



Cultural normativity and identity practices in Chinese livestreaming



MA Thesis

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Abstract

The aim of this study is to explore the operation of normativity and identity practices in Chinese online livestreaming. More specifically, it zooms into the new social relations between female streamer and male viewers embodying elaborate self-presentation and meticulous face work. The theoretical and methodological tools are provided by literature review, digital ethnography and online interviews with two participant streamers. The results encourage the hypothesis that live streamers nowadays considered as a new form successful entrepreneur have created unprecedented sociality in digital China, meanwhile maintaining certain normativity as a necessity in their practices.

Chapter 1. Introduction

This study explores the interactive patterns, identity construction and new forms of sociality in China's online practices, more specifically livestreaming through conducting a digital ethnographic approach. Thanks to the popularization of the internet, mobile technologies and more importantly, an IT industry are booming. In China, among other, a number of live streaming providers have gone viral drawn extensive attention from both the public and the business world. By June 2016, there were about 325 million livestreaming users in China, accounting for nearly a half of the Chinese total netizen's population (CNNIC 2016). Across about 200 livestreaming platforms (iiMedia Research 2016b), there are 4 million participants (both streamers and viewers) simultaneously present in about 3000 livestreaming rooms at peak times. Given the enormous scale of both the livestreaming users' population and livestreaming-related services in China, this mode of online practice is playing a vital role in people's everyday life and becoming a major mode of entertainment and communication among strangers.

The practices of livestreaming have attracted some academic attention. According to Lee, Yen, Chiu, King & Fu (2018), in the course of this interactional practice, viewers are given the right to choose various virtual gifts from a list which value varying amount of money and 'send' it to the streamers they are keen on. Zhu, Yang and Dai (2017) illustrated gift-sending as a new online interaction between streamers and viewers, in which the gift value sum is closely related with the popularity of different livestreaming channels. Furthermore, Lee, Yen, Chiu, King and Fu (2018) found out the main motive of livestreaming in China is gaining economic profit instead of merely sharing daily experience. And streamers' online presentations are specifically tailored by interaction with viewers to boost tipping behaviors. Lu, Xia, Heo and Wigdor (2018) also explored the motivations of active users in livestreaming and the main differences of livestreaming between North America and China in terms of content types. Additionally, they discovered that viewers' engagement is playing an indispensable role in the gift-sending and fan group-chat. Despite a new socio-technological phenomenon livestreaming has brought, Chen, Hu, Lu, and Hong (2018) indicated the beneficial effect of adopting livestreaming strategy on online commerce. This online practice directly leads to a boom of live streaming providers in China, an increasing population of young people, especially young women, to embark this business, which mainly revolves around a high personal profile, stressing the importance of "visibility and self-disclosure" (Li, 2017). It is revealed that feminine

beauty is employed as a form of capital to exert tremendous economic impact in this form of woman-to-man online interaction (ibid). Li also have shown that streamers have employed ‘enough’ semiotic resources to index certain cultural identities, orienting themselves to the normality of communication. This is echoing the streamers in my study who are expected to demonstrate the right amount of specific features so to be recognized as a ‘good’ or ‘popular’ streamer. This is delicate work in which measures have to be mastered to both stand out as a successful streamer but not cross the lines of public morality. In this sense, we witness the emergence of a new order of social actions brought by a technologically mediated infrastructure – the internet – revolving around a new form of social relationship shaped by the specific patterns of communication in live streaming. It can be seen from the previous research this type of online practice has enabled new forms of social relationship and identity expression

Although live streaming has opened up a new business opportunity and enriched netizen’s leisure life, critical voices emerged in the meantime. Especially from normative journalistic studies, it demonstrated that the negative effect brought from current live streaming phenomenon has undermined social cultures and people’s way thinking and behaving. Xiao (2017) points out that online culture in livestreaming has been degraded due to the pursuit of economic benefits, the content and patterns of some livestreaming providers turn to be vulgar and obscene in order to draw attentions from a large number of audiences. Yang (2017) also argued that this popular online phenomenon is facing some difficulties in terms of lack of surveillance for its incomplete operation, however its potential and development are evidently unstoppable.

These critical voices towards livestreaming seem to imply that this cultural form is challenging the mainstream sociocultural normativity in contemporary China, as it is considered ‘vulgar’. Nevertheless, the IT industry indeed embraces the huge economic profits brought by the business. In an attempt to complement previous research and respond to the normative discussions about livestreaming, this study aims to probe deeper into the cultural normativity and identity practices operating in the live streaming platforms and within the viewers’ community. Many contents can be streamed online and the videos are presented in various forms. This research focuses on the most popular and lucrative category called showroom livestreaming (秀场直播- xiuchangzhibo). In this type of videos, the streamers are mostly young women who possess charming appearance according to the aesthetic standards in mainstream China. They chat with a large number of viewers meanwhile sing or dance in front of a webcam (Li, 2017).

In particular, the study firstly examines the backstage preparation for presenting an elaborate self-image in front of the camera. In this way, we can see how dominant conceptions about physical beauty and personality are performed by female streamers with a personal accent. Moreover, I shall also address how female streamers negotiate the ambivalence and contradiction between platform regulations and viewer community culture. This leads to the theorization of new types of sociality enabled by livestreaming practices.

After the current chapter 1, Chapter 2 will focus on elaborating the theoretical framework utilized to contextualize normality of platforms, streamers' preparation and interactions with audiences. Then chapter 3 will explain the notion of digital ethnography and how I will apply it in the analysis, as well as lay out the whole process of research reported in this study. In chapter 4 data analysis will be zooming into 4 dimensions of the data collected from digital ethnography. Firstly, a number of restrictions of platforms and rules of viewers' community as prerequisites for streamers to proceed certain activities in their chatrooms while streaming. Secondly, delicate face work in front and behind the camera presented by the streamer is investigated based on Goffman's dramaturgical theory which unveils how the elaborate preparation before the performance should be done and the importance to face-saving when encountering unexpected situations. While conforming to the 'normal things' everyone is doing, streamers' authenticity has to be shown to stand out and correspond with their own personality. Thirdly, an unprecedented interactive pattern generated from this online practice will be identified during the active interaction between streamers and viewers, as well as between two streamers. Fourthly, I will attempt to investigate the underlying economic motive and career perspective given by the participant streamer. In chapter 5, discussion will be drawn by giving results and answering research question. Then the conclusion will provide the limitations of this study and recommendations for future research.

Chapter 2. Theoretical Framework

2.1 Introduction

This chapter will offer the main theoretical and argumentative dimensions of the study, and it builds what we have seen in Introduction. In the first part of identity construction in the backstage, I will start with an important theory with regard to ‘dramaturgy’ presented by Goffman to indicate how streamers distinguish their behaviors in front and beyond the camera. In order to be recognized who they are and what they are doing, streamers have to present right amount of semiotic features namely ‘enoughness’ pointed out by Blommaert and Varis and embody the authenticity throughout their presentation. Additionally, a new form of interactive patterns shaped in this online practice will be shown in different space-time, in which we will see face work as a crucial strategy for streamers to maintain their popularity and harmony in the chat rooms. Meanwhile, streamers’ online self-presentations are likely to differ greatly in various chronotopes which accordingly lead to different groups of viewers. Therefore, we will see how Blommaert stressed the importance and principles of combining Garfinkel’s theory with online phenomenon that groups and new rules are generated after the implementation of certain social behaviors. Furthermore, Li’s work grounded a basis for this study. I will illustrate his main conclusion and my arguments from different perspective to complement his study.

2.2 Identity construction in the backstage

2.2.1 Dramaturgical theory

This study mainly draws its theoretical insights from a dramaturgical analogy defined by American sociologist Goffman (1959). In his identity theories, human identity presentations are likened to theatric performances, in which we act upon social scripts in front of a specific audience. He argued that human social behavior is interactionally organized and proceeds on the basis of anticipations of the other’s reactions. One of the most useful notions designed by Goffman with respect to identity work is ‘dramaturgy’, which denotes the performative nature of our daily identity presentations and equates social actions with social ‘acting’. Two stages are emphasized that the front one is where

performers (individuals) display their selves on stage in front of the audiences, noticeably it is also where the ideal self and desired impression are highlighted. Another aspect of impression management raised by Goffman is self-disclosure that individuals can regulate what others know about them, namely one is freely to reveal the amount of information about the self to others. It is also the breadth and the depth of one's self an individual is willing to give to achieve a certain level of intimacy. Additionally, human identities are cast through social performances and decided by the audience's reception of such performances. But in order for that to be successful, people need to be able to tune into their audience's expectations. They need, in other words, to be aware of the normative codes that govern acceptable social performance. In the meantime, audiences not only receive an idealized view from performer but of the character who is thought to be portrayed by the performance. One condition has to be sustained that the audience is kept at certain distance from performers, who can therefore maximally maintain the performed illusion (Manning, 2005). The distance between performers and audiences is referred to the "front" of Goffman's dramaturgical theory. Manning (1991) explained that this "front" comprises stage props (such as desks for lawyers) and appropriate facial expressions and role attitudes.

In my study, I shall draw inspiration from Goffman's dramaturgical theory, focusing on the identity construction comprises unseen backstage self- preparation. Manning pointed out a certain form of distance plays an important role throughout this practice. In my study, streamers enact an active performer with physical isolation from audiences in front of the camera. I must be more specific now with respect to enough semiotic features and authenticity I shall address.

2.2.2 Enoughness and authenticity

Based on the dramaturgical theory from Goffman, we can see performers' preparation of their unique persona vary by presenting small accents and small deviations from one another. However, in order to be recognized by audiences of what genres they choose, what they are doing, performers have to showcase enough details to be correctly comprehended what their purposes and behaviors entail. This reminds us of Blommaert and Varis's (2011: 144) enoughness, identity practices are "discursive orientations towards sets of features that are (or can be) seen as emblematic." In this sense, to be considered as an outstanding performer, one has to comply with the semiotic array of features and discursive practices that leads to 'enough' individual identity features – not too little and not too much. To get close to such level of enoughness and with that of authenticity, one needs to have a

good control on the dose of ‘enoughness’ that ought to be perpetually adjusted, reinvented and amended (Blommaert and Varis 2011). Nevertheless, performers can construct small spaces of uniqueness on the base of being recognized in order to stand out and enable others to find it more interesting than most, thus to elaborate a more layered and mysterious character to be remembered and likely to reach certain goals in reality. Blommaert and Varis (2015) pointed out the importance of ‘authenticity’ that enough emblematic features have to be presented to be ratified as an authentic member of an identity category. “The features rarely occur as a random or flexible complex; when they appear they are presented (and oriented towards) as ‘essential’ combinations of features that reflect, bestow and emphasize ‘authenticity’.” (2015: 6) In which we can see that authenticity meanwhile plays an indispensable role in performer’s self-presentation on stage.

Van Leeuwen (2001) illustrated the conceptions of authenticity in terms of different contexts. He further addressed the emerging influence of media in reinforcing how mass public perceive and judge authenticity. He suggested that interestingly, when performance encounters authenticity which is bound to social norms of either too much variation or excessive restraint will lead to failure of authenticity. Therefore, he demonstrated that authenticity is tightly relative to norms as judgements differ when such norms are changing. Such ever-changing authenticity is also applied in nowadays internet world. Marwick (2013) examined the relativity of authenticity in fashion blogging with audiences and commodities. She unveiled the contraction between fashion blogger’s self-promotion as marketing strategy for economic profit and personal perspective with regard to fashion. It brings a quest for how authenticity be presented in online sphere with intangible and non-physical contact, does authenticity of online identity construction still exist?

Blommaert and Varis (2011) argued that recognizability occurs only if enough and authentic identity features are presented. However, van Leeuwen pointed out the variability of authenticity is embodied with different norms. While Marwick’s view of authenticity in terms of fashion blogging is relevant with more elements, audiences and commodities. The streamers in my study possess enough semiotic features of being recognized authentically, on the other hand they also try to elaborate their self-image based their own uniqueness. I must now specify the new forms of interaction I will address.

2.3 Interactive patterns in online chronotopes

2.3.1 Face-work

Advancing from dramaturgical model, Goffman (1967) addressed impression management in the frame of ‘face-work’, in which he defined face as “the positive social value a person effectively claims for himself by the line others assume he has taken during a particular contact “(1967: 5). Then he introduced the notion of ‘line’, by which he meant “a pattern of verbal and nonverbal acts by which he (the interactant) expresses his view of the situation and through this his evaluation of the participants, especially himself” (ibid). Goffman argued that only through a certain line that was decipherable to others can a person effectively claim a specific face. As the line is context sensitive, one’s face based upon it is to be sustained in the dynamics of encounters. In our daily interaction with others, it is very likely to encounter in wrong face or out of face by accident, coupled with the feelings of shame and inferiority or feel bad to be judged by others. In order to sustain the “face” and rescue self-reputation, it is necessary and effective to employ face-work. Ting-Toomey (1985, 1988) also presented face-negotiation theory, which confirmed “face” is a vulnerable identity-based resource owing to its tendency to be either fostered or threatened in any uncertain social situation. Both Goffman and Ting-Toomey demonstrated different cultures and individuals possess their own characteristic repertoire of face-saving practices. Different cultural values are one of the main reasons accounting for the diversity of solutions. In my study, face work is employed by streamers as an effective tactic to improve their online ideal self and eliminate or diminish any face threatening situations they might encounter with a large number of viewers.

2.3.2 From chronotopes to groups

To the extent that the online infrastructures have brought new phenomena to societies, both online and offline have experienced a new form of social relations and interpersonal interactions. These innovations do have their specificities though: the online world has enabled new forms of interaction, of social group formation, of identity performance, of knowledge and capital production and distribution (Li, 2017). I will engage in the chapter 4 with highly specific online environments which we can best imagine as ‘chronotopes’(Bakhtin 1981,1984; cf. Blommaert and De Fina 2017): space-time arrangements in which specific norms operate, generating specific forms of identity and adequate conduct for those inhabiting them. We will see how much specific normativity – e.g. those

of a livestreaming chatroom in my data analysis chapter – impose such normative orders onto both streamers and participants, especially producing specific forms of affordances and constraints on streamers’ self-presentation in front of the webcam. This online practice inhabits specific chronotopes that impose “conditions on who could act, how such actions would be normatively structured, and how they would be normatively perceived by others” (Blommaert 2017a:96) As argued by Blommaert and Varis,

“any aspect of human life can now be organized into structured and ordered mini-systems, which we called elsewhere ‘micro-hegemonies’” (2015:18).

