



UNIVERSIDADE
CATÓLICA
PORTUGUESA

DATING APPS

LOVE AND RELATIONSHIPS IN CONTEMPORARY JAPAN

**Dissertation presented to the Universidade Católica
Portuguesa for obtaining the Asian Studies Master's Degree**

By
Catarina Maria Nascimento

Faculdade de Ciências Humanas da Universidade Católica Portuguesa

December 2019



UNIVERSIDADE
CATÓLICA
PORTUGUESA

DATING APPS

LOVE AND RELATIONSHIPS IN CONTEMPORARY JAPAN

**Dissertation presented to the Universidade Católica
Portuguesa for obtaining the Asian Studies Master's Degree**

By
Catarina Maria Nascimento

Faculdade de Ciências Humanas da Universidade Católica Portuguesa
Advised by Professors António Barrento and Cátia Ferreira

December 2019

Index

Image Index	3
Abstract	6
Acknowledgements	7
Introduction	8
Chapter 1 - Interpersonal Relationships	17
Chapter 2 - Cybercultures and Cyberdating	28
Chapter 3 - Case Study	35
Conclusion	48
Glossary	52
Bibliography and Webography	54
Annexes	64

Image Index

- **Image 1** - page 8; *Japan's Population Pyramid*. Image retrieved from: *Japan Population 2019*. World Population Review. Retrieved from <http://worldpopulationreview.com/countries/japan-population/>
- **Image 2** - page 37; *Pie Chart "Respondents Information: Gender"*. Data collected from the case study. Graphic designed by author.
- **Image 3** - page 38; *Pie Chart "Respondents Information: Age"*. Data collected from the case study. Graphic designed by author.
- **Image 4** - page 37; *Pie Chart "Respondents Information: Relationship status"*. Data collected from the case study. Graphic designed by author.
- **Image 5** - page 39; *Pie Chart "Respondents Information: Sexuality"*. Data collected from the case study. Graphic designed by author.
- **Image 6** - page 39; *Bar Chart "Respondents Information: Occupation"*. Data collected from the case study. Graphic designed by author.
- **Image 7** - page 40; *Pie Chart "Respondents Information: Dating app usage"*. Data collected from the case study. Graphic designed by author.
- **Image 8** - page 40; *Pie Chart "Non-users: Matchmaking app type usage"*. Data collected from the case study. Graphic designed by author.
- **Image 9** - page 40; *Pie Chart "Non-users: Attitude towards dating apps"*. Data collected from the case study. Graphic designed by author.
- **Image 10** - page 41; *Bar Chart "Non-users: Reasons not to use"*. Data collected from the case study. Graphic designed by author.
- **Image 11** - page 41; *Pie Chart "Users: Gender"*. Data collected from the case study. Graphic designed by author.
- **Image 12** - page 42; *Pie Chart "Users: Age"*. Data collected from the case study. Graphic designed by author.
- **Image 13** - page 42; *Pie Chart "Users: Relationship status"*. Data collected from the case study. Graphic designed by author.

- **Image 14** - page 43; *Pie Chart “Users: Sexuality”*. Data collected from the case study. Graphic designed by author.
- **Image 15** - page 43; *Pie Chart “Users: Occupation”*. Data collected from the case study. Graphic designed by author.
- **Image 16** - page 44; *Pie Chart “Users: Relationship status”*. Data collected from the case study. Graphic designed by author.
- **Image 17** - page 44; *Pie Chart “Users: Attitude towards dating apps”*. Data collected from the case study. Graphic designed by author.
- **Image 18** - page 44; *Pie Chart “Users: Times met with another user”*. Data collected from the case study. Graphic designed by author.
- **Image 19** - page 45; *Tinder Advertisement on Japanese Youtube*. Screenshot taken and kindly donated by André Pinto who lives in Japan.
- **Image 20** - page 45; *Bar Chart “Users: Applications used”*. Data collected from the case study. Graphic designed by author.
- **Image 21** - page 45; *Bar Chart “Users: Preferred dating app”*. Data collected from the case study. Graphic designed by author.
- **Image 22** - page 46; *Bar Chart “Users: User experience rate”*. Data collected from the case study. Graphic designed by author.
- **Image 23** - page 46; *Pie Chart “Users: Continued dating app usage”*. Data collected from the case study. Graphic designed by author.
- **Image 24** - page 47; *Bar Chart “Users: Reasons to quit using dating apps”*. Data collected from the case study. Graphic designed by author.
- **Image 25** - page 64; *Questionnaire in Japanese “Section 1 - Respondents’ Information”*. Screen capture of the inquiry composed by the author.
- **Image 26** - page 65; *Questionnaire in Japanese “Section 1 - Respondents’ Information, second part”*. Screen capture of the inquiry composed by the author.
- **Image 27** - page 66; *Questionnaire in Japanese “Section 2 - Users”*. Screen capture of the inquiry composed by the author.

- **Image 28** - page 67; *Questionnaire in Japanese “Section 2 - Users, second part”*. Screen capture of the inquiry composed by the author.
- **Image 29** - page 68; *Questionnaire in Japanese “Section 3 & 4 - Former users & Non-users”*. Screen capture of the inquiry composed by the author.
- **Image 30** - page 69; *Questionnaire in Japanese “Section 4 - Non-users, second part”*. Screen capture of the inquiry composed by the author.
- **Image 31** - page 69; *Questionnaire in Japanese “Section 5 - Closing section”*. Screen capture of the inquiry composed by the author.
- **Image 32** - page 70; *Questionnaire in English “Section 1 - Respondents’ Information”*. Screen capture of the inquiry composed by the author.
- **Image 33** - page 71; *Questionnaire in English “Section 1 - Respondents’ Information, second part”*. Screen capture of the inquiry composed by the author.
- **Image 34** - page 72; *Questionnaire in English “Section 2 - Users”*. Screen capture of the inquiry composed by the author.
- **Image 35** - page 73; *Questionnaire in English “Section 2 - Users, second part”*. Screen capture of the inquiry composed by the author.
- **Image 36** - page 74; *Questionnaire in English “Section 3 & 4 - Former users & Non-users”*. Screen capture of the inquiry composed by the author.
- **Image 37** - page 75; *Questionnaire in English “Section 4 - Non-users, second part”*. Screen capture of the inquiry composed by the author.
- **Image 38** - page 75; *Questionnaire in English “Section 5 - Closing section”*. Screen capture of the inquiry composed by the author.

Keywords

Japan; Dating Apps; Deai; Tinder; Omiiai; Cyberpsychology; Interpersonal Relationships

Abstract

After living in Japan for a semester, I noticed certain tendencies considering interpersonal relationships patterns, specifically about Dating Apps. Which lead me to research about their usage.

The main question of this thesis is not in the centre stage in the Asian Studies field of research. It is an issue discussed by the media, especially the online based media. Although most of it is looked on with western or westernized eyes, there are many Japan-based websites and even YouTube channels discussing it.

There is a concern relating to the lack of natality and the so called sexless culture. Japan was a country where polygamy was natural, however, in order to appeal to the West, it suppressed this culture, becoming more monogamous. Although, religion and the emperor no longer rule the sexual lives of the people, private companies as well as the Japanese government sponsor a lot of matchmaking events, in an attempt to raise the number of marriages, and consequently the natality rate. For this purpose, the Japanese government has invested many million yen in dating apps and dating app like services, such as start-up companies.

There has been a rise in the *deai* culture, which brings people online to talk to each other in forums. The objective of these people is to find new friends or confidants, as well as dates. *Deai* does not detain the best reputation, which might lead to a stigma towards dating apps. Furthermore, smartphones are the leading platform in internet access in Japan, which creates auspicious conditions for the rise of said apps.

Through a simultaneous analysis of the current dating situation in Japan and online dating culture, it is the goal of this work to understand dating app usage by younger layers of the population. For this objective, a case study was devised. It is comprised of an inquiry with 322 respondents. The questionnaire was circulated online as well as done in person, conducted mostly in university campuses.

Dating apps are effective while online, but the end result is unpredictable due to its dependance on human and offline factors. The Japanese government's funding would be better spent in an effort to better understand the human and cyberpsychological aspects of dating apps, rather than developing new ones.

Acknowledgements

Throughout the process of writing this dissertation I have received a great deal of support. First and foremost from my parents; not only did they give me life, they also supported me through this journey.

Secondly and more importantly I would like to thank the Swiss bank Lombard Odier, for providing me with a scholarship that allowed me to complete this master's degree.

I would like to acknowledge my colleagues of the Asian Studies field. The colleagues in lower grades both in the Faculty of Letters of the University of Lisbon and in this masters degree as well, who provided me with fresh eyes and insight. As well as the ones already in their own master's degree, who took their time to assist and support me.

In addition, I would like to thank the faculty of the Master's Degree at the Catholic University of Lisbon, for their availability in answering any inquiry. In particular, I would like to thank Professor Jorge Santos Alves and Professor Elisabetta Colla for their guidance and advice. Furthermore, I am thankful to Professor Lúcio de Sousa at the Tokyo University of Foreign Studies as well as to André Pinto of Niigata University for their invaluable help during my research in Japan.

Finally, I am grateful to my advisors: to Professor António Hawthorne Barrento and also to Professor Cátia Ferreira for their guidance, insight and thorough feedback.

I would also like to recognize the hard work of my proof-reader and consultant Tyler Jarman. Additionally, I would like to acknowledge my lifelong friends as well as my colleagues at Vivace ISCTE choir, for providing an escape from the stressful times. Besides, I would like to thank my extended family, especially Ana Paula and António Pedro for being unofficial advisors; as well as my parents one more time, especially my dad for all the "business" dinners.

Introduction

In 2015 there were around 600,000 marriages in Japan¹ and, in order to double that number by 2020, the government has been spending 30 million United States dollars yearly on matchmaking strategies, which include dating apps. There is a clear concern that about natality rates, which depend on interpersonal relationships. The Japanese government is doing all it can to get the marriage numbers up and facilitate the lives of young expecting couples. However, the inverted triangle that the Japanese population pyramid shows is worrisome for the economy, since in a few years there will be no lower layers² to support the welfare state.

This is a widely discussed issue in the field of Asian Studies, especially in the western world. However, this issue does not seem to concern the younger Japanese population. While studying in Japan, I have met several young people who ignore their parents' plea for marriage and who seem profoundly unconcerned with their own romantic future. There are two kinds of dating in Japan: *dēto* (デート) which comes from the English word “date” and is a more relaxed kind of dating, which can be done casually and even between friends; and then there is *otsukiai* (お付き合い), which is a serious form of dating which usually leads to marriage, or at least aims at it.

Young Japanese people, who represent the future, are the only ones who can change the natality rates, which is why it is important to appeal to youngsters. Since nowadays every young person carries a smartphone around, dating apps, more than arranged encounters, might provide a

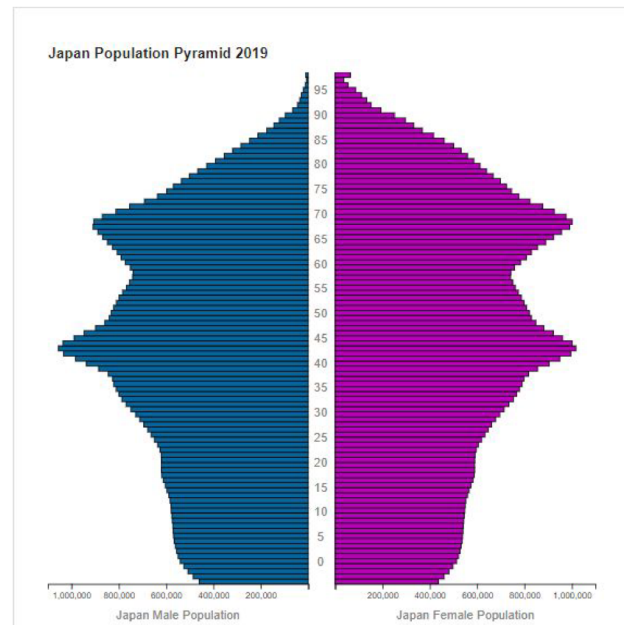


Image 1 - Japan's Population Pyramid 2019

¹ Quite low since, according to the United Nations Population Prospects, the total population that year was 127,985,133 people.

² The lower layers indicate the younger people. There are many shapes that a population pyramid might take. In Japan's case, this is the typical inverted triangle shaped pyramid that is used as an example of an aging population. The peaks that we see in the pyramid are the Japanese Baby Boomers, the post war surge of birth in Japan had two phases: the first from 1947 to 1954, and then from 1971 to 1975 (which is often referred to as the Junior Baby Boom). Besides these two anomalous peaks, the population has been decreasing steadily for years.

solution. However, can we say that the money that the Japanese Government is investing in dating apps and start-up company development is being effective? Could these new technologies help solve the natality problem?

State of the Art

There is a scarcity of written material about dating apps in Japan. There are some articles, like **Farrer, J., & Gavin, J. (2009). Online Dating in Japan: A Test of Social Information Processing Theory. *CyberPsychology & Behavior***³ which refer to online dating, but from a cyberpsychology point of view, not from a sociological one, which is the approach taken in this dissertation. There are a few paramount works on related themes that compensates for the shortage of true state of the art texts. The discourse on online dating in Japan is quite recent⁴, having started in the early 2000's with works such as **Gottlieb, N., McLelland, M. J., & Gauntlett, D. (2003). *Japanese cybercultures***, which refers to issues such as *deai*. About dating apps in Japan, however, the issue is even more recent: the first study with a similar objective to mine was only conducted in 2019 by MMD Labo. The study has been conducted in March of this year (2019) and it is about the usage of such apps. It was led by **Mobile Marketing Data (MMD) Labo** and later published by Statista, a statistics publishing and developing group. MMD Labo is a research company about mobile devices such as smartphones and tablets⁵. This study can be paralleled against my own since it takes an inquiry format to discover about the usage of dating apps by the Japanese population. It takes into consideration all kinds of Japanese people with bigger samples of respondents of people of any age (as long as they own and use a smartphone). The study presented in this dissertation, however, is aimed at younger layers of the population. Still, specifically about dating apps in Japan there is an extremely recent study: **Suzuki, Y., Kosaka, M., Yamamoto, K., Hamaki, T., Kusumi, E., Takahashi, K., Tanimoto,**

³ Whitty M, Gavin J. Age=sex=location: uncovering the social cues in the development of online relationships. *CyberPsychology & Behavior* 2002 is a parallel text from the same journal that focuses on online communication formats.

⁴ Not only in Japan, in Asia in general this discourse started in early 2010 as we can see with articles such as **Jaruhirunsakul, P., (2010) SEX AND MONEY: THE PHENOMENON SEXUAL NORMS IN THAI CYBER CULTURE. *The Journal of Behavioural Science***. As well as worldwide **Bryant, K., Sheldon, P., (2017) Cyber Dating in the Age of Mobile Apps: Understanding Motives, Attitudes, and Characteristics of Users. *American Communication Journal***.

⁵ According to their website: <https://mmdlabo.jp/>

T. (September 2, 2019). *The Association Between Syphilis Incidence and Dating App Use in Japan*. This study is conducted in the field of medicine, but it closely connects dating app usage with spikes of Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STDs). This suggests that some people are indeed being successful at using dating apps.

Gottlieb, N., McLelland, M. J., & Gauntlett, D. (2003). *Japanese cybercultures* is a book that helps to better understand how the Japanese use the internet. This publication is a collection of articles by a series of contributors from different academic backgrounds. All of these are about cybercultures, and provide a better understanding of the Japanese cyberspace altogether and how the Japanese navigate through it. It includes much needed information on Japanese online forums and *Deai* sites⁶, as well as online activism, which, besides social networking, seems to be the biggest event going on in Japan's cyberspace.

In addition, there are relevant newspaper articles relating specifically to dating apps in Japan. **Shimodi, K., & Ujikane, K. (March 20, 2014). *Abe funds matchmaking to ease welfare bill*,** for example, mentions several issues that the government is trying to solve concerning the marriage crisis. As well as some solutions to the same problem that the government hasn't successfully achieved yet, such as the proliferation of kindergartens, so that mothers can go back to work as soon as possible. A similar article, **Woodley, E. (August 22, 2016). *Japanese Government Set To Pay \$30m Into Dating Industry.***, refers exclusively to the subsidization, by the government, of the dating industries, such as the aforementioned group dating events as well as dating apps⁷.

All of these works are in reference to dating apps in Japan exclusively. They complete the specific information about dating apps that *Japanese Cybercultures* leaves out. From how relationships online are cultivated and processed in Japan, to how and why the Japanese government spends so much money yearly to support the growth of these types of applications⁸.

⁶ These are online forums that people enter in order to meet like minded individuals. Besides Gottlieb *et al* (2003), there are other fitting references, such as **Kumano, Y. (November 19, 2009). *Deaikei duties: Posing online as a woman*. *CNN Travel*.** which expose the darker sides of *deai*.

⁷ Contrary to the money spent by the government, there are also articles that mention the revenue of dating apps. Such as: **Woodley, E. (August 4, 2016). FROM THE WEB: The 'Matchmaking' Site For Japanese CEOs Sees 1,170% Surge In Stocks. *Global Dating Insights*.**

⁸ There are also articles commenting on the recent popularity of dating apps, for example **Murai, S. (February 13, 2018). *For young Japanese seeking romance, beauty is in the eye of the dating app*. *Japan Times*.**

Since only smartphones are able to hold apps, the overall discourse on dating apps worldwide is limited to the birth of the smartphones in late 2000's⁹. Dating apps in Japan is still a rare topic to read about, but dating apps and their interpersonal dynamics has been an international discourse since the early 2010's, with text such as **Ansari, A., & Klinenberg, E. (2016). *Modern romance*** being published. From 2015 onwards a substantial interest on cyberpsychology has arisen. Especially concerning cyberbullying and cyber dating¹⁰.

