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Dating in the 21st century: How important is authenticity for mobile dating apps?

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Abstract

Purpose: The purpose of this paper is to shed light on which role authenticity plays in mobile dating apps, an environment where users can present themselves only with a limited amount of information. By investigating how users create their profiles and evaluate others, the existing knowledge on authenticity and self-presentation can be advanced.

Methodology: The research applied a relativist and social constructionist approach as authenticity and self-presentation on mobile dating apps is a process which is shaped by people and influenced by their behaviours and social factors. A qualitative research design was applied, as it offered in-depth comprehension and awareness about the research topic. The data collected to answer the research questions were visual data and semi-structured interviews. A combination of grounded and visual semiotic analysis was used, to effectively analyse the data.

Theoretical Perspective: This study conducts consumer research and draws on the theory of self-presentation and authenticity. Both are relevant concepts regarding mobile dating apps. Self-presentation is important, due to its ubiquity in social life and persistent stance in dating and authenticity because of its importance in interpersonal relationships. Further, prior literature on online and mobile dating regarding self-presentation and authenticity was examined.

Empirical Data: The researchers combined in a mixed method approach semi-structured interviews with visual data in form participants' profile picture. Overall, nine interviews with Tinder users were conducted and visual data from their profiles was obtained and seven were included in the presentation and findings chapter due to the richness of the data.

Conclusion: The developed concept, Hypocritical Authenticity, illustrates that authenticity in mobile dating is more a matter of social desirability than a deeply rooted personal desire. The new concept provides a different layer to the discussion on authenticity for consumers. Regarding self-presentation, users of mobile dating apps presented themselves often with an ought self instead of their true or ideal selves, which is not inevitably authentic. This showed that, although consumers crave authenticity in other context, in the actual consumers' behaviour in mobile dating it is not as important.

Keywords: Authenticity, mobile dating apps, Hypocritical Authenticity, Tinder, self-presentation, ought self

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1 Introduction

For hundreds of years consumer have been actively seeking authenticity (Grayson & Martinec, 2004) which is "central to consumer roles within virtually every subculture and communal consumption context" (Leigh, Peters & Shelton, 2006, p.482). Authentic, refers to aspects such as "sincerity, truthfulness, originality, and the feeling and practice of being true to one's self or others" (Vannini & Franzese, 2008, p.1621). Especially in today's commodity culture finding something authentic and true is perceived as important and consumers are yearning for authentic and honest products (Fritz, Schoenmüller & Bruhn, 2016; Gilmore & Pine, 2007). This longing for authenticity has been investigated by various studies (e.g. Arnould & Price, 2000; Grayson & Martinec, 2004; Leigh, Peters & Shelton, 2006). In particular Grayson and Martinec (2004) highlighted the importance of authenticity in consumer culture due to its "long-standing, persistent, and contemporary marketplace appeal" (p.296). Nevertheless, consumer research has not been given "considerable focused attention to authenticity" (Grayson & Martinec, 2004, p.296) and its complexity is yet to be understood (Peñaloza, 2000). Therefore, more understanding of authenticity is needed. One particularly interesting consumption context to study authenticity is in the dating context where consumers actively "shop" (Heino, Ellison & Gibbs, 2010, p.429) for potential partners. This is because authenticity by nature is highly important here, since it fosters trust, commitment, and relationship satisfaction (Cole, 2001; Wieselquist, Rusbult, Foster & Agnew, 1999). In this context, due to its rising popularity (Becker, 2002) online dating has become a comprehensively researched field, which examines how consumers engage in self-presentation on these platforms.

However, considering the latest technological developments a new phenomenon arose: mobile dating apps. Here consumers seek interpersonal relationships and try to find the *right* product on the *market of love*. What makes these apps particularly interesting to study is that they have not received much academic attention (Tyson, Perta, Haddadi & Seto, 2016). Although different apps exist, "one recent addition stands out amongst all others" (Tyson, et al, 2016, p.461), which is Tinder.

Tinder has a tremendous consumer base worldwide, and offers a unique case due to its swiping mechanism and functionality. Therefore, it provides a highly interesting case for research to shed light on what role authenticity plays in consumer behaviour.

1.1 Problematisation of the Study

In the fragmented and virtualised postmodern society, individuals are constantly engaging in identity construction processes to craft their own identity not only in face-to-face interaction, but also on digital platforms. Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and digital dating services are vivid examples for contexts where users are engaging in self-presentation via digital interfaces (Matic, 2011). In the digital dating context, identity construction via self-presentation is especially important since individual's market and present themselves on such platforms with the intention to meet potential partners online (Gibbs, Ellison & Heino, 2006; Heino, Ellison & Gibbs, 2010).

Similar to other online contexts, online dating relies on limited information for people to present themselves, but also to assess others. The information provided is more consciously *given*, than indirectly *given off* (Goffman, 1959) and self-presentation is more controllable, due to the asynchronous and editable nature of computer mediated communication (Walther, 1992,1996). This environment enables users to present themselves in different facets and more selectively, thereby consciously concealing or highlighting certain attributes (Ellison, Heino & Gibbs, 2006; Walther, 1992, 1996). How users *sell* themselves via dating profiles is therefore one major aspect of online dating research. In this environment, the digital interfaces are seen as gatekeepers for future interaction and as a *resume* or "a promotional tool that markets one's 'best self'" (Heino, Ellison & Gibbs, 2010, p.435). Here one overarching tension has been observed: users are motivated to enhance their self-presentation and at the same time present themselves authentically (Hancock & Toma, 2009; Whitty, 2008). As mentioned, in the dating context, authenticity plays a key role since an inauthentic behaviour can undermine a partner's trust, commitment, and relationship satisfaction (Cole, 2001; Wieselquist et al., 1999). Nevertheless, in the online context, people feel the need to enhance themselves to be perceived as desirable and need to stand out from the masses to compete on the highly-contested *market of love* (Ellison, Heino & Gibbs, 2006; Heino, Ellison & Gibbs, 2010).

The need to stand out might be greater on mobile dating apps like Tinder, which although similar to online dating, differs in terms of users' presentation and the establishment of communication and contact (Tyson et al. 2016). Tinder is a unique phenomenon, not only due to its unique swiping mechanism and the highly-reduced amount of information provided by its users, but also because of the tremendous number of active users (Tyson et al. 2016). The fact that self-presentation is limited to physical appearance in forms of profile pictures not only

reduces the amount of information accessible for the user, but also the possibilities for a comprehensive self-presentation (Blackwell, Birnholtz & Abbott, 2014; Ward, 2016a). Thus, evaluation and presentation is based on visual stimuli and leads critics of Tinder to argue that the app reduces individuals to superficial attributes (Ansari & Klinenberg, 2015). It is even proposed that apps like Tinder "constitutes a cut-down version of online dating, without any of the features that make it possible to understand the deeper characteristics of potential mates" (Tyson et al., 2016, p.461). Drawing on online dating literature, where it was perceived as important to still present an authentic self (Gibbs, Ellison & Heino, 2006; Toma & Hancock, 2010; Toma, Hancock & Ellison, 2008; Whitty, 2008) the question arises if the role of authenticity changes when market pressures, competition, and the need to sell increase.

However, this question is not only interesting in the context of mobile dating and the formation of interpersonal relationships but also in the context of marketing. In the latter, the concept of authenticity recently gained attention, since according to the commodification and virtualisation consumers increasingly seek authentic products and make their purchase decision based on the fact if a product is perceived as fake or real (Fritz, Schoenmüller & Bruhn, 2016; Gilmore & Pine, 2007). Mobile dating can be seen as a market as well, thus this development fosters the need to consider the role of authenticity in the mobile dating context.

Taking the research on mobile dating apps into account, it is evident that relatively little research has been conducted in terms of authentic self-presentation. More precisely the tension between enhancement and authenticity in self-presentation has received very limited attention and only isolated findings could be gathered. The few insights that exist highlight the aforementioned tension as also inherent on mobile dating apps and users in general aim to present themselves accurately (Ward, 2016a).

To the researchers' best knowledge, no study has focused predominantly on the concepts of authenticity and self-presentation on mobile dating apps. Therefore, the overarching research question of this study is:

>   RQ: Which role does authenticity play for users in a superficial environment on mobile dating apps like Tinder?

To be able to answer this question and to add to the understanding of the phenomenon of Tinder, the research will assess how users argue for both, their own self-presentation and how they evaluate others. This is because "profiling its [Tinder] usage is key for understanding this recent

social phenomenon" (Tyson et al. 2016). The following sub questions will aid in answering the overarching research question:

1. How do individuals market themselves based only on the visual impression?

2. How do Tinder users evaluate other profiles based only on the visual impression?

The sub research question will be answered by gathering data regarding Tinder users' action, experiences, opinions, and perceptions and draws on the literature of self-presentation and authenticity. Firstly, Tinder users' profile pictures will be analysed and secondly semi-structured interviews conducted. The data to be gathered is therefore visual and language data (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2015) and will subsequently be analysed by visual semiotic and grounded analysis. Considering both verbal justifications and actions of Tinder users, conclusions can be drawn on which role authenticity plays in mobile dating.

1.2 Intended Contribution

Intended Theoretical Contribution: As pointed out above, self-presentation and authenticity are essential concepts within consumer research and to understand consumer behaviour in society. Considering the immense number of users and the popularity in society, one particularly important consumption context is mobile dating. However, to the best knowledge of the researchers no research has been conducted on these services, focusing particularly on both concepts. Therefore, this research aims to contribute new insights to the existing knowledge, both in self-presentation and authenticity literature and furthermore to the understanding of consumer behaviour and the research area of mobile dating. More precisely, this research aims to provide new knowledge concerning self-presentation strategies of users on mobile dating apps and how they evaluate others in general. Comparing both their verbal justification and their actual behaviour, this research aims to investigate which role authenticity plays for the consumers. By doing so this research aims to also contribute to the existing knowledge about the tension between enhanced and authentic presentation in digital dating environment and to investigate if findings of online dating are transferable to the mobile dating context. Finally, the purpose of this study is also to develop a concept which explains the role authenticity plays in a person's self-presentation and evaluation of others in the mobile dating context.

Intended practical contribution: This research aims to investigate which role authenticity plays on mobile dating apps, like Tinder. Conducting this study aims to give insights for brand managers and developers of mobile dating apps on how important authenticity is to consumers regarding these kind of services and interacting on a market, thereby being able to modify the apps accordingly. Furthermore, the findings of this study aim to add new insights concerning developments in a broader context for society.

1.3 Delimitation of Research

Authenticity is a very complex concept and as Vannini & Franzese (2009) stated very subjective and even emotional. Scholars cannot agree on one single definition of authenticity, just that it is a very complex concept (Vannini & Franzese, 2009). This paper however will not aim to conceptualise authenticity for online or mobile dating. A conceptualisation of authenticity, even though it might be helpful to have, will not help in answering the research questions proposed at the end of the problematisation. Furthermore, it is not the aim of this research to investigate how authentic the setup of Tinder is by reducing someone to almost only physical appearance, instead self-presentation and authenticity will be examined. Moreover, the purpose of this research is not to provide statistically generalisable insights since it is of qualitative nature, thus being subjective and interested in in-depth insights on the phenomenon of Tinder. Finally, although, there are other online dating websites and mobile dating apps, which could be of interest to study, this is not the scope of this paper. The aim is to extend knowledge on the dating app Tinder, since it is one of the most popular dating apps on the market and a recent phenomenon in the dating field (Ward, 2016b).

1.4 Outline of the Thesis

This thesis is made up of five chapters. After the above outlined introduction of the overall research topic, Chapter 2, provides a background and literature review of research conducted on online and mobile dating regarding self-presentation and authenticity until this date. Further, the theoretical lens which underpins this research will be shown. Chapter 3, shows the research design, describes the data collection and analysis methods used and highlights the

trustworthiness of the research. Chapter 4, includes the findings of the research and the analysis. First, the individual cases will be presented, followed by a cross section analysis of common themes in light of literature and theory presented in Chapter 2. Chapter 5, highlights and discusses the most interesting findings pointed out in Chapter 4 in relation to the objectives and the research question formulated in Chapter 1. Finally, the conclusion and answers to the research questions will be given and the contributions this thesis aims to make regarding existing literature and suggestions for further research are outlined.

2 Literature and Theoretical Review

2.1 Background

This section will provide a brief background on the marketisation of love, the differences between online and mobile dating as well as introducing the case of Tinder. After this a thorough literature review of research conducted on self-presentation and authenticity for online and mobile dating will be provided.

2.1.1 Marketisation of Love

Traditionally, the age-old quest of finding a romantic partner, might have been understood as an interaction where romance and passion are involved (Ward, 2016b). However, for decades already, economic models have been used by scholars from the fields of economics, sociology, and consumer research to study relationship initiation and explain people's behaviour when selecting a partner (Becker, 1973; Roloff, 1981). In 1974, Foa (seen in Hirschman, 1987) already described love as one of six heterogeneous resources which are exchanged in social interactions in his *Theory of Resource Exchange*. Here, "the pairing of men and women" is seen as a "resource transaction in Western culture" (Hirschman, 1987, p.100) and therefore as a heterogeneous marketing exchange. Further, economic models as metaphors like *marriage market* (Becker, 1973) or *meat market* (Ahuvia & Adelman, 1993), which shape individual's perceptions and actions in the context of finding a romantic partner, have been researched (Ahuvia & Adelman, 1993; Bailey, 1988). Understanding the process of finding a partner as *selling oneself* might be even more applicable to the online dating environment. This is because the emergence of digital dating changed the way people meet and exchange their *resources* drastically (Sales, 2015). On these platforms individuals *market* and *brand,* themselves through their profiles, which should attract others and can be seen as a 'commodification of affect' (Arvidsson, 2006). Moreover, online dating platforms can even be described as "a place where people go to "shop" for potential romantic partners and to "sell" themselves in hopes of creating a successful romantic relationship" (Heino, Ellison & Gibbs, 2010, p.429).

Taking into account that mobile dating apps can be understood as a "free-market economy come to sex" (Sales, 2015, np), and that individuals are "using their phones as a sort of all-day, every-day, handheld singles club, where they might find a sex partner as easily as they'd find a cheap flight to Florida" (Sales, 2015, np) indicates that the economic aspects of *buying* and *selling* are applicable to mobile dating apps, too. This suggests that, although finding a partner can be seen as a very emotional concept (Ward, 2016b), it is influenced by economic and market orientated attributes and the increased need to market oneself persuasively (Ellison, Hancock & Toma, 2012; Toma & Hancock, 2010).

2.1.2   Online versus Mobile Dating

The way people get to know potential partners has changed drastically in the recent decades. Instead of meeting future partners on a face-to-face level for example in a bar as it was the in the past (Fiore & Donath, 2004), it has become almost mainstream that individuals find their romantic partner through online dating websites (Baker, 2002). Online dating is defined as "Internet services designed to facilitate interactions between potential romantic partners" (Heino, Ellison & Gibbs, 2010, p.428). On these platforms users have the possibility to present themselves to potential partners with an online profile. Based on the personal presentation in form of a profile other online daters can be evaluated and decisions can be made to engage with another person or not (Heino, Ellison & Gibbs, 2010). Furthermore, these profiles are relatively comprehensive and contain a variety of mandatory information such as name, age, gender, but also detailed descriptions about one's physical appearance and hobbies. Additionally, most platforms offer the possibility to upload photographs and are characterised by messaging systems which enables the users to communicate with each other (Fiore & Donath, 2004; Gibbs, Ellison & Heino, 2006). Search engines allow users to specify which attributes a person wishes for in another person to limit the number of provided offers, and "shop[ping] for the perfect parts" (Heino, Ellison & Gibbs, 2010, p.434).

Considering the recent technological developments, in terms of getting in contact with other daters, individuals seeking partners are increasingly using mobile dating apps which can be downloaded to the user's Smartphone and connect nearby users through local proximity, using the phone's GPS tracking systems (De Souza e Silva & Sutko, 2011). Although, the idea of finding an interpersonal interaction is similar in both services, the way mobile dating apps work

is essentially different from traditional online dating services (see Figure 1) (Tyson, et al., 2016). Firstly, online dating users usually seek to find their romantic partner (Ellison, Heino & Gibbs, 2006), whereas in mobile dating, consumers use these apps with diverse intentions in mind. These can range from casual sex to entertainment to self-validation (Sumter, Vandenbosch & Leigtenberg, 2017; Timmermans & De Caluwé, 2017). Secondly, the location based technology mostly reduces the search possibilities for potential mates. Instead of searching for specific attributes in other users' profiles, suggestions are made of close by users by the app. This convenience of being close to each other increases the ability to meet spontaneously, therefore reducing the time until a face-to-face interaction. In online dating, it might have taken people weeks or even months of online communication before arranging a face-to-face meeting. The local proximity of mobile dating apps in contrast makes dating easier and more efficient (Blackwell, Birnholtz & Abbott, 2015). Additionally, the fact that users download the apps onto their Smartphones allows them to actively engage in dating in every social context and situation (Blackwell, Birnholtz & Abbott, 2015) instead of predominately using it when having access to a computer. Finally, the major difference between these two services is that the information offered on users' profiles is immensely reduced in mobile dating (e.g. Birnholtz, Fitzpatrick, Handel & Brubaker, 2014; Tyson et al., 2016, Ward, 2016a). On mobile dating apps, users usually present themselves solely with profile pictures, a very limited number of personal information, like age or profession and their location (Blackwell, Birnholtz & Abbott, 2015; Ward, 2016a). Online dating profiles, in contrast are more comprehensive and often include mandatory questionnaires (Birnholtz et al., 2014). Considering, different mobile dating services more precisely it is evident that some apps further reduce the information available and limit the way users can present themselves. In this context, the app Tinder needs to be highlighted, which due to its novel way of framing the self-presentation of its users and immense popularity will be the focus of this research. The section below will be introduced Tinder in more detail.

2.1.3 Introducing Tinder

Tinder has achieved global popularity, with more than 50 million global users in 196 countries and 10 billion matches since its inception in 2012 (Tinder, 2017a). Globally, users login to Tinder on average 11 times a day and spend up to 90 minutes a day swiping. Further, data has shown that women browse a Tinder profile for 8.5 minutes, whereas men browse for 7.2 minutes during a single session (Bilton, 2014). The numbers not only show the popularity of

this new dating service among users, but also the considerable amount of time users spend daily on this app, indicating the relevance and influence on individuals' daily life.

To use Tinder, the app needs to be downloaded to a Smartphone and a profile with a person's Facebook profile is created. After logging in to Tinder, users are able to select up to six pictures either from their Facebook profile or their phone's camera roll, write a short (max. 500 signs) self-description and select their gender (Ward, 2016a, Tyson et al, 2016). The only mandatory information is name, gender, and age, which are drawn from the user's Facebook profile. The location is adjusted based on the phone's GPS. Tinder's location-based-real-time-dating nature does not offer enhanced search and filter options for its users, like traditional online dating sites do (Ward, 2016a). Instead, Tinder's algorithm, allows users to limit their search results solely to three aspects; scale of distance (max. 160 km), scale of age (18 - 55+) and gender (male/ female) (Tinder, 2017b). This increases the number of displayed participants, allowing users to look through hundreds of possible matches (Sales, 2015), instead of reducing the amount of people, as filtering on online websites did.

Figure 1: Swiping Mechanism
(Source: Rafael, 2015)
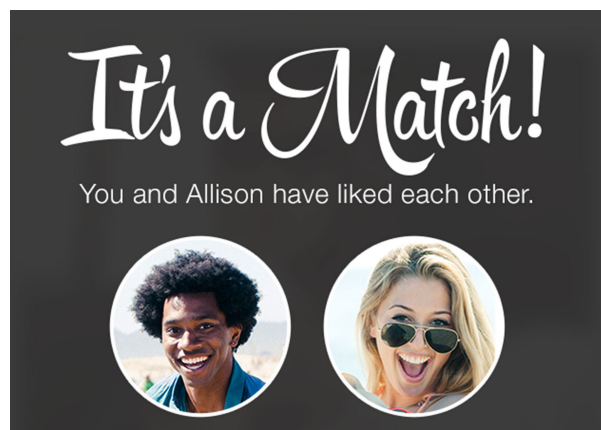
Figure 2: Mutual Match
(Source: Focus, 2015)

On Tinder, users present themselves solely based on their physical appearance, visible through profile pictures and a short, often voluntary, text (Duguay, 2017; Blackwell, Birnholtz & Abbott, 2014) instead of writing a comprehensive profile. Therefore, both the creation of a profile as well as the assessment of other profiles is highly reduced due to the amount of information required/provided. Furthermore, Tinder's unique swipe mechanism allows users to reject or like a person with milliseconds by moving the screen with the person's profile either to the left (reject) or right (like) with one's finger (Tinder, 2017a) (see Figure 1). When more information is needed beside the first picture of a person, the rest of the profile can be viewed

by tapping on the screen. Another novelty is that the exchange of messages is only possible after a *match (see Figure 2)*, meaning both parties must swipe right on each other's profiles, signalling an interest in each other.

Figure 3: Online Dating versus Mobile Dating
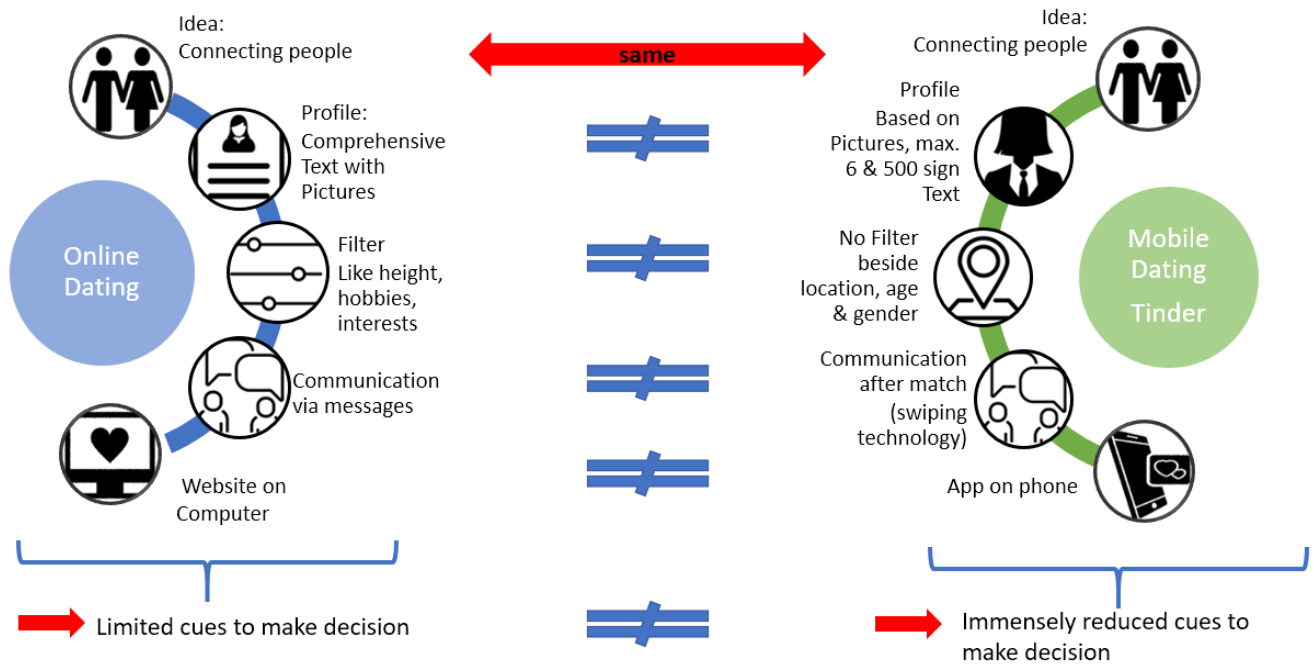
2.2   Self-presentation and Authenticity in Online Dating

Users of online dating websites are presenting themselves with information they provide in their profiles. This presentation will decide if users are able to compete on the market of love and successfully market themselves, since decisions concerning ignoring and rejecting potential mates are often made solely on a quick perusal of one's profile. (Ellison, Heino & Gibbs, 2006; Heino, Ellison & Gibbs, 2010). Therefore, users want to present themselves in the best possible way (Ellison, Heino & Gibbs, 2006), and understand their profile as a 'résumé' and "a promotional tool that markets one's 'best self'" (Heino, Ellison & Gibbs, 2010, p.435), which needs to be convincing and attract (Heino, Ellison & Gibbs, 2010). Research conducted on how people construct their self-presentation on online dating sites found that although there is a strong desire to (1) enhance one's self-presentation, to be able to present oneself in the best

possible light, there is also (2) the need to be authentic (Ellison, Heino & Gibbs, 2006; Hancock & Toma, 2009; Toma, Hancock & Ellison, 2008) (see Figure 4).

