



INTERNET DATING EXECUTIVE SURVEY

39 Dating Industry CEOs Weigh-in on Facebook's Entry Into Dating

MAY 2018

BY **MARK BROOKS**

Abstract

Dating industry executives are generally surprised but upbeat about Facebook entering the Internet dating industry. Generally, they think the overall market will grow as a result of Facebook shining a light on Internet dating, and that Facebook will not steal the lions-share of the market. Niches will remain. Matchmakers will do fine. This won't be Facebook's forte. The context of dating is distinct from social networking and a separate dating silo is what most people will desire, despite the unique and vast reach of Facebook. Privacy is paramount.

Introduction

I surveyed CEOs of Internet dating companies to gage what they think about Facebook entering the dating industry. Here's how Facebook describes what is happening, and industry executive responses to the prospect of Facebook dating.

Facebook's Explanation of What is Happening

Silvano Senn – Internet Dating Client Partner - Global Sales at Facebook



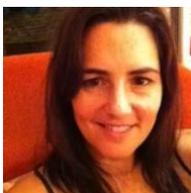
We're building a feature for dating and relationships within the Facebook app. People already use Facebook to meet new people, and we want to make that experience better. People will be able to create a dating profile that is separate from their Facebook profile and potential matches will be recommended based on dating preferences, things in common, and mutual friends. They'll have the option to discover others with similar interests through their Groups or Events. However, what people do within the dating feature will not be shown to their friends. We'll

share more information when this begins testing later this year.

We are not making any changes to how third party developers, including dating apps, access Facebook data or advertising on our platform as a result of this dating experience. People use different dating services for different reasons and we expect that will continue to be the case. Further, this update will not change the way we service dating advertisers on our platform. Our ad delivery system is auction based and our guidelines to advertise dating will remain the same.

Facebook Dating Will Help Us!

Mandy Ginsberg - CEO of Match Group



We're flattered that Facebook is coming into our space - and sees the global opportunity that we do - as Tinder continues to skyrocket. We're surprised at the timing given the amount of personal and sensitive data that comes with this territory. Regardless, we're going to continue to delight our users through product innovation and relentless focus on relationship success. We understand this category better than anyone. Facebook's entry will only be invigorating to all of us.

Gourav Rakshit - CEO of Shaadi



The Match.com IPO in 2015 had a tremendous impact on the dating industry, providing a public face and business benchmarks, to an industry which was largely dominated by private players. Since then there has been a swathe of activity triggered in the industry, with Tinder becoming a major mover and shaker. Given the high levels of user engagement in dating, it's not unusual to see Facebook wade in as well. They've entered other industries in the past – some have worked out, others not so well. They will undoubtedly encounter challenges unique to matchmaking which they've never dealt with before, however their social graph could prove to be a game changer. It remains to be seen how well they are able to straddle staying connected with friends, while simultaneously delivering new connections with potential dates, and whether they will be able to stay the course.

Sumesh Menon – Co-founder & CEO of Woo



I think it's clear indication that the long-standing approach to harnessing digital to discover and build healthy new romantic relationships continues to get wider acceptability and prominence. This idea receives further validation with global heavyweights like Facebook weighing in with their plans.

I believe that the dating industry is very personalized and Facebook as an application is quite social. Those who want to speak to new people and look for meaningful relationships can do so on a dating app easily without being judged by their social media timeline.

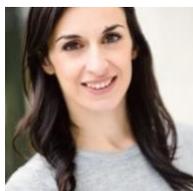
The long-standing approach to harnessing digital to discover and build healthy new romantic relationships continues to get wider acceptability and prominence. This idea receives further validation with global heavyweights like Facebook weighing in with their (dating) plans.