Dating apps have also gained a fresh spotlight, especially this year (2019), in Asia. In China particularly, a dating app named Momo has gained a sizeable amount of users, subsequently, some studies have surfaced: **Xu, D., & Wu, F. (2019). Exploring the cosmopolitanism in China: examining mosheng ren ("the stranger") communication through Momo. *Critical Studies in Media Communication***.¹¹ Written by two native authors, this text summarizes how that an app called Momo is changing the way that people in big cities meet, communicate and relate to one another.

There has also been a place for the study of dating apps in academic discourse: **Mickleson, K. (2017). *Online dating in New Zealand: Why and how do people use Tinder?* Victoria University of Wellington**. In her dissertation, Kate Mickleson, a psychology student, conducted two studies based on swipe type dating apps, like Tinder, to study their usage in New Zealand. Although it is about a different country, culture and population, it is a very similar thesis to mine. Mickleson's studies were crucial to understand what kind of questions should be included in my inquiry, and which were superfluous.

While Mickleson's is a very statistically oriented dissertation, **Ansari, A., & Klinenberg, E. (2016). *Modern romance*** is a more sociological work, which establishes a norm around dating apps and modern dating worldwide. In their book, Aziz Ansari, an American comedian, and Eric Klinenberg, a renowned sociologist, collaborate to conduct focus groups all over the

⁹ The first iPhone, for example, was launched in 2007.

¹⁰ Regarding cyber dating, a considerable amount of the published works refer to cyber dating abuse such as **Deans, H., & Bhogal, M. S. (2019). Perpetrating Cyber Dating Abuse: A Brief Report on the Role of Aggression, Romantic Jealousy and Gender. *Current Psychology*** and **Lancaster, M., Seibert, G. S., Cooper, A. N., May, R. W., & Fincham, F. (2019). Relationship Quality in the Context of Cyber Dating Abuse: The Role of Attachment. *Journal of Family Issues***.

¹¹ **Chan, L. S. (2019). Multiple uses and anti-purposefulness on Momo, a Chinese dating/social app. *Information Communication and Society***. Is also a good example of one of these texts. It portrays the way the chinese use Momo for more than just dating, exposing how the Chinese situation is similar to the one in Japan.

world in order to get a better grasp on the modern ways to date, like dating apps and their users. The book as a whole is important to better comprehend the user extent and motivation, but the most relevant section to this study is the one about Tokyo, Japan. It covers all of the important topics, starting with love hotels, the marriage crisis, herbivore men, online dating in Japan, *machikon* and *gokon*, and the relationship surrogate industries. Herbivore men is an expression often used nowadays to talk about men who are afraid of rejection, as such they do not approach women. In Japan there are a few places, such as cuddle cafes, where men can go in and pay to cuddle with a girl or even get their ears cleaned¹². Also, since a lot of people live with their parents until very late, love hotels are places that rent rooms hourly, so that people can have sex unreservedly. The issues approached in this book are very recent, but some of them have been discussed since the 1990's, such as the marriage issues in Japan. There are many works relating to the decrease in marriage numbers, many of them mention the change in gender roles and social status. The more recent texts analyze the problematic of herbivore men as well, this is a rhetoric that started in the late 2000's, intensifying with the publication of **Morioka¹³, M., (July 18, 2008) *Lessons of Love for Herbivore Boys*. Media Factory, Tokyo.**

Some paramount works on gender roles and marriage include **Strowhorn, P. D., (2013). *The United States and Japan: A Cross Cultural Analysis of Gender Roles and Intimate Relationships*** and **Yukiko, I.-S. (2012). *Aspirations for Career and Marriage among Young Japanese Women: The Case of Okayama University*. *South Pacific Studies***. These articles describe in detail the gender roles of the two parties of a couple. Strowhorn's is a comparative thesis on an individualistic culture (USA) versus a collectivist culture such as Japan. It provides a comparison between what is considered a norm and how a specific case, such as Japan's, differs. It is also an indepth analysis of dating and relationship dynamics. Yukiko's is an even more detailed approach on how gender roles affect marriage, except this is a view on women only. Both works agree that marriage and working a full-time job is not favourable for Japanese women in today's society, since they are expected to be mothers and housewives as well. Yukiko's (2012, p. 51) study found that the most realistic approach for women was to quit work

¹² This is a caring gesture that is usually done by a mother or wife.

¹³ Masahiro Morioka seems to be the leading expert on the topic of herbivore men. He has written other more recent works, such as **Morioka, M., (2013). *A Phenomenological Study of "Herbivore Men"*. *The Review of Life Studies*. Vol.4, 1-20.**

after marriage or a first child but rejoin the workforce at a later stage in life. Agreeing with this trend is **Retherford RD, Naohiro O, Rikiya M. (2001) Late marriage and less marriage in Japan. *Population & Development Review*** . In this study, Retherford *et al* discuss the reasons for the marriage crisis in Japan, being the strongest ones education¹⁴ and women's role in the family contrasting with their role in the workforce. Redirecting from love and marriage dynamics to what happens in order to get married: **Applbaum, KD. (1995) Marriage with the Proper Stranger: Arranged Marriage in Metropolitan Japan. *Ethnology***. Despite providing valuable insight on dating life in Japan, this article focuses more on the full process of a *miai*, or an arranged marriage. Although the discussion about marriage in Japan dates back about 20 years, recently it is much more present, since the problem is growing. **Ryang, S. (2008). *Love in modern Japan its estrangement from self, sex and society*** is a crucial text that mentions the polygamic style of relationships lead before the Meiji restoration in 1838 and continues to explain how the involvement of the government in people's private lives has changed the relationship dynamics.

These five texts are the foundation to establishing the roles that each person has in an interpersonal relationship in Japan, especially how these can be conducted. The first text informs us about Japan's long history with arranged marriage and even poligamy, setting it apart from the marriage standards proposed by the western texts and standards, such as **Jackson-Dwyer, D. (2014). *Interpersonal relationship***. They all refer to how education and new social standards have changed the expected roles of people in society, causing the age of marriage to increase exponentially, not unlike other worldwide trends. The reference by Sonia Ryang draws on the work of early sociologists from the 1960's to the 1980's, such as Takeo Doi, Origuchi Shinobu and Saeki Junko (among others) to explain how love works in modern Japan, which parallels in some ways with the western norm, but it has its own particularities. Furthermore, it provides us information on the sexual nature of the Japanese, providing a different perspective on the situation with what is now discussed in the Asian studies field as the sexless culture. These are

¹⁴ Education is a very important criteria when choosing someone to marry. Hence less educated people or people with lower degrees of education have a harder time tying the knot.

mostly *nihonjinron*¹⁵ works, which means that these belong to a genre of texts about Japanese cultural identity.

Since this dissertation takes a sociological approach and dwells into the field of relationships, it is essential to have a standard on interpersonal relationships worldwide. Psychologists, philosophers, sociologists and many more have dwelled on this topic for centuries. However, since this is a twenty first century dissertation, **Jackson-Dwyer, D. (2014). *Interpersonal relationships*** was an essential psychology manual to consult. In her work, Diana Dwyer covers all of the basics about relationships, from the beginning of any relationship, to the end of it. In one of the chapters she mentions small variations in relationships, from cultural to sexual. This was used to establish the basis on how a regular relationship should be conducted, even though the author is British and is under the western standard, she manages to escape being prejudiced or bound by it.

The aforementioned works have plenty of information on relationships in Japan and worldwide. However, they lack information about the way Japanese people can meet new people to date. The discourse on dwindling marriage numbers has brought about a new one, relating to the dating lives of the Japanese. From 2010 onward this has been an issue not so much discussed in academic fields, but it has been the target of the media, especially sensationalistic media.

Two of the alternatives to dating apps for the young Japanese people to meet with the intent of dating are *Gokon* and *Konkatsu*. These are both forms of group dating, which used to be organised in person, but now planning such events usually takes place online. Methods such as *machikon*¹⁶, referred as well in *Modern Romance*, needed to be further researched for the sake of providing a parallel of opportunity to the dating apps, to take into consideration which of them would be more efficient to resolve the marriage/natality issue that Japan is facing. For this purpose, there are some articles that provide us with information on these. **Kuchikomi (May 15, 2016), 8 years into 'konkatsu' boom, lifelong single population continues to grow** and **Hoshina, A. S. (March 5, 2018). Konkatsu: A Look Into Japan's Spouse Hunting Parties** are recent articles both written by Japanese authors. These give an inside perspective on *konkatsu*,

¹⁵ Literally meaning “discussion on the Japanese people”, *nihonjinron* refers to a genre of texts on the topic of Japanese people and their culture and nationality. This genre became extremely relevant after WWII and the period after the occupation, when the Japanese were trying to rediscover their identity.

¹⁶ This is another form of group dating which has been gaining popularity steadily.

which is a way to meet people with the intent of marriage, they are commonly referred to as “marriage hunting parties”. While Hoshina’s article describes the parties, Kuchikomi’s exposes their ineffectiveness.

Similarly, **Kanert, M. (February 15, 2017). The Secrets of 'Gokon'** and **Clegg, C. (September 28, 2014). The ugly truth of 'gokon,' Japan's group blind dates. *Japan Today*** are articles both referring to the group dating practice of *gokon*. While Kanert explains how *gokon* works, Clegg expose its disadvantages, such as awkwardness and the dangers of sexual assault during these events.

We can see that dating apps is a very contemporary issue. In Japan, it has not been a very discussed topic yet, being the primary platforms of discussion are online newspapers, forums and similar media. Besides the study conducted by MMD Labo, mine is the first academic study to analyze the usage of dating apps in Japan. Contrarily to the aforementioned study, mine focuses only on young (18 to 35 years old) people. By studying younger people, we can understand them and provide them with better methods to find a suitable match which might later lead to marriage. This study combines the information from the past and an analysis on the evolution of dating habits with freshly gathered data on dating apps to complement and update the information given by the previously mentioned works.

Objectives and Methodology

In this dissertation, I intend to paint a portrait of the average user of these apps. By means of a case study, I will try to find out about the demographics of the users of these types of app, as well as what kind of result they plan to obtain with their use, be it a long-term romantic relationship, friendship, or a casual relationship. Through looking at the people who are using these apps and what they are looking for, we can perceive if the users are getting the supposed use out of them: finding a partner¹⁷. It is the main objective of this work to understand whether these apps are effective or not. By looking at the user profiles and usage percentage, it can also be understood if it is advantageous to keep studying this case or not.

¹⁷ Or at least the use that the Japanese government is expecting.

The objectives of this dissertation are to understand the usage of dating apps by young Japanese people. We will start by analyzing related content, such as the way interpersonal relationships proceed in Japan, as well as Japanese cybercultures.

The first chapter studies the interpersonal relationships in Japan and how they differ, or not, from other relationship norms. The second chapter approaches the topic of online relationships exclusively. Finally, the third and last chapter is a case study about the users and usage of dating apps in Japan, which comprises a sample of 322 inquiries conducted both on and offline, targeting young people such as university students and new entrants into the workforce¹⁸.

The first two chapters are based only on references and knowledge gathered *in loco*. These are meant to supply a strong background and infrastructure to later analyze the results of the case study in the last chapter. The third chapter is what sets this study apart from what has been done before: it gathers previous knowledge and statistics to interpret the usage of dating apps in Japan by young people. This can be key to understand if the Japanese government's money is being well spent. It is also useful for the common reader who might be looking for their own match.

Finally, with the information gathered in all three chapters, it will be possible to understand if dating apps in Japan are fulfilling their primary objective¹⁹. By answering this question, we can then discern if dating apps can be a replacement, or at least a contender, to previously established practices. With this we can also perceive whether the Japanese government's investment in dating apps and start-up companies of the sort is justifiable.

¹⁸ These were the people chosen since they are going to be the parents of the next generation and are the ones in most need of understanding and matchmaking

¹⁹ Which is to have people find partners.

Chapter 1 - Interpersonal relationships

“Humans are essentially a social being (...) our ultimate happiness and despair is founded in relationships” - Dwyer (2014, p. 1)

Romantic interpersonal relationships and the way they unravel and/or are kept are compelling topics. For that reason, I have decided to divide this chapter into two parts. I will start by looking at interpersonal relationships and what is considered to be the norm. Then, we will look into the Japanese case. The norm established will be built mostly through western references, since I am not completely fluent in Japanese, however, I will be turning to many books written by native authors. Due to linguistic limitations, I consulted mostly books written by bilingual authors or translated texts. However, oftentimes, much can be lost in translation.

Lastly, we will see about Japanese interpersonal relationships. It will be the goal of this chapter to provide the information for the reader to develop a critical mind, thus becoming able to interpret the results of the case study. This chapter will provide the infrastructure to better understand the third chapter, by introducing the specificities of Japanese society and interpersonal relationships and putting them against an established norm.

Interpersonal Relationships - Recognizable Patterns

Any type of relationships are essential for the human being: paternal, maternal, fraternal, of complicity, intimacy, etc. Intimacy implies romantic relationships, mostly of a sexual nature. These relationships emerge and develop differently all around the world, being it that correlations exist in some behaviours and divergences in others. For example, in Portugal, it is more common for friends of the opposite sex to touch each other or hug each other in an accomplice way, yet in Japan, that is a more intimate gesture, more commonly seen in couples. Albeit, in both cultures, strolling down the street holding hands will usually be seen as a gesture shared by a couple. These types of public demonstrations of affection, such as kissing in public, holding hands or hugging, are not very common in Eastern societies, for being considered a sort

of indecency and rude to passerbys. Although public demonstrations of affection are much more common in western cultures, they are becoming more and more common in the East as well²⁰.

As explained by Dwyer (2014, pg. 15) and according to Berscheid and Walster, there are three categories that one can use to categorize love. The first one is liking, then companionate love and finally passionate love. There are other ways to categorize the kinds of love a human being can feel²¹. Despite being an oversimplification, Berscheid and Walster's theory summarizes quite well the human types of love. According to it, the people one likes are those that one does not dislike, but does not completely identify or is very close with, for example, one's coworkers or acquaintances. Companionate love applies to one's friends and family, people who are deeply connected to one's life. Finally, passionate love, which is the type of love most referred to in this dissertation, is felt towards the person one is or wants to be romantically involved with, and this kind of love usually is of a sexual nature.

But what leads us to search for this kind of affiliation? We affiliate with others who are similar to us, or with whom we have relations, such as family, community peers or neighbours. We seek comfort in other humans in times of need so that we can reduce our fears by talking to someone we can compare ourselves to. In other words, we search for peers who are or have been in a similar situation to ours in order to feel reassured and accompanied.

Dwyers (2014, pg. 42) defines five factors that contribute to our choices of affiliation: similarity, proximity, physical attractiveness, liking and competence. In order to be compatible romantically, two people must have a high compatible index, which depends on the score of all five factors. They must be physically close: working or living together or significantly close, so that they become familiar with one another. The two individuals must show similar attitudes or interests. Both must be physically attracted to one another. Naturally, they must share in reciprocal liking. Also, they must be competent, which means being able to conduct themselves socially and taking care of themselves. These are all factors that influence the choice of partners

²⁰ In Japan, for example, nowadays it is common to see young couples holding hands (and sometimes even hugging) in cosmopolitan centers.

²¹ Rubin's model has a loving scale based on a 10 points by factor (with six factors in total) to distinguish between three types of love, depending on the score of each factor. There is Sternberg's component based types of love; and more, such as Lee's Greek based six types of love, etc. All of this is thoroughly explained by Dwyers (2014, pp 15-27)

during *miai*²². According to Applbaum (2007, pp. 41-43), in Japan more factors are taken into consideration when choosing a partner through an arranged marriage, like the lineage of the family or the mental health of the person.

If a person of reciprocal liking is found that fulfills all five criteria, one can then proceed to start a relationship. When in a relationship, there are a few theories that define the laws of attraction. However, much is decided by profit: if the effort and love one puts in the relationship is returned, then all is well. When there are discrepancies and the effort is not returned, one starts looking for alternatives and the possibility of changing into a relationship that will satisfy them more or be more well balanced. If the situation is dire, however, there might be a preference to break off the relationship and stay alone. People with low self-esteem often believe that they deserve less. Therefore, they feel content with less profit and are more likely to settle. The longer a relationship is maintained, the more investment is likely to exist from both parties. More investment makes a relationship harder to leave, since they might already share a home, pets, or children.

However, there are a few factors that blur the limits of an individual on how long they are willing to stay in a low profit relationship. Besides self-esteem, culture plays a big part in establishing how much loss of profit a person can handle in a relationship. According to Strowhorn (2013, p. 21), in Japanese culture people date less than on most occidental cultures. Furthermore, they tend to settle into marriage as a way to appease society and feel normal²³. Because most people feel like they will eventually settle, they do not feel the need to date, and when they do, it is either with the intent to marry as promptly as possible or to simply have fun²⁴.

Arranged marriages are also common. This makes it so the amount of personal investment diminishes. Because people might not be that much in love in the first place, and the will to protect the family and the children is bigger than the will to seek emotional profit within the marriage. This to say that cheating on a spouse in Japan is not that uncommon. Ryang (2006,

²² *Miai* or *Omiiai* (お見合い) is the Japanese practice of arranging a marriage.

²³ In Japan, unmarried people might not be considered full-fledged adults, and might even be seen as social pariahs. Applbaum (2007, p. 39) even states that for women in society's eyes, "this [getting married] and raising children are the all exclusive mission in life".

