
I LOVE YOU, I LOVE YOU NOT

Enhancing Female-Specific
Mate Selection in Online Dating



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Mate Selection in Online Dating

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Above
My great-grandparents, Muradovs, c. 1946
My grand-parents, Kurbanovs, c. 1963
My grand-parents, Halmuradovs, c. 1973
My parents, Kurbanovs, 2001

PREFACE

If one were to crack open the shell that balances atop my strained neck, one would find deteriorated rolls of film, greasy reread pages, and feverishly repetitive melodies, all on the subject of love. My obsession with this four-letter word was pinned down, dissected, and interrogated through an academic deconstruction of our ingrained and institutionalized upbringings. With all the seduction and butterflies that come with the concept, love is a bundled package of emotions that reflects time and culture.

For my great-grandmothers, marriage promised them moral rights and safety they were otherwise denied. For my grandmothers, matrimony provided them independence and stability. For my mother, marital companionship was a carrier for love and mutual support. And for me, love is a multiplicitous concept that I am free to define and choose for myself. This report is my unspoken attempt at that.

I would like to thank my supervisors Annemiek van Boeijen, Giulia Calabretta, and Marco van der Woude. Thank you for your unconditional consolation, your enthusiasm, and your wisdom. You have helped thread the following sea of words and kept my sanity afloat. I hope the research was as stimulating as your guidance was for me. Thank you to everyone at Breeze. I will hold the friendships, daily check-ins, coffee breaks, ping pong battles, and workation memories close to my heart. Finally, I would like to thank my family, friends, and roommates. You have seen the good, the bad, the ugly, and the monstrosity. Thank you for understanding, supporting, and hugging. With this said: sit back, relax, and luxuriate in the sensations that the following undressing of modern love offers.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Nat King Cole once sang “the greatest thing you’ll ever learn is just to love and be loved in return” in the song “Nature Boy” written in 1947. Four years prior to these words infiltrating the many ears through its accompanying smooth jazz instrumentals, the psychologist Abraham Maslow published his book “A Theory of Human Motivation” in which the hierarchy of needs is explored (Clark, 2010). Above our physical needs and below the esoteric lies our need for love and belonging- the need to love and be loved in return (Robinson, 2021).

When life gives you a shot at love, is it so easy to accept? The search and devotion for romance is an agonizingly difficult experience from which a few of us have been spared. Online dating services aim to address the excruciatingly tedious process of finding a mate by offering a space-less platform in which a date can be planned in a matter of minutes (and from the comfort of one’s toilet seat if one wishes). In such services, however, drastic differences in activities between their cisgendered male and female users have been identified. In fact, the female demographic has a relatively high dislike-rate of profiles, often leading to the question: why are women so picky?

Mate selection is a gender-specific decision making process, where males and females showcase different parameters for assessing and selecting a potential partner. Instead of questioning the level of selectivity of female users, this research acted as a probe for exploring the extent to which online datingservicesaddressthefemalemateselectionneeds online through their digital translations of offline mate assessment factors. With this said, the following research question that scaffolded the thesis was formulated: *How can needs for an offline interaction be met online to encourage Breeze’s young urban professional female users to like profiles?*



Was Goldilocks very picky, or did she just have the freedom to pick and choose what she wanted and liked?



Painting within a coffret of Frau Minne, Lady of Love, and her male lover (c. 1325)

A culturally-sensitive approach was used to uncover the archeological state of the female scope and their relationship to this modern mode of love pursuit. Breeze, an online dating app, was used as a case for the investigation as the service similarly faces the aforementioned problem of gender-imbalanced like-rate activity. The goal of the research was therefore to propose a design that would enhance the female on-line dating experience on Breeze, ultimately increasing their like-rate.

The multidimensional nature of the research required a theoretical framework, in which insights from different perspectives were derived. Love, mate selection, decision making, instrumentality of technology, and risk information seeking and processing research gave insights to the context, followed by user research that clarified the mindset of the targeted users. As Breeze offers an online mate assessment experience for an offline interaction, the research revealed that the content of the gap between the current and the desired female online activity consisted of behavioral factors as mate selection needs that were best digested through a visual language. To elaborate, acquiring an expectation of the offline behavior provided certainty and assurance to the female on the success of the date, which was efficiently and accurately processed through visual information, enhancing the envisioning of the potential interaction. This made female users more willing to go on a date.

As a result, four concepts for Breeze were created and positioned on a scale of present to future implementation. Each prototype provided behavioral information through different degrees of visual-orientation, exemplified by the proposed visual languages. The concepts were created to not only visualize the potential translation of offline needs, but to act as anchor points or future visions for the service in their journey towards the forefront of the online dating industry. The concepts are a response to the internal and external research, allowing for Breeze to stay future-proof and congruent with behavioral change in both the online and offline domains. The concepts were assessed and evaluated by the female scope and the Breeze company, leading to suggestions for design iterations and recommendations for future research.



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1

INTRODUCTION

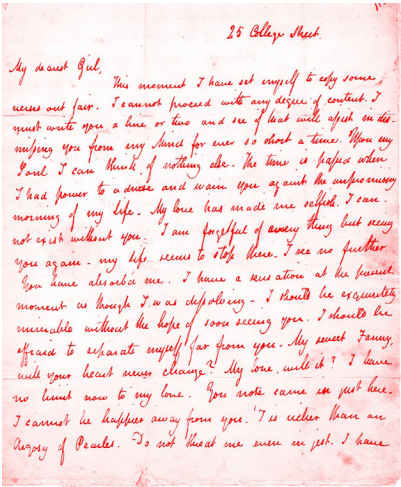
This chapter is an introduction to the project. It will present background knowledge on mate selection, Breeze, and the gender specificity of mate assessment. The problem of the research will be presented, in addition to its relation to Breeze. Finally, the aim of the research and the approaches which were taken will conclude the chapter.



1.1.1
MATE SELECTION

The quest for love is ever-evolving, taking on different forms as it grows, interwoven with corresponding cultures, time, and environments. Research on mate selection can be dated back to Darwin’s “The Descent of Man” (1871) in which the naturalist applies evolutionary theory to sexual selection. Various methods such as “the battle”, to the use of ornamental features for attraction are shared by the species that inhabit our planet. Humankind has of course translated and developed such approaches through our own five-senses. From duels of the 17th and 18th centuries, to giving roses on Valentine’s day, to the creation of love letters, the pursuit of mate selection continues to take on a decorative form of rituals, artifacts, and languages.

Modernization of society has allowed for many mate selection approaches to be implemented into one’s culture and identity, in which dating has become the most common method for mate compatibility assessment adopted worldwide. This moment of intersection allows potential mates to assess one another’s compatibility, in hopes to maintain a position in each other’s lives, whether it results in a relationship, a situationship, or simply a one-night-stand. Unfortunately, the search for love is not always as effortless as we would like. Freudian culture suggested that romantic misery is inevitable and self-inflicted- luckily the emergence of real-time location-based dating apps has been transforming traditional pathways of socialization in the past decade (Castro et al., 2020).



Romanticist poet, John Keats, notoriously wrote infamous love letters to his next door neighbour, Fanny Brawne

“ If sociologists could hear the voices of men ”
and women searching for love, [they]
would hear a long and loud litany of
moans and groans.

(Illouz, 2012)

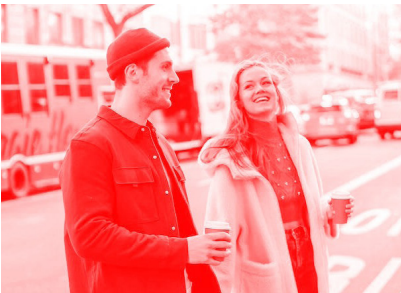


A duel was a common way to “win over” a woman in the 17th and 18th centuries

BREEZE



The Breeze team is currently located in Rotterdam, where the team builds everything in-house



The COVID restrictions didn't stop Breeze from arranging "Walk and Talk" dates



Segment from the "Skin Deep", in which two individuals are set on a blind date. Breeze has a similar concept, but online-removing the "conversation phase" and going straight to the date

With a growing proportion of the population being composed of singles, and career and time pressures increasing in highly urbanized regions, people rely on dating apps as an efficient way of meeting others for intimate relationships (Brym and Lenton, 2001). The digitization of human needs has allowed for the extension of space to help one avoid traveling to meet someone. With its relatively new introduction to humankind’s vocabulary of mate selection, online dating has proved to be the most common way for heterosexual couples to meet today (Rosenfeld, Michael J., et al., 2019).

Breeze is a platform that provides the opportunity for such couples to meet by taking online dating offline. Its core value is to enhance rather than replace human interaction, addressing the current worldwide dilemma in which desensitized users often experience a time-consuming process of swiping and matching for an average of 38 hours per date (Peat, 2018). As an online dating start-up located in Rotterdam, the Netherlands, the Breeze team builds everything in-house, from the application design to the matching algorithm. They stand by their honest business model where they only gain value (turnover) if the users derive value from the service (a date).

“ You don’t have to find the love of your life right away, Breeze dates are about the fun and excitement you feel when you meet new people.

(Breeze, 2022)

The service offers a simple daily routine for its keen users, where a handful of profiles are given to them every 24 hours. Within the same time frame , users must make a decision- to either accept or reject. If there is a match, a date can be immediately arranged through the platform either as a “Walk and Talk” or “Drinks at a Bar”. Breeze’s mission is to make online dating human again by encouraging users to meet face-to-face, addressing the slot-machine-like psychological mindset, choice paralysis, and endless hours of chatting which often leads to nowhere in other dating applications. Breeze’s vision is to arrange five million dates by the end of 2026, and their strategic priorities lie in expanding their service internationally. With its smart matchmaking technology, the system design determines the best potential profiles for each user.

GENDER SPECIFIC MATE SELECTION



Holding hands relief , found in the Double Temple of Kom Ombo (180–47 BCE in Ptolemaic dynasty)



Assessing a mate can be compared to crossing things off a shopping list

There is a significant difference between male and female use of the matchmaking technology in respect to motivation, preferences, self presentation, interaction, and outcomes in online dating in general (Abramova et al., 2016). Evolutionary theory is generally still applicable to online dating, where users continue to follow natural stereotypes when it comes to choosing a mate, exhibiting distinct selection criteria (Buunk et al., 2002).

Sex differences in relationship motivation within the online dating realm are congruent with typical strategies of mating theory where men generally look for short-term relationships with lower level of commitment, and females look for a long-term relationship (Abramova et al., 2016). The pursuit for these different types of relationships require a specific amount and kind of information, affecting the decision one makes regarding the pursuit. Lizarraga et al. (2007) state that gender differences exist because of different social relationships, norms, responsibilities, expectations on characteristics, expectation on aptitudes, behaviors, and culture.

The decision making in attitude formation regarding a potential mate is quite a complex mechanism of human thinking as various factors and courses of action intervene with different results (Lizarraga, 2007). What triggers you to instantly like/dislike the profile before you? Among the various variables that influence this reasoning, gender is a relatively new psychological phenomenon in the decision making styles that plays a major role (Swarna, 2012).

Females are more likely than men to say it was difficult finding people on dating sites or apps they were interested in, and were more likely to report negative experiences on dating platforms (Andre, 2021). Many of the reported reasons point back to the information available and presented by the male user (Abramova et al., 2016). Females tend to be internally focused and often talk as a way to connect and relate to others (Swarna, 2012). They are also observed to have more searching patterns in hopes of comprehending all information available through an analytic way (Swarna, 2012). Contrarily, males are externally focused and often view situations as issues to be resolved and tend to go to the most salient cues, gathering information through heuristics (Swarna, 2012). If parameters of evaluating information are gender-specific (Swarna, 2012), how are these different decision making processes being addressed in online dating?

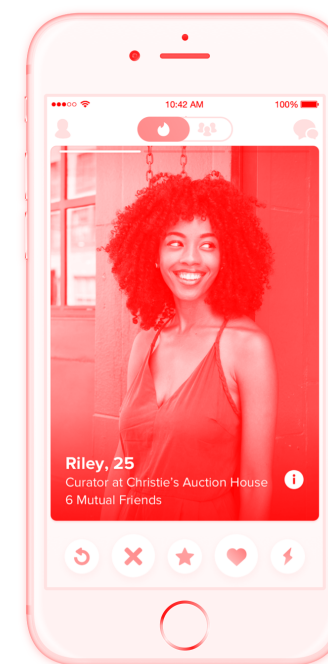


1.2.1 PROBLEM

With its birth, courtship has been redefined and drastic behavioral evolutions towards love and dating have occurred amongst the users today. Moira Weigel, author of “Labor of Love: The Invention of Dating”, states that modern dating has made it possible for economic concepts to seep in, with the supply-and-demand concept (Fetters and Tiffany, 2020). With the system and interface design conforming to the consumer behavior tendencies one might have, it makes it difficult to separate the process of shopping for products from shopping for a mate.

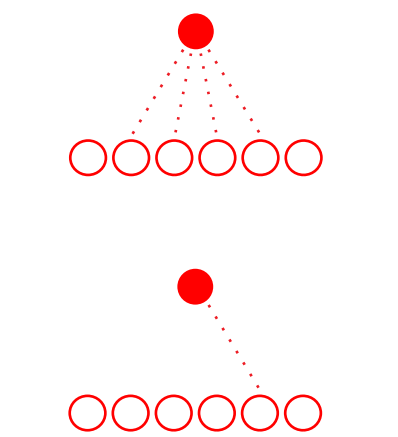
The general online dating profiles consist of a given number of information such as textual and a few visuals (photos and/or videos) which users will use as input for their mate assessment. Such mediums act as carriers of insight, and much like offline mate selection, naturally vary in regards to the sufficiency of information they provide for their users to make a decision. Research shows that physical attractiveness is the key criterion for men when selecting partners (Abramova et al., 2016). Given that the first data point one is exposed to when entering an online dating app such as Breeze, Tinder, or Hinge, is a photo of the potential mate, it can be assumed that the process of decision making is easier for the male users as the information desired is immediately supplied. Contrarily, women prioritize specific information that reveal attributes, such as one’s subculture (Abramova et al., 2016). Such information is not filled into an obligatory feature on a profile like uploading a photo. This type of information is not standardized, therefore dependent on the user’s choice in self presentation. Thus, it can be claimed that certain females’ values in mate assessment are not being equally met in this mode for mate selection.

Dunwoody and Griffin (2015) explore “Risk Information Seeking and Processing” in which they claim that too little information leads one to resort to effective methods that would provide some insight. The “insufficiency” triggers one to unlock their systematic appraisal mode, an analytic, high effort, and rational mindset that motivates one to devote time and energy to acquiring additional information. Females are generally observed to have more searching patterns and tend to comprehend all information available in online dating (Swarna, 2012), unlocking their risk awareness. It can therefore be claimed that the insufficiency of information is a key player in females’ decision making process. With online dating parameters only leaving the user with a binary choice, yes or no to a date, one would assume the lack of insight would steer the females’ decision to a “no”.



The first thing you will see in any common online dating profile is the photo

BREEZE’S
DILEMMA



A diagram to present the male and female profile acceptance rate: with every "like" that a female gives to a male profile, a male likes 4 female profiles



BBC’s adaptation of Jane Austen’s “Pride and Prejudice” is notorious for this scene in which the protagonist rejects her brooding suiter for their differences in values and expressions of love

Similarly, Breeze is facing this dilemma in which their female demographic has a relatively high dislike-rate of profiles. In fact, female users are generally considered to be more “picky” and selective in mate selection (Abramova et al., 2016), and for Breeze in particular, the male users like the female profiles four times more frequently than females liking males. However, one must ask the question: are women more particular with their choices, or do dating applications simply conform more appropriately to the decision making style and needs of male users?

In her book “Invisible Women” (2020), writer and activist Caroline Criado-Perez explores how the majority of the world’s data is based around the male body and the typical male life pattern. Perhaps there is a shortcoming in addressing the needs and values of female users in the online dating domain as well.

“ **Humanity is male and male defines woman not in herself, but as relative to him; she is not regarded as an autonomous being. [...] he is the Subject, he is the absolute - she is the Other.** ”

(Simone de Beauvoir, 1949)

Although certain applications have attempted to better present one’s character through the introduction of new features on the profile such as voice recordings, videos, links to social media, etc., the distrust and dissatisfaction with online dating from female users remains, evidently on Breeze. As the service exists within the online domain, it acts as a digital tool for providing opportunities to meet a potential mate offline, by extending space and the process of mate selection into an interface. The low-like rate of Breeze female users suggest a disruption/fluke in the experience of the tool. Could it perhaps be this translation?

AIM

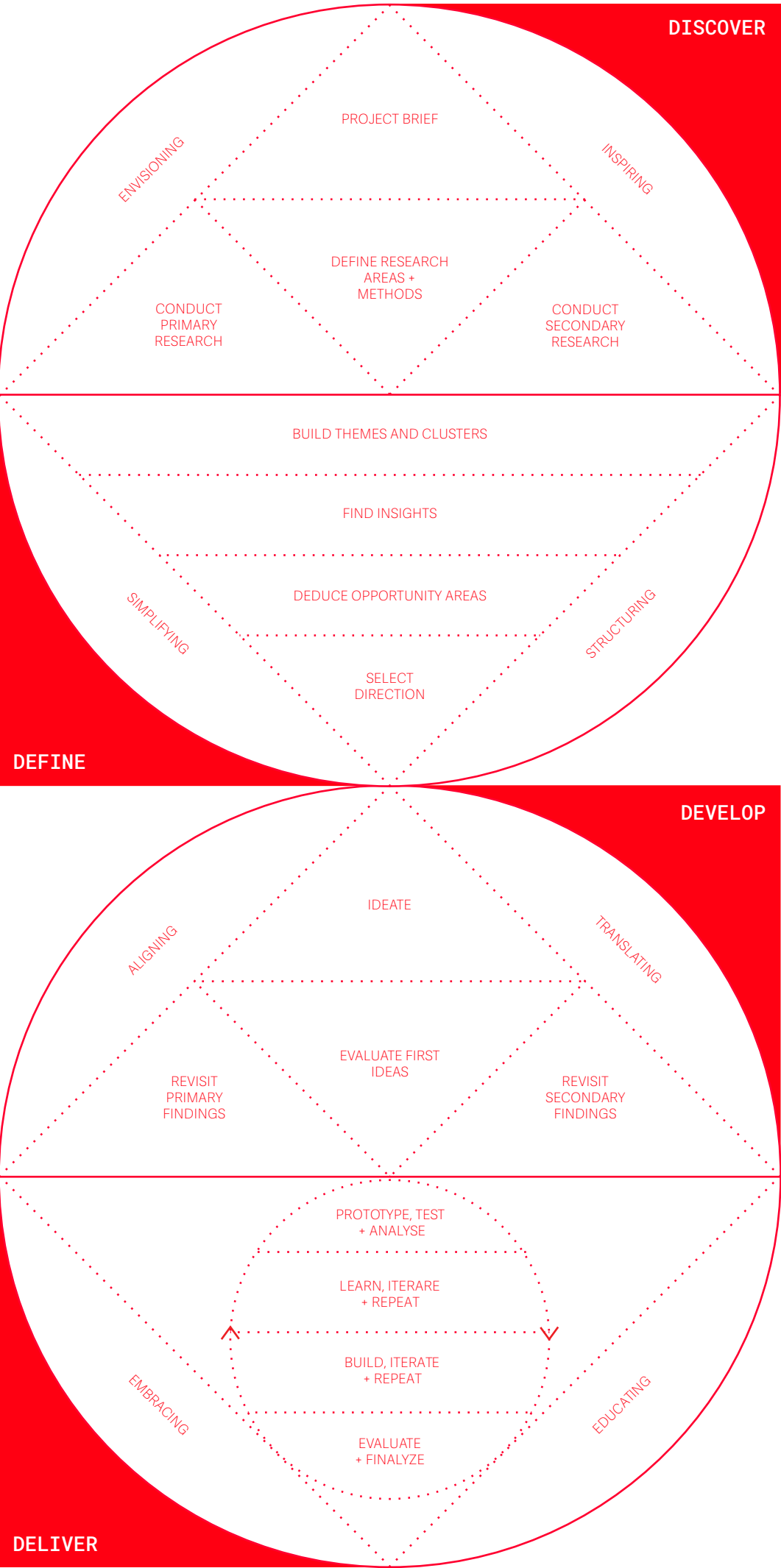
The thesis aims to explore the decision making style of Breeze’s female users, unravel their underserved values, and understand the obstacles that stand in their way for the pursuit of love online. The problem statement is therefore: *insufficient information on a profile triggers the systematic apprasial mode of females, ultimately increasing their risk awareness, and thus creating uncertainty in them regarding the expected chance of success of the date.*

By focusing on enhancing their online dating experience by catering to their mate selection needs, their like-rate would potentially increase, benefiting the service by creating more matches. Therefore, this project strives to identify the unmet needs and values of females, and propose several concepts within the parameters of the Breeze vision and brand, to tailor to their mate assessment experience.

To answer the goal of the assignment within a manageable timeframe, a scope was set in advance in reference to the user demographics of Breeze, along with other reasoning discovered from secondary research. More specifically, the scope of the research is restricted to heterosexual cis-gendered female users seeking a serious relationship who live in the Netherlands, falling under the category of young urban professionals. To conclude, for the concept designs to come into fruition, the following research question was explored:

How can needs for an offline interaction be met online to encourage Breeze’s young urban professional female users to like profiles?

FIG. 1



1.3.0

APPROACH

As the goal of the thesis is to propose a design that would enhance the female Breeze user's experience using the service, the psychological and anthropological subject oriented towards female-specificity and the online realm beckons an understanding of the context of the world today through a culturally sensitive lens. Additionally, it demands an archeological dissection of human relationship to technology in order to deliver a design that shapes and modifies the online dating experience in regards to the desired behavior of the user.

In this section, the general approach of the thesis will be explained, and the various mediums for unraveling information and catalyzing the progress will be elaborated upon. With Breeze as the case online platform, strategic decisions will be made throughout the research process to provide a long-term and future-proof impact on the company. This entails the explicit awareness of the desirability, viability, and feasibility of the proposed design and direction. Therefore, "Design Thinking" was selected to act as the scaffolding for the entire research process.

1.3.1 DESIGN THINKING

The multidimensionality of and marriage between design anthropology, psychology, and strategic product design of this project requires efficiency in flow and a collaborative methodology that the "Double Diamond" provides. The human-centricity of this approach allows for deep understanding of the online dating users and the behavior of females on Breeze specifically. Ultimately, this enriching method of cognitive, practical, and strategic processes would result in the framing of problems and insights as fuel for the concept ideation and reasoning. The specific phases of the Discover, Define, Develop, and Deliver stages are elaborated in Fig. 1.

1.3.2 INTERACTION VISION

With the aim of enhancing the female online dating experience through design, the user-centered reseach requires a justified guideline. An interaction vision is a statement that summarizes the intended interaction between the user and the proposed design. In hopes of making the values of the project and the established context more explicit, an analogy acts as the interaction vision to clarify the foundation of the final concept. This was created after the user research phase.

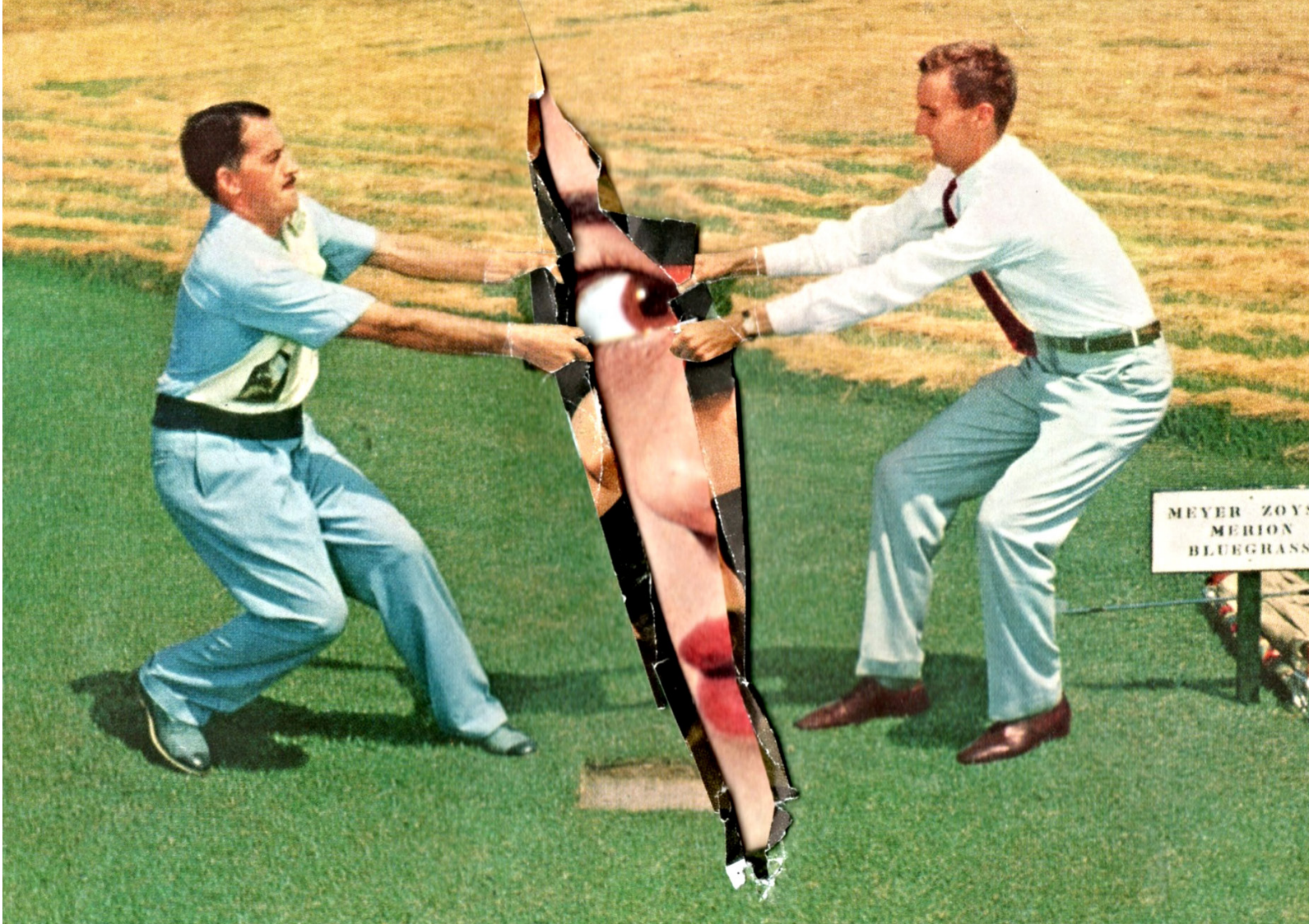
1.3.3 CULTURAL SENSITIVITY

A globalized world with interconnected societies and multicultural subgroups that share a multitude of differing values, beliefs, and practices acts as the backdrop of this project. As it focuses on young urban professional females dating online in the Netherlands, understanding their values and needs from a cultural perspective is vital. A culturally-sensitive approach helps us understand how and where to look at the culture of love in both the online and offline domain, explore the impact of social constructs of romance and dating on the scope of the project, create unique ideas and concepts, and check the acceptability of the final design (Van Boeijen and Zijlstra, 2020). Therefore, several culturally-sensitive models were used throughout the project to 1. maintain awareness of the cultural heritage of society, 2. see its effect on material culture, 3. see its impact on behavioral evolution, 4. understand the translation of the offline domain to the online, 5. and create a meaningful, socially sustainable, and future-proof design for the insatiable needs of Breeze users.

1.3.4 ARCHEOLOGICAL DISSECTION

Colomina and Wigley state that “archeology has always been about design”. It reconstructs human activity by analyzing the material traces of techno fossils” in their book “Are We Human?” (2016). As humans, we have always been reshaped by the designs in our world, and to question the reasoning for the relationship a female user might have with a design such as an online dating experience would be best answered with a delicate brush that would uncover every artifact and pattern we have in the context of love and technology. Seeing as the context of the thesis is the online realm, it is important to study the internet as a culture, which means seeing it as a social space on its own rather than seeing it as something within another space (Slater, 2002).

The virtuality that comes with online dating (where space has become ambiguous) shines light on the importance of understanding online cues translated from the offline, and examining the behaviors that develop from the efficiency/ lack of such a translation. This archeological approach towards the subject of the thesis ties in with the culturally-sensitive one, where the reverse-engineering initiated by the research question will help understand this translation and how design for the desired behavior could help create a more effortless decision making process when it comes to mate selection for female Breeze users.



GENDER INNOVATION



A medieval engraving of an androgyne, showcasing both female and male physical features (1493)



Goddess Sculptures from the Prehistoric Period to 1200 BC represented by the accentuated female form

Gender refers to the social relationships, roles, and responsibilities of men and women, the expectations held about the characteristics, aptitudes, and likely behaviors of both women and men that are learned change over time and vary within and between cultures (Swarna, 2012). Due to the gender-specificity of the research, it is required to have an awareness of gender as a concept and its corresponding stereotypes. Gender bias often leads to missed market opportunities and relevant insights that would otherwise contribute to harnessing creative design power (Stanford University, 2011). It will therefore be crucially important to identify bias and integrate gender, sex, and intersectional gender analysis processes throughout the research to add value to the research of online dating, society (by making research more aligned to social needs), and the business of Breeze (by developing gender intersectional ideas to benefit the needs of their target users). Methods such as the gender impact assessment, gender analysis, and interaction of gender and sex analysis (Standford, 2011) scaffold the discover, define, develop, and deliver phases of the thesis to steer the research in an inclusive and intersectional direction.

Additionally, the notion that gender is a construct must also maintain a sense of importance throughout the research process. Gender, defined by the Marriam Webster dictionary, is “the behavioral, cultural, or psychological traits typically associated with one sex” (Marriam Webster, 2022). Living in a binary-conforming world, research in online dating and gender-specificity in behavior within this context is often defined by the binaries of gender: women versus men. Unlike biological sex, gender is a product of society (Psychologyanswers.com, 2022), and is thus everchanging. The determinism of masculinity and femininity is inconsistent and subjective. For the sake of the research, gender will solely be limited to cisgendered individuals with a selected set of behaviors and attitudes towards online dating. The final deliverables will also aim to be inclusive of other genders as well, despite the female-specific intention. The intersectionality of gender will also act as a priority in the research, development, and formulation of designs. This is due to the goal of the research to be more inclusive, and thus applicable to a larger group of users of Breeze.

1.3.6 FIELD EXPERTS

Throughout the research and design process, a collaboration with several field experts was carried out to: 1. get their professional perspective on the theory of the project, 2. receive feedback on the direction of the project, 3. get advice on the design methodology approach, and/or 4. hear their evaluation on the design ideations of the project. The experts were selected for their expertise in their specific fields which are: service design, creative facilitation and ideation, digital mediation in human connection, instrumentality of technology and digital society, strategic product design, decision making, and information seeking and processing. Their connection and contribution is presented in Appendix B.3. It was intended there to be a diverse set of field experts in age, gender, experience, and background to obtain a well rounded impression of their feedback for impact on the research.

1.3.7 DELIVERABLES

With the design thinking, culturally sensitive, archeological, expert-aided, and gender intersectional approaches, the research will result in four deliverables that will contribute to the exploration and attempt to answer the goal of the assignment through four horizons. The first three deliverables act as stepping stones towards the fourth deliverable, the concept future vision for Breeze. Each prototype evolves into its following one, addressing the same core design goals and aims. This will be elaborated further in the report. The deliverables are:

- 1. A feature called the “behavior tags”.
- 2. An illustrative feature.
- 3. A collection of new potential profile interfaces.
- 4. A concept as a new future vision for Breeze.

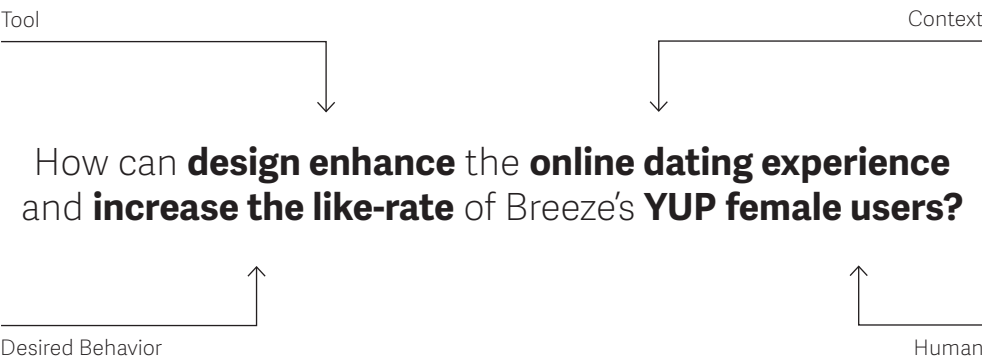
A discussion and recommendations were written to communicate how Breeze can further enhance its online dating experience for other demographics and how to approach them in an intersectional and future-proof manner. The multidimensional approach of this research has also resulted in findings, presented through frameworks and visuals that could be applied by Breeze in other demographic-specific projects.

2

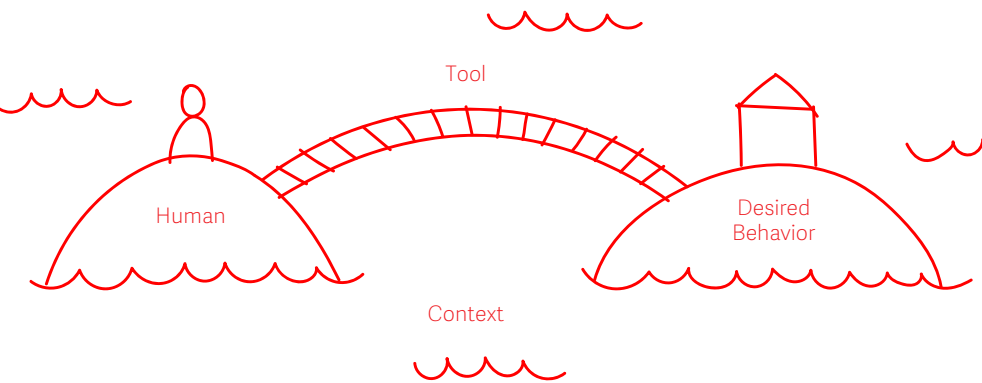
LITERATURE REVIEW

The approach and method which scaffolded the theoretical and thematic research starts off this chapter. The literature review consists of three categories: the pursuit of love, human relationship to technology, and gender specificity in mate selection. Each category ends with a conclusion consisting the main insights.

Before getting started on attempting to figure out a solution for the problem, it is essential to understand the big picture. The research question of meeting needs for an offline interaction online to encourage females to like profiles gives birth to a design question that acts as a kickoff to the research, as presented below. With this said, the aim of the design outcome would provide the human with a tool which would enhance the context of its use, ultimately helping Breeze achieve the desired behavior. The story below helps visualize this better.



We begin our story with the scope, the female demographic. Let's call this element the "human". The human is a seeker of love and in an active position of attaining it through online dating. We have now established the environment that they are in and the destination they are trying to get to. Unfortunately, there is an obstacle stopping the human from getting to the destination, the water, that makes the female unable to or avoid getting to the destination. This is the problem of the research, the human's high rejection rate of profiles or the lack of information for them to like them. To address this, a bridge must be made by Breeze to help assist the human to their desired destination.



It is important to first get a feeling for the obstacle (context) and understand why the human is feeling hesitant about the bridge. What is influencing the females' relatively low like-rate, what are their thoughts on love, what are they feeling hesitant about the pursuit of love in online dating, and in what context are they existing in? To view and fill in the story from a theoretical and thematic perspective, a literary review was conducted to address the design question through three literature review research questions. The findings were then categorized into three major topics, which additionally answer sub-questions that were created to guide the research. The topics are: 1. pursuit of love, 2. human relationship to technology, and 3. gender specificity in decision making.