Kris Covino - Former CTO & co-Founder, Avalanche (Date.com / Matchmaker.com)



People will continue to do what comes natural and meet others in many ways as they do offline. Just as there isn't one bar or sporting event to meet within a city Facebook entering the dating market will provide just another option for people to meet. There is less a concern at the moment, until of course their data science teams are able to reverse engineer the human chemistry component of relationships but until that time I would say to Match 'Get Ready, Player One!'

Gloria Diez – MD London at Mamba, Formerly Head of Global Marketing at Badoo



There are three major factors to make a new service succeed; The access to a mass audience; the access to the right infrastructure, including technology, and a proper implementation. Implementation is crucial and it is only possible to succeed in this point with a proper team, able to move fast and showing a real empathy with people trying to meet new people.

The real success will depend on implementation and the dating background of the team behind it. Dating requires a lot of real empathy with the feelings of people involved. The service has to support them by creating a comfortable dynamic atmosphere for users to meet and successfully connect. This requires a constant effort and adaptability to meet their needs and understand their specific online behaviour in "romantic" matters to offer immediate solutions. It is a continuous action-result game. I have seen a lot of good ideas in the dating industry failing because of lack of empathy with the user.

One of the main challenges for Facebook in this context, is to create an intimate private space for dating, allowing the user feel secure and safe to date inside Facebook platform. Keeping the dating activity confidential and giving the user tools to control if their Facebook friends can find about it will be crucial.

In closing, I find this initiative very good news for the dating industry and all its players. It is the ultimate step to bury the dating stigma and will be followed by fresh ideas.

Eric Jangor - VP Marketing & Business Development at Lovoo



It's a smart move at a surprising moment and shows the immense potential of the market as well as the importance of connecting people. We do believe that the contextual environment of an origin dating service will still have more advantages though and that Facebook's tap into the dating industry will boost it further. Bringing live video to dating across Europe starting from May seem to be a good timing now.

Jens Kammerer – CEO of Jaumo



We welcome Facebook to the dating game. It's great to see that online dating has become such a mass phenomenon and is now well accepted in our society. Facebook adds more and more services to its official app, and we are surprised by the timing of their latest move given the fact that dating involves a lot of personal and sensitive data.

We at Jaumo are successfully optimizing our dating apps for more than seven years now offering a secure and innovative experience to our 30 million members without the need to share more data with Facebook. With our latest feature live video, we are again ahead of our competition offering a new and unique way to connect with others successfully.

Rune Heickendorf – Founder & CEO of Single.dk, Co-founder of Hanky



It's really interesting to see that Facebook wants to add a dating feature to their suite of services. I personally think it's amazing that a giant player like Facebook invests their resources into this, as it will obviously nurture a whole new audience into the great opportunity of finding love online. I also believe it will provoke a lot more innovation within the industry, and really emphasizes the importance of our services to modern society.

Haluk Akin – Co-founder of PembePanjur



I think this clearly shows how the online dating market is growing. One of the largest companies in the world considering investing in the industry is a thing. I think it will help grow the online dating market even bigger.

It's Just a Passing Phase

Geoff Cook – Co-Founder & CEO of The Meet Group



Facebook doesn't strike us as an obvious forum for dating. Beyond the well-documented privacy issues, we believe people don't want to share that part of themselves on Facebook. Also, Facebook's record of launching new products beyond their core use-case is not stellar. They launched a jobs service which had no impact on LinkedIn, a classifieds business with no impact on eBay, a Sponsored Results business with no impact on Google, not to mention the many long-

shuttered standalone apps like Slingshot, Paper, and Rooms. We don't think Facebook Dating changes anything about our position. We've been competing effectively against Tinder for years, largely by being where the 600lb gorilla is not. In any event, the history of dating is that it is not a winner-take-all market like traditional social networking.

Ravi Mittal – Founder & CEO of QuackQuack.in



Facebook's entry into the dating sector has come as a surprise. I am not sure how the users of Facebook will take this considering privacy and security issues, esp women. However, we are neither optimistic nor pessimistic about their entry. You see, Facebook has experimented with many a things and failed at many and succeeded at some. They launched Facebook emails, Fb search, classifieds, etc which haven't taken off the way they wanted and killed many a features down the line. While, features like stories on Instagram are doing pretty good. I guess we'll have to wait and watch as to how good or bad their implementation goes.

