	Not Supported
H6a	MRR→GRR	.376	.042	7.888	***	Supported
H6b	DRR→GRR	.083	.044	1.735	.084	Not Supported
H6c	TRR→GRR	.260	.052	5.367	***	Supported
H6d	IRR→GRR	-.136	.027	2.777	***	Supported

Table 16 presents a summary of tested research hypothesis in this study. As presumed in hypothesis 1, there is a significant relationship between social media use and gratification in romantic relationships. This hypothesis was supported by the analysis run in the study ($p < .001$). Hypotheses 2 which also assumed that there was a significant relationship between social media use and monitoring in romantic relationships was also supported ($p < .001$). The assumptions in hypotheses 3, 4 and 5 stating that there was a significant relationship between social media use and (3) distraction, (4) trust, and (5) infidelity in romantic simultaneously were not supported.

However, findings supported hypothesis 6a and 6c, which assumed that (6a) monitoring and (6b) trust will be significantly associated with gratification in romantic relationships ($p < .001$).

However, there was a negative significant relationship between infidelity and gratification in romantic relationships while regression analysis results did not support the assumption that distraction will be significantly associated with gratification in romantic relationships.

Chapter 5

CONCLUSION

This chapter presents a summary of the research, conclusions drawn from the study, theoretical contributions as well as suggestions and recommendations for future research.

5.1 Summary

This research was an empirical study that evaluated the influence of social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and Snapchat on romantic relationships. The ultimate aim of the study was to find out if social media has a positive influence and use on romantic relationships and thereafter lead to gratification, which will enhance love in such a relationship.

The research used a significant number of an international sample, which is one of the strengths of the study through the distribution of questionnaires to students of Eastern Mediterranean University, North Cyprus. The sample of the study (376) consisted of students from about 100 countries in the University. Initially, the study adopted its questionnaire from over five (5) published peer-reviewed research articles (Young, Len-Ríos, & Young, 2017; Arikewuyo & Ozad, In Press; Gabbay, Lafontaine, & Leta Bo, 2012; Whitty, 2003; Hendrick, 1988).

The analysis in the research were done through descriptive and inferential statistical analysis using SPSS (22.0). Frequencies, means, standard deviation, factor analysis,

and multiple regression analysis were carried out in the study. This further enriched the research and with the sample size, the findings from this research can be generalizable.

Findings from the study make theoretical contributions. It enhances the knowledge of the researcher and would be readers on the Uses and Gratifications Theory and Media Multiplexity Theory. Discussions are made and conclusions drawn from the findings.

5.2 Conclusions Drawn from the Study

Generally, this study has been able to make new findings as well as support a number of existing literature. Interestingly, not all hypothesis was supported, thereby making new findings to literature. These findings are also able to contribute to theories in the field of communication and personal relationships. This section seeks to revisit the research questions/hypothesis and find answers to them from the study.

The current study shows that using social media platforms will strengthen romantic relationships. In addition, using multiple social media platforms may facilitate satisfaction in romantic relationships when partners show love and attraction and communicate with their romantic partners via social media.

Quite importantly, one of the contributions of the present study is the findings that social media use when in a romantic relationship may also exacerbate problems in romantic relationships; when romantic partners use multiple social media platforms, their relationship can suffer from jealousy, infidelity, monitoring by a romantic partner, and distraction, which may cause dissatisfaction. Our findings are also supported by the fact that when individuals engage in communication with online friends on social media platforms, it may pose a form of threat to such a relationship

(Mesch & Talmud, 2006). As such, media multiplexity does not only facilitate or enhance strong ties in romantic relationships, but may also be a major cause of relationship dissatisfaction.

The current study has attempted to underscore the gratification that romantic partners derive from using social media platforms. One of the most important aspects here is the ability to have enhanced and effective communication patterns throughout the relationship. For example, romantic partners can chat through Facebook Messenger, tag each other on Instagram, share intriguing pictures or videos on Snapchat, and so forth. These activities can serve as a means of spicing up each other's day and brightening their moods. This is in line with Jin and Peña (2010), who find that social media platforms facilitate smooth communication patterns that lead to an increase in love and commitment in a romantic relationship. As such, because of the availability and use of multiple social media platforms, the frequency of communication between romantic partners tends to increase (Ledbetter, Taylor, & Mazer, 2016), ultimately facilitating greater levels of gratification in the relationship.

