



## The Patron-Client's Role in the Use of the MSM (Men's Sex with Men) Dating Application

Fian Irawan; Sri Hastjarjo; Ign. Agung Satyawan

Sebelas Maret University, Indonesia

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### **Abstract**

In MSM (Men with Sex with Men) relationships that occur in dating applications often form patron-client communication patterns. The patron-client pattern balance that occurs affects the creation of closeness and sustainability of a relationship. Therefore, this study tries to see how patron-client patterns occur in MSM relationships in dating applications. This research uses a case study method with several sources and data sources. This research found that the role of patron-client is clearly illustrated and often appears in every MSM relationship in the Hornet dating application. Patron-client patterns also have an important role in creating closeness and sustainability of relationships, and the role of patrons and clients in each MSM can change according to who is the interlocutor.

**Keywords:** *Patron-Client; MSM; Dating Application*

### **Introduction**

As the era and information disclosure are unstoppable, nowadays the phenomenon of using homosexual dating applications has increased. The use of homosexual dating applications is not only used in countries that officially legalize homosexual relations, but the use of homosexual dating applications is also widely used in countries that have not legalized homosexual relations. Based on the latest information obtained in mid-2019 China has become one of the countries that has not officially legalized homosexual relations. However, China is the most country that has homosexual dating application users, especially gay dating applications or MSM (Men with Sex with Men) in Asia. The survey from App Annie ([merdeka.com](http://merdeka.com), 23/02/14 accessed 03/28/19) predicts there are around 70 million people using MSM dating apps in China. Specifically, for Indonesia there is no exact number of MSM dating application users, but App Annie said the market for MSM dating applications does exist and is quite large in Indonesia because the use of MSM dating applications is constantly increasing.

Various MSM dating applications can be downloaded and used, one of the most popular and widely used applications especially in Boyolali, Central Java is Hornet. This is because Hornet has several advantages when compared to other MSM dating applications. One convenience in using the Hornet dating application is that Hornet users do not need to add or wait for the approval of other users to make friends first, users can immediately view photos and exchange messages privately with other users

or can also directly block other users who are nearby. Hornet is also a homosexual dating application with a good rating on the *Playstore* and has been downloaded more than five million times.

The phenomenon of using MSM dating applications such as Hornet is a means of interacting among MSM as a form of Computer-Mediated-Communication (CMC). Referring to the understanding of Wood and Smith (2005:4) CMC is all kinds of interpersonal and group communication that interact with each other through computers in one internet network. When viewed further, the use of MSM dating applications such as Hornet is the answer to the limited access to communication experienced by MSM who often experience various forms of discrimination that make it difficult for MSM to be able to interact with each other. In fact, communication is something that is essential because every human being cannot not communicate (Liliweri, 2015:3).

The development of the field of communication technology with the emergence of social media and chat applications led to changes in human behavior patterns in interacting, interpersonal communication patterns and self-actualization. The pattern of MSM interpersonal communication through the internet or dating applications is quite interesting for further research. One study of MSM communication patterns in dating applications was conducted by Lin and Marc Van der Putten (2012) with a study entitled *Identities in Motion: Cyberspace and Myanmar Men having Sex with Men*. Lin and Marc Putten found that patron-client communication patterns often emerge in relationships between MSM and dating applications. In addition, patron-client communication patterns provide enough support to attach to each other and create sustainable relationships.

Patron-client communication patterns introduced by George M. Foster. Simply without simplifying patron-client communication patterns is an interpersonal communication pattern where one individual or communicator becomes dominant because it has advantages or is considered to have advantages such as social status, experience, education and so forth compared to the other person or communicant. As stated earlier in the background section patron-client communication patterns provide support for MSM users dating applications to embed and create sustainable relationships.

The creation of closeness and sustainability in a relationship cannot be separated from the balance of communication patterns that are played. The balance of communication patterns in interpersonal communication such as patron-client communication patterns needs attention. Therefore, based on the background that has been conveyed by researchers in this study try to see how the pattern of patron-client communication that occurs in MSM in using the Hornet dating application.

