

## Research on Information Sharing Behavior of Older Adults in Short Video Media Environments: An Emotional Perspective (Postprint)

**Authors:** Wang Wei, Zhu Yuqian, Fang Luoyuan

**Date:** 2024-01-10T00:00:00+00:00

### Abstract

[Purpose/Significance] To reveal the deep psychological motivations of older adults when sharing information with different emotional experiences, and to deepen indigenous research on the information sharing behavior of Chinese older adults at the levels of psychological mechanisms and emotional experiences in the video/image era. [Method/Process] Through qualitative research employing online non-participant observation (5 WeChat family groups) and in-depth interviews (16 older adults), and using information-emotion-behavior as the analytical logic, this study induces the emotional experiences and behavioral logic in the process of older adults' information sharing. [Results/Conclusion] Older adults tend to share information with positive emotional experiences, manifested in their cherishing of intergenerational affection, nostalgic sentiment, and love for family and country; Socioemotional Selectivity Theory possesses certain explanatory power for their information sharing behavior. However, challenging this theory, older adults do not completely avoid information with negative emotional experiences, but rather employ indirect strategies in their sharing behavior to express emotions and viewpoints, aiming to alleviate individual cognitive dissonance or to promote traditional Chinese cultural values. Furthermore, older adults also share low-arousal daily life information, with health and wellness information sharing in particular serving as a mediator for older adults' online interactions.

### Full Text

#### Information Sharing Behavior of the Elderly in the Context of Short Video Media: Based on an Emotion Perspective

**Wang Wei, Zhu Yuqian, Fang Luoyuan**  
(NingboTech University, Ningbo 315100, China)

## Abstract

**[Purpose/Significance]** This study reveals the deep psychological motivations of older adults when sharing information with different emotional experiences, deepening localized research on Chinese elderly information sharing behavior in the video-image era from the perspective of psychological mechanisms and emotional experiences. **[Method/Process]** Through qualitative research combining online non-participatory observation (5 WeChat family groups) and in-depth interviews (16 elderly individuals), this study adopts an information-emotion-behavior analytical logic to summarize the emotional experiences and behavioral patterns in the information sharing process of older adults. **[Results/Conclusions]** The findings indicate that elderly individuals tend to share information associated with positive emotions, reflecting their values regarding intergenerational affection, nostalgia, and national sentiment. Socioemotional Selectivity Theory demonstrates considerable explanatory power for their information sharing behavior. However, a challenge to this theory emerges: the elderly do not entirely avoid information with negative emotional valence. Instead, they employ indirect strategies in their sharing behavior to express emotions and viewpoints, either to alleviate individual cognitive dissonance or to promote traditional Chinese cultural values. Additionally, older adults also share low-arousal daily life information, with health and wellness content particularly serving as a medium for online social interaction among the elderly.

**Keywords:** Short video; Information sharing behavior; Elderly; Emotion

**Classification Number:** G206

**DOI:** 10.31193/SSAP.J.ISSN.2096-6695.2023.04.06

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With the so-called “pictorial turn” and the arrival of the “image-reading era” in social interaction, short videos have become a shortcut for older adults to enter the digital age and initiate digital lives. According to the “Short Video Usage Survey Report for Middle-aged and Elderly People” jointly released by the Center for Population and Development Studies at Renmin University of China and Douyin, short video applications like Douyin provide contemporary elderly with new tools for knowledge acquisition, social entertainment, and self-expression [1]. Additionally, the “2021 WeChat Channel Ecological Insight Report” released by a data monitoring agency shows that WeChat Channels have unleashed new vitality among the silver-haired population, with emotional quotes and life reflections spreading most rapidly within middle-aged and elderly groups [2]. Therefore, in the short video media environment, the motivating factors and psychological mechanisms underlying elderly information sharing behavior warrant attention.

