

The purpose of online dating



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Hullinger claimed that the purpose online dating is defined as placing and responding to an Internet personal advertisement. The first time meeting through an online service is fast, efficient, safe, and everyone are suitable to use, whatever your background, or who you are looking for.

There are million of people all over the world have been using the Internet to meet others for friendship and relationship since the mid 1990s (Jones, 2001). Researchers Parekh and Beresin (2006) noted that today's personal advertisements are popular to both educated and singles people. The rising divorce rate over the last 25 years has led to more singles and older singles. Also young people have trend to postpone marriage until educational or financial goals are achieved. The phenomenon is special appear in women obviously, because since women's movement in the 1960s, women in particular have delayed marring and have a families in order to develop their careers, that's why the number of educated singles is increasing. So it's not surprise that Watt and White (1999) assert that through computer communication, people can develop a very close, and potentially important relationship, even they never meet and seen one another.

Merkle and Richardson(2000) claimed that as society because more rapid, people have not enough free time and they are hard to balance multiple roles and responsibilities, so people are finding the other way which is non-traditional avenues for social interactions, such as Internet. From this, it showed that one of the reasons of people using the Internet to find love is because the traditional dating methods are not working.

Besides, because of the quickly growth of Internet technology in the past few years, many people go online to seek a partner through the Internet. Hence, interpersonal attraction has become an important topic on the internet.

This literature review begins in the psychology area with the concept of interpersonal attraction. And then through the description of online dating, finding out one of the important point of interpersonal attraction on the Internet: the roles of name in online dating.

Part 1: Interpersonal Attraction

A. Traditional Interpersonal Attraction. There are some traditional ways to have a date without online, Silverstein and Lasky (2004) conceived that people meet partner at work (22%), meeting people at pubs(11%) and other smoky places(4%), finding partner at church or interest clubs(6%), meeting people at cruise ship and singers vacations(2%). In other research find that there were some people meeting partner though personal advertisements, and also, someone meet partner through friends (Ellison, Heino, & Gibbs, 2006). It's different from the new addition of online dating.

In previous studies, men and women have different criteria for choice of mates (Buss, 1987). It's the well known evolution theory. Men are more like to rate women's physical attraction as the important point to find mate, compare to women, who consider men's financial status to be more important than men's physical appearance (Buss, 1994). That's mean women emphasize the interpersonal dimension of romance, and men stress the physical aspects of attraction, because men and women differ physically and psychologically, and they have different roles in traditional society,

that's why there are differences in their perceptions of what is attractive. Men have tendency to find beauty and fit body shape partner, because it can enhance the probability to create a better next generation, on the other hand, for women's consideration, they have tendency to find higher financial and social status, older, stronger partner, because when women are pregnant, they need men's protection and security.

All of these concepts are already evident in adolescent males and females (Feiring, 1996). Generally, women tend to prefer men who are older than themselves, since typically income increases with age, men tend to prefer women who are younger because young women have the ability to reproduce more easily (Buss, 1994). When men are being older, the age gap between them and the women they favor as mates increase (Kenrich & Trost, 1989).

On the other side of traditional attraction perspective was Social Role Theory. Wood and Eagly (2002) claimed that men and women were attracted by people who were valued in a particular society, and also, people control their behaviors which match the gender roles promoted by society. These theorists believe that men are attracted to women who are physically attractive, because female beauty is valued in the society. When being partnered with a female who is physically attractive will increase a man's social status. On the other hand, women liked men who have higher socio-economic status under this theory, such as men who have higher income, professional job and high intelligence.

B. Interpersonal attraction on the internet. In online dating, the Internet are given everyone a dating place which equally shown same level of personal information. It increased the opportunity to individuals to talk and truly get to know each other's backgrounds, opinions, and life goals to decide if it deserved to meet each other (Jerin & Dolinsky, 2001). Merkle and Richardson (2000) suggest that online relationships are different from face to face (FTF) relationships in that there is a different process of interaction, the developmental pattern of FTF relationship begin with initial encounter based on spatial proximity and physical attraction, and then move to the deeper process, find out the similarity and self disclosure. In contrast, online dating relationships process self-disclosure and discovery of similarities first, and then in their first meeting in real world, they have judgment of physical attractiveness.

