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ABSTRACT

At the beginning of 2013, a Beijing non-profit group launched a ‘Clean Your Plate Campaign’ on Sina Weibo, a Chinese Twitter-like microblogging site, with aims to reduce food waste. This paper examines social media users’ reactions during two periods of the first three years of the campaign. Upon examination of topic content, supporting participation was the most popular topic in January 2013 and showcasing individual achievement was the most frequently discussed topic in March 2016, with socialising as the common purpose for posting in both months. Users mentioning the campaign most in January 2013 belonged to private organisations, with posts from ordinary people becoming more predominant by March 2016. This study sheds light on the use of social media to raise public awareness regarding food waste in China. The findings will help campaigns aiming to promote food waste reductions or other social movements that use social media as a platform for citizen involvement.

KEYWORDS

Food waste; Clean Your Plate Campaign; marketing; Sina Weibo; China

Introduction

As China’s household incomes, urban populations, and overall food consumption levels increase, the country faces massive food waste problems at the consumer stage (Liu, 2014). Consumer food waste occurs both at the household level and during meals eaten away from home. According to the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations, much more food waste occurs at the consumer level in medium- and high-income countries than in low-income countries (Gustavsson, Cederberg, Sonesson, Otterdijk, & Meybeck, 2011). As the largest emerging economy in the world, China suffers from a high overall volume of food waste at the consumption stage (Liu, 2014), especially in urban areas and the catering industry.

In China, food scraps make up around 61% of household waste and 70% of all wastes (Zhou, 2013). Scientists from China Agricultural University have found the amount of food waste produced by restaurants in one year is
enough to feed approximately 200 million people for a year, according to
data from 2006 to 2008 (Xinhua News Agency, 2011). The amount of food waste generation in the restaurant and catering sector has greatly increased, sparking increased media coverage and raising public concerns in recent years (Liu, 2014).

When it comes to consumer involvement with and attitudes toward food in China, research identifies three segments of consumers: concerned, uninvolved, and traditional (Grunert et al., 2011). In order to increase concern and reduce the massive amount of food waste in China a ‘Clean Your Plate Campaign’ was initiated by a non-governmental organisation in 2013 (Zhou, 2013). This organisation advocates for not wasting any food when dining out. As the movement spread from Beijing to other cities, a growing number of citizens, schools, restaurants and organisations have participated in it, and more people have become aware of the food waste problem and have demonstrated their willingness to make efforts to reduce their food waste. The ‘Clean Your Plate Campaign’ began on Sina Weibo, an online social networking site used by community-based organisations and government agencies. Weibo is the Chinese translation of microblogs, a Twitter-like social media platform (Fu, 2015). Similar to Twitter, Weibo enables users to follow other microbloggers, repost or forward someone else’s Weibo posts to their home pages, and broadcast Weibo posts of their own. Currently, Sina Weibo is the most popular microblogging site in China due to the effect of celebrities’ and news’ influence (Wang, 2014). Many celebrities register Sina Weibo accounts and interact with their followers. Sina Weibo also enables its users to make comments on others’ posts without having to repost that post. The features of Sina Weibo have made it an essential tool for netizens to explore information and express ideas quite freely (Wang, 2014). However, similar to other social media in China, the Sina Weibo service also implemented content censorship (Sullivan, 2012). Thousands of employees using sophisticated software monitor a list of politically ‘sensitive’ words. Despite the strong censorship, there now exists a range of political activism and expression on this social media (Sukosd & Fu, 2013). In March 2014, Sina Weibo altered its name to Weibo (Wang, 2014). After one month, it debuted on the United States Nasdaq market. According to its Q4 2015 report (Weibo Corporation, 2016), the number of monthly active users (MAU) and daily active users (DAU) on Weibo reached 236 million and 106 million, respectively.

This study analyses Sina Weibo contents related to the ‘Clean Your Plate Campaign’ in China. The key question driving this study was ‘How is the (Sina) Weibo microblogging service used by members of the ‘Clean Your Plate Campaign’ community to address food waste reduction in China?’ An additional question was ‘Has this usage of (Sina) Weibo changed over the period of the campaign?’ To answer these questions, the authors conducted a content analysis based on the theoretical framework developed by Ardianto,
Aarons, and Burstein (2014) of Sina Weibo posts. To analyse the content of messages, the authors coded the microblogging posts into four constructs – topic of Sina Weibo posts, intention of Sina Weibo posts, parties that mentioned ‘Clean Your Plate Campaign’ and parties which were involved in the communication. This study helps understand what has happened during the ‘Clean Your Plate Campaign’ to date and how Chinese netizens’ have reacted to and engaged with this campaign. The ‘Clean Your Plate Campaign’ seems to be an example of a relatively successful behaviour change movement in China run primarily on social media (Sina Weibo). As such, from a practical perspective, understanding more about how the social media has been used, by whom, and to achieve what, will help provide illuminating insights for other campaigners who wish to embed social media into new or existing social movement campaigns. Insights into this campaign will provide interesting lessons for both food waste campaigners in China and globally, as well as for campaigners who are working to promote consumer behaviour change campaigns in other substantive areas.

Although uncommon, there have been some academic studies which have examined Twitter’s use by numerous individuals, organisations and temporal communities involved in social movements (Gleason, 2013; Borge-Holthoefer et al., 2015; Theocharis, Lowe, Van Deth, & García-Albacete, 2013). However, previous Sina Weibo studies have mainly focused on a variety of disaster and crisis events, such as earthquakes (Qu, Huang, Zhang, & Zhang, 2011), the hepatitis B vaccine crisis (Chen et al., 2015), the Middle East Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus outbreak and the outbreak of human infection of avian influenza A (Fung et al., 2013). Relatively few studies have examined Sina Weibo’s use in a social movement (Fung et al., 2015; Sukosd & Fu, 2013; Wang & Li, 2016). This study, therefore, aims to increase understanding of how Sina Weibo might be used in China as a tool to combat issues of food waste among the public. Because most of the anti-food waste campaigns that have been documented/reported on to date have been organised in Western countries, such as England and New Zealand, it is both interesting and necessary to uncover how this kind of campaign operationalises in an Asian country, especially since marketing can play a key role in reducing food waste behaviours (Calvo-Porral, Medín, & Losada-López, 2017).

