

Revisiting Communication in the Digital Age: Unraveling the Confluence of Dating Apps, Advertising Strategies, and Dark Patterns

FIRYA QURRATU'AIN ABISONO¹ & RISKY APRILIANI²

¹Communication Science, Universitas Sebelas Maret (UNS), Indonesia

²Communication Studies, Universitas Muhammadiyah Surakarta, Indonesia

E-mail: firyagr@staff.uns.ac.id

Abstract

This comprehensive literature review delves into the intricate interplay between dating app ecosystems, advertising strategies, and the discrete integration of dark patterns—design elements subtly influencing user behavior. By synthesizing and analyzing existing scholarly works, this review navigates the multifaceted landscape where these elements converge. The article uncovers the strategic integration of advertising within dating app ecosystems, exploring how these platforms leverage advertising to enhance user engagement, influence interactions, and generate revenue. It delves into the ethical nuances of integrating dark patterns into app interfaces, raising questions about the balance between user autonomy and design manipulation. Furthermore, the article examines the intricate realm of user data privacy within dating apps, revealing the methods by which data is collected and harnessed for targeted advertising purposes. This exploration sheds light on the potential privacy vulnerabilities users may face and considers the regulatory frameworks guiding data protection. As a synthesis of current literature, this article offers a platform for researchers, practitioners, and policy makers to engage in a comprehensive discourse about the ethical dimensions encompassing dating app ecosystems, advertising strategies, and dark patterns. By weaving together insights from various perspectives, it contributes to an ongoing dialogue on responsible technology design that prioritizes user welfare, fosters transparency, and aligns with ethical considerations in an ever-evolving digital landscape.

Keywords: Dating Apps, Advertising Strategies, Dark Patterns, Data Privacy, Consumer Protection

Abstrak

Tinjauan literatur ini mengeksplorasi hubungan yang kompleks antara ekosistem aplikasi kencan, strategi periklanan, dan penggunaan terselubung dari "dark patterns"—elemen desain yang secara halus memengaruhi perilaku pengguna. Melalui analisis karya-karya ilmiah yang ada, peneliti menelusuri bagaimana elemen-elemen ini saling terkait dan memengaruhi satu sama lain. Dalam artikel ini, membahas bagaimana periklanan diintegrasikan secara strategis dalam aplikasi kencan. Artikel ini fokus melihat bagaimana platform-platform menggunakan iklan untuk meningkatkan keterlibatan pengguna, memengaruhi interaksi antar pengguna, dan menghasilkan pendapatan. Selain itu, peneliti juga mengeksplorasi aspek etis dari penggunaan "dark patterns" dalam antarmuka aplikasi, yang sering kali menimbulkan pertanyaan tentang sejauh mana desain ini memanipulasi pengguna versus menghormati otonomi mereka. Lebih lanjut, artikel ini menyelami isu privasi data pengguna dalam aplikasi kencan, mengungkap bagaimana data dikumpulkan dan digunakan untuk tujuan periklanan yang ditargetkan. Ini membantu peneliti memahami potensi risiko privasi yang mungkin dihadapi pengguna dan mengevaluasi kerangka regulasi yang ada untuk melindungi data. Sebagai sebuah sintesis dari literatur yang ada, artikel ini mengajak para peneliti, praktisi, dan pembuat kebijakan untuk berdiskusi tentang aspek-aspek etis yang melingkupi ekosistem aplikasi kencan, strategi periklanan, dan penggunaan "dark patterns." Dengan menggabungkan berbagai wawasan, artikel ini berkontribusi pada diskusi tentang desain teknologi yang bertanggung jawab, yang memprioritaskan kesejahteraan pengguna, mendorong transparansi, dan sejalan dengan pertimbangan etis di dunia digital yang terus berubah.

CoverAge

Journal of Strategic
Communication

Vol. 15, No. 1, Hal.1-114
September 2024.

