

Process of Relationship Initiaton Using Social Media Study on Tinder Users in Solo City

Fian Irawan

Student at the Master of Communication
Science Program
Universitas Sebelas Maret
Solo, Indonesia
Fianirawan13@gmail.com

Sri Hastjarjo,
Lecturer at Department of
Communication Science
Faculty of Social and Political Sciences,
Universitas Sebelas Maret
Solo, Indonesia

Ign. Agung Satyawan
Lecturer at Department of
Communication Science
Faculty of Social and Political Sciences,
Universitas Sebelas Maret
Solo, Indonesia

Abstract. Social Media has brought exceptional changes in the practice of communication. Social media is one of the favorite online activities which used by most people in present day. The emergence of social media brought a shift in the manner of people to understand, read, and search for content and information. Hundreds of social media channels have operated around the world today, such as Facebook, Instagram, Whatsapp, LinkedIn and so on. In addition to connecting and searching for information, social media channels can also be a place to find a partner. There are many social media channels which are created specifically for practical communication via chatting with the goal to find a partner. This channel is called a chat date app or matchmaking application. One of the pioneers of dating application is Tinder. Based a theory by D. B. Ruben about the stages of the relationship development process, the objective of this research is to discover about the initial stages of a relationship which occurred in Tinder app, specifically on its teenage users in Solo City. The method of this research used case study, with a qualitative paradigm. The objective of this research is to discover the development process of relationship at the initial stage or initialization which occurred in the Tinder dating application. Overall, the initiation stage which occurred in Tinder is considerably different compared to the initiation stage in direct interaction or face-to-face meeting.

Keywords: Relationship Development, Initiation, Social Media, Tinder.

I. INTRODUCTION

Social media has brought exceptional to the practice of communication. Social media is one of the favorite online activities which used by most people in present day. Based on an article by Kompas.com published in March 2018, active social media user in Indonesia is about 130 million users, compared with the population of Indonesia at about 265.4 million. As many as 120 million Indonesians use gadgets such as smartphones or tablets to access social media. While on average, Indonesians spend about three hours and 23 minutes in one day to access social media [1].

Social media itself means that content is made using easily accessible and measurable technology of publishing. The matter of this technology is the manner of people to

understand, read, and search for content and information. There are currently hundreds of social media channels which have operated around the world, such as Facebook, Instagram, Whatsapp, LikedIn and many more. It can be imagined that the content of interaction in social media occurs very frequently, either interactions of interpersonal, group or mass communication.

In addition to bringing changes to the practice of communication, social media can also facilitate its users to find partners. Find a partner? How can? Maybe it is unbelievable that social media are able to do so. But in reality, with the rapid development of technology and information, social media today probably able to facilitate whatever its user desire, such as looking for a partner. There are many social media channels which are created specifically for practical communication via chatting with the goal to find a partner for its users. Usually, this channel is called a chat date app or matchmaking application. There are many available dating applications which can be used. One of the pioneers of dating application is Tinder.

Dating applications like Tinder often received negative outlook. Many thought that dating application is only used for hooking up or looking for a sex partner. However, based on a survey conducted by the Application Poll (Jakpat), 31% of 512 Tinder users in Indonesia stated that they do use it to find potential partners [2]. Tinder also matched Rey Utami and Pablo Putra Benua who would later become a married couple [3].

The fact above dismissed the notion that Tinder was only used to find sexual partners. In addition, the phenomena that occurred in the Tinder dating application are interesting to be observed, specifically, the initial stages of a relationship which occur in a virtual meeting. The objective of this research is to discover about the initial stages of a relationship which occurred in Tinder app, specifically on its teenage users in Solo City.

II. METHOD

The method of this research used case study, with a qualitative paradigm [4]. The method of case study is used to explore a phenomenon of an individual or group which involves various sources of information through interviews and research observations [5]. This research was conducted in the city of Solo and technique of data collection is through interview, literature studies and observations.

