

"An image of ourselves in our minds": How Online Dating Users Construct Profiles for Effective Self Presentation

ANONYMOUS AUTHOR(S)

Online dating has become a frequently used tool for individuals looking for potential relationships and intimacy connections. Central to dating apps is the creation and refinement of a dating profile, which represents the way individuals desire to present themselves to potential mates, as well as hiding information they do not care to share. To investigate the way frequent users of dating apps construct their online profiles and perceive the effectiveness of strategies taken in making profiles, we conducted semi-structured interviews with 20 experienced users and uncovered the processes and rationales by which they make profiles for online dating, particularly in selecting images for inclusion. We found that participants used unrealistic photos that exaggerated their positive personality traits, sometimes traits that they do not possess but perceive others to desire, and sometimes even traits they wish themselves had possessed. Users also strategically used photos that show personality and habits without showing themselves, and often hide certain identifying information to reduce privacy risks. This analysis of experienced online dating users reveals the way people present themselves for perceived effective expression of interest, providing implications for design of systems that limits use of inaccurate information while still promoting self-expression in relationship platforms.

CCS Concepts: • Human-centered computing → Collaborative and social computing.

Additional Key Words and Phrases: Collaboration, Creativity Support

ACM Reference Format:

Anonymous Author(s). 2024. "An image of ourselves in our minds": How Online Dating Users Construct Profiles for Effective Self Presentation. In *Proceedings of the 2024 ACM Conference on Computer Supported Cooperative Work (CSCW '24), November 9–13, 2024, San Jose, Costa Rica*. ACM, New York, NY, USA, 23 pages.

1 INTRODUCTION

Online dating has emerged as a pivotal tool for individuals seeking potential relationships and intimate connections. In the digital age, dating apps have revolutionized the way individuals engage in the pursuit of companionship and love [26]. Central to these applications is the creation and refinement of a dating profile, a critical aspect that dictates how individuals present themselves to potential mates. This process of self-presentation is not just about showcasing oneself but also involves strategic decisions about what to reveal and what to conceal [47]. The choices made in profile creation, from the selection of photos to the crafting of personal descriptions, play a significant role in shaping the online dating experience [21, 25].

Studies have shown that self-presentation in online dating profiles is influenced by several factors, including personality traits [20], gender differences [22], and the desire to manage impressions and maintain privacy [28, 29]. For instance, users may choose to present themselves in a certain way to attract attention, empower themselves, or seek self-verification [25]. Additionally, gender and cultural differences significantly impact how individuals construct their online personas, with varying patterns of self-disclosure observed across different countries [22]. Furthermore, the

Permission to make digital or hard copies of all or part of this work for personal or classroom use is granted without fee provided that copies are not made or distributed for profit or commercial advantage and that copies bear this notice and the full citation on the first page. Copyrights for components of this work owned by others than the author(s) must be honored. Abstracting with credit is permitted. To copy otherwise, or republish, to post on servers or to redistribute to lists, requires prior specific permission and/or a fee. Request permissions from permissions@acm.org.

© 2024 Copyright held by the owner/author(s). Publication rights licensed to ACM.
Manuscript submitted to ACM

53 relationship status of users has been found to affect their self-presentation strategies on social networking sites, with
54 singles often disclosing more personal information and photographs compared to those in relationships [51].
55

56 Despite the increasing prevalence of online dating, there is a relative lack of understanding of how users actually
57 construct and optimize their online dating profiles. Existing studies have focused on the authenticity of self-presentation
58 in online dating profiles [47], but there is a lack of understanding of the strategies employed by users in choosing text
59 and images for effective self-presentation. Furthermore, we know little about how strategic information concealment
60 or embellishment in online dating profiles affects the perception of these profiles. This gap in research is significant,
61 considering the impact of these adaptive strategies may have on online dating experiences and outcomes [31].
62

63 Our research is guided by the following questions:

64 *RQ1: What strategies do people adapt when selecting images for their dating profiles?*

65 *RQ2: How do people use dating profiles to present themselves and for what purpose?*

66 *RQ3: What key factors may influence people's perception of other's profiles?*

67 To explore these questions, we conducted semi-structured interviews with 20 experienced users of dating apps.
68 Our participants were selected to provide a diverse range of insights into the profile creation process. Through these
69 interviews, we uncovered the nuanced processes and rationales behind the choices users make when constructing
70 their online dating profiles, particularly in selecting images for inclusion. Our findings reveal that participants often
71 used unrealistic photos that exaggerated positive personality traits, sometimes portraying traits they do not possess
72 but believe others find desirable, and occasionally traits they wished they had. Additionally, users strategically used
73 photos that displayed personality and habits without fully revealing their identity, often concealing certain identifying
74 information to mitigate privacy risks.
75

76 Our work illustrates how a process engaged by experienced users can reveal social and psychological needs in their
77 interaction with technology designed for social connection, showing implications for development of systems that
78 balance the need for accurate self-representation with the desire for privacy and self-expression.
79

80 2 RELATED WORK

81 2.1 Online Dating Strategies

82 In today's era of rapid digital and internet technological advancements, online dating has become a mainstream form
83 of social interaction [19]. This trend requires users to adopt effective strategies to enhance their attractiveness and
84 dating success rates in the virtual space. Unlike the self-presentation in offline social interactions that conforms to
85 societal expectations and norms, the form and content of self-presentation in the online environment have undergone
86 significant changes[41]. This section aims to explore the common strategies used on online dating platforms and how
87 these strategies affect users' self-presentation and interaction.

88 The rise of social media and online dating platforms has not only changed traditional dating modes but also introduced
89 new challenges and opportunities. The popularity of these platforms has made online dating a convenient and flexible
90 modern way of courtship, providing more opportunities for young people to meet companions in their leisure time. To
91 attract potential partners, users need to carefully plan their online image, which involves selecting photos and writing
92 texts that reflect their personal character, interests, and lifestyle[11, 27, 34]. Moreover, users must maintain continuous
93 interaction and engagement to deepen the understanding and interest of potential partners.

94 However, self-presentation in online dating also faces challenges. Dating apps often emphasize physical appearance,
95 leading to potential inaccuracies, self-deception, and societal expectation biases in photo uploads[10]. To enhance
96

105 attractiveness, users may resort to photography and digital editing techniques, but this can also weaken trust in online
106 dating information[15]. To address these challenges, users need to carefully assess the authenticity and credibility of
107 potential partner profiles, and expand their search for partners with similar cultural connections, thereby making more
108 comprehensive and rational choices[11, 27].
109

110 These online dating strategies are not just about attracting potential matches but are part of the self-presentation
111 process in relationship development. Current research has focused on how to present oneself to attract potential
112 partners, but there is a relative lack of strategies for maintaining authenticity and dealing with false information
113 during this process. Particularly, how users cope with and adapt to the constantly changing social expectations and
114 cultural differences in the online dating environment[5], as well as how these factors influence the optimization of their
115 self-presentation and communication strategies, is an area worthy of in-depth exploration. Therefore, we need to pay
116 more attention to these key issues in online dating strategies to fully understand the dynamics of social interaction and
117 romantic relationships in the digital age.
118

120 **2.2 Self-Presentation for Relationship Development**

121 As first outlined by Goffman's impression management theory [12], self-presentation is integral to how individuals shape
122 their identities during social interactions within relationships. In the early phases of developing offline relationships,
123 the way individuals present themselves is crucial, particularly as others need this information to determine whether
124 they want to pursue a relationship [7, 35, 44].
125

126 Analogous to a theatrical performance, Goffman's analogy [12] introduces the concepts of "front stage" and "back-
127 stage," where individuals navigate between strategically playing desired roles in the presence of others and authentic
128 self-expression [36]. In this theory, the use of self-presentation is compared to a dramatic performance, where every
129 individual is a performer in the show. Individuals strive to cater to societal expectations on the "front stage," while
130 the "backstage" area is where they isolate themselves from the audience, relax, and expose their real selves. Previous
131 research also indicated that the self-presentational process occurs mostly in the "backstage" mode, and will only switch
132 to a more active "front stage" mode on some specific occasions like important events or when others' perception matters
133 [36]. When these important events occur, people manage their impression through *given* expressions (conventional
134 communication like spoken words) and *given-off* expressions (presumed unintentional cues, such as nonverbal signals)
135 on the "front stage" [12].
136

137 Furthermore, the degree of self-presentation exhibits variations when individuals present to different audiences
138 based on familiarity and gender [13]. Studies reveal that self-presentation motives are notably lower among highly
139 familiar individuals of the same sex compared to less familiar individuals or those of the opposite sex [23]. Additionally,
140 self-presentation tends to be more modest when interacting with friends as opposed to strangers [45]. Regarding dating
141 relationships, it was found that when individuals anticipate meeting a potential dating partner for the first time, they
142 adjust their self-presentational behavior to align with the values deemed desirable by the prospective date [33].
143

144 **2.3 Dating App Profile Creation**

145 Constructing effective dating profiles holds significant importance in online dating, where less attractive ones, especially
146 in physical attributes, are frequently quickly neglected due to the abundance of profiles to look through [16, 47]. Under
147 pressure to present themselves desirably, online daters utilize different strategies to market their "best" selves [47]. For
148 example, many dating app users emphasize the importance of small cues (e.g., grammar or any given message) in the
149 reduced-cue environment, carefully designing their own profiles to attract their potential partners [8, 9]. However,
150

research has found that online daters value physical attributes more than other factors, highlighting the need for well-crafted physical images in crafting dating profiles [50]. To enhance their attractiveness, individuals consistently modify their profiles based on their performance (i.e., whether they have successfully attracted those they are searching for), viewing the profile creation process as a constantly updating dynamic process [50].

Due to the need to present a desirable and attractive self and compare with others, online daters were motivated to exaggerate or even “lie” on their profiles. Researchers found that it is ubiquitous but subtle to misrepresent or deceive on physical attributes, as well as other information (e.g., photographs) when creating dating profiles [15, 47]. Individuals strategically present themselves by crafting an “ideal self” profile to attract potential partners, while unintentional deception may also occur due to the “foggy mirror” [8]. This phenomenon means sometimes how individuals see themselves can be overly positive or negative compared to external assessment. In some cases, individuals misrepresent or exaggerate because they know others will also “lie”, which is considered acceptable and expected misrepresentation in online context [9].

