

Midterm Review

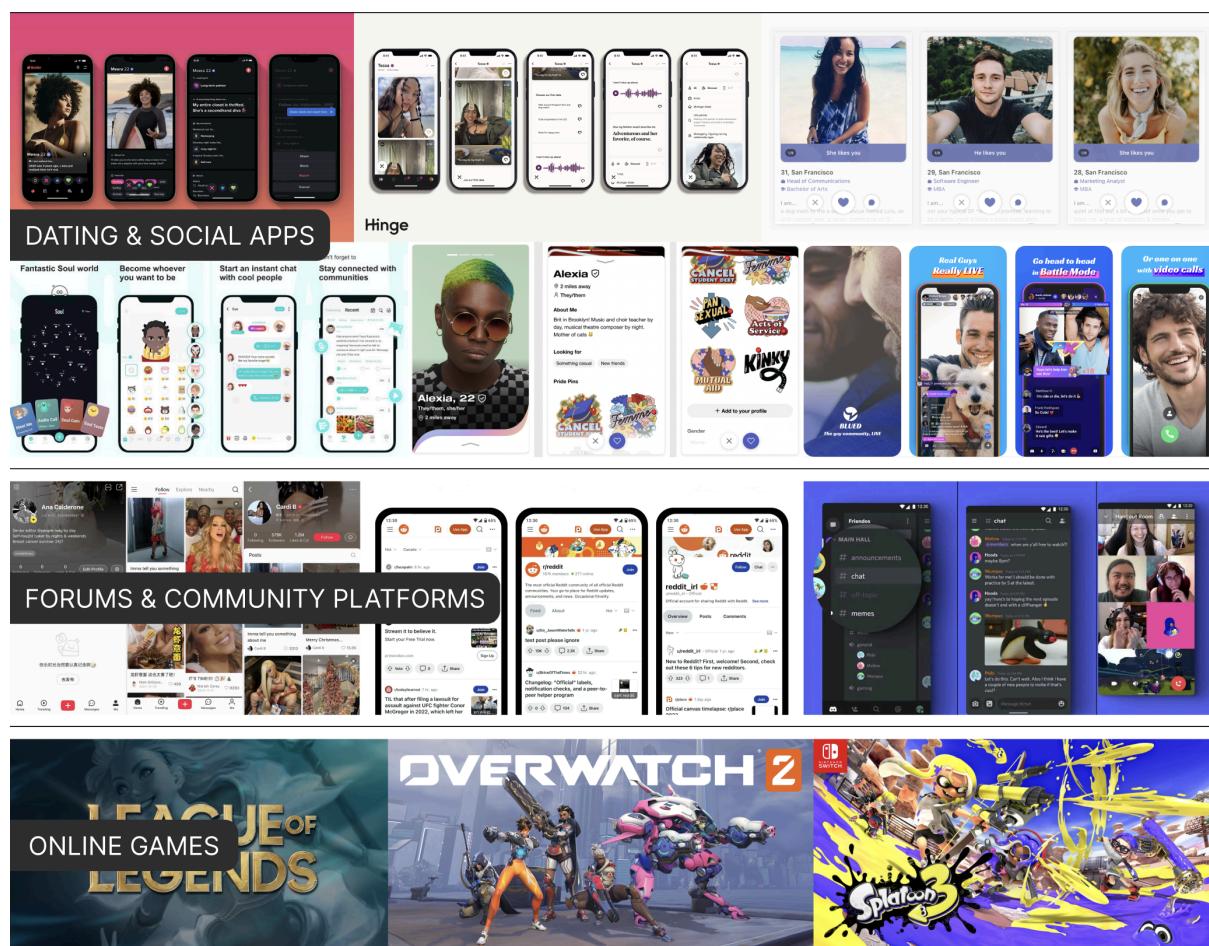
Background

Most dating apps focus on building connections online first, often leading to shallow conversations and a lack of real chemistry when people finally meet. This creates a gap between digital interaction and genuine in-person connection.

Main Problem

How can we design a product that encourages people to meet and connect in person from the very beginning, helping them build authentic relationships right away?

