

## CHAPTER II

### THE SOCIAL, CULTURAL, AND ECONOMICAL BACKGROUND OF UNDERSTANDING THE COMMUNICATION EXPERIENCES OF THE INTERCULTURAL ONLINE DATING

#### 2.1 Why People are Interested in Using Tinder

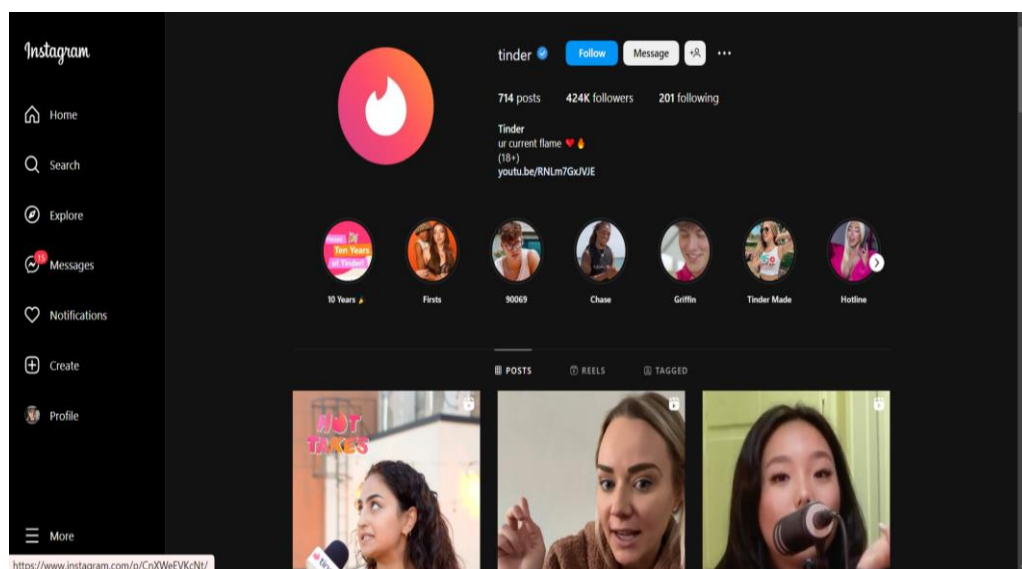
Tinder is certainly the pioneer of online dating applications. After the emergence of Tinder, there are other dating applications that came into the market. Even though at first society views dating applications as something unusual or taboo, now online dating applications are seen as something that is more 'normal'. Many are assuming that these days, people are into Tinder because it's easy and convenient to look for a casual sex partner but it's actually way more deeper than that.

Ananthu Nair and Padmakumar K., decided to do a study on analyzing Tinder's user motivation among Indian Young Adults. Based on the 12 Tinder Motive Scale or TMS which was found by Timmermans & De Caluwe in 2017, this is the sequence on people's motive behind downloading or using Tinder (Nair A., 2020:43):

- Entertainment
- Curiosity
- To meet people with similar sexual orientation
- To improve flirting and social skills
- To make friends
- For casual sex

- To find a romantic relationship
- As a distraction
- As an ego booster
- Because everyone around is using Tinder
- Because a friend created a profile
- To forget about an ex

Few of these reasons above show that most of the respondents decided to give Tinder a try due to people that they're close with. We can conclude that the environment really plays a big role in influencing others towards the positive image of the dating application so people are interested to be a part of the experience. Besides obtaining information regarding Tinder through friends, the dating application seems to also focus heavily on marketing itself. Tinder markets its application through advertisements on popular social media platforms like Instagram, YouTube and TikTok.



## 2.1 Tinder Instagram Account

On Instagram, Tinder has over 400k followers, which is actually a large number compared to other dating applications such as OkCupid who only has around 90k followers. The contents on Tinder's Instagram mostly consists of reposted content from other social media, containing people talking about their experience in using the dating app; good, bad, funny, intriguing, or even mortifying stories. We can say that these stories are what makes Tinder has its own charm and gets people wanting to also experience the thrill. Besides reposting people's contents, Tinder also shares other contents like collaboration projects or the announcement of a new in-app paid feature.

Unlike other monster social media platforms, TikTok has only become popular recently. The social network was first launched and created in 2016 by a Chinese company named ByteDance. By early 2022, TikTok has seen about 1 billion global daily users. TikTok was first used by teenagers to film lip sync videos, but in the last quarter of 2019 and early 2020, TikTok has become a popular short video sharing platform to film and share easy, fun, simple dancing videos. The platform grew bigger when the pandemic hit, with users expanding its video contents into cooking tutorial, makeup tutorial, hang out places recommendations, restaurant recommendations, and many, many more.



