Identity, Attraction and Trust: How MSM Compose and Assess Location-Aware Dating/Hookup App Profiles in Mumbai

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What are **MSM** doing with location-aware social apps in Mumbai?
J 26

Online now
0 feet away

Edit Profile

Llama Del Rey.

Love a sense of humor, creatives, talkatives, & passion. Hipsters make me feel things. Still rooting for Lindsay Lohan.

Height
5’7”

Weight
135 lbs

Position
Bottom

Relationship Status
Single

HIV Status
Negative

Find me on

Twitter
Facebook

Get the Groupon App
One App, 1,000s of Deals

Install
Friday, January 18, 2013

You good?
09:07

I am fabulous. You?
09:07

Yes, very good thanks
09:08

And how are you?
09:08

I am fabulous. You?
10:59

Good thanks. Up to much?
10:59

I am fabulous. You?
15:43

Connecting to the server...
What we did

35 interviews with 18-35 year old Grindr/MSM app users in Mumbai (including bi, gay, MSM; married and single)

Interviews in Hindi, Marathi, English

Qualitative analysis
How and when did people learn about these apps?

Younger participants were 15-16; others found them later.

Discovered apps after using chat rooms, Planet Romeo, ‘Fake Facebook’, etc.
How and when did people learn about these apps?

“I was around 15 that time. ...I came across fake Facebook profiles at the time. Then I came across particular profiles, where there were Indian guys who were gay and they had their fake profiles setup. So, I thought of creating my own. I created my own and through that I got to know that there are other specific dating apps as well.”

P1, Gay
20 years old
What do people share?

This varies widely.

Some include names or face photos; others don’t.

Different apps have different norms.
Where do they get used?

*Not* just in cities!

Participants used apps in their hometowns, suburbs, villages, when traveling, vacation destinations.

They seem to be used everywhere.
What value do apps provide?

Yes, people have sex. *(We knew that already.)*

Apps are also a gateway to **community resources** like crisis support, health information, friendships while traveling, mentorship.
“Like I was training in one of the hotels and the assistant manager of that hotel was on Grindr and that’s how I got a little more comfortable in the hotel because he introduced me to a couple of more people. He made sure that I don’t get bullied. It was nice. It was a nice experience.”

P2, Gay, 19 years old
“...we started chatting to each other because we were in same college and he was my first friend, first gay friend. Still we are best friends and then we hooked up and everything happened. So that was a very good experience of my life like using Grindr.”

P12, Gay, 18 years old
Preparing for Travel

“One month before... I just use fake GPS locations, I use it around the area for like if I connect with someone then I exchange contacts with them to get to know them and if I feel that this guy is decent enough then I go there and meet them.”

P6, Gay
22 years old
“I never knew that this guy would be on Grindr because he [had] a really nice personality. He was not looking like a gay. ...I saw that he is using his phone constantly. And he just gave me a look. So I was like what is this happening? Suddenly he started smiling at me. ...And then he just touched me on my knee like, ‘okay, I am going right now.’ Then I opened my Grindr and then I saw his profile.”
Risks

Outing and recognition

HIV Stigma

Blackmail or harm
“Yes, I will put my picture in Mumbai. Like I don’t have to hide myself there as not many people know me. And also probably because when I was in my hometown once I came across a cousin of mine, a far off relative kind of cousin. So it was scary.”
HIV Stigma

“[if] he has mentioned HIV positive, STI positive and whatever, I don’t talk [to him] and if I get a message from the person upfront, I do hello and keep friendship and I tell him that as you have already mentioned this in your profile so we can just be good friends. We cannot involve in any sexual activities.”

P15, Gay
28 years old
“I sent a photo and the guy said that, ‘I know you.’ ... Then I said, ‘I accept that I am gay but what you are doing here, what you are doing in this app. It means you are also the same.’ Then he... tried to scare me also. But I did not get scared.”

I: How he was scaring you?

P: “He said ‘I would tell your family,’ this and that. But I did not get scared.”

P23, Bisexual
24 years old
Lessons

**Dating apps are for more than dating and sex.**

People find **community and visibility.**

Users **share information**, but this can be **risky.**
Implications for Intervention

Apps are for more than sex.

How can we help MSM share information safely and prevent harm?

What other community resources could be incorporated into apps?