Self-enhancement in online dating:
Authenticity and attractiveness evaluations of photograph- and text-based
profiles

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1. Introduction

Online dating services have gained an important role in generating successful relationships (Wotipka & High, 2016; Toma, 2015) and are founded to be an appealing tool for daters to use. The purpose of online dating is to create a self-descriptive profile to interact with others online (Hancock, Toma, & Ellison, 2007) and to potentially find a romantic partner (Toma, 2015). The self-descriptive online profiles typically consist of photographs and text-based descriptions of the online dater in question (Toma, 2015).

When constructing self-descriptive profiles, online daters can feel tension between presenting their authentic self or a more positive one (Ellison, Heino, & Gibbs, 2006). People perceive authenticity as a more desirable choice when interacting with other people online, as they are seeking a partner that likes them for the person they really are (Toma, 2015). In addition, presenting a more positive self can have negative consequences on the relational development between daters. However, self-enhancement is an appealing choice when wanting to be perceived as an attractive person to others online in the first stages of relationship development (Toma, 2015).

Self-enhancement strategies are tools for self-creation, where individuals can remove obstacles and present a more positive version of themselves (Kadlac, 2018), which is a way of selective self-presentation. Specifically, in the context of online dating people have the tendency to involve in selective self-presentation (Guadagno, Okdie, & Kruse, 2012). Online, people can create a more positive, controlled, and strategic self-presentation than would not be feasible in a face-to-face setting (Hall, Park, Song, & Cody, 2010). This selective self-presentation behavior is common on the Internet due to the lack of physical cues (Hancock & Toma, 2009), as they cannot feel, hear, or see each other as they can in real life.

Self-enhancement can take two forms in online dating. First, people can use self-enhancement strategies through photographic processes and enhance their physical characteristics, like attractiveness (Hancock & Toma, 2009). Due to the lack of physical cues online, photographs play an important role and can provide a more favorable self-view. Online daters can present an enhanced photograph by editing or hiring a professional photographer (Hancock & Toma, 2009). That photographs can be easily manipulated online (Gibbs, Ellison, & Heino, 2006) can result in dishonest self-presentation of the online dater in question.

Secondly, online daters can also enhance the self by constructing a more favorable text-based description, through only providing positive information about themselves and leave out any negative aspects. However, negative information in self-presentation is perceived as more credible than positive information when creating an impression about someone (Fiske, 1980).

Therefore, online daters can be in doubt to present an enhanced presentation or a more accurate one. The way of presenting can have an influence on other people's impression forming (Walther & Parks, 2002), as an enhanced self-view can lead to a higher perception of attractiveness, whereas an accurate self-view can lead to a higher perception of authenticity.

Till now there is still little research known about the effect of self-enhancement in photograph-based and text-based online dating profiles and how others identify those profiles as attractive or authentic or not. This study will examine the combination of self-enhancement strategies in photograph-based and text-based self-presentations and other people's perceptions about authenticity and attractiveness. With the research question: *Do self-enhancement strategies in photograph-based and text-based self-presentations influence people's perception of authenticity and attractiveness in online dating profiles?*

2. Theoretical framework
2.1. Perception of online dating profiles

As a result of the online setting that daters are in, they can present themselves, as they would like to be perceived by others (Fiore, Taylor, Mendelsohn, & Hearst, 2008). This phenomenon makes it hard for daters to generate an accurate impression of others online. If the aim of online dating was to find a romantic partner for online purposes only this would not create a problem, however, the goal of online dating is not to find a partner for online purposes only, but to find a partner to have an offline relationship with (Toma, 2015).

When the intention of an online dater is to find a potential partner, it can be challenging to find someone whom they would actually find attractive in person rather than online (Fiore et al., 2008). By the information online daters present in their profiles others can form an impression about how that person in question would be like in real life (Walther & Parks, 2002). The information that they present can have a major influence on the perception of authenticity and/or attractiveness of that person.

In online dating, people can provide information in a visual or textual matter, with photographs and a text-description.

People rely on the information that is given by the daters to draw a reliable connection of the person presented online and the actual person in real life (Walther & Parks, 2002). The perception of authenticity can be influenced by the way online daters present information about themselves if they only provide positive information or also highlight negative aspects in their profiles. The study by Walther, Van der Heide, Hamel, and Shulman (2009) found that people, specifically in online dating, are more skeptical about the authenticity of a profile when daters appear to provide more favorable information about themselves than less favorable information.