## 2.2 Tinder Collaboration with Influencer on Tiktok



## 2.3 & 2.4 Tinder users shares their experience on TikTok

There are also videos where users would tell stories about their lives on TikTok, even ones that were traumatic, and would get a lot of likes for doing so.

This can be as a result of their perception that the stories being delivered are completely relatable to them. Utilizing this particular trend, Tinder works with influencers to tell their stories when using the app. Besides collaborating with influencers, there are many Tinder users who deliberately went on TikTok to tell their stories while using Tinder, and many gained attention due to its absurdness. Basically, this also helps to promote the dating application to the younger generation and shows how Tinder is fun, quick, convenient and easy to use. These traits will definitely attract people to finally use Tinder.

Ever since YouTube, the most popular video-sharing website, began integrating adverts into its videos, many businesses have tried to create engaging video advertisements to attract more attention. Tinder is no exception. One of the advertisements made by Tinder Indonesia for YouTube had successfully reached 40M views. The narrative of the video essentially demonstrates to viewers how Tinder may be utilized to look for a "partner kondangan." For Indonesian young adults, this is a very realistic topic, and this advertising may encourage individuals to download Tinder and take the action depicted in it. Tinder's marketing films have always attempted to address social topics that are currently popular and related to romance in order to increase awareness of the app and downloads.

## **2.2 Online Dating, Then and Now**

From thousands and thousands of years ago, humans have always been made to be in pairs. The desire to find romantic partners is always an important agenda for most people living in this world, and the whole online dating thing has altered the dating scheme; for both the good and the bad. Looking back in the 14th

century, relationships were only viewed as tactical business between families, and the emotions of the pair themselves were unimportant. The idea that love was supposed to start from physical attractions towards one another then extend into deep feelings of affection would be deemed as profoundly irresponsible, if not plain peculiar. Social class continued to have a considerable impact on relationships and marriages in the 17th and 18th centuries. Aside from the traditional chaste kiss, dating started to become about sex in the late 18th and early 19th centuries as people began to let go of the notion that it needs to be under supervision.

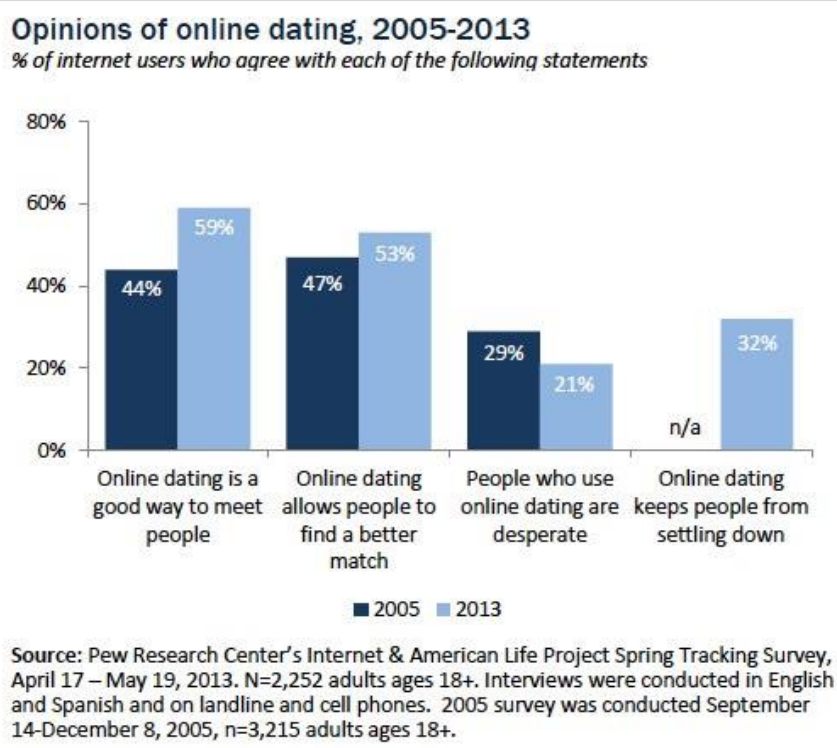
As the twenty-first century went on, cultural trends like less pressure to get married, more employment responsibilities, and greater social mobility started to materialize. These modifications made it possible for people to wed later in life, frequently after establishing their careers (Kambara, 2005 in Fung, K.C, 2016:8). The desire and perception that it can be difficult to find a loving companion in the modern era both persist. But as a result of the Internet's creation, growth, and current ubiquity, the resources that can be used to address these difficulties have altered significantly. 30% of the 7 billion people in our world currently have access to the Internet, according to statistics (InternetWorldStats.com, 2011). The most recent innovation in the long history of using media for dating and marriage is online dating. Its forerunners include video dating, which first appeared in the 1980s and utilized video cassette recordings, as well as print personal ads, which date back to the 1700s. Online dating has significantly risen in popularity, both in terms of drawing users and producing fruitful relationships, in contrast to newspaper ads and

