

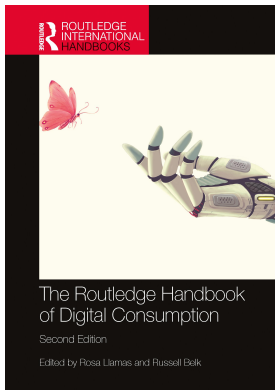
This article was downloaded by: 10.2.97.136

On: 01 Apr 2023

Access details: *subscription number*

Publisher: *Routledge*

Informa Ltd Registered in England and Wales Registered Number: 1072954 Registered office: 5 Howick Place, London SW1P 1WG, UK



The Routledge Handbook of Digital Consumption

Rosa Llamas, Russell Belk

Capitalist Subjectivity, Tinder, and the Emotionalization of the Web

Publication details

<https://test.routledgehandbooks.com/doi/10.4324/9781003317524-22>

Eva Illouz, Dan M. Kotliar

Published online on: 26 Sep 2022

How to cite :- Eva Illouz, Dan M. Kotliar. 26 Sep 2022, *Capitalist Subjectivity, Tinder, and the Emotionalization of the Web from: The Routledge Handbook of Digital Consumption* Routledge
Accessed on: 01 Apr 2023

<https://test.routledgehandbooks.com/doi/10.4324/9781003317524-22>

PLEASE SCROLL DOWN FOR DOCUMENT

Full terms and conditions of use: <https://test.routledgehandbooks.com/legal-notices/terms>

This Document PDF may be used for research, teaching and private study purposes. Any substantial or systematic reproductions, re-distribution, re-selling, loan or sub-licensing, systematic supply or distribution in any form to anyone is expressly forbidden.

The publisher does not give any warranty express or implied or make any representation that the contents will be complete or accurate or up to date. The publisher shall not be liable for an loss, actions, claims, proceedings, demand or costs or damages whatsoever or howsoever caused arising directly or indirectly in connection with or arising out of the use of this material.

18

CAPITALIST SUBJECTIVITY, TINDER, AND THE EMOTIONALIZATION OF THE WEB

Eva Illouz and Dan M. Kotliar

While the early days of the internet were characterized by a clear techno-optimist sentiment, today, in stark contrast, it is primarily being driven by unprecedented profit. It is a place that is characterized by (and dependent on) mass surveillance (Lyon 2003; Zuboff 2019); a place where political and social control are exercised through online platforms (Vaidhyanaathan 2018), where algorithmic systems serve as engines of polarization, discrimination, and inequality (Eubanks 2018; Noble 2018); and as ripe grounds for the creation and spread of dis- and misinformation (Marwick and Lewis 2017).

While the reasons behind this shift are numerous, one of the key explanations to the quick derailment of this enterprise can be found in the logic of capitalism, and particularly, in the ties between capitalism and mass surveillance. According to Shoshana Zuboff (2019), surveillance capitalism claims human experience as raw material for translation into behavioral data. This data is then declared as a “proprietary behavioral surplus” and is fabricated into prediction products that are traded in “behavioral futures markets” (ibid). That is, today’s internet produces “a form of ‘social’ that is ready for appropriation and exploitation for value as data” (Couldry and Mejias 2019: 338).

However, capitalism is more than mere flows of capital (or data). Rather, capitalism is a complex, multi-faceted phenomenon, made up of various, often conflicting elements, whose advent and sustainment are deeply related to emotions (Illouz 2007, 2008, 2012). This article follows this path and explores the role emotions play in the relationship between the internet and ourselves, and the ways in which our deepest desires, our innermost affects are getting digitally turned into capital. More specifically, by focusing on the complex interrelations between the internet and the subject, we ask: What are the ties between capitalist subjectivity and online emotions? What makes subjectivity so smoothly and seamlessly interweave with the online fabric of the internet? How do hookup apps afford specific kinds of emotionality? And how do they change and disrupt love? But first, what is capitalist subjectivity?

Capitalist Subjectivity

Capitalism contains multiple logics: the logic of commodification (transforming an ever increasing number of services and objects into commodities exchanged for money), the logic of marketing (deciding which commodities to sell to whom and how), the logic of advertising

(creating and focusing consumers' attention), the logic of branding (making commodities singular and personal), the logic of quantification (introducing metrics in order to make production, consumption, and marketing more efficient), the logic of standardization (producing according to standards), and the logic of obsolescence and innovation (innovation based on destruction). All of these constitute capitalism's ways of thinking about reifying and reconstructing subjects, objects, and the relationships between them.

Subjectivity can be defined in a dual way, both as that which designates how we are being subjectified (how we are made the subjects that we are by different power structures), and how we are made into active, willful subjects. Foucault's quasi entire oeuvre consisted in showing that these two aspects are inseparable and are deeply connected to modern subjectivity (Foucault 1967, 1977, 2004, 2005). The former enacts the forms of modern power wielded by the state and the market, and the latter enacts autonomy, reason, and freedom. Emotions are crucial to any definition of subjectivity because they both help define and discipline human subjects, and at the very same time, they constitute the nuts and bolts of volition, will, and desire. Through emotions, we are both subjectified and empowered.