## **Methodology**

This study uses a qualitative approach which in general qualitative research aims to provide an overview and understanding of how and why a phenomenon occurs (Pawito, 2007:35). While the research method used is a case study, because it is considered to be in harmony and fit with the research problems regarding how and why, and in this study researchers have little or no chance of controlling the phenomenon under study when the focus of the research lies in the present phenomenon (Yin, 2011:13).

The informants in this study were MSM users of active Hornet dating applications and domiciled in Boyolali, Central Java, which consisted of various age-prone vulnerabilities. While the data sources used in this study consisted of several forms of data such as direct interviews with informants, screenshots of conversations in the Hornet dating application as well as literature searches and previous research.

## **Result and Discussion**

This study uses a patron-client communication pattern discovered by George M. Foster at Tzintzuntzan to explain the problems that have been conveyed. When the patron-client communication

pattern was discovered, it played a role in maintaining relationships in social life in Tzinzuntzan. Patron comes from the Spanish language which means "protector", it can further mean someone who has power, high status, authority and influence or even a saint. Keep in mind the notion of patron is only relevant to clients or people who are not strong and are assisted or protected by patrons. Provision of assistance by patrons will be returned by the client in return for goods, loyalty and so forth.

Foster (1963: 1821) defines patron-client communication patterns as vertical or asymmetrical relationships because communicators and communicants are very different in position or obligation. The role of the patron has power or dominance in the relationship, while the client is a subordinate or the role tends to follow the dominance of the patron to maintain the relationship. Understanding how the role of patron-client can support closeness or sustainability in gay couples needs to be examined more deeply. Lin and Putten (2012) add that in interpersonal communication the role of patron-client is not interpreted to the extent that a more masculine or older couple will become dominant (patron), or conversely the more feminine or younger one becomes a client. The role of the patron is a balancer and owner of power, usually in addition to having more value in power, wealth and social status the patron has the desire and need for affection. While the client is a description of attractive young qualities and the need for protection and support. In particular, the balance of wants and needs that can be met in the role of the patron-client can make the relationship at MSM sustainable.

In this study focuses on looking at patron-client patterns that occur in MSM users of Hornet dating applications. The communication patterns found in this study can be seen from several screenshots and interviews conducted as follows:



SGX: Hy \*\*\*\*\* (name)  
 Let me know you  
 SG: Hello  
 SGX: \*Picture  
 hahahaha  
 SG: to wide...☺  
 SGX: what?  
 SG: your mouth.. your laugh is so happy ... like finding money on the road  
 SGX: yes..hahaha  
 Find me a boyfriend please  
 SG: here many just choose

SGX: yaa  
 But im afraid of T (*top*)

SG: what you dating..?

SGX: attention

SG: all of gay,..when going on having sex

SGX: that's the problem  
 Im afraid to do that

SG: at the first im afraid too, but just do it...

SGX: it will hurt..  
 And I know it...

SG: after a while its good  
 Or you just T?

SGX: cant

SG: actually, im a VB (Vers Bottom).. wkwk  
 But I prefer be *bottom*

SGX: why?

SG: make me more comfy...

SGX: huh  
 I was tired

SG: never mind, just be yourself. We cant be merried with men, just be happy.

SGX: okey ☹  
 Feel like have friend  
 Give lot advise

SG: but if not already (sexual intercourse), don't do it. You just wanna attention? A lot of people give that, your friend of family...

SGX: you so nice bro

SG: I regret it...you still young...  
 Better don't

SGX: okey...  
 Are you believe we can get boyfriend from here?

SG: im believe it

SGX: I don't..hahaha  
 Do you want be my friend?

SG: sure...Hehe

SGX: give me your Whatsapp number

SG: \*\*\*\*\*

### Screenshot 1 Screenshot of SG conversation

In general, patron-client communication patterns can be seen from Screenshot 1 above, based on these screenshots, it can be seen that the patron-client trend is reflected in conversations conducted by informants with their interlocutors. Keep in mind the role of the patron is close to the dominant, more powerful, more knowledgeable, protective and compassionate nature. This is clearly seen from the informant to the person he is talking to with the message “but if not already (sexual intercourse), don't do it. You just wanna attention? A lot of people give that, your friend of family”. The message delivered by the informant to the interlocutor contains a form of protection as well as advice to the interlocutor. In addition, this also happened because the informants felt they had more knowledge or experience and were longer in the world of MSM which was explained by the information provided about knowledge about the relationship of MSM in sexuality. While the interlocutor informant shows the opposite, where the need for attention and affection attached to the nature of the client is reflected in responding to the informant.

