



JÖNKÖPING UNIVERSITY
International Business School

How do you succeed on Tinder?

An exploratory study about young women's self-presentation and strategies online

BACHELOR THESIS WITHIN: *Business administration*

NUMBER OF CREDITS: *15 hp*

PROGRAMME OF STUDY: *Marketing management*

AUTHORS: *Alice Jörgensen Pesch
Cilla Palmroos*

TUTOR: *Brian McCauley*

JÖNKÖPING May 2020

Acknowledgements

The authors of this research would like to acknowledge and show gratitude to everyone who has contributed to the research process.

Firstly, we would like to thank our tutor Brian McCauley for his engagement and guidance throughout the research process. With his expertise and valuable advice, we gained useful insights and ideas for our topic.

Secondly, we want to acknowledge Anders Melander for providing us with the needed information and guidance for writing this thesis.

Lastly, we want to express our gratitude for all participants in the study that enabled us to gain knowledge on the subject and fulfil the purpose of the study.



Cilla Palmroos



Alice Jörgensen Pesch

May 18, 2020

Bachelor Thesis in Business Administration

Title:

Authors: Alice Jörgensen Pesch, Cilla Palmroos

Tutor: Brian McCauley

Date: 2020-05-18

Keywords: Self-presentation online, Tinder, online dating, true self

Abstract

Background: As the expanding digital tools of communications provide new ways for people to interact online, new ways of initiating relationships have emerged from this technological development. From traditional online dating sites to today's proximity dating applications that enable users to easily interact with other users nearby with the help of geolocation technology. This fast-paced movement allows dating applications to enter the market to assist people with the search for their soulmate. These dating applications such as Tinder allows people to manage their self-presentation as desired to pursue their goals online.

Problem: Previous literature about self-presentation and behaviour online has mainly focused on Facebook as the context. Because of its popularity among emerging adults today, this thesis has chosen to study Tinder as a context. Additionally, previous literature about Tinder has mainly focused on the motives behind using the app. However, the examination of self-presentation focusing solely on young women and how Tinder is utilized to reach one's goal is not thoroughly researched.

Purpose: The purpose of this study is to increase the knowledge of how young heterosexual women in Sweden use self-presentation and utilize digital social platforms to reach their goal. This research examines the context of the online dating application Tinder to study experiences and get insights into how the users utilize the app and different strategies to succeed. To fulfil the purpose of this research, the research team is going to thoroughly analyse the participants' experiences and opinions to further understand how self-presentation and strategies are implemented in a context as Tinder.

Method: This thesis has followed a qualitative approach where an interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) strategy is used. Ten semi-structured interviews have been conducted on young heterosexual women between 18-25 in Sweden utilizing the online dating application Tinder.

Results: The findings suggest that the participants use different strategies and have a varying perception of Tinder depending on how they want other users to perceive them and what their goals are. The discovered strategies are how the participants select pictures, what information they disclose in their profile, and how they interact with male users on the application. The development of the digital environment has impacted how users behave online, and findings suggest that social online platforms do not facilitate the expression of the true self online as previous literature has stated.

Table of Contents

1. Introduction	1
1. 2 Background	1
1.3 Problem discussion	2
1.4 Purpose.....	3
1.5 Research question	4
1.6 Explanation of Tinder	4
1.7 Definitions	5
2. Frame of reference	6
2.1 Online dating.....	6
2.2 Strategies online.....	7
2.3 True-self.....	7
2.4 Self-Presentation.....	8
2.5 Self-Disclosure.....	9
2.6 Marketing yourself online.....	10
2.7 Social influence.....	11
2.8 Proximity dating applications	12
2.9 Tinder.....	12
3. Methodology and method	13
3.1 Methodology	13
3.1.1 Research philosophy	13
3.1.2 Research approach	14
3.1.4 Research design	14
3.1.3 Research strategy	14
3.2 Method	15
3.2.1 Data collection	15
3.2.1.1 Secondary data.....	15
3.2.1.2 Primary data.....	16
3.2.1.3 Sampling approach	17
3.2.1.4 Semi-structured interviews	18
3.2.1.5 Interview questions	19
3.2.2 Data analysis	19
3.3 Ethics	22
3.3.1 Anonymity and Confidentiality	22
3.3.2 Credibility	23
4. Empirical findings	23
4.1 Reason to download the app	23
4.2 Perception of Tinder	24
4.3.1 Influence on behavior	25
4.3.2 Influence on pictures/ profile.....	27
4.4 True- self.....	27
4.5 Self- Disclosure.....	29
4.6 Marketing yourself on Tinder.....	31
4.7 Need of affirmation.....	34
5. Analysis	35
5.1 True-self.....	35

5.2 Self-disclosure	36
5.3 Marketing yourself on Tinder	37
6. Conclusion.....	41
7. Discussion.....	42
7.1 Contributions	42
7.2 Limitations	43
7.3 Future research.....	43
9. Appendix	56
9.1 Appendix 1 Interview Consent form	56

1. Introduction

This section starts by providing the reader with a background about the scope of the study, followed by an introduction about the context Tinder. This followed by a discussion of problem and purpose for the research question. Lastly, the delimitations are explained, and a list of definitions is provided.

1.2 Background

The emergence of social networking sites has offered a space which enables individuals to experiment with and express their own identities (Lutz & Ranzini, 2017). The development of mediated communication and the existing digital technology has changed how people meet, how they interact with their social networks and portrait themselves (Kowalski, Giumetti, Schroeder & Lattanner, 2014; Subrahmanyam & Smahel, 2010). This era of technology where numerous of different social networking platforms are available has come to challenge the traditional self-presentation strategies and behaviours for individuals (Nadkarni & Hofmann, 2012). In today's digital era, people are expected to construct and maintain their own distinctive personal identities. Individuals constantly present themselves in different roles online, since the private and professional identities converge (Ramarajan, 2014; Ramarajan & Reid, 2013). Individuals utilize strategies that influence the affection and respect they receive from other people when deciding how to present themselves online (Ollier-Malaterre, Rothbard & Berg, 2013).

People have always been concerned with their self-presentation and image and are always striving to present themselves in the most attractive way to potential partners whether they are looking for a casual hook-up, a spouse, or a passionate love affair (Goffman 1978). New mediated opportunities to connect with people have emerged from traditional newspaper advertisements to online dating websites and dating platforms, where Tinder is one of the most popular offerings amongst matchmaking applications (Ward, 2017). The increased control of one's self-presentation is a frequently cited benefit of computer-mediated communication (Walther, 2007), which specifically applies to online dating where the first step is to create an online profile. Mobile dating apps enhance the users' spontaneity and enable a frequent use because of its mobility since people only need to have an internet connection to use the application (Chan, 2017; Ranzini & Lutz, 2017).

Creating your online dating profile can also be seen as a method of marketing yourself to potential partners. Heino, Ellison, and Gibbs (2010) found in their study about online dating that most of their participants compared online dating with economic transactions using metaphors within purchasing and marketing. In a digital context, as in reality, the managing of one's self-presentation starts prior to a face-to-face encounter or even before any interactive communication. The impression management in the context of Tinder starts when the user selects his or her profile picture (Ward, 2017).

All societies have written and unwritten rules that indicate the general morality (Herlitz, 2003). Swedish people resolve conflicts either by compromising or long discussions, indicating a fear of conflicts (Geert-hofstede, 2020). Arnstberg (1989) and Ebenhard (2007) also state that conflict avoidance is a cultural paradigm in Swedish society. The word "lagom" which refers to not too much, not too little, is something that characterizes Swedish culture and mentality (Mahmood, 2012). Geert-hofstede (2020) has also stated that the Swedish culture is built around the concept "lagom", which is enforced in society by "Law of Jante". It is a fictional law that makes sure everyone has enough but nobody goes without and is implemented in Scandinavia to keep everyone in order. In Swedish society, "Law of Jante" counsels people not to brag or perceive themselves as better than anyone else (Geert-hofstede, 2020).

1.3 Problem discussion

Reviewing the literature it becomes apparent that previous research on self-presentation online has been highly focused on Facebook (Bareket-Bojmel, Moran & Shahar, 2016; Nguyen, McDonald, Nguyen & McCauley, 2020; Oberst, Renau, Chamarro & Carbonell, 2016; Tosun, 2012). Facebook use among young adults in Sweden has decreased during recent years. From 2017 to 2019 the daily Facebook use of Swedes between 16 to 25 years decreased from 76% to 61% (Internetstiftelsen, 2019). Therefore, the existing research about self-presentation and behavioural patterns in the context of Facebook is not as relevant. Tinder is, as mentioned before, commonly used among emerging adults today and was therefore chosen as a suitable context.

Previous research has via the uses and gratification theory examined the motives for using Tinder and the differences in these between sociological and demographic characteristics (Lutz & Ranzini, 2017; Timmermans & De Caluwé, 2017; Ward, 2017). However, how people express themselves and utilize Tinder via self-presentation and marketing themselves in order to reach their goals with the app, has not been examined in-depth to date. Ward (2017), studied how

individuals construct their profiles and wish others to perceive them on Tinder. However, studies focusing extensively on heterosexual women in the context of Tinder was not found.

The focus of this thesis is to investigate the self-presentation techniques and computer-mediated communication strategies women use online in a particular context. The chosen context is Tinder since it is the most used online dating platform in Sweden (Keldsen, 2018) and there was a significant gap in the literature about emerging adults' internet dating. Whitty (2008) argues that researchers should not try to develop one single theory of how individuals present themselves on the internet but rather analyze the behaviour in different spaces online. Additionally, Dubson (2015) and Wei (2016) state that young women's online behaviour should be researched by gaining knowledge about their lives and experiences in certain contexts, rather than measuring their media usage against pre-existing theoretical criteria.

Many authors have suggested future research within self-presentation on online platforms. Uski and Lampinen (2016) recognized through their study that there is a need for studies on how social norms affect the process of self-presentation on social networking sites. When it comes to research about online dating sites, Hance, Blackhart, and Dew (2018) stated that online dating sites could increase self-disclosure and admits the need for further examination of the concept. This research has taken these suggestions into account as previous research has identified a need for extended knowledge.

1.4 Purpose

The purpose of this study is to investigate how young women between the ages of 18-25 in Sweden use self-presentation and utilize digital social platforms, in the context of Tinder. This research aims to examine strategies within self-presentation, behaviour, online interaction and expression of the true self. To fulfil the purpose of this research, the experiences and opinions about the individuals' consumption of digital platforms are going to be thoroughly analysed, with the aspiration to gain deeper insight into how different strategies are used.

The interest behind our choice of study stems from the fact that we have grown up in a society heavily influenced by the digital world which has such an important impact on our lives, and that

a majority of what we do and how we interact today is determined by a simple “click” on a smartphone. By living in this technological era, we have been exposed to the realm of numerous available online platforms. The fact that we have been able to follow this novel and emerging context of interacting in a digital environment and the development of new dating strategies amongst our friends and people around us fascinate us and are, therefore, our main reasons for this chosen subject.

1.5 Research question

RQ: *“How young women in Sweden experience Tinder and utilize different strategies on the app to pursue their goal through self-presentation?”*

1.6 Explanation of Tinder

Tinder is a free mobile application launched in 2012. It is available in 190 countries and more than 40 different languages. According to the company, more than 50% of Tinder users are between the ages of 18 to 25 (Tinder Newsroom, 2020). In 2018 27% of internet users between ages 16-25 in Sweden were using Tinder. In 2017 27% of men between ages 16-25 were using Tinder in Sweden and 21% of women in the same age category (Svenskarna och internet, 2019).

According to Help.tinder.com (2020), to set up a profile the user needs to have a Facebook or Google account to connect with the app. From the Facebook account, Tinder uses the name, age, and occupation of the individual. The user can write a short bio about themselves and add up to 9 pictures. The user then chooses gender, sexual orientation, age-range and a distance for how near they want to find other people. On your profile, you can include a favourite song or artist or connect your Instagram. When Instagram is connected, other users can see the most recent pictures from your Instagram account. The app finds your location and shows other users within the chosen distance. The feed is designed like a deck of cards with pictures where the user can swipe left or right. If you swipe the picture to the right, it means that you like the other person, or if you swipe left it means that you are not interested. The user can also click on the photo on the deck to see the whole profile with additional pictures and information the other user has included. When two persons like each other a match is made, and they can start a chat with each other. There is also a “Super Like” function that you use by swiping upwards. The super like is shown immediately for the person you liked, so they know you have shown interest.

