MOBILE DATING IN THE DIGITAL AGE: COMPUTER-MEDIATED

COMMUNICATION AND RELATIONSHIP

BUILDING ON TINDER

by

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A thesis submitted to the Graduate Council of
Texas State University in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts
with a Major in Mass Communication
May 2015

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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my parents, Carl and Karen, who have showered me with

unconditional love and encouragement throughout my academic career.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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ABSTRACT

This study explores how and why people use Tinder, the popular mobile dating application. By comparing use across age and gender, this research found key differences between men and women and their perceptions of mobile dating. In addition, this study examined the potential of new media gratifications granted by smartphones and mobile technologies. A 30-question online survey was administered at Texas State University, producing a random sample of 578 respondents, to which 38 used Tinder and participated in this research.

CHAPTER I

Introduction

<u>Problem</u>

The expansion of the Internet has reconstructed how we initiate and maintain personal relationships. Through computer-mediated communication (CMC), users can exchange a series of electronic messages and participate in different social activities exclusively through cyberspace. Online dating, for example, has fundamentally altered the process of finding romance. Users can connect across vast geographic regions, and employ a series of CMCs, such as photos, texts, or video, for meeting potential partners. With new forms of emerging media, specifically Internet-accessible smartphone devices, online daters can download different mobile applications that satisfy individual romantic needs. With 20,000 downloads per day (Wortham, 2013), Tinder has arguably become the most notable mobile dating application.

Upon signing up, Tinder users are asked their gender, location and sexual orientation for locating nearby singles. They are also given the option to provide a 240-character bio. The app draws basic Facebook information (i.e. name, age, location, interests, photos) into a digital profile that allows users to anonymously swipe right if they are interested in someone, and left if they are not. When two people swipe right, they're considered a "match" and can chat in a private window until deciding to meet in person. Unlike other online dating websites that require detailed surveys and antiquated questionnaires, Tinder is free to download, and is known as a self-selection dating application. Users can filter through a series of profiles and select their ideal partner with the intention of meeting in person shortly after chatting (Colao, 2014). Tinder's unique

mobile design has generated a wide range of user applications as many download the software to locate short-term relationships and/or casual sex. As an online GQ article published in February 2014 said, "Tinder: the dating hookup hybrid that makes things simpler, sexier, and particularly lady-friendly" (Witt, 2013). However, according to Tinder co-founder Justin Mateen, only 6% of users think Tinder is a "hookup app" (Dredge, 2014). Thus, this study will explore the implications of self-selection mobile dating applications in the digital age.

Background

The digital novelties of Tinder fall under the category of location-based real-time dating (Handel & Shklovski, 2012). By incorporating the GPS-enabled software available on all smartphone devices, Tinder users can engage in real-time interaction relatively fast compared with PC-based online dating where people may chat for weeks before meeting face to face (Mascaro, Magee, & Goggins, 2012). While older studies have often cited CMC relationships as being cold, impersonal and ineffective (Kraut et al., 1998; Hiltz, Johnson, & Turoff, 1989) a growing body of research suggests just the opposite (Whitty & Carr, 2006; Walther, 1995). Today, 23% of adults said they have met a spouse or long-term relationship through online dating sites or mobile applications (Smith & Duggan, 2013).

Significance

With smartphone ownership now representing 56% of American adults (Smith, 2013), Tinder's 10-million daily users (Lapowsky, 2014) imply a growing shift in the discourse of online dating. Indeed, one of the most novel features on Tinder and other self-selection dating applications is the heavy emphasis on photos, which prevent users

from creating richer digital self-presentations (Birnholtz, Fitzpatrick, Handel, & Brubaker, 2014). Studies questioning the construction of online dating profiles have found a "shopping" mentality for selecting matches, where users evaluate other singles based on physical appearance and desired traits (Fullick, 2013; Gibbs, Ellison & Heino, 2006). While looks are important when choosing a partner, Tinder's digital interface could potentially impact how people decide to use the application.

The uses and gratifications (U&G) theory serves as the theoretical framework for this research. The theory seeks to understand why and how people use media to satisfy individual needs, and the potential consequences of acting on such needs (Blumler, Katz & Gurevitch, 1974). Past studies focusing on U&G have often evaluated traditional forms of media (e.g. television, newspaper, radio), but as modern media becomes more interactive and multimodal, scholars have urged for updated studies on user gratifications to better understand the latent effects of technology (Rubin, 2009; Ruggiero, 2000; Sundar & Limperos, 2013). Sundar's MAIN model (2008) addresses the digital affordances offered on new media devices, for example, smartphones. The model posits that such affordances provide cues to media users, which then trigger mental shortcuts about characteristics of the content they consume (Sundar & Limperos, 2013). When designing mobile applications, developers often follow a User Centered Design (UCD) that augments the product around the wants and needs of the end user. Not only is the design contingent on the technology, but also what people want to gain from the mobile application. Therefore, investigating the possibility that media needs are shaping the design of mobile applications is warranted.

As a social media mobile application with a unique digital interface, Tinder presents a rich opportunity to explore how people use mobile dating technology and the underlying gratifications users may receive from smartphone interaction. This study will expand on existing uses and gratifications literature as it pertains to online dating, in addition to more recent studies that focus on the design and functionality of new media devices. The central questions of this research are as followed: How and why do people use Tinder, and what differences exist between age and gender? How do people evaluate Tinder profiles? How does Tinder's design impact its use and application? In order to answer these questions, the results section of this research analyzed 578 electronic surveys randomly administered at Texas State University, to which 38 used Tinder and participated in the study.

CHAPTER II

Literature Review and Theoretical Background

<u>Online dating</u>

<u>Overview</u>

Online dating has become a common practice for people looking to form new relationships (Whitty & Carr, 2006). Of the 54 million single people in the U.S., 40 million have tried online dating (StatisticBrain.com, 2012). Today, one in ten Americans use online dating sites (Smith, 2013). Over the years, online dating has seen a steady increase. According to a 2013 Pew survey, 11% of adults have used online dating sites or mobile dating apps up from just 3% in 2008 (Smith, 2013). Sixty six percent of online daters have gone on a date with someone they met through a dating site or mobile application compared with 43% in 2005 (Smith, 2013).

Additionally, 23% of online daters said they have met a spouse or long-term relationship through similar sites compared with 17% in 2005 (Smith, 2013). A 2009 nationally representative survey of 4,002 adults investigated how people met their current partners. Among the participants who met their partners between 2007 and 2009, 22% of heterosexual couples met on the Internet, which made the Internet the second most common way to meet a partner, only behind meeting through friends (Rosenfeld & Thomas, 2010). This is consistent with a similar finding from Pew, which determined that 88% of Americans still meet their significant other offline (Smith, 2013).

Definitions

Online dating is the "practice of using dating sites to find a romantic partner" (Finkel et al., 2012, pp. 7). By contrast, conventional offline dating is "the way people meet potential romantic partners in their everyday lives through non-Internet activities, such as their social network, a chance face-to-face encounter, or some combination of the two" (Finkel et al., 2012, pp. 7). Online dating differs from conventional forms of offline dating mainly through its use of computer-mediated communication (CMC), which provides users the "opportunity to interact with potential partners through the dating site or service before meeting face to face" (Finkel et al., 2012, pp. 6). Dating sites are "websites that primarily focus on offering the user opportunities to form a new romantic relationship" (Finkel et al., 2012, pp. 7). Such sites are assessed by their ability to produce favorable romantic outcomes and the extent someone positively evaluates and/or intends to persist in pursuing a specific romantic partner (Finkel et al., 2012).

History

The introduction of the personal computer in the latter of the 1980s granted widespread Internet access to a multitude of commercially owned dating websites. Since mainstream online dating appeared in the 1990s, dating websites have developed new business categories for distinguishing use and application: (1) online personal advertisement sites; (2) algorithm-based matching sites; and (3) smartphone-based dating applications (Finkel et al., 2012).

