

## Is Tinder over?

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We've had RSVP, then eHarmony - so what's next in the world of online love?

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In the middle of the executive summary of a report conducted by IBISWorld into Australia's \$113 million dating services industry, there's one sentence that truly does sum it up for those seeking a turn a dollar in the matchmaking game.

"The emergence of Tinder – an online dating app – represents significant competition for the industry, particularly among younger consumers," it reads. That sober appraisal likely underestimates the disruption the free, wildly popular dating app has caused. But with a string of unfortunate incidents allegedly linked to Tinder, has its time come and gone?

"If you're single and dating you're either on Tinder or seriously contemplating getting on it," says Karina Pamamull. "It's revolutionised the way we meet partners and it's fun and addictive – you can swipe through profiles and meet people in a short space of time."

But Tinder has its limitations. "Tinder provides a great ego boost, particularly to women," Pamamull says. "But with a lot of the mutual matches nothing ever eventuates – or if it does it's a short encounter. Those people who are seeking a quality long-term relationship are still happy to pay money to facilitate that, be it to the established dating sites such as RSVP and eHarmony or newer matchmaking options. Also, they're not mutually exclusive; someone looking for a relationship might be on Tinder, a member of several dating sites and regularly attending speed dating events."

Pamamull's business, Dateljicious, grew out of a blog she started after a relationship break-up in 2012. It now offers those seeking love lots of free online advice about the best ways to find and keep a partner along with revenue-generating 'dating services', such as writing profiles for matchmaking sites, a six-week course for men that promises to "overhaul your entire approach to dating" and even a dating concierge who will "organise a memorable date night".



Janie Bentley: matchmaker.

Like Pamamull, Jane Bentley, the owner of Authentiiic, is betting that people will shell out for the personal touch an algorithm can't provide.

"Tinder is very effective at what it does, which as I understand it is allowing people to be very upfront about organising hook-ups, and it's certainly had an impact on the dating industry. But even before Tinder this was a crowded market and you needed a unique angle to stand out," Bentley says.

"Authentiiic's angle is that while it takes advantage of modern technology, it's more of a traditional matchmaking service with a focus on human interaction. We meet all the people who want to become members in person, film a video with them so potential matches have more than just a photo and bit of text to work with, then either organise group mixers or one-on-one dates so members can have real-world meetings as early as possible, rather than sending endless messages to each other in cyberspace."

Bentley, who has a background in recruitment, is certain she's onto a winner and is about to quit her job to focus on her business full time.

"In the pre-dating site era it was common for people to pay \$1800 to sign up with a matchmaking agency. So, while I've just launched, I'm confident that those seeking a serious relationship will be happy to pay the \$99 a month I'm charging."

"We're the anti-Tinder for people with online dating fatigue," is how Laura Carrie describes Woo! Social Club. Carrie and some thirtysomething single friends came up with the idea for the business during a frustrating night of filling in online dating profiles. "We were over lying about liking Ernest Hemingway novels and Pilates and trying to write eloquent self descriptions. We began to talk about doing things the old-school way, allowing people to get back to exchanging glances with someone across a crowded room."

Moving quickly to make their vision a reality, Carrie and her co-founder Josie Kidd began putting on social events for singles at bars, restaurants and festivals around Sydney in February this year. Woo! now averages a couple of events a week that can attract up to 30 people.

"At the moment we've both still got our day jobs but the paid membership is growing steadily. We're now looking to get angel funding then scale this up around the country – and hopefully the world!" says Carrie.

"There's definitely a demand for what we offer. All the admin involved in online dating, as well as the superficiality of judging someone on their profile pic or the wittiness of their messages, can get very old, very quickly."

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