Dating apps have their own uniqueness which is customized to their market. For example, our uniqueness lies in enabling users to chat before they match, unlike Tinder. And with the majority of our 3.5 Million userbase being email/phone registered, and a minimal number using their Facebook login, we won't be seeing much of an overlap. In fact, from the time Tinder has launched in India, our userbase and revenue has only doubled and we're growing at 120k new users per month. If at all, Tinder should be the most effected since Facebook's features look very similar to Tinder's offering.

Facebook Dating Will Be a Gut Punch to Dating Industry Revenues

Andrey Bronetskiy - CEO of Mamba



The news is not great for the market I think. If they will do all well (and for them it is not too difficult to do), I think it can be -50% of market in terms of money. FB is for older people. When Instagram does something similar then the market will lose the second 50%. But from the other hand for FB, in my opinion, dating is too small service in terms of capitalization. It will never be their focus. Then some market will remain.

Kevin Carmony – Founder & CEO of Dating DNA



Facebook should have done this ages ago. They are in the best position to do this of any site, and it would be very easy for them to do it right. We approached them about it years ago. It will be interesting to see how closely they do it to how we suggested, so as not to interfere with those on FB who are not interested in using it for dating. If they do it right, this could be a huge blow to the other dating sites.

Privacy is Paramount

Didier Rappaport – Founder & CEO of Happn



The interest that Facebook showed in dating by announcing a new dedicated development is a strong signal that characterizes the maturity which the sector has reached and its relevance within digital services.

We are surprised by the timing Facebook has chosen to announce its new ambition to enter the dating space given the controversy that has recently surrounded the company, and the fact that what is related to dating and interpersonal relationship is strictly intimate and private.

As an independent player in the sector, happn will continue its growth and will strengthen its position worldwide. Our mission and commitment to bringing the real world and the magic of dating at the core of our service is reinforced by the presence of our competitors, whether they are old or new. Since launching in 2014 we have created and initiated a unique, innovative experience for our users. "Find the people you've crossed paths with." We'll continue to provide them with innovative services, while preserving their privacy and the safety of their personal data.

Daniel Haigh - Director of Product & Technology at RSVP / Oasis.com



It isn't such a good fit; having your Facebook dating profile separate to your normal Facebook profile. There's lots of perceived conflicts of privacy. Will it be free?

I think everyone has been expecting this development for many years now - so no surprises here. Facebook certainly needs features that allow its users to connect with others outside of their existing circle.

From what I can gather the dating service to be offered by Facebook doesn't look particularly innovative, and there will be a lot of privacy concerns.

I wouldn't panic just yet, because online dating is very much about making the process of finding a date enjoyable, rather than just match-making. There is a hell-of-a-lot to online dating, and Facebook will be a newcomer in this space.

Alex Harrington - CEO of PeerStream (SNAP Interactive)



It's an odd choice Facebook is making. They might already be the biggest players in the dating industry, in that they may be the single biggest source of lead generation revenue. But Facebook has always supported the illusion that user had control over who sees what information on their profile and how much they are exposing to strangers, and that control and sense of security helped them attain their leadership position over Myspace, where users had no control. That illusion of privacy is shattered once you venture into dating. On a dating site user profiles are exposed to strangers, period. At a time when users are beginning to doubt Facebook's handling of user data, it's a risky move that undermines one of the reasons Facebook was successful in the first place.

Marcie Rogo – Co-founder of Stitch



Many people on online dating sites do complain about the slew of fake profiles / scammers. I'm concerned that this service within Facebook may draw predators who will now have an enormous amount of personally identifiable information about individuals before they connect. This is definitely a safety concern to me, especially for more vulnerable individuals.

