

## **How the Internet Affects My Lifestyle**

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When my best friend was living and volunteering in Uganda, we spoke only once every few months (when she had a stable Internet connection). The last time I was at home with my parents and sisters in Pennsylvania was over a year ago. My boyfriend and I have been together for two years nine months and two years one month of it has been long distance. The Internet greatly affects relationships with my friends, family, boyfriend and consequently my lifestyle.

#### **Friends**

Regardless of where my friends live, I can stay connected with them through the Internet. Last week, thanks to Facebook, I found out that my Peruvian friend whom I met studying abroad in Japan just started a new job and that my American high school classmate recently got engaged. I responded with a “congratulations” to both in less than three seconds. Mailing a letter would probably have taken three weeks. Not only does Internet and social media make communicating easier and quicker, various aspects such as sending or sharing pictures, emoticons, and games allow for more casual interaction with others. This promotes a more frequent and personal style of communication than is possible with plain text emails or letters. In my case, it allows me to stay close to my friends who live far away.

#### **Family**

My sister’s first son and my first nephew, Caleb, was born last year while I was in Japan. It costs me over 15 hours and 1,500 US dollars to go back home. In lieu of not being in Pennsylvania, I video chat with my family whenever everyone gathers together such as for Christmas. Every time, my sister brings my nephew in front of the computer while saying, “Caleb, say ‘hi Aunt Kay!’” I can see Caleb’s smiles. I wave, and he stares back looking confused but reaching out his tiny arms toward the screen, attempting to touch my face, acknowledging my presence. In these moments, I appreciate how I am able to spend real ‘time’ with my family despite the distance.

#### **Significant Other**

My boyfriend and I met in Okinawa. Now, he lives in Tokyo and I live in Fukuoka due to our jobs. To be honest, I don’t think our relationship would have lasted this long if it weren’t for the Internet. We use Skype, Facetime, or Google Hangouts to talk with

each other almost every day. Even if we're not actually talking, we often leave our computer screens on while going about our individual routines. For example, I might be hanging up laundry and my boyfriend cooking dinner while we are talking about how our days went at work. Of course, the Internet isn't perfect. It gets frustrating when there is a bad connection and I can't hear his voice clearly or his image gets distorted. Naturally, I'd prefer to spend time with my boyfriend in person, but the Internet helps us to have mobility to pursue our dreams and goals while sustaining our relationship through consistent communication.

## Conclusion

The Internet allows me to stay connected with my friends, family, boyfriend, and consequently supports my lifestyle. A few decades ago, being a female in my mid-20s, I probably would have had to choose between starting a career or a family. This is not my case. Instead, I feel entitled to be able to successfully pursue and manage both. My confidence in my ability to work toward my professional and life goals stems from the opportunities and flexibility the Internet presents such as working from home. According to Forrester Research, 34 million US adults telecommuted occasionally in 2009 and that number was predicted to increase to 63 million by 2016. My sister, having a full time job, also telecommutes spending only 20 hours a week in the office while working from home and taking care of Caleb the rest of the time. In the future, I foresee myself in a similar predicament circumstances while my husband and I have equally balanced responsibilities inside and outside the home responsibilities. To this end, the Internet empowers both women and men serving as a tool for gender equality.