CASUAL CLUB:

ONLINE DATING SITES TAKE OFF THEIR MASK

Until a few years ago looked upon with suspicion and considered a bit like the last resort for the most discouraged single, online dating is experiencing a real golden age with an unprecedented boom in subscriptions. No more only web enthusiasts accustomed to maintain virtual contacts on a daily basis, but ordinary people who, for various reasons, prefer to break the ice under the protective umbrella of a nickname or an anonymous message rather than going on a blind date with an often uncertain outcome.

The logical consequence of the growth of the potential market is, as always, specialization: in the last few years the offering of dating sites has began to fragment in order to meet the diverse needs of the users, with the birth of a wide range of niche sites, perhaps with fewer subscribers, but with the certainty that those few are in line with what the members are looking for.

This process brought a new honesty on the purposes of dating sites: since they are no longer forced to have a "good for everyone" image, they can make it clear what they offer to their users. A peculiar example of this trend is CasualClub.com, dedicated, starting from the name, to casual dating. Those who register to Casual Club are not interested in finding a mate for life, but simply in living a romance with no strings attached, perhaps hidden from their spouse. It is worth noting that the site does not e courage treason, it simply does not show off a false morality: noting that cheating is a common behavior, the site allows those who are interested to do so without being judged. The emphasis is indeed on the absolute privacy guaranteed to the users there are no photos, no nickname, no instant chat.

During the registration process the users are asked to specify, leaving nothing to the imagination, their sexual tastes, the characteristics of the partner and the place where they are look for it. To avoid the "catalog effect" typical of the classic dating sites the choice of the possible partners is due to a complex algorithm that, by combining the data provided by users, automatically selects the partners and proposes to the members only the most interesting ones. Users can exchange e-mails and possibly ar range a meeting with the certainty, of course never mathematic, to conclude it in the best way. All of that browsing a site of simplicity and elegance, designed also for those unfamiliar with a computer.

The casual dating phenomenon is on the rise, also thanks to the cultural legitimation it experienced in recent years, and with more than forty millions of single people in Europe alone it is not surprising. Web sites like Casual Club are perhaps not for every one, but they have the merit of exposing the often inconvenient truth that not everyone is looking for love. ■