²⁴ Typically, people who date just for fun do not have marriage in mind, especially not with the person or people they are involved with. Thus, these people tend to put in much less effort in the relationship, making it fragile.

pp. 9-24) mentions several times the tendency for polyamorous and polygamic relationships in ancient Japan that proceed onwards almost until the Meiji Restoration in 1868²⁵. Ansari (2015, pp.166-167) also mentions the existence of places such as Soapland, which is a chain of massage parlors in Japan where naked girls massage men with their bodies, ending happily, more often than not. After asking Japanese girls, most of them do not consider frequenting these parlors a form of cheating.

As illustrated by Applbaum (2007, p. 39) and Strowhorn (2013, p. 22), Japan is still a very patriarchal society, in which women are expected to cook and clean and men are expected to work and gain money. Most wives are frowned upon for continuing to work after giving birth or even getting married. This is one of the factors that dissuades women from having babies or marrying early: they want to maintain their financial independence. Not only that, maintaining both a family and a full-time job is not an easy feat.

The social roles of both parties are defined to the extent that codependency settles in and it is harder to leave the relationship. This may be considered a type of investment, but it feels more like cohabitation. There is a culture of *amae*. This expression comes from the verb *amaeru*, which, according to Doi (2005, p. 14) means “to depend and presume upon another’s benevolence”. This means that Japanese couples depend on each other to have a balanced life. More than cohabitation, it becomes a sort of codependence.

Dwyer (2014, pg. 5) mentions the existence of collectivist societies and individualistic ones. Japan is a collectivist society as opposed to the individualistic societies of the West. Being collectivist means that the wellness and stability of the group comes before one’s own happiness, which changes the way interpersonal relationships work. This does not mean that Japanese arranged marriages are devoid of love. A study by Gupta and Singh (1982, pp.92-97) proves that love marriages and arranged marriages are not that different, except that the love in arranged marriages actually lasts longer than the one in love marriages. The amount of love in arranged marriages simply starts at a low level and grows exponentially, while the love in love marriages

²⁵ After the Restoration, the Japanese government was concerned that the West would still see them as uncivilized. With this in mind, it slowly started making polyamorous or polygamic marriages illegal, while also intensively and severely regulating prostitution and opening state owned brothels.

shows the opposite effect: it starts at a high level and eventually fades at around the 10-year mark.

Arranged marriages should not be confused with forced marriages. There are three types of marriages: love marriages, arranged marriages and forced marriages. Forced marriages usually happen to minors who have no power to choose who they marry. Arranged marriages should not be confused with the latter, they function more similarly to business transactions. As Applbaum (2007, pg. 44-45) states, there are a lot of stages to be completed and marriage only happens if both consenting parties are interested in going forth with it.

With the American influence, love marriages have become really popular in Japan. Therefore, young people are now trying to find a soulmate anyway they can, keeping an arranged marriage in their minds as a last resort. According to Retherford *et al* (1999, p. 65), the concept of love marriages entered Japanese culture after the American post World War II (WWII) occupation. With the rise in American pop culture, young people became eager to find their soulmate or true love and marry them. As established by Browne (2006, pp. 13-388), it seems that the norm for dating would be: boy meets girl, they go on a date, if all goes well they go on many dates and start a relationship. Eventually this relationship leads to a love marriage and the couple may produce offspring. This seems to be the norm in Japan as well, except that boy might meet girl through an agency and not through kismet or destiny, and true love has very little to do with it.

Dating and Beyond in Modern Japan

Japanese love is communal. This means that two people marry for the good of the community. This is the reason why love marriages were not popular in the times of sovereign love: love marriages do not necessarily serve a purpose. After the Meiji Restoration of 1868 the Japanese Emperor re-established all his power and thus the Japanese people regained their adoration towards His divinity.²⁶ In her chapter on sovereign love, Ryang (2006, pp. 35-64), analyzes the way in which this type of love is processed. Ryang refers significantly to WWII and

²⁶ According to Shillony (1999, pp. 5-12) the Japanese Imperial Family had long justified their rule over the country through their connection to the Sun Goddess Amaterasu. It is believed that the Emperor is a manifestation of the divine, an intermediary between the Spiritual World and the Physical (or Human) World.

how men were expected to die for the Emperor, while women were supposed to bear five children each. Women had an indispensable role: they were to support their husband's adoration for the Emperor and send their (male) children to war. At this time, according to Ryang (2006, p.61) "love between two individuals for each other was not love". Love at this time, translated to love and adoration towards the Emperor, and all acts were to serve him, or in His name.

After the defeat in the war, the Emperor's power was questioned once again and this sovereign type of love lost strength, especially due to the American Occupation Period that lasted until 1951. According to McElwain (2017) the current Japanese constitution was put in place in 1947, this is when Japan officially became a constitutional monarchy. Theoretically, the first Prime-Minister of Japan ruled starting 1885²⁷, during the Meiji Era, however, at this time, the Emperor still held most of the power. Nowadays the Emperor is the official Head of State, but holds little to no power, similarly to other constitutional monarchies, such as Spain and the United Kingdom, the head of state is an iconic image of the country. The current Emperor is Naruhito²⁸ and the Prime-Minister is Shinzo Abe²⁹.

The current Ministry of Education in Japan is called MEXT: Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology. According to its website³⁰, it was created in 1871. Frühstück (2003, p. 16) mentions that the first year of sexual education in Japan was 1992. It started because of the concern about HIV and according to Ishiwata (2011, pp. 158) this is still MEXT's primary concern. The sexual education curriculum shows a bigger concern with protecting life, practicing safe sex and childcare, while bowing little to none with having a happy and fulfilling sex life. However, it has come a long way, from advertising abstinence as the answer.

Ansari (2015, pp. 160-161) mentions how the Japanese might have trouble meeting people of the opposite sex to befriend and possibly date. This happens due to the segregatory

²⁷ According to the *Prime Minister of Japan and his Cabinet* website (http://japan.kantei.go.jp/cabinet/0061-90_e.html)

²⁸ Naruhito rose to the throne in 2019 after his father's abdication. He started the Reiwa era.

²⁹ Prime-Minister Shinzo Abe was elected in 2012 and has been re-elected. He is known as the creator of *Abenomics*, which are a number of austere economic policies put in place by Abe after his first rule in 2012. These have brought a big improvement in Japan's economy.

³⁰ http://www.mext.go.jp/b_menu/hakusho/html/others/detail/1317242.htm

tendency in high schools and even some universities. Tendency which, according to Ryang (2006, p. 95), started in the late nineteenth century during the Meiji Era.³¹

Introducing a friend to another and meeting new people through your already existing friends and connections is universal. However, in Japan, there are ways to meet people solely with the intent of starting a relationship, or even with marriage in mind. Besides group dating³² and the *Omiai* practice, which is in its way a predecessor of Dating Apps, there are other methods. These demonstrate a Japanese predisposition for blind dating and even arranged marriages. This predisposition seems to bide well for the progression of dating apps.

The practice of *miai* or *Omiai* in Japan dates back to the sixteenth century. There are agencies that supply this service, but usually it is provided by people with large social networks in the community, such as company bosses or school teachers. This is a practice that nowadays is losing popularity; it serves mostly to appease the parents and the community: by pretending to be searching, the parents are bound to pressure less.

The process involves the client sifting through a catalog of candidates, while usually accompanied by their mother. They eventually pick one of these candidates, who all have extensive information written about them, from profession to blood type. Once a candidate is picked, there are still several procedures to go through before setting the first date. First, the service provider at the agency contacts the candidate to get broader information on them, their family history, for example or their medical records. If the client decides to proceed then the candidate is asked if they would like to go on a date. If they say yes, then before the date, there will be an investigation conducted by the agency: the service providers will talk to school teachers and neighbours to assess whether both people are indeed who they say they are and if there are no other problems. Both families will be truly under a magnifying glass during this process. However, none of the families mind, since they know that this process is applied to both sides of the couple and therefore, it is for their benefit. After this, both parties will go on a first

³¹ There are still some single sex high schools and universities (for example Keisen University in Tama). Even the mixed high schools can have separate classes for boys and girls, for example, there might be a Physical Education shift for boys and a different one for girls. However, according to an article in the Japan Times (2012), this practice seems to be in decline.

³² There are a few forms, such as *Gokon*, *Machikon*, and *Konkatsu*. But since these have adapted to the technological society, chapter 2 provides more insight on the subject.

date accompanied by their two agents there as an ice breaker, but they will eventually be left alone to associate by themselves. If the date is successful, both parties might ask for more dates and even each other's personal contact information. Of course, when going on a date, both parties are aware that the objective is marriage.

Because of practices like this, most Japanese people do not feel the need to date, because they know that when the time is right, they can find someone. Most of the times, however, people choose to settle, instead of looking for something more, simply because 'it is time'. And, according to Applbaum (2007, pp. 46-47) it is poorly seen to be unmarried after a certain age, since unmarried people can be considered a burden to society.

Gokon is another way of meeting a potential future partner, which dates back to the 1970s. This practice usually involves one or two hosts. A boy will invite his male friends and ask a female friend to invite an equal number of her female friends. There are a few issues with this practice. The first one is that there is no agency or offline group you can join that provides *gokon* services. Secondly, most Japanese people nowadays do not have many friends from the opposite sex with whom to organize a *gokon*. This practice has advantages and disadvantages: on one hand *gokon* provides the opportunity to make different gender friends; on the other hand, one needs to find someone with the connections to organize it in the first place.

If blind dates have a tendency to be awkward, group blind dates can be even more so. Another thing that *gokon* often lacks is a good ice breaker. Even if there are people with the connections to make *gokon* happen, it does not always mean that they will have the social skills to make several people connect at the same time. According to Kanert (2017), the meetings typically involve food or dinner and start off with a toast. After said toast, the participants will talk a little about themselves and share a meal. If everything goes well, they might even go to karaoke after dinner to know each other better. Here some divergences might occur, either participants don't like each other, or two people like the same person, many awkward situations might occur. This can dissuade people from participating. There are also reports of sexual harassment during company organized *gokon*.

Machikon is another form of group blind dating. It is similar to *gokon*, but it is organized online or by companies. As Ansari (2015, pp. 165-166) has mentioned, there are *machikon*

parties organized by local governments or agencies. They are similar to singles mixers, where attendants pay a fee and attend a party at an establishment, usually a bar or restaurant, with many other single people. Most of these events are organized online nowadays, which means attendants might not know any of the people involved in the event. These events are easier to participate in than *gokon*, since you don't need to have a connection to participate in. However, for the shy or herbivore participant they might be ineffective.

Konkatsu, similarly to both *gokon* and *machikon*, is an organized party, but it is more personal than a singles mixer. This practice is more fluid and flexible as well. *Konkatsu* is usually organized by agencies and, according to Kuchikomi (2016), events range from organized parties to match-making trips. Contrary to *gokon* and *machikon* which might result in friendship or dating, *konkatsu* is more oftenly seen or referred to as “marriage hunting parties”. In the recent 2017 NTV television series 過保護のカホコ (romanized to *Kahogo no Kahoko*, meaning Overprotected Kahoko³³) Kahoko, the protagonist, goes on a few *konkatsu* events for the sole purpose of finding a husband, but she ends up meeting with the same man twice. This suggests that, even though the events have seen a recent spike, they are not being efficient. A fact that is corroborated by Kuchikomi's 2016 article, in which the author states that despite the boom of *konkatsu*, or match-making activity, there is no corresponding spike in marriages.

Herbivore men or *soushoku danshi* (草食男子), which literally translates to “grass eating boys” are young Japanese men who focus on themselves and are believed to have no sexual interests or to have a passive attitude altogether when it comes to romantic relationships. These are men who focus on their appearance and self-grooming. According to Chen (2012, p. 283), the average herbivore man is content with having a lower paying job that is less demanding. It would appear that these men are not very ambitious in any aspect of their love life and career, instead preferring to live a comfortable and quiet life.

Soushoku danshi present a break from the typical masculine image of the suit sporting Japanese salary men, who are considered the “meat eaters”. As stated by Chen (2012, p. 303) they spend their time and money on online games, spa days and shopping for clothes. They are fashion conscious and have a style sometimes deemed feminine, wearing for example skinny

³³ It is a television series about an average overprotected child in Japan. The protagonist is 21 year-old Kahoko, who is in search of a job and, eventually, a husband.

jeans or oversized shirts. Herbivore men are not shut-ins³⁴, they can abide by social standards, have friends and go out. However, according to Ansari (2015, pp. 157-162) they wouldn't approach a girl with the intent to date her. Morioka (2013, p. 5) states that one of his previously published books, *Lessons in Love for Herbivore Men*, was targeted at young men who were shy of nature and afraid of rejection. This was meant to pull young men away from a media representation of the very virile man. Not to make young men herbivore, but to validate their fear and encourage them to pursue women, even if they were not the spitting image of the "macho" man. What Morioka (2013, pp. 5-6) was trying to do was the reverse of the government. The Japanese government seems to think that the solution to herbivore men is to make them more masculine, which only furthers the problem.

A 2009 study quoted by Chen (2012, p.284) found that "60% of unmarried Japanese men between the ages of 20 and 34 identify themselves as *soushokukei danshi*." The term has become an escape from responsibility: people are not expecting herbivore men to date, as such if a man does not want to concern himself with dating, he can simply identify as herbivore and no one will blame him³⁵. The term "herbivore men" should not hold a bad connotation, and Morioka (2013, pp. 4-5) tries to redefine the term as a way to say that these are just gentle men who are afraid to get hurt and therefore do not avidly pursue relationships. This is especially so considering that having a serious relationship in Japan implies that a man should provide for a woman, and that these men do not possess high paying jobs, leading them to believe that they are not desirable. Furthermore, these men do not want to be saddled with the responsibility to provide, which does not mean that they do not want a relationship.

Ansari (2015) refers to herbivore men and the sexless culture together, but they are not very straightforwardly connected. This issue of herbivore men and even of sexless culture is one that is not often spoken about in Japan. Ansari (2015, pp. 161) mentions how the media is "blowing this out of proportion". Certainly *soushoku danshi* is now a fashionable headline in pop

³⁴ Often referred to as *hikikomori* (引きこもり). These are people who shut themselves at home and don't come out. They become extremely anti-social and sometimes social pariahs. This is a widely discussed issue in and about Japanese society nowadays. However, these people should not be confused with the herbivore men.

³⁵ Society does not expect herbivore men to date, so they will accept being herbivore as something they cannot change about a person. However, they will still talk about how much of a social problem these men are. The Youtube channel Asian Boss has a video that illustrates this: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GWoM4ooZBcc>.

culture sites and women's magazines. However, the sexless culture has little to do with it. As explained by Ansari (2015, p. 159), women seem frustrated by these men for not approaching them, but they do not seem concerned enough to approach them themselves. Moreover, in a series of interviews conducted by the popular Youtube channel Asian Boss, Japanese girls state that they would prefer a man to approach them, rather than having to do it themselves, and they show a clear preference for the virile salary men type.

Contradictorily, a high number of Japanese seem to begin their sex lives quite early. According to a study quoted by Ishiwata (2011, p. 158) 37.3% of boys and 45.6% of girls have had sexual experiences by the last year of highschool. This seems to indicate a not so sexless culture, as well as a need to start teaching safe-sex earlier. Especially since, according to another study quoted by Ishiwata (2011, p. 156), in 2007 1.4% of all Japanese babies have been born to women 19 years old or younger.

The problem then does not seem to be the lack of sex, but instead marriage and the subsequential natality rates. There seems to be a misconnection between the wants and needs of the Japanese women and men. Joining a service such as *machikon*, *konkatsu*, *omiai* or *gokon*, where one knows that the other participants are also looking to date to marry might help make the connection. However, not everyone is an extrovert and joins these services without a push. One might argue that it is easier to connect with people from an app on your smartphone before proceeding to the next step. But can dating apps compete against these services?

Chapter 2 - Cybercultures and Cyber dating

“[...] *Deai* provides protected encounters which, nonetheless, enables users to drop the veil of anonymity and pair up.” - Holden & Tsuruki (Gottlieb *et al*, 2003, p. 34)

Nowadays as a consequence of technological development, these encounters can be done through Dating Apps. These, accessible to anyone with a smartphone, are a more comfortable way of sifting through candidates. Considering that these kinds of applications depend on internet usage, that becomes a factor to determine whether they are viable or not.

According to Bell *et al* (2004, p. 41) cyberspace is defined as “[...] the space created through the confluence of electronic communications networks such as the Internet which enables computer mediated communication (CMC) between any number of people who may be geographically dispersed around the globe”. Therefore, cyberculture can be defined as the culture created by the activities and social circumstances created by the use and communication through online media. Cyber dating is one of the activities that go on in cyberspace, thus becoming part of cyberculture. According to Lehman (2019) cyber dating began in the 1960’s with the matching of people through computer mainframes, and it is a habit that has grown and evolved. Dating apps are part of this evolution.

Japan is often considered one of the world's most technologically advanced nations, and the population reflects that standard. As in most first world countries, people now spend a lot of time online and especially on their personal smartphones. In Japan, the smartphone has become the companion of commuters, especially since commutes can range between the regular 20 minutes and three hours, or the odd six hours. It is plausible to assume that, since they spend so much time on their phones, Dating Apps are more comfortable or desirable for the average Japanese.

This chapter is divided into two parts. The first one discusses the technical aspects of dating apps and online dating. The second one provides a brief history of online dating in Japan.

Dating Apps VS Online Dating

It is important to establish the difference between online dating and dating apps. Dating applications are a form of online dating, since they are processed online. The difference is that when talking about online dating, one can be referring to websites or email services, such as Match.com or OkCupid. However, when discussing dating apps, one is referring exclusively to the applications that one can download onto one's smartphone, like Tinder or Bumble.

