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Food-bloggers:
Do they influence customers' food choices?

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To my grandfather who has always told me:

*“If you must do something,
do it well or do not do it at all”.*

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Introduction

This work aims at understanding the characteristics of food-bloggers and if they can influence dietary behaviour. The phenomenon of influencer, far from being an emerging trend, may be considered as a rooted reality by now. Influencers can affect consumers' decisions by providing new trends or sponsoring products. They operate in various sectors and starting from social networks, they may expand their activity. Food-bloggers belong to the influencers' category. They do not exclusively provide recipes but, they also suggest restaurants or products to buy, give advice about diet or food tendencies as well as be promoters of a brands or create partnership with companies. The connection that they create with their followers allows to distinguish their profiles from celebrities and makes them more reliable. They represent a new form of amateur professionalism that perfectly matches the food world with the online environment. Being understood the foregoing, before explaining in details the food bloggers' characteristics, their evolution across time and the influence they have upon consumers, it is important to provide information about the two topics they refer to: food (the object of their work) and Internet (the environment they work into).

Food is not only the "fuel" of human's body but, it is strictly related to socio-cultural realities. The concept of "food culture" refers to the practices, attitudes, beliefs, networks and institutions surrounding the production, distribution, and consumption of food. So, it is possible to talk about food as a "cultural aspect" when a population operates on it and modifies its characteristics. Individuals share food and recipes every day, using food as a way to communicate culture and to keep relationships alive. So, if food is considered as a glue between generation and culture, food-bloggers represent a bridge connecting them. Through online channels they transmit information, give advice to their audience and share food across time and distance.

A second aspect to highlight, it is the online environment in which food-bloggers operate in. With the introduction of the first model of Internet in 1969 and with the creation of Web 2.0., the way thought which individuals share information has been completely changed. Web 2.0. allows to share information, to publish contents, to discuss and to communicate with third parties, to use technology in everyday life. The possibility of real-time communication, of information sharing and the connection among people across the world has increased, and web communities have growth in popularity. In virtual

communities, people electronically communicate and share interests and goals. The most common web communities are represented by blogs, social networks and forums. Social networks represent an emerging phenomenon of the last years: they have moved from a niche to a mass phenomenon. Throughout such work thesis, some examples of most known social network, such as Instagram, Facebook or YouTube will be explained. SNs are computer networks which socially and virtually connect people or organizations: each user interacts with other actors and each social interaction is represented by a node. A larger number of nodes shows a higher number of social interactions. Users, such as food-bloggers, who operate across various nodes are considered like influencers because their opinion can be spread across different groups. People have always exchanged information: the phenomenon of word of mouth (WOM) has been converted in eWOM, where the “e” stays for “electronic” because users spread information across the web. Due to the success of SNs, a lot of companies have decided to create their profiles, and at the same time, food-bloggers have decided to spread their activities through them in order to obtain a larger audience.

On the other hand, a blog is an online platform allowing individuals to create a sort of “personal diary”. Bloggers talk about different topics, share opinions, experience or personal life. Due to the development of technology, they can communicate with a larger audience than before. Blogs give voice to “ordinary people”: food-bloggers are not professional of the sector; they are foodie and they want to share their passion for food. It is possible to find blogs about every topic so that bloggers who want to distinguish themselves from the mass should be able to be perceived as credible and trustful. Blogs and social networks will be analysed in details and further information on them will be provided here-below, such as communities, micro blogging, opinion leaders and WOM. Once provided and understood the main characteristics of these two worlds, the figure of food-blogger could be analysed. More attention will be focused on blogs because they are the first tools used by food-bloggers to share their passion. Then, food-bloggers’ characteristics will be analysed in order to understand what they are and why they are considered opinion leaders. Food blogs are considered a relevant source for food research, such as recipes, restaurant where eat or new dietary tendencies. Reasons why photographic elements are considered essential will be also explained, with a focus on the phenomenon of “foodporn”. Due to increasing number of “food-bloggers” present on the web, it is very difficult to distinguish who is reliable and who is not. They want to share their passion for food and use various tool to do that. Some of them consider their activity

as a pure hobby, while others want to use that as a springboard for their career. There are a lot of “food-influencer” who have started their activity on blog. To confirm this trend, it will be introduced a paragraph dedicate to one of the most known Campania food-blogger: Egidio Cerrone, alias “Puokemed”. Egidio has been interviewed to disclose information about food-blogging in general, his consideration of the role that food-bloggers should have and about the reasons and evolution of his career. When a food-blogger obtains great success is defined as a “food influencer”: for this reason, companies want to collaborate with them to promote their products.

Information about food, online world and food-bloggers represents the basis of a market analysis aimed at understanding if and how food-bloggers actually influence customers’ food-choices. A survey has been provided to customers and spread online in order to reach a larger audience. The questions are related to socio-demographic aspects of consumers, their dietary habits and their knowledge of food-bloggers. From the questions obtained, the analysis aims at discovering if food-influencers are a niche phenomenon or are spread across market. Moreover, data obtained allows to identify the most influenced target, the source of information most used, the entity of influence that food-bloggers have on population and to define a profile of the “common consumer”.

1. Food environment

The main topic of this thesis is represented by “food-bloggers”. For this reason, it is necessary to provide an introductory and general chapter related to food in order to understand what it is, dietary changes across time and its symbolic and cultural values. In fact, food-bloggers become more and more popular due to the cultural value and all the changes in food choices and dietary behaviour that characterized markets: consumers research recipes, new product information, sophisticated or local restaurant, new dietary tendencies and thanks to the development of Internet, they do all these activities online.

1.1. What is food?

Food is represented by any substance that can be used to provide support for an organism. It has animal or plant origins and it contains essential elements for human body such as carbohydrates, proteins, fats, vitamins and minerals. These substances are assimilated by the organism cells and used to provide energy, to stimulate growth and maintain the organism alive.

In the past, people procured food by hunting, fishing, gathering and agriculture but, nowadays, most of the food is provided by food industries. Because of the industrialization of food practices, food security and food safety are continuously monitored by many associations such as “International association for food protection” or “World food program”. They operate trying to solve other issues such as sustainability, biological diversity, climate change, nutritional economics, population growth, water supply, and access to food.

“The right to food” is included into “human rights”: in fact, ICESCR (International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights) recognizes the *"right to an adequate standard of living, including adequate food"*, as well as the *"fundamental right to be free from hunger"*.

Throughout the time, a lot of new food categories are introduced to satisfy people’s needs, for example *finger food, camping food, diet food, functional food* and many others.¹

¹ SOCIETY, NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC (2011). "food". *National Geographic Society*.

It is important to clarify that, while from a biological standpoint “food” is defined as any substance containing nutrients which provide sustenance for the body, from a cookery perspective, food is nourishment usually considered in its solid form.²

1.2. Food culture

Food is not only related to the support of the body, but it is also connected to culture. It is the symbol of socio-cultural realities. It continually changes and adapts itself to environmental, cultural and structural changes.³ Food anthropology analyses social and cultural differences of human food choices, enthusiasm and disgust which are historically defined and culturally and socially built.⁴

There are a lot of common expressions used to identify the cultural concept of food, such as “*Say me what you eat, and I will tell you who you are*”⁵ or “*You are what you eat*”⁶. The modification of food practices allows to determine the transformation of a culture and, consequently, of a population. Vice versa, historical, economic, social, political or religious changes affect food. For example, this can highlight the richness or the poverty of a country. Food divides the time of the day (breakfast, lunch, dinner), weekdays and seasons, ordinary day and festivity ones (birthday, Easter, Christmas, marriage etc.): each food is different according to the period and the culture; for example, there are some typical food only prepared during Christmas holidays: “Panettone” for Italian Christmas, “Gallettes de Roi” in France and “Polverones” in Spain. No one has never been able to eliminate a food ritual from its tradition.⁷ Food becomes a “cultural aspect” when a population operates on it and modifies its characteristics. The discovery of fire represents the birth of cuisine. Only human beings can cook and can transform a natural product into something completely different.