We can also regard different online practices as replete with micro-hegemonies in which

“it is clear that identity as a singular notion has outlasted its usefulness – people define their ‘identity’ (singular) in relation to a multitude of different niches – social ‘spheres’ in Bakhtin’s famous terms – and this is a plural term. One can be perfectly oneself while articulating sharply different orientations in different domains of life or on different issues” (2015:5).

For instance, a businessman can be very assertive and severe to deal with daily job affairs and formal conferences whereas he can also alter to an image of playing with his kids by making funny face and joking hard. Furthermore, Blommaert (2018) combined Garfinkel’s central institutions with new forms of online analysis. He designed 4 lines of principles to investigate how “group is a communicatively organized and ratified set of social relationships”. Namely, active groupness or sociation generate hand in hand with order forms of communicative behavior. Garfinkel emphasized that rules can only make sense when social action is implemented which illustrates the necessity of situated social action which emerge groups and subsequently forms of order.

I adopt the concept of chronotope from Blommaert and Varis to demonstrate digital affordance creates an overall optimal environment for thriving livestreaming business, while on the other hand rules and normativity deployed in different livestreaming providers compel both streamers and viewers to follow. And within the live streaming interactions, certain interactive and behavioral patterns form specific fans group in which the orders and privilege are distinguished from excluded members. In this study, I will also focus on the economic drive for streamers to embark this industry and how most of female streamers employ their physical appearance as an indispensable tool to be successful. Let me now turn to this point.

2.3.3 Feminine beauty as commodities online

My study is greatly influenced by Li (2017)'s work who concluded the importance of feminine beauty as commodities through various online practices in digital China nowadays. He has specifically discussed the identity construction of those female streamers and interactions between them and audiences to reach a desirable economic outcome. By conducting an ethnographic investigation and thorough analysis, Li gained in-depth insights of the interactive patterns between female streamers and male audiences which becomes a new form of social relations of avoiding the moral judgment and stigmatization normally be deemed in offline. However, the entangled power relation among platform owner, female streamer and male audiences is not specified in Li's analysis. Also, importantly Li's study does not explore how female streamers prepare their identity construction at backstage and beyond the screen. Therefore, the current study tries to complement the previous research by focusing on both the offline preparation and the power negotiation among multiple roles in the livestreaming culture. It will take a different perspective onto the live streaming domain, leading to my research question: how does normativity of online representation shape and intertwine with live steamers' self-disclosure and how the interactive patterns in live streaming create a new form of relationship sociality?

I will shed lights on the questions of firstly how current restrictions from digital providers imposed on streamers affect their behavioral patterns and interactions with audiences; secondly, digging into the elaborate back stage preparation of female streamers before showcasing their optimal self-presentation in front of the audiences through the camera. It is the aspect that Li as a man is difficult to approach as female streamers might be discreet and remained when he interviews them. Additionally, he does not possess women's sensitivity about cosmetics, dressings and certain nuances. Thirdly, I will disclose another form of interaction between streamers themselves besides the normal pattern between streamers and viewers. Last but not the least, it is also important to see how these ladies as partly entrepreneur see this emergent but bombing business.

Chapter 3. Methodology

3.1 Introduction

My research trajectory has been started by recalling my personal experience of seeing and partly participating in once livestreaming activity of my friend about 5 years ago. However, I was not paying much attention to this online phenomenon due to aware of the ever-changing nature of online practices. Surprisingly, not only the prosperity of livestreaming did not cease, but it has been lasting for years and become one of the most popular online entertainments nowadays in China. Therefore, I was determined to conduct a research with respect to livestreaming in online China. This study investigates profound cultural normativity and identity practices in livestreaming platforms and within viewers' community by ethnographic approach. In this chapter, I shall illustrate two main sections: digital ethnography and method, the latter comprises participants, field site and data collection.

3.2 Digital ethnography

I have utilized digital ethnography as the main research approach for investigating live streaming phenomenon in digital China. Traditional ethnography, according to Bryman (2015: 432) is a research method in which the researcher spends “an extended period of time” to immerse him/herself in a specific social setting in order to develop “an understanding of the culture of the group’s and people’s behavior within the context of that culture”. As increasing social interactions occurs on various types of digital media nowadays, ethnographic approach has been adopted by a growing number of researchers to investigate online cultural and communicative practices. This research approach has emerged to different forms, such as ‘digital ethnography’ (Murthy 2008), ‘virtual ethnography’ (Hine 2000), ‘cyberethnography’ (Robinson & Schulz 2009), ‘discourse-centered online ethnography’ (Androutsopoulos 2008), ‘internet ethnography’ (boyd 2008; Sade-Beck 2004), ‘ethnography on the internet’ (Beaulieu 2004), ‘ethnography of virtual spaces’ (Burrell 2009), ‘ethnographic research on the internet’ (Garcia et al. 2009), ‘internet-related ethnography’ (Postill and Pink 2012) and ‘netnography’ (Kozinets 2009). Despite various labels share the resembling

implication of this method, Varis & Hou (2019) points out the advantage of utilizing ‘digital’ instead of ‘online’ dimension as the offline context should not be excluded in the course of research. According to Kaur-Gill & Dutta (2017), digital ethnography is originated from traditional ethnography, addressing questions of social relationships, interaction and so forth in digitalized spheres. Thanks to the development of internet, unprecedented social relations and behaviors that have never existed before become pervasive nowadays, which meanwhile facilitates the rise of digital ethnography. However, no matter online or offline, Singer (2009) addresses the essential role of culture that cannot be neglected while investigating holistic phenomenon in a community. In the case of my research in which is revolving around a new form of identity construction and sociality in live streaming context where delicate work of self-presentation from live streamers display instantly interact with mass viewers through camera. In the meantime, viewers constitute certain volume of communities to support the live streamers through sending virtual gifts.

3.3 Method

The first impression about livestreaming I can recall ascends to 2016 when I was accomplishing my bachelor in China. The advent and pervasion of livestreaming at that time opened up opportunities for a large number of young people to follow this emerging trend and increase their popularity in social media platforms. Although I was not interested in this trend, it seemingly crept into every corner of my life. I specifically remember when I was proceeding regular dance training as a team leader, few of the members from dance team were always livestreaming our dance practice by putting their phones in the front table and talking to the viewers while taking a break. It is noted that those girls are all deemed as in line with the feminine beauty standard in China and mostly active in their social media accounts. I did not pay much attention on livestreaming industry regardless of it has been undergoing its flourish in China these few years except coming across some related news. Until I read a PhD dissertation from Kunming Li, the former researcher from the same faculty with me in Tilburg University of Humanities and Digital Science School, who investigated the Chinese women’s discursive-semiotic and economic practices regarding the capitalization of feminine beauty in digital China (Li, 2017). One of the chapters discussing about the livestreaming phenomenon in China especially drew my attention. Li’s dissertation highly inspired me of choosing this as the topic of my Master Thesis and evoked my interest on gaining deeper insights about this incredibly popular online activity.

3.3.1 Participants

The time hugely aroused my attention regarding this phenomenon was when one of my best friend was live streaming in front of me while we hung out. That was the first time I witnessed the backstage of livestreaming, namely closely observed how a relatively popular live streamer proceeded her livestreaming activity in offline world, how she behaved in front of the camera and interacted with continuously visiting viewers in her virtual chat room. Therefore, I decided to invite her as my first and main participant streamer to conduct digital ethnography after I was determined to investigate livestreaming as my thesis topic. After talking to her through WeChat, the largest Chinese social media platform about my interest and purpose, she gave the consent of allowing me to take screen record and screenshots while she is livestreaming, record the interview conversation with her and roughly introduce her background without revealing her real name. Jinliyuan is the nickname she uses as a streamer in the livestreaming platform. She graduated from Shenzhen University (a University located in Shenzhen, Guangdong Province, China) accomplishing Music Performance (pop singing) bachelor degree and has learnt a variety of dance styles since very young age.

Xiaoxiaosu, a friend also colleague of Jinliyuan in livestreaming from the same media company. As an observer, I firstly saw her in the PK one of the main livestreaming activities between her and Jinliyuan. I contacted Jinliyuan to ask her willingness of participating in my study. After obtaining permission from her through Jinliyuan, I added her on WeChat for further interview with her and started observing her streaming. Livestreaming business is currently all of her financial resource, but meanwhile she is looking for another job due to her awareness concerning the instability of this industry. But she claims to keep doing livestreaming as a part-time job when she finds another job to just reduce the original time of streaming.

3.3.2 Field site

In the first period of my fieldwork, both Jinliyuan and Xiaoxiaosu had been working as full-time online live streamers in Yizhibo by having a contract with a media company. However, they respectively migrated to different livestreaming providers in the latter period of my observation. Jinliyuan started livestreaming in Yingke in the end of March meanwhile remained in Yizhibo. In the end of May, she quitted Yizhibo and completely migrated to Yingke and Douyin, internationally

known as TikTok specialized for short-video sharing as well as live streaming. Another streamer Xiaoxiaosu quitted Yizhibo in the end of March and migrated to Tiktok as well.

During the observation, I noticed that Jinliyuan had created an exclusive WeChat fans group for viewers whose user level reach certain degree and become true love fans of her. Therefore, I asked her permission for joining that WeChat group for my study. After she added me in that group, my field site expanded to another social media platform except merely livestreaming platforms. As Hou (2018) pointed out that the social practices on the internet are more complicated than offline sites. Mobility and connections should be considered in the study of online activities (Hine, 2015). Followed by Buscher and Urry (2009) that a mobile strategy should be adapted in ethnography, where researchers follow the movement of people and ideas. In this regard, my study field is conducted across multiple social media platforms.

3.3.3 Data collection

Observation

The main instrument applied in this study for data collection is observation. The time of observation started around October, 2018. After taking an online audio call with Jinliyuan, I acquired the information of her streamer account number and the livestreaming platform she was using. During the observation, I have combined ‘lurking’ and ‘interacting’ stance as my main participation. Lurking offers me the chance to “record information as it occurs,” avoiding potential data manipulations resulting from methodic intrusions (Creswell 2014: 191). Interactive observations are made as an in-depth follow-up investigation, additionally viewers’ name will be seen by the streamer when they enter into chat room, Jinliyuan specifically shows her warm greetings to me when my user name is shown on the screen. Therefore, I usually interact a little bit when I enter her chat room and then stop sending messages.

In the words of Hine,

“Ethnography can be time-shifted so that the ethnographer’s engagement can occur after the events with which they engage happened for participants. Ethnographer and participants no longer need to share the same time frame” (Hine 2000: 23).

Thanks to the development of technology, different kinds of screen recorder application have emerged which increases the convenience of digital fieldwork, in my case, I realized observing live

streaming every day at certain time is hugely time consuming and sometimes not many new things come up which might lead to self-frustration and feeling of time-wasting. However, with the help of screen recorder application, no matter in smart phone or computer, everything displayed on the screen is able to be preserved for a certain period of time. The screen recorder I use is called ApowerREC which enables users to record videos of computer screen, and also include audio from the computer and/or from a microphone. In order to analyze the data and put it on writing, screenshots were also taken during the observation and screen records watching.

Interviews

Li (2017) points out that observation has its limitations, despite its practicability and the important role it plays in ethnographic studies. Firstly, numerous implications of certain terms streamers use during livestreaming are meant to be nonsense for me. Secondly, I can only get in-depth insights by obtaining information and subject feelings from streamers themselves. To overcome these limitations, I have carried out online interviews with two participant streamers of my study, Jinliyuan and Xiaoxiaosu. 6 interviews were conducted with Jinliyuan and 1 interview with Xiaoxiaosu through WeChat audio call in my portable phone and the conversations were recorded by my laptop. The language I employed in the interview is Chinese, I translated the conversation from Chinese to English while transcribing the interview audios.

Time frame

The observation period of this study had lasted for 8 months starting from October, 2018 to June, 2019. While the mainly complete screen records started from February, 2019 when I started gathering consistent data and summarizing the main points obtained from the interview and arranged regular meeting with my supervisor Jan Blommaert for gaining guidance and discussing the emerging discoveries from livestreaming records. I sometimes observed participants' livestreaming instantly as well when I was not busy with other important things. However, I came to realize the large investment of time and energy on watching livestreaming real time. Then I quickly altered to the method of utilizing screen recorder, which I could choose to speed up the recording for improving efficiency. 6 interviews with Jinliyuan took place respectively on 12th, 15th, 22th of February, 13th of March, 5th of April and 9th of May, 2019, while 1 time with Xiaoxiaosu on 13th of March, 2019. During the period time of observation and interviews with participant streamers, I constantly captured a large amount of information and new findings. Therefore, I generalized the main dimensions based on the data by the help of my supervisor Jan Blommaert and started writing

in the end of April. When I nearly finished the major chapters in the middle of June, I contacted my second reader Mingyi Hou to examine my work and obtained more critical remarks.

Chapter 4. Data analysis

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I will present three main sections comprise of introduction of livestreaming in contemporary China, identity construction in backstage and new forms of sociality. Prevailing online practice like livestreaming has been leading a new way of entertainment in China which covers various genres. People go online to see strangers from far away of proceeding different daily activities. Notably, women account for a larger population of live streamers. In my study, firstly I aim to address how the female streamers conduct their self-presentation before performance in the backstage. Secondly, I move to unveil multiple layers of sociality embedded in this online interaction.

4.2 Livestreaming in China

Various smart devices and the technological innovations has generated hand in hand with the pervasion of internet, which have given rise to neoteric lifestyles with strong social connectedness and integrated ‘online’ and ‘offline’ lives (Varis and Van Nuen, 2017). Online live streaming as one of the most salient activities has got viral and draw extensive attention throughout the world. Online streamer which is also known as live streamer, internet streamer is a group of people who broadcast themselves online through a live stream, the genres vary from game playing, tutorials, and various events to merely chatting with viewers and etc., (Wikipedia). According to Fietkiewicz, Dorsch, Scheibe, Zimmer & Stock (2018), in recent years a new form of social media has established itself, the so-called Social Live Streaming Services (SLSSs), combining Live-TV with elements of Social Networking Services (SNSs) as they include a backchannel between the viewers and the streamers as well as among the viewers. It is widely used such as Periscope, Ustream, YouNow, YouTube Live, Facebook Live, Instagram Live, Snapchat Live Stories, niconico (in Japan), or – for broadcasting e-sports or drawing – Twitch and Picarto respectively. Such services allow their users to broadcast live anything they want and to everyone who is interested to watch.

