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Fast Choices and Emancipatory Spaces: Complex Reality of Online dating Apps

Abstract

Contemporary digital environments are increasingly changing the ways in which we live and interact. One of the fields where this is evident is the field of intimate relationships. At the beginning of the third decade of the 21st century mobile dating applications are becoming a common way of meeting potential partners. The purpose of this paper is to explore the implications of this and to look more closely how online dating in the age of mobile applications is changing the field of intimate relationships, as well as to note the complexity of this phenomenon.

Key words: dating applications, intimate relationships, online dating, Tinder, OkCupid, digital media.

Contemporary digital technologies are mediating all aspects of human life, including intimate personal relationships. One of the aspects they are impacting at the beginning of the third decade of the 21st century, is the meeting of potential romantic partners, in the sense that meeting partners through mobile applications has become an increasingly common way of entering into romantic or sexual relationship. Before the age of digital media, romantic partners used to meet mostly through personal social networks e.g. through sociologically so-called "weak ties", whereas over the last 15 years the internet has partly displaced the family, the school, the neighbourhood, friends and the workplace as the venue for meeting partners.[69] There has however been further technological development in the recent years in terms of the development of mobile internet and mobile phone applications and an increase in their use. This has also reflected itself on the field of online dating, concretely in the phenomenon of switching from websites for online dating to dating applications on mobile platforms. Dating applications have further contributed to the popularization of online meeting, making online dating less an exception and more a common channel of relationship formation. Research report of the Pew Research Center for the year 2019 shows that online dating has in the recent years lost the stigma attached to it and has become a common way of meeting partners.[70] Further, Rosenfeld's analysis of national data in the USA shows that meeting online has increased so much that it has displaced meeting through friends from their former roles as main intermediaries in the formation of new partnerships.[71] We can also assume that this is linked with the widespread use of digital environments which at the beginning of the third decade of the 21st century, are starting to permeate all aspects of everyday life, including formation of intimate relationships.

All of the dating applications function in a similar manner. They use user-generated profile data to match users as potential partners. Algorithms analyze the data and check the compatibility of the users and this compatibility is calculated in different ways on different platforms - it is combined with the criterion of geographical location or closeness and other data from the profile. The most popular applications worldwide are Tinder, OKCupid, Tantan, Badoo and Zoosk. Tinder and OKCupid are owned by the same corporation from the USA called Match Group, Zoosk also originates from the USA, while Tantan is of Chinese origin and Badoo of Russian origin. The application Tinder is considered an innovator and leader within the industry of online dating, being present in more than 190 countries around the world, with more than 50 million users. How widespread it is is evident in the phenomenon of its name becoming a representation of online dating in everyday conversations of the 21st century - the question when it comes to online dating often turns from "Are you dating online?" to "Are you on Tinder?" Also, with Tinder Match Group first introduced

69   Michael J. Rosenfeld and Reuben J. Thomas, Searching for a Mate: The Rise of the Internet as the Social Intermediary, American Sociological Review 77(4): 523.

70   "5 facts about online dating", available at https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2016/02/29/5-facts-about-online-dating/, Access 10th November 2019.

71   Michael J. Rosenfeld and Reuben J. Thomas, "Disintermediating your friends: How Online Dating in the United States displaces other ways of meeting", *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 116 (36), p. 17758.