Figure 4: The Tension between Self-presentation and Authenticity
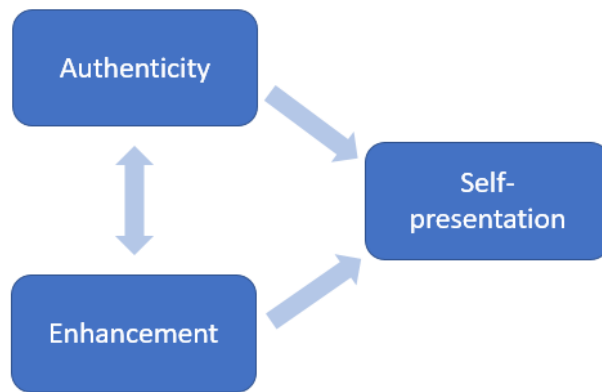
This need to still be perceived as authentic is caused by different underlying reasons. Predominantly, manipulated self-presentation might be detected in the anticipated face-to-face interaction and lead to the undesired effect of disappointing the dating partner and the termination of further interactions (Gibbs, Ellison & Heino, 2006; Toma & Hancock, 2010; Toma, Hancock & Ellison, 2008; Whitty, 2008). Furthermore, individuals might want to attract other daters but still stay true to themselves, since the future partner should accept the person the way s/he is (Swann, 1994; Toma, Hancock & Ellison, 2008). Next, computer-mediated communication makes misrepresentation possible but also more recordable and provable (Toma, Hancock & Ellison, 2008). Finally, engaging in misrepresentation and lying, conflicts with the public discourse, regarding positive evaluation of being honest, and should therefore be avoided (Ellison, Hancock & Toma, 2012; Mazar & Ariely, 2006). All these are aspects why users in online dating try to balance the tension between enhancing oneself and being authentic.

Surrounding this tension, research on online dating focuses predominantly on the deceptive behaviour of online daters in their self-presentation. This is mainly due to the nature of online dating in which deception in one's self-presentation is possible and the fear of deception is a central and predominant concern (Hancock & Toma, 2009; Gibbs, Ellison & Lai, 2011). In this context, scholars focused both on evaluating and exploring textual self-descriptions (e.g. Ellison, Heino & Gibbs, 2006; Toma, Hancock & Ellison, 2008), and profile pictures (e.g. Hancock & Toma, 2009; Toma & Hancock, 2010) or even both (e.g. Ellison, Toma & Hancock,

2012) of online daters. The qualitative study of Ellison, Heino and Gibbs (2006) on textual data presented insights that users develop strategies to mediate the tension between the desire to enhance their presentation and the need to present themselves authentically. They often present themselves with their "ideal" self, that is attributes an individual would like to possess (Higgins, 1987). Daters present a more desirable and potential future version of themselves, portraying attributes which they want to develop and improve in the future (Ellison, Heino & Gibbs, 2006). Although an accurate and authentic self-presentation is perceived as important by online daters, Ellison, Hancock and Toma (2012) found that users do not view their online identity as a precise and accurate description of their offline identity. They rather understand online profiles as a kind of promise, which includes aspects of the person's past, present or future self. Furthermore, this research found "online dating participants gave themselves – and others – permission to employ a flexible sense of identity" (Ellison, Hancock & Toma, 2012, p.60) and the online identity can be perceived "merely as a promise that may soon be fulfilled" (Ellison, Hancock & Toma, 2012, p.60).

Considering concretely to which degree users purposefully misrepresent themselves, it was evident that at least in terms of textual data users do engage frequently and systematically in deceptive behaviour, but to a magnitude which is not detectable in future face-to-face interactions (Toma, Hancock & Ellison, 2008). Future face-to-face interaction can therefore be seen as a limiting variable for the degree of deceptive behaviour (Toma & Hancock, 2010; Whitty, 2008). Furthermore, what is interesting in this context is that misrepresentation can be both strategically and intentionally as it was the case in the research conducted by Toma, Hancock and Ellison (2008) or Whitty (2008). But it can also be unintentional, based on limited self-knowledge for example (Ellison, Heino & Gibbs, 2006). Furthermore, users with short-term goals are expected to be more likely to be deceptive by enhancing their self-presentation to be attract a higher number of potential matches (Toma & Hancock, 2010), whereas users with more long-term oriented goals tried to present themselves as authentically as possible (Whitty, 2007 cited in Toma & Hancock, 2010).

In addition, Toma and Hancock's (2009) research of photographs found that deception and manipulation of physical appearance in pictures is quite common among online daters. Prior research found that deceptive behaviour in textual data is relatively small in magnitude (Toma, Hancock & Ellison, 2008), whereas it was found that in photographs it was relatively high in magnitude (Toma & Hancock, 2009). These findings are important since in the online dating

context photographs play a very important role. They function as a "bait" for attracting other daters (Brown, Maycock & Bruns, 2005). Physical attractiveness which is visible in photographs is generally a highly rated and crucial attribute when looking for potential mates (Toma & Hancock, 2010; Whitty, 2008), since attractive individuals are perceived as more desirable relationship partners (Gangestad & Scheyd, 2005; Riggio, Widaman, Tucker & Salinas, 1991). To increase their attractiveness, users engage both in presenting different attributes like age, weight, or hair colour but also by applying retouching processes to their pictures. The pressure between authentic and enhancing behaviour was managed "by engaging in substantial amounts of selective self-presentation" (Hancock & Toma, 2009, p.379), since daters improved their physical appearance in relation to how they look on a day-to-day basis (Hancock & Toma, 2009). Additionally, photographs are seen as a warranty of a realistic and honest self-presentation (Ellison, Heino & Gibbs, 2006) due to their iconic nature (Messaris, 1997 cited in Hancock and Toma, 2009) and because they mirror reality (Barthes, 1977). However, considering that users apply manipulation techniques in their pictures erodes this definition. Furthermore, the fact that users themselves perceive their pictures as accurate whereas others did not, indicates a missing self-knowledge about an accurate self-presentation. Moreover, it supports the findings pointed out by Ellison, Hancock & Toma (2012), that users allow themselves some flexibility in terms of authenticity in the online dating context.

2.3   Self-presentation and Authenticity in Mobile Dating

Generally, the usage of mobile dating apps has attracted limited attention and research from academics (Tyson et al. 2016). The research conducted so far on mobile dating apps focused predominantly on the gay dating app Grindr and Tinder. This is mostly due to their popularity and pioneering role in the mobile dating context (Blackwell, Birnholz & Abbott, 2014; Duguay, 2017; Van de Wiele & Tong, 2014). The most prominent aspects of research conducted on Tinder are security concerns (e.g. Stenson, Balcells & Chen, 2015) and the assessment of the different goals inherent in using these apps (e.g. Ranzini & Lutz, 2016; Sumter, Vandenbosch & Leigtenberg, 2017; Timmermans & De Caluwe, 2017; Van de Wiele & Ting, 2014; Ward, 2016a). Furthermore, users of traditional online dating are focused on finding a long-term romantic partner (Ellison, Heino & Gibbs, 2006), whereas user of mobile dating apps consuming the app due to a variety of reasons. Timmermans and De Caluwé (2017) for example

identified 13 different goals for using Tinder, ranging from social approval, relationship seeking, peer pressure up to curiosity. Similarly, Sumter, Vandenbosch and Ligtenberg (2017) narrowed the motives down to the seven goals; finding love, casual sex, ease of communication, self-worth validation, thrill of excitement, and trendiness. In general, scholars conducting research on mobile dating services frequently link their research to the findings of research conducted on self-presentation in the online dating context (e.g. Ranzini & Lutz, 2016; Ward, 2016a). This indicates that this research is also to some degree valid for mobile dating apps.

Another aspect, introduced predominantly in the mobile dating context is the tension between authentic and enhancing behaviour (e.g. Blackwell, Birnholz & Abbott, 2014; Birnholtz et al., 2014; Ranzini & Lutz, 2016; Van de Wiele & Tong, 2014; Ward, 2016). Researchers even argue that the tendency for people to enhance themselves while still presenting themselves in a plausible light might be even more apparent on mobile dating apps. The reason for this being the predominance of presenting oneself with profile pictures and the limited alternative information (Blackwell, Birnholz & Abbott, 2014). However, considering the findings of these studies regarding profile creation, it was evident that also other aspects beside authenticity play a predominant role in mobile dating. Users of the dating app Grindr were for example predominantly concerned if they were identifiable in their profiles instead of how accurate their presentation was (Blackwell, Birnholz & Abbott, 2014). To manage this concern of being identified users had pictures with averted face or landscapes to avoid showing their real identity. Considering this knowledge, first attempts were made to shed some light on what role authenticity plays in the mobile dating, particularly with the new and different conditions.

Duguay (2017) pointed out in her case study on Tinder that especially in mobile dating it is important that users' present themselves accurately. She investigated how Tinder ensures that its users present themselves authentically. Her research pointed out that Tinder uses the term authentic interchangeably with real, and claims users on Tinder present themselves authentically since they have a real Facebook profile. By working with Facebook's (2017) 'real name requirement' Tinder ensures that a real and authentic person is behind every Tinder profile. However, it does not provide any insights how users perceive the importance of authenticity both in their self-presentation and other profiles (Duguay, 2017).

Ranzini and Lutz (2016) conducted another study investigating self-presentation of Tinder users and included authenticity as one variable. Their findings showed a correlation between the level of authentic behaviour and the different goals, concluding that these variables influence each

other (Ranzini & Lutz, 2007). More serious relationship goals positively influenced authentic behaviour, whereas goals like self-validation had a correlation to deceptive self-presentation. This was also found in research conducted on the dating app Grindr. Here Van de Wiele & Tong (2014) identified that users with short-term goals were less honest in the information they disclosed.

Further, first qualitative research on Tinder conducted by Ward (2016a) focused on self-presentation of Tinder users in general. Ward (2016) found that users try to present themselves as "ideal yet authentic" (p.8), providing first indications that users still value authenticity in their own presentation. Nevertheless, her research on self-presentation was very broad and did not focus on authenticity as a concept. Furthermore, although her findings indicate that users try to balance authentic behaviour independent from their goals, only limited insights are provided on how this is achieved. Additionally, no information is provided if users value authenticity in the presentation of others therefore, a more focused and in-depth evaluation of its role on Tinder is required.

2.4 Theoretical Review

2.4.1 Introduction

This study will be underpinned by two theoretical lenses, first self-presentation and secondly, authenticity, which are both relevant for mobile dating apps. Self-presentation is important, due to its ubiquity in social life (Goffman, 1959) and has been present both in traditional face-to-face interactions and in the past decade also in online environments. It can be seen as an image of oneself or the process of creating an image due to numerous social purposes (Counts & Stecher, 2009). This has gained importance as in contemporary society individuals constantly craft their own identity via consumption (Elliott & Wattanasuwan, 1998) and decide by themselves who they want to be and when (Holt, 2002). It is further relevant in the dating context since potential partners will decide based on a person's self-presentation whether to start a relationship with this person or not (Derlega, Winstead, Wong & Greenspan, 1987 cited in Ellison, Heino & Gibbs, 2006). However, the extent of self-presentation in online environments is substantially wider than in offline-contexts, making self-presentation online both more multifaceted and selective (Ellison, Heino & Gibbs, 2006, Walther, 1992,1996). The

increased motivation to create a desirable image to attract the other sex actively fosters the engagement in selective self-presentation (Ellison, Heino & Gibbs, 2006; Guadagno, Okdie & Kruse, 2012; Hancock & Toma, 2009). Therefore, considering today's technological advancements self-presentation is a relevant concept to study in regard to dating on Tinder. It is the first theoretical concept for this research on mobile dating apps, and very closely linked to authenticity, which will be the second theoretical lens.

Authenticity has received comprehensive attention in the past decades (Anderson, 1990; MacCannell, 1999; Trilling, 1972). And has been identified as a central attribute of contemporary life, by many scholars (e.g. Arnould & Price, 2000; Grayson & Martinec, 2004; Jacknis, 1990; Leigh, Peters & Shelton, 2006; Lowenthal, 1992). Lowenthal (1992) for example suggests that "the cult of authenticity pervades modern life," (p.184) and Jacknis (1990) says that "authenticity is a general preoccupation of modern western culture" (p.9). However, in consumer research, authenticity has not received focused attention (Grayson & Martinec, 2004) and it still is "not well understood in its market manifestations" (Peñaloza, 2000, p.103). This is problematic since consumer research also indicated that consumers in modern society are seeking for authenticity in consumption (Fritz, Schoenmüller & Bruhn, 2016; Gilmore & Pine, 2007; Grayson & Martinec, 2004; Holt, 2002). Therefore, more understanding and knowledge about the role of authenticity in the consumption context is needed. Furthermore, authenticity, is also a relevant concept in the formation of interpersonal relationships (e.g., DeGreeff, Burnett, & Cooley, 2009; LaFollette & Graham, 1986; Lopez & Rice, 2006; Wieselquist et al., 1999) and can be seen as an ideal of one's self-presentation (Kadlac, 2017). It is therefore essential to consider in the new mobile dating context.

2.4.2   Authenticity

2.4.2.1.   Defining Authenticity

In the domain of close interpersonal relationships authenticity and honesty are important concepts (e.g., DeGreeff, Burnett, & Cooley, 2009; LaFollette & Graham, 1986; Lopez & Rice, 2006; Wieselquist et al., 1999) which can promote pro relational behaviour and relationship satisfaction. Their antitheses — dishonesty, and inauthenticity — can however undermine a partner's trust, commitment, and relationship satisfaction (Cole, 2001; Wieselquist et al., 1999). Authenticity is discussed in numerous academic journals and articles, from fields like sociology

(Goffman 1959; Vannini & Franzese, 2008), psychology (Wickham, 2013), brand management (Ilicic & Webster, 2014, Peterson, 2005) and consumer research (Grayson & Martinec, 2004), but no single definition of authenticity exists (Vannini & Franzese, 2008; Grayson & Martinec, 2004, Peterson, 2005). Most scholars agree that authenticity is a very subjective and personal concept (Gilmore & Pine, 2007; Vannini & Franzese, 2008; Vannini & Williams, 2009) and being multidimensional since it is embedded in a social context and influenced by social factors (Peterson, 2005; Ilicic & Webster, 2014; Marwick & Boyd, 2010). Mostly, authenticity refers to different things such as "sincerity, truthfulness, originality, and the feeling and practice of being true to one's self or others" (Vannini & Franzese, 2008, p.1621). Important sociological research on authenticity builds upon the research of Goffman (1959) and the symbolic-interactionist tradition, which largely talks about authenticity as self-reflective and emotional. Goffman's (1959) view addresses both what the true self is, i.e. the individual's subjective sense, and the being true or untrue to that self, namely an individual's subjective emotional experience. In contrast Kadlac (2017) has argued if a person pretends to be something or someone they are not, they present a false picture to the outside world, thus not being true to oneself and others. And is understood as a less authentic behaviour for the purpose of this paper.

Indexical and Iconic Authenticity

Peirce's (1998) semiotic framework can be used to distinguish two kinds of authenticity, namely indexical and iconic authenticity (cited in Grayson & Martinec, 2004). Sometimes 'authentic' is used to describe something, mostly an object, that is thought not to be a copy or an imitation (Grayson & Martinec, 2004; Vannini & Franzese, 2008). People are thought to be authentic if a person's actions or expressions clearly reflect who the person is in real life (Curnutt, 1999–2000; Goldman & Papson, 1996; Trilling, 1972, Kadlac, 2017) and do not "put on" an act or imitate someone to meet social conventions and norms (Cohen 1988; Gair 1997; Holt 2002; Trilling 1972, Kadlac, 2017). Peirce (2000), also coined the term "index" to allude to cues which are believed to be a factual and spatio-temporal link with something else. Therefore, indexicality distinguishes "the real thing" from its copies (Benjamin 1969; Goodman 1976; Kingston 1999 cited in Grayson & Martinec, 2004). If for example two social actors act in similar ways, the authentic set of behaviours is that which is believed to reflect the actor's true self and not simulated to achieve a certain result (Grayson & Martinec, 2004). Moreover, the word "authentic" is occasionally used to describe something whose physical meaning resembles something which is indexically authentic (Grayson & Martinec, 2004). According to

Pierce (2000), icons are associated with the phenomenological experience of attending to one's senses (Grayson & Martinec, 2004). Thus, consumers' perceptions towards iconicity depend on the pre-existing knowledge that the consumers have (Grayson & Martinec, 2004). To view something as an icon, consumers need to have some kind of idea and previous knowledge about the background of that person (Grayson & Martinec, 2004).

Despite disagreeing on many aspects regarding authenticity researchers often agree on the following points: (1) whether there is a true self, and (2) tension surrounding authenticity (Vannini & Franzese, 2008).

2.4.2.2. The true self

Most theories that exists on authenticity address the issue of a true self; does a true self exist, and if it does, is it intuitive or socially constructed? This issue has been theorised in numerous ways. One of these is Higgins' (1987) (see 2.4.3.1 for more details), which assumes that the self is 'multidimensional' and the outcome of a person's claim to individuality and social interaction (Higgins, 1987). Additionally, Turner (1976) has distinguished between two different driving forces in one's self-conceptualisation. The institutional pole, refers to external forces influencing the self, whereas the impulse pole consists of internal and more individual forces (feelings, desires). Both poles influence a person's construction and enacting of their true self (Turner, 1976). But if a true self exists where does it emerge from? Most researchers agree that parents and socialisation processes shape the self-formation. Adams and Marshall (1996) have argued that socialisation acts as both individual and social functions for people to differentiate oneself from others. This means that finding one's authentic or true self can serve both as a differentiation of individuals from others and create a sense of belonging, particularly with people whom the person feels like s/he can behave in an authentic way (Adams & Marshall, 1996). In line with this argumentation the true self is understood as an authentic and honest representation of oneself.

2.4.2.3.   Tension surrounding authenticity

Although authenticity is considered to an honest presentation of the true self, it is still influenced by the same social forces that shape individual's experiences. Frameworks dealing with authenticity often challenge this tension between the individual and society. The changing environment laid down by social and cultural changes requires outstanding impression management skills of people and the ability to suppress the authentic self (Erickson, 1995). Research and academic literature on authenticity suggests that the position of authenticity as an ideal (acting in-line with one's true self) and as a quest (searching for one's true self) are not achieved easily (Johnson, 2007; O'Connor, 2006). Thus, as honourable as authenticity might be it is still influenced by social life which is made up of compromises, deals, and negotiations (Strauss, 1978) and cannot be excused from having to find a balance between ideal and necessity. Moreover, the strain individuals feel in situations that influence their social life might replicate an underlying conflict between authenticity and need for social approval. However, current research suggested that a person's need for social approval and authenticity are closely linked, and that a higher need for social approval expects lower levels of authentic behaviour (Franzese, 2007). Furthermore, in this sense, being true to oneself is then a matter of autonomy rather than authenticity. Individuals who serve as their own audience and are therefore not considering what others think are acting in an authentic way. Thus, people who set their own path and do not let themselves be influenced by the preferences, judgements or desires of others behave in an authentic way (Kadlac, 2017). A person that presents him/herself only in a certain way because of these pressures is not authentic. People were found to have submerged authenticity for numerous reason to uphold likeability, sometimes for self-protection and sometimes for self-gain (Franzese, 2007).

2.4.3   Self-presentation or impression management

2.4.3.1.   Defining Self-Presentation

The term self-presentation, introduced by Goffman (1959) describes the process of trying to influence and control the impression others have of oneself. It occurs based on the desire that the audiences have of an impression of the individual self (Ellison, Heino, & Gibbs, 2006; Hancock & Toma, 2009; Guadagno, Okdie & Kruse, 2012; Walther, 1996). Goffman (1959) defines the process as a strategic approach "to convey an impression to others which it is in his

[her] interest to convey" (p.4). According to him there are two kinds of impressions to consider: *given* and *given off*. *Given* impressions can be designated by specific actors, i.e. when people are actively saying something, whereas *given off* impressions can be determined by the behaviour of the actors (Goffman, 1959). Further, *given off* impressions can be the action of an individual or unintentional communication which includes non-verbal cues (Blackwell, Birnholtz, & Abbott, 2014; Ellison, Heino & Gibbs, 2006).

Leary and Kowalski (1990) distinguish between two components in self-presentation or impression management; impression motivation and impression construction. Impression motivation occurs when there is a need to control the impression others have of oneself, whereas impression construction refers to individuals actively constructing an impression. Individuals actively alter their behaviour and consciously decide how they want to act (Leary & Kowalski, 1990). It needs to be considered that to achieve the desired impression, individuals tend to exaggerate their qualities (Ellison, Heino & Gibbs, 2006; Hancock & Toma, 2009). Generally, there are different motivations when creating a certain impression. Individuals for example want to be perceived as sympathetic or competent among their audiences (Guadagno, Okdie & Kruse, 2012). Being perceived in a positive way is especially important and "people expend considerable social energy attempting to get others to like and to appreciate them" (Bell & Daly, 1984, p.91). Generally, impression management is viewed as a 'necessary evil' to negotiate the interactions of a social world which requires a true self that needs to be embedded via social interaction (Vannini & Franzese, 2008, p.1628).

The Domains of the Self

In the context of self-presentation, the concepts of *Domains of the Self* (Higgins, 1987) need to be considered since by presenting oneself one can chose between different selves. Higgins (1987) identified three different domains which he called the *ideal, the actual* and the *ought self*. The *actual self*, synonymously used with true self in this paper, describes the characteristics a person actually possesses, whereas the *ideal self*-enhances these aspects and describes attributes a person wants to have. Finally, the *ought self* is the presentation of characteristics one thinks s/he should have based on the social discourse (Higgins, 1987). Moreover, individuals not only hold *ideal, actual and ought self,* they also have past, present and future selves which play a role in their self-presentation (Markus & Nurius cited in Ellison, Hancock, & Toma, 2012). Higgins (1987) *ideal self* might for example exists based on different selves containing attributes one held in the past, present or desires to have in the future (Ellison,

Hancock & Toma, 2012). Considering the different number of selves playing a role within self-presentation, an active process of impression management is inherent.