Fakultas Ilmu Komunikasi,
Universitas Pancasila

Kata Kunci: Aplikasi Kencan, Strategi Periklanan, Dark Patterns, Privasi Data, Perlindungan Konsumen

Accepted December 11, 2023
Revised July 10, 2024
Approved September 12, 2024

INTRODUCTION

The complexity of technology and society has given birth to a new civilization known as the digital society era (Estaswara & Anggraeni, 2018). Unlike conventional forms of communication media, such as advertising, which utilize mass media to deliver messages that are one-way from the communicator to the recipient of the message, while the interactive or digital communication pattern, in the information technology era, there is a new media form that utilizes the internet as an interactive or digital media. Viewed from the substantive dimension, the message delivery pattern in interactive communication is more of a dialogue, where the new media allows various forms of communication patterns, can be one-way, reciprocal, even in the form of a centralized discussion (Prayitno, 2021). The roles of the communicator and the communicant can change roles, messages in the form of images, audio, video, or writing can develop, and the function of the role as an informative, persuasive message, even cursive to encourage immediate action, can occur at the real-time and spread without limits (borderless) in a network that can cover the entire world. Basically, interactive media has inherent properties as a form of interpersonal communication and mass communication, coupled with its own properties due to the existence of information technology, especially the internet, so that a new media species has emerged known as interactivedigital media (Apriliani & Nurjanah, 2023). Currently and in the future, the role of interactive media is the backbone of business and marketing in the global era. George E. Belch and Michael A. Belch in the book *Advertising and Promotion: An Integrated Marketing Communications Perspective*, state that interactive media allows for a reciprocal flow of information in a way that users can participate in and modify the form and content of information messages received at the same time (Prayitno,

2021).

In this digital era, dating apps have revolutionized the way individuals seek romantic connections, offering unparalleled convenience and accessibility. These platforms allow users to browse profiles, interact with potential matches, and easily arrange meetings, reshaping the landscape of modern romance. According to Sari and Kusuma (2018), online dating serves as a prime example of Computer-Mediated Communication (CMC), which can enhance interpersonal closeness by fostering idealized perceptions of others (Kashian et al., 2017). Success in online dating often hinges on self-disclosure, where users share personal traits and feelings to cultivate deeper connections (DeVito, 2011). Trust is a crucial element that encourages this self-disclosure on digital platforms (Fadilla et al., 2023).

Unlike traditional dating, which relies on serendipitous encounters and in-person interactions, online dating merges technology with intentionality, reflecting a lifestyle of urban sophistication and technological advancement that creates a new form of social status (Fatiny, 2017). However, this shift is not without its drawbacks. Algorithms that drive these platforms can perpetuate biases in matching preferences, and issues such as bubble filters and the commodification of user data raise significant ethical concerns (Abisono, 2021).

The online dating process begins with creating a user account, where individuals input personal details and dating preferences and upload photos. Upon finding a match, users can communicate through various digital tools, facilitating the process of getting to know each other. A distinctive feature of online dating is the algorithmic recommendation of matches, which underscores the blend of human intent and algorithmic assistance in these modern dating practices.

However, the digitalization of dating al-

so brings forth ethical challenges, particularly concerning the use of "dark patterns." These are design strategies that subtly manipulate user behavior, often prioritizing the service's benefit over the user's experience. For example, Match.com has faced criticism for allegedly allowing fake messages to entice users into subscribing (Narayanan et al., 2020). Such practices in dating apps raise critical questions about transparency, user autonomy, and ethical design standards.

This research builds upon three previous studies to expand the understanding of these issues and identify existing gaps. Fadilla, Setiawan, and Karimah (2023) highlighted that physical attractiveness and personality are pivotal in the initial stages of online dating, with trust being essential for deeper self-disclosure. Garda and Karhulahti (2019) analyzed how Tinder's game-like design engages users through uncertainty and entertainment. Rahbari (2023) explored how Hinge's design could privilege certain users, underscoring the need to study user perceptions alongside app features.

The present study aims to shed light on the presence and implications of commercial dark patterns within dating apps. It investigates the strategies employed by these platforms to influence user behavior, particularly in the areas of engagement, monetization, and data collection. By examining these design practices, this research contributes to the broader understanding of the intersection between technology, commerce, and user experience in digital dating. This analysis aligns with the theme of "Revisit Communication: Integrating the Basics with Digital," emphasizing the evolving dynamics of human interaction and the ethical considerations inherent in digital dating environments.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The role of the internet through Social Networking Sites (SNSs) or social networking

media, has created a public space or public sphere as a form of "cyber democracy" and has the capacity to disseminate messages in real time (Owen & Humphrey, 2008). Thousands or even millions of people around the world have used various applications and other similar social media as a means of communication (Estaswara & Anggraeni, 2018). Not only that, it is also connected mobile via smartphones and makes it a significant daily activity (Boyd & Ellison, 2008). SNSs also help to reconnect with old friends or become a means to build relationships with new friends around the world, without time and geographical limits.

