

App Watch: Will you be my Between? App for lovers

January 23 2014, by Youkyung Lee



In this Monday, Jan. 20, 2014 photo, Value Creators & Company CEO Park Jaeuk shows his company's app Between on a screen at his office in Seoul, South Korea. Created by the Seoul-based startup, Between hit 5 million downloads in two years. About two thirds of the users are in South Korea with their average age in the mid-20s. Between has attracted more than half a million users in Japan and is expanding in Thailand and Singapore. Hundreds of thousands of Chinese and American couples have also joined. (AP Photo/Lee Jin-man)

If ever in doubt about your guy's commitment to a relationship, ask him

if he would commit to an app.

A growing number of [young couples](#) in Asia are sharing special moments in the privacy of Between, a tight networking app that links only two people.

In an age of social media overload where tweets, Instagram and Facebook postings can invite unwanted attention from parents and employers, Between feels like a digital safe haven that blocks outside noise and keeps memories just for two.

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Value Creators CEO Park Jaeuk said [social media](#) fatigue is the main driver behind Between. As more people join Facebook, Twitter, and chat-based services such as Line and Kakao Talk, Between sees a bigger chance to grow its user numbers.

—HOW IT WORKS

You install Between on your Apple or Android device and provide the mobile number of the person you want to use the app with. Most use the app, which is free, with someone they are romantically involved with, though that's not required. Once the request is accepted, the two can use [instant messaging](#), keep journals, exchange voice messages, post pictures and leave comments. Between also offers a blog-like space where the two users can create photo albums and long notes. Pictures can be tagged to a "Memory Box," which arranges them in a stream of tiles. Reminders

for anniversaries, birthdays or any special days such as the day the couple first met can be set in the app's calendar. The content created is private to the two users and the app can be password protected.

—DIGITAL COUPLE RING

CEO Park said the company envisioned a closed social network akin to a "digital couple ring." While any two people can use Between regardless of their relationship status, Park said many users see the app as a sign of commitment and loyalty, similar to rings that South Korean couples wear even before promising marriage. Agreeing to use the app or asking someone to join the app shows affection. A shy Korean may prefer saying "Do you want to do Between with me?" to ask someone out, he said.

While some mobile apps have given rise to exchanging naked pictures or hooking up with a stranger nearby, Between's design encourages an exclusive and lasting relationship. The one-account-per-email rule supports the idea of monogamy, although Park laughed saying the company wouldn't deter a person managing multiple accounts. Ham Yoon-seok, a 29-year-old finance professional in Seoul, said he writes poems and letters of apology on Between after a quarrel with his girlfriend.

Between will never add a location-tracking feature, Park said, because the app maker believes that trust is key in a [relationship](#).

—DATING CULTURE

South Korean couples often expect each other to follow romantic customs, a source of big business here. In addition to Valentine's Day when women give chocolate to men, there is White Day on March 14 when men give sweets to women. It is easy to guess what to give on Rose

Day and what to do on Kiss Day. Some businesses exclusively serve couples by selling identical looking T-shirts and other apparel that can be paired. Some offer special discounts for couples. The list goes on.

Korean couples celebrate not only a one-year anniversary, but also 100 days since meeting. Between keeps a count, serving as a reminder for people like Ham, who marks such occasions by writing a poem, giving a gift or dining at a fancy restaurant. Ham and his girlfriend have been together for more than 1,000 days.

—HANDS ON

Since I started using Between with my boyfriend, it has become the primary way we chat, save photos, plan vacations and keep to-do lists. We have stopped talking on Kakao Talk or iMessage. While I ceased to post pictures on Facebook, dozens of pictures accumulated on Between. Between feels like keeping a blog between the two of us with an instant messaging feature as an added benefit. I can tell when my boyfriend sends an instant message because Between alerts with a unique beep sound. Even for couples like us who sniff at anything excessively lovey-dovey such as wearing a couple ring, Between's simple design and features have a great appeal.

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