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**INTERGENERATIONAL COMMUNICATION ON THE INTERNET:
MAIN BARRIERS AND APPROACHES FOR OVERCOMING THEM ON
WECHAT PLATFORM**

Master's Thesis
Speciality 1–23 80 11 Communication

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« ____ » _____ 2022

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Doctor of Philosophy in Sociology

Minsk 2022

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INTRODUCTION

With the development of science and technology, modern communication methods are rapidly being updated. The emergence of new media has shaped new communication methods and habits of modern people, and the communication space has shifted more from traditional reality to virtual reality. In recent years, the emergence of blogs, instant messaging software and self-media platforms have greatly enriched the social lives of young people. However, because the product update speed has been significantly improved compared with the radio wave era and the printing era, higher requirements are also placed on users' knowledge reserves and knowledge update capabilities. Because the older generation needs more time to learn new tools than the younger generation. At the same time, the new media environment has continuously fostered unique "subcultures", such as the two-dimensional culture and fans circle culture. The formation of these cultures divides young groups into different, relatively closed "circles." It is often difficult for people outside the circle to understand the unique cultural symbols and cultural phenomena in the circle, let alone communicate. Therefore, under various circumstances, the cultural gap between the Z generation and the X and Y generations has gradually expanded. " Under such circumstances, how to promote exchanges between different generations using the Internet as an emerging tool and give full play to the advantages of new media as advanced media has become an urgent problem to be solved.

WeChat is an application developed by Tencent of China on January 21, 2011. It provides the public with functions such as a free platform, news push, and Moments. It offers simplicity and a high degree of privacy. Therefore, it has been popular since the beginning of its release, and it has been favored by middle-aged and elderly people. After ten years of promotion, WeChat has developed into the most popular and common instant chat software in China. Therefore, with a large number of cases and reference materials, it is completely realistic and feasible to use WeChat as the research object.

In the current time, the researches on WeChat is more about the application and innovation of WeChat functional plug-ins in the commercial field, but there is a lack of discussion on the communication behavior of WeChat itself. Most of the WeChat research in the communication field focuses on a single event triggered by a WeChat platform or a certain function of WeChat, and analyzing the hidden Communication phenomenon behind it. This research attempts to start from a new perspective, focus on intergenerational communication between the elderly and young people, study the communication principles of WeChat as a communication medium, and summarizing general and universal laws to better guide social practice, especially for

Intergenerational communication. Therefore, the social universality and practical guidance of this subject is undoubtedly significant.

In 2021, the number of WeChat users has reached 1.26 billion, and its user age range has spanned from 15 to 65 years old. It is a true "national-level software". This research attempts to reveal the reasons behind its explosive popularity, Analyzing the methods of WeChat platform to solve the barriers of intergenerational communication in the Internet context. In addition, this study also expects to summarize scientific guiding theories to better explain social practice activities and guide the development and improvement of new social software.

The subject of the thesis is the main barriers to intergenerational communication on the Internet and the ways to overcome them. The WeChat platform is used as a research case to explore the advantages and disadvantages of social media, especially new media, and the forms and characteristics of intergenerational communication in the Internet environment. It is conducive to better play the role of social media in the communication process, guiding people to use social media correctly, eliminating communication barriers, and better promoting information and emotional exchanges between different generations.

The goal of this research is to study the instant messaging system and Moments system of the WeChat platform, exploring the role of WeChat in promoting online intergenerational communication.

The tasks of research is to analyze the intergenerational communication behaviors that occur on the WeChat platform, summarizing the communication information on the WeChat platform, deconstructing the WeChat text frame, and exploring the social and Communication phenomenon behind it.

In order to reach the goal of the research it is necessary to answer following questions:

- (1) What is the definition of intergenerational Internet communication?
- (2) What are the main barriers to intergenerational communication in the context of the Internet?
- (3) What are the functions and effects of the WeChat platform as a media in eliminating barriers to intergenerational communication?

The WeChat platform is committed to taking advantage of its flat software structure, diversified functions, and spatial privacy, to eliminate barriers to users of different generations in the process of Internet communication, and to strengthen and protect users' emotional exchanges and expressions, which are not found in other new media. These features are not found in other new media.

By comparing the changes in the media ecology before and after the launch of WeChat, we explored the attempts and results of the WeChat platform in solving Internet intergenerational communication, and finally concluded effective methods to

promote the process of Internet intergenerational communication. Through the analysis of WeChat communication behavior, we will finally derive the communication principle of WeChat's influence on the process of intergenerational communication.

Finally, the perspective of intergenerational communication is unique, and there are few academic studies based on this perspective; second, the existing research perspectives pay more attention to the comparison of intergenerational communication in the Internet era and the pre-Internet era, and focus on the current situation and future of the Internet for intergenerational communication research remains to be discovered. Third, there are few research cases of WeChat in Belarus, and WeChat has research value as a phenomenon-level medium. Therefore, this study has certain novelty.

MASTER'S THESIS SUMMARY

Key words: INTERGENERATIONAL COMMUNICATION, INTERNET, DIGITAL DIVIDE , CULTURAL FEEDBACK, CHANNEL, WECHAT PLATFORM.

Object of study: Intergenerational communication in the Internet age, Chinese Internet communication software.

Subject of study: The Approaches and solutions of the issue of main barriers in intergenerational communication in the Internet age, and the role of WeChat platform as a communication channel in the process of intergenerational Internet communication.

The aim of the study: Reveal the obstacles existing in intergenerational communication in the Internet era, and explore ways to solve these obstacles.

Research methods: Description, Literature analysis, System analysis, comparative analysis.

Research objectives:

- 1) Defining and describing intergenerational communication, the characteristics and changes of intergenerational communication in the Internet age;
- 2) Revealing the problems existing in intergenerational communication in the Internet age;
- 3) Taking the WeChat platform as the main case to explore ways to solve the main obstacles in intergenerational communication in the Internet era;

Scientific novelty of the obtained results: This thesis is the first attempt to explore issues in intergenerational communication in the Internet age through case study of WeChat platform on the basis of related academic standards. It gives the opportunity to define better promoting intergenerational communication in the Internet era, and consider the shortcomings of WeChat platform in promoting intergenerational communication.

Area of possible practical application: The results obtained in the research can be used in the field of communication studies, as well as in related fields of sociology, anthropology and psychology. Exploring the practical significance of better promoting intergenerational communication in the Internet era, and consider the shortcomings of WeChat platform in promoting intergenerational communication;

Materials and results of the master thesis were obtained on the basis of reliable sources and independent theoretical research.

Master's thesis: 69 pages, 63 sources.

ОБЩАЯ ХАРАКТЕРИСТИКА РАБОТЫ

Ключевые слова: МЕЖПОКОЛЕНЧЕСКАЯ КОММУНИКАЦИЯ, ИНТЕРНЕТ, ЦИФРОВОЙ РАЗРЫВ, КУЛЬТУРНАЯ ОБРАТНАЯ СВЯЗЬ, КАНАЛ, ПЛАТФОРМА WECHAT.

Объект исследования: общение между поколениями в эпоху Интернета, китайское программное обеспечение для интернет–коммуникаций.

Предмет исследования: подходы к решению проблем межпоколенческого общения в эпоху Интернета, а также роль платформы WeChat как коммуникационного канала в процессе межпоколенческого интернет–общения.

Цель исследования: Выявить препятствия, существующие в межпоколенческом общении в эпоху Интернета, и изучить пути преодоления этих препятствий.

Методы исследования: описание, анализ литературы, системный анализ, компаративный анализ.

Задачи исследования:

- 1) определение и описание межпоколенческого общения, характеристик и изменений межпоколенческого общения в эпоху Интернета;
- 2) Выявление проблем, существующих в межпоколенческой коммуникации в эпоху Интернета;
- 3) Исследование платформы WeChat в качестве основного примера для изучения способов преодоления основных препятствий в межпоколенческом общении в эпоху Интернета.

Научная новизна полученных результатов: Эта диссертация является первой попыткой исследовать вопросы межпоколенческого общения в эпоху Интернета на примере платформы WeChat, опираясь на соответствующие академические стандарты, что позволяет определить наилучшие способы обеспечения межпоколенческой коммуникации в эпоху Интернета и учесть достоинства и недостатки платформы WeChat в развитии коммуникации между поколениями.

Область возможного практического применения: Результаты, полученные в магистерской диссертации, могут быть использованы в области исследований коммуникации, а также в смежных областях социологии, антропологии и психологии.

Материалы и результаты магистерской диссертации получены на основе достоверных источников и независимых теоретических исследований.

Магистерская диссертация включает: 69 страницу, 63 источника

CHAPTER 1

AN OVERVIEW OF INTERGENERATIONAL COMMUNICATION

1.1 Notion of Internet Intergenerational Communication

With the advancement and popularization of Internet technology, related derivative products and services have experienced explosive growth in the past decade. The derivative products and services of the Internet have increasingly become the indispensable tools and methods in people's life, work, entertainment and communication. The concept of intergenerational relationship was first proposed by the American anthropologist Margaret Mead in her book, using the term "generation-gap". Intergenerational communication mainly refers to the family as a unit, the relationship between parents and children, grandparents and grandchildren. Intergenerational communication is a form of communication based on intergenerational relationships.as defined by the entry on the Oxford Bibliography website, refers to "interactions between individuals from different age cohorts or age groups. For example, many family interactions, including those between a parent and child or a grandparent and grandchild, can be classified as intergenerational communication. Intergenerational communication also occurs outside of the family. Indeed, any communicative interaction between a child and a middle-aged or older adult, a young adult and a middle-aged or older adult, and a middle-aged adult and an older adult is classified as intergenerational communication. Thus, many interactions that occur in daily life, including those at home, school, the workplace, and other social settings, involve intergenerational communication." [7 , 1]

Intergenerational communication is the important component part of our daily activities of communication, which is different from the relationships linked by social interaction, such as friends, classmates, colleagues, is that intergenerational communication is the interaction between members who are linked by family and blood. It is a key link in the social information interaction system to enhance the relationship between family members and strengthen the important function of family structure harmony and stability. In recent years, problems such as "technical barriers", "information poverty" and "digital divide" caused by the rapid development of Internet technology have had a huge impact on the process and environment of intergenerational communication. In the context of this era, the research on intergenerational communication has gradually attracted the attention of social science scholars, and the research in this discipline has continued to heat up. Nowadays, academic research on intergenerational communication has become an important component of the field of social sciences. Many social science scholars

have tried to describe, explain and predict intergenerational communication from different perspectives, a major topic with important social practical significance, and some results and progress have also been made.

This thesis refers to more than 60 related researches in the field of intergenerational communication in different Chinese and English versions, and finds that the research on intergenerational communication can be traced back to the research published by the famous American anthropologist Margaret Mead in 1970: "Culture and Commitment – A Study on the Generation Gap." The concept of "three figurative cultures" was proposed in this study, namely "prefigurative culture", "parafigurative culture" and "postfigurative culture", can be regarded as a pioneer concept in the study of cultural generation gap in the process of intergenerational communication. Since then, many communication scientists and sociologists have developed new supplements and ideas for intergenerational communication from different disciplinary perspectives., Including that the book published in 2007 by Harwood. J: "Understanding communication and aging," which focuses on the issues of intergenerational communication regarding attitudes to population aging, interpersonal communication, social representation, mass communication, and the communicative environment in old age.

The book was published in 2012 by M.L.Hummert: "Challenges and opportunities for communication between age groups. In Handbook of intergroup communication", by studying communication challenges between individuals of different age groups and other more stable group members (such as race and gender–represented groups) are similar and different in communication challenges, The study focuses on the role of intergenerational communication between groups.

"Ageism: Stereotyping and prejudice against older persons" , published by Nelson.TD, focuses on the work of gerontology, psychology, sociology, and communication researchers on age stereotyping, prejudice, and discrimination, including research on the origins and effects of ageism Theoretical framework and empirical findings, and recommendations for reducing ageism.

The article "Handbook of communication and aging research" by J.F. Nussbaum. and J.Coupland summarized in 2004 research on communication and aging to demonstrate that aging is not only an individual process of aging physically and temporally, but also social aging . At the same time, the book also proposes assumptions: as social actors, how we should treat the behavior of others in the process of interaction.

The article "Intergenerational communication across the life span" by A. Williams. and J.F. Nussbaum provides a lifelong developmental perspective on communication and aging by advancing the understanding of human behavior throughout life by studying intergenerational communication.

The earliest research on intergenerational communication in China can be traced back to the book "Cultural Feedback: Intergenerational Revolution in a Changing Society" published by Chinese sociologist Zhou Xiaohong in 1988. This book takes the perspective of cultural inheritance in the process of intergenerational communication as the breakthrough point, and explores how intergenerational communication affects the transformation of intergenerational relations under the wave of new media by collecting interview materials from 34 focus groups of 77 families. It also analyzes the cultural feedback phenomenon arising from the change of intergenerational relations in modern country from various perspectives, such as the theory of generation and intergenerational relations, the theory of social transformation and the theory of globalization. Since then, the phenomenon of "cultural feedback" has become one of the most important concepts in the process of studying intergenerational relations and intergenerational communication by Chinese scholars.

Based on the official website of the National Center for Philosophy and Social Science Documentation of China, a total of 50 journal results related to intergenerational relations and intergenerational communication during the 21 years from 2000 to 2021 were searched. Through sorting out, it is found that the research fields of intergenerational relations and intergenerational communication in China are mainly concentrated in the following areas: research on the effect of intergenerational communication, derived symbols and subcultures in intergenerational communication, media research in intergenerational communication, and the existence of intergenerational communication main problem.

In the field of research on the effects of intergenerational communication, attention to the phenomenon of "cultural feedback" is one of the key topics of research in this field. Among them, the article "Digital Generation Gap and Cultural Feedback: A Quantitative Investigation of the "Silent Revolution" in the Family" published by Zhou Yuqiong, a professor of communication at Shenzhen University in 2014, is of great significance. This article focuses on the impact of the two phenomenon of digital divide and cultural feedback on intergenerational communication in the new media environment. The author conducts a large number of field investigations on two generations of parent-child families living in Shenzhen through questionnaires, and finally summarizes the intergenerational differences in the ownership and use of new media by the digital divide. The social reality of "cultural feedback" (offspring to parents) is significantly more than "cultural nurturing" (parents to offspring)" was confirmed, and this achievement set the tone for subsequent research in the field of intergenerational communication in China.

