Chapter 2
Survey of Chinese Internet Users' Internet-Using Habits

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China has the world's largest Internet in terms of the number of Internet users and Internet coverage.[1] As of December 2014, there were 649 million Internet users in China, including 31.17 million new ones in 2014, and the Internet penetration rate was 47.9, 2.1% points than the end of 2013. Meanwhile, mobile Internet has developed by leaps and bounds in China. By December 2014, there were 557 million mobile phone Internet users in the country, 56.72 million more than 2013 and its proportion in the total number of Internet users rose to 85.8% from 81.0% in 2013.[2] According to data of 2012, China had far more Internet and mobile phone users than the U.S. (250 million smartphone users in China as opposed to 230 million in the U.S., including Android and IOS systems), and the growth rate of mobile Internet users was overtaking that in the U.S. and other developed countries (Forbeschina 2013) (Fig. 2.1).

With the rapid development and extensive application of Internet and mobile Internet, Chinese Internet users' Internet-using habits have changed. To present how they use the Internet, New Media and Social Research Center of Institute for Public Opinion Research in Shanghai Jiao Tong University conducted a large-scale telephone survey of Internet users in 36 cities (including municipalities directly under the central government, provincial capitals and sub-provincial cities). Contents of the survey include how Chinese Internet users get online, the types of media they access and prefer, purpose of using the Internet and the use of social applications.

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[1]China's Internet. http://baike.baidu.com/link?url=MnRGUcKtFadEwZfZ0IroCsRCTMYQZo BrabyUIyS-cipMV98hhPdNFjtumr-G0caqzkPi4vjz7YefPIRk0ZYFzq.
[2]CNNIC: *35th Statistical Report on Internet Development in China*, http://news.mydrivers.com/1/ 381/381898.htm.

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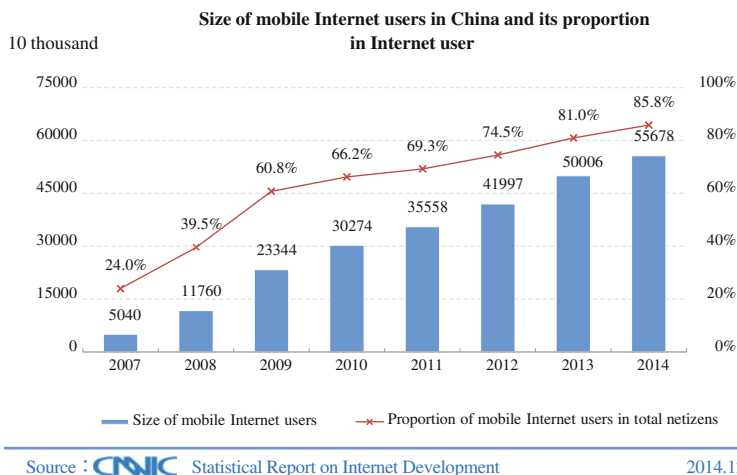e-mail: Lcong26@sjtu.edu.cn

Size of mobile Internet users in China and its proportion in Internet user

Fig. 2.1 Size of mobile Internet users in China and its proportion in total Internet users

2.1 Method of Survey

By means of multi-phase composite sampling, this survey, which was conducted in May 2014, covered permanent residents aged 16–84 nationwide who had fixed-line telephone or mobile phone. Since the survey targeted residents who had used the Internet, namely "Internet users", the first question on the questionnaire was meant to screen those who "had never used the Internet". In the first phase, 36 cities at and above the prefectural level were selected based on their political, economic and cultural influence, covering the eastern, central and western regions and tier-1, tier-2 and tier-3 cities comprehensively. In the second phase, 30 interviewees were selected in each city by means of Random Digit Dialing (RDD). To determine the quantity of survey samples, the error of simple random sampling at 95% confidence level should not exceed 3%, so 1067 samples had to be selected. In the end, 1080 valid samples were obtained based on overall considerations for such factors as the number of surveyed cities, survey expense and feasibility.