Tinder is available for free, however, there are two different upgraded versions that the company charges of. The first one is Tinder Plus, which allows the user to use a Passport and Rewind feature. The passport enables you to choose your location anywhere around the world. With the rewind feature, you can give another user a second chance if you have already swiped left, that indicates that you are not interested. With Tinder Plus you will also receive additional Super Likes to use and a “Boost” every month, which makes you one of the top profiles in your area for 30 minutes. The second upgrade is Tinder Gold, which gives you access to the same features as Tinder Plus, but also the possibility to see everyone who has given you a “like” before you decide if you want to swipe left or right. During COVID –19 the passport feature is available for all users of the app (Help.tinder.com, 2020).

1.7 Definitions

- **App:** App is the abbreviation for application, which is used in this paper for the mobile application Tinder. Application refers to a program resident on a smartphone or tablet computer that performs varying useful functions (Ince, 2013).
- **Self-presentation:** Self-presentation refers to how individuals attempt to control how others perceive them by creating the desired impression (Goffman, 1978).
- **True-self:** The true self is the actual self, one’s existing characteristics, but those characteristics are not completely expressed in one’s social life, like potential self (Rogers, 1951).
- **Strategy:** A strategy is a consciously intended course of action to manage a situation, also called a plan (Mintzberg, 1987).
- **Emerging adulthood:** This thesis is based on a study conducted on emerging adults, defined by Arnett (2000) as people between 18-25. This age is when the dependency of childhood and adolescence is left but the normative responsibilities of adulthood have not appeared yet (Arnett, 2000).

- **Online dating:** Online dating is the process where two strangers get introduced to each other via the internet, looking for a future relationship (Ince, 2019).

2. Frame of reference

This section presents existing literature on self-presentation and online dating, providing the reader with a better understanding of the topic, by introducing theories about the true self, impression management, self-disclosure, and social influence.

2.1 Online dating

Previous research on online dating sites has focused mainly on the reasons for using them. Qualitative studies on motives for using online dating sites has shown that the use is often driven from wanting to find a soul mate, finding sexual partners, for amusement (Couch & Liamputtong, 2008), comfort after a life crisis, for excitement (Lawson & Leck, 2006), adventure and finding romance (Wang & Chang, 2010).

Research has stated that users are highly motivated to control the impression they present in the context of mediated dating environments (Ellison, Hancock & Toma 2012; Kramer & Winter, 2008; Toma, Hancock & Ellison, 2008; Zytka, Jones & Grandhi, 2014). Both Heino, Ellison, and Gibbs (2010) and Whitty (2008) identified that creating an online dating profile can be seen as a method of marketing yourself to potential partners. Participants in their studies also used metaphors within purchasing and marketing during the interviews.

Online dating is for many an efficient way of finding a potential partner because of the possibility of being exposed to much more individuals than in one's day to day life (Heino et al., 2010). The increased exposure might, however, lead to discarding more people while filtering options in a short time on small details (Heino et al., 2010). According to Ramirez, Sumner, Fleuriet, and Cole (2015), the goal for most online daters is to eventually establish a successful offline romantic relationship, despite the potential dishonesty and misrepresentation. Since they predict a face-to-face interaction, the daters realize that their image online should be positive and attractive in order to interest a potential future encounter with someone, but as well realistic to build and maintain an offline relationship (Toma & Hancock, 2011).

2.2 Strategies online

Mintzberg (1978) defined a strategy as a course of action which is consciously intended to manage a situation, also referred to as a plan. Strategies used for self-presentation online refers to the act of implementing a set of strategies to achieve the desired impression, which for example could involve deceptive self- enhancement and the expression of desired attributes (Toma & Hancock, 2010). Within the context of Tinder, any conscious act related to constructing the profile, such as, selecting pictures or writing a biography account as strategies.

2.3 True-self

The concept of true self comes originally from Rogers (1951). He states that the true self is the actual self, one's existing characteristics, but those characteristics are not completely expressed in one's social life, like potential self. Rogers (1951) also uses "real you" as a synonym for the true self. Bargh, McKenna, and Fitzsimons (2002) introduced true self on the net, investigating how the true self can be expressed through online communication. They found that the possibility of anonymity and the reduced risks of social sanction online provided individuals with a better opportunity for self-expression. This applies especially when the aspects of yourself discord with social norms and expectations (Bargh, et al., 2002; Tosun 2012). People who know us have placed expectations and constraint on how we act, which decreases on the internet where the audience is unknown (Bargh, et al., 2002). Research conducted by McKenna, Green and Gleason (2002), showed that individuals who feel they can express their true self better online can also establish more meaningful relationships through computer-mediated communication. Moreover, Manago, Graham, Greenfield, and Salimkhan (2008), and Smahel and Subrahmanyam (2007) argue that the possibility of editing a message online leads to more purposeful communication. People who are socially skilled in face-to-face communication also show enhanced competence to utilize online platforms to achieve personal goals (Desjarlais & Willoughby, 2010; Kraut, Kiesler, Boneva, Cummings, Helgeson & Crawford, 2002).

Interacting online, in whatever online context it means, provide us with opportunities for managing the ideal self (Ward, 2017). People also have a need for others to see them as they see

themselves. Swarm (1990) revealed that the need for acquaintances to have the same perception of you that you hold yourself is stronger than the need for them to have a positive opinion of you.

2.4 Self-Presentation

Previous research on self-presentation online has been highly focused on Facebook and traditional online dating sites (Bareket-Bojmel, Moran & Shahar, 2016; Oberst et al., 2016; Tosun, 2012; Whitty, 2008). The social image and the strategic management of one's self-presentation is something that always has concerned people (Goffman, 1978), and today's technological era with the increased use of social networking sites has heavily influenced the efforts of strategic self-presentation and interactions (Ellison, Heino & Gibbs, 2006; Gibbs, Ellison & Heino, 2006; Gibbs, Ellison & Lai, 2011; Walther, 1996; Whitty, 2008). Previous research has stated that users within the context of mediated dating environments are highly motivated to control the impression they construct (Ellison et al., 2012; Koestner & Wheeler, 1988; Kramer & Winter, 2008; Toma et al., 2008; Zytka et al., 2014). As a result of this high motivation, people sometimes attempt to idealize themselves when engaged in self-presentation online. Gender differences have had a significant meaning in many of the previous researches on these online platforms. Both men and women have deceptive information on their online profiles, women more often lie about their weight and men about their height and their income levels (Feingold, 1990; Gonzales & Meyers, 1993; Hall, Park, Song & Cody, 2010; Harrison & Saeed, 1977; Toma, et al., 2008; Toma & Hancock, 2010). Oberst et. al., (2016) also discovered that women often strive to portray themselves on Facebook more feminine and towards gender stereotypes than men.

Depending on how people desire to present themselves online, they utilize strategies and make decisions that impact the extent of approval and respect they receive from other individuals (Bareket-Bojmel et al., 2016). Individuals often strive to present themselves in line with cultural norms to meet societal expectations (Zhao, Grasmuck & Martin, 2008). Diversity amongst the audience is a factor that impacts self-presentation online, as people today have increasingly diverse social networks comprised of close friends, colleagues, family members, and sometimes strangers (Hampton, Goulet, Rainie & Purcell, 2011). This can challenge effective self-presentation as different social networks may have different perceptions and expectations about the person's true self.

2.5 Self-Disclosure

Self-disclosure has been examined as “the process of making self-known to others” (Jourard & Lasakow, 1958, p. 91) and stems from the study of verbal communication. This includes all types of messages or information about the self that a person can exchange with another individual, including opinions, attitudes, descriptive, affective, and evaluative information (Cozby, 1973; Wheelless & Grotz, 1976). This shared information may occur between pairs of people, inside a group, or between a person and an organization (Joinson & Paine, 2009). Self-disclosure online may involve various disclosure activities such as displaying images, presenting personal information, posting status updates, or sharing personal experiences and preferences (Cheung, Lee & Chan, 2015). In the context of Tinder, this shared information could include name, age, pictures presenting yourself, a biography containing information, and even music preferences as a so-called attached anthem (Help.tinder.com, 2020). A key component when developing a relationship is self-disclosure since it establishes closeness (Derlega, Winstead, Wong & Greenspan, 1987). Research by Gibbs et al. (2006) found that individuals with long-term goals of developing face-to-face relationships are likely to engage in a more extensive self-disclosure, like being more honest, and express more personal information. Furthermore, these individuals also tend to make disclosures with more effort and intention towards other users online. This research further states that online self-disclosure varies from user to user depending on what relational goal they have.

Physical attraction is a key factor for self-disclosure, where people are more likely to reveal more to people they are attracted to (Brundage, Derlega & Cash, 1976). Tinder is built on the idea of two people’s mutual attraction: two people need to swipe right on each other indicating their interest towards the other person in order to start a conversation (Ward, 2017). In terms of online platforms, the decision of how an individual discloses him or herself is shaped by the expectations and norms of each site, and each user’s desire to be perceived as a unique individual, where the aspiration to stand out conflicts the need to blend in (Ellison et al., 2006). Because of this, many online-dating users feel pressured to disclose information, both to comply with social norms and their wish to develop a romantic relationship (Gibbs et al., 2011). Users may be motivated to engage in self-disclosure that is honest and open and not deceptive if the individual desire to establish a romantic relationship, and wish to be fully understood by his or her interaction partner (Ellison et al., 2006). For an individual to reveal one’s true self, he or she must disclose aspects of the true self to the interacting partner online (Hance et al., 2018). Previous research found that individuals who succeed with expressing their true self online are more likely to establish intimate

relationships online which later on become face-to-face relationships (Mckenna et al., 2002). Greater anonymity, a room for intimacy and strong emotional bonds are a few qualities that mediated communication offer and these advantages may enable users to get through the usual obstacles or barriers that in traditional face-to-face interaction may hinder a potential relationship from succeeding (Mckenna et al., 2002).

2.6 Marketing yourself online

The process of finding a romantic partner online can resemble the process of marketing a product or service. “Marketing is the activity, set of institutions, and processes for creating, communicating, delivering, and exchanging offerings that have value” (American Marketing Association, 2017, para. 2). Heino et al. (2010) conducted research investigating the market metaphor with online dating. The study showed that people using online dating tend to go through the same steps in decision making, as when shopping. The first step before a transaction is the assessment of the goods under consideration, similarly, the first step of evaluating the potential partner online is the assessment of the person (Heino et al., 2010). Economic metaphors generally indicate efficiency and competition (Napoli, 1999). Tinder supports the market metaphor, since the big number of users and the instant affirmation from matches, enables the individual to evaluate their own perceived desirability easier than in face-to-face interaction (Heino et al., 2010). If the perceived value is too low the user of the online dating site might change their self-presentation, expecting to get better results (Heino et al., 2010).

Creating a marketing strategy includes selecting and describing a target market and developing a strategy that will produce mutually satisfying exchanges (Lamb, Hair & McDaniel, 2015). Like products are marketed to a specific target group, people on online dating sites want to be appealing to a person with characteristics they are looking for in a partner (Heino et al., 2010). Thus, constructing a profile you think would attract the kind of individuals you wish to meet.

A crucial factor in creating a good relationship is a positive first impression (Fiske & Taylor, 1991). Individuals often experience pressure to present themselves as attractive and interesting when forming relationships (Hirschman, 1987). In the online dating environment, this includes forming a profile to be the most desirable version of yourself. The technical possibilities in online dating might make the need for a positive first impression even more important (Heino et al.,

2010). In the context of Tinder, the first impression determines if you get a “like”, i.e someone swipes right, which might lead to not getting a second chance.

