WILL YOU BE MY FRIEND? AN ANALYSIS OF FRIENDSTER.COM

A Thesis by
Amelia Hendra
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I have examined the final copy of this thesis for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Master of Arts, with a major in Communication.

Dr. Patricia L. Dooley, Committee Chair

We have read this thesis and recommend its acceptance:

Dr. Amy Mattson-Lauters, Committee Member

Dr. Jodie L. Hertzog, Committee Member
DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this work to my family. Throughout my life they have provided me with love, supports, and encouragements.

To my father, Andy S. Hendra, who has always given me good advice, inputs, and encouragements. He has been my role model since I was young. He has guided and pushed me to have the confidence with what I am doing. His perseverance and hard work have enabled me to pursue my education in the United States. He is a man that I deeply love and respect.

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To my precious sisters, Jennifer and Melissa Hendra, who have always supported me. They have always been there even through my darkest hours. Words cannot describe how much I thank God for having both of them with me in Wichita.

It is my hope and prayers that my achievements will make my family proud, because they deserve much of the credit for the person I have become.
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being wonderful people in my life. Without all of you, I wouldn’t have made it this far. I love you all!
ABSTRACT

Friendster.com was launched in California in 2002 with 20 users. Today, it has more than 27 million members and it is especially popular among Southeast Asian women. It differs from other online dating sites in that users must be approved before they can become part of a user’s personal network. This study explores what may have made the site so attractive, as well as how its users represent themselves in their personal profiles.

Drawing on social constructionist and feminist theories, this thesis employed qualitative content analysis and survey methodologies to address the following questions:

1. How does Friendster.com portray its role in terms of getting people together? As a dating site or otherwise?
2. How do Southeast Asian women in these two age groups (18-21 and 27-30) construct themselves on Friendster.com?
3. Do Southeast Asian women join Friendster.com to connect with “the one”? If not, what are their reasons for joining the site?
4. What are Southeast Asian women’s on- and off-line blind-date standards and practices?

The research examines the choice of words and pictures from 60 Friendster users’ profiles by using qualitative content analysis as the methodology. Preliminary findings suggest that the site serves as a new safer
form of an online dating service, and that its users aggressively sell themselves as a result. Moreover, the definition of blind-date is socially constructed.
Being an international student at Wichita State University, my intention, when I signed up as a Friendster’s user, was simply to keep in touch with my friends back home, Indonesia. However, as an “advertising person,” I slowly discovered that Friendster users, whether they are conscious or not, have advertised themselves with their good qualities and characteristics when describing themselves on their Friendster profile. I personally believe that this is a new phenomenon in the areas of personal advertising and computer-mediated communication.

Being born and raised in Southeast Asia, I find that the culture of Southeast Asia is rather conservative. My experiences indicate that it is rather a “social stigma” for many Southeast Asians to join an on-line dating site. Today, Friendster, viewed as unique, reliable, and trustworthy, presents a new interesting way that is certainly less-threatening for its users to find “the one” through their friends. Friendster brings back the old traditional courtship idea in a more sophisticated way; it is done on-line.

The aim of this study is to understand more about the culture of Southeast Asia in their courtship process through these women’s self-presentation on Friendster. On a personal note, if it is proven that Friendster as a social-networking site has “unofficially” become an on-line dating site, how do other Southeast Asian women defend themselves to overcome the “social stigma” of being on an on-line dating site? On a broader aspect, looking from gender and
culture perspectives, I hope to learn more about whether the way the world views Southeast Asian women matches with the way Southeast Asian women construct themselves in terms of gender roles.
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In today’s time-constrained world, many claim they are so busy that they do not have the time to find dates the old-fashioned way through face-to-face interaction. Instead, more and more singles place personal ads in the mass media. Newspapers, the telephone, television, and, increasingly, websites are among the places used to find “the one.” Essentially, personal ads are meta-statements about the kinds of people we are (Raybeck, 2000). Like advertisers, people use the personals to describe their characteristics and qualities. And also, like advertisers, people adjust their description of their qualities and characteristics to what they believe potential dating partners are looking for (Goode, 1996).

Recently, a new type of personal ad has proliferated on the Internet’s World Wide Web. Called social-networking websites, they are unlike other on-line dating sites in that those looking to “connect” with new people do so through their friends rather than on their own. One of the web’s most popular social-networking sites is Friendster.com. First launched in 2002, Friendster has grown exponentially and today has more than 27 million users. The operators of Friendster describe it as “an online community that connects people through networks of friends for dating and making new friends” (Friendster, 2002). Friendster and other social networking websites are particularly popular among Southeast Asian women (99.3%).
The personals are considered by researchers to be rich sources of information on relationships and mating strategies (Strassberg and Holty, 2003). Gonzales and Meyers, for instance, have studied the personals to learn about “interpersonal attraction, self-presentation strategies, relationship goals, desirable inner qualities, and gender stereotypes (1993).” Others have examined personal ads from different angles like age and race; physical attractiveness and weight; and personality traits, including masculinity and femininity. In addition, studies have also looked at the personal ads of heterosexuals, lesbians and gays (Smith and Stillman, 2002). Another advantage of employing personal advertisements for the study of the courtship process is that “placing and responding to personal ads is naturalistic, real-life behavior with possible real-life consequences (Goode, 1996).” Examining the content of personal advertisement is also a way to understand what “individuals desire in partners and what they believe others desire (Smith & Stillman, 2002).”

Little research has explored sites like Friendster and what impact, if any, they might be having on the lives of individuals and society more generally. Friendster is especially popular in Southeast Asia, and I am particularly interested in its use by Southeast Asian women in two age groups, 18 to 21 and 27 to 30. Until recently, the parents of Southeast Asian young people, especially those who live in rural areas, often arranged their children’s marriages. Today, these old norms seem to be relaxing, and it is possible that global media are playing a role in the process that has led to this change. If computer-mediated communication does lead to changes in social norms and rules (Chesebro and
Bonsall, 1989), such new norms could be affecting those in broader communication contexts, such as face-to-face communication. More specifically, if Southeast Asian women are constructing on-line dating identities different from those they assume in their off-line lives, it is unclear how this will work out, or if these new practices will lead to a backlash against such developments.

Drawing on social constructionist and feminist theories, this thesis employed qualitative content analysis and survey methodologies to address the following questions:

5. How does Friendster.com portray its role in terms of getting people together? As a dating site or otherwise?

6. How do Southeast Asian women in these two age groups (18-21 and 27-30) construct themselves on Friendster.com?

7. Do Southeast Asian women join Friendster.com to connect with “the one”? If not, what are their reasons for joining the site?

8. What are Southeast Asian women’s on- and off-line blind-date standards and practices?

The following sections of the chapter provide reviews literature on the following topics: computer-mediated communication, the history of personal advertising, studies on personal advertising, social-networking software, the establishment and subsequent development of Friendster, and Southeast Asian women and courtship and dating cultures in that region of the world. The chapter concludes with a discussion of several theories that have guided my exploration of this topic.
LITERATURE REVIEW

Computer-mediated Communication as a Social Context

For centuries, technology has played an important part in people’s communication lives. Today, computer technologies have converged with old forms of technology to create new ways to communicate. Instead of handwritten letters, we use electronic mail (e-mail) as a means of communication between people who live geographically far from each other to a primary communication tool among co-workers who work in the same building. In addition, the Internet allows us to buy things online, do research, and even shop for new relationships.

Computer-mediated communication (CMC) is defined as “the study of how human behaviors are maintained or altered by exchange of information through machines” (Wood and Smith, 2001, p. 4). Another definition of CMC is offered by Walther (1992), who sees it as “synchronous or asynchronous electronic mail and computer conferencing, by which senders encode in text messages that are relayed from senders’ computers to receivers” (p. 52).

Williams (1982) suggests that “the computer is the first communications technology to interact intellectually with its users. Most technologies only transform light, sound, or data into electronic impulses for transmission, then reverse the process at the receiving end. Computers, by contrast, can accept or reject our message, reduce or expand them, file them, index them, or answer back with their own messages.” Furthermore, he stated, “While other communication technologies extend the range of our human messages, the computer allows us to extend our human capability for acting upon messages.”
(1982, p. 108). Chesebro and Bonsall (1989) also suggest that the computer is a unique communication technology because it was “intentionally designed to process and to alter human messages and to draw new conclusions regarding human messages” (p. 31).

As an interpersonal medium, Kiesler, Zebrow, Moses, and Geller (1985) have found that participants have the tendency to view computer-mediated interactions as “more dispassionate and more uninhibited than face-to-face settings” (p. 77). They also discovered that CMC participants “evaluate each other less favorably than face-to-face participants did when making subjective personal impressions about each other” (p. 78).

Other researchers have reported that CMC is often viewed as a lean communication medium. According to Daft and Lengel (1984, 1986), El-Shinnawy and Markus (1997), Schmitz and Fulk (1991), CMC does not allow for immediate feedback, prevents sensory cues, is more impersonal, and restricts language variety. Pratt, Wiseman, Cody and Wendt (1999) have written that relationships formed through computer-mediated interaction are often greatly affected by the medium used by participants. Palmer (1995) added that although some media restrictions may apply, social interaction is the one that plays a major role in human behavior during relationship development stages. Palmer (1995) also argued that although CMC is limited in channel capacity to written forms, participants would find ways to make the medium interpersonal.

Some scholars have argued that face-to-face and computer-mediated communications are so different that they are not comparable. The most obvious
difference discussed by scholars is that CMC does not allow people to see each other in their interactions. Chesebro and Bonsall (1989) identified five variables related to those differences: the channel, the discursive mode, the unique feedback systems, the social roles, and the use of time. In terms of channels used, Chesebro and Bonsall (1989) focused especially on the elimination of nonverbal messages in computer-mediated messages. Most of the social modes have to be translated into verbal mode or signs. For example: I’m happy (😊).

Flaherty, Pearce, and Ruin (1998) also stated that “electronic paralanguage conveys relational messages such as intentional misspellings, spatial arrays, and ALL CAPITAL LETTERS to convey yelling” (p. 251).

While CMC is a context where people can relate interpersonally, it is not a discursive mode of communication. What are missing in CMC are vocal quality, tone and pitch, which normally are important variables in interpersonal communication. In contrast, in CMC, “Beyond the typing skills required if messages are to be conveyed at any kind of reasonable rate, messages must always be inputted line by line” (Chesebro and Bonsall, 1989, p. 59).

Feedback in face-to-face relationship is synchronistic. Chesebro and Bonsall (1989) describe the interaction as “dynamic, ongoing, ever-changing, and continuous” (p. 60). In computer-mediated interaction, feedback is considered asynchronistic due to its physical structure and technologies requirements. In other words, “the transmission must be completed before the receiver is able to respond to the sender’s message” (Chesebro and Bonsall, 1989, p.60).
According to Chesebro and Bonsall, the social roles of participants in face-to-face and computer-mediated relationships are different. "In face-to-face exchanges, participants necessarily provide a complete and immediate sociological composite of the self" (1989, p. 61), they stated. In addition, during face-to-face interaction, one can tell the other person's nationality, race, gender and age, and insight into a person's occupation or income can be gained from someone's appearance. On the other hand, in computer-mediated interaction, “a person exerts discretionary control over what and when sociological information is conveyed to others. In addition, the way in which these sociological factors are to be characterized is determined by the individual” (p. 61).

The last element relates to one’s use of time. Unlike computer-mediated communication, face-to-face exchanges take place in real time. Chesebro and Bonsall (1989) explain that every moment that has a “particular quality that affects social relationship” during face-to-face interactions count (p. 61). However, time can be controlled and manipulated during a computer-mediated communication process. One can utilize a preparation time when constructing his or her message.

Scholars have also been concerned with the social consequences of CMC. Chesebro and Bonsall (1989) worry that the CMC process usually eliminates nonverbal cues such as facial expressions and other aspects of physical appearance. As they put it, “Computer connections also eliminate the personality clues people can derive from epistolary communications-handwriting, choice of stationary, and so forth” (Chesebro and Bonsall, 1989, p. 117).
Some scholars worry that computer-mediated communication is impersonal and incomplete, while others report that computer-mediated communications have generated close friendships and marriages. Foulger (1990) noted that experienced computer users believe that CMC is a “richer” communication channel than the telephone, television, and face-to-face interaction. Wright (1993) argued that the “remoteness and anonymity of CMC fosters intimacy and candid conversation” (p. 20).

On the qualities of social relationships resulting from CMC, Chesebro and Bonsall (1989) argue that although “a computer relationship can be a task-oriented and isolating experience, … under other circumstances, a computer-human relationship can introduce us to new people and expand our experiences” (p. 122). Although they maintain that CMC is not an effective way to resolve conflicts, they claim it is a more efficient and time saving way to relate, since the number of words and sentences used in interactions are usually less compared to face-to-face situations.

Some scholars have argued that CMC is fostering new cultural systems. Since computer-mediated communication does not take place in a spatial and temporal social environment, it is considered a unique system. People need to “create the social norms and rules that govern these new social contexts” (Chesebro and Bonsall, 1989, p. 124). In other words, those social rules and norms govern computer-mediated communication processes.

Chesebro and Bonsall (1989) have observed that the incompleteness of CMC as a human-exchange system stimulates higher use of alternative media,
and that CMC decreases leader-centered communication. In CMC, people feel more equal than they might face-to-face with other participants during interactions.

How people identify themselves on-line is an important area of scholarly and popular interest. Wood and Smith (2001) have defined identity as “a complex personal and social construct, consisting in part of who we think ourselves to be, how we wish others to perceive us, and how they actually perceive us” (p. 47). Jacobson-Widding (1983) argues that the term “identity” has two different meanings: sameness and distinctiveness: “On a superficial level, distinctiveness seems to refer to individual identity, while sameness is rather connected with a sense of commonality between several persons who constitute a group” (p. 13).

Wood and Smith (2001) have stated that the main aspect of identity relates to how we present ourselves to others. Although the terms “identity” and “self-presentation” are often used interchangeably, many are not aware that they have different meanings. Wood and Smith (2001) define self-presentation as “the process of setting forth an image we want others to perceive” (p. 47). Derlega, Metts, Petronio and Margulis (1993) characterize self-disclosure as “what individuals verbally reveal about themselves to others (including thoughts, feelings, and experiences)” (p. 1). They also claim that it plays an important role in close relationships.

