GDC × NetEase Games
Passion of gamers
March 21-25,2022
San Francisco,CA

Game Socialization Trends:
How Strangers Evolved into Companions

-How we evolved interactions with in-game strangers from superficial displays of wealth and status into deep emotional investment and companionship

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#GDC22
#NetEase Games

Talk Overview

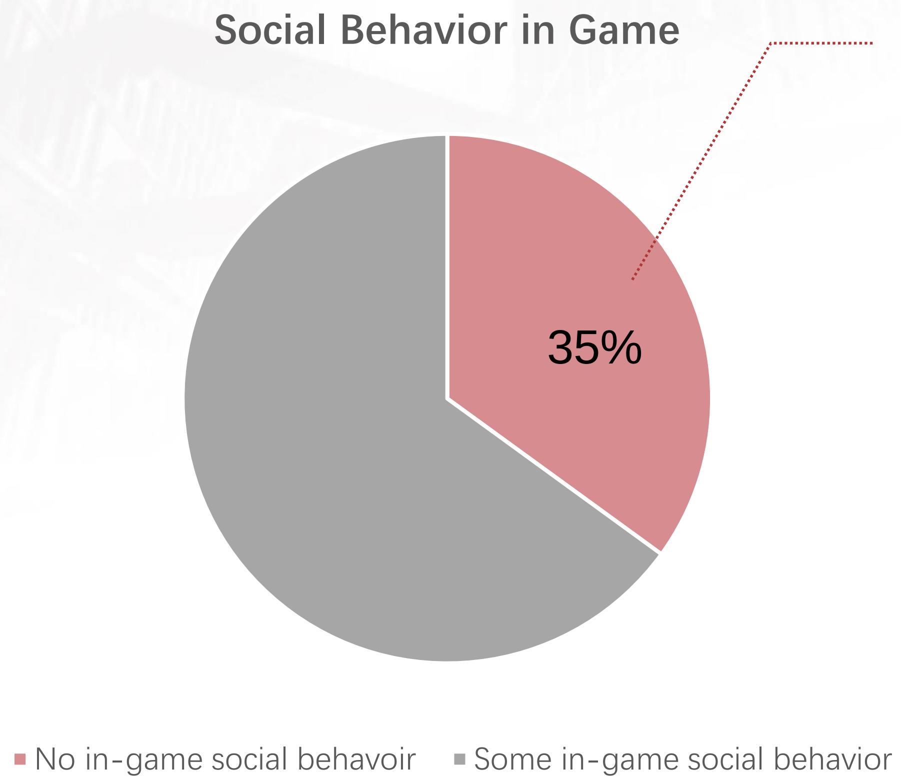
- Background
- The Rise of "Talk with Strangers" Social Apps
- Features of Companion-Oriented Social Apps
- Learning from Companion-Oriented Apps
- Takeways

01

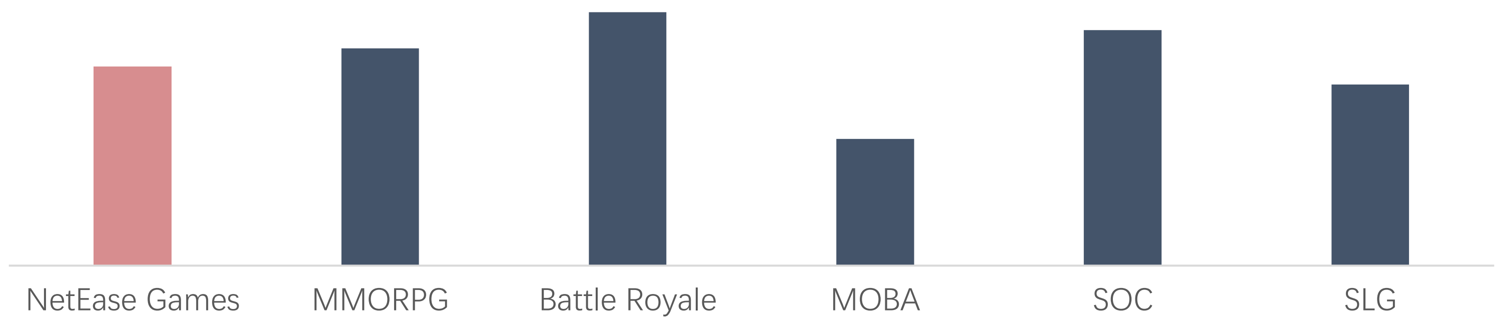
Background

Background: Why Pay Attention to Social Apps?

Gamers with unsatisfied social needs turn to social network apps instead



11% of all players have social needs that games are failing to satisfy.



5% of players turn to Chat with Strangers social apps instead.