Capitalism and Emotions

Emotions are also the building blocks of social interactions, and thus, of social life. They contain and enact the moral frameworks through which people understand and interpret their social environment, and they point to the rules and expectations through which actors shape their relationships to others. Emotions are, thus, not only properties of the subject's inner psyche but also components of social structures and social action that are continually being shaped by material, cultural, and economic forces (Ahmed 2004; Illouz 2019; Skeggs 2012). Emotional life has also become deeply intertwined with the goals and strategies of capitalism, both on the production and the consumption side. Throughout the 20th century, a good part of the economy has directly catered to the management, production, quantification, and modification of emotions, and accordingly, emotions have become deeply intertwined with the economy (Berezin 2005; Illouz 2007; Zelizer 2005), and the economy has become central to the formation of emotional subjects.

Given the importance of emotions for such key phenomena as political identification (Gould 2009; Kotliar 2016), pairing and marriage (Illouz 1998; Zelizer 2005), work (Hochschild 1979), or consumer behavior (Illouz 2009), understanding the changing nature of emotions is a fundamental task in untangling the ties between capitalism, subjectivity, and the internet. After all, in the history of capitalist subjectivity, the internet marks a new stage and invites us to think about how emotions are being constructed, constrained, and exploited online, and how this relatively new socio-technical environment impacts (and is being impacted by) our emotional life. That is, the internet marks a new stage in the history of the reification and exploitation of the emotional subject by and through capitalism, a stage we may characterize as the emotionalization of the internet and technologization of feelings.

The Emotionalization of the Internet

The emotionalization of the internet is manifest in at least three different levels: first, social networks make considerable efforts to mimic close interpersonal interactions and their attendant emotionality: emojis codify and visualize a growing set of emotions (Stark and Crawford 2015); GIFs rearticulate some of our basic communicative mechanisms (Miltner and Highfield 2017); and mobile applications for emotional self-management (Johnson 2014;

Stark 2020), online psychological services (Clough and Casey 2015), or hookup apps (Albury et al. 2017; Sumter and Vandenbosch 2018) increasingly harness our emotions to the online sphere. Accordingly, with the move to user-generated content (or Web 2.0) and social network sites (SNS), emotions have started to play a role in the design of the web itself (Alloing, Pierre, and Casilli 2017). At the same time, big tech corporations have become highly aware of the emotional dimension of the products they create; and they increasingly encourage users to use their platforms to express, manage, learn about, and communicate emotions (Arvidsson and Colleoni 2012). People's "likes," their "reactions," and their GIFs have become a quotidian, even banal activity, but at the same time, they constitute an important part of the interface between the economic and emotional spheres.

Furthermore, users' facial, linguistic, and vocal emotional expressions are increasingly being quantified and "mined" by companies in order to profile users and "personalize" the contents or offers they see and receive (Lury and Day 2019; McStay 2016). In fact, companies perpetually seek ways to algorithmically access users' emotional spheres, by gaining access to an allegedly pre-discursive, more authentic, and hence, a more lucrative aspect of the subject (Andrejevic 2013; Cheney-Lippold 2017; Kotliar 2020a).

Finally, the internet mediates between the market and the experience of emotions through a long list of "emotional" services: our ability to find a partner, communicate with our loved ones, and even reach "inner peace" all increasingly depend upon online services that mediate and afford people's innermost emotional experiences.

But the ties between capitalism and emotions are by no means new. Throughout the 20th century, consumers' emotions were tapped by marketers (Cohen 2003; Rose and Miller 2008; Trentmann 2006); and the workplace harnessed workers' creative and emotional self to immaterial labor (Weeks 2007). Even more significantly perhaps, a good part of the economy catered directly to the management, production, or modification of emotions. In other words, emotions have become sub-species of commodities, or, as Illouz dubbed it – *Emodities* (Illouz 2017). Emodities are consumer goods designed as emotional experiences – commodities which aim at eliciting (and producing) a segment of the very subjectivity of the consumer. Examples of such purchasable affects are mood-inducing music for elevators or hotel lobbies; "anger-management" workshop, "romantic holiday resorts," a mood-enhancing pill, a short grief therapy service, and many more. In these examples, specific emotional experiences (or, at the very least, a promise of such experiences) are purchased through expert services, consumer spaces, or consumer technologies (Illouz 2017). But the advent of the internet has ushered in a new kind of emodities, a kind we term *techno-emodities*. These are commodified emotions that are deeply interrelated with technological, web-based systems. Techno-emodities once again use traditional forms of subjectivity to produce profit (for example, the affective work that is embedded in social media platforms), but in opposition to more traditional emodities, techno-emodities simultaneously promise to consume a particular emotion and feed consumers' emotions back into the system – only to nudge them back into consumption. In other words, with techno-emodities, technology elicits and activates an emotional response at the very same time as users' emotions get datafied.