Since then, Zhou Yuqiong has also published "The Rise of Digital Vulnerable Groups: A Study on the Influencing Factors of the Adoption and Use of Wechat by

the Elderly", "Research on the Current Situation and Influencing Factors of Three Generations of Digital Feedback in Chinese Families", "Conceptualization and Operationalization of Digital Generation Gap: Based on National Family Grandparents and Grandchildren" The first attempt of a three-generation questionnaire survey" and other research results, all of which focus on the in-depth investigation of the phenomenon of "cultural feedback" and "digital divide" in Chinese families, and discuss the effect of intergenerational communication.

On the basis of Zhou Yuqiong's research, Zhuang Ting and Chen Ruiqun published an article in 2016, "Research on WeChat's "Usage Gap" from the Perspective of the Digital Divide, focusing on the research on the phenomenon of "digital divide" in WeChat as a medium, demonstrating that the digital divide from the perspective of the existence of WeChat usage gap, and put forward relevant suggestions to try to eliminate the social inequality caused by this emerging technology from different levels.

Ma Kaige's 2019 article "Cultural Silencing: Intergenerational Transmission under Changes in Family Structure" discusses the impact of three major factors: "digital divide", "interruption of cultural cultivation" and "interruption of cultural feedback", the phenomenon of "cultural silencing" occurs between generations of communication – that is, the communication and integration of intergenerational cultures stagnates. The concept of "cultural silencing" proposed in the article is novel to a certain extent, and has progressive significance for our understanding of the process of cultural inheritance in intergenerational communication.

Yan Hongyuan's article "Research on the Formation Path of Cultural Feedback Mechanism in the Family Field in the New Media Era" published in 2020 focuses on the specific path research of individuals' "cultural feedback" behavior, and explains how the "cultural feedback" mechanism is formed from a micro perspective. .

Zhang Xuefang and Zhou Fei published an article in 2020, "Research on the Influence of Internet Language on Intergenerational Communication of Contemporary College Students from the Perspective of Cultural Feedback", using interviews with Nanjing Forestry University students and their parents as a case to explore the role of Internet language in the process of intergenerational communication. It also clarifies the characteristics of the phenomenon of "cultural feedback" in intergenerational communication. This research has a certain role in understanding the intergenerational differences and communication effects of the intergenerational communication process.

Liang Feng's 2021 article, "Intergenerational Differences and Digital Feedback in WeChat Use in Rural Families", focuses on the phenomenon of "cultural feedback" in the process of intergenerational communication, by investigating the situation of

WeChat usage among rural households in Wanzhou, Chongqing, China , exploring the motivation, status and impact of "digital feedback" behavior in WeChat usage.

In addition, the study of intergenerational transmission of health information has become an emerging topic in the study of the effect of intergenerational transmission, and the reason for its rise is largely due to the context of the Covid-19 global epidemic.

The article "Humorous persuasion on intergenerational differences in communication effects on medical WeChat public accounts" published in 2020 by Mu Yi and Zhang Lin focuses on intergenerational differences in the effects of health information communication. Exploring the effect of humorous persuasion on information persuasion, author credibility, willingness to share information, and willingness to behave in a healthy manner among different generations, and finally came to the following two points: Humorous information did not improve the audience's perception of the quality of the content of the article, emerging adults have a lower sense of humor than young and middle-aged adults.

Mu Yi and Na Qian's 2021 article "An Empirical Study on the Covid-19 Protection Behavior of the Rural Elderly in my country from the Perspective of Communication" provides how the rural elderly acquire relevant medical knowledge through media use and intergenerational communication during the Covid-19 epidemic. Based on the empirical investigation, the article finally came to the view that intergenerational transmission plays a leading role in the protective behavior of the new crown among the elderly in rural areas, providing new ideas for the role of intergenerational transmission in the field of public health communication.

Gong Wanqi, Guo Qin, and Jiang Li published an article in 2021, "The Feedback Effect in Health Communication: A Study on the Influence of Intergenerational Communication on the Prevention and Control of Infectious Diseases in the Middle-aged and the Elderly", which also examined the relationship between intergenerational transmission and disease prevention and control. Taking the example of two family communication paradigms of dialogue orientation and compromise orientation, it is concluded that dialogue orientation has a positive impact on eliminating the "digital divide" in intergenerational communication, and promoting middle-aged and elderly people to pay attention to the prevention and control of infectious diseases. This study broadens the research horizon of intergenerational communication in health communication, and provides an important empirical basis for the feedback effect in health communication.

Kuwen and Ouyang Xia's 2021 article "Cognitive Bias and Communication Dilemma: A Study of Intergenerational Health Information Dissemination in the Elderly" explores the relationship between intergenerational communication and elderly health information dissemination. The phenomenon of intergenerational

elderly health information dissemination was explored from three aspects: "mistakes and dilemmas of intergenerational health information dissemination", "information bias of offspring information dissemination behavior", and "emotional bias of intergenerational health information dissemination behavior of the elderly". At the same time, it also provides suggestions on how to improve the dissemination of intergenerational elderly health information. The above studies have broadened the perspective of intergenerational relations and intergenerational communication research, and provided new ideas for the subsequent research on intergenerational communication.

In the research on Internet-derived products and subcultures in intergenerational communication, related research mainly focuses on the intergenerational differences in the use of social media and its subsidiary functions, and explores the mechanisms behind the intergenerational differences in the use of media products and Internet cultural symbols.

Li Qiong's 2014 article "Research on the Intergenerational Differences in Internet Language" focuses on the language issues in intergenerational communication in the Internet context. The article discusses the influence of social factors such as age, gender, education level and other social factors on the differences in Internet language by studying the Sino-Japanese joint field survey on Internet terms of young people and their parents. The article concludes that age is the most significant factor affecting the intergenerational differences in Internet language.

Hu Miaomiao's 2017 article "The Rise of Middle-aged and Elderly Emojis and the Analysis of the "Generation Gap" Behind them" focuses on media research in the process of intergenerational communication. Taking "emoji of middle-aged and elderly" as an example of an Internet interactive symbol, Exploring the mechanism of cultural differences contained in the use of intergenerational differences in packs of emoji.

Chen Subai and Shao Shu published an article in 2018, "Research on Intergenerational Differences in Like Behavior", through research on the motivation and object of "Like" behavior, in the form of questionnaires, to explore the post-70s, post-80s, post-90s" The motivation and connotation behind the "like" behavior, summed up the deep-seated reasons behind the phenomenon that different generations have differences in the use and understanding of the same Internet culture, Realized the extension of the investigation of new media functions from a single dimension to an intergenerational dimension.

Yan Zhenni's 2020 article "Intergenerational Differences in the Pragmatics of "Haha" in Internet Chat" focuses on the role of Internet-derived culture in the process of intergenerational communication, and discusses the semantic reconstruction of traditional words in the new context. The article explores the mechanism of

intergenerational cultural differences behind the formation of intergenerational communication barriers through the semantic variation and extension of the word "hehe" in different Internet chat situations.

Guo Mengmeng's article "Research on the Phenomenon of Emoji in Social Media" published in 2020 focused on the relationship between Internet-derived products and intergenerational communication. By studying the unique utility of the product "emoji pack" in the functions of emotional expression, distance reconstruction, identity and stratification in Internet communication, exploring the possible impact of changes in Internet culture on the process of intergenerational communication.

Wang Xiaohui's article "Face Theory from the Perspective of Intergenerational Communication" published in 2020 focuses on Internet subcultures, especially the role of youth subcultures such as "mourning culture" and "little happiness culture" in intergenerational communication. Revealing that the issue of "face" is essentially a manifestation of the struggle for family discourse power in the dimension of intergenerational communication, exploring the role that intergenerational communication plays in deconstructing and reshaping the structure of modern family relationships.

In an article jointly published by Qian Wei, Mu Kaiyue, Sui Jiaao, Yin Yue and Li Lan in 2021, "Research on the Differences in the Use of Wechat Emoji Packs between College Students and Parents", based on a survey on the differences in the use of emoticons in WeChat among college students and their parents in Qingdao, Shandong Province, China, This study attempts to reflect the context of communication barriers formed by intergenerational cultural differences on the Internet by exploring the differences in understanding and preference of emojis among different generations of users.

In the field of media research in intergenerational communication, relevant articles focus on exploring the reconstruction of the intergenerational relationship structure and intergenerational communication model in the new era by new media, especially mobile media and the media environment formed by them, and Exploring the proportion of factors such as social status, economic level, and media literacy in the generational differences in the use of new media. Among them, the "digital divide" has become one of the most concerned concepts in this study.

In Liao Xiaoping's 2004 article "On the Intergenerational Digital Divide in Network Society and Its Ethical Performance", he discussed the relationship between the digital divide and intergenerational ethics. Explored the elimination and reconstruction of the traditional intergenerational ethical relationship and the intergenerational moral concept system by intergenerational communication in the

new media environment, and put forward suggestions for the development direction of intergenerational communication in the Internet era.

In Zhu Xiuling's 2015 article "The Reshaping of the Time and Space of Intergenerational Communication in Teenagers' Families", Zhu Xiuling discussed the media research in communication behavior, By using British sociologist Anthony Giddens's theory of "spatio-temporal separation", this paper explores the role of mobile phones as the most common medium in the Internet era in reshaping the process of intergenerational communication.

Liang Xiaolin's 2018 article "The Intergenerational Digital Divide in the Internet Age" focuses on the phenomenon of the "digital divide" in intergenerational communication. The article analyzes the main reason for the formation of the digital divide, the intergenerational communication barrier, from four aspects: the definition of the digital divide, the causes and manifestations of the digital divide, the generation and expansion of the intergenerational digital divide, and specific cases. The article has positive implications for our more complete understanding of the relationship between the "digital divide" and intergenerational communication.

Zheng Suxia and Wu Dechen's 2018 article "The Formation Background, Social Influence and Adjustment of the Digital Divide in Intergenerational Communication" discusses the impact of the phenomenon of the "digital divide" in intergenerational communication, By analyzing the reasons for the formation of the digital divide and the subsequent impact, it is proposed to carry out online training activities for the elderly, provide a platform for the elderly to participate in online behavior, and establish a new type of parent-child relationship to bridge the "digital divide".

Wang Shiyao and Wang Yonghong published an article in 2018, "Research on Intergenerational Differences in the Use of Social Media in China in the Past 20 Years", which focuses on media research in the process of intergenerational communication. The article summarizes the origin, intergenerational differences, and influencing factors of social media use in China in the past 20 years, and concludes the possible impact of social media use on intergenerational communication in both positive and negative aspects, providing a reference for solving the practical problems of intergenerational communication. .

The article "Difficulties and Key Points of Digital Poverty Governance for the Elderly Group" published by Lin Bao in 2020 studies the relationship between the media environment and intergenerational communication, focusing on the Internet intergenerational communication caused by the phenomenon of "digital divide" and "digital poverty" obstacle, It comprehensively analyzes the difficulties and key points that should be solved in improving intergenerational communication, and provides a

certain direction and goal for practitioners to solve intergenerational communication problems.

Wang Mengyu, Yan Yan, and Yu Xiaoyan published an article in 2020, "Research on Intergenerational Communication of College Students' Families from the Perspective of Digital Media", focusing on the role of digital media in the process of intergenerational communication. Through the sample survey and case analysis of students in Anhui Normal University, the paper discusses the problems of "universal communication conflict", "communication embarrassment caused by high and low contexts", and "decentralized structural changes" in the intergenerational communication of college students' families from the perspective of digital media, and proposes targeted methods accordingly.

Liu Jingya published an article in 2021, "Research on Social Media Use from the Perspective of Intergenerational Differences – Taking QQ as an Example." The article also focuses on intergenerational differences in media use. By choosing QQ, the longest-lived social media in China, she explores the similarities and differences in the use of QQ by different generations from an intergenerational perspective, explores the presentation of the "digital divide" phenomenon in the dimension of intergenerational communication, and proposes a "new intergenerational digital difference" point of view.

In addition, Zhao Lianfei's series of studies on intergenerational differences in Internet use published between 2018 and 2019 investigated and summarized the current status of Internet use and behavior among different generations of people. Among them, his article "Intergenerational Differences in the Formation Mechanism of the Internet Divide – An Empirical Study of Internet Participation in the Post-70s", "Post-80s" and "Post-90s" published in 2018 focused on the formation of the "digital divide" mechanism between different generations. The reason for this research is to explore the variables that affect the formation of the three digital divides through data analysis, and it is concluded that the intergenerational differences formed by the digital divide are actually the projection of social inequality on the Internet.

In 2019, he published the article "Intergenerational Differences in Internet Public Participation in the Post-70s, Post-80s, and Post-90s Generations – An Exploration of Public Participation in WeChat and Weibo", focusing on the media usage of different generations, using WeChat and Weibo as research cases, providing the different types of issues that the three generations of the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s are concerned about in the use of the same Internet product, and Exploring the political efficacy and intergenerational cultural differences reflected behind the phenomenon that intergenerational communication has different concerns on the "public domain" and "private domain" issues.

His 2019 article "Analysis of Generational Differences in Online Communication" investigated the behavioral differences among the 70s, 80s, and 90s on different social platforms. By comparing the three dimensions of "anonymization strategy", "strong ties and weak ties", and "social network landscape", Analyzing the formation mechanism behind intergenerational differences in online communication behavior, providing an argument for follow-up research to more accurately grasp intergenerational cultural differences.

In addition, many studies have also provided new ideas for intergenerational communication, broadening the research perspectives in the field of intergenerational relations and intergenerational communication. For example, Zhao Chengchen's 2018 article "Cultural Negotiation: Research on Internet Language Communication from the Perspective of Intergenerational Communication" focuses on the phenomenon of increased intergenerational conflict caused by poor intergenerational communication, Taking this as an example, it explores the different usage conditions, language characteristics, and language cognition and discourse patterns of Internet language between different generations. Through a large number of real and vivid case demonstrations, the article believes that the development process of intergenerational communication is actually a process from "conflict" to "negotiation" to "articulation". From the perspective of cultural exchange, it takes us to re-examine the essence and evolution of intergenerational communication, and providing that new ideas for the study of intergenerational communication.

Ye Wenzhen and Ye Feng published an article "Network Communication and Communication Network" in 2008, which focused on the impact of the Internet age on intergenerational relations. The article takes the different views of parents and children on the use of the Internet as the starting point, showing the intergenerational differences in cultural identity and information reception in the Internet era, and providing a thinking direction for the reshaping of the intergenerational communication mode under the Internet background.