The first generation appeared in 1995 when Match.com launched a website of online personal advertisements. Singles could post a dating profile and browse other

members at will. Today, Match.com claims that 1 in 5 relationships begin online

(Fisher, 2011). Five years later, a second generation began in 2000 when eHarmony

introduced the concept of "science-based" online matching or algorithm-based

matching. This format requires users to provide personal data, such as interests,

personality, values and desired characteristics. For a monthly fee, social and behavioral

scientists process data to determine matches based on a mathematical algorithm (Finkel

et al., 2012). The third generation, which is the category Tinder falls under, is known as

a self-selection mobile application. Self-selection sites allow people to browse profiles

of potential partners from the general population in the nearby area using location-based

software (Finkel, et al., 2012). This category of online dating was developed around

2008, shortly after Apple Inc. introduced the App Store for all iPhone mobile devices.

Self-selection sites are frequently launched with broader social networking sites, like

Facebook, and are becoming extremely popular (Finkel et al., 2012).

Changing attitudes toward online dating

In 1992, less than 1% of the population met their partner through printed

personal advertisements or other intermediated sources (Laumann et al., 1994). Even

before online dating, using newspapers or magazines to find romance was largely

stigmatized (Finkel et al., 2012). Shortly after the appearance of online dating, negative

views associated with newspaper personals still lingered (Finkel et al., 2012). Many

online daters were stereotyped as desperate or socially inept (Whitty & Carr, 2006), but

thanks to popular culture and movies, such as *You've Got Mail,* online dating started to

shed its bad reputation (Finkel et al., 2012).

1997 saw a large increase in the number of online daters, not coincidently, as did Web 2.0 technologies, which allowed for more user-generated content and sharing capacities (Hogan et al., 2011). However, younger generations were still leery of online dating. For example, researchers studying college students' attitudes toward online dating the early 2000s found that many young adults had more negative than positive feelings about online dating (Donn & Sherman, 2002). Specifically, students were concerned that people on the Internet would lie, it would take longer to get to know someone, and it was generally unsafe (Donn & Sherman, 2002).

Three years later, the Pew Internet & American Life study examined public attitudes about online dating for the first time. The study, which monitors the effects of the Internet on Americans' lives, determined that 44% agreed that the Internet was a good way to meet people and 44% disagreed (Madden & Lenhart, 2006). Additionally, only 29% agreed that online daters are desperate, but 66% thought online dating could be dangerous. Pew recently revisited that same study and has since updated its findings. In 2013, 59% percent agreed online dating is a good way to meet people and 21% said online daters are desperate (Smith, 2013).

Characteristic of online daters

The two strongest predictors of online dating are using the Internet and being single (Sautter et al., 2010). Other factors include: homosexuality or minority sexual orientation (Hogan et al., 2011); recently moved to a new city or experienced a breakup (Yurchisin, Watchravesringkan, & McCabe, 2005); middle-aged rather than young adults (Hogan et al., 2011); divorced rather than never married (Sautter et al., 2010);

limited time for dating because or work or being a single parent (Barraket & Henry-Waring, 2008); lost interests in the bar scene (Long, 2010); and witnessed success of online dating usually through friends or family members (Long, 2010).

In a 2007 study by Valkenburg and Peter, researchers explored other antecedents of online dating. Their research found that online dating was not related to income and education level, and males reported visiting online dating sites more often than females (Valkenburg & Peter, 2007). However, there were no differences between genders in frequency of posting online profiles. In regard to age, one-in-five adults between ages 25 to 34 have used online dating, and 17% of adults ages 44 to 54 have also tried a dating site or mobile application (Smith, 2013). Interestingly, other studies have shown that older people are drawn to online dating while younger people are more likely to have tried speed dating (Whitty & Buchanan, 2009).

Factors that lead to online dating

Kang and Hoffman (2011) found that total number of tasks a person performs on the Internet to be a significant predictor of online dating. Couch and Liamputtong (2008) explored differences in demographic conditions that led to online dating and found that seeking a soul mate, sex, fun, relaxation, boredom, and "it's easier to meet people" were among key motivations. Changing personal circumstances were also factors for online dating, specifically busy work schedules, friends becoming partnered, having children, not being able to go out much, separating from a partner and moving to a new city (Couch & Liamputtong, 2008).

The technical features of the Internet allow people to connect across large physical distances, but surprisingly, in the Couch and Liamputtong study, location and proximity were important considerations for online daters. In reference to ease and convenience, some participants were only using online dating for casual sex. One man from the study said he'd been on 40 dates and claimed to have had sex with all of his matches (Couch & Liamputtong, 2008). Indeed, a large body of research suggest that the Internet facilitates increased numbers of sexual meetings (Cooper et al., 2003; Bull et al., 2004; Hardey, 2004; Daneback, 2006), but other research supports online dating and its ability to create enduring relationships (Whitty & Carr, 2006; Baker, 2002).

Some scholars contend that relationships beginning on the Internet can successfully extend beyond the web (Whitty & Gavin, 2001). The duration of time spent chatting online before meeting face to face was explored in Whitty's 2003 study of 30 men and 30 women. From this sample, 65% of daters said they met their date within a week of chatting online and 11% said they met within a month of initial contact (Whitty & Carr, 2006).

The majority (91%) of participants hoped to find a long-term relationship by means of online dating, while others were seeking casual sex (12%). Ten percent of subjects said they were attracted to online dating because of social anxiety and considered themselves shy people. Nearly half (47%) of individuals said the large number of potential matches appealed to them, while 67% felt they had no other option because of personal reasons (Whitty & Carr, 2006). Additionally, 35% of respondents talked about liking the convenience of online dating, meaning they could access and browse dating sites in their own home.

Profile construction

Dating sites usually involve online profiles that offer users a face to the virtual world. Using CMC to meet potential partners presents new challenges in regard to self-presentation and self-disclosure behaviors (Gibbs, Ellison & Heino, 2006). Several studies researching the risks of online dating have found profile deception to be among the biggest user concerns (Guadagno et al., 2012; Hall et al., 2010; Couch & Liamputtong, 2008). Negative experiences with online dating happen quite often as 54% percent of online daters felt that some users seriously misrepresented themselves in their user profile (Smith, 2013).

From a 2006 Gibbs et al. study, 86% of respondents said they felt physical appearances were most misrepresented in online dating profiles. Other common misleading characteristics included: relationship goals (49%); age (46%); income (45%) and marital status (40%). Twenty-eight percent of online daters have been harassed or was made uncomfortable by someone on a dating site, and women are more likely (42%) to receive this type of contact compared with men (17%) (Smith, 2013). Additionally, 22% of online daters have asked someone to help them create or perfect their user profile, but women were around twice as likely (30%) compared with men (16%) to ask for assistance (Smith, 2013).

Constructing a dating profile often requires users to ascribe marketable characteristics when seeking a romantic partner (Heino, Ellison & Gibbs, 2010). Witty and Carr (2006) found physical attractiveness to be an important characteristic when evaluating profiles for both men (96%) and women (83%). Other answers included: similar interests (men 83%; women 86%); occupation/intelligence, (men 73%; women

73%); personality (men 63%; women 80%); size/weight (men 46%; 26% women); proximity (men 36%; women 43%) and sense of humor (men 20%; women 26.7%).

The marketplace mentality for selecting other singles resonates on several online dating websites (Heino, Ellison & Gibbs, 2010). For example, Match.com promotes itself by providing "millions of possibilities to meet your match." Online dating services commonly advertise numerous opportunities to find romance by granting immediate access to a large pool of searchable profiles. In this environment, users are presented in a virtual marketplace of potential dating partners (Heino, Ellision & Gibbs, 2010). The market metaphor of online dating as Heino (2010) describes, "is a place where people go to 'shop' for romantic partners and to 'sell' themselves in hopes of creating a romantic relationship."

