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GAIN Report

Global Agricultural Information Network

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China's New Media Sold On U.S. Agriculture

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Agriculture in the News

Beverages

Food Service - Hotel Restaurant Institutional

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Wine

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Report Highlights:

ATO Beijing led a team of bloggers from Beijing, Chengdu, and Shanghai to the U.S. to learn about American food and food culture and the wide range of products available from the U.S. The trip proved highly successful, as the participants with over 700,000 followers generated 37 blog articles and 338 Weibo tweets about their experiences.

Media Tour Showcases U.S. Food for Chinese Consumers

One of the key obstacles facing U.S. food in building market share in China is the generally low level of recognition that U.S. products face there. Beyond a handful of key products, few distinctive U.S. food products are recognized in China, and consumers generally equate U.S. cuisine with fast food. This perception is a significant obstacle to building sales in the high-end segment, where growth is fastest.

To help address this concern, the U.S. Agricultural Trade Office in Beijing led a media team of bloggers from Beijing, Shanghai and Chengdu to the United States to learn more about the diversity of U.S. food culture, and the wide range of products available. This was the first team to focus on New Media, meaning professional bloggers, instead of traditional magazines and news media.

Big Numbers

Quantitative measurement of the value of press coverage is always difficult to assess. However, whatever standard is used, the results of this tour were good. The bloggers all post to both Weibo (a Chinese version of Twitter) and to their online blogs. Weibo followership gives a notion of the audience size:

Bloggers

Codes	Blogger Name	No. Weibo Fans
A	七色地图 (Beijing)	310,000
B	行走40国 (Beijing)	333,000
C	潘潘猫 (Beijing)	60,000
D	鲍小菲 (Chengdu)	2,500
E	喻小2 (Shanghai)	11,000
TTL		716,500

Between them, the five bloggers wrote a total of 338 tweets during the 12 day trip, making for a bit over 28 tweets per day on average. For the Beijing bloggers alone, the commercial cost for placement of tweets would have been roughly \$65,000 (ATO was not able to obtain a charge estimate for the non-Beijing bloggers).

Blog articles provided more in-depth coverage, including photographs and video on specific site visits. A detailed list of blog articles, the sites they covered, and links to the articles themselves is included below. The Beijing bloggers led the way again, with a total of 37 articles. Of these, Sina.com, China's largest web portal, promoted 25. These articles generated over 1 million page views. The Chengdu-



Our bloggers hard at work, chopping okra as they blend U.S. ingredients with Chinese cooking.

based blogger put in an admirable performance: as editor of one of West China's top portals, her articles were placed on the front page, generating over 100,000 page views. In addition, she actively participated in her website's forum, interacting with netizens to discuss her travel.

A Diverse Itinerary

Having recently (2010) visited the U.S. West Coast, ATO took this team to locations on the other side of the country: New York, North Carolina, Louisiana and Chicago. The itinerary included a wide range of different locations:

Agricultural production:

- New York vineyards: Brotherhood, Tuthilltown Spirits, Stoutridge, Millbrook
- Stone Barns Center for Food and Agriculture
- Ford's Gourmet Foods
- Vienna Beef

Retail

- Hunts Point Markets
- Union Sq. Greenmarket
- NCDA&CS Raleigh Farmers Market

Cooking education

- New Orleans School of Cooking

Restaurants

- Peter Luger Steakhouse
- Grand Central Station Oyster Bar
- Carnegie Deli
- State Farmers Market Restaurant
- Court of Two Sisters
- Antoine's Restaurant
- Distinctive Food, LLC's Cheesecake
- Chicago Cut steakhouse

Culture tour

- JC Raulston Arboretum
- Cooking at the home of a North Carolina native
- Oak Alley Plantation
- Airboat Swamp tour
- Sight-seeing in New York
- Sight-seeing in New Orleans
- Architecture tour of Chicago

Lessons from the Past



The team visits Pie Piper in New York City.

