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DIGITAL FLIRTING ON MEEFF: EXPLORING DIGITAL COMMUNICATION PATTERNS IN ONLINE DATING

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Abstract

This article investigates the patterns of digital communication and flirting tactics in online dating applications, with a particular focus on Meeff and its impact on Generation Z. The urgency of this research lies in the increasing use of dating applications among young people aged 18 to 24, indicating a significant shift from conventional to digital interactions. This study employs a qualitative method with a phenomenological approach to delve deeply into user experiences. Data collection techniques were conducted through in-depth interviews with active Meeff users, whose narratives were analyzed using content analysis to identify common themes, motives, and behavior patterns. The results of the study reveal that online identity construction and self-presentation play a crucial role in shaping the dynamics of digital communication. Users strategically select profile photos, write engaging bios, and use appropriate emojis and language styles to enhance their appeal. Recommendation algorithms and real-time notifications support these strategies by providing relevant suggestions and helping users manage their interactions more effectively. Additionally, the study found that the timing of message delivery and responsiveness are essential components of flirting tactics, which can enhance conversation flow and demonstrate genuine interest. The conclusion of this study asserts that the combination of technology utilization and effective self-presentation strategies not only increases the success in attracting attention but also in maintaining long-term interactions, creating more adaptive and responsive relationships.

Keywords: Online dating, Self-presentation, Generasi Z, Meeff

A. INTRODUCTION

The digital era has transformed the way individuals interact and build relationships. With the advent of online dating applications such as Meeff, interpersonal communication patterns have undergone significant evolution. This application, popular among Generation Z, offers a unique platform for social and romantic exploration, making it an intriguing subject for research in the context of digital communication (Ade Fega Mei Lusi Ana & Sufyanto, 2023; Rita et al., 2021).

According to recent data, the use of the Meeff application has exponentially increased among young people, especially Generation Z. A 2023 survey indicated that over 60% of Meeff users are aged between 18 and 24, reflecting a strong preference among the younger generation for digital interactions over conventional methods of forming relationships (Bodhana, 2024).

Generation Z, with their extensive exposure to digital globalization, demonstrates a unique ability to adapt diverse cultural norms and practices through their interactions on platforms like Meeff (Andryani Sihombing et al., 2022; Lifintsev & Wellbrock, 2019). Recent research shows

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that these young users often utilize dating apps to expand their social and cultural understanding, not just to seek romantic partners. This signifies a shift from the traditional use of social media for socialization to a tool for informal education about global diversity (Broeker, 2023).

Technology, particularly online dating applications, plays a significant role in the social identity formation of Generation Z. In the context of the Meeff application, users not only engage in creating visually appealing profiles but also participate in curated personal narratives that allow them to express their identities digitally. Studies indicate that this process often involves self-exploration and self-branding, where young users strive to highlight the best versions of themselves in an effort to influence others' perceptions and attract interest (Pranata & Putri, 2020).

Interactions on online dating applications like Meeff also bring significant psychological implications, especially among Generation Z. Several studies note that while these platforms can offer opportunities for meaningful connections, they also risk generating stress and social anxiety due to the pressure for digital validation and recognition. Furthermore, dynamics such as ghosting (sudden and unexplained cessation of communication) and benching (keeping someone as a backup without serious intent) can impact users' mental health, emphasizing the need for guidance and interventions to ensure that technology use supports their overall well-being (Hanson, 2021).

Experts in social psychology and communication technology note that dating applications like Meeff facilitate a form of "social game" that involves complex communication strategies. Professor Jane Goodall, a leading psychologist, argues that these applications enrich romantic approach tactics through texts, emojis, and various forms of multimedia, allowing users to express themselves more broadly and deeply (Sobieraj & Humphreys, 2022).

Figure 1. Number of dating application users worldwide
Source: business of apps

The displayed graph shows the increase in the number of dating application users worldwide from 2015 to 2022. In 2015, the number of dating application users was recorded at 198.6

million and steadily increased each year. Significant growth was observed particularly during the periods of 2018-2019 and 2020-2021, with the number of users increasing from 250.5 million to 283.5 million and from 293.7 million to 323.9 million, respectively. In 2022, the number of dating application users peaked at 337.3 million. This data illustrates the growing trend in the use of dating applications, which can be attributed to social and technological changes driving more individuals to seek relationships through digital platforms.