Techno-emodities are evident in the staggering number of mobile apps designed to improve users' "emotional performance," alter their emotional state or mood, generate "new" emotions (happiness, concentration, or relaxation for example), or dispose of existing ones (anger or grief). At the time of writing, over a 1,000 meditation apps are on offer on "Google Play Store," joining similar numbers of anger management apps, psychological counseling apps, and more. Thus, emotions are key factors in the digitalization of social life, as they get

commodified and prosumed as techno-emodities. We will now turn to illustrate this point with a brief examination of Tinder.

Tinder as a Techno-Emodity

Founded in 2012, Tinder is a location-based dating app that allows users to like (swipe right) or dislike (swipe left) other users, and chat if both parties liked each other (also known as “a match”). Users’ profiles usually include their picture, their age, their distance from you, and a short bio. Reportedly, Tinder currently has 57 million users across 190 countries, and it is available in 40 different languages. In the 9 years since Tinder’s launch, over 20 billion matches were made; on average, users make 1.5 billion swipes a day, and following their matches, users go on 1 million dates per week (Iqbal 2019). This article offers to understand this particular type of technologically mediated sociality that simultaneously targets users’ emotions while turning them into techno-emodities. We will argue that this techno-emodity is deeply disruptive of ordinary modes of sociality.

Disruption has been widely discussed as a principle of the economy. Clayton Christensen coined the term in 1995 (Bower and Christensen 1995), and it has since been enthusiastically adopted by the business and tech community to refer either to technological innovation per se, to a disruptive business model, or to a disruption of the infrastructure supporting the technology. In the case before us, Tinder primarily disrupts the infrastructure of encounters – how, where, how quickly people meet – and thus, to this extent, it is a disruption of romantic relationships that more broadly disrupts the very fabric of sociality.

As Appadurai and Alexander recently put it (2019), while destruction gets rid of previous norms of relationships, disruption keeps previous norms – such as romantic love – but changes the infrastructure of encounters so much that it constantly disrupts the basic emotional infrastructure of love. The ideal is kept, but the social resources and infrastructure to live by, or reach the ideal, are often dramatically altered. But how does this disruption work? And what does it consist of? We have identified five ways in which the techno-emoditization of emotions by Tinder disrupts sociality – ways in which this app enlists people’s emotions, and their quest for emotional experiences, as resources for contemporary capitalism.

Scopic Capitalism and the Visualization of Selfhood

Perhaps, the most salient feature of hookup apps like Tinder is the prominence of visibility in modes of self-presentation and evaluation (Chan 2018). Indeed, face-to-face interactions were almost always visual, but online visibility is disruptive of face-to-face visibility because it is mediated by photography, and more specifically, self-directed photography – the shots people take of themselves to present themselves to others. Tinder revolves around an interaction with a fixed image of the self that has been meticulously engineered by the self.

Tinder’s self-produced images can be seen as adopting the iconographic conventions of advertising and self-branding (David and Cambre 2016, 4). It is a visibility that is the result of the symbiosis of the beauty-fashion-media industries, which generate endlessly reproduceable models of attractiveness and sexiness, diffused through various social groups associated with those industries. Fashion designers, stylists, models, actors, photographers, women’s magazine editors, cosmeticians, hairdressers, movie makers, and many more – have been promoting visual appearance as a tradable commodity for decades and are the engine of what Illouz has called *scopic capitalism* (Illouz 2019) – a capitalism which creates a formidable economic value through the spectacularization of sexuality, and its

transformation into an image that circulates in different markets. Visuality turns the body into a commodity – a consumable object shaped by a consumer logic. It is converted into an asset in the productive sphere of labor as an image to be sold in various visual industries; and it can circulate in media technologies through an economy of attention and reputation. That is, in scopic capitalism, the “look” is a form of self-investment which circulates along networks of money and sexuality. These networks produce *scopic markets*, where value is created through the valuation of images of sexual bodies destined to be consumed by the gaze.

According to GlobalWebIndex (GWI), 85% of Tinder users agreed with the statement “I look after my appearance/image,” 63% like to keep up with the latest fashions, while 58% consider themselves to “be much more affluent than the average” (Mcgrath 2015). In other words, Tinder, in its basic structure, constructs its users as commodities – designed in line with scopic models of beauty and fashion, as well as high consumers of others’ appearances. Tinder is not a platform to show others who you are, but it is a platform to advance the photographization of the self, the pressure to conform to still shots modeled by the ideals of advertising and media industries. That is, Tinder’s self is in osmosis with the consumer culture which produced it.

Visualization is also closely tied to another central feature of this app – quick judgment. Visualization mobilizes snap, instantaneous evaluations, objects are typically apprehended and evaluated visually in a matter of milliseconds. As cognitive psychologists have shown (Kirchner and Thorpe 2006), a visual evaluation is a type of cognition that is “fast and frugal,” it relies on and needs little information to form a preference toward an object (Conlin 2009; Jacob and Jeannerod 2003; Kahneman 2011). Because of the speed of visual evaluation, actors will tend to seek and privilege conventional features of attractiveness, which have been codified in media images and fashion industries (cleavage, narrow waist, long legs, blond hair, fair and smooth skin, thinness, etc.). The speed of visual evaluation also makes sexual evaluation a relatively non-interactive feature. Contrary to traditional recognition which demands a symbolic and social exchange, visual evaluation can in principle take place without any significant interaction and be one-sided. It is mediated by the gaze of the evaluator who instantly decides who is attractive and who is not.

