

Should we meet in person or on Facetime? An examination of expectancy violations and predicted outcome value forecasts during online dating modality switches

Erin M. Sumner¹, Artemio Ramirez, Jr², and Audrey Herrera¹

¹Trinity University, ²University of South Florida

Abstract

The present study drew from expectancy violations theory, predicted outcome value (POV) theory, and the modality switching perspective to examine online daters who subsequently met for FtF-like communication. Hierarchical regression analyses tested whether online daters' post-modality switch (MS) expectedness ratings, evaluations, and POV forecasts were related to their: (a) pre-MS length of online association; (b) number of pre-MS partner photos seen; (c) use of pre-MS phone calls; and (d) decision to hold the first FtF-like meeting in person or through video chat. Behavioral and physical appearance expectedness ratings were positively related to the number of pre-MS partner photos seen, and curvilinearly (inverted-u shape) related to daters' pre-MS length of association. Physical appearance evaluations were positively associated with the number of pre-MS photos seen, while behavioral and physical appearance evaluations displayed positive associations with pre-MS phone calls. Finally, post-MS POV forecasts were positively associated with the number of pre-MS partner photos seen, holding the MS through video chat, post-MS assessments of a partner's behavioral expectedness, and post-MS evaluations of a partner's behavioral and physical appearance. An interaction also emerged for behavioral expectedness and evaluation on POV, which implied that negative expectancy violations were more useful than positive violations in predicting a relationship's potential viability.

Keywords: modality switching perspective; online dating; expectancy violations theory; predicted outcome value theory; modality expansion.

Online dating applications (apps) help users establish communication with potential romantic partners. Online daters must then decide whether (and if so, when) to meet face-to-face (FtF), which Ramirez and colleagues (2015) characterize as a modality switch (MS). The modality switching perspective (Ramirez & Zhang, 2007; Ramirez & Wang, 2008) builds upon the hyperpersonal perspective's (Walther, 1996) claim that individuals interacting in cue-lean environments for lengthy periods are prone to develop idealized - or unrealistically positive - impressions of their partners. Cue-lean environments involve text-based and editable forms of communication that allow communicators to strategically present

their desirable traits while omitting or downplaying their less attractive aspects (Walther & Burgoon, 1992; Walther, 2007). Meanwhile, partners might attempt to reduce uncertainty by over-interpreting the sparse (and likely strategically positive) cues at their disposal in ways that create a positive feedback loop. The partner idealization tendency is particularly strong when mediated communicators anticipate future interaction with their partner, and are therefore motivated to develop detailed initial impressions (Walther, 1994). Most online daters hope to form an offline romantic relationship (Ellison et al., 2006), so hyperpersonal conditions could be present between online daters.

The first FtF-like meeting is an important relational turning point in which online daters' expectations are tested in a rich-cue environment (Ramirez et al., 2015). Based on expectancy violations theory (EVT; Burgoon, 1993) and predicted outcome value theory (POV theory; Sunnafrank, 1986), the expectancies formed online – and the extent to which said expectancies are violated upon meeting FtF – could have a profound effect on online daters' assessments of each other and their potential relationship. It is therefore prudent to explore how communicative factors occurring before and during a MS might influence an online dater's views about their partner and the viability of a continued relationship.

The present study extends the MS perspective by examining online daters' assessments of a partner following their first FtF-like meeting (i.e., POV forecasts as well as behavioral and physical appearance expectedness and evaluation assessments) in correlation with their pre-MS length of association, number of pre-MS partner photographs seen, use of pre-MS phone calls, and choice of MS channel. In line with EVT, we will probe for main and interaction effects between the expectedness and evaluation of partners' appearance and behavior during the first FtF-like meeting, and online daters' post-MS POV forecasts. The knowledge gained from the present study will add nuance to our scholarly understanding of expectancy violations during the shift from online to offline dating while helping online daters make more informed decisions regarding their communication choices before and during a modality switch.

Literature Review

Modality Switching and Online Dating Expectancy Violations

Online dating apps are important venues for modern romantic relationship initiation (Tong et al., 2016). The Pew Research Center estimates that 30% of American adults have attempted online dating, with 23% of American adults having gone on in-person dates, and 12% having formed serious romantic relationships with partners met online (Andersen et al., 2020). Although initially stigmatized, online dating apps foster communication with a wider pool of potential partners than most people would otherwise encounter (Heino et al., 2010), and allow daters to assess their potential compatibility before devoting time and effort toward meeting offline (Finkel et al., 2012). At the same time, online daters might struggle to shift their relationship offline, especially when offline reality fails to meet online expectations.

Within the EVT framework, an expectancy is “an enduring pattern of anticipated behavior” developed based on cultural, social, and relational norms as well as previous interactions with a particular partner (Burgoon, 1993, p. 31). Once

formed, expectancies serve as cognitive baselines from which future interactions are evaluated. An expectancy violation occurs when a partner deviates from expectations; provoking additional information-seeking and secondary cognitive appraisals of why the violation occurred and how it should be interpreted (Burgoon & Hale, 1988). Individuals consider not only how far a partner deviated from expectations (i.e., the level of *expectedness*), but also the extent to which the deviation was better or worse than expected (i.e., the valence or *evaluation*).

Online daters form initial partner impressions using the dating app (Ellison et al., 2006), and these impressions form the basis of expectations regarding how the partner will look (i.e., *physical appearance expectancies*) and behave (i.e., *behavioral expectancies*) FtF. For example, an online dater who reads their potential partner is “athletic” might form the physical appearance expectancy that this person will have a muscular physique. Likewise, someone who always responds to dating app messages promptly might be granted the behavioral expectancy of being an attentive communicator. Social and nonverbal cues gained by switching to a cue-rich modality could uphold - or conversely, violate - these and other partner expectancies. As such, the first FtF-like meeting might diminish, confirm, or enhance online daters’ evaluations of each other and their relationship (Finkel et al., 2012; Sharabi & Caughlin, 2017; Whitty, 2008). The present study, therefore, seeks to explore whether elements of pre-MS communication (i.e., the length of online association, number of partner photographs seen, and use of pre-MS phone calls) and MS channel choice (i.e., holding the first cue-rich FtF-like meeting in person or via video chat) are related to post-MS expectancy violations and evaluations among online daters.

Pre-MS Length of Online Association and Post-MS Expectancy Violations

The first FtF-like meeting between online daters can be conceptualized as an act of modality switching in which partners shift from a cue-lean to a cue-rich communication environment (Ramirez et al., 2015). The modality switching perspective (e.g., Ramirez & Zhang, 2007) built upon social information processing theory (Walther, 1992) and the hyperpersonal perspective (Walther, 1996) to posit that switching from lean to rich modalities can yield differential effects depending on the timing of said shift (e.g., the length of online association). Early MS research examined zero-history experimental work groups and found that longer periods of online association were conducive to the development of idealized partner impressions (Ramirez & Zhang, 2007) and the formation of unrealistic expectancies that were violated when partners met in person (Ramirez and Wang, 2008). Hence, this body of experimental research implies that modality switching might be beneficial for partners with a relatively brief period of online-only interaction, yet risky for partners with a lengthy period of online-only interaction.

Pre-MS length of association has also emerged as an important consideration in online dating modality switches. In Ramirez et al.’s (2015) retrospective survey of online daters, length of online association was curvilinearly related to daters’ assessments of relational messaging following the first FtF meeting. Participants benefited from a short period of online interaction, but a tipping point emerged in which waiting longer was associated with more negative relational ratings. The authors speculated that expectancy violations may have played a role in their find-

ings, however, they did not directly test whether the pre-MS length of association was related to post-MS expectancy violations. Likewise, expectancies were not probed within Sharabi and Caughlin's (2017) longitudinal study that assessed online daters' pre-MS and post-MS ratings of a partner and revealed a reduction in attraction after partners met offline.

