

Romantic Relationships, from Online to Offline:

A Study of the Urban Community in Jakarta, Indonesia



MASTERS THESIS

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Abstract

This empirical study explores how a group of Jakartans¹ use the Internet as a communication tool to broaden their social network, and how the Internet opens the possibilities for finding romance. The Internet overcomes the space limitation in communication, therefore the subjects use it to meet people that they never met in real life before. With phenomenological approach, this research is focusing on examining how five Jakartans use computer-mediated communication (CMC) for their socialization needs. Each of the subject in this study is entangled in different background situations, and it influenced how she/he used the Internet for CMC, and make media selections.

Drawing on two months' of field work in Jakarta Indonesia, the data collected from qualitative semi-structured interviews and CMC messages demonstrates the intimacy between the subjects and their online lovers. The elements that exist in common offline relationships (sharing hopes, joy, sadness, fear, lust, etc.) are also being shared among the online couples in this study. This points out that although all of the interactions within the relationships (in this research) are mediated, the communication technology allows the subjects and their partners to overcome the distance barrier in order to establish and maintain their online romantic relationship.

By using early theories of computer-mediated communication (Social Presence, Social Context Cues, and Media Richness) I try to explain the role of communication tools in enhancing the subjects' relationships.

¹A term for people of Jakarta.

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Bibliotek

Abstract	i
Acknowledgement.....	ii
Table of contents.....	iii
Abbreviation list.....	V
Chapter I.....	1
Introduction.....	1
I.1 Indonesia's history and the media explosion.....	2
I.2 Internet and the usage in Indonesia.....	3
I.3 The Jakartans' use of the Internet.....	6
Research questions.....	10
Chapter II Theoretical Perspective.....	11
I.1 Previous Studies.....	11
II.2 Theoretical foundations.....	11
II.2.1 Social Presence Theory.....	12
II.2.2 Social Context Cues.....	12
II.2.3 Media Richness.....	13
II.3 Usefulness of theories.....	15
Chapter III Methodological Approach.....	19
III.1 Overview on the methodology used: Qualitative and Quantitative methods.....	19
III.2 The Qualitative research method.....	20
III.3 Qualitative data collection methods.....	20
III.3.1 Qualitative interviews.....	20
III.3.2 Collecting CMC messages.....	21
III.3.3 Data treatment.....	22
III.4 Research design – Phenomenological approach.....	23
III.5 Subjects of research.....	24
III.6 Research process.....	28
III.7 Relating the theory and methodology.....	29
Chapter IV Presenting the Data.....	30
IV.I Individual Description: Getting to Know the Subjects.....	30
IV.1.1 FP (Female, aged 19).....	30
IV.1.2 GP (Female, aged 25).....	38
IV.1.3 RA (Female, aged 27).....	45
IV.1.4 BN (Male, aged 27).....	50
IV.1.5 MT (Female, aged 50).....	54
IV.2 Findings of the interviews: Comparison.....	59
IV.2.1 Internet usage.....	59
IV.2.2 Purposes in using the Internet.....	60

IV.2.3 Devices to access the Internet.....	61
IV.2.4 The Internet and socialization.....	62
IV.2.5 Opinions toward online relationships.....	63
IV.2.6 Frequency of socializing online and offline.....	65
IV.2.7 Expectation of meeting people on the Internet.....	66
IV.2.8 Do online relationships always end up with offline?.....	67
IV.2.9 Online dating sites.....	68
IV.2.10 Trusting people on the Internet.....	70
IV.2.11 Media selection in the relationship.....	71
IV.2.12 Reasons behind the media shifts.....	72
IV.2.13 Satisfaction with media usage.....	74
IV.2.14 Subjects' interest in the people they met online.....	75
IV.2.15 Are online relationships meaningful?.....	76
IV.2.16 Continuing to seek romance online.....	78
IV.3 Summary.....	79
Chapter V Discussion.....	81
V.1 Theoretical Discussion.....	81
V.2 Modes of Communication.....	86
V.3 The influence of background on the subjects' online behavior.....	89
Chapter VI.....	92
Reference List.....	98
Appendix.....	103

Abbreviation List

CMC = Computer-Mediated Communication

SNS = Social-Network Sites

FtF = Face-to-Face Communication

SIP Theory = Social Information Processing Theory

APJII = *Assosiasi Penyelenggara Jasa Internet Indonesia* or Association of Indonesian Internet Service Providers

SIUPP = *Surat Ijin Usaha Penerbitan Pers* or The Letter of Permission of the Press Publication

SE = Socioemotional

YM = Yahoo Messenger

Chapter I

Introduction

The following introductory chapter will consist of a brief overview of Indonesia, as well as the capital city – Jakarta – where this research was conducted.

Indonesia is the largest archipelago country in the world, with a population of over 230 million. It is the fourth most populated country in the world, with 17,508 islands and islets, and is 5,000 km wide, and home to 100 different ethnic groups (Cole, 2006, p. 46). Since the territory is so large, each area has different cultural traditions, values, and languages. Moreover, it is the biggest Muslim country in the world, with up to 87% of the total inhabitants belonging to this faith. In addition, Indonesia officially recognizes five other religions, namely: Catholicism, Protestantism, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Confucianism. Indonesia was initially occupied by Portugal, Dutch, and Japan, and gained its independence in 1945, which was officially acknowledged in 1949.

The country's capital city is located on the west side of Java Island. With 661 square feet of territory, Jakarta is a big metropolitan city, with skyscrapers and modern office buildings, as well as shopping centres. The population is growing rapidly: it rose from 1.2 million in 1960 to 8.8 million in 2004, and in a 2010 census the population was reported at 9.59 million inhabitants (Noviansyah, 2011). As the centre of the Indonesian government, commerce, and industry, it is a busy and crowded city. Since it is the capital city of Indonesia, Indonesian people from many parts of the region come to Jakarta in search of a better life; as a result, Jakarta has become the most multicultural city in Indonesia.

In many respects, the nation's development has been centralized in the capital city of Jakarta; this can be traced back to when Indonesia was still an authoritarian country under the rule of its second president, Soeharto.

In the past, The New Order was trying 'relentlessly' to make Jakarta the centre of the domestic culture and to make Jakarta the epicenter of the country not only politically but economically, as well as culturally. Turning his will to uniting the country, and centralizing power, Soeharto tried

to prevent regional, ethnic, linguistic and religious differences from taking a political form, by seeking to 'authorize' them (Cole 2011, p. 53).

As a result of this policy, Jakarta has become the most populated city in Indonesia.

The point of departure for this thesis is an overarching picture of Indonesia's domestic situation over recent decades, and from here a focus on the specific topic of discussion. It is necessary to briefly mention Indonesia's past in politics and the media industry, from its struggles to gain freedom in terms of its media, to the phenomenon of online relationships that has emerged today, in order to give a clearer picture of the current situation.

I.1 Indonesia's history and the media explosion

Indonesia has followed a long path to achieve freedom and democracy. Despite its lack of prominence in the eyes of the world, the country has become one of the world's newest democracies. Moreover, a 2010 survey by American NGO The Freedom House stated that "Indonesia is considered as the only 'free' country in the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) in terms of political rights and civil liberties, and 'partly free' for press freedom" (Pressrun.net, 2010). However, this ongoing process of democracy is the result of a long historic journey. Indonesia experienced an authoritarian era under Soeharto, with his 32-year *New Order* regime. The *New Order* restricted citizens from expressing their political opinions. The media were also under his power, since Soeharto felt that they had to be controlled, in order to perpetuate his power over the nation.

As a result, the control of the media was exclusively in the hand of the government. The *New Order* established a regulation regime as a tool to restrain the media. The Ministry of Information was placed in charge of ruling the media in general, and established a media license to publish or broadcast called SIUPP (*Surat Ijin Usaha Penerbitan Pers*) or Letter of Permission of the Press Publication (Definition-of., n.d.). It was extremely difficult for the media to obtain the license due to the oligopoly of media ownership. Most of the media owners at that time were members of Soeharto's family, or his associates.

In 1998, the authoritarian regime finally came to an end when Soeharto was forced out of power by the people. Moreover, “Indonesian media emerged out of the state-enforced limits while at the same time new technologies created new spaces and new ways for using the media everywhere” (Sen & Hill, 2011, p. 3). The media was finally allowed to develop, as the political situation in Indonesia began to head towards democracy.

After the era of authoritarian rule ended, the new government provided opportunities for the media to grow, and to express themselves freely. The regulation that had been constraining the media was finally revoked, and they were given more freedom to do their jobs. Because of these opportunities, the media blossomed, and owners of capital began to start media businesses. As a result, “according to the South East Asian Press Alliance (SEAPA), by the end of 1999, there were some 299 newspapers, 886 tabloids, 491 magazines, 11 bulletins, 12 TV stations and 1,110 radio stations, as well as an unknown number of media related websites” (Cole 2011, p. 43). This sudden freedom of press and freedom to establish media is what is known as a “media explosion”. As a result of this media explosion, a vast variety of media in Indonesia emerged, as well as the technology that supported it.

In addition to conventional media, the Internet emerged, and with it further options for media consumption. From this point on, Internet platforms grew rapidly and continuously, as did the numbers of users and the devices used to access it. The following section will provide some statistics on Internet growth in Indonesia, in order to explain the Internet usage situation in the country, particularly in Jakarta.

I.2 Internet and its usage in Indonesia

In general, Asia accounted for 42.4% of the world’s Internet users in 2009 (Internetworldstats, 2002). Whilst in comparison to continents such as Europe and America, Asia’s Internet growth is rather slow, the fact that the majority of the population resides in Asian countries (55% of the world’s population) makes the region a major player in the Internet industry (Nusantara News, 2009). As explained above, the Internet was first established in Indonesia in 1996, and since then has seen rapid growth in terms of users. According to Boston Consulting Group/ BCG (BCG,

2010), the estimated number of Internet users in Indonesia will triple by 2015 as an effect of the fast growth of media companies and phone carriers.

Figure 1, below, presents some information about Indonesia’s digital landscape as of 2011. It depicts Indonesian society’s preferences regarding social media usage and device selections.

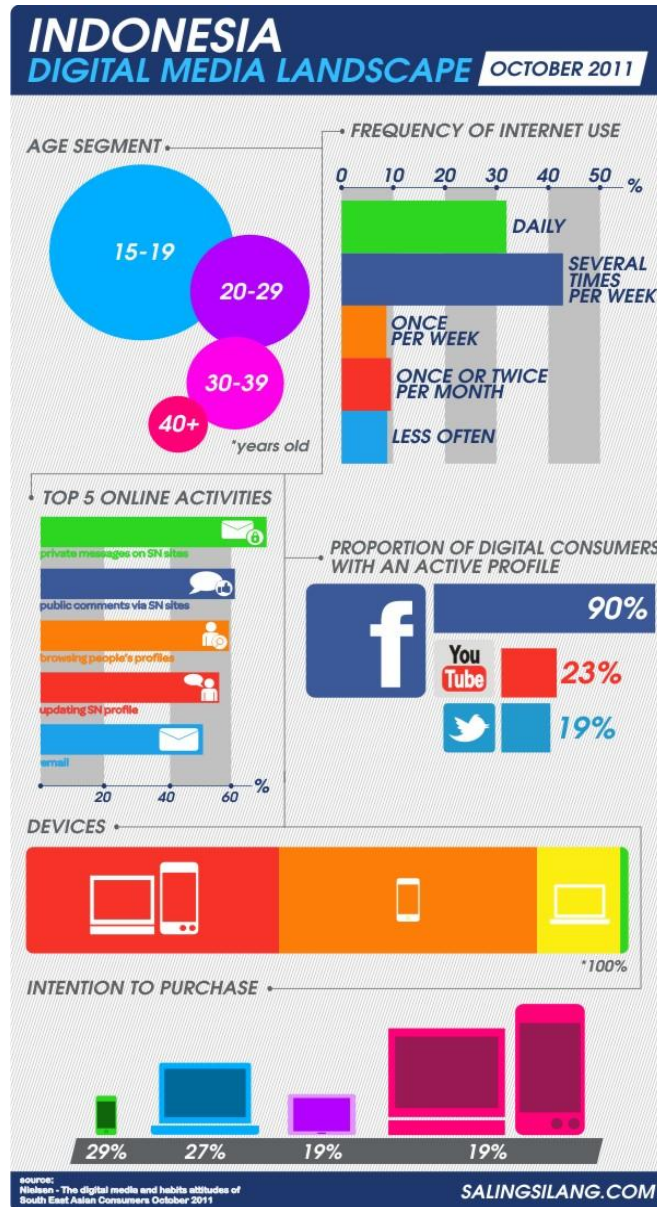
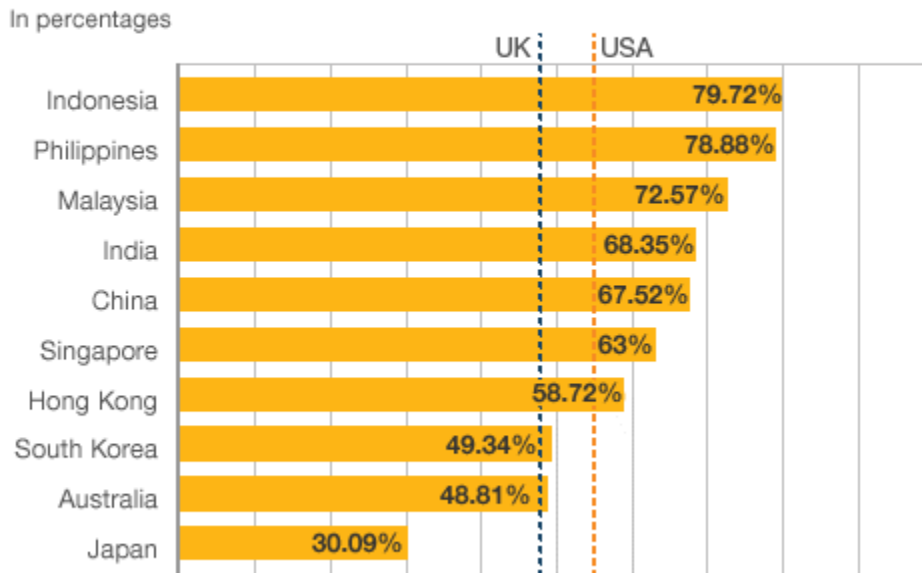


Figure 1 The Digital Landscape of Indonesia (Salingsilang, 2011)

In terms of age segmentation, the age group 15-19 represents the largest Internet user group in Indonesia, with as many as 55% of all Internet users in the country. The percentage of users who access the Internet every day is 32%, although this is lower than the number of users who access it several times a week. Four out of the five top online activities in Indonesia are those involving social networking sites (SNSs). Facebook is still the main SNS for the proportion of digital consumers with an active profile. YouTube and Twitter are second and third, with no significant percentage differences between them. Desktop PCs and mobile phones remain the most popular devices used to access the Internet. These devices share the market with 42% and 43%. Smartphones and notebooks/netbooks are the most desired devices in Indonesia, over PCs. This suggests that, for Indonesians, the smaller the device is, the more highly desired it is.

Figure 2 provides comparisons of social media and SNS usage between Indonesia, Australia, and other countries within Asia. In Indonesia, the percentage is 79.72%, which exceeds that of even the USA, which is the country in which most SNSs were built. According to Vaswani (2012), “there are 40 million Facebook users among Indonesia’s 240 million strong population – no small feat, given that only 21% of Indonesians between the ages of 15 and 49 have access to the Internet, according to a 2011 report”(Vaswani, 2012). Although many rural areas still do not have Internet connections, the social media phenomenon is at its peak in terms of popularity among Indonesia’s urban elite.

Internet users in Asia using social media networks



Source: GlobalWebIndex Survey 2010

Figure 2 (GlobalWebIndex Survey, 2010)

Many Indonesian Internet users use Internet cafés to access the Internet. According to the Indonesia Internet Café Association (Dolorosa, 2012), the number of Internet cafés in Indonesia at the end of 2011 has reached 20,000, mainly in small cities.

I.3 Jakartans' use of the Internet

According to *Assosiasi Penyelenggara Jasa Internet Indonesia* (APJII) or Association of Indonesian Internet Service Providers, 12% of Internet users in the entire country, as many as 75% live in Jakarta (APJII, 2004); although this data was taken in 2004, it is still valid in terms of highlighting that the majority of Indonesian Internet users are Jakartans, since infrastructural development in relation to the Internet is still concentrated in that area.

As the most advanced and populous city in Indonesia, living in Jakarta can be challenging. Jakarta always has an intense traffic jam issue, this problem can be summarized as follows: “the present growth rate of Jakarta’s roads is 0.9% a year, while vehicle growth is 9%. Up to 70% of the citizens have private vehicles, and it is estimated in 2014 the city will attain total traffic gridlock” (The Economist, 2010). In short, many Jakartans spend a lot of time on the streets and at work, though at the same time they have a strong need to socialize. As a solution, many have begun to use the Internet to interact with other people – for leisure as well as business. This can save time and overcome space limitations.

In terms of social status, it is mainly middle- and upper-class Jakartans that have regular access to the Internet (Firdaus, 2010). Moreover, based on research conducted in 2002 by TLD-ID and APJII (TLD-ID & APJII, 2002), as many as 68.13% of Internet users are employees. Those who work in offices, indoors, are often fully facilitated by their companies to socialize through the Internet (whilst working, or during break times or after office hours), whereas Jakartans who work outdoors tend to have portable devices with which to communicate.

Middle- and upper-class people usually utilize advanced communication devices such as smartphones to access cyberspace. As stated in a research from Taylor Nelson Sofres, “The survey of 1,500 Internet users in seven cities revealed that 48 percent of respondents accessed the Web from mobile phones, compared with 26 percent the year before.” (Taylor Nelson Sofres, 2010). This fact is strengthened by the popularity of the BlackBerry smart phone. It has been booming in recent years, and Indonesia has been nicknamed the “BlackBerry Nation” because RIM¹ holds 46 percent of the smart phone market in Indonesia (Youtube, 2011).

Through such devices it is easy to access the Internet anywhere, this enhanced the popularity on the Social Network Sites (SNS). Taylor Nelson Sofres claimed, “some 77 percent of those surveyed (1,500 Internet users) used social-networking sites, compared with 58 percent last year” (Taylor Nelson Sofres, 2010). The advanced technology allows Jakartans to be ‘present’ in cyberspace, without investing much time and effort for socializing. Maintaining, as well as establishing, relationships has become an easier task than ever before.

¹ Research In Motion, a Canadian mobile phone company that produce Blackberry.

As well as forging new connections online, Jakartans use the Internet to maintain their existing relationships. By being online, Jakartans are able to maintain contact with old friends from school, long-distance friends, and members of their family.

According to Walther, “computer-mediated communication (CMC) is synchronous or asynchronous electronic mail and computer conferencing, by which senders encode text messages that are relayed from senders’ computers to receivers” (Walther, 1992, p. 52). In other words, CMC refers to communications that take place via the Internet, such as e-mail, instant messaging, SNSs, Internet forums, etc. Despite the lack of social presence and non-verbal cues, CMC has become a popular way to enhance social lives. In addition, CMC has come to be a common tool for seeking romantic relationships. Many researchers have become interested in this topic and it has become popular in the academic field. “The popularity of cyberspace interactions and relationships in the US and other countries have increased dramatically in recent years, and research interest in this area has increased accordingly” (Yum & Hara, 2005, p.1). In this vein, a large number of SNSs have been established to provide users with specific options relating to the formation of romantic relationships. By using such SNSs, Jakartans can save time and space to start – as well as to maintain – relationships. In other words, this represents an additional way in which the Internet can enhance Jakartans’ social lives, namely in finding romantic relationships or engaging in online dating using CMC. “Relationships that were previously established and sustained primarily through face-to-face (FtF) interactions have come to be complemented by a social technology that is creating a new genre of interpersonal relationships” (Merkle & Richardson, 2000, p. 187).