2.4.3.2.   Self-presentation on the Internet

Self-presentation on the Internet needs to be distinguished from self-presentation in face-to-face interaction. Whilst during face-to-face interaction individuals can rely on multiple nonverbal cues and real-time behaviour, computer mediated communication (CMC) allows a much more selective process of self-presentation (Ellison, Heino & Gibbs, 2006; Hancock & Toma, 2009; Walther, 1992, 1996). CMC, which was introduced by Walther (1992) and is characterised by two elements; reduced nonverbal cues and an asynchronous nature. Users of CMC present themselves only with textual elements which can be edited by its author. The impression others get of this individual is based mainly on the social information transferred via language components (Walther, 1992,1996). Considering Goffman's (1959) terminology, information in this context is therefore more *given* than actually *given* off" (Ellison, Heino & Gibbs, 2006). Furthermore, the communication within CMC does not necessarily have to be in a real-time manner. This allows for more flexibility and freedom in carefully constructing, manipulating, and controlling one's self-presentation online (Hancock & Toma, 2009; Walther, 1992, 1996). Self-presentation in an online environment is thus a more strategic and selective display of oneself (Gibbs, Ellison & Heino, 2006; Ellison, Heino & Gibbs, 2006; Hancock & Toma, 2009; Toma, Hancock & Ellison, 2008; Walther, 1992, 1996). In other words, the first impression in a CMC environment is highly manageable and malleable. Users could plan and had the chance to self-censor, since they had "more time for message construction and less stress of ongoing interaction" (Walther, 1992, p.229). Thus, being able to put on their 'best face' (Walther, 1992, p.229).

2.5   Theoretical Lens and Positioning

Considering, the literature review and theoretical lenses introduced, Figure 5 shows the positioning of this research. This study is conducted within consumer research and will draw on the theory of self-presentation and authenticity. Both concepts will allow the researchers to investigate how users present themselves and how they evaluate others to finally answer the overarching research question, what role authenticity plays in mobile dating.

Figure 5: Positioning of this Research
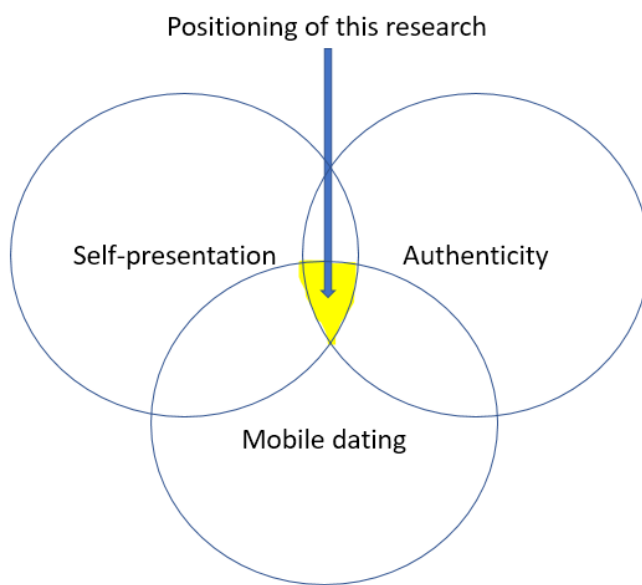
3   Methodology and Method

The following chapter outlines the methodology, research design, data collection, data analysis, trustworthiness of the research and limitations as well as ethical considerations.

3.1   Methodology

This research applies a relativist and social constructionist approach. It is argued that authenticity and self-presentation on mobile dating apps is a process which is shaped by people and influenced by their behaviours and social factors, therefore it is a subjective and personal concept (Vannini & Franzese, 2009).

3.1.1   Ontology

It is believed that social reality is experienced differently by individuals and varies depending on context or country (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2015) and that many contrasting 'truths' exist and that facts depend on the observer's perspective. As Collins (1983) has argued "what counts for the truth can vary from place to place and from time to time" (p.88, cited in Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2015). "[O]ntology is about the nature of reality and existence" (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2015, p.46) and different positions can be adopted within the social science. These are, internal realism, nominalism and relativism. Regarding this paper's scope, a relativist position is applied, because in this world, many truths and facts exist, which depend on different perspectives (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2015). In this paper, the concepts of authenticity and self-presentation are seen from a subjective point of view.

3.1.2   Epistemology

Having a relativistic approach to ontology, the position of social constructionists was taken, because the construction of new human knowledge is relevant in this research field. This approach is used, as reality is not objective but socially constructed and consumers give it meaning through social interactions (Berger & Luckman, 1966 cited in Easterby, Thorpe & Jackson, 2015). Further, since authenticity is a very subjective and personal concept (Gilmore & Pine, 2007; Vannini & Franzese, 2008) and multidimensional, it is embedded in a social

context and influenced by social factors (Peterson, 2005; Ilicic & Webster, 2014). This is in line with the social constructionist position of this research. Moreover, self-presentation is also socially constructed since it is a very subjective act. People engage in strategic behaviour to present themselves in the best possible way to impress their audience (Goffman, 1959). Social forces further influence the self-presentation process, as individuals try to impress peers and other people around them (Vannini & Franzese, 2009).

3.2   Research Design: qualitative and inductive

For this research, a qualitative research design was applied, since the interest lies in the "the quality or nature of human experiences and what these phenomena mean to individuals" (Draper 2004, p.642). This will offer in-depth comprehension and awareness of the role authenticity plays in mobile dating apps (Daymon & Holloway, 2011). Considering the goal of qualitative research, to "understand and explain beliefs and behaviours within the context they occur" and its "interpretive and naturalistic" characteristic (Draper, 2004, p.642) this approach is appropriate. It will aid in understanding which role authenticity plays within self-presentation techniques of users and the evaluation of others on mobile dating apps, like Tinder.

Following the qualitative approach of this research, grounded theory, more distinctly the Straussian approach (Strauss & Corbin, 1990) was followed. Grounded theory can be a "method, technique or research design, and the outcome of research" (Sarantakos 2005, p.117). It is an open and flexible form of research and "data collection, analysis, the development of theoretical concepts and the literature review occur in cyclical and interactive process" (Daymon & Holloway, 2011, p.109). This is a suitable approach when some knowledge on the topic exists, and it can provide insights into phenomenon (Daymon & Holloway, 2011), in this case Tinder. Strauss (1990) argued that it is a qualitative research method, which uses a planned set of procedures to develop theory about a phenomenon inductively. The Straussian approach introduced by Strauss and Corbin (1990) was most suitable for this research project since it allowed the researchers to focus on what data needs to be collected. Without formulating any research questions prior to the data collection processes, which would be the case in Glaser's (1978 cited in Easterby, Thorpe & Jackson, 2015) approach to grounded theory, the researchers might be enticed to collect any data (Yin, 1994) for the project. And thereby risking the gathering of a huge amount of unnecessary data.

In a first step, the literature on online and mobile dating with regards to authenticity and self-presentation was reviewed. The aim of the initial literature review was to provide a structure to the research design of the latter empirical study prior to its execution. Surveying the literature according to Hekkala (2007) helps the researcher "identify relevant concepts and theories for the research", and allows the researchers to "make sense of the data gathered in the fieldwork" (cited in Halewah, 2012, p.35). In a second step, primary empirical data was gathered through in-depth semi-structured interviews as well as visual data in terms of Tinder users' profile pictures.

3.3   Data Collection Method

To answer the research questions; which role does authenticity play for users in a superficial environment on mobile dating apps like Tinder? data regarding Tinder users' experiences, opinions, and perceptions on authenticity and self-presentation was gathered. The data collected was language and visual data (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2015).

Language data was gathered through semi-structured interviews, to hear the reasoning and motives behind users' self-presentation and evaluation of others on Tinder, and which role authenticity plays. This data can provide the researcher with insights into social realities. Speaking to Tinder users allowed the researchers to discover perceptions, views and opinions of the individual (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2015).

Visual data was gathered because, the researchers agree with Secrist, Koeyer, Bell and Fogel (2002) that despite a people's eloquent verbal descriptions of his/her experiences, often words alone are not able to communicate the complex and confusing situations they encounter. For this paper, visual data is defined as any kind of visual material, like pictures taken by individuals (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2015). This data gave insights into how users present themselves as well as evaluate others, because pictures are the primary form of presentation and evaluation of others, on Tinder.

A combination of these two methods was used because one single method may not provide enough understanding of a phenomenon. Using multiple methods can provide much deeper and richer knowledge (Denzin, 1978; Patton, 1999, 2001). Although interviews can provide rich data "people don't always do what they say" (Fellman, 1999, cited in Elliott & Jankel-Elliott

2003, p.215) therefore gathering visual data provided an additional source of information. Thus, the combination of gathering visual data and conducting in-depth interviews, provided a more 'well-rounded collection of information' (Turner, 2010, p.754) and deeper insights into individual's behaviours and use of Tinder.

3.3.1   Sampling

Prior to the data collection process, a suitable sampling approach had to be selected. The detailed sampling process will be described in the section below. Data collected from a sample allows the researchers to draw conclusions about the population where the sample was taken from, thereby placing responsibility on the researchers to assert whether the findings are relevant (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2012). The sample of this study focused on users of the mobile dating app Tinder.

For this study, a non-probability sampling design was used, more precisely a combination of snowball and purposive sampling. Firstly, snowball sampling was chosen since it is a good method when it is difficult to approach people (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2015). This was the case on Tinder, since the communication between users is only possible after a mutual match, therefore, approaching participants via the app is challenging. For snowball sampling, one "starts with someone who meets the criteria for inclusion in a study who is then asked to name others who would also be eligible" (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2015, p.82). In this study, snowball sampling was started within our circle of friends and acquaintances. Two persons who were known to use Tinder were approached to participate in the study. After the first respondents were recruited they were asked to recommend other individuals who fit the criteria of the study and were available to participate. The specific participation criteria were: being an active or recent user of the app Tinder, since users without experiences were not able to answer the interview questions. Further, participants needed to speak English or German, due to the language skills of the research team. To gain diverse and rich data, it was ensured that the first two participants did not know each other and had different backgrounds (i.e. different nationality, different education, different age). What needs to be highlighted, is that the friendship between the researchers and first respondents might have increased their willingness to participate and in the interview situation it might have helped to create a more

familiar and open atmosphere. The latter supports that participants "express personal feelings, and therefore present a more "realistic" picture" (Fontana & Frey, 1994, p.371).

However, it also needs to be pointed out that this choice of participant increased the probability that at least the first two participants might hold similar backgrounds or interests to the research team, based on friendship. However, to enrich the diversity of the data even further and ensure that participants with different goals were included to increase the richness of the data, the researchers further applied purposive sampling. Users which fulfil the above-mentioned criteria and were known by us through a prior research project were therefore directly recruited for this study. This combined sampling approach allowed the researchers to get in contact with a diverse set of individuals which the researchers otherwise would not have been able to talk to and ensure a rich and diverse data set.

3.3.2 Visual Data

Generally, photographs are one of the main types of visual documents (Bryman & Bell, 2011) and are used in this study as one data source. The reason was visual data of pictures helped understand and interpret the underlying meanings and messages audiences can draw from photographs. The profile pictures of the participants were required to answer the sub research question how users present themselves and how they evaluate others on Tinder. Participants who took part in the study were asked to provide all the pictures uploaded on their Tinder profile (ranging from four to six pictures per participant). Insights about their own self-presentation were gathered by analysing the profile pictures of the participants, since this gave insights on how people chose to present themselves and which characteristics they want to communicate. Further, both participant's own profile pictures as well as the pictures of other unknown participants were used during the interviews (see section 3.3.3). This was done since involving the pictures during the interview helped the participants to express their emotions and reasons for choosing them. Moreover, it encouraged them to talk about the construction of their profile in more detail. By presenting pictures of others a basis for talking about their evaluation behaviour of other profiles was created, more precisely what they liked and disliked in other pictures. The final but very important reason was further that involving pictures can support a more comfortable feeling in the interview situation (Bryman & Bell, 2011) which was essential for such an intimate topic as dating.

The provided profile pictures were mostly personal photographs. These can be defined as pictures which are either made by the participants themselves, members of the family or a peer group. The pictures were made for the person's own use, and are not taken by professional photographers (Chalfen, 1981; Slater, 1995). Therefore, the pictures were secondary visual data since they were taken for purposes other than this research (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2015). Usually, personal photographs present ideals and emphasise how people wish their lives to be remembered (Holland, 1997). Therefore, people both consciously and unconsciously transform themselves in front of the camera, portraying a version of themselves they hope to be (Barthes, 1981; Jacobs, 1981; Slater, 1995).

However, the visual data from pictures alone is not enough to understand how pictures are used to communicate, thus other verbal information needed to be examined as well (Chalfen, 1987). The visual data analysis was therefore a complementary data source to the conducted interviews.

3.3.3   Interviews

To answer which role authenticity plays for users of the mobile dating app Tinder, semi-structured interviews were conducted. This method was chosen since interviews allowed the gathering of comprehensive data on individual's opinions, perceptions and experiences regarding a certain phenomenon (Turner, 2010). Furthermore, participants' interpretations and opinions regarding Tinder could be captured in regard to their own worldviews (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). This was important since it aided in answering the overarching research question, and investigating how users argue both for their own self-presentation and the evaluation of others. Furthermore, the romantic stance in terms of the interview situation was followed: that is, believing the interview situation is an honest interaction where "rapport, trust, and commitment between interviewer and interviewee" (Alvesson, 2003, p.16) is established. The interviewers were therefore able to "explore the inner word or experienced social reality of the interviewee" (Alvesson, 2003, p.16) in an honest and comprehensive way.

Semi-structured Interviews

Semi-structured interviews were chosen since this kind of interview allowed to ask fairly specific questions about the self-presentation of Tinder users (Bryman & Bell, 2011). Although,

a loosely structured interview guide (see Appendix B) was followed, semi-structured interviews provide a rather flexible approach of asking questions and allowed to gather in-depth knowledge on the phenomenon of Tinder. This was because they did not restrict the researchers to a "pre-planned, rigid list of questions" (Daymon & Holloway 2011, p.221), rather allowed to focus on "issues or topic areas to be covered and the lines of enquiry to be followed" (Daymon & Holloway 2011, p.225). It also enabled the respondents to talk freely and discuss aspects which s/he personally perceived as important (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2009). The predefined questions in the interview guide helped the researchers to lead back to the topic under investigation should the interviewee start to talk off topic, therefore ensuring that certain topics and issues were covered (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson). Additionally, since the interviews were conducted by two researchers, it allowed for a comparable interview style (Bryman, 2004). Further, in the context of preparing the interview guide, a test-interview was held before conducting the first official interview to ensure the appropriate and understandable language was used in the interview guide and the questions "flow[ed] reasonably well" (Bryman, 2004 p.324).

During the interviews, the *laddering method* was used to probe and prompt the interviewees for further explanations (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2015). *Laddering up,* was used to motivate respondents to provide more descriptive accounts on their opinions on different social aspects (Bourne & Jenkins, 2005; Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2015) and aided respondents to move from factual or descriptive statements to revealing their values (Bourne & Jenkins, 2005; Wansink, 2003). This was accomplished by asking questions like "Why is this so?" or "Why did you choose this picture? Additionally, the *laddering down* approach is used to collect more detailed illustrations by asking questions like "Could you give an example?" to obtain more in-depth information (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2015). These questions allowed the researchers to explore the respondent's opinions and understandings regarding self-presentation and authenticity on Tinder. Further, since the researchers were concerned to receive answers to open-ended questions, it was important to not suggest a certain type of answer or steer the participants to answer in a certain direction (Bryman, 2004). Finally, to avoid any leading indications, the precise research objective was not communicated since it is common that participants want to give the *right* answer and tell the researcher what they believe s/he wants to hear (Alvesson, 2003).

Numbers, Design and steps followed:

In total nine interviews, with four male and five female respondents, were conducted between the 11.04 - 18.04.2017. The length of the interviews varied between 40 and 75 minutes. The interviewees were between 21 - 30 years old and from Sweden, Germany, and America. The interviews were conducted either in a face-to-face meeting or via a Skype communication (see Table 1).

Table 1: Overview of Conducted Interviews

Overview of conducted interviews									
Participant Information					**Interview Information (Period 11.04-18.04.2017)**				
Case	**Name**	**Age**	**Gender**	**Nationality**	**Day**	**Time**	**Type**	**Duration**	**Language**
1	Marcus	25	Male	German	Tuesday 11.04	10:00 - 11:00	Face-to-face Room in LUSEM	40 minutes	English
X	Sarah	26	Female	American	Wednesday 12.04	07:00 - 08:00	Skype	52 minutes	English
2	Isabelle	25	Female	American	Monday 17.04	09:00-10:00	Face-to-face Room in LUSEM	75 minutes	English
3	Jessica	24	Female	Swedish	Thursday 13.04.:	18:15-19:15	Skype	63 minutes	English
4	Lisa	26	Female	Swedish	Thursday 13.04.:	19:45-20:45	Skype	59 minutes	English
X	Katharina	21	Female	Swedish	Wednesday 12.04.:	17:00 - 18:00	Skype	63 minutes	English
5	Justin	25	Male	German	Tuesday 18.04.:	10:45 - 11:50	Skype	55 minutes	English
6	Anton	25	Male	German	Thursday 13.04	09.30 - 10:30	Face-to-face Room in LUSEM	48 minutes	English
7	Zach	30	Male	German	Monday 17.04.	11:00 - 12:15	Skype	61 minutes	English

X = Not included in analysis

Concerning the interview location there are essential aspects which need to be considered. A good location is easily accessible for both parties, comfortable (e.g. the furniture and temperature), and should have low levels of noise and distractions (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2015). Furthermore, talking about such an intimate topic like the self-presentation on a dating app can foster stress and anxiety since it dives into the private emotional world and experiences of the interviewee (Cowles, 1988). Therefore, a private and secure setting was very important. This was no problem in the case of the Skype interviews were the participants chose an interview location which s/he felt comfortable in. For the face-to-face interviews a neutral and quiet room at Lund University was chosen since it offered no distractions or external

influences such as interruptions. This not only ensured a private and secure environment but also fostered an open and honest communication. In this context, the fact that the interviews were conducted by two researchers contributed to a more informal atmosphere (Bryman & Bell, 2011) which was beneficial for this sensible topic.

Concerning the process, before starting with the interview, all participants were informed about the purpose and process of the research and their right to drop out at any point. Participants with whom face-to-face interviews were conducted were asked to read and sign an *informed consent form* (Appendix A), participants interviewed via Skype were asked to give oral consent. All interviews were *recorded*, using an audio recorder, to ensure that nothing was missed during the interviews. Additionally, one researcher took notes during the interview, to both make the participant feel more appreciated and to aid the interviewer in coming up with probes and follow-up questions (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2015). Figure 6 shows the process that was followed for all interviews conducted.

Figure 6: Interview Process

- **1. Introduction** — First, users were asked to introduce themselves, talk about their impression of Tinder and the reason for using the app.

- **2. Evaluation of others** — Secondly, participants were asked what they perceive as important when evaluating Tinder profiles of others in general. Further they were shown photographs of other unknown participants to find out which elements play a role when rejecting or liking a person.

- **3. Self-Presentation on Tinder** — Finally, users were confronted with their own profile and asked about their reasoning for constructing their profile in the particular way.

3.4   Data Analysis

This section will outline the practical analysis that followed and how themes and patterns emerged from the collected data. It provides a detailed description on the procedures followed. A combination of grounded and visual semiotic analysis was used to effectively analyse textual data gained from the semi-structured interviews and visual data from participants' profile pictures. All interview recordings were transcribed and a comprehensive picture analysis (see Appendix C) was written to analyse the data gathered effectively and efficiently.

3.4.1   Visual analysis - Semiotic analysis

In general, "semiotic analysis investigates the content and composition of photographs and how these combine to communicate through signs and symbols various messages about the places they depict. A *sign* is most commonly defined as "something that stands for something else" (Sebeok 1986, p.936). Taking into account that the interpretation of signs and symbols is a subjective process, the researchers followed Barthes' (1977) method of visual semiotic analysis. In this context the cultural meaning of signs and symbols were understood as a given fact which is shared by everyone in the contemporary culture (Van Leeuwen, 2004). Based on the two-step process of Barthes (1977) the pictures were analysed by identifying signifiers and signified in the picture, enabling the researchers to read the meaning of the photographs and identify codes.

Semiotic analysis of photographs included the identification and interpretation of three different messages; first, a linguistic message, second a coded and third a non-coded iconic message. Linguistic messages are textual elements in a picture (Barthes, 1977) which do not exist in the presentation of Tinder, since pictures do not have headings or descriptions. Beside linguistic, coded and non-coded iconic messages are part of the visual elements of the picture. The coded message consists of a signifier and the signified. The signifier offers the hint towards the underlying meaning, whereas the signified is the meaning itself (Bryman & Bell, 2011). To give an example, a participant is wearing a watch with a striking brand name - this can be a signifier for the signified of a wealthy person. The signified of a wealthy person itself has a further euphoric meaning, indicating exclusiveness and status in society. Thus, by reading signifiers and signified in the photographs of the participants they become a deeper meaning,

not solely an arrangement of colours and shapes (Barthes, 1977). However, to locate such meaning, the reader needs to be able to identify the non-coded iconic message. In the given example, the reader of the picture would need have the understanding what a watch is. This required understanding can however be understood as almost "anthropological knowledge" (Barthes, 1977, p.36). By exploring each sign in its generality, but still having the photo as a whole in mind with the intention to identify the final inter-relationship of coded and non-coded iconic messages, the visual semiotic analysis "is not a naive analysis but a structural description" (Barthes, 1977, p.37). In this research, by applying visual semiotic analysis the researchers were able to draw meaning from profile pictures and gain first insights about the person and how they chose to present themselves on Tinder.

What needs to be highlighted in the context of visual semiotic analysis is the special role of the reader of the photographs, which in this case is the research team. Instead of offering objective information, a photograph is "perceived, received and *read* by its audience (Barthes, 1977, p.19). The plain description of a picture alone cannot be neutral and without first interpretation solely based on how one names the aspects and objects s/he is describing (Panofsky. 1979 see in Schade & Wenke, 2011). Thus these verbal codes of connotations drawn by the viewer of a photograph can never be completely neutral or artificial. It rather depends on the historical or cultural background and the reader's knowledge (Barthes, 1977). Also, Goffman (1979) highlighted that the interpretation of a photograph is influenced by the society one lives in. In the case of this research both researchers grew up in western society more precisely in Germany, which influenced how signs like portrayed gestures, expressions or colour were interpreted.

The pictures analysed for this study ranged from four to six pictures per participant. For each picture a detailed analysis was written (see Appendix C) to draw interpretations and find the underlying meanings. Furthermore, by analysing each picture the researchers were able to code the pictures, which were used later together with the codes identified from the interviews.

3.4.2   Grounded Analysis

Since the research design is based on grounded theory, grounded analysis was used to analyse the textual data obtained from the interviews. Further, this was combined with the visual semiotic analysis to gain a comprehensive understanding of all the data gathered (see Figure 7).

Figure 7: Data Analysis Process
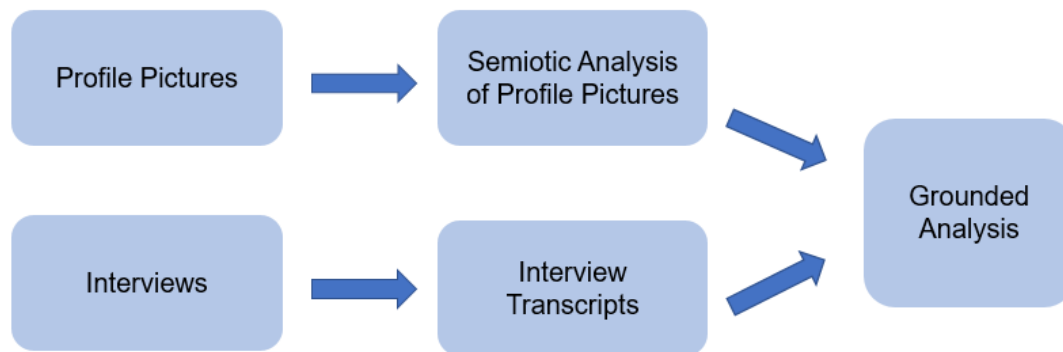
This approach was chosen to build categories or themes which were grounded in the data rather than the theory. It is a more comprehensive approach because it aimed to "derive structure (i.e. theory) from data in a process of comparing different data fragments with one another, rather than framing data according to a pre-existing structure" (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2015, p.191). Thus, this process allowed for the emergence of new discoveries in the research. Moreover, grounded analysis aimed to understand "the meaning of data fragments in the specific context in which they are created" (p.191, Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2015). Thus, a stronger commitment is made to the voices of participants and required the researchers to engage with cultural dimensions of the data (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2015). In this analysis, the seven steps suggested by Charmaz (2014) for grounded analysis were followed.