video dating, which accounted for a minuscule percentage of romantic partnerships (Toma, 2016:1).

People who are busy making a living still need a way to find partners without interfering with their activities. The invention of Internet and online dating, surely satisfied the niche. Match.com was the first modern dating site that was launched in 1995. Since then, many dating sites have been popping up. Based on Forbes Magazine, there are currently more than 2,500 online dating services operating in the United States and more than 8,000 sites globally. Online dating sites maintain their popularity through inventions. Now that people carry their smartphones which have ‘applications’ around every day, online dating applications are booming because of their uniqueness. They are considered unique because they use proximity instead of algorithms to identify prospective mates. One of the most popular dating applications among young people now is Tinder.

Now, online dating sites or applications are estimated to be a \$2 billion business. Based on a survey conducted in the Pew Research center by Aaron Smith and Maeve Dugan, online dating services or mobile dating apps have been utilized by 11% of American adults and 38% of those who are currently "single and looking" for a relationship. In 2013, online daters seemed to be more open towards the idea of going out on dates with people they met on these sites compared to 5 years prior. Approximately 66% of online daters have gone on a date with a person they met on a dating website or app. Moving forward in time, 23% of online daters say that they have successfully gotten into marriage or long-term relationships. From 2005 until 2013, public attitudes and opinions have grown more positive.

As we can see from the data below that according to 59% of all internet users, online dating is a good way to meet people, up from 44% in 2005, which is a 15% rise. In addition, 53% of internet users agree with the statement that "online dating allows people to discover a better match for themselves since they can get to know a lot more people," a 6-point rise from the 47% who said so in 2005. Online daters generally have positive things to say about the process. A whopping 79% of online daters concur that it's an excellent method to meet people, and 70% concur that having access to more possible partners makes it easier to discover a suitable romantic fit.



## 2.5 Opinions of Online Dating in 2005 and 2013

When the Covid-19 outbreak happened, online dating received an upsurge with most people confining themselves with virtual dating. Due to the home



restrictions and social distancing, many turned to dating apps to maintain social interactions and if lucky, get themselves possible suitors. During this pandemic, people are constantly in motion, which puts their needs for protection, belongingness, and esteem under danger. Therefore, the significant increase in dating application usage from 0 to 15% between the months of February and June raises questions about why people would turn to an online dating forum for comfort. (Thatcher & Nability-Grover Cheung, 2020 in Joshi G., 2021:24). Online dating served as a stress reliever for many people during this pandemic since it gave them more time to get to know one another rather than having to meet right away after starting a discussion and without the pressure of rushed physical contact.

Now that restrictions have plummeted and most people worldwide are already vaccinated, apparently the online dating applications users are not decreasing. Users' perspectives on online dating have changed, and they now appreciate how convenient it is to check out someone's interests and start a discussion before making the effort to meet up in person. The stigma associated with downloading these apps has diminished due to their widespread use during the pandemic. Online dating has never been more enticing as a result. During lockdown, many people who wouldn't have dared use them otherwise were forced to do so due to the benefits, and they don't seem to be stopping any time soon (Wiederhold, B.K., 2021:435).

### **2.3 Online Dating Applications and The Younger Generations**

A survey that was run in University of South Carolina shows that the majority of students, or around 93,3% are reportedly using Tinder. In a Pew

Research study, 48% of people aged 18 to 29 reported using a dating app (Smith and Duggan, 2013). This shows how popular dating applications are among younger generations, especially college or university students. One of the main reasons why it is so popular with this particular group is how they can experience some fun amidst the hustle-bustle of being a student. It also seems to get its popularity through word of mouth; many downloaded it because it's popular among their peers. During his time at USC, junior business administration student Charlie Wasson used Tinder. It was utilized by him because it was the most widely used app among USC students.