To fill this void, the present study examines a central claim of the MS perspective; that the pre-MS length of association will be related to expectancy violations upon meeting FtF (Ramirez & Zhang, 2008). More specifically, it stands to reason that online daters will benefit from a brief period of online only interaction to get acquainted and reduce uncertainty. Conversely, partners who interact online only for increasingly longer periods will be prone to establish idealized expectancies that are violated upon meeting FtF; provoking uncertainty and leading them to make more negative post-MS evaluations of their partner. We therefore predict:

H1: The pre-MS length of association will be curvilinearly related to online daters' partner behavioral (H1a) and physical appearance (H1b) expectedness assessments following the first FtF-like meeting; such that the associations will be positive initially but negative over time.

H2: The pre-MS length of association will be curvilinearly related to online daters' partner behavioral (H2a) and physical appearance (H2b) evaluations following the first FtF-like meeting; such that the associations will be positive initially but negative over time.

Pre-MS Partner Photographs Seen and Post-MS Expectancy Violations

While the modality switching perspective offers consistent predictions regarding partners' pre-MS length of association and post-MS expectancy violations, other aspects of pre-MS communication deserve attention. For example, the number of partner photos seen before a MS might play a role in the development of expectations, especially concerning a partner's physical appearance. Within the hyperpersonal perspective (Walther, 1996) partner idealization is common in lean environments where communicators can present themselves strategically to craft positive impressions. Whether photos factor into this framework, however, remains unclear.

On the one hand, photographs can be labeled as lean cues that are susceptible to strategic posing, editing, and alteration in ways that might promote partner idealization. Online daters who view a larger number of photographs before meeting FtF could therefore be prone to idealize the person in the photographs in ways that leave them disappointed when FtF reality fails to match heightened online expectations. Hence, the relationship between the number of pre-MS partner photos seen and post-MS partner expectedness and evaluation assessments might follow the same curvilinear trend as seen between pre-MS length of association and post-MS partner assessments (e.g., Ramirez et al., 2015).

On the other hand, photographs are a more visual and cue-rich channel compared to text-based messages. Photos can provide a basic sense of a person's physical appearance and perhaps even demeanor (e.g., whether they were doing something active, or smiling warmly). Profile photos convey important cues about a user's physical appearance, so daters tend to select a photo that is "flattering and positive, such that it attracts potential mates, but also realistic, such that it makes it

possible to develop and sustain relationships” (Toma & Hancock, 2011, p. 49). As such, online daters who engage in MS are likely to have provided somewhat accurate photos of themselves to potential partners. With this in mind, online daters who see an increasingly large number of partner photos – likely in different poses, clothing, and settings – might form increasingly accurate expectations of how their partner will look and behave FtF. If partner photographs enable online daters to form more accurate expectations, then online daters who see many photos and still choose to meet FtF might also be prone to evaluate their partner more positively upon meeting FtF. As such, the number of pre-MS partner photos seen might be linearly related to post-MS expectedness and evaluation assessments.

Extant research has not yet examined the role of partner photographs as a variable of interest within the context of online dating modality switching. In one study, Ramirez et al. (2015) found the number of pre-MS partner photos seen was related to positive relational communication assessments and POV following online daters’ first FtF meeting. The authors, however, treated photos as a control variable and, therefore, did not examine whether photos – as a source of partner expectancy formation – might display the same curvilinear trend as the pre-MS length of association. As such, the following research questions will be examined:

RQ1: Is the number of pre-MS partner photos seen linearly or curvilinearly related to online daters’ partner behavioral (RQ1a) and physical appearance (RQ1b) expectedness assessments following the first FtF-like meeting?

RQ2: Is the number of pre-MS partner photos seen linearly or curvilinearly related to online daters’ partner behavioral (RQ2a) and physical appearance (RQ2b) evaluations following the first FtF-like meeting?

Pre-MS Phone Calls and Post-MS Expectancy Violations

Online daters’ decision to speak on the phone before meeting FtF is another aspect of pre-MS communication that might influence post-MS expectancy violations. Online daters often embrace richer and more synchronous channels such as telephone calls before meeting offline (Finkel et al., 2012). However, existing research about online dating modality switching typically assumes a direct transition from online platforms to in-person interaction (e.g., Ramirez et al., 2015; Sharabi & Caughlin, 2017). Meanwhile, Antheunis and colleagues’ (2020) study on channel progression in dating did not include phone calls in their analysis, leaving a gap in understanding about how pre-MS phone calls might impact post-MS outcomes.

The act of embracing multiple communication channels has been studied under the rubrics of media multiplexity theory (Haythornthwaite, 2001), modality expansion (Ramirez et al., 2017), modality weaving (McEwan, 2021), and mixed-mode relationships (Parks, 2017). These approaches all imply that closer partners will adopt and subsequently utilize a greater number of communication channels as they attempt to develop and sustain their bond. Online daters who communicate via phone calls before meeting FtF increase their degree of multiplexity in ways that suggest increased closeness heading into a modality switch. That said, past research explored the number of channels online daters used (i.e., the degree of multiplexity) before a modality switch as a potential control variable (Ramirez

et al., 2015), and ultimately excluded the variable due to a lack of correlation with online daters' impressions after the first FtF date.

The lack of a relationship between the number of pre-MS channels and post-MS outcomes could reflect that online daters are using different combinations of channels that possess drastically different levels of bandwidth (McEwan, 2021). For example, someone who shifts from app-based messaging, to texting outside the app, to FtF communication stayed in a relatively lean-cue environment despite having expanded to the same number of channels as someone who shifted from app-based messaging, to phone calls, to FtF interaction.

To summarize, "it is not clear how well previous modality-switching research describes today's overall online environment, in which communicators switch among several different modes and media platforms" (Parks, 2017, p. 4). Meeting in person will test the expectations formed online, but whether this process is affected when partners progress through a more moderate-cue channel such as phone calls requires formal investigation (McEwan, 2021). Texting and social media sites serve as extensions of the online dating app by offering more diverse text-based messaging and photo opportunities, but they remain asynchronous, editable, and prone to strategic self-presentation. Phone calls, on the other hand, enable synchronous interaction of a less editable nature, while offering vocalic cues that might help partners refine their expectations. While it seems likely that phone calls would be related to greater expectedness and more positive evaluations following a MS, this remains untested. As such, we ask:

RQ3: Is online daters' use of pre-MS phone calls related to their partner behavioral (RQ3a) and physical appearance (RQ3b) expectedness assessments following the first FtF-like meeting?

RQ4: Is online daters' use of pre-MS phone calls related to their partner behavioral (RQ4a) and physical appearance (RQ4b) evaluations following the first FtF-like meeting?

MS Channel and Post-MS Expectancy Violations

As previously noted, online daters' communication choices before a MS likely influence their expectations of each other heading into their first FtF-like encounter. It is also prudent, however, to interrogate factors related to the MS itself; such as online daters' choice of MS channel. Past research describes the first in-person date as an important screening point for online daters (Finkel et al., 2012), and recent research implies that video chat might function similarly to in-person interaction during the channel expansion process (Antheunis et al., 2020; Sprecher & Hampton, 2017). However, this potential remains speculative, highlighting the necessity to broaden the modality switching perspective by comparing video chat to in-person conversations as venues for the first FtF-like meeting.

