

## Love in the time of dating apps

How Bumble is attempting change the game

By Chelsea Davis

Dating with the aid of technology. No longer a sign of desperation or shame, dating in the 21st Century almost would cease to exist if it weren't for these tech companies devoted to romance...or at the very least, sex. While the phenomenon began with online sites like eHarmony, Match.com, and OkCupid the dating world would forever be changed with the invention of the dating app Tinder.

Even I, a vocal skeptic of tech-aided dating and an all-around romantic cynic, admit to using Tinder and apps of the like. And...finding some success. Now, don't worry, I'm not picking out china patterns or anything. Let's be real, those apps haven't sent me any long-term gems. However, I know many a friend who has found their mates on dating apps, most recently the dating app with a feminist twist, Bumble.

When I was first introduced to Bumble I was blissfully, or rather ignorantly, unaware of the company's backstory and the trials that went into its creation. I decided to try it because I was told that a friend met her current BF on that app. I was also told that the app was different because *women* made the first move. Without even knowing *who* created it or *why* it felt innately feminist. Hell to the yeah. I mean a dating situation where women have the power from the get-go ... and in the tech world which has been historically dominated by men ... Hell to the yeah. Sign me up.

You may be asking yourself, "Well, who created it and why did they do so?" You may be asking me, "Well, are you going to f#cking tell us, Chelsea?!" Calm down. I am.

Bumble was created exactly for the very feminist purpose of giving women the power. It was also created by a woman, former Tinder VP of Marketing, Whitney Wolfe-Herd. Also, like any good app created by women for women, it does a really great job at coddling the male ego without letting on that it's doing so. Women are so great and so smart. Right?

Where were we? Oh yes. Bumble is the brain-child and tech baby of Wolfe-Herd. After leaving Tinder under fraught circumstances and experiencing some intense online backlash/bullying, Wolfe-Herd wanted to create a space for women to connect, encourage, and empower one another. She has effectively done with the dating world - professionally speaking - and wanted to infuse the world with some positivity. (I already like this chick.)

However, as fate would have it, she wasn't going to get away from the dating world that easily. Upon joining forces with Andrey Andreev, founder of the world's largest online dating network, Badoo, Wolfe-Herd was encouraged by Andreev to keep her focus on women, but also on dating. Keeping it women-centric and giving women the power, but in the realm of sex and romance - a realm that often does not put women at the helm.

With her vision and industry experience, plus the backing of Andreev, Wolfe-Herd launched Bumble in December of 2014. Within its first year, Bumble exploded. Since then the app, often referred to as “feminist Tinder,” has amassed over 22 million users. And while Tinder still holds the lead with 46 million users, Bumble far exceeds the competition in year-over-year growth: 70-percent to Tinder’s 10-percent.

And guess what?! With all of Bumble’s success and culture permeation, Wolfe-Herd and the other PTB at Bumble have decided to cross industry lines and expand into friendship and career networking. Basically what Whitney wanted to do from the beginning, but this time with the clout to back it up.

BumbleBFF and BumbleBizz are extremely similar to good ol’ BumbleOriginal (not the real name, don’t sue me). You’re still uploading a series of photos and information that aim to represent who you are. The difference is these photos and words will be skewed to fit a different audience - friends and potential employers/mentors. No sexy, suggestive photos...unless that’s your line of work, I guess. BumbleBFF allows either party to “make the first move” but BumbleBizz still puts the power in the hands of lady, in an attempt to, “help clear up the gray areas in networking that often make women feel uncomfortable,” Bumble told *The Verge*.

Now for a little of my own humble opinion. I know, you’ve been dying for some #ChelseaWisdom™. Like I said earlier in this article, I’m not a fan of dating apps/sites. I never really have been, for many reasons. I haven’t found many people I truly connect with on these 21st-century matchmaking-devices and I guess I’m still hoping for an IRL, rom-com-esque meet-cute. Media has spoiled me. Don’t get me wrong, the apps are fun, and I have had a lot of fun with them, and maybe that’s all they are for some people. That’s fine. Also, most dating apps aren’t very queer-friendly, and that needs to change. But alas, a conversation for another time and another story.

One thing I will say is: even as I sit and brood in my romantic cynicism, I do like Bumble a lot more than Tinder. I’ve had more luck with Bumble in meeting people I connect with.. a *bit* more.. than with Tinder and other such dating apps.

I can also FULLY, fully support the mission with which Bumble was created, and now that I’m actually privy to that information it may sway me to use Bumble a bit more for dating. I’m DEF.IN.ITE.LY going to look into Bumble for career networking (tbh I need to be better about that) *and* for making wonderful, encouraging, adult women-friends. It can be so hard to find people to connect with in this day and age on any level, and for some reason feels even harder when you just want to be BFFs. I need all the help I can get.

So thank you, Whitney Wolfe Herd. Thank you for having the experiences you did. Thank you for enduring the unappealing and harmful experiences, so that you could create a truly magical

and inspiring product. Thank you for keeping women and their needs at the forefront of your professional endeavors and desires. It means a lot.

Sincerely, the women of the world.