

Desperately seeking love online

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Only 12% of South Africans have used the Internet to find love. This is compared to 29% of the French and 21% of Filipinos interviewed in a global survey about dating perceptions, use of the Internet to find a romantic partner and the level of success that they have had.

Synovate surveyed 4 368 people from South Africa, Brazil, France, Korea, the Phillipines, Singapore, Romania and the United States.

Over one third of those interviewed who aren't online daters believe only "desperate people" use the internet to look for love. The results reveal a fairly even match between those who think online dating is a great way to meet people (49 percent) and those who think it is a waste of time (48 percent) but show large disparities among levels of use and comfort between people of different nationalities.

Globally, 15% of respondents said they had used an online personal ad or online dating service to meet a potential romantic interest, with the French (29 percent), Filipinos (21 percent) and Americans (15 percent) being the biggest online daters.

Have you ever used an online personal ad or online dating service to meet a potential romantic interest?

	Total	South Africa	USA	Korea	Philippines	Singapore	Brazil	Romania	France
Yes	15%	12%	15%	11%	21%	4%	12%	13%	29%
No	85%	88%	85%	88%	77%	96%	88%	86%	71%
Don't know	1%	-	-	1%	2%	-	-	1%	-
Refused	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

68% of South Africans state that they would not even consider using an online personal ad or dating service.

Just looking

Entertainment is the main driver for 46 percent of online dating respondents, with many Brazilians (67 percent) and Americans (50 percent) trying online dating out of fun or curiosity, while one quarter of all online daters consider it simply a natural extension of their regular use of the internet.

Surprisingly, although a person's photograph is the main factor determining whether someone will initiate communication for one quarter of online daters, 39% are more interested in the written description of their personality and 32% just want someone who meets basic criteria such as shared interests and hobbies. 50 % of Brazilians want a partner with personality.

Online daters across the globe vary in how long it takes them to move contact offline. Thirty two percent of Filipinos are in no hurry, waiting at least a month from the first correspondence to meet while one-third of the French, Americans and Brazilians tend to wait more than a week but less than a month. Many Romanians don't waste their time – 16 percent said

that they meet within a day!

The French report the most disasters when moving online correspondence offline, with 58 percent having had a terrible date with someone they met through the internet, although two-thirds said that they had had more good dates than bad ones. Americans are also familiar with online dating disasters. Over half indicated that they've had at least one disaster date with someone they met online, but 64 percent said that they'd had more good dates than bad ones.

Online daters who do end up meeting face-to-face have a remarkable success rate, with 25 percent of all respondents having met their spouse or life partner through online dating. Americans (42 percent) and the French (28 percent) are the most successful in taking online love offline.

Stranger danger

Despite the success of some, for many people online dating is still a concept they just aren't comfortable with.

Ninety five percent of Koreans who haven't dated online said they would not consider using the internet to find a romantic partner, along with 85 percent of Brazilians and 84 percent of Singaporeans.

Synovate also discovered many negative perceptions about internet dating globally, some of which may contribute to respondents' online dating hesitation.

Almost one-third of those respondents who would not consider online dating believe that it could be dangerous, a perception that may be reinforced by the 77 percent of consumers globally who believe that most people lie in their online dating profile.

Most of the South African respondents (48%) state that the reason for not using the Internet is that they would just rather see someone in person first. 21% believed that it could be dangerous.

Americans are most convinced that people are dishonest in their online dating profiles (84 percent), followed closely by Brazilians and Filipinos at 82 percent each.

What's the main reason you would not consider using an online personal ad or online dating service? (Base: Would not consider using an online personal ad or online dating service)

	Total	South Africa	USA	Korea	Philippines	Singapore	Brazil	Romania	France
It could be dangerous	29%	21%	30%	24%	26%	27%	45%	11%	20%
There's a bad stigma associated with meeting someone this way	6%	4%	4%	10%	14%	10%	1%	10%	2%
A friend or family member had a bad experience with it	3%	1%	2%	5%	2%	3%	2%	3%	3%
Just rather see someone in person first	33%	48%	42%	15%	36%	34%	22%	37%	57%

Don't think the Internet should be used to find someone to date	23%	8%	22%	31%	19%	18%	28%	20%	18%
Don't have access to a computer	1%	1%	-	-	3%	1%	2%	2%	-
Don't know	4%	-	-	10%	-	5%	-	16%	-
Refused	2%	17%	-	5%	-	2%	-	1%	-

But when it comes down to it, it may simply be a case of online dating being seen as the domain of the desperate and dateless.

With close to one-third of respondents globally stating that “only desperate people use online dating”, it may be a long time before many people can shake the desperado perception and start looking for love online.

CURIOSITIES

- > One-fifth of all those surveyed don't think that the internet should be used to find a romantic partner.
- > Sixty seven percent of Brazilians have tried online dating “just for fun”, not necessarily to meet a partner.

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