This thesis will focus on the issue of dating through the use of CMC by people in Jakarta. The reason why I put interest in this topic and I consider it is worthy of investigation, because the Internet is used by people around the world, and CMC is used to connect these people through the Internet. The Internet “has been the place where online communities are created, social networks thrive, business transactions occur, future material partners are found, and even sexual desires can be fulfilled” (Merkle & Richardson, 2000, p. 187). Much research has focused on Internet dating in various parts of the world, and has generated specific theories in relation to this phenomenon, such as Social Presence Theory, Social Information Theory, Media Richness,

Social Identification/Deindividuation Model, and many more. As it is such a global issue, it is also pertinent to Indonesia, which is of particular interest to the researcher. Thus, the objective of this thesis is to give a clear description of how online dating occurs in Indonesia, specifically Jakarta.

Focusing on online relationship phenomenon, I assumed the following: The way in which Jakartans use the Internet and CMC to conduct relationships most likely happens through several stages. The first stage is usually using social networks, which are public by nature. One example of this is Facebook, which is one of the most popular social networking tools in Indonesia; in addition, the nation accounts for the second highest number of Facebook users in the world, with a total of 35,177,260 – a figure that is growing by 69.3% each year (Burcher, 2011). Many Jakartans use Facebook to socialize: they can easily go online and greet people using minimum amounts of their valuable time, compared to FtF meetings. For many Jakartans, Facebook has become one of the main socialization tools. It is not only used to communicate with family and friends that they know personally offline (i.e. in real life), but also to form new relationships with people online. Moreover, an online relationship can also continue offline, and, as indicated above, is not just limited to friendships, but can apply to romantic relationships as well. In addition to using Facebook to establish new relationships, users can also reveal information about themselves by stating personal information on their profiles, and uploading photographs. These Facebook profiles can serve as an introduction about the user, which can then be used as a pre-selection tool before starting a relationship. There is often enough information on a Facebook profile to replace the first meeting in traditional FtF communications, since it contains all the basic information about the user.

If, at this stage, interest grows between two Facebook users, it will continue to the next stage. In the second stage, following the successful “introduction”, the relationship may move to a more private SNS like Yahoo Messenger (YM) or MSN. On chatting sites such as these, the relationship will continue to develop as more information is given away, and each person’s personality is disclosed. More access will be given as well, and phone numbers may be exchanged at this stage.

If things go well during stage two, the third stage will be conducted via phone. By communicating via phone, audio information such as that relating to the voice, and ways of speaking, laughing, etc., will be disclosed. The final stage is FtF meeting. The assumptions above formulate the first hypothesis:

H1: Although such relationships start online, once they become more personal, they will eventually lead to FtF communication.

Though CMC is considered a practical way of communicating, it is still an impersonal and task-oriented form of communication, because of the lack of non-verbal cues; moreover, it can be considered a very “lean” channel because of this fact. These non-verbal cues, such as gestures, voices, facial expressions, and so on, are considered essential in building a relationship. “Experimental research has reported that CMC is less personal or socioemotional (SE) than face-to-face communication” (Walther 1992, p. 53). Furthermore, according to Rice and Love (1987), CMC is “less friendly, emotional, or personal and more businesslike, or task oriented” (Rice & Love 1987, p. 88). This assumption leads to second hypothesis:

H2: Since non-verbal cues are absent in CMC, it is considered unfulfilling to conduct a romantic relationship purely online.

For the purpose of this thesis, the author chose to investigate five Jakartans, from different backgrounds, with reference to their online dating activities. Although the investigation cannot be generalized to represent all Indonesian or Jakartan inhabitants (since it is limited to five people), it will provide a description of a small sample of Jakartans, and their habits with respect to socializing and establishing romantic relationships via the Internet.

The research questions for this thesis are as follows:

- 1. In what way has the Internet and its services changed the ways how the Jakartans in the study socialize?**
- 2. What is the role of CMC in online relationships?**
- 3. What is the relation between online and offline life?**

Chapter II

Theoretical Perspective

II.1 Previous Studies

Many studies have been conducted to investigate various aspects of online relationships (e.g. Sproull & Kiesler, 1986; Rice & Love, 1987; Walther, 1992, 1996, 2001; Merkle & Richardson, 2000, etc.). A number of researchers have discovered the same result with regards to CMC – that because there are no non-verbal cues involved, the exchange of information cannot be as fulfilling as FtF communication: “Users are self-absorbed and are less likely to form impressions of other actors as distinct individuals” (Walther, 1992, p. 58). Such researchers consider CMC an unsuitable medium by which to form a romantic relationship, because it does not allow for the extensive exchanges of information necessary to achieve sufficient self-disclosure. “Because of the nature of CMC, such highly personalized interactions are needed in resolving disagreements, getting to know someone, or bargaining and negotiation” (Walther, 1992, p. 58).

A result of the general conclusion on CMC, according to Rice and Love (1986), is that “because of its lack audio [...] of audio or video cues, [CMC] will be perceived as impersonal and lacking in normative reinforcement, so there will be less socioemotional (SE) content exchanged”(Rice & Love, 1986, p. 88).

II.2 Theoretical Foundations

In this chapter, the theories that will be used to analyze the online dating phenomenon in Jakarta will be presented. There are three closely related theories which the author considers suitable to explain the study: Social Presence Theory, Social Context Cues Theory, and Media Richness Theory. Social Presence Theory deals with feelings of involvement in the process of communicating; Social Context Cues Theory is related to the elements that are present during communication; while the Media Richness Theory is used to analyze the media over which the relationship development takes place.

II.2.1 Social Presence Theory

Although this theory was initially used to explain teleconferencing, it was one of the first theories to be applied to the CMC phenomenon. Social Presence Theory posits that social presence is an essential aspect which must exist in mediated communication events, and that social presence itself is “the feeling that a medium is personal, warm, and sociable rather than impersonal, cold, and unsociable” (Hiltz, Johnson, & Turoff, 1986, p. 228). Walther states that “social presence is the feeling that other actors are jointly involved in communicative interaction” (Walther, 1992, p 54). Within Social Presence Theory, some media have greater or less social presence, and some media are richer than others. The richest form of communication is still the unmediated one – i.e. FtF – which can facilitate vast information exchanges.

According to Whitty and Carr “Social presence is the feeling that one has that other individuals are involved in a communication exchange” (Whitty & Carr, 2006, p.7). Moreover, “since CMC involves fewer non-verbal cues (such as facial expression, postures, dress, and so forth) and auditory cues in comparison to face-to-face communication, it is said to be extremely low in social presence” (Whitty & Carr, 2006, p. 7). This theory claims that as social presence is less pronounced in CMC, the communication becomes more impersonal. On the contrary, when more information can be exchanged (e.g. physical appearance), this could add more positive value to the relationship. “CMC with its paucity of nonverbal elements and backchanneling cues, is said to be extremely low in social presence in comparison to FtF communication” (Walther, 1992, p. 54). In other words, compared to traditional FtF communication, CMC has less social presence, and thus CMC is less personal and less intimate.

Although Social Presence Theory was not originally set forth as a theory to analyze CMC, it has “been accepted widely (and criticized) as a major in this field” (Walther, 1992, p. 55).

II.2.2 Social Context Cues Theory

Social Context Cues Theory was first proposed by Sproull and Kiesler 1986, and underlines the primary difference between CMC and FtF communication, which is the absence of social context

cues in CMC. Social context cues are “aspects of the physical environment and actors’ non verbal behaviors that define the nature of the social situation and the actors’ relative status” (Walther, 1992, p. 56). There are certain cues that only exist in FtF settings, such as spatial features, artifacts, and physical adornments. Moreover, Social Context Cues Theory posits “that online relationships are less intimate and more aggressive than FtF relationships” (Whitty & Carr 2006, p. 7).

In research by Sproull and Kiesler, Social Context Cues Theory was originally used to analyze the electronic mail system (EMS), which uses computer text-processing and communication tools to provide a high-speed information exchange service. There are three general characteristics of EMS: 1. Senders and receivers do not exchange messages simultaneously – i.e. it is asynchronous. 2. EMS is capable of transmitting information quickly. 3. EMS is a text-based communications tool. Their research focused on EMS usage for organizational communication, and they concluded that EMS is relatively weak in terms of the social context Sproull and Kissler (1986, p. 1493).

Although the EMS research did not focus directly on the romantic online relationship phenomenon, it seems that Social Context Cues Theory is still applicable to this study. From the three general characteristics of EMS outlined above, point number one may not be wholly applicable to certain types of CMC, such as YM, MSN, or Skype; however, it is applicable to email messaging, and even Facebook, because these CMCs are asynchronous (there is a delay between message and reply).

Sproull and Kiesler (1986, p. 1494) also outline the variables in this theory, namely: geographic, organizational, and situational. A discussion of these variables and their relevance to this study will be presented later in the analysis chapter.

II.2.3 Media Richness Theory

Media Richness Theory posits a similar stance to Social Context Cues Theory, in which FtF is still the most fulfilling form of relationship. This theory underlines the media aspect of online relationships. Daft and Lengel 1986 explain this as follows:

Information richness is defined as the ability of information to change understanding within a time interval. Communication transactions that can overcome different frames of reference or clarify ambiguous issues to change understanding in a timely manner are considered rich. Communications that require a long time to enable understanding or that cannot overcome different perspectives are lower in richness. (Whitty and Carr, 2006, p. 8)

In this theory, the terms “lean” and “rich” are used to define the capacity of information exchange in each media. Daft and Lengel claim that “media have varying capacities for resolving ambiguity, meeting interpretation needs, and transmitting data” (Trevino, Lengel, & Daft, 1987, p.557). “Communication media (e.g. memos, telephone, electronic mail, computer printouts, FtF) can be characterized as “rich” or “lean” based on: (a) availability of instant feedback, making it possible for communicators to converge upon common understanding; (b) the utilization of multiple cues such as body language to convey interpretations and feelings; (c) the use of natural language” (Trevino, Lengel, & Daft, 1987, p. 557)

Furthermore, this theory claims that, “FtF communication is the richest type of media as it provides immediate feedback and utilizes more channels” (Whitty & Carr, 2006, p. 8).

Daft and Lengel’s (1986) theory was originally used to analyze studies on media choices in organizations which focused on task-oriented communication. They analyzed how managers in organizations choose which media to use to interact with their superiors, colleagues, and subordinates. The media included email, telephone, and written memo/letter; again, unmediated communication, or FtF, was the most effective form of communication. According to Daft and Lengel (1986), there are two forces that influence information processing in organizations: uncertainty and equivocality. Moreover, Daft and Lengel argue that “FtF was preferred for messages containing equivocality, while written media were used for unequivocal messages. These findings suggest that “when equivocality is high, organizations allow for rapid information cycles among managers,

typically FtF, and prescribes fewer rules for interpretation” (Daft & Lengel, 1986, p. 555). In other words, richer media is needed to facilitate more complicated messages.

The basic goal of communication is to exchange information; the more information that can be exchanged, the more successful the communication is, and the medium used for the communication plays an important role. As Trevino et al. explain, “one explanation for communication success may have to do with the capacity of a medium to transmit cues that enable mutual understanding” (Trevino et al., 1987, p. 555). Therefore, there are reasons people choose certain media for communicating, and these depend on the messages and intentions they wish to convey. Thus, Media Richness Theory is basically about analyzing people’s media choices.

Although Media Richness Theory originally related to how executives select media to accomplish tasks, and the reasons why they choose these media, the author believes that this theory can also be implemented to analyze more personal communications, and even romance. In an online relationship, the actors also have reasons for choosing certain media to accommodate their relationship; as the relationship becomes closer and more intimate, richer media is needed in order to exchange more information. As Walther states about CMC, “for receivers to understand clearly more equivocal information, [or] information that is ambiguous, emphatic, or emotional [...] a richer medium should be used” (Walther, 1992, p. 57).

II.3 Usefulness of Theories

The Social Presence, Social Context Cues, and Media Richness theories all deal with different elements and have their own capacities for analysis. Social Presence Theory deals with the presence of each actor in the social interaction, and this depends on the availability of channels and codes. The degree of social presence of the actors is lower when fewer channels or codes are available in a certain medium; on the other hand, Social Context Cues Theory deals with elements that are involved in communication, such as physical environment, actors’ nonverbal behaviours, geographic location, etc. Media Richness Theory deals with the capacity

of the medium that is being used to communicate. These elements, which can arguably be analyzed sufficiently by reference to the three theories, are particularly important for the current study.

Originally, the three theories above were used for organizational research in which CMC was used for task-oriented communications. Even though the big picture of this study is more personal compared to general online relationships, the theories are still applicable to this study. This will be justified in further detail below.

The theoretical challenge in this study is to use the theories generated from organizational communication, and implement them to a different aspect of communication, namely interpersonal communication (specifically, romantic relationships). Between the two types of communication forms, there are three differences that should be considered. The first relates to the setting. According to Berger (2000, p. 15), organizational communication “deals with how organizations communicate to members of the organization and to other interested parties”, while interpersonal communication is “the communication that takes place between ourselves and a relatively small number of people. There is interaction among all parties involved” (Berger, 2000, p. 15). From these statements, the difference in setting between organizational and interpersonal communication can be summed up as follows: organizational communication takes place in organizations/companies, whereas relationship communication can take place anywhere, as long as more than one person is involved in the interaction.

The second difference between the two types is the form the communication takes. The form of organizational communication is vertical, or hierarchical, and is used between managers, coworkers and subordinates. On the other hand, in the interpersonal relationship, the form of communication is horizontal, such as between partners who are equal in the relationship.

The third difference is the number of people who are involved in the communication process. Organizational communication takes a one-to-many basis of communication, for instance one manager to several subordinates, and is task-oriented; relationship communication takes a one-to-one basis, and involves intimacy.

Despite these differences, the author decided to implement the theories in the present research to explain the phenomenon of romantic online relationships among Jakartans, with reference to the similarities between them. There are two similarities that should be underlined here. First, similar elements are involved in both types of communication processes. These elements are available channels/codes, physical environment, actors' non-verbal behaviour, physical adornments, bandwidth, etc. This supports the fact that the three theories can be used as a tool for analysis, since the elements in organizational communication also exist in relationship/interpersonal communication. The second similarity is the general purpose of both types of communications, which is to send messages. This also means that there is a sender, a receiver, a message, and a medium in both types.

Each of the three theories has different advantages in relation to the analysis used in this study, and thus each will help bring a unique understanding to the issue under investigation.

Study of the Internet is still in flux, with a wide range of aspects which have not yet been studied, and the theories mentioned above are pioneers in CMC and Internet studies. Studies and theories are still being generated within this subject, and new theories often contradict previous ones. One example is Social Information Processing (SIP) Theory, as proposed by Walther (1995). He states that, "the main difference between FtF communication and CMC is the pace [at which] relationships develop in each space rather than the capability to develop relationships" (Whitty & Carr, 2006, p. 17). The underlined aspect of SIP theory is the pace at which a relationship is developed, which means it is strongly related to the time or period of communication. Walther (1995) tested his theory by comparing (online and offline) groups over time (Whitty & Carr, 2006, p. 17). However, the author was unable to do this due to time restraints during fieldwork; since pace and time aspects in SIP theory are important, the author decided not to use this theory because the data gathered is less pertinent to SIP theory compared to the three theories outlined above.

As mentioned above, despite the fact that the three theories were originally developed in relation to organizational communication, they are also applicable and relevant to the person-to-person communication that this study deals with. In the above description about each of the theories, it was mentioned that they each take different approaches to analyze a common

phenomenon. Thus, they are useful for this study because they can explain the romantic online relationship more thoroughly.

In this research, the interview questions were generated with reference to Social Presence, Social Context Cues, and Media Richness theories. This meant that the information given by the subjects is closely related to the aspects discussed within these theories, whilst also providing new information by virtue of the fact that the interviews were semi-structured.

The present advanced technology for Internet-based communication has meant that it is no longer only text-based, but can also involve audio and video elements. Examples of CMC programs with these features include Skype, Gtalk, YM, Twitter and Facebook. This in turn means that CMC is becoming more and more qualified as a fulfilling communication tool, and this fact will challenge the Social Presence, Social Context Cues, and Media Richness theories, which posit that FtF communication is the best way to communicate and develop romantic relationships.

Furthermore, the original studies on Social Presence, Social Context Cues, and Media Richness Theories mostly discuss text-based communication, which was the most-used form of electronic communication when these theories were first generated. Now, however, communications technology has become much more developed, as indicated above. Despite the discrepancies between the past and the present technology situation, however, it is felt that the theories serve as a sufficient theoretical foundation, as they still point to the theoretical direction of the study undertaken here.

Chapter III

Methodological Approach

III.1 Overview of the methodology used: Qualitative and Quantitative methods

This chapter is dedicated to discussing the methodology used to investigate the phenomenon. The definition of methodology is “a theory and analysis of how research should proceed” (Harding, 1987, p. 2), and must be applied to all research conducted, in order to gather the correct data for the intended findings. There are two main types of research method, which are often discussed together: qualitative and quantitative. Each of these aims to meet a different goal. Qualitative research “describes or analyses a phenomenon without specifically measuring variables, although the data can be expressed numerically, while quantitative research requires that variables under consideration are measured” (Wimmer & Dominick, 1983, p. 19). Moreover, “qualitative methods include among others participant observation, direct observation, interviews, document analysis and focus group discussions while quantitative methods include content analysis and surveys” (Bryman, 2004, p. 27).

In terms of the types of findings of each method, “quantitative methods avail researchers with numbers that can allow greater precision in reporting results” (Bryman, 2004, p. 20), whereas “qualitative research produces a wealth of detailed information” (Patton 1990, p. 14). According to Patton “one of the advantages of the quantitative method is that it enables generalization and comparison of findings as several people can be interviewed using a limited number of questions, while in comparison, it is difficult to generalize from qualitative methods because fewer respondents are involved in the study, but it enables in-depth analysis of the situation” (Patton, 1990, p. 14).

According to Strauss and Corbin (1990, p. 19), “a research that tries to explain a person’s experience with a phenomenon is better explored using qualitative methods”. Thus, in relation to the purpose of this study, the qualitative method seems to be the most suitable for analyzing the phenomenon of romantic online relationships among Jakartans, since the aim is to obtain rich information from each of the respondents. The quantitative research method can provide precise

numbers and allow for generalization, however the author feels that this type of data will not be fruitful with respect to revealing the real situation behind the phenomenon in question, since the purpose of the study is to understand subjects' points of view towards online dating.

III.2 The Qualitative Research Method

As explained above, the qualitative method has been selected for this research. In-depth interview, document analysis and observation will be the tools used to gather information in this research. Kvale and Brinkmann (2009, p. 1) state that “the qualitative research interview attempts to understand the world from the subjects' point of view, to unfold the meaning of their experiences, to uncover their lived world prior to scientific explanations”, while Patton affirms that “interacting with informants aids the detailed study of a phenomenon thus providing diverse and more useful data” (1990, p. 11).

The qualitative research method is applied in this study by collecting data according to qualitative research procedures. Thus, after conducting the interviews with each of the subjects, the messages between the subjects and their partners will be analyzed in order to obtain more detailed information on how they communicate within their romantic relationships.

