

From 'Like' to Love: How Brands Can Woo Users on Messaging and Dating Apps

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Dating goes digital

The generation accustomed to communicating at all times is coming of age and bringing the same attitude to their romantic lives.

“I think in the time I was in a relationship, all dating communication went exclusively to text. You can’t call anybody anymore. If you call someone, they’re like ‘What? Are you on fire? Then quit wasting my time. Text me that [stuff].”

– Aziz Ansari, Comedian



Credit: [Comedy Central](#)

We heart mobile dating apps

Online dating services and apps are an increasingly common way to meet potential mates:

- 1 in 3 single Americans have used an **online dating service**
- 1 in 6 couples married in the last three years **met online**

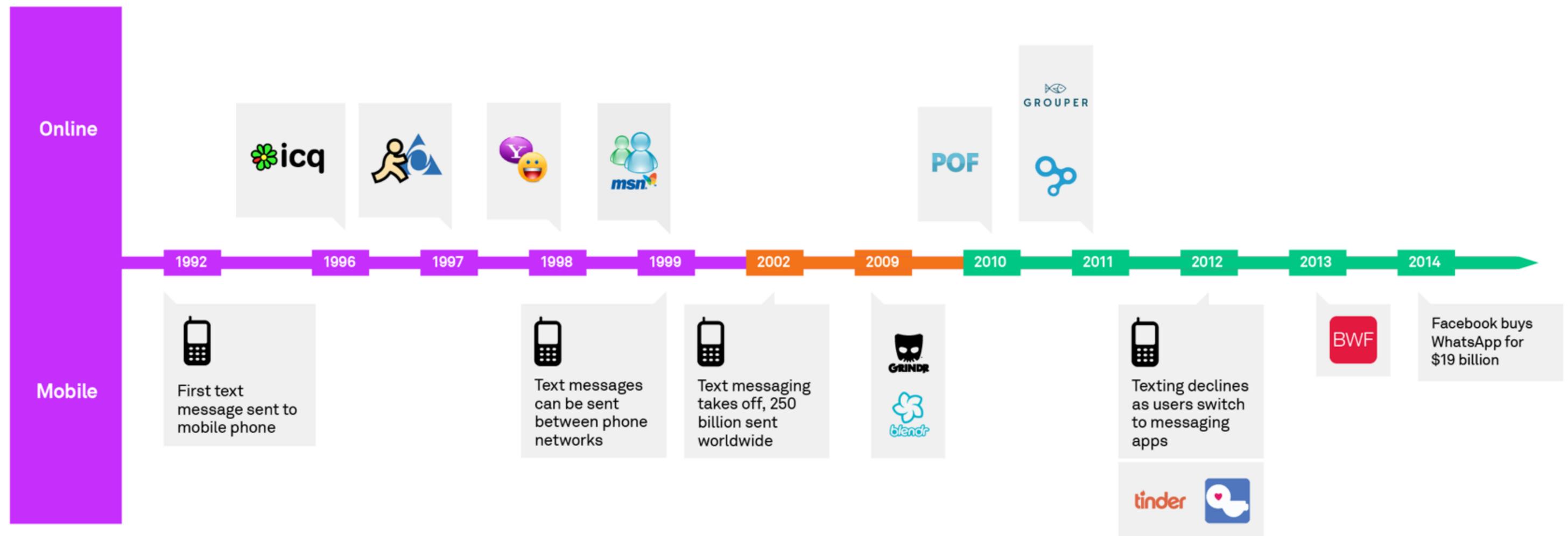
COMPARISON OF INTERACTIONS



Graph Sources: marketingland.com/founders-whisper-tinder-75424; www.internetlivestats.com

Sources: www.pewinternet.org/2013/10/21/online-dating-relationships/
cp.match.com/cppp/media/CMB_Study.pdf

Dating apps moved to mobile as messaging apps began to proliferate



But it's not just dating apps

Dating apps, social networks, and messaging apps are blurring as people seek, create, and document new relationships:

- **Glimpse** connects people based on their Instagram photos
- **LinkedUp** turns the professional site into a dating platform
- **Kik** users share usernames instead of digits on multiple platforms

What's going on here?

As we noted in our white paper on [Messaging Apps](#), messaging platforms are fighting for consumers and introducing new features to increase audience engagement. People will continue to move to messaging apps to escape the pressure of social networks, so it's only natural other human behaviors, like flirting, will emerge in these ecosystems.

Why is mobile dating so popular?