Using multiple social media platforms may also facilitate a high level of displays of affection. Romantic partners can show love and affection to their partners on different social media platforms, thereby facilitating increased levels of satisfaction. In addition, romantic partners can send romantic messages to their partners through different social media platforms; this has proven to be an efficient way of showing love and affection to romantic partners, thereby facilitating satisfaction (Cornwell & Lundgren, 2001).

Perhaps because of the human nature of being attached to one's romantic partner, the findings also indicate that individuals become jealous and uncomfortable whenever

their romantic partner communicates with online friends on social media platforms, especially with the opposite gender. As such, romantic partners may sometimes begin to insinuate certain unpleasant activity such as infidelity between their partner and online friends. Indeed, jealousy in a romantic relationship may be associated with low self-esteem and may lead to depression and anxiety (Utz & Beukeboom, 2011). This may be attributed to a romantic partner's frequency and multiplexity of social media use and will ultimately facilitate dissatisfaction in the relationship.

Use of multiple social media platforms may sometimes create a means for romantic partners to monitor each other. The study shows that romantic partners monitor one another on social media. However, monitoring romantic partners may be regarded as a common use of social media platforms in romantic relationships (Fox & Warber, 2014) This act is carried out by scrolling through the social media platforms of one's romantic partner and checking whose pictures he or she likes, pages commented on, and who he or she follows. As elaborated by Utz and Beukeboom, (2011) "Visiting the SNS profiles of friends and partner, however, is part of the SNS routine of many users" (p. 512). In essence, individuals monitor the activities of their romantic partners on social media not only when there is no trust in the relationship, but also to caution the social media activities of their partner. The current study's results show that using multiple social media platforms may facilitate infidelity in romantic relationships. This occurs when romantic partners engage in the frequent use of social media and have a high friend base on the platforms. According to the findings, when there is a high number of friends and frequent interactions with online friends on different platforms, attraction may set in, and the relationship may move offline.

This current study has shown that using multiple social media platforms can be a cause of distraction in romantic relationships. Romantic partners are oftentimes glued to social media, even when they are supposed to be spending time with a partner; this affects the growth and development of a romantic relationship. Indeed, distractions from social media platforms have been linked to conflicts in romantic relationships, and distractions in general have also been found to have a long-term negative effect on the success of the relationship (Roberts & David, 2016). Possible negative effects of distraction include jealousy, low levels of satisfaction and infidelity (Elphinston & Noller, 2011). Ultimately, multiplexity in social media may increase the levels of satisfaction in romantic relationships; however, if not appropriately used, it social media use may lead to dissatisfaction. The findings of the current study are in line with the literature on social media and romantic relationships which explain that social media may positively or negatively influence romantic relationships (Coyne, McDaniel, & Stockdale, 2017; Fox & Warber, 2014; Studije, 2017; Freidus, 2017; Young, Len-Ríos, & Young, 2017).

As the MMT states, multiplexity in media use will lead to strong ties in relationships, which can increase the levels of satisfaction. By applying the MMT to social media platforms, our result suggest that multiple use of social media in romantic relationships builds and strengthens strong ties; this will lead to satisfaction in a relationship. In addition, the current study's finding shows that social media multiplexity in romantic relationships may become a means of dissatisfaction in such relationships. The study also explained that multiple use of social media platforms may negatively affect romantic relationships which may cause dissatisfaction.

The current study showed that there is an essential need to educate social media users on how to use the platforms to avoid dissatisfaction in their romantic relationships. In conclusion, using multiple social media platforms may help satisfy romantic relationship desires when social media is used in moderation.

RQ 1: Is there a positive relationship between social media use and gratification in romantic relationships?

One of the major findings in this study is the H1 which upholds that social media is a significant predictor to gratification in romantic relationships. This indicates that with the use of social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, and Twitter, romantic partners are able to derive satisfaction in their relationships. These satisfactions vary from sexual, emotional, affectionate and psychological satisfaction.