Self-disclosure focuses on the manifest content of interpersonal exchanges. Derlega, Metts, Petronio and Margulis (1993) have divided such content into two categories: descriptive and evaluative self-disclosures.
Information about a participant that is not highly personal is considered as descriptive self-disclosure. Such information might consist, for example, of one’s number of siblings or drinking habits. In contrast, evaluative self-disclosure relates one’s feelings, opinions, and judgments; for example: “I think I like you,” “I love you,” and “I hate veggies.”

Identity construction in the digital world has attracted the attention of many researchers. Introduced in the middle of the twentieth century by Cooley and Mead, the study of identity has “evolved and grown central to current sociological discourse” (Cerulo, 1997, p. 385). According to Cerulo, many sociologists are mainly focused on the construction of “me” or “self” when studying identity. Furthermore, many communication, sociology, and psychology scholars believe that one’s identity helps explain behavior.

Online, people can control the information that they want to share. Wood and Smith (2001) state that people make conscious decisions about how they wish to be perceived by others when “choosing names, signature files, or personal descriptions” (p. 57). According to O’Sullivan (2000), several factors affect one’s self-presentation in non-mediated and mediated communication. Among those factors, he identified self-concept as the main factor that influences identity construction. Arkin (1986) said although identity is constructed for various reasons, its key purpose is to build and sustain a stable and positive impression of the self.

Wood and Smith (2001) stated that there are three levels of on-line identity construction: anonymity, pseudonymity and real-life identity. In mediated
communication, anonymity is “a state of communicating where the identity of the communicator is not readily apparent” (Wood and Smith, 2001, p. 58).

Pseudonymity is by far the most popular way of constructing identity online. It protects the participant to some degree. Wood and Smith (2001) explained people who are engaged in pseudonymity usually rename themselves on the digital world. In other words, people use nicknames or “nicks” to identify themselves.

Scholars suggest the name one goes by has influence on others’ initial impression of them (English and Stephens, 2004). Because of this, many people choose to use nicknames rather than their formal names to attract others’ attention. A study done by Mehrabian and Piercy in 1993, for example, found that “undergraduates ranked formal names that were presented in isolation and without additional information higher than they did nicknames on 9-point Likert scales of success and morality but lower on scales of popularity and cheerfulness” (English and Stephens, 2004, p. 535).

Bechar-Israeli (1995) identifies six types or categories of “nicks.” They are “self-related names (handsome, shydude); names related to medium, technology, and their nature (pentium, aixy); names on flora, fauna and objects (tulip, froggy, cheese); play on words and sounds (whatthehell, myTboy, uh-huh); people using real names (Cortne, SusanLee); names related to figures in literature, films, fairytales, and famous people (madhatter, rainman, elvis); and names related to sex and provocation (sexsee, sexpot, hitler)” (Wood and Smith, 2001, p. 60).
Personal Advertising

Personal ads offer people opportunities to meet possible dating partners, and, to attract attention, those who use the personals portray their characteristics and qualities in the best light possible (Goode, 1996). Personal ads offer users an alternative to traditional courtship methods, where all initial meetings are face-to-face. The personals have become a remarkable source of information about interpersonal attraction, self-presentation strategies, relationship goals, desirable inner qualities, and gender stereotypes (Gonzales and Meyers, 1993).

Scholars have done a considerable amount of research on the practice of personal advertising. According to an article in Psychology Today, some researchers are interested in learning how people use tiny ad spaces to portray themselves (Raybeck, 2000). Such studies are done to determine what people seek in partners and what they believe others have (Smith and Stillman, 2002). Other researchers examine personal ads to learn about how they are used by people in different demographic groups: physical attractiveness and weight; and personality traits, including masculinity and femininity. Past studies have also looked at personal ads of heterosexuals, lesbians and gay men (Smith and Stillman, 2002).

Many researchers believe that one of the advantages of employing personal advertisements as a strategic research sites to study the courtship process is that “placing and responding to personal ads is naturalistic, real-life behavior with possible real-life consequences” (Goode, 1996, p. 142). Moreover, subjects are not aware that they are being studied (Goode, 1996). Examining the
content of personal advertisement is also a way to understand the qualities people seek in partners and what they believe others desire (Smith & Stillman, 2002).

Historically, people used media like newspaper and magazines as a starting point for personal advertisements. Some people were uncomfortable advertising themselves publicly because of the strong connotation that was built during 1960s to 1970s. Such ads usually appeared in the back of underground newspapers and sex magazines.

People started acknowledging the credibility of personal advertising when The Chicago Tribune and the conservative National Review began to publishing them (Morrow, 1985). David Dinnage, the president of Boston-Based Tele-Publishing International that supplied personal ads services to more than 250 United States’ dailies and weeklies, stated that personal advertisements’ income grew about 15 percent per year in the mid 1990s (Dotinga, 2000).

By the mid 1990s, major newspapers such as The Washington Post and Boston Globe had expanded their personals sections. Dailies and weeklies extended their services to voice-mail personals to love seekers. Personals’ advertisers could place advertisements and outgoing voice-mail messages for free. However, respondents usually have to pay about two dollars per minute to listen to messages and leave responses of their own with their home phone numbers to advertisers (Dotinga, 2000). Today, personal ads are popular. Morrow further noted personal advertisements have become a trustworthy way to “shop for new relationships” (1985, p. 74).
As technology has advanced, many people looking for friends and people to “connect” with have switched to online personal advertisement. Today there are many web-based dating services known as commercial sites and free personal advertising bulletin boards known as noncommercial sites (Strassberg and Holty, 2003). Other publications, like the Village Voice and New York magazine, famous for their print personal advertisement sections, have started online venues for their customers (Sprout, 1997).

Some have claimed their online personal advertising offers many advantages over other venues. Evan Neufelda, an analyst at Jupiter Communications in New York City, stated,

There’s a level of anonymity that people feel very comfortable with. On the Web you can hide behind a handle and an E-mail address, giving out your phone number only when you choose to. Second, you can be as prolix as you’d like; while a print personal is often restricted to a few lines, a Web ad can run the length of several sonnets (Sprout, 1997, p. 186).

In addition, online personal ads are relatively inexpensive or even free, and advertisers can reach a larger audience (Strassberg and Holty, 2003). As a result of this new phenomenon, many daily newspapers have faced a decrease in revenue. Some examples are Los Angeles Times and Seattle Times (Dotinga, 2000).

Today there are more than 200 online dating websites. Many people have joined match.com, eharmony.com, people2people.com and other similar sites.
Some charge for membership, while others do not. Fees range from $7.95 per month to $59.95 per year (Sprout, 1997).

**Gender and mate selection**

**Evolutionary perspectives**

In research on whether gender influences the number of physical attributes requested and offered by those placing personal ads, scholars have found differences between how men and women approach mate selection. One theoretical position follows Charles Darwin’s theory of evolution. Its proponents argue that there are two concepts of sexual selection: intersexual and intrasexual. According to Darwin, intrasexual selection happens when members of one sex compete for members of the opposite sex. On the other hand, intersexual selection occurs when there is a tendency for members of one sex to have particular preferences when choosing mates (Bartholome, Tewksbury, and Bruzzone, 2000). According to this theory, researchers suggest men are likely to be concerned about their potential mates’ youth and physical appearances (Bartholome, Tewksbury, and Bruzzone, 2000; Goode, 1996; Kaufman and Phua, 2003; Lance, 1998; Smith and Stillman, 2002; Strassberg and Holty, 2003). A woman’s reproductive value is related to their age, which means men respond to the physical cues associated with youth such as: smooth skin, good muscle tone, shiny hair and full lips (Strassberg and Holty, 2003). A study done by Smith, Waldorf and Trembath (1990) also discovered that women’s physical attractiveness and weight in particular play important roles in their selection.
On the other hand, women demonstrate more interest in personality traits and financial securities than men do in personal ads (Bartholome, Tewksbury, and Bruzzone, 2000; Goode, 1996; Kaufman and Phua, 2003; Lance, 1998; Smith and Stillman, 2002; Strassberg and Holty, 2003). A study done by Waynforth, an anthropology student at the University of Mexico, and Dunbar, a primatologist at the University of Liverpool, suggests women are more demanding when it comes to setting criteria for a potential partner than men. They are more likely to specify all the attributes they are seeking from a mate. They wrote:

Women can conceive far fewer offspring in their lifetime than men can father and this means that each possible conception carries much higher stakes. It thus pays for them to be extremely careful in selecting the person with whom they’ll be doing the conceiving, and we expected to see this kind of choosiness in the personal ads we studied (Kluger, 1996, p. 43).

Women put higher preference on resources and status, and this leads them to choose older men as their potential mates. Women also value intelligence, ambition and potential success in a male mate (Lance, 1998). They weigh occupational and economic success when evaluating their potential partner (Goode, 1996). Another criterion that women look for from a man is that they prefer single rather than married men (Goode, 1996).

However, Waynforth and Dunbar discovered that, as they grow older, women tend to be less choosy because their reproductive value drops off. On the
contrary, men have the tendency to be more demanding as they grow older due to the fact that they have more to offer to women in terms of status and financial stability (Kluger, 1996).

**Socio cultural approach**

Another theoretical framework assumes a sociocultural approach. The concept of sociocultural theory was originally presented through the work of Vygotsky (1986). Sociocultural theory suggests that people are greatly influenced by their experiences as school children and in their experiences later in life because human development develops out of social interaction. Vygotsky (1986) added that to be able to understand the development of a child, we should not focus on only the child as an individual. Vygotsky (1986) believed that the external social world in which that individual life in affect the way he or she do things. A child’s learning and development process are affected by all social events that occur in his or her life as he or she “interacts with people, objects, and events in the environment (p. 287).”

As a result, many researchers claim that women accentuate their own physical characteristics because they believe others want them to (Lance, 1998). These sociocultural pressures on women to be thin and physically attractive shape the way they present themselves on personal advertisements (Smith, Waldorf and Trembath, 1990). At the same time, the sociocultural pressures on men to be financially stable tend to influence the way they advertise themselves. Men are more likely to offer financial and occupational success (Goode, 1996). These past studies on personal advertisements both print and online have
confirmed that gender seems to have a strong effect on the content of the personal advertisement.

**Friendster.com: A social-networking site**

During 2002, a new online community network group called *Friendster* was launched. Friendster is a social networking site that invites its users to present themselves through profiles that list their demographics, interests, pictures, as well as to post public testimonials about others, and surf people on the network. Friendster markets itself as an alternative to dating sites, and expects that its users will present their true identities in their profiles. Users are invited to check on the authenticity of other users’ profiles through public testimonials posted by users’ friends.

Friendster is part of a burgeoning social-networking online scene that has developed quickly in the past several years. In general, participants in social networks create self-descriptive profiles that include their links to other members, creating a visible network of connections. Donath and Boyd (2004), information management scholars, have studied the social implications of the public display on one’s social network. Questions they address include: How do people display their social connections in everyday life compared to on-line in social-networking sites? What do people learn about another’s identity through the signal of network display? How does this display facilitate connections? How does it change the costs and benefits of making and brokering such connections compared to traditional means?
In their research, they report that people are accustomed to thinking of the on-line world as a social space. They also state that while in the physical world people display their connections in many ways, like introducing friends who they think would like each other through parties or gathering, people do so too on-line due to their time limitations. They argue that social-networking sites have recently become popular because knowing that someone is connected to people one already knows and trusts is one of the most basic ways of establishing trust with in new relationships.

Scholars in the fields of communication, sociology, psychology, and computer science have studied on-line social networking from different angles. Computer scientists study its technical characteristics; communication scholars look at the process of interaction and the social use of language among the participants of social networks; and psychology and sociology scholars examine how participants construct their identities and socially interact.

Although one of the primary functions of social networking sites is to meet new people for personal or business reasons, they also help people acquire sources of emotional and financial support, and information on jobs. Today, a web site called “Social Software Weblog” compiles information and links on hundreds of social networking sites in nine categories: business, common interests, dating, face-to-face facilitation, friends, pets and photos.

Donath and Boyd (2004) state that in today’s society, access to information is a key element of status and power and communication is instant, ubiquitous and mobile. Therefore, these scholars claim that social-networking
sites are a product of this emerging culture. They define social networking sites as “on-line environments in which people create a self-descriptive profile and then make links to other people they know on the site, creating a network of personal connections” (p. 72).

Garton, Haythornthwaite and Wellman (1997) have investigated how the study of networks is changing the way sociologists are viewing society. They argue that social networking takes place as soon as a computer network connects people or organizations. They defined social network as “a set of people (or organizations or other social entities) connected by a set of social relationships, such as friendship, co-working or information exchange” (p. 2).

Donath and Boyd have compared identity presentation in social-networking sites and on-line dating sites. They found that in dating sites, people are pseudonymous with no displays of connection, while on network sites people feature real names and displays of connection. According to their study, social-networking sites are more reliable. They wrote, “The use of one’s real name and the network both imply that if one were to prevaricate extensively in one’s profile, real acquaintances would see this and presumably, make some rebuke –or at least, one would be embarrassed to be seen exaggerating accomplishments in front of one’s friends” (Donath and Boyd, 2004, p. 74).

Gross and Acquisti (2005) have studied the patterns of information exposure in online social networks and their privacy implications. They evaluated the amount of information that more than 4,000 Carnegie Mellon University students disclosed and studied their use of the site’s privacy settings. They also
compared on-line dating sites (Match.com, Nerve and Salon) and diary/journal sites (LiveJournal) with social networking sites like Friendster and facebook. Their findings suggest that within traditional on-line dating sites, the profile is critical and the network of relations is absent. In diary/online journal sites, profiles become secondary; networks may or may not be visible, while participants’ online journals take central roles. Online social networking thus can morph into online classified in one direction and blogging in another.

As far as information exposure in social networks, they found that there are significant differences between offline and the online scenarios. Gross and Acquisti (2005) also found that online social networks are displayed more immediate, but weaker, ties than offline social networks. In other words, while thousands of users may be classified as friends of friends for an individual and thus can access his or her personal information, at the same time, the threshold to qualify as friend on somebody’s network is low. This may make the online social network only an “imaginary community” (Anderson, 1991, p. 16).

Each Friendster profile consists of five elements: demographic information, self-descriptions (“about me” and “who I want to meet” sections), picture(s), list of friends, and testimonials. On their “about me” profiles sections, Friendster users are allowed to post 50 photos and are given up to 2,000 characters to describe themselves. Users can update their profiles anytime they wish. Users are allowed to include 500 friends on their personal networks and can ask to be part of other users’ personal networks. Once a request is sent, users accept or reject those asking to be on his or her personal network of
friends. Friendster members are invited to post testimonials about other site users.

