Impression Formation in Online-Dating-Situations: Effects of media richness and physical attractiveness information

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ABSTRACT

The present research investigates the effects of media richness, i.e. of paraverbal and nonverbal cues, as well as of physical attractiveness information on impression formation in a fictive online dating setting. Male subjects were presented with identical information about a young woman who presented herself either in a short video-clip, per audio-trace, in a written text that was accompanied by a photo or by written text only. Afterwards, participants judged how confident they felt with the impression they have formed of the target person, how pronounced the impression was, and how much they would like to get in contact with that girl. As expected, all three measures were significantly enhanced in the video as compared to the audio and the text-only condition, but they did not differ from the text-plus-photo condition. Thus, it seems that it was attractiveness information rather than media richness that enhanced desire for contact, confidence in, and clarity of the impression formed. It made no difference whether attractiveness information was static (photo) or dynamic (video), nor whether, whether content information was static (written text) or dynamic (audio). Singles indicated an overall stronger desire for contact and more confidence in their impressions than non-singles. Clarity of the impression did not differ as a function of relationship status. Advantages and disadvantages of the option to provide physical attractiveness information via photos and video-clips in online dating portals are discussed from a social psychological perspective.

Keywords: online-dating, person perception, mating, nonverbal cues

1   Getting to know each other, virtually

Surprisingly little information seems to suffice us humans when we are about to form an impression of others. In his pioneer work on the field, Solomon Asch stated: "We look at a person and immediately, a certain impression of his character forms itself in us. A glance, a few spoken words are sufficient to tell us a story about a highly complex manner…" (1946, p. 258).

Getting to know each other on the internet, however, holds special challenges to our impression formation skills. Compared to the dynamic of face-to-face-situations, the perceiver is provided with very limited input, because the options for self-presentation are usually restricted to static information such as text and photographs (Kim, Kwon & Lee, 2009; Toma & Hancock, 2010; Walther, 2007). Nevertheless, especially online platforms connecting potential intimate partners have substantially increased in popularity in western cultures, including Japan (i.e., Farrer & Gavin, 2009), and they report impressive success rates (e.g., parship.de, 2011; ElitePartner.de, 2011).

Thus, although dynamic and sensory means of expression, such as voice, speech melody, mimics and gestures (not to mention olfactory factors) play a major role in mating choices (Aronson, Wilson & Akert, 2008), individuals obviously can do without them when (pre-)selecting potential partners in the web (Rosen, Cheever, Cummings & Felt, 2008).

The "big" German-speaking pay-portals throughout offer quite elaborate and sometimes even psychologically grounded tests assessing personality traits, preferences, life motives, value orientations and the likes. Parts of the results complete the self-presentation profiles. Thus, depending on the diversity and depth of the factors assessed, these do of course substantially contribute the respective candidate's self-presentation. In free contact portals, singles usually introduce themselves far less comprehensively.

Still, it seems plausible that for both kinds of portals, perceptually richer self-presentations via audio- or video-clips should elicit richer impressions than reduced modes such as written text, eventually accompanied by a photo. Theories and findings on such channel-reduced modes of communication as well as on the role of attractiveness in impression formation shall be briefly reviewed in the following section.

2   Mediated Impression Formation

2.1   Advantages and disadvantages of media richness

Media richness theory (Daft & Lengel, 1984, 1986) states that a medium's richness increases with the degree to which it supports the processing of and coping with ambiguous information (cf. Döring, 2003). This is, for example, supported in studies on computer-mediated conferences (e.g., Gunawardena & Zittle, 1997) as well as by media richness rankings. In a study by Schmitz and Fulk (1991; cf. Clark & Brennan, 1991) the telephone was ranked between e-mail and other written communication at the bottom end and video and face-to-face-interaction at the top end of the hierarchy. In general, technically mediated interaction "is often regarded as a priori full of deficits and (depending on dose) in tendency destructive surrogate for face-to-face interaction" (Döring, 2003, p. 150, own translation). Some theorists claim that so-called channel-reduction impoverishes communication because it leads to de-sensualization and de-emotionalization (Winterhoff-Spurk & Vitouch, 1989). The virtual community has, however, quickly come up with substitutes (e.g., emoticons) and new communication skills that compensate for the lack of nonverbal information (Ramirez, Walther, Burgoon, & Sunnafran, 2002). In fact, despite all obstacles and limitations that are inherent in computer-mediated communication, it also bears a number of advantages that are particularly relevant to online dating. Skopek, Schulz and Blossfeld (2009) name, among others, the independence of space and time, high heterogeneity of the user population, a large number of potential partners, anonymity and contact options.

