



HOTORNOT.COM

THE HOOK: Hotornot allows you to put your profile photo on public display to be rated. Random strangers score your looks on a scale of 1 to 10 — with 10 being hot. I spend hours skewing the statistics by rating the men with model-looks as 1 and the ‘face for radio’ types as 10.

HOW IT WORKS: Create a basic profile of up to 1,000 words and add up to 50 keywords about your interests. After browsing singles you can click to ‘meet’. Your profile will appear in your potential’s match list. If you both agree, you are matched. As long as one person is a paid member, you can mail each other or chat. If you are both free members, you are limited to poking each other pointlessly.

OTHER FEATURES: There is an iPhone application.

POPULARITY: Around 25 million hits a month.

REGION: Global, but predominantly American. Only three men between 18 to 65 in Vietnam.

COSTS: US\$14.99 for one month, US\$9.99 per month for a three month subscription, US\$7.99 per month for 12 months.

RESULTS: After one month of free membership and only accepting requests from genuinely suitable matches, I have 23 double matches. Ten are full members. Three I now have contact with outside of the site. I am chatting to a different three regularly on-site. None are geographically close.

TOP TIPS FOR CREATING A PROFILE

1. *Do* use your best photo. Your deadpan prison-style passport shot won't impress.

2. *Don't* wear sunglasses or a hat. It will seem like you have something to hide.

There are some things to hide, like a bad relationship or an alcohol problem. Save the negatives for later.

3. *Do* use a spell checker.



PLENTYOFFISH.COM

THE HOOK: The world's largest online dating site uses a so-called chemistry questionnaire to find matches. It also offers relationship advice through a “needs assessment survey”, visible to interested members. This includes information such as interdependence, relationship readiness and preferred expressions of affection. Apparently I “...need someone who satisfies the hopeless romantic in me”.

HOW IT WORKS: Create your profile under a headline you choose. This includes whether you have or want children, smoke, use drugs and own a car along with your longest relationship. You then have over 6,000 words to describe yourself. Hint: Don't write to the word limit — you'll seem boring. In an optional space you can describe your ideal first date. As a member, you can mail any other member even if you are not matched.

OTHER FEATURES: Date night allows you to list yourself as available for a Friday night date.

POPULARITY: 145 million monthly visitors.

REGION: Global. In Vietnam there are 338 men aged 18 to 65, 217 are over 30.

COSTS: Free for basic level. If your questionnaire results show you are capable of long-term relationships you can upgrade to serious member level, which allows you credits to put towards virtual gifts and puts you higher in search returns. Three months is US\$9.80 per month, six months is US\$7.80 and one year is the equivalent to US\$5.95 per month.

RESULTS: I have met one guy in person who was travelling through and he was not my type. I have sporadic communication with some Vietnam-based men I hope to meet once I'm convinced they're not stalkers. I get a lot of mail. Mainly from people who don't meet my criteria.

#1 PROFILE FROM OASIS.COM

I ran my profile through online translation into a few languages and back into English: “I like climbing and spending time travelling easily rock, has a beach. I dream to travel abroad twice a year to get away on weekends. I hope for me to know to communicate these soul mate. If you like these things too, please get in touch.”



OASIS.COM

THE HOOK: Totally free. No matter how often I log in or how many matches I reject, I always have more than 500 matches available. This keeps me optimistic.

HOW IT WORKS: Oasis gives you over 8,000 words to tell everyone about you, followed by a pro-forma overview of what you are seeking in terms of age, location and relationship status, then a self-written description of the same. Scrolling through your automatically-generated matches, you can remove them, or view their profile. If they are online, they receive notification that you are looking. You can send a contact request with a reason as simple as “we have common interests” or as blatant as “I think you're really hot”. If the other side accepts, you will appear in each other's messenger lists so you can chat. If you reject the contact you can give a diplomatic reason like “I don't think you're my type”.

OTHER FEATURES: You can keep photos hidden and unlock them for your preferred matches only.

MEMBERS: More than 2.5 million members. 20 men in Vietnam, 11 over 30 years old.

REGION: Truly global. I elected to only allow contact from English speakers, but am strangely popular in Spain.

COSTS: Totally free.

RESULTS: Oasis is addictive. The opportunity to interact is immediate, although time differences can slow things down. There are a number of people I chat with and others that I soon delete when the conversation doesn't flow. I currently have three contacts who I message outside the site. My matches span the globe so I haven't met any yet. One is moving to Vietnam soon. As we hit the start of February with Valentine's Day looming, I still don't have a date lined up in this city. But at least I now feel there are possibilities out there.