Friendster allows its users to access the people on the network within four degrees of separation. Once registered, users are invited to start building their personal networks by inviting their friends to sign up. As the site states, “Soon you could be connected—by up to four degrees of separation—to thousands or hundreds of thousands of people” (Hamilton, 2003, p. 71). Four degrees of separation means a user’s friends’ friends’ friends’ friends can see their page and vice versa.

The operators of Friendster did not create with the idea that it would be a typical on-line dating site. Instead, it was built on the hypothesis that friends’ friends are more trustworthy than strangers. Friendster invites people to join the site not to find dates, but to widen their circles of friends. Friendster’s population is mainly group-driven; users invite their friends to join the site and become part of their personal networks.

The majority of Friendster’s users are from 18 to about 30 years old, educated, and computer literate. Unlike traditional on-line community networks, users are not supposed to add new people to their networks unless they are their “real-life” friends. As a result, Friendster has not been perceived as an on-line dating site. Many people see it as a place where they can keep in touch with their old friends or other friends who are separated by countries or even continents (Rosenheck, 2003).
Before *Friendster* was launched in 2002, people used other Web sites with clearly stated objectives of helping them finding “the one.” But with 20 people and no marketing budget, *Friendster* rocketed from zero to six million users in a year. The founder and CEO of *Friendster*, Jonathan Abrams commented:

“It really was like that old shampoo commercial where you tell two friends and then they tell two friends and so on. And it goes beyond viral marketing to something I call viral nagging. That’s when your friends don’t just tell you about something, but they bug you about it and keep bugging you (Stanley, 2004, p. S8).

With the intention of building a better way to meet people online, Abrams, a software engineer at Netscape, created *Friendster*. The name *Friendster* was chosen because Abrams did not want *Friendster* to be perceived as a dating site. Words like “love,” “match,” or “marry” were consciously disregarded in the process of naming the site. Abrams wanted to make sure that *Friendster* had a broader base for its potential users (Stanley, 2004).

Although *Friendster* was originally not perceived as a dating site, some of its members use it as a place to meet future spouses. Many believe that *Friendster* is unique and reliable, and not like regular on-line dating sites because people can possibly meet future husbands or wives through their friends. This was also one of the reasons Abrams built *Friendster*. He said, “They want to meet people through people they already know. I wanted to create a way
for people to meet over the Internet that was more like real life” (“On Friendstership”, 2004).

Friendster spokesman Kent Lindstorm said the site has grown at around 15 percent each week. Lindstorm added, “The key to Friendster’s exploding popularity is its inversion of the on-line dating formula that everyone fears about being sad and alone.” According to Lindstorm, “Other sites are like big singles bars. Friendster is more like a dinner party. You meet new people through the introductions of existing friends” (Rosenheck, 2003, p. 12).

Southeast Asian Women

Friendster is especially popular among Southeast Asian women from Indonesia, Malaysia, and Singapore (99.3%). Southeast Asia is a convenient term for countries that are connected together by certain historical and cultural ties. The countries of Burma, Thailand, Cambodia, Laos, Vietnam, Malaysia, Indonesia, Singapore, the Philippines, and the British territories in North Borneo are considered part of Southeast Asia. Matthew (1963) stated that although these countries have their own individual characters, they have much in common, such as their social and cultural background, lifestyle, and outlook on the world. McDaniel (2002) defined Southeast Asia as “a collection of historically, politically, culturally, and economically diverse nations that nevertheless share certain fundamentally important qualities” (p. 3). Other contemporary observers of Southeast Asia have defined Southeast Asia as a region with people who are dedicated to the countries’ economic development (Kahn, 1998).
Geographically, Southeast Asia is located between the mainland Asia and Australia. Historically, most travelers from the East and the West had to pass through the region of Southeast Asian as interregional movement took place. This has allowed Southeast Asian traders to have contacts with other people from different cultures. McDaniel (2002) wrote that although these Southeast Asians still hold their own values and norms, they are actually open and curious about other cultures.

For this study, I will focus on three Southeast Asian neighborhood countries: Indonesia, Malaysia, and Singapore. The three countries were chosen because they are very similar in their cultural norms and traditions. The ethnic make-up of the people who live in these three countries is similar in that they all include Chinese, Malay, and Indian people.

Indonesia has many ethnic groups, including the Javanese, Sundanese, Balinese, Malay, Madurese, Acehnese, Minangkabau, Batak, and a small population of Chinese and Indians. Malaysia’s population is comprised of Malay (half of the population), Chinese (less than a third), and Indian (about 10 percent) people. Singapore is divided into three ethnic groups: Chinese (about three-quarters of the population), Malay, and Indian (McDaniel, 2002; Kahn, 1998; Huat, 1998).

Dozens of language are spoken within these cultures. There are also different types of writing forms. However, one local language, Malay, is the national language in all three of these countries (McDaniel, 2002). Some Chinese still speak Mandarin or some Chinese dialects. As far as the dominant
international language that is utilized for commerce and enterprise, people in these countries use English (McDaniel, 2002; Huat 1998). Singaporeans and Malaysians have the advantage of speaking better English than Indonesians because it is used as their administrative language.

McDaniel (2002) stated, “the Internet was an instant phenomenon” in Southeast Asia (p. 112). Of the three countries studied in the research, Singapore and Malaysia, particularly, have large numbers of educated people with enough wealth to make use of the Internet. The survey done by McDaniel (2002) also revealed that more women than men in Southeast Asia believe that the Internet is an efficient communication tool. Since then, Southeast Asian governments have encouraged Internet providers by offering easy and inexpensive connections. Today, the majority of people in Southeast Asia have had access to the Internet from either home, work, school, or Internet kiosks.

In Southeast Asia, family structures tend to be patriarchal, with women being largely restricted to the home. As far as women's role in Southeast Asia, Jones (2005) reported that most believe women should exhibit a nurturing character. Smith-Hefner (2005) stated that, in Indonesia, ideal husbands are ones who provide for their families. Women are seen as helpmates, and wives and/or mothers’ whose main responsibilities lie in the home. In recent days, young women have increasingly sought higher education, joined the workforce, led independent lives and remained single (Jones, 2005).

In the past, marriage was considered expected in most Asian countries. Non-marriage was considered “an aberration in the resolutely family-centered
world of Southeast and East Asia” (Jones, 2005, p. 94). Jones’ study (2005) also revealed that among Malay’s populations of Malaysia, Singapore and Southern Thailand, half of the women were married before they reached the age of 18. Moreover, less than one percent of women were still single at age 40. Those who were not married usually suffered from either mental illness or physical abnormalities. Smith-Hefner’s (2005) study revealed that in the 1960s, many Indonesian women were married by the age of 16.

Despite these figures, some changes have occurred over the past two decades, especially in large urban areas, where the unmarried women’s population has increased (Jones, 2005). The percentage of women age 30-34 who have never been married in Malaysia, mainly Kuala Lumpur, since 1970 has doubled. And from nine percent in 1990, the percentage of unmarried women in Jakarta has risen sharply to 14 percent in 2000 (Jones, 2005). Studies have shown that education is the primary reason why these women have delayed their marriages. Quah (1990) said college educated women have very high levels of non-marriage. Jones (2005) also said that non-marriage in Jakarta and Kuala Lumpur is high due to secondary and particularly tertiary education.

Jones writes that such changes indicate sweeping cultural change: “It is widely recognized in the region that the rise in female non-marriage represents a major break with the past, and that it poses challenges to traditional culture, to relationships within the family, to the aim of raising fertility in low-fertility societies, and to aspects of social policy” (Jones, 2005, p. 98). In a newspaper article in Malaysia in 1991, Jones wrote that the failure of Malaysian women to marry by
the time they are in their 30s is considered a serious problem in the country. Yet, Jones (2005) and Smith-Hefner (2005) found that Indonesians still believe marrying and having children are their top priorities. Women who are not married are seen as “incomplete” and “unmarketable.”

Jones (2005) also noted that many researchers found that there are two reasons for the delay in marriage among Southeast Asian women. First, these women, particularly the ones who have secondary and tertiary education, have the tendency not to “marry down.” Second, many women decided to live alone because they prioritize their careers.

Oppenheimer (1988) believes that another element of the change is women’s desire for greater equality in marital relations. This situation leads women to raise their expectations in finding mates (Smith-Hefner, 2005). Jones (2005) said with the rise of feminist movements, better-educated women are fussier about who is a suitable husband. With better incomes, they do not have to depend on men financially. Jones (2005) argues that today’s women can enter “career[s] that…. [are] fulfilling and provides a real alternative to the traditional route to self-fulfillment through marriage and raising a family” (p. 101). His study also reveals that for many women, a career and a family are roles that can somehow be combined. Although many women postpone or even avoid marriages when a suitable partner cannot be found, some still do get married because of the social pressure.

Few scholars have investigated Southeast Asia’s dating culture. Soloman and Knobloch (2001) define dating as a romantic dyadic interaction focused on
intimacy development through the negotiation of mutually recognized, interdependent emotional attachment. Afifi and Metts (1998) define dating as a process of uncertainty reduction in order to judge the attractiveness of pursuing an intimate relationship with an individual.

Jones (2005) states that matchmaking was an important cultural expectation in Southeast Asia in 1950s and 1960s. According to Smith-Hefner (2005), at that time, parents played an important role in choosing the husband or wife for their children in Indonesian society. During those days, arranged marriages were common. Parents hoped to protect the reputation of the daughters and the family. According to Smith-Hefner, “By doing so, they not only guarded their family's good name, but also increased the prospects that the girl might be able to marry a man of appropriate wealth and social standing” (2005, p. 443).

In the 1970s and 1980s, Indonesia expanded its educational opportunities for all its citizens and this led to more opportunities for women in the workforce. Many Indonesian parents allowed their daughters to pursue higher education, even if it involved living away from home (Smith-Hefner, 2005). The new education system has had a great impact on the courtship pattern in Indonesia. Women now have the opportunity to interact with the opposite sex through school or work. According to a survey and ethnographic study completed by Smith-Hefner (2005), although many Indonesian parents still try to limit or even forbid their daughters to have love relationships, most start having boyfriends sometime in mid-secondary school. Greater opportunities for education for
women have also allowed women to more often pursue their own marital partners.

Similar situations have developed in Singapore and Malaysia, where matchmaking was common in 1950s and 1960s. Today, although the traditional practice of matchmaking is rarely done in these two countries due to the expansion of education, matchmaking has evolved. Many people in Singapore and Malaysia claimed that they have joined dating agencies to make more friends (Fang, 2005). Members are usually paired up to have lunch or dinner with someone who has the qualities that they seek.

THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES

The theoretical framework for the thesis draws from social constructionist and feminist scholars. A primary lens used is the social construction of reality. Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann (1967) suggested that our everyday life is socially constructed by the constant creation, through actions and interactions, of a shared reality that is experienced as objectively factual and subjectively meaningful. They also argued that individuals form their own social worlds by their activity with others.

A social construct is anything that we are not "naturally" given or born with, and language helps shape the reality in which that culture lives. Crotty (1998), Gergen (1999), Patton (2002) and Pearce (1995) define social construction as the collective generation of meaning though which one views and reacts to the world. Many social constructionists are classified by their focus on
producing meaning through communicative actions and behaviors. Almost everything that we see or experience in life is socially constructed. Moreover, reality is socially constructed. People’s perspectives about anything in life have unavoidably been shaped through dialogue and interaction. Through continuous dialogues and interactions, their perceptions and social realities will certainly be adjusted.

Thus, identity is a social construction. As mentioned in the literature review, computer-mediated communication participants consciously construct their identities and self-presentation online. Becker and Stamp (2005) stated that a person’s self-presentation implies his or her identity which includes gender, age and interests. Nicknames or “nicks” are part of identity. Since identity is social construct, one can assume that “nicks” are too.

According to the study done by Becker and Stamp (2005), most computer-mediated communication participants feel that choosing a “good” name is crucial. One of the participants believed that “a cool name demands respect and ‘gives’ identity” (Becker and Stamp, 2005, p. 243). Other participants of the study are also aware that people may suspect the authenticity of their online identities. Some strategies that are often employed by participants to gain people’s trusts are to “enhance perceived similarity, increase reciprocity, and portray themselves as desirable to others” (Becker and Stamp, 2005, p. 243).

Gender as part of one’s identity is also a social construction (Kramer, 2005 and Lucal, 1999). Many people use the term “gender” when referring to “sex” without realizing that they have different meanings. According to Kramer
(2005), the term sex should be utilized as a personal quality that is determined by biological and genetic characteristics. On the other hand, the term “gender” is defined as “the totality of meanings that are attached to the sexes within a particular social system” (Kramer, 2005, p. 2).

Lucal (1999) reported gender is something that all of us identify with. “Starting from a constructionist perspective, we followed a conceptualization of gender as something that people do on a day-to-day and moment-to-moment basis in social interaction as a fleeting, transitional, and highly context dependent phenomenon” (Koch, Mueller, Kruse and Zumbach, 2005, p. 29). Although many researchers report that most gender construction takes place during face-to-face interaction (Koch, 2004; Marecek, Crawford and Popp 2004), people have started constructing and deconstructing gender through computer-mediated interactions (Koch, Mueller, Kruse and Zumbach, 2005). Since the study focuses on how women present themselves on a social-networking site called Friendster, the literature that is presented here is related to women.

Derlega, Metts, Petronio and Margulis (1993) suggest that cultural gender roles influence people’s communicative behaviors. Therefore, decisions about online self-disclosure are greatly affected by the culture in which people live. Since gender roles in the society are also socially constructed (Kramer, 2005), the study will look at whether this has shaped women’s decisions when presenting themselves online. Are the attributes that they offer adjusted based upon their perceptions of men’s preferences for mates?
The book *Theories of Human Communication* includes a set of assumptions that social constructionists share, according to Robyn Penman. Among those are: communicative action is voluntary, knowledge is a social product, and knowledge is contextual (Littlejohn, 2002, p. 84). According to social constructionists, communicative action is voluntary because communicators have choices, even though they are not free. The social environments that people live in restrict what they do or can do. Littlejohn writes, “Within a social group people have the latitude to act in variety of ways, but they are also prevented by meanings, moral orders, roles and rules from unbridled action (2002, p. 84).”

