Asian Journal of Social Science Research (e-ISSN: 2600-9706)
Volume 8, Issue 1, 2026
DOI: https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.20807438

ONLINE DATING THROUGH A SOCIOLOGICAL LENS: A SYSTEMATIC REVIEW

Nguyen Xuan Duy[1*]

[1]Institute of Sociology and Psychology, Vietnam Academy of Social Sciences

[*]Corresponding author, dxuan7970@gmail.com

Received Date: 05/02/2026 Accepted Date: 15/06/2026 Published Date: 30/06/2026

ABSTRACT

Online dating has become a major phenomenon of digital technologies, reshaping intimate relationships and mate-seeking behavior. In this respect, sociological studies have an important role to understand this phenomenon more deeply. Therefore, the aim of this systematic review is to identify which sociological aspects of online dating have been studied in previous studies, thus helping to better understand online dating from a sociological viewpoint. Using a systematic review approach, relevant literature was retrieved from the Scopus database. Following several stages of screening and eligibility assessment, 20 studies were selected for synthesis and analysis. The findings indicate that existing research focuses on five sociological aspects: (1) the reproduction and transformation of dating norms in the context of online dating; (2) social inequality in online dating; (3) the social functions of online dating; (4) self-presentation on dating platforms; and (5) online dating as an expression of "liquid love." The article also proposes several ideas and directions for future research approaching online dating from a sociological perspective.

Keywords: online dating, sociology, systematic review.

INTRODUCTION

With the rapid development of the Internet, digitalization has penetrated almost every sphere of life, and the digital space has become an integral part of modern society. In this context, people are able to date and have romantic relationships in virtual environments, a trend called "online dating". The evolution of online dating has gone through three significant stages reflecting changes in the ways people pursue and establish romantic bonds (Jamaludin et al., 2024). The first stage was the launch of online personal advertisement websites, beginning with Match.com in 1995. These sites were platforms for finding partners based on personal profiles. In the early 2000s, algorithm-based matchmaking platforms such as eHarmony, PerfectMatch and Chemistry launched, offering more compatible connections through the use of user data. The third stage is characterized by the rapid development of smartphone dating applications, particularly following the advent of the App Store in 2008 (Jamaludin et al., 2024). The applications enhanced user experience by integrating location-based technologies, providing mobility, convenience, and more intuitive interfaces. Until today, thousands of dating apps are available in app stores, providing users with many options to connect with potential partners (Roshchupkina et al., 2023; Sunam Audry et al., 2023).

DOI: https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.20807438

The European online dating service users are estimated to be around 80 million and are expected to continue to grow in the coming years (Gori et al., 2024). According to Statista, 25% of Americans are using dating apps to find a partner (Bleize et al., 2023). In the United States, about 60.5 million people used online dating services in 2024 (Slotta, 2025). Online dating is also a lucrative market with a global scale of USD 7.55 billion in 2021 (Roshchupkina et al., 2023) and revenue in North America growing stably at approximately USD 912 million (Woloszyn et al., 2020). In 2024, the online dating market in the United States reached around USD 1.39 billion (Slotta, 2025). Moreover, the average revenue per user in online dating was USD 33.85 (Slotta, 2025). In addition, it is expected that the number of platform users and total revenue will grow significantly up to 2028 (Elagina, 2026; Statista Research Department, 2026).

The growing prevalence of online dating has significantly transformed the ways in which individuals form and maintain intimate relationships, as well as how they seek romantic partners (Jamaludin et al., 2024). Consequently, online dating services increasingly function as important "social intermediaries," partially replacing traditional matchmaking roles previously performed by family, friends, or other social relationships (Hobbs et al., 2017; Whyte & Torgler, 2017). Sociology is still a useful field for identifying social phenomena, determining their underlying causes at the micro and macro levels, and helping to explain social change processes at any stage of societal development. Since the early years of the twenty-first century, scholars have argued for the need for more sociological analyses of online dating in order to gain deeper insight into how technology mediates and sustains intimate relationships, as well as the nature of these relationships in a global era (Barraket & Henry-Waring, 2008). Accordingly, sociology plays an important role in examining online dating as a social phenomenon, helping to elucidate its social impacts as well as the social factors that give rise to its emergence and expansion. This review represents an effort to synthesize and analyze selected sociological dimensions in the study of online dating.

RESEARCH BACKGROUND AND GAP

In recent years, with the increasing prevalence and popularity of dating apps, research on online dating has primarily focused on mobile apps rather than traditional online platforms such as websites or email. These studies have shed light on the current state of dating app use across various dimensions, including app selection, levels of use (time spent and frequency of access), and user motivations (Nguyen, 2025). Additionally, many studies have explored the psychological and social impacts of online dating, thereby clarifying the dynamics of forming virtual relationships and their consequences for real-life social interactions (Jamaludin et al., 2024).

With the increase of the research, many review studies have been done to identify research trends of online dating in general and the use of dating apps in particular. Castro and Barrada (2020) systematically reviewed 70 studies and found that dating apps are used by people regardless of their gender, age, sexual orientation, relationship status, education, income or personality traits. Regarding usage characteristics, Castro and Barrada (2020) note that the prevalence of dating app users varies across studies, depending on the study population and sampling methods. Their work also highlights Tinder and Grindr as the most used apps. The results also reveal that the characteristics of use are often divided into three stages: (i) before use (profile construction and self-presentation); (ii) during use (duration, frequency of access and messaging activities); and (iii) after use (rates of offline meetings and the likelihood of relationship formation) (Castro & Barrada, 2020). The systematic review provides a general

overview of the use of dating apps, but it is evident that it does not cover the sociological issues linked to this phenomenon enough.

Regarding usage motivations, several review studies indicate that users of online dating services have diverse purposes and motivations. Beyond seeking intimate relationships or long-term partners, many individuals use dating apps for entertainment, curiosity, social networking, casual sexual encounters, stress relief, coping with post-breakup distress, or even business-related purposes (Castro & Barrada, 2020; McPherson et al., 2025). Some users also engage with dating apps to manage their self-image, avoid long-term commitments, and escape traditional social norms (Bonilla-Zorita et al., 2021). Furthermore, studies in the field of psychology suggest that users of online dating services often exhibit socio-psychological characteristics such as discomfort in face-to-face interaction, anxiety regarding social relationships, feelings of embarrassment, and a preference for written communication over direct conversation (Barraket & Henry-Waring, 2008). Overall, systematic reviews adopting a psychological perspective have primarily focused on users' motivations, personality traits, and psychological characteristics associated with online dating use.

Regarding the consequences of using online dating services, Castro and Barrada (2020) note that research on the positive benefits of using dating apps remains relatively limited. However, it is believed that these platforms facilitate the creation and maintenance of relationships across the globe. At the same time, negative impacts have also been documented in many reviews, such as negative body perceptions and self-dissatisfaction; an increased risk of eating disorders and unhealthy weight-control behaviors (Bowman et al., 2025; Castro & Barrada, 2020); and the promotion of impulsive behaviors in risky sexual choices, substance use (e.g., drugs and alcohol), and even sexual addiction (Bonilla-Zorita et al., 2021), thereby affecting both physical and mental health. Existing systematic reviews on the consequences of using online dating services have primarily focused on psychological and health-related outcomes, while social consequences have received comparatively limited attention, if any. In contrast, the social consequences and broader societal impacts of online dating highlight the importance of a sociological perspective. This underscores the need to examine and systematically review sociological studies in order to determine whether and how the social consequences and societal impacts of online dating have been addressed in existing research.

