HG2052 ASSIGNMENT 1

Tse Mun Hing (U1230177D)

Introduction

This essay gives an overview of the online dating industry since 1959. It also compares the communications facilitated by online dating websites with speech and writing based on the 7 properties of speech and writing proposed by David Crystal. The analysis will be categorized into two phases. The first is the communication in the process of sourcing for potential partners. This mode of communication is more similar to writing since it involves the users creating a profile accessible to many viewers, requiring users to mine through the abundance of profiles. The second phase would be the interaction between a matched couple online before their first date. The communication in the second phase is very similar to speech since it involves private and spontaneous communication between couples. Information presented in this essay includes observations made of profiles available on online dating websites such as OkCupid, Zoosk and Tinder.

The "Happy Families Planning Service"

The origins of online dating can be dated back to the 1959 in Iowa Stanford University. (Gillmor, 2002) It was called computer dating, and the project was titled Happy Families Planning Services. This was a class project of Stanford students Jim Harvey and Phil Fialer. They made use of questionnaires recorded with the help of punch cards. The collection of data was not random since subjects were chosen through submission of questionnaires distributed in dormitories, and many of Harvey and Fialer's acquaintances were involved. To match couples, they measured the differences in answers provided by the subjects, a couple is matched with the lowest difference score which signals compatibility. As the title of the project suggested, the objective of computer dating was to match-make couples and the best desired outcome would be a marriage between the matched couple.

Online Dating Today

However, with the rise of technology and also changing societal norms, the objectives of online dating have changed. This is reflected by the large variety of online dating websites available.

There are also online dating websites catered to users of certain sexual orientation, and carriers of sexually transmitted diseases. Many discriminated users rely on these social platforms to make new friends amongst a group of people who are very likely to share the same challenges and circumstances. These objectives are significantly different from the simplistic original objective of meeting potential significant others. The acceptance of open relations and casual hooking up also meant the expected outcome of online dating is no longer finding a lifelong partner and marriage and mere socialising.

The perception of online dating and their users is also changing. Users of online dating websites are often perceived as desperate and leftovers. This mindset is changing with the emergence of successful matches that led to marriages. While it is questionable whether the marriages last, it has technically met the objective of enabling a couple meet their significant half. This is also why a bulk of research on the effects of online dating is the examination of divorce rates amongst couples who met online.

Since its conception, online dating has itself evolved to exploit the advances of technologies. On top of boosting calculations of compatibilities backed with scientific research, many online dating provide services such as sending of gifts and chat features. In recent years in light of the rise of mobile gadgets and the importance of having the world in our palms, online dating is being catered to busy individuals, the development of mobile only application providing dating services. An example would be Tinder which is not available on desktops and operates as a mobile app only. On top of its mobile feature, it also makes use of GPS to search and generate suggestion for users that are within a close geographical proximity.

Today, the popularity of online dating websites is confronted with a steady decline of users following the rise of social networking sites such as Facebook since the communications facilitated by the online dating websites can also be done over Facebook.

Research on effects of online dating

Over the years, many studies have been conducted on the effects of online dating sites. These studies focus on the societal (Sautter, Tippett, & Morgan, 2010) and psychological impacts of online dating. Online dating started out to bring about convenience in matchmaking couples, therefore it is only natural society is concerned about the outcomes of online dating. Studies

focus on success rates of relationships and marriage as a result of online dating. Correlations are often drawn between divorces and couples who met online. There were also many researches and attempts to come up with the best algorithm to calculate compatibility and match couples.

Online dating requires users to present the best sides of themselves through profiles and ads. This concerns issues of the portrayal of an image. There is often a gap between the image created by users online and the real life impression given off during the first meet ups. There are often reports of disappointments on first dates (Manning, 2014). The accuracy of information provided is also a critical aspect often studied (Toma & Hancock, 2012). While some users attempt to present the actual image and hide no truths in their profile, many others often withhold or give entirely false information so that they can attract a targeted group of users they most desire.

Profiles of online dating users

Compared to traditional dating, people meet their potential partners through mutual friends and in environments such as workplaces and schools. They would have to interact with each other to gather information about their potential partners. This exchange is time bound and dynamic.

Users of online dating sites on the other hand get to browse through an abundance of information of potential partners even before the first meeting. In this case, users' profiles can be seen as space bound. Below are two profiles of Singaporean male users extracted from Zoosk.

