

## A systematic literature review on self-presentation strategies in dating app profiles

 Xiaomeng Duan<sup>1</sup>,  Maizatul Haizan Mahbob<sup>2\*</sup>

<sup>1,2</sup>Centre for Research in Media & Communication, Faculty of Social Sciences & Humanities, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, 43600, Bangi, Selangor, Malaysia; P117647@siswa.ukm.edu.my (X.D.) maiz@ukm.edu.my (M.H.M.).

**Abstract:** With the growing global popularity of dating applications, users' self-presentation strategies within their profiles have increasingly become a key topic of scholarly interest. Guided by Page, et al. [1] this systematic literature review retrieved relevant studies from two major databases—Scopus and Web of Science (WoS)—focusing on English-language publications from 2020 to 2024. A total of 39 representative studies were ultimately included for analysis. This review identified three overarching themes: content dimensions, platform influences, and socio-cultural and identity-related factors, which were further broken down into nine subthemes. The findings suggest that users' self-presentation on dating apps is primarily shaped by visually driven cues aimed at attractiveness, strategic textual disclosure, and platform-specific affordances. Additionally, gender role expectations and cultural backgrounds play a significant role in shaping users' self-presentation strategies. The key contribution of this review lies in its systematic synthesis of fragmented and interdisciplinary research in the field. It highlights the lack of attention to issues such as algorithmic mediation, cross-cultural variation in self-presentation, and the behaviors of older user groups. By outlining potential directions for future research, this review offers a structured analytical perspective on self-presentation in digital dating environments and provides a valuable foundation for future empirical studies and platform design practices.

**Keywords:** Dating apps, Gender roles, Profile strategies, Self-presentation, Socio-cultural influences, Systematic literature review.

### 1. Introduction

#### 1.1. Background and Research Problem

With the rapid advancement of internet and geolocation technologies, an increasing number of people around the world are turning to dating apps to fulfill various needs, such as making new friends, seeking romantic partners, self-validation, and social interaction [2]. By 2023, the global revenue of dating apps had surged to \$5.34 billion, with the number of users exceeding 350 million [3]. Mobile dating is gradually becoming the mainstream way for people to meet romantic partners, progressively replacing traditional intermediaries such as friend introductions and family arrangements [4, 5]. On these platforms, users can swiftly browse and filter potential matches anytime, anywhere, with just a simple swipe or tap, and engage in instant and in-depth communication through text messages, video calls, emojis, and social media links. This innovative way of socializing has significantly expanded social circles and accelerated the dating process, making it a crucial means of meeting family expectations, alleviating social pressures, and fulfilling personal emotional needs. As a result, dating apps have played a transformative role in reshaping how people seek partners and build relationships, holding a pivotal position in shaping contemporary views and choices regarding romance and marriage.

However, these applications also place users under more immediate pressure when it comes to self-presentation [6]. Dating apps typically require users to create a public and comparable profile when

setting up an account, which includes personal photos, basic information, and a self-introduction. Given that personal profiles play a crucial and central role in shaping first impressions and influencing subsequent interaction decisions [7, 8] an increasing number of users see their profiles as strategic tools. They carefully curate the content they disclose, control the degree of disclosure, and even engage in moderate embellishment to present themselves in the best possible way, enhance their attractiveness, or highlight their strengths [9]. This highlights the fact that computer-mediated communication (CMC) provides an unprecedented platform for impression management. As a result, profile-related research has gained increasing academic attention, as it offers new perspectives and theoretical foundations for understanding information dissemination and social behavior in the context of new media. By exploring information presentation strategies, analyzing audience psychology, and examining patterns of social interaction, communication scholars can provide practical guidance for dating app users on how to optimize their profiles. This, in turn, contributes to the healthy development of dating apps and promotes gender equality and social inclusion.

Although existing studies have examined user behaviors on dating apps, there remains a notable lack of systematic analysis regarding users' profile self-presentation strategies. In most studies, such strategies are treated as peripheral topics rather than central research concerns. For example, Wang and Yang [10] explored how the disclosure of health-related information in dating profiles affects user impressions and decision-making. While the study involved selective self-disclosure, it did not treat self-presentation strategies as a core analytical variable, nor did it delve into users' underlying motivations or behavioral differences. Similarly, Roig-Mora, et al. [11] investigated how young gay men construct their identities through bodily appearance and expressions of masculinity on dating platforms. Although the study included observations of self-presentational behaviors—such as muscular display and nudity—it mainly focused on objectification and body ideals, without a detailed examination of presentation strategies or the psychological mechanisms behind them. Appel, et al. [12] through an experimental design, assessed how the use of beauty filters by male Tinder users affected women's perceptions. While the study addressed visual self-presentation, it concentrated on recipient perceptions rather than on the strategic decisions behind users' self-presentation choices.

In light of these limitations, the present study conducts a systematic review of literature published between 2020 and 2024 in the Scopus and Web of Science databases. The aim is to synthesize the currently fragmented research on profile presentation into a coherent analytical framework, clarify the types of user optimization strategies, examine their relationship with matching outcomes, and offer empirically grounded insights for future theoretical development and platform design.

### *1.2. Research Objective and Research Question*

The overall research objective (RO) of this study is to systematically review and synthesize the current state, types, and underlying influencing factors of self-presentation strategies in dating app user profiles. Specifically, the research objective can be divided into two key aspects:

RO1: To summarize the current state of research on self-presentation strategies in dating app profiles.

RO2: To analyze the self-presentation strategies adopted by dating app users and the influencing factors behind them.

Based on these objectives, the research questions (RQs) for this systematic literature review (SLR) are formulated as follows:

RQ1: What is the current state of research on self-presentation strategies in dating app profiles?

RQ2: What are the self-presentation strategies employed by dating app users and the underlying influencing factors?

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1. Profiles in Dating Apps

Dating apps are smartphone-based online services that rely on GPS technology to help users discover and connect with potential partners in their vicinity. They exemplify the contemporary integration of algorithmic systems and digital infrastructure into the construction of intimate relationships [13, 14]. Owing to their portability, availability, locatability, and multimediality, these apps have increasingly become the “default option” for many young people seeking romantic connections [15, 16]. They provide users with a digital interactive space in which potential partners can be filtered according to social, emotional, or cultural preferences [17–19]. However, despite the widespread recognition of dating apps’ convenience in facilitating social interaction, current scholarship remains limited in its understanding of the self-presentation norms and strategic behaviors these platforms encourage.

On dating apps, users are typically required to construct detailed, attention-grabbing, and context-rich profiles. A growing body of research has confirmed that user profiles play a central role in impression formation and significantly shape interaction intentions and relational outcomes [7, 8, 20]. Regardless of users’ specific motivations, profile construction is often a strategic process imbued with deliberate effort and anticipation. As Miller [21] suggest, a profile functions both as a display window for one’s ideal self and as a filtering mechanism that communicates one’s partner preferences. However, most existing studies focus on the functional role of profiles, offering limited insight into how users navigate the tension between self-presentation and partner selection.

Gender differences have been identified as a significant factor in shaping profile content. Research has shown that male users tend to emphasize personality and socioeconomic status, while female users are more likely to highlight physical attractiveness, particularly weight [22, 23]. These patterns suggest that profile construction is not only a matter of personal expression but also reflects broader gender roles and societal expectations. That said, such studies often operate within a heteronormative framework, with limited attention paid to gender identity, sexual orientation, or the self-presentation strategies of queer and nonbinary users—thus restricting the broader applicability of existing theories.

In terms of format, dating profiles typically consist of two main components: images and text. A substantial number of studies agree that in early-stage interactions—especially when users must quickly decide whether to “swipe left” or “swipe right”—photos play a decisive role, with physical appearance being the most influential cue [8, 24–26]. Users with more attractive profile pictures have been consistently rated higher in terms of physical appeal and dating desirability. These findings underscore the irreplaceable role of visual presentation in both initial attraction and subsequent relational development.

Nonetheless, the dominant view of image-based primacy has been challenged by more recent studies. Van der Zanden, et al. [27] using eye-tracking experiments, found that users spend an average of nine seconds focusing on profile text regardless of the attractiveness of accompanying images, with approximately 50 fixations and over 80% of attention directed toward written content. More importantly, the attractiveness of the profile picture did not significantly affect how much time users spent reading the text. This suggests that even when visual cues spark initial interest, users remain highly attentive to verbal content in order to form a more comprehensive understanding of a person’s personality and values.

Still, the role of profile text remains underexamined in the literature. While Van der Zanden, et al. [28] note that highly original and well-crafted texts enhance user appeal and make authors appear more intelligent and engaging, most studies treat text as a secondary, aesthetic component rather than as a meaningful vehicle for identity construction, rhetorical strategy, or cultural positioning. At present, few investigations have explored how textual elements reflect users’ values, emotional needs, or social positioning. This gap is particularly salient in non-Western contexts, where little is known about culturally specific discourse practices or normative expectations in textual self-presentation.

As Gonzalez and Meyers [29] observed in their study of personal ads, “Personal ads provide researchers with an interesting source of information that pertains to self-presentation strategies, relationship goals, contemporary definitions of what is attractive or ideal, and gender stereotypes” (p.131). The same holds true for dating app profiles today: they are not merely digital tools for self-representation but also socio-cultural artifacts embedded with meaning and governed by normative structures. Future research on profiles should move beyond the binary framing of “photo VS text” and instead pursue a more holistic understanding of how users construct and communicate identity within digital environments. Such a perspective not only enriches the conceptual foundation for analyzing impression management and self-presentation strategies (see Section 2.2), but also highlights the complex interplay between platform architecture, user agency, and cultural discourse.

## 2.2. Impression Management and Self-Presentation

In the context of Computer-Mediated Communication (CMC), the possibilities for self-presentation have expanded considerably. Walther [30] and Walther, et al. [8] posits that the asynchronous and editable nature of online communication allows individuals to carefully craft their messages, thereby enhancing how they are perceived by others [6]. Within this framework, impression management is understood as a deliberate strategy through which users control visible cues to influence others’ perceptions of their personality, intentions, and attractiveness [31]. In the realm of online dating in particular, users are expected to “market” themselves to gain attention and increase the likelihood of being matched [9, 32]. As such, the dating profile functions not merely as a repository of personal information, but as a highly strategic and performative tool.