However, dating app users often grapple with the challenge of accurate self-disclosure and try to balance self-presentation pressures with the desire for authenticity [8, 47]. For one thing, daters were aware that most relationships were still constructed offline, constraining them from faking too much in online profiles lest they will meet the potential partner in person [50]. Moreover, individuals hold the intention of seeking partners who can understand and appreciate their “actual” selves instead of ideal versions of them [43]. Therefore, online daters tend to present an attractive but still real profile using equivocal statements [9].

While previous research in the field of dating app profile creation has explored self-presentation strategies online, misrepresentation and issues of authenticity, there is a lack of analysis of what people do step-by-step in profile construction, especially in choosing text and images. By examining this step-by-step process, we can unveil the decision-making mechanisms behind text and image selection and the desirable traits and qualities for users. Knowledge of the process allows for the development of dating app systems that prioritize user privacy, safety, and satisfaction. Especially as artificial intelligence has become part of our cultural environment, how systems that limits use of inaccurate information but still promotes self-expression can be designed should be considered thoroughly. Therefore, we raise our question: what processes and strategies do dating app users use to choose text and images for their profiles for effective self presentation?

3 METHOD

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 20 users utilizing Tencent Meeting, Feishu, WeChat, and offline methods. The goal was to explore the adaptive processes individuals employ when crafting their dating profiles and what desirable presentation they would like to achieve in the profiles. Participants were recruited based on their experience with at least one dating application. Institutional research protocols were approved and rigorously adhered to throughout the interview process, ensuring that participants provided informed consent for the use of the information collected, and that the data was processed in a blind and anonymous manner. The recruitment of study participants was achieved via direct messaging and social media posts on WeChat. Each interview session, conducted in Mandarin Chinese and audio-recorded, lasted between thirty and sixty minutes. To ensure confidentiality, the Mandarin Chinese interviews were transcribed into English after removing any identifying information and personal details.

209 3.1 Participants

210 A cohort of 20 participants was engaged for this study (see Table 1), following a purposeful sampling strategy from various
 211 districts within China[42]. The age range of the group was 22 to 33 years. The group comprised 11 female and 9 male
 212 participants, presenting heterogeneity in sexual orientation, including both heterosexual and homosexual individuals,
 213 predominantly single. Educational backgrounds varied, ranging from bachelor's degrees to doctoral qualifications,
 214 in fields such as public health, management, psychology, design, geography, artificial intelligence and automation,
 215 computer science, and optical and electronic information.
 216

217
 218 The limitation in here is all participants are Chinese, and although seven of them had experience living abroad,
 219 certain limitations still exist. Since dating behaviors and app usage patterns can significantly differ across cultures,
 220 our results are predominantly representative of Chinese dating app users. This specific cultural context of the study
 221 participants limits the generalizability of our findings.
 222

223 Participants reported familiarity with a spectrum of dating applications, both Chinese and international, including
 224 but not limited to TanTan, Tinder, Bumble, Soul, QingTeng Zhi Lian, JiMu, Blued, and FanKa. This diversity highlights
 225 the active engagement of young adults in China with the digital dating scene and illustrates their use of technology
 226 for personal development, social interaction, and emotional exploration. Ethical integrity was ensured, with informed
 227 consent meticulously secured from all participants, adhering strictly to anonymization protocols as dictated by the
 228 institutional Internal Review Board (IRB), thereby guaranteeing participant privacy. Upon completion of the interview,
 229 participants were compensated for their time with a 50 CNY shopping card.
 230

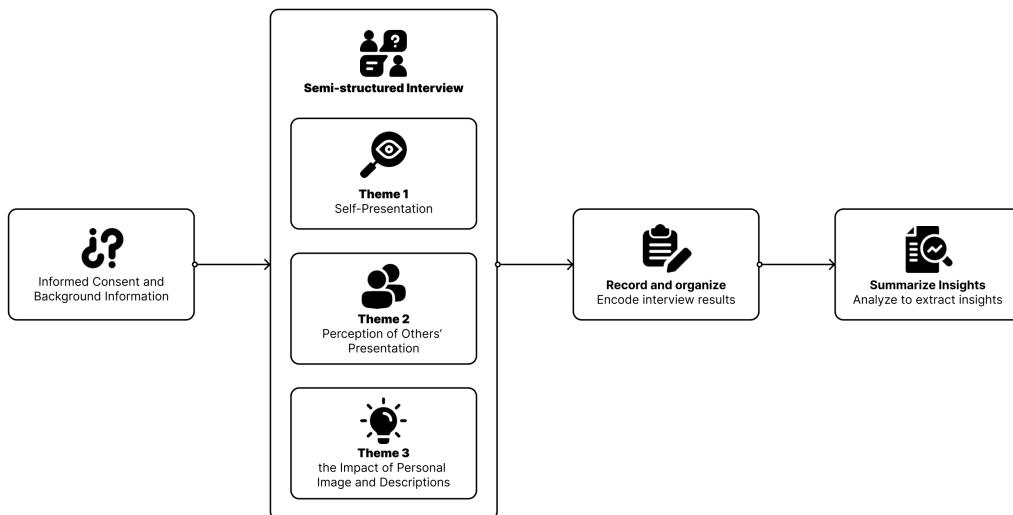
231
 232 Table 1. Demographic Information of Participants
 233

234 ID	Gender	Age	Education	Experience with dating apps	Major
235 <i>P1</i>	Female	24	master's degree	Bumble, TanTan	public health
236 <i>P2</i>	Female	24	master's degree	Bumble, TanTan, Tinder, Bumble	public health
237 <i>P3</i>	Female	23	bachelor's degree	Bumble, Soul, Summer, Tinder	public health
238 <i>P4</i>	Female	24	bachelor's degree	QingTeng Zhi Lian, TanTan	management
239 <i>P5</i>	Female	27	master's degree	Soul, Tinder	communication
240 <i>P6</i>	Male	27	bachelor's degree	QingTeng Zhi Lian, Soul, TanTan	management
241 <i>P7</i>	Male	33	doctor's degree	Bumble, TanTan, Tinder	psychology
242 <i>P8</i>	Female	23	master's degree	Hinge, QingTeng Zhi Lian	design
243 <i>P9</i>	Female	23	master's degree	QingTeng Zhi Lian, Soul	design
244 <i>P10</i>	Female	22	master's degree	QingTeng Zhi Lian, Soul	design
245 <i>P11</i>	Female	26	bachelor's degree	JiMu, Soul, Tinder	design
246 <i>P12</i>	Male	24	bachelor's degree	Blued, FanKa	geography
247 <i>P13</i>	Female	23	master's degree	JiMu, Soul, TanTan	design
248 <i>P14</i>	Female	25	master's degree	Bumble, JiMu, Soul, TanTan, Tinder	design
249 <i>P15</i>	Male	22	bachelor's degree	Tinder	design
250 <i>P16</i>	Male	25	master's degree	Blued, FanKa	computer
251 <i>P17</i>	Male	27	bachelor's degree	Bumble, TanTan, Tinder	computer
252 <i>P18</i>	Male	29	bachelor's degree	Blued, Tinder	management
253 <i>P19</i>	Male	24	master's degree	Soul, TanTan	education
254 <i>P20</i>	Male	24	master's degree	Soul, TanTan	electronic

261 3.2 Interview Procedure

262 During each semi-structured interview, participants were invited to articulate their motivations behind the selection of
 263 profile images and textual content. The interviews delved into inquiries encompassing their experiences with dating
 264 apps, their methods of presenting themselves within profiles, and the reasoning undertaken in creating these profiles this
 265 way. The discussions were structured around key themes such as Self-Presentation, Perception of Others' Presentation,
 266 and the Impact of Personal Image and Descriptions (see Figure 1). Under each theme, specific questions were posed
 267 (see Appendix A), such as how participants select photos for their profiles, what information they choose to include,
 268 and their perceptions of physical attractiveness versus personal descriptions in achieving successful matches. These
 269 questions were intended to probe into their strategies and motivations in presenting themselves and assessing others
 270 on the platform, offering insights into the complex dynamics of online dating. This approach was instrumental in
 271 uncovering the underlying processes and rationales behind profile creation and interpretation within the context of
 272 dating apps. Discussions also explored the nuances of differentiating their choice of images for dating apps from those
 273 selected for other social media platforms.
 274

275 Additionally, participants provided insights into their perceptions and interpretative approaches towards the profile
 276 images of others within the dating app context.
 277



300 Fig. 1. Interview Flowchart: We conducted semi-structured interviews with three main themes (Self-Presentation, Perception of
 301 Others' Presentation, and the Impact of Personal Image and Descriptions).

303 3.3 Constructing Profiles

304 We initially offered participants a structured procedure to follow for creating their profiles, detailing each step of the
 305 original process. This comprehensive guide was designed to assist them in systematically constructing their dating
 306 app profiles. In the profile-making process, we used Tinder to create profiles for dating apps (see Figure 2). Upon the
 307 completion of the profile construction, we conducted semi-structured interviews with the participants.
 308

313
 314
 315
 316
 317
 318
 319
 320
 321
 322
 323
 324
 325
 326
 327
 328
 329
 330
 331
 332
 333
 334
 335
 336
 337
 338
 339
 340
 341
 342
 343
 344
 345
 346
 347
 348
 349
 350
 351
 352
 353
 354
 355
 356
 357
 358
 359
 360
 361
 362
 363
 364

First Name
 Grace

Email Address

Birthday
 12 18 1998

Gender
 Man Woman More >

Show my gender on my profile

Show Me
 Men Women Everyone

Looking for

Long-term partner

Passions

Movies Reading Foodie Tour Astrology
 Dancing

Sexual Orientation

Straight

Profile Photo

Add at least 2 photos to continue

Fig. 2. Profile-making Process: We used Tinder to create online dating profiles. This is a profile example constructed using one researcher's photos following P4's photo selection and persona construction strategies.