Generation Z, known for their reliance on and fluency in technology, chooses online dating applications as the primary tool in their search for life partners. Their familiarity with digital media allows quick adaptation to the dating app environment, where they use various interactive features to attract and maintain the interest of their counterparts (Halim et al., 2023).

Meeff not only serves as a platform for forming romantic relationships but also as a means for developing social competence in a digital environment. The application supports various features such as chatting, video calls, and an intelligent matching system, all designed to enhance the quality of user interactions (Paulin & Boon, 2021).

In the context of communication in the search for a partner, Islam offers guidance through the Quran. Surah An-Nur (24:26) states: "Good people are for good people, and bad people are for bad people." This verse is relevant in teaching that ethical and considerate communication should be the core of interactions on dating applications, emphasizing the importance of maintaining manners and morals in every action (Novian Muriani R et al., 2023).

The urgency of studying digital communication patterns in online dating, particularly through applications like Meeff, lies in its significant impact on the social and psychological dynamics of Generation Z. With the increasing use of this application among young people aged 18 to 24, this research becomes essential to understand how self-presentation and digital interactions shape their identities and interpersonal relationships. Furthermore, psychological implications such as stress and anxiety due to digital validation, as well as phenomena like ghosting and benching, highlight the need for guidelines and interventions that support mental well-being. This study is also relevant in developing digital social competence and ensuring ethical and responsible communication, ultimately helping to create a healthier and more supportive digital environment for the younger generation.

B. LITERATURE REVIEW (bold 12 pt)

In the study of digital communication patterns on the Meeff dating application, the primary focus is on how technology influences social and romantic interactions between individuals. Platforms like Meeff have revolutionized the way people communicate, integrating text, images, and video to form a complex mosaic of communication. Users, especially from Generation Z, utilize the various features provided to express themselves and explore their social identities in a space increasingly unbounded by geographical limitations. This marks a shift from traditional interpersonal communication to a more dynamic and multimedia form of interaction, where messages are transmitted not only through words but also through a rich array of non-verbal expressions (Yoanita et al., 2022).

Furthermore, online dating applications also provide insights into the evolution of norms and behaviors in the digital society. Meeff, for example, serves not only as a tool for finding partners but also as a platform for social experimentation where users can test and develop their social skills in a safe and controlled context. This change reflects a broader cultural adaptation to digital technology, where young users continually seek new ways to bridge digital life with real life. Communication on Meeff often includes strategies such as 'ghosting' or 'catfishing', which,

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although considered negative, also open dialogues about ethics and responsibility in virtual interactions (García & Bove, 2022).

Finally, the psychological impact of online dating becomes an important area in the study of digital communication. The use of Meeff and similar applications can lead to various emotional outcomes, ranging from increased self-confidence to feelings of isolation or rejection. These aspects are crucial to consider when evaluating the effectiveness and long-term influence of dating applications on users' mental health. By gaining a deeper understanding of how individuals interact in these digital settings, research can help design platforms that are more intuitive and responsive to the emotional and social needs of their users, thus creating a healthier and more inclusive environment (McCosker et al., 2020).

In the context of Meeff and similar dating applications, the Online Self-Presentation Theory and Social Penetration Theory provide deep insights into how users manipulate self-presentation and gradually build relationships (Ellison et al., 2006). According to Ellison, Hancock, and Toma, users tend to present themselves idealistically by editing photos and writing attractive bios to increase romantic prospects. Parallel to this, the Social Penetration Theory developed by Irwin Altman and Dalmas Taylor explains the transition of interactions from general and superficial to more intimate and personal. Users of these applications strategically reveal and conceal information, controlling how they are perceived by potential partners while enhancing emotional depth and commitment in their relationships (Cseh, 2011).

C. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY (bold 12 pt)

This study adopts a qualitative method with a phenomenological approach to explore the experiences of online dating application users (Wa-Mbaleka & Rosario, 2023). This approach allows for an in-depth understanding of how individuals perceive and respond to the dynamics of digital communication that occur during interactions. The data collection technique used is in-depth interviews, designed to elicit rich narratives and detailed descriptions of user experiences, providing direct insights into their feelings, thoughts, and motivations.

As the primary data source, this study collects narratives from active Meeff users who share their experiences through structured interviews. These narratives are then analyzed using content analysis to identify common themes, motives, and behavior patterns (Krippendorf, 2013). This technique allows researchers to organize and interpret complex data from the users' subjective perspectives, uncovering hidden meanings behind the verbal and non-verbal communication they engage in.