A third feature of visual evaluation, connected again to its speed, is that it transforms the attribution of worth into a binary process: a person is either hot or not, attractive or unattractive (David and Cambre 2016, 4). Users are expected to know instantly – are they attracted to someone (as he or she is represented in their profile picture) or not; can they feel something toward that someone, or not. This binary emotional logic seems much closer to the workings of a computer processor (with its zeros and ones) than what is traditionally seen as a relational communication between two humans.

Indeed, Tinder’s main technological innovation consists precisely in enabling speed and binarity. Swiping right or left demands a quick form of consumerist evaluation that is overwhelmingly based on visibility, enabling fast selection, fast interaction, more efficiently geared to sexually desirable partners. Persons become bodies, moving and speaking bodies become still images, and evaluation itself becomes an instantaneous act of evaluating a still shot, making emotional and sexual attraction into a punctual, quick, and discrete “yes” or “no,” and creating a seamless harmony between the objectifying visualization of sexual personhood and technology.

That is, the speed, one-sidedness, and binary character of visual representation are becoming formalized and institutionalized by hookup apps like Tinder, turning persons into techno-emodities – consumable promises for an emotional (and sexual) experience. Emotion

and capitalism, thus, get intertwined through scopic capitalism – the heightened focus on visibility is a way to swiftly and efficiently extract value from people’s emotions.

Velocity and Abundance

The ability to choose between potential partners with a mere swipe of your finger enables incredible velocity in partner selection, and accordingly, the endless flow of profiles offers an unparalleled abundance of potential partners. As a Tinder representative explained in an interview to *Time Magazine*:

While traditional dating sites require extended periods of time in front of the desktop writing and browsing long bios, Tinder can be played in short bursts on the go. It also values efficiency (and this generation’s comfort with releasing personal information online) by importing profile information directly from Facebook including name, age, interests, and most importantly mutual friends. And thus, romance has become a second screen experience.

(Stampler 2014)

The velocity, abundance, and “efficiency” of this app posit an emotional self that is mobile, liquid (Bauman 2013), unattached, “on the go.” It offers a quick and “efficient” process of mating that demands little effort and can connect to other apps or social networks (e.g. Instagram), and hence, to the categories of self that are represented in those apps. This structure also overwhelmingly increases the number of possible choices users face. In fact, choice and efficiency turn out to be a gift paper that wraps a frenetic activity of choosing that often time turns into an end in itself – the endless swiping, the window shopping between endless possible partners become the main experience this app has to offer to its users.

It is important to recall that these three factors – velocity, abundance, and efficiency – are chief factors in the capitalist mode of production. Increased velocity of production enables to increase the quantity of production, cheapen its cost, and expand to new markets (Agger 1989). And so, Tinder merely mirrors this capitalist logic into online, mobile dating.

In “The Question Concerning Technology” Heidegger discusses “the standing-reserve” – a fundamental attitude toward the world, by which we place others on call to make them available to our needs (Heidegger 1977, 295–301). In the case before us, and bringing a feminist twist to Heidegger’s idea, the high velocity afforded by dating apps places human beings, and especially women, in a state of permanent availability to other people’s emotional (and sexual) gaze. Such availability, in continuation with Heidegger, threatens both the object and the subject. We may wonder if the capacity to turn to so many subjects at once does not turn human beings, women in particular, into standing-reserves¹. It is this structure of the object-subject relationship that changes altogether the nature of subjectivity and makes ontological uncertainty its core – an uncertainty that stems from the difficulty of holding on to a sense of worth and identity; that “resists” one’s availability to the gaze and to the sexual appropriation by others, and to instrumentalization through sex.

Thus, the velocity of Tinder and the abundance of potential-partners highlight the ways in which the logic of the market penetrates and amalgamates with contemporary logics of emotion. Together with the binary nature of such choices, with the heightened visibility, and with the algorithms that guide these choices, the techno-capitalist ethos becomes inseparable from how emotions are being seen, produced, and commodified in this app.

Networks as Infrastructure for Emotional Interaction: Connectivity vs. Solidarity

In February 2014, Tinder's chief marketing officer Justin Mateen declared to the Guardian that the company "never intended it to be a dating platform. It's a social discovery platform, facilitating an introduction between two people" (Dredge 2014). Whether that was the company's intent or not, Tinder clearly offers a networked model of sociality (Schwarz 2012), and more specifically, it is an app that offers networked intimacy (Chan 2018; Hobbs, Owen, and Gerber 2017, 2579). By that, Tinder exemplifies a broader feature of contemporary networked-life: connectivity replaces solidarity. While solidarity is a mode of sociality between people who know each other, know to which groups they belong, and what is the goal or purpose of their interaction, connectivity offers an almost arbitrary kind of sociality that momentarily connects two networked individuals with almost no common, agreed-upon ground. This is a fundamental sociological change, and one that goes hand in hand with the hyper-individuation that online, datafied connectivity brings-about. After all, as Ori Schwarz has shown, social networks are more than a theoretical construct, a model used by social scientists to represent and understand social relations, it is also a *material infrastructure* that organizes social life (Schwarz 2012).