Scholars generally agree that users tend to highlight their strengths and downplay weaknesses in their profiles, often presenting an idealized version of the self [33, 34]. This self-presentation includes not only the selection of photos, prompts, and textual content, but also the manipulation of ambiguity and emphasis. Schreurs and Vandenbosch [35] observe that users frequently overstate positive attributes while omitting or minimizing less favorable information, rendering the profile a space of selective self-display [6, 9]. However, much of this research remains focused on cataloging behavioral types or identifying surface-level strategies, with limited attention paid to the underlying social norms or cultural scripts that shape such behaviors. For instance, the degree to which “enhanced” self-presentation is perceived as acceptable may vary significantly across cultural contexts—yet this dimension remains largely underexplored.

A longstanding point of contention in the literature on impression management involves the boundary between authenticity and deception. On the one hand, some scholars argue that minor misrepresentations—such as slight age adjustments, retouched photos, or omissions of negative experiences—should be considered pragmatic adaptations to platform constraints, and thus an extension of strategic self-presentation [6, 36]. On the other hand, others insist that such actions constitute deception, undermining the foundation of trust and ultimately compromising relationship quality [6, 26]. A study by Kun, et al. [37] reported that as many as 83% of users admitted to modifying information in their profiles to some degree. This finding suggests that so-called “deceptive” practices may have become normalized in dating app contexts, challenging traditional dichotomies of real versus fake. It highlights the need for more nuanced concepts—such as strategic ambiguity and semantic elasticity—to better capture the complexity of self-presentation online.

Patterns of deceptive behavior also vary by gender and type of information misrepresented. McWilliams and Barrett [23] found that men were more likely to exaggerate socioeconomic status, while women were more inclined to alter their physical appearance in photos. Similarly, Hancock and Toma [38] observed that women tended to make more frequent, yet subtler, edits to their photos, whereas men more commonly fabricated income or height. Meanwhile, Whyte, et al. [39] showed gendered differences in tolerance: men were less forgiving of physical deception, while women were more critical of false claims about status. Although these findings reveal important intersections between gender and presentation strategies, most studies remain descriptive in nature, lacking deeper

exploration of the structural influences behind such behaviors—such as platform design, algorithmic feedback, or broader sociocultural expectations.

There is also considerable debate about the consequences of information inconsistency within dating profiles. Some studies suggest that incongruities between verbal and nonverbal cues—such as a mismatch between appearance and personality description—can undermine credibility and reduce perceived attractiveness, ultimately weakening match potential [6, 39–41]. However, other research highlights users’ tendency toward “positive illusions” and idealization. Tang, et al. [42] for example, found that even when discrepancies were noticed, participants often rationalized them in favor of maintaining a favorable impression. While this “idealization tolerance” may serve a protective function in early-stage interactions, its long-term impact on offline encounters and relationship satisfaction remains under-investigated.

In sum, although current scholarship offers valuable insights into impression management and self-presentation in online dating, several significant theoretical gaps persist. First, much of the research remains preoccupied with classifying types of behavior, while paying insufficient attention to the motivations, cultural frameworks, and technological structures that shape such strategies. Second, studies are overwhelmingly based on Western contexts, often overlooking culturally specific notions of authenticity, attractiveness, and disclosure. Third, the prevalent binary framing of impression management—real versus fake—fails to capture the fluidity, ambiguity, and contextual variation that characterize users’ actual practices. Future research should pay closer attention to how individuals negotiate their self-presentation within the intersection of platform affordances, social expectations, and personal identity, in order to more fully understand the complexities of digital self-expression in contemporary mediated environments.

### 3. Methodology

This study was conducted in accordance with the Page, et al. [1] and was prospectively registered on the Open Science Framework (Registration DOI: 10.17605/OSF.IO/7RBY6).

#### 3.1. PRISMA

PRISMA, or Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses, is an international standard designed to improve the quality of systematic literature reviews (SLRs) and meta-analyses. It consists of a 27-item checklist and a four-phase flow diagram. Given PRISMA’s crucial role in enhancing the quality and credibility of SLR studies, this research strictly adheres to the guidelines set forth in the PRISMA 2020 statement. Compared to PRISMA 2009, PRISMA 2020 introduces improvements in terms of transparency, comprehensiveness, and methodological standardization, further ensuring the reliability and replicability of research. In accordance with the Page, et al. [1] guidelines, this study will conduct rigorous term-based searches across relevant databases to identify studies related to self-presentation strategies on dating apps. The findings will analyze research patterns and trends, offering valuable insights for future studies.

#### 3.2. Resources

This systematic literature review selected Scopus and Web of Science (WoS) as the two indexing databases. Scopus is one of the world's largest online, peer-reviewed abstract and citation databases, covering nearly 36,377 journals from approximately 11,678 publishers. It spans four major fields—life sciences, social sciences, physical sciences, and health sciences—encompassing 27 specific disciplines. Due to its extensive journal coverage, Scopus provides a more comprehensive and detailed perspective when analyzing article citations. Web of Science (WoS), operated by Clarivate Analytics, is a multidisciplinary literature database that includes multiple core collections such as Science Citation Index Expanded (SCIE), Social Sciences Citation Index (SSCI), and Arts & Humanities Citation Index (A&HCI). It also features conference proceedings citation databases such as CPCI-S and CPCI-SSH, as well as specialized databases like the Chemical Information Database. WoS plays a crucial role in

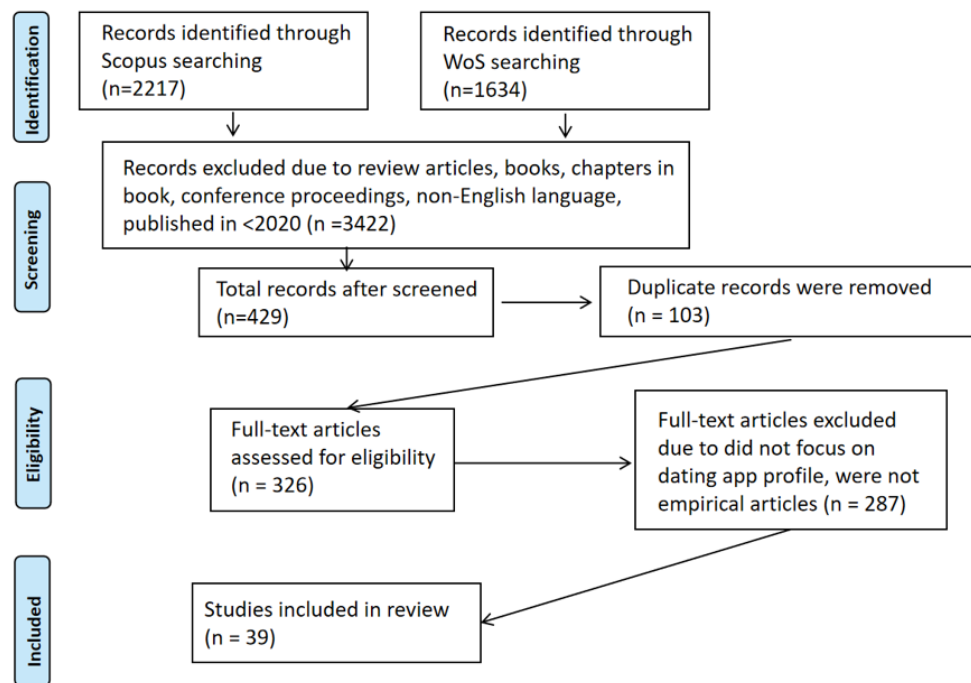
citation analysis and is widely used for evaluating academic impact and research performance. Given the rich academic resources provided by these two databases—particularly in literature retrieval and citation analysis—their selection is essential to ensure the quality of the studies included in this systematic review.

### 3.3. Systematic review process

According to the Page, et al. [1] guidelines, this SLR process is divided into three main stages: identification, screening, and eligibility assessment, as illustrated in Figure 1.

#### 3.3.1. Identification

Identification is the first stage of the systematic review process, which involves keyword selection and information retrieval. This stage was conducted in January 2025. Relevant terms were extracted from various sources, including encyclopedias, dictionaries, and thesauri, while also referring to keywords and related terms used in numerous previous studies (see Table 1). The search strings were divided into two parts. The first part included terms related to dating apps, covering the names of major dating platforms worldwide. The second part comprised terms and expressions associated with profiles and self-presentation. These two concepts were categorized under the same section and considered interchangeable because they are closely related in research on social media and dating apps. Many studies may use only one of these terms, and merging them helps capture a broader range of relevant literature. Separating these two concepts could narrow the search scope and potentially exclude studies that treat them as synonymous or discuss them in an overlapping manner. Through this process, 2,217 articles were retrieved from the Scopus database, while 1,634 articles were identified from the Web of Science (WoS) database.



**Figure 1.**  
The flow diagram of the study.  
Source: Samsuddin, et al. [43].

**Table 1.**  
Keywords and search strings.

Database	Keywords used
Web of Science	TS=("dating app*" OR "online dating" OR "mobile dating app*" OR "matchmaking platform*" OR "Grindr" OR "Tinder" OR "Bumble" OR "OkCupid" OR "Hinge" OR "Eharmony" OR "Tantan" OR "Plenty of Fish" OR "Momo" OR "Blued" OR "MeetMe" OR "Skout") AND TS=("profile*" OR "profile presentation*" OR "self-presentation*" OR "impression management*" OR "identity management*" OR "self-disclosure*" OR "profile optimization*" OR "profile enhancement*")
Scopus	(TITLE-ABS-KEY("dating app*" OR "online dating" OR "mobile dating app*" OR "matchmaking platform*" OR "digital dating" OR "Grindr" OR "Tinder" OR "Bumble" OR "OkCupid" OR "Hinge" OR "Eharmony" OR "Tantan" OR "Plenty of Fish" OR "Momo" OR "Blued" OR "MeetMe" OR "Skout")) AND (TITLE-ABS-KEY("profile*" OR "profile presentation*" OR "self-presentation*" OR "impression management*" OR "identity management*" OR "self-disclosure*" OR "profile optimization*" OR "profile enhancement*"))

### 3.3.2. Screening (Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria)

Screening is a crucial step in the SLR process, aimed at conducting an initial review of the collected literature based on predefined inclusion and exclusion criteria. This step ensures that only high-quality and relevant studies proceed to the eligibility assessment stage. The screening criteria in this study are divided into four key aspects. First, in terms of time frame, studies published between 2020 and 2024 were selected to reflect the most recent research trends, keep up with industry developments and technological advancements, and ensure the relevance and timeliness of this SLR. Second, regarding document type, only peer-reviewed journal articles containing empirical data were included. Unpublished papers, review articles, books, conference proceedings, and other non-peer-reviewed sources were excluded, as they may lack rigorous peer review processes, making it difficult to ensure their research quality.