**Literature review**

**Factors leading to food waste**

**Chinese culture**

Traditionally, face (ego), associated with pride and self-esteem, is a key element for the Chinese (Gui, 2013). The popular Chinese banquets, in which excessive dishes are tabled for showing great hospitality to the guests,
is evidence of this concept. The hosts will gain face when the guests leave some food on the plate because this shows that the hosts are wealthy and they have ability to order more food than the guests’ need. In the upper classes of society, banquets have been an important type of social gatherings for centuries (Mateer, 2015). In the past, Chinese emperors and the imperial court members held banquets as a celebration. In the modern world, Chinese businesspersons and their clients hold banquet for social connection and business dealings. Many government officials also like to use public funding to hold extravagant feasts in restaurants to show off their prestige and hospitality to their guests. If there were some food left on the table, the hosts would not pack up the leftovers because this behaviour could cause them to lose face in front of their guests (Gui, 2013). Partly driving this phenomenon of saving face at feasts is memories of, and reaction against, the periods of famine during 1958–61, where over 40 million people died (Magistad, 2013). As the growth of China’s economy has been remarkable, people can now afford more that they could in the past and this means that they buy things without needing them (Mateer, 2015). Ordering excessive food and leaving some food on the plate at restaurants are key examples of food waste that are culturally driven. Furthermore, previous research from the United Kingdom suggests that consumers who rarely cook food at home (kitchen evaders) are more wasteful than other groups of consumers (Mallinson, Russell, & Barker, 2016). These myriad of factors combine in China to contribute to food waste patterns.

**Food waste at the school level**

Apart from banquet waste, food waste in universities is also a serious problem. According to a researcher from China Agricultural University, nearly one-third of the food purchased in university canteens was observed to be wasted – enough to feed an additional 10 million people for one year (China News, 2010). North News (2006) reported that many students from Inner Mongolia Normal University and Inner Mongolia Agricultural University threw away large amount of food each day. Students wasted their food due to numerous reasons, such as the food being too oily, feeling embarrassed to take leftovers home, being scared of gaining weight, and disliking the taste. Furthermore, it was reported that many food items were thrown away in the canteen of Chongqing Normal University during lunch time and most of the students who wasted food were female (Xinhua News Agency, 2010). Similarly, Wuhan University’s canteen waste about 500 kg of food during each afternoon (China News, 2012). In 2013, an online survey conducted by China Youth Daily investigated food waste issues among 2134 university students (China Youth Daily, 2013). Their result shows that the main reasons students waste food are (1) most of the students believed the food was not delicious (70.8%) and (2) the food portions were too large (53%).
The ‘Clean Your Plate Campaign’

The ‘Clean Your Plate Campaign’ was initiated in January 2013 by a non-profit organisation from Beijing called IN_33 (Peng & Fong, 2013). This campaign aimed to fight against waste and gluttony (Bishop, 2013). The campaign organisers called themselves the IN_33 group as the members in this organisation knew each other from a training course where IN_33 was their course code (Peng & Fong, 2013). Members in IN_33 are from different industries, such as finance, advertising and insurance (People’s Daily Online, 2013b). The group members got the idea to start the ‘Clean Your Plate Campaign’ after they saw that students were being wasteful on college campuses (Magistad, 2013). This anti-food-waste movement was initially targeted to ordinary individuals and used the slogan ‘Start from me, no leftovers on the plate today’ (Pokojski, 2015). In order to deliver the concept of ‘clean your plate’, the members started to promote this campaign on Tencent Weibo (a competing micro-blogging site, see section 3.2) on 13 January 2013 and Sina Weibo on 14 January 2013. Figure 1 shows the first Sina Weibo post of IN_33 where they attached a digital flyer of ‘Clean Your Plate Campaign’. IN_33 wrote on the flyer ‘Worldwide, more than a billion people go hungry. On average 10 million people in the world die of starvation every year, and every six seconds a child dies of hunger. If we reduce our daily food waste by 5%, we can save more than 4 million starving people! …’ (Xie, 2014). On 16 January 2013, the ‘Clean Your Plate Campaign’ was officially launched in Beijing.

The group members also went to petrol stations and more than 1,000 restaurants in many parts of Beijing to explain the concept of this campaign by giving out their leaflets and posters (Magistad, 2013). In fact, they were not the first one who had the idea of a ‘Clean Your Plate Campaign’. In April 2012, a journalist called Xu Zhijun had uploaded a picture of an empty plate on both of his Tencent Weibo and Sina Weibo (Figure 2), showing his empty plate at the end of a meal. He urged others to do the same. Xu Zhijun generated this idea when he realised that many people in Beijing created a lot of food waste in restaurants.

On 17 January 2013, Xi Jinping, general secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China (CPC), made a written comment on a media report by the Xinhua News Agency. Xi said it was shocking to know the huge amount of food that was wasted in China and noted that promotion of the Chinese proverbs of ‘being diligent and thrifty’ and the idea of ‘honour to frugality and shame to extravagance’ among all lifestyles was important (Legal Weekend, 2013; People’s Daily Online, 2013c). The news channel of China Central Television operated by the Chinese government (CCTV-13) advocated the campaign on Sina Weibo on 21 January 2013. The next day at a plenary meeting of the CPC’s Central Commission for
Discipline Inspection, Xi once again called on all officials to maintain a thrifty lifestyle, reduce their extravagant spending on banquets and curb the uncontrolled waste created by banquets (Yang, 2013a). In order to support Xi Jinping, the ‘Clean Your Plate Campaign’ then received front
page mention in the Chinese Communist Party’s main newspaper (The People’s Daily) (Magistad, 2013). The message posted by The People’s Daily on Sina Weibo was reposted more than 10,000 times. Not only The People’s Daily but many other influential media organisations, including Xinhua News Agency, Guang Ming Daily, China Youth Daily, and China Daily also reported about the ‘Clean Your Plate Campaign’ (Guang Ming Daily, 2013 and Youth Daily, 2012). There were about 2,000 news stories related to the ‘Clean Your Plate Campaign’ in January 2013 (People’s Daily Online, 2013c).