Literature has attenuated that communication is a significant predictor to romantic relationship gratification. As such, social media platforms being inevitable instruments of uninterrupted communication may often enhance interpersonal communication thereby increasing the level of gratification derived in a relationship. For instance, with the aid of social media platforms, romantic partners are able to establish, maintain and enhance communication between themselves. Romantic partners who are also involved in distance relationship or are out of sight for a period of time may be able to gratify their romantic relationship desires through social media communication.

Social media platforms have continued to grow and with the instant messaging feature embedded in virtually all the platforms, romantic partners can communicate via text, audio and video calls at minimal or no cost. It is worthy of mention that the role social

media play in helping romantic partners achieve gratification can be traced to the invention of the internet which has further birthed series of communication platforms.

RQ 2: Is there a positive relationship between social media use and monitoring romantic partners?

Individuals may engage in monitoring their romantic partner as a means of maintaining their relationship, thereby leading to satisfaction. For example, some individuals may engage in monitoring the activities of their romantic partner in order to caution them while derailing on what they post or comments they make. As such, they begin to gain confidence in the online activities of their partner, thereby leading to satisfaction. However, individuals may also monitor their romantic partner in order to find out whose pictures they like, what comments other users make on their walls, the kind of reactions they make on other users' walls, and what smileys their followers use when interacting online.

Findings in this study support that social media use enhances or aids monitoring romantic partners. This finding is supported by literature stating that with social media, individuals continue to monitor the online and offline activities of their romantic partners. Individuals continue to visit their romantic partner's social media pages to surf their daily activities thereby monitoring who posts comments on their platforms as well as whose pictures their partner likes etc. Some individuals also pay attention to the kind of relationship that exists between their partner and their social media followers. As such, findings support that that social media is a predictor to monitoring romantic partner.

RQ 3 & 6c: Is there a significant relationship between SM use and distraction in romantic relationships?

Findings in this research state that neither does social media predict distraction in romantic relationships, nor does distractions predict romantic relationship gratifications. These findings are in contrast with studies of Roberts and David (2016) who argue that social media is a significant cause of distractions in romantic relationships as well as Morey, Gentzler, Creasy, Oberhauser, & Westerman (2013) stating that distractions are a major cause of conflict in romantic relationships. Therefore, social media may not necessarily predict an individual being distracted in a relationship. As such, other factors such as self-esteem, lack of affection, and relationship dissatisfaction may cause distractions in relationships. Most importantly, when an individual is distracted in a relationship, gratification in such a relationship is not ultimate. Therefore, H3 and H6c are not supported.

RQ 4: Is there a significant relationship between SM use and trust in romantic relationships?

Findings in this research state that there is no relationship between social media and trust in romantic relationships. This may invariably translate to the fact that trust in romantic relationships is not in correlation with social media use. As such, individuals will have to build, maintain and enhance trust in their romantic relationship through other means like being generally transparent with their partner as well as being truthful, and sincere in their dealings in and out of the relationship.

RQ 5: Is there a significant relationship between SM use and infidelity in romantic relationships?

When individuals consciously use social media platforms, they will not most likely engage in activities that will undermine or jeopardize their relationship. This may be the reason behind the finding in this study that social media does not predict infidelity in romantic relationships. As such, when an individual intends to engage in extramarital activities, it necessarily does not have to be on social media. Therefore, watching pornography on social media or engaging in hot sex chat with online friends may not be strictly classified as forms of infidelity.

RQ 6a: Will monitoring in romantic relationships be positively associated with gratification in romantic relationships?

Interestingly, findings also support that when individuals monitor their romantic partner on social media, they tend to derive satisfaction/gratification in their relationship. This is quite evident as the initial motivation of individuals monitoring their partner's platform(s) is to derive self-assurance and satisfaction that their partner is not engaging in immoral acts with their social media friends/followers. For example, when an individual is quite transparent in his/her social media activities, the partner who is monitoring the actives will have no element of doubt and will, in turn, be satisfied with such relationship.

RQ 6b: Will trust in romantic relationships, be positively associated with gratification in romantic relationships?