**Table 2.**  
The inclusion and exclusion criteria.

Criterion	Inclusion	Exclusion
Timeline	Between 2020 and 2024	<2024
Document type	Journals (research articles)	Journals (review articles), books, book chapters, proceeding paper, editorial material, book review, data paper, meeting abstract
Language	English	Non-English
Subject Category	<b>Web of Science:</b> Communication, Psychology Multidisciplinary, Psychology Social, Social Sciences Interdisciplinary, Sociology, Women's Studies, Anthropology, Behavioral Sciences, Computer Science Artificial Intelligence, Social Issues, Cultural Studies, Information Science Library Science, Political Science, Ethics, Computer Science Information Systems <b>Scopus:</b> Social Sciences, Psychology, Computer Science, Arts and Humanities, Business, Management and Accounting, Decision Sciences, Health Professions, Multidisciplinary	Excluding the eligible subject categories or fields listed on the left under the WoS and Scopus classifications.

Third, in terms of language criteria, this review includes only English-language publications to avoid potential misunderstandings and information bias that may arise during the translation process (see Table 2). Finally, in terms of subject classification, specific disciplines were selected to ensure the relevance of the research. This strategy allows for a focused exploration of highly relevant fields while



effectively filtering out unrelated studies, thus improving retrieval efficiency and reducing unnecessary workload. After applying the screening criteria, 429 articles were retained, while 3,422 articles that did not meet the criteria were excluded.

### 3.3.3. Eligibility

Before the eligibility assessment, this study first conducted a deduplication process on the search results from Scopus and WoS using the Rayyan platform. After removing duplicates, 326 articles proceeded to the eligibility stage.

The eligibility assessment stage involves manually reviewing the literature based on specific research criteria to determine whether to include or exclude studies. During this phase, each retrieved article was examined individually to remove those that did not meet the required criteria, ensuring that only studies that align with the research standards were included. In addition to the inclusion and exclusion criteria, special attention was given to whether the articles were closely related to the research topic. The specific criteria for determining relevance and reasons for exclusion are detailed in Table 3. Following the screening process, which involved reviewing titles, abstracts, and full texts, a total of 39 articles met the criteria and were included in the final analysis.

**Table 3.**

Overview of selected studies on cultural representation and historical costume in Chinese historical films.

Category	Inclusion Criteria	Exclusion Criteria
Study Population	The study population consists of Dating App users	Research targeting non-Dating App users, such as developers, platform operators, or studies on platforms other than Dating Apps
Platform Focus	Focuses on Dating Apps	Non-dating social media platforms or dating sites
Research Topic	Explores user profile presentation strategies and their impact on interaction and behavior	Only involves research on topics other than profile strategies, such as matching algorithms, advertising marketing, privacy, security, etc.

### 3.4. Data Abstraction and Analysis

This study conducted an integrative review, aiming to synthesize findings across qualitative, quantitative, and mixed-methods research in order to develop a comprehensive understanding of the trends, patterns, similarities, and differences in the existing literature. To ensure consistency in data processing, all included studies were analyzed qualitatively. For studies employing quantitative methods, only the key findings reported in the conclusions were extracted; the original statistical data were not reanalyzed. This decision was based on two primary considerations: first, most quantitative studies did not provide access to raw data, making it difficult to conduct secondary statistical analysis; second, the primary objective of this review was to conduct a thematic-level synthesis rather than to replicate or revalidate existing statistical models. Therefore, using the reported conclusions from quantitative studies as supplemental input for the thematic analysis was more aligned with the aim of this review. Building on this approach, the study applied thematic analysis to identify core themes and subthemes from the qualitative data.

The first stage, Data Compilation, involved extracting all relevant data or statements related to the research questions from the selected 39 studies. The second stage, Data Coding, entailed an open coding process, where researchers labeled data using original words or phrases from the literature. This process initially generated 248 preliminary codes. These codes were then categorized, grouping similar meanings together. Through this process, the 248 initial codes were refined into 12 higher-level codes. The third stage focused on deriving themes from the higher-level codes. Ultimately, the data were classified into three major themes: Content Dimensions, Platform Effects, and Socio-Cultural and Identity Factors.

Throughout the analysis, all authors maintained detailed records of their ideas and observations to ensure transparency. To uphold objectivity, the classification results were compared and discussed



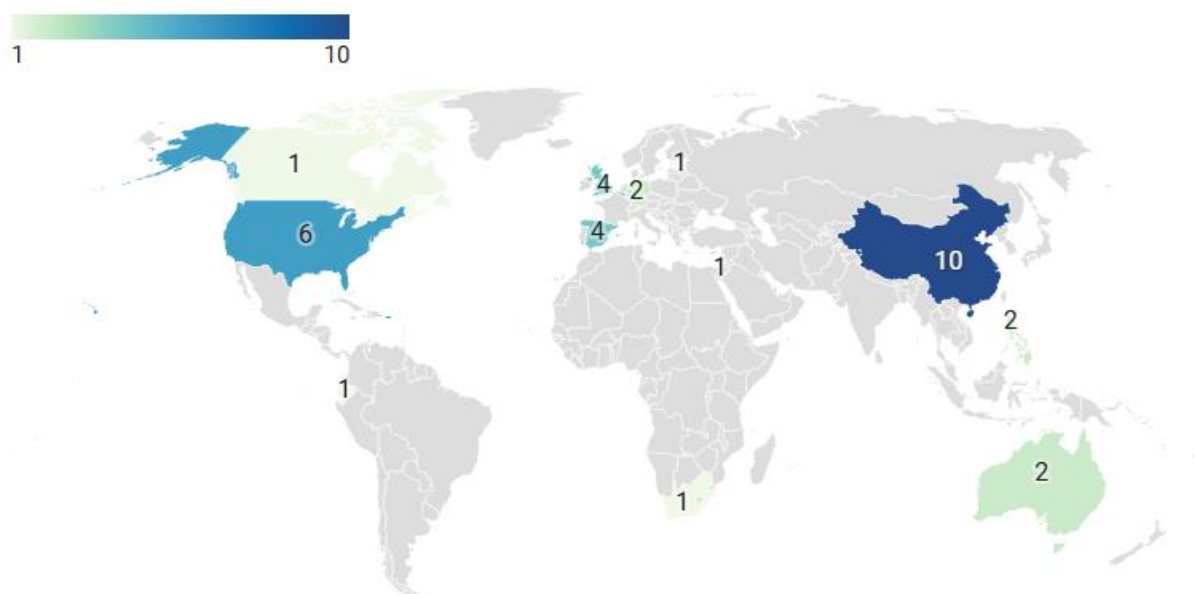
among the authors. In cases of disagreement, further discussions were conducted, and relevant academic literature on dating apps, self-presentation, and gender studies was consulted for additional guidance. Finally, the developed themes and sub-themes were adjusted to ensure consistency. To further enhance validity, two independent experts were invited to review the findings, and necessary revisions were made based on their feedback.

## 4. Findings

### 4.1. Current State of Research

As shown in Figure 2, in terms of geographical distribution, research is primarily concentrated in developed countries, such as North America (the United States, Canada), Europe (the United Kingdom, Germany, Spain, Belgium), and East Asia (China). The relatively high number of studies conducted in these regions may be attributed to their advanced technological infrastructure, widespread usage of online dating applications, and abundant academic resources. In contrast, developing countries and emerging markets, such as the Philippines, South Africa, and Ecuador, have significantly fewer studies. This disparity may reflect lower adoption rates of dating apps in these regions or limited research resources available. However, the current body of research is heavily concentrated in a few countries, particularly China and the United States, which may introduce limitations in perspective. For instance, social cultures, dating norms, and user behavior patterns can vary significantly across different countries. Over-reliance on data from certain regions may hinder a comprehensive understanding of the complexities of global online dating behaviors. On the other hand, some countries, such as Israel, South Africa, and Estonia, despite having a presence in the research landscape, remain underexplored. Further investigation is needed to uncover cross-cultural self-presentation strategies and the influencing factors unique to these regions.

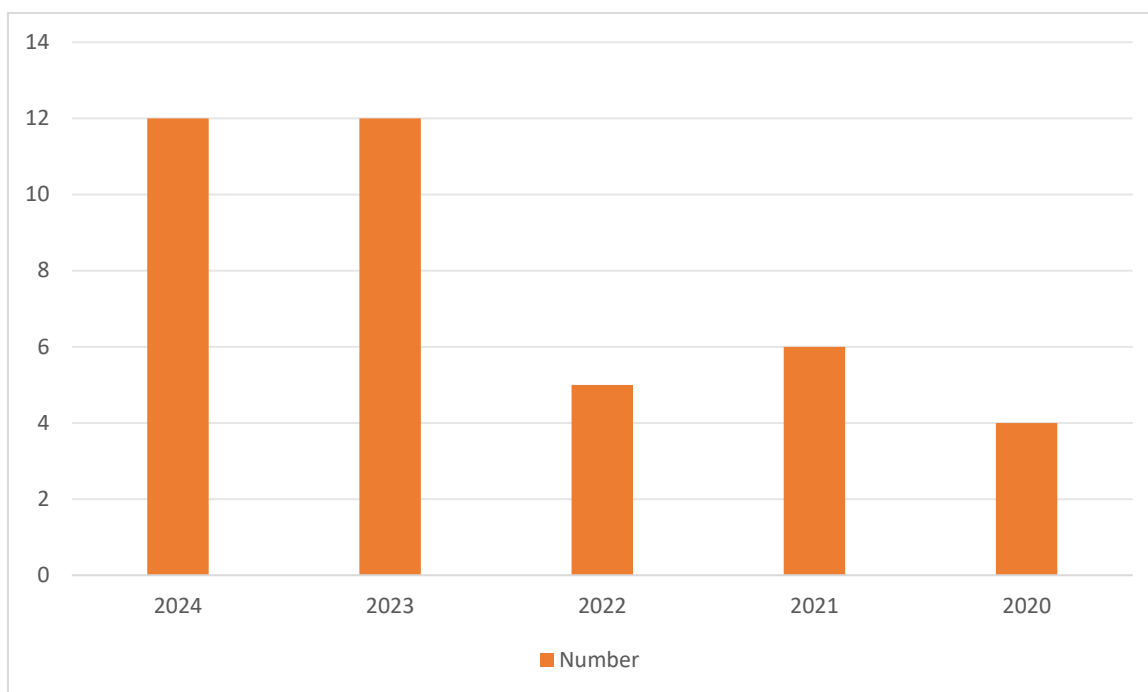
### [Research Coverage Across Countries]



