



Exploring Areas of Neglect: A Qualitative Study on the Dissemination of Sport Information for Over-65s on Social Media in China

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Abstract. The background of this study is based on the triple context of the serious trend of China's aging society and the popularity of social media such as WeChat and Kuaishou, as well as the rise of the national sports trend. It was found that people over 65 years of age like to disseminate sports-related information on social media such as WeChat and Kuaishou, but there are few studies on the dissemination of sports for the elderly in the academic world, so this study is able to fill this knowledge gap well. The research questions of this study are centred around two main questions: What are the social motivations driving the dissemination of sports information among individuals aged 65 and above on platforms such as WeChat and Kuaishou? Do the Kuaishou and WeChat evoke physical and mental anxieties among the elderly population when communicating sports-related information? This study will use non-participatory observation method as well as interviews with 18 randomly selected participants based on the information saturation theory. It will also be analysed in conjunction with the information cocoon theory. The research location is mainly in Haizhu District, Guangzhou, because Guangzhou is the capital of Guangdong, with developed medical treatment, and the elderly population can be covered from high education to low education, and the selected population is also radiant and representative. Ultimately, it was found that there are three social reasons behind the elderly's love of spreading sports information: the climbing mentality of friends around them, the information surrounded by news of sports powerhouses, and the concept of fear of being disliked. And as soon as social media spreads sports information, they will not be anxious at first, but if they see more than five messages in a row, they will develop anxiety. At the same time the information cocoon effect of sports information will also increase their anxiety. This study has both theoretical and practical significance, which not only enriches the application of information cocoon theory in sports communication. In addition, it can also find that the elderly who watch more sports information have anxiety, and the state should increase the psychological counselling in this area. In addition, we should also provide sports psychological counselling courses for the elderly, and develop physical and mental health while exercising, and then evolve a series of results

to promote the development of the elderly economic industry, such as mental health care, gyms, diets, courses, and sportswear for the elderly. This will not only promote the development of the geriatric economy, but the physical and mental health of the elderly can also be used to support the youth economy. It will also change the stereotypes that young people have about older people. The study can also be derived from a series of thesis research for all sectors of society.

Keywords: Elderly Chinese, Sport communication, Information cocoon, Psychological anxiety, Social media.

1 Introduction and Research Questions

The landscape of communication has undergone significant transformations in recent years, propelled by the confluence of demographic shifts, technological advancements, and evolving societal trends[1]. In the context of an increasingly aging society in China, coupled with the pervasive influence of social media platforms such as Weibo, WeChat, and Kuaishou, a notable emergence is observed in the dissemination of sports-related information among individuals aged 65 and above. This phenomenon is situated within the broader framework of China's aging demographic, where seniors are actively engaging with digital platforms to connect, share, and interact. Within this dynamic milieu, the rise of national sports trends further amplifies the significance of understanding how sports information is communicated and received among older adults on social media. Despite the observable prevalence of such activities, academic scholarship in this domain remains scarce, representing a notable gap in our understanding of elderly engagement with sports-related content in digital spaces. It is within this context that the present study seeks to contribute by delving into the qualitative aspects of sports information dissemination among individuals aged 65 and above on social media platforms. Despite the growing prevalence of older adults engaging with social media platforms to disseminate sports-related information, there remains a notable dearth of academic research addressing this phenomenon comprehensively[2]. The existing literature predominantly focuses on broader aspects of social media usage among the elderly, often overlooking the nuanced motivations and experiences specific to sports information dissemination. While anecdotal evidence suggests a penchant among individuals aged 65 and above for sharing sports content on platforms like WeChat and Kuaishou, empirical studies exploring the underlying social dynamics and potential impacts are conspicuously scarce. Moreover, existing studies tend to concentrate on younger demographics or general patterns of social media use across age groups, thereby overlooking the unique needs and preferences of older adults in accessing and interacting with sports content online.

This research gap presents an opportune space for empirical inquiry into the motivations, behaviors, and potential challenges faced by older adults when engaging with sports-related information on social media platforms. By bridging this gap, the proposed study seeks to offer valuable insights into the intersection of aging, digital communication, and sports engagement, thereby enriching our understanding of the evolving socio-cultural landscape in an increasingly digitized society. Furthermore,

addressing this research gap holds practical implications for designing targeted interventions aimed at enhancing digital literacy, promoting social inclusion, and mitigating potential anxieties associated with digital communication among older adults. The research questions underlying this study pivot around two central inquiries aimed at elucidating the social dynamics and potential implications of elderly engagement with sports information on social media: 1. What are the social motivations driving the dissemination of sports information among individuals aged 65 and above on platforms such as WeChat and Kuaishou? 2. Do the Kuaishou and WeChat evoke physical and mental anxieties among the elderly population when communicating sports-related information?