Xiong Weina and Shao Erhui published an article in 2014, "Analysis of the Obstacles of Intergenerational Communication among Rural College Students", which focused on the problems of intergenerational communication in rural areas of China, exploring the five main factors that affect the formation of intergenerational communication difficulties in rural areas under the background of the high development of the Internet, It provides theoretical guidance for the practice of improving intergenerational communication in rural areas.

Li Qingzhen's 2016 article "A Comparative Study of Youth Values between Generations in the Context of Networking" focuses on the influence of the growth environment of different generations on their communication behaviors in the context of networking. The article deeply analyzes the differences in the growth environment,

educational background, and economic status of the four generations of the 60s, 70s, 80s, and 90s, and how to gradually eliminate these differences in the field formed by the media under the network background and complete the reconstruction of inter-group values is of great significance for better understanding of intergenerational communication.

Zhao Lianfei, Xu Xiaojuan, Zhao Yuxiang and others jointly published the article "Research Progress and Frontier Exhibition of Intergenerational Learning Abroad" in 2017, which mainly explored the relationship between intergenerational relationship and lifelong learning. By summarizing and the main modes of intergenerational learning, the paper puts forward an outlook on the future development mode of intergenerational learning. The research of Xu Xiaojuan and Zhao Yuxiang has widened the research perspective in the field of intergenerational communication and has positive significance for promoting the progress and development of intergenerational education.

Ren Zhiying's 2019 article "Bringing in and Integrating: Oral History Education and Intergenerational Transmission of Family Culture" focuses on the channel research of intergenerational transmission. By studying the status and role of "oral history" in the dissemination of family history, and exploring the impact of different dissemination methods on the continuation of human history, this opens up new ideas for the study of intergenerational dissemination.

Peng Lan's 2020 article "The Hierarchy of the Internet Society: The Interweaving of the Real and Virtual Hierarchies" discusses the causes, status quo and problems of the phenomenon of Internet hierarchies, including the intergenerational hierarchy of the Internet. This article analyzes and summarizes the definition of the intergenerational hierarchy of the Internet, the degree of cultural understanding, the cognition of cultural symbols, and the hierarchical status, and generally grasps the changes in the intergenerational relationship in the context of the Internet. The above studies all start from different disciplines and fields to explore the possibility of intergenerational communication in social practice, which has a good reference for the study of intergenerational communication.

By sorting out and summarizing the existing literature, we can make the following definition of Internet intergenerational communication here: Internet intergenerational communication refers to a kind of communication behavior that takes place among family members with the technology and tools of the information age as the carrier, and the participants include parents and children, grandparents and grandchildren. The carrier covers both hardware and software, including the Internet, personal computers, personal mobile terminal equipment, application software, etc. It can be concluded that the current research on intergenerational communication is in the stage of "a hundred flowers bloom and a hundred schools of thought contend".

The Chinese and English studies cover sociology, anthropology, psychology, communication and other disciplines, and the research directions include Media research, effect research and phenomenon interpretation of intergenerational communication, and research on the mechanism and principle of problem formation. Zhou Yuqiong's series of studies deeply analyzed the important function of "cultural feedback", which is an important function of intergenerational communication, and clarified the principle of the effect of cultural inheritance in intergenerational communication, as well as the impact of "cultural feedback" on the reconstruction of social and family relationships. The research of Zhu Xiuling, Liang Xiaolin, Zheng Suxia explained the causes, motivation and development of the phenomenon of "digital divide" in intergenerational communication. The research of Li Qiong, Hu Miaomiao, Guo Mengmeng and others explained the related derivative subcultures and cultural symbols in the Internet. The manifestations and causes of intergenerational differences in use.

On the whole, there is a lot of related research on intergenerational communication today. The research methods range from empirical methods to qualitative methods, and they have achieved certain theoretical results and novel viewpoints. However, the existing research still has some shortcomings, such as the number of studies is still insufficient compared with other disciplines, the research on the problems of intergenerational transmission is obviously insufficient, the description, interpretation and prediction of the process of intergenerational transmission are too fragmented, Research phenomena are often described and explained from the perspective of a single discipline, lacking the connection between multiple disciplines. In addition, the existing research on intergenerational communication mostly cuts in from the macro and micro perspectives, and lacks research on the medium level such as social platforms and social media. It is difficult for readers to grasp the specific role played by the media as a communication tool and channel in the process of intergenerational communication as a whole. In addition, the existing research still lacks a systematic analysis of existing social software, which is currently the "main battlefield" for intergenerational communication in the networked era. The mechanism principle and successful experience behind it have important guiding significance for guiding social practice and the future direction of media development.

Therefore, this thesis will systematically analyze the functions of WeChat, a Chinese phenomenon-level chat software, in the next chapter, explaining the tool role of WeChat in the process of intergenerational communication. Ultimately, it will shed light on how WeChat is addressing the barriers to intergenerational communication on the Internet in China, and offer some perspectives for future social media improvements.

1.2 A review of media evolution in intergenerational communication

According to McLuhan's book "Understanding the Media", he believes that the media has a strong reaction to information, knowledge, and content. It is active and dynamic and has a significant impact on the message, determining the clarity and structure of the message. , this is "the medium is the message"; at the same time, "the medium is also an extension of the human body", and different media have effects on different senses. According to people's participation in the media, he also divided the media into "cold media" and "hot media". This point of view opened up a new perspective for later communication studies, that is, the study of communication channels. It is true that as an indispensable link in the communication process, a channel is a means of carrying and transmitting information, and a bridge between senders and receivers. The correct understanding and use of media is of great significance for promoting the results and influence of interpersonal communication, organizational communication, and mass communication. As an important part of social communication, intergenerational communication is the main way of family communication. The good operation of intergenerational communication is conducive to the stability of family structure and emotional exchange, and is an important means to promote social harmony and stability. In order to better understand the process of intergenerational communication and how it occurs, it is necessary to review the evolutionary history of media in the process of intergenerational communication. Clarifying the characteristics of media in different eras and grasping the influence of different media on intergenerational communication is conducive to better use of media to serve intergenerational communication.

1.2.1 Oral medium

Oral medium is the earliest and most basic medium for human beings, and it was born at the same time as human communication behavior. Oral medium is the use of human's original organs to complete communication through language, pronunciation and other forms. Oral medium is the earliest medium for human beings to use words to transmit information, and it played an important role in the early stage of human society. Humans complete information exchange through oral communication, thus completing social cooperation and greatly promoting the progress of human society. The advantage of this medium is that it has less restrictions on its use, but its disadvantages are also obvious. Its use requires face-to-face communication, and the fidelity and dissemination distance of information are relatively low, so it is more used in daily communication scenarios. During this period, there was no separation between the media and the receivers. The

receivers were both ends of the information and also the channels of information dissemination.

1.2.2 Paper media

The emergence of paper media is an important milestone in the history of human civilization and communication. It makes up for the insufficiency of the oral medium in the spatial dimension, and at the same time makes use of writing, a great invention of mankind, to greatly increase the fidelity and accuracy of information. The dissemination of this stage is no longer limited to the same time and space, and human communication has entered a new era. Intergenerational communication has also made a new leap at this stage. Intergenerational communication can be carried out remotely through letters and other means. The stability of the family structure and the emotional maintenance between members are guaranteed to a certain extent. However, paper media still has its limitations. For example, the cost of obtaining paper media in the early stage is expensive, but it appears later: the preservation time of paper media is affected by changes in the physical environment, the use of paper media requires a certain level of education, and the transmission of paper media The slow speed and other issues have restricted the further development of human transmission. However, starting with the paper medium, there is a separation between the communication channel and the recipient, and the communication medium is established and given attention as a separate section in the communication process.

1.2.3 Electronic media

Electronic media is the third important stage in the evolution of human communication media. The earliest radio medium was the telephone invented by American Bell in 1876. The emergence of the telephone once again broke the limitation of time and space in the process of human communication. Human communication no longer needs to consider the difference between time and region, and people anywhere can complete high-quality and effective communication in a short period of time. Intergenerational communication also has a new development at this stage, that is, the focus of communication is slowly shifting from information exchange to emotional communication. Intergenerational communication is no longer through cold words, but replaced by warm and vivid voices. Compared with the exchange of information between the two parties, emotional satisfaction and sustenance are the reasons why intergenerational people want to communicate over the phone. Intergenerational communication has shifted from focusing more on practical effects in the past to focusing on spiritual and experiential effects, which is an important symbol of the development of intergenerational communication in the age of electronic media. The frequency and effectiveness of intergenerational

communication also increased during this time period, especially after the advent of personal phone. Today, electronic media is still one of the main channels of intergenerational communication.

1.2.4 Network media

Network media is another milestone transition in the history of human media development. With the birth of network media, human beings have entered the network age. In this era, the speed of information exchange and generation has exploded compared with the past, and the dissemination process has entered the era of "minutes and seconds". Communication in this era relies on a range of new media technologies, including mobile smartphones and instant messaging software, which are the focus of this paper. At this stage, the communication methods are diversified again. The communication time of human beings is no longer limited to instant interaction, but delayed communication; the content of communication is no longer limited to text, sound, and pictures and images have also become the means of carrying information. The information exchange and emotional interaction in the process of intergenerational communication are more frequent and intensive, and the emotional satisfaction of intergenerational communication is further improved. Since then, intergenerational communication has entered the era of what McLuhan calls "hot media." In addition, there is a new feature of intergenerational transmission—fragmentation. That is, the time and place of intergenerational communication are becoming more and more random and scattered, and it is no longer similar to the era of letters and electronic media with certain regularity; Compared with the relative concentration of information content and themes in the era of paper media and electronic media, the communication content of intergenerational communication also presents the characteristics of decentralization.

Reviewing the evolution history of the entire media, it is found that every progress of the media has had a profound impact on intergenerational communication. Early media did not function as an extension of man, it was one with sender and receiver. However, after the paper medium, human communication began to break away from the shackles of ontology, and the transmission of information had a new bearing method, and the content and genre of the bearing became more and more rich. Throughout the entire history of media evolution, two characteristics can be summed up: first, with the continuous progress of the media, human beings are increasingly dependent on the media; second, as the media carry more and more diverse information content, the focus of intergenerational communication has also shifted from practical information exchange to focusing on emotional interaction, and finally achieve a balance between the two. At present, the medium of intergenerational communication is mainly the network medium, supplemented by the electronic

medium. Network media makes intergenerational communication show new characteristics in the new era. In the next chapter, the research will focus on the development status of network media in China, as well as the main difficulties encountered by intergenerational communication in the Internet era. The research strives to better guide the network to play its due role as a communication channel.

Conclusions

The first chapter mainly reviews the existing literature. First, the chapter recalls the concepts of "generation gap" and "three metaphors culture" proposed by Mead, which are also the theoretical origins of today's intergenerational communication research;

Second, this chapter also organizes the works of scholars such as M.L.Hummert, T.D.Nelson, J.F.Nussbaum, etc., in order to understand the current state-of-the-art research results in the field of intergenerational communication. In addition, the chapter also makes a lot of reference to the theoretical achievements of Chinese scholars represented by Zhou Xiaohong and Zhou Yuqiong; The former first proposed the concept of "cultural feedback" in 1988, which provided new ideas for subsequent research on intergenerational communication; The latter conducted a series of empirical investigations into the phenomenon of "digital divide" in Chinese households. Their research has a positive effect on the social context in which this master's thesis explores the WeChat platform as a way to facilitate overcoming barriers to intergenerational Internet communication.

Finally, in order to better understand the role of media as a communication tool and communication channel in promoting intergenerational communication, the chapter also summarizes the development history of media.

The chapter summarizes the characteristics of media and the form of intergenerational communication in four different eras, from oral media to paper media, electronic media and network media, and finally draws two points of view: First, the communication between human beings is increasingly dependent on media; second, the purpose of intergenerational communication has shifted from information exchange to emotional exchange.

CHAPTER 2 PROBLEMS OF INTERGENERATIONAL COMMUNICATION ON THE INTERNET

2.1 General Situation of Chinese Internet Users and Social Media Usage.

On February 25, 2022, as the most authoritative department to study China's Internet ecology, the China Internet Network Information Center (CNNIC) released the "49th Statistical Report on China's Internet Development" on its official website (hereinafter referred to as the "Report").), the 2022 edition of China's Internet Ecosystem Overview. The report pointed out that as of December 2021, the total number of Internet users in China had reached 1.032 billion, an increase of 42.96 million compared with the same period in 2020. (Figure 2.1) This means that China's Internet penetration rate has reached 73%, and the Internet has become one of the most essential tools in Chinese life.[40. 1]



The blue part represents the number of netizens, and the red line represents the Internet penetration rate.

Figure 2.1 – Scale of Internet users in China and Internet penetration rate

In addition, the usage behavior of Chinese Internet users also presents new characteristics, which are mainly reflected in the steady increase in the per capita time, while the types of access devices show a trend of more diversification. According to the report, as of December 2021, the average time spent online by Chinese netizens reached 28.5 hours, an increase of 2.3 hours compared with the

same period last year. In terms of access device types, as of December 2021, the proportion of Chinese Internet users using mobile phones to access the Internet reached 99.7%, and mobile phones are undoubtedly the main device for Internet access. This compares to 35%, 33%, 28.1% and 27.4% of desktop computers, laptops, TVs and tablets, respectively. (Refer to Figure 2.2)



Figure 2.2 Internet access device usage in China

On the basis of such a high penetration rate, instant messaging, the most important and important function of a mobile phone, has basically achieved universal popularization, including the popularization of instant messaging applications and methods of using instant messaging. The report shows that as of December 2021, the utilization rates of instant messaging, online video and short video users were 97.5%, 94.5% and 90.5% respectively, and the number of users was 1.007 billion, 975 million and 934 million respectively. Instant messaging is still one of the main purposes for Chinese people to use the Internet and mobile terminals.

In fact, the reasons behind such a dramatic shift are not inconceivable. In 1978, China began a vigorous modernization reform, and a large number of laborers migrated from rural areas, remote areas, and inland areas to urban areas, central areas, and coastal areas. The main communication problem caused by this large-scale population migration is that the distance between family members and relatives continues to widen, resulting in a series of social problems such as "left-behind children" and "empty-nest elderly". Inter-generational communication is often difficult and infrequent, which severely reduces the emotional connection between generations.