² COLLINS ENGLISH DICTIONARY – Complete and Unabridged, 12th Edition 2014 © HarperCollins Publishers 1991, 1994, 1998, 2000, 2003, 2006, 2007, 2009, 2011, 2014

³ GOLINO A. (2014), Food from a Sociological Perspective, *Italian Sociological Review*, vol. 4 (2), pp. 221-233

⁴ GUIGONI A. (2000), Il messaggio è nel piatto: antropologia dell'alimentazione, AA.VV. *Nello stato delle cose. La luce era buona. Antropologie*, Perugia, Gramma, pp. 12-16

⁵ Expression introduced in 1826 by Anthelme Brillant-Saverin and then used by many others.

⁶ “Der mensch ist was er isst” is one of the most known quotes from the German philosopher Feuerbach. Sometimes food is used as a stereotype to identify a community (for example: Germans are “sauerkraut eater” while Asians are “rice eater”).

⁷ SCARPI P. (2005), *Il senso del cibo: mondo antico e riflessi contemporanei*, Palermo, Sellerio Editore, p. 26

Cooking practices and chemical modifications provided by the act of cooking and by the mix of various ingredients, allows to eat something partially artificial and transform into edible food something that in nature was not.⁸ In relation of different cooking methods, it is possible to distinguish a culture from another: any of them is a mix of compactness, tastes, flavours, emotions, memories, traditions. Each bite identifies humans for their biological and physiological being.⁹

According to Levi-Strauss, cooking is like a language: it is a universal human activity and there is no population without a proper language or a proper food culture. The linguistic model of cooking is based on his famous “*cooking triangle*”: cooked, uncooked and rot.¹⁰ Examining food choices and food habits helps in understanding of ourselves and of others. Hauck-Lawson introduced the concept of “*food voices*”: it explains that what each decides to eat or to not eat communicates characteristic of a person’s identity and emotion.¹¹ Hence, the concept of “*food culture*” refers to the practices, attitudes, beliefs, networks and institutions surrounding the production, distribution, and consumption of food. It includes the concepts of foodways, cuisine, and food system.¹²

According to scientific research, people can survive sixty day without eating.¹³ So, the most of time, people eat because they want to and not because they need to: food becomes more a cultural necessity than a physiological one. All these factors, in addition of culture characteristics, affect the final decision. Leroi Gourhan affirms that communities show preferences and rejections called “*ethnic personality*”;¹⁴ although man is omnivorous, around the world people eat in different ways: so, acceptance or rejection of certain food depends on food culture.

⁸ PRAVETTONI R. (2013), *Il cibo come elemento di identità culturale nel processo migratorio*, <http://www.globalgeografia.it/temi/pravettoni.pdf>, p.5

⁹ DELGADO SALAZAR R. (2001), *Comida y cultura: identidad y significado en el mundo contemporaneo*, *Estudio de Asia y Africa*, XXXVI(1), p. 83

¹⁰ DÍAZ MÉNDEZ C. & GÓMEZ BENITO C. (2005), *Sociologia y alimentacion*, *Revista Internacional de Sociologia (RIS)*, Tercera Época, N°40, January-April, pp. 21-46

¹¹ Cfr. HAUCK-LAWSON A. (2004), Introduction to special issue on the food voice, *Food, culture, and society*, vol 7(1), pp. 24-25 in: ALMÉRICO GINA M. (2014), *Food and identity: food studies, cultural, and personal identity*, *Journal of International Business and Cultural Studies*

¹¹ This period can increase if people receive small portion of food or nutrients. In: UNCOME, <https://www.uncome.it/salute/articolo/quanto-tempo-si-puo-stare-senza-mangiare-13289.html>

¹¹ GUIGONI A. (2000), *cit.*

¹² LEXICON, <https://www.lexiconoffood.com/definizione/definizione-food-culture>

¹³ This period can increase if people receive small portion of food or nutrients. In: UNCOME, <https://www.uncome.it/salute/articolo/quanto-tempo-si-puo-stare-senza-mangiare-13289.html>

¹⁴ GUIGONI A. (2000), *cit.*

It can be demonstrated by the fact that when a person is hungry, he could eat any kind of food in order to sustain his body but, on the other hand, he chooses a dish rather than another according to the time of the day, what he had eaten, weather conditions, feeling, desires, etc.

Sophie Bess said: “*Say me what you eat, and I will tell you which God you pray, where you live, which culture you belong to and in which social group you are attached*”.¹⁵

Any country could be identified by a traditional plate: Italian pasta, French cheese, Spanish paella etc. For this reason, when we travel, for example we research on Google “What can I eat in my Marseille?”: food bloggers help us in finding uncommon or non-stereotype plates and give us some information about famous restaurants or hidden delicious corner to discover.

The French geographer Jean Brunhes said: « *Manger est assimiler un territoire* »¹⁶ in order to communicate that to discover well a determinate place, people should also be immersed into its gastronomic culture; therefore, gastronomic tours are part considered a relevant part of travel experience.

Ramiro Delgado Salazar in his study for the “University of Antioquia” states that eating means to digest culturally a territory. Talking about food is constantly referring to the territory where tastes of that culture are assembled.¹⁷ So, it is possible to consider the existence of “*hidden geographies*” where food relates to ideas, memories, past experiences, sounds, beliefs, worries, etc. Mixing all these components, the final elements is perceived by physical sensations.¹⁸

Food, plates and occasions identify the cultural identity of someone and during an alienating situation in which people are far from their original country, recipes and typical foods identify a certain ethnicity and let people to keep memories of their origins and distinguish themselves from the surrounded cultural environment.¹⁹ Food, food habits, familiar tastes, identity, sensation, memories are strictly related.

¹⁵ NUNES DOS SANTOS C. (2007), Somos los que comemos: identidad cultural, hábitos alimenticios y turismo, *Estudios y perspectiva en turismo*, Volumen 16, pp. 234 - 242

¹⁶ It means “eating is to absorb a territory”.