When it comes to China where the impact of Zhibo (直播, literally ‘online livestreaming’) is even more incredibly tremendous. As Li (2017) explained in his dissertation that even though livestreaming was invented quite some time ago, China turned it, for the first time in history, into an unprecedented public online ‘carnival’ with the largest number of participants. By June 2016, there were about 325 million livestreaming users in China, accounting for nearly a half of the Chinese total netizen’s population (CNNIC 2016). Across about 200 livestreaming platforms (iiMedia Research 2016b), there are 4 million participants (both hosts and watchers) simultaneously present in about 3000 livestreaming rooms at peak times. Given the enormous scale of both the livestreaming users’ population and livestreaming-related services in China, this mode of online practice has played a vital role in people’s modern life and the default mode of entertainment and communication among strangers. According to Lee, Yen, Chiu, King & Fu (2018), in the course of this interactional practice, viewers are given the right to choose various virtual gifts from a list which value varying amount of money and ‘send’ it to the streamers they are keen on. Due to the flourish of live streaming platforms industry in China which also stimulates increasing population of young people especially young women to embark this business, which mainly revolving around a high personal profile, stressing the importance of “visibility and self-disclosure” (Li, 2017)

Yizhibo, one of the leading and most influential livestreaming platforms has been launched through Sina Weibo in May 2016. With the exposure to Weibo’s massive user base, Yizhibo achieved an average of 7.73 million daily active users during the month after its launch (Chen, Hu, Hong & Lu, 2018). Chen, Hu, Hong & Lu (2018) further illustrates that this link even directly benefits online sellers in Weibo, due to the popularization of increasing online micro celebrities which greatly take advantages from the direct link between Yizhibo and Weibo so as to reduce the advertisement cost caused by platforms changes. Additionally, live streamers not only can demonstrate the product, but also instantly communicate with mass fans and viewers to get real-time feedback and opinions immediately. Li (2017) explains the logo of Yizhibo that the word ‘yizhi’(一直, ‘non-stop’) in orange featured in the upper part of Figure 1 underscores their constantly non-stop streaming (zhibo, 直播, ‘livestreaming’) service. Right below the logo is the advertisement slogan ‘if you want to broadcast, then keep it non-stop (要播, 就要一直播, yao bo jiu yao yi zhi bo)’ meaning ‘if you want to broadcast, you should live stream non-stop’. As we can see, here Yizhibo promotes a lifestyle that attaches much importance to one’s perpetual digital presence and sharing of personal daily activities (the ‘always on’ culture described by Baron 2010).



Figure 1 Yizhibo official introduction on its mobile webpage

Another successful Chinese social media platform, Douyin, internationally known as TikTok is mainly specialized for short-video sharing as well as live streaming. Douyin has now exceed 150 million active daily users in China and industry insiders estimated that Douyin outstripped YouTube, Facebook, Instagram, and Snapchat in total downloads in September 2018 (Sensor Tower, 2018). The content delivery mechanism of Douyin is decentralized. When receiving the user-uploaded videos, Douyin ranks them and recommends the relevant short videos by analyzing the interests of the user. Chen, He, Mao, Chung, & Maharjan (2019) have summarized the characteristics of Tik Tok in terms of video length, video bitrate and video size and found out that found out that the distributions of the bitrate and the size of videos closely follow Weibull distribution.

4.3 Backstage

In this section, we will be zooming into the backstage of how the streamers exactly design and prepare their performance according to specific models of beauty and attractiveness to be able to perfectly showcase their ‘selfies’ in front of the camera, which echoes dramaturgical theory presented by Goffman (1959). Dramaturgical model refers that people’s day-to-day lives can be seen as resembling performers in action on a theater stage which composed of back stage and front stage. Namely, the front stage mostly occurs in public and professional situations in which the way

performers behave, interact with others correspond to the certain contexts and interlocutors. Whereas backstage is mostly the environment alone at home where people perceive free to be themselves without confronting with audiences. Therefore, live streamers are exactly enacting as a performer in the online chatroom environment where the front stage locates and seen by audiences.

In order to be successfully presenting the perfect self in the front stage, a vast of delicate preparation needs to be mindfully completed in the backstage. We will see that costumes, props and scripts and so forth play indispensable role in this consistent and intricate performance. Inevitably, the homogenous beauty standard and norms generated by society and culture have been guiding streamers with the main trend and direction. It importantly leads streamers to take care of the right amount of semiotic features to be recognized by audiences as a streamer. In the meantime, the streamers are eager to stand out by featuring their own uniqueness to attract increasing attentions from audiences while without overdoing nor underdoing, which reminds us the control on the dose of ‘enoughness’ that is supposed to be constantly adjusted, reinvented and amended (Blommaert and Varis 2011, see above). Nevertheless, the extent of authenticity is present hand in hand with streamers’ individual accent as authenticity is embedded in one’s accents and embodied through the way of expressing it. I will combine the analysis of the observation from fieldwork and interviews with the two participants live streamers. In order to employ the perfect self-presentation in the front stage, elaborate preparation in the backstage is intricate and massive effort demanding. In my research, owing to the nature of visual-image presentation of livestreaming context, streamers have to focus on beautifying their appearance and clothing types to satisfy most of viewers’ visual enjoyment. For female streamers, this is highly linked with makeup products they use, such as foundation, lipsticks, and eyeshadows and so on. The online interview shown below was with participant streamer Jinliyuan of this research, as transcribed below. In this extract of interview, Jinliyuan illustrated her preference of lipstick color for better suiting different clothing, meanwhile she addressed her unique style of not following another style she tried to avoid. So, we can see that her choice of lipstick color mainly depends on her mood and clothing at certain day for the performance in live steaming.

Interview	Translation
Me: 那个唇膏的话，你要是直播前，要准备，或者每天用的话，一般什么颜色为主？	Then then in terms of ‘chungao’(it can mean either lipstick lip balm in Chinese), you have to prepare before live streaming or for everyday use, what color do you use the most?
Jinliyuan: 你说口红还是唇膏？	You mean lipstick or lip balm?
Me: 口红，那口红吧.	Lipstick, let’s say lipstick.
Jinliyuan: 口红，还是一般比较偏正红色啊，因为红色的话就比较百搭嘛，	Lipstick, I usually go for red as it is the kind of color that is very versatile.
Me: 红色会比较百搭吗？	Is red versatile?
Jinliyuan: 对呀，就是无论你穿的比较运动点，还是休闲点，还是什么样的，基本上就是比较……但是我的红也没有很红，因为我不是走那种路线的，我会看根据衣服啦，和就是当时那天的装扮选择	Yes, it is like no matter you are wearing sports, casual or whatever, essentially it is more…… but the red lipstick I use is not too bright, Because that is not the style I chose. It also depends on my clothing, and the dress in certain days, sometimes I go for rouge; sometimes I tend to use more pink lipstick when I am wearing light makeup or nearly without makeup.
口红有时候会正一点，有时候会粉，偏粉一点，如果妆不浓的话，比较偏素颜。	

However, according to her authenticity, she sometimes tends to intertwine make-up preparation with her performance in front of the camera where the front stage lies. For example, as shown in Figure 2, the live-streaming interface of Jinliyuan’s chatroom in Yizhibo, where she is putting her lipstick on during the broadcasting. Her movements are natural without showing any embarrassment of doing this supposedly backstage thing. The color of the lipstick is actually purple pink which delicately matches her velvet dark green top, indicating the style of being elegant at that day. Even though the color of the lipstick is not red as she always uses, but which is highly in accordance with the perfect

match between lipstick choice and clothing style that she addresses. In the viewers' comments, the viewer with 16 user level shown on the top of the chat history comments that she looks sexy tonight with the emoji of smiling face with a drop of sweat which implies that the style of Jinliyuanyuan that day slightly differs from usual. In the meantime, it embodies her awareness of caring about the selfie and be relatively diverse and still conform to her personality.

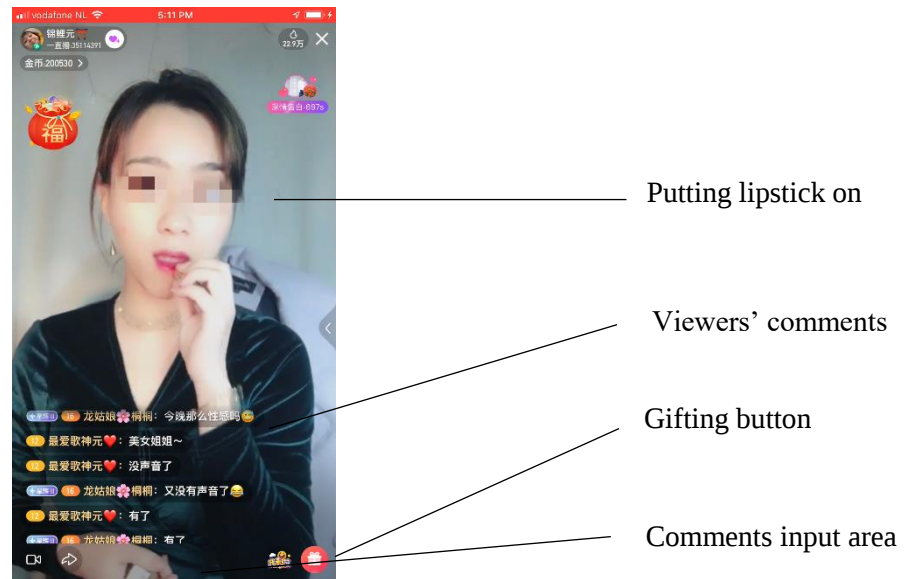


Figure 2 livestreaming interface of Jinliyuanyuan's chatroom

Due to the nature of online livestreaming, it provides physical isolation during interaction, perfumes are not needed, namely she can just focus on details are visible in the front stage instead of wasting time on non-visual details. Although she follows the main trend of using makeup for her off-stage preparation, she does not wear thick and smoky makeup as she knows her own uniqueness. She proceeds the procedure any other streamers do but more importantly sticks to her unique feature of not crossing it nor underdoing it. She further admits she sometimes does not wear makeup in front of the camera thanks to the beauty effect of livestreaming platform, while wearing lipstick is indispensable which makes her look less pale. (See the screenshot of her putting on lipstick)

Nowadays due to the popularity and ubiquitous use of beauty effects attached with camera applications, it enables streamers' skin to look particularly smooth and bright, to wider eyes and to extend the images of the legs etc. Therefore, it is no longer necessary for Jinliyuanyuan to wear full makeup in front of the camera. However, she says in the interview, "some of my followers did ask me to modify some parts of my makeup, mostly the male followers. For instance, once a male fan texted in the chat that I didn't draw my eyebrows well." After receiving the feedback, Jinliyuanyuan draws more attention on her makeup of eyebrow part. Jinliyuanyuan says she is relatively lazier

comparing with other streamers, because the majority of live streamers tend to excessively underscore the importance of the makeup and clothing. This is also due to the sensitivity of her skin, wearing full makeup everyday would hugely damage her skin, therefore again the beauty function of camera provides convenience for her and other streamers to cover small facial flaws. From here, we can also see that, her authenticity is thoroughly embodied in her preparation. Because her skin is not suitable for wearing makeup every day, she does not harm herself in order to conform to the mainstream makeup implemented by other streamers. Additionally, thanks to the advanced technological innovations of beauty camera which provides a digital affordance for streamers' beautified preparation work. In this part of interview shown below, Jinliyuan stressed the extra effort for her individual attractions would be deployed in special occasions.

Interview	Translation
Me: 那那那你每天风格的话, 是按你的心情来定, 还是说你会特意的去, 就是想那天该要怎么搭配, 这样吗?	Then then then, in terms of your everyday style, is it in accordance with your mood or you would particularly plan to schedule your everyday dress up and make up?
Jinliyuan: 一般都是按心情搭配, 但是过年过节的话, 就会专门花心思想一想。	Generally, depends on my mood, but I would be particularly thinking more in special occasions like traditional festivals.
Me: 那你今年就是过年的时候, 也有直播吧, 哎呀我今年过年的时候居然没去看你直播, 我本来一直想着去看来着。	So you did live streaming in Chinese New Year? Ah I did not see you streaming in Chinese New Year, I had been thinking about it for a while.
Jinliyuan: 我今年过年的时候穿了一个旗袍啊。	I wore a Qipao (a kind of traditional Chinese costume for women) during that time this year.
Me: 哇哦, 有记录吗, 就是可以回看吗?	Wah, do you have record, can I watch the playback?
Jinliyuan: 没有。	No
Me: 点解(Cantonese)?	Why?
Jinliyuan: 回放被我给删了。	I deleted the playback.
	Why?

Me: 为啥?	Because, eh,en, because actually every
Jiinliyuan: 因为, 嘖, 嗯, 因为我每次	time I watched the playback I found out
其实, 每次我自己看完回放就觉得自己	myself look so silly.
好傻逼啊。	Hahahahahaha, do you still have the
Me: 哈哈哈哈哈哈 那你还有资源吗,	resources, how could you just delete it, I
竟然就这么没了, 我想看旗袍那个。	would like to see you wearing that Qipao.
Jiinliyuan: 哈哈哈哈哈哈, 旗袍也没	Hahahahaha, it was not that special, it was
有什么, 就那种, 也是素色的, 不是红	not red but very plain color, because I was
色的, 因为我怕红色的, 撑不起来, 太	afraid that I cannot match red as it is too
妖艳了。	coquettish.

In this part of transcription from the interview with Jinliyuan, she said once she wore Qipao a type of Chinese traditional outfit in the Chinese Spring Festival, to surprise the viewers in her chat room. She also addressed that the color of qipao she chose is light and simple as it is in line with her personality and authenticity. Although knowing red is the typical color for Chinese New Year representing auspicious and luck, she decidedly gave up wearing red because she is aware that Qipao in bright red does not match her, namely she is not tempted to conform to mainstream, suiting her the best is the most important. Blommaert and Varis (2015) demonstrate that we have experienced immense pressures towards conformity as the elementary part to many aspects in our life, nevertheless there are always a small space for ‘uniqueness’ in these processes of homogenization. In the case of the live streamer Jinliyuan whose routine performing behaviors are fundamentally in line with the micro-hegemonies of popular live streaming industry by using various makeup products, thoughtfully preparing clothing style and etc., but she does place her own accents, the characteristics of her own uniqueness. She utilizes different brands of makeup products and maybe usually opt for organic and less-chemical cosmetics products due to her sensitive skin. When she tries to apply Qipao as a special and important part of her self-presentation in the front stage, she chooses the color suiting her personality the best instead of following everything of how the other streamers do. Here we can see “how small differences appear to invoke a broad and deep complex of difference in ‘style’ and thence, in ‘personality’.” (Blommaert and Varis 2015:23)

The background of the livestreaming room is also another salient element apart from streamer's appearance in the preparation of backstage. She uses a big white curtain hanging on the wall behind her as the main background decorated with some small white lights which looks warm and cozy. She said "It is not realistic to decorate the streaming background too complicated due to the space limitation of her bedroom which is not spacious enough." She addressed the importance of at least providing a clean and comfortable streaming background to the audiences. And further stated this simple background is based on her identity of being a talent streamer with outstanding singing skills. However, she said nowadays a large number of streamers labels themselves as talent streamers even if they do not possess the skills. Mostly the female streamers can get attention as long as they focus on their preparation for physical appearance, talent skills like singing is no longer that important, the beauty and sexual attractiveness become more important than their alleged identity of being a talent streamer. Meanwhile the viewers draw tremendous attention on their appearance and chatting instead of examining their singing talent, let alone most of viewers do not possess professional singing background thence they do not have the ability to verify if the streamer are authentically qualified singers or not.