Although, this study establishes that trust is highly essential in achieving gratification in romantic relationships, this finding is quite significant as trust builds confidence and establishes various forms of gratification in romantic relationships. Juarez and

Pritchard (2012) corroborate this finding in their study stating that when individuals begin to lose trust and confidence in their romantic partners, dissatisfaction begins to set into the relationship, thereby leading to break up. When individuals exhibit various degrees of openness and truthfulness, their romantic partner may most likely build trust in them, this will in turn positively affect their relationship by facilitating gratification.

RQ 6d: Will infidelity in romantic relationships be positively associated with gratification in romantic relationships?

One of the most important findings in the study is the negative association of infidelity with gratification in romantic relationships. This implies that infidelity significantly affects the quality of a relationship as well as whether gratification will be achieved in a romantic relationship. As such, the study finds out that, the higher the infidelity, the lower the gratification in a romantic relationship. For instance, as soon as individuals discover through social media or otherwise that their romantic partner is involved in extramarital affairs, conflict and dissatisfaction may set in. However, this may lead to an intention to break up from the relationship.

RQ 7: Will (a) monitoring (b) distraction, (c) trust, and (d) infidelity mediate between social media use and gratification in romantic relationships?

As part of the major findings in this study (a) monitoring, (b) distraction, (c) trust, and (d) infidelity do not successfully serve as mediators to achieving gratification in a romantic relationship through the use of social media. This indicates that (a) monitoring, (b) distraction, (c) trust, and (d) infidelity do not in any way influence how social media predicts gratification in romantic relationships. As such, the gratifications received in a relationship cannot be mediated by these variables.

Other interesting findings made in this study according to the control variables include; firstly, the more an individual grows in age, the more the gratification in the romantic relationship. This may be because as romantic partners grow in age, they tend to understand each other's character, actions, and attitude; this makes them adapt thereby facilitating gratification in their relationship. Secondly, the more individuals go through their romantic partner's social media platforms the more the tendency to monitor their online and offline activities. This is because there may be a dialectic interpretation of messages sent and received by their partner online. Thirdly, there are more tendencies that the female gender may involve in monitoring their romantic partners online to the male gender. This may be due to certain factors like jealousy, insecurity, lack of confidence in their romantic partner as well as unpleasant experience in their past relationships. Muise (2014) supports this finding. Fourthly, when individuals frequently go through their romantic partner's social media platform, they tend to build trust in their partner. This may be attributed to the elimination of suspicious messages as well as the partner's ability to carefully explain or interpret messages that may facilitate conflict due to dialectic interpretation. Finally, there was a significant relationship between the frequency of social media use and infidelity. This may indicate that infidelity in romantic relationships is predicted by high use of social media. For example, when an individual frequently uses social media, the friend base of such individual may increase, as such, the weak ties may grow to become strong ties due to the frequency of communication and through that, a sexual relationship may arise.

5.3 Theoretical Contributions

According to the findings in this research, social media use in romantic relationship facilitates gratifications obtained in romantic relationships. This finding is quite

significant to this study as it further affirms the Media Multiplexity Theory, which advances that frequent online communication between individuals strengthens the ties that exist between them. As such, with the aid of social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, and Twitter, romantic partners are able to maintain uninterrupted communication at any point in time, thereby strengthening the ties. However, based on the postulation of this theory, when an individual engages in constant communication with online friends, there is a possibility that the ties between them may grow from weak to strong. For example, when an individual interacts with a social media friend frequently, the relationship between them may become intimate and transform from online to offline. This may ultimately lead to infidelity and as such reduce the level of gratification an individual desires or receives in his/her romantic relationship. This is also in tandem with the findings of this study stating that the more an individual involves in infidelity, the lower the romantic relationship gratification.

One of the postulations of the MMT is that mediated communication plays a significant role in strengthening or enhancing the current tie that exists between two people (Haythornthwaite C., 2005). Findings in this study strongly support this assumption stating that social media facilitate romantic relationship gratifications. This is evident as the more romantic partners communicate, the more the gratification received and thereafter the stronger the ties. According to the MMT, when communication is carried out through social media, weak ties may develop to become strong ties. This is supported by findings in this study, which states that the higher an individual use social media the more likely the occurrence of infidelity. To further verify this fact, when two individuals meet on social media and frequently communicate with each other, they may most likely become allies and in some cases

develop emotional or sexual feelings for each other. This translates to infidelity for an individual who is already in a romantic relationship. In addition, a number of individuals have through constant communication on social media become romantic/lifetime partners.

