

Mobile Sexuality: Presentations of Young Filipinos in Dating Apps

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Mobile dating applications have become self-presentation spaces and stages among the youth. In the search for romance and sexual relationships, young Filipinos create and act out pre and co-constructed selves that enable them to find dating partners. Using the musings and experiences of 50 Filipino young adults who have been using dating apps to search for love or lust, the study found that created mobile/online selves or faces reflect presentation strategies that include the show of sincerity, dramatic execution of the role, use of personal front, maintenance of control over the information, mystification, idealization, and misrepresentation. The study concludes that self-presentations range from the authentic to the inauthentic portrayal of the self to advance motives and intents in the use of dating apps.

Keywords: self presentation, mobile communication, young adults, online behaviors, Filipino communication experience

Introduction

The Philippines has seen a growth of the use of mobile phone communication for dating as evidenced by the rise of choices (e.g., Tinder, Bumble, Grindr, Her, OkCupid) in the local scene (Rivera, 2019). What used to be a computer-dependent dating process has now become an app-based experience with the Philippines becoming a growing market for such an algorithm-driven practice (Salvosa, 2018). Dating app users in the country are part of the 1.6 billion who swipe daily, which, then, results to at least 1 million dates per week (Iqbal, 2020). The Philippines currently has 72 million active social media users that access content via mobile devices, with 4 hours spent in using social media (DataReportal, 2019).

The spread of the use of mobile phones for dating has led to discussions that question the morals of the users, especially young adults who use it to find sexual partners. Critics find the intent, motives, and performed roles in such spaces as inherently “wrong” with some sectors of the Filipino society connecting mobile dating to the demise of the seemingly conservative Filipino way of life (Dulay, 2018).

Presenting the self in a mobile platform such as the dating apps is perceived as an act that threatens the moral fiber of the Filipino society (Atienza, 2018).

There is an impression that the Filipino youth who indulge in mobile dates create a distorted and displeasing online “face.” The impression aligns with the corrupted sexual and sensual intents and motives of the users (Samonte, Reyes, & Labor, 2016). Furthermore, because it is the millennial generation, considered highly emotional and needy of affection, by others, then the platform may be used as venues to unleash the users’ false sense of selves that result from over-attribution and exaggeration (Joinson, Reips, Buchanan, & Paine, 2010; Walther, 1996). Moreover, old-fashioned thinking assumes that users of dating apps sacrifice honesty and truthfulness in the apps.

There is an on-going debate on the role of mobile telephony in dating practices. On the one hand, some claim that mobile phones encounter for dating purposes has expanded and maintained romantic and sexual relationships in cosmopolitan societies (Aricat, Karnowski, & Chib, 2015). Traditionally used for individual-specific purposes, mobile phones of today have provided the agency to enable personal and professional connections. Jonathan Donner (2009) claimed that the use of mobile phones had cut the distance, and optimistically changed the interactions of people. Fernando Paragas and Trisha Lin (2016) acknowledged the decisive role of technology in enhancing interpersonal relationships, claiming that technology use led to “a shift that has since resulted into a re-understanding of the nature of the audience” (p. 152), where technological innovations become a part of and not as a determinant of actions and interactions. Further, researchers like Joseph Walther (1996) see online platforms like dating apps as venues where users reflect and manage their presented selves, allowing users to attain successful relationships. Individuals have also attained a sense of empowerment because of the high level of relational identities formed in mediated dyadic encounters (Joinson et al., 2010).

On the other hand, some have cautioned users of the negative consequences of the public use of mobile telephony, particularly in the use of mobile dating apps (Cabañes & Collantes, 2020; Zervoulis, Smith, Reed, & Dinos, 2020). The use of dating apps’ location data system is deemed a privacy risk as chat data, user profile, shared pictures, e-mail addresses, epoch value (time), and location can be retrieved by just about anyone who knows data base storage. Seemingly, it feels that technological innovations such as computer and mobile apps have adverse effects on human engagements, particularly on how they develop and nurture relationships. Some even worry that dating apps drive the HIV epidemic, especially in the Asia Pacific region (Clark, 2015).

The Filipino millennials are in the center of the issue as their technology practices, particularly on the use of dating apps, are questioned. Being digital natives, they feel that they can navigate online social networks (Ronquillo,

2016). They describe themselves as empowered yet are perceived as self-entitled and narcissistic by some because of their “me first” attitude. In 2018, one of the discussants, Michael Labayandoy, in a CNN Life tech feature, claimed that 71% of the Filipino millennials know a couple who have met via online dating (Rivera, 2019). Such involvement in online dating is changing the experience of traditional dating, which makes many individuals from older generations worried (Finkel, Eastwick, Karney, Reis, & Sprecher, 2012). The millennials’ mobile dating behaviors are criticized as acts of narcissism since these include presenting, editing, and curating their appearances (Garcia, Reiber, Massey, & Merriwether, 2012; Twenge & Campbell, 2009).

The rise of mobile dating app use equates to the growth of the multi-million business of apps in the country. A recent report claims that dating app use has increased to 71% among Filipinos (Rivera, 2019). On the one hand, the rise in the use of the mobile apps made Tinder, Bumble, Grindr, Her, and OkCupid household names. Such rise led to the easing of the taboo on the act of dating someone with the aid of technology (Keating, 2013; Finkel et al., 2012).

On the other hand, for conservative cultures like the Philippines where religion is a decisive factor in dating and relationships, having this wide array of choices of dating apps may be an indication of a less morally upright approach to dating. There exists an impression that adapting to new practices and technologies of dating and self-presentation is veering away from core values and tradition (Dumdum, 2010). As these apps pave the way for more casual dating and sex, young Filipinos and their ‘Westernized’ take on dating are somehow regarded as conflicting with the religious ideals of intimate relationships—one that is leading towards marriage sanctified by the Church. Though not considered a taboo, especially in urban communities, “in public discourse, however, there is still a strong censure for being liberal about sexuality” (Cabañes, 2019, p. 1655).

Mobile technologies changed the nature of intimacies. The use of synchronous and asynchronous mobile apps have paved the way for newly formed relationships that challenge traditional notions of courtships and dating. The formation and progression of relationships in the context of digital dating are greatly influenced by the features and tools of dating apps, and the kind and extent of interactions the technology afford to offer its users (Bucher & Helmond, 2018). These apps offer both synchronous interactions in the form of calls and video calls and asynchronous communication through chats and messaging. A study on Digital Intimacy noted how users of dating apps deliberately share more intimate content with others through photos, videos, posts, updates, and chats as a means of establishing rapport

and relationship (Turkle as cited in Sadowski, 2016). This sharing of intimate content during the early stage of relationships challenges the limitations of traditional face-to-face dating in terms of physical distance and time constraints. Users of dating apps get to engage in personal and intimate conversations even before personally meeting each other. According to Gill Valentine (2006), “online exchanges are characterized by higher levels of self-disclosure or hyperpersonal communication” (p. 367). Another aspect of online communication and its asynchronous nature is the user’s advantage of having more time to think about how to respond or present one’s self which is crucial in the initial stages of establishing relationships. Moreover, Al Cooper, Irene McLoughlin, and Kevin Campbell (as cited in Valentine, 2006) pointed out that the accessibility and availability of mobile dating apps give users more chances of meeting more people at any given time with just a couple of clicks or swipes.