That is, connectivity is a way to conceptualize social action, agency, and culture (Papacharissi 2010; Wittel 2001), and particularly, it represents a shift in the previous ontology of relationships – what defines them as real for us, how they are incorporated or not in our lives, the kind of rituals we engage in to make them be, and more. Tinder has redefined romantic and sexual encounters because it melts solidarity under a generalized, amorphous, highly connective form of sociality in which relationships lose a crucial feature – what phenomenologists call their aboutness (Merleau-Ponty 2013).

Additionally, networks tend to be open, and that – contrary to the name – can be highly disjunctive (without connection to each other). As Wittel argued: "In network sociality, social relations are not 'narrational' but informational; they are not based on mutual experience or common history, but primarily on an exchange of data and on 'catching up'. Narratives are characterized by duration, whereas information is defined by ephemerality. Network sociality consists of fleeting and transient, yet iterative social relations; of ephemeral but intense encounters" (Wittel 2001, 51).

If "traditional" love was the quintessential ritual that produced effervescence and social solidarity, it is here melting in the light tissue of connectivity. Tinder creates informational, ephemeral social ties that usually evaporate with a swipe, milliseconds after their inception. Moreover, while Tinder turns matchmaking into an act of consumption, it is a consumption that focuses on the (commodified) individual, and as such, it does not offer avenues for consumer solidarity (Chatzidakis, Maclaran, and Varman 2021), and while this datafied matchmaking is based on users' immaterial labor, they cannot turn to each other for advice or support. Thus, Tinder's ever-expanding social network (that grows with every swipe) disrupts more traditional types of sociality in line with this company's effort to expand their market share.

Evaluation Instead of Recognition

There is another way in which Tinder disrupts the ontology of relationships. The traditional modern subject was endowed with will, wants, and desires. More crucially, the modern subject is defined by and through intersubjectivity, and more specifically, through processes

of recognition. With the type of sociality that Tinder offers, these fundamental components are undermined. As a young woman described her Tinder experiences in an interview to The Outline:

On Tinder, I am always that perfect projection of my A-game appearance and interpersonal skills. My profile depicts me as the most attractive I've ever looked, the most popular I've ever been, doing the most interesting things I've ever done [...]. I can receive validation for my best self any time I open the app, without leaving my couch; no need to get dressed up or project interest or aloofness or whatever I think he thinks I think he thinks I think he is interested in. Someone will validate this person that I already am, and once they do, to be honest, for most of them I can't muster the care to actually go through all the motions of meeting them in person. And 90 percent of the people I validate back appear to feel the exact same way. I tested this theory out on at least two real-life Tinder dates, and to my recollection at least one of them agreed. (...) It feels like people on Tinder used to at least pretend there had to be some follow through to a swipe-right, but now we're all too exhausted by the sheer volume of people on there, and it's devolved right back into Hot or Not, with a dashboard of the people who actually called you hot. If we swipe right on each other, I feel validated, you feel validated, I feel validated that you feel validated, and we can all continue on in our single lives feeling satisfied that we are good without actually having to do much at all. That, Tinder is great for; actual dating, not so much.

(Johnston 2018)

Interestingly, recognition here seems almost independent from relationship. It spins around itself and does not aim at recognizing another person once the (commodified) self has been recognized. Rather, it is integrated in a self-feeding process of recognition induced through technologies of self-beautification and instant communication, and through an apparatus of evaluation. The traditional work of recognition proper no longer needs to take place, and self-validation becomes disentangled from recognition. This, if we follow Hegel (Williams 1998), is no longer what we would call intersubjectivity. Instead, it is a prime example of how Tinder users take on their role as techno-emodities – of how they perfect their consumable features and enjoy how others emotionally consume them with their swipes.

Dividuated Eroticism: Power through Algorithms and Erotic Capital

In line with the previous characteristics, one of the striking features of the Tindered-connectivity is the parallels between how algorithms see people and how people are made to see (and consume) each other through this app. The binary gaze, the unparalleled speed, the post-lingual, or post narrative type of sociality all mirror the ways in which algorithms see and construct subjectivities (Cheney-Lippold 2017; Kotliar 2020a). The use of meta-data, the reliance on behavioral data (Rouvroy 2013), and the ability to create countless hyper-individuated user-categories (Lake 2017), all echo the characteristics described above. Similarly, much like the focus on a single picture of people's face, algorithms tend to see people as dividuals (Leese 2014; Prey 2018) – dividing the subject into endless dividable sub-parts. As Marxist philosopher Maurizio Lazzarato, following Deleuze, explained: "Subjection produces and subjects individuals, whereas in enslavement '[i]ndividuals become dividuals,' and masses become samples, data, markets, or 'banks.'" The dividual "functions" in enslavement in the same way as the "non-human" component parts of technical machines, as

organizational procedures, semiotics, and so on” (Lazzarato 2014, 26). In the case of Tinder, users are divided into becoming emodities – their faces becoming their consumable, objectified online self.