Smartphones, the platform for dating apps, accompany us in our daily lives. That is why location-based dating apps seem to be so popular nowadays. These applications utilize the users' location data to determine the closest possible matches. Waiting at home, in front of a computer, to match with a person who might live hundreds of kilometers away is a thing of the past. It is much more practical to instantly match with someone in the same city. Ansari (2015, pp. 108-119) makes a good point towards this when referring to the popularity of apps like Tinder and Grindr. The author states that it is enjoyable to use them, denoting that one can even use them while out with friends: it can feel like a video game in which everyone can participate and voice their opinions towards matching candidates.

Location based applications have gained a lot of popularity. Recently, swipe type apps such as Tinder and Bumble have become popular as well. This system shows the picture of a candidate and then one can scroll through more pictures or read the short profile description. After looking at a profile, the user swipes one way to like the candidate, or another to refuse him or her. These apps diminish the danger of rejection, since you are only allowed to talk to the people who reciprocate your "like" in the application. The swipe element also makes the application more enticing to use, since it makes usage feel gamelike. Overall, it is an extremely user friendly system.

According to Gottlieb *et al* (2003, p. 5), nowadays internet usage in Japan is processed mostly by *i-mode*, which is a type of mobile internet that can be accessed through a smartphone or a *keitai denwa*³⁶. It clearly surpasses Personal Computers' (PC) usage. Japanese people prefer to use their mobile phones or devices to surf the internet, since they are smaller, more mobile, cheaper and therefore more practical than a Laptop or a PC. This provides dating apps with a big

³⁶ Flip-phones with access to email and other online features.

advantage, because not all websites are adaptable to *i-mode*. However, since dating apps are specifically built for smartphones, they become not only more pleasant to look at, but also more user-friendly.

More than that, in Japan, especially among young people, personal smartphones are a form of identity affirmation. Everyone has different phone cases, phone charms that dangle around in the train, different wallpaper backgrounds, ringtones, etc. A plethora of small identity affirmations that sets them apart from the crowd of suit wearing people. When referring to phones or cellphones, in this dissertation it is typically implied smartphones, or in Japanese - the *sumaho* (スマホ). Flip phones, in Japanese *keitai denwa* (携帯電話), are irrelevant for the topic at hand, since they cannot hold applications of any kind. Although the expression *keitai* literally means mobile, applying to any kind of portable phone, nowadays the expression is used mostly in relation to flip phones, and less to smartphones³⁷. It is still quite common to carry a *keitai* in smaller towns.

Online Dating in Japan

When mentioning the internet, one must keep in mind the existing digital divide. This expression relates to the layers of population without access to the internet, which create a rift (or division) in between those with access and those without. Notwithstanding, even if one has access to the internet, it does not necessarily mean that one has the capability to participate fully in the existing cybercultures, either for lack of knowledge³⁸ or because it is common for internet communities to shut down to outsiders³⁹.

According to Gottlieb *et al* (2003, p. 1), belonging to a cyberculture means belonging to a community. There are people who surf the web everyday for basic purposes, such as finding places to eat or recipes, gaining knowledge about politics, economics and religion, reading the news, watching “how to” videos or participating in social networks like Instagram or Facebook.

³⁷ It can still apply to both.

³⁸ For example, there is some online discourse in languages other than Japanese, which means one needs knowledge of these in order to participate. For instance, Youtube, which is a worldwide online video platform, has content in many languages; in order to participate in the discussion in the comment section of a video in English, Japanese people need English skills.

³⁹ Especially when it is a sensitive community, such as a support group.

However, the communities that Gottlieb *et al* (2013, p. 9) mentions the most in Japan are the underground communities: feminist forums, activists, gay forums, Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) positive forums and a lot more. According to Baudinette (2019, p. 96) online dating services for homosexual people (especially men), have been in place since the early 1990's. Additionally, since the advent of smartphones and dating apps in the 2010's, homosexual oriented dating apps have been instrumental to bringing "gay towns"⁴⁰ to the online world, thus expanding the community beyond its previously physical limits.

The use of the internet for dating purposes has become fairly popular in Asia recently. Thailand for example, according to Jaruhirunsakul (2010, p.78) internet dating is amongst the most used methods for meeting new people in Thailand. The situation in Thailand seems to be similar to the one in Japan, where men are expected to pay for the usage of the app to prove their financial security. There is also a slight stigma associated with it, however, as suggested by Jaruhirunsakul (2010, p.78), the biggest stigma seems to be the substantial sexual hunger of the male users. Another situation is that of China which, according to Chan (2019, p. 4), has an app called Momo which innovating old ways to communicate, meet and matchmake. The situation in China is especially similar to the Japanese one, since both countries had the government somehow controlling people's marriages and love life. Japan had the Emperor and China had Mao.

Besides online activism, in Japan a lot of internet activity goes toward *Deai* sites. *Deai* sites are similar to chatrooms, in a sense that, by accessing the site, one gets to chat with people who are interested in the same things, or have similar hobbies. *Deai* (出会) is composed by characters meaning out and meeting, whereby one can infer that they are sites where one can encounter different types of people, whom one will hopefully later meet offline. The expression is usually followed by the suffix *kei* (系), *deai-kei* (出会い系), which is usually translated as "encounter". The term itself has nothing to do with dating. However, since most of the sites are used for that nowadays, *deai* sites are now seen as matchmaking sites. Although, it is true that

⁴⁰ Neighborhoods or places where the gay community usually reunites. In Tokyo, the most well-known "gay Town" is in Shinjuku Ni-chōme.

there are *deai saito* (出会いサイト) for support groups⁴¹, nowadays most sites are used for dating.

With the new widespread usage of *deai saito*, complications have arisen: there are a number of crimes associated with *deai*, for example kidnapping or murder cases, there are also prostitution rings that are run through *deai*. As *Deai* has become almost an equivalent to matchmaking, offline establishments, such as *Deai Kissa* (出会い喫茶), emerge. Similarly to what happens in the Red Light District, these are cafes where men go to peep at girls through windows and choose whether they want to interact with them or not. While supposedly more modest than what happens at Red Light District, a lot of these cafes have become a front for prostitution and thus have been shut down by Japanese authorities.

These factors have contributed to a smearing of image towards *deai* sites. Of course, many people continue to use them, either out of curiosity, or because they are indeed trying to find a match. Still, people are reluctant to meet with other users of *deai* for many reasons. Firstly, there is the stigma associated with it: people do not want other people, especially their peers, to know that they use these sites, so even if asked directly, *deai* partakers will deny accessing the sites. Also, meeting someone outside of the safety of a firewall and anonymity of the websites means that the person one meets knows their face and, possibly, real name. In certain instances, they can become part of one's life, which generates vulnerability. Secondly, there are the dangers associated with it. In *deai* sites, there are people who are paid to pose online as attractive people and flirt with users to keep them online. These people have no interest in meeting with the users, or actually dating them⁴². Therefore, one does not know whether a certain person one met online is not just a paid employee, or worse, is not a murderer. Nonetheless, people still use *deai*, mostly on their phones, which makes it more convenient to chat with anyone at anytime. This situation is similar to the one described in Thailand in the study conducted by Jaruhirunsakul (2010, p.75-87), in which it was discovered that despite the possible dangers of internet dating, people still enjoy and participate in it.

⁴¹ Such as the aforementioned online communities where HIV positive patients share their experiences and connect with each other, for example HIVOICE is a newsletter circulated to HIV positive or interested parties. Another very common kind of support *deai* is for LGBTQ+ communities.

⁴² These people are often called *sakura*. Kumano (2009) has interviewed a *sakura* who does not seem to think that their job is too hard, however he does often get concerned with Japanese people's ability to behave socially.

Online dating predates dating apps. A few decades ago, one could already sign up to websites such as Match.com (founded in 1993) that would match you with people with the same interests. That is what these dating *deai* sites are all about. To look into them is to peek into the success of dating apps, even if these are a somewhat different concept. Gottlieb *et al* (2003 p. 36) describe a poll that is similar to the inquiry presented in the case study conducted here. The poll was conducted online and answered by 300 users. In this study, it was found that 39% of users had never met with anyone on the site, while 37% had met with less than three individuals. This means that a large majority of the users, even if they joined to make friends, did not actually make lasting offline friendships and therefore, I am assuming, did not date any of the people they met online. Plus, 31% of the users reported joining online dating by mere curiosity, which means that, once satisfied, they probably did not continue using these sites. The study showed that only 8% of respondents had the goal of actually meeting another person through *deai*. This makes *deai* an ineffective place to meet someone who you would date, since probability shows that people on these websites are not seriously looking for someone. We will look to see if dating apps can be a better option for this purpose.

Farrer, J., & Gavin, J. (2009, p. 409) have referred to a study conducted about Match.com in which it was found that a lot of people associate *deai* and online dating. This can be detrimental to the reputation of dating sites and apps, causing their usage to go down. However, these sites and apps are still needed by the layers of the population who have no other means of meeting new people. It has also shown that, typically, men initiate contact more often than women. This study showed some of the good aspects of online dating, such as: making the selection method easier; providing a better control over communication and maintaining a certain degree of safety and anonymity (as expressed before). Overall, it is a very flexible means of communication that allows one to filter one's potential partners without fear of being judged or fear of face to face rejection.

Notwithstanding, it is relevant to mention cyber dating abuse. Cyber dating refers to all kind of dating behaviours that take place online, whether it is meeting in dating apps, sexting or just texting. The overabundance of dating apps, social networks and messagings apps have made it so people can be in contact with each other at all times, even with people from a foreign

country. This is a great advantage, but as Deans *et al* (2019, p. 1077) demonstrate, it also has brought about plenty of opportunities for abuse and cyberbullying. Therefore, we cannot assume that by staying online and avoiding to meet offline one is safe. There are still the dangers of verbal abuse, impersonating⁴³ and online grooming⁴⁴. It is prudent to say that the stigma associated with *deai* is justified.

Written communication online might be difficult, due to the lack of gestures or facial expressions. However, technology has come a long way to provide the tools to assess other factors, such as the use of emojis, stickers, or animated GIFs. The timing of response and language used can also help determine whether a person is being genuine or not in its interest and intentions when communicating online.

Japanese society furthers the complications and communication issues, since there are various formality levels that should be taken into account when talking to someone, especially someone whom one has just met or has never seen in real life. The use of *keigo*⁴⁵ and other formalities can make communication seem impersonal or uninterested. Although, according to Farrer, J., & Gavin, J. (2009, p. 410), the avid users of such sites and apps have developed a sensitivity for written communication and are able to make it feel more personal. When encountering the chatting partner offline, such struggles fade, or might even disappear, depending on the people in question. Therefore it should not be considered an impediment.

⁴³ This is when someone pretends to be someone who they are not, like in the case of the *sakura*. People can also pretend to be a certain person with an intent to harm that person or their reputation.

⁴⁴ According to Machimbarrena *et al* (2018, p. 3), this happens when an adult prepares a minor to obtain sexual material, which can be considered a criminal offense

⁴⁵ Overly formal Japanese language that one would use to talk to a superior, such as a boss.

Chapter 3 - Case Study

Objectives

Why do people use dating apps in Japan?

This wide and general question was broken down into two easier to answer questions. The main objective of this study is to understand the profile of the average user of these apps: who are they? This leads to another question: are the users getting what they are looking for (be it a friend, a casual relationship or a life-long partner), or not?

Considering that this study was done only by me, there wasn't enough capability to analyze the whole of the Japanese population. Therefore, the study sample was controlled by purposely selecting young people to answer the questionnaire. Thus, the universe in which the questions are answered becomes much smaller: young Japanese people. Then, can we say that dating apps are effective for young Japanese people? Little is written about this topic, so I devised a case study, in which I proceeded to circulate a questionnaire, both on and offline, to student mediums. The questionnaire is in the annex below.

Methodology

A split questionnaire was devised in order to understand both the users and the non-users. There is of course a bigger focus on the users. The questionnaire is split so that it might be possible to understand why people use dating apps and why they do not. This way, it is possible to understand people's impressions and perspectives about dating apps. It is important to understand this aspect, since the public opinion about a certain product might lead to a rise or fall in its popularity. Japanese society in particular is very pressing on its people, and everyone tries to abide by the norm, which means that the Japanese public opinion about dating apps might lead to an increase or decrease in their usage. Therefore, one objective of the questionnaire is to understand if there is a stigma associated with dating apps, as predicted in chapter 2, related to *deai*.

The questionnaire was answered by 322 people. The questionnaire was first circulated online on social media and then presented to Japanese people *in loco*. The social media used

where Facebook, Line and Instagram. The questionnaire was also circulated by me: I approached young people in busy train stations and university campuses with a tablet and a smartphone that had the GoogleForms questionnaire on it. Of the total, 39 responses were obtained online before reaching Japan. The trip occurred from the first of July of 2019 to the first of August of the same year, the inquiry was conducted during this time and throughout six cities. The cities visited were Tokyo, Osaka and Kyoto, for being the biggest cities and most populated cities in Japan. And then Nagoya and Hiroshima, for their considerable size and young student populations. I finally chose Niigata, a more rural city. With this variety, I expected to cover different types of users.

The people chosen online were Japanese friends and friends of friends. These were people attending or freshly graduated from university. For the *in loco* interviews, rest areas in train stations and university campuses were chosen. The approach was directed towards young looking Japanese people who were either alone (studying or relaxing) or in small groups⁴⁶. By young looking people, it is understood people who look to be between twenty and thirty years old.

The questionnaire was split in three parts, the first one is for identification. Questions included were about gender, age, relationship status, professional situation and social orientation. The last question in this section was “Have you ever used a dating app?” if the answer was “yes”, then the respondent was taken to the user section of the questionnaire; if it was “no”, they were taken to the non-user section.

Users and non-users had different questions to answer. Users were asked what apps they used, which one was their favourite and how they would rate their experience. Users were also asked about their objective in using the apps and whether they had ever met offline with any of the people they had matched with online. Finally they were asked what kind of change they thought that dating apps could bring into the world and if they still used them. The people who responded “no” to the last question were asked why they quit using dating apps.

Non-users were only asked three questions. First, the reason why they did not use the apps. Secondly, whether they had ever used an app that was not used necessarily for dating, but

⁴⁶ In Niigata the questionnaire was exceptionally circulated amongst the participants of a Portuguese culture class event who were all Japanese university students. And in Tokyo they were circulated after a Portuguese language class.

for other purposes, such as making friends. Lastly, they were asked a question that was similar to one of the questions that users were asked to answer. It was: “What do you think about this new form of meeting people?”.

There were multiple choice answers, in which respondents could choose more than one option. In the professional situation, for example, people could be a student and also a full-time worker, or part-time. There were also two open short answers and one long answer. The short answer for users was about the kind of app they liked. The non-users were briefly asked what kind of people they thought used dating apps. The long answer was optional and was about whether the respondents had any interesting stories to share about dating app usage.

There was a total of 19 questions. The Respondents’ Information section had six questions to which all of the interviewed were asked to answer. After this, the user section had eight questions, and the non-user five questions. At the end there was also the optional long-answer for all participants. The user section was left with 15 questions and the non-user section with 12 questions in total. The questionnaire took around three minutes to complete.

All of the questions except for five of them were of mandatory response. The optional ones are the writing responses: two short and one long. As well as the question about sexual orientation and the one about how many times had the users met offline with other users.

Most of the respondents (58.7%) are women, since they were much more receptive to talking to other women when approached in the street. Men on the other hand, even when in large groups, would avoid engaging in conversation or responding to the inquiry. The approach was geared towards university students, so the research was conducted in and around university areas. The assumption was that young people, growing up with technology would be the biggest users of this kind of app. This is why it was decided to conduct the study mostly in campus areas.

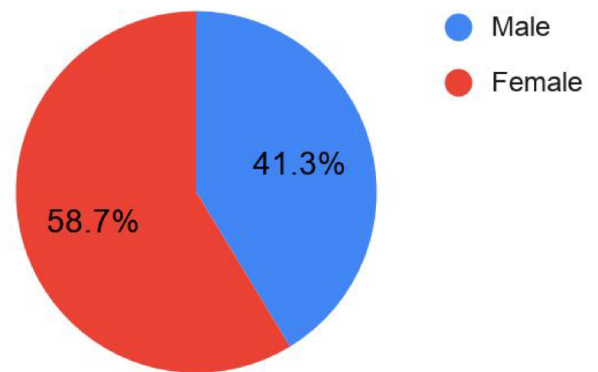


Image 2 - Pie chart “Respondents Information: Gender”

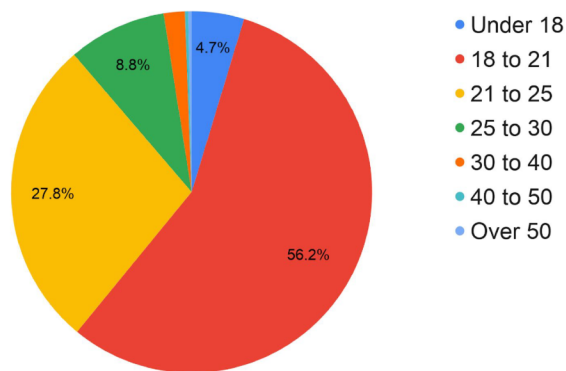


Image 3 - Pie chart "Respondents Information: Age"

Additionally, young people are the ones who are least likely to hold prejudices against using technology for any means, including meeting people online.

Instead of approaching people in the middle of the street standing or walking, the best method was approaching people who were seated. Going to big train stations or places on campus where students often go to relax and address big groups there was the most successful method. When inserted into a group, people were more likely to engage.