Research Problem and Aims

These trends and issues in the use of mobile phones as sexual and romantic dating platforms led to the question: “How do young Filipinos present themselves in mobile dating apps?” This paper looks into the narratives of self-presentation among Tinder and Grindr dating app users during their online dating performances. In this paper, I argue that dating app users perform a self in a situated action that used embodied knowledge. In this paper, I would like to describe the self-presentation strategies of mobile dating app users. I also contend that the co-created presented selves are enacted on the moment of interaction while, at the same time, informed by rules of engagement that govern dating as a social practice. This paper would like to contribute to the growing interest to provide empirical observational data on mobile intimacies as practiced in phone-based dating. In analyzing the practices of posting presentations in Tinder and Grindr, the paper adds to the dearth of literature on mediated presentations of identity. This paper adds to the discussion on how new media provide platforms for presentations and recognitions of new symbolic powers.

Literature Review

Several studies have explored concepts and theories on self-presentation in general and in the context of digital space. Erving Goffman (as cited in Van Dijck, 2013) positioned the concept of self-presentation as a performance. He emphasized that in social media platforms, “users have various socio-discursive needs—expressive, communicative or promotional—reflecting the need for different personas and necessitating different addressees” (p. 211). Different social media platforms and dating apps call for different

presentations of the self. The presentations depend on user intention and the audience. Goffman (as cited in Van Dijck, 2013) also discussed the concepts of self-expression and self-promotion with the latter deemed as a more conscious and purposive attempt to build one's self-image. In the lens of self-presentation as a performance, a highly relevant framework is Judith Butler's (as cited in Salih, 2002) Theory of Performativity which argues that gender is a "doing" rather than a "being." Performativity is "a set of repeated acts within a highly rigid regulatory frame" (p. 56). Nevertheless, even though there are conventional ways of performing genders, gender conventions still get redefined given new contexts (Butler as cited in Sadowski, 2016). These new settings include digital spaces and online interactions. Helga Sadowski (2016) noted that technology and gender identities are complexly correlated and seen as "shaped together and shaping each other" (p. 150).

Nancy Thumim (2012) highlighted the complicated relationship between self-representation and digital culture and described digital culture as an interplay of cultural, social, and political factors. As individuals have heightened involvement in the process of self-representation, their standpoints and contexts—social, cultural, political, economic, and technological—become more apparent and prominent in the creation of their self-image. Furthermore, Thumim discussed media literacy as a factor in individuals' control over their digital image and representation. Meanwhile, Gill Valentine (2006) elaborated on the role of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) in maintaining familial relationships and creating intimate sexual relationships. In the context of "doing sexual intimacy" (p. 368), ICT provides more possibilities and opportunities in establishing intimate relationships with someone who shares the same interests, beliefs, or lifestyle with an individual through sites or groups created for people with common interests. Moreover, it opens the platform for online dating and public discourse to people from minority groups. ICT is deemed a helpful and empowering tool for people who seek to express themselves, explore their sexuality, build networks with others who share the same situations or sentiments, and establish romantic relationships (Dumdum, 2010; Valentine 2006).

Individuals have varied self-presentation strategies. Males and females show themselves differently (Bowman & Compton, 2014; Felmlee, Sweet, & Sinclair, 2012). Moreover, trans and lesbians perform their identities and sexual orientations in a manner that enhances their being (Mandal & Hillman, 2013; Mandal & Jakubowski, 2015; Rosario, Schrimshaw, & Hunter, 2008; Tortajada, Arauna, & Martinez, 2013). No definitive study has found the gender demarcation stable. Recently, William Hart, John Adams, Alex Burton, and Gregory Tortoriello (2017) found out that narcissism is

related to self-presentation. Grandiose narcissism is associated with one's assertiveness to self-present positive information about oneself.

In the realm of online encounters, the features and affordances of computer-mediated communication, specifically its reduced communication cues and asynchronous communication, lend much leeway for self-presentation that is optimized and selective (Walther, 1996). These two features allow users more control on the construction of their self-presentations (Gibbs, Ellison, & Chih-Hui, 2015), one that has been given attention in online dating literature (Ramirez, Sumner, Fleuriet, & Cole, 2015). Andrew Fiore (2008) noted the self-presentation motivations of online dating users in creating profiles, namely: "to present themselves as attractively as possible, in order to draw attention from potential dates, and to present themselves accurately, so that people who would find them attractive partners in real life can identify them as such online" (p. 2).

Online daters employ different strategies such as enhancing positive personality qualities (Ellison, Heino, & Gibbs, 2006; Ellison, Heino, & Toma, 2011) while deemphasizing or altogether leaving out negative ones (Toma & Carlson, 2012). Such deviations or misrepresentations were "ubiquitous but small in magnitude" (Toma, Hancock, & Ellison, 2008, p. 1) so that they would not be easily detectable in offline encounters. To account for deviations in self-presentations, Nicole Ellison, Jeffrey Hancock, and Catalina Toma (2011) conceptualized online dating profiles as a "promise" of users to others, a combination of their actual and desired qualities. Meanwhile, Rebecca Heino, Nicole Ellison, and Jennifer Gibbs (2010) used a marketing metaphor to describe users' propensity to create optimized presentations in order to market themselves to others.

Several studies found differences between men and women in terms of the accuracy of their self-presentation in online dating sites. Men tended to focus on their personalities and socioeconomic status (Hall, Park, Song, & Cody, 2010; McWilliams & Barrett, 2014), while women focused on their sexuality and attractiveness (McWilliams & Barrett, 2014), specifically their weight (Hall et al., 2010). Men were also more likely to engage in selective self-presentation when faced with the possibility of future interaction, whether online or face-to-face (Guadagno, Okdie, & Kruse, 2012). In terms of photographic enhancement, women's photographs contain more deviations compared to men's photographs (Hancock & Toma, 2009). However, regardless of sex, less attractive users were more likely to commit photographic misrepresentations than more attractive users (Toma & Hancock, 2010a, 2010b).

Misrepresentations and deviations in online profiles are associated

with deception. Misrepresentation means that there is a consciousness to transmit messages to a receiver with the intent to foster a false belief or conclusion (Goffman, 1956). Self-reports show that users do not engage in online deception or misrepresentation (Gibbs et al., 2006). However, researchers noted the unreliability of self-report methods in detecting deception (Toma et al., 2008). Therefore, this phenomenon led to the creation of novel methods.

