



CHINA REAL TIME REPORT

First Major WeChat Outage Unleashes Flood of Sad Emoticons

Jul 22, 2013 12:15 pm HKT

0 RESPONSES

This post has been updated since it was first posted. See below.

[Tencent Holdings](#)'s popular WeChat messaging application was down for a portion of users Monday morning, prompting a flurry of frustrated outbursts on social media in a sign of how many in the country have come to rely on the app for communication.

Tencent said on a verified account on [Sina](#)'s Weibo microblogging platform that WeChat and some other Tencent services went down [beginning around 8 a.m.](#) Monday morning due to a malfunction with two optical cables in a server room.



This is the first major outage Tencent's WeChat has experienced since it transformed last year from a messaging application for leading-edge smartphone users to the de facto way to chat on a smartphone in China. The problem demonstrates both how challenging it can be to operate a massively growing online service in a country with almost 600 million Internet users, and just how reliant many in China are on the company's services.

In March, Tencent said it had 194 million monthly active users for the service inside China. In July, it said it has 70 million registered users outside the country.

By 11 a.m. the company said on its account that service to some users had already been restored, and its engineers were working to completely fix the problem.

"We are very sorry for the inconvenience! If we have new information we will promptly notify users. Thank you for your understanding."

If the response to Tencent's [first Sina Weibo post](#) about the outage was any indication, there was no shortage of inconvenience. Put up at 9:26 a.m., the post had already accumulated more than 16,000 comments and had been reposted more than 38,000 times by noon.

The outage is unlikely to chase away users, though repeated server problems or long repair times could impact the app's growth.

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On Sina Corp.'s Weibo microblog service, many users were relieved the problem didn't have to do with their phones or connections, but also angry at the time they spent figuring that out.

"I tried so freaking hard to log on to WeChat but failed. I thought somebody stole my account and asked for money from my friends," [wrote](#) one user under the handle Zhong Hua'er.

Another user [complained about wasting money](#) on data by re-downloading WeChat, and still another wrote: "WeChat you cheated my feelings. I worked on it the whole morning: restart, power off, download, unload, open the Internet access, close it...You need to compensate for the time that I wasted."

Still, the majority of the messages were filled with much weeping and gnashing of teeth, often in the form of rows of various melancholy emoticons.

Commenting on this, user Xiaomiao Laoba perhaps said it best: "The breakdown triggered so much online discussions..... It says we are already in a WeChat society."

[UPDATE 12:30 p.m.: Tencent said [in a Sina Weibo post](#) at 12:20 p.m. that local government construction work on a road led to the severing of two optical cables, ultimately causing the outage. It said it is cooperating with the relevant departments to replace the cables with new ones.]

-- Paul Mozur. Follow him on Twitter [@paulmozur](#)

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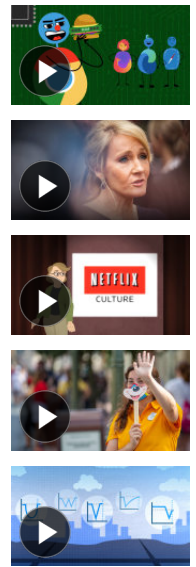
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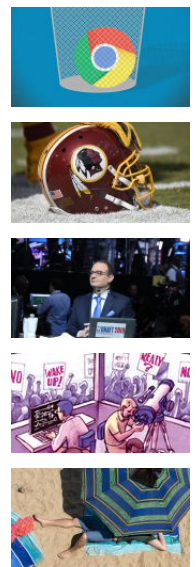
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