Second, when talking about knowledge as a social product, social constructionists refer to “something that is discovered objectively but is ‘achieved’ through interaction with others in particular times and places (Littlejohn, 2002, p. 84).” In the case of the Asian women who use *Friendster*, such an approach would suggest that language is a powerful tool in establishing meanings and influencing action. Language is the main vehicle for creating “one’s own and perceiving another’s online persona” (Wood and Smith, 2001, p. 55). Groom and Pennebaker (2005) stated that when “producing natural language in the form of writing or speech,” people have to make decisions based on choices like: what to talk about; what type of words, phrases, sentences, phrase forms or even sentence structures they should employ when they write about themselves on personal advertisements (p. 448). Each of these choices represents a subjective creation of knowledge.
Traditionally, almost every culture has expected women to display caring and nurturing traits (Lance, 1998). As explained in the literature review, previous studies on personal advertisements have revealed that men have had the tendency to highly value women’s physical attractiveness. Thus, young Southeast Asian women pick and use words, phrases, sentences, and photographic images to portray themselves as the girls or mates that men dream of.

Third, knowledge is contextual, according to Littlejohn (2002), because meanings are subject to change in different places and times. Young women may “advertise” themselves differently than older ones because they are experiencing different stages of life. Geographic location also plays an important role in how people construct their identities. People in the United States may see things differently than people in Asia due to the cultural background differences. Since communication is a process that constructs all reality, “It is involved in all things and separate from none (Littlejohn, 2002, p. 84).”

Postmodern scholars have identified the importance of social construction in the social sciences. Although researchers have the tendency to be subjective, Sanchez (2002) noted that social construction hinders scholars from limiting themselves in “conceptual boxes.” Chen and Pearce (1995) claimed, “Much research in interpersonal communication is still evaluated by criteria based on the assumption that knowledge must be of things objectively derived, permanent, and universal” (p. 135). Therefore, using social construction as a theoretical
framework, researchers can examine this dating phenomenon that cannot be elucidated by traditional objective theory.

The next chapter will describe the methodologies used to study Friendster.com. Chapter three presents the research findings, and chapter four discusses the findings and presents concluding remarks.
CHAPTER TWO

METHODOLOGY

Drawing on social constructionist and feminist theories, this thesis employs qualitative content analysis and survey methodologies to address the following questions:

1. How does Friendster.com portray its role in terms of getting people together? As a dating site or otherwise?

2. How do Southeast Asian women in these two age groups (18-21 and 27-30) construct themselves on Friendster.com?

3. Do Southeast Asian women join Friendster.com to connect with “the one”? If not, what are their reasons for joining the site?

4. What are Southeast Asian women’s on- and off-line blind-date standards and practices?

Two methods were used to answer these four questions: survey and qualitative content analysis. Qualitative content analysis was used to answer questions one, two, and three, and survey research for question four. The use of two or more methods is referred to as triangulation. Frey, Botan, Friedman and Kreps (1992) stated, “In the context of communication research, triangulation means that different research techniques producing consistent results provide a more effective base for describing, explaining, understanding, interpreting, predicting, controlling, and critiquing a communication processor event than a single research technique producing a single result (p. 252).”
As written by Frey, Botan, Friedman and Kreps (1992), survey research includes “selecting individual respondents, asking them questions, analyzing their responses, and then inferring how the findings apply to large groups of people” (p.85). Babbie (2004) also stated, “Survey research is probably the best method available to the social researcher who is interested in collecting original data for describing a population too large to observe directly” (p. 243).

To learn about Friendster’s usage among Southeast Asians, the survey consisted of 19 questions (see Appendix A). The majority of the questions in the survey ask the respondents to choose between specified answer categories, although several open-ended questions are included as well. The survey also employed several contingency questions; certain questions were applicable to some of the respondents and not applicable to others (Babbie, 2004).

The survey was created and distributed using the on-line survey software called SurveyMonkey. Its promoters advertise it in the following way: “Intelligent survey software for serious primates of all species. SurveyMonkey has a single purpose: to enable anyone to create professional online surveys quickly and easily” (SurveyMonkey, 2006). Participants were recruited through the researcher’s friends who live in Indonesia, Malaysia, and Singapore. An e-mail that contains instructions to fill out the survey was sent to approximately 27 people. The survey was open for 24 days.

The survey contains six types of questions: demographic, familiarity with Friendster, dating habits, experience with blind dates, use of Friendster, and respondents’ perception of Friendster. Demographic questions included: the
respondents’ country of origin (Indonesia, Singapore, and Malaysia), age group, sex, and status in relationship (single, in a relationship, married, or domestic partnership).

In terms of respondents’ familiarity with Friendster, I asked if they had heard of Friendster. If they had not heard of Friendster, the respondents were not asked to fill out the rest of the questions. If they had, I was interested to know how they heard of this social networking site. The next question asked the respondents whether they are members of Friendster. If the sample indicated that he or she was not a member of Friendster, an open-ended question allowed the respondents to explain why they had not joined Friendster. The last question in this section asked respondents who are members of Friendster about their most important reason for joining this particular social-networking site. The specific answer categories for this question were: to find new friends; to keep in touch with old friends; to date; to find “the one;” because their friends have Friendster accounts, so they have one too; and other (respondents have an opportunity to answer with their own words).

The third section deals with the respondents’ dating habits. Respondents were asked if they had ever gone out on a date with someone from Friendster. If they had, the next question asked them if they had met the person before the date. If they had not, the respondents were directed to the fourth section which is their experience with blind-dates. The first question of this section asked the respondents if they approve of and go on traditional blind-dates. The second question asked the respondents if they would go out with people from Friendster.
This section was designed to see if respondents’ perception and approval or disapproval of blind dates in their regular versus on-line personas were different.

The fifth section asked the respondents about their usage of Friendster. Questions like how often they check their Friendster accounts and update their profiles were asked. The last question in this section asked the respondents if they randomly invite other people to be on their Friendster’s network. This is to determine whether Friendster was used as a tool to get to know other people or to just keep in touch with their real-life friends.

The final section of the survey concerns the users’ perception of Friendster, specifically whether they perceive Friendster as an on-line dating site. A question was also asked to see if the respondents were registered on any on-line dating sites. If the respondent chose “yes,” they were asked to fill in which they belonged to as well as their favorite on-line dating sites. The last question asks respondents who list Friendster as their favorite on-line dating site, why they prefer it over others.

The second method that I employed in the research was qualitative content analysis. This involved reading user profiles to learn the names used as identified in how they write about themselves, and their goals in their self-descriptions and desired mates’ characteristics. Berger stated, “Content analysts assume that behavioral patterns, values, and attitudes found in this material reflect and affect behaviors, attitudes, and values of the people who created the material” (Berger, 1998, p. 23). The object of the research is the intention of the communicator. In this case, it would be Friendster’s users. Berelson (1952) also
indicated that content analysis is used to study the manifest content of a text. He defined content analysis as “the objective, systematic, and quantitative description of the manifest content of communication” (p. 18).

Since this study’s purpose is to examine the expectations of Asian women in searching for mates on Friendster, content analysis seemed to be a good fit. This is because the research questioned whether there were any significant differences of attitudes between the two groups, and also what trends or themes emerged through the usage of words by Friendster’s users. Content analysis is a method that identifies, enumerates, and analyzes occurrences of specific messages and message characteristics embedded in communication texts (Frey et al., 1992).

The greatest advantage of content analysis as a method is that it is completely unobtrusive, since Friendster members in the sample were not aware that they were being observed. Since the research examines Friendster users’ motivations in joining Friendster and how they construct their on-line identities, the choice of words that users use may be the best way to examine users’ attitudes and behaviors. Moreover, the researcher could not influence the actions of the sample. Second, content analysis covers unstructured materials. Due to the relatively unstructured nature of the computer-mediated communication text, content analysis is considered a good method for this study. Third, content analysis “allows researchers to deal with subjects that are very current” (Berger, 1998, p. 26). Computer-mediated communication is also a rather new area of
study; hence content analysis allows researchers to examine the emergent patterns.

Problematic questions concerning the use of content analysis as a method relate to sample size and representativeness of the texts studied. In addition, researchers must understand the slang or other culturally significant terms; since those from Friendster being studied are from Indonesia, Malaysia, and Singapore, there might be slang or other words that I might not understand.

The texts studied are the “about me” and “who I want to meet” sections of Friendster’s users’ personal page. A total of 60 user pages were studied, 30 for each of the 18 to 21 and 27 to 30 age groups. Although 30 pages for each age group may seem like a small number, after preliminary work, the results became repetitive or reached saturation.

In selecting user pages for the study, I established the following parameters: Indonesian, Malaysian, and Singaporean single women between the ages of 18 to 21 and 27 to 30. In addition, only those with at least one picture on their profiles were selected for study, and only those using mainly English in their pages were included.

In this part of the research, I randomly selected Friendster users by using Friendster’s “user search” tool. More specifically, I employed keywords under “sex,” “location,” “age range,” and “single.” Following this, I selected the second profile from every hit page.

The two age groups were selected for comparison purposes. While both groups are seeking friends, it was thought that their ages might be reflected in
their constructions of identity. Women were selected only if they provided pictures on their pages. This helped in determining how they market themselves. Users also were selected based on marital status; they need to be single in order to be included in this study. Users in an attached relationship may use a different choice of words.

Since the researcher is interested in Asian cultures, the sample was restricted to users from Indonesia, Malaysia, and Singapore, neighboring countries with populations that share similar cultural norms and values. Users were selected only if they used mainly English in their profile to avoid difficulties with the language used.

To answer the thesis’s research questions, survey and qualitative content analysis were used in the following more specific ways:

Research Question 1: How does Friendster.com portray its role in terms of getting people together? As a dating site or otherwise?

To answer this question, the Friendster tour page, press releases, and privacy policy were examined to learn whether it portrays itself as a social-networking or on-line dating site. Secondly, these materials were compared to an on-line dating site’s materials to see whether there are any differences in how they advertise why people ought to join. The second site chosen was match.com.

Research Question 2: How do Southeast Asian women in these two age groups (18-21 and 27-30) construct themselves on Friendster.com?

To answer this question, Friendster members’ profiles were examined to see if they used nicknames or real names in their profiles. In doing so, three
aspects of the profiles were targeted: the use of name, photographs, and narrative presentations. Each Friendster user lists either a nickname or their real name in their profiles. One way to determine whether members use nickname or real names is through the testimonials that their friends wrote. To study the self-descriptions users have created, the “about me” section of these profiles were examined. More specifically, the researcher assessed whether the ways these women present themselves on Friendster indicate that they treat this site purely as a social networking site to keep in touch with their real-life friends or an online dating site, investigated whether users construct their profiles for potential dates, and studied how users advertise or market themselves. Differences in such portrayals also were assessed when they exist between the two age groups.

Each profile was coded by separating them into five categories:

1. Physical attributes – anything that is related to physical appearance was coded. Profiles are coded by examining how each user indicates their height, weight, and/or facial appearance. For facial appearance, anything like eyes’ color, length of hair, skin color that is described in the profile is coded.

2. Personality traits – Five sub-categories under personality traits have been coded for: honesty, kindness, warmth, independence, and sense of humor. For example: A Friendster would be coded under honesty if she indicated she is trustworthy, does not lie, etc.; if a Friendster user says she is honest or does not lie, she user would be coded under honesty; under kindness, statements about being caring, willingness to help, genuineness, sincerity, understanding, patience and niceness were counted; in terms of warmth, traits included friendliness,
cheerfulness, fun, happy, romantic, and appreciation for families, relatives, and friends; women were coded under independence when a woman stated she “likes to travel,” or is independent and/or adventurous; women were coded under humor, if she indicated she is funny or has a sense of humor. Because it is a qualitative content analysis, when a person tries to be funny on her profile, the researcher will also code it under sense of humor.

3. Personal achievements – Anything that is related to education and financial status was coded under personal achievements. If the person mentions anything that is related to a person’s intelligence, coder will specify it under education. Words like smart, college graduate, high school, school or anything that is related to a person’s intelligence will also be coded under education. For financial stability, coder should code any words related to someone’s financial status. Words like stable income, savings, investment, secure job should be considered under financial stability.

4. Interests – Anything that is related to the user’s activities, hobbies or interest was coded under interests.

5. Dreams or goals – Anything that shows the user’s dream or goals in life was coded under dreams or goals.

6. Others – Anything that the user wrote that does not relate to any of the previous categories was coded as others.

Research Question 3: Do Southeast Asian women join Friendster.com to connect with “the one”? If not, what are their reasons for joining the site?
In this part of the research, the “who I want to meet” section of Friendster users’ profiles in the two groups was studied. More specifically, requested mate characteristics were studied. Are they trying to keep in touch with their long lost friend, find new friends, or meet “the one?” The differences between the two age groups were examined.

The “who I want to meet” section was coded using these categories:

1. Anyone – when the user indicates that she wants to meet anyone without any condition on Friendster, the researcher categorized it under “anyone.” For latent meaning, when the user simply writes “you” under the “who I want to meet” section, the researcher coded it as “anyone.” The assumption was that when users write “you,” they are basically referring to “anyone.”

2. Someone – Some Friendster users indicated they wanted to meet “someone.” In these cases, certain conditions that the user is expecting from the “someone” were identified. If such conditions existed, they were listed under the following categories:

   a. Physical attributes – Anything related to physical appearance was coded. If the person indicated that a person of a certain weight or height was desired, the profile was coded under physical attributes. Facial characteristics such as eye color, length of hair, skin color, that were specified were coded. Language that related to muscle tone and other qualities related to one’s body were also coded.

   b. Personality traits – Anything that indicated preference for people with certain personality traits were coded. If the person said she is looking for a
man who is honest, the researcher should code it under the honesty column. “A man who doesn’t lie” should also be coded under honesty.

When the user says she is looking for someone who is kind, caring, willingness to help, genuine, sincere, understanding, patience and nice, the researcher should code them under kindness. In terms of warmth, phrase like “can give me happiness” should be coded under warmth. Other traits like romantic and friendliness should also be coded under warmth. For sense of humor, words like funny or humorous are coded. As far as independence, characteristics like “adventurous” and “independent” were coded under independence. When the user indicates that she likes to travel, the researcher will also code it under independence.

c. Personal achievements – Anything that was related to education and financial status was coded under personal achievements. If the person mentioned anything that is related to a person’s intelligence, the researcher specified it under education. Words like smart, college graduate, high school, school or anything that is related to a person’s intelligence should be coded under education. For financial stability, coder should code any words related to someone’s financial status. Words like stable income, savings, investment, secure job should be considered under financial stability. Expression like “he can buy me many things” should also be coded under financial stability. Anything that is related to money, jobs, and professions should be coded under personal achievement.
3. The researcher was also interested to see if users are looking for “the one” on Friendster. Keywords like: dream prince, soul mate, husband, Mr. Right, or anything along the same line were coded under “the one.”