Emotion represents both the psychological fluctuations users experience during information consumption and a factor that prompts further information sharing [3]. However, current research examining information sharing behavior from an emotional perspective remains underexplored. Regarding the elderly

population, existing studies on their information sharing behavior primarily focus on the types, characteristics, and influencing factors of such behavior, but are largely confined to the health information domain [4], with insufficient examination of the video-image era media environment. Regarding information characteristic-level influencing factors, research mainly investigates information quality (usefulness) and trust in information (reliability) [5], while paying inadequate attention to the emotional characteristics of information.

Consequently, this study adopts an emotion perspective, using WeChat Channels as a case study, and employs a mixed-method approach combining in-depth interviews and online non-participatory observation to examine the explanatory power of Socioemotional Selectivity Theory on elderly information sharing behavior. It further reveals the deep psychological motivations of older adults when sharing information with different emotional valences (positive/negative) and arousal levels, exploring the emotional experiences and psychological mechanisms of elderly information sharing behavior in the video-image era. This research deepens localized studies on Chinese elderly information sharing behavior in the video-image era at the level of psychological mechanisms and emotional experiences, enriching and supplementing Western Socioemotional Selectivity Theory to some extent. Simultaneously, it provides insights for helping older adults in digital society—particularly in the video-image era—to deepen their digital life practices and enhance their information literacy and spiritual quality of life.

### 1.1 Research on Elderly Information Sharing Behavior

Due to rapid information technology development, browsing information shared by others has become a primary means for users to obtain and utilize information [6], making information sharing behavior an important lifestyle for the general public in the digital age [7]. Research on specific groups' information sharing behavior has predominantly focused on young students [8], with only a few scholars beginning to examine elderly information sharing behavior. These studies primarily center on WeChat—the most frequently used social software among older adults—and predominantly focus on health information content, particularly health information sharing behavior. For instance, some scholars have applied social exchange theory and uses-and-gratifications theory to examine elderly WeChat information sharing behavior from cost (cognitive cost, operational cost) and benefit (entertainment needs, self-expression, altruistic needs) perspectives, finding that altruistic needs most significantly influence sharing behavior while operational costs negatively affect it [9]. Other scholars have investigated the patterns and influencing factors of elderly health information sharing behavior on WeChat from an indigenous “socio-cultural” perspective, arguing that authority orientation and relationship orientation within social orientation significantly influence this behavior [10]. Additional research has examined the types, motivations, and feedback of health information sharing among older adults on WeChat, identifying multiple sharing motivations includ-

ing information-seeking and relationship-seeking [11]. Given the particularities of elderly physical and psychological development, the information sharing behavior of this group deserves further attention, whether from the classic audience research tradition in communication studies or from the information behavior field's concern for special populations.

## 1.2 Research on Emotion and Information Sharing Behavior

In the field of sociology of emotion, emotion and behavior become interconnected. Homans' behaviorist theory posits that when people's behavior is rewarded, they experience positive emotions, and conversely experience negative emotions [12]. In emotion psychology, scholars also focus on the relationship between emotion and behavior, including questions about the sequence of emotion and behavior, the emotional foundations of aggressive and approach-avoidance behaviors, and the relationship between emotional contagion and social trends, group incidents, and online public opinion [13].

Specifically in the information behavior domain, whether and what information individuals share is influenced by "emotion" as a psychological response [14]. Emotion correlates significantly with information sharing behavior. On one hand, emotion can serve as an information cue directly influencing individual decision-making and judgment [15]. Research confirms that news containing emotional information is more likely to be forwarded than non-emotional news [16], and emotionally colored Weibo posts are more likely to be forwarded and shared [17]. On the other hand, emotion also plays a mediating role in the information sharing process, with emotional arousal acting as a mediating factor in information dissemination [18]. The higher the level of individual emotional arousal, the more likely information sharing behavior becomes [19]. Highly arousing Weibo information carrying positive emotions is more likely to be forwarded and commented on than that with negative emotions [17,20]. Additionally, beyond emotional arousal, emotional valence may also influence information sharing behavior [21]. For example, psychology's "negativity bias theory" suggests that negative information receives priority attention and processing, leaving more profound cognitive and memory traces and eliciting stronger emotional responses in individuals, thus demonstrating stronger transmissibility in time and space [22], with negative emotions more easily spreading widely on Weibo platforms [23]. However, research examining elderly information sharing behavior from an emotional perspective remains underexplored.