the "swipe" move - hand move moving mobile phone picture representing refusal or acceptance to "match" with another application user. This movement has in the meantime become the industry norm and thus it is present also on Tantan, Badoo and Zoosk. All four applications use geographical location and closeness as the criterion for matching, while OKCupid uses the method of matching users based on the results of a psychological test that they can take. While the first three applications are characterized by the technological architecture with the emphasis on the photograph the user uploads, building a profile on OKCupid seems to require more effort by its asking user to fill out the psychological questionnaire. Match Group also owns three other dating applications - Hinge, Plenty of Fish and Match.com, all catering to different audiences - Hinge is oriented more towards a younger generation[72], Plenty of Fish more towards those who are not willing to pay, while Match.com is for those seeking long-term relationships. However, if we start to look at the underlying economic structures, those differences become questionable. For example, the Match Group corporation mentioned above had a 1.7 billion dollar revenue in the year 2018.[73] This ought to remind us that, in spite of the fun-looking frontend of these applications, the economic structures behind them that condition their functioning are profit-making. While basic features of most dating applications are available for free, they are nevertheless based on the profit-making business model, with either charging access to wholesome features of their service or making profit through advertisement. When dating applications are looked at from the perspective of the underlying economic structures, they start to resemble what Theodor Adorno recognized as the artificial differentiation of products in late capitalism. Under the apparent differentiation of the products, what is actually happening is the differentiation of the consumers, where they are segmented, while their choices are predefined, preselected and embodied in a product, so that the whole market is covered in advance - as Adorno has put it, "something is provided for all so that none may escape".[74] When the market segments Match Group covers with its portfolio of applications is looked at from this perspective, together with their own claim that they offer products for any type of dating desire"[75], the autonomy of choice and preference of the user may seem like an artificial segmentation of the market, whereas any difference among the applications can be seen as pseudo-difference since the economic structures behind all applications are the same - led by the principle of profit-making. It is useful to note this when analyzing the functioning of the applications for online dating, since it impacts the ways in which they mediate user experience.

What has to be emphasized when it comes to contemporary dating applications is how technological architecture of dating applications differs from the architecture of the online dating websites, following the trend towards the visual in the contemporary technological architecture. Unlike

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72 Why Hinge is staging own "death" to stand apart from sister-app Tinder, https://www.thedrum.com/news/2019/08/12/why-hinge-staging-own-death-stand-apart-sister-app-tinder, Access: 9th of January 2020.

73 "Match Group", https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Match_Group, Access: 10th of November 2019.

74 Max Horkheimer i Theodor Adorno, "The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception"in *Media and Cultural Studies: KeyWorks*, Ed. Meenakshi Gigi Durkham i Douglas M. Kellner, John Wiley and Sons, Chichester, 2012., p. 55

75 Match Group, https://www.mtch.com/, Access: 9th of January 2020.

online dating websites that were based on textual profiles, user profiles on dating applications are organized around photographs. The possibility of using text to describe oneself while filling out the profile exists, but it is in most cases minimal. For example, Tinder has space for 6 photos to be uploaded, while it simultaneously has the maximum of 600 characters for text entry on its form for data entry when creating a profile. This is the first significant feature of new dating applications that differentiates them from the previous generation of dating services, websites that provided internet dating before the rise of application and mobile internet. There, the profile was organized around textual content - while an entry for photograph existed, the emphasis was on the textual content. Most contemporary dating applications like Tinder, Badoo or Tantan emphasize visual content and this is the format that is innovative not only in the field of technological development, but also in the cultural sense. The short form for the textual entry points to the technological architecture that gives primacy to the visual. Even if users wanted to emphasize the textual content, they are not able to do so. Grounding of relationship formation in the architecture of technology favoring visual element is a new cultural moment. Psychological personality on Tinder is organized around six photographs, these photographs becoming a narrative of personal identity. Thus it is not unusual that they are carefully framed and coated through filters in an attempt to look as attractive as possible. Consequently, in digital environments of contemporary dating applications the capability for visual self-presentation becomes the social currency. The important skills are those related to the manipulation and editing of the visual content, in comparison with the textual dating websites where writing skills were crucial for self-presentation. The question of the correlation between digital and social reality also arises. An extremely edited photo on the digital dating application represents a certain social value, but does it necessarily correlate with the social, emotional or cultural capital of its owner in the offline social world? Challenges embodied in this question are part of wider challenges that we come to face in the world where digital environments become increasingly embedded in everyday life.

