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# Livestreaming influencers trigger questions of propriety

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**A**spate of recent incidents have shown the length aspiring influencers go to for viewership, and the need for harsher regulation.

In some provinces in the north, the prolonged precipitation had delayed the harvesting of wheat for some time, and the recent stretch of fine weather has kept villagers busy gathering in the crops.

It also made crowds of livestreamers busy. Dressed brightly and armed with all kinds of gear, they set up in the middle of the farm field, streaming live broadcasts of the people harvesting.

Obviously the influx of these livestreamers creates additional hardships for the rural residents rushing against time to harvest their crops.

Just imagine the sight of a dozen of these garishly attired actors in the midst of a wheat field flirting with the harvesting — it is a disrespectful act that borders on sacrilegious. People my age still remember that for traditional Chinese anything concerning food is a

deadly serious issue, and toying with or wasting food could earn us severe reprimands from our parents, if not eternal damnation.

So even the most brazen livestreamers used some subterfuge in their theatrical performance. Some said they were helping with the harvest. When this proved hard to sustain, they turned to something they are adept in: fabrication.

In the latest incident, a long period of rain had prevented harvesting machines from entering the fields, resulting in some wheat beginning to germinate or go mouldy.

So some livestreamers cooked up a tale that the highway authority, by not allowing the harvesters to leave the highway, should be held responsible.

One video circulating such a rumor earned million of views, 156,000 likes, and 74,000 comments. Subsequent police investigation led to detention of one person, and reprimands for another four.

It seems livestreaming exonerates its practitioners from honoring any principles about decorum or dignity. A “*dayi*

brother,” a villager in Shandong who became famous for a song in a talent show some years ago, has been since living in the spotlight, surrounded by his fellow villagers and outside visitors. Even the gate to his home had been crashed open, and damaged in the process.

Thanks to her fame as a diving champion, Quan Hongchan, 16, had seen her home turned into a mecca of sorts, with no less than 2,000 visitors swarming at one time, causing severe disturbances to other villagers. In Shanxi, a woman livestreamer began to dance at the scene of a fire accident, drawing outrage.

If these brazen behaviors could be explained by commercial motivation, vanity alone could account for one recent tragedy.

On May 30, a 43-year-old woman, while touring a small island in Hong Kong, was swept into the sea while posing for a group picture braving surging waves. She was pronounced dead when her body was recovered.

In Shanghai, the sudden sensation over a bridge over the Suzhou Creek, the Puji Road bridge, also showed how

capricious Internet sensation can be.

Pictures taken on the S-shaped ramp to the bridge, with the balustrade, lamps and buildings in the background all in shades of light grey, allegedly produced an impression evocative of a Japanese urban scene.

When such photos were shared on social media, it drew a crowd of influencers who, armed with their props and equipment, tried to produce the desired effect by striking all kinds of poses.

So many of them lingering on the staircase or the traffic lane undoubtedly posed severe threats to the flow of traffic, and the administration responded by festooning the side of the bridge with streamers bearing slogans in Chinese characters, considerably dampening their enthusiasm for the location.

But challenges remain of creating a long-term mechanism for checking the unscrupulous exploitation of any location for the purpose of photos or livestreaming, without ethical or moral considerations.