PURSUIT OF LOVE

- RQ1.** *How is online dating the new mate selection platform?*
SQ1. What is the nature of mate selection?
SQ2. What role does love play in mate selection, and how has it evolved?
SQ3. What role does a "like" play in mate selection?

HUMAN RELATIONSHIP TO TECHNOLOGY

- RQ2.** *What is today's human's relationship to online dating and why?*
SQ1. How can human relationship to the online realm be determined?
SQ2. To what extent is online dating a tool for love?
SQ3. What role does an interface and infrastructure of a dating app play in mate selection?

GENDER-SPECIFIC DECISION MAKING

- RQ3.** *What are the potential reasons for females' profile-rejection?*
SQ1. What decision making processes occur in mate selection?
SQ2. To what extent does gender act as a factor in decision making?
SQ3. How has the female mate criteria evolved?
SQ4. To what extent do dating apps address YUP females' needs?

What is love, and why are there centuries worth of literature, music, art, etc. devoted to a concept so mysterious to humankind? Nietzsche notoriously expressed that “there is always some madness in love. But there is also always some reason in madness” (Verkerk, 2014). Freud states that early experiences of loss will inevitably be enacted throughout one’s romantic journey in adulthood, yet Eva Illouz argues that “the social organization of romantic pain has changed profoundly” in her book “Why Love Hurts” (2012). Perhaps both perspectives contain some truth- that despite the agony, the pursuit of love stays ever significant in one’s life whilst its intention morphs to accompany its time.

In Greta Gerwig’s 2019 film adaptation of Louisa May Alcott’s novel “Little Women” (1869), the character Amy believes that “we have some power over who we love”. This quote illustrates the very subjectivity of love, where one’s desire and expectation of this innate need is disguised in different forms, whether it is to simply be accepted, acquire power, achieve marriage, etc. Much of feminist theory finds that “love is the cement with which the edifice of male domination has been built” and that “male power resides in the fact that gender identities and hierarchy are played out and reproduced in the expression and experience of romantic sentiments” which “sustain broader economic and political power differentials” (Illouz, 2012). With this said, it can be presumed that love acts as a factor in mate selection. In fact, due to such discrepancies, one might say that the sets of institutionalized social expectations influence one’s gender-identity performance, approach, and judgment towards romantic pursuit. How could this explain love being historically so much more powerfully seductive to women?

As Austinian literature (the epitome of romance) might illustrate, love promised women moral status, economic, and political rights that were otherwise denied to them (Illouz, 2012). Surely today’s context is much different. Illouz (2012) defines our current time, a hyper-modern world, as the period following World War I where the radicalization of social tendencies has changed profoundly, with the “culture of love and the economy of gender identity contained in it”. The question now lies in how modernization and thus the deterioration of institutional constructs has reshaped the expectations and methods of mate selection.

“ Yet, when you put two political ideals of gender equality and sexual freedom at the center of intimacy, it stripped love of the rituals of deference and the mystical aura in which it had hitherto been shrouded.”

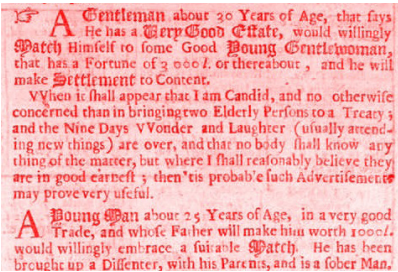
(Illouz, 2012)



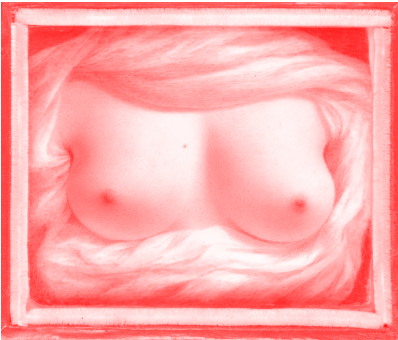
Section of the painting “Young Man Holding A Book” by Master of the View of St. Gudula (c. 1480) showing a songbook, typically made in the shape of a heart



2.2.2 MODERN MATE SELECTION



First personal ad from July 19th, 1695, sent in by a 30-year-old man looking for a "good young gentlewoman"



Self portrait by Sarah Goodridge that was sent by her to a recently widowed US senator Daniel Webster in 1828, much like what we know today as a "sext"

Darwin proposed the concept of sexual selection 150 years ago in his "Descent of Man", where the role of sexual selection in the evolution of humans is explored, and the purpose of it stated as the divergence among distinct human populations (Castro and Barrada, 2020). Darwin realized that the method that a species adopts in order to attract a potential mate is in line with the accompanying context, influencing the behavior. Take the deer species as an example. The male deer use their antlers as weapons to fight and establish dominance over the other, often intended to "win over" the female species. Such a characteristic serves as a visual cue signaling health and genetic quality to female deer, but has also evolved as defense against predators. This intersection of utility and decoration displays the interdependency of an environment on the nature and evolution of mate selection.

Heterosexual romantic love in our context today contains the two most important cultural revolutions of the twentieth century: the individualization of lifestyles and intensification of emotional life projects, and the economization of social relationships (Illouz, 2012). With the acceleration of the globalization of cultures (Anderson and Obeng, 2020), interactions between people and countries worldwide are being stimulated, and culture-specific perspectives along with methods regarding mate selection are being spread. Westernization of cultures in the past few centuries has reshaped and translated various methods of mate selection, dating back to European colonization where new religions, ways of living, beliefs, etc. were adopted and thus somewhat universal behaviors developed (Difference Between, 2021). Online dating is one of such universally adopted concepts, which can be rooted back to the first personal ad published, aimed to help a British bachelor find an eligible wife in 1695 (Lee, 2017).

With over 234.1 million online dating app users around the world, 15.8% user penetration is in the Netherlands alone (Andre, 2021), in which most app users tend to live in urban contexts (Castro et al., 2020). Within the urbanized sociodemographic context, people are more accessible online than offline, and simply meeting potential mates the traditional way is becoming outdated. The phone in which the dating apps live in show us that the idea of the body being in one place has gone. We have become homo-cellulars. Beings with an additional limb- the phone (Colomina and Wigley, 2016). For us now, mate selection is as simple as hitting a "like", whether it is on an online dating app, a facebook post, or a reaction to an Instagram story. Giving a like, however, is not the same for everyone.

2.2.3 CONCLUSION

To view mate selection as a romantic pursuit is a hyper-modern and relatively western approach to the innate human need. Once viewed as a political or economic statement, love has come a long way due to the cultural revolutions of the individualization of lifestyles and the economization of social relationships. From the motivation for attaining a marital status, to sharing vulnerabilities and sensations of acceptance, the pursuit of romance is inevitably dependent on the nature of the time, context, and corresponding history of its experience. Dating is a universally accepted personally-driven approach to mate selection that now exists within the online realm, where we extend our realities in a spaceless platform as homo-cellulars. Once upon a time, parents' recommendation/decision of a mate was valued. Then it moved onto friends fixing their friends up. Now, individuals find themselves responsible for their own lives and position establishment in society- this is when online dating comes into the story. This digital translation of mate selection is fueled by "likes". In response to the research question, we have now determined the power of the seemingly simple action of "liking" someone or their content as the modern intentional step in mate selection. To what extent is the online domain successfully translating the innate offline mate assessment needs for such a like to occur, and how is this affecting human's relationship to technology (online dating)?

2.3.1

THE HOMO-CELLULAR

Human biology and mentality profoundly changed in 1983 by the arrival of the cell phone (Colomina and Wigley, 2016), creating a language since then where behaviors have evolved into our current abilities of interacting with the world through information and communication technology. Perception, social interaction, memory, and even thought itself has become cellular and the device is no longer an accessory to human life, but a basic of a new kind of life (Colomina and Wigley, 2016).

As homo-cellulars, we develop our behaviors in the online domain- cyberspace. As defined by Gibson (1984), this space is a “consensual hallucination experienced daily by billions of legitimate operators. A graphic representation of data abstracted from banks of every computer in the human system” (Gibson, 1984). Here, we find overlapping social formations and visual experiences that address our offline needs and behaviors in a seamless manner. The phone is a culmination of all this and has become a prosthetic, a tool for your physical and virtual persons to become synonymous and interchangeable (Lloyd, 2010). Most importantly, its the home of online dating.

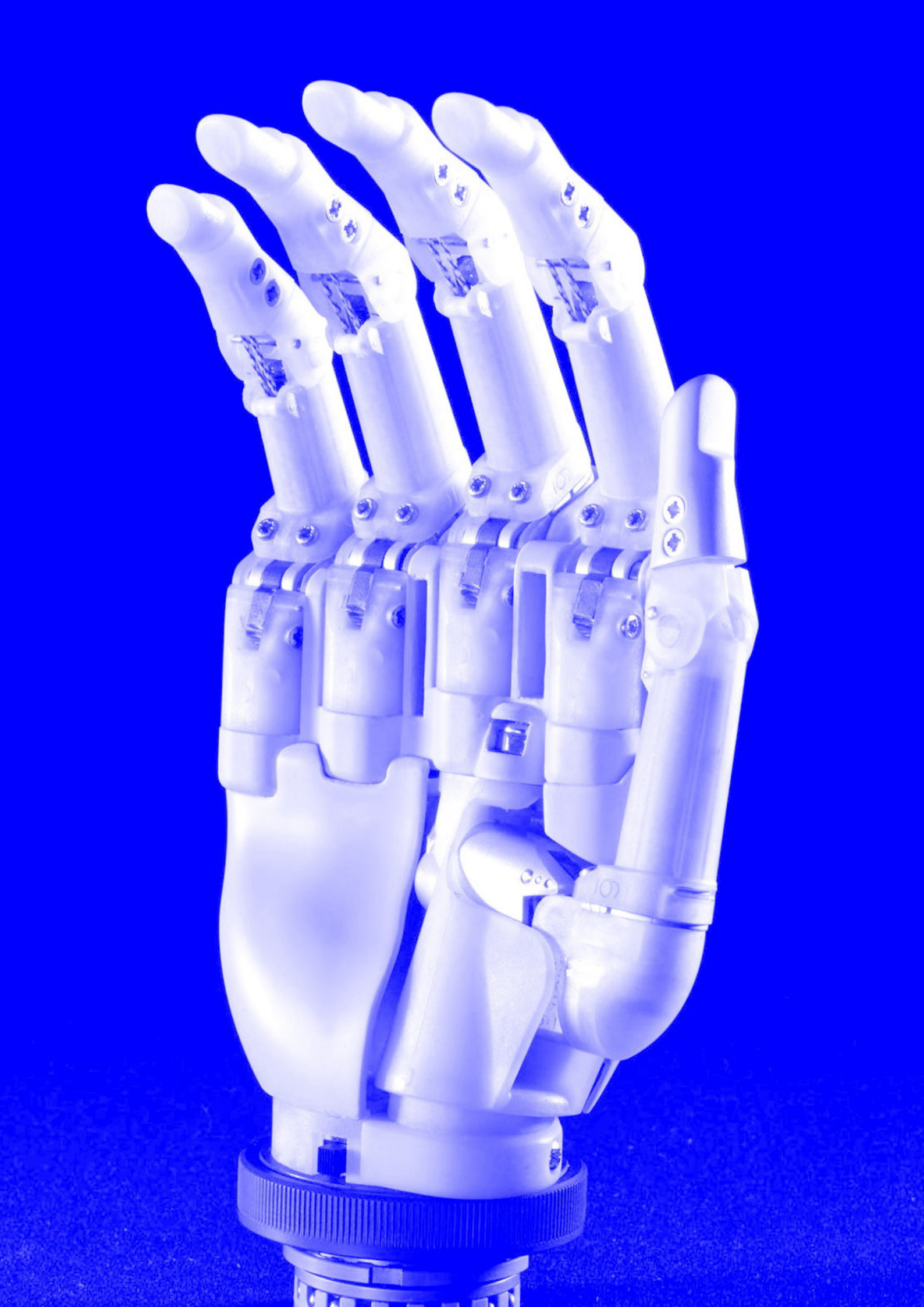
“ We construct our technologies, and our technologies construct us and our times. Our times make us, we make our machines, our machines make our times. We become the object we look upon but they become what we make of them.

(Lloyd, 2010)

Much like the quote above so clearly suggests, technology is a design that impacts our development as human beings. The machine as the physicality of technology becomes a symbiotic extension of the person by “enhancing the faculty of sight or replicating hearing, touch, and smell through remote sensors” (Lloyd, 2010). It becomes a tool that we humans use to not only make better sense of the world, but adapt to the ever-changing environments and circumstances thrown our way. Technology is therefore merely a language that develops and evolves over time. Online dating, a digital platform, is therefore a technological tool that has been created in response and congruence to the current circumstances and needs in mate selection. As a form of social media, how familiar is it to our current habits, routines, and expectations of love?



Paris Hilton with a flip-phone, a product she pioneered as an accesory, glued to her at all times



2.3.2
TECHNOLOGY
AS TOOL

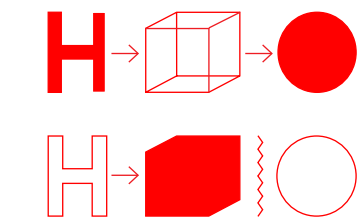


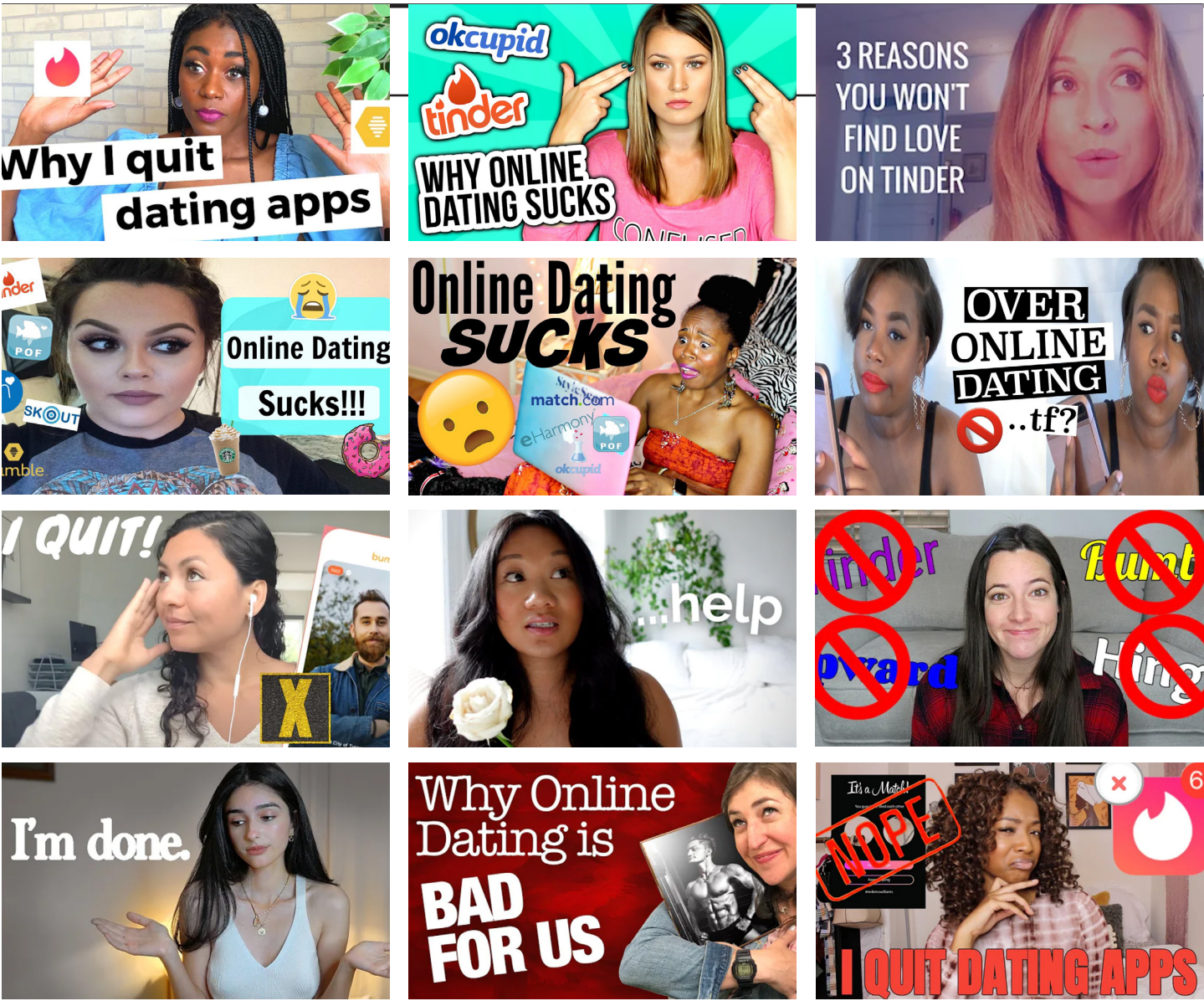
FIG. 2
Humans acquires knowledge through a tool- if it is broken/inaccessible, the obstruction of knowledge acquirement

Heidegger’s account of technology as a tool is explored in his print of lectures and essays “The Question Concerning Technology” (1977). He explains that technology is instrumental, and instrumentality is linked to bringing forth or revealing truth (Zuern, 2019). 17th century philosopher Descartes’ Cogito Ergo Sum captures the essence of humanity’s major question. His “I think, therefore I am” quote questions the extent to which one can trust one’s perception of reality, and this at its core is one’s goal and inevitable path in life- acquiring knowledge. Tools make this possible. A tool is an artifact, which when dug up, can reveal the history and culture through assessment. In Joachim Trier’s film “The Worst Person In the World” (2022), a character looks back on his life and the things he collected:

“ I grew up in a time when culture was passed along through objects. They were interesting because we could live among them. We could pick them up. Hold them in our hands. Compare them. ”

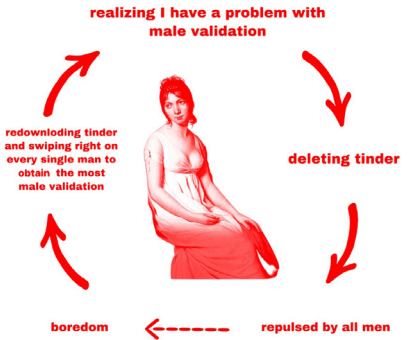
For a tool to work efficiently, it must be transparent. Heidegger presents an example of a hammer- if someone wants to use it, it does not draw attention to itself, but rather to what is reached through it (Secomandi and Snelders, 2013). In Lloyd’s “There, Yet Not There: Human Relationships with Technology” (2010), various relationships that one has with technology is dissected and explored in according to Idhe’s “genres of technics” (Lloyd, 2010), where the essence of technology is in “revealing” (Secomandi and Snelders, 2013).

Often, this revealing is evident when a tool breaks down or goes missing. This is when we see the user’s involvement with it getting disturbed (Lloyd, 2010). The tool now draws attention to itself and presents its existence as an obstruction for the user- this is when the division between the tool and the user becomes clear (Fig. 2).



YouTube thumbnails of dissatisfied females on their online dating opinion videos

If online dating is a tool for finding a mate and pursuing your desire for having love in your life, why is it that almost half of female dating app users are expressing frustration in achieving that (Andre, 2021), and more so than the male users? Additionally, 35% of the users feel pessimistic and 30% find it difficult to find a partner on an online dating app (Andre, 2021). Could the instrumentality of such a dating method be considered obstructed, much like the example stated previously of the tool? The high resistance to online dating of female users requires further examination if we are to exist within an online-dominated world (Lloyd, 2010). The philosopher Latour suggests that we need a framework for addressing a malfunction of a tool:



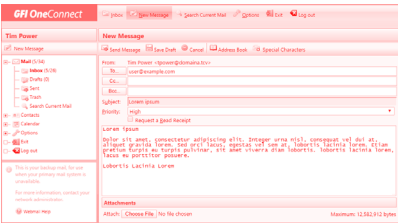
A meme expressing the dilemma of a modern woman with online dating

“ Allow us to ignore traditional questions about the division between technology and humans, and concentrate on analyzing the cultural field in which we live as a field of forces, relations, processes, and effects. ”

(Latour, 1987)

2.3.3

THE SKELETON OF ONLINE DATING



Composing an email mimics the elements of a letter in both content and format

An online dating app was not created out of thin air, despite its virtuality. The space-less spaceful digital space (say that five times) is composed of a foundation, a skeletal structure that holds it all together. A service such as a dating app is composed of an interface and an infrastructure, much like a front and back office (Snelders et al., 2014). Bonsiepe, expressed that “the interface defines a tool only in relation to a context of action” (Secomandi and Snelders, 2013), much like a digital email mimics the features of a letter that we are familiar with in the offline domain. Similarly, the system design scaffolds an online dating experience by either following the ‘see-and-screen’, ‘algorithm’, or ‘blended’ format (Tong et al., 2016). Breeze has an algorithm format that provides a handful of profiles to their users every day. Tong et al. (2016) find that online dating apps with an algorithmic system along with suggested profiles under the number of 20 cater more to users seeking serious relationships. This information would set Breeze up to a pretty good start for the scope. What's going wrong then?

Below is OKCupid's "DTF" (Down to Fuck) campaign. OKCupid has the blended format, and evidently caters to a different demographic than Breeze



2.3.4

CONCLUSION

In the past decade, humankind’s reliance and activity with technology has exponentially increased. Our entrance into the online domain has played a crucial role in our behavioral evolution. Our existence online is not an accessory to our reality, but a different version of reality altogether in which technology extends our senses by allowing us to reveal truth and acquire knowledge through its offers. Online dating similarly extends our mate selection process, and is thus a tool for love. However, half of the female users have a bad relationship with the method- this suggests the obstruction of the tool.

The composition of a dating app is made up of its interface and system design that interestingly influences the user’s experience and triggered behavior online, and can be the start of examination the obstruction of the tool, (the bad reputation it has). Studies show that such factors impact mate selection in a gender-specific way. Now that we have established the relationship the human has with the tool and the potential factors that influence this (infrastructure and interface), it is important to understand the cognitive information seeking and processing experience a female has when exposed to the content on a profile. Additionally, identifying the potential reasons for their generally high rate of profile rejection could contribute to the design process.

2.4.0

GENDER SPECIFICITY IN MATE SELECTION

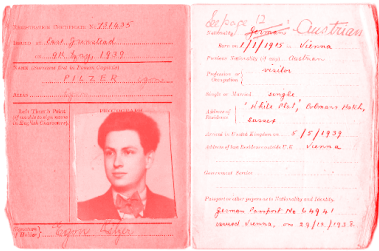
2.4.1

MATE CRITERIA

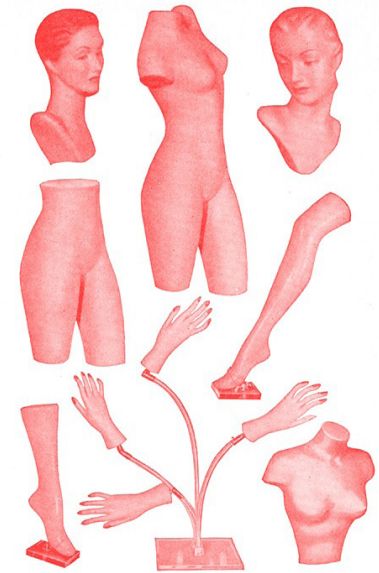
Material resources, earning potential, social status, psychological support, protection, ambition, etc. have shown to play a role in the female choice of male partners in offline settings, whereas for men it's physical attractiveness, youth, etc. (Abramova et al., 2016). Reasons for such differences could root back to the biological needs and tendencies of each gender- females being more attentive to features of an individual that suggest resource acquisition such as dominance and status, and males more attentive to reproduction potential (Buunk, 2002).

Additionally, mate criteria differs not only in gender, but also in the level of intimacy one is in/seeking. Buunk et al. (2002) explore the nature of mate selection of a sexual fantasy, one night stand, being in love, serious relationship, and marriage. They find that individuals are more selective with long term mates, and use factors such as income, education, physical attractiveness, self confidence, intelligence, social position/capabilities, and dominance as points for analysis. Similarly, such mate criteria factors are considered and theories applied in the mate selection process online (Abramova et al., 2016). How might the interface and system design of the dating app act as tools in translating such offline features into the online domain?

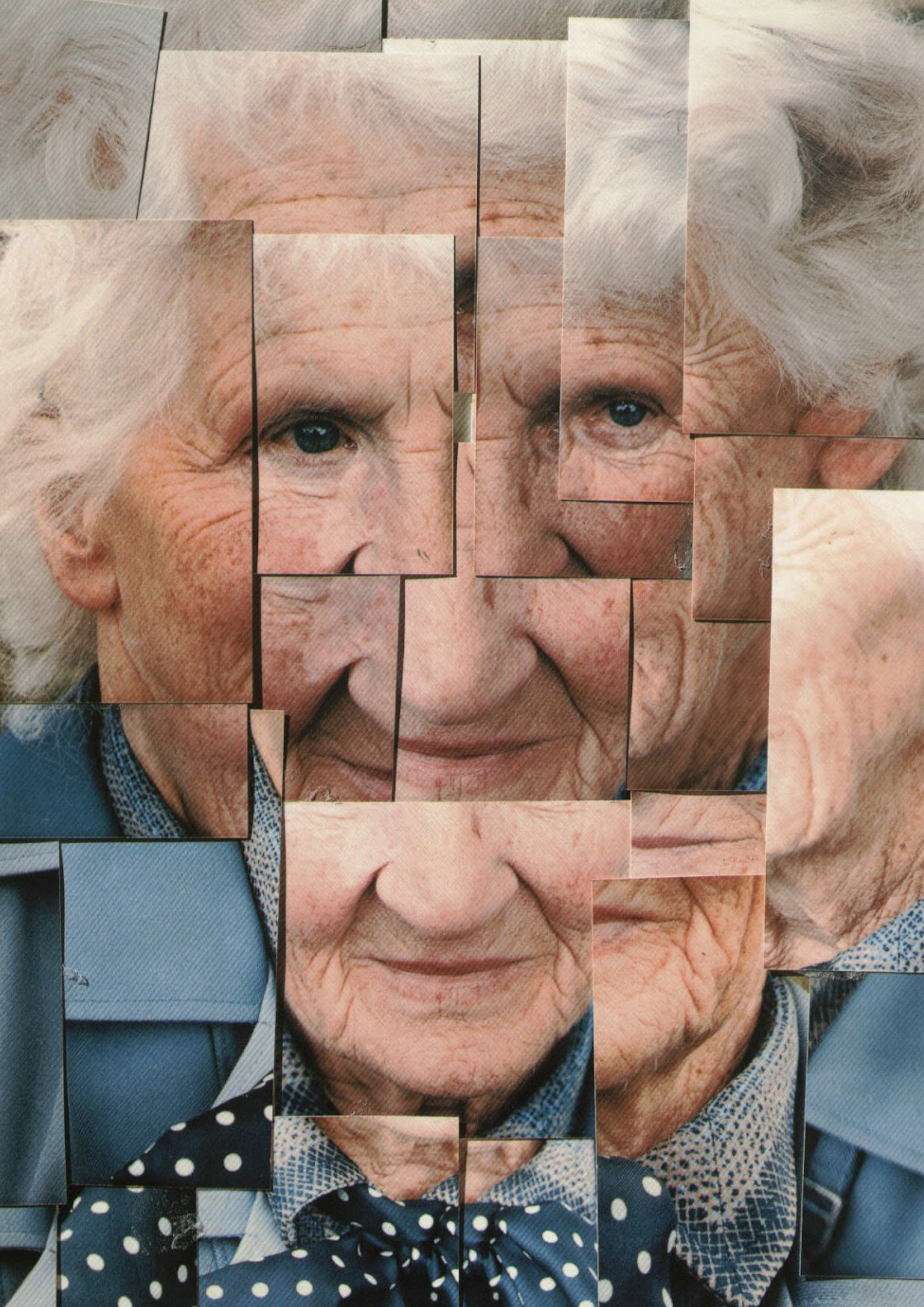
By carrying out market research of the online dating industry, one would see a recurring profile interface design which foregrounds profile photos, and backgrounds textual self-descriptions that come in the format of a "bio" or answers to pre-selected questions. The photo-centricity of almost all dating apps on the market, and the character limit of text, encourage shallowness in profile selectivity in regards to superficial qualities (Fetters, 2018). The photo-heavy format of the dating app proves to benefit the male's mate selection process, where men swipe right far more often than women do, leaving them with a low success rate of about 0.6% (Paul, 2018). This directs our attention to the gender gap within the design world, and that specifically of online dating.



A profile provides metric information, making the interface look a lot like a passport, wouldn't you say? Do you find this appealing?



Physical attractiveness is the key criterion for male dating app users



2.4.2
THE MALE
STANDARD

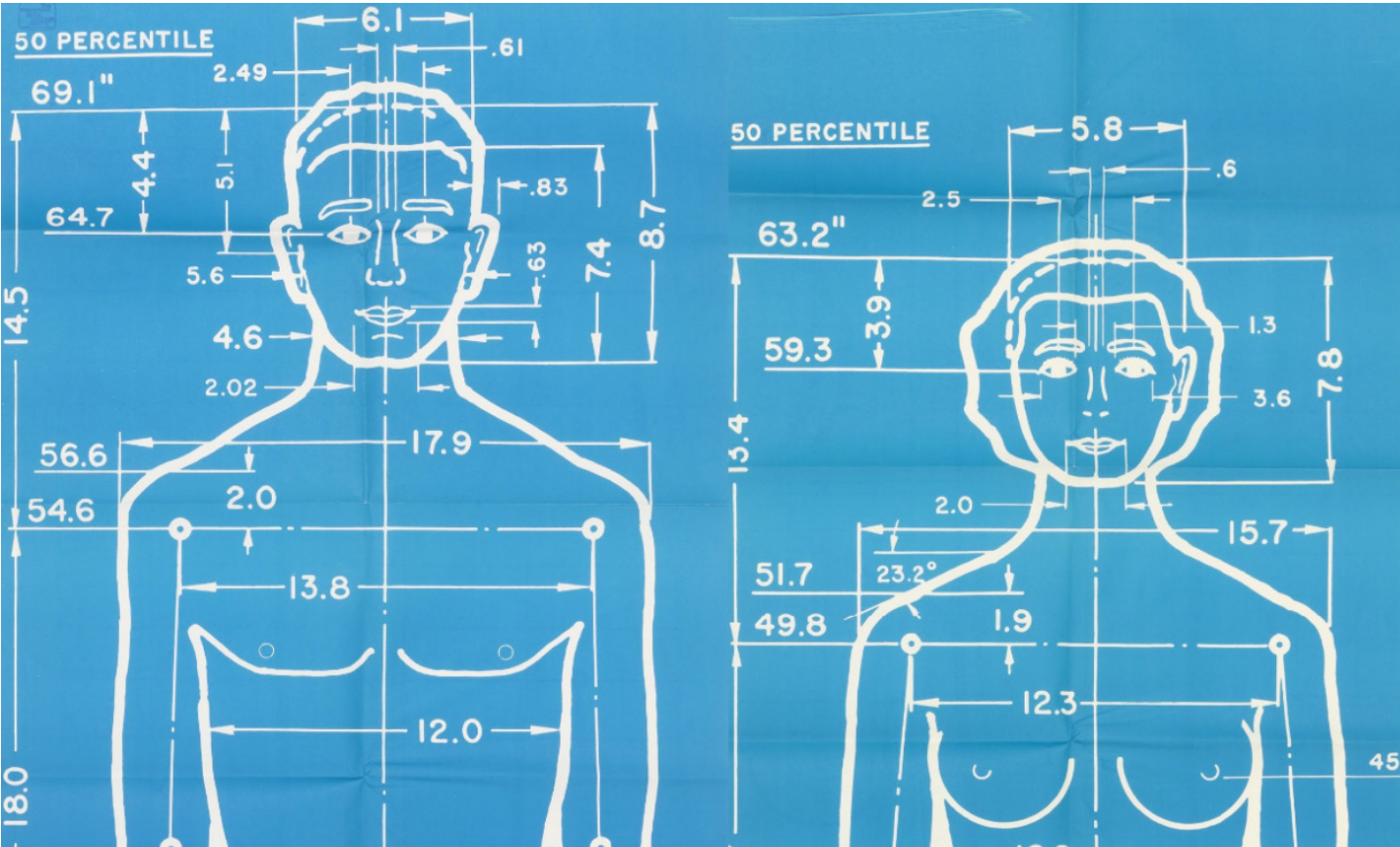


The the dimensions of keys and octaves of a piano have been designed to conform to the average male size hand, affecting the performance of female pianists, and increasing their chances of developing hand injuries

Women are more likely than men to say it was difficult finding people on dating sites or apps they were interested in, and were more likely to report negative experiences on dating platforms (Andre, 2021). Many of the reported reasons point back to the information available and presented by the male user. In "141 Crucial Online Dating Statistics" (Andre, 2021), it states that for women, it is very important that profiles include the type of relationship the individual wants, their religious beliefs, social status, etc. The type of information that would contribute and benefit a female's mate assessment process is often absent on a male's profile (Abramova et al., 2016). The question now lies in what roles the offered features on dating apps (such as photos, tags, bio, etc.) play in the female's mate assessment.

To answer this question, let's first look into what information seeking and processing looks like. These vital steps in decision making are "a series of cognitive operations performed consciously, which include the elements from the environment in a specific time and place" (Lizarra-ga et al., 2007). In the case of this research, the interaction between the need for companionship is addressed within the profile environment.

Henrey Drefuss' "Joe and Josephine", the archetypal people for whom Dreyfuss creates all his designs



2.4.3
RISK INFORMATION SEEKING
AND PROCESSING (RISP)



SH & Sadler's series of photos "Meat" assesses the line between "what is beautiful and what is ugly". Do you think this is how we view profiles?

The information seeking and processing in online dating eerily mimics that of the consumer behavior (Fig. 4). Online dating is often compared to online shopping, in which the de-sensitized mode of assessing profiles seems a lot like shopping for some meat. With online dating, if the presented information satisfies your needs and expectations of a situation in regards to the risk of regretting the decision made, you match, and proceed to check out for the real date. A factor always explored in the appraisal of subjects for a final outcome, such as a purchase or in this case a match, is risk.

In online dating, deciding to go on a date with a complete stranger is a chance one takes. In Dunwoody and Griffin's (2015) "Risk Information Seeking and Processing in Decision Making", the RISP Model aims to help understand the factors that prompt individuals to engage in either heuristic (less effortful) or systematic (analytical) decision making. This model help break down the minute processes that occur to trigger an online dater's behavior, especially in regards to the type and amount of information females are exposed to and how that might influence their desire to reject.