3.3.1 *Image Selection.* Participants were tasked with selecting six images as shown on the Tinder webpage (see Figure 2) to assemble a profile for a dating app. Participants were asked to:

- Choose specific photos and articulate their reasons for these choices.
- Discuss their thoughts on composition and color.
- Explain what aspects of each image they found appealing.
- Describe the rationale behind the sequence of the photos, especially the placement of the first and last images.

In addition, participants were required to complete the textual description component of the profiles.

3.3.2 *Textual Content.* For the textual content of the profiles, participants were guided to create descriptions based on the information provided. We explored their reasoning behind the text they composed, aiming to understand how it complements the visual aspects of their profiles.

Upon the completion of the profile construction, we conducted semi-structured interviews with the participants. However, as the study progressed, we noticed that participants primarily focused their discussions on the photo selection aspect. Consequently, we adapted our approach, shifting our emphasis to inquire specifically about their choices and reasoning behind the photos. This optimization in our methodology, made during the course of the study, allowed us to

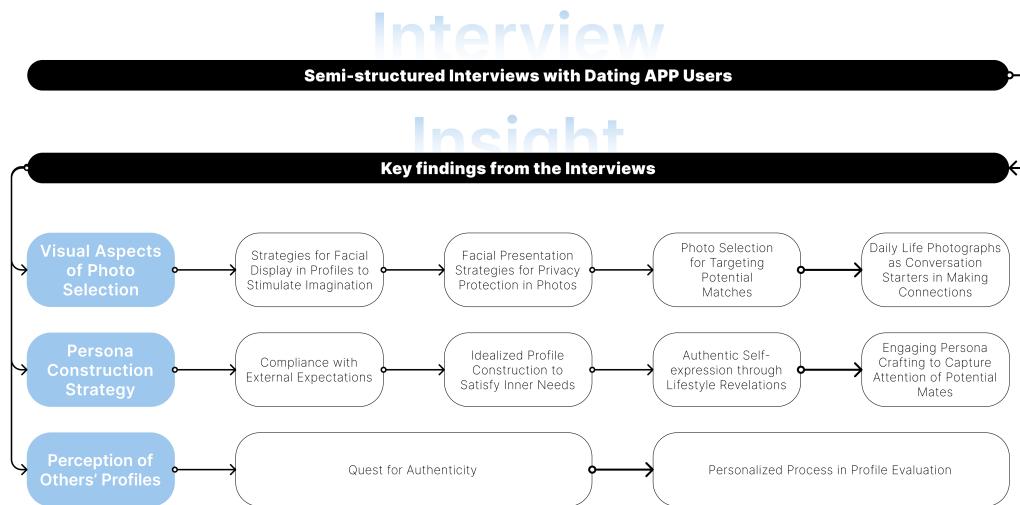
365 tailor our questions more effectively and gain deeper insights into the participants' decision-making process regarding
 366 image selection for their profiles.
 367

368 3.4 Data Analysis

370 We utilized open coding for thematic analysis of interview transcripts, as outlined in grounded theory[40]. We indepen-
 371 dently coded the data, ensuring rigor and impartiality. The transcriptions were then analyzed to distill potential codes.
 372 Following this, the team engaged in reflexive dialogue used iterative discussions to identify themes in the data. This
 373 process led to the categorization of the interview data into three themes: Visual Aspects of Photo Selection, Persona
 374 Construction Strategy, and Perception of Others' Profiles. Four researchers collaboratively analyzed these themes to
 375 assess their relevance for presentation, yielding a thorough interpretation of the findings.
 376

377 4 RESULTS

380 In this research, we conducted an in-depth analysis of strategies for self-presentation and selection of others' profiles in
 381 online dating. While personal photos and display strategies were evident in the narratives of the participants, textual
 382 information was considered of less importance in this context. Therefore, we answered RQ1 in Section 4.1, RQ2 in
 383 Section 4.2, and RQ3 in Section 4.3. Our findings not only clarified how users maintain authenticity while presenting
 384 themselves but also revealed how they adjust their presentation and communication strategies amidst changing social
 385 expectations and cultural differences. Through this analysis, we filled an important research gap in the existing literature
 386 about online dating strategies, providing a new perspective in the field of online dating, particularly regarding the
 387 diverse strategies users employ in the process of presenting themselves, thereby facilitating more effective online dating.
 388



409 Fig. 3. Key findings from the interviews

410 4.1 Visual Aspects of Photo Selection

411 4.1.1 *Strategies for Facial Display in Profiles to Stimulate Imagination.* As mentioned earlier, photo presentation plays a
 412 crucial role in online dating. Although the emphasis in online dating photos is usually on appearance and physique,
 413 participants in this study adopted more unique strategies for self-representation. As participants P8 and P4 emphasized,
 414

417 their photo presentations were not just limited to simple facial displays. Instead, they focused on creating an artistic
 418 effect full of imaginative space through photography, aiming not only to showcase personal appearance but also to
 419 create an engaging and thought-provoking atmosphere.

420 “I rarely posted highly edited selfies with just the upper body, often with uninteresting backgrounds like car interiors.

421 Such photos lacked depth and failed to convey my interests or aesthetic taste. Instead, I focused on the atmosphere and
 422 storytelling in my photos, aiming to create a sense of interaction with the viewer.”(P8)

423 “When I saw a photo on a dating app with good layout and composition, I felt the urge to go in and zoom in. That photo
 424 really had a feel, a genuine feel. It had a certain vibe. I really liked that one.”(P4)

425 Moreover, this strategy also includes considerations from participant P3, who intentionally avoids directly depicting
 426 their face or body to attract curious and genuinely interested potential dating partners.

427 “I didn’t post clear front-face photos of myself. Sometimes I posted a good-looking segment, but I wouldn’t put it at the
 428 beginning; I chose to place it at the end. Because you had to swipe to see the end. If someone wasn’t interested in you,
 429 they wouldn’t immediately see your face.”(P3)

430 Unlike some users who directly showcase their faces and bodies, this category of users adeptly employs elements
 431 like body language, lighting effects, negative space, and blurring techniques to add mystery and allure to their photos
 432 (see Figure 4). This approach not only avoids direct judgment based on appearance but also stimulates the viewer’s
 433 imagination and interest, thereby arousing deeper curiosity and attraction among potential partners. Through these
 434 strategies, participants successfully transform their photos into effective tools for self-expression and communication,
 435 carving out a unique niche in the world of online dating.



440
 441 Her photos do
 442 not show her
 443 face directly,
 444 and there is a
 445 considerable
 446 amount of white
 447 space.
 448



449
 450 Her photo on the
 451 swing helps us
 452 understand the
 453 dynamics and
 454 body language
 455 of the photos
 456 mentioned by
 457 the participants.
 458



459
 460 This is her mobile
 461 phone’s camera
 462 screen, and you
 463 can see that her
 464 face only occupies
 465 one of the nine
 466 frames, while the
 467 rest of the larger
 468 image area is filled
 469 with teddy bears.
 470

a.

b.

c.

471 Fig. 4. These are a few photos uploaded by P8 on the dating app.

472 **4.1.2 Facial Presentation Strategies for Privacy Protection in Photos.** Participants who prefer not to show their full
 473 faces in photos have developed strategies to create a sense of mystery while still giving potential dating partners a
 474 general idea of their appearance. P8 offers a cautious approach to facial exposure on social media, suggesting that facial
 475 exposure should be limited to a small part of the photo, preferably positioned at the edge (see Figure 4). P3 shared a
 476 similar viewpoint.

477 “Really, when I took photos, the phone screen had a grid, and my face could only occupy so much of one grid. That is all
 478 the facial exposure I showed in the picture.”(P8)

479 “I won’t show my full face, I chose to show half of it. It’s mainly for privacy concerns. I wouldn’t use a photo like an ID
 480 picture, but rather a side view.”(P3)

481 “I wouldn’t put a photo like a graduation picture on such platforms. It’s important, but I’d rather share it with friends or
 482 family, not strangers. I don’t want all strangers to see me.”(P4)

469 Other participants expressed their reluctance to post full-face photos, fearing recognition by friends or family
470 members who also use the same online dating apps, which they find quite embarrassing.
471

472 Overall, these strategies represent a shift from traditional self-presentation methods on online platforms to a greater
473 emphasis on privacy protection. By intentionally leaving space and using blurred or side-view photos, users reduce
474 direct identification while still displaying their personal style and interests. This approach not only maintains individual
475 privacy and avoids overexposure in public digital spaces but also effectively prevents awkward encounters with
476 acquaintances on dating platforms. This focus on privacy and careful self-presentation is key in establishing healthy
477 and secure communication in the digital dating environment.
478

479 **4.1.3 Photo Selection for Targeting Potential Matches.** Photo selection on online dating platforms was strategic for
480 screening and attracting potential dates. As participant P9 articulated, the first photo in social media profiles played a
481 crucial role, requiring artistic and design appeal to attract viewers' attention. Serving as the "facade" of personal profiles,
482 the first photo not only reflected an individual's taste and interests but also served as a starting point for potential
483 communication and interaction. Choosing an impactful and intriguing first photo was essential.
484

485 *"When I used dating apps, you generally saw one person at a time, and they only showed the first photo initially. If you
486 were interested, you swiped to see the rest of their photos. So, the first impression was really important." (P9)*

487 Additionally, as P13 pointed out, individuals tended to select visually appealing photos for their profiles, often
488 leading to heavily edited or exaggerated images through photo editing software. This trend reflected a balance between
489 reality and idealization, where the authenticity of self-presentation was often compromised for visual attraction. While
490 these edited photos might have enhanced immediate visual appeal, they could also lead to unrealistic expectations and
491 misrepresentation, potentially affecting the authenticity of online interactions and relationships. Notably, P13 and P16
492 prioritized the aesthetic appeal of photos over the accuracy of personal representation.
493

494 *"You really couldn't trust all the beautiful photos on dating apps. Many people were deceiving, and they didn't look like
495 their photos in reality. I did the same; I didn't care if my friends said it didn't look like me. Even if they sometimes said
496 I'd edited it too much, I still posted it if I thought it looked good. People on online dating didn't know what you looked
497 like anyway." (P16)*