Policing Against Scammers is Paramount

Dan Winchester – Founder of FreeDating.co.uk & Director at Scamalytics



Obviously this is a possibility which the industry has been debating for many years, and now it looks to be finally happening. Probably the most significant event in dating since Tinder.

Facebook already has a problem with dating scammers - we see obvious scammer profiles active on Facebook which would never make it onto a well-run dating site. We also see scammers active on dating sites, who move targets onto Facebook, where they then presumably execute the scam. Why can the scammer execute the scam on Messenger, but not on the original dating site? Facebook's platform is built around connecting friends who already know each other. Connecting strangers is far more risky, as those two people need to trust each other sufficiently to contemplate a relationship, but be wary enough to avoid getting scammed. Dating services have built up sophisticated techniques to protect users over many years of operating in this environment.

Authentication is Paramount

Jackie Elton – Owner of Christian Connection



Online dating services need to be operated very responsibly, with careful checks on identity, behaviour and age limits. The power of Facebook is that it links people who already know each other. With dating services we don't, so there are complex additional responsibilities to check profiles. Facebook provides important advertising services to independent dating sites. Will that continue?

And Then There's All Those Fake Profiles

Sachin Bhatia – Co-founder & CEO of Truly Madly



Well one thing is for certain....given that FB is now the custodian of the largest number of fake profiles in the world, the probability of getting matched with fake profiles will increase many fold. I see it as a great opportunity for apps like TrulyMadly that work very hard on verifying each profile. Though we use FB, we also verify each FB account to ensure that it's not fake and users are who they say they are. We triangulate it with data from other sources.

FB might help popularize online dating further but will drive people away soon to apps like ours once their members realize that their matches are either fake or not relevant. Also, the big reason online dating works is that there is little fear of judgement since users are mostly anonymous.

Trust is a Major Issue for Facebook Dating

Siddarth Mangharam – Founder & CEO of Floh



When Facebook gets into your industry, it is potentially game changing. They've got the audience, and they've got the data. Perhaps, a key ingredient that they don't quite have right now is the trust of users. That said, at Floh, a few months ago we started building non-romantic communities to bring like-minded people together at physical experiences. We now have cohorts for pregnant mothers, cancer survivors, retired folks and so on. At the core, Floh helps people who don't want to be lonely, and this goes far beyond romantic relationships. I am genuinely

surprised at this move, and at the timing.

Jamie Hall – Co-founder & CTO of Mocospace



I think this is a far stretch for Facebook. In our experience, people want to keep their dating activity far removed from their social network of friends and family, and despite their claims of separating these activities on Facebook I'm very skeptical that people will ultimately trust them to do so effectively.

Culture Matters

Murugavel Janakiraman – Founder & CEO of Matrimony.com



We have to wait and watch to see whether Facebook would be able to effectively compete and made any significant dent against the exclusive dating players where there are big and nice dating sites operate across the world.

The cultural nuances of how people choose their life partner in India is very unique and we don't expect either dating sites or Facebook offering dating services having any impact in the Indian market.

Context Matters!

John Meuffels – CEO of Match Media



Of course Facebook is big and has a lot of data to match people for serious relations. On the other hand every social network has its own function. Facebook for sharing content with friends. LinkedIn for business. Twitter for sharing content with the public. I really wonder if Facebook users will use the platform for online dating. For us, we just keep working on the best solutions for finding a partner online!

Mark Brooks – CEO of Internet Dating Excellence Association



The way behavior works is extremely context sensitive. The rules may apply in one context, but than a perfectly good experiment and observation may fail in another context.

Facebook = place to stay in touch with friends = non-private
Dating App = place to meet new love interests = private

When people go on a social network they are there to communicate with people they already know. The dating context is the antithesis. When people go to their favorite dating app, they're seeking a private place to find someone new to meet. These contexts are at odds with each other. I don't see how Facebook will be able to overcome this in the minds of users.