After processing the samples by weighting according to the male/female proportion in the sixth national population census and removing invalid samples that contained unclear information, the final sample structure of this survey is as follows: male accounted for 51.0% and female 49.0%; 60.1% had non-agricultural hukou (hukou, a record in the system of household registration) and 39.9% agricultural hukou; those aged 20–29 took up the largest proportion (47.3%) of all interviewees, followed by those aged 30–44 (31.0%), 45–59 (9.6%), under 20 (9.4%), 60–74 (2.5%) and above 75 (0.3%). The education level of the interviewees was quite even: 34.0% went to college, 23.6% went to high school or vocational

Table 2.1 List of cities surveyed

City	Municipality	Provincial capital	Cities specifically designated in the state plan	Total
Eastern region	Beijing, Shanghai, Tianjin	Shijiazhuang, Shenyang, Nanjing, Hangzhou, Fuzhou, Jinan, Guangzhou, Haikou	Dalian, Ningbo, Qingdao, Xiamen, Shenzhen	16
Central region	–	Taiyuan, Changchun, Harbin, Hefei, Nanchang, Zhengzhou, Wuhan, Changsha	–	8
Western region	Chongqing	Hohhot, Nanning, Chengdu, Guiyang, Kunming, Lhasa, Xi'an, Lanzhou, Xining, Yinchuan, Urumqi	–	12
Total	4	27	5	36

school, 22.6% went to junior college, 12.4% graduated from middle school, 4.3% had master's or higher degree, and 4.3% only graduated from primary school or below.

The interviewees were of various professions, including professional technicians (22.6%), students (18.4%), business service personnel (17.9%), private business owners (8.4%), clerks and related personnel (7.5%), freelancers (5.6%), production and transportation workers and related personnel (5.4%), retirees (4.0%), the unemployed (3.4%), head of Party organs, government departments, enterprises and public institutions (3.4%), people engaged in agriculture, forestry, animal husbandry, sideline industries, fishery and water conservancy (2.5%), others (0.7%) and soldiers (0.3%). In terms of income, 18.9% of the interviewees had monthly income of RMB3001-4000 (the largest proportion), those with no income or monthly income of RMB2001-3000 ranked second and third with the proportion of 18.5 and 15.0% respectively, followed by RMB4001-5000 (13.3%), RMB5001-6000 (8.6%), RMB10000 + (6.7%), RMB1001-2000 (6.6%), RMB1-1000 (3.7%), RMB6001-7000 (2.7%), RMB7001-8000 (2.5%), RMB9001-10000 (2.4%), and RMB8001-9000 (1.1%) (Table 2.1).

2.2 Internet Access Equipment

The survey investigated how the interviewees access the Internet, and one interviewee may get online in several ways. The results showed that most of the interviewed Internet users (66.5%) used mobile phone as a means to access the Internet, 49.4% through PC and 41.1% through laptop, ranking second and third respectively, whereas only 23.5% got online through tablet.

Further analysis of the characteristics of those who accessed the Internet through mobile phone, PC, laptop and tablet indicated that.