Self-presentation online, specifically in online dating allows the individual to be more selective and highlight the most positive attributes (Ellison, et al., 2006; Gibbs, et al., 2006; Gibbs, et al., 2011; Walther, 1996; Whitty, 2008). McGloin and Denes (2018) argue that physical attractiveness is the most important determinant of dating success on an online platform. This becomes particularly evident on dating apps, because of the visual dominance (Chan, 2017), which enables the users to choose between profiles based on pictures (Ward, 2017). In the study by Heino et al. (2010), they found that the profile was perceived as a way of marketing yourself strategically by highlighting only the attractive attributes of oneself. As a result, presenting an ideal version of yourself (Ellison et al., 2006). The self-presentation on Tinder can be seen as a process of marketing yourself, with a goal to be desirable and get a match. Consumers with knowledge, tend to approach marketing campaigns with scepticism. This can also be seen in the online dating environment where the individuals are aware of the possibility of exaggerations in profiles and therefore avoids people with diffuse photos or profiles (Heino et al., 2010). An example of this is a study by McGloin and Denes (2018) that showed that men tend to have less trust towards exceptionally beautiful women on online dating platforms.

2.7 Social influence

Social influence refers to a common feature of everyday life where individuals change their behaviour, thoughts, and physical state in order to meet demands within their social environment (Joinson, McKenna & Postmes, 2009). The degree of popularity of an online platform depends on the number of people that use it and the level of interactions between other users within the network (Cheung et al., 2015). Social influence is a critical factor that determines individuals' behaviour on online platforms (Cheung, Chiu & Lee, 2011; Li, 2011; Zhou, 2011). Lefebvre (2018) has previously discovered that people's main reason for utilizing Tinder is because their peers, friends and people within a certain desired social circle use it. Users of social online platforms tend to adapt their behaviours to correspond with their friends (Cialdini & Goldstein, 2004). Empirical findings presented by Lewis, Kaufman, and Christakis (2008) show that users with friends who have a private profile are more likely to adopt a private profile as well. In the context of Tinder, this could mean that the user adopts a profile containing only the required information (name, age) and a few pictures. Cheung et al. (2015) expect that users are more prone

to expose personal data in a larger extension on social online platforms when they desire to comply with their peers' expectations.

2.8 Proximity dating applications

Proximity Dating Applications are popular today and refer to a recent trend within online dating (Timmermans & De Caluwé, 2017). By using geolocation technology, this kind of application is designed to set up a detailed radius and to enable users to find potential partners near their current location. Instead of just knowing whether or not another user is online, which instant messaging software often do, proximity dating applications show the user potential partners located close to them (Sutko & De Souza e Silva, 2011). These dating apps are especially popular among emerging adults (Smith & Anderson, 2016). Dating apps based on GPS location technology are strengthening the connection between online and meeting in real life, by giving the users an incentive to actually meet (Cohen, 2015; Gibbs et al., 2011). Proximity dating applications enable individuals to find potential partners beyond physical constraints, giving more options and increasing accessibility (Regan, 2016). Previous research has given proximity dating attention recently, however, this research has had a limited focus or an exceedingly broad definition of proximity dating where it has been perceived as a part of traditional online dating (Blackwell, Birnholtz & Abbot, 2015; Finkel, Eastwick, Karney, Reis & Sprecher, 2012). Timmermans and De Caluwé (2017) state that researchers do not seem to recognize the distinct difference between traditional online dating sites and proximity dating applications.

2.9 Tinder

Advancements in communication technology have enabled people from all around the world to connect, using their smartphones (Goodman-Deane, Mieczakowski, Johnson, Goldhaber & Clarkson, 2016). Before the invention of the internet people were dependent on finding a partner from their close surroundings (Silva, Koch, Rickers, Kreuzer & Topolinski, 2019). The increasing use of smartphones and the possibility of satellite geolocation brought forth the mobile dating app evolution and made relationship initiation more effortless (Lefebvre, 2018).

Research on Tinder has previously highlighted and examined the motivations behind the use of the dating app amongst emerging adults. Different factors of motivation to use Tinder are love, casual sex, ease of communication, and thrill of excitement (Lutz & Ranzini, 2017). In a study by Ward (2017) the participants explained that their reasons for downloading the app were to recover from a breakup, for an ego boost or as entertainment. The findings conclude that the Tinder application is used for a greater cause than just casual hookups without strings attached, namely

for people to find love. The main initial reason for adopting Tinder has been identified as due to the influence of social circles (Lefebvre, 2018) yet Ward (2017) found that motivations changed over time to hope for finding a partner. Moreover, the same study uncovered that there is still a stigma of online dating and that using Tinder “just for fun” is more acceptable. Lutz and Ranzini (2017) found that demographic characteristics influence the different motivations for utilizing the app and that gender differences had a significant meaning.

Traditional online dating websites often ask the users’ weight and education level (Lin & Lundquist, 2013; Skopek, Schulz & Blossfeld, 2011), while Tinder profiles often only include pictures and a short text (Ward, 2017) indicating that the physical attractiveness of a person might be the biggest determinant of interest. In a study conducted by Timmermans and Decaluwé (2017) they discovered that several participants perceived a match as an indication of their attractiveness and called Tinder an “ego-booster” or “self-confidence booster”. Lefebvre (2018) discovered that not receiving responses or obtaining matches was one of the biggest reasons people deleted the mobile dating app Tinder. Silva et al. (2019), found that Tinder users usually are perceived with lower trustworthiness than individuals on other dating platforms.

3. Methodology and method

The following section presents the methodology and method applied throughout this study. The methodology includes the chosen approach and design, followed by the method concerning the execution of the research including data collection, sampling, and ethics of the study.

3.1 Methodology

3.1.1 Research philosophy

The two main philosophies of the methodology are positivism and interpretivism (Collis & Hussey, 2014). Within the positivist paradigm, the assumption is that reality is independent and measurable, and therefore often used in quantitative research (Healy & Perry, 2000). Interpretive philosophy is used to “make sense of the subjective and socially constructed meanings expressed

about the phenomenon being studied” (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2016, p. 168). Therefore, an interpretive approach was appropriate for this study, where the goal was to create new and deeper understandings of the social worlds and contexts. The authors of this paper aim to provide an understanding of how young women use self-presentation and utilize digital social platforms through qualitative research. The research was conducted in circumstances where the experiences included interactions with others and they were unique and depending on the context.

3.1.2 Research approach

For the approach of a research study, an inductive, deductive or abductive approach can be used. When using a deductive approach, a hypothesis or hypotheses are developed from the existing literature and then tested through the data collection. Whereas induction is a more flexible approach where the conceptual framework is derived from the results of the data analysis (Saunders et al., 2016). In line with the interpretive philosophy, the social phenomenon is examined and therefore an inductive exploratory approach is applied. The purpose of the interviews in an exploratory study is to explore a phenomenon and get a deeper understanding of the subject studied (Saunders et al., 2016). The authors aim through qualitative in-depth interviews to construct a conceptual framework on how young women's self-presentation and techniques are implemented in the context of Tinder.

3.1.4 Research design

In this thesis, a qualitative research design was chosen in order to understand how young women use self-presentation and strategies online by looking into their experiences. This way of examining the topic is in line with a qualitative research approach as it does not use a numerical way of visualizing findings (Krauss, 2005; Lin, 1998). It further means that the used approach in this research is contrasting a quantitative research approach since quantitative is not appropriate when developing an in-depth understanding of a phenomenon and its underlying reason (Collis & Hussey, 2014; Krauss, 2005).

3.1.3 Research strategy

Interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) is used in qualitative research to understand the phenomena researched from a first-person perspective. It highlights the importance to grasp the experiences of the individuals within the subject as a whole (Eatough & Smith, 2008). IPA has previously been used by authors to examine personal narratives and experiences (Handley & Hutchinson, 2013; Howe-Walsh & Turnbull, 2016; Uski & Lampinen, 2016).

Given the arguments by Dobson (2015) and Wei (2016) that instead of assessing young women's media usage with already established theoretical principles, researchers should approach the digital culture of young women with a perspective of gaining knowledge about their lives and experiences in certain contexts. The participants of such a study lead the researcher through meaningful experiences, life-stories, and events that are significant for them considering the chosen topic of the research (Eatough & Smith, 2008), which in this specific case has been to explore young women in Sweden and their self-presentations and techniques for succeeding on Tinder.

Experiences are a core concept within IPA (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014). Experiences are subjective in nature and when using IPA, the aim is to consider all aspects of people's wishes, feelings, and motivations to discover how these affect the action of the individual. The authors need to distinguish between the parts that matter to the individuals and decide which ones to focus on. The process of using IPA concerns the in-depth examination of every interview before moving to identify patterns and themes. Following IPA, the authors acknowledge the emergence of biases and assumptions during the research process. According to Dahlberg (2006), the prejudices should not only be seen as a negative effect, rather as something that can be controlled and used to get more valuable interpretations. IPA is commonly used for studies with small purposive samples and Semi-structured interviews where the participant is seen as an experiential expert (Smith & Osborn, 2003). The authors aim to understand the world of the interviewee in order to investigate it and be open to new ideas and uncertainty (Eatough & Smith, 2008).

3.2 Method

3.2.1 Data collection

3.2.1.1 Secondary data

Secondary data refers to data that originally has been collected in previous research with a different purpose and thereafter reused in another study (Hox & Boeijs, 2005). This research has used secondary data regarding self-presentation, online strategies, online dating and behaviour online which were collected from journals and books relevant to the topic. This data is retrieved primarily from online databases such as Primo, the online search engine on the Jönköping University library website and Google Scholar. The collected secondary data has provided a

deeper knowledge of previous research and has further assisted in interpreting the collected primary data. To facilitate the search process and find relevant data the following search parameters were used: keywords: Self-presentation online, Tinder, online dating, true self; Literature type: Books, Peer-reviewed articles, Internet; Year of publication: 1990-2020; Publication languages: English, Swedish, and Finnish. The number of citations of the articles and the ranking of the journals through the academic journal guide ABS and Scimagojr were taken into account to ensure reliability and high-quality of the used sources.

3.2.1.2 Primary data

The primary data collected for this research is qualitative in order to correspond to the research strategy of this study. Hox and Boeije (2005) have defined primary data as data collected which is focused towards a specific goal of research and is presented through the empirical findings. Following an inductive design throughout this research, this study aimed to generate significant answers from the empirical findings. The empirical data is collected through semi-structured interviews (*see table 1*) to get reliable and accurate data for the study. The use of interviews as the method for collecting data enabled to answer the research question, as it allows the gathering of significant, heterogenous, and thorough understandings of the phenomena (Longhurst, 2003). Semi-structured interviews allow a more open discussion about the topic and, therefore, can provide with relevant data that have not necessarily been directly asked for (Saunders et al., 2016). Since only major themes and essential research questions were used as a guide, the nature of semi-structured interviews allowed the researchers to be flexible and adaptive when conducting the interviews.

The participants were able to freely express themselves which resulted in deep-rooted and meaningful data (Longhurst, 2003). The interviews were conducted in Swedish and then transcribed and key quotes were translated into English. Both open questions which start with “what?”, “how?” and “why?” and probing questions were used. Probing questions are follow-up questions that are also open but more directed to a specific focus (Saunders et al., 2016). Participants were asked to share their experience of using different online platforms, how they present themselves, what their goal is with using the app, and how they perceive the opposite gender on the app. The aim was to get a deeper insight into the behavioural patterns and self-presentation of young women on Tinder.

Preferred when conducting the interviews were contexts that enabled rich communication, which is why the interviews primarily were conducted face-to-face, and otherwise through video communication such as Zoom. A setting that enables direct and personal communication beyond

just written or verbal communication enabled us to observe any expressions from the interviewee that indicate discomfort or avoidance.

