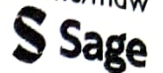


Window Shopping Humans in the Dating Store: What User Bios Tell Us About Online Dating

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Abstract

This essay explores certain aspects related to the projection and objectification of the self on dating apps. I explain how romance and intimacy have become a part of a wider consumerist logic—governed by ease of access, multiplicity of choice, frivolous interactions and diminished attention span. In an algorithm-induced mechanism, where human options are quick-swiped like commodities, visual displays and textual descriptions invariably play a significant part in determining choice and getting matches on an anonymous platform. I focus more on the careful curation of the self-image through short descriptions called user bios and what these bios represent not just about the user, but also about a range of other aspects that are integral to app-mediated dating. I argue how several users portray themselves as desirable objects waiting to be consumed and see others as commodities on the shopping window. Using several bios, I reveal how self-objectification also takes the route of overt sexualisation of the self or disdain for that amongst other users. I also argue how self-information announces boredom, disenchantment and doubts about the app to find a suitable match. Finally, I explore the non-obligatory casual nature of this sort of human interaction, where users are entitled to ‘ghost’—disappear without an explanation—making human interactions uncertain.

Keywords

Online dating, relationships, self-objectification, consumerism, digital affordance