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SEEKING A LIFE PARTNER WITH THE USE OF INTERNET TECHNOLOGY

Poszukiwanie partnera życiowego z wykorzystaniem technologii Internetu

Abstract

Since its beginning Internet has been used for matrimonial purposes. The first dating portals were launched in the United States already in the first half of the 1990s. The research shows that the number of people searching for partners and spouses via the Internet has been constantly growing. Searching for a life partner using online tools is also connected with the development of new strategies. The paper presents the results of a study conducted among singles . The research involved a qualitative study conducted among singles in the Silesian region and a nation-wide quantitative online study among the singles using *sympatia.pl* – one of the popular dating portal in Poland. The research findings show the interest of singles in searching for life partners on the Internet, but also their scepticism about the possibility of finding a valuable life partner in this way.

Keywords: single, Internet, dating portal, ecology and architecture of choice

Streszczenie

Internet był używany w celach matrymonialnych od samego początku swojego istnienia, zaś pierwsze portale randkowe powstały w Stanach Zjednoczonych już w pierwszej połowie lat dziewięćdziesiątych XX wieku. Badania pokazują, iż mamy do czynienia ze stałym wzrostem liczby osób poszukujących partnerów i małżonków za pośrednictwem Internetu. Poszukiwanie partnera życiowego z wykorzystaniem technik internetowych wiąże się przy tym z kształtowaniem się nowych strategii działania. Artykuł zawiera prezentację wyników badań singli i singielek dotyczących tej kwestii. Przeprowadzono badania jakościowe wśród singli mieszkających w województwie śląskim oraz ogólnopolskie badania ilościowe realizowane online wśród singli i singielek korzystających z popularnego w Polsce portalu randkowego *sympatia.pl*. Wyniki badania pokazują zainteresowanie singli poszukiwaniem parterów życiowych w Internecie i ich jednoczesny sceptycyzm co do możliwości znalezienia w ten sposób wartościowego partnera życiowego.

Słowa kluczowe: singiel, Internet, portal randkowy, ekologia i architektura wyboru

Introduction

We live in the world of ongoing changes. We found less and less support in the traditional institutions and patterns of social behavior. More and more we define our fate insociety on our own. We used to be assigned to the rigid social roles, but now we become the creators of our own social biographies. The world around us experiences the process of slow disintegration of the social forms typical for the first modernity, like class, sex or family. At the same time, the world becomes the place where we look for new solutions, which would make individuals free from the rules, social roles and lifestyles established in the industrial society.

Sometimes with no stable support in this changing, "fluid" world, individuals must take responsibility for their own life. They must create it themselves.

Intimate and family life has also been changing. Rigid social patterns lose their influence in this sphere also. This is reflected particularly in the transformations of the process of choosing a life partner. The socio-cultural context of this process is described as the development of the new "ecology and architecture of choices of the heart" (Illouz 2016: 67-68). The conditions of the choices are of dual nature. First, they involve ecology of choice, that is wider social conditions, which set the frames for the choice. Second, there is the architecture of choice, namely criteria used by an individual to asses an object (here, potential partner) together with emotions and knowledge guiding the choice. While analyzing the changes in the ecology of choice, Eva Illouz notices two important issues. First, with the development of capitalism different areas of social life have become autonomous. It is mainly the economic activity which – free from the social and moral constraints, began to be performed within the self-regulating capitalist market. It also subdued the social sphere, shaping the individuality of people and creating the foundations for rational behavior. The market provided the conditions for individual actions and choices. It was a certain ecology of choice. According to Illouz, the similar process takes place in the area of romantic relations. This sphere is also becoming autonomous and, like economics, is subject to self-regulatory processes. This process involves "disembedding of individual romantic choices from the moral and social fabric of the group and in the emergence of a self-regulated market of encounters.