By approaching big groups less time was lost. However, there seems to have been a problem with this approach: when I showed the graphic in annex about dating app usage (Image 7) to some Japanese people, they were surprised at the results. It seems like going to people directly might have been a mistake. The stigma associated with *deai* has spread slightly to dating apps as well. Therefore, most people would lie to save themselves the embarrassment of saying that they partake in their usage.

Research like this depends solely on the respondents and their honesty. However, it feels like there is a "don't ask, don't tell" policy over these apps: people know that everyone uses them, but most do not like to admit it. The stigma and dangers associated with meeting people online is too present for Japanese people to admit to using dating apps. In people's minds there's also a correlation between *deai*, dating apps and people who have poor social skills. Therefore some people might feel like admitting to using such apps is admitting to being socially inept.

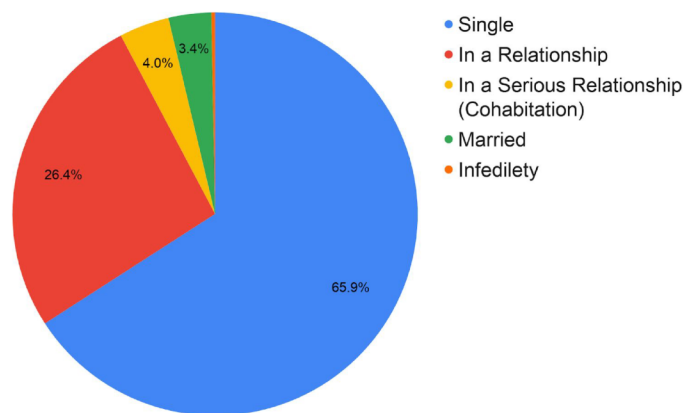


Image 4 - Pie Chart "Respondents Information: Relationship status"

Results

Of the respondents 41.3% are male and 58.7% are female. They diverge in age significantly: the biggest age group is 18 to 21 years old at 56.2%, followed by 21 to 25 years old at 27.8%. Respondents aged between 25 and 30 are also substantial at 8.8%. Other age groups are comprised of smaller numbers, such as people under 18 years old account for 4.7%; 30 to 40 1.9%, and 40 to 50 and over 50 years old account for 0.3% each.

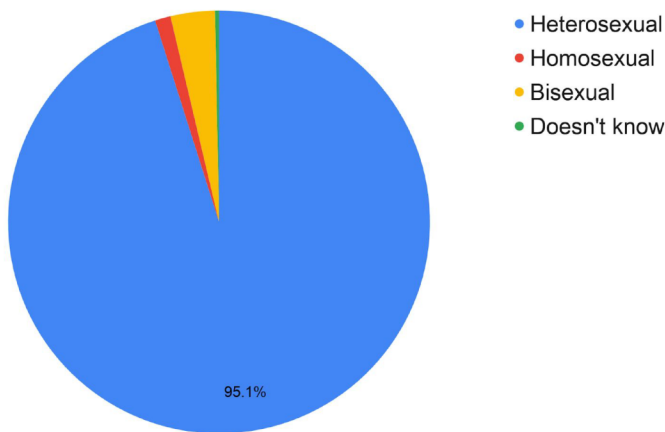


Image 5 - Pie Chart "Respondents Information: Sexuality"

Finally, regarding professional situations, respondents could choose more than one answer. 263 people (81.7%) are students, who might belong as well to the workforce. Considering the workforce, 108 people (33.5%) have a part-time job that is under 20 weekly hours; 30 people (9.3%) have a part-time job that is over 20 weekly hours and 43 people (13.3%) are full time workers. Four people (1.2%) are unemployed, five (1.6%) are homemakers, one is self-employed while another is a football player (each account for 0.3%).

Concerning relationship status, 65.8% of respondents are single, and 26.4% are in a relationship. Smaller groups are: 4% of respondents are in a serious relationship, 3.4% are married and 0.3% (which accounts for only one respondent) are being unfaithful. As for sexuality, the majority (95.1%) is heterosexual, 1.2% homosexual and 3.4% bisexual. There was one case, accounting for 0.3%, that responded "Do not know".

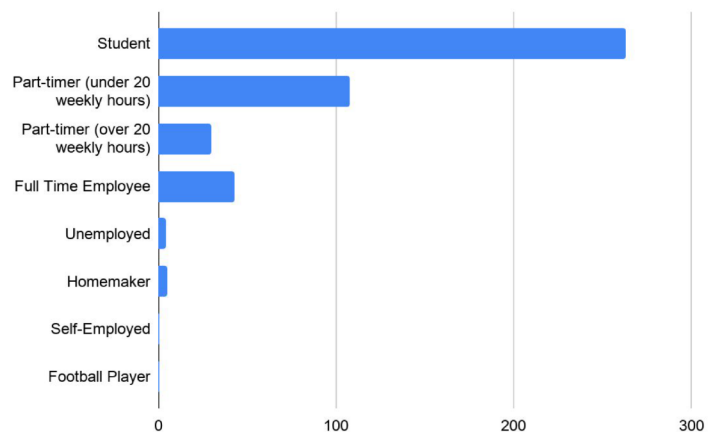


Image 6 - Bar Chart "Respondents Information: Occupation"

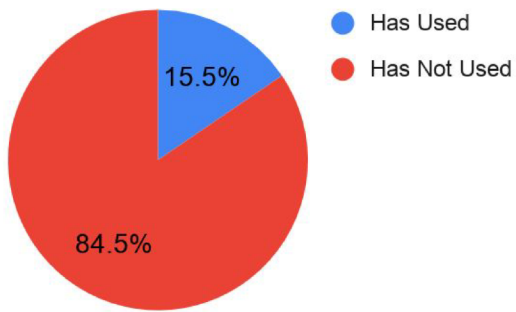


Image 7 - Pie Chart "Respondents Information: Dating app usage"

Of the respondents 15.5% report to have used dating apps, meaning that 84.5% report never having used one.

Non-users account for 84.5% of the population of this case study, the biggest reason they mentioned for not using dating apps seems to be associated with the safety factor, since 160 people (58.8%) answered that it was not safe. This was another question where people could choose multiple answers. 110 respondents (40.4%) report

not having a reason to use it. The third biggest reason given is the dislike of talking to people online, accounting for 51 people and 18.8% of the non users. Less substantial numbers are the lack of time at 29 people and 10.7%. 18 people (6.6%) report thinking that dating apps are for people with no romantic capabilities; 14 people (5%) have a variety of reasons besides the ones stated above.

Of the non-users 33.5% think that

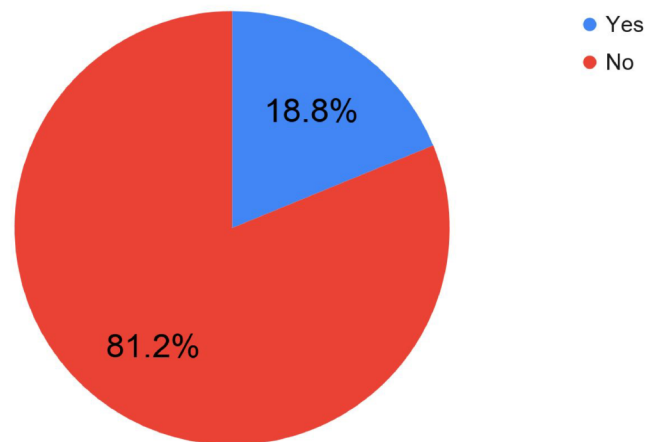


Image 8 - Pie Chart "Non-users: Matchmaking app type usage"

dating apps are a positive way to meet new people and 22.9% think it is a bad way to meet new people. The majority of non-users (43.6%) express no opinion towards it, considering that it is a neutral way to meet people. The data collected from the short answers is that most of the users consider that dating apps are used by people with lower social skills, or simply by people looking for new friends or a casual relationship. It seems that even with 22.9% of non-user

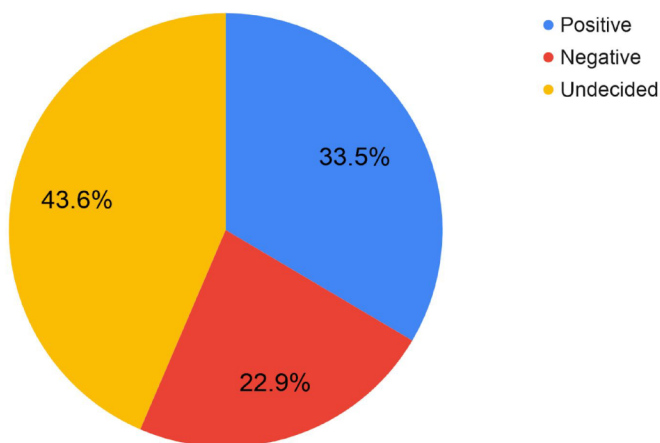


Image 9 - Pie Chart "Non-users: Attitude towards dating apps"

respondents thinking that dating apps are a negative way of meeting people, most non-users have the idea that these types of apps are used by people looking for a relationship or someone to love; the users are seen only as lonely people, but not bad people overall. This means that any stigma that might exist seems to be aimed towards the apps themselves, and not towards the users.

Finally, when asked, 18.8% of the non-users reported to having used apps of the matchmaking sort in the past. This leads me to believe that, in reality, only the remaining 81.2% of this sample of non-users has truly never used a dating app.

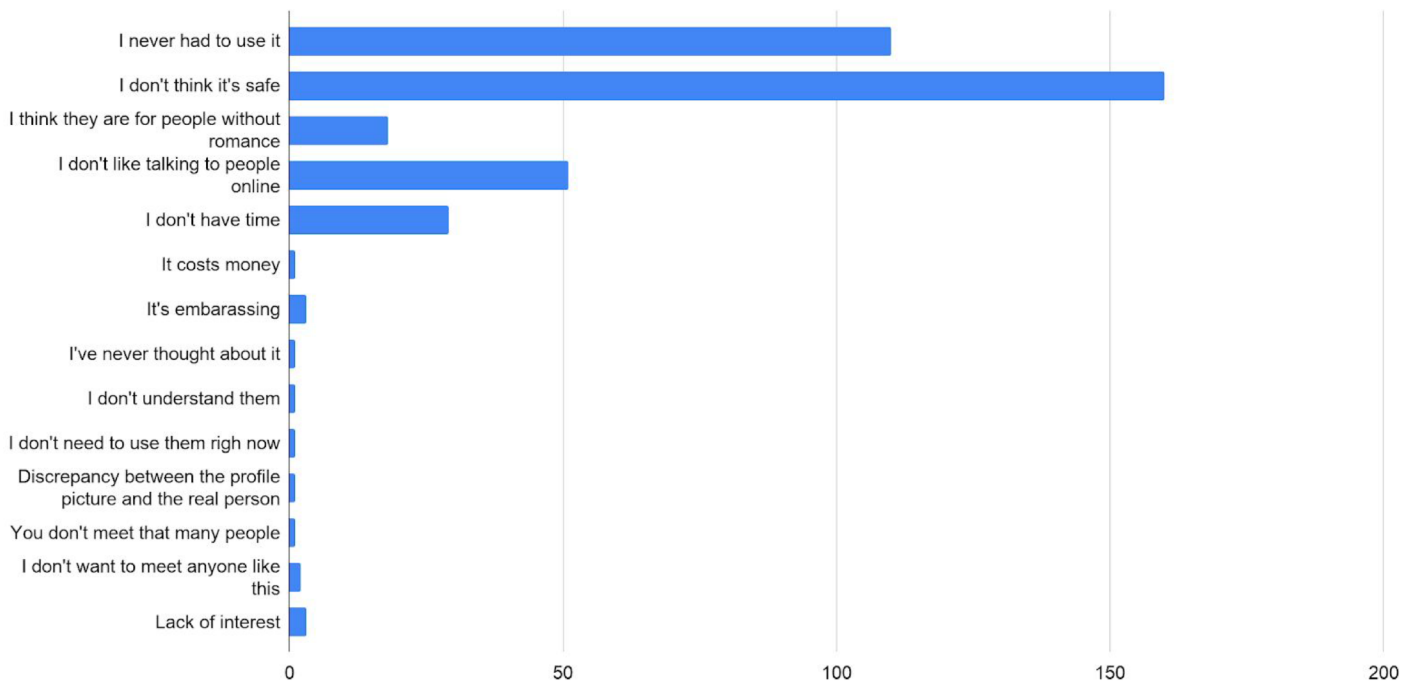
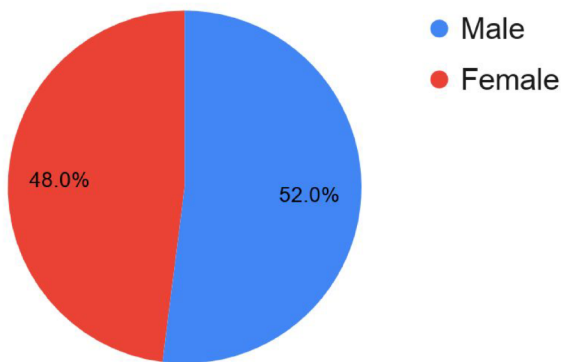


Image 10 - Bar Chart “Non-users: Reasons not to use”



The user profile of this sample is: 48% of users are women and 52% are men; 54% of users are between 21 and 25 year old, 24% are between 18 and 21 years old, followed by 18% of people between 25 and 30 years old, 30 to 40 and over 50 years old each account for

Image 11 - Pie Chart “Users: Gender”

2%. Of the sample, 64% is single, 20% is in a relationship, 10% are in a serious relationship and 6% are married. Sexuality wise, 94% are heterosexual, 4% bisexual and 2% homosexual.

In terms of occupation: 27.5% are students, 17.6% are students with part-time jobs under 20 weekly hours and 7.8% are students with part-time jobs over 20 weekly hours; 29.4% are full time employees; 5.9% are part-time employees with under 20 weekly hours and 3.9% are over 20 weekly hours. Unemployment, homemaking, self-employment and football player, each account for 2% of the users.

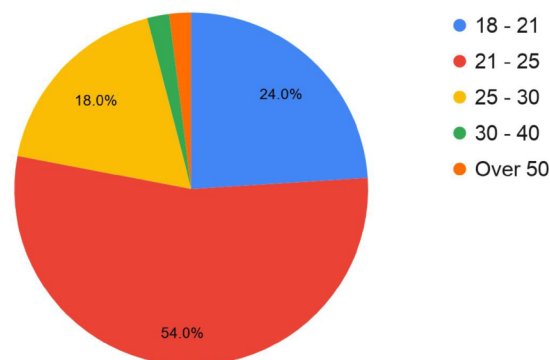


Image 12 - Pie Chart “Users: Age”

About user objectives, the majority (38.9%) seems to be looking for a relationship. The second most popular goal is to make friends (34.7%), followed by a casual relationship (12.7%), marriage (8.3%) and extraconjugal relationships (2.8%).

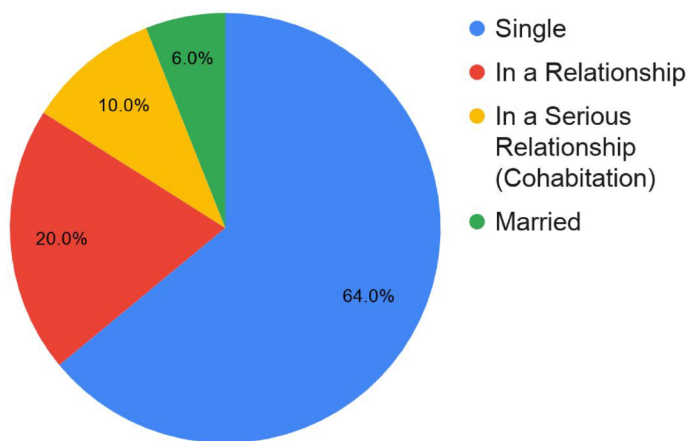


Image 13 - Pie Chart “Users: Relationship status”

The remaining 2.6% of people pursue two motives: a son’s matchmaking and language exchange.

These users seem to see dating apps in a positive light. 64% report it as bringing a positive change in the world and only 10% think they have a negative impact. 26% of users see it as neutral.

The most used app seems to be Tinder, since 66% of people report using it. It is followed by Pairs at 24% usage,

Omiai at 14%, With at 8% and Tapple at 6%. The following apps each amount to 2% of usage each: Bumble, OkCupid, YYC, HelloTalk, 9Monsters and Badoo.

Tinder seems to be the most popular app. When asked about their favourite app, 31.2% of users answered Tinder; 18.8% said Omiai; Tapple and Pairs were tied both at 12.6% and finally With had a 6.3% preference rate. 18.9% of users reportedly did not have a favourite application.

When asked if they had ever met offline with anyone who they had met on the app, 36% of users said they had never. 24% said they had met more than once, 22% said they had met only once, 14% more than five times and only 2% said they had met with someone more than 15 times, followed by another 2% that reportedly had met more than 30 times with people from the app.

The users do not seem too satisfied with dating apps, since the majority of them (26%) rated it at five out of ten. 22% gave them a four out of ten, 12% a six out of ten. The

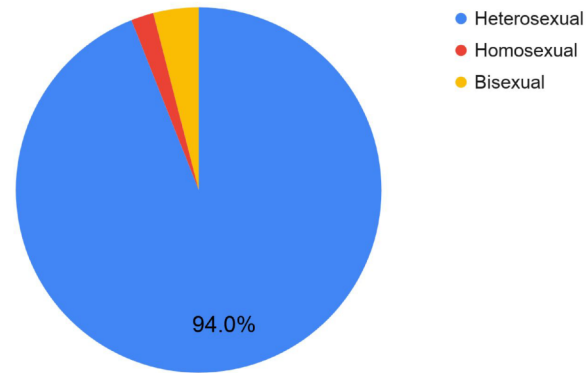


Image 14 - Pie Chart "Users: Sexuality"

scores two, seven and eight out of ten all account for 8% of users each. 6% for both one and ten out of ten. Finally, 3% of people gave them a nine and another 3% gave them a three out of ten. This results in a mean of 5.16/10, which is neither brilliant, nor horrible.