III.3 Qualitative data collection methods

The data obtained for this study were collected using the following methods:

III.3.1 Qualitative interviews

The main tool for collecting data in this study will be qualitative interviews. “Qualitative interviews are aimed at understanding a social actor's perspective about a topic, verifying, validating or commenting on data collected from other sources and testing hypotheses developed by the researchers” (Lindlof, 1995, p. 166). The type of qualitative interview used in this research is the semi-structured interview, wherein the topics of conversation are chosen by the interviewer in advance. An interview guide was prepared prior to the interviews, to help the interviewer to

keep the topics on the right track. Via these means, the flexibility of the interview can be maintained, while the subjects are given new leads to follow and, thus, out-of-focus dialogues can be avoided. Moreover, it enables the interviewer to construct spontaneous questions during the interviews, when there are interesting points in the subjects' stories that need to be closely scrutinized. According to Bernard (2002, p. 212), "the informal nature of the interview situation prevents the interviewer from being seen to be exercising excessive control". Based on this argument, the researcher tried to create an informal atmosphere in every interview, by using informal language. However, when the subject was significantly older, more formal language was used in order to show respect, though the relaxed atmosphere was maintained.

The questions for the interviews were kept general, to allow the subjects to freely tell their stories, while keeping the conversation within the desired context. Hence, additional information was obtained to the specific answers sought. It was felt that conducting the interviews in a native Indonesian tongue was the best option for exploring the subjects' stories, since not all Jakartans are fluent in English. In this manner, the subjects were able to describe their feelings and experiences freely, without experiencing difficulties in terms of converting languages.

With permission from the subjects, all interviews were recorded. Although some were reluctant to be recorded at first, with gentle persuasion and the promise of confidentiality, they all eventually agreed. This recording was necessary for the analysis stage of the study; in addition, by recording the interview rather than taking notes, according to Kvale (1996, p. 160), "the interviewer can concentrate on the topic and the dynamic of the interview", and elaborate on interesting points or unexpected new information. Furthermore, as well as words, the tone and pauses can be captured, and the recording can be played back as many times as needed.

III.3.2 Collecting CMC messages

The subjects' online messages also needed to be analyzed, as written proof of the development of the online relationship, and to provide an understanding of the types of messages that were exchanged while the relationship developed. By analyzing these messages, the emotional

situations that occurred could be comprehended more thoroughly, and provide another perspective in addition to the interview data. The researcher's own perspectives on the data analyzed will also contribute to this study. In this way, arguably more insight can be obtained from multiple perspectives.

Thus, three different perspectives were combined in this research: those of the participants, gathered directly from the interviews; the written text messages; and the researcher's perspective on the data analyzed.

III.3.3 Data Treatment

Following the interviews, the audio recordings had to be converted to written form by transcribing them. According to Kvale, transcribing involves "prepar[ing] the interview material for analysis, which commonly includes a transcription from oral speech to written text" (Kvale, 1996, p. 88). In addition, data gained from the CMC messages between the subjects and their partners was collated and analyzed, as will be explained in further detail in later chapters.

With respect to the data processing or analysis, the term used by Moustakas (1994, cited in Creswell, 2007, p. 61) is *horizontalization*: "data analysts go through (e.g. interview transcriptions) and highlight 'significant statements', sentences, or quotes that provide an understanding of how the participants experienced the phenomenon". The next step is to *cluster the meaning* from those statements into themes. These steps were implemented in this study as a mechanism to treat the data, which will ultimately generate a conclusion. Creswell (2007, p. 148) states that displaying data in graphs, tables, and charts is recommended in order to allow readers to draw clear comparisons. During this coding stage, the data is reduced and combined, unused data is eliminated, and new information can be spotted.

Thus, after converting the audio information from the interviews to written transcripts, the meanings of the various statements were interpreted and clustered into themes. Further analyses developed from the themes are presented in Chapter IV. A table was generated to give a clear presentation of the subjects' background information, which will help readers to easily acknowledge the similarities and differences between each subject.

Each subject gave his/her own level of disclosure, and some subjects were more open than others. The researcher explained the obligation to protect their identity from being revealed for any purpose other than this research. If the participants were not willing to share information about their personal messages, this was respected in order to maintain the comfortable atmosphere during the interviews.

III.4 Research Design – Phenomenological Approach

The phenomenological approach was selected as the research design for this study. Bryman (2004, p. 27) posits that, “A research design is the framework used to collect and analyze data to answer a researcher’s questions”, while Yin states that:

The different types of research designs include: experimental, cross-sectional, longitudinal, case study and comparative. Each design is chosen according to the type of research question, the control an investigator has over actual behavioral events, and the focus on contemporary as opposed to historical phenomena (Yin, 2003, p. 1).

In addition, Patton (1990, p. 54) argues that “resources (time, money and personnel) can affect the design choice”.

This research focuses on investigating one phenomenon that has been experienced by several respondents. Therefore, the most suitable research design is the phenomenological approach. “A phenomenological study describes the meaning for several individuals of their lived experiences of a concept or a phenomenon” (Creswell, 2007, p. 57). Creswell also states that phenomenology researchers aim to describe the common phenomenon which the respondents have experienced. The researchers choose people who have experienced the phenomenon that about to be investigated, and develops a description that represents all of the individuals. This description consists of “what” they experienced and “how” they experienced it (Creswell 2007, p. 58).

A phenomenological research design is applied in this study as the informants were selected according to the fact that they have experienced conducting romantic online

relationships. “The type of problem best suited for this form of research is one in which it is important to understand several individual’s common or shared experiences or phenomenon” (Creswell, 2007, p. 60). In phenomenology, understanding a common experience is important with respect to explaining and analyzing the phenomenon, in order to generate conclusions. Moreover, the “what” and “how” aspect of each individual is closely examined in order to capture the essence that can be drawn from the informants’ experiences.

The data was collected from the subjects via interviews and email/chat messages between them and their partners. As stated by Creswell (2007, p. 61), “often data collection in phenomenological studies consist of in-depth interviews and multiple interviews with participants”. Five people were included in the study, based on Polkinghorne’s (Creswell, 2007, p. 61) recommendation “that the researchers interview from 5 to 25 individuals who have all experienced the phenomenon”. A small number of subjects was used for this study as it was felt that this would enable a more elaborate and focused analysis of their stories. Although few subjects were used, each of them does have a different story to tell, thus ensuring diversity within one common phenomenon. The types of data collected in this study were audio format from the interviews and written text messages.

Unlike quantitative, generalization in qualitative research to reach is difficult to reach. As stated by Patton, that it is a challenge to generalize from qualitative methods because of fewer research subjects are involved in the study (Patton, 1990, p.14). This research is a qualitative study with a phenomenological research design approach, and the subjects are limited to five people, which makes it very specific since it is only focused on how this small group of people have experienced online relationships. Therefore, its validity and reliability will be difficult to measure, and these aspects will be not discussed.

III.5. Subjects of the research

This study focuses on the online dating phenomenon in Jakarta. As well as being Jakartan, the subjects are: technology-conscious (in terms of the Internet and its devices), middle-class and

above in social status (i.e. those who can afford Internet access), and regular Internet users. They also have experience in conducting romantic online relationships.

Based on these criteria, one specific SNS, namely Facebook, was used to identify Jakartans that fulfill the aspects above. The researcher posted a message on the “wall” of her Facebook account, and asked Facebook “friends” to post a message if they include themselves in the relevant criteria. In addition, relatives of the researcher that have first-hand experience in online relationships, were asked to participate in the study. By these means, enough subjects were identified that matched the sample criteria. The age range of the participants is 19-32 years old. In my opinion, subjects of this age range are more open to meeting new people since they are not married yet, and have more opportunities, as well as more eagerness, to explore the Internet. However, in the middle of the data collection process, another interesting subject was encountered who had experienced the phenomenon, despite being outside of the age range above. Since the aim was to obtain a range of results, the researcher deliberately selected subjects with different background stories. Hence, the final decision was to include participants whose ages range from 19-55 years old.

Originally, there were ten people included in the prior criteria. The researcher conducted the qualitative interviews to them, however, then she decided to do another selection. From the ten people chosen to be the subjects of study, the author reduce them to five subjects, with the criteria as follows, 1) The subjects of study should meet her/his online partner for the first time on the Internet. 2) The subjects must be involved in romantic relationship, which means both sides (the subjects and her/his partner) have to acknowledge their feelings and admit the relationship. 3) The subjects must have the willingness to disclose their personal (online) relationship stories to the researcher, since their cooperation is paramount in order to investigate this phenomenon. On the basis of criteria the researcher described she excluded five people who were not fulfill the criteria and asked the other five to participate. This subject reduction was also based on Polkinghorne’s statement that 5 to 25 individuals who experienced the phenomenon under investigation are adequate for a phenomenological research (Creswell, 1998, p. 54).

Despite the diversity of the subjects' backgrounds and personalities, their stories are also comparable. By considering the differences between the individuals, comparisons can be drawn because their experiences are based on one common phenomenon. Therefore, this study aims for comparative diversity within and between the subjects. This diversity will also allow readers of the study to relate to the subjects, and thus make the study more comprehensible.

A brief description of each subject is given below, along with the reasons for selecting them as prospective samples.

1. FP

FP is a 19-year-old undergraduate student of a private Islamic university in Jakarta. She wears a *hijab*, and has strong religious views. She is majoring in Education for Early Childhood. Currently, she has been dating an American Christian man (BK) for one year. They have known each other for two years; after a year they decided to start a romantic relationship. They have never met FtF, but they have discussed marriage. After getting married, FP is planning to move to the US, and continue her education to masters degree level in BK's hometown in Missouri, Columbia.

FP was deemed suitable for the study because the committed relationship between her and her American boyfriend, whom she never met before, was considered interesting, as was the fact that they have principally different backgrounds.

2. GP

GP is a 25-year-old graduate student of a prominent business university in Jakarta. She is currently living in Jakarta to complete her masters degree; before she came to Jakarta, she lived in Bandung, and she was born in Semarang, Central Java, where her whole family currently lives. She is a lesbian, and has been using the Internet to find lesbian communities and prospective partners. She claims all of her girlfriends have been met via the Internet. She is currently in a relationship, but not a committed one.

GP was considered a useful subject for the study in terms of how homosexuals use CMC to meet each other. Identifying homosexual communities in real life in Indonesia is not an easy

matter, because this sexual orientation still considered unusual and unacceptable in Indonesian society. With the help of the Internet, this 'hidden' community has become reachable.

3. BN

BN is a 28-year-old male who works as an editor at a national TV station based in Jakarta. He claims that his job takes up most of his time, so he has no opportunities to socialize. He used Facebook to find a Javanese girlfriend, however the girlfriend he found does not live in Jakarta. After two weeks of meeting and chatting to each other via CMC, BN decided to visit the girl and meet her parents. They are in a serious relationship, and intend to marry.

BN was one of the persons who answered the author's request on Facebook. His story was deemed interesting because he is always busy with work, and has no social time, and thus used an SNS to find a girlfriend.

4. RA

RA is a 26-year-old social media specialist and blogger. She is active in environmental activities within an NGO. She has experienced two romantic online relationships with men she met on SNSs such as Friendster and Twitter. She is still in a steady relationship with the man she met on Twitter.

RA is very familiar with the Internet and many SNSs, because she works in that field and must be online on a daily basis. She admits that she never intended to find romance via the Internet. The ways in which the Internet and SNS influence her, not just professionally, but also personally, are considered interesting from the point of view of the current study.

5. MT

MT is a 50-year-old female who works as Head of Record Center in a foreign oil company based in Jakarta. She is married to an American man she met via the Internet. They have been married for eight years.

MT's story represents a successful online relationship, which is particularly interesting considering the fact that she and her partner were initially residents of two different continents.

The above provides a preliminary description of the subjects. In the next chapter, each of the respondents' background, and experiences with online relationships will be considered in more detail.

III.6 Research process

The fieldwork for this research – i.e. the interviews and literature review – was conducted from 6 June until 19 August, 2011. Prior to the fieldwork, potential subjects (who live in Jakarta) were approached; this was done using CMC facilities since the researcher was based in Norway at the time. In this way, the researcher obtained access to the subjects before the fieldwork commenced, which saved time.

Each subject was contacted separately via email, text message, phone call, and Facebook to make appointments to meet FtF. Before meeting in person, they were already aware of the research purpose and the topic of this study. Each respondent took part in a single interview, however prior to the interviews the researcher met with each of them in order to gain their trust. Although the interviews could have been conducted online, which would have saved time compared to FtF interviews, it was decided that a FtF interview would provide more complete information, including that such as non-verbal cues, which could not have been gathered if the interviews were conducted online.

The meetings were held in various venues. BN and MT were interviewed at their offices after work or during lunchtime, FP at her campus after class, GP at a coffee shop, and RA at her house. The interviews lasted approximately 20-60 minutes, depending on the level of talkativeness of the subject, and how much detail they were willing to disclose about themselves.

Several challenges were encountered during the data collection process, for instance: 1) It was difficult to observe how the respondents chat with their partners, because some of the relationships in question had happened in the past. 2) Thorough observations could not be

conducted because, due to logistical constraints, it was not possible for the researcher to follow their daily activities, or view their real-time communications with their partners via the Internet.

3) The respondents had not kept all of their CMC messages. Therefore, some respondents had more archived CMC messages than others, and hence the information provided by each was not equal. 4) Due to limitations in terms of time and human resources, complete CMC messages following the development of the relationship from the beginning until the present time could not be collected. 5) The data was gathered from the respondents themselves; hence, no data was obtained from their partners.

III.7 Relating the theory to the methodology

In every research, methodology and theory work hand in hand. In this sub-chapter, the methodology, which takes a phenomenological qualitative research approach, will be related to the theories of Social Presence, Social Context Cues, and Media Richness.

The main method in this study is interview, since it is a qualitative study. The subjects interviewed had all experienced, first hand, a common phenomenon, which is what makes this a phenomenological study. Moreover, as the above theories focus on different elements, the basic interview questions were generated based on them, and the follow-up questions generated according to the subjects' situations. In this manner, sufficient and relevant data was obtained, and could be analyzed more easily in later stages.

The theories used in this study were generated from previous research, which employed various methods. Social Presence Theory uses quantitative content analysis research (Rice & Love, 1987, p. 93); Social Context Cues Theory uses interviews, questionnaires, and content coding research (Sproull & Kiesler, 1986, p. 1499); and Media Richness Theory uses interviews (Trevino et al., 1987, p. 560). Similarly, this study uses qualitative interviews and text analysis from CMC messages. Despite some discrepancies between this research and the previous research, this study can arguably cast a new light on these theories, and may contribute towards strengthening them through the empirical findings.

Chapter IV

Presenting the Data

The qualitative data collected throughout this research will be presented in this chapter. It is divided into two parts: the first summarizes the individual stories of the research subjects; both interview and CMC data will be displayed here in order to provide a more thorough description of the subjects' situations and the degree of intimacy between them and their partners. The second part provides a comparison between their stories, and consists of the subjects' communication information taken from the interview sessions.

In relation to the data collected from the CMC messages, all quotes will intentionally be kept in their original form, despite the grammatical mistakes and slang language usage, in order to preserve the originality of the texts. All of the CMC communications are email messages between the subjects and their partners, which were taken from their archives.

IV.1 Individual Descriptions: Getting to Know the Subjects

IV.1.1 FP (Female, aged 19)

FP was born in Bandung, Indonesia, and has been living in Jakarta since 2010 to pursue her bachelor's degree. She is majoring in Education for Early Childhood at one of the private universities in the area. Even though it is not an obligation, most of the female students at the Islamic University wear a *hijab*, or headscarf. Prior to her education here, she was enrolled in Islamic schools in her hometown.

Like many other Indonesians her age, FP uses Facebook on a daily basis. From time to time she changes her profile picture, for which she takes images she likes from the Internet. In December 2011 she uploaded pictures of herself, showing her painted hand and her uncovered long hair. She only wears the *hijab* on campus because it is a religious environment, and

because her previous attendance at other Islamic schools made her become accustomed to wearing it. On her Facebook wall, she states which subject she is majoring in and the name of her university in Jakarta. She states her status as “in a relationship”, without specifically linking it to her boyfriend, BK. She also states that she speaks six languages, including the traditional *Sundanese*², lists Bandung as her place of birth, and includes her birth date. On her wall she has five pictures, which are combined to form the sentence “yes, I miss you”. She has 411 friends on her friend list.

She is currently in a relationship with an American man (BK), who is four years older than her, and they have been together since 2010. BK was studying to become a chef at that time. At the beginning, FP’s intention for socializing with foreigners was to practice English and learn about the culture of other countries. Apart from BK, she has several friends from foreign countries. After a year of correspondence, BK started to initiate the romance by sending an unexpected “I love you” email. At first, FP was confused and unsure of how to react, but she eventually agreed to BK’s request to begin a relationship. Since then, their relationship has become more intimate, as each started to care for the other.

FP did not originally have any intention of finding a boyfriend online, as she stated in the interview.

In the beginning, I had no intention. And I didn’t want to make him my boyfriend.

This is the first time FP has had an online romantic relationship, especially with a foreign man. BK lives in Columbia, Missouri. There is approximately a 12-hour time difference between Missouri and Indonesia, which has forced them to sacrifice many of their sleeping hours in order to keep in contact. They have also used Skype (video call) to communicate, and are in touch with each other almost every day.

Our communication is a bit difficult, I mean because of factors like I’m busy with my studies, and he’s busy with his work, but we still communicate with each other [...] almost every day even though there are time differences.

² *Sundanese* is the name of one of the tribes in Indonesia.

This couple do not share the same religious beliefs. BK was born a Christian and FP is Muslim-born. Moreover, both of them have strong religious views. FP prays according to the Muslim faith on a daily basis, while BK goes to church every Sunday. Neither of them has any intention to convert religions, but their relationship has progressed despite these differences.

He respects and accepts that I'm a Muslim and wear a hijab although he doesn't want to change his religious belief to become a Muslim.

Even though FP and BK have never met FtF before, they seemed to be fully committed in their relationship, and have serious conversations about the future during their everyday communications. Although they are separated by a great distance, they maintain their relationship by communicating regularly. FP describes her goals to BK, and vice versa.

For now we just talk about my goal to finish my degree and plans to continue studying abroad to get a masters degree. I may also start working and continue my study [...] later. Well, I don't know, but for sure he wants to work first to save some money for his future.

As two people born in different parts of the world, FP and BK were raised as individuals with different principles and cultures. FP is a conservative person, unlike BK who is more open-minded. At the beginning of their relationship, BK often talked about sex, which made FP feel uncomfortable. FP offered BK an understanding about her point of view and Indonesian culture. After a while, BK understood this and their conversations came to be focused more on the relationship instead of sex.

At first, I didn't really trust him because our cultures are different. He likes to talk about sex and I'm not the kind of girl who likes to talk about that. Then I told him about Indonesia's culture. Now, we can understand each other and we try to limit our conversation by not talking about bad things. Now we have become more focused on ourselves, [and] what we want for our own futures. We care about each other.

FP claims that she is attracted to BK's personality and open-minded way of thinking. According to FP, they feel closer emotionally when conducting conversations. BK's appreciation

and his respectful conduct towards and treatment of FP have led her to care about him. FP admits that she was attracted to BK because of the way in which he communicates.

It's more about the topics we talked about which make us feel connected with each other, and then the way he responds in conversations. For instance, when he talks about religion and I don't feel comfortable, we don't continue our chat. I'm also interested in the way he appreciates me. For example, if I [have] offended him, he turns it into humour, so we feel more comfortable. So it's more about our conversation.