Our Unique Focus and Skillsets Matter!

Andrew Dowling – Founder & CEO of Stitch



I think it's probably a little early to tell how Facebook's move plays out for the dating industry as a whole, as a lot will depend on how they implement their strategy, but our initial reaction is a positive one. We think Facebook's main impact will be on the larger incumbents, who will now face strong competition from a major new player which possesses extensive resources, as well as some of the less scrupulous dating operators whose promises don't always match the reality -- Facebook's offering will give customers a potentially more valid alternative. For specialized sites, or for communities like Stitch which provide more than just a traditional dating service, we think the new offering won't have a major impact and may eventually create new opportunities through leveraging the Facebook platform. One thing is sure, however, and that is that pretty much everyone in the dating industry will be watching Facebook's strategy carefully over the coming months, as the potential ramifications to the industry as a whole could be enormous.

Sammy Wan – Marketing Manager at MillionaireMatch



I think Facebook is more specialized in social networking. Dating sites, especially niche dating sites have obvious advantages in professional dating services. We control profile quality, filter scammers & fake profiles, have better privacy & personalized settings and faster customer service etc. FB may not put more effort on this.

There's Some Distinct Regional Challenges Beyond Culture

Hiroshi Tsumoto – CEO of Diverse (Japan)



Matchmaking services are regulated in Japan. To register, a driver's license or ID issued by an official agency confirming that a user is 18 or over is required. It is hard to imagine this check being done through Facebook, but most important is to first confirm whether the feature is coming to Japan.

*While the regulations only apply to Japanese companies, Facebook is part of an organization that takes steps to protect minors under the age of 18. They will probably have to make some adjustments before implementing the matchmaking feature.

and, Matchmaking is Distinct from Dating

Grant Langston – CEO of eHarmony



After helping millions and millions of people find love, build relationships and start families, we know that it takes commitment, science, psychology and an emphasis on building human connections to succeed. As we see it, Facebook's entry is further validation that people are looking for long-lasting, meaningful relationships, which has been the core of our business since our inception.

Sanjeev Misra – Sr. VP & Head of Matchmaking Business at Matrimony



There could be a potential impact on the dating industry but we don't foresee a lot of impact for the matchmaking business which is what we are primarily into. The matchmaking business is significantly more detailed oriented and consumers want a match to their preference against a wide variety of parameters before they move forward to next steps. Also, the information sought from a potential match is extensive. Facebook may not be able to provide or capture: Education, Work Experience, Income, Religion, Ethnicity, Caste/Sect, Language, Family

Background, Horoscope in certain cases. Finally, customers come to a matchmaking site when they have made up their mind for marriage unlike on a Facebook.

Our Members Probably Would Not Want to Use Facebook, Anyway

Tomas Roos - COO of HappyPancake



HappyPancake has always been about providing a free platform for finding serious relationships. We review all content being placed into the service (by humans), even presentation texts. We're marking our revenue on advertising just like Facebook. What's a bit interesting is that Facebook has always declined working with us on AudienceNetwork (their adnetwork) because we're a dating service. I guess there's a difference between people and people.

The next thing is that we made a survey on our audience and many people do not want to connect their Facebook account or real name when doing internet dating and prefer to have an anonymous alias in order to feel safe. Sometimes it's also about promoting yourself aligned with your goals rather than your history.

But again, this just shows that internet dating is here to stay and neglecting the whole industry is just wrong.

Niche Dating is Probably Safe

Sam Moorcroft – Co-founder & President of Christian Cafe



Facebook's been rumored to be doing this for a very long time. It's too early to say how this will affect the dating industry (Match's stock dropping 20+% today, notwithstanding). But, if it has a negative effect, it's going to hit the generic sites the most, I'd think. Mind you, there's always been a difference between "free" sites and paid ones. The clientele is more serious on paid services and you tend to weed out most of the weirdos.