2.2   Media Choice in the Dating Process

Armed with criteria checklists, life motive rankings, personality schemes and the like, online dating candidates try to achieve a more or less rationally founded pre-selection of potential partners. Of course, they are supported by elaborate matching algorithms that make according partner suggestions. First contacts are then usually made in writing, and usually kept on that "level" until a certain stage. The next step might be to switch to a chat-room, or to talk on the phone, before a first meeting is finally arranged. Thus, dating candidates choose increasingly "complete" communication media, thereby intensifying the relationship and at the same time enriching the basis for mutual impression formation with paraverbal and nonverbal cues. However, when Bühler-Ilieva and Geser (2002) asked more than 4000 users of a big Swiss partner portal about their experiences, 4% claim to already have fallen in love on the first email contact. Similarly, full 18 percent of the respondent couples in a recent study by parship.de (2011) remember to already have had butterflies in their stomach at the email contact stage. In how far this may simply reflect an instance of hindsight-bias or "knew-it-all-along"-effect (Fischhoff, 1975; for reviews, see Christensen-Szalanski, & Willham, 1991, and, more recently, Blank, Nestler, von Collani & Fischer, 2009) remains an open question.

Email as a medium is, however, of course quite different from a static self-presentational text. It provides a powerful means of quick exchange and there is more to it than just the topics referred to: One may determine the order of posts, tailor the length of messages according to contact stadium, signal intensity by short delay of responding, and so forth. Moreover, the ambiguity of written information provides ample opportunities to read between the lines (see above), which may induce positive expectancies and higher openness to new experiences. According to Döring (2003), one major advantage of online dating is that it may thereby prevent individuals from effects of negative initial categorization and stereotyping that sometimes hinder proper impression formation in face-to-face contact. This perspective is supported by self-reports of online daters who claim that few lines in an email often disclose much more about a person than a photo (elitepartner.de, 2011; parship.de, 2011).

Moreover, Döring (2003) argues that the information lack in reduced contact situations might initiate active imagination and construction processes, which, in turn, may increase a sense of proximity. In combination with positive expectancies, this can help to build particularly positive impressions that in a direct face-to-face contact may have been spoilt by superficial trivialities (Walther, 1996).

2.3   The role of physical attractiveness

How powerful initial expectancies can be in affecting real interactions has been shown by Snyder, Tanke and Berscheid (1977) in their classic study on self-fulfilling prophecies. They let male participants talk to women on the phone and made them believe that their interview partner was either physically attractive or unattractive. The women were unaware of this randomized manipulation. Not surprisingly, the presumably attractive women were rated more friendly, likeable and sociable. To demonstrate that this effect is not just another instance of the "what-is-beautiful-is-good"-stereotype (Dion, Berscheid & Hatfield, 1972, see below), the authors collected ratings from independent judges. Unaware of experimental conditions, these listened to the tape-recorded interviews and indeed, too, rated the "attractive" women as more open, friendlier, and so on, than the "unattractive" ones. It turned out that the male participants asked more charming questions, listened to longer, and were in general more confirming when they believed to talk to an attractive rather than not so attractive woman. This behavior naturally had, in turn, shaped the women's responses. Thus, the men's positive expectancy affected their real behavior towards the target in a self-fulfilling way, namely provoking something that otherwise would not have occurred (see also Snyder, 1982). Such interactive effects presumably play a major role in ambiguous impression formation tasks.