As I mentioned above, in the dramaturgical theory of Goffman (1959) that scripts play an essential role in the front stage. Kivisto, & Pittman (1998) also point out that scripts are the most important means for audience to understand a role enacted by performers. Although most of interpersonal communication in our everyday life is relatively improvisational, certain elements and patterns of conversation in specific situations can be well scripted. It also highly resembles the chat room in livestreaming, a sentence is sticky on top of the texting area, which means "welcome to the livestreaming chat room with profession→singing→street dance→ painting+goddess, follow with throbbing" any of the streamer Jinliyan's true love fans of send this scripted sentence in the chat room when he/she arrives, or Jinliyan would ask them for help to send this which she can stick in one of the most conspicuous spots in her chat room. In the meantime, I have observed that Jinliyan designed her own scripted sentence which she regularly says in chat room to remind her rule which is "xihuanzhubodekeyidiandianguanzhujiyajiazhenaituan, youxiaoliwudebaobaomenkeyiduiduisong. Xiangtinggedebaobaomenqingsongyiduomeiguohua.(喜欢主播的可以点点关注, 加加真爱团, 有小礼物的宝宝们可以怱怱送送, 想听歌的宝宝们请送一朵玫瑰花. Literally, you can subscribe my account if you like me and join the true love fans group, babies with small gifts is welcome to send me. Babies who want to listen songs please send me a rose.) Despite the elaborate self-presentation prepared in the backstage and deliberately performed by streamers in front of the camera, certain

formulized scripts can provide distinct advantages. Viewers get informed by this well-designed script and thence for those who would like to stay in the chatroom get accustomed to the rules of Jinliyuan formulated.

Additionally, I also found out that special regional accents exert relatively importance in the script part which on the other hand is linked with streamer's geographical background. The characteristic of streamer Jinliyuan's accent would be displayed in the transcription below.

Interview	Translation
Me: 说到声音，那你在直播的时候，就是，额会特意放大你的口音吗，虽然你没有什么口音，但是就是听起来会比较，额..... Jinliyuan: 会啊。因为比如说，如果能进来一个，你也知道那种，如果是同乡，或者是什么老乡之类的就会，比较有亲切感嘛， Me: 嗯哼 Jinliyuan: 比如说进来一个广东的或者怎么样，就肯定比较偏广东腔一点跟他讲 Me: 但是，我觉得你的东北腔比较多哈哈哈哈哈 Jinliyuan: 我直播间东北的粉丝比较多 Me: 就贼搞笑 Jinliyuan: 我就不知道为什么一直播特别多东北的	Speaking of voice, when you are streaming, that is will you deliberately amplify your accent? Even though you don't have much accents, but it just sounds more, eh..... Yes. For example, if there is a new comer, you know, from the same hometown with me, which I will find it very familiar. Yes For instance, a new viewer from Guangdong entering my chatroom, I will definitely talk to him more with my Guangdong accent. But, I think you have more northeast accent hahaha. A larger proportion of my fans in livestreaming are from northeast of China It is pretty funny I don't understand why there are so many people from northeast of China in Yizhibo.

Me: 真的, 我都觉得, 突然一下你那个味儿就特别北方, 我觉得很好听 你知道不 Jinliyuan: 很亲切	Really, I think so, I always hear that your voice suddenly changes to northern accent But I find it very pleasant to hear you know. Very warm and cordial
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Jinliyuan is born and brought up in Shenzhen, a southern city of China but her original hometown is from the north area. She mostly speaks standard mandarin with a bit of north accent. She addressed the significance of speaking mandarin to the majority of streamers, while using excessive dialects during streaming is prone to impair viewers' interest and likely to decrease of streamer's popularity. Therefore, in this context, Jinliyuan has to conform to the norms that the majority streamers do, but in the meantime, she can employ her own accents and authentic background to create better interaction with her audiences in. Interestingly, apart from showing her accents to certain group of viewers from the same hometown, she tends to sweeten her voice, and exaggerate her southern accent for the viewers who send her gifts, the extent of accents change varies based on the values of the gifts, which according to her is also one of the most common features of female online streamers.

In this chapter, we have seen how elaborately designed off-stage self needs to be prepared and deployed in livestreaming in order to create an optimal and desirable performance and image in front of the camera to massive viewers. This particular online self-presentation practice requires to be considered as two parts, front stage and back stage. I exemplified Jinliyuan to illustrate the main elements embedded in this context. In favor of the delicate make-up selection and learning, she is able to master certain makeup skills to assure her aesthetic outer look. To further optimize the holistic image, certain cosmetics products have to match her clothing in accordance with her own uniqueness. Furthermore, the use of her accents will exert extra advantages to build up closer relationship and interactions with certain groups of audiences. In the next section, we shall see new forms of interactive patterns and social relations brought from livestreaming.

4.4 New forms of sociality

In this section, three dimensions of new forms of sociality emerged in livestreaming will be elaborated. Firstly, I will show an unequal power relation in current livestreaming practice and how face work is implemented by the streamer to avoid violating the rules imposed by digital platforms and self-face. Secondly, we will see regulations vary greatly among different livestreaming service providers which leads to streamers' choices or migration. Additionally, various forms of interactions present in streamers' chat room generate an unprecedented type of relationships between streamers and viewers. Therefore, specific groups are created for viewers who follow the same ordered behaviors and in which more complex social relations take place. The third form of sociality will be shown through a popular activity PK in livestreaming. PK not only creates a new meaning for traditional competition, but also strengthen the relations between streamers and viewers.

4.4.1 Applying Face-work on livestreaming

According to Goffman (1959), Face work refers to the process involved in the maintenance of an 'appropriate' public image or impression. He explained face work as "a pattern of verbal and nonverbal acts by which he (the interactant) expresses his view of the situation and through this his evaluation of the participants, especially himself" (Goffman 1967: 5). Thus, a tremendous interaction elements and feedback exchanging are involved and necessary in the interpersonal communication on livestreaming between streamers and viewers. Jinliyuan stated that most of live streamers use nicknames, she is no exception. Although possessing outstanding skills of singing and dancing, she seldom performs dance during streaming. She explained that dancing in online streaming is usually seen as showing purely sexy moves without presenting real dance techniques as well as the regulations of Yizhibo are rigorous with regard to female streamer's erotic performance, therefore singing for her is more neutral and less norms-violated. Owing to the advantage of her bachelor major specialized in pop music singing, viewers are easily attracted by her professional singing skills. Meanwhile, she still has to practice new songs to keep the pace with followers' requirements.

It is still possible for her to perform dance without including erotic elements in specific occasions such as Spring Festival and other traditional Chinese holidays, or accepting the requirements to dance after receiving gifts valued certain amount of money but importantly not crossing lines. She particularly insisted to reject the requirements of exposing some parts of her body. Certainly, she is

nice and polite to new viewers, explaining the rules and so forth. For instance, reminding new people who pick songs for her to sing without sending gifts by saying ‘sorry, just send me a rose you can hear any song you like’. Because singing as a remarkable label of Jinliyuan is not free of charge, viewers who request her to sing the songs they pick have to follow her rule by giving her a gift of rose which is equivalent with around 1 RMB (about 0.13 euro).



Figure 3. Jinliyuan’s chatroom surface in Yizhibo livestreaming

An episode of interaction between Jinliyuan, *Luckychen and *bashenmesi, both are true love fans of her livestreaming.

[]: Visible actions performed in the chatroom

(): My explanations

Italics: textual comments

[sticky on top *Bashenmesi: welcome to the livestreaming chat room with profession→singing→street dance→ painting+goddess, follow with throbbing]

	Translation
*Bashenmesi: 鞋就行	It is ok with the shoes.
*Lucky 琛: 我准备买个杜蕾斯给他	I plan to buy a durex for him.
Jinliyuan: 我的天哦琛琛你这个名字, 欧西吧你发的这个字 (playing laughing	Oh my God, Chechen (indicating the viewer Luckychen) the name you mentioned, ohxiba (originated from

hard sound effect) 我来大概解释一下啊 (playing laughing sound effect) , 好放弃 (playing laughing sound effect and shaking her head) 翻译机已死机, 欢迎鹏飞万里。反正就是, 反正就是只要你喜欢他, 你就给他 (she laughs a bit) 什么鬼啊。	Korean referring the feeling of astonished and angry) the words you sent. Let me roughly explain this. Ok I gave up, the translator machine has died. [Welcome pengfeiwanlia new viewer entering the chatroom] anyways it is, anyways it is you give him if you like him. What is that ah (expressing with emphasis)
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In spite of the strict regulations employed by the livestreaming service provider Yizhibo, viewers' expectations and thoughts are not controlled especially for the context of female streamers - male viewers. Streamers have to be prepared to encounter any inappropriate words sent by viewers and in respond with wise and witty attitude to tackle the embarrassment or risks of violating the norms. As seen in Figure 3, one of the viewers *Luckychen was chatting with streamer Jinliyuan and other audiences about the idea of birthday gift. And then *Luckychen sent a text message mentioning a name of condom brand Durex referring to buy a condom from the brand of Durex as a birthday gift, which immediately astonished the streamer Jinliyuan. She then reacted by slightly complaining the sensitivity of this name, then she still tried to explain it roughly but finally gave up by saying no and shaking her head with using laughing sounds effect in order to veil the embarrassment of not answering this topic and the advent of this sexual-related words. Here we can see a face threatening example of streamer Jinliyuan in her chat room. She encountered a situation when a viewer was talking about a sexual related word. Undoubtedly, this topic is too sensitive to talk about according to the rules implemented by the platform. However, as a streamer who has to face various viewers every day, a good skill of maintaining face work is crucial. According to Goffman (1967), certain knowledge of face work is normally possessed by members of every social circles, and this capacity can be regarded as social skills. Due to the absent physical co-presence from both sides of streamer and viewers and one side of visual presentation from streamer, Jinliyuan has no choice to avoid certain people who she can definitely recognize and walk away offline. Goffman (1967) further pointed out that poise is an important type of face work to controls embarrassment. In order to maintain both the norm regulated by the platform and her own face, Jinliyuan certainly dealt with the dilemma effectively by avoiding it and using a lot of sound effect.

This example also invokes a deeper ambivalence and contradiction between platform regulations and (male) users' 'community culture'. Jinliyuan explicitly articulated in the interview about the severe consequences of violating Yizhibo's regulations. She might get sanctions or be blocked in this industry perpetually. However, as Li (2017) argued that female streamers' self-presentation can be converted from erotic capital to economic capital by catering to male viewers' flirty requirements. Therefore, we can see that female streamers are facing an unequal power relation and pressured from both of company and main interactors.

4.4.2 Interactions in livestreaming

Building up audiences

This entirely new online phenomenon here incorporates very old normative features, removing the transaction from the frame of 'prostitution' and 'trade' to a much less clear-cut kind of transaction, a 'grey zone' in which risks of moral (and legal) condemnation can be circumvented and suggestions of love and affection can be offered without 'real' consequences. This is also again the unique advantage of online environment. The interaction between women and men without physical co-presence, in a 'virtual' atmosphere which offers enough similarities with offline relational practices to attract male audiences to this type of femininity performance. The streamer Xiaoxiao herself also agrees that the physical isolation is perfect for protecting streamers' safety and private life. As Li (2017) also point out the physical isolation between a female streamer and her audience creates a buffering zone for the hostess to circumvent any bullying and potential risks that can be hard to handle in offline intimate relationships. Meanwhile the online self- presentation from the streamers can be safely transformed to economic benefits without taking its conventional tolls in forms of moral condemnations and stigmatization.

Under the legal restrictions of the platform, a new form of flirting and affection showing to strangers who have never met offline has emerged in this online interactional practice. In order to get reward from a vast of viewers and maintain their fans base, streamers tend to interact with them with elaborate flirting performance, which increases the willingness of viewers to send more generous gifts so that streamers can receive considerable economic return. According to Li (2017) "All of this evolves in the highly specific contours of the online livestreaming chronotope, in which such relationships and practices can be enacted as features of 'normal' interactional conduct." (p.149). As shown in Figure 4,



Figure 4 A follower's expression and Jinliyan's gestural response to a series of virtual gifts

An episode of interaction between Jinliyan and *longguniangtongtong and *speaili are viewers of her livestreaming. *longguniangtongtong was sending text messages and bought her virtual gifts.

[]: Visible actions performed in the chatroom

(): My explanations

Italics: textual comments

[sticky on top *changshaqiongyuan(one of Jinliyan's true love fans):welcome to the livestreaming chat roomwith profession→singing→street dance→painting+goddess, follow with throbbing]

	Translation
*longguniangtongtong: 每天早上习惯性起来瞄一下啊你有木有播 *longguniangtongtong: 😊 emoji Jinliyan : 我尽量, 我看看明天能不能六点钟起来播, 习惯性瞄一下?早上没有我的陪伴是不是一天都缺少点什么的感觉得 [CriminalpianziWGV6F entering the broadcasting room]	I get used to checking if you are livestreaming or not when I get up everyday morning. I try my best, I will see if I can get up to stream at 6 a.m. get used to checking? (Reading out part of *longguniangtongtong's comment) Is it a sense of lacking sth in the whole day without my accompany in the morning?