With regards to the uses and gratifications theory which postulates that media users choose their preferred media platforms to gratify specific purposes, this study affirms and upholds the postulation. It is quite evident that the most important use of social media in romantic relationships is to gratify and attract satisfaction in their relationship. As such, individuals will mostly use social media to ensure the security of their relationship and most importantly to keep in touch with their partner. The UGT further elaborates that there is a mixture between the uses and goals individuals want to achieve through the media. In addition, this study further elaborates on that, for instance, individuals may post affectionate pictures on Facebook and Instagram in order to express love to their partner.

The UGT focuses attention on the users, not the media; therefore, in further affirmation of this, it is quite clear that individuals will only use a particular platform when it is clear that the goal that is targeted will be achieved. For example, romantic partners will only be able to engage in interpersonal communication through platforms like the Facebook messenger or direct message features of the platforms. However, when the motive is to monitor, they will most likely surf through the walls of their partner to see their recent activities.

Communication in romantic relationships before the advent of social media platforms was usually a private affair, as romantic partners usually communicate one on one.

However, with technological developments romantic partners migrated to text messaging and then social media. For example, with social media, individuals now establish their presence online and do not hesitate to display or show affection with their partner online. This has further publicised people's relationships on one hand and as well promoted jealousy on another hand. For example, while some individuals receive gratification through posting their relationships online, others get jealous.

Therefore, this research in addition to its general findings makes important theoretical contributions.

5.4 Recommendations for Future Studies

Findings in this research have been able to update existing knowledge on the uses and effect of the media, most importantly, social media. Therefore, it is important that through media literacy, social media users caution the frequency and means of using social media. This will help in digesting and dissecting media messages for effective use. This may be regarded as media literacy. Media literacy will also help users to avoid acts capable of bringing about dissatisfaction in their relationships such as infidelity, monitoring, and others. In addition, individuals need to constantly build trust in their romantic partners to enhance gratification and relationship satisfaction.

Further studies may be carried out on how factors such as low self-esteem and relationship dissatisfaction affect romantic relationships. Other studies may also holistically examine how ICT generally influence romantic relationships most especially among married couples. Because the majority of the respondents in this study are undergraduate students, future research may examine how infidelity, communication, and relational dialectics affects couples.

Based on the distribution of the study, majority of the respondents sampled were Africans, as such this may be regarded as a limitation in the research. Therefore, future study studies may investigate other cultures based on the findings of this research. Future research may also find out if there is a difference in the gratifications received based on culture and race. Self-reflexivity may also may also be essential when academics are conducting research of this nature, as this will help in understanding the phenomenon better.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Ethical Review Approval

 <p>Doğu Akdeniz Üniversitesi "Uluslararası Kariyer İçin"</p>	<p>Eastern Mediterranean University "For Your International Career"</p>	<p>P.K.: 99628 Gazimağusa, KUZEY KIBRIS / Famagusta, North Cyprus, via Mersin-10 TURKEY Tel: (+90) 392 630 1995 Faks/Fax: (+90) 392 630 2919 bayek@emu.edu.tr</p>
<p>Etik Kurulu / Ethics Committee</p>		
<p>Reference No: ETK00-2018-0167 Subject: Application for Ethics.</p>	<p>31.07.2018</p>	
<p>RE: Abdulgaffar Olawale Arikewuyo, Faculty of Communication and Media Studies Ph.D. student</p>		
<p>To Whom It May Concern:</p>		
<p>On the date of 21.05.2018, (Meeting number 2018/58-08), EMU's Scientific Research and Publication Ethics Committee (BAYEK) has granted, Mr. Abdulgaffar Olawale Arikewuyo, from the Faculty of Communication and Media Studies, to pursue with his Ph.D. thesis work "An Evaluation of the Effects of Social Media on Romantic Relationships". This decision has been taken by the majority of votes.</p>		
<p>Regards,</p>		
<p> Doç. Dr. Şükrü TÜZMEN Etik Kurulu Başkanı</p> 		
<p>ŞT/ba.</p>		
<p>www.emu.edu.tr</p>		

Appendix B: Questionnaire

Social Media (SM) and Romantic Relationships Survey

Dear Respondent,

Thank you for accepting to participate in this important research. I am conducting a research titled "An Evaluation of the Effect of Social Media on Romantic Relationships ". Please note that this survey is to be filled by only individuals who are in a romantic relationship. This survey should take 15 to 20 minutes.