TanTan MoMo Soul

≈ Chinese Tinder

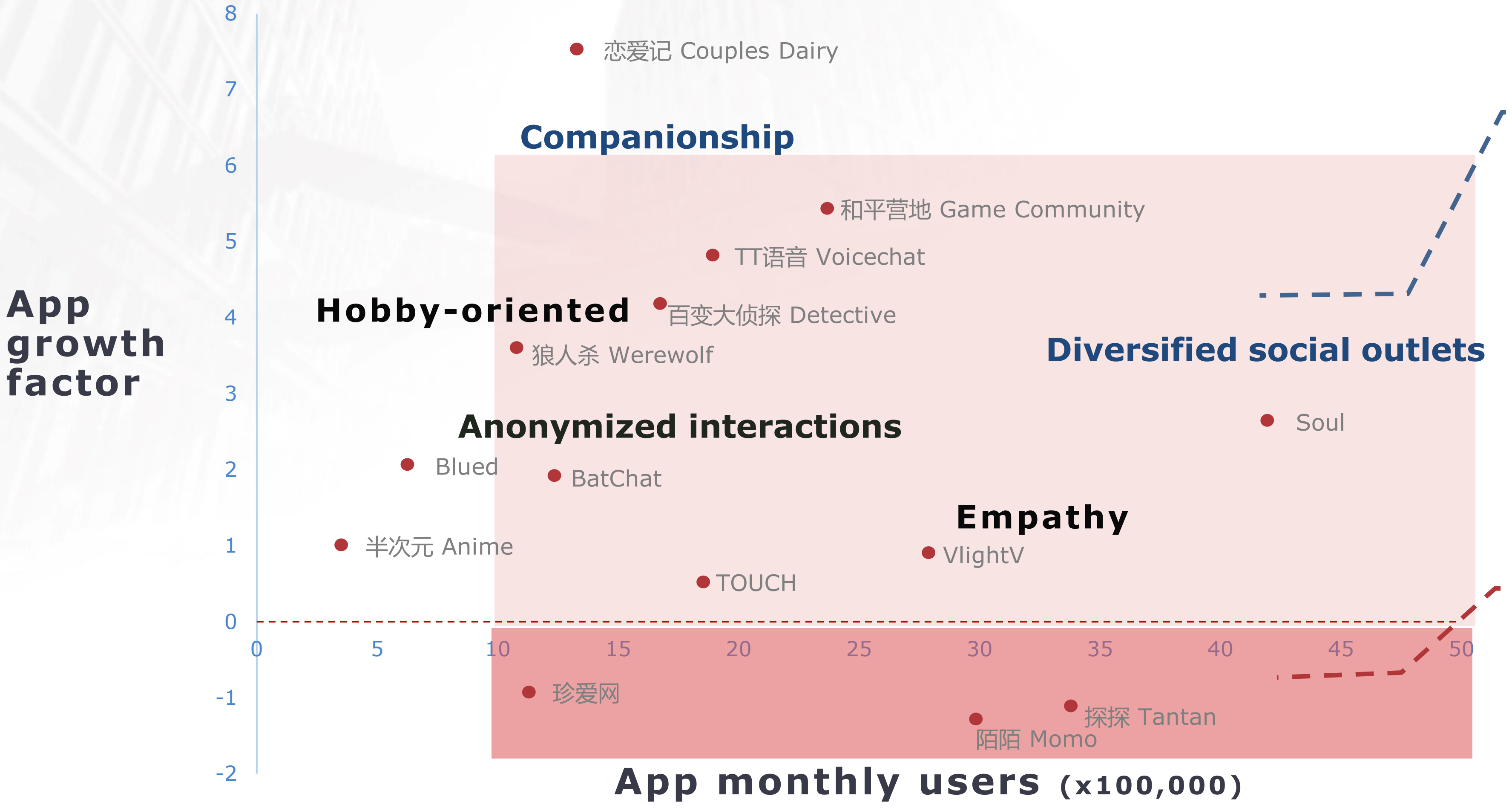
≈ A cross between Instagram, SnapChat and 2D VR Chat in China

02

Socialization Trends: Apps & User Demographics

Study 1: What new social apps are on the rise?

Stranger Social App Trends



Rising social apps
- Companionship
- Hobby/interest-based

Stalled social apps
- Goal-oriented (dating)
- Match-making

Study room apps

Deskmate

Costudy

Party game apps

Ever-Changing Detective

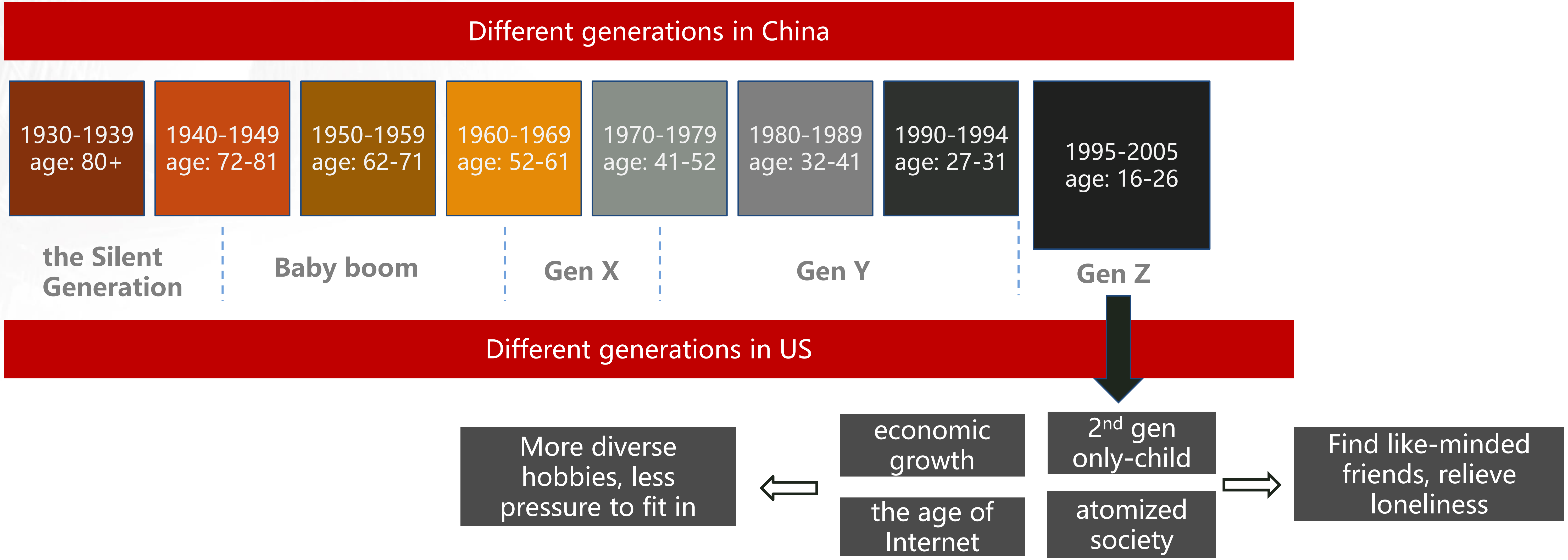
Who's Undercover

Dating & Match-making apps

TanTan

Zhenai.com

Study 2: What Gen Z needs are these apps catering to?