Table 1. Participant Overview

Participant	Age	Date of interview	Duration	Type	Location Participant
1	25	2020-03-23	50 min	Face-to-face and Zoom	Jönköping
2	23	2020-03-25	55 min	Via Zoom	Göteborg
3	23	2020-03-25	55 min	Via Zoom	Göteborg
4	23	2020-03-25	60 min	Via Zoom	Göteborg
5	20	2020-03-29	60 min	Via Zoom	Göteborg
6	24	2020-03-31	55 min	Face-to-face and Zoom	Stockholm
7	23	2020-04-09	70 min	Face-to-face and Zoom	Stockholm
8	23	2020-04-12	60 min	Face-to-face and Zoom	Stockholm
9	21	2020-04-14	50 min	Face-to-face and Zoom	Göteborg
10	24	2020-04-15	45 min	Face-to-face	Stockholm

3.2.1.3 Sampling approach

Different sampling techniques are used within research to select the aspired subjects amongst a population. The impossibility of researching an entire population applies to all these different sampling techniques (Etikan, Musa & Alkassim, 2016). In order to obtain relevant primary data within this research, a non-probability sampling approach was chosen. This refers to a sampling approach where only a limited group of individuals are given the opportunity to participate in this research (Etikan et al., 2016). More precisely, the applied sampling technique is purposive

one could participate face-to-face during the interviews that were held both in Jönköping and Stockholm while the other one participated through video calls (Zoom). The rest of the interviews that could not be arranged face-to-face were held entirely through video calls. The interviews and analysis were conducted in Swedish and selected quotes used in the thesis were translated into English.

3.2.1.5 Interview questions

The main purpose of the interview questions was to discover how young women use self-presentation online and utilize online social platforms within the context of Tinder. Additionally, the purpose of the questions was to get an insight into the participants personal experiences and opinions regarding the topic. The majority of the questions were open-ended questions which refer to questions that require a longer and well-developed answer containing the interviewees own reflections and experiences (Collis & Hussey, 2014). Closed-ended questions which only requires a simple “yes” or “no” were used when considered necessary to establish mutual understanding and confirmation regarding any uncertainties (Collis & Hussey, 2014). The research was introduced with a brief introduction of the study and the researchers before the interviews to create a positive and safe environment. By establishing an open environment, it enables the participants to freely express their reflections, experiences, and opinions (Walsh & Bull, 2012).

3.2.2 Data analysis

This thesis used an interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) approach, thus the data was also analysed in line with that method. The primary goal of the analysis using IPA was for the authors to discover how the participants make sense of their experiences (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014).

The authors started by conducting and transcribing 5 interviews and then moved further to analyse them. The analysis followed the steps recommended by Pietkiewicz and Smith (2014), and Storey (2007) for the approach. The first step involved carefully reading and re-reading the transcripts several times, making notes. The notes done by both authors were discussed and compared with great precision in order to make sure all important findings were included. After that, the emerging themes were identified and evaluated. The third step included discovering connections in the identified themes and clustering them together to provide a descriptive label. The descriptive labels represented then the superordinate themes and are illustrated in the table below (*See table*

2). These themes were also evaluated for the essentiality towards the research question and the most suitable ones were chosen. After evaluating the themes discovered from the 5 first interviews, the interview questions were adapted to focus on the main themes and to possibly discover new ones suitable for the subject. These questions were then used in the 5 next interviews. The same analysis process was completed for all 10 interviews in order to get the most precise results. The last step for the analysis involved representing the findings of the research and combining them with connections to existing literature and recommendations for future research (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014).

Table 2. Table of superordinate and emergent themes.

SUPERORDINATE THEME	EMERGENT THEME
1. TRUE SELF	Difficult to express the true self online Desire to present a realistic image of themselves
2. STRATEGIES	What pictures to have in the profile, what information Initiate conversations Go outside the box
3. SELF-DISCLOSURE	Don't want to reveal much information in the bio Feeling exposed when revealing too much information Revealing information after a match has occurred, want to get to know the person step by step
4. SELF-PRESENTATION	Desire to have a profile that matches with the true self All participants consider their pictures as truthful; they are satisfied with them but realistic Different opinions regarding if they succeed showing a realistic image.
5. MARKETING YOURSELF ON TINDER	Selecting attractive pictures Trying to express their personality through pictures to find the right target group, also by showing outfits and glimpses of their lifestyle
6. SOCIAL INFLUENCE	Reason to download Tinder Confidence towards Tinder Use Tinder among friends, get advice of how to behave or write to someone Stigma for using Tinder too seriously
7. NEED OF AFFIRMATION	Motivation for using Tinder Receive affirmation from matches Reason for participants to download it
8. INSTAGRAM	May use Tinder during periods when affirmation is desired The pictures participants use on Instagram are similar to Tinder Tinder is perceived as less serious than Instagram
9. CONFIDENCE TOWARDS TINDER	Many participants know people who have met someone serious from Tinder Gateway opener for approaching someone you did not talk to in reality Perceive Tinder as rather unserious.
10. TINDER VS REALITY	Easier to approach someone on Tinder than a total stranger in reality because you get an instant confirmation if a match occurs Most participants prefer face-to-face interaction
11. NEGATIVE EXPERIENCES	Sexual and disrespectful comments and messages from male users on Tinder Some guys have a very unserious approach and suppose everything is about sex, so they are instantly initiating sexual encounters

3.3 Ethics

Research ethics is referred to conducting the research process appropriate towards all parties involved and that may be affected. Sometimes researchers neglect this, although ethics play a significant role when conducting business research, as ethics govern the research throughout the whole process (Saunders et al., 2016). This research has therefore followed a moral, responsible, and fair approach from day one when conducting the study. Following this, an essential challenge in business research is the voluntary participation amongst the participants (Bell & Bryman, 2007). To guarantee this, the first task was to make sure that the participants wanted to partake the study voluntarily. The purpose of the study was therefore explained in detail when approaching the participants. The research team contacted the potential participants through Facebook messenger or approached them face-to-face. The researchers proceeded the scheduling of the interviews if the potential participant's reactions were positive towards the study. The interviews were supposed to be conducted face-to-face in a comfortable setting, but because of the serious circumstances with Covid-19, many of the interviews were held through video calls (Zoom). Prior to the interviews, a consent agreement form (*see appendix 1*) was distributed to each participant in the study to secure their confidentiality and anonymity.

3.3.1 Anonymity and Confidentiality

To obtain honest and true research, two significant concepts must be taken into account, these are *anonymity* and *confidentiality* (Bell & Bryman, 2007; Saunders et al., 2016). Bell and Bryman (2007) state that participants are guaranteed to be undisclosed throughout the research through anonymity, while the provided information from the participants is protected through confidentiality.

By distributing the aforementioned consent form to the participants, anonymity was assured completely and regarded all participants. The aim with this was to protect the participants and in turn achieve an increased response rate, establishing a transparent and honest environment to motivate the participants to freely express themselves and any opinions (Collis & Hussey, 2014). The research team informed all participants that they would be mentioned as a number instead of their name throughout the study. The researchers furthermore encouraged the participants before the interviews to express their sincere opinions and reflections in order to obtain meaningful answers and an in-depth understanding of the phenomena.

3.3.2 Credibility

An important concept related to establishing the trustworthiness of research is *credibility* (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Shenton, 2004). If the researchers manage to execute and report their study in an appropriate and identifiable way, the research may be considered as credible (Cope, 2014). This is of great importance as the research team is the main collector of data and analysis, when following a qualitative research path, as in this research (Patton, 1990). The degree of credibility is according to Saunders et al. (2016) depending on the extent of precise preparation, which is why this research has followed a procedure including a thorough process of preparation.

4. Empirical findings

This section introduces the collected data for the research. An overview of the findings from the interviews and quotations from the participants are provided. The participants are referred to as “participant #”, or (P#), this is done to protect the anonymity of the participants and to clarify for the reader.

4.1 Reason to download the app

During the interviews, all participants were asked to explain their main reason to why they downloaded the Tinder app in the first place. A reoccurring answer from many of the participants regarding this question highlighted the social influence. Most of the participants had downloaded the app because friends and people in their surroundings had it and that it first was a “thing” to have it like everyone else.

“It was mainly because everyone else had it, and because I was single as I still am haha.” (P10)

“It was pretty recent it had become a thing, and I was curious about it, so I guess I downloaded it because everyone else had it.” (P2)

“I think the main reason was that I was curious since everyone talked about it, it was like a group pressure like “Omg I also need to be on Tinder.” (P8)

“I did as everyone else did, everyone had Tinder. It became a social thing.” (P9)

Participant 6 explained that she has had Tinder during different periods in her life and not non stop. The reason why she deleted the app when she moved to Lund, a city with an approximate population of 124.000 in South of Sweden (Scb, 2020) was that no one else used Tinder there. According to her, it was more natural to meet new people through the University and other social events.

“I lived in Lund when I deleted it, and in Lund, it is not so much a dating culture but it is very much that you meet people through connection with everything you do, it is very natural to meet guys in other ways in Lund.” (P6)

4.2 Perception of Tinder

It was evident that each participant’s view and perception of tinder was influenced in either a positive or negative way depending on your friends’ perceptions. This was also an emergent theme during the interviews and connected to social influence and how different groups of people influence each other differently. Participant 2 explained that the perception of Tinder amongst her friends is not very serious, which correlated with her thoughts and expressions during the interview.

“The general perception amongst my friends is that Tinder is not serious, so mostly we talk about funny experiences connected to Tinder.” (P2)

“You don’t want to meet someone through Tinder, as you have a certain perception about those guys, so you basically just want to see who’s interested in you.” (P2)

Most of the participants explained that they discuss Tinder with friends, but they would not want anyone in public to see that they are on the app. They also confirmed that they feel that people have a prejudice against others on the app. Moreover, they feel it can be perceived as desperate to be on Tinder, which influences their behaviour.

“Sometimes it feels a bit desperate, even if it’s not like that nowadays. There has just become some stigma around it because so many assume that you are desperate for love if you are on Tinder.” (P8)

“My parents still don't know that it was through Tinder that I met my ex, and I just think it's because of my preconceived opinions.” (P2)

“I would never pull Tinder up on a lecture or a bus.” (P4)

“It feels like there are still many people who have prejudices for Tinder ‘aha you met on Tinder...’ that they still have a basic view that it is frivolous.” (P5)

Participant 1, 5, and 9 explained that they think that they and their friends can often say that they use Tinder “just for fun” when in reality everyone wants to find a partner.

“They don’t want to seem desperate and therefore have a facade and say “I have it just for fun”. But if it had only been for fun, they wouldn't have met the guys and tried, so somewhere I think they want to find someone.” (P9)

“I’ve never had Tinder to meet anyone seriously, but I still think you have it in the back of your head [the possibility of finding romance].” (P5)

4.3 Social influence

4.3.1 Influence on behavior

A recurring theme from the majority of all participants was that they all use Tinder amongst friends when they spend time together. Some of them see it as a fun activity, and some do it to receive and give advice regarding Tinder. Despite the different reasons, it was evident that all participants’ behaviour on Tinder gets influenced in some ways by their friends and other

people around them. According to many of the participants, it is common to discuss with your girlfriends, for example, whom to swipe, what to write, and whom to write to.

“Sometimes you forget what guys you have matched with in the past, and suddenly my friend takes my phone to look through the different guys and says, “he was cute” and then I say, “yes he was actually nice”. Then I might write to him after.” (P10)

“It depends, [what you discuss with your girlfriends] whom you should swipe yes to, whom to write to, and what you should write to someone. Sometimes we send screenshots of different matches in our group chat.” (P2)

“It can be anything from showing my pictures to show a conversation to my friends and ask whether it’s worth to meet him, or if I should meet him again if I already have met him once.” (P4)

“Mostly we discuss what people write to one another and what you should have in your bio. My friends also think I should have an older age range since they say that the younger guys are so immature.” (P1)

“Sometimes when I feel very confident [when she usually writes to a guy] or if I’m together with friends, but it rarely happens since I never know what to say next.” (P8)

“No not how you should look [whether she gets influenced by her friends], rather that they can push me to write or reply to someone, but we don’t care so much about each other’s pictures.” (P10)

Something that was discussed during the interviews was how the participants use emojis or smileys. Participant 6 stated that she usually adapts her use of emojis depending on whom she is having a conversation with.

“I try to see how the other person is doing. But I may not start doing that [using emojis], but if I notice the other person is doing it a little bit then I can do the way I do to my friends, which is a normal level.” (P6)

4.3.2 Influence on pictures/ profile

Except receiving advice regarding how to behave on Tinder which previously was discussed, two participants explain that they sometimes want their friends' opinions regarding their profile and what pictures to use on Tinder. This also includes what to write in their so-called bio on Tinder.

