

Tinder's "It Starts With A Swipe" Campaign

MGT 6464: Selling Strategy

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## **Tinder's "It Starts With A Swipe" Campaign**

### **Executive Summary**

In a generation consumed by social media, human connection is now harvested through the channel of dating apps. The Online Dating industry is constantly evolving and shifting as consumers' desires shift. Tinder hoped to break through the clutter and stand out against competitors with their new "It Starts with a Swipe" campaign. The campaign launched in early 2023 and strongly targeted Gen Z, hoping to play up on the trends they find relatable, and their newly updated dating aspirations.

Tinder has become an industry leader, and a household name when it comes to dating apps. The online dating industry has been around since 1995 and has been changing ever since. Tinder has established a strong awareness in consumer's minds, but are they able to shift the perception of their brand? Tinder is aiming to follow the rest of the industry and shift to more classic symbols of love. This is a risky task for Tinder to try and tackle as "hookup culture" has become synonymous with the Tinder brand. Our team conducted a deep dive into Tinder's "It Starts With A Swipe" campaign, to determine how the aspects of the advertisements have contributed to executing their overall goal of rebranding. Our team has taken a look into the successes and failures of the campaign to determine the overall effectiveness. We conducted our analysis through the evaluation of industry trends, segmentation and positioning of Tinder, major market competitors, as well as the campaign itself.

### **Market situation**

The online dating industry is an industry that many believe can attribute its creation to the launch of the iPhone in 2007. Since the initial surge in the market, there has been continuous

growth, as well as multiplying amounts of dating platforms. This industry began in 1995 strictly via desktop applications, and eventually transferred to mobile app form in 2009, 2 years after the creation of the iPhone. Tinder found themselves entering the market in 2012 and has since grown to become the number one online dating app, holding a brand awareness of 84%, as well as 6,080,690 monthly downloads in 2023. According to Statista, in 2022 the online dating industry was priced at \$2.86 billion USD, with its highest amount of revenue coming from the United States. As the industry has flourished over the years, new trends have emerged that continue to align with society. Current market trends within the online dating industry include: subscription models, diversification, Dating Sunday, classic symbols of love, and instant gratification.

As time progresses and trends shift, it is crucial for online dating apps to remain current with the times if they are hoping to stay relevant with consumers. Various dating apps have begun to offer tier style subscription models. With the various tier costs, consumers are able to decide if they would like to select the free version and receive baseline results, or pay for a higher level and find the partner of their dreams with the added app perks. This trend has allowed the participating dating apps to maximize their revenue by luring users in based on the benefits offered at each tier. Consumers have also started to crave diversity in recent years, not just within their dating pool, but within the brand's marketing as well. There has been a visible shift within the industry of companies incorporating more diverse couples such as members of the LGBTQIA+ community and interracial couples within their ad campaigns. Apps are aiming to create a safer space and welcome in users from all walks of life to start dating on their platform. "Dating Sunday" is another trend that was recently introduced in 2016 after researchers noticed a large jump in dating app activity on the first Sunday of the year. It has now become a widely known phenomenon that many mobile app users will login on "Dating Sunday" with even higher

hopes that they will meet their match in the new year. Several platforms have taken advantage of this rush, and ramp up marketing efforts in the month leading up to and the month prior, which we noticed Tinder did a great job of when rolling out their “It Starts with a Swipe” campaign in February of 2023. The online dating industry found themselves becoming the hotspot for “hookup culture”, but as the generation who has grown up on these apps began to age, there was a noticeable repositioning towards classing symbols of love. As the users of these apps matured, so did their dating preferences, which has led many popular dating platforms to revert to traditional values of dating and love. The popularity of social media apps such as TikTok and its inclusion of short form video, has created the need for instant gratification amongst Gen Z. Apps within the online dating industry have found themselves embracing this need to appeal to Gen Z and have discovered ways to integrate it into the matching process. On many of the mobile platforms, the status of your match will instantly popup onto your screen revealing right away if there is a connection or not. Online dating apps have done a fantastic job of staying up to date with market trends, as well as evolving with their consumer base.