## 1.3 Socioemotional Selectivity Theory

A classic theory related to emotion research in elderly populations is Socioemotional Selectivity Theory, proposed by Laura Carstensen. This theory posits that time perception serves as the basis for people's pursuit of social goals: as individuals age and perceive time as limited, emotional goals become more important than knowledge goals and become a fundamental pursuit [24]. Consequently, older adults not only prefer emotional materials but also show selective

bias toward the emotional valence of materials, favoring positive over negative materials [25] to reduce negative emotions in decision-making processes and increase emotional satisfaction [26]. Additionally, older adults' positive emotional bias may lead them to favor positive information more in intertemporal decision-making processes, thereby influencing their information processing [27].

Currently, the two major application areas of Socioemotional Selectivity Theory include social interaction selection and socioemotional management strategies [28], but its application in the information behavior domain, particularly in elderly information behavior research, remains insufficient.

In summary, current research on elderly information sharing behavior primarily focuses on types, characteristics, and influencing factors, but is largely confined to the health information domain with insufficient examination of the video-image era media environment. Regarding information characteristic-level influencing factors, research mainly investigates information quality (usefulness) and trust (reliability), with inadequate exploration of information's emotional characteristics. Whether and how the special emotional characteristics of elderly populations influence their information sharing behavior warrants attention. Therefore, this study examines elderly information sharing behavior using WeChat Channels as a case study, aiming to explore two questions: First, what explanatory power does Socioemotional Selectivity Theory—a crucial theory in elderly emotion research—have for their information sharing behavior? Second, from an emotion perspective, what types of Channel content do older adults prefer to share, and what emotional experiences and psychological mechanisms underlie these sharing behaviors?

## 2 Research Design

WeChat and short videos hold special significance in the process of Chinese elderly integration into digital society. WeChat's simplicity and ease of use have made it stand out among numerous new media applications, becoming an important pathway for Chinese older adults to “touch the internet” and achieve digital breakthrough [29]. Since its launch in January 2020, WeChat Channels have rapidly iterated and updated their product functions. With content primarily comprising images and videos, and positioned within WeChat's Discover page below the Moments entrance, Channels offer natural convenience and appeal to WeChat's massive existing user base, with elderly users representing an important demographic. Given the suitability of WeChat Channels' content and format for elderly populations and the prevalence of video sharing behavior among older adults in WeChat family groups, this study uses WeChat Channels to examine elderly information sharing behavior in the video-image era.

Considering that survey respondents are generally older, employing questionnaire methods would require time-consuming and labor-intensive reading and comprehension of questions, making them less acceptable to ordinary elderly individuals. Therefore, this study adopts qualitative research methods, situat-

ing itself within the special context of research subjects to better understand elderly behavior and “vivid” experiences and comprehend the special meanings they generate from these experiences [30].

## 2.1 Interview Subjects

This study primarily employed online non-participatory observation and in-depth interviews. First, we conducted online non-participatory observation of elderly individuals aged 60 and above in the researchers’ own WeChat family groups from February to June 2022, lasting 16 weeks, mainly examining the video content forwarded by older adults in 5 WeChat family groups and their underlying primary emotions. Subsequently, we conducted in-depth interviews with 10 elderly individuals from these family groups between June and October 2022. Due to COVID-19 pandemic restrictions, face-to-face interviews were hindered, so this study primarily used online interviews, with each interview lasting over 30 minutes on average. To prevent information omission or concealment due to familiarity between researchers and interviewees, we adopted a one-on-one cross-interview format to ensure rigor and scientific validity, while researchers continuously reflected on their role positioning in the study.

Following the general procedure of “theoretical saturation” [31], we used the preliminary theory generated from the data as the criterion for further sampling. The researchers then used snowball sampling to conduct face-to-face interviews with 6 additional elderly individuals for theoretical saturation testing. All 6 interviewees had habits of following WeChat Channels and using Douyin, and frequently engaged in information forwarding and sharing behavior. The average duration of face-to-face interviews was approximately 1 hour. No new categories emerged after these interviews, meeting the requirement that “when fresh data no longer generates new theoretical insights nor reveals new properties of core categories” [32]. Therefore, this study can be considered to have achieved theoretical saturation.