498 Some participants preferred a contrast strategy in photo arrangement. As P2 and P3 mentioned, if the first personal
499 photo was particularly stunning, subsequent photos might include humorous or unconventional images to balance the
500 distance created by physical attractiveness and create a contrast effect.
501

502 *"Finally, I thought it was important to create a contrast. Although I might have looked good, it could create a sense of
503 distance. To reduce that, I might have added some humorous or quirky photos to balance that distance." (P12)*

504 P14 also mentioned adopting a strategy to attract people interested in specific types of photos, such as selecting
505 sports-related images to attract those interested in sports, thereby initiating conversations based on common interests.
506

507 Overall, these findings highlighted the complexity and strategic considerations involved in selecting photos on dating
508 apps. Users carefully curated their profiles not only to present themselves in a visually appealing way but also to attract
509 specific types of matches, initiate conversations, and manage perceptions of their personality and interests.
510

511 **4.1.4 Daily Life Photographs as Conversation Starters in Making Connections.** Daily life photos play a significant role in
512 maintaining conversation and interaction in online dating. As recommended by P9, subsequent photos in a personal
513 profile should emphasize an individual's daily life and interests, such as food and entertainment activities.
514

521 Photos of everyday life provide a relaxed and authentic starting point for communication, making it easier for other
522 users to engage and foster connections based on common interests and daily experiences. As mentioned by P2, P3, P5,
523 and P15, compared to sharing movies, books, or text, sharing relatable everyday experiences like food is more suitable
524 as a conversation starter. Such shared experiences can help find potential cultural links, such as common lifestyle habits
525 or preferences.

526 “*I usually avoided deep or controversial topics in initial conversations. I preferred discussing light-hearted subjects like*
527 *food and drink. For instance, I might have shared photos of me with my favorite food, sparking conversations about the*
528 *best places for that food. This approach avoided serious debates and easily found common ground. If the other person*
529 *hadn't tried the food, they could taste it and continue the conversation with me, naturally leading to more similar*
530 *topics.”(P9)*

531 However, the perspective of P16 adds another dimension, indicating that some users are reluctant to share their
532 thoughts and mental states with strangers in the initial stages. Such deeper sharing usually occurs after some progress
533 has been made in the relationship.

534 “*I tended to share, for example, I said I liked to sing, but that was all I would share. It just didn't go on any more about*
535 *what traits I had in that area, so if you wanted to know about it, you could just chat about it later.”(P16)*

536 In summary, the use of everyday life photos on online dating platforms not only reflects an individual's lifestyle
537 and interests but also provides an effective way for users to establish connections based on shared experiences. This
538 strategy not only presents one's preferences but also lays the foundation for more profound future interactions.

539 4.2 Persona Construction Strategy

540 Our participants utilized various strategies to construct different personas in order to align with external expectations,
541 respond to internal desires for traits that they wish to possess, express themselves authentically, or capture the attention
542 of potential mates.

543 4.2.1 *Compliance with External Expectations.* According to the interviewed online daters, they actively mold their
544 online personas to align with external societal and potential partners' expectations and requirements.

545 Participants noticed the cultural differences between countries, tailoring their profiles to the requirements of different
546 social environments. P1, who had online dating experience in China and Sweden, mentioned a significantly different
547 self-presentation strategy meeting the requirements of different social environments. When she was in China, she
548 deliberately avoided mentioning her size because she was considered a bit overweight. But in Sweden, she was not
549 afraid to list it because it was considered average there.

550 “*I think it may be because the standards in China and Sweden are different, because they may not care much about body*
551 *shape (in Sweden)...girls who are considered very plump in China look just perfect here, so I don't care much about this*
552 *aspect. But in China, I would be more concerned about this aspect.”(P1)*

553 Meanwhile, although self-identified as introverted, P1 emphasized her outgoing side by exaggerating her passion for
554 nature and outdoor activities when she tried to use dating apps in Sweden. She discovered that most people showed
555 this trait or related information, which made her believe that people there would expect to find cheerful and outgoing
556 partners.

557 “*I think because each society values different points, I will make some appropriate adjustments and beautification based*
558 *on this.”(P1)*

⁵⁷³ P4, who intended for a serious relationship, would choose more conservative photos with less skin exposure when
⁵⁷⁴ she was in China. She explained that people would expect and like those dress more conservatively, otherwise would
⁵⁷⁵ be considered looking for only sexual relationships.
⁵⁷⁶

⁵⁷⁷ Participants highlighted the need to consider potential partners' expectations with different relationship intents.
⁵⁷⁸ Those who intend for serious and long-term relationships, like P4, often carefully choose photos with less skin exposure
⁵⁷⁹ and "sexual" signals.
⁵⁸⁰

⁵⁸¹ *"If you use photos revealing more skin on dating apps, people will ask you if you want to go for sex." (P4)*

⁵⁸² P4 added that photos revealing more skin would potentially attract those looking for "short-term fun" in such a
⁵⁸³ conservative society. With the intention of looking for a relationship that can be "the source of security and power of
⁵⁸⁴ support," P12 would consider what kind of profile may attract more people when crafting his profile. He also commented
⁵⁸⁵ that photos containing "sexual" signals might raise the "swipe right" rate, yet they attract more superficial relationships.
⁵⁸⁶ Similarly, P14 who looked for a long-term relationship, would carefully construct a profile of high quality, choosing
⁵⁸⁷ photos representing her characteristics instead of those with more skin exposure. On the contrary, P15 highlighted the
⁵⁸⁸ necessity of showing attractiveness or openness when looking for a "sexual" relationship.
⁵⁸⁹

⁵⁹⁰
⁵⁹¹ **4.2.2 Idealized Profile Construction to Satisfy Inner Needs.** Apart from adjustment according to external requirements,
⁵⁹² participants are aware of the traits they wish to possess or they are looking for, crafting a profile that mirrors their
⁵⁹³ "ideal" self and the traits they seek in a potential partner.
⁵⁹⁴

⁵⁹⁵ Participants tend to exaggerating the parts of themselves that they want to idealize and present. P12 said, "If you
⁵⁹⁶ want something in your heart, you may exaggerate it." He noticed the unconscious misrepresentation in his profile
⁵⁹⁷ construction process and believed it had to do with "self-perception bias."
⁵⁹⁸

⁵⁹⁹ *"People tend to think better of themselves. I feel like in terms of weight, this may be a point that I am not very satisfied
⁶⁰⁰ with. I may not be able to change it in reality. Maybe I have always imagined a lighter me in my mind. I might be
⁶⁰¹ inclined to write this weight down a bit (in profile)." (P12)*

⁶⁰² For example, P12 was unsatisfied with his weight. He appeared to be aware of constructing an "ideal self" with a
⁶⁰³ lower weight. He argued, "It's not intentional. It may be subconscious. It's a habit. I may have lied to myself for too
⁶⁰⁴ long and have taken it as reality." When he crafted his online profile, he also tended to present himself with a lower
⁶⁰⁵ weight. He added that he was still real because it was an "unfalsifiable proposition and deviation within a reasonable
⁶⁰⁶ range" and thus couldn't be found out by others.
⁶⁰⁷

⁶⁰⁸ Participants would also design their profiles according to the ideal partners they were looking for. As P1 said, she
⁶⁰⁹ wants to find someone with similar hobbies and lifestyle. Her profile presented her habits (e.g., drinking, smoking) and
⁶¹⁰ hobbies (e.g., cooking, photography).
⁶¹¹

⁶¹² *"I like people who are smart, and I also hope that I can show that I am very smart." (P1)*

⁶¹³ She specifically highlighted her education and stated she had the same criteria in self-presentation and when looking
⁶¹⁴ for ideal partners. Therefore, she would show the same traits with same level she desire in potential partners in her
⁶¹⁵ own profile in order to find "a perfect match". Similarly, P3 and P4 mentioned that they would present their hobbies
⁶¹⁶ and interests to find those that resonate with them. Furthermore, P12 went to a university ranked 73 in China, but to
⁶¹⁷ highlight his academic prowess, he put on his profile that he went to one of Chinese top 10 universities. He explained
⁶¹⁸ that his "cult of academic qualifications" made him write down a better university to attract people with better education,
⁶¹⁹ though this time, he feared being exposed.
⁶²⁰

625 4.2.3 *Authentic Self-expression through Lifestyle Revelations.* Although misrepresentation or exaggeration exists due to
 626 external or internal needs, participants still want to express themselves authentically in profile construction, using
 627 online dating platforms as stages for self-expression and expressing the interesting moments or happenings in their
 628 lives.
 629

630 Participants emphasized their realness in profile construction. P13 mentioned that she would carefully keep authenticity
 631 even when choosing photos purposefully for persona construction. The dating process was deemed an "art" by
 632 P12, while designing profiles considering the preferences of his "ideal partner" was too mechanical and formulaic.
 633

634 *"I think it (designing profiles) is too complicated...I have to assume the type of person I like and what kind of person he
 635 might like. Then I need to match my presentation with his preferences. I think it's a little too by the book." (P12)*

636 Thus, he created his profile in a more casual and real way instead of making complex assumptions, putting whatever
 637 he wanted to show. He also reported that his profile was quite consistent with himself in real life. P15 agreed that
 638 considering others' opinions was too much pressure and described his profile as "very objective without any subjective
 639 description."
 640

641 By revealing their lifestyle and talents, participants expressed their authentic selves and interesting souls. P14 would
 642 display her life in a more real and natural way rather than meeting others' expectations or being too ostentatious.
 643 She incorporated fitness into everyday photos to present her characteristics and lifestyle in a more synthetic way
 644 instead of focusing on her shape only. P8 held a similar opinion that presenting interests and talents on online dating
 645 platforms should not be a simple skill demonstration, such as "taking selfies directly in the mirror of gym." Instead, it
 646 should incorporate skills or hobbies into real life, such as "wearing fitness clothes in everyday photos". She took "taking
 647 pictures of the scenery and your own sketching work at the same time" as an example, highlighting the interesting
 648 aspects brought by indirect lifestyle display (see Figure 5 a).