The questionnaire has been designed such that no respondent can be personally identified in any form. **ALL RESPONDENTS ARE ANONYMOUS**

Please be assured that ALL information provided will be treated as **HIGHLY CONFIDENTIAL** and **SOLELY FOR THE PURPOSE OF RESEARCH**

PS: Romantic relationship is a mutual and intimate relationship that exists between two people thereby facilitating love, affection and sexual intimacy between them.

Best regards

Section A: Demographics

1. **Gender** (1) Female (2) Male
2. **Region**
3. **Educational Background** (1) Undergraduate (2) Masters (3) Ph.D.
4. **Faculty** (1) Architecture (2) Arts & Sciences (3) Business & Economics (4) Communication and Media Studies (5) Education (6) Engineering (7) Health Sciences (8) Law (9) Medicine (10) Pharmacy (11) Tourism
5. **Age** (1) 18-23 (2) 24-29 (3) 30-35 (4) 36-40
6. **Marital status** (1) In a relationship (2) Engaged (3) Married
7. **How long have you been in a Romantic Relationship**
(1) Less than 1 year (2) 1-5 years (3) 5-10 years (4) Above 10 years
8. **How often do you use social media?**

(1) Never use (2) Almost never (3) Sometimes (4) Almost every time (5) Frequently use

9. How often do you use social media in communicating with your romantic partner?

(1) Never use (2) Almost never (3) Sometimes (4) Almost every time (5) Frequently use

10. Which social media platform do you frequently use?

(1) Facebook (2) Instagram (3) Snapchat (4) Twitter

11. How often do you go through your partner's social media platforms?

(1) Never (2) Almost never (3) Sometimes (4) Almost every time (5) Every time

Section C: Social Media Use in Romantic Relationship

Kindly CIRCLE (O) the answer that corresponds with your agreement to the following statements, where 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Undecided, 4 = Agree, & 5 = Strongly Agree

S/N	Item	SD	D	U	A	SA
	I use social media (SM)					
12.	To find a lot of information about things that are going on	1	2	3	4	5
13.	To keep up with what my friends are doing	1	2	3	4	5
14.	To see what others are talking about	1	2	3	4	5
15.	To tell other people about the things I'm doing	1	2	3	4	5
16.	It's an automatic habit to check updates	1	2	3	4	5
17.	To follow a romantic crush	1	2	3	4	5
18.	To monitor what someone I'm romantically interested in is doing	1	2	3	4	5
19.	To find something to talk about	1	2	3	4	5
20.	To get feedback and support from others	1	2	3	4	5
21.	To feel like I belong to a group	1	2	3	4	5

22.	To find a way to pass the time”	1	2	3	4	5
23.	To feel entertained	1	2	3	4	5

Section D: Monitoring in Romantic Relationships

Kindly CIRCLE (O) the answer that corresponds with your agreement to the following statements, where 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Undecided, 4 = Agree, & 5 = Strongly Agree

S/N	Item	SD	D	U	A	SA
24.	I visit my partner’s SM page often	1	2	3	4	5
25.	When visiting my partner’s SM page, I read the new posts of his/her friends	1	2	3	4	5
26.	I often spend time looking through my partner’s SM pictures	1	2	3	4	5
27.	I pay particularly close attention to news feeds that concern my partner	1	2	3	4	5
28.	I notice when my partner updates his/her SM page	1	2	3	4	5
29.	I am generally aware of the relationships between my partner and his/her SM friends	1	2	3	4	5
30.	If there are messages on my partner’s wall I don’t understand, I try to investigate it through others’ SM	1	2	3	4	5
31.	I try to read comments my partner posts on mutual friends’ walls	1	2	3	4	5
32.	I am generally aware of my partner’s SM activities	1	2	3	4	5
33.	I peruse my partner’s SM page to see what s/he’s up to	1	2	3	4	5
34.	I see the friends my partner keeps on his SM page	1	2	3	4	5
35.	I know when my partner hasn’t updated his/her SM page in a while	1	2	3	4	5

