

# **Gamification of love: a case study of Tinder in Oslo**

**Polyanna Rocha**



**Det Humanistiske Fakultet**

**IMK – Institutt for Medier og Kommunikasjon**

**University of Oslo**

**Spring 2018**

# **Gamification of love: a case study of Tinder in Oslo**

**Polyanna C Rocha Santos**

**Nordic Media Program**

**Det Humanistiske Fakultet**

**IMK – Institutt for Medier og Kommunikasjon**

**University of Oslo**

**Spring 2018**

© Polyanna C Rocha Santos

2018

Gamification of love: a case study of Tinder in Norway

<http://www.duo.uio.no/>

Print: Reprosentralen, Universitetet i Oslo



## **PREFACE**

This master's thesis has been conducted at the Institute of Media and Communications - IMK, at the University of Oslo - UiO, SPRING semester 2018. It is the outcome of the MSc in Nordic Media.

I thank my supervisor Anders Fagerjord for his careful supervision and patience during these semesters. I thank all participants for the insightful conversations and discussions. I also thank Maria Tårland, Student Consultant at IMK, who offered me a lot of help and support during my personal battle.

I thank my classmates, in special Tina, Thanh and Angèlique, who I now happily call my friends, for their company over the last two and a half years. I also thank Bruninha, pelas palavras de apoio; Marcela, mesmo longe, se mantendo presente na minha vida e Pedro, pelos fornhos segurados nessa jornada. Tomas for all the support and encouragement at all times.

Finally, I am happy and proud to be able to present what I feel is a strong and relevant thesis. I have worked hard to produce this original work, despite the difficulties.

To my family in Brazil, agradeço por todo amor e carinho, mesmo que não façam ideia do que eu estudo.

## **ABSTRACT**

Mobile dating applications have increased in popularity over recent years, with Tinder the first to break into the conventional online marketplace, bringing dating to the mobile sphere. This study examines how the Mechanics, Dynamics and Aesthetics (MDA framework) on Tinder's design impacts the user perception of this mobile application and how the application is gamified. It also discusses how online environments offer individuals an increased ability to control their self-presentation, and, therefore, greater opportunities to engage in misrepresentation. This case study of Tinder paves the way for future investigation into its use as a game.

**Keywords:** Tinder, Mobile dating application, Gamification, Play, Games, Computer-mediated-communication, Self-presentation, Mechanics, Dynamics, Aesthetics.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>I INTRODUCTION .....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>1.1 Purpose of the study .....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>1.2 Objectives of the research and motivations .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>1.2.1 Relevance and contribution .....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>1.2.2 Structure of the study.....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>1.2.3 Study Object .....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>II LITERATURE AND THEORY .....</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>2.1 History of dating on Internet.....</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>2.2 Mobile technology and mobile social media.....</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>2.3 Brief history of gaming and mobile gaming.....</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>2.4 Gamification and play .....</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>2.5 Self-presentation and cues .....</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>2.6 MDA- Mechanics, Dynamics and Aesthetics .....</b>	<b>28</b>
<b>III METHODOLOGY .....</b>	<b>32</b>
<b>3.1 Method Development .....</b>	<b>32</b>
<b>3.2 Sampling.....</b>	<b>35</b>
<b>3.3 Document Analysis .....</b>	<b>35</b>
<b>3.4 Data Collection .....</b>	<b>36</b>
<b>3.4.1 Semi-structured interviews.....</b>	<b>36</b>
<b>3.4.2 Structured interviews.....</b>	<b>37</b>
<b>3.5 My own experiences: Participatory observation .....</b>	<b>38</b>

3.6 Focus Group.....	41
3.7 Ethical concerns.....	41
3.8 Data Analysis .....	44
<b>IV ANALYSIS .....</b>	<b>46</b>
4.1 The MDA- Mechanics, Dynamics and Aesthetics of Tinder .....	46
4.1.1 Mechanics.....	46
4.1.2 Dynamics .....	49
4.1.3 Aesthetics.....	51
4.2 Social interactions on Tinder.....	54
4.3 Interactions on Tinder as perceived by Tinder .....	57
4.4 Self-presentation and cues on Tinder .....	62
4.5 Gamification on Tinder.....	64
<b>VI FINDINGS.....</b>	<b>67</b>
5.1 Summary of Interviews.....	67
5.2 Summary of Focus Group .....	68
5.3 Themes.....	69
5.3.1 Thematic Analysis .....	71
5.3.1.1 Theme: Tinder .....	71
5.3.1.2 Theme: Self-presentation.....	72
5.3.1.3 Theme: Gamification and playing .....	74
5.4 Summary of Interviews and Focus Group .....	76
5.5 Findings .....	77
5.5.1 Gamification of Love.....	77



<b>VII CONCLUSION.....</b>	<b>80</b>
<b>VIII REFERENCES.....</b>	<b>83</b>
<b>APPENDIX I.....</b>	<b>95</b>
<b>APPENDIX II .....</b>	<b>97</b>
<b>APPENDIX III.....</b>	<b>99</b>



## I INTRODUCTION

There have never been more ways to communicate with one another than there are right now. Baym (2010: 1)

The Internet has opened a new path for romantic interaction. Baym (2010) and Whitty (2013) have explained that social media has transformed the way people meet, interact and even live. New personal forms of communicating and connecting with others are often received with scepticism, until people start to see it as a new opportunity to interact with others. People were used to meeting their partners through proximity - through family and friends - but now meeting people through the Internet is surpassing every other form.

Baym (2010) explains that in the middle of the 20th century, the telephone improved social interactions, helping people to feel closer more quickly, as a new form of personal connection. Through the introduction of the Internet, computers and mobile applications evolved this further. Baym (2010) points out the various ways in which communication on the Internet and mobile phone differ “in the degrees and kinds of interactivity they offer”, for example, the distinction among using your phone “to select a new ringtone and using that phone to argue with a romantic partner or using a web site to buy new shoes rather than to discuss current events” (p.7).

The use of a smartphone as a tool for communication means more than to make a call or send a text message to someone. Today, globally, an average mobile social media user spends 1.72 hours per day on social networking sites (Bennett, S., 2015, January 27), which means about 28 percent of all their online activity. Tinder’ users spend approximately 35 minutes daily (Smith, 2017, March 7) swiping on the application.

This study will show how the mobile dating application Tinder, principally through its design, makes users in Oslo think that it is a game. It is also discussed how the application brings geographical and physical attraction elements into online dating, reducing stigma, and how Norwegian users think of Tinder as a game. I further contend that the popularity of Tinder can be attributed to its focus on three main elements: its mechanics, dynamics and aesthetics (MDA). This research will suggest that Tinder has a higher social presence than, for example, a dating webpage, due its main MDA elements and mobile portability.

Through computer-mediated-communication (CMC), people can exchange online messages and contribute in social activities completely over cyberspace. For instance, online dating has essentially changed the procedure of finding romance. Persons can connect over larger distances, and engage in a sequence of CMC, such as pictures, audio, text or video, for finding potential partners. Tinder has more than 20.000 downloads per day and it is has become the most prominent mobile dating application (Wortham, J., 2013, February 26).

In this thesis, I will demonstrate that Tinder's design influences the user to think that they are using a game application, not just a simple dating application. Tinder has changed online dating, providing what I will call *the gamification of love*. Whitty (2003) states that playing at love on the Internet is considered so unique an activity that is a form of play. There is "a greater opportunity online for fantasy than there is offline" (p. 349).

The following sections provide a brief background for the study, leading up to the research issue and research question. Then, an explanation of the structure of the study is provided. The next chapter builds on the background and presents detailed information about this study subject, namely Tinder.

### **1.1 Purpose of the study**

This study aims to investigate how Norwegian users engage with Tinder, how they perceive the application and what they think about the application.

Tinder co-founder Sean Rad stated in an interview for Time Magazine (Stampler, L. :2014, February 6): "We always saw Tinder, the interface, as a game". On the same interview, Tinder' founders affirmed that the biggest trick was to crack the application into "a game that you would want to play even if you were not looking for a date". Based on these assertions, I will consider both what this means, and what Tinder users think about the application as a game.

The application description on the Apple Store do not portray Tinder as a game, but as a simple dating tool to expand the social gatherings and get to know people wherever the user is:

(...) Tinder has changed the way people meet around the world. It's much more than a dating app. Tinder is a powerful tool to meet people, expand your social group, meet

locals when you're travelling and find people otherwise never would met (...). Apple Store (2017).

Based on that, I will argue how Tinder is a game. The way the application is portrayed – the “card deck” of users, the *hot-or-not* style (symbolizing yes or no), as well as how the design impact the user decisions, are some points to be discussed in this study.

The above specified research concern leads to the formulation of the following research question:

**RQ: Is it possible that users in Oslo think of Tinder as a game?**

By exploring the understanding and importance of the design and gamification on Tinder, I will investigate how its users in Oslo engage with it and what they perceive from the application.

### **1.2 Objectives of the research and motivations**

This research contributes to research on online dating, and how technology (mobile applications in general) influence social behaviour (mostly on dating). Further, it contributes to our knowledge of how people see the Mechanics, Dynamics and Aesthetics (MDA) framework as a connection with gamification.

Tinder is dynamic. The first time I used it I was curious, swiping around to understand its mechanics, and I became enthusiastic about the aesthetics and experience. My motivation to write about it came from my immense interest in social media, Internet and how personal connections happen in the digital age.

I witnessed technology's rise, growing up before the invention of the Internet, but maturing during its expansion. I have watched previous generations form romantic relationships without the help of technology, such as my parents and brothers. Now, I eyewitness how technology invaded the society. Tinder instantly grabbed my attention and became my focus. Even those who have not used Tinder have heard of it. We all know someone who is currently logged on and swiping, or someone who is in a Tinder relationship.

I believe Tinder has lifted the online dating taboo, making it not only a socially acceptable method of dating, but a very popular one. I wanted to better understand the application that has some of us, and most of our peers, swiping. I am curious to study its effect on the initiation of romantic relationships and society. As an international student in Norway, I notice numerous cultural differences on a daily basis. So, I decided to portray how people in this country, especially in Oslo, use this app to connect and interact, as well as whether or not they think that Tinder is a game, and why.

Through the application, Tinder can take its users to real-life meetings and experiences, bringing an initial online “attraction” to a real-world encounter through its design and interactivity elements. Tinder’s dynamism and resulting app updates have caused me to have to readjust and continually edit my conclusions about it.

### **1.2.1 Relevance and contribution**

A usual application of gamification is to take the scoring features of video games, such as levels and achievements, and apply them to another context. Investigating how Tinder is a gamified tool is a relevant and positive contribution to studies on gamification and dating applications.

This is also the case for other research, as mentioned in section 1.2. By carefully exploring the way the design effects the gamification, changes or improvements can be made, leading ultimately to a better use of the application. Furthermore, best practices identified may be applied to different contexts in similar studies.

### **1.2.2 Structure of the study**

The following sections provide a concise background for this study, followed by the concretization of the research issue and research question. Then, an explanation of the structure of the study is provided.

The second section presents a background about dating on the Internet, as well as important facts about the history of mobile technology. An introduction to mobile gaming, play and gamification is also provided. The methodological approach is discussed in chapter IV, including choice of methods for research, data collection and analysis. A complete overview of Tinder, as well as analysis, is presented in chapter V. Chapter V also explores the theoretical

framework by outlining the main concepts used to answer the research question, self-presentation and MDA model. Chapter VI lays out the analysis of the focus group, interviews and thematic analysis, and presents the results of the investigation. Finally, chapter VII concludes the study with main findings and suggestions for future research.

### 1.2.3 Study Object

Tinder was launched in September, 2012 in Los Angeles, California, by Sean Rad, Justin Mateen, and Jonathan Badeen, aiming to “be your dependable wingman—wherever you go, we will be there” (Tinder, 2017). This mobile social media application is free of charge and available for Android, iOS and Windows mobile users. The application is supported by InterActiveCorp (IAC)<sup>1</sup>, a parent company to other virtual dating channels such as Match.com, okCupid, Pairs and Vimeo. Tinder gained notoriety following its initial release at American universities, and later in the Athlete Village at the Sochi Winter Olympics (Bertoni, 2014, November 4).

When signing up, Tinder users are asked their gender and sexual orientation to help locate nearby users who fit with their preferences. They are also given the option to provide a short biography. The application creates a digital profile by using basic information from the users’ *Facebook*, such as: first name, age, location, and up to six pre-selected photos. The profile forms one card in a ‘deck’ of users. Users can anonymously *swipe right*; if they are interested, and *swipe left*; if they are not. When two people *swipe right* on their respective profiles, they are considered a *match* and can chat together in a private window. Different from other online dating platforms that demand detailed surveys and old-fashioned forms, Tinder is well-known as a *self-selection* dating application. Users can filter across a list of profiles and choose their best partner with the intention, if they want, of meeting in person shortly after chatting (Colao, 2014).

Match.com, a popular dating website from the 2000s, relies on algorithms to pair potential matches based on shared interests. The company has developed a matching algorithm that is

---

<sup>1</sup> IAC is a leading media and Internet company with more than 150 brands and products serving loyal consumer audiences. Iac. (n.d.). Retrieved September 22, 2016, from <http://iac.com/about/overview>.

based not only on users' stated preferences, but also on their ratings of the matches sent to them (Gelles, 2011, July 30). The same occurs with Tinder. In an interview, Dan Gould, a former advertising technology executive, says that Tinder's algorithm gives a lot of weighting to the choices the users make while setting preferences (Kantrowitz, A.:2016, September 23). Distance, gender, and age preferences need to be balanced before Tinder show a potential match. For him, two other analytical issues are distance and recency: distance is straightforward: "Being closer gives you an advantage". But 'active time', is more interesting. "People who have been active recently are more likely to come back soon and interact with other people" (Kantrowitz, A.:2016, September 23).

With the arrival of mobile dating applications such as Tinder, the capability for geolocation - which permits users to 'see' other users that are nearby - has opened new doors. No longer do users have to rely on pre-determined computer algorithms to find potential suitors. Now, if they find another user within their area all they have to do is swipe right. If the user in which they are interested swipes right too, they are matched and can start messaging each other instantly. As stated by Sean Rad, Tinder's CEO: "We want to be the company you turn to when you want to meet somebody" (Colao, 2014).

Currently, Tinder is a success. With 20 billion matches to date, and now in more than 24 languages, Tinder is the world's most popular app for meeting new people. Indeed, it has been called "the world's hottest app" (Heath, A.: 2015, October 26) for a reason, according to the company (Tinder, 2017): "We spark more than 26 million matches per day". Tinder has more than 70 million global users every month, in 196 countries. There are more than 1,4 billion swipes per day (Tinder, 2017). In September 2015, Tinder had approximately 9.6 million daily active users (Tinder, 2017).



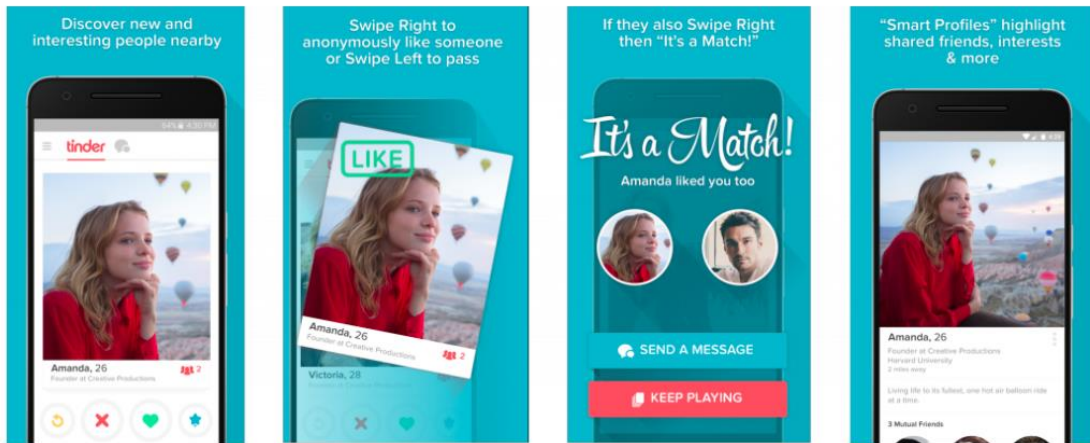


Image 1 – Screenshot of Tinder’s advertisement on App Store (2017)



Image 2: Screenshot of Tinder’s main page

## **II LITERATURE AND THEORY**

The purpose of this chapter is to give an overview of earlier research on the proposed research topic. To that aim, I first present facts about mobile technology and mobile social media history and structure.

### **2.1 History of dating on Internet**

The Internet is a new social institution that has the ability to connect people who have never met face to face and is thus likely to transform the dating process. (Lawson, 2006: 190).

The advance of the Internet and mobile technology has triggered huge changes in communication. Now, the only problem trying to reach friends in another part of the world is the time zone. People can see or speak to each other on a computer screen or on their mobile phone as if they are sitting right next to them. In Baym's words, it means that after centuries, people can finally "communicate across distance at very high speeds" (2010: 3). It was the beginning of the Internet' success.

Way before online dating, the matchmakers were already here: parents searching for spouses for their children. Getting married and having children has always been an important mission. Historically, "traditional matchmaking was often a side role for rabbis, priests, clergy, and sometimes elderly women in the community" (Finkel et. al., 2012: 7). Today, is no longer a job for parents, and instead falls to online dating websites and applications to help single women and men who want to find a partner. There are still face-to-face matchmakers doing the job the old-fashioned way. Known as 'millennial matchmakers', they are well paid for it: some starting on 249 American dollars a year per person – that is more than three times the cost of the paid version of Tinder (Kim, D., 2016).

Online dating has become common practice for people looking to form new relationships (Whitty & Carr, 2006). Internet dating is explained by Lawson (2006: 191) as "the pattern of periodic communication between potential partners using the Internet as a medium". This study explores Tinder as a case of Internet dating on mobile social media. Online dating is explained by Whitty & Carr (2006), as:

Similar to newspaper personals (but with much more information) individuals construct a profile, describing themselves and often providing photographs of

themselves and sometimes sound bites and video. Users typically have to pay to use this service and once they identify a person whose profile they like; online contact is made through the system to gauge whether the other individual might also be interested. From there, individuals typically organize to meet face-to-face. (p.4)

Many researchers have discussed the differences between online and traditional (face-to-face) encounters. Slouka (1995) suggests that online dating is superficial and impersonal due to the privation of social cues. Cooper, & Sportolari (1997: 13), on the other hand, see the Internet as “a powerful new medium with the potential to reshape relationships, to restructure our social world”. On online dating apps and sites such as Tinder, users have the chance to use several forms of CMC to interact with users and have the opportunity to connect to potential partners before meeting face-to-face. For Finkel et. al. (2012), these forms of communication can differ significantly through the online dating scenery:

Asynchronous forms of communication, including messaging systems that approximate e-mail and simpler, less personalized forms of communication (e.g., virtual “winks”) that quickly and concisely convey some measure of interest, are commonplace. Alternatively, users may also choose real-time, synchronous forms of communication, such as live instant-message (text based) chat and live interaction via webcams that allows users to see and hear each other. Finkel et.al. (p. 4)

Whitty (2003) mentions that when researcher’s arguments about relationships developed on the Internet, they focused their writings on the non-existence of the body. She uses the lack of cues to implicate “that bodies can only meet offline” (p.344). McRae (1996), for example, has described cybersex or virtual sex as “a generic term for erotic interaction between individuals whose bodies may never touch” (p.243). The lack of cues and body is a problem for online daters. Whitty (2003) suggests as an alternative view of cyberspace is that it existed before the origins of the Internet, in the form of telephone calls. By definition, academics as Stratton (1997) claim that cyberspace ought basically to be understood “simply as the space produced by human communication when it is mediated by technology in such a way that the body is absent” (p. 29).

In summary, online dating differs from conventional forms of offline dating mostly through its use of CMC, which offers users the “opportunity to interact with potential partners through the dating site or service before meeting face to face” (Finkel et al., 2012: 6). In face-to-face dating, people can reveal information about themselves instantaneously, in a *synchronous* mode, in a very short amount of time. This is in contrast to online dating, which permits people to take

their time choosing what kind of information they desire to self-disclose. On Tinder, the interaction is only determined if the two users decide to communicate (*match* and after chat) and then meet each other face-to-face, if both want to. Whitty has theorized, describing from Object Relations Theory<sup>2</sup>, that some people, especially shy individuals are “drawn to the Internet to cyber flirt and form relationships given that it provides a safer space for them to try out new skills to initiate relationships” (2004: 67).

In a study from 2007 conducted by Valkenburg and Peter, investigators found that online dating was not associated with income and instruction level, and men used online dating sites more often than women (Valkenburg & Peter, 2007). Nevertheless, there were no differences among genders in frequency of posting online profiles. Regarding 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 reports have revealed that older people are also drawn to online dating, while younger people are more likely to have tried speed dating (Whitty & Buchanan, 2009). The motivation for using online methods for dating can happen for many reasons, for example: individuals looking for a more effective way of meeting others for a love relationship; single people who have a busy work-life; and divorced people. “People over 35 years old are more likely to have tried online dating and consider using it in the future” (Whitty, 2009:2). Also, online interactions could help people who have problems interacting face-to-face: issues such as shyness, anxiety or problems in the social environment (Lawson, 2006: 195). For those people, online dating, especially Tinder, can be a safe place to meet new people and engage in a relationship of any kind, since all the interaction will happen online, until both parties agree to meet in person.

Sumter, S. R., Vandenbosch, L., & Ligtenberg, L.’s (2017) findings suggest that the consequences of the use of Tinder and other dating applications are directly connected to the goals of each user. Their report was the first to reveal that “Tinder should not be seen as merely a fun, hook-up application without any strings attached, but as a multifunctional tool that satisfies various needs among emerging adults.” (p.75). The fact that CMC is free of visual and

---

<sup>2</sup>Object relations is a variation of psychoanalytic theory that diverges from Sigmund Freud's belief that humans are motivated by sexual and aggressive drives, suggesting instead that humans are primarily motivated by the need for contact with others—the need to form relationships.

auditory cues that guide interpersonal communication may make it attractive to shy individuals, who find face-to-face interaction challenging (Daly & McCroskey, 1984; Duran & Kelly, 1989).

Although not much research has been published on attitudes toward Tinder and its use as a game based on its design, online dating historians have referred to the design of smartphone technology as contingent on the psychological wants and needs of media users. Duguay, S. (2016: 360) affirms that Tinder sustains “enrolment through game-like activity flows, which routinize its use in daily activities”. For Duguay (2016), liking or rejecting users in browsing mode looks like earlier online games. For example, *Hot-or-Not*, created in the 2000s as a rating site that allowed users to rate the attractiveness of photos submitted voluntarily by others (Hot-or-Not, n.d.). The *hot-or-not* style is clarified by Zichermann & Cunningham (2011: 87) as a flirtation and romance gaming mechanic. Alternatively to other mobile application competitors, Tinder is seen by many of its users as a modern blend of *hot-or-not* game. Duguay (2016) argues that not only is Tinder’s “repetitive and fast-paced” swiping designed like a game, but also other progressive actions ‘unlock’ the ability to exchange messages, as you might see in a game.

More than that, other researches on Tinder mostly discusses the motivations for using online dating platforms, for instance: Whitty (2003, 2004, 2007, 2009); and discussions about the swipe logic and self-presentation on Tinder application, as example: Sumter, S. R., Vandenbosch, L., & Ligtenberg, L. (2017) and Ranzini, G., & Lutz, C. (2016).

Finkel et Al. (2012:3) says that dating sites offer some combination of three broad classes of service: *access*, *communication*, and *matching*. *Access* refers to a user’s chance to meet and access potential romantic companions they would otherwise be unlikely to meet. *Communication* denotes the user’s chance to use numerous forms CMC to interact with certain likely partners over the dating website, before meeting face-to-face. *Matching* refers to a site’s use of a mathematical algorithms to select potential partners for users (p.3). These major services are important in understanding how online dating fundamentally differs from conventional offline dating and the circumstances under which online dating promotes better romantic results than conventional offline dating.