Modern criteria to evaluate a love object have become disentangled from publicly shared moral frameworks. This disentanglement took place because of the transformation of the criteria for selecting a mate […] and because of the transformation of the process of mate selection – which has become both more subjective and more individualized". (Illouz 2016: 68) Second, the autonomization of the romantic sphere, or relations between the sexes is related to the objectivization of this sphere. Romantic relations may be guided by rational choice only, when they can be reflected upon. Illouz writes about the "emotional ontology" or the "idea that emotions may be separated from their subject in order to explain and control them […] This means that relationships have been transformed in the subject of explorations, which can be compared and analyzed regarding the costs and benefits. […] Intimate relationships are more like quantifiable goods or objects one can exchange and trade". (Illouz 2010: 55) Such ecology of choice could only emerge due to the development of the therapy culture which made emotions the subject of explorations and control. Intimate relations have become object of observations, evaluation and manipulation based on objective criteria (Illouz 2010; Bellah et al. 2007). Thus, consumerism has entered the area of romantic relations. "Marriage markets create forms of choice that are increasingly similar to those operating in consumer markets. Consumer choice is a culturally specific category of choice, exercised through a combination of rational deliberation, refinement of taste, and the desire to maximize utilities and wellbeing". (Illouz, 2016: 145) The development of the marriage markets was connected with widening (place of living) and opening (social status) the areas where mates are searched for. This became particularly visible with the development of the Internet.

The new ecology, in turn, influenced the architecture of choice consisting "in a number of cognitive and emotional processes, and, more especially, it has to do with the ways in which emotional and rational forms of thinking are valued, conceived of, and monitored in making a decision". (Illouz 2016: 35-36) The way the decision is made, the criteria used and how it is affected by emotions and knowledge – in other words, how is the "architecture of choice" shaped is related to the conditions accompanying the choice. As it was already mentioned, this takes place within an open market, where "people meet and pair up according to their "taste" and compete with others depending on their capacity to access the most desirable mates". (Illouz, 2016: 85) The "market" exchange includes different, subjective individual attributes: social, psychological and sexual.

Internet plays a significant role in shaping the architecture and ecology of choice. It has been used for matrimonial purposes and first dating portals were launched in the United States. First two mass dating websites (kiss.com and match.com) were registered in 1994 and 1995, respectively, and in 1996 there were already 16 dating portals in the US only. (Oronowicz-Jaśkowiak, Jaśkowiak 2015: 326-327). In 2005 Match.com had over 40 million registered users. (Ansari 2016: 89) The development of the dating sites may be divided into three periods. At first, there were simple advertisements on dating sites. This model is very similar to the old matrimonial ads in newspapers, with the

only difference that they were published online and, thus, were more widely accessible. Second stage were portals facilitating searching for and matching mates based on mathematical algorithms used to analyze and compare information provided by the users (for example, in questionnaires). Third, there are mobile applications allowing to find potential partners interested in new relations close to the user's location. Such services enable finding a person who is potentially interested in a relationship and sending a date invitation immediately. (Kacprzak 2014: 148; Oronowicz-Jaśkowiak, Jaśkowiak 2015: 330-331). The most popular example of such application is Tinder, created in 2012 by Sean Rad, Justin Mateen and Jonathan Badeen. Registration in Tinder is easy and instant. No forms, no algorithms. Once a user logs in, Tinder identifies his or her location and sends an infinite number of photos of potential mates. Users swipe to accept or reject other users.. After quick analysis, they can swipe right to like or swipe left to dislike the photo. If both users swiped each other right, there is a "match" and the parties may chat using the app or set a date (Ansari 2016: 121; Żyła 2019). Applications like Tinder perfectly fit into the modern consumerism, as they are quick, comfortable and easy way to meet the needs of users. However, this also entails all threats already mentioned herein, like too many possibilities, which make decisions impossible.

