



Dr Love figures out the maths of matchmaking

Debbie Mason

Looking for love online? Forget romance, forget psychological theory, forget the fact that hearts even beat. Just sit down with a calculator, and work it out.

Or let the world's largest matchmaking website for Chinese speakers do the maths for you.

There are no roses or chocolates in Dr Li Song's very ordinary double room at the Beijing International Hotel, and he wears a slightly marked, pale orange sweatshirt with baggy greyish trousers.

But the multimillionaire chief executive of www.zhenai.com has applied his Cornell-studied mathematics and come up with the perfect

dress code for making matches from an enormous database that stores details from hairstyles to the shade of one's tights.

Li is an investment banker-turned entrepreneur, who graduated from Cornell with a PhD in finance. He worked as an investment banker in New York then at Morgan Stanley in Hong Kong before going to the mainland to apply quantitative finance to love.

Li bought free dating site 96333.com in 1998 before transforming it into an integrated internet and call centre matchmaking service model with his business partner Avi Xiong.

Zhenai.com, which means "cherished love", is now the largest match-

making site for Chinese speakers in the world, boasting 23 million registered members and a daily sign-up rate of 30,000.

Li's 400 call centre matchmakers advise those who sign up that 70 per cent of women with long, straight hair get second dates.

Just 5 per cent of those with short, curly hair do.

His team advise women to wear above-the-knee skirts, high heels, and definitely black, transparent tights.

"Not too low-cut for the tops. If you wear something too low-cut you lead a man to think of you in the wrong way. In other words you want to be sexy, but not sexual," Li stressed.

Li uses a statistical modelling process for his service.

"There are two approaches to matchmaking - one is that you couple with a psychological theory to predict the results based on your theory, but because my background is more mathematically inclined, I don't have a theory to begin with," said.

"What I do is based on statistical results, reverse engineering, and make it a learning process.

"We have developed a very efficient CRM [customer relation management] system which is based on accumulated empirical data.

"It's an iterative process so you match people and then you stu-

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