

Online dating sites: The size of the potential dating pool makes all the difference

September 11 2024



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Online dating sites have become one of the more popular means for people to meet each other and explore the potential for a romantic relationship. But did you know that it's the size of the online dating pool

that could make or break your own quest for love?

A new study has revealed that if the size of the group of potential matches is larger, you are likely to be more selective. But, if the size of your own group—your competition—is larger, you are likely to be less selective.

The study, "Effects of Market Size and Competition in Two-Sided Markets: Evidence from Online Dating," is [published](#) in the journal *Marketing Science* and authored by Jessica Fong of the University of Michigan.

"The main thing I wanted to study was how those on the same side of the matching process behaved, and then compare that to those on the other side of the match to see how matching decisions were made," said Fong. "More to the point, how do market size and competition size independently affect users' decisions to participate in the online dating marketplace, and how does this impact their level of selectiveness?"

In the context of the study, if you're a man seeking to date women, the "competition size" would center on how many other men will compete against you for the attention of the women on the site. The "market size" would center on the number of women on the site.

Fong conducted the experiment in collaboration with an online dating platform. Users of the platform were informed as to how many men and [women](#) were on the site and "nearby." This helped her determine user decision-making patterns.

"I found that information about market and [competition](#) size does influence both participation and matching decisions," she said. "First, an increase in the market size decreases the likelihood that the user subsequently participates in the market; on average, a 50% increase in

market size reduces the probability of participation by 1%. This finding conflicts with conventional wisdom that consumers prefer larger pools from which to make choices."

More information: Jessica Fong, Effects of Market Size and Competition in Two-Sided Markets: Evidence from Online Dating, *Marketing Science* (2024). [DOI: 10.1287/mksc.2023.0142](https://doi.org/10.1287/mksc.2023.0142)

Provided by Institute for Operations Research and the Management Sciences

Citation: Online dating sites: The size of the potential dating pool makes all the difference (2024, September 11) retrieved 11 September 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2024-09-online-dating-sites-size-potential.html>

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