Video chat has become popular among online daters who aim to balance health and safety concerns with their desire to assess compatibility in a synchronous FtF-like setting (Wiederhold, 2021). Some dating apps (e.g., Match and Bumble) have even integrated video chat within their platforms, believing it to be a viable method for determining whether a potential partner warrants the effort and expense of meeting in person (Duguay et al., 2022). While online daters are increasingly shifting from text-based communication to video chat, it is unclear how video chat should be conceptualized within the modality switching perspective.

While modality switching was originally conceptualized as the initial shift from online to offline communication (e.g., Ramirez & Zhang, 2007), Ramirez and Sumner (2015) later defined modality switching as “shifting between communication channels that vary in their ability to transmit nonverbal and social information” (p. 1). A MS represents a critical juncture in which online impressions and expectations can be affirmed or violated as communicators gain access to additional nonverbal and social cues. Video chat fits the general criteria of a MS because it is a synchronous and cue-rich channel that is FtF-like in the sense that it enables users to see and hear each other in real time. For online daters, the first video chat might thus serve as the critical modality switching moment in which online expectations are put to the test. Past MS research has, however, predominantly focused on direct transitions from text-based to in-person interaction (e.g., Ramirez & Wang, 2008; Ramirez et al., 2015; Sharabi & Caughlin, 2017).

The present study therefore directly compares online daters who held their first FtF-like meeting via video chat to those who held their first FtF-like meeting in person. While no known research has compared video chat to in-person interaction as acts of modality switching, a limited body of work has addressed the role of video chat as a precursor to in-person interaction. For example, Antheunis and colleagues (2020) conducted a speed-dating experiment in which unacquainted participants engaged in two brief interactions over a short time period; the first of which was either held via text or video chat and the second of which was always held in person. The authors detected evidence of hyperpersonal effects among female participants, with text-based initial communicators holding greater social attraction both heading into and following an in-person meeting than initial video chat communicators. This finding implies that individuals whose initial encounter occurs through video chat are less prone to idealize their new partner, which means that video chat might function more similar to in-person interaction than it does to text-based communication.

In a second study, Sprecher and Hampton (2017) compared a control group that met a partner in person three times to an experimental group that progressed from text, to video chat, to in-person communication with a partner. While communicating through text, the experimental group reported lower levels of liking, closeness, and enjoyment than their in-person counterparts. That said, participants reported increased levels of each outcome as they shifted to video chat, with the experimental group catching up to their fully in-person counterparts by the end of their video chat conversation. These results, once again, suggest video chat might offer enough richness to function in a manner that is somewhat similar to in-person interaction.

While the previously mentioned studies offer important insight, fundamental differences in study goals and conceptual frameworks raise questions over whether similar trends will emerge within the present study. First, Antheunis et al. (2020) compared video chat to text messaging as alternative channels for initial communication before an in-person MS, whereas Sprecher and Hampton (2017) explored video chat as part of the channel expansion process leading up to an in-person MS. In comparison, the present study conceptualizes video chat as akin to in-person interaction, with both channels serving as cue-rich modality switching venues in which online expectations meet FtF-like reality as partners see and hear each other

while interacting in real-time. Second, participants in Antheunis et al. (2020) and Sprecher and Hampton (2017) all met their partners under experimental conditions in which they lacked relational history, communicated for very brief one or two-hour periods, and did not anticipate a romantic relational future. The anticipation of future interaction is a key contributor to hyperpersonal communication dynamics (Walther, 1994) that might influence expectancy violations during a MS. Hence, the present study will extend past research by comparing video chat MS to in-person MS within the naturalistic context of online daters who selected to meet a particular partner in a FtF-like setting. Given a lack of extant research comparing FtF and video chat as MS channels, we ask:

RQ5: Is online daters' MS channel (i.e., video chat or in person) related to their partner behavioral (RQ5a) and physical appearance (RQ5b) expectedness assessments following the first FtF-like meeting?

RQ6: Is online daters' MS channel (i.e., video chat or in person) related to their partner behavioral (RQ6a) and physical appearance (RQ6b) evaluations following the first FtF-like meeting?

Expectancy Violations and POV Forecasts during Online Dating Modality Switches

POV theory (Sunnaf Frank, 1986) builds upon notions of uncertainty reduction and expectancy violations to assert that partners are more likely to seek information and engage in approach-related behaviors when they believe doing so will provoke positive outcomes. Online daters likely use information gleaned during their first FtF-like meeting to assess whether a continued relationship with their partner would be rewarding (i.e., a high POV), or unrewarding (i.e., a low POV). Extant research reveals that individuals who hold high POV assessments of each other following an initial interaction are more likely to form lasting relationships than those holding low POV assessments (Sunnaf Frank & Ramirez, 2004). Applying the framework of POV theory to online dating, the formulation of high POV assessments is a sign of first FtF date success that signals greater potential for a continued relationship. As a core outcome of post-MS relational success, POV is expected to display the same set of associations with pre-MS length of association, number of pre-MS partner photographs seen, and MS channel that were predicted above with relation to expectedness and evaluation assessments. As such, we offer the following predictions and ask the following questions:

H3: The pre-MS length of association will be curvilinearly related to online daters' POV forecasts following the first FtF-like meeting; such that the association will be positive initially but negative over time.

RQ7: Is the number of pre-MS partner photos seen linearly or curvilinearly related to online daters' POV forecasts following the first FtF-like meeting?

RQ8: Is online daters' use of pre-MS phone calls related to POV forecasts following the first FtF-like meeting?

RQ9: Is online daters' MS channel (i.e., video chat or in person) related to POV forecasts following the first FtF-like meeting?

The POV assessments that online daters form during their first FtF-like meeting might be related to not only their pre-MS behaviors and choice of MS chan-

nel, but also: (a) the degree to which expectations were violated during the first FtF-like meeting, and (b) the degree to which the information obtained during the first FtF-like meeting was evaluated negatively or positively. Indeed, McEwan (2021) notes "the magnitude and valence of the idealized perceptions are likely linked to modality switching effects... researchers should measure both magnitude and valence of discrepancies in future studies" (p. 10). Blending concepts from both POV theory and EVT, it is essential to not only examine the degree with which partners' appearance and behavior were rated as expected (i.e., the magnitude of a violation) and positively evaluated (i.e., the valence of the discrepancy) after a MS, but also look at these factors in combination.

The interaction between the degree of expectedness and valence of related behavioral and physical appearance evaluations is a key component of EVT because it explains that expectancy violations need not be harmful if the violation is perceived as better than what was expected (Floyd et al., 2008). The first FtF-like meeting between daters might, for instance, provide surprisingly positive information (e.g., the partner is better looking or has a better personality than expected), or surprisingly negative information (e.g., the partner is perceived as worse looking or has a worse personality than expected). As such, EVT stipulates a need to examine both main and interaction effects for expectedness and evaluation ratings on relational outcomes such as POV assessments. The following predictions will, therefore, be examined:

H4: The degree of partner behavioral (H4a) and physical appearance (H4b) expectedness will be positively related to online daters' POV assessments following the first FtF-like meeting.

H5: The valence of partner behavioral (H5a) and physical appearance (H5b) evaluations will be positively related to online daters' POV assessments following the first FtF-like meeting.

H6: There will be an interaction effect between the degree of partner expectedness and valence of partner behavioral (H6a) and physical appearance (H6b) evaluations on online daters' POV assessments following the first FtF-like meeting.

Materials and Methods

Recruitment Procedures and Sample

The sample was recruited through a market research firm using a two-step process. A pre-screening survey was sent to Prolific Academic respondents who identified as living in the United States and having experience with online dating sites/apps. The first 1,100 respondents completed a two-item pre-screening survey that asked whether they had: (a) used an online dating site/app within the prior three months, and (b) shifted an online dating relationship to video chat or in-person communication during the same period. To avoid demand characteristics, each pre-screening respondent was compensated 20 cents. Participants who responded affirmatively to both screening questions were sent a link to the full questionnaire, and those who completed it were awarded \$2.80. The complete study design received Institutional Review Board approval at the primary researcher's university.