CMC Messages

Throughout their relationship, FP and BK have used various types of messaging formats; these are not only text-based, but also contain images (both still and moving) to add more variety to the communication routine. As well as using video calling via Skype, they send each other pictures via email to exchange information about their physical appearances. They have a physical attraction to one another, although they have never seen each other in person. BK has two email accounts, one email for messaging, and the other for receiving photos from FP. Below is the communication in which BK informed FP of his other email account, and that she should use it if she wants to send him pictures.

BK: The xxx.xxx@xxxx.com is where u can send me pics of u and pics of u turning me on or teasing me. Mwah. I love u.

FP: The last pics when I ate in pizza hut. Are u sure I'm sexy. lol. Come here to see me directly..miss u. mwah. . .

Most of the time FP and BK communicate via email. In order to have better access to his email, BK linked one of his email accounts directly to his phone, so that he can reply to FP's emails wherever he is.

FP: Ohh,, I see ,, how many e-mail do you have???

BK: This email is to my cell phone. I don't have my laptop with me.

Romance is inseparable in FP and BKs' relationship. They make an effort to maintain their chemistry, especially as it is a long-distance liaison. FP and BK always include a romantic

element in their conversations, stating how much they love and miss each other, which makes them feel closer emotionally. Although their communications are mediated by the Internet, they are still able to express their romantic feelings.

FP: Where are u now???

BK: Bed. Thinking of u.

FP: What the season there?? Here so cold...I live in tropic area so I always feel cold...will u make some food for me if u here????

BK: Yes and feed it to u. And keep u warm.

FP: baby do u now what I am thinking now?? Are u romance boy???

BK: Mmm I would love to romance u. No Idk [I don't know] what u r thinking of.

FP: I wish u can be part of my heart baby.

A potential problem arose in their relationship when BK's ex-girlfriend, who still had feelings for him, continued to leave romantic messages on BK's Facebook wall. FP expressed her jealousy to BK, and told him how she felt about his ex-girlfriend, since although FP and BK are in a long-distance relationship, it is an exclusive and committed one, and they have both agreed not to conduct romantic relationships with anyone else in real life. The following example highlights the importance of the relationship status on Facebook, particularly for FP, who wanted BK to change his Facebook relationship status to show that he is in a relationship with her.

FP: Thanks to change your relationship status with JN [BK's ex-girlfriend]. I think u r love me seriously. Are u OK?

BK: Yeah, getting ready to sleep.

FP: Yes baby,, but I am jealous to JN, she always say "I love u" in your Facebook wall,, I am jealous. I love u ,,, i miss u,, hope u near me

BK: Awww...I love u 2.

By using Skype, BK and FP were able to see moving images of each other, and this enabled them to exchange physical information that cannot be provided by other forms of SNSs.

This resulted in FP becoming concerned about her looks. During video calls with BK, FP often took off her headscarf, except when they were “Skyping” in public places, such as on FP’s campus. To FP, BK’s opinion about her appearance is important, and influences the way she looks. In addition to video calling, they also exchange pictures from time to time.

FP: Hope, if we live together one day. Do you like my long hair? or short hair?

BK: Ur long hair. Hope u do not cut it.

FP: Yes, i will. but i cutted my bangs be straight. I will send the pic later, i didn't bring now.

BK: Awww.. No more cutting ur hair on ur head.

FP expects BK to be serious with her, and give her his word that he will marry her one day. However, since they have never met in person, FP is not certain of whether BK is genuinely willing to commit to her or not. She does not feel secure on this point just from BK’s promise that he will marry her in the future, since he has only said it in cyberspace, and not in person.

FP: It's very hard not to think twice when you say will marry me, I want too. But, it's not enough if u say in e-mail. Chat now please...whatcha doing now?

BK: Laying on my bed. Thinking of u.

FP: How old when u make love for the first time? i never.

BK: 18. To me be ur first. Did u?

FP: Yes for the first with u and forever after we are wedding.

FP and BK both wish to meet in person. After more than a year of being a couple, BK has begun to make plans to come to Indonesia to meet FP for the first time. They intend for this meeting to strengthen the relationship, and bring it to the next level. However, FP is cautious about how BK will behave in her society. She recognizes the difference between Indonesians and Americans in terms of how people of the opposite sex should behave in public, and this is why FP continuously reminds BK to act more reserved when he comes to Indonesia.

BK: Yes. Make love and cuddle

FP: Yes, but in my area, that's is can't. So many people hate it baby...

BK: U have it with me. Do u hate it? Why do most people hate it for?

FP: U should know, that the most Indonesian people is Islam, so we must married before do it....baby,, I wish u can understand me,, this is about culture,I will really happy if u understand it...do u angry???

BK: No I'm not angry.

FP: Good baby, so I never make love with someone, and I hope I can do that after I marry with someone...if in one relationship I just want to know himself better,what time is it baby???

BK: Ok baby. Its 2.34am

FP: If u understand me, thank's I love u. Are u slepping baby???

BK: Yeah. Im sleppy. I guess I go to sleep alone.

FP also shares her problems with BK. When her parents were getting a divorce, FP was in shock and she turned to BK for comfort. As her boyfriend, BK comforts FP when she needs it. Their conversation below shows how they support each other during bad times. Being away from her family, FP needs extra support from BK to face her situation. The support messages from BK are calming to her.

FP: I really confused by my parent.

BK: Aww... Why?

FP: Yeah, after divorce, I felt empty space, I can't follow both of them...

BK: Aww

FP: Yeah, and I still 18 in different city. Damn!

BK: Aww sorry to hear that. Hugs. Wish u were here.

FP: Yes, hugs, I wanna close to you...

BK: Lay with me n bed.

FP: Yeah, I wanna cry in your arms.

Since she began dating BK, FP has begun to consider continuing her studies in the US to obtain a masters degree in the same major. Although they live in different parts of the world,

they are starting to plan their future together. FP discusses her future education plans with BK. If their relationship works out and they get married, she is planning to move to the US to be with him. The conversation below, about her plans to pursue her masters degree in BK's hometown, shows how serious FP is about BK.

FP: Do u know something? wanna continue study in US. I find good university there.

BK: Where at?

FP: Not find yet, wanna take scholarship. But I find information about NIU [Northern Illinois University]. I will find another.

BK: Kool. Try University of Missouri.

There are times during which FP feels devastated about the long-distance relationship she is involved in, and she often expresses her feelings about this to BK. She continuously asks when BK will come to see her in Indonesia, however he does not have enough money to do this yet. The conversation below demonstrates the fact that they want to take the relationship more seriously by continuing it offline.

FP: Babe, it's crazy but can't stop think about u...want u here.....!!!!!!!

BK: I know.

FP: Yeah so????????????it's made me crazy....

BK: Crazy in a good way?

FP: Yeah, but it's suck. I dreamed about us last night.

BK: Awww... Dream that we kiss.

FP: Idk [I don't know], but I see u in my dream

BK: That be kool.

FP: Yeah, but just a DREAMED. Whens will happen??? I'm crazy bout that..

BK: Idk. I will try. But the money cost keep me from coming.

Summary, FP

Against all odds, FP and BK started a romantic online relationship in 2010. They realized that it would not be easy to maintain a relationship in the face of such heavy obstacles, such as their different global locations with different cultures, values, and norms.

FP and BKs' relationship has been completely built via the Internet: they started as strangers, then got to know each other online. Nevertheless, the issues that they talk about are as broad as in offline communication. FP and BK do not have any limitations with regards to the topics they discuss, which include their different religions. They also provide support for each other's personal problems, romance one another, and express jealousy, sadness, etc. Moreover, they are free to exchange information in numerous forms because of the technology available. Despite the time and distance, they are able to discuss serious issues in their relationship, even though all of these conversations are mediated by the Internet. FP and BK use multiple SNSs, such as Skype, email, mobile email, and Facebook. Each of the SNSs has its own purpose, and they use them according to the functionality required. Skype is considered the richest SNS because it can accommodate visual contact by incorporating moving images, and audio and chat facilities, and thus enable FP and BK to see live images of each other. In addition, via their Facebook profiles, they can see each other's pictures and also pictures of each other's friends and family. Once in a while, FP posts a message on BK's Facebook wall. Though different forms of online communication lead to different forms of togetherness, FP and BK hope that they will meet offline in the future, which shows that they are unsatisfied by just having an online relationship.

IV. 1.2 GP (Female, aged 25)

GP was born in Semarang, Indonesia, in 1987. Before she moved to Jakarta, she lived in Bandung in order to pursue her masters degree in business management. She met her first girlfriend (NA) on the Internet, and they fell in love. For this reason, GP transferred her classes to Jakarta and moved there so they could live together. GP had never been in a same-sex relationship prior to meeting NA. After a year of living together, they broke up; GP then met her

second girlfriend SJ, once again online. They were in a long-distance relationship, since SJ was living in Jogjakarta (eight hours from Jakarta by train). After 10 months of dating, they decided to end the relationship.

Being homosexual is intolerable in Indonesian society, as it is not in line with the religion, norms and values of most of Indonesian people. While it is taboo to have sexual intercourse outside of marriage for heterosexuals, it is even more taboo to be homosexual. This explains why most homosexuals in Indonesia are not open about their sexual orientation.

For GP, the Internet is the easiest way to socialize with the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) community, because it is “hidden” among the heterosexual societies in Indonesia. In order to socialize better with the LGBT community, GP created a separate Facebook account, in addition to the account she had always had. In this way, she is able to protect her identity by not giving any real information about herself on her LGBT Facebook account’s profile.

She deactivated her LGBT Facebook account when she met her first girlfriend, NA. When they broke up, she made a new LGBT account in order to find a new partner. After meeting her second girlfriend, SJ, she deactivated her second account as well. During the time of this study (December 2011), GP had only one Facebook account, which is her “normal”, heterosexual account on which she her friends and family are included in her friends list. On her Facebook wall, she has uploaded a close-up picture of herself, with several pictures tagged from her graduation day, pictures of her childhood, and pictures of her college friends. In terms of basic information, GP lists her background education in Business Administration, her current place of residence, which is Jakarta, her place of origin, namely Semarang, and her date of birth. GP admits that she hides her friends list because she does not want people to know who her Facebook friends are, and she also says that she has some of her LGBT friends the list.

GP states that her purpose for using the Internet to socialize depends on her relationship status.

If I am single, my motive is to look for a partner and if I am not single, I meet new people only for making new friends.

GP claims that she has no intention to reveal herself as a lesbian, and thus she is very careful about disclosing her sexual orientation to people. She is discreet about her sexual preference with her real friends, namely those from school and her coworkers, and her family. When socializing on the Internet, she prefers to meet people who are completely new to her, and who do not know any background information about her. Moreover, GP admits that the Internet has become her main medium within which to find a same-sex partner.

This (LGBT) is my dark alter ego which I don't want to reveal to my true friends [non-gay friends] who know me historically from a long time ago. But, if I meet new people online, they don't know my history/background, who I am, where I live, so I think it is safer for me to reveal the true me to them than to the ones who know my background, such as my family, etc.

As explained above, GP has conducted relationships with two women to date. Both relationships started online, and ended up offline. She met her first partner, NA, on a lesbian forum. She started a romantic relationship with NA after meeting her in person when she travelled to Jakarta from Bandung.

I met my first partner through an online forum. At that time I was in Semarang, and wanted to move to Bandung. I randomly added many accounts in the forum since I was new in town, I did not have friends yet. I chatted with some friends, but not so much with my first partner. We just said hi. After realizing [that we liked each other], we chatted more intensely every day. When I moved to Bandung, we were still in contact. Finally, we met in person in Jakarta. After that, we dated. [This involved] many tragedies and dramas that I had never experienced [before]. We also lived together [in Jakarta] for almost a year, but then we broke up.

After breaking up, GP created a new Facebook profile for socializing within the homosexual community. Not long after that, she met SJ and started a second gay relationship. The relationship was long-distance, and GP and SJ visited each other from time to time. GP claimed that she communicated more intensely (using the Internet), when she was in a long-distance relationship compared to when she lived with her ex-girlfriend, NA. She used the Internet to foster her relationship with her second gay partner. She states that she used her LGBT Facebook accounts only for the benefit of finding a relationship. When she had achieved her purpose, she would shut the accounts down.

In the beginning we only sent messages through Facebook and exchanged our real [heterosexual] Facebook accounts. Moreover, we communicated through SMS [short message service]. She lived in Yogyakarta where I also have a house [...] so I went there sometimes. After that, we dated for ten months. She went abroad once, and for the sake of love, I followed her. [...] In our LDR [long-distance relationship], we mainly communicated via YM because it was cheaper and better than SMS. During weekends, she often visited me, or vice versa. All for love. Finally, we broke up since we had no feelings left between us. [...] We broke up offline. After that, I deactivated my LGBT Facebook account.

Although GP uses the Internet to find gay potential partners, she has never begun a relationship through the cyber world. She claims that she would not do so without seeing the actual person.

I think it would be unreal if we just dated before meeting each other offline. Even though we started the relationship virtually [on screen], if we want to go on a date, it should be in the real world.

CMC Messages

Since GP communicated intensively online with her second partner, SJ, she was able to provide a great deal of data regarding their daily CMC messages. At that time, GP was in Jakarta and SJ was in Manila, in the Philippines.

The CMC messages between GP and SJ were mostly written in Indonesian, with some in English. The following messages have been translated, except where they were already in English.

GP and SJ communicated using several SNSs on the Internet. They started out by using Facebook, and finally met up in person. After they decided to start a romantic relationship in real life, they continued it online since they lived in different places. During the relationship they used many forms of communication channels, mostly in text form via YM, but sometimes they also video-called each other.

SJ: I tried to call you, and also invite you to view my web cam, but you're not there.

GP: I already accepted it. Where are you?

SJ: Why is it dark?

GP: I can't see you. Just click it again.

SJ: Ok.

GP: >:D<. I see you. Hey it's gone. Did you stop it?

SJ: No I didn't.

GP: You see in your status, not "view my webcam" anymore. Invite me agaaain!

With respect to the prospect of conducting video calls, GP became concerned about what SJ would think about her looks. GP thought SJ liked girls with long hair, so was unconfident as she had short, bob-styled hair. When video-calling each other, GP wanted to make sure that SJ approved of her hairstyle.

GP: Do you like girls with long or short hair?

SJ: Uhhh, not specifically. But mostly my exes have long hair. It all depends on the face shape. The most important thing is the person is comfortable with herself. I can tell if the person is comfortable or not with her style. So I think its no use she has long hair but she's not comfortable, or she has short hair but that's not what she wants.

GP: What do you think about mine?

SJ: I like your hair.

GP: The style? Or the hair?

SJ: Your hair and style, I guess :D. I like the way you are, my dear.

Jealousy was experienced during their long-distance relationship. One example was when GP's old friend from school stayed over at her house.

GP: It's a friend from when I was in college.

SJ: Does she know you are gay?

GP: Nope

SJ: Don't tell her, she would hit on you.

GP: Hahahahhaa

SJ : [-(. I'm jealous.

GP: Don't worry honey, Aquarius is a faithful person ;). She's just a best friend, that's all.

In SJ and GPs' relationship, a romantic aspect existed. Since all of their communications were mediated, mostly in the form of texts, romance was a good way to develop intimacy within their relationship. In the below conversation, GP and SJ were romancing each other to enhance their emotional closeness as a couple.

GP: Kiss me first.

SJ: Muah.

GP: That was a too light kiss. You are stingy.

SJ: Whenever I kiss you, you never kissed back. Kiss me back will you?

GP: Mmmuaachhhhhhhhhh

SJ: Muuuach honey.

GP: Take care, baby."Although there will be a huge wall in the future, don't be scared, we'll break them together" mean it ya... cao.

SJ: Surely. I still remember the moment we kissed each other before I go. I think that was the first time we kissed in public.

GP: ='>

GP and SJ were open with each other, and they discussed all aspects of each other's lives. Sometimes they discussed sex and how they felt about it.

GP: Miss ur kisses

SJ: I miss everything about you.

GP: I like when u're sweating :">

SJ: Why?

GP: Dunno, I just feel sexier. Feel your sweat. Everything about you makes me hmmm..

SJ : :). Glad to know you enjoy sleeping with me.

GP: Falling asleep beside you is the most beautiful moment in my life. I feel safe. Your scent makes me feel like I'm home.

GP: I'm not lying.

SJ: Did you say the same thing to everyone you slept with?

GP: Hahahahaha. No way. I only slept with two women, you and my ex. Why I want to do it with you, because I feel the comfort. I'm not a one-night stand type. Only two women touched me, you and my ex.

They also paid close attention to each other, especially when one of them was sick. Although they could not really help each other, since they were not in physical proximity, they each supported the other by, for instance, encouraging them to go to the doctor, reminding them to take medicine, asking about progress, and so on. They also gave each other affection, just as an offline couple would do. Although all support was given online in the form of text messages, the feeling of being supported was created effectively.

GP: Be careful honey. Get well soon. I wish I were there to take care of you.

SJ: Thank you honey.

GP: Love you.

SJ: Don't worry I'll be fit in no time.

GP: Promise?

SJ: You too, take care of yourself, don't be too tired.

GP: Don't go out too late in the meantime.

SJ: Ok honey.

Summary, GP

Unlike in some western countries, two women falling in love and having a romantic relationship is still intolerable in Indonesia. GP pretends to be straight because she is aware of

the fact that she lives in a heterosexual society. At the same time, she has the need to socialize with the homosexual community as well. She has used Facebook to socialize both in the heterosexual and homosexual communities, using different accounts. By being anonymous, she can protect her identity while socializing with the homosexual community.

Through Facebook, she met her second girlfriend, SJ. They met in real life and then decided to start a relationship, despite it being long-distance. Throughout their relationship they mostly communicated online, in order to get to know each other and to enhance their emotional closeness as a couple. They used numerous SNSs to support their relationship, in addition to SMS and phone calls; thus, the Internet played an important role in keeping their relationship going, as well as strengthening it.

IV. 1.3 RA (Female, aged 27)

RA is a social media specialist. Her job is to establish and maintain her clients' social media accounts, including Facebook and Twitter. RA is online at all times not only because of her job, but also because she has a passion for the medium. In addition, she is an active blogger. Her blog won the *Internet Sehat*³ Blog & Content Award (ISBA) for being one of the most informative blogs in Indonesia.

For her, social media is a place not only to maintain existing relationships with old friends or relatives, but also to meet new people. On Facebook, she uses a photo of herself posing in front of a backdrop of *Angry Birds*⁴ as her profile picture. Several tagged pictures on her wall are of her and her friends. She provides information about herself such as: her role as a Social Media Specialist, her university, Jakarta as her place of residence, her relationship status ("it's complicated"), the three languages she speaks (English, Indonesian, Italian), and her birth date. On her wall, she puts many links to useful information on the Internet and her blog. Furthermore, she has 1,520 Facebook friends.

³ *Internet Sehat* translates as "Healthy Internet"

⁴ *Angry Birds* is puzzle video game which was first released for Apple's iOS.

Of the various SNSs, she mainly uses Twitter; apart from updating her own Twitter account, she also updates several of her clients'. In the below statement, she points out that she uses a few SNSs to greet real-life friends (e.g. Facebook), and she mostly uses Twitter to socialize with new people, since Twitter is more public than Facebook.

For old friends or not-so-close friends, I just greet them when they are having birthdays, [posting] birthday wishes, something like that. [For Twitter] It's very often [new people that I communicate with] because when we're [on] Twitter, everyone can follow or unfollow everyone they want [...] as we know that the Internet has no limits; everyone, no matter where they are, can access the Internet as much as they want.