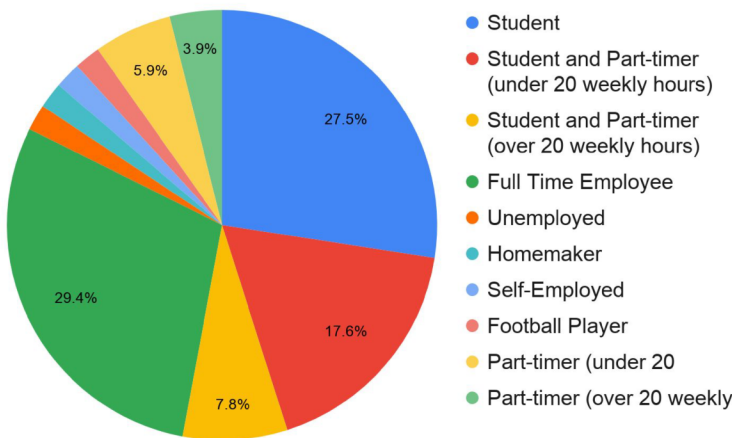


Image 15 - Pie Chart "Users: Occupation"

With this in mind, only 32% of people report a continued usage of the apps, with 68% of people saying that they have quit

using them. Of the people who have quit using dating apps, 47.1% report to no longer have a need

for it. 20.6% say they did not have time to use dating apps and another 20.6% of people reported that the system was not effective them. Similarly, 14.7% of people said that they could not find what they were looking for and 11.8% reported having had a bad experience. The less significant answers, all at 2.9% each, report going overseas and not being able to use dating apps; at the same time someone reports that they only used them overseas. Lastly 2.9% reported getting bored. Only 8.7% of users quit because they entered into a relationship.

Result Analysis

Considering that Japan is often seen as an extremely technologically advanced country and the rise in the so-called herbivore men or the sexless culture, one would expect that dating apps would be a good solution for the marriage crisis or natality problem. However, after this research, this does not seem to be

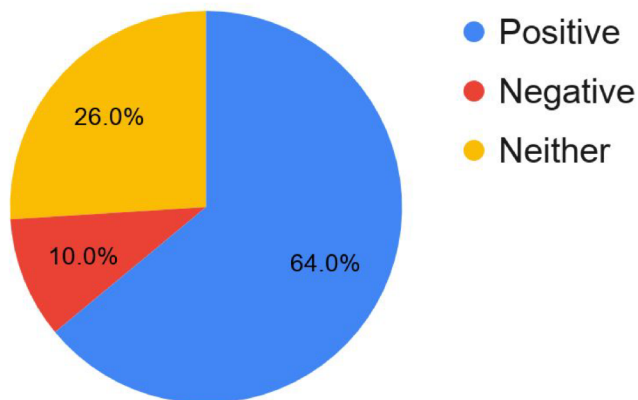


Image 17 - Pie Chart "Users: Attitude towards dating apps"

a more significant number, accounting for almost a third of the population sample, only 16 people report to keep using them, which means that once the novelty wears off, dating apps are not given continued usage. Additionally, only 9 people (18%) out of the 50 users report having met repeatedly with matches from the app. This means that in this sample only 2.8% of people have fulfilled the true purpose of dating apps: to have people meet. This alone is a strong indicator that dating apps are not very effective.

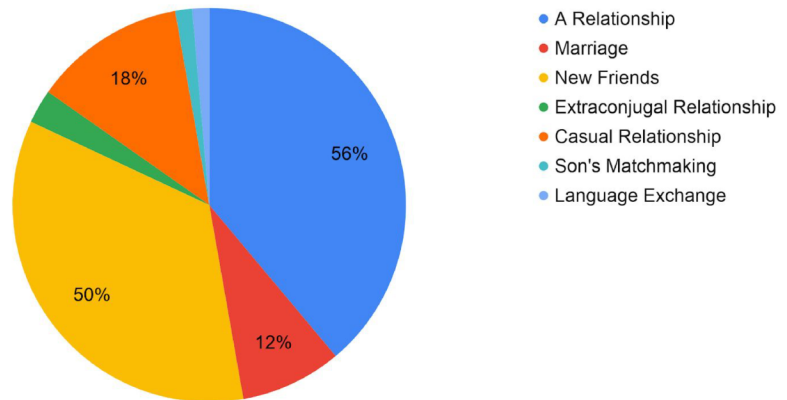


Image 16 - Pie Chart "Users: Relationship status"

the case. Only 50 out of 322 people (15.5%) said that they used dating apps. And 34 out of these 50 reported having quit using dating apps. Which means only 16 people use them. If we add to the 50 users the 18.8% (51 people) of non-users who reported having used a similar sort of app, that amounts for

101 people out of 322. Although it is

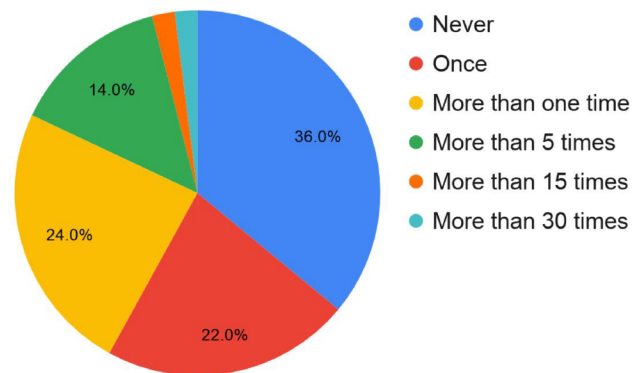


Image 18 - Pie Chart "Users: Times met with another user"

However, in this study we are considering only younger people. One look at the MMD Labo study, which had a bigger sample of older people, tells us that Pairs⁴⁷ is the most popular app. This suggests that Japanese people using international dating apps seem to be looking for friends, especially foreign friends with whom they can practice their English. Therefore, after studying the problem a little bit further, it seems that the biggest users of Japanese dating apps are probably people looking for marriage and not for dating, ergo, older people. The Tinder advertisement shown in the Image 19, which translates to “let’s make new friends” is a strong indicator



Image 19 - Tinder Advertisement on Japanese Youtube

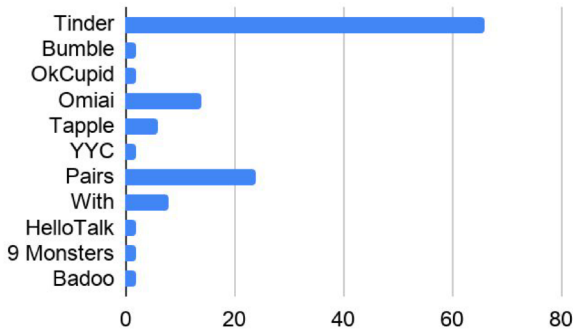


Image 20 - Bar Chart “Users: Applications in use”

that Japanese people use the app so much for that purpose, that it is being advertised as a friend-making apps, as opposed to a matchmaking app. Another strong indicator of this is that a big percentage of the users (a total of 34%) reported being in a relationship, which means that, unless all of these people are planning to be unfaithful to their partners, they are searching for friends.

In March 2019, a study was conducted that asked 1179 Japanese

people, between 20 and 49 years of age, what the most popular dating app was. Contrary to my case study, it was found that the most popular app was Pairs with 58.6% approval rate for women and 49.7% for men. This inquiry, conducted by MMD Labo and published by Statista, put Tinder only in the 6th place in terms of popularity. It is preceded by Tapple, Omiai, With and Zexy Koimusubi, which are all Japan exclusive dating apps. Once more, this suggests that the Japanese dating apps are

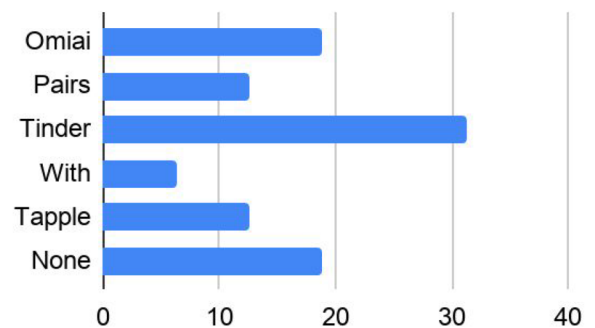


Image 21 - Bar Chart “Users: Preferred dating app”

⁴⁷ A Japanese dating app for people trying to get married.

taken more seriously when compared to the international ones, meaning that their users are not looking for friends or casual dating. Since the sample in my case study is younger, with inquiries ranging mostly between the age of 18 and 30, this suggests that the apps mentioned above are more popular with an older layer of the population. This might be because they are more marriage oriented apps, since apps like Pairs and Omiai are more geared towards finding a true pair, rather than just a casual relationship.

The Japanese people who read this study seemed to think that the respondents were not being truthful. Some of the interviewed told me that most of the Japanese have used dating apps, even if only once, just for curiosity, or to meet foreign people with whom they

can speak English. Another study conducted by MMD Labo and published in Statista corroborates my hypothesis that most respondents were shy to answer truthfully. Also conducted in March 2019, it was based on a sample of 5771 Japanese smartphone users. In this study, it was found that 52.9% of the population have never used and have no intention of using dating apps. Considering that in my study 84.5% of the sample reported to never have used dating apps, this can mean that young people use these apps less, or are more embarrassed to admit to using them.

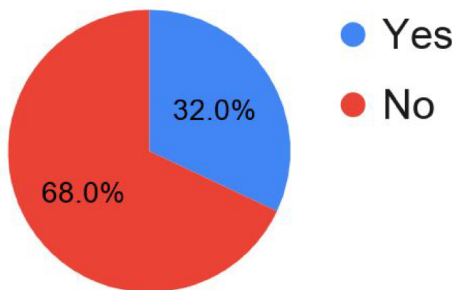


Image 23 - Pie Chart "Users: Continued dating app usage"

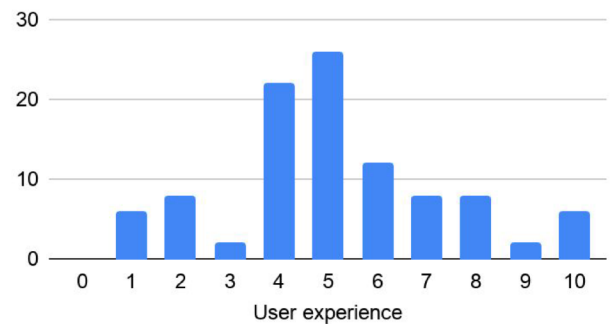


Image 22 - Bar Chart "Users: User experience rating"

Furthermore, 50% of dating apps users in this case study stated that they were looking to make new friends. Most of the Japanese dating app users really are looking to make friends, since, as suggested by Ansari (2015, p. 161), it is very uncommon to have mixgendered groups of friends, especially before university. It is when the average Japanese young adults enter university that they make the most friends of the opposite sex. According to Ansari (2015, p. 165), this is what makes events like *Gokon* so much harder to plan nowadays, since often times, there is no one in a group of friends who has a connection to

opposite sex friends. That may be a reason why the youth seems to prefer more relaxed and casual styles of dating apps as opposed to more serious ones.

Japan does not seem to have a heavy dating culture either, which could explain the fact that only 56% of users actually seek a relationship. You would expect someone who uses a dating app to be just looking for a relationship, even if only a casual one (16%). In short, to be looking for someone to date. However, in Japan, people do not concern themselves too much with dating. Most people nowadays do not seem to be bothered or do not make time for that.

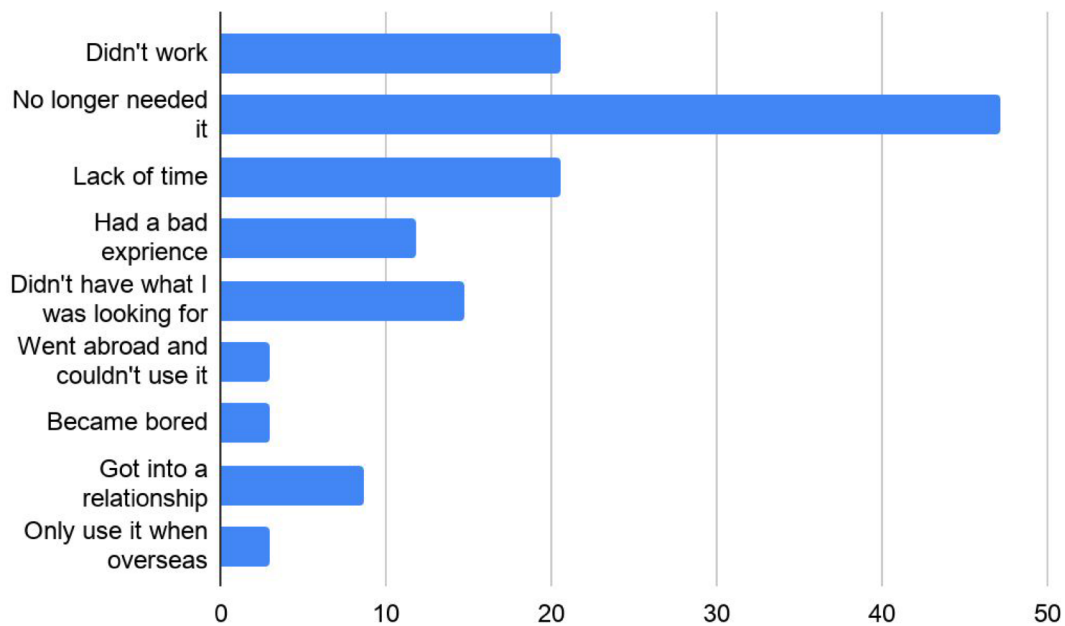


Image 24 - Bar Chart "Users: Reasons to quit using dating apps"

This does not mean Japanese people do not have sex. Especially since according to Suzuki *et al* (2019, p. 6) the rise in numbers of cases of syphilis is related to dating app usage. Meaning that there are several Japanese people who are successful in at least attaining sexual contact via dating app.

Some of the interviewed also explained to me that once you are old enough you can find someone to marry easily: the government assists with their sponsored parties and events. Additionally, there is a plethora of places or events in which to meet someone with the intention to actually marry instead of just dating, such as *konkatsu*.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the average profile of the Japanese dating apps user is a 21 to 25 year-old male. The average user is heterosexual, single and a student and/or part-timer. Such user is typically looking for a relationship, but they are satisfied with make new friends as well.

According to another survey conducted by MMD Labo, 47.8% of women and 39% of men met once with a match but nothing developed. According to my own research, 36% of users have never met with anyone, 22% met once and 24% met more than once, but less than five times. These are still not substantial numbers, which means that, even if two users match, they might not pursue their relationship offline. Research suggests that, even if two people do match and decide to meet offline, they probably will not end up in a relationship or married since smaller numbers of these kinds of activities exist. Marriage-wise only 4.7% of men and 2.4% of women have married after meeting through a dating app. Reports of continued dating after meeting are only 18.5% for women and 20.5% for men. Higher percentages (19.2% for women and 24.3% for men) have decided to stay friends and 26.2% for women and 23.8% for men have dated but are currently broken up.

This suggests that dating apps mostly do not fulfill their main objective, which is to have two people meet and date. When they do fulfill their goal, people do not always become involved after meeting, and even if they do, only a very small percentage of people remain in a relationship to be married. Therefore, we cannot say that dating apps are effective, especially not for the younger layers of the population as analyzed in my case study. Neither can we assume that they fulfill their main objective, especially when considering the goal of the Japanese government which is having dating apps result in a higher number of marriages and subsequent babies. Although dating apps fulfill one of their objectives, which is to have people meet, it is still only a small percentage of people who meet offline.

In Mickleson's (2017, pp. 29 & 56) study about Tinder a similar conclusion was reached. Firstly, that in New Zealand, Tinder is also the most used dating app and that young people prefer dating apps to dating websites. Secondly, that a dating app is merely a tool for filtering and matching. Therefore, the choice and effort to pursue a relationship will be in the hands of the users, the app's influence is limited to matching and instant message exchange. This suggests

that using simple and elegant apps are an international trend. It also proves that although dating apps are a good tool to meet people, there are still human limitations and unpredictable aspects surrounding their effects.

Each way of dating that is analyzed in this dissertation has its advantages and its disadvantages, and dating apps are no exception. However, they have different benefits and drawbacks from those of their counterparts. It is easier to join a dating app, it is fairly easy to get a match and no outside help is needed to schedule a date. This means that people such as the shut-ins can find themselves a date. However, this does not necessarily mean that they will meet said date offline. Dating apps do fulfill their purpose exclusively online, it is the offline part that needs a better adjustment. Meaning that, dating apps provide what they promise: matches and people to talk to and to schedule dates with. The problems only arise when we factor in the human element: disadvantages may include divergence of objectives on one or both parties (one only wants a casual relationship, while other wants a lifelong partner for example), as well as the difficulty or inability to schedule a date, either by lack of interest of one party or fear, for example. Some of their advantages compensate for the disadvantages of their counterparts, but there is no certification that the matching will result in an actual relationship or marriage. Contrarily, in more serious methods of dating, such as *konkatsu* or *machikon*, people can have a bigger certainty that their objectives (to marry) will match. Nevertheless, it seems like the Japanese apps like Pairs and Omiai can parallel to this seriousness.