Today selection of a partner is made in the cultural context, which means wider and more open search areas. Internet removes the limitations related to the lack of direct contact and social status. This does not mean that all the barriers and forms of segregation in the marriage market disappear (Rosenfeld, Thomas 2012: 526). The attitudes characteristic for the "regime of authenticity" are fully demonstrated online. Technologies of choice offered by the Internet facilitate, or even force, subjectivisation and commercialization of intimate relationships. "These technologies overlap with and rely heavily on psychological knowledge […] and modes of partner selection that derive from the market." (Illouz 2016: 262) The availability of many potential mates allows and forces users to apply their criteria for evaluation and comparison and in result – based on these criteria and accordingly to the consumerism culture – make the market choice. The choice which results in maximization of own benefit and commoditization of the partners. Potential and existing mates are thus evaluated, but also compared based on the adopted criteria. "If potential partners can be evaluated according to a certain metric, they become interchangeable and as a matter of fact can be improved further on. That is the process of settling on a "good-enough" choice that becomes increasingly difficult" (Illouz 2016: 274-275). E. Illouz writes that "the internet places each person searching for another in an open market in open competition with others, thus radicalizing the notion that one can and should improve one's romantic condition and that (potential or actual) partners are eminently interchangeable" (Illouz 2016: 276). As a result, "psychology, internet technology, and the logic of the capitalist market applied to mate selection have contributed to create a cultural personality, which has considerably refined and multiplied its tastes and capacity for discernment and choice" (Illouz 2016: 270).

It may seem that the prevalence of the Internet would lead to the extension and opening of area of partner search that should favor a choice. But too many opportunities may yield the opposite result. They may prolong the decision making time or even paralyze and hinder the ability to make a choice. Describing his own experiences of being single, Michael Nast notices that "thanks to social media and dating applications we have access to so many potential partners that many of us feel overwhelmed. […] A person with too many options has problems with making a decision. And usually, does not make any" (Nast 2017: 68). Thus, more choices does not necessarily means better (Schwartz 2013). As the number of options increases, the more effort is required to make a decision. Schwartz points out that with numerous choices, one cannot evaluate any option without considering other potential choices. Each option bears the costs of missing the opportunity provided by other options. The more options we have, the more likely we will regret the ones we did not choose. If there are many options, the chances grow that somewhere there is a really good or even the best one. We feel we should find it. If the option we actually choose turns out to be unsatisfactory, we think we should have been more considerate. As the number of option keeps growing, wondering about the better option may lead to expecting the regrets when we finally discover it, and thus, stop us from making any decision. This refers to all consumer goods, including the choice of a mate made in the marriage market. The situation is alike.

Studies among the users of dating portals

The research shows that the number of people searching for partners and spouses via the Internet has been constantly growing. Study conducted by John Cacioppo from the Chicago University revealed that more than one third of the couples marrying in the US in 2005-2012, first met online. The survey, conducted in the representative group of four thousand Americans, clearly shows that this trend is growing (Rosenfeld, Thomas 2012; Ansari 2016: 91-96). Concluding his research, Aziz Ansari writes that "emergence of dating sites changed the way we initiate relationships. In 2000, only five years after launching Match.com, 10% of people in relationships met their partners through the Internet. In 2010 – almost 25%. No other methods of starting romantic relationships has ever evolved so much and so fast" (Ansari, 2016, p. 95). This trend is also present in Poland. The studies conducted among the Polish Internet users revealed that 39% of the respondents think Internet is a good place to meet a long-term mate (Oronowicz-Jaśkowiak, Jaśkowiak 2015: 329). According to the research commissioned by the dating site *Sympatia.pl*, 41% of the respondents admitted that their last date was with a person they had met online. In their 2008 research on the online activity of Poles, the Public Opinion Research Center (CBOS) included the marital status of the respondents. The secondary analysis of the results, performed by Anna Bujała, indicates that in 2008 15.5% of the general population of Poles aged 25-45 with secondary or higher education met their partners on the Internet. Persons who did not have long-term partners are more inclined to engage in this type of relationships. Almost 23% of singles admit they met someone online, whereas for couples it is almost 14.4% (Bujała 2013: 208-210). The most popular dating portal in Poland is Sympatia.onet.pl. In November 2014 the site recorded 1.06 million visitors (6% of all Internet users). Singlessalad.com comes second, with 0.79 million visitors (4.5%). Last year, this site was not even in the ranking of the most popular dating services. Between February and November 2014 it recorded almost five-fold growth of interest (from 0.17 million; 1%). The third most popular service is Edarling.pl, visited by 0.69 million users (3.9%) (Gemius Polska 2015).