Different generations in China

1930-1939	1940-1949	1950-1959	1960-1969	1970-1979	1980-1989	1990-1994	1995-2005
age: 80+	age: 72-81	age: 62-71	age: 52-61	age: 41-52	age: 32-41	age: 27-31	age: 16-26

the Silent Generation

Baby boom

Gen X

Gen Y

Gen Z

Different generations in US

More diverse hobbies, less pressure to fit in ⇐

economic growth

the age of Internet

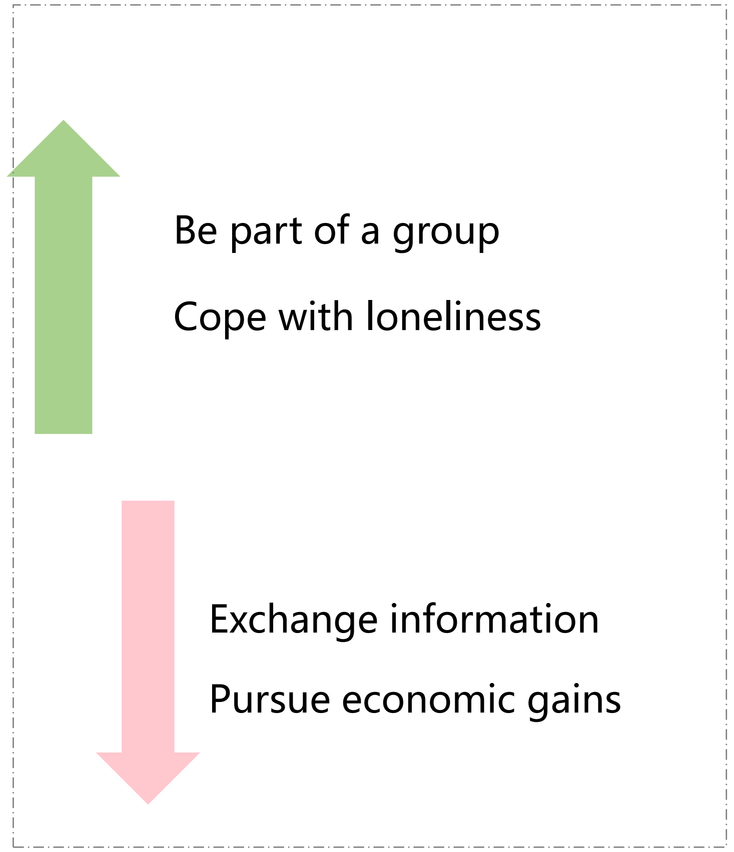
2nd gen only-child

atomized society

⇒ Find like-minded friends, relieve loneliness

Study 2: What Gen Z needs are these apps catering to?

		TGI		
	Social motivations	**Post-2000s generation**	**1990s**	**1980s**
00s	Need help from others	134.5	82.1	86.6
	Be the leader, gain sense of accomplishment/self-worth	120.9	88.4	93.3
	Maintain previously established social relations	110.4	90.2	90.4
	Cope with loneliness	109.9	94.8	94.4
90s	Find a date	110.2	106.3	80.7
	Gain approval and social status	101.7	104.9	91.4
	Find others with similar hobbies	88.6	105.8	100
80s	Exchange information or knowledge	96.7	91	123.5
	Be a part of a team and work towards a common goal	104.3	87	114.7



Be part of a group

Cope with loneliness

Exchange information

Pursue economic gains

03

Companionship Oriented Social Apps

What does "Companionship" mean in social interactions?

Benefit driven,
Result oriented

Emotion driven,
Process oriented

Romance

Find date/partner

TanTan MoMo

Goals

Benefit from collaboration

Zhihu

Hobbies

Have fun, share content

Ever-changing detective Who is Undercover

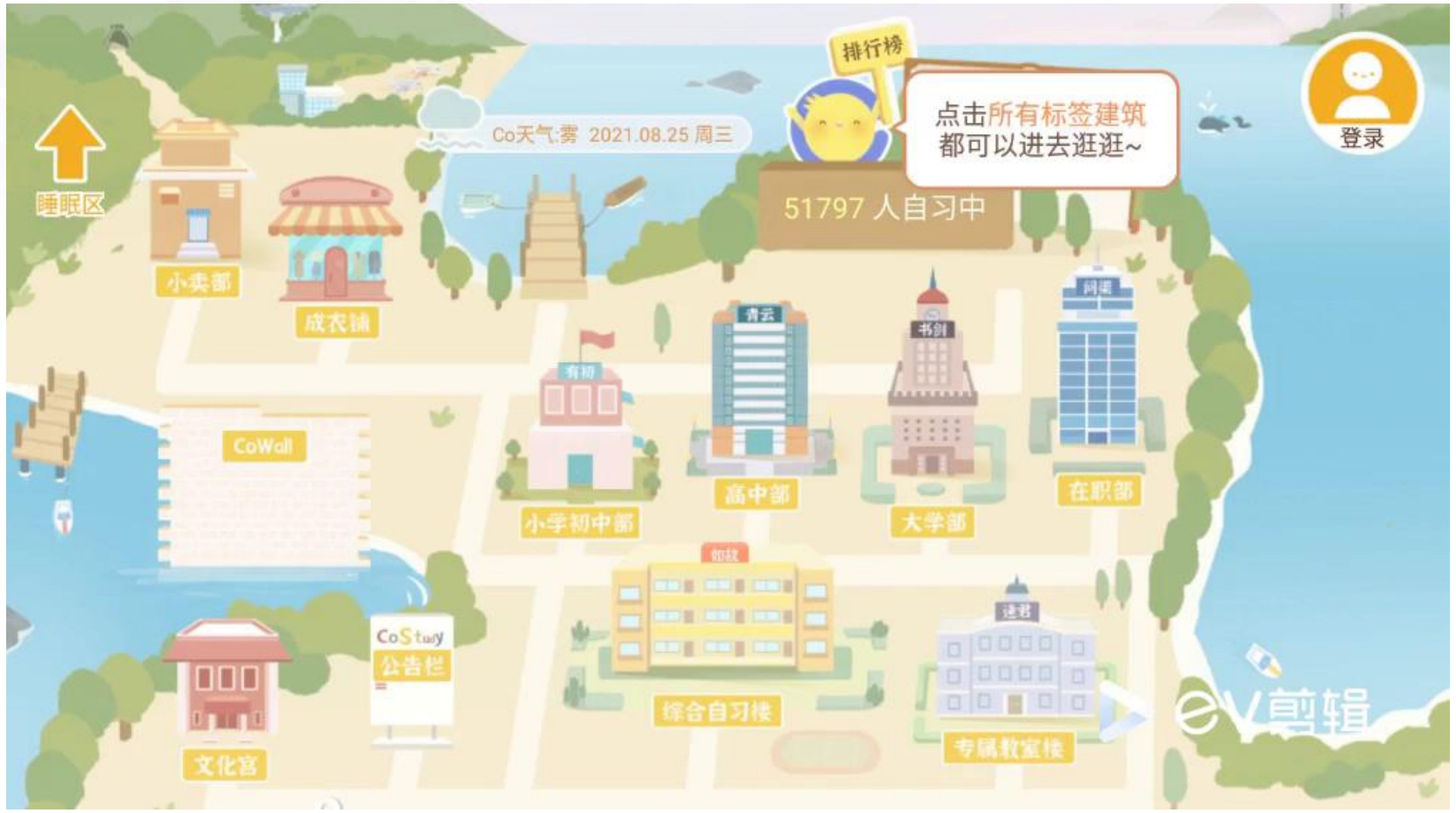
Companion-ship

Share emotions, memories

vlightv Costudy

Companion App#1: Virtual Study Room, Anonymous Live Broadcast

- Virtual study room: Only displays user avatars. Almost no voice chat or messaging. Anonymous companionship, knowing someone is studying beside you.


