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## Surveying China's livestreaming economy

审视中国的直播经济

What was once a niche subculture has evolved into a \$5bn business in China. In 2016 nearly half the country's Internet users watched a livestream. "People's Republic of Desire", a documentary directed by Hao Wu, reveals the strange machinations of an online world where people can fulfil their most basic social needs.

曾经的利基型次文化，如今已在中国发展成价值 50 亿美金的行业。2016 年，这个国家大约半数网民都看过网络直播。《虚你人生》这部由吴皓导演的纪录片，揭示了网络世界中不寻常的套路，人们在这里得以满足他们最基本的社交需求。

The livestreamers themselves are usually poorly educated and unemployed: they perform online in hope of quick fame and fortune. Big Li migrated from Hubei to Beijing to work as a security guard, before striking it rich livestreaming full-time.

主播们自身通常没受过什么教育，也没有工作。他们在网上表演，以期一夜成名和赚笔快钱。老李从湖北来到北京当保安，之后全职当主播发了横财。

At the heart of the film, then, is a familiar story. Livestreaming started off full of creative, entrepreneurial and democratic potential but has since taken on a dystopian feel. Everybody can participate in the competition for clicks, views and tips in China's attention economy, but the platform dictates the rules of the game. "I was fascinated by how a single platform could profit from rich and poor alike," Mr Hao tells The Economist. Before pursuing film-making, Mr Hao worked at Alibaba and Yahoo, two internet companies, and he says he is sensitive to the ways in which users can be manipulated for profit.

另外，这部纪录片的核心，则是一个常见的故事。直播最开始充满了创造的、进取的、民主的潜质，但随后却染上了一层反乌托邦的色彩。在中国的注意力经济下，每个人都能参与竞争，追求点击量、浏览量和小礼物，但直播平台支配着游戏规则。“光凭一个平台就能既赚富人的钱又赚穷人的钱，这一点令我着迷。”皓先生告诉《经济学人》。投身电影行业之前，皓先生在阿里巴巴和雅虎两家互联网公司工作过，并且表示他对操纵用户进而牟利的手段是很敏感的。

His thought-provoking film reveals a bitter irony not limited to livestreaming: that the connection that technology was meant to provide has isolated people, too. Big Li's family begins to fall apart. "I miss my son," he confesses in one scene, breaking down in tears in front of millions of his fans. He turns away, as if finally realising that the faceless, flickering icons on his computer screen will not give him what he longs for.

他这部发人深省的纪录片揭示了一种苦涩的讽刺，而且不局限于直播业：技术本应为人们提供的联结，却同时孤立了人们。老李的家庭开始分崩离析。“我想念我的儿子。”他在一幕直播画面中坦白说，当着数百万粉丝的面感情失控，流下了眼泪。他转过脸去，仿佛终于意识到电脑屏幕上那些没有面容、闪闪发光的图标，无法给予他，他真正渴望的东西。

-----文章来源 / 经济学人

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### 重点词汇

**survey**/'sʌ:veɪ, sə'r'veɪ/

- v. 审视

**niche**/nɪtʃ/

- n. 利基（市场）

**machination**/,məʃɪ'neɪʃn/

n. 阴谋策划

- machinations against other board members

**fulfil**/fʊl'fɪl/

v. 完成；实现

- fulfil one's ambition
- fulfil oneself

**fame and fortune**

名和利

- risk and reward
- friends and foes

**migrate**/'maɪgreɪt/

v. 移居

**dictate**/'dɪkteɪt/

v. 支配；规定

**manipulate**/mə'nɪpjuleɪt/

v. 操纵

- manipulate the public

**isolate**/'aɪsəleɪt/

v. 使孤立，使隔离

- a country which is isolated from the rest of the world

**fall apart**

解体；崩溃

- marriages fall apart
- fall apart to pieces

**confess**/kən'fes/

- v. 认罪；勉强承认

**break down**

（感情）失控；（健康）垮掉

**flicker**/'fɪkər/

v. 闪烁

**long**/lɒŋ/

v. 渴望

- long for knowledge
- long to see some old friends