Meanwhile, more than 750 restaurants in Beijing joined the campaign by serving smaller dishes, encouraging guests to take doggy bags, offering discounts or giving out certificates to customers who had cleaned their plates (Cheng, 2013; Magistad, 2013). Public support for the campaign was high; Excessive Wording Magazine (Excessive Wording magazine, 2013) chose ‘clean plate’ as one of the top 10 Chinese buzzwords of 2013.

**Social media use and Communicative Ecology Theory**

Communicative Ecology Theory is a holistic approach that ‘provides a framework for researchers to understand the communication that occurs within the group and between groups, without focusing solely on an individual or on a single communication channel. As such, the use of the term “ecology” is used to signify the imperative of understanding the broader field of communication of groups of people who are connected’ (Hearn, Collie, Lyle, Choi, & Foth, 2014, p. 203; Foth & Hearn, 2007). This theory interprets communication practice in three different but interconnected layers: (1) The technological and media layer (i.e. device materials and properties that shape communication); (2) the discursive layer (i.e. the actual content of communication, in particular the stories, understandings, beliefs and symbols that define); and (3) the social/people layer (i.e. the relationship between communication parties, their social relationships and the social institutions and structures that connect them) (Foth & Hearn, 2007). Communicative ecologies as a conceptual framework has been used to study the communication of other phenomena in a number of settings, including urban environments (Foth & Hearn, 2007) and sustainable urban environments (Ardianto et al., 2014). Scholars that have worked with this theory have called for further empirical studies on the application of this framework (c.f. Ardianto et al., 2014; Hearn et al., 2014). No studies to date have applied this framework to the study of social media use in either a Chinese or food waste context. Given the holistic scope of analysis that communicative ecology theory encourages, applying a framework derived from this theory permits the researchers to obtain a robust understanding of social media users’ interactions and reactions to the ‘Clean Your Plate
Campaign’, as well as obtain a wider understanding of the role that social media plays in consumer campaigns in China.

**Methodology**

**Technique**

This study uses a content analysis of Sina Weibo posts concerning the public’s opinions and behavioral responses towards the ‘Clean Your Plate Campaign’ in China. Content analysis is a systematic technique for interpreting the meaning of textual data (Mayring, 2000) and the process of content analysis involves researchers assigning large quantities of text into the categories of a coding frame (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005).

**Data source**

Sina Weibo and Tencent Weibo are the two leading microblog platforms in China and both of them have many Chinese netizens who mentioned the ‘Clean Your Plate Campaign’. While Tencent Weibo has been a significant tool in terms of its impact on the campaign, it was not selected for analysis because at the time of the study, its service was about to fade out without further development and resultantly, the number of bloggers had dramatically dropped. Secondly, in each search, Tencent Weibo only provides a small number of pages of search results and it does not allow the researcher to specify a period in which to search posts, making it ineffective to select the representative content to analyse. In contrast, Sina Weibo provided these required searching features.

**Data collection search filters and software**

A native speaking Chinese (second author) collected the data. The search term was ‘Clean Your Plate Campaign’ (光盘行动 in Chinese). The Sina Weibo search filters included the date ranges (detailed in section below), originality (refers to the individual user’s own writing and does not include forwarded messages posted by other users) and a limitation to posts created by certified users. Irrelevant content, such as advertisements or unrelated posts of netizens were deleted. NCapture, a web browser extension in NVivo (a qualitative data analysis computer software), was used to import social media data from Sina Weibo as dataset pdf sources for coding and further analysis. The unit of analysis that was captured was a single post, a message of 10,000 Chinese characters maximum, which could include videos, images and emotion icons (SINA Corporation, 2016) (see Figure 2 for an example of a post that was imported into NVivo using NCapture).
Data collection timeframe

As aforementioned, IN_33’s first post on Sina Weibo was on 14 January 2013 making that the logical starting point of analysis. March 2016 was the most recent full month available for analysis at the time the study took place. Thus to examine the changes in message content over time, the 477 texts posted in January 2013 (from 14/1/2013–31/1/2013, 15 days, 31.8 average posts/day) and the 450 texts posted in March 2016 (1/3/2016–31/3/2016, 31 days, 14.5 average posts/day) were selected for analysis.

Coding, analysis and interpretation

To assist with defining the analytical categories for coding, we use the guiding framework for Twitter content classification developed by Ardianto et al. (2014). Ardianto and his colleagues created a content-based categorisation of the type of messages posted by Twitter users in their study that depended on the ‘topic’ and ‘intention’ of tweets, as well as ‘parties involved in the communication’ (effectively dividing the research foci into the three aforementioned layers: the technology and media layer, the discursive layer and the social layer). In addition to these three original coding schemes generated by Ardianto et al. (2014), the researchers of this study added one more coding scheme (i.e. parties which mentioned the campaign) given the perceived importance of this in this particular study context. The reason this was deemed to be important was because unlike other ‘grassroots’ campaigns, the ‘Clean Your Plate Campaign’ did involve a considerable amount of official promotion by both the government and by media agencies (including television and print) particularly at the time of its inception in 2013. The resulting four schemes were as follows: (1) Topic of Sina Weibo posts, (2) intention of Sina Weibo posts, (3) parties that mentioned the ‘Clean Your Plate Campaign’, and (4) parties which were involved in the communication. In the next stage, researchers developed definitions for each category and subcategory (these are presented in Tables 2–5). The Topic of Sina Weibo posts (Table 2) comprises two main categories, which are information exchange and community engagement. Information exchange consists of four sub-categories: (1) seeking and sharing factual information, (2) seeking and sharing relative information, (3) seeking and sharing practical information and (4) seeking and sharing event information. Community engagement has three sub-categories: (1) showcasing individual achievement, (2) showcasing collective achievement and (3) support for participation. The classification of categories for the intention of Sina Weibo posts (Table 3), are brokering, socialising, and building traffic. For parties that mentioned the ‘Clean Your Plate Campaign’ (Table 4), the major categories are individual user and external party. The individual user category is sub classified into celebrities, ordinary people and industry representatives, while external party is sub classified into public
organisation, private organisation and media outlet. The categories from the parties that were involved in the communication (Table 5) include single or self-referral, individual user, internal community networks, and external party. The external party category comprises public organisation, private organisation, and media outlet.