¹⁷ DELGADO SALAZAR R. (2001), *cit.*, p. 84-85

¹⁸ Cfr. COOK I. et al. (2011), Geographies of food: Afters, *Progress in Human Geography*, 35, pp.104-120 in: COLOMBINO A. (2014), La geografia del cibo, *Bollettino della società geografica italiana Roma* - Serie XIII, vol. VII, pp. 647-656

¹⁹ SIMEONI P. E. (1994), La catalogazione del cibo. Un corpus di oggetti virtuali, *La Ricerca Folklorica*, No.30, Antropologia dell'alimentazione, Grafo S.p.a., pp. 95-98

Food keeps alive the relation with native culture: it is concrete, direct, physical, immediate; it is perceived instantaneously by all five senses and create a point of contact with someone who is far (both physical and chronological distance).²⁰

Each group could be understood analysing its eating behaviours: a group uses food to express identity, community, values, status, power, artistry and creativity.²¹

According to Franco (2001)²² tastes and preferences are shaped by culture and controlled by society. Everybody has papillae but taste and liking or disliking feelings depend on cultural group. Food habits are affected by social class, race, age, education, health and social environment: taste is socially, and not individually shaped so, food decisions are affected by the belonging to a social class.²³

“*Dietary style*” is affected by culture such as single food elements. There are a lot of stereotypes related to food classes: symbolic values are pitched on social classes who use a product rather than another; sophistication, vulgarity, abundance, nonconformism, richness, exoticism is shown by food. Moreover, stereotypes identify “masculine” and “feminine” food: for example, a steak is considered more masculine than an escalope.²⁴

Others stereotype are created by judging what people put into their shopping cart: a cart full of prepared food and frozen food may identify a wrong example to follow while a cart full of fresh fruits and bio products is related to a person who take care of his health. Hence, any country or population bases its culinary attitude towards specific tastes, values, attitudes and beliefs defining what should be considered food and what not, what is socially accepted and what is not. For example, for Muslim is forbidden to eat pork, Hinduism deny cow meat, European population consider unaccepted eating cats or dogs. Not only food consumption is affected by culture, but also food preparation and organization, for example the Italian-French distinction between the main dish and the second one: a soup could not follow a steak, a dessert could not start the meal.

²⁰ PRAVETTONI P. (2013), *cit.*, p.12

²¹ LEXICON, <https://www.lexiconoffood.com/definition/definition-food-culture>

²² Cfr. FRANCO A. (2001), *De caçador a gourmet: uma história da gastronomia*. Editora SENAC, São Paulo in: Sloan D. (2005), *Gastronomia e turismo*, Aleph, São Paulo; in: NUNES DOS SANTOS C. (2007), *cit.*

²³ Cfr. CUSCUDO L.C. (2004), *Sociologia da alimentação*. In: *História da Alimentação no Brasil: pesquisa e notas*. 3 ed., Itatiaia, Belo Horizonte, pp. 339, 339-402; in: NUNES DOS SANTOS C. (2007), *cit.*

²⁴ SEPELLI T. (1994), *Per un'antropologia dell'alimentazione: determinazioni, funzioni e significati psico-culturali della risposta sociale a un bisogno fisiologico*, *La Ricerca Folklorica*, No. 30, *Antropologia dell'alimentazione*, pp. 7-14

Who does not know these aspects, does not belong to the group who consider it normal!²⁵ According to Montanari (2006), food becomes culture when it is produced, prepared and consumed. People usually prepare and consume food with their families or their friends;²⁶ the act of sharing food let people to elevate their status and to share their culture and to create togetherness because food is used to “create and maintain social relationship”.²⁷

We share food and recipes every day: recipes and food traditions are shared by a generation to another, from a place to another, during family dinner or lunch with friends and represents a tool to communicate culture and to keep relationship alive. Sharing is an important aspect of culture. Food-bloggers help this sharing process providing recipes through the network and establishing a relation with their followers. Moreover, there are a lot of media, magazines, cookbooks or television programs which contribute in sharing recipes. During last years, the number of cooking television programs such as “MasterChef” are increased as the number of food blogs and consequently, the popularity of food bloggers. Culture changes across the time and so the way by which culture is shared. Sharing recipes or others information about food represents a ways to communicate experiences, preferences and desires and give people what Annie Hauk-Lawson identifies as “*food voice*”, a voice that expresses themselves and “*forge cooperative links, extend hospitality and assert power or obligation*”.²⁸

Alimentation is surround by secondary functions, psychological aspects, symbolic connotations, cultural values and meanings which affect food practices and behaviour. Food is a mediator between humans and the world.²⁹ Food should feed collective mind before feeding the empty stomach and it should feed collective stomach before feeding collective mind.³⁰

²⁵ SCARPI P. (2005), *cit.*, p.13

²⁶ Cfr. MONTANARI M. (2006), *Food is Culture*, Trans. A. Sonnenfeld. New York: *Columbia University Press*; in: LOFGREN J. (2013a), *Changing tastes in food media: a study of recipe sharing traditions in the food blogging community*, ARC Centre for creative industries and innovation, Creative Industries Faculty, Queensland university of technology, p. 1

²⁷ Cfr. MENNELL S., MURCOTT A. & OTTERLOO A.H.V. (1992), *The sociology of food: eating diet and culture*, London: Sage; in: in: LOFGREN J. (2013a), *cit.*

²⁸ Cfr. BELASCO (2008), *Food: the key concept*. Oxford: Berg; Cfr. HAUK-LAWSON A. (2004), Introduction. *Food, culture & society* 7 (1): 24-25 in: LOFGREN J. (2013a), *cit.*, p.3

²⁹ SCARPI P. (2005), *cit.*, p. 11

³⁰ Cfr. HARRIS M. (1987), *The Sacred Cow and the Abominable Pig: Riddles of Food and Culture*, New York, touchstone, p.15 in: DELGADO SALAZAR R. (2001), *cit.*, p. 92

We can conclude this paragraph with a Plinius's citation: "*There is no one who do not find comfort for his anger, distress, sadness and every passion in food; therefore, it has to be considered as a therapeutically action not only for the body, but also for the morale*".³¹

1.2.1. Food as cultural heritage

Food may be considered a cultural heritage both for its material and immaterial aspect. In the first case, it is based on a physical and touchable product and in lot of cases, it is safeguarded because belonging to a rare species or because it is historically related to a place. In the second case, food heritage can be evaluated because its value is related to production or preparation practices. For example, family's traditional recipes are shared from a mother to his daughter, from a generation to another.

To testify the importance of food for a place, it is possible to mention the various countryside festival and events aimed at protecting food values. Furthermore, the creation of specific registered trademark (D.O.P., D.O.C, I.G.T, and so on) wants to protect food products and use them as a resource for the increase of a country. The existence of "*Presidi Slow Food*" marks the protection of small typical production considered as an expression of small communities' culture. Memory is fundamental to support this aspect of food. Hence, food-blogger are useful to share recipes with other people in order to spread food culture around the web and around the world. They could also promote remarked product in their recipes.³²

³¹ PLINIO, *Storia naturale*, XXII, 52

³² DANSERO E., GIORDA M., PETTENATI G. (2015), Per una geografia culturale del cibo, *Scienza attiva*, Edizione speciale ExpoTo2015

1.3. Evolution and changes in food consumption

In the past decades, food trends have changed constantly. They had started in '90 with the Recession period which followed the Consumerism of '70 and '80. It is possible to identify different causes:³³

- a. *Socio-demographic changes*: population aging implies healthy, novel and “light” food products; mononuclear families, dual career families and singles require “ready-to-eat”, precooked and mono-portion products and increase extra-consumption expenses; ethnic communities introduce “new foods” such as sushi or kebab, etc;
- b. *Increase of food attention*: consumers pay more attention in selecting their product, in particular after many scandals such as “Crazy cow”. Consequently, industries are adopting new qualitative production standards and new technique of food traceability.

Moreover, this attention is a consequence of unhealthy disease related to food: obesity, allergies, etc. It implies the production of specific product such as “gluten free”, “no added sugar” or “light” products;
- c. *Changes in economic condition of population*: introduction of cheaper supermarkets based on a major offer (GDO) or economic restaurant (such as fast food) based on a standardize organizations which allows to reduce costs and so prices;
- d. *New technologies*: used for new packaging and conservation methods.