Further, the pace in which dating applications condition users to choose a partner can be seen as a cultural shift in relationship formation. The process of choosing potential partner on contemporary dating applications is very fast-paced and simplified. As mentioned above, this process comes down to the so-called "swipe" - the movement with which the user drags their finger over the other user's profile to the left or right side, which in the IT architecture behind the application symbolizes rejection or acceptance of the other person as the potential partner. As Marshall McLuhan[76] noted, technology is not neutral; its design conditions the ways people behave. What the "swipe" thus signifies on a cultural level is a new manner of entering potential romantic relationships. What is different in the process of "swiping" as a new social practice of relationship-entry in comparison with meeting through friends or one's own network is the very short period of time given for a decision on the compatibility of a potential partner and a decision based on the visual digital content that this kind of technological architecture fosters. The evaluation of someone's compatibility as a partner

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76 Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding media: The extensions of ma*n, London and New York, McGraw-Hill 1964, p. 10.

comes down to the quick look of the photograph presented in the profile and a short moment of decision whether to "swipe" right or left. While the technological architecture of the dating websites required taking some time to read the potential partner's profile, the architecture of "swiping" fosters fast-paced decision-making based on visual appearance. When it is taken into account that the practice of the "swipe" has become so popular socially that it has also become normalized in the everyday language, coming to signify searching for potential partners or hookups, we can view it as a new emergent social practice, reflecting new ways of entering potential relationships based on visual and instant-culture. This kind of relationship-formation gives a phenomenological feeling of greater expendability of such connections at the first sight of any kind of frustration - after all, why would one dwell long on a connection which was created through minimal effort? This makes for a cultural shift in the structuring of romantic relationship formation and in this sense contemporary dating applications are indeed, as Tinder boasts on its webpage, "not only a dating application, but a cultural movement".[77]

What is namely also a new cultural phenomenon when considering contemporary dating applications is the insight into the amount of potential partners available in the social surrounding. This insight, combined with the relatively easy access to these potential partners, has certain implications. It can encourage the evaluative mindset usually applied in the process of consumption. In the year 2010 Eva Illouz[78] conducted a qualitative research on the users of dating websites, and her results already then showed inclinations of users to engage in the process of cognitive evaluation resembling shopping for goods in the market in a capitalistic system of consumption, when searching for a partner on the internet; one's personality is turned into a packaged product, which competes with others on the open market. She placed this within the context of a wider phenomenon that she called "emotional capitalism", where relationships become exposed to the logic of utilitarianism and become measurable and replaceable entities.[79] Švab et al. call this principle a "rational choice which tries to fulfill emotional needs of the person", such as the choice of their male heterosexual respondents who participated in online dating searching for partners without children, in order to have children with them.[80] However, data from these research studies stems from the age in which textual websites were still prevalent, while it is contemporary dating applications in which this evaluative mindset finds its real embodiment. The architecture of technology of mobile applications for online dating turns potential partners into a database with visual display, while the option of "swiping" gives the possibility to search through the database quickly, which is phenomenologically a new feeling in the process of the search for romantic partner, because it enables the view of alternative options of potential partners. Thus it is possible to assume that this type of architecture will additionally foster an evaluative mindset among users, where potential partnerships will be

77 "Tinder", https://tinder.com/, Access: 10th November 2019.

78 Eva Illouz, *Hladne intimnosti: Oblikovanje čustvenega kapitalizma*, Založba Krtina, Ljubljana, 2010.

79 Ibid., str. 131-132.

80 Tjaša Žaljek, Doris Kocon, Alenka Švab and Roman Kuhar, "Internet Dating as a Project: The Commodification and Rationalisation of Online Dating", *Družboslovne razprave*, 13(78), str. 21