### **Segmentation and positioning strategy**

Tinder is a matching and messaging, online dating platform that is the leading dating app in the United States. The “swipe” interface originated with Tinder and became so popular that the term “Swipe Right” was trademarked by Tinder. The popularity of the app created a surge in the usage of online dating, especially within Tinder’s target market age range of 18-25 year olds, and the LGBTQIA+ community. The LGBTQIA+ community is also the fastest growing group on Tinder. Because Generation Z is Tinder’s main target market, the app’s marketing is promoted through multiple social media platforms such as TikTok, Instagram, and Snapchat, where

Generation Z can be found. Tinder advertisements are also presented on streaming services such as Hulu, Youtube, and Roku. Spotify podcast ads are purchased by the app as well.

In order to appeal to more consumers, Tinder follows a tiered subscription service that progressively includes more benefits as the subscriptions get more expensive. The first tier is free to everyone and only allows swiping, matching and messaging. The tiers that follow are named Tinder Plus, Tinder Gold, Tinder Platinum, and Tinder SELECT. A complete list of what each tier includes is presented in *Appendix I*.

When looking at Tinder's segmentation and positioning in the dating app market, we established 4 main competitors:

1. **Hinge:** Launched in 2012, Hinge marketed itself as the app that's "designed to be deleted." The app focuses on users creating meaningful connections, by having users fill out a detailed profile with prompts to help other users engage in conversation. This is as opposed to other apps, where users just swipe left or right
2. **Bumble:** Launched in 2014, Bumble's business model and strategy revolves around women having the control over who they match with, by prompting them to initiate all conversations with matches. With the slogan, "Make the First Move," Bumble not only offers solutions for dating, but they also help in creating platonic friendships with Bumble BFF and helps users network with other professionals with Bumble Bizz. However, the app as a whole has gained its popularity with its emphasis on empowering women in online dating.
3. **Raya:** Launched in 2015, Raya is an exclusive, member only dating app. To get on the users, go through an application process to which they are either approved, denied or put on a waiting list. Because of this meticulous process, many celebrities have been found

using that, which is how Raya has gotten its reputation as the “celebrity dating app.”

What differentiates this app from other competitors in the market, is that all members must pay a membership fee and users who are approved, are not allowed to screenshot or screen share any profiles they may come across.

4. **Grindr:** Launched in 2009, Grindr is a dating app that is specifically tailored to the LGBTQIA+ community. As the #1 dating app in the world for this community, Grindr is most known for its geolocation-based matching system, with an emphasis on creating casual encounters and romantic relationships within the LGBTQIA+ community. The app also happens to be the most popular dating app for users aged 54+, who identify with the community.

When Tinder launched, it positioned itself as one of the pioneers of the swipe-based dating app model. It quickly gained widespread popularity for its simplicity and accessibility. With its user-friendly interface and mass appeal, Tinder was able to move the online dating market away from websites like eHarmony, and towards app based dating that was easily accessible. However, as other competitors have come, Tinder, has lost some of its strength in the market, as the app has frequently been viewed as the “hookup” app. In *Appendix 9* we can see that Tinder is an extremely inclusive app, but has a difficult time pushing past the idea of ‘hookup culture.” However, with their new campaign *It Starts With a Swipe*, Tinder is showing its users that you can find whatever relationship you are looking for on their app.

### **Promotion & Campaign Objectives**

Tinder's "It Starts with a Swipe" promotion aims to achieve several objectives. Firstly, it seeks to debunk perceptions surrounding the app, moving away from the notion of it being solely for casual hookups. Instead, Tinder wants to highlight its versatility, emphasizing that users can

find various types of relationships, whether long-term, short-term, or casual encounters. Tailoring to Gen Z, Tinder aims to resonate with this demographic by demonstrating an understanding of their values and perspectives on dating. By targeting the 18-25 age group, particularly those uncertain about their romantic desires, Tinder aims to position itself as a platform that caters to diverse relationship preferences. Additionally, the campaign emphasizes diversity and inclusion, showcasing representations of various demographics in its advertisements to reflect the real-world diversity users can expect to find on the app. Ultimately, Tinder presents itself as a place of possibilities, where users can discover anything from lifelong friendships to potential life partners, challenging the perception of Tinder as solely a hookup app.