China's urbanization process has also led to the concentration of employment and educational resources in a few cities, and a large number of young and middle-aged people of school age have left their hometowns in search of better development opportunities. For families with children who go out to study, the reunion time of parents and children can only be hoped for during the winter and summer vacations each year. For families with migrant workers, the dream of reunion between parents and children is often only every year in China. The traditional festival "Spring Festival" can be realized during the period. The duration of this reunion generally ranges from 7–28 days, accounting for less than one-tenth of the number of days in the year. This situation of "gathering less and leaving more" has seriously affected intergenerational communication and the communication of family interpersonal relationships. Therefore, the rising proportion of juvenile delinquency caused by the lack of parental education has become one of the most concerning social problems in China in the past three decades.

Over the years, in order to solve this social problem and at the same time to promote the implementation of the national "Internet +" strategy, the Chinese government has formulated a series of policies to adjust the cost of Internet use. In 2015, under the leadership of the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology of China, the three major Internet operators in mainland China (China Telecom, China Mobile, and China Unicom) announced specific plans to increase network speed and reduce tariffs. Among them, broadband costs decreased between 30% and 40%, the cost of the mobile network drops between 20% and 35%. This move has greatly reduced the cost of using the Internet for Chinese people, and has accelerated the Internet's entry into the lives of ordinary people, especially in rural areas and low-income groups.

On the other hand, the rapid upgrading has also promoted the civilianization of mobile terminal equipment, especially the price of smart phones, so that "one mobile phone for everyone" is no longer an unattainable dream. In China, although foreign high-end brands such as Apple and Samsung are still the most popular mobile phone brands for young people. However, local Chinese brands such as Huawei and Xiaomi have all taken a different approach since 2010, and launched models with low prices, various functions and rich appearance. This move was aimed at competing for domestic cell phone market share.

In Guan Zeng'an's 2018 article "Analysis on the Development of Smartphones under the Mobile Internet Wave", it is mentioned that "popular smartphones usually use a smooth operating system and have a strong application download function, and their hardware configuration can ensure the smooth use of users and has a good price/performance ratio. In the context of the popularization of 4G mobile networks, popular smartphones will provide users with a better user experience and become a

hot-selling product in the mobile phone market.” “Xiaomi, Huawei Honor and other mainstream brands, their main strategy is cost-effective, mobile phones can not only meet the normal needs of users, but also the price is very close to the people, which is widely praised by users." With the efforts of local mobile phone brands, whether it is for young people who are pursuing fashion or Middle-aged and elderly groups who pay attention to functions and cost-effectiveness have more choices, which provide a realistic material basis for intergenerational communication on the Internet.

In 2020, the sudden outbreak of Covid-19 has also deepened people's reliance on Internet communication to a certain extent. A series of travel and travel restrictions introduced by the prevention and control of the epidemic have, to a certain extent, limited the opportunities, methods and willingness of residents to communicate and entertain offline, making the way Chinese people live, communicate, and entertain more online. Under the government's initiative, offline gatherings have become increasingly inappropriate, while online greetings have become more considerate, whether for their own safety or the safety of others.

To sum up, based on the Internet, using mobile terminal equipment to communicate through instant messaging software has become the most important way of communication between generations in today's Chinese society. This topic has great practical significance and research value. But in practice, although the popularity of the Internet, mobile terminal devices and instant messaging software has promoted intergenerational communication to a certain extent, it has also led to a series of problems. Problems such as "information gap", "cultural differences", and "communication barriers" inevitably caused by the rapid development of the Internet are constantly affecting the smooth communication between prices in the Internet, thus hindering the further development of intergenerational communication. This phenomenon deserves the attention of scholars and will be discussed in the following sections.

2.2 Main Barriers to Intergenerational Communication on the Internet.

The main barrier to intergenerational communication on the Internet is the result of information poverty. In 1999, the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) first defined the concept of "digital divide" in the book "Lost in the Network: Defining the Digital Divide". The digital divide refers to a divide that exists between those who have the tools of the information age and those who do not. The digital divide is considered to be the divide between the information-rich and the information-poor, including different country and population level. The digital divide embodies the disparity that exists in the contemporary information technology field. "This kind of gap exists not only in the

development field of information technology, but also in the application field of information technology, especially the gap caused by network technology. It has penetrated into people's economic, political and social life, and has become a social problem that emerges in the information age. "[36, 140]

The digital divide is reflected in the structure of intergenerational communication. The parent is undoubtedly the information-poor party in the digital divide of intergenerational communication, while the offspring often become rich in information because they grew up in the information age. In the classification of the information gap, there is a distinction between "access gap" and "use gap". The access gap refers to the gap between those who have the tools of the information age and those who don't, but after years of technological progress, including the reduction in network costs and the proliferation of smart devices we mentioned above, the digital divide at the hardware level of the access gap has basically been eliminated, but there is still a gap in the software difference of the access gap; the use gap refers to the differences in people's performance when using these information tools, mainly reflected in the time spent on the Internet and the purpose of Internet access and online status. In the use of the gap, there will be differences between the parent and the offspring due to the combined action of various subjective and objective factors, and this difference will cause a gap in knowledge and culture between generations under the accumulation of a long time.

On the basis of the digital divide, the disparity in the density of information reception between generations due to the gap between the access gap and the use gap, cultural differences between parents and offspring in the Internet context, and new values of offspring The differences and conflicts with the traditional values of the parents, as well as the lack of common topics in the communication between the offspring and the parents, having become factors that hinder the deep and smooth communication of intergenerational communication on the Internet.

2.2.1 The Unequal Information Reception Density between Generations Caused by the Digital Divide.

In the information age, the Internet-based information circulation mode determines that the volume and speed of information circulation have undergone earth-shaking changes compared with the past. If the information circulation speed in the paper media era is based on days and months, and the information circulation speed in the broadcasting age is in hours, then the information circulation speed in the information age is calculated in minutes and seconds, and every second people are accepting Bombardment of Internet information. Under the premise of high-speed information flow, the volume of information is also much larger than in the past. A

mobile phone user can receive messages from all over the world that have happened or are happening in one day. Under such a massive and high-speed information dissemination speed, the parents often receive information far less quickly than their offspring due to various factors. Over time, the information gap will gradually widen, eventually resulting in an irreversible gap in cognition, knowledge and technology. .

First, there are innate and acquired differences in the receptivity of new technologies between parents and offspring. As an older parent, the ability to receive and digest fresh information, knowledge, and technology is naturally weaker than younger offspring. No matter how a person maintains his mental and physical strength, middle-aged and elderly people are less sensitive to new knowledge and new technologies than the younger generation. Parents need to spend more time and energy to acquire and master new technologies and knowledge, which will consume their enthusiasm and interest in Internet technology in the process. Due to their age advantage, the offspring are in the period of active brain, and they receive new things quickly, and they are often the popularizers and leaders of the waves brought by new technologies.

On the other hand, the different conditions of social and economic development also lead to differences in the information quality of parents and offspring. According to C.R. McClure's theory, information literacy is the integration of four aspects: traditional literacy, which refers to basic cultural literacy such as reading, writing, and computing; computer literacy, that is, to understand the basic computer culture and master its basic application; network literacy, that is, to understand and master the core of the contemporary information environment – the Internet. Due to the different social and economic development conditions and times, the information quality of parents and offspring also presents different characteristics. Take the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s as an example. Chinese people born in the 1970s are in the transitional stage from a planned economy to a market economy. At this stage, the social and economic elements are not active, the flow of social population and resources is slow, and the speed of cultural change is slow. Although new ideas are introduced, the mainstream social thinking is still conservative. Most of the middle-aged and elderly parents who grew up in this social background did not receive a good and systematic education, which led to the lack of the ability of the parents to use the tools of the information age in the later wave of new media. Even in modernized Chinese society, education coverage, especially literacy, in rural areas remained low for a long time.

In contrast, the offspring of intergenerational communication are generally born in the 1980s and 1990s. The period of their growth coincides with the golden stage of China's social and economic development. Driven by the restoration of the college entrance examination system in China in 1977 and the subsequent

implementation of the "nine-year compulsory education" system, both the penetration rate of higher education and the quality of the people have increased significantly. In addition, due to the "Southern Tour Speech" (an important event on the direction of economic development in Chinese history) and the basic establishment of the market economy, the social and economic elements were unprecedentedly active, the commodity economy developed rapidly, and social and cultural trends of thought changed rapidly. The offspring who grew up under such social conditions are obviously more adaptable than their parents in the ability to use new technologies.

Before the Internet age, although the communication method of telephone and text message was widely accepted by parents and has been the main method of intergenerational communication for many years, the disadvantages of this communication method are obvious. Mere verbal and written communication cannot fully meet the communication demands and emotional needs between parents and offspring, especially for parents who are thousands of miles away and cannot meet their offspring for a long time. The parents yearn to be able to relieve their thoughts of the offspring through visual visibility. The voice and smile of the offspring can bring great spiritual comfort to the parents, and this is the advantage of multimedia communication in the Internet age, and it is also one of the reasons why we strive to promote and promote Internet intergenerational communication.

But in reality, although the popularity of smartphones has eliminated the hardware gap between parents and children, due to the difference in the quality of information use, parents cannot fully develop the functions of smartphones compared to children. Smartphone use by many parents tends to follow the way it was used in the non-smartphone era, using the smartphone only as a tool for "calling" and "sending texts." That is, the communication mode of many parents on the Internet is still dominated by the traditional telephone era communication mode. In this cognitive situation, the communication between parents and children is often based on traditional phone calls and text messages, and the way of intergenerational communication presents a single and shallow feature. The communication between the parent and the offspring can only be accomplished through the exchange of words. The changes of one's emotions and images cannot be captured by the other, and the environment and happy scenes of one person cannot be instantly transmitted to the other. In this case, it is easy to cause intergenerational communication to fall into the predicament of having nothing to say.

Second, differences in media usage habits also lead to differences in the density of knowledge reception between generations. The younger generation who grew up in the era of rapid development of the Internet is more accustomed to the role played by the Internet and mobile terminal equipment in their lives, and regards

the Internet as the most important channel for receiving information. But parents who grew up before China's "reform and opening up" were more accustomed to print media, radio and television as their main channels for receiving information. In their view, as the authoritative and relatively centralized paper media, the radio media is the information sender they are familiar with. In the Internet age, everyone is a communicator, and the communication structure is more diversified. The parents have not completely changed their media usage habits, so distrust and resistance will naturally arise.

In addition, the advancement and popularity of smartphones has also contributed to the birth of a large number of applications, and thriving technology companies can almost release a new software every so often. Whenever a new software is recognized by the market, it will be accompanied by a large number of homogeneous products, which results in a variety of choices on the market, and each product has more or less its own characteristics and goals. The audience is the inevitable law of the market economy and the inevitable result of free competition. On the one hand, the prosperity of the application software market has enriched the choices of users, but on the other hand, the market atmosphere of free competition has also spawned a series of "cottage" products. In order to quickly compete for market share, application software companies have continuously launched shoddy products, and even directly Copy the content of some popular products, and then repackage them directly into the market. This behavior will undoubtedly make the products in the application market mixed. Under such circumstances, the offspring of young people still need to have certain network quality and scientific knowledge to screen and select products, not to mention the parents who are unable to handle Internet products.

In fact, in order to further occupy the market, many application companies will continue to increase the functions of their products, trying to be significantly different from the existing similar products in the market, so as to attract users as a selling point. This approach meets the needs of some young users, especially those of the younger generation in big cities.

Today, the fast-paced life in big cities makes it almost difficult for the younger generation living in big cities to find separate free time for entertainment and leisure. Mobile software is almost the only way of entertainment and recreation for young people in the city. As a result, the cycle from addiction to boredom for the younger generation for an application is much shorter than before. The younger generation of users urgently needs the market to continuously introduce application software with new services to meet their huge entertainment needs. This leads to the need for software companies to constantly update and upgrade their applications, and constantly introduce new services and new stimulation points to maintain user

stickiness. But this move invisibly deepens the parents' difficulty in learning and using Internet software. Leaving aside the constant introduction of new features and services, the ever-changing software interface alone can overwhelm the middle-aged and older generations. Frequent updates cause users to be re-disturbed when they just adapt to the previous version, and can only continue to adapt and learn again. Such a continuous cycle will eventually lead to the fading of enthusiasm for learning and using the application.

For example, in the field of instant messaging software related to this article, in addition to WeChat, similar products in China include QQ (an instant messaging software launched by Tencent in 2003, which can be regarded as the predecessor of WeChat), BigAnt , Ruliu, DingTalk, and foreign software such as MSN, Whatup, Skype also have a place in the Chinese market. Numerous software makes it difficult for parents to choose, and at the same time, the continuous updating of software also increases their learning cost, which eventually leads to abandoning the use of these software and it is difficult to form a habit of use. The "use gap" has been continuously expanded, and intergenerational communication has also fallen into the embarrassing dilemma of lack of communication channels.

Under this circumstance, the ability and speed of the parent generation to obtain the latest information by using the mobile phone will inevitably widen the gap with the children who have mastered various new technologies of the Internet. And this lagging information reception speed will in turn affect the parents' integration and adaptation to the Internet age, resulting in the disconnection between the parents and the information age, and eventually becoming "the weaker party in the digital age", which is very important for the parents in rural China. As the gap between the speed of information reception widens, the gap between the parental knowledge reserve and personal cultural quality level and the offspring will also increase. Under such a huge gap in cognition and quality, the Internet intergenerational communication between parents and children is often deadlocked from the beginning.

2.2.2 Cultural Differences between Generations Caused by the Digital Divide

As the digital divide continues to widen, the most notable impact is the growing cognitive and cultural differences between parents and offspring. In the Internet era, the continuous progress of application software has produced a series of unique cultural phenomena, which have been deeply embedded in the cultural concepts of contemporary young people. Eventually young people internalize these cultures as a way of communicating in everyday life.

Internet language refers to a language produced in the Internet or applied in the context of Internet communication, including the combination of letters, punctuation, symbols, icons and words, which often express specific meanings in specific situations. It was born in the Internet age. At first, the purpose of netizens using Internet languages was to make Internet communication more efficient and humorous. However, with the increasing popularity of Internet terms, Internet languages have quickly become an indispensable part of online communication life. In this fragmented era in which everything pursues efficiency, the producers of social software are undoubtedly doing their best to give full play to the functional advantages of their products, trying to maintain the original high context, but also actively adopt a short, simple and straightforward network language, forming a cultural context that is compatible with high and low levels. This not only greatly enhances the affinity of human social interaction, but also enriches the cultural context of network social media. The emoticon package that came into being, because of its more efficient, straightforward, joking and other characteristics, has improved the efficiency of users' communication and interaction to a certain extent, and also enriched the user's communication form, thus becoming a popular network landscape on social platforms. .