Cooper & Sportolari (1997) explain that in the beginning of the 1980s until the early 90s, researchers initially pondered “how computer- mediated- communication (CMC)<sup>3</sup> compares to face-to-face communication (FTF) in terms of level of social-emotional engagement”. CMC tends to be less involved and less personal than FTF connections. This is due to the “lack of facial and body language cues, absence of the "felt presence" of the other, and no "shared social context" between the communicators” (p.8). It is important to base this research on the Social Information Processing Theory (SIP), (Walther, 1996), which suggests that people communicate social information within the limitations of the medium. This interpersonal theory explains how people get to know others online without non-verbal and other socially relevant cues, and how they develop and manage relationships in an online environment. For many reasons, CMC can provide shy individuals with a way to overcome their shyness and meet others in a relatively favorable environment. CMC is free of visual and auditory cues that guide interpersonal communication, which may make it attractive to shy individuals, who find face-to-face interaction challenging (Daly & McCroskey, 1984; Duran & Kelly, 1989).

Baym (2016) clarifies that socioemotional communication “may be easier face-to-face, but it is common and successful in digital media as well” (2010: 103). Since conventional online dating appeared in the 1990s, dating websites have developed new business categories for distinctive use and application, which (Finkel et al., 2012: 10) divide in three stages:

- (1) ***Online personal advertisement sites***: appeared in 1995 with the launch of Match.com, a website of personal advertisements. It means that such dating sites basically worked as search engines, permitting users to create and post a profile and to browse the profiles of potential partners (p.11).
  
- (2) ***Algorithm-based matching sites***: this second generation started around 2000, when eHarmony introduced algorithm matching - “a science-based concept” (p.11). For a monthly fee, social and behavioral scientists process data to determine matches based on a mathematical algorithm.

---

<sup>3</sup> Computer-mediated communication is explained by Heide, B. V, & Walther, J. B. (n.d.). as the field of human communication where people and groups “interact, form impressions, establish relationships, and accomplish tasks using networked computers” (p.2).

(3) *Smartphone-based dating applications*: this category of online dating was developed around 2008, shortly after Apple Inc. introduced the App Store for its devices. From this time on, mobile applications started capitalizing on mobile internet technology and GPS functionalities to notify users of potential partners in the immediate locality (p.11).

Researchers presume that open dating performs can be linked to the experience of teenagers in the 1920s - meeting secretly, face-to-face, for romantic interactions at scheduled times and places. These practices developed together with new technologies such as telephones and vehicles, which permitted young people to become more independent from their parents. In the late 1990s, the Internet became a major channel for social meetings (Baym, 2010). Over the Internet, people can interact over larger distances, in a shorter period and at less expense than in the past.

Online dating platforms are here to stay (Whitty, 2009:3). Their structure and form are constantly changing, for example, from webpages, to mobile and then to mobile applications. More so than the technology, people are also changing their minds about the way they use their mobiles to connect to the world. As Whitty (2009:3) predicted in her article, “Perhaps also adding more playful applications, such as those used in social networking sites, will make the online dating experience more playful and flirtatious”. Exactly this happened in 2012, with the object of this study: Tinder.

## **2.2 Mobile technology and mobile social media**

Technology is seductive when what it offers meets our human vulnerabilities. And as it turns out, we are very vulnerable indeed. Turkle (2011:1)

Mobile technology is now reliable and easily accessible every day. When discussing mobile social media connections via Tinder, it is important to consider the history of mobile telephony. The mobile technology “...is more than simply a technical innovation or a social fad”, it provided a new understanding in the culture (Ling, 2004 :5).

Before telephony, social relations between people occurred in the form of asynchronous communication, such as letters; or synchronous interaction, like face-to-face interaction (FTF). These temporal structures are important to understand the difference between the mediums. The telephone was the first device to permit individuals to talk directly to each other across

large distances, with a certain time delay, in a *synchronous* mode. This kind of communication made the interaction easier to sustain, since the response is immediate. Otherwise, in *asynchronous* communication, the user has time to work more strategically on their self-presentation, whenever they feel like doing it - days, weeks, or never. That can happen with Tinder' users. Baym (2010) describes that the telephone was seen "as a means to bring closer together, build communities, and decrease loneliness" (p.35). Contrastingly, letters could take months to be delivered overseas.

Mobile technology is exactly what the name implies: technology that is portable. As the years went by, and after technical improvements, telephony branched out into other forms of communications, such as 'Short Message Service' (SMS) messaging.

Today, mobile telephony has developed into a consistent and easily accessible technology. According to Ling (2004), the number of mobile subscriptions in 2003 meant "one mobile telephone subscription for every fifth or sixth person" (p.11). Mobile communication was moving in the direction of broader kinds of access and new forms of communications. With the growth of the Internet in 2000, mobile social media network groups started to form and integrate through the use of the devices. Kaplan (2012.:131) describes mobile social media as "a group of mobile marketing applications that allow the creation and exchange of user-generated content" and more: to participate in social networking.

The most common use for smartphones became by far the access to social networks such as *Facebook*, *Foursquare* and *Tinder* (n.d, App Store). Bohyun (2015: 8) explains how mobile social media has taken up people's time: only four years ago, smartphone holders spent "nine hours and six minutes a month" on social networks, compared to "one hour and fifteen minutes" streaming videos. These results can be related to Schrock's (2015:1234) explanation about mobile social media, based on what he calls "affordance perspective". The main point here is to picture mobile media in a perspective concentrating on communication, focused on: *portability*, *availability*, *locatability* and *multimediality*. "Communicative affordances are defined as an interaction between subjective perceptions of utility and objective qualities of the technology that alter communicative practices" (p.1238).

Technology such as mobile media can allow several uses. On *portability*, holders can use whilst travelling to, or any time at, their workplace, which gives an advantage to mobile media.



“Smartphones may now have processing power on par with computers, but portability is what fundamentally differentiates mobile media from desktops” (p.1236). Tinder, as a mobile application, can be used wherever and whenever the user wants, as long as there is an Internet connection. *Availability*, according to Schrock (2015:1236), depends basically on the user: “affordances can make communication possible, but it is up to individuals to use these affordances in more or less strategic ways”. On Tinder users can decide to turn on or turn off ‘push notifications’, whenever they want, so they can control whether or not the app ‘interrupts’ them with a notification. “Availability is often negotiated and filtered in response to changing social contexts” (p.1237). *Locatability* can refer to location-based services. Tinder is a location-based application. Users must allow Tinder to use the location services on their smartphones to be able to use some features, as *Passport*. Schrock (2015) points out that in this case, location is not just defined by GPS coordinates, but in an extensive diversity of ways, such as voice or text, combined with mapping services (p.1238). *Multimediality*, as the name says, is the incorporation of services on smartphones, such as the combination of pictures, audio and video through mobile devices (p.1238). As in Tinder, the ability to integrate with apps like *Facebook*, *Instagram* and *Spotify*, bring more content to the service.

Likewise, Marcus (2016) discusses synchronicity affordance and mobility affordance in line with Schrock’s (2015) portability affordance of mobile media. He points out that Tinder is suitable for use anywhere you have Internet connection, such as buses, bars and other public places. Consequently, this affordance seems to invite more social uses than traditional dating, for instance, swiping and chatting about profiles can be a fun thing between friends (Sales, September 2015). Lastly, the synchronicity affordance defines “the short amount of time in which messages are sent” (Marcus, 2016: 7). This affordance requires spontaneity and availability from users, who need to make quick judgments and display specific self-presentation skills. The affordances of Tinder face particular restrictions on the users, leading to matters like excess of information, distraction from the real world, and a sense of competition due to the large numbers of users (Marcus, 2016).

The mobile phone helps to create a sense of nearness with other people. Silva, A. D., & Sutko, D. M. (2009:14)

Nowadays almost all mobile devices come enabled with GPS, emphasizing a new association between the online and offline experience of place (Hjorth, 2011: 85). For Bohyun (2015: 8)

GPS has made it possible for people “to track their own locations as well as find out the locations of other people who share their information”. Hjorth & Richardson (2014) point out that through the transformation and change of mobile media to social and locative, “it is clear that the mobile device is no longer simply a communication medium, but rather a complex and multiform online portal for social networking, gaming, and place-based forms of everyday creativity and play” (p.78). Location-based services, according to Hjorth & Richardson (2014:6), “(...) remind us that place is more than just physical geographic location; it is constructed by an ongoing accumulation of stories, memories, and social practices”.

The emergence of Location-Based-Real-Time-Dating (LBRTD) apps such as Tinder, has introduced a new way for users to get to know potential partners nearby. Location-based mobile social media devices have become universal and are a common instrument for introducing social interactions with both known contacts and immediate strangers with similar interests or who are involved in shared activities. GPS is a main feature of mobile dating activity. According to El-Rabbany, A. (2002), the GPS system allows people to “connect with others and share/exchange information, such as current geographical position”. Hjorth & Richardson (2014: 77) explain that the fact that GPS has “afforded location-based services”, became a necessary part of everyday life, mostly because of the easy access to geotagging and Google maps over social media accessed via “mobile platforms and devices”.

Tinder indexes each user’s geographic location and alerts them of any other users near them who meet their pre-set criteria. Baym (2010) explains that enabling the GPS has become a new culture - a “culture of sharing the location”. GPS based applications such as Tinder, “tell” people where they are at the moment. Tinder is restricted to a physical place by only permitting users to find others in a certain proximity. The portability of smartphones and tablets permits the use of Tinder in a variety of locations, from “private to semi-public and public spaces” (Ranzini et. al.: 2016:3).

The smartphone became not only a game interface; it incorporates an extensive display of actions that when integrated can develop into a game experience. The services and integrations proposed by new mobile phones, such as social networking, location-based services and navigational services, evolve the mobile experience into a play space “that renders the mobile game environment fundamentally transformative of our social experience” (Hjorth &

Richardson; 2014:33). Nowadays smartphones have become a significant part of our daily lives. It is almost impossible to see someone who does not have a mobile phone or another smart gadget connected to the Internet and able to access social media, at anytime, anywhere.

### **2.3 Brief history of gaming and mobile gaming**

Mobile gaming highlights the role movement. From the rise of haptic games to new portable affordances, mobile gaming always moves in, and around, a sense of place and presence. Hjorth & Richardson (2014: 158)

According to Hjorth (2011: 21), gaming development can be divided into seven phases. The first gaming generation was during the foundation of computer science as a discipline in the 1950s and '60s at Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT). In the beginning of the 1990s, games were thought of as a teenager's pursuit. Over some decades, games have changed, developed and 'gaming' has become one of the biggest forms of entertainment (Hjorth; 2011) in the twenty first century. Since as early as 1970, games have been developing and growing to become one of the dominant media cultures of the century (Hjorth; 2011). Between 1977 and 1989, the "Golden Age of Arcade Games" (Hjorth; 2011: 21) marked the rise of handheld gaming, with the popular Nintendo Gameboy, amongst others. The expansion of gaming is very much connected to the development of the mobile phone.

Around the 2000 Era, the mobile boom brought to people easy access to Internet based games, making online gaming gradually more popular, accompanied by mobile gaming. Hjorth (2011:143) affirm that online gaming provided new models for competition and business that were not earlier provided by non-networked gaming. For Hjorth, the Internet itself has contributed a lot to the rise of online gaming. Over the Internet, more viewers are capable of watching and participating, ensuring the expansion of the genre. For the author (p.25), gaming differs from other media, such as TV, in two main aspects: *interactivity* and *simulation*, which are central elements to gameplay.

More than the extraordinary graphics and narratives, the biggest difference between video games and mobile games is that the Internet-connected smartphone changed *where* and *how* games are played and game dynamics can be associated. Hjorth & Richardson (2014) relate that only after the first generation of iPhones was released in 2007 that smartphones became a game platform. Before, in 2002, mobile gaming was limited to pre-loaded offline games, like

*Tetris*, and consequently mobile gaming developers could not distribute their applications. The researchers clarify that after the launch of the Apple application store, or App Store, mobile applications had to improve. Services that “are not simply defined by the term casual or game” were also present. (p.23) Finkel et al. (2012) also described this process, citing the growth of the Apple App Store as an important part of the development of online dating applications.

The market for mobile media continues to expand and attracts new audiences to gaming. The same happened to the online market, with online games increasingly becoming more casual. The expansion of mobile media has “informed new types of gaming genres and modes of playing” (p.134). Larissa Hjorth (2011:18) explains that the games people play are influenced by their home environment and the experiences and memories they have. Part of the mobile phones multi-functionalities are routine and part of daily life, turning into something natural and casual. Some researchers simply categorize mobile gaming as ‘casual games’ (Oxland: 2004, Hjorth & Richardson; 2014). The authors explain that casual gaming gives an experience more flexible and fitting to the player’s time. Basically, offering an easier, less in-depth experience than a traditional videogame, but an experience that is instead more flexible with the player’ time. The ‘casualness’ refers mainly to the fact that they are played on a mobile phone.

Oxland (2004: 49) describes casual as a form of entertainment, in the same way as someone would watch a movie or listen to music. Casual gamers will enjoy for “an hour”, which, according to Oxland (2004), will “avoid any confusion and complicated interface design”. We can infer from this that casual gamers have a lower tolerance for bugs and system crashes: they want to be able to immediately open the application and play without hindrance. Based on that, Tinder can be termed as a casual, and as a social game. In social gaming (Oxland; 2004: 226, 227), the game requires an Internet connection and the interaction of two or more users: what the author calls ‘multiplayer’. On Tinder’s feature *Tinder Social*, in which the user needs to have a group of up to four players (based on ‘common friends’ on the *Facebook* account the main user uses to connect) to start to *swipe*. This feature turns Tinder not just into a social game application, but also a *party game*, that can be played at home or in any public place, among friends (Hjorth & Richardson; 2014:49).

In her book *Games and Gaming*, Hjorth (2011) states that GPS allows games to be played simultaneously online and offline. On Tinder, it is necessary to have an Internet connection to swipe, but the GPS system never stop working, changing the users' cards according to the user's location. Based on Hjorth, Tinder can be seen as being similar to location-based mobile games, once it is played with a mobile phone that is equipped with GPS and an Internet connection (p.92). Even though location-based mobile games may have an online element, the game takes place mainly in the physical space, as how it occurs on Tinder: the user can see the virtual game elements on their mobile screen (p.92).

McCullough (1998) argued that the deepest engagement on casual games is through touch, and the hand has figured importantly during the history of the human technology, especially with mobile devices. For Hjorth & Richardson (2014: 51), the power of touch and the meaning of the hand/screen relationship is obvious in both gaming and design. The authors affirm that the mobile touchscreen recovers some of the immersive qualities more familiar to console games played on a computer screen. In sum, the authors say that the haptic intimacy of the touchscreen interface “reshapes the way we experience our being and doing in the world”. For Vetere, F., Gibbs, M. R., Kjeldskov, J., Howard, S., Mueller, F., Pedell, S., Mecoless, K., Bunyan, M. (2005: 472), the act of touching the screen and its display has become an essential characteristic and habit for users absorbed in the mobile world.

On Tinder, this relationship can be noted by the main gesture: swiping, as well as scrolling and clicking. Tinder's motto: “*Any swipe can change your life*”, creates a possibility for the presumed intimacy and tensions a user might experience during the swipe.

## **2.4 Gamification and play**

Gamification and games share many characteristics. Just like games, gamification provides us with a fun activity to do, has rules to follow, and can require various levels of technology, from none to simple or advanced. (Bohyun, 2015:10)

In the 2000s, Human Computer Interaction (HCI) researchers also became interested in examining the design and experience of video games, developing methods to evaluate their user experience, playability decisions for their design, models for the mechanisms of games and game experience (Deterding, Sicart, Nacke, Ohara, & Dixon; 2011a: 2). Deterding et al (2011:2) define gamification as a term for “the use of video game elements to improve user

experience and user engagement in non-game services and applications”. The researchers explain that the term gamification was invented in the digital media industry around 2008, but the term “did not see widespread adoption before the second half of 2010” (p.1). For Bohyun (2015:5), gamification is it not entirely about the construct of a game, but it is the allocation of some features of a game to “something that it is not a game, thus *gami- “fy”-ing*” it.

The most fundamental element of gamification is how it boosts “game thinking,” the change of an ordinary achievement into an opportunity for development and to improve user experience and user engagement in non-game services and applications. Gamification can also be recognized as the process of game-thinking and game mechanics to involve users and resolve problems, according to Bohyun (2015: 14). The author points out that the scenery of gamification consists of three fundamentals: *the remarkable development of mobile web, the increased use of social media and the rapid embracing of the smartphones* (p.7). The combination of the smartphone, Internet and (mobile) social media made possible the popularity of ‘gamified’ applications. *Foursquare*, for example, is a well-known gamification mobile application that launched in 2009, which gamifies the common activity of visiting different places. Around 2012 the application was considered one of the market leaders in the area of mobile social media (as well as gamified applications) with nearly 10 million registered users and a growth rate of 30,000 per day (Kaplan, 2012.:130).

According to a majority of the reviewed studies, gamification does produce positive effects and benefits. Even though it is not often disclosed, there is also a possible long-term negative impact of gamification. Nicholson, S. (2012) explains that the basic idea of gamification is motivation and that people can be motivated to do something because of internal or external motivation. A study conducted by Deci, Koestner, and Ryan (2001) that examined motivation in educational situations discovered that practically all forms of rewards “reduce internal motivation”. It suggests that when gamification is used to offer external motivation, the user's internal motivation decreases. In the book *Gamification by Design*, Zichermann & Cunningham (2011) claim that this assumption in internal motivation over extrinsic rewards is baseless, and gamification can be used for groups to control the behaviour of users by substituting those internal incentives with extrinsic rewards. They do admit, nevertheless, that "once you start giving someone a reward, you have to keep her in that reward loop forever" (Zichermann & Cunningham, 2011, p. 27).

According to Zichermann, (2012, November 15), most research into motivation and the effect of extrinsic rewards has used cash as the tested incentive. In contrast, the number of studies that have tested non-cash incentives have found that they raise satisfaction and intrinsic motivation. This conclusion squares with Zichermann's Status, Access, Power and Stuff (SAPS) model of gamified rewards which states: players interacting with a system and with each other can gather achievements. He points out that empirical investigation of very successful "gamified systems and videogames themselves suggest this is a supportable conclusion" (2012, November 15).

Closer alignment with users' intrinsic motivations creates better satisfaction. Zichermann, (2012, November 15) concludes that good gamification design tries to comprehend and coordinate an association's aims with a player's intrinsic motivation. For Zichermann, "through the use of extrinsic rewards and intrinsically satisfying design, move the player through their journey of mastery". This journey, according to him, needs elements such as "desire, incentive, challenge, reward and feedback to create engagement".

Zichermann and Cunningham (2011) summarize four different types of players: explorers, achievers, socializers and killers (p.22). *Explorers* are the types that look for the surprise element in the game. For them, "the experience is the objective" (Zichermann & Cunningham, 2011: 22). *Achievers* are players that enjoy competitive games. They play to win. *Achievers* drop interest when they do not win the game. *Socializers* play in order to interact with other people, other players. They appreciate "the community of the game more than the actual win" (Zichermann & Cunningham, 2011: 24). The last type of player, *killers*, are similar to *achievers*. They also play to win; nonetheless, they do not just want to win, they also want others to lose. On standard, most players, about 80%, are *socializers*, according to Zichermann and Cunningham (2011: 23). Today, social games are most popular. We characterize most Tinder users as *socializers*. Most users aim to initiate conversation and potentially meet in person, even if their focus is not romantic.

Deterding et al. (2011a:3) affirm that gamification relates to games, "not play (or playfulness)", where play can be perceived as the wider, looser term, but different from games (Salen, K., & Zimmerman, E.: 2010). Bohyum (2015) also affirms that gamification relates to games and not to the act of play. Many studies on online dating, especially Tinder, show different opinions

about gamification and its relationship to playfulness. Gamification aims to change an ordinary activity into something more exciting and fun. Sean Rad once mentioned that “nobody joins Tinder because they’re looking for something” (Stampler, L.:2014, February 6). He stated that people join Tinder “because they want to have fun. It doesn’t even matter if you match because swiping is so fun”. Academics have investigated playfulness as a necessary user experience or type of interaction, and how to design for it. Deterding et. al. (2011a: 3) distinguish gaming from play, relying on Caillois’ (2001) perception of playing and gaming as two extremes of play(ful) actions:

1. **Paidia** (“playing”), a more free-form, expressive, improvisational, even “tumultuous” recombination of behaviors and meanings, little space for open, exploratory.
2. **Ludus** (“gaming”), playing structured by rules and competitive goals. Focus almost exclusively on design elements, goal-oriented play.

We believe that “gamification” does indeed demarcate a distinct but previously unspecified group of phenomena, namely the complex of gamefulness, gameful interaction, and gameful design, which are different from the more established concepts of playfulness, playful interaction, or design for playfulness. Deterding et al. (2011a: 2)

Playfulness is relevant to game design: once people are designing a game, they should maximize meaningful play for the users. In Salen, K., & Zimmerman, E.’s words, playfulness is necessary to outline game rules and turn them into an entertainingly playful series of events that even experienced players continue to enjoy (2010: 302). To complement the term *playfulness*, Deterding et. al. (2011a: 3) suggests adopting the term *gamefulness*, introduced by McGonigal in 2011, where he explains:

1. **Gamefulness** (the experiential and behavioral quality),
2. **Gameful interaction** (artefacts affording that quality),
3. **Gameful design** (designing for gamefulness, typically by using game design elements).

Hjorth (2011:26) affirm that from a child’s perspective, “games are conceived as having rules while play does not”. Nonetheless, Frasca (1999) emphasized that even ways of child’s play still have rules and agreements. Consequently, *play* and *games* have rules, the difference is that *games* define a winner or loser, but *play* does not.



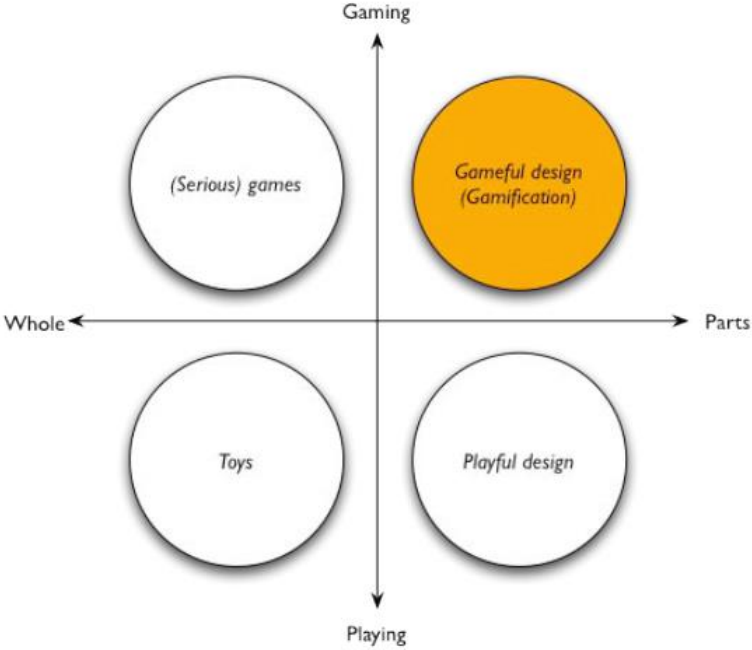
Salen, K., & Zimmerman, E. (2010) took a close and comparative look at eight explanations for game and play. In amongst the meanings, a handful of problematic questions appear over and over. These problems not only explain the exclusive qualities that make a game a game, but “also differentiating games from similar phenomena, such as other forms of play, conflict, and contestation” (p.85). It is also clear that there is a difference between defining games themselves and defining the act of playing a game. Every author states games for specific motives inside the context, for instance. On the other hand, this segmented approach to defining games produces interesting comparative results, as explained for Salen, K., & Zimmerman, E. (2010).

All of the authors except Costikyan include rules as a key component. Beyond this there is no clear consensus. Some elements, such as games being voluntary or inefficient, do not seem to apply to all games. Others, such as the fact that games create social groups, describe the effects of games rather than games themselves. Still other elements, such as the representational or make-believe quality of games, appear in many other media and do not help differentiate games from other kinds of designed experiences (p.91).

