

# Noisy livestreamers seeking online fame overwhelm quiet city venues

Wan Lixin and Xu Qing

The popularity of 20-second videos and livestreaming in general is causing grief for neighborhoods disrupted by noisy, intrusive crowds of people.

The once quiet, picturesque 900-meter-long Anfu Road in downtown Shanghai is one such site. The secluded roadway has become a hot spot for livestreamers and shutterbugs using the venue as a catapult to online fame - much to the chagrin of local residents.

The street's popularity stems, in part, from the "Anfu Road Princess," who first appeared to be a stocky, elderly man with closely cropped hair and indifferent features in a video. A bit of investigation revealed that the old man was actually an old auntie who often strutted on the street dressed coquettishly like a young girl. Her overweening confidence and poise amid prying looks from passers-by earned her Internet notoriety.

It seems many wannabe personalities are showing up on the road, eager to replicate her success by creating videos and pictures to upload online.

One video-streaming man has been showing up there for three months, according to a report by Shanghai News Radio.

Asked to explain his choice of the location, he said: "You meet all the trendy people here - those strapping lads and charming lasses who quicken your blood circulation, and also those devils and monsters of every description ..."

Some of the more dedicated livestreamers film nonstop for hours. Neighbors complain about the travesty they are imposing on the once nice, peaceful street.

Some residents who used to stroll there during the day now postpone their walks until late in the evening to avoid the publicity-seekers.

Some photographers recklessly shoot on the sidewalks or even in the roadway, obstructing both pedestrians and motorists.

In a move unhelpful to the situation, several shops on the road have tried to cash in on this subculture by placing photogenic furniture or other props at their storefronts.

"The road used to exude an ambience of cultured elegance, evocative of light-



Wannabe online personalities often park themselves on Anfu Road in downtown Shanghai for long periods of time. — IC



Models and photographers block a pathway through the cherry blossoms in Gucun Park. — Xu Qing

hearted and leisurely seclusion" said one resident. "But, alas, now that has all been overrun by chaos and ostentation. On my way home from a theatre recently, I was frankly flabbergasted

by the pandemonium of livestreamers howling, screaming and doing all sorts of antics."

Some residents draw their curtains closed during daytime to fend off

prying eyes and cameras. A few of them remembered being the object of a spate of snapshots when they tried to air their laundry outside.

Anfu Road is not the only venture suffering the stain of such unwanted attention.

As flowers bloom across the city, parks are also on alert.

In Baoshan, local police issued warnings to prepare for a surge in crowds, particularly in Internet-famous locations, such as Gucun Park, known for its cherry blossoms.

In some instances, streaming hostesses will station themselves around a particular tree for up to three hours. In their relentless zeal for recognition, some hostesses perch on ladders and dress in exotic clothing. Cameramen come equipped with reflector sheets, ladders or stools.

Some visitors to the park are clearly annoyed.

"People come to appreciate the blossoms and find these attention-seekers glued to an area, with ladders, chairs and other equipment," a woman who identified herself only as Yumi, a Shanghai native who now lives in Japan, told Shanghai Daily.

She said some hostesses hold snapped blossom branches in their hands, which she finds inexcusable.

"Unless this situation gets addressed, I won't be here again," she said.

Should park authorities step in to regulate this sort of behavior?

It's been proposed that parks could cordon off a few trees explicitly for livestreaming camera hounds, providing brightly colored ladders for those who want their pictures taken. The rest of the park would be off-limits to such activities, at least during peak visitor hours.

However, a visitor surnamed Shao dismissed the suggestion as impractical. He said livestreamers tend to favor a variety of locations, and setting aside a fixed space for them might incur the displeasure of ordinary visitors.

Gucun Park has put additional security personnel to dissuade people from taking pictures if a person or group lingers too long in one spot.

Others argue that the responsibility for controlling the behavior of livestreamers rests with video platforms, which should be monitoring the videos they air for infringement of ethical, social and privacy norms.