

Abstract

China is a rapidly emerging market for coffee consumption. Coffee, the fruit and plant itself is not new to China, however, coffee drinking and its associated culture is not. Coffee drinking culture boomed in China when Starbucks was introduced to the country in 1999 and is quickly gaining ground among the younger generation (Harrison, 2005). Following this, several formats of coffee preparation have been introduced (Euromonitor International, 2015). Using Bourdieu's framework of *Habitus*, the study aims to have an in-depth study of the emerging coffee drinking culture in China and Taiwan.

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Chapter 1

Background

China is famously known as a nation of tea drinkers. Coffee, the plant, however, is no stranger to Chinese soil. Its earliest instance of cultivation was during the 19th century in Yunnan province and large scale commercial plantation started around the 1950s (Zhang, 2014).

1.1 Starting on Tea

To illustrate tea's importance to China, There are three aspects to consider: 1. China has been historically involved with tea, 2. there are several provinces whose major industries involve tea, and 3. tea has its own ceremony.

Tea is no stranger to legend. One story attributes its discovery to a legendary emperor named Shen Nong. Legend has it that tea leaves had blown into his cup of hot water and started from there (Beaudoin & Graham, 2011, p. 2). Another, known around Buddhist circles is the story of Bodhidharma, an Indian monk who went to China and is known as the founder of Zen¹ Buddhism. Upon his arrival, he immediately meditated for nine years, and at one point, fell asleep for a few moments. Determined to stay awake, he cut off his eyelids in an effort not to fall asleep again. Upon seeing this, Guanyin, the goddess of mercy, caused tea plants to grow on where Bodhidharma's eyelids fell (Beaudoin & Graham, 2011, pp. 2-3).

¹Also known as 禅 Chan

During the Tang dynasty, tea was undergoing intensive cultivation. In the eighth century, a scholar named *Lu Yu* wrote the *Cha jing*, translated as The Classic of Tea, detailing the history of tea. It also describes the utensils needed to make tea and the process to make a good brew. Through this document, tea was transformed from an ordinary drink into an art form. Several industries flourished as a side effect of the massive demand for tea, bringing in revenue in rural cash poor areas. A transport industry developed, and wooden chests for containing tea grew. The porcelain industry was spurred. Tea was then introduced to Japan and Korea after. Further cultivation was done during the Song dynasty and a drinking habit was established and spread throughout the country. Silk production grew in the north by the thirteenth century to be used as barter for tea (Chow & Kramer, 1990, pp. 2-10). By 1607 CE, more than eight hundred years later, Europe experienced its first taste of tea in Holland, Denmark by a ship that came in from Macau (Chen, 2012).

Tea was then introduced to Japan and Korea after. Further cultivation was done during the Song dynasty and a drinking habit was established and spread throughout the country. By 1607 CE, more than eight hundred years later, Europe experienced its first taste of tea in Holland, Denmark by a ship that came in from Macau (Chen, 2012).

Terroir is a concept where “the location is given special connotation, where certain products are endowed with a unique identity that will influence production and impart different impacts upon its final characteristics” (Silva, de Queiroz, Pinto, & Santos, 2014). Depending on where tea is grown, its quality, taste, and other characteristics is affected on where it is planted, the type of soil the plant grows on, and the various climates it experiences across locations. This is the concept that helps us differentiate Yunnan tea from Fujian tea, barring specialized methods of preparing tea for consumption.

Yunnan, Fujian, Jiangsu, and Anhui are some of the many provinces in China that cultivate tea. In fact, there are twenty provinces that produce tea, comprising one-fourth of China’s landmass (Chen, 2012) and each known for a specific specialty variant.

1.2 The Market

In 1999, the first Starbucks in the Mainland was established at the Beijing World Trade Center. When the idea of establishing Starbucks in Mainland China was first brought up, there was skepticism on how could a coffee shop chain possibly compete against a country whose beverage market is dominated by tea and whose drink prices are US\$3 per cup (Adamy, 2006)?