From a business standpoint, media consumption usually involves entertainment or leisure. The hedonic consumption perspective highlights the enjoyment of consumer searching activities (Holbrook & Hirscham, 1982). In a 2010 Long study, one participant confirmed the marketplace metaphor associated with online dating. As quoted in Long: "I think [shopping] is a perfect analogy for it. I can pick and choose; I can choose what size I want, it's like buying a car, what options am I looking for. I can test drive it, eh it's not really my fit, I'll put it back and go try another car." Indeed, 32% of Internet users agreed with the statement, "online dating keeps people from settling down because they always have options for people to date" (Smith, 2013).

A 2010 study by Hitsch, Hortacsu and Ariely explored the profile-searching and contact behavior of 6,485 heterosexual users (3,702 men and 2,783 women) of a major U.S. self-selection dating site. In the study, researchers examined the likelihood that

users would contact a potential partner after viewing his or her profile. Results determined that men viewed more than three times as many profiles as women and were approximately 40% more likely to initiate contact with a woman after viewing her profile compared with a woman viewing a man's profile (Hitsch, Hortacsu & Ariely, 2010). The average man initiated conversation 3.2 times more than the average woman over a 3.5-month period. Men are more likely to favor the assertive path compared with women who are often more passive in their communication (Hitsch et al., 2010). A sample of users on one self-selection dating site reported spending an average of 5.2 hours per week browsing profiles that yielded in 18 hours of face-to-face interaction (Frost et al., 2008).

<u>Tinder background</u>

In September 2012, Sean Rad and Justin Mateen piloted a mobile matchmaking application at the University of Southern California. Within a week, the aptly named "Tinder" had gone from 300 to 1000 users (News.com, 2014). Today, Tinder is offered in 24 languages and has generated 1 billion matches, with 800 million swipes per day (News.com, 2014). It has since been considered the fastest-growing dating application in the United States (Baxter & Cashmore, 2013). As stated by Rad, "We want to be the company you turn to when you want to meet somebody" (Colao, 2013).

Carrying the tagline, "It's like real life but better," Tinder's innovative design allows Apple and Android smartphone users under age 50 to connect with nearby people using location-based software and basic Facebook information, such as mutual interests and friends. By connecting directly with a user's Facebook account, people

become authenticated, therefore mitigating the chances of viewing fake profiles (Emson, 2013). Users can create a Tinder profile by uploading four pre-selected pictures from their Facebook account and providing an optional 240-character bio. Each Tinder user can customize the desired age, gender and proximity of potential matches in the "preferences" section of the application.

Unlike traditional forms of online dating, which require a username or some type of pseudonym, Tinder profiles automatically include a person's age and first name in their profile picture, making the experience appear even more genuine. Tinder's photo-centric design enables users to filter through a series of profiles before rejecting (swipe left) or accepting (swipe right) other singles. After both users have displayed interest in each other by swiping right, a screen reading, "It's a match" appears, authorizing both users to chat in a private window. In order to continue searching, users are instructed to click the "keep playing" button. Users can have possibly hundreds of conversations simultaneously before deciding to meet with an individual face to face.

The design affords little effort on the part of the user, and can be easily accessed throughout the day via a smartphone device. With just a swipe of the finger, Tinder users can find, or rather, select, romantic matches based on individual preference. Some users have actually found marriage and long-term commitment through Tinder (Bosker, 2013), but many have dubbed the self-selection mobile application the modernized version of "Hot-or-Not," an online rating website that allows people to evaluate the attractiveness of user-submitted photos.

Not surprisingly, the ease and convenience of Tinder has prompted a number of user intentions, including casual sex. As a January 2014 article published on BetaBeat, a

website dedicated to up-and-coming tech tools stated, "Tinder: High-speed digital dating (that) gets you more ass than the L Train." Other critics contend that Tinder is more of a game than a tool for serious dating. For example, bar goers in England gather around groups of friends and approve or disapprove potential Tinder matches on behalf of one another (Dredge, 2014). A 2013 article from the Huffington Post quoted a Cornell University student who shared a similar stance: "People don't think of [Tinder] as online dating, they think of it as a game… I think of it as a beauty contest plus messaging." Roughly 50% of users on Tinder are between the ages of 18 to 24; 25 to 32 year olds represent 32%; 13 to 17 are over 7%; 35 to 44 are about 6.5%; and the remainder are older than 45 (Dredge, 2014). It's important to note, 96% of Tinder users have never tried another dating application (Colao, 2013).

Tinder was funded after InterActiveCorp, also the owners of Match.com and OkCupid, saw that mobile social technologies were on the rise (Bercovici, 2014). Since Tinder's inception, niche mobile applications with similar self-selection digital platforms have surfaced, such as Clover, Hinge and How About We, which incorporate social networking with smartphone technology for finding matches (Finkel et al., 2012). Tinder recently added a "moments" feature that allows users to send instant snapshots to all of their matches, serving as a type of icebreaker (Rao, 2014). In March 2015, developers announced the launch of Tinder Plus, a premium service for $9.99 a month that adds additional features, such as the ability to rewind a left swipe or search for matches in different city (Crook, 2015). Moreover, a new "right swipe limiter" has also been added to Tinder's premium software. The limiter caps how many right swipes a user can make in a 12-hour period. Only by purchasing Tinder Plus can users receive

more right swipes. As quoted in a 2015 TechCrunch article, the company has seen "a small number of users who only swipe right just to see who likes them back" (Crook, 2015). The number of people participating in "indiscriminate narcissism," as the behavior's been called (Crook, 2015), was not mentioned in the blog post or the TechCrunch article.

Many pundits in the digital dating world, such as CEO of Match.com, Sam Yagan, feel that Tinder gives the people what they want: an easier and faster way to meet someone new in real time. "This device is the thing that marries online dating and offline dating…. Mobile dating is one of the few digital products that, when you use it, is designed to lead to a meeting." However, TechCrunch writer Jordan Crook attributes shallow behavior on Tinder to its game-like design "…. If we put anecdotal behavior stuff aside, we can point to the obvious truth: The actual *design* of Tinder is based around a deck of cards. Can't get much more gamified than that. Users want to swipe more because that is the game of Tinder, but the match is the equivalent of a turbo-charged Like on another social network. It's not just a friend giving you a hat-tip on your photo or some random follower favoriting your tweet. It's someone who might actually like you, someone who may potentially want to have sex with you. The stakes are raised, and so is the reward."

Uses and Gratifications theory

This research incorporates the uses and gratifications (U&G) theory to identify how and why consumers use mobile dating technology. Defined by Blumler, Katz, and Gurevitch (1974), U&G research investigates user motivations and what people do with

mass media. Since the definition of mass media has come to include elements of emerging technology, U&G is an appropriate framework for explaining how and why audiences select to download and use Tinder. Compared with studies on passive media effects, U&G is an audience-centered approach, which posits that media users are active in their selection and have specific needs that drive media adoption (Rubin, 2009). Other objectives of U&G are to understand motives for media behavior and to identify functions or consequences of certain needs (Katz et al., 1974).

Needs are the "combined product of psychological dispositions, sociological factors, and environmental conditions," (Katz, Haas & Gurevitch, 1973, pp. 516-517). Katz, Hass and Gurevitch (1973) developed 35 needs taken from the mass media and divided them into five categories: cognitive needs, emotional needs, personal integrative needs, social integrative needs, and tension release needs. Similarly, McQuail (1983) summarized four core reasons for media use: information, personal identity, integration and social interaction, and entertainment.

Past studies on U&G determined that media gratifications are largely based on a user's pre-existing needs, rather than specific technological features of media (Greenberg, 1974; Lucas & Sherry, 2004). Needs drive the use or gratification acquired from different media contexts, but as media becomes more interactive, it's important to remember differences between traditional media (e.g., radio, television, newspapers) and newer forms of media (e.g., video games, tablets, smartphones), which usually offer Internet connectivity and more options for user gratifications. Staying akin with the U&G approach, media will compete with other information sources for user gratifications (Katz et al., 1974). Since U&G focuses largely on media innovations,

outlining findings from early U&G studies lays the framework for later examining

consumer use of Tinder.