睡眠区
Co天气:雾 2021.08.25 周三
排行榜
点击所有标签建筑
都可以进去逛逛~
登录
51797 人自习中
小卖部
成衣铺
CoWall
有初
小学初中部
青云
高中部
书剑
大学部
问渠
在职部
如故
综合自习楼
逐君
专属教室楼
CoStudy
公告栏
文化宫
eV剪辑

Deskmate

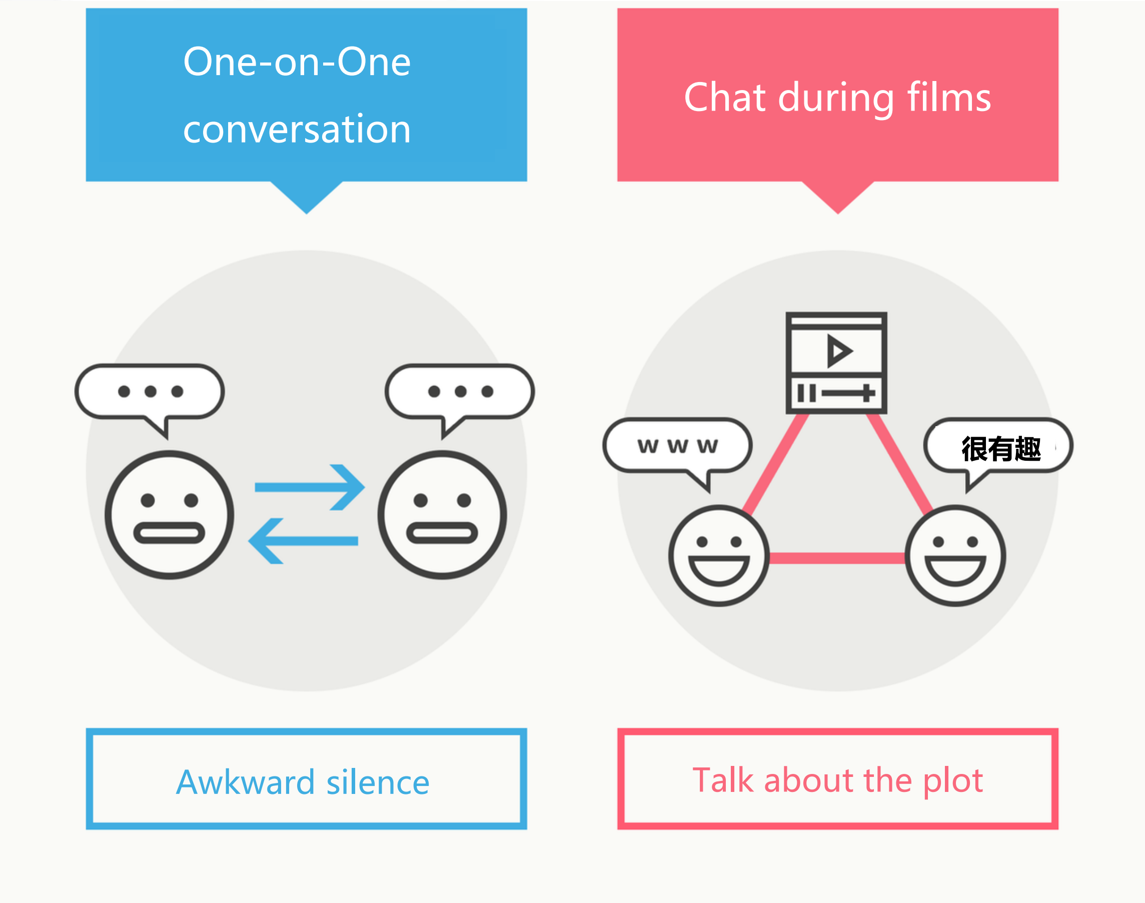
CoStudy

Timing

QQ-Study Room

Companion Apps#2: Talk about movies, just chillin'

- Virtual movie theater: make friends while watching a movie together. Share thoughts on the plot and build emotional bonds.
- Less difficult and stressful to strike up conversations and less awkward during the occasional lull of silence.

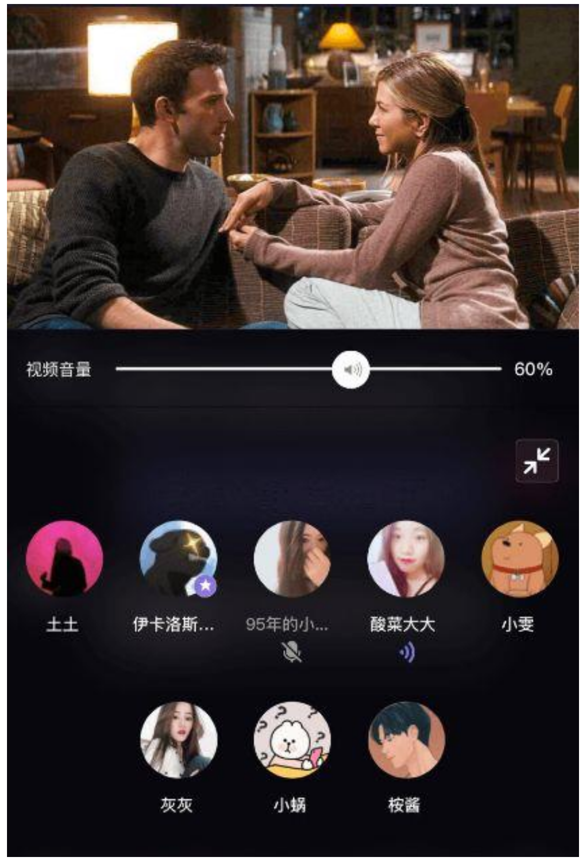


One-on-One conversation

Chat during films

Awkward silence

Talk about the plot



vlightv app

Differences#1: Low barrier to entry

Keeping up appearances

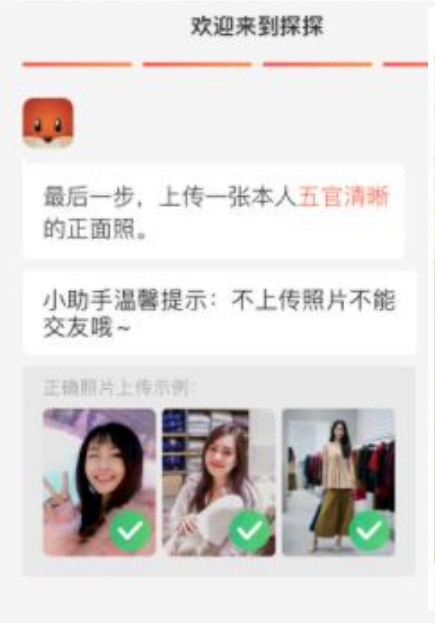
Middle ground

Casual, less stressful

These apps emphasize appearance and wealth and force their users to compare themselves with each other.