2 Significance of the Study

Theoretical Significance. **Enrichment of Information Cocoon Theory:** This study enriches the application of information cocoon theory in the context of sports communication. The identification of the information cocoon effect in amplifying anxiety among older adults provides a nuanced understanding of how selective exposure to sports-related content shapes cognitive and emotional responses in digital environments. **Social Influence Dynamics:** The findings underscore the significance of social influences, highlighting the role of social validation and status elevation in motivating older adults to share sports information online. This deepens our understanding of the social dynamics driving information dissemination behaviors within older adult peer networks.

Practical Implications. **Psychological Counseling:** The identification of anxiety among older adults consuming excessive sports information underscores the importance of psychological counseling interventions in addressing digital media-related stressors. By increasing access to psychological support services tailored to older adults, policymakers can mitigate the negative emotional impacts of online information consumption. **Sports Psychological Counseling Courses:** The recommendation to provide sports psychological counseling courses for older adults aligns with the broader goal of promoting physical and mental well-being in aging populations. By integrating mental health support within sports-related activities, communities can foster holistic wellness and resilience among older adults. **Economic Development Opportunities:** The study highlights the potential for leveraging the burgeoning interest in sports among older adults to stimulate economic growth in the geriatric sector. Initiatives such as mental health care services, specialized gyms, tailored diets, educational courses, and age-appropriate sportswear can not only meet the diverse needs of older adults but also fuel economic expansion within this demographic segment. **Redefining Stereotypes:** By emphasizing the physical and mental health benefits of sports engagement among older adults, this study challenges stereotypes and perceptions of aging. Promoting active lifestyles and digital literacy among older adults not only supports their well-being but also fosters intergenerational solidarity and mutual respect.

3 Literature Review

3.1 Digital Engagement Among Older Adults

The convergence of demographic transitions, technological advancements, and evolving societal norms has reshaped the landscape of communication, particularly in the context of older adults' engagement with digital platforms[3]. As the global population ages, there is a growing recognition of the importance of understanding how older adults interact with social media, including their motivations, behaviors, and experiences. Within this broader context, the dissemination of sports-related information among older adults on social media emerges as a compelling area of inquiry, yet one that remains relatively underexplored in academic literature.

Research on older adults' engagement with social media has burgeoned in recent years, reflecting the increasing digitalization of society and the expanding adoption of digital technologies among older age cohorts. Studies have consistently highlighted the diverse motivations driving older adults' use of social media platforms, ranging from social connection and information seeking to leisure activities and self-expression [4]. Despite initial assumptions of digital exclusion among older adults, empirical evidence suggests that many older individuals actively embrace digital technologies as integral components of their daily lives.

3.2 Sports Information Dissemination on Social Media

While the literature on older adults' social media use is extensive, research specifically focusing on the dissemination of sports-related information among this demographic remains sparse[5]. Existing studies predominantly center on broader patterns of social media engagement or specific topics such as health information seeking, neglecting the unique dimensions of sports-related content consumption and dissemination among older adults. However, anecdotal evidence and emerging trends indicate a notable interest among older adults in accessing and sharing sports content on platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram.

3.3 Motivations for Sports Information Dissemination

Understanding the motivations driving older adults' dissemination of sports information on social media is essential for elucidating the underlying dynamics of this phenomenon[6]. While empirical research specific to this context is limited, insights can be gleaned from broader studies on information sharing and social media engagement among older adults. For instance, research suggests that older adults often use social media as a means of maintaining social connections, staying informed about current events, and expressing their identities and interests . Applying these insights to the realm of sports information dissemination, it is conceivable that older adults may share sports-related content as a form of social bonding, self-expression, or participation in communal interests.

3.4 Challenges and Opportunities

Despite the potential benefits of older adults' engagement with sports information on social media, various challenges and opportunities warrant consideration. One prominent concern relates to digital literacy and access barriers, which may disproportionately affect older adults, particularly those with limited prior exposure to digital technologies. Additionally, there is a need to explore potential anxieties or apprehensions experienced by older adults when navigating social media platforms, including concerns about privacy, information overload, and unfamiliar interfaces .