Research question 4: What are Southeast Asian women’s on- and off-line blind-date standards and practices?

To answer this question, I have looked at the results from the survey to see whether Southeast Asian women are comfortable with the idea of blind dates, a type of dating that occurs when two people meet in person for the first time on a date. I have also examined whether there was a difference in terms of respondents’ attitudes when the word Friendster is included in the question.
CHAPTER III
FINDINGS

As mentioned in the previous chapter, this study employed two methodologies: qualitative content analysis and survey. Survey research was conducted to collect information on Southeast Asian women’s general perceptions of Friendster. The survey generated 142 responses with the breakdown as follows: 90 Indonesians, 12 Singaporeans, and 40 Malaysians. Survey questionnaire and results are attached (Appendix A and Appendix B).

In terms of familiarity with Friendster, most respondents stated that they had heard about this site (99.3%). A high percentage also indicated they are members of Friendster (99.3%). One respondent who is not a member of Friendster articulated that she does not have time to sign up and “maintain friendships” through this site.

Research Question 1: How does Friendster.com portray its role in terms of getting people together? As a dating site or otherwise?

Before a person decides whether he or she wants to register on Friendster, one can “take a tour” to get a better idea about what Friendster really is. The manifest content of Friendster’s descriptions on its tour page (Appendix C), press releases (Appendix D), and privacy policy (Appendix E) were examined and compared with another on-line dating site, match.com, to find out how different they are when representing themselves.
Friendster’s tour page provides the following six tabs: overview, profiles, blogs, photos, groups, and discussions. Friendster primarily positions itself as a site where its users can widen their circles of friends. “With over 27+ million members, Friendster is the best way to stay connected to friends and meet new people who share similar interests” (Appendix C). The word “friends” appears on most of its tour pages. On its overview page, Friendster says it allows its users to:

Find old classmates and co-workers, provide an easy way for your friends to find your blog, share photos with your friends, never forget your friends' birthdays or lose their contact information, check your friend compatibility on any given day using joint horoscopes, see your relationship to any member on Friendster, allowing you to safely meet people through your friends (Appendix C).

Friendster advises its users to treat their profiles as their personal pages. Friendster appeals to two types of users: users who are looking to keep in touch with their real-life friends, and users who are looking to widen their circles of friends. Friendster members have the flexibility to hide their profiles from everyone, if they only want to stay in touch “with immediate friends and aren’t looking to meet new people” (Appendix C). However, for users who want to widen their social-network, Friendster provides the opportunity for “other members can peruse your profile and even send you a message if they’re interested” (Appendix C).
Friendster also offers *Friendster Blogs* for users to express themselves. “Because Friendster Blog is part of your Friendster profile, it’s easy for your friends to find your blog and know what you’re up to” (Appendix C). Friendster users are also encouraged to post their pictures so that “friends and potential friends can see the real you” (Appendix C). Another feature is called *Friendster Groups* where users have the opportunity to join a public group or start their own. Friendster calls it as “the easiest way to stay connected to friends who share similar interests or affiliations” (Appendix C). The last feature, *Friendster Discussions*, allows users to do the following:

- Create your own discussions, add your comments to existing discussions,
- view all the posts made by a friend no matter what discussion they’ve joined, filter posts by user, rate topics, display the posts of a discussion either by all or by tree view (Appendix C).

On its press releases, Friendster usually starts with its motto, “the easiest way to stay in touch with your friends”. When Friendster announced its free Blog service, it said the blogs would “enable members to easily create and share online journals with friends.” In one of its press releases, Scott Sassa, Friendster’s former chief executive officer, said, “Blogging is core to our mission of making it easier to stay in touch and share experiences with your friends” (Appendix D).

Friendster also positions itself as “the company that pioneered social networking.” In its press releases, Friendster has announced new features to help users stay in touch with their friends. In October 2005, Friendster introduced new features to help users interact and express themselves within their networks,
among which are: FriendTracker, which contains updates about users’ friends: birthdays, new photos, and other profile updates; and Slideshow, consisting of photo slideshow where “friends are the stars via their newest photos”. In March 2006, Friendster announced its on-line radio stations for its users to “share them with their friends” (Appendix D).

Although Friendster always positions itself as a social-networking site that provides “the easiest way to keep in touch with your friends” on its tour page and press releases, its privacy policies reveal a different scenario. Friendster introduces itself on its privacy policy statement as “an on-line social-networking community that connects people through networks of friends for dating or making new friends” (Appendix E).

On the other hand, when comparing to another on-line dating site like match.com, I found that match.com clearly stated that it is an on-line dating site. Match.com describes itself as follows:

With over 10 years of experience in online dating and relationships,

Match.com is the worldwide leader in online dating and relationships.

Where else can you find millions of singles looking for love, just like you?

We don't offer just online personals, we are personal in our offerings - to help you find a date, a relationship, a marriage (Appendix F).

Match.com is a “diverse, global community of single adults who want to find great dates, make new friends, form romantic relationships or meet life partners.” Its members are mostly “college-educated, professional and residents of a large city or its suburbs.” Match.com states, “Each year millions of people
come to Match.com to flirt, mingle, have fun and make meaningful connections.” Match.com also posts industrial reviews from other Web Sites saying “#1 site for love” (Appendix F).

Research Question 2: How do Southeast Asian women in these two age groups (18-21 and 27-30) construct themselves on Friendster.com?

In order to answer this research question, two elements presented on Southeast Asian women’s Friendster profiles were examined: the use of names and the user’s visual and narrative presentations. From this study, I found that the younger age group had a greater tendency than those in the older age group to use nicknames. Out of 30 samples from the younger group, 21 used nicknames. They were LoSt GeRL, ‘Belle de jour’, Bebe, MUYB, xRaisonxDetrex, ‘FIONN, Britlyn Spears, -bebe-, jhouaNN, kawaiie, BrandyCoke, BiuTyFuL SouL, Lotus, DaShInY, -Baby shasha-, mPuUsIiLcliNaGn, d’IoVeLy, friendLy icHa, baby blue, aPPle-lia, and pinkie.

Another interesting finding from the younger group related to the use of name is that the alphabets that were used to construct their names were modified. Eleven out of 30 Friendster users in the younger age group employed the combination of upper and lower cases to form their names. Examples are ‘SeReNe’, ShAnTiNi, xRaisonxDetrex, jhouaNN, BrandyCoke, BiuTyFuL SouL, DaShInY, mPuUsIiLcliNaGn, d’IoVeLy, friendLy icHa, and aPPle-lia. Three users used lower case only for her name. The rest of the group used a regular combination of upper case as the first alphabet and the rest were done in lower case.
Members of the older Friendster group did not use nicknames at all, and they did not manipulate the alphabet in the spelling of their names. Most of the users simply used the upper case for the first alphabet and lower case for the rest when presenting their names. Ten of them used the lower case only. Some examples are maeya, sari, anna, lina, aalice, evelyn, ain, sarina, minako, and nancy.

The second element deals with the user's presentation found at the “about me” section. For this I examined two elements: pictures and users' self-descriptions. Pictures are one of the important elements in a personal advertisement. They give advertisers a chance to show what they really look like. Pictures are also important for the advertisement’s responders because they want to know what the advertiser looks like in “real life.” For this particular study, I observed what kind of pictures Friendster users displayed. The majority of these Friendster users used their single pictures.

Most of the younger age group members employed pictures showing them alone. All of them were close up shots. All of the young women in this group uploaded more than one picture. The majority had 50 pictures, which is the maximum number of pictures a user can have. Eighteen users used caption underneath their pictures. Captions ranged from identifying the location where the pictures were taken to phrases like: “am I cute?” and “this is me.” Two users used emoticons as their captions like: “:)” and “>_<”. Some users also indicated when the pictures were taken. For example, “March 15, 2006”.

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Most of the users in the older age group also employed pictures of them alone. As far as the amount of pictures displayed, the majority have five pictures uploaded. One user had 43 pictures. In terms of captions used, only five users had them. The majority of the captions used signify the location where the pictures were taken. However, two users wrote “how do I look?” and “I am miss frappucinno.”

The second element that I focused on the “about me section” was the user’s narrative self-description. “About me” is the section where Friendster users have the opportunity to express what type of person they are through words. This is the time when users, whether they do it consciously or not, “advertise” themselves. Users have up to 2,000 characters to describe themselves. The younger age group has the tendency to write more. Some even utilized most of the space.

Through content analysis, emergent themes were found from the “about me” section. These were then classified into five broad categories: physical attributes, personality traits, personal achievements, interest, and others. A total of four utterances dealt with physical attributes, like users’ height, weight or look. An example can be found from MUYB’s profile, “I’m average, but I’m a bit fat. I’m 165 cm tall but I’m 65 kg.”

Personality traits were grouped into five different sub-categories: honesty, kindness, warmth, independence and sense of humor. Three users had statements that signified honesty. Some said they are honest, while some indicated that they dislike people who lie. The next sub-category is kindness. As
previously explained in the methodology chapter, attributes like kind, nice, humble, caring, willingness to help, genuine, sincere, understanding and patience were coded under the kindness sub-category. For latent meaning, when a user stated that she was just a normal or ordinary girl, the researcher coded it under being humble. A total of nine utterances dealing with kindness were identified. For example, aPPle-lia stated, “Well… I’m not good enough in describing myself but… at least I can make it in one simple sentence… “I’m nothing but He is everything.”

The third sub-category, warmth, featured a person being friendly, cheerful, fun, happy all the time, and romantic. When users stated that they loved their families, relatives, and friends, they were also grouped under warmth. A total of 24 utterances dealing with warmth were observed. The following is an example of a self-description written by ‘Belle de jour’ that contains the personality trait warmth: “I am high on life. I am simple, easy-going girl who loves to be pampered especially by the loved ones. I love to chill at home, cook and catch up on my reading. And I love clubbing too. Oh, I am friendly, I won’t bite.”

The fourth sub-category was connected to a girl being independent or adventurous. A total of nine statements were recorded under being independent or adventurous. This sub-category ranged from explicit messages stating that she is independent or tough to implicit messages saying she likes to travel. An instance would be from Bebe’s profile saying, “I am into traveling, sports, the outdoors, shopping, and pampering myself.”
The final sub-category, sense of humor, consisted of verbal self-descriptions that explicitly said the users had a sense of humor and implicitly signified that the users have a sense of humor. For this particular sub-category, one person explicitly uttered that she has a sense of humor. xRaisonxDetrex’s profile stated, “I’m Fariza. I am 18. Funny and introvert. Stupidity is absolute pet peeve.” For latent meaning, the researcher found that two users implied that they are humorous. These are some examples related to users being humorous. Kawaiie uttered, “…. the most important thing that I think I’m really really kawaiie… hahahaaaa…” Another example can be taken from ‘Belle de jour’s entry, “… Oh, I am friendly, I won’t bite.”

The third broad category was personal achievements. There were three utterances related to education or jobs. Two of them were connected to jobs. BrandyCoke mentioned, “…. I love my job (lots of benefits)…” As far as statements related to education, mPuUsliLcliNaGn wrote, “…What do u hope to be done recently?-Complete Music degree n master…."

The fourth category was labeled as interest. There were three sub-categories related to user’s interest: activities, love, and making friends. Seven utterances dealt with users’ favorite activities, such as: writing poems, hanging out with friends, dancing, reading, cooking, traveling, and sports, and so on. ‘Belle de jour’ stated, “… I love to chill at home, cook and catch up on my reading. And I love clubbing too…” Three users indicated that they are interested in looking for love. An entry by baby blue stated, “… but now I realize that I can’t live without boy forever. So that I’m looking for a man…” Seven users showed
that they are interested in making new friends. Lyn explicitly said, “Heyya people… wuts up hey… I just lookin down ere to cruise me sum of theuddies… chu got wut it takes hey… drop me a line yeah… catch ya later aite..”

The final category was labeled as others. This category contained users who did not write much on their profiles. Two users suggested other users to read their testimonial sections to find out more about them. An example is drawn from Shandy’s profile. She directed people to “Hmm… just read my testimonials.” Three users indicated that if other users want to get to know them better, they should add these users to their Friendster’s list or e-mail them. Lastly, two users simply wrote, “I am who I am.” D’lovely said, “I am me…”

In examining this information, three emergent themes within the profiles of the members of the younger group were identified. First, they tended to focus on two things: love and friends. A second theme identified in the majority of these profiles is the tendency to employ the words “I love to…” to describe what they like to do. Finally, in addition to the use of the word “love,” many of the younger Friendster users employed the words “friends” and friendship in their profiles. Every user in this group has at least one of those three words utilized.

Compared to these young Friendster members, the older group tended to be more to the point in their self descriptions. The researcher also classified them into broad categories: physical attributes, personality traits, personal achievements, interest, goals or dreams and others. Overall, the responses of the older Friendster members studied in the research were similar to those in the
younger group. One difference is that several in the older group wrote about their dreams and goals.

First, in terms of physical appearance, six users described what they look like. Rini said, “amazing, gorgeous, interesting, wonderful, nice girl to be friend.” Sarah mentioned, “… born with Chinese blood, but gifted by big eyes and yellowish skin.” Elaine stated, “…I also enjoy maintaining my long chestnut hair…”

In terms of personality traits, the researcher grouped them into five different sub-categories: honesty, kindness, warmth, independence and sense of humor. Four users had statements that signified honesty. For instance, Sarah wrote, “…I treasure honesty as basic of relationship … and straightforward.” There were 13 utterances dealing with kindness. Traits like kind, loyal, sincere, nice, understanding, patient, good friend and good listener were coded under kindness. Ais stated, “I’m just a friendly, fun, lovely, loyal, romantic & sincere person that loves to have a good time with anyone…I always try to be a better person for my family, friends and others… always tries to be a little kinder than is necessary…” Sharon Claire characterized herself as “sweet and simple. Very patient especially with kids! Fun loving and with a great sense of humor.” In terms of warmth, there were 21 utterances. An Jo said, “Peaceful, phlegmatic type of personality. I am easy going, good listener, compassionate and has concerns for friends.” Pipit saw herself to be “humorous n ‘lil bit romantic.” As far as being independent or adventurous, only one utterance that was related to this particular trait. Ais mentioned that she “… enjoys travellin’ so much…” Finally,
there were three utterances connected to having sense of humor. All three of them were explicitly written on their profiles. Sarah said that she is “…calm and serious by nature, but can be funny and humorous inside…” Sharon Claire said that she is “…fun loving and with a great sense of humor.”