Basics

Sign: Gemini
Height: 183 cm
Sex: Male
Ethnicity: Asian
Body Type: Athletic
Relationship History:
Never married
Children: No children
Education: College graduate
Religion: Buddhist
Lifestyle: Doesn't smoke,
Doesn't drink

Story

wish to know more people n nice chats
like to explore and experience other
people lives.. Lets share our story
enjoy backpacking travel, diving, cycling
and beaches, and of course do all the
above with my friends

Gifts

Send a Gift

.
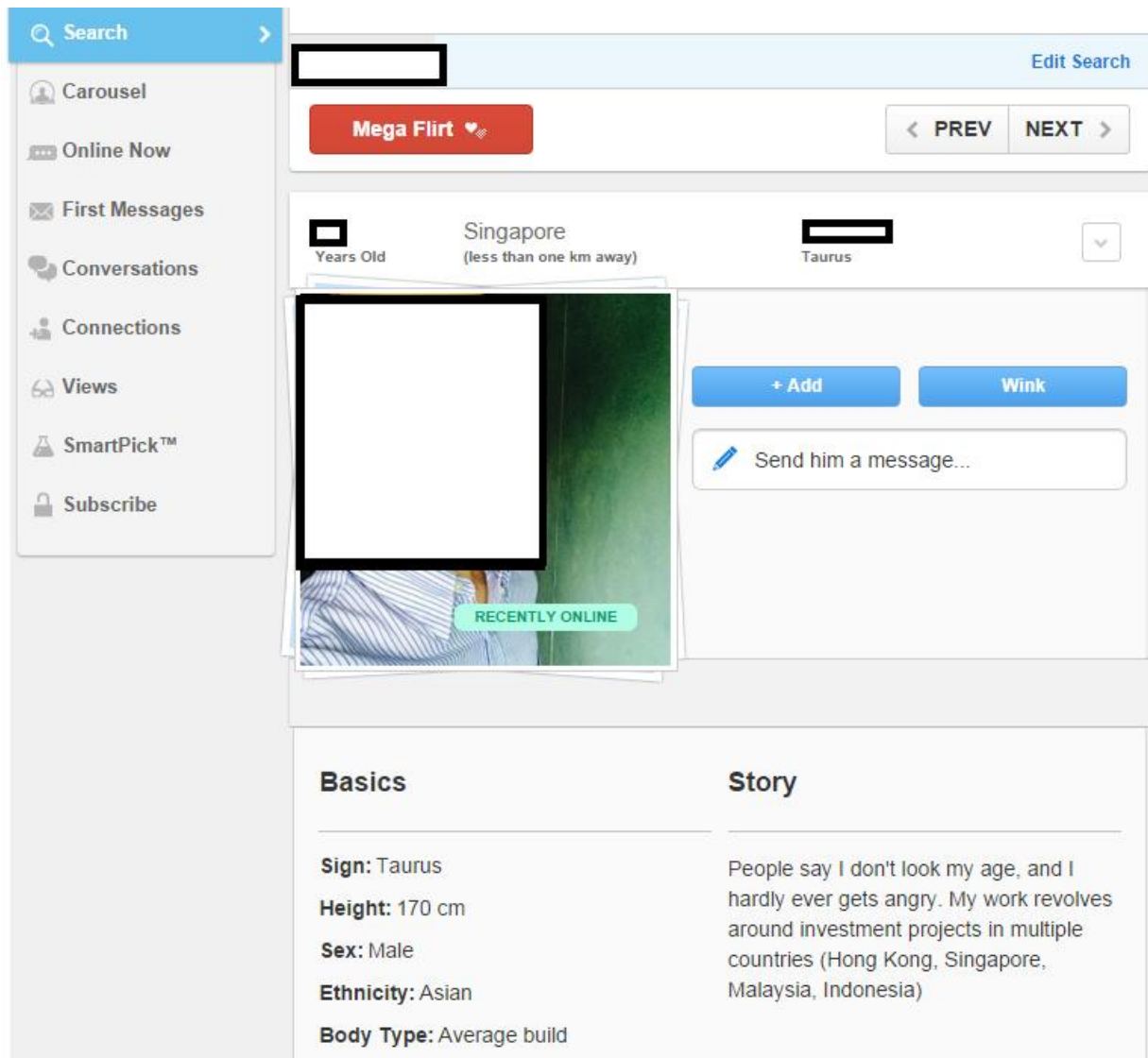
It is important to keep in mind, profiles can be updated anytime, and therefore, it is not entirely space bound. Users get to change, lie and withhold information based on the target audience. An example would be the constant change of address to attract the attention of a targeted group of people living in a certain geographical location. Revision of profiles is also common after disappointing and failed dates. Language proficiency is sometimes used by educated users to attract potential matches. While they look out for and only respond to messages that appeals to them, they also specifically present an image on their profiles that is reflected by the length of their write-ups. There are instances where users make use of formality and length of profile write-ups to attract the suitors they want. An example would be the deliberate display of lengthy

profiles by educated females to weed out males who do not like to read and thus would not be a compatible partner.

Private Communication between Users

Exchanges made over the chat features provided by some sites would also be space bound since whatever messages sent out are not retractable. Chat features make the communication spontaneous which is very similar to speech, especially when both parties are online. However, private messaging can also be perceived as contrived especially first contact since there is always a choice for the receiver to ignore and mark messages as unread. Chatting online is likely to be loosely structured given its informal context. It is also possible for users to send gifts, which can be contrived, although it is assumed active online dating users would have notifications alerts enabled and would be notified of any gifts received almost immediately.

Conclusion

Online dating over the years has evolved through the advances of technology. The objectives of online dating are shaped by societal expectations in intimate relationships. Online dating is a mode of communication that brings about convenience in socialising and it is an adaptation of both speech and writing communication.

Works Cited

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