Physical attractiveness is obviously "highly valued in mate selection" (Toma & Hancock, 2010, p. 337) and thus likely to have strong impact on whatever measure collected in this context. Bak (2010) could show that effects of attractiveness in online-dating environments even occur when it is not to be considered a valid stimulus. Since the seminal work of Dion et al. (1972), there is overwhelming evidence that perceivers follow a "what is beautiful is good"-stereotype when judging an unknown target's traits: Attractiveness seems to produce a substantial halo effect on

ratings of social and, to a lesser degree, intellectual competence, on potency, on adjustment, and other "good" characteristics (meta-analysis by Eagly, Ashmore, Makhijani & Longo, 1991; Feingold, 1992). Wheeler and Kim (1997) demonstrated that people ascribe especially those traits to "beautiful" targets that are highly cherished within their particular culture. That is, over and above a general effect on ratings of friendliness and the like, participants in individualistic cultures tend to ascribe traits like assertive and dominant, whereas participants in collectivistic cultures rather ascribe traits such as trustworthiness, empathy, and generosity. So, what is good at least partly differs across cultures - but what is beautiful does astonishingly little. Langlois et al. (2000) report high agreement on attractiveness features across cultures (Langlois et al., 2000). Many determinants of beauty seem to be closely related to health (e.g., clear skin, full hair, bright eyes, etc.; Barber, 1995; Thornhill & Gangestad, 1993), suggesting that they are rooted deeply in our evolutionary history (Buss, 1988; Buss & Schmitt, 1993).

Given that physical features play a central role in choosing intimate partners (Toma & Hancock, 2010), people who do not perfectly match standard attractiveness criteria might be tempted to "polish" their self-presentations in order to attract more interest. In an online dating setting, it is comparatively easy to deceive - just a little bit – when it comes to height, weight or age, or by choosing a particularly flattering photograph out of a hundred more realistic ones. Toma and Hancock (2010) found that online daters indeed had increasingly embellished their physical descriptors and had chosen more candy-coating photographs with decreasing physical attractiveness. Also, in line with evolutionary accounts, women's profiles were found to be slightly more deceptive in terms of attractiveness than men's. Because deceptive profiles may heavily backfire once the deception is revealed (Whitty, 2007, cit. in Toma & Hancock, 2010), one may conclude that dating candidates consider enhanced physical attractiveness a key feature to successful contact-making and are thus even willing to take that risk.

Taken together, impression formation in dating contexts is most likely to be affected by information about physical attractiveness. This could be provided by a photograph. However, media richness should also play a substantial role in mediated communication tasks. To cite Asch (1946) once more, "a glance, a few spoken words", as given in a video or a spoken text, should provide a much richer basis for impression formation than static information such as written information and a photo.

3 Effects of media richness and physical attractiveness information

3.1 Overview and hypotheses

The aim of the present study is to assess how different modes of self-presentation on the one hand and physical attractiveness information on the other hand affect social impression formation in a fictive online dating scenario. We expect that the perceptually richer the medium, the more pronounced the impression will be, and the more

confident the perceiver should feel with that impression. Also, it seems plausible that medially richer self-presentations elicit a stronger desire for contact with the target person – given the impression is generally positive, of course. Apart from media richness, visual information about (above average) physical attractiveness should increase desire for contact. In line with the "what is beautiful is good"-stereotype, it should also increase the positivity of and confidence in the overall impression, as compared to conditions where no attractiveness information is provided.

As an additional factor, we explored how participants' current relationship status (single vs. non-single) affects the dependent measures. It seems plausible that singles would express an overall stronger desire for contact than non-singles, potentially going along with a more positive overall impression. Apart from these main effects, there might be interactions of relationship status and attractiveness information, as attractiveness probably matters more to those in search of a potential partner than to those who already have one.

3.2 Method

3.2.1 Design and Materials

Participants were asked to imagine that they were in search of a partner and just studying profiles on a respective dating website (cf. Sritharan, Heilpurn, Wilbur & Gawronski, 2010). There, they came across a brief self-presentation of a young woman, which then was provided either in the form of a short video-clip, an audio-file, as written text accompanied by a photo or as written text only, respectively. Thus, the four conditions differed in terms of media richness (high in the video- and audio-condition vs. low on the photo- and the text-only-condition), and in terms of visual attractiveness information (given in the video- and the photo-condition vs. not given in the audio- and the text-only-condition). Participants were asked to watch / listen to / read the self-presentation intently and to form a first impression of Christina, the target person.

