

First Impressions in Online  
Environments:  
The Matchmaking Setting

Sameer Bajaj

11/08/2003

# Impression Formation

- Physical attractiveness
  - The “What is beautiful is good” factor
- Attribute similarity
  - People are likely to interact and become friends with people who are similar to them
  - More positive evaluation of people with similar attitudes
- Computer Mediated-Communication
  - Impressions are more intense but shallower

# Online matchmaking

- As many as 3000 matchmaking sites
- Huge traffic
- Creating a Profile (free)
  - Information about oneself and preferences about potential partners
- Search for potential partners (free)
  - Across different criteria
- Contact (NOT free!)
  - If one finds a person who is “interesting”

# My research question

- What are the factors involved in first-impression formation in online matchmaking?

# Hypotheses

- Main effects for
  - Physical attractiveness
  - Attribute similarity
- Interaction effect between physical attractiveness and attribute similarity
- Gender effects in reports of physical and social attraction

# Method

- Design – 2 (appearance) x 2 (similarity) within subjects design
- Participants - 43 male and 46 female undergraduate students
- Materials
  - Photos – 2 attractive and 2 unattractive for each gender and each ethnicity
  - Profiles
- Procedure
  - Each participant filled out his/her own profile
  - Each participant then rated profiles of 4 potential partners

# Screenshot of the experiment


Results - Microsoft Internet Explorer

File Edit View Favorites Tools Help

Back Forward Stop Home Search Favorites Media Print Copy Paste Address

Address [http://pages.stern.nyu.edu/~sbajaj/cgi\\_bin/startexp.cgi?gender=m&ethnicity=s&otherethnicity=&religion=hi&smoker=n&drinker=sd&music=cw&fashion=co&humor=ss&part](http://pages.stern.nyu.edu/~sbajaj/cgi_bin/startexp.cgi?gender=m&ethnicity=s&otherethnicity=&religion=hi&smoker=n&drinker=sd&music=cw&fashion=co&humor=ss&part) Go Links

Google Search Web PageRank 118 blocked AutoFill Options

 **Location:** New York City  
**Ethnicity:** South Asian  
**Religion:** Hindu  
**Smoking:** Yes

# Results – Willingness to meet

Appearance

Unattractive

Attractive

Low

7.03

9.37

Similarity

High

8.85

11.71

Scale: 1 – 14

# Gender

	Social Attraction	Physical Attraction
Males	10.61	9.64
Females	11.30	8.14

Scale: 1 – 15

# The main question that emerged

- What does this study mean for other online environments?
  - Online auctions
  - Online advice sites
    - Technical
    - Personal
  - Corporate expertise locators