

Social media: The perils and pleasures

April 12 2013



The study found increasing use of social media led some couples to report a decrease in marital satisfaction.

Too much social media activity may damage strong relationships, according to a new study by Dr Bernie Hogan of the Oxford Internet Institute.

Researchers tested the theory of 'media multiplexity' (the ability to communicate via several communications channels), which was first developed in 2005. The theory suggests that there is a clear link between the number of media channels used to communicate, the frequency with which they are used and the strength of relationship ties.

Dr Hogan said: 'This theory was first put forward in an era of email, chat and [telephone conversations](#). However, we are now firmly in the age of [digital communication](#) with social media really taking off. We wanted to see if these more diverse communications channels strengthened relationship ties in the digital era.'

'Over 24,000 people in marital relationships took part in the new research, using 10 media channels. We found that those using more media tend to report no greater [relationship satisfaction](#) and some even reported decreasing satisfaction. This work suggests that media, which now includes online social media, still operates as a signal of ties of strength in relationships. However there may be a cut-off point after which the increasing complexity of maintaining so many separate communications threads starts to undermine relationship ties'.

The [research findings](#) were presented as part of a symposium about the impact of online social media at the Annual Conference of the British Psychological Society. The symposium is chaired by Professor Robin Dunbar of the University of Oxford and explores the latest research on both the pleasures and the perils of social media use.

Provided by Oxford University

Citation: Social media: The perils and pleasures (2013, April 12) retrieved 6 May 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2013-04-social-media-perils-pleasures.html>

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