"I have not chosen all [pictures] myself, instead I have asked for my friends' opinions. Your own perception of yourself may not be the same as other people's' perception of you, and you always want to maximize your chances." (P8)

"Sometimes, I ask my friends if my profile presents a good and realistic impression of me or which picture is the best, but otherwise not [if she asks for advice from friends]. " (P7)

4.4 True- self

The participants in this study did not show any signs of being able to express their true self better in the online environment than in face-to-face interaction. They explained that it is difficult to express your true self when it is only via text.

"I don't think it's easy to figure out what kind of person it is through messaging. I think it's completely impossible for me." (P8)

"It is difficult in general through text to give an image of oneself." (P5)

"To get a feeling in a conversation is easier face-to-face f in my opinion." (P5)

When it comes to strategies on Tinder, the participants explained that they want to present their true self as much as possible, but they feel that it is not possible to do it completely. Moreover, the Participants explained that they think the more you can be yourself and express your true self, the more likely you will succeed on Tinder. When participant 8 was asked if she adapts to how others are and what she thinks is expected of her on social media she answered:

"Yes, but I try not to because I am aware that it's not the real me." (P8)

The majority of the participants argued that they maintain a realistic profile on Tinder which matches the real-life person to some extent. This profile often contains glimpses of the positive sides of a person according to the participants.

“I certainly don’t give a 100% picture of myself. I have a lot of bad qualities too.” (P6)

“I don't think you can portray yourself there [on Tinder] because nobody can get to know me only through my profile. I'm very outspoken, so when we talk (conversations on Tinder), I always get to hear that I am very honest.” (P9)

Since a lot of information is left out, participant 2 consider it very difficult for anyone to see the real her with that limited amount of information:

“I don’t think that my image is false, but if you don’t have a caption there’s a lot of information left out. I don’t think you get the full image of me, but everything in my profile is me.” (P2)

The different opinions between the participants are not whether or not their self-presentation is realistic, it is more about succeeding or not with presenting a full image of the true-self. Both participant 5 and 3 think it is difficult to present a realistic image through text even though they both consider themselves good at saying the things they want and be themselves. Misperceptions are something that easily might occur when only engaged in writing to each other, and Participant 3 said:

“I think few people succeed, even if you think that you are being perceived in a certain way, I think depending on whom you’re talking to, the perception of you will always be different. I once met a guy from Tinder who had a different perception of me. Luckily, he was positively surprised, as he thought of me as more boring judging from my profile on Tinder.” (P3)

Because of the risk of misperceptions via text, participant 6 explained how she might choose to show less of her true self on Tinder:

“I'm a person who has a pretty rough sense of humour...and then I am afraid that if you don't know me as a person you would misinterpret it. For a while I wanted to write like this: Looking for someone to save me from bad one-night stands, because that's my humour and I think it's fun. But then I'm afraid that it may sound like I am sleeping around with people all the time and that I am portrayed in a certain way... It's very difficult to understand such a jargon if you don't know

a person, so I have chosen not to write something like that because I still want guys who might get afraid of that to like me.” (P6)

4.5 Self- Disclosure

A theme that emerged during the interviews was self-disclosure, and this was something all participants had similar thoughts about. They were asked to describe what information their Tinder profile contained, where seven out of ten participants did not disclose any further information than Tinder requires to set up a profile (name and age). All participants had their name, age, and three out of ten included their location or education.

“I obviously have my name and age, but actually nothing else.” (P10)

“I have included the name of the school I attended.” (P5)

“None, just 24 years.” (P6)

Participant 4 explained that she has a few emojis, to illustrate her interests and things she likes to do in life.

“Now I have some emojis which represent my hobbies, one tennis ball, a skier, a surfer, a sailboat, and two beers.” (P4)

One participant (P1) out of ten has included a quote in her bio, which is the following:

“Looking for something, but don’t know what.” (P1)

The common reason for the majority of the participants to not have any further information is that they do not know what to write. Some of them don’t want to give the wrong impression to other users and explain that some things might be viewed as cringe or goofy. Participant 2 mentioned that she gets very uncomfortable when it comes to that sort of things.

“I don’t know, I didn’t know what to write, and I hate when it gets too cringe.” (P9)

“Nothing really, I think it states “Jönköping”, that’s the only information. Again, this is something that makes me very uncomfortable.” (P2)

Even if most of the participants have not written anything further in their profile, some of them mentioned that they think it is good to reveal more of themselves in terms of pictures, like for example showing their hobbies. Several of the participants have included one or a few pictures from when they are doing their favourite activities, such as skiing, travelling, horse-riding, spending time with friends, or drinking. Participant 4 explained that it is easier for other people to relate to you if you reveal something more about yourself in your pictures, instead of just having selfies.

“If you just have one picture of yourself, even if people think it’s nice-looking, it is rather difficult to relate to someone who only shows their face. It is easier to relate if you have a picture where you do an activity or a glimpse of your lifestyle.” (P4)

When discussing whether or not they feel comfortable being themselves during conversations on Tinder, the majority said that they feel confident and able to have open and honest conversations.

” How I speak, yes 100% [whether or not she can be herself] I don’t see why I should be someone I’m not or say something I don’t agree with.” (P7)

” If I notice that I can’t be myself with someone while writing, then it’s not interesting anymore.” (P10)

Participant 8 explained that she thinks it is difficult to be herself during conversations with a stranger on Tinder since she overthinks everything.

“I am very self-conscious since I don’t know what the other person wants, I can barely start a conversation as I don’t know how to write with a person I don’t know. So no, I can’t be myself and I overthink everything I write.” (P8)

“I feel that they possibly could get angry if I don’t answer the things they expect. And then they delete the match.” (P8)

The lack of information in most of the participants' profile does not seem to be an obstacle, instead, they commonly think it is better to disclose themselves when a match has occurred with someone. Participant 1 and 3 mentioned that they feel too exposed on Tinder to reveal more information in their bio, instead, they think it is better to disclose such information during a conversation. Participant 1,3,5, and 9 explained that it is more exciting to get to know things about someone step by step in a conversation, instead of reading the information from a profile. Participant 3 also mentioned that the mystery disappears if you reveal too much information in the profile. It is evident that most of the participants see the match as a first interest trigger, and then that the conversation with someone is the place where they want to disclose information about themselves.

"I felt that anyone could see me on Tinder really, so I did not want to disclose so much about me to everyone, instead they can ask me directly and then I can decide what I want to reveal or not." (P1)

"I think the mystery disappears directly if you disclose so much [in the profile]." (P3)

"I don't know, I feel that it doesn't say that much [the information in the bio], instead you get to know each other while writing." (P5)

"I'm very outspoken, so when we talk [conversations on Tinder], I always get to hear that I'm very honest. So often, they get to know me by then." (P9)

"I think it's better to just: Do I find him attractive? Yes/No, we match and then we start to write to each other. The app is very simple, and it's easy to match and then write." (P5)

4.6 Marketing yourself on Tinder

When it comes to marketing yourself on Tinder, all participants explained that they want to choose the most attractive pictures to be desirable. Their strategies mostly focus on trying to show some personality through pictures.

"Obviously you want presentable pictures, you wouldn't take any picture." (P2)

“it goes without saying that I want to choose pictures where I look pretty.” (P9)

“I would never post something where I look funny but ugly as hell, it just doesn't happen.” (P6)

“I probably tried to have a variety [of pictures], one that showed I looked pretty, clear on the face. Then I probably had one when I did something, a sport or activity. And then I had one with a friend.” (P3)

“I want it to symbolize me well but that it should look nice and clean from a visual point of view. Give a good impression, seem lovely.” (P10)

Participant 5 also explained that you want the first picture to be the most attractive in order to catch interest:

“I probably have prejudices about how people or guys are on Tinder so the first picture is a picture where I am extra pretty then they might think ‘oh wow she is good looking’.” (P5)

Most of the participants mentioned that they want to show their hobbies, in order to attract people with similar interests. Moreover, they explained that a picture where they do some activity is often a good conversation starter and that way you can get the guy to start the conversation. The conversation can then start with something more interesting than a simple “hi”, which all participants felt was boring.

“I also have a picture with my horse and a picture where I canoe so it still shows what I like to do, and it says something about me that not just a selfie or body image does.” (P1)

“I have emojis of my interests, a tennis ball, a skier, surfer, sailboat and two beers [in the bio].” (P4)

“If you only have a picture of yourself, even if other people think it is a good picture, it is more difficult to relate to someone who only has selfies. It is easier for others to relate to one if one has an activity picture or a lifestyle picture.” (P3)

“On Tinder, I don't only want to appear good looking or what to say, but I also want to post pictures where I show my interests. So, I might have a picture where I sit in the Alps where you understand ‘Okay she is interested in skiing, she is a ski girl’. Maybe have a picture where you are on holiday abroad, that you like to travel. You might have some pictures where you are with

your friends that show that you're a social person. You might have a drink in your hand, just to show that you think it's nice.... I noticed, for example, it turned out that the pictures I had chosen that I had a drink in my hand on every picture...then I noticed that many people wrote to me and 'what do you like more than sangria?' little fun comments like this, so I kept it because I thought it was a bit funny... So, you still notice that you get responses to different types of pictures, also that it becomes clear that you get more response to those pictures where it is clear that you do something [an activity].”(P6)

Participant 7 also explained that depending on what kind of clothes she is wearing, guys with similar style tend to match with her. She chooses to show her outfits as much as possible to be attractive to the right “target group”.

“I try to give a good picture of what kind of person I am or my clothing style and overall what I like... then it's not that that suit guy who might give me a like.” (P7)

Since you get immediately affirmation on Tinder in the form of a match, the participants felt that it is a good way to get information on what kind of pictures work.

“When I have changed some selfie or something, I got reactions. People can go in like on Facebook and give a heart or like” and there will be a little more activity on the account. So maybe I should do it a little more often.” (P1)

When it comes to more provocative pictures the participants had somewhat different opinions. Most of them, however, felt that with pictures in bikinis or similar, you could be appealing to the wrong “target market”. They explained that they want guys to show more interest in their personalities than looks.

“I don't want provocative pictures because I don't want a guy to want me for my body... sometimes I almost don't want to use the finest pictures of me for the guy to be genuine.” (P9)

“I don't have a bikini image, and I would never want to have one. I think that if you have a bikini image that is very clear of the body, I think you send out a signal that you don't want anything more serious. So I still try to be careful with that.” (P6)

” They might just see me as my body and not my personality. I don't want to be objectified.” (P8)

“It's just not me, for example, to push up my breasts and show in the picture. And it is, again, this with my profile to reflect me as a person.” (P2)

“I am the same person with the clothes on or without.” (P7)

Participant 1 stated that she thinks provocative pictures “sell” on Tinder and that they are effective to catch a guy’s interest.

“I get more attracted when I see how someone looks physically and I like my body and think I have a nice body. Tough marketing. They say sex doesn't sell but I think it does on Tinder.” (P1)

Most participants explained that they after a match go back and then decide which ones are interesting enough to have a conversation with. They explained that you might only look at the pictures when swiping but when deciding on starting a conversation or answering a message they want to be sure it is a person they feel they could have a connection with.

“When you swipe and match, it is like a first elimination. If there are 10 people out of 30 who sends a message, then I usually go through those people again and see if there is someone that I really want to talk to.” (P8)

4.7 Need of affirmation

When identifying superordinate themes for the analysis one of the emerging themes was need of affirmation. All participants except participant 9 admit they use or have used Tinder for affirmation purposes. Moreover, participants explained that their goal with the app has changed during the time they have used it and that in the beginning affirmation was one of the biggest drivers.

“In the beginning, it was really just because people would see me and think that I was beautiful.” (P1)

“I think I downloaded it for affirmation.” (P6)

Participant 3, 6, and 8 also explained that when they have deleted the app, they might download it again because of the need for affirmation. All participants showed a degree of awareness of their need for affirmation even if they didn’t say it was the biggest motivation for swiping.