For young people who are accustomed to online communication, the emergence of the latest online terms can be captured in time and used in daily online communication, eventually forming a culture and habit of online communication. But for the parents, the provenance is unknown, and most Internet terms mixed with foreign scripts are a completely new language. Due to the gap between the access gap and the use gap, it is difficult for the parents to capture the update of Internet terms in time, and they do not understand the meaning of the new Internet terms. In addition, there are some foreign letters such as English commonly found in Internet language, which has basic requirements for the education level of users, and the parents who grew up in the 1960s and 1970s are generally not as educated as those born in the 1980s and 1990s. To a certain extent, this also makes the parents have certain difficulties and obstacles in understanding Internet terms. In Li Qiong's investigation and research on the intergenerational differences in Internet terms, "Generally speaking, children's Internet use is higher than that of parents, and the use of Internet words is also higher than that of parents. In addition, different social factors will affect the use of Internet words and the degree of Internet use between the two generations has an impact. The analysis results show that there are certain differences in the high-frequency Internet words used by the two generations, and the Internet words used by parents are mostly widely spread and have a high degree of acceptance; At the same level of education, the higher the degree of children's Internet utilization, the higher the use of Internet words, and the two are positively

correlated." [28, 40] Different abilities and habits in the use of Internet terminology make Internet terminology, a secondary Internet culture, have different degrees of influence between parents and offspring. Under the influence over time, the gap between the two generations' cognition of Internet-related culture has gradually formed, and ultimately further widen the cultural differences between generations. This difference differentiates the cultural fusion point between parents and offspring, and it is easy to cause differences and conflicts in the process of intergenerational communication. On the one hand, Internet languages are an indispensable and important part of Internet communication, and their existence cannot be avoided in Internet communication. On the other hand, the parents' learning of Internet languages is relatively slow, which ultimately affects the experience of intergenerational communication.

Among the many internet languages, an important part is the emoticon. Emoticons refer to pictures that express emotions or a specific meaning in online communication. It was born in instant chat software. The earliest emoticon package was just the "emoji" expression that came with the instant chat software. Later, with the continuous enrichment and popularization of emoticons, most of the instant software began to allow functions imported from the outside and created by users, the types of emojis also appear picture emoticons with screenshots of movies, animations, and quotations, which greatly enriches the types and expressive meanings of emojis. Nowadays, emoticons have become an important part of online communication. Basically, in online communication, emoticons are mixed with normal words to replace the function of expressing emotions that words cannot perform. In daily online communication, using text or voice for greetings is too serious and weakens the enthusiasm and intimacy of the sender. However, if you send an emoji that expresses greetings, such as a greeting emoticon with the text "How are you", etc., it is easy to shorten the distance between the two parties and start a conversation naturally. This function of rapidly shortening social distance and breaking social embarrassment is one of the most significant positive effects of emoji on interpersonal communication.

In actual use, emoticons are often still on the basis of expressing their superficial meanings, and other meanings are extended through the use of users in different environments. For the younger generation, using emoticons has become a part of their communication life, and they are already familiar with the meaning and application scenarios of various expressions. The emergence of emoticons is a unique way for the younger generation to express themselves in the Internet age, and even "emotional socialization" has emerged. Guo Mengmeng, a scholar at Peking University, once described this kind of social interaction: "This kind of social interaction is more common among young people. They use emoticons to interact,

self-deprecating, and enrich themselves in the process of others communicating in this way. There are even new online vocabulary such as "doutu" and "receiving" in the expression pack library.[14, 37] Through emoticons, young people not only express their literal emotions and meanings, but also contain a spiritual core to express themselves and their individuality. Young people born in the 1980s and 1990s grew up with the Internet. Internet life and Internet culture are the main battlefields for them to express their spiritual aspirations and shape their own cultural imprint of this era. But for parents born in the 1960s and 1970s, online communication, or communication on instant messaging software is only a channel for them to communicate, and its main function is to convey their own messages. At the same time, due to growing up in the era of letters and telephones, the main way for parents to express their feelings is to stay in traditional emotional expressions such as real pictures and tone of voice, and it is impossible to understand the role of emoticons in online communication. In addition, also due to the continuous expansion of the knowledge gap, it is often difficult for parents to understand the emotional content contained in the emoji, let alone some emojis that may cause misunderstandings. This is the cultural difference between generations caused by the Internet-derived culture, and this cultural difference will become an obstacle in intergenerational communication.

In Ge Ying's research on the family generation gap and feedback phenomenon, there is such an example: the interviewee (children) sent a "sigh" expression in the family group chat, which is equivalent to an interjection to the children. The reason for sending is simply because the offspring hadn't figured out how to respond at the time. But then the interviewee's mother called to ask. The mother believed that the "sigh" emoji sent by the interviewee expressed her mood at the time. This is a misinterpretation of emojis. "Actually, it may not represent your entire mood to you at the moment, but that's what they think." [12, 28] This is an example of a misunderstanding of the intergenerational communication process due to cultural differences. In the use of emoticons, parents tend to express straightforward and simple expressions, and tend to express the literal meaning of emoticons. However, the use of emoticons by the offspring has the characteristics of Internet socialization, and will contain more jokes and elements of subculture.

In addition to Internet language and emoticons, subcultures born on the Internet are also barriers to intergenerational communication. The concept of subculture was first proposed by the American Chicago School in the 1920s and 1930s, and was later inherited and developed by the Birmingham School. The concept of subculture is mainly "pointing to those group deviant cultures that deviate from the existing mainstream social norms, especially closely related to youth culture".[25, 90.] In the information age, the Internet has become a gathering place for subcultures and

carnivals, and young people express their views and spirits based on the open environment of the Internet. After the dissemination and fermentation of certain views and values on the Internet, they were gradually accepted by the youth group, and eventually formed a subculture. In the contemporary Chinese Internet environment, there are subcultures showing diversified characteristics, such as the second dimension, Lolita, etc. Among them, the most representative emerging subcultures in recent years are the emergence of "anti-involution" and "mourning" cultures. (Figure 2.3) "The mourning culture largely reflects the self-mockery of the youth group, that is, the youth group advertises itself as mourning. This reflects the youth's strong rejection of the fixed labels imposed on them by society, which is essentially a kind of rejection of the mainstream Consciousness of rebellion and resistance." [45, 104]

What's more worrying is that when offspring want to bridge this cultural difference caused by the Internet through communication, they often encounter resistance from their parents. This resistance is not only due to the parents' lack of understanding of Internet culture, but also contains the "face problem" in Chinese traditional culture. The traditional Chinese culture of face is deeply ingrained in the ideology of the parents. The older generation always maintains a mature and stable image outside, and believes that emojis are "children's things", so they are not used frequently when communicating with outsiders. First of all, they think that using weird and childish emojis will damage their dignity, and secondly, they can hide their embarrassment that they are outdated in the Internet age. This kind of escapism damages the enthusiasm of the parents to actively adapt to the Internet age, which in turn further affects the parents' understanding of the meaning of expressions, and ultimately leads to obstacles in intergenerational Internet communication.



Mourning Tea is an "Internet celebrity" tea drink shop. It was originally a joke for the sake of hi tea. It was open from April 28 to May 1, 2017. It was jointly organized by Ele.me and Netease News. A planned event.

Figure 2.3 China's first "mourning"-themed milk tea shop was opened in Shanghai.

Moreover, due to growing up in the Internet age, the offspring of the 1980s and 1990s have a unique advantage over their parents in the 1960s and 1970s in the ability to use the Internet to obtain information and knowledge, and their knowledge update speed has undergone significant changes compared to their parents. With the continuous expansion of the "knowledge gap" brought about by the digital divide, the offspring of the information-rich are more and more capable of back-propagating knowledge to their parents. This is the "post-figurative culture" proposed by Mead. Chinese scholars It is called "cultural feedback". Under this circumstance, the acceptance of new technology and new knowledge is not only a simple act, but also a change in ideology and family structure. In the past, the parental generation, who played the role of "knowledge disseminator" in the family, had a slow status. Slowly being challenged, the family authority structure began to be impacted, and it became more and more difficult for parents to gain the respect and admiration of their offspring through the advantages of experience and knowledge. This situation is more evident in the parents in rural areas of China with strong traditional concepts and traditional thinking. Under the psychological effect of safeguarding their own parental authority, the parents will adopt a "hostile" attitude towards the Internet and its new technologies, and face the Internet and its related applications with a complacent attitude. And behavior will undoubtedly further delay the parents'

acceptance of new Internet knowledge and new technologies, which will eventually lead to a vicious circle of further widening of the digital divide.

Taking the "mourning culture" mentioned above as an example, the mainstream culture that contemporary young people resist is essentially the mainstream social values represented by their parents. Therefore, when mourning culture appears in the form of an Internet subculture, it essentially reflects the silent protest of young people against the authority of their parents, and it is also a challenge to the authority of the family. As for the challenge of this culture, the fathers (usually fathers) who are the authority of the family tend to take a repressive and resistive attitude, and reprimand the offspring's mourning and lying down behaviors. In essence, this is a kind of family discourse power. Scramble and pull. In this case, the resistance of parents to Internet culture will become more and more obvious, and they will be rejected as a flood and a beast that poisons the mental health of young people. In this case, the communication between parents and offspring will be stagnant or estranged. Parents' lack of understanding of Internet culture, intolerant of their offspring's demands, and lack of common topics due to differences in region, age, and culture between the two generations will ultimately lead to a decline in the willingness to communicate between generations , and ultimately make intergenerational Internet communication obstacles.

2.2.3 Decreased Willingness to Communicate between Generations due to the Digital Divide

Information poverty and cultural differences, two barriers to intergenerational communication on the Internet, will eventually lead to another barrier that affects intergenerational communication: the willingness to communicate with each other becomes lower and lower. Since China entered into modern development, the acceleration of urbanization and marketization is usually accompanied by intensive population flow. Among them, due to the needs of study and work, the offspring, mainly the younger generation, have become the generation with the most frequent migration. When family members are absent for a long time, the space of the family field is separated, the original family structure is destroyed early, and family functions based on member interaction, especially the functions of emotional connection and emotional support, are also weakened, the spatial distance has thus become a key factor hindering the parent-child relationship.

Due to the difference in knowledge and cultural understanding between the two parties, parents often lack empathy and understanding for the topics and events that their offspring say, and offspring are disappointed because the parents cannot give meaningful feedback on the topics they bring up. In the process of this seemingly

two-way communication but in fact only one-way output of their own opinions, the offspring are often easy to shift their attention to other goals. In this case, social media, video games, and entertainment applications can all allow children to find emotional outlets, and they are more willing to find a friend in the virtual world who shares their interests and values with them. Therefore, there will be situations in life where children would rather open their hearts to unfamiliar netizens, but self-isolate to their parents. The virtual interpersonal communication environment created by mobile phones can easily make teenagers indulge in a kind of virtual satisfaction, and are keen on interpersonal communication with distant characters, while ignoring the originally closer parent-child communication, thus increasing the parent-child relationship. The psychological distance between them creates emotional indifference and alienation. These phenomena all reflect the problem of modern mobile phone communication. People turn a blind eye to the people around them, but they are connected with invisible people anytime, anywhere. "The furthest distance in the world is not when I stand by your side and you don't know that I love you, but when we sit together and you are playing with your phone." Although this sentence has a playful tone, it expresses the current situation between parents and children in some families.

In Giddens' words, modern society is a world "separated in time and space." A world in which the relationships of the pre-modern world based on what Alfred Schutz called "vibrant presence" disintegrated: face-to-face communication within the family, controlled, relatively unchanging Space and time no longer exist. When the offspring feel that they cannot communicate with their elders, they will choose to use the mobile phone as an escape space. By using mobile phones to browse social software, play games, or watch videos, teenagers can detach themselves from the current interpersonal communication situation at any time, and they are spiritually absent at this time.

In this case, the Internet communication of intergenerational communication lacks a "lubricant", an activity that can place two generations in the same goal or the same situation. In this activity, parents and offspring can express their emotional value through interactions in the activity.

On the other hand, differences in values can make it difficult for parents to understand the emotional value of their offspring, which is often prone to disagreements. In the era of unpopular smartphones, if there is a quarrel between generations due to differences, there is a lack of a "buffer zone" between parents and children, and the communication between the two parties may directly enter a state of isolation and stagnation. The isolation and stagnation of communication will lead to unequal information between the two parties. The offspring do not understand the

true thoughts of the parent, and the parent wants to ease the relationship but does not know how to start, and can only be in a stalemate in the end.

In fact, after the popularity of smartphones, the reason for poor communication between parents and offspring is not the lack of communication time, but the lack of common topics, which makes the communication between parents and offspring superficial. After the offspring go out to work or go to school, the living environment between the parent and offspring has undergone tremendous changes, and this change will cause the communication between the parent and offspring to remain at the most common level of greetings, such as "are you tired today?" "What did you eat for dinner?" Such topics are often avoided by children when it comes to deeper communication such as work, study and even vision.

The reason is that, first of all, the changes in lifestyle and emotional value brought about by the change of living environment result in the lack of a common background for intergenerational communication, and the offspring are exposed to completely different lifestyles and groups of people in the new environment. , and this kind of experience is difficult for parents to really understand without personal experience. A simple behavior or value may require a huge communication cost for offspring to explain clearly to parents, which leads to a decline in offspring's willingness to continue communicating. The long-term separation of time and space and the absence of presence make the communication between parents and offspring only stay in a short network communication time. Compared with the time spent around the clock when they were children, the time spent communicating and getting along with their relatives after going out to study or work has been greatly shortened. In the new environment, the offspring will continue to reshape their self-awareness, value system and ideology. The speed of this change is even more amazing in the Internet age. In the past, the offspring's ideas only came from their parents and a smaller social living space, which may not have changed much for several years. However, as the offspring enter the society alone, the fast-paced urban life and the massive amount of Internet information may subvert the offspring's previous behavioral orientation and values within one year. However, it is unrealistic for the parents to rely on daily, weekly short network communication time or even short reunion time in a year to fully understand this kind of change in the offspring. Many parents will lament that "the child has changed", which is essentially the consequence of the separation of time and space. In this case, the offspring will think that the parent does not understand themselves and refuse to communicate, and the parent does not know how to start asking the child. At the same time, it can avoid being too straightforward and lead to embarrassing situations. Intergenerational Internet communication is often just got stagnant due to a lack of valid topics.