Existing systematic reviews indicate that psychological research has primarily focused on elucidating the motivations and psychological traits influencing usage, as well as the subsequent psychological impacts of online dating. Conversely, as noted by Barraket and Henry-Waring (2008), sociological studies emphasize the social conditions that shape online dating practices while examining the underlying social implications and issues inherent in the phenomenon. Nevertheless, Barraket and Henry-Waring (2008) argued that sociological approaches to online dating remained relatively limited. To date, however, this gap has gradually narrowed, with numerous studies have approached online dating through aspects related to sociology, such as self-presentation through profile construction (Ranzini & Lutz, 2017; Zhang et al., 2025), mate selection behavior (Konings et al., 2024; Witmer et al., 2025), and patterns of interaction and communication on online dating platforms (Andersen, 2025; McCartney & Hellier, 2021). Each of these studies contributes different angles and findings to enrich sociological understandings of online dating. This means that a lot of research has been done on online dating from a psychological and sociological perspective. However, the available systematic reviews have mostly used psychological approaches or have only

provided a general overview of online dating, while systematic reviews from a sociological perspective are glaringly rare. Therefore, the aim of this systematic review is to synthesize and analyze previous studies on online dating from a sociological perspective in order to better understand the social impacts and consequences of online dating, as well as the related social issues. This serves as an important step toward understanding the transformations of romantic relationships in the digital age.

METHODOLOGY

This systematic review methodology follows several PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) guidelines on the process of searching and selecting documents (Page et al., 2021), as illustrated in Figure 1.

IDENTIFICATION

The literature search phase was conducted in September 2025 using the Scopus database, one of the world's largest online platforms for abstracts and citations of peer-reviewed scientific publications. Owing to its broad coverage and rich citation data, Scopus enables a more comprehensive and detailed picture when analyzing academic research (Duan & Mahhob, 2025). Considering the scope of the study and the practical limitations associated with accessing multiple reputable databases, Scopus helped ensure the feasibility and manageability of the review process while still providing access to a substantial body of peer-reviewed international publications relevant to the research objectives. Within the scope of online dating research, this review did not restrict the analysis to any specific online dating platform, including dating apps, dating websites, or any other form of online dating platform. To maximize retrieval, the search string was constructed as follows: TITLE-ABS-KEY (("online dating" OR "internet dating" OR "digital dating" OR "cyber dating" OR "mobile dating" OR "dating app*" OR "dating application*" OR Tinder OR Bumble OR "OkCupid" OR Hinge OR "Match.com" OR "eHarmony") AND (sociolog* OR "sociological perspective*")). The search using this set of keywords yielded 241 initial results. A series of inclusion criteria was then applied, including (1) the field of social sciences, (2) document type limited to research articles, (3) final publication stage, (4) publication in academic journals, and (5) English language. In addition, as the aim of the study was to explore sociological approaches to the phenomenon of online dating in general, this review did not impose any restriction on the year of publication. After applying these screening criteria, 108 eligible articles were downloaded for the evaluation and selection process.

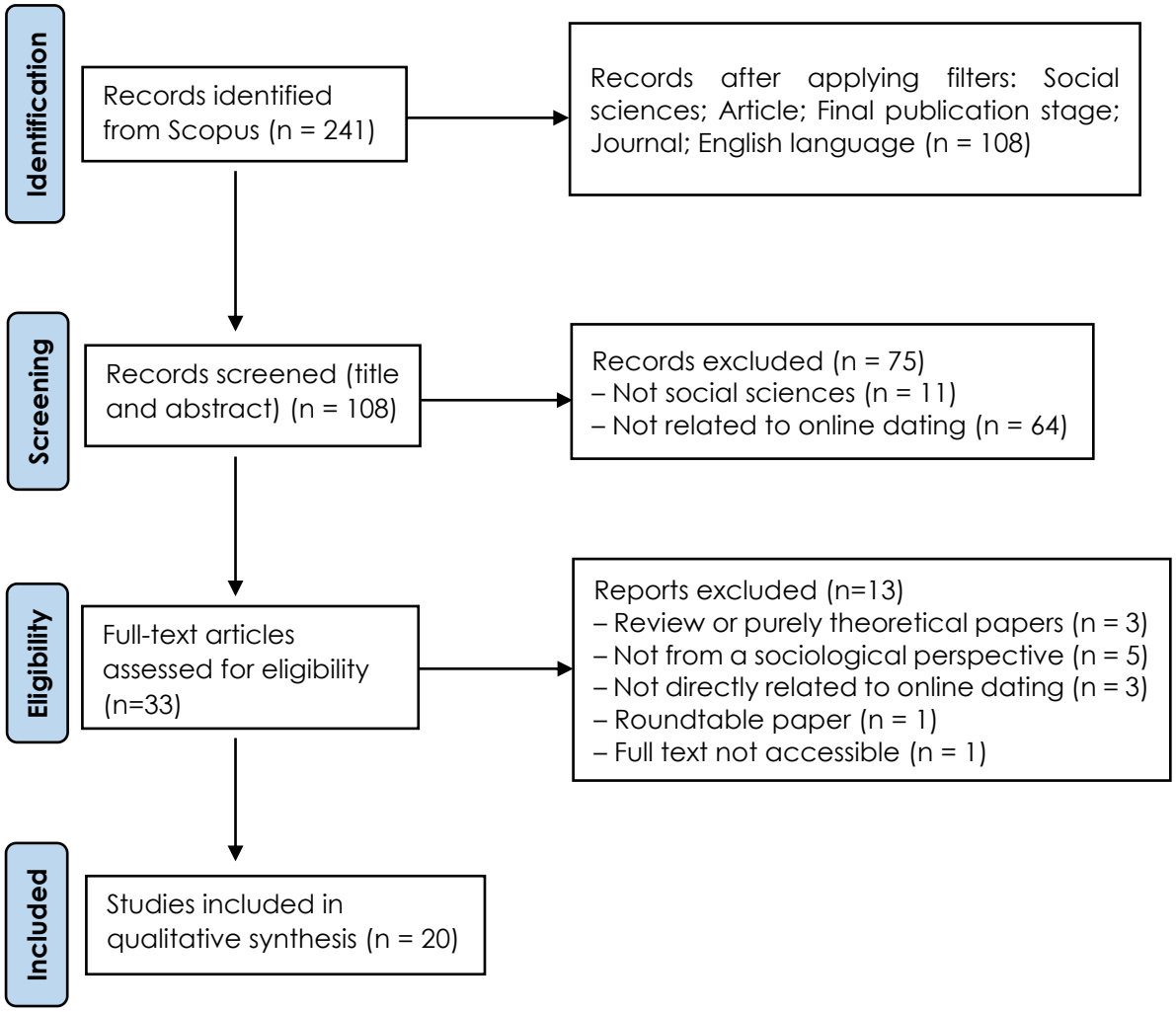


Figure 1. Flowchart of the systematic review process

SCREENING AND ELIGIBILITY

Out of the 108 retrieved records, a title and abstract screening was conducted to exclude studies that did not align with the objectives of the review. Specifically, 11 articles were excluded for not belonging to the field of social sciences, and 64 were removed because they were not related to online dating. In addition, 9 studies for which relevance could not be clearly determined based on the title and abstract were retained for further assessment at the full-text review stage.

Among the 33 articles assessed in full text, additional exclusion criteria were applied, including (1) review or purely theoretical papers (3 studies excluded); (2) studies not adopting a sociological perspective (5 excluded); (3) studies not directly related to online dating (3 excluded); (4) roundtable paper (1 excluded); and (5) articles for which the full text was not accessible (1 excluded). In addition to the exclusion criteria, the full-text studies were discussed and reviewed in consultation with the author's supervisor, who has expertise in sociology, in order to minimize subjective bias during the selection of studies. This process eventually led to the inclusion of 20 eligible studies for analysis (see Figure 1).