In today's digital age, finding a romantic partner has become increasingly accessible, thanks to the advent of online dating applications. These applications, commonly referred to as dating apps, are software platforms designed primarily for mobile devices but are also accessible through web platforms. They facilitate the connection between individuals seeking romantic relationships, companionship, or casual dates by utilizing a combination of user-provided information, sophisticated algorithms, and interactive features. These apps suggest potential matches based on shared interests, geographical proximity, and other compatibility factors, creating a virtual environment where users can engage in social, sexual, and romantic relationships (Pooley, 2021; Pavia, 2021).

The popularity of dating apps has surged in recent years, with millions of users worldwide swiping through potential romantic partners daily. This phenomenon reflects a significant shift in how people approach relationships, moving from traditional face-to-face meetings to online interactions. Ward (2019) highlights that these apps tap into a subconscious desire to be perceived as attractive, desirable, and worthy. The process often involves a cycle of receiving attention and validation, which can be suddenly with-

drawn, only to be dangled again, creating a loop that keeps users engaged.

Drawing on Zygmunt Bauman's concept of 'liquid love' (Bauman, 2013), the fluidity of modern relationships can be attributed to socio-technological changes that have dissolved the once-secure foundations of romantic partnerships. Hobbs et al., (2017) expand on this by introducing the idea of 'networked intimacy,' where both temporary and permanent romantic connections are now influenced by digital networks, resulting in what they term 'confluent love.' This form of love is contingent and strategic, shaped by the interactions and connections made through these platforms. While some dating apps attempt to differentiate themselves from the gamified hook-up culture, they still operate within this framework of confluence.

The rise of dating apps has not only changed the way people search for partners but also how they communicate and develop relationships. Before meeting face-to-face, users typically engage in online interactions, where they exchange personal information as part of the relationship-building process, known as self-disclosure. Online self-disclosure involves sharing personal details with someone via the internet, a crucial step in developing intimacy and trust in the digital age (Manu et al., 2017).

However, the convenience and excitement of online dating come with a darker side that cannot be ignored. The design of dating apps often includes manipulative elements known as "dark patterns." These are deceptive design techniques intended to trick users into taking specific actions or making choices that may not be in their best interest. Such patterns exploit psychological biases to influence user behavior, ultimately maximizing app engagement and profitability. Douglas (2020) identifies several examples of dark patterns in dating apps, including deceptive user interfaces, misleading notifications, hidden costs

or fees, forced consent to data sharing, and other manipulative tactics. These practices not only lead to negative user experiences but also raise significant privacy concerns and can result in harmful outcomes.

Harry Brignull, a UX designer and researcher, has extensively documented these deceptive strategies on his website, "Deceptive Design" (formerly known as "Dark Patterns"). In a 2020 interview with *Wired*, Brignull emphasized that one of the primary goals of dark patterns is to maximize user retention. Companies often make it difficult for users to leave their platforms, knowing that even a slight extension in user engagement can translate into significant financial gains. While Brignull's work mainly focuses on websites, many of the strategies he describes are also prevalent in geosocial dating apps, particularly those that incorporate gamification elements.

Gamification, the application of game-like mechanics in non-gaming contexts, is a common feature in many dating apps, particularly those targeted at specific demographics, such as gay dating apps. These apps often use points, badges, and other rewards to encourage user engagement, making the process of finding a match feel like a game. Grindr, one of the first gay geosocial apps, is often credited with mainstreaming these dark patterns. Although these strategies are designed to keep users engaged, they can also lead to compulsive behavior and contribute to the commodification of relationships.

The excitement surrounding online dating apps is tempered by the increasing prevalence of crime associated with these platforms. Incidents of fraud, identity theft, and online gender-based violence have been reported, raising serious concerns about user safety. Crimes that begin on dating apps are particularly challenging to address, as they often involve fake identities and accounts that are easily created in cyberspace. Victims may

find it difficult to report these crimes to authorities, as the perpetrators can be elusive and hard to track down.

Given these risks, it is crucial for users to be aware of the potential dangers and to take steps to protect themselves while using online dating apps. Understanding the psychological manipulation tactics employed by these platforms can help users make more informed decisions and avoid falling victim to dark patterns. Additionally, users should be cautious about sharing personal information and should take advantage of privacy settings and security features offered by the apps.

While online dating apps have revolutionized the way people connect and form relationships, they also present new challenges and risks. The use of dark patterns in app design raises ethical concerns about user manipulation and privacy, while the potential for crime and exploitation underscores the need for greater awareness and caution. As these platforms continue to evolve, it is essential for both users and developers to consider the broader implications of their design choices and to prioritize safety and transparency in the online dating experience.