Some people also concern about the online relationships might be ended when the daters shut down the computer, but it's not true. Merkle and Richardson (2000) claimed that online daters have strong commitment because of the higher level of self disclosure and intimacy online, more than face-to-face relationship. Besides, Watt and White (1999) discovered that online communication is in many ways significantly different from normal FTF communication. For example, physical appearance may not be used for a mean of effective evaluation. However, in cyberspace, typing speed and grammatical presentation are potentially useful telling skills.

Even some research emphasize that the strong commitment in Online relationship, other researcher seems don't agree. Brophy(1997) noted that online dating is totally different from meeting people at a pub. Every body in <https://assignbuster.com/the-purpose-of-online-dating/>

cyberspace is perfect. They are tall, thin, nice and rich. They are without physical cues to provide reality check, the computer screen becomes a projection for hopes and dreams, and therefore the person on the other end can be imagined as an ideal lover. It was directed deceive in cyberspace, and it is also easy to fall into premature intimacy. That's why online dating is different from real life dating, real life dating involves time in patience, and however, on the other hand, time in cyberspace is compressed, sometimes it may leads impulsive actions.

Part 2: Online Dating Issues

A. The Overall Environment on the Internet and Online Dating Service.

According to statistics from 2010 report in "Internet World Stats", there is almost 1.9 billion people use the Internet in the entire world (www.internetworldstats.com). In this report, there are 800 million of them are Asian(42%), 480 million of them are European(24.2%) and 270 million of them are come from North America(13.5%). Within Asian internet users, a half of them are Chinese (50.9%), and the second place, Japan, 12% of them are Internet users in Asian. In Hong Kong, there are only 1% of them within Asian, it is because Hong Kong is a small city, and there are only 7 million people, but there is almost 70% of Hong Kong residents are Internet user. It has shown the power of Internet within Asians and Hong Kong residents.

When researchers face to this huge number in different race of people, it's easy to explain that why there are many people make new friends and meet partners through Internet. In the Internet world, almost 100 million Internet users (52%) are visited online dating web site in the year of 2008, 35% of them are come from Europe, 22% of them are Asian, and almost 40% come

from other countries. There are 80% of these visitors are join as member in these different online dating services. Therefore, it can conclude that there are 80 million online daters in the world of Internet.

About these online dating services, Match. com is the most popular online dating services and it was also the first online dating service in the world launched in 1995 (Benson, Harrison, Koss-Defer & Mullen, 2007). Then the researchers had again confirmed Match. com as the leading online dating property in the world. According to the first 2008 report of comScore Media Metrix, the personal sites of Match. com have nearly 35. 6 million visitors, more than twice as big as its closest competitor (<http://www. realwire. com>).

Since Match. com was introduced, plenty of Internet dating services had shown up, even Match. com have the highest amount of members (15 million members, 19% of all online daters), the other online dating service are also affect the market, they are friendfinder. com (14 million members, 17. 5% of all online daters), “ yahoo personal” (12 million members, 15% of all online daters), date. com(10 million members, 12. 5% of all online daters) and others websites including perfectmatch. com, true. com, etc. (<http://www. matchmaking-service. net>)

The above online dating services are the general online dating website. It means that it is popular in the entire world, wherever you are. However, there is some online dating service especially popular in Asian, such as “ Asia Friendfinder”. In Hong Kong, there are also some popular online dating service for Hong Kong online daters, such as hongkongcupid. com, cueasy. com, and hi5. com. Beside there are niche sites for people of different

religions, such as hkchristians.com. Recently, there is new software available in iPhone, named “DateMe”, it’s a new software for Hong Kong online dater to meet Taiwan and Chinese people. It allowed people chatting with each other immediately, view the personal profile, and send photos or videos.

Specific Statistic about Online Dating World. After discuss about the whole environment on the internet and online dating service, here is some researches examined other aspect related to online dating. One of the researches examined one’s relationship who met online through virtual environments. Researchers found that there are several types of relationships on the online dating, they are, close relationships which included 40.6%, friendships which included 26.3%, and romantic relationships which 26.3% (Knox et al., 2001). In addition, study by Knox et al. (2001) focused on the number of people who ended up meeting their online target face to face, they found that 33% of participants who had started personal relationships online had later met their relational partner face to face.

