

Mate Preferences by Gender in Online Dating: A systematic Literature Review

Siqi Zhu and Faizah Mohd Fakhruddin

Universiti Teknologi Malaysia Malaysia

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ABSTRACT

Online dating sites and apps offer a range of conveniences that appeal to those looking to form new relationships, striving to position themselves as powerful tools for finding dates and building romantic relationships. However, there are clear differences between men and women in their mate acquisition behaviors. While existing research frequently reports frequent gender differences in online dating, these insights remain scattered across multiple studies. This review aims to collect research data to understand the differences in the ways men and women approach mate acquisition online. The study found that the main criterion for men to measure a partner is appearance, while women give priority to the financial attributes of their partner. The findings provide a deeper understanding of the underlying dynamics of the online mate selection process from a gender perspective.

Keywords: Online dating, Online romance, Dating sites, Gender difference

INTRODUCTION

Over the past two decades, digital media has produced transformative changes in all aspects of life, especially in reshaping couple and family relationships. In the field of romantic love, digitalization heralds the arrival of a new era (Sun, 2020). People's pursuit of marriage, which was once limited to traditional arranged marriages and casual dating, has now been realized through the digital field (Okoye, 2021). Online dating platforms have become important venues, opening up new avenues for romance to begin and marital commitment to develop (Kwok et al., 2020). 11% of U.S. adults have used a dating platform or app, and a whopping 23% of users admit to meeting their spouse or long-term partner online (Blair, 2023). While statistics vary by country and age group, both men and women readily use popular dating platforms such as Momo, Tantan and Tinder, indicating a strong appetite for romantic interactions and connections (Ponseti et al., 2022).

However, there are some differences between women and men on their preferences in selecting marriage partners (Fenoaltea et al., 2021). Generally speaking, women are more likely to put security and stability as their priority (Berger et al., 2020). They often want a relationship based on financial stability, emotional support, and family responsibility (Berger et al., 2020). In contrast, men may focus more on the pursuit of romance and passion, placing the priority of marriage in terms of excitement in the relationship and respect for personal freedom (Bühler et al., 2020). In addition, women may be more concerned with family roles and distribution of responsibilities, while men may be more inclined to retain a certain amount of freedom (Parker et al., 2020). Of course, these are only general trends. In fact, everyone's preference for marriage may be different, affected by various factors such as personal experience, cultural background, and values (Lazarus, 2023). While a range of studies investigating various user-related aspects of online dating sites have captured a variety of gender differences, these insights have generally been scattered across other research projects and do not provide a coherent picture of the available research in this area. To fill this gap, this study aims to provide an updated and comprehensive review of existing empirical investigations and systematically summarize existing knowledge on mate selection by gender in online dating.

Role Interaction Theory (Husin et al., 2020) and Evolutionary Theory (Stearns et al., 2020) are frequently employed to elucidate disparities in behaviors and perceptions between genders (Gabriel et al., 2021). Within

the realm of mate selection, an evolutionary standpoint holds particular significance as it delves into human species' choices amidst competition and the pursuit of limited reproductive opportunities. Originally expounded upon as Sexual Selection Theory by (Filice et al., 2022), this perspective posits reproductive success as a paramount drive-in human evolution, with both males and females striving for optimal outcomes in this domain. However, as contemporary society often links reproductive opportunities with monogamy, men encounter consequential decisions (Sassler et al., 2020). Hence, they might emphasize traits such as health, "good genes," physical attractiveness, youth, and other "feminine" attributes crucial for fulfilling female reproductive functions (Cassar et al., 2023). To date, prior research has furnished empirical evidence delineating evolutionarily-motivated discrepancies in offline behaviors and cognition between males and females (Cassar et al., 2023). Nevertheless, there exists scant systematic evidence regarding gender differentials within the context of contemporary online dating (Prentice et al., 2022). Given the burgeoning independence of women in developed nations and the burgeoning emphasis on gender parity, traditionally assumed disparities may no longer hold significant sway, or may have undergone some degree of transformation (Anglin et al., 2022). Therefore, this study systematically summarize existing knowledge analyzing areas ranging from online dating to marriage from a gender perspective.

A methodological review of past literature is a crucial endeavor for any academic research (Booth, 2016). The need to uncover what is already known in the body of knowledge prior to initiating any research study should not be underestimated (Thornberg, 2012). In terms of theory, this study can accurately describe the current research situation and provide good guidance for future research directions. Furthermore, the findings can be used to shed light on gender differences in motivations and behaviors in the transition from online dating to marriage, allowing for better comparison with established knowledge on pathways to offline marriage. From a management perspective, this research can help platform providers decide on gender-specific additional features or special offers for VIP platform areas common to such sites. On a more general level, by advancing knowledge in this area, this research may also contribute to a greater social good, as couples who meet through online channels report greater satisfaction and are less likely to divorce (Valenzuela et al., 2022), suggesting online dating has had a beneficial impact on society as a whole.

