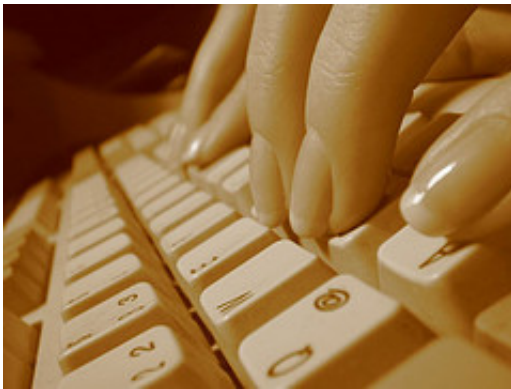


Internet dating sites need to take cultural differences into account: researchers

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(PhysOrg.com) -- Online dating sites that are used around the world need to take into account cultural differences, researchers at the University of Bath have found.

Dating websites such as Match.com are based on a western model that was developed in America but has since been introduced to other countries, including Japan, where approaches to dating are very different.

Dr Jeff Gavin from the Department of Psychology has looked at differences in the ways Japanese users respond to [dating sites](#) compared to those in Western countries.

Traditionally Japanese people use social cues, such as body language and dress code, rather than language to make judgements about potential partners. They also use silence to imply a message through what is not said.

Despite these [social cues](#) posing problems on internet dating sites, Dr Gavin's study discovered that Japanese users found ways to adapt the concept.

He said: "The internet is not culture neutral but is shaped by local cultures of politics, community, internet use, the social shaping of technology, and language. Therefore, the lack of [social context](#) cues in text-based communication could be particularly problematic in Japanese culture, where social context plays a much greater role in the communication process.

"Online daters attend to subtle almost minute cues in others' profiles and email messages. This includes spelling-ability, timing, message length as well as broader cues such as whether the online partner is an active user on the dating site or the type of photograph included."

Dr Gavin, who carried out the research in collaboration with James Farrer from Sophia University in Tokyo, found that despite the obstacles Japanese internet dating sites were proving to be successful, but relationships typically progressed more slowly than in the West.

Photographs were generally described as very important as a cue not only to attractiveness but also to personality.

Provided by University of Bath

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