

CMGT 590: Directed Research

Student Name

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Research Topics and Questions

An Empirical Study: Gender difference in Dating App Use and Performing Casual Relationship

Online dating is now a popular and socially acceptable way to meet romantic partners (Clemens, Atkin, & Krishnan, 2015). Benefits of online dating are significant; for example, providing the ability to connect with a wider network of potential dating partners (Finkel, Eastwick, Karney, Reis, & Sprecher, 2012), and the opportunity to find a partner who shares similar sexual orientations or religious affiliations (Clemens et al., 2015). According to McKenna, Green, and Gleason (2002) concluded three points when comparing online dating to traditional face-to-face approaches: 1) almost three quarters of romantic relationship that started online were reported as being closer and stronger; 2) intimacy developed at a faster rate; 3) the quality of the interactions online was more predictive of liking. Also, people who are rejection-sensitive are more likely to be drawn to online dating because they feel they can better present their “real” selves in an online environment compared to a more traditional dating environment (Blackhart *et al.*, 2014). Relative to traditional offline dating, online dating provides individuals greater opportunity to manipulate and craft their image using selective self-presentation choices (Hancock & Toma, 2009). Therefore, an online dating profile provides important information regarding not only a person’s physical appearance, but it also allows users to make inferences about that person’s overall trustworthiness (McGloin & Denes, 2013).

Other than focusing on studying the differences between traditional and online dating, the deception of dating app profile and other areas, researchers also look into gender difference when it comes to dating app perception and motive. As Chappetta and Barth (2016) found in their research, physical attractiveness is influential when male determine how interested they are in a woman's profile while female pays more attention to the social status showed in a man's profile. According to Hall, Park, and Song (2010), when dating online, men are more likely to strategically misrepresent their personal assets while women are more likely to misrepresent their relationship goals. The above research results all showed that male and female have a great difference when it comes to dating online and there might be more difference waiting to be discovered.

One of the most successful location-based online dating application, Tinder, has been growing continuously with 100 million downloads, and has a steady daily active user pool of 10 million (March, 2017). Like its competitors, the promoted motivation for Tinder use is casual sex and most of its users are looking for a casual relationship (Daneback, Mansson, & Ross, 2007). And the use dating app indeed associated with causal relationship and casual sex (Choi *et al.*, 2016). Opposite to serious relationship, Jonason (2013) states that the casual relationship often refers to one-night stands (relationship where you meet someone and you have sex that night and only that night), booty-call relationship (relationship that you have repeated sexual encounters with someone else), and friends-with-benefits (relationship that you have sex with the person but also do non-sexual things in a more social/public context).

Gender differences in relationships and dating app use also draw many researchers' attention. Sumter, Vandenbosch, and Ligtenberg (2017) developed a measure that specified six primary motivations to use Tinder, which includes casual sex, love, ease of communication, self-

worth validation, a thrill of excitement, and trendiness. The study has also reported gender differences in motivation to use Tinder, where male users showed a higher motivation for casual sex than female users. And more male respondents than female respondents indicate that they believe Tinder was to meet sexual partners (Carpenter, 2016). Galperin et al. (2013) also suggested that men regret casual sex less than women because men experience greater sexual gratification. It is also verified that the gender role incongruence is the greatest factor that determined interest in a profile (Chappetta & Barth, 2016). When it comes to online dating users' strategic misrepresentation, men and women both believe that men are more likely to lie about their financial assets, plans to marry and professions of love (O'Sullivan, 2008). However, how the perception difference of potential seriousness of a relationship, as defined by the expected length of the relationship between different gender influences online profile attraction still remains a mystery.

However, the research about the different motivations surrounding dating app use and the perception of casual relationship encouraged by the increasing use of dating app between male and female remain relatively blank. Also, very little study exists about apps' marketing strategies when targeting different genders as well as other factors that might induce differences when using apps. Therefore, in this study, these questions would be posed and answered: 1) What are the differences in the purpose and motive when using location-based dating app between male and female; 2) What types of relationships people seek when using dating app and what is the difference between male and female; 3) Will the perception and expectation of length of relationship influence the online profile attractiveness, and what male and female focus more when evaluating a dating app profile; 4) What is the impact of dating app induced casualness in relationship on building real-life intimacy? 5) Will the dating app brand proposition and

promotional material impact on users' relationship perceptions? 6) What is the difference in dating app advertisement when targeting difference genders?

Readings

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Study Plans

- In-person meetings would be held once every 4 weeks with the supervising faculty.
- One five-page report will be submitted by every meeting and a 12-page research report will be submitted by the last Thursday, 5:30 pm in the final week of classes.