Individuals control their self-presentation in online erotic encounters (Ellison et al., 2006; Fullick, 2013; Toma, 2016; Toma & Hancock, 2010b; Toma et al., 2008; Whitty, 2008), which are not usually available in traditional or offline dating. These services include creating a profile using text, photographs or videos; searching other people's profiles; and messaging other people (Fiore, 2008; Gibbs, Ellison, & Heino, 2006; Rosen, Cheever, Cummings, & Felt, 2008; Whitty & Buchanan, 2009), with some of these services requiring users to pay in order to access the full functionality (Rosen et al., 2008; Whitty & Buchanan, 2009). The information provided in profile creation typically includes age, height, weight, relationship status, location, and self-description (Toma, 2016; Rosen et al., 2008). Apart from increased control of self-presentation, users of online dating sites also have access to a considerable number of potential dating partners (Finkel et al., 2012; Heino et al., 2010), regardless of their proximity to each other (Valkenburg & Peter, 2007). Users have the benefits of both asynchronous and real-time communication (Gibbs et al., 2006). It seems that presentations in the online world have produced artefacts that come from the performances during the synchronous online situations (Hogan, 2010).

Despite the focus given on rendering attractive and likeable self-presentations online, dating app users are still concerned with identity authenticity. Gina Hernez-Broome, Cindy McLaughlin, and Stephanie Trovas (as cited in Van Dijck, 2013) noted that users strive to balance "authentic" and "idealized" self-presentation in different social media platforms. More than being an attempt to express themselves better and personalize their profiles, this is to prevent other users from thinking that their accounts and identities are fake and deceptive. Social anxieties and security concerns still surround the idea of online dating because of the absence of face-to-face interaction (Donath as cited in Marwick, 2013). The concerns are rooted in the notion that face-to-face communication is still more "real" and organic compared to online interactions. Goffman (in Southerton, 2017) argued that nonverbal cues, especially facial movements, are critical factors in assessing a person's honesty and sincerity. Mediated forms of interaction, therefore, are viewed as more susceptible to deception and dishonesty (Souza e Silva and Frith in Southerton, 2017).

There are different lenses in the study of technological affordances. Coined by Gibson (in Bulcher & Helmond, 2018) in 1966, affordance refers to the set of action possibilities in a given environment. In the technological sense, an affordance is more than just a component of individual action but also that of social action interaction. More than what technology offers people in terms of social interaction, the concept also seeks to examine affordances as a “useful tool for user-centered analyses of technologies” (Gaver 1991 in Bulcher & Helmond, 2018, p. 97). Wellman (2001) pointed out that technological changes do not only affect and pave the way for social interactions per se but also influence social relations and structures on a broader sense. Schrock (in Bulcher & Helmond, 2018) also noted how the process and practice of communication continuously change and evolve with the presence and use of mobile phones. Meanwhile, affordances in social media focus not only specific platforms or technological features but also on social and communicative changes that transpire through and because of social media (Ellison & Vitak as cited in Bulcher & Helmond, 2018).

In the Philippines, Quennie Arguelles and Charisse Ann Basa (2011) mentioned that individual perception and attitude towards social comparison fuel self-presentation among young professionals. The study suggested that because there is a need for inclusion and control of how others perceive one, young Filipino professionals self-present based on how they have experienced self-presenting and how they see their current and future co-communicators. Leah Gustilo (2006) also found that in personal home pages of Filipinos, “multi-modal elements like favorite links, guest books, background music, linguistic descriptions, graphics, and emails” (Abstract) are presented with the intent to self-promote one’s qualification to assert one’s useful life. More recently, Mary Joyce Cedillo and Rodelando Ocampo (2016) argued that Filipinos self-monitor their presentations online. Using selfies as units of analysis, the researchers claimed that a correlation exists between self-monitoring behavior and selfie behavior among Filipinos young adults. Still, the research agreed with past findings that Filipinos highlight belongingness and appropriateness concerning self-expressions.

Jayson Vincent Cabañes (2019) looked into the migrant intimacies of Punjabi youth in Manila. The research found out that as Punjabi and Filipino youths interact through Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs), they negotiate their culture’s tradition of arranged marriage and culture of idealistic love and marriage, respectively. They maintain a public image of conservatism while practicing sexual liberalism in private. The researcher noted that though young Punjabis engage in online dating, their decisive factor in settling down is still security and stability offered by their

migrant communities. Jozon Lorenzana (2016) explored the concept of mediated recognition in the case of Filipino transnationals in Indian cities. The study confirmed the influence of social media, particularly Facebook, in transnationals' self-esteem and sense of identity. Positive remarks and positive comments meet the need for recognition and validation of Filipinos who are away from their families and home country. In 2010, Omar Dumdum researched Filipino gays in amateur pornographic sites. The study emphasized on the shift of the Filipino definition and essence of "bakla" which transformed from a sense of inner self or "kalooban" to a Westernized concept of transitive sexual actions. Upon exploring the sexualization XTube users in the light of globalization, Dumdum (2010) concluded that capitalism affects even the perceived freedom to express one's identity and to gratify from sexual desires on such online platform. This finding is somehow parallel to claims by Christian Groes and Nadine Fernandez (2018) asserting that relationships between people from different social, cultural, and socioeconomic structures, classes, and backgrounds are now made possible by migration and mobile technology. Online dating and the online sex industry are prevalent in the current technological setting. Such prevalence opens more opportunities for people to establish relationships with others whom they hope will secure their futures and help them attain social mobility. These relationships, however, are strongly subject to the complexities of power relations.

Methods and Procedures

The study used a descriptive-interpretive case study research design. The approach was constructivist with a slant on how individuals perform in technology (Jansen & Vellema, 2011). The researchers asked for volunteer informants who were active users of Tinder and Grindr for at least six months. Activeness in this study meant that the informants should use the apps for online and even offline interactions. The researcher used in-depth interviews. The informants' musings, insights, and perspectives were the data of the study.

I used the inductive thematic analysis to see how users were able to construct and enunciate the narratives and discourses of their technographic mindsets. I examined the transcripts using open and context coding. The derived codes served as the initial categorization. Open coding allowed the themes to emerge from the data (Kandiko & Mawer, 2013). I matched the coded themes with the existing conceptual constructs of the study. The initial context codes were arranged in matrices using a dendrogram (Drout & Smith, 2012) to know the most meaningful content and the significant statements mentioned by the informants. Moreover, significant statements

were used in identifying categories of codes and valuable themes (Aronson, 1994). Time series analysis was conducted to continually check the value of the data (Yin, 2003). Participants were informed about the research before they signed consent forms as research participants.

Results

I have interviewed 52 young Filipino mobile dating app users. The average age of all the informants is 25. Thirteen of the informants are in a relationship while 39 are single. Almost all of the informants are either graduates or are college students. The informants have an average of 26 months or at least two years of mobile app use. They spend an average of three hours on the app per day.

