What the last year on Tinder tells us about the next decade of dating

This past year, as social distancing became the new normal, it was a tough time to be single. Many places young people used to go to connect with others were closed, but their need for human connection was more urgent than ever. During the pandemic, Tinder emerged as one of the few places young people could go for much needed human interaction. In fact, 60% of members came to Tinder because they felt lonely and wanted to connect with people. And Gen Z specifically came to Tinder to meet *new* people to get them out of their echo chamber: 40% visited Tinder to see "new and different people".

Social engagement on Tinder was also up during the pandemic. Gen Z spent more time talking on Tinder, as 19% more messages were sent per day in Feb 2021, compared to Feb 2020. And conversations were 32% longer during the pandemic. Members also updated their bios more often to fuel conversation, with Gen Z updating their bios nearly 3x as often as they did pre-pandemic and still 2x as often as Millennials. And pandemic bios included more timely topics, like Black Lives Matter and popular content, like Bridgerton.

Gen Z also turned to video chats, as the constraints of COVID had them looking to connect in different ways. Nearly half of Tinder had a video chat with a match during the pandemic, and 40% plan to continue using video to get to know people even when the pandemic is over. These virtual experiences helped satisfy Gen Z's cravings for social interaction: according to Ypulse, 43% of dating app users said the apps made them feel less lonely in the pandemic.

The innovation in Gen Z dating behaviour and Tinder's growth in the social discovery category, made **2020 the busiest year in Tinder's history**. Tinder's engagement and activity grew significantly throughout the year with 11% more Swipes and 42% more matches per Tinder member. On March 29, 2020, Tinder's SWIPE activity broke 3 billion in a single day, the first time to do so, then broke that single day, 3 billion record, 130 more times in the last year.

The past year has led to some fascinating shifts in Gen Z behaviour; shifts that reveal the future of dating. Let's look at how the events of the past year help predict the next decade of dating.

#1: **Daters will be more honest and authentic.**
The pandemic helped many people put things in perspective. It led Tinder members to be more truthful and vulnerable about who they are, how they look, and what they're going through. Mentions of 'anxiety' and 'normalize' in bios grew during the pandemic ('anxiety' grew 31%; 'normalize' grew more than 15X). This shift toward honesty will accelerate in the future as Gen Z, a generation known for valuing authenticity, becomes more of the dating population (today, over 50% of Tinder is Gen Z).

#2: **Boundaries will become more transparent**

The pandemic brought up more discussions of personal boundaries. Tinder members used their bios to make their expectations clear: the phrase 'wear a mask' went up 100X over the course of the pandemic, 'boundaries' is being used more than ever (up 19%), and the term 'consent' rose 11%. YPulse's Dating in a Post-COVID World study also found signs of these discussions, saying that 17% of daters 'had a conversation on safety precautions before meeting up' and 16% 'asked for consent to physically touch a date'. This practice will make conversations about consent more commonplace and comfortable in the future. As conversations move to intimate matters, people will use the skills they've honed during the pandemic to make dating safer and happier.

#3: More people will want to "See where things go"

In an uncertain world, daters had less expectations for the future of their relationships. Mentions of phrases like 'see where things go' and 'open to' reached all time highs in Tinder bios, as members showed greater openness to possibility this past year, ('see where things go' rose 19%, ‘open to’ rose 17%). And in a recent survey of Tinder members, the number of daters looking for ‘no particular type of relationship’ was up nearly 50%. So rather than the pandemic driving a desire for marriage, the next generation of daters will seek more open-ended relationships.

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