In assigning the codes, the researchers assessed the most dominant meaning of the Sina Weibo posts when one post expressed more than one meaning. For example, although the topic of the first post in Table 2 does involve information exchange (e.g. ‘If we reduce food waste by 5%, over 4 million people could be saved’), the community engagement component (e.g. ‘We must practice strict economy and combat waste, support “Clean Your Plate Campaign” and encourage the traditional virtues of diligence and thrift’) was deemed to be more pervasive and hence this was coded as showing support for participation. Finally, researchers compared the code frequencies of the various identified categories of Chinese netizens’ activities within the period January 2013 and March 2016. The frequencies of codes is presented in all tables as percentages to allow comparisons to be easily made, given the differing time periods analysed (i.e. time period 1 was only 15 days vs. time period 2 which was 31). The second author translated into English the Sina Weibo posts, which originally were in simplified Chinese characters, when quoted in this paper. One coder completed all the coding to remove inter-coder reliability issues.

Table 1 lists some selected examples of Sina Weibo posts from the data set and shows how they were coded for reference. The classification of the fourth post from Table 1 (i.e. ‘I heard that every 6 seconds a child dies of hunger in our country and the annual amount of food thrown out by restaurants in China is enough to feed 200 million people for a year from a conference. We need to be thrifty and don’t waste any food, especially with the Spring Festival approaching, everybody need to think about every 6 seconds, think about 200 million people while having fun! You can have a good meal, but please clean your plate and join the “Clean Your Plate Campaign”. Forwarding this post is also accumulating well virtue’) is now described to illustrate the coding process. Firstly, the topic of the post is classified as Community Engagement/support for participation, (defined as ‘encouraging and showcasing participation in “Clean Your Plate Campaign” e.g., Give reasons, sharing slogans and pictures, rewards, ask other users to repost’). Secondly, the intention of the post is classified as Socialising (defined as ‘Adding comments to “Clean Your Plate Campaign” as a way of interaction (e.g. promotion, support, asking questions’). Thirdly, the party which posted was Individual User/Celebrity (defined as ‘At least one other individual Sina Weibo user is mentioned and does not mention organisation’s or internal networks’ Sina Weibo account’). Fourthly, the parties that were involved in communication was Single or Self-referral (defined as ‘No Sina Weibo user is mentioned or only its own Sina Weibo ID is mentioned (self-mentioned’)).
Table 1. Example of Sina Weibo Posts From the Data Set