The final sample was comprised of 298 participants (42% female, 55% male, and 3% gender nonbinary) who averaged 32.16 years of age ($SD = 9.30$, range = 18-67) and had a median annual income of \$40,000-\$49,000. Participants self-identified as White ($n = 207$), Asian/Asian-American ($n = 40$), Hispanic/Latino ($n = 34$), Black/African American ($n = 33$), Native American ($n = 9$), Pacific Islander ($n = 2$), and other ($n = 3$). Approximately two-thirds of participants met their partners through one of three apps: Tinder (39%), Hinge (14%), and Bumble (14%). The remaining participants met their partners on OkCupid (9%), Plenty of Fish (8%), Match (3%), Grindr (3%), eHarmony (2%), and “other” apps (9%).

Instrumentation

The questionnaire began by asking participants to think about their most recent instance of online dating modality switching. Participants were given the following instructions:

A key turning point for online dating relationships occurs when partners shift their communication to a more face-to-face channel that allows them to see and hear each other while engaging in real-time interaction. This turning point can occur when partners meet in person/offline for the first time, but it can also occur when partners meet through video chat tools such as FaceTime and Zoom for the first time. For the remainder of this survey, we would like you to focus on the most recent instance in which you first met someone using an online dating site or app, and then shifted your communication by having a face-to-face conversation either in person or through video chat.

To assist with recall, participants were asked to enter their partner’s first name or initials, and this name was piped into the remaining survey items.

MS Channel and Pre-MS Phone Calls

MS channel was assessed by asking participants to report whether the first FtF-like conversation with their partner occurred in the form of a video chat or in-person meeting (dummy-coded; 0 = video chat, 1 = in person). A total of 108 participants (36.2%) reported that their first FtF-like communication with their partner occurred through video chat, with the remaining 190 (63.8%) reporting in-person meetings.

To measure *pre-MS phone calls*, participants were asked whether they communicated with their partner on the phone before their first FtF-like meeting (dummy-coded; 0 = no pre-MS phone calls, 1 = used pre-MS phone calls). Only 76 participants (25.50%) reported communicating with their partner via the phone before their first FtF-like meeting.

Pre-MS Length of Association and Number of Pre-MS Partner Photos Seen

To meet the demands of naturally occurring online dating relationships, the present study assessed *pre-MS length of association* by providing an open-ended textbox and asking participants to report how many days passed between their initial contact on the dating app and their first act of FtF-like communication. A second open-ended textbox was used to assess the number of *pre-MS partner photos seen*. Preliminary analyses (see Table 1) revealed substantial amounts of skewness

Table 1.
Descriptive Statistics and Intercorrelations among Variables of Interest (N = 298)

	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1 MS Channel	.64	.48	--								
2 Pre-MS Phone	2.35	.86	-.17*	--							
3 Pre-MS LOA	12.65	13.68	.13 [†]	-.03	--						
4 Pre-MS # Photos	9.17	12.42	.05	-.01	.17**	--					
5 Behavioral Expect- edness	4.88	1.29	-.05	-.01	-.01	.14*	--				
6 Physical Appearance Expectedness	5.19	1.39	.03	.09	-.01	.16**	.41**	--			
7 Behavioral Evaluation	5.47	1.37	-.12*	.15*	-.03	.08	.42**	.23**	--		
8 Physical Appearance Evaluation	5.63	1.40	-.05	.16**	-.03	.21**	.26**	.36**	.62**	--	
9 POV	4.37	1.10	-.15**	.13*	-.03	.14*	.34**	.21**	.73**	.63**	--

Notes: The *M* and *SD* for pre-MS LOA and # of photos are reported in their original unit of measurement.

[†]*p* < .05 (two-tailed); ***p* < .01 (two-tailed)

(photos seen = 5.68; length of association = 2.61) and kurtosis (photos seen = 37.56; length of association = 8.66) for both variables. Taking the log helped normalize the distributions, so log values were used for further analyses.

Expectedness and Evaluation

The central EVT measures of expectedness and evaluation were adapted from Afifi and Metts (1998) and completed twice, first in response to the partner's behavior during the first FtF-like meeting, and then in response to the partner's physical appearance. Items were (re)coded so that higher scores indicate greater expectedness and more positive evaluations.

Behavioral expectedness ($\alpha = .73$) was assessed using three semantic differential items in which participants were prompted to rate their partner's behavior during the first FtF-like meeting using a set of opposing poles (e.g., 1 = was completely what I expected, 7 = was not at all what I expected; and 1 = surprised me a great deal, 7 = did not surprise me at all). *Physical appearance expectedness* ($\alpha = .81$) utilized an identical set of three semantic differential poles, except the prompt asked participants to rate their partner's physical appearance during the first FtF-like meeting.

Partner evaluation scores were measured using similar semantic differential scales, but four sets of poles were rephrased to assess the extent to which participants evaluated their partner's behavior or appearance negatively or positively (e.g., 1 = was very negative, 7 = was very positive; 1 = I did not like at all, 7 = I liked a lot). The *behavioral evaluation* ($\alpha = .92$) and *physical appearance evaluation* ($\alpha = .96$) scales both achieved high internal reliability.

Predicted Outcome Value Forecasts

POV ($\alpha = .93$) was assessed using an abbreviated 4-item version of Sunnafrank's (1986) 10-item measure in which participants were provided a set of semantic differential style scales and asked to forecast what they thought a continued relationship with their online dating partner would be like in comparison to their expectations for a typical relationship of that nature. For example, "Given your general expectations about your partner, how positive will this future relationship be for you?" (1 = much less than I expected, 6 = much more than I expected).

Results

The hypotheses and research questions were tested using a series of five multiple hierarchical regression analyses with the expectedness (i.e., behavioral and physical appearance), evaluation (i.e., behavioral and physical appearance), and POV measures as criterion variables. Participants' age, the number of messages exchanged with a partner before the MS, and the number of days since the MS occurred were considered as controls but excluded due to lack of correlation with the criterion variables. To enable consistent interpretation of hypotheses and research questions across models, insignificant variables and steps were preserved in each model.

Expectedness and Evaluation Models

The expectedness and evaluation models examined linear and curvilinear

predictions. The linear terms for pre-MS length of association, number of pre-MS partner photos seen, MS channel (dummy coded; 0 = video chat, 1 = in person), and use of pre-MS phone calls (dummy coded; 0 = no phone calls, 1 = used phone calls) were entered at step one, while the quadratic terms for pre-MS length of association and number of pre-MS partner photos were entered at step two (for a discussion of this procedure, see Cohen & Cohen, 1983; Pedhazur, 1982).

Partner Expectedness

The two expectedness models collectively examined H1, RQ1, RQ3, and RQ5. The final models for behavioral expectedness and physical appearance expectedness were statistically significant (see Table 2), but certain steps of each model failed to achieve significance.

The pre-MS length of association was curvilinearly related to both behavioral expectedness ($\beta = -.50, p = .03$) and physical appearance expectedness ($\beta = -.52, p = .02$). The linear terms for pre-MS length of association were not significant within either model. These results fully support H1; behavioral expectedness (H1a) and physical appearance expectedness (H1b) displayed inverted u-shaped curvilinear relationships to pre-MS length of association.

Meanwhile, the number of pre-MS partner photos seen was linearly and positively related to both behavioral expectedness ($\beta = .15, p = .01$) and physical appearance expectedness assessments ($\beta = .17, p = .01$). The quadratic terms for the number of pre-MS partner photos failed to achieve significance in either model. Hence, to answer RQ1, the relationship between the number of pre-MS partner photos seen and post-MS behavioral (RQ1a) and physical appearance (RQ1b) expectedness assessments was linear and positive in nature.