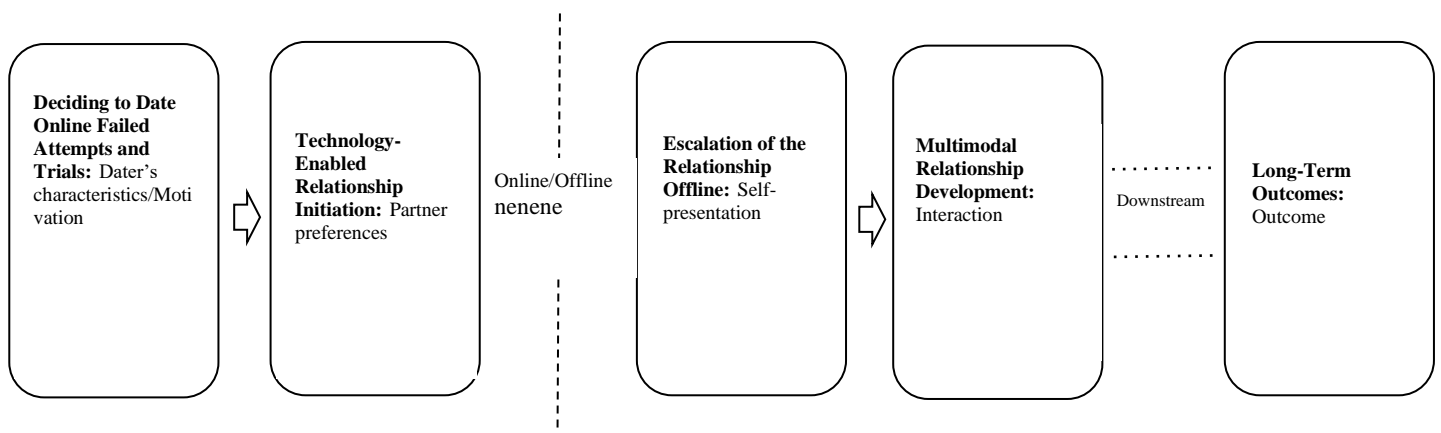


Figure 1. Process Model of Online Dating.

METHODOLOGY

Following the advice of Levy (Levy et al., 2006), this study conducted a systematic literature review using the scientific databases Scopus (213) and (16700) in combination with the keywords {online dating OR dating website OR digital dating OR internet romantic relationship OR internet dating OR online romance OR online love OR Match.com OR Tinder AND gender OR male OR female OR woman OR man OR sex differences AND marriage mate} and 2004-2014. A total of 16913 studies were identified which produced a final selection of 40 studies after inclusion and exclusion criteria were applied (see Fig.2). The inclusion criteria comprised full-text studies that (i) were published in peer reviewed journals, (ii) were published from January 1 (2004) to February 30 (2024) as first studies on online dating in the consulted databases dating back to 2004, (iii) were written in English as these are the languages that the first author speaks, (iv) made reference to intentions and/or motives, marriage market or mate preference, deception and/or exaggerated performance. Studies were excluded if they (i) primarily online dating leading to marriage, (ii) primarily related to gender characteristics,

and (iii) did not assess online dating as the main variable under investigation. This yielded 40 studies (see Table 1), only six of these specifically addressed gender differences in the effects of online dating on marriage. In terms of method, studies in this sample were based on surveys, interviews, experiments, descriptive analysis or other types of statistical analyses. Around 40% of articles focused on gender-related issues, student samples were present in only a small share of all articles in this sample (20%).

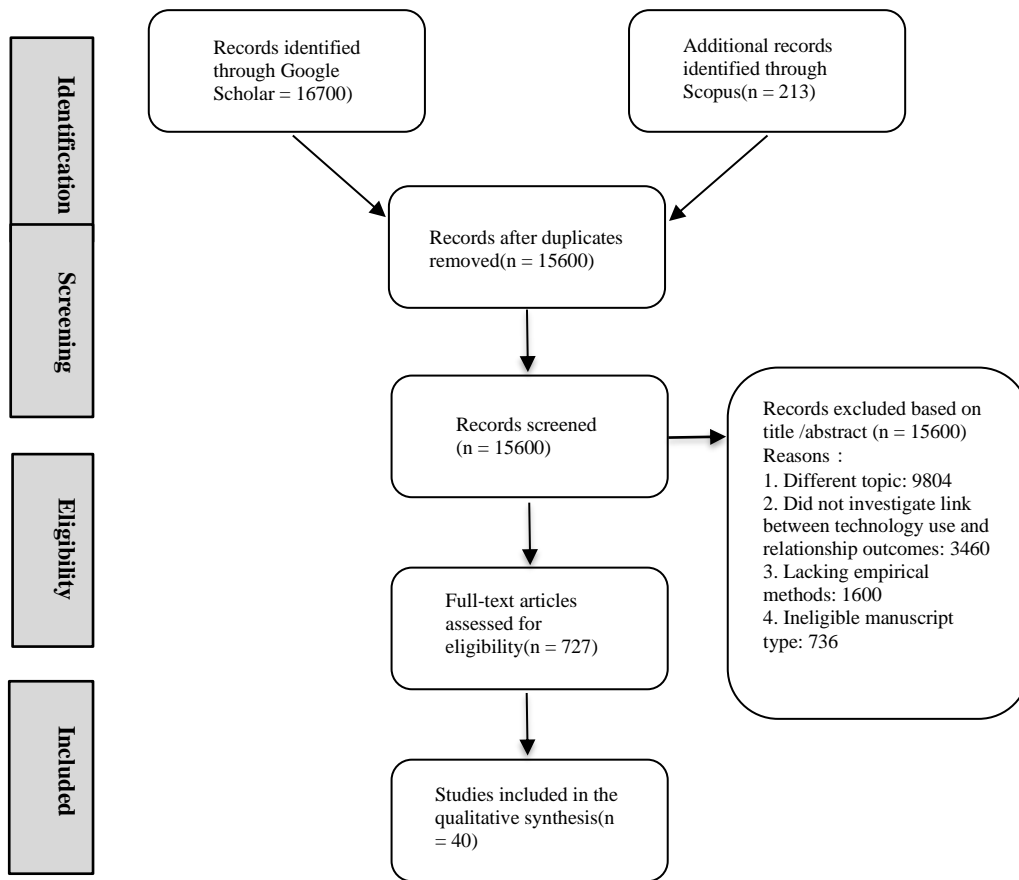


Figure 2. Literature search flow.