The third category was personal achievements. There were four utterances related to education or jobs. Three of them were connected to jobs. Zuraini’s considered herself to be, “… very committed in anything especially when it comes to work…” Agnes even made it very clear in her profile that she is “like a cat. If you like cat, you will adore me. If you dun like cat, you may love them after knowing me, or you might not even be given a chance to know me. That is me – arrogant. Now only want to concentrate on my work, or earn more money. If you are looking for flirting partner, please leave me alone. I am not interested at all, thank you.” In terms of education, Ruhil described herself as “a simple, intelligent and friendly person who enjoys discovering new things through readings and surfing.”

The fourth category was users’ interest. There were 16 utterances dealing with users’ favorite activities, such as: cooking, shopping, traveling, reading, dancing, talking to friends, listening to music and exercising. In her profile, Ais mentioned that she “…loves sexy stuff, flowers, poem, cooking, shopping, but not too much, really… enjoy travellin’ so much, hangin’ out, sports, healthy life, nutritious foods, fruits, takin’ care of my body & my appearance perfectly.” Elaine stated, “I love reading books, gym, taebo and dancing, exercise, talking with friends and listening to music…” She also signified her religious ritual, “…every
Sunday we go to church to serve as choir and afternoon we go to EL Shaddai for praise and worship.”

The fifth category was dreams or goals. No mention of anything that related to this category was present in the profiles of the younger age group. There were five statements connected to the users’ dreams or goals. The majority of their dreams are to become a good mother and wife. For example, maeya explicitly stated, “I’m just ordinary woman who wants to be a good mom and a good wife.” Ais also said, “…Hopefully, I wanna be a lovely wife & lovable mother & will dedicate all my life for them all. O God, can’t wait to start…” One user, Anna, shared her dream in general, “I have a dream to see white Christmas!”

The final category was “others.” This category contained users who did not write much on their profiles. One user suggested that Friendster users read their testimonial sections to find out more about them. Vie stated, “Just read my testimonials from my friends at this account and at novi_gouw@hotmail.com.” Three users indicated that if other users want to get to know them better, they should add these users to their friendster’s list or e-mail them. Cindy wrote, “You will know more about me when you become my deary friend.” Lastly, three users simply wrote, “I am who I am.”

Research Question 3: Do Southeast Asian women join Friendster.com to connect with “the one”? If not, what are their reasons for joining the site?

On the survey, a majority of the respondents indicated they join Friendster mainly to keep in touch with old friends (76.1%). Some believed they should have
a Friendster account because their friends do (9.1%). The rest use the site to find new friends (4.2%); to find “the one” (5.6%); to date (2.1%); and others (2.9%).

After conducting the survey, I studied the “who I want to meet” section, where “advertisers” indicate who they would like to meet through Friendster. Users have up to 1,000 characters to express their wants. An emergent theme found in the younger age group members was users’ tendency to write “anyone” or “you,” in their profiles. In fact, there were 12 users who indicated that they want to meet “anyone” without any condition. Nine indicated that they want to meet “anyone” with certain conditions. The following are some examples of conditions that users have set. D’lovely said she wants to meet “all the nice people.” Lyn said, “you…but the most important thing is hey, ‘you hot.’” Three indicated that they want to meet guys. Jamie was more specific, “I like to netmeet with guys with webcams preferably. If you have a webcam, please add me at xiaogal19@hotmail.com.” ShAnTiNi said that she wants to meet “guys with bike, if you are, add me @ MSN shantini_oldwest@hotmail.com.” Baby shasha wants to meet “guys out there. I’m searching for love now, and I single and available just add me camellia_vogue@hotmail.com.”

Eleven users displayed their email addresses so that people who want to be in touch with these users can send an invitation to join their personal networks. Four of them also added that other users can add them on their MSN Messenger or Yahoo! Messenger.

Seven users indicated that they wanted to meet “someone.” Two of them were more specific. Pinkie’s description was “someone that I’ve been waiting in
life to taking care of me, loving me with all his heart, can take me as I am, believe in me in everything he does. Someone that I don’t know or never know whether he is done until that day. Someone that I don’t know whether he is far away or maybe so close to me.” Along the same line, three users specified that they want to meet their soul mate or prince charming or dream prince.

Two users mentioned that they want to meet celebrities such as Tom Cruise or Brad Pitt. Two users described that they want to meet their family members or relatives. Lastly, four users indicated that they want to meet their old buddies such as classmates or friends in general.

As far as the older age group, some of these users indicated that they are ready to get married and looking for one through Friendster. Fifteen out of 30 profiles that were examined indicated that they want to meet their soul mates. Keywords such as soul mate, husband, prince charming, honey, secret romantic, destiny, Mr. Right, and cyber dates were identified. Ais said that she wants to meet her “babe hubby soul mate.” Sari wrote,”Mr. right?? My destiny, my soul mate.” Vie also extended her invitation, “My soulmate, email me at novigouw@yahoo.com.” Two users indicated that they want to meet single men.

Second, someone with a good personality was sought by these women. Two utterances were connected to honesty. “Someone honest” was mentioned by sarina. Nine statements dealt with kindness. Angie mentioned that she wants to meet “people who are willing to spend time understanding me. People who can make positive changes to my life and adding colors to it. People who have
held or going to hold special place in my heart. People who care for me truly.”

Five phrases were related to warmth. Zuraini wrote,

I would love to meet a man who is really down to earth, cute and adorable, who knows what he wants in life, responsible. Someone that is really there when you need him and caring. Someone that loves you for what you are and accept you as it is. A person that doesn't make me cry. He has to try to make me feel like a special person and appreciate me a lot. Where is he?

Lastly, four utterances connected with sense of humor were also coded under personality traits.

Third, six women believed that education is important from a future partner. Sharon Claire in her profile required her partner to be “simple, thoughtful, understanding, educated, GOD fearing, patient and must be funny.” One user, evelyn, thought that her someone has to be “mature in thinking with stable job…” Ruhil also stated, “Someone who is intelligent and would like to share his or her views on any subject especially intellectual one are welcome here.”

The next category is related to physical appearance. Three statements were identified. For example, although personality traits are important, Natalie made a point that appearance is crucial too by saying,

People whom I can communicate well with. Good listeners who can also keep a conversation going. Honest, supportive, affectionate, caring and with a great sense of humor. I need someone who can make me laugh when I can’t do it on my own anymore. To be honest, I won’t reply if you
don’t provide me a way to check out what you look like. Married/attached men should focus on their partner and not elsewhere.

Two users mentioned that their future partners should share the same religion with them. An example is drawn from Sarah’s entry that said, “…most preferably single man who has same faith as mine (Christian-protestant), smart, has self-confidence, independent and humorous as well as able to be serious…” Four users broadened their option by saying “anybody” on their “who I want to meet section.”

Research question 4: What are Southeast Asian women’s on- and off-line blind-date standards and practices?

Questions concerning Southeast Asians’ dating habit were asked when the survey was conducted. Most of the respondents said they had not gone out on a date with someone from Friendster (93.0%) and that they do not approve of blind dates. However, more than half (60.0%) indicated they would go out on a blind date, if it were with someone from Friendster.
CHAPTER IV

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The research results presented in the previous chapter show similarities between Friendster and sites that more boldly identify themselves as on-line dating sites. On the whole, although the survey results revealed that many Southeast Asian women do not believe that Friendster has become an online dating site (52.8%), the qualitative results revealed the opposite. Through words and pictures, Southeast Asian women have constructed themselves in ways similar to those who use on-line dating sites. This likely could have implications for future cultural norms and traditions in not only the three Southeast Asian countries studied in the research, but in the greater region as well. The following sections, which are broken down by research question, further discuss the research.

Research Question 1: How does Friendster.com portray its role in terms of getting people together? As a dating site or otherwise?

By analyzing the manifest content on Friendster's tour page, press releases, and privacy policy, Friendster mainly portrays its role as a social-networking site where users can stay in touch with their friends and meet new friends. Although there is a little section on its privacy policy mentioning that users can find dates through its sites, this does not appear to be the main intention of the site. All of the features that were upgraded help users to better express and interact with their friends. The word “friends” appeared on almost all press releases it has.
In contrast, Match.com blatantly positioned itself as an on-line dating site. Match.com’s choice of words is around: love, dating, relationship and singles. It is clear that Match.com is targeting its site to singles who are looking for love, dates, and relationships. “Let love find you! Instead if looking at other singles, get them looking for you” (Appendix 15).

Friendster appears to want to be perceived as a social-networking site. Wherever people go, there will be those who are looking for “the one”. Some users are searching for “the one” on Friendster, which Friendster is aware of. That is why Friendster indicated the possibility that users can find dates through this site on its privacy policy.

Research Question 2: How do Southeast Asian women in these two age groups (18-21 and 27-30) construct themselves on Friendster.com?

Although past studies about identity presentation in social-networking and on-line dating sites by Donath and Boyd suggests that dating sites are pseudonymous while the social-network sites always feature real names, this research revealed the opposite. Findings showed younger Friendster members have a tendency to use nickname more than older ones.

As far as identity construction when using nicknames, most of the women studied in the research are engaged in pseudonymity. Wood and Smith (2001) explained people who are engaged in pseudonymity usually rename themselves on the digital world. In other words, people use nicknames or “nicks” to identify themselves. By using Bechar-Israeli’s (1995) identification categories of nicknames, the researcher found the following: self-related names were utilized
by the majority of the women (LoSt GeRL, kawaiiee, BiuTyFuL SouL, mPuUsiLcIiNaGn, d’loVeLy, baby blue, and friendLy icHa). Kawaiiee is Japanese term for cute. If we look closely to the nickname mPuUsiLcIiNaGn, it means Puiling musician. Pui-ling is the user’s name and from her profile, she indicates that she wants to be a musician in the future. There were names on objects (BrandyCoke, Lotus, and aPPle- lia). Some played on words and sounds (bebe, bebe-, BiuTyFuL SouL, DaShInY, MUYB, ‘FIONN, jhouaNN, and pinkie). In some Asian countries, bebe is the colloquial term for baby. Few used names related to figures in literature, films, fairytales, and famous people (Britlyn Spears, ‘Belle de jour’, and xRaisonxDetrex). None of them employed names related to medium, technology, and their nature; other people’s real names; and names related to sex and provocation.

It seems that younger people are still trying to find their “identities” in the world of dating and courtship, while the older ones are more clear about their dating and courtship goals. These findings support the study that was done by Becker and Stamp (2005) in that most computer-mediated communication participants feel that choosing a “good” name is crucial because it assigns identity to users. The combination of upper and lower cases to construct one’s name is also part of choosing a “good” way to present their identities.

In terms of picture representation, I found that although two users displayed celebrities’ pictures (Britney Spears and Hillary Duff) as their primary pictures, the majority utilized the pictures that contain the user alone. The
majority of the sample presented their latest pictures. The majority of the younger age group even had the maximum number of pictures.

As far as the older age group, all of them displayed their own pictures by themselves. Three of them had their primary pictures with their friends. Their pictures range from one to twelve. Most of them have about three. Most of them did not really update their pictures.

Friendster users seeking to widen their social networks or to keep in touch with their friends would not so exclusively portray themselves alone. Thus, using an image of oneself alone is more like a personal ad than someone with purely “social-networking” ambitions.

Younger women had the tendency to write more about themselves in their self-descriptions. Some of them even wrote an article about themselves. In contrast, women in the older age group are more succinct in writing self-descriptions. A theme identified in both groups is that women have the tendency to write about their personality traits than other qualities. The only difference between the two groups was that some of the older group members wrote about their dreams and goals in life as to be good mothers and wives. These women’s self-presentations are geared toward advertising themselves to find a partner. A tendency exists for these Southeast Asian women to construct themselves according to society’s expectations on gender roles. This construction includes mentions of: cooking and becoming good wives and mothers.

Southeast Asian women studied in the research did not conform to what past studies report that men are most interested in: their potential mates’ youth
and physical appearances. Southeast Asian women presented what they think they should present on Friendster. The majority of these women wrote more about their personality traits than advertising their physical attractiveness.

Research Question 3: Do Southeast Asian women join Friendster.com to connect with “the one”? If not, what are their reasons for joining the site?

In terms of motivation, members of the younger age group are gearing their messages toward anybody who might want to become their friends' like a “popularity contest.” Many list hundreds of friends. The member of friends listed ranged from 15 to 500. Although some indicated that they wanted to find “the one” or “dream prince” as quoted from their profiles, these users are not “in a hurry” to be in a serious relationship.

Conversely, from the content of the messages presented by members of the older age group are motivated more toward finding long lost friends and “the one.” The friends that these women have in their personal network range from one to 91. The majority listed about 20 to 30 friends.

This study agrees with past literatures that report women value personality traits, financial securities, intelligence, ambition and potential success in a male mate. Some also indicated that they prefer single over married men that validating the past study done by Goode in 1996. The findings revealed the existence of these elements in the “who I want to meet” section. The findings also confirmed the past studies that suggested women to be more demanding when it comes to setting criteria for a potential partner. They tend to specify all the attributes they are seeking from a mate.
However, although past studies report that older women are not as picky as younger ones due to the decreasing value of their reproductive systems, this study revealed the complete opposite. The younger group was not as demanding as the older one. The older group had established criteria for their potential mates, while the younger Friendster users were more flexible. Education and personal experiences likely play a big role in shaping women’s criteria for “the one.”

This study shows that the way Southeast Asian women identify, present, and look for “friends” on Friendster is the same as that for on-line dating sites. Therefore, we can conclusively say that Friendster has unofficially been turned into an online dating site for Southeast Asian women.