Before the Internet era, intergenerational communication was often facilitated through collective activities such as "mahjong" and "poker". The family is reunited under the same time and space, discussing and moderately "competing" on the same goal. During this process, many topics of communication were brought up inadvertently, and thus intergenerational communication started smoothly. But under the premise of Internet communication, such collective activities are difficult to achieve due to the differences in digital quality between generations.

The differences between the two sides will widen in constant friction, which will eventually lead to communication barriers. A Chinese scholar Ma Kaige called this phenomenon "cultural silencing". He described this phenomenon as follows: "Due to the different cultural influences received, there is a huge difference in cultural understanding. At present, these two kinds of Culture itself is not mutually exclusive, however, due to the constant existence of the gap brought by media technology, the two cultures have gradually formed two fields. The two cultural fields are hostile to each other, and in the absence of effective communication leading to the interruption of the fusion of the two cultures." [30, 209]

Conclusions

This chapter focuses on an overview of the development of the Internet in China. The chapter also summarises and explores the barriers to intergenerational communication in the Internet age, using Chinese society as the object of study. First, the chapter cites relevant data from the 49th Statistical Report on the Development of China's Internet. The report shows that the Internet media has become the main way of intergenerational communication nowadays, both in terms of frequency of use and scale of coverage. Among them, cell phones are the main channel through which intergenerational communication behaviors occur, and they permeate all aspects of people's communication lives. The two phenomena mentioned above have occurred mainly due to the efforts of the Chinese government and cell phone manufacturers in reducing the cost of internet and cell phones.

Overall, the barriers to intergenerational communication in the Internet era have been largely smoothed out at the hardware level, but gaps in software and technology use still exist. The digital divide, a concept first introduced by the NTIA in 1999, has become a major cause of intergenerational communication barriers since the spread of Internet technology in China. Under the effect of the digital divide phenomenon, the parental and offspring generations firstly present different information reception density, and this difference further leads to differences in cultural understanding and cultural identity between the parental and offspring generations. The most typical manifestation of this is the different attitudes of

different generations toward online expressions and online culture. Under the effect of the digital divide phenomenon, the parental and offspring generations firstly present different information reception density, and this difference further leads to differences in cultural understanding and cultural identity between the parental and offspring generations. The most typical manifestation of this is the different attitudes of different generations toward online expressions and online pop culture.

On top of this, differences in information reception density and culture can lead to a lack of common topics in intergenerational communication. In the long run, the lack of common topics often leads to a shift in the object of communication between the offspring. In addition, the lack of space for collective activities between parents and children in the context of the Internet also leaves intergenerational communication without a "propeller" or "buffer zone". These two reasons together lead to the content of intergenerational communication remaining on the surface, making it difficult for both parties to communicate at a deeper level, and the quality of intergenerational communication being low on a single occasion, ultimately leading to a decline in the willingness to communicate between generations.

CHAPTER 3

WECHAT PLATFORM AS AN EMERGING INTERGENERATIONAL COMMUNICATION CHANNEL

WeChat software is a free application that provides instant messaging services for smart terminals launched by Tencent, Shenzhen, China on January 21, 2011. The software supports cross-communication operators, cross-operating system platforms to quickly send free (requiring a small amount of network traffic) voice messages, videos, pictures and texts through the network. Plug-ins "Shake", "Moments", "Public Platform", "Mini Programs" and other service plug-ins. At the beginning of its release, WeChat increased its users by associating with QQ, another phenomenon-level instant chat software of Tencent. By linking QQ accounts, the contacts were directly imported into the WeChat friend list, thereby realizing user transfer.

On April 19, 2012, WeChat added the "Circle of Moments" function in its 4.0 version, which is similar to foreign social software such as Facebook and Instagram. It can publish and store photos and share your life with WeChat friends. . The opening of WeChat Moments marks the official establishment of the two main functions of WeChat—communication and social networking. Since then, WeChat users have grown rapidly, and by the second quarter of 2016, WeChat had covered more than 94% of smartphones in China. [38, 1] On March 18, 2020, Tencent announced that the combined monthly active accounts of WeChat and WeChat overseas were 1.165 billion, a year-on-year increase of 6.1%. [37, 1]It can be said that WeChat has grown into a truly “national-level” software in China. Basically, this software exists in every Chinese smartphone. It penetrates into Chinese people’s life, study, business, entertainment.

In March 2014, WeChat opened the WeChat payment function. On January 21, 2015, WeChat opened the "WeChat Red Envelope" function, and "Sending Red Envelopes" has therefore become one of the indispensable activities for Chinese during the traditional festival "Spring Festival". On January 9, 2017, WeChat opened the "mini program" function, users can experience various complete online services through the applet without installing other software; "One tap" feature, a feature used to alert the other party to important information while chatting. On October 29, 2013, WeChat opened the WeChat public platform function, which supports enterprises or individuals to send articles, pictures, voices, and videos of all categories of content to fans of their accounts. The WeChat public platform has now become one of the main publicity channels in China. Official media such as People's Daily, Xinhua News Agency, and CCTV have their own WeChat public platforms. At present, WeChat has about 2 million WeChat public accounts. After the development and

improvement from 2013 to 2022, WeChat has now become a phenomenon-level software integrating communication, social networking, entertainment, business payment, and office functions. WeChat has formed a complete ecosystem, and users can use WeChat to enjoy the various services in life.

According to the population sampling survey data released by the National Bureau of Statistics of China in April 2016, as of the end of 2015, the elderly over 60 years old accounted for 16.15% of the total population in China, and the elderly over 65 years old accounted for 10.47% of the total population, which has exceeded the international standard The aging definition standard (10% and 7%), into an aging society.[57, 161] As a national-level application software, WeChat also pays attention to the user experience of middle-aged and elderly groups. On September 28, 2021, WeChat added a "care mode" to the version update, and then upgraded WeChat's "teenage mode" on October 11. On January 20, 2022, WeChat became the first batch of websites and apps to pass the aging-friendly and accessibility assessment in the "Special Action for Internet Application Aging and Accessibility Transformation" carried out by the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology of China. The WeChat payment function has successfully passed the evaluation. The rise of WeChat and the process of its functional improvement have a positive impact on the better integration of middle-aged and elderly people into Internet life, and this impact naturally includes intergenerational communication activities. Next, this chapter will aim at the various functions of WeChat, trying to analyze and explain how WeChat can eliminate the main obstacles in the intergenerational Internet communication mentioned above through its own structure and its subsidiary functions.

3.1 How WeChat Platforms Solve the Old Generation's "Digital Poverty" Problem.

According to the definition of the digital divide, the reason for the growing divide between the middle-aged and the elderly generation and the younger generation mainly comes from the two aspects of "access gap" and "use gap". In the "access gap" dimension, it refers to the gap in people's possession of the tools and technologies to access information. With the reduction of Internet tariffs and the affordable price of smartphones, the hardware level that caused the "access gap" has been basically eliminated, but the software level still hinders the middle-aged and elderly parents from mastering new media. The gap between parent and offspring in terms of their ability to use the Internet still exists. In the age of radio waves, there are various limitations in intergenerational communication with telephone as the main means of communication. First of all, telephone communication presents the

characteristics of short-term and singularity. Specifically, due to the high cost of telephone charges, the process of intergenerational communication is difficult to continue for a long time, and communication only through voice seems monotonous. However, as a representative medium in the new media era, WeChat provides the possibility of multi-modal interaction and delayed interaction for intergenerational communication. Parents and children can share the details of life with their parents through various forms such as text, small videos, photos, etc. At the same time, since the cost of the Internet is greatly reduced compared with the cost of the telephone, the intergenerational communication is no matter in terms of frequency or frequency. The time for a single communication has been greatly improved. The video calling function of WeChat provides a more realistic spatial experience for intergenerational communication. This experience creates a virtual family field for both parties in communication, and the atmosphere of intergenerational communication is also more friendly. Intergenerational communication has also changed from the previous strong purpose to the daily communication with strong emotional connection. In the context of video chat, parents and offspring can not only briefly share the time and space of both parties, but also create a sense of intimacy. At the same time, it also makes up for the lack of emotion between parents and offspring because they cannot be reunited for a long time, so that intergenerational communication can also be very life-like on the Internet.

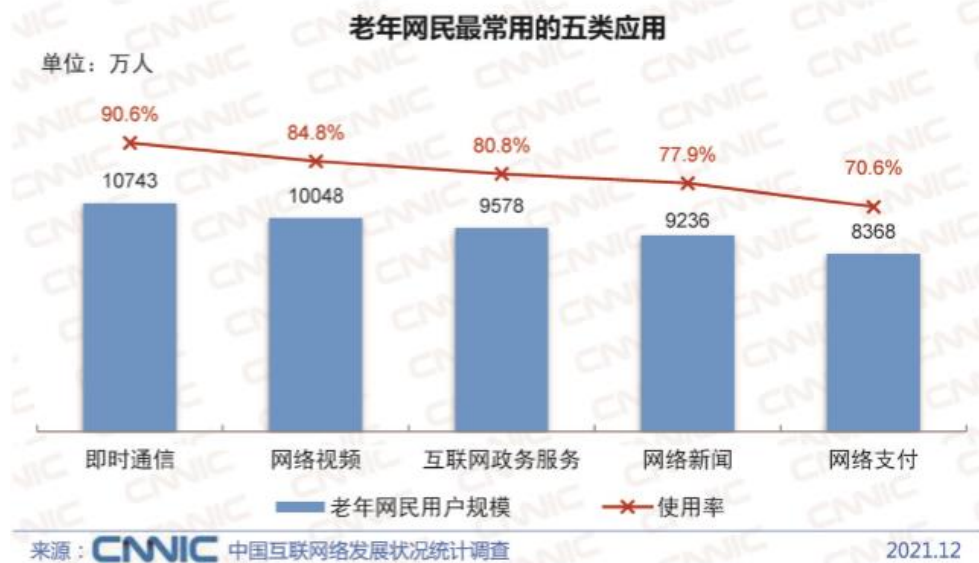
Second, as a national-level software for all people, its operation interface and auxiliary functions are all working towards simplicity and humanization. WeChat strives to help parents better integrate into and adapt to the Internet age through the perspectives of physiology and design.

Taking the WeChat operation interface as an example, the WeChat operation interface mainly consists of four parts: "Chats", "Contacts", "Discover" and "Me". Users can see at a glance which interface the service they want to find is located; at the same time, the entire interface the color tone of the software is mainly white and gray, and the overall color matching is simple. It is also clear at a glance for users with weak visual ability, and can quickly distinguish all the elements in the software. With the increase of age, people's visual perception performance decreases significantly, the visual threshold increases, and the ability to adapt to darkness and light decreases. In the existing psychological research, the object is placed on a background with high contrast, and the color is distinct, which can be easily identified by the visually impaired. On September 28, 2021, WeChat added a "care mode" to the version update. In the care mode, users can get a clearer display interface with larger fonts. This humanized design will undoubtedly make it easier for parents, mainly middle-aged and elderly people, to use WeChat for intergenerational Internet communication.

The WeChat platform creatively sets the personal chat box and the WeChat public platform (that is, the official account) as the same type of module, which both appear in the chat interface in the form of small chat boxes, which allows users to reduce the time to switch interfaces when using them. The number of times, the whole operation is flatter, which is conducive to the formation of memory points, which is very important for middle-aged and elderly people. For the middle-aged and elderly groups, the more complicated the way to obtain information, the more energy is required, and the huge time and mental cost may make the middle-aged and the elderly discouraged from obtaining information.

According to a survey conducted by Hong Wenjie in 2019, he found: "The habits of the older generation using smartphones are different from those of the younger generation. They do not easily try new apps, new functions, and new systems. Compared with the young people, they like the new and hate the old. They prefer constant usage, and they don't want their phone to change all the time, which can make them feel overwhelmed." [16, 66] According to the 49th Statistical Report on Internet Development in China, the five most commonly used applications by elderly netizens are instant messaging, online video, Internet government services, online news and online payment (Figure 3.1). In fact, the functions of these five types of applications can be implemented on the WeChat platform, which greatly reduces the learning cost of parents.

On the WeChat platform, the first interface for middle-aged and elderly parents is the chat interface, and the channel for obtaining the latest information, the WeChat public platform, appears in the field of vision in the form of a chat box. With just one click, the parent can open the platform of the WeChat public account. The chat box will display articles provided by different public accounts in the form of messages, and the content can include current affairs, life, entertainment, medical and health care, military, etc., parents can click to read according to their own interests, and the WeChat public account in the form of a chat box has an advantage, that is, it can be fixed on the first interface of the chat interface in a "top" way. It also reduces unnecessary and repetitive operations for parents when using it, greatly shortens the steps for parents to acquire knowledge on the Internet, and controls the operation of acquiring information within three clicks. WeChat, a model that combines instant messaging and information acquisition, makes it easy for users to develop software usage habits, and this usage habit will also accelerate the adaptation and integration



(from left to right: instant messaging, online video, government services, online news, and online payment)

Figure 3.1 Five types of applications most commonly used by elderly netizens

of middle-aged and elderly parents into the information age, and accelerate the reduction of intergenerational communication. information gap. By designing the operation interface to be more concise and flatter, there are no high requirements for the user's physiological conditions, education level and learning ability, which is conducive to every user to easily learn to browse the latest news on the WeChat public account, This is how the WeChat platform improves the parents' ability to "get information" at the "access gap" level.

WeChat, on the other hand, places equal emphasis on broadening information sources and diversity. Due to the massive user scale and user stickiness of WeChat, the WeChat official account has naturally become an important publicity channel. The configuration of the necessary publicity channels for each organization. In recent years, WeChat has actively promoted the cooperation between external institutions and WeChat official accounts. After nearly ten years of hard work, the WeChat official account has reached 2 million accounts, involving industries including government departments, party organizations, local private and state-owned enterprises of various sizes, foreign-funded enterprises and public welfare organizations, etc. Among them, government departments include national-level media such as People's Daily, CCTV, Xinhua News Agency, and official WeChat accounts of governments at all levels; party organizations include official accounts of party and government agencies at all levels of the Communist Party of China; local

companies include Alibaba, Internet companies such as Tencent, Baidu, Xiaomi, and Huawei, as well as foreign-funded companies including Apple, Samsung, Coca-Cola, Mercedes-Benz and other global companies, all have official accounts on the WeChat official account. These organizations all use the WeChat official account as a window to deliver the latest information to WeChat users. In addition, the WeChat official account also allows the opening of an account in the name of an individual, which has spawned a large number of "self-media" accounts. These account owners share their views through the WeChat official account, and the original articles can further enrich the knowledge of the parents and vision. Parents can learn the latest information and knowledge from all over the world only by relying on the WeChat public account, which is more comprehensive and convenient than relying on newspapers, radio, television and even web pages to obtain the latest information. This knowledge acquisition mode greatly shortens the "knowledge gap" gap between offspring. In some cases, parents who enter the late stage of their careers and have a lot of leisure time can get the latest events at the first time than their offspring who need to work and study during the day. In this case, the two parties with different statuses complete a brief disappearance or even a reversal.