Diversified social capital, lower the threshold of social interactions

No social capital involved, you can make friends with anyone without any information

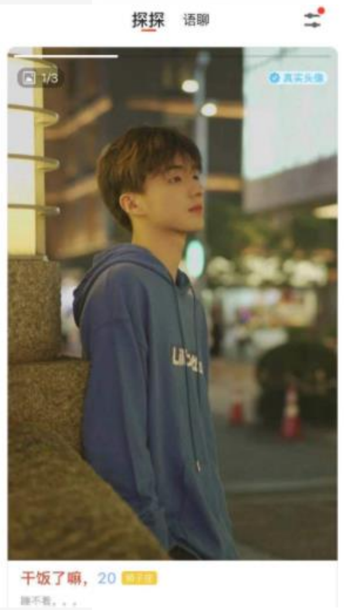

欢迎来到探探

最后一步，上传一张本人五官清晰的正面照。

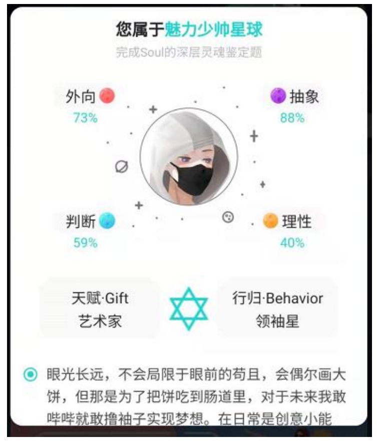
小助手温馨提示：不上传照片不能交友哦～

正确照片上传示例：

users are reuqired to upload a photo of themselves



Swiping


您属于魅力少帅星球

完成Soul的深层灵魂鉴定题

外向 73%

抽象 88%

判断 59%

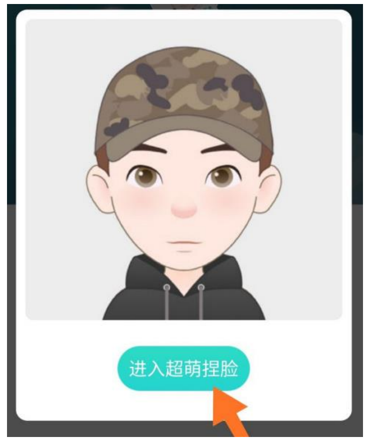
理性 40%

天赋·Gift 艺术家

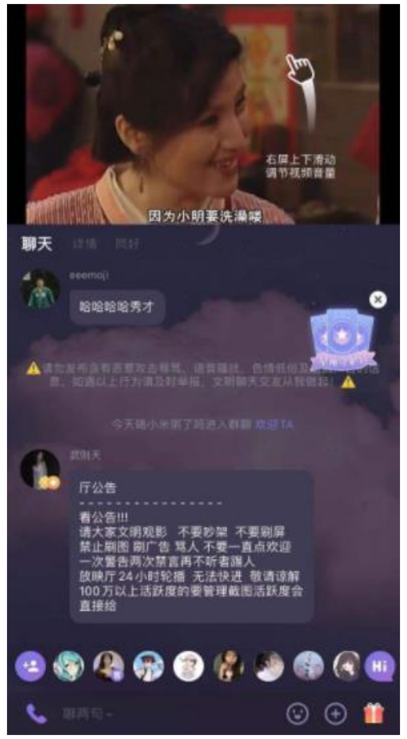
行归·Behavior 领袖星

眼光长远，不会局限于眼前的苟且，会偶尔画大饼，但那是为了把饼吃到肠道里，对于未来我敢哔哔就敢撸袖子实现梦想。在日常是创意小能

matchmaking



Only virtual iamge
create your avatar in Soul



哈哈哈哈秀才

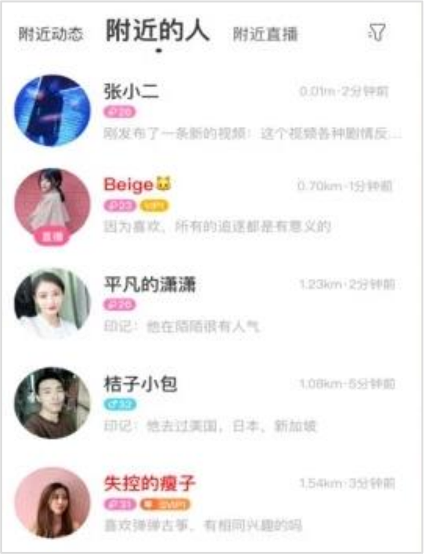
厅公告

看公告!!!
请大家文明观影　不要吵架　不要刷屏
禁止刷图 刷广告 骂人 不要一直点欢迎
一次警告两次禁言再不听者踢人
放映厅24小时轮播　无法快进　敬请谅解
100万以上活跃度的要管理截图活跃度会直接给