## 2.2 Interview Content

The in-depth interview outline comprised three main sections: First, what types of video content older adults follow and share—this section was cross-checked with online non-participatory observation to verify the main types of information forwarded and shared by the elderly. Second, what emotions were evoked when watching these videos and what emotional experiences they had—this section aimed to examine emotion as a mediator that might influence information sharing behavior. Third, the main motivations and intentions behind sharing these videos, what emotional feedback they expected, and what sharing effects they hoped to achieve—this section focused on explaining the purposes and motivations behind elderly information sharing behavior. With oral consent from the 16 interviewees, interviews were recorded, and textual data was organized immediately after each interview.

### 3 Research Findings

Through grounded theory data coding methods, this study continuously categorized raw materials (coding process examples shown in Table 1 ) to further explore the specific emotional experiences and psychological mechanisms in elderly information sharing behavior. The main findings are as follows.

#### 3.1 Positive Emotional Experience and Empathy

Emotions can be divided into positive and negative emotions based on valence. Positive emotions refer to pleasant subjective experiences produced when individuals are influenced by human behavior or environmental atmosphere, which subsequently affect positive individual behavior.

**3.1.1 Intergenerational Affection** This study found that a large portion of videos shared by older adults concern family warmth, particularly content about “caring for young grandchildren.” Emphasizing blood relations and family continuity makes older adults highly attentive to their responsibilities toward children and grandchildren [33], with grandchild care becoming one of the mainstream lifestyles for contemporary Chinese elderly. On one hand, older adults serve as primary caregivers, with “child-rearing” reflecting their sense of value in “remaining useful in old age.” For older adults with similar caregiving experiences, grandparenting topics help establish a sense of alliance among them. On the other hand, given the cooperative parenting model between generations, “child-rearing topics” also serve as a bridge and bond promoting intergenerational interaction between grandparents and adult children, enhancing intergenerational cooperation. Research shows that through caring for grandchildren, older adults gain greater psychological satisfaction and family affection, which improves their life satisfaction and subjective well-being [34-35].

Interviewee S9 frequently shared content about child-rearing, explaining that “watching children sing and dance is very cute, it makes me happy, and I want others (my sisters-in-law who also care for children) to see it.” Interviewee S2 also enjoyed forwarding WeChat Channel content about “harmonious mother-in-law and daughter-in-law relationships.” “I particularly like watching content about harmonious relationships with daughters-in-law, because filial piety comes first—daughters-in-law must be filial to their parents-in-law. Although families may have small conflicts sometimes, they shouldn’t hurt harmony. No matter what, filial piety must come first.”

Under China’s traditional “family-oriented” value system, family relationship quality becomes an important factor influencing older adults’ spiritual quality of life. Especially in the current social reality of “descending familism” [36], where the third generation carries family hopes and family resources generally flow downward, harmonious mother-in-law relationships and the virtue of filial piety remain expectations older adults have for their children, representing an important manifestation of their sense of life value and fulfillment.

**3.1.2 Patriotic Sentiment** This study found that older adults tend to share themes related to national prosperity, such as beautiful landscapes, national policies, traditional Chinese culture, and pandemic prevention achievements.

Interviewee S7 frequently forwarded videos including beautiful national landscapes and pension policy adjustments, stating: “Seeing such beautiful rivers and mountains of our motherland makes me want to share them with others. I feel our country is great and hope to travel around it in the future... Seeing adjustments to pension policies also makes me very happy. I think our country is remarkable and believe it won’t mistreat us.”

Interviewee S5 frequently forwarded videos of Chinese athletes winning medals at the Winter Olympics. “Watching skiers at the Winter Olympics surpass other countries one by one makes my heart excited. Seeing China win gold medals makes me feel proud and happy. I think China is amazing and want to share the joy with others... Seeing China launch rockets sending people into space makes me feel China is becoming stronger and stronger—something unimaginable before. I feel China can accomplish anything difficult!”

