

## **Making tastes, making markets:**

Thinking about the role of cultural intermediaries in building a fine wine consumption culture in China.

Professor Jennifer Smith Maguire  
Sheffield Business School

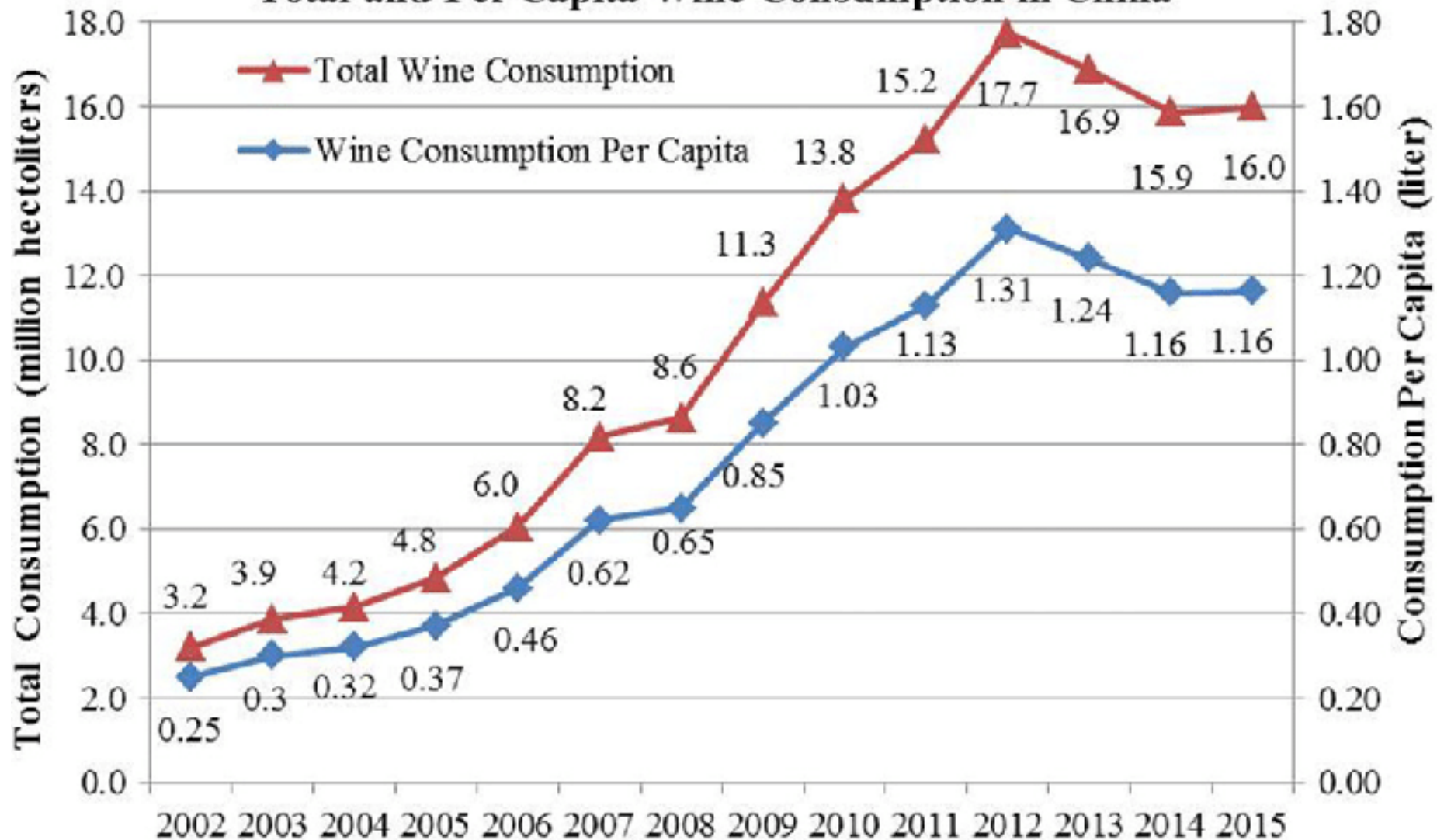
✉ [j.smith1@shu.ac.uk](mailto:j.smith1@shu.ac.uk)

🐦 [@consumapalooza](https://twitter.com/consumapalooza)