**Figure 2.**  
The Spatial Distribution of Selected Articles.

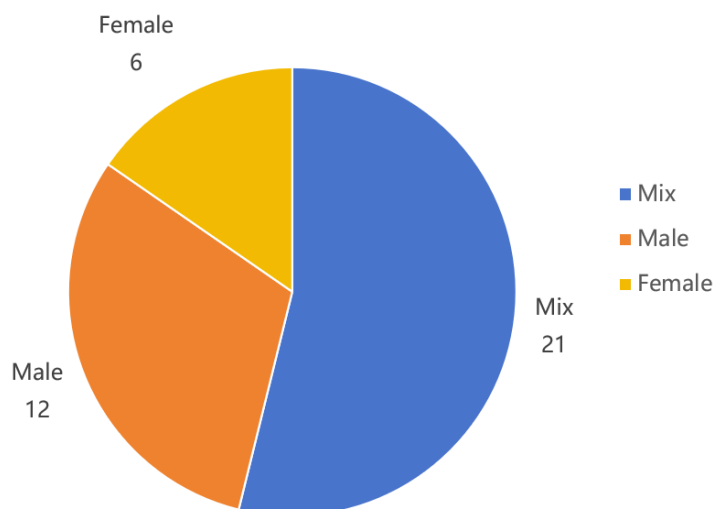
In the literature collected for this study from 2020 to 2024, we observed an increasing trend in the number of studies (see Figure 3). In 2020 and 2021, the number of studies was relatively low, with 4 and

6 publications, respectively. However, a significant increase was observed in 2023 and 2024, with both years reaching 12 publications, accounting for 61.5% of the total research. This trend indicates that, with the growing popularity of mobile dating applications and the increasing social acceptance of online dating, research in this field has expanded significantly in recent years. Additionally, the trend may have been influenced by the COVID-19 pandemic, which accelerated the adoption of online social interactions and prompted scholars to pay more attention to user behavior patterns on dating platforms. Given these developments, it is expected that research in this area will continue to grow in the future.



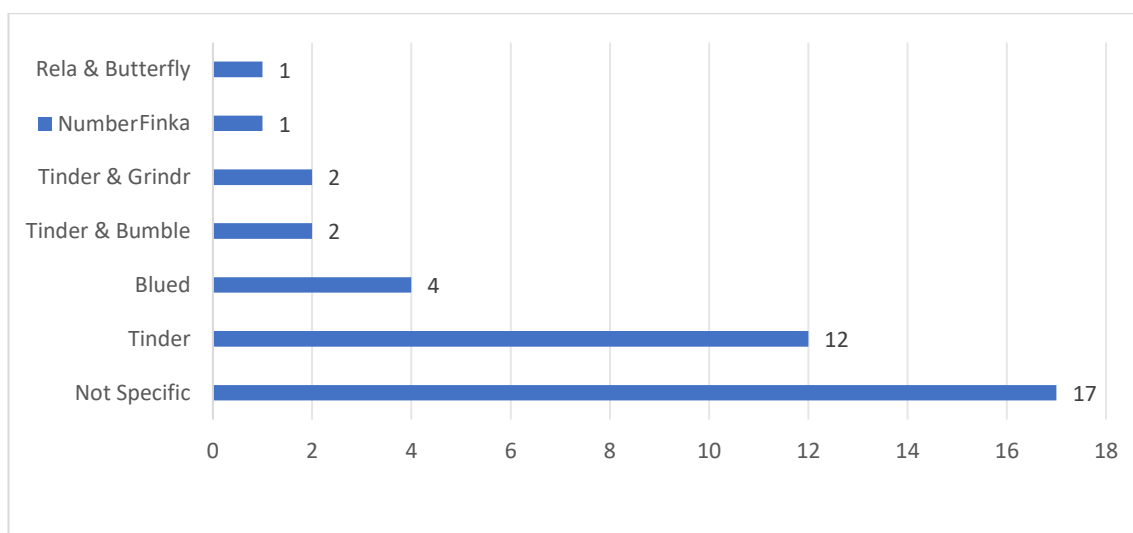
**Figure 3.**  
The Temporal Distribution of Selected Articles.

As shown in Figure 4, among the literature collected for this study, 21 studies focused on mixed-gender participants, while 12 studies specifically examined male users, and only 6 studies focused on female users, making it the least represented group. This distribution suggests that most research tends to adopt a mixed-gender sample, while in studies that focus on a single gender, research on males is twice as prevalent as research on females. This imbalance may reflect the academic community's greater interest in gender differences in dating apps, particularly with a stronger focus on male self-presentation and user behavior.



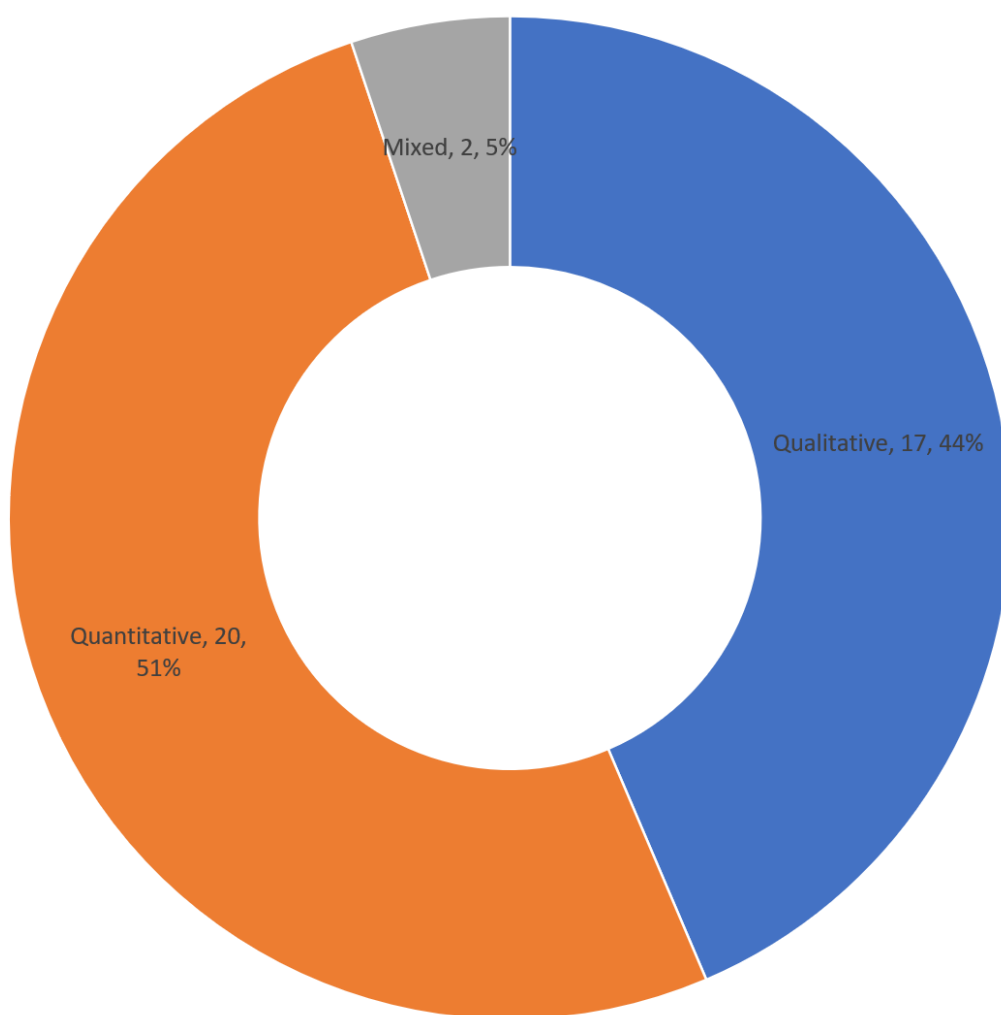
**Figure 4.**  
Gender Distribution of Study Participants (n=39).

As shown in Figure 5, the collected literature in this study covers a total of seven specific dating apps, along with 17 studies that did not specify a particular platform. Among the identified studies, Tinder is the most frequently studied platform, with 12 articles, indicating its significant attention in academic research. This prominence may be attributed to Tinder's status as the world's largest dating app, with a vast user base and considerable social influence. Additionally, Tinder's reliance on the "swipe-matching" mechanism has made it a popular topic for exploring user behavior and self-presentation strategies. Blued, an app catering specifically to the LGBTQ+ community, has been the subject of 4 studies, while studies examining multiple platforms, such as Smith and Anderson [44] and Lee and Park [45] are relatively fewer, with only 2 articles each. Other niche apps, such as Garcia and Lopez [46] and Thompson [47] have been explored in just 1 study each. This distribution suggests that academic research primarily focuses on mainstream platforms with large global user bases. In contrast, research on apps targeting specific groups or niche markets remains relatively limited.



**Figure 5.**  
Research apps distribution (N=39).

As shown in Figure 6, quantitative studies dominate the collected research, with a total of 20 studies. This is followed by qualitative studies, which account for 17 studies, while mixed-methods research is the least represented, with only 2 studies. These findings suggest that scholars in the field of dating app research tend to favor quantitative methods, likely due to their ability to provide more precise data analysis, user behavior modeling, and extensive statistical inference. However, the scarcity of mixed-methods research indicates that the academic community has not yet fully integrated both approaches, which may result in certain limitations in the depth or breadth of existing studies. This study reveals that research on dating apps predominantly adopts quantitative approaches, while mixed-methods studies remain relatively underutilized. Future research could benefit from employing a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods, as mixed-methods approaches may offer deeper insights into the complexities of user behavior.



**Figure 6.**  
Distribution of research methods (N=39).

#### 4.2. Content Dimensions

Among the 39 studies reviewed, 21 focused on the content aspects of dating app profiles.

#### 4.2.1. Presentation Style

Nine studies explored how users present themselves in dating app profiles, generally dividing profile presentation into two parts: photos and text.

Asadchy, et al. [48] focused on the visible content and shooting angles of profile photos, categorizing them into 13 types, including intimate selfies, dark selfies, mirror selfies, charming photos, green landscapes, bright selfies, cityscapes, waterfronts, bars and cafes, framed photos, and those featuring pets, vehicles, and sunglasses. In contrast, Degen and Kleeberg-Niepage [49] using a reconstructive serial picture analysis, emphasized users' self-presentation intentions, classifying photos into eight main types: selfie-focused, informative (highlighting lifestyle and romance), snapshot (capturing contextual moments), social enjoyment (including social and environmental cues), professional (carefully curated images), anonymous (hiding the face), subject suspension (using avatars, objects, or pets instead of self), and norm-challenging (defying conventional aesthetics). Despite the variety of photo types, studies suggest that most users focus on physical attractiveness when choosing profile photos. The majority tend to emphasize their external appeal in the first and second photos, while only a few highlight inner qualities or resource values [50]. Moreover, Tanner [51] found that users with lower satisfaction with their facial and body appearance are more likely to present themselves in a more sexualized way in profile photos.

