

Men need to channel women when crafting profiles for online dating

May 18 2017, by Laurel Thomas Gnagey

In the fan-favorite movie "What Women Want," Mel Gibson's macho male character has a freak accident that allows him to hear what women are thinking. In fairly typical Hollywood cad-turns-hero fashion, he first uses the gift to his advantage and later channels it for a greater good.

Research from the University of Michigan shows that men who hope to get women to respond to them on online dating sites have a better chance if they create profiles that are more like the women they hope to attract, and yet can show they are distinct from other males.

"Specifically, she is more likely to respond when the text in the male's [profile](#) is similar to hers," said lead author Danaja Maldeniya, a graduate student at the School of Information.

Maldeniya and colleagues say the successful male dater is the one who optimizes cross-gender similarity, while exhibiting same-gender differentiation.

"Our findings suggest that when males craft their profiles, they should attempt to highlight their perceived similarities with the females they are hoping to attract, while highlighting what they think makes them stand out from the competition," he said. "Depending on the particular pair of users, these two factors may be at odds."

The researchers analyzed three months worth of anonymous data from a popular dating site from September to November 2013. This included

the profiles and clickstreams of 410,000 active users in 10 metropolitan areas.

Dating site users authored 25 million messages, generated 286 million clicks on the site and rated other users' profiles 864 million times. Males accounted for 62 percent of the messages and initiated 86 percent of the communication.

Research on dating sites and online courting behavior has previously shown the impact of photos and lists of common goals and interests, including geographic location, race, education, income, marital histories and the desire for children. But this is believed to be the first to look specifically at how text in profiles crafted by men is perceived by the [women](#) they hope to attract. The study zeroed in on the free-text responses to several questions designed to share insights men thought potential romantic partners would want to know about them.

"The results of our study offer insights that could be useful for improving the recommendations made by dating sites to their users," said Daniel Romero, U-M assistant professor of information. "For example, at any given time, a dating site would know the set of males who are competing for the attention of a female.

"The site can then adjust recommendations so that the female is linked to a more diverse set of men who are different from her current suitors, but still similar to her, which our results suggest would lead to more successful matches."

Because their data came from a dating [site](#) in which most interactions were male-female and most often were initiated by males, the researchers were unable to study male-male and female-female interactions, or cases where females initiated contact with [males](#).

More information: The Role of Optimal Distinctiveness and Homophily in Online Dating. [dromero.org.s3-website-us-east ... mazonaws.com/Optimal%20Distinctiveness.pdf](https://dromero.org.s3-website-us-east-1.amazonaws.com/Optimal%20Distinctiveness.pdf)

Provided by University of Michigan

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