evaluated against alternative visible options. In favor of this, the application Tinder was in the year 2015 accused of destroying romantic relationships in the area of New York City[81], by providing men with a venue for practising unlimited casual sex which lessened their readiness to commit to a long-term relationship. This phenomenon can be understood better if romantic partnerships in contemporary society are considered in terms of Giddens's reflexive relationships of late modernity - relationships based on personal choice and the will to commit, and which in social context of late modernity are replacing relationships structured by external social anchors such as tradition.[82] Pure relationships of late modernity are based on choice, and their maintenance demands commitment and effort which is what replaces external social anchors in which relationships are rooted in traditional societies. It is already their formation that requires a certain amount of effort. Namely, it is inevitable that the process of forming a new relationship will cause some frustration, in that it is a process of adjustment and harmonisation of two until then separate and distinct subjectivities. It requires some adjustment and negotiating of different habits and habituses on both parts of potential partners which will inevitably include some amount of frustration. In this context, it is definitely tempting and easier to instead "swipe" right towards a new choice on an online dating application. It can be assumed that economic capitalistic structures in the background of dating applications with the goal of profit-making consequently have the aim of providing the user with the pleasurable experience - with minimal amount of frustration - which will prolong his usage of the application, so the organization of the process of meeting in this manner is partially conditioned by those structures. As Zygmunt Bauman notes, in the age of capitalism the process of falling in love is attempted to resemble the goods on the market, by trying to eliminate any kind of anticipation, too much trouble of effort out of the process.[83] This is precisely the formula which dating applications provide - minimal amount of effort in the process of connecting in addition to minimal amount of frustration and instant availability of alternative choice in the case of dissatisfaction with the existing one. Providing that the population of prospective partners on certain location is big enough that the alternative choices seem endless, this can further have a potentially negative impact on the amount of the effort one is willing to invest in the formation of a particular intimate relationship. Why tolerate frustration if there is always new alternative option available on your mobile phone? Furthemore, if we remember how Heidegger[84] located the very essence of technology in the "standing reserve" waiting to be ordered for further processing, we can recognize this precisely in the organization of dating applications. It seems that dating applications are turning prospective partners in one's social context to a visual reserve on standby waiting to be ordered for further emotional or sexual processing. In a way it becomes a reserve of alternative options always available - standing reserve for further emotional or sexual use, to which it is always possible to come back to if the actual

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81 "Tinder is tearing apart society", https://nypost.com/2015/08/16/tinder-is-tearing-apart-society/, Access: 20th of October 2019.

82 Anthony Giddens, *Modernity and Self-identity*, Polity press, London, 1991.

83 Zygmunt Bauman, *Liquid Love: On the frailty of human bonds,* Polity press, Cambridge, 2003., p. 7

84 Martin Heidegger, "Pitanje o tehnici" iz *Uvod u Heideggera*, Centar za društvene djelatnosti omladine RK SOH, Zagreb, 1972.

physical emotional reality fails or feels too complex. The example of New York City shows that in the context of an area populated enough to have almost unlimited number of alternative options available, this possibility can indeed become a social reality.