As a person who is always exposed on the Internet, she has experience of conducting two romantic relationships with men online. At the time of the interview, she was still in a relationship with the second one. Although she met her ex-boyfriend (AN) and current boyfriend (SW) via the Internet, she used/uses different SNSs to communicate with each. The SNS used depends on the popularity of the SNS at that time, and its functionality. For instance, RA met AN through Friendster⁵, and SW on Twitter, which is currently (as of 2011) one of the most popular SNSs in Indonesia.

RA's first romantic online relationship was with AN. AN sent a message via Friendster to RA, and stated his desire to be friends with her. He mentioned that he had been searching for his favorite authors and musicians, and unintentionally found RA's profile. He told her that he was interested in her blog, which she found flattering. After a while, RA decided that she wanted to meet him in person; however, RA did not trust AN immediately after they became online friends. As the below statement shows, RA observed AN's behaviour in cyberspace before she decided to meet him in real life.

He added my Friendster [account] after sending me an email telling me that he was surprised to find out about the writers that I like. He said that I have a positive energy and he said we have many things in common (which he saw from my profile), so he wanted to be my friend on Friendster and asked me to approve his request. After reading his email, I thought it was okay to approve him, moreover he didn't talk about my physical appearance and he talked more about my writing on my blog. I am flattered if someone compliments my writing. So I confirmed his friend request. One day, I was

⁵ This was the most popular SNS in Indonesia in 2008.

online on YM, and he was online too, so we talked about many things including the similarities that we have. Since he never asked my mobile number or to meet offline, I trusted him. Until one day, I asked him to play basketball⁶ at my campus just to prove whether he was real or not.

RA was cautious with strangers she met online, which is why she checked AN's Friendster profile, and made some observations of how he communicates with his Friendster friends, before she made further decisions about letting him approach her.

I didn't think that he was a freak or something, because I read his testimonials and comments on his Friendster profile. They were good enough.

RA claims that she and AN have many similarities as individuals, such as the same taste in music, enjoyment of the same sports, and a preference for the same books, so they could enjoy many activities together. However, AN did not really use the Internet for communication, while RA considers cyberspace her life because she works in the Internet field. AN preferred communicating via phone calls or text messages, whereas RA preferred him to follow her SNS updates, so that he would not have to asked her questions about her activities. This was one of the reasons they eventually broke up after three years of dating.

With AN, we often communicated by phone or SMS. The point is, my ex-boyfriend was seldom online; he never updates his Twitter. One day, he updated his status on Facebook to complain behind my back, and he always asked 'Where are you?' I said 'Don't you see my status updates?', 'What are you doing?' I said 'Don't you see my Twitter?', 'How is your trip?' I said 'Why don't you read my blog?'. It made me mad because this is my job, I earn money from this, so I have to always be active on the Internet.

RA's current boyfriend, SW, is also a heavy Internet user. He is an active blogger as well, and is always online on his Twitter account. RA always posts her activities via Twitter, so SW knows about RA's activities. RA and SW use social media to communicate, as well as text messages and phone calls. RA feels that this is an efficient way of communicating.

⁶ Basket ball is one of RA's hobbies, and coincidentally AN plays basket ball as well. RA and AN discussed about each other's hobbies through the CMC.

We communicate by phone and SMS, however, YM and DM [Direct Message] Twitter have an important role in our relationship. He knows my activities from the Internet, he would say 'have fun' when he read my status updates. I don't think he's a stalker, and it's okay for me if he knows my activities from the Internet without asking too much about my activities or what am I doing, somehow it's more efficient.

CMC Messages

The CMC message provided by RA is a Friendster message from her ex-boyfriend AN, in which he introduced himself and asked RA to add him as her friend in Friendster and Yahoo Messenger. He began his message by stating that he had no intention of meeting people via Friendster, and only uses it to find old friends. This introduction seemed an effort to gain RA's trust, since he was a complete stranger to RA.

Hi, I am AN. As you can see from my profile (if you already approved it), I've been in Friendster since 2004. The thing that keeps making me online to Friendster is the same like any other Friendster users, finding old friends. Maybe only a year I used Friendster very often for that purpose. I found a lot of my old friends, but I also can't find some of them. Eventually, I kind of lost interest in Friendster.

AN pointed out in this message that he was not a big Friendster fan, and he was not someone who added people just to increase his friend list. He explained this to RA in order to show that he was a decent person and had no negative intentions. His only intention was to be friends with people via social media (Friendster and YM).

All I did after that were just reading and filling in those foolish bulletins, or adding pictures to my gallery [in Friendster]. Actually, I don't have the intention or the courage to do what I'm doing to you now. I never thought I want to add someone I don't know, and especially since I have never wanted to add people just to have many friends in Friendster. The only crazy thing I've done with Friendster was sending messages [adding] to several people named 'AN' too [people who have the same name]. So don't feel strange if you see many people named 'AN' in my friend list.

AN explained in his message why he wanted to get to know RA better. Despite their age difference (AN was 38 years old and RA was 23) they both share the same interests in music and books. He also liked RA's blog. He admired RA for being a positive person. This encouraged AN to approach RA.

I found you when I tried filtered the search using the word 'Goenawan' (Goenawan Mohammad⁷), 'Seno' (for Seno Gumira Ajidarma⁸), and 'books' ...I found 40 people. Probably you're wondering why I chose you? First, when I saw your profile, I was telling myself, "Oh my god, how can this 23-year-old girl have that taste of books and music???" Seriously, I'm giving you more of the compliments. That's crazy, 'Seno' and 'Catatan Pinggir'⁹? Then Stevie Wonder? Things that I like are also being liked by 23 years old? Honestly, I thought you got the influence from your older siblings or other family members. But after I read your blog, which is the second reason why I chose you, I realized you're not only a reader, but an avid reader. I really like '36' and 'I.N.V.U' which are so mysterious for me. After I also like 'T-shirts'. It's cool! Really cool! Then after reading your other writings in the 'review' and see your pictures, the impressions I got is you have things that I think everybody (including me) want to have, energy and enthusiasm.

In his closing statement, AN stated that he wanted RA to add him in both Friendster and Yahoo Messenger. This made it clear that he wanted to be RA's friend in more than one SNS, in order to get more information and at the same time become closer emotionally.

I hope you don't mind if I added you, both in Friendster and Yahoo Messenger. I really want to have the chance to know you better. Apart from that we like similar things, I figure that by being around you, I can be influenced by your burning energy and enthusiasm. I hope this is going to be a good start. Thank you for your attention.

Regards,

AN

Summary, RA

RA is very familiar with the Internet and SNSs, since she is a social media specialist. Apart from her work, she also has a passion for this field, and uses the Internet in her leisure

⁷ A famous Indonesian writer.

⁸ Another famous Indonesian writer.

⁹ Goenawan Mohammad's book.

time. She is an active blogger and claims she is always online. In other words, the Internet has become an essential part of her life. Even though they live in the same city, she uses several SNSs in addition to phone calls and text messages to communicate with her boyfriend. She states that the Internet offers an alternative way for her to communicate, and that SNSs are replacing conventional communication methods (phone calls and SMS). RA has been an SNS user for a long time, and changes SNSs according to their functionality and popularity.

One of the reasons why she broke up with AN was because she felt that he did not understand her preferred means of communication. AN preferred communicating via mobile phone to get updates on RA's activities, while RA thought that observing her SNSs updates would have showed that he cared for her. RA and SW, by comparison, share the same values when it comes to communicating via the Internet.

IV. 1.4 BN (Male, aged 27)

As with the three earlier subjects, BN is also a Facebook user, and used this medium to seek a potential girlfriend (before he met his current girlfriend in June 2011). His profile picture was a picture of himself behind a camera, and his profile also included several photos tagged by his friends. The basic information on his wall includes: the TV Company he works for, his previous university, Jakarta as his current (as of 2011) place of residence, and "in a relationship" as his relationship status. He has 283 friends in his friends list. His girlfriend has posted several comments on his wall, which indicates that Facebook is one of the ways in which they communicate.

BN is a professional video editor who works for a national television company in Indonesia. He works in shifts: sometimes he has a day shift, and sometimes a night shift. He claims that his job takes up most of his time. He often has to spend nights at the office to meet deadlines. As a result, he has very limited time for socializing with friends, or for dating. Thus, he decided to try to find love through the Internet.

In total, he has dated four people online, but only two of these have continued on to an offline relationship. At the time of writing (December 2011), he was in his second relationship, in which he had already met his girlfriend in person. With his first partner, he communicated mostly by chatting and text message via mobile phone. Unfortunately, they did not stay together for long because neither of them had time for the other.

I added her Facebook, She was an activist in a foundation that facilitates street children's education in Bogor¹⁰. We chatted and sent texts, every Sunday she teaches the children and I came there twice [...] now we're only friends.

He met his current girlfriend when he searched randomly for certain profiles which met his criteria. He prefers to have a girlfriend who belongs to a certain tribe in Indonesia, namely Javanese¹¹, so he deliberately sought someone who lives on Java Island. He searched Facebook for girls' profiles and looked at their pictures. If he found someone interesting he would send her a message to try to get to know her better. At the time of the study, BN is in a relationship with a girl who lives in Semarang (Central Java). The relationship is a committed one and is heading for marriage.

She lives in Semarang, that is one reason why I added her on Facebook. When she confirmed my friend request, I asked her to chat with me. Although she was a bit cold when we first chatted, I asked for her phone number. After a month, I flew to Semarang. When we met she told me that she wanted to have a serious relationship, so I asked her to come to Jakarta, and meet my parents. We went to Jakarta by train. After meeting my parents, I drove her back to Semarang. It was an amazing experience and we're still together now.

BN was reserved during the interview, and not willing to give detail information. He answered only the basic questions, without giving away more information about himself. This is also reflected in his statement about how he usually positions himself when he communicates within his relationships (past and present).

¹⁰ One of the satellite cities that surround Jakarta.

¹¹ One of the tribes in Indonesia, who mostly live on Java Island.

Most of the time I just try to be a good listener [...] I tend to be a consultant for them to help them figure out their problems.

BN claims that in both of his romantic relationships they have discussed each other's hobbies, such as travelling, in depth. After meeting them online, BN met both in person, and they then travelled together. Spending time and enjoying activities together were BN's way of making the relationships stronger. BN still considers offline activities to be the most prominent way in which to strengthen emotional bonds with his girlfriends.

Usually we talked about travelling. So, it's more about hobbies [...] I travelled with both of them, but mostly with my second girlfriend.

CMC Messages

BN claims that his current relationship is primarily conducted online, because his girlfriend, AA, lives in Semarang, which is more than 400km from Jakarta. As the one who initiated the romantic relationship, BN added her to Facebook before they had had any contact. Below is a conversation that took place in Facebook chat after AA approved BN's friend request.

BN: Hi, how are you? Thank you for approving my invitation.

AA: I'm fine, you're welcome.

Their conversations on Facebook chat began slowly when they first met each other online. They started by asking about basic information, such as occupation. BN claims that when they were chatting for the first time, AA was not really friendly to him.

BN: So where do you come from? Where do you work?

AA: I was born in Solo but I'm working in Semarang, in a distributor company for Toyota.

BN: From which part of Solo?

AA: In an area called Punggawan, near Balapan Station. Do you know where?

BN: Not really, just wanted to ask.

AA: Btw [by the way], where do you work?

BN: In a private television.

AA: In which TV? As what?

BN: TV XX, as an editor.

Their first conversation was rather brief. Hence, BN decided to ask directly for her phone number, and to his surprise, she gave it to him immediately. They communicated further via mobile phone, using both text messages and phone calls.

BN: BTW, can I have your phone number?

AA: What is it for?

BN: So I can call or text you. I won't play around with it. Only if you want to.

AA: +62-xxxxxxxxx

BN: Thanks. I will text you later.

Summary, BN

BN states that his work takes up most of his time, so that he is barely able to allocate time to socializing. In order to find a girlfriend, he decided to use Facebook, and it was through this means that he met his current (December 2011) girlfriend, who did not live in Jakarta. Without the Internet, BN feels it would be almost impossible for him to continue the relationship, since he does not have much time for socializing and his girlfriend lives in another city. Using the Internet and the SNS has given BN the chance to find someone who met his criteria. He was able to conduct a preliminary selection using Facebook profiles before introducing himself. In short, BN uses Facebook both for maintaining friendships with his existing friends, and finding a potential girlfriend.

IV.1.5 MT (Female, 50)

MT is a 50-year-old woman who works for an international oil company based in Jakarta, as the Head of Record Center in the General Affairs Department. She has been married for eight years to an American man, TH, whom she met via the Internet.

MT claims that she is a “loner”, and prefers reading books over socializing with people. Unlike the other subjects, she does not have a Facebook account.

She had strict criteria for her potential spouse, and encountered difficulties in finding “the one”. MT belongs to the Bataknese tribe¹², and by Bataknese tradition, members are expected to marry among themselves. However, MT was unable to find someone (which is also Bataknese) whom she was interested in. She even tried putting an advertisement in the newspaper the in hope that she would find someone interesting, but this was not successful.

I'm a Bataknese from a big family. Whenever there was a family gathering, my relatives kept asking me why I hadn't got married yet. They tried to find me some Bataknese men but somehow I wasn't interested in them because at that time I'd already worked with foreigners and it made me disinterested in Bataknese men. I even tried to find someone through an ad in Kompas [a local newspaper] together with my friend. She got someone but I didn't find anyone, although Kompas sent me 45 candidates. No one impressed me because I have my own criteria.

When she was 37 years old, she found a new way to overcome the spatial boundaries and reach wider options in searching for a soulmate: using the Internet. MT claims that by using the Internet, she was able to reach candidates faster than in any conventional way.

Before I was married, my aunt often introduced me to the eligible men she knew. She introduced me to let's say one candidate each week. Whereas by using the Internet, it would give me 50 candidates in less than a month.

MT realized, however, that finding a partner via the Internet who could fulfill her expectations was not an easy matter, especially because she did not know anything about the

¹² One of the tribes in Indonesia, from Sumatra Island.

people she could contact from cyberspace. Hence, she had her own set of rules and criteria to find a man that would fit her. She began her mission by putting an advertisement on the Internet. In it, she stated that she was looking for a decent man who was ready for marriage. She received 50 emails from men all over the world. Of those 50, she narrowed them down using her criteria and rules. The way in which the people communicated with her was also included in her consideration of whether or not she needed to eliminate them.

I limited the people I met online to 50. Then I sorted them by looking at their educational background, their nationality, the way they think, and their height, so if someone didn't meet the qualifications, I deleted them right away from the candidates list. I paid attention to the way they write; their word choices could give me hints about what they have on their mind and also the level of their intelligence [...] if they said something too vulgar, I immediately removed them from my list.

In addition to the criteria above, MT also had certain subjective reasons for preferring certain men over others. She likes British men because of their English accents, and American men because of their open-minded ways of thinking. Moreover, she likes tall men of at least 180cm. Those who did not meet her criteria were eliminated immediately.

There was a British man who proposed to me right away, a couple of days after we met, but unfortunately I had my own rule to find a man whose height was 180cm.

After 6-12 months of corresponding via the Internet. MT had narrowed them down from 50 to only seven. MT then invited those men to visit her in Jakarta. MT claims that during their visits, she treated them like friends and nothing more. From their willingness to make a trip to Indonesia, MT was able to judge their seriousness to have a committed relationship with her.

I let them come here after six months of getting to know each other via the Internet. For me, six months was enough for a mature person to come and show their willingness to have a serious relationship with me [...] I wanted to see what they had in mind before I asked them to come to Jakarta.

MT claims that she is an unromantic person. In her opinion, romanticism was not needed when she conducted her online relationships. Rather, she based these relationships on logic.

Furthermore, she informed her family about her mission and told them about all of the online relationships. She also updated them of her progress, and even let her mother participate in selecting among the seven people who came to Jakarta.

I think I wasn't looking for a romantic relationship, but a logical one. Romanticism itself would appear after meeting the right person. I didn't want to have sex with him because I didn't want to embarrass my family too [...] I wanted my family to take part in this, at least to let them know that I was in an online relationship.

Throughout their online relationship, MT and the final candidate, her now-husband TH, discussed their plans for the future, as well as their personal values. By discussing these issues, they got to know more about each other. Before they met in person, they had already conducted serious conversations about marriage and life after marriage.

Oh yes, for instance about where we would live after we got married; he asked me to move to the US. We also talked about how many children we want to have, or what kind of job I would like to take if I moved there. We also talked about our principal values.

MT and TH conducted most of their “getting to know each other” phase online. For MT, this long-distance correspondence was one of her stages of selection. TH was patient enough to conduct a long-distance friendship for months, which for MT was an indication of TH’s seriousness. In other words, MT measured seriousness according to consistency and correspondence time.

We were online for almost 12 months; he was in Jakarta around two weeks, and then we kept in touch for almost 4-5 months before we decided to get married here according to Batak customs.

Even though they are now married, they are still in a long-distance relationship due to a visa problem. MT lives in Indonesia, and TH still lives in Wisconsin, USA. MT goes to visit her husband once every five months, and thus communication is very important in their marriage, even though they are separated by a great distance.

Married couples normally live together. Since we are separated, communication is important in our married life. We talk about everything, I let him know what I feel. He calls me four times a day.

CMC Messages

MT and TH had an online relationship for almost 12 months before they met in person when TH came to Jakarta. In that 12 months they discussed many issues, including their ways of thinking, their likes and dislikes, and their personalities.

You said in your ad that you are kind of shy. I am too. I always found it difficult to speak to new people that I do not know. I am too relatively new to meeting people via the Internet. This is because my work is now based out of my home and getting out to meet people in the more conventional ways is more difficult. Perhaps this is good in that I can reach out to people such as you. The chances of us meeting in a particular place are pretty slim. However, I am glad in that more interesting people, like you, are available than the local people around here.

TH told MT that he has an interest in other countries' cultures, and wanted to learn more about them. He also told MT about his opinion of American women, and that he was more attracted to women from foreign countries. MT also has negative opinions towards Indonesian men. So in this respect, they share the same way of thinking about the opposite sex from their own countries.

I have a great interest in other cultures. I am always trying to learn more about people from different parts of the world. The beauty of other cultures fascinates me. I do seem to have difficulty in maintaining patience with American women. Certainly I have enjoyed myself more in the company of foreign women.... It seems that you have encountered similar difficulties. Your description of the behavior of Indonesian men is kind of sad.

MT and TH also talked about the distance between them, which could have become an obstacle in their relationship. However, neither of them considered distance to be a barrier. TH also stated in his email that he wanted to get to know MT despite the thousands of miles between them.

You asked me if the distance would make things difficult. There is no doubt that the physical distance between us does not allow for me to visit you regularly. It would be nice to be able to see the sparkle in your eyes or to see your smile...I see distance as no barrier at all to our getting to know each other.

MT says that throughout their relationship, since it is a long-distance one, communication is the most important thing in terms of keeping the relationship going. TH has assured MT that she can say anything and be honest with him, as he tries to do the same.

You can always be free to talk to me or ask me about anything you wish. I will always be attentive to what you say and will be honest with you.

Summary, MT

At the age of 37, MT began to search for a potential husband using the Internet. She had not been an Internet user before, and became a user solely to further her mission to find a soulmate, not for making friends. She posted an advertisement about herself on the Internet, saying that she was looking for a future husband, and 50 people from around the world answered it within one month; something that conventional communication methods (phones, FtF, etc.) would not have been able to facilitate. She narrowed her selection down by judging the respondents' personalities in respect to the way in which they communicated via written correspondence. After approximately one year, she identified the best choice, TH, to whom she is now married.