After all, Salen, K., & Zimmerman, E. (2010:12) define games as a system in which players engage in an artificial conflict, defined by rules – the mechanics, that results in a quantifiable outcome. It has been argued that to achieve in a game, rules are necessary. They point out that rules are a crucial part of games “which provide the structure out of which play emerges, by delimiting what the player can and cannot do” (p.93). The academics explains that rules can be divided into three types: *constitutive*, *operational* and *implicit*; where *constitutive rules* are only concerned with the internal operational system of game logic, *operational rules* are related directly to a user's behaviour and interaction with the game and; *implicit rules*, where ‘implicit’ games are not games until someone plays them (p.155). On the other hand, Kapp (2012) explains the rules as: *constitutional* or *foundational* rules, which usually only programmers comprehend: for instance, the algorithms that build up and allow the game to work; *implicit rules* or *behavioural rules* that improve the interactions between the users - on Tinder the act of matching; and *instructional rules*, which represent the evidence the user ought to learn from playing a game. On Tinder, the act of swiping can be based on the *instructional rules*. This study will lay on Salen, K., & Zimmerman, E.’rules actions to support the upcoming analysis, once these rules are based on a behaviour and action.

One of the ways to let users make gamification experiences more expressive is to permit players to set their own goals. Deterding (2011) explains this in his notes to his Google Tech Talk about gamification: “One practical way to do this is to allow users to set and customize their own goals within the platform. The design challenge here is to support and guide the user in setting long and short-term goals such that they become achievable and provide experiences of mastery on the way” (p. 37).

Deterding et al. (2011a:5) find the central characteristic of gaming in explicit rule systems and the “competition or conflict of performers in those systems towards discrete goals or outcomes and conclude that gamification relates to games, not play, which lacks those characteristics”. To explain that, Deterding et al. (2011a) presents a quadrant diagram:



**Image 3: “Gamification” between game and play, whole and parts (Deterding et al.: 2011a: 5).**

Based on this diagram, Deterding et al. (2011a: 5) summarize gamification as the use of design elements characteristic for games in non-game contexts.

## 2.5 Self-presentation and cues

Online, as in all media and face-to-face interaction, we try to manage what other people think of us. (Goffman, 1959)

From a sociological perspective, Goffman's (1959) approach on self-presentation was to use a theatrical performance as a metaphor. According to him, life is a performance because a player may take on any role he or she wants "to convey an impression to others which it is in his interests to convey" (1959: 4). This is essentially what occurs with online dating; the users have the power to self-present as they wish.

Ellison, N. B., Hancock, J. T. & Toma, C. L. (2012: 48) describe self-presentation as behaviour aimed at conveying an image of self to others with the primary goal of influencing others to respond in a desired way. However, self-presentation becomes a challenge when using mobile dating applications for meeting people. The authors (2012:46) state that "online dating profiles are typically static self-presentational portfolios consisting of textual descriptions and photographs". The users often feel driven to create alter egos that are attractive to potential romantic partners. Because the pressure for acceptance is so huge, daters "admit to include exaggerations" in their profiles (Whitty, 2008). For Derlega, Winstead, Wong, & Greenspan (1987), self-presentation is especially important during the beginning of a relationship, as others will use the information gathered to decide whether or not to follow up with a relationship. These self-presentation cues build a personal and unique identity and help us align ourselves with other social groups. Nevertheless, different sources suggest that these strategies may differ from those engaged in when meeting people offline. "Because of the heavy emphasis on photos, users typically rely on limited cues to make swiping decisions" (Ranzini & Lutz: 2016:3).

There have been many studies of self-presentation strategies on social networks and online dating sites. With more and more people using online dating to meet a partner, studies exploring online dating are also increasing. These studies have frequently found that people carefully choose content to share with others in order to gain a positive reaction from them. A study conducted at the University of Wisconsin-Madison (Rosenbloom, 2011, November 12) shows how people present themselves and how they judge misrepresentation. The study found that 81 percent of people lie about their height, weight, or age in their online dating profiles. Successful self-presentation online is similar to impression management (Goffman, 1959). It refers to the degree to which online dating users feel they are able to make a good impression with others

and promote promising self-presentation through the application. Tinder users have good reason to manage their photos, as this is the only first impression they are able to make. However, this could imply that only physically attractive people highlight pictures in their self-presentation. In a study of pictures in CMC, Walther, J., Slovacek, C. & Tidwell, L. (2001), found that physical attractiveness is associated with effective self-presentation. For Ranzini, et. al. (2016: 4) dating sites force users to plan an “identity that is desirable for people they do not know yet and wish to attract”. Even though Goffman (1959) built his research in an offline environment, this theory helps to understand the relation of self-presentation on the mobile social media application Tinder. The main challenge in using mobile applications for meeting others is self-presentation.

Finkel et Al. (2012: 15) explain that the “information users present in their profiles tends not to be entirely veridical”. A justification for this, according to the researchers, is that people sometimes lack accurate self-perception. Another common occurrence is “that people engage in strategic self-presentation when constructing their profiles, just as they do in traditional dating” (p.15). In contrast to old-fashioned dating apps, where users can offer a rich presentation of themselves over their profiles and interactions, Birnholtz, J., Fitzpatrick, C., Handel, M., & Brubaker, J. R. (2014: 2) state that “dating applications rely heavily on images and comparatively simple profiles with limited opportunities for expression and self-presentation”. The researchers clarify that from a self-presentation perspective, mobile location-based real-time dating applications introduce many challenges; such as the physical restrictions of a mobile device and small screen size (p.4).

Baym (2010) claims that reduced “social cues make it easier to lie, but separation, time lags, and sparse cues also remove social pressures that make lying seem a good idea” (p. 116). Ellison et al. (2012:47) point out that mobile dating choices of “how to resolve challenging demands”, such as an honest and positive self-presentation, are influenced by three key factors associated with computer-mediated-communication: *reduced cues*, *asynchronicity*, and *shared contextual expectations*. The academics relied on “hyper personal model<sup>4</sup>” (Walther, 1996) and “common ground” (Clark, 1996) to clarify these issues:

---

<sup>4</sup> The hyper personal model (Walther, 1996) specifies how technological characteristics affect relational outcomes by considering how properties of online environments can transform sender, receiver, channel and feedback dynamics.

1. **Reduced cues** – Online environments offer individuals an increased ability to control their self-presentation; therefore, offering greater opportunities to engage in misrepresentation. Mobile dating application users on Tinder present themselves via text-based communication and pictures. According to Ellison et al. (2012:48) this interaction “introduces ambiguity into the self-presentation process, especially in relation to subjective characteristics”.
2. **Asynchronicity** - Users have more time to consider and edit their messages which “frees up cognitive resources” (Ellison et al., 2006: 48). Asynchronicity can consequently allow selective self-presentation and “contribute to idealized impressions” (p.48).
3. **Shared contextual expectations** – The authors (p.48) refers to the “shared expectations that are relied upon during communication as communal common ground”.

Tinder is deemed more trustworthy when compared to some other dating platforms by importing users' pictures and information from *Facebook*. Chamorro-Premuzic, T. (September 17, 2014) says this “hardly makes Tinder profiles realistic”. According to the Chamorro-Premuzic, this “is to increase average levels of attractiveness compared to the real world”, resulting in people investing time posting and uploading pictures on their *Facebook* and *Instagram* profiles.

Finkel et Al. (2012) explains that the cues-filtered-out perspective “is an umbrella term that describes these early findings” built on earlier telecommunications research. The cues-filtered-out perspective proposed that since CMC holds fewer non-verbal cues than face-to-face communication does - sometimes almost none - the experience of social presence is reduced. Likewise, because these reduced cues cause CMC to feel unlike ‘real’ interaction to the user, people are more likely to engage in impersonal, asocial forms of communication and may even exhibit more uninhibited and/or antisocial tendencies than they would in face-to-face settings (p.32). In brief, cues-filtered-out suggests a decrease in the number of available non-verbal and contextual cues, reducing people's experience of social presence and use of face-to-face social interaction; consequently, delaying their capability and desire to build social connections (p.33). Therefore, the cues-filtered-out viewpoint produced evidence that computer-mediated communication could result in short relationships, far less intimate romantically.

Ellison et al. (2012) suggests that part of this more strategic impression management might be caused by the structure of the website itself: users must summarize their identity through the ‘reduced cues’ offered by the application. To understand how the cues work on Tinder, it is important to discuss how people use the Internet to form and create new personal relationships as both partners and friends. There are more than 262 million people accessing<sup>5</sup> Internet around the world and millions of these users are online looking for a personal connection. Baym (2010:6) explains this social interactivity as “the ability of a medium to enable social interaction between groups or individuals”. The Internet allows people to connect through social networking services, for instance *Orkut* - founded by Google in January 2004 and *Facebook* - founded later the same year. For Whitty & Carr (2006: 343), bodily cues in flirting are important. They state that “body language can signal attraction without being too obvious”. This guards people in doubt from humiliation if the person they are signaling attraction to shares these sentiments. But flirting behavior online involves mostly non-verbal signals, such as emojis and gifs.

## **2.6 MDA- Mechanics, Dynamics and Aesthetics**

Mechanics describes the particular components of the game, at the level of data representation and algorithms. Dynamics describes the run-time behavior of the mechanics acting on player inputs and each other’s outputs over time. Aesthetics describes the desirable emotional responses evoked in the player, when she interacts with the game system (Hunicke; LeBlanc & Zubek 2001-2004: 2).

The MDA framework was developed by game designers and professors Hunicke, LeBlanc and Zubek (2001- 2004). It is an investigation of the elements of a game: Mechanics, Dynamics and Aesthetics and how these elements relate to both game designers and gamers.

This relatively new theory from the 2000s is based on both psychological and system-based thinking, which helps us discuss experiences outside of the game. Hunicke et al., (2001-2004:1) explains the MDA theory as an approach to understanding games, “one which attempts to bridge the gap between game design and development, game criticism, and technical game research”. Deterding et al. (2011:3) defines the model as how designers “work with mechanics to create aesthetics, whereas players experience aesthetics, and in so doing, infer knowledge about mechanics”.

---

<sup>5</sup> Global Research. Global Internet Statistics (n.d.). Retrieved September 11, 2016, from [www.internetworldstats.com](http://www.internetworldstats.com).

The main point on MDA framework theory is the idea that games are more object-like than they are media. This means that the “content of a game is its behaviour, not the media that streams out of it towards the player” (Hunicke et al., 2001-2004: 2). The MDA model breaks down a player’s experience of gaming into three parts: rules, system and fun. This links to and assists with the game designer’s process of mechanics, dynamics and aesthetics (Bohyun, 2015: 18)

Oxland (2004: 27) describes ‘mechanics’ as the part of the game which determines how “the player interacts and controls the game”. He states that mechanics refers to the various actions, behaviours and control mechanisms given to the player within the game (p.18). For Ventrice, (2016, February 03), mechanics are the basis of “any gamification program”. Mechanics gives rise to dynamic system behaviour, which in turn leads to particular aesthetic experiences. These experiences are comprised of a series of tools that when used correctly, evoke an emotional reaction from the players, that Hunicke et al. (2001-2004) refer to as “aesthetics”. From the player’s perspective, aesthetics set the scene and consist of observable dynamics and operable mechanics.

*Dynamics* are one of the most developed elements in a gamified system. Bohyun (2015:17) explains that some gamification dynamics are easy to identify, because many of us have played games before. The author claims that some game mechanics such as rewards, points, avatars, quests and challenges fall into three game mechanic types:

1. *Behavioral* - “are solely focused on human behavior and the human psyche”
2. *Feedback* - “complete the feedback loop in a game mechanic”
3. *Progression* - “are used to structure and stretch the accumulation of meaningful skills” (p.17).

However, Priebatsch, S. (September, 2010) mention three other examples of game dynamics: *appointment*, *progression*, and *communal discovery*. According to the author, ‘*appointment*’ is a game dynamic in which to succeed a player “must return at a predefined time to take a predetermined action”. ‘*Progression*’ is a player’s level of success which is shown in real-time and slowly developed over the achievement of difficult tasks; for example, in the game Blizzard’s *World of Warcraft*. ‘*Communal discovery*’ “involves an entire community working

together to solve a problem”. For Priebsch, S. (September, 2010), dynamics are gaining advantage in real-world circumstances to influence users’ behaviour. Game dynamics are fast becoming a critical currency of motivation - “Their power lies not in connecting users to their friends, but in straight inducing people’s individual behaviour”.

Bohyun (2015: 19) describes *Aesthetics* – the layout - as elements including “achievement, challenge, discovery, epic meaning, blissful productivity, sensation, and fantasy”. Aesthetics are what make the game more interesting and entertaining and help form the gameplay feel more fun, which is the “kind of emotions and experience the gamification tries to deliver” (p.32). Essentially, they help it feel more like a finished product to add to gamers’ enjoyment. But to game designers, aesthetics is far less important than game dynamics and game mechanics because it is no good having a game that looks great but doesn’t work properly.

Hunicke et al. (2001-2004: 2) takes the above and uses it to introduce eight different genres relating to fun, in an effort to explain as to *why* we play games or use an application such as Tinder.

**Sensation (Sense pleasure):** Player experience something completely unfamiliar.

**Fantasy (Make-believe):** The player lives the imaginary world.

**Narrative (Drama):** A history that drives the player keep coming back.

**Challenge (Obstacle course):** Need to master something. Boosts a game’s replay.

**Fellowship (Social framework):** A community where the player is an active part of it.

**Discovery (Unexplored territory):** the desire to explore the game world.

**Expression (Self-discovery):** Individual creativity.

**Submission (Leisure):** Connection to the game, as a whole, despite of limitations.

**Hunicke et al. (2001-2004: 2)**

Different games emphasize multiple different aesthetic goals and every game schase different aesthetic purposes. This is important to describe games and why different genres appeal to different players at different times. Later on, this analysis will be clear about the relation of MDA framework with Tinder.



Even though the MDA scheme was created to analyse games, it still offers reasonably in-depth investigation of the application while maintaining the roles of both the user and designer. Hunicke et al. (2004) states that the model helps to understand games as a dynamic system which permits designers to control “undesired consequences by conducting desired behaviours” (p.3). People can decide to use Tinder for different reasons as already discussed here. MDA framework helps to determine how the application itself controls its interactions through the Mechanics, Dynamics and Aesthetics of the application.

Hunicke et al. (2001-2004) states that “the content of a game is its behaviour, not the media that streams out of it towards the player”, which means that this framework helps to understand how on Tinder the system builds behaviour through interaction. In the chapter IV, I will discuss the relation of MDA framework with the object of this study: Tinder.

### **III METHODOLOGY**

In this section, I firstly explain the methodological approach and research model of the study. Then I outline the sources of information, followed by an explanation of the choice of methods for data collection. Following that, I clarify how the data analysis was conducted. Finally, I discuss ethical issues, as well as reliability and validity.

#### **3.1 Method Development**

The methodological approach taken in this study is based on the research question proposed in section 1.1 and consists of a qualitative approach. The main qualitative methods used are document and text analysis, participant observation and semi and structured interviews.

For this study, a qualitative method is proposed. According to Kothari (2004), qualitative research is especially important in the “behavioural sciences where the aim is to discover the underlying motives of human behaviour” (p.3). The purpose of this method is to help answer the research question on the use of the Tinder application by users on mobile social media, through individual interviews.

Interviews can be used as a primary data gathering method to collect information from people about their own practices, beliefs, or opinions. Kothari, (2004) describes the interview process as a “method of collecting data is usually carried out in a structured way where output depends upon the ability of the interviewer to a large extent” (p.17). For Kothari (2004), the interviewing process is an art “governed by certain scientific principles”. Every attempt ought to be made to generate a welcoming environment of trust and confidence so that participants can feel comfortable while talking with the interviewer. In the beginning I chose interviews as my qualitative method looking to better understand the meaning of the application Tinder from the users’ perspective.

I had difficulties transcribing some of my interviews due my health condition, so I decided to collect data via an online form, using Google Forms, change the semi-structured to structured interviews. Google Forms is a web application that allows users to create surveys and polls that can be distributed to authorized users (D., Mireille, I., Glenda, and P., Annie, 2015). The form included the same questions I have asked in a face-to-face interview (see APPENDIX II). For D., Mireille, I., Glenda, and P., Annie. (2015: 9), Google forms prompt to help researchers to

explore research topics, to narrow their research focus, to develop keywords for more effective searching, and for session evaluations and other feedback. The fact that I have used Google Forms turned up my study on a mix of semi-structured interviews and structured- interviews, once I have used closed-ended questions on the form.

The Qualitative Interview followed Brinkmann, S., & Kvale, S. (2015:128) seven stages of an Interview inquiry, valid for both methods I have used: semi-structured and structured-interviews: Thematising, Designing, Interviewing, Transcribing, Analyzing, Verifying and Reporting. 'Thematising' research occurs when a research question to be investigated is defined, before the interview commences. The study was Thematised during the first semester of the Nordic Media program. Since I'm interested in social interactions online, Tinder is a great topic - mostly because of the cultural differences between my home country (Brazil) and where I live now (Norway). The Designing process started before the interviews were conducted take ethical issues and the aim of the study into consideration. The interview was planned and presented to the Norwegian Social Science Data Services (NSD) for approval. "Designing the study is undertaken with regard to obtaining the intended knowledge and taking account the moral implications of the study" (p.128). At first, I opted for qualitative interviewing because it is a flexible method and tends to flow naturally in the direction the interviewee takes it. This allowed me to adjust the prominences in the study as a consequence of significant issues that appeared during the interviews. The interviewing process started after the participants were selected at random. The Transcribing process started immediately after I concluded the interviews; while the information I had gathered from the conversations was still fresh. Analyzing, Verifying and Reporting processes interconnect and "communicate the findings of the study and the methods applied in a form that lives up to scientific criteria" (p.129).

Given the relative absence of previous research on the phenomenon of Tinder, I used the interviews to explore the different ways in which users understood and made sense of their experience throughout their very own descriptions and explanations. Brinkmann, S., & Kvale, S. (2015) perceives the interviewing process as an interpersonal process. In regard to Tinder, the interviews seek to "obtain descriptions of the life world of the interviewee with respect to interpreting the meaning of the described phenomena" (p.150). During this phase, I followed Brinkmann, S., & Kvale, S. (2015) 'Designing and Interviewing' stages of an interview inquiry,

as explained before. The interview guide used was a set of twenty-five questions, targeted at different categories of participants. It was formulated in a similar way to boost consistency in data collection and to enable the researcher to make comparisons between the various participants.

Throughout the interviewing stage, I conducted the process “based on an interview guide and with a reflective approach to the knowledge sought and the interview context and considered the interpersonal relation of the interview situation” (Brinkmann, S., & Kvale, S., 2015:129). I based my approach on typical research questions informed by literature about online dating and relationships. In addition to questioning about participants’ experiences, the interview procedure included questions about their online dating past, profile construction, honesty and self-disclosure online, criteria used to assess others online and relationship progress.

All the semi-structured interviews were conducted in a place agreed by both parties and all the participants (semi and structured interviews) in this study received a description of the research project in advance. As well as a consent form was provided and signed by all participants. Interviewees were initially asked to report basic information about themselves such as age, relationships status and more. The procedure contained questions such as: “How did you choose what to write about yourself in your profile?”, “Are you trying to express a certain impression of yourself with your profile?”, “What do you think your friends will say about your profile if you show them?”, “What did you try to avoid about your personality on your profile?” and “How do you choose your pictures?” among other questions. Next, they were asked to explain their motivations for using Tinder. Participants/users were then asked to explain how they started using the application, involving queries on how they built their very own profiles, which kind of profiles they were attracted to and how they started a conversation on the application. They were then asked to explain how the relationship progressed from online to offline; including questions about the relationship itself, such as how they matched up to their profiles, also what kind of personal information they revealed to people they had matched with. They were asked to describe how their face-to-face dates were typically agreed and why they were agreed in this way.

Some of the interviews were conducted face-to-face, making better interaction possible and to maintain the flow of conversation. “When a respondent didn’t comprehend my questions, I

rephrased, or probed for more information” (Bernard, H. 2002: 256). When recorded, participants granted their permission. Participants were assured anonymity and were told that pseudonyms would be used to replace their real names. Participants were also reminded that they could leave the study at any time up until the end of the research, and they were also aware of the ethical concerns.

### **3.2 Sampling**

Kothari (2004: 17) says that “the sample design to be used must be decided by the researcher taking into consideration the nature of the inquiry and other related factors”. On this matter, a small group of ten Tinder users were voluntarily recruited through simple random snowball sampling; mostly via posts on social media. It was posted on *Facebook* groups: IMK, International Students in Oslo, International Students at UiO an open invitation to participate on this study. Some of the interviewees were interested on the topic and decided to help, as well as introducing me to other people who also wanted to participate.

The purpose of the qualitative semi-structured interview that was designed for this study is to understand “themes of the lived daily world from the subjects’ own perspectives” (Brinkmann, S., & Kvale, S., 2015: 27). The number of participants should prove satisfactory in qualitative inquiries involving understanding the experiences and perceptions of each person interviewed. The main point of the qualitative interviews is to get detailed information about person’s use of a dating application. The aim, in this case, is to learn general patterns regarding the use of Tinder from a wide range of people. It can be used to collect information on past or present behaviours or experiences. Interviews can further be used to gather background information or to tap into the expert knowledge of an individual. These interviews gave me accurate material and data - such as descriptions of processes - and will often include the collection of both types of information.

### **3.3 Document Analysis**

Document analysis is a form of qualitative research in which documents are interpreted by the researcher to give voice and meaning around an assessment topic (Bowen, 2009). Analyzing documents incorporates coding content into themes similar to how focus group or interview transcripts are analyzed (Bowen, 2009). There are three primary types of documents (O’Leary, 2014):

- Public archives: ongoing records of an organization's actions. As instance: transcripts, statements, annual/ monthly reports, manuals, handbooks, strategic plans, and syllabi.
- Personal documents: first-person interpretations of an individual's actions, experiences, and dogmas. As example: notebooks, e-mails, scrapbooks, blogs, social media posts, duty logs, incident reports, reflections/journals, and newspapers.
- Physical evidence: physical objects found within the study setting. Examples include flyers, posters, agendas, handbooks, and training materials.

This work will lay on personal documents, such as e-mails, personal conversations and mostly notes taken during my conversations with Tinder' representants.

### **3.4 Data Collection**

#### **3.4.1 Semi-structured interviews**

Semi-structured interviews were my primary source of empirical data in this study as a means to grasp the attitudes and opinions of different research participants. According to Crang & Cook (2007), interviewing cannot be treated as a separate method because social researching, by definition, involves learning through conversation. Therefore, it is worth being prepared for it even if one does not plan to do it formally. In accordance with Rose (1997), I chose to use interviews as one of the main sources of data because I am interested in the personal experiences of people.

In this study, an interview guide was prepared so that the most important topics were covered during the interviews<sup>6</sup>. I first decided for semi-structured interviews because of the flexibility they offer. In semi-structure interviewing, the investigator can start from the interview guide and ask new questions that follow up informants' answers (Bryman, 2016). Usually, qualitative interviewing is a malleable method and tends to respond to the direction in which informants take the interview. This permitted me to adapt the emphases in the study as a result of significant issues that occurred in the sequence of interviews. The benefit of this type of interview is that the interviewer is in control of all the procedure of getting the data from the interviewee but is able to follow new leads as they appear.

---

6

See Appendix I

I used a smartphone to record the interviews. Bernard, H. (2002) pointed that “recorded interviews are a permanent archive of primary information that can be passed on to other researchers” (p.227) and also, a secure way to keep the conversations, since it has been synchronized the entire time with my personal cloud service.

I have interviewed one person within my social sphere, a closer friend. According to Brinkmann, S., & Kvale, S. (2015), the interviewer must not have familiarity with the participant prior to the interview. The authors claim that this might cause the contributor's answers to be occult. I experienced this limitation in some of my interviews, for example, an interview with a closer friend. During the interview, the collaborator did not entirely elaborate his answers because he knew that I was aware of the his social and dating life. I also found acquaintance to be an advantage, however, establishing the quality of the interviews. Tinder is a personal topic and I asked intimate questions. Consequently, my existing relationships created a comfortable environment and allowed for in depth answers. I decided to do not use this particular interview, but it did give me insights to adjust my guide and this person later helped me during the focus group, serving the participants beverages and snacks.

The interview process was used to provide responses to many of the questions raised in this research. According to Brinkmann, S., & Kvale, S. (2015: 32), qualitative semi-structured interviews are “a research method that gives a privileged access to people’s basic experience of the lived word”. The authors explain that a semi-structured personal interview is characterized by twelve aspects or keywords from a person’s point of view: Life world, meaning, qualitative, descriptive, specificity, deliberate naiveté, focus, ambiguity, change, sensitivity, interpersonal situation and positive experience (p.32).