Familiarisation: The researchers filtered all the data (interviews and pictures) gathered, considering what the data suggested and whose point of view was being expressed. Here it was decided to include seven of the nine interviews in the thesis due to the richness of the data. Further, in-line with the romantic view of interviews the information gained during the interview was believed to be true. The researchers did not add anything and interpreted the data based on their own experience and cultural background.

Reflection: In this stage, the data was brought together considering existing knowledge on the phenomenon (Tinder). Questions like the following were asked:

- What is data about?
- Does it support existing knowledge?

- Does it challenge it?
- Does it answer previously unanswered questions?
- Is it different? What is different?

Open-coding: In the next phase, we sought to "discover, name and categorize phenomena and also develop categories in terms of their properties and dimensions" (Strauss & Corbin 1990, cited in Denscombe 2010, p.211). Here, first categories were formed, from the gathered textual data by segmenting all of the information (Creswell, 1998). These codes were still very descriptive and aided in the organisation of the data. Open codes were used to break up long text and pictures into manageable portions. The codes were;

- physical appearance,
- personality,
- profile construction,
- self-presentation,
- expectation,
- location.

Conceptualisation: In this part, we sought to identify patterns among the codes we found in the previous step. These were then characterised by similarity, difference, frequency and sequence. Through comparing and organising the codes into different categories the researchers were able to identify concepts and themes to understand what was happening. In this process the researchers adhered to Charmaz (2014) suggestion to keep the codes simple and stay close to the data when identifying relevant codes and categories.

Focused re-coding: Once the relevant codes were identified the relevant data was coded and recoded with a limited number of more focused codes, which were;

- self-presentation strategies,
- evaluation of others,
- authenticity and self-presentation,
- expectation of others versus own self-presentation.

This process was very iterative because it required the researchers to go over all the data again, comparing incidents so certain commonalities and differences could be identified. Furthermore,

it allowed to challenge the initial interpretation and arrive at the strongest and most interesting interpretations (Alvesson, 2003).

Linking: At this stage, it was becoming clearer how self-presentation, the evaluation of others and authenticity related to each other in mobile dating. We identified how the theory on online dating linked to mobile dating, highlighting similarities and differences. Further, a first attempt was made to link the findings to existing theory on self-presentation and authenticity as well as highlighting new aspects that emerged.

Re-evaluation: In the final step, all the data and concept developed was re-evaluated to ensure nothing was missed. Further, here it was noted if additional research could be done, which the scope of this research was not able to, thereby suggesting topics that emerged from the data for future research.

3.5 Trustworthiness of research

Since this study is of qualitative nature instead of addressing concepts of validity and reliability often used in quantitative research the authenticity and trustworthiness of this research need to be ensured. In terms of authenticity and to ensure that the results of this study are believable it was transparently pointed out how the study was conducted, respondents selected, data stored and analysed (Easterby, Thorpe & Jackson, 2015). Regarding trustworthiness in naturalistic inquiries four criteria need to be considered: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Guba, 1981).

Credibility, deals with the question "How congruent are the findings with reality?" (Merriam, 1998, cited in Shelton, 2004, p.64). Firstly, the credibility of the study was increased due to the choices made in the data collection method. To ensure that accurate measures were included for the studied topics, as is demanded by Yin (1994), the researchers oriented the method of data analysis on previous research, especially taking the research done by Fournier (1998) as a stepping stone for the presentation and analysis of the findings. Her highly accredited study about brand relationships provides the legitimated structure of first introducing our interviewees as individual cases and then applying a cross section analysis. Secondly, in addition to this important reference point for the research design, it was beneficial that both researchers had their own experiences with Tinder, therefore being familiar with the "culture of the participating

organisation[s]" (Shenton, 2004, p.65) prior to the study. However, it needs to be highlighted that both the experiences with Tinder and the previous academic knowledge influenced the process and outcome of the research (Anderson, 2008b cited Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2015). The credibility of this study was increased by combining semi-structured interviews and the visual data in form of pictures to gain rich data. Further, the fact that two researchers were involved in this research project ensured a more diverse consideration and interpretation of the gathered empirical data (Kvale, 1994).

Transferability, needs to be considered since in qualitative research it is impossible to prove that the findings are applicable to other contexts and populations, due to the small number of cases and participants (Shenton, 2004). In this study only seven participants were introduced, but through the combination of interviews and visual data analysis extensive in-depth and thick descriptions (Geertz, 1973) could be gathered. The relatively small number of cases, however, limited the holistic and all-encompassing understanding of the different self-presentations and the role authenticity plays on Tinder, but made it orientated toward the "contextual uniqueness" of the given phenomenon (Bryman & Bell, 2011, p.398). Furthermore, to ensure that adequate information about the fieldwork site is available to the reader, the researchers provided a comprehensive presentation of the app Tinder. Moreover, the boundaries of this research were clearly point out in the delimitation section (see Chapter 1), to enable the reader to decide if the presented findings are applicable to different settings and situations (Shenton, 2004).

Dependability and confirmability: In terms of dependability, due to the dynamic and changing nature of the researched phenomenon and the qualitative research approach, it would be problematic to ensure reliability. Thus, it could not be ensured that if the research would be repeated, even under the exact circumstances, similar results will be obtained. Confirmability refers to the question of objectivity of the study, ensuring that the opinions and values of the research team do not influence the research process, findings and the researchers act in good faith (Bryman & Bell, 2011). Due to the qualitative nature of the study, in terms of dependability and confirmability, it depends on the subjectivity of the interviewers'. It is seen as an asset in qualitative research since the analysis relies on the historical, cultural background and the researchers' knowledge and can therefore, provide valuable insights on the research phenomenon (Kvale, 1994). Furthermore, it depends also on the fact that the interviewees recall information and experiences correctly. What needs to be considered as well, that especially in the context of this study, respondents might be influenced in their statements by what is valued

in society and therefore give socially desirable answers (Bryman, 2004). Considering this, it needs to be stressed although the research followed the romantic view of interviews, assuming participants will talk openly and honestly in the interviews (Alvesson, 2003) but did not take everything said at face value and dug deeper to get the underlying meanings. Further, by combining the interview data with the data conducted in the visual analysis, the dependability on only one data source could be reduced and therefore the confirmability increased. Dependability could be further decreased since the process of conducting this study was continuously audited by the supervisor of the researcher of Lund University. It was ensured that all evidences of all steps of the research process were kept (Bryman & Bell, 2011) and the procedure applied in this research was reported in detail (see method section), which enables readers to understand and assess the methods (Shenton, 2004).

3.6   Ethical considerations

According to Bryman & Bell (2011), four ethical principles need to be considered when conducting research; "harm of participants, lack of informed involvement, invasion of privacy, involvement of deception" (p.128). To obtain the trust of the interviewees and ensure that no harm occurred during this research, both the interview transcripts and profile pictures were treated entirely confidentially and were anonymised when entered into the files on the computers of the researcher team. In the final research paper, the names of the participants were changed and the profile pictures not published to ensured that the interviewees remain anonymous and quotes of the participants used in the findings section could not traced back to one particular participant (Bryman & Bell, 2011). This was particularly important due to the sensitivity and intimacy of this research and the recognisable nature of the profile photographs.

Furthermore, by guaranteeing participants' anonymity their trust could be gained. According to the romantic view on interviews, this is essential since creating trust and commitment between the researcher and the respondents can foster a more 'genuine' interaction (Alvesson, 2003), ensuring that users engaged in an honest and open communication. Additionally, in the interview the researchers talked openly to the participants and did not judge what or how they said certain things, but remained neutral throughout the interview. This sensitivity further increased the trust and commitment between researcher and respondents (Bryman & Bell, 2011). Participants were honestly informed about the purpose, process and scope of this study,

to provide a clear and not deceptive picture of the conducted research. Informed consent was gained from the participants after explaining the process of the research to them and asking if they consent to this. The form included all relevant information and conditions concerning the participation in this study and informed the respondents that they could withdraw from the study at any time. Furthermore, in terms of invasion of privacy, respondents were able to deny answering questions which they did not feel comfortable with.

4 Presentation and Analysis of Findings

This section will first, present detailed insights into participants' self-presentations and evaluation of others, allowing for an in-depth investigation of each participant and presents the individual characters of the participants. Furthermore, behavioural tendencies of each participant could be identified with this approach (Fournier, 1998). After that a cross-sectional analysis will be conducted, where common patterns discovered among the cases will be analysed (Fournier, 1998). This will be done in light of self-presentation and authenticity theory, as well as prior research on online and mobile dating. The presentation and analysis design adopted is based on Fournier (1998) and provides an accredited paradigm for this study.

4.1 Presentation of Cases

Here, the seven participants will be presented and each is viewed as an individual case. The findings of both the visual analysis of their profiles and the interviews will be presented. The focus will be placed on participants' self-presentation and how they evaluated others on Tinder. Finally, a summary of all the seven case and first links to prior research will be given.

4.1.1 Case 1: Marcus

Marcus, a 25-year-old male from Germany, currently living in Lund, describes himself as an open and friendly person, likes spending time with friends and family, and enjoys being active. Additionally he likes to study and learn new things, to develop his career. Marcus has been using Tinder for roughly four years. His goal on Tinder is to date girls, not to find a long-term relationship, rather more causal relationships, hook-ups or one night stands.

Marcus's self-presentation: Looking at both Marcus's Tinder profile and the interview, the overarching theme of his self-presentation can be defined as selling himself based on his physical appearance. Although, he mentioned personality is important to a small degree, "*it's mostly about how I look not about my personality*". This is further evident when looking at the composition of his profile pictures. Pictures two and four are visibly zoomed in and cropped, therefore excluding both other individuals and other cues about the context the pictures were

taken in. Regarding Marcus's selling strategy to get matches, it is evident he sells himself with his physical appearance. He strategically chose pictures which focus solely on him, especially how he looks. Moreover, all photos portray him relatively close up and this is further supported by his remark that it is important for him to show his face clearly,

> *"I would not have picked a picture where I'm standing on a mountain and you can see the whole mountain but you cannot see my face, ... so I only tried to show how I look like not so much about my character"*

Further, all photos are uploaded in relatively high resolution and quality and there is no indication for active manipulation of his appearance, which further supports that Marcus wanted to present a clear view of him and did not intend to hide. However, it is very important to him to show his best side, *"Of course I also tried to take the pictures where I think I look best and which are maybe close to my face*. Only one picture provides some characteristics other than his physical appearance, namely liking sports. This is consistent with the assumption that selling is Marcus's main self-presentation strategy, because he said he included the gym picture only because it underlined his physical attributes and he assumes being sportive is perceived as positive by girls. Marcus even argued that he chose his gym picture over a soccer picture which was his hobby for years, because he looked better in the gym picture and it is good to have although it might be less authentic,

> *"I'm playing football and I was playing football for a long time, but on the picture itself I don't look that good because ... when you play football you look a bit shitty sometimes. So, I didn't put it up because I thought okay I'm not good-looking".*

Additionally, Marcus's decisions were not only guided by what he believes is appreciated by girls but also guided by his friends' opinions. He selected pictures based on recommendations what they had on their profile or if they liked his pictures. *"I talk to my friends' someone for example said you have to have a sports picture on here, have a picture with your whole body and show your side".*

Marcus's evaluating of other profiles: Regarding the evaluation of others, physical appearance could also be detected as the main criterion for Marcus when looking for girls to hook-up with. A girl that was attractive to him based on her physical appearance was more important to him than detecting some personality or other characteristics in her pictures. As he argued:

"I don't look that much at the description or something, I mainly look at the picture ... and most of the time I don't even open the profile so I just swipe directly. And ... I am looking for the type of girl I like."

This remark clearly shows that Marcus not only focuses on the physical aspects of a girl in general but especially on how the girl looks in her very first picture. Further, according to Marcus, Tinder does not provide insights other than physical appearance about a person because it is based mostly on the visual presentation. He did mention that personality might play a small role when deciding to swipe left or right, *"sometimes there are also girls who have a really charismatic appearance ... so someone is smiling on the picture then always, most of the times I like the picture"*. However, since Marcus equals charismatic with smiling it is clear Marcus is not looking for personality or character traits. Being charismatic requires personality and different character traits than just smiling in a nice way and cannot be detected from pictures alone.

4.1.2 Case 2: Isabelle

Isabelle is a 26-year-old female from the United States, currently living in Lund. She describes herself as a goofy and funny person who likes hanging out with friends, going to parties or attending other events. According to Isabelle, Tinder is *"the most used dating app"* and *"it is easier to compartmentalize"* one's life, and that is the reason she uses it. Her main goal on Tinder is firstly having a distraction and finding something casual "*I'm looking for some long-term casual sex thing. Yes, for like sex and physical intimacy, that's important to me*".

Isabelle's self-presentation: Considering both Isabelle's Tinder profile and the interview findings it was evident that she follows an honest and natural self-presentation strategy. The first picture in particular gives a very clear, natural and straightforward impression of how Isabelle looks. It is a closeup shot of her and viewers can see her face clearly. Further, since Isabelle is not wearing any makeup it seems she wanted to portray a very natural image of herself. This was supported by her statement that she chose the picture to show how she looked like on a day-to-day basis,

"well I just wanted to be reasonable about how I look like ... my face. Because this is how I look like ... it's pretty accurate how I look like".

In addition to portraying an accurate presentation of her physical appearance it was also important for Isabelle to present different aspects of her character. Her pictures, although only four out of six possible pictures were added, show a variety of different settings. From these settings viewers can derive insights about her personality. Two pictures show her outdoors, one in a forest the other one on a mountain; both are very natural pictures which are in-line with the identified natural self-presentation strategy. The other two pictures show her indoors, both in a party context. This indicates that Isabelle wanted to present herself both as a person who likes being in nature as well as being an outgoing person. By taking personal pictures and creating a profile with them Isabelle wanted to convey a certain impression of herself, but it seems she still wanted to be authentic and honest about who she is,

> *"I would feel uncomfortable putting a photo, my first photo on Tinder wearing*
> *makeup because I normally don't wear a lot of makeup. I think that is deceitful*
> *… I don't want someone swipe right on me under false pretences".*

Moreover, considering she is drinking wine out of a bag indicates she is a person who likes to be silly. During the interview, she also argued she wanted to show her "goofy" side by drinking out of the wine bag which according to her is not in line with the usual behaviour. Isabelle's self-presentation shows she is not very concerned about social norms or about living up to social expectation.

Isabelle's evaluation of other profiles: In terms of evaluating others, Isabelle felt it was important for her to see different aspects, (contexts, settings, locations) in the profile pictures of guys. Physical attractiveness was important to some extent to her when looking for matches which is clear from her remark *"I have to be attracted to the person".* However, showing personality was more important, because she wanted the pictures to tell her something about the person. Isabelle, liked profiles which are similar to her own, showing different pictures. The pictures need to make Isabelle curious to look at the profile and show more information about the person, than what he looks like.

> *"if it's a bunch of pictures with the same face. Maybe a different background*
> *and each one like a bunch of selfies which I have taken just for Tinder. That's*
> *a turnoff if the pictures are generally boring. … shows no personality. I don't*
> *know who you are what you're even trying to say with a photo. It literally tells*

me nothing about you. ... I think just photos showing people doing things and
interacting with other people are all positive things that I look for".

Considering that she includes personal information in her profile suggests that she is looking for similar attributes as she has in her own profile. Further, it was seen as important to Isabelle that the pictures are not staged, *"I just don't like this picture because it is too staged"*, because staged pictures do not give an authentic presentation of the person. These aspects show that physical appearance is not as important to her as personality, both in her own profile construction as well as in others.

4.1.3   Case 3: Jessica

Jessica, a 25-year-old female from Sweden/Latvia currently living in Lund, likes travelling, going out with friends, meeting new people, discovering new cultures and hosting dinner parties. Jessica is using Tinder because it is very mainstream and another way for her to meeting a future partner. According to Jessica, Tinder has become accepted by everyone, thus allowing to find a serious relationship and not only casual hook-ups. Her goal is to date guys, meet new people and find a relationship. Tinder is especially convenient and simple for Jessica living in Sweden where according to her it can be difficult to meet people due to its *"reputation of being very excluding and a bit cold".*

Jessica's self-presentation: Looking at how Jessica presents herself on her profile and how she justifies her presentation a common theme was identified, namely being mysterious and showing different sides of herself. This is evident when looking at both her first picture, where she does not show her face, as well as the overall composition of her other pictures. The viewer does not know who Jessica is until they see her last picture and even then, she chose a picture of her making a funny face, distorting her physical appearance. This strategy makes her appear as both mysterious and intriguing. Jessica further felt not showing herself clearly gave her a *"sense of safety" and a "good feeling about the people I match with"*. Jessica assumes users who like her profile will not be too superficial, since they swiped right without seeing her face in the first pictures but liked her whole profile and not only her physical appearance. Moreover, the number of pictures and the fact that she gives the audience a diverse set of cues about her personality and preferences, show that focusing on her interests and personality is very

important to her. Further, according to her, being strategic in her self-presentation allows her to match with the right guys, because

> *"if I only would have like super superficial selfie in the first picture … then I would probably not match with guys I am really interested in anyway".*

It is clear from Jessica's presentation that she carefully selected pictures and themes to present herself thereby influencing possible partners so swipe right on her profile.

Jessica's evaluation of other profiles: In terms of evaluating others, Jessica valued physical appearance more than personality. Further, according to Jessica if a person is not good-looking then Tinder is not the place to find love; this clearly highlights the superficiality inherent on Tinder

> *"But if you know for yourself that this [good looking] is not your greatest feature, then first of all, you probably also know that Tinder is not the place for you to find love. Because you can't have a brilliant personality in your first picture."*

However, Jessica contradicts herself by saying that she also wants to see different sides i.e. different settings *"that there is a variety showing what he likes to do and not only what he looks like. Seeing some kind of his personality and character"*. Additionally, Jessica expected guys to live up to the expectations she made based on their pictures, meaning if a face-to-face meeting occurs the person should look the same as in his profile pictures. In her opinion it was extremely important since in mobile dating one is in a vulnerable situation from the beginning, due to the limited amount of information;

> *"and when you are in the situation when this is so obvious that someone is lying right in your face then you feel fooled and you feel so disappointed and hurt".*

Considering Jessica perceives the misrepresentation of one's physical appearance on a Tinder profile as lying, indicates she is not very tolerant in this context.

4.1.4   Case 4: Lisa

Lisa, a 27-year-old female from Sweden, is living and working in Stockholm. She is a pretty easy-going person, energetic and likes spending time with friends. Further, Lisa said she is a shy person, especially when meeting new people. Tinder is therefore an easy way for her to get to know people, *"it feels like the easiest way to actually meet new guys and go on dates because it's really difficult in the real world to get in contact with someone"*. Her goal on Tinder is finding a serious relationship and not just a casual hook-up.

Lisa's self-presentation: Analysing Lisa's profile and her justifications for her self-presentation, her presentation can be defined as being natural and showing her personality. In most of the pictures Lisa is portrayed by herself but she also included a picture with friends. She is smiling and appears to be happy in all her pictures, and none of the pictures seems staged, further supporting the natural and honest presentation strategy. Furthermore, having pictures which show her outdoors, either on the beach or the top of the mountain indicate she likes being outdoors and traveling. The pictures clearly show not just physical aspects of Lisa, but who she is as a person. Pictures like her and a dog or with a group of friends, shows for example that she is a caring and social person.

> *"I chose that picture because she was very special to me, I love dogs so I want
> to show you I'm a dog person ... I think it's good to have a picture with friends;
> it's a happy picture with friends"*.

Further, considering she presents herself without makeup and all the pictures show her in a natural or casual setting, suggests she is not a vain person and is satisfied with her natural appearance. Lisa chose pictures particularly to show herself in a natural way,

> *"I'm not looking my best in this picture my hair is up, wind in my face I don't
> have a lot of makeup on so I guess I wanted it to be a reality picture"*.

This further indicates that Lisa wanted to be honest in her self-presentation, by portraying herself in a natural and every-day situation. Furthermore, it seems especially important to show different sides of her personality and not just her physical appearance, which is in line with her natural and honest self-presentation. Nevertheless, even though Lisa is concerned with presenting a realistic presentation of herself, for her first picture she chose an older picture which shows her wearing a bikini on the beach and on which she *"look[s] perfect"*. She argued

that she chose this picture due to the superficial nature of Tinder to make users curious about her profile.

Lisa's evaluation of other profiles: When evaluating others Lisa valued personality more than physical appearance. Further, she liked when pictures told her something about the person, his personality or interest, and not only show how handsome the person is,

> *"I tried to find something in their eyes and their pictures if they seem good, like a good person and I can't truly say what I'm looking for it's more of a feeling that I get when I look at the pictures and I like if they seem like a bit sporty if they like to do things".*

Therefore, it is evident here that physical appearance is not the predominant criterion for Lisa and shows that this is also important in the context of mobile dating. In addition to showing some personality it was also important for Lisa that guys did not wear sunglasses, have pictures which do not show their face clearly or group pictures as their first picture. Moreover, for Lisa the most important aspect is that the pictures are not staged and the person looks genuine. In this context, Lisa said she is quite picky and never swipes right on a person based on their first picture,

> *"I also don't really trust guys that only have one picture because anyone, ... you can look so different in one picture and doesn't have to look like you at all I don't trust guys with just one picture so that's why I want to see the whole profile".*

She fears that guys are misrepresenting themselves, therefore she values an honest and authentic presentation in others and it is crucial for her that the person lives up to the expectations if a face-to-face meeting occurs. In her opinion people who do not present an honest and accurate self are deceitful and not genuine people. This is not the person she is looking for on Tinder.

4.1.5 Case 5: Justin

Justin, a 25-year-old male from Germany, living in Lund, is a very outgoing person, who likes being around people and doing sports. He has used Tinder on and off for roughly four years and believes it is a good way to assess his position with girls and check his *"market value"* as well

as get as many matches as possible, especially now that he is single again after a long relationship. He is not actively looking for a long-term relationship on Tinder, since the process of matching with someone and meeting the person can be very time consuming.

Justin's self-presentation: Considering Justin's profile and the interview it is evident that he focuses on presenting and selling his physical appearance and is concerned with making a good impression with girls. This was noticeable in his pictures, since four out of five pictures focus solely on his physical appearance, even suggesting they are professional modelling pictures. Due to his goal of getting as many matches and proving his market value, Justin chose pictures which present him in the most attractive way, showing his *"best side"*. His selling strategy is further supported since he selected pictures together with friends to achieve the best outcome. The first picture was therefore chosen because he received a lot of positive feedback on it. Moreover, since Justin does not necessarily want to meet the girls he matches with, he allows himself to be a bit egocentric, arguing, *"I think that's what Tinder is about in this kind of situation you can a bit egoistic and narcissistic and get good feedback in a nice way"*.