DATA SYNTHESIS AND ANALYSIS

Thematic analysis was used to extract the key themes and subthemes from the data collected from the selected articles, based on the procedure outlined by Duan and Mahbob (2025). In the first stage (data compilation), all findings regarding sociological perspectives on online dating were collected from the 20 included studies. The second stage (data coding) involved an iterative process of open-coding, whereby extracted data segments were repeatedly examined and labeled with short descriptors, yielding 28 initial codes. These codes were then reviewed and compared and grouped according to similarities in meaning and content. As a result, some codes were collapsed into four higher-order codes, and others remained analytically distinct. In the third stage, themes were created from both the higher-order codes and the rest of the initial codes. In the process of data synthesis and coding, any ambiguities related to sociological relevance or code labeling were discussed and resolved by consulting with the research supervisor. This process helped to improve the reliability and consistency of the data extraction and categorization. Finally, the data were organized into five main themes: (1) the reproduction and transformation of dating norms in the context of online dating; (2) social inequality in online dating; (3) the social functions of online dating; (4) self-presentation on dating platforms; and (5) online dating as an expression of "liquid love."

RESULTS

CHARACTERISTICS OF STUDIES INCLUDED IN THE REVIEW

The 20 studies included in the review were summarized according to several key characteristics: (1) author(s) and year of publication; (2) sample size and characteristics; (3) research methods; and (4) main findings, as presented in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Summary of characteristics of studies included in the review

Author(s) (Year)	Sample (N, Characteristics)	Methodology	Main findings
Baldor (2022)	Club-goers who use mobile dating and hookup apps (75% gay men; 25% nonbinary/transgender/genderqueer; 62% non-Hispanic White)	Participant observation in gay nightlife spaces in and beyond Philadelphia's Gayborhood neighborhood; in-depth interviews and informal interviews	Dating apps have radically changed social interactions by creating a new class of "familiar strangers" and complex problems of how to handle offline encounters that combine digital and analog social norms.
Barraket & Henry-Waring (2008)	23 users of online dating services (5 men and 18 women), aged 25–62, residing in Australia; the majority identified as heterosexual	Web audit of over sixty online dating sites and in-depth interviews	Online dating technologies have a twofold effect on intimate relationships: on the one hand, they introduce new norms and ways of initiating and building intimacy, but, on the other hand, they also serve to reinforce traditional cultural norms and existing social networks.

Chan (2018)	Semi-structured interviews with 7 participants aged 26–30, all residing in the Los Angeles area; a quantitative survey of 245 respondents aged 19–68 (mean age = 30).	Semi-structured interviews and online surveys (via Reddit, LGBT websites, Mechanical Turk, social media, and an institutional participant pool)	Relational ambiguity, profile dominance, and an abundance of potential connections create ambivalence in the formation of relationships on dating apps. This ambivalence is not confined to the private lives of gay men, but is closely associated with broader neoliberal logics of the market and consumption practices.
Chen (2024)	N/A	Qualitative document, discourse analysis of online materials	The analysis shows how dining-dating apps shape intimacy by embedding gender norms and romantic ideals in culturally mediated consumption.
Christensen (2021)	Women (n = 23) and nonbinary femme individuals (n = 2), aged 18–25, who swipe for men on Tinder.	Semi-structured interviews	The results show a hybrid hookup script, combining traditional dating practices with the expectation of casual sex. Hookups on Tinder function in the context of multi-level sexual scripts embedded in broader youth culture. Intimacy, dating, and casual sex are not mutually exclusive.
Conner (2018)	Thirty in-depth interviews (26 app users and 4 public health officials familiar with the app's sociomedical impacts).	Participant observation; ethnographic fieldwork in gay-oriented spaces; volunteer work with community organizations; in-depth interviews; and qualitative content analysis on online dating profiles, e-zines, newspapers, and historical documents	Body typing, ageism, racism, and HIV stigma are reproduced within gay men's self-performance on Grindr.
Dröge & Voirol (2011)	Users of online dating: 12 participants (men and women) aged 20–53	Online ethnography and content analysis of major Swiss dating sites, in-depth interviews	Online dating presents a complex interplay where users navigate between deep romantic aspirations and pragmatic, market-driven strategies. This constant negotiation underscores the enduring, yet often conflicting, nature of love and economic rationalization in modern

			society, with the internet serving as a dynamic stage for this ongoing tension.
Dwyer et al. (2021)	12 Australian online dating users (current and former), aged 34–49 (7 women, 5 men)	In-depth semi-structured interviews	Findings Four main themes were identified: dating thinness as a result of few opportunities and loss of networks after a breakup; gendered differences in relationship aspirations; gendered experiences of risk and control in online dating; and emotional filtering, in which prior relationships influence assessments of partner selection and readiness.
Henry-Waring & Barraket (2008)	23 users of online dating services (5 men and 18 women), aged 25–62, residing in Australia; the majority identified as heterosexual	Web audit of over sixty online dating sites and in-depth interviews	"Online interaction is a part of the real world and has real consequences for intimacy. Global social changes are transforming the way people relate and communicate with each other, but it is uncertain whether online dating fundamentally changes the nature of intimacy.
Kang (2023)	10 Tinder users from North America (United States = 8; Canada = 2), aged 21–33	Semi-structured in-depth interviews	Musical taste presentation functions as a form of cultural performance that signals similarity between users; however, Spotify's algorithmically generated "Top Artists" lists often flatten diverse listening practices into simplified identity markers, prompting some users to actively reconstruct their data through what is termed "*conscious listening*."
Katz (2023)	19 Grindr users in Tel Aviv (5 tourists, 7 local residents, and 7 immigrants), aged 18–38.	Qualitative semi-structured interviews and audio diaries	Grindr not only influences interpersonal relationships as a platform for sexual and romantic encounters in the context of international tourism, but also as a space for intercultural exchange and the building of relationships structured around migrant identities that go beyond cultural and geographic boundaries.
Katz (2025)	19 Grindr users in Tel Aviv (5 tourists, 7 local residents, and 7 immigrants), aged 18–38.	Semi-structured interviews and audio diaries	Grindr simultaneously reproduces and enables resistance to hegemonic masculinities, revealing inequalities and everyday negotiations of gender regimes in transnational digital spaces.

Liu & Lin (2021)	Face-to-face ethnographic (N = 68; 23 men, 45 women; ages 18–45)	Ethnographic fieldwork (participant observation in a cell phone factory (Dongguan) and a in non-governmental organization labor (Shenzhen); face-to-face interviews)	Drawing on long-term ethnographic research, the study shows a significant link between rural migrant men's active use of digital technologies, their caring practices, and perceived desirability. The authors introduce the concept of caring capital, which is men's ability to successfully navigate romantic courtship online, display caring behaviors in subsequent offline interactions and meet the expectations of (future) parents-in-law.
Newett et al. (2018)	Young Australians (aged 18 to 30) use and experience Tinder. Survey (N = 203; mean age = 24.1; 53% female, 47% male) and interviews (N = 10; aged 20–30; 5 women, 5 men)	Online survey and semi-structured interviews	Tinder is entrenched in the intimate lives of young Australians, offering a tool that blurs the boundaries between digital and physical interactions and allows for different types of connection, even if the quality of these connections is sometimes perceived to be different. Results support Jurgenson's depiction of contemporary societies as augmented realities, not digital dualisms.
Peck et al. (2021)	137 predominantly heterosexual young adults (84 women, 53 men) aged 18–25.	Peer-to-peer interviews	The study finds that white heterosexual users often use color-blind racist discourses, framed as cultural incompatibility, personal preference, or family values, to justify their rejection of Black potential partners. These stories obfuscate and normalize racial and sexual racism in dating sites, thus reproducing contemporary forms of racism in online dating contexts.
Portolan & McAlister (2022)	20 dating app users aged 18–35 living in New South Wales, Australia; all had used or were current users of Bumble and/or Tinder (12 heterosexual women, 6	Iterative focus groups and in-depth interviews	Dating app users were caught in a cycle of "jagged love" especially during the COVID-19 pandemic. They were thwarted by the cultural romance master plot to pursue security and connection, but also by the limitations of dating apps to generate true intimacy and physical chemistry, particularly when compounded by lockdown restrictions. And so it became an