### **What are they actually doing**

Tinder's *It Starts With A Swipe* campaign consists of photo, offline, and video advertisements. Their photo ads are tailored towards Generation Z and posted on different social media platforms. One example of a photo advertisement they created is named "Proving Astrology Right" and shown in *Appendix 2*. The idea of finding compatibility through astrological stars signs a trend that is widely known to be followed by Gen Z. Another photo example is named "Comfortable Silences," which is shown in *Appendix 3*. This advertisement aligns with the idea of a "Social Battery," that describes how much energy a person needs to exert when they are around certain people. "Comfortable Silences" is supposed to emphasize the idea that consumers can find the person they do not need a social battery around, on Tinder. *It Starts With A Swipe* advertisements can also be found offline as large posters on buildings in major cities, where the majority of Generation Z is located (*Appendix 4*).

In alignment with the photo and offline advertisements, Tinder also created multiple video advertisements to include in their new campaign. A major trend we found that occurs in

the videos is making viewers assume one thing, because of the title, while the video shows a different meaning. One example of this is, “New Last Name,” that is seen in *Appendix 5*. The idea of a new last name makes consumers think the advertisement is discussing marriage. However, viewers are actually shown the actor changing their Tinder date’s name on their phone from “Miguel Tinder” to “Miguel ❤️”. Another example of a video advertisement that was created for this campaign is named “Summer Fling” which is found in *Appendix 6*. This video is a perfect representation of the message Tinder is trying to express through their campaign. As mentioned earlier, the perception consumers had of Tinder was the place to go when you are looking for something that is not serious. Therefore, the advertisement begins with the narrator saying, “So you were looking for a summer fling...,” in order to emphasize that Tinder is aware of their previous perceptions. However, the narrator then goes on to say, “... but you accidentally found a fall, winter, and spring fling too,” and shows the same two actors together throughout different seasons. These videos are meant to emphasize the meaning of the campaign; that Tinder consumers can find more than just a “hook-up” on their dating platform.

Outside of physical advertisements, Tinder offers sales promotions to their consumers as well. During the *It Starts With A Swipe* campaign, users were offered promotion codes to receive discounts on the different tiers that Tinder offers. The more expensive the tier is, the higher of a discount the consumer would receive. Another offer Tinder incorporated during the campaign was a new subscription tier named, Tinder SELECT. Unlike the other subscription tiers, Tinder SELECT was offered through invitation only to the top 1% of Tinder users and requires \$499/month.

## **Success**

Overall, the campaign was a success and met their primary objectives of debunking their current brand perceptions, tailoring their messages to Gen Z, focusing on diversity/inclusion and providing a platform for opportunities. In doing so they were able to accomplish moving with society, meaning that they are keeping up with popular trends that their customers are following. For example, mentioning your zodiac signs, your social battery level, changing someone's tinder name after you become more serious, talking about love languages, and their spotify partnership are all ways that Tinder has effectively implemented trend topics among their platform and throughout their messaging. Additionally, a goal of the campaign was to be more inclusive, which they did through widening sexuality demographics. This was done through showing diversity in their ads by using non-straight couples. As a result, Tinder saw an increase in LGBTQIA+ users. By leveraging a fun and lighthearted approach to dating in their ads, followed with consistent and clear messaging about what they stand for, they were able to build a more relatable brand image. Specifically targeting the Gen Z audience, Tinder puts little pressure on defining the relationship, and aims to take the stress out of finding your perfect match. Along with these successes, Tinder also saw a surge in sign-ups, especially among female users. This is important to note as their current demographic is 75% male. Additionally, they are promoting healthy dating habits, as 80% of 18-25 year olds said that self care is their top priority (*"Relationships in 2023 take Many Forms"*). Not only were they successful in their campaign objectives, but Tinder was also able to generate revenue as well. *Appendix 7* shows that from the beginning of the campaign in Feb, 2023, revenues steadily increased, with an 11% increase in 3rd quarter sales (Iqbal 2024). Overall, with the objectives that Tinder set, they were successful in accomplishing them and making a valuable impact on consumers.