METHOD

This study employs a document analysis approach, utilizing existing data on online dating applications as well as insights from previous research to synthesize findings relevant to this investigation. The data analysis process is iterative, occurring concurrently with data collection, where information is systematically reduced and distilled to draw meaningful conclusions. This research uses a qualitative approach. Data analysis using the model analysis determined by Miles and Huberman (Rijali, 2018) often called interactive data analysis methods. They reveal that activities in qualitative data analysis are carried out interactively and continues continuously until completion, until the data is available fed up.

There are three activities in qualitative data analysis, namely the data reduction stage, displaying data, and conclusions or verification. The study also incorporates data triangulation as a critical tool to validate findings and ensure the reliability of the research. This triangulation process allows for a comprehensive examination of the psychological implications of advertising strategies and the use of dark patterns within online dating apps. The research specifically focuses on how these elements impact user experiences, including their emotional well-being, satisfaction with the app, and overall engagement levels. By cross-referencing multiple data sources, this study aims to provide a nuanced understanding of the effects of these practices on users.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Dating App and Advertising Strategies

Advertising strategies on dating app have been widely examined in academic literature, reflecting the evolving nature of digital marketing in these unique platforms. For example, research by Wang et al., (2018) demonstrated that online dating apps, such as Tinder, are increasingly viewed as legitimate and effective channels for advertising. Their study highlighted that Generation Z users, in particular, exhibit positive receptivity toward marketing campaigns on these platforms, although the acceptance level across different generations did not show statistically significant differences. This suggests that dating apps may serve as a versatile platform for engaging a broad demographic through advertising.

Further exploration into advertising strategies reveals a significant shift from a product-centric approach to a more brand-focused strategy. Historically, advertising was dominated by the "Unique Selling Proposition" (USP), which emphasized specific product benefits. However, as Rita et al., (2020) discuss, modern advertising has transitioned

to strategies that prioritize brand identity and values, aiming to create a more profound connection with consumers. This evolution is particularly relevant in the context of dating apps, where branding can resonate deeply with users' personal identities and experiences.

Dating apps capitalize on various sophisticated targeting mechanisms to ensure that advertisements reach the most relevant audiences. These platforms typically use demographic factors such as age, location, gender, interests, and relationship status to tailor ads precisely. For instance, a company selling dating advice e-books might strategically target ads to single users aged 25 to 34, thereby increasing the likelihood of engagement and conversion (Wang et al., 2018).

Moreover, dating apps utilize diverse advertising formats to capture user attention effectively. Banner ads, a common format, are prominently displayed at the top or bottom of the app interface and can be either static or animated. These ads often link directly to an advertiser's website or a specific landing page. For example, a banner ad for dating advice e-books might feature an image of a happy couple, accompanied by text encouraging users to seek advice for finding love, and would be shown to the targeted demographic (Rita et al., 2020).

Sponsored content represents another prevalent advertising format within dating apps, often blurring the lines between organic and paid content. Such content might appear as articles, blog posts, or videos that are seamlessly integrated into the app's regular offerings. For example, a dating advice company could sponsor a blog post titled "Top 10 Tips for Finding Love Online," which, while informative, subtly promotes the company's products or services. This type of advertising is designed to engage users without disrupting their experience, increasing the likelihood that the content will be consumed (Rita et al.,

2020).

Native ads are perhaps the most unobtrusive form of advertising on dating apps. These ads are meticulously crafted to blend in with the app's organic content, making them less likely to be dismissed by users. Examples include sponsored profiles, messages, or search results that appear naturally within the user's browsing experience. A sponsored profile might, for instance, appear when a user searches for dating tips, providing information about an e-book along with a call-to-action to purchase (Rita et al., 2020).

Despite the strategic benefits, advertising on dating apps is not without its challenges. For instance, Bumble faced criticism for a recent advertising campaign that was perceived as insensitive to the 4B movement, which encourages women and other genders to avoid heterosexual relationships (TJ Withers, 2024). This incident underscores the importance of cultural sensitivity and the need to align advertising campaigns with the broader social and ethical context in which they operate.

In conclusion, advertising on dating apps presents a unique and potent opportunity for brands to engage with a highly involved audience. By leveraging advanced targeting options and diverse ad formats, companies can effectively market their products or services within these platforms. However, the ethical implications of such advertising practices must be carefully considered. Brands must ensure that their campaigns are respectful, inclusive, and culturally aware, as this approach not only fosters user trust but also enhances their reputation in the highly competitive landscape of dating app marketing.