Past research on U&G

One of the first media studies to investigate U&G occurred in 1944 when Herta

Herzog researched why people listened to radio soap operas. From her study, Herzog

found three types of gratifications: emotional, wishful thinking and learning (Herzog,

1944). She later conducted a similar study on radio quiz shows and found that

competition, education, self-rating and sporting were among important user

gratifications (Herzog, 1944). Similarly, Berelson (1949) suggested that newspapers

gave readers a sense of respite, social contact, social prestige, and brought structure to

one's daily routine.

Rubin (1983) stated that television motivation could be categorized in two

dimensions: "ritualistic" and "instrumental." Ritualistic implies more passive media

use, such as habits, relaxation, and passing time, while instrumental use refers to goal-

oriented viewing, where users seek certain content because of specific needs, for

example, information or entertainment. Additionally, arousal, escape, learning, habit,

social interaction, and companionship were salient gratifications from watching

television in past U&G studies (Greenberg, 1974; Rubin, 1981, 1983).

At the turn of the new millennium, Leung and Wei (2000) studied gratifications

of cellular phones, and found mobility, immediacy, and instrumentally to be the

strongest predictors of user motivation. Intrinsic factors such as, affection and

sociability were also related to cellular phone adoption. Demographic use of cellular

phones on buses, cars, and trains were linked to mobility and immediate access gratifications (Leung & Wei, 2000).

A study by Papacharissi and Rubin (2000) later investigated motives and gratifications of Internet use. By incorporating pre-existing measures of interpersonal, traditional media and new media gratifications, the researchers determined that people use the Internet for interpersonal reasons, to pass time, information seeking, convenience and entertainment purposes (Papacharissi & Rubin, 2000). In 2004, Stafford, Stafford and Schkade found three main gratifications from Internet use: (1) content; the need for researching or locating specific information (2) process; the experience of purposeful navigating or random browsing of the Internet and (3) social; which includes creating and deepening social ties (Stafford & Schkade, 2004).

With the onset of social media platforms appearing in the mid to late 2000s, a 2013 study led by Whiting and Williams found that 76 percent of survey respondents use social media to pass time; 64 percent said social media is a form of entertainment, such as playing games; 60 percent use social media for relaxation purposes; and 16 percent of people mentioned using social media to escape from the real world (Whiting & Williams, 2013).

Collectively, the findings of these studies indicate similarities between traditional media gratifications, such as radio, newspaper and television, and new media contexts like the Internet, mobile phones and social networking sites. However, generally speaking, it seems people seek out media for leisure purposes. As media becomes more collaborative and social, it's appropriate to investigate the changing nature of technology, and the possible gratifications granted by new media contexts.

Indeed, Tinder encompasses a variety of media elements, including Internet, social and mobile gratifications, but distinguishes itself through its design, accessibility and user interactivity.

<u>Potential gratifications of technology</u>

Sundar (2008) argues that the shift from old to new media creates new gratifications that develop with technology. This notion challenges conventional definitions of U&G research on the premise that needs or gratifications can also be satisfied by media characteristics. The social capacities of the Internet and the affordances of smartphones calls for updated gratifications better positioned with new media channels (Rubin, 2009; Ruggiero, 2000; Sundar & Limperos, 2013). As with new technology, Sundar postulates that new media will generate new behaviors (Sundar & Limperos, 2013).

Past research investigating U&G suggests that gratifications are either experienced through the "content" carried by a medium (e.g. information, entertainment), or for the "process" (e.g. playing with technology, surfing the Web) (Stafford & Gillenson, 2004). These two categorizes are known as "process" and "content gratifications." Stafford and Gillenson (2004) recommends including "social" gratifications as a third dimension to reflect the social abilities of the Internet. Their research has found social motivation to be a major determinant of Internet use. As quoted in Sundar and Limperos (2013), "Newer media are characterized by newer functionalities, thereby altering process gratifications…. At the same time, they also determine content gratifications by influencing the nature of content accessed, discussed, and created when users interact with such media" (p. 511).

Interacting with a given medium is somewhat dictated by the affordances in the technology of the medium (Norman, 2002; Sundar & Limperos, 2013). Affordances are cues about how an object should be used. Digital affordances visually suggest how users can interact with the interface and how they can contribute and construct content through the interface (Sundar & Limperos, 2013). New media creates several innovative affordances; therefore, exploring user interactions and the possibility of emerging gratifications is warranted.

The MAIN Model (Sundar, 2008) identifies four potential areas of technological affordances: modality, agency, interactivity, and navigability. The model theorizes that affordances give cues to media users, which then activate mental shortcuts about characteristics of the content they consume (Sundar & Limperos, 2013). Over the years, MAIN affordances have been shown to have significant psychological consequences. As quoted in Sundar and Limperos (2013), "A distinct possibility is that the affordances of modern media will lead users to expect certain gratifications and thereby shape the fulfillment they receive by using these media" (p. 512).

Modality refers to the different methods of presentation (e.g. audio or pictures) of media content (Sundar & Limperos, 2013). The Internet provides the option for users to provide content through multiple modalities (text, photo, audio video), which is why the term multimedia is often associated with the Internet. Specific gratifications from the modality affordances are (1) realism; (2) coolness; (3) novelty; and (4) being there (Sundar, 2008). According to Sundar, the visual modality (i.e. photos) is more trusted than text because pictures lead people to conclude something is more real. This is known as the "realism heuristic." Additionally, Sundar suggest the "coolness heuristic"

can be experienced through newer, stylish modalities, like the iPod and other Apple products, but "novelty heuristics" can be triggered because of uncertainty in use during the interaction. Advanced modalities, such as virtual reality, would fall under the category of "being there."

Agency-based gratifications allow the user to be the "agent" or source of the information. With the onset of Web 2.0 technologies, the rise in user-generated content has significantly altered the dynamic of online communication. For example, a 2012 study by Sundar, Oh, Bellur, Jia and Kim, studied potential gratifications of source interactivity in digital media environments. Source interactivity allows users to express themselves by customizing different interactive features (Sundar, Oh, Bellur & Kim, 2012). Their study found that digital media users enjoyed customizing information in the sender role. Sundar calls this affordance "agency-enhancement." Additionally, subjects from that same study were also motivated to participate in community building by commenting on online forums. Sundar summarizes that agency-based gratifications are made possible because of new interface tools that relate to customization and crowdsourcing (Sundar & Limperos, 2013).

Interactivity is the affordance that allows the user make real-time changes to the content of the medium (Sundar & Limperos, 2013). Clicking, dragging and moving are all examples of website interactivity. Sundar argues the very presence of interactivity on any digital application is likely to convey meaning to users (Sundar, 2008). Additionally, the proliferation of interactive media has expanded user expectations and the degree of activity we decide to have with modern-media interfaces. These factors

will eventually make interactivity as common of gratification as information seeking (Sundar & Limperos, 2013).

Navigability is a key aspect of the online user experience as this affordance allows users to move through the medium. The medium's design is essential for understanding user navigation. An example is the sensation of freely navigating the Internet by searching different websites. Sundar (2008) calls this response the "browsing heuristic." Additionally, the navigation affordance also encompasses the "play" gratification, emerging from the user enjoyment of moving through levels or spaces. Sundar suggests, "The escapism and immersion that are induced by the affective state of play are best realized when the navigational structure of the interface affords a continuous sense of exploration and smooth transitions," (2013, p. 516).

The MAIN model introduces a new series of gratifications that may be established by different digital affordances. While many appear to be unrelated to traditional U&G research, studies in this area have indicated more nuanced gratifications from new media. As users continue to rely on smartphones for different media services, the strategic design of mobile applications could create nuanced gratifications that potentially impact its use.