However, favorable information can make the person in the profile more attractive to others. Physically attractive people are assumed to be great romantic partners in the online dating world (Toma & Hancock, 2010). A study by Thornhill and Grammer (1999) found that physical attractiveness was the only characteristic that daters would take into account when deciding if the other was a potential partner or not. However, there are far more characteristics that can have an influence on forming an impression of how attractive a person is, like the communication skills of a person (Friedman, Riggio, & Casella, 1988).

Thus, forming an impression of daters online comes with some difficulties. In forming an impression, there are two important indicators, the authenticity, and attractiveness of an online dater that can influence the process of finding a potential partner.

2.2. Self-presentation in online dating

In scientific research, the way people present themselves is identified as self-presentation (Goffman, 2002). When people present themselves to others, others are asked to identify this presentation as a real resemblance of that person's true self. However, there is a strong belief that people do not present themselves for own purposes but for those of others. Goffman (2002, p. 47) defined this as a type of performance: "[…] *there is the popular view that the individual offers his* (her) *performance and puts on his* (her) *show for the benefit of other people*".

In addition, Goffman (2002) hypothesized that in the process of self-presentation there is a difference between which information we give intentionally and which information we give unintentionally. Information that is given intentionally

is referred to as expressions given, like verbal communication, as we are aware of the information that we provide. On the contrary, information that is given unintentionally is referred to as expressions given off, such as nonverbal communication cues, for example, smiling or blushing (Goffman, 2002).

When people present themselves, they can choose for themselves which information they provide to another person (Fiore et al., 2008) in a verbal or nonverbal matter (Goffman, 2002). They can choose to hide, negative emotions or information about themselves, so others perceive them as a more likable person. This selective self-presentation is when people create a more positive, controlled, and strategic presentation about themselves (Walther, 1996). As the definition already forecasts, selective self-presentation is providing information in a selective manner.

Self-presentation is a crucial and complicated process (Goffman, 2002), one that has become more complicated by the arrival of new online technologies. The lack of physical cues online brought new concerns about how real online presentations are (Hancock & Toma, 2009). The Hyperpersonal model by Walther (1996) explains how users can benefit from the absence of physical cues in online communication. This model provides an explanation that due to the lack of physical cues it creates an opportunity for users to participate in selective self-presentation.

Walther (1996) distinguished two components in his model. The first one is *asynchronicity*, which stands for the time between creating the profile and the interaction. The second one is *editability*, which allows users to edit profiles, self-presentation when they prefer. These components allow people to create, edit and plan their selective image, far more easily than in face-to-face settings (Walther, 1996).

In online dating, people can engage in selective self-presentation as well. Presenting the self in a favorable way is especially important in generating relationships, as others will decide with the information that is given if the person is a potential partner or not (Derlega, Winstead, Wong, & Greenspan, 1987). Online daters can easily manipulate information about themselves online, as they present themselves with self-descriptive online profiles (Ellison et al., 2006). These profiles can be edited versions of the self in order to make favorable impressions for others. Due to the fact that daters make those profiles themselves, individuals may consider this information as not real at all (Ellison et al., 2006).

Numerous studies have focused on selective self-presentation in online dating (e.g., Ellison, Hancock, & Toma, 2012; Guadagno et al., 2012; Hall et al., 2010; Toma & Hancock, 2010; Toma, Hancock, & Ellison, 2008). The study by Toma et al. (2008) showed that people think that online dating is full of deceptive behavior due to the fact you do not know the person and their intentions. In other words, people are trying to present themselves in a way that they believe is right, as their goal is to find a romantic partner, they might leave out negative aspects of themselves, to be perceived as a more suitable partner by others.

Thus, online daters feel the tension between presenting information that will make them look good or providing information that reflects the true self. As mentioned earlier, others make perceptions about the authenticity and attractiveness of a person online by the information that they have given. The way online daters present themselves can have major consequences on how others perceive them, as an attractive or authentic person, or maybe both.

2.3. Authenticity

The nature of authenticity in self-presentation lies in the way online daters present themselves to others and, in turn, how those others view them (Kadlac, 2018). An authentic self-presentation requires that online daters present themselves in a way that is true to the self and not to deceive others with false information. Through the medium of online dating, people can violate these standards in multiple ways, as they can fail to be true to themselves and/or others (Kadlac, 2018).