“Cultivating oneself, regulating the family, governing the state, and making the world peaceful”—extending from self and family to the world—represents an important characteristic of traditional Chinese social structure, lifestyle, and cultural values [37]. Behind sharing such video information lies older adults’ expectations and pride in their motherland’s magnificent landscapes, prosperity, and strength. Having experienced the vicissitudes of time, older adults extend their attachment to family and collective to love for their country, carrying feelings of national stability, prosperity, and cultural confidence.

**3.1.3 Nostalgic Tendency** Nostalgia refers to the process of intentionally or unintentionally evoking one’s past, including recalling special or ordinary life events, accompanied by a sense of vivid re-experience. As an important media form, video images contribute positively to individual nostalgia through real-time reporting of major events, media representation of historical events [38], and citizen empowerment in the digital era through internet-enabled grassroots writing [39].

Interviewee S3 enjoyed forwarding WeChat Channel content commemorating just wars. “I also like sharing content about the Korean War because my father participated in that war. They are China’s most lovely people! I hope young people don’t forget this history and always keep the country and history in their hearts. Because of my father’s participation, I pay close attention to these matters.”

“I was deeply moved watching the video about ‘borrowing rice to get by while raising children.’ Our family life was like that before—when we ran out of rice, we had to borrow and repay it next month... I wanted to share it in the group so everyone could see how difficult it was for us to have enough to eat back then.” (S7)

Whether individual memories of war, family nostalgia involving recollections of past family life, or “we also went through this together” and “songs our generation all listened to” (Interviewees S13, S14), this bittersweet reminiscence and collective nostalgic emotion often functions to store positive emotions [40], release negative emotions, indirectly satisfy individual needs for increased social connection and belonging, and has effects on improving positive self-cognition, sublimating meaning, and enhancing well-being [41].

### 3.2 Negative Emotional Balance and Adjustment

Consistent with Socioemotional Selectivity Theory and selective attention theory, elderly groups do tend to share information containing positive emotions. However, correspondingly, this study found that video content with negative emotional tendencies and negative emotional reactions is also common in elderly information sharing processes.

**3.2.1 As an Emotional Regulation Strategy** This study found that older adults forward and share video content concerning family disputes (unfilial children), food safety issues (disgusting takeout preparation environments), etc.

“Every time I see videos about unfilial children, I feel very angry. I comment below and share them with others to show that children must be filial.” (Interviewee S2)

“Forwarding videos about disgusting takeout preparation environments is to let my family see how unclean these takeouts are, how unsanitary the environment is, how the lunch boxes are industrial waste plastic without disinfection... I want to remind everyone to be careful when eating out and try to eat less takeout.” (Interviewee S3)

“Seeing this person uncooperative with pandemic prevention staff inspections makes me very angry. How could this person be like this, so inconsiderate? I also share it with others.” (Interviewee S1)

“I occasionally ask everyone for their opinions below [the forwarded videos] and comment with my own views.” (Interviewees S1, S15)

Thus, although video content contains psychologically negative emotions such as anger, disgust, and indignation, older adults still forward and share them, even engaging in high-involvement commenting behavior. On one hand, this reflects older adults’ simple values (punishing evil and promoting good). On the other hand, older adults also desire direct emotional responses, such as “I also feel very angry” and “This is really incomprehensible” (Interviewees S13, S14, etc.). This aligns with emotional regulation theory, whereby sharing and forwarding negative emotional content achieves consistent group emotional identification, reducing individual cognitive dissonance and stabilizing individual emotional fluctuations.