The emphasis on bloggers was a lesson learned from previous media efforts. A similar mission in 2010 included a mix of bloggers and traditional magazines. On that team, bloggers generated stories and posted photographs on a daily basis, drawing their ‘followers’ to become part of the trip as it proceeded up the U.S. West Coast, learning more about U.S. food and about the clean and natural growing conditions on the way. On returning to China, blogger participants posted summary stories within the week. Magazine participants, on the other hand, generated one or two stories apiece, for the entire tour, typically published a month or more after returning. In addition, bloggers were more engaged on the small, quirky aspects of U.S. food: the craft beer and local wines, for example, suited the short-but-interesting emphasis of the food blogging world, but were very difficult to capture in full magazine spreads. As a result, ATO chose to go entirely over to new media for the next tour. It is easier to track media coverage (such as the number of views) and also encourages more interaction with the audience than print media.

Local Heroes

A second new area of emphasis was to focus on working through direct local contacts in the United States. This was partly an outgrowth of the new-media focus of the tour, as the large number of short stories that blogging generates is better suited to capturing the many faces of local culture in the U.S., as opposed to the more formalized approach taken by magazines. ATO built the tour around prior contacts for exactly this reason. North Carolina and New York were the standouts: the North Carolina Department of Food and Agriculture provided a warm welcome that truly communicated the degree to which food, culture and daily life are woven together. The bloggers were hosted at a tailgate party for a high school football team, and entertained at a private home for a barbecue.



The team learns about the craft beer movement in Chicago. Craft beer is still in its infancy in China, but U.S. hops are already finding a market there.

New York vineyards and the Stone Barns Center showcased the sheer diversity of U.S. food and agriculture, including the nearly infinite variety of ethnic cuisines that have flourished in the United States. In the process, the message that U.S. food is about more than just fast food, but rather is about healthy lifestyles, history, and culture, came through loud and clear. Stone Barns was especially impressive, highlighting fresh foods organically produced in a sustainable manner, as well as a cutting-edge presentation of the cuisine.

Lessons Learned

Defining expectations is important to generating results. Chinese media, including new media, are subject to a constant stream of suitors, all offering gifts or benefits, often with no apparent strings attached. It is important, therefore, to be clear that there is some expectation of results. A substantial

difference in the output of the Beijing-based bloggers versus those from other areas can be seen: this is related to the simple practice in Beijing of requiring bloggers to sign an expectations letter that committed them to publishing a minimum number of tweets and blog items during the tour. In actual fact, all Beijing bloggers showed great passion about the trip and took initiatives afterwards, but the open statement of expectations helped to clarify that this was a working trip, and not a benefit offered in hopes of future favorable coverage.

Safety in Numbers

Analysis of blog articles and tweets follows, broken down by site and by blogger. Also following is a comprehensive set of URLs for blog articles written by the Beijing-based bloggers.

a) Weibo:

The five bloggers tweeted to Weibo **338 times** about this trip and reached about **710 thousand fans**. The content included diverse programs including food production, retail markets, restaurant experiences and culture tours.

	Bloggers	A	B	C	D	E	Total
New York	Tuthilltown Spirits	1	1	1	1	1	4
	Stoutridge Vineyards	1	1	1	1		3
	Millbrook Vineyards & Winery	1		1	1		2
	Peter Luger	1	1		2	2	5
	Hunts Point Markets.	1	1	1	1	1	4
	Union Sq. Greenmarket	1	1	1	2	1	5
	Grand Central Station Oyster Bar	1	1	2	1		4
	Sight-seeing in NY	4	9	3	6	3	21
	Carnegie's Deli		1				1
	*Stone Barns Center for Food and Agriculture	2	1	1		1	3
NC	Ford's Gourmet Foods	1	1	1	1		3
	JC Raulston Arboretum			1	1		2
	NCDA&CS Raleigh Farmers Market	1	1	1	1		3
	State Farmers Market Restaurant	1	1				1
	Cooking at home		2	5	1	2	10
New Orleans	Oak Alley Plantation	1	4	1	1		6
	Airboat Swamp tour.	1	3	1	1	1	6
	Sight-seeing (e.g. French Quarter)	2	7	4	1		12
	Restaurant: Court of Two Sisters and others	1	1	1			2
	New Orleans School of Cooking	1	1	2		1	4
	Antoine's Restaurant New Orleans		1	1			2
Chicago	Distinctive Food, LLC's Cheesecake			1			1
	Chicago Cut steakhouse	1	2		1	2	5
	Chicago's Architecture Tour	1	3	4	1	1	9