Moreover, like other algorithmically infused services, people’s choices on Tinder are induced by, designed by, and are often constrained by algorithms (Kotliar 2020b; Yeung 2017). In other words, algorithms determine to a great extent the very shape of our social (and emotional) interactions. How people look on the app, their discoverability, and the discoverability of other users are all determined by obscure algorithmic decisions that inevitably take part in how users meet or try to meet their potential loved ones. And so, like other types of algorithmically infused online consumption, Tinder’s promise to find the best, or “most relevant” match, promises consumer empowerment and autonomy, but at the same time, it is based on control over, and data-driven manipulation of consumer decision-making (Zwick and Denegri-Knott 2018; Darmody and Zwick 2020).

Thus, discourse about technology often overlooks the profoundly consumer and capitalist logic behind it, and particularly, the ties between this logic and emotion. In the case of Tinder, this capitalist logic is apparent in the different processes we have analyzed here: visualization, velocity and abundance, connectivity, evaluation instead of recognition, and algorithmization are five technological and economic mechanisms that disrupt the sociality of emotion and turn it into another commodity in contemporary capitalist markets.

Further reading

- Albury, Kath, Jean Burgess, Ben Light, Kane Race, and Rowan Wilken (2017), “Data Cultures of Mobile Dating and Hook-up Apps: Emerging Issues for Critical Social Science Research,” *Big Data & Society* 4 (2): 1–11. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2053951717720950>.
- Illouz, Eva (ed.) (2017), *Emotions as Commodities: Capitalism, Consumption and Authenticity*, New York: Routledge.
- McStay, Andrew (2018), *Emotional AI: The Rise of Empathic Media*, London: Sage.
- Stark, Luke (2018), “Algorithmic Psychometrics and the Scalable Subject,” *Social Studies of Science* 48 (2): 204–231. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0306312718772094>.

Note

- 1 See Bakewell (2016).

References

- Agger, Ben (1989), *Fast Capitalism*, Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press.
- Ahmed, Sara (2004), *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- Albury, Kath, Jean Burgess, Ben Light, Kane Race, and Rowan Wilken (2017), “Data Cultures of Mobile Dating and Hook-up Apps: Emerging Issues for Critical Social Science Research,” *Big Data & Society* 4 (2): 1–11. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2053951717720950>
- Alloing, Camille, Julien Pierre, and Antonio A Casilli (2017), *Le Web Affectif: Une Économie Numérique Des Émotions*, Paris: INA éditions.
- Andrejevic, Mark (2013), *Infoglut: How Too Much Information Is Changing the Way We Think and Know*, New York: Routledge.
- Appadurai, Arjun, and Neta Alexander (2019), *Failure*, New York: Polity.
- Arvidsson, Adam, and Elanor Colleoni (2012), “Value in Informational Capitalism and on the Internet,” *The Information Society* 28 (3): 135–150.
- Bakewell, Sarah (2016), *At the Existentialist Café: Freedom, Being, and Apricot Cocktails with Jean-Paul Sartre, Simone de Beauvoir, Albert Camus, Martin Heidegger, Karl Jaspers, Edmund Husserl, Maurice Merleau-Ponty and Others*, New York: Other Press.