## **Failures**

As far as evaluating the shortcomings of the It Starts with a Swipe campaign, there were some aspects that could have been improved or may influence customers to use Tinder. The first being that Tinder may be alienating other demographics like Millennials by targeting only Gen Z consumers with this campaign. While Tinder is targeting a younger audience, not all of Gen Z can be grouped into the same category of consumer. This is a progressive campaign that offers a lot of positive social attributes, but unfortunately not all of gen Z would appreciate the campaign, which may turn them away as customers. Additionally, some users may expect the original “hookup culture” associated with the app and turn to competitor apps if they don’t feel their needs are met with the new image of the brand. Changing your brand image to incorporate inclusivity and diversity is a positive social change, but their decision to incorporate all relationship types in their ads and stray away from their original branding may hinder their differentiation amongst other apps. During the campaign, Tinder also incorporated the Tinder SELECT tier option, which targeted a small percent of users, promoting exclusivity in an inclusive campaign, which is contradictive. Lastly, even though their revenues and sign ups increased, their subscriptions decreased. This could mean that either current users are not in favor of Tinder’s new branding or campaign, that Tinder may also be using other streams of revenue to generate money, and/or they are focusing on higher value subscription plans. While this campaign was deemed a success and promoted positive social change, Tinder should be wary of isolating their current demographic and not lose their competitive advantage in a saturated online dating app space.

## **Conclusion**

Tinder's "It Starts with a Swipe" campaign features videos, physical advertisements and promotions that work to rebrand the company as not just a short-term commitment dating app. They were successful in accomplishing their objectives of changing consumer perceptions, promoting inclusivity and diversity and building brand awareness among Gen Z users. Their lighthearted, colorful and creative campaign ads drew in more users, especially those in the LGBTQIA+ community, as well as females. Although it was deemed a success, Tinder should still be hesitant to isolate their current consumers with their new objectives. The "It Starts with a Swipe" campaign is paving the way for inclusive and positive associations around dating culture and sets the tone for other dating apps targeting Gen Z users.

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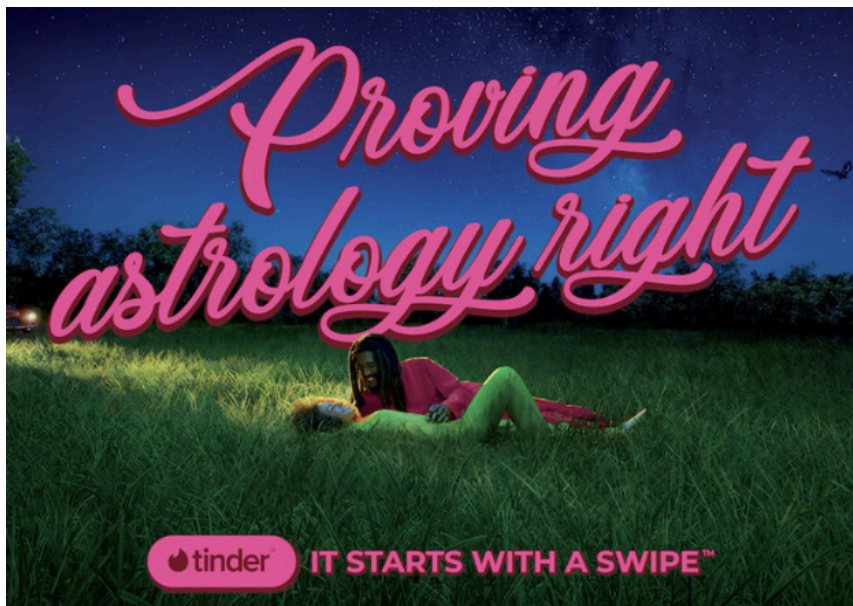
<https://www.thedrum.com/news/2023/02/27/tinder-rebrands-gen-z-singles-first-global-brand-campaign>"

Appendices

Appendix 1: Tinder’s Tiered Subscription Service

Features	tinder	tinder+®	tinder GOLD™	tinder PLATINUM™
Match. Chat. Meet.	•	•	•	•
Unlimited Likes		•	•	•
Unlimited Rewinds		•	•	•
Passport™ To Any Location		•	•	•
Hide Advertisements		•	•	•
*5 Super Likes a week			•	•
*1 Free Boost a month <small>Free monthly Boost only available for 1 month or longer subscriptions.</small>			•	•
See Who Likes You			•	•
New Top Picks every day			•	•
Message before Matching				•
Prioritized Likes				•
See the Likes you've sent in the last 7 days				•

Appendix 2: *It Starts With A Swipe* Photo Advertisement - “Proving astrology right”