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Examples (Chinese)</th>
<th>Examples (English translation)</th>
<th>Category</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>人民数字: #光盘行动#我们每天节约5%的浪费，就可以救活超过400万的饥民，厉行节约，反对浪费，加入光盘行动，倡导勤俭节约的传统美德。 <a href="http://ww1.sinaimg.cn/bmiddle/96a1eeecjw1e1cf0eqd7j.jpg">http://ww1.sinaimg.cn/bmiddle/96a1eeecjw1e1cf0eqd7j.jpg</a> (2013–1-31 19:50)</td>
<td>#Clean Your Plate Campaign# If we reduce food waste by 5%, over 4 million people could be saved. We must practice strict economy and combat waste, support 'Clean Your Plate Campaign' and encourage the traditional virtues of diligence and thrift.</td>
<td>(1) Support for participation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CEA生产技术部: #西安机务 “光盘”行动#珍惜每一粒粮食，今天你做到了吗？没有华丽的口号，我们用实际行动来证明！@青春西安机务 @武小舞 @海螺芳 @东方航空西北青年 @东航机务茶社 @东航西安飞机维修基地 <a href="http://ww1.sinaimg.cn/bmiddle/9e12d4ffw1e1cnusoxwqj.jpg(2013%E2%80%931-31">http://ww1.sinaimg.cn/bmiddle/9e12d4ffw1e1cnusoxwqj.jpg(2013–1-31</a> 18:01)</td>
<td>#Xian Mechanical section's ‘Clean Your Plate Campaign’# Did you taste every grain of food today? Without using a well-crafted slogan, we took action to show how we cherished our food today. @青春西安机务 @武小舞 @海螺芳 @东方航空西北青年 @东航机务茶社 @东航西安飞机维修基地</td>
<td>(2) Socialising</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>扬州发布: 【#光盘行动#联盟标识昨出炉】近来，你光盘了吗？扬州“光盘行动”联盟标识出炉啦，参与“光盘行动”餐饮企业的大小餐厅、饭馆将在醒目位置悬挂标识，并可公布各自响应“光盘行动”所指定的措施，如提供小分量、半份菜、点餐提醒、免费打包、吃光奖励等服务。大家可以“寻找就餐”，参与“光盘行动”哦 <a href="http://ww2.sinaimg.cn/bmiddle/994e48gw1e1cjw0qxqvj.jpg">http://ww2.sinaimg.cn/bmiddle/994e48gw1e1cjw0qxqvj.jpg</a> (2013–1-31 15:44)</td>
<td>Have you cleaned your plate these days? The sign of Yangzhou ‘Clean Your Plate Campaign’ is released now. Restaurants which joined ‘Clean Your Plate Campaign’ will put up the sign in obvious places and they will remind customers like offering smaller dishes, half-portioned dishes, etc. Everyone could join ‘Clean Your Plate Campaign’ by finding the sign of the campaign union.</td>
<td>(3) External party: Public organisation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>导演金刚jingang:【光盘行动】在会议上听说，全国每6秒就有1名儿童被饿死，中国1年浪费的食物可以解决全世界2亿人1年的温饱。要不要节约而反浪费，尤其是春节临近，大家欢庆之余，想想每6秒，想想全世界2亿人！你吃光好没关系，但把盘子打扫干净些，参加到光盘行动中吧！转发也是积德行善 <a href="http://ww3.sinaimg.cn/bmiddle/576361a7jw1e1bjqor94jj.jpg">http://ww3.sinaimg.cn/bmiddle/576361a7jw1e1bjqor94jj.jpg</a> (2013–1-30 18:53)</td>
<td>I heard that every 6 seconds a child dies of hunger in our country and the annual amount of food thrown out by restaurants in China is enough to feed 200 million people for a year from a conference. We need to be thrifty and don’t waste any food, especially with the Spring Festival approaching, everybody need to think about every 6 seconds, think about 200 million people while having fun! You can have a good meal, but please clean your plate and join the ‘Clean Your Plate Campaign’. Forwarding this post is also accumulating well virtue.</td>
<td>(4) Single or self-referral</td>
</tr>
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(CONTINUED)
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Examples (Chinese)</th>
<th>Examples (English translation)</th>
<th>Category</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>新浪湖北: #城事#【武汉万人承诺告别餐桌浪费 光盘行动】“签名，是承诺。节约就从下一顿饭开始！”昨日，由省文明办、楚天都市报和武汉市餐饮协会联合发起的“告别餐桌浪费”万人签名活动，在武汉三镇同时举行。万余市民参与宣誓：反对“剩宴”，提倡“光盘”。今年大家要光盘哦！<a href="http://t.cn/zYzioVY">http://t.cn/zYzioVY</a> <a href="http://ww3.sinaimg.cn/bmiddle/7a273328jw1e1bcakjmzmj.jpg">http://ww3.sinaimg.cn/bmiddle/7a273328jw1e1bcakjmzmj.jpg</a> (2013–1-30 14:35)</td>
<td>#City news#【One million people in Wuhan promised to curb banquet waste and join the ‘Clean Your Plate Campaign’.】‘Sign your name is a promise. Start to be thrifty from your next meal!’ Yesterday, province’s civilisation work office, Chutian metropolis Daily and WuHan Catering Association launched ‘Curring banquet waste’ Million signatures campaign in the Three Wuhan Cities. About one million people joined and swear: Against banquet waste and advocate ‘Clean your plate’. We have to clean our plate in this year.</td>
<td>(1) Seeking and sharing event information: Specific events (2) Building traffic (3) External party: Media outlets (4) Single or self-referral</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>中国文明网: 【拒绝中国式“剩宴” 网民发起“光盘行动”】北京一家民间公益组织在网上发起“光盘行动”，所谓光盘，即吃光盘子中的食物，拒绝浪费，珍惜粮食！一时间，在微博上晒出自己吃干净的餐具和打包带走的剩菜剩饭成为风尚，许多演艺界的知名人士、官方认证的餐饮行业也都加入“光盘行动”中。<a href="http://t.cn/zYzioVY">http://t.cn/zYzioVY</a> (2013–1-25 13:38)</td>
<td>【Against Chinese-style banquets, netizens launched ‘Clean Your Plate Campaign’.】 ‘Clean Your Plate Campaign’ was started by an nongovernmental organisation in Beijing, ‘clean your plate’ means that the food on plates is eaten up, against food waste and cherish food. Posting an empty plate and doggy bags on weibo have become so popular, many celebrities and catering industry have also joined the ‘Clean Your Plate Campaign’. How the cabin crew support ‘Clean Your Plate Campaign’? Everybody please give some suggestions, I suggest an electronic ordering system can be used, order food according to individual needs would not cause food wastage, I personally think it is possible to achieve cost reductions of 30%, and the reduced waste can be donated to students’ healthy free lunch. @飞常准@中国南方航空</td>
<td>(1) Seeking and sharing factual information: Campaign (2) Building traffic (3) External party: Media outlets (4) Single or self-referral</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>机长广：机组乘务组怎么支持#光盘行动#？大家来说说，我建议实施电子系统订餐，根据个人需要订餐，绝不浪费，个人觉得至少节省30%成本，减少的浪费捐给学生的“免费营养午餐”。⑯ @飞常准@中国南方航空 (2013–1-24 02:45)</td>
<td>In order to reduce serious food waste, somebody initiated ‘Clean Your Plate Campaign’. How many of you realise that each grain in your dish is a fruit of arduous labor? Are you willing to join this campaign? @夏柠儿@小飞鱼@小鱼妈咪@小m晓萌@杨迪的甜筒乐园@野蛮家伙@fans_ku@梁广杰狮兄</td>
<td>(1) Support for participation (2) Brokering (3) Individual user: Industry representatives (4) Internal community networks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>北京的菜: 针对吃饭浪费严重的情况，有人掀起了“光盘行动”。是呀，谁知盘中餐，粒粒皆辛苦！你愿意参加这个活动吗？@夏柠儿@小飞鱼@小鱼妈咪@小m晓萌@杨迪的甜筒乐园@野蛮家伙@fans_ku@梁广杰狮兄 (2013–1-24 00:47)</td>
<td>In order to reduce serious food waste, somebody initiated ‘Clean Your Plate Campaign’. How many of you realise that each grain in your dish is a fruit of arduous labor? Are you willing to join this campaign? @夏柠儿 @小飞鱼 @小鱼妈咪 @小m晓萌 @杨迪的甜筒乐园 @野蛮家伙@fans_ku@梁广杰狮兄</td>
<td>(1) Support for participation (2) Brokering (3) Individual user: Industry representatives (4) Internal community networks</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Key: (1) = topic of Sina Weibo posts; (2) intention of Sina Weibo posts (3) parties which mentioned ‘Clean Your Plate Campaign’ (4) parties which were involved in communication.
**Findings**

927 posts relating to the ‘Clean Your Plate Campaign’ met the selection criteria and were selected for final analysis. This included 477 Sina Weibo posts from time period 1 (14/1/2013–31/1/2013) and 450 Sina Weibo posts from time period 2 (1/3/2016–31/3/2016).