In summary, dating apps provide a more comfortable searching experience, but after a match there are a lot of uncertainties. These uncertainties cannot be catalogued or understood completely just yet. However, there are reports of more traditional methods of dating evolving to become online methods of dating. Such is the case of *konkatsu*, which according to Dalton & Dales (2016, p. 11-16) works well online. On one hand, the online aspect facilitates joining *konkatsu* for those with a busy life. On the other hand, it seems some people take it less seriously and start joining “just for fun”. In this study, Dalton & Dale (2016, p.12-16) include several testimonies of the online *konkatsu* participants. These indicate that the problem is not with the meeting, but with what is expected of the meeting. The men complain that women want someone to support them, but the women complain that men want someone who is maid-like. This

suggests that the problem is with the Japanese society itself: there is a misconnection between expectation and reality: society and government seem to maintain a paternalistic intent, while the people search for a more balanced, partnership-like couple life.

Right now the situation in Japan is feeling more and more like the situation described by Zhang *et al* (2004, p. 16) about captive panda population: Pandas are not concerned with reproducing, especially male pandas, who prefer playing - humans have been taking care of panda reproduction through behavioral management and artificial inseminations. The same is happening in Japan: women do not want to lose their financial freedom and men are not sure that they can support a whole family on their own, so they prefer to play and enjoy their freedom until it is time to marry, and, when the time comes, the government, or any other entity, will take care of finding one a match with whom to procreate and spend one's life.

The greater question is: Is it worth it for the Japanese government to keep their investment in matchmaking? It seems like the Japanese people might be more truthful in face-to-face events such as *gokon*, *machikon* and *omiaiai*. Additionally, they appear to show more respect for these well-established practices. There is no guarantee that after attending such events people will form relationships, but neither is there one for dating apps. If the investment is to prove profitable, funding should be spent inciting research to fill in the gaps and contradict the limitations of dating apps, such as the exhaustive photo editing, as well as the untruthfulness of some users⁴⁸. Otherwise, it would be best to keep investing in more traditional types of matchmaking and parties.

The case study developed by me is, in itself, a limitation, since it was developed by one person team with no funding and stunted knowledge in the field of statistics as well as economics. Due to the lack of time, the sample was also quite small, being comprised of only 322 participants. Joined with the information gathered in the MMD Labo studies, most aspects of dating app usage can be understood. Aspects such as which type of apps are more popular and should be more developed, the limitations of dating apps as well as the target age and overall target usage.

⁴⁸ Which, according to the studies of MMD Labo are some of the main reasons for people's distrust and dislike for dating apps.

A longer study and research are required to better understand the limitations of dating app usage in order to make it efficient for the Japanese culture and government. A study such as mine that analyzes its usage is important to understand the limitations. Through this dissertation it is clear that the situation in Japan is unique because of the way society works and the discrepancy between the wants and needs of both sexes, as well as the rapidly changing gender and social roles. In order to better grasp how one can be successful at attaining a relationship in Japan through a dating app, a longer study, such as Mickleson's (2017, pp. 1-87), more geared towards users only and dating app culture can be useful.

In conclusion, the Japanese governments funds would be better spent on providing face-to-face matchmaking events, or developing a sort of "marriage only" dating app.

Glossary

1. *Cyberculture*

- A cyberculture surfaces when a group of like-minded people meet online in cyberspace in order to talk about a common goal or interest. Regardless if they do or do not proceed with group activities offline.

2. *Deai* 出会い

- Composed by the character 出, meaning “to go out” or “to leave” and 会, meaning “to meet” or to “encounter”, *Deai* means to meet someone. *Deai-kei* (出会い系) has a similar meaning: “type of encounter”. We talk about this word in an online dating context for its most well known associate - *Deai-saito* (出会いサイト), the last part meaning “site”, as in website; these are the *Deai* websites where people talk to each other in chat rooms or forums. There are also *deai-kissa* (出会い喫茶), *kissa* is a short form of *kissaten* (喫茶店), which means something similar to a coffee shop or a cafeteria; these are places where people go to meet who they met online, or where men go to ogle (and possibly talk to) younger women.

3. *Godo konpa* 合同コンパ

- More commonly abbreviated and referred to as *gokon* (合コン), this term stems from two others: *godo* (合同), meaning joint and *konpa* (コンパ), which is in itself an abbreviation of the english word “company”. *Gokon* is a form of group blind dating, where both organizing parties bring an equal number of friends with the intention of finding dates.

4. *Keitai denwa* 携帯電話

- *Keitai* (携帯) literally meaning portable and *denwa* (電話) meaning phone. A landline phone would be referred to as *denwa* and typically you would refer to your mobile phone just as *keitai*. For smartphones, the japanese adapted the word *sumātofon* (スマートフォン), which comes

from the english word “smartphone” and can be shortened to *sumaho* (スマホ); but they can still be referred to just as *keitai*.

5. *Konkatsu* 婚活

- Composed by the characters of “spouse” (婚) and “to get” (活) or “to catch”, *konkatsu* is defined as spouse hunting. There are many ways to participate in *konkatsu*: you can join a *konkatsu pāti* (婚活パーティー) (*pāti* meaning party) or a *konkatsu ibento* (婚活イベント) (*ibento* meaning event). To stay up to date with these events and to know when and where they are going to happen, you can join a *konkatsu saito* (婚活サイト).

6. *Miai* 見合い

- More often referred to as *Omiai* (お見合い), with the added “o” to express respect. This term literally means “to see one another”, however, it is often as “matchmaking” or “arranged marriage”. The *miai* practice begun long ago in feudal Japan (sixteenth century). It is a matchmaking custom where two people are introduced by a third party who knows both participants. The people involved in *omiaiai* have full control over who they marry and are not forced into marriage, arranged marriage should not be confused with forced marriage.

Bibliography and Webography

- «8 years into 'konkatsu' boom, lifelong single population continues to grow», *Japan Today*. (May 15, 2016). Retrieved from <https://japantoday.com/category/features/kuchikomi/8-years-into-konkatsu-boom-lifelong-single-population-continues-to-grow>
- Ansari, Aziz, & Klinenberg, Eric (2016). *Modern romance*. London: Penguin Books.
- Aoyama, Tomoko (2014). *Configurations of Family in Contemporary Japan*. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315871196>
- Applbaum, Kalman D. (2007), «Marriage with the Proper Stranger: Arranged Marriage in Metropolitan Japan», *Ethnology*, 34, <https://doi.org/10.2307/3773862>
- Baudinette, Thomas (2019), «Gay dating applications and the production/reinforcement of queer space in Tokyo», *Continuum*, 33, pp. 93–104. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10304312.2018.1539467>
- Bell, David; Loader, Brian D.; Pleace, Nicholas; Schuler, Douglas (2004), *Cybercultures The Key Concepts*, London: Routledge
- Beusman, Callie (March 18, 2016), «My Sensual Journey into Japan's \$90 Million Fake Anime Boyfriend Market», *Broadly*. Retrieved from https://broadly.vice.com/en_us/article/qkg74b/my-sensual-journey-into-japans-90-million-fake-anime-boyfriend-market
- Browne, Joy D. (2011), *Dating for Dummies*, Indianapolis: John Wiley & Sons.
- Bryant, Katherina, & Sheldon, Pavica (2017). «Cyber dating in the age of mobile apps: Understanding motives, attitudes, and characteristics of users», *American Communication Journal*, 19, pp. 1–15.
- Burns, Patrick D. (1996). «Foreign students in Japan : a qualitative study of interpersonal relations between North American university exchange students and their Japanese hosts», *Doctoral Dissertations*, University of Massachusetts.
- Chan, Lik Sam (2019), «Multiple uses and anti-purposefulness on Momo, a Chinese dating/social app» *Information Communication and Society*, pp. 1-16 <https://doi.org/10.1080/1369118X.2019.1586977>

- *Changes in the number of births in Japan* (2012), Retrieved from https://web.archive.org/web/20160222081037/https://www.teikokushoin.co.jp/statistics/history_civics/index15.html.
- Chavez, Aamy (2011, December 17), «Herbivorous men, where's the beef?» *Japan Times*, Retrieved from <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/community/2011/12/17/our-lives/herbivorous-men-wheres-the-beef/#.Xe3xJej7TIU>
- Chen, Steven (2012), »«The Rise of 草食系男子 (Soushokukei Danshi) Masculinity and Consumption in Contemporary Japan: A Historic and Discursive Analysis», *Gender, Culture, and Consumer Behavior*, Retrieved from <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/307108482>
- Dalton, Emma & Dales, Laura, (2016). «Online Konkatsu and the Gendered Ideals of Marriage in Contemporary Japan», *Japanese Studies*. 36, pp. 1-19.
- Deacon, Chris (2012), «Herbivore Boys and the Performance of Masculinity in Contemporary Japan», *All the World's a Stage*.
- Deans, Heather & Bhogal, Manpal S. (2019), «Perpetrating Cyber Dating Abuse: A Brief Report on the Role of Aggression, Romantic Jealousy and Gender» *Current Psychology*, 38, pp. 1077–1082. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12144-017-9715-4>
- de Munck, Victor, Korotayev, Andre & McGreevey, Jennifer (2016), «Romantic love and family organization: A case for romantic love as a biosocial universal» *Evolutionary Psychology*, 14, pp. 1–13. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1474704916674211>
- Doi, Takeo (2005). *Understanding amae: The Japanese concept of need-love: Collected papers of Takeo Doi*. Folkstone, Kent, U.K.: Global Oriental.
- Farrer, James & Gavin, Jeff (2009), «Online Dating in Japan: A Test of Social Information Processing Theory» *CyberPsychology & Behavior*, 12, pp. 407-412. doi:10.1089/cpb.2009.0069
- Fletcher, Garth J. O., Simpson, Jeffrey A., Campbell, Lorne & Overall, Nickola C. (2015), «Pair-Bonding, Romantic Love, and Evolution: The Curious Case of Homo sapiens» *Perspectives on Psychological Science*, 10, pp. 20–36.

<https://doi.org/10.1177/1745691614561683>

- Flores, Edson H. (2015), «Land of the aging sun : the impact of population decline on Japanese economic performance» *CUNY Academic Works*, City University of New York. Retrieved from http://academicworks.cuny.edu/bb_etds/20
- Fotache, Ioana (2016), «Matters of the Flesh: Japanese Herbivore Men and the Asexuality Umbrella» doi: 10.4135/9781473966680
- Frühstück, Sabine (October 7, 2003) *Colonizing Sex: Sexology and Social Control in Modern Japan*. University of California Press.
- Gottlieb, Nanette, McLelland, Mark J., & Gauntlett, David (2003). *Japanese cybercultures*. London: Routledge.
- Gupta, Usha & Singh, Pushpa (1982), «An exploratory study of love and liking and type of marriages» *Indian Journal of Applied Psychology*, 19.
- Harvey, Scott (February 18, 2018). «Dating Apps Benefit as Young Japanese Seek Efficiency», *Global Dating Insights*. Retrieved from <https://www.globaldatinginsights.com/news/dating-apps-benefit-as-young-japanese-seek-efficiency/>
- Heimisdóttir, Thelma R. (2015), «Courtship in Japan and Iceland Then and Now» *Ritgerð Til BA-prófs í Japönsku Máli Og Menningu*, Retrieved from <https://skemman.is/bitstream/1946/22794/1/RitgerðThelmaw.pdf>
- Hoshina, Aya S. (March 5, 2018), «Konkatsu: A Look Into Japan's Spouse Hunting Parties», *Savvy Tokyo*. Retrieved from <https://savvytokyo.com/konkatsu-look-japans-spouse-hunting-parties/>
- Huruse, Noriko (1978), «A comparative study of communication style in Japan and the United States as revealed through content analysis of television commercials», *Dissertations and Theses*, Portland State University, doi:10.15760/etd.2863
- Incrível Japão: Omiai. *Japonês Dake*. Retrieved from <http://japonesdake.blogspot.com/2012/11/omiai.html>

- Ishiwata, Chieko (2011) «Sexual Health Education for School Children in Japan: The timing and contents», *Japanese Medical Association Journal*, pp. 155-160 Retrieved from https://www.med.or.jp/english/journal/pdf/2011_03/155_160.pdf
- Itoh, Youichi (1991), «Socio-cultural backgrounds of Japanese interpersonal communication style», *Civilisations* (39), pp. 101-128, doi:10.4000/civilisations.1652
- Jackson-Dwyer, Diana (2014). *Interpersonal relationships*. London: Routledge, Taylor & Francis.
- Jaruhirunsakul, Pataraporn (2010), «Sex and Money: The Sexual Norm Phenomenon» *The Journal of Behavioral Science*, 5, 75–87.
- Ryall, Julian (October 25, 2017), «Dishonest dating services received nearly 2,000 complaints, prompting Japanese watchdog to investigate», *South China Morning Post*, . Retrieved from <http://www.scmp.com/news/asia/east-asia/article/2116872/japanese-watchdog-cracks-down-dishonest-matchmaking-services>
- Japan Population 2019. (2019). Retrieved from <http://worldpopulationreview.com/countries/japan-population/>.
- Jitchotvisut, Janaki (May 10, 2018), «The 8 biggest differences between dating in Japan and America», *The Insider Culture*. Retrieved from <https://www.thisinsider.com/differences-japanese-and-american-dating-2018-2>
- Clegg, Cara (September 28, 2014), «The ugly truth of 'gokon,' Japan's group blind dates», *Japan Today*. Retrieved from <https://japantoday.com/category/features/lifestyle/the-ugly-truth-of-gokon-japans-group-blind-dates>
- Kanert, Michael (February 15, 2017), «The Secrets of 'Gokon'», *All About Japan*, Retrieved from <https://allabout-japan.com/en/article/4878/>
- Karandashev, Victor (2015), «A Cultural Perspective on Romantic Love» *Online Readings in Psychology and Culture*, <https://doi.org/10.9707/2307-0919.1135>

- Kawashima, Kumiko (2004), «Interpersonal Relationships in Japanese and Australian Women's Magazines: A Case Study», *Proceedings of the 2004 Conference of the Australian Linguistics Society*, The University of New South Wales.
- Kerner, Ian (2006). *DSI--date scene investigation: The diagnostic manual of dating disorders*. New York: ReganBooks.
- Keyes, Hilary (October 19, 2018), «Online Dating In Japan: What Apps Are Worth It And What Aren't?» *Savvy Tokyo*, Retrieved from <https://savvytokyo.com/online-dating-japan-apps-worth-arent/>
- Kumano, Yoko (November 19, 2009) «Deaiki duties: Posing online as a woman» *CNN Travel*. Retrieved from <http://travel.cnn.com/tokyo/play/deaiki-duties-posing-online-woman-355918/>
- Lancaster, Morgan, Seibert, Gregory S., Cooper, Ashley N., May, Ross W. & Fincham, Frank (2019), «Relationship Quality in the Context of Cyber Dating Abuse: The Role of Attachment», *Journal of Family Issues*, Tallahassee: Florida State University <https://doi.org/10.1177/0192513X19881674>
- Lehman, Katherine (2019, November 27), «Cyber Dating» *Encyclopedia.com*. Retrieved from <https://www.encyclopedia.com/humanities/encyclopedias-almanacs-transcripts-and-maps/cyber-dating>
- Li, Angela, Robustelli, Briana L., & Whisman, Mark A. (2016), «Marital adjustment and psychological distress in Japan», *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, 33, pp. 855–866, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0265407515599678>
- Lowry, Rachel (September 15, 2015), «Meet the Lonely Japanese Men in Love With Virtual Girlfriends», *Time Magazine*. Retrieved from <http://time.com/3998563/virtual-love-japan/>
- Woodley, Emma (May 8, 2017), «Lunch Actually & Diverse Launch Matchmaking Platform Tailor For Professional Japanese Singles» *Global Dating Insights*. Retrieved from

<https://globaldatinginsights.com/2017/03/28/lunch-actually-launches-matchmaking-platform-tailor-for-professional-japanese-singles/>

- Machimbarrena, Juan M., Calvete, Esther, Fernández-González, Liria, Álvarez-Bardón, Aitor, Álvarez-Fernández, Lourdes, & González-Cabrera, Joaquín (2018), «Internet risks: An overview of victimization in cyberbullying, cyber dating abuse, sexting, online grooming and problematic internet use», *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 15. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph15112471>
- McElwain, Kenneth M. (2017, August 15), «The Anomalous Life of the Japanese Constitution», *Nippon.Com* Retrieved from <https://www.nippon.com/en/in-depth/a05602/the-anomalous-life-of-the-japanese-constitution.html>
- Mickleson, Kate (2017). *Online dating in New Zealand: Why and how do people use Tinder?* Victoria University of Wellington. Retrieved from https://researcharchive.vuw.ac.nz/xmlui/bitstream/handle/10063/6251/thesis_access.pdf?sequence=1
- MMD Labo (2019, April). *Most popular matchmaking apps among Japanese smartphone users as of March 2019, by gender*. Retrieved from <https://www.statista.com/statistics/1020947/japan-popular-matchmaking-apps-by-gender/>
- MMD Labo (2019, April). *Penetration rate of matchmaking apps in Japan as of March 2019*. Retrieved from <https://www.statista.com/statistics/1020903/japan-user-distribution-matchmaking-app/>
- MMD Labo (2019, April). *Relationship of dating application users after meeting their match as of March 2019, by gender*. Retrieved from <https://www.statista.com/statistics/1021699/japan-relationship-after-matchmaking-app-date-by-gender/>
- Morioka, Masahiro (2013), «A Phenomenological Study of “Herbivore Men.”» *The Review of Life Studies Vol.4*, pp. 1-20
- Morioka, Masahiro (July 18, 2008) *Lessons of Love for Herbivore Boys*. Media Factory, Tokyo.