It's how people normally communicate

- People are accustomed to using their mobiles to communicate whenever, wherever
- Their private nature (one-to-one communication) means people don't have to feel they are performing for their whole social network

It's easy

- No extensive questionnaires or quizzes; just photos and basic information to judge initial interest
- Mutual liking requirement reduces spam
- Swiping motion to approve or reject suitors is almost effortless

It feels safe

- Exchanging usernames, rather than phone numbers, gives users more control
- The ability to block a user limits harassment
- Using photos and information pulled from other social media profiles gives users more credibility

How can brands connect with dating app users?

Where audiences go, brands follow, especially when those audiences are young and hard to find on traditional media. As a result, several brands are experimenting with the best ways to reach people on messaging apps. The combination of brands, messaging, and dating is creating some unusual results, as seen in the following examples.

TV characters look for (audience) love

In an effort to reach the 20- and 30-something audience, characters from television shows are showing up on dating apps. “The Mindy Project” and “Suits,” have created profiles for their main characters and allow limited chat opportunities with users, while “The Walking Dead” created Tinder profiles of women who slowly morphed into zombies. HBO’s “Girls,” meanwhile, joined Snapchat to promote its third season.

”The Mindy Project” Profile



Image: [Huffington Post](#)

”Suits” Profile

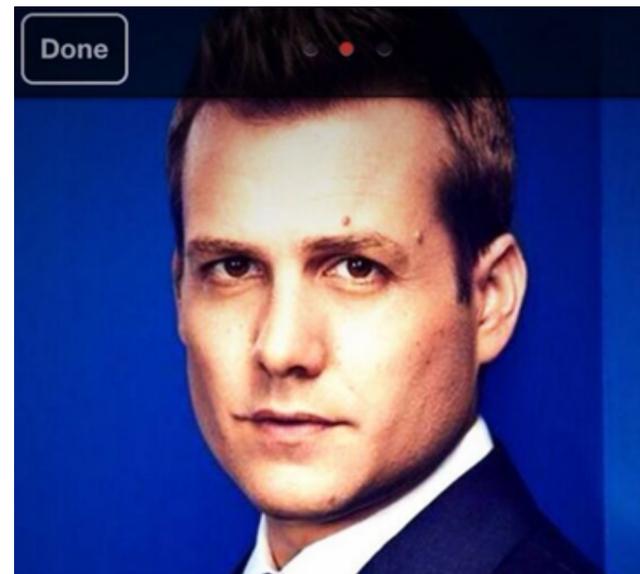


Image: [AdAge](#)

“The Walking Dead” Profile



Image: [Stop Press](#)

“Girls” Snapchat



Image: [Mashable](#)

Politicians are canvassing for votes

Two Dutch politicians from the D66 party uploaded their profiles to Grindr (a dating app targeting gay and bisexual men) to get votes in the March 2014 elections. They made clear that they were only looking for votes, not dates, and the medium turned into an effective way to discuss political issues with their constituents.

According to Jan-Bert Vroege, one of the candidates, he received 35 to 40 messages a day during the campaign.

Sources: [Vice](#), [Politiek](#)

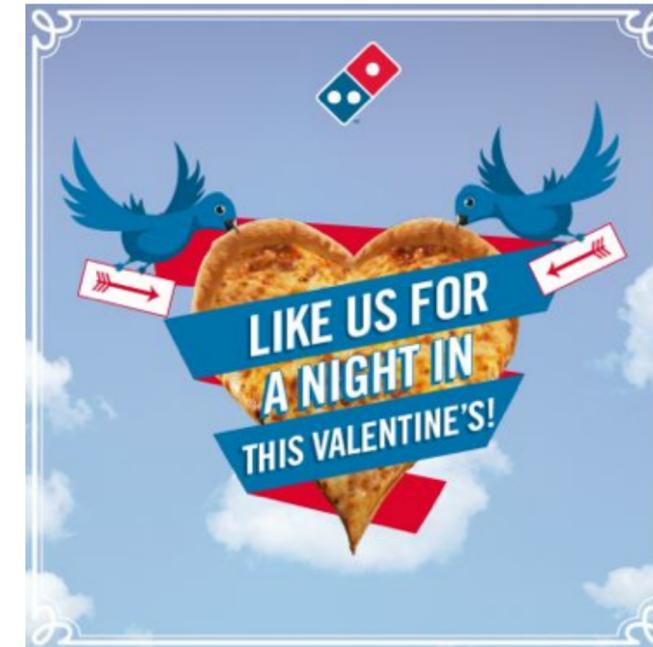


Retailers are also looking to get in on the action

Retailers and restaurants face a challenge in the dating app world in that they don't have a "face"—a recognizable spokesperson that people can connect to. Instead, they tend to rely on special offers. Valentine's Day in particular is a popular day for brands to get attention on dating apps: both Domino's and Australia's General Pants Co. invited Tinder users to connect for discounts.