From the data collected from January 2013, the predominant topic of Sina Weibo posts (Table 2) is *support for participation* (49.7%) and the next most prevalent topics are *seeking and sharing relative information* (13.2%) and *seeking and sharing factual information of the campaign* (12.2%). The percentage of *seeking and sharing event information – specific events* (8.4%) and *showcasing individual achievement* (6.9%) are less than these three categories. The two lowest proportion of Sina Weibo topics are *showcasing collective achievement* (2.1%) and *seeking and sharing event information – general campaign* (0.8%). Unlike 2013 posts, the highest proportion of Sina Weibo topics analysed from data of March 2016 are *showcasing individual achievement* (62.2%), *support for participation* (18%), and *showcasing*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Coding option</th>
<th>Definition of the code</th>
<th>% of Total (Jan 2013)</th>
<th>% of Total (Mar 2016)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Information exchange</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.1 Seeking and sharing factual information</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.1.1 Food waste</td>
<td>Exchanging food waste information based on fact (e.g. news, research, pictures)</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>0.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.1.2 Campaign</td>
<td>Exchanging ‘Clean Your Plate Campaign’ information based on fact (e.g. news, research, pictures)</td>
<td>12.2%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.1.3 Seeking and sharing relative information</td>
<td>Exchanging information based on the perceptual knowledge (e.g. experience)</td>
<td>13.2%</td>
<td>1.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.1.4 Seeking and sharing practical information</td>
<td>Exchanging information with practical implications (e.g. tips on how to reduce food waste)</td>
<td>2.7%</td>
<td>0.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2 Seeking and sharing event information</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2.1 Specific events</td>
<td>Exchanging information around specific event (e.g. schedule, location, event reporting)</td>
<td>8.4%</td>
<td>4.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2.2 General campaign</td>
<td>Exchanging information around ‘Clean Your Plate Campaign’ (e.g. schedule, location, campaign reporting)</td>
<td>0.8%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Community engagement</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1 Showcasing individual achievement</td>
<td>Showcasing milestone of success in individual participation (e.g., sharing first empty plate)</td>
<td>6.9%</td>
<td>62.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2 Showcasing collective achievement</td>
<td>Showcasing milestone of success in collective participation (e.g., sharing group empty plate achievement)</td>
<td>2.1%</td>
<td>13.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3 Support for participation</td>
<td>Encouraging and showcasing participation in ‘Clean Your Plate Campaign’ (e.g., Give reasons, sharing slogans and pictures, rewards, ask other users to repost)</td>
<td>49.7%</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: A total of 927 posts were selected for final analysis. This included 477 texts posted in January 2013 (from 14/1/2013 to 31/1/2013, 15 days, 31.8 average posts/day) and 450 texts posted in March 2016 (1/3/2016–31/3/2016, 31 days, 14.5 average posts/day).
collective achievement (13.3%). Meanwhile, the percentage of seeking and sharing event information – specific events has dropped to 4.2% for that month. None of the Sina Weibo posts analysed is coded as seeking and sharing factual information – campaign and seeking and sharing event information – general campaign.

As for the intention of Sina Weibo posts in the first month of 2013 (Table 3), a high percentage falls on socialising (76.3%) while brokering and building traffic are 12.6% and 11.1%, respectively. Similarly, the majority of Sina Weibo posts extracted from March 2016 are socialising (73.6%), whereas brokering and building traffic account for 25.3% and 1.1% of the posts respectively.

In terms of the parties which mentioned ‘Clean Your Plate Campaign’ (Table 4), most of the Sina Weibo posts in this category come from private organisation (32.3%) and media outlet (31.9%) while there are 12% and 8.4% of posts that come from ordinary people and celebrities respectively as analysed from the data of January 2013. However, as indicated from data of March 2016, 80% of ‘Clean You Plate Campaign’ posts on Sina Weibo originated from ordinary people while private organisation contributes 17.1% of the campaign posts. None of the posts in either time period that mentioned ‘Clean Your Plate Campaign’ came from public organisation.

For Table 5, most of the posts of January 2013 for parties involved in communication are single or self-referral (67.5%). Posts of internal community networks follow (10.5%), while public organisation (1.3%) occupies the smallest proportion. Similar to 2013, data of March 2016 shows that a majority of the posts are single or self-referral (68.2%). The second highest is private organisation (21.8%) and there are no posts involved with public organisation.

Overall, except seeking and sharing event information – general campaign (Table 2), and communication parties involving single or self-referral and individual user (Table 5), the percentage of codes in each category between the two different periods is very different. Thus, interestingly, the data shows that the way Chinese netizens used Sina Weibo during the campaign changed considerably over time.
Researchers in this study conducted a content analysis on 927 Sina Weibo posts about the ‘Clean Your Plate Campaign’ extracted from January 2013 and March 2016. They identified various ‘Clean Your Plate Campaign’-related topics, intentions of Sina Weibo posts, parties that mentioned ‘Clean Your Plate Campaign’, and communication involved in the campaign. The tables below summarize the coding scheme definitions and frequency of codes for parties which mentioned ‘Clean Your Plate Campaign’ and those which were involved in communication.

**Table 4. Coding Scheme Definitions and Frequency of Codes on Parties Which Mentioned ‘Clean Your Plate Campaign’**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Coding option</th>
<th>Definition of the code</th>
<th>% of Total (Jan 2013)</th>
<th>% of Total (Mar 2016)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Individual user</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.1 Celebrities</td>
<td>At least one other individual famous Sina Weibo user mentioned ‘Clean Your Plate Campaign’</td>
<td>8.4%</td>
<td>0.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2 Ordinary people</td>
<td>At least one other individual Sina Weibo ordinary user mentioned ‘Clean Your Plate Campaign’</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.3 Industry representatives</td>
<td>At least one other industry representative Sina Weibo user mentioned ‘Clean Your Plate Campaign’</td>
<td>6.9%</td>
<td>1.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. External party</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1 Public organisation</td>
<td>At least one public organisation’s Sina Weibo account mentioned ‘Clean Your Plate Campaign’</td>
<td>8.6%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2 Private organisation</td>
<td>At least one private organisation’s Sina Weibo account mentioned ‘Clean Your Plate Campaign’</td>
<td>32.3%</td>
<td>17.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3 Media outlet</td>
<td>At least one media outlet’s Sina Weibo account mentioned ‘Clean Your Plate Campaign’</td>
<td>31.9%</td>
<td>1.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 5. Coding Scheme Definitions and Frequency of Codes on Parties Which Were Involved in Communication**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Coding option</th>
<th>Definition of the code</th>
<th>% of Total (Jan 2013)</th>
<th>% of Total (Mar 2016)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Single or self-referral</td>
<td>No Sina Weibo user is mentioned or only its own Sina Weibo ID is mentioned (self-mentioned)</td>
<td>67.5%</td>
<td>68.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Individual user</td>
<td>At least one other individual Sina Weibo user is mentioned and does not mention organisation’s or internal networks’ Sina Weibo account</td>
<td>5.5%</td>
<td>5.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Internal community networks</td>
<td>At least one internal networks’ Sina Weibo account is mentioned despite individual Sina Weibo user may have been mentioned too</td>
<td>10.5%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 External party</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1 Public organisation</td>
<td>At least one public organisation’s Sina Weibo account is mentioned</td>
<td>1.3%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2 Private organisation</td>
<td>At least one private organisation’s Sina Weibo account is mentioned</td>
<td>5.7%</td>
<td>21.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.3 Media outlet</td>
<td>At least one media outlet’s Sina Weibo account is mentioned</td>
<td>9.6%</td>
<td>0.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Discussion**