**Research question 4: What are Southeast Asian women’s on- and off-line blind-date standards and practices?**

The survey’s findings indicated that a high percentage of Southeast Asians do not go on, nor do they approve of, blind-dates. However, when the word Friendster was introduced to the question, a moderate percentage was more comfortable with the idea of blind-date (60.6%). Friendster may be perceived as a more reliable and credible site for dating by its users. The concept of blind-date is socially constructed, and Southeast Asians’ perception about blind-dates may be changing as a result of these sites. Users may think that because they are meeting their dates through their friends, this is not a “true” blind date.
Several conclusions may be drawn from this study. First, the dating culture in Southeast Asia is changing. While it confirms the past literatures that women today have more freedom when choosing their own mates, this study shows that the idea of matchmaking is still acceptable, but in a new form. Instead of parents finding someone for their son or daughter to marry, on Friendster, friends are the ones who do that. Second, the meaning of blind date is socially constructed, and today, two definitions are being used: off-line blind dates and on-line blind dates. Since users can meet other friends or “friends” through their other friends on Friendster, it is possible that Friendster is seen as a more trustworthy and credible site to meet “the one.”

Finally, although Friendster has not wanted to be perceived as an on-line dating site, in reality, it is being used as one by many Southeast Asian women, who construct themselves as seeking “the one” in their profiles. Although many Southeast Asian Friendster users do not claim to use it for on-line dating, findings suggest the opposite. Although framed differently, the ways that Southeast Asian women identify and present themselves, as they look for “friends” on Friendster, is similar to how users of more traditional on-line dating sites do so.

In this case, the term on-line dating site is also socially constructed. Society may come up with different terms like online-dating site, social-networking site, on-line community, on-line forum, and so on. However, if these sites are employed as vehicles to find “the one,” users are treating them as on-line dating sites. Therefore, it appears that Friendster has unofficially been turned
into an online dating site for Southeast Asian women. The way these Southeast Asian women construct their profiles is very similar with the profile’s construction of on-line dating sites.

There are several limitations that the researcher encountered during the study. First, there is very little literature available in the area of social-networking web-sites. Although scholars from different fields have done research on this new phenomenon, few communication scholars have studied it. Second, users of Friendster can make changes to their pages and profiles whenever they have time (68.3%). It was difficult to keep monitoring the users, especially for those who are very active on Friendster. Another limitation cropped up during the process of the study. While it focused on Friendster users who live or were brought up in Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore and wrote in English for their profiles, many users mixed their native language and English. This meant that selecting who would be used in the sample was a lengthy process. Another problem encountered was that, for many of the users, English was not their first language; this made the analysis more difficult, especially when studying the self-description and motivation sections.

Future research can look at how successful Friendster is at helping its users finding “the one.” Interviews with Southeast Asian women to learn whether they are encountering any conflict surrounding their use of Friendster as a place to find dates or their future partners would be useful. Along these same lines, study of other elements presented on the users’ profiles, such as blogs and testimonials, to find out more about Southeast Asian women’s on-line self-
presentation would add to this research. Comparison studies in terms of gender and culture are also appealing. Researchers could study how men advertise themselves on Friendster, and cross-cultural comparisons between Friendster users from eastern and western cultures would be interesting.

Second, in addition to Friendster, there are many online community websites that advertise themselves as places to meet new friends. Some examples would be Zorpia, Sms.ac, facebook, myspace and Multiply. It would be valuable to learn how these sites compare to Friendster. Future research could involve interviews of competitor site users to learn if they prefer them to Friendster and, if so, why. On the other hand, it would be appealing to do a follow up study focusing on how Friendster is handling this competition and about the brand-loyalty of Friendster users.


Dotinga, R. (2000, May 29). Classified information: popularity of newspapers’ personal ads leads to enhanced online personal ad services. *Editor & Publisher, 29*.


APPENDICES
APPENDIX A

The Usage of Friendster among Southeast Asian Women

1. What country are you from?
   a. Indonesia
   b. Singapore
   c. Malaysia

2. What is your age?
   a. 18-21
   b. 21-26
   c. 27-30
   d. Above 30

3. Please indicate the option that best describes your love life
   a. Single
   b. In-a-relationship
   c. Married
   d. Domestic Partnership

4. Have you heard about Friendster?
   a. Yes. If you answered yes, please go to question 5
   b. No. If you answered no, you may submit your response. Thank you.

5. How did you hear about Friendster?
   a. Newspaper or magazines
   b. Friends
   c. On-line (e-mail referrals/advertisement)
   c. Other: _______________

6. Are you a member of Friendster?
   a. Yes. If you answered yes, please answer the following questions.
   b. No. If you answered no, why not? _________________________________
      If you answered no, you may submit your response. Thank you.

7. What is the most important reason why you join Friendster?
   a. To find new friends
   b. To keep in touch with old friends
   c. To date
   d. To find “the one”
   e. All my friends have Friendster accounts, so I have one too.
   f. Others: ________________________________
8. Have you gone out on a date with someone you met on Friendster?
a. Yes. If you answered yes, please go to question 9
b. No. If you answered no, please go to question 10

9. Did you meet your date in person before the actual date?
a. Yes
b. No

10. Do you go out on blind dates?
a. Yes
b. No

11. Would you go on a date with a person from Friendster?
a. Yes
b. No

12. How often do you check your account on Friendster?
a. More than once a day
b. Everyday
c. Once every 2-5 days
d. Once a week
e. Just when I have time/very seldom

13. How often do you update your profile (adding new pictures and updating the general profile, “about me” and/or the “who I want to meet” sections)?
a. Everyday
b. Once every 2-5 days
c. Once a week
d. Just when I have time/very seldom

14. Do you randomly invite other people to be on your Friendster network of friends?
a. Yes
b. No

15. Are you registered on other online dating sites?
a. Yes. What are they? ______________________________
If you answered yes, please go to question 16
b. No. If you answered no, please go to question 18

16. Of those, which one is your favorite?
______________________________
17. If you chose Friendster, which of these reasons you choose Friendster instead of other online dating sites?
   a. It is a trustworthy site to make friends and meet future mate
   b. It is convenient
   c. Less pressure since it is not really an online dating site
   d. Other: ____________________________

18. Do you think Friendster has become an online dating site?
   a. Yes
   b. No

   Thank you for your participation. Please submit your response.
APPENDIX B

Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question 1</th>
<th>What country are you from?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Country</td>
<td>Response %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indonesia</td>
<td>63.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Singapore</td>
<td>8.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malaysia</td>
<td>28.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Respondent</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 1

What country are you from?

Table 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question 2</th>
<th>What is your age group?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age Groups</td>
<td>Response %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18 - 21</td>
<td>31.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22 - 26</td>
<td>59.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27 - 30</td>
<td>9.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Above 30</td>
<td>0.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Respondent</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 2

What is your age group?
Table 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Status</th>
<th>Response %</th>
<th>Response Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Single</td>
<td>57.7%</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In-a-relationship</td>
<td>28.9%</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Married</td>
<td>12.0%</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Domestic Partnership</td>
<td>1.4%</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Respondent</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>142</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 3

Please indicate the option that best describes your love life

![Pie chart showing the distribution of responses: Single 57.7%, In-a-relationship 28.9%, Married 12.0%, Domestic Partnership 1.4%]

Table 4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer</th>
<th>Response %</th>
<th>Response Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>99.3%</td>
<td>141</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>0.7%</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Respondent</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>142</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 4

Have you heard about Friendster?

![Bar chart showing the distribution of responses: Yes 99.3%, No 0.7%]
Table 5

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question 5</th>
<th>How did you hear about friendster?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Media</td>
<td>Response %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newspaper/Magazine</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friends</td>
<td>84.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online (email referrals/advertisement)</td>
<td>14.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>0.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Respondent</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 5

![How did you hear about Friendster?](chart)

Table 6

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question 6</th>
<th>Are you a member of Friendster?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Answer</td>
<td>Response %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>99.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>0.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Respondent</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 6

![Are you a member of Friendster?](chart)
Table 7

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question 7</th>
<th>The most important reason to join Friendster</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reason</td>
<td>Response %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To find new friends</td>
<td>4.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To keep in touch with old friends</td>
<td>76.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To date</td>
<td>2.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To find &quot;the one&quot;</td>
<td>5.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All my friends have Friendster account, so I have one too</td>
<td>9.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>2.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Respondent</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 7

The most important reason to join Friendster

Table 8

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question 8</th>
<th>Have you gone out on a date with someone you met on Friendster?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Answer</td>
<td>Response %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>7.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>93.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Respondent</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 8

Have you gone out on a date with someone you met on Friendster?
Table 9

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question 9</th>
<th>Did you meet the date in person before the actual date?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Answer</td>
<td>Response %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>40.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>60.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Respondent</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 9

Did you meet the date in person before the actual date?

Table 10

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question 10</th>
<th>Do you go on blind dates?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Answer</td>
<td>Response %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>7.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>93.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Respondent</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 10

Do you go out on blind date?
Table 11

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question 11</th>
<th>Would you go out on a date with a person from Friendster?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Answer</td>
<td>Response %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>60.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>39.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Respondent</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 11

![Bar chart showing the percentage of respondents who would go out on a date with a person from Friendster. Yes: 60.6%, No: 39.4%.]

Table 12

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question 12</th>
<th>How often do you check your account on Friendster?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reason</td>
<td>Response %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than once a day</td>
<td>18.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Once a day</td>
<td>24.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Once every 2-5 days</td>
<td>24.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Once a week</td>
<td>9.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Just when I have time/seldom</td>
<td>22.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Respondent</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 12

![Bar chart showing the percentage of respondents checking their account on Friendster. More than once a day: 18.3%, Once a day: 24.6%, Once every 2-5 days: 24.6%, Once a week: 9.9%, Just when I have time/seldom: 22.5%.]

90
Table 13

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question 13</th>
<th>How often do you update your account?</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reason</td>
<td>Response %</td>
<td>Response Total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Everytime I have the &quot;new things&quot; to add/ very often</td>
<td>22.5%</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Once every 2-5 days</td>
<td>2.8%</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Once a week</td>
<td>6.3%</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Just when I have time/ seldom</td>
<td>68.3%</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Respondent</td>
<td></td>
<td>142</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 13

Table 14

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question 14</th>
<th>Do you randomly invite other people to be in your friendster network list?</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Answer</td>
<td>Response %</td>
<td>Response Total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>25.4%</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>74.6%</td>
<td>106</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Respondent</td>
<td></td>
<td>142</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 14
Table 15

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question 15</th>
<th>Do you think Friendster has unofficially become an online dating site?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Answer</td>
<td>Response %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>47.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>52.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 15

Do you think Friendster has unofficially become an online dating site?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>52.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>47.2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 16

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question 16</th>
<th>Are you registered on other online dating sites?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Answer</td>
<td>Response %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>7.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>92.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 16

Are you registered on other online dating sites?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>92.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>7.7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 17

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question 17</th>
<th>Favorite online dating site</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Online dating sites</td>
<td>Response %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friendster</td>
<td>81.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Match.com</td>
<td>18.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Respondent</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 17

Table 18

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question 18</th>
<th>The reason you chose Friendster instead of other online dating sites</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reasons</td>
<td>Response %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is a trustworthy site to make friends and meet future mate</td>
<td>72.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is convenient</td>
<td>9.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less pressure since it is not really an online dating site</td>
<td>18.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Respondent</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 18
APPENDIX C

Overview

With over 27+ million members, Friendster is the best way to stay connected to friends and meet new people who share similar interests.

On Friendster You Can:

- Find old classmates and co-workers.
- Provide an easy way for your friends to find your blog.
- Share photos with your friends.
- Never forget your friends' birthdays or lose their contact information.
- Check your friend compatibility on any given day using joint horoscopes.
- See your relationship to any member on Friendster, allowing you to safely meet people through your friends.

Profiles

Think of your profile as your personal page on Friendster. It includes some photos and a description of yourself, who you’re looking to meet, and information about your favorite music, movies, and books.

In addition, it contains links to all your friends’ profiles. If you’re using Friendster only to stay in touch with your immediate friends and aren’t looking to meet new people, you can hide your profile from everyone but your immediate friends.

But, if you’re looking to expand your social network, you can allow other members to view your profile and even send you a message if they’re interested.

Want More?

Check out some of our current member profiles and see for yourself.

Adam
Tim
Polly
Blogs

Friendster Blogs are the easiest way to express yourself on the Web. Because your Friendster Blog is part of your Friendster profile, it’s easy for your friends to find your blog and know what you’re up to, whether you use your blog to rant, tell a story, share your travel journal, or just emote. And, since you can upload photo albums to your blog, it’s the perfect place to share your pictures with your friends.

Express Yourself!

- Upload photos and create albums to share with family and friends.
- Meet new friends with similar interests.
- Allow others to post comments to your blog for you and your friends to read.
- Link your blog to your website, email signature, discussion board or anywhere you post content online!
- Check out Umesh’s Blog!

Photos

There are so many ways to share your photos on Friendster!

First, you can post up to a dozen photos on your profile so your friends and potential friends can see the real you...dressed up, dressed down, in front of a sunset, on a kayak with your dog. And, since you can upload a photo for a friend, you can help your friends show off their quirky smiles.

You can even create additional photo albums to go with your Friendster Blog. With all your pictures in one place, your friends will always be able to see where you’ve been.

It’s Easy To Add Photos!

You can use any JPG, GIF, or PNG. Then all you have to do is...

- Browse files on your computer.
- Select the photo you want to add.
- Upload it to your Friendster profile.
Groups
Friendster Groups is the easiest way to stay connected to friends who share similar interests or affiliations. Join a public group or start your own, just for you posse.

With easy set-up, group messaging capabilities and discussion boards, organizing your group has never been easier.

With Friendster Groups You Can:
- Join public groups
- Create your own private group
- Receive group notifications
- Participate in discussions
- Organize events
- Stay connected!

Discussions
Friendster Discussions is the best way to share your ideas, seek advice, or give your opinions about any conceivable topic.

Whether you’re looking for car buying tips or just sharing information about an event, Friendster Discussions has something for you.

What You Can Do:
- Create your own discussions
- Add your comments to existing discussions
- View all the posts made by a friend no matter what discussion they’ve joined
- Filter posts by user
- Rate topics
- Display the posts of a discussion either by all or by thread view
PRESS RELEASE

Friendster Launches Free Blogs Service Featuring Six Apart’s TypePad Software

Friendster Makes it Easy for its 16 Million Members to Blog With Friends

Mt. View, Calif. – March 3, 2005 – Friendster, the easiest way to keep in better touch with your friends, today announced the availability of Friendster Blogs, a free weblogging service that enables members to easily create and share online journals with friends. With Friendster Blogs, powered by TypePad, the award-winning hosted personal weblogging software from Six Apart, Friendster is now offering its users the richest, easiest set of features available for publishing, updating and sharing information on the Web.

