

## Gaming and streaming: Not always fun and games

A girl's quest to carve out a space for herself in the gaming and streaming sphere is not an easy one, but Annabelle Lim fights on



Annabelle Lim sits in cosplay and holds a Genshin Impact pillow in front of her gaming set-up at home. Her love for gaming progressed into Twitch-streaming in 2020.

When most people think of gaming streamers, guys like Pewdiepie and Sykkuno immediately come to mind. This is unsurprising since gaming and streaming have always been male-dominated. Although girl gaming streamers have gained popularity in recent years, they are often stereotyped as poor gamers and that they are gaming just to attract male attention.

The reality of these girls could not be more different.

### Getting her game on

Final year NUS student Annabelle Lim, 23, has been gaming since she was 13. She first started out with Maplestory, an online roleplaying game, and eventually branched out to first-person-shooter games like Overwatch and other roleplaying games like Genshin Impact.

When a close friend saw her skillfulness in these games, he suggested that she should start streaming on Twitch – a live-streaming platform most often used by gamers. Taking his advice, she embarked on her streaming journey in September last year.

### **Finding an X-factor**

Lim shyly confided that she thought about how to stand out when she first started. She stated three main reasons for people achieving popularity on Twitch: being a pro-gamer, having a funny personality, or being good-looking. She refused to force herself into such “success formulas” and thus decided to cosplay characters from the games she played while streaming.

The idea came about as Lim had been cosplaying for over a year and it became a cherished hobby. “I wanted to combine all my favourite activities together,” she said. Her eyes lit up as she excitedly showed me a wide array of colourful wigs and intricate cosplay outfits arranged neatly in her closet. “It creates a more immersive experience for me, and cosplaying celebrates the game as well,” she excitedly explains.



Lim plays Genshin Impact on her phone while the phone screen is mirrored onto her laptop. The screen above shows what viewers will see on her Twitch streams, which often lasts 2-3 hours long.

### **Being treated differently**

Yet for Lim, gaming has its challenges. Her eyebrows furrowed while recounting instances that made her unhappy while gaming. “Once, I was talking over the Overwatch voice communications when two guys asked, “Wait, is that a girl?”, and burst out laughing. I felt confused and insulted. They were making fun of me just because of my gender,” said Lim.

Male players also patronize her upon realizing that she is a girl, like complimenting everything she does in the game regardless of the significance. “It’s like the types of treatment I get are attributed to me being a girl, and not my skills,” she sighed. “It’s very demeaning.”

To add to gender-related issues, streaming can be stressful in other ways too. Once, a guy friend who streams told Lim that she has it easier because she’s a girl.

“I don’t feel that it’s easier at all. If you look at guy streamers, they just put on a t-shirt, their hair is messy and they’re ready to stream. Girl streamers put in a lot of effort into their looks to make sure they’re presentable on their streams,” she said as she scrolled through Twitch to show me what she meant.

When asked if she ever felt pressured to conform to societal standards of beauty, Lim immediately agrees without hesitation. She shifted uncomfortably in her seat as she told me how often she gets insecure due to how female streamers are portrayed as having high-pitched voices, small and pretty faces, and largely being “sexy” or “cute”.

“Sometimes, I’m unsure if I should create that sort of online persona that aligns with what audiences want to see,” she admitted.

### **Girls just want to have fun**

Nonetheless, Lim presses on despite these worries and takes comfort in just enjoying what she does. “At the end of the day, I love what I do and I’m not going to let these worries bother me too much,” she said.

Gaming and streaming are stress-relievers for her ongoing final thesis and having the support of her close friends further encourages her. Looking forward, she plans to save up for a gaming PC, a more professional setup complete with speakers and headphones; and she hopes to cosplay more characters from Genshin Impact in her streams.