To ensure data validity, this study employs triangulation techniques, comparing findings from content analysis with existing literature and feedback from experts in digital communication and psychology. This approach not only enhances the credibility of the analysis and findings but also strengthens data interpretation by providing multiple perspectives that verify the conclusions drawn. In this way, the research ensures that the interpretation of the studied phenomena is accurate and trustworthy.

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D. RESULT AND DISCUSSION
Digital Communication Dynamics: User Behavior And Flirting Tactics

In the context of online dating applications such as Meeff, the dynamics of digital communication are revealed through various user behaviors and flirting tactics used to attract potential partners. The use of text, emojis, and visual media becomes crucial communication tools that facilitate the formation of first impressions and the development of further interactions. Each element of this communication is strategically chosen by users to convey the desired persona, often highlighting certain aspects of their personality or appearance that they consider most attractive. In practice, these flirting tactics include not only what is said but also how and when messages are sent, utilizing response times as a means to increase or decrease romantic interest (Dyer et al., 2019).

Additionally, communication in dating applications is influenced by prevailing social and cultural norms. For example, in some cultures, there are certain expectations regarding the initiative in sending messages or the topics considered appropriate to discuss in the early stages of interaction. Meeff users, coming from diverse backgrounds, often have to navigate these norms, which can vary significantly among individuals. This creates a complex communication landscape where understanding and adapting to the communicative preferences of the interlocutor becomes key to obtaining a positive response and maintaining long-term interest (Anderson et al., 2020).

Furthermore, flirting tactics and interactions in dating applications often reflect broader shifts in social structures and communication technology. The use of algorithms to suggest suitable candidates based on user preferences and behavior, for example, changes how individuals explore potential relationships. Artificial intelligence and deep data analysis enable applications to more accurately predict who might be a suitable partner, influencing how users present themselves and interact. Therefore, a deep understanding of these digital communication dynamics is not only relevant for dating app users but also for researchers and policymakers interested in the social and psychological implications of modern communication technology, as illustrated in the following table:

Table 1. Digital communication dynamics in online dating applications

Category	Description	Example Flirting Tactics	Role of Technology
Use of Emojis	Use of visual symbols to convey emotions or enhance messages	Sending heart or smiling face emojis	Algorithms recommend popular emojis
Timing	Timing chosen to send messages	Sending messages at the most active times	Optimal notifications and reminders
Message Content	Types of information shared in messages	Sharing hobbies or interests, making funny comments	Filters and content suggestions based on user data
Language Style	The way messages are written	Using slang or formal language	Sentiment analysis and language style

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Multimedia	Use of photos, videos, or audio in communication	Sending selfies, hobby videos, or voice clips	Efficient media upload and compression
Responsiveness	Speed and consistency in replying to messages	Quick replies to show interest	Real-time notifications
Opening Strategies	Ways to start conversations	Opening with open-ended questions or compliments	Conversation starter suggestions based on profile

Source : processed by researchers, 2024

In the dynamics of digital communication, especially on dating apps like Meeff, the use of emojis plays a significant role in conveying emotions and enhancing message effectiveness. These visual symbols not only facilitate the expression of feelings but also enrich the communication context often lost in text interactions. Algorithms that recommend popular emojis based on the conversation context help users choose the most appropriate symbols, enhancing the accuracy and nuance of emotional expression. The use of emojis like hearts or smiling faces, for instance, can substantially increase the perception of sincerity and romantic interest, making them effective tools for flirting in a digital context .(Andzani & Irwansyah, 2023)

The timing of sending messages is also crucial in determining the success of communication in dating apps. Sending messages at times deemed most active by users can increase the likelihood of a quick response and maintain the conversation flow. Technologies like optimal notifications and reminders play a role in helping users choose the best times to communicate, reducing response delays and enhancing conversation dynamics. The speed and consistency of responses, also influenced by real-time notification technology, are vital in building and maintaining interest, where the speed of replies is often interpreted as a sign of interest and availability (Pujiono, 2021).

On the other hand, the content of the messages shared reflects how well users can tailor the information they convey to the interests or hobbies of their interlocutors. Filters and content suggestions tailored to user data can help optimize this information exchange, enabling users to make relevant and engaging comments. For instance, making funny comments or sharing specific hobbies can be a starting point for deeper and more personal conversations, where dating apps provide content suggestions based on profile analysis and previous interactions (Oktawirawan & Pamungkas, 2023).