Andrew Boon – Founder & CEO of Boonex & UNA



Facebook is like a supermarket. It's a convenient one-stop shop for social networking of any kind, but at the same time this aggregation of experiences inevitably kills diversity. The Internet itself is meant to be a oval network, not Facebook. So, the more Facebook does; connecting, messaging, marketplace and now dating, the more they pull the world into a wholesale ecosystem which is controlled by just one entity with dubious moral standing. At <https://una.io> for example we specifically choose to not build generic social networks. When generic

SNS get traction the impact on the world is always negative. Instead we focus on niche networks around causes, interests or specific use-cases, boosting diversity and healthy competition among sites operators. In that sense the step towards dating by Facebook is another example of further monopolization of the Internet. Too many people entrusted their data to Facebook.

Maria Avgitidis – CEO of Agape Match, Host of The Matchmakers Conference



Dating is such a private thing and Facebook's established intent is in juxtaposition with what is being proposed. As a professional matchmaker, I'm curious if this will drive personal matchmakers even more business. When Tinder came out, we saw an influx of users opting for pricey matchmakers because there is a segment of the population that could not participate in modern dating trends like online dating and app dating.

If people threatened to delete their FB profile after the Cambridge Analytica debacle, I cannot imagine this going smoothly as it rolls out. The kind of persona someone builds to be more marketable in online dating (and therefore get more likes, winks, and dates) is not the same person on Facebook, and rightfully so. I imagine privacy being the biggest concern when it comes to Facebook dating. Very curious to see how they'll navigate the complexity of a user's attachment style as it pertains to social media versus online dating.

As app dating has become the norm and over-saturation of dating apps have plagued the modern day single, more online dating companies become niche specific, usually revolving around lifestyle. Look at the successes of The League or Inner Circle and how they are curating an experience for educated and high net worth singles. Will Facebook have sub cultures within the dating app to respond to these demands from experienced online daters?

And Don't Forget Blockchain!

Violet Lim – co-Founder & CEO of Viola.AI & Lunch Actually Group (Asia)



I'm excited to hear the news this morning that Facebook just unveiled the plan to launch a dating service. It makes sense, as there are over 200 million users registered as singles on the platform, and there are huge opportunities for matches and connections to happen! I'm also happy to hear that they share the same goal as us at Lunch Actually Group, which is to create long-term relationships, and not focused just on hookups.

To me, I don't see Facebook's entrance into the market as competition because although we are in the same industry, Lunch Actually Group's key feature is actually 'verification' and our value-added coaching and consultancy services. For Lunch Actually, we do the verification face-to-face, and even with our online dating and dating apps, we still employ the human touch to approve and verify the singles' profiles. The value-added services in the form of our coaching and consultancy products which help singles to be better daters to maximize their dating success.

We have also always believed in innovation and disrupting ourselves, as shown by our 14 years entrepreneurial journey of coming up with other (sometimes seemingly competitive) dating products.

Currently, with our latest product Viola.AI where we are currently building the MVP, we take away that 'middle man' through our REL-Registry built on the blockchain that does ID and Relationship verification. We are building a Global Relationship Registry to restore transparency to the love industry complemented with our evolving AI as love advisor. Blockchain also makes the data more secure as it's decentralized and is also unhackable and immutable.

Viola.AI is also different from other dating products in the market as it has the ability to advise and give recommendations to users at different stages of their relationships (when they are in a relationship, engaged or married as well) from different merchants and service providers. We see

this as the value-added component which is very important in one's journey to have and sustain a happy, lasting relationship (beyond just meeting the Right One).

Ultimately, We're Specialists

Tim Taylor – Founder of T3 Limited (FreeandSingle.com)



Facebook's move into dating is going to require a step change in what their brand stands for. When you join a dating site such as FreeAndSingle.com, you're putting your trust in our brand - a brand that is known as the place to find new, meaningful relationships. You're trusting that we'll look after your data, and that our sole purpose is to introduce you to a large number of likeminded singles in a safe, fun, private environment. You're trusting that we're doing everything we can to protect you from scammers, fakes and disrespectful behaviour, and that we have a fast, friendly & reliable customer care team available when you need help.