649 *"In short, you cannot just show that you are learning a certain interest, it should be extended to the fact that your interests
 650 have affected and integrated into your life. The starting point is that you love life. This is the ultimate goal of talent
 651 presentation on dating platforms." (P8)*

**a.****b.****c.**

652 Fig. 5. Example photos according to participants' statements: a. Use "pictures of the scenery and own sketching work" to indirectly
 653 show one's talent. (P8) b. Photos of landscape that one shot could express a moment moved one person, while photos of oneself
 654 simply showed one's appearance. (P4) c. P3 provided two photos with varied appearance and hair style taken from different periods
 655 of time, which aroused others' curiosity.
 656

657 In this way, interests and talents could be displayed more naturally and attractively as important parts of an individual's
 658 life. Additionally, P4 highlighted the difference between two types of photos during a trip: photos of oneself and photos
 659 one took (see Figure 5 b).

660 *"Because when you shoot a landscape, it means that you sincerely think that moment is beautiful, and it touches you. I
 661 think this is different from posing for a picture of a person." (P4)*

⁶⁷⁷ By showing photos one took during a trip, P4 wanted to express a moment that touched her. She said, "I am not
⁶⁷⁸ telling people that I love the world in a pretentious way, but I am really expressing my love for some creatures and
⁶⁷⁹ things in the world."

⁶⁸⁰

⁶⁸¹ **4.2.4 Engaging Persona Crafting to Capture Attention of Potential Mates.** Additionally, some participants utilized special
⁶⁸² strategies to capture attention of potential mates, such as showing niche and arcane hobbies and using contrasting
⁶⁸³ photos.

⁶⁸⁴ By presenting niche hobbies and interesting text, P4 aimed to craft a mysterious persona to attract potential mates.
⁶⁸⁵ For example, she would mention astrology as one of her hobbies in profile construction.

⁶⁸⁶

⁶⁸⁷ *"You can choose one or two unpopular ones there, because you might actually meet someone with similar hobbies. It
⁶⁸⁸ (astrology) also occupies a little bit of a niche. I think it will be a bit mysterious. Maybe people think it is very good and
⁶⁸⁹ they will ask you." (P4)*

⁶⁹⁰ She believed that presenting unpopular hobbies would not only catch others' eyes, but also help find those possess
⁶⁹¹ similar hobbies. Besides, she mentioned that she would write interesting text, like "only talk until 10pm," to also craft a
⁶⁹² niche persona. P4 believed that most people will only use dating apps during late night, thus a persona that sleeps early
⁶⁹³ can catch other's attention immediately.

⁶⁹⁴

⁶⁹⁵ *"I will only use dating apps after I have finished my work during the day, otherwise I would not just open it and use it
⁶⁹⁶ casually. I think most people should be like this. We use "only talk until 10pm" to create a persona that goes to bed early,
⁶⁹⁷ which is a very niche persona. Don't you ever wonder why a person goes to bed so early?" (P4)*

⁶⁹⁸ Similarly, some participants would strategically present their photos to make people curious. For example, P10 would
⁶⁹⁹ choose profile shots or back view photos to maintain a sense of mystery and be more imaginative. P18 and P19 had a
⁷⁰⁰ similar strategy that avoids exposing their face in photos. P3 mentioned that using contrasting photos might arouse
⁷⁰¹ curiosity, taking her photos with varied styles from various periods as an example (see Figure 5 c).

⁷⁰²

⁷⁰³ *"I can find you a photo that was taken a long time ago...a Swedish guy said that when he first saw that photo, he thought
⁷⁰⁴ that it was a fake photo and I used fake photos to deceive people...because at that time I had short and orange-red
⁷⁰⁵ hair...my hair is no longer orange...then they asked if it was me." (P3)*

⁷⁰⁶ P3 indicated that she didn't deliberately put contrasting photos to capture others' attention, yet it turned out that it
⁷⁰⁷ worked quite well.

⁷¹² 4.3 Perception of Others' Profiles

⁷¹³ **4.3.1 Quest for Authenticity.** In our study, a key aspect of participant behavior was their cautious approach toward
⁷¹⁴ assessing the authenticity of others' profiles. This caution was particularly evident in their reactions to profiles, where
⁷¹⁵ the specific properties in a photo, including displays of material wealth or the quality of the pictures, significantly
⁷¹⁶ influenced their perceptions.

⁷¹⁷ Participants like P15 and P1 prioritized authenticity, favoring realistic and relatable images over those appearing
⁷¹⁸ overly perfect or staged. For P1, overly perfect photos conveyed a message that the person had some purposes other
⁷¹⁹ than looking for a relationship, such as attracting followers to be a celebrity. Rather, she would like to see profiles with
⁷²⁰ everyday photos and sharing of one's life.

⁷²¹

⁷²² *"If his photos are all very beautifully edited, and each of them looks like they were cut out of a magazine, which makes
⁷²³ me feel as if he didn't use this software to match others...some people will even post their home page below, and I will
⁷²⁴ think that maybe he wants to be a celebrity." (P1)*

Many participants demonstrated a careful approach when encountering profiles with overly perfected images or those that exhibit significant inconsistencies among various profile pictures. P1, for instance, took a holistic view of the profile, evaluating its text in addition to focusing on just the appearance to validate the authenticity of the profile.

"(I) will assess text besides photos. It also depends on what content...an introduction to yourself, which may be more comprehensive and detailed. Be able to judge this person's life hobbies, interests, and what he values. These make it more real to me." (P1)

P13 exemplified this act of caution, especially towards profiles with photos that seemed excessively perfect or of high quality. To ascertain their authenticity, P13 often saved these images and utilized tools like Baidu Image Search or consulted friends.

"I will directly search on Baidu, save the image, and then use Baidu's image recognition. Alternatively, I ask friends, 'Do you think this person looks like someone from a photo online?'" (P13)

P12 also highlighted a common skepticism towards overly polished or inconsistent photos. He would often evaluate the consistency of all photos to check whether this was a real person or not. He said, "If the main picture and the subsequent ones in their profile are nearly identical, it is probably their real image. But if there's a stark difference between the first and the following pictures, they are likely images from the internet."

Reflecting on the interviews, a pattern emerges in how participants discern authentic from fake profiles based on specific properties in photos. P5, P11, and P13 consistently expressed aversion to profiles featuring luxury brands, vehicles, and other symbols of affluence, which they viewed as disingenuous and showy.

"What I'm not interested in are... pictures with more than five brand logos, blurred ones, like a photo taken inside a Lamborghini, wearing Dior and a Rolex watch." (P5)

P14 felt unreal especially when saw low-quality or obviously copied images. P1 had a similar feeling when she saw photos that were "too blurry," which made her feel fake. These insights suggest that for these participants, authenticity is tied to realism and consistency in online presentations, while blatant displays of wealth or poor-quality images raise suspicions about a profile's genuineness.

Interestingly, P4 mentioned a specific aspect when she felt a person was unreal, "It feels like the facial features are patchworked...no, not patchwork, maybe because there is no light and shadow transformation." She felt that the light and shadow effect could be affected significantly by photo editing, which made it rather important in assessing the authenticity of photos.

4.3.2 Personalized Process in Profile Evaluation. When evaluating profiles, our participants had disparate processes and strategies. While physical attributes were the predominant focus of users, text descriptions in profiles were deemed by some participants to better reflect characteristics.

Many participants, both female and male, mentioned that their first impressions were built on photos (P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P7, P8, P10, P12, P14, P15, P16, P19) in which the most important factors were considered physical attributes (especially appearance and height). P1's remarks underscore the significance of appearance in online dating.

"The first thing I do when opening a profile is to look at the person's photos, especially the profile picture, as it's the first thing I see. The age and height information, otherwise usually displayed in the bottom left corner of the photo, are also crucial factors in my assessment." (P1)

P14 echoed a similar sentiment: "I first look at the face, and if it seems okay, I then check the height. Only if both these aspects are satisfactory do I proceed to view other photos and read the personal introduction." P14's approach revealed how users in online dating sequentially filter potential matches, starting with physical characteristics. P2 and

⁷⁸¹ P4 also emphasized the importance of facial attractiveness. P2 candidly expressed, "If the face looks good, I continue
⁷⁸² browsing; if not, I stop." P4 shared a similar view, "For me, the main focus is on the face. I don't spend time reading their
⁷⁸³ lengthy text descriptions." P19 further validated this perspective, "My primary focus is on the person's face and body.
⁷⁸⁴ Their photos are key to my assessment."

⁷⁸⁵
⁷⁸⁶ Apart from physical attributes, some participants mentioned that photos containing animals or unique content would
⁷⁸⁷ also attract them. P1 underscored the importance of showing animals in profile. She said, "I think photos with small
⁷⁸⁸ animals will greatly increase my probability of matching with this person by 80%. I personally love animals very much.
⁷⁸⁹ I think if he particularly likes animals, he must be a good person." P3 shared her experience when evaluating a profile
⁷⁹⁰ with unique content:

⁷⁹¹
⁷⁹² *"For example, I saw a boy who was in Egypt. He was Swedish, but he was working in a relatively poor country, also
⁷⁹³ (doing) that kind of (animal) protection. Then, the first photo on his homepage was a baby turtle on his face. He was on
⁷⁹⁴ the beach, and then I felt I had to talk to him to find out what he had experienced. We talked about his work on sea turtle
⁷⁹⁵ protection." (P3)*

⁷⁹⁶
⁷⁹⁷ Some participants, like P3 and P4, expressed their preference for photos over text. For P3, photos could convey
⁷⁹⁸ more information (e.g., environment, person, and vibe) and be more reliable due to the higher threshold and cost for
⁷⁹⁹ photo creation. This perspective was confirmed by P4, "You can plagiarize. You can just quote some good sentences or
⁸⁰⁰ something. I think it loses some authenticity."

⁸⁰¹
⁸⁰² *"Because the creation of photographs is of a higher threshold than the creation of words. If you really want to show you
⁸⁰³ are into puppies, then you must have a picture of a puppy. But if you don't have a picture of a puppy, you just write a
⁸⁰⁴ text saying I like puppies...photos are more believable than words." (P3)*

⁸⁰⁵
⁸⁰⁶ Meanwhile, participants mentioned that text could reflect one's real characteristics and personalities better and more
⁸⁰⁷ easily than photos. P3 said, "Because words can be more subtle than photos...Words will easily reveal that you are a
⁸⁰⁸ misanthrope or that you are carpe diem people."