Message content was identical in all four conditions and designed to be generally positive and agreeable, i.e., all sorts of extremes were avoided: Christina stated that she studied medicine in her fifth semester, that she liked going to concerts and loved breakfast in bed, did sports, and the like. The girl acting in the video rehearsed the text until she could speak it naturally and fluently. She was videotaped with only head and shoulders visible, standing in a park and talking freely to the camera. In order to hold intonation, prosody and other paraverbal cues constant across conditions, the audio file was extracted from the final version of the video. In order to hold visual attractiveness constant across conditions, a screenshot from the video was used as the photo to accompany the written text in the respective condition. The target's attractiveness may be described as above average, but not extremely so. Video and audio file were 1 min. 16 sec. long. The statement is provided in Appendix A.

3.2.2 Dependent measures

After the impression formation phase, participants were asked to indicate on Likert scales (1-5) how much they agreed to four statements generated to assess confidence in one's own impression (Cronbach's alpha = .80), e.g., "I have quite a good idea of what kind of girl Christina is". Another set of ten statements was constructed to assess the degree to which participants wanted to get in contact with Christina (Cronbach's alpha = .91), e.g. "I would like to give Christina my telephone number". After completing the intermixed statements on confidence and contact intentions, participants were asked to indicate their impression on nine bipolar adjective pairs using a 7-point scale (Cronbach's alpha = .98). This measure was collected in order to determine how pronounced or clear the impression was, i.e., how far the averaged ratings differ from the scale's neutral midpoint. Since all ratings turned out to be positive, this measure at the same time reflects overall positivity. All items and scales are given in Appendix B.

3.2.3 Participants and Procedure

Participants were $N = 80$ males aged between 18 and 33 ($M = 23.11$, $SD = 2.72$). None of them indicated homosexual preferences (78 heterosexual, 2 bisexual). 48 (60%) categorized themselves as being single and 32 (40%) as currently having an intimate relationship. Because we did not want to ask for participants' relationship status prior to the experiment, the distribution of singles and non-singles across the four conditions is not perfectly equal, but there is no systematic confounding (X^2 (3; $N = 80$) = 2.08, $p = .55$, *n.s.*).

Participants were recruited individually and asked to follow instructions on the computer (audio and video condition) or on the questionnaire, respectively. The ratings were assessed in paper-pencil form in all groups. Data for the video, the audio and the text-only conditions were collected in May and June 2010, and the $n = 60$ participants were assigned randomly to one of the three experimental conditions. Data for the text-plus-photo-condition were collected in July 2011. Thus, one might argue that these $n = 20$ participants belong to a potentially different sub-sample. Since recruiting method and socio-demographic sample characteristics as well as materials and procedures were, however, most similar, we regard it as methodologically justified to analyze and present the entire data set in terms of one single experiment.

3.3 Results and Discussion

We collapsed the items for each scale by computing the respective means, or, for the bipolar adjective scales, the mean difference from the neutral midpoints. Table 1 shows homogeneity indices of the scales and correlations between the three aggregated dependent measures. A table with means and standard deviations of all three dependent measures according to condition is provided in Appendix C.

Table 1: Cronbach's alpha's and correlations of confidence in one's impression, desire for contact and clarity of impression.

	Confidence in impression	Desire for contact	Clarity of impression
Confidence in impr.	α = .80		
Desire for contact	.64**	α = .91	
Clarity of impression	.67**	.47**	α = .98

Note. ** $p < .01$

To test our hypotheses, we conducted univariate ANOVAs with attractiveness information (given = video and photo vs. not given = audio and text) and media richness (high = video and audio vs. low = photo and text) as well as participants' relationship status (single vs. not single) as between-subjects-factors. As can be seen in Figure 1, subjects uttered a higher confidence in their own impression when attractiveness information was provided than when it was not ($F(1, 72) = 23.77$, $p < .01$, eta² = .25). Media richness, to our surprise, had no effect on the confidence ratings ($F < 1$). There was also a main effect of participants' relationship status, as singles gave higher confidence ratings compared to those who currently were involved in an intimate relationship ($F(1, 72) = 5.92$, $p = .02$, eta² = .08). None of the interactions approached significance (all p's > .19).
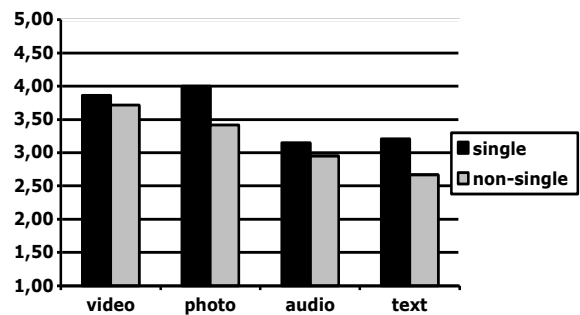

Figure 1. Confidence ratings as a function of experimental condition and perceiver's relationship status.