	heterosexual men, 2 queer men)		endless cycle of engagement, hope, disappointment and then back to the apps.
Ruhela & Riaz (2019)	N=113 (77 men and 36 women); the mean age was 43 for men and 37 for women.	Cross-sectional survey design	Dating apps have drastically changed social interactions and perceptions of intimacy, with gender differences in self-presentation, partner preferences, and experiences of social image concern and intimacy. Both of these platforms reflect some traditional gender roles and biases, particularly in the initial interactions and criteria for selecting partners, and they create new opportunities for connection.
Thomas (2019)	N = 3,036 (mean age = 38.33, SD = 13.37); 2009 (n = 1,342); 2017 (n = 1,694)	Secondary analysis of nationally representative survey datasets collected in 2009 and 2017.	Online couples tend to be closer in age and more diverse in race, religion and education. Online meetings at the population level contribute only a small part to recent increases in couple diversity, but may generate more change as they become a major route to romantic relationships.
Yeo & Fung (2018)	74 users of gay mobile dating apps (Grindr and Jack'd) in Hong Kong, aged 18–26.	In-depth interviews and focus-group discussions	The features and interface of gay dating apps are structured such that they encourage immediate and short-term relationships by focusing on appearance-based screening and the pursuit of casual sexual encounters. The ephemeral quality of browsing and interacting on these apps is not in line with normative expectations about the development of friendship and long-term romantic relationships, which has a negative impact on perceived quality and user satisfaction for users seeking more durable connections.
Žakelj (2014)	34 men and 32 women with Internet dating experiences, aged 19-72	In-depth semi-structured interviews	The online dating market in Slovenia largely reproduces traditional gender norms. Women are expected to be respectable, asexual and without previous family responsibilities, while men maintain traditional roles and preferences. The internet may provide possibilities

to express oneself, but in the case of online dating, it largely reproduces existing gender norms.

Sociological studies on online dating, published sporadically between 2008 and 2025, show that the year of publication does not have any time restrictions. This indicates that the subject has been in the focus of sociologists since the beginning of the twenty-first century. The highest numbers of publications were in 2018 and 2021 (four studies each), while in most other years only one to two studies were published per year.

Most of the studies employed qualitative methods (n = 16; 80%), a smaller percentage used quantitative methods (n = 2; 10%) and mixed methods (n = 2; 10%). Qualitative studies mainly employed semi-structured and in-depth interviews; interestingly, several also used and analyzed different data sources, for example, official web sites, lifestyle magazines, blogs and App Store reviews (Chen, 2024), as well as online dating profiles, e-zines, newspapers and historical documents (Conner, 2018), and others (see Table 1). This is in part a reflection of a turn towards qualitative analysis in sociological research on online dating and in particular analysis of non-interview data.

The studies reviewed were conducted in various parts of the world. In the Americas, the largest number of studies (n = 8; 40%) was from the United States, followed by Oceania with five studies (25%) in Australia. Five studies (25%) originated from the Asia region with studies from Israel, United Arab Emirates, China and Hong Kong. In contrast, fewer studies (n = 2; 10%) represented Europe and were conducted in Slovenia and Switzerland.

With regard to the online dating platforms examined, Tinder was the most frequently studied platform, with nine studies (45%) focusing on its users. Seven studies (35%) investigated multiple platforms, while nine studies (45%) concentrated on a single platform only. In addition, only three studies (15%) specialized in dating websites (primarily in 2008 and 2011), whereas the remaining studies focused on dating apps or both websites and apps. Furthermore, seven studies (35%) did not specify the particular dating platforms used by participants.

THE REPRODUCTION AND TRANSFORMATION OF DATING NORMS IN THE CONTEXT OF ONLINE DATING

The emergence and development of online dating, on the one hand, are considered to contribute to the formation of new dating norms as more and more people use online dating services; on the other hand, they also reproduce and reinforce traditional dating norms (Barraket & Henry-Waring, 2008). Several studies clearly illustrate this pattern in the following aspects:

Gender norms

Numerous studies indicate that traditional expectations regarding gender roles, particularly the role of men in dating, are still maintained in the context of online dating. Henry-Waring and Barraket (2008) show that men still assume the role of initiators in online dating. Specifically, men are often expected to make the "first move," as well as to take the lead in arranging the first offline meeting (Barraket & Henry-Waring, 2008; Žakelj, 2014). Similarly, Christensen (2021) points out that online dating scenarios on Tinder frequently position men as controlling the

progression of interaction, from message exchanges to the organization of dates. This has become one of the unwritten rules, considered a norm in online dating (Žakelj, 2014). In addition, Chen's (2024) study on the dating app Dine, a platform that allows users to choose the "who pays" feature, indicates that chivalric ideals continue to be valued in dining-based dating culture, with men being expected to cover more of the expenses, and this behavior being viewed as an advantage in the matchmaking process. This feature reflects how gender norms are reproduced in online romantic interactions. Therefore, offline dating norms are not necessarily eliminated or redefined in the digital environment but may continue to be maintained. In other words, rather than creating an environment that reduces social differences, gender expectations remain deeply rooted in the online dating market (Žakelj, 2014).

Several studies, however, suggest that digital technology mediates online dating in ways that may undermine traditional gender scripts and increase the level of agency among users. In the study by Dwyer et al. (2021), a portion of participants reported that online dating helped them move beyond rigid gender expectations in the process of seeking a partner. Supplementing this argument, Ruhela and Riaz (2019), through testing a dating app, recorded an increase of more than 150% in connections initiated by women, such as sending the first message. This finding indicates that online dating has the potential to shift gender expectations related to the active initiation of interaction and relationships. Accordingly, dating platforms contribute to the "softening" of gender norms in dating, thereby allowing women to assume a more proactive role. Nevertheless, these changes need to be situated within specific social contexts in order to fully understand the impact of online dating on dating norms in postmodern society (Henry-Waring & Barraket, 2008).

Mate selection patterns

Despite the wide range of partner choices available on online dating platforms, men continue to select partners according to traditional gender role expectations, such as women being nurturing, taking care of household chores, being gentle, and being modest (Žakelj, 2014). This suggests that, even in online spaces, the image of the wife remains framed and expected to conform to traditional norms. Moreover, although online dating may signal a new era of global partnering, many users still engage with it as a way to seek similarity rather than difference, such as similarity in geographic location, personality traits, and interests (Barraket & Henry-Waring, 2008), as well as age (Thomas, 2019). As a result, the potential for expanding their social circles is limited rather than encouraged (Henry-Waring & Barraket, 2008). These arguments provide some indication that online dating still reinforces traditional dating patterns, even in partner selection. Conversely, Thomas (2019) argues that partner selection based on assortativity mechanisms on online dating platforms is less effective than in offline dating, as boundaries related to race, religion, and education are more frequently crossed in online environments. This may mark the beginning of a new age of openness in the partner-seeking sector (Thomas, 2019).