In the following step, a total of 40 mate preference-relevant insights were derived using the in-text search. Following this analysis, this study was able to elicit 4 different themes (see Table 1), that reflect a typical online dating process (see Figure 1).

Table 1. Themes in Gender-Relevant Discourse on Online Dating.

Theme	Description	Number of papers
Motivation	Motivational patterns of users.	6(15%)
Preferences	Preferences of users with regard to mating choices.	16(40%)
Disclosure	Information shared on the profiles of users.	7(17.5%)
Interaction	Dynamics of interaction between users via private messaging functionality.	11(27.5%)

RESULT

This section has been divided into four subsections which cover: (i) Motivation, (ii) Preferences, (iii) Disclosure and (iv) Interaction of online dating. Across the subsections, the focus is on the main findings of each study and, when applicable, how these findings relate to mate preference attributes.

Motivation

According to the Cognitive Motivation Theory (Schunk et al., 2020), media cognition and emotional processing are influenced by the content and structural characteristics of messages. Cognition, emotion, and

motivation are explained as interrelated, through a dual-system framework of emotional responses to environmental stimuli (Pessoa, 2015; Strack et al., 2015). The Cognitive Motivation Theory (Schunk et al., 2020) predicts that cognitive processing of media is determined by the relative activation of appetitive and aversive motivational systems. System activation is typically explained by physiological arousal (Lang et al., 2022), as the body prepares for approach and avoidance responses to motivationally relevant media stimuli, as if these stimuli were indistinguishable from direct encounters. Subsequently, activation of motivational systems influences the relative allocation of limited cognitive resources to different components of information processing, such as gathering additional information, associating new information with long-term memory structures, and recalling previously acquired information (encoding, storage, and retrieval respectively) (Bower, 2022).

The initial motivations for participating in online matrimonial services may play a crucial role in subsequent mate selection processes. Therefore, gender differences in motivation align with typical mating theory strategies (see Table 2). When faced with various opportunities, male users often tend to seek less committed short-term relationships (Potarca, 2021; Rappleyea et al., 2014). In contrast, female users claim to be driven by non-romantic motives, such as seeking friendships (Abramova, 2016; Fiore et al., 2004) or potential marriage partners (Regan et al., 1997; Gibbs et al., 2011), indicating a preference for long-term relationships. Interestingly, these motivations remain consistent over time.

Table 2. Motivation Patterns of Online Daters

Title	Author	Scope/Research Objectives	Research Design	Samples	Findings
First comes love, then comes Google: An investigation of uncertainty reduction strategies and self-disclosure in online dating.	Gibbs, Jennifer L., Nicole B. Ellison, and Chih-Hui Lai.	Investigates relationships between privacy concerns, uncertainty reduction behaviors, and self-disclosure among online dating participants, drawing on uncertainty reduction theory and the warranting principle.	Quantitative	nationwide sample of online dating participants (N = 562)	The frequency of use of uncertainty reduction strategies is predicted by three sets of online dating concerns—personal security, misrepresentation, and recognition—as well as self-efficacy in online dating.
Online dating and ‘becoming’ heterosexualities for women aged 30 and older in the digital era.	Frohlick, Susan, and Paula Migliardi.	Unravels some of the complexities involved for heterosexual women aged 30 years and older using online dating to seek out intimate and sexual relationships with men.	Qualitative	Interviewed 27 women between the ages of 30 and 61 living in various provinces across Canada.	Online dating and the myriad routine activities required to be successful in finding a suitable man entailed a simultaneous negotiation of sexuality and negotiation of aging for this group of women, who found both pleasure and restriction in their forays online.
Internet dating and respectable women: Gender expectations in an untraditional partnership and marriage	Žakelj, Tjaša.	The article deals with the question of gendered normativity related to expressions of femininity in the case of building of intimate romantic partnership within Internet dating.	Qualitative	66 in-depth semi-structured interviews with 34 men and 32 women with Internet dating experiences	Traditional normative understandings of gender were identified especially in the field of expectations related to women and womanhood and were revealed in men’s hierarchical positioning of women regarding their status, in

market-the case of Slovenia.					women's endeavors to present themselves as respectable and in men's disapproval of women's sexualities.
Are sex differences in mating strategies overrated? Sociosexual orientation as a dominant predictor in online dating strategies.	Hallam, Lara, et al.	To investigate whether previously documented sex differences in mating strategies can be partially explained by sapiosexuality, as a proximate manifestation of sex, by replicating a study about motives to use online dating applications	Quantitative	N=254 online daters	Individuals with a preference for unrestricted sexual relationships are more motivated to use online dating for reasons related to casual sex, whereas individuals who prefer restricted sexual relationships are more motivated to use online dating to find romance.
Online dating is shifting educational inequalities in marriage formation in Germany.	Potarca, Gina.	This study ran a series of Fine-Gray competing risks models to assess how online dating shapes the transition to marriage for partnered adults with non tertiary and tertiary education.	Quantitative	Using 2008–2019 pairfam data from Germany (N=3,561)	Irrespective of education, men in online-formed couples had greater chances of marrying than men in couples established offline. Highly educated women who met their partner in non digital ways were less prone to marry than lower-educated women; for women in couples initiated online, however, the pattern was reversed.
Gender differences and communication technology use among emerging adults in the initiation of dating relationships.	Rappleyea, Damon L., Alan C. Taylor, and Xiangming Fang.	Investigated the use of communication technology and its impact on how relationships are discovered, initiated, and maintained among this group	Quantitative	1,003 young adults (ages 18–25 years)	Analyzed using chi-square tests to assess for differences between groups. Findings suggest significant differences between men and women and their use of communication technology during the initiation of dating relationships.