3.5 Addressing the Research Gap

The identified research gap underscores the importance of conducting empirical investigations to fill the lacuna in our understanding of sports information dissemination among older adults on social media[7]. By adopting a qualitative approach, researchers can delve into the nuanced motivations, behaviors, and experiences of older adults in engaging with sports-related content online. This entails exploring the role of social media platforms such as WeChat and Kuaishou in facilitating sports information dissemination, as well as examining potential challenges and opportunities for older adults in this context.

3.6 Implications for Theory and Practice

Addressing the research gap holds theoretical and practical implications for advancing our understanding of aging, digital communication, and sports engagement. The findings of empirical studies in this domain can contribute to theoretical frameworks elucidating the intersecting influences of age, technology, and social context on information dissemination behavior. Moreover, insights gleaned from such research can inform the development of tailored interventions aimed at promoting digital inclusion, enhancing older adults' digital literacy, and facilitating meaningful engagement with sports-related content on social media platforms.

In summary, while the dissemination of sports information among older adults on social media represents a burgeoning area of interest, it remains relatively underexplored in academic scholarship. By addressing this research gap through empirical inquiry, researchers can shed light on the motivations, challenges, and opportunities associated with older adults' engagement with sports-related content online, thereby enriching our understanding of the evolving dynamics of digital communication in an aging society.

4 Research Method

The research methodology employed in this study seeks to provide a comprehensive understanding of the dissemination of sports information among older adults on social media, incorporating both qualitative observations and interviews to elucidate the

motivations, behaviors, and experiences of participants. The chosen methodological framework integrates non-participant observation and semi-structured interviews, leveraging the strengths of each approach to capture both observable behaviors and subjective insights. Non-participant observation serves as a foundational component of the research methodology, allowing the researchers to directly observe and document the online activities of older adults engaging with sports-related content on social media platforms[8]. Through systematic observation of participant interactions within digital environments, researchers can discern patterns of engagement, content preferences, and navigational behaviors, providing valuable insights into the dissemination process. By adopting a non-participant stance, researchers minimize the potential for observer bias and intrusion, thereby facilitating more naturalistic observations of participants' online behaviors. In conjunction with non-participant observation, semi-structured interviews will be conducted with 18 participants randomly selected based on information saturation theory[9]. Information saturation theory posits that data collection should continue until no new information or themes emerge, ensuring comprehensive coverage of the research topic. Through purposive sampling, participants will be recruited from the Haizhu District of Guangzhou, leveraging the district's diverse demographic composition to ensure a representative sample encompassing older adults with varying levels of education, socioeconomic status, and digital literacy. The semi-structured nature of the interviews allows for flexibility and depth in exploring participants' perspectives, motivations, and experiences related to the dissemination of sports information on social media. Open-ended questions will be employed to encourage participants to express their thoughts freely, while also allowing researchers to probe deeper into specific themes or phenomena as they arise during the interview process. By combining observational data with rich qualitative insights gathered through interviews, the study aims to provide a nuanced understanding of the complex interplay between older adults, social media, and sports engagement. Central to the analysis of observational and interview data is the application of the information cocoon theory, which posits that individuals selectively expose themselves to information that aligns with their pre-existing beliefs, values, and interests, thereby creating a self-reinforcing "information cocoon". By examining participants' online behaviors and interview responses through the lens of the information cocoon theory, researchers can discern patterns of selective exposure and information seeking within the context of sports-related content[10]. This theoretical framework provides a conceptual lens through which to interpret and contextualize the findings, shedding light on the underlying mechanisms driving the dissemination of sports information among older adults on social media. The research location primarily focuses on the Haizhu District of Guangzhou, chosen for its status as the capital of Guangdong province and its diverse population demographic. Guangzhou's developed medical infrastructure ensures access to a range of healthcare services, making it an ideal research setting for studying older adults across various socioeconomic strata. Additionally, the Haizhu District's diverse socioeconomic landscape allows for the inclusion of older adults with varying levels of education and digital literacy, ensuring the study's findings are reflective of a broad cross-section of older adults. In summary, the research methodology combines non-participant observation, semi-structured interviews, and theoretical analysis to explore the dissemination of sports information

among older adults on social media. By integrating qualitative observations with theoretical frameworks such as information cocoon theory[11], the study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the motivations, behaviors, and experiences of older adults engaging with sports-related content online. Through purposive sampling in the Haizhu District of Guangzhou, the research seeks to capture the diverse perspectives of older adults across different demographic and socioeconomic backgrounds, thereby enhancing the generalizability and relevance of the study's findings.

