

Tim de Graaf

S1043455

Dr. J.V. Jefferey

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Tinder Perceptions and the Truth about Tinder Usage

Online dating has become a popular way of searching for a potential partner. Be it by ways of online dating agencies, online dating websites or, an even newer way of dating, mobile dating apps. Although the internet was not the place to look for a partner in the past, it is now, as the figures indeed show. Since the year 2000, 8% of couples in the Netherlands met each other online through either social media or dating sites (Wobma). 15% of U.S. adults report to have used online dating sites or mobile dating apps (Smith & Anderson). The phenomena of meeting online is already becoming very normal to the general population. Today, about half of the general population of the U.S. knows someone who uses online dating or who has met a partner or spouse through online dating, and attitudes towards online dating have grown more positive (Smith & Anderson). Online dating apps are the newest way of meeting people online and since everyone carries their smart phone with them wherever they are, one always has the opportunity to start dating anywhere. A research conducted by the Pew Research Center shows that 9% of American adults have used a dating app on their cell phone. This number is growing rapidly. In 2013 the usage of online dating apps was at

3% of the population, it has tripled since then (Smith). This essay will focus on the hugely popular mobile dating app Tinder. Since the launch of the new mobile phone application Tinder in September, 2012, it has become a huge success. Tinder is used throughout the world and is available in about 30 languages. In the public opinion Tinder is seen as the hook-up app, not an app for serious relationships but just an app for casual sex. But this is just a reputation. The reasons for using Tinder are diverse. They range from seeking a romantic partner, seeking an one night stand, to just entertaining oneself with the app. The purpose of this essay is to question common perceptions of Tinder as a hook-up app and to examine the real reasons that people use the app.

In the public opinion Tinder is an app for casual sex (Nancy Jo Sales). An article by Thompson rates the best hook-up apps and places Tinder at a third place with the following extra information about the verdict of Tinder: "Men are much more subtle here. You're likely to be invited out for a drink rather than just round for sex." (Thompson). This last quote shows a purely sexual motivation and confirms the hook-up app reputation. One of the advantages of using Tinder as a hook-up app seems to be the option to search for matches within a proximity of your choice. There are stories of people who use the app just to have sexual intercourse and with a great deal of success. (Moore) The plethora of sites that offer Tinder success guides also suggest that Tinder is used mainly for hook-ups. These are guides that offer the reader information about what kind of opening lines to use, and what kind of topics to talk about, all with the goal of enticing the opposite sex (The Ultimate Tinder Cheat Sheet).

One non-scientific study suggests that more than 20% of Tinder users are looking for a serious relationship and that the majority is using it out of curiosity. Out

of the four possible answers for the reason of using tinder, looking for a quick hook-up is the least given answer (A New Perspective on Relationship marketing through Tinder). According to Tinder's CEO, 80% of the users are looking for a serious relationship (Dredge). A recent study has defined six motivations for the use of Tinder (Sumter, Vandenbosch, Ligtenberg, pp. 71). The first motivation was labelled Ease of Communication and reflected a psycho-social need of making connections with people. Ease of Communication simply relates to the ease which Tinder gives in interacting with people. Tinder offers you a way to interact with people from a safe distance. The user can think about what he or she wants to say. The Love motivation reflected the motivation to use Tinder to find a long-term committed relationship. The Casual Sex motivation indicated using Tinder for physical, sexual needs including both online and offline sexual behaviours. Online sexual behaviour is known as sexting, sending sexual messages to each other. The Self-Worth Validation motivation referred to using Tinder to receive compliments about one's appearance and about one's character. Since Tinder profiles show mainly profile pictures and only a short profile description the accent lies on appearance. The Thrill of Excitement motivation is the motivation to use the app for the thrill and excitement that it gives certain users. Finally, the Trendiness motivation is the motivation to use the app because it is new or a peer is using it, it has everything to do with belonging to the group.

To find out which motivation is most prominent an online survey was done among a group of 163 people who had used or still use Tinder. The research group was give 46 statements that reflected physical, social and psycho-social motivations. They could choose an answer on a scale ranging from 1-5. 1 for strongly disagreeing and 5 for strongly agreeing. After analysing the data this survey concluded that the main

reasons for using Tinder was for the excitement (Thrill of Excitement motivation) and because it is a new app and perceived as "cool" (Trendiness motivation). Furthermore, Tinder is more often used to find a steady relationship rather than merely sexual encounters. The Ease of Communication Motivation was the motivation that ranked the lowest.

Although media presents Tinder as the hook-up app and with all the various guides out there that teach users how to be a Tinder player, the Tinder hook-up app reputation seems to be a false reputation. It can not be denied that there is a group that is actively searching for one night stands, but this is just a minority. Research shows that the Love motivation is higher than the Casual Sex motivation. However Tinder is also not the app for serious relationships. The highest scoring motivations are the Thrill of Excitement motivation and the Trendiness motivation. The Trendiness motivation is in fact not an intrinsic reason to use Tinder. It is not a reason to use Tinder for the experience of it but rather because it is seen as "cool". This is quite remarkable considering that it is also perceived as a hook-up app.

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