Even after eight years of marriage (as of 2011), MT and TH still live in their home countries because of a visa issue. Throughout their relationship, from the time when TH answered MT's advertisement until today, they have maintained their long-distance relationship, primarily through emails and phone calls.

IV.2 Findings from the interviews: Comparison

In this sub-chapter, the data presentation and analysis will be presented under certain topics. Therefore, the subjects' answers can be compared thus their similarities and differences will be easily distinguished.

IV.2.1 Internet usage

For most of the subjects, the Internet is something they use on a daily basis, and some of them never even “sign out” of cyberspace. Four out of five subjects go online everyday.

Every day. I mean in a week, I almost use it every day. In the morning, afternoon, and evening. (FP)

Very often, every day. (GP)

I work in front of the PC from 7 to 11, but if I'm not working I must be online [...] for sure I am always online, it's never off. (RA)

Very often because I use it while working, yeah all the time except when I'm sleeping. (BN)

While MT is only online during her lunch break.

It's not very often, because I must work, usually I use the Internet up to two hours in a day. (MT)

When I was interviewing MT, she claimed that she is no longer the heavy Internet user she used to be, before she got married to her husband.

In 2000 [my] aim was looking for friends and a soulmate. So it happened for one-and-a-half years, every Saturday me and my best friend went to an Internet café [...] because I didn't have a computer at that time. We spent four hours there. Actually, it happened when I was already working at Santa Fe [company name]; one of my friends taught us to use the Internet because at that time, the Internet was so 'in'. (MT)

Analysis

Four out of five subjects are heavy Internet users. They are almost never offline. FP, GP, RA and BN are online most of the time, day and night, which shows their interest in the cyber world. It has become a part of their life, and they are highly dependent on it. MT is no longer a heavy Internet user, and only goes online during lunchtimes on weekdays, although when she was on her quest to find a soulmate via the Internet, she made time to go on the Internet every weekend. This difference in usage levels may be related to the generational difference between MT and the other participants: FP, GP, RA and BN are in their mid- to late-twenties, while MT is in her fifties.

IV.2.2 Purposes for using the Internet

The subjects use the Internet for many purposes, depending on their needs, hobbies, occupations, etc. Below are the reasons why the informants use the Internet, and these indicate that the Internet has become a very important aspect of their lives.

Sometimes for browsing about competitions, seminars, papers [school assignments] but mostly for chatting. (FP)

Correspondence. Like mailing, chatting, Facebook, browsing. I am dependent to Google so I have to stay online¹³. (GP)

For work, because as a social media specialist I must manage my clients' accounts such as Facebook or Twitter which need to be updated even though it's the weekend. [Apart from work I use it] to socialize, such as up date my Twitter account. (RA)

Reading news, chatting, browsing information about editing, browsing and watching videos, Facebook, socializing. (BN)

All of the subjects except for MT use the Internet to socialize by using SNSs such as Facebook, Twitter, Yahoo Messenger, etc. MT uses the Internet mainly for leisure activities.

¹³ GP has a strong dependency on Google (she likes to browse information with Google).

I only use the Internet if I want to browse for information that I really need. I seldom use it for fun, for instance browsing some fashion style. (MT)

However, her current habits with regards to using the Internet differ from her previous ones. When she had a different purpose, she was a heavier Internet user.

Actually, my goal was looking for a soulmate, not a friendship, because I'm an introverted person and like to be alone, so I wasn't looking for friendship or companionship, but marriage. (MT)

Analysis

The Internet offers many forms of communication, with numerous SNSs that can accommodate a range of purposes. FP, GP, BN and RA are heavy Internet users, and use it not only for their work and study, but also for socializing in forms such as chatting, “Facebooking”, “Twittering”, emailing, etc. On the other hand, MT says that back in 2000, her purpose for using the Internet was to meet new people to seek a potential husband, but now (in 2011) she mainly uses it for finding information she needs.

IV.2.3 Devices used to access the Internet

With respect to the wide range of advanced devices existing today, Internet users have extensive options to choose from when deciding which device is most suitable and comfortable for them to use for accessing the Internet. Many Internet users have more than one device to meet their needs.

Modem and laptop. (FP)

BlackBerry and laptop. (GP)

Mostly, I use mobile phone and laptop? (RA)

Mobile phone (BlackBerry), laptop, PC, yeah all devices that are able to connect to the Internet, I'll use them. (BN)

Since MT is no longer a frequent user of the Internet, she is satisfied by using one device, even though it is not a portable one.

PC. Mostly, I use the internet when I'm in the office. (MT)

Analysis

The first four subjects use several devices to access the Internet, including fixed and portable ones. They use personal computers (PCs), laptops, and mobile (smart) phones to connect to the Internet. On the contrary, MT claims that she is already satisfied by using a computer at her workplace, and says that she does not use any portable devices to access the Internet. Communications with her husband in the US mainly take place through international phone calls.

IV.2.4 The Internet and socialization

The Internet has made communication easier and cheaper, and this technology certainly brings about changes to the ways in which people communicate and socialize, as reflected in the subjects' statements below.

Yeah I think [it is easier now]. It's more fun to be online with people who are far away from me, people who I don't know at all. (FP)

Yes, it's easier now. It's true that it's not face-to-face but for me it makes communication easier. (GP)

[The Internet has] changed the way we socialize, before we used to use SMS to contact each other but now we can use YM to contact everyone [...] Now the Internet can help us to get closer to our old friends; we can find out their latest news from their Facebook accounts, for instance we can find out if they are engaged, or married, or have continued their study abroad. I think it is no longer surprising if we know about their latest news from the Internet instead of from real life. (RA)

MT also stated that the Internet has changed her way of socializing, even though she is currently the least-frequent Internet user, compared to other subjects. Her statement below shows

that she does not maintain friendships online , because her purpose for using the Internet was to find a potential spouse, and she never intended to make new friends or find old friends on the Internet.

Well, it has changed me in the sense that I can easily get a lot of friends in the nick of time, but I was only looking for [those] who were also looking for a serious relationship, so usually I would remove them from my list if they were not looking for a serious relationship. (MT)

Unlike the other subjects, who immediately agreed that the Internet has changed the way they socialize, BN was a bit hesitant because he does not consider himself as someone who socializes via the Internet often; usually he just uses Facebook to make appointments to get together with friends. However, when asked about meeting new people from the Internet, he realized that he does use it for socializing with new people in certain situations.

I don't think it changed me because I seldom socialize on the Internet although I use it. I think it's better to meet offline, make an appointment in one place and hang out there. [...] I use the Internet to get to know someone new. (BN)

Analysis

FP, GP, RA and MT state that the Internet has changed the way they socialize. BN, however, hesitated initially because he mainly uses the Internet to make appointments with his friends, but after some thought he realized that he does use the Internet to meet new people as well. For these participants, the Internet makes communication easier and cheaper, which ultimately influences the way they socialize. RA pointed out that she now uses the Internet and SNSs instead of conventional text messaging via mobile to contact her friends, and GP stated that it is easier for her to communicate using the Internet. FP mentioned that distance is no longer an issue for socializing, and she can easily meet new people on the Internet from distant countries. MT states that she can make new (online) friends faster, compared to in real life.

IV.2.5 Opinions on online relationships

When asked their opinion on online relationships, the four subjects immediately agreed that there are positive sides to conducting relationships online. RA, for instance, who is very

familiar with the Internet, has no bad impressions regarding online relationships. BN states that as long as he uses it wisely, it will not bring about negative outcomes. GP has positive opinions about online relationships as well, and also points out that she treats people from each of her Facebooks account differently – she was more open to meeting new people on her LGBT account (before she deactivated it), because she was looking for a potential lesbian partner and friends from the homosexual community. MT also highlights the positive sides, but says that she was careful when getting to know people via the Internet. The responses below demonstrate the participants' feelings on using the Internet to conduct online relationships.

It's pretty fine. (RA)

For me personally, it tends to be positive. Because I use it in the right way. I mean I want to know lots of people [...] so it's not just for fun. (BN)

I think for me it's positive. Because of the Internet, communication is easier now. [...] If I meet a completely new person, especially on Facebook, I will ignore them, but if we have many mutual friends, I will accept [their friend request] [...] except for [my] LGBT Facebook [where] I will just accept friend requests from anyone. (GP)

Personally, I think it's positive. Well, it depends on the people who use the Internet. If they use it in a positive way, the results will be positive too. Nowadays the Internet helps us to make friendships easily, but we still need to be picky to make us feel safe when we use it, yeah who knows what kind of people we meet in the cyber world. (MT)

FP was the only one who expressed any doubts about online relationships. She claims that we should all be wary when meeting people from the Internet.

It's not really good because we can be fooled by people we meet on the Internet. (FP)

Despite her doubts, however, she is still in a relationship with BK, who was a stranger to her when they first met online.

Analysis

Four out of five respondents gave positive statements about online relationships, as long as the user does not abuse it for negative purposes. FP seems to be more sceptical about online relationships, although she met her current boyfriend via the Internet.

IV.2.6 Frequency of socializing online and offline

In this era of advanced communication technology, socializing can be done both online and offline. Online communication has become easier and cheaper day by day, and thus socializing online is a common activity for today's societies. With regards to the frequency of socializing online and offline, the subjects gave various answers. FP claims that proportional amounts of time are spent socializing offline and online.

It's a balance. (FP)

RA also says that she spends a balanced proportion of time socializing offline and online, but says that she mostly communicates offline with her boyfriend, since they live in the same city.

With friends, it's a balance between online and offline. If it's with my boyfriend, it's more offline. (RA)

GP states that she does more online socializing, because it does not require her to allocate special times for it, and thus she can socialize while doing other activities.

[I communicate] mostly online. It is difficult to meet friends because we are busy [...] With the Internet, we can still communicate while doing what we are doing. (GP)

BN claims that in terms of people whom he met on the Internet, he only socializes with them online, whereas with his existing friends he mostly socializes with them offline.

The percentage [of] new people met on the Internet is higher than meeting them offline. [Socializing offline] is just for old friends. (BN)

MT never really uses the Internet for socializing, and therefore she does all her socializing with friends offline.

Offline of course. I only used the Internet to find a prospective relationship. So for socializing in general, I do offline socializing more often. (MT)

Analysis

The subjects gave various answers about the frequencies with which they socialize online and offline. FP claims that there is a balance between socializing online and offline, while RA claims that it is a balance with her friends, but that she mostly communicates with her boyfriend RA offline. GP states that she does most of her socializing online, because it is more time-efficient for her. BN socializes online with people whom he met via the Internet, and does not use it much for maintaining existing friendships. MT, who does not have any SNS accounts, prefers to socialize offline.

IV.2.7 Expectations of meeting people on the Internet

Some of the subjects do not expect anything more from SNSs than making online friends. FP's expectation with regards to meeting people online was just to make friends with people from other countries, to learn about their culture, and to practice her English. GP also claims that her expectation was to gain friendships and network. RA also seeks to make friends via the Internet, however she has criteria for the people she wants to be friends with. While BN points out that the Internet not only helps him to socialize, and make friends, but also to find romance. The statements below highlight these viewpoints.

It's more a friendship, in order to help me speak English fluently [...] and I can learn their culture too. (FP)

For networking and friendship. For instance, I meet people who are actually my old friends from school or work. Via Facebook, we can easily communicate. From just commenting (on Facebook status or photos), the relationship can be developed to send personal messages and exchange phone numbers, so that the communication is developed not just virtually, but also in the real world. (GP)

The simplest expectation is I can make friends with [people I meet on the Internet]. We can communicate by chatting on the Internet because if we're busy with our work, the Internet helps us to connect to each other. (BN)

Personally, I want to make friends with people who 1. I met in the real life before; 2. Know how to have fun; 3. Have the same hobbies; 4. Are funny; 5. Are informative. So if they don't have those five qualifications, I will not want to make friends with them in the

cyber world. For instance if there is somebody I don't know and we don't have any mutual friends (on Facebook), I won't confirm his/her friend request. (RA)

Only MT never expected friendship alone from the people she met on the Internet. She used the Internet to find a foreign husband who wanted to have a serious relationship like she did. Hence, she ignored the people who wanted to be just friends.

Well, because I was looking for a serious relationship, I made my own rules by narrowing down the people I know on the Internet. I expected to find one from the 50 people I met who really wanted to be serious with me. (MT)

Analysis

Most of the subjects only expect friendships out of the people they meet on the Internet, even though they have experience of conducting a romantic online relationship. However, from the beginning, MT never wanted to make friends, and hence she ignored anyone who did not want a serious relationship.

IV.2.8 Do online relationships always end up offline?

All of the subjects have experienced online relationships, both romantic and non-romantic. FP, GP, BN and RA agree that online friendships do not necessarily have to end up offline, whereas it is a necessity for romantic relationships to continue offline.

No. For me, if it's a relationship where the people are hooking up on the Internet [romantic relationship], it's important to meet each other, but if it's only sharing and chatting, I don't think that it's important to end up face to face because we just share some information so it's not important to meet each other [...] I mean if we just met someone new it's enough to [stay] online. (FP)

I don't want to just make a special online relationship with someone whom I don't know for real, and vice versa. If we only dated online, I think it's nonsense. If the relationship is only friendship, it is okay to just maintain it online. (GP)

In my case not all of [my friendships] end up offline. For people I just know from the Internet [...] we only meet online. (BN)

I haven't met [all of the people I met online] yet because of the distance. (RA)

Since MT never intended to foster any online friendship that did not have potential to go further, she only referred to her romantic online relationship. She states that her online relationships had to end up offline, because her goal was marriage.

From the 50 people, I narrowed it down to less than ten, if I'm not mistaken about five or seven people. I asked all of them to come to Jakarta one by one. (MT)

Analysis

For FP, GP, RA and BN, who have accounts in SNSs such as Facebook, Twitter, Skype, etc., apart from starting and maintaining romantic online relationships with their partners, they also socialize with friends using the Internet. For them, online friendships do not have to end up offline, while it is necessary for romantic relationships to continue in real life. MT, who does not make friendships online, also has the opinion that romantic online relationships have to end up offline. This means that all of the subjects agree that it is not enough for a romantic relationship to remain online, despite all of the SNS technology available today (in 2011).

IV.2.9 Online dating sites

There are many online dating sites on the Internet, and these sites have various functions in order to meet different people's needs or preferences. For instance, many dating sites are based on religion, race, nationality, etc. Online dating sites are explicitly meant for finding romance on the Internet. However, four out of five subjects claim that they have not really used the Internet for dating purposes. FP states that she tried a dating site once out of curiosity, but did not continue to do so because she had no intention of finding a boyfriend at the time. GP avoids online dating, BN uses Facebook alone for dating purposes, and RA never had the intention of

finding romance on the Internet, and so has never used dating sites. The comments below reflect these findings.

I was just trying to log in to the site for fun, my purpose was not looking for a date, and an online relationship wasn't intentional. Because I was not interested in it, I stopped it. Because the people there [on the site] like to manipulate their identities, sometimes they change their names, and their profiles [...] are unreliable, so I don't trust them. (FP)

I think it seems tacky and very desperate to participate in online dating. I even don't know much about online dating websites. (GP)

I don't have any intention of using dating sites, because I think I can use Facebook for that purpose. (BN)

Online dating? Never! [...] I don't have any intention to do that; it never crossed on my mind. (RA)

Only MT used online dating sites before she met her husband on the Internet. Since she had the very clear purpose of using the Internet to find a potential spouse, she had a specific reason for using online dating sites.

I wasn't that hi-tech at that time, so I used what already existed, for instance Asian Dating or Christian Friendship. (MT)

Analysis

The first four subjects, FP, GP, RA, and BN, have never really used any online dating sites. As MT had the clear intention to find a husband via the Internet, it was more convenient for her to use dating sites over ordinary SNSs. Moreover, MT is from a different generation compared to the other four subjects: FP, GP, RA, and BN are in their twenties, and MT was 37 when she began her mission on the Internet. This generational difference may influence their preference of SNSs for dating purposes.

IV.2.10 Trusting people on the Internet

With minimum information available when meeting people through cyberspace, the question arises as to how trust can be given to complete strangers. The subjects' thoughts on this are as follows:

It can't be fully trusted, people may [...] put fake identities [on Facebook], although there are pictures that can convince me, but I won't immediately trust them. I only trust Facebook accounts of my own friends or people who I feel close to. But for strangers, I can't immediately trust them. (FP)

It is never a real world. I don't know who s/he is, but there is a process. People cannot just meet, introduce, and directly decide to date at one time [...] except for offline situation/real life. [There I] can meet the person physically and can see his/her character from his face, etc. But, in the online relationship, I don't know yet whether the picture is real or not, since [online information] can be manipulated. Thus, I prefer not to trust the person initially. (GP)

I met a man who added my YM, [and] I approved him because he said that he saw my blog and [was] interested in it. At first we talked about normal things, but then in our third chat he started to talk about his personal life, that he has been divorced and distrusts everyone; at that point I felt scared and considered him freaky, although he said [he was] a nice person, I didn't think that he was nice. How [can] somebody tell something personal to someone he just met, and online? He may do that if we have been online for three-four months; I didn't mean to not trust him but I was afraid that he was a psycho or freak. He asked my phone number after he gave his; I refused to give mine, saying that we could use YM to communicate. What made me scared was that he knew my office address, and since then I never replied to his YM. (RA)

MT claims that learning to trust is important with regards to opening up to other people when finding a romantic relationship. However, in her mission to find a spouse, her trust had to be gained, and she did not give it away easily. She needed a relatively long time to be able to trust the people she met in cyberspace.

For the first stage of a relationship, I think we have to learn to trust in someone. I think it was impossible for these people to want to spend lot of money to come to Jakarta if they didn't want to have a serious relationship. [...] [I started to trust them] from the way they had conversations with me; 6-12 months (of communicating online) were enough to trust them. (MT)

Unlike the others subjects, BN only needed to chat to someone a few times before he began to trust them.

I see from the conversation itself [...] Probably after five to ten times of chatting [I begin to trust them]. (BN)

Analysis

BN finds it easier to trust people whom he met on the Internet, compared to the rest of the subjects. This trust issue may be influenced by the subjects' sex: BN is male and the rest are female. The female subjects all seem to have a set of rules to protect themselves from strangers with bad intentions on the Internet, however BN only requires several chats before he gives his trust.

IV.2.11 Media selection in the relationship

On the Internet, there are numerous SNSs that provide different means of communication. Facebook can serve as an introductory tool, since it contains basic information and pictures, which is enough to start a relationship. YM and Skype accommodate more interactive communication as both have video call and chatting functions. Twitter can be used for updating activities via concise messages, and emails can be used for longer written communications, or for exchanging files such as documents or pictures. Mobile phones can be used for voice calls and text messages. The subjects have their own preferences of which media to use, as follows.

I knew him from Facebook, then he asked my YM, then his mobile email, and later on we exchanged phone numbers [...] We also use Skype. So it's YM, Facebook, Skype, mobile email, and mobile phone. (FP)

First time from Facebook or lesbian online forums, YM, then exchanging phone numbers to making phone calls and sending short text messages, and then we met. (GP)

Just chatting on Facebook. [...] We exchanged phone numbers, made phone calls, [exchanged] SMSs, and then we met. (BN)

I met the first man on Friendster and the second one on Twitter. (RA)

I never used Skype, but I let him use email to communicate with me, at that time I used my office email address, and the romantic side is he collected all of his emails and bound them like a book. [...] We communicate almost every day, mostly he is the one who calls first, I never call him and [each call lasts] two-three hours. (MT)

Analysis

Many media exist by which to send and receive messages. These media can be seen as a “bridge” between two people who are involved in a romantic online relationship; the media make it possible for various forms of messages to be transferred, even though the actors involved are not standing beside each other. All of the subjects have their own preference of which medium they use to exchange messages with their partners in order to facilitate their romance relationship.