FIG. 3
Risk InformationSeeking and Processing Model (Dunwoody and Griffin, 2015)

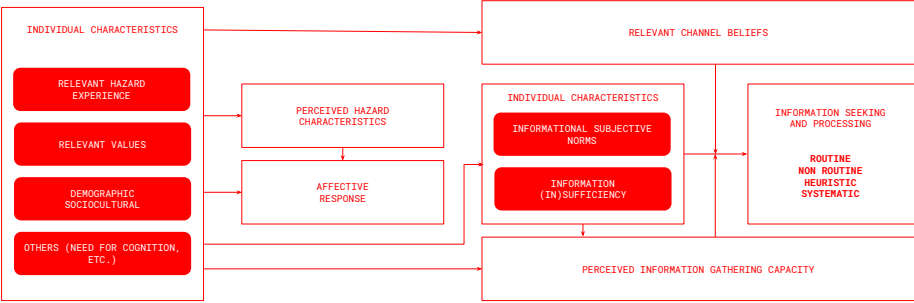
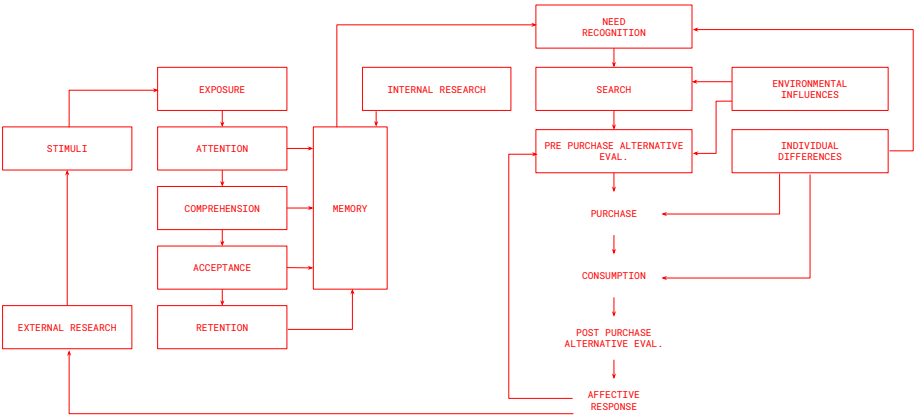


FIG. 4
Model of Consumer Behavior (Engel et al., 1994)



2.4.4 HEURISTIC V.S. SYSTEMATIC

Depending on the status and circumstances of the factors of the RISP model, one is either in a routine-heuristic, routine-systematic, nonroutine-heuristic, or nonroutine-systematic information assessment mode. The female Breeze users would be best categorized into the routine-systematic mode, as females tend to be more analytical in not only decision making (Swarna, 2012), but in mate selection as well (Darwin, 1871), and are searching for love in Breeze’s time-framed service. Dunwoody and Griffin (2015) stress that individuals who are faced with a higher threshold of risk tend to appraise information more analytically, and with more effort. With this finding, one would question if there is any correlation between risk and profile rejection. Additionally, as female users are considered to be “more selective”, which factor(s) of the RISP model is/are emphasizing risk to them for them to be so analytical? What is this risk, and how can it be reduced?



2.4.5 CONCLUSION

Females and males inhibit different mate selection criteria, and decision making processes. Studies show that females often fall back on their systematic appraisal of profiles. Dunwoody and Griffin (2015) state that one obtains an analytical mindset when faced with risk. This possibly explains females’ rate in profile rejection. As female users are considered to be “more selective”, which factor(s) of the RISP model is/are emphasizing risk to them for them to be so analytical? What is this risk, and how can it be reduced? To answer these questions, we must first understand the platform for such information seeking, processing, and final decision making. This will be elaborated upon in the next chapter.

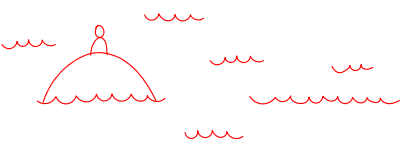
3

INTERNAL RESEARCH

This chapter provides a summary of Breeze's service along with an analysis of their future vision, goals, strategic priorities, etc. through a service blueprint session. With the findings, a brand analysis helped create an understanding for the brand identity as an anchorpoint for the user research and design phase. Additionally, a trend and target group analysis helped elaborate upon the "human" and set both the current and future state of the online dating industry.

3.1.1

APPROACH



This chapter helps us better understand the human of the story, and the context that they are in

The aim of this chapter is to provide information on the vision, identity, and user demographic of Breeze in attempts to understand how the service can design a better "tool" for the scope. A service blueprint session was carried out with several of the founders to acquire an aligned understanding of their goals and desired direction within the online dating industry. Additionally, a Breeze brand analysis was created to act as an anchorpoint for further design developments, in attempts to maintain a linked mindset with the client for the production of the tool. Finally, a thorough analysis on the YUP female and current trends helped determine the state of the "human" and the "context" for the present and future, as a means to making the tool relevant today and future-proof.

3.1.2

THE SERVICE



A profile is very much like a trailer to the movie you are about to watch. Is it enticing? Too vague? Who is it targetting and to what extent will the movie stay true to the trailer?

Breeze was founded in 2019 by a multidisciplinary team coming from the fields of industrial design, computer science, and electrical engineering. The app was designed with one purpose- to reduce the time and effort it usually takes for users to meet their matches. With the limited number of profiles presented each day, users are more prone to being attentive when assessing the profiles (Tong et al., 2006) and the metric information it offers. Due to the allocated times in which users are presented profiles, the experience of Breeze has become a routine, a ritual of some sort in which profiles are offered to users at 7PM every day.

When the user enters the online platform of Breeze, they fall upon the main page where the profiles selected by the algorithm are placed in a carousel format. The user is given the option of immediately supplying the system their decision, by clicking on the “not for me” or “I’ll go for a walk/drink” buttons under the main photos of the users, or further exploring the person behind the picture by entering their profile. This space is saturated with features that Breeze offers, such as pictures (maximum of 6), metric information (eg. age, location, etc.) answers to prompts (eg. “something that makes me weirdly happy”, etc.), hobbies and interests tags (eg. art, psychology, etc.), factor tags (eg. vaccinated, looking for a relationship, etc.), and lifestyle tags (eg. empathetic, creative, etc.). If the users presented to one another both show interest, then it is a match, and a date can be planned either as a “walk and talk” or a “drinks at a bar” at a partnered restaurant, cafe, or bar (currently only available in the Netherlands).

Right
Top: A Breeze advertisement
Bottom: Process of arranging a date



3.1.3 GOALS

Breeze’s drive, as stated before, is to take online dating offline by addressing the plethora of digital romance dilemmas we have today such as choice paralysis, desensitized swiping, hours wasted without an actual date, etc. They hope to continue enhancing human interaction, getting rid of the pressure and expectations associated with dates, and expressing the fun and thrill of meeting new people. They aim to arrange five million dates by the year 2026 and to expand internationally in the coming years.

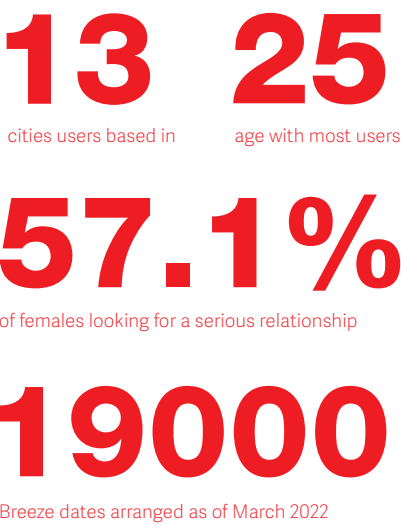
3.1.4 FUTURE VISION

After meeting the Breeze team member individually, several future visions were identified. As a relatively new online dating service on the market, they envision 1. developing into a matchmaker of people (friends, museum lovers, etc.), 2. becoming a relationship advisor (using data from date experiences and providing feedback to users), or 3. simply being the number one go-to dating app. These varying directions are dependent on which needs prove to be bigger, and how Breeze’s performance as a dating app will evolve. Ultimately, their aim of getting and remaining at the forefront of the dating industry in not only the Netherlands but around the world requires their promotion for users to arrange actual dates.

3.1.5 STRENGTHS

One of Breeze’s main unique selling points is its offer to immediately have the date arranged without any wasted time over online chit-chat. Its date planner provides an easy and quick method for bringing the users together. Additionally, its “matching pool” feature distinguishes the service from its competitors, informing users of their shared interests with by presenting the overlapping “groups” or “pools” they’re in (eg. artlovers, inappropriate humor, etc.). Similarly, the “hobbies & interests”, “lifestyle”, and “factors” tags highlight the shared selected tags between users, to show what users have in common- this could be seen to aid the mate selection process.

3.1.6 USERS

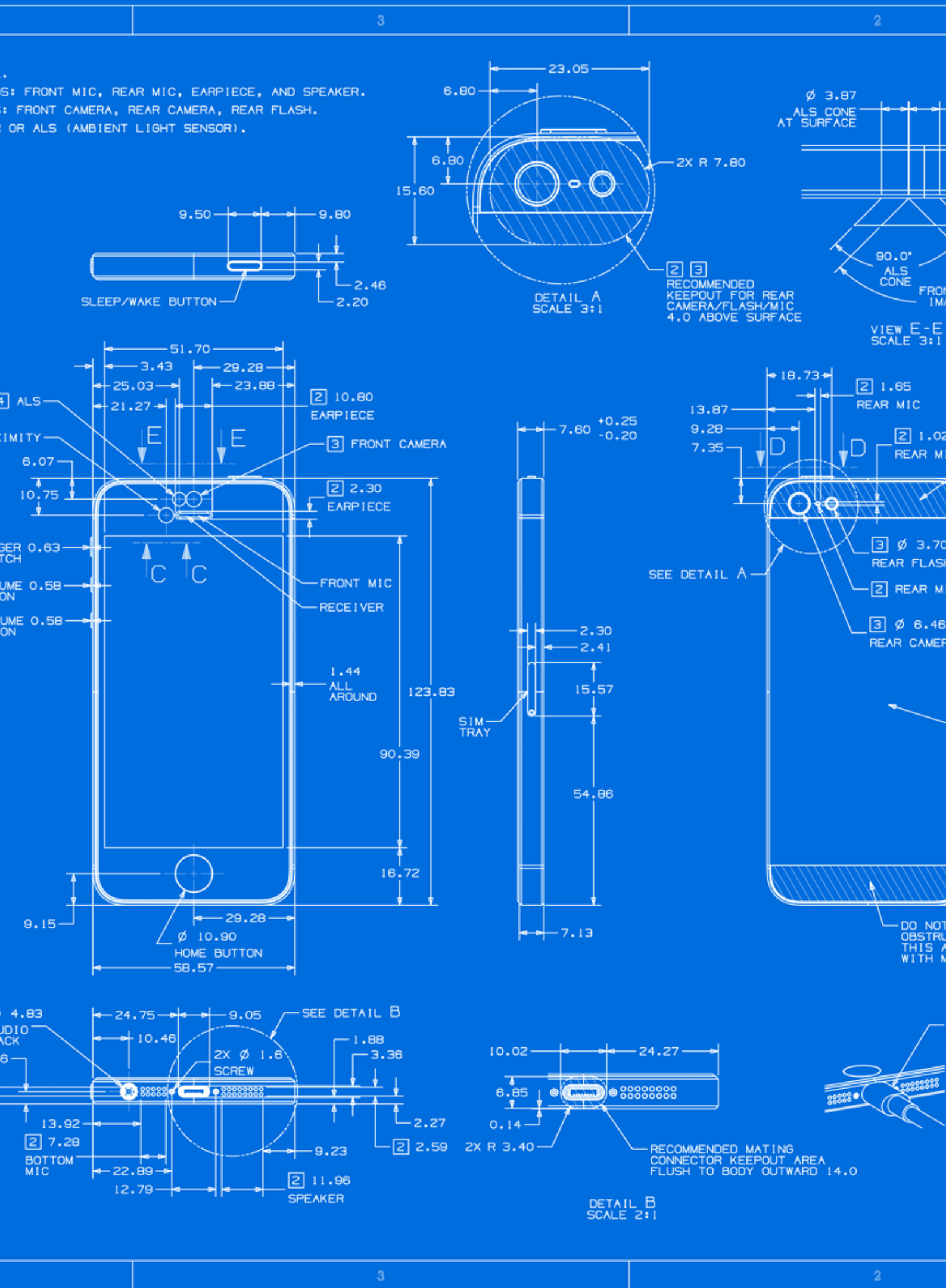


The user demographic of Breeze falls under the ages of 18 to 86, with a big portion of users of the late Millennial and early Gen-Z age group, ranging from the ages of 20 to 35. As the service is exclusively in English, the users have a proficiency in the language. The app is available in Alkmaar, Amsterdam, Breda, Delft, Den Bosch, Eindhoven, Groningen, Leiden, Nijmegen, Rotterdam, The Hague, Utrecht, and Wageningen, and is most used in Amsterdam, Utrecht, and Rotterdam. Due to the scope of the research, the following information will be exclusive to females in the age range of 25-40, who currently reside in the Netherlands (Dutch and non-Dutch).

3.1.7 BEHIND THE SCENES

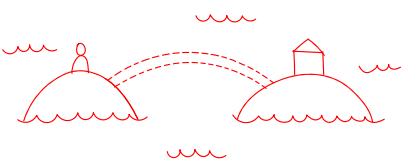


Breeze users are using the service for one reason and one reason only- to meet someone new. Whether it is for something serious or casual, the app provides them with potential matches with the combination of the “cupido” and “suggestion logic” algorithm (Appendix B.12). This aspect of the backstage process is led by the matchmaking team, constantly updating and developing the system and matchmaking strategy in response to the feedback and activity of the users. Similarly, the quality assurance, product, business development, software development, and marketing teams work intertwined and in unison with one another to assure a seamless and effortless experience for their users. With constant projects, updates, and goals being created, it is vital to stay aligned with not only one another, but with the overall Breeze vision and brand. A service blueprint session was therefore carried out with several founders of Breeze to achieve this synchronous understanding of the touchpoints of the service, the activity of the users, and the overarching identity in hopes to fuel the research process and touch base as a relatively new contributor to the company.



3.2.0 SERVICE BLUEPRINT SESSION

3.2.1 APPROACH



This section helps us better understand what to keep in mind when designing the tool- what should it look like? How can it be designed to serve the human?

The goal of this session was to 1. obtain a general consensus on Breeze's impression of their users, 2. get an aligned vision of the Breeze identity and strategic priorities, and 3. understand the processes involved and tied to the touchpoints of the profile appraisal from their infrastructural perspective. As this is a relatively complex process of decision making a user undergoes, the joint meeting aimed to expose the underlying resources and processes (in both the front and backstage) that is involved at the profile appraisal stage of the user journey, the strategic benefits of the company, the possible weaknesses and strengths, and finally the potential pains and gains of the users. To simplify, this session helped see a bigger picture of how the online dating service is implemented by Breeze, and how it is used by the users.

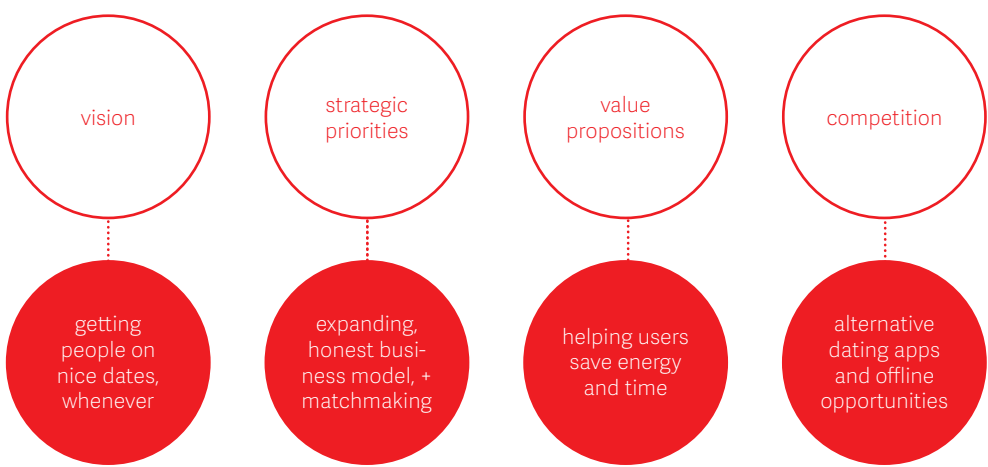
3.2.2 PROCEDURE

A service blueprint template (Appendix B.8), empathy map (Appendix B.7), and context canvas (Appendix B.7) were created prior to the meeting that involved three of the Breeze founders who lead the product design, finances, and matchmaking of the service. All of the responses from the team during this session was based on their previous collaboration in setting up the service, the acquired data, the received feedback from users, and personal experiences. The session was broken down into four activities. First, various ice-breaking questions were posed and answered through creative responses and drawings. The second activity was the empathy map. This helped get into the mindset of the customer. The third activity similarly asked for the filling out of a context canvas, in which areas like Breeze's strategic priorities, vision, value propositions, and channels prompted the alignment of the company identity. Finally, the founders completed a service blueprint, specified to the user journey of opening the app to making a final decision on a profile. Here, a better understanding of the above ground user touchpoints, actions, and the below ground actions and systems were acquired.

The session ended with a final discussion on the different responses of each activity, revealing areas in which the company was aligned with their identity and the activity of their users, and exposing areas for further development and solidification. The acquired information was processed and analyzed using the Grounded Theory Method (Birks & Mills, 2015), clustering and translating the responses from the founders of each activity into themes and aligned visions (Appendix B.9 and B.10). The findings of the session were also implemented into the brand analysis, elaborated further in section 3.3.0.

3.2.3 FINDINGS

All the responses to each activity have been clustered into themes. Along with the thorough look into how users might interact with the service during the profile appraisal phase, the most interesting findings related to the aligned factors of the Breeze identity. Additionally, the Breeze team finds that the users undergo a relatively negative experience on the app as nervous, anxious, frustrated, hopeless, and desperate emotions emerge when envisioning the result of being on the app- not getting matched with the people they want to match with, and not seeing profiles that attract them.



3.2.4 CONCLUSION

The session proved to be an insightful kickoff to the primary research of the thesis. By getting better informed on the frontstage, backstage, and users' experiences, the touchpoints that triggered most emotional responses from female users were identified for further observation and inspiration for the design process. Despite the thorough and objective views supplied by the Breeze team, the findings of the method have limitations regarding the validity of their perception of the users. As creators of the service and informants of the thesis direction, it must be noted that there is a possibility that a confirmation bias was active in the formation of their responses. Therefore, a focus group was decided to be carried out to obtain a deeper and more reliable understanding of the major user demographic of Breeze. This is explored in chapter 4. The aligned Breeze identity proved to be sufficiently informative to refer back to during the primary and secondary research process. However, the findings lacked insight into the Breeze brand identity. Therefore, along with the supplied information on the aligned Breeze identity from the blueprint session, a brand analysis was carried out to solidify it for better direction in the design and research process.

3.3.1

APPROACH

For the brand analysis, a brand DNA, competition axis, and mood boards were created. This was done with the information supplied by the session, the Breeze brandbook, the digital channels in which the concept of the service is presented (the website and Instagram), and exploring the world wide web. Once completed, they were presented to the art director of Breeze to be evaluated, discussed, and developed collaboratively. Additionally, trend research was carried out to acquire relevant knowledge of the state of our world today. This would help better understand Breeze’s position in it, bringing awareness to factors that should be considered when creating a future-proof and successful design proposal.

3.3.2

BRAND DNA

When creating a brand DNA, it is important to have the purpose, positioning, and personality coherent and congruent with one another. In the one created in Fig. 5, these three are addressed: the value of the brand, the vibe of the user, and the character of the experience, much like an individual is defined by their tone of voice, aesthetics, and personality. Additionally, several mood boards were created to summarize this analysis to help step into the shoes of the Breeze persona when researching, planning for research methods, and designing (Appendix C.1).

FIG. 5

PURPOSE

We believe technology should enhance human connection, instead of replacing it.

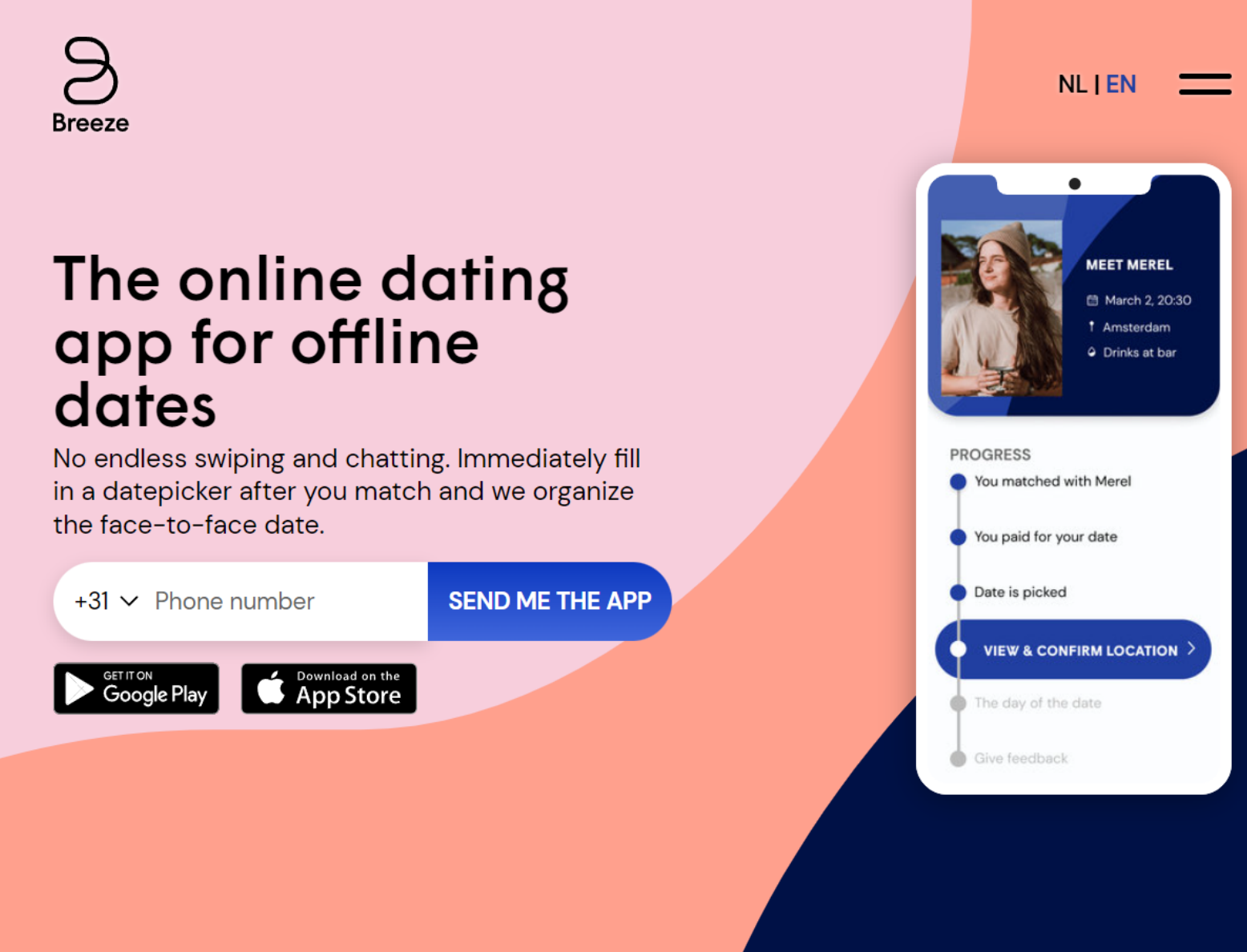
POSITIONING

A no-nonsense dating app for YUPs yearning for a true connection, and daring to go on a date.

PERSONALITY

Witty, authentic, and edgy.

Right
Top: The Breeze homepage
Bottom: Old Breeze slogan exploraitons



3.3.3
COMPETITION MAP

A competition axis has been drawn (Fig. 6) to show how the Breeze identity distinguishes from its online dating app competitors. The presented brands are limited to highly performing dating apps available in the Netherlands, used by the YUP scope of the project seeking heterosexual relationships. The axes represent the identified unique product attributes of Breeze, as input to position the brand in relation to the others. The first axis presents the level of intimacy commonly experienced in or communicated by the brands, and the second axis describes the nature of the system design- whether the algorithm aims to present selected profiles to the users or random ones.

It can be seen that Breeze is rather unique in positioning itself as a supplier of selected profiles for users that are potentially looking for serious relationships, as the only brand in its quadrant. Plotting the competitors on this axis helped clarify the strengths of Breeze’s narrative, but does not necessarily present its success rate in relation to the other brands. Therefore, the performance of all competitors within the industry is elaborated upon in the next section.

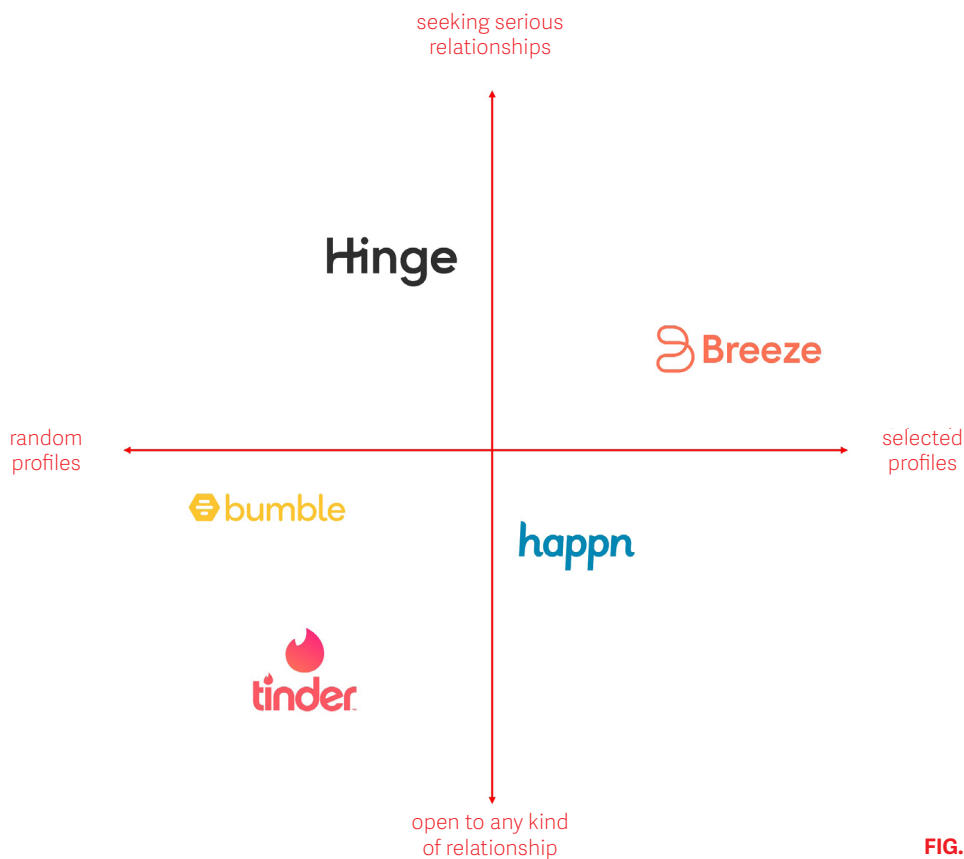


FIG. 6

3.4.0

TREND ANALYSIS

3.4.1
ONLINE DATING
INDUSTRY



"You've Got Mail" explored modern online romance in which the characters meet and fall in love in a chat room

Nora Ephron’s 1998 film “You’ve Got Mail” is a cult classic that normalized the concept of online love. In this movie, the romantic interests find each other in a chat room and exchange anonymous emails. In “real life”, they are sworn bookstore-owning enemies. They wake up excitedly every day, and rush to their block computers to hear those three little words, “you’ve got mail”. Today, we don’t need to wait for an email after what seems like hours for the dial up to access the internet. We simply wake up, and have an infinite amount of profiles on apps like Tinder in the palms of our hands.

Developments and changing circumstances within the online dating industry have already taken place by many competitors of Breeze by introducing new features for matchmaking. Take Tinder, for example, which introduced “Vibes” in which users answer a series of frequent questions about their personalities for better profile recommendations (Tinder, 2022). Or Thursday the dating app, which has been hosting singles mixers at bars across London and New York to remove the frustration users often feel with hours wasted on chatting without an actual date (New York Times, 2022). New dating apps and features are being introduced for demographic-specific seekers of companionship, whether it is Christian Mingle for religious singles or Luxy as “Tinder without the poor people” (Glamour, 2017), the online realm is growing with services created to specifically address the unique needs of the target users. What about Breeze? Who should Breeze keep an eye out for with the same target users, and how can it stay future proof with the mass-produced dating apps we have today?

3.4.2
BREEZE'S
COMPETITORS

As illustrated in the competition axis, this research analyzes the narrative and performance of Breeze in relation to its competitors that fall in the same category of services. To reiterate, the factors considered in the comparison of free dating apps are 1. providers of mate selection for serious heterosexual relationship seekers, 2. available in the Netherlands, 3. showcasing similarities between target users, and 4. using the algorithmic system in matchmaking. In the Netherlands, 71% of dating app users are seeking a relationship (Statista, 2022), most of which are heading to Tinder which ranks number one in most used online dating service in not only the Netherlands, but the world (Statista, 2022). Bumble and Happn are also high-performing dating apps, however Breeze is close in line, ranking number four in top grossing free dating apps in the Netherlands (Similarweb, 2022). To stay ahead and at the forefront of the industry, Breeze must be future proof in a highly accelerating online ecosystem.

3.4.3

THE METAVERSE



Mark Zuckerberg's introduction video to the renaming of Facebook to Meta mainstream-ified the concept of the metaverse

Many dating apps are introducing features that best capture one's character in an all-rounded manner, such as videos, links to social media, favorite songs, etc. The unanimous direction towards a highly saturated profile beckons one to question the state of the online domain today, and what is required to proceed into the new digital reality. The "Metaverse", a shared virtual world environment, was made a mainstream term by Mark Zuckerberg this year, who introduced Facebook's change in company name. Despite talks of this concept in the past, this futuristic dimension has become a hot topic as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic (Knox, 2021) and especially of interest for businesses who are planning on implementing themselves into it for better relationships with consumers (Facebook for Business, 2022).

3.4.4

FUTURE OF ONLINE DATING



The show "Black Mirror" has an interesting take on the future of online dating in their episode "Hang the DJ", in which users are unknowingly a part of simulated dates

Online dating apps have begun to explore the idea of the metaverse, blurring the boundary between the offline and online worlds. Tinder and Bumble have expressed their interest in preparing for "whatever emerges in the metaverse" (Reuters, 2021) which will be making use of virtual and augmented reality to move through digital environments. Perhaps this dimension will directly mimic the world of mate selection we know offline, or by then, behaviors will evolve and develop in such a way that is only comprehensible online. In any case, the metaverse acts as a future anchor point for this research in which the design concepts developed will be strategically framed in such a way that fits into our current notion of the impending state of online dating. VR glasses, as tools for accessing the meta verse, are currently in user for other purposes such as online gaming. This new reality is not as far as we think it is.



3.5.1

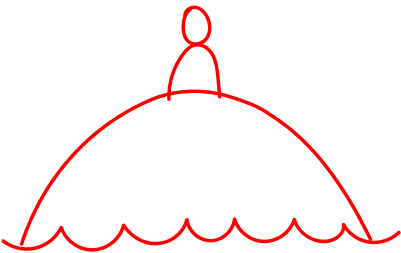
THE YUP

“You can spot [them] at the juice bar, the custom-salad shop, or checking Whatsapp on [their] iPhone while waiting for an Uber outside the big name law/consulting/finance firm where [they’ve] been working since [they] graduated from a prestigious university with a liberal arts degree, en route to a start-up mixer where [they are] exploring ideas for the venture [they] intend to pursue as soon as [their] next bonus cycle ends.”

(Miller, 2015)

“Young Urban Professional” or “Yuppie” is a term popularized in the 1980s (Miller, 2015) used to refer to a market segment often characterized by youthful, ambitious, and affluent beings in their mid 20s to mid 30s (Halton, 2021). Once used as a derogatory label at the birth of its time to describe individuals that presented arrogant, obnoxious, and undeservedly wealthy qualities (Halton, 2021), the term “YUP” will be referred to as a neutral demographic term in this research, solely for the factors it represents: young individuals who live in urban settings and are educated professionals.

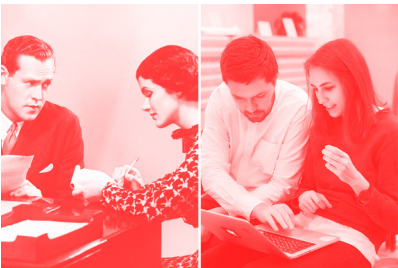
In her article “Meet the Muppies”, Michelle Miller (2015) describes the modern “yuppie” known as the “muppie” (millennial yuppie). She continues to illustrate the modern YUP as “educated, independently-minded, confident, and capable of extraordinary achievement”. Of course, not all individuals that fall into the aforementioned age group of the YUP might identify with the stated description, yet their existence as professional beings that grew up with technology, introduction to the professional world with income levels still impacted by the financial crisis of 2008 (Miller, 2015), and development within a globalized world threads a combined set of values amongst them.



This section is an analysis on the human, for a better understanding of their lifestyles, values, strengths, and motivations



3.5.2 PROFESSIONALS



Comparison photos showing the progression of work fashion

As employees, the YUPs have “instantaneous and far reaching opportunities” where they are constantly weighing their options and ambitiously looking for roles that would enable their best performance (Gallup.com, 2022). They are, however, a group without attachments. They do not feel as devoted to jobs that provide them monetary benefits, and they most certainly are waiting longer to get married (Gallup.com, 2022). As an unconstrained age group, they are pushing to change the world. Constantly encouraging new definitions to social constructs such as gender and family, YUPs are the kind of demographic that don’t accept the phrase “that’s the way it has always been done”.

3.5.3 MOTIVATIONS AND STRENGTHS



Section of Tomoko Sawada’s “ID400” (2000) in which the experimental artist invented a total of 400 identities in public photo booths to express the wonder of adaptability

CliftonStrengths, an online assessment that measures one’s natural talents within 34 themes, found that individuals between the ages of 25 and 40 have five strengths: achiever, empathy, learner, adaptability, and responsibility (CliftonStrengths, 2022). YUPs are considered to be more adaptable than the generations before them (Gallup.com, 2022), a common trait of younger individuals, which possibly correlates to their high usage of online dating apps and resilience to the high-paced, exponentially evolving online realm.

3.5.4 IDEA OF LOVE



"Sex and the City" follows the lives of four friends who explore their sex, love, and professional lives, setting the image of adulthood for many YUP females



"Broad City" is a Comedy Central series in which the millennial protagonists undergo surreal and raw experiences in New York, a lot of which entail their sexual explorations



In "Working Girl", the antagonist is a financial executive who in comparison to the protagonist, carries herself and behaves as if a "man" would, unable to win over the male romantic interest. What did this teach us?

Developmental psychologist, Piaget, states that cognitive development during childhood forms the construct or a mental model one has of the world (McLeod, 2022)- the mind becomes a mold, and the following life is spent filling it in. As a technologically adept demographic, the YUPs grew up with cinema as their main input of information for knowledge (Kubrak, 2020). Another developmental psychologist, Harriger, declares that "films often provide children with a framework from which to understand the world around them" (Kidspot, 2020). With this information, it’s important to take a step back and be informed of the ideas the target group of their research might have on love, and specifically look into its portrayal in cinema and thus the impact on the demographic’s expectations of the innate need.

Growing up in the 90s and 2000s, the YUP females were exposed to post-feminist storylines in film and TV like “Bridget Jones Diary” and “Sex and the City” that depicted single women who were flawed yet authentic professionals. This era’s plethora of female-led stories appeared to be a great celebration of independence and individualism, however these characters that were intended to symbolize this were always presented as unhappy, and in search of a man. They only received happily ever afters through traditional heteronormative partnerships.

“ **Post feminism emerged as a way of making sense of paradoxes and contradictions in the representation of women.** ”
(Gill, 2020)

To what extent did these films shape the YUP group’s idea and expectations of romance? Entering the online realm today, how applicable are these notions in the digital domain, and how might the degree of this impact their relationship to technology, and thus online dating? These questions are answered in the user research of chapter 4.