"I thought it was fun to write with people too, so I wouldn't say that I'm the person who just matches to get affirmation, but that's part of it, too."(P3)

All participants stated that getting a match or a message from a man was a sign of affirmation. They explained different situations where they have felt the need, which participant 6 explained like this:

"It is always a bit fun if someone whom you think is cute confirms that you are interesting. And it can be very easy to get that affirmation on Tinder. Or if you have been sad because of someone else, and that you, therefore, go in and swipe just to get confirmation from other people that you are attractive." (P6)

Participant 1 explained that she does not appreciate getting compliments on her looks from matches. She felt like the match is enough to know both find each other attractive, therefore, it made her uncomfortable to get comments on it right away.

"Although one tries to show off one's beautiful self, I still get uncomfortable with appearance fixation, so I try to start conversations casually while I think many men start with appearance compliments." (P1)

5. Analysis

The following section introduces an analysis of the empirical findings connecting it with the frame of references. The analysis has followed the IPA process to answer the given research question, "How young women in Sweden experience Tinder and utilize different strategies on the app to pursue their goal through self-presentation?". The analysis will focus on the identified superordinate themes true self, self-disclosure, marketing yourself of Tinder, and social influence.

5.1 True-self

Rogers (1951) who introduced the concept of true self argues that the potential self is not fully expressed in one's social life. Bargh et al. (2002) and Tosun (2012) stated that many individuals

might feel easier to express their true self in an online context than face-to-face. This was not confirmed through the interviews in this research. The participants found it difficult to express themselves through text and pictures only. Which contradicts with the research by Manago et al. (2008) and Smahel and Subrahmanyam (2007), which state that messages online enables more purposeful communication. However, all participants felt that they aim, both with their profile and on conversations on Tinder to show their true self, even if they recognized difficulties. The online environment is in constant change and therefore how people act on the internet alters with it. The results of our study not being in line with the findings of Bargh et al. (2002) and Tosun (2012) illustrated this by participant 5 articulating the following:

“To get a feeling in a conversation is easier face-to-face in my opinion.” (P5)

Rogers (1951) also used “real self” as a synonym to the true self. The participants in our study often used “real me” when explaining how to show their true self on the app. Mckenna et al. (2002) found that individuals who succeed in communicating their true self in an online context would be able to form deeper relationships online. This is in line with all participants view on how to succeed on Tinder. They believe that the more you express your true self, the better matches you will get.

Moreover, Bargh et al. (2002) argued that the risks of social sanction are highly reduced on the internet. Participant 8, 4, and 7 did, however, state that they do think a lot about how other people will perceive them and what they will think. They also acknowledge that people tend not to be afraid to express their thoughts online because of the possibility of anonymity. This makes participant 8 more careful about what she says or does online. Since the development of existing digital technology has changed how people interact with their social networks (Kowalski et al., 2014; Subrahmanyam & Smahel, 2010) the social norms from the actual world might affect online behaviour.

“I can't dodge other people's opinions and what I think others think of me... more people equal more opinions.” (P8)

5.2 Self-disclosure

Previous literature suggested that one of the key factors for self-disclosure is a physical attraction (Brundage, Derlega & Cash 1976). From the empirical findings, it becomes apparent that the

participants do not want to reveal more information in their Tinder profile than required to set up an account. Instead, the process of further self-disclosure begins according to the participants after a match has occurred and when they begin a conversation with another user. During the conversations, most of the participants feel that they can engage in open and honest conversations. To enable a conversation with someone, both parties need to swipe right on each other to indicate a mutual interest, which is based on physical attraction. It becomes evident that the physical attraction is a factor determining the participants level of self-disclosure they are willing to engage in, which is in line with the previous literature.

The way individuals disclose themselves online is according to previous literature shaped by different norms and expectations of each site, and the desire to be perceived as unique at the same time as they want to blend in (Ellison et al., 2006). It is also previously stated that users feel pressured to disclose themselves in accordance with social norms (Gibbs et al., 2011). Throughout the interviews, participant 6 and 8 have expressed concern when it comes to disclosing themselves and how they sometimes feel a need to adapt their way of revealing themselves depending on whom they talk to, which can be seen as a way of complying with social norms of what is perceived as “normal”. Participant 6 explained that she has very rough humour and jargon that might scare boys away if they do not know her personally, which is the reason she might modify her way of revealing herself in her profile and during conversations on Tinder.

“I feel that they possibly could get angry if I don’t answer the things they expect. And then they delete a match.” (P8)

Research by Gibbs et al. (2006) suggested that individuals tend to engage differently when it comes to self-disclosure depending on what relational goal they have. A person who desires a serious romantic relationship is more likely to put greater effort into their self-disclosure and reveal more personal information during the interaction online. This has been confirmed from several of the participants during the interviews, where participant 5,7,6, and 9 explained how both their behaviour and ways of revealing themselves differ depending on what goal they have. Depending on what goal the participants have had during their time on Tinder, several of them confirmed that they express and disclose themselves differently.

5.3 Marketing yourself on Tinder

Heino et al. (2010) demonstrated through their study how individuals market themselves on online dating platforms similarly to product or service marketing. This was shown in the empirical findings where most of the participants explained their strategies in a way that is similar to

constructing a market strategy. According to Lamb et al. (2015), the marketing strategy includes recognizing the target market and finding a way to appeal to them. The empirics showed how all participants explained what kind of person they are looking for and how they construct their profile according to that. Several participants also explained that they choose not to have provocative pictures to avoid attracting the wrong target market.

In previous research by online dating Whitty (2008) found that the participants explained the process of creating the profile as “selling yourself”. This also became evident when analysing how the participants discussed their strategies in constructing their profiles. Participant 1 also explained her reason for having a bikini picture as a marketing strategy.

“I get more attracted when I see how someone looks physically and I like my body and think I have a nice body. Tough marketing. They say sex doesn't sell but I think it does on Tinder.” (P1)

Ellison et al. (2006), Gibbs et al. (2006), Gibbs et al. (2011), Walther (1996), and Whitty (2008) stated that self-presentation online allows a more selective presentation highlighting the positive attributes while filtering unflattering ones. This assumption aligns with the strategies of all of the participants and becomes evident in how everyone explained that they choose the prettiest pictures of themselves, even if they want to present themselves realistically. The participants also mentioned that they would not mention something in conversations that could be seen as a negative attribute.

The empirics also discovered that the matching on Tinder is only the first evaluation of the person. 6 out of 10 participants explained that they after a match go back and then decide which ones are interesting enough to have a conversation with. This is in line with Heino et al.'s (2010) assumption of online dating being similar to a shopping experience. They explained the assessment of goods before buying a product, which is similar to the assessment of people before making contact. This becomes evident in how participant 8 explained her strategy:

“When you swipe and match, it is like a first elimination. If there are 10 people out of 30 who sends a message, then I usually go through those people again and see if there is someone that I really want to talk to.” (P8)

Heino et al. (2010) also described that the market metaphor is appropriate because of the big number of users and instant affirmation from matches. This way the user can evaluate their perceived desirability. 4 out of 10 participants explained that they have acknowledged what kind

of pictures they get the most response with and constructs their profiles according to that. Showing your hobbies through pictures was seen as a success factor in getting a response. By using photos they got a positive response with the participants felt they were succeeding better on Tinder, got more affirmation and evaluated their desirability as higher.

5.4 Social Influence

Previous research has stated that social influence is a key factor for determining individuals' behaviour and use on an online platform (Cheung et al., 2011; Li, 2011; Zhou, 2011). Moreover, this is something that has been discovered throughout the interviews to be a significant factor when it comes to influencing the participants' behaviour and view of Tinder. Lefebvre (2018) stated in the study that a significantly large part of the participants uses Tinder because their friends, peers, and people within their desired social spheres used it. The reason why the majority of the participants in this study downloaded the app in the first place was that "everyone else" had it which further confirms the statement from the previously mentioned study. The example mentioned where participant 6 deleted Tinder while she studied in Lund was because nobody else used it there as it was perceived as more natural to meet new people through social gatherings instead. This further suggests that individuals' use of Tinder is influenced by your social environment.

What could be seen throughout the interviews was how the participants commonly used Tinder as a social activity while spending time with their friends. Cialdini and Goldstein (2004) suggested that users adapt to their friends' behaviour on social online platforms, and except that social influence was discovered as a major factor for why the participants have downloaded Tinder, it was discovered to influence their behaviour within the app as well. Utilizing Tinder during social occasions with friends was seen as a fun activity by some participants, but also as a way of giving and receiving advice regarding Tinder. Participant 10, 2, 6 explained that they enjoy discussing whom to approach, what to write and, whom to answer with their friends. Despite the different degree of influence the participants' friends have, it was evident that they adapt, change and take others' opinions into account when they utilize Tinder.

“It depends on, [what you discuss with your girlfriends] whom you should swipe yes to, whom to write to, and what you should write to someone. Sometimes we send screenshots of different matches in our group chat”. (P2)

Something that also can be connected to the desire and pressure of blending in is the use of emojis when people write to each other. Several participants have mentioned that they adjust their use of emojis according to the other person’s use of emojis. This behaviour does also confirm the desire to fit in and follow social norms.

Lewis et al. (2008) suggested that users who have friends with private profiles also tend to adopt such a profile. This was not something that was discovered throughout the interviews, the focus according to participant 1, when discussing Tinder with friends is not the profile or photos, it is rather behaviour- related things. Participant 7 and 8 explain that they might ask their friends regarding what pictures to use in their profile, to present a realistic and nice image. Ward (2017) discovered that there still is a certain stigma connected to the use of online dating and that people, therefore, claim to use Tinder “just for fun”. This stigma related to Tinder has been discovered throughout the interviews as well, where Tinder is perceived as something quite unserious that they use it “just for fun”. The findings suggest that this view of Tinder often is mutual within a group of friends and that one’s perception is influenced by friends or your social environment. According to participant 1, 5, and 9, it is common that they or their friends mention that they only use Tinder for fun when they, in reality, want to find a romantic partner.

“They don’t want to seem desperate and therefore have a facade and say “I have it just for fun”. But if it had only been for fun, they wouldn’t have met the guys and tried, so somewhere I think they want to find someone.” (P9)

The findings suggest that social influence in the context of Tinder mostly impacts how the participants behave in terms of what to write and whom to approach, instead of impacting what kind of profile they have since that not seems to be as discussed among friends. Social influence also seems to be a strong factor for determining how an individual perceive Tinder, whether it is just for fun or something you truly believe in.

The empirical findings show that social influence is a strong determining factor impacting the participants’ behaviour and perceptions when it comes to self-presentation and interaction online. Previous research by Arnstberg (1989), Ebenhard (2006), Geert- Hofstede (2020), and Mahmood (2012) has stated that Swedish people commonly avoid conflicts and that individuals in the

Swedish society are counselled to not stand out, enforced by the fictional “Law of Jante”. Individuals often strive to present themselves in line with cultural norms to meet societal expectations (Zhao et al., 2008). The indication about Swedes desire to blend in corresponds well with the findings of the participants’ strong aspiration to adapt to the norm and a desire to blend in.

6. Conclusion

This section provides the reader with a summary of the findings of the study regards to the purpose and research question.

The purpose of this exploratory study was to investigate how young heterosexual women in Sweden (18-25 years old) use self-presentation and utilize digital social platforms, in the context of Tinder. The aim was to examine strategies within self-presentation, behaviour, online interaction and expression of the true self. This purpose was derived from how today’s dating environment has evolved with the technological era and enabled people to establish relationships. To follow the purpose, IPA was implemented whereby ten semi-structured interviews were conducted. A conceptual framework was developed to recognize the most significant strategies emerging from the study. The emerging themes from empirical data were categorized according to relevance and analysed by connecting to previous research. The following paragraph demonstrates the findings of the study.

The overall perception among the participants was that the online environment does not provide the possibility for better expression of the true self. This contradicts with the previous literature on the topic. Several strategies for self-presentation and impression management were identified as common. These are the construction of the profile, communication, and utilization of the app to reach the individuals’ goal on Tinder. It became evident that the use of Tinder as a dating app involves marketing yourself in terms of desirability towards the desired target group. Physical attraction was discovered as a requirement for self-disclosure, whereby the degree of self-disclosure depends on your goal on Tinder. Lastly, the findings indicate that all participants are highly influenced by social norms and people in their social sphere.