*longguniangtongtong: [send out 99 pick (gift)] *longguniangtongtong: [send out 1 pick (gift)] *longguniangtongtong: [send out 99 pick (gift)] *longguniangtongtong: [send out 99 pick (gift)] Jinliyuan : 谢谢桐桐送的 pick me [(action) Sketching out the heart shape for ‘love’ in front of the camera] 哇哦 我的桐桐，可以连着九十九个吗？哦一下子就要快了。还有三块钱还是多少。谢谢我的桐桐啊，操心我。诶呀到关卡2了，谢谢桐桐! [(action) moving her head to the right side with big bright smile and two ‘yeh’ gestures touching her head] biu, 发射! [(action) and then repeat sketching out the heart shape for ‘love’ in front of the camera] *longguniangtongtong: 好了 *speaili: 过了 *speaili: 第二关，10 个小皇冠 *longguniangtongtong: 剩下交给你们，我安心去上班。	(Sweet smiling and exaggerating the way of speaking) Thanks, Tongtong for sending me pick me. Waow, my little tongtong, can you send them 99 times in a row? Oh, it’s approaching. Still 3 yuan left or what. Thanks for my little tongtong, taking care of me. Eh ya (a particle to express a sense of being surprised) it succeeded to the second pass, thank you tongtong! Biu (a particle of showing cueteness), launch! Ok It passed The second task, 10 small crowns (gifts) Counting on you guys to send the rest of the gifts, so I am unworried to go to work now.
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Entering the broadcasting room for seeing and helping Jinliyuan finish her tasks has become a habit the fan of Jinliyuan *longguniangtongtong. Although he only remains this virtual online connection with the live streamer, a routine has formed for interacting and sending virtual gifts to a person he

has never had offline contact before. After *longguniangtongtong's generous gifts-sending for passing the first task, Jinliyuan showed her repeated and emphatic verbal and nonverbal expression of love and intimacy specifically for him. Thanks to the generalization of electronic device, internet and live-streaming applications, viewers have access to easily proceed online interaction with different live streamers. But when they become the true love fans of one specific streamer, a close joint has generated from this community where members without offline encounter but being able to collaborate for one specific person.

Compared with textual messaging, real-time recordings of streamers Jinliyuan sitting in a chair and making various vivid facial expressions and body movements in her chatroom play an essential role in livestreaming context, which is in line with Goffman's dramaturgical identity performance in nature. According to Li (2017), streamer is the only visible performer in the stage proceeding her/his continuous livestreaming in front of the camera to the audiences who can only communicate with the streamer by textual messages and gift sending. Therefore, apart from textual messages, gifting is deemed as an important tool to stimulate steamer's enthusiasm and active interaction given this exposure discrepancy. As shown in Figure 5, it is clear that the gifting button lies at the right below corner of the user interface, which provides high convenience for most of right-handed phone users. And in Figure 6, we can see that the genres of gifts are various and occupy a relatively center and big space with colorful design, and vivid effects. In the episode of the interaction between Jinliyuan and viewers shown below, a generous gift arouse streamer's specific affection and body movements toward the gift-sender. From the recording of the livestreaming, I have observed that Jinliyuan was talking about her desirable gift of tonight was 'small train' which gave viewers a hint that whoever sent her 'small train' would be treated specifically. When she gave a warm greeting to the coming viewer Tingge, she also asked 'are you going to send me a small train' with expressing a big smile and sweet voice. After a few minutes, the viewer Tingge sent Jinliyuan the gift of 'small train' with textual message of 'giving Yuanyuan (refer to streamer Jinliyuan) a small train, wish Yuanyuan a happy livestreaming tonight'. From Figure 6 we can see that 'Small train' cost 10000 gold coins which is equivalent with around 142.86 RMB (about 18.54 euro), and the effect of this gift was technologically glorified and vivid which also created a visually remarkable image. After receiving this gift, Jinliyuan immediately showed her gratitude and a series of special treatment by making heart-shaped arms and hands with a sound effect of cheering, and air kissing with sound effect of kiss. All of these expressions are exclusively towards one viewer who made an action of sending her a nice gift, which is more importantly orchestrated to a larger number of viewers especially those

who have affection to her as well, amplifying the importance and well-treated results of generous gifts and the prominence of those who offer them.

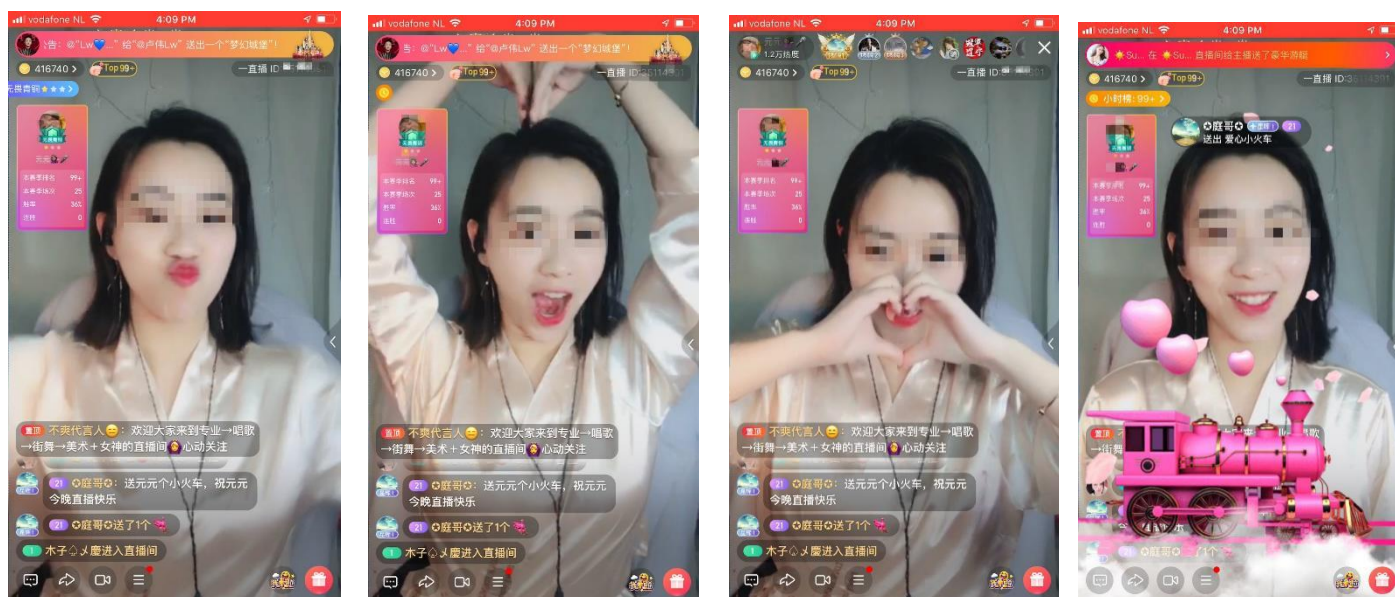


Figure 5 Jinliyuan's gesture response to an expensive gift

Aixinxiaohuoch
(爱心小火车,
literally heart-
shaped small train)



Figure 6 the gifts interface design in Yizhibo

An episode of interaction between Jinliyuan and *Tingge is a viewer of her livestreaming. *Tingge is sending text messages and bought her virtual gifts.

[]: Visible actions performed in the chatroom

(): My explanations

Italics: textual comments

[Sticky on top *bushuangdaiyanren(one of Jinliyuanyuan's fans):welcome to the livestreaming chat room with profession→singing→street dance→painting+goddess, follow with throbbing]

	Translation
* Tingge: 送元元个小火车, 祝元元今晚直播快乐 Jinliyuanyuan: 庭哥要送我小火车吗, 欢迎 zhuangjian。谢谢庭哥小火车, 哇 [playing sound effect of cheering and making a heart-shaped arms] *Tingge: sent out the gift of Aixinxiaohuohce(爱心小火车, literally heart-shaped small train)] Jinliyuanyuan : 谢谢我的庭哥, Mwah, [(action)playing sound effect of kissing and giving a 'pronounced' air kiss to *Tingge] 嘿嘿还是庭哥比较疼我, 比心 [(action)making heart-shaped by hands and arms again]比个大心给你, 庭哥也祝你今晚有个好梦哦。	Giving Yuanyuan (referring to the streamer Jinliyuanyuan) a small train, wish Yuanyuan a happy livestreaming night *Tingge is going to send me a small train? Welcome zhuangjian. Thank *Tingge's small train, wah [playing sound effect of cheering and making a heart-shaped arms] Thank you my *Tingge, muah [playing sound effect of kissing and giving an air kiss] heyhey it is *Tingge who cares a lot about me, give you a heart [making heart-shaped by hands and arms again] give you a big heart, *Tingge I wish you sweet dreams o (a sentence-final particle that conveys intimacy) .

As discussed in the previous chapter that streamer Jinliyuanyuan sees dancing as a risk of violating the normality in the livestreaming chatroom, therefore she seldom performs dance. But it is definitely not a taboo, as long as she does not cross the line namely violate the norms and rules deployed in the livestreaming platform, she tries to attract and satisfy some viewer's requirements in a proper way. As shown below Figure 7, streamer Jinliyuanyuan turned the camera to a new angle which showed a relatively empty space. She was dancing a choreography learnt from a dance lesson in offline world due to one of her fans was eager to see. Undoubtedly, she was very conscious about the clothes she

wore, so she chose to wear a skin covered leggings, lose T-shirt with a shirt tied on her waist. In the livestreaming chatroom, it is very different to showcase dancing instead of singing, because body movements are visually presented which can be somehow easily and explicitly altered to be sexy and obscene related. In order to avoid all the potential risk of regulation violation, the dance she performed was cute and lively without any alluring moves and she wore a set of casual clothing, in the meantime it was a success to satisfy viewers' curiosity and requirements.



Figure 7 Screenshot of Jinliyuan dancing in the chat room of Yizhibo

In the previous section, I have addressed the importance of Face work in the online livestreaming context, no matter in the front or back stage that streamers as a performer having a show in the theater have to be elaborately prepared in the back stage to showcase an optimal self in the front stage, that is in front of the camera to the office. During the performance, the performers also have to pay extremely attention to their face work, such as the sensitive topics and excessive skin exposure which are regulation-violated. Otherwise, they might be confronted with potential severe results of declining popularity or even obtaining sanctions and losing their jobs. Therefore, a careful maintenance and protection of face work is carrying out throughout the whole livestreaming practice. However, as we can see below Figure 8, there are some special gifts with funny visual animated effect when sending it to the streamer. The platform itself provides these kinds of anti-beauty

standard gifts for viewers to amuse streamers which we can see it as a destruction for streamers' delicate face work. Nevertheless, it is noticed that the price of these 'ugly' gifts are expensive comparing with average gifts, which entails that streamers will still be happy and grateful after receiving these gifts. In the example shown below, Jinliyuan received 3 times of abnormal gifts which were Choujidan (臭鸡蛋, literally rotten egg) costs 5000 gold coins(71.43 RMB, 9.27 euro), Ershixiong (二师兄 literally two brother referring to a character in the novel of 'Journey to the west') costs 6600 gold coins(94.3RMB, 12.24 euro) and Mofayaoshui (魔法药水, literally Magic Medicine) costs 8800 gold coins(125.71RMB, 16.32 euro), though she expressed a bit of unnatural when she firstly received rotten eggs, she was still thankful for the gift and assured that the effect of rotten eggs on her face looked cute. When she said she didn't like Mofayaoshui at all, the viewer Huohuo immediately sent her Mofayaoshui which showed a visual effect on Jinliyuan's face in a funny image. Jinliyuan then made a joke with saying she should have a talk with the owner of the platform. From here we can see that the streamer Jinliyuan was confronting a face threatening situation which to the certain extent ruined her well-prepared appearance, nevertheless, she tried to save her face by talking in a funny way and expressing her gratitude to the gift sender. It highly corresponds with what Goffman stressed about face-work, "Which serves to counteract "incidents" – that is, events whose effective symbolic implications threaten face. Thus, poise is one important type of face-work, for through poise the person controls his embarrassment and hence the embarrassment that he and others might have over his embarrassment." (1967:16) Jinliyuan as a performer who balanced the incident for her face work exactly in an appropriate way which satisfy the gift sender and her work requirements. It is also her own characteristic repertoire of face-saving practices. Namely, a successful streamer has to possess decent social skill, namely being prideful and considerate and have had exercised perspective towards this incident's scenarios. In the case of Jinliyuan, she took the attitude of I-can-take-a-joke laughing instead of trying to avoid, because firstly the effects of gifts are provided by the platform itself which is not against any rules, secondly any gifts are seen as lucrative for streamers who, although the visual effects of those seemingly ugly gifts are not perfectly looking and charming, it on the other hand exerts a specifically amusing and funny atmosphere in the chatroom. Plus owing to the streamer Jinliyuan's witty face-saving skills and social skills which actually brought positive results to her career.

Choujidan
(臭鸡蛋,
literally
rotten egg)



Ershixiong (二师兄 literally two
brother referring to a character in
the novel of 'Journey to the
west')



Mofayaoshui (魔法药水,
literally Magic Medicine)

Figure 8. The interface of gifts list in Yizhibo



Figure 9 animated effect of gifting on Jinli Yuan's face in the screen

An episode of interaction between Jinli Yuan and *Huohuo597639075, *Dian_zl, *Bashenmesi and *Appleyaya are viewers of her livestreaming. * Huohuo597639075 bought Jinli Yuan virtual gifts.