Effective today, members throughout the U.S. and Canada have access to the online tools necessary to build travel logs, journals and digital scrapbooks, or to collect and share their personal interests, insight or commentary. In addition to its free service, three levels of advertising-free upgraded service are also available for a fee. The company plans to extend its weblogging service worldwide shortly thereafter.

“Blogging is core to our mission of making it easier to stay in touch and share experiences with your friends,” said Scott Sassa, President and Chief Executive Officer of Friendster. “TypePad is the best blog service on the market, and this association with Friendster will make blogging easy for members – one click from your Friendster profile links directly to your blog. Six Apart is the visionary of the blogging world, we couldn’t have asked for a better technology provider with whom to work.”

A single click from the home page initiates Friendster Blogs, with no confusing technology to learn, and no installation necessary. Members can include pictures and links in their blog, invite comments and categorize their posts. A library of templates and content options (such as color, border, font, etc.) are also available. Controls can even be put in place to allow members to communicate, privately or publicly, with the audience of their choice.

To support the growing interest in digital and mobile phone cameras, Friendster Blogs also supports mobile blogging. Sending an image to your blog is as easy as sending an email, and photo album templates automatically resize photos and make adding titles, captions, dates and other information simple.

“We are pleased to work with Friendster, a pioneer and leader in social networking,” said Barak Berkowitz, Six Apart’s chief executive officer. “The company’s enthusiastic adoption of TypePad represents a strong endorsement for our software and services, and will introduce millions of people to weblogging. We are committed to delivering the
best weblogging tools on the Web, and look forward to watching the Friendster Blog
community take shape."

**Pricing and Availability**
There are no fees or registration required for members in the U.S. and Canada to begin
using Friendster Blogs. For individuals seeking more advanced features, including
multiple weblogs, an exclusive domain name, enhanced security options and more,
Friendster will offer three upgrade packages. For more information and pricing on these
options, visit www.friendster.com/blogs.php

**About Six Apart Ltd.**
Six Apart Ltd., based in San Francisco, CA, is the company behind the Movable Type
publishing platform, TypePad personal weblogging service and LiveJournal, an online
community organized around personal journals. Founded by husband and wife team
Ben Trott and Mena G. Trott in 2002 and funded by Neoteny Co., Ltd. and August
Capital, Six Apart’s sole focus is to create tools that enable millions of individuals,
organizations and corporations to participate in the Web’s full potential by publishing
their ideas on the Internet with simple, yet powerful software and services. For more
information about Six Apart, LiveJournal, TypePad and Movable Type, visit the Six Apart

**About Friendster**
Friendster is the leading online community for making new friends, communicating with
existing friends, sharing information, organizing activities, finding dates, and
reconnecting with lost friends. Friendster has received several industry awards, including
Friendster is a privately-held corporation headquartered in Mountain View, California,
and is backed by Kleiner Perkins, Benchmark Capital, Battery Ventures and individual
investors.

# # #
Media Contact:
Carleen LeVasseur
For Friendster Public Relations
408-264-6767
carleen@maxi.net
APPENDIX E

Friendster Privacy Policy

Last Updated on May 8, 2006

Friendster does not send Spam or sell email addresses.

About Friendster and the Information We Collect

Profile Information submitted by Members to Friendster

Friendster is an online social networking community that connects people through networks of friends for communicating, sharing and making new friends. To accomplish this, each Friendster Member creates his or her own profile, which contains the personal information that the Member chooses to include. This personal information includes such things as:

- First name or first and last names of the Member (depending on the options selected by the Member),
- Gender, age, martial status and other, similar personal information,
- Occupation,
- Schools attended or companies with whom the Member is associated,
- Location (e.g., city and state), and
- Photos, videos or other shared content uploaded by the Member to his or her profile, to the extent that it includes personal information.

Other Information submitted by Members to Friendster

Friendster also collects Member-submitted account information such as name and email address, to identify Members and send notifications related to the use of the Friendster service.

You should also be aware that Members may reveal other personal information while communicating on other areas of the Friendster website, such as while participating in discussions on Friendster Groups, using the Friendster Chat service, or posting information on Friendster Blogs. This information, in turn, might be viewed by other Members or visitors to the Friendster website who are not Members.

Information Not Directly Submitted by Members or Other Website Users to Friendster

Finally, we also collect some information from Members, as well as from other visitors to the Friendster website, that is not personally identifiable, such as browser type and IP address. This information is gathered from all Members and visitors to the website.
Use of Information Obtained by Friendster

Profile Information submitted by Members to Friendster

The personal information of a Member contained in his or her profile will be shown to those people whom the Member chooses. Each Member has three options when choosing the level of sharing of his or her profile. They are:

- "Friends" which consists only of that Member's friends,
- "Friends of Friends" which consists of that Member's friends, as well as the extended group of people who are friends of that Member's friends, and
- "Anyone" which is all visitors to the Friendster website, whether or not they are Friendster members.

PLEASE NOTE THAT, REGARDLESS OF WHAT PERSONAL INFORMATION A MEMBER CHOOSES TO INCLUDE IN HIS OR HER PROFILE, OR WHAT LEVEL OF SHARING HE OR SHE CHOOSES, CERTAIN INFORMATION ABOUT EACH MEMBER WILL BE INCLUDED IN THAT MEMBER'S "PUBLIC PROFILE," WHICH IS AN ABBREVIATED VERSION OF A FRIENDSTER PROFILE. A LIST OF THE INFORMATION CONTAINED IN EACH PUBLIC PROFILE CAN BE FOUND IN THE FRIENDSTER TERMS OF SERVICE. CLICK HERE TO SEE A SAMPLE PUBLIC PROFILE. PUBLIC PROFILES WILL BE AVAILABLE TO ANY USER OF THE FRIENDSTER WEBSITE, WHETHER OR NOT THE USER IS A MEMBER

Other Information submitted by Members to Friendster

Except where a Member might choose to include a full name in his or her profile, a Member’s email address and full name will only be used in the following circumstances:

- When the Member invites a friend via email to become a Friendster Member,
- When the Member sends a request to another Member to add the other Member to his or her friend list,
- When we send notifications to the Member relating to his or her use of the Friendster service or Friendster website, and
- If the Member so chooses, when we send regular notifications, weekly updates, or other news regarding the Friendster service or the Friendster website.

Except when inviting or adding friends, a Member’s email address will never be shared with or displayed to any other person. Members and their friends, and other Members within their personal networks (depending on the level of sharing a Member has chosen) communicate on Friendster with each other through the Friendster service, without disclosing email addresses.

Information that Members do not submit to us

We use information relating to the server information, IP address, and browser-type.

Sharing of the Information this Site Gathers/Tracks

Except as explained above, or where you are expressly informed otherwise, we do not sell, rent, share, trade or give away any of your personal information, unless required by law or for the protection
of your Membership. However, Friendster may share profile information and aggregate usage information in a non-personally identifiable manner with advertisers and other third parties in order to present to Members and other users of the Friendster website more targeted advertising, products and services. In such situations we will never disclose information that would personally identify you.

Links

The Friendster Website contains links to other websites. This includes links that are placed there by Friendster (such as in advertisements), as well as by other Friendster Members. Please be aware that Friendster is not responsible for the privacy practices of any other website. We encourage all Members and other users of the Friendster website to be aware of when they leave our website, and to read the privacy policies of each and every website that collects personally identifiable information. This privacy policy applies solely to information collected by Friendster through the Friendster website.

Use of Cookies

A cookie is a small text file that is stored on a user's computer for record-keeping purposes. We use cookies on the Friendster website. However, we do not and will not use cookies to collect private information from any Member or other user of the Friendster website which they did not intentionally submit to us, other than as stated in this Privacy Policy.

We use both "session ID cookies" and "persistent cookies." We use session ID cookies to make it easier for you to navigate our site. A session ID cookie expires when you close you browser. A persistent cookie remains on your hard drive for an extended period of time. Note also that Members may optionally use a cookie to remember their email in order to automatically log in to our website. You can remove persistent cookies by following directions provided in your Internet browsers's "help" file; however, please note that, if you reject cookies or disable cookies in your web browser, you may not be able to use the Friendster website.

Correcting/Updating or Removing Information

REMEMBER THAT YOU CAN CHANGE THE GROUP OF PEOPLE WHO MAY VIEW YOUR PROFILE AT ANY TIME. YOU CAN CHANGE THESE PROFILE SHARING SETTINGS BY CLICKING THE "SETTINGS" LINK IN THE TOP, RIGHT CORNER OF THE FRIENDSTER HOMEPAGE. ALSO, YOU CAN ALWAYS CHANGE THE PERSONAL INFORMATION YOU'VE SUBMITTED TO THE FRIENDSTER WEBSITE, INCLUDING THE INFORMATION INCLUDED IN YOUR FRIENDSTER PROFILE, BY CLICKING THE "EDIT PROFILE" LINK ON YOUR FRIENDSTER PROFILE PAGE.

Changes in Our Privacy Policy

If we change our privacy policy, we will post those changes on our web site so Members and other users of the Friendster website are always aware of what information we collect, how we use it, and under what circumstances, if any, we disclose it. If we are going to use Members' or other users' personally identifiable information in a manner different from that stated at the time of collection, we will notify those Members and users via email or by placing a prominent notice on our website.
Invite a Friend

If a Member elects to use our "Invite" feature to invite a friend to become a Member of the Friendster service, we ask them for the friend's email address. Friendster will automatically send the friend an email inviting them to join the site. Friendster stores this email address for the purpose of automatically adding the respondent to the friends list of the Member sending the invitation, and also to send reminders of the invitation. Friendster will never sell these email addresses or use them to send any other communication besides invitations and invitation reminders. Any person who receives an invitation may contact Friendster to request the removal of this information from our database.

Security

The Friendster account of every Member is password-protected. Friendster takes every precaution to protect the information of the Members, as well as information collected from other users of the Friendster website. We use industry standard measures to protect all information that is stored on our servers and within our database. We limit the access to this information to those employees who need access to perform their job function such as our customer service personnel. If you have any questions about the security at our website, please contact us.

Email Choice/Opt-out

Members who no longer wish to receive our weekly email updates or other email notifications may opt-out of receiving these communications by following the instructions contained in the applicable email or by logging-in and changing their settings in the "Account Settings" section of the Friendster website. You can access this page by clicking on the "Settings" link on the top right of your Friendster homepage.

Third Party Advertising

The ads appearing on this Web site are delivered to Members by our Web advertising partners. Our Web advertising partners may use cookies. Doing this allows the ad network to recognize your computer each time they send you an online advertisement. In this way, ad networks may compile information about where you, or others who are using your computer, saw their advertisements and determine which ads are clicked on. This information allows an ad network to deliver targeted advertisements that they believe will be of most interest to you. Friendster does not have access to or control of the cookies that may be placed on the computer of any Member or other user of the Friendster website by the third-party ad servers or ad networks.

This privacy statement covers the use of cookies by Friendster only, and does not cover the use of cookies by any other party.

Members and Users Located Outside of the United States of America

We have made an effort to protect the personal information of all Members and other users of the Friendster website, and to the extent applicable, we attempt to comply with local data protection and consumer rights laws. If you are unsure whether this privacy policy is in conflict with the applicable local rules where you are located, you should not submit your personal information to the Friendster website. IN ADDITION, IF YOU ARE LOCATED WITHIN THE EUROPEAN UNION, YOU SHOULD
NOTE THAT YOUR INFORMATION WILL BE TRANSFERRED TO THE UNITED STATES, THE LAWS OF WHICH MAY BE DEEMED BY THE EUROPEAN UNION TO HAVE INADEQUATE DATA PROTECTION (see, for example, European Union Directive 95/46/EC of 24 October 1995, a copy of which can be found here). Members and other users of the Friendster website located in countries outside of the United States of America who submit personal information do thereby consent to the general use of such information as provided in this privacy policy and to the transfer of that information to and/or storage of the information in the United States of America.

Contacting Friendster

If you have any questions about this privacy policy, Friendster's privacy practices, or your dealings with Friendster, please contact us.
APPENDIX F

Match.com

How it works | Success stories | Subscribe Now

I am: | Seeking: | Between ages: | Zip code: | Date of Birth:

- Man | Man | 25-30 | United States |
- Woman | Woman | 45-50 |

Your Location: | Year |

United States |

Username: | Password | Email Address:

Find My Matches

A great way to a great relationship.

Looking for more in a relationship and a dating site?

With over 16 years of experience in online dating and relationships, Match.com is the worldwide leader in online dating and relationships. Where else can you find millions of singles looking for love just like you? We don’t offer just online personals, we are personal in our offerings - to help you find a date, a relationship, a marriage.

Match.com is the World’s Largest Online Dating, Relationships, Singles & Personal Services

We are a personals site making your online dating experience the best. We prove that an online dating persona can really lead to a long-lasting serious relationship. Since Match.com met real singles like you today! Why is Match.com the most popular website in the world? It’s because we’ve inspired 18 million relationships. We’ve had over 1000,000 success stories. We’ve helped you find your love and that special someone. Get your FREE Match.com account now.

For Subscribers

One of many services available on Match.com, but only if you are a subscriber.

An exclusive group of people looking for an enduring relationship. A little more private, a little more personal. Let us do the searching for you.

looklove.com

chemistry.com

An exclusive approach from Match.com

For Subscribers

One of many services available on Match.com, but only if you are a subscriber.

An exclusive group of people looking for an enduring relationship. A little more private, a little more personal. Let us do the searching for you.

match.com

A great way to a great relationship.
Favorite Music:
- Passion
- Sonic Flood
- Third Day
- Hillsong
- Steven Curtis Chapman
- Josh Groban

Favorite TV Shows:
- The OC
- American Idol

About Me:
I am truly blessed!

Who I Want to Meet:
- my friends and long lost friends

SooChan | 10/01/2006
SATU DIA TOA EMPATI!
LINGUA TETAPI HEBAT!!

SooChan | 10/01/2006
CONGRATULATIONS!!! Lu Li, Knowing that you have made it So must rush to be the first one to congratulate you, since you always had me to write something here.
WELL DONE!
DONO SIR!
DONO SIR!

msMikieLL | 01/04/2006
Hard to say/flash to feel n hard to think...like writing an essay in Engr.