³³ PETA E.A. (2008), “Consumi agro-alimentari in Italia e nuove tecnologie” in *Strategie di innovazione e trend dei consumi in Italia: il caso dell'agro-alimentare*, ESPOSTI R., LUCATELLI S., PETA E.A., Collana materiali Uval, 15, pp. 10-26

1.3.1. De-structuration and polarization of meals³⁴

Recently, people often eat outside their home. Number of restaurants is increased considerably and the built of enterprise canteen creates new dietary habits. Meals are de-structured for these reasons and, in addition, because consumers do not consider a meal important as it was in the past; for example, millennials usually surf on internet or watch television while they are eating. Snaking is another cause of the de-structuration of meals. A snack is a symbol of “autonomy” and establishes the decline of food sharing with family.³⁵

Inside family, it is difficult and not convenient to prepare a different meal for each person. So, families start to choose only one dish for each meal: food preferences start to polarise and prefers a common choice. This phenomenon does not affect all meal, but it depends from the number of family component, the number of times these members eat together, time available for cooking, meal preparation complexity, family’s economical condition: for example, lower is this number, higher is the possibility to personalize a meal. Small meal such as breakfast or breaks are represented by a higher level of personalization than principles meals. In the last cases, families that they prefer to recreate the “*spirit of conviviality*” lost in contemporary era. In the past, families were bigger: now families are usually formed by no more than four people who are less prone to spend time in cooking activities and who prefer to buy “ready-to-use” products.

1.3.2. “Time-saving” needs

With the increase of working woman, 24h opening, increase of employment and dual career,³⁶ there was less time dedicated to cooking activities. For this reason, families looked for new kind of products:

- Ready to use
- Easy to cook
- Frozen

³⁴ PILATI L. (2004), *Marketing agro-alimentare*, Editrice UNI service, p.51-53

³⁵ FRANCHI M. (2007), *Il senso del consumo*, Bruno Mondadori (Economica)

³⁶ Cfr. GAMBA P. & SABBADIN E. (1984), Processi di acquisto e segmentazione nel commercio, *Commercio*, n.18, pp. 125-150 in: BELLETTI G., MARESCOTTI A. (1996), Le nuove tendenze dei consumi alimentari, in: Berni P.E. Begalli D. (a cura di), “I prodotti agroalimentari di qualità: organizzazione del sistema delle imprese” (Atti del XXXII Convegno della Società Italiana di Economia Agraria, Verona, 1995), Il Mulino, Bologna, pp.133-152.

- Precooked
- Mono-portion.

Consumers look for “time-saving” product (such as the ones already cited) and services such as automatic cash register or optic recognition of prices. A new packaging is required. Therefore, technological innovations such as refrigerator, freezer or microwave, help in conserving the new product and in diversify time to eat. Any family member could warm up his food and eat it when he wants. Time to wash, peel, cut, cook, the ingredients is reduced. In supermarkets, consumers could find any kind of product that helps their private life in saving time for cooking and for cleaning. For example, a woman who buy a “Russian salad”, buy a product ready to eat and save time for preparing it and so for cleaning, cutting and washing each ingredient³⁷. In addition, the increase of restaurants and fast foods help consumer in saving-time goal.

1.3.3. Price attention

After the Consumerism of '70 and '80, during '90 consumers paid more attention on their purchases. The reasons are socio-economic variables or '90 Recession period and socio-cultural elements related to consumers. Consumers pay more attention on their choices, both for product itself and for the place and time of purchase. They start to compare goods and to choose cheaper products without well-known brands, to buy in discounts or GDOs rather than in small and specific markets, to reduce lunch or dinner at restaurants. They look for information across all channels available, they are more encouraged to buy during sales and they want to catch promotions.³⁸

1.3.4. “Extra-domestic” consumptions

According to Pilati (2004), domestic consumptions can be divided into two groups:³⁹

- a. *Domestic consumption* (or consumption at home);

³⁷ CONTRERAS J. (1992), Alimentacion y cultura: reflexiones desde la Antropologia, *Revista Chilena de Antropologia N°11*, 95-111

³⁸ Cfr. CENSIS (1994), *Dopo il consumo affluente, la medietà*, Censis-Findomestic, dattiloscritto, Roma, 18 ottobre; Cfr. FABRIS G. (1995), *Cosumatore & Mercato. Le nuove regole*, Sperling & Kupfer, Milano in: BELLETTI G., MARESCOTTI A. (1996), *cit.*

³⁹ PILATI L. (2004), *cit.*, pp. 58-61

- b. *Extra-domestic consumption*: at the same time, it can be divided in two categories:
- *Commercial food service*: restaurants, hotels, pizzerias, fast food, snack bar, pubs, etc.
Lunch prevails in fast food and dinner in slow food restaurant; commercial model may satisfy different necessities, such as a rapid meal or a dinner with a show.
 - *Collective food service*: especially canteen. They also stipulate contracts with commercial food service and provide “food coupons” or they manage all food service, from food supply to food preparation and service.

Recently, the second group is notably increased. Comparing food expenditure between '90 and 2000, we can notice a reduction for domestic consumption but an increase of expenditure for restaurant services.⁴⁰ Consumers prefer eating at restaurant because they can choose any kind of dish, while at home they are limited due to the polarization of meals; moreover, a restaurant represents an escape from ordinary world and a meeting point for social activities. Furthermore, consumptions became an experience so, restaurants do not offer only a meal but sensations, history, tradition, shows and conviviality too. Food bloggers promote restaurants, pub and any kind of external commercial on their blog or on social media: they usually prefer Instagram or Pinterest due to the image support offered by these social medias. There are some countries such as U.S.A. or Canada where extra-domestic consumptions are much higher of consumption expenses. In Italy this tax is lower, but it is not so far from 50%. A consequence of the increase of extra-domestic consumption is represented by a homogeneity of dietary styles.

On the other side, it is necessary to cite another trend: home delivery. Internet make it easier thanks to a lot of “app”, such as Deliveroo and Just Eat. Extra-domestic consumption returns to be domestic one although food is not homemade. Consumers should download the app or surf on the online website, chose a meal, pay with credit card or directly to the delivery man, and wait. It is easy and effortless.

⁴⁰ PETA E.A. (2008), *cit.*

1.3.5. Dietary convergence

With the increase of economy, people change their tastes and desires and want to discover new kind of food: in particular, they are attracted by food that come from foreign places. They are attracted by other cultures and new tastes. Food lose its characteristics related to the environment and should satisfy symbolic and sensorial circumstances. This situation expresses more a need for the mind than for the stomach.

Rigidity of food choices is related to the past: nowadays, people want to undergo; it is for this reason that the term “*gastronautic*” is introduced.⁴¹

At the beginning, this expanded variety could be afforded only by high society.⁴² Then, with globalization, lot of “exotic food” could be reached also by middle or poor classes. “Trickle down” is the phenomenon according to which gastronomic excellences are spread toward lower social classes.⁴³ Nowadays, lot of these “new foods” have become commons: consumers often go to the restaurant for eating sushi, Argentinian steak, Chinese soya spaghetti, Kebab or cous cous. In this context, people can transmit localism and territorial identity through food.⁴⁴ Globalization implies a convergence of food habits and food commodities.⁴⁵

This convergence might be analysed from two points of view:⁴⁶

- a. *From food demand*: due to standardization of lifestyle and economic and social dynamic;
- b. *From food offer*: due to free circulation of products, globalization of industrial activities, convergence of restaurant model, same merchandising in markets, etc.