- Bauman, Zygmunt (2013), *Liquid Love: On the Frailty of Human Bonds*, Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons.
- Berezin, Mabel (2005), "Emotions and the Economy," In *Handbook of Economic Sociology*, ed. Neil J. Smelser and Richard Swedberg, 109–127. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Bower, Joseph L., and Clayton M. Christensen (1995), "Disruptive Technologies: Catching the Wave," *Harvard Business Review*, 73: 43–53.
- Chan, Lik Sam (2018), "Ambivalence in Networked Intimacy: Observations from Gay Men Using Mobile Dating Apps," *New Media and Society* 20 (7): 2566–2581. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444817727156>
- Chatzidakis, Andreas, Pauline Maclaran, and Rohit Varman (2021), "The Regeneration of Consumer Movement Solidarity," *Journal of Consumer Research* 48: 289–308. <https://doi.org/10.1093/jcr/ucab007>
- Cheney-Lippold, John (2017), *We Are Data: Algorithms and the Making of Our Digital Selves*, New York: NYU Press.
- Clough, Bonnie A, and Leanne M Casey (2015), "Therapy on the Move: The Development of a Therapeutic Smartphone Application," *International Journal of Cyber Behavior, Psychology and Learning* 5(1): 33–41.
- Cohen, Lizbeth (2003), *A Consumers' Republic: The Politics of Mass Consumption in Postwar America*, New York: Random House.
- Conlin, Juliet A. (2009), "Getting around: Making Fast and Frugal Navigation Decisions," *Progress in Brain Research* 174: 109–117. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0079-6123\(09\)01310-7](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0079-6123(09)01310-7)
- Couldry, Nick, and Ulises A. Mejias (2019), *The Costs of Connection: How Data Is Colonizing Human Life and Appropriating It for Capitalism*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Darmody, Aron, and Detlev Zwick (2020), "Manipulate to Empower: Hyper-Relevance and the Contradictions of Marketing in the Age of Surveillance Capitalism," *Big Data & Society* 7(1). <https://doi.org/10.1177/2053951720904112>
- David, Gaby, and Carolina Cambre (2016), "Screened Intimacies: Tinder and the Swipe Logic," *Social Media & Society* 2 (2). <https://doi.org/10.1177/2056305116641976>
- Dredge, Stuart (2014), "Tinder: The 'painfully Honest' Dating App with Wider Social Ambitions," *Guardian*, February 24. <https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2014/feb/24/tinder-dating-app-social-networks>
- Eubanks, Virginia (2018), *Automating Inequality: How High-Tech Tools Profile, Police, and Punish the Poor*, New York: St. Martin's Press.
- Foucault, Michel (1967), *Madness and Civilization: A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason*, London: Tavistock.
- (1977), *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, New York: Vintage Books.
- (2004), *The Birth of Bio-Politics: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1978–79*, ed. Michel Senellart, New York: Palgrave-Macmillan.
- (2005), "The Hermeneutics of the Subject: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1981–1982," in *Lectures at the Collège de France*, ed. Frédéric Gros, François Ewald, and Alessandro Fontana. New York: Picador.
- Gould, Deborah B (2009), *Moving Politics: Emotion and ACT UP's Fight Against AIDS*, Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Heidegger, Martin (1977), *Basic Writings: From Being and Time (1927) to The Task of Thinking (1964)*, New-York: Harper Perennial.
- Hobbs, Mitchell, Stephen Owen, and Livia Gerber (2017), "Liquid Love? Dating Apps, Sex, Relationships and the Digital Transformation of Intimacy," *Journal of Sociology* 53 (2): 271–284. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1440783316662718>
- Hochschild, Arlie Russell, (1979), "Emotion Work, Feeling Rules, and Social Structure," *American Journal of Sociology* 85 (3): 551–575.
- Illouz, Eva (1998), *Consuming the Romantic Utopia: Love and the Cultural Contradictions of Capitalism*. *Contemporary Sociology*, Berkeley: University of California Press.
- (2007), *Cold Intimacies: The Making of Emotional Capitalism*, Cambridge: Polity.
- (2008), *Saving the Modern Soul: Therapy, Emotions, and the Culture of Self-Help*, Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- (2009), "Emotions, Imagination and Consumption: A New Research Agenda," *Journal of Consumer Culture* 9 (3): 377–413. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1469540509342053>.
- (2012), *Why Love Hurts: A Sociological Explanation*, Cambridge: Polity.