Gender differences in photo usage are also significant, particularly in the emphasis on appearance versus resources [48, 50]. Women tend to upload intimate selfies, charming photos, and framed selfies, often with a greater number and variety of images [48] as they aim to highlight their physical attractiveness [50]. In contrast, men prefer bright selfies, sunglasses, and vehicle-related photos [48] emphasizing resource-related cues such as cars and career status, which appear 2.92 times more frequently in men's profiles compared to women's [50].

Several studies in the collected literature focus on how users present themselves through the textual components of dating app profiles. Overall, text-based self-presentation serves not only as a means of showcasing personal value but also as a way to express preferences, convey emotion, and reveal group-level differences.

First, text is often used to highlight individual value. Vranken, et al. [50] found that among users who chose to write profile descriptions, references to external market value (MV)—such as resources—appeared in 78.65% of cases, while references to internal MV—such as personality traits—appeared in 61.98%. In contrast, direct mentions of physical attractiveness (also a form of external MV) were relatively rare, at only 13.02%. Second, text frequently conveys users' preferences or rejections. Forbes and Stacey [52] identified two dominant strategies: “positive reframing” (stating what one is looking for) and “explicit exclusion” (stating what one does not want). Because the latter is more likely to be interpreted as prejudiced or discriminatory, most users tend to prefer the former to maintain a more favorable image. Textual content also reflects gender- and age-related differences. For example, València [53] found that men generally use emojis more frequently in their profile texts than women. Younger users, especially those under 30, were more likely to use a combination of text and emojis to enhance expressiveness and emotional tone, whereas older users preferred straightforward, emoji-free writing styles. Similarly, Kang [54] observed that female users were more likely to incorporate pop culture references—such as music playlists or movie quotes—as a means of expressing taste and constructing identity. Male users, in contrast, tended to use brief declarative phrases (e.g., “gym enthusiast,” “entrepreneur”) to signal lifestyle and social roles. Finally, text is sometimes used as a tool for redirecting traffic. Cantos-Delgado and Maíz-Arévalo [55] found that women seeking men often included very minimal self-descriptions (e.g., only listing height) and frequently added Instagram handles at the end of their bios, effectively guiding potential matches to other platforms. This practice illustrates the diverse strategic approaches users adopt when managing their presence on dating apps.

#### 4.2.2. Self-Presentation Strategies

Among the collected studies, 8 focused on how users present themselves in their dating app profiles. Labor [56] suggested that users typically adopt various strategies to present themselves and attract

others, including being honest, dramatizing, controlling information disclosure, maintaining a sense of mystery, idealizing, and even misrepresenting themselves.

Regarding the function and style of text presentation, Kang [54] found that while some users list their music preferences to showcase their identity, others use music in a more strategic way—selecting songs purely for impression management rather than genuine interest. Similarly, Cantos-Delgado and Maíz-Arévalo [57] pointed out that humor is a common strategy used in profiles, as it helps to create a sense of connection between strangers. There are also gender differences in the way humor is used: men prefer self-deprecating jokes and anecdotes, while women often use irony and quotes. Additionally, teasing (more common among women) and self-enhancement (more common among men) are also popular humor strategies.

Mitchell and Knittel [58] highlighted that many users adopt an "uncertainty reduction" strategy in their profiles due to safety concerns and the fear of being recognized. On the other hand, those who are more focused on attracting potential matches rather than protecting themselves tend to enhance their positive attributes in their profiles [59].

Studies have shown that exaggeration is one of the most commonly used enhancement strategies [59-61]. Around 83% of participants admitted to some level of deception in their online dating profiles, though the overall degree of lying was relatively low [59]. Minor enhancements often include "rounding up" height or using older photos and filters [59, 60]. Research also indicates that women are more likely to enhance their physical appearance, while men tend to exaggerate their social resources [59]. Although factors such as fewer social cues, the normalization of lying, self-objectification norms, competition, and concerns about managing stigmatized identities may encourage users to exaggerate their profiles, the expectation of face-to-face interactions often limits extreme deception to avoid embarrassment upon discovery [62]. As Peng [59] noted, these minor misrepresentations are often seen as an attempt to strike a balance between "attractiveness" and "accuracy."

#### 4.2.3. Motivations and Goals

Among the collected studies, three explored the connection between users' motivations for using dating apps and their self-presentation in profiles. However, these studies did not focus primarily on the relationship between motivations and profile presentation.

Chen, et al. [63] pointed out that different motivations drive either authentic self-presentation or strategic self-presentation. For example, relationship motivations and self-verification motivations can influence how users present themselves. Peng [59] found that motivations often affect the choice of self-presentation strategies—users who are more focused on attracting potential partners tend to use more information manipulation strategies. The study also noted that individuals driven by the motivation to attract others are more likely to misrepresent themselves compared to those motivated by the fear of being caught lying. Zheng and Lin [64] explored the link between different motivations ("hook-up" vs. "non-hook-up") and self-presentation styles. Their findings revealed that hook-up motivations were linked to the display of sexual features, while non-hook-up motivations were more associated with a focus on social orientation and personal characteristics.

#### 4.2.4. Personality Traits

Three studies in the collected literature examined how personality traits and psychological factors influence self-presentation in dating app profiles. Traits such as vulnerable narcissism, social anxiety, and rejection sensitivity can significantly impact the depth and authenticity of users' disclosures.

Megan, et al. [65] emphasized that vulnerable narcissism is a key predictor of inauthentic self-presentation in online dating profiles, whereas other traits from the "Dark Triad," such as Machiavellianism and psychopathy, did not show a significant predictive effect. Rozen and Aderka [66] focused on individuals with social anxiety disorder (SAD) and found that they tend to provide shorter self-descriptions and use more neutral images. Compared to those without SAD, these users exhibit a cautious approach, often avoiding emotional exposure. Blackhart, et al. [67] studied individuals with

rejection sensitivity (RS) and found that they are more likely to present their authentic selves in online settings. Online platforms are often perceived as "disinhibited environments," providing a sense of anonymity and psychological distance, which offers a safer space for those who fear rejection. As a result, these users are more open and honest in their self-presentation.

#### 4.3. Platform Effect

Among the collected studies, seven focused on how dating app platforms influence users' self-presentation in their profiles. Since the number of relevant studies is relatively small, they are discussed together in this section without further categorization.

Five studies explored how platform features and interaction designs shape self-presentation. Different platforms have unique functions and technical limitations that influence how users present themselves. For example, OkCupid emphasizes text-based questionnaires and algorithmic matching, Tinder focuses on quick visual judgments, and Blued highlights physical appearance and body features [48, 51, 64, 68]. Studies by Zheng and Lin [64] and Zhou [68] found that Blued's interface heavily emphasizes body image, such as muscles and physique. Users rely on visual elements like photos and tags to "show" or "prove" their physical attractiveness. As a result, Blued has been criticized for overemphasizing "sexual capital," leading to exclusion of those who do not fit such criteria, and normalizing discrimination. Both studies argued that this platform design reinforces social hierarchies rather than promoting equality. Research by Asadchy, et al. [48] and Tanner [51] indicated that OkCupid allows users to present their personalities and values through detailed descriptions, while Tinder simplifies the process by prioritizing visual appeal. Both heterosexual and homosexual users tend to focus more on physical appearance on visually driven platforms like Tinder. Additionally, Degen and Kleeberg-Niepage [49] noted that the swipe-based browsing system of mobile dating apps encourages users to present themselves in ways that conform to widely accepted standards of attractiveness. In this fast-paced environment, users tend to follow social norms rather than highlighting their unique individuality, leading to the oversimplification and marginalization of diverse identities.

Only one study Asadchy, et al. [48] examined how algorithms and recommendation mechanisms influence self-presentation in dating app profiles. This study found that users' perceptions of the underlying algorithms significantly shape their self-presentation strategies. Specifically, their interactions with the algorithm reflect the dynamic relationship between "dating" and "sex" in their daily use. Users incorporate their assumptions about the platform's recommendation logic and visibility ranking into their experience, strategically choosing what information to display or conceal to avoid unwanted attention or misclassification.

Three studies explored the impact of platform culture and norms on self-presentation. Overall, these studies revealed that users tend to follow unwritten social rules on different platforms, which influence their choices in photo style, gender expression, and body image presentation. Asadchy, et al. [48] pointed out that the consistency of images across profiles suggests the existence of implicit social norms that define what kind of images are considered appropriate, shaping a platform's unique "style space." Konings, et al. [69] found that platform culture significantly affects gender expression. For example, on Bumble, which is known for its feminist-oriented branding, men are more likely to emphasize traditional masculinity, possibly as a way to reinforce their gender identity within this environment. In contrast, men on Tinder are less likely to do so. Fan, et al. [70] studied the dating app Finka and found that it encourages users to present their ideal body types by offering specific profile tags and additional exposure opportunities for users with high "sexual capital." Such platform norms influence users to highlight their physical attributes to align with community expectations regarding appearance and attractiveness.

#### 4.4. Socio-Cultural and Identity Factors

A total of 24 studies explored how socio-cultural and identity factors influence self-presentation in dating app profiles.



#### 4.4.1. Gender Role

Among the reviewed literature, only six studies explicitly examined how gender role expectations influence users' self-presentation in dating app profiles. Although limited in number, these studies highlight the significant role of socio-cultural norms and user motivations in shaping self-presentation behaviors.

Several studies García-Gómez [71]; Konings, et al. [72] and Peetz [73] indicate that, regardless of platform type or users' sexual orientation, dating profiles often reflect traditional gender roles. Male users tend to emphasize stereotypically masculine traits, such as referencing traditionally male professions or using assertive, dominant language, even though they are less likely to highlight physical features in visual content. In contrast, female users are more inclined to use feminine language, emphasize emotional characteristics, and include photos that showcase physical attributes, thereby reinforcing a gendered self-presentation. These behaviors suggest that users, either consciously or unconsciously, conform to socially prescribed gender norms in the way they construct their profiles, contributing to the ongoing reinforcement of conventional gender expectations.