As for authenticity in online self-presentation, the most important component is the presented personal information, especially, the information that online daters hide form others with intentional reasons. Online daters mostly present favorable information about themselves to others, despite the fact that people's weaknesses are perceived as better indicators of their characteristics (Klein, 1991). As, negative information provides more accurate knowledge about a person's attributes because it provides more unique aspects of the person in question (Fiske, 1980).

Multiple studies investigated authenticity and concluded that negative information in self-presentation weights more heavily and is perceived as more credible than positive information (e.g., Hamilton & Zanna, 1972; Leventhal & Singer, 1964; Kellermann, 1989). Thus, based on the aforementioned literature,

authenticity can be defined as an accurate representation of the self that includes a true resemblance of the person in real life by providing positive and negative aspects.

Presenting the self in a more favorable way, as people do with selective self-presentation, has a lot to do with the physical attractiveness of a person. In online dating, the perception of others is even more important, as they decide if the person in question is a potential partner or not. Besides physical attractiveness, there are other aspects that indicate how attractive a person is, like people's personalities. Others can perceive a person as honest as they present negative aspects of the self (Miller, Berg, & Archer, 1983).

People can present themselves in many ways, however, in the end, they are searching for a partner online that will like them for who they really are (Toma, 2015). In addition, presenting the self in a favorable way can be referred to as deceptive or dishonest behavior, which, when detected, has negative consequences for finding a romantic partner (Toma, 2015). Therefore, there are reasons to believe that authenticity is a more desirable strategy for finding a partner online, which leads to the following hypothesis:

> **H1**: When an online profile is evaluated as authentic the intention to date is higher than when evaluated as not authentic.

2.4. Self-enhancement strategies

Online daters decide which self-presentation information they present in their profile, and which information they leave out (Ellison et. al., 2006; Toma et al., 2008). People are motivated to present a positive self-view to others. They avoid negative aspects of the self by presenting positive views of the self through self-enhancement (Alicke & Govorun, 2005). Self-enhancement is "*the desire to maintain or increase the positivity (or decrease the negativity) of one's self-concept or, alternatively, the desire to maintain, protect, and enhance one's self-esteem*" (Leary, 2007, p. 319).

Researchers mostly identified self-enhancement as the following (Leary, 2007): self-enhancement is people's underlying tendency to believe that they personally improved over the past (see: Wilson & Ross 2001), people provide information that supports their own self-esteem (see: Ditto & Lopez 1992), people take greater responsibility for positive events than negative (see: Blaine & Crocker

1993), people believe that they are a better version of themselves than they really are (see: Alicke & Govorum 2006), and people deny that they have any tendencies to enhance the self (see: Pronin, Lin, & Ross, 2002).

A study by Sedikides and Gregg (2008) proposed that self-enhancement has four levels: an observed effect, an ongoing process, a personality trait, and an underlying motive. All four levels have in common that they enhance or protect the self-view. Sedikides and colleagues (2008) characterized self-enhancement further along four bipolar dimensions.

First, an individual can enhance the self by self-protecting or self-advancing, which will either decrease the negative or increase the positive aspects of the self (see: Arkin, 1981). Secondly, an individual can either engage in self-enhancement behavior in a private or public setting (see: Leary & Kowalski, 1990). Third, individuals differ in which domains they perceive as important (see: Crocker & Wolfe, 2001), where domains refer to the different aspects of online dating (see: Sedikides, Gaertner, & Toguchi, 2003). Lastly, self-enhancement is either tactical or candid; as an individual can use strategies to enhance the self in the near future or instantly gains a positive result of enhancing the self (see: Sedikides & Strube, 1997).

As for online dating, people can participate in self-enhancement strategies in the visual aspects (i.e., photographs) and text-based content, where they provide a more positive version of the self to other daters.

2.4.1 Photograph-based self-enhancement

Photographs provide evidence that the person in the photograph actually existed and looks the way they appeared in the photograph as they did in front of the lens (Hancock & Toma, 2009; Denton, 2005). Photographs are captured in a certain moment in time with a technological device, which can in itself affect the quality of the photograph.