Relationship development process norms

Online dating platforms emphasize the value of convenience by maximizing the number of connections while minimizing the time required for initial interactions (Yeo & Fung, 2018). This mechanism may encourage users not to follow the normative sequence of emotional development, which traditionally regards friendship as the starting point of love (Yeo & Fung, 2018). Nevertheless, the willingness to follow a slower pace or adhere to the traditional sequence of relationship development (starting with friendship rather than sex or "whatever fits," as well as not rushing into conversation or flirting with multiple men at once) is considered by some users to be a temporal norm, dictating the formation of long-term relationships (Yeo & Fung, 2018). This finding once again suggests that traditional dating norms are not replaced but continue to be maintained and reproduced in the context of online dating.

SOCIAL INEQUALITY IN ONLINE DATING

Dating apps are often considered to contribute to the reinforcement of social inequality patterns, as they facilitate new forms of exclusion and discrimination in digital environments. Through mechanisms such as filtering users based on specific criteria, blocking accounts, or simply ignoring messages, users can easily marginalize others within the dating market (Conner, 2018; Peck et al., 2021).

Three studies indicate that online dating contributes to the reproduction and intensification of racial inequality in the partner-seeking market. Christensen (2021) shows that women of color frequently encounter sexually and racially charged harassment from White men, creating significant social barriers to their participation in online dating environments. Moreover, most users tend to prefer matching with partners of the same race; however, White users constitute the majority on Tinder, thereby placing people of color at a disadvantage when seeking same-race partners on these platforms (Christensen, 2021; Peck et al., 2021). This preference for same-race partners inadvertently contributes to racial discrimination and exclusion within online dating platforms. Supporting this argument, Conner (2018), through an analysis of profiles on Grindr, finds that many users openly refuse to match with racial minority groups and employ exclusionary language in their personal descriptions, exemplified by statements such as "I block more Asians than the Great Wall of China" (Conner, 2018, p. 11). In addition, many White users openly express racism through prejudices about appearance, class, and social morality, thereby reinforcing the subordinate status of other ethnic groups in the online dating market (Conner, 2018). Peck et al. (2021) further note that such racial discrimination is often justified through arguments such as a lack of cultural similarity, differences in preferences, or family pressure, reflecting how racism is normalized in the online dating spaces.

In addition to racial inequality, some online platforms continue to reflect discrimination in the ways users perform gender, even though this is a free environment for self-expression. Katz (2025) shows that processes of mutual exoticization on Grindr contribute to the reinforcement of gender expression norms, as images associated with traditional masculinity, such as bearded men or those belonging to the Mizrahi ethnic group, are valorized, while images of men wearing makeup tend to be downplayed or disparaged. Moreover, Grindr's filtering features allow users to silently discriminate against those who do not fit hypermasculine ideals, rendering some individuals effectively invisible in the online dating market (Conner, 2018). As a result, Grindr can be seen as promoting toxic masculinity on the platform by privileging hypermasculine images (Katz, 2025).

Žakelj (2014) further demonstrates that gender inequality exists in the online dating market. Specifically, when women openly express their sexual desires, they will be considered incompatible with the standards of a potential partner according to men's perceptions and social expectations. Instead, women are expected to present themselves in a more asexual and less sexually suggestive manner in their profiles in order to be regarded as respectable. Meanwhile, men's sexual desire is not stigmatized and is regarded as normal.

Additionally, having children constitutes a significant barrier for women seeking intimate partners in the online dating market (Žakelj, 2014). Not only that, but those who are no longer young (particularly from their late twenties onward) or who are HIV-positive also face similar obstacles (Conner, 2018). These findings may indicate that not everyone has equal opportunities for self-expression or partner seeking in the online dating market, which can become a new space where social inequalities continue to persist rather than being erased.

THE SOCIAL FUNCTIONS OF ONLINE DATING

Facilitating the formation of romantic relationships

The notification systems of mobile dating apps allow users to receive new messages even when they are not actively using the apps, aligning with a culture of constant connectivity and increasing their overall appeal (Yeo & Fung, 2018). By emphasizing the opportunities to meet "here and now" through location-based services, these platforms also create a sense of convenience and urgency, which speeds up the transition from online interaction to face-to-face encounters and helps the formation of intimate relationships (Yeo & Fung, 2018). This is the manifest function of online dating platforms from the perspective of Merton (1968). Chen's (2024) study of the Dine app illustrates this role well, where restaurant recommendations and consumer-oriented interventions are crafted to maximize the probability of couple formation through dinner dates. Similarly, Katz (2023) illustrates the ways Grindr enables meetings, the creation of romantic relationships, and the expression of affection in a range of social contexts, including while travelling. Therefore, applications such as Dine and Grindr have incorporated features intended to maintain the manifest function of online dating services, namely facilitating partner matching. Notably, online dating is particularly meaningful for "thin markets" in terms of partnering opportunities, where users (including middle-aged individuals, divorced individuals, and same-sex partners) are more likely to find partners online than offline (Thomas, 2019). For middle-aged singles following divorce, dating platforms help sustain intimate lives while balancing work, childcare responsibilities, and the constraints of existing social networks (Dwyer et al., 2021). Thus, online dating functions as a catalyst for emotional connection and intimacy, as well as an important stepping stone toward offline dating experiences (Henry-Waring & Barraket, 2008; Portolan & McAlister, 2022).

Many young people even regard the development of intimacy without physical co-presence as normal, with perceived levels of connectedness comparable to those found in offline relationships (Newett et al., 2018). Similarly, Dröge and Voirol's (2011) study of Internet dating indicates that exchanging dozens of emails per day can create a deep sense of attachment to the extent that some couples form intimate relationships even without having met face-to-face. These findings provide further evidence that online dating platforms have indeed facilitated the formation and development of romantic relationships, sometimes without the need for direct interaction.

Expanding social networks, enriching travel experiences, enhancing cognitive awareness, and facilitating migration

Beyond functioning as a catalyst for romantic relationships, online dating also serves as an effective means of expanding social networks (Henry-Waring & Barraket, 2008). Katz (2023) demonstrates that enhanced connections with local residents through Grindr help tourists enrich their travel experiences, for instance, through restaurant recommendations and sightseeing suggestions. These interactions also create opportunities for tourists to learn local languages and for both tourists and local users to engage in discussions about political issues, religion, and cultural norms (Katz, 2023). In terms of the cognitive dimension, Henry-Waring and Barraket (2008) also propose that online dating helps users to know themselves better, especially concerning who they are and what they want. Furthermore, for migrants, making friends through this platform contributes to processes of adaptation and social integration in the host society (Katz, 2023). Merton's (1968) perspective, these outcomes reflect a latent function of online dating. Online dating sites, apart from their obvious role in partner matching, also contribute to the development of social networks, enrichment of travel experiences and cultural knowledge, development of self-knowledge and adaptation and integration of migrants to new social environments. These social consequences were not originally conceived by platform designers; however, users have appropriated and used these platforms in ways that carry significant social meaning. This points to the sociological aspect of online dating, suggesting that such sites serve not only as devices for matching partners but also perform important social functions.

Expanding connection spaces

Online dating offers the advantage of enabling users to meet individuals outside their familiar social networks and beyond the scrutiny of those around them. As such, it allows relationships to form within private spaces without the mediation of friends or workplaces (Barraket & Henry-Waring, 2008; Newett et al., 2018). Therefore, several studies point to a convergence or interdependence, rather than a binary separation, between digital and physical spaces (Baldor, 2022; Dwyer et al., 2021; Netwett et al., 2018). By expanding the social circles, these platforms help users encounter a greater number and diversity of potential partners, particularly through location-based apps such as Tinder, which allow flexible adjustment of the search radius for partners (Liu & Lin, 2021; Newett et al., 2018). Consequently, online dating platforms broaden partnering opportunities across boundaries of nationality, race, religion, and educational attainment (Katz, 2023; Thomas, 2019).