III. DISCUSSION

A relationship will pass through stages of development. B. D. Ruben explained that there are six phases of relationship development, which are: (1) Initiation stage, the beginning of a relationship where the process of obtaining information takes place, (2) a phase after initial stage where the potential of relationship advancement is visible, (3) Intensified stage where the decision is made to decide whether the relationship would go on or be stopped, (4) formalization stage which would formalized the status of relationship, (5) redefinition phase where a self-change occurred and the process of relationship redefinition takes place, and last (6) deterioration phase where there is a decline in the relationship and could result in a break up. This research focused on the initiation stage of relationship development in Tinder. Brent D. Ruben's stages of relationship explained that the initiation stage is where the individual obtain information from non-verbal clues such as smiles, hand position, glance, and certain gestures. The obtained information could be used in understanding the meaning, experience of empathy, and expression of emotion [6].

When referring to Ruben's theory, at the initial stage of a relationship, acquiring information in the initiation process requires a face-to-face meeting between the pair, which is used as preparation to enter the next stage of relationship development. However, the meeting that took place in Tinder is different. Tinder users do not have a face-to-face meeting; they meet in a virtual space that is Tinder. Information at the initiation stage such as smiles, handshakes, direct views, gestures or other non-verbal communication could not be obtained.

This research has conducted an interview with Trio Saputra, a student of a private University in Surakarta. Trio has actively used Tinder for almost two years. Trio was interviewed about how he would start a relationship in Tinder, which he stated as quoted from the interview:

In Tinder, you just use "love". It's like, we make an account, upload our photo, write something about me, which has the same function as in other social media like name, age, college or work. Tinder has many things (users). Now we can also use our favorite song. So, it looks for people around us in certain range, people can see my profile, and I can see people's profile too. We cannot update our status like in Facebook. Tinder is just to look for people around is. I look at the photo of prospective partner. If she's good, I look at her profile. Usually only

age and name, sometime people write their Instagram profile, and I checked that out too. If she looks like she's fun, I would "love" her, and I wait until she "loved" me too, and then we can start chatting with her.

Dating apps like Tinder has a different working mechanism compared to other social media in general. Tinder doesn't have a status wall like Facebook. Tinder only displays photos and profile of the user which displayed to other users or potential partners around them. Tinder will automatically find and display potential partners around the user. Then, if the potential partner is suitable for someone's preference, he/she can press the love button, or if they don't like it, press the X button. A user and potential partner can exchange messages if both parties press the love button, or commonly called a match.

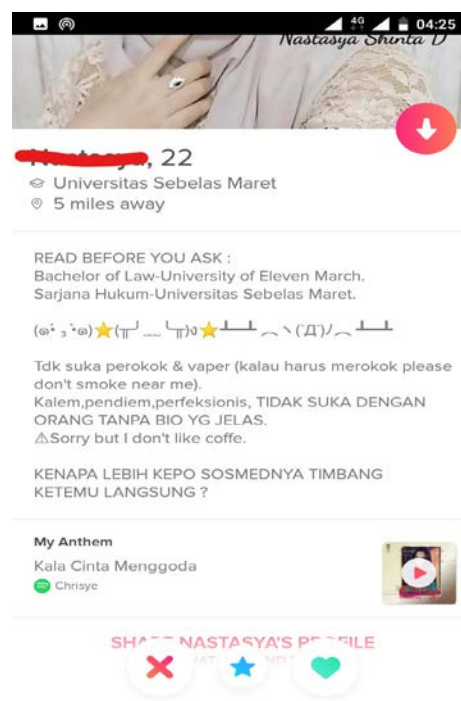


Fig. 1. The interface of Tinder which contains the photo and bio data of prospective partner.