TODO: tea ceremony

1.3 Open Door

We move on to the modern era, during the time of Deng Xiaoping and the Open Door Policy and known for the quote “It doesn’t matter if the cat is black or white, so as long as it catches mice”. Economic reform was the plan and his leadership was generally hands-off by nature, leaving decisions to officials he has appointed, experts in their field, with Deng providing general guidance and direction. For the rare times he has personally intervened for policymaking, his decisions have proven crucial and effective (Naughton, 1993).

For the initial steps of economic reform, the government loosened its grip on existing enterprises. This left individual citizens now free to initiate their own small to medium business ventures and letting these enterprising individuals dictate their own prices and at quantities they wish to produce. This is in contrast to Mao’s plan of the state having control of all means of production throughout the territory and controlled how much and how many products of a certain kind are churned out. After which these products are sold to the government at basement prices which are then resold to the general populace.

As an effect, private ownership became possible. Competition among firms heated, stimulating development and creativity. This in turn incentivized workers and increased productivity. The economy flourished.

Then came the Special Economic Zones, or SEZs. A *Special Economic Zone* is a specially demarcated area, with a special administration handling that area. Incentives like tax cuts are offered to businesses and enterprises when established

within the zone. On the state's part, procedures are streamlined to make it easier and faster for these prospective businesses to get started. An important provision of the SEZs is that foreign companies can establish themselves there, with full ownership of their assets. Further, they are exempted from import duties for selected items (Zeng, 2011; Jaggi, Rundle, Rosen, & Takahashi, 1996)

When the program was first initiated in 1980, there initially four participating cities across the two provinces of Guangdong and Fujian. These four cities were Shenzhen, Zhuhai, Shantou, and Xiamen. Hainan, Pudong, and other cities followed after (Jaggi et al., 1996).

1.4 Where Starbucks fits in

Then came Starbucks. While not the first, it is one of the many North American food service chains to set foot early in China. Their initial foray into the Asian market was in August 1996, whose first branch outside North America was established in Tokyo. The plan was to form partnerships with local operators, initially with a joint venture with Sazabu (Harrison, 2005). This was in the similar case of McDonald's in Japan in 1971, where the chain was franchised by a then University of Tokyo student, Den Fujita. (Watson, 2006, pp. 21, 113)

At China World Trade Building in Beijing, Starbucks made its first presence in the Mainland in 1999. From one branch in 1999, they have expanded to 209 stores in 2005, 470 stores at the turn of the decade in 2010. In 2011, Starbucks planned to further increase their presence by opening 1000 more stores, with a target of 1500 branches by 2015 ("Starbucks to increase 1,000 cafes in China by 2015," 2011). True to their word, they have reached 1811 stores near the end of 2015 (Statista, 2015). CEO Howard Schulz is confident of the company's progress within China so much that the corporation plans to open 500 more branches within the Mainland for the next five years (Burkitt, 2016).

1.5 Statement of the Problem

Since Starbucks' entry into the cafe market in China in 1999, cafes have been a hit with the population. This research desires to seek out the factors that enabled Western-style cafes to be popular, with Starbucks as a specific example. While being popular with the population, who are its patrons and what are their motivations to frequent or even to just try out these cafes?

Chapter 2

Review of Related Literature

While other countries have coffee as their perk-me-up drink of choice, China has tea for their case. This is evident with ready-to-drink (RTD) tea sales specially in the retail sector (International Coffee Council, 2015). The same holds true in a large part of the world, and will be so for a good period of time (CITEME). In places where coffee holds dominance, it serves the same purpose as tea would: as a recreational drink and as something to keep one awake.

Tea also appears in other texts, through its close connections with Buddhism. Kieschnick (2003) details how tea came into regular use by monks as a drink to keep their concentration going during long meditation sessions. He also describes here tea's various appearances in legends and ancient writing such as Lu (1974) on *The Classic of Tea*.

In analyzing coffee, Silva et al. (2014) puts forward *terroir*, a concept used in winemaking to analyze its quality and taste. Location, altitude, and soil type are variables in crop production and influence taste profile of a specific type of coffee bean. The study managed to efficiently determine differences with harvests among the locations sampled.

