



Love at First Sight: The Stories and Science Behind Instant Attraction

By Earl Naumann

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If you're like some, you've only heard about love at first sight, perhaps dismissed it as cliché or mere emotional overload. But if you're among the lucky ones, you've experienced it--within one hour of meeting someone, you felt strange and powerful feelings of love for him or her.

Love at First Sight is the first book to deeply examine this remarkable human phenomenon. A Ph.D. in marketing and an expert in market research, author Earl Naumann conducted surveys and in-depth interviews with 1,500 individuals across America, of all ages, races, religions and backgrounds. His empirical findings revealed a staggering statistic--nearly half of his respondents had experienced love at first sight, but for different reasons and in dramatically different ways.

Written in a personal, yet highly professional style, Love at First Sight examines the influence of three categories of characteristics that attract people: physical traits, personality and career/achievements. It also includes love stories from survey respondents that illustrate the author's findings. Their heartfelt stories reveal the soul behind the phenomenon—an almost magical experience that leaves a lasting impression.

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Combining true stories by men and women who claim to have experienced Love at First Sight with quantifiable research based on nearly 1,500 in-depth interviews, Earl Naumann (Creating Customer Value) offers readers insight into the possible psychological and biological explanations for love, as opposed to what many argue is really lust, at first sight. Although general readers may find the preponderance of statistics in this book overwhelming, one of Naumann's more revealing discoveries is that instantaneous love seems to happen only to people who believe in it.

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About the Author

Earl Naumann is an author and business consultant. Through his research and consulting firm, Naumann performed primary research on the little-studied phenomenon of love at first sight. His business books, *Creating Customer Value* (1994; Van Nostrand Reinhold; ISBN: 0538838477) and *Customer Satisfaction Measurement and Management* (1995; ASQ Quality Press; ISBN: 0873894278), are among the leading professional books in their respective fields. Naumann holds a Ph.D. in marketing from Arizona State University. He resides in Boise, Idaho.

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From Chapter 6, *The Traits That Attract Men and Women*

As discussed earlier, some experts argue that mate selection is based on equity theory. Each person possesses a variety of traits that could be appealing to the opposite sex or another person. We develop a perception of our own self-worth by assessing and valuing all of our own traits. Then we compare our aggregate package to that of a potential mate. If the potential mate brings a roughly equivalent bundle of traits, we may develop an interest in the other person. But if the other person has a perceived much greater self-worth, we may conclude that "they are out of my league." If the perceived self-worth of the other person is much lower than our own, we may conclude that "we can do better than him/her."

There is some research evidence that this does occur. Some researchers have found that couples usually are very close to one another in appearance. Using the infamous ten-point scale, psychologists have found that 60 percent of the couples are within one point of each other on an attractiveness rating, and 85 percent of couples are within two points of one another. It is pretty unusual for there to be a substantial gap in attractiveness among couples when they are young.

In another study of the impact of attractiveness, schoolgirls were rated on their physical attractiveness. Twenty years later, they were contacted. The most attractive girls had married "better." Their husbands were more successful and wealthier than those married to the "less attractive" girls.

But these two studies were tracking only one trait, physical attractiveness. While that trait is important, it certainly is not the only trait considered in the evaluation process. A variety of traits may be considered when evaluating a potential mate. Some of these traits are presented in Table 6.1. These are rather generic categories of traits that could be broken down into much more detail.

For example, physical appearance could include many dimensions such as height, weight, body shape, or physical condition. Or it could be even more detailed to include body measurements, type of hair, skin color, or complexion. Physical appearance also may include a person's attire, such as the dashing sailor in uniform. The point is simply this, each category of traits contains many more specific dimensions that could be important to a particular individual.

The traits that people use to evaluate one another are probably the result of a complex interaction of genetics, family experiences, and socio-cultural values. But, somehow, we evaluate all of these traits collectively and make a judgment of the acceptability of another person. And there does not have to be absolute equity between partners on each trait. Strengths in one area can offset shortcomings in another.

To illustrate, the lady in one of the love at first sight stories was in her early twenties, very attractive, and in a rocky marriage. She met a very wealthy man who was twenty years her senior. There was no love or passion on her part toward the man. He was not extremely handsome or a physical specimen. But he was wealthy, and, for the lady, that one trait was sufficient to offset weaknesses in other areas.

The closer that two people are on the traits individually and collectively, the more likely they are to have a happy relationship or marriage. The more disparate two people are, the more likely problems will arise. For example, the lady who married for money had a string of affairs to make up for the sexual intimacy lacking in her marriage.

In an attempt to simplify the traits in Table 6.1 for research purposes, the traits were collapsed into three categories. The three categories were physical traits, personality traits, and career/achievement traits. As we shall see in subsequent chapters, each of these categories were further broken down into eight to twelve more specific dimensions.

Men vs. Women

Most people contend that men focus more on the physical traits of a woman. Most would also believe that women use a broader range of evaluative criteria when selecting a mate than men. And that contention is supported by this research (Table 6.2).

When asked "What one category of traits most attracted you to the other person," 51.7 percent of males and 41.2 percent of females said physical traits. This difference is statistically significant and indicates that the physical appearance of a woman is more important to men than the inverse. Interestingly, studies of singles advertisements show that women stress their physical attractiveness more than men. Apparently, women have been conditioned correctly to understand that appearance is important to men. However, the emphasis on physical traits by men is not as strong as one might expect.

There were 46.4 percent of men and 53.1 percent of women who said that personality traits most attracted them. Thus, the personality traits of men are much more important to women. For men, the difference between physical traits and personality traits (51.7 percent versus 46.4 percent) is much less than for women (41.2 percent versus 53.1 percent). Hence, men are attracted almost equally by the physical and personality traits of a woman. Women show a clear preference for the personality of a man.

The most striking finding for the career/achievement traits is their minor role in love at first sight. Perhaps, these issues are more unknown in the first sixty minutes of a relationship. It is likely that this category would be more important in a relationship that developed more gradually. Only 1.9 percent of men and 5.7 percent

of women mentioned that career/achievement traits were what most attracted them.

While definitely in the minority, women were over twice as likely as men to identify career success as the most important traits. This seems to imply some support for the concept that women want a "good provider" to care for them and any subsequent children.

This question allowed a respondent to pick only one category. It may be that the career/achievements of men would be a more consistent secondary trait used by women. A woman might be attracted to a man's personality, but then evaluate his career achievements or potential as a secondary issue once he passed the initial personality screen.

There is no question that there are differences between men and women regarding which traits that they find most attractive in another. But the differences are not as great as some might expect. While there are differences in traits between men and women, there were no differences across age or education level. It was thought that younger people might focus more on physical traits, but this contention was not supported. It was thought that the better educated would focus more on the personality or career/achievement traits, but this was not supported either. There were significant differences across the times married and across ethnic groups, however. (chapter continues...)

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Robert Gibson:

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