Likewise, desire for contact was strongly affected by whether Christina's self-presentation included visual attractiveness information (video or photo) or not (audio or text). Figure 2 shows the respective means according to experimental condition and participants' relationship status. There is a main effect of attractiveness information ($F(1, 72) = 6.91$, $p = .01$, eta² = .09), and an even stronger main effect of participants' relationship status ($F(1, 72) = 12.45$, $p = .01$, eta² = .15), but again none of media richness ($F = 1.04$, $p = .31$), nor any interaction (all p's > .15).
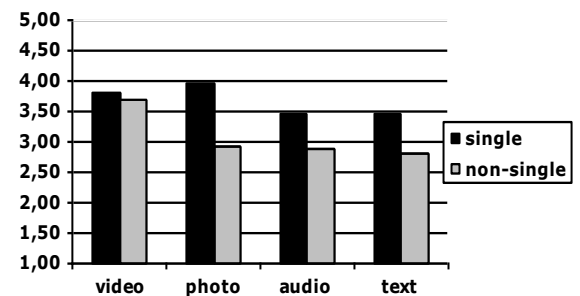

Figure 2. Desire for contact as a function of experimental condition and perceiver's relationship status.

Although the interaction effect is statistically irrelevant, it seems that the main effect of being single or not substantially goes back to the non-video conditions. Singles hardly differ from non-singles when they don't have to *form* but literally *get* a vivid picture of the target.

Finally, we examined how pronounced or clear the overall impression was by subjecting the mean values of the adjective ratings to a two-factorial ANOVA. Doing so yields again a strong main effect of attractiveness information ($F(1, 72) = 49.19$, $p < .01$, eta² = .41). As can be seen in Figure 3, Christina got overall more positive trait ratings, when participants knew what she looked like, confirming the "what is beautiful is good"-effect.
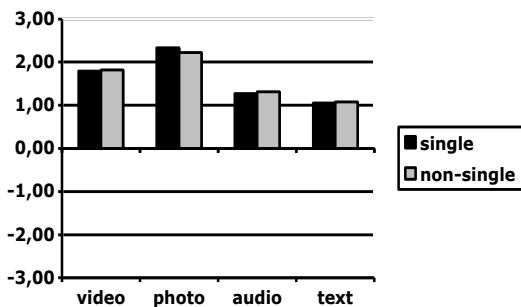

Figure 3. **Clarity (positivity) of impression as a function of experimental condition and perceiver's relationship status.**

Also, there is a significant two-way interaction between attractiveness information and media richness (F (1, 72) = 6.06, $p = .02$, eta² = .08). To our surprise, however, the judgments were more extreme in the photo- as compared to the medially richer video condition. Thus, richness did not lead to more determinedly positive impressions in the present context. There was no difference between the (dynamic) audio and the (static) text-only condition. Neither the main effect of media richness or participants' relationship status, nor any other interaction approached significance (all p's > .35).

To summarize, our participants were more confident with their impression, had a stronger desire to contact "Christina", and gave more resolutely positive ratings when she presented herself in a mode that included attractiveness information (video, photo) than in a mode that did not (audio, text only). Contrary to predictions, however, media richness, i.e., vividness of the self-presentation, hardly had any effect on the measures collected. Singles expressed a generally stronger desire for contact than non-singles, and they were more confident about their impression, though they did not give more positive ratings. Relationship status interacted neither with attractiveness information nor with media richness.