For health, Dharmananda (2003) analyzes coffee in the context of Traditional Chinese Medicine. The coffee plant and its relatives have historically been a source of medicinal herbs. Coffee in particular has an effect of regulating liver qi, giving the experience of “a strong sense of mental and physical vitality”. Namba and Matsuse (2001) recounts how coffee first arrived in Japan through translations of Dutch textbooks. They further study how the framework of how Chinese and Arabic

traditional medicine dealt with and described the effects of coffee, mostly through caffeine and its effects on aging, infectious diseases, and heart processes.

Su, Chiou, and Chang (2006) studies the impact of western culture in Taiwan. Three studies were performed, correlating consumption patterns with the desirability of foreign culture and the “adoring of foreign value in coffee consumption”. It was found that foreign brands were being preferred over local brands for tea and coffee. This lead to the conclusion that there was an adoration of western culture and influenced consumers’ purchase decisions and drink preferences. A market research study by Euromonitor International (2015) illustrates the growing coffee trend in Taiwan. Sales of instant coffee, Nestlé to be specific, dominate the market. In addition, a new format of coffee preparation was introduced to the market in the form of “coffee pods” through the brand “Nespresso”, a division of Nestlé. However, there is a growing demand for fresh coffee beans driven by an increasing number of cafés opening up in Taiwan. Consumers have started to gain access to coffee making equipment, enabling them to prepare their own serving at home. Because of an increased demand of for fresh coffee, prices have risen due to consumers seeking better quality coffee. As a net effect, the rise of coffee has cannibalized tea sales and consumption, with consumers preferring ready-to-drink tea mixes while on the go.

In China, Harrison (2005) describes Starbucks’ initial foray into the international market, along with descriptions of its business model. For example, in an effort to stimulate consumption, Starbucks places several stores nearby other branches. Yang, Hu, Mupandawana, and Liu (2012, I) measured how much of a premium, consumers in Wuhan are willing to pay for coffee that is labelled as “Fair Trade”. It was found that consumers were willing to pay as much as 22% more on average than traditional coffee. While not mentioned in the study, Starbucks promotes its products as fair trade goods.

Watson (2006) presents an ethnographic case study of the fast food chain McDonald’s across five cities: Beijing, Hong Kong, Seoul, Taipei, and Osaka. The study describe locals’ perception of McDonald’s in each of these cities. These perceptions range from being a window to the world outside of China in the case of Beijing, to being a political act and a reflection of attitude on the subject of reunification in Taiwan, and to the eventual integration of everyday culture in Japan.

Zhang (2014) argues that coffee drinking in China is more of a trend than a habit. Most of its consumers are of a younger and more affluent demographic. Drinkers are found to be concentrated among major cities like Beijing, Shanghai, and

Guangzhou. International Coffee Council (2015) notes that there are no clear statistics on China's coffee drinkers, but consumption can be estimated by import and export volumes. Coffee imports are noted to be mostly in unprocessed and non-roasted form. While Yunnan (云南) is an area known for tea, coffee production is rising.

Chapter 3

Methodology

I will attempt to answer these questions using Bourdieu's framework of *Habitus*. Articles from People's Daily (English) have been gathered for this study. These articles will then be subject to content analysis, on the lookout for recurrent themes.

Being a daily publication, newspapers provide a good form of coverage for small incidents and important events. A newspaper provides the role of an archival chronicle, keeping track of what was happening on a day to day basis (Martin & Hansen, 1996). People's Daily was selected because of its wide circulation in China, enjoying significant readership and wide reach across the population. Public officials and ministers have chosen to release official statements through this outlet.

In gathering articles, a simple search with the term "Starbucks" within the [People's Daily website](http://en.people.cn)¹ was performed, returning 81 articles, the earliest of which date back to August 2007. A small Python script (see appendix Appendix A) was written to programatically download all matching articles. While all news articles presented in the search results dating back from 2007 were downloaded for the dataset, analysis was intentionally limited to stories within January 2010 until May 2016. Refining further, stories that did not happen within China's borders are not included in the analysis. A complete archive of all downloaded articles and this paper itself are available in a [GitHub repository](https://github.com/tsdmgz/sbux-rmrb)². Sample articles that were included and excluded can be found in appendices B and C.

¹<http://en.people.cn>

²<https://github.com/tsdmgz/sbux-rmrb>

3.1 Analytical Framework

3.2 On the case of Starbucks

One may question, so why Starbucks? There are a number of competing coffee chains in China knowing that Starbucks was not the first of its kind in the Mainland.