Elements of the photograph or people that are in photographs can easily be edited (Snyder & Allen, 1975), in many ways. Hancock and Toma (2009) suggested that there are two kinds of discrepancies in photograph-based self-presentation. The first are discrepancies about physical characteristics, which include flattering poses, clothes, makeup or any other beauty equipment that can enhance the appearance of a person. The date of when the photograph is taken, can also play a role in the accuracy of a photograph, online daters can choose to present a photograph from many years

ago, were they probably looked better, as the photograph is still accurate, it does not reflect the current appearance of that person (Hancock & Toma, 2009).

The second are discrepancies generated by the photographic processes, which include hiring a professional photographer, as a better camera can hide imperfections and can enhance the physical attractiveness of a person. It also includes, editing software such as Photoshop that can remove skin imperfections, change the hair color or whiting teeth, or even can make a person look slimmer (Messaris, 1997).

That elements of a dating profile photograph can easily be edited, raises questions about the authenticity of the dater's current physical presentation. There are reasons to believe that online daters take advantage of the photographic medium to enhance their self-presentation and be noticed by others in the competitive online dating world. In addition, a study by Toma and colleagues (2008) found that others frequently evaluate photograph-based self-presentations as not authentic. Taken together, this indicates that people that use self-enhancement strategies are perceived as less authentic by others, therefore the following is proposed:

H2a: When evaluating online dating photographs, daters that present an accurate self-view are perceived as more authentic than when daters present an enhanced self-view.

Online daters can use photographs to present their level of physical attractiveness with others. Attractive people are perceived as more desirable and popular with other daters (Gangestad & Scheyd, 2005), as they are found to have more friends, betters jobs, and better social skills than people that are less attractive (Riggio, Widaman, Tucker, & Salinas, 1991).

This phenomenon can be explained by the fitness-related evolutionary theory, which states that a characteristic, like physical attractiveness, was an important factor for a great romantic partner (e.g., Buss & Schmitt, 1993; Gangestad & Thornhill, 1997; Symons, 1979). "In other words, physical appearance served as a reliable gauge of a person's value as a mate, and, as a result, people have evolved to favor physical attractiveness in the mate selection process" (Toma & Hancock, 2010, p. 337).

Fiore and colleagues (2008) studied physical attractiveness in photographs and found a difference for gender. Photographs of men are perceived as attractive when they looked extraverted, not too warm and kind, genuine and trustworthy, whereas

photos of women were perceived as attractive when they appeared more feminine, higher in self- esteem, and lower in self-centeredness.

Due to the manipulation options of photographs, it can lead to selective self-presentation. The impressions of others in the online dating world are really important, that may lead online daters to enhance their perceived level of attractiveness. Research found that individuals are more likely to pursue a physically attractive person than a person that is perceived as less attractive (Blackhart, Fitzpatrick, & Williamson), which leads to the following hypothesis:

H2b: When evaluating online dating photographs, daters that present an accurate self-view are perceived as less attractive than when daters present an enhanced self-view.

As mentioned, online daters can chose to present an accurate reflection of the self, which is perceived as more credible and leads to a higher perception of authenticity, however, it can have a negative effect on the perception of attractiveness, as the online daters present less favorable aspects of the self. Based on the aforementioned literature, there are reasons to believe that there is a mediating effect of self-presentation (i.e., enhanced self-view or accurate self-view), which leads to the following hypothesis:

H2c: When evaluating online dating photographs, an accurate self-view has a positive mediating effect for authenticity, but a negative direct effect on attractiveness.

2.4.2 Text-based self-enhancement

As for textual descriptions, online dating profiles mostly consists of demographic information (Toma, 2015). Online dating services provide informational questions that the daters have to fill in to construct a profile, like short-answer questions about their age, weight, or relational status, and long-answer questions about who they are as a person (Toma, 2015). These short-answer questions are referred to as constrained descriptions, which put online daters in certain categories (e.g., blond 26-year-old female), whereas the long-answer questions are free-response

descriptions, which provide more information about the person itself (Fiore & Donath, 2004).

Daters can enhance the self in a textual matter online, in many ways, for example, by providing more and/or favorable information about the self. As users may consider text-based self-presentations where online daters provide more information about themselves as more authentic than text-based self-presentations with less information. However, a study by Norton, Frost, and Ariely (2007) found that people consider more information about potential dater as positive, however, more information can also have a negative effect on the compatibility and/or attractiveness of that person. On the contrary, when that person is perceived as highly compatible, more textual information can have a positive influence after all.