“ **These new young women are confident enough to declare their anxieties about possible failure in regard to finding a husband, they avoid any aggressive or overtly traditional men, and they brazenly enjoy their sexuality.** ”
(McRobbie, 2004)

3.5.5
WHY THIS
TARGET GROUP?

This age group of 25-40 YUPs in the Netherlands was chosen for five reasons. Firstly, they are the demographic with the highest rate of activity in online dating apps worldwide (Andre, 2022). Secondly, there are over 2.2 million online dating users in the Netherlands alone, making it the 4th country with the highest percentage of users at 15.8% (Andre, 2022), and currently the only country that Breeze is available in. Thirdly, it's the biggest age group pool of Breeze's users, coming at 55% (Breeze, 2022). Fourthly, Breeze has the highest percentage of users in the urban cities of the Netherlands, such as Amsterdam, Rotterdam, and the Hague (Breeze, 2022). And finally, the age range has the highest percentage of female users seeking serious relationships on Breeze, at 57.1%, and 40.1% stating to be open to any kind of relationship, including serious ones (Breeze, 2022). The female users of Breeze that fall under this group are in a wide array of fields such as: consultancy, psychology, education, the arts, and law, with 72.6% stating to have had a university education (Breeze, 2022).

3.5.6
URBAN
NETHERLANDS

It must be noted that the location of the female target group is the Netherlands, a developed country that provides an interesting context for the investigation of female specificity when it comes to mate selection. Compared to other western cultures such as the US, the Dutch culture is characterized by a relatively high level of femininity (Hofstede, 1984) due to the higher level of sexual liberalism, along with a high level of individualism, long term orientation, and indulgence (Hofstede Insights, 2018). The country is considered to have an exceptional standard of living, ranking 16th in the 20 countries with the highest life expectancy worldwide (O'Neill, 2022). Additionally, the research has been rooted down to the urbanized regions of the Netherlands, which consist of 92.24% of the total population (O'Neill, 2022). Urban areas have a high density of human structures (National Geographic, 2011), in which the inhabitants are attracted by jobs in manufacturing, professions, and increased opportunities for education and entertainment (National Geographic Society, 2019). With cafes, bars, restaurants, and other exciting venues for connection, urban areas provide the best opportunities for dating.

FIG. 7
Created visual to present the major
values and qualities found in a YUP
female from external research

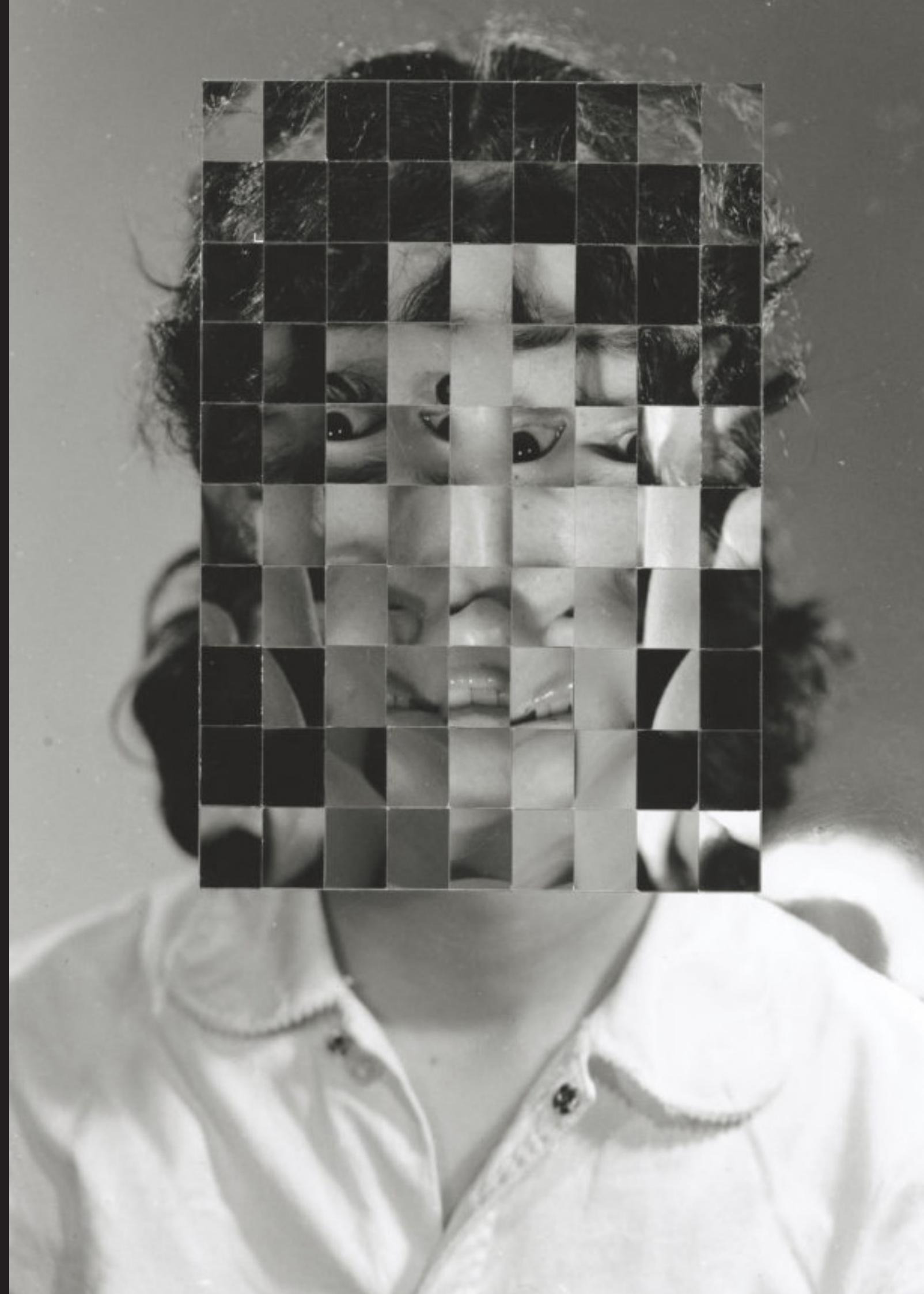


3.6.0

CONCLUSION

Breeze is a relatively young dating app that is already ranked 4th on the top most grossing dating apps in the Netherlands. Available in 13 cities, the company has expansion and being at the forefront of their industry as their strategic priorities. With a witty, authentic, and edgy brand identity, the no-nonsense service targets young urban professionals for their high density in the country, and consistent activity with the service. With their “go-getter” attitude, goal in redefining the constructs of cultures today, and valued independence, the YUP demographic provides an interesting opportunity to study the relationship between values and the pursuit of love in contrast to the plethora of out-dated research intertwined with more evolutionary principles of mate selection. Their location in the urban Netherlands presents their tolerance for elaborate and new methods for mate selection, such as online dating.

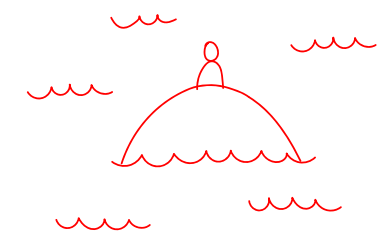
Young urban professionals are the biggest online dating group of users today, most of which are seeking serious relationships in the Netherlands. With adaptability as one of their core strengths, they have been consistently adjusting to the new features and concepts of mate selection being implemented by Breeze’s competitors such as Tinder, Bumble, Happn, and Hinge. The trend research showed that the dating industry is not only addressing the growing needs of their user pool, but the future-oriented trends such as the metaverse that is currently infiltrating the minds of many. However, if services like Breeze should be planning for the metaverse now, to what extent will this impact the current target users? Who is to say that they are reacting and will react well to such future-oriented developments on platforms for love, when they are looking for it in the present day, metaverse-less? To answer these questions, there is only one thing that can be done- ask the questions. Therefore, user research was carried out to better understand the YUPs, and the relationship they have with online dating today, and of the future.



4

USER RESEARCH

To acquire a deep and rich understanding of the target group's use of online dating, their impressions, goals, discomforts, and needs in mate selection, user research was carried out. This consisted of a focus group, user observations, and interviews. Approach to and findings from each method are summarized in this chapter, concluding with final remarks in the end.



The goal of the user research was to provide clarity on the YUP females' lifestyles, values, thoughts on online dating, and experiences with the modern pusuit of love

The decision for incorporating user research into the project was to gain a multitude of insights into the lives of the young urban professionals. The literature review which consisted of love, mate selection, human relationship to technology, gender-specific decision making, and the gender gap in design along with the findings of the internal and external research that consisted of a breakdown of Breeze, its users, and the changing circumstances of the online dating industry today, inspired an exploration of the YUP's idea of love, relationship to online dating, and interaction with the Breeze service. Therefore, this chapter describes the choice in methods for obtaining the aforementioned information through various research questions. The findings will be analyzed and illustrated, ultimately acting as the foundation of the define phase, and root of inspiration for the develop phase.

4.1.2

APPROACH

To explore the diverse points of interests, 1. a focus group, 2. user observations, and 3. interviews were carried out with young urban professional women between the ages of 25 and 40. With each method, culture-sensitive, strategic product design, and human-centered research approaches were implemented to ensure a thorough sociocultural and cognitive exploration of females, and an efficient documentation of the findings for the next phase of the research.

4.1.3

OVERARCHING PARTICIPANTS

There were a total of nine overarching participants that were involved in the qualitative research, only five of which were available for the focus group. The use of the same sample group for each method enabled to obtain an in-depth understanding of the participants in the context of this research, centering on the how and why of their activity with online dating, mate selection selectivity, and male assessment on Breeze.

The participants were recruited through opportunistic sampling. All participants reside in urban settings in the Netherlands (Rotterdam, Delft, and Amsterdam). This group of females was selected for their demographic information that lie within the young urban professional female scope of the research. It was a prerequisite that these females were well-versed in social media usage, have had experience with online dating, and have used Breeze.

4.2.1

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The aim of the focus group was to 1. select a focus from the scope of the thesis, 2. understand the personal and factual factors of a YUP female's life, 3. unravel their relationship to love and dating, 4. understand the active gender norms they experience, and 5. unravel their interactions with people and institutions and the extent to which this is based on their gender identities. Themes like mate criteria, needs and values, uncertainties, experience with dating apps, and singlehood were explored through a set of activities, probing questions, and exercises. The research questions of this session therefore are:

- R1.** What are the core needs and values of YUP females as a cultural group?
- R2.** What are their aspirations in life and in love?
- R3.** How do their professional lives intersect with the pursuit of love?
- R4.** What role does their living situation play in the pursuit of love?
- R5.** What are their needs, values, and desires in a mate?
- R6.** Why are the YUP females rejecting profiles online?

4.2.2

PROCEDURE

The focus group consisted of three main activities: 1. Culture mapping with Hofstede's "onion model" (2005), drawing the self and identity, and determining the mate values based on Buunk et al.'s "partner selection criteria" (2002). Questions were also probed throughout the session, and completed exercises were also discussed. The whole session was recorded with the consent of the participants, and revisited for clustering based on the topics and patterns that were shared by the cultural group.

Firstly, the onion model was selected as the first exercise to act as both a warm-up and simplifying tool for what culture entails, helping the formation of an inventory of relevant values and related practices (Van Boeijen and Zijlstra, 2020). Factors like the symbols, goals, routines, rituals, and values of the YUP female group were explored and discussed. Secondly, the drawing activity was implemented to gain insight on the participants' image of the self, needs, uncertainties, and of their position in life. Finally, the organizing of mate values provided insight to today's YUP females' mate criteria, and used as a point of reference for determining the detectability of the factors on a dating profile.

The findings obtained from each exercise can be found in Appendix C.2-C.5. The clustering of the findings in Appendix C.6 and C.7 were used as input for three data processing visuals:

- 1. persona canvas (Fig. 8)
- 2. behavioral design canvas (Appendix C.8)
- 3. profile-detectability scale (Fig. 9)

4.2.4

PERSONA CANVAS

A persona canvas was made to make it easier as a researcher to step into the shoes of the target group, making the provided characteristics more tangible and concrete. This is presented in Fig. 8. It was found by the session that YUP females are career-oriented, independent individuals who have multiple social bubbles. Therefore, with a packed schedule filled with fitness, dinners with friends, and work events, they find it difficult to make time for dating in their routine life. Females find it important to be certain of the success of a date (well-spent time), as they don't want to have it be a waste when having had to push something/someone aside off of their agenda. Still, they are in active search for a mate to challenge themselves. As the majority of this demographic has experienced serious relationships (Andre, 2022), they are craving the stability and companionship they once had, yet forget about the prior steps such as dating before getting to that level of comfort and love. This can making dating a little irritating for them, unlike the excitement they had when first starting to.

“ I just want to have that companionship- want to stay in bed on the weekends with someone and feel accepted and loved. But it's difficult- I'm impatient and don't want to do the things that I need to do before getting there. Dating is just so time consuming. ”

(Participant 2)

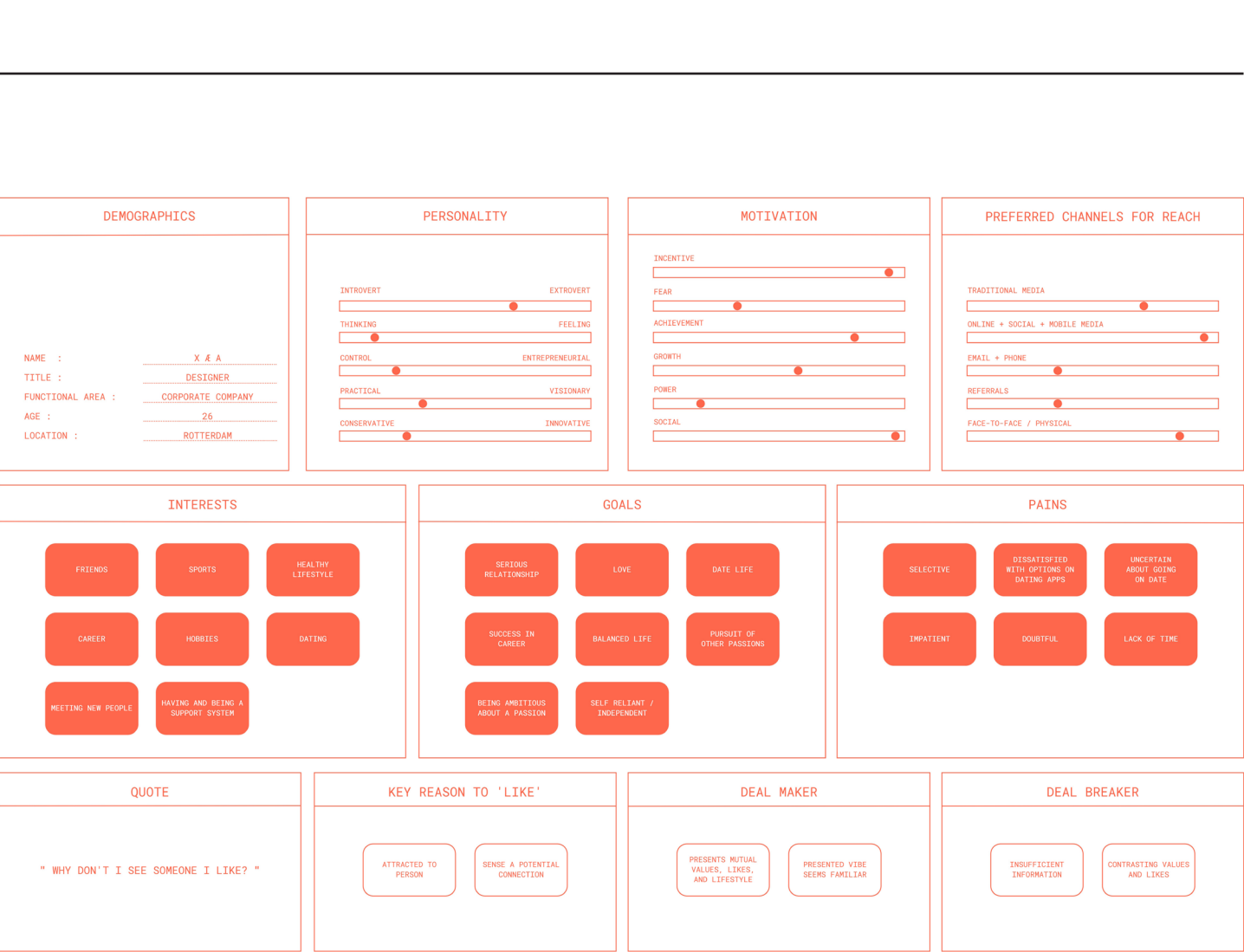


FIG. 8
Persona Canvas

4.2.5

BEHAVIORAL
DESIGN CANVAS

A behavioral design canvas of the design consultancy, SUE (2022), was used to map out the pains, gains, comforts, and anxieties of the YUP females with dating (Appendix C.8). This was done to better understand the reasoning for their current behavior with online dating which is being highly rejectful of profiles, what pushes them away from the current solutions, what attracts them to other solutions, and what can be done to get them to the desired behavior, in this case, an increased like-rate. An interesting insight from mapping the findings onto the canvas was the YUP female's anxieties about dating/going on a date. The participants stated to reject profiles to: 1. avoid the risk of having a bad date, 2. avoid a waste in time, and 3. avoid awkwardness. This avoidant behavior was supported by their past negative experiences filled with bad interactions and incompatibilities which was a result of inaccurate presentations and interpretations of the males. This could potentially be supported by the main finding of the mate criteria exercise, explained in the next section.

4.2.6 VALUES IN A MATE

The activity that was inspired by Buunk et al.'s “partner selection criteria” (2002) generated some interesting insights on the factors in a mate these YUP females values. Females rated social position, self confidence, and intelligence as the three most important factors (respectively)- it can be concluded that they liked knowing about the potential mate’s self image and drive. Physical attractiveness, education, dominance, and income came next (respectively). Physical attractiveness and education can be considered a privilege, and dominance and income can be considered "outdated" values in a mate in the hyper-modern context of the scope. This finding gives us an understanding of what females are looking to see in a profile, the question now is, which of these factors are detectable?

4.2.7 PROFILE DETECTABILITY SCALE

The profile detectability scale is a visualization of how evident and easy it is to spot the factors on a profile. From Fig. 9 it can be seen that the three most important values in a mate for females are highlighted, two of which are at the “undetectable” side of the spectrum (social position and self confidence). Intelligence is more detectable, however this is purely dependent on the user’s choice in self-presentation (the way they might answer a question, the tags they choose, etc.), unlike “physical attractiveness” which is a constant factor addressed in all dating apps (as photos are the dominant feature of a profile). Therefore, it can be stated that there is insufficient type of offline-oriented information which females are specifically looking for in a mate.

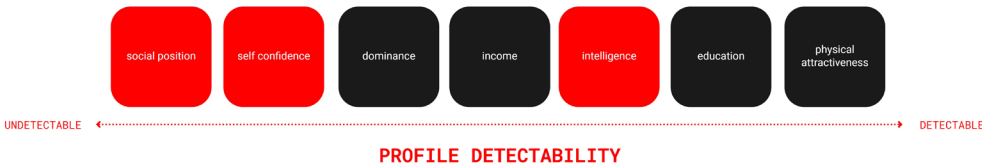


FIG. 9
Profile Detectability
Scale

4.2.8 CONCLUSION

A YUP female’s busy and routine schedule rarely presents time for leisure. The focus group addressed the first research question of the section, where their independence, maintaining their social groups, and career-oriented drive act as active values in ther lives. They are a demographic that has most likely already experienced a relationship, and are thus craving the feeling of companionship (R2). Additionally, their busy schedules make it difficult for them to fnd time for a date (R3), explaining the pressure in which online dating profiles hold in order to satisfy the needs and expectations of female users in mate selection (it better be worth it). With anxieties such as fear of a bad interaction or a waste of time loom in the air, females avoid liking profiles possibly due to the lack of sufficient information provided by not only the male users, but the interface and infrastructure of an online dating service which would have increased their level of assurance (R6). Females are seeking information regarding the potential mate's social position, self confidence, and intelligence to determine the compatibility and success of the date (R5).

With a general grasp of the target group within the context of living in urban areas in the Netherlands achieved from this focus group, it was decided that further investigation into their assessment of potential mates on Breeze specifically was required as an initial attempt at address- ing the research question of the project with the acquired information.

4.3.1

RESEARCH
QUESTIONS

The aim of the user observations was to 1. confirm that the information females are seeking is indeed difficult to detect or completely absent on dating profiles, 2. expose the YUP female’s assessment styles and corresponding profile touchpoints, and 3. better understand their active anxieties and thoughts experienced during the profile appraisal. This was done by observing nine participants’ activity on Breeze profiles. The research questions are:

- R1. What is the pattern/order in which a YUP female assesses a profile?
- R2. What data points on a profile trigger uncertainty in a YUP female?
- R3. How do YUP females analyze textual and visual information?
- R4. What are YUP females looking for in a profile?
- R5. What type of information excites and dissatisfies YUP females?

4.3.2

PROCEDURE

The nine participants were asked not to use Breeze for a full day in order to have a set of profiles to assess for the session. They were asked to speak their thoughts out loud from the moment of opening to exiting the app, responding to the information presented on profiles and expressing opinions and emotions experienced at any point. Questions were posed based on the level of interest and relevance their comments provided to the aforementioned research questions. All sessions were recorded, and revisited for analysis.

4.3.3

ANALYSIS

Several general overlapping themes were discovered and clustered (Appendix C.9), and an “online to offline” service cluster was made (Appendix C.10). These are elaborated upon in the following pages.

4.3.4

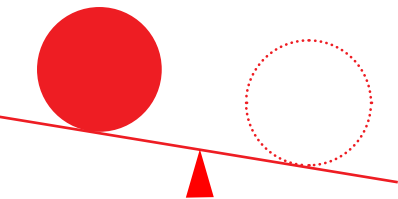
SEARCH FOR
OFFLINE BEHAVIOR

Participants presented an adamant search for information on one’s behavior, which proved to be difficult to detect on a profile. After all, online dating purely exists in the online domain, with the sole purpose of connecting individuals offline. The assessment of one’s behavior allowed for the females to envision the interaction, which would eliminate any risks of wasted time (the date). The information they were searching for were qualities like body language, insecurities, etc., which were not provided by the feature options of Breeze, and could only be detectable in “real life”. This finding proves to be interesting, as the YUP participants’ upbringing was predominantly an offline one. It would therefore make sense if the females request offline-oriented information. The question now lies in the extent to which offline information can be translated online. With Breeze’s visual (photos) and textual features (bio, tags, and answers to prompts), this might be too limiting in the possibility and degree of expression.

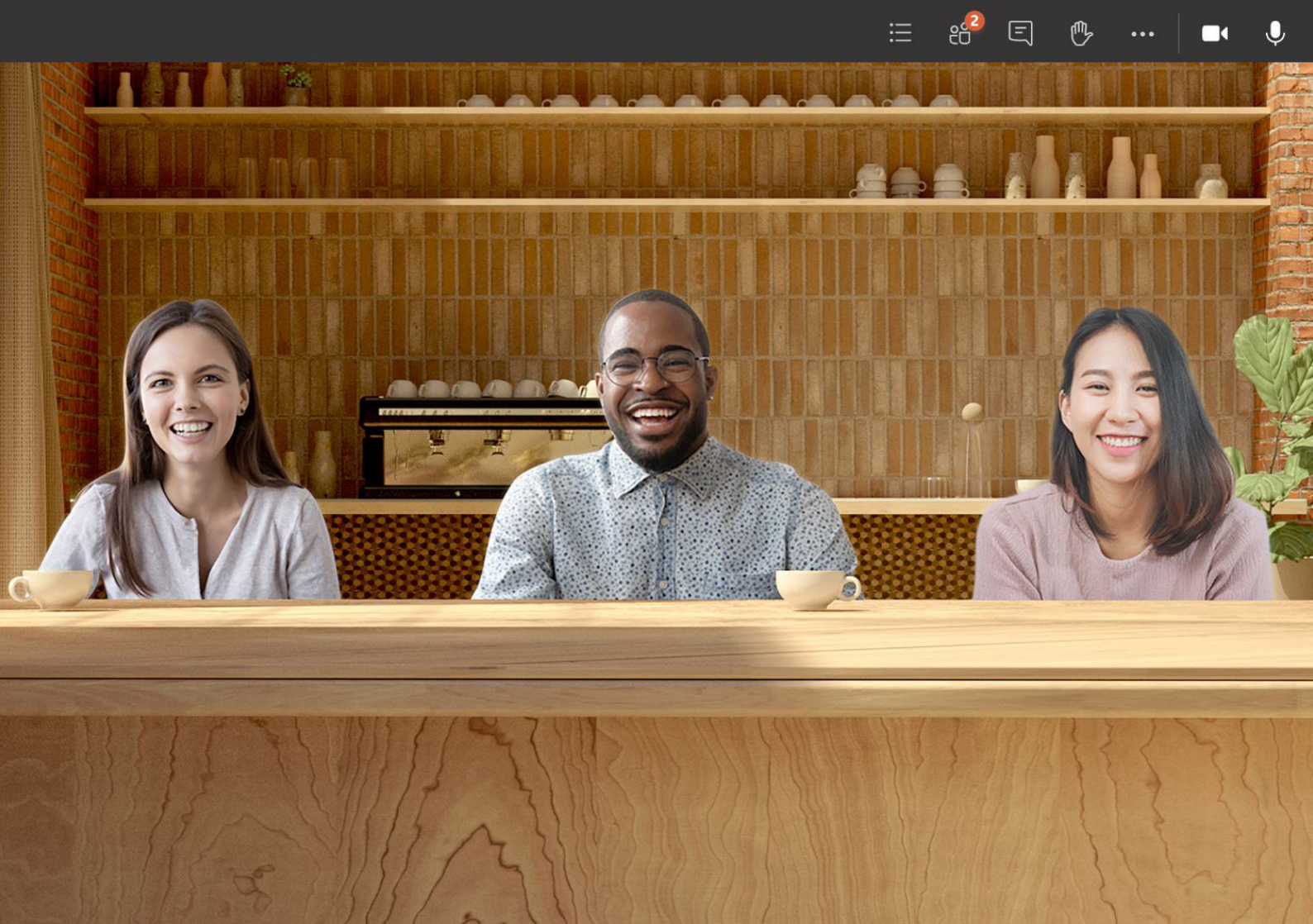
4.3.5

ONLINE TO
OFFLINE TRANSLATION

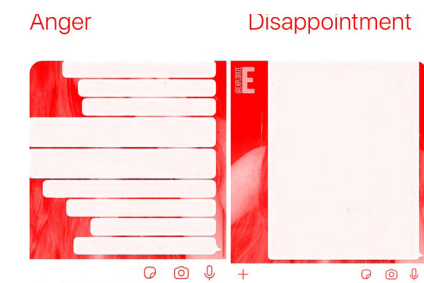
To better understand how offline information can be mimicked online to enhance the envisioning process, an “online to offline” cluster was created (Appendix C.10). Features like Gorillas’ online supermarket, Nike’s “Nike By You” online shoe customizer, and Facebook’s “free and for sale group” are presented examples in which an offline experience/object is showcased online, either taking on a simulation or authentic approach. It was discovered that some services have implemented a copy-and-paste direction, like Microsoft Team’s “auditorium mode”, in which participants of a digital meeting are placed into a virtual lecture hall. Or when altogether authentic experiences were created, like Travis Scott’s virtual concert on the popular game Fortnite, where the rapper was blown up into skyscraper size of himself teleporting across the landscape as he performed his song, redefining the concept of a concert. This clustering allowed for the reflection of Breeze’s placement on the axes- how sensorial/direct and simulating/authentic is it as a service, and to what extent should the offline and online worlds be intersected in the pursuit of a date?



To what extent should the modern mate selection of online dating mimic the one we know offline? Should the offline outweigh the online? Or vice versa?



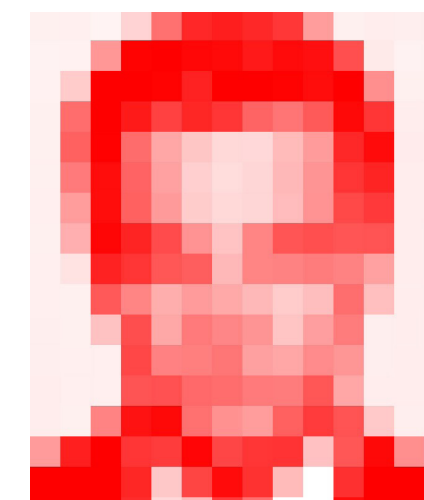
4.3.6 PREFERENCE FOR VISUAL INFORMATION



A meme best showcasing the power of visual information- the format in which the text is written is indicative of the emotion behind it. A lot of the women from the user observations looked at how much/little a male wrote as a response to a prompt (not looking at the actual answer)

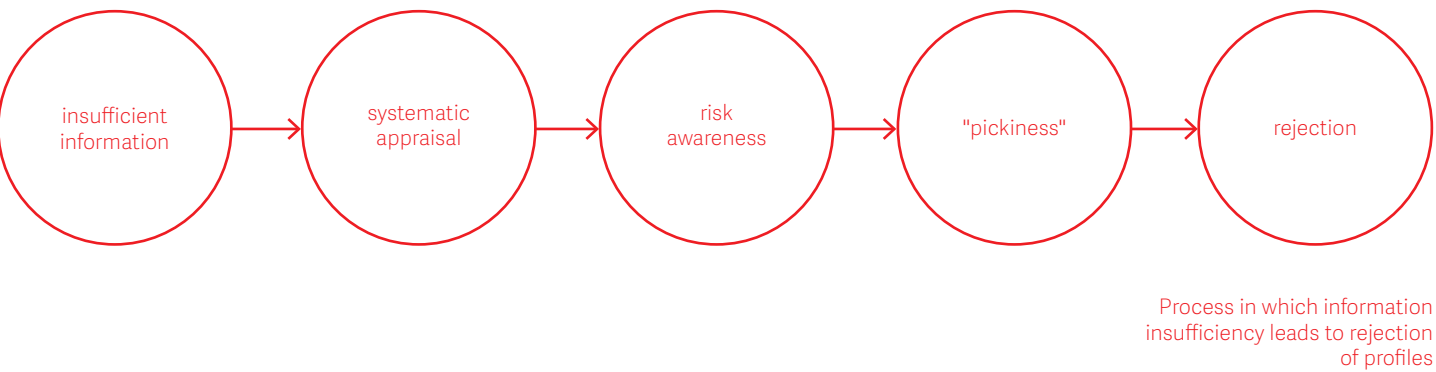
Those questions were lightly touched upon by the participants' reliance and interest in visual information. All females showed interest in the photos as they could attempt to predict one's character and behavior based on: 1. context of the photo, 2. clothing worn, 3. friends (if presented), and 4. physical appearance. The participants showed acute awareness of the quality of the photos, the repetition in outfits, emotions experienced by the male, etc. They were also triggered by the visual cues in shared interests, lifestyles, etc. (pink tags represent shared tags, orange ones are their others). Interestingly enough, this visual orientation also applies to the length of text. If the participant saw the text was long, they were excited. If the answers were 1-3 words, the females were turned off and interpreted that as a "red flag"

4.3.7 INFORMATION INSUFFICIENCY



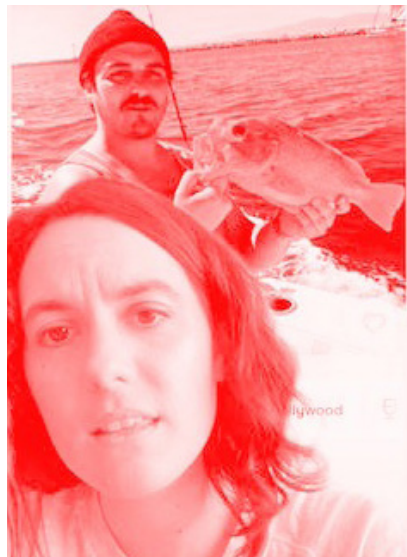
The desired information provides one with clarity on the potential offline interaction- what kind of information would help YUP females to envision the male offline better?

The reason behind the participants' gravitation towards visual information could be best explained by information insufficiency. The lack of type of information that could positively contribute to their mate assessment process triggers a hyper awareness in them to ensure a grasp of as much information that would assist them in determining one's character. This is supported by Dunwoody and Griffin's "Risk Seeking and Processing in Decision Making" (2015), in which information insufficiency acts as a "motivation" factor for additional information search, often through systematic appraisal. This analytical mindset, much like a sponge that soaks in as much information as possible, also causes one to be more aware of risk (Dunwoody and Griffin, 2015), ironically. This would explain a YUP female's tendency to be "picky", and thus reject profiles at a high rate. It can therefore be hypothesized that the level of insufficiency of information on a profile is positively correlated to the level of risk awareness.



4.3.8

ONLINE ROMANCE IS UNROMANTIC



TikToker, Cala Murr, pokes fun at the men she sees on Tinder who pose holding fish, a universally acknowledged "red flag" on a profile in the female community

The participants also expressed distrust and disinterest in dating apps in general, as love found online is considered unromantic in comparison to the offline love they were promised in the literature, films, and family stories they grew up with. With the hope of meeting someone in "real life", the participants admitted to feeling less committed to online dating, and therefore were not as fully active as they were capable of being.

“ **He looks so creepy here. His eyes are too wide and he’s too close to the phone. Why would you take a picture like that? Why would you put that on your profile? It’s cringe.** ”

(Participant 1)

4.3.9

CONCLUSION

The female participants showed a desire to acquire information on the male subjects' offline state (R4). Visual information was the best feature that would allow for them to envision the potential interaction- the females always first gravitated towards the pictures to assess the male's pose, clothing, body language, etc. to determine this (R1). Photos in which the male subject posed with friends or family was appealing to the participants, emphasizing the importance of context (R5). If the male subject presented only selfies, the same outfits, close shots of the face, etc., the females were turned off- perhaps this presents the male's self awareness (how he presents himself online). They also expressed their distrust towards their own interpretations (R2). Additionally, they showed to analyse the responses to prompts from a visual perspective (how much/little was written as opposed to the actual content) (R3).

The findings show that there is an information insufficiency in the profiles, which potentially triggers the systematic appraisal mode of the female users, especially that of visual information on a profile. The analytical and thorough assessment of information exposed the potential risks with the respective presented content, which resulted in the “picky” and “selective” mindset the female population is erroneously notorious for in the online dating industry, ultimately leading to rejection of profiles. It can be concluded that there is a lack of information on the social behavior of the potential mate which the Breeze features provide. The participants’ goal of determining social behavior is to envision an offline interaction, in attempts to predict the success of a date and to avoid the risk of having a bad/wasteful time. This logical approach to the pursuit of love can be explained by the YUP female’s busy schedule, and hesitancy to find someone online, as they find the concept unromantic in comparison to the post-feminist media they were exposed to (the first glimpse to love they had). To get an understanding of how online dating can be “authenticated”, and what factors contribute to enriching the envisioning of a behavior and the potential offline date, interviews were conducted. This would provide insight on how Breeze can improve their profiles and features to offer the requested information.

4.4.1

RESEARCH
QUESTIONS

From the findings of both the focus group and user observations, the aim of these interviews was to 1. confirm whether the female scope desired offline-oriented information in the decision making process of mate selection and 2. to further dissect this process regarding the social behavior consideration and determination in both offline and online contexts. The research questions of the interviews were therefore:

- R1.** How do females assess males offline?
- R2.** How do females assess males online?
- R3.** What qualities of a male do females observe to determine behavior?
- R4.** What enriches the envisioning process of an offline interaction online?

4.4.2

PROCEDURE

An interview guide (Appendix C.11) was prepared that introduced the research topic in an introductory script, and attempted to address the research questions through open-ended questions. The questions acted as the basic lines of the interview. The interview format was split into two parts.

The first section covered the participants’ experience with assessing potential mates in offline social settings. These questions covered the various contexts in which mate selection could occur, the role context has in mate selection, the role it has in behavior, and the specific factors that the females took into consideration when assessing the potential mate’s social behavior and awareness. These questions were also answered by the participants with descriptive recollections of relevant experiences of mate selection in offline settings and the validity of impressions experienced with questions that aimed to examine the various independent and dependent factors involved. The second section explored the tools and methods used online in assessing potential mates. The questions covered various social media platforms in which attraction and mate selection could occur (excluding online dating). The information processing step of decision making was delved into by uncovering the features/tools online which presented the personality and behavior of the considered individual. All interviews were recorded, and revisited for clustering.