Qualitative research conducted among the users of dating portals in Poland provided information about their opinion about the advantages and disadvantages of these services. The main advantages mentioned by the respondents was the large number of active users who form a comprehensive base of potential mates. The users also mentioned many positive experiences with people they met through the dating portals. A big group of the respondents met people with whom they engaged in long-term social relations, entered into informal relationships or even marriages. The main disadvantage of the dating sites was limited security: creating false accounts and providing false data, as well as using the services for fraudulent purposes. The respondents also mentioned the growing trend to treat other users as objects (Dominiczak 2016: 99-123).

Who are the singles?

In the world literature, the beginnings of research interest in the issues of individual and social functioning of singles date back to the first half of the 1930s. Naturally, the phenomenon of being single, has a much longer history. The study of various aspects of the life of singles has always involved diverse manners of defining the phenomenon. Depending on the approach adopted, different categories of people have been classified as singles.

The easiest way to describe singles is defining them as unmarried people. Such a purely formal definition can be found in one of the first scientific publications on the life of unmarried people, the collective work *The Sex Life of the Unmarried Adults* (Wile 1935). However, the formal and legal definition of singles only as unmarried people is insufficient. A group defined in this way includes highly diverse persons, representing all ages, who have never been married, divorced or widowed.

One can, therefore, be single formally and socially. Social singles will be those who actually live alone. They are also referred to as singletons. However, they form only part of the singles' group (Klinenberg 2012: 4). The rest of the group is characterised by more or less extensive social activity, including the intimate sphere. Defining a single involves, therefore, both legal, social and individual (personal) aspects. Distinguishing a single from a couple is usually achieved by reference to the following three characteristics. Firstly, the presence

or absence of a long-term close and intimate partner. Second, self-definition in one of these roles. Thirdly, the age limitations governing the legal possibility of getting married (Hertel 2007: 141).

Defining a single as a person who can get married, but intentionally does not do so and does not have a partner with whom he or she would have a long-term intimate relationship, still, however, delimits a large and internally very diverse group of people. Among such a broadly defined group of singles, one can distinguish subcategories and make various typologies (Stein 1976; Stein 2008; van Horn 2000). Also in the Polish literature on the subject, various ways of defining and classifying singles are proposed (the reviews of the proposals see: Rzymowska, Świąder 2016; Palus 2012; Ochnik 2012; Rychłowska-Niesporek 2017).

Lifestyle may also be relevant to defining singles.[1] A single is, therefore, a person who not only remains voluntarily unmarried and has no permanent partner, but also leads a specific lifestyle, the definition of which, obviously, poses a problem. The variety of lifestyles led by singles and their different life opportunities, depending on education, income, profession, health, race, ethnicity, age, place of residence and parental status, are pointed to (Stein 2008).

The last important definition criterion of a single is age. It is assumed that the lower age limit for a single person is the age at which it is legally possible to conclude a marriage. However, most persons who marry, do so beyond the legally permitted age for marriage. From this perspective, anyone who got married beyond the age limit, was single in the period of his life prior to that event. Therefore, we can talk about the legal limit for getting married and the actual limit resulting from social practice. The average age of getting married for the first time can be considered the latter. Taking into account this average age and its standard deviation, we can determine the age range in which approximately 95% of people get married for the first time. Thus, getting married within this age range will be a specific conventional standard of behaviour. Hence, persons who remain single up to the upper limit of this age range can be called normative singles, while persons above this age limit who have not married would be non-normative singles then (Kaiser, Kashy 2005: 122).

Research on singles dates back to the 1930s. It focused on various aspects of their individual lives. Much attention was paid to their sex life (Burgess 1935). The characteristics of their social position were described and analysed as well as their way of self-defining (Shostak 1987; Darrington 2005). The research also concerned various forms of stigmatisation and discrimination against singles, including comparative analyses with persons leading family life (DePaulo, Morris 2005, 2006). On the one hand, there were calls for the creation of Singles Studies, similar to Gender or Black Studies (De Paulo 2014). On the other hand, the very point of using the term „single" in social research was discussed (Clark, Graham 2005). Until the 1990s, the use of the term single in analyses of social phenomena appeared only ocassionally in Poland – primarily, as an example of an alternative form of family life or as an analysis of one-person households. On the other hand, the term "single" was quite commonly used in media texts (Ochnik 2012: 63).