Preferences

Compared to offline environments, online dating significantly expands the scope of potential partners (Chappetta et al., 2022; Fiore et al., 2008). The internet allows users to establish relationships with strangers through online or offline channels, and mate preferences have been widely studied (Hopcroft et al., 2021; Chappetta et al., 2016). Engaging in conscious mate selection processes through online dating platforms entails a series of steps to narrow down the pool of qualified candidates from many to one (Sepehri et al., 2013). Based on the differences established in the motivation model above, our review suggests that both men and women have a relatively clear understanding of certain characteristics sought in partners (see Table 4).

This study summarizes these as "potential attraction" and "preference attraction" to explain people's

preferences and choices for long-term partners (Sharabi, et al., 2019; Hammond, et al., 2020). Potential attraction implies that people choose partners whose characteristics align with their gender features, indicating their reproductive potential: men prioritize youth more than women, while women prioritize partners' aspirational social status, economic wealth, and commitment, traits associated with being a good provider. In other words, men tend to seek younger and physically attractive women, while women focus more on men's socioeconomic status (Shi et al., 2021). In terms of "preference attraction," although women appear to be more tolerant of potential partners' appearance (Whyte et al., 2017; Rosenfeld et al., 2012), men readily express specific preferences for body types (Whitty et al., 2008; Fiore et al., 2004), with slim and fit being their most desired type (Glasser et al., 2009; Appel et al., 2023; Skopek et al., 2011). In fact, women's physical attractiveness seems to be the decisive criterion for male online daters (Chappetta et al., 2016; Brand et al., 2012; Bak, 2010), corresponding to their pursuit of female reproductive advantages. Regarding age criteria, men exhibit a clear pattern of seeking younger (Kreager et al., 2014; Rosenfeld et al., 2012; Hitsch et al., 2006; Hitsch et al., 2010) or at least similarly aged partners (Šetinová et al., 2021). Empirical studies on offline dating suggest that mate selection aligns closely with evolutionary predictions based on parental investment theory, and the potential attraction hypothesis is built upon parental investment theory (Fiore et al., 2010; March et al., 2016). However, research on Chinese online dating sites suggests that mate selection aligns more with the preference attraction hypothesis (He et al., 2013).

According to the review, preferences for education level, age, and race exhibit homogeneity in mate choice patterns or preferences for potential partners among both men and women (Lin et al., 2013; Lewis et al., 2016), indicating a tendency for people to choose partners similar to themselves. There are three possible reasons for homogeneity. Firstly, similar individuals are more likely to have common interests and frequent similar places, making it easier for them to encounter each other (Hitsch et al., 2013). Secondly, relationships introduced by relatives and friends exhibit homogeneity (Neyt, et al., 2019). Finally, similarity between partners can also be explained by personal preferences or cost/benefit calculations. On some online dating platforms, users can anonymously browse other users' profiles without leaving any traces of visits. A recent study on a major North American online dating site found that anonymous users browsed more profiles, while non-anonymous users obtained better matching results (Egebark et al., 2021).

However, in terms of height, men exhibit higher tolerance, with taller men tolerating greater height differences in partners, while taller women tolerate greater height differences in partners, contrasting sharply with tall women and short men trying to adhere to socially acceptable standards (Yancey et al., 2016).

Household material well-being may depend on male income (Malone et al., 2010), explaining why women strongly prefer dating wealthier men (Neyt et al., 2019; Hwang et al., 2013; Hitsch et al., 2006; Skopek et al., 2011). Meanwhile, men are more open and willing to interact with women with lower income (Su et al., 2019; Guadagno et al., 2012; Potarca et al., 2021; Hitsch et al., 2010). The positive relationship established between socioeconomic status and academic achievement (Berkowitz et al., 2017) explains why educational preferences follow the same gender patterns as socioeconomic status and are more important for women (Lin et al., 2013; Hwang et al., 2013; Hitsch et al., 2010). Men's higher educational attainment attracts women (Hitsch et al., 2005; Skopek et al., 2011; McClintock et al., 2014), and educational homogeneity is considered a good choice for both women and men (Ranzini et al., 2022; Thomas et al., 2020; Lewis et al., 2016). In summary, men have lower educational requirements for partners and are willing to interact with women with lower educational attainment (Xiao et al., 2020; Rosenfeld et al., 2012; Huber et al., 2017; Eastwick et al., 2008). However, when women's intelligence surpasses their own, men are not attracted to women's intelligence (Ong et al., 2015). For both of these scenarios, online daters' preferences for height follow the "male height" norm (Whyte et al., 2017; Sharabi, et al., 2019; Appel et al., 200623), with female preferences being more pronounced (Xia et al., 2014).

Finally, both men and women have preferences for the information provided by the opposite sex. While all daters who post more photos have a greater chance of convincing potential partners of their attractiveness (Hancock et al., 2009; Brand et al., 2012; Abramova et al., 2016; Whitty et al., 2008), posting photos is especially important for women's dating success. For them, the number of messages received is positively correlated with the number of photos they post (Fiore et al., 2008; Gibbs et al., 2006; Hancock et al., 2009; McGloin et al., 2018), indirectly demonstrating the importance of physical attractiveness for men. In contrast, women prefer men who post longer self-descriptions (Tong et al., 2020).