Marc Augè coined the term “*non place*” to identify a series of places similar for their shapes, their organizations, interior designs: fast food is the icon of that phenomenon. It is an economic and friendly place; it represents the convergence of “food tastes” and a rupture with ancient food culture: for example, people eat by hands and eating process is mechanical (fast preparation and fast consumption). It symbolises the application of

⁴¹ FRANCHI M (2007)., *cit.*

⁴² PRAVETTONI R. (2013), *cit.*, p.8

⁴³ OLIVERO N. & RUSSO V. (2013), “*Psicologia dei consumi*”, McGraw-Hill Education

⁴⁴ GOLINO (2014) A., *cit.*

⁴⁵ GUIGONI A. (2000), *cit.*

⁴⁶ PILATI L. (2004), *cit.*, p.61-64

Taylorism to food service and identifies a standardized consumption.⁴⁷ Fast foods were born in U.S.A. during '50 and spread the concept of “*quick service*” all over the world. McDonald's, the most known, was born in 1955 in Illinois and introduced a new way of producing and providing food services. Its model has been copied by other fast food chains and introducing a new era: it is the period of “McDonaldization⁴⁸”.

The rapid chain is contrasted by his best enemy: “Slow food” movement is an opposite tendency which focuses on criticize the obsession against fastness and the speed of the modern world. This new trend wants to rebuild the relation between consumers and producers⁴⁹ and a return to tradition.⁵⁰ Carlo Petrini, an Italian gastronome, sociologist, writer and activist, founder of association “Slow food” declares: “*The biggest problem is losing the symbolic value of food. They are becoming a commodity, a common good without a soul*”. In fact, sometimes people eat only because they must do it and not because they understand what food really means.

⁴⁷ Cfr. AUGE M. (1999), *Disneyland e altri non luoghi*, Torino, Bollati Boringhieri in: PRAVETTONI R. (2013), *cit.*, p. 37-39

⁴⁸ Theory based on the return on localism and to community in addition with this new type of “fast to cook product”

⁴⁹ Cfr. PETRINI C. (2001), *Slow Food. Le ragioni del gusto*, Bari, Laterza in: GOLINO A. (2014), *cit.*

⁵⁰ FRANCHI M. (2007), *cit.*

1.3.6. Dichotomy pleasure/control and health/disease⁵¹

The relation between food and body is continuously changing. Physical aspect is considered important and so, people want to take care of themselves. People usually judge someone for his aesthetics. Food choices may affect physical and health conditions.

On one hand, consumers look for new products, new tastes and flavours (hedonistic culture) but, on the other hand, they evaluate the impact that these foods may have on their body. Society is characterized by uncertainty: self-control and consumption, diet and food pleasure are some examples. Dietary disturbs increase. Thinness idea requires control: consumers, especially women, suffer for bulimia or anorexia due to the advertising promotion of skinny models. While anorexia represents the rejection of food and the development of private and antisocial cult, bulimia represents a personal secret: eating in public to enter in social context but expelling any food in private space to feel comfortable with herself. Consumer's desire to relieve after eating is a ritual act: he wants to eat because food is desired but, he wants to expel it due to its negative effect on his body and aesthetic.⁵²

A second dichotomy is related to dietary health or sickness. Obesity is another dietary problem and should be monitored. For example, in U.S.A. has been introduced the "junk food tax". The attention on sickness due to food push customers to look on healthier and greener product (as it is explained in the following paragraph). "*Gastro-anomia*" represents a sense of anxiety and uncertainty due to the lack of references in food choice.

1.3.7. Environmental attention and healthy lifestyle

Few years ago, costumers' perception of food industry reduced. Consumers became more interested in the safeguarded of environment and of their health so, they start to pay more attention on their purchase decisions; there was a return to a "*healthy lifestyle*". Consumers became interested in eco-friendly products and considered production and distribution activities before buying a product.⁵³

Food industry's activity is limited because of the perception that consumers have of food: they want something ready to eat or easy to cook but, at the same time, this food should be like "*grandma's recipe*". Consumers are worried of all additives, pesticides, hormones

⁵¹ FRANCHI M. (2007), *cit.*, cap 3.4

⁵² OLIVERO N. & RUSSO V. (2013), *cit.*,

⁵³ BELLETTI G., MARESCOTTI A. (1996), *cit.*

and other chemical elements that may be included in industrial food product.⁵⁴ Hence, enterprises should readapt their activity in order produce in a “greener” way, reducing waste and using ecological raw materials and processes. It is the return to “green” and “biological” products.

The increase of allergies and health diseases such as obesity, provides also the necessity of specific product aimed to reach this segment who is always increasing. Many food bloggers decide to reach these sensible target providing ideas for new original recipes using hypoallergenic ingredients, proposing food suggestions (lower calories or diet and light products) to who is affected by weight problems, or promoting an healthier lifestyle on their blog or on their personal profile on social media.

On the other hand, customers research also “light” (food with a low level of calories or sugar), natural and fresh products. Vegan and vegetarian consumers increase: this choice is due both for animalistic reason and both for environmental reasons due to the larger space and higher energy waste required for meat production. New consumers’ dictionary is formed by these words:

- No OGM
- Gluten free
- Eggs and milk free
- No added sugar
- No palm oils
- Superfood
- Bio
- No parabens
- Vegan
- Vegetarian
- Typical
- IGP, DOC, DOP, and others registered trademarks

⁵⁴ CONTRERAS J. (1992), *cit.*

Some examples of a marketing strategy related to these new necessities are represented by “AgriServices” and “Eataly”. The first is a society created in Teramo and formed by 136 farms who have developed a new commercial form: they create a “vending machine” of fresh milk and establish a supermarket with full merchandise (based on the motorway which connect Teramo and Giulianova), mixing the American formula of supermarket and the Italian traditional local production. On the other hand, Eataly is an enogastronomic and polyfunctional centre: its big market mixes stand of fresh products and thematic restaurants. Its aim is to offer quality food at reasonable price and to communicate productive methods and local producers’ histories. Eataly is strategically helped by Slow Food association.⁵⁵

If the previously aspects are related to healthy lifestyle, another consequence of food concern is related to social and cultural context; solidarity allows to create various movements and associations:⁵⁶

- a. *Fair Trade*: this movement aims to safeguard and economically sustain producers coming from Third World because of their reduced bargaining power. The most important organizations which promote this movement are FLO (Fair Trade Labelling Organizations), Ifat (International Federation of Alternative Trade), News (Network World’s Shops) and Efta (European Fair-Trade Association).
- b. *FAO*: organizations founded in 1945 and aimed at improving nutrition levels, farming performance and rural population lifestyles.
- c. *Italian “Banco Alimentare”*: it spreads food overflow from richer country to the poorer ones. For example, it organises a “Colletta alimentare” outside supermarkets asking people to share some products.

⁵⁵ OLIVERO N. & RUSSO V. (2013), *cit.*

⁵⁶ PILATI L. (2004)., *cit.*, p. 56-58

1.4. Social aspects of food

Eating is also, but especially, a social practice. Scientific literatures show the strong bond between food and the construction and expression of personal and social identity.⁵⁷ Eating at restaurant has become the main social activity.⁵⁸ Social context strongly influences eating behaviour: people eat differently when they are alone compared when they are with someone else. Starting from the quantity of food eaten or the type of food, social norms affect people food choices. For example, De Castro and Brewer (1992) demonstrated that, during a meal, the presence of a person may increase food consumption of 28%, two people increase the level of 41%, three people of 53% and so on. Moreover, the time spend in eating increase according to the number of participants: an increase of 15 minutes, spend not only for talking but also for eating more. In general, when in group, people tend to eat more and more slowly.⁵⁹ Food liking and preferences are affected by others: people always tend to conform to a group. For this reasons, social eating norms should be a starting point to encourage healthier eating style⁶⁰. These norms are considered as standards of appropriate consumption. Not following these norms implies a sort of social punishment or sanctions such as embarrassment or disapproval. At the same time, a norm could be rejected if a person does not want to be accepted by a group⁶¹.