Along with the socio-economic transformation, significant cultural changes took place in Poland, which were also reflected in changes in lifestyle. The changes also included the sphere of family life. Research on various aspects of the life of Polish singles has been undertaken as a response to these changes in the first decade of the 21st century. Polish researchers drew on a long international tradition of defining, classifying and studying singles. At the same time, they have opened up new and interesting research areas. Since 2000, several important books presenting the results of research on Polish singles have been published in Poland (Żurek 2008; Paprzycka 2008; Czernecka 2011; Kuklińska 2012; Paprzycka, Izdebski 2016; Such-Pyrgiel 2012, Such-Pyrgiel 2013, Such-Pyrgiel 2018; Rychłowska-Niesporek 2020). In addition to them, many scientific articles, doctoral and even bachelor's theses have been published on singles and single lifestyle. (Rychłowska-Niesporek 2017).

Original research methods

The research results described in the article represent a small fragment of the analysis carried out within a research project among singles. The subject of the research was the life experiences of singles, their knowledge

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1   Other terms are also used to describe a single's lifestyle, such as living alone, going solo, solo living or singlehood.

and views on the economic and social conditions of their life practice. One of the research problems involved the practice of using the Internet by singles in search of potential life partners. In accordance with triangulation of methods, both a qualitative and quantitative study were conducted and suitably analysed. The qualitative approach (involving individual in-depth interviews) was dominant, whereas the quantitative (involving surveys) was complementary. The qualitative interviews were conducted from December 2016 to June 2017. The analyses covered 20 interviews with the individuals who met the sampling criteria. The respondents came from the cities in the Silesia region. As to the quantitative study, it involved singles using the popular dating site in Poland, *sympatia.pl*. In this case as well, the respondents were singles meeting the adopted criteria, the only difference was that the sample was nation-wide. The research was performed online, using the survey questionnaire published at *www.survio.pl*. The respondents received the link to the site with the survey via *sympatia.pl* website. The survey involved 633 respondents (340 women and 293 men). For the research purposes, the group of singles was limited to those individuals who have never entered into a formal marriage relationship. They are persons who may marry but do not do it intentionally and do not have a long-term partner. We assumed that a single, unmarried person will be older than the average age of persons who get married for the first time. An important characteristics of singles is their economic independence. The study focused solely on professionally active singles with higher education.

Analysis of the results

My original qualitative research shows the ambivalent attitude of the respondents towards searching for life partners on the Internet. Despite the fact that all of them have Internet access, only a little more than half of the singles look for a mate online. Others reject this opportunity providing different explanations of their decision.

> *No, I really don't like it. I prefer traditional ways.* (Monika, 36 years)

> *I know about the dating sites because my friends use them but I guess I would never dare to log in, post my photo and wait or search myself. No, I have never searched myself. I have never been desperate to say I have to have a boyfriend. No.* (Anna, 28 years)

> *I don't have and I've never had a profile in dating portals, chats or things like that.*
> (Kinga, 35 years)

> *I think everyone lies on the Internet. I don't know why but I think I prefer it this way rather than using computer.* (Magda, 33 years)

> *Dating portals or things like that – not really. You never know who is on the other side. I've heard many stories.* (Sonia, 38 years)

The persons who search for a mate on the Internet, do it with varying intensity and use different services and applications. However, they have different opinions about using the Internet for these purposes. For example, the respondents notice that using the Internet to initiate new relationships has become a necessity.

> *I've wondered about it recently and talked to my friend that today you can only meet someone online because even in pubs people no longer approach one another. This does not happen often, there are different times.*
> (Ewelina, 32 years)

On the other hand, for some respondents the dating services provides the real opportunity to meet new friends.