Table 3. Preferences Patterns of Online Daters

Title	Author	Scope/Research Objectives	Research Design	Samples	Findings
How gender role stereotypes affect attraction in an online dating scenario: A replication and extension.	Kelsey C. Chappetta and Joan M. Barth	examined the effects of gender role congruence on romantic interest in online dating profiles	Quantitative	Study 1 (N = 429, 55% male) Study 2 (N = 958, 50.6% male)	Attractive and gender role incongruent profiles were preferred over average-looking and gender role congruent profiles, but the latter effect was driven by women. The difference in preference for attractive and average-looking profiles was greater for women than for men. Men's preference for both congruent and incongruent profiles was related to holding feminine communal traits and egalitarian gender role beliefs.
Assessing attractiveness in online dating profiles.	Andrew T. Fiore and Lindsay Shaw Taylor	We examined how users perceive attractiveness in online dating profiles, which provide their first exposure to a potential partner.	Qualitative	Searched for profiles with photos meeting the appropriate criteria and randomly chose one profile from the 10 displayed on each of the first five pages of the search results.	The free-text component also played an important role in predicting overall attractiveness. Numerous other qualities predicted the attractiveness ratings of photos and free-text components, albeit in different ways for men and women. The fixed-choice elements of a profile, however, were unrelated to attractiveness.
Generation and gender differences in mate selection.	Sepehri, Safoora, and Fatemeh Bagherian	Addresses what criteria are important for girls and boys in selecting their prospectus spouses.	Qualitative Qualitative	Participants were 15 young boys and 15 girls and their mothers.	Physical beauty was more important to boys than to girls while the criteria of responsibility and being loved were more important to girls than to boys. Income, field of study, and being handsome were more important criteria for mothers when choosing a son-in-law than when selecting daughter-in-law. The girls paid more attention to loving and being loved and relations before marriage than their mothers. Choosing a handsome bride was the more important criterion for boys than for their mothers.
Personal income and the probability of marriage, divorce, and childbearing in	Hopcroft Rosemary L.	Includes complete measures of male biological fertility for a	Quantitative	the 2014 wave of the Study of Income and Program Participation-N = 55,281	Women are more likely than men to prioritize earning capabilities in a long-term mate and suggest that high income men have high value as long-term mates in the U.S.

the US.		large-scale probability sample of the U.S. population			
Online Dating and Females in the Academia: Is it an Issue for Commendation, Condemnation or Ambivalence?.	Hammond, Christiana, and Langmia Kehbuma.	Explores the nature of online dating, interrogates the motivations for engagement, and examines the lived experiences of females in the academia on online dating.	Qualitative	Eighteen purposively selected females from two higher educational institutions in Ghana.	Online dating is prevalent among females in the academia who often suffer gender constraints in their quest for love due to a perceived strong personality, accomplishment, and level of thinking. The paper recommends efforts at enhancing security protocols on e-dating to help minimize impersonation and cyber fraud which are characteristics of e-dating which is an integral part of the contemporary era.
Things change with age: Educational assortment in online dating.	Whyte, Stephen, and Benno Torgler.	To identify the factors that influence educational assortment in an online dating setting	Quantitative	Analise 219,013 participant contacts by 41,936 members of the Australian online dating website RSVP over a four-month period.	More educated online daters are consistently likely to assort positively (homogamy) meaning that they are more likely to contact potential mates with the same level of education. However, as the more educated cohort gets older they care less about homogamy while less educated daters become more interested in homogamy which leads to an increase in similarity towards caring for the same educational level.
Pragmatic men, romantic women: Popularity feedback on online dating platforms.	Shi, Lanfei, Peng Huang, and Jui Ramaprasad.	Reveal information about their popularity relative to other users and investigate their post-feedback behavioral changes in two engagement strategies	Quantitative	Users (n=7,228) of the platform and assign each subject into one of two groups—a control group (n = 3,563) with no popularity feedback and a treatment group (n =3,665) with comparative popularity feedback	The way individuals react to comparative popularity feedback is contingent on both revealed popularity and gender. Males exhibit pragmatic adaptations in selectivity calibration and self-marketing, whereas females display a 'romantic' persistence and show little strategic change in their behavior.
Searching for a mate: The rise of the Internet as a social intermediary.	Rosenfeld, Michael J., and Reuben J. Thomas.	Explores how the efficiency of Internet search is changing the way	Quantitative	HCMST is a nationally representative longitudinal survey of 4,002 English literate	Adults with Internet access at home are substantially more likely to have partners, even after controlling for other factors. Partnership rate has increased during the Internet

		Americans find romantic partners.		adults, of whom 3,009 had a spouse or romantic partner.	era (consistent with Internet efficiency of search) for same-sex couples, but the heterosexual partnership rate has been flat.
From first email to first date: Strategies for initiating relationships in online dating.	Sharabi, Liesel L., and Tiffany A. Dykstra-DeVette.	The present study explores the relationship initiation process in online dating	Quantitative	Participants' (N = 105) naturally occurring email messages to a prospective romantic partner	Men were generally more direct than women (e.g., by sending the first message), and those who discussed their mate preferences tended to report a higher likelihood of a second date than other participants.
Swipe right? Using beauty filters in male Tinder profiles reduces women's evaluations of trustworthiness but increases physical attractiveness and dating intention.	Appel, Markus, et al.	Connecting and extending prior theory and research, a model on the influence of filter use on potential dating partners' perceived trustworthiness and attractiveness is proposed	Quantitative	A total of 280 participants. The target sample was specified to be female, single, between 20 and 28 years old, and heterosexual or bisexual.	Showing that (hetero- or bisexual) women perceive male Tinder users with filtered photos (as compared to the same users with unfiltered photos) as more physically attractive—but as less trustworthy. The more attractive and trustworthy the profile owner was perceived, the more likely the women were inclined to date him. Attractiveness had a greater influence on women's dating intention than trustworthiness, leading to a positive overall effect of filter use on dating intention, irrespective of photo-editing experience. Implications are discussed.
The gendered dynamics of age preferences- Empirical evidence from online dating.	Skopek, Jan, Andreas Schmitz, and Hans-Peter Blossfeld.	This study uses innovative data from online dating to analyze men's and women's preferences regarding the age of a partner.	Quantitative	Utilized two datasets collected on a major German online dating website.	Age preferences essentially shift with age, but in different ways for men and women: Whereas men increasingly prefer younger women as they age, women's age preferences become increasingly diverse. They also show that age preferences are confounded with gender-specific preferences for attractiveness and education. Finally, preferences for age also vary with market relevant traits such as education and parenthood, but not with prior marital experience.
What makes you click? Mate preferences and matching outcomes in online dating.	Hitsch, Günter J., Ali Hortaçsu, and Dan Ariely.	Draw inferences on mate preferences and to investigate the	Qualitative	University of Chicago undergraduate and graduate students in the 18-25 age	Revealed preference data allow us to investigate mate preferences that people might not truthfully reveal, in particular their behavior towards potential mates of