Table 2.2 Internet access equipment—by demographic factors

		PC (%)	Laptop (%)	Mobile phone (%)	Tablet (%)	% of samples
Gender	M	55.8	54.2	49.8	50.9	51.0
	F	44.2	45.8	50.2	49.1	49.0
Age	20–	5.8	7.0	10.1	8.3	9.4
	20–29	40.8	55.4	51.4	43.7	47.2
	30–44	38.4	31.0	29.6	38.8	31.0
	45–59	11.3	5.0	8.0	7.0	9.6
	60–74	3.3	1.6	0.9	1.9	2.5
	75+	0.4	0.0	0.0	0.3	0.3
Education	Primary school and below	3.0	2.0	3.0	3.1	3.2
	Middle school	12.0	5.3	11.7	8.8	12.4
	High school and vocational school	26.0	15.2	23.7	14.6	23.5
	Junior college	26.1	22.2	21.7	21.4	22.6
	College	28.3	48.2	36.3	45.6	34.0
	Master's degree and above	4.6	7.1	3.6	6.5	4.3
Profession	Head of Party organ, government departments, enterprises and public institutions	4.2	5.7	3.0	5.0	3.4
	Professional technicians	26.9	26.1	22.4	31.2	22.6
	Business service personnel	17.8	16.8	18.5	14.6	17.9
	Clerks and related personnel	8.4	8.0	7.7	9.1	7.5
	People engaged in agriculture, forestry, animal husbandry, fishery and water conservancy	2.6	1.1	3.0	1.5	2.5
	Production and transportation workers and related personnel	5.6	2.9	5.9	2.8	5.4
	Private business owners	9.4	7.4	7.9	10.8	8.4
	Soldiers	0.2	0.6	0.3	0.3	0.3
	Retirees	4.2	1.4	2.4	2.4	4.0
	Unemployed	3.1	2.7	3.3	3.4	3.4
	Students	10.5	23.0	19.3	13.4	18.4
	Freelancers	6.2	4.1	5.7	5.2	5.6
	Others	0.9	0.2	0.6	0.3	0.7
Hukou	Agricultural	35.5	35.7	42.5	28.6	39.9
	Non-agricultural	64.5	64.3	57.5	71.4	60.1

A large proportion of females aged below 29, with college degrees and who were business service personnel or students and agricultural hukou owners accessed the Internet through mobile phone, and a large proportion of males aged above 30, with high school, vocational school or junior college degree and who were heads of

Party organs, government departments, enterprises or public institutions, professional technicians, clerks and related personnel, private business owners and non-agricultural hukou owners accessed the Internet through PC. A large proportion of males aged 20–29, with college or master's degree and who were heads of Party organs, government departments, enterprises or public institutions, professional technicians, students and non-agricultural hukou owners accessed the Internet through laptop, while a large proportion of males aged 30–44, with college or master's degree and who were professional technicians with non-agricultural hukou accessed the Internet through tablet (Table 2.2).

2.3 Types of Media Accessed by Interviewees

2.3.1 Access Rate: The Interviewees Had the Highest Access Rate of TV and a Low Rate of Newspaper, Radio and Magazine

This study investigated the interviewees' access to traditional media, and the results showed that they had the highest access rate of TV. 74.3% of the interviewees accessed TV in their everyday life, 51.4% of them read newspapers, whereas the access rate of radio and magazines was quite low. Respectively 54.6 and 50.4% of the interviewees seldom used those two types of media.

2.3.2 Average Daily Use: Internet > TV > Radio > Magazine > Newspaper

This study investigated how much time the interviewees spent on different types of media every day, and the results showed that they spent obviously more time on the Internet than other traditional media per day on average. About half (49.6%) of them spent 1–4 h on the Internet every day on average, and 13.9% spent eight hours or more on it. In terms of duration of average daily use, the interviewees used the traditional media of TV much longer than other media types such as radio, magazine and newspaper. More than 60% of them spent less than half an hour on radio (64.1%), magazine (65.1%) and newspaper (70.1%) per day on average, whereas only 22.5% of them spent less than half an hour on TV every day (Fig. 2.2).