The question that arises further is whether this kind of technological architecture invites certain types of psychological features? What is to be expected when we are collectively subjected to technologies that foster low tolerance of frustration, focus on visual appearance and sense of unlimited possibilities when it comes to intimate relationships? It is not possible to think of these hallmarks without being reminded of a certain type of personality which they could favor - narcissistic personality. Christopher Lasch[85] has in the 1960s identified the reproduction of the culture of late capitalism in this type of individual. Such personality has an outer grandiose facade, and is adept at managing impressions it gives to others, simultaneously craving attention because of feelings of inner emptiness, but also unable to form satisfying relationships, and thus in the constant search of emotional titillation in the form of shallow relationships which do not last long. The phenomenon of an outer grandiose facade which does not correspond to the inner psychological reality is a hallmark of narcissistic tendencies within the psychoanalytic tradition. The outer facade of grandeur often hides the inner frailty of the self of the narcissistic personality, which is sensitive to the least of frustrations which it experiences as an injury to its self-perceived feelings of omnipotence. Consequently, authentic emotional intimacy exposes this kind of self with too much discrepancy between the narcissist's outer facade and inner reality and thus he tends to avoid intimate relationships. Relationships where others can be used as objects and thus the cognitive control can be maintained are often sought. Are the environments of the dating applications a technological embodiment of the features of this type of narcissistic self as contemporary cultural norm? Digital environments fostering visual appearance do not offer time to focus on anything else other than appearances, the outer grandeur of the carefully filtered and panned appearance in photos are in contrast with the authenticity that complex social reality inevitably brings with itself, and with a questionable correlation to it. The selection process through the practice of "swiping" based on visual appearance and the orientation on one's own goals can be said to foster the type of attachment where others are seen as objects instead of subjects. A visual standing reserve of ever-available alternative options on dating applications seems to offer the playground for omnipotent fantasies. All of these features are a reflection of the hallmarks of the narcissistic type of self, inviting the question of whether the contemporary dating applications are a digital space where this kind of personality can now thrive? After all, a never-ending "standing reserve" of potential partners through which one can swipe offers the feeling that the options for hookups - shallow relationships that offer short-term emotional satisfaction - is always present. This offers the possibility of an escape from the emotional risk that entrance into a personal relationship inevitably exposes one to. Do contemporary dating applications then in this manner provide the means for escaping from emotional risk for narcissistic selves of the 21st century - a tool for the compensation of the formation of long-lasting relationships? This is one possible type of usage that their technological architecture fosters.

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85   Christopher Lasch, The Culture of Narcissism: American Life in the Age of Diminshing Expectations, Norton & Company, New York, 1991., pg. 34

What is, however, easy to overlook when it comes to dating applications are the emancipatory spaces that can be found within them. For example, the previously mentioned OkCupid application which uses psychological testing to match users offers a lot of space for personal psychological exploration during its usage. When creating a profile, the user is faced with multiple choice questions about his or her lifestyle, values, sexual preferences and habits, based on which the algorithm of the application then calculates his or her compatibility with other users. The number of questions which one can answer on OkCupid is extensive - it counts to 4000. This kind of technological architecture can be seen as opening up the space for reflexive exploration of one's identity. As Giddens[86] has also noted, the self is in late modernity a project based on reflexivity, meaning that reflexivity is transferred from collective traditions to individual choices about one's lifestyle and decisions on how to live. Except being an active creator of his or her relationships, the late modern individual is an active agent in the construction of his own identity. With its 4000 questions available for reflexive pondering of one's identity, OKCupid represents an ideal technological platform for the self-reflexive individual of late modernity that Giddens describes. It is hard to answer these questions without having a new insight about oneself, and in this sense the application fosters reflexive exploration of one's identity. Further, even for those individuals who have already thought about their identity reflexively, this level of extensiveness when it comes to reflexivity offers new potential insights - for example, "How much control do your parents have over your life" or "Is it possible for your partner to be too ambitious?" OKCupid does not leave out any possible area when it comes to reflexivity - it is fostered through questions on daily habits, political values, moral values, attitudes towards relationships, preferences in relationships and sexual identity. The latter is where OKCupid becomes a really sophisticated tool for the exploration of sexual identity of the late modern individual, with 22 available categories of gender and 13 of sexual orientation into which users can classify themselves, while the website simultaneously offers detailed descriptions of each of those identities. This gives the user an opportunity to acquaint himself or herself with existing categories of sexual identity and to question one's own in relation to them. The application even popularized the term "sapiosexual", meaning a person who "finds intelligence sexually most attractive characteristic"[87], which has also entered the everyday language. By widening the field for potential reflexivity and fostering the reflexivity of its users, OKCupid can be seen as the digital space for deliberation which can be helpful in the reflexive construction of one's identity. In this sense, it can be seen as having a certain emancipatory potential, especially in the contexts of social structures where exploration of sexual identities outside of traditional gender roles is still forbidden or socially punished.