		role played by these preferences in determining match outcomes and sorting patterns.		group, with an equal fraction of male and female recruits.	different ethnicities. Regarding such preferences, we find that the users of the dating site prefer to match with a partner of their own ethnicity, and that such same-race preferences are more pronounced for women than for men.
Who are people willing to date? Ethnic and gender patterns in online dating.	Hwang, Wei-Chin.	Better understanding race relations and willingness to date intra- and inter- racially	Quantitative	Data from 2,123 online dating profiles were randomly collected from four racial groups (Asian, Black, Latino, and White).	Willingness to date interracially was generally high and that willingness to date interracially was lower and influenced by racial social status. Because men evidenced an overall high willingness to date interracially, women's willingness to out-date provided a more accurate depiction of racial social status and exchange. Women of higher racial status groups were less willing than those from lower status groups to outdate.
Are men intimidated by highly educated women? Undercover on Tinder.	Neyt, Brecht, Sarah Vandembulcke, and Stijn Baert	Examine the impact of an individual's education level on her/his mating success on the mobile dating app Tinder.	Quantitative	Collected data on 3,600 profile evaluations.	Indicate a heterogeneous effect of education level by gender: while women strongly prefer a highly educated potential partner, this hypothesis is rejected for men.
Brains or beauty? Causal evidence on the returns to education and attractiveness in the online dating market.	Egebark, Johan, et al.	Preferences for education and attractiveness by conducting a field experiment in a large online dating market.	Qualitative	Collected photos of 88 males and 54 females (all white and around 30) ...	Men and women prefer attractive over unattractive profiles, regardless of their own attractiveness. We also find that high-educated men prefer low-educated over high-educated profiles as much as high-educated women prefer high-educated over low-educated profiles. With preferences similar for attractiveness but opposite for education, two groups are more likely to stay single: unattractive, low-educated men and unattractive, high-educated women.

Disclosure

Self-disclosure, an essential component of online dating, involves the sharing of personal information, signifying the release of barriers rooted in fear and anxiety as individuals deepen their understanding of each

other (McKenna et al., 2014). As relationships progress, intimacy and trust naturally develop between the involved parties (Eichenberg et al., 2017).

In face-to-face interactions, individuals often approach with caution when it comes to divulging personal details, particularly in the early stages of a relationship (Whitty et al., 2008). They gradually open up about their interests, careers, and daily routines. However, it is only after a certain level of trust has been established that they begin to share deeper emotions and thoughts (Schmitz et al., 2013). On online dating platforms, individuals present themselves through personal information, hoping to align this portrayal with their true selves (Ellison et al., 2006). Research indicates that men tend to disclose more information in their profiles, although the content may be relatively standard and homogeneous, with limited variety (Whyte et al., 2017; Sharabi, et al., 2019; Appel et al., 200623). Drawing from mating theory, men are inclined to share details pertaining to their personal identity, such as income, occupation, property, or vehicles, as a means to showcase desirable resources to potential partners (Kosinski et al., 2014; Lo, et al., 2013; Shen et al., 20022).

Conversely, women demonstrate more diversity and creativity in their self-presentation (Haferkamp et al., 2012). They are inclined to share a broader spectrum of information about their lives, interests, family, and sexuality (LeFebvre et al., 2018). Driven by the desire to highlight their own attractiveness, women are more inclined to upload visually appealing photos to accentuate their allure (Kisilevich et al., 2010).

Text analysis reveals that men typically utilize numbers and references to others, while women favor personal pronouns, express positive emotions, incorporate spatial language, and provide more elaborate self-descriptions (Toma et al., 2014; Coats, et al., 2012; Gibson et al., 2019). Although gender differences in the use of tentative language were not significant, the overall pattern of disclosing personal information aligns with the predictions of evolutionary theory (Eastwick et al., 2014).

Table 4. Disclosure Patterns of Online Daters

Title	Author	Scope/Research Objectives	Research Design	Samples	Findings
Contradictory deceptive behavior in online dating.	Shao-Kang Lo, Ai-Yun Hsieh, Yu-Ping Chiu	This study conducts two experiments to examine contradictory deceptive behavior in online dating.	Quantitative	A total of 172 volunteers (87 men, 85 women, average age = 21.78).	Women employ higher levels of deception in self-presentation than men in online dating environments.
Do women pick up lies before men? The association between gender, deception patterns, and detection modes in online dating.	Schmitz, Andreas, Doreen Zillmann	Investigate deception patterns of men and women in online dating profiles.	Quantitative	1,975 men (60%) and 1,315 women (40%) , The average age is 40.	Women are more likely to misrepresent their physical attractiveness; men are more likely to misrepresent information on marital status, intended relationship, and height. Women are more likely to detect specific male deceptions during e-mail communication in an early stage of dating, whereas men are more likely to detect specific female deceptions at the first face-to-face meeting.
How to Find Mr/Miss Right? The Mechanism of	Shen, Yang, and Yue Qian.	Examine their strategies for finding a partner online.	Qualitative	Interviews with 29 heterosexuals, highly-	Despite the heterogeneity in dating types, online dating exhibited homophily effects, which

