"Like me?" Terms and conditions may apply

"We have a responsibility to protect your information. If we can't, we don't deserve it," said Facebook Inc. CEO and founder Mark Zuckerberg. This comment was publicised in response to the worldwide scandal of 2018 which involved a breach of users' personal information. This is just one example that revealed the lack of control that consumers have over their information and the fighting spirit they have to gain it. Other high profile data breaches (through cyber attacks) came from global brands such as Twitter, Grindr and Garmin. The misuse of data is not limited to international companies. They are of concern to South African companies too.

Limited in-person interactions brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic made online communications standard. Mobile dating applications (MDA) became the most viable method for those with dating intentions to connect. The issue of the misuse of personal information also has an effect on MDAs and their users. To understand this effect on MDA users and to build secure MDA ecosystems, it is essential to understand the initial motivations of MDAs usage and how privacy concerns impact the intention to continue the usage thereof.

A research study was conducted by Luzelle van Niekerk, a Master's student in the Department of Marketing Management, to addresses the gap in the extant MDA literature within a South African context. Firstly, the study provided an understanding of MDA usage, considering both romantic (love, casual sex) and non-romantic (friendship, intrigued entertainment and self-worth validation) motivations for using a MDA. Secondly, it examinined the effect of privacy concerns on the relationship between users' motivations and the continued usage intention of MDAs. This article utilised the uses-and-gratification theory to investigate the motivations of the continued usage intention of MDAs; and contributed to the body of knowledge on mobile dating.

Data from 247 respondents who have used a MDA in the last 6 months was collected using a structured self-completion online questionnaire. Findings revealed that only the romantic motivation (love and casual sex reasons) was significantly related to users' continued MDA usage intention. Furthermore, privacy concerns significantly moderate the relationship between love and intention to use MDAs. This is especially true for those who have medium to high levels of privacy concern. Individuals who exhibit low levels of privacy concern are more likely to use mobile apps again in the future.

Since mobile dating apps require the exchange of personal information, knowledge of how the related privacy violation concerns affect MDAs is crucial. The findings assist marketers to shape their messages around the strongest motivations for initial and continued use. App developers should make cyber security their main strategic focus because their main business (making love connections) is strongly connected to it. Areas of development include investigation on how privacy can enhance participation, and not just usage in online dating by means of mobile apps.

This research was conducted as part of the fulfilment of the [Master's degree](#) in Marketing Management in 2021 with the [Department of Marketing Management](#) by Luzelle van Niekerk under the supervision of [Prof Yolanda Jordaan](#).