There were no significant relationships detected between online daters' use of pre-MS phone calls (RQ3) nor their choice of MS channel (RQ5) and their post-MS behavioral or physical appearance expectedness assessments.

Partner Evaluation

The two evaluation models collectively examined H2, RQ2, RQ4, and RQ6. The final models for behavioral evaluation and physical appearance evaluation were both significant (see Table 3); however, the second step of each model failed to achieve significance.

The linear and quadratic terms for pre-MS length of association were not significantly related to behavioral (H2a) or physical appearance evaluations (H2b) within the models, so H2 was not supported. RQ2 explored the nature of the relationship between partner evaluations and the number of pre-MS partner photographs seen. To answer RQ2a, the number of pre-MS photographs was neither linearly nor curvilinearly related to post-MS partner behavioral evaluations. However, to address RQ2b, the number of pre-MS photographs displayed a linear positive relationship with physical appearance evaluations ($\beta = .22, p < .001$).

In response to RQ4a and RQ4b, the use of pre-MS phone calls was positively related to both behavioral evaluations ($\beta = .13, p = .03$), and physical appearance evaluations ($\beta = .15, p = .01$) after the first FtF-like meeting. In response to RQ6, the MS channel was not related to either behavioral or physical appearance evaluations.

Table 2
Hierarchical Regressions Predicting Behavioral Expectedness (N = 294) and Physical Appearance Expectedness (N = 290)

	<i>Behavioral Expectedness</i>					<i>Physical Appearance Expectedness</i>										
	<i>Coefficients</i>					<i>Model Statistics</i>			<i>Coefficients</i>					<i>Model Statistics</i>		
Predictors	B	SE B	β	t	p	ΔR^2	ΔF	p	B	SE B	β	t	p	ΔR^2	ΔF	p
Step One						.03	1.91	.11						.04	2.67	.03*
Pre-MS LOA	-.04	.08	-.03	-.51	.61				-.06	.09	-.04	-.65	.52			
Pre-MS # Photos	.27	.11	.15	2.57	.01**				.32	.12	.17	2.79	.01**			
MS Channel	-.15	.16	-.05	-.91	.37				.13	.17	.04	.74	.46			
Pre-MS Phone Calls	-.06	.18	-.02	-.31	.75				.30	.19	.09	1.57	.12			
Step Two						.02	3.07	.05*						.02	2.74	.07
Quad. Pre-MS LOA	-.16	.07	-.50	-2.24	.03*				-.17	.08	-.52	-2.32	.02*			
Quad. # Photos	-.09	.08	-.23	-1.20	.23				-.03	.08	-.06	-.30	.76			

Notes. Full Model Summary for Behavioral Expectedness: Total $R^2 = .05$; adjusted $R^2 = .03$; $F(6, 294) = 2.30$, $p = .04^*$
 Full Model Summary for Physical Appearance Expectedness: Total $R^2 = .05$; adjusted $R^2 = .03$; $F(6, 290) = 2.71$, $p = .01^{**}$
 $^*p < .05$; $^{**}p < .01$

Table 3
Hierarchical Regressions Predicting Behavioral Evaluation (N = 292) and Physical Appearance Evaluation (N = 291)

	<i>Behavioral Evaluation</i>					<i>Physical Appearance Evaluation</i>										
	<i>Coefficients</i>					<i>Model Statistics</i>										
Predictors	B	SE B	β	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	ΔR^2	ΔF	<i>p</i>	B	SE B	β	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	ΔR^2	ΔF	<i>p</i>
Step One						.03	2.53	.04*						.07	5.78	<.001**
Pre-MS LOA	-.04	.09	-.03	-.46	.65				-.09	.09	-.06	-1.05	.30			
Pre-MS # Photos	.19	.11	.10	1.71	.09				.44	.11	.22	3.91	<.001**			
MS Channel	-.27	.17	-.10	-1.67	.10				-.06	.17	-.02	-.34	.73			
Pre-MS Phone Calls	.39	.18	.13	2.15	.03*				.48	.19	.15	2.61	.01*			
Step Two						.003	.47	.63						.003	.50	.61
Quad. Pre-MS LOA	.01	.07	.02	.08	.93				-.02	.07	-.06	-.28	.78			
Quad. # Photos	-.08	.08	-.20	-1.03	.31				-.08	.08	-.18	-.97	.33			

Notes:

Full Model Summary for Behavioral Evaluation: Total $R^2 = .04$; adjusted $R^2 = .02$. $F(6, 294) = 2.15$, $p = .05^*$
 Full Model Summary for Physical Appearance Evaluation: Total $R^2 = .08$; adjusted $R^2 = .06$. $F(6, 293) = 4.01$, $p = .001^{**}$

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$

POV Model

The POV model probed the same linear and curvilinear trends examined in the above models, while also testing for EVT's hypothesized main and interaction effects for expectedness and evaluation on POV. As such, the linear terms for pre-MS length of association, number of pre-MS photos seen, MS channel (dummy coded, 0 = video chat, 1 = in person), and use of pre-MS phone calls (dummy coded; 0 = no phone calls, 1 = used phone calls) were entered at step one, the quadratic terms for pre-MS length of association and pre-MS number of partner photos were entered at step two, behavioral and physical appearance expectedness were entered at step three, behavioral and physical appearance evaluations were entered at step four, and the two interaction terms (behavioral expectedness x behavioral evaluation, and physical appearance expectedness x physical appearance evaluation) were entered at step five. The final model for POV was significant, however, step two failed to achieve significance (see Table 4).

Table 4
Hierarchical Regression Predicting POV (N = 288)

Predictors	B	SE B	β	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	ΔR^2	ΔF	<i>p</i>
Step One						.05	3.61	.003**
Pre-MS LOA	-.04	.07	-.04	-.58	.56			
Pre-MS # Photos	.24	.09	.16	2.66	.01**			
MS Channel	-.30	.13	-.13	-2.19	.03*			
Pre-MS Phone Calls	.27	.15	.11	1.82	.07			
Step Two						.002	.35	.71
Quad. Pre-MS LOA	-.03	.06	-.10	-.43	.67			
Quad Pre-MS # Photos	.04	.07	.12	.63	.53			
Step Three						.11	18.00	<.001**
Behavioral Expectedness	.44	.04	.53	10.48	<.001**			
Physical Appearance Expectedness	.06	.05	.08	1.32	.19			
Step Four						.45	160.54	<.001**
Behavioral Evaluation	.44	.04	.55	10.55	<.001**			
Physical Appearance Evaluation	.23	.04	.29	5.63	<.001**			
Step Five						.01	3.68	.03*
Behavioral Expect x Eval	-.06	.02	-.62	-2.58	.01**			
Physical Appearance Expect x Eval	.001	.02	-.01	-.02	.98			

Notes. Final Model Summary: Total $R^2 = .62$; adjusted $R^2 = .60$. $F(12, 288) = 37.21$, $p < .001$
* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$

H3 and RQs 7-9 collectively explored potential main effects for the pre-MS length of association, number of pre-MS partner photos seen, use of pre-MS phone calls, and choice of MS channel on post-MS POV assessments. No relationships were detected between POV and the linear or quadratic terms for pre-MS length of association (H3), so this hypothesis was not supported. To answer RQ7, a positive linear relationship was detected between POV and the number of pre-MS partner photos seen ($\beta = .16, p = .01$), while the quadratic term for partner photos did not achieve significance. Regarding RQ8, no relationship was detected between pre-MS phone calls and POV. To address RQ9, a negative relationship was detected between the MS channel and POV ($\beta = -.13, p = .03$); such that meeting via video chat was associated with greater POV than meeting in person.