A comparison of the time spent on Internet by Internet users of different ages showed that most of those who spend 2–5 h on the Internet every day are aged below 45, whereas those aged above 45 take the largest proportion in the time range of 0.5–2 h. Internet users aged below 20 are quite scattered among different time ranges of Internet use (Table 2.3).
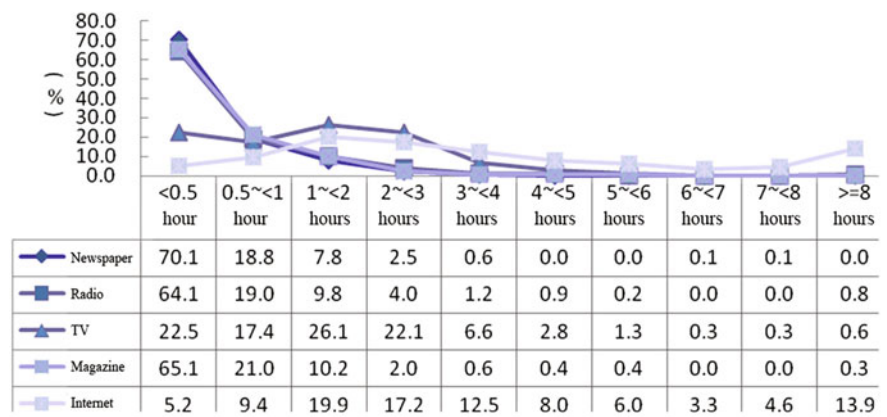
	<0.5 hour	0.5~<1 hour	1~<2 hours	2~<3 hours	3~<4 hours	4~<5 hours	5~<6 hours	6~<7 hours	7~<8 hours	>=8 hours
Newspaper	70.1	18.8	7.8	2.5	0.6	0.0	0.0	0.1	0.1	0.0
Radio	64.1	19.0	9.8	4.0	1.2	0.9	0.2	0.0	0.0	0.8
TV	22.5	17.4	26.1	22.1	6.6	2.8	1.3	0.3	0.3	0.6
Magazine	65.1	21.0	10.2	2.0	0.6	0.4	0.4	0.0	0.0	0.3
Internet	5.2	9.4	19.9	17.2	12.5	8.0	6.0	3.3	4.6	13.9

Fig. 2.2 Time spent on different types of media by interviewees

Table 2.3 Time spent on Internet by interviewees of different ages

Time spent on internet	Age					
	20–	20–29	30–44	45–59	60–74	75+
<0.5 h (%)	12.0	5.3	5.6	9.2	16.6	0.0
0.5–2 h (%)	33.6	20.7	29.1	55.0	43.0	100.0
2–5 h (%)	35.3	40.6	38.3	23.1	29.1	0.0
>5 h (%)	19.1	33.4	27.0	12.7	11.3	0.0
Total (%)	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Table 2.4 Time spent on Internet by interviewees of different educational levels

Time spent on internet	Educational level					
	Primary school and below (%)	Middle school (%)	High school and vocational school (%)	Junior college (%)	College (%)	Master's degree and above (%)
<0.5 h	22.9	18.9	7.4	2.7	4.0	0.0
0.5–2 h	37.1	40.2	35.8	26.7	21.0	23.1
2–5 h	23.3	29.6	32.1	37.1	43.4	44.6
>5 h	16.7	11.3	24.7	33.5	31.6	32.3
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

A comparison of the time spent on Internet by Internet users of different educational levels showed that most of those who spent 0.5–2 h on the Internet every day have an educational level lower than junior college, and those with junior college and higher degree take the largest proportion in the time range of 2–5 h. The more educated the interviewees, the smaller proportion of them spend less than 0.5 h on the Internet every day. This means that better educated Internet users spend more time on the Internet every day (Table 2.4).

Table 2.5 Time spent on Internet by interviewees of different genders

Time spent on internet	Gender	
	Male (%)	Female (%)
<0.5 h	6.4	6.7
0.5–2 h	30.0	27.5
2–5 h	39.8	34.3
>5 h	23.8	31.5
Total	100.0	100.0

Table 2.6 Motives for Internet use of interviewees of different ages

Motive for internet use	Age					
	20–	20–29	30–44	45–59	60–74	75+
Recreation and entertainment (%)	69.6	67.6	56.9	43.0	23.8	0.0
Accessing news (%)	53.3	66.3	73.4	71.3	79.9	100.0
Broadening knowledge scope (%)	34.2	42.5	40.8	26.9	50.6	26.3
Acquiring living information (%)	31.2	40.5	45.0	31.8	41.5	52.5
Acquiring specialized knowledge (%)	32.0	48.5	55.2	25.7	26.8	26.3
Killing time (%)	31.5	46.5	41.5	26.6	34.8	0.0
Socializing (%)	49.5	50.2	39.5	25.7	20.1	0.0
Shopping (%)	41.7	51.3	47.6	26.0	29.9	0.0
Searching for applications (%)	24.8	34.4	32.5	13.4	36.0	26.3

A comparison of the time spent on Internet by Internet users of different genders showed that about the same proportion of male and female Internet users spend less than half an hour on the Internet every day. There are more male than female Internet users in the time range of 0.5–5 h and more female than male Internet users in the time range of more than 5 h (Table 2.5).