	Vienna Beef	1	1				1
Others		25	106	37	32	44	219
TTL		50	151	71	56	60	338

b) Blogs

The three bloggers ATO Beijing recruited are very influential. They wrote **37 blogs**, with rich content and pictures about the tour. Among them, 25 blogs were recommended and promoted by Sina.com. These blogs were viewed almost **1 million times!**

Blogger	Content	Link	View times
A	Preface	http://blog.sina.com.cn/s/blog_49ba2b940102e658.html	151,583
	North Carolina Pumpkins	http://blog.sina.com.cn/s/blog_49ba2b940102e6jf.html	65,292
	Organic dinner at a NY farm	http://blog.sina.com.cn/s/blog_49ba2b940102e6nh.html	86,330
	Fall in love with Chicago	http://blog.sina.com.cn/s/blog_49ba2b940102e6tx.html	61,127
	New Orleans , Be High!	http://blog.sina.com.cn/s/blog_49ba2b940102e6w0.html	148,322
	New York street food	http://blog.sina.com.cn/s/blog_49ba2b940102e70z.html	77,963
B	Receiving the invitation to visit the US	http://blog.sina.com.cn/s/blog_4b62f1a30102e0ub.html	1,401
	The iPhone 5 Live Sale	http://blog.sina.com.cn/s/blog_4b62f1a30102e0v2.html	2,534
	Fruit and vegetable prices in New York	http://blog.sina.com.cn/s/blog_4b62f1a30102e0vh.html	3,985
	New York City tour	http://blog.sina.com.cn/s/blog_4b62f1a30102e0vw.html	3,333
	What do celebrities eat	http://blog.sina.com.cn/s/blog_4b62f1a30102e0w1.html	1,146
	Food safety in the US	http://blog.sina.com.cn/s/blog_4b62f1a30102e0we.html	874
	Cooking in the home of an American	http://blog.sina.com.cn/s/blog_4b62f1a30102e0wp.html	1,374
	A highway experience	http://blog.sina.com.cn/s/blog_4b62f1a30102e0xj.html	755
	Bars	http://blog.sina.com.cn/s/blog_4b62f1a30102e0y5.html	859
	New Orleans roast chicken	http://blog.sina.com.cn/s/blog_4b62f1a30102e0yo.html	1,098

	A crocodile in New Orleans	http://blog.sina.com.cn/s/blog_4b62f1a30102e0z0.html	651
	Oak Alley	http://blog.sina.com.cn/s/blog_4b62f1a30102e0zi.html	3,209
	The hometown of jazz music	http://blog.sina.com.cn/s/blog_4b62f1a30102e10c.html	354
	A restaurant where you can meet Hollywood stars	http://blog.sina.com.cn/s/blog_4b62f1a30102e10i.html	5,587
	A horrible clothing store	http://blog.sina.com.cn/s/blog_4b62f1a30102e10w.html	38,630
	Chicago Cloud Gate	http://blog.sina.com.cn/s/blog_4b62f1a30102e119.html	580
	Food in Chicago	http://blog.sina.com.cn/s/blog_4b62f1a30102e11i.html	1,319
	The tallest building in the U.S.	http://blog.sina.com.cn/s/blog_4b62f1a30102e11j.html	2,912
	A 5 Star Red Flag on a U.S. street	http://blog.sina.com.cn/s/blog_4b62f1a30102e123.html	922
	Swan pumpkin	http://blog.sina.com.cn/s/blog_4b62f1a30102e15a.html	7,085
C	New York	http://blog.sina.com.cn/s/blog_4dd78ed30102e25c.html	30,451
	Stoutridge Vineyards Tuthilltown Spirits	http://blog.sina.com.cn/s/blog_4dd78ed30102e25q.html	21,836
	Peter Luger Steak House	http://blog.sina.com.cn/s/blog_4dd78ed30102e27b.html	47,234
	Union Sq. Greenmarket	http://blog.sina.com.cn/s/blog_4dd78ed30102e27c.html	57,962
	Grand Central Station Oyster Bar	http://blog.sina.com.cn/s/blog_4dd78ed30102e2ab.html	20,811
	North Carolina's countryside	http://blog.sina.com.cn/s/blog_4dd78ed30102e2ck.html	27,375
	Making Chinese food in North Carolina	http://blog.sina.com.cn/s/blog_4dd78ed30102e2cj.html	15,882
	Chicago street food	http://blog.sina.com.cn/s/blog_4dd78ed30102e2iw.html	38,891
	Chicago Cut Steakhouse	http://blog.sina.com.cn/s/blog_4dd78ed30102e2jf.html	26,257
	Airboat Swamp tour in New Orleans	http://blog.sina.com.cn/s/blog_4dd78ed30102e5ct.html	12,912
	Food culture in New Orleans	http://blog.sina.com.cn/s/blog_4dd78ed30102e5el.html	29,171
TTL (37)			998,007