The emancipatory space that digital applications for dating offer can also manifest itself in the unintended consequences of their usage, in the sense of users using dating applications to build different kinds of connections than it was envisioned in its original aim. For example, a Belgian

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86 Anthony Giddens, *Modernity and self-identity*, Polity press, London, 1991.

87 "Identity: Orientation and Gender Expression as told by real, actual humans", https://www.okcupid.com/identity/sapiosexual, Access: 10th of November 2019.

study on the usage of Tinder[88] among youth showed that it is also used for the aim of socialization when travelling or betterment of social skills. Users thus find ways to use the technology of dating application for their own goals, besides the goal of finding a partner or a hookup. This potential of using internet technology for establishing connections of a different kind than it was intended for is part of a wider emancipatory space that digital technology creates. This was recognized on many levels since the beginning of the internet, in the digital space which social networks offered for networking outside of institutional venues, for example, in terms of the organization of protests. [89] Digital technology has the potential of disembedding the individual out of his or her social circles and offers the possibility to establish connections with social circles which the individual had no way of locating before. Ortega and Hergovich have proven that online meeting is beneficial to social diversity, analysing how it connects individuals without overlapping social networks.[90] This potential is further increased with the technological possibility of dating applications to locate users geolocally, meaning locating geographical location of the certain mobile internet connection enabled by smartphones and mobile internet, while this search can be combined with certain characteristics of users as the criterion for searching. Thus it is not surprising that this way of connecting will be of greatest importance for those social groups whose members are hard to locate in the physical social reality, for example marginalized social groups that lack venues for meeting in a certain social context. One of the social groups for which these technological possibilities are of importance is the LGBTQI community. For example, research on a representative population in USA[91] shows that already before the emergence of dating applications more than 60% of LGBTQI persons in USA met online in 2008 and 2009 and that internet mostly displaces other ways of meeting precisely within this population. 41% of homosexual couples who met in the last 10 years have met online, while this percentage is 17% when it comes to heterosexual couples [92]. In the context of social norms that users experience as repressive, as in the case of homosexuality which is still socially stigmatized, online dating venues provide a platform for safe socialization and meeting of potential partners. Qualitative research conducted in Slovenia has shown that gay men use online venues as places for the establishment of connections in the context of social stigma attached to homosexuality and homophobia, as well as lack of bars for homosexuals, and as means of socialization.[93] Qualitative research study conducted on young men in USA also indicates the importance that dating applications have for providing the

88 Elisabeth Timmermans, "From Swiping to Casual Sex and/or Committed Relationships", *The Information Society,* 34(2), p. 109.

89 Manuel Castells, *Networks of Outrage and Hope: Social Movements in the Internet Age,* Polity Press, Cambridge, 2012.

90 Josue Ortega i Phillip Hergovich, *The Strength of Absent Ties: Social Integration via Online Dating,* https://arxiv.org/pdf/1709.10478.pdf, Access: 20th of October 2019.

91 Michael J. Rosenfeld and Reuben J. Thomas, Searching for a Mate: The Rise of the Internet as the Social Intermediary, *American Sociological Review* 77(4), p. 17-18.

92 Ibid, p. 23-24.

93 Tjaša Žaljek, Doris Kocon, Alenka Švab and Roman Kuhar, "Internet Dating as a Project: The Commodification and Rationalisation of Online Dating", *Družboslovne razprave*, 13(78),p. 14.