The fact that he chose two model pictures which portray staged settings, since he poses for the camera, further supports his selling strategy. Furthermore, considering Justin experimented with his profile pictures to achieve the best possible results concerning the number of likes, proves this is the most important aspect on Tinder for him. Although he argued Tinder is "not only about the physical", only one of his pictures provides little more information regarding his personality, the others only show his physical attractiveness. For Justin, it was more important to,

> *"showing your best side ... There was also a sporty picture on there ... but it probably wasn't the best one, so I took it down ... the one in the suit that was a model picture, I thought I can put that in".*

This statement indicates his self-presentation is quite superficial, not aiming to give more information about himself as a person. Despite saying *"my suggestion would always be present yourself as you are"*, Justin further contradicts himself by admitting he only communicated particular attributes which might be valued by girls and lead to success on Tinder.

> *"On Tinder, you can choose yourself how you want to present yourself. For me it's about getting likes and getting feedback. So, I probably don't present myself in the most authentic way."*

This shows his presentation is influenced by what will get him likes, and that presenting himself honestly is not very important to him.

Justin's evaluation of other profiles: When evaluating others, physical appearance is an important criterion Justin uses to judge girls. An ideal profile for Justin should include a close-up picture of the girl's face. A clear shot without *"a weird angle with sunglasses or far-away"* is important to have a reliable idea how the girl looks like. Furthermore, a full body picture is appreciated to identify her body shape, even though this would not be beneficial for the first picture. Justin would only swipe right based on the physical appearance he is attracted to in particular cases, since he described himself as a picky swiper. He usually likes to look at the whole profile before swiping right, not only to validate if the girl is as pretty as she presented in the first picture, but also to look for additional information, like the girl's personality. Interestingly, despite not offering diverse personal information himself, receiving information about a girl's character is important to him and can influences his decision. This is evident from his remark that a picture should,

> *"show her personality. For example, if she is into sports or reading or music. Maybe her profession ... something which catches attention like maybe from a vacation or so picture"*

Additionally, the overall profile composition, selection and order of the pictures is important for Justin, since it can say something about the girl's personality and goals. By evaluating how much skin a girl shows on pictures and if she smiles or not, Justin makes assumptions about the personality, inferring a message from the pictures. Justin highlighted that he is expecting the other person to be accurate in their presentation, otherwise he would be disappointed.

4.1.6   Case 6: Anton

Anton, a 25-year-old male from Germany, living in Lund, is a relaxed, patient, serious and very honest person. According to Anton, Tinder is the most convenient dating app and people are not ashamed of using it since it is socially accepted. He has used the app on and off for approximately three years, and his goal on Tinder is to meet girls only for one night stands and casual short-term relations, but nothing serious. In his opinion it is not possible to find serious long-term relationships via Tinder.

Anton's self-presentation: Considering both his profile construction and the interview findings Anton is concerned with what is valued most by others. It was important for Anton to present himself clearly in terms of his physical appearance and receive as many likes as possible from girls. Particularly, in the first picture a clear presentation was important to him since he assumes girls want to see this, *"first picture should present your face that's the most important thing ... so the other person can see how you look like"*. Furthermore, his fourth picture shows him with a dog, which can be interpreted as him liking dogs and wanting to show this. However, when asked why he chose this picture he admitted,

> *"a friend told me he had a good experience when he uploaded pictures when there is a dog in it. Then I said ok perfect I have one [picture with a dog] as well. Because girls love dogs and when girls see you have a dog or something like this then they think you're a nice person because you can take care of another animal and then they automatically think you are a nice guy".*

These two examples clearly show it is important for Anton to present aspects on his profile he believes girls will like and value. Thus, his self-presentation strategy is selling himself based on what is valued in society and not guided by what is important to him.

Anton's evaluation of other profiles: In terms of evaluating girls' profiles on Tinder it was evident that physical appearance is the most important criterion for Anton when deciding to swipe left or right. He remarked,

> *"I am always just looking at pictures ... Mostly just the first picture ... usually I would say I can pretty much see on a first picture directly if I would like her or not".*

Moreover, it is imperative for Anton that the girl's physical appearance is presented accurately, *"So I was not very happy, amused to see almost a different person"*. The expectations he has based on the pictures need to be met when a face-to-face interaction takes place, *"hope that at least to a certain amount expectations will be fulfilled ... if that expectation is not met that is the worst"*. Furthermore, Anton also mentioned looking at other pictures, beside the first one, when he either has time or needs more information about the girl, *"Sometimes when I am not sure how she looks like, then and she could be interesting then I like look for a next picture"*. Here is a slight indication that he looks for something more than just physical appearance, by saying *"she could be interesting"*. Thus, to some degree personality and other characteristics

are valued too, like education. But, even if the girl does not have a job her physical appearance can make up for this, which again emphasizes that attractiveness is more important.

4.1.7   Case 7: Zach

Zach, a 30-year-old male living and working in Germany, likes to sing in a classical choir, spend time with friends and do sports. On weekends, he spends time with his girlfriend, which he found on Tinder. For Zach using Tinder was a good way of meeting new girls, because it was a novelty at the time and he wanted to try it out. Tinder *"was just the way to get to know people… I would not have met in everyday life"*. His intention with Tinder was to meet new girls to date, not looking for hook-ups or one night stands.

Zach's self-presentation: From analysing his profile and his reasoning in the interview, it is evident that Zach follows a humorous and self-ironic self-presentation strategy. His first picture portrays him flexing his muscles and appears to be shouting. This gesture, normally a very masculine one is ridiculed by Zach, since he is wearing a suit, holding a whisky glass. But looking more closely at the picture it was evident that he is not as trained as the picture would suggest. It however appears to have been the intention of Zach with this picture to be funny and also a little ironic,

> *"I liked it personally because it's self-ironic I heard and had the impression that male people on Tinder show muscles and stuff … I wasn't willing to compete with that."*

This clearly shows Zach does add pictures to his profile which are thought to be appreciated on Tinder, but he makes fun of these expectations. Instead of adhering to expectation and putting up a staged picture, he adapted it to fit his personality to be different than all the other males on Tinder.

Moreover, Zach presented different themes in his pictures and portrayed himself from different perspectives, suggesting that he wanted to show his personality and not only his physical appearance. Pictures one and four show that he is a funny guy who has a humorous side, whereas the black and white pictures show that can also be serious and thoughtful. The picture of him looking through a bottle, seems good to start a conversation, *"left some fantasies and*

also some room for asking questions like where have you been". However, considering his other pictures and his reasoning for having them, he still wanted to present himself in a positive light, *"none of the pictures show me in an unattractive situation so this is also something that I kind of looked for"*. In his opinion though the pictures still need to present reality, otherwise the girls would be disappointed when a meeting took place and *"if [you] enhance yourself too much then you undergo the risk that if you meet someone for the first time this person is disillusioned"*.

Zach's evaluation of other profiles: In terms of evaluating girls' profiles, Zach appreciated the physical appearance aspect of Tinder very much, although it is a very superficial way of meeting girls,

> *"I like that about Tinder, and I know that many people think it's very superficial*
> *but I like that it really is built around the visual impression, because from my*
> *experience at least the pictures are what are the closest to what you see of the*
> *person on the street or the club"*.

This emphasises that his first impression is based on the physical appearance, as is the case when meeting someone the traditional way at a bar for example. But on Tinder where seeing someone is based on a static visual impression it was important for Zach that the girls face is portrayed clearly. In his opinion that is what Tinder is all about, to get an idea what the person looks like and nothing else. This was even more evident when he remarked *"Tinder can give you information if a person is attractive but not if you will match"* and that *"the information you got from the profile upfront was more an indication"* whether the portrayed person is attractive or not. Although physical appearance was a major factor, Zach also valued pictures which told something else about what a person likes or not, i.e. their personality or other character traits. In this context, the girls' pictures should be able tell something about the setting or the context to enable others to draw conclusions what the person likes to do. For him, interesting characteristics can even balance a physical appearance which he is not entirely attracted to. Finally, Zach felt that it was crucial the expectations he made of the girls based on their profile pictures were met, because it is frustrating for him when the first impression or expectations from the pictures do not match reality.

4.1.8 Summary of Cases

The preceding analysis of the seven individual cases showed that participants are on Tinder with different intentions. They had either serious relationship goals, were concerned with finding a casual short-term interaction partner or for self-validation reasons which is in line with prior research which detected different goals among Tinder users (Sumter, Vandenbosch & Leigtenberg, 2017; Timmermanns & De Caluwe, 2017). Furthermore, the individual case presentation pointed out that users had different ways of presenting themselves and evaluating other profiles.

Marcus, Justin and Anton's self-presentation and evaluation of other profiles clearly showed that physical appearance is the predominant criterion for all three. All three sold themselves predominantly with their physical appearance and tried to present themselves as attractively as possible. This behaviour might be explained by the theory that attractive individuals are perceived as more desirable relationship partners (Gangestad & Scheyd, 2005; Riggio et al., 1991) since, physical attractiveness is a highly rated and crucial attribute when looking for potential mates (Toma & Hancock, 2010; Whitty, 2008) and is important because it is embedded in human nature (Toma & Hancock, 2010). Additionally, considering that for all three the self-presentation is either based on receiving likes and selling themselves through their physical appearance. Prior research suggested that a person's need for social approval and authenticity are closely linked, and that a higher need for social approval expects lower levels of authentic behaviour (Franzese, 2007). This is the case for all three participants, since getting likes and thereby the approval of girls was more important than presenting an accurate or true self. Furthermore, participants' self-presentation were influenced by society or peer-pressure, because they did not select the pictures by themselves or added pictures that are appreciated by society. This behaviour, which supports their lower levels of authentic behaviour, is highlighted in the theory on authenticity that although being authentic is honourable, it is influenced by society and other external factors (O'Connor, 2006; Eriksson, 1995; Strauss, 1978). Therefore, people who are influenced by these social pressures, and portray impressions based on friends' opinions rather than what they perceive as important based on their true self are not authentic in their self-presentation (Kadlac, 2017; Erickson, 1995). Furthermore, Erickson argued that these societal pressures require outstanding impression management skills of people and the ability to suppress the authentic self (Erickson, 1995), thus not being authentic.

Similar to these three cases, was Jessica who also valued physical appearance more than personality, which is in line with the superficial nature of Tinder (Tyson et al., 2016). For her, physical attractiveness is the prerequisite to be considered a potential match. However, in contrast to the first three users, she is not convinced solely by an attractive picture and looks for additional cues, which tell her something about the user's personality. Jessica is overall very contradicting both in her own presentation and what she values in others. Her own profile presentation is very different to the other three male participants' presentations. Instead of persuading with her physical attractiveness she tried not to have too superficial pictures, because she feared that these kinds of pictures would attract superficial people.

In contrast to these four participants, Isabelle's and Lisa's self-presentation and evaluation of others suggest that authenticity plays a role to some extent on Tinder, although this service reduces people to meet based on limited cues (Ward, 2016). Both present themselves in natural and honest ways and considering they value authenticity in other people are first indications of the importance of authenticity on Tinder. However, when critically reflecting on their self-presentation it was evident, that only Isabelle is presenting herself realistically in all her pictures. In contrast, Lisa does not present herself very authentically in her first picture to make others curious and to be able to compete on Tinder. Nevertheless, she provides more realistic pictures afterwards. Zach's self-presentation, is also similar to Isabelle and Lisa, since he presented a realistic impression of himself and also includes personality aspects in his self-presentation. Nevertheless, he is still aware of themes and pictures that are expected on Tinder, but presents these in a very self-ironic way and did not let his self-presentation be influenced by others (Kadlac, 2017). By doing this he stands out through presenting a unique way of himself while still blending in by serving the expected form (Ellison, Heino & Gibbs, 2006).

4.2   Cross-Section Analysis

After presenting and summarising the individual cases this section will now move to the cross-section analysis for theoretical specifications on self-presentation and authenticity. Four themes were identified from all seven cases; self-presentation strategies, evaluation of others, authenticity and self-presentation, and expectation of others versus own self-presentation.

4.2.1 Self-presentation Strategies on Tinder

Apparent in all seven cases after the individual analysis was that Tinder users developed different self-presentation strategies to portray themselves in a certain way and to create an impression with their profiles. The strategic way of presenting themselves goes in line with theory on self-presentation which says that it is a strategic process of a person "to convey an impression to others which it is in his [her] interest to convey" (Goffman, 1959, p.4). This was particularly evident in the interview findings, which found that a successful self-presentation strategy which sells is crucial to all participants. The reason for this was that in the mobile dating environment the only information available about a person is limited to the visual impression drawn from profile pictures. Additionally, users mentioned that they needed to compete with a tremendous number of users as Jessica highlighted, *"you are competing against so many more people"* and *"you are so aware of the competition"* (Jessica). Participants adopted self-presentation techniques to consciously and strategically highlight and present attributes which presented them as attractive and desirable as possible to potential matches. Therefore, they were concerned with presenting themselves through preferable cues (Walther, 1992). Both the immense competition (Toma, Hancock & Ellison, 2008) and the strategic and selective self-presentation (Ellison, Heino & Gibbs, 2006; Guadagno, Odkie & Kruse, 2012; Heino, Ellison & Gibbs, 2010; Toma, Hancock & Ellison, 2008) are common in online dating. The findings of this research suggest that these aspects are valid in mobile dating too.

However, in contrast to online dating where the composition of a comprehensive profile with detailed descriptions about a person is provided (Fiore & Donath, 2004), on Tinder the focus lies on participants' pictures. Therefore, self-presentation tactics on Tinder are built around the pictures as they provide the initial source of information about a user. This research showed that particular focus is placed on the first picture both in self-presentation as well as evaluation of others (for latter see section 4.2.2), since potential matches are presented first only with one picture. Choosing the first picture is therefore a crucial factor for being successful or unsuccessful on Tinder. Zach for example argued,

> *"it is important to choose the first picture wisely because that's the first picture that people see of you. People will … make a decision based on the first picture."* (Zach)

In terms of self-presentation tactics concerning the first picture, two overarching strategies could be identified among the respondents of this study; (1) receiving as *many matches* as possible, and (2) getting the *right matches* (see Figure 8).

Figure 8: Self-presentation Strategies

1) Receiving as *many matches* as possible

2) Attracting the *right matches*
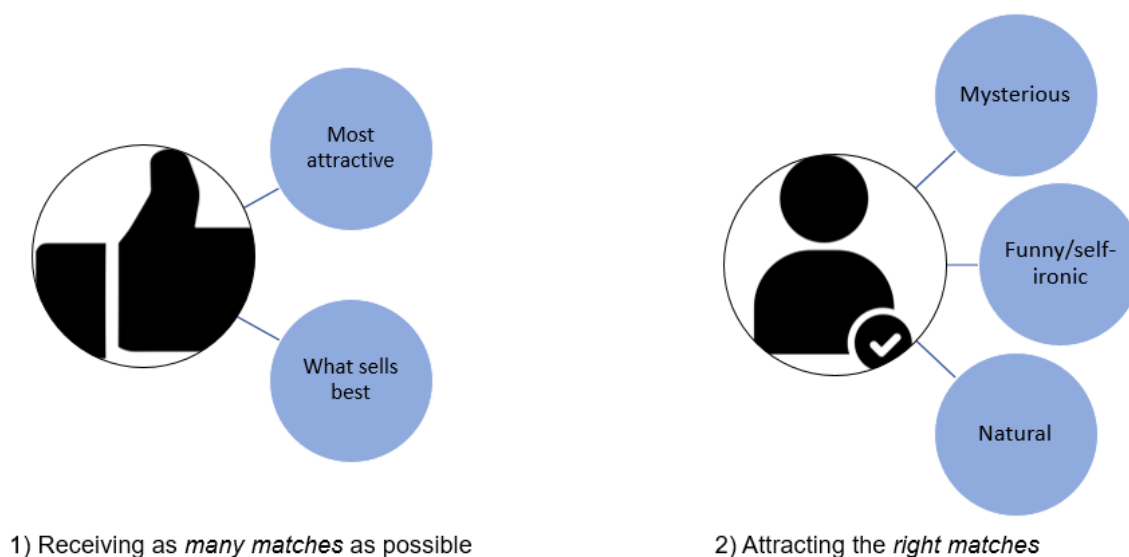
Participants with the first strategy argued that a high number of matches is important to be able to choose between different matches. Users with this intention focused primarily on attracting matches through their physical appearance, following the more superficial aspects of Tinder. In this context individuals were highly concerned with presenting a positive, good looking images of themselves to compete in an environment where assessments are based on superficial attributes. Instead of presenting specific personality traits, pictures were chosen on which individuals looked most attractive. As Marcus stated, the main criterion to decide which picture to put on Tinder is, *"Do I look good on the picture, do you like how I look? Do others say yes you look good in this picture? That's the main thing"*.

Although, some participants did not appreciate reducing themselves only to physical attributes, it was perceived as unavoidable, due to the superficiality inherent on Tinder. Therefore, to compete on Tinder and get matches, the participants justified why they needed to present themselves in the best possible way. Lisa, for example, said she chose a first picture *"where I look perfect to make people curious"* so she could compete in the superficial environmen*t*. This self-presentation strategy shows that a person's need for social approval and authenticity are closely linked. Franzese (2007) argued that a higher need for social approval expects lower

levels of authentic behaviour. This is clearly the case in this group as their goal is receiving as many likes as possible instead of presenting a true and honest self. Furthermore, in this sense, being true to oneself is rather a matter of autonomy than authenticity, as it was discussed in section 2.4.2.3. Individuals who do not serve as their own audience and think about other people's opinions are less authentic than people who set their own path and do not let themselves be influenced by the preferences, judgements, or desires of others (Kadlac, 2017).

The second group adopted a sort of filter strategy with their first picture. The reason for doing this was to increase the efficiency of their Tinder profile in terms of reducing the number of matches to the right ones. The participants felt this was necessary since Tinder does not offer filter options besides, age, distance and gender. To overcome this missing functionality on Tinder, participants chose their first picture strategically to filter out users they did not want to interact with and attract a certain kind of person. The chosen pictures presented the individuals in a certain way, and conveyed an underlying meaning. Interestingly, the participants seemed to assume other users will be able to interpret the meaning of their picture, thereby only matching with those who hold the same values. One example of this particular strategy is Zach, who presented himself in a very self-ironic and humorous manner (see detailed picture description Appendix C, Zach Picture 1). His intention was to attract girls who are also humorous and self-ironic, therefore similar to himself. This behaviour of trying to attract users similar to oneself was defined as homophily by Fiore & Donath (2005) in online dating. Similarly, Ward's (2016) study on impression management on Tinder found the same behaviour. Thus, considering the findings of this study it can be assumed that homophily is applicable to mobile dating apps too. The reason that this behaviour is evident in both online and mobile dating might be because in general people like to be with someone who holds similar values and interests as themselves (Fiore & Donath, 2005).

This finding supports that the first impression in a computer mediated environment is highly manageable and malleable (Walther, 1992, 1996), and was evident in all participants of this study. Thus, it can be said that this behaviour is also applicable in the mobile dating environment, since participants actively managed the impression they wanted to portray.

4.2.2   The Evaluation of others

Considering participants' argumentation for evaluating others on Tinder it was conspicuous that physical appearance was the essential criterion for all. It was commonly mentioned that one needs to be attracted to the person to swipe right. The other person therefore needs to meet this *"minimum expectation"* as Marcus framed it. This is not very surprising due to the already mentioned importance of physical appearance of potential daters (see 4.1.8) know from the online dating context. Toma and Hancock (2010) as well as Whitty (2008) found that physical appearance is crucial attribute when looking for potential partners.

What is interesting, however, is that besides this superficial aspect of physical attractiveness (Ward, 2016a, b), some users also communicated they look for additional cues which provide hints about the personality of a person. There were, looking for something "interesting" and to make them "curious" about the person when evaluating a profile. This was especially evident for users with more serious intentions on Tinder. Those participants argued that it was important to get additional information about the person:

> *"An ultimate profile picture … would be showing a variety of things which kind of represent the person. So, either, if you love cooking then I want something that kind of illustrates you in this setting. If you are very adventurous than I would like to see you hiking or climbing a mountain. Just showing four of five pictures in different settings, and kind of matching my interest. And also, showing a group of friends showing what kind people you hang out with." (Jessica)*

Besides the fact that users try to gather more *given off* (Goffman, 1959) information from which they draw conclusions about the person's personality and do not rely only on the superficial aspect of physical appearance, it also indicates that they expect users to present themselves with their true self. That is individuals expect to see real hobbies and aspects which shows who the person truly is and what s/he values, which is defined as indexical authenticity according to Pierce's (1998) semiotic framework of authenticity (see 2.4.2.1). Therefore, it can be assumed that an indexical self-presentation is expected when evaluating others on mobile dating apps. Nevertheless, providing only an attractive presentation did not necessarily give people enough information to decide to swipe right. This was not only important for long-term goals but also evident for participants with short-term intentions:

"[This] one is attractive, but what are you trying to say…? I don't know what you're trying to do with your pictures and it literally shows nothing of your personality. Great you are attractive, so welcome to the world." (Isabelle)

Furthermore, this relatively harsh statement about another person's presentation is a first hint how blunt and direct judgments are. This was further detectable in participants swiping behaviour. Especially in terms of rejecting a person, all participants were very quick and definite in their decision. After looking at the first picture of a person for only a split-second, participants were able to determine to swipe left. When asked about their decisions, all participants were able to provide a justification for their behaviour. A vivid example is Jessica's argumentation

"[It's a] gym [picture], that is a definite no. These are the kinds of profiles where I spend 0.00001 second on. It's because it shows everything I am not looking for in a guy. It is very self-absorbed and the only thing that they care about is themselves and these pictures show that this is how they look. … [these] self-absorbed people, looking for hot girl, preferable with pictures of her tits and ass, yes, one-night stand hello."

This very blunt and definite way of dismissing another person clearly emphasises the need of having an appealing and convincing first profile picture. Although some users argued that they were interested in additional information, indicating they give others a chance to convince them, their actions spoke a slightly different language since they decided to swipe left immediately. Furthermore, the argumentation indicates that users have quite concrete criteria on which they assess others. Therefore, if the presentation is not convincing, or communicated the wrong values, it leads to immediate rejection. This finding highlights the need to see a Tinder profile as a marketing tool which needs to present a desirable self which is in line with the understanding in online dating (Heino, Ellison & Gibbs, 2010). People need to actively sell themselves with their profiles to overcome the danger of being rejected within milliseconds.

4.2.3 Authenticity and Self-presentation on Tinder

As mentioned in the section above (4.2.1), self-presentation on Tinder is influenced by the tremendous competition, therefore the app causes an enormous market pressure for its users. All participants, even those concerned with an authentic self-presentation, carefully selected pictures which are attractive, to compete on the market and as Lisa's remark shows, *"we all put up pictures that are amazing because you want to look good and want to make a good impression"*. This behaviour reflects the two aspects inherent in impression management identified by Leary and Kowalski (1990). User have the motivation to impress others and therefore construct the impression they want to show. This behaviour to impress others with their self-presentation is also supported by prior research (Gibbs, Ellison and Heino, 2006; Guadagno, Okdie & Kruse, 2012; Hancock & Toma, 2009), since consumers want to show an attractive and desirable side of themselves, to convince in an environment where only a limited number of cues are available (Walther, 1992, 1996). However, when asked more specifically about creating a certain impression or enhancing themselves, participants felt that the anticipated face-to-face meeting determined how inaccurately they present themselves. This was especially the case in terms of physical appearance. Anton for example argued:

> *"I don't know but I would not do that [present myself inaccurately] because I think it's so stupid. I would hate when I would upload a picture ... of me where I look like completely different and I know it almost. And then meet the person I would feel so bad before this date because I would think 'okay this person will be for 100% sure disappointed."*

Participant's reasoning for keeping up at least some level of authenticity goes in line with the tension between enhancement and authenticity (Ellison, Heino & Gibbs, 2006; Hancock & Toma, 2009; Toma, Hancock & Ellison, 2008), and the determining role future face-to-face interaction plays in online dating (Whitty, 2008; Toma, Hancock & Ellison, 2008). A reason why the findings are also applicable to mobile dating could be the location based nature of Tinder. Apps like Tinder increase the likelihood of, and reduce the time-period until a face-to-face meeting occurs. Thus, presenting a rather authentic and honest self could be even more important for users to not disappoint the other person. This goes in line with the claims of the literature regarding authenticity, which stated that being perceived as accurate and honest is honoured socially (Kadlac, 2017; Strauss, 1978; Vannini & Franzese, 2009), and individuals want to avoid being perceived as liars (Mazar & Ariely, 2006) is supported.