Table 1: Informants’ gender and type of mobile app used.

Gender	Tinder	Grindr
Straight Male	11	
Straight Female	11	
Gay	10	10
Lesbian	10	

The presentation process allowed individuals to create an online self that contained information that they thought reflected their online intents. The mobile dating app users underwent a series of strategic routes for them to present their mobile selves in the dating app. I found out that the mobile dating app users utilized tactical routes or courses in order for them to convince their dating matches of their value. These routes could be subsumed into four categories: displaying the ideal self, showing an active lifestyle, self-censoring oneself, and negotiating online spaces through altered selves.

Displaying the ideal self

Mobile dating app users dramatically executed their presented selves to others. The informants revealed that they performed their presentations well to others by dramatically “acting out” their parts. Acting out here meant that they were trying to project an idealized version of themselves, with the motive to display a flawless and faultless persona. The users were able to project likeable images by consciously constructing posts, pictures, and performances that represented their best sides. The dramatic execution of the online self includes the following: posted copies of their dynamic lifestyles in their photos to match their lifestyle claims, written dramatic pickup and conversation scripts, and played the role that they were “a good catch.”

Eight out of the ten male Tinder users uploaded photos that showed their ideal lives to catch the attention of their potential matches. They showed their matches that they looked better than the other potential matches. Ivan (personal communication, September 18, 2017), 28 years old, a research assistant in a multinational company, represents such idealization among the straight male informants. He has always projected that he is both the formal and the sporty guy, so he uploads photos that aided the “flawless guy” narrative. He explained:

I presented myself as someone who can be both the prim and the rugged guy through four photos. I have four photos. The first one is a picture of me riding a bike. The next one is showing my skill in surfing. I am wearing a tuxedo in the third photo and the last one is a photo that shows me wearing a polo.

He posted these photos to establish a good impression that he had both a professional/formal side and a sporty side.

Eight out of ten women informants added drama to their posts by creating a cohesive story in their profile pictures. Some women provided coherent narratives to their photos. Louise (personal communication, July 14, 2017), a 22-year-old freelance writer, has always liked to make her Tinder profile pictures as conversation pieces. “I have a picture of the beach, then a book, my dog, then a picture of me with an elephant when I went to Thailand,” she shared. She had the habit of asking her matches to identify the reasons why she posted these photos correctly. “If my match could guess what these posts mean; then I will spend time with him. I want people to recognize what I want to tell them without actually saying it,” she added.

Seventeen out of twenty gay informants projected that they were ideal sexual and professional matches. Nico (personal communication, July 24, 2017), a 21-year-old property specialist in one of the financial districts in Manila, for instance, displays the ideal gay image because the best ones always get to take home the best hookups. He also mentioned that if he puts out a profile picture that makes him appear handsome and, at the same time, writes a bio that declares his work for a good company, then he is considered a good catch. He also noted that there is an unwritten rule in the use of dating apps among gays. “If I want to be seen as an intelligent person, then I would go to Tinder. If I want to hook up with someone, I have a very lewd Grindr account,” he explained. In both dating apps, Nico would always have the habit of curating his profile in order for him to project the ideal gay guy- good-looking and affluent.

In order to present their idealized selves, seven out of ten lesbians added drama to their presentations in the profile section of their dating app. Anya (personal communication, August 5, 2017), a 25-year-old technical support employee in the financial capital of Manila, chose pictures that showed her passion for sports. She believed that if she creates a sporty persona, then this would enable the curiosity of other lesbian users of the dating apps. She has uploaded pictures that show her playing table tennis, jogging, and running. She also projects that she is intelligent by posting pictures that showed her either reading a book or watching a YouTube video. The same tactic that was used by Dee, a 23-year-old training and development officer, who stated that she shared many pictures about her music gigs so she could project an image of a rock star. "I am part of a rock band. I want others to see that I am an outgoing person who likes to listen to bands," she revealed. She also posted pictures of her favorite books to tell other app users that she is more than a musician.

Showing an offline life

Some informants had the habit of projecting a mobile self that is synchronous to their offline identities. The use of this tactic means that a majority of the informants narrated that their Tinder and Grindr profiles were identical to their offline information. The informants shared to me that they used real photos and declared correct details in their bio sketches. I noticed that there is a need to bind the narratives of the off and online selves because the user has to project an offline image that is non-imaginary. A cohesive narrative is necessary in order for the user to feel that the user is honest and accurate to life. Ash (personal communication, August 27, 2017), a twenty-one-year-old administrative officer and one of the male informants, claimed that he never edits his pictures nor his declared information because he believes that being genuine would help him attract women. John (personal communication, August 10, 2017), a 22-year-old university student, also uploads many pictures in Tinder so that his matches could verify that he has an authentic account. He even uploaded pictures from his Facebook profile so that his matches could cross-check his genuineness.

The women informants have stated that they presented themselves truthfully in their Tinder accounts by showing a lot of their active lifestyles outside the dating app. They wanted their dates to realize that they have a life outside Tinder. Seven out of the eleven women informants mentioned that they uploaded at least three photos in Tinder so their male matches would know that they are real women and, at the same time, that they do have interesting and real stories and activities, too. Julia (personal communication, August 1, 2017), a 26-year-old recruitment analyst, said

that she uploads pictures that would project her varied interests in her offline life. "I use my pictures which show who I am. I even uploaded a not so glamorous picture of myself so that my matches would know who I am daily," she explained.

Seven of the lesbian informants mentioned that they connected their dating app profiles to other social networking sites (SNS) to allow their matches to verify their shared Tinder information. Anya (personal communication, August 5, 2017) said that she used a consistent set of bios in all her dating apps and SNS because such consistent set of profiles would assure her matches that she was not hiding anything from them. Lia (personal communication, September 27, 2017), a 23-year-old research analyst, made similar profiles in both Tinder and Facebook to project consistency in both her online and offline selves. She shared:

I know of some queers who hide because they are closeted and I agree with that because it is their preference but, as for me, I put out all my information because if I want to be taken seriously, I need to be coherent in all those apps.

Fourteen of the gay men that I interviewed stated that they uploaded authentic photos. Austin (personal communication, September 1, 2017), a 21-year-old university student, uploaded at least six photos of himself. He did this to validate that he is the owner of the Tinder account and, at the same time, project what he does with his life. "I have the habit of updating my photos and posts for me not to be taken as a poser in Tinder... so to validate the claim that I am a legitimate owner of my account, I update it regularly," he shared. JJ (personal communication, August 3, 2017), a 26-year-old government employee, mentioned that, as much as possible, he uploads blunt photos of himself to show his matches that he is a real person. "I post wacky and candid photos because I need others to see the real me. I also link my account to other social networks to project a unified personality," he mentioned.