- (2017), “Introduction: Emodities or the Making of Emotional Commodities,” In *Emotions as Commodities: Capitalism, Consumption and Authenticity*, ed. Eva Illouz, 1–29, New York, NY: Routledge.
- (2019), *The End of Love: A Sociology of Negative Relations*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Iqbal, Mansoor (2019), “Tinder Revenue and Usage Statistics,” *Business of Apps*, <https://www.businessofapps.com/data/tinder-statistics/>.
- Jacob, Pierre, and Marc Jeannerod (2003), *Ways of Seeing: The Scope and Limits of Visual Cognition*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Johnson, Sophia (2014), “Maternal Devices’, Social Media and the Self-Management of Pregnancy, Mothering and Child Health,” *Societies* 4 (2): 330–350. <https://doi.org/10.3390/soc4020330>
- Johnston, Casey (2018), “Tinder Is Not Actually for Meeting Anyone,” *The Outline*, February 14, <https://theoutline.com/post/3402/tinder-is-not-actually-for-meeting-anyone?zd=2&zi=dqpwmm57y>.
- Kahneman, Daniel (2011), *Thinking, Fast and Slow*, New York: Macmillan Publishing.
- Kirchner, Holle, and Simon J Thorpe (2006), “Ultra-Rapid Object Detection with Saccadic Eye Movements: Visual Processing Speed Revisited,” *Vision Research* 46 (11): 1762–1776.
- Kotliar, Dan M (2016), “Emotional Oppositions: The Political Struggle over Citizens’ Emotions,” *Qualitative Sociology* 39 (pp. 267–286). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11133-016-9334-7>
- (2020a), “The Return of the Social: Algorithmic Identity in an Age of Symbolic Demise,” *New Media & Society* 22 (7): 1152–1167. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444820912535>
- (2020b), “Who Gets to Choose? On the Socio-Algorithmic Construction of Choice,” *Science, Technology, & Human Values* 46 (2): 346–375. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0162243920925147>
- Lake, Robert W (2017), “Big Data, Urban Governance, and the Ontological Politics of Hyperindividualism,” *Big Data & Society* 4 (1). <https://doi.org/10.1136/jnnp.50.1.66>
- Lazzarato, Maurizio (2014), *Signs and Machines: Capitalism and the Production of Subjectivity*, Los Angeles, CA: Semiotext(e).
- Leese, M (2014), “The New Profiling: Algorithms, Black Boxes, and the Failure of Anti-Discriminatory Safeguards in the European Union,” *Security Dialogue* 45 (5): 494–511. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0967010614544204>
- Lury, Celia, and Sophie Day (2019), “Algorithmic Personalization as a Mode of Individuation,” *Theory, Culture & Society* 36 (2): 17–37. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0263276418818888>
- Lyon, David (2003), *Surveillance as Social Sorting: Computer Codes and Mobile Bodies*, New York: Routledge.
- Marwick, Alice, and Rebecca Lewis (2017), “Media Manipulation and Disinformation Online,” New York: Data & Society Research Institute, 7–19.
- Mcgrath, Felim (2015), “What to Know About Tinder in 5 Charts,” GlobalWebIndex. <http://www.globalwebindex.net/blog/what-to-know-about-tinder-in-5-charts>
- McStay, Andrew (2016), “Empathic Media and Advertising: Industry, Policy, Legal and Citizen Perspectives (the Case for Intimacy),” *Big Data & Society* 3 (2), <https://doi.org/10.1177/2053951716666868>
- Merleau-Ponty, Maurice (2013), *Phenomenology of Perception*, New York: Routledge.
- Miltner, Kate M, and Tim Highfield (2017), “Never Gonna GIF You up: Analyzing the Cultural Significance of the Animated GIF,” *Social Media & Society* 3 (3). <https://doi.org/10.1177/2056305117725223>
- Noble, Safiya U (2018), *Algorithms of Oppression: How Search Engines Reinforce Racism*, New York: NYU Press.
- Papacharissi, Zizi (2010), *A Networked Self: Identity, Community, and Culture on Social Network Sites*, New York: Routledge.
- Prey, Robert (2018), “Nothing Personal: Algorithmic Individuation on Music Streaming Platforms,” *Media, Culture & Society* 40 (7): 1086–1100. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0163443717745147>
- Rose, Nikolas, and Peter Miller (2008), *Governing the Present: Administering Economic, Social and Personal Life*, Cambridge: Polity.
- Rouvroy, Antoinette (2013), “The End(s) of Critique: Data-Behaviourism vs. Due-Process,” in *Privacy, Due Process and the Computational Turn: The Philosophy of Law Meets the Philosophy of Technology*, ed. Mireille Hildebrandt and Katja De Vries, 143–169. New York: Routledge.
- Schwarz, Ori (2012), “The New Hunter-Gatherers: Making Human Interaction Productive in the Network Society,” *Theory, Culture & Society* 29 (6): 78–98. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0263276412452619>
- Skeggs, Beverley (2012), “Feeling Class: Affect and Culture in the Making of Class Relations,” in *The Wiley-Blackwell Companion to Sociology*, ed. George Ritzer, 269–287. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers.

- Stampler, Laura (2014), "Inside Tinder: Meet the Guys Who Turned Dating into an Addiction," *Time Magazine*, February 6, <https://time.com/4837/tinder-meet/>
- Stark, Luke (2020), "The Emotive Politics of Digital Mood Tracking," *New Media & Society* 22 (11): 2039–2057. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444820924624>
- Stark, Luke, and Kate Crawford (2015), "The Conservatism of Emoji: Work, Affect, and Communication," *Social Media & Society* 1 (2). <https://doi.org/10.1177/2056305115604853>
- Sumter, Sindy R., and Laura Vandenbosch (2018), "Dating Gone Mobile: Demographic and Personality-Based Correlates of Using Smartphone-Based Dating Applications among Emerging Adults," *New Media and Society* 21(3) (pp. 655–673). <https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444818804773>
- Trentmann, Frank (2006), "The Modern Genealogy of the Consumer: Meaning, Identities and Political Synapses," in *Consuming Cultures, Global Perspectives: Historical Trajectories, Transnational Exchanges*, eds. John Brewer and Frank Trentmann, 19–69. Oxford: Berg.
- Vaidhyanathan, Siva (2018), *Antisocial Media: How Facebook Disconnects Us and Undermines Democracy*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Weeks, Kathi (2007), "Life within and against Work: Affective Labor, Feminist Critique, and Post-Fordist Politics," *Ephemera: Theory and Politics in Organization* 7 (1): 233–249.
- Williams, Robert R. (1998), *Hegel's Ethics of Recognition*. Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press.
- Wittel, Andreas (2001), "Toward a Network Sociality," *Theory, Culture & Society* 18 (6): 51–76. <https://doi.org/10.1177/026327601018006003>
- Yeung, Karen (2017), "'Hypernudge': Big Data as a Mode of Regulation by Design," *Information, Communication & Society* 20 (1): 118–136. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1369118X.2016.1186713>
- Zelizer, Viviana A. (2005), *The Purchase of Intimacy*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Zuboff, Shoshana (2019), *The Age of Surveillance Capitalism: The Fight for a Human Future at the New Frontier of Power*, New York: Public Affairs.
- Zwick, Detlev, and Janice Denegri-Knott (2018), "Biopolitical Marketing and Technologies of Enclosure," in *The SAGE Handbook of Consumer Culture*, ed. Olga Kravets, Pauline Maclaran, Steven Miles, and Alladi Venkatesh, 333–347. London: SAGE Publications. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781473998803.n19>