Search Among Online Daters in Shanghai.				educated daters conducted in Shanghai	may reinforce social inequality in China's marriage market.
Swiping me off my feet: Explicating relationship initiation on Tinder.	LeFebvre, Leah E.	Investigates how people engage in relationship initiation behaviors through Tinder and highlights how interpersonal relationship initiation, selection processes, and strategic pre-interaction behaviors are evolving through contemporary-mediated dating culture.	Quantitative	Participants (N = 395) were recruited from Amazon's Mechanical Turk.	New emergent technologies are changing how interpersonal relationship initiation functions. The traditional face-to-face relationship development models and initiation conceptualizations should be modified to include the introduction of the pre-interaction processes apparent in mobile dating applications such as Tinder
Exploring gender differences in member profiles of an online dating site across 35 countries.	Kisilevich, Slava, and Mark Last.	Explore online dating similarities and differences in patterns of self-disclosure.	Quantitative	SNS dataset of 10 million public profiles with more than 40 different attributes	Some geographically close countries exhibit higher similarity between patterns of self-disclosure which was also confirmed by studies on cross-cultural differences and personality traits.
Separating fact from fiction: An examination of deceptive self-presentation in online dating profiles.	Toma, Catalina L., Jeffrey T. Hancock, and Nicole B. Ellison.	Examines self-presentation in online dating profiles using a novel cross-validation technique for establishing accuracy.	Qualitative	Eighty online daters	Participants strategically balanced the deceptive opportunities presented by online self-presentation (e.g., the editability of profiles) with the social constraints of establishing romantic relationships (e.g., the anticipation of future interaction).
Sex differences in relationship regret: The role of perceived mate characteristics.	Coats, Susan, et al.	Examined regret involving action and inaction in the realm of romantic relationships by testing whether such regret is associated with the characteristics of one's mate.	Quantitative	394 participants reported on a previous casual sexual encounter, and in study 2, 358 participants reported on a previous romantic relationship.	The perceived stinginess of the participant's mate and perceived wealth of the participants' potential mate. when the mate presented in the scenario was described in ways consistent with mate preferences.

Interaction

Past research has documented gender differences in online dating (Hallam et al., 2018; Hwang, et al., 2013; Alterovitz et al., 2011). Regarding final interactions (see Table 5), the literature consistently suggests that male initiators are better able to establish contact with more ideal partners compared to males who wait for contact, while female initiators are equally capable of establishing contact with more ideal partners as females who wait for contact (Kreager et al., 2014; Regnerus, et al., 2011; Guadagno et al., 2012). Additionally, features allowing access to viewing records tend to encourage men to initiate conversations more actively, as they are more willing to send messages to women who have viewed their profiles through this feature (Kreager et al., 2014; Mascaro, et al., 2012; Sharabi et al., 2023).

Consistent with the aforementioned, women receive a substantial number of messages during this process, while men receive fewer messages and replies (Potarca et al., 2020; Kimbrough, et al., 2013; Gibbs et al., 2006). Both men and women tend to send messages to individuals in the dating market who are most socially popular, regardless of their own level of attractiveness (Hancock et al., 2009). They also found that the likelihood of contact initiation by women is more than twice that of men, but women send four times fewer messages than men (Rosen et al., 2008). Overall, this indicates that men attempt to capitalize on opportunities to reach out to multiple women and are satisfied with the superficial features of this contact (García et al., 2017). In contrast, women are quite selective when deciding who might be potential dating partners for them (Fletcher et al., 2014). Furthermore, expressing clear dating preferences (Ellison et al., 2006) and engaging in conversations related to sexuality (Gibbs et al., 2006) increase the chances of female users receiving responses (Bruch et al., 2018). Meanwhile, lengthy messages increase the chances of men receiving replies (Whitty et al., 2008).

Table 5. Interaction Patterns of Online Daters

Title	Author	Scope/Research Objectives	Research Design	Samples	Findings
Dating deception: Gender, online dating, and exaggerated self-presentation.	Guadagno, Rosanna E., Bradley M.	Examined how differences in expectations about meeting impacted the degree of deceptive self-presentation individuals displayed within the context of dating.	Quantitative	148 (88 women, 60 men) introductory psychology students from a large southeastern university	Male participants emphasized their positive characteristics more if the potential date was less salient compared to a more salient condition or the control conditions. Implications for self-presentation theory, online social interaction, and online dating research will be discussed.
Where have all the good men gone? Gendered interactions in online dating.	Kreager, Derek A., et al	This article explores gendered patterns of online dating and their implications for heterosexual union formation.	Quantitative	Data from a midsized Southwestern city (N=8,259 men, 6,274 women)	Couple similarities are more likely to result from relationship termination than initial homophilous preferences.
Not just a wink and smile: an analysis of user-defined success in online dating.	Mascaro, Christopher M.	An analysis of user-defined success in online dating	Quantitative	The websites of Match.com (n=544), eHarmony (n=213), and OkCupid	1) The distribution of relationship status (Dating, Engaged, Married) varies among websites, 2) Approximately half of all stories explicitly thank the service they used, 3)The