Online daters can enhance the self by constructing a more favorable text-based description through only providing positive information about themselves and leave out any negative aspects. However, as mentioned earlier, negative information can provide a more accurate representation (Fiske, 1980), due to, negative information can provide more knowledge about the characteristics of a person. However, as there is an opposite effect, daters will engage with attractive people sooner than when they are perceived as less attractive, self-enhancement strategies in text can make an online dater more appealing for others (Toma & Hancock, 2010).

A survey by Brym and Lenton (2001) showed that one-fourth of online daters did engage in self-enhancement strategies when presenting themselves online. Overall they misrepresented information about their identity, like their age or marital status (Brym & Lenton, 2001). In addition, when online daters participate in self-enhancement, they provide shorter descriptions and more negations when they enhance or protect the self (Leaver & Hancock, 2010).

Nevertheless, there is still little research known about the relation between text-based self-enhancement and how authentic others perceive them in online dating. There are reasons to believe that based on the aforementioned literature, the relation between photograph-based self-presentation and perceived authenticity, would be the same as for text-based information, which indicates the following hypothesis:

H3a: When evaluating online dating text-descriptions, daters that present an accurate self-view are perceived as more authentic than when daters present an enhanced self-view.

Whereas most research has focused on the physical aspects of attractiveness in forming impressions, on later note research began to investigate the role of other characteristics in impression forming. For example, research has uncovered a link between nonverbal communication skills and expressiveness in forming an impression of the attractiveness of a person (Friedman, Riggio, & Casella, 1988). A different study has found the importance of possessing emotional and social skills on how attractive others perceive them (Riggio & Throckmorton, 1988).

People are perceived as more attractive when they have similar interest, attitudes, and personality traits as the person evaluation them (Gerlach, & Reinhard, 2018). However, some people assume that "opposites attract" and are searching for a partner that can complement their needs in a way they cannot do themselves (Shibazaki & Brennan, 1998).

To attract potential partners people can engage in selective self-presentation to impress others. They can enhance the self by providing favorable information about themselves. In addition, verbal intelligence, like communication skills, is an important indicator in forming an impression about the attractiveness of a person (Kanazawa, 2011). Based on the little information scientific literature provided by now, the following hypothesis is proposed:

> **H3b**: When evaluating online dating text-descriptions, daters that present an enhanced self-view are perceived as more attractive than when daters present an accurate self-view.

As mentioned, for photograph self-enhancement, there are also reasons to believe that there is a mediating effect for text-based self-enhancement, as there might be a negative effect for attractiveness, when daters provide an accurate self-view but a positive mediating effect for authenticity, when others form an impression of daters online. This leads to the following hypothesis:

> **H3c**: When evaluating online dating text-descriptions, an accurate self-view has a positive mediating effect for authenticity, but a negative direct effect on attractiveness.

3. Method

3.1. Participants

In this study, … people participated. All participants were between the 18 and 28 years old, were native Dutch speakers, and were not in a relationship nor married. …% were male participants with an average age of … (S*D* = …) and …% were female participants with an average age of … (*SD* = …).

3.2. Design

This experiment had a 2 x 2 design, with photograph-based self-presentation (accurate or enhanced) and text-based self-presentation (accurate or enhanced) as within-subject variables. Participants were exposed to all conditions and were presented with a total of four dating profiles, one from each condition. The online dating profiles consisted of a photograph and a text-based description. Whether a participant saw a male or female profile was determined by the sexual preference of the participant.

3.3. Materials

Photograph-based self-presentation

Based on the criteria by Hancock and Toma (2009), enhanced and accurate photograph-based self-views of fictitious profile owners were created. The self-enhancement strategies for photograph-based self-presentation were defined as "*discrepancies about physical characteristics*" and "*discrepancies generated by the photographic processes*". An enhanced photograph included the use of any sort of beauty equipment, flattering poses, hiring a professional photograph, or editing software, whereas, an accurate photograph presents a person that did not make use of any of the above-mentioned self-enhancement strategies and provided a true reflecting of the self as they look like in the real world.