### **3.4.2 Structured interviews**

Structured Interviews, according to Brinkmann, S. (2013), are usually used in surveys, questionnaires in a standard way. The author affirms that although this model of interviews are usual for some purposes, they do not take “advantage of the dialogical potentials” for the data gathered from an interaction face-to-face. Brinkmann, S. (2013) says that it is generally preferable to “lead participants only to talk about certain themes, rather than to specific opinions about these themes” (p.19). Based on that, I lead the structure- interview in certain directions,

dividing the form in topics: I Personal and Social Connections and II About Tinder. This scheme, according to Brinkmann, S. (2013: 19) provides a structure that it is “flexible enough for interviewees to be able to raise questions and concerned in their own words and from their own perspectives”. Making a questionnaire helped me to regulate the way of asking the desired questions that I had during the few face-to-face interviews. I have had and led to answers that was compared across the participants.

### **3.5 My own experiences: Participatory observation**

The observations and informal conversations of field studies will usually give more valid knowledge than asking subjects about their behaviour. Brinkmann, S., & Kvale, S. (2009:128).

In addition to semi-structured, I made self-participation observations by creating my own Tinder profile so I was able to comprehend the Mechanics, Dynamics and Aesthetics of the application, as well as trying to understand the user side while talking about self-presentation and other themes. Human beings are observational creatures. Many people like to sit and observe others walking, eating, or just looking around. Kothari (2004) says that observation becomes a scientific tool and a method of data collection when used for articulated research purposes; “systematically planned and recorded and is subjected to checks and controls on validity and reliability” (p.96).

Observation is a key method in this study. Crang & Cook (2007) describe participant observation as a three-stage process in which researchers firstly gain access to a specific community - in my case, Tinder, then live and/or work among the research participants in order to grasp their views and, finally, go back to academia to make sense of what they experienced in ‘the field’. Participant observation requires the development of intersubjective understandings between researcher and research participants.

There are two different perspectives while talking about observation methodology: *participant observation* and *non-participant observation*. When *participating*, the researcher becomes a member of the community they are observing so they “can experience what the members of the group experience” (Kothari, 2004: 96). *Non-participating* researchers make no attempt to be part of or “to experience through participation what others feel” (Kothari, 2004: 96). In this project, it was necessary to be participate to understand the dynamics of Tinder – how the



application works, such as social media integration (*Facebook, Instagram, Spotify...*) and pictures – and how the users interact with each other. The main advantage of this method, explained by Kothari (2004), “is that subjective bias is eliminated, if observation is done accurately” and the fact that all the information obtained via observations relate to “what is currently happening; it is not complicated by either the past behaviour or future intentions or attitudes” (p.96).

At first, I had to create my own account on Tinder but I kept my profile hidden until the beginning of January 2016. I also had profiles on Tinder’s biggest competitors: Happn<sup>7</sup> and Bumble<sup>8</sup>. I made my profile visible again when I started my observations to try to understand Tinder’s dynamics before approaching the users. To gain other users’ interest, I used my own personal pictures to illustrate my profile. As Walther (1996) explains, photographs have a potential power to act as a self-presentation, as the user can present themselves in the way they prefer. However, the way that users interpret and present themselves using photos may differ by gender. As an example, a picture of a guy with two naked girls may not be taken in a positive way for a potential date. A girl dressed in a bikini will probably get more ‘likes’, since the photograph has sexual appeal. Thus, like Walther, et. al. (1996) points out; in CMC all the information used to present the online self is more controllable and smooth in comparison to offline life, where people can be more dynamic and strategic.

Having been a full participant in the object of study, I was able to report to the contributors’ in this research while still remaining open to new perspectives and positions. Though there is a risk of losing a neutral perspective when collecting, describing, and analyzing the data when engaging in participant observation, it was extremely important to experience the scenario. As a participant observer, I examined how people use Tinder, as well as how they filled up the extra information such as pictures, content and more. With this method, it is necessary to understand the behaviour of Tinder’s users, how they use the app, what they are looking for, how they present themselves. Over time I interacted with Tinder users and became part of their community. I have not approached interviewees via application.

---

7

[www.happn.com](http://www.happn.com)

8

[www.bumble.com](http://www.bumble.com)

I contacted many Tinder employees with various degrees of success via application. Through e-mails I was able to obtain information about Tinder's front and back ending, as well as being introduced to Tinder's sociologist. I also managed to express my interest, by Super Liking him through the app, towards Sean Rad, Tinder's CEO. I expressed my interest for an interview on my profile, and received a like back, but no reply. It was when I decided to set my location to Tinder's headquarters in Los Angeles, USA, where I made some real progress. I made contact with Tinder's Product Manager, Larry Sequino, who become an important part of this study.

I flew to Los Angeles on January 30, 2017 and arranged to meet Larry Sequino, Tinder's Product Manager for lunch on February 2. Larry explained that the office was not open to the public, since it is an open space and new ideas were all over the place in form of post-its. After some negotiating, I could go to the office lobby, but not before signing an online document confirming that I agree to keep any information confidential, to protect the company. According to the document, I could not record any information, and everything presented would have to be later confirmed via e-mail, since I need proof of what information I have used. Some of the information I obtained was off the record and will not be used in this study.

When observing Tinder, I was looking for how long people spent looking at the profiles and their gestures/acts i.e. how many times people swiped to the right or left while 'playing' Tinder. Sargent, F. (2014, July 9) explains Tinder's interface as addictive because it is seen as game-like; where swipe right and left makes the process automatic. The mechanics of the application (swiping left or right) means yes or no. I have met around ten users – men, women, heterosexual, homosexual, bisexual, transgender – who used Tinder mostly to find a relationship. Before I met the users, I introduced myself as a researcher and made a brief introduction about this study. I only took notes from the conversations I had with users that I deemed useful and that helped with observing the way they used the application. The meetings happened in public places, wherever place fitted the contributor.

Kitzinger (1995) explains the idea behind the focus group is that that group processes can help the researcher to explore and clarify their view "in ways that would be less easily accessible in a one to one interview". People became more open during the session, once everybody was discussing the same subject. The down side was the long pauses and silent moments which

occurred during the panel. The session was recorded, transcribed and notes were taken by me and by an assistant who did not participate in the discussion.

### **3.6 Focus Group**

Interviews helped to know how people feel about using Tinder. But some debate and different perspectives were necessary to help this investigation. The main idea of building a focus group was to reveal a wealth of detailed information and deep insight; how people act on Tinder, what they think about it, etc. while maintaining a diverse panel with people of different gender and sexual orientation who may differ in opinion about the application and provide new insight. Again, the contributors were recruited via the social media website *Facebook*. Six participants attended the session that took place in the Institute of Media and Communication, campus Forskningparken.

While some participants of the focus group have used or are presently using Tinder, others have only heard of it. Nevertheless, all were capable of dynamically contributing their opinions. The group was instructed before we started and throughout the focus group, I took observational notes in order to create a more nuanced and accurate transcription.

Kitzinger (1995) explains the idea behind the focus group is that group processes can help the researcher to explore and clarify their view “in ways that would be less easily accessible in a one to one interview”. People became more open during the session, once everybody was discussing the same subject. The down side was the long pauses and silent moments which occurred during the panel. The session was recorded, transcribed and notes were taken by me and by an assistant who did not participate in the discussion.

### **3.7 Ethical concerns**

The first ethical decision you make in research is whether to collect certain kinds of information at all. Once that decision is made, you are responsible for what is done with that information, and you must protect people from becoming emotionally burdened for having talked to you. Bernard, H., (2002: 223)

Ethical concerns exist in any kind of study. The research process generates tension between the purposes of study to adapt the process for the good of others, and the rights of participants to preserve their privacy.

Ethics in this context can be broadly defined as “the conduct of researchers and their responsibilities and obligations to those involved in the research” (O’Connell and Layder, 1994: 55 in Dowling, 2010: 25). Researchers have responsibilities that not only relate to ethics, but also to their own safety. One must conduct research in a safe way both to oneself and to research participants. Hence, reflexivity and critical self-reflection are an important part of the research process (Rose, 1997).

Due to the fact that there will be the collecting of sensitive data from the interviewees, this study was submitted for approval by the Norwegian Social Science Data Services (NSD), the department that deals with ethical issues and data collecting. It is a mandatory procedure to submit the interview project for an ethical review before the investigation starts. Brinkmann, S., & Kvale, S. (2015) says that the researcher is thereby required “to think through in advance value issues and ethical dilemmas that may arise during an interview project”. Additionally, the author discusses four arguments normally discussed in ethical guidelines for researchers, such as informed consent, confidentiality, consequences and the role of the researcher (p.91).

According to Smith (2001), qualitative research is a way of interference and, if this interference feels wrong somehow, such approaches are probably unethical and should be discontinued. During my investigations, I carefully considered my responsibilities towards participants with regard to issues of harm, informed consensus and privacy. This was achieved by ensuring that my research does not expose my informants (and myself) to physical or social harm and making sure that research participants were fully informed about the purpose, methods and possible uses of the research. Every participant of this study signed a consent form, meaning they participated in a voluntarily, free of any coercion (see APPENDIX).

Qualitative methods such as interviews involve different ethical issues. Volunteering participants could take part in the interviews through a simple random sampling, method after accepting the agreement and indicating that the participants are 18 years of age or older, the interviews could proceed. The same occurred for those who answered the Google Forms. These agreements, according to Brinkmann, S., & Kvale, S. (2015), demand “informing the research participants about the overall purpose of the investigation” as well as “of any possible risks and benefits from participation in the research project” (p.93). Based on that, participants were

asked to sign an approval form that contained the fundamentals of this research and their appearance in it. “The participants should agree to the release of identifiable information” (Brinkmann, S., & Kvale, S., 2015: 94). The consent form also indicated that aid in the study was voluntary, and participants could drop out from the study at any time. In addition, before being interviewed, participants were verbally reminded of the voluntary nature of their participation and their ability to withdraw.

The confidentiality in research refers to “agreements with participants about what may be done with the data that arise from their participation” (Brinkmann, S., & Kvale, S., 2015: 94). In this research, participants' identities were protected throughout the study. Participants were identified only by pseudonyms during the process and after the transcription. Anonymity can protect the participants in the interview but can also deny them “the very voice in the research that might originally have been claimed as its aim” (Brinkmann, S., & Kvale, S., 2015: 95). Confidentiality also includes where the data material is stored; in this case in an online cloud service personal storage which limits who will have access to it. As informed to Norwegian Social Science Data Services (NSD), all data will be destroyed by a predetermined date.

The consequence of a study needs to be considered, such as the value and responsibilities of the interviewee and the interview process for the research. Participants may have regrets about some information they have shared so the researcher must be conscious about the participant–interviewer relation. “The personal closeness of the researcher relationship puts continual and strong demands on the tact of the researcher regarding how far to go in his or her inquiries” (Brinkmann, et. al., 2015: 96).

The ethical issues are also focused on the researcher. Brinkmann, S., & Kvale, S. (2015) explains that the researchers may maintain a professional distance from the participant to help the validity process. As a participant observer, I had to follow some ethical issues. Since qualitative interview research is an interactive interview, the relationship with the interviewer can become closer. In this case, my role as researcher was to be more than aware of any potential intimacy, but also respectful of the interviewee. No consent letter was required during the observations, as well as no audio recording. After the meetings, I tried not to speak or have any contact with those who contributed.

### 3.8 Data Analysis

The ideal interview is already analysed by the time the sound recorded is turned off.  
Brinkmann, S., & Kvale, S. (2015:216)

In this section I introduce the data sources of the study, as well as data needs and methods for data collection. Documents and interviews are the main data sources of this research, but participant observation also played an important role.

The initial plan was to conduct semi-structured interviews with participants between the ages of 18 to 65. Before the collection of data, people were supportive and willing to participate by giving interviews. Unfortunately, I got mostly negative answers: mostly of the people between 40-65 years that I have reached before, decided to do not talk to me. I think the reason is that people are still concerned about discussing such personal subject matters, as their social connections can be found online. Therefore, in this study, the views on the topic under investigation are based mainly on all the interviews.

After gathering the data, it was processed and analyzed, according with this project summary. For Brinkmann, S., & Kvale, S. (2015) the ideal method during the research process is to think about the interviews analysis before they are conducted. The author points that the method of analysis decided on will “then guide the preparation of the interview guide, the interview process, and the transcription of the interviews” (p.216). In qualitative research, interviews are usually taped and transcribed when possible. As a qualitative researcher, I am interested not only in what my participants say, but also in the way they say it. For this reason, having a thorough transcription of the interviews available was helpful and important, thus all interviews for this study were transcribed. In order to evaluate the quality of qualitative research, the analysis of the interview data followed a simplified version of the general steps of qualitative data analysis described by Brinkmann, S., & Kvale, S. (2015):

1. *Analyzing*: Involves evaluating which methods of analysis are appropriate for the interviews.
2. *Validity*: Assessing the reliability of processes. A valid argument is solid, convincing and strong. This process is necessary to prove the study contributes valid scientific knowledge. “Validation is here not some final verification or product control, verification is built into the entire research process with continual checks in the

credibility, plausibility, and trustworthiness of the findings” Brinkmann, S., & Kvale, S. (2015:285).

3. *Reporting*: involves reporting the findings of this study. This is contained in the next chapter.

The steps of data analysis described here represent ideal abstractions. In practice, qualitative research procedures do not always follow this order. Validating the accuracy of the research findings occurs throughout the research process (Brinkmann, S., & Kvale, S.,2015:283).

According to Bryman (2016), reliability refers to the question of whether the results of a study are repeatable, whereas validity is concerned with the integrity of these results. Nevertheless, Bryman (2016) explains that there has been debate between qualitative researchers about the relevance of these criteria for qualitative research. For example, validity almost by definition carries meanings of measurement, which is not a main concern among qualitative researchers.

One option is to adapt meaning when incorporating reliability and validity into qualitative research. In this sense, this study could, for instance, focus on external reliability and external validity which asks whether the results can be generalized beyond the specific context or replicated. This process can also be referred to as generalizability (Bryman, 2016). Nonetheless, when the methods of data collection include participant observation and qualitative interviews with a small number of participants, critics claim that it is nearly impossible to figure out a way to apply the results to other settings. This is exactly the scenario of this research.

The solution I found is to rely on transferability. In other words, to produce an in-depth account of the details of the case being researched. Bryman states that an accurate description should provide others with “a database for making judgments about the possible transferability of findings to another milieu” (2016: 384). Even though I acknowledge that there is a contextual uniqueness in my research, my hope is that best practices identified in this study can be, to some extent, transferred and generalized to other similar contexts and arrangements.

## IV ANALYSIS

This chapter offers the analysis of interviews and relevant documents identified throughout the research process. During the analysis, answers to the research question emerge – laying the basis for the next chapter, where discussion takes place. First the Mechanics, Dynamics and Aesthetics of Tinder is presented, followed by the analysis of Interviews and Focus Group. The data collected through interviews and the data provided by the focus group complement each other and provide useful insights to answer the research question.

### 4.1 The MDA- Mechanics, Dynamics and Aesthetics of Tinder

Deterding, et. al. (2011: 2) suggests that in the MDA framework, designers work with mechanics to create “aesthetics, while players experience aesthetics, and in so doing, infer knowledge about mechanics”. On Tinder, by breaking down the elements of its Mechanics, Dynamics and Aesthetics, the idea of influence from games is reinforced and when all the mechanisms are combined, they become “fun” (Hunicke et al., 2001-2004). Based on that, I divided Tinder elements into Mechanics, Dynamics and Aesthetics.

#### 4.1.1 Mechanics

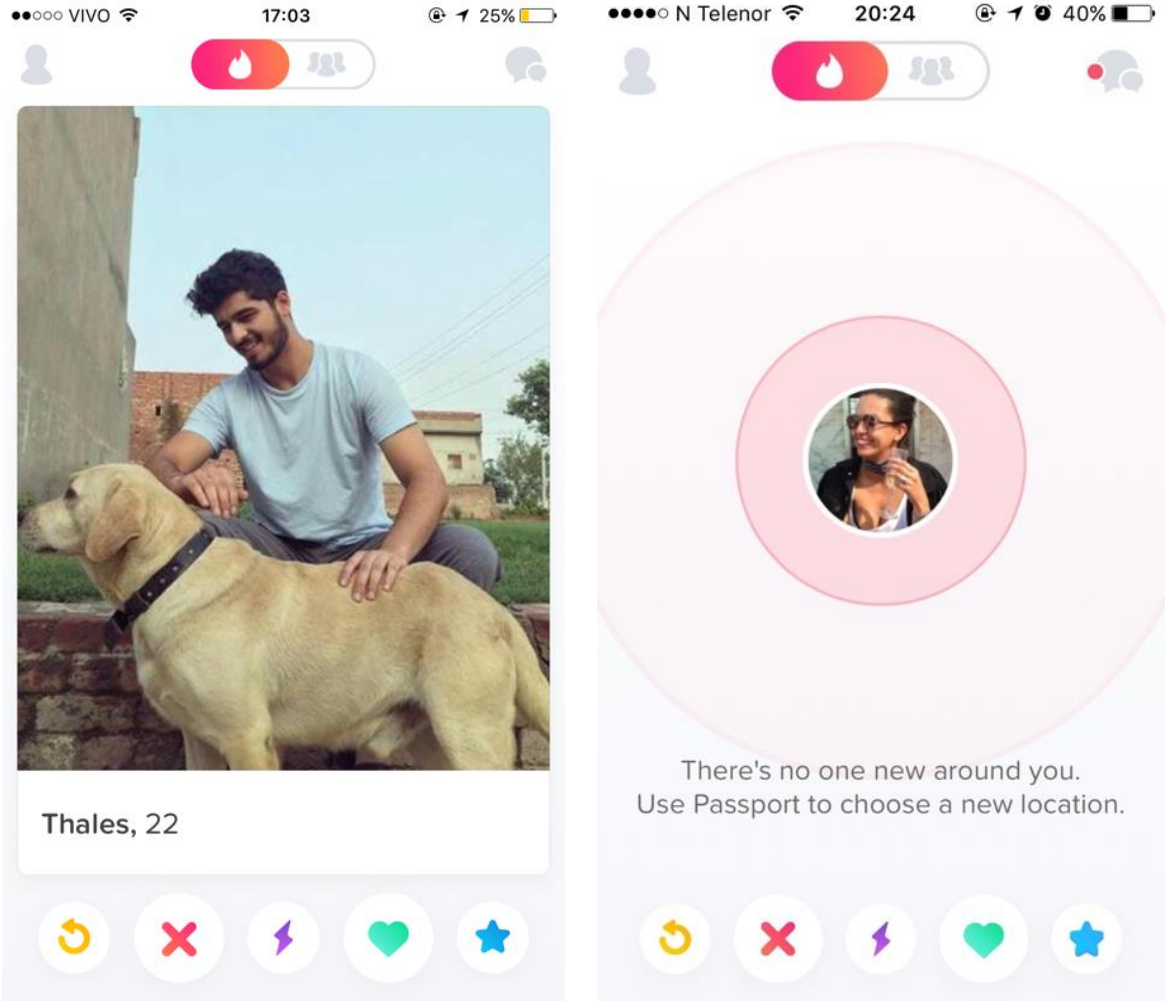
Tinder lists potential *matches* and it is up to the user to decide whether or not he/she is interested in them. The mechanics are the base of this mobile application, the rules. According to Hunicke et al., (2001-2004) *Mechanics* “describes the particular components of the game, at the level of data representation and algorithms” (p.2).

To install Tinder, as explained before, the user must have a smartphone with Internet access and connect the service to their *Facebook* account. From the moment the person connects their *Facebook*, Tinder then imports the user’s personal information, such as: age, gender, location, education and pictures. Once it has finished loading, Tinder presents profiles of nearby people who match the user’s specifications (in terms of sexuality and gender) by using the location-based service (GPS) on the smartphone. Then the user can start to swiping *right* (heart) to accept or *left* (cross) to reject them. Tinder incorporates a unique feature - the swipe. The swipe is what makes Tinder easy, fast, and addictive. Sean Rad, Tinder’s CEO explains, “The yes-no swiping design brings a game element to dating – each match gives the user an ego boost... Tinder offers virtual voyeurism – people watching in the palm of your hand” (Bertoni, 2014b: 2).



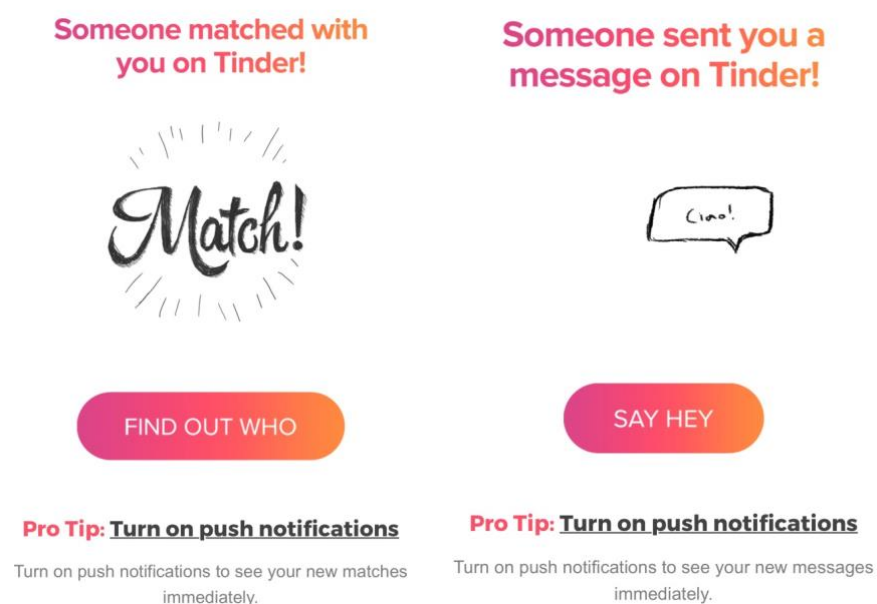
The mechanics defines how the user interacts and controls Tinder. For example, the user will only get a match if he/ she starts to swipe the cards, once this act it is one of Tinder's rules. *Matching* on Tinder means to the application's result of algorithms to select potential partners for users based on distance, gender and age. This simple *swipe-to-like* mechanism has given to Tinder an advantage over more time-consuming dating apps. On average, people log into the application eleven times a day. "All of this can add up to 90 minutes each day" (Bilton; 2014, October 29). If both users *like* one another, the app allows them to start a conversation.

For David & Cambre (2016:4) the Tinder interface is less stressful than a face-to-face encounter. This is because the users are able to self-present themselves based on pictures. "Images are crucial, functioning as if bait, and tempting other users to connect (p.4)".



Images 3 and 4: Tinder's interface (February, 2017)

Tinder's gamification provides a fun activity to pass the time. To better understand what makes gameplay fun, we can look at four characteristics that gameplay is comprised of: *goal*, *rules*, *feedback system* and *voluntary participation* (McGonigal: 2012). As with most applications, and usually in gaming, the participation on Tinder it is completely *voluntary*: to use it, the person must first download the application. When you have not used the application for a while, the *feedback system* notifies you via push notifications, for example: "You have 10 new matches, come and check out" or "More than 100 people are swiping around you at the moment". If you do not turn it on, you may get the notifications via e-mail (Images 5 and 6). Tinder has rules, which are both obvious in the limits of the app itself and hidden in the implicit guidelines supported by those participating. As described earlier, they are simple - *swipe* to the right or left. For instance, usually in a heterosexual *match*, the male is usually expected to be the first to make contact with the female (Whitty, 2003), which was not confirmed by my informants. Following these rules will optimistically bring about accomplishing Tinder's primary goal and getting its reward: a relationship, a hook up or perhaps a friendship. As discussed previously on section 2.4 Gamification and play, games are defined by rules. Based on Salen, K., & Zimmerman, E. (2010: 155), I suggest that on Tinder, the operational rules drive the user' actions, as instance, the swipe. The users' behaviour it is connected to their acts while using Tinder, using the touch of their fingers. In summary: if the user does not swipe the cards to right or left, there will not be a reaction or response, no effect, so, no game. On Tinder, the act of swipe is a main rule.



**Images 5 and 6: Tinder alerts via e-mail. (October, 2017)**

### 4.1.2 Dynamics

*Dynamics* are the processes and behaviours that appear when you actually use the application. In an interview during Game Design Workshop (September 11, 2016), the game developer and researcher Mark LeBlanc said that “the player is part of the system too, so some of our understanding of game dynamics has to be an understanding of human dynamics”. Through the dynamics, Tinder has built essential extensions for a gamification experience, creating a range of experiences.

