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Singapore

Want to meet your date? Show your COVID-19 vaccination status first, say dating agencies



A couple holding hands. (Photo: Pixabay)

With vaccination-differentiated rules in place for F&B outlets, dating agencies are asking members for their COVID-19 vaccination status

Agencies say they need the information to set up physical dates at cafes or restaurants

Those who are not vaccinated can choose to have virtual dates

Some dating apps also have new features that allow users to pin "vaccinated badges" to their profiles





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SINGAPORE: Like many businesses that adapted to new norms amid the COVID-19 pandemic, dating company Kopi Date has been setting up virtual meetings for its users over the past year and a half.

As its name suggests, Kopi Date sets up dates for singles to meet over a cup of coffee. With the shift to online, it arranged for beverages to be delivered to participants' homes, along with an "experience kit" that includes interesting information about the other party and ice-breaker questions.

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The company also got creative and designed virtual island-hopping trips or amusement park tours to spice up the online dates.

Still, it is eager to go back to organising physical meet-ups, given that its flagship experiences are based on dates at unique dine-in spaces, said co-founder Lee Jing Lin.

So it had to ask its users for their COVID-19 vaccination status when [vaccination-differentiated safety protocols](#) for dining-in at food and beverage outlets were announced. These rules, in place since Aug 10, meant that dine-ins at restaurants are only allowed for fully vaccinated people or those who have tested negative for COVID-19.



Kopi Date, a Singapore-based dating company, sets up dates for singles to meet over a cup of coffee. (Photo: Kopi Date)

Matchmaking agency GaiGai said it has received more requests for physical dates as the country begins to reopen. So it needs to know whether a member has been vaccinated to arrange dates that comply with government requirements.

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“On top of that, we also want to make known to the couple the vaccination status of their match before going on the date so that they are informed,” said Mr Alex Tam, chief executive of Paktor Group, which owns GaiGai and online dating app Paktor.

Vaccination statuses are verified by GaiGai employees against records in the HealthHub mobile app.

“With more being vaccinated, we will consider organising more in-person physical activities in (the fourth quarter) while keeping to smaller group size compared to pre-COVID days,” Mr Tam said.



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with a panel of consultants via Zoom, and launched a new mobile app.

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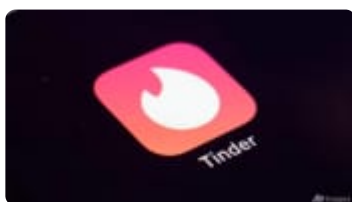
To allow members to meet again in person for their first dates at restaurants under current COVID-19 rules, Lunch Actually has asked for information such as vaccination status and effective-vaccinated dates.

“When we arrange physical dates, we will make sure that both parties are vaccinated,” said chief executive and co-founder Violet Lim.

“For our clients, there is definitely a concern when they meet someone new, whether they have been vaccinated or not. However according to our recent survey, 74 per cent of singles are still open to meeting unvaccinated singles because there are valid reasons why someone is not able to be vaccinated, like allergy,” she added.

“On our side, we are more cautious and we’re following the regulations from the Government closely ... to ensure safety and well-being of our clients.”

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Ms Lim stressed that vaccination statuses will make “no difference” in its matching process, which takes into account its members' values, goals and lifestyle.



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“When we do find a match, we will check the vaccination status of both sides and if they are not vaccinated, we will still arrange for a virtual date for them. If both are fully vaccinated, then we arrange for a physical date at a restaurant.”

Kopi Date has also come up with a “Walk & Talk” option – outdoor trails with checkpoints leading participants to various food options, sights and activities. These dates cater to all, regardless of vaccination status.

The company has partnered with F&B outlets that offer take-away items so the couple can “sit and chill anywhere”. This allows members with varying vaccination statuses to “socialise in a safe manner”, said Ms Lee.