In addition, other studies García-Gómez [74] and Wu and Liu [75] further explored why female users often present themselves as compliant or "well-behaved." These studies found that some women deliberately emphasize traits associated with submissiveness or innocence in their bios to enhance a sense of safety or increase their likelihood of being positively received. While such strategies may successfully elicit protective responses from male users and improve the chances of interaction, they also reflect an internalization of patriarchal gender norms and may further reinforce existing gender stereotypes.

In sum, gendered patterns of profile presentation are not merely passive responses to societal expectations; rather, they often reflect strategic, motivation-driven choices made by individuals navigating the dating app environment. These behaviors reveal how users negotiate between personal goals—such as perceived safety or match success—and broader cultural scripts. Although still understudied, this line of inquiry sheds light on how macro-level gender ideologies are reproduced through micro-level digital practices and deserves greater attention in future research.

#### 4.4.2. Sexual Orientation (LGBTQ+)

Among the collected studies, 14 focused on self-presentation in dating app profiles among LGBTQ+ users. Specifically, 9 studies explored self-presentation strategies of gay men, 2 focused on lesbian women, and 1 addressed bisexual women. Additionally, 2 studies mentioned non-heterosexual users while discussing other topics. These numbers indicate that the self-presentation of gay men has received the most academic attention.

Regarding self-presentation strategies among gay men, two studies found that they tend to emphasize their appearance and body features in their profiles [64, 68]. Many users include tags related to fitness, muscles, and body type, and often upload photos that align with dominant ideals of masculinity within the gay community. Meanwhile, three other studies Fan, et al. [70]; Miller [21] and Wongsomboon, et al. [76] analyzed specific aspects of profile photos, such as visibility and background context. For example, Fan, et al. [70] found that showing one's face in photos is positively linked to popularity, but visibility of specific body parts, like muscles or torsos, does not always guarantee higher attractiveness. Miller [21] highlighted that facial photos are associated with higher app usage and longer usage time, whereas body-focused photos are more common among users who are older, more muscular, or perceive themselves as more masculine. Wongsomboon, et al. [76] noted that individuals perceived as more attractive tend to display both upper and lower body in their profile photos. However, those who fear being recognized tend to blur or obscure their faces. Additionally, Fan, et al. [70] found that users often prefer taking profile photos in private settings, such as dressing rooms, bedrooms, elevators, and showers, as these environments can create a more intimate and sexually suggestive atmosphere.

In terms of textual self-presentation, Zheng and Lin [64] observed that gay men frequently use direct preference statements, either through positive self-promotion or explicit rejection of certain traits, to filter potential matches quickly. Hermosa-Bosano, et al. [77] pointed out that users' focus on factors like body type, age, and masculinity is reflected in their self-descriptions, with many individuals highlighting their own physique and traits to attract desirable partners. Focusing on the Blued platform, Lu, et al. [78] identified 35 types of sexual allusions (SA) categorized into six semantic fields, with "Sexual activity" being the most frequently mentioned and "Personal traits" the least. This suggests that gay men on Blued tend to emphasize their sexual expectations and desires in the textual part of their profiles. To increase their chances of matching, Labor, et al. [79] found that most gay men regularly update and refine their profiles, adjusting descriptions and tags to better align with the platform's culture and meet the aesthetic expectations of potential matches.

Two studies Cantos-Delgado and Maíz-Arévalo [55] and Fung [80] explored how lesbian women present themselves in the text sections of their dating app profiles. Cantos-Delgado and Maíz-Arévalo [55] found that lesbian users tend to include more detailed text in their profiles and frequently use phrases like "I" or "I like," which suggests a stronger sense of identity. For these women, dating apps are not just platforms to find romantic or sexual partners but also serve as spaces to connect with local or online communities and build friendships. On the other hand, Fung [80] highlighted the challenges lesbian women face when selecting labels for their profiles. Despite feeling that these labels do not fully capture their complex personalities or sexual identities, they often choose certain labels to fit within the platform's structure and meet others' expectations. As a result, many of them have mixed feelings about using labels—they recognize their usefulness but worry about being confined by them, which may impact their self-identity and personal growth.

One study focused on bisexual women. Hackett and Gerodetti [81] found that for young bisexual women, constructing their bisexual identity on dating apps is an ongoing process of adjustment and self-reflection. Since bisexuality lacks clear visual or appearance-based cues to signify their identity, these women frequently modify their profiles and photos to be perceived as bisexual across different platforms and audiences, while also trying to avoid discrimination. They may reference LGBTQ+ music in their bios or, in some cases, choose not to disclose their sexual orientation at all. Their primary goal in this process is to establish meaningful connections while minimizing anxiety about their bisexual identity. For them, affirming and reinforcing their sexual identity becomes the most important self-presentation goal on dating apps.

Two studies examined how sexual orientation influences self-presentation. Konings, et al. [72] found that compared to heterosexual users, non-heterosexual users are more likely to adopt sexualized self-presentation in their profile text and mention casual relationship motives more frequently. Meanwhile, València [53] observed that gay users tend to use emojis in their profiles more often than heterosexual users. They prefer combining text with emojis in their descriptions and are more likely to engage with profiles that include emojis. These findings suggest that self-presentation among different sexual orientation groups varies not only in content (such as emphasis on sexuality and casual encounters) but also in style (such as combining text with emojis).

#### 4.4.3. Race

Among the reviewed literature, only one study has specifically examined how racial factors influence self-presentation. Tanner [51] notes that users often rely on indirect disclosure mechanisms in their profiles to express racial preferences. These strategies may include the use of racially coded language or the adaptation of content to align with the cultural norms of a particular ethnic subcommunity, thereby avoiding overt statements about racial preferences. Through such tactics, users leverage visual cues to attract or filter for specific racial groups, aiming to reduce the psychological burden of sexual racism and minimize the likelihood of rejection. This finding suggests that race not only influences users' matching decisions but also plays an active role in shaping the content and strategy of self-presentation. However, this topic remains significantly underexplored in the existing literature. Future research is

needed to systematically investigate both the shared practices and divergent approaches across different racial and ethnic groups in constructing dating profiles.

#### 4.4.4. Cross-Cultural Comparison

Among the reviewed studies, only one focused specifically on how users' self-presentation strategies differ across cultural contexts. Cantos-Delgado and Maíz-Arévalo [57] conducted a comparative analysis of dating app users in the United Kingdom and Spain, finding that British users were twice as likely to use humor in their profile bios compared to Spanish users. Moreover, the two groups demonstrated distinct styles of humor: Spanish users tended to favor subtle strategies such as paradoxes and quotations, while British users were more inclined to employ direct self-enhancement as a form of humorous expression. The study also observed that self-promotional language appeared more frequently in British users' profiles, reflecting cultural differences in communication preferences and social norms. While this research offers valuable initial insights, cross-cultural comparison remains a largely overlooked area within the literature on profile construction. Further empirical studies involving diverse national and cultural samples are needed to deepen our understanding of how cultural frameworks shape digital self-presentation practices.

#### 4.4.5. Social Norms

Among the reviewed literature, two studies explicitly highlight the influence of social norms on self-presentation within dating app profiles.

Dredge and Anderson [82] observed that users generally perceive a "proper" profile as one that includes a sufficient number of clear, high-quality photos and conveys personal interests, identity, and dating intentions through both text and visuals. Presenting oneself in a humorous or attention-catching manner is often regarded as socially appropriate. In contrast, profiles with poor-quality or inappropriate images, insufficient information, or distorted self-representations tend to be seen as deviating from platform norms. Degen and Kleeberg-Niepage [49] further emphasized that self-presentation on dating apps is heavily regulated by implicit social expectations. Most users prefer to present themselves in ways that are easily categorized and quantified, resulting in highly curated, aesthetically conforming images. While this kind of "normalized" presentation may enhance social approval, it often limits the space for personal expression and creativity. Nevertheless, the study also identified a minority of users who resist such norms by adopting unconventional imagery, opting for anonymity, or using "subject suspension"—a strategy where users obscure their own presence through objects, avatars, or indirect cues—to challenge dominant presentation logics.

Taken together, these studies suggest that users are not entirely free in constructing their dating profiles, but rather operate within the boundaries of platform-specific social norms. Although this remains a relatively underexplored topic, it is of significant relevance for understanding how platforms shape user behavior and how individuals strategically navigate these implicit constraints. Future research should pay closer attention to this important dimension.

## 5. Conclusion

This study aims to systematically review the existing literature on user profile presentation strategies in dating apps. Regarding RQ1, findings indicate a steady increase in research within this field over the years, with a peak in 2023 and 2024, accounting for more than 60% of the total studies. In terms of research methods, quantitative studies dominate, followed by qualitative studies, while mixed-method studies are relatively scarce. This suggests that current research focuses more on large-scale data analysis, with less emphasis on in-depth exploration. Geographically, most studies are concentrated in developed regions such as North America, Europe, and East Asia, while research in developing countries and emerging markets remains limited. This may lead to regional bias in research perspectives. In terms of study participants, mixed-gender samples are the most common, with significantly more studies focusing on male users compared to female users. This indicates a greater

academic interest in men's self-presentation behaviors. When it comes to platform selection, Tinder is the most frequently studied app, reflecting its leading position in the global online dating market. However, research on apps targeting specific groups remains relatively limited, highlighting the need for broader study coverage.

For RQ2, this study identifies three key themes: Content Dimension, Platform Effect, and Socio-Cultural and Identity Factors. The key findings of each theme are summarized below.

**Content Dimension:** Research shows that while men and women tend to upload different styles of photos in their profiles, the focus on physical attractiveness remains central. The text section of profiles is often used to showcase personal values, preferences, and other relevant information. To attract potential matches, users adopt various self-presentation strategies, such as honesty, dramatization, information control, idealization, and distortion. Among these, minor exaggerations are the most common, as they enhance attractiveness without compromising authenticity. Additionally, users' motivations and psychological traits—such as vulnerable narcissism, social anxiety, and rejection sensitivity—significantly influence the depth and truthfulness of the information they disclose in their profiles.

**Platform Effect:** Different app features and technical limitations shape how users present themselves. Users' perceptions of the platform's algorithms, as well as their assumptions about recommendation logic and audience reach, influence how they choose to present themselves and what content to include. Furthermore, "unwritten" social norms exist within each platform, leading to variations in photo styles, gender expression, and body presentation based on the platform's unique culture.

**Socio-Cultural and Identity Factors:** People from different cultural backgrounds adopt varied self-presentation strategies, often to conform to or mitigate the pressure of racial biases and social norms. Regarding gender roles, users tend to reinforce traditional gender traits, either consciously or subconsciously, to gain social acceptance or feel safer. Notably, LGBTQ+ individuals have received significant academic attention. Among gay men, appearance and body image (sexual capital) are often overemphasized. Additionally, varying levels of societal acceptance towards homosexuality lead to more complex and conflicting experiences for users in terms of self-presentation in their profiles, as they face potential biases and discrimination.