[]: Visible actions performed in the chatroom

(): My explanations

Italics: textual comments

[Sticky on top *zuaixiaoqiujiemie(one of Jinliyan's fans):welcome to the livestreaming chat room with profession→singing→street dance→painting+goddess, follow with throbbing]

	Translation
* Huohuo597639075: sent out the gift of Choujidan (臭鸡蛋, literally rotten egg)	
*Bashenmesi: 哈哈哈哈哈	Hahaha
[* Axiuluodeni entered in the livestreaming room]	
*Jinliyan : 那你知道最憋屈的是什么呢, 就是你们送我这种礼物, 完了我还得感谢你们[(action)playing sound effect of laughing] 谢谢霍霍的臭鸡蛋。(keeping singing with the background music)	Do you know what is the most unfair? Which is I have to thank you guys when you send me this kind of gift.
.....	Thanks, Huohuo's rotten eggs
*Jinliyan: 不过其实我觉得那个鸡蛋还挺可爱的啦, 比魔法药水好太多。	But I think the rotten eggs are somehow cute la(a partical that serves to soften the expression before it), much better than Mofayaoshui (魔法药水, literally Magic Medicine)
.....	No I don't like it, I would rather Zhubajie(猪八戒 literally pig eight commandments referring to a character in the novel of 'Journey to the west')
*Jinliyan: 不我不喜欢, 我宁愿戴猪八戒我都不要带魔法药水	Yes
*Bashenmesi: 对	
* Huohuo597639075: sent out the gift of Mofayaoshui (魔法药水, literally magic medicine)	
*Bashenmesi: 她超级喜欢	She is crazy about it
[Tianguancifu666777 entered the livestreaming room]	

*Jinliyuan: 诶，师傅，你看一下，就是这个样子， [(action)playing a sound effect of laughing and making a facial expression of kissing] 这个魔法药水卡这么久的吗？我管这个魔法药水叫蹦迪妆，怎么还有呀[(action) again playing a sound effect of laughing] 一直播的官方爸爸我们要不要出来聊下天 [(action) again playing a sound effect of laughing] 我觉得我觉得真的过分了，凭什么这种丑丑的礼物就要卡这么久？你心心念念想看的魔法药水，谢谢霍霍的魔法药水，谢谢你哦。 * Huohuo597639075: sent out the gift Ershixiong (二师兄 literally two brother referring to a character in the novel of ‘Journey to the west’) *Dian_zl: 挺美的 [emoticon of laughing crying]😂 *Bashenmesi: 哈哈哈哈哈 [*Appleyaya entered into the livestreaming room] *Jinliyuan: [(action) playing the sound effect of laughing And covering her face with her hands while laughing hard] 那你今天真的是 (keep laughing hard) [(action) covering her	Ei, master, have a look, that is it. This effect of Mofayaoshui is sticking for long time? I see this Mofayaoshui as makeup for clubbing. Why is it still here? The official papa of Yizhibo, shall we have a talk. I think I think, this is too much, why this ugly gift is sticking here for longtime? See, the Mofayaoshui you have been thinking, thanks Huohuo’s Mofayaoshui, thank you o(a sentence-final particle that conveys intimacy) It is beautiful hahahahaha Today you are really.....,
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mouth with one hand] Eggghhhh[(making a noise of imitating pig's sound)]大师兄，师傅被妖怪抓走了。	Dashiciong (大师兄, literally Big bro, referring to a character in the novel of 'Journey to the West') Master is caught by monster.
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Fans group maintenance

Despite the interaction with fans and viewers in the chatroom of livestreaming platform, Jinliyuan has created a WeChat group maintaining the importance of loyal fans and providing an access to more authentic self. Nevertheless, Jinliyuan clarifies that for better differentiating private and work life, she also has another WeChat account specializing for getting in touch with this group of fans, this exclusive group consists of the fans selected by Jinliyuan the streamer herself and managed by one of her true love fans. The mechanism is that certain viewers who continuously visit Jinliyuan's chat room by talking to her and sending her gifts will be reminded by her to become 'True Love Fans' by only spending 1 RMB (approximately 0.8 euros) per month, and subsequently ones who reach over 3rd grade of true love fans have access to join the WeChat group to have privilege of being updated about her persona apart from live streaming. Therefore, the distinction is clear that she deploys layers between platforms and closer connection – WeChat group. As we can see here which also embodies the rules implemented by the streamer herself, normality is intertwined with the growing interaction between streamer and viewers that those have access to further and closer interaction with their favorite streamer can only by means of continuous visiting and gift-sending.

The main function of the WeChat group is to update Jinliyuan's status, for instance sometimes when she's not available to live stream, the members of WeChat group will be informed immediately than the other viewers who are outside of the group, which ties up the bond between fans and the streamer and among fans themselves. See Figure 10, Jinliyuan is releasing the news of being absent in live-streaming tonight so that the fans do not need to wait for her at the regular starting time. WeChat as the most popular and widely used social media application in China is easier and more convenient to interact, and also enables those people who have never met each other offline or confronted in any other occasions to be gathered in this special group of community based on the affection towards one person and proceed related online activities regularly. Figure 11 shows that Jinliyuan updates the news of not streaming at a certain day as the routine function of this exclusive group, and a fan

immediately responds with his/her bad negative feelings about this news because s/he expected to see her streaming and talk to her instantly as usual. And through the conversation, we can see that the fan does not hesitate to say 'missing her' in an intimate way as if they are very good friend. Thus, Jinliyuan is seen as the most essential and indispensable part of this online community, how to consolidate and maintain the collective joint has become another part of her job apart from performing in front of the camera. As shown in Figure 12, Jinliyuan posted on her WeChat to express her gratitude for the fans who has been accompanying, supporting her during long time especially the period of time when she has undergone the declining popularity thence she found it very touching and encouraging. Figure 13 shows the amount of gold coins the gifts value and which Jinliyuan took screenshots to post them in her WeChat account. The three kinds of gifts shown on her profile picture to thank the loyal fans demonstrate its high value of money, 'magical instrument of attracting fans' values 50000 gold coins which is equivalent with around 714.3 RMB (about 92 euro), 'lucky koi fish' values 8800 gold coins which is equivalent with around 125.7 RMB (about 16.25 euro), 'running MM bean' values 3000 gold coins which is equivalent with around 42.9 RMB (about 5.55 euro). The three kinds of gifts are relatively expensive ones which are also seen as remedy for Jinliyuan's difficult time of declining popularity in her context.

As I mentioned above, it is the image only shown in her WeChat profile which can be seen by the fans who are both included in the WeChat group and added her working WeChat account. The fans who have access to see this are also the ones who have been helping her finish the tasks assigned by live-streaming platform constantly and further reaching her authentic self. It is the role of real value containing consistent care and economic giving that exchanges her authenticity self, and accordingly fans obtain specific form of attention from generous gift giving.



Figure 10 Screenshot of chat history in WeChat true love fans group

An episode of interaction that Jinliyuan is informing her fans she has to skip the live streaming tonight in the WeChat group.

*Dollar is the wechat name of live streamer Jinliyuan. *Canmouzhang and *Xiaoqiu are two who reached very 3rd grade true love fans.

	Translation
*Dollar: 😊	Emoji (Smiley)
*Dollar : 宝宝们	Babies
*Dollar: 今晚直播暂停一下	The live streaming of tonight will be paused
*Canmouzhang: 不批	Not permitted
*Xiaoqiu: 啊哈哈哈哈哈哈	Ahahahahahaha
*Xiaoqiu: 你咋了	What's up with you?
*Dollar: 参谋长你都多久没来 emoji	Chief of staff (a nick name of the fan *Xiaoqiu only known in this community)
*Dollar: 我现在才下课	How long haven't you been to my chat room I am just off my dance class

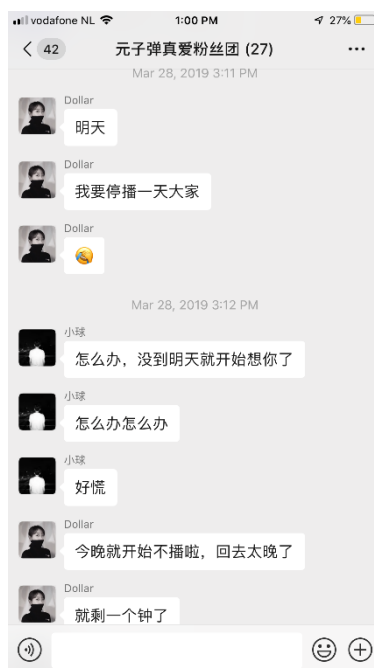


Figure 11. Screenshot of chat history in WeChat true love fans group

An episode of interaction that Jinliyuan is informing her fans she is not available to live stream tomorrow in the WeChat group.

*Dollar is the wechat name of live streamer Jinliyuan. *Xiaoqiu is one who reached 3rd grade true love fan.

	Translation
*Dollar: 明天	Tomorrow
*Dollar : 我要停播一天大家	I will stop live streaming whole day
*Dollar: 🤦	Emoji (face palm)
*Xiaoqiu: 怎么办, 没到明天就开始想你了	What shall i do, i am already missing you before tomorrow
*Xiaoqiu: 怎么办怎么办	What to do what to do
*Xiaoqiu: 好慌	Very panic

*Dollar: 今晚就开始不播啦，回去太晚了	I am not live streaming also for tonight, it is going to be too late when i get home
*Dollar: 就剩一个钟了	Only one hour left



Figure 12 Screenshot of Jinli Yuan's WeChat post

Content:	Translation
有种苦尽甘来的感觉，想哭，谢谢大家的这么长久的陪伴，虽然我记性不好但你们的一点一滴我都记得，不管在我多低谷的时候，一直不离不弃坚持陪着我相信我，希望能成为你们坚强的后盾，要一起都越来越好，和你们共同成长 爱你们	There is a kind of bittersweet feeling, want to cry, and thank you guys for accompanying with me for that long time, although I have a bad memory but I remember every little thing you have done for me. No matter how down I was, you never leave me behind or abandon me instead believing me consistently, I hope

	to become your strong backing. I would like to grow, get better and better together with you 🧡 love you all 🧡
--	---



One of the tricks of that WeChat group is that only the administrator Jinliyuan herself is able to add the fans in the group, not from the opposite side. Only the top 3 ranked having sent the most gifts to Jinliyuan can add her working WeChat account, but it is also possible to add her personal account if they are being friendly and not asking for strange things according to Jinliyuan herself. The WeChat fans group include both men and women, some of her fans especially who are able to add her person account actually have tried to chat with her for getting closer interaction or about intimate topics.

Mobility among platforms

Blommaert and Varis (2015:14) point out that “One is never a ‘full’ member of any cultural system, because the configurations of features are perpetually changing, and one’s fluency of yesterday need not guarantee fluency tomorrow. In the same move, we of course see how such processes involve a core of perpetually shifting normativity” Oneself while articulating sharply different orientations in

different domains of life or on different issues. In terms of online streaming, rigorous regulations representing normativity deployed by certain platforms greatly determine streamers' online presentation, whereas they are also free to choose different platform to embody completely different self-image. The steamer Xiaoxiaosu who migrated to another platform called Douyin in the middle phase of my observation, where she showcases an entirely different 'selfie' to the audiences. As we can see in Figure 14, Xiaoxiaosu is wearing a loose pink T-shirt with the same color sticker of animated rabbit ear shown on the screen of her head, the entire outlook is embodying a cute and adorable style which is in accordance with the regulations imposed by Yizhibo. However, when she migrated to another platform Douyin, the clothing style completely changed to be sexy and more skin exposed (Figure 15). Therefore, the self-presentation in different online space sphere can demonstrate in totally distinctive ways. When Xiaoxiaosu fled away from the regulations of one livestreaming platform, she is able and seek to present herself in a more alluring style for mainly male audiences in order to gain more popularity and accordingly the possibility of increasing economic benefits.



Figure 14 Screenshot of Xiaoxiao in Yizhibo



Figure 15 Screenshot of Xiaoxiaosu in Douyin

In the case of Jinliyan, she mentioned in the interview that livestreaming has gone through its thriving time, now she has to accept the fact that new comers are decreasing and people's interests of sending expensive gifts are tend to be rare. Therefore, seeking for other job opportunities for her is becoming urgent and necessary. As shown in Figure 16, the live streamer Jinliyan has pink Band-

Aid and hammer on her face in the screen indicating she just lost in the PK. When one of the viewers asks her why her ‘Dage’ (literally translated as ‘Big older brother’ who usually send very generous and expensive gifts to specific streamers) does not come to support her in the PK, she is being honest and confessing that her ‘Dage’ is gone and not watching anymore without explicitly elaborating the reasons. This is likely to be a topic of face threatening. Jinli Yuan chose to tell the truth to the viewers while giving limited information for saving her face and protect her identity work in the front stage. In Figure 17, she again mentioned the possibility of quitting livestreaming which refers to the depression of her popularity in Yizhibo. However, the true love fans reacted in a negative way for her intention of leaving as this virtual online community has formed a sense of close connection over time. But meanwhile, the reality of declining popularity is pressuring most of live streamers to convert their job orientation.



Figure 16. Jinli Yuan’s chatroom surface in Yizhibo livestreaming

An episode of interaction between Jinli Yuan, * and *siyahualu a true love fan of her livestreaming.

[]: Visible actions performed in the chatroom

(): My explanations

Italics: textual comments

[sticky on top *longguniangtongtong: welcome to the livestreaming chat room with profession→singing→street dance→ painting+goddess, follow with throbbing]

	Translation
*siyahualu: 你的大哥呢	Where is your Dage (literally translated as ‘Big elder brother’ viewers who are very generous to send expensive gifts to the specific live streamers they like)?
Jinliyuan: 大哥呀, 大哥走了呀。大哥退网了, 不玩了。欢迎余生请多指教。大哥退网了, 他不看了不玩了。对。	Dage, Dage is gone. Big rother withdrew from the internet, he doesn’t play anymore. Welcome yushengduozhijiao. Dage withdrew from the internet (repeating) he doesn’t watch and play anymore, yes.
*siyahualu: 退网了	Withdraw from the internet (repeating what Jinliyuan was saying)



Figure 17. Jinliyuan's chatroom surface in Yizhibo livestreaming

An episode of interaction between Jinliyuan, *yuanyuantawaiye and *jungongbainian true love fans of her livestreaming.

[]: Visible actions performed in the chatroom

(): My explanations

Italics: textual comments

[sticky on top *yigeqiuqianchi: welcome to the livestreaming chat room with profession→singing→street dance→ painting+goddess, follow with throbbing]

	Translation
Jinliyuan: 直播不能作为我所有的经济来源，你看我现在，我最近没什么人气，凉凉，就是就是，直播也不可能一直做啊。就是还是会播，就是万一有事的话，就不一定想每天都这样播的那	Livestreaming cannot be all my financial resources, look at me now, I don't have much popularities recently, cool cool (a Chinese online expression referring something is eventually failed), it is impossible to keep doing livestreaming. I will still live stream, but I will not do it

么勤，能播还是会播一下啦。所以你们真的要趁着我还在，多看看我。	every day if I find another job, I will still do it if I can manage the time. So you should all come to see me often when I am still here.
*jungongbainian: 突然听到你会不经常播了，有点小失落诶！	I feel frustrated and sad when I suddenly heard you are not going to stream as frequent as before!
*yuanyuantawaiye: 不播？	Not broadcasting anymore?
yuanyuantawaiye: 为什么	Why
Jinliyuan: 没有啦，我没有说不播。就是说直播不再是我全部的中心了而已。我还是没事我还是会播的啦。	Not really, I did not say I am quitting livestreaming. It is just livestreaming will no longer be my entire focus. I will still do this when I am available.