Dating apps, such as Grindr, are thought to provide gay people with a safe place to express their sexual orientation without fear of judgment or discrimination (Katz, 2023). To clarify this argument, Yeo and Fung (2018) point out that they could meet other gay men at home before, but now they can exchange messages anytime and anywhere and respond to messages immediately because of the mobility of devices. Partly, these findings suggest that online dating sites do not only increase the chances of forming partnerships, but also help to create a safe space for the LGBTQ+ community to meet, communicate and be themselves.

SELF-PRESENTATION ON DATING PLATFORMS

Dating profiles function as communication tools within online dating environments, where users attempt to present themselves through images, biographical descriptions, and personal information (Henry-Waring & Barraket, 2008). Chan (2018) reports that most survey respondents carefully select their profile pictures and invest considerable time in crafting their biographies, reflecting efforts to present themselves in digital spaces. Dating profiles not only convey personal interests and intentions but also become a "digitized stage" for the performance of gender identity and sexual orientation (Christensen, 2021). This is particularly beneficial for individuals who are shy and feel more comfortable writing than speaking (Henry-Waring & Barraket, 2008). Additionally, some users express themselves through their lists of favorite songs and artists on Tinder, thereby displaying their musical taste and cultural capital (Kang, 2023).

Notably, some studies indicate that self-presentation on dating profiles is not always authentic. Some users, for example, use fake names and fake pictures of themselves to protect their social image (Ruhela & Riaz, 2019). At the same time, others upload music that does not reflect their actual preferences on their profiles in order to present themselves as "socially attractive" (Kang, 2023). This demonstrates that users tend to present themselves in line with social norms, even if this presentation does not reflect who they truly are. These results are consistent with Goffman's (1956) dramaturgical theory where users play roles that are different from their true selves behind the screen to meet social norms and expectations, with the dating profiles as a stage. However, some individuals still strive to present themselves as authentically as possible; as another interviewee in Kang's (2023) study noted, he was reluctant to use Tinder's song-display feature because his favorite songs changed constantly and did not reliably represent his musical preferences.

ONLINE DATING AS AN EXPRESSION OF "LIQUID LOVE."

As Bauman (2003) suggests, we are living in a time of liquid love, where the art of loving has been replaced by a commercially driven imitation, transforming intimate relations into "love experiences" that work according to a commodity model: attractive, easily accessible and promising instant gratification without the need for waiting or sustained effort. Online dating supports this idea, presenting the formation of relationships as a rational, commercialized, and individual choice, where love is a click away (Barraket & Henry-Waring, 2008). Findings from several studies support Bauman's (2003) argument regarding liquid love. Barraket and Henry-Waring (2008) show that many participants view themselves and others as "products for consumption" in the dating market. Similarly, Dröge and Voirol (2011) note that some individuals compare online dating to shopping on the Internet, like choosing a digital camera: they receive "offers," compare options, and weigh advantages and disadvantages before making a decision. Moreover, Dröge and Voirol (2011) demonstrate the rationalization involved in partner selection on apps, as users actively adjust filtering criteria to narrow down potential partners, thereby making evaluation more efficient and avoiding wasted time on unsuitable matches. Consequently, concepts and practices from the sphere of markets and mass consumption have penetrated the domain of online romantic relationships (Dröge & Voirol, 2011), thereby clearly reflecting Bauman's notion of "liquid love."

Online dating, supported by matching features, makes relationship formation easier and faster but, at the same time, also makes leaving someone or being left more straightforward (Henry-Waring & Barraket, 2008). The processes of swiping and filtering on apps, which prioritize physical attractiveness and rapid connection, deviate from normative trajectories of

emotional development, thereby contributing to the fleeting nature of relationships and the erosion of intimacy (Yeo & Fung, 2018). Supporting this argument, an interview participant in Newett et al.'s (2018) study reported placing less value on relationships established through Tinder. In addition, some apps, such as Grindr, shape interactions toward short-term, non-committal encounters, thereby hindering the formation of long-term, committed relationships (Yeo & Fung, 2018). The findings indicate that online dating appears to be a mirror of fragility and fluidity of intimate relationships in the postmodern era, consistent with Bauman's notion of "liquid love".

The lack of strong commitment is not only the design of online dating platforms but also the users who may lack trust and remain skeptical about relationships formed through these platforms. For example, some users doubt the authenticity of matches (Newett et al., 2018) or worry about "overinvesting" in someone who is not a suitable partner (Portolan & McAlister, 2022). Hence, even with the support of online platforms, users' hesitation, ambivalence and skepticism contribute to the uncertainty and risk associated with online dating, thus highlighting the image of "liquid love" described by Bauman.

DISCUSSION

One important finding is that online dating both reinforces and changes traditional dating norms. This suggests that online dating has had major effects on dating culture. Moreover, although digital spaces are characterized by openness and provide greater opportunities for unrestricted social connection, users still tend to select partners based on similarities in race, social class, and other social characteristics. Consequently, whether technology fundamentally transforms the nature of romantic relationships remains a question that is difficult to answer conclusively. At the same time, the findings highlight homophily as a crucial mechanism in the formation of social networks, particularly in the processes of seeking friends and romantic partners. In this sense, online dating has become a space for expanding social relationships and building social capital without necessarily relying on traditional forms of face-to-face interaction.

Furthermore, the review indicates that online dating serves not only as a mechanism for partner matching, but also fulfills a variety of other functions, including expanding social networks, increasing social knowledge and understanding, enriching travel experiences, and, notably, facilitating migrants' adaptation to new social environments. The findings may help mitigate the stereotype that online dating is only a tool for romantic matching. This enhances our sociological understanding and contributes to a larger view of online dating. In a similar vein, the systematic review carried out by Castro and Barrada (2020) produced results that are contrary to the widespread stereotype that dating applications are used only for casual sexual encounters.

Social impacts of online dating are also visible in how it intensifies broader social inequalities, especially gender inequality, racial inequality, and inequalities connected to gender expression. Our findings point to the fact that social inequalities are not only a characteristic of the offline world but are also subtly embedded in digital environments. That's why more active participation in online spaces must be part of the efforts and campaigns for the fight against social inequality.

Sociological research on online dating has typically focused on the social effects of the phenomenon and on the social aspects of the phenomenon itself. However, there is an absence of empirical studies aimed at explaining the social conditions and social factors influencing this phenomenon in the context of the chosen literature.

LIMITATIONS

This review has several limitations. First, not all PRISMA guidelines were fully followed, particularly regarding the assessment of risk of bias in the selected studies. Therefore, although inclusion and exclusion criteria were established, these procedures may still have been influenced by subjective judgments, and some relevant findings may have been overlooked. Second, relying solely on Scopus as the sole data source may limit the scope of accessible literature. Perhaps for this reason, this systematic review has not identified the social factors influencing the use of online dating services. Furthermore, this review did not adopt a predefined sociological theoretical framework but instead relied primarily on journal classification and keywords related to sociology. This approach facilitates the exploration of diverse sociological perspectives but at the same time limits the possibility of in-depth analysis based on a consistent theoretical foundation.