Algorithm and Dark Pattern on Dating App

As previously explored, the algorithms that power online dating applications are fundamentally driven by the data collected within the app ecosystem. This user-generated data,

willingly provided during profile creation and interaction, becomes an invaluable set that enables the algorithm to gain a nuanced understanding of individual preferences. These preferences span a wide array of personal interests, including culinary tastes, preferred dating venues, and even specific lifestyle choices. For instance, some platforms like Bumble allow users to include vacation preferences in their profiles, which the algorithm then uses to store, refine, and optimize potential matches by aligning individuals based on shared interests and characteristics (Samuelson et al., 2024; Muyssetal., 2024).

Additionally, the algorithm's operational capacity extends to generating match recommendations, a feature intricately linked to the frequency of a user's engagement with the app. The algorithm dynamically adjusts its output, increasing the number of potential matches as a user's interaction with the app intensifies. This adaptive approach is designed to sustain user interest and satisfaction, thereby fostering a more immersive and engaging experience within the digital dating environment (Samuelson et al., 2024; Rosalsky, 2024).

However, while this sophisticated ecosystem offers substantial benefits, it also presents potential risks, particularly as the user base expands. The growing appeal of these platforms to advertisers, eager to exploit the vast amounts of data generated by users, introduces significant concerns. Online dating apps may find themselves tempted to monetize this data through partnerships with advertisers, leading to the potential sale or sharing of personal information. Such practices raise critical ethical questions, particularly regarding user consent and data privacy. The unauthorized sharing of user data with third parties without explicit consent compromises user autonomy and highlights the broader ethical implications of data protection in the context of online dating (Caltrideretal., 2024).

a. **Misleading Subscription Models:**

A prominent example of commercial dark patterns in dating apps is the strategic use of misleading subscription models designed to exploit user behavior and maximize revenue. These deceptive tactics often involve enticing users with ostensibly attractive "Free Trial" offers that appear to provide valuable services at no cost. However, these offers are frequently structured to automatically convert into paid subscriptions, often without clear or timely notification to the user, unless the user actively cancels the subscription before the trial period ends (Raju, 2022). This approach leverages a lack of transparency and user understanding, manipulating users into inadvertently committing to ongoing payments. The complexity and ambiguity of these subscription models are purposefully designed to obscure the true cost and commitment involved, making it challenging for users to make fully informed decisions. Consequently, this practice raises significant ethical concerns about transparency, fairness, and the respect for user autonomy within the digital marketplace. The manipulation inherent in such models not only undermines user trust but also highlights broader issues in the digital economy related to informed consent and the ethical boundaries of user engagement strategies (Muyssetal., 2024).

b. **Hidden Costs:**

Hidden costs embedded within dating apps present significant concerns regarding transparency and the preservation of user autonomy. These costs are typically associated with premium features or subscription services, yet they are often not clearly communicated to users. The lack of explicit disclosure means that users may remain unaware of the full financial commitments they are undertaking when interacting with the app. This opacity can result in unexpected charges, leaving users surpris-

ed and frustrated when they discover the true cost of utilizing certain features. Furthermore, the ambiguity surrounding the pricing of upgrades or premium services exacerbates this issue, as users struggle to fully comprehend the financial implications of their decisions within the app (Alter, 2017). This scenario is particularly troubling because it can lead to unintended financial burdens, causing users to experience unnecessary stress or financial strain. The broader implications of hidden costs are profound, impacting user decision-making and eroding trust in the app's integrity. In essence, the failure to provide clear and transparent financial information within dating apps raises serious ethical concerns about informed consent, fairness, and the responsibility of app developers to protect users from deceptive practices (Muysetal., 2024).

c. Notification Overload:

Notification overload, as explored by Deterding et al., (2011), is a prevalent issue in dating apps that is often intensified by advertising strategies designed to maximize user engagement and monetization. These platforms frequently bombard users with a barrage of notifications, many of which may offer little meaningful content. This tactic, while intended to keep users engaged, can inadvertently lead to notification fatigue—a condition where users become desensitized to constant alerts, ultimately diminishing the quality of their interactions and overall user experience (Samuelson et al., 2024). Advertising within dating apps is intricately woven into the user experience as a primary revenue-generating mechanism. These advertisements can take various forms, including promoted profiles, sponsored messages, or banner ads strategically placed within the app. In many cases, dating apps may time these ad placements to coincide with

notifications, further contributing to the overwhelming number of alerts users receive (Samuelson et al., 2024). The relationship between notification overload and ad strategies highlights a critical tension between the need for app monetization and the preservation of user satisfaction. While advertisements are vital for the financial sustainability of dating apps, their excessive or poorly timed deployment can detract from the user experience. As such, developers and designers must carefully calibrate the frequency and timing of both notifications and ads to prevent notification fatigue, thereby ensuring sustained user engagement and satisfaction (Samuelson et al., 2024).