What stands in contrast to the assumption that an authentic behaviour might be more important on Tinder is that participants engaged in a rather flexible way when it comes to their authentic presentation. This was evident for example in Jessica's case who admitted to experimenting intensively with her profile pictures. She adjusted her profile according to what is demanded by the market, although this means being less authentic, *"I need to get over the first obstacle. And then I can prove that I [am] maybe not what I am in picture number five"* (Jessica). Furthermore, the participants pointed out that some aspects, both in terms of the composition (i.e. number of pictures) and themes of pictures (i.e. travel, sporty or funny picture), are generally expected and important to have to be successful*, you need to tick some boxes*, to have a chance on Tinder. Users therefore adjusted their self-presentation to fit aspects which are valued by others as is highlighted in Justin's remark, *"it should present me as a person who likes to travel but also because it's positively connected and has positive characteristics"*. Both aspects, experimenting with profile pictures and adjusting the profile, highlights the influence social life and external factors have on a person's authentic self-presentation. These aspects of social pressures are often pointed out in the theory regarding authenticity (Franzese, 2007; Kadlac, 2017; Strauss, 1978; O'Connor, 2006; Vannini & Franzese, 2009). Furthermore, the freedom participants allowed themselves in their self-presentation goes in line with findings of Ellison, Hancock and Toma (2012) in the online dating context.

Another finding regarding authentic behaviour was found in terms of participants' goals on Tinder. Jessica and Lisa for example, both followed the goal of finding a serious relationship on Tinder, engaging in different levels of authentic behaviour. Lisa is concerned with presenting a rather authentic impression of herself, whereas Jessica is more flexible in her self-presentation, as it is discussed above. This finding indicates that an authentic presentation is not necessarily connected to a person's goal, as it was stated by Ranzini and Lutz (2016) and that users with long-term goals present themselves as authentic as possible (Whitty, 2007 cited in Toma & Hancock, 2010) Therefore, the findings of this study suggest that the previous findings are not comprehensively applicable and a one size fits all rule is not inherent. However, an overall tendency towards a less authentic behaviour in short-term goals was detected in the participants of this study. Anton, for example, provided a picture of himself and a dog, suggesting he is a loving person, although the dog belonged to a colleague, and he just borrowed it for the picture. Also, participants who are currently following long-term or serious intentions on Tinder, argued if they changed to short-term intentions they would handle an authentic presentation more liberally. Their reasoning behind this argumentation was that such a

behaviour might increase their chances of finding a match for a casual hook-up. Justin, for example, would change his profile to present himself as open-minded:

> *"I'm really open-minded, good to go ... I don't know maybe change it not even in an authentic way but, if I only had to go to meet someone that weekend, I would just take the best pictures maybe even 5, but just those that present myself in the best possible way to meet the girl. And that could be for example my first picture and the party picture and maybe one vacation picture that would be one example, and we think what can be the most convincing pictures to meet someone Friday or Saturday."*

A reason for this might be that for users with more short-term intention, the anticipated face-to-face interaction, which causes the need to present a relatively authentic self in online dating (Gibbs, Heino & Ellison, 2006) is not such an influential factor. This could be because for users looking for a one night stand the fear of terminating the relationship after detecting a deceptive presentation (Toma, Hancock & Ellison, 2008; Toma & Hancock, 2010) is less prominent, since additional future meetings are less likely to happen. Since no emotional interaction is planned users might feel less accountable for the accuracy of the provided information (Van de Wiele & Tong, 2014).

4.2.4   Expectation of Others versus own Self-presentation

Another interesting aspect was that users highly valued an accurate and authentic self-presentation of others. Not only in terms of personality, as pointed out by Jessica who wanted the person to present their real interests (see 4.2.2.), but even more predominantly in terms of physical appearance. An inauthentic presentation is not valued since it causes disappointment and frustration;

> *"But in the moment, I saw her I was like ok, that is not the same person as on the pictures. This is unfortunately a thing what happens a lot. I have a feeling, I don't want to say something wrong, but this is more a girl's thing ... I think they spent a lot of time with this. So, I was not very happy, amused to see almost a different person"* (Anton)

These kinds of experiences were pointed out by various participants and can lead to situations where *"you feel fooled and you feel so disappointed and hurt"* (Jessica). Therefore, when it comes to the presentation of others, participants wanted people to *"just try to be as genuine as possible"* (Lisa). These expectations are in line with prior research in online dating, which found users are "attracted to genuine and honest people and they hoped that an individual's profile presents something about who the individual 'really' is" (Whitty, 2008, p.1719). The appreciation of an honest presentation was further evident when identifying that participants even developed certain tactics to detect deceptive behaviour just by looking at a profile. Profiles which had less than two pictures were generally perceived as tricky, since one picture does not provide enough information regarding a person's looks. Lisa for examples felt *"you can look so different in one picture and it doesn't have to look like you at all"*. Furthermore, participants felt a small number of pictures might indicate the person is trying to hide something, and therefore perceived it as less trustworthy, and were more likely to be rejected. Thus, multiple pictures which present the profile owner in various contexts and from different perspectives is perceived as important by most of the participants.

Moreover, Jessica argued, *"It is most important that I do get a good glimpse of what the person looks like"*. A picture which shows different facets of the person's physical appearance was highly appreciated by the participants. Considering, the overall composition of the profile pictures, participants commonly stated that a close-up picture of the face and a full body picture should be included. Most participants evaluated pictures negatively which showed people wearing sunglasses or presented the profile owner only from the same perspective. These types of pictures did not give enough indication how the person really looked like. Moreover, participants felt, especially the first picture should not include multiple individuals, or be taken from too far away because these pictures make the person unidentifiable. In terms of personality users further argued that presenting hobbies and friends were important, to get additional information about the personality of the potential matches. As Lisa stated, *"I think you should show a range of yourself try to show as many different aspects of yourself as possible so the person gets an idea of who you are"*.

Nevertheless, looking at the self-presentation of the participants it was evident that users did not necessarily live up to their own rules. Almost half of the interviewees presented themselves with either a friend, wearing sunglasses or even with an averted face in the first picture, therefore providing no clear indications about their physical appearance. In terms of accurate

profiles, participants admitted to choosing pictures which were a couple of years old. This again shows that they allowed themselves a certain degree of freedom when presenting themselves, thus not being necessarily authentic and this is illustrated in the following statement

> *"You would never guess that it is 5 years old because I have like the same hair. It is still representing who I am. I haven't gained like 300 kg or gotten 40 cm shorter." (Jessica)*

Furthermore, even though personality was mentioned as being important to some degree by most participants, not all provide rich insights about their own personality. Marcus justified this by saying *"it's mostly about how I look not about my personality ... I think is important to see what it look like how I dress and that should be enough for a girl to say yes."* The identified behaviour clearly shows that participants expect an honest and authentic presentation but not necessarily live up to the high standards. This provides a contradiction to findings of Ellison, Heino & Gibbs (2006) who found that online daters usually incorporate their evaluation rules for others in their own self-presentation.

5   Discussion and Conclusion

5.1   Discussion

This section will discuss in more detailed the two most surprising and interesting findings of the preceding analysis, which are either significantly different to prior research or present a novel phenomenon. Both the identification of the ought self in the user's self-presentation as well as the developed concept of *Hypocritical Authenticity* are drawn from the investigation how users present themselves and how they evaluate others. These were significant to answer the overarching research question which role authenticity plays in the mobile dating context.

Ought Self

One of the most exciting findings in terms of self-presentation is that users often present themselves with attributes and ways they assume other people will appreciate. This behaviour was justified with the need to (1) get potential matches, (2) raise attention and curiosity for the own profile, and (3) the wish to be perceived as desirable and receive likes. According to prior research, this self-presentation differs significantly from how users of online dating websites present themselves. Here users were also concerned to present themselves as desirably as possible to attract other online daters (Ellison, Heino & Gibbs, 2006; Guadagno, Okdie & Kruse, 2012; Hancock & Toma, 2009), but tried to achieve this predominantly by enhancing their profiles. Common manipulations in the context of textual data was to pretend to be younger or taller, for example (Ellison, Heino & Gibbs, 2006; Toma, Hancock & Ellison, 2008). In the context of profile photographs, users were likely to manipulate their pictures for example by editing them with special programs to be perceived as more attractive (Hancock & Toma, 2009; Toma & Hancock, 2010). With these actions, online daters commonly presented themselves with their ideal self (Ellison, Heino & Gibbs, 2006) or their future self (Ellison, Hancock & Toma, 2012). This means they either presented themselves with attributes they would ideally like to possess (Higgins, 1978) or with attributes they can possibly hold in the future, for example weighing less (Ellison, Hancock & Toma, 2012). In contrast to such a behaviour, mobile daters did not actively edit their picture or lie about specific attributes about themselves. By selecting very strategic pictures which presented them attractively and interestingly, they created an image they think is appreciated and valued by society. The aim of this is to communicate attractive values, and increase the chances of getting matches on Tinder.

Therefore, individuals neither presented a true nor an ideal self (Higgins, 1987), since these attributes do not necessarily communicate the individual's own actual or desired attributes to potential matches. Instead, attributes which "someone (yourself or another) believes you should or ought to possess" (Higgins, 1987, p.321) are presented, and thereby people engage in an ought self-presentation. This self-presentation behaviour is sometimes also referred to as social ideal self, since users' present attributes which they assume are ideals of others (Higgins, 1987), but in this research the term ought self is used. This presentation does not necessarily include being "true to one's self or others" (Vannini & Franzese, 2008, p.1621) and can be interpreted as a less authentic self-presentation.

The justification of mobile dating users for this kind of self-presentation is predominantly the immense *market pressure* inherent on Tinder, which might be perceived as even greater than for online daters. A reason for this might be the competition on Tinder since everyone within a certain age bracket and local proximity are competing against each other. This is in contrast to online dating where the group of contenting users can be narrowed down by more specific search attributes. Furthermore, the *limited cues* and the reduction to solely physical appearance does increases the need to be persuasive and present oneself with attributes the other person mostly likely will appreciate and excludes the possibility to make up for some less attractive attributes. Users therefore assume they need to fulfil *social norms* and tick some boxes to be successful. Further, *peers* immensely foster the presentation of an ought self, since decisions about the profile construction are often made with friends or other social contacts. Due to their feedback, users know what others might want or like to see in a profile and create their profiles accordingly, to increase the success of their presentation. This shows users did not decide only by themselves what pictures to include in their profile thus, it can be argued that users did not present themselves with their true self and therefore less authentically. Although a true self is subjective (Goffman, 1959) and always influenced by internal and external factors (Turner, 1976) it usually develops during the socialisation process of the person (see section 2.4.2.3). The ought self, presented on Tinder in contrast seems to be relatively independent from the socialisation process of a person. Instead it is rather a temporal adjustment of a person's presentation on Tinder with the aim to get matches. It can therefore be argued that users not necessary present their true self instead they present someone they might not even be in real life, which is then less authentic (Kadlac, 2017).

The identification of the external forces which foster the presentation of an *ought self* (illustrated in Figure 9) supports the statement of Strauss (1978), who argued that although authenticity is an honourable attribute and valued in society, it is still influenced by social life. Authenticity is made up of compromises, deals, and negotiations and therefore proves the validity of this perception of authenticity in the contemporary mobile dating context. Moreover, these social and cultural influences require excellent impression management skills of people and the ability to suppress their authentic self (Erickson, 1995). This indicates that the tension between enhancement and authenticity in the mobile dating context is not determined predominantly by the future face-to-face interaction, which in online dating lead to an enhanced presentation although relatively small in magnitude (Toma, Hancock & Ellison, 2008). On Tinder the need for an authentic presentation seems to be levelled out by the pressure to be persuasive and desirable, making authenticity negotiable in terms of self-presentation and therefore adding complexity to the tension.

Figure 9: Influences leading to Ought Self
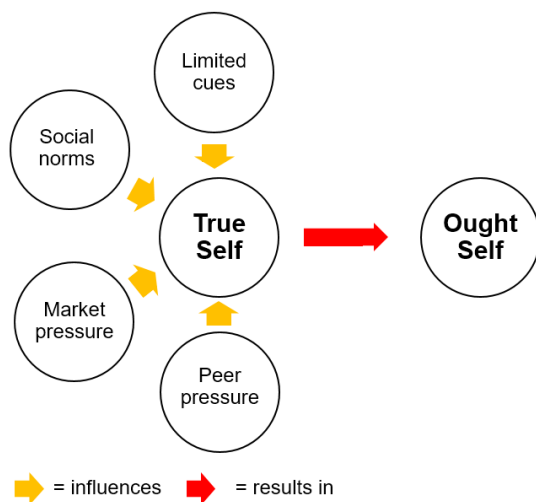
Hypocritical Authenticity

Considering both the findings concerning the own self-presentation of mobile dating users and the evaluation of others, it was evident that authenticity plays a role in mobile dating. In terms of the self-presentation of others, users clearly stated that they highly appreciated an authentic presentation and that misrepresentation leads to disappointment and frustration (see 4.2.4). Statements like this are comprehensible and foreseeable since authenticity is a very honourable

attribute in society (Kadlac, 2017; Strauss, 1987; Vannini & Franzese, 2009) and consumers have sought it for hundreds of years (Grayson & Martinec, 2004). Therefore, the statement that users present themselves authentically and would not interact in deceptive behaviour is reasonable since being perceived as a liar is associated negatively (Mazar & Ariely, 2006). More surprising though, are the findings considering the actual behaviour on Tinder. As pointed out both in the individual and the cross-section analysis, users did not live up to their own expectations concerning an authentic presentation of themselves but allowed themselves some flexibility when constructing their presentation. A reason for this behaviour might be the external forces inherent on Tinder which also foster the presentation of an ought self (see Figure 9). Furthermore, the immediate and definite way users are rejecting potential matches might force them to act in a less authentic way to ensure their success. However, it still provides a clear contradiction between what users argue for and how they act, indicating a rather insincere way of dealing with authenticity. A similar contradiction is detectable when comparing users' evaluation behaviour of others and their stated importance of an authentic presentation in other profiles. Instead of leaving other users room to present themselves authentically, as it is requested, they expect a highly appealing presentation which needs to persuade within split second to not be rejected. This behaviour further indicates that the actual role of authenticity in mobile dating might be not as important and rather negotiable.

Considering both aspects, it can be assumed that the communicated appreciation is rather an ideal understanding, influenced by the social discourse which honours authenticity, instead of an actual appreciated and desired value. A suitable term for this newly identified phenomenon is *Hypocritical Authenticity* and summarises the quite ambiguous role of authenticity inherent in mobile dating. Another context in which *Hypocritical Authenticity* was detectable, was the different standards users placed on their own presentation and that of others. As presented in the cross-section chapter, users justified their less authentic behaviour (see 4.2.3) but did not concede the same right to others since they expect them to be authentic (see 4.2.4). This not only provides a further discrepancy to prior research which argued that "online dating participants gave themselves – and others – permission to employ a flexible sense of identity" (Ellison, Hancock & Toma, 2012, p.60) but also highlights the hypocritical nature of authenticity inherent on Tinder.

To sum up, on Tinder the role of authenticity seems to have changed and authenticity is not predominantly important and appreciated since it is not deeply rooted in the individuals'

behaviours; (1) users perceive authenticity as such as important but do not necessarily present themselves authentically, (2) users want others to present an authentic profile but often reject a profile which might be authentic but not appealing, (3) users allow themselves freedom regarding a less authentic presentation but expect others to be authentic in their presentation (see Figure 10). Therefore, on Tinder, *Hypocritical Authenticity* is inherent. It can be defined as the ambiguous claim of individuals to appreciate authenticity which is hypocritical since they do not adhere to these claims in their actual behaviour, which is often less authentic.

Figure 10: Hypocritical Authenticity
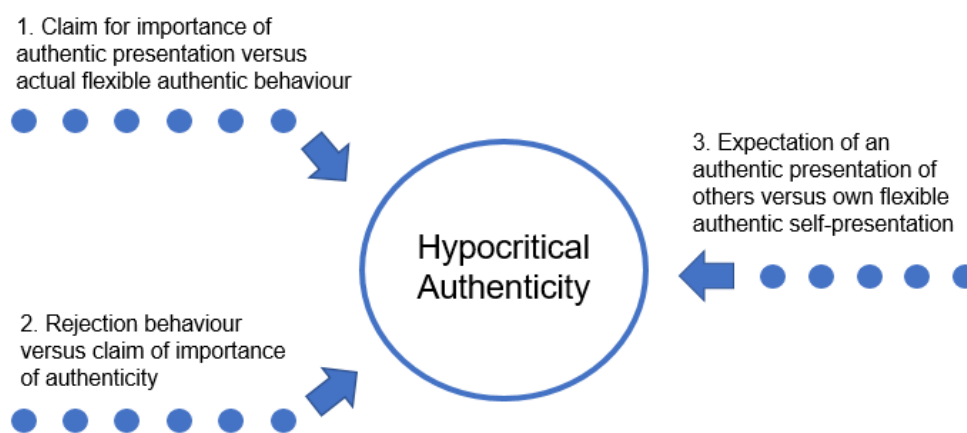
5.2   Conclusion

This research was executed with the intent to shed light on which role authenticity plays on Tinder. This is a mobile dating environment, where limited cues are available, immense market pressure is inherent due to an immense number of competing users, and self-presentation is crafted very selectively predominantly via profile photographs. Gaining new insights about the role of authenticity was important not only because the increasing demand of authenticity by consumers (Fritz, Schoenmüller & Bruhn, 2016; Gilmore & Pine, 2007) but also due to the predominance of the concept in traditional relationship formation (DeGreeff, Burnett, & Cooley, 2009; LaFollette & Graham, 1986; Lopez & Rice, 2006; Wieselquist et al., 1999). This research combined the theoretical concept of authenticity with the concept of self-presentation, making this research even more relevant for consumer research. The latter is ubiquitous in social life (Goffman, 1959) and individuals in the postmodern society are constantly involved

in creating their own identity via consumption (Elliott & Wattanasuwan, 1998; Holt, 2002) and digital interfaces (Matic, 2011). By investigating firstly how users verbally justified and secondly acted in their own profile construction and how they evaluated others this research was able to provide significant new insight towards the overarching question of this study: Which role does authenticity play for users in a superficial environment on mobile dating apps like Tinder?

In terms of the first sub research question: how do individuals market themselves based only on the visual impression? this study found that users strategically presented themselves (Goffman, 1959; Walther, 1992, 1996), with two main strategies; 1) getting as many likes as possible and 2) attracting the right matches. In this context, profiles can be viewed a strategic marketing tool with which users very rationally marketed and sold themselves to potential matches. Interestingly, when it comes to the first profile picture, users often were not necessarily concerned with the question how accurate their selling propositions were in terms of authenticity and if it reflected their true selves. In contrast, to the behaviour common in online dating where users presented themselves with an ideal (Ellison, Heino & Gibbs, 2006) or future self (Ellison, Hancock and Toma, 2012), users on Tinder presented themselves with an ought self (Higgins, 1987) which is not inevitably authentic. Although users verbally argued that an authentic self-presentation is important to successfully market themselves and to cope with the dominance of external influence, consumers allowed themselves some freedom and presented themselves also with attributes which are assumed to be appreciated by society. This was perceived as necessary due to the market pressure inherent on Tinder and to reduce the risk of being rejected by other users. These findings provided insights that in the profile construction process authenticity might not be as important anymore. Moreover, new external influence factors (limited cues, social norms, peer pressure and market pressure) were detected which add to the tension between enhanced and authentic self-presentation (Ellison, Heino & Gibbs, 2006; Hancock & Toma, 2009; Toma, Hancock & Ellison, 2008; Whitty, 2008) and therefore make this trade-off more complex.

Concerning the second sub research question: how do Tinder users evaluate other profiles based only on the visual impression? physical appearance was the essential aspect for all participants when assessing other profiles. However, some users argued that they also tried to avoid relying only on the superficial aspect of physical appearance and looked for additional cues which provide hints about the personality of a person. Overall, what was predominantly important was

the fact that all users argued for the importance of an authentic and honest self-presentation in others. They even actively searched for misrepresentation in the profiles when the first picture was not convincing enough to look into the whole profile. However, the very blunt and direct judgments of the first profile picture of others and the rejection behaviour displayed a very harsh and quick evaluation process. This indicated that users on Tinder expect a convincing and attractive presentation and give other users limited room to convince with an authentic presentation. Moreover, it shows that authenticity, even if it is valued verbally, is not predominant considered in the first evaluation process of other profiles.

Based on the findings of these two sub questions the overarching research question, which role does authenticity play for users in a superficial environment on mobile dating apps like Tinder?, could be answered with the developed concept of *Hypocritical Authenticity*. Firstly, this concept pointed out the paradox that users valued and appreciated authenticity on Tinder verbally but did not live up to this appreciation in their actual behaviour. Secondly, it highlights that users apply different standards to their own presentation and the presentation of others where they expect a very authentic presentation. Therefore, the call for authenticity on Tinder is rather a *hypocritical* one which might be rooted in the social desirability of authenticity but not necessarily in a deeply rooted desire and personal need of the user. Due to the marketisation of finding a partner on Tinder, which is highly influenced by the need to be persuasive and not to market "one's 'best self'" (Heino, Ellison & Gibbs, 2010, p.435), as it was the fact in online dating, but to market a socially desired best self the role of authenticity seems to be negotiable and decreased in importance concerning the actual behaviour of mobile daters.

5.3   Research Contribution

5.3.1   Theoretical Contributions

The developed concept, *Hypocritical Authenticity,* provides a novel understanding of the role authenticity plays in the self-presentation context. Investigating both consumers' verbal argumentation and their consumption behaviour, it could be detected that authenticity in consumers' actions lost its importance to some extent. This new knowledge contributes to both the literature of self-presentation as well as authenticity because it vividly illustrates that authenticity in the self-presentation in mobile dating is rather a matter of social desirability than a deeply rooted personal aspiration. Furthermore, it adds new dimensions to the research on

how users create their profiles and what they value in other presentations in the digital dating context. Not only future research in the field of mobile dating should consider *Hypocritical Authenticity,* but also prior research on self-presentation in the digital context should be critically reflected based on this new finding.

This research added further aspects to the understanding of consumers' own self-presentation in mobile dating. Firstly, two different strategies were identified how users systematically present themselves. This adds new insights to the understanding of how users of digital dating services construct their self-presentation and therefore adds knowledge to both self-presentation and mobile dating literature. Secondly, it was found that consumers did not necessarily feel the need to present their true self on mobile dating apps but marketed themselves on this highly competitive market. To achieve this, they engaged in portraying an *ought self.* This is in contrast to prior literature on online dating, where consumers portrayed their own ideal or future self. Thus, the insights enhance the knowledge of self-presentation as well as authenticity literature and provides further support of the applicability of Higgins (1987) concept of the Domains of the Self in the mobile dating context.