SHU Creating Knowledge Conference, 2019



## Total and Per Capita Wine Consumption in China



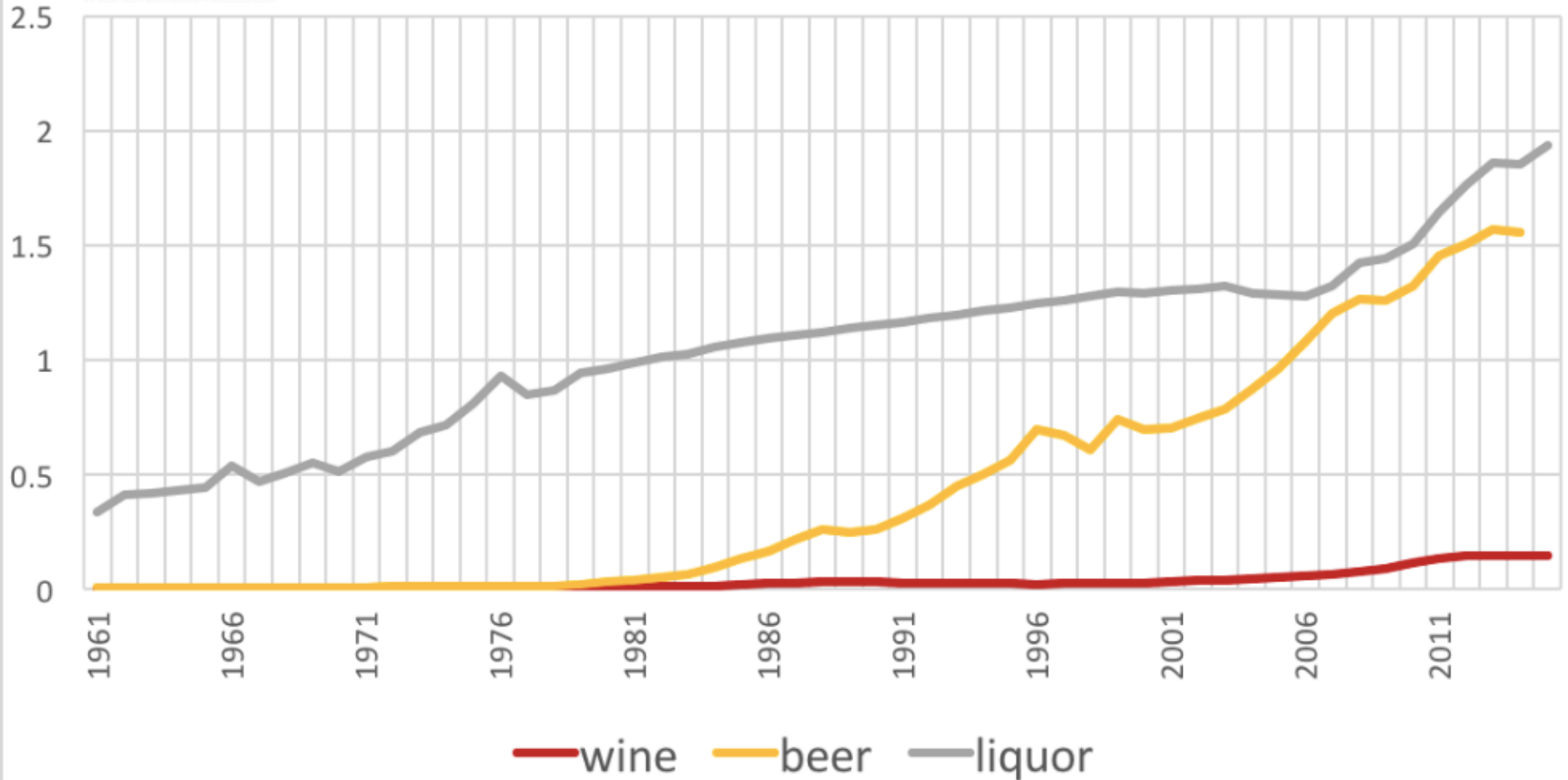
Wine consumption in China. Source: Data of wine consumption: ASKCI (2016), OIV (2016); data of population: National Bureau of Statistics of China (2016); and calculated by author. Consommation de vin en Chine.

(Li & Bardají, 2017)



# Wine, Beer and Liquor Consumption in China 1961-2015

in liters of alcohol per capita



(Storchmann, 2017)

## Thinking about markets...

Markets are outcomes of various arts and devices of attachment that work with the avid propensities of all entities to associate. [...]  
Markets proliferate attachments and attachments proliferate in markets.

(McFall, Cochoy & Deville 2017: 1)



## Thinking about market makers...

[Cultural intermediaries] construct value, by framing how others...engage with goods, affecting and effecting others' orientations towards those goods as legitimate [and are] differentiated by their explicit claims to professional expertise in taste and value within specific cultural fields.

(Smith Maguire & Matthews 2012: 552)



Intermediary Role	Ethnicity	Career in wine	Gender, Age
Writer/educator	British	6 years	Male, 40s
Writer/educator (Annie)	Chinese	17 years	Female, 50s
Brand representative (Yang)	Chinese	7 years	Male, 30s
Sommelier	Chinese	4 years	Male, 20s
Writer/educator (Louis)	Taiwanese	11 years	Male, 40s
Educator	Chinese	1 year	Male, 20s
Sommelier/retailer	Singaporean/Chinese	20 years	Male, 40s
Educator	Chinese	6 years	Male, 20s
Retailer	Chinese	7 years	Male, 50s
Brand representative	Taiwanese	3 years	Female, 20s
Brand representative	Chinese	9 years	Male, 30s
Sommelier	Chinese	7 years	Male, 30s
Sommelier	Chinese	5 years	Male, 30s

Even if I don't have to work in the holidays, I still drink wine. I still take notes and I still share my notes on Weibo or Facebook. I think it's helpful for me to always keep notes so I can remember the performance of that wine. And also, I...have many readers, and they are happy to read more and that's helpful for them to choose the wines.

