

China Goes **Kosher**

Major Media

Position OU

as **WORLDWIDE**

LEADER

with the

RIGHT INGREDIENTS

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It's the "largest certification organization in the world," the "most widely accepted," "the most respected," and the "leader in the field." It's perceived to be "the standard," and among key consumer groups, "the safest," "the cleanest," "most reliable" and "trustworthy." It's the symbol, by a wide margin, that is top-of-mind when the consumer thinks "kosher certification."

Those are among the key findings published as part of the Orthodox Union's (OU) recent "Kosher Certification Symbol Study." Armed with quantitative evidence, the OU decided the time had come to augment business development efforts around the world with the launch of a targeted media campaign. The objective? To begin building



a business and financial media profile for the global leader in the kosher certification industry.

The OU's Kashrut Division brought in Welfeld Public Relations (WPR), a boutique communications and PR firm well-versed in the consumer packaged goods and food industries (including "kashrut") and the complexities of creating and executing the type of strategic media campaign that could amplify the Study's findings.

The WPR team, encouraged by the Study's findings, set out to uncover newsworthy elements of the OU story that would support the organization's position as chief builder and market developer in the kosher certification category throughout the world. With more than



500,000 products produced in more than 7,000 plants located in 83 countries around the world—and an approximate 70% market share, it was not a difficult case to make.

Yet, the media and communications

challenge was clear: How does one build interest in the worldwide business media for a story that, upon first glance, appears to impact only a niche group of American consumers, many of whom purchase kosher certified products for dietary or religious reasons.

A review of OU business objectives and recent history revealed areas where the organization had been looking to grow its global certification business—and in what part of the world the nonprofit organization's worldwide expansion was occurring at the most rapid pace.

In both cases, the answer is China.

The OU's China and Far East team of Rabbi Mordechai Grunberg and Rabbi Donneal Epstein paved the way for WPR media strategy, writing seminal pieces in the spring 2007 issue of BYUS, describing the country's explosive short and long-term certification growth opportunities for the organization.

While major mainstream U.S.-based press was displaying an unrequited news appetite for all things China, the trend story of "China Goes Kosher" had gone virtually unreported.

Yet, for a trend story to make a major news or business page feature, it frequently requires a certain friction or tension around the subject matter at a specific time ... to provide the "tipping point" for piquing media interest.

Enter the perfect confluence of world events providing the trigger for moving forward with the theme and storyline.

The agency conducted an external media audit, researching and documenting a steady stream of recent media coverage around a series of alarming reports criticizing China's export food and consumer product safety and inspection rules and regulations. A September 19 Reuters story (reporting on a Reuters-Zogby poll) indicated that "around 78% of Americans worry about the safety of Chinese imports, and a quarter has stopped buying food from China." Additionally, media coverage commenced on the subject of scrutinizing the food supply for safety obstacles in conjunction with the August 2008 Beijing Olympics.

The team then applied the well-known strict standards of food supervision, "the second set of eyes" associated with kosher certified products, to the media approach equation.

On September 1, 2007, for example, the Chinese government, through its watchdog agency that certifies quality assurance, passed a law that makes it mandatory for a CIQ (Certification, Inspection, Quarantine) number to be affixed to each and every product. Before that, there was hardly a way to trace a product to its origin. However, over the last decade, the OU, according to Rabbi Grunberg, has insisted contractually that each CIQ number be imprinted on the product label with every manufacturer with whom it does business—next to the U-Within-A-Circle symbol—in order to clearly indicate the product point-of-origin.

China, now the second largest exporter in the world, had become the fastest-growing manufacturing supplier to transnational food corporations for food ingre-



dients, including botanicals, soy-related products, vitamins, dehydrated fruits and vegetables, additives, oils, enzymes, salt and spices and an increasing amount of finished goods, for example, fish, candy and baked goods. It has been estimated that ingredient exports (to the U.S. and rest of the world) make up a \$2.5 billion industry, of which kosher certified products are estimated to comprise or be included in close to half, or \$1.25 billion. These numbers solidify China's position as THE fastest growing kosher product producing country in the world.



Most importantly, the OU has certified more than 300 of the full-time 500 total certifications within the country through 2007. Within the past two years, the OU has more than doubled the numbers of the past ten years, and is on a current pace to double each year moving forward.

The OU plans to certify its first mass production kosher certified beef slaughterhouse in the country by the end of 2008, opening an entirely new export marketplace from which to exponentially increase kosher certification opportunities.

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Before the end of 2008, China will become the world's largest exporter, surpassing Germany, pushing the United States to number three. And OU certifications in the country throughout various product categories will grow right along with it.

In reinforcing the OU Study's keen observations, these market insights illustrate the organization's reputation as the most influential kosher certification symbol in the world and the undisputed global kosher standard.

The PR campaign's preparation and launch introduced the major news and business media to the category-building power of and respect for the OU symbol.

The story first broke with the Bloomberg News Service and was picked by major dailies throughout the country and worldwide, including Newsday, Miami Herald and Jerusalem Post.

Associated Press, one of the two leading news services in the world, followed with a story distributed nationwide. Among the first to reprint the story was the nations #1 circulation daily - USA Today. The Los Angeles Times, the #4 largest circulation daily in the U.S., in an unprecedented placement for any kosher food industry trend story, published a Page One, Column One story. National Public Radio's "Weekend Edition" followed as did mentions in numerous online and offline outlets, all positioning the OU as the leader in its category. Within days of the story breaking, media coverage reached more than 4 million people, with more on the way.



The story proved to be of great interest to the media; and both the general business and consumer public appear to have a healthy appetite for more. Media outlets including The Financial Times, Washington Post, Business Week, New York Times and CNN all indicate intention to weigh in with coverage in what has become a "rolling thunder" story.

So where on the planet will the OU's "Next Big Thing" occur? What product categories will provide the next "sweet spot" for the worldwide leader?

We know but we're not saying! Stay tuned.

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