This study additionally provides enhanced insights on mobile dating and provided proof that it can be seen as an evolution of online dating. Although these services differ in terms of functionality in crucial elements, the findings of this study showed that the predominant aspects in online dating are also inherent in mobile dating, even though to different degrees or specifications. The limited cues and the tremendous competition for example also influenced users' presentation on mobile dating and fostered a very selective and strategic self-presentation to be perceived as a desirable dating partner (Guadagno, Okdie & Kruse, 2012; Heino, Ellison & Gibbs, 2010; Toma, Hancock & Ellison, 2008). However, it leads in mobile dating to the presentation of an ought self rather than ideal or future self as discussed above. Further, users in mobile dating understood their profiles also as a marketing tool (Heino, Ellison & Gibbs, 2010), and realised the need to market themselves eventually even more due to the increased competition and pressures on mobile dating apps. The balancing act identified in online dating between an authentic self-presentation and an enhanced one (Ellison, Heino & Gibbs, 2010; Hancock & Toma, 2009; Toma, Hancock & Ellison, 2008) was also inherent in mobile dating. But this study identified additional factors which influences and adds complexity to this tension. By identifying these similarities this study significantly contributed to the understanding of

mobile dating and the transferability of the findings in the online dating literature to the mobile dating literature.

5.3.1   Practical Contributions

This investigation adds knowledge to which role authenticity plays in contemporary dating on mobile dating apps, like Tinder. It showed that on this *market of love*, appearances are essential and individuals need to convince in a highly competitive environment. Consumers need to *sell* themselves based on the very first picture and within a split second, because a failure to do so could lead to a disadvantage in the search for a potential partner. This environment fosters a very strategic self-presentation and shows that a very rational and unemotional way of thinking in more economic terms is inherent in various spheres of society, even in the dating context which originally was highly emotional. It furthermore highlights that individuals constantly need to craft their identities no matter in which contexts they are. Marketing one's best attributes in the right way is furthermore essential, since not doing so can lead to disadvantages such as the rejection on Tinder. Interesting in this context was, that individuals did not necessarily rely on their true selves when crafting their identity or were concerned with pointing out aspects which make them different to others. Instead individuals seemed to engage in an identity construction process which aimed to be in line with what is generally accepted and valued in society although this might be less authentic. Considering this finding in a broader context, it seems that identity construction in society is becoming less individualistic and more adaptive. Particularly interesting for brand managers and app developers is that although authenticity is sought after by customers in other consumption contexts (Fritz, Schoenmüller & Bruhn, 2016; Gilmore & Pine, 2007) participants' behaviour showed that this is not necessarily the case on mobile dating apps. In an environment like Tinder, it is more important to convince with the first impression and mostly superficial attributes since the app does not leave much room for the communication of a rich personality. This research furthermore showed that users are judgmental, highly influenced by the first impression and tend to make immediate decisions when evaluating others, therefore giving them no room to be authentic. To counteract this development and foster an authentic behaviour in the self-presentation and evaluation of others, app developers should provide an environment, where not only the very first impression matters and where presenting oneself authentically does not lead to disadvantages like decreasing one's success in finding a partner.

5.4   Future Research

The researchers hope the findings of this study were able to add to the existing body of knowledge and contribute knew knowledge with the concept of Hypocritical Authenticity to self-presentation and authenticity in mobile dating. However, to get more knowledge about the transferability of the study, future research needs to be conducted which applies the concept of *Hypocritical Authenticity* to different social contexts. It would be interesting to investigate if *Hypocritical Authenticity* is transferable to other consumption contexts. Therefore, future research could apply this concept for example to other social media apps.

This study clearly indicates that there can be quite essential differences between what individuals communicate in verbal communications such as interviews and how they actually behave. This finding leads to two indications for future research. Firstly, it is recommended that future studies about the role of authenticity in the consumer behaviour should not solely rely on a method which gathers verbal statements but also provides data which is documenting the actual behaviour of the consumer as it was the case in this study. Furthermore, future studies might implement even more methods to increase the triangulation and richness of the empirical data. For example adding observational data to the data gathering process would help to get more information about the unconscious and actual behaviour of users and gain a more comprehensive understanding of the consumer.

Finally, by identifying *Hypocritical Authenticity* this study found that on Tinder authenticity does not play a predominant role and authentic behaviour is rather negotiable rather than actually respected in the self-presentation and the evaluation of others. This provided contradicting insights to prior research which stated that authenticity is increasingly important and sought for (Gilmore & Pine, 2007; Fritz, Schoenmüller & Bruhn, 2016). Therefore, further research is necessary which focuses on this contradiction and investigates more in-depth the reasons for the behaviour of consumers in regard to authenticity.

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Appendix A: Consent Forms

LUND UNIVERSITY

School of Economics and Management

Research Study: Self-presentation on Tinder

Researcher Names: Franziska Filter and Lara Magyar

INTERVIEW CONSENT FORM

- I have had an opportunity to ask questions about my participation.
- I understand that I am under no obligation to take part in this study.
- I understand that I have the right to withdraw from this study at any point without giving any reason.
- I understand that what I say in the interview will be confidential and my anonymity is guaranteed in the study.
- I understand that the pictures will be confidential and my anonymity is guaranteed in the study.
- I agreed that anonymized profile pictures are viewed by the researchers and other participants in the study.
- I agree to have the interview recorded (Dictaphone), so it can be transcribed after the interview is held.
- I agree to participate in the study regarding self-presentation on Tinder carried out by Franziska Filter and Lara Magyar of the University of Lund, to aid the researchers with the research phenomenon of Tinder.

_____

Signature   Date

If you have any further questions or concerns about this study, please contact:

Lara Magyar: la4451ma-s@student.lu.se;

Franziska Filter: fr6075fi-s@student.lu.se;

Appendix B: Interview Guide

General about personality:

1. Tell us a little bit about yourself: How would you describe yourself?

General Tinder:

2. What comes to mind when you hear Tinder?
3. Why did you start using Tinder and for how long?
4. Tell us about your best and worst experience on Tinder?

Questions how others are evaluated:

5. What would an ideal profile (for you) look like?
6. What do they value in profile picture?
7. When you look at these pictures, would you swipe right/ left? → Why?
8. Describe the person in the picture. What do you think the person was intending with this picture?

Questions about Profile picture & Other pictures on profile

9. Why did you chose this as a starting picture? Why did you not choose another picture?
10. Have you experimented with your profile picture?
11. What do you want to present with this picture?
12. What do you think strangers will see in your picture?

General questions

13. Is the composition of your pictures important? Why/in which way?
14. Did you edit your pictures in any way? If yes how and why?
15. Have you experimented with your pictures? If yes why?
16. Are there any attributes you actively did not mention or de-emphasize in your pictures?
17. If you showed the picture to your closest friends what do you think their response would be?

Appendix C: Semiotic Picture Analysis

Case 1: Marcus

Profile Picture

This pictures presents two male individuals standing beside each other in the foreground of the picture. Both are smiling and looking directly into the camera. It is likely they are aware of being photographed and concerning the distance to the camera the picture was most likely taken by some else. Based on this picture viewers cannot identify who the Tinder profile belongs to. Moreover, the right person is slightly closer to the photographer, therefore minimally more in the foreground. He is standing in front of the other male, hiding small parts of the shoulder and head with his own body. This person is therefore, slightly more present. Both individuals are almost the same height and standing on the same level, indicating an equal social level. The fact that they are standing very close to each other and their heads are touching, suggests a close relationship and familiarity between the two. The right person is holding a beer in his hand and both males are wearing relatively casual clothes. In the background, dark room with a crowd of people is visible. This indicates that the portrayed individuals are at a social gathering. Interpreting the casual clothes and the beer the photo seems to be taken in a party context.

Picture 2

The picture portrays Marcus from his left side with his body visible up to the waist and in the focus of the picture. In the background leaves are visible, suggesting the picture was taken outside. Marcus is wearing a printed t-shirt and a cap which indicates a casual setting as well as warm weather, since he is not wearing a jacket. Marcus is not actively looking into the camera his face is relaxed and he is looking downwards. This might indicate that he is in his thoughts and not aware that he is being photographed. Further, since he is not facing the audiences through a straightforward look into the camera he is not actively engaging with the them and his downwards gaze indicates some sign of submission or shy characteristics. Additionally, his view lets him appear as a thoughtful maybe even dreamy person, both are more sensitive and soft attributes. Furthermore, since Marcus is in the focus of the picture and not much is visible beside him, indicates the picture is cropped. This is supported by the aspect that a female person next to him is only slightly (her right arm and shoulder) visible. Considering, he actively cut out a female person shows he wants the focus and attention solely on himself.

Picture 3

This picture shows Marcus in an indoor gym, working out. He is the focus of the picture, while in the background other fitness equipment is visible. The picture is taken by someone else, since the Marcus is holding handlebars of a fitness machine with both hands. Further, he is looking down and seems to be concentrating on his workout. Considering, he is wearing headphones supports the conjecture that he is not aware that someone is taking a picture of him. The scene portrayed here symbolizes strength and fitness of the portrayed person since he is lifting weights. The assumption of his physical fitness is supported by the shape of his body, a trained chest and arms, which the audience can identify although he is wearing a long-sleeved shirt. Moreover, as he is wearing a sport wearable on his left arm the claim of a trained person is further supported, since these devices are usually used to track fitness activities regularly.

In terms of editing, the picture does not offer very bright and sharp rather more soft colours indicating that a sepia filter is applied. This makes the picture appear more harmonic. Furthermore, Marcus one is almost the only object the audience can see when looking at the picture, suggesting that in addition to the sepia filter the photo is also cropped. Therefore, the presence of him fills out almost the entire picture, leaving no room to focus on anything other than him.

Picture 4

This picture portrays Marcus, wearing a button-down shirt underneath a pullover and looking directly into the camera. Furthermore, he is posing and making a kissy-face, suggesting he is aware of being photographed. The photo itself is cropped and zoomed in so that Marcus is the focus of the picture. Due to being cropped, only the arm and part of the torso of another person is visible. However, it is clearly observable that this person is also male, due to his body shape and clothes. This person is taller than Marcus and has his arm around his shoulder, hugging Marcus. This pose can be interpreted as a symbol of friendship and familiarity, since they are standing very close to each other, touching each other's bodies. The picture therefore displays that Marcus has close male friends and that he likes to party with them. However, the fact that the other male person is cropped out of the picture indicates, that Marcus wanted to have the focus solely on himself and offers no distraction or irritation about other persons in the picture.

Reflecting on the clothes of the other person who is also wearing a button-down shirt, indicates that Marcus is portrayed on a at least slightly fancy occasion. Even though the background is

out of focus, two other persons are localizable but not identifiable behind Marcus. Generally, the bright light ensured the background to be out of focus, suggesting that the picture is taken inside. Considering the bright light, fancy clothes and people in the background this photo most likely portrays a party scene.

Composition of the pictures

Except of picture one, which portrays Marcus with another male person, he is alone in all pictures. Considering, that picture two and four are visibly zoomed in and cropped and therefore exclude other individuals indicates that this was a conscious decision. Marcus wants to guide the observation of the audiences and let them focus on his person. Besides picture three the observer is not able to detect any particular location or occasion in the pictures. Both aspects together lead to the fact that the profile pictures do not leave room for extensive interpretation about his personality. Nevertheless, the fact that all photos are uploaded in relatively high resolution and quality and there is no indication for active manipulation/ editing (besides the cropping and the filter on picture three) suggests that Marcus wanted to present a clear vision of his physical appearance and does not intend to hide. This also indicates self-confidence about his physical attractiveness. Considering, none of the pictures show a female person, rather one was consciously cropped (picture 2) shows that he does not want to be portrayed with females. Since the pictures are posted for the purpose of attracting possible females, he might want to avoid misunderstandings about his relationship to the girl and about his intention to get in contact with other females. Furthermore, Marcus is presenting himself solely with male individuals. This indicates the importance of his friendship with other males and that he values his leisure time with his male friends (buddies) highly. It presents him as a very social person. Reflection on the clothes he is wearing in the pictures, he seems to be a more laid back person who likes to interact in more casual environments but also can dress up for parties. Especially, parties seem to have an important part in his life since two out of four pictures are portraying him in this context. Furthermore, that two out of four pictures are presenting himself with his male friends signals that he wants to underline the importance of his male friends to him. Two of his pictures are representing the party and male friendship themes, one shows him more thoughtful and one at the gym. Moreover, he did not use the option to upload more pictures or chose to show different aspects indicates that he did not perceive it as relevant to present other aspects of his life or personality. Finally, considering all pictures present him solely in close-up shots without giving further clues for locations and occasions leaves not much room for further interpretation about his personality.

Case 2: Isabelle:

Profile Picture

This picture portrays Isabelle in the centre of the photograph looking straight ahead into the camera. In the background a dirt road is visible framed by various trees. No other people or any sign of human interaction is identifiable which indicates that Isabelle is a natural environment, most likely a forest. The ground and the trees are covered with red and yellow leaves signalling that the picture is taking in autumn. Isabelle is pictured in the foreground of the picture, relatively close to the camera, her face almost filling ⅔ of the picture. She is directly looking into the camera and therefore directly towards the audiences and is smiling openly. The bright smile lets her appear as a happy person. The close distance to the camera, which does not allow the viewer to see more then her face and her shoulders and the position of her shoulders indicate that she is taking a selfie. Since no other people are in the picture and she is taking a selfie furthermore leads to the interpretation that she is by herself the forest. She is furthermore not wearing any visible makeup in the picture, indicating that she is not overly vain but confident with her appearance. The latter can additionally be identifiable by the fact that there is no active editing in the picture and with such a close shot of her face is not able to 'hide' something of her physical appearance. Besides this, the audiences can identify shoulder a backpack most likely from a backpack, indicating that she is doing some physical activity such as a hiking tour which presents her as an active person.

Picture 2

On this photography, a female person is sitting with the back towards the camera on a ledge of a mountain. The photography overall is from a poor quality with a low resolution. The viewer is therefore not able to clearly identify what is in the background of the pictures. Considering the white points and the significant blue band it indicates that it is a city close to the sea. Both aspects, the overall low resolution and the fact that the person is sitting with the back to the camera, does not allow the audience to identify the female person as Isabelle in the picture. Isabelle sitting on the mountain and looking down to the city. She is wearing an armless shirt and wide pants which indicates that the picture is taken in summer. The way she is sitting and looking in the wide make her appear dreamy and sensual, even romantic. It furthermore indicates that the is enjoying the very moment. The composition of the picture with the warm weather, the city below here, the sea in the distance indicates that the is on holidays, doing a hiking tour to reach this look-out point to be able to enjoy the scenery. Considering that she

chose this picture for profile signals that she likes to travel and to be active. Even though she is alone in the picture the viewer can assume that the is together with another person at this mountain who took the picture, which gives first indications that she might be a social person.

Picture 3

This pictures shows Isabelle in the very front of the pictures surrounded by at least three other individuals. The picture is from poor quality, since the resolution is very low. The red colour of the light is dominating the photography. Both Isabelle and the three people in the background are looking into the camera and standing close to each other. This not only indicates that all of them are aware that the photo is taken but also that they are knowing each other. The close shot does not offer many cues for the interpretation where the photo is taken but the red colour give signals for the assumption that is taken in a nightclub. The angle of the photography, which is from above, looking down on the photography and the very close position of the respondent to the camera indicates that she is taking a selfie, holding the camera up in the air to have all the other persons with her in the picture. High angles in photographs giving the viewer some power over the person in the pictures since the he or she is looking down on the presented person. This might indicate that Isabelle also holds some submissive attributes and is looking for a person who can also guide her in her future life. However, the other persons are not identifiable since they are anonymised by red blurry spots which are covering their faces. Even though the picture is presenting the face of the respondent from a short distance, due to the low resolution the audiences are not able to see details of her face. What is visible is that the is smiling which indicates that she has fun. Reflecting on all this details in the picture, the main message the audiences can draw from this is that Isabelle likes to go out and is a social person since she is together with other people which most likely are her friends, since they are looking actively looking in the picture which is taken by her and therefore want to be with her in the picture. That she chose a picture where she is not clearly visible but with friends on a party might indicate that presenting her physical appearance is not that important as being perceived as social and outgoing for her.

Picture 4

This photography shows Isabelle from the side. She is in the focus of the picture and fill it out almost entirely. In the background a white wall and partly a door is visible signalling that she is inside but not give more clues about the location and occasion of the situation.

She is not looking into the camera and is holding a silver bag over her head. It does not look like she is aware of being photographed since she is not looking into the camera. She is turned away and seems to be contracted on holding a silver bag over her head. The fact that she is holding the bag close to her mouth indicates that she is drinking out of the bag. Since usually wine is sold in this container she is most likely drinking wine. The fact that one can assume that the portrayed person is drinking alcohol gives insights that she likes to drink alcohol and since she is not having a glass but holding whole bag indicates that the rather drinks a bigger portion. Furthermore, even though the background and the relatively bright light did not indicate that she is on a party, the fact that the picture is not taken by herself lead to the assumption that she is probably not alone in this room. This gives also hints of a social personality. The fact that she is drinking wine directly out of the bag instead in pouring it into a glass, might be perceived as more unusual or even inappropriate behaviour, coming from a more conservative point of view. Additionally, wine in these silver plastic bags does not have the reputation of very classy and expensive wine. Both indicate that she is maybe not very posh and that she does not follow all conventional "rules". It signals that she is not taking social norms that seriously and she most likely is not caring as much about what other people are thinking.

Composition of the pictures

Out of six possible pictures Isabelle present herself with four pictures. Two of the pictures present her in an outdoor environment, one in a forest the other one on a mountain, both indicating that she did an activity such as a hiking tour. The other two pictures showing her indoors, both in a social context. This in combination indicates that Isabelle wants to present herself both as an active person who likes being in the nature and as an outgoing person who likes to be surrounded with people. The fact that she is on at least one picture without any makeup and she is wearing in all pictures relatively casual and relaxed clothes as well as the combination of clothes do not indicate that she is a very vain or posh person. This together with the fact that she is drinking wine out of the bag indicates that she is not very concerned about social norms or about living up to special social expectation. Nevertheless since out four profile pictures three does do not enable the viewer to clearly her face, either because she is not looking into the camera (picture 2 and four) or because the picture is very out of focus (picture 3), that she does not want to present herself very precisely or give cues about her physical appearance. However, in contrast to this the very first one is giving a very clear and straightforward impression of how she looks like, since is it is a very close shot of her face. That the other pictures not give as much information about her physical appearance might either indicate that

she thinks other aspects such as communicating that she is outgoing and likes nature is equally important.

Case 3: Jessica

Profile Picture

The picture shows a girl, from the side, her legs are slightly bent and she is holding one of her knees with both her hands. She is in the foreground of the picture, sitting on the right edge of the picture rather than in the centre. One can see that she is sitting on a windowsill, because of the black window frame and the white sill. From the angle the picture was taken one both Jessica and the viewer have a good view of different buildings, the harbour and ships which are in the background of the picture. The person portrayed is turned away from the camera with her upper body and head. Long blond hair is hiding her face, so one does not see what she looks like. The way she is turned away from the camera and her relaxed posture suggest that she is relaxed and enjoying the view in front of her. But it also suggests that she is not actively communicating with the viewer, maybe trying to be intriguing. Moreover, her posture might suggest that she did not know the picture was taken, or it might have been done on purpose to create mystery. Further, in the background, buildings and water are clearly visible, in particular a white building with a sail-like roof catches the viewer's attention. This building indicates that she is in Australia, more precisely in Sydney and looking at the opera house. Since Jessica is from Sweden and still living there, this picture indicates that she is on vacation and likes to travel.

Picture 2

In the second picture two girls are portrayed, both faces are clearly visible as they are looking into the camera. The girl on the left is making a funny face into the camera while the one, on the right, is making a kissy-face into the camera. Further, she is pointing with her hand to the camera this gesture and her kiss face might suggest that she blow the viewer a kiss into the camera. This gesture can be further interpreted as kind of an invitation, as the girl is clearly flirting with the viewer, with her facial expression. Furthermore, the right girl is closer to the camera, and having a higher position then the girl on the left which let the right person appear more dominant or powerful. The other girl on the left who is making a funny face, clearly is not taking herself very seriously, and is maybe making fun of the viewer. The picture shows that the girls are having fun and are inviting the viewer to have fun too. The viewer still does not know who the profile belongs to, since both girls have long blond hair and the first picture

did not show the face. This adds to the mystery aspect of the first picture, since the viewer has to look at more pictures to find out who the profile belongs to.

Picture 3

In the third picture a group of girls are portrayed, they are standing outside by a river. All of them are laughing or smiling into the camera and two are making peace signs with their hands. The whole group is wearing sunglasses which indicates that it is summer. This can further be inferred from the clothes they are wearing which are very light shirts and shorts. On this picture one can recognize one of the girls from the previous picture, although the sunglasses are covering part of her face. The girl standing closest to the viewer in the front of the picture is slightly cut out of the picture, the angle the picture was taken at indicates that is probably the one who took the picture of the group. One girl on the left side of the pictures seems to have been cut out of the picture. Moreover, in the background one can see a ship and water which indicates that the picture was taken outside and Jessica likes to be active and outside.

Picture 4

In picture four, two girls are shown standing outside by the ocean. Both girls are visible with their whole bodies and wearing summer clothes, one a green dress and the other a skirt and a white blouse. This indicates that they are in a warm country most likely in the summer. The taller girl is hugging the other one, which suggests that they are friends. As one can see the whole body of the girls their faces are not clearly visible, both girls can be recognized from the previous picture. However, since the taller girls has long blond hair and the short girl short hair, as well the shorter girl has another body shape one can assume that the profile belongs to the taller girl. Since she chose to put a picture on her profile with her friend who is clearly shorter than her might suggests that it is important for her to show her height. Additionally, putting a picture on her profile with her friends shows that she is a social person and likes to spend time with her friends. Showing this is apparently important to her otherwise she would not have but up a picture with her friend. Moreover, in the background of the picture one can see white buildings in a Mediterranean style and the ocean. This indicates that the picture was taken in a country other than Sweden, where Jessica is from, and that Jessica is on vocations. This is further supported by the clothes the girls are wearing. Therefore, this picture also show that Jessica likes to travel as well as spending time outdoors.

Picture 5

In this picture, Jessica is portrayed by herself again. The picture portrays her full body since one can see her standing outside on a bride. Her face is not clearly visible in this picture, because of the distance the picture was taken from and the slightly low resolution of the photo. Further, she is wearing sunglasses which hide her face. What is detectable for the viewer is that she is relatively tall. From the angle the picture was taken from and because one can see the whole body of Jessica the picture was not taken by her but by someone else. Her posture and the way she is looking into the camera however suggest that she knows the picture is being taken and is even posing for it. Besides the wooden bridge, Jessica is standing on one can see trees, water and in the distance some buildings in the background. Although this background might indicate that Jessica in nature her clothes indicates that she is not on an outdoor or hiking tour. She is wearing handbag, open shoes and a light jeans jacket. The viewer therefore can interpret that she is having an easy walk in this area.

Picture 6

The last picture shows a close-up of Jessica's face, she is laying on a bed, which can be inferred from the pillow underneath her head. The picture was taken from above, the viewer is clearly looking down into her face. From the angle and distance of the picture was taken from it can be assumed that is a selfie she took by herself. Moreover, in this picture she is making a funny face, one can see a hint of a smile and she is squinting her eyes. This indicates that she does not hesitate to look funny or goofy and present her in this way to potential mates. It furthermore indicates that she likes to have fun and does not take herself too serious. Both the fact that she is laying on the bed and the picture is taken from above influences how the viewer is interpreting the picture.