In conclusion, there are several approaches for an individual to implement when engaged in portraying themselves on digital platforms and online dating applications. Young women use different strategies and techniques depending on how they want to be perceived and what their goal is with the use of Tinder.

7. Discussion

The following section discusses the academic contribution of the research, followed by limitations. Finally, suggestions for future research are provided.

7.1 Contributions

This thesis contributes to the current literature by providing further insights and empirical findings within the field of online behaviour, and more precisely within the context of online dating applications. By examining young women's experiences and behaviour online, this research extends the existing literature by providing valuable findings of relationship initiation and strategies used to pursue one's goal on the online dating application Tinder. Additionally, this research has contributed to the body of existing literature about self-presentation online and the expressing of the true self. The empirical findings of this research contradicted with previous literature about the expression of the true self online, since the participants did not feel able to express their true self better online. As previous literature was lacking consistent research on women's self-presentation strategies and behaviour on Tinder, this study adds further to the literature within this topic by presenting insights from the emerged themes of empirical findings.

Social influence was found to be a significant factor behind the participants' behaviour and perceptions online which corresponds with previous literature about Swedish culture and mentality. Whereby, the final contribution of this thesis is the link between the empirical findings suggesting that social influence is a recurring theme as well as within the Swedish culture where people strive to blend.

7.2 Limitations

Firstly, as this study focuses on the context of Tinder, it is limited by the technological changes and improvements that are constant. The technological environment changes constantly which affect online behaviour. Thus, previous research from 2018 might already be outdated. Trends among the use of apps and different social platforms also vary from year to year among emerging adults.

Secondly, because the participants were friends of the authors, all participants have similar backgrounds, lifestyles and shared values. This means that the study could not draw meaningful differences between demographic or educational factors that might arise.

Lastly, due to the outbreak of the COVID-19 virus the research process needed to be moderated. The authors were working together from distance and all interviews were partly or entirely conducted via online video calls on Zoom. This meant that the interviews lacked the face-to-face interaction that is often recommended for similar studies.

7.3 Future research

Previous research on online dating has argued that there are significant gender differences in strategies and behaviour. This study focused solely on heterosexual women that are looking for a male partner. Therefore, further research on user strategies on Tinder with a focus on gender differences and other sexual orientations would give a deeper understanding of the findings.

Another interesting option could be to do a cross-cultural study on the identified strategies for utilizing Tinder. The findings from this study suggest that the social norms affect significantly the behaviour in an online context. Thus, the cultural differences could give interesting insights about social influence in the context of Tinder.

Lastly, it could be interesting to investigate self-presentation on Instagram with users that see it as a platform to find romance. In the case of this study, several users indicated that Instagram is becoming a popular platform for dating purposes, which would render new observations about online dating.

8. References

American Marketing Association. (2017). *What is Marketing? — The Definition of Marketing — AMA*. Retrieved 13 May 2020, from <https://www.ama.org/the-definition-of-marketing-what-is-marketing/>.

Arnett, J. (2000). Emerging adulthood: a theory of development from the late teens through the twenties. *American Psychologist*, 55(5), 469–480. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0003-066X.55.5.469>

Arnstberg, Karl-Olov (1989). *Svenskhet: den kulturförnekande kulturen*. Stockholm: Carlsson

Bargh, J. A., McKenna, K. Y., & Fitzsimons, G. M. (2002). Can you see the real me? Activation and expression of the “true self” on the Internet. *Journal of social issues*, 58(1), 33-48.

- Bareket-Bojmel, L., Moran, S., & Shahar, G. (2016). Strategic self-presentation on Facebook: Personal motives and audience response to online behavior. *Computers In Human Behavior*, 55, 788-795. doi: 10.1016/j.chb.2015.10.033
- Bell, E., & Bryman, A. (2007). The ethics of management research: an exploratory content analysis. *British journal of management*, 18(1), 63-77.
- Blackwell, C., Birnholtz, J., & Abbott, C. (2015). Seeing and being seen: Co-situation and impression formation using Grindr, a location-aware gay dating app. *New media & society*, 17(7), 1117-1136.
- Brundage, L. E., Derlega, V. J., & Cash, T. F. (1976). The effects of physical attractiveness and need for approval on self-disclosure. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 3(1), 63-66.
- Chan, L. S. (2017). Who uses dating apps? Exploring the relationships among trust, sensation-seeking, smartphone use, and the intent to use dating apps based on the integrative model. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 72, 246-258.
- Cheung, C., Lee, Z., & Chan, T. (2015). Self-disclosure in social networking sites. *Internet Research*, 25(2), 279–299. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IntR-09-2013-0192>.
- Cheung, C. M., Chiu, P. Y., & Lee, M. K. (2011). Online social networks: Why do students use facebook?. *Computers in Human behavior*, 27(4), 1337-1343.
- Cialdini, R.B. and Goldstein, N.J. (2004), “*Social influence: compliance and conformity*”, *Annual Review of Psychology* , Vol. 55, pp. 591-621.
- Cohen, L. (2015). World attending in interaction: Multitasking, spatializing, narrativizing with mobile devices and Tinder. *Discourse, Context & Media*, 9, 46-54.
- Collis, J., & Hussey, R. (2014). *Business research: A practical guide for undergraduate & postgraduate students* (4th ed.). Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Cope, D. G. (2014). Methods and meanings: credibility and trustworthiness of qualitative research. In *Oncology nursing forum* (Vol. 41, No. 1).

- Couch, D., & Liamputtong, P. (2008). Online dating and mating: The use of the internet to meet
- Cozby, P.C. (1973), "Self-disclosure: a literature review", *Psychological Bulletin*, Vol. 79 No. 2, pp. 73-91.
- Dahlberg, K. (2006). The essence of essences—the search for meaning structures in phenomenological analysis of lifeworld phenomena. *International journal of qualitative studies on health and well-being*, 1(1), 11-19.
- Derlega, V. J., Winstead, B. A., Wong, P. T., & Greenspan, M. (1987). Self-disclosure and relationship development: an attributional analysis.
- Dobson, A.S. (2015). Postfeminist digital cultures: Femininity, social media, and self-representation. New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Desjarlais, M., & Willoughby, T. (2010). A longitudinal study of the relation between adolescent boys and girls' computer use with friends and friendship quality: Support for the social compensation or the rich-get-richer hypothesis?. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 26(5), 896-905.
- Eatough, V., & Smith, J. A. (2008). Interpretative phenomenological analysis. *The Sage handbook of qualitative research in psychology*, 179, 194.
- Eberhard, David (2007). *I trygghetsnarkomanernas land: om Sverige och det nationella paniksyndromet*. [Ny utg.] Stockholm: Månocket
- 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. doi: 10.1177/1461444811410395
- 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), article 2.
- Etikan, I., Musa, S. A., & Alkassim, R. S. (2016). Comparison of convenience sampling and purposive sampling. *American journal of theoretical and applied statistics*, 5(1), 1-4.
- Feingold, A. (1990). Gender differences in effects of physical attractiveness on romantic attraction: A comparison across five research paradigms. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 59(5), 981–993. doi: 10.1037/0022-3514.59.5.981

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.

Fiske, S. T., & Taylor, S. E. (1991). *Social cognition*. McGraw-Hill Book Company.

Geert-Hofstede.com, *Country comparison Sweden*, Retrieved from: <https://www.hofstede-insights.com/country-comparison/sweden/>

Gibbs, J., Ellison, N., & Heino, R. (2006). Self-presentation in online personals: The role of Anticipated future interaction, self-disclosure, and success in Internet dating. *Communication Research*, 33, 152–177.

Gibbs, J. L., Ellison, N. B., & Lai, C. H. (2011). First comes love, then comes Google: An investigation of uncertainty reduction strategies and self-disclosure in online dating. *Communication Research*, 38(1), 70-100.

Goffman, E. (1978). *The presentation of self in everyday life* (p. 56). London: Harmondsworth.

Gonzales, M. H., & Meyers, S. A. (1993). ‘Your mother would like me’: Self-presentation in the personals ads of heterosexual and homosexual men and women. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 19(2), 131–142. doi: 10.1177/0146167293192001

Goodman-Deane, J., Mieczakowski, A., Johnson, D., Goldhaber, T., & Clarkson, P. J. (2016). The impact of communication technologies on life and relationship satisfaction. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 57, 219-229.

Hall, J. A., Park, N., Song, H., & Cody, M. J. (2010). Strategic misrepresentation in online dating: The effects of gender, self-monitoring, and personality traits. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, 27(1), 117–135. doi: 10.1177/0265407509349633

Hampton, K. N., Goulet, L. S., Rainie, L. & Purcell, K. (2011) ‘Social networking sites and our lives: how people's trust, personal relationships, and civic and political involvement are connected to their use of social networking sites and other technologies’, [Online] Available at: <http://pewinternet.org/~-/media//Files/Reports/2011/PIP%20->

Hance, M. A., Blackhart, G., & Dew, M. (2018). Free to be me: The relationship between the true self, rejection sensitivity, and use of online dating sites. *The Journal of social psychology, 158*(4), 421-429.

Handley, E., & Hutchinson, N. (2013). The experience of carers in supporting people with intellectual disabilities through the process of bereavement: An interpretative phenomenological analysis. *Journal of Applied Research in Intellectual Disabilities, 26*(3), 186-194.

Harrison, A. A., & Saeed, L. (1977). Let's make a deal: An analysis of revelations and stipulations in lonely hearts advertisements. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 35*(4), 257–264. doi: 10.1037/0022-3514.35.4.257

Healy, M., & Perry, C. (2000). Comprehensive criteria to judge validity and reliability of qualitative research within the realism paradigm. *Qualitative Market Research – An International Journal, 3*(3), 118-126

Heino, R. D., Ellison, N. B., & Gibbs, J. L. (2010). Relationshopping: Investigating the market metaphor in online dating. *Journal of Social and Personal relationships, 27*(4), 427-447.

Help.tinder.com. (2020). *A Guide To Tinder – Tinder*. Retrieved 13 May 2020, from <https://www.help.tinder.com/hc/en-us/categories/115000755686-A-Guide-To-Tinder->.

Herlitz, G. (2003). *Svenskar: hur vi är och varför*. Konsultförl./Uppsala Publishing House.

Hirschman, E. (1987). People as products: analysis of a complex marketing exchange. (personal advertisements as examples of marketing exchange). *Journal of Marketing, 51*(1), 98–108. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1251147>

Howe-Walsh, L., & Turnbull, S. (2016). Barriers to women leaders in academia: tales from science and technology. *Studies in Higher Education, 41*(3), 415-428.

Hox, J. J., & Boeijs, H. R. (2005). Data collection, primary versus secondary.

Ince, D. (2013). app. In *A Dictionary of the Internet*. Retrieved from <http://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/acref/9780191744150.001.0001/acref-9780191744150-e-4443>

Ince, D. (2019). online dating. In *A Dictionary of the Internet*. Retrieved from <http://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/acref/9780191884276.001.0001/acref-9780191884276-e-4518>

Internetstiftelsen. (2019). *Svenskarna och internet 2019*. Retrieved from <https://svenskarnaochinternet.se/app/uploads/2019/10/svenskarna-och-internet-2019-a4.pdf>

Joinson, A., McKenna, K., & Postmes, T. (2009). *Oxford Handbook of Internet Psychology*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Joinson, A., & Paine, C. (2009). Self-disclosure, Privacy and the Internet. In *Oxford Handbook of Internet Psychology*. <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199561803.013.0016>

Jourard, S.M. and Lasakow, P. (1958), "Some factors in self-disclosure", *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology*, Vol. 56No. 1, pp. 91

Keldsen, T. (2018). *Svenskarna föredrar Tinder för att svajpa fram tjejer*. YouGov: What the world thinks. Retrieved 11 May 2020, from <https://yougov.se/news/2018/05/01/svenskarna-foredrar-tinder-att-svajpa-fram-dejter/>.

