

My cultural experience in China

The last two and a half years of my life in China have been quite a journey, an appreciation of a culture radically different from ours. The Chinese have great respect for authority and social order that can be seen from the smallest of things like in a restaurant, where you see everyone lining up quietly during the peak hours. Ten minutes break for every hour of class are respected by both the teachers and students.

It took me a while to trust the system, but two things were easily noticeable, people are generally calmer and there is a noticeable absence of guns. I first saw a gun at the railway station in Beijing after five months of my stay in China. China is nearly a cashless society. Every time you pay for an item with cash, you attract that funny look. Only a few of the elderly and people who do not know how to use phones transact business in cash.

The elderly perform a big role in society, including keeping the streets clean to looking after their grandchildren. It is common to find elders converging at designated places to do exercises. Sports are



really promoted in schools and even without having a talent for any particular sport, you find yourself on a football pitch or a basketball court. The physical education classes are delivered even at university level. This encourages people to learn different games.

Cities are well connected via the railway systems. There are also subway as well as bus systems. The buses are similar to the Pioneer buses we see in Kampala. Taxi fares are set and enforced by the city authorities. Online shopping is effective and reliable - what you see is what you get. I was a bit anxious

when I first interacted with shopping apps, but all this changed when I changed my mind-set. I have since become a big fan of it, there is a designated period for celebrating online shopping which climaxes on the so-called Singles Day aka 11.11. During this year's 11.11, Alibaba Group generated \$25.3b in sales. It does not matter what you want or the cost. Even a product of 1 Yuan (about Shs530), can be delivered at no extra cost.

Despite the huge number of people on the telecom networks, there is no congestion. Airtime scratch cards are a thing of the past as the phone can either be recharged via the online payment platforms or at customer service centres. Social media is big business and heavily regulated.

Family ties are highly respected the many festivals are treasured and used as family days. During the New Year's festival, which occurs from the end of January to early February, streets get deserted, and people are with their families the way it is on Christmas Day in Kampala.

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