Researchers in this study conducted a content analysis on 927 Sina Weibo posts about the ‘Clean Your Plate Campaign’ extracted from January 2013 and March 2016. They identified various ‘Clean Your Plate Campaign’-related topics, intentions of Sina Weibo posts, parties that mentioned ‘Clean Your Plate Campaign’, and communication involved in the campaign.
Your Plate Campaign’ and parties that were involved in the communication. The extracted and analysed Sina Weibo data have provided an initial insight and understanding of how Chinese people use the term ‘Clean Your Plate Campaign’ and how the Chinese social media platform has been used to promote the campaign.

There has been a significant decrease in the amount of Sina Weibo posts using the term ‘Clean Your Plate Campaign’ between January 2013 (477 posts occurred in 15 days/31.8 posts per day) and March 2016 (450 posts occurred in 31 days/15 posts per day). To provide additional context and external validity for these figures, Figure 3 presents the scale for internet users’ search volume for the term ‘Clean Your Plate’ in web browser Baidu from 2013 to present. Looking at this time trend data, it is evident that after the initial high online interest in the campaign at its inception in 2013, the scale of searches decreased considerably and then has remained fairly constant (at least since mid-2014). This data indicates that there is still online interest/engagement in the campaign today (start-2018).

It is not surprising that the majority of posts in January 2013 were related to support for participation in ‘Clean Your Plate Campaign’, as this campaign was highly supported by the Chinese government after Xi Jinping’s call for greater thrift among Party officials, who were openly known for hosting lavish banquets and wasting large amounts of food (Yang, 2013b). From the results of the analysis, some posts coded as support for participation came from a number of famous catering companies in Beijing, such as Wang Shun Ge Restaurant, Beijing New Spicy Way, and Restaurant Management Company Limited. In order to support the campaign and help people finish all the food on their plates, some restaurants started providing a take-out food service with smaller portions for their customers. For instance, Wang Shun Ge Restaurant offered more than 30 half-portion dishes to their customers at a cheaper price on their Sina Weibo account. Porridge Paradise restaurant also posted on Sina Weibo that they would offer doggy bags at all branches. Besides catering companies, a number of posts that supported the campaign were posted by government departments, such as Department of Public Security of Henan Province and Department of Public Security of Luoyang. These kinds of organisations quickly backed up this campaign in response to China’s leader Xi Jinping’s call to reject lavish banquets.

In addition, in January 2013 the official newspaper (The People’s Daily) and other influential newspapers in China posted front-page articles about curbing food waste and promoting the ‘Clean Your Plate Campaign’ (Guang Ming Daily, 2013). As these traditional media outlets were linked with Sina

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1. http://chinese-restaurant-748.business.site/
Weibo, they disseminated headlines to Sina Weibo and provided links to their newspaper articles. Such influential media outlets provided some sources of governmental views on the ‘Clean Your Plate Campaign’ and the food waste issue in China, which aroused netizens’ attention and encouraged more Chinese people to restrain food waste behaviour (People’s Daily Online, 2013a). As a result, many Sina Weibo bloggers shared some factual campaign information from the newspaper articles and relative information. There was also private organisations that organised specific ‘Clean Your Plate’ events in different places thereby encouraging ordinary people to take action in reducing food waste.

In March 2016, there were many people on Sina Weibo posting their clean plate photos after a meal. Most of these posts were thus categorised as showcasing individual achievement. Researchers noted in the results that featuring a clean plate photo in Sina Weibo posts could attract more attention, and other Sina Weibo users were more likely to join the campaign and share their achievement after seeing those campaign messages. This finding reflects that currently many private organisations and ordinary people in China are still participating in the campaign and are eager to reduce food waste. On the other hand, the number of posts in March 2016 (in the categories seeking and sharing factual campaign information and event information- general campaign) are diminishing. There are two possible reasons for this situation: firstly, because news media usually report the latest news, there may be some reluctance to still report on the campaign given it had already been around for three years; secondly, the official campaign organisers stopped posting to their accounts since 30 December 2014 for unknown reasons.

When looking at the intention of Sina Weibo posts in both of the periods (Table 3), socialising accounts for a larger percentage than the other two intentions (brokering and building traffic). Many posts relate to the encouragement of the ‘Clean Your Plate Campaign’ and comments that were made at the campaign’s inception. As opposed to the situation in January 2013, many people in 2016 like to share their campaign achievements with other
users in the socialising category. For posts in both January 2013 and March 2016, some of the Sina Weibo users may have asked other specific users to join the campaign by adding their usernames in their posts and therefore, these posts fit into the brokering category. As there have been some news outlets using Sina Weibo to drive traffic by offering a link to a news story on their own posts, it is therefore not surprising to see that several initial posts of January 2013 are related to traffic boosting. Interestingly, building traffic posts decreased over time as shown in the March 2016 data. It again might be because media organisations lost interest in reporting the campaign. Similarly, celebrities may also consider the news value of the campaign as less worthy as time passes. As such, they appear to have gradually lost interest in being involved in the online social media communications, as evidenced in the data.