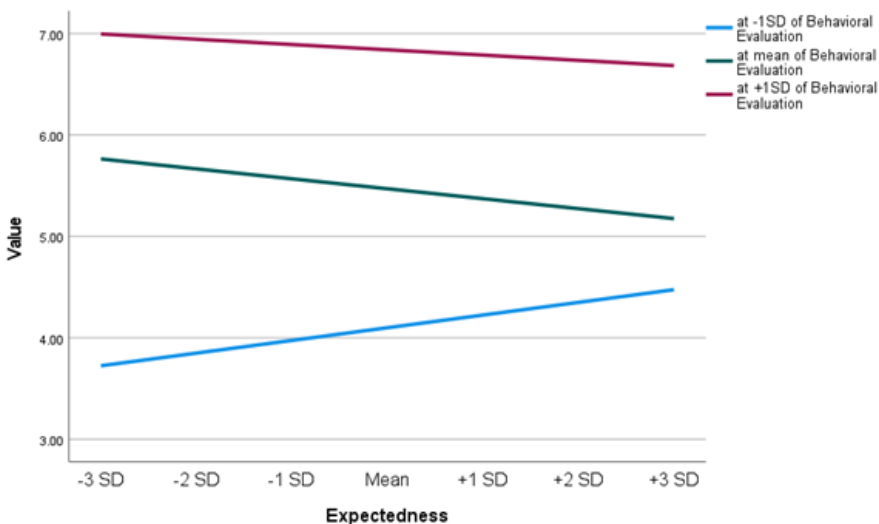
The remaining hypotheses predicted main and interaction effects for the expectedness and evaluation variables on POV. H4 predicted main effects for expectedness on POV, and the hypothesis received mixed support. In support of H4a, POV was positively related to behavioral expectedness ($\beta = .53, p < .001$). However, POV was not significantly related to physical appearance expectedness, so H4b was not supported. H5 predicted main effects for evaluation on POV, and this hypothesis was fully supported. POV was positively related to both behavioral evaluation (H5a; $\beta = .55, p < .001$) and physical appearance evaluation (H5b; $\beta = .29, p < .001$).

Finally, H6 predicted an interaction between expectedness and evaluation assessments on POV. H6a was supported, as the interaction of behavioral expectedness on behavioral evaluation emerged as significant ($\beta = -.62, p = .01$). H6b, however, was not supported, as the interaction term failed to achieve significance for physical appearance assessments.

The interaction between behavioral expectedness and behavioral evaluation on POV was probed (see Figure 1). An examination of the interaction per Aiken

Figure 1

Results of Simple Slope Analysis of Behavioral Expectedness by Evaluation Interaction on POV



and West (1991) revealed that at one standard deviation above the mean of behavioral evaluation, behavioral expectedness ($B = -.05$, $\beta = -.05$, $t = -.92$, $p = .36$) failed to significantly predict POV. However, at one standard deviation below the mean, behavioral expectedness ($B = .11$, $\beta = .13$, $t = 2.15$, $p = .03$) significantly predicted POV. To summarize, the effect of post-MS behavioral expectedness on POV forecasts is contingent upon how said expectedness is evaluated, but only at lower levels.

Discussion

The present study examined expectancy violations and POV assessments as online daters shift their relationships to a more FtF-like setting. Predictions gleaned from EVT, POV theory, and the modality switching perspective were mostly supported concerning both POV and assessments of behavioral expectedness and evaluations following the first FtF-like meeting. The same predictions displayed a more complicated pattern for physical appearance expectedness and evaluations. Extant research helps illuminate these divergent results while highlighting the present study's implications.

Expectedness Models

Online daters establish initial partner expectancies online and these expectancies are tested when partners meet in a FtF-like setting. Past research suggests online daters often experience a drop in attraction upon meeting in person (Sharabi & Caughlin, 2017), with expectancy violations being offered as a potential explanation why some online daters struggle to shift their relationship offline (Ramirez et al., 2015). Hence, the present study tested how elements of pre-MS communication (i.e., the pre-MS length of association and number of pre-MS partner photos seen) and choice of MS channel relate to online daters' assessments of whether their partners' FtF-like behavior and physical appearance lived up to their expectations.

The discovery of a curvilinear inverted u-shaped relationship between the pre-MS length of association and post-MS behavioral and partner expectedness ratings aligns with the fundamentals of the modality switching perspective (Ramirez & Zhang, 2007; Ramirez & Wang, 2008). Participants in the present study rated their partner's behavior and physical appearance as more expected after a brief period of online interaction to reduce uncertainty and form baseline expectations about each other; however, a point of negative returns emerged in which those who waited progressively longer tended to rate their partner's behavior and physical appearance as less expected. The present study, therefore, underscores the importance of modality switching timing for online daters (Ramirez et al., 2015) and suggests those who delay meeting FtF for too long may be prone to experience expectancy violations during the MS.

Photos are crucial to an online dating profile and allow daters to grasp each other's physical characteristics while gaining contextual clues regarding behavior (e.g., based on poses, facial expressions, and activities captured in the photos). The present study emphasizes the potent role that photos play in shaping daters' expectations of how their partner will look and behave (Toma & Hancock, 2011). A positive linear relationship was observed between the number of pre-MS partner photos seen and daters' post-MS expectedness ratings. In other words, online

daters who saw more photos before their MS tended to report that their expectations were more fulfilled upon meeting in person or through video chat. While the study did not delve into the specifics of photo type or content, this linear trend aligns with findings from Ramirez et al. (2015), suggesting that a “more is better” approach is warranted with regard to profile photos in online dating. Online daters who seek to forge offline relationships might consider providing each other with a larger number of photos, as doing so might assist in the formation of accurate behavioral and physical appearance expectations.

Evaluation Models

Within the EVT framework, a partner’s behavior and physical appearance can be assessed not only based on their level of expectedness but also their evaluative valence (Burgoon & Hale, 1988). Evaluations form the basis of the subsequent social judgments and responses that may ensue following an expectancy violation. That said, the present study’s findings for evaluation were not as robust as those assessing expectedness.

The present study drew upon the modality switching perspective (Ramirez & Wang, 2008) to predict a curvilinear relationship between post-MS partner evaluations and the pre-MS length of association, but no such relationship emerged. Participants’ expectedness and evaluation ratings of a partner were positively associated with each other for both behavior and physical appearance, so it is perplexing that the predicted curvilinear trend for pre-MS length of association was supported on expectedness yet not evaluation. Together, these findings point toward a more complex model that might include mediators, moderators, or confounds falling outside the scope of the present study. Online daters’ goals for pursuing a MS are a potential confound deserving of attention. Online daters in search of one-time hookups might display different communication patterns before, during, and after a MS than those who are seriously pursuing marriage. These divergent patterns might shape how long they wait before meeting FtF, the depth and nature of their expectations, and the criteria they take into account when evaluating their partner upon meeting FtF.

Meanwhile, the number of pre-MS partner photos seen displayed a positive linear association with evaluations of physical appearance, with no corresponding relationship observed for behavioral evaluations. This finding could reflect that individuals who were ultimately evaluated as possessing high levels of physical attractiveness chose to highlight their physical assets by posting a lot of photos on their dating profiles. At the same time, the collective results also suggest that photo viewing may be better suited for certain types of social judgments than others. Physical features depicted in photographs can be more readily con-firmed during an initial FtF conversation, whereas behavioral aspects may require additional interaction to confirm or refute. The present study suggests that seeing many photos might help online daters establish accurate behavioral expectations before a MS, yet photos might not be powerful enough to influence post-MS be-havioral evaluations in light of the wealth of new behavior cues that online daters gain upon meeting FtF.