The key opinion leaders on Weibo are keen to drink high end wines. I know people who can afford to drink DRC and Petrus at every meal. I am always happy to accept those dinner invitations! (*laughs*) But these are low profile people; they don't come to classes. So, they invite me, so it's a private class. They enjoy it—it's for fun, not about business. Maybe before people go and play golf. Now they have good quality people to talk about wine, and enjoy it, and they might meet other people with similar interests, people like themselves. People who enjoy good wines also have good taste. So, through knowing about wine, you know they have the same taste as you.

I know about the wines because I've met the producers through wine shows or events or when I've visited the wineries. It helps because I am very interested in the history and the stories of the winery. I like to tell people the stories. So, if I spend time with the owner, I can get some details that allow me to write a better story.

Louis (male, 40s, Taiwanese, wine writer/educator)

It's different with the region, by 1st tier, 2nd tier...even 5th tier cities. You've got some small, coastal cities that are crazily cashed up, so it varies a lot. Here's an example. A three and a half tier city, half a million population: a baby city compared with Shanghai. We ran a wine dinner there—it was the first time they'd had a wine dinner in their top hotel. For half of the attendees, it was their first time drinking wine—I mean the first time sipping wine, not just 'bottom's up.' You get government people, private business owners, alcohol and beer distributors: they tend to pick it up really fast.

[What do you tell that kind of audience?]

Very basic terms, how to taste, how to serve the wines. Colours, trying to identify different characteristics in the wine.

Yang (male, 30s, wine representative of a large global beverage company)

We talk about what is wine, what is wine making, the regions, the terroir and its influence on the wine styles. We teach them to understand the different styles by tasting. We teach them wine service. For the more advanced, we teach them more specific information on the region, as well as understanding the labels, how to read the labels. Before the class, most people will say that they can't separate different wines; to them, all wines are the same. Maybe they do gan bei, bottom's up. But then they learn to taste the different varieties, the different styles. For them, that's a big leap. And they will form small groups and meet to drink and talk about the wines.

Louis (male, 40s, Taiwanese, wine writer/educator)



[In the 1990s] no one was offering education to consumers. I wanted to create a wine column for consumers. Nobody was doing it at that time—I was the first, maybe. The magazine editors, the newspaper editors, they thought I was crazy to write only about wine. Or, they thought I was selling something. They didn't understand. I'm independent. I'm not selling a brand; I'm selling ideas. I needed the editors to fall in love with wine, so I tried a German ice wine, and I opened their eyes. They gave me a column.

[In my wine education classes], we compare wine with Chinese tea culture. I want a Chinese wine culture. I want the East talking to the West, tea talking to the wine. In China, people understand the tea, so they will understand it. I want to publish in English so that they [in the West] will understand how we do it. So, I will compare Chinese and Western cultures.

[...] When I was writing columns, I had to interest people in the wine, so I would write about wine and Chinese traditional festivals and traditional aesthetics of beauty. So, it was like a graft, grafting the wine onto Chinese culture.

Annie (female, wine writers, 50s)



# Proxies for legitimate consumers





Exemplars for not-yet-legitimate consumers



Functional democratizers

# CHEFS Research Cluster

HOME    EVENTS    MEMBERS



## Culture, Health, Environment, Food and Society Research Cluster

CHEFS is a cross-faculty, interdisciplinary research cluster that utilises food/drink as an empirical window through which to explore how individuals (producers, intermediaries and consumers) and institutions accomplish the cultural production and consumption of everyday life under the broad headings of *culture, health, environment and society*.

Our aim is to develop an inclusive, collaborative cluster that facilitates impactful research and knowledge exchange activities. Our research interests and expertise fall within five broad themes:

- Food + processes of cultural production and representation
- Food + cultural practices and identities
- Food + inequality and social stratification
- Food + institutional setting
- Food + place, development and sustainability

All disciplines and career stages welcome!

<https://blogs.shu.ac.uk/chefscluster/>

CHEFS café  
June 27  
9-11am

### Recent Posts

- [CHEFS Launch Events \(15.05.19\)](#)

### Recent Comments

### Archives

- [May 2019](#)

### To learn more:

Interested in finding out more or getting involved?

Please get in touch with [Jennifer Smith Maguire](#) (j.smith1 [at] shu.ac.uk).

**thank you**

Professor Jennifer Smith Maguire  
Sheffield Hallam University

✉ [j.smith1@shu.ac.uk](mailto:j.smith1@shu.ac.uk)

🐦 [@consumapalooza](https://twitter.com/consumapalooza)