Koestner, R., & Wheeler, L. (1988). Self-presentation in personal advertisements: The influence of implicit notions of attraction and role expectations. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, 5(2), 149–160. doi: 10.1177/026540758800500202

Kowalski, R. M., Giumetti, G. W., Schroeder, A. N., & Lattanner, M. R. (2014). Bullying in the digital age: A critical review and meta-analysis of cyberbullying research among youth. *Psychological bulletin*, 140(4), 1073.

Kramer, N. C., & Winter, S. (2008). Impression management 2.0: The relationship of self-esteem, extraversion, self-efficacy, and self-presentation within social networking sites. *Journal of Media Psychology*, 20(3), 106–116. doi: 10.1027/1864-1105.20.3.106

- Krauss, S. E. (2005). Research paradigms and meaning making: A primer. *The qualitative report*, 10(4), 758- 770.
- Kraut, R., Kiesler, S., Boneva, B., Cummings, J., Helgeson, V., & Crawford, A. (2002). Internet paradox revisited. *Journal of social issues*, 58(1), 49-74.
- Lamb, C. W., Hair, J. F., & McDaniel, C. (2015). *MKTG 9*. Cengage Learning.
- Lawson, H. M., & Leck, K. (2006). Dynamics of internet dating. *Social Science Computer Review*, 24(2), 189-208. doi:10.1177/0894439305283402
- LeFebvre, L. E. (2018). Swiping me off my feet: Explicating relationship initiation on Tinder. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, 35(9), 1205-1229.
- Lewis, K. , Kaufman, J. and Christakis, N. (2008), "The taste for privacy: an analysis of college student privacy settings in an online social network", *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication* , Vol. 14, pp. 79-100.
- Li, C.L. (2011), "Online social network acceptance: a social perspective", *Internet Research* , Vol. 21 No. 5, pp. 562-580.
- Lin, A. C. (1998). Bridging positivist and interpretivist approaches to qualitative methods. *Policy studies journal*, 26(1), 162-180.
- Lin, K. H., & Lundquist, J. (2013). Mate selection in cyberspace: The intersection of race, gender, and education. *American Journal of Sociology*, 119(1), 183-215.
- Lincoln, Y.S., & Guba, E.G. (1985). *Naturalistic Inquiry*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage
- Longhurst, Robyn. "Semi-structured interviews and focus groups." *Key methods in geography* 3 (2003): 143-156.
- Lutz, C., & Ranzini, G. (2017). Where dating meets data: Investigating social and institutional privacy concerns on Tinder. *Social Media+ Society*, 3(1), 2056305117697735.
- Mahmood, Qaisar (2012). *Jakten på svenskheten*. Stockholm: Natur & kultur
- Manago, A. M., Graham, M. B., Greenfield, P. M., & Salimkhan, G. (2008). Self-presentation and gender on MySpace. *Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology*, 29(6), 446-458.

- McGloin, R., & Denes, A. (2018). Too hot to trust: Examining the relationship between attractiveness, trustworthiness, and desire to date in online dating. *new media & society*, 20(3), 919-936.
- McKenna, K. Y., Green, A. S., & Gleason, M. E. (2002). Relationship formation on the Internet: What's the big attraction?. *Journal of social issues*, 58(1), 9-31.
- Mintzberg, H. (1987). The strategy concept I: Five Ps for strategy. *California management review*, 30(1), 11-24.
- Nadkarni, A., & Hofmann, S. G. (2012). Why do people use Facebook?. *Personality and individual differences*, 52(3), 243-249.
- Nguyen, T. N., McDonald, M., Nguyen, T. H. T., & McCauley, B. (2020). Gender relations and social media: a grounded theory inquiry of young Vietnamese women's self-presentations on Facebook. *Gender, Technology and Development*, 1-20.
- Napoli, P. M. (1999). The marketplace of ideas metaphor in communications regulation. *Journal of Communication*, 49, 151-169.
- Oberst, U., Renau, V., Chamarro, A., & Carbonell, X. (2016). Gender stereotypes in Facebook profiles: Are women more female online?. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 60, 559-56
- Ollier-Malaterre, A., Rothbard, N. P., & Berg, J. M. (2013). When worlds collide in cyberspace: How boundary work in online social networks impacts professional relationships. *Academy of Management Review*, 38(4), 645-669.
- Patton, M. Q. (1990). *Qualitative evaluation and research methods*. SAGE Publications, inc.
- Pietkiewicz, I., & Smith, J. A. (2014). A practical guide to using interpretative phenomenological analysis in qualitative research psychology. *Psychological journal*, 20(1), 7-14.
- Ramarajan, L. (2014). Past, present and future research on multiple identities: Toward an intrapersonal network approach. *Academy of Management Annals*, 8(1), 589-659.
- Ramarajan, L., & Reid, E. (2013). Shattering the myth of separate worlds: Negotiating nonwork identities at work. *Academy of Management Review*, 38(4), 621-644.

Ramirez, A., Sumner, E. M., Fleuriot, C., & Cole, M. (2015). When online dating partners meet offline: The effect of modality switching on relational communication between online daters. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, 20(1), 99-114.

Ranzini, G., & Lutz, C. (2017). Love at first swipe? Explaining Tinder self-presentation and motives. *Mobile Media & Communication*, 5(1), 80-101.

Regan, P. C. (2016). *The mating game: A primer on love, sex, and marriage*. Sage Publications.

Robinson, O. C. (2014) Sampling in Interview-Based Qualitative Research: A Theoretical and Practical Guide, *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 11:1, 25-41, DOI: 10.1080/14780887.2013.801543

Rogers, C. (1951). *Client-centered therapy*. Boston: Houghton-Mifflin.

Saunders, M., Lewis, P. and Thornhill, A. (2016). *Research methods for business students* (7th ed.). Harlow: Pearson Education Limited.

Silva, R. R., Koch, M. L., Rickers, K., Kreuzer, G., & Topolinski, S. (2019). The Tinder™ stamp: Perceived trustworthiness of online daters and its persistence in neutral contexts. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 94, 45-55.

Shenton, A. K. (2004). Strategies for ensuring trustworthiness in qualitative research projects. *Education for*

Skopek, J., Schulz, F., & Blossfeld, H. P. (2011). Who contacts whom? Educational homophily in online mate selection. *European Sociological Review*, 27(2), 180-195.

Smahel, D., & Subrahmanyam, K. (2007). “Any girls want to chat press 911”: Partner selection in monitored and unmonitored teen chat rooms. *CyberPsychology & Behavior*, 10(3), 346-353.

Smith, A., & Anderson, M. (2016). 5 facts about online dating. *Fact Tank*, 29.

Smith, J.A. and Osborn, M. (2003). Interpretative phenomenological analysis. In J.A. Smith (ed.), *Qualitative Psychology. A Practical Guide to Research Methods* (pp. 51– 80). London: Sage.

Statistiska Centralbyrån (2020). Retrieved 12 May 2020, from <https://www.scb.se/hitta-statistik/statistik-efter-amne/befolkning/befolkningens-sammansattning/befolkningsstatistik/pong/tabell-och-diagram/topplistor-kommuner/folkmangd-topp-50/>

Storey, L. (2007). Doing interpretative phenomenological analysis. *Analysing qualitative data in psychology*, 51-64.

Subrahmanyam, K., & Smahel, D. (2010). *Digital youth: The role of media in development*. Springer Science & Business Media.

Sutko, D., & de Souza E Silva, A. (2011). Location-aware mobile media and urban sociability. *New Media & Society*, 13(5), 807–823. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444810385202>

Svenskarna och internet. (2019). *Unga använder Tinder - Svenskarna och internet*. [online] Available at: <https://svenskarnaochinternet.se/rapporter/svenskarna-och-internet-2018/andra-aktiviteter-pa-natet/unga-anvander-tinder/> [Accessed 16 Feb. 2020].

Swarm, W. B. (1990). To be known or to be adored: The interplay of self-enhancement and self-verification. *Handbook of motivation and cognition*, 2, 448.

Timmermans, E., & De Caluwé, E. (2017). Development and validation of the Tinder Motives Scale (TMS). *Computers in Human Behavior*, 70, 341-350.

Tinder Newsroom. (2020). *Tinder Newsroom - About Tinder*. Retrieved 29 March 2020, from <https://www.tinderpressroom.com/about>.

Toma, C. L., Hancock, J. T., & Ellison, N. B. (2008). Separating fact from fiction: An examination of deceptive self-presentation in online dating profiles. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 34(8), 1023-1036.

Toma, C. L., & Hancock, J. T. (2010). Looks and lies: The role of physical attractiveness in online dating self-presentation and deception. *Communication Research*, 37(3), 335–351. doi: 10.1177/0093650209356437

- Toma, C. L., & Hancock, J. T. (2011). A new twist on love's labor: Self-presentation in online dating profiles In KB Wright & LM Webb. *Computer-mediated communication in personal relationships*, 41-55.
- Tosun, L. (2012). Motives for Facebook use and expressing "true self" on the Internet. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 28(4), 1510–1517. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2012.03.018>
- Uski, S., & Lampinen, A. (2016). Social norms and self-presentation on social network sites: Profile work in action. *New media & society*, 18(3), 447-464.
- Walther, J. B. (1996). Computer-mediated communication: Impersonal, interpersonal, and hyperpersonal interaction. *Communication Research*, 23, 3–44.
- Walsh, D., & Bull, R. (2012). Examining rapport in investigative interviews with suspects: Does its building and maintenance work?. *Journal of police and criminal psychology*, 27(1), 73-84.
- Walther, J. B. (2007). Selective self-presentation in computer-mediated communication: Hyperpersonal dimensions of technology, language, and cognition. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 23(5), 2538-2557.
- Wang, C. C., & Chang, Y. T. (2010). Cyber relationship motives: Scale development and validation. *Social Behavior and Personality: an international journal*, 38(3), 289-300.
- Ward, J. (2017). What are you doing on Tinder? Impression management on a matchmaking mobile app. *Information, Communication & Society*, 20(11), 1644-1659.
- Wei, R. (2016). Taking stock and showcasing communication research on Asia for a global audience. *Asian Journal of Communication*, 26, 507–510. doi:10.1080/01292986.2016.1246168
- Wheless, L.R. and Grotz, J. (1976), "Conceptualization and measurement of reported self-disclosure", *Human Communication Research* , Vol. 2 No. 4, pp. 338-346.
- Whitty, M. (2008). Revealing the "real" me, searching for the "actual" you: Presentations of self on an internet dating site. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 24(4), 1707–1723.
- Zhao, S., Grasmuck, S., & Martin, J. (2008). Identity construction on Facebook: Digital empowerment in anchored relationships. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 24, 1816–1836. doi:10.1016/j.chb.2008.02.012

Zhou, T. (2011), "Understanding online community user participation: a social influence perspective", *Internet Research* , Vol. 21 No. 1, pp. 67-81.

Zytka, D., Jones, Q., & Grandhi, S. A. (2014). *Impression management and formation in online dating systems*. Presented at the Twenty Second European Conference on Information Systems, Tel Aviv

9. Appendix

9.1 Appendix 1 Interview Consent form

Interview Consent Form

Research Project Title:

Research authors: Alice Jörgensen Pesch, Cilla Palmroos

Information:

- The interview will take 60-90 minutes.
- You have the right to interrupt the interview and you are free to withdraw from this research if you would like to. This interview will be recorded and thereafter transcribed.
- We will be analysing the transcript of this interview, and you will remain anonymous as a participant in this research.
- Quotations from this interview or any summary from the interview content that are published publicly through academic publication or academic databases may be used in academic articles, newspapers, or policy articles.

By signing this consent form, I agree that:

1. I am voluntarily participating in this research project. I also understand that I can withdraw at any time.
2. The content from this interview may be used as explained above.
3. I have thoroughly read the information sheet provided.
4. I am aware that no payment or benefit will be received by participating in this research.
5. I am informed that I can request a copy of my transcribed interview and request any edits in the content in order to ensure any issues regarding confidentiality.
6. The researchers have made it clear that I am allowed to ask any questions during and after the interview and that I am free to contact them at any time if necessary.

Participants signature

Date

Researchers signature

Date