Differences#2: Focus on scenarios

Traditional chat box

The venerable chat box


附近动态
附近的人
附近直播

张小二 0.01m·2分钟前
刚发布了一条新的视频：这个视频各种剧情反…

Beige 0.70km·1分钟前
因为喜欢，所有的追逐都是有意义的

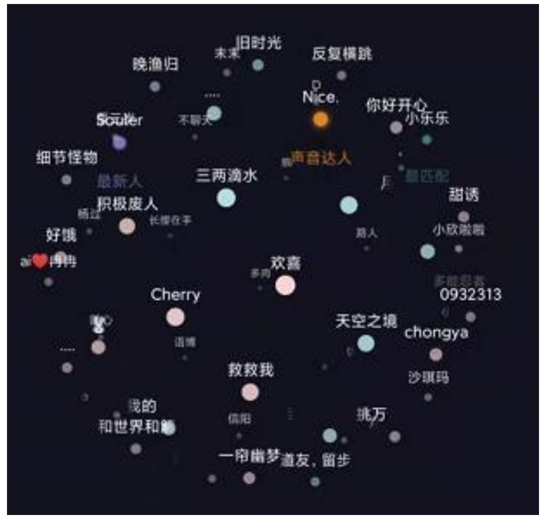
平凡的潇潇 1.23km·2分钟前
印记：他在陌陌很有人气

桔子小包 1.08km·5分钟前
印记：他去过美国，日本，新加坡

失控的瘦子 1.54km·3分钟前
喜欢弹弹古筝，有相同兴趣的吗

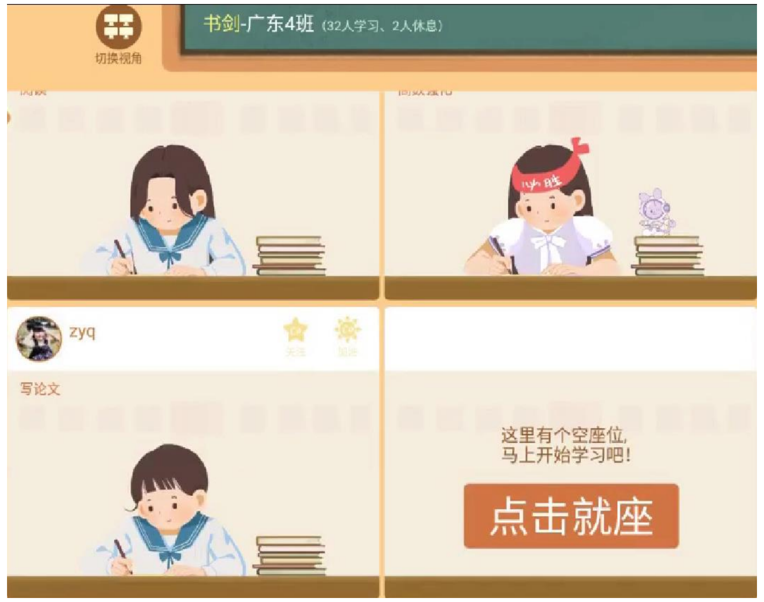
Middle ground

Each dot represents a user


旧时光
晚渔归
反复横跳
Nice.
你好开心
小乐乐
Souler
不聊天
细节怪物
声音达人
三两滴水
甜诱
积极废人
长情在手
好饿
路人
小欧啦啦
ai❤冉冉
欢喜
Cherry
0932313
天空之境
chongya
救救我
沙琪玛
我的
和世界和解
挑万
一帘幽梦
道友，留步

Real-Life Scenarios

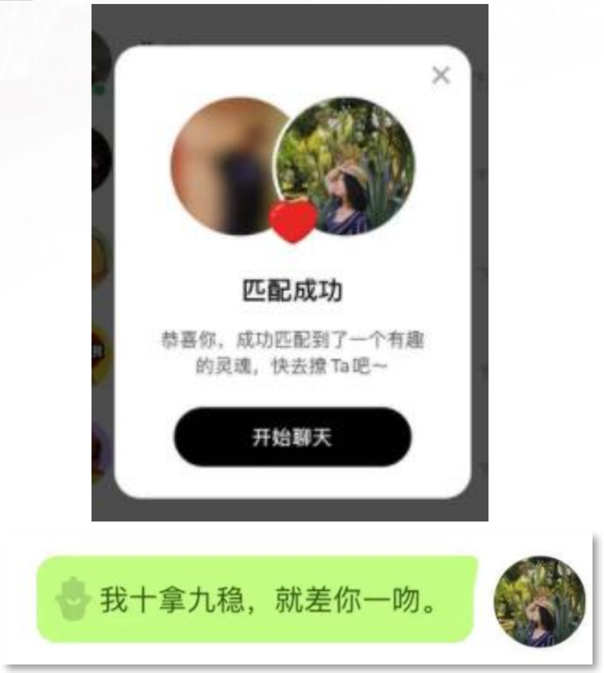
Mimic real-world interactive scenarios


切换视角
书剑-广东4班 (32人学习、2人休息)
zyq
写论文
这里有个空座位，
马上开始学习吧！
点击就座

Differences#3: Emphasize common interests

Accomplishing goals

Use interest as an means to an end, tags for finding romance



匹配成功

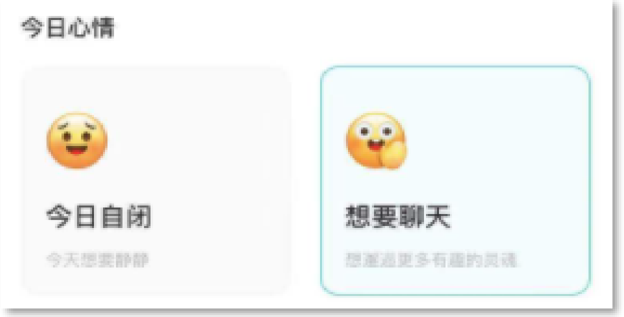
恭喜你，成功匹配到了一个有趣的灵魂，快去撩 Ta 吧～

我十拿九稳，就差你一吻。

complusory matchmaking

Middle ground

More interest-oriented, a diverse range of topics



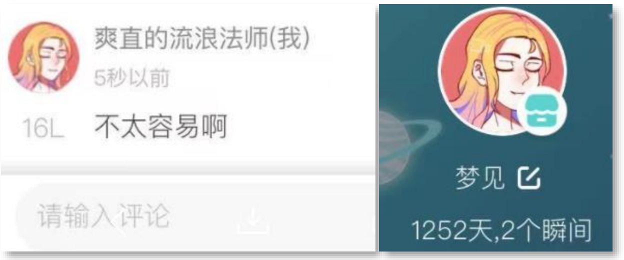
今日心情

今日自闭

今天想要静静

想要聊天

controllable matching switch



爽直的流浪法师(我)