4   Discussion

The aim of the present studies was to examine the effects of differentially vivid modes of self-presentation and of physical attractiveness information on impression formation in a simulated online dating context. Young male participants saw a video, listened to an audio-message or read a text (with or without a photo) in which a girl pre-

sented herself in a favorable way and stated that she was looking for a partner. Results show that, in comparison to written text, paraverbal cues as provided in a spoken message did not affect any of the impression measures collected here. Physical attractiveness information, on the other hand, did enhance participants' confidence in their impression, lead to a stronger desire for contact and to more pronounced, i.e., more positive trait ratings. Media richness theory would lead one to expect that if attractiveness information further included dynamic cues such as mimics and gestures, the effect should become more pronounced. This was not the case here. The only difference between the video and the photo condition was that the trait ratings were more extreme in the photo condition. Thus, if anything, the pattern observed is contrary to predictions. However, we would rather not give too much weight to this finding because it is restricted to one of three dependent measures, and because of the fact that the photo condition was assessed under different sampling terms (see Participants and Procedure section).

In general, one must of course criticize that the situation we lead our subjects into was rather artificial. It remains questionable how easy or realistic it is for participants to imagine that they are in search of a partner and just flick through self-presentation profiles in an online portal. This is particularly true for those participants who are already involved in a stable relationship. However, singles and non-singles alike gave more extreme adjective ratings in the conditions where attractiveness information was provided, adding to the body of evidence for a general "what is beautiful is good"-stereotype.

This measure, to our understanding, reflects quite well what is meant by "having formed a clear picture" of someone, and accordingly, it was highly correlated with participants´ confidence ratings (see Table 1). Interestingly, media richness does not seem to contribute to this effect in the video condition, as it was even more pronounced when there was only a photo provided along with a written statement.

In follow-up studies, it would be interesting to realize an experimental setup using several target persons of varying attractiveness, each presenting themselves via one medium, and combining these in accordingly balanced sets. Such a fully crossed design would offer the opportunity to examine effects of target attractiveness, media richness, and potential interaction effects more thoroughly. Also, it would be interesting to include an audio-plus-photo condition in order to separate effects of physical attractiveness and dynamic nonverbal cues, as are still confounded in the video-clip here. In addition, the scenario should be rendered more realistic by presenting materials on a "real" fake online platform. Finally, richer measures of impression formation over and above the ones collected here could be included, e.g., the ascription of value-orientations, attitudes, interests, and the like. From a social psychological point of view, it would be interesting to see how confident participants feel in "going beyond the information given" (Bruner, 1957) depending on media richness and target attractiveness.

Now, what insights and recommendations can be derived for online dating portals in real life? At first sight, it seems desirable and advantageous that candidates could post a video message in completion of their profiles. The authors are not aware that this option is currently offered by any of the popular German speaking online-dating providers. Of course, most candidates would wish to keep such a video-clip concealed from the public and activate access for trusted contacts only. This procedure is yet frequently applied to photos in order to protect the clients' anonymity. The advantages of a video-clip are self-evident: Not only do the perceivers get a more complete picture of their virtual vis-à-vis, but also do the "target" persons get a wider scope to present their individuality. Though a face-to-face encounter naturally remains a totally different situation, many aspects of a person's charisma and habitus can be grabbed by a video-clip. Thus, both parties can be spared the disappointment that may arise at first face-to-face encounter and can render the situation most uncomfortable for both. Depending on how long and intense the prior contact phase has been, such disappointment bears substantial emotional costs for either partner, not to mention time and expenses for transports across the country, as the case may be.

On the other hand, one may argue that the advantages resulting from the more anonymous and ambiguous character of web-based interactions get lost if photos and videos are provided. This would particularly apply to those dating candidates who reveal their charms and virtues only when interpersonal exchange becomes substantial. That is, superficial physical features might simply disentitle them from the opportunity to get to that substantial stage. As outlined in the introduction, Döring (2003) argues that a major plus of "reduced" interactions is that negative stereotypes and stigmata are easily overcome if the basis for according categorization is lacking. These individuals might then profit from a self-fulfilling prophecy that inverts the one demonstrated by Snyder et al. (1977): In their study, presumably attractive people were in the end perceived as more friendly and sociable, because they were treated warmly and confirmatory. In our case, individuals who indeed behave friendly and sociable (e.g., in email, chat, or phone contact) might elicit expectancies of at least sympathy in appearance. The principle of the self-fulfilling prophecy won't turn just anyone into a splendid beauty, but positive expectancies might still work: Beauty is, after all, to a certain degree in the eye of the beholder. In fact, in their famous review on the lack of conscious access to mental process and causal reasoning in everyday life, Nisbett and Wilson (1977) report a study yielding very similar effects of warmth on physical attractiveness ratings.