⁸⁰⁹
⁸¹⁰ Interestingly, while most participants valued photos more than text, some of them would specifically look for
⁸¹¹ attractive cues in profile descriptions after photo evaluation. P2 described one special text description that caught her
⁸¹² attention, "One day, I saw a boy's profile saying that he could easily be moved and that anything could make him cry...I
⁸¹³ think he described it very well." For P15, interesting or unique text would attract him. He gave an example like "30
⁸¹⁴ years old, divorced, having two kids," which was Internet slang in China that was popular a long time ago.

⁸¹⁵

⁸¹⁶ 5 DISCUSSION

⁸¹⁷
⁸¹⁸ Our study investigated how experienced online dating platform users strategically craft their profiles. The findings
⁸¹⁹ of our study shed light on the intricate process of online dating profile creation, focusing on visual aspects of photo
⁸²⁰ selection (RQ1), persona construction strategies (RQ2), and perception of others' profiles (RQ3).

⁸²¹

⁸²² 5.1 Key Findings

⁸²³

⁸²⁴ *5.1.1 Modes of self-presentation.* We relate our findings to Goffman's impression management theory [12], especially
⁸²⁵ to the concepts of "front stage" and "backstage." "Front stage" is where individuals perform to meet external societal
⁸²⁶ expectations like performers perform to the audience they don't know. "Backstage" refers to the place where individuals
⁸²⁷ expose their real selves without any audience. Our findings suggest that online dating users may also experience the
⁸²⁸ switch between "front stage" and "backstage" modes when creating their dating profiles. Many participants indicated
⁸²⁹

⁸³⁰

⁸³¹

⁸³²

833 that they would actively modify their profiles to meet different external societal expectations, performing on the “front
834 stage.” Occasionally, they would also seek authentic self-expression even on online “backstage.” In contrast, previous
835 findings indicated that the self-presentation process occurs mostly in the background mode and only switches to a
836 more active foreground mode under important events [36]. We speculate that the reason why the self-presentation in
837 our study occurred more on the “front stage” than on the “backstage” is that online dating itself is a special event in
838 need of marketing [47]. And our participants also found it important to present a desirable profile to attract others’
839 attention, much as like in an attention-driven marketplace [16].
840

841 In addition to the “front stage” and “backstage” concepts, we found one other self-presentational strategy, where
842 people intend to stay at “backstage” but appears “front stage” almost imperceptibly when asked to respond, as if it’s an
843 innate need to present themselves to others better than they actually are. Thus, some participants misrepresented in
844 their profiles due to expectations for themselves instead of external expectations. In this process, they may not be aware
845 of misrepresentation due to self-perception bias, i.e., the “foggy mirror” phenomenon [8]. In other words, they thought
846 they were still on the “backstage” but actually were already on the “front stage,” where they were their own “audience.”
847

848 5.1.2 *Incorporating desired traits into user’s own profile.* In our study, participants revealed an interesting strategy when
849 constructing an “ideal self” in profile creation. For example, P12 was unsatisfied with his weight and always desired a
850 lighter version, and he put that desired lighter weight in his profile. P1 desired a smart potential partner, and she also
851 wrote that she went to a good university. Previous research has clearly defined three aspects of the self: the “actual self”
852 refers to who a person currently is, the “ideal self” refers to who a person wishes to be, and the “ought self” refers to
853 who a person ought to be [17]. Our findings suggest that people construct their profiles mirroring the “ideal self” and
854 the “ideal partner.” The psychological process by which online dating users create profiles can be conceptualized as a
855 cyclical paradigm. This paradigm can be expressed as: “I show what I value; I attract people who like what I show; I
856 discern those I attract whether have traits I value.” This cyclical process encapsulates the dynamic interplay between
857 personal values, self-presentation, attraction patterns, and subsequent message discrimination developed through
858 interaction with the attracted person.
859

860 5.1.3 *Paradoxes in judging others’ profiles vs. users’ own profiles.* Moreover, we found that people may have double
861 standards in regards to how their own profiles should be perceived vs. their own judgment of others’ profiles. Many
862 participants expressed their desire for others to see more than just their appearance by avoiding showing their faces
863 in photos, while most of them also viewed physical attributes as the most important in assessing others’ profiles
864 [18][46]. Also, our participants used blurred or side-view photos to protect their own privacy, although they felt blurry
865 photos in other’s profiles suggested falsehood. When looking for potential partners, our participants always quested for
866 authenticity. Their own profiles, however, were often found to exaggerate or misrepresent to a different extent. A few
867 studies have explored sexual double standards between different genders in dating [30, 32]. Our findings suggest that
868 double standards may not only exist between genders but also between self and others when considering online dating
869 profiles. We further speculate that the cautious self-presentation strategies and strict standards for others are related to
870 self-protection in an online dating environment. Previous research has explored how AI [6] or other design concerns
871 [3, 4] can be used to reduce risks of harm for women on dating platforms. Our findings push this forward and highlight
872 the need to design systems that support self-protection through profile construction and evaluation.
873

874 5.1.4 *Selecting photos for common connection.* In terms of photo selection, our findings show that people tend to use
875 photos from their daily lives as a starting point for establishing potential cultural connections and initiating dialogue.
876
877

When browsing profiles on dating apps, images are more likely to capture initial attention compared to text [49][37][39]). As previous research [11, 27] has pointed out, users of online dating prefer to look for people similar to themselves, especially in attributes related to life's journey. Our study further reveals that, without being certain whether the other person has similar experiences, users utilize photos to provide potential dates with cues for establishing cultural connections. For instance, P9 mentioned that they might display easily shared elements in their photo messages, such as a favorite restaurant. If a potential date is in the same city, having dined at this restaurant can be a shared experience and a point of cultural connection. Even if a potential date hasn't visited the restaurant, it's still relatively accessible for them to visit the same place in the city. Thus, sharing aspects of everyday life becomes an easily established cultural connection.

Cultural connections can also assist in determining the accuracy of information provided by potential dates. Users often need to thoroughly search for similar cultural connections to assess the authenticity of a potential mate's profile. As P1 pointed out, examining a potential date's life interests and values can aid in constructing a more authentic portrayal of that person. This approach not only helps users find potential mates with shared interests but also enhances opportunities for mutual understanding and trust-building. Consequently, users can gain a deeper insight into the personality and values of their potential mates, enabling them to make more informed decisions.

5.1.5 Curating profiles features for attracting other users. In line with previous research [13, 47], our dating app users were also aware of the importance of utilizing different strategies in profile creation to attract others. In our study, users were found to attract potential dates through several photo selection and persona construction strategies, including stimulating imagination (i.e., making people want to explore more in this profile), first-photo selection, and constructing niche personas. One interesting finding is that people stimulate imagination by limiting facial display in photos, although physical attributes are considered as most important by many people. This finding supports previous work showing the importance of physical attributes in profiles [50], and further suggests that the critical point of photo attractiveness may stand at provoking the desire to explore instead of only visually appealing. Another important and novel finding is that people use visually captivating and humorous photos together to attract people at first sight, as well as reduce the distance brought by good-looking appearances. Interestingly, our participants mentioned that they would show niche and mysterious hobbies to attract attention, which is in accord with a recent finding showing that niche hobbies in profiles are becoming more popular and trump any other factors in attracting perfect mates [1].

5.2 Design Implications

Based on our analyses and summaries above, the dating software used by our participants is not limited to any specific country or sexual orientation. Our results are informative for the optimization of dating software as a whole. In this subsection, based on our findings, we discuss the implications for dating app design from the perspectives of presentation channels, matching tools, and trust-building.

5.2.1 User Presentation Channels. From the perspective of user self-presentation, as mentioned in Goffman's impression management theory [12], users engage in self-decorating behaviors but also desire their potential dating partners to accept their true selves[38]. Therefore, we believe user presentation should be divided into two stages. Initially, when discovered by potential dating partners, only a superficial part of the profile, the "front stage" information, should be displayed. As the relationship progresses, for instance, once a certain amount of chat time accumulates, further information can be revealed.

937 The advantage of this two-stage presentation method is twofold. First, it can reduce the anxiety and inferiority
938 complex users may feel during initial presentation. Our participants, like P16, typically do not want to reveal too much
939 personal information to strangers at the beginning and may beautify their personal information and photos due to social
940 expectations[14, 28]. However, they also wish to present themselves as authentically as possible. Facing potential dating
941 partners for the first time, they worry about being judged for aspects they are self-conscious about, like education,
942 height, or appearance. The two-stage presentation allows users to initially project an idealized image and then reveal
943 their true selves as mutual understanding deepens, providing a buffer and a process of mutual selection.
944

945 Secondly, this method also helps reduce the risk of privacy breaches while presenting the true self[24]. As participants
946 such as P4 mentioned concerns about information security on online dating apps, they are reluctant to share more
947 personal photos on social platforms, such as graduation pictures meant only for family and friends. The two-stage
948 presentation allows users to protect these private details initially, revealing more only when they feel ready.
949

950 *5.2.2 More Precise Matchmaking Tools.* This paper can promote the development of more precise matchmaking
951 mechanisms in online dating apps. These improvements can be based on users' niche interests, personality traits,
952 appearance, education, etc., for more detailed matching, combined with user surveys to increase accuracy[48]. Our
953 observation of user behavior reveals that online dating users typically match in two ways: as presenters, carefully
954 crafting their image through photos and text, and as selectors, judging other users' profiles to see if their interests,
955 hobbies, and personalities match their preferences.
956

957 For instance, P12 mentioned avoiding explicit photos, and participants like P8 avoid directly showing their physique
958 and appearance. These strategies aim to filter out users who judge solely on appearance while also avoiding harassment.
959 On the other hand, users like P14 display sports-related images to attract potential dates interested in sports.
960