The interpretation of the findings related to the use of pre-MS phone calls and partner evaluation is more straightforward. Online daters who engaged in pre-MS

phone calls also tended to provide more positive post-MS behavioral and physical appearance evaluations. This finding fits the general premise of media multiplexity theory (Haythornthwaite, 2001) and research on modality expansion (Ramirez et al., 2017), which imply that embracing new communication channels can reflect increased relational development. In the case of online dating, phone calls might help partners develop their relationship while gaining access to new vocal and chronemic cues afforded by phone calls. Taken together with the (nonsignificant) findings associated with expectedness, the present study suggests that talking on the phone before switching modalities may not play a significant role in the formation of online daters' partner expectations, but may become more instrumental in how partners are evaluated during initial FtF-like meetings.

Finally, the present study sought to explore whether online daters who pursue a MS through two distinct forms of cue-rich FtF-like interaction – in person and video chat – are more or less likely to experience expectancy violations. Intriguingly, no associations were found between the choice of MS channel and any of the expectedness or evaluation assessments among online daters. This finding aligns with past work that treated video chat as a precursor to in-person communication. For example, Sprecher and Hampton (2017) followed strangers as they either communicated three times in person or progressed from texting to video chat to in-person interaction over the course of an hour. The CMC-progression group that suffered while interacting via text caught up to their in-person counterparts after using video chat, implying that video chat might be rich enough to warrant comparison to in-person interaction. The present study surveyed online daters with longer potential pre-MS length of association, and the findings – or in this case, lack thereof – also suggest that video chat functions somewhat similarly to meeting in person within the framework of modality switching and expectancy violations. Online daters who held their MS through video chat were no more or less likely to experience expectancy violations or evaluate their partner differently than those who met in person.

POV Model

POV theory (Sunnafrank, 1986) states that individuals seek to maximize the potential for positive outcomes when engaging with others. The present study proposed that online daters would use information gleaned during their first FtF-like meeting, coupled with features of their pre-MS communication, to form outcome assessments regarding whether continuing to develop the relationship would be rewarding.

The pattern of findings suggest that pre-MS visual cues play an important role in online daters' post-MS POV forecasts. The number of partner photos seen prior to MS was positively associated with daters' forecasts about the relationship's continued viability. It is plausible that viewing photos helped online daters create a more accurate and positive physical assessment of their partner that translated into higher POV ratings upon meeting in a FtF-like setting. It is also possible that the partner's objective level of physical attractiveness served as a confound in the present study, with high POV forecasts given to partners who highlighted their physical beauty by posting more photos than less physically attractive partners posted. Future research

should seek to unpack this finding by examining objective ratings of physical attractiveness within the context of online dating modality switching.

In contrast, the use of phone calls - a cue-richer yet non-visual channel - failed to achieve statistical significance. This is particularly interesting given the findings associated with partner evaluation discussed earlier. Phone calls appear relevant to immediate social evaluations following a MS, but have little to no influence on projections of the relationship's future outcomes. As previously discussed, future research should explore this conundrum within the context of online daters' motives or goals (Corriero & Tong, 2016). It is possible, for example, that online daters seeking hook-ups might benefit from seeing photos of a potential partner, yet not benefit from calling the person before meeting FtF. Meanwhile, the same person in search of a hook-up might evaluate a partner's behavior and physical appearance positively, yet still report low POV forecasts because they never desired a relationship in the first place.

The present study also sought to compare video chat and in-person interaction as potential MS channels, and results revealed that online daters who held their first FtF-like meeting via video chat also tended to report higher POV than those who met in person. This result is intriguing when combined with the lack of the predicted relationships between MS channel and expectedness and evaluation assessments. It is vital to note that the MS channel could feasibly influence POV outcomes if each channel's divergent affordances and bandwidth influence communication therein. At the same time, online daters in the present study got to choose which channel to use, so any relationship between MS channel and POV might also reflect online daters' motives, as discussed above. Future research should therefore examine online daters' goals for meeting FtF, as well as their reasons for selecting video chat or in-person interaction as their first venue for FtF-like communication.

The final set of analyses examined whether POV forecasts were associated with the EVT-related factors of expectedness and evaluation. The analysis revealed a complex set of relationships. On the one hand, POV was positively related to expectedness ratings for partner behavior but not for physical appearance. The more expected a partner's behavior was, the more positive participants forecasted the relationship would be in the future. On the other hand, POV was positively related to participants' evaluations of both behavior and physical appearance, which suggests that relational forecasts are enhanced when daters evaluate their partner's behavior and appearance positively after meeting for FtF-like interaction. However, interpretations regarding partner behavior are conditional because the presence of a significant expectedness-evaluation interaction superseded the findings and indicated that the association of behavioral expectedness on relational forecasts is dependent upon how behavioral expectedness is evaluated. The overall pattern showed that higher, more positive evaluation of a partner's behavioral expectedness did not predict daters' POV for the relationship; however, lower, less positive evaluation of partner behavioral expectedness did. Put differently, using EVT vernacular, negative expectancy violations appeared to be more useful to daters in predicting their potential relationship's viability than were positive violations.

Limitations, Future Directions, and Conclusions

This present study offers opportunities for future research, especially if inherent limitations are addressed. First, while the present study's survey design offers important replication of past experimental research (Ramirez & Wang, 2008) regarding modality switching and EVT, this design also offers less predictive control than an experiment. Conceptually, it would not make sense for first-date assessments of expectedness or evaluation to affect the length of association that predated the first FtF-like meeting; however, the directionality of effects could not be ascertained within the present design. The detected relationships should, therefore, be read as correlational. Moreover, the naturalistic setting and corresponding reduction in control likely contributed to the small effect sizes in the present study. Future research should apply an experimental approach to modality switching among online daters by manipulating the timing of the first FtF-like date in relation to EVT and POV theory's claims.

Second, the present study sought to understand online dating modality switching, so the sample was limited to individuals who had met an online dating partner in person or through video chat. Only one-quarter of participants reported having used phone calls before their MS, so these individuals could reflect online daters whose phone calls went well enough to warrant a FtF-like meeting in person or through video chat. Online daters might use phone calls as an initial screening point, and those who hold negative evaluations following a phone call might choose to end communication rather than meet through FtF-like channels. As such, online daters who ceased communication with a partner following a bad phone call would not be reflected within our sample, nor would those who stopped communicating after chatting on the app or through text messaging. Future research might, therefore, examine whether phone calls provide enough richness to constitute a MS for online daters by directly comparing phone calls to video chat and in person as cue-rich venues for modality switching.

Finally, the present study involved retrospective assessments and POV forecasts made following the first FtF-like meeting. History effects could be present in which daters' assessments were influenced by any additional communication (or lack thereof) between partners. Likewise, assessments after the first FtF-like date are an indicator of its success, but POV does not reveal whether a relationship actually persisted into the future. Finally, the present study only examined one-sided perceptions of POV, and long-term relational success would require interest from both partners. Future research should employ longitudinal and/or dyadic designs to explore the shift from online to offline dating as it occurs in real time.

Despite limitations, the present study provided additional insight regarding EVT and POV theory with regard to modality switching and online dating while adding important clarifications regarding how pre-MS communicative elements (length of association, photographs seen, and use of phone calls), and choice of MS channel (in person or video chat) are related to expectedness, evaluation, and POV assessments as online daters attempt to shift their relationship offline. Future research can thus use the present study as a springboard for additional work regarding online dating modality switching.