3.2 How WeChat Platform Eliminates Intergenerational Cultural Asymmetry – "Cultural Feedback" and Relationship Reshaping.

The concept of "cultural feedback" originated from the term "three metaphors culture" put forward by American anthropologist Margaret Mead, in which prefigurative culture refers to the teaching of knowledge from elders to juniors, and the learning of juniors from elders culture, and postfigurative culture refers to the culture in which the elders learn from the younger generation in turn in the process of cultural transmission. In 1988, Chinese scholar Zhou Xiaohong first proposed the concept of "cultural feedback" on the basis of "post-figurative culture" in his book "Cultural Feedback: Intergenerational Revolution in a Changing Society". The concept refers to a new way of passing on the culture of the younger generation to the older generation living in the world.

Since then, the phenomenon of cultural feedback has become one of the important topics in the study of intergenerational communication in Chinese academic circles. In the information age, accelerating the elimination of the information poverty of the middle-aged and elderly-based parents not only requires the parents to voluntarily integrate into and adapt to the rhythm of the information age, but also the cultural feedback of the offspring has a decisive influence on accelerating the elimination of the information poverty of the parents.

For China in the early 2000s, a computer was a luxury industry for ordinary families. Family members who wanted to use computers and their networks often chose to go to public places such as Internet cafes. Under the premise of Internet access costs, the frequency and willingness of most parents to access the Internet will also decrease. Even after the popularization of mobile devices, the update of smartphones and the reduction of network costs, there is still a gap in cultural feedback between parents and offspring, that is, there is a lack of a simple and convenient micro-communication platform between the terminals of parents and offspring. In the early days, when WeChat did not become the most popular application software in China, the application software was still a new invention that favored the younger generation. The parents' usage habits of mobile phones and other smart terminals still remain at the superficial level of making calls and sending messages. The cumbersome download steps and usage methods make the parents discouraged from the application software, and the offspring cannot accompany the parents for a long time. , most of them do not have the patience to persuade their parents to use the application software during the short reunion time, and it is often difficult for the parents to find a suitable common place for cultural feedback with their children.

Therefore, even if the offspring acquires new knowledge or information on a certain social software, it is difficult to present the information and knowledge completely to the parents due to the difference in operating systems and application platforms. There are problems such as information loss and insufficient transmission density, which eventually lead to the failure of cultural feedback. Therefore, WeChat, which has high popularity, supports multimedia operations, and has both communication and social functions, acts as a bridge and channel for the offspring to feed back their culture.

As the most important social and office application of Chinese enterprises, WeChat has become an electronic business card for Chinese social communication. After the popularization from 2010 to 2022, WeChat has become an indispensable application for Chinese people to live, socialize and work. Even parents of middle-aged and elderly people are forced to learn and use WeChat. In such an involuntary situation, parents and offspring are on the same platform for information exchange, and a channel for intergenerational communication emerges. In such a platform, the offspring can provide cultural feedback to their parents in the chat box by "forwarding" messages. And this type of cultural feedback has rich and diverse content formats, including articles from WeChat public accounts. In addition to text, these articles also contain pictures, videos and other forms of content, which greatly enrich the parents' understanding of new knowledge and study. At the same time, there are various external applications. Wechat has basically established import

channels with most applications, and the offspring can quickly form a cultural feedback to their parents.

In addition, there is another obstacle to the cultural feedback between intergenerational communication, that is, the factor of "parental authority" is at work. "The stereotype of "parental authority" makes it difficult to realize the metaphor. Chinese rural parents are deeply influenced by traditional thinking and traditional concepts in their growth experience, and the stereotype of "parental authority" cannot be eradicated. Therefore, some parents think that their children are juniors. "Younger generations should follow the teachings of their elders, otherwise they will be unfilial." [41, 24] In this context, it is often difficult for the offspring to form an effective cultural feedback to their parents. However, in the communication field of WeChat, the offspring can provide cultural feedback to their parents in the form of "third-person persuasion" by forwarding articles or messages from relevant authoritative departments or institutions. For the parents who grew up in collectivism, authoritative discourse can often enhance the parents' trust in information and knowledge, which virtually eliminates the parents' resistance to receiving new information, and finally achieves the effect of the offspring's cultural feedback.

Backfeeding through WeChat, this process has shaped the family into a field of reverse socialization. In this field, the two generations of parents and children have realized a two-way interaction of values, emotions and knowledge. This is also what WeChat backfeeding brings to the family. The main effect is to increase parent-child communication and facilitate the completion of re-socialization of the parents. However, this kind of communication still has certain limitations. Because of the inequality in knowledge, the offspring have an absolute advantage in backfeeding, so backfeeding cannot close the generation gap. But to a certain extent, the Internet has promoted the road of equal rights within the society and the family, and cultural feedback has broken the traditional ethical relationship from top to bottom. This deconstruction is embodied in the process of feedback in WeChat, which provides more space for the two generations of parents and children to speak, and to a certain extent, harmonious parent-child relationship.

On January 21, 2015, WeChat updated the "expression pack storage" function, which solved the problem that WeChat users would lose their custom expression packs when replacing smart terminals. The improvement of this function provides an opportunity to eliminate intergenerational Internet cultural differences. In the past, the field where children used network terms or emoticons was often social software, and the younger generation with the same knowledge background and values were carnival on social platforms such as Weibo and Facebook. However, the usage rate of middle-aged and elderly people on social platforms is far less than that of their children. Therefore, there will be embarrassment that Internet cultures such as

emoticons and Internet terms want to export to their parents but lack channels. However, as WeChat opens the function of importing emoticons, offspring can introduce emoticons that are popular on other platforms into WeChat, and finally use it to complete the output of emoji culture in the communication with their parents.

Mead, the American sociologist who proposed the theory of symbolic interaction, believes that human thought is not a fixed organic existence, but a process of constantly interpreting, reflecting and judging experience. An individual responds to other individuals or objects because these people or things have meaning to him, but these meanings are not fixed, nor do they depend on the nature of culture or society, they are "open-closed", changes in the specific context of human interaction. [17, 86] This process is not achieved overnight, but requires a long process of accumulation and interaction to achieve. For parents, who are already weak in the use of new media and social software, it is difficult for them to take time and energy to cultivate new application time habits, and even using new application software is only a means of obtaining information. And this process is often one-way and no feedback.

When parents see an expression outside their own knowledge in other applications, even if they are confused, but due to various technical and psychological factors, such as writing speed or desire for Internet communication, parents often choose to give up exploring. But in WeChat, the offspring who are accustomed to the way of online communication will unconsciously use emoticons in the process of chatting with their parents, and send emoticons to their parents for cultural output, while the parents will doubt, explain, and accept in the process, And this process can get immediate feedback from the offspring, so as to quickly update their understanding of the meaning of the expressions of the younger generation, and achieve the run-in and reduction of cultural differences between the two generations.

In addition, the parents can also complete the digestion and re-creation of the emoji culture by storing emojis. The most typical example is that in the process of dissemination of the emoji culture on the WeChat platform, an emoji package that is widely loved by the middle-aged and elderly groups has also been derived. Chinese netizens call it "middle-aged and elderly emoticons". In fact, middle-aged and elderly netizens have their own characteristics: their enthusiasm for communicating with friends of the same age is not inferior to that of young people, so there are a lot of expressions about friendship and love in the emoji package, which is no different from the letter making friends in the past. Most of their WeChat friends are relatives and old friends, but the field of communication has changed from offline to online today, and the means of communication has also changed from simple letters and phone calls to multi-modal network communication in the Internet age. As a result, middle-aged and elderly people who are also active in online communication are not

willing to hand over the full power of online speech to the younger generation, so the middle-aged and elderly emoticons with a style that is completely different from the younger generation, setting off a retro trend in the emoji world, appeared. These expressions are often obtained by the parents from their peers, and occasionally from the offspring of different styles; even some "middle-aged and elderly expression packs" are originally from the hands of middle-aged and elderly people – as the learning results of computer courses in colleges for the elderly.



The Chinese characters in the picture mean: "To our friendship, cheers!"

Figure 3.2 "Middle-aged and elderly emoticons" with a strong atmosphere of the times

This type of meme "is typically characterized by high saturation, high contrast, and the neon glow of a 90's disco club. These memes favor red roses, yellow roses, pink roses, sunflowers, and a variety of unknown but colorful flowers. In terms of text, the font size is changeable, the font is changeable, the gradient is standard, the content is quite satisfactory, and everything is literal. The typical posture is holding a wine glass, showing love, holding flowers, combing back hair, and wearing a standard eight-toothed smile. Against a colorful background with a mixed style, he invites you "for us". Cheers to your friendship" and wish you a "great future".

(Figure 3.2) "These emojis reflect the background and cultural imprint of the parents' growth experience, a fusion and reshaping of traditional culture in the context of the Internet, and the values of "positive, full of positive energy" with strong parental characteristics. The emergence of middle-aged and elderly emojis represents a positive attempt by the parents to understand and integrate into Internet culture, which will undoubtedly allow the parents to better understand the values of the children. The amazing thing is that the middle-aged and elderly emoticons have not become a symbol of rejection by young people, nor have they lost the market among

middle-aged and elderly users because they are considered "earth" by young people. On the contrary, the "parents" users are still keen to use the gorgeous emoji with their recognized style, while the younger generation gradually accepts and starts to use this kind of emoji that does not match their age in their interactions. In the process of using the middle-aged and elderly emoticons, the offspring have a deeper understanding of the parent's background knowledge, aesthetic point of view, and value orientation, and ultimately promote the generation of the elimination of cultural differences between international communication has a positive effect.

To sum up, the process of backfeeding through WeChat has shaped the family into a field of reverse socialization. In this field, the two generations of parents and children have realized the two-way interaction of values, emotions and knowledge. As a feedback channel, the main impact on the family is to increase parent-child communication and promote the completion of re-socialization of the parents. However, this kind of communication still has certain limitations. Because of the inequality in knowledge, the offspring have an absolute advantage in backfeeding, so backfeeding cannot close the generation gap. But to a certain extent, the Internet has promoted the road of equal rights in society and family, and cultural feedback has broken the traditional ethical relationship from top to bottom. This breakthrough is manifested in the feedback of WeChat, which provides more space for the two generations of parents and children to speak, and harmonious parent-child relationship to a certain extent

3.3 How WeChat platform enriches the mode of intergenerational communication.

In the information age, due to differences in living environment and cultural background, there is a lack of a "starting point" for communication between parents and offspring, which is also a major obstacle to intergenerational communication on the Internet. But on the WeChat platform, this embarrassment has been alleviated to a certain extent. First of all, the information dissemination process based on the WeChat official account is not only a process of bridging the knowledge gap, but also an opportunity for communication between parents and children. According to the content forwarded by the offspring or parents, family members can discuss these topics, so that intergenerational communication is no longer superficial, and the words are not limited to simple greetings such as "hello" and "how are you?"

Take one of the most common topics in intergenerational communication – health and hygiene knowledge as an example. Gong Wanqi found in her research: "Young children not only provide emotional support to middle-aged and elderly people, but also an important source of health information. The family

communication paradigm not only affects the process and outcome of the communication and interaction between parents and children, but also has a significant impact on the psychology, opinions and behaviors of family members in all aspects. "The dialogue-oriented family communication paradigm can help middle-aged and elderly people understand the dynamics of the epidemic, increase their knowledge of disease prevention, and reduce their negative emotions during the epidemic." [13, 44]The offspring can forward relevant articles published by authoritative medical care, Complete the popularization of medical and health knowledge for parents. Especially during the COVID-19 epidemic, the offspring who are the pioneers in receiving information can urge the parents to complete the epidemic prevention measures by forwarding the latest and most scientific knowledge of epidemic prevention to their parents, so as to ensure the health of the parents during the epidemic.

In fact, from the perspective of the parents, the transmission of the health information of the offspring is not simply an exchange of information, but more importantly, emotional communication and spiritual support, which is the attention the offspring shows to the parents. In this regard, the interaction process with the offspring often makes them feel more meaningful than the parents themselves inquiring about the relevant health and hygiene information. In the behavior of health information dissemination, parental generation is more inclined to satisfy emotional needs rather than cognitive needs. Therefore, even if the acquired health information is not satisfactory or applicable, the elderly can obtain emotional satisfaction.

The support and care of children's health information is one of the main ways for parents to meet their emotional needs, and it can even become a kind of "capital" to show off to their peers in daily life. In Kuwen and Ouyang Xia's research, they found that "in the interviews, almost every elderly person mentioned their children's health information and other aspects of their concern. For example, the interviewees showed the researchers that their daughters specially made them for them. Diabetes recipes, hypoglycemic and other imported health care products, etc. These items are placed in a prominent place in the living room. Every time a friend comes to play, she will introduce what information her daughter has said or bought again." [20, 196]

By forwarding relevant medical knowledge, this communication method not only makes the content of communication more in-depth, but also warmer than daily greetings. On the other hand, the exchange of health information is not only a way for offspring to express their concern to their parents, but also an opportunity for parents to start talking to their offspring. For parents who have children working or studying in big cities, parents often want to talk to their children about their troubles, but they are afraid of disturbing their children's work and study. At this time, the sharing of health information becomes an excuse for parents. Parents can intuitively feel the

care from their offspring, and at the same time, they can start daily communication with their offspring in a logical way, and family relationships will also be warmed up through mutual communication again and again, and finally achieve the ideal effect of intergenerational communication.