There is the popularity aspect. Yes, there are other coffee chains like Taiwanese-based UBC Coffee (**CITEME**), and Costa Coffee from Hong Kong (**CITEME**), but Starbucks is not known as yet another coffee chain, but it is rather known as a famous coffee chain. They are a place to be that sells coffee, rather than something that sells coffee that offers itself as a place to be.

Chapter 4

Data and Analysis

In the article “Chinese prefer foreign brands”, a market survey of the top 1000 brands by Campaign Asia-Pacific found that most recognized brands in China are from other countries. The top ten brands were Apple Inc., Nestlé, Chanel, Sony, Samsung, Uni-President Enterprises Corporation¹, Panasonic, Nike, Canon, and Starbucks. It is interesting to note that there is none of these recognized brands are based in the mainland. The first mainland company in the list would be Beijing Tong Ren Tang, a pharmacy chain at the eleventh spot in the list.

Comparatively, not much has changed in four years. In a 2016 report of the same survey, the top ten brands were Samsung, Nestlé, Chanel, Apple, Sony, Nike, Beijing Tong Ren Tang, Starbucks, Adidas, and Panasonic. While other brands merely shuffled positions, there were only two new entrants to the top ten, namely Beijing Tong Ren Tang and Adidas. Only one of which is a local brand, Beijing Tong Ren Tang.

Within the dataset, there were (TODO:two|three) instances where a chain was criticized for opening in a specific location and left alone in another. One of these controversial locations was at Lingyin temple, a Buddhist temple first established during the fourth century. As reported in the article, a Starbucks branch had opened up nearby and had gathered controversy from social media users over at Weibo and news commentators alike.

It is said that imitation is the highest form of flattery. In the case of Apple, the

¹Company is Taiwan based

imitation they have experienced is beyond flattery. Their flagship device, the iPhone, is widely counterfeited with varying degrees of quality hoping to cash in to unsuspecting and impatient buyers wanting to get their hands on the latest device earlier than the rest (Justice, 2015). The imitation does not end at devices. Even the Apple Store itself is copied by enterprising entrepreneurs also hoping to cash in on the Apple craze. These lookalike stores have managed to imitate the look, form, and feel of an original Apple Store down to uniform and store layout (Lee, 2015).

Appendix A

article-grab-link.py

```
1  #!/usr/bin/python3
2  #takes TOC archive index and gets links for wget to download
3
4  import argparse
5  from bs4 import BeautifulSoup
6  from bs4 import SoupStrainer
7
8  parser = argparse.ArgumentParser(description="HTML file to use")
9  parser.add_argument('-f', dest = 'file')
10 parser.add_argument('-t', dest = 'publication')
11 args = parser.parse_args()
12 html_doc = open(format(args.file))
13
14 soup = BeautifulSoup(html_doc, "html.parser")
15
16 if args.publication == 'rmrb':
17     x = soup.find_all(class_='on1 clear')
18     for ul in x:
19         for link in ul.find_all('a'):
20             print(link['href'])
21 elif args.publication == 'chinadaily':
22     x = soup.find_all(class_='cs_sear_list_tit')
23     for div in x:
24         for link in div.find_all('a'):
```



```
25         print(link['href'])
26
27 # vim: smartindent breakindent
```

A.1 Usage

A.1.1 Synopsis

```
article-grab-link.py -t PUBLICATION -f FILE
```

A.1.2 Description

Parses a downloaded copy of a search results page of a given FILE from PUBLICATION and returns links to articles in the given FILE.

A.1.3 Options

- t PUBLICATION** Use PUBLICATION in parsing a saved results page.
 - t rmr** Download articles from People's Daily (English).
 - t chinadaily** Download articles from China Daily.
- f FILE** Obtain links from FILE. Multiple input files are not supported.