References

- Afifi, W. A., & Metts, S. (1998). Characteristics and consequences of expectation violations in close relationships. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships, 15*, 365–392. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0265407598153004>
- Aiken, L. S., & West, S. G. (1991). *Multiple regression: Testing and interpreting interactions*. Sage.
- Andersen, M., Vogels, E. A., & Turner, E. (2020). *The virtues and downsides of online dating*. Washington, DC: Pew Internet and American Life Project. Retrieved from: <https://www.pewresearch.org/internet/2020/02/06/the-virtues-and-downsides-of-online-dating/>
- Antheunis, M. L., Schouten, A. P., & Walther, J. B. (2020). The hyperpersonal effect in online dating: Effects of text-based CMC vs. videoconferencing before meeting face-to-face. *Media Psychology, 23*(6), 820-839. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15213269.2019.1648217>
- Burgoon, J. K. (1993). Interpersonal expectations, expectancy violations, and emotional communication. *Journal of Language and Social Psychology, 12*, 13–21. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0261927X93121003>
- Burgoon, J. K., & Hale, J. L. (1988). Nonverbal expectancy violations: Model elaboration and application to immediacy behaviors. *Communications Monographs, 55*(1), 58-79. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03637758809376158>
- Cohen, J., & Cohen, P. (1983). *Applied multiple regression/correlation analysis for the behavioral sciences* (2nd Ed.). Erlbaum.
- Corriero, E. F., & Tong, S. T. (2015). Managing uncertainty in mobile dating applications: Goals, concerns of use, and information seeking in Grindr. *Mobile Media & Communication, 4*(1), 121-141. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2050157915614872>
- Duguay, S., Dietzel, C., & Myles, D. (2022). The year of the “virtual date”: Reimagining dating app affordances during the COVID-19 pandemic. *New Media & Society*. <https://doi.org/10.1177/146144821107257>
- Ellison, N. B., Heino, R. D., & Gibbs, J. L. (2006). Managing impressions online: Self-presentation processes in the online dating environment. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication, 11*, 415-441. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1083-6101.2006.00020.x>
- Ellison, N. B., Hancock, J. T., & Toma, C. L. (2012). Profile as promise: A framework for conceptualizing veracity in online dating self-presentation. *New Media & Society, 14*, 45-62. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444811410395>
- Finkel, E. J., Eastwick, P. W., Karney, B. R., Reis, H. T., & Sprecher, S. (2012). Online dating: A critical analysis from the perspective of psychological science. *Psychological Science in the Public Interest, 13*, 3-66. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1529100612436522>
- Floyd, K., Ramirez, Jr., A., & Burgoon, J. K. (2008) Expectancy violations theory. In L. K. Guerrero, J. A. DeVito, & M. L. Hecht (Eds.), *The nonverbal communication reader: Classic and contemporary readings* (3rd edition., pp. 503-510). Waveland Press.
- Fox, J., & McEwan, B. (2017). Distinguishing technologies for social interaction: The perceived social affordances of communication channels scale. *Communication Monographs, 84*(3), 298–318. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03637751.2017.1332418>
- Haythornthwaite, C. (2001). Exploring multiplexity: Social network structures in

- a computer-supported distance learning class. *The Information Society*, 17(3), 211–226. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01972240152493065>
- Heino, R. D., Ellison, N. B., & Gibbs, J. L. (2010). Relationshipshopping: Investigating the market metaphor in online dating. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, 27, 427–447. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0265407510361614>
- McEwan, B. (2021). Modality switching to modality weaving: Updating theoretical perspectives for expanding media affordances. *Annals of the Intercultural Communication Association*, 45(1), 1–19. <https://doi.org/10.1080/23808985.2021.1880958>
- McEwan, B., & Zanolla, D. (2013). When online meets offline: A field investigation of modality switching. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 29(4), 1565–1571. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2013.01.020>
- Parks, M. R. (2017). Embracing the challenges and opportunities of mixed-media relationships. *Human Communication Research*, 43(4), 505–517. <https://doi.org/10.1111/hcre.12125>
- Pedhazur, E. J. (1982). *Multiple regression in behavioral research: Explanation and prediction*. Holt, Rinehart & Winston.
- Ramirez Jr, A., Sumner, E. M., Fleuriet, C., & Cole, M. (2015). When online dating partners meet offline: The effect of modality switching on relational communication between online daters. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, 20, 99–115. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jcc4.12101>
- Ramirez Jr, A., Sumner, E. M., & Spinda, J. (2017). The relational reconnection function of social network sites. *New Media and Society*, 19, 807–825. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444815614199>
- Ramirez Jr., A., & Wang, Z. (2008). When online meets offline: An expectancy violations theory perspective on modality switching. *Journal of Communication*, 58, 20–39. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1460-2466.2007.00372.x>
- Ramirez, Jr., A., & Zhang, S. (2007). When online meets offline: The effect of modality switching on relational communication. *Communication Monographs*, 74, 287–310. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03637750701543493>
- Sharabi, L. L., & Caughlin, J. P. (2017). What predicts first date success? A longitudinal study of modality switching in online dating. *Personal Relationships*, 24(2), 370–391. <https://doi.org/10.1111/per.12188>
- Sprecher, S., & Hampton, A. J. (2017). Liking and other reactions after a get-acquainted interaction: A comparison of continuous face-to-face interaction versus interaction that progresses from text messages to face-to-face. *Communication Quarterly*, 65(3), 333–353. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01463373.2016.1256334>
- Sunnafrank, M. (1986). Predicted outcome value during initial interactions: A reformulation of uncertainty reduction theory. *Human Communication Research*, 13, 3–33. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2958.1986.tb00092.x>
- Sunnafrank, M., & Ramirez, Jr., A. (2004). At first sight: Persistent relational effects of get-acquainted conversations. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, 21, 361–379. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0265407504042837>
- Toma, C. L., & Hancock, J. T. (2011). A new twist on love’s labor: Self-presentation in online dating profiles In K. B. Wright & L. M. Webb (Eds.), *Computer-mediated communication in personal relationships* (pp. 41–55). Peter Lang Publishing.

- Tong, S., Hancock, J. T. & Slatcher, R. (2016). The influence of technology on romantic relationships: Understanding online dating. In G. Meiselwitz (Ed.), *Social computing and social media* (pp. 162–173). Springer.
- Walther, J. B. (1992). Interpersonal effects in computer-mediated interaction: A relational perspective. *Communication Research, 19*, 52–89. doi: 10.1177/009365092019001003
- Walther, J. B. (1994). Anticipated ongoing interaction versus channel effects on relational communication in computer-mediated interaction. *Human Communication Research, 20*, 473–501. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2958.1994.tb00332.x>
- Walther, J. B. (1996). Computer-mediated communication: Impersonal, interpersonal, and hyperpersonal interaction. *Communication Research, 23*, 3–43. <https://doi.org/10.1177/009365096023001001>
- Walther, J. B. (2007). Selective self-presentation in computer-mediated communication: Hyperpersonal dimensions of technology, language, and cognition. *Computers in Human Behavior, 23*, 2538–2557. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2006.05.002>
- Walther, J. B., & Burgoon, J. K. (1992). Relational communication in computer-mediated interaction. *Human Communication Research, 19*, 50–88. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2958.1992.tb00295.x>
- Whitty, M. T. (2008). Revealing the ‘real’ me, searching for the ‘actual’ you: Presentations of self on an internet dating site. *Computers in Human Behavior, 24*, 1707–1723. doi: 10.1111/j.1752-0606.2008.00088.x
- Wiederhold, B. K. (2021). How COVID has changed online dating – and what lies ahead. *Cyberpsychology, Behavior, and Social Networking, 24*(7), 435–436. <https://doi.org/10.1089/cyber.2021.29219.editorial>