To consider about online dater seeking and developing relationship, Bryrn and Lenton(2001) found that 60% of a large Canadian sample of online dating service users were looking for a serious relationship, and 3% said they had married someone they met on online dating web sites. Park and Roberts(2007) found that 90% of participants to a survey of Multiple User Dimensions have formed personal relationships. About 40% of those relationships had resulted in face-to-face meeting and 25% were of a romance nature.

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B. Dating Through Online Dating Services. The above Online dating services are set up for people to meet online and possibly develop a social, romantic, or sexual relationship. It's the newest device where people can find love, friendship, or even sex partners.

Lehrman(2009) listed some sites on the internet that help people to be successful in “ flirting, dating, and finding love” in cyberspace. Such online dating services allow individual to set up their profile where they provide personal information, such as ages, gender, personality, hobbies, etc. Some sites require individuals to conduct a personality test so that individuals can be matched on compatibility. Most sites encourage people to include a photograph on their profile. Also, some sites have large membership, including over a hundred thousand members; others are more specialized, for example, for special interest groups, such as vegans or goths.

Any other worthy discussion about the online dating service is the payment. Some researchers claimed that any internet user may browse the ads free of charge (Bryrn & Lenton, 2001), Indeed, there are some online dating service is free such as “ Hong Kong Yahoo Personal”, “ Asiafriendfinder. com”, and online dating chat room. In these web sites, people can become member for free, but if they would like to contact someone they like, or get more the information of the target, they need to pay as a “ VIP member” to get more functions.

Therefore it had shown the fact that if people would like to put personal profiles on the internet, or read other people's profile, one must pay money and to be the “ VIP member”. Some sites charge a monthly fee and support

more function for their online users. When they pay, they can text their ads which include self introductions and an optional photograph or sound recording of each person. Besides, online users can contact each other by E-mail or instant messaging in the intranet. They can receive invitation, send invitation and search other online partners. The search keys always include height, weight, gender, region, hobbies, interests and personalities.

It's no doubt that the financial commitment might give some online daters pause, but weighed against the cost, both time and money, it can see that if people choose to go to bars, museums, parties and other events, online dating is actually an economical way to get themselves in front of a huge number of potential mates. Therefore, experts generally agree that paid sites are better than free ones. Silverstein and Lasky (2002) conclude that pay sites are preferable because they require a certain level of commitment by users. The advantages including the requirements of long personal essays with a minimum word count, photos, and payment by credit card which can help make profile posters traceable.

The Advantage and Limitation of Online Dating. There are several factors which discuss about the positive ways of online dating. The ability of online dating is which allow people to meet some other people around the world. Online dating world is like an internet “ global village”. According to Jerin and Dolinsky (2001), people can meet other person in the virtual world who has characteristics of their ideal lover.

Silverstein and Lasky (2004) conceived that online dating some benefits, one of the benefit is all people know that every person who has posed the

personal advertisement online means that “ I am available and looking for someone”, so people no need to ask the embarrassing question like “ Are you in a relationship?”, because the answers is assumed to be “ No”. Also people can know a reasonable amount of data about the online dater they interested, a lot of data such as height, location, education level, vocation, children and religion can be known and shared. Besides, people can know something about how the target think and write from info and personal web blog. People can do all this to understand the target they interested without any costs to go out for dinner at a restaurant. That’s why online dating is more convenient than traditional dating. The whole concept of virtual dating is the community of single prospects available to people whatever people want to meet each other. People not only can log on at odd hours, also people can log on for short amounts of time.

Bryrn and Lenton (2007) also stated that the reason of people use online dating services, one of the reasons is that online dating services give the chance to people meet someone who would never meet, such as a Asia person can meet a Africa person. Also it is easier to end a relationship if it is just online. Besides, it offers privacy and confidentiality.

However, in the same report, researchers also stated that the biggest disadvantage of online dating is that people sometimes do not tell the truth about themselves, they might be hiding something. When people are communicating online, they do not sense what a person is like. Bryrn and Lenton (2007) reported that internet users who have never used an online dating site perceive lack of control and lack of effectiveness in such sites. The top reason of people do not like using online dating website was they

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want to see a potential date before actually dating the person. The second reason was that they think online dating is utilitarian, which means all online daters at least have one goal or they would like to fulfill some desires. If the one cannot satisfy the desire, they may “disappear”. The third reason is they cannot trust people they meet online. They feel there are better ways to meet people. Daters who have not visited an online dating site have no interest and believe it is too risky. Also some online daters do not tell others about their experience with online dating because they regard such matters as personal.