d. Artificial Scarcity:

Artificial scarcity is a commonly employed tactic in dating apps, often manifesting through messages such as "Limited Matches" or "Almost Out of Likes," which are designed to create a sense of urgency among users. This strategy effectively heightens user engagement by prompting immediate action, such as making in-app purchases for additional swipes or likes. While this method is successful in driving revenue, it also raises significant ethical concerns. The pressure exerted by artificial scarcity can lead to impulsive spending, where users may make financial decisions, they might otherwise avoid under less urgent circumstances (Cialdini, 2007). This approach, although lucrative, brings to light the ethical challenges inherent in balancing user engagement with responsible design. The manufactured urgency that artificial scarcity creates may compel users to spend money on in-app features without fully considering the consequences. This not only risks user dissatisfaction but also undermines the principles of informed decision-making and user auto-

nomy. Therefore, the use of artificial scarcity in dating apps requires careful consideration, as developers must navigate the fine line between enhancing user experience and exploiting psychological triggers for profit (Samuelson et al., 2024).

e. Auto-renewal Subscriptions:

Auto-renewal subscription models in dating apps are a significant aspect of app design, closely tied to both user experience and ethical considerations. These models automatically renew users' premium subscriptions at the end of each subscription period, often without explicit user consent or clear communication. Although intended to simplify the user experience, this design choice can have substantial consequences. Users may unknowingly find themselves locked into extended subscription terms, leading to unexpected financial obligations or frustration when they discover the automatic renewal. This practice challenges the principles of transparency and user consent, which are crucial in financial transactions. Ideally, users should have the freedom to decide whether to continue their subscriptions or opt out, without facing undue pressure or difficulty. The ethical concerns surrounding auto-renewal models stem from their potential to be perceived as tactics designed to maximize revenue while making it challenging for users to cancel subscriptions easily. This can result in users unintentionally paying for services they no longer wish to use. The key ethical issue here is finding a balance between user convenience and transparency. Drawing on behavioral economics, auto-renewal subscriptions can be viewed as a form of "nudging," subtly influencing user behavior without eliminating their freedom to choose (Thaler & Sunstein, 2009). However, the ethical implications of such nudges must be carefully considered to

ensure they do not infringe upon user autonomy or lead to unintended financial strain.

f. Profile Boosts:

"Profile boosts" in dating apps are designed to significantly enhance a user's visibility, yet their implications go far beyond merely improving profile exposure. This strategy is not only intended to increase user engagement but also serves as a key revenue-generating mechanism, intricately linking user experience with ethical considerations. According to Ariely (2009), profile boosts often create a heightened sense of urgency by notifying users that their profiles will enjoy increased visibility for a limited period. However, the caveat is that accessing this feature usually requires making in-app purchases. While the allure of enhanced visibility can be attractive, this practice raises important ethical questions. Users may feel compelled to spend money impulsively, driven by a fear of missing out on potential connections. These dynamic highlights the tension between delivering a positive user experience and the app's monetization strategies. The pressure to make quick financial decisions, fueled by the temporary nature of profile boosts, underscores the need for a careful balance between facilitating user engagement and maintaining ethical standards in the design and marketing of such features. This balance is crucial to ensuring that the pursuit of revenue does not come at the expense of user autonomy or well-being.

CONCLUSION

This study delves into the intricate dynamics of online dating applications, particularly examining how advertising strategies and algorithm-driven features shape user experiences. The findings reveal a duality within these platforms: while dating apps offer unparal-

leed convenience and potential for meaningful connections, they also present ethical challenges that warrant careful consideration.

One of the key observations from this research is the role of advertising strategies in shaping user experiences. The evolution from product-centric advertising to brand-focused strategies has transformed the way dating apps engage users. Advertisers leverage sophisticated targeting mechanisms to reach specific demographics, making ads more relevant and potentially more engaging. However, the prevalence of dark patterns, such as misleading subscription models and hidden costs, raises significant ethical concerns. These practices often exploit users' psychological vulnerabilities, leading to unintended financial commitments and eroding trust in the platform.

