



Love at the time of Internet is more like a smartphone app: full of emojis and sometimes relegated within the screen of an iPhone.

Managing a relationship is always a personal matter and no one can establish the rules of the perfect love.

Surely, compared to the past, the chances of meeting the soul mate have changed. In the old days when you wanted to meet someone you had to find an excuse or a friend to introduce you. Now all you have to do is to download an app and there you are, in constant, seamless contact with the surrounding world. You can also “be found” by establishing a range of action for your “hunt”, just don’t forget to outline your interests and habits.

In the always connected world, the digital self no longer needs intermediaries to introduce himself to the others. You can do it immediately, with many “Pros” in terms of freedom, but also with all the “Cons” that come from a relationship with no mediation.

To paraphrase Karl Popper, we could say that the future of the Internet – as its “psychology” as well- is open. It’s up to us to direct it towards a desirable future. It’s up to us, indeed, to remember that the invention of the Internet, while powerful as that of writing and print, allows “human beings” to interact, in different ways, with other “human beings”.

But what’s left of “Human” in connecting with each other through an app or a dating site? How many people found love? The answer, unfortunately, is not many.

Indeed, algorithms and virtual matches can be useful, but the complexity of a relationship or a feeling surely do not originate from them.

Where modern love comes from: the invention of the romantic dating

In her essay *Labor of Love: the Invention of Dating*, social historian Moira Weigel explains very clearly the difference between classic and modern dating.

Today, relationships are consumed in a short lapse of time: for practical purposes and superficially. Not much is left of that old, well known dance: there’s him (sentimentally free) asking her (free as well) to go out on a date (at least three days in advance); he picks her up; pays for a movie, dinner, drinks; takes her home, and the evening often ends up with a kiss on her doorstep. Or with a "Do you want to come in?" The author

goes on to describe contemporary dating as "a form of unpaid sentimental internship: occasional, fast and never binding. Because we date the way we work."

In short, in a world of precariousness and uncertainty, even relationships and feelings are more and more feeble, trade goods where creativity, sacrifice and commitment leave room to fleeting encounters, where both interest and a possible common goal are set on a very low standard.

Modern love: what's left of emotions

Today, you only need 4 elements to find "love" online:

- A nice picture of yourself that highlights your best features
- The right catchy nickname
- A brief summary of your main interests
- And the cherry on top: show that you're funny!

In short, nothing too different from drafting a résumé to attract attention and a job, or maybe even love!

No more stolen glances, or shyness, or butterflies in the stomach. A relationship with an expiration date, lasting barely the time of just knowing each other, or even just enough to get a new date.

And what if we don't like that person? Just delete it or block it, and away we go, to a new adventure.

Much like discarding a CV or throwing away a candy wrapper.

Modern love: what happened to the love languages?

Gary Chapman, expert relationship consultant, identified the five love languages crucial to a relationship:

- Words of affirmation
- Acts of devotion

- Gift giving
- Quality time
- Physical touch

According to the author, individuals tend to give and express love the way they prefer to receive it. But what they should actually do is learning the love language their partners understand. Today, this can be a more challenging task, because technology plays a primary role in the relationships and technology makes little room for finesse and nuances.

So, the question is: can the texts from a chat be considered words of affirmation?

Actual face time, a crucial part of quality time, can convey the same emotions even through the web? Can a webcam or a video chat really allow actual face time?

Surely someone has been able to find a first connection through an app, and then have a lasting and authentic extra-digital relationship.

What really needs to be rediscovered is the pleasure of being surprised. Leaving something to fate. Being overwhelmed by the person in front of you, with their merits and flaws.

Because online, we must remember, everything looks perfect, and it's easier to convince everyone that everything is fine, but the truth is that perfection does not exist.

It's easy to make an impression from behind a keyboard, but only through authentic human contact we can get to the truth, to the actual self of the person, and to finally discover if that person actually is (or isn't) our soul mate.