4.4.3

ANALYSIS

From the clustering analysis of overlapping themes and patterns (Appendix C.12), three outputs were created to present, visualize, and analyze the qualitative data or each of the domains (online and offline): 1. key findings (Appendix C.13 and C.14), 2. a mate assessment landscape (Fig. 10 and 11), and a storyline (Appendix C.16 and C.17) to capture the assessment process generalized by the mate assessment landscape. After this, outputs of both domains were compared where similarities and differences between them were determined (Appendix C.18).

The core of mate assessment, regardless of the context, was then visualized through two outputs: 1. the "mate assessment factors" (Fig. 12) and 2. the “pursuit trifecta” (Fig. 13). Finally, the findings of the analysis were used to see Breeze’s position in mate assessment capabilities (Appendix C.19). For this, Breeze’s mate assessment landscape was made (Fig. 14). Now, let’s delve into the key findings of the offline domain.

4.4.4
OFFLINE:
KEY FINDINGS



Rene Margritte's "Empire of Light" painting emphasizes the difference between light and darkness in a surreal manner- we see and perceive where the light shines. Could this perhaps explain the difference in the expected degree of authenticity in the day time as opposed to the night?



In "Bridget Jones' Diary", the love interest Mr. Darcy professes his love to the main character by saying something we all want to hear: "I like you very much, just as you are". At the end of the day, we just want to be accepted for our authentic selves

The female participants found that the context defined the behavior of both themselves and the individual they were observing. There is a context-specific mindset that comes with existing within a space. A bar was a common example used by the interviewees- with the available functions, tools, objects, and individuals there, the female participants recalled making assessments on the potential mate based on their interaction with the aforementioned factors. Attending a workshop was another common example- their criteria in mate selection shifted to seeing how the potential mate interacted within the context of education and networking, and the type of information they shared when participating in discussions. The common goal of mate observation was to obtain as much information about the individual to authenticate their image of them.

“ **Night time is the best time for love and attraction.
The world becomes smaller at night-
we only see where the lights are.** ”

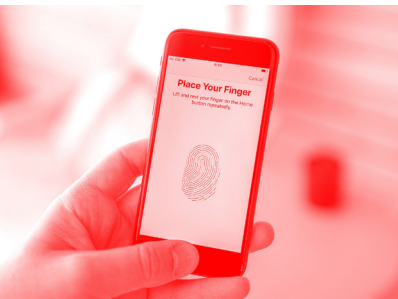
(Participant 1)

Another finding related to context-specificity is the presumptions associated with space. The motivation of meeting someone at a bar influences one’s mindset when entering this space, and thus their criteria of mate selection. Despite the universal expectation of night time being the best time to meet someone, the participants of the interviews shared the common opinion of feeling comfortable getting to know someone in a context that is free of the expectation of romantic connection. One participant finds that “with this, [she] show[s] up with more of an authentic version of [herself], and expects the same with others around [her]” (Participant 4). Eight of nine participants found that daytime activities are contexts for authentic behavior.

“ **In unexpected social settings, you see them in so many
different capacities.** ”

(Participant 1)

4.4.5
ONLINE:
KEY FINDINGS



The fingerprint scanning set-up process is similar to the mate assessment process of the female participants- they wanted to see the male in different contexts, to create a more three-dimensional and thus authentic image of him

All participants referred to Instagram as the major platform for assessing one’s behavior online. Instagram was considered to provide more of an authentic impression of someone as opposed to a dating profile. The findings of this section of the interview is therefore referred to Instagram as the contextual platform.

The participants made use of the multidimensionality of Instagram, taking note of the male's activity on their general profile, posts, comments, highlights, newsfeed, DMs, stories, and tagged photos to determine their offline behavior. Much like the mate assessment offline, the participants shared an interest for uncensored information, as the ones found in the male’s tagged section of a profile. This presented a more "realistic" perspective on the male, where the participants would often also check the friends’ profiles to get an understanding of his social group. A visualization of the participants’ points of assessment on a profile can be found in Appendix C.15.

4.4.6
MATE ASSESSMENT
LANDSCAPES

From the stated findings, two visuals were created which differ in contexts: the offline and online domain. The female subjects' conscious mate selection analysis is panned out in these graphs, drawing inspiration from the overlapping patterns discovered in the interviews. By unraveling the underlying criteria the females were taking into consideration in both contexts, it was discovered that there were two ultimate focal points to any mate assessment process which simultaneously maintained activity in the female’s mind: 1. the potential mate’s interaction with others, and 2. their interaction with the female, whether it be through visual cues or literal communication.

The bridging of these focal points is the determined behavior of the potential mate, a response to the context that he is in (Hollander, 1971). This surface-level observation is joined by the corresponding connotation of the various factors considered, such as body language, level of desirability, social group, etc. which the female will use as input for understanding the male’s personality core. Regardless of gender, one will use the tools and resources available in the context they are in, whether it be online or offline, to fill in the gaps of the potential mate’s character and behavior to reduce risk and carry out preliminary analysis to diminish uncertainty towards the pursuit of the potential mate.

4.4.7
OFFLINE
LANDSCAPE

Fig. 10 is a culmination of stories acquired from the interviews. Let us begin with the female individual, placed at the bottom of the major circle. With two focal points in mind, the female observes the male's activity within the specific context. At the core of the male's surface level presentation and the potential inner characteristics that define his personality, the female will determine whether the pursuit is worth the risk by looking at the available information on his: social group, self awareness, body language, level of desirability, visual cues of interest, perceived risk, social awareness, values and needs, social position, level of authenticity, intentions in relationship, attraction to, and chemistry with the female. The overall impression paired with the female's demographic sociocultural and relevant values allows the female to determine his behavior and personality core, to envision a potential mate and make her final decision.

It was noted, however, that this process of mate selection is not a linear one. The procedure of getting to know someone is multidimensional, in which one's opinions and affective behavior are results of simultaneous thoughts, collectively equalizing one's final impression. The process of assessing mate compatibility is a two-way street- an instinctual choreography between two people. This landscape therefore acts somewhat as a criteria, a skeleton if you may, of what was active in the participants' shared recollections.

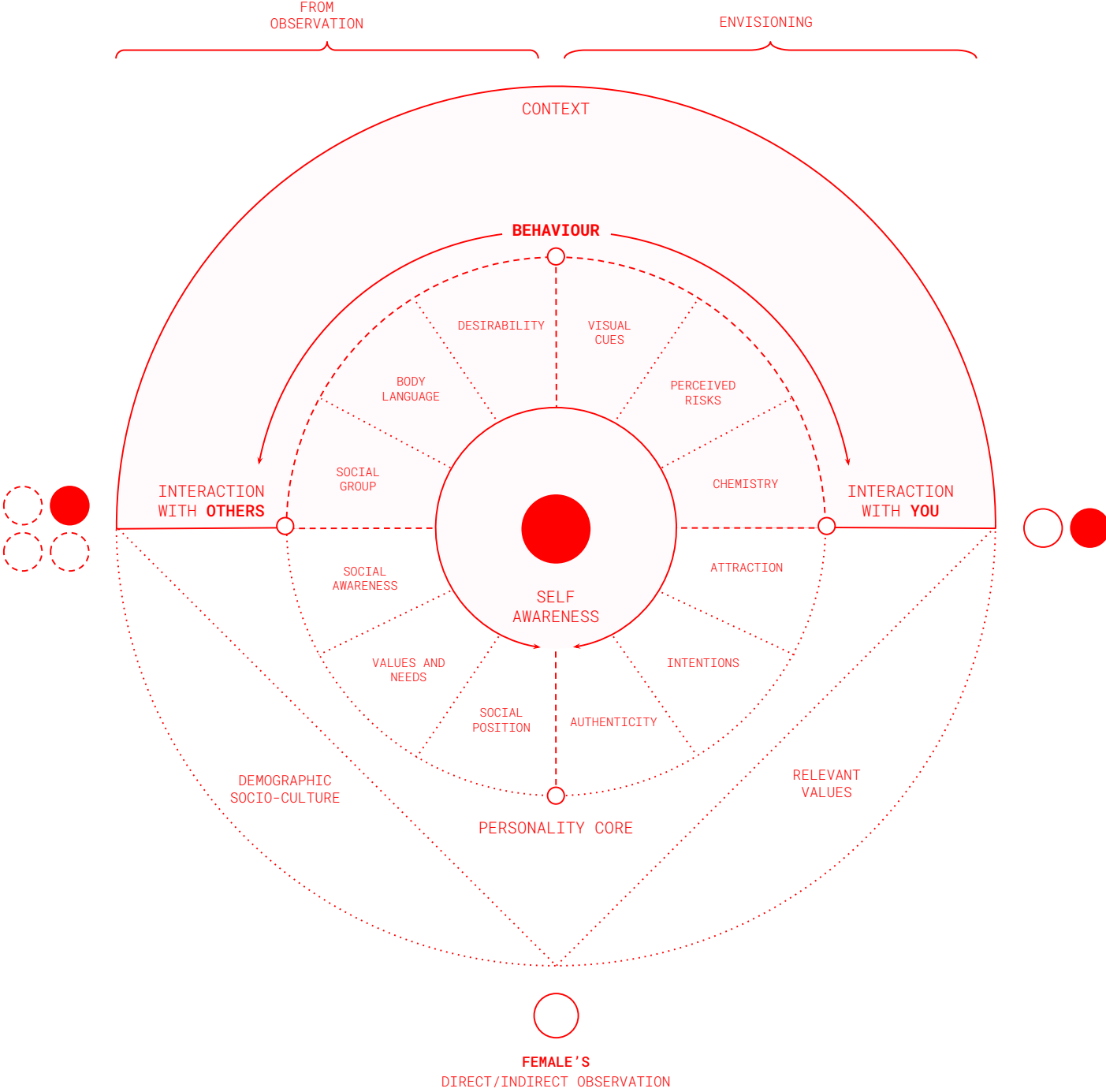


FIG. 10
Offline Mate Assessment
Landscape

4.4.8
ONLINE
LANDSCAPE

In the online domain, the females similarly approached the mate assessment with the two focal points in mind. As the online realm has its own sets of tools and dimensions, the female will make use of this to determine the male's behavior and character. They do this by assessing three things: 1. the male's profile, 2. their activity, and their 3. tagged photos. In both the profile and tagged photo section, the females will assess his: social group, tone of voice, social awareness, social activity, personality core, perceived risks, intentions, and level of authenticity. The female will also assess the male's online activity that would provide the aforementioned factors, by looking at his comments and/or likes, reposts, frequency of posts, and activity with the direct messaging. To better illustrate both the offline and online landscapes, two storylines have been created- this can be found in Appendix C. 16 and C.17.

The same procedures occur in the online domain as they do in the of-fline. The multidimensional unraveling of one's character and behavior is done so with the provided online tools to determine the compatibility. For example, the time in which it takes someone to respond to a message, or the amount of selfies that are liked in a row. This phenomenal digital translation and interpretation of the information provided by the online resources go to show one's innate drive for analytic dissection of information, especially that of the female, as stated by Swarna (2012).

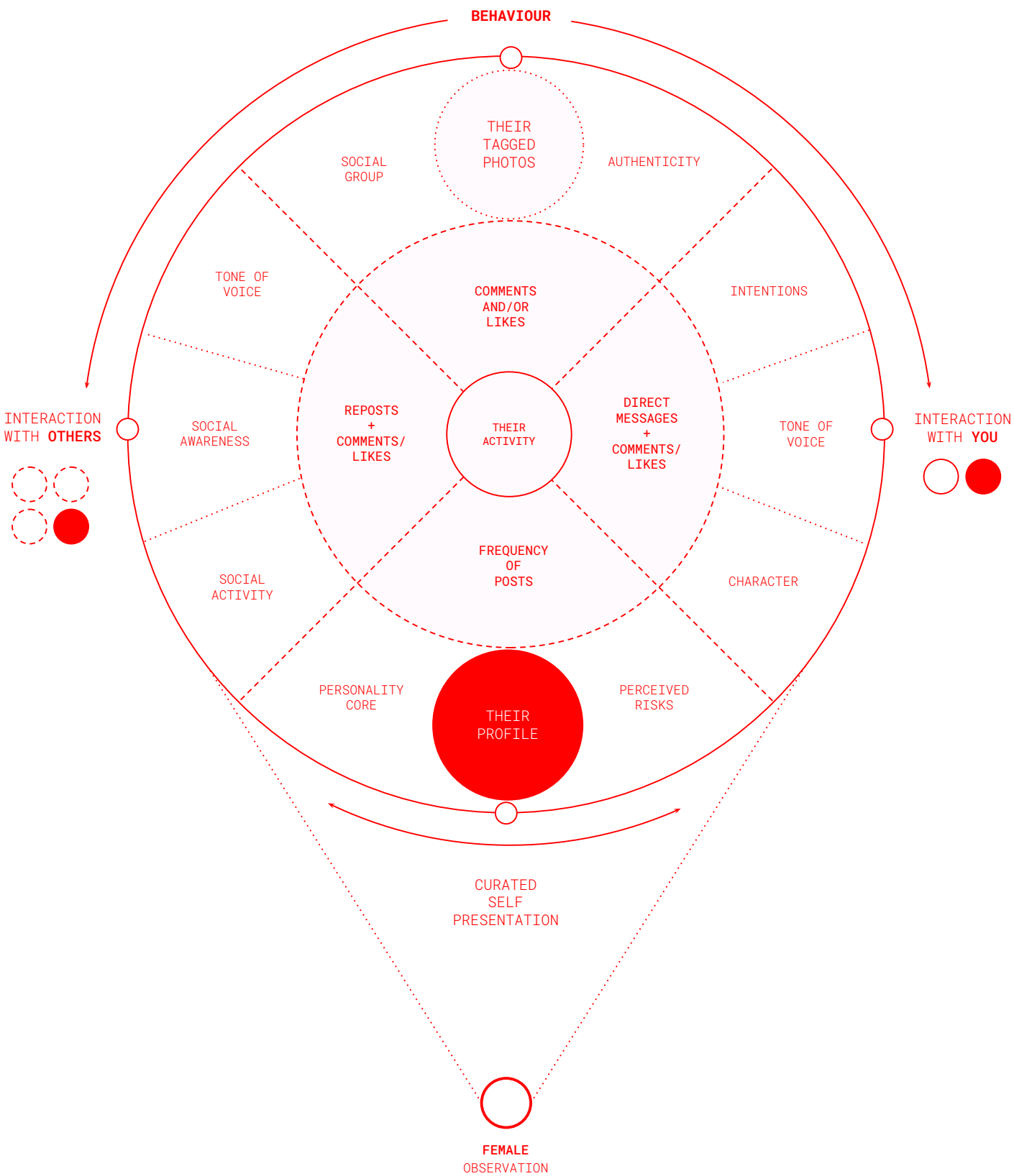


FIG. 11
Online Mate Assessment
Landscape

4.4.9

MATE ASSESSMENT
FACTORS

Once comparing and contrasting both graphs and referring back to the stories expressed by the participants of the focus group and user observations, several overlapping factors that females considered as input for mate assessment stood out. These factors were noted, and thus the “mate assessment factors” was created (Fig. 12). These are the intersecting factors that are both detectable in the offline and online domain (Instagram), and those that are domain-specific, dependent on the available resources and tools. See Appendix C.20 for elaboration on each factor and Appendix C.18 for the shared and different available factors of the online and offline domain.

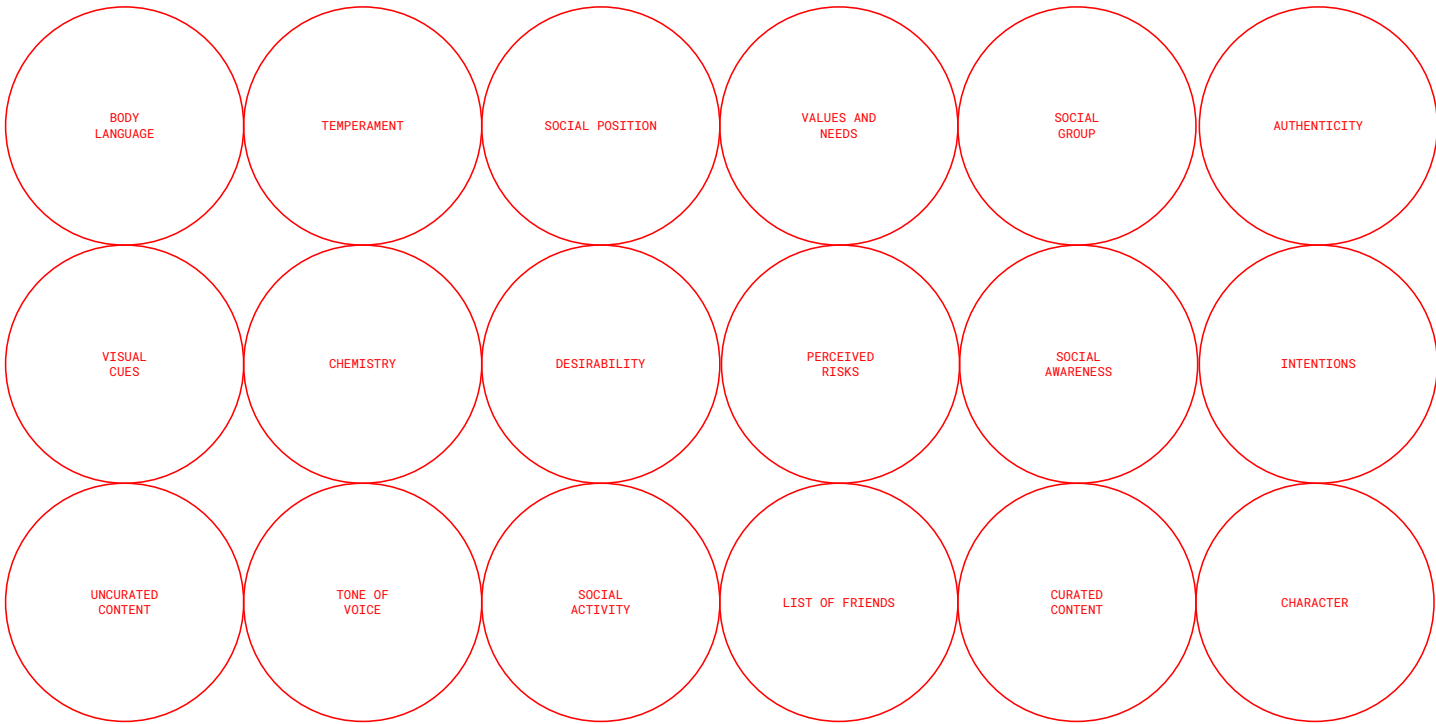


FIG. 12
Mate Assessment
Factors

Potential Mate

18 factors per person
Serving size at least 80% (15/18)

Amount per factor
Percentage 5.5%

Body Language	4%
Temperament	4%
Social Position	2%
Values and Needs	3%
Social Group	2%
Authenticity	1%
Desirability	3%
Social Awareness	1%
Uncurated Content	4%
Curated Content	5%
Tone of Voice	5%
Social Activity	4%
List of Friends	2%
Character	3%
Intentions	2%
Visual Cues	5%
Chemistry	5%
Perceived Risk	5%

4.4.10
THE PURSUIT
TRIFECTA

When zooming out of all the findings and analyses, one would see that there are three major processes occurring that allow a female to feel determined whether to pursue a male or not: observation, interaction, and envisioning. They will be referred to as the “pursuit trifecta”. The visualization of this finding, as seen in Fig. 13, was created to illustrate the intersection of the three processes. To break it down, firstly the female must be able to observe the potential mate. This information will allow for the female to envision a possible connection, interaction, or a relationship. Finally, an interaction between the female and the potential mate (whether direct or indirect) would provide her the final information needed to make the decision- to pursue the male or not, or in the case of this research, to say yes or no to a profile. As the female gathers both superficial and insightful information regarding the potential mate, she will include her own demographic sociocultural and personal values into the equation, questioning the compatibility between them, and the potentiality of a companionship. To conclude, the degree of sufficiency of information obtained in each process collectively determines the level of determination/certainty the female would feel regarding the match between her and a potential mate.

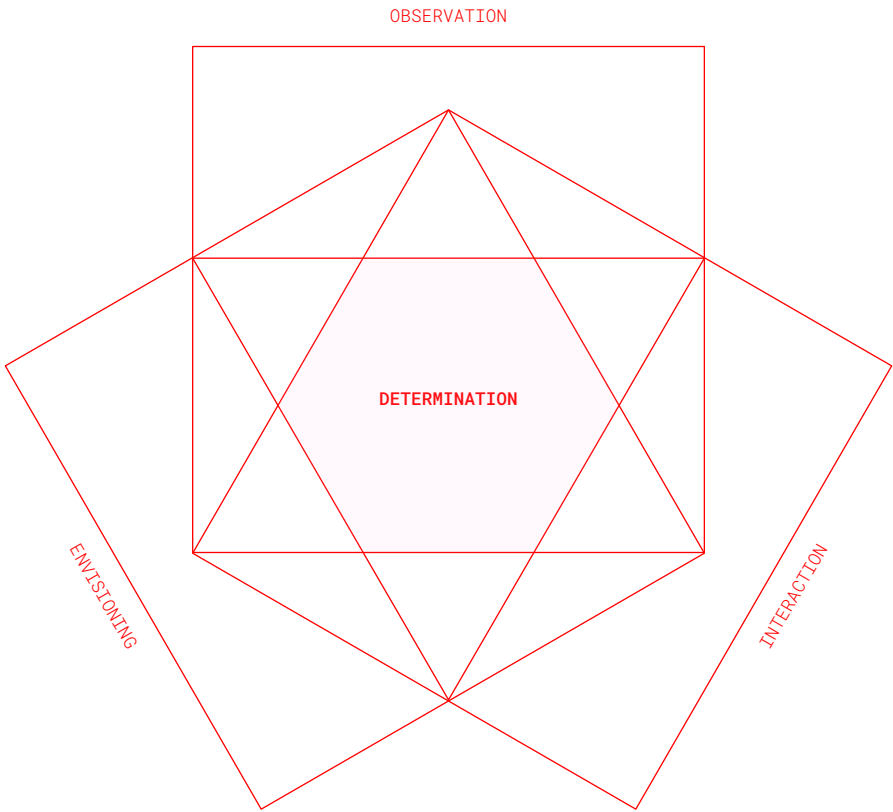


FIG. 13
The Pursuit
Trifecta

4.4.11
CONCLUSION

From the interviews, the females' mate assessment styles and processes were dissected in both the offline and online realm. From the findings, an offline and online mate assessment landscape was created to present the general conscious focal points in regards to the potential mate's interaction with others, and with the female (R1 and R2). This was described to encapsulate one's behavior, which the females valued in mate selection. Behavior, consisting of multiple qualities that act in unison in response to the context, supplies the female sufficient information in order to determine whether to pursue the male or not. This is seen in both the offline and online contexts, scaffolded by their shared and domain-specific tools and languages.

The factors that females considered in the appraisal of a potential mate was grouped into “mate assessment factors” (R3) which can be found in Fig. 12. In the online mate assessment process, the females referred to Instagram as the platform that provided the most multidimensional and thus authentic image of the mate. This is because its dynamic tools and opportunities for observation and interaction, such as the profile, comments, stories, tagged photos, direct messages, etc., provided the females with contextual information that are both curated and non-curated- something females value in mate assessment. This gave them clarity and sufficiency of information to envision the potential offline interaction (R4). It was discovered that in order for the female to feel determined to pursue (or "like") a male, she must have sufficient information in all of the following processes: observation, interaction, and envisioning (the pursuit trifecta as seen in Fig. 13).

5

CONCEPTUALIZATION

In this chapter, a guideline was set prior to the concept ideation phase. Findings from the user research were placed within the paradigm of Breeze, in which design goals, a design criteria, and an interaction vision were created to ensure an aligned and relevant direction for the designs.

5.1.1

APPROACH

From the user research, the key findings were applied to the state of Breeze and the capabilities in behavior presentation offered by its profile design. With this assessment, along with the literature review, internal, and external research, a general design goal was created to act as a framework for the develop phase of the project. Additionally, a criteria oriented towards the target user, Breeze, the future, and for gender intersectionality were also created to keep in mind when ideating and evaluating concepts. Finally, an interaction vision was created to envision the intended interaction between the Breeze service and the user to guide the concept ideation phase.

5.1.2

BREEZE LANDSCAPE

From the key findings of each user research, it can be summarized that YUP females are hesitant about accepting profiles due to the risk of it being wasted time. This hesitancy was triggered by the lack of information that allowed for them to envision the offline interaction. The type of information that encapsulated the social behavior they were seeking to predict are listed in the mate assessment factors. With this in mind, a mate assessment landscape, much like the one made for the offline and online domain, was created in reference to the Breeze platform. This is presented in Fig. 14.

The landscape shows that Breeze’s capabilities for showcasing the mate assessment factors are limited in relation to other online platforms such as Instagram. Conversation and any form of interaction is absent on Breeze during the mate assessment phase, therefore there is a complete lack in the “interaction” phase of the pursuit trifecta. This would explain the participants’ expressed frustration with the male profiles, as there is information insufficiency that would have otherwise aided the male’s impression on the female.

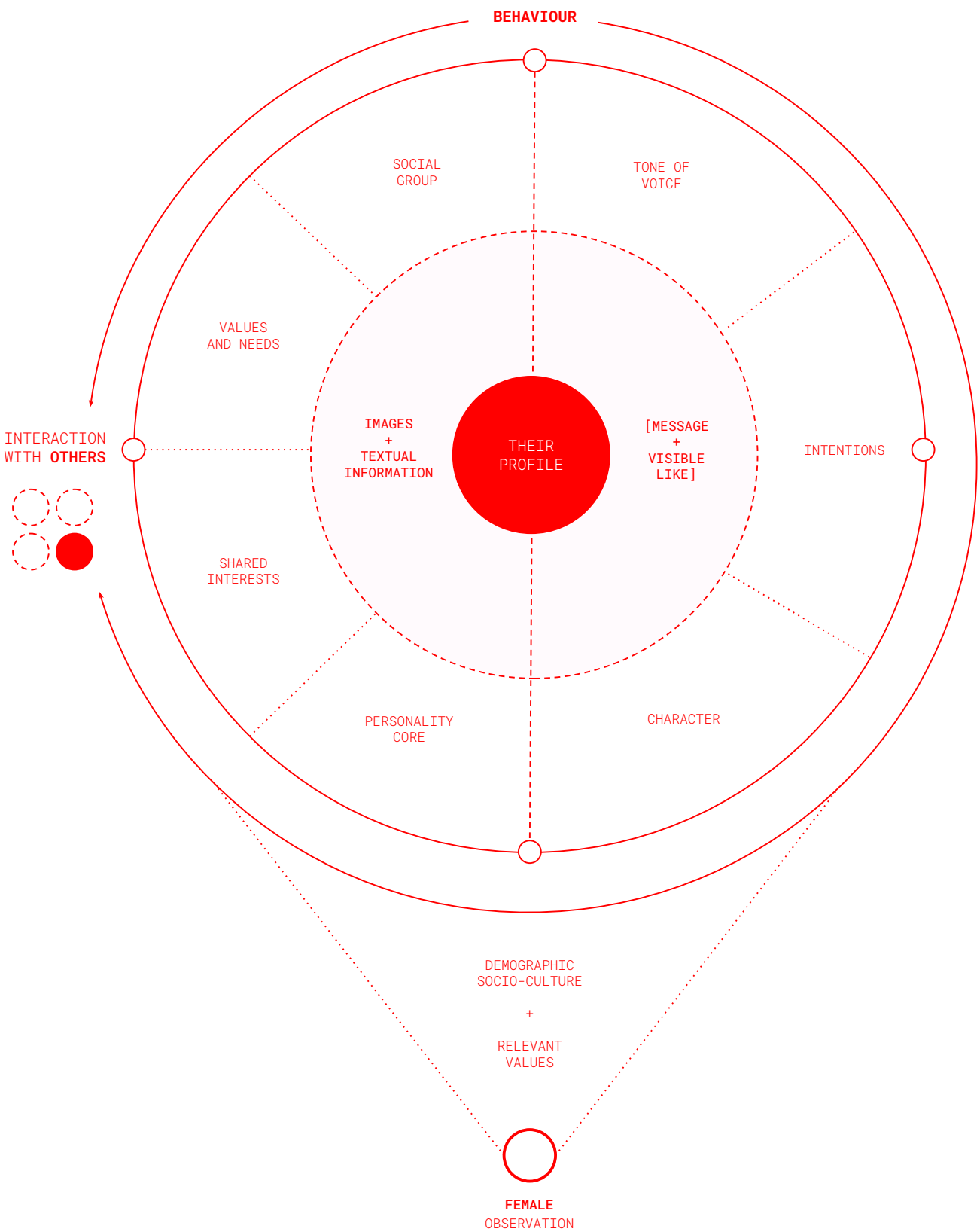


FIG. 14
Breeze Mate Assessment
Landscape

5.1.3

BREEZE'S MATE ASSESSMENT FACTORS

Breeze’s stance on the mate assessment factors was also analyzed, and explored for the extent to which the factors were applicable to/detectable on a Breeze profile. This is presented in 15. The red factors are evidently portrayed on a profile, the pink somewhat present (dependent on the male user’s choice in self-presentation), and the white completely absent.

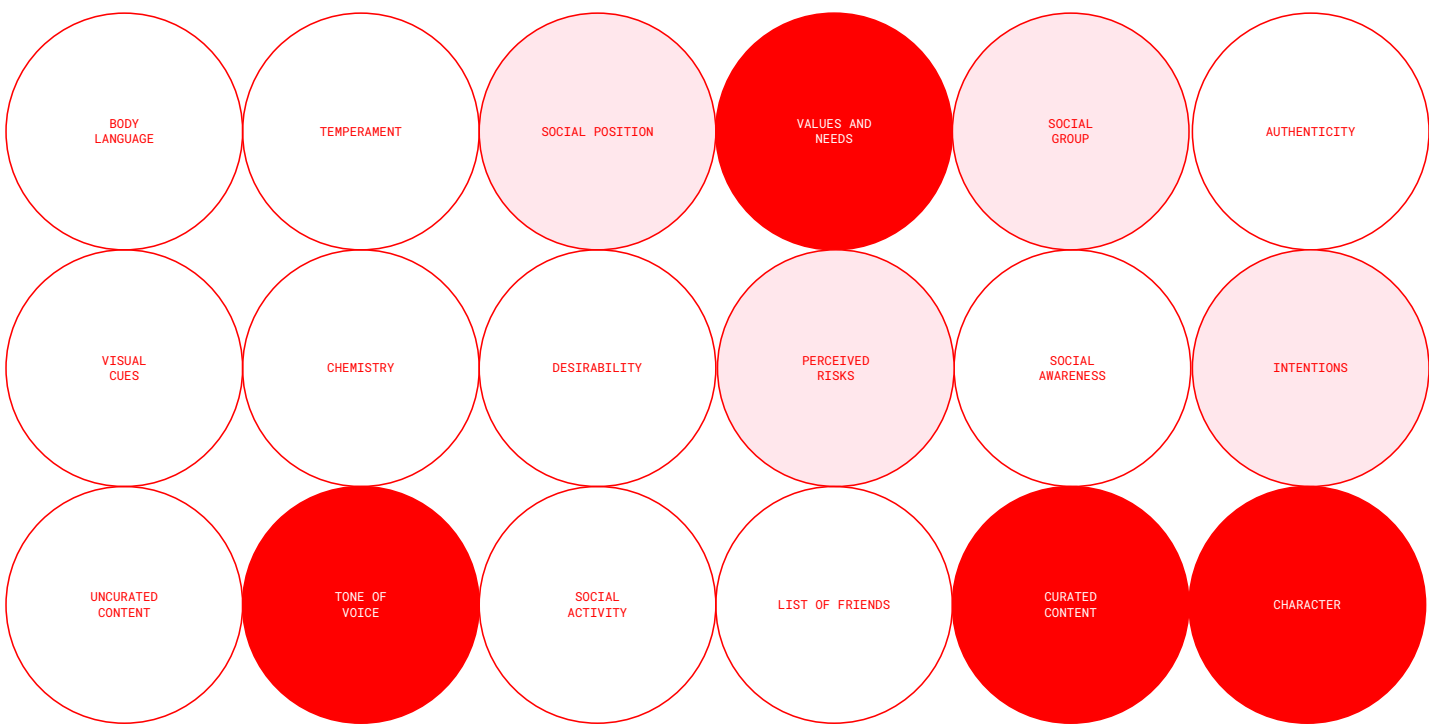


FIG. 15
Fully (white) or somewhat (pink) missing mate assessment factors on Breeze

5.1.4

CONCLUSION

By applying the findings of the user research onto Breeze, it can be seen that there are an array of mate selection factors that are not being addressed on a profile. The shared factors between an offline and online domain such as Instagram is far greater than the shared factors Breeze has with them both combined. It can therefore be predicted that by including information that would describe the male’s body language, temperament, social position, social group, level of authenticity, visual cues, chemistry, level of desirability, perceived risks, social awareness, intentions, uncurated content, social activity, and list of friends, the chances of the female liking the profile is increased as the information insufficiency that creates risk awareness in the female would be addressed. How can these factors be implemented into a Breeze profile with the features it currently has, and the potential ones it can create with the brand identity intact? How can this be done in a digestible way for the female users, without overwhelming them with an overload of information? These questions acted as great starting points for the concept ideation phase. But before starting, design goals were created to ensure the birth of a well-rounded, relevant concept.

5.2.0 DESIGN GOAL

The goal is to enhance the YUP female user’s decision making process for mate selection by incorporating the mate assessment factors into the Breeze profile to ensure a seamless observation, interaction, and envisioning process.

The aim of the concept ideation phase is to address the needs and goals of four anchor points: the 1. target group, 2. Breeze, 3. the future of online dating, and 4. gender intersectionality. This entails the addressing of current and future contexts in reference to the target group and Breeze, as both are not fixed in nature. The current target group won’t be that of the future for Breeze, and the service’s values will inevitably evolve as do the needs of the users. Additionally, a gender intersectional approach will act as a lens throughout the whole ideation phase. Despite the female-specificity of the project, a gender inclusive design will be strived towards to guarantee an enhanced online dating experience for not only females, but also male, non-binary, and gender fluid individuals. To conclude, it is therefore important to create congruence and alignment between all four anchor points through a designed concept to ensure a feasible, desirable, and meaningful direction for Breeze.

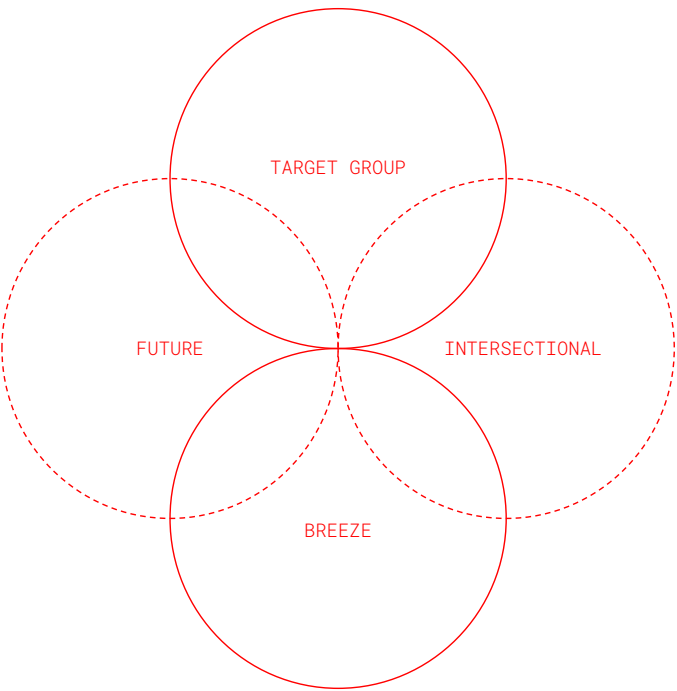


FIG. 16
The four anchorpoints

5.3.0 DESIGN CRITERIA

To provide guidance throughout the ideation, concept assessment, and final evaluation phase, a design criteria for each anchorpoint was created to ensure a successful, relevant, and meaningful designed experience.