Other studies have been done in relation to this argument, such as the one proposed by Robinson and others⁶² in which is tested how people adhere to social norms in order to gain social approval. Two studies were conducted to investigate if people modify their food intake to be integrated easier into a group. People with lower self-esteem are usually prone to match their partner's behaviour in order to facilitate social acceptance. So, if this need of integration is removed, matching in food intake should be reduced. Moreover,

⁵⁷ Cfr. CAPLAN P. (1997), Approaches to the study of food, health and identity. In Caplan P. (ed.), *Food, health and identity* (pp.1-31). London e New York: Routledge in: GUIDETTI M. & CAVAZZA N. (2010), *De gustibus: l'influenza sociale nella costruzione dei repertori alimentari*, *Psicologia Sociale* n°3,

⁵⁸ FRANCHI M. (2007), *cit.*

⁵⁹ OLIVERO N. & RUSSO V. (2013), *cit.*

⁶⁰ HIGGS S. & THOMAS J. (2016), Social influences in eating, *Current Opinion in Behavioural Sciences*, 9:1-6

⁶¹ Cfr. BAUMEISTER R.F. & LEARY M.R. (1995), The need to belong. Desire for interpersonal attachments as a fundamental human motivation. *Psychological Bulletin*, 117(3), p.497; FEHR E. & FISCHBACHER U. (2004), Third-party punishment and social norms, *Evolution and Human Behavior*, 25, pp. 63-87 in: HIGGS S. (2015), Social norms and their influences on eating behaviours, *Appetite* 86, 38-44

⁶² ROBINSON E., TOBIAS T., SHAW L., FREEMAN E., HIGGS S. (2012), "Social matching of food intake and the need for social acceptance", School of psychology, University of Birmingham, Edgbaston, Birmingham B 15 2TT, UK

when participants were exposed to a socially warm conditions, participants did not feel the need for integration because they are already socially accepted. The results of many studies⁶³ provide in part support for the hypothesis sustained by the authors. People might follow eating norms to satisfy the desire to be like their peers but, when people eat alone, they used to follow to same norms in order to “behave correctly”.⁶⁴ Food-bloggers represent a starting point in healthier food style promotion. Social networks are other tools that can be used to promote healthier behaviour: food size of pictures shared on these platforms are usually bigger than normal; considering that social networks are one of the most influential tool used to communicate messages, increase in average size of food portion may have created new consumption norms.⁶⁵ Celebrities performing in commercials usually promote unhealthy products: this can negatively influence adolescents more than older adults because they are still forming their identity; celebrities, athletes, tv stars are often thin and fit and their promotion of unhealthy product may be erroneously associated with a good way of eating because of their physical aspects⁶⁶. Food is a symbol of social relation and it expresses the relationship between a given social structure and a symbolic structure through which food is expresses.⁶⁷ Food tells how people see themselves and what people think about themselves in relation to the others⁶⁸. People follow social norms⁶⁹ in order to give a better image of themselves: for example, a woman prefers not eating a lot during her first date with someone she likes. In fact, female image has always been associated with small food portion and lightly food⁷⁰. The act of eating does not refer only to the necessity of sustain the body, but it is an act full of meaning. For example, restaurants offer more than food. Restaurant reviews, such as the one on TripAdvisor platform or written by food-bloggers, are not based only on the evaluation of food quality but they are an average of all the restaurant’s proposals: food, quality, menu, dish size, price, atmosphere, waiter’s kindness, location, speed of service, etc. When people go to the restaurant, they do not want to feed themselves, they want a

⁶³ GUIDETTI M. & CAVAZZA N. (2010), *cit.*

⁶⁴ HIGGS S. (2015), *cit.*

⁶⁵ Cfr. HERMAN C.P., POLIVY J., PLINER P. & VARTANIAN L.R. (2015), Mechanisms underlying the portion-size effect, *Physiological behave*, 144, pp.129-136 in: HIGGS S. & THOMAS J. (2016), *cit.*

⁶⁶ KONIG L.M., GIESE H., STOK F.M., RENNER B. (2017), The social image of food: associations between popularity and eating behaviour, *Appetite* 114

⁶⁷ Cfr. GOODY J. (1982), *Cooking, Cuisine and Class. A study in Comparative Sociology*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press in: DELGADO SALAZAR R. (2001), *cit.*, p. 96

⁶⁸ DANSERO E., GIORDA M., PETTENATI G. (2015), *cit.*,

⁶⁹ Social norms are implicit or explicit representations of acceptable group conduct that provide guide to appropriate actions. Definition in: LAPINSKI M. K.& RIMAL, R. N. (2005), An explication of social norms, *Communication Theory*. 15 (2): 127–147.

⁷⁰ HIGGS S. & THOMAS J. (2016), *cit.*

360° experience. A small intimate restaurant with a soft music might be chosen for a romantic dinner, a more casual local for a family dinner, a luxury and well decorated restaurant for ceremonies, etc.

Another example is provided by Farb and Armelagos. A restaurant proposes a menu for four people (total of 8000 calories, so 2000 for each person) based on the following elements:⁷¹

- 838,4 grams of water
- 97,0 grams of proteins
- 165,9 grams of carbon hydrate
- 96,6 grams of fat
- 2,6 grams of sodium
- 2,6 grams of potassium
- 307,8 milligrams of calcium
- 998,0 milligrams of iron
- 15,0 milligrams of iron
- 0,8 milligrams of titanium
- 53,5 milligrams of vitamin C
- 4.042,0 international units of vitamin A
- Other vitamins such as B6, B12, D, E, folic acid, magnesium, zinc etc

If food is necessary only in order to feed body, these nutritive substances can be assimilated by various products that can be bought into a supermarket or into a pharmacy, such as 80 grams of fat, 28 grams of salt, 160 grams of sugar, etc. But, as we know, food is also related to culture so, a dinner into a restaurant gives to this four people family an added value. Farb and Armelagos showed that eating is not a mere biological function: “*eating*” is a social phenomenon, while “*feeding*” is a healthy phenomenon. Other examples to show the difference between these two concepts (eat vs feed) are the following:⁷²

- a. *Food illness*: bulimia, obesity, anorexia, are caused by desires, anguishes, stress, fears. Social relation with food is not due only to biological hunger;

⁷¹ Cfr. FARB P. & ARMELAGOS G. (1985), *Anthropologie des coutumes alimentaires*. Paris, Donoel; in: CONTRERAS J. (1992), *cit.*

⁷² GUIGONI A. (2000), *cit.*

- b. *Deployed activities*: passive and relaxing situation when food became redundant, such as popcorn at cinema, chewing gum, chocolate, etc.
- c. *Junk food*: communities are losing their experience food tradition and values (gastro-anomaly).

Culture influences food production: dietary styles are socially produced and are characterized by the following aspects:⁷³

- They are heterogeneous across different society
- They change in each society according to the historical modification processes.

Consequently, “*nutrition system*” is represented by a mix of these elements:

- A determinate type of food,
- Production, distribution and preparation structures and procedures,
- Institutional organization through with consumption took place,
- Techniques used to share “nutrition models”,
- Cultural values.