This study provides three main contributions at both theoretical and practical levels. First, by systematically collecting, organizing, and evaluating existing literature, it fills the gap in the field of dating app profile presentation strategies, where no comprehensive review was previously available. It also extends the application of impression management and self-presentation theories to the context of new media platforms. Second, this study strictly follows the PRISMA guidelines, offering a replicable framework for future systematic reviews on similar topics or other social media self-presentation research. Lastly, by analyzing common self-presentation strategies and potential challenges (such as privacy concerns, authenticity, deception, and self-enhancement), this study provides theoretical support for optimizing dating app features, such as privacy settings, and helps users better balance "enhancing attractiveness" and "maintaining authenticity" when presenting themselves on dating platforms.

Despite its contributions, this study has several limitations in terms of methodology and scope. First, the literature search and selection were limited to two major databases, Scopus and Web of Science, and focused only on English-language journal articles. This may have excluded relevant gray literature and non-English studies, potentially limiting the depth and breadth of the findings. Second, the study covers only the past five years, which may not fully capture the early development of online dating research. Third, this study focuses solely on dating app profile presentation strategies, excluding research on dating websites or studies that specifically explore the impact of certain disclosure styles on attractiveness and interaction. The strict exclusion criteria may have restricted the diversity of the included research.

To address these limitations, future research can expand data sources to include additional databases and non-English literature, as well as incorporate gray literature to obtain broader insights.

Extending the time frame of analysis may also provide a more comprehensive understanding of the evolution of online dating research. Additionally, most existing studies do not specifically focus on profiles but rather discuss them in relation to other topics, highlighting the need for deeper exploration of the key role and influence mechanisms of profiles. More empirical studies are needed to explore how platform features influence different user groups (based on gender, age, cultural background, and psychological traits) and to conduct cross-cultural comparisons of self-presentation strategies. Psychological factors such as vulnerable narcissism, social anxiety, and rejection sensitivity also require further large-scale and diverse sample validation.

Overall, expanding research subjects, focusing on various platforms and diverse populations, will be crucial for advancing this field. Future studies can build upon the findings of this review to contribute further to the understanding of online dating and social interactions.

### Transparency:

The authors confirm that the manuscript is an honest, accurate, and transparent account of the study; that no vital features of the study have been omitted; and that any discrepancies from the study as planned have been explained. This study followed all ethical practices during writing.

### Copyright:

© 2025 by the authors. This open-access article is distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) license (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).

### References

- [1] M. J. Page *et al.*, "The PRISMA 2020 statement: An updated guideline for reporting systematic reviews," *BMJ*, vol. 372, p. n71, 2021. <https://doi.org/10.1136/bmj.n71>
- [2] M. A. Christensen, "'Tindersluts' and 'Tinderellas': Examining the digital affordances shaping the (hetero)sexual scripts of young womxn on Tinder," *Sociological Perspectives*, vol. 64, no. 3, pp. 432–449, 2021.
- [3] Curry, "Dating app revenue and usage statistics," 2024. <https://www.businessofapps.com/data/dating-app-market/>
- [4] M. Anderson, E. A. Vogels, and E. Turner, "The virtues and downsides of online dating. Pew Research Center," 2020. <https://www.pewresearch.org/internet/2020/02/06/the-virtues-and-downsides-of-online-dating/>
- [5] M. J. Rosenfeld, R. J. Thomas, and S. Hausen, "Disintermediating your friends: How online dating in the United States displaces other ways of meeting," *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, vol. 116, no. 36, pp. 17753–17758, 2019.
- [6] C. L. Toma, J. T. Hancock, and N. B. Ellison, "Separating fact from fiction: An examination of deceptive self-presentation in online dating profiles," *Personality and social psychology bulletin*, vol. 34, no. 8, pp. 1023–1036, 2008.
- [7] L. L. Sharabi and J. P. Caughlin, "What predicts first date success? A longitudinal study of modality switching in online dating," *Personal Relationships*, vol. 24, no. 2, pp. 370–391, 2017.
- [8] J. B. Walther, B. Van Der Heide, S.-Y. Kim, D. Westerman, and S. T. Tong, "The role of friends' appearance and behavior on evaluations of individuals on Facebook: Are we known by the company we keep?," *Human communication research*, vol. 34, no. 1, pp. 28–49, 2008.
- [9] N. Ellison, R. Heino, and J. Gibbs, "Managing impressions online: Self-presentation processes in the online dating environment," *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, vol. 11, no. 2, pp. 415–441, 2017. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1083-6101.2006.00020.x>
- [10] L. Wang and M. Yang, "Health disclosures in online dating profiles: Effects on user impressions and decision-making," *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, vol. 29, no. 1, pp. 45–62, 2024.
- [11] D. Roig-Mora, F. Sánchez, and M. Pérez, "Embodying masculinity: Identity construction among young gay men on dating apps," *Sexualities*, vol. 27, no. 2, pp. 158–175, 2024.
- [12] L. Appel, J. Smith, and T. Baker, "Beauty filters and perception: An experimental study of Tinder users' visual self-presentation," *New Media & Society*, vol. 25, no. 9, pp. 2150–2169, 2023.
- [13] N. Holtzhausen, K. Fitzgerald, I. Thakur, J. Ashley, M. Rolfe, and S. W. Pit, "Swipe-based dating applications use and its association with mental health outcomes: A cross-sectional study," *BMC Psychology*, vol. 8, no. 1, p. 22, 2020. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s40359-020-0373-1>
- [14] L. S. Chan, "The politics of dating apps: Gender, sexuality, and emergent publics in urban China," *Chinese Journal of Communication*, vol. 13, no. 1, pp. 64–78, 2020.
- [15] A. R. Schrock, "Communicative affordances of mobile media: Portability, availability, locatability, and multimodality," *International journal of communication*, vol. 9, pp. 1229–1246, 2015.

- [16] C. Bandinelli, "Dating apps: The unheavenly mix of technology and desire," *Journal of Cultural Economy*, vol. 15, no. 1, pp. 1–14, 2022.
- [17] J. Cleaver and B. Davies, "Digital romance: Navigating love in the era of dating apps," *Journal of Digital Culture*, vol. 10, no. 2, pp. 101–115, 2024.
- [18] S. Zhao and Y. Lu, "Swipe right for science: The impact of dating app use on romantic relationship formation," *Computers in Human Behavior*, vol. 138, p. 107423, 2023.
- [19] S. Kühn, "The gamification of dating: Exploring user experiences of swipe-based applications," *New Media & Society*, vol. 24, no. 3, pp. 753–769, 2022.
- [20] J. Banks, L. Willoughby, and S. Banks, "Self-presentation and deception in online dating: A content analysis of Canadian profiles," *Journal of Communication*, vol. 67, no. 3, pp. 418–441, 2017.
- [21] B. Miller, "A picture is worth 1000 messages: Investigating face and body photos on mobile dating apps for men who have sex with men," *Journal of Homosexuality*, vol. 67, no. 13, pp. 1798–1822, 2020. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00918369.2019.1610630>
- [22] J. A. Hall, N. Park, H. Song, and M. J. Cody, "Strategic misrepresentation in online dating: The effects of gender, self-monitoring, and personality traits," *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, vol. 27, no. 1, pp. 117–135, 2010.
- [23] S. McWilliams and A. E. Barrett, "Online dating in middle and later life: Gendered expectations and experiences," *Journal of Family Issues*, vol. 35, no. 3, pp. 411–436, 2014. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0192513x12468437>
- [24] A. T. Fiore, L. S. Taylor, G. A. Mendelsohn, and M. Hearst, "Assessing attractiveness in online dating profiles," in *Proceedings of the SIGCHI Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems*, 2008.
- [25] R. McGloin and A. Denes, "Too hot to trust: Examining the relationship between attractiveness, trustworthiness, and desire to date in online dating," *New Media & Society*, vol. 20, no. 3, pp. 919–936, 2018.
- [26] S.-K. Lo, A.-Y. Hsieh, and Y.-P. Chiu, "Contradictory deceptive behavior in online dating," *Computers in Human Behavior*, vol. 29, no. 4, pp. 1755–1762, 2013.
- [27] T. Van der Zanden, M. Mos, and A. P. Schouten, "The role of self-disclosure and perceived authenticity on Tinder: Effects on initial attraction," *Computers in Human Behavior*, vol. 114, p. 106553, 2021.
- [28] T. Van der Zanden, A. P. Schouten, and M. Mos, "Swipe me off my feet: Self-presentation and interaction goals in Tinder introduction messages," *Computers in Human Behavior*, vol. 130, p. 107176, 2022.
- [29] R. A. Gonzalez and S. A. Meyers, "Your profile really caught my eye: The impact of profile completeness and self-disclosure on perceptions of trustworthiness in online dating," *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, vol. 10, no. 2, pp. 243–254, 1993.
- [30] J. B. Walther, "Computer-mediated communication: Impersonal, interpersonal, and hyperpersonal interaction," *Communication Research*, vol. 23, no. 1, pp. 3–43, 1996.
- [31] M. R. Leary and R. M. Kowalski, "Impression management: A literature review and two-component model," *Psychological Bulletin*, vol. 107, no. 1, pp. 34–47, 1990.
- [32] L. S. Chan, "Liberating or disciplining? A technofeminist analysis of the use of dating apps among women in urban China," *Communication, Culture & Critique*, vol. 11, no. 2, pp. 298–314, 2018.
- [33] L. E. LeFebvre, "Swiping me off my feet: Explicating relationship initiation on Tinder," *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, vol. 35, no. 9, pp. 1205–1229, 2018.
- [34] K. Albury and P. Byron, "Safe on my phone? Same-sex attracted young people's negotiations of intimacy, visibility, and risk on digital hook-up apps," *Social Media + Society*, vol. 2, no. 4, p. 2056305116672887, 2016. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2056305116672887>
- [35] B. Schreurs and L. Vandenbosch, "Understanding the relationships between exposure to positive self-portrayals of others on social media and emerging adults' mental health during a COVID-19 imposed lockdown," *Cyberpsychology: Journal of Psychosocial Research on Cyberspace*, vol. 26, no. 1, p. Article 3, 2022.
- [36] R. E. Guadagno, B. M. Okdie, and S. A. Kruse, "Dating deception: Gender, online dating, and exaggerated self-presentation," *Computers in Human Behavior*, vol. 28, no. 2, pp. 642–647, 2012.
- [37] P. Kun, W.-Y. Lin, and H. Chen, "Consequences of deceptive self-presentation in online dating," *Chinese Journal of Communication*, vol. 15, no. 4, pp. 582–610, 2022.
- [38] J. T. Hancock and C. L. Toma, "Putting your best face forward: The accuracy of online dating photographs," *Journal of Communication*, vol. 59, no. 2, pp. 367–386, 2009. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1460-2466.2009.01420.x>
- [39] S. Whyte, B. Torgler, and D. A. Savage, "The role of income in dating decisions: A critical review," *Personality and Individual Differences*, vol. 168, p. 110395, 2021.
- [40] E. E. Levine and M. E. Schweitzer, "Are liars ethical? On the tension between benevolence and honesty," *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, vol. 53, pp. 107–117, 2014.
- [41] D. M. Buss, "Sex differences in human mate preferences: Evolutionary hypotheses tested in 37 cultures," *Behavioral and Brain Sciences*, vol. 12, no. 1, pp. 1–14, 1989.
- [42] H. Tang, X. Wang, and L. Zhao, "Self-presentation tactics in online dating profiles: A lens model approach," *Computers in Human Behavior*, vol. 104, p. 106153, 2020.
- [43] S. Samsuddin, M. Othman, and N. Alias, "Systematic review of self-presentation in online dating profiles," *International Journal of Human-Computer Studies*, vol. 134, pp. 35–49, 2020.