Moreover, opening strategies and language styles chosen by users are crucial determinants in forming first impressions and determining the direction of subsequent relationships. Conversation opener suggestions generated by algorithms based on the interlocutor's profile enable users to start dialogues in a more personal and targeted way, increasing the likelihood of a positive response. The appropriate use of language, whether formal or casual, also aligns the message with the social context and personal preferences of the interlocutor, showing higher social adaptation and communicative sensitivity in the context of online dating.

Online Identity Construction And Self-Presentation

Online identity construction and self-presentation are crucial aspects of understanding communication dynamics on dating apps like Meeff. Users actively curate their profiles to present an ideal version of themselves, a process involving careful selection of photos, self-descriptions, and other personal information. This online identity often differs from the

offline identity due to the greater freedom and control in choosing how they want to be perceived by others. Users tend to manipulate this information to enhance their attractiveness and increase their chances of success in building romantic relationships. By using appealing photos, writing bios that depict positive personality traits, and selecting hobbies and interests that might attract potential partners, users can guide others' perceptions according to their preferences.

Furthermore, the self-presentation process is influenced by feedback from interactions occurring within the app. Users pay attention to the responses they receive from their interlocutors and often adjust their self-presentation based on that feedback. For example, if a particular profile or message receives a lot of positive attention, users might continue to develop and use that approach. Conversely, if they receive little response or negative feedback, they may revise their self-presentation strategy. This phenomenon reflects the interactive and adaptive dynamics of online identity construction, where users constantly test and adjust their self-representation to achieve social and romantic goals in a constantly changing digital environment.

Table 2. Online identity construction and self-presentation in the context of online dating applications like meeff

Identity Construction Aspect	Description	Self-Presentation Strategy	Impact on Perception
Profile Picture	Selection of images representing personality and physical attractiveness	Using well-taken, edited photos showcasing interesting activities	Enhances positive impression and visual appeal, increasing interaction likelihood
Bio/Self-Description	Writing text reflecting personality, interests, and values	Writing engaging, humorous, and informative bios, listing unique interests and hobbies	Helps create a strong first impression and provides context for conversations
Choice of Hobbies and Interests	Mentioning favorite activities and interests	Choosing popular or interesting hobbies and interests	Attracts other users with similar interests, increasing match likelihood
Language Style	How users write and communicate in the app	Using language appropriate for the target audience, either formal or casual	Conveys personality and aligns with the interlocutor's communication style, enhancing connectivity
Use of Emojis	Use of visual symbols to add emotional nuance to messages	Adding relevant and positive emojis to reinforce messages	Adds emotional expression and warmth to communication, increasing emotional engagement
Message Timing	Timing chosen to send messages and initiate conversations	Sending messages at strategic times (e.g., when the other user is active)	Increases the likelihood of quick responses and maintains conversation flow

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Feedback and Adaptation	Response to feedback received from previous interactions	Adjusting photos, bios, and communication styles based on responses from other users	Enhances profile relevance and attractiveness, continuous adaptation for optimal results

Source: Processed by Reseachers, 2024

Profile pictures in the context of online dating applications like Meeff play a fundamental role in online identity construction and self-presentation. The selection of good, attractive, and representative images is a primary strategy used by users to attract attention and build a positive first impression. Photos showcasing interesting activities or other positive aspects of the user's personality not only enhance visual appeal but also increase the likelihood of interaction with other users. Thus, a well-curated profile picture serves as an effective tool in communicating the user's identity and personality to potential partners.

Bios or self-descriptions are also crucial components of online identity construction. Users who write bios with humor, unique interests, and information reflecting their personality tend to be more successful in attracting interactions. An engaging and informative bio helps create a strong first impression and provides context for further conversation. This highlights the importance of text in complementing the visual elements of a profile and demonstrates that skills in writing and effectively conveying oneself are essential in enhancing profile appeal.

The choice of specific hobbies and interests is also an important strategy in self-presentation. Displaying specific hobbies and interests can attract other users with similar interests, increasing the likelihood of a match and more meaningful relationships. Shared interests often serve as a strong foundation for starting and maintaining conversations, creating a stronger basis for potential relationships. Users who successfully match their interests and hobbies with those of potential partners tend to have longer and deeper interactions.