2.4 Interviewees' Motives of Internet Use

This study investigated why the interviewees used the Internet, and some of them might have two or more motives. The results showed that the most common motive was to access news (68.1%), followed by recreation and entertainment (60.8%), acquisition of specialized knowledge (45.7%), shopping (45.7%), socializing (42.8%), killing time (40.8%), acquiring living information (39.8%), broadening knowledge scope (39.4%) and searching for applications (30.5%).

A comparison of motives among Internet users of different ages showed that those aged under 29 use the Internet mostly for recreation and entertainment, but they pay less attention to this purpose as they grow old. Accessing news is the predominant motive for Internet users aged above 30, acquiring special knowledge is the predominant motive for those aged 30–44, and Internet users aged 20–29 pay most attention to killing time, socializing and shopping (Table 2.6).

Table 2.7 Motives for Internet use of interviewees of different educational levels

Motive for Internet use	Educational level					
	Primary school and below (%)	Middle school (%)	High school and vocational school (%)	Junior college (%)	College (%)	Master's degree and above (%)
Recreation and entertainment	50.0	56.8	53.7	63.3	66.7	63.5
Accessing news	62.9	52.5	62.4	74.0	74.2	73.7
Broadening knowledge scope	30.5	22.7	34.0	42.6	45.3	56.7
Acquiring living information	30.5	26.6	31.8	45.5	47.9	40.4
Acquiring specialized knowledge	28.5	23.9	35.2	53.0	54.9	76.9
Killing time	32.4	43.8	32.7	45.9	43.7	40.4
Socializing	33.3	30.4	33.2	46.1	52.1	53.5
Shopping	32.8	26.2	41.2	53.4	51.2	68.1
Searching for applications	23.8	16.5	25.8	37.3	34.0	51.4

A comparison the motives among interviewees of different educational levels showed that accessing news is the predominant motive for Internet users who only went to primary school or below, high school and vocational school, junior college and college, recreation and entertainment is the predominant motive for those who went to middle school, and acquiring specialized knowledge is the predominant motive for those with master's or higher degree. Internet users with college degree pay most attention to recreation and entertainment, while those with master's or higher degree pay more attention to broadening knowledge scope. Acquiring living information is the main motive for Internet users with college degree, killing time is the main motive for those who went to junior college, and those with master's or higher degree pay most attention to socializing, shopping and search (Table 2.7).

2.5 Interviewees' Use of Social Applications

After we understand the interviewees' motives for Internet use, we'll further analyze their use of social applications. This study investigated what social applications the interviewees usually use, and some of them use two or more applications. The results showed QQ (78.5%), WeChat (73.2%) and microblog (42.0%) have a much higher penetration rate among the interviewees than other social applications,

followed by Renren (13.7%), YY (10.0%), other applications (7.9%), MSN (7.7%), Douban (5.7%), Kaixin (5.2%), Facebook (3.6%) and Twitter (2.9%) (Fig. 2.3).

2.6 Main Channels for Interviewees to Obtain Information About Public Events

This survey investigated the main channels for the interviewees to access information after the occurrence of public events, and some of them might access information through two or more channels. The results showed that the largest number of the interviewees (56.7%) access information mainly through news media, and more than 40% of them access public event information through mobile phone news client (42.7%) and WeChat (40.7%). It's worth noting that WeChat surpassed microblog to become one of the three most important channels of information acquisition (Fig. 2.4).
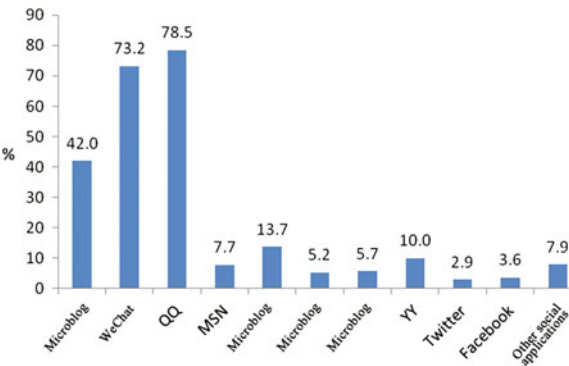