				(n=61).	locations of successful couples from Match.com and eHarmony are not statistically different when analyzed at a regional level, and 4) while the distribution of these couples follows general population trends, there are low population density islands where many self-identified successful couples live.
The enduring effect of internet dating: Meeting online and the road to marriage.	Sharabi, Liesel L.	Approach to understanding the role of online dating in the progression of relationships toward marriage.	Qualitative	Fifty interviews (ages 21–62; Mage=33.42) who were married or engaged to someone they met via online dating	Findings from this study suggest that online dating is changing more than where couples meet and have theoretical and practical implications.
Deception in online dating: Significance and implications for the first offline date.	Sharabi, Liesel L., and John P. Caughlin.	Investigated the effects of online dating deception on people's subsequent offline interactions.	Quantitative	Between ages 18 and 63 (M=24.64, (SD)=7.86 years. Most were female (n=69, 73.4%), with fewer males (n=25, 26.6%)	Participants' perceptions of their partner's deception—but not their own—negatively predicted first date success.
The demography of swiping right. An overview of couples who met through dating apps in Switzerland.	Potarca, Gina.	This study provides a rich overview of couples who met through dating apps by addressing three main themes: 1) family formation intentions, 2) relationship satisfaction and individual well-being, and 3) assortative mating.	Quantitative	(n = 1,587), those without a partner (n = 2,929), as well as partnered participants without an answer on where they found their match (n = 212).	Couples formed through mobile dating have stronger cohabiting intentions than those formed in non-digital settings. Women who found their partner through a dating app also have stronger fertility desires and intentions than those who found their partner offline.
The impact of emotionality and self-disclosure on online dating versus traditional dating.	Rosen, Larry D., et al.	Examines the online dating process, similarities and differences between online and traditional dating, and the	Qualitative	One thousand and twenty-nine adult subjects were recruited from the Los Angeles area by students in	The amount of emotionality and self-disclosure affected a person's perception of a potential partner. An e-mail with strong emotional words led to more positive impressions than an e-mail with fewer strong emotional

		impact of emotionality and self-disclosure on first (e-mail) impressions of a potential partner.		a junior and senior level university course.	words and resulted in nearly three out of four subjects selecting the e-mailer with strong emotional words for the fictitious dater of the opposite sex.
The romantic ideal of men and women involved in the relationship of friends with benefits.	García, Herenia, and Encarnación Soriano.	This study provides a descriptive analysis of some beliefs or myths of romantic love that maintain individuals involved in the sexual relationship called friends with benefits (FWB).	Quantitative	The sample was made up of 119 adults.	Most of these beliefs, though weakened, remain despite the pragmatic, superficial and liberal nature of these relationships. Some gender stereotypes persist, men are still heavily biased by tilting sex, while women remain significantly claiming the exclusivity of the relationship.
Predicting romantic interest and decisions in the very early stages of mate selection: Standards, accuracy, and sex differences.	Fletcher, Garth JO, et al.	Predicting Romantic Interest and Decisions in the Very Early Stages of Mate Selection: Standards, Accuracy, and Sex Differences	Qualitative	article	Judgments of attractiveness/vitality perceptions were the most accurate and were predominant in influencing romantic interest and decisions about further contact. Women were more cautious and choosier than men—women underestimated their partner’s romantic interest, whereas men exaggerated it, and women were less likely to want further contact...
“Shopping” for a mate: Expected versus experienced preferences in online mate choice.	Lenton, Alison P., Barbara Fasolo, and Peter M	Expected versus experienced preferences in online mate choice	Quantitative	Eighty-eight individuals participated.	Men and women do not differ in their expectations regarding the effects of smaller versus larger sets of potential mates, nor do they differ greatly in their reported experiences dealing with option sets of varying sizes.
One-way mirrors in online dating: A randomized field experiment.	Bapna, Ravi, et al.	Examine the impact of a particular anonymity feature, which is unique to online environments, on matching outcomes.	Qualitative	Run a randomized field experiment on a major North American online dating website, where 50,000 of 100,000 randomly	Weak signaling is a key mechanism in achieving higher levels of matching outcomes. Anonymous users, who lose the ability to leave a weak signal, end up having fewer matches compared with their nonanonymous counterparts. This effect of anonymity is particularly

				selected new users.	strong for women, who tend not to make the first move and instead rely on the counterparty to initiate the communication.
Attached to dating apps: Attachment orientations and preferences for dating apps.	Chin, Kristi, Robin S. Edelstein, and Philip A. Vernon.	Examines attachment-related differences in the use of dating applications (dating apps)	Quantitative	Three hundred and three North American adults were recruited via Amazon's Mechanical Turk (MTurk)	Individual differences in attachment may be relevant for understanding online behavior, and that dating apps might be a fruitful avenue for future research on attachment-related differences.

CONCLUSION

The current literature review is one of the earliest papers to provide an overview of the state of online dating literature from a gender perspective. This study conducted a systematic review of gender differences in four stages of online dating. Through the analysis of the online dating process, the study results revealed gender differences in motivations, preferences, disclosures, and interactions among daters. Additionally, this study referenced two sociological theoretical frameworks to analyze these four characteristics. this study utilized an evolutionary approach to analyze the motivations and preferences of single individuals in online dating, and this study applied social interaction theory to analyze disclosures and interactions among single individuals in online dating. We observed that men are more active on online dating platforms and are attracted to the appearance of potential partners, whereas women's choices in dating are based on men's ability to provide for the family and prioritize socio-economic characteristics over physical attractiveness (Egebark et al., 2021; Gerico et al., 2015). In interactions on online dating platforms, both parties adhere to their traditional roles: men initiate more contacts, allowing women to choose whether to reciprocate attention and continue interaction (Sprecher et al., 2015; Dinh et al., 2022).

The study has several limitations: long-term effects of online dating on marriage were not considered, and online interactions between individuals of the same sex were not addressed. Additionally, cultural differences were not taken into account, thus paving the way for further investigation.

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