Justin Mateen, one of the founders of Tinder, said they deliberately targeted the app towards college students because they understood that if it appealed to them, it would be successful. Ward and Tracy (2014) looked at college students' samples and conducted surveys assessing relationship satisfaction, number of relationships, social support behaviors, interpersonal competence, confidence/anxiety, and shyness. The researchers discovered that shy people were more inclined to engage in online connections. Additionally, they discovered that shyness was linked to more challenges in face-to-face relationships as opposed to online ones (Ward and Tracy, 2004 in Poley M, 2011:3). Besides the fact that Tinder is convenient, this helps to explain why Tinder is popular with college students; even when the stigma around college is that you get to go out in bars every weekend and meet new people everyday, not many are open to that idea due to being shy or introverted. Tinder surely helps these introverts to still get the chance to go out there.

As the number of young people who hop in the dating application trend keeps on growing, unique issues regarding this method of finding partnership have developed. One of the issues that stands out is how online dating and mobile applications are changing and affecting the dating culture among the younger generations and how they perceive these experiences. The emergence of these dating applications makes it possible for the young people to not only encourage them to “date shop”, but also to choose partners based on scant visual information rather than establishing a connection through dialogue. Researchers Couch, Liamputtong, and Pitts (2012) looked at how and to what extent consumers of online dating services thought that dating online was harmful or dangerous. Researchers discovered that online dishonesty, emotional vulnerability, sexually transmitted illnesses and pregnancy, aggression, and the risks of online anonymity were the top concerns among daters. Sexually transmitted disease is on the list due to how popular these online dating applications are used to just search for potential sexual partners, especially with college students and the hook-up culture.

Erik Erikson (1968) described that for most students, college is a period of psychological moratorium in which an individual holds few responsibilities and is able to try on a multitude of identity roles and part of this process is sexual experimentation. Recent trends in the literature hint to a new method of sex experimentation known as “hooking up” on college campuses. Garcia, Reiber, Massey, and Merriweather (2012:1) define a hookup as a “short, uncommitted sexual (encounter) between people who are not dating each other or in a love relationship.” In a hookup, the uncommitted nature of the sexual encounters—

rather than the precise sexual acts that occur or who is involved—is the most crucial thing to keep in mind.

According to many academics, four-year institutions with on-campus housing are the best places for students to hook up. According to Arnold (2010:1), college students can create a collective peer culture of physical intimacy and sexual experimentation without obvious consequences in this context since there is “extensive, unsupervised free time combined with a dense community of same-age, comparable peers.” 91% of college students feel like the hook-up culture dominated their lives. According to research, both male and female college students dislike hookup culture and frequently experience remorse or even depression symptoms after hooking up (Klinger, 2016:6). So even though many are using the application due to wanting to have some fun, many of these youngsters are actually trying their luck to find love as well.

After all, we can conclude that most Tinder users are young people, especially college students who usually come from the upper middle class range since they can afford to go to college. This fact also proves that most users understand how technology works and are educated so they know what they’re signing up for.

#### **2.4 Indonesian Women in Using Tinder and on Dating Foreigners**

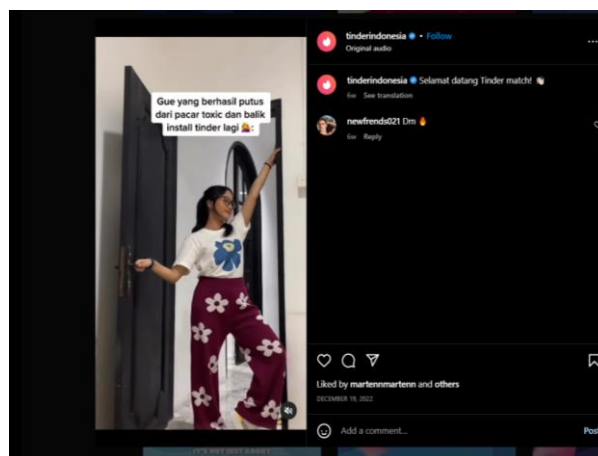
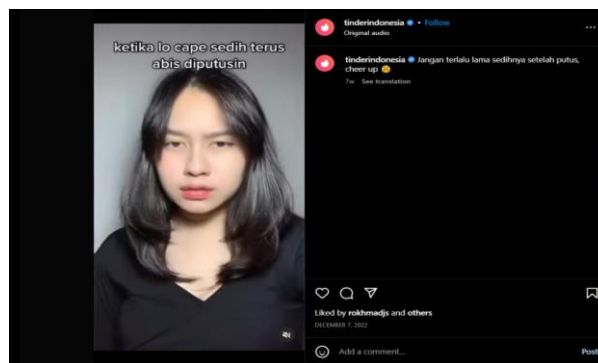
When it comes to dating, Indonesian women have a lot of options to choose from — after all, Indonesia has many islands with countless tribes, resulting in diverse choices for a possible partner. But, even when there seems to be endless options, many still struggle to find a partner that truly “clicks” with them. Not