Gender in Online Dating. According to Boies(2002)'s study, the male and female ratio of users was 2: 1. It had shown the consistency with the other study which reported that there are 57% of online dating site members is men (Levitt & Dubner, 2004).

Some researchers conducted an analysis of internet personal advertisements that were placed by college students (Hatala et al., 1999). They discovered a huge difference in gender of the ad placers. The results suggested that men are more open to online dating than women. However, when considering openness to online dating services, other factors are also needed to be considered rather than only thinking about the gender of ad placers. Because when people are considered traditional men in the society, who had the role of asking women out, it is explained the behavior of men placing the internet personal ads more often than women, or, on the other hand, it is an extension of traditional dating roles.

For the deceit within the online dating, there are some interesting findings between gender differences in deceit behavior. The research shows that men more than women claim to make over two hundred grand a year, when in reality less than 1% of them actually earn that much. On the other hand, women typically claim to be 20 pounds less than the national average (Levitt & Dubner, 2004).

For the meeting tendency of gender, the report of Levitt and Dubner (2004) has shown that the richer man had received more responses, and the better looking woman has received the more responses. On the other aspect, to show the online dater's preference, men prefer to date students, artists, musicians, veterinarians, and celebrities while avoiding secretaries, retirees, and women who work in military or law enforcement, and women prefer dating military men, policemen, firemen, lawyers, and financial executives, but avoid laborers, actors, students, and men who work in food services or hospitality.

The Objective of Online Dater. Previous research described some types of online dater. Schwartz (2000) claimed that there are four general categories. It can also reflect the motive of online dater. The first one is the Dabbler, this type of online dater online are going to “ see what this internet dating thing is all about”, but do not usually have any plan other than “ have fun.” The second type is the Nester, which want to find a committed relationship and think the internet as one of many ways to find “ the one”. They are very goal-oriented in that the purpose of socializing online is not about the process of forging friendships, but is about finding their lifetime mate, in other word, they are finding their “ Mr. or Miss right”. The third type is the <https://assignbuster.com/the-purpose-of-online-dating/>

Hormone, which they want in cyberspace is sex. They know their aim very clearly in the cyberspace. Hormones vary in that some just want virtual sex, some want to meet people in the physical world, of course, there are some Hormones want sex in all manner, shape and form. The forth type is the Seeker, which do not know what they are looking for. Sometime they claimed that they are finding a partner, but sometime they are just looking for sex.

Bryrn and Lendon(2007) reported that people use online dating services mainly to find dates and to establish relationship. There are 78% of the online survey respondents said they often used online dating services to meet people. The second reason for using such services is to find someone for a long-term relationship, even love relationship or friendship, there are 58% of respondents have this objective. The third most frequently cited reason for visiting online dating sites is to find sexual partners, there are almost 43% of them used online services for sex. Smaller percentages of respondents often use online dating services out of curiosity, or fun and they are no intention of making face-to-face contact, they are just want casual online chatting and flirting, however, on the other hand, some of them want to find a possible marriage partner. The report also found that younger aged people more often use online dating with no intention of meeting face-to-face, when compared to the older age group. They found that people under the age of 25 or over the age of 59 said they are more likely to use online dating to find sexual partners.

For study of college students, the results by the Knox et al. (2001) study suggest that college student used the online dating service more often to establish friendship, rather than develop romantic relationships. In this

study, 33% of respondents who met someone online ended up in face-to-face encounters with their Internet friend, 7% of them reported becoming emotionally involved, and 2% ended up living together.

Part 3: The Role of “ Name” in Online Dating Self-presentations

A. The General Self presentation perspective. Goffman’s (1959) theory of strategic self-presentation claimed that “ It is beneficial to control how other people think about us and that one way of doing so is through optimizing the impression we give others of ourselves”. Self-presentation theory assumes that people have a tendency to strategically self present during interpersonal interactions in order to appeal to their audience and conform to their audience’s perceived values, a phenomenon also known as impression management (Schau & Gilly, 2003).