IMPLICATIONS

The results of this systematic review support the explanatory power of sociological theories such as functionalism of Robert K. Merton, dramaturgical theory of Erving Goffman, and concept of "liquid love" of Zygmunt Bauman, in explaining the phenomenon of online dating. The findings show that classical and contemporary sociological theories still offer important analytical insights into intimate relationships mediated by digital technologies and theoretical directions for future research on the topic. This review also contributes to the development of Digital Sociology or the sociology of technology, especially in the context of the rapid development of digital technologies and artificial intelligence and their increasing integration in social life.

Furthermore, this review also points out some potential directions for the researchers in this field. Specifically, the future review studies might be more focused on specific aspects rather than broad scope. In addition, most of the existing studies are qualitative and their scope is mostly limited to the United States and Australia. Thus, future research could use quantitative or mixed-method approaches, probability sampling approaches, and extend the research to more countries. These approaches would increase the representativeness of the results and would enable cross-cultural comparison of sociological understandings of online dating. Future research may also continue to probe whether dating norms are really changing or mostly being reproduced in digital environments, and explore patterns of self-presentation among users on online dating platforms. This review also contributes to the methodologically systematic review research on online dating. However, the database searches of future review studies should include more databases to improve the comprehensiveness of the findings.

This review suggests that for developers of online dating platforms, application features should be designed to increase women's agency and status in the partner-selection process, such as allowing women to initiate conversations, as done by Bumble. Additionally, platforms should focus more on reducing algorithmic bias and ensuring fairer visibility between the profiles of white users and users of color. In addition, more stringent mechanisms to verify user information should be implemented to reduce deception and to foster trust in the platform environment.

For policymakers, this review points to the need for codes of appropriate online conduct to be developed alongside appropriate regulatory measures to mitigate discriminatory behavior in digital spaces. In addition, population policymakers may consider the promotion of the use of online dating services as a potential strategy to address delayed marriage and to contribute to increasing fertility rates especially in low birth rate countries. In addition, policymakers in the fields of culture and tourism may also use online dating platforms as tools for the promotion and development of local tourism in the context of digital transformation.

This review is encouraging for users of online dating services to create profiles that reflect themselves authentically. Users should also be aware that not all profiles are a perfect reflection of other user real identities at the same time. Hence, caution and careful verification is necessary throughout the process of selecting potential partners. Users might use these platforms to find romantic partners or to expand their social networks and enrich their travel experiences, as well as other forms of social experience.

CONCLUSION

From a sociological perspective, online dating in the domain of this review both continues and creates dating norms. Men are still initiators in online spaces, but they also create opportunities for women to be more active. While there is still evidence of partner selection based on similarity, research suggests that online dating users are more inclined to seek partners across racial and religious boundaries. Moreover, users generally continue to follow conventional stages in the development of romantic relationships, even though platforms may facilitate the acceleration of these processes. Dating platforms open up new avenues for social discrimination, prejudice, and inequality, especially with regard to gender and race. Nevertheless, such platforms also promote the formation of romantic relationships. More importantly, they expand social networks by creating opportunities to meet new people beyond existing social circles, thereby supporting travel experiences, migration processes, and enhanced self-understanding and social awareness. They further provide a more open and relatively safe space for LGBTQ+ communities. In addition, dating apps and websites function as digitized stages on which users strive to present themselves authentically while simultaneously adjusting their self-presentation to meet social expectations. Finally, from a sociological perspective, online dating reflects the characteristics of "liquid love," in which romantic relationships are formed easily in ways similar to the consumption of goods and are equally easy to dissolve.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

This article was developed during the author's doctoral studies

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The author declares no conflict of interest in relation to the publication of this paper.

REFERENCES

Andersen, E. M. (2025). "So fast on the keys, when do you have time to meet": Interactionally generated invitations in Danish Tinder chats. *Discourse, Context and Media*, *64*, 100849. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.dcm.2024.100849

Baldor, T. (2022). Do I Know You? Managing Offline Interaction in Acquainted Stranger Relationships. *Qualitative Sociology*, *45*(3), 353–370. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11133-022-09515-5

Barraket, J., & Henry-Waring, M. S. (2008). Getting it on(line): Sociological perspectives on e-dating. *Journal of Sociology*, *44*(2), 149–165. https://doi.org/10.1177/1440783308089167

Bauman, Z. (2003). *Liquid Love: On the Frailty of Human Bonds*. Polity Press.

Bleize, D. N. M., van Stekelenburg, A., & Tamboer, S. L. (2023). The association between mobile dating app use and relationship status satisfaction: A survey study. *Mobile Media and Communication, 12*(3), 602-616. https://doi.org/10.1177/20501579231221069

Bonilla-Zorita, G., Griffiths, M. D., & Kuss, D. J. (2021). Online Dating and Problematic Use: A Systematic Review. *International Journal of Mental Health and Addiction*, *19*(6), 2245–2278. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11469-020-00318-9

Bowman, Z., Drummond, M., Church, J., Kay, J., & Petersen, J. M. (2025). Dating apps and their relationship with body image, mental health and wellbeing: A systematic review. *Computers in Human Behavior*, *165*, 108515. https://doi.org/10.1016/J.CHB.2024.108515

Castro, Á., & Barrada, J. R. (2020). Dating Apps and Their Sociodemographic and Psychosocial Correlates: A Systematic Review. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, *17*(18), 6500. https://doi.org/10.3390/IJERPH17186500

Chan, L. S. (2018). Ambivalence in networked intimacy: Observations from gay men using mobile dating apps. *New Media and Society*, *20*(7), 2566–2581. https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444817727156

Chen, W. P. (2024). Mediating Gender Norms Through the 'Foodies' Culture as Romantic Emotions. *Sociological Research Online*, *29*(4), 1036–1053. https://doi.org/10.1177/13607804241227113

Christensen, M. A. (2021). "Tindersluts" and "Tinderellas": Examining the Digital Affordances Shaping the (Hetero)Sexual Scripts of Young Womxn on Tinder. *Sociological Perspectives*, *64*(3), 432–449. https://doi.org/10.1177/0731121420950756

Conner, C. T. (2018). The Gay Gayze: Expressions of Inequality on Grindr. *Sociological Quarterly*, *60*(3), 397-419. https://doi.org/10.1080/00380253.2018.1533394

Dröge, K., & Voirol, O. (2011). Online dating: The tensions between romantic love and economic rationalization. *Zeitschrift Fur Familienforschung*, *23*(3), 337–357. https://doi.org/10.20377/jfr-200

Duan, X., & Mahbob, M. H. (2025). A systematic literature review on self-presentation strategies in dating app profiles. *Edelweiss Applied Science and Technology*, *9*(8), 1–23. https://doi.org/10.55214/2576-8484.v9i8.9195

Dwyer, Z., Hookway, N., & Robards, B. (2021). Navigating 'thin' dating markets: Mid-life repartnering in the era of dating apps and websites. *Journal of Sociology*, *57*(3), 647–663. https://doi.org/10.1177/1440783320948958

Elagina, D. (2026, March 19). *Dating service revenue worldwide 2017-2030, by segment*. Statista. Retrieved from https://www.statista.com/forecasts/891138/eservices-dating-services-online-revenue-by-segment-worldwide/

Goffman, E. (1956). *The Presentation of Self Everyday Life*. Anchor Books.