Which photographs belonged to each of the conditions was determined by a pre-test, in which 10 participants rated the authenticity of the presented photographs. The participants rated all the photographs regardless of the gender preference of the person in question. To pre-test the photographs, 10 models were invited, which included five female and five male models. They were each asked to provide an enhanced photograph and an accurate photograph. From all 20 photograph, the four that scored the highest on authenticity for male ($N = 2$) and female ($N = 2$) were

selected as the accurate photographs, and the four that scored the lowest for male ($N =$ 2) and female ($N =$ 2) were categorized as the enhanced photographs. The average accurate photographs were those that scored higher than … for male photographs this was … ($SD =$ …) and for female photographs … ($SD =$ …).

After the pre-test, for both male and female profiles, eight photographs were selected: four accurate photographs and four enhanced photographs. Figure 1 shows two examples of photographs, where the left photograph is an accurate representation where the person presents a version of the self that is accurate with the way they look like in real life, and the right photograph is a representation that is enhanced with the hiring of a professional photographer.
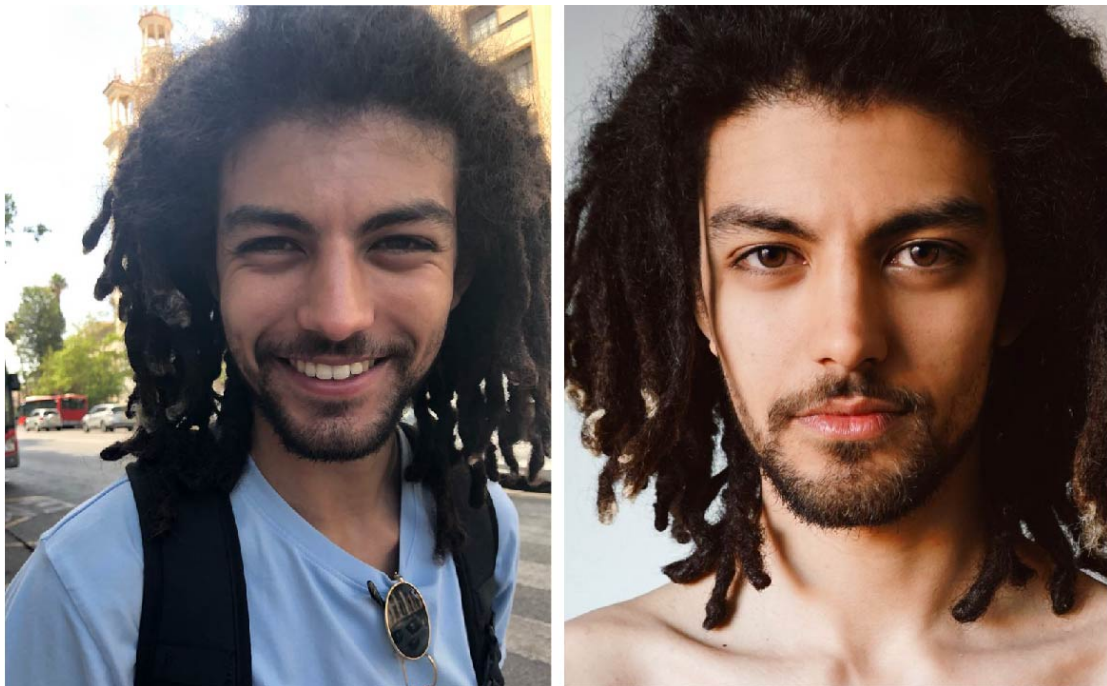

Figure 1: At the left a photograph with an accurate representation and at the right a photograph with an enhanced representation

Text-based self-presentation

Based on the aforementioned self-enhancement literature, the text-descriptions were created. Primarily, the textual descriptions were about online daters demographic information, interests and what kind of romantic partner they are searching for. The enhanced textual descriptions included positive information about the person (e.g., amount of salary or fancy car), whereas the accurate textual descriptions included a combination of positive and negative information (e.g., provided with a good job but does not like it). The content of the text-based

descriptions are identical for male and female profile owners, however, there are some exceptions for gender-specific words (e.g., her or his). The texts ranged from 90 to 110 words.