**3.2.2 As a Viewpoint Expression Strategy** Beyond forwarding video content with negative emotions, older adults also share news about negative information, such as nursing home scandals, official corruption, and social unwritten rules. Interviewee S2 once forwarded negative news about a nursing home brutally treating elderly residents without children, believing that “these elderly without children are quite pitiful. I want family members to see and understand that filial piety comes first—while parents are still alive, children must fulfill their filial duties and not casually send them to nursing homes.” (Interviewee S2)

“Forwarding videos about anti-corruption data uncovered by the central government is to express support for the Party and government, and to let everyone see that they must never touch the red line of Party discipline and national law, and must abide by their duties... Corruption seriously affects national image, reduces people’s work enthusiasm, and damages the Communist Party’s image. The country’s vigorous crackdown on corruption makes me feel the government is willing to take responsibility and do practical work, and our country will get better and better.” (Interviewee S3)

Thus, unlike previous research concluding that people tend to avoid information when facing negative emotions [42], this study found that older adults also forward and share video content with negative emotional tendencies. Behind this behavior lies a circuitous strategy: through mild fear appeals (such as legal punishment for corrupt officials), they hope to exert persuasive or warning effects on family members, ultimately aiming to lead traditional Chinese cultural values of patriotism, dedication, respect for elders, and integrity. The starting point remains essentially positive.

### 3.3 Low-Arousal Emotion Sharing and Emotional Connection

The two-dimensional theory of emotion posits that emotion includes a pleasure dimension (emotional valence)—pleasant (e.g., happiness) and unpleasant (e.g., sadness)—and an arousal dimension (activation)—low-arousal states (e.g., calm) and high-arousal states (e.g., surprise) [13]. Beyond the above analysis of positive and negative emotional valence, this study, through categorization and coding, also identified a common low-arousal emotional state in elderly information life practices, such as daily life information and health practices.

**3.3.1 Daily Life Information** Savolainen [43] proposed the Everyday Life Information Seeking (ELIS) model, arguing that beyond information seeking in work (occupational) domains, researchers must not ignore individuals’ information seeking behaviors in daily life (non-work domains), such as family care, shopping, and hobbies. For older adults who have exited occupational fields and work stages, their information sharing behavior is more a form of everyday life information sharing behavior. With the popularization of video applications in the mobile era, video imaging technology profoundly influences people’s daily lives, creating a so-called “video-based survival mode,” namely

the mediatization of daily life [44]. This study found that rich video content in new media broadens channels for older adults to obtain daily life information, with elderly individuals enthusiastically sharing videos about food preparation, weather conditions, and health and wellness.

“I see this dish being prepared very well in the video. I forward it so others can learn how to make it. I know many people enjoy cooking. I can also try making it myself and show off to relatives next time they visit.” (Interviewee S3) When older adults share food and weather videos, they not only inform others and teach skills but also actively create an environment for mutual exchange, shortening interpersonal distances and increasing closeness.

Additionally, older adults share singing, square dancing, and other videos to achieve emotional communication. “After eating, we usually stroll outside and exercise at square dancing venues. When I see new square dancing videos, I want to share them with my sisters to learn, so we can dance them next time.” (Interviewee S2)

Thus, video images increasingly embed themselves in older adults’ daily lives, becoming not only important channels for information acquisition but also important venues for skill learning. Older adults also transplant or practice video content into daily life [45], serving as a medium and bond for offline communication.

**3.3.2 Health and Wellness Practices** An important theme in older adults’ daily lives is their concern for health and wellness, leading them to extensively forward and share health-related video content to express care for those around them. If they can obtain group members’ recognition after forwarding, they experience more satisfaction, identification, and reward.

“Many of them now cook some health soup and take calcium tablets after watching my health videos. At our age, we must focus on health maintenance... Seeing them drink health soup with me makes me happy... They drink less spirits and take more responsibility for their health... The liver is very important. This video says ‘often eat something to protect the liver, give the liver a big cleaning.’ It looks quite useful, so I forwarded it.” (Interviewee S2)

Older adults’ information sharing in WeChat Channels often involves forwarding daily life information they encounter or browse to others in pursuit of reciprocity and resonance. They typically do not conduct deep “fact-checking” or review of information quality, nor care whether the content they obtain is “information” or “knowledge”—as long as it aligns with their life experience. This aligns with Wang Yidi’s research conclusion that the significance of older adults sharing health information on social media lies more in initiating group chat topics, triggering discussions and reaching consensus to form intra-group identification [46]. Older adults consider relatives in family groups and friends in acquaintance circles as their most important sharing targets, ultimately to maintain or seek social relationships and emotional connections [10]. Daily life information,

especially health information sharing, has become an important form of online interaction among elderly groups. “Sharing health information” and “sharing wellness concepts” have become “intermediaries” for Chinese elderly interaction on social media, representing an indigenous characteristic of Chinese elderly online interaction in the social media era [47].