Thanks to these websites I have contact with guys all the time, all the time. When we don't meet, like now, I can log into the portal and there is always someone writing something. Of course, after few sentences I verify is this is a person you can talk to or not, but the guys are there all the time. Today I have another date. So when I have time, I go on a date, like I would do if I had a long-term mate, I go on dates and they are cool, there are butterflies etc. (Katarzyna, 36 years)

However, confronting one's expectations built upon the online relations with potential partners with the reality is sometimes painful. Direct contacts with the people met through the dating portals did not end up successfully. Partners chosen online often did not meet the expectations when met face to face.

I didn't work. I was dating this girl. She was 2 years older but it didn't click on my side. (Michał, 30 years)

Through sympatia.pl. I was in 3 relationships from sympatia.[…] I was dating online and I somehow learned the 5 second rules, where you talk, chat and write and you don't know these persons. If it's your first meeting and it does click within first 5 seconds, I don't know, you like each other, it may work, but if there is nothing for 5 seconds, it's over. But the first impression, there is something to it and there were persons I enjoyed talking to on the phone but when we met if was tough. […] Or we decided we do not match or I just walked away, I did not find a person meeting my expectations. (Paweł, 36 years)

I went on a date twice but it usually ended with shorter or longer conversation. There were more dates set, but I changed my mind, decide I have something else to do and finished it but twice I went on a date, yes. One was ok, it was nice to talk but the girl was not my type. The other one was very nice and I really don't know why we hadn't met again. We just didn't. I did not suggest anything, neither did she, and it just died. (Igor, 30 years)

The most interesting thing was that I went on one date and it was initiated by a woman. I had tried over a dozen of times, I chatted to different women, tried to initiate a relationship through this website but it was like in the real life, without a success. (Piotr, 36 years)

I met this boy through a dating portal and we were together but he disappointed me so much that I decided I would not give him another chance and broke up before Christmas. I was on some dating sites but it's horrible what happens there. You hardly ever meet, I try to verify it somehow, sometimes even during a phone conversation. If something feels strange because they confuse what they say and sometimes you can recognize that. Usually, when I finally meet with someone, it ends with one date. […] This year I went on a date with this guy from the portal, who did everything, like parachuting, they introduce themselves as great enthusiasts and then it turns out he jumped only once because his friends gave it to him on his 30th birthday. But his hobby was parachuting (laughter) and tennis – he played only once. That is why most of these dates are the first and last ones because you either have nothing to talk about or you sense such desperation that he would tell you everything to look super cool. (Karolina, 33 years)

Such experiences strengthen the negative attitude of the singles towards online dating.

For example, I have an account on a dating portal and I used it for a while. But with time, after several failures I got discouraged. (Krzysztof, 36 years)

Yes, I just use it very little, I am signed up on Tinder. I used to try to use it more but I could not draw positive conclusions out of it. (Damian, 30 years)

The already mentioned smartphone applications play increasingly important role. But the respondents also notice that using them poses many risks.

> *I have a Tinder profile. This is a place where I meet new people but it's a bit difficult, I mean there are many people who have nothing to say and that's very annoying. The girls look pretty but so what if you can't talk to them. Girls are very often vain and spoilt, and I try not to be like that, I try to be open to all new contacts but I've met many such persons.* (Mateusz, 30 years)

> *I have an account in Badoo, because one of my friends was desperately looking for a wife, I mean he was really desperate and he knows all the available accounts and he dates, I think he might go on a date everyday. Thanks to him I have Badoo account and we sometimes browse it [...] This is weird. For me, it was weird at the very beginning because you swipe photos and mark them with an "X" or a heart. If there is a match, because the other person also liked your photo, you may start talking. I've had it for two weeks and I've told Tomek that I give up because for me having an account is too much, just after two sentences like: Hi! How are you? or Hey! This is so unnatural for me that I can't get over it. Most people there is looking for sex. I don't know if anyone is actually looking for love.* (Kinga, 32 years)

The advantages of the open market offering the unlimited choice of goods and services actually make choice ever more difficult. The freedom of choice turns into a slavery, constant anxiety: Did I choose well? Similar situation happened when looking for a mate.