TARGET GROUP
C1. The information provided by the design discourages less analysis. C2. The design addresses the mate assessment factors. C3. The design addresses the pursuit trifecta. C4. The design is visually-oriented. C5. The design provides certainty to users in their mate selection decision.
GENDER INTERSECTIONAL
C6. The design is beneficial in the decision making of other genders. C7. The design is gender-ambiguous.
BREEZE ALIGNED
C8. The design provides opportunities for modification. C9. The design aligns with the future vision of Breeze. C10. The design is congruent with the strategic priorities of Breeze. C11. The aesthetic of the design aligns with the Breeze brand DNA. C12. The design creates a new meaning for Breeze.
FUTURE ORIENTED
C13. The design will be relevant a few years from now. C14. The design aligns with the direction towards the metaverse. C15. The design can evolve into new future concepts.

5.4.0

INTERACTION VISION

The alignment of the anchor points along with the psychological phenomena of decision making explored through cultural sensitivity beckons the acknowledgement of the complexity of this project. The plethora of collected information from both primary and secondary research demands a sense of inspiration formatted in a concise manner for the concept ideation. The aforementioned goals along with the criteria, as stated before, provide guidance. However, what is needed to take creative initiative is a vision, as the stated formatted inspiration. An interaction vision is an instrument to consider the experiential effects a product (Pasman, Boess & Desmet, 2011). To get started, an endeavor in simplifying the complex used the following example to exercise the mind.

5.4.1

SIMPLICITY OF THE COMPLEX

A glass ball is a minimal form. The transparent material, unseemingly simple, yet powerful in the information it can present. In whatever environment one might place this form, the glass will present its entire exterior within. It was therefore aimed to similarly capture something as complex and multidimensional as female-specific needs in online mate selection within a simple, packaged design. How might one's behavioral identity and personality core be visualized in a minimal manner such as a glass ball? Additionally, how might this visualization be universally comprehensible and intuitively digestible to any viewer? These questions sparked the birth of an interaction vision.



Much like behavior is a response to one's environment, the glass ball visualizes this concept by projecting its entire exterior within



5.4.2 THE VISION

The glass ball example might also remind one of a crystal ball a fortune teller often uses. As they glare into the cloudy form, they mysteriously see your whole being and existence. This scenario inspired the interaction vision between a female Breeze user and the intervention to be designed corresponding to a potential mate's profile:

That feeling of clarity and excitement one feels when getting a glimpse into the future. With the supplied information that the design(s) would offer, the future female user would feel certain, intrigued, and excited by the vision of the offline interaction.

This analogy was used to stress the relevance of the feeling of certainty and assurance that a female requires in order to pursue/accept the profile of a male user. This online experience would allow one to observe, interact, and envision an offline connection in an authentic and comprehensible manner.



6

CONCEPT IDEATION

With the path designed, key elements were identified as "stakeholders" to the project, as the research's multidimensionality required the addressing of several destinations. A Breeze ideation session helped get a kickstart to the design process, in which sources of inspiration were found for the final prototyping.

6.1.1

APPROACH

To delve into the ideation process, a concept framework in the form of key elements was first created as a reference point in addition to the anchoring points mentioned in the previous section. Afterwards, an ideation session with the Breeze team was conducted to gain inspiration on the various methods and possibilities in which behavioral factors can be translated digitally onto a Breeze profile. With this as fuel, additional concepts were personally brainstormed. These ideas were presented to Breeze team members, and along with their feedback, several concepts were selected and assessed based on the deesign criteria.

6.1.2

KEY ELEMENTS TO ADDRESS

In the attempt to create a design that not only benefits the current context of Breeze, but allows the service to be future proof for their future users, four key elements in the exploration of the research question were identified: 1. the current target users, 2. future target group, 3. future of online dating, and 4. the service itself. The elements would therefore act like “stakeholders” of the concept development phase to ensure a relevant yet strategic direction for Breeze.

6.1.3

AIM

Thus, with four key elements, it was decided to eventually deliver four designs that would enhance users’ experience on Breeze, in which each concept would act as a proposed stepping stone towards the envisioned future of the service and the online dating industry. The first design would aim to address the current needs of the target users in their mate selection on Breeze in the present time (intersection of “current target users” and “Breeze”). The second design would aim to do so in a visual language that allows Breeze to be prepared for the online lingo and experience of future users (intersection of “current target users” and “future target group”). The third design would aim to provide a glimpse into a feasible future experience of the Breeze service. Finally, the fourth design would aim to act as a symbol- a visualized future vision/concept car for Breeze that depicts how it can fit into the future of online dating.

6.2.1

APPROACH

After applying the mate assessment factors onto the Breeze profile, it was discovered that the service only addressed a few of the behavioral features through the provided set features. It was therefore decided to explore how the absent factors could be addressed on a profile. An ideation session would: 1. help get the ideation mindset, 2. acquire unique and diverse perspectives on how social behavior can be translated digitally, and 3. get inspiration for the personal ideation.

6.2.2

PROCEDURE

Two founders and two other members of the Breeze team contributed to the session made up of short 3-minute rounds. These rounds differed in the mate assessment factor that was lacking on the Breeze profile (presented in Fig. 15). The participants were asked to generate as many ideas as possible on how the specific factor of the round might be presented on an online dating profile, and were informed: 1. not to think about the utility and feasibility of the concepts, 2. to create wild and unique ideas, and 3. to try to think of more concepts by building on top of each other's. After each round, the participants rotated clockwise onto the next factor. The main goal of the session was “quantity over quality”. After the participants generated ideas for each factor, these concepts were collectively clustered based on relevant themes and assessed. The clusters can be found in Appendix D.1

6.2.3

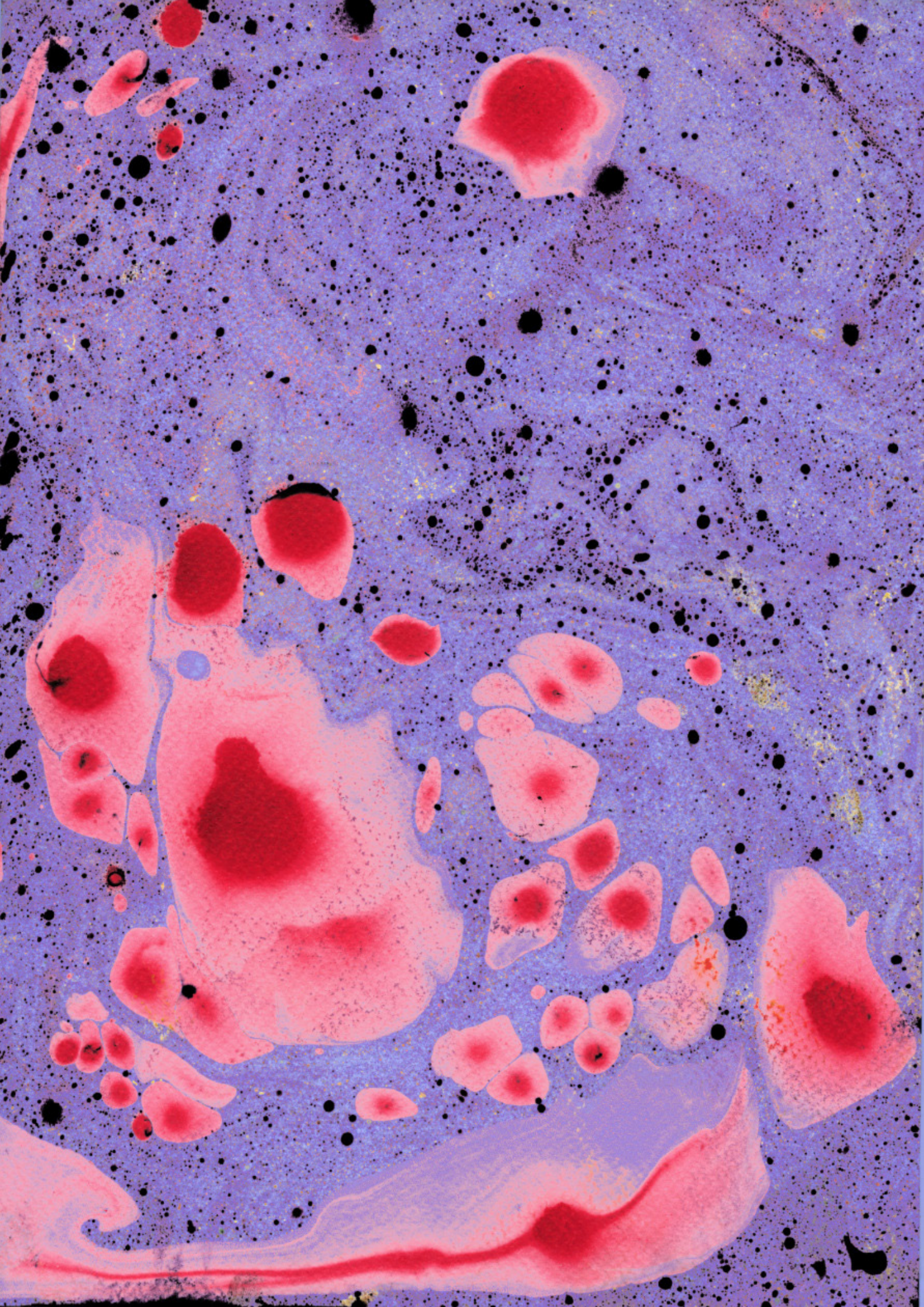
CONCEPT IDEATION

The themes that were found most interesting and exciting were used as inspiration for further ideation, in which concepts were created with reference to 1. the key elements (section 6.1.2) and 2. the interaction vision (section 5.4.1). Additionally, they were selected based on their intersections with the design criteria. It was aimed to create designs that addressed the mate assessment factors and the pursuit trifecta in a seamless manner.

7

PROTOTYPES

Four horizons were designed for the prototyping. This resulted in four concepts that are illustrated and explained in reference to the aim of the design, the offered experiential qualities, and the inspiration behind them. Each concept ends with an assessment, in with the created design criteria was used as reference in assessing the concepts' alignments with the identified key elements.



7.1.1 INTRODUCTION

The personal brainstorming and feedback from the Breeze team resulted in four concepts that were positioned on a scale of what can be implemented today to the envisioned future of online dating. Below are the four concepts, respectively, in reference to the aforementioned key elements: 1. behavior tags, 2. visual features, 3. profile interface, and 4. the concept car. The scale starts with concept one, and heads towards concept 4 which is not a set proposed design, but a new designed future vision. The next section will present the prototypes for each concept, reiterate its aim, and assess it based on the design criteria.

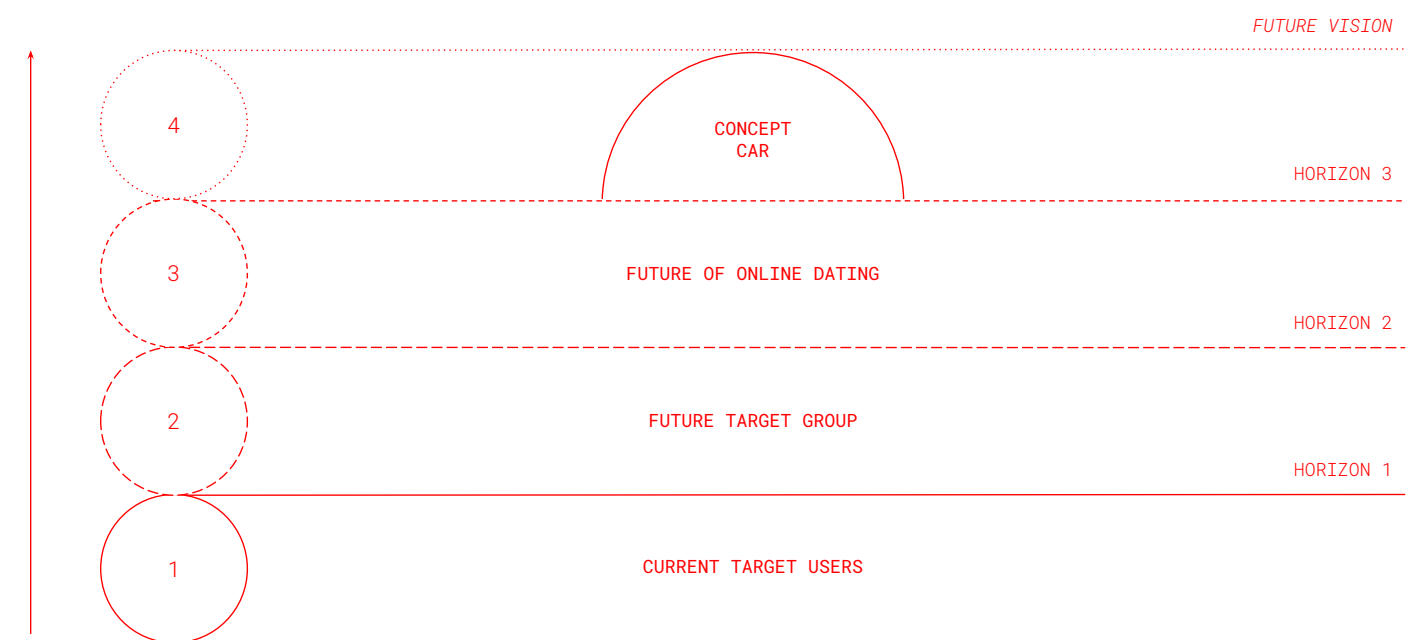


FIG. 17
The four horizons

The aim of this concept is to address the current needs of the target users in their mate selection on Breeze. A big portion of the mate assessment factors were not being addressed on a Breeze profile through its features. Therefore, the goal of this design is to address such factors to enhance the envisioning phase of the pursuit trifecta. The observation phase was not addressed as this is a given process during profile appraisal. Similarly, the interaction phase was not addressed as it would not align with the Breeze brand identity today (no interaction during the mate assessment or profile appraisal, only after, when using the date picker).

The behavior tags concept marries Breeze’s “prompt” and “tag” features. In this concept, there are two designs: 1. the example prompts that were developed in reference to the mate assessment factors and the pursuit trifecta, and 2. the designed tag examples that begin a more visually-oriented direction for Breeze. A prompt and tag proposal table was created, and can be found in Appendix D.9.

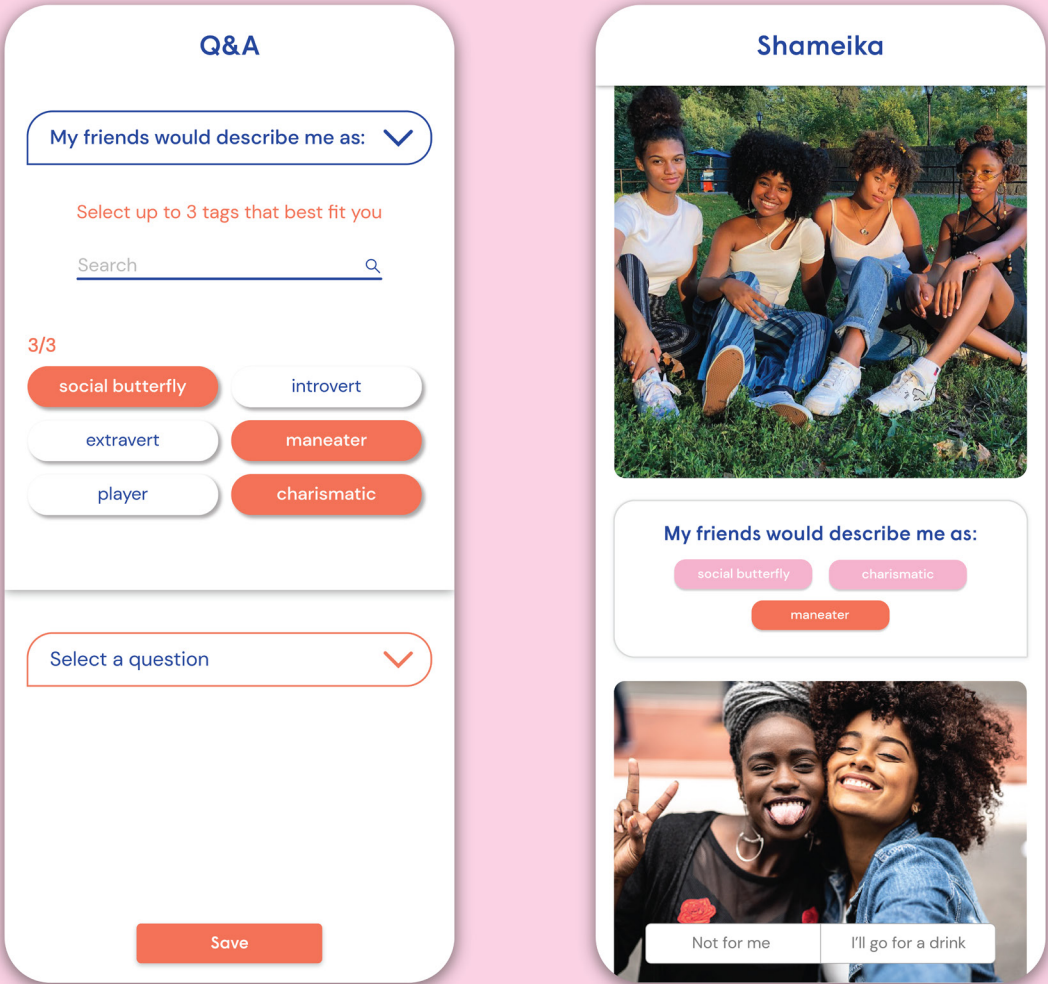


FIG. 18
Setting up the feature, and how it might look like on a profile

7.2.3
MATE ASSESSMENT
FACTORS

To address and simplify the mate assessment factors, the ones absent from a Breeze profile have been categorized into appropriate corresponding groups. These are presented in the prompt and tag proposal (Appendix D.9). In the prototype visual in Fig. 18, the example prompt used is referring to the desirability and social activity factors. The two proposed questions as seen in Fig. 19 are “my friends would describe me as” and “people think I’m”. There have been six tags per category created, however can grow up to another limited amount- currently on the “lifestyle” section on Breeze, each category contains 11-29 tags.

7.2.4
VISUAL
ORIENTATION

With the metaverse as a symbol of a digitized online future along with the findings of the user research in which participants expressed visually-oriented assessments and observations, this design would allow Breeze to take its first step towards the visualization of behavioral information (excluding photos). The tags that Breeze offers now in the profile is an identified strength- it allows users to not only digest information easily, but also identify shared interests/values/characteristics with the potential mate. This strength was addressed in this design, in which tags would act as the answer for each prompt. The issue of users having a negative impression based on the amount of text written, for example, can be avoided. The answer tags create unity and consistency throughout all profiles, in which the behavioral information is assessed in an objective and fixed way.

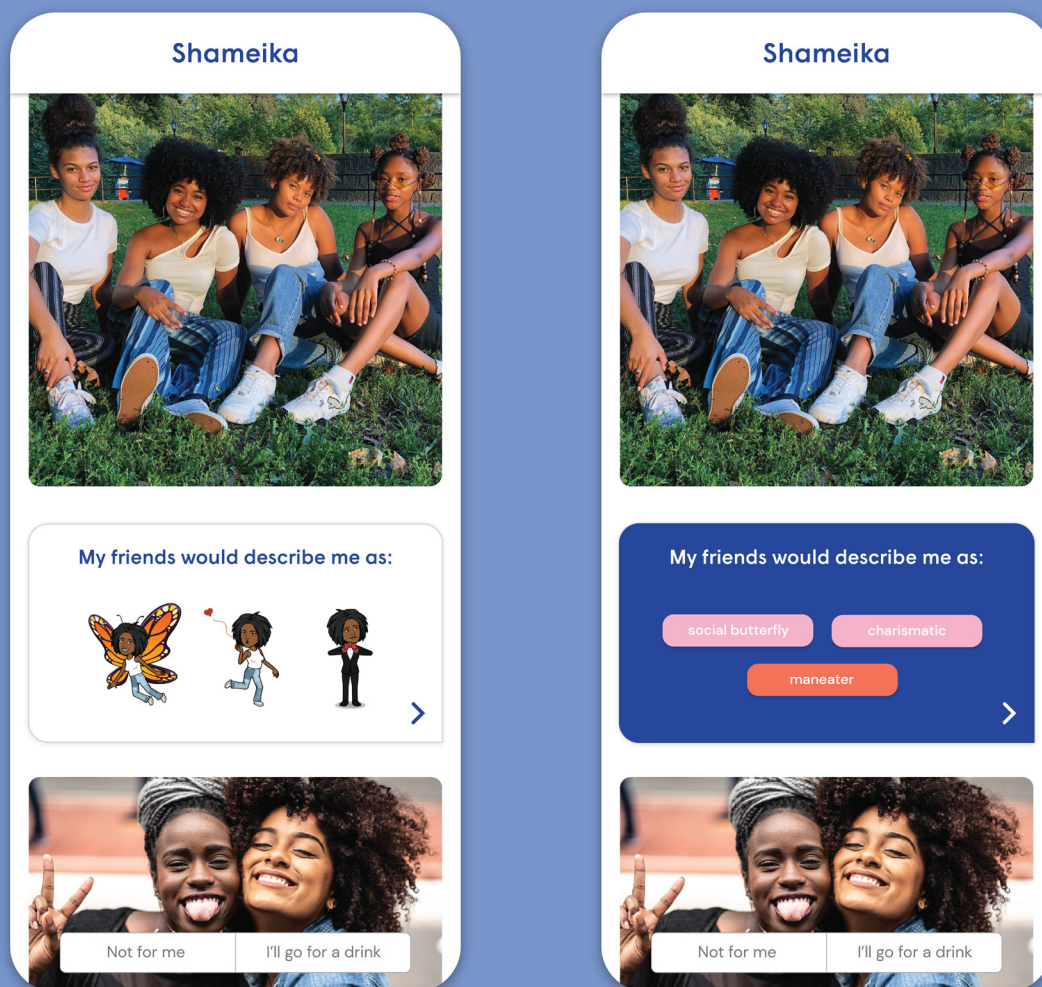
FIG. 19
An excerpt from the prompt and tag proposal (full table can be found in Appendix D.19)

body language	By the way, I'm quite:	clumsy	affectionate
	On our date, don't be surprised if I'm:	awkward	energetic
		distant	fidgeting
temperament	We'll get along if you're also	stoic	sarcastic
	I'm enjoying a conversation when I'm:	restless	optimistic
		pessimistic	chaotic
desirability	My friends would describe me as:	social butterfly	introvert
	People think I'm:	extravert	maneater
social activity		player	charismatic

7.2.5
CONCEPT ASSESSMENT

Based on the design criteria, this concept intends to act as a format of information that would discourage additional information seeking of the female users (C1) by being directly associated to the mate assessment factors (C2) as seen in the prompt and tag proposal, and addresses the pursuit trifecta (C3) by creating prompts which entice and allow the female users to position themselves amongst the potential user. Take, for example, the question “on our date, don’t be surprised if I...” of the body language category. The question sets a scene, a hopeful representation of the potential date, and describes the manner in which the male might interact with the female. The visual orientation of the answers (C4) attempts to simplify the phenomena of social behavior by providing sufficient type of information that would provide certainty (C4) in the female user’s decision, and act as a strategic step towards the metaverse-esque envisioning online future (C14).

Additionally, the tags vary in each category through a gender inclusive manner (C6). The design itself is gender ambiguous (C7), as it is in direct alignment with the current Breeze brand DNA (C11) that provides an intersectional online dating experience. Despite the concept of the tags being set by Breeze, as a service it still has the freedom to modify and adjust based on new directions and/or activity/feedback from users (C8). The congruence of the concept with the strategic priorities and future vision of Breeze lies at the ultimate core intention of its creation- to enhance the online dating experience (C9, C10) through a visually oriented presentation of information females require in mate selection (C12), with the potential to evolve into new concepts (C15), one of which will be exemplified in the next section.



7.3.0

CONCEPT 2

7.3.1
AIM

The aim of this concept is to similarly address the mate assessment factors, but in a more literally visual manner for the service to be more prepared for the online lingo and experience of the future target group. This concept is an evolved version of the behavior tags, in which the tags are now visualized in the form of avatars of the user.

7.3.2
BITMOJIS

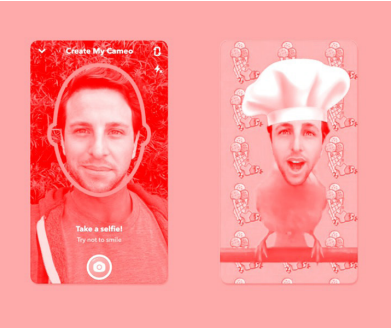
This concept adopts a more visual representation of the tags and uses “bitmojis”, a personal emoji, as a hypothetical visual feature. This second stepping stone towards the envisioned future would be initiated by linking your profile to an external application, such as Bitmoji in this case. With the visual representation of the self on the Bitmoji app already, various “stickers” would be automatically transferred which Breeze finds a correspondence to the specific tag. In Fig. 20, the user selects the specific prompt they would like to answer (up to three in this example as well). They are given a range of varying stickers which portray characteristics that the users pick based on the degree of relatability. Once selected, the tags pop up below the bitmojis, presenting the tag in text-form. If the user is satisfied with the description, they move on- if not, they unselect the sticker and pick another one that they find speaks to them better. On the profile, the stickers would be presented beside each other as an answer to the prompt. If the viewer requires clarification on the description behind the sticker, they may click the text box to flip it to the side in which the behavioral tags are presented (much like in the first concept).

FIG. 20
What this feature would look like in a profile, and the clarified textual tags that would flip over when selected

7.3.3
FRIENDMOJIS

Bitmoji as an app has made its way across many platforms such as iMessages and Google Chrome. It is most notorious for its connection to Snapchat, in which users create cartoon versions of themselves and use it as an avatar that can be transformed into interactive emojis to send to other users. Additionally, “friendmojis” can also be generated if more than two users have a bitmoji, and thus a sticker including both users is made available. This has been quite a revolutionary step towards visualization in which no other additional information or action is required to mimic an offline activity. If a user wants to express that they find their friend’s joke pathetically hilarious, there is a sticker that captures this emotion without the user having to take a photo, a video, or make a recording to present this thought/emotion. Friendmojis could be a potential future approach to the concept, where stickers tags of two users are created in reference to the profile that the female user is viewing. The friendmojis would correspond to the specific prompts where it might be best to envision both users, such as the “we’ll get along if you’re also” and the “you know I’m into you when” prompts, to create intrigue and curiosity. This mimicking of an interaction could help the user better envision the individual as well as the potential synergy. This is exemplified in Fig. 21.

7.3.4
SNAPCHAT'S
CAMEO



Snapchat's "Cameo" feature

Another source of inspiration was Snapchat’s “Cameo” feature, whereby one takes a picture of one’s head and then stick that image on top of an existing video from Snapchat’s own video bank. With this, one can send a personalized GIF-like video to better portray one’s feelings to friends. This is a more advanced or visually stimulating version of the bitmoji. Additionally, cameos can also feature another person from one’s contact list.

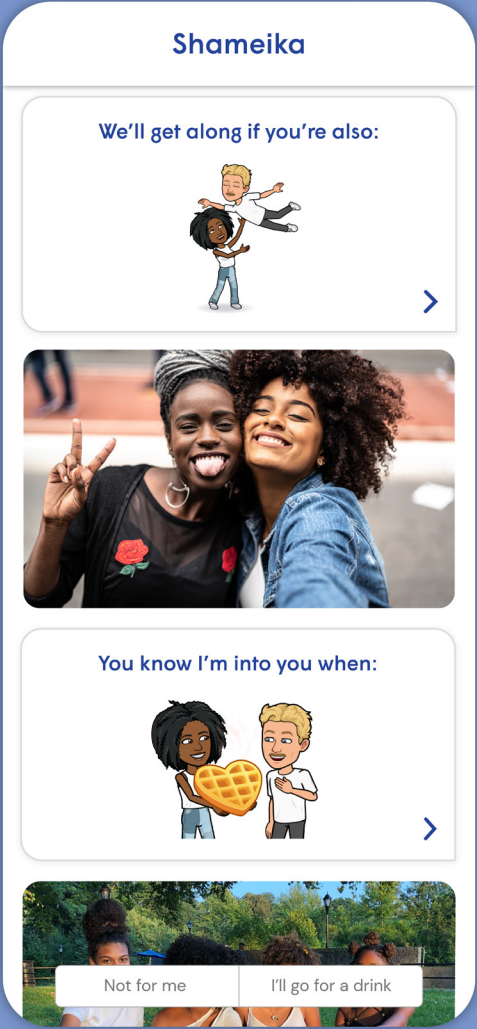
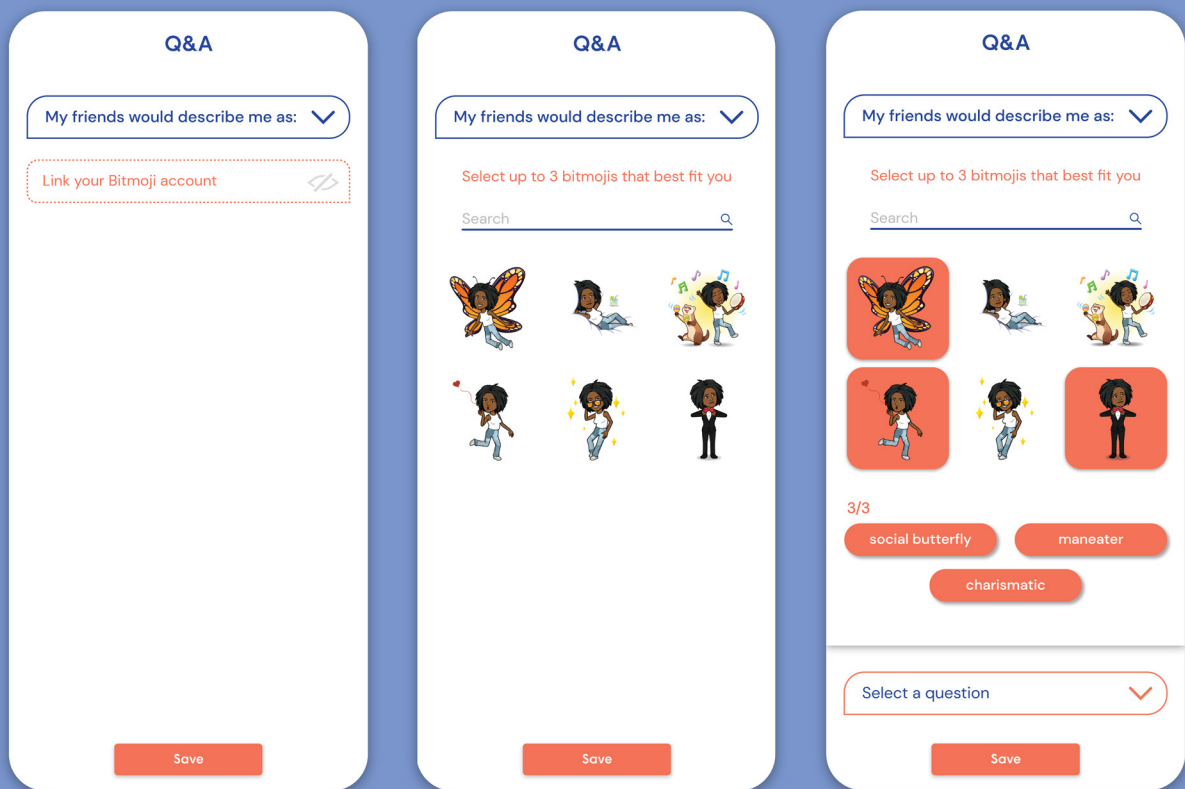


FIG. 21
How the Friendmoji feature
could potentially look like



7.3.5 AUGMENTED REALITY

Augmented reality has prospects in many industries, from education to healthcare to construction. Now AR has come to advertising, allowing marketers and advertisers to reach out to consumers in a more interactive way through social media filters by virtually interacting with their physical spaces. This simple manner of intersecting the online with the offline proved to be interesting, as it allowed for the consumers to envision the product. Thus this concept developed into the integration of the bitmoji into a profile- to allow for the users to envision the potential mate slightly better and view them more as a human, and less than a passport-mimicking profile.

7.3.6 CONCEPT ASSESSMENT

Much like the behavior tags, the use of the Bitmoji intends to provide enough information in which users no longer seek additional ones (C1) to make a determined decision (C5) as the visualization of the activity and emoji presented allows for them to envision the person’s personality core, behavior (C12), and the potential interaction (C3, C4, C12). The universality of the avatar emojis used (bitmojis, memojis, etc.) proves that this design is not only beneficial in the decision making of other genders, but is also gender ambiguous as a tool for mate selection (C6, C7). The step of incorporating this feature, however, can be considered a little tricky in regards to its alignment with the Breeze brand DNA (C11), and is further assessed in the next chapter. This feature addresses the rest of the criteria in the same manner as the behavior tags (C8, C9, C10, C13, V14, C15).

FIG. 22
Setting up the Bitmoji feature- you either do so by picking the ones you visually or textually identify with



7.4.0

CONCEPT 3

7.4.1
AIM

The aim of this concept was to provide a glimpse into a feasible future experience of the Breeze service (intersection of future target users and future of online dating). Four variations in an evolved form are presented, in which the interface of a profile lubricates the users to the ultimately visual and experiential future of online dating.

7.4.2
PROFILE INTERFACE

The prototype split into four designs shows how the profile interface can be developed towards an experience that enhances the envisioning process even more. Here, the interface and its influence on experience was used to mimic the process of the mate assessment process. The self is multifaceted, it is dynamic, and it is ephemeral. Similarly, so is human connection. When two individuals head towards each other, both physically and emotionally, a process of unraveling occurs. The process of mate assessment is not linear. It is synchronous. The instinctual choreography that happens between two people, in which qualities, opinions, emotions, etc. occur at a simultaneous time are visualized in the format of the varying interfaces. Like a fingerprint scan, one requires information of various levels, dimensions, and layers. This can be visually represented by the layers and forms that structure the profile.

FIG. 23
Interface design
explorations

7.4.3
DESIGN 1

This design was created to illustrate the most feasible direction this concept could take. Unlike the profile today in which information is exposed through a scrolling-down motion, the characteristics and qualities of the individual are quite literally layered. The user is given the freedom in this phase to select which information to discover, based on the visual stimulation from the photos. This mimics a conversation one has, where certain information stands out from the others, in which the listener will follow up on to gain a deeper understanding. In the visual for example, one might be attracted to the creative look the female presents. They will therefore open up the “layer” that might present her hobbies, interests, etc.

7.4.4
DESIGN 2

In the next phase, the freedom of choice for information exposition becomes more limited. In this example, to reveal the photos, one must “scratch” it off. The content of one’s profile is presented through sticker shapes, which one must swipe to peel off. This intimate process of unraveling someone is quite exciting, much like trying to figure out the clues to a puzzle. This example mimics the randomness of information discovery of a potential mate. One does not know what information they are going to get, fighting the de-sensitized process of mate assessment one forms out of habit when given the same structured profile. Each set of data points is jumbled up with every profile. The same kind of information is not found in the same location of every profile.