Dating brings challenges for Facebook in all these areas. Their brand, data handling, the technical aspects of providing a safe, fun & successful dating experience, and offering world-class customer care. Getting any of this wrong will damage their brand and even the industry's reputation. I foresee Facebook realising quickly that providing a successful dating service is a specialist skill that is difficult to get right, followed by strategic acquisitions or partnerships with respected dating brands."

Quality Events Are Not So Easy To Pull Off!

Mark Owen – CEO of Events & Adventures



We are entering a golden age for social singles clubs like our own. It will be a serious challenge for match, tinder and other online dating services because Facebook already knows the customer so well. They know things about customers that they don't even know about themselves AND it will likely be free. If Facebook sends you a notice saying there is this woman you should meet and facilitates that contact, most Facebook users will take it seriously. I expect most will try it at least once. I am less worried about its impact on Events and Adventures because of our reputation for quality social events for singles and the filtering process we use to make sure only the right kind of people are joining. After 30 years in business our event quality and filtering sets us apart and will continue to do so. ...I assume I will be getting acquisition calls soon since we are the experts in doing events and the online companies will be scrambling to compete.

Here's Some Start-up CEO Perspectives

Andrew Hunter Weeks – Founder & CEO of Japan dating start-up Raburabu.jp



FB certainly has a vast array of analytics & user data at their disposal. If anything, this gives FB an immense edge over the online dating industry. Their active user-base alone, earns them exclusivity and could very well position them to be unsurpassed in online dating.

FB's new service announcement in and of itself, slaughtered shares from Match Group Inc. and IAC/InterActiveCorp. This is very telling and rather ominous. Inauspicious for the industry in terms of monopolizing the field of online dating and altogether, critically hostile for small online dating start-ups. However, industry success is a delicate dance. A platform should have or be able to create a certain energy, style and user experience that is alluring and captivating, yet functional in a simplistic form.

Facebook is quite functional and simplistic (very utilitarian) but it's also exceptionally 2 dimensional with respect to creativity. Personally, FB doesn't elicit any urge or desire for me to stay on for any extended period of time and to think of FB as a dating platform seems almost redundant with messaging etc...(despite the separate features proposed). In fact, the entire premise is very uninspiring and blasé.

Furthermore, as FB is still embroiled in the Cambridge analytica data scandal, some users may feel quite reluctant to Opt in for a "new" service, on a platform that has already exceedingly misplaced their trust as well as privacy and as a result, evoked strong feelings of doubt among now many disenchanting users.

With that said, if FB can burgeon a youthful spirit of creativity and reinvent itself with an ardour for dating, then it has the enormous potential to turn the entire industry on its head.

John Kershaw – Founder of M14 Industries & Brislr



It'll be quite an uphill struggle for them given the history of Facebook and dating services. There's a lot of trust issues, and there's lots of safety concerns about trying to match you with people you don't know and who will be at the same event as you.

Because they're Facebook, they'll not struggle to find plenty of users, but there's a lot of unanswered questions; where is the value and motivation for Facebook, how will they advertise this new product, and how will this impact competing dating services already making use of other Facebook features and services (like ads, pages, etc.).

The Three Most Likely Scenarios Are...

Pedro Neira Ferrand – Founder & CEO of Dating Latam



As I see it, there are 3 possible scenarios that could unfold:

1. **NEUTRAL SCENARIO "Bluff / Non Core product for FB"**

One possible scenario is that this product announcement is one of many product launches where Facebook enters a field outside its core business which is to connect you better with people that you already know.