c) Chengdu Web Portals

News Channels

The Chengdu blogger is actually a full-time editor for a top Chengdu web portal, chengdu.cn. She posted two articles with pictures on the website and promoted them on the site's front page. Daily clicks reached 100 thousand.

Figure A. "New York Vineyards"



http://news.chengdu.cn/content/2012-09/20/content_1048881.htm?node=13361

Figure B. "Cooking in a NC home"



http://news.chengdu.cn/content/2012-09/23/content_1050369.htm?node=13361

Forums

She also posted two articles on the web’s forum, which aroused good interaction with netizens. Daily clicks reached 20 thousand.

Figure C. “New Orleans”



<http://bbs.chengdu.cn/thread-17275156-1-1.html>

Figure D. “Foods in NYC”

论坛首页	【S720·我的出色搭配】带着S720出行，游走在城市的每个角落！	小豆子IN成都 2012-10-17
文明论坛	未经领导批准，擅自推出史上歪闹得最惨栏目：大家同大家……敬请关注！！	闲云野鹤人 2012-8-11
成都生活	《裸奔！裸奔！惊现成都华侨城狂欢季狂欢节，城管及时制止》	MonkeyG 2012-7-19
旅游天下	刚从欢乐谷狂欢节现场归来，各种疯狂各种H，要玩要耍赶紧来！	西瓜不甜 2012-7-6
吃喝玩乐	介是鬼马奔舞的年代 中国的僵尸和外国的吸血鬼都恋爱咯~	安静女人 2012-10-8
爱车E族	敬爱！爱跑！IN成都开启2.0时代！越积极！越多好礼等着你！	小豆子IN成都 2012-7-9
家居生活	买个房子操心事儿忒多	我是茶客 2012-8-14
摄影写真	【同心卡9-10月特辑】国庆环球旅行，成都新派餐饮，浪漫秋季档一卡打尽！	红色小阿狸 2012-8-21
母婴亲子	成都厨房美国之行（二）——通过美食，看不一样的纽约	公民有话说 2012-10-25
时尚购物		
健康成都		
评测		

<http://bbs.chengdu.cn/viewthread.php?tid=17276122&extra=&page=1>

The Value of Coverage

Following is a brief analysis of the estimates for purchasing similar Weibo coverage commercially. Estimates were not available for all blog coverage, retweets, additional coverage after the team returned, or for coverage from the Chengdu and Shanghai participants, thus the \$65,000 estimate likely represents a substantial proportion, but not all of the coverage generated.

Blogger Name	Price per Weibo	Price per blog post	No. of Weibo	No. of blog posts	Total Weibo cost	Total blog cost	Total cost of media coverage
七色地图	2000	6000	50	6	100,000		136,000
行走40国	Package price (50000 for 50 Weibos and 5 blogs)	6000	151	20	180,000		180,000
潘潘猫	800	3000	71	11	56,800	33,000	89,800
					336,800	69,000	RMB 405,800
							\$65,452