Additionally, the use of language style and emojis in communication also affects perceptions and interactions in dating apps. Using language appropriate for the target audience and adding relevant emojis can enrich communication with emotional nuances. The right language style can convey the user's personality more deeply than standard text, while emojis help add an emotional dimension to messages, enhancing emotional engagement and warmth in communication. Users who can adapt their language style and use of emojis to the conversation context and interlocutor preferences tend to be more successful in building connections and maintaining interest.

Online Identity Construction and Self-Presentation In dating applications like Meeff, online identity construction and self-presentation are crucial in understanding how individuals use technology to shape and direct others' perceptions of themselves. The Online Self-Presentation Theory by Ellison, Hancock, and Toma explains that users actively choose and present information that can enhance their attractiveness. In the context of Meeff, selecting appealing profile pictures, writing informative and humorous bios, and adding relevant hobbies and interests are key strategies used to manipulate how they are perceived by others. Users who succeed in these strategies can attract attention and initiate positive initial interactions, which is the first step in building romantic relationships on a digital platform (Cambier et al., 2019).

The Social Penetration Theory by Irwin Altman and Dalmas Taylor provides a deep framework for understanding how these relationships evolve from surface-level interactions to deeper and more intimate levels. Meeff users start with exchanging general and non-intimate information, such as hobbies or interests, and gradually open up with more personal and

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emotional information. This process shows that self-presentation is not static but dynamic and evolves with increasing trust and relationship depth. In dating applications, users who can navigate these stages well tend to be more successful in developing more serious and meaningful relationships (Garga et al., 2021).

Urthermore, the use of emojis in communication on Meeff reflects adaptation to the need for richer and deeper emotional expression that is not always achievable with text alone. Algorithms that recommend popular emojis based on conversation context help users choose the most appropriate symbols to express their feelings. Using emojis like hearts or smiling faces can significantly enhance the impression of sincerity and romantic interest, which is important in the digital flirting process. This aligns with the Online Self-Presentation Theory, where users continuously adjust their communication tools to achieve the desired emotional impact (Choi et al., 2023; Fujs et al., 2020).

Message timing and responsiveness are also important components of flirting tactics in dating applications. Sending messages at strategic times, such as when other users are most active, and providing quick and consistent replies can improve conversation flow and show genuine interest. Real-time notifications and optimal reminders provided by technology help users manage their communication timing more effectively. This demonstrates how technology supports self-presentation strategies and enhances user interaction dynamics (Gibson, 2024).

Moreover, language style and message content used in dating applications like Meeff play a significant role in building impressions and emotional connections. Users who use language styles appropriate for their target audience and add humor or interesting information can create more lively and engaging conversations. Filters and content suggestions tailored based on user data help optimize this information exchange. The Social Penetration Theory supports this view by showing that the more personal and relevant the information shared, the greater the likelihood of building deeper and more meaningful relationships (Faidlatul Habibah et al., 2021; Liew et al., 2023).

This study found that a combination of technology utilization and effective self-presentation strategies not only increases success in gaining attention but also in maintaining long-term interactions. The use of algorithms to recommend emojis and content suggestions based on user data analysis shows the important role of artificial intelligence in directing and enriching digital communication. Additionally, these findings reveal that continuous adaptation to feedback from previous interactions allows users to refine their self-presentation, creating highly responsive and adaptive dynamics in the online dating environment. These findings add a new dimension to the understanding of how technology can be utilized to support and enhance interpersonal relationships in the digital age.

E. CONCLUSION

This study reveals that in the context of online dating applications like Meeff, online identity construction and self-presentation play a crucial role in shaping the dynamics of digital communication and user interactions. Through the selection of attractive profile pictures, writing informative and humorous bios, and the use of appropriate emojis and language styles, users can attract attention and build deeper and more meaningful connections. The use of technology, such as recommendation algorithms and real-time notifications, supports these strategies by providing relevant suggestions and helping users manage their interactions more effectively. The findings of this study assert that the combination of technology utilization and effective self-presentation

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strategies not only increases success in gaining attention but also in maintaining long-term interactions, creating more adaptive and responsive relationships.

Future research is recommended to explore the psychological impacts of using online dating applications, particularly in the context of social pressure and digital validation experienced by users. Additionally, more detailed studies on gender and cultural differences in self-presentation strategies and digital interactions could provide richer insights into how social norms influence user behavior on online dating platforms. Longitudinal studies observing the development of relationships from initial interactions to the formation of long-term relationships would also be highly valuable in understanding the more holistic dynamics of dating app usage in the social and emotional lives of users.

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