Self-censoring one's profile

In contrast to the earlier result, I found it interesting that a majority of the informants in this study practice self-censorship. Forty informants mentioned that they edited their photos and bios, as well as curated a specific look for their mobile dating app profile. They did this because they wanted to appear appealing to others. They uploaded pleasing primary and secondary photos and mentioned attractive information about themselves to positively build their presented selves.

Seventeen out of the twenty gay men had the habit of uploading close up shots of their faces. Some of them claimed that they spend time taking pictures of their faces through headshots because because good looks easily attract some gay men. Gian (personal communication, August 7, 2017), a 25-year-old writer from Manila, explained that he takes many selfies so he would have many choices for his primary picture in the dating app. He claimed that he spends time pondering on what to upload because he has to sustain his appealing image to his matches. "I mostly post headshots because those whom I have met told me that I look like a movie actor. I do this because I only want to be matched with men who are also good looking," he shared.

Some mentioned that they have the habit of posting their pictures wearing their fancy clothes. Wearing signature or fashionable clothes makes them appear sophisticated and stylish. Some female informants reasoned that posting branded clothing make them look pleasant. Self-censoring is essential in creating the narrative of pleasantness here as the app user has the upper hand in constructing what is to be included in the packaged profile. Selena (personal communication, August 2, 2017), a 21-year-old media planner, mentioned that she uploads photos that show her in beautiful and branded clothing so she would appear sophisticated. "I do not wear just any clothes. I wear branded clothing in order for me to show that I am not just any girl. I do not also wear clothes that reveal too much of my skin either. It makes girls cheap," she explained. She added that she frequently changes her primary photos in the app to show her ever-evolving fashion sense. "You could always see me in my OOTD.³ I often change my pictures because I want to show my clothes for them to know my worth," she furthered.

In my interviews, I noticed that my gay user-informants were picky with the photos and information that they shared with others in the dating apps. They said that when they uploaded photos, they made sure that their would-be matches pleasantly perceived them. Ariana (personal communication, August 14, 2017), for one, stated that she, being a runway model, only uploaded photos from her photoshoots to make sure that her matches perceived her as attractive. Another gay user who used his front wisely was Marko. He shared that he put a robust set of pictures in his profile. "My main picture was shot by Shaira Luna. I tell them that she did it. The other photos are artsy" (Marko, personal communication, July 27, 2017), he stated. He also mentioned that he indicated in his profile that he worked on-set for various film outfits.

Eight out of the ten male Tinder users mentioned that in order to appear attractive, they chose pictures and bio declarations that would present them

as funny and well-travelled. Those who wanted their wit to be the center of attention said that they uploaded wacky photos and humorous statements in their profiles. They claimed that these made them more funny and casual. They believed that projecting themselves as such made them more appealing to their audience. Hex (personal communication, August 28, 2017) stated that he uploaded pictures of himself as a funny man. "I choose photos that are funny and are considered the best ones. There is one where I am dressed in formal attire while wearing shorts, then another one is a picture of me in the beach wearing Barong," he mentioned.

Some presented their funny sides in their bio descriptions. Mark (personal communication, September 6, 2017) shared that he indicated in his bio a tagline: "insert pretentious crap here." Rani (personal communication, August 28, 2017), another male Tinder user, also suggested that he used his humor and happy-go-lucky self when he posted his tagline "more than just a beautiful face" in his profile. Mond (personal communication, September 7, 2017) disclosed that his tagline "I am so ugly I could be a modern art piece" was an attention-getter.

Seven of the lesbian informants also showed their real and pleasant selves by posting their personal information and their current preoccupations and concerns. The lesbians seemed to have shown pleasantness in their photos by appearing presentable in their clothes. "It is not because one is blue therefore she must wear polo shirt or shorts," C (personal communication, September 20, 2017) explained. She revealed that even if she is "blue" or butch, she did not wear clothing that typified her as such. "I look like femme because I present myself as someone who is attractive and wearing skirt or blouse is my notion of attractive but I do want femmes. If a butch approaches me, I tell them 'di tayo talo' (we are not compatible)," she explained.

Six straight female informants also had the habit of uploading their pleasing pictures to gratify other Tinder users. Some females uploaded travel photos. For them, telling others that they were into travelling made them eye-catching. Silver (personal communication, July 24, 2017) stated that she uploaded travel and sports photos. "I have scuba diving pictures and wakeboarding and hiking," she revealed. Scarlet (personal communication, August 2, 2017) also highlighted her travel shots by posting her pictures in Tagaytay City in the Philippines and in Guam. She uploaded these to connote that she was fun and adventurous.

Only a few informants in this study mentioned that they updated their bio and pictures from time to time in order to address the desires of their potential matches. There were a few who corrected errors in the performance of their presented selves.

Only three out of the twenty interviewed gay men mentioned that they maintained control of their accounts by changing profile details and photos almost every day. These three stated that they corrected what they saw as problems in their self-presentations. Ariana (personal communication, August 15, 2017), one of these gays, stated that because she was transitioning to becoming a transwoman, she felt that she monitored the changes that came with her physical and psychological journey. She, therefore, reviewed, updated, and changed the content of her Tinder profile. Kel (personal communication, July 27, 2017) also monitored his profile activity because he shared that he used both fake Facebook and Tinder accounts. He maintained control of his account primarily because he did not want anyone to find out who he was. “Nobody knows that I have an alter account so I am always uncertain and critical of the people I interact. No one in my family knows that I am gay. My boyfriend does not know that I have an alter account,” he disclosed. Kel (personal communication, July 27, 2017) also shared to me that even if he has a boyfriend, he was still active in doing casual sex.

Kurt (personal communication, July 17, 2017) maintained control of his profile details such as his photos and posts to check if he was perceived as someone who was too effeminate. He reasoned that in Grindr, there was bias against those who were effeminate and bottom for tops. Such a sentiment validated Kurt’s tendency to control what is shared in Tinder. He did not want to be labelled as effeminate because that meant that he would not get any sexual partner in the app. It seemed that he wanted to appear mysterious because this meant that he could portray a role that would be advantageous to him. On the one hand, he admitted that pretending to be manlier was the norm in Grindr, so keeping a profile that can pass for such a role is much desired. On the other hand, if a top gay man had wanted him to be a bottom, he could also adjust to such a request. That was the reason why Kurt maintained a vague presentation on the app. He found comfort in such a performed role.

Four lesbian informants mentioned that they maintain control of the information that they post in the dating app. They control information because they feel that there will always be scrutiny to their persona once they let out too much information about themselves. Lia (personal communication, September 27, 2017), out of curiosity, asked her matches to comment on both her profile and posts. “I would like to know if my way of presenting myself is consistent with that of other lesbians. I am curious to know if my brand of lesbian is seen in my posts. Do people know that I am a lesbian?” she shared.