The result of parties which mentioned the campaign (Table 4) is logical. Researchers found netizens used Sina Weibo at the beginning of the campaign as a means to encourage more people to join and disseminate campaign-related information by many media outlets and catering companies (as shown in private organisation and media outlet categories). In January 2013 when the ‘Clean Your Plate Campaign’ started, it was not widely known meaning that individual user (celebrities, ordinary people and industry representatives) did not make up a large proportion of the sources. However, even though the celebrities’ posts were not especially numerous, most of the celebrities in this category, including a famous movie director, religious persons, radio hosts, former Chinese international football players etc., have had an influential effect in encouraging other users to join the campaign. The effect of celebrities on this campaign warrants further research as opinion leaders. The results show the different situation between January 2013 and March 2016, where ordinary people in the later period dramatically dominate the 2016 Sina Weibo posts in contrast to 2013 where external parties (private organisations and media outlets) dominated. Most of the ordinary people display achievement by posting a photo of their plate without leftovers on Sina Weibo. Different student organisations, however, generated the majority of posts in the private organisation category, and display group achievements in their posts, as well as encouraged other students to join the campaign.

From the result of parties which were involved (Table 5), most of the posts generated in both studied periods have no mention of other usernames, because their intentions are more socialising rather than brokering. In comparison with January 2013, the percentage of posts of private organisation within March 2016 has increased almost four times from 5.7% to 21.8%. This could be because many student organisations have communication with other student organisations within their posts in order to encourage more
people to support the campaign. That means the awareness of the campaign has been broadly disseminated among student organisations.

Building upon findings by Sukosd and Fu (2013), which found that Sina Weibo has been used in China by citizens for critical discussion and engagement in multiple cases of environmental pollution and related unrest, this study similarly finds a place for social media platform Sina Weibo in creating, encouraging and sustaining interest and participation in a social movement, in this case the ‘Clean Your Plate’ campaign. In addition, this study found the campaign was able to confront individual perceived behavioural control through the use of social media to change popular opinion and decrease food waste, corroborating studies by both Stancu, Haugaard, and Lähteenmäki (2016) and Lorenz, Hartmann, and Langen (2017), who found perceived behavioural control to be one of the primary drivers of food waste.

Sina Weibo was instrumental in the development and popularity of the movement, allowing users to disseminate information, demonstrate their own performance, and encourage others to do the same. Public concern about food waste reduction was demonstrably increased after the launch of the campaign, and engagement with the goals of the projects were observed for a long period following its introduction in January 2013. In a paper by Wang and Li (2016), the authors highlight the important role that organizations played in disseminating positive information related to the ‘Clean Your Plate’ campaign, and the role that virtual opinion leaders play in supporting and perpetuating the movement with their posts exhibiting adoptive and supportive behaviours. Our study yields similar findings, but also adds to the existing body of literature by further delving into other aspects of the movement and its nature on Sina Weibo. Our study goes on to demonstrate that the type of engagement online changed with time, with the content and focus of Sina Weibo posts regarding the ‘Clean Your Plate’ campaign shifting as the movement progressed, which highlights an imperative change from information dissemination and expression of interest to concrete action and sustained achievement not only varied along user lines, but also temporal. The empirical evidence presented in this study demonstrates how citizens in China can harness the power of political activism and expression and initiate many kinds of social movements through the use of platforms like Sina Weibo, a process that will perhaps play a very significant role in the future of social movements in China.

**Limitations**

The researchers acknowledge several limitations of this study. First, it is impossible to avoid a certain level of subjectivity when analysing the content of Sina Weibo posts. Second, the study is also limited by its sampling of
online content from just one social media platform given that Tencent Weibo users couldn’t be included for technical reasons. Third, the study did not allow for the observation of reactions of Sina Weibo users who are passive viewers of online content, thus only reflecting partial views of Sina Weibo users. In addition, since researchers only retrospectively collected the original Sina Weibo posts, some users might have deleted their original posts during the collection period, which may lead to information loss. On a related note, given the known censorship of online postings by the Chinese government, it is possible that postings were also removed by the government and therefore, as with all online analyses conducted in China, the results need to be qualified in this censorship context (i.e. as non-censored Sina Weibo communication in the Clean Your Plate Campaign) (Sukosd & Fu, 2013). The final limitation is the specificity of the results. Given the unique nature of the Chinese cultural context, as well as the uniqueness of this type of consumer campaign, the results cannot be generalised to social media communications on the Weibo network pertaining to other campaigns without further research.

**Conclusion and future work**

In this study a content analysis on Sina Weibo posts related to the ‘Clean Your Plate Campaign’ has been performed to examine people’s engagement with the campaign in China. The study shows how Sina Weibo has been a vehicle for the Chinese community to promote participation in food waste reduction and expansion of the food waste network. In this study, the researchers have noticed that the usage of Sina Weibo changed overtime. Moreover, the results have demonstrated that using Sina Weibo data can be useful in measuring the public’s reaction to, and interactions with, the campaign in China. In addition, government support and media outlets were shown to be critical in raising the public’s food waste awareness, which could be important enablers of food waste behaviour change through raising consumer concern and guilt (Grandhi & Appaiah Singh, 2016; Qi & Roe, 2016). The most dominant themes discovered in this study in January 2013 include support for participation, socialising, private organisation and single or self-referral while showcasing individual achievement, socialising, ordinary people and single or self-referral were the most common themes in March 2016, highlighting the evolution of the movement over time from awareness raising to engagement. This analysis provides campaigners with an example of how they can use social media platforms to run and monitor effective behaviour change campaigns, both within and beyond the contexts of food waste and China. Future research that investigates both food waste campaigns specifically, and social media usage by campaign organisations more generally, is worthwhile. From a theoretical standpoint, the study
provides another application of communicative ecologies as a conceptual framework for understanding social media communications among and between people and groups, thereby contributing to the wider academic literatures in this field as well. To the best of the authors’ knowledge, the application of this communicative ecologies framework to study social media usage overtime is novel in a number of ways. It is the first application of this framework (1) in a Chinese context; (2) in campaigns relating to food waste; and (3) in a longitudinal manner to study how social media usage changes overtime. Future research that investigates both food waste campaigns specifically, and social media usage by campaign organisations more generally, is worthwhile. The official ‘top down’ presidential promotion of the campaign at its inception makes the structure of this social movement quite different from many other social movements witnessed in other parts of the world that are ‘bottom up’ or more grassroots in nature. Investigation of Sina Weibo communications in other online social movement communities with differing structures is warranted. Studies that take into consideration how social media communications change overtime, as well which consider how social media communications differ in different cultural contexts, are especially encouraged.

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References