In the dating scene, interactions are very important. Dynamics tells us how the users interact with their Tinder experiences. Spotify, for example, has a feature that learns the users musical taste and makes suggestions of songs the user may enjoy. The user can link their Spotify account to Tinder which broadcasts their *Tinder Anthem*, which displays the user’s favorite artists and songs. Tinder users can also connect their *Instagram* account, taking their self-presentation to the next level. Schrock (2015) calls it a “multimediality affordance”, based on his communicative experiences, as explained in section 2.1; Mobile technology and mobile social media.

The fact that Tinder needs a *Facebook* link so the user can begin swiping, allows it “to display the so-called verified profiles to reassure its users that if they have connections in common, so some measure of safety is ensured” (David et. al., 2016: 4). Some users think that it is safer to go on a date with someone that they share a common friend with on *Facebook*. Also, to strengthen the *Facebook* interaction, Tinder has launched the feature *Tinder Social*. A group of up to three users can either swipe on individuals or other friend groups with the intention of potentially meeting and subsequently going out together to socialize. When a group matches with another, the participants can chat with each other until the conversation expires at noon the next day. Likewise, before it expires, people can like the users individually to maintain contact via app. “It’s simpler, faster and more fun” (Tinder, 2016). This element aims to make it easier to plan a night out with friends or get to know people via application and potentially meet in person for the purpose of socializing more so than dating.

The *Super Like* feature, it is an important part of Tinder’ system. It means that the user can swipe up the user as opposed to swiping left or right. “If you *Super Like* someone, that person will see that the user like him/ her before they make the decision to swipe left (never talk to

you) or right (begin the chat)” Ranzini & Lutz (2016). By swiping up, or simply tapping the blue star icon when looking at someone’s profile, the user let that person know that they stand out from everybody else. *Super Likes* are limited to one use per day.

Another feature, *Tinder Boost* makes the user skips the card’s queue. For 30 minutes, the user is the top profile in his/her area, increasing the number of likes. So, if there is a group of friends using Tinder at the same time, the user who boosted its profile will be on the top card for the next thirty minutes.

With Tinder, it is even possible to find a date while sitting at your television since the introduction of the Apple TV version in December of 2016. To me, this version seems like a modern take on when parents used to help select potential partners for their children. The Apple TV version does not have the full functionality of the app. TV users can only swipe right or left on potential partners and are unable to send messages, which means that the user still has to use their mobile phone in order to have the full experience.

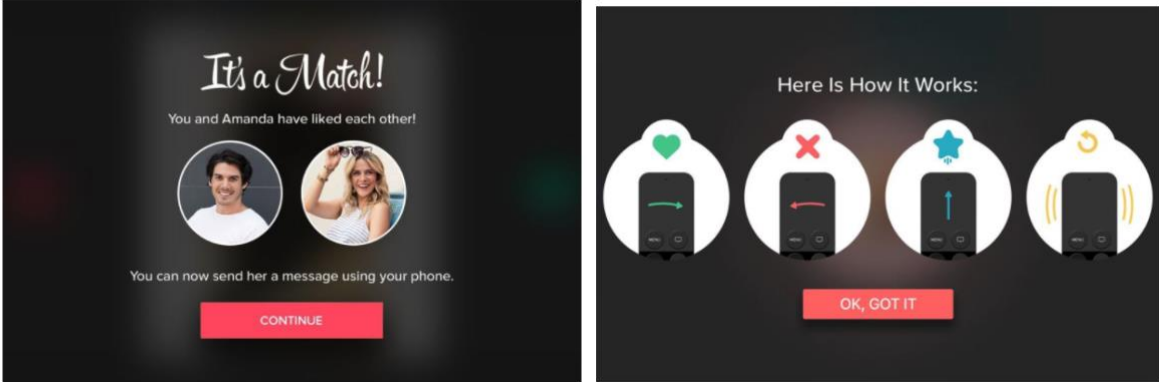


Image 7 and 8: Tinder screen on Apple TV (December, 2017)

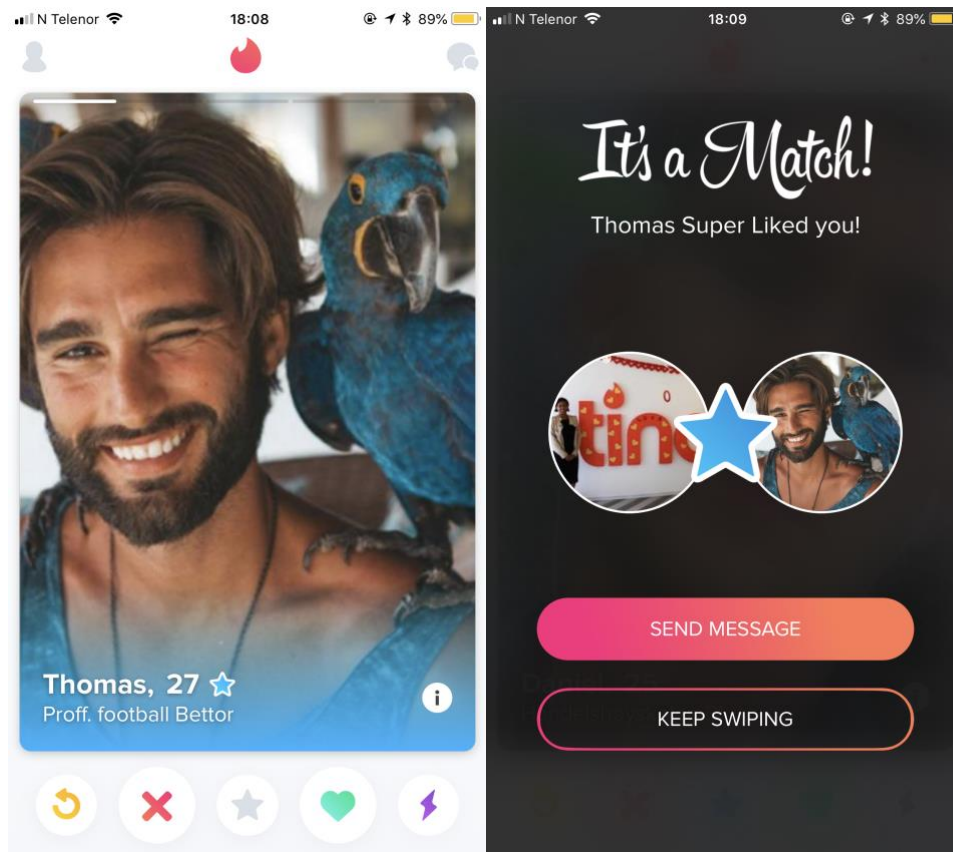


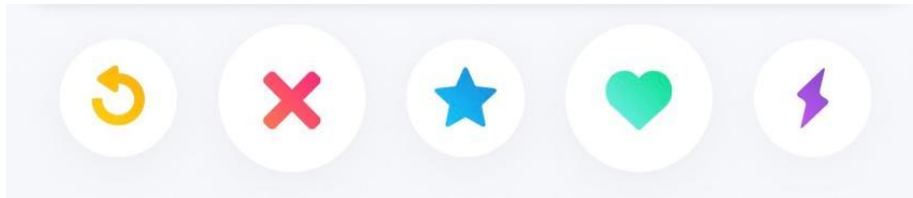
Image 9 and 10: *Super Like and Super Like match*

#### 4.1.3 Aesthetics

Finally, Aesthetics is explained by Hunicke et al. (2001-2004) as the “desirable emotional responses evoked in the user, when she/ he interacts with the game system” (p.2). This is what makes the game enjoyable and incites fun. This relates to the area of game research; including design and user-experience, as well as psychology. User experience while using Tinder usually increases consumer satisfaction by improving the usability, accessibility, and the pleasure provided during the interaction. Ranzini, G., & Lutz, C. (2016: 2) noted that Tinder’s design represents an exit from “old-school” dating websites as it relies on Schrock’s (2015) affordances of mobile media. For Ranzini and Lutz, this may change the way people describe themselves as their authentic or deceptive self. However, the use of traditional desktop-based dating websites is frequently limited to private spaces. Furthermore, the availability affordance of mobile media increases the spontaneity and usage frequency of the application. These communicative affordances presented by Schrock (2015) help us to understand the CMC theory and its relationship with Tinder, based on social behavior, technology and communication practices.

When compared, Tinder's aesthetics are more playful and easy to understand than similar applications, as example the application Happn<sup>9</sup>. Mechanics, Dynamics and Aesthetics on Tinder shows the main point of the application: its social context.

Sometimes layouts make substantial use of the horizontal alignment, placing some of their elements left, and other on the right side. Kress & Leeuwen (1996: 181) discuss that “the placement or arrangement of visual elements or ingredients in a work of art, as distinct from the subject of a work”. The last sections among the horizontal axis can be used to show one of the principles of composition presented by the authors: its information value, “the placement of elements... endows them with the specific values attached to the various ‘zones’ of the image” (Kress & Leeuwen, 1996: 183), represented by Image 11. Kress & Leeuwen (1996) define that the elements placed on the left side are presented as *Given*, and the elements on the right as *New*. Given information is explained as something familiar. New information, on the other hand, is unfamiliar and stimulates special attention from the user. On Tinder, the star, heart and lightning bolt icons are placed on the right so, in theory, profiles that have the icons placed on the right, stimulate special attention from the user.



**Image 11: Tinder action bottoms –Rewind, Cross, Super like, Like and Super boost. (Tinder, 2018)**

In 2015 Tinder implemented an algorithm that limits the number of times a user can swipe right every twelve hours (Tinder, 2017), averting them from infinitely swiping right only to see who matches with them. This move intended to reduce the creation of “low quality matches that never lead to conversations” (Tinder, 2015) and preserving the application’s “integrity and effectiveness” (Tinder, 2017.). Based on this, *Tinder Plus* was introduced. The service is a membership service for those who want to control what people can see on their profiles, which counts for more than one million subscribers (Tinder, 2017). *Tinder Plus* and *Gold* gives to the

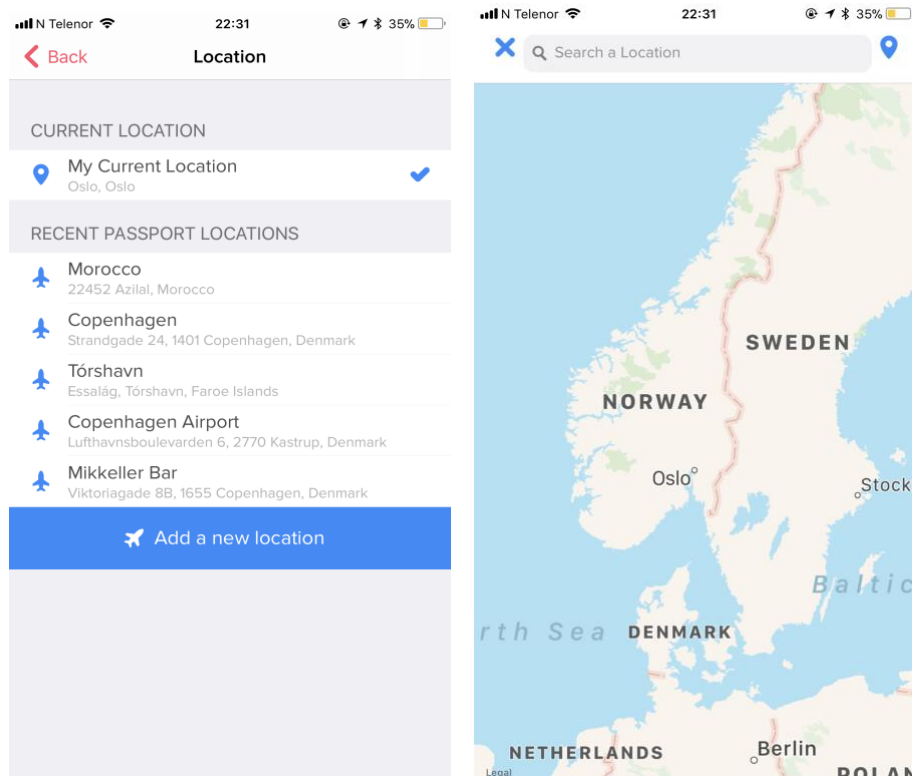
---

<sup>9</sup> Happn is a location-based social search mobile app that allows users to like or dislike other users and allows users to chat if both parties liked each other. (Happn, n.d)

user an extra fun. The user can enable or disable the visibility of age and distance, has unlimited likes, the ability to undo a swipe and hide advertisements. Users can also use the *Passport* feature. Prices can vary monthly/yearly, starting from 210kr a month (Tinder, 2017).

Tinder's *Passport* feature accommodates the company's expansion outside of the dating sphere and "beyond romantic interactions, an effort that Tinder would like to make in the long-term to grow its user base by connecting people on social and professional levels" (Deutsch, A. L.: December 27, 2014). *Passport* allows *Plus* users to change their geographic location to anywhere in the world; they are no longer limited to their city of residence and the zero to one-hundred-mile range around it and users can now search for potential matches around the world. Users can swipe, *match*, and message with all other users by dropping a pin on a virtual map or searching by city name. *Rewind*, other feature in *Tinder Plus*, allows users to take back their last swipe. With a touch of the *rewind* button, users can correct their swiping mistake to re-review a potential match's profile. Potential matches rapidly swiped to the left are "no longer lost in the Tindersphere forever" (Tinder, 2017).

As an alternative to *Tinder Plus*, the company launched *Tinder Plus Gold* in September, 2017. The service is a boosted version of the *Plus*, and more expensive. With *Tinder Gold* the users no longer have to swipe profiles one-by-one to see their matches. In its place, everyone who has liked someone appears as a list of profile photos that the user can scroll through at their leisure. Users can even hold and swipe multiple matches at a time to speed up the process. This innovation allows the *Tinder Gold* user to swipe the cards only among users who have liked their profile, so it becomes a *win-win* game, and the user has the final word. The service also grants *Tinder Plus* features like *Super Likes*, control over one's location, the option to hide age and distance, and others already elucidated here.



**Images 12 and 13: A screenshot of location capabilities on Tinder Plus’s Passport feature (Tinder, 2017)**

Looking for a partner, a lover, or an affair has become easier in our society, one click away through a mobile experience. Typically, people associate gamification with games - the act of play - but the gamification stage is everything where behaviour is reinforced by perceived benefits and rewards in a strategic, inbuilt and addictive user experience design, such as on Tinder.

#### **4.2 Social interactions on Tinder**

We show others that we are approachable, and that we are interested in them, through immediacy cues. O’Sullivan et. al. (2004. In, Baym, 2010)

Communication in the digital space involves a series of points. The way people talk and interact on Tinder is seen as informal. For Baym (2010: 61) an online conversation is “full of non-standard spellings, slang and other markers”. To explain about how media – in this particular study, mobile social media - influence personal connections, Baym (2010: 6) presented seven key concepts: interactivity, temporal structure, social cues, storage, reach, replicability and mobility. These concepts will help to explain about how people connect through Tinder in the digital Era.



The interactivity on Tinder is seen as how it allows the user to connect and interact with other individuals. Unlike television and radio, online communication permits you to talk back. On Tinder, the user is allowed to reply and start an interaction with the other, after *matching*. Baym (2010:7) points out that the interactivity that Internet provided, “gives rise to new possibilities”. On Tinder, the user can meet a new person and start a relationship.

Temporal structure on Tinder comes under asynchronous communication, with delays between the messages if the user it is not online, which is impossible to know. It also influences the self-presentation as disclosed in the section 2.1 Self-presentation and cues. For Baym (2010: 7) it is not always the medium’s fault: “poor connections may lead to time delays” and sometimes the user is replying so quickly that it works as a synchronous mode of communication. Usually users start the conversation in the application and take it to the next level, meeting face-to-face.

In contrast to face-to-face dating, social cues on Tinder start as a non-verbal interaction. “People show feeling and immediacy, have fun, and build and reinforce social structures even in the leanest of text-only media” (Baym, 2010: 59). Tinder has this text-only interaction, but for many it may not be fun, so Tinder’ developers have created ever-richer resources for the users to communicate. Tinder *Reactions* it is a function that allows users to express themselves using “louder” emoticon options. On the application, the use of emoticons may be described as remarkable; they accomplish social connections, answers for emotional situations, and allows the user to show their own expressions. “Our expressions of emotions and immediacy show others that we are real, available (...)” (Baym, 2010: 62). More than textual, *Instagram* also contributes to visual cues on Tinder, which gives the user more opportunity for the user to access more pictures of the match; *Spotify* provides access to the user's musical profile and *Facebook* to their *Facebook* profile.



**Image 14: “Reactions speak louder than words” (Tinder: October, 2017).**

Storage, reach and replicability in Tinder are somewhat connected. Tinder’ users can reach people globally. In the tool *Tinder Plus*, the user can travel to other locations thanks to the *Passport* option. It is possible for users who are living in any of the 196 countries available on the app to swipe from local and global (Baym, 2010: p.10). Thanks to the storage and replicability, messages can be kept and the user has the chance to retrieve or replicate it; this is in contrast to face-to-face conversations, that cannot be stored or replicated (p.11).

For mobility, Baym (2010) explains that the mobile telephone represents “the paradigm case of mobility, making person-to-person communication possible regardless of location” (p.11). Mobility, Internet and location-based services such as GPS made interaction between people easier. These concepts built by Baym (2010) help to understand the parallels and differences of face-to-face and computer-mediated-communication on Tinder.

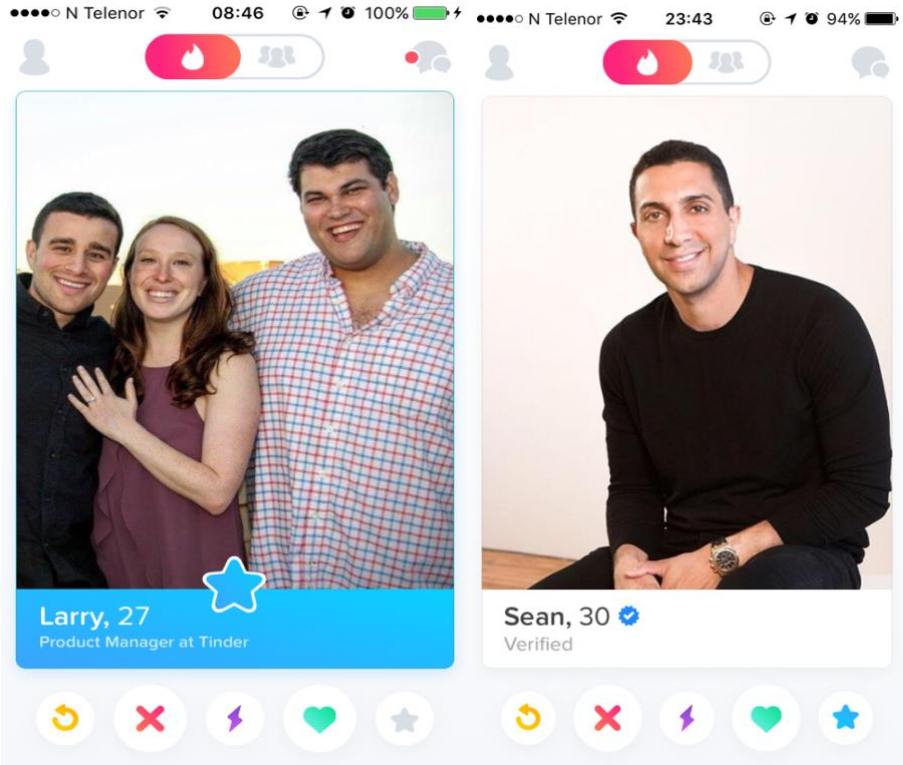
Regarding storage, a brief introduction about Tinder’s privacy information is necessary. The journalist Duportail, J. (2017, September 26) asked Tinder to grant access to her personal data in march 2017, based on the European Data Protection Law. The law says that every European citizen is allowed to have access to their online data, but according to Tinder “very few actually do”. Duportail obtained 800 pages from the company, what she called: “all my Tinder history”. Some of the data, as she wrote for *The Guardian*, contained information such as her *Facebook* likes, *Instagram* photos, her education, the age-rank of men she was interested in and how many

Facebook friends she had. It even contained when and where every online conversation with every single one of her matches happened and more. After this episode, Tinder decided to make the account information they have stored available to all users. To do this, the user needs to request via website<sup>10</sup>; 24 hours after I requested mine I got a link to download my index-html files. Tinder had saved records of all my chats since I started using the application 3 years ago, along with the matches I have unmatched - deleted - or even reported (for any reason).

According to Tinder, they need the information of their users “to personalize the experience for each of our users around the world” (Duportail, J., 2017, September 26). This personalization, according to the company, helps them to consider various factors when presenting potential matches, once the matching tools are very self-motivated.

### 4.3 Interactions on Tinder as perceived by Tinder

The people we meet change our lives. A friend, a date, a romance, or even a chance encounter can change someone’s life forever. Tinder empowers users around the world to create new connections that otherwise might never have been possible. We build products that bring people together. (Tinder, 2017)



<sup>10</sup> [www.tinder.com/privacy](http://www.tinder.com/privacy)

**Images 15 and 16 – Screenshots of the Tinder employees I have reached via application.**  
(Tinder, 2017)

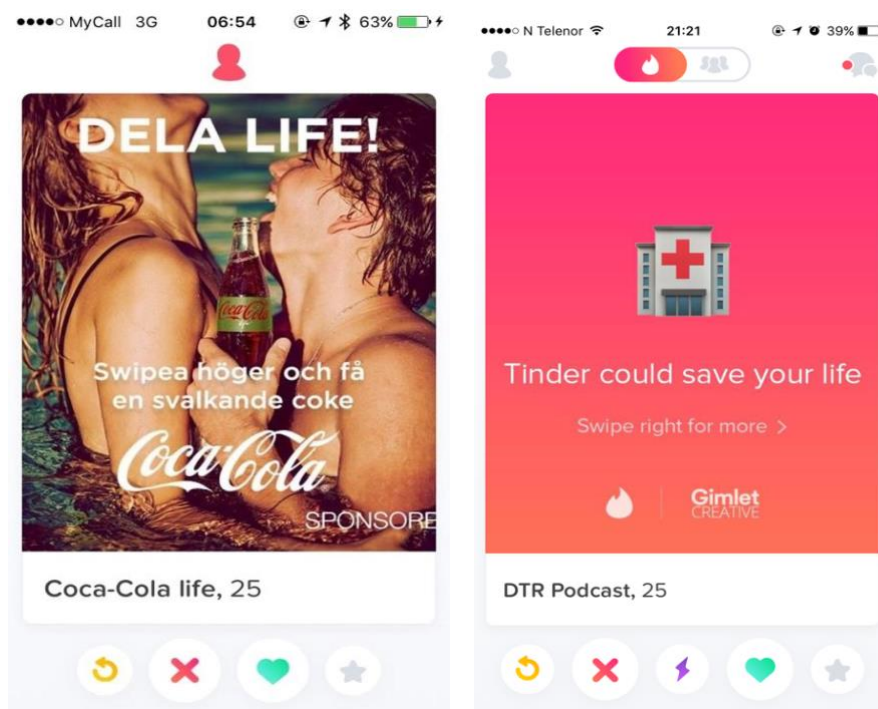
As explained on Section II - Methodology, (My own experiences: Participatory observation), I flew to Los Angeles to meet up with Larry Sequino, Product Manager. I have *matched* a some of Tinder employees, including Sean Rad, the CEO and Larry Sequino, who became an important piece of this study.

Larry Sequino is Tinder's Product Manager since August 2016. He was very curious about what and why I was researching about Tinder, as well as how it is used among Norwegians in Oslo. I was quite direct and asked if he believes Tinder to be a game, to which he resolutely replied "Yes, no doubts about it". Larry also emphasized the importance of how the application looks, a lot of consideration was put into the design of the app. According to him, "people would not use an application if it does not look great".

For Sequino, Tinder has a long way to go. "We want to build a social community", which is becoming apparent while studying the application and its properties. He points out that Tinder's dynamic it is after its algorithms, but "still connected to the desirability factor" – or how people can swipe right on you: if they think you are interesting, or not. There were two main points of interest when trying to understand what is behind Tinder's numbers: "how active and how selective the user is". It means that Tinder essentially ranks users according to their use (how many times they log in), and how selective in matches the users are, where the app will rank those who are pickier over those who are less picky. If the person is a high user, Tinder will recognize he as a bot and will result in a "*shadowban*" – in Larry's words, a low score that can make the user invisible for a while on the swiping card.