Gori, A., Topino, E., & Griffiths, M. D. (2024). The Problematic Online Dating Apps Use Scale (PODAUS): Development and evaluation of its psychometric properties. *Addictive Behaviors Reports*, *19*, 100533. https://doi.org/10.1016/J.ABREP.2024.100533

Henry-Waring, M., & Barraket, J. (2008). Dating & intimacy in the 21st century: The Use of Online Dating Sites in Australia. *International Journal of Emerging Technologies and Society*, *6*(1), 14–33. https://webarchive.nla.gov.au/awa/20080617040421/http://pandora.nla.gov.au/pan/85781/20080617-1353/www.swinburne.edu.au/hosting/ijets/ijets/vol6num1/vol6num1-article2.html

Hobbs, M., Owen, S., & Gerber, L. (2017). Liquid love? Dating apps, sex, relationships and the digital transformation of intimacy. *Journal of Sociology*, *53*(2), 271–284. https://doi.org/10.1177/1440783316662718

Jamaludin, N., Yusof, N. M., Maishahadi, F., Sohid, F., Omar, S. A., Fikri Ishak, M., Mustaqim, S., Yusof, S., & Saidon, J. (2024). Determinants of Online Dating Application Among Millennials. *Information Management and Business Review*, *16*(3S(I)a), 750-760. https://doi.org/10.22610/imbr.v16i3S(I)a.4162

Kang, E. B. (2023). On streaming-dating convergence: Music-mediated self-presentations on Tinder. *New Media and Society*, *25*(8), 2057–2072. https://doi.org/10.1177/14614448211026618

Katz, R. A. (2023). Grindr Tourism Among Tourists, Locals, and Immigrants: Dating App Impacts for Social Relations, Gay Tourism, and Digital Convergence. *Social Media and Society*, *9*(3), 1–12. https://doi.org/10.1177/20563051231192033

Katz, R. A. (2025). Negotiating Hegemonic Masculinities and Mutual Exoticization within Grindr Tourism Interactions: "Everyone in Tel Aviv is a Muscle God." *Journal of Homosexuality*, *72*(7), 1287–1309. https://doi.org/10.1080/00918369.2024.2373804

Konings, F., Sumter, S. R., & Vandenbosch, L. (2024). A linkage study investigating sexualized self-presentation on mobile dating apps and user traits. *Body Image*, *51*, 101781. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.bodyim.2024.101781

Liu, T., & Lin, Z. (2021). Caring masculinity as caring capital in the field of marriage: Chinese rural migrant men's engagement with digital dating. *Information Communication and Society, 26*(8), 1637-1652. https://doi.org/10.1080/1369118X.2021.2020869

McCartney, J., & Hellier, S. (2021). Match, Chat, Mate: A Narrative Analysis of Online Dating and Sexual Experiences Among Women. *Journal for Nurse Practitioners*, *17*(4), 394–398. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.nurpra.2020.12.030

McPherson, J. L., Luu, C. Q., Nguyen, J. P., Garcia, M., & Robnett, R. D. (2025). Motives for engaging in online dating: A meta-synthesis. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships, 42*(11), 3217-3248. https://doi.org/10.1177/02654075251366963

Merton, R. K. (1968). *Social theory and social structure* (Enlarged ed.). Free Press.

Newett, L., Churchill, B., & Robards, B. (2018). Forming connections in the digital era: Tinder, a new tool in young Australian intimate life. *Journal of Sociology*, *54*(3), 346–361. https://doi.org/10.1177/1440783317728584

Nguyen, X. D. (2025). Dating App Usage: A Literature Review of International Research. In T. A. T. Le (Ed.), *Proceedings of the 21st International Conference Socio-Economic and Environmental Issues in Development* (pp. 1553–1568). Finance Publishing House.

Page, M. J., McKenzie, J. E., Bossuyt, P. M., Boutron, I., Hoffmann, T. C., Mulrow, C. D., Shamseer, L., Tetzlaff, J. M., Akl, E. A., Brennan, S. E., Chou, R., Glanville, J., Grimshaw, J. M., Hróbjartsson, A., Lalu, M. M., Li, T., Loder, E. W., Mayo-Wilson, E., McDonald, S., … Moher, D. (2021). The PRISMA 2020 statement: An updated guideline for reporting systematic reviews. *BMJ*, *372*:n72, 1–9. https://doi.org/10.1136/bmj.n71

Peck, A. J., Berkowitz, D., & Tinkler, J. (2021). Left, right, Black, and White: how White college students talk about their inter- and intra- racial swiping preferences on Tinder. *Sociological Spectrum*, *41*(4), 304–321. https://doi.org/10.1080/02732173.2021.1916663

Portolan, L., & McAlister, J. (2022). Jagged Love: Narratives of Romance on Dating Apps during COVID-19. *Sexuality and Culture*, *26*, 354–372. https://doi.org/10.1007/s12119-021-09896-9

Ranzini, G., & Lutz, C. (2017). Love at first swipe? Explaining Tinder self-presentation and motives. *Mobile Media and Communication*, *5*(1), 80–101. https://doi.org/10.1177/2050157916664559

Roshchupkina, O., Kim, O., & Lee, E. J. (2023). Rules of Attraction: Females Perception of Male Self-Representation in a Dating App. *Asia Marketing Journal*, *24*(4), 169–177. https://doi.org/10.53728/2765-6500.1597

Ruhela, S., & Riaz, S. (2019). Relationships through the Lens of Dating Applications: A Social-Imaging and Gender Based Study. *Journal of Content, Community and Communication*, 9, 50–56. https://www.amity.edu/gurugram/jccc/pdf/JCCC%20June%202019%20Final-50-56.pdf

Slotta, D. (2025, December 17). *Online dating in the United States – statistics & facts*. Statista. Retrieved from https://www.statista.com/topics/2158/online-dating/#topicOverview

Statista Research Department. (2026, March 16). *Digital Market Outlook: dating service users worldwide 2018–2028, by segment*. Statista. Retrieved from https://www.statista.com/forecasts/891146/eservices-dating-services-online-user-by-segment-worldwide/

Sunam Audry, A., Bas, O., İnceoğlu, İ., Kaya, Y. B., Cöbek, G., & Alkurt, S. V. (2023). Nationwide research on the uses and motivations of dating apps by young adults in the cultural environment of Turkey. *Mobile Media and Communication, 12*(3), 662-687. https://doi.org/10.1177/20501579231215709

Thomas, R. J. (2019). Online Exogamy Reconsidered: Estimating the Internet's Effects on Racial, Educational, Religious, Political and Age Assortative Mating. *Social Forces*, *98*(3), 1257-1286. https://doi.org/10.1093/sf/soz060

Whyte, S., & Torgler, B. (2017). Preference Versus Choice in Online Dating. *Cyberpsychology, Behavior, and Social Networking*, *20*(3), 150–156. https://doi.org/10.1089/cyber.2016.0528

Witmer, J., Rosenbusch, H., & Meral, E. O. (2025). The relative importance of looks, height, job, bio, intelligence, and homophily in online dating: A conjoint analysis. *Computers in Human Behavior Reports*, *17*, 100579. https://doi.org/10.1016/J.CHBR.2024.100579

Woloszyn, M. R., Clyde, K., & Corno, D. (2020). The relative impact of looks, income, warmth, and intelligence on female online dating preferences. *Social Sciences and Humanities Open*, *2*(1), 100089. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ssaho.2020.100089

Yeo, T. E. D., & Fung, T. H. (2018). "Mr Right Now": Temporality of relationship formation on gay mobile dating apps. *Mobile Media and Communication*, *6*(1), 3–18. https://doi.org/10.1177/2050157917718601

Žakelj, T. (2014). Internet Dating and Respectable Women: Gender Expectations in An Untraditional Partnership and Marriage Market – The Case of Slovenia. *Sociologija*, *56*(1), 5–21. https://doi.org/10.2298/SOC1401005Z

Zhang, T., Tian, Y., & Cheng, T. C. E. (2025). Online retailing with key opinion leaders and product returns. *International Journal of Production Economics*, *279*, 109458. https://doi.org/10.1016/J.IJPE.2024.109458