"VACCINATED" BADGES

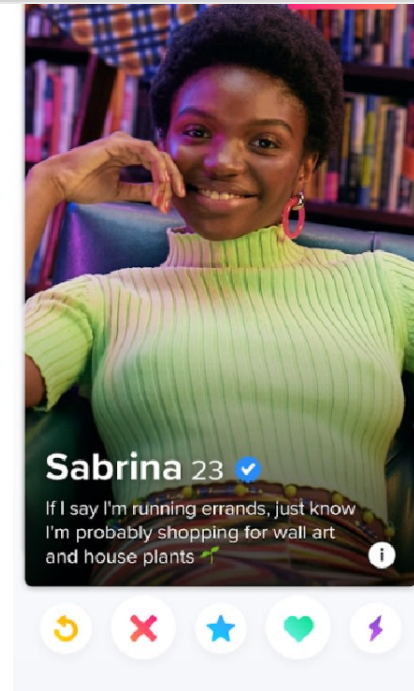
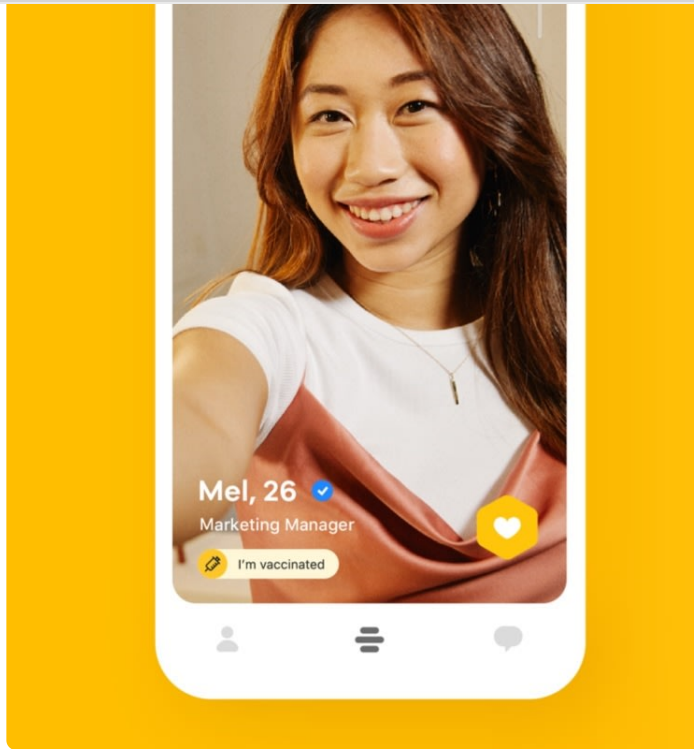
Some dating apps have also added features that allow users to indicate if they are vaccinated or support the vaccination drive.

However, these apps – Bumble and Tinder – told CNA that these vaccine statuses are self-reported by users and “not independently verified” by them.

Bumble rolled out a “I’m vaccinated” badge in Singapore in mid-July after seeing an increase in users who included the words “vaccine” or “vaccinated” in their profiles since the vaccination drive began earlier this year.

The app-based platform also has this opt-in feature available in its other markets, such as the United States and Australia.

“As society begins to open up, we hope that the vaccinated badge will allow for easier conversations between our users about their dating preferences, allowing them to feel comfortable and safe on dates,” Bumble told CNA.



At least two dating apps have introduced new features to allow users to indicate if they have been vaccinated against COVID-19. (Photos: Bumble, Tinder)

Tinder launched a similar feature in Singapore about two weeks ago.

Apart from displaying one's vaccination status, the platform's "vaccine advocacy initiative" also provides various sticker designs, such as "Vaxing Soon" or "Immunity Together", that users can pin to their profiles.

"Tinder members are eager to share their support for getting vaccinated, many have been including their stance on vaccines in their bios since they became available," said a spokesperson.

Vaccination has been a popular talking point on the dating app, with mentions of "vaccine" up more than 30 per cent in June from May, and doubled when compared with January. The word "vax" also began appearing in bio mentions since May, with mentions up nearly 10 times as of August.

"What better way to turn a conversation starter into action, by offering interactive profile stickers that connect members to education resources and create positivity around being vaccinated," added the Tinder spokesperson.



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The first version of this feature will not have verification capability “as it involves much more localisation and resources” to implement across all of its markets, said Mr Tam. But it is working towards “direct verification” in future.

“We wanted to roll this out at a time when vaccination becomes a personal choice, which in turn encourages more people to take up vaccination,” he added.

Asked if those unvaccinated might have concerns about being discriminated against, Mr Tam said: “We are aware of such potential concerns, but we prioritise safety of our users in making this feature.

“We hope to allow users to make informed decisions before arranging physical dates with their matches on our app to reduce the chance of spreading the virus in our community. For those unable to be vaccinated due to personal reasons, they may also clarify on their profile details.”

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