Algorithmic features of dating apps also play a crucial role in shaping user experiences. While algorithms enhance the efficiency of matching by analyzing user preferences, they also contribute to the commodification of relationships. The use of artificial scarcity and notification overload further exacerbates this issue, as users are often pressured into making hasty decisions, either to avoid missing out on potential matches or to maximize their profile visibility. Such practices, while effective in driving engagement, can lead to user dissatisfaction and raise questions about the ethical boundaries of app design.

The presence of dark patterns—deceptive design strategies intended to manipulate user behavior—underscores the need for greater transparency and ethical standards in the design of online dating platforms. These patterns not only impact user satisfaction but also have broader implications for user well-being and trust. The research highlights the psychological toll that such manipulative tactics can take, potentially leading to emotional distress, reduced user satisfaction, and, in some cases, decreased engagement with

the app.

Given these findings, it is essential that dating app developers and marketers adopt a more user-centric approach, prioritizing transparency, ethical design, and user education. Developers should ensure that all costs, particularly those associated with subscriptions and premium features, are clearly communicated to users upfront, enabling informed decision-making. Moreover, the use of dark patterns should be critically reevaluated, with a focus on minimizing manipulative tactics that exploit psychological triggers, such as artificial scarcity or auto-renewal subscriptions. Instead, apps could incorporate features that enhance user trust and satisfaction, such as more straightforward cancellation processes, transparent pricing models, and options that allow users to control the frequency and type of notifications they receive.

To address privacy concerns, dating apps must improve their data handling practices, ensuring that user information is protected and that any sharing of data with third parties is conducted with explicit user consent. Educating users about the potential risks of these platforms, including the ways in which their data might be used or monetized, is crucial for fostering a safer and more transparent digital environment. Additionally, app developers should consider the ethical implications of their advertising strategies, striving to create ad experiences that respect user autonomy and avoid overwhelming users with excessive or intrusive notifications.

Finally, the findings of this study suggest that while dating apps offer significant benefits, there is a pressing need for the industry to adopt more ethical practices that protect and empower users. By focusing on transparency, user education, and ethical design, dating apps can build stronger relationships with their users, ensuring that the pursuit of profit does not come at the expense of user trust and well-being. The future of on-

line dating lies in creating platforms that not only connect individuals but also respect their autonomy, privacy, and dignity in the digital age.

REFERENCE

- Abisono, F. Q. (2021). The Dating Apps Dilemma: Algorithms and Data Commodification. *DigitalSociety*, retrieved from <https://digitalsociety.id/2021/12/28/the-dating-apps-dilemma-algorithms-and-data-commodification/access-on-October,9-2023>.
- Alter, A. (2017). *Irresistible: The rise of addictive technology and the business of keeping us hooked*. Penguin.
- Apriliani, R., & Nurjanah, A. (2023). Social Media Instagram as a Tool to Build a Reputation for Disaster Care (Study on The PT Pertamina Disaster Management CSR Program). *Jurnal NYIMAK*, 7(2), 131-320.
- Ariely, D. (2009). Predictably irrational: The hidden forces that shape our decisions. HarperCollins.
- Bauman, D. C. (2013) Leadership and the Three Faces of Integrity. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 24, 414-426. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.leaqua.2013.01.005>.
- Boyd, D. M. & Ellison, N. B. (2008). Social Network Sites: Definition, History, and Scholarship. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, 13(1), 1-10.
- Caltrider, J., Rykov, M., & MacDonald, Z. (2024, April 23). *Data-Hungry Dating Apps Are Worse Than Ever for Your Privacy*. Mozilla Foundation. <https://foundation.mozilla.org/en/privacy-not-included/articles/data-hungry-dating-apps-are-worse-than-ever-for-your-privacy/>
- Cialdini, R. B. (2007). *Influence: The Psychology of Persuasion*. HarperCollins.
- Deterding, S., Dixon, D., Khaled, R., & Nacke, L. (2011). From game design elements to gamefulness: defining "gamification". *Proceedings of the 15th international academic MindTrek conference: Envisioning future media environments*, 9-15.
- DeVito, J. A. (2011). *Komunikasi Antarmanusia* (5th ed.). Jakarta: Karisma Publishing Group.
- Estaswara, H., & Anggraeni, D. (2018). Mengelola Corporate Crisis Melalui Transformasi Model Stakeholder Relations di Era Digital. *Jurnal CoverAge: Journal of Strategic Communication*, 9(1), 1-16.
- Evans, D. N., & Blount-Hill, K. L. (2022). Swipe right?: Experimental analyses of app-based dating in the age of criminal stigma. *Corrections*, 7(4), 296-318.
- Fadilla, S., Setiaman, A., & Karimah, K. (2023). Keterbukaan diri pengguna aplikasi kencan online Bumble dalam Mencari Pasangan. *Comdent: Communication Student Journal*, 1(1),102-118.
- Fatiny, N. (2017). *Penggunaan Aplikasi Kencan Online Sebagai Gejala Hiperrealitas (Studi Pada Pengguna Tinder di Jakarta)*. Jakarta: Universitas Negeri Jakarta.
- Garda, M. B., & Karhulahti, V. M. (2021). Let's Play Tinder! Aesthetics of a Dating App. *Games and Culture*, 16(2), 248-261. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1555412019891328>.
- Kashian, N., Jang, J. woo, Shin, S. Y., Dai, Y., & Walther, J. B. (2017). Self-disclosure and liking in computer-mediated communication. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 71, 275–283. <https://doi.org>