Only one male Tinder user said that he was conscious of maintaining the character that he portrayed in the app. John (personal communication,

August 10, 2017) mentioned that in Tinder, he was “god of his content.” “I play god in my content. I edit what I want to present. I know what makes me attractive sa app so I highlight it. So, people say na ‘ang gwapo’ (you look handsome) so I use that as an advantage,” he shared.

Only one woman mentioned that she controlled the content of her posts in Tinder. As a way to maintain the relevance of her profile, she checked how other users perceived her in the app. Louise (personal communication, July 14, 2017) asked her current matches and past dates to comment on her profile.

Negotiating online spaces through altered selves

By mystifying the presentation

Some informants agreed that they highlighted some aspects of their online selves and concealed their defects. The use of this altering process meant that in order for these users to become striking in the eyes of their potential matches, they focused on desirable characteristics and left out undesirable ones. Desirability was contextual among the users because some used this as a way to attract or distract their matches. Mystifying one’s desirability was a reason for highlighting and side lighting their physical appeal, skills, and personality.

Three male users opened up that they mystified their self-presentations by concealing their physical and professional attributes. Two of them mentioned that they hid their height while one of them concealed his profession. Rille (personal communication, August 8, 2017) said that he knew that he was not tall, so he mystified this by uploading photos that would flatter him. “I only upload mid-shot pictures so that other users would not find me short,” he shared. Ash (personal communication, August 27, 2017) shared that he was not comfortable in discussing his height especially because he felt that, in the dating app, it was one of the factors that made a man a standout. Hex (personal communication, August 28, 2017) said that he concealed his profession because he felt that some might see it inappropriate for a teacher to be in Tinder.

Two of the lesbian user-informants mystified their identities in mobile dating apps. Carrot Cake (personal communication, August 9, 2017) said that because she had a family to protect, she could not reveal herself in the app. She also added that because she was closeted, she could not afford to show her real identity. “I do not declare anything about myself in the app. I also do not post pictures,” she stated. She revealed that she was not comfortable using Tinder because there might be leaks on who she was. She furthered that she was in the app because she had desires and wants but she had to remain anonymous. “I do not have a persona in the app. I

cannot have a persona. I will hurt many people if they find out who I am," she narrated.

Another way to mystify was through the practice of hiding one's face in the profile photo. MJ (personal communication, August 5, 2017) said that she did this to create some form of enigmatic effect. "I just do not like the idea that everything is given already. I have another picture that does not reveal my face, too. It shows that I play the drums," she mentioned.

Only one of the female informants mentioned that she deliberately did not mention one crucial detail about herself. Julia (personal communication, August 1, 2017) explained that because she was a teacher, she also did not openly tell others what her job was. She was conscious of the fact that if ever she would be asked about her profession, she would tell the match that it could be discussed during the actual face-to-face meet up.

Only one gay informant revealed that he practiced mystification. Kurt (personal communication, July 17, 2017), a gay Grindr user, uploaded a silhouette of his face as his primary photo just to make the exchange exciting. "I would want to be perceived as someone mysterious because there are times when effeminate men like me get to be discriminated against even in the app. I use a shadow in the profile picture to hide my feminine side," he explained.

By idealizing the online face

Some Tinder and Grindr users also idealized themselves in their created profiles and during their conversations with their matches. The idealization happened when they projected a seemingly perfect version of themselves during the initial encounters. The users, who idealized coherently, told their match that they were a perfect choice.

Fifteen out of twenty gay men user-informants idealized themselves by selling their best versions to their audiences in Tinder and Grindr. Mr. R (personal communication, July 26, 2017) said that because he wanted to date those who were sporty and artsy in Tinder, he uploaded pictures and stories that would lead his target match to his profile. JJ (personal communication, August 3, 2017) mentioned that he idealized himself by declaring that he studied in a prestigious university. He mentioned that the recall factor of the university was a plus for Grindr users like him. "There are times when I would use the name of my university as a way to create a bang. It is an additional factor. It is also a topic of conversation," he stated.

Five of the ten male informants in this study admitted to this kind of self-presentation. They stated that they either presented themselves as a sexually active person or the ideal nice guy. Rille (personal communication, August 8, 2017) stated that he used the "sexual chick boy" persona so he could

catch the attention of women in Tinder. He claimed that he was a different person in Tinder. He acted out a different role in this platform compared to his other social networking accounts. "In Facebook, I post about my core values. I even post Bible verses, but in Tinder I am different. I assume the role of a naughty chick boy," he stressed. Mond (personal communication, September 15, 2017) also used the nice guy tactic. He said that he wanted to be perceived as a kind-hearted guy in Tinder. He mentioned that when he conversed with his matches, he wanted to discuss his match's relationship problems.

Five of the women user-informants also used the "ideal nice girl" idealization tactic to avoid being labelled as sexual objects. Mon (personal communication, July 25, 2017) stated that even if she posted sexy and revealing pictures, she still wanted to be perceived as a decent individual. "I want to be seen as a model because there might be potential clients in the app, but I do not want to be seen as slutty," she revealed. Seraphina (personal communication, August 2, 2017) also refused to be sexualized so she consistently portrayed herself as an intelligent woman. "I would always engage in conversations and I am vocal about my opinions. I also forward the idea that I have brains so do not belittle me," she said. She, however, had to adjust to the level of her potential matches, especially if she found them attractive.

Idealization was also an essential element in the self-presentation of the informants. In this study, this was seen in their portrayal as better choices than their Tinder or Grindr competitors. They employed tactics that made them appear as the best choice among the matches of their target date. Interestingly, no lesbian user mentioned that he or she idealizes herself in the dating app. Rajah (personal communication, September 13, 2017) mentioned that she never understood the idea of idealizing oneself because the end goal of the online dating is to meet the other person in a real-life setting. "Why should people do it? Is it because they just wanted to do online meetups forever? I find it silly and weird. I guess I aim to be truthful so that when we meet, we can identify with each other," she said.

By misrepresenting the offline self

Six gay men misrepresented themselves in mobile dating apps. One of the informants who told me that there was blatant misrepresentation in his account was Kel (personal communication, September 5, 2017). He revealed that he had a Facebook account that he exclusively used for Tinder purposes. "I do not know if there is sincerity. I use a different Facebook account for my alter account. I used to access it for my awareness advocacy but now I use it to find hookups," Kel stated. He added that he created fake

Facebook and Tinder accounts so that there would be no hint about what his online life, especially because he had a boyfriend. “I use fake accounts so that no one can trace my real identity. Even if I meet or have sex with people in the app, they would never know my real identity,” he narrated.

The interviews with the straight male, straight female, and lesbian informants point out that no misrepresentation happened when they were in Tinder and Grindr. They were one in saying that no changes should be made in presenting the self or editing their online personas. Rani (personal communication, August 28, 2017), one of the male informants, said that he was real in Tinder but admitted to checking other profiles so he could compete with them. “I feel that I have to constantly check out other male users just to see if I am still in the competition. I also feel that I need to shape up because some men are so buff,” he explained.