FIG. 24
Top: Design 1
Bottom: Design 2



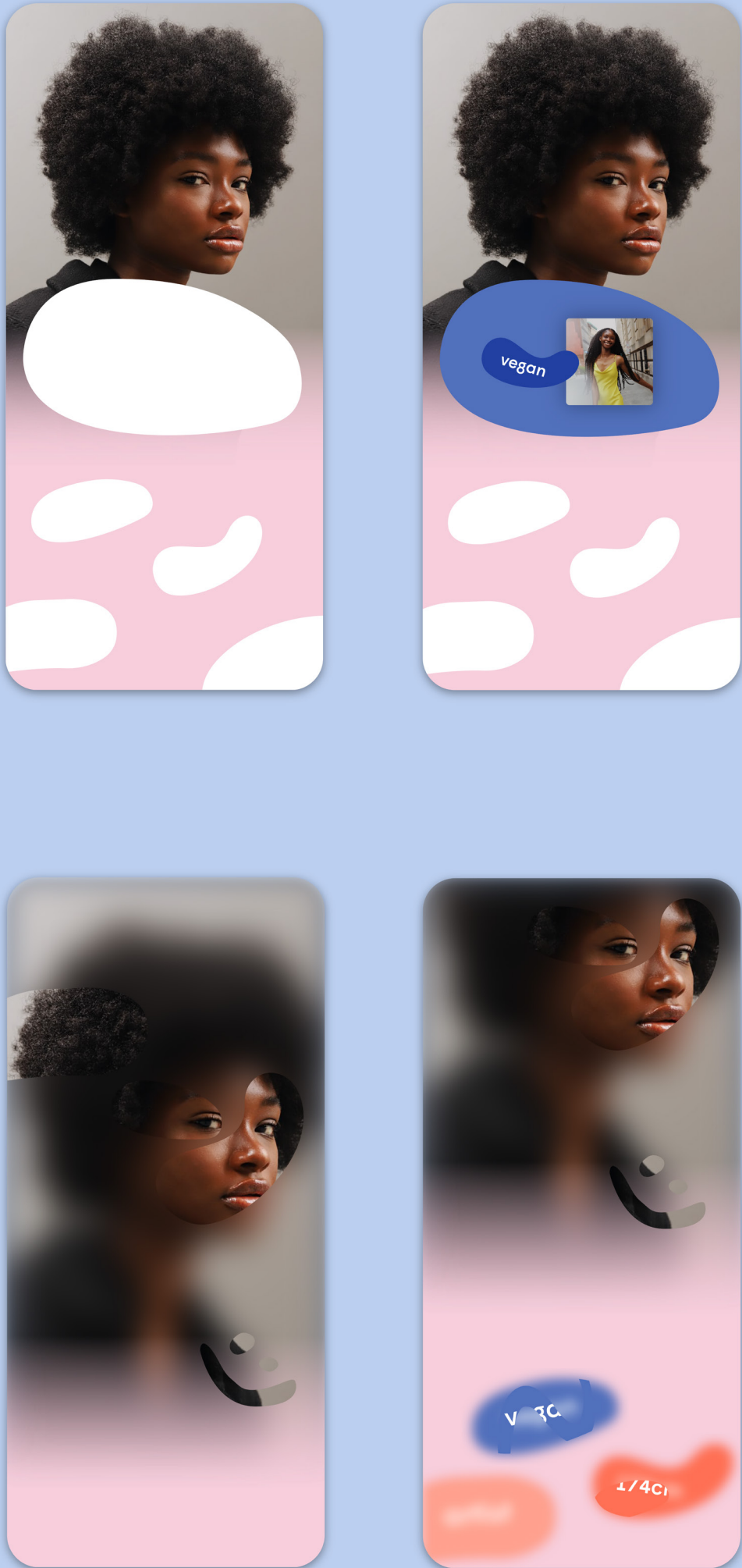
74.5
DESIGN 3

In this design, bubbles that float over the photos beckon one to pop them to expose the information. The characteristics then remain over the photos of the individual, much like impressions and thoughts one might have during the mate assessment process. This process, as you can see, is more visualized. Perhaps by somewhat gamifying information exposure, Breeze’s playful and quirky brand identity will be built upon with this design language.

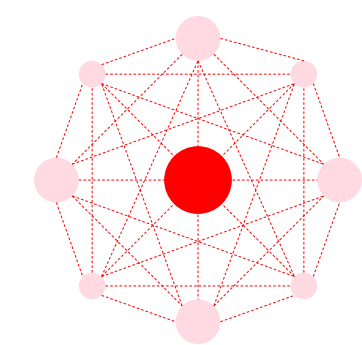
74.6
DESIGN 4

Finally, the fourth design was inspired by the wiping off foggy windows. Here, the wiping off of content is used as an example to illustrate the non-linear process of acquiring information, much like the previous designs. The randomness of the stated design creates unity across all profiles, yet provides an element of surprise regarding the order in which the information is presented (in relation to other profiles viewed as well). With whatever content one has discovered, the user will dwell on the information without any biases, or expectations from the information exposed previously as they will be unrelated. In this design, the user is also given the option of not viewing the photos first. Although it is not certain that this feature will encourage users to focus on other information, it is still important to provide an interface in which the level of attractiveness is not the first data point, as this is a relatively male-specific value in mate selection.

FIG. 25
Top: Design 3
Bottom: Design 4



7.4.7 MIRRORING OFFLINE ASSESSMENT



The process of getting to know someone is a multidimensional process, and not as linear as profiles present people to be

Assessing a mate is like wiping fog off of a window or a mirror. With every motion, more information is exposed, and the context/individual is presented. This, however, requires effort. One doesn't know what one is about to wipe and discover. Love is not simple. It requires time. The example of the fog on the mirror, and the movement of clouds up in the air acted as inspiration for the interface ideation. The pure emotion of understanding one another and being seen for who you are is a result of countless clouds clearing a path, naturally or through hard work. The increased duration of time to review a full profile with this design (much like the process of human connection) allows one to fully soak in all information without the swipe-swipe-swipe mindset that other dating app users have. Additionally, an infamous quote from Shrek that acts as a core memory for almost half the world's population best captures the aim and inspiration behind this concept. "Layers. Onions have layers. Ogres have layers. Onions have layers. You get it? We both have layers".



7.4.8 CONCEPT ASSESSMENT

This attempt in digitizing the experience of getting to know someone through interface design intends to encourage less information seeking, and more information receiving as the user will place themselves into a familiar process- much like meeting someone at a bar, but online, and without an actual interaction (C1, C3, C4, C5). This online experience that encapsulates the complex and multidimensional process of mate selection potentially provides a new meaning for Breeze (C12), leaving space for improvement and evolution (C8). This pure visual experience is now closer to the envisioned metaverse future, and prepares the users to experience mate selection as we know offline, online. The future target group's potential relationship to the online realm is predicted to be more visually oriented, as the online domain is being saturated with social media and platforms as such that value visual information (take Netflix's home page for example, in which thumbnails of films play a major role in enticing the viewers through strategically and specifically selected visual content). Therefore, this concept intends to remain relevant a few years from now as it targets the future users (C13) and aligns with the direction towards this described future (C14, C15). The designs created for this concept align with the branding of Breeze, where visual and form-based information were obtained from the website, Instagram, and advertisements (C11). Although they might overstep the boundaries with the new interface approach, this concept is afterall a potential design of the future, a reference point for current developments, and a reminder as to how the future Breeze could look like. This concept addresses the other design criteria in the same manner as the previous prototypes (C6, C7, C9, C10).

7.5.1
AIM

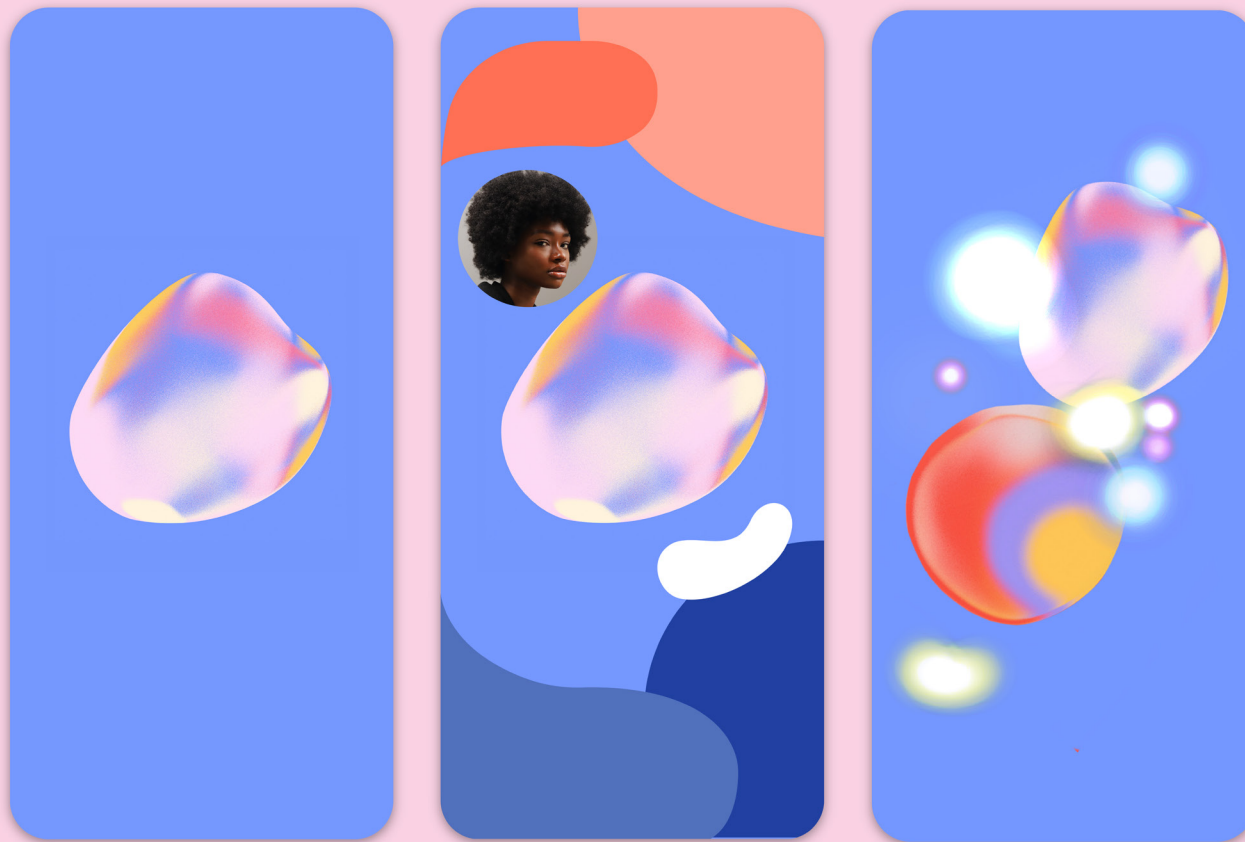
This concept is a symbol, an abstract representation and encapsulation of all the findings of the research and the previous concepts. A future vision, a concept car, if you may. Thus, please interpret the following information as a future that Breeze could potentially have in which visual and behavioral information is superior. The concept car, known as the “Breeze Blob” is a vision created with the aim of communicating the direction that Breeze should take .

7.5.2
THE BLOB

The Breeze blob is a spatially ambiguous experience that encapsulates your social characteristics in an innately comprehensible form. Its features are acutely relevant to the time of its existence, multi-referential to the constructs created in the past and to the communication, sociality, and identity that are produced with the resources available within both the online and offline realm. This description goes to show that the visual presented in Fig. 25 acts as a placeholder for what a future online dating experience may look like- completely absurd to us now and visually immersive. The “blob” acts as a visual symbol for how something like behavior (both online and offline) can be represented in a nonconventional way, at least non-conventional for us now.

The blob is generated automatically, much like the bitmojis of the concept car are. Once the user answers the behavior-oriented prompts, the information is used as input for the blob, in which each answer determines a specific feature of the form, whether it is the color, the shape, the speed of its movement, etc.

FIG. 26
Ideations as to how an interface and
information can be purely visual



INSPIRATION

7.5.3 AUTHENTICITY

This feature is an abstract one, where in this example, an answer to a prompt is provided through a video. For the blob to be formed, it would be intended for the users to continuously answer questions every day with only one shot, to bring forth authenticity into the visual information by removing the freedom for curation and by supplying new information in reliance to one's natural and never-ending development. Ideally, the viewer sees the blob on a profile and immediately gets a feeling for someone's vibe. If interested or curious, they may select a floating form (that corresponds to a color, movement, etc. of the blob) to get more information, whereby the viewer will be presented with the recorded video. Additionally, the concept entails the option of viewing both blobs interacting with one another, to mimic potential chemistry. Here, the user might take note of the common colors, movements, etc. that the two users share, much like what the current Breeze tags do (through color differences). This idea showcases the possibility of chemistry being redefined, based on our behavioral development online. This concept goes to show that there will be a new base and criteria used for determining compatibility.

7.5.4 WHY BLOB?

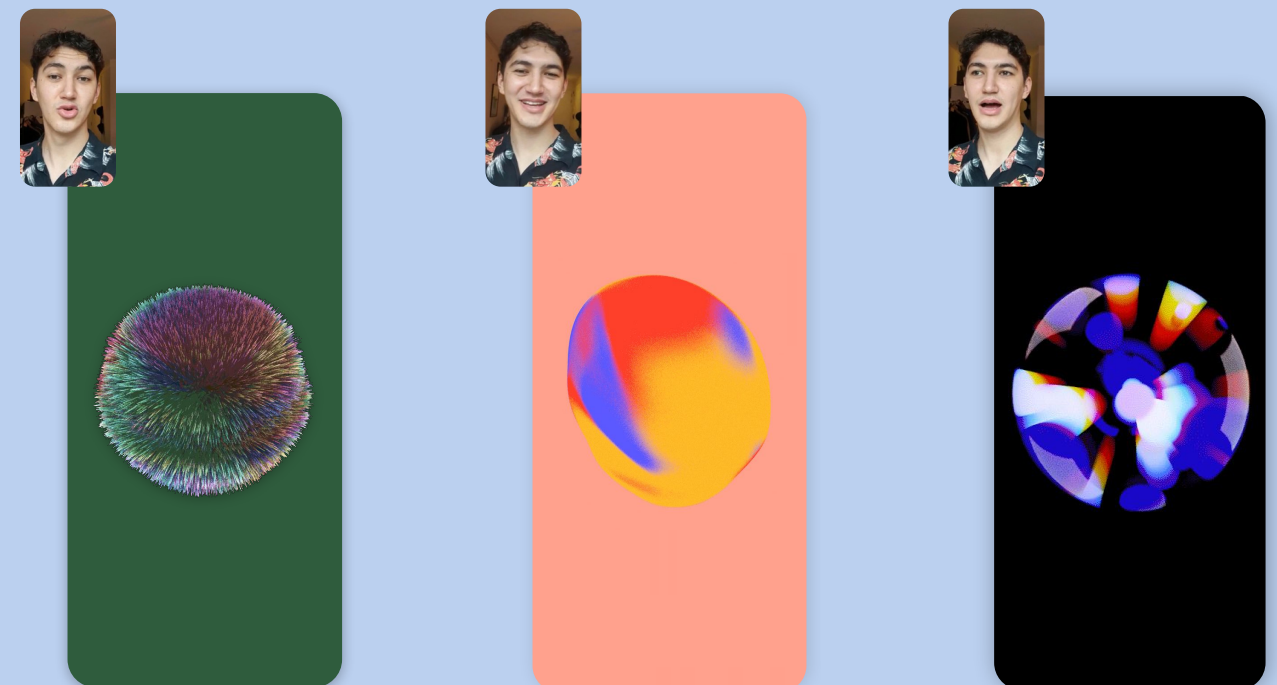
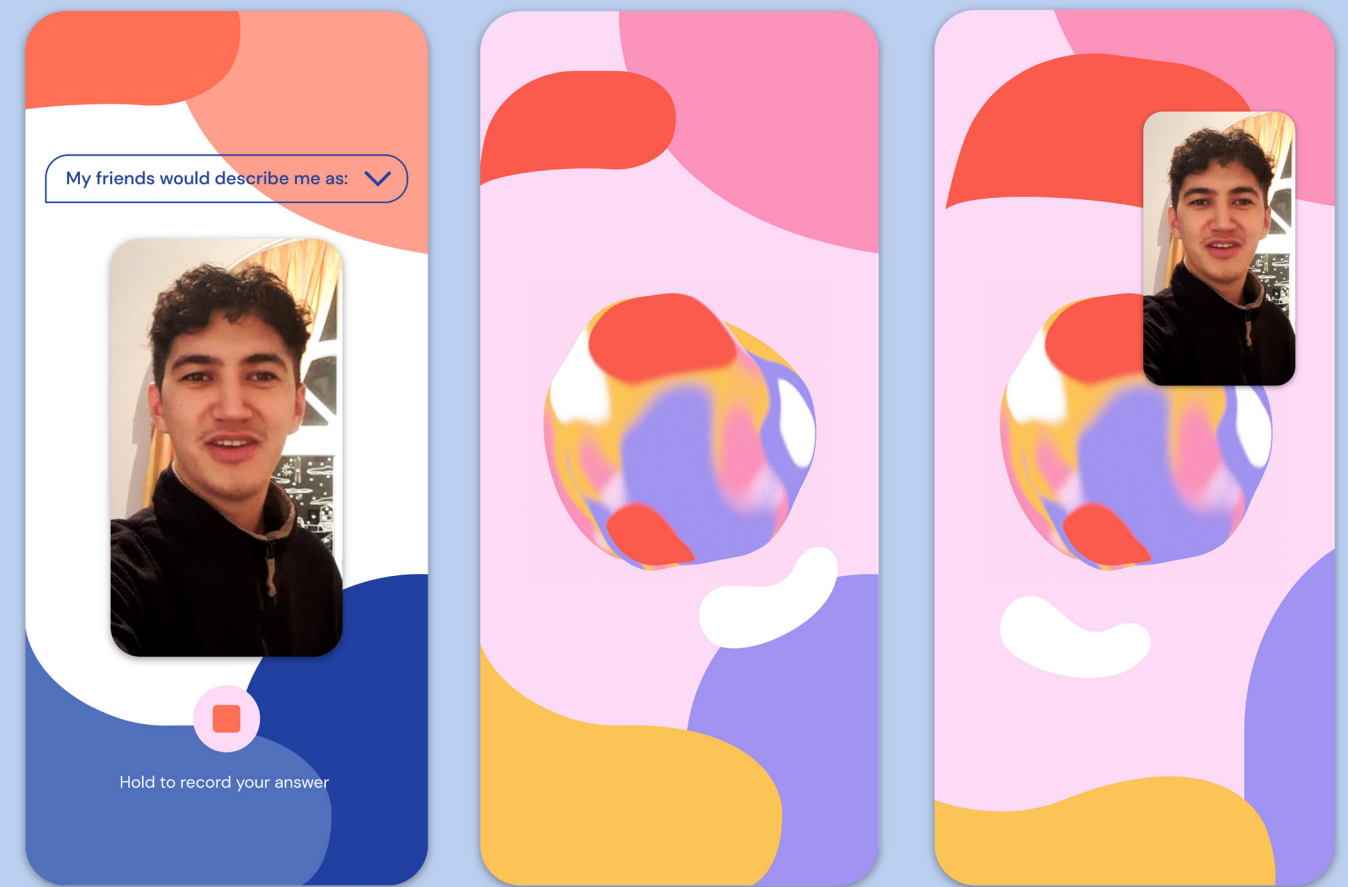


Offline space can be immersive, why not the online? This is what the aim of the concept is: providing a visually stimulating experience of a profile

Why not simply present answers through video, why the blob? One might ask. As mentioned before, this blob is simply a representation of the fact that we don't know exactly what our online language will be like, even a few years from now, but trends show that it's headed towards a visually-oriented one. The domain is developing at an accelerating rate, and thus requires services, like Breeze, to be prepared and aware of this fact as a vital platform for the pursuit of love. This concept blob is a reminder, an inner compass, and a framework that the online dating app should keep in mind to stay future proof. As a designer, a blob was the most familiar visual language in presenting the absurdity of the future when it comes to translating behavior. The blob is a flexible form. As seen in Fig. 27, the blob changes form with every new information that it is fed- no blob is ever the same- an online fingerprint. Thus, when a user sees a blob, intrigue is triggered. The user aims in finding out the person behind the blob.

FIG. 27

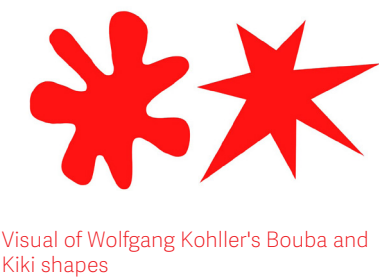
Top: Set-up of blob through prompts
Bottom: How the blob aesthetic can change based on the provided answer



7.5.5
VISUALIZING
THE COMPLEX

Whether it is aura photography or Siri's voice in waves (elaborated in Appendix D.4), complex concepts are being visualized in beautiful and comprehensive ways. Not only that, but these creative elements give birth to new forms of assessment and experience (much like the sensory visuals of Windows Media Player). One, however, might question the chance of visual information being interpreted correctly, as perception is subjective. This is an important question to ask, especially as the project revolves around visual-information.

7.5.6
THE BOUBA
KIKI EFFECT



This phenomenon was discovered in 1929 by Wolfgang Kohler, who examined the cross-modal link between senses by word and form association (Gallagher, 2021). Originally, he used the words “maluma” and “takete” for people to connect either to a round or a spiky shape (as presented on the left). More than 70% of the people confirmed the Bouba/Kiki effect, where speakers of 17 out of 25 languages systematically validated the effect (Gallagher, 2021). Cwiek, an expert in iconicity in language and sound symbolism, states that at the end, we are all the same. The following quote by him best captures the power of visual information:

“ **When we don’t share a language, it’s easier to rely on resemblance than to rely on something very abstract. If the signal gets to you then you’re more likely to repeat it and it’s more likely to be coined as a term.** ”

(Gallagher, 2021)



7.5.7
CONCEPT
ASSESSMENT

Albeit the abstractness of this final concept, it is a culmination of the root findings of this research: people value social behavior in mate assessment through visual information to enhance the envisioning process of an offline interaction for assured decision making (C1, C2, C3, C5). Even if the YUP target group of the future might not value this, its protest for visual-orientation links all target groups together as it aims to translate complex concepts as we head towards a deeper and more interactive reality within the online domain (C4, C12, C13, C14). This concept is least aligned with the current Breeze brand DNA, and understandably so, as it is a symbol. It does, however, reference several branding features such as the selected colors and the process of answering prompts (C11). It also addresses the future vision for matching people together, whether it be for love or friends, and aims to create more matches by presenting an enhanced online dating experience (C9, C10).

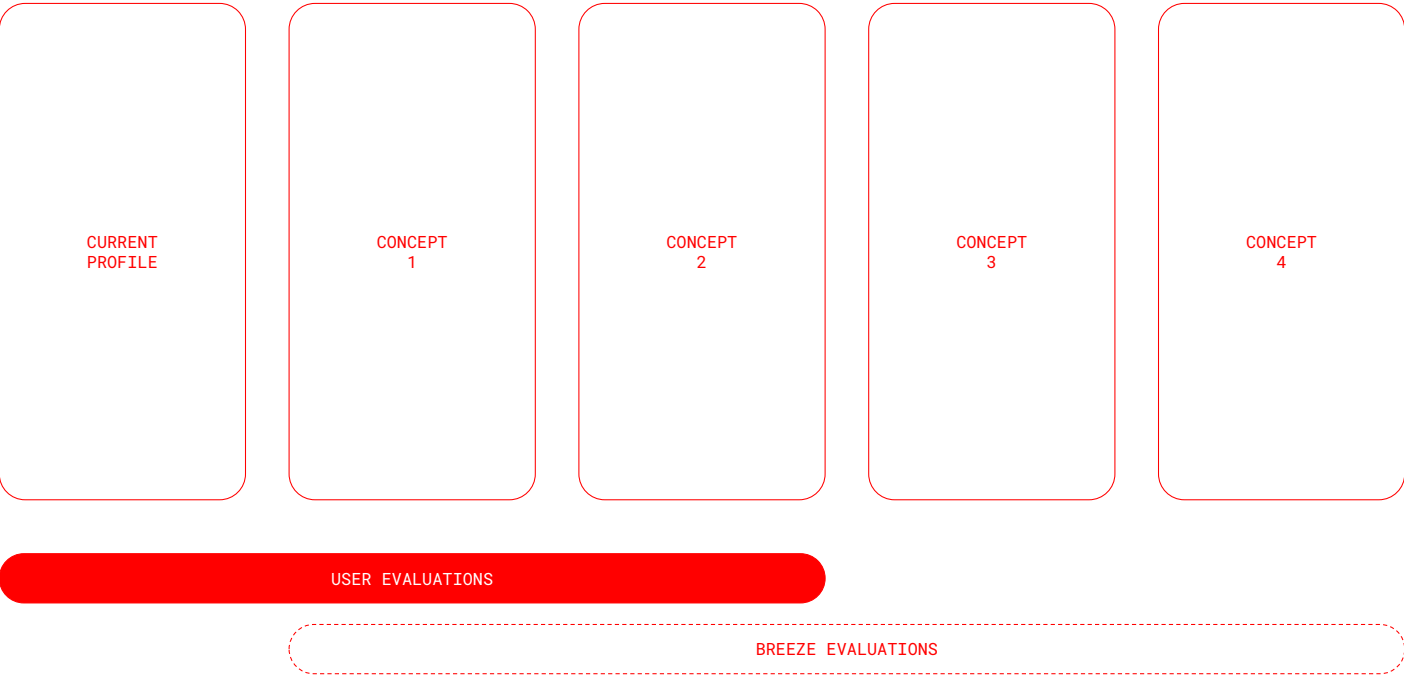
8

CONCEPT EVALUATIONS

This chapter elaborates upon the user and Breeze evaluations carried out in attempts to test the concepts' credibility, usability, and feasibility. Reoccurring themes were unraveled for each concept, and the pros and cons of the designa were explored through a generative approach. The chapter ends with a conclusion.

In response to the research question of the project, the previously presented designs intend to better address the needs of female YUP users in the online context. Now, we move onto investigating the degree to which the design question of investigating ways in which a tool can enhance the scope’s online dating experience. To evaluate the credibility, usability, experience, and feasibility of the prototypes, evaluation sessions were carried out with YUP females and the Breeze team. This section elaborates upon the research goals and procedure of each evaluation with the corresponding party, giving an overview of the key findings of both evaluations through analysis. Each party was presented with a different set of concepts, as illustrated in Fig. 28, aimed at exploring the party-specific research goals, as elaborated upon in the following section, in which their understanding, view of the concepts, and the initial impressions of them were assessed for the “fit”. First, let’s look into the mate assessment experience of the YUP females through the different concepts.

FIG. 28



8.2.1

RESEARCH GOALS

The user group was presented with concept 1 and 2, as these designs intend to address the values and needs of the demographic in mate selection. The goal of the interviews with this party was to see the 1. potential effect of the concepts on the females’ information seeking and processing, 2. usability of the designs, 3. pros and cons of each concept, 4. degree to which each concept helped the envisioning of behavior and offline interaction, and finally 5. level of accuracy in behavior and character prediction through each concept. Despite the fact that concept 2 is intended for the future target users of Breeze, this evaluation also helped determine to what extent the visual feature will be accepted by and beneficial to the YUP females of today for further inspiration in ways which Breeze can implement future-oriented design features.

8.2.2

PROCEDURE

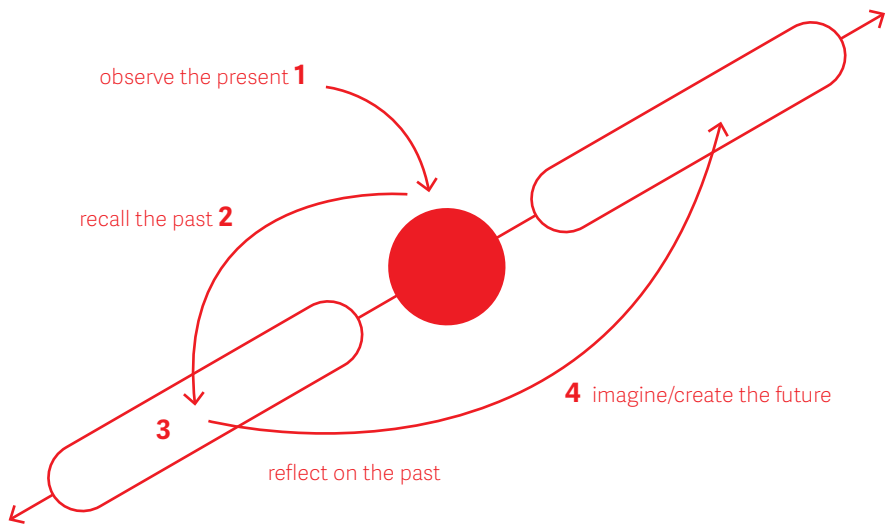
A group of eleven YUP female professionals were selected (some of which partook in the previous user research) and interviewed individually to evaluate the concepts. As the aim of this evaluation was to acquire an understanding for the general experience of the design and its effect on the females’ mate assessment, three functioning profile prototypes were created of the same existing YUP male subject: the first was his current Breeze profile, the second implemented the behavior tags feature (concept 1), and the third implemented the visual feature (concept 2). The current profile design was used as an anchor point, to understand the different effects of concept 1 and 2 on the females’ online dating experience. Additionally, the selected male subject provided all necessary relevant information for the formation of the profiles which included concept 1 and 2 to generate a realistic and cohesive representation of himself for viable feedback from the participants. These profiles can be found in Appendix E.3-E.5.

By going through each profile individually, the participants were asked to speak out their thoughts on the potential mate, in which questions from the interview guide (as found in Appendix E.1) were probed to reveal their prediction of the subject’s character and behavior, as well as the potential offline interaction.

8.2.3 GENERATIVE APPROACH

This generative approach combined both the user observation and an interview methods with intentions to acquire explicit, observable, tacit, and latent knowledge of the YUP females by observing their profile appraisal and experience of the available online features/tools for mate compatibility assessment. Thus, Sanders and Stappers’ (2012) “Path of Expression” concept (Fig. 29) was used as inspiration for the generation of questions, which aimed to unlock the participants’ visions of their desired futures, triggering them to observe their present experience of the profile assessment, and then move into reflecting upon their past experiences in profile setup. These questions can be found in Appendix E.1

FIG. 29
Sanders and Stappers’ (2012)
Path of Expression



8.2.4 ANALYSIS

The following findings summarize the general consensus on the male’s predicted character, behavior, and the envisioned offline interaction based on the available features of each profile that have been formulated after clustering all feedback from the evaluations (as seen in Appendix E.6). The section concludes with ways in which each concept can be improved to better address the research and design question.

8.3.0 CURRENT PROFILE EVALUATION

8.3.1 PHOTOS AS DETERMINANTS OF BEHAVIOR

When asked about their perception of the behavior of the male subject, the participants gravitated towards acquiring information from the photos to determine this. When assessing the photos, the factors that the females took into consideration were the male’s physical appearance, facial expression, context, and order in which the photos were presented. Their immediate assumptions drawn from visual information are a result of having too little information on a profile- one participant describes the process of assessing the male as “cloudy” (Participant 3).

8.3.2 RELIANCE ON STEREOTYPES

The photos probed a big portion of the participants to rely on their stereotypes. The participants attempted to decipher the visual elements they could comprehend. This process of generalization based on personal experiences can also be found in consumer behavior, in which the formation of attitudes towards a product is rooted in the information that one has categorized in order to comprehend it (Hoyer et al., 2016). This can be explained by the information insufficiency issue discovered in the user research that was possibly evident in these evaluations, causing the participants to resort to all of their “known” experiences, personal properties, and inclinations (Psycho Tests, 2022) to better understand the male subject. Similarly, after the decipherment of behavior from photos, the participants moved onto the metric information as the age, height, and occupation. The stereotypes associated with the jobs triggered the female participants to envision the male subject within that context, emphasizing the risk in misinterpretation when relying on stereotypes associated with such explicit yet superficial information.

8.3.3 UNCERTAINTY

Despite the use of stereotypes and biases, the participants showed uncertainty in their own judgment and thus in the prediction of the male’s behavior. Due to this, they were unsure of how to feel about him, exposing the influence of uncertainty in the prediction of the offline interaction. A lot of the assessments began with “I think” and “I feel like” sentences, emphasizing the insecurity in their own impressions of the male.

<div>8.4.0</div> <div>CONCEPT 1 EVALUATION</div>	<div>8.5.0</div> <div>CONCEPT 2 EVALUATION</div>
<div>8.4.1</div> <div>CONFIRMATION OR CHANGE IN IMPRESSION</div>	<div>8.5.1</div> <div>PERSONAL USE DETERMINES OPINION ON FEATURE</div>
<div>8.4.2</div> <div>ENHANCING ENVISIONING</div> <div> <p>With the introduction of the behavior tags on the preexisting profile, the participants expressed a sense of comfort and/or certainty in their impression of the male subject, whether it was confirming their previous prediction of the character, or ultimately changing their impressions altogether. The increased level of comfort and certainty intended by the design would potentially increase the females’ online dating experience, by reducing the risk of profile rejection due to the sense of doubt.</p> </div>	<div> <p>The participants shared an array of mixed reviews regarding the Bitmoji visual tool- they either completely rejected it as plausible information or expressed preference for it in comparison to the current profile and profile with concept 1. The degree of liking was correlated to their individual experience of using this specific Bitmoji tool, where the participants that frequently expressed themselves in this visual manner through chats found the feature “amusing”, “fun”, and “cute”. The other portion of the participants found the information incomprehensible and inhumane, much like perceiving a language one has no knowledge in. One participant expressed that the male subject “exists in two dimensions now” (Participant 3), thus making the process of understanding his character and behavior a little more difficult.</p> </div>
<div>8.4.3</div> <div>CONTRADICTION IN TAGS</div> <div> <p>The additional information also proved to help the participants to envision the behavior and the date better. With the prompts that now probe one to imagine the male subject in various settings, several participants mentioned a change in expectation for the date. In fact, some participants were immediately aware of the impact of the new feature: “this profile is less about how he thinks he’s attractive, and more about how he behaves” (Participant 3). As the information was perceived as “more personal” (Participant 5), the participants had “more empathy towards him” (Participant 8) now. Additionally, the participants had more information to paint the offline interaction picture with, as they also had more probes to lead a conversation with.</p> </div>	<div>8.5.2</div> <div>HUMANIZATION OF MALE SUBJECT</div> <div> <p>The visual representation of the male acted as a new source of information for the envisioning process for some of the participants, in which it gave them an expectation of his reactions and body language. The tool extended their expectation of him, showing both the “internal and external” side of a person. With this, the pleased participants felt “more attached to this person” because of the “more realistic representation of him” of which they could now relate better to.</p> </div>
<div>8.5.3</div> <div>GAMIFICATION OF BEHAVIORAL INFORMATION</div> <div> <p>A lot of the participants expressed confusion with tags presented in certain prompts, as some contradict one another. An example of this is the male's response to the prompt “On our date, don’t be surprised if I’m...” in which he stated to be “a little shy”, “awkward”, and “spontaneous”. The first and the last tags disrupted the participants’ envisioning of him as they found the tags to present opposite qualities. To avoid this, a suggestion for improvement is to provide a wider range of differing tags that are independent of one another.</p> </div>	<div> <p>The setup of the feature in which the bitmojis are elaborated upon with the behavior tags once the section was selected by the user, created a gamified experience of unraveling one’s behavior. The processing of information was “kind of a fun decoding game”, where the participants found themselves guessing what the bitmojis could represent before flipping it for the answer. This playful quality additionally created more attention to the actual text of the behavior tags, allowing one to soak in the information in a different manner.</p> </div>

8.5.4 DISTRACTING QUALITY

This was , however, a different case for the participants that showed disinterest and dissatisfaction with the feature. The gamification proved to be overwhelming for them, taking the attention away from what the Bitmoji actually represents, and creating more focus on the visual language of the Bitmoji. This critique was hypothesized before the evaluations were carried out, as the YUP females were predicted to use the visual tool less frequently than the younger generations and thus experienced the visual language differently. However, this feedback also shined light on the significance of visual information and the extent to which it should be detailed- enough to represent an individual, and minimal enough to be digestible to the eye and mind.