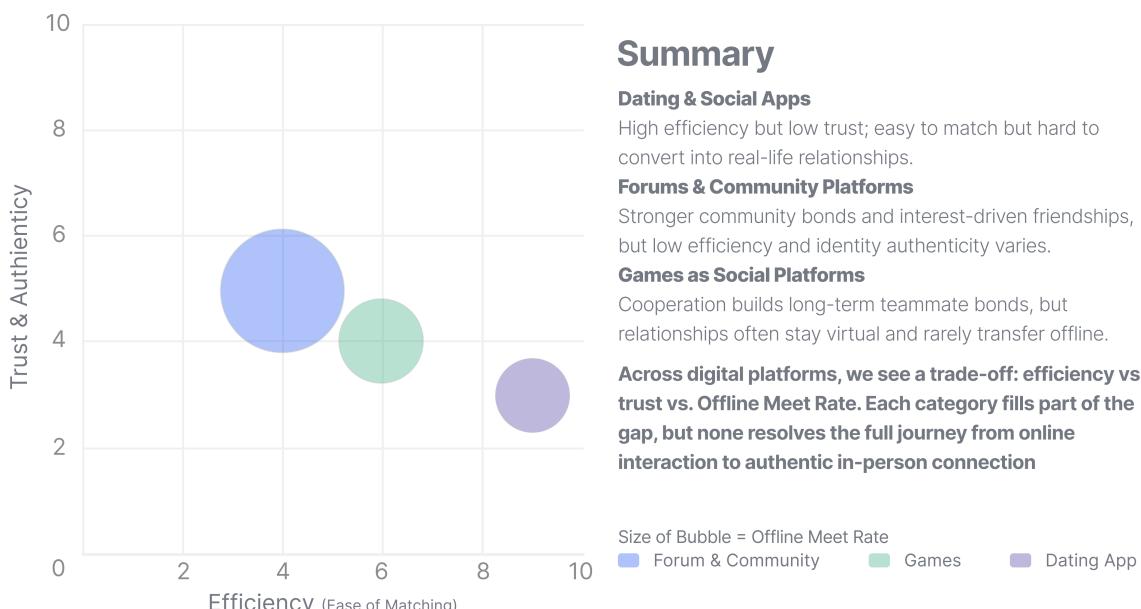
Digital Social Platform Analysis



	Category	Apps	Key Features
DATING & SOCIAL APP	Mainstream Dating	Tinder, Bumble, Hinge, TanTan	Large user base, swipe-based matching, high efficiency, focused on casual or mainstream dating markets
	Curated / Serious Dating	Coffee Meets Bagel (CMB)	Limited daily high-quality matches, encourages meaningful connections, geared toward long-term relationships
	Interest / Context-based Social	Soul, Lets Movie	Interest tests / personality profiling / shared activities (e.g., movies) as entry points, focuses on conversation starters beyond looks
	LGBT / Niche Community	Her, Jiyan, Grindr, Blued	Targeted to women, lesbian, and queer communities, emphasizes belonging, inclusivity, and safety
FORUMS / COMMUNITY PLATFORM	Global Anonymous Communities	Reddit	Large global user base, forum-style subreddits, posts & comments, interest-driven groups, semi-dating boards (e.g., r4r, r/dating)
	Real-time Interest Communities	Discord	Servers & channels for hobbies/games, voice & text chat, strong community sense, also used for LGBT and friend-making
	Youth / Campus Forums	Dcard	Popular among Taiwanese college students & young adults, forum posts + daily anonymous matching letters, strong campus identity
	Lifestyle / Interest Sharing	Rednote (Xiaohongshu)	Lifestyle & interest-driven content feeds, comments, DMs, visual-first, often used to find "activity peers"
Games as Social Platforms	Virtual Pet / Casual Social	QQ Pets	Virtual pet raising + neighbor visits, light social bonding, nostalgic but limited real-life conversion
	Competitive Team Games	League of Legends (LOL)	Team-based gameplay, requires cooperation, encourages long-term "teammate" bonds, common in student/young adult groups
	MMO / Co-op Games	PUBG, Genshin Impact, Animal Crossing	Guilds, co-op missions, shared worlds, strong sense of community, can form long-term friendships but identity authenticity remains low

Platform Comparison

Dimension	Dating Apps	Forums & Community Platforms	Games as Social Platforms
Trust & Authenticity	Low → fake photos, scams, misleading profiles	Medium-low → anonymity makes chatting easy, but identity reliability varies (Reddit/Discord low, Dcard/Rednote higher)	Medium → virtual avatars and nicknames dominate, trust builds only after long-term cooperation
Privacy & Safety	Risks of harassment, romance scams, gender imbalance; women especially vulnerable	Anonymity lowers exposure but can lead to harassment; semi-public sharing (Rednote) risks oversharing	Less exposure of real info, but toxic behaviors (flaming, trolling) are common
Success in Building Connections	High matching efficiency but low offline conversion (~12% achieve long-term relationships)	Lower efficiency (no algorithmic pairing), but stronger community bonds & friendships around interests	Easier to form long-term teammates/guild bonds, but most relationships stay in-game, rarely transfer offline
Core Problem	Efficient matching but low trust & poor offline outcomes	Strong community bonds but low efficiency & authenticity gaps	Strong in-game bonds but weak real-world transfer



Summary

Dating & Social Apps

High efficiency but low trust; easy to match but hard to convert into real-life relationships.