space for the establishment of meaningful relationships within the homosexual community.[94] The ability to search users through the feature of geolocation enables new digital space to connect with individuals from different social networks with which are in immediate geographical proximity and with which individual was previously unconnected and thus the potential of acquiring a new social capital. Even in cities which are considered progressive in terms of LGBTQI rights such as London, dating applications are found to allow the practice of queer life in ways that are adaptable to the preferences of users.[95] Some hardships in the translation of this connection to the physical and social space have also been noted, a tendency towards closing of the homosexual relations into private spaces as well as hardships when it comes to locating "community" in the digital applications. Despite that, it seems that online dating applications are important for the establishment of intimate connections of individuals within LGBTQI population. Dating applications open up spaces of access to other members of this marginalized group in the context of lack of spaces for connecting in the social physical reality and thus harder possibility of detecting the members of this group. Although the attempt of translating the potential relationships from digital two-dimensional reality to the social reality in its complexity of economic, cultural and emotional capital is characterized by possible discrepancies between the two realities, it is already evident that in spite of this dating apps provide novel spaces for the formation of social capital.

In a similar manner, online dating applications provide spaces for the realization of personal agency and related behaviors within other social contexts felt as oppressive within which social reality offers limited possibilities of connecting within physical locations. For example, in India, where traditional social norms still require young people, especially women, not to date or have sex before marriage, Tinder has become a tool that allows for the bypassing of these norms and exercise of sexual autonomy for the younger generation that experiences these norms as repressive.[96] In this context dating applications represent online points of access - similarly to what they allow for the homosexual population in a social reality which lacks venues for meetings of these marginalized groups. Thus one of the emancipatory spaces that dating applications provide is located within their potential to transfer behaviors from digital to offline spaces which can be seen as an exercise of agency in establishment of intimate relationships within social contexts that are felt as oppressive.

In conclusion, online dating applications are changing the ways in which romantic relationships are formed in the 21st century. On the one hand, because of the seemingly unlimited choices of finding alternative partners they continually offer, combined with the ease of their browsing and the practice of fast choice in addition to the technological primacy of the visual aspect, they can

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94 Uteda, Austin, "Young Gay Adults' Personal Engagement with Contemporary Hookup Culture Through the Use of Mobile Apps", Undergraduate Honors Theses, 1460. Available at: https://scholar.colorado.edu/honr_theses/1460, Access 10th November 2019.

95 Sam Miles (2017) "Sex in the digital city: location-based dating apps and queer urban life", *Gender, Place & Culture*, 24:11, p. 1595-1610

96 How Tinder changed the dating landscape of India, https://mediaindia.eu/social-vibes/how-tinder-changed-the-dating-landscape-of-india/, Access: 11 December 2019.

be seen as medium enabling goal-oriented behaviors and thus in this sense introducing principles of technology and capitalistic consumption into the formation of intimate relationships. Potential implications of this can be found also in the easier avoidance of emotional investing in long-term relationships for which such possibilities are provided by this kind of digital environment. However, it should also be emphasized that this kind of technological architecture creates emancipatory spaces, both on individual and social level. On the individual level this is evident in its possibility to offer a place of empowerment in terms of reflexive exploration of identities or means of establishing of safe connection and exercise of agency in social contexts that are felt as oppressive and increase in one's social capital. On the social level it is manifested in terms of connecting of previously unconnected social groups. Reality of dating applications which are becoming a common way to meet in the field of intimate relationships in the 21st century seems to be more complex than the evaluation of their implications one-sidedly as either positive or negative, would allow.

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Brzi izbori i emancipatorni prostori: kompleksna stvarnost aplikacija za online upoznavanje

Sažetak

Suvremena digitalna okruženja sve više mijenjaju načine na koje živimo te bivamo u interakciji. Intimni odnosi su jedno od područja na koja ona utječu. Mobilne aplikacije za upoznavanje su na početku trećeg desetljeća 21. stoljeća sve uobičajeniji način upoznavanja potencijalnih partnera. Svrha ovog rada je istražiti implikacije ovakvog načina upoznavanja te pobliže promotriti način na koji online upoznavanje mijenja područje intimnih odnosa u dobu mobilnih aplikacija, kao i obratiti pozornost na kompleksnost navedenog fenomena.

__Ključne riječi:__ aplikacije za upoznavanje, intimni odnosi, online upoznavanje, Tinder, OkCupid, digitalni mediji.