In the initiation stage of relationship development on Tinder, information can be obtained from the profile and photos of the user. Trio, in his interview, said that sometimes Tinder users did not fill out information clearly. This sometimes becomes an obstacle for him to gather information about potential partners. In order to get more information, he usually opens another social media account listed on the profile of potential partner, such as Instagram or Line. The clarity of the information obtained from the photo and profile of potential partner becomes a determining factor in the decision to whether press the love button or X button. In addition to being a decisive factor, the second interview with Hendri Saputra explained that the information is also a provision or reference for starting a conversation when a match is made. Hendri admitted that the clarity and amount of

information obtained from potential partners made it easy to create discussions, as he stated from the interview:

I'm not interested if the profile is unclear, I would not know what we will talk about later. If I greet "hi" and she replies with "hi", I don't know what to talk about. If the profile is clear, like she listed what kind of music she likes... it is good. We can talk about the singer's origin and whatever. Or if we know what university she attends to, we can talk about the program she took. But there are times when the profile is unclear but the person is pretty, I usually chit chat about her origin, whether she came from Solo or if she live in a boarding house, I would ask where she is studying, a chit chat. Later we would jokes or something, then we will talk more frequently, ask her phone number, ask to meet somewhere... whether she wants it or not. If she does, then we eventually meet...

Based on the interview with Hendri, the photo and profile on Tinder is a source of information to start the initial stage of relationship. Tinder users also try to find further information from the profile of potential partner, such as checking their Instagram account and Line profile. After a match is made, users also continue to look for additional information through conversation. Interestingly, based on the above quote, a photo of potential partner could encourage Tinder users to search for more information after a match. Match or virtual meetings which occurred could also continue into the next stage of relationship development, such as exploration and intensity and the possibility to enter the formalization stage.

Based on development theory at the initiation stage by Ruben, what happened in the Tinder has a considerable difference, especially in the process of getting information. In a face-to-face interaction, nonverbal movements such as smiles, hand position, glances and gestures of the body become sources of information to form assumptions and experiences of empathy toward the interlocutor. Whereas in Tinder, information is obtained from photos and profiles of potential partners who are also becomes the determining factors for the decision to vote. It is also possible in Tinder that the process of finding the initial information was obtained from occurring conversation. Virtual meetings in Tinder also create a possibility to continue on meeting directly or face-to-face. In addition, based on the results of interviews, it is possible that the process of relationships development which occurred in Tinder can continue to the stage of formalization.

IV. CONCLUSION

The emergence of social media brought a shift in the manner of people to understand, read, and search for content and information. At present day, there are many social media channels, ranging from socializing, chatting, spreading information, and even looking for a partner. Social Media has brought changes in the practice of communication. The objective of this research is specifically to discover the initial stage of relationship development which occurred in the Tinder dating app. Overall, the initiation stage that occurs in

Tinder is quite different compared to the initiation stage in direct interaction or face-to-face meeting. A very visible difference is in the process of obtaining information. This research did not aim to discover to what extend the relationship development stage in Tinder is. The topic can be used as the focus of follow-up research.

REFERENCES

- [1] W. K. Pertiwi. (2018). *Riset Ungkap Pola Pemakaian Medsos Orang Indonesia*. Available: <https://tekno.kompas.com/read/2018/03/01/10340027/riset-ungkap-pola-pemakaian-medsos-orang-indonesia>
- [2] M. Kresna. (2017). *Aplikasi Kencan: Cari Jodoh atau Teman Bobo?* Available: <https://tirto.id/aplikasi-kencan-cari-jodoh-atau-teman-bobo-ctrR>
- [3] A. Effendi. (2016). *Cerita Rey Utami, Cinderella Dari Aplikasi Dating Tinder*. Available: <https://www.kapanlagi.com/showbiz/selebriti/cerita-rey-utami-cinderella-dari-aplikasi-dating-tinder-57b12d.html>
- [4] M. P. K. Sugiyono, "Kualitatif, dan Kombinasi (Mixed Methods)," *Bandung: Alfabeta*, 2013.
- [5] J. P. Keeves, *Educational research, methodology and measurement: An international handbook*: Pergamon, 1988.
- [6] H. B. Mokros and B. D. Ruben, "Understanding the communication-information relationship: Levels of information and contexts of availabilities," *Knowledge*, vol. 12, pp. 373-388, 1991.