961 Implementing a more detailed matchmaking mechanism enables dating apps to more effectively help users find
962 potential partners that align with their interests and goals. Not only does this facilitate more compatible romantic
963 relationships, but it also significantly enhances the overall user experience. This precise matchmaking approach ensures
964 users focus on those with similar dating purposes, improving success rates and satisfaction.
965

966 *5.2.3 Establishing More Reliable Trust Relationships.* Online dating platforms can facilitate the establishment of trust
967 by statistically visualizing potential cultural connections between users.[2, 24, 34] This mechanism can incorporate data
968 from users' other social platforms, such as cities they have visited, restaurants they have reviewed, favorite animations,
969 and shared experiences.
970

971 As our empirical research shows, mutual disclosure of information is vital for cultivating trust. Users often un-
972 consciously seek potential dating partners with similar cultural backgrounds. Online dating apps that provide such
973 information not only offer more common topics and cultural connections but also more verifiable information to
974 enhance trust between users.
975

976 For example, some participants mentioned methods they use to verify the honesty of others. They might use image
977 recognition software to check if the profile photos are genuine, or use details in the text as corroborating evidence for
978 the authenticity of the picture information. More information on cultural connections helps users build a fuller, more
979 authentic image of the other person in their minds.
980

981 Online dating apps can effectively help users establish trust in the initial stages, thereby fostering deeper communica-
982 tion and connection. This matchmaking mechanism, based on shared cultural backgrounds and experiences, not only
983 improves compatibility among users but also strengthens mutual trust and safety.
984

989 Current dating apps may have usability flaws that lead to an atmosphere of distrust and prejudice among users.
990 Therefore, one of the main challenges facing online dating apps in the future is how to satisfy users' sexual needs while
991 considering their demands for accuracy and authenticity. Through these improvements, dating apps can not only better
992 meet users' needs but also build a healthier, more trustworthy communication environment on a deeper level.
993

994 5.3 Limitations

995 This study, while providing insightful observations on online dating profile creation, is subject to certain limitations that
996 must be considered. The 20 participants we interviewed, though diverse, may not capture the full spectrum of behaviors
997 and attitudes prevalent in the broader online dating community. In particular, even though 7 of the participants had
998 significant overseas experience, the majority were Chinese users. Western users may have less conservative ways of
999 showing their profiles, for example, not including photos that show only part of their face or more frequently using
1000 photos with more skin exposure. The experiences and strategies described by our cohort thus may not fully represent
1001 the diverse range of user experiences across different demographics, which can be addressed by future study.
1002

1003 Additionally, the reliance on self-reported data through semi-structured interviews introduces potential biases.
1004 Participants' responses could be influenced by social desirability bias, leading to either conscious or unconscious
1005 alteration of their experiences and strategies in online dating profile creation. This aspect raises concerns about the
1006 accuracy and generalizability of the findings. For example, participants may be too eager to show their effective
1007 attraction strategies in order to impress the researchers. Moreover, Individuals may have a distorted self-perception to
1008 make the ideal profiles subconsciously which is not extensively explored. Other methods such as benignly observing
1009 user activities online or anonymous surveys may complement our findings by providing a different mode of research
1010 probe.
1011

1012 Another notable limitation is the study's limited focus on the textual aspects of profile creation. This gap in our
1013 research arises from the primary emphasis on image selection strategies, potentially overlooking how textual content
1014 contributes to self-presentation and impression management in online dating profiles. The lack of in-depth exploration
1015 into textual self-presentation may lead to an incomplete understanding of the multifaceted nature of online dating
1016 profiles, where text and imagery work in tandem to convey a user's identity and interests.
1017

1018 Furthermore, our study predominantly addresses the selection of images for online dating profiles, with minimal
1019 exploration into the realm of image editing. We focused on the choices users make from existing photographs rather
1020 than the alteration or enhancement of these images. The absence of an examination of image editing practices may
1021 overlook a significant aspect of self-presentation, especially in an online environment where editing images is a common
1022 practice for altering the perception of an individual's appearance and personality. Future work on image editing for
1023 profile creation may uncover additional insights that corroborate our findings in image selection, or yield contradictory
1024 evidence that suggests newer ways of presenting attractiveness in dating profiles. Building on this, future studies should
1025 aim to explore the interplay between text and imagery in online dating profiles and examine the prevalence and impact
1026 of image editing on user perception and interaction.
1027

1028 6 CONCLUSION

1029 Through 20 semi-structured interviews with online dating app users, we investigated how online daters select their
1030 photos and text when crafting profiles, how they use dating profiles to present themselves, and how they evaluate others'
1031 profiles. Online daters strategically selected photos without identifying information to stimulate imagination or protect
1032 privacy. They presented visually appealing or humorous photos to target potential mates. We also found that participants
1033

1041 exaggerated or misrepresented their traits in response to external and internal desires while striving to present their
1042 authentic selves. Our findings suggest that we should design systems that promote authentic self-expression while
1043 protecting privacy, provide more precise matchmaking tools, and thus help establish more reliable trust relationships.
1044

1045 REFERENCES

- 1046 [1] [n. d.]. From trainspotting to knitting, hobby dating is here to m... <https://screenshot-media.com/the-future/dating/hobby-dating-trend/>
- 1047 [2] Olga Abramova, Annika Baumann, Hanna Krasnova, and Peter Buxmann. [n. d.]. Gender Differences in Online Dating: What Do We Know So Far?
1048 A Systematic Literature Review. In *2016 49th Hawaii International Conference on System Sciences (HICSS)* (Koloa, HI, USA, 2016-01). IEEE, 3858–3867.
1049 <https://doi.org/10.1109/HICSS.2016.481>
- 1050 [3] Hanan Khalid Aljasim and Douglas Zytko. 2022. Foregrounding Women's Safety in Mobile Social Matching and Dating Apps: A Participatory
1051 Design Study. *Proc. ACM Hum.-Comput. Interact.* 7, GROUP, Article 9 (dec 2022), 25 pages. <https://doi.org/10.1145/3567559>
- 1052 [4] Caroline Bull, Hanan Aljasim, and Douglas Zytko. 2021. Designing Opportunistic Social Matching Systems for Women's Safety During Face-to-Face
1053 Social Encounters. In *Companion Publication of the 2021 Conference on Computer Supported Cooperative Work and Social Computing* (Virtual Event,
1054 USA) (*CSCW '21 Companion*). Association for Computing Machinery, New York, NY, USA, 23–26. <https://doi.org/10.1145/3462204.3481751>
- 1055 [5] Lik Sam Chan. [n. d.]. Who uses dating apps? Exploring the relationships among trust, sensation-seeking, smartphone use, and the intent to use
1056 dating apps based on the Integrative Model. 72 ([n. d.]), 246–258. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2017.02.053>
- 1057 [6] Isha Datey, Hanan Khalid Aljasim, and Douglas Zytko. 2022. Repurposing AI in Dating Apps to Augment Women's Strategies for Assessing Risk of
1058 Harm. In *Companion Publication of the 2022 Conference on Computer Supported Cooperative Work and Social Computing* (Virtual Event, Taiwan)
1059 (*CSCW'22 Companion*). Association for Computing Machinery, New York, NY, USA, 150–154. <https://doi.org/10.1145/3500868.3559472>
- 1060 [7] Valerian J. Derlega, Barbara A Winstead, Paul T. P. Wong, and Michael J. Greenspan. 1987. Self-disclosure and relationship development: An
1061 attributional analysis. <https://api.semanticscholar.org/CorpusID:202264065>
- 1062 [8] Nicole Ellison, Rebecca Heino, and Jennifer Gibbs. 2006. Managing Impressions Online: Self-Presentation Processes in the Online Dating Environment.
1063 *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication* 11, 2 (Jan. 2006), 415–441. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1083-6101.2006.00020.x>
- 1064 [9] Nicole B. Ellison, Jeffrey T. Hancock, and Catalina L. Toma. 2012. Profile as promise: A framework for conceptualizing veracity in online dating
1065 self-presentations. *New Media & Society* 14, 1 (Feb. 2012), 45–62. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444811410395> Publisher: SAGE Publications.
- 1066 [10] Franziska Filter and Lara Magyar. [n. d.]. Dating in the 21st century: How important is authenticity for mobile dating apps? ([n. d.]).
- 1067 [11] Andrew T. Fiore and Judith S. Donath. [n. d.]. Homophily in online dating: when do you like someone like yourself?. In *CHI '05 Extended Abstracts
1068 on Human Factors in Computing Systems* (Portland OR USA, 2005-04-02). ACM, 1371–1374. <https://doi.org/10.1145/1056808.1056919>
- 1069 [12] Erving Goffman. 1959. *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*. Anchor Books, New York.
- 1070 [13] Courtney L Gosnell, Thomas W Britt, and Eric S Mckibben. 2011. Self-presentation in everyday life: Effort, closeness, and satisfaction. *Self and
1071 Identity* 10, 1 (2011), 18–31.
- 1072 [14] Rosanna E. Guadagno, Bradley M. Okdie, and Sara A. Kruse. [n. d.]. Dating deception: Gender, online dating, and exaggerated self-presentation. 28,
1073 2 ([n. d.]), 642–647. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2011.11.010>
- 1074 [15] Jeffrey T. Hancock and Catalina L. Toma. 2009. Putting Your Best Face Forward: The Accuracy of Online Dating Photographs. *Journal of
1075 Communication* 59, 2 (June 2009), 367–386. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1460-2466.2009.01420.x>
- 1076 [16] Rebecca D. Heino, Nicole B. Ellison, and Jennifer L. Gibbs. 2010. Relationshopping: Investigating the market metaphor in online dating. *Journal of
1077 Social and Personal Relationships* 27, 4 (June 2010), 427–447. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0265407510361614> Publisher: SAGE Publications Ltd.
- 1078 [17] E Tory Higgins. 1987. Self-discrepancy: a theory relating self and affect. *Psychological review* 94, 3 (1987), 319.
- 1079 [18] Günter J Hitsch, Ali Hortaçsu, and Dan Ariely. 2010. What makes you click?—Mate preferences in online dating. *Quantitative marketing and
1080 Economics* 8 (2010), 393–427.
- 1081 [19] Yongzheng Jia, Xue Liu, and Wei Xu. [n. d.]. When Online Dating Meets Nash Social Welfare: Achieving Efficiency and Fairness. In *Proceedings of the
1082 2018 World Wide Web Conference on World Wide Web - WWW '18* (Lyon, France, 2018). ACM Press, 429–438. <https://doi.org/10.1145/3178876.3186109>
- 1083 [20] Lesley Jimenez. [n. d.]. Personality Differences in Social Networking and Online Self-Presentation. ([n. d.]). <https://doi.org/10.33015/dominican.edu/2014.PSY.ST.01>
- 1084 [21] Carolyn Kane, Kathryn Maguire, Kimberly Neuendorf, and Paul Skalski. [n. d.]. *Nonverbal displays of self-presentation and sex differences in profile
1085 photographs on MySpace.com*.
- 1086 [22] Slava Kisilevich and Mark Last. [n. d.]. Exploring Gender Differences in Member Profiles of an Online Dating Site Across 35 Countries. In *Analysis
1087 of Social Media and Ubiquitous Data* (Berlin, Heidelberg, 2011) (*Lecture Notes in Computer Science*), Martin Atzmueller, Andreas Hotho, Markus
1088 Strohmaier, and Alvin Chin (Eds.). Springer, 57–78. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-642-23599-3_4
- 1089 [23] Mark R Leary, John B Nezlek, Deborah Downs, Julie Radford-Davenport, Jeffrey Martin, and Anne McMullen. 1994. Self-presentation in everyday
1090 interactions: effects of target familiarity and gender composition. *Journal of personality and social psychology* 67, 4 (1994), 664.
- 1091 [24] Kate Sangwon Lee. [n. d.]. Examining Safety and Inclusive Interventions on Dating Apps by Adopting Responsible Social Media Guidelines.
1092 In *Proceedings of the 2023 ACM Conference on Information Technology for Social Good* (Lisbon Portugal, 2023-09-06). ACM, 537–546. <https://doi.org/10.1145/3582515.3609579>