## 4 Conclusion and Discussion

Short videos possess multiple advantages in disseminating information, telling stories, and expressing emotions, with a large elderly user base. For older adults, the behavior of watching short videos and then sharing them with others has become increasingly frequent in the video-image era. WeChat Channels have gradually become an important platform for elderly information sharing due to their content suitability (emotional life content) and format convenience (WeChat portal). Emotion is the continuation of rationality and determines choice, serving as a concrete experience that generates behavior in both goal orientation and ability activation. Simultaneously, emotion and feeling are not only special psychological states of individuals but also part of social relationships, possessing social communication functions [48]. Therefore, based on the logic of information-emotion-sharing behavior and using WeChat Channels as the observation medium, this study explores the emotional experiences and psychological mechanisms behind elderly information sharing behavior in the video-image era. The main findings are as follows:

First, compared to knowledge acquisition, older adults pay more attention to emotional experiences, especially positive emotional experiences. Socioemotional Selectivity Theory demonstrates strong explanatory power for elderly information sharing behavior in the video-image era. However, this theory fails to reveal indigenous characteristics of positive emotional experiences among Chinese elderly. Building upon this theory, this study further discovers that older adults primarily forward and share videos containing positive emotions due to emotional experiences of intergenerational affection, patriotic sentiment, and nostalgic tendencies.

Second, unlike previous research concluding that people tend to avoid information when facing negative emotions, this study finds that some older adults still choose to forward and share video content with negative emotional experiences. Their behavior reflects an adjustment strategy: when facing negative emotional experiences such as “disgust,” “anger,” and “indignation,” they hope to achieve emotional identification and ideological resonance (“I feel the same way”) within the sharing group to reduce individual cognitive dissonance and achieve emotional regulation. When facing negative news information such as “official corruption,” “social unwritten rules,” and “elderly abuse,” they employ circuitous strategies of sharing information and mild fear appeals to exert persuasive or warning effects on family members. Their starting point remains essentially positive, aiming to lead traditional Chinese cultural values of patriotism, dedication, respect for elders, and integrity.

Finally, older adults also share low-arousal daily life information content, such as videos about weather conditions, food preparation, and singing and dancing. This not only broadens their channels for obtaining daily life information but also achieves goals of information sharing, discussion generation, communication enhancement, and relationship maintenance through forwarding behavior. Notably, against the cultural background of Chinese elderly's belief that "wellness equals health," sharing wellness information has become an important theme in their information sharing behavior, serving as a crucial intermediary for Chinese elderly interaction on social media and representing an indigenous characteristic of Chinese elderly online interaction. However, this may involve issues of information authenticity and is an important reason for the widespread dissemination of pseudo-health information among elderly groups that raises social concern.

In summary, this study's theoretical significance lies in deepening localized research on Chinese elderly information sharing behavior in the video-image era at the level of psychological mechanisms and emotional experiences, enriching and supplementing Western Socioemotional Selectivity Theory to some extent. At the practical level, insights include: balancing information quality and emotional value to enhance elderly digital life participation through both central and peripheral pathways; fully leveraging family contexts and positive emotional experiences to effectively improve elderly information literacy; and combining online and offline approaches to enrich elderly spiritual and cultural life while improving their spiritual quality of life.

However, this study has limitations. First, observing only 5 WeChat family groups and conducting qualitative research with 16 interviewees is insufficient to capture the full picture of elderly information sharing behavior and psychological motivations. Future research could combine experimental and survey methods for more generalizable conclusions. Second, this study only examined positive, negative, and low-arousal emotional experiences, without distinguishing different emotion types (such as fear, anger, surprise, disgust, happiness, sadness) and different emotional intensity levels (high, medium, low). Future research could explore these aspects in greater depth.

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