Conventional online dating sites as Match.com base their algorithms on the assumption of similarity and complementarity, and Tinder, according to Sequino, bases its platform on physical desirability built on the pictures disclosed by the users. Mathematical algorithms have no way of guessing vertical preferences or physical attraction for that matter. Tinder ignores algorithms as a mathematical science and instead matches users based on proximity through age, gender preferences and geolocation. Tinder does not use a fixed set of characteristics to match users. Consequently, Tinder users are in control of matching with nearby users based on their own choices.

Monetization of the application started with the introduction of advertisements, for all users who do not pay for *Tinder Plus* or *Gold*. For the Coca-Cola advertisement on the application, the user who matched the brand was given a link to a QR Code for a free beverage. This action took place in May 2017 and had a 40% increase in clicks through in one day on the Coca-Cola advertisement profile, approximately 218.000 impressions in Norway (Sequino, L., Tinder Product Manager: 2017).



Images 17 and 18: Advertisement on Tinder (Tinder, 2017)

Margalit, L. (September 27, 2014) points out that Tinder’s success “stems from its simplicity and minimalism, which relates to how our cognitive system works”. Tinder’s interface allows its users to make quick decisions and judgments based on little information.

“Dating applications are used to satisfy a need for sensation” (Sumter, Vandenbosch, & Ligtenberg, 2016: 68). As explained in Chapter III, the eight kinds of fun explained by Hunnicke et al. (2001-2004: 2) gives support to MDA Theory when talking about Tinder: The first kind of fun that Tinder can generate is *sensation*. This occurs once the player experiences something totally unusual to them. As *fellowship*, it is possible to find Tinder’s main kind of entertaining,

according to its description on AppleStore (2017). LeBlanc<sup>11</sup> explains that "all of the social aspects of games; the ability for a game to function as a social framework. All the ways in which games facilitate human interaction". The application is a multiplayer platform, which means that for interactions to happen, another user is necessary, making the application a form of social interaction. "These games generally require human-to-human cooperation for the challenge to be overcome" (Oxland, 2004: 227).



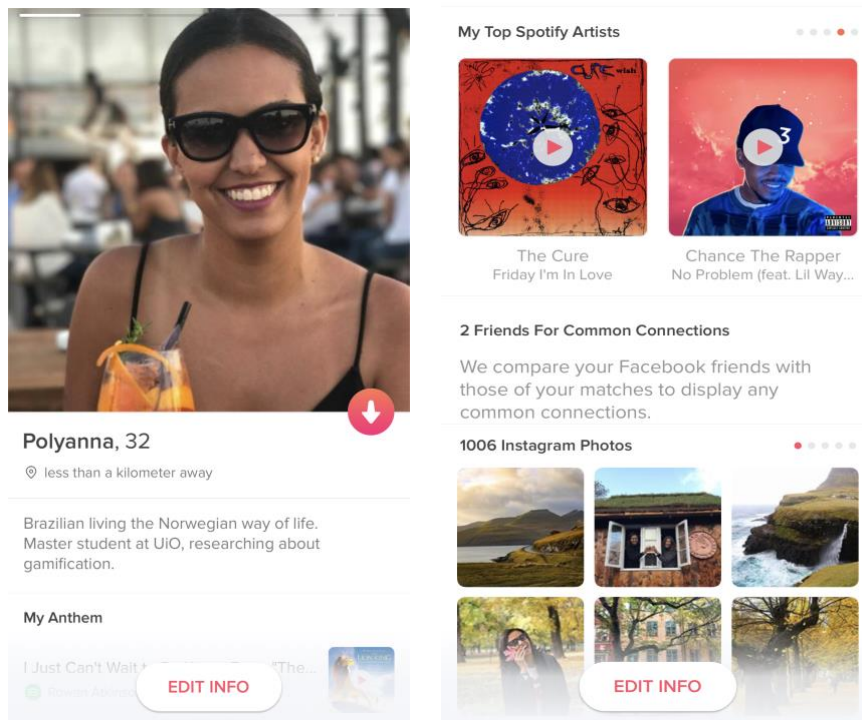
**Image 19: Fellowship represented through Tinder Social (Tinder, 2017)**

Dating can be interpreted as a type of romantic *fantasy* where individuals construct ideal partners based on their online profile, which can be very exciting. Whitty (2003: 349) explains that there is a better chance online for fantasy than there is offline. "Online participants can inhabit anybody they desire, whether that is a youthful body, an attractive body or even a body of the opposite sex". During the *Narrative* process, part of the *Dynamics* of Tinder, the applications users develop very personal storytelling, which can be true or not. This includes the kind of music they like, shared via Spotify, and their pictures during summer holidays or with the family, shared via *Instagram*. It is up to the user to be the storyteller of their own

---

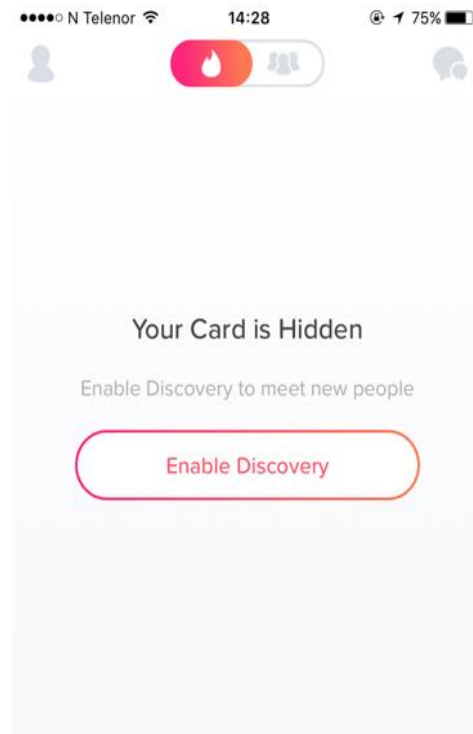
<sup>11</sup> In; Nutt, C. (2008, February 18).

Tinder profile. The player can fantasize about their matches before meeting face-to-face. As argued for Whitty (2003:349), while “clearly the body is not physically present during online interactions, it still does matter”. In the online space, Tinder users can play with their identities and even generate fabricated personas, based on what they decide to disclose.



**Images 20 and 21: Narrative and fantasy represented. Tinder main profile and connections: Spotify and Instagram (Tinder, 2017)**

The *challenge* on Tinder is the *match*, part of the *Mechanics* of the application. Tinder encourages people to swipe and make easier the interaction between the users after the match. *Discovery* on Tinder is presented as a deck of cards with many options. When enabled, the card will present other people’s profiles to the user, so the *yes-or-no* interaction can start. *Expression* on Tinder is in the form of self-presentation: the way the users present themselves on the platform through pictures, text and connection with other social media. *Submission*, is the use of the application as a hobby. The user starts the challenge anytime, anywhere, depending only on their Internet access.



**Image 22: Discovery - Tinder card hidden. (Tinder, 2017)**

Once discussing about a gamified experience, MDA framework helps to comprehend the influence of these three levels - Mechanics, Dynamics and Aesthetics - of abstraction in the user experience. MDA supports a formal, iterative approach to design and change. It allows us to aim explicitly for particular design goals, and to anticipate how changes will impact each aspect of the framework including the resulting designs/implementations. On Tinder, MDA shows how the application can generate emotions on the users, how the social interactions happen and how it becomes the key to bring the game to real life.

#### **4.4 Self-presentation and cues on Tinder**

Self-presentation on Tinder, based on Goffman (1959), is how the user measures performance and participation on the application. The way they present themselves and how they attempt to control the impressions the other might have from them, are important points on Tinder. The users tend to present and occasionally inflate or build their characteristics in an effort to raise their wanted impression, which I will call self-presentation goals, based on the interviews made for this study. The self-presentation goals on Tinder are built on the outcomes the user wants to achieve on the application, like finding a relationship of any kind. On the application, many



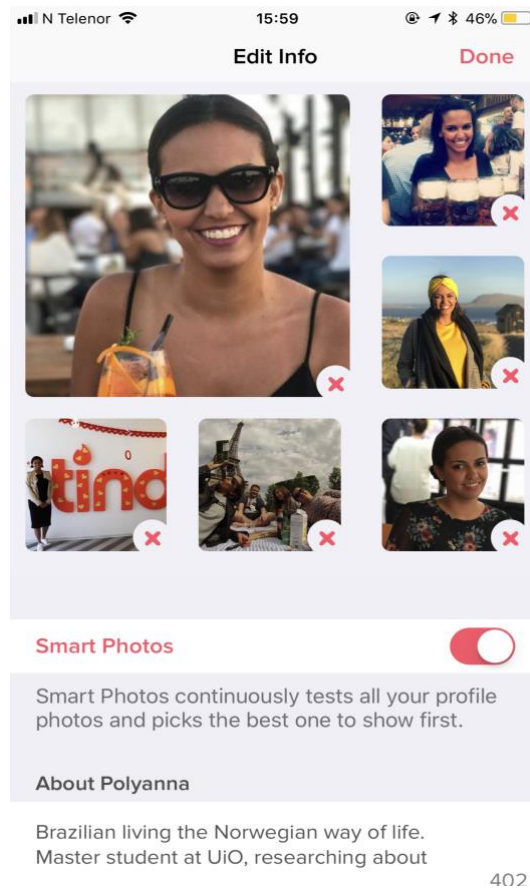
contextual factors, separately of the communication mode, such as the availability of physical appearance and nonverbal cues could impact the ways in how users self-present themselves.

Goffman (1959) states that “a social establishment is any place surrounded by fixed barriers to perception in which a particular kind of activity regularly takes place” (p. 238). Users log in, swiping left or right, expecting to initiate a relationship. Tinder serves as a platform that introduces users to more potential dates than ever, proclaiming “any swipe can change your life” (Tinder, 2017). Nevertheless, due to the fact that Tinder is a computer-mediated form of communication, certain barriers – time, audio, and visual – are inevitable in the application and impede users’ perceptions. Assured by Goffman (1959: 238). that “any social establishment may be studied commercially from the point of view of impression management,” I will continue to analyse performances on Tinder.

On Tinder, users present themselves mostly through their pictures, but people can be very bad at choosing their own profile photos. According to Tinder’ sociologist Dr. Jess Carbino, “people tend to swipe left more frequently if the user is: not smiling, covering their face (even a small portion), in a group of people, wearing a hat, or wearing any kind of glasses” (Tinder, 2016). In 2016 Tinder released the feature *Smart photos*, a new algorithm that maximizes the user’s match potential through their profile pictures. Tinder tests user’s various profile photos according to each response as others swipe on you and reorders your photos to show your best ones first. In the end, the algorithm will determine which one is most popular, and automatically serves up that picture first in the deck. According to Tinder (2017), users saw up to a 12% increase in matches. The apps smart photos feature could also be another way for Tinder to gather more data, to target individuals and personalize their marketing advertisements for those that do not pay for *Tinder Plus/Gold*. My profile picture for example, chosen via *Smart photos*, is a picture of me wearing sunglasses, which according to Tinder, would make people swipe me left, but looks like it is my most popular picture. Sean Rad, head of Tinder, explains the importance of photographs on the application:

We’re actually very good at understanding the nuances and details inside photos. At first glance, you’re like ‘oh, Tinder is all about looks because I’m looking at photos.’ Well, that is a very superficial understanding of Tinder. You look at these photos. People are doing things in the photos. There’s body language. There’s stories that they’re telling. Our brains can pick up these nuances in milliseconds, and it’s true what they say: a picture is worth a thousand words. What we’re finding is that the most powerful signals of relevance within Tinder is actually the content inside the photos. Bertoni (2014a: 00:15:30-00:16:27)

The need of self-presentation is completely influenced by the intended outcome of the relationship and self-esteem. It could be that individuals with a lot of self-esteem have a better sense of how to achieve expected impressions and influence the users that see their pictures. Likewise, those who use Tinder with the precise aim of finding a relationship, might be better prepared to carry on the communication to a deeper level and therefore attract other users.



**Image 23: Tinder album (Tinder, 2017)**

A computer-mediated-communications based system like Tinder may be attractive to people who lack self-confidence because they can make contact with others before meeting in real life. While chatting, the user can build a new reality, a new self and even pretend to be someone else.

#### **4.5 Gamification on Tinder**

What is new about gamification is not necessarily the idea of applying gaming elements to a real-world activity, but how seamlessly, ubiquitously, and socially those gaming elements are now applied. Bohyun (2015:8).

Gamification uses game-based dynamics to engage an audience. It presents an engaging Mechanics, Dynamics and Aesthetics interface that affects how users face a game. The most fundamental element of gamification is how it boosts “game thinking,” the change of an ordinary achievement into an opportunity for development.

The definition of gamification provided by Zichermann & Cunningham (2011) and supported by Bohyum (2015) emphasize its objective: user engagement and problem solving. People use Tinder because they have a goal: find a relationship; romantic or not. The problem or solution it is when the user gets to *match* and start chatting with the potential date. Gamification uses game-based dynamics to engage an audience. It presents an engaging Mechanics, Dynamics and Aesthetics interface that affects how users face the application as a game. This combo is the result of the gamification on the application: engagement and solve a matter - on Tinder, find a relationship of any kind.

Gamification is the transformation of something that is not a game into a game-like context, so the player becomes ‘hooked’ and continues to play. This is precisely what Tinder has done. Sean Rad asserts, “Tinder quickly set itself apart by applying [...] game psychology to online dating” (TechCrunch, 2014: 00:01:38). Throughout this research it became clear that Tinder is popular, not only because it introduced a new style of dating application, but also because game mechanics are incorporated. As emphasized by Zichermann and Cunningham, “It is the mechanics of a game – not the theme – that make it fun” (2011: 3).

According to this analysis, Tinder has a design inspired by games, gamified, that can offer experiences and behaviours inclined more to one pole (Caillois, 2001) of play – *ludus* – than *paidia*. This occurs because on Tinder the user is goal-oriented and follow the design components that together creates the rule elements essentials for the *match*. But still, Tinder can be an exploratory application. On these grounds, it can be affirmed that Tinder includes both poles.

On *Tinder Social*, for example, users can swipe with their friends – up to 3, as in a team. Tinder can be termed as a casual and as social game. In social gaming (Oxland: 2004), games require Internet and the interaction of two or more users, such as how occur on Tinder’ feature *Tinder*

*Social.* As in all gamification experiences, the user spend time on the application and it can be addictive: Tinder users access an average of 11 times a day and spend between 7 and 9 minutes swiping during a single session. Women browse profiles for 8.5 minutes at a time versus 7.2 minutes for men (Bilton, 2014).

Dating often contains game-like elements, but applications like Tinder make the gamification of dating way more obvious (Neilson, 2013). This passage, has two thinkable perceptions. One perspective is that Tinder is a real-time challenge among the other users. An alternative is that Tinder, as a casual game is focused on chance, implicating that a user gets a match among many profiles and competes against a chance rather than a direct adversary. For some, the experience of both users' match seems amazing. These conditions support the idea that Tinder works as a "game of chance" (Juul, 2013), consequently making Tinder a sort of game. TechCrunch journalist Jordan Crook points out that the superficial behaviour on Tinder can be related to its game-like design:

(...) If we put anecdotal behaviour 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 turbocharged 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. Crook, J. (2015, March 12).

Tinder was designed to solve a real-life problem: meeting and dating people. Gamification tries to solve a problem and, based on Bohyun (2015), the kind of concern to be solved is never fictional, but real. "In order for something to count as gamification rather than a game, its goal must be solving a real-world problem" (p.6).

## VI FINDINGS

This section presents a brief summary of the interviews. The essence of each interview was found through a thorough process of analysis and coding. The summaries are listed in chronological order and compile the main points addressed by each informant.

### 5.1 Summary of Interviews

- (1) **25 years old, female, straight, single.** This participant started using Tinder after some friends talked about it. She is single and admits that she “plays” Tinder when she is bored. She met her ex-boyfriend through the application.
- (2) **21 years old, male, straight, single.** This participant started using Tinder after read about it. He has had some dates and thinks that he could not have a relationship with someone he met on the application. He affirms that self-presentation it is the key on Tinder.
- (3) **26 years old, female, straight, in a relationship.** This participant started using Tinder when she lived abroad, in Australia. Back in Norway, now she is living with her first Tinder date, who has become her boyfriend.
- (4) **18 years old, male, straight, single.** This collaborator started using Tinder as curiosity. He likes older girls and foreign. In his opinion, Norwegian girls are “slow” and just like to “show off”.
- (5) **32 years old, female, bisexual, single.** This collaborator started using Tinder for fun and to spend some time. She says that Tinder it is a time-pass game for her.
- (6) **42 years old, male, straight, divorced.** This participant started using Tinder after his divorce last year. He had one date and he thinks that Tinder it is too “modern” for him.
- (7) **20 years old, male, straight, single.** This collaborator started using the application after moving back to Norway from the USA, and his sister insisted that he needed to date. He found his ex-girlfriend via app and stayed together with her for 2 years.
- (8) **27 years old, female, straight, single.** This participant started using Tinder for fun. For her, Tinder it is just a tool to hook up and she admits to play it all the time.
- (9) **30 years old, female, straight, single.** This participant started using Tinder because she is “really shy to meet someone out of the web”. She had a couple of dates, but never had a relationship through the app. She wants to find a boyfriend.

**(10) 33 years old, female, gay, in an open relationship.** This participant started using Tinder after open her relationship with her girlfriend. They use the application to meet other girls and have “fun”.

## **5.2 Summary of Focus Group**

This section presents a brief summary of the Focus Group. The essence of each interview was found through a detailed process of analysis and coding. The summaries are listed in chronological order and compile the main points addressed by each informant.

**(11) 36 years old, male, straight, in a relationship.** This participant started using Tinder after its launch in the American App Store, in 2012. The application arrived in Norway later on. He knew his girlfriend from before, but just after matching on Tinder that they started talking about dating.

**(12) 34 years old, male, straight, in a relationship.** This participant started using Tinder in August 2016. Among the group, he was the only one who affirmed that he never felt playing Tinder. The contributor said that for him Tinder it is just another dating tool. He had two dates and met his actual girlfriend through the application.

**(13) 27 years old, male, gay, single.** This contributor has used Tinder since 2013 and pointed out the differences between the use in Norway and in other countries. The main point from the debate are the following: he thinks that while using Tinder in another country, people tend to play - swipe right - without even check the user profile, mainly because of the lack of time.

**(14) 28 years old, male, gay, single.** This contributor has used Tinder since 2014. From the debate, it is important to point the comparison the user made about Tinder and the gay dating application Grindr. For him, “things” on Tinder are slower than on Grindr. For instance, on Tinder people takes more time chatting after a match than on Grindr, where people usually goes quicker to a face-to-face meeting/ hook-up.

**(15) 26 years old, female, in a relationship.** This user has used Tinder for a year, between 2014 and 2015. The main points from the debate are the following: she doesn't believe that Tinder it is trustful tool, but she thinks that it can be successful. For many times, she said that Tinder it is not more than a social game. She also discussed that Tinder' design tend to make people play it, calling it *hot-or-not*.

**(16) 26 years old, female, in a relationship.** This participant has never used Tinder herself and knew the application via friends. The main points from the discussion are the following: she enjoyed playing Tinder for her friends when they “got bored” about swiping. The contributor points out that at the first, use Tinder sounded “creepy”, but after while she enjoyed to look for the faces on the application.

### 5.3 Themes

The main themes identified from the interviews were: the importance of mobile social media as tool for connecting people, the importance of Tinder as a dating tool in Oslo, Norway, Tinder as an application to pass time and entertainment. It is important to acknowledge that the structure of the interview guides had a direct influence on the themes and sub-themes that emerged during the analysis, as the questions often related to concepts and fields of relevance to the study.

The coding process contributed to identifying and creating the main themes, which were used to further comparison and analysis. During this process, the interview quotes from each one of the informants were selected and placed under the appropriate theme and sub-theme in a table. This process resulted in an easier systematization and analysis. Table I is an example of the theme “Self-Presentation”, and Table II characterizes the theme “Playing Tinder”, and shows how quotes represents the individual opinions or experiences of the informant are placed under each main theme.

**Table I and II: Illustration of coding process for interview analysis**

<b>Theme: Self - Presentation</b>
-----------------------------------

<p>What did you take into account when you posted your own photos?</p>	<p>“(…) My pictures are probably just my most recently tagged <i>Facebook</i>-photos. I did not really care about it. About how I’m looking. If someone like me, will swipe right. If no, I will never get to know. Every swipe it is a new chance to fall in love (laugh).”</p>
--	--

Did you not think about what your photos would reveal about yourself?	“A bit, maybe. I’m not freaking about how I’m looking. I might say I care a bit about do not post pictures where I look drunk or weird. Girls can get scared.”
What makes you swipe right or left?	“(…) If the guy’ first picture is a shirtless picture I swipe right immediately (laugh). I like hot guys. Obviously, if I’m not interested, I will just say no. Sarcastically, if someone is almost too good looking to be true, like a model, I go left. I like also when someone has a nice a funny description, gets points. And I have a pattern, I like foreign guys.”
How do you want people to see you?	“That the pictures are clear so you know the guy is not hiding anything and that the pictures show some sort of humour and a bit of humbleness, not only "look how hot I am" (though it is nice to see hot bodies…)”
What do you write about yourself in the bio?	“I guess just like the basics first and then wait for them to like ask for more (information). I do like to put too much information about myself out (on Tinder) because I do not want to be seem like I am trying hard to impress people.”
How important is self-presentation for you on Tinder?	“Very. To see if they (people) look crazy or fun.”
What is Tinder for you?	“It’s instant gratification and a validation of your own attractiveness by just, like, swiping your thumb on an app”

**Theme: Playing Tinder**

Do you feel playing Tinder?	“Yes, Tinder is a game for me! I don't play it anymore out of respect for my boyfriend but I could totally keep on playing it because it
-----------------------------	--



	does not have any romantic aspect for me (and no more "sexual" aspect as before since I have a boyfriend).”
Do you feel playing Tinder?	“I agree that it is a game, but it's not like I feel like I'm playing a game when I'm using it. I actually wanted to find someone I might have fun with.”
Do you feel playing Tinder?	“I do not really like it, because it is only based on appearance, so maybe I missed someone nice. A friend of mine played on my phone. I do not feel like I do.”
Do you feel playing Tinder?	“Yes, yes. Mostly when I’m bored”
Do you feel playing Tinder?	“Sometimes I do. Mainly if it is Friday night and I’m on the couch watching Netflix and getting fat. I just open my Tinder and start swiping.”
Do you feel playing Tinder?	“It is such a game, and you have to always be doing everything right, and if not, you risk losing whoever you are hooking up with.”

### 5.3.1 Thematic Analysis

In this section of the study, the main themes obtained when coding the interviews are analysed by highlighting the most interesting and relevant opinions and perceptions of the informants and identifying similarities and differences between them.

#### 5.3.1.1 Theme: Tinder

Being Tinder the general topic of the study it was a theme addressed in every interview and in the focus group. Right in the start of the interviews and focus group, contributors were asked to explain their understanding about the application in one phrase.

Consonantly with the explanation presented before, some of the contributors gave a clear definition of what Tinder it is. One of the informants, (5), mentions that Tinder is a platform where people bring themselves out there saying they are willing to get to know others. In

addition, the same informant (5) explains that he feels playing a *hot-or-not* game motivated by the application design and it makes him feel in a “meat market”. For the informant (1), Tinder it is “easy to play”, what makes her spend “more time using it”, mostly during “weekends”, when she feels “bored”.

The motivation for using the application varies from informant to informant. Among all the interviewees and participants in the panel, meeting someone and maybe get into a romantic relationship was the mainly point. One contributor (13) says that he was on Tinder basically to get “laid”. For another (2), Tinder was a nice way to meet people to hang out and have a nice time. A female (16) says that Tinder it is was a form of entertainment for her and that she liked to share her smartphone with close friends who would also “play”. Using tinder for advice from locals when traveling was one of the good reasons for two focus group participants (13 - 14). Participant (13) pointed out that using Tinder is a nice way of get to know locals, which helps a lot, mostly when he wants to “escape from tourist traps”.