A third aspect to mention in the pro's and con's here is that people who don't fit common criteria of physical attractiveness are still likely to profit from a video-format as compared to a photo. In a video-clip, a warm charisma, cheerfulness, vivid and sympathetic mimics and gestures may more or less easily compensate for whatever cues may cause initial negative stereotyping on the basis of static physical features.

There is obviously no use in giving general recommendations for standard media formats in online dating portals. Everyone should just have the choice. The situation seems to bear similarities with the question of prenatal gender diagnosis: Those who want to know their baby's sex in advance in order to mentally prepare themselves may know. Those who prefer to enjoy the natural secret, the curiosity and suspense the situation holds may choose not to know. In the context of baby's gender, knowledge does not include a choice. In the context of dating, it does.

5　References

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6   Appendix

A: Self-presentation (translated from German)

Hello, my name is Christina. I am 22 years old and study medicine in Düsseldorf, in the fifth term. I study medicine because I have known since I was a child that the well-being of others is very important to me. Moreover, I find processes in the human body most interesting. Of course, I also have a life beyond studying. In my spare-time, I like to do sports. Also, I go to concerts from time to time and would enjoy it if my partner would accompany me. My family is also important to me and I like to spend time with them. Don't worry, they are really nice and would welcome my boy-friend cordially. Though I am an active person, I also like to put my legs up on a lazy day. When I should describe such a day, I would sleep in, first of all. Then, breakfast in bed, and wake up slowly. A perfect day requires sun, of course. I would enjoy it in the open air pool and let the day fade out with a good dinner in the evening. I am looking for a partner with whom I can talk about serious matters, but who also makes me laugh. When in a relationship, faithfulness is very important to me. That is, I expect and give full trust. If my boyfriend has had a bad day, I would hug him and ask what had happened and cheer him up. So, just get in contact, I am looking forward to you.

B: Dependent measures

Statements on Confidence in one's impression:
Based on her self-presentation, I could form a pretty clear picture of Christina.
I have the feeling that I already know Christina a bit.
I have quite a good idea of what kind of girl Christina is.
I have the impression that Christina is a stranger to me. (r)

Statements on Desire for contact:
I would like to get in email-contact with Christina.
I would like to get in telephone contact with Christina.
I would like to get to know Christina in person.
I can well imagine beginning a relationship with Christina.
I think Christina would be a really interesting partner for me.
Even if I had her phone number, I would not want to contact her. (r)

I would like to learn more about Christina.
On a personal encounter, I can well imagine that we start an intimate relationship.
I would like to give Christina my telephone number.
I wish Christina would like to get to know me as well.

Adjective pairs for clarity of impression:
sympathetic – not sympathetic
sporty – not sporty
intelligent – stupid
trustworthy – not trustworthy
relaxed - nervous
honest – artificial
charismatic – not charismatic
interesting - uninteresting

Table C1. Means and Standard Deviations (in parentheses) of all dependent measures according to experimental condition and participants' relationship status.

| | | Physical attractiveness information | | | |
| | | Provided | | Not provided | |
	Media richness	High (video)	Low (photo)	High (audio)	Low (text only)
Confidence in impression	Single	3.86 (0.88)	4.00 (0.20)	3.15 (0.47)	3.21 (0.54)
	Non-single	3.72 (0.72)	3.39 (0.43)	2.95 (0.85)	2.67 (1.08)
Desire for contact	Single	3.79 (0.58)	3.95 (0.54)	3.45 (0.39)	3.44 (0.43)
	Non-single	3.67 (0.72)	2.92 (0.86)	2.89 (0.98)	2.82 (1.32)
Clarity of impressi-on	Single	1.79 (0.49)	2.33 (0.41)	1.27 (0.32)	1.06 (0.51)
	Non-single	1.82 (0.45)	2.22 (0.41)	1.31 (0.48)	1.08 (0.58)

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