

Marketing Research Seminar Series | Department of Marketing | WU Vienna

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**"Detecting Cupid's Vector: Universals and Deal-Breakers in Mate Choice via
Online Dating Activity Data"**

Abstract: Philosophers dating back to antiquity have struggled to figure out what people are looking for in a potential mate. Their contemporary counterparts, sociologists and marketers, have until recently had to rely on two sorts of data: (1) what people *say* they want; and (2) observations of relationships at various stages. Both have well-documented shortcomings but, with the advent of online dating, researchers can avail of a massive trove of 'behavioral' data -- what people actually *DO* -- regarding their ongoing searches for suitable mates.

Here, we leverage modern choice modeling techniques to a large corpus of data involving both whom web site users "browse", and whom they then take the more effortful (and perhaps rejection-inducing) step of "writing" to. We use these data in two ways. First, to identify possible "deal breakers": attributes of potential mates so unwelcome that no other combination of characteristics can overcome. And second, to potentially identify "universals": desirable characteristics that seem to run across otherwise heterogeneous preferences. The model allows for a more nuanced account of mate selection strategies than has been possible in the past.