In order appease the needs of different media users, software designers exploit contextual features and emerging communication technologies (Jabeur, Zeadally & Sayed, 2013). A user-centered design (UCD) is a design process in which end-users influence how a design takes shape (Abras, Maloney-Krichmar, & Preece, 2004). By using this process, a new product can target users' needs through consumer research, i.e. observation, contextual inquiry, and shadowing (Rhee, Lee, & Chang, 2010).

Research on social trends and new technologies allows software companies to capitalize on niche markets given a current business landscape (Rhee, Lee, & Chang, 2010). Compared with other design philosophies, UCD augments the product around how users can, want or need to use the product. This is especially true for the design and aesthetic of Tinder, which incorporates mobile and social media capacities to locate nearby singles in the area.

Could the design of smartphone technology be contingent on the psychological wants and needs of media users? Maybe more fundamentally, are users shaping the design of new media applications? If so, how does this influence self-selection mobile dating applications that are intended for romantic pairings?

Research questions

RQ1: Why do people use Tinder?

RQ2: How do users evaluate profiles when looking for matches?

RQ3: How does design influence the way people use Tinder?

RQ4: How does age and gender impact Tinder's application?

CHAPTER III

Methodology

<u>Sample selection</u>

In order to answer the aforementioned research questions, this study administered a web-based Snap Survey using the Initiative for Interdisciplinary Research Design and Analysis (IIRDA) resource at Texas State University. The researcher received a systematic random distribution list of 10,981 email addresses in the form of an Excel sheet from the Office of Institutional Research on November 7, 2014. A random sample was selected as opposed to a convenience sample because the random sample is more representative of the population (i.e. the number of people actually using Tinder) and would generate the most descriptive results. Therefore, using Tinder was not a requirement for this study since the population was randomly selected. The survey was voluntary and subjects received no incentive for participating in the research.

A link to the survey was sent to 1,000 faculty and 1,000 staff members, in addition to 3,500 students at Texas State University. The survey was launched on November 13, 2014, and remained active until December 2, 2014. A reminder email was sent on November 20, 2014, to notify people about the survey's closing date and encourage more participants. From the total distribution list of 10,981 email addresses, 578 responded, to which 38 used Tinder and completed the entire survey. While Tinder use varies by age, Institutional Review Board guidelines make it difficult to include participants who are under 18. Participants had to be at least 18 years old and have a

Texas State email address to be eligible for this research. Participants' ages were

categorized 18-24, 25-44, 45-64, and 65+.

<center>Questionnaire</center>

The researcher developed the survey questionnaire by reframing questions from

past and present U&G studies, in addition to online dating to identify user behavior on

Tinder. Suggested questions from Sundar's MAIN Model were used to gauge user

satisfaction of new media and smartphone technology. However, these questions were

more interpretative, and were included to highlight general smartphone interactivity in

relation to design. Questions specific to Tinder included uses and gratifications of

online dating. The researcher's thesis committee approved a copy of the proposed

survey questions in November 2014.

While many studies on online dating have often taken a qualitative approach,

this research followed a quantitative method, and included a 30-question online survey.

This appeared to be the most efficient way to gain a random population, therefore,

increasing the validity of the study. After completing the required IIRDA training, the

survey was created using the web-based Snap Survey software available to Texas State

faculty and graduate students. The URL to the survey was linked into an email

invitation, which included the Institutional Review Board approval date of September

12, 2014. Participants were then directed to the online Tinder questionnaire.

The first two questions in the survey asked participants for their age and gender.

These two categories were selected to distinguish differences between men and women

of varying ages. Following questions one and two, a qualifying question asked

<center>26</center>

participants if they currently use the mobile dating application Tinder. Participants who

selected "no" were directed to the end of the survey, and those who selected "yes" were

allowed to continue. Users could stop taking the survey at any time without penalty.

Survey questions were measured using a single answer, five-point Likert scale

(e.g. strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, strongly disagree). Considering the length

of the survey, it was decided a five-point scale would encourage more respondents

compared with a seven-point scale. After the survey closed, the researcher uploaded the

data using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) in February 2015.

CHAPTER IV

Findings and Conclusion

Demographic profile

In regard to gender, females represented the largest number of survey respondents at 65% (n = 380), with 18-24 year olds making up the majority age group at 38% (n = 148). Thirty-five percent of survey respondents were male (n = 198), with 45-64 encompassing the largest age group at 36% (n = 71) (see Figure 4.1).
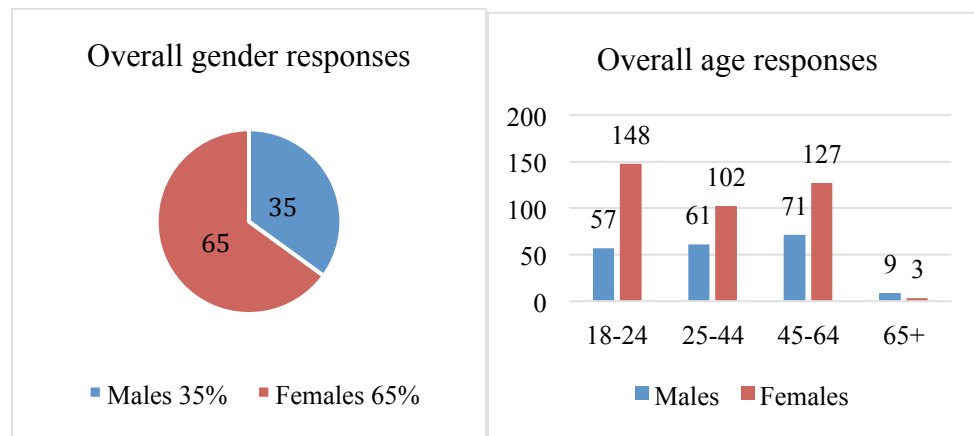

Figure 4.1. Gender and age of survey participants from the response sample (n = 578).

Overall, more women responded to this survey than men. The largest number of female respondents fell within the 18-24 age range, while 45-64 year olds generated the highest response rate for males. This result is somewhat surprising given the majority of emails were sent to Texas State University students (n = 3,500). Since undergraduates are usually around 18-24 and represent 31,005 of the 36,790 total campus population, the disparity in age between men and women was unexpected. The smaller postgraduate population at Texas State, consisting of roughly 4,500 students,

could explain the limited number of participants in the 25-44 age range. Only 2,000 emails were sent to faculty and staff members. This demographic is likely to fall within the 45-64 age range, and because academic institutions often send out questionnaires that are usually conducted by professors or other university employees, this population could be more inclined to participate in survey research. No participants above age 65 participated in this research.

<p style="text-align:center"><u>Tinder use</u></p>

From the sample (n = 380), 7% of females used Tinder (n = 27) and women ages 18-24 was the most prominent age group at 85% (n = 23). Additionally, 5% (n = 11) of men used Tinder, with 81% (n = 9) of 18-24 year olds reporting the highest usage (see Figure 4.2). This is consistent with a previous report that found 50% of Tinder users are between the ages of 18-24 (Dredge, 2014). However, older adults ages 25-34 have been identified as the primary demographic for online dating (Smith & Duggan, 2013).
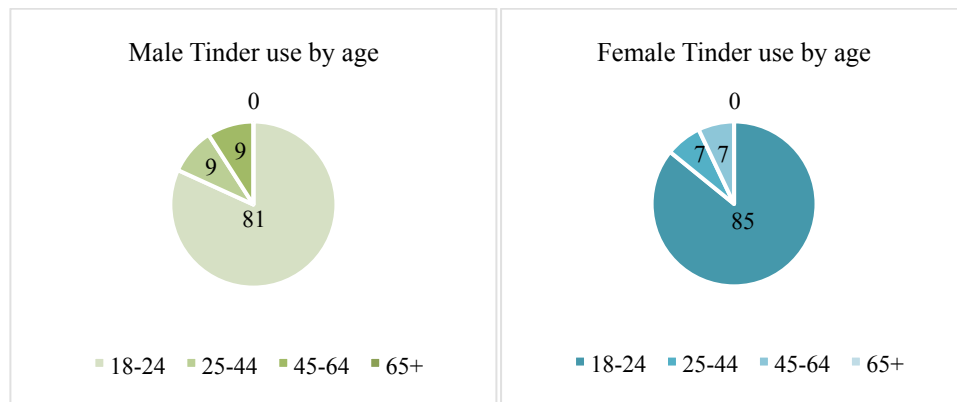

Figure 4.2. Age of survey participants who use Tinder from the response sample (n = 578).