However, Facebook has a history of launching things in adjacent industries, that were supposed to "kill entire industries" but never really took off. Here a few examples:

- Facebook Deals - Groupon Killer (2011)
- Facebook Places - Foursquare Killer (2011)
- Facebook Credits - Paypal Killer (2012)
- Facebook Notify - Twitter Killer (2015)

All of these products have been discontinued to date. All the leaders of these industries are still the market leaders today. If this scenario is true...I think the main reason for Facebook to announce this launch now would be much more related to PR than to a real product strategy. The "Timing" of the launch would aim to change the current talk about Facebook on all the media from the "Cambridge Analytica scandal" to "Facebook is entering Online Dating". It's still soon to know if these features will be a "bluff/no-core" byproduct of Facebook which will be discontinued after a few months like the examples above ... or if "Facebook Dating" features came here to stay forever as an integral part of FB like the "Newsfeed" or the "like" button.

2: NEGATIVE SCENARIO: "Facebook Dating" becomes the "De facto" standard and cannibalizes other current online dating options

Facebook's penetration is so high that in most countries its very close to the Internet penetration overall. On average let's say it's more than 90% of people who have Internet access. With this kind of market penetration and specially, social acceptance, there's a scenario where FB becomes the standard for dating. Having such a huge pool of users and such a huge amount of data from its users it could probably bring more relevant matches than any other existing dating platform. No platform (besides Google) has more personal data from us and more users on board than Facebook. In this scenario, "FB Dating" works so well that people would use it as the "Default" for dating and stop looking for any other option on the market, just as we use Google to search for anything now and don't think about any other Search Engine. In this scenario "FB Dating" would cannibalize other products in the market, reducing the size of the industry as a whole, but not all players will be affected in the same way. In my opinion, the players that would be more heavily affected are those who rely the most on Facebook, specifically for 2 things:

- Rely heavily on Facebook for their LOGIN process
- Use data from Facebook for their matching algorithms

This means that APPS like Tinder or Bumble will be heavily affected. The value proposition to their users will be lower than "FB Dating" given that FB Dating will always have more users and more data.

On the other hand, APPS that generate their own data and rely much less on FB login like Mi Media Manzana * or eHarmony will be affected too... but on a much lesser scale.

(* Disclosure: I'm the CEO of Dating Latam, owner of the Dating app "Mi Media Manzana" which is the most downloaded app in the "Dating" category on ANDROID in LatinAmerica)

3: POSITIVE SCENARIO: "Facebook Dating" increases the "size of the pie" and accelerates heavily adoption of the category

With this scenario the fact that Facebook launches "Dating" features would be the final step for the "Social Validation" that the industry needs, especially with the segments and geographies where "Online Dating" still has a negative stigma. This could accelerate exponentially the adoption of "Online Dating". Of course some cannibalization would still occur, but the "pie" would still be so much bigger than it is today. So the industry would win as a whole.

One strong argument for this scenario is the natural behaviour that "Online Daters" have shown over the years. Usually, someone who is in "Dating mode" uses about 3 apps at the same time. So even if FB Dating becomes the de facto choice for everybody, the "no brainer" 1st choice, the market as a whole could still be bigger than it is today because people would still use two additional options at the same time.

In developed countries where the "Online Industry" is already a mature industry the NEGATIVE scenario is more likely to happen; cannibalization will have a greater effect on these markets.

In developing countries where Facebook penetration is also +90% but Online Dating has not taken off yet, the POSITIVE scenario is more likely to happen; acceleration of adoption is more likely to happen.

About IDEA – please see InternetDatingExcellenceAssociation.com

The Internet Dating Excellence Association exists to help the dating industry grow and achieve its potential.

About OPW – please see OnlinePersonalsWatch.com

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About Mark Brooks – please see [bio at MarkBrooks.info](http://bio.atMarkBrooks.info)

I'm an analyst / consultant of Internet dating companies and lead a team of specialists who are committed to helping Internet dating companies grow and achieve their potential. I'm a graduate of HBS and LSE