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Tender Tinder: A Study of One of the Hottest Dating Apps and Geographic Location

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Context

- Tinder is a dating app with the reputation of being used to “hook up,” or have sexual relationships without commitment pressures. To find a match through the app, swipe right if interested, swipe left if not.
- Review of literature showed contrasting claims about Tinder’s reputation. Both Huffington Post and Vanity Fair reported Tinder as a means for hook-ups, where the NY Times claimed that Tinder is a good way to meet someone looking for a long-term relationship.
- Conducted a netnography, an online ethnography, that utilized rhetorical analysis of the app, as well as participant-observation to investigate the reality of Tinder’s reputation.

Research Questions

1. Does a specific geographical location or cultural context impact how people use Tinder? Specifically, is Tinder used differently in Utah than in other parts of the country?
2. How do people depict themselves in their profiles on Tinder?
3. What is the role of pickup lines? Do they vary by geographic location?
4. Do people tailor their Tinder accounts based on their current location or their home state?

Process

- **Research Phase:** Analyzed Tinder’s reputation through a review of literature.
- **Observation Phase:** Joined Tinder and observed firsthand how people interact on the app.
- **Analysis:** Evaluated 50 male profiles and conversations, focusing on pickup lines linked to geographic location.
- **Focus Groups:** Initial group of 20 random profiles for a baseline, specific group of 50 for depth.

Findings

- Pickup lines are not commonly used, if at all, by Utah Tinder participants.
- Jokes are used far more frequently than pickup lines, sexual references, or statements of intent.
- Geographic location does play a part in Tinder profiles. Data collected showed a distinct contrast between Tinder’s national reputation and its use in Utah.

Figure 1 – Selected Profiles Based on Definitive Biographies

Figure 2 – 20 Consecutive Profiles, Study Baseline

Figure 1: depicts the 50 profiles focused on for the project, chosen based on their definitive biographies. This figure was more conclusive than Figure 2 due to more profiles and more categories.