In a similar vein, differences in gender were apparent in Tinder use and online dating. Past studies have found online dating to be higher among males compared to

females (Valkenburg & Peter, 2007), but 7% of women (n = 27) and 5% (n = 11) of men reported using Tinder from the population of respondents (n = 578) (see Figure 4.3).
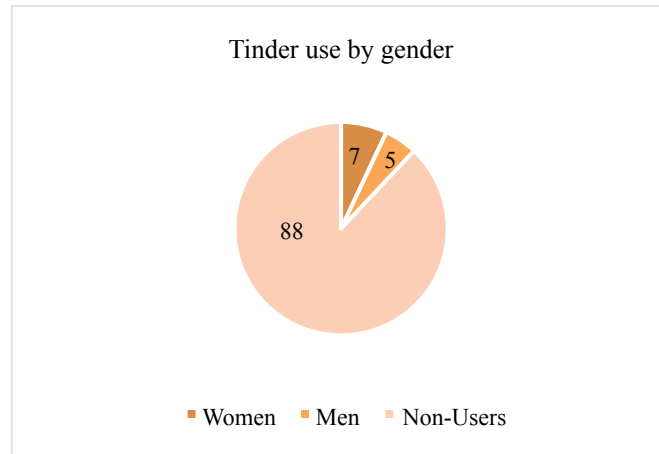

Figure 4.3. Percentage of people who use Tinder from the response sample based on gender (n = 578).

In order to identify differences in Tinder use among men and women, the researcher first averaged survey responses of male and female participants based on age. Since the study was conducted at a university, the majority of respondents fell within the 18-24 age range. While this demographic represented the largest number of survey responses, the lack of participants in other age groups made comparing differences in Tinder use difficult. Therefore, the researcher decided not to analyze this variable in the findings section of this study. However, given the unequal sample size, several dissimilarities emerged between age and gender from the question averages (see Table 4.1).

Findings for research questions

A Chi-square test (α = .05) was applied to this research since this analysis is often used to explain the relationship, or lack thereof, between variables. By analyzing the above data, this test was helpful for identifying how Tinder use differs among men and women. As mentioned earlier, age was not analyzed with the Chi-square test because an overwhelming number of participants were in the 18-24 age range, preventing any real comparisons with older respondents.

Research questions that did not evaluate age and gender (i.e. RQ1, RQ2, RQ3) were measured using response averages from the questionnaire. This was done in an attempt to illustrate how the general population uses Tinder. The researcher aggregated Likert scale data into subcategories that reflected individual research questions for RQ1, RQ2, and RQ3. In order to highlight differences in Tinder use by gender, RQ4 analyzed the total number of questions from RQ1, RQ2, and RQ3.

However, on further examination, not all 30-survey questions were included in the findings as some appeared redundant and did not reflect the intended research topic. Some questions were omitted to better fit with the scope of the study. Additionally, question 30 was not answered by any of the participants. Survey questions, with the exception of questions 1-3, were displayed five per page. Since questions 24-30 appeared on two different screens (question 30 on a standalone screen), question 30 may have been overlooked, causing participants to click "finish" before the survey was actually completed.

RQ1: Why do people use Tinder?

Table 4.1

Aggregated Likert scale survey data for RQ1

Survey question	Mean response
Q4: To meet new people, Tinder is easier than going to bars or social gatherings.	3.13
Q8: I enjoy using Tinder and look forward to checking my matches.	3.45
Q10: I downloaded Tinder to find serious/long-term relationships.	2.13
Q11: I downloaded Tinder to find casual sex.	2.39
Q18: I feel more comfortable chatting on Tinder than in a face-to-face setting.	2.37
Q20: Online dating is for desperate people who can't find romance.	1.84

These results indicated that people are generally divided about their Tinder use. In regard to ease and convenience, respondents were unsure if meeting new people on Tinder was easier than going to bars or social gatherings (3.13). While still in the neutral range at 3.45, it seems that people somewhat enjoy using Tinder and look forward to checking their matches. However, downloading Tinder to find long-term relationships produced one of the lowest averages at 2.13, but surprisingly, respondents also disagreed with the statement that Tinder is for short-term relationships and/or casual sex (2.39). Despite research supporting the success of text-based online relationships, users do not feel more comfortable chatting on Tinder compared with face-to-face meetings (2.37). Nonetheless, question 20 produced the lowest average at 1.84 with users strongly disagreeing with the statement, "online dating is for desperate people who can't find romance."

RQ2: How do users evaluate profiles when looking for matches?

Table 4.2

Aggregated Likert scale survey data for RQ2

Survey question	Mean response
Q7: I find myself looking for a specific "type" of user on Tinder.	3.62
Q9: I evaluate Tinder users solely on their looks and/or physical appearances.	3.26
Q12: Tinder is more effective than traditional forms of online dating because I can personally select which users are appealing.	3.05
Q13: I typically "swipe right" for all Tinder users to boost my self-esteem.	1.76
Q23: Tinder is appealing because you can meet with someone immediately after chatting.	3.05

Responses for RQ2 followed similar results as RQ1 with answers ranging from low to neutral. Users reported the highest average for question 7 at 3.62. Users were asked to rank the statement, "I find myself looking for a specific type of user on Tinder." Likewise, question 9 scored nearly as high with an average of 3.26, which determined that some people "evaluate Tinder users solely on their looks and/or physical appearances." It seems users are slightly more attracted to Tinder compared with traditional online dating because they can personally select which users are appealing (3.05). However, users strongly disagreed (1.76) with question 13, "I typically swipe right for all Tinder users to boost my self-esteem." Similar to question 12, some people like the idea of real-time dating (3.05) as users semi-agreed with the statement, "Tinder is appealing because you can meet with someone immediately after chatting."

RQ3: How does design influence the way people use Tinder?

Table 4.3

Aggregated Likert scale survey data for RQ3

Survey question	Mean response
Q6: Tinder is more of a game I use to pass time than a serious tool for dating.	3.50
Q13: I typically "swipe right" for all Tinder users to boost my self-esteem.	1.76
Q17: I usually keep conversation on Tinder "light" or cordial.	3.61
Q22: I discontinue conversations with my Tinder matches because of lack of interest or too much effort.	3.42
Q5: Checking for Tinder notifications has become a part of my daily social media routine.	2.89

Participants' averages for RQ3 also fell within the disagree to undecided range. When asked if Tinder was more of a game used to pass time or a serious dating tool, user responses were in the higher neutral range at 3.50. Question 13, also used in RQ2, produced a 1.76, meaning users do not generally swipe right for all matches to boost their self-esteem. Indeed, the highest average for RQ3 was question 17 (3.61), which asked if people usually keep conversation on Tinder light or cordial. Similarly, question 22 pertained to why rapport discontinues on Tinder. A response average of 3.42 indicated that some users suspend conversation on Tinder because of lack of interest or too much effort. Even though Tinder is a social media mobile application, a low average of 2.89 signified that checking for Tinder notifications has not become a part of a user's daily social media routine.

RQ4: How does age and gender impact Tinder's application?