While talking about what gets their attention when swiping on Tinder, mostly of the participants like to open the full profile and check all the available information about the future match. The tagline it is also an important point when discussing about Tinder’ interactions. The user’s burb, or tagline, it is, for all the female participants on the focus group and interviews, what help them to “choose” their potential matches. For the participant (15), the textual introduction as well as the photos, makes her to get “even more into to the person”. The profile building was a greater point of discussion in both interviews and focus group, which will be discussed next.

### **5.3.1.2 Theme: Self-presentation**

As presented in section 2.1; Self-presentation and cues, using mobile social media to find dates give people new challenges related to self-presentation. Self-presentation is omnipresent in social life: persons try to control or guide others’ impressions by influencing setting, appearance and behaviour (Goffman, 1959).

For the informants, the strategy on Tinder is the following: self-present in a way that makes you attractive to others. For this, they all agreed that it is important the use of pictures on their profile. Informant (1) mention that she feels “excited” when she matches with a “hot guy” and that she “enjoy” when guys post pictures without t-shirt.

One of the focus group participant (13) says that it is very important to use pictures, so you can have a good - or not - first impression. For another (11), the pictures helped him to know about the match' personality: "if she is wearing bikini in her picture", it tells him that she likes to show up her body. In addition, the same participant (11) explain that in his profile, he decided for uploading pictures that his female friend helped to choose, so other girls would also like it.

Among the interviewees and focus group, 13 out of 16 had linked their *Instagram* accounts in their profile, which permit users to "show off their photos" (Prigg, 2015). Nevertheless, the focus group indicated that most users were hesitant to share a larger portion of their private images with anonymous audience but have done it. When accounts are linked, all the pictures posted on *Instagram* are available. The importance of images is reflected in interview comments: "It is very easy even if you are not a professional, to understand another person's style, humour and passions" (12). For participant (7) pictures are a "great way to first know someone". Informant (6) says that he just has two pictures and is does not want to post pictures with his kids, to protect them. When argued about which kind of pictures he has on Tinder, he smiled and said "pictures that I think I'm looking good on". I have checked and the pictures are very different from each other: in one he is looking serious and fancy in a suit. The second one, he is smiling in a paradisiac scenery, somewhere in the Caribbean.

The fact that Tinder is linked to *Facebook*, permits its users to see connections in common on the application, so some degree of security is guaranteed. This feature lays on the degree of connection to every swipe. Although users may find ways to fake their Tinder identity such as false *Facebook* profiles or nicknames, other users might identify how new connections are connected to strong and weak links.

A female participant (1) says that she used Tinder as a form of boost her self-esteem. She explains that she enjoys to get compliments after matching a nice guy – in her words, "*nice* means a handsome guy with an athletic body". On the other hand, a male interviewee (2) points out that mostly of the girls on the application are there to increase their egos. He says that it is the reason why he feels playing Tinder: "the girls are not looking for relationship, just for someone who will massage their egos with nice words".

When I made my profile, I used images that I felt best represented me and I thought about how people could get the best me” (...) “Tinder gives me control of my representation. Participant (12).

In general, the participants believe that the users have the power of building their real self on Tinder, showing the *best* of them. Some of the contributors firmly believe that they are being truthful about their representation on the application and that they are authentic and honest, even if they feel like playing a game. The interviewee (1) says that while deciding for which pictures to upload on the app, she always publish the ones she is “always looking hot, and of course, with makeup”. The participant (12) points that usually many girls are not being honest on their presentation and that is the reason he always “check their names and luckily find them on other social media channel, as *Facebook* or *Instagram*”. User (13) agrees and add that he likes when the person connect their *Instagram*: “I can get to know a bit more about the person even before I decide to swipe right or not”.

On Tinder, all the interaction make via application is computer-mediated and via chat, without any verbal cues. The user of Tinder, self-present what they want to reveal about themselves. The recipient gets what the sender finds convenient. For Walther (1996), the advantage of this kind of relation online is that the intimacy of the relationship would be the same if they meet face-to-face. You start the relation online, and it can become a real-life connection. As in a game, the fantasy become into reality.

### **5.3.1.3 Theme: Gamification and playing**

Gamification will be treated here as a game/ gaming, since many of the interviewees and participants in the focus group, does not know the difference between these terms or did not discuss these terms during their conversations. The answers provide a good illustration of the variety of dimensions identified by Bohyun (2015).

Consonantly with the literature presented in the section 2.4; Gamification and play, some of the informants - eleven out of sixteen - underline Tinder as “passing time” tool. The contributor (15) says that her first attempt on Tinder was with some friends. “A friend was *playing* with it and she looked so hooked to it, so I was like “I just want to see what this is about!”. One of her friends, contributor (16) affirms that she never had the application, but she likes to play “her friends Tinder” when “they are out having some drinks” and she feels “bored”. User’ profile

was explained as storytelling. For one contributor (8), the profile' narrative' sequence of pictures makes it more engaging and convincing. She also agrees that Tinder has many game-elements, such the icons and the dynamics for swiping, what she called hot-or-not. The contributor (11) disagrees when the others discuss about Tinder as a game. He points out that "he used the application to find love", so he "did never play it".

According to one of the informants, it is clear that Tinder it is a game. The informant says:

It is clear [Tinder as a game] even on the app. When you stop playing, it sends you the message - keep playing. It is a really nice pastime, it is gratifying matching with hot girls. Participant (4).

For many times, the expression *hot-or-not* was mentioned. The contributor (9) says that even though she is on Tinder to find a fix relationship, sometimes she feels like choosing her "dinner out from a menu". It is important to register that in different moments and for several times, Tinder was mentioned for the contributors as a game and they used the word "play", while explaining their relation with the cards (users) deck. The contributor (13) said the he "plays Tinder" and his goal is "in the end of the night have someone to bring home and have sex". As explained before, users are motivated to obtain outcomes either intrinsically or extrinsically (Zichermann & Cunningham, 2011: 26). Intrinsic motivation derives from within the player, from their core – for example, through a confidence boost or relief of their boredom. Whereas, extrinsic motivation derives from an external reward – for example, initiating a match and building a relationship. Interviewee (8) exemplifies both types of motivation in her statement:

Well for me, I think there are two sides. I definitely use it as like (pause) what do you call it, a game, to pass the time. For sure and also like a confidence boost at times. I mean, yeah, I do that. But I do also use it very much to meet new people. To go on dates. Participant (8).

This highlights on Tinder are both intrinsic and extrinsic motivators, which affect the users' wanted outcome.

In section 2.4 Gamification and Play, it was disclosed about Zichermann and Cunningham' (2011) four different types of players: *explorers, achievers, socializers and killers*. During the Focus Group, contributor (15) says:

Some people use Tinder to find out from locals where to go to have dinner or to grab a drink, like we do on TripAdvisor when we travel, you know? Not to find a relationship, or dating, or anything, but just kind of a way to meet Norwegians and learn about the city, like what happened when I was living in Bergen. Participant (15).

Other Tinder users are *achievers*. They are intrinsically motivated; they play to win, to feel the gratification of matching with many other users. Participant (1) is a good example. She says:

Tinder for me is definitely a win-win game. I mean, if someone do not match me, there will always be another who will. At least until I swipe all the cards. And yes, the swiping makes me feel playing even more, sometimes I did not even check the guy's profile and I need to go back and check it again. Participant (1).

#### **5.4 Summary of Interviews and Focus Group**

There is a common understanding of what Tinder it is and about how its game-like design influences the users. In general, mostly of the contributors agreed on Tinder being a game and assumed to play it. Tinder is mostly considered an enjoyable and essentially satisfying activity with gratifications: meet people to have any kind of relationship or for a hook up.

Each informant had its own understanding about Tinder, which is directly related their way of using the application. Most inputs on Tinder' use is related to self-presentation and behaviour influenced by the game- alike design (yes or no commands; right or left).

All the interviews were conducted with Tinder users. The majority of the focus group participants (5 out of 6) were Tinder users.

Tinder is a kind of the “winner takes it all”. If you have a settled profile, with nice pictures, information and other details, you will have many cards (on your deck) to play. If you do not have so much to set up, you fall short. The feeling of failure is more present on that kind of apps, says relationship expert. “Dating it is an everyday activity, we all do it in the offline life”. People go out to bars, parties and start relationships.

Based on the data collected it is possible to affirm that Tinder gamifies the act of dating, mostly because of its MDA framework, that provides a meaningful gameplay experience based on the rules, system and layout. All this together provides fun. During the interviews and focus group, the contributors also brought up details as notifications and gratifications: a relationship of any kind.

## 5.5 Findings

In this chapter, the data analysis is discussed with the objective of answering the research question outlined in section 1.2 Objectives of the research. As appropriate, reflections are supported by the theoretical framework. Firstly, the research question is discussed and concretely answered. Then, the study is evaluated, with focus on the limitations faced during the research process.

### 5.5.1 Gamification of Love

This subsection aims to answer the following research question:

#### **RQ: Is it possible that users in Oslo think of Tinder as a game?**

In order to objectively answer this question, I mainly make use of the empirical data collected through semi-structured interviews and focus group.

Based on data analysis it is possible to state that Tinder application it is gamified and its users in Norway notice that. The main set of the application was never to be a game. The company has built Tinder to be a “powerful tool to meet people” (Apple Store, 2017). The dating process has become a game on the application, mostly because of the game design. Easy-to-ignore actions, such as the *X*, representing *no*; heart, representing *love*, and the *hot-or-not* style, makes the user feels that Tinder is as game at a first look.

Winnicott (1971-1997) wrote that gaming is an important activity even during adulthood. He stated that “whatever I say about children playing really applies to adults as well” (p. 40). From the data analysis, it is clear that the Tinder offers a space for online flirting as an exclusive form of gaming, since there is a better chance online for fantasy than there is offline. The users can be anyone they wish, stating a gaming feature that it is to pretend to be someone else, as disclosed on self-presentation Section. Tinder it is easy to learn how to use, can offer quick recompenses, as the matches, and the user can *pause* and *return* without lose any move, since the card of options will stay open.

As revealed before, the eight kinds of fun explained by Hunicke et al. (2001-2004: 2), help to understand why people play games or use applications such as Tinder. On Tinder, the users can

create their own narrative, involving with pictures, self-presentation and personal taste. In this study, I could realize that might exist more kinds of fun related to Tinder, such:

1. **Social interaction:** Tinder helps the user to build a social interaction through the game, as a result of the way they express and present themselves individually, (such as age, gender, pictures), all defined by the medium;
2. **Romance:** the main reason why users goes on Tinder it is to find affection or a kind of relationship and that is what involves the users. The main point on the application it is romance;
3. **Discovery:** the pleasure of discovery someone new, interesting, in a different environment, that can end up in a love story;
4. **Power:** the users have the power in their hands – the yes, the no, the ability to improve their profile and work on their self-presentation in the way they want to.

These forms of fun that I found on Tinder are essentially part of the application’ design, as the framework presented above:

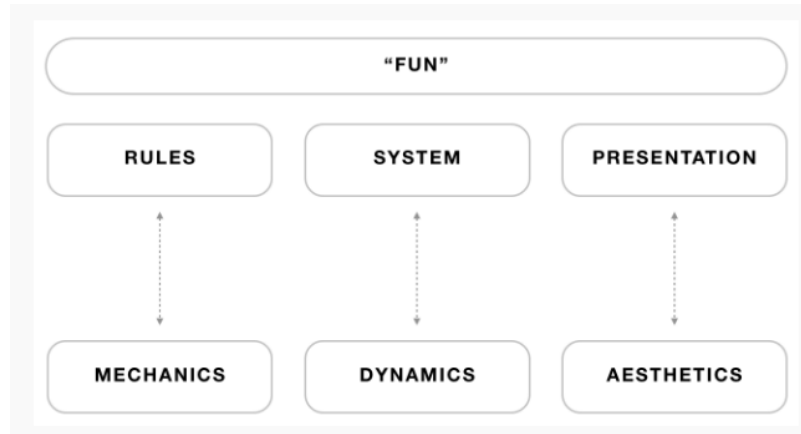


Image 24: MDA framework related to fun (Hunicke et al.; 2001-2004: 2)

Designing a game that would use all of these eight kinds of fun proposed by Hunicke et al. (2001-2004) would just create confusion, which would not be as interesting in a game. I would concentrate on only few of these kinds of fun, as the examples I proposed, and applying them well. Nevertheless, on Tinder, some of this aesthetics resonate strongly for some users, and less for others. But all of them have a preference, or their behaviours can reveal which of this aesthetics they value more.



For me, as a user, I would point out social interaction as the stronger feature. The data analyzed indicates that Tinder it is seen as a passing time tool, such as when people use mobile gaming applications as *Candy Crush and Tetris*, but with different goals. Tinder is for essence a dating application, as explained before. The gamification of the application happened with the use of design elements in its non-game context. So, inside the gamification principles, Tinder it is a game because of the use of gaming design on its design, expressed on its Mechanics, Dynamics and Aesthetics.

According to the data analyzed, people perceive Tinder as a game mainly because its gaming framework. The MDA framework it is a strategic connection to understand how Tinder works and it is in fact, a game. The Mechanics, Dynamics and Aesthetics of Tinder, make it a game-like application, mainly because game elements present on the app. Once I'm affirming, based on data analysis that Tinder it is a game, nothing more important than explain about the player's motivation. During the interviews and focus group, many contributors have answered that they play Tinder because it is "fun". Although playing Tinder, the user it is expecting a win-win situation. That it is what convinces the user to play until he/she gets tired or there are no more options (users) available on the settled location. Can take some time, but there will be a match. That is the user's goal, that can be understandable as the user completing the challenges, and, matching and developing a conversation with someone.

The most likely strategy of designing for gameful experiences is to use game design elements, and the most likely goal of using game design elements are gameful experiences. Deterding S, Dixon D, Khaled R, Nacke L. (2011:3)

The gamification of love. Among its billion users, more than a dating app, that is what Tinder is doing.

## VII CONCLUSION

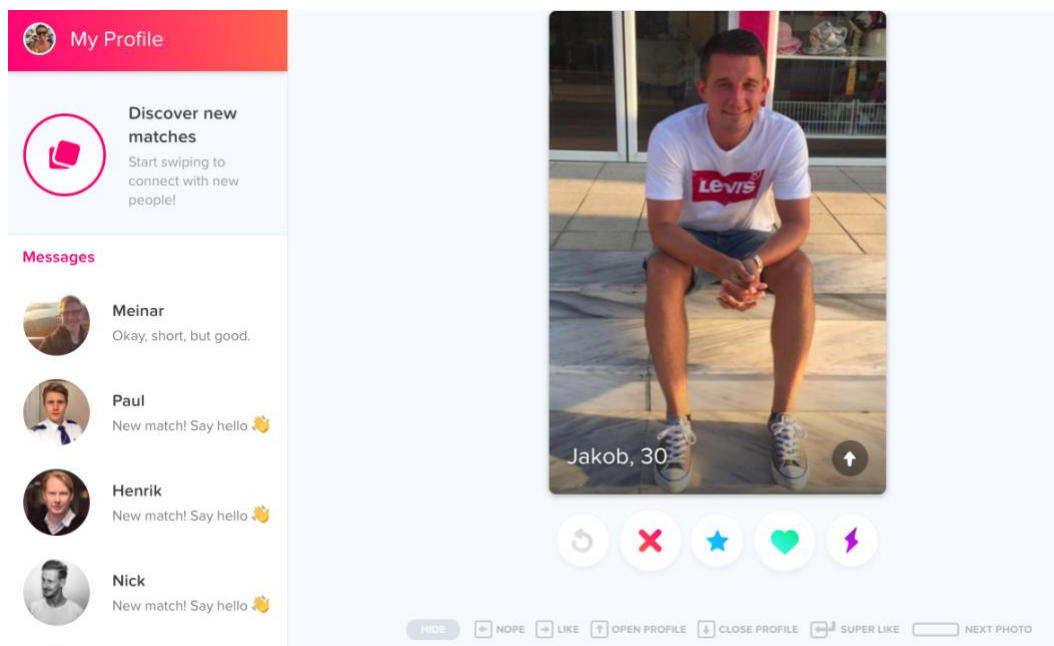
This study attempted to answer the following research question: Is it possible that users in Oslo think of Tinder as a game? In this section, the main findings identified from analysis and discussion are presented. I expect that this study helps researchers involved within Media, Psychology and Gaming studies, once Tinder can be related to all these areas.

The research process produced relevant results about if it possible that users think of Tinder as a game. The results provide insights to the research issue based on literature review, interview analysis and document analysis.

As explained in the Methodology chapter, my hope is that best practices identified in this study can be generalized to other contexts and arrangements. Nevertheless, due to the contextual uniqueness of the application, this might not be the case. Concerning the interview analysis, in qualitative research the reliability is more difficult to determine. In my opinion, the data obtained through semi-structured interviews and focus group is a good source for understanding the informants' opinions and perceptions of relevant concepts and topics; therefore, I regard the empirical data as valid.

This research gained more far-reaching with the fact that I could involve closely with the Tinder team in Los Angeles. Ideally, I wish I have had more time and that this study visit to Tinder's headquarters could have been more open, without not as many limitations as I had. Also, it is important to say that Tinder is releasing new features in a short period of time, what made me incapable of follow their paths, once I have signed a confidentially agreement and I could not write anything before any new release.

On an interview to Time Magazine (Stampler, L.: 2014, February 6), Tinder CEO, Sean Raid said: "Computers are going extinct, and I thought mobile is the future". But only 3 years after his statement, in 2017, Tinder has launched the called *Tinder Online*. Tinder is no longer just a mobile application. Users now can swipe from any device with Internet connection, for example laptops and desktops. I suggest for future researches, a broader focus on mobility and how *Tinder Online* will change the way of dating, since it is the only dating application present in more than one media (users need to have Internet connection): mobile, computer, TV.



**Image 25: Desktop layout of Tinder Online (October, 2017)**

The data of this research implies that users in Oslo, Norway, think that Tinder is a game, mostly based on its Mechanics, Dynamics and Aesthetics' design and gamification elements. As talked on section 2.4 Gamification and play; in this study gamification refers to game design elements in non-game contexts.

People associate gamification with games, but the gamification layer is anything where behaviour is reinforced by apparent benefits and rewards in a strategic, embedded and addictive design such as on Tinder. Tinder is a clear sample of how technology is not just changing how we communicate, but how people socialize, search and find services and even how people have sex. Gamification mechanics attract more users to Tinder. The *swipe* and the *match* actions convert Tinder into a competitive game. Users become players: they are in complete control, deciding when, where, how, and if they want to start the game. Players pursue to get as many matches as possible, sometimes swiping for many hours without really engaging a conversation. Tinder cannot be expected to provide users with romantic relationships. Tinder can be used for initiation, but not relied on for anything further. One must stop playing the game in order to win.

MDA framework allows a more convincing and involved user-experience that eventually motivate users to do particular actions. They are able to appeal to the basic human desires of wanting to achieve or being rewarded for our actions. When applied in the correct way, these components of gamification have the capability to push user engagement and involvement to new peaks. As the gaming industry develops, the definition of Mechanics, Dynamics and Aesthetics will continue to advance, yet they will always focus on the primary values of what motivates and drives our decision-making process, together with how we interact.

Still in respect to the design of mobile dating applications, more research questions related to MDA theory would recognize more gratifications that users receive from interacting with Tinder. By investigating the design of mobile applications, people can start to better understand how to use media services in a more conscientious way. The general agreement among the contributors was that online dating was a great way to meet people and to establish a bit of common connection, but they agreed that self-presentation helps them to create or inflate their self. Tinder turned out to be the place to influence the new computer-mediated-communication language in a real-world situation. The company is still discovering new ways, and the team is passionate about innovative ideas that can shape the future of Tinder.

Tinder has transformed the matchmaking process. While traditional dating sites require long periods of time in front of a computer, Tinder can be played in short spurts on the go. Based on this I can affirm that romance has become a second screen experience, giving space for the gamification of love.

## VIII REFERENCES

Alvin, Cooper & Sportolari (1997). *Romance in Cyberspace: Understanding Online Attraction*. *Journal of Sex Education and Therapy*, 22:1, 7-14.

A. M. (2014, November 3). *Game Mechanics in Gamification – Revisited*. Retrieved September 23, 2017, from <https://www.gamified.uk/2014/11/03/game-mechanics-gamification-revisited/>

Aretz, W., Demuth, I., Schmidt, K., & Vierlein, J. (2010). *Partner search in the digital age. Psychological characteristics of online-dating service users and its contribution to the explanation of different patterns of utilization*. *Journal of Business and Media Psychology*.

Baker, A. J. & Whitty, M. T. (2008). *Researching romance and sexuality online: Issues for new and current researchers*. In S. Holland & F. Attwood. *Remote relationships in a small world*. (pp. 34-49). New York: Peter Lang.

Batinic, B., Reips, U., & Bosnjak, M. (2002). *Online social sciences*. Seattle: Hogrefe & Huber.

Baxter, H. (2013, November). *Many matches but no spark*. *New Statesman*. Retrieved November 07, 2017, from <http://www.newstatesman.com/society/2013/11/many-matches-no-spark>

Baym, N. K. (2010). *Personal connections in the digital age*. Cambridge, UK: Polity.

Bertoni, S. (2014a). *Sean Rad & the Future of Tinder*. [Online Video] 20th October 2014. Available from: <http://www.forbes.com/video/3851455517001/>. [Accessed: 21st February 2015].

Bertoni, S. (2014b, November 4). *Exclusive: Sean Rad Out as Tinder CEO. Inside the crazy saga*. Retrieved October 06, 2016, from <http://www.forbes.com/sites/stevenbertoni/2014/11/04/exclusive-sean-rad-out-as-tinder-ceo-inside-the-crazy-saga/#780e503722fd>

Bilton, N. (2014, October 29). *Tinder, the Fast-Growing Dating App, Taps an Age-Old Truth*. Retrieved October 6, 2016 from [http://www.nytimes.com/2014/10/30/fashion/tinder-the-fast-growing-dating-app-taps-an-age-old-truth.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2014/10/30/fashion/tinder-the-fast-growing-dating-app-taps-an-age-old-truth.html?_r=0)

Birnholtz, J., Fitzpatrick, C., Handel, M., & Brubaker, J. R. (2014). *Identity, identification and identifiability*. Proceedings of the 16th International Conference on Human-computer Interaction with Mobile Devices & Services - MobileHCI '14.

Blumler, J. G., & Katz, E. (1974). *The Uses of mass communications: current perspectives on gratifications research*. Beverly Hills: Sage Publications.

Bowen, G. A. (2009). *Document analysis as a qualitative research method*. *Qualitative Research Journal*, 9(2), 27-40. doi:10.3316/QRJ0902027

Boyd, D., & Ellison, N. (2010). *Social network sites: Definition, history, and scholarship*. *IEEE Engineering Management Review IEEE Eng. Manag. Rev.*, 38(3), 16-31.

Brinkmann, S., & Kvale, S. (2015). *Interviews: Learning the craft of qualitative research interviewing*. Los Angeles, CA: Sage.

Brinkmann, S. (2013). *Qualitative interviewing*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

Bryman, A. (2016). *Social research methods*. Oxford university press.

Campell, J. D. (1990). *Self-esteem and clarity of self-concept*. *Social Psychology*, 59, 538-549.

Colao, J. (2013, April 8). *Not Just for Hook-ups: Tinder Looks to Conquer Business Networking*. Retrieved from <http://www.forbes.com/sites/jjcolao/2013/04/08/tinder-for-business-dating-applooks-to-conquer-other-matchmaking-verticals/>.

Cooper, A., & Sportolari, L. (1997). *Romance in cyberspace: Understanding online attraction*. *Journal of Sex Education and Therapy* 22:7-14

Crang, M., & Cook, I. (2007). *Doing ethnographies*. Sage: London.

Crook, J. (2015, March 12). *Hate It or Love It, Tinder's Right Swipe Limit Is Working*. Retrieved August 9, 2016, from <http://techcrunch.com/2015/03/12/hate-it-or-love-it-tindersright-swipe-limit-is-working/#GAWJNn:13go>.

D., Mireille, I., Glenda, and P., Annie. (2015). *From Paper to Pixels: Using Google Forms for Collaboration and Assessment*. Library Hi Tech News 32, no. 4.

David, A. (2013, August). *How to hook up on Tinder: Made man: Gentlemen welcome*. Retrieved November 07, 2017, from <http://www.mademan.com/how-to-hook-up-on-tinder/>

David, G., & Cambre, C. (2016). *Screened Intimacies: Tinder and the Swipe Logic*. Social Media Society, 2(2).