5 Research Finding and Discussion

This study shed light on the motivations, behaviors, and experiences of older adults in the dissemination of sports information on social media, revealing intricate dynamics influenced by social, cognitive, and emotional factors. Through the integration of non-participant observation, semi-structured interviews, and theoretical analysis, three primary themes emerged, elucidating the multifaceted nature of older adults' engagement with sports-related content online.

Firstly, the findings underscore the significance of social influences, particularly the "climbing mentality" observed among older adults, wherein individuals are motivated to share sports information as a means of social validation and status elevation within their peer networks. This phenomenon reflects the social nature of online interactions, wherein older adults seek to reinforce their social identities and relationships through the dissemination of sports-related content.

Secondly, the research reveals the pervasive influence of sports media and the allure of sports power as drivers of information dissemination among older adults. Participants exhibited a propensity to engage with sports-related content embedded within broader news narratives, highlighting the interconnectedness of sports media with broader sociocultural discourse. The association of sports with power, prestige, and societal relevance served to enhance older adults' interest in sharing sports information within their social spheres.

Thirdly, the findings illuminate the complex interplay between social media usage and emotional responses among older adults in the dissemination of sports information. While initial engagement with sports content on social media may evoke feelings of excitement or interest, prolonged exposure to a high volume of sports-related information can induce anxiety among older adults. Specifically, the research identifies a threshold of tolerance, whereby older adults experience heightened anxiety upon encountering more than five consecutive pieces of sports-related content. This suggests a potential saturation point at which information overload contributes to negative emotional outcomes, highlighting the need for moderation and selective exposure strategies in online information consumption.

Furthermore, the research findings elucidate the exacerbating role of the information cocoon effect in amplifying anxiety among older adults in the context of sports information dissemination. The information cocoon phenomenon, characterized by selective exposure to ideologically congruent information, contributes to the reinforcement of existing beliefs and preferences while limiting exposure to diverse perspectives. In the

context of sports information, the information cocoon effect exacerbates anxiety by perpetuating echo chambers of like-minded content, thereby reinforcing cognitive biases and amplifying emotional responses to online stimuli.

In summary, the research findings underscore the intricate interplay of social, cognitive, and emotional factors in shaping older adults' engagement with sports information on social media. The convergence of social influences, media dynamics, and emotional responses elucidates the complexities inherent in online information dissemination among older adult populations. By delineating the motivations, behaviors, and emotional responses underlying the dissemination of sports information, this study contributes to a nuanced understanding of the socio-psychological dynamics at play in the digital age.

6 Conclusion

The research findings from this study offer valuable insights into the motivations, behaviors, and experiences of older adults in the dissemination of sports information on social media. By examining the interplay of social, cognitive, and emotional factors, this study contributes both theoretically and practically to our understanding of digital communication dynamics among older adult populations. Understanding the motivations and experiences of older adults in engaging with sports content on social media holds multifaceted significance. Firstly, it sheds light on the evolving dynamics of digital communication within aging populations, offering insights into the role of social media in fostering connections and interests among seniors. Secondly, by addressing the potential anxieties associated with digital communication platforms, the study contributes to discussions surrounding digital inclusion and accessibility for older adults, with implications for designing more user-friendly interfaces and interventions tailored to their needs. In summary, this research endeavors to bridge the gap in academic literature concerning the dissemination of sports information among the elderly on social media, offering valuable insights into the social motivations and challenges underlying this phenomenon. By addressing these research questions, the study seeks to inform broader discussions on aging, technology, and digital communication, with implications for both academic scholarship and practical interventions aimed at enhancing elderly well-being in the digital age. Overall, this study serves as a catalyst for further research and intervention initiatives aimed at addressing the complex socio-psychological dynamics shaping older adults' engagement with sports information online. By integrating theoretical insights with practical interventions, policymakers, healthcare providers, and community stakeholders can work collaboratively to promote the holistic well-being and empowerment of aging populations across diverse societal sectors.

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