Forums & Community Platforms

Stronger community bonds and interest-driven friendships, but low efficiency and identity authenticity varies.

Games as Social Platforms

Cooperation builds long-term teammate bonds, but relationships often stay virtual and rarely transfer offline.

Across digital platforms, we see a trade-off: efficiency vs. trust vs. Offline Meet Rate. Each category fills part of the gap, but none resolves the full journey from online interaction to authentic in-person connection

Digital social platforms either maximize efficiency at the cost of trust, or foster community at the cost of conversion — leaving a persistent gap between online interaction and genuine offline connection.

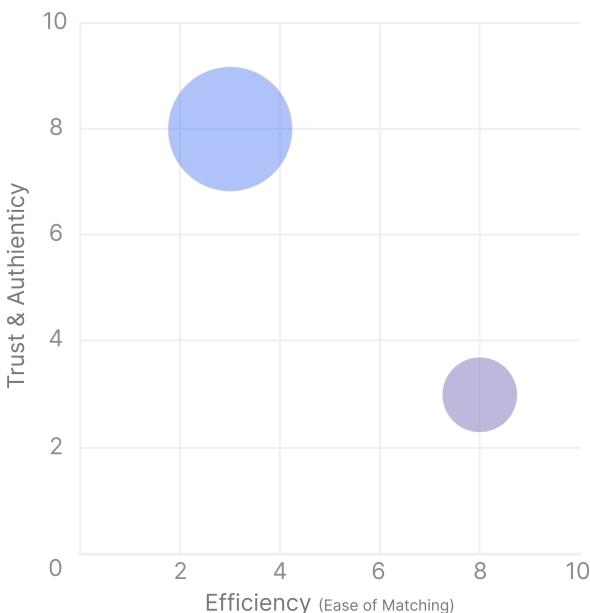
Offline Social Approaches Analysis



Category	Examples	Key Features
Pet-based Socializing	Dog walking, pet meet-ups	Shared interest in pets; pets as natural conversation starters; generally higher trustworthiness and friendliness perception
School-based Connections	Classmates, study groups	Proximity-driven, easy to form bonds; often long-term friendships
Travel-based Encounters	Youth hostels, travel buddies	Strong bonding through shared journey/experience; often spontaneous and cross-cultural
Hobby & Sports Groups	Cycling clubs, marathons, fandom activities	Group activities create strong team spirit; common interests accelerate trust-building
Friends-of-Friends	House parties, small gatherings	Social graph extension; higher trust due to mutual connections
Nightlife Venues	Nightclubs, bars, game arcades	Casual encounters; high energy atmosphere but low trust/safety; success depends on context
Hardware / Objects as Social Symbols	Xiaotiancai smart watch, Tamagotchi, Labubu charms	Act as identity or belonging signals; can spark conversations or indicate group membership

Digital vs. Offline: Comparative Summary

Dimension	Digital Platforms	Offline Social Approaches
Efficiency	High	Lower , depends on time/place (e.g., meeting while walking dogs or at parties)
Trust & Authenticity	Generally low → fake profiles, anonymity, virtual avatars	Higher → face-to-face, real identity, mutual friends, shared activities
Privacy & Safety	Online risks: scams, harassment, oversharing	Safer in familiar contexts (friends, school); but nightlife venues can be risky
Success in Building Connections	Easy to match , but low offline conversion (~12% find long-term partners)	Bonds often deeper (shared experience, mutual networks), more sustainable friendships/relationships
Core Problem	Efficient but lacks authenticity and offline outcomes	Authentic but inefficient, limited by context and chance encounters



Summary

Across social approaches, there is a clear trade-off between efficiency, trust, and relationship depth.

Digital platforms maximize efficiency but struggle with authenticity and offline outcomes.

Offline approaches foster high trust and deeper bonds but are limited in scale and speed.