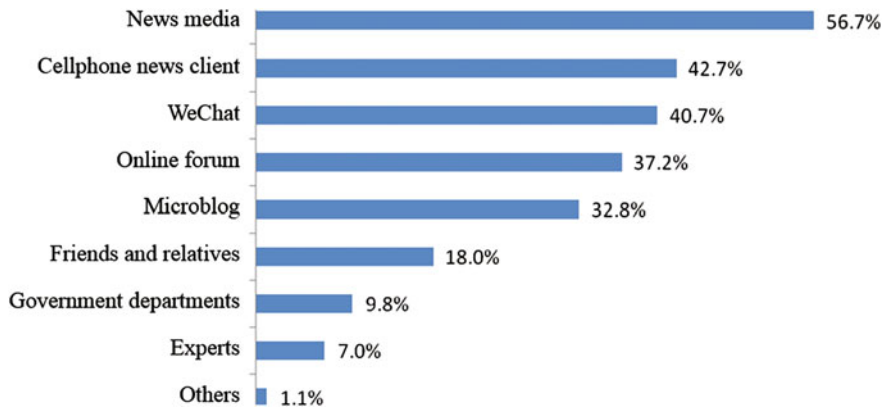Fig. 2.3 Interviewees' use of social applications

Fig. 2.4 Main channels for interviewees to access public event information

2.7 Conclusion

Based on the survey and analysis of Internet-using habits of Internet users in 36 cities across China, we can come to the following conclusions:

Chinese Internet users mainly get online via mobile phone, followed by PC, laptop and tablet. Most of them spend 2–5 h on the Internet every day, and of Internet users who spend more than 5 h on various media forms every day, Internet users take the largest proportion. A comparison of the time spent on Internet by Internet users of different ages showed that Internet users aged below 45 take the largest proportion in those who spend 2–5 h on the Internet every day, whereas those aged above 45 take the largest proportion in the time range of 0.5–2 h. There are more male than female Internet users who spend 0.5–5 h online every day, but more female than male Internet users who spend more than 5 h online every day.

In terms of rate of use, different types of social applications can be ranked in the following order: QQ, WeChat, microblog, Renren, YY, MSN, Douban, Kaixin, Facebook and Twitter. QQ has the largest use rate with about the same number of male and female users, followed by WeChat that has slightly more female than male users, and microblog that has notably more female than male users. Most social applications have more female users, and only YY and "other applications" have more male users.

In terms of percentage (from high to low), purposes of using the Internet can be ranked in the following order—accessing news, recreation and entertainment, acquiring specialized knowledge, shopping, socializing, killing time, acquiring living information, broadening knowledge scope and searching for applications. A comparison of motives for Internet use among Internet users of different ages showed that those aged under 29 use the Internet mostly for recreation and entertainment, but they pay less attention to this purpose as they grow older. Accessing news is the predominant motive for Internet users aged above 30. We also found that Internet users aged 60–74 pay the closest attention to broadening knowledge scope, while those aged above 75 pay more attention to acquiring living information. Acquiring specialized knowledge is the predominant motive for those aged 30–44, and Internet users aged 20–29 pay most attention to killing time, socializing and shopping. A comparison of motives among Internet users of different educational levels showed that accessing news is the predominant motive for those who only went to primary school or below, high school and vocational school, junior college and college, recreation and entertainment is the predominant motive for those who went to middle school, and acquiring specialized knowledge is the predominant motive for those with master's or higher degree.

Reference

Forbeschina. (2013). *China is overtaking US in mobile internet*. Published online at http://www.forbeschina.com/review/201306/0026184.shtml [June 4, 2013].