8.5.5 CREATING MORE UNCERTAINTY

Additionally, the visual language of the Bitmojis that was seen as incomprehensible by some of the participants triggered uncertainty in the prediction of the male's behavior and character. Some stated that the tool did not in fact help them understand the male better, and created more space for misinterpretation.

8.5.6 MISALIGNMENT AND MISINTERPRETATION

The relationship between the tags and the corresponding Bitmojis were perceived as misaligned most of the time. In fact, some of the participants were not aware of the fact that the exposed tags were textual references to the Bitmojis. Despite this design-specific feedback, the main takeaway is that visual language triggers subjective interpretations. This goes in line with the previously stated analysis that the extent to which the visual information is realistic needs to be heavily investigated consistently, as various demographics will show to have different relationships to the spectrum of visual realism and minimalism.

8.5.7 THE CRINGE EFFECT

Surprisingly, almost all participants expressed that Bitmojis are something that their aunts or mothers use. This creates a connotation to the visual tool in which it was perceived as “cringe”, much like when one is “trying too hard” to be modern. This association obstructed their envisioning process, and added a layer of judgment to the tool, as opposed to using it as an enhancement to the envisioning process of the male subject.

8.5.8 IMPROVING EXPERIENCE

Despite the multiple initial negative thoughts received, with more time spent on interpreting the visual information, several participants stated to feel like it was “more fun now” to decipher them. This illustrates the level of comfort one needs to have with visual information in order to make effective use of it. The sample size of this evaluation, however, does not suffice to conclude that everyone would eventually feel this comfort. Thus, different measures can be taken to maintain visual information on a profile in a more digestible manner. A participant mentioned that using GIFs would prove to be more comprehensible and authentic. As complex as the study of behavior is, this evaluation proved that one visual feature, as Bitmojis, won't magically solve the problem of difficult and/or inaccurate behavior prediction.

Additionally, a few of the participants mentioned their awareness of the negative perception, and the possibility that this would be a different case if they themselves were to set up a profile with Bitmojis. This point presents the limitation of this evaluation structure- for improvement and more reliable feedback, the participants would ideally undergo personal profile set-up with the feature, and then the profile assessment of males.

8.6.0

CONCLUSION

The user evaluations with the current profile of the male subject presented the visual-orientation towards information seeking and processing in mate selection, in which the females used the photos as a source for determining behavior (as seen in the user observations). In addition to that, the participants used the biometric information to paint a better picture of the male, with constant references to triggered stereotypes as a method for categorizing and better understanding the information. This approach was a common one as the participants expressed the lack of vital information that would help the envisioning process. This level of uncertainty remained consistent amongst all participants.

With the introduction of behavior tags, the level of certainty in the envisioning of the male subject increased. With new behavior-oriented information, the participants showed an increased level of confidence in their impressions- whether it was a change in impression of the male subject altogether, or simply a confirmation of their expectations from the first profile (current Breeze one). The questions also probed the male user to provide intimate information, which the participants perceived as vulnerable and honest. These are traits they valued in a mate, thus their level of attraction towards the male subject naturally increased. From a critical perspective, several participants expressed confusion with some answers to the certain prompts, as there were cases in which the tags contradicted themselves. This creates a risk in reducing the users' level of confidence when it comes to the prediction of behavior, and can therefore be resolved with a more thorough exploration of diverse tags that are independent of one another.

The final presented profile with the behavior tags exposed mixed reviews from the YUP females. The goal of this evaluation was to see the extent to which the scope was accepting of visual information such as Bitmojis, as it was hypothesized that they would not be the biggest fans of this tool due to their inexperience of its frequent usage and general experience of expressing themselves online visually. Nonetheless, a lot of the participants expressed positive feedback on the feature, as they themselves used this visual tool frequently, and thus had an understanding for the language. The participants who were not as familiar with Bitmojis expressed frustration and dissatisfaction with it, as they found it "cringe" and confusing. This shined light on the significance of visual information and the corresponding elements (such as level of realism and minimalism) on the processing of information. Additionally, the feature gamified the prediction of behavior on a profile. This was either taken well or poorly by the participants, who either stated that they liked the experience of decoding behavior in this manner, or found the experience distracting from actually getting to know the male subject.

The overall evaluations did prove the impact of visual information on the prediction of behavior. The behavior tags was the most preferred feature by the participants, as it allowed them to seamlessly envision the male subject's behavior. The evaluations with the Bitmojis stressed the importance of visual language, and the sensitivity that one had with such information. Thus, for the future target users, a visual language must be selected that the majority of the demographic was familiar with that can be consistently updated and modified, as visual language such as the verbal evolves at an exponential rate.

8.7.1

RESEARCH GOALS

For the Breeze evaluations, all prototypes were presented in aims to 1. lubricate the company to the findings of the research and their application to the designs, 2. see how these concepts might fit into their future vision and strategic priorities, 3. understand if and how the designs can be better aligned with the Breeze brand identity, and 4. acquire inspiration for how else the concepts can help the envisioning process for females. Despite the fact that the Bitmojis were simply an example for how visual information can be implemented into a profile, the critical feedback from the participants emphasizes the sensitivity of such a language.

8.7.2

PROCEDURE

With Breeze as the foundation of the research, three evaluation sessions were carried out with Breeze employees (the CEO, head of quality assurance, and CFO). All prototypes and supporting corresponding findings from the user evaluations were initially presented to them with several insights from the user evaluations. An interview guide (Appendix E.2) was created in reference to the design criteria created, which scaffolding to the questions asked. The questions aimed to unravel their personal impressions of each concept, their honest opinions on the concepts' alignment to the Breeze brand identity, visions, and strategic priorities, and finally the viability, feasibility, and desirability of each concept. As previously mentioned, the evaluations also acted as a strategic communication tool to the client, warming them up to the findings and concepts prior to the final presentation and submission of the report.

8.7.3

ANALYSIS

The following findings summarize the general consensus on Breeze's professional take on each concept that has been formulated after clustering all feedback from the evaluations (as seen in Appendix E.7). The analysis was shaped by the party's feedback on the concepts' alignment with the brand identity, capabilities for implementation, and future vision in addition to their thoughts on the concepts' relationship to the research and design question. The section concludes with ways in which each concept can be improved to better align with the aforementioned factors.

8.8.1

BRAND ALIGNMENT

The Breeze participants found the behavior tags designed to be in line with the brand DNA they have today. One participant stated that this feature was an "extension" of their tools and capabilities which not only proves the concept's alignment with the brand identity, but the aesthetics as well.

8.8.2

FEASIBILITY

The participants found that the the seamless and congruent visual brand language between the feature and the current brand identity presents immediate implementability into the service today.

8.8.3

FUTURE VISION, RESEARCH
AND DESIGN QUESTION

Breeze hopes the service excels in being an easily usable tool that enhances the profile assessment process of their users. Their main focus lies in offline social interaction, where all of their work goes towards providing users the confidence to take that step towards the offline date. They found this concept to be directly in line towards this vision, agreeing upon the use of this behavior-oriented direction in getting there. Additionally, they found it to address the mate selection values and needs of female users. This shows the clarity and desirability of the concept, and as it is intended for the present target users, the confirmation of the feasibility from the client presents a degree of success in the direction of this design.

8.8.4

SUGGESTIONS FOR
IMPROVEMENT

There were several remarks on the distinguishability of the behavior tags from the current prompts, in which the participants found the design and set-up of questions to be too similar to what they have today. As a separate feature, the nature of its information presentation can be developed to be seen and interpreted differently by the users, mimicking the nature of mate assessment better.

8.9.0

CONCEPT 2 EVALUATION

8.9.1

BRAND ALIGNMENT

The Breeze participants found that this concept was rather difficult to decode and not "straight to the point" (as the service), yet too plain to help envision an offline interaction. They suggested further investigation and iteration to implement a concept such as this one. Nevertheless, the intention to represent behavioral information visually was agreed upon by all participants, and expressed as in line with the visual and aesthetic direction for Breeze.

8.9.2

FEASIBILITY

Implementing bitmojis is feasible as stated by the participants. However, the visualization of other information, such as the location of the male subject or the potential date venue is more feasible in the near future.

8.9.3

FUTURE VISION, RESEARCH AND DESIGN QUESTION

As this is a concept used to better illustrate potential visual information for the future target audience, the participants were uncertain in the possibility of it aligning with the future vision yet- for this, user research must be carried out with the intended target audience, and from that, the degree to which it enhances the envisioning process of offline interaction can be measured. Nevertheless, the presentation of the Friendmojis (two Bitmojis interacting with one another) excited the Breeze representatives, as this emphasized the offline interaction which they found to strongly align with the future vision.

8.9.4

SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT

The participants shared various ideas of how else visual information on a profile can increase the envisioning process of the offline interaction, such as showcasing the potential location of the date. The Bitmoji has too much of a stylized aesthetic that may conflict with the information processing and brand alignment as well as be considered as too direct, thus removing opportunities for interpretation.

8.10.0

CONCEPT 3 EVALUATION

8.10.1

BRAND ALIGNMENT

The Breeze participants showed interest in the first and third prototype in this concept, as they found them to better align with the brand. In contrast to the others, these designs were seen as more simple and easy to maneuver, addressing the "straight to the point" tone of the brand.

8.10.2

FEASIBILITY

The participants predicted the implementation for such a multi-dimensional profile to be feasible with the infrastructural and technological capabilities they have today. The interaction between the user and the interface/information is very much the same with the current profile and in the intended future-oriented ones, in which the user is given a degree of freedom in revealing information.

8.10.3

FUTURE VISION, RESEARCH AND DESIGN QUESTION

The Breeze participants found the presented interface prototypes to align with the future vision for its role in increasing the envisioning of an online interaction, as the design mimics a conversation (picking which information to expose, or being presented with random ones). This mirroring user interaction would hopefully encourage the users to like profiles, as they have more or less had a "virtual" conversation with them. This would address and make up for the absence of the conversation phase on Breeze.

8.10.4

SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT

Despite the overall positive feedback on the designs, the participants expressed concern on the danger of such a complex and multi-dimensional user experience causing fatigue. This raises the question now of what an individual's threshold for change is, especially that of visual information. Additionally, it is important to be careful when proposing new figurative and literal layers to the interface, as it might encourage more opportunities for curation.

8.11.1
BRAND ALIGNMENT

It was communicated to the participants that the blob in the concept acted as a symbol for the absurdity of the future, and somewhat of a probe for getting a feeling of how to best explain this to the client in their preferred visual language. As expected, the participants expressed intrigue yet doubt in the design, as they found the language to be “too abstract” and “inhumane”. Thus, conflicting with their straight to the point brand DNA. One participant expressed their satisfaction with the idea behind the concept and agreement with the intention, however found that the visual elements such as color and movement gave the concept a “spiritual” meaning, which does not intersect with the Breeze brand identity.

8.11.2
FUTURE VISION, RESEARCH
AND DESIGN QUESTION

Additionally, Breeze wants to be known for being easy to use- the blob creates an experience now where the users will have to investigate it, which goes against the future vision in which the user can ideally judge the presented profile in a matter of seconds. The party also envisioned the future in a less abstract manner, where the profile will still withhold realistic representations of the individual. This was useful feedback, as a new future vision was addressed in this session in regards to the visual expectations of a profile for Breeze. Due to to the surrealism of the blob, they could not determine whether it was aligned with the research and design question.

8.11.3
SUGGESTIONS FOR
IMPROVEMENT

As the blob concept aims to act as a tool for communicating to Breeze the extent to which visual information can represent behavior in an online context, the absurdity acted less as an element of this goal, and more of a distraction to the Breeze participants. It did however probe them to think about the replacement of textual information with the visual, and enticed brainstorming of applicability, such as the aforementioned visualization of the date on a profile.



8.12.0

CONCLUSION

The first concept was described as “immediately implementable” by the Breeze representatives as it was seen as an “extension” of the features and capabilities they have today. Its easy use and address to the mate selection factors touches upon their future vision and brand. The feature, however, is not too distinguishable from their current prompts. A way in which this can be improved is by updating the questions and tags to make it more unique and thus offer a new experience in behavior presentation.

The second concept received mixed reviews, as it did with the YUP female evaluations. The Breeze participants found that it made it a little more difficult to predict one’s behavior, as the visual language triggered thorough investigation of information, when in fact their brand expresses the importance of being “straight to the point”. They did enjoy the friendmojis, however, as they found that it better addressed their future vision in providing a seamless and enhanced experience of assessing a potential match online. A way of improving this overall concept of incorporating visual information to enhance the behavior prediction is perhaps by using a different visual tool (such as GIFs), and/or replacing the current information on the profile today with visuals, to help present the potential offline interaction (such as adding an image of the date location).

For the third concept, the participants showed interest in all prototypes, especially the ones that were more simple in aesthetic nature. They found that the profiles mimicked a conversation, and this was a unique contribution to the service that currently ignores the conversation phase. The prototypes were assessed to be feasible with their current capabilities, however wondered about on the future users’ possible fatigue with the designs. This directed attention to the extent to which visual information should be updated online. In any case, it is rather difficult to evaluate the success of this concept as it is future-oriented, and would require user research with the intended future users.

Finally, the fourth concept did succeed in communicating the intention of the design as a communication tool to the company, however received some critical feedback on how to better express this. The participants found the blob aesthetic to be too inhumane, thus adding some realistic and familiar qualities to the visual would help better express the point of the concept. The participants did find the concept to be on the right track, and agreed with its symbolism of moving towards a completely visually-oriented profile.

9

DISCUSSION

This chapter holds the discussion, in which the research and design questions are reflected upon, and the general findings restated. The limitations of the research follow, organized through the exploration of its credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability.

Alas, with the research and findings evaluated, we end up at the final point of assessment. The initial research question that kicked off the project was: How can needs for an offline interaction be met online to encourage Breeze's young urban professional female users to like profiles?

To better paint the dilemma of the Breeze case, a design question was followed up: How can design enhance the online dating experience and increase the like-rate of Breeze's young urban professional female users?

Sub-questions were created and explored in the literature review, focus group, user observations, and interviews to better paint the picture of the human, the desired behavior, the context, and the tool in the design question through a culture sensitive, gender-intersectional, and archeological perspective. Findings on the females' behaviors online that acted as factors for answering the research and design questions were assessed from a design and socio-cultural perspective and applied to the future vision, strategic priorities, and brand identity of Breeze in which four concepts were created to act as stepping stones towards the envisioned future of online dating. The concepts were used and evaluated by the YUP female users and Breeze representatives.

Exploring the research question, it was concluded from the primary and secondary research that behavioral information online of a potential mate is a need for YUP females in their mate selection process. This attitudinal and activity-based presentation of a male allows the female to envision an offline interaction (a date), and thus determine whether the match is compatible. A seamless envisioning is the result of information sufficiency, much like the transparency of the tool described by Heidegger in "The Question Concerning Technology" (1977). The research aimed at providing such behavioral information that would enforce the transparency of the tool and discourage female users from undergoing a hyper-analytical assessment of the profile which often results in risk awareness (Dunwoody and Griffin, 2015), ultimately settling for the doubt.

The acquired mate assessment factors revealed the mate criteria of the YUP female today, and thus exposed the potential sociocultural role and impact on their expectations, priorities, and deeper motivations in the pursuit of love both online and offline. The mate assessment factors were compared and contrasted in both realms, in which an underlying thread (the pursuit trifecta) was discovered that allowed for females to feel the determinism, certainty, and confidence in "liking" a profile: the opportunity to observe, interact, and envision a potential connection with the male.

The findings of the research provide insight to the mode in which our offline lifestyles, beliefs, and expectations can be translated and transferred online. In the attempt in doing so through the designs, the degree of intersection between the online and offline nature of being was reflected upon and constructed in reference to the research question- this approach can be proven to be beneficial to other online to offline services that design for human experience.

The archaeological dissection of the female's relationship to online love presented the nature of technological significance and development on one's existence and perception of online and offline reality. This shone light on the importance of the instrumentality of technology, and the current obstruction of the online dating "tool". The four design concepts attempt to address the "obstruction" by providing information for the identified behavioral needs in a mate a YUP female has. Thus, the design question was addressed through the bridging of female-specific needs in online dating through four evolving features in aims to increase the like-rate by providing clarity/information sufficiently for the females' decision making through visually-oriented behavioral information. This is the bridge between the human and the desired behavior that also acted as somewhat of a framework for Breeze to remain future-proof.

The concepts presented success in allowing for the envisioning process to be more effortless and enhanced to the intended female users (concept 1 and 2), and Breeze representatives showed accordance and enthusiasm with all directions, yet critical feedback from both parties were suggested for improving the designs for better final effect. The critique exposed the sensitivity of visual language on information seeking and processing of online dating users, and thus directed attention towards the strategy of implementing the sense of sight into the online realm as a mode of translating offline needs, behaviors, etc.

Nevertheless, the positive response from the users and Breeze suggests the alignment and agreement in enhancing the online dating experience for females in the proposed intersectional methods. The psychological and sociological approach to Breeze's dilemma proved the significance of addressing human needs, determining the extent to which the designed experience should be new yet familiar, comprehensive, and relevant in the translation and transferral of the life we know offline, online.



9.2.1
APPROACH

The human-centered, context-driven, and interaction-oriented approach of the research beckoned for qualitative assessments of the YUP females within the online realm today. Despite the thorough generated knowledge grounded in human experience (Sandelowski, 2004), qualitative research often lacks the conventional quantitative assessment of validity and reliability (Nowell et al., 2017). Thus, the behavioral and user-driven nature of the research will be evaluated through Lincoln and Guba’s (1985) four criteria of trustworthiness to reveal the limitations with the credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability of the research which impacted the quality of the findings and the ability to answer the research question.

9.2.2
CREDIBILITY

According to Guba and Lincoln (1989), credibility addresses the “fit” between the stakeholders’ views and the representations of them. After this assessment in the user and Breeze evaluations, the degree of the personal influence on the direction of the research and the visualization of the findings through concept-form was identified. Taylor’s (1986) conceptual model of information quality suggests that people make judgments in choosing particular information by assigning value to some but not others (Danielson and Rieh, 2007)- the personal role as a designer here must be addressed. As a fellow single YUP female, there might be possible limitations in the method for and analysis of findings. The emic approach could have potentially led to a biased perspective when understanding the users, analyzing the findings, and creating conclusions to build off of, possibly affecting the research’s legitimacy. To avoid personal biases such as researcher, cultural, and halo bias, an intentional approach towards seeking alternative information, especially that from outside the scope can be implemented throughout the research.

The aim of the research and final concepts was to create a gender-intersectional experience- this means that the proposed designs ensure equal access and benefits for women, men, and gender-diverse individuals. Despite the gender-intersectional approach taken in the design process, the time constraints did not allow for the user concept evaluations to be inclusive of other genders of the spectrum. Thus, their experience and feedback of the concepts was not assessed and the overall intersectionality not measured. To improve this area of the research, more time would be dedicated to researching, designing, and evaluating with males and gender-diverse individuals to ensure viable designs and directions for Breeze.



9.2.3 TRANSFERABILITY

Transferability refers to the generalizability of the research and findings (Danielson and Rieh, 2007). The primary research on YUPs were limited to those who reside in the Netherlands, and the secondary research predominantly came from western sources and data of individualistic cultures. This subculture, however, varies throughout cultures and independent ages- as the demographic consists of both Millenials and Gen-Z individuals, the findings of this study in generalization to YUPs have to be seen in the light of some limitations.

Firstly, it would not be appropriate to apply the findings on the nature of YUPs to those in a developing and or/collectivist country such as Navua, for example, in which online dating is almost absent. Applying this research in other locations could provide richer data on the YUPs, which could potentially help Breeze be culture-specific and future proof when expanding the service internationally. Secondly, the research showed that the relationship one has with technology is determined by several factors (such as one's experience and upbringing with it). However, the general consensus of a YUP's experience is painted by findings from a relatively large scope that consists of people within a spectrum of a strong technological upbringing and an almost technologically-absent one. To address this limitation in future research, an even more refined scope could generate more credible findings.

This thesis aimed to enhance the female's experience in online dating by addressing their values and needs in mate assessment through a dating profile. As the scope was limited to cis-gendered heterosexual females, to what extent can the findings apply to intersex, trans, and gender fluid biological females? As gender is non-binary and being actively redefined across time and space, the findings of the research possibly carry a superficial nature which needs deeper and a more diverse investigation for inclusive application. Gender, after all, is multi-dimensional. Gender perceptions and predictions, however, were generalized in this research, and may have a lot of exceptions.

Although exceptions do not invalidate generalizations (Swarna, 2012), it is important to explore the experience of the female through a multicultural lens if attempting to go into a gender-specific research. Obvious sex differences do not only exist because of genetic reasons, but due to cultural variations (Teather, 1995), thus maintaining the culturally sensitive approach in the deep dive of the future research would ensure transferability of the findings.

9.2.4 DEPENDABILITY

Dependability of the findings and the corresponding limitations can be assessed by looking at the logic and documentation of the research (Danielson and Rieh, 2007). Design and research can oftentimes be a non-linear process with bursts of inspiration and attention at several simultaneous points. This was the tendency and often the case with this research process, however due to the technical requirements of the project, a linear approach was strived and maintained. This possibly created new opportunities for limitations to arise, in which the chosen methodologies restricted the natural and spontaneous redirections of the project.

Additionally, dependability describes the need for "the researcher to consider variables in the context in which the research occurs" (Guba and Lincoln, 1994). It was attempted to carry out user research, evaluations, and Breeze assessments close to the research process, however new findings would arise from analyses in which past findings would be referred to for input and/or inspiration. This suggests a limitation in the reliance of certain conclusions, as confirmation bias, for example, could have come into play in the formulation of key findings. This can be seen in hindsight, but during the process was somewhat disguised. Thus to avoid this in future research,an active awareness and an open mind to the collected findings and processes through specified methodologies would be maintained and additional user research carried out for specific subject dissection.

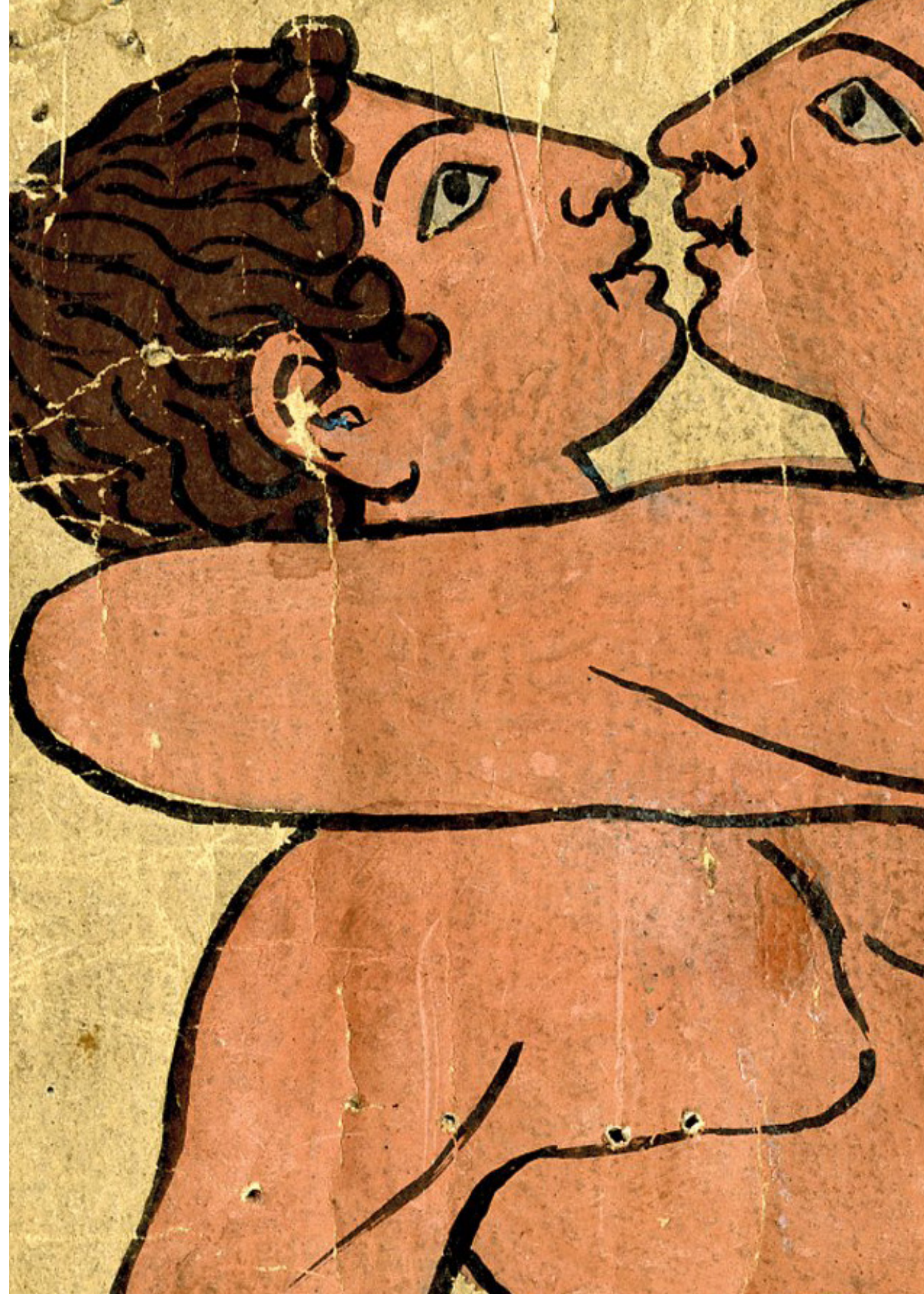
9.2.5 CONFIRMABILITY

Confirmability of research is defined by the alignment of data with conclusions and interpretations through relevant theoretical, methodological, and analytical approaches (Danielson and Rieh, 2007). Firstly, bias is inevitable during the initial research phase in which literature is dissected for significant information. This limitation could be prevented by possibly starting the research with less reliance and reference to the research question- a free flow of exploration.

Secondly, the user research approaches consisted of the same returning participants to acquire deep and rich qualitative data. Despite the in-depth understanding acquired on the how and why of the participants' activities online, the use of the same sample group poses limitations. The participants received somewhat of an insight into the thesis project along the way, which they could have been steered by when providing thoughts, opinions, and impressions. Additionally, the sample group consisted of 5-11 participants due to the time constraints (depending on the session), which is relatively small to acquire data in a subject as complex as behavior, mate selection, and love. As a tip for improvement, the sample size could be drastically increased, with alternating participants.

Thirdly, the qualitative approach presents several limitations as well. Although it was attempted to generate objective questions, activities, and probes for information, the qualitative nature ultimately creates subjective information points. The personal connection of all data points lead to specific interpretations. In addition to that, the analytical approach of qualitative data was thematic analysis, which suggests the possibility of missing a rich amount of data, losing focus on the amount of information provided, and ignoring the theoretical framework which potentially decreases the importance of the study. To enhance the stated limitations, quantitative approaches can be implemented into the research as well as an addition of one or more researchers, to collectively agree upon objectively significant findings.

To conclude, the stated limitations were the result of a partially novice approach towards culturally sensitive research for an online dating service, along with the time constraints of the project. It must be noted that despite the gaps in achieving validity and reliability, the research acted as a probe to better understand the context, human, tool, and desired behavior of the YUPs within the Breeze service today, and the potential relationship in the future. With the suggested recommendations, future investigation into the topic could benefit in regards to unraveling the stated elements in a more objective manner, for a more successful and effective design tool for Breeze.



10

FUTURE RESEARCH

This chapter explores the future relevant research opportunities that could build off of the findings of this research, potentially creating a new value for the domain and for society in general. Additionally, the stated opportunities are explored in relation to the aforementioned limitations of the research.

10.1.1
APPROACH

In this section, recommendations for future research and further application of knowledge are explored by delving into the relevance of discovered behavioral data and future-oriented envisioning of the online realm.

10.1.2
INTRODUCTION

This research investigated the sociocultural relationship and impact of context on personal identities and values in life. Much like the “tip of the iceberg” expression, through the archaeological dissection of a YUP female’s experience with mate selection online, the role of culture, history, and design was exposed and referred to in our current constructs of reality. What makes one a woman? What is love, and why is it love? What makes one behave the way one does? What information scaffolds our subjective perceptions? Such questions aggressively dwelled within the mind, and stressed the interconnectedness of human, design, and perception of reality. The behavioral analysis of the YUP female drew attention to not only the female as a subject, but the translation of human needs through languages not limited to the touch and sound of the tongue, especially in our journey into the relatively new online realm. Do not be fooled by the female-centricity of the project- the scope simply attempts to fill in the gaps of our standardized world.

Nevertheless, the concrete and tangible findings of the female online dating experience is both a personal and academic step towards redefining our understanding of obstructions. Initially, the project started with the question: why are women selective in online dating? However, the research revealed the biased and immediately accusational nature of undesired inconveniences. The question eventually transitioned into: why don’t dating apps address female needs and values in mate selection better? The change in lens designed a new approach to the research altogether. This change is rooted in the tools and platforms in which such needs and values are to be presented- online. As we head towards the now symbolized “metaverse”, it is vital to be prepared for the journey and thus religiously incorporate a behaviorally-oriented approach.



10.2.1
EXPLORING DIFFERENT
DEMOGRAPHICS

The current target group of Breeze lies within the YUP demographic, however this generalized group consists of complex individuals defined by their personal beliefs, upbringings, experiences with love, etc. Exploring different demographics in the Netherlands (age, subculture, profession, etc.) would benefit the service today as they have users between the ages of 18 and 86. Therefore, prioritization in inclusivity could benefit the service as the incoming future target group consisting of late Gen-Z and early Gen-Alpha value the deconstruction of the world we have set for us today. Additionally, the gender-intersectionality can be extended by carrying further research in not only males, but individuals that identify as non binary or gender fluid in their search for love. Parameters of mate selection are surprisingly political- thus a thorough exploration into their mate selection and assessment process can ensure the address of underserved needs, values, and decision making patterns.

10.2.2
EXPLORING ONLINE
BEHAVIOR

Due to the time constraints of the projects, the behavioral patterns online were lightly touched upon in the user research (in reference to Instagram as the major social media). Behavior in the spaceless space is developing in new and non-conventional ways, and investigating the pattern in which one is existing and portraying themselves online would allow Breeze to stay up to date with the activities and expectations of their users. This would help Breeze create and maintain a seamless user experience in mate selection, avoid chances of product failures, and adjust with change. Referring to online behavior in other social media (not only Instagram) could provide thicker data and a three-dimensional view of the subject for implementation into the service. Acquired knowledge could potentially be applied to other fields, such as consumer behavior, and used as input for the design and establishment of the online realm through other services.

10.2.3
EXPLORING THE INTERSECTION
OF THE ONLINE AND OFFLINE

The research addressed the extent to which offline needs and behaviors are to be intersected with the online. Comparisons such as the Microsoft Team’s auditorium mode with Travis Scott’s Fortnite concert was made in attempts to determine the degree of “copy and paste” approach online dating could use in the translation of human behavior. This posed an interesting topic for research. By further investigating and attempting to establish a framework of offline and online intersection, services that aim for an offline impact through the online platform (such as Zalando for online shopping, LinkedIn for job hunting, and Charly Cares for finding a babysitter) could benefit with the acquired knowledge on the matter.

10.2.4
INVESTIGATING
VISUAL LANGUAGE

The major finding of the concept evaluations was the sensitivity and power of visual language. As the acceptance of the online realm as a reality settles into our minds today, the use and reliance of visual language provides a grand opportunity for research- determining the nature, form, and communication of visual language online. As TikTok proves the coherence of its unexpectedly accepted collage-form videos that are composes of filters, text, pop-culture references, and video content all together, the threshold that one has with visual stimulation demands further investigation. This thesis research presented the mixed reviews of the Bitmoji feature, determined by one’s personal experiences and use of it. For Breeze, researching the multitude of visual languages existing online right now could greatly benefit their product design, and strategy towards the metaverse. Additionally, exploring the elements of visual language, such as color, form, texture, and combination with other language (ie. textual) could also greatly benefit the field of user experience, specifically that within the online dating industry.

10.2.5 EXPLORING CULTURE-SPECIFIC MATE SELECTION

The research was only limited to users seeking a mate in the Netherlands, a developed nation with an individualistic culture and predominantly progressive outlook on life. Such factors influence the pursuit of love and values in mate selection, as the female population has an independent choice. As one of Breeze's strategic priorities is international expansion, their current plan in offering the service in the United Kingdom provides an opportunity to delve into the process of mate selection in other cultures, especially those active there. The client's value in universal usability can be addressed through more multicultural research, incorporating culture-specific needs and values into the platform for ultimate inclusivity and intersectionality.

10.2.6 FURTHER DISSECTION OF FEMALE-SPECIFICITY

The female-centricity and specificity of the thesis aimed to address the gender gap in research and design today. The six-month-long research process, however, does not bring the aim of the project justice due to the unfortunately limiting and unnaturally structured findings for the sake of the project's completion. Thus, dissecting the female-specificity in not only online dating, but other behavioral processes online would greatly benefit the unanimous step towards digitizing our culture and society. Females' rise in economic power is reshaping the consumer market, and acting as a world compass for change (Brennan, 2020). As they seek to use services that do good for the world and for their fellow females, there is no need for them to settle for products that do not meet their needs, or do so superficially (Silverstein and Sayre, 2009). A focus on women as the target group for Breeze will up the service's chances of success, and provide an opportunity for the app to play a vital role in mate selection in our world today.



This project began during one of the lockdowns, when I was sitting in my room, longing for human connection. With online dating apps in the palms of my hands, I was repulsed by the desensitized process of looking at profiles as though they were products in the meat aisle of the supermarket. I knew I wasn't the only one that felt this way. This inspired the subject of the thesis.

With a multicultural upbringing, I was inspired to incorporate cultural sensitivity into the research and came to find a deep fascination for the approach. Although the complexity that comes with discovering the interconnectedness of infinitely evolving realms in the subjects as seemingly straightforward as mate selection, the research process was fruitful and revealing to me of my own position as an identifying female. The study of love and mate selection was a carrier for studying something much deeper- the constructs that shape our lives in response to our sex. Additionally, the study of the online domain opened doors to philosophical perspectives on the instrumentality of technology, changing my perspective on the gadgets we have grown to consider our new limbs. I feel honored to have explored this topic, and feel connected to our collective motion deeper into the online realm.

Working at Breeze was quite a life-changing experience. With the warmth, support, and kindness provided by everyone on the team, I understood what a good working environment meant. It was also the first time I gained experience working for a startup- the speed and energy that came with it was exhilarating. This was especially helpful for my research, as I was able to form a close relationship with everyone on the team to learn from and share ideas with along the way.

As a strategic product designer, this taught me one of the most important lessons during the project- communicating to different stakeholders. Apart from being able to tell a good story, I acquired knowledge and experience in finding a common language with the people with whom I shared my thesis findings, prototypes, and service proposals. With a topic as emotional, psychological, and behavioral as female-specific mate selection, I learned how to present and serve to each stakeholders' needs, whether it was a teammate, user, mentor, or a friend. For me, it was important to get the essence of the story across, as it was too interesting and extraordinary to keep all for myself.



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CONCEPT 1, 2

@ashley_masse, 2022; iStock; Bitmoji

CONCEPT 3

@ashley_masse; Unsplash

CONCEPT 4

Unsplash; Microrocks; Pinterest