IV.2.12 Reasons behind media shifts

Although the subjects have their own preferred media for communication, these have often shifted over time. Below are the subjects’ reasons for shifting media.

FP states that she shifts media depending on the characteristics of the media itself. Since she is in a relationship with BK, Facebook alone is not enough to accommodate their communication, because it is considered too public.

Probably, he thinks that Facebook is too public, and then he asked to move to YM because it’s more private. Skype and mobile phone are considered totally private. (FP)

For GP and RA, their reasons for shifting media are related more to its function, and their needs. They use Facebook to see people’s profiles, then shift to YM when they want to get to know someone from the Internet better. They then move to mobile phones as the relationship becomes stronger.

I used Facebook to find a partner. After I found her, I didn't use it anymore, I moved to the media that supported our communication need, and YM was the easiest way to communicate. We used Facebook only for showing off our intimacy to friends. [...] YM, SMS, and phone call were used [during a single period]. Since we couldn't talk via phone call all the time, we used YM to keep communicating while doing something else, like working. [...] Meanwhile, [we used] Twitter to send short messages to each other. (GP)

People add us [on Friendster or Facebook] to see our profiles, then when we get closer we use YM because it's faster to use for chatting. On Friendster (or Facebook), it takes time to get a reply but when we use YM we can see the notification [when the person is typing their message, there is a notification]. Whereas with SMS, [...] when we feel closer to someone we want to have [as many] connections as possible, so if we can't reach [them] via one medium we can try another. (RA)

BN and MT point out that their main reason for shifting media is trust. The more they begin to trust the people they meet on the Internet, the more information they provide on ways in which to contact them.

If I've trusted that person I will change the media, for instance to mobile phone. I wouldn't give [my number out] if I'm not interested in this woman, because I don't want to [...] receive phone calls from her. So, [...] from our chatting, if everything is going well, it will continue to phone calls until we meet each other. (BN)

Because we were strangers, I had to protect myself just to ensure my safety and security, although we were far away. After I [began to] trust him, I let him use email to communicate [with me]. Then, it continued to phone calls. I let him call me because I already felt comfortable and closer to him, so I opened myself to have a chat directly to compare the way he wrote [with the way he] talked. (MT)

Analysis

Of the five subjects, three reasons are generated for why they shift media. These are based on the SNSs characteristics, the SNSs functions, and the trust they are willing to give to the people they meet on the Internet.

IV.2.13 Satisfaction with media usage

The subjects have all used online media to start a romantic relationship and/or maintain it. A romantic online relationship requires more accommodation because it contains more intimacy than ordinary friendships, therefore, there is a need for media that can offer a wider variety of messages. In this era of advanced communication technology, there is a wider variety of media, at ever-decreasing cost, but is it enough to facilitate a romantic relationship? In general, all of the subjects agree that romantic relationships cannot remain online forever, even though communication technology is highly advanced. Therefore, the media that exists to date (2011), is not satisfactory with respect to romantic relationships, according to FP, BN, RA and GP.

I need to meet him. I want to know whether he exists or not, I mean although he has already told me about his family, I do also need to meet him, it's not enough just to see him [on the computer screen]. (FP)

It's better if I can see her expression when we meet offline because it gives happiness, and a better feeling. (BN)

For me it's important to meet each other. If it's a romantic relationship, touching each other is a pleasure, for instance holding each other's hands. When you're online you may say romantic words, but you can't touch each other. So I think meeting offline is important, probably other people choose just to meet online but personally I can't. (RA)

The media [allows us] to show our romance by doing small things, such as uploading photos and tagging her, and commenting on the photos, simple things that could develop the quality of the relationship through communication. YM could support us to communicate more intensely, share our daily activities. It was enough in some respects, but we also have other aspects that were fulfilled when we met in person... like... how can I say it? We need to touch. (GP)

Unlike the four subjects above, MT is satisfied with the media she uses for communicating with her husband, both before and after she got married.

Personally, I think it's enough to develop the relationship. [Look at the] couples who aren't in long-distance relationship – the divorce rate is still high. (MT)

Analysis

The subjects in this study have used online media to communicate right from meeting their partners online, and some of them still use the Internet very often to maintain their relationship, since they are separated by long distances. For FP, GP, RA and BN, the media is not satisfying enough in terms of accommodating their romantic relationships, because there is an aspect which is absent during the communication process, namely physical contact. However, MT is quite satisfied with the media she uses to communicate with her husband. Even though she and her husband are still living in different countries, they have a strong bond with each other as they can maintain good communication in their relationship. She points out that so many people who are not in long-distance relationships experience break-ups and divorces, because they don't have good communication with their partners.

IV.2.14 Subjects' Interest in the people they meet online

A very appealing feature of the Internet is that it eliminates distance. Since cyberspace cannot facilitate information exchange to the same level as FtF meetings, it is interesting to find out what attracts the subjects to one another when they are socializing on the Internet. FP claims that she is interested in people who are willing to share aspects of their culture with her.

In the beginning I started to socialize on the 'net because I wanted to learn from people about their culture, so I was more interested in that aspect. I feel bored when having conversations about nothing. (FP)

GP claims that she becomes interested in someone she feels she has a connection with them, i.e. in relation to the conversations they have. When GP was questioned why she might be more interested in person "A" than person "B", her response was as follows:

Maybe because when communicating with A, I feel more connected than with B. (GP)

For BN, his first point of interest is physical appearance (from pictures on Facebook profiles); after that he considers the person's background and the conversations they have.

First, usually from their faces, if they're beautiful then I want to know them. Next step is their way of thinking, their background, the topics we talk about when we're chatting, from there I can see her characteristics, for instance if she's childish, I won't continue to chat. So it's more about our topic of conversation. (BN)

RA refers back to the fact that she wants to be friends with people she meets on the Internet. She has five qualifications for becoming friends with them, that they: 1. Have met in real life; 2. Know how to have fun; 3. Have the same hobbies as RA; 4. Are funny; and 5. Are informative.

I'm interested in people who have those five qualifications within them. (RA)

MT states that intelligence is the most important thing she looks for in a man. Hence, the first aspect of interest for her in terms of the people she has met on the Internet is their intelligence level.

For me, their intelligence represents who they are, it can be seen from the way they write. I want to spend the rest of my life with someone who is able to talk about everything. From their conversation we can see their politeness and it can give me a hint that this man is someone that I have been looking for. (MT)

Analysis

Each of the subjects has their own criteria by which to select the people they begin relationships with on the Internet. These aspects function as selection tools for which kinds of people they want to be closer to, among the billions of Internet users all over the world.

IV.2.15 Are online relationships meaningful?

When the subjects first met their partners on the Internet, they had minimum information about each other. Online relationships are based on mediated communication in the form of written text, audio, and moving and still images. However, the information exchanged in online

communication is not as complete as in offline communication. When asked whether their online relationships are meaningful to them or not, all of them stated that they are, because the relationships benefit them in various ways.

It's quite meaningful. I learn a lot from him [...] I feel my life has changed since I hooked up with him, he gives me lots of advice, yeah so it's meaningful. (FP)

Yes, they were meaningful, indeed. Everything in this world is about learning, whether it is good or bad, we can still learn something from it. When I ended the relationship with the first one, I didn't feel like I lost something. I have got new friends, they have become my best friends even until now. With the second one, I got to know her closest friends, her schoolmates, and I was happy knowing them. (GP)

Yes, it's meaningful because I can learn how to communicate from it. I can meet a lot of people. Because I cannot speak if I just met someone new, I'm not really a social person, I tend to keep quiet, but with the Internet it is easier for me to express what I have on my mind. I learn how to respond to people. So, it will be easier because they can't see my reaction and expressions on the Internet. (BN)

Absolutely [...] it's kind of abstract. It's meaningful because I can get closer to the people I meet online. (RA)

Of course it's meaningful. I have been married to him now for almost eight years. (MT)

Analysis

Although the relationships started online with total strangers met on the Internet, they are still meaningful to the subjects. Even FP, who has not yet met BK in person, claims that the relationship is meaningful to her. Compared to conventional relationships started by FtF meetings that enable complete information exchanges, online relationships begin with minimum amounts of information. Despite this, however, all of the subjects agree that, against all odds, online relationships are meaningful to them.

IV.2.16 Continuing to Seek Romance Online

Even though technology has made communication more advanced, conducting romantic relationships online is not ideal. When asked whether they would seek another romantic online relationship should their current relationships end, FP and GP immediately answered “no”. FP claims that it is tiring to have a romantic relationship online, while GP wants to avoid it because of her past experience.

I will try to find a foreigner again, but not from the Internet because [...] it's tiring. (FP)

No, because I am lazy. [...] For a LGBT relationship [...] the choice is limited since there are many things that I have to protect myself against. [...] From now on, I don't want look for [love] on the Internet because of my past experience. (GP)

On the contrary, BN, RA and MT all state that they would seek another romance online if their current relationships should end.

In the future, if I break up with my girlfriend, probably I will still do that. Why not? Just like I said before, not all things from the Internet are negative, it depends on the individuals themselves. (BN)

No problem, if you say try to find someone on the Internet again, I didn't have any intention to [find a relationship this way in the first place]. If I hook up it's just because I find similarities with him, we feel connected, as long as we meet offline first before we decide to hook up. (RA)

Yes, for sure. I would look for someone until I found him. (MT)

Analysis

Not all of the subjects would choose to be in an online relationship if the chance arose in the future. FP and GP state that they would not be in another romantic online relationship, while the remaining three subjects have no objections to seeking a relationship through this means in the future.

IV.3 Summary

In this research, people with different backgrounds were intentionally selected as the subjects of this study. These five subjects can be seen as examples of how diverse users' backgrounds can be, and the study demonstrates that the way in which different people use the Internet depends on their situation and necessities. FP, GP, RA, BN, and MT have differences and similarities in terms of their backgrounds (Table 1).

Table 1 Summary of respondents' backgrounds

	FP	GP	RA	BN	MT
Intention to find romance on the Internet	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
Experience in conducting a romantic online relationship	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Sexual orientation	Heterosexual	Homosexual	Heterosexual	Heterosexual	Heterosexual
Age	20	25	27	27	50
Occupation	Bachelor Student	Masters Student	Media Specialist	Video Editor	General Affairs in Oil Company
Education	Ongoing Bachelor	Ongoing Masters	Bachelor Graduate	Bachelor Graduate	Bachelor Graduate
Place of	Jakarta	Jakarta	Jakarta	Jakarta	Jakarta

residence					
Devices used to access the Internet	Laptop	Laptop, BlackBerry	Nokia Smart Phone, PC, Laptop	PC, Laptop, BlackBerry	PC

Despite their differences, the subjects have several similarities that bind them together, namely: they use the Internet and other devices for communication in their romantic relationships; they all are Jakartan citizens; and they all have, or are working towards, higher education.

From the CMC messages, the intimacy between the subjects and their partners could be observed. Even though their communications are mediated, the couples still address topics that are usually discussed in conventional offline romantic relationships, such as future plans, fears, sadness, happiness, hopes, ways of thinking, sex, etc. Their relationships also have the same functions as those of conventional romantic relationships. They are able to express their feelings toward their partners, including jealousy, affection, comfort, and other elements that are established in romantic relationships. Although they are separated by distance, it does not mean that their relationship is not real or meaningful, since it has the elements which exist in offline relationships.

Chapter V

Discussion

The main goal of this research is to understand the differences between online and offline communications among people seeking romance on the Internet. The theoretical foundations of the research include Social Presence, Social Context Cues, and Media Richness theories.

This chapter will discuss the following points: (1) The theoretical framework, including criticisms from other researchers, and critical reviews in relation to this study; (2) The modes of communication analyzed in the study, and how the subjects interact using technology; and (3) The subjects' personal backgrounds and how these influence their ways of communicating.

V.1 Theoretical Discussion

Social Presence

Each media has a different degree of Social Presence which depends on its capability to transfer communication elements or cues; this is related to its bandwidth. Various researchers have conducted experiments to compare different media with FtF interaction (Rice & Love, 1987, p. 88): these studies focus on the narrow bandwidth and lack of non-visual cues that characterize non-video media. Media that provides less bandwidth will allow less social presence, hence “communication is likely to be described as less friendly, emotional, and more serious, businesslike, or task oriented” (Rice & Love, 1987, p. 88). In CMC, because of its lack of audio or video cues, it is “perceived as impersonal and lacking sociability and normative reinforcement, so there will be less socioemotional (SE) content exchanged” (Rice & Love, 1987, p. 88). Moreover, previous studies indicate that audio and video conferences are perceived as effective for task-oriented matters, but are unsatisfactory for communication that needs high levels of social presence, such as getting to know people (Hiltz, Johnson, & Turoff, 1986, p. 228).

Since today's CMC technology has become more advanced and facilitates visual cues, this research offers a different situational background in relation to past studies. The

communication actors are able to exchange visual information, both still (photos) and moving (videos), as well as conducting audio communication over great distances through VOIP programs such as Skype, for little or no cost. As a result, a broader range of social presence and SE content is possible, and it is suggested that current technology could effectively facilitate not only task-oriented matters, but also more personal relationships such as romance.

The people in this study use this communication technology first-hand, and even conduct personal romantic communications through it. This indicates that the level of social presence and SE content in the communication process in CMC has increased, compared to when the studies mentioned above were conducted. Furthermore, the quality of the communication itself has improved dramatically, since it is possible to provide visual cues. As a result, the subjects in this study perceive the quality of communication to be satisfactory with respect to establishing meaningful connections.

Social Context Cues

According to Sproull & Kiesler (1986, p. 1494), a social context cue has three variables: geographic, organizational, and situational. The origin of this is rooted in organizational theory, however in this study it is used to analyze more personal forms of communication within romantic relationships. Therefore, among the mentioned variables, here only the two that can be related to the phenomenon of this study will be used –geographic and situational.

Geographic location is defined as “a person’s physical position in time and space”(Sproull & Kiesler, 1986, p. 1494). To engage in FtoF communication, people have to be in the same geographic location, as distance prevents them from taking part in real-life interaction. “Distance sometimes affects communication content as well as contact, independently from any other variables” (Sproull & Kiesler, 1986, p. 1494). Secondly, situational variables describe “features of the immediate communication situation, such as the relationships between senders and receivers, the topic of the communication, and the norms or social conventional appropriate to the situation” (Sproull & Kiesler, 1986, p. 1495). Moreover, “norms in the communication setting also influence what is communicated to whom” (Sproull, & Kiesler, 1986, p. 1495).

In the current study, the subjects and their partners are separated by distance. They are not in the same geographical locations, and thus do not belong to the same real-life environments. Therefore, their chances of meeting would have been small, were it not for the Internet. The distance also determines the pace at which online relationships move offline. When the distance is greater, the subjects use the Internet extensively (via many types of SNSs including Facebook, YM, Skype, etc.), and continue to communicate via the Internet for longer periods of time. However, this research shows that when there is less distance between the subjects and their partners they tend to require less time before continuing the relationship offline, compared to those in long-distance relationships. For example, RA met her boyfriend in real life after only one month (because they live in the same city), while MT needed about one year of online communication before she finally met her husband in person (MT lives in Indonesia, and her husband in the US). This is because MT and her husband require high amount of transport cost in order to meet each other, while RA and her boyfriend only require relatively small cost since they both live in Jakarta.

With respect to situational variables, it is interesting that norms play a big role in determining the communication content. The norms that are valid in Indonesian society influence the topics of online conversations, and there are several topics that the subjects are reluctant to talk about, such as sex. Many Indonesians take their religions seriously, and there are several religious norms that are also valid in Indonesian society. For example, subjects FP and MT have strong religious beliefs (FP is a Muslim, and MT is a Catholic); they clearly state that sexual activity before marriage is forbidden, and they stand up for this belief by not talking about sex in their online conversations with their partners. The statements below are examples of their resistance to sex before marriage.

U should know, that the most Indonesian people is Islam, so we must married before do it....baby,, I wish u can understand me,, this is about culture,I will really happy if u understand it. (FP. Source: CMC message between FP and BK)

I didn't want to have a sex with him because I didn't want to embarrass my family. (MT. Source: qualitative interview).

However, even though norms are important in Indonesian society, not all citizens adhere to them. For instance, GP is more open-minded about the variety of online conversation topics, including sex. Unlike MT and FP, she is more blunt in expressing her emotions and sex drive to her same-sex partner though it seems to the researcher that these differences in online behavior depend on the values of the person her/him self, not on sexual orientation.

Media Richness

Media Richness theory focuses on the degree of richness between media, where the richest is an unmediated form of communication, namely face-to-face. According to Daft and Lengel, “Face-to-face is the richest medium because it provides immediate feedback so that interpretation can be checked. FtF also provides multiple cues via body language and tone of voice, and message content is expressed in natural language” (Daft & Lengel, 1986, p. 560).

The subjects in this study started their romantic relationships on the Internet, and maintain them using CMC. All modes of mediated communication are considered less rich than FtF according to Media Richness theory, because it cannot accommodate immediate feedback or multiple cues (visual and audio) like FtF communication does. In relation to this study, all the subjects except FP have met their partners in real life, however FP also hopes that in the future she will meet BK FtF. In other words, online romantic relationships cannot stay online forever, because the communicators need more channels through which to accommodate their intimate relationships. The fact that the informants want to continue their online relationships offline is one indication that CMC is not completely satisfactory with respect to fostering romantic relationships.

In relation to the type of messages used, according to Media Richness Theory, “the greater a medium’s ability to provide timely feedback, the richer it is. Oral media can convey cues such as voice tone and inflection, and are thus considered richer than written media” (El-Shinawy & Markus, 1997, p. 446). Therefore, written communications such as that used in chat messages are the least rich type of message.

Nevertheless, there are limits to Social Presence, Social Context Cues, and Media Richness theories. Walther conducted several studies (1992, 1994, 1996) in which he generated other theories to elaborate upon previous ones, for example, he posited Social Information Processing Theory, which is more focused on CMC. Walther's reasons for criticizing previous research are as follows:

First, the majority of the early research was conducted in experiments settings that failed to mirror how people communicate with different media in the real world. Second, these early studies and researchers assumed that the absence of visual cues led to an absence of sociability. Third, they assumed that task-oriented communication lacked relational and social communication. And fourth, they failed to acknowledge that just as cues are filtered out, other cues are filtered into CMC and therefore CMC has some affordances that face-to-face communication does not (Walther, 1996; Walther & Parks, 2002; cited in Lowenthal, in Press, p. 12).

Therefore, according to Walther, the previous theories are not entirely suitable for analyzing social communication phenomena. Thus, he generated his Social Information Processing Theory (1992), which posits that relationships can be developed in a computer-mediated environment, even though they may need more time to progress compared to FtF relationships. If enough time is invested into the online relationship, it may have the same quality as FtF relationships.

Unlike Walther's theory of Social Information Processing, which involved experiments conducted within a certain period of time, the three earlier theories do not include the time aspect. Limitations with respect to fieldwork time and human resources made it impossible to implement Walther's methodology in the present study. Thus, it does not consider time, and it was therefore decided that the early theories – Social Presence, Social Context Cues, and Media Richness – would be used as the study's theoretical foundation. Arguably, this research will provide new insights into the growth of CMC and online behaviour in a developing country. More thorough research involving the time aspect should be conducted in future, however, in order to achieve richer results.