Straight women informants told me that they did not spend time, money, and effort in the app just to be accused of falsifying their identities. Silver, a straight woman informant, said that she also did not see sense in faking information and “screen grabbing”⁴ pictures. She pointed out that the value of connecting Facebook to Tinder was to serve as a validation to the claims of the Tinder user. Such a sentiment was common among women who unfailingly narrated to me that faking personal details was not a norm in the use of dating apps.

No lesbian informant mentioned that they faked their photos, information, and bio declarations in Tinder. Purple (personal communication, September 18, 2017) said that the dating apps were created in order to serve as an initial step in the dating process. “The role of the app is for people to find real people so why do we have to change anything,” she mentioned. She, however, added that there would be enhancements to one’s already positive details and features but defended that such actions should not be considered as blatant lying. “Are the filters part of one’s misrepresentations? I do not think so. Enhancements are used to make the features better but the people who use them are not posers,” she asserted.

Discussion

The findings of this study revealed that mobile dating app users did show sincerity by posting real and verifiable information about them. Majority of the informants who belonged to the four gender groups also dramatically executed their roles by mentioning, framing, and continually repeating information that they thought needed emphasis during the “getting-to-know” process. Most user-informants from the four gender groups also used personal fronts that were pleasant and pleasing to other users through their photos and information.

A few users maintained control of their information by regularly updated their bio in order to meet the desires of their potential matches. These user-informants edited their profile information in order to please other users and their potential matches. Only a few of the informants mystified their presentations by concealing information that was deemed necessary to establish their identities. Seven out of the 52 user-informants said that they highlighted information that would allow them to be chosen by other users and concealed their defects so they could appear desirable to their matches. Most gay informants and some straight men and women informants said that projected a seemingly faultless version of their selves in order to create the illusion that they were the perfect choices for their matches. Only a few gay men deliberately misrepresented themselves in the dating apps by blatantly lying or deceiving other users. They used fake accounts with fake details so that they would be chosen as hook-up partners of other users.

The informants were also aware that they had to use a well-liked personal front when they uploaded a pleasant primary picture, used pleasing and well-curated photos, and mentioned exciting information about themselves. There was also drama in the way they communicated their selves when they projected a likeable image, presented catchy information about themselves and portrayed themselves as good catches. I also noticed that an idealization of the self existed among the informants when they projected a fanciful self that catered to their target audiences. This conscious effort to positively present one's self reflects Goffman's (as cited in Van Dijck, 2013) concepts of self-expression or signs that are "given unconsciously" and self-promotion or signs that are "given off consciously" (p. 201). While dating app users might get to express themselves naively in private conversations, the way they promote themselves through their public profiles is a more deliberate act. In line with Butler's (in Sadowski, 2016) principle that performativity entails "reiterative acting"(p.106), online dating app users eventually craft their patterns and styles in self-presentation over time (Goffman as cited in Van Dijck, 2013).

Some informants used deceptive self-presentations. Deception is defined as an idealization of the user's profile to fit one's preferred identity in order to be liked by other individuals. Such a finding runs parallel with previous works where the self was manipulated and has become different because of too much enhancement (Gibbs et al., 2011; Hart et al., 2017; Levine & Feldman, 1997). There was, therefore, some form of misrepresentation when the users falsified the content of their performed self. Some informants also mystified themselves when they concealed some information that they felt would be in contrast with their projected selves in the dating apps (Ellison et al., 2006; Goffman, 1956; Toma & Carlson, 2012; Toma, et al., 2008). This

tactic can be reconciled with Madianou and Miller's concept of "polymedia" which argues that users, being aware of the affordances of each platform, deliberately choose a platform with particular ends in mind (Lorenzana, 2016). In the case of dating apps where attractiveness is a crucial factor, users strategically market themselves for higher chances of romantic opportunities.

Self-presentation in online spaces like the mobile dating app was about self-promotion (Goffman as cited in Van Djick, 2013) and enhancement. As evidenced by the stories of the user-informants, there was a tendency to package one's self as likeable and interesting. Past findings revealed that individuals would enhance (Carey & Paulhus, 2008; Ellis, West, Ryan, & DeShon, 2002; Kacmar & Carlson, 1999) by highlighting what they perceived as physical and professional achievements. Sharing one's accomplishments and achievements online is also a facet of building one's self-worth and self-esteem and eliciting validation from other online users (Lorenzana, 2016). The highlighted and presented selves, however, were sincerely performed, as these were real information. The informants even provided the matches with links to their Facebook, Instagram, or Spotify to enhance their believability and establish a consistent public image across different social media platforms (Goffman in Van Djick, 2013). Users' willingness to share or link other social media accounts is a measure of identity authenticity for some given the reality that dishonesty, fraud, and security concerns are still associated with online dating (Southerton, 2017; Donath in Marwick, 2013).

According to Valentine (2006), online dating is anchored in sparking connection and making striking first impressions through communicating self-narratives. This mode of dating explains why users forwarded well-liked personal fronts such as a pleasing set of photos and attractive bio declaration and information. They revealed that they curated their photos well, presented catchy information about themselves, and consistently performed themselves as good catches to other users. They were conscious of creating a cohesive story, from pictures to words, in order to match their projected selves and render their identity on social media (Lorenzana, 2016). This finding agreed with past researches that noted how individuals would present idealized versions of themselves during initial interactions (Fiore, 2008; Fiore, Taylor, Mendelsohn, & Hearst, 2008; Kacmar & Carlson, 1999). It has also been observed that online dating conversations tend to be more "hyperpersonal" even in the initial stages as compared to traditional dating (Valentine, 2006). This hyper personality can be a manifestation of a constant effort to catch and sustain the other party's attention through conversations, given the pool of other dating app users who are competitors.

There was also the presence of manipulation of content and this was only evident among gay men who misrepresented themselves by creating fake or alternate accounts. Alice Marwick (2013) noted how some users create multiple accounts to cater to their different networks and audiences. Such a result is similar to a previous finding that argued that deception in communicative encounters resorts to manipulation of appearance, likeability, and competence (Feldman, Forrest, & Happ, 2002). Some also mystified their selves by enhancing some qualities and deemphasizing the ones they felt were negative traits (Ellison et al., 2006; Gibbs et al., 2006; Toma et al., 2008; Toma & Carlson, 2012). However, as observed in Valentine's study (2006), the choice to not disclose one's perceived negative traits may change when trust and acceptance are established through more intimate and consistent communication.