Mennell, Murcott and A. Otterloo highlight that “*conviviality*” is the centre of sociability.⁷⁴ From the Roman Empire to contemporary century, sharing “canteen” is one of the strongest characteristics of communities. Platurco in its “Dispute Conviviali” wrote: “*We do not invite each other simply to eat and to drink, but to eat and to drink together*”; it means that we use food to make new friends. Food rituals have a symbolic value: canteen has physical and metaphoric attributes because it marks belonging or extraneousness, inclusion or acceptance, etc.⁷⁵ Food is a common conversational argument: it is always present in conversation, opinions, daily life, educations, etc. Through this argument, people can express themselves and their opinions about the world.⁷⁶ Additionally, food and eating always participate in human’s life and help clarifying reflection on subjects such as identity and ethnicity⁷⁷.

⁷³ SEPPILLI T. (1994), *cit.*

⁷⁴ DÍAZ MÉNDEZ C. & GÓMEZ BENITO C. (2005), *cit.*

⁷⁵ DANSERO E., GIORDA M., PETTENATI G. (2015), *cit.*

⁷⁶ GOLINO A. (2014), *cit.*

⁷⁷ DELGADO SALAZAR R. (2001), *cit.*, p. 93

Humans do not feed, they eat. Moreover, they are the only species who share food: its relations with food is unique.⁷⁸ K.C. Chang studied food from four points of view:

- a. Quantitative
- b. Structural
- c. Symbolic
- d. Psychologic

After his studies, he defined food as a language: it works as a communication system and social interaction communicating information about society and individual.⁷⁹

According to what Chang said, social classes may be identified analysing the context in which people eat and according what they eat. While eating at McDonald's, Burger King or others fast food chains is related to a lower class, eating into a local or not so expensive restaurant identifies middle class while "degustation" or sophisticated local are a symbol icon to represent upper class. So, also in terms of food, we can identify three different levels of classes: cheeseburger (lower class), steak (middle class) and caviar (upper class). The "junk food" phenomenon is related to North Americans adolescents: it is not only food; it includes food, music, sound, company: teenagers met social experiences. Barthes proposed the example of the "coffee break"⁸⁰: coffee is a stimulant but, except few times a day when it is drunk for that goal, a "coffee break" represent an excuse to meet friends, to take a break from work. In this way, it can be considered more a "restful" rather than a "stimulant". It is more a circumstance (break and relax) than a substance.⁸¹ Indeed, group of peers is influenced especially in terms of snack and fast food because they are not related to family context.⁸² People models their eating choices according to partners or friends' ones.⁸³

Since our birth, all activities are related to a social connection: the relationship between a mother and her son is established by the act of breastfeeding. This relationship is

⁷⁸ ALMERICICO GINA M. (2014), *cit.*

⁷⁹ Cfr. CHANG K. & ANDERSON E. N. (1997), *Food in Chinese culture: Anthropological and historical perspectives*. Taipei, Republic of China: SMC Pub. Inc., pp.12 and 376
in: DELGADO SALAZAR R. (2001), *cit.*, p. 96

⁸⁰ CONTRERAS J. (1992), *cit.*

⁸¹ FRANCHI M. (2007), *cit.*

⁸² KONIG L.M., GIESE H., STOK F.M., RENNER B. (2017), *cit.*

⁸³ Cfr. HERMAN C.P., ROTH D.A. & POLIVY J. (2013), Effects of the presence of others on food intake. A normative interpretation, *Psychological Bulletin*, 129(6), pp.873-886 in: HIGGS S. (2015), *cit.*

fundamental for the infant because it represents the main relation which affect the next social, cultural and symbolic development of the individual.⁸⁴

Social and psychological factors affect human food choices: for example, children tend to follow adult behaviours⁸⁵, but they are more prone to follow their teacher rather than their parents. They are influenced by their peers, they favourite characters, their older brothers and sisters. A group acceptance or rejection for a food, also influence choices.⁸⁶ Food preferences and habits are established during childhood and kept across all life: some of them are innate, others depend on the capability of learning sub-conditioning and other are learnt from personal experiences and social interactions. Another fundamental step is during adolescence: group of peers is necessary for the development of identity and conquest of autonomy.

If eating together is a social norm, closer friends are the first influencer: talking about food, listening comments and opinions, analyse food behaviours affect individual's behaviour. Influence effects are reflected on quantity, quality and food behaviour such as diet.⁸⁷ The process continue with the influence of TV programs, radio, advertisement, magazines, social media, food-bloggers, etc. It is important what we eat but also how, where, when and especially with who. Eating together give an added value to a meal and its symbolic values allow to reinforce bonds and create relationality.

Meeting friends, having business meetings or a date, spend a sunny day in a park doing a pic-nic, celebrating important days such as Christmas or a birthday have one point in common: food. Eating alone or eating with someone else provide the same benefits for the body, but not for the mind and the spirit. Eating together implies also communication. Conventions, trends and etiquette are created during a meal: people who want to eat together should respect a scheduled time, divided role and other aspects that do not refer

⁸⁴ SIMEONI P.E. (1994), *cit.*

⁸⁵ They tend to refuse food if their parents or peers show a dislike face in trying it.

Cfr. BAEYENS, VANSTEENWEGEN, DE HOUWER, & CROMBEZ (1996), in HIGGS S. (2015), *cit.*

⁸⁶ Cfr. BROWN A. (2011), *Understanding food: Principles and preparation (4th ed.)*, Belmont, CA: Wadsworth in: ALMERICO GINA M. (2014), *cit.*

⁸⁷ Cfr. ROZIN P (1990), The importance of social factors in understanding the acquisition of food habits in: CAPALDI E.D. & POWLEY T.L. (eds.), *Taste, experience, and feeding*, pp.255-270, Washington, Dc: American Psychological Association; Cfr. BIRSH L.L. & FISHER J.O. (1998), development of eating behaviour among children and adolescents, *Pediatrics*, 101, pp. 539-549; Cfr. POMBENI M.L. (1997), L'adolescente e I gruppi di coetanei. In A. Palmonari (a cura di), *Psicologia dell'adolescenza*, pp. 251-270; Cfr. STEINBERG L. (1986), Latchkey Children and Susceptibility to pee pressure. An ecological analysis, *developmental Psychology*, 22, pp.433-439; Cfr. LATTIMORE P.J & BATTERWORTH M. (1999), A test of the structural model of initiation of dieting among adolescent girls, *Journal of Psychosomatic Research*, 46, pp. 295-299; Cfr. PAGE R.M. & SUWANTEERANGKUL J. (2007), Dieting among Thai adolescents: having friends who diet and pressure to diet, *Eating and Weight disorders*, 12, pp. 112-124 in: GUIDETTI M. & CAVAZZA N. (2010), *cit.*

directly with food.⁸⁸ Although people sometimes eat alone, they are not really eating alone because the meal refers to habits and choices culturally and socially accepted⁸⁹. Eating and preparing food together create a sense of belonging, a familiar environment.⁹⁰ Share food with others is a demonstration of care or love for the counterpart.