> *Ok, this is the choice that I will not take this man, this woman because I can visit the portal in a minute and I will meet another ten, and maybe there will be someone. Why should I pick this one, his ears are sticking out so I will find a guy with the same character but without protruding ears. [...] It's like buying butter in a supermarket. [...] There is a lot of choice so it supposed to be easier but it's not, there is a choice but I don't know what to choose at all.* (Daniel, 30 years)

The respondents want to choose the best mates, they want to be sure they made the best possible choice. Online dating portals should help but it turns out that they do not. Only half of the singles who participated in the qualitative study admit they have accounts in dating websites. However, they do not consider it a good place to meet a valuable, compatible person. The respondents complain about phoniness or even lies, which are a standard on such websites. Very often people met on the Internet "lose" when met "live". The surveyed singles have experienced many failures regarding dating persons met on dating portals. They keep their accounts but they do not count that they will find their soul mates there.

The qualitative study was complemented with the survey conducted among the singles registered in *sympatia.pl*. The survey results show a big interest in searching for potential mates using dating websites.

Table 1. Dating portals (multiple choice)

What dating portals you have used or use?	Sympatia.pl	
	N=633	%
eDarling	176	27.8
be2	31	4.9
MyDwoje	57	9.0
Sympatia.pl	633	100
Badoo.pl	257	40.6
Randka.pl	11	1.7
Tinder	169	26.7
Other	80	12.6

Source: Author's original research

The respondents who have their accounts in *sympatia.pl* register also in many other dating services and use different dating applications.

Table 2. Searching for mates using the Internet

Have you ever searched for a mate using the Internet?	Sympatia.pl	
	N=633	**%**
Yes, very often	117	20.0
Yes, often	286	48.9
Yes, rarely	182	31.1
No, never	0	0
Total	633	100

Source: Author's original research

Among the users of *sympatia.pl* almost 70% of the respondents was looking for a mate on the Internet often or very often.

Table 3. Dates with persons met on the Internet

Have you ever dates with persons you had met on the Internet?	Sympatia.pl	
	N=633	**%**
Yes	544	85.9
No	89	14.1
Total	633	100

Source: Author's original research

Little more than 85% of the singles who took part in the survey and were registered in *sympatia.pl* went on dates with persons met through the Internet.

Conclusions

The Internet has definitely revolutionized marriage markets, especially in terms of the scaleand opportunities to search for the potential mates. There are more and more new dating services and those already existing modernize their profiles. But as it turns out, more does not mean better. With great opportunity, there are also numerous threats. The decision paralysis, described above and resulting from the excess of available offers, leads to frustration, disappointment and often withdrawing from searching activities or treating the persons met online as objects not very seriously. Today's trend in dating applications is narrowing the search to the most matching individuals by, for example, compatibility tests which apply different criteria like age, education, physical look, worldview etc. There is also so called slow dating, that is, meeting less people with whom one can spend more time and know them better. It turns out that the limitless opportunities to meet new people may foster loneliness that becomes the problem of today's world. Using dating websites takes a lot of time and energy. Research shows that single people use social media much more often than people living in relationships. This results in single men and women being locked in the world of the Internet, favouring the formation of a new type of single – a "single 2.0" or an electronic single, whose activity in searching for a partner is limited only to the virtual world. (Such-Pyrgiel 2019: 253). Constant verification and checking the offers is tiring. It also leads to increasing expectations, decision problems and, as a result, remaining single. My research confirms the great interest of singles in finding a partner via the Internet. However, at the same time, the singles involved in the research did not consider the Internet a good place to meet a valuable person. In fact, the respondents declared negative experiences when dating persons met on dating websites. On the one hand, the Internet gives a possibility of unlimited search for a potential life partner, but on the other, it strengthens anxiety about the value of this choice. It should be emphasized that despite the reported

problems, more and more modern relationships have been initiated online and their number will surely grow. Time will show if they will last and be satisfactory. Or maybe, they are not the same relationships anymore, taking individual needs into account, focused on meeting personal expectations, without the pressure of long-term approach and sacrifice understood as life shared "for good and for bad".

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