

How Has the Internet Changed the Dating Industry?



Note from Daniel Dourado

Why was this piece written? This was a 24-hour challenge to research & write a click-worthy article for an agency. This impressed their in-house moderators for being well-researched, well-structured and for wrapping SEO trends/keywords in an engaging article.

Welcome to the magical kingdom of 1995.

Please rise for the National Anthem, 'Gangsta's Paradise', and bust the Macarena as the National Dance. Pogs are legal tender, Brad Pitt is People Magazine's sexiest man alive, Braveheart wins five Academy awards.

And [Match.com](https://www.match.com) is born with the new World Wide Web.

From OK Computer to OKCupid

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A stigma developed early for internet dating as something shameful and potentially dangerous, since so little information was available. 25 years later, as the Coronavirus turns the world online, the dating industry has transformed.

Celebrities that have used online dating include Adele trying [eharmony](#), Mariah Carey [singing about Match](#) and Lindsay Lohan finding her brother's profile on [Tinder](#). Tinder alone now has 50 million users worldwide – if it were a country it would have a population larger than Spain. [The latest figures from Pew](#) show 30% of Americans have used a dating site or app and 12% found a committed relationship or marriage through online dating.

There is proof that the internet has been successful for millions of people in the short *and* long term, and for many online dating is just another channel for finding love.

Love in the Millennial Age

It is easy to see the appeal. The pool of potential partners from internet dating is vast to the point of overwhelming. It saves time and money. In just your day-to-day experience, who could you reasonably make an intimate connection with beyond your friendship circle, beyond your workplace, beyond your weekend outings, or beyond embarrassing family match-making attempts at the annual barbecue? Online dating has destroyed the social and physical barriers limiting the options for romance.

Yes, even the role of friends in setting up romance is being displaced, which is one of the most unexpected impacts of online dating according to [Stanford sociologist Michael Rosenfeld](#).

Happy Friendship Day, by the way! You no longer have to be a wingman.

Even in just 2009, people were still using friends to help set up online dating profiles. Now, with mobile phones providing an instant and very personal user experience, the role of friends as matchmakers is being passed over.

(IMAGE FROM 'FRIENDS' TV SHOW)

CAPTION: *Well, we know Friends has not been relevant since 1995.*

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This social barrier breakdown has had huge success in particular for LGBT adults, where the percentage of relationships that started online skew highest, up to 70% in America. This is even over the 18-to-29 year old demographic. In 2014, [OKCupid](#) were the first to make 22 genders and 13 sexual orientations available on their app, which led to an explosion in popularity.

Many apps have a niche to narrow down for easier connections as the potential for partners *is* so overwhelming: [HER](#) for queer women, [Happn](#) for relentlessly busy people, [Christian Connection](#) for people named Christian (okay, for religious dating). Some go even further down to the level of hobbyists and other personal identifiers.

A Swipe Right or A Swipe Wrong?

Once on the site, matching is down to the algorithms. Unlike in the 90s, information is abundant – people are connecting their public profiles to their Instagram and Twitter pages.

The dating scene is still full of strangers, but now they are strangers with a product description. They share their history and their choice selfies showing that one angle they insist is their best side.

There's an unspoken promise of a new level of safety and something to talk about on that first date. The worries of *how* to meet someone become *who* to meet out of all these prospects, allowing people to reflect more on what their ideal partner would be by their interests, their personality and their looks.

However, an environment of strangers can lead to a problem that has plagued social media since it started - the dehumanising effect.

Follow the Trail of Breadcrumbs

The language of online dating tells its own story.

Terms like 'Ghosting' and 'Submarining', which sound like terrible B-Movies, are actually for people disappearing without a trace midway through courting.

There's the recent 'Breadcrumbing', people seeking gratuitous bites of attention with no intention of actually dating. Just returning to flirt when things are going slow for them.

And there's the ever-present threat of 'Catfishing', where people construct entirely fictional profiles for scamming purposes.

In Pew's research, 71% of online daters say it is common for people to lie on their profiles to appear more desirable, meaning it has been experienced by an massive majority. *"Some experts contend that the open nature of online dating — that is, the fact that many users are strangers to one another — has created a less civil dating environment and therefore makes it difficult to hold people accountable for their behavior."*

So, while women receive the abundance of attention over men in online dating, they also receive the abundance of harassment.

Notifications and swipes provide a dopamine rush, and many apps like Tinder are successful *because* of their gameification.

The Grass is Always Greener

One question continues to arise about internet dating and the industry: does it make people less keen to commit, knowing that there is such a large pool of potential partners out there? There are even sites like Ashley Madison that are open and up-front about being specifically for extramarital affairs.

Is there not a contradiction in an industry touting the success of delivering long-term relationships when its own financial success is banking on people continuing to date?

While the initial part of the dating game can certainly cause choice paralysis in some, the research into long term relationships does not seem to point that way, at least for now. In America, which has a booming dating industry, marriages from internet dating are rated slightly happier and less likely to break-up after a year together.

When asked about this by [The Atlantic](#), Eli Finkel, a professor of psychology at Northwestern, quoted a 1997 paper on the subject:

“Even if the grass is greener elsewhere, happy gardeners may not notice.”

More wise words from the 90’s.

SOURCES

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