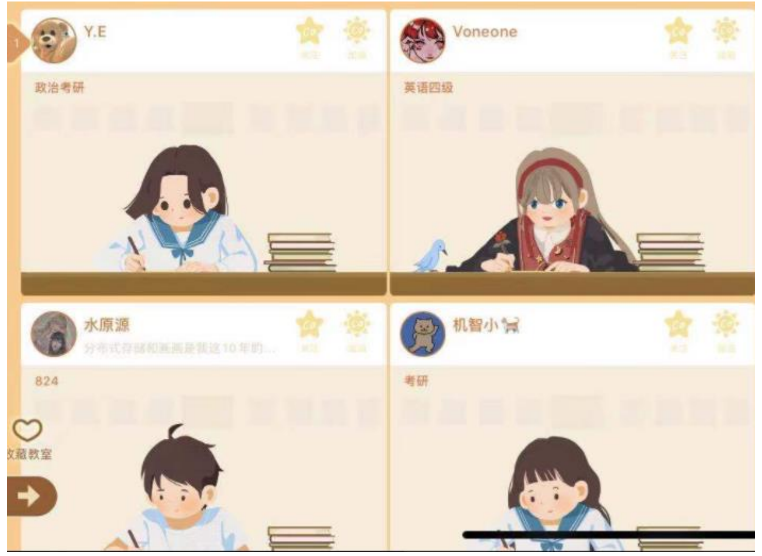
5秒以前

16L 不太容易啊

anonymous comments

Enjoying the process

Not goal-oriented, users don't have to be social to participate



study, watch movies, listen to music

Features of Companionship Social Apps

low barrier to entry, diverse scenarios, focus on common interests

Low barrier

Social interactions not limited by superficial factors.

Diverse scenarios

Enhanced sense of immersion and social atmosphere.

Common interest

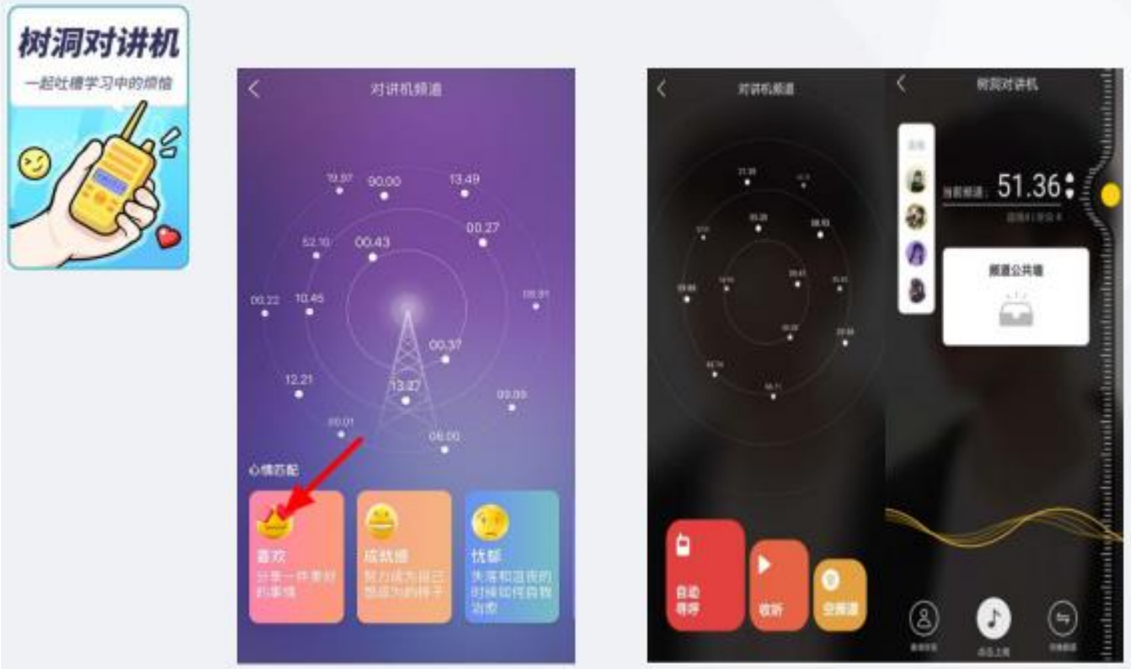
Focus on common interests.

04

Learning from Social Apps

More contextual designs

- **Contextual design: create instanced scenarios that meet player needs for empathy and desire to meet "that special someone‟, rather than matching efficiency**

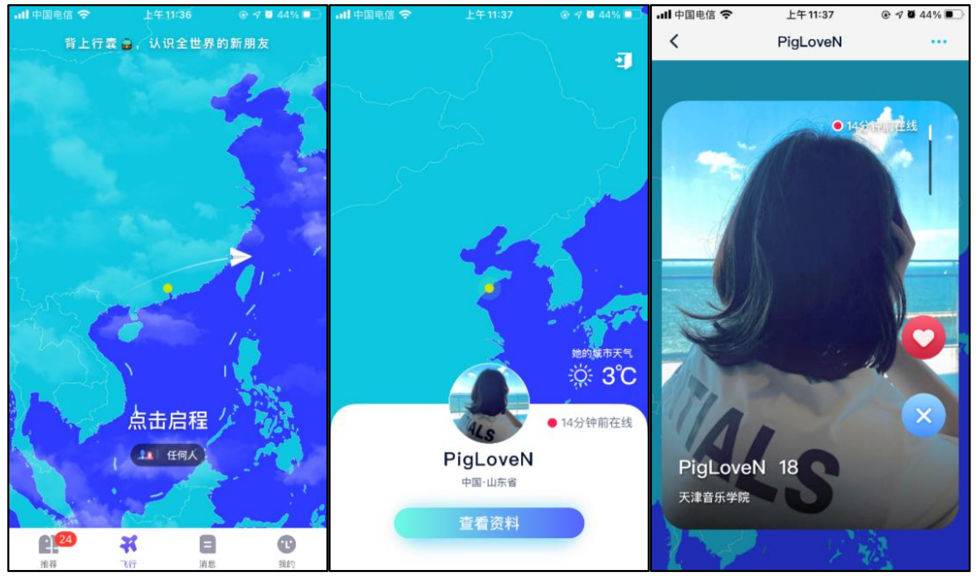


Get matched into chat rooms

Send walkie-talkie style voice messages

Tree-hole voice chat (Timing)

No friend requests, no commitment, just type in your mood and get matched at any time.