/10.1016/j.chb.2017.01.041.

- Manu, C., Sugiatica, I. G., Purnawan, I. D. A., & Ramaswati, N. L. (2017). Self Disclosure Pengguna Aplikasi Kencan Online (Studi pada Tinder). *E-Jurnal Medium*, 1(2), 285–290.
- Muys, S., Fredirixsen, E., & Ng, K. (2024, March 1). *Dark patterns: domains, dozing, dating and digital platform regulation*. Gilbert + Tobin Lawyers. <https://www.gtlaw.com.au/knowledge/dark-patterns-domains-dozing-dating-digital-platform-regulation>.
- Narayanan, A., Mathur, A., Chetty, M., & Kshirsagar, M. (2020). Dark Patterns : Past, Present, and Future: The Evolution of Tricky User Interfaces. *Queue*, 18(2), 67-91. <https://doi.org/10.1145/3400899.3400901>.
- Owen, R. & Humphrey, R. (2009). The Structure of Online Marketing Communication Channels. *Journal of Management and Marketing Research*, 2(1), 5-8.
- Prayitno, S. (2021). Komunikasi Pemasaran Global Terpadu: Tantangan di Era Digital. *CoverAge: Journal of Strategic Communication*, 12(1), 27-39.
- Pavia, R. (2021). The Impact of Dating Apps on Mental Health: A review of the literature. *Journal of Clinical Psychology*, 77(6), 1234-1249.
- Pooley, K., & Boxall, H. (2020). Mobile Dating Applications, Sexual and Violent Offending. *Trends and Issues in Crime and Criminal Justice [electronic resource]*, 6(12), 1-16.
- Rahbari, L., Kavka, M., Paisley, E., Zimmann, L., Mercier, F., & Boross, B. (2023). Affordances, diversity, and inclusion on dating apps: A dialogue between sociologists and media Studies researchers about 'Hinge'. *Journal of Diversity and Gender Studies*, 10(1), 8-17.
- Rijali, A. (2018). Analisis Data Kualitatif. *Jurnal Alhadharah*, 17(33), 81-95.
- Rita, P., Ramos, R. F., Moro, S., Mealha, M., & Radu, L. (2020). Online dating apps as a marketing channel: a generational approach. *European Journal of Management and Business Economics*, 30(1), 1-17.
- Rosalsky, G. (2024, February 13). *The dating app paradox: Why dating apps may be worse than ever*. NPR. <https://www.npr.org/sections/money/2024/02/13/1228749143/the-dating-app-paradox-why-dating-apps-may-be-worse-than-ever>.
- Rosana, A. S. (2010). Kemajuan Teknologi Informasi dan Komunikasi dalam Industri Media di Indonesia. *GemaEksos*, 5(2), 144-156.
- Samuelson, L., Merrie, L., Lewis, J., & Sauro, J. (2024, July 16). *The UX of dating apps and websites* (2024). MeasuringU. <https://measuringu.com/online-dating-benchmark-2024/>
- Sari, W.P., & Kusuma, R. S. (2018). Presentasi diri dalam kencan online pada situs dan aplikasi setipe dan tinder. *MediaTor*, 11(2), 155-164.
- Thaler, R. H., & Sunstein, C. R. (2009). *Nudge: Improving Decisions About Health, Wealth, and Happiness*. Penguin.
- Wang, R., Gou, Q., Choi, T. M., & Liang, L. (2016). Advertising strategies for mobile platforms with "Apps". *IEEE Transactions on Systems, Man, and Cybernetics: Systems*, 48(5), 767-778.
- Ward, J. (2019). Dating App Autoethnography: Presenting Myself as a Researcher and User. *The Qualitative Report*, 24(1), 130-144.