The findings of this study agreed with the literature that men tended to focus on their personalities and socioeconomic status (Hall et al., 2010; McWilliams & Barrett, 2014) but so did all the other gender groups. While dating app users generally seek to portray interesting personalities or feature personal achievements (Lorenzana, 2016), Tinder and Grindr users specifically used their sexuality and attractiveness as "come-ons" for their potential matches (Hall et al., 2010; McWilliams & Barrett, 2014). The use of physical attractiveness further validates the claim that despite apparent similarities, social media platforms constitute their respective setting and affordances. New cultures and practices of communication and sociality are afforded by social media and their various and respective features. Even though dating apps have the same general idea, each platform offers users a different kind of experience and set of possibilities while users purposively choose specific platforms and maximize its affordances (Bucher & Helmond, 2018; Madianou & Miller in Lorenzana, 2016). A study reveals that some social media users have a clear notion of "wholesome" apps and in fear of being criticized as sexually liberated, they only maintain an online presence in these wholesome social media platforms (Cabañes, 2019). These "idioms of practice" are the sets of and normative practices in the context of a specific technology (Gershon in Marwick, 2013).

Contrary to what the literature said about photographic enhancement (Hancock & Toma, 2009), a majority of the user-informants claimed that this was no longer blatantly practiced, as the photographic deviations caused their potential matches to see them negatively. This study, however, found that those who saw themselves as less attractive in terms of facial features, height, and even sexual positions (i.e. being bottom and effeminate among gays) practiced photographic misrepresentations either by concealing their height, blurring their faces, or darkening the silhouettes of their photos. I

observed, however, that the accounts of deception were less emphasized during the course of the interviews. I expected such a scenario as previous findings revealed that individuals who misrepresented themselves online would not reveal their deceptive ways that easily (DePaulo, Kashy, Kirkendol, Wyer, & Epstein, 1996, as cited in Toma, Hancock, & Ellison, 2008; Gibbs et al., 2006).

It is crucial to consider that technological affordances are both enabling and constraining (Hutchby & Barnett, as cited in Bucher & Helmond, 2017). The features (or the lack thereof) of dating apps give rise to new patterns in communication and interaction and idioms of practice (Bucher & Helmond, 2017); Gershon in Marwick, 2013). Even if there were limitations in the features of the mobile app that hindered the interactions of users, the setting did not impede the users from being creative (Walther, 1996). The minimal cues that were present in the platform created adaptable users (Gibbs et al., 2006; Ramirez et al., 2015). Nicole Ellison and colleagues (2006) labelled this adjustment as “creative workarounds” wherein users adapted to the features of the platform during the dating process. One of these workarounds in Tinder, for instance, was the use of various photos to represent one’s speckled interests. Users who wanted to highlight their physique would upload many pictures that show their well-toned bodies. To show that there is a variety in the user’s interest, the person will upload a favorite book, or any place that the person frequents. For Grindr users, uploading pictures of one’s body meant that the person was not only portraying himself as good-looking but also projecting his sexual side.

Overall, self-presentations in mobile dating apps were communication texts that were combinations of actualized and desired qualities that the users saw as fitting marketing strategies so that other users could choose them from the hundreds of others. Ellison and colleagues (2011) claimed that self-presentations served as promises so that they could become marketable to others. Over time, online dating app users develop their own strategies of self-presentation that meet their needs to express and promote themselves (Goffman in Van Dijck, 2013). I argue that the Filipino millennials managed to adapt and use this marketing metaphor in creating their optimized presentations. They delicately balanced truthfulness and overemphasis as ways to sell their profiles (Hernez-Broome et al. in Van Dijck, 2013). They knew how to gauge which features they had to highlight and which ones they had to leave behind. These optimized self-presentation strategies were used as starting points in allowing the informants’ matches to choose them among the matches. The use of self-presentation was also used as crumbs that led the users to disclose information to their matches. It became cues that allowed the matches to think about the users’ intent

and plans. Self-presentation calibrated the starting points of the intimate conversations as it provided a backdrop to the disclosures of the intentions of the mobile app users.

The findings of this study also revealed that the Filipino millennial Tinder and Grindr users had control over their self-presentation (Ellison et al., 2006; Toma, 2016; Fullick, 2013; Toma & Hancock, 2010; Toma et al., 2008; Whitty, 2008), which is not usually the case in traditional or offline dating. Tinder and Grindr users were given the power to define their profile using text and photographs. They were able to search and stalk other people's profiles in various social networking sites and connect with their matches, too. I agree with the warnings that were written by scholars who advised users about the threats that the openness that online dating entails (Fiore, 2008; Gibbs et al., 2006) as this causes improper, unethical, and illegal online acts such as bullying, stalking, and identity theft. Economically speaking, the apps require monetary investment as users needed to log on to a Wi-Fi connection or even pay in order to access the app's extra or full functionality (Rosen et al., 2008; Whitty & Buchanan, 2009). It is, however, critical to take into account that any technology has its structure and limits. The same features that enable users also constrain them (Hutchby & Barnett as cited in Bucher & Helmond, 2018) and prompt new dynamics in communication and human relations (Bucher & Helmond, 2018). While there is an illusion of freedom and choice, these are not absolute. José Van Dijck (2013) contended that the digital architectures of social media platforms predetermine the form and content of self-expression and presentation users can perform. The features, updates, and even advertisements in these apps elicit a particular type of response and data from users. The platforms regulate the texts, photographs, and other forms of content shared by users to networks allowed by the apps. Looking into the broader context, critical players in online dating also involve developers and businesses who operate on data analytics while negotiating and meeting user needs. While it can be said that online apps provide agency to users in their struggle to express and promote themselves, user performance is still subtly orchestrated by digital technology and capitalism (Dumdum, 2010). More than being an avenue dating and relationships, online dating apps facilitate a new culture.

Conclusion

There is an impact of online dating apps in human relationships. This study focused on how young Filipinos presented themselves in mobile dating apps and confirmed that self-presentation allowed users to create an online identity that reflected their intentions and actual engagements with other dating app users.

The users' projection of an ideal self-image, whereas they highlight positive traits and achievements in order to attract and connect with prospective partners is among the strategies of self-presentation. Creating consistent narratives of online and offline identities was also deemed essential by users in order to guarantee other users of their identity authenticity. Self-censorship is another observed theme as users regulate the type and amount of information they share on their profiles. They also deliberate on what content to share online in order to uphold their positive image. It was also determined in the findings that users negotiate their identities online. Some users mystify or deliberately misrepresent themselves in order to conceal negative traits that might disappoint other users or prevent them from getting matches. Others opt not to use their real names because of fear that people who know them will judge them or their sexuality. Meanwhile, some users frame their details accordingly to idealize themselves and their characteristics.

The different self-presentation strategies were products of co-created realities that gave birth to new communication processes and idioms of practices. The technological affordances of each platform and the entire online dating scheme was also proven to be enabling and constraining at the same time. Although dating apps are viewed as a means of self-expression and self-promotion, banking on the notion that the Internet is a free space, it was also noted that user performance of identity is regulated and shaped by the features and architecture of online dating apps and digital technology as a whole.

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