Due to the fact of Jinliyuan's gradually undesirable economic income in Yizhibo, she adjusted her streaming strategy to migrate to other platforms. The interview with Jinliyuan shown below reveals her actual intention of abandoning the long-term working environment in Yizhibo and transferred to new platforms Yinke and Douyin. From her example, we can see that Yizhibo indeed takes advantages of Sina Weibo which provides considerable Weibo users directly to Yizhibo, Figure 18 has shown that the population of female users outnumbers male users in Yizhibo. Although Jinliyuan has formed a close relationship with some of her female fans, the main group of viewers who tend to send generous gifts is men. Li (2017) points out that live streaming practice reveals a specific connection between female live streamers and male audiences in which a real mode of conversion of feminine beauty into economic gains. According to my observation during the livestreaming field work, it is mainly male fans who have sent expensive gifts to participant streamer Jinliyuan, so that Jinliyuan's eager of migrating to Yinke and Douyin is understandable for attracting more male viewers and subsequently obtain economic gain.

Interview: Me: 去抖音的话，是你们公司的平台之一吗，	Translation: If you go to Tik tok, is it one of the platforms of your company?
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Jinliyuan : 对呀, 公司有很多个平台 Me : 一直播抖音映客都是? Jinliyuan: 对 Me: 啊那你是说那个一直播你是不播了吗? Jinliyuan: 不播了 Yuan: 为啥呢? 那边那么多粉丝你就 Jinliyuan: 没有啊, 我把粉丝都引到另一个平台了, 因为一直播, 不适合我播, 就一直播现在都是男生 Me: 我也觉得, 我感觉我现在好像一打开一直播, 基本都是男主播在热门页上, Jinliyuan: 对呀, 而且大部分都是女生在那里看, Me: 所以抖音上是看的人比较多吗? 还是说, 男粉比较多? 那映客呢 Jinliyuan: 抖音, 我还没播呢所以还不知道。映客, 男生会比较多一点。你看我在一直播吸的都是女粉, 就是女生会多一点。 Me: 为什么女生会比较多呢, 是因为他的规矩比较多吗还是 Jinliyuan: 因为女生逛微博的多。他很多都是微博引流进来的 Me: 你之前有提到一直播的规矩比别的平台要较多是吗?	Yes, my company has a bunch of platforms. Including Yizhibo,Tiktok and Yinke? Yes Ah so you mean that you are no longer live streaming in Yizhibo? Yes, not streaming there anymore Why? You have so many fans there, and you No, I have transmitted fans to another platform, because Yizhibo, doesn't fit me, because they are all men in Yizhibo I think so, I feel like there are always male live streamers on the hot page anytime I open Yizhibo Yes, and girls are watching most of time So there are more people watching in Tiktok? Or you mean there are more male fans? what about Yinke? Tiktok, I don't know because I haven't streamed there yet. In terms of Yinke, yes, there are more men there. You see that I always attract female fans in Yizhibo, so there are more girls. Why there are more girls, is it because there are more rules in Yizhibo or? Because mostly it is girls who like to use weibo, and accordingly they are guided from Sina Weibo.
--	--

Jinliyuan: 也不是规矩, 就是说要稍微正规一点。	You have mentioned before that Yizhibo has more rules than the other platforms, right?
Me: 对就是稍微正规点	Not really rules, but certainly it is more regular in Yizhibo.
Jinliyuan: 对对对	Yes, more regular
	Yes yes yes

The proportion of female users in Yizhibo is 63.72%

The proportion of female users in Yizhibo is 36.28%

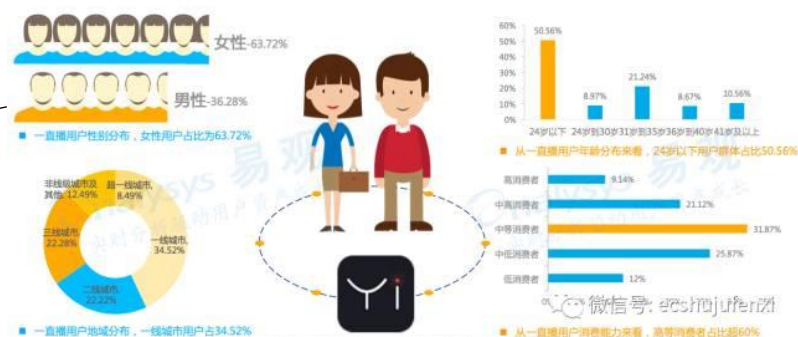


Figure 18. The gender proportion of live streaming platform Yizhibo usage

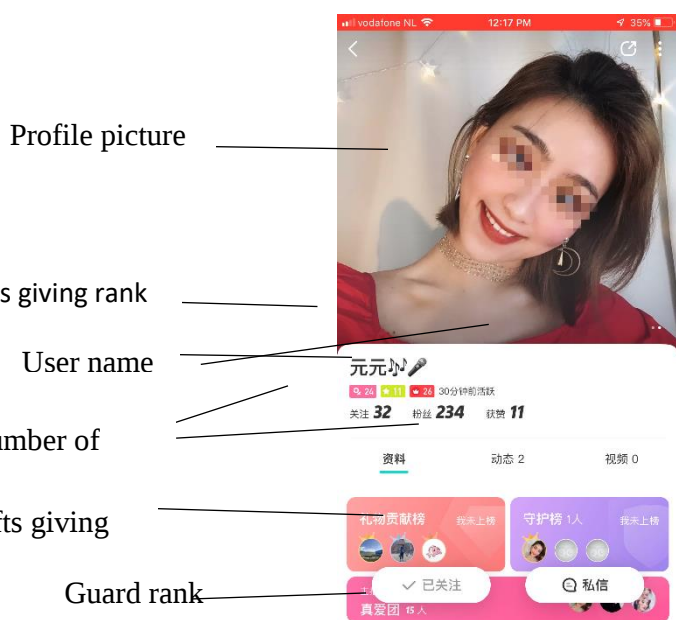
(Yiguanzhibodashujuyizhiboquanwangyonghushentoulvpaimingdiyi 易观直播大数据 | 一直播全网用户渗透率排名第一)

The establishment of WeChat true love fans group greatly contribute to the success of this motion, which enables the close fans to keep following her meanwhile attracting new fans in the new live streaming environment. Through my observation, I have noticed that in the end of March, Jinliyuan has increased her working load by streaming in the meantime on another considerably influential live-streaming platform Yinke. Interestingly, in the end of May, I have received messages from Jinliyuan's WeChat fans group that she is no longer stream in Yizhibo instead starting in Douyin and meanwhile staying in Yinke. In the interview, Jinliyuan explained that it is feasible to work in multiple platforms as company and platform are operating differently, but a company can run different platforms. The company may ask the live steamers' opinions and willingness of working at different platforms, but they will not compel them to do this, which is a voluntary option.

As shown in Figure 19, the main background picture is Jinliyuan herself with delicate makeup and dress, the holistic style tends to be cute and sweet which is also in line with her personality and the style she defined in another live-streaming platform Yinzhibo. The user name is modified to be Yuanyuan by her which has one same character 'yuan' left in comparison with Jinliyuan she used in

Yizhibo, embodying the authentic identity of herself. The number of her fans is only 234 which is greatly less than the fans population in Yizhibo. Her tags consist of goddess, mature lady and good at both singing and dancing which are partially the same with what she is verified in another platform except the tag of mature lady. However, Yuanyuan has received 530 thousand Yincoins (the currency can be purchased by viewers in Yinke) with very limited fans comparing with the fans she has in Yizhibo.

The main motive of Jinliyuan migrating to another platform is to increase the income and solve the potential financial issue due to the declining popularity of her chat room in Yizhibo in February, 2019 when she only earned 4000 yuan (500 euros). Only when she starts embarking a new job, she will gradually shift her focus from livestreaming to the other job. She said her old fans followed her to the new platform, as well as new fans coming gradually in the same time. From Figure 20, we can see that Jinliyuan is trying to convince her true love fans from Yizhibo to also download another application called Yinke and come to watch her streaming. Accordingly, the reaction of the fans in the WeChat group is very supporting and enthusiastic. Currently the population of old fans outnumber the new comers in the new platform. Because she works in the afternoon in Yinke which is hard to attract viewers due to most of people are at work. Thus, she is considering working from 1 to 3 am as she thinks there will be more people watching during that period of time. She explains owing to be a fresh man in the new working environment she is not very familiar with the platform Yingke yet.



Profile picture

Gifts giving rank

User name

Number of

Gifts giving

Guard rank

True love group



Streamer's tags

Recently viewing

Diamonds sent

55 thousand Received Yin coins(currency purchased by viewers) in Yinke

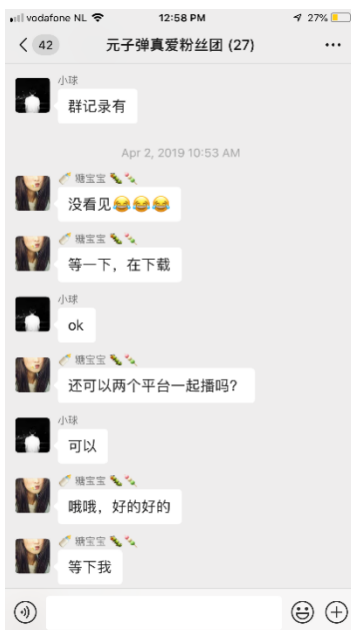
Figure 19 Screenshot of Jinliyuan's profile page on Yinke



1.



2.



3.



4.

Figure 20. Screenshots of chatting history from true love fans WeChat group

An episode of interaction that Jinliyuan is informing her fans she has started live streaming now but in another platform.

*Dollar is the WeChat name of live streamer Jinliyuan. *Xiaoqiu *Tangbaobao and *An imp are three who reached 3rd grade true love fans.

() my explanation

	Translation
1.	Biaoqing (caption 'I am coming for you')
*Dollar: (表情包: 我来抓人了)	(Biaoqing with the caption 'the other
*Xiaoqiu: (表情包: 对方不想理你还	person doesn't want to reply and fart to
对你放了个屁)	you')
*Dollar: 对的鸭	Yes
*Tangbaobao: 你好久播案?	It has been a while?
*Dollar: 我正在播呐老婆	I am streaming wife (an intimate nick
*Dollar: 今晚早点	name for calling her fans)
*Tangbaobao: 哦哦哦	It is a bit earlier tonight
	Oh oh oh
2.	
*Tangbaobao: 你在哪里播?	Where are you streaming
*Dollar: 映客~	Yingke
*Dollar: 我老婆喔!	My wife!
*Dollar: (表情包: 笑)	(Biaoqing)
*Tangbaobao: 啊?	Ah?
*An imp: 哈哈	Hahaha
3.	
*Xiaoqiu: 群记录有	There is information in the chat history
*Tangbaobao: 没看见😂😂😂	I didn't see it (3 emoticons)
*Tangbaobao: 等一下, 在下载	Wait a minute, downloading
*Xiaoqiu: ok	Ok

*Tangbaobao: 还可以两个平台一起播吗? *Xiaoqiu: 可以 *Tangbaobao: 哦哦, 好的好的 *Tangbaobao: 等下我 4, *An imp: (an information forwarded from Yingke) *An imp: (a screenshot of streamer Yuanyuan's profile on Yingke)	Two platforms in the same time? Yes Oh oh ok ok Wait a minute
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Jinliyuan mentions some streamers are particularly hardworking who even work overnight and sleep the whole day. The reason is that most of viewers tend to watch live-streaming in the evening or at late night. Some people might stroll down different streamers' chat room when they cannot fall asleep, or due to specific types work requiring working overnight. As shown in Figure 21, two fans are complaining in Jinliyuan's true love WeChat group about not being able to sleep which confirmed there are certainly people being awake at late night for various reasons that live streamers might seize the possibility to shift their working time and thence to interact with this group of people to obtain potential economic income. Additionally, the WeChat group provides an environment for this fans community to interact apart from livestreaming platform which is a more daily life relevant communication means. It is possible strength their virtual friendship based on 'fans' identity and in the meantime reinforce Jinliyuan's supporter base for her career.



Figure 21. Screenshots of Jinliyuan’s wechat true love fans group

An episode of two members of the true love fans WeChat group sending messages at 4.38 am in China

[]: Visible icons performed in the chat group

*An imp and *请叫我胖鑫 (qingjiaowopangxin) are two who reached 3rd grade true love fans.

	Translation
*An imp:睡不着	Cannot fall asleep now
*An imp: 😭😭😭	3 crying emoticons
*An imp:有人没	Anybody is here
*qingjiaowopangxin: 没有	No
*qingjiaowopangxin: 睡觉	Sleep
*qingjiaowopangxin: 晚安	Good night
*An imp:what	What
*An imp:你也没睡吖	You haven’t slept either
*An imp:好像我也	Seems like i also
	
	Cannot sleep

*An imp:	Let's get up
*An imp:睡不着	
*An imp:嗨起来	[sticker]
*An imp:[sticker]	[sticker]
*An imp:[sticker]	[sticker]
*An imp:[sticker]	

4.4.3 PK, a battlefield without bullets

Apart from merely chitchatting, there are various activities to increase more interactions between streamers and audiences. PK as one of the most popular activities is worthy to be investigated in this research as it not only brings considerable benefits to streamers and intensify the interaction in the specific context, but also reveals different layers of the meaning of battle in the new online phenomenon and creates an entire new social relation.