Derlega, V., Winstead, B., Wong, P., & Greenspan, M. (1987). *Self-disclosure and relationship development: An attributional analysis*. In M. E. Roloff & G. R. Miller (Eds.), *Interpersonal processes: New directions in communication research* (pp. 172-187). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage

Derk, I. K. (2016). *Swipe left to detain: a procedural comparison between tinder and papers, please*. Journal of games criticism. Retrieved March 21, 2017, from <http://gamescriticism.org/articles/derk-3-2>

Deterding, S. (2011). *Meaningful play: Getting «gamification» right*. Google Tech Talk. Retrieved from: <http://www.slideshare.net/dings/meaningful-play-getting-gamification-right>

Deterding, S., Dixon, D., Khaled, R., Nacke, L. (2011). *From game design elements to gamefulness: defining gamification*. In 15th international academic MindTrek conference: Envisioning future media environments.

Deterding, S., Sicart, M., Nacke, L., Ohara, K., & Dixon, D. (2011a). *Gamification. using game-design elements in non-gaming contexts*. Proceedings of the 2011 annual conference extended abstracts on Human factors in computing systems - CHI EA 11.

Deutsch, A. L. (2014). *Tinder to Start Swiping for Cash?* Retrieved September 11, 2016, from <http://www.investopedia.com/articles/personal-finance/121714/how-tinder-makes-money.asp>

Duguay, S. (2016). *Dressing up Cinderella: Interrogating authenticity claims on the mobile dating app Tinder*. *Information, Communication and Society*.

Duportail, J. (2017, September 26). *I asked Tinder for my data. It sent me 800 pages of my deepest, darkest secrets*. Retrieved November 10, 2017, from <https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2017/sep/26/tinder-personal-data-dating-app-messages-hacked-sold>

Ellison, N., Heino, R., & Gibbs, J. (2006). *Managing impressions online: Self-presentation processes in the online dating environment*. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, 11(2), 415–441.

Ellison, N. B., Hancock, J. T., & Toma, C. L. (2012). *Profile as promise: A framework for conceptualizing veracity in online dating self-presentations*. *New Media & Society*, 14(1), 45–62.

El-Rabbany, A. (2002). *Introduction to GPS: The Global Positioning System*. Boston, MA: Artech House.

Enli, Gunn (2015): *Mediated Authenticity: How the Media Construct Reality*. New York, Peter Lang.

Finkel, E. J., Eastwick, P. W., Karney, B. R., Reis, H. T., & Sprecher, S. (2012). *Online Dating: A Critical Analysis from the Perspective of Psychological Science*. *Psychological Science in the Public Interest*, 13(1), 3-66.

Gamification Wiki, Badgeville, *Game Mechanics*, Retrieved November 3, 2014, <https://badgeville.com/what-is-a-game-mechanic/>



Gelles, D. (2011, July 30). *Inside Match.com: It's all about the algorithm*. Retrieved October 18, 2017, from <http://www.slate.com/id/2300430/>

Goffman, E. (1959). *The presentation of self in everyday life*. New York: Doubleday.

Grigoriadis, V. (2014, October 27). *Inside Tinder's Hookup Factory*. Retrieved September 19, 2016, from <http://www.rollingstone.com/culture/features/inside-tinders-hookup-factory-20141027>

Gubrium, J. F., & Gubrium, J. F. (2012). *The Sage handbook of interview research: the complexity of the craft*. Thousand Oaks: SAGE.

Heath, A. (2015, October 26). *The App 100: The world's greatest apps*. Retrieved November 12, 2017, from <http://www.businessinsider.com/the-app-100-the-worlds-greatest-apps-2015-10?r=US&IR=T>

Heide, B. V., & Walther, J. B. (n.d.). *Computer-Mediated Communication*. Encyclopedia of Human Relationships.

Hjorth, L. (2011). *Games and Gaming*. New York.

Hjorth, L., & Richardson, I. (2014). *Gaming in social, locative, and mobile media*. New York.

Juul, J. (2013). *The art of failure*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press. [Kindle edition].

Kaplan, A. (2012.). *If you love something, let it go mobile: Mobile marketing and mobile social media 4x4*. Business Horizons, 129-139.

Kapp, K. M. (2012). *The gamification of learning and instruction: game-based methods and strategies for training and education*. San Francisco: Pfeiffer.

Kantrowitz, A. (2016, September 23). *Cracking the Tinder Code: Love in the age of algorithms*. Retrieved November 10, 2017, from [https://www.buzzfeed.com/alexkantrowitz/cracking-the-tinder-code-love-in-the-age-of-algorithms?utm\\_term=.epOMPXwad#.qj0a4zn3K](https://www.buzzfeed.com/alexkantrowitz/cracking-the-tinder-code-love-in-the-age-of-algorithms?utm_term=.epOMPXwad#.qj0a4zn3K)

Katz, E., M. Gurevitch, and H. Haas (1973). *On the use of mass media for important things*. *Amer. Soc. Rev.* 38: 164-181.

Kim, B. (2015). *Understanding gamification*. Chicago, IL: ALA TechSource.

Kim, D. (2016, June 21). *The New Generation of Millennial Matchmakers Wants to Help Your Tinder Game*. Retrieved March 28, 2017, from [https://www.vice.com/en\\_us/article/the-new-generation-of-millennial-matchmakers-want-to-help-your-tinder-game](https://www.vice.com/en_us/article/the-new-generation-of-millennial-matchmakers-want-to-help-your-tinder-game).

Kitzinger, J. (1995). *Qualitative Research: Introducing focus groups*. *Bmj*,311(7000), 299-302. doi:10.1136/bmj.311.7000.299

Kress, G. R., & Leeuwen, T. V. (1996). *Reading images: sociocultural aspects of language and education*. Geelong, Vic.: Deakin University.

Lawson, H. M. (2006). *Dynamics of Internet Dating*. *Social Science Computer Review*, 24(2), 189-208.

Lea, M., & Spears, R. (1995). *Love at first byte? Building personal relationships over computer networks*. In: Wood, J.T., Duck, S.W., (eds.) *Understudied relationships: Off the beaten track*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage, pp. 197–233.

Ling, R. S. (2004). *The mobile connection: The cell phone's impact on society*. San Francisco, CA: Morgan Kaufmann.

Marcus, S. (2016). *Swipe to the right: Assessing self-presentation in the context of mobile dating applications*. Paper presented at the annual conference of the International Communication Association (ICA), Fukuoka, Japan.

Margalit, L. (2014). *Tinder and Evolutionary Psychology*. Retrieved August 09, 2016, from <https://techcrunch.com/2014/09/27/tinder-and-evolutionary-psychology/>.

McCullough, M. (1998). *Abstracting craft: the practiced digital hand*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1998.

McGonigal, J. (2012). *Reality is broken: why games make us better and how they can change the world*. London: Vintage Books.

McQuail, D. (1983). *McQuail's mass communication theory*. Los Angeles: SAGE.

McQuail, D. & M. Gurevitch (1974). *Explaining audience behavior: three approaches considered*, in J. G. Blumler and E. Katz (eds.) *The Uses of Mass Communications: Current Perspectives on Gratifications Research*. Beverly Hills, CA and London: Sage.

McRae, S. (1996). *Coming apart at the seams: Sex, text and the virtual body*. In L. Cherny & E.R. Weise (Eds.), *Wired women: Gender and new realities in cyberspace* (pp. 242–263). Seattle, WA: Seal.

Motorola Inc. (n.d), Accessed in June 12<sup>th</sup>, 2016. Available at [http://www.motorola.com/us/consumers/about-motorola-us/About\\_Motorola-History-Timeline/About\\_Motorola-History-Timeline.html](http://www.motorola.com/us/consumers/about-motorola-us/About_Motorola-History-Timeline/About_Motorola-History-Timeline.html)

Mull, I. R., & Lee, S. E. (2014). "PIN" pointing the motivational dimensions behind Pinterest. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 33, 192-200.

Nicholson, S. (2012). *A User-Centered Theoretical Framework for Meaningful Gamification*. *Gamification in Education and Business*, 1-7. Retrieved November 1, 2017., from <http://www.quilageo.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/07/Framework-for-Meaningful-Gamifications.pdf>

Nutt, C. (2008, February 18). GDC: *Game Design Workshop: Mechanics, Dynamics, Aesthetics*. *Game Design Workshop*, 111-145. Retrieved December 09, 2016, from

[http://www.gamasutra.com/view/news/108415/GDC\\_Game\\_Design\\_Workshop\\_Mechanics\\_Dynamics\\_Aesthetics.php](http://www.gamasutra.com/view/news/108415/GDC_Game_Design_Workshop_Mechanics_Dynamics_Aesthetics.php)

O’Leary, Z. (2014). *The essential guide to doing your research project*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, Inc.

Oxland, K. (2004). *Gameplay and design*. London: Addison Wesley.

PBS Game/Show. (2014, December 23). *The game design of tinder & online dating*. [Video File]. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Shpx1O88f04>.

Priebatsch, S. (2010). *Welcome to the Decade of Games*. HBR Blog Network, Harvard Business November 07, 2017, from <https://hbr.org/2010/09/welcome-to-the-decade-of-games>

Prigg, M. (2015, April) *Swipe right for puppy pictures: Tinder teams up with Instagram to allow users to show off their photos on their profile*. Mail Online. Retrieved August 23, 2017, from <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/sciencetech/article-3040649/Swipe-right-puppy-pictures-Tinderteams-Instagram-allows-users-photos.html#ixzz3tvBBFqag>

Ranzini, G., & Lutz, C. (2016). *Love at first swipe? Explaining Tinder self-presentation and motives*. Mobile Media & Communication.

Rosenbloom, S. (2011, November 12). *Love, Lies and What They Learned*. Retrieved November 07, 2017, from <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/11/13/fashion/online-dating-as-scientific-research.html>

Salen, K., & Zimmerman, E. (2010). *Rules of Play - Game Design Fundamentals*. MIT Press.

Sales, N. (2015). *Tinder and the dawn of the “dating apocalypse.”* Retrieved November 07, 2017, from <https://www.vanityfair.com/culture/2015/08/tinder-hook-up-culture-end-of-dating>

Schrock, A. R. (2015). *Communicative Affordances of Mobile Media: Portability, Availability, Locatability, and Multimediality*. International Journal of Communication 9 (2015).

Silva, A. D., & Sutko, D. M. (2009). *Digital cityscapes: Merging digital and urban playspaces*. New York: Peter Lang.

Shao, G. (2009). *Understanding the appeal of user-generated media: A uses and gratification perspective*. *Internet Research*, 19(1), 7-25.

Smith, A. (2014, February 13). *5 facts about online dating*. Retrieved August 23, 2017, from <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2014/02/13/5-facts-about-online-dating/>.

Smith, S. J. (2001). *Doing Qualitative Research: From Interpretation to Action*. In *Qualitative Methodologies for Geographers: Issues and Debates*, edited by M. Limb and C. Dwyer. Arnold: London, pp. 23–41.

Smith, C. (2017, March 07). *45 Impressive tinder Statistics*. Retrieved October 13, 2017, from <http://expandedramblings.com/index.php/tinder-statistics/>

Stampler, L. (2014, February 6). *Inside Tinder: Meet the guys who turned dating into an addiction*. *Time*. Retrieved November 07, 2017, from <http://time.com/4837/tinder-meet-the-guys-who-turned-dating-into-anaddiction/>

Sundar, S. S., & Limperos, A. M. (2013). *Uses and grats 2.0: New gratifications for new media*. *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media*, 57(4), 504-525.

Sumter, S. R., Vandenbosch, L., & Ligtenberg, L. (2017). *Love me Tinder: Untangling emerging adults' motivations for using the dating application Tinder*. *Telematics and Informatics*, 34(1), 67-78.

Techcrunch (2014). *Tinder Wins Best New Startup of 2013. 10th February 2014*. Retrieved August 23, 2017, from <http://techcrunch.com/video/tinder-wins-best-new-startup-of-2013-crunchiesawards-2013/518118930/>.

The World Bank. (n.d). Accessed in September 23, 2017. Available at <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/IT.CEL.SETS.P2>

*Tinder - meet interesting people nearby.* (n.d.). Retrieved August 09, 2016, from <http://www.tinder.com/>.

Tinder (2016). *Launching Tinder Social – A New Way to Plan Your Night.* Retrieved September 11, 2016, from <http://blog.gotinder.com/launching-tinder-social-a-new-way-to-plan-your-night/>

Tinder Inc. (2017, November 03). *Tinder on the App Store.* Retrieved November 12, 2017, from <https://itunes.apple.com/no/app/tinder/id547702041?mt=8>

Tinder Online (2017). <https://tinder.com/app/login>

Turkle, S. (1995). *Life on the screen: Identity in the age of the Internet.* New York: Simon & Schuster.

Utz, S. (2000). *Social information processing in MUDs: The development of friendships in virtual worlds.* *Journal of Online Behavior*, 1 (1). Retrieved September 26, 2017, from [www.sonja-utz.de/publications.html](http://www.sonja-utz.de/publications.html)

Valkenburg, P.M., & Peter, J. (2007). *Who visits online dating sites? Exploring some characteristics of online daters.* *CyberPsychology & Behavior*, 10 (6), 849-825.

Ventrice, T. (2016, February 03). *Distinguishing Between Game, Social, and Reputation Mechanics.* Retrieved September 26, 2017, from <https://badgeville.com/distinguishing-between-game-social-and-reputation-mechanics/>

Vetere, F., Gibbs, M. R., Kjeldskov, J., Howard, S., Mueller, F., Pedell, S., Mecoles, K., Bunyan, M. (2005). *Mediating intimacy: Designing technologies to support strong-tie relations.* *Proceedings of the SIGCHI Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems, CHI 2005, USA* (pp. 471–480).

Zichermann, G., & Cunningham, C. (2011). *Gamification by design: Implementing game mechanics in web and mobile apps*. Sebastopol, CA: O'Reilly Media.

Walther, J. B. (1996). *Computer-mediated communication: Impersonal, interpersonal, and hyperpersonal interaction*. *Communication Research*, 23(1), 3–44.

Ward, J. (2016) *Swiping, Matching, Chatting: Self-Presentation and Self-Disclosure on Mobile Dating Apps*. *Human it* 13.2 (2016): 81–95.

Whitty, M.T., & Buchanan, T. (2009). *Looking for Love in so many Places: Characteristics of Online Daters and Speed Daters*. *Interpersona: An International Journal on Personal Relationships*, 3(2), 63-86.

Whitty, M. T. & Carr, A. N. (2006). *Cyberspace romance: The psychology of online relationships*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Whitty, M. T. (2003). *Cyber-Flirting: Playing at Love on the Internet*. *Theory & Psychology*, 13(3), 339-357.

Whitty, M T. (2004). *Shopping for Love on the Internet: Men and Women's experiences of using an Australian Internet dating site*. *Communication Research in the Public Interest: ICA*, New Orleans, USA, May 27-31, 2004

Whitty, M. T. (2007). *The art of selling one's self on an online dating site: The BAR Approach*. In M. T. Whitty, A. J. Baker, & J. A. Inman (Eds.), *Online matchmaking*. (pp. 57-69). Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan.

Whitty, M. T. (2009). *Internet dating*. In H. T. Reis & S. Sprecher (Eds.), *Encyclopedia of Human Relationships*. (Vol. 2, pp. 886-888). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Wood, M. (2015, February 04). *Led by Tinder, a Surge in Mobile Dating Apps*. Retrieved November 07, 2017, from <https://www.nytimes.com/2015/02/05/technology/personaltech/led-by-tinder-the-mobile-dating-game-surges.html>

Wortham, J. (2013, February 26). *Tinder, a dating app with a difference*. Retrieved March 21, 2017, [http://bits.blogs.nytimes.com/2013/02/26/tinder-a-dating-app-with-a-difference/?\\_r=0](http://bits.blogs.nytimes.com/2013/02/26/tinder-a-dating-app-with-a-difference/?_r=0)

*28% of Time Spent Online is Social Networking* (n.d.). Retrieved August 23, 2017, from <http://www.adweek.com/socialtimes/time-spent-online/613474>

(n.d.). *28% of Time Spent Online is Social Networking*. Retrieved August 23, 2017, from <http://www.adweek.com/socialtimes/time-spent-online/613474>



## **APPENDIX I**

### **INTERVIEW GUIDE**

Hi, my name is Polyanna Rocha and this interview is part of my master thesis named “Gamification of love: a case study of Tinder in Norway”, for the Department of Media at the University of Oslo.

Today is *month/year*, the time now it is.

It is okay for you if I record this interview? And I would like to reinforce that all your responses will be kept confidential, only used for research purposes. Also want to tell you that I will be taking some notes during this session.

Are there any questions about what I have just explained? Are you willing to participate in this interview?

So, let's start the interview.

#### **I- Informal:**

1. Can you please present yourself and talk a bit about you?
2. How many devices with Internet access do you have at home (please count also mobile devices, such as phone and tablets)? And work?

#### **II- About Social Connections**

1. How many portable devices with Internet connection do you have?
2. Are you on social networks? How and which social media do you use?
3. If you are on *Facebook*, how many friends do you have on? And real life?
4. Do you consider yourself shy?
5. How often do you go out with your friends?
6. Do you drink? If yes, would you call yourself a social drinker or do you often pass the limit?
7. Do you have a girlfriend/boyfriend? Where did you meet?
8. Are you dating someone? Where did you meet?

#### **III- About Tinder**

1. How did you start using Tinder? Why?
2. What is your motivation for using it?
3. How do you start a conversation on Tinder? Would you give me an example?

4. Which kind of information do you reveal on your profile?
5. Do you open the full profile when you swipe right? How do you do?
6. Did you connect your Instagram? Why?
7. What is the importance of the pictures on Tinder in your opinion?
8. Have you ever had Tinder Plus? Why?
9. How many dates have you ever had? Among that, how many did u ended up having a relationship or night-stand?
10. How did the relation proceed from online to offline?
11. Can you please describe how you face-to-face dates were typically agreed?
12. Can you compare online dating with other forms of dating in Norway, such as meet someone casually in a bar, for example?
13. In one phrase, how would you explain Tinder to someone who never heard about it?

Is there anything more you would like to add?

I will analyse the material and it is okay if I get back to you with any other question about what we have talked?

Time now it is ... and we are finalizing this interview.

Thank you for your time, [name of the interviewed].

## **APPENDIX II**

### **INFORMATION LETTER**

Hi! My name is Polyanna Rocha. I am a graduating student at the University of Oslo, working towards a Masters of Nordic Media.

I am contacting you after receive your e-mail. I do have a personal profile on Tinder that was created for this study, please understand that I am approaching you as a researcher and my correspondence with you is for research purposes only. I am conducting a study on the online dating environment Tinder. The purpose of this study - Mobile Social Media connections in the digital age: a case study of the use of Tinder in Oslo - is to explore the ways in which Norwegian people uses this application to get to know people and interact.

This project wants to contribute to the debate on how dating applications made people dependent on mobile technology to meet people out of the online world. "From a broader perspective, mobile social media allow for a tighter integration of virtual and real life" Gardner, H., & Davis, K. (2014:6).

I would like to find out what you have to say on this topic through a brief taped interview in person. Please be assured that your identity will be protected at all times: I won't use your profile, pictures or name. Neither paper or electronic data will include information that could identify you or any other individual. Electronic forms will be stored on a personal computer that is password protected and itself kept secure. When the study is concluded and its results have been reported, the data will be destroyed.

Your participation in the study is completely voluntary, and you may withdraw at any time; any information collected about you will be destroyed at that time. You are also free to simply not answer particular questions as your wish. You will also be given the opportunity to review and approve the information you have provided prior to inclusion in the results of this investigation.

If you have any questions or concerns, you may contact me via e-mail polyannr@media.uio.no. If you agree to be interviewed, please indicate your consent by signing (or checking the box) the following statement and forwarding it to me with your name and date typed at the bottom.

This is to acknowledge that I have read the letter of Polyanna Rocha, and I am aware of the nature of the study. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I may choose not to participate at any time. I understand that an in-person interview will be recorded. My signature below indicates that I consent to participate in this study.

Name:

Date:

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Polyanna Rocha

## APPENDIX III

### GOOGLE FORM

#### Do you use Tinder?

Do you use Tinder? If the answer it is yes, talk to me!

I am conducting a study on the online dating environment Tinder. The purpose of this study - Mobile Social Media connections in the digital age: a case study of the use of Tinder in Oslo - is to explore the ways in which Norwegian people uses this application to get to know people and interact via mobile social media.

This project wants to contribute to the debate on how dating applications made people dependent on mobile technology to meet people out of the online world. For that I'm looking for VOLUNTEERS to be interviewed.

All your responses will be kept confidential, only used for research purposes. Completely ANONYMOUS. Your identity will be protected at all times: I won't use your profile, pictures or name. Either paper or electronic data will not include information that could identify you or any other individual. Electronic forms will be stored on a personal computer that is password protected and encrypted.

All the questions are required.

Thanks a lot!  
Polyanna Rocha  
IMK- Department of Media at the University of Oslo.  
Curious? Feel free to contact me: [polyanna@student.media.uio.no](mailto:polyanna@student.media.uio.no)

\* Required

1. Email address \*

---



2. Are you willing to participate in this study? \*

Mark only one oval.

- YES  
 NO

#### Section I: Personal and Social Connections

3. Age \*

---

4. Gender \*

---

5. Sexual preference? \*

---

6. How many portable devices with Internet connection do you have? E.g laptop, tablet, phone... \*

---

7. Which social media do you use? \*

---

---

---

---

---

8. If you are on Facebook, how many friends do you have on? And real life? \*

---

9. Do you consider yourself shy or outgoing? \*

---

10. How often do you go out with your friends? \*

---

11. Do you drink? If yes, would you call yourself a social drinker or no? \*

---

---

---

---

---

12. Do you have a girlfriend/boyfriend? Where did you meet? \*

---

---

---

---

---

13. Are you dating someone? Where did you meet? \*

---

---

14. Do you play games? If yes, which kind and in which media? E.g: Playstation, Candy Crush... \*

---

---

---

---

---

## Section II: About Tinder

15. Could you please define what is Tinder for you in a phrase? \*

---

---

---

---

---

16. How did you start using Tinder? Why? \*

---

---

---

---

---

17. How often do you access your Tinder profile? \*

---

---

---

---

---

18. What is your motivation for using it? \*

---

---

---

---

---

19. How do you start a conversation on Tinder after the match? Would you give me an example? \*

---

---

20. Do you use gifs/ emojis? Do you think it is important? Why? \*

---

---

---

---

---

21. Which kind of information do you reveal on your profile? E.g: height? Work? \*

---

---

---

---

---

22. Do you open the full profile (click on the picture) before you swipe right (to check the full information, such as other pictures...)? How do you do? \*

---

---

---

---

---

23. Do you feel playing Tinder (hot or not)? Why? \*

---

---

---

---

---

24. Did you connect Instagram and Spotify? Why? \*

---

---

---

---

---

25. What is the importance of the pictures on Tinder in your opinion? \*

---

---



26. How many pictures do you display on your profile (total of 6)? \*

---

27. How do you choose the pictures you will post? What do you take in consideration? \*

---

---

---

---

---

28. What in a profile gets your attention while swiping? \*

---

---

---

---

---

29. Do you feel users honestly promote themselves on Tinder? \*

---

---

---

---

---

30. Have you ever had Tinder Plus? Why? \*

---

---

---

---

---

31. On Tinder dates, have your expectations been met? If not, why? \*

---

---

---

---

32. On Tinder dates, do you worry you are not meeting your match's expectations? \*

---

---

---

---

---

33. How many Tinder dates have you ever had? Among that, how many did you ended up having a relationship, more dates or one - night stand? \*

---

---

---

---

---

34. How often do you initiate romantic relationships in person compared to on Tinder? If more, why? OR If less, why? \*

---

---

---

---

---

35. Can you please describe how your face-to-face dates were typically agreed? \*

---

---

---

---

---

36. In your opinion, what are the pros and cons of using it? \*

---

---

---

---

---

37. Can you compare online dating with other forms of dating in Norway, such as meet someone casually in a bar, for example? Which one do you think it is better and why? \*

---

---

38. In one phrase, how would you explain Tinder to someone who NEVER heard about it? \*

---

---

---

---

---

A copy of your responses will be emailed to the address you provided