**Appendix 3: *It Starts With A Swipe* Photo Advertisement - “Comfortable Silences”**



**Appendix 4: Offline Advertisements**





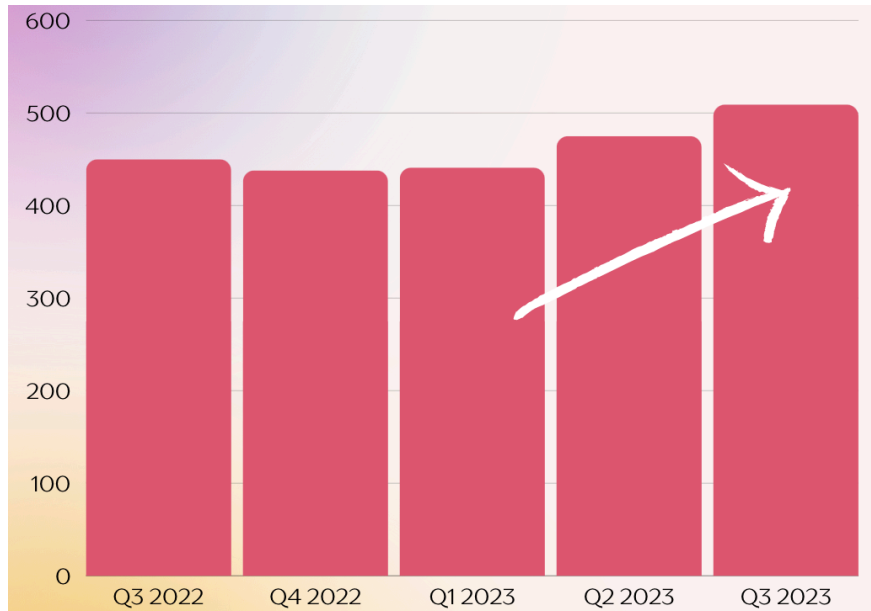
## Appendix 5: *It Starts With A Swipe* Video Advertisement Example - “New Last Name”

▶ New Last Name | It Starts with a Swipe™

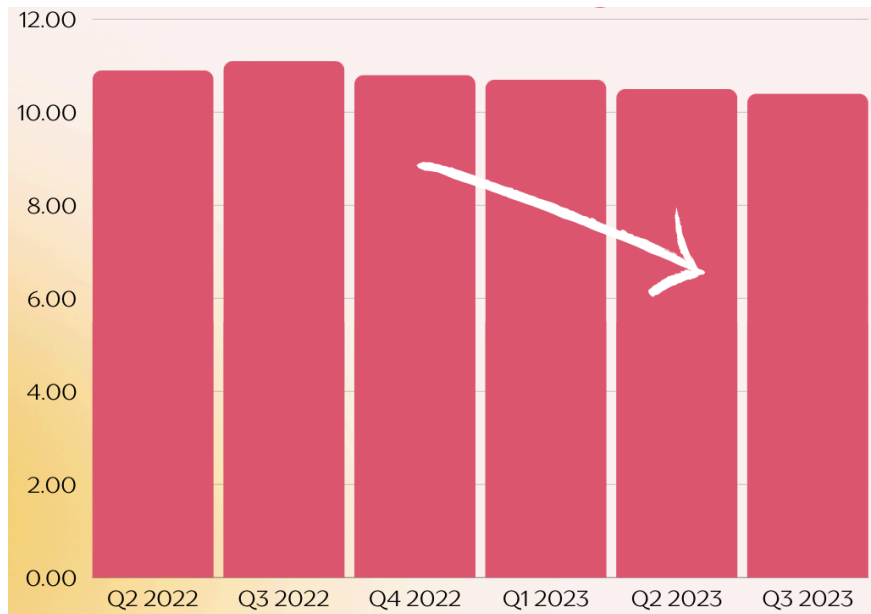
## Appendix 6: *It Starts With A Swipe* Video Advertisement Example - “Summer Fling”

📺 Summer Fling - It Starts with a Swipe - Tinder Commercial

## Appendix 7: Tinder’s Quarter Revenue Since Creating the Campaign



## Appendix 8: Tinder’s Subscriber Count Since Creating the Campaign



## Appendix 9: Perceptual Map