Size of Bubble = Depth of Relationships

■ Offline Social Activity ■ Digital Platform

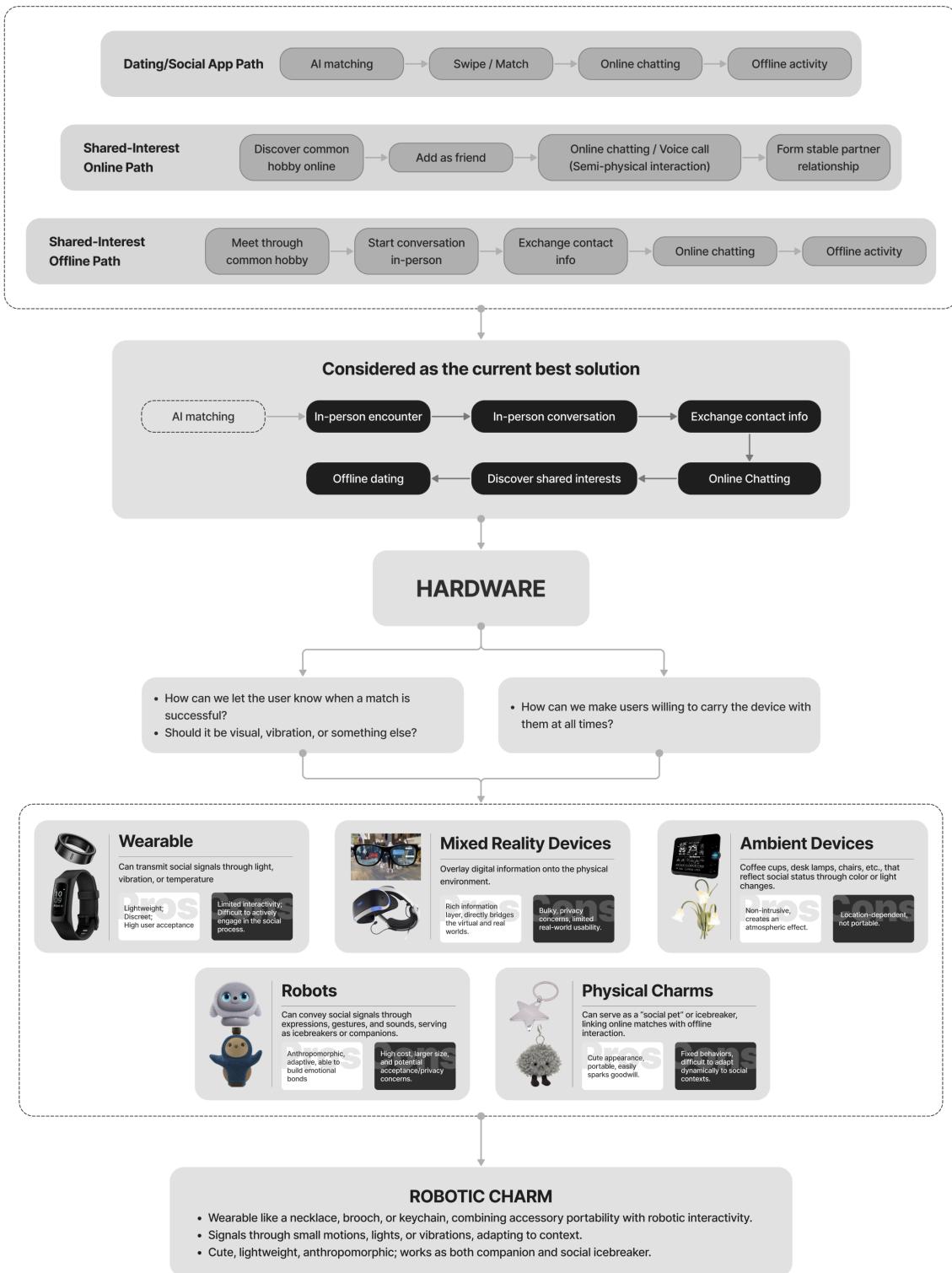
Hybrid Models: Limitations & Case Study

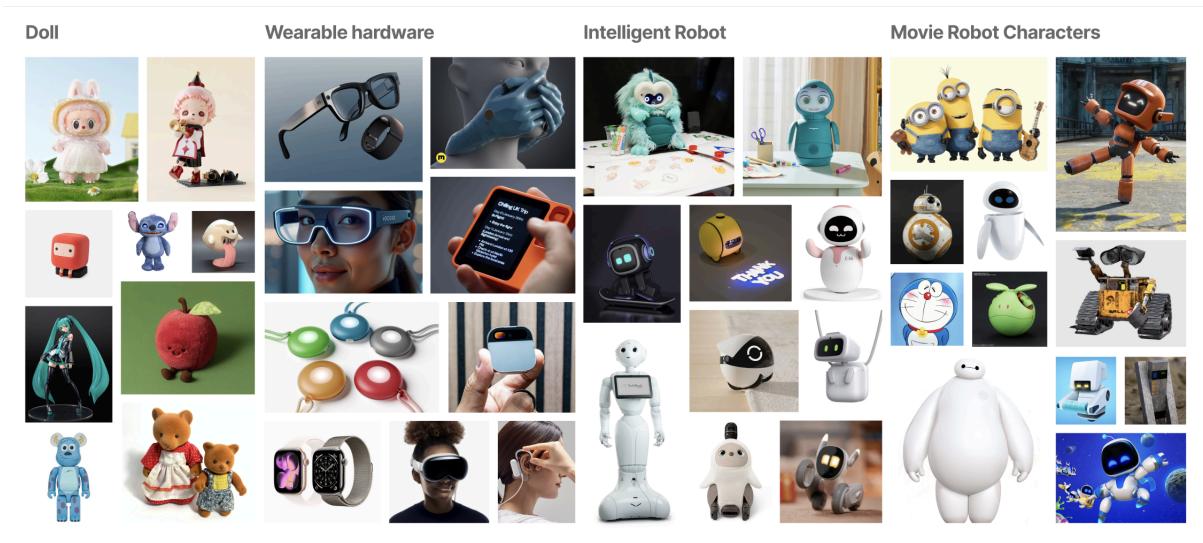
Case Analysis: Lets Movie (Website)

Aspect	Strengths	Weaknesses / Reasons for Failure
Concept	Hybrid of digital and physical; encourages meeting in person first	Relies on AI-driven matching rather than user choice
Social Context	Movies provide a built-in shared topic; easier to break the ice	Users can't fully control who they meet, reducing agency
User Experience	Lowers awkwardness by offering common ground	Lower sense of safety and satisfaction; trust issues remain



How to combine the advantages of offline activity & digital platform?





Existing Studies on Companion Robots



Name	Positioning	Interaction Style	Emotional Impact	Inspiration
Paro (Therapeutic Seal Robot)	Companionship / Therapy	Responds to touch (sound, movement)	Comforting, gentle, soothing	Simple interactions can build emotional bonds; especially effective in reducing loneliness and anxiety
Lovot	Emotional Companion	Actively seeks hugs, calls for attention	Warmth, like a child or pet	Proactive interaction triggers the human instinct to care
SoftBank Pepper	Social / Icebreaker	Voice recognition, facial recognition, body gestures	Cheerful, friendly, slightly commercial	Fits public spaces (guidance, reception), creates shared attention among people
Fragile Gloves (Death Stranding 2)	Symbolic Interaction Object	Handholding, synchronized touch	Deep, ritualistic, shared experience	Doesn't need to be a "robot" — objects themselves can carry strong emotional meaning