A.1.4 Use case

In the process of grabbing the articles, a search is performed in People's Daily website which then returns a results page with the URL

```
http://search.people.com.cn/language/english/getResult.jsp
```

However, this is not the page we are looking for. The actual URL for the results page is at the bottom part, at the pagination links and looks like

```
http://search.people.com.cn/language/search.do?pageNum=3&keyword=starbucks
&siteName=english&dateFlag=true&a=&b=&c=&d=&e=&f=
```

The URL for the results page is now known. As of writing, there are 9 pages in the results page. A command to download all the pages in the search results can now be constructed.

```
cd data/articles/peoples-daily/searchresults
echo "http://search.people.com.cn/language/search.do?pageNum="{1..9}
"&keyword=starbucks&siteName=english&dateFlag=true&a=&b=&c=&d=&e=&f="
| parallel -n1 -j9 wget -v
```

With all pages from the search results downloaded, links to resulting articles can now be parsed.

```
cd articles
find ../ -maxdepth 1 -type f|parallel ../../../../script/article-grab-link.py
↪ -t rmb -f {}|parallel -j30 wget -v {}
```

All downloaded articles are downloaded in the current working directory. If the commands were followed, look in data/searchresults/peoples-daily/articles.

Appendix B

Sample included articles

B.1 Former Kuomintang Leader's Old Residence Turned into McDonald's

- Author: not listed
- Editor: Liang Jun, Bianji
- Syndicated: Yes, CRI Online
- Filename: c90000-8977155.html

Former Kuomintang leader Chiang Ching-kuo's former residence in east China's Hangzhou city has been turned into a McDonald's fast food outlet.

The McDonald's outlet has opened in the main building of the old residence, a western-style brick and wood villa built in the 1930s.

A Starbucks cafe opened two months earlier this year, in a side wing of the same building, next to the McDonald's cafe.

Chiang Ching-kuo was a Kuomintang politician and leader, and son of Chiang Kai-shek, who held numerous leadership positions in Taiwan.

The use of Chiang Ching-kuo's old residence as a coffee shop and fast food outlet has stirred concerns about the protection of historical sites among netizens.

An expert on historic preservation says developing historical sites for commercial purposes and conducting renovation should both need government approval.

The expert added that those renovating historical sites are not allowed to change any interior room structure or exterior building walls.

B.1.1 Reason

Another Starbucks branch has been opened in a historical/cultural site and has generated controversy, again.

B.2 Smoother, faster ride home for Spring Festival

- Author: not listed
- Editor: Ma Xiaochun, Bianji
- Syndicated: Yes, Xinhua
- Filename: c90000-9008767.html, c90000-9008767-2.html

BEIJING - High-speed trains with comfort, Starbucks coffee onboard, free WIFI in stations, and phone apps for ticket purchase. As the Spring Festival travel rush kicked off on Sunday, hundreds of millions of Chinese found that their journeys for holiday homecomings have become much smoother and faster.

This year's Spring Festival travel rush reflected how China's economic boom, huge investment in infrastructure and fast growth of information technologies totally redefined the once gruelling experience of going home for the Chinese New Year, which falls on February 8 this year.

MODERNIZED JOURNEY

At Shanghai Railway Station, the ticket office is no longer crowded. In previous years' travel rush, the ticket office was crammed every night with tens of thousands of people who had to line up for the whole night to buy a ticket.

But this year, about 83 percent of tickets were purchased online.

China's railway service has been adapting to hi-tech trends by making itself accessible through websites and mobile phone apps, said Zhu Wenzhong, passenger traffic director of Shanghai Railway Bureau. Passengers now could order onboard meals on the phone app before boarding. Drinks made by Starbucks are available on certain trains.

Across China, free WIFI is offered in some train stations and electronic ticketing machines were placed in bus stations. An online system that integrates bus operators in 13 provinces has been launched.

The Ministry of Transport said this year it started to use big data to analyze the Spring Festival traffic.

Chinese car-hailing app Didi rolled out a car-pooling service that can pair travelling needs across the country, making it possible for drivers to take on others when travelling home for the Chinese Lunar New Year.

Train stations have also been modernized. In the city of Nanchang, a railway hub in east China, passengers used to wait outside Nanchang Railway Station as there was not enough room indoors during the Spring Festival travel rush. But this year, they can wait inside the station as a high-speed train station was just added to the city.

FASTER RIDE

This year, Gong Xinyi, a college student in Shanghai, traveled back to her hometown in Jiangxi Province with only one third of the time that she used to spend.