Self presentation in Cyberspace. When self-presentation theory set up initially, it was only apply to describe traditional contact, such as face-to-face contact because they thought that self-presentation involved “ given” like directly speaking, and also “ give off” like body language which was non-verbal cues (Goffman, 1959). It could be argued that the nonverbal cues absent in online environments, such as clothing, gestures, and body language, lead to a weakened ability to self-present. However, many studies have shown that there are unique ways that online communication can foster strategic self-presentation. Vaast’s (2007) study on self presentation in online work forums suggests that virtual environments actually allow for an increase in what Goffman calls the “ mystification” aspect of self-presentation. The mystification theory is applicable due to the increased

distance between online performers and their audiences. Online performers can also easily leave out aspects of their offline selves that they do not want audiences to know, while emphasizing the aspects they choose to present (Vaast, 2007).

Self presentation in profile (Personal advertisements). Toma et al. (2008) try to explain the salience of selective self-presentation in the online dating world: there are millions of profiles to compare between, so daters must manage their presentation, use the best stratagem type personal information, to appear attractive and compare favorably with others. Thus it is unsurprising that many online daters present their 'best' selves rather than providing completely truthful self-representations, since the pressure to appear above average is so incredibly high. The online daters interviewed by Whitty (2008) stressed the importance of creating an attractive profile and admitted to some misrepresentations in the process of trying to attract dates.

The argument of profile photo present. The biggest argue of profile, that is, about if the picture available can affect online human attraction.

Joinson(2003) pointed out the important of profile photos, for example, people often choose to have a photo of themselves online, and they might also use a webcam while they type, it shown that online dater will typically ignore a profile without photos. However, some researches found another fact. Walther et al. (2006) argued that when there was no photo present, physical attractiveness perception still available, and they also found that the presence of a picture prior to and during love finding had positive affect on social attractiveness for short-term relationship.

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Actually there are 70% online daters know that one's profile has a picture on it that does not look like them face-to-face, such as women posting glamour photographs, people of both genders posting photographs from as many as ten years ago, or in one reported case, a man posting a picture of his much more attractive brother, with whom he shared some vague resemblance (Whitty & Joinson, 2009), that's why the influence of profile photo decay nowadays in online dating.

B. The other personal information present except photos. While the argument of profile photo tend to saturated. There are other studies about profile and personal information emergence. For example, in an interesting study by Back, Schmukle, and Egloff (2008) it was found that individuals do make personality stereotypes of email addresses and these personality judgments were fairly accurate. Besides, the name in online dating, also worth to study because online dating services such as match. com always say that a good name in online dating is very important.

The traditional view of name. Personality characteristics have been found to be ascribed to certain first names (Mehrabian, 2001). Androgynous names mean more popular, fun and less masculine characteristics for men, on the other hand, that mean more popular, fun, less caring and more masculine characteristics for women than gender-specific names. Less traditionally spelled names mean uniformly less attractive characteristics and more anxiety and neuroticism compared with less common names. Individuals can also receive different treatment from others depending on their name. For instance, Mehrabian and Piercy (1993) found that rare names and rare spellings of names connoted lower levels of success, morality, popularity,

warmth and cheerfulness. Similarly, Harari and McDavid (1973) found that less common names randomly assigned to student essays received significantly lower grades than more common names.

Name in online dating. Buchanan and Smith (1999) have argued that screen names can be used strategically to present a certain image of one. Drawing from Goffman's (1959) work on presentation of self, many face-to-face contact of image manipulation are absent from computer-mediated interactions. However, in the electronic context the screen name becomes available as another potential aspect of personal front. Assumed that screen names are usually self-generated, they give individuals considerable creative scope for shaping the first impressions they present to others. A screen name can thus be seen as a self-presentational tool that allows its owner to express some aspects of identity or personal attributes. These may be either real or aspiration, and can serve a useful function in defining the image a person will display (Bechar-Israeli, 1995). Research on auction sites has also investigated the meaning names might convey. Shohat and Musch (2003), for instance, found that sellers with German names on an online auction site were more likely to receive winning bids earlier than sellers with Turkish names. These researches showed the important role of name in the profile of online daters.