Which of the texts belonged to each condition was determined by a pre-test. 10 participants rated the authenticity of the presented text-descriptions. In total, ten descriptions were tested, as they do not differ for males or females. Five text-descriptions were an accurate version and five text-descriptions were an enhanced version of those five accurate texts. As the subjects for the accurate and enhanced sets were mostly the same, there was only a difference in provided positive and/or negative aspects. From all ten text-descriptions, the two that scored the highest on authenticity were selected as the accurate text-description, and the two that scored the lowest were categorized as the enhanced text-description. The average accurate text-description were those that scored higher than … (SD = …).

For each profile text, a version with and without self-enhancement strategies was created. Figure 2 shows two examples of translated versions of the dating profiles used for the experiment. The profile on the left is an accurate representation of the online dater, and the one on the right a self-enhancement version of the online dater.

I am Josef, 25 years old and I live in Rotterdam. I live in a small studio on my own. I have studied Business Administration and work at a mortgage company. It is a well-paid job but I do not really like working there. In my spare time, I like doing sports, I am not the best but I enjoy myself (mostly the beers after). I also enjoy reading books I mostly read non-fictional books because they are easy to read. The most important thing that I am looking for in a woman is humor and that she has the same interest as me.

I am Josef, 25 years old and I live in Rotterdam. I live by myself and I pay my own rent. I have my master's degrees in Business and now work as a mortgage advisor, which makes a very good salary. In my spare time, I like doing sports, any kind of sport actually, basketball, tennis, and football. I can do it all! I also like drinking beers with my friends and I read a lot of informative books to keep my mind busy. I am very versatile! I am looking for a woman that is attractive, smart, and funny, so we can have an awesome life together.

Figure 2: At the left a text-description with an accurate representation and at the right a text-description with an enhanced representation

Dating profiles

A total of 64 combinations of photographs and text-descriptions were made as experimental material for both male and female dating profiles. The photograph-text combinations were partly randomized to avoid any effects of a specific photograph or text-description. However, each participant evaluated a profile of each of the four conditions, which did not allow total randomness.

3.4. Procedure

The experiment was produced with Qualtrics, where the participants were instructed to answer some demographic questions. In addition, the participants answered some questions about their dating life. After the questions, they were told that they would see four mock-up dating profiles that they had to view and evaluate. Each participant was exposed to all the conditions, which meant that all the participants rated four different profiles, one for each of the conditions, but each time with a different photograph and text-description. When participants were done viewing a profile, they evaluated the authenticity and attractiveness of the person's information (i.e., photograph and text). The participants answered multiple impression formation questions about the owner of the profile. In total, the experiment took approximately 10 minutes.

3.5. Measures

Perceived Attractiveness measurement

To measure the perceived attractiveness that indicates if people would like to date the person in the profile, four determinants were used, which all cover a different dimension of attractiveness: physical attractiveness, social attractiveness (see: McCroskey & McCain, 1974), dating intention (see: Campbell, 1999), and similarity. Multiple items were used to test the perceived attractiveness, for example, "I think this person is good-looking" for physical attractiveness, "I think this person and I could be friends" for social attractiveness, "I would not want to have a relationship with this person" (i.e., reverse coded) for dating intention, and "The person in the profile is just like me" for similarity were used. Each of these items was measured on a 7-point Likert scale (i.e., 1 = *completely disagree* till 7 = *completely agree*). The same measurement was used as Van der Zanden, Schouten, Mos, and Krahmer (2019) did to measure the attractiveness evaluations of online dating profiles.

Perceived authenticity measurement

Impressions of authenticity were measured with eight items, which are the same four statements for evaluating photographs as for evaluating text-descriptions (i.e., "The photograph of this person shows who the person is in a real-life setting", "The photograph of this person is authentic", "The photograph of this person is an accurate representation of the self", and "The photograph of this person looks like it is fake"). Each of these items was measured on a 7-point Likert scale (i.e., 1 = *completely disagree* till 7 = *completely agree*).

3.6. Analysis

To test the hypotheses, a MANOVA is used in SPSS version 25. There is chosen for a MANOVA since there are two independent factors that are from origin categorical variables, and the dependent variables are perceived as continuous in this study. The dependent variables are measured with a Likert scale, which in this case is an indicator that ranges the items continuously; as 1 (i.e., *completely disagree*) is perceived as lower as 7 (i.e., *completely agree*). The MANOVA will test if the dependent variable will change when manipulating the dependent variable. In addition, to answer H2c and H3c a mediation analysis PROCESS model was used.

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