[HowAboutWe Couples](#) has taken a different tactic, expanding on their online offering: they offer special deals on activities and restaurants to users. Their new mobile app will allow them to offer more location- and time-specific offers to couples looking to change up their routine.

Sources: [Marketing Magazine](#), [MUmBRELLA](#)



A rectangular advertisement for General Pants Co. The main visual is a black and white photograph of a person's back, showing their waist and the back of their jeans. The text "GET IN MY PANTS" is written in large, bold, black letters on the left side. Below this, the text reads: "GENERAL PANTS CO. ARE GIVING YOU 20% OFF DENIM FOR VALENTINE'S DAY!*". Further down, it says: "SO WHY DON'T YOU GET INTO A NEW PAIR OF PANTS? SIMPLY SHOW YOUR TINDER PROFILE AT ANY GENERAL PANTS CO. STORE NATIONALLY." At the bottom, it includes the General Pants Co. logo and the Tinder logo. The text "YOUR GLOBAL TREND HUNTERS" is written in small letters below the General Pants Co. logo. A small disclaimer at the bottom reads: "*MINIMUM SPEND \$100. NOT VALID ONLINE. VALID TILL SUNDAY 16TH FEB".

Brands make a connection with couples

[HowAboutWe Couples](#) has taken a different tactic, expanding on their online offering: they offer special deals on activities and restaurants to users. Their new mobile app will allow them to offer more location- and time-specific offers to couples looking to change up their routine.



**YOU
& ME**

AN APP FOR YOUR
RELATIONSHIP

— CREATED BY —
howaboutwe...

GET THE FREE APP

How can my brand get involved?

1. Understand who the face of your company is
2. Determine the right interaction and the right platform
3. Keep it simple to avoid negative feedback

1. Understand who the face of your company is

Messaging apps are typically used for communication between individuals, not between individuals and impersonal brands. As a result, brands with recognizable personalities—celebrities, bands, television characters, spokespeople—are a natural fit for messaging platforms. Brand consistency is also important: ideally, users should recognize the personality from the real world, rather than as an app-specific character. In “The Mindy Project,” for instance, Mindy’s character referenced using Tinder, making it appropriate that she would then appear in the app itself. If your brand doesn’t have a clear spokesperson or point of view, messaging apps may not be the best channel for reaching customers.

For your consideration:

- What character or personality is readily identifiable with your brand?
- Why would it make sense for your spokesperson to appear on a messaging app?
- How can messaging app activities be reflected in other channels?

2. Determine the right interaction and the right platform

Once you've determined who will represent your brand on messaging apps, you must consider the response you want to elicit from users, as well as how your brand will respond. Most brands that have appeared on messaging apps have minimal, one-time interaction: either a reminder to watch their show (as in Suits) or a discount on a purchase (like Domino's Valentine's Day offer). What makes messaging apps exciting, though, is the opportunity to carry on a conversation over time: the Dutch politicians who appeared on Grindr, for example, actively encouraged people to start political conversations with them. Although this takes more planning, brands that move towards more personalized responses will be rewarded with more engaged users.

For your consideration:

- What is the end goal of your brand appearing on messaging apps?
- What is the expected length of interaction?
- How much moderation or personalization are you willing or able to dedicate to the app?

3. Keep it simple to avoid negative feedback

Messaging apps are a place for people to connect with friends. Since these apps are still relatively new, they are largely free of advertising, so any advertising is currently a novel, positive experience at best, and easy to ignore at worst. As more marketers join messaging apps—which they will, as most apps need advertiser support to make money—the “signal to noise” ratio will decrease. To maintain relevance, marketers must focus on the **value exchange**: offer people a discount, a sneak peek, or even a funny moment to reward people for their attention.

For your consideration:

- What does your brand have to offer on messaging apps that people can't get elsewhere?
- How can you minimize intrusion in the messaging experience?
- What will keep people excited to see your messages over time?

Curious about other applications of messaging apps?

Check out the IPG Media Lab's latest white paper, [“Messaging Apps: The New Face of Social Media and What It Means for Brands.”](#)

Thanks!

We hope you've found this POV interesting and provocative. If you have questions or want to talk more about the future of media, please contact us:

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