Romance in the digital age

Modern love

Online dating has changed the search for a mate, for better more than for worse.

THE internet has transformed the way people work and communicate. It has upended industries, from entertainment to retailing. But its most profound effect may well be on the biggest decision that most people make choosing a mate.

In the early 1990s the notion of meeting a partner online seemed freakish, and not a little pathetic. Today, in many places, it is normal. Smartphones have put virtual bars in people’s pockets, where singletons can mingle free from the constraints of social or physical geography. Globally, at least 200m people use digital dating services every month. In America more than a third of marriages now start with an online match-up. The internet is the second-most-popular way for Americans to meet people of the opposite sex, and is fast catching up with real-world “friend of a friend” introductions.