In addition to taking information as an opportunity for communication, WeChat's unique "red envelope" mechanism has also become an important factor in promoting intergenerational communication in recent years. As the most important traditional festival for Chinese people, the act of "giving out red envelopes" not only represents the inheritance of traditional Chinese culture, but also symbolizes the blessing and care of parents for their children in the new year. However, in the past, due to the barriers of time and space, many offspring who were studying or working abroad could not reunite with their parents during the Spring Festival, and the tradition of giving red envelopes was often not continued. But with the opening of WeChat's "red envelope" function, this tradition has gradually become popular between generations. Parents can send red envelopes to their offspring in the form of "red envelopes" through WeChat payment, which solves the barriers of time and space; In addition, in traditional customs, after the parent sends a red envelope to the offspring, the offspring must "return" the behavior, that is, say some beautiful words to the parent. This kind of words may disgust the children who oppose traditional culture in normal times, but the children who receive the red envelopes are often in a happy mood, so the enthusiasm and sincerity of the blessing words will also increase. Today, sending red envelopes on WeChat has become a must-have activity for Chinese during the Spring Festival, and it has even grown from a single family to an entire family. According to data released by Tencent, on New Year's Eve in 2022 (00:00–24:00 on January 31), a total of 688 million people in China participated in the red envelope grabbing, and the peak of people grabbing red envelopes appeared at 0:03 on February 1.[46, 1] The parents give out red envelopes, and the offspring grab the red envelopes. The amount each time ranges from a few cents to dozens of dollars. It seems that the amount is not large, but the willingness to communicate between generations is significantly generated by a small red envelope. The connection and cohesion among family members are strengthened under the constant repetition of the two actions of "sending" and "scramble".

On the other hand, WeChat's rich "mini-program" function also provides a variety of possibilities for intergenerational communication. A WeChat "mini program" is simply to embed other applications into the WeChat platform in the form of small plug-ins, allowing users to use its functions without resorting to other applications. This function provides a platform for intergenerational communication through recreational activities. Take the Chinese most popular entertainment activities "Mahjong" and "Poker" as an example.

In China, activities for all ages like "mahjong" and "poker" are among the most popular activities for family reunions, but such group activities often require participants to be in the same space and time. Even after the advent of the Internet age, due to the insufficiency of mobile phones and applications, the parents are unable to cope with the complex download and registration process of entertainment applications. But with the emergence of WeChat mini–programs, this limitation of time and space has been broken. By cooperating with app developers, WeChat mini–programs can allow users to engage in entertainment activities on WeChat in the name of WeChat users without having to download and register. At the same time, WeChat users can quickly complete the invitation to WeChat friends through the "Share" function in the applet interface. This simple operation process undoubtedly greatly reduces the cost of participating in common collective activities between generations, allowing parents and offspring to realize online invitations through the WeChat platform. In the process of entertainment activities, parents and offspring can communicate naturally, making intergenerational communication more interesting and sustainable.

Third, the rich communication mechanism of WeChat has made intergenerational communication no longer limited to the verbal level. The rapid development of social media has also liberated people's communication from single–language communication, and similar "likes" have appeared. behavioral communication. In 2009, Facebook added the "Like" function to its pages, whose original meaning represents the approval of the content published by the author. Subsequently, this function was imitated and introduced by major domestic software, among which WeChat's circle of friends function is one of them. Statistics show that as of June 2018, among the 802 million netizens in China, the usage rate of WeChat Moments reached 86.9%. [39, 1]

As a communication software with social functions, WeChat relies on the function of Moments to become a tool for parents and children to complete socialization. In moments, everyone operates a personal space of their own. For parents, since the motivation for using WeChat is often the transfer of real social networks, WeChat friends are all close friends or acquaintances. Parents will use the circle of friends as a stage to show themselves and express their true self, so the image displayed on the circle of friends is often more realistic. This point is often different from the offspring who are familiar with the unspoken rules of communication in the Internet age. The offspring will pay attention to personal privacy when using the Moments because of the weak relationship in WeChat. Under this cognitive difference, the offspring can easily learn the other side of the parent from the moment, thereby strengthening the understanding of the parent.

Due to the influence of traditional thinking and "face awareness", parents tend to be more reserved when facing offspring in real life. However, due to the anonymity and freedom of the Internet, parents can often make some images that are different from those of the past. This kind of behavior will make the offspring discover that the parent is not only a static, conservative and old-fashioned image, and the parent also has the same lively and interesting "child image" as the offspring. This kind of understanding will undoubtedly deepen the offspring's understanding of the parent's image, and at the same time widen the distance between the offspring and the parent, so that the offspring will no longer "draw the line" between themselves and the parent, and thus be more willing to communicate with the parent.

On the other hand, due to the isolation of time and space, it was often difficult for parents to understand them in an all-round and three-dimensional manner in the past. However, after the offspring's feedback, the parents no longer passively wait for the offspring to express their feelings to themselves, or wait for the limited reunion time to vaguely understand the offspring's changes, but can use the avatars and nicknames in the circle of friends at ordinary times. Moments content, reposted content, Moments status and background and other elements to understand the true personality of the offspring, this way of understanding is more euphemistic and more humane than the parental direct inquiry in the past, allowing the offspring to feel the parents respect and understanding of oneself, thereby contributing to the healthy development of intergenerational communication.

In the Moments function, parents and children can achieve emotional expansion in addition to daily chat exchanges. After the popularization of WeChat applications, the function of Moments is a key channel for intergenerational understanding of each other's daily life. Both parents and children can show their lives through Moments, while the other party can like or comment to complete an interaction. Through the like function, parents and children can express their approval of each other's behavior without words. According to social cognition theory, there is an interactive effect between individual cognition, environment and behavior. Among them, individual cognition includes self-efficacy and outcome expectations. Self-efficacy refers to people's confidence in their ability to achieve a certain goal. [51, 432] In WeChat Moments, the act of liking can make the liked person feel caring and concerned. WeChat likes are a form of expressing concern, allowing others to get help and care, gain warmth, and reduce loneliness. This kind of concern is not only limited to the contact with friends in the process of socialization of users, but also the concern from the family relationship network dominated by relatives is also an important way to eliminate loneliness and gain self-recognition.

In fact, as the first stage in the process of human socialization, the behavior of family members undoubtedly has an important influence on the value orientation and

behavioral bias of the offspring. When a thing can be recognized and appreciated by family members, it will greatly increase the enthusiasm and confidence of users for this thing. This is important not only for offspring who are accustomed to using social platforms, but also for parents who want to re-socialize through social platforms. When parents begin to pay attention to and use social applications more and more frequently, the information and cultural differences in intergenerational communication are bound to shrink continuously. There will be more and more common topics in intergenerational communication, which will eventually lead to the improvement of the quality and quantity of intergenerational communication behaviors.

In addition, this non-verbal, non-direct expression can significantly improve the situation of family conflicts and intergenerational communication problems. For example, in the "mourning culture" mentioned above, this culture represents the reflection of contemporary youth on their own mental state and the expression of dissatisfaction with social reality. This kind of reflection and expression seems to the children to be a simple act of self-expression, but to the parents who represent traditional values, the "mourning culture" is undoubtedly a resistance to the parents' family status and values. This network subculture often causes conflicts and differences in the process of entering intergenerational communication. Due to the psychology of maintaining the discourse status of the family, parents often reprimand their offspring. And this kind of incomprehension and inconsideration often cause harm to the offspring, which leads to the offspring avoiding communication behaviors, and the intergenerational communication stagnates.

In the past, the situation often evolved into a bigger contradiction under the stalemate between the two sides. But with the circle of friends and its like function, there is a "buffer zone" for resolving differences and conflicts between parents or children. The communication between the two parties is no longer direct and immediate, but an obscure and delayed one. When direct communication is ineffective or stagnant, children or parents can express their views by posting relevant content in the circle of friends. This content is incomprehensible to others who do not know the context, but is well understood by both the generational parties who already have the preconditions. This is a social behavior that appears to be posted to "everyone" but is actually only targeted to "specific people". When the other party sees relevant content, they can express the signal that they want to ease the relationship through the act of liking, and at the same time, it can also save the "face" of both parties. This kind of liking to ease relationships doesn't just happen between friends, it also applies to intergenerational communication relationships. There are many emotions and feelings that are difficult to express in words, but a like action

can convey more powerful effect than words. It is a silent expression of emotion, a unique mechanism to the information age that facilitates communication.

Conclusions

Using the WeChat platform as a case study, this chapter examines how the WeChat platform as a communication channel overcomes the barriers that exist in intergenerational communication by dissecting the features of its various functions.

Firstly, the flat design and simple interface style of WeChat has greatly reduced the number of operations necessary for the parental generation, which is conducive to the parental generation developing the habit of using it; secondly, the development and expansion of the function of WeChat public platform has increased the density and depth of information received by the parental generation on the Internet, The fact that the parents can use the same platform (software) for both communication and messaging functions has, to a certain extent, reduced the threshold for the use of Internet technology, which helps to narrow the information gap between the parents and the offspring.

On the other hand, thanks to the joint promotion of both groups and individuals, the WeChat platform has become an indispensable communication tool in the daily lives of Chinese people. This gives the opportunity for cultural exchange between parent and child generations in the same arena. One of the most obvious changes is in the understanding of online expressions by the parental generation. The ability to store emojis on WeChat has made the dissemination of online emojis easier and more frequent, and the parental generation's acceptance and awareness of online emojis is increasing in their daily communication. The "middle-aged and elderly emojis" are a vivid embodiment of the parents' attitude towards online emojis, from recognition to acceptance and finally to active creation.

In addition, WeChat has shown certain advantages in synchronising the space for intergenerational communication and providing common topics. WeChat's 'applets' and 'red envelopes' functions allow people of different generations to quickly enter the same space in a short period of time. The 'red envelope' function is now one of the most frequently used functions by Chinese people during the traditional Chinese New Year festival. WeChat's 'mini-programs' offer the most popular Chinese family activities such as mahjong, poker and chess, which provide new opportunities for inter-generational communication to take place. The WeChat platform acts as a 'lubricant' and 'enabler' in this process.

In addition, through the presentation of everyday life in the "Moments" feature, different generations can learn about each other's different personalities and life paths, which offers the possibility of a deeper understanding of each other between

generations. The social spheres between generations are no longer separate but rather intersect. The possibility of deeper and more effective intergenerational communication also arises on the basis of a better understanding of each other.

On this basis, the "like" function offers a new way of thinking about intergenerational communication in the Internet era. The "like" function acts as a kind of "silent recognition" or "signal of concession" in situations where communication between the two parties is stalled or isolated due to disagreement; the "moment" function provides a way for both parties to complete information exchange even when communication has stopped. These two functions constitute a new attempt to ease intergenerational relations in the Internet era.

CONCLUSIONS

With the advent of the Internet era, the intergenerational communication on the Internet has received more and more attention from society and academia. In related research, the phenomenon of "digital divide" is a frequently mentioned topic. In fact, through the collection and summary of literature in related fields, it can be concluded that the digital divide is generally considered to be one of the main reasons for the obstacles to intergenerational communication on the Internet. In essence, the obstacles in intergenerational Internet communication are a manifestation of the different adaptability of people in different eras to new communication methods in the information age. Due to the existence of the digital divide, the unequal information reception density, intergenerational cultural differences, and the transfer of attention and willingness to communicate between generations have profoundly affected the depth and fluency of intergenerational communication. To further explore the reasons for the emergence of the contemporary digital divide, there are not only physiological and congenital factors that lead to differences in learning ability due to different ages and cultural qualities between generations, but also the selection difficulties caused by market economic competition. There are also social factors such as the emergence of alternative products and the diversion of attention to intergenerational communication; the lack of necessary channels and common activities is also considered to be the key factor for the delay in the development of Internet intergenerational communication; at the same time, the study also found that with The differences and conflicts between the traditional values represented by the parents and the new Internet values represented by the offspring in the process of intergenerational communication, as well as the relationship between the offspring's cultural feedback behavior and the reconstruction of the family authority structure. These factors hinder the parents' adaptation and integration in the Internet age at different levels, and this obstacle in turn acts on the formation and expansion of the digital divide, which ultimately makes it difficult to advance the Internet intergenerational communication to a deeper level.

Through the research on WeChat, a phenomenon-level application software in China that integrates instant messaging, social networking and life platforms, the study found that WeChat has a positive impact on solving the above-mentioned main obstacles to intergenerational communication on the Internet. First of all, by reducing scene switching, simplifying the operation process, making the operation interface flatter, and broadening the access of external information types, WeChat greatly reduces the cost of information acquisition, which is conducive to parents to understand the latest information on the Internet faster and more comprehensively. This, to a certain extent, simultaneously dissolves the digital divide from the two

levels of "access gap" and "use gap"; Secondly, diversified chat modes and open client functions allow Internet-derived culture such as emoticons to have space for dissemination and secondary creation. The rise of "middle-aged and elderly emoticons" is the active integration of parents with middle-aged and elderly people as the main group and one of the best manifestations of adapting to the Internet culture and context. Third, the functions of likes and circle of friends make the forms of intergenerational communication more diverse, and this "silent expression" has a positive impact on alleviating differences and conflicts arising from intergenerational communication. Finally, the emergence of plug-ins such as "Send Red Envelopes", "WeChat Mini Games", and "WeChat Official Accounts" has created an opportunity for intergenerational communication. Parents and offspring have the opportunity to communicate emotionally in the same field and under the same knowledge background. Intergenerational Internet communication is no longer just a superficial greeting, but more warmth and connotation. In summary, WeChat, as a versatile instant messaging software, is undoubtedly a pioneer in removing the barriers to intergenerational communication on the Internet. Although this paper only studies from the perspective of intergenerational communication, the development process of WeChat and the idea of function update are worthy of study and reference by related software developers in the future.

However, this thesis does not summarize all the problems existing in intergenerational communication on the Internet, and WeChat has not completely solved the current obstacles to intergenerational communication on the Internet. For example, when the author researched relevant materials, we found that although WeChat and Moments have the effect of alleviating the contradictions in intergenerational communication and deepening the level of intergenerational communication, there is an obvious difference in the frequency of use between offspring and parents. Generally speaking, the user stickiness of parents to WeChat is significantly lower than that of children, which is especially obvious for parents in rural areas; Secondly, although most children will choose to add their parents as WeChat friends, they generally set the circle of friends to be "invisible" to their parents. This kind of behavior of offspring actively isolating communication with their parents is difficult to solve completely by relying on WeChat alone. In addition, although the WeChat official account and the forwarding function have eliminated the gap of information in the "access gap", the parents' praise and criticism of an article will still be judged based on traditional values and their own experience. This deep-rooted value judgment standard has strong limitations in the Internet age. Although the offspring can narrow the digital gap between their parents and themselves through cultural feedback, most of the feedback content will be screened by the offspring. While cultural feedback in this context could provide more space for

intergenerational communication, the limited time currently available for interaction between parent and offspring is still far from adequate compared to the rate of growth of information. The above are the deficiencies found in the research of this master's thesis, hoping to provide some ideas and directions for subsequent research and related practice fields.

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