Composition of all pictures

Jessica presented herself with six different pictures and therefore made use of the full possibilities to present herself. When looking at all her pictures, one can see that she likes being outdoors and traveling, since most of her pictures show her in different places outdoors. She seems to enjoy especially warm weather since three out of six pictures present her in warm environments. Furthermore, it can also be assumed that she likes to spend time with her friends as three out of six pictures show her either with a group of friends or with one friend. What is conspicuous is that she is only portrayed with female friends which might indicate that she

spent a lot of time with girls and that these are very important to her. This might also signal a very feminine character but especially that she is a social person. In addition, this when looking at the pictures, especially the second and sixth picture portray a funny person who does not take things too seriously. Jessica clearly, tried to portray different aspects of herself in her profile and included aspects which are important to her. Moreover, considering she did not want to show her face in the first picture and that the pictures afterwards show her with friends, make her a little mysterious and intriguing. It however also indicated that she does not want to present her physical appearance. Potential matches are not only not able to identify who the owner of the profile is till picture number three, there is no picture included which offers a close look to her face. Either the pictures are too far away, her face is covering with sunglasses or she is making a face in the camera. As already mentioned, the fact that she is presenting herself on half of the photos with friends leads to the interpretation that she is very social but also that she does not want to present herself alone. In combination with her 'anonymity' concerning her facial appearance it might give some signals that she is not overly confident with her physical appearance. Considering picture two and three on which she is more in the background can be interpreted that she is not always the dominant or guiding character whereas her gesture on picture four indicates that she likes to care for people as well. However, the number of pictures and the fact that she is not the only objects in the picture allow the audience to gather diverse cues about her personality and preferences and does not only focus on her physical appearance.

Case 4: Lisa

Profile Picture

In the first picture of the profile Lisa is portrayed from the front. Her upper body down to the chest is visible, she is wearing a black bikini and is smiling directly into the camera, which indicates that she knows she is being photographed. She is wearing her hair open, which is dark blond, shoulder long and framing her face. In the background one can see the ocean and in the distance some islands. Since she is wearing a bikini and has a tan, one can assume that the picture was taken in the summer, most likely on vacation. This can be further assumed from the beach and ocean in the background. She is openly smiling into the camera, directly focusing the viewer and therefore engaging the audiences and let appear her as a happy person. Furthermore, the image portrays her face relatively closely. The viewer get a clear impression how Lisa looks like. She is not wearing makeup which indicates that she is a natural person, and is confident with how she looks like. Furthermore, showing a picture of herself in a bikini

might suggests that she likes her body and wants attract others with that. Furthermore, showing a lot of naked skin to potential dating mates also indicated some sexual availability. From the angle, the picture was taken and the way her arms are hanging loosely beside her body suggests that someone else took the picture of her. Moreover, the picture might also be an indication that she likes to travel and wanted to show this in her picture.

Picture 2

In this picture, Lisa is again smiling into the camera but this time she is standing a little bit to the left of the picture. Her hair is in a ponytail and blown back, maybe by the wind. The right side and the background of the picture show the scenery behind her. One can see a mountain range and from the angle one can see the mountains one can assume that the picture was taken from a higher point, maybe a higher mountain. Considering her light t-shirt, it is likely that the picture is taken in summer or in a warm country. Further, the way she is standing to the side of the picture and showing the mountains in the background suggests that she knows she is being photographed. Moreover, when looking closer to her position of her arm one can see that she is actually the one taking the picture. Since she is standing on the left side of the picture and gives room for the scenery indicates that she wants to viewer to not only focus in herself but also on the background and share her view of the mountains with the viewer. As she is not wearing visible makeup, therefore appears very natural. This picture might show that she like to be outdoors, going on hikes in the mountains and is a natural person.

Picture 3

In the third picture Lisa is shown with a dog. In the background one can see trees and some buildings and from the width of the water one can assume that it was taken by a river or lake. The closeness to the water suggests she is sitting on a footbridge or gangplank. The dog is in the centre of the picture. Lisa is sitting behind the dog and has her arms around the dog, holding him. The way they are sitting, suggests that she is posing for the camera. This can be further inferred from the way the dog is looking at the camera. He is focused on the person behind the camera as if someone was calling him. Further, since she has her arms around the dog, she was not the one taking the picture. Considering Lisa chose a picture where the dog is in the centre and from the way she is hugging the dog one can assume that this dog is important to her and she want to bring this across with this picture. Additionally, the hugging might suggest that she is a loving and caring person, since she is protective of the dog and takes care him and not just herself. That she is smiling on the picture let her appear happy but since she is wearing

sunglasses more details from her face are not visible. The soft attributes like caring and loving are supported by the filter which is applied to the picture. It is a sepia filter which extenuate the brightness of the colours soften the overall expression of the photo and let the scenery appear more harmonious.

Picture 4

In the fourth pictures Lisa is shown with a group of people. They are all looking directly into the camera, either smiling or making funny faces. This indicates that they know they are being photographed. All portrayed people are sitting close to each other, touching each other bodies which indicates that they know each other well, and are friends. When looking at the picture more closely, one can see that Lisa is taking the picture of the group. Her arm is in the picture and the person to her left had to lean in to be in the picture. The fact that all portrayed people want to be pictured together also underlines the signal that they are friends. Moreover, in this picture Lisa particularly is making an exaggerated smile and her eyes are open wide and having her head tilted to the right. With this picture, she might want to show how much fun she is having with her friends, that she is not taking herself too serious and that she is a fun and happy person. The funny face in combination with the posture of her head makes her approachable and let her appear in a more relaxed and casual way. This picture further suggests that she is a social person and likes to hang out with her friends, since she included them in her profile. Since she is picturing herself with only female persons indicate signals that especially same sex friendships are important to her. However, the fact that she is in the very front of the picture indicates that she still wants to make sure that the viewer can recognize and focus on her. In the background one can see tents and garden furniture, sofas and tables, which indicates that the picture was taken outside, maybe at some kind of event, supporting the claim that she might be an outgoing person.

Picture 5

The last picture shows Lisa by herself again. This time she is smiling naturally into the camera and her head is tilted slightly to the right. She is wearing a short-sleeved blouse and one can only see her body up to her waist. The angle the picture was taken from and the way her arms are hanging loosely beside her, indicate that someone else took the picture of her. She is actively smiling and looking straight into the camera, directly looking towards the viewer. This indicates that she knows the pictures is being taken. Further, the way her head is tilted might indicate that she is posing for the pictures. In the background one can see a glass window with some writing

on it and a street with houses and cafes. There are people walking in the street which might suggest that it is a pedestrian street. Furthermore, since she is wearing short-sleeved blouse and has a bit of a tan one could assume that she is on vacation, mostly likely in a southern country.

Composition of pictures

When look at all pictures together, Lisa presented herself in different occasions. In most of the pictures she is portrayed by herself but she also included a picture of her and some friends. She is smiling and appears to be happy in all her pictures, which suggests that she is a warm and cheerful person and she wants people who look at her profile to know this. Furthermore, having pictures which show her outdoors, either on the beach or the top of the mountain might indicate that she likes being outdoors as well as traveling. Further, the pictures clearly show not just physical aspects of herself but also who she is as a person. Pictures like her and the dog or her and with friends, show that she is a caring and social person. Picture four in which she is presenting herself making a face indicates that she likes to have fun and is not taking herself too serious. All pictures are presenting her furthermore in more relaxed occasion wearing casual clothes. This give first insights that she is a more relaxed person. The fact that she is presenting herself on pictures without makeup and non-picture is presenting her very dresses up way present her as a not overly vain person who is satisfied with her natural appearance and want to present her in this way to potential mates. Considering the combination of pictures which clearly portray how she looks like about also gives insight about how she like to spend her free time and that friends and dogs are important to her one can infer that not only physical aspects are important for her to portray but also more personal characteristics. However, choosing a picture in a bikini as the first picture also indicates that she wants to attract potential matches with her body and female attributes. The fact that only one picture (picture 3) does not give a clear vision of her face symbols that she does not want to hide her physical appearance, but present herself from different angles.

Case 5: Justin

Profile Picture

This pictures portraits Justin from a distance, due to this and the angle of the camera, which is looking slightly up, the audience can see his upper body and face. The face is at the top of the picture, whereas his chest and belly are the main focus of the picture. He is wearing a simple and casual sweat-shirt, a leather jacket and sunglasses. His left hand is by the back pocket of

his jeans, whereas the right is in front of his leg. According to his posture and the position of his hands he was walking when the photograph was taken. He is not actively looking into the camera but focuses on something behind the photographer.

The smirk on his face in combination with his upright body position, the left hand in his pocket and the angle of the photography present him in a more superiority attitude and self-confident. Further, his self-confident body language in combination with his fashionable outfit and the sunglasses lets him appear as a "cool" person, self-aware of his physical appearance. The fact that it looks like he is walking creates a dynamic and active atmosphere. Although he is not actively focusing on the camera and looking into the distance, and especially the smirk does not look entirely natural or a snapshot of a random situation. Therefore, this picture appears to be a staged scene. Moreover, the picture might have been taken by a professional photographer is supported by the fact that the photography itself has a very high resolution. Additionally, it was taken with a skilful photo technique, since the background is out of focus, whereas the portrayed person is sharp.

Although out of focus, trees are identifiable in the background, and the not very bright colours and a red glimmer indicate that the picture was taken during dawn or dusk. The fact that the lighting does not necessarily require sunglasses, the person wears very fashionable clothes and the professionalism photograph in taking the picture, suggest that this picture might be a professional model picture.

Picture 2

In this picture, Justin is portrayed from the front, directly looking into the camera and openly smiling. The photograph is taken in front of a brick wall, giving no indications about the location or occasion in which the picture was taken. The face is in the centre of the image and parts of his upper body. He seems to be sitting and has a very relaxed posture, with his arms hanging loosely by his side. Considering that the picture portrays his face up close, the viewer is able to clearly identify how he looks like. Choosing such a photo for an occasion like Tinder indicates that the person is self-confident with his appearance, and does not want to hide something. The open and wide smile which reaches his eyes let him appear as a friendly and warm person. This is supported by the fact that his head is slightly turned to the right which takes away some of the tense or serious appearance which occurs with a very straight posture, thus making him more approachable. His posture in combination with his smile lets him appear as a friendly and open person. The picture was taken in black-white which removes some of the

warm atmosphere and indicates a staged aspect of the photograph. Furthermore, the fact that other colours are not identifiable reduces the number of available cues for further interpretation of the pictures since everything is either black or white independent from its original colour.

Picture 3

This picture shows Justin in another black and white shot, from head to his waist in front of a white background. He is wearing a button-down shirt, a suit jacket and his hair is styled with gel or hairspray. His hands are touching each other side of the middle button of his jacket. Justin is looking to the left and has a serious facial expression. There is some distance between the viewer and Justin, since he is actively looking in another direction and distancing himself from the viewer. The fact that the picture was taken in front of a white and plain background indicates that was taken in a photo studio. Furthermore, the way he is holding his hands and actively looking away from the camera appears staged and suggests he is posing for the camera. The black and white filter supports this even more. The serious gazing face expression, the look to the side and his combed hair indicates a serious person. The combination of his clothes suggests that he is dressed up for a more formal occasion. Since no other cues are provided in this picture the viewer is focusing only on the physical appearance of the portrayed person. Since he is dresses up and posing, and seems professionally taken, it is likely that is a model picture.

Picture 4

In this picture, Justin is photographed while walking. The photograph is taken from some distance, enabling the audience to see the full body of Justin and some of the environment around him. Although, the picture is taken from too far away to see details of his face, the viewer can identify that the respondent is smiling. Justin is walking on a sidewalk, to his right a hedge is visible and to the left parking cars. This indicates that the picture is taking in an urban area. He is wearing sneakers, jeans, pullover and a cap. This very casual outfit and the smile on his face indicates a relaxed and laid-back personality. The relatively tight fit of his pullover and jeans gives the audience the impression of his body shape, which can be an indication for his fitness. Whereas some of the pictures before might have been understood as staged, his relaxed attitude and the casual outfit indicates that this image is picturing a random everyday life situation of Justin. This is supported by the fact that although he is looking into the camera and seems to be aware of being photographed he is not posing actively. The fact that the interview is walking lets him appear as active person and his smile makes him appear approachable and friendly. His straight posture indicates self-confidence. The colours of the pictures are relatively

soft and not very bright indicating that a filter is applied to make the whole image appear more relaxed and smooth, supporting the impression of his relaxed character.

Picture 5

Here Justin is portrayed in the foreground of the picture, he is not in the focus rather on the very right edge of the photograph. This leaves room for the audiences to focus of the background in which giraffes in an environment of trees and grassland are visible. Since giraffes usually do not live in the wild in European areas, the viewer can assume that the picture is taken during a vacation. He is wearing a casual t-shirt and sunglasses. He is looking straight in the camera and is making a face. One might assume that he wants to mime the face impression of the giraffes in the background. This indicates a humourful characteristic and that he is taking himself not too serious. On this picture, the physical appearance of Justin is not entirely visible since he is wearing sunglasses and his facial expression is a grimace. Reflecting on this aspect Justin appears as a funny and extrovert person, who takes life not to serious and who likes to travel.

Composition of pictures

Justin decided to upload five pictures out of possible six pictures. On each of the picture he is pictured from different perspectives. On two pictures, he presents himself in more staged environment, giving some hints that he is working as a model. Physical appearance seems to be predominantly important for him since his pictures mostly only provide information about this. Only the last picture offers some additional information about his personality, since in provides a travel context. All the other pictures do not provide any additional information about location, occasion or social context. The straight body posture in the pictures and the overall high resolution of his pictures indicates that he is self-confident and satisfied with his appearance and willing to show this to potential mates on Tinder. Even though the model picture show him as more detached and distanced, maybe even self-absorbed, picture number two portrays him as a warm and friendly person which is easy to approach. Together with picture four and five he is presenting himself as a relaxed and casual person. Furthermore, Justin is only portrayed by himself. No other persons are part of his pictures and besides this model theme no hints for what he likes to do are given.

Case 6: Anton

Profile Picture

This picture portrays Anton in a close-up shot, standing in front of a white background. He is the focus of the picture, his torso is visible up to his chest and looking straight into the camera. Anton is on eye-level with the viewer. His posture is not an entirely natural position, therefore one can assume that Anton is posing for the picture. Moreover, he is wearing relatively formal clothes, a button-down shirt underneath a pullover and his hair is done up and styled. The precision of his hair indicates that careful thought was put into it. Both the formal clothes and the neutral environment of the picture, indicate this picture was taken by a professional photographer. This can further be inferred from his posture which is a typical pose for an application picture. No obvious editing was applied and the photo offers a relatively high resolution. The picture shows his face from a relatively close distance and does not hide any aspects of his visual appearance, suggesting he is quite self-aware and confident that his appearance will attract potential mates. However, Anton displays almost no emotions on his face, although he is smiling slightly. His straight pose and the direct look towards the viewer make him appear self-confident. The fact that he is not showing emotions lets him appear as a very serious person. The very neutral nature of the picture and the missing cues does not leave room for further interpretation regarding his personality (sense of humour) but let him come across as neutral, reserved, even stiff.

Picture 2

This photograph shows Anton with another male person. The shot portrays them with their full bodies and provides some hints about the environment. The males are in the focus of the photo and looking directly into the camera. They are standing in front of a grass field with a hedge. In the background multi-level houses and cars parking at a street are visible. The relatively small grass area and the combination of the houses and cars indicate that they are in a more urban area. Both males are wearing suits and white shirts, but no ties. They are standing relatively close to each other but not touching each other, and one can see that Anton is a slightly taller than the other male. They are both standing very straight, facing the camera and smiling. The fact that they are actively looking into the camera, indicates that they are aware of being photographed and posing for the picture. The combination of very classic black suits with white shirts and the red pocket square indicates that he is fashionable and concerned with being up-to-date. The open smile shows him as a cheerful person, his posture however of holding his

hands in front of the bell indicates a very controlled and more serious person. The fact that another male is with him on the picture shows that he is a social person and spends time with others. However, since they are standing next to each other without touching, thus do not actively engaging with each other gives no hints for a very close relationship rather a more reserved personality.

Picture 3

This photo pictures Anton a sitting position. The picture is slightly out of focus, therefore background details are not identifiable. Nevertheless, it can be seen that he is inside a building, since the silhouette of a person and a blackboard with the word "rosmarin" the German word for rosemary are visible behind him. Thus one can assume that the he is in a restaurant. Anton is portraying his profile from the side since he is not looking into the camera. The picture shows him up close, thus it can be assumed that he is aware of being photographed and is posing for the unknown photographer. His stiff face expression which does not show any emotions lets him appear distanced and emotionless. Further, he is wearing a casual t-shirt with the print "You can't sit with us". This relatively harsh statement indicates that he only wants to be surrounded by certain people and in combination with his distanced pose it might even be interpreted as arrogant. His t-shirt is relatively tight, therefore offering the viewer an indication of his body shape, that he is trained and in good shape. Since he chose this picture for Tinder he wants to signal this to potential mates.

Picture 4

This picture presents Anton sitting on an office chair in front of a window and he has a dog in his lap. He is wearing a button-down shirt under a pullover, which is a slightly formal outfit. He is sitting inside a building in an office chair, which indicates that he is in an office or in another formal environment. Anton is not looking into the camera but focusing on the dog. He has a slightly open mouth and a serious face expression which indicates that he is talking with the dog. His left hand is point out in the direction of the photographer. The serious face expression and the pointing gestures indicates that he is either scolding the dog and wants him to move from his lab, or is trying to make him look into the camera. He appears to have a very strict and serious character. However, he does not look very angry or annoyed which indicates that he generally like dogs since he actively chose this picture for his Tinder profile. The more formal clothes and the relatively big watch on his wrist indicates that Anton likes to dress up and present himself in a fashionable way. Since the watch is a status symbol and he is wearing

a relatively big one indicates a masculine character and that he likes to present some kind of wealth or status.

Composition of the pictures:

Reflecting on the composition of the pictures, Anton is presenting himself as a relatively serious and controlled person. Out of four pictures only one pictures shows him smiling on all the others he has a relatively stiff or emotionless expression. Dressing in a good and formal way seems to be important for him, since he is wearing button-down shirts on three pictures and even a suit in one picture. All pictures clearly show is physical appearance, both picture one and three are relatively close face shots indicating that he is confident and satisfied with his appearance. He does not have any intention to hide special aspects of his face and wants to provide a real and accurate reflection of his appearance. All pictures are taken in relatively neutral environments giving no hints about any hobbies or personality aspects. Only the fact that he uploaded a picture with a dog gives some hints that he might like these animals. However, this picture does not give any clear indication in what connection he stands to the dog, if he enjoys being with him or scolding at him. Considering these aspects Anton comes across not as an overly emotional, cheerful or humorous person but remains relatively anonymous for the user since his pictures do not provide many cues for further interpretation.

Case 7: Zach

Profile Picture

In the first picture Zach is shown from the front. He is photographed before a plain black wall, indicating that this picture is taken in a more professional context. One can see Zach's whole body and that he is wear a suit and tie, this suggests the picture was taken in a more formal occasion. He is looking directly into the camera, and the fact that one can see his whole body and his body posture suggest that the picture was taken by someone else. The image portrays Zach in a slightly unusual posture. He is holding a whisky glass in one hand and the other is flexed as if he were showing off his muscles, raising his fist in the air. He has a strong expression in his face, staring at a point slightly next to the camera and has the mouth open as if he were shout. The whole gesture looks very masculine and serious. However, considering his body shape and posture one can identify that he is actually not intensively trained and the fact that he is posing in that way in a suite and in front of a photographer indicates that he making fun of this masculine posing. It indicates that he is a humorous and ironic person, who does not take

himself too seriously. Since he has chosen this picture as his first profile picture one can assume that being funny and self-ironic is an important aspect of his personality and wants to bring across immediately. The formal clothes also indicate that he likes to dress up.

Picture 2

The second picture shows a close-up of Zach's face from the left side. Since his head is turned away from the camera his profile is visible which fills out the entire profile. He is either looking down or has his eyes closed which makes him appear deep in thought but not necessarily aware that the photo in taken. His relaxed facial expression and his downward view let him look delicate and present himself as a soft, sensitive or even dreamy person. The applied black and white filter makes the picture more distinctive but also gives it a thoughtful and intriguing mood. Furthermore, the close portray of his picture indicates that he wants to clearly present how he looks like. But this picture does not offer further cues which can be interpreted by the viewer. The fact that he is not looking into the camera makes him appear more detached to the viewer, since he is not actively looking towards the picture to the audiences.

Picture 3

In this picture, Zach is portrayed from the front. Considering the background of the picture where other people, chairs and tables are visible, it looks like that he is sitting at a table in a cafe or restaurant. One can see his body up to his chest, his arms are resting on the table. The distance from which the photograph is taken and the relaxed posture of Zach indicates that someone else took the picture. Zach is smiling broadly and looking directly into the camera. He appears to be a very happy and cheerful person, enjoying the situation he is in. His body posture with his arms resting on the table in front him make him appear relaxed. Moreover, his clothes signal a very casual occasion since he is wearing a hoody and has tousled hair supports the claim of his easy-going character.

Picture 4

The fourth picture shows Zach from the right side up to his waist. He is wearing a jacket with a hoody and sunglasses. In the background one can see water, most likely the ocean and in the far distance some islands or the mainland. Further, on the right side one can see a bridge crossing to the mainland. In combination with the metal balustrade behind Zach it suggests that Zach is on a boat. With his hands he is holding a beer bottle to his eyes and looking through it. This posture reminds on the picture of a captain, looking through a telescope. He is smirking in

the picture. His posture together with his face expression indicates that he wants to present himself in a funny way, symbolising that he is a funny and humorous person, since he is using the bottle as binoculars. It also adds some touch of adventurous spirit and that he likes to be active and outside. Due to him not looking into the camera, is smirking and wearing sunglasses the viewer cannot identify much of his physical appearance.

Picture

The fifth picture is a black and white picture and shows Zach from his side and again from a very close perspective. He is holding a glass in his hand and he is looking to the right, and away from the camera. This indicates that the picture was taken by someone else and that Zach might not be aware that the picture was taken in the first place. In the background one can see a mirror with some writing on it, which might suggest that the picture was taken inside most likely in a bar. In comparison with picture 2 which also shows him from such a close angle, this one looks less staged, it appears like he is looking at another person, listening to him/her instead of being deeply into thoughts. His relaxed face expression indicates that he is feeling comfortable in the situation.

Composition of pictures

When looking at the composition of the pictures one can see that Zach presents different themes in his pictures and portrays himself from different perspectives. The third indicates that he wants to show different sides of his character. On the one side pictures like his first and fourth photo show that he is a funny guy and has a humorous side, whereas on the other side the black and white pictures show that he is also a serious guy and thoughtful. This might indicate that one can have fun with him but also have more serious conversations. Furthermore, the picture with the bottle also shows that he likes to be outdoors and be active. The fact that he chose to upload two very close profile pictures indicates that he want to offer a clear impression of how he looks likes. However, since both pictures are edited with a black and white filter and from such a close perspective the pictures already just offer pieces of his overall impression. The open smile on picture three presents him as happy person whereas picture two indicates that he is a thoughtful and sensitive person as well. The fact that he took a very masculine meaning of the pose of picture one into a funnier one makes him self-ironic.