Table 4.4

Chi-square test results for RQ4

Question	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Q4: To meet new people, Tinder is easier than going to bars or social gatherings.	.521
Q5: Checking for Tinder notifications has become a part of my daily social media routine.	.895
Q6: Tinder is more of a game I use to pass time than a serious tool for dating.	.571
Q7: I find myself looking for a specific "type" of user on Tinder.	.201
Q8: I enjoy using Tinder and look forward to checking my matches.	.958
Q9: I evaluate Tinder users solely on their looks and/or physical appearances.	.938
Q10: I downloaded Tinder to find serious/long-term relationships.	.945
Q11: I downloaded Tinder to find causal sex.	.009
Q12: Tinder is more effective than traditional forms of online dating because I can personally select which users are appealing.	.959
Table 4.4, continued	

Table 4.4, continued		
Q13: I typically "swipe right" for all Tinder users to boost my self-esteem.		.025
Q17: I usually keep conversation on Tinder "light" or cordial.		.514
Q20: Online dating is for desperate people who can find romance.		.008
Q22: I discontinue conversations with my Tinder matches because of lack of interest or too much effort.		.425
Q23: Tinder is appealing because you can meet with someone immediately after chatting.		.384

From the online survey, three questions produced significant findings with p >

.05. Question 11, for example, asked if participants "downloaded Tinder to find causal

sex." This question investigated why men and women decided to download Tinder.

Question 11 produced higher averages for male participants compared to females with *r*

= .009. Fifteen females strongly disagreed with this statement while five males strongly

agreed (see Figure 4.4.).
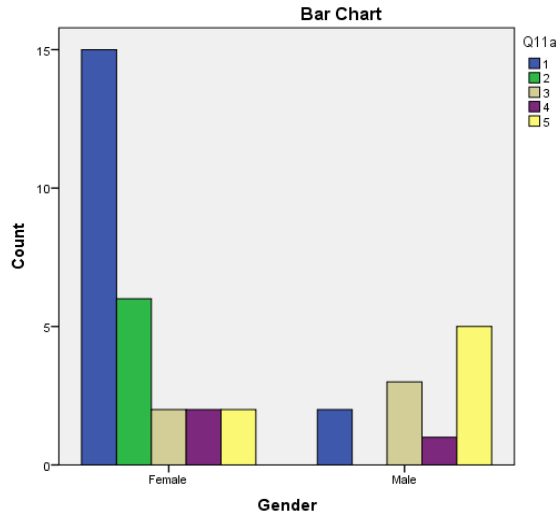
Figure 4.4. Men generally download Tinder to find casual sex compared with women.

Question 13 asked if participants swipe right for all Tinder users to boost self-esteem with $r = .025$. This indicates that men largely use Tinder to improve confidence levels or potentially increase the odds of meeting more matches. Indeed, 21 women strongly disagreed with this statement compared with six men who were either undecided or strongly agreed (see Figure 4.5).

Figure 4.5. Men and women slightly differ in why they swipe right for Tinder users.

Question 20 had a significance level of $r = .008$. This question asked if participants thought online dating was for desperate people. Once again, the majority of females (26) either disagreed or strongly disagreed with the above statement. However, men were more divided in their responses. Five male respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed with question 20, but four were undecided with two either agreeing or strongly agreeing (see Figure 4.6).
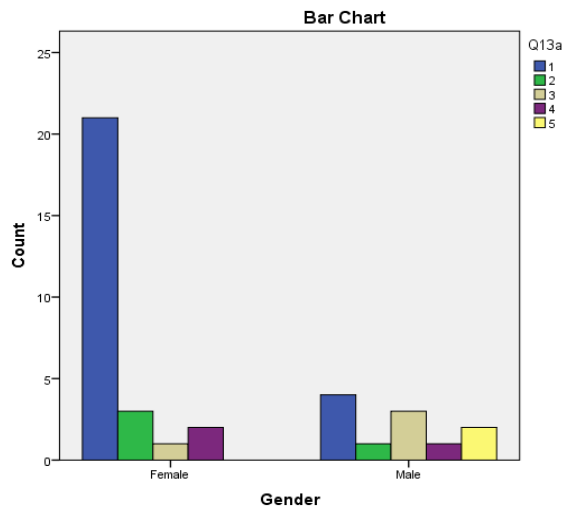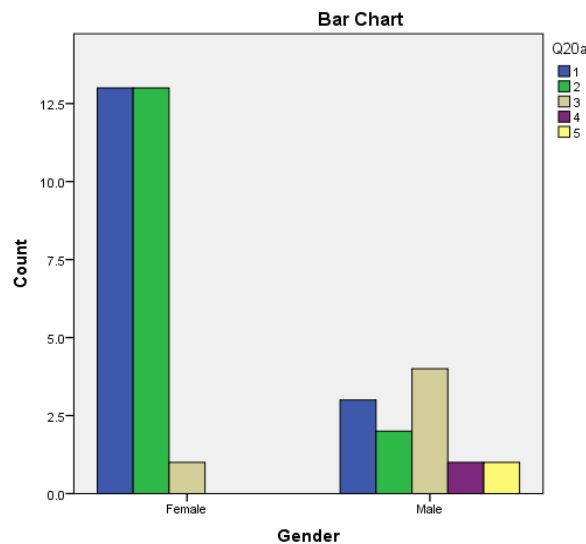

Figure 4.6. Women are less likely to think online dating is for desperate people compared with men who appear to be more undecided.

Conclusion

This research offers insight into how and why people use mobile dating applications and the differences that exist between genders. It also examines possible gratifications of new media technologies in relation to design and user behaviors. While little research has explored if basic design principles do impact the use and application of social mobile applications, this study provides a novice analysis for the possible existence of such factors. Furthermore, as smartphones and mobile applications continue to play an increasing role in our daily lives, investigating the implications of

new media contexts will add to the growing body of literature dedicated to human and computer interaction.

The data of this research suggests that Tinder use is mainly personal, but key differences do occur between genders. RQ1 asked why people use Tinder. There were no compelling averages that emerged from this question, but it appears people generally enjoy using Tinder, as this question produced the highest result for RQ1. However, participants did not download Tinder to find casual sex or long-term relationships. This is surprising given that Tinder is advertised as a self-selection matchmaking application. There is a possibility that people may be using Tinder for broader social purposes, such as meeting new friends or business connections in the area. But if this is true, question 4, which asked if using Tinder to meet new people was easier than going to bars or social events, would not be accurate.

Research exploring how romantic relationships develop on the Internet has found that some people are more comfortable talking online before meeting face to face (Whitty & Carr, 2006). Even though Tinder offers a private window where matches can chat before meeting in person, this question produced unfavorable results. This shows that people are just as relaxed talking to Tinder matches face to face compared with online environments. It seems the stigma once associated with online dating is no longer apparent, at least not for younger generations. Users do not feel online dating is for desperate people who are incapable of finding romance. With more social activities being conducted online and the number of Internet-accessible media applications available on smartphones, this result is not alarming. Research has shown the more

tasks a person completes on the Internet, the more likely they are to participate in other online activities (Kang & Hoffman, 2011).

RQ2 analyzed how people evaluate Tinder profiles. The two highest averages for RQ2 were survey questions 7 and 9, which asked if users look for a specific type of user on Tinder and if they only evaluate physical appearance when deciding to swipe right. Despite responses being in the undecided range, the higher averages could infer that people have a tendency to objectify other Tinder users. Likewise, older studies focusing on the construction of online dating profiles have found a "shopping" mentality for selecting partners (Gibbs, Ellison & Heino, 2006). Given that research has acknowledged the hedonic and intrinsic gratifications associated with media use (Holbrook & Hirscham, 1982; Agrebi & Jallais, 2015), presenting users like commoditized goods could have serious repercussions for future generations of Tinder users.