A newly added high-speed route has linked Gong's hometown with Shanghai and shortened her journey to three hours. Last year, she had to take a 7-hour-train ride and an additional 3-hour bus trip.

Gong's faster Spring Festival journey is made possible as China has been investing heavily to expand its high-speed train network which is already the world's largest.

Of all the trains serving in the Spring Festival travel rush this year, more than 60 percent are high-speed trains that can run up to 350 kilometers per hour.

Around 3,300 kilometers of new lines were added to the high-speed railway network last year, bringing the total length to 19,000 kilometers, which make up 60 percent of the world's total.

From 2011 to 2015, the period in which China's 12th Five-Year Plan was implemented, fixed-asset investment in railways amounted to 3.58 trillion yuan (544 billion U.S. dollars), up 47.3 percent from the 11th five-year-plan period.

Sheng Guangzu, general manager of the China Railway Corp., said China plans to invest 800 billion yuan in railways in 2016, especially in less-developed central and western regions.

High-speed rail service continues to carry more weight in the Spring Festival travel rush because more Chinese now can afford to travel in style after the country's average disposable income surged by more than seven percent every year over the last decade.

Chinese people's growing ability to afford a faster journey has also fueled an air travel boom.

Chinese airlines are expected to carry 54.55 million passengers in the Spring Festival travel rush, up 11 percent from the last year.

Air China said during the Spring Festival travel rush, it would add 2,432 flights and operate an average of 1,160 flights daily.

China Southern Airlines planned to add over 6,000 flights on 155 international and domestic routes during the Spring Festival travel rush.

Effort has also been made to ensure a faster trip back on the ground. As no toll way fee is charged nationwide during the seven-day Spring Festival holiday, traffic jams on highways had trapped thousands of cars for hours in previous years.

Zheng Zongjie, an engineer at the road network center of the Ministry of Transport, said this year car drivers would no longer need to pick up the tickets at toll gates to make traffic smoother, as they did during previous free-hours.

Urban transportation would also be improved with better arrangement of metro, bus and taxi in the Spring Festival travel rush, the authorities said.

B.2.1 Reason

Aside from adopting new tech innovations, it is interesting to note that Starbucks coffee has been specifically mentioned, when a coach may also have other food and/or beverage products on board

Appendix C

Sample excluded articles

C.1 Lack of “excellent” coffee blends: Consumer Reports

- Author: not listed
- Editor: not listed
- Syndicated: Yes, China Daily/Agencies
- File name: out-of-scope/6886496.html

After tasting 37 different blended coffees, Consumer Reports couldn’t find one that measured up to its “excellent” or “very good” ratings, the publication said Tuesday.

The less-than-glowing report follows a year that saw tight supplies of high-quality arabica coffee beans in Colombia, followed by steep premiums that caused some roasters to look for cheaper and more available options for their blends.

Ranking at the top of the list of 14 caffeinated blends – earning a rating of “good” – are the Starbucks House Blend, calculated at 26 cents per cup, and Green Mountain Signature Nantucket Blend Medium Roast, at 23 cents per cup.

Blends are the best-selling type of ground coffee and contain beans from at least two regions or countries, the publication said.

The highest score for the 13 decaffeinated coffees also failed to reach the top two categories. The better scoring varieties included Allegro Organic Decaf, Blend Medium Dark, Peet's Decaf House Blend, Caribou Daybreak Coffee Morning Blend Decaf and Bucks County Decaf Breakfast blend.

Consumer Reports has a rating criteria in which the tasters look for specific characteristics including the flavor and aroma.

The publication advised coffee drinkers not to count on familiar brand names or expensive price tags, noting that the cost doesn't accurately reflect the cost per cup due to varying grind densities, and recommended ratios of coffee to water.

Consumer Reports is published by Consumers Union, an independent nonprofit organization that does not accept outside advertising or free test samples, it said in a release.

Full results of the coffee ratings will be available in the March issue of Consumer Reports and online at www.ConsumerReports.org.

C.1.1 Reason

While Starbucks was mentioned, this story did not happen in China and was not related to China or the Chinese.