- Murai, Shusuke (February 13, 2018), «For young Japanese seeking romance, beauty is in the eye of the dating app», *Japan Times*. Retrieved from <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2018/02/13/national/young-japanese-seeking-romance-beauty-eye-dating-app/#.WyWKoKdKjIV>
- Nakano, Kenji (June 27, 2017), «Japan's 'deai-kei' dating sites making a killing» *Tokyo Reporter*, Retrieved from <https://www.tokyoreporter.com/entertainment/fuzoku/japans-deai-kei-dating-sites-making-a-killing/>
- Nicolae, Raluca (n.d.). SŌSHOKU(KEI) DANSHI: THE (UN)GENDERED QUESTIONS ON CONTEMPORARY JAPAN. *Romanian Economic and Business Review*, 9(3).
- National Institute of Population and Social Security Research (November 2011) *The Fourteenth Japanese National Fertility Survey in 2010-Attitudes toward Marriage and Family among Japanese Singles*.
- Nishimura, Keishi (December 3, 2008), «Police crack down on pay-for-play 'coffee shops'», *The Asahi Shinbun*. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20081205114251/http://www.asahi.com/english/Herald-asahi/TKY200812030060.html>
- «Omiai: The Culture of Arranged Marriage in Japan», *Japan Info*. (December 11, 2015). Retrieved from <http://jpninfo.com/36254>
- Retherford, Robert D. R., & Ogawa, Naohiro (2001), «Late Marriage and Less Marriage in Japan Marriage trends in Japan», *Population and Development Review*, 27, pp. 65–102.
- Ryang, Sonia (2008). *Love in modern Japan its estrangement from self, sex and society*. London: Routledge.
- Sarah (2010, October 29), «Deai kissa matchmaking cafes more than just a meet n' greet», *Japan Subculture Research Center*, Retrieved from <http://www.japansubculture.com/deai-kissa-matchmaking-cafes-more-than-just-a-meet-n-greet/>

- Sawada, Tomoko (2001), «OMIAI», *Getty Museum*, Retirado de <http://www.getty.edu/art/collection/objects/268565/tomoko-sawada-omiaai-japanese-2001/>
- Seki, Kyoko, Matsumoto, David, & Imahori, Todd T. (2002), «The conceptualization and expression of intimacy in Japan and the United States», *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology*, 33, pp. 303–319. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022022102033003006>
- Shillony, Ben-Ami (1999), «Divinity and Gender: The Riddle of Japanese Emperors», *Nissan Occasional Paper Series*, 30. Retrieved from https://www.nissan.ox.ac.uk/sites/default/files/nissan/documents/media/nops30_0.pdf
- Shimodi, Kyoko, & Ujikane, Keiko (March 20, 2014), «Abe funds matchmaking to ease welfare bill», *The Japan Times*, Retrieved from <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2014/03/20/business/abe-funds-matchmaking-to-ease-welfare-bill/#.WyaefadKjIU>
- Shoji, Kaori (December 2, 2017), «Women in Japan too tired to care about dating or searching for a partner», *The Japan Times*, Retrieved from <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2017/12/02/national/media-national/women-tired-care-dating-searching-partner/#.WyajCKdKjIX>
- «Single-sex schools in decline», (2012, April 29), *The Japan Times* Retrieved from <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/opinion/2012/04/29/editorials/single-sex-schools-in-decline/#.Xbsksuj7TIU>
- Smith, Aaron, & Anderson, Monica (2015), «5 facts about online dating», *Pew Research Center*. Retrieved from <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2016/02/29/5-facts-about-online-dating/>
- Stoetzer, Ulrich (2010), «Interpersonal relationships at work: Organization, working conditions and Health» *Departments of Public Health Sciences* Stockholm: Karolinska Institute.
- Strowhorn, Percy D. (2013), «The United States and Japan : A Cross Cultural Analysis of Gender Roles and Intimate Relationships», *Global Honors Theses*, University of Washington Tacoma.

- Suzuki, Yosuke, Kosaka, Makoto, Yamamoto, Kana, Hamaki, Tamae, Kusumi, Eiji, Takahashi, Kenzo & Tanimoto, Tetsuya (September 2, 2019), «The Association Between Syphilis Incidence and Dating App Use in Japan», Retrieved from: <https://ssrn.com/abstract=3335064>
- Tajan, Nicolas, Hamasaki, Yukiko, & Pionnié-Dax, Nancy (2017), «Hikikomori: The Japanese Cabinet Office's 2016 Survey of Acute Social Withdrawal», *The Asia-Pacific Journal | Japan Focus*, 15, Retrieved from <http://apjif.org/-Nancy-Pionni---Dax--Hamasaki-Yukiko--Nicolas-Tajan/5017/article.pdf>
- «The Constitution of Japan» (n.d.), *Birth of the Constitution of Japan* Retrieved from <https://www.ndl.go.jp/constitution/e/etc/c01.html>
- Tran, JT, & Zindagi, Alice (2015). *Online Dating for Asian Men*.
- Uddin, Sahab (2018), «Neurochemistry of Love: Can Romantic Love Truly be Addictive?», *Journal of Psychiatry*, 21, <https://doi.org/10.4172/2378-5756.1000e113>
- Wendel, Martin, & Frandsen, Emil M. (2015), «An Analysis of the Online Dating Industry and How Startups Can Compete», Copenhagen Business School. Retrieved from http://studenttheses.cbs.dk/bitstream/handle/10417/5413/martin_wendel_og_emil_maltesen_frandsen.pdf?sequence=1
- Whitty, Monica, Gavin, Jeff (2001), «Age=sex=location: uncovering the social cues in the development of online relationships», *CyberPsychology & Behavior* 2001, 4.
- Woodley, Emma (August 4, 2016), «FROM THE WEB: The 'Matchmaking' Site For Japanese CEOs Sees 1,170% Surge In Stocks», *Global Dating Insights*. Retrieved from <https://globaldatinginsights.com/2016/08/04/the-tinder-for-japanese-ceos-has-seen-a-1170-stock-gain/>
- Woodley, Emma (August 22, 2016), «Japanese Government Set To Pay \$30m Into Dating Industry», *Global Dating Insights*, Retrieved from <https://globaldatinginsights.com/2016/08/22/japanese-government-is-set-to-pay-30m-into-dating-industry/>

- Xu, Deya, & Wu, Fang (2019), «Exploring the cosmopolitanism in China: examining mosheng ren (“the stranger”) communication through Momo», *Critical Studies in Media Communication*, 36, pp. 122–139. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15295036.2019.1566629>
- Yukiko, Inoue-Smith (2013), «Aspirations for Career and Marriage among Young Japanese Women: The Case of Okayama University», *South Pacific Studies*, 34, pp. 41–61.
- Zhang, Guiquan, Swaisgood, Ronald R., & Zhang, Hemin (2004), «Evaluation of behavioral factors influencing reproductive success and failure in captive giant pandas», *Zoo Biology*, 23, pp. 15–31. doi: 10.1002/zoo.10118

Annexes

Japanese Version of the Inquiry

This version was translated by a bilingual Japanese.

Link: <https://goo.gl/forms/WAJ0Rja931ueFFWG2>

Images:

Section 1 of 5

マッチングアプリ

このアンケート調査は日本人のマッチングアプリに対する意見を集めるのが目的です。このデータ収集は学術目的のみです。すべての情報の匿名性を守り第三者による使用はありません。平均回答時間7分。

性別 *

- 女性
- 男性
- Other...

年齢 *

- 18以下
- 18 ~ 21
- 21 ~ 25
- 25 ~ 30
- 30 ~ 40
- 40 ~ 50
- 50以上

交際状況 *

- 独身
- 既婚
- 交際中
- 真剣なおつきあい(同棲中)
- Other...

Image 25 - Questionnaire in Japanese
“Section 1 - Respondents
Information”

職業 *

複数当てはまる場合すべて選択してください。

- 学生
- 週20時間以下のアルバイトがあります
- 週20時間以上のアルバイトがあります
- 従業員
- 無職
- 主婦
- Other...

性的指向

- 異性愛
- 同性愛
- 両性愛
- Other...

マッチングアプリを使ったことはありますか *

- はい
- いいえ

Image 26 - Questionnaire in Japanese
“Section 1 - Respondents Information,
second part”

利用者と「はい」と答えた方



Description (optional)

どのマッチングアプリを使っていますか *

複数選択可

- Tinder
- Bumble
- OkCupid
- JapanCupid
- MatchAlarm
- Omiai
- Tapple
- YYC
- Pairs
- Zexy Koimusubi
- Other...

どのアプリがお気に入りですか

Short answer text

このアプリを使うことで何を求めていますか？ *

複数選択可

- お付き合い
- 結婚
- 新しい友達
- 婚外関係
- カジュアルな関係
- Other...

Image 27 - Questionnaire in Japanese
“Section 2 - Users”

マッチングアプリを使った経験をどの様に評価しますか？ *

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

とても悪かった 素晴らしかった

このようなアプリを使って誰かと実際に会ったことはありますか？

- 実際に会ったことがない
- 一回
- 一回以上
- 五回以上
- 十五回以上
- 三十回以上

このような新しい出会いの形についてどう思いますか？ *

- ポジティブ
- ネガティブ
- どちらでもない

現在もアプリを使用していますか？ *

- はい
- いいえ

Image 28 - Questionnaire in Japanese
“Section 2 - Users, second part”

Image 29 - Questionnaire in Japanese
“Section 3 & 4 - Former Users and
Non-users”

Section 3 of 5

元利用者

Description (optional)

なぜやめましたか *

複数選択可

- 成功しなかった
- 必要としないようになった
- 時間が無くなった
- いやな経験をした
- 求めていたものと違っていた
- Other...

Section 4 of 5

「いいえ」と答えた方 利用していない方

Description (optional)

利用しない理由は？ *

複数選択可

- 一度も使う必要がなかった
- 安全だと思わない
- マッチングアプリは恋愛能力のない方に向かっていると思います
- ネット上の人と話すのがあまり好きではない
- 時間がない
- Other...

Image 30 - Questionnaire in Japanese “Section 4 - Non-users, second part”

このようなアプリを一度でも使ってみようと思ったことはありましたか？ *

はい

いいえ

このような新しい出会いの形についてどう思いますか？ *

ポジティブ

ネガティブ

どちらでもない

...

どのような人がマッチングアプリを使用していると思いますか？

Long answer text

Image 31 - Questionnaire in Japanese “Section 5 - Closing section”

Section 5 of 5

ご協力ありがとうございました！

Description (optional)

マッチングアプリでのあなた、又は知り合いの経験談を教えてくださいませんか？

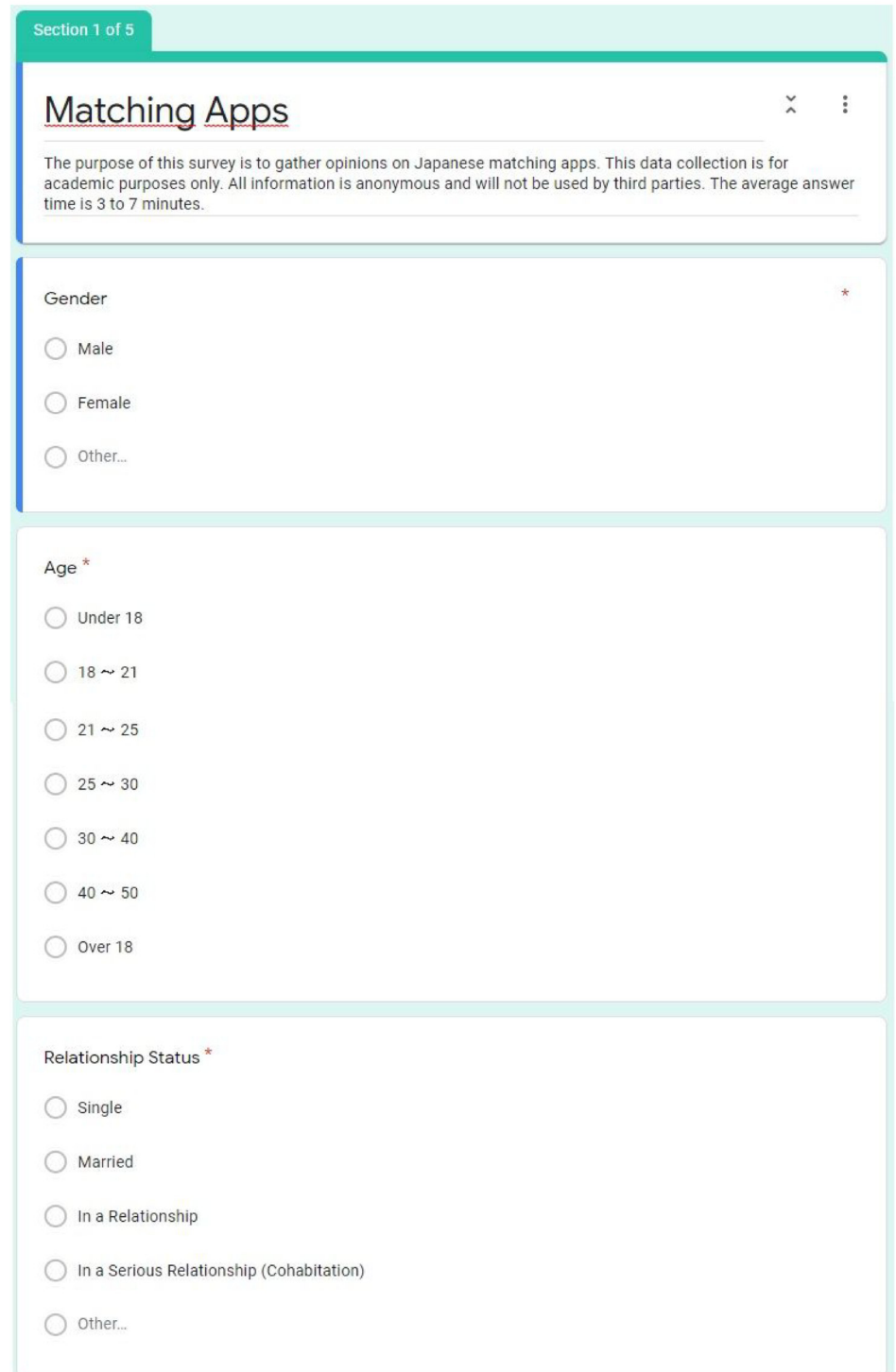
Long answer text

English Version of the Inquiry

This version was translated to English by me.

Link: <https://forms.gle/yjGEyhWj81VbpyfR6>

Images:



Section 1 of 5

Matching Apps

The purpose of this survey is to gather opinions on Japanese matching apps. This data collection is for academic purposes only. All information is anonymous and will not be used by third parties. The average answer time is 3 to 7 minutes.

Gender *

Male

Female

Other...

Age *

Under 18

18 ~ 21

21 ~ 25

25 ~ 30

30 ~ 40

40 ~ 50

Over 18

Relationship Status *

Single

Married

In a Relationship

In a Serious Relationship (Cohabitation)

Other...

Image 32 - Questionnaire in English
“Section 1 - Respondents’ Information”

Professional Situation *

You can select more than one answer.

- Student
- Part-time under 20 weekly hours
- Par-time over 20 weekly hours
- Full-time employee
- Unemployed
- Housewife
- Other...

Sexual

- Heterosexual
- Homosexual
- Bisexual
- Other...

Have you ever used a dating app? *

- Yes
- No

Image 33 - Questionnaire in English “Section 1 - Respondents’ Information, second part”

Section 2 of 5

People who have answered "YES"

Description (optional)

What dating apps do you use? *

You can choose multiple answer.

- Tinder
- Bumble
- OkCupid
- JapanCupid
- MatchAlarm
- Omiai
- Tapple
- YYC
- Pairs
- Zexy Koimusubi
- Other...

What kind of apps do you like?

Short answer text

What are you looking for while using this app? *

You can choose multiple answers.

- Relationship
- Marriage
- New friends
- Casual Relationship
- Other...

Image 34 - Questionnaire in English "Section 2 - Users"

How do you evaluate your experience with matching apps? *

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Very Bad Excelent

Have you ever met someone from an app like this?

Never

Once

More than once

More than 5 times

More than 15 times

More than 30 times

What do you think about this new form of meeting *

Positive

Negative

Neither

Are you still using dating apps now? *

Yes

No

Image 35 - Questionnaire in English
“Section 2 - Users, second part”

Section 3 of 5

Former User

Description (optional)

Why did you quit? *

You can choose multiple answers.

- It did not work
- No longer needed it
- Lack of time
- Had a bad experience
- Didn't have what I was looking for
- Other...

Section 4 of 5

People who answered "NO"

Description (optional)

Why don't you use them? *

You can choose multiple answers.

- I never needed it
- I don't think it's safe
- I think they are for people without romance
- I don't like talking to people online
- Lack of time
- Other...

Image 36 - Questionnaire in English "Section 3 & 4 - Former Users & Non-users"

Image 37 - Questionnaire in English “Section 4 - Non-users, second part”

Have you ever tried to use a similar app? *

Yes

No

What do you think about this new form of meeting *

Positive

Negative

Neither

Who do you think is using the matching apps?

Long answer text

Image 38 - Questionnaire in English “Section 5 - Closing Section”

Section 5 of 5

Thank you for your cooperation! ✕ ⋮

Description (optional)

Do you want tell me about a funny or interesting experience with matching apps?

Long answer text