seldom, online dating applications became the perfect answer for those individuals. In the past, online dating applications kind of had a negative image in Indonesia, because people still felt unsure and unsafe about meeting strangers from the Internet. However, over time, stories about the effectiveness of the application actually succeeded in persuading individuals to try, even though there are instances about people using online dating services to commit fraud.

Nevertheless, even after a few years of the emergence, many were still reluctant to use online dating services, especially for women. The most common explanation is that using those kinds of applications makes people feel uncomfortable if they run into someone they know. They are concerned that doing so might damage their reputation. But it looks like things have shifted these days, since online dating services are getting more popular and there are also many women that are promoting dating apps. According to a Rakuten Insights poll in February 2022, Tinder is one of the top online dating services in Indonesia with a response rate of 57,6%. If we look at the social media and commercials for Tinder Indonesia, we can see that they are attempting to market Tinder in line with Indonesian culture. As an illustration, one of Tinder Indonesia's YouTube adverts depicts how, typically, when Ramadhan arrives, friends and family join together to break their fast, and that at this time, people frequently bring their partner. This behavior is used by Tinder to demonstrate how they may assist people in finding a companion and avoiding going alone.

To convince Indonesian women further on trying out their luck on Tinder, Tinder Indonesia collaborates with women influencers to promote their services.

Due to all of the favorable coverage, many Indonesian ladies were inspired to give it a try. But these days, the image of Indonesian men is going downhill, especially with all the stories of their weird behaviors that have been circulating online, like infidelity or them having high standards despite not having anything to offer to the table. When the Covid-19 epidemic strikes, Tinder offers free access to the passport tool, one of the paid in-app features available through Tinder Gold. The passport feature enables users to swipe internationally wherever they like. Users can utilize the map to search by city or put a pin to begin swiping there. Thanks to this feature, many Indonesian ladies have the opportunity to meet men from all around the world.



## 2.6 & 2.7 Tinder using Women Influencers in Promoting Tinder on Instagram

The Tinder passport feature surely did an amazing job in helping the Indonesian women get their experience of dating people outside their race and culture. If we look at TikTok, there are numerous hashtags that post information about how Indonesian ladies found their present partners through the dating app, such #Suamibule #Tinder #Bule etc. All the stories are unique in their own ways, but one story that gained many attention from the Indonesian Netizen is the one shared by the account @christasean. Christa was an Indonesian woman who met her boyfriend through a dating app. At first, she struggled to communicate with him because she cannot really speak English. Even so, they keep trying to keep in touch with each other through video calls, and everytime there's new vocabulary, Christa would take notes of the word in her laptop. She spent two years chatting nonstop while learning the language, and now that she can speak it fluently, her partner suggested she start an online English course. This resulted in a huge shift in her life, she unexpectedly had many students from all over the country and even overseas like Japan, Malaysia and Dubai. After her success with the online class, her boyfriend recommended that she make a book to help people learn English. She tried out the idea and the book became a bestseller. The story of her hard work and how supportive her boyfriend truly left a deep impression on people.

In addition to Christa's story, there are still a lot of other stories on TikTok regarding how these foreign men treat Indonesian women as their partner with extra support and kindness. One user shared how her partner, who originated from England, never asked her to clean up the house. He always told her to sit down and enjoy netflix or do her own thing instead. This makes many Indonesian women

flood the comment section with jealousy, saying how they wish their Indonesian partner would do the same for them. Other Indonesian women have also shared how their partners from other countries did the same for them in the comments section. Many videos from other users even shared how they married their foreign partner, and it's not uncommon for their partner to convert to their religion in order to marry them. With all of the positive stories that Indonesian women have shared on the Internet about how loving their partner from other countries can be, it appears that this has opened the minds of fellow Indonesian women to dating foreigners; many have even stated that they would like to have a foreigner as a partner.