Interview:	Translation:
Me: 那你在 battle 之前会准备些什么吗? 你需要提前准备些什么吗?	What will you prepare before battle?
Jinliyuan: 不需要	Do you need to prepare something beforehand?
Me: 就是你想 PK 就 PK 了?	No need
Jinliyuan: 对呀, 我想接就接不想接就不接	Which means you will PK whenever you want to PK
Me: 就是别人有时候也会给你发	Yes, I won't connect if I don't want to connect which means sometimes the other one will send PK invitation to you
Jinliyuan: 对	Yes
Me: 那你这个就是	Then in your case is
Jinliyuan: 随机 PK 的话就是匿名的, 就是, 它会弹出来一个框框说, 有 PK 接入什么之类的, 想不想连什么之类的, 允许还是拒绝什么的	Random PK is anonymous, which is, there is a message box popping up in my screen indicating something like PK connecting, do you want to accept, allow or refuse

Me: 但是你 PK 时候的那个状态跟说话的方式肯定跟你就是不 PK 的时候是不一样的吧? Jiinliyuan: 那肯定啊, PK 的时候就不能什么话都说 Me: 那你会注意些啥呢? Jiinliyuan: 就尽量 PK 两家不要尬, 有些你就不认识的, 第一次见面, 也没什么好聊的, Me: 对啊对啊, 那你一般怎么解决啊? Jiinliyuan: 一般这种就玩游戏啊, 比如说那我们来玩成语接龙吧, 或者歌词接龙吧, 或者我们要不要打血条之类的, 玩游戏就不会那么尬。而且有些主播会带节奏。 Jiinliyuan: 有一种叫偷塔, 还有一种叫守塔, 偷塔就是你在最后的一秒钟上一个大的就可以把, 就我们这边两方都有血条嘛, 如果我们的血条一下子过去了, 他们一下子来不及上或者是忘记上了, 那就我们赢了, 就是也是有战略性的。如果不是比赛的话, 这种就是友谊连麦, 也没有打得那么厉害。	But the mode and your way of speaking when you are in PK is definitely different from when you are not in PK right? Of course, you cannot say everything in PK What will you pay attention to? Try not to be embarrassed for both of streamers cause you don't know the other one, the first time you meet, there are few things to talk about Yes yes, so how do you solve it generally? Generally, we play games in this situation, for instance let's play the Chinese string up puzzle, or finish the lyrics, or shall we play the blood grooves, it will not be that embarrassed when we play some games. Also, some streamers are good at taking the initiatives and living up the atmosphere. There is a trick called 'Touta'(偷塔, literally stealing tower), another one called Shouta (守塔, literally defending tower), Touta is that you send a big in the last second which enables, cause the two streamers have respective blood groove, if my blood grove suddenly rise up, the opponent cannot catch up with it or his/her fans forget to send gifts, then I will win, so it is also strategic. But normally we do connection in friendship if it is not a competition, so it won't be that intensive.
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Me: 那你之前打的最好，不是最好，就是打的钱最多的那一次是属于比赛吗？ Jinliyuan: 好像也不是吧。就是玩游戏当时，比如说 PK 也有很多玩法，有一种最简单就是尬聊，就是不管血条，然后还有一种就是成语接龙啊歌词接龙啊这种是消耗时间的，还有一种就是专门打血条，就是谁的礼物多。因为上面有两个血条嘛，谁送的礼物多，谁的血条就会过去一点点，这样子。所以一般玩的狠一点就是打血条，就是谁的礼物多，谁的血条少，谁就要被惩罚，做什么深蹲啊做什么举重啊，或者对方要你做什么这样子的。	So the time you did the best, not the best, i mean you gained money the most was competition? Doesn't seem like it. When we were playing games, for example, there are different games in PK, the simplest one is chitchatting, which means we don't focus on the blood groove, the others are like finish the idioms and finish the lyrics which are time killer. There is one kind is to specially compete the blood groove namely who receive the most gifts. Because there are two symbols representing two streamers' blood grooves in the screen, one receives gift whose blood groove increases. So normally, the crueller game is competing the blood grooves. The one with lower blood groove gets punishment, such as squats, lifting, or the winner asks you to do something.
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This part of interview shows the reasons that trigger the occurrence of PK and how streamer deal with the situation when PK with a random streamer. The participant live streamer Jinliyuan indicates it is common for streamers to proceed PK almost every day especially when there are few viewers and scarce of interesting topics in the conversation with viewers. She further explains that PK in live streaming of Yizhibo platform is a streamer chooses an opponent from his/her friend list or randomly match another streamer they don't know (which would be anonymous). The main goal is to gain a large number of gifts rapidly from viewers during this activity. She elaborates several popular games in the PK: firstly, the simplest one is chitchat about daily trivia brought from both streamers themselves and viewers, and recent news with using a lot of sound effects such as laughing out loud and so forth to build a lively atmosphere. Secondly time killer: Chinese string up puzzle, song lyrics guessing. Thirdly Blood Drain that two symbols of blood grooves are shown above the surface of

two streamers during PK which embody the two players' blood drain. When one of the streamers' blood groove increases and outnumbers the other one means she/he has gained more gifts from viewers or fans than the other streamer. But blood drains are unpredictably changing during the PK. Victory depends on the sum gifts given by the viewers. After that, the streamer who loses with lower blood groove has to undertake the punishment assigned by the other streamer with higher volume of blood groove, such as squat, weightlifting. The one who finally fails also gets a hammer sticker hitting on her face shown on the screen. The PK rankings are also shown on streamers' profile which embodies the streamers' previous PK results and history. Due to the nature of battle, followers tend to support their favorite streamer to win by sending plenty of gifts continuously. According to Jinliyuan, the other prominent reason for streamers to play PK is that new or random viewers are prone to be attracted by the PK and they might start gaining interest to one/both streamers after watching or gift sending.

Interview:	Translation
Me: 上次说到 PK 的事情，你们那个就是每次赢或者输是，就是都是额随意的吗？就是会不会说 Jinliyuan: 不是啊，只是因为像我跟，小小酥是因为我跟她家比较熟，然后我们两家所以都打不太起来，别人家主播才不会这么让呢，该怎么打怎么打你。 Me: 额所以你们，你跟你比较熟的这个女生就，那这个输赢会不会说这次我让你然后下一次我让你这样子 Jinliyuan: 不会啊不会啊，就是随便的。 Me: 那如果要是连着几次可能都是你赢的或者连着几次都是她赢的话，	Speaking of PK, we talked about last time, is that whoever wins or loses each time is random? Or is it No, just because like I am with, it is because I am familiar with Xiaoxiaosu (a female streamer who has closer friendship with Jinliyuan), so it is hard for she and I to have a competitive PK, the other streamers will not take it easy like that, they will defeat you as the PK supposed to be. Eh so you, you and the girl you are familiar with are, so is it possible that the victory would be arranged, like you win this time, and she wins next time. No no, it is random. Then what if you win few times in a row, or she wins few times in a row.

Jinliyuan: 也没关系啊, 我们会互相给对方送消除药水, 就是消锤子那些 Me: 消除药水? Jinliyuan: 嗯 Me: 啥意思呀? Jinliyuan: 就是谁输了谁不是会有那个锤子什么创可贴吗, 然后你送小药水, 然后那些特效就会没有嘛。 Me: 哦~~ 你还可以送这个, 是赢得才可以送? Jinliyuan: 也不是, 就是你要是觉得你赢了不好意思你也可以给对面送小药水, 那一般这种属于特别熟的情况下了。	That doesn't matter, we will send elimination liquid medicine which is used for removing the hammer sticker and so son Elimination liquid medicine? En What does it mean? Which means whoever loses will have a sticker of hammer or Band-aid on his/her face, and then the winner can send medicine, then the effect will disappear. Oh~~ you can even send this, is it only winner who can send? Not really, you can also send it to the other streamer if you win but feel a bit embarrassed, but mostly it only happens between streamers with close friendship.
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Jinliyuan explains her main tactic in the PK is that when she's battling with a streamer who is more popular than her, she tends to be humble in the beginning to pretend she is lack of followers who can send her generous gifts, and then she uses one of the famous tactics called 'Touta' (偷塔 literally, steal tower) which refers to the suddenly huge amount of gifts sent by a fan or several fans in the last few seconds of PK. In her case, it is by informing true love followers in the WeChat group to throw a plenty of gifts to her. Meanwhile streamers and fans in respective chat rooms during PK cannot see each other's chat history. However, in the interview shown above, we can see that she is less serious with familiar or friend streamers to avoid intense atmosphere, conversely, she tries her best to defeat randomly matched streamers. It is possible that Jinliyuan defeats the same friend streamer in the PK in a row during few days, but they will not negotiate before the PK to arrange winning or losing. In that case, she gives a specific virtual medicine to only close friends to remove the hammer sticker. On the other hand, she loses from time to time in the PK when confronting a 'big' live streamer namely who possess certain fans who are rich and generous to send very expensive gifts. Loser

streamer can ask fans to tip him/her the specific virtual medicine (See Figure 22) to eliminate the loser's mark of hammer sticker on her/his screen.

Xiaochuyanshuidilu (消除药水滴露, literally elimination liquid medicine drop)



Figure 22 Screenshot of the virtual gift of elimination liquid medicine drop on Yizhibo

Just as shown in Figure 23, Screenshot of the PK between Jinliyuan and her opponent, the two different colors of rectangles shown above two steamers representing Jinliyuan and the other streamer's lifeblood in the PK. The blue blood groove outnumbers the red indicates Jinliyuab's failure in the battle. Therefore, the punishment is visual effect of an animated pink hammer hitting her head and a Band-Aid shown on her nose on the screen which lasts 150 seconds. However, a fan of Jinliyuan is sending her 66 times of virtual gift of medicine which resembles a pink bottle used for removing the loser's mark on the face. In spite of the symbol of loser's identity does not look excessively terrible, the streamers tend to opponent greatly value face presentation and protect their ideal image online, hence they ask fans for help which corresponds to the importance of face work in this online self-presentation. In reality, PK implies the essence of nervous and drastic in the competition, both of the streamers are eager to win which not only prevents them from acquiring the visual punishments but also accordingly gains accelerating number of gifts in the short time as it is the only key to win. Jinliyuan confirmed that she does not need to prepare before connecting or being connected by other streamers in the PK thanks to her abundant previous streaming experience.

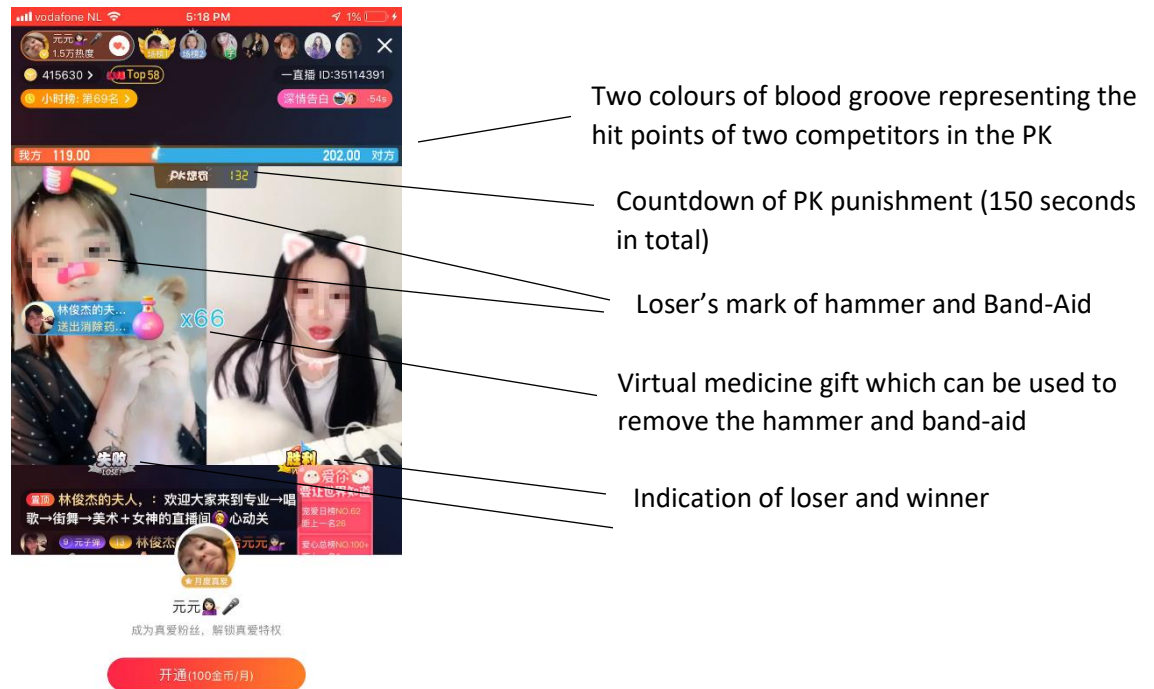


Figure 23 Screenshot of the PK between Jinliyuan and her opponent

Chapter 5. Discussion and conclusion

This thesis has used theoretical references, obtained through a literature review, which conjugated digital ethnography and empirical case studies, in its attempt to answer *what are the cultural normativity and identity practices operating in the livestreaming platforms and within viewers' community?* In the previous I have shown that how the regulations of the certain digital providers have greatly shaped live streamers' preparation and performance behind and in front of the camera, meanwhile without crossing the line, streamers employ a variety of characteristic and versatile self-presentation to draw massive attention from audiences (mainly female streamers- male audiences) in order to obtain desired economic outcome. Additionally, the interaction patterns in live streaming generate a new way of relationship sociality in which not only being restricted between streamers and viewers, but also through a connection between streamers. Digital ethnography was conducted to investigate the serial daily activities in the participant streamers' chatrooms. After observing the situated livestreaming environment, questions according to small details were raised. Therefore, applying interviews to streamers provided me both abundant of data and a profound insight of this online practice.

The results indicate that the contents of live streaming are not unlimited, in certain streaming platforms not only streamers have to be meticulous with the rules but also viewers have to be mindful otherwise they will be excluded from the community, in which draws attention on the current cultural normativity in livestreaming environment China. Consequently, the normativity becomes a necessity for streamers to design their self-image while preparing in the back stage namely behind the camera, which is embedded throughout the whole streaming process. When streamers finish their elaborate face work, they will be dedicated to stimulate viewers' interest to stay in the chatroom by mastering the rules and interactive patterns. New forms of sociality are emerged during this phase, firstly we see an unequal power relation intertwined among livestreaming service provider, streamer and viewers.

When more rigorous policies imposed on female streamers to forbidden any forms of erotic performance in livestreaming, whereas most of male viewers tend to acquire more intimate interactions with female streamers. In order to tackle this dilemma, a seemingly flirty interaction pattern without violating the rules are carried out among most of female streamers with male viewers. Additionally, viewers who send more gifts will have access to join another unique group

where they share mutual interests on one person and on the other hand strengthens the fans group of streamers. The tremendous economic interest in live streaming industry drive increasing younger generation to join this seemingly easyf but complicated business. Nevertheless, streamers have to be prepared to undergo the down period with low popularity. Streamers' mobility in different platforms has been investigated to rescue their difficult time and attract more viewers. PK, a traditionally defined as antagonistic is actually functioning both of collaboration and battle between streamers. Lee, Yen, Chiu, King and Fu (2018) argue that PK held among streamers essentially stimulate more viewers' interests and involvements, therefore creates more possibility of tipping.

Although I have analyzed this online practice with regard to different aspects and gained in-depth insights of how it exactly operates, certain limitations arise in the research. Through my observation and interviews with participants streamers of this study, I realize that more and more male streamers are gradually occupying the hot page of several popular livestreaming platforms. However, my study does not cover the dimension of male streamers. Therefore, the relation between male streamer and female viewers maybe worthy to further expand this topic of livestreaming practice.

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