

Love a click away in Indonesia's Twitter Republic

February 12 2012, by Arlina Arshad



Two women enjoy social networking by using their mobile phone devices in Jakarta on February 11. In Indonesia, a vast archipelago of 17,000 islands -- some without even landlines -- 40 million Facebook users and 20 million tweeters comprise the world's third-largest Facebook community and fifth-biggest on Twitter.

He was a geeky kid from Yogyakarta, she a glamorous city girl in Jakarta. In a country with one of the world's most vibrant social networking scenes they fell in love on Twitter.

The storyline of "Republik Twitter," an Indonesian romantic comedy to be released in Valentine's week, exemplifies a growing trend of couples hooking up through [social networking sites](#) in the world's most populous Muslim nation.

In Indonesia, with its 240 million population scattered across a vast archipelago of 17,000 islands -- some without even landlines -- 40 million Facebook users and 20 million tweeters comprise the world's third-largest Facebook community and fifth-biggest on Twitter.

And the button on a [smartphone](#) is often the gateway to [love](#).

Social media manager Aulia Soemitro met his belle on Twitter. On Valentine's Day, he wants to tweet his tale.

"I'll post a short story about our love journey, confess when I started having feelings for her and what made me so crazy about her," the 24-year-old said.



A young woman enjoys social networking by using her mobile phone devices in Jakarta on February 11. In Indonesia, a vast archipelago of 17,000 islands -- some without even landlines -- 40 million Facebook users and 20 million tweeters comprise the world's third-largest Facebook community and fifth-biggest on Twitter.

Ilham Aji Prasetyo, a 22-year-old student, said he snared himself a

cyberspace girlfriend after two weeks of flirting -- but never got to meet her face-to-face.

"It was a virtual relationship, we never met. I checked out her Facebook photos and chatted online and she felt so right for me," he said.

"But after three weeks we both felt we couldn't get more serious because we were of different faiths so we split."

He found another girlfriend last month -- again online.

"This time we've met," he said. "On Valentine's Day I will send her a love [tweet](#) with heart icons, then we'll go out to the malls."

Marriages are not usually arranged in Indonesia, but social networking sites have become a popular way to find a partner -- particularly over long distance in such a big country.

But some Islamic clerics have called for a ban of sites like [Facebook](#), arguing they allow improper mingling between the sexes and encourage pornography and illicit sex.

"Republik Twitter" portrays not only Indonesia's online romance scene, but also the nation's collective love affair with [social networking](#) sites.

"We are a Twitter nation. Some use the medium to communicate and share news, others to find love," said Kuntz Agus, 30, who directed the film.

"Numerous hook-ups and break-ups happen on Twitter. Many relationships end badly due to personality differences. After all, it's hard to get to know a person well in 140-character bits," he added.

On screen, love blossoms on [Twitter](#) between Sukmo and Hanum. But after Sukmo meets her and she turns out to be a glamorous and beautiful journalist, his confidence melts. He decides to reinvent his looks, and real love blooms when they meet again.

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