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Dating App Growth Slows, but Advertisers Shouldn't Ignore Hopeful Singles

ARTICLE

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Due to slowed growth among the most popular dating apps, app-switching (as opposed to new downloads) and a potential rise in successful relationships, we've lowered our dating app forecast figures for 2019.

We expect the number of people who own a smartphone and use dating apps to grow 5.3% this year, reaching roughly 25 million. This figure is much flatter than our previous forecast of 9.8% growth, and just one-sixth of growth in 2016.

US Smartphone Dating App Users, 2016-2020
millions, % change and % of smartphone users
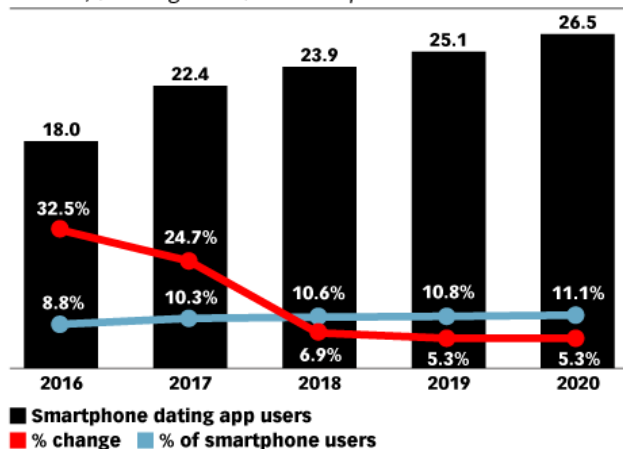
Note: ages 18+; smartphone users who use at least one dating app on their smartphone at least once per month
Source: eMarketer, June 2019

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Illustrating a similar slowdown, app analytics platform Apptopia found that worldwide, dating app downloads for the 15 most-popular apps (includes Apple App Store and Google Play) decreased to 247 million in 2018, down from 256 million the year prior.

But Adam Blacker, vice president of insights and global alliances at Apptopia, is optimistic about this app category.

"If not in 2019, I do expect dating app installs to increase in the near future," Blacker said. "It's as simple as dating apps being the new norm and the global population growing. As more people come of age, they will download one or more dating apps, even just to check it out. There will also be more niche or specific dating apps that pop up which *en masse* will generate new installs from people who have already downloaded more general apps like Tinder or Match."

And a prosperous market is good news for the growing number of singles out there. We estimate that 28.9% of single smartphone users will use dating apps this year, and that number will climb to 35% by the end of our forecasting period.

Although we slowed our overall growth predictions, our figures still illustrate dating app popularity and a growing market—one that advertisers shouldn't ignore.

"Dating apps are a place where people are willing to interact with ads, if you nail the implementation," Blacker said. "But each app will need to determine the style that suits them. For dating apps that are relatively gamified, I think it makes sense for users to watch a 15-second video to unlock more potential matches. Or, let's say there is a niche app for hikers or outdoors people, in that case banner ads for Patagonia could work."

Companies that offer products or services tangentially related to dating (clothing, health and hygiene, beauty products, ticket companies, restaurants, etc.) are all a good match for this market. Advertising on these apps is a clear win for brands if they do so strategically.

"Different dating apps will enable advertisers to leverage different types and amounts of data," Blacker said. "Location-based targeting could work for experience-based date ideas. For example, an escape room could advertise to users based on their location, and ultimately push to purchase with a catchy date night promotion."