

Enhanced dating site photos have mixed results for men and women

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Credit: George Hodan/public domain

Dating apps like Tinder offer a quick look at a potential connection, with a simple swipe to either decline or accept the potential match. The stakes are high for putting the right picture in your profile. But does putting an enhanced picture of yourself increase the chance you'll make that match? Being cat-fished is a real risk and users have to take into consideration whether the picture of the person is "too hot to trust." A

new study by researchers at the University of Connecticut found that enhanced photos of women viewed by men increased attractiveness but lowered trustworthiness. Women found enhanced photos of men both increased attractiveness and increased trustworthiness.

Rory McGloin, Amanda Denes and Olivia Kamisher from the University of Connecticut will present their findings at the 65th Annual Conference of the International Communication Association in San Juan, Puerto Rico. The researchers focused on 305 participants who identified as heterosexual and ranged from ages 17-36. Participants were placed into an opposite sex condition and then randomly assigned to view one of four profile pictures of the same male and female. These pictures featured two different types of images, one that had been beautified (i.e. lighting, makeup, hair) and the other, which was a relatively normal, non-beautified picture (satisfactory lighting, no makeup, no hair treatment). Participants were then asked a series of questions to determine the profiles physical attractiveness, similarity (to the participant), [trustworthiness](#), and ultimately their desire to date.

The researchers found that men perceived a beautified profile picture to be more attractive, yet less trustworthy compared to the non-beautified picture of the exact same female. However, women found the beautified male profile picture to be both more attractive and more trustworthy than the non-beautified profile picture that featured the same male.

Previous research has shown that dating site users understand the importance of putting their best "face" forward and that the focus on profile pictures is important given how much of an influence it has on an individual's appeal to a profile. Individuals have long been beautifying themselves (hair, make-up, fitness, plastic surgery, etc.) to enhance their [physical attractiveness](#). This study takes an evolutionary approach in which they use theories of attraction to explain why the perceived attractiveness of a profile picture is so important.

"Trust is an important part of any relationship and it certainly plays an important role in the forging of new social bonds in the dating context. Yet, we found an interesting relationship between attractiveness and trust for males who were viewing female [profile pictures](#). Specifically, men typically found the more beautified and therefore more attractive profile to also be less trustworthy," McGloin said. "This finding provides an empirical highlight to the concept of cat-fishing and the larger phenomena surrounding online dating, in which it is both normal and acceptable for individuals' to mislead or deceive their potential suitors."

McGloin added, "Our research also found that males found the beautified profile as more attractive and had a higher desire to date the person in the picture despite the lower degree of trustworthiness they reported. This finding suggests that even when men suspect that a woman may not look exactly like she does in her profile picture, they are willing to take the risk and pursue a date with her. In our sample, attraction seems to be more important than trust."

More information: "Too Hot to Trust: Examining the Relationship Between Attractiveness, Trustworthiness, and Desire to Date in Online Dating" by Rory McGloin, Amanda Denes and Olivia Kamisher; to be presented at the 65th Annual International Communication Association Conference, San Juan, Puerto Rico, 21-25 May 2015.

Provided by International Communication Association

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