- 1093 [25] Richard Lemke and Simon Merz. [n. d.]. The Prevalence and Gratification of Nude Self-Presentation of Men Who Have Sex with Men in Online-Dating
1094 Environments: Attracting Attention, Empowerment, and Self-Verification. 21, 1 ([n. d.]), 16–24. <https://doi.org/10.1089/cyber.2016.0691> Publisher:
1095 Mary Ann Liebert, Inc., publishers.
- 1096 [26] Jing Li and Jonathan P. Bowen. [n. d.]. Female Self-presentation through Online Dating Applications. <https://doi.org/10.14236/ewic/EVA2022.22>
- 1097 [27] Nikki M Lloyd. [n. d.]. Identity Construction in Online Dating. ([n. d.]).
- 1098 [28] Shao-Kang Lo, Ai-Yun Hsieh, and Yu-Ping Chiu. [n. d.]. Contradictory deceptive behavior in online dating. 29, 4 ([n. d.]), 1755–1762. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2013.02.010>
- 1099 [29] Lucie Merunkova and Josef Slerka. [n. d.]. Goffman's Theory as a Framework for Analysis of Self Presentation on Online Social Networks. 13, 2
1100 ([n. d.]), 243–276. <https://heinonline.org/HOL/P?h=hein.journals/mujlt13&i=243>
- 1101 [30] Alexa Paynter and Campbell Leaper. 2016. Heterosexual dating double standards in undergraduate women and men. *Sex Roles* 75, 7 (2016), 393–406.
- 1102 [31] Kun Peng, Wan-Ying Lin, and Hexin Chen. [n. d.]. Consequences of deceptive self-presentation in online dating. 15, 4 ([n. d.]), 582–610. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17544750.2022.2052130> Publisher: Routledge _eprint: <https://doi.org/10.1080/17544750.2022.2052130>
- 1103 [32] Julie A Reid, Simikka Elliott, and Gretchen R Webber. 2011. Casual hookups to formal dates: Refining the boundaries of the sexual double standard. *Gender & Society* 25, 5 (2011), 545–568.
- 1104 [33] Wade C Rowatt, Michael R Cunningham, and Perri B Druen. 1998. Deception to get a date. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin* 24, 11 (1998),
1105 1228–1242.
- 1106 [34] Natasha Saltes. [n. d.]. Disability, identity and disclosure in the online dating environment. 28, 1 ([n. d.]), 96–109. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09687599.2012.695577>
- 1107 [35] Barry R Schlenker. 1984. Identities, identifications, and relationships. In *Communication, intimacy, and close relationships*. Elsevier, 71–104.
- 1108 [36] Barry R Schlenker, Thomas W Britt, and John Pennington. 1996. Impression regulation and management: Highlights of a theory of self-identification.
1109 ([1996]).
- 1110 [37] Graham G Scott and Christopher J Hand. 2016. Motivation determines Facebook viewing strategy: An eye movement analysis. *Computers in Human
1111 Behavior* 56 (2016), 267–280.
- 1112 [38] Joseph Seering, Felicia Ng, Zheng Yao, and Geoff Kaufman. [n. d.]. Applications of Social Identity Theory to Research and Design in Computer-
1113 Supported Cooperative Work. 2 ([n. d.]), 1–34. Issue CSCW. <https://doi.org/10.1145/3274771>
- 1114 [39] Gwendolyn Seidman and Olivia S Miller. 2013. Effects of gender and physical attractiveness on visual attention to Facebook profiles. *Cyberpsychology,
1115 Behavior, and Social Networking* 16, 1 (2013), 20–24.
- 1116 [40] Robert W Service. 2009. Book Review: Corbin, J., & Strauss, A.(2008). Basics of Qualitative Research: Techniques and Procedures for Developing
1117 Grounded Theory . Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage. *Organizational Research Methods* 12, 3 (2009), 614–617.
- 1118 [41] Sabrina Sobieraj and Lee Humphreys. [n. d.]. The Tinder Games: Collective mobile dating app use and gender conforming behavior. 10, 1 ([n. d.]),
1119 57–75. <https://doi.org/10.1177/20501579211005001> Publisher: SAGE Publications.
- 1120 [42] Harsh Suri. 2011. Purposeful sampling in qualitative research synthesis. *Qualitative research journal* 11, 2 (2011), 63–75.
- 1121 [43] W. B. Swann, C. De la Ronde, and J. G. Hixon. 1994. Authenticity and positivity strivings in marriage and courtship. *Journal of Personality and
1122 Social Psychology* 66, 5 (May 1994), 857–869. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.66.5.857>
- 1123 [44] Dalmas A Taylor and Irwin Altman. 1987. Communication in interpersonal relationships: Social penetration processes. (1987).
- 1124 [45] Dianne M Tice, Jennifer L Butler, Mark B Muraven, and Arlene M Stillwell. 1995. When modesty prevails: Differential favorability of self-presentation
1125 to friends and strangers. *Journal of personality and social psychology* 69, 6 (1995), 1120.
- 1126 [46] Catalina L Toma and Jeffrey T Hancock. 2010. Looks and lies: The role of physical attractiveness in online dating self-presentation and deception.
1127 *Communication research* 37, 3 (2010), 335–351.
- 1128 [47] Catalina L. Toma, Jeffrey T. Hancock, and Nicole B. Ellison. 2008. Separating Fact From Fiction: An Examination of Deceptive Self-Presentation in
1129 Online Dating Profiles. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin* 34, 8 (Aug. 2008), 1023–1036. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0146167208318067> Publisher:
1130 SAGE Publications Inc.
- 1131 [48] Yoji Tomita, Riku Togashi, and Daisuke Moriwaki. [n. d.]. Matching Theory-based Recommender Systems in Online Dating. In *Proceedings of the
1132 16th ACM Conference on Recommender Systems* (Seattle WA USA, 2022-09-18). ACM, 538–541. <https://doi.org/10.1145/3523227.3547406>
- 1133 [49] Tess Van der Zanden, Maria BJ Mos, Alexander P Schouten, and Emiel J Krahmer. 2022. What people look at in multimodal online dating profiles:
1134 How pictorial and textual cues affect impression formation. *Communication Research* 49, 6 (2022), 863–890.
- 1135 [50] Monica T. Whitty. 2008. Revealing the 'real' me, searching for the 'actual' you: Presentations of self on an internet dating site. *Computers in Human
1136 Behavior* 24, 4 (July 2008), 1707–1723. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2007.07.002>
- 1137 [51] Stephan Winter, Nina Haferkamp, Yvonne Stock, and Nicole C. Krämer. [n. d.]. The Digital Quest for Love – The Role of Relationship Status in
1138 Self-Presentation on Social Networking Sites. 5, 2 ([n. d.]). <https://cyberpsychology.eu/article/view/4247> Number: 2.
- 1139
- 1140
- 1141
- 1142
- 1143
- 1144

A APPENDIX:**A.1 Interview Questions****Background Information**

1149 What is your gender?

1150 How old are you?

1151 What is your occupation?

1152 What is your educational background?

1153 Which dating apps do you use?

1154 How frequently do you use dating apps?

Self-Presentation

1155 How do you choose photos for your profile?

1156 Are there any criteria?

1157 What information do you mention in your dating app profile?

1158 Is there any information you deliberately avoid mentioning?

1159 Have you ever exaggerated or downplayed certain traits of yourself? Why?

1160 How do you describe your personality and interests?

Perception of Others

1161 What do you first notice when browsing someone's profile?

1162 What specific information or photos attract your attention?

1163 What information or photos make you feel repulsed or uninterested?

1164 How do you judge whether a profile is authentic or fake?

1165 Have you ever decided not to pursue someone based on their information or photos?

Dating Experience

1166 What is your primary purpose for using dating apps?

1167 Have you had experiences where the actual situation of a person you met on a dating app differed from their profile, leading to disappointment?

1168 How do you think dating on apps differs from dating in real life?

1169

1170

1171

1172

1173

1174

1175

1176

1177

1178

1179

1180

1181

1182

1183

1184

1185

1186

1187

1188

1189

1190

1191

1192

1193

1194

1195

1196