- [44] A. Smith and M. Anderson, "Comparative analysis of self-presentation on Tinder and Bumble," *New Media & Society*, vol. 23, no. 5, pp. 1234–1252, 2021.
- [45] J. Lee and S. Park, "Identity and community on Tinder and Grindr: A cross-platform study," *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, vol. 25, no. 6, pp. 400–419, 2020.
- [46] M. Garcia and R. Lopez, "Exploring niche dating apps: A case study of Finka and Rela," *Mobile Media & Communication*, vol. 7, no. 3, pp. 345–361, 2019.
- [47] L. Thompson, "Butterfly app and targeted dating: Research insights," *Journal of Social Media Studies*, vol. 12, no. 1, pp. 27–40, 2022.
- [48] Y. Asadchy, A. Karjus, K. Mukhina, and M. Schich, "Perceived gendered self-representation on Tinder using machine learning," *Humanities and Social Sciences Communications*, vol. 11, no. 1, pp. 1–11, 2024.
- [49] J. L. Degen and A. Kleeberg-Niepage, "Profiling the self in mobile online dating apps: A serial picture analysis," *Human Arenas*, vol. 6, no. 1, pp. 147–171, 2023.
- [50] I. Vranken, S. Sumter, and L. Vandenbosch, "A multi-method study examining the role of swiping on dating apps: Mate value preferences, sexual satisfaction, and need satisfaction with matches in emerging adults," *Archives of Sexual Behavior*, vol. 53, no. 7, pp. 2547–2582, 2024. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10508-024-02891-9>
- [51] A. B. Tanner, "Sexualized self-presentation and appearance satisfaction in dating profiles," *Journal of Social Psychology*, vol. 158, no. 3, pp. 123–139, 2024.
- [52] T. D. Forbes and L. Stacey, "Personal preferences, discursive strategies, and the maintenance of inequality on gay dating apps," *Archives of Sexual Behavior*, vol. 51, no. 5, pp. 2385–2397, 2022.
- [53] S. València, "Gender differences in emoji use on online dating platforms," *Journal of Language and Social Psychology*, vol. 39, no. 4, pp. 506–522, 2020.
- [54] E. B. Kang, "On streaming-dating convergence: Music-mediated self-presentations on Tinder," *New Media & Society*, vol. 25, no. 8, pp. 2057–2072, 2023. <https://doi.org/10.1177/14614448211026618>
- [55] C. Cantos-Delgado and C. Maíz-Arévalo, "I take hot showers so I can practice burning in hell": A corpus analytical study of Tinder female profiles in the UK," *Alicante Journal of English Studies-Revista Alicantina de Estudios Ingleses*, vol. 41, pp. 151–174, 2024.
- [56] J. S. Labor, "Mobile sexuality: Presentations of young Filipinos in dating apps," *Plaridel*, vol. 17, no. 1, pp. 253–284, 2020.
- [57] C. Cantos-Delgado and C. Maíz-Arévalo, "I hear you like bad girls? I'm bad at everything": A British-Spanish cross-cultural analysis of humour as a self-presentation strategy in Tinder profiles," *European Journal of Humour Research*, vol. 11, no. 3, pp. 31–53, 2023.
- [58] K. M. Mitchell and M. L. Knittel, "Navigating the role of LGBTQ+ identity in self-disclosure and strategies used for uncertainty reduction in online dating," *The Journal of Sex Research*, vol. 60, no. 5, pp. 645–655, 2023.
- [59] K. Peng, "To be attractive or to be authentic? How two competing motivations influence self-presentation in online dating," *Internet Research*, vol. 30, no. 4, pp. 1143–1165, 2020.
- [60] M. Dai and R. Robbins, "Exploring the influences of profile perceptions and different pick-up lines on dating outcomes on tinder: An online experiment," *Computers in Human Behavior*, vol. 117, p. 106667, 2021.
- [61] K. Peng, W.-Y. Lin, and H. Chen, "Consequences of deceptive self-presentation in online dating," *Chinese Journal of Communication*, vol. 15, no. 4, pp. 582–610, 2022.
- [62] E. Filice, C. W. Johnson, D. C. Parry, and H. Oakes, "Shades of digital deception: Self-presentation among men seeking men on locative dating apps," *Convergence*, vol. 28, no. 6, pp. 1598–1620, 2022. <https://doi.org/10.1177/13548565221102714>
- [63] X. Chen, Y. Li, and Z. Wang, "Motivations behind authentic and strategic self-presentation in online dating," *Computers in Human Behavior*, vol. 150, p. 107073, 2023.
- [64] L. Zheng and H. Lin, "The influence of hook-up versus non-hook-up motivations on self-presentation styles in online dating," *Journal of Communication Research*, vol. 51, no. 2, pp. 215–234, 2024.
- [65] R. L. Megan, J. A. Smith, and M. K. Turner, "Vulnerable narcissism predicts inauthentic self-presentation in online dating profiles," *Personality and Individual Differences*, vol. 204, p. 111958, 2023.
- [66] D. Rozen and I. M. Aderka, "Social anxiety disorder and self-presentation in online dating: The use of images and profile length," *Journal of Anxiety Disorders*, vol. 86, p. 102532, 2022.
- [67] G. C. Blackhart, D. K. Hernandez, E. Wilson, and M. A. Hance, "The impact of rejection sensitivity on self-disclosure within the context of online dating," *Cyberpsychology, Behavior, and Social Networking*, vol. 24, no. 10, pp. 690–694, 2021. <https://doi.org/10.1089/cyber.2020.0257>
- [68] Z. Zhou, "'Don't bother me unless you are good-quality!' - Youzhi (優質) (Good-Quality) discourse on gay dating platform in China," *Deviant Behavior*, vol. 45, no. 7, pp. 1047–1064, 2024. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01639625.2023.2271115>
- [69] F. Konings, S. R. Sumter, and L. Vandenbosch, "A linkage study investigating sexualized self-presentation on mobile dating apps and user traits," *Body Image*, vol. 51, p. 101781, 2024. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.bodyim.2024.101781>



- [70] J. Fan, Y. M. Chen, L. Zhang, Y. Wu, and X. F. Liu, "Attraction behind "Beauty": Revealing gay men's self-presentation on a dating app with computer vision," *Computational Communication Research*, vol. 5, no. 1, pp. 51–75, 2023.
- [71] A. García-Gómez, "Discursive representation of masculinity and femininity in Tinder and Grindr: Hegemonic masculinity, feminine devaluation and femmephobia," *Discourse & Society*, vol. 31, no. 4, pp. 390–410, 2020.
- [72] F. Konings, S. R. Sumter, and L. Vandenbosch, "Gender roles and mobile dating applications: Exploring links between user characteristics and traditional gender expressions in self-presentations," *Archives of Sexual Behavior*, vol. 53, no. 6, pp. 2361–2376, 2024. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10508-024-02884-8>
- [73] T. Peetz, "Intimate valuation devices: Doing valuation while doing dating in Tinder texts," *Journal of Cultural Economy*, vol. 17, no. 5, pp. 605–625, 2024. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17530350.2023.2246987>
- [74] A. García-Gómez, "Critical femininities: exploring young women's digital sexual cultures," *Journal of Gender Studies*, pp. 1–14, 2024.
- [75] S. Wu and S. Liu, "When the hunter plays the hunted: heterosexual Chinese women's negotiations with hegemonic sexual scripts on dating apps," *Feminist Media Studies*, pp. 1–16, 2024. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14680777.2024.2386322>
- [76] V. Wongsomboon, E. Sietins, and G. D. Webster, "Predictors of face and body visibility in online dating applications among young men who have sex with men," *Journal of Homosexuality*, vol. 69, no. 13, pp. 2305–2325, 2022. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00918369.2021.1938469>
- [77] C. Hermosa-Bosano, P. Hidalgo-Andrade, and C. Paz, "Geosocial networking apps use among sexual minority men in Ecuador: An exploratory study," *Archives of Sexual Behavior*, vol. 50, no. 7, pp. 2995–3009, 2021.
- [78] C. Lu, J. Zhang, and K. Zhang, "Sexual anti-languages on social media: A Chinese case study," *Journal of Asian Pacific Communication*, vol. 33, no. 2, pp. 137–158, 2023.
- [79] J. S. Labor, C. J. Samonte, and N. D. Bana, "Othering within the gay dating community? Tensions in gender identity representations between Filipino gays and the bakla in mobile dating applications," *Journal of Asian Pacific Communication*, vol. 33, no. 2, pp. 227–246, 2023.
- [80] C. Fung, "Strategic, conflicted, and interpellated: Hong Kong and Chinese queer women's use of identity labels on lesbian dating apps," *International Journal of Communication*, vol. 17, pp. 2514–2534, 2023.
- [81] C. Hackett and N. Gerodetti, "Am I too straight for the gay people, am I too gay for the straight people?: A qualitative analysis of how young bisexual women navigate self-presentation on dating apps," *Young*, vol. 31, no. 5, pp. 445–461, 2023.
- [82] R. Dredge and C. A. Anderson, "The role of self-presentation in partner selection: An analysis of online dating profiles," *Cyberpsychology, Behavior, and Social Networking*, vol. 24, no. 6, pp. 389–394, 2021.