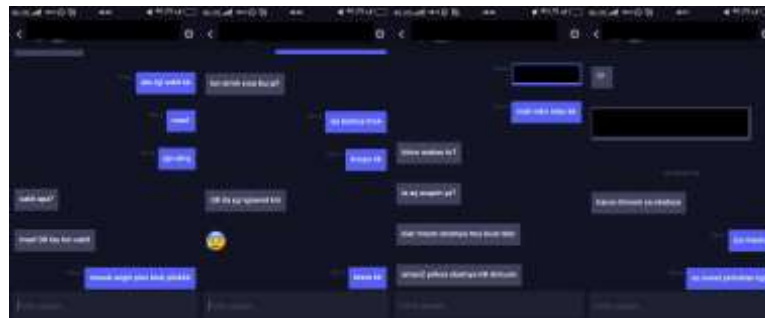
The role of the client is illustrated by being obedient and following the protection and advice given. The patron-client pattern that occurs in conversations in Screenshot 4.1 produces a growing relationship that is marked by the exchange of *Whatsapp* numbers that are made. In the introductions that occur in the Hornet dating application, the *Whatsapp* number exchange means that there is interest and allows for continued relationships. This was confirmed by JY informant with

*“Often ask for WA numbers (Whatsapp), that's often. If I'm interested, I will give it...”*.  
(interview with JY on 01/15/19)

The role of the patron, not always attached to the JY informant, based on the findings of the researcher the role of the patron-client can occur depending on the interlocutors encountered. Don't rule out the possibility of JY informants who appear to have a patron nature will turn into a client if dealing with others. This was reaffirmed by JY's informant with a statement

*“I am the one who likes being loved, cared for ... but I am if the same person is younger than me and has never done anything with anyone, I prefer what it is to tell, advise ...”*.  
(interview with SG, 01/04/20)

Based on the statement above, it appears that the nature of the client is attached to the informant. In fact, the informant needs love, protection and support as seen from his statement “I am a person who likes to be loved, cared for”. However, in certain situations, such as facing a younger person or with less experience the informant tries to be protective as the traits attached to the patron. Looking beyond the conversation of SG informants, patron-client patterns are influenced by their age and experience. Older MSM and longer experience of MSM tend to be the role of patrons in relationships. In addition, the role of each MSM patron does not always take the same role, the role in changing based on who is the interlocutor. Researchers found patron-client patterns often appear in MSM relationships that occur in Hornet dating applications. Other evidence from this statement is as follows:



UR: im sick bro  
sorry  
not now  
URX: what pain?  
Sorry don't know you ill  
UR: got fever  
URX: at home with mom?  
UR: ya  
Why?  
URX : nobody take care of you now  
UR: its fine  
\*picture  
Wanna eat but to lazy  
URX: haven't eat??

Already to take medication?  
 Must take the medicine  
 UR: okay bro  
 So sweet...

### Screenshot 2 Screenshot of UR conversation

Based on Screenshot 2, the UR informant next shows how the patron-client pattern re-occurs in the relationship. In relation UR becomes a client with acceptance of my love or attention given by the interlocutor. In addition, the form of compliance by UR shown in the conversation emphasized that UR became a client in the relationship. With the role of the patron-client in the relationship, providing a balance in determining the sustainability of the relationship.

### Conclusion

Based on the findings in this study, the patron-client pattern is clearly illustrated and often appears in MSM relationships in Hornet dating applications. The role of the patron is illustrated by the nature of the giver of protection, advice and compassion. While the client is the opposite, the client acts as the recipient of protection, advice and affection. The role of patron and client can change depending on who is the interlocutor. These changes are influenced by age, experience and length of time being a MSM. A balanced patron-client pattern in a relationship also influences the sustainability of the relationship.

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