C.2 More good journalists needed despite 'fall' of CCTV star

- Author: Ku Ma
- Editor: Kong Defang, Yao Chun
- Syndicated: Yes, China Daily
- Filename: out-of-scope/c90882-8755827.html,
out-of-scope/content_17780431_2.htm

In sharp contrast to the limited coverage of CCTV star anchor Rui Chenggang in the official media, social and new media are full of reports

on his “being taken away by procuratorate”, with comments spreading fast and wide on WeChat.

Information on Rui’s “being taken away” is limited, the same as other similar cases under investigation. Whether he assists investigation or himself is under investigation is not revealed yet. However, it will not be a big surprise if Rui turns out to be involved in corruption or exploiting his position to make money as some media reports said, given the ongoing tremors caused by corruption allegations in the CCTV business channel.

For ordinary Chinese, Rui’s “missing” was even more dramatic than the news of the fall of “big tiger” Han Xiancong, a top political adviser in Anhui province, on the same day. Perhaps the reason for that is that 35 provincial or higher level “big tigers” have already been ensnared in the anti-corruption drive since the 18th Congress of the Communist Party of China, whereas Rui is the first well-known TV anchor to be “taken away”.

But people need to distinguish his misdeeds, if confirmed, from his profession career. Even if Rui is truly under investigation, he is being investigated not for his journalistic work, despite its controversial nature at times, but for his possible wrongdoings.

For long, Rui has been admired by youths as a symbol of China’s new elite generation. He topped the college entrance examination, or gaokao, in Hefei, Anhui province, and got admitted to China Foreign Affairs University, and ultimately completed his studies at Yale University. After joining CCTV, the most influential TV station in China, he has interviewed about 200 political and business leaders from across the world.

There is little doubt that Rui possesses almost everything today’s Chinese youths crave —good education, a well-paying job, handsome looks, money and fame. That’s perhaps the main reason why his “being taken away” has dealt a blow to the TV station and sparked heated online debates.

Some critics say Rui deserved to be “detained” because he was snobbish and arrogant. Others argue that he was “taken down” for his “nationalist remarks”, and still some others lament his fall from grace.

Also, this is not the first time Rui has created a controversy. In 2007, Rui wrote in his microblog that Starbucks should be moved out of China’s Forbidden City although the coffee shop set up the branch at the latter’s invitation. Under the influence of the celebrity who had 10 million followers in Sina Weibo, China’s equivalent Twitter, Starbucks eventually

moved out of the palace. In that case, people may have quite different judgments on whether Rui was too nationalist or despised the spirit of contract. However, the modern Starbucks' presence in the ancient world heritage itself was controversial, and the Forbidden City should have solicited public opinion before the offer was made.

Later at the G20 meeting in 2010, he raised eyebrows again, this time by usurping the last question, supposed to be asked by a South Korean journalist, "to represent the entire Asia" to ask US President Barack Obama .

The next year, he invited criticism for asking the then US ambassador to China, Gary F. Lock, at Davos whether he traveled economy class because the US owed huge debts to China.

His style of raising questions may be too straightforward, or even clumsy, for many Chinese who prefer the traditional spirit of politeness and modesty. But as a well-educated journalist who speaks English fluently, his interview style, despite being controversial, didn't affect his work.

He is one of the few journalists bold enough to challenge powerful figures while interviewing them. His success in persuading 200 political and business leaders to accept his invitation to be interviewed should be considered as an achievement. He had enough reasons to be proud of, and he could boast of being the new face of Chinese journalism to the outside world.

His professional achievements and possible illegal deeds are two separate things, so his "being taken away" has nothing to do with his "patriotic remarks". Many journalists use cheap tricks to sensationalize their reports, because they fear that otherwise viewers and/or readers will consider their efforts ordinary and dull. But is it right to sensationalize news even if it is to promote nationalism? More journalists need to seriously discuss this issue.

As a rising power, China is bound to develop deeper relations with the international community. So it will need more journalists like Rui to reach the country's true story to the outside world. And of course, the crackdown on corruption should be intensified to prevent so-called star journalists from using their positions to make money.

The author is an editor with China Daily.

C.2.1 Reason

While the article happened in China and Starbucks is mentioned, the story does not significantly involve the company.

Bibliography

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