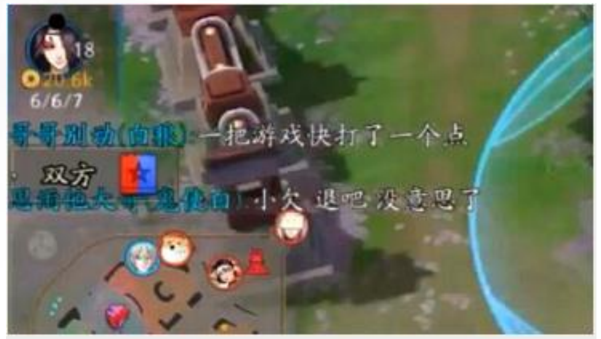
Paper airplane (SheTalk)

Users can travel to a random location on a map and have a 3-minute chat with the person who chose the same city with you in the same time, to create a sense of destiny

Don't make it a win-or-lose situation

- **Soften the competitive side of social interactions, so shy, passive players can enjoy the game for its emotional values**

Passive players don't get a voice



哥哥别动(白眼)：一把游戏快打了一个点

[illegible]：小久 退吧 没意思了

效率低、输了，被队友骂

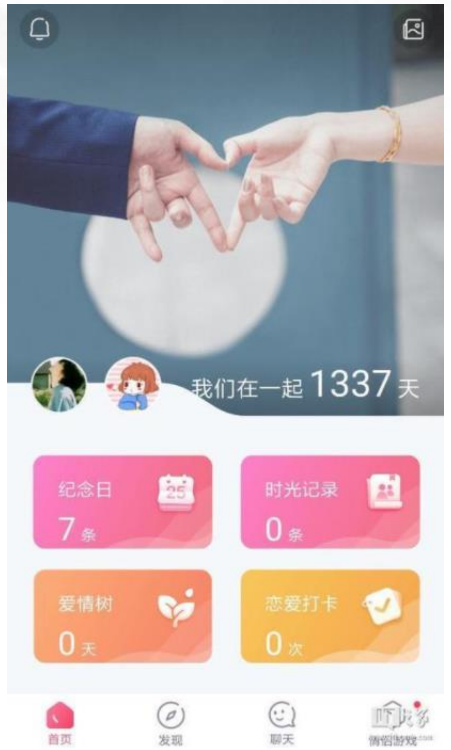
MMORPG & MOBA:
Low-level, underperforming players feel marginalized, and pressured by their clan or team to do better.
They lack the will to express themselves within the in-game social structure.

Giving outlet to express emotional values

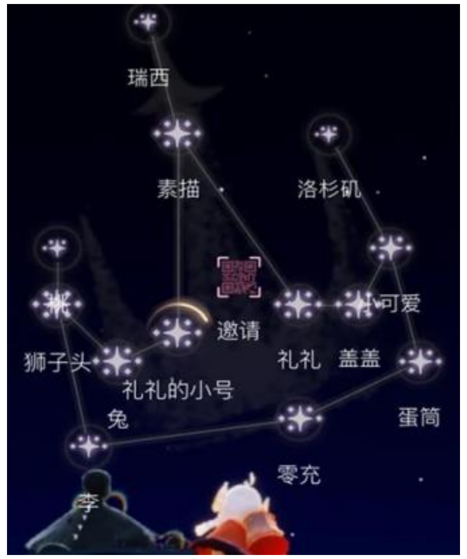
Sky:
Socially passive players (i.e. lower level, new players) accumulate candlelight and hearts during gameplay, which can be used as in-game currency to interact with higher level players

Record memories and shared experiences

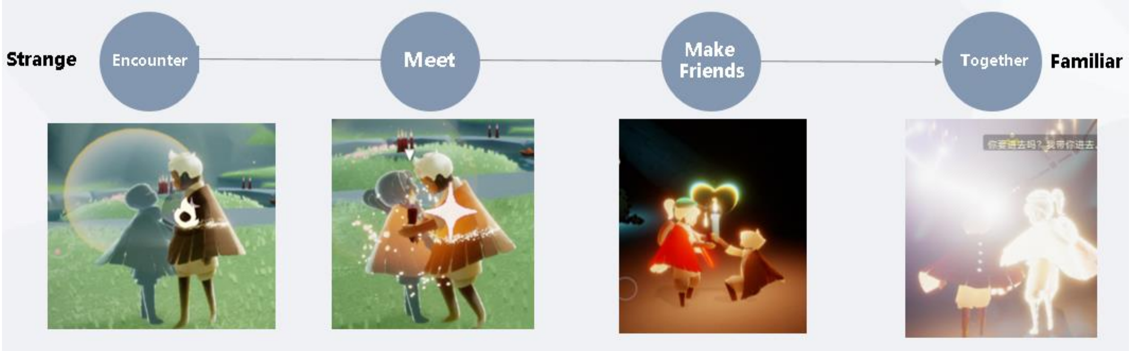
- **Achievement systems and liveop events can make use of recorded memories, to build stronger emotional ties between the player, their friends and the game itself**


我们在一起1337天
纪念日 7条
时光记录 0条
爱情树 0天
恋爱打卡 0次
首页
发现
聊天

Couples diary:
An app to help couples record the details of their relationship


瑞西
素描
洛杉矶
邀请
可爱
狮子头
礼礼的小号
礼礼
盖盖
兔
蛋筒
零充

Sky:
Memory wall remind players of shared experiences with friends


Strange
Encounter
Meet
Make Friends
Together
Familiar

Wrap up

Why pay attention to player social needs?

Chinese Gen Z groups

Be part of a group
Cope with loneliness

Exchange information
Personal gains

What does companionship mean?

- Low barrier
- Diverse scenarios
- Common interests

How this applies to game social designs

- More contextual designs
- Soften the win-or-lose mentality
- Record cherished memories and shared experiences

05

Takeaways

Takeaways — For Game Designers

- Gen-Z changing social expectations: mutual companionship, not personal gains

- To cater to this need, game designers can:

I. Add more interactive scenarios which are separate and unrelated to core gameplay, but meaningful and immersively interactive for players.

II. Do not only make social features about win-or-lose.

III. Add recollection features, photo albums, player storylines to build emotional bonds and help players relive memories of each other‘s company.

Takeaways — For Community Managers

- As Gen Z players become the main audience of most communities, their increasing need to seek for companions deserves attention.
- As a latecomer in the community, the cumulative effect of social capital can hinder the social interaction of Gen Z players.
- To cater to these needs, community managers can:

I. portray themselves as companions and playmates, guiding the way and engaging in dialogue with players.

II. use differentiated events and themes to guide later entrants and allow new players to shine.

THANKS FOR WATCHING

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Overseas: https://www.neteasegames.com/careers

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Facebook

Youtube

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