36.	I try to monitor my partner's behaviors through his/her SM	1	2	3	4	5
37.	I explore my partner's SM page to see if there is anything new or exciting	1	2	3	4	5
38.	I know more about my partners' everyday life by looking at his/her SM page	1	2	3	4	5

Section E: Trust in Romantic Relationships

Kindly CIRCLE (O) the answer that corresponds with your agreement to the following statements, where 1 = **Very Strongly Disagree**, 2 = **Strongly Disagree**, 3 = **Disagree**, 4 = **Undecided**, 5 = **Agree**, 6 = **Strongly Agree**, & 7 = **Very Strongly Agree**

		VSD	SD	D	UD	A	SA	VSA
39	My partner is primarily interested in his (her) own welfare.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
40	There are times when my partner cannot be trusted.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
41	My partner is perfectly honest and truthful with me.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
42	I feel that I can trust my partner completely.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
43	My partner is truly sincere in his (her) promises.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
44	I feel that my partner does not show me enough consideration	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
45	My partner treats me fairly and justly.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
46	I feel that my partner can be counted on to help me.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Section F: Distractions in Romantic Relationships

Kindly CIRCLE (O) the answer that corresponds with your agreement to the following statements, where 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Undecided, 4 = Agree, & 5 = Strongly Agree

S/N	Item	SD	D	UD	A	SA
47.	I have arguments with my partner on the amount of time I spend on SM	1	2	3	4	5
48.	I get distracted by SM when with my partner	1	2	3	4	5
49.	I attend to my SM friends before my partner	1	2	3	4	5
50.	SM makes me forget my discussions with my partner	1	2	3	4	5
51.	The things I see on SM make my relationship less attractive	1	2	3	4	5
52.	I spend more times taking pictures for SM than for my partner	1	2	3	4	5
53.	I spend more time making comments on SM than discussing with my partner	1	2	3	4	5
54.	I spend time on chatting with SM friends to my partner	1	2	3	4	5
55.	SM makes me miss important dates with my partner	1	2	3	4	5

Section G: Infidelity in Romantic Relationships

Kindly CIRCLE (O) the answer that corresponds with your agreement to the following statements, where 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Undecided, 4 = Agree, & 5 = Strongly Agree

	Items	SD	D	U	A	SA
	The following acts can be classified as forms of infidelity					
56.	Viewing pornographic videos or magazines	1	2	3	4	5

57.	Viewing pornographic pictures on web sites	1	2	3	4	5
58.	Viewing porn sent via an email	1	2	3	4	5
59.	Engaging in hot (sexual) chat with strangers online	1	2	3	4	5
60.	Engaging in hot (sexual) chat regularly with the same person online	1	2	3	4	5
61.	Engaging in hot (sexual) chat with a stranger	1	2	3	4	5
62.	Just the once, engaging in cybersex with strangers online	1	2	3	4	5
63.	Engaging in cybersex with a stranger just the once	1	2	3	4	5
64.	Engaging in cybersex regularly with the same person online	1	2	3	4	5
65.	Engaging in intercourse/sexual acts offline	1	2	3	4	5
66.	Sharing deep emotional and or intimate information with a person of the opposite sex (same sex if homosexual) offline	1	2	3	4	5
67.	Maintaining a non-sexual relationship with someone of the opposite sex offline (same sex if homosexual)	1	2	3	4	5

Section H: Satisfaction in Romantic Relationships

Kindly CIRCLE (O) the answer that corresponds with your agreement to the following statements, where 1 = **Not at all**, 2 = **Slightly**, 3 = **Somewhat**, 4 = **Moderately**, & 5 = **Completely**

		NaA	SLT.	SMT	MDT	CMPT
68	How well does your partner meet your needs?	1	2	3	4	5
69	In general, how satisfied are you with your relationship?	1	2	3	4	5
70	How good is your relationship compared to most?	1	2	3	4	5

71	To what extent has your relationship met your original expectation?	1	2	3	4	5
72	How much do you love your partner?	1	2	3	4	5