With the debut of Tinder's new "right swipe" limiter, question 13 investigated if people "Like" all Tinder users to boost self-esteem levels. This result produced the lowest average for RQ2, demonstrating that people are generally selective when it comes to picking matches, further supporting survey questions 7 and 9. In regards to location-based capacities, users seemed to be somewhat attracted to Tinder because they can meet with someone immediately after chatting. Since the majority of survey participants fell within the 18-24 age range, this result is similar to past studies that found younger generations to be more attracted to speed dating compared with older adults (Whitty & Buchanan, 2009).

As correlation does not imply causation, there is no statistical way to determine if the design of Tinder directly impacts its application. Therefore, RQ3 was largely interpretive, and examined if gratifications from Sundar's MAIN model could emerge from using Tinder. Survey question 6 asked participants if Tinder was more of a game used to pass time or an actual tool for dating. While this question fell within the neutral range, it still produced a relatively high average compared with other responses from RQ3. Since the navigation affordance of the MAIN model includes the "play gratification," this question highlighted the sensation of freely moving through levels, similar to users filtering through Tinder profiles. In regard to interactivity, users strongly disagreed with question 13, which asked if users swipe right for all Tinder profiles. The interactivity affordance allows the user to make real-time changes to the medium by swiping, clicking and personally interacting with the mobile application. While this question did produce low results for the general population, there was a significant finding for gender use.

Questions 17 and 22 averaged on the higher end, and examined why conversations discontinue on Tinder and the depth of dialogue topics. The modality affordance addresses the gratification people receive from using different multimedia elements, like photo and texts. Processing text-based modalities involves more cognitive effort compared with photos (Sundar & Limperos, 2013). It doesn't seem that users chat too extensively on Tinder. This could explain why conversations on Tinder often end quickly with users either deciding to meet in person shortly after matching or discontinuing rapport all together. As a mobile application that utilizes Facebook, question 5 asked if checking for Tinder notifications has become a part of a user's daily

social media routine. The agency affordance states that people enjoy being the source or "agent" of their online selves in social media environments. This could imply that people use Tinder with the intention of meeting someone new outside their social network.

Unlike the results of question 11 from the general population, there appear to be differences in how men and women use Tinder with $r = .009$. Studies have found that people mainly use traditional online dating websites to find long-term relationships (Whitty & Carr, 2006), but there's also research confirming that the Internet allows for more sexual encounters. The response demographic (i.e. men 18-24) could possibly skew this result as men in college are often more sexually promiscuous and less serious about finding romance compared with women. Nonetheless, the result of this finding could have serious ramifications during the early stages of dating when men and women are starting to know each other. By using Tinder to find casual sex, men are further objectifying the female body and preventing the development of healthy emotional relationships.

With the addition of Tinder's "right swipe" limiter, question 13 produced a significant finding with $r = .025$. The general population of Tinder users strongly disagreed with this statement. However, it appears men are more likely than women to participate in this behavior, possibly for increasing the chances of finding a compatible match or more sexual partners. Research on traditional online dating has found that men view more than three times as many profiles as women and are more likely to initiate conversation (Hitsch, Hortacsu & Ariely, 2010). While the percentage of men swiping

right for all Tinder users is unknown, the appearance of a limiter indicates that the behavior is not desirable for Tinder's image.

It appears that gender impacts how Tinder users view online dating with $r = .008$. Women do not think that online dating is for desperate people. However, men were more varied in their responses, but generally agreed with the above statement. As mentioned earlier, the Internet increases the odds of using online dating. Since smartphones are widely used and grant instant Internet access, people are generally more accepting of using dating websites and/or applications. The disparity is responses between men and women could be explained by the above significant findings that allude to women using Tinder for more serious/long-term purposes. Younger men might be reluctant to admit they used Tinder, which is a form of online dating, while women might employ the device in a more practical way.

Discussion

While this study did produce significant findings between genders, it did not accurately reflect the opinions of varying age groups. Since this survey was offered at a university, a majority of research participants fell within the 18-24 age range. Indeed, while this demographic is the most likely to use Tinder, future research should include older, and possibly younger, users for evaluating differences in application. Additionally, with very few respondents at n = 38, a convenience sample might generate broader conclusions, in relation to age, compared with a random sample.

The survey questions for this study should be revisited. A more prudent approach would follow a qualitative route, asking participants directly "why they use

Tinder?" If a quantitative study is desired, using a focus group to generate questions or

categories of Tinder use beforehand may also be helpful. This would create more

nuanced survey questions, therefore, decreasing the odds for misinterpretation.

In regard to the design of mobile dating applications, more research questions

related to Sundar's MAIN model would identify specific gratifications users receive

from interacting with Tinder. By examining the design of smartphones and mobile

applications, society can begin to better understand how to use such media services in a

more conscientious way.

The researcher also suggests investigating what impact mobile dating

applications could have on the objectification of Tinder users, both male and female. By

filtering through user profiles that include limited textual information, focusing on what

characteristics men and women find appealing might produce interesting findings.

The researcher did not extensively mention Tinder's commercial model as the

company just recently introduced its paid premium service, "Tinder Plus." However,

tech articles indicate that Tinder is looking into avenues for advertising (Wells, 2015).

While Tinder is funded by IAC, a leading media and Internet company with 150+

brands and products, figures from Forbes magazine stated the online dating industry

generated $2.1 billion in 2013, with IAC controlling one-third of the market share

(Bercovici, 2014). Comparing these numbers with revenues after the launch of Tinder

Plus would better address the commercial elements of mobile dating applications and

what role, if any, those factors have on user behavior.

APPENDIX A: Questionnaire

Please take a few minutes to answer this survey on Tinder and mobile dating

applications. By clicking next you are giving your consent to participate. You may stop

taking the survey at any time by closing the browser.

Q1: What is your gender?

- Male
- Female

Q2: What is your age?

- 18-24
- 25-44
- 45-64
- 65+

Q3: Do you currently use the mobile dating application Tinder?

- Yes
- No

Please rate the following using the scale below:

1 Strongly disagree	2 Disagree	3 Undecided	4 Agree	5 Strongly agree

Indicates questions used for research questions

*Q4: To meet new people, Tinder is easier than going to bars or social gatherings.

*Q5: Checking for Tinder notifications has become a part of my daily social media

routine.

*Q6: Tinder is more of a game I use to pass time than a serious tool for dating.

*Q7: I find myself looking for a specific "type" of user on Tinder

*Q8: I enjoy using Tinder and look forward to checking my matches.

*Q9: I evaluate Tinder users solely on their looks and/or physical appearances.

*Q10: I downloaded Tinder to find serious/long-term relationships.

*Q11: I downloaded Tinder to find causal sex.

*Q12: Tinder is more effective than traditional forms of online dating because I can personally select which users are appealing.

*Q13: I typically "swipe right" for all Tinder users to boost my self-esteem.

Q14: I usually initiate conversation with my Tinder matches.

Q15: Giving someone my personal cell number is a sign of trust.

Q16: I've had meaningful/serious conversations with my matches on Tinder.

*Q17: I usually keep conversation on Tinder "light" or cordial.

*Q18: I feel more comfortable chatting on Tinder than in a face-to-face setting.

Q19: I would go on a date with someone I met on Tinder.

*Q20: Online dating is for desperate people who can find romance.

Q21: The majority of people on Tinder only want to "hook up" or have casual/sexual relationships.

*Q22: I discontinue conversations with my Tinder matches because of lack of interest or too much effort.

*Q23: Tinder is appealing because you can meet with someone immediately after chatting.

Q24: I have met my boyfriend/girlfriend/significant other on Tinder.

Q25: I know someone who has met his or her boyfriend/girlfriend/significant other on Tinder.

Q26: Tinder is more convenient than other algorithm/question-based dating sites, such as Match.com or EHarmony.

Q27: I feel disclosing personal information is essential for building meaningful relationships.

Q28: I would meet with someone face to face immediately after chatting on Tinder.

Q29: I feel comfortable disclosing personal information about myself on Tinder.

Q30: I worry people's profiles are misleading or dishonest.

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