WALL-E	Emotional Projection Character	Anthropomorphic behavior, simple gestures	Innocent, kind, evokes humanity	Robots don't need many words; non-verbal interaction can strongly touch emotions
R2-D2	Social Catalyst / Story Driver	Beeping sounds, body gestures (non-human language)	Loyal, witty, humorous	Even without speech, becomes a "social glue," enriching human-to-human interaction
Cozmo	Education / Playmate	Desktop robot with expressive eyes, games, programmable	Mischiefous, cute, like a small buddy	Small-scale, emotion-driven interaction draws people in; gamified design is great for icebreaking
Keepon	Education / Social Guidance	Simple ball-shaped body moves to sound/music	Playful, funny, makes people smile	Minimal interaction can still capture social attention; especially effective in engaging children or strangers

Why Robot?

Aspect	Robots	Other Devices (e.g., wearables, charms)
Social Signals	Combine facial expressions, movements, sounds, and light effects for rich interaction	Mostly limited to vibration or light notifications
Emotional Engagement	Emotional modeling triggers empathy; feels like interacting with a companion, not a cold device	Minimal emotional presence; perceived as passive tools
Role in Interaction	Acts as a social agent with adaptive behaviors, presence, and expression	Functions as a static object, limited adaptability
Suitability for Dating Context	Serves as a social catalyst, reducing anxiety and fostering authentic interaction	Primarily signal-based, weak in supporting social dynamics