The Social Presence, Social Context Cues, and Media Richness theories were originally used in previous researches for achieving generalization, thus it involved many people as the subjects of study. However, in the current research, those theories are being used not for aiming any generalization, since this study has very limited materials (only five people as samples), and its phenomenological¹⁴ nature means that the results cannot be generalized.

V.2 Modes of Communication

Communication using the Internet and SNSs is closely related to socialization in the context of friendship. However, SNSs are not solely used for purposes of maintaining and starting friendships: since they open up possibilities for getting in contact with people from all around the world, Internet users also use SNSs to begin and maintain romantic relationships. This research gives some indication of how people use the Internet to enhance their social lives in terms of friendships and romantic relationships.

The five subjects in the study use the Internet to meet people that are out of their reach in real life. They all use the Internet to establish friendships or romantic relationships for their own reasons, and depending on their situations. FP, GP, RA and BN, for instance, use the Internet for friendships, and later found love online as well, while MT used it strictly for finding love. BN intentionally used one SNS to find a girlfriend, because he is always busy working, and GP, who hides her true sexual orientation from society, has used the Internet to find same-sex partners. MT used the Internet to find a foreign husband.

Moreover, the initial intentions of the subjects do not necessarily have a causal relationship with the resulting romances they began online. RA and FP, for instance, did not have any intention to find love on the Internet; it happened coincidentally. BN, MT, and GP, however, did intend to find romance online. Despite the different intentions among them, however, intentionally or not, they have all experienced conducting romantic relationships online.

¹⁴ "A phenomenological study describes the meaning for several individuals of their lived experiences of a concept or a phenomenon" (Creswell, 2007).

In this era of advanced communication technology, people have begun using the Internet for more communication purposes than ever before, whether on a one-to-one or one-to-many basis. This study deals with one-to-one communication, since the phenomenon analyzed is online romance. The five subjects in the study have all found love and maintained it through cyberspace, until, and following, meeting each other in person (except for FP, who has not yet met her boyfriend FtF).

The subjects have invested much time into building their relationships via the Internet, exchanging numerous SNSs in written text form with their partners, such as emails, chatting, Facebook and Twitter (including exchanging photos using SNSs), and then moving on to richer media that allow possibilities to exchange audio and visual information (phone calls and video calls). Although the subjects communicate in a variety of ways (in and out of the Internet), since this study investigates the communication process between (online) lovers thus the mode of communication in this research is one-to-one basis.

This one-to-one basis of communication uses a range of the communication technology available today: chatting and messaging in Facebook, YM (or similar SNSs), emails, video calls, phone calls, etc. These communication innovations allow communicators to exchange many forms of messages (texts, pictures, audio, and video), which are getting closer to FtF communication. In addition, these technological advancements are becoming more accessible and affordable than ever before.

Although audio and visual messages have become involved in such communication, FtF interaction has not yet been replaced, because only FtF communication allows for extensive information exchanges, and connections between people, including physical contact. Thus, although the Internet can be a means through which to start romantic relationships, it seems the relationship cannot remain online forever. In other words, CMC has created the possibility for starting a relationship, but it does not provide enough channels to accommodate the level of information exchange and connections required for partners to maintain romantic relationships. This finding is in accordance with the framework theories of the study, Social Presence, Social Context Cues, and Media Richness: FtF is the final destination of online relationships because it is the richest form of communication, since it allows for extensive information exchanges. “FtF

communication is the richest type of media as it provides immediate feedback and utilizes more channels” (Whitty & Carr, 2006, p.8).

Although CMC is not sufficient by itself for maintaining romantic relationships, the subjects claim that it is enough to maintain friendships. Some of the subjects state that they have had online friends for years (i.e. they communicate regularly online), without making any attempt to meet each other, even though they live in the same city.

In relation to media selection, two aspects have a strong influence on the subjects’ media preference in their communication activities: namely, the distance between the communicators, and the communication purpose.

Every person in this study has his/her own preference for the medium used to bridge the relationship. FP met her boyfriend BK (who lives in the US) on Facebook, and they continued to chat using Facebook and YM, as well as exchanging emails, and using Skype for video calls. They seldom conduct phone conversations because it is expensive to make international calls. GP met two of her girlfriends on an online lesbian forum, and on Facebook. She continued the contact using YM, after which she exchanged phone numbers with them and then met them in person. To maintain her relationship with her previous girlfriend, who lived in a different city, she mainly used YM and phone calls. BN, who met his girlfriend on Facebook, prefers to have phone conversations, partly because phone calls to other cities within the country are reasonably priced. Almost the same pattern can be ascribed to RA and her current and ex-boyfriends, whom she met via SNSs (Twitter and Friendster), and which ended up in FtF meetings. Since both men live in Jakarta, RA was able to meet them easily when she wanted to develop her relationship with them, after getting to know them online. Similarly, MT met her husband (who lives in the US) on a dating site, and they then began to exchange e-mails. They met in person after 12 months of correspondence. Since they live on different continents, they mainly communicate via email, which they feel is the most convenient way to correspond over such a great distance.

With regard to purpose, as communication technology has developed, more and more SNSs have flourished to meet users’ needs and wishes. These SNSs offer a variety of messaging platforms, which gives the communicators options regarding the type of message they want to

send, depending on the communication purpose. The different SNSs serve a variety of functions and produce different forms of messages. For example, Facebook offers an “introduction” to other people, because it contains basic information on their profiles, as well as pictures which provide visual physical information. Moreover, Facebook also provides a chat facility. YM is another chat program. It enables users to conduct conversations without any delays between exchanges, and thus is more similar to live conversations. Email facilitates longer written text messages, and is used for delayed messages; it can also accommodate the sending and receipt of pictures. In Twitter, the maximum message length is 140 characters. It is usually used for updating followers about the user’s activities, or giving away brief information. Skype is popular for its free video call facility, and it also enables users to chat. Outside of the Internet, mobile phones for text messaging and audio calls are convenient ways to communicate because of their portable nature.

With such a range of choices in terms of communication media, the subjects in this study are able to select the ones that suit their communication purpose. For instance, BN used Facebook to find a girlfriend that met his criteria, such as physical appearance and place of origin. FP met BK on Facebook, and they then moved to emails, which have a more personal nature. MT posted an “advertisement” about herself on the Internet and then shifted to emails, which enabled her to get to know the men who answered her ad. GP met her girlfriends on a lesbian forum and via Facebook, and then used YM when she wanted to get to know them better. RA, who was “found” by her ex-boyfriend, AN, on Friendster, decided to give her phone number to him when she began to trust him and wanted to get to know him better. These subjects have thus made selections on which media they should use with respect to meeting their purpose of communication.

V.3 The influence of background on the subjects’ online behaviour

Based on the findings of the biographies and backgrounds of the five subjects, it can be concluded that aspects such as age, occupation, and sexual orientation play important roles in determining the subjects’ online behaviours.

MT is the only subject who used the Internet strictly for finding romance. Compared to the other subjects, who were all born after 1980, MT, who was born in 1961, is considered a *digital immigrant*, whereas the other subjects are *digital natives*. These two terms are introduced by Palfrey and Gasser (2008). “The Digital natives were born when social digital technologies came online. They all have access to networked digital technologies, and they all have skills to use those technologies” (Palfrey & Gasser, 2008, p 1). For them, “the major aspects of their lives – social interactions, friendships, civic activities – are mediated by digital technologies, and they’ve never known any other way of life” (Palfrey & Gasser, 2008, p 2). The digital natives in this study are FP, GP, RA, and BN who are in their twenties (and born after 1980s). This fact suggests their high dependency on the Internet. While digital immigrants “learned how to e-mail and use social networks late in life” (Palfrey & Gasser, 2008, p 4). Since MT is not a digital native, she is not too deeply involved in online socializing with respect to friendships, and her dependency on the Internet is not as strong as that of the digital native subjects.

Online behaviours are also related to occupation. For example, BN works as an editor for a national TV channel, and he spends most of his time in the office. He decided to use the Internet to find a girlfriend, because he has no spare time to socialize. This way, he does not need to find spare time to be social. Similarly, RA’s work influences her online behaviour. Since she is a social media specialist, she is obliged to be online on a daily basis. She started and maintained her relationships with her ex and her current boyfriend online, meeting them through Friendster and Twitter, respectively. Furthermore, she uses many SNSs to communicate with her boyfriend and friends.

GP is the only subject with a homosexual orientation. Since being homosexual is disapproved of by Indonesian society, GP uses the Internet differently to the other subjects. The Internet has become her main means by which to find a same-sex partner.

According to Palfrey and Gasser (2008, p. 2), every person has two identities: a personal identity and a social identity. Personal identity includes the attributes that make a person unique, such as personal characteristics, special interests, and favourite activities. Social identity, on the other hand, is closely related to family members, friends, and neighbours. These identities are dynamic; a person can change their personal identity by changing their clothes, expressing

themselves in different ways, and displaying their interests in different fields. Social identity can be changed by interacting with different people, adjusting social relationships, etc. However, some aspects of social identity cannot be controlled completely, such as a family's status, gossip among neighbours, etc.

Unlike FP, RA, BN and MT, GP has in the past created two identities on Facebook, namely a heterosexual one and a homosexual one, to suit her two social identity tenors. Each of the accounts is dedicated to different tenors, since GP needs to represent herself within two different communities. By having two accounts, GP can hide her homosexual identity from her heterosexual community (school friends, co-workers, family), wherein she does not want to reveal her true sexual orientation. The other four subjects studied in this research do not need to have more than one personal identity online, since they do not have anything to hide or other identities to represent. As heterosexuals, they have more possibilities to openly approach potential partners, in cyberspace as well as in real life.

Chapter VI

Semi-structured interviews have generated insights into the online behaviours of five Jakartans who have experience of having online romantic relationships, and the study has attempted to identify connections between media selection and the subjects' individual situations. Thus, the findings are expected to provide further understandings of social communication behaviour, specifically in CMC.

Apart from semi-structured interviews, data were collected in the form of the subjects' CMC messages. The subjects were requested to provide archives of their emails, chat messages, and SNS messages, in order to collect richer data on their individual stories. However, this also created limitations in the study. Since not all subjects had retained their CMC messages, it was impossible to collect data in equal amounts for each subject. As a result, the development of the subjects' relationships could not be documented and analyzed as deeply as desired.

Moreover, this study only relies on data collected from interviews and CMC messages, without any extensive observations on the subjects' online behaviours. Conducting such observations would have been impossible, because the researcher could not have been present every time the subjects went online.

In relation to the very limited scope of materials (only five subjects were involved), as stated previously, this study is not intended for any purposes of generalization. All of the findings generated represent the five people alone. The study is, however, intended to contribute some insights into the ways in which people in a developing country use the Internet for different purposes, specifically finding romance.

People with different backgrounds were deliberately chosen as the informants for the study, in order to investigate how background can determine online behaviour. Based on this study's findings, it seems that age, occupation, and sexual preference have influenced the five subjects' usage of media when they are conducting mediated interactions. Each subject has a unique story in relation to their online experience, however they have all experienced the phenomenon of conducting romantic relationships online. Moreover, despite the fact that the

interactions in their relationships have always been always mediated, their relationships still contain most of the elements that exist in conventional offline romantic relationships, such as affection, companionship, sharing thoughts, etc. Thus, the online relationships are meaningful to the subjects in the study.

Communication technology has developed rapidly, and thus people can become connected to one another easier than ever before. This advance in technology has a strong influence on how people use communication tools. As this thesis shows, the social lives of the subjects involved have been enhanced by the availability of the Internet. By going online, they can overcome space limitations and become connected to people who are outside of their real-life society, and even in different continents.

This study focused on romantic relationships that involve distance, where the subjects and their partners do not belong to the same real-life community and would thus have less chance of meeting offline. The actual (real-life) distance between the potential partners affects both the pace of relationship development (from online to become offline), and the media selection. Where the distance is great, the communicators moved from online to offline later compared to those who were more closely situated. In terms of media selection, when the distance is great the subjects select media that are more affordable, which means they can stay on the Internet for longer and use SNSs more extensively than, for example, the telephone. When the distance is less, they use other communication means, including mobile phones for text messaging and phone calls, before meeting each other offline.

Apart from distance, the subjects' media selection is also influenced by their purpose of communication. The many communication tools offered today, both on- and offline, allow the subjects to make media selections according to their purpose for communicating, for example greeting people, getting to know people, making introductions, etc.

This empirical study is aiming to investigate the phenomenon of online romantic relationships among the five Jakartans as its research subjects. In order to meet the goals of this study, the research questions will be answered in the discussion below.

In terms of research question 1 (In what way has the Internet and its services changed the ways how the Jakartans in the study socialize?), the following was found:

As communication technology and the Internet have developed, people have started to use the Internet as an alternative way in which to communicate, in addition to traditional means such as FtF, conventional mail, telephone, etc. As Internet access has become more accessible and many SNSs have been created, communicating is becoming increasingly easier and cheaper, and as a result the Internet has become one of the main communication tools used to connect people.

The subjects in this study use the Internet to socialize, in addition to conventional methods. For various reasons – e.g. being too busy working, the fact that it is easier or cheaper, etc. – the subjects prefer using the Internet to socialize. Thus, the way in which they maintain friendships is partly (though not entirely, because telephone, mail, etc. is still used) through the Internet and related services.

Socializing in this context not only refers to friends in real life, but also friends in cyberspace. Some online friendships are conducted solely online. This means that it is possible for two people to have conversations on a daily basis, but never see each other in person. Socializing via SNS can also maintain closeness between old friends, who do not necessarily see each other often in real life, but speak to each other on Facebook, Twitter, YM, etc. Thus, the Internet and its SNSs has also partly replaced FtF socializing for many Jakartans in terms of friendships.

Moreover, generally speaking, the function of SNSs is mainly for socializing in terms of friendships. However, as CMC technology has become more advanced, people have also used it for finding and maintaining romantic relationships. Through the Internet, there is a wider scope for people to meet without any obstacles of time and space. Hence, people can start a romantic relationship with people from different countries. CMC is also used for couples who are engaged in long-distance relationships.

The second research question (What is the role of CMC in online relationships?), can be answered as follows:

The advancement of Internet technology and SNSs has made a great contribution to the development of CMC activities. In this sense, CMC has become easier, cheaper, and more advanced than ever before. For instance, in the 70s and 80s many researchers investigating CMC (e.g. Fowler & Wackerbarth, 1980; Hiemstra, 1982; Johansen, 1977; Short, William, & Christie, 1976; William, 1978) noted the “narrow bandwidth and lack of nonvisual cues of nonvideo media. The typical conclusion is that as bandwidth narrows, media allow less social presence”(Rice & Love, 1987, p. 88). Indeed, the degree of social presence differs across media, and there is less social presence in some media compared to others. The greatest degree of social presence is unmediated, or FtF communication. Moreover, “since CMC involves fewer non-verbal cues (such as facial expression, postures, dress, and so forth) and auditory cues in comparison to face-to-face communication, it is said to be extremely low in social presence” (Whitty & Carr, 2006, p.7).

Apart from social presence, CMC in past eras was insufficient for providing social context cues. Social context cues are “aspects of the physical environment and actors’ non verbal behaviors that define the nature of the social situation and the actors’ relative status” (Walther, 1992, p.56).

Time has brought vast developments in CMC technology. CMC now enables users to exchange richer information compared to that provided in written texts. It even allows users to exchange video messages, which provide non-verbal information.

The subjects of this study have all experienced romantic relationships that have been started online and maintained via CMC. For the long-distance couples, the use of CMC is extremely necessary for fostering their feelings towards each other. Since CMC is now greatly developed compared to in the past, today’s technology is able to provide visual information exchanges to increase the degree of social presence and social context cues. However, the subjects in this study claim that CMC is fulfilling for online friendships, but not for more intimate relationships such as romantic relationships. In romantic relationships, more channels are needed to fulfill aspects that CMC cannot facilitate.

In terms of the third research question (What is the relation between online and offline life?), the following has been found:

All of the subjects in this study have the intention to meet people they have met on the Internet FtF, especially if the relationship goes beyond friendship. This means that CMC alone is not adequate for conducting romantic relationships. Media Richness Theory suggests that “FtF communication is the richest type of media as it provides immediate feedback and utilizes more channels” (Whitty & Carr, 2006, p.8). Therefore, some media are richer than others. Daft and Lengel argue that “FtF is the richest communication medium, followed by telephone, and written documents” (Trevino, Lengel, & Daft, 1987, p. 557).

The people in this study have their established their own steps or patterns of media selection as the relationship has developed. They started via public SNSs such as Facebook, Friendster, Twitter, etc., with the intention of meeting new people. They then shifted to more personal forms of CMC, namely chatting, using SNSs such as YM, MSN, Facebook chat, etc. The process continued outside of the Internet, with the exchange of phone numbers. Through phone calls, more information can be given away, such as audio cues. At the end of the pattern is a FtF meeting, as this is considered the richest form of communication.

This study partly disagrees with previous research, which considers CMC as an unsuitable medium through which to form a romantic relationship because it cannot provide the extensive exchange of information necessary to allow for sufficient levels of self-disclosure. “The nature of CMC is that it less appropriate to use this channel for such highly personalized interactions are needed in [...] getting to know someone” (Walther, 1992, p. 58). It was found in this study that the subjects use CMC to establish and maintain romantic relationships.

The theories of Social Presence, Social Context Cues, and Media Richness state that no modes of communication are as rich as the unmediated one, i.e. FtF. Based on this study, it is true that the richest form of communication is FtF, and romantic relationships always seek to move offline. However, in terms of starting relationships, the communication technology available today is adequate. In other words, online romantic relationships can be established and maintained via CMC, though the final goal is still meeting FtF, and being together in real life.

Although the subjects are exposed to advanced communication technology, and the Internet is considered an important part of their lives, they are still able to balance the time spent online and offline. In other words, they engage in two forms of socialization (in terms of both friendship and romance), online and FtF. Socializing on the Internet has enabled users to enhance their social lives outside of the socializing they do in real life, and both means of socialization support, rather than replace, each other.

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Appendix

Subjects' background	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Occupation? 2. Age? 3. Place of Birth? 4. How long have you live in Jakarta?
Internet usage	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. How often do you use the Internet? 2. For what purposes? 3. What devices do you use to access the Internet? (PC/smart phones/Internet cafes) 4. Has the Internet changed the way your socialized?
Online Relationship	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What is your opinion on online relationship? 2. What do you expect from meeting people on the Internet? 3. Do all online relationships (friendships and romantic relationships) always end up with face-to-face meetings? 4. Do you have any online relationships that only happen online? 5. Do you use the Internet to seek romantic relationship? why? 6. Have you ever tried to use online dating sites? 7. How many times you have involved in romantic online relationship? 8. What are the factors in the Internet which make you interested in certain people, so you want to get closer to them? 9. Do you trust someone you met in Internet immediately after you know her/him? 10. How often you communicate with your online partner? 11. What are the topics of conversations you have with your partner? (everyday's events, goals, values, emotions towards your partner) 12. Please tell me the process in your relationship, from the first time you met her/him on the Internet, until now?

	<ul style="list-style-type: none">a. What types of media do you use in your relationship, from the beginning until now?(e.g. email, chat, phone, webcam)b. What SNS do you use, from the beginning of the relationship until now (FB, Myspace, etc)? Why?c. Why do you shift from one media to another? <p>13. How long it takes you from the first time you met your partner in the Internet, until your relationship become official?</p> <p>14. Do you want to continue online romantic relationship to offline? Why?</p> <p>15. Do you think CMC is satisfying to develop/maintain romantic online relationships?</p>
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