Inspired to political economy, the concept of “Global commodity chain” added to the “follow the things”⁹¹ concept let us to expand food studies and to consider “food” as an object and as a good able to “put us into a network” with people and places far from our native territory and cooking traditions. This can be demonstrated, for example, by the different ingredients that form our plates: they come from all countries around the world and they are mixed in order to obtain a unitary final dish.⁹²

Contemporary age is represented by the coexistence of several races and ethnicity: food helps community to live their ethnicity and, at the same time, to respect the other ones. World citizens live and taste each contemporary, global and economical cultural perspective.⁹³ A meal act as a path between cultures and facilitate integration⁹⁴: show off opulence during a banquet through the prosperity of courses and dishes does not have nutritional aims but want only to highlight the “superiority” of a social class and consequently, the inclusion or exclusion of the member who take part in.⁹⁵

Mary Douglas said that food represents a union between biological and social matters. Social aspects are fundamental in “decoding” food: in fact, if food is considered as a code, each society is characterized by a different code which represent internal and external events of the society.⁹⁶ Eating is finding difference between discrimination, inclusion and exclusion⁹⁷ of a person from his social environment.

⁸⁸ GOLINO A. (2014), *cit.*

⁸⁹ DANSERO E., GIORDA M., PETTENATI G. (2015), *cit.*

⁹⁰ PRAVETTONI R. (2013), *cit.*, p.24

⁹¹ The “follow the thing” approach analyses food from different perspectives: it considers the effect of food on people who touch it to produce and transport it and on people’s mind and body who eat it.

⁹² COLOMBINO A. (2014), *cit.*

⁹³ DELGADO SALAZAR R. (2001), *cit.*, p.88

⁹⁴ PRAVETTONI R. (2013), *cit.*, p. 3

⁹⁵ SCARPI P. (2005), *cit.*, p.18

⁹⁶ Cfr. DOUGLAS M. (1985), *Antropologia e simbolismo*, Bologna, Il Mulino in: DELGADO SALAZAR R. (2001), *cit.*, p.96

⁹⁷ FRANCHI M. (2007), *cit.*

2. Online environment

In this chapter, there are explained new transformations of digital world, starting from the birth of Internet to the development of communities and social networks and the description of many of them. This introduction to the online environment allows to understand the context in which food-bloggers operate and the various channels that they could use. In particular, from subparagraph 2.3.1. to 2.3.5. some social networks, their characteristics and goals and the reason why food-blogger may use it are explained in detail.

Digital age and new media offer the promise of more opportunity for connection with more people, creating stronger and diverse relationships, eliminating face-to-face interactions: technologies influence how they see themselves, our relationships, communities and the entire world.⁹⁸

2.1. Internet: birth and development

Finding a restaurant, writing a paper about panda's behaviour, reading a newspaper or buying a pair of shoes has never been so easy: Internet has completely change human's world. Internet has become a routine: people are unable to live a day without it. Nowadays, people work using internet, look for information and communicate thanks to it. Communication has become faster and cheaper. Nonetheless, Internet was not created to communicate with people, to look for a job, to share photos or videos with friends, to book a flight or to find a restaurant: it was introduced to safeguard military knowledge. In 1969, the first internet connection was launched by US Department of Defence: ARPANET. In 1970, a small, technical communities developed the Internet to facilitate the communication among researchers.

In 1971, ARPANET developed the most common and still used communication tool: the email. The following year, the sign “@” was introduced by Ray Tomlison of Bolt Beranek and Newman Inc (BBN).⁹⁹

⁹⁸ BAYM N., (2015), “*Personal connections in the digital age*”, second edition. Polity: Malden, MA, pp.1-23

⁹⁹ BAYM N. (2015), *cit.*

The 27th October 1980, while Arpanet was experimenting on the propagation speed of email, the site was completely blocked due to an error in the header of the messages: in defining the TCP (Transmission Control Protocol) and the IP (Internet Protocol), DCA and ARPA introduced Internet as a system of interconnected net.¹⁰⁰ In 1980, the improvement of graphical user interfaces was added to systems. An emoticon dictionary was introduced in 1990, eleven year after the introduction of the first smiley emoticon “-)”. The mayor transformation in digital communication occurred in 1990 when a group of physicists and the CERN laboratory (European Organization for Nuclear Research) introduced the World Wide Web (WWW) that facilitate the development of online community groups and the use of web sites.¹⁰¹ By 2000, people joined the net mainly to use email.¹⁰² So-called “Web 1.0” was focused on the publication of contents and information.¹⁰³

The introduction of Web 2.0. is connected to Tim O’Reilly and the “O’Reilly Media” at the end of 2004.¹⁰⁴ Web 2.0. or “Social web” is an interactive social communication tool. It converts new and old applications and uses of Internet into a social network: it allows to share information, to publish contents, to discuss and to communicate with third parties, to use technology in everyday life.¹⁰⁵ It is available 24h a day and seven days per week; it represents a *horizontal revolution* (communication becomes multidirectional and multimodal) characterized by *social media*, online communication, collaboration and tools that connect individuals, communities and organizations. It is characterized by an active participation of users who become a co-producer. Web 2.0 is a *perpetual beta*: in terms of innovation, beta represents a product that should be tested, and this means that Web 2.0 is going to change, progress and improve continuously.¹⁰⁶ Internet is very used, especially by adolescents: 50% of them spend time online until they go to sleep. They use Internet for every activity: searching information, reading, watching movie, listening to music, chatting, etc.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁰ HOBBS' INTERNET TIMELINE - *the definitive ARPAnet & Internet history*, su www.cs.kent.edu.

¹⁰¹ PREECE J., MALONEY-KRICHMAR D. & ABRAMS C., (2003), “*History of online communities*” in: Karen Christensen & David Levinson (Eds.), *Encyclopedia of community: From Village to Virtual World*. Thousand oaks: sage Publications, 1023-1027

¹⁰² Cfr. KRAUT, MUKHOPADHYAY, SZCZYPULA, KIESLER & SCHERLIS (2000), in: BAYM N. (2015), *cit.*

¹⁰³ TUTEN T.L. & SOLOMON M.R. (2014), “*Social media marketing. Post consumo, innovazione collaborativa e valore condiviso*”, Pearson, pp. 14

¹⁰⁴ O'REILLY T. (2005), *What Is Web 2.0, O'Reilly Network*

¹⁰⁵ ORIHUELA J.L. (2008), Internet: la hora de la redes sociales, *Nueva Revista* 119

¹⁰⁶ TUTEN T.L. & SOLOMON M.R. (2014), *cit.*

Messenger, chat and Internet in general create the use of a new language, more direct, intuitive, flexible, simpler. It does not respect grammatical norms perfectly, but it helps a dynamic conversation: Orihuela affirmed that people have never read or write as much as today; people use differently new information and communication media and create a new type of entertainment. The use of *emoticons* helps to express emotions. Individuals who belong to that population are define “digital natives”. Its utility, facility and simplicity made this cybernetic language universal. Internet and computer introduce another language with its own norms and functions: they create a new way of thinking.¹⁰⁸ Internet, and generally social networks, create a sort of addiction for many users so, it should be promoted a right behaviour toward the use of it, in order to reduce the problems related to its abuse. For example, although social networks allow to communicate with others, the creation of a personal online profile helps young people to create a fake identity¹⁰⁹ and remain closed in their online world. Adolescents are addicted to Internet if they show signs of dependency and control: for example, they check their mobile due to boredom, loneliness, anger, etc. rather than for necessity or for the pleasure of using it. But to define a TIC (technological information and communication) addiction it is necessary to consider time spending for social interaction in daily life rather than time spending on Internet.¹¹⁰ Nowadays in fact, it is important to consider that all daily activity, including working and studying, requires the use of Internet.

¹⁰⁷ DRX. MORDUCHOWICZ R. (2011), “*Los adolescentes y las reded socialed: como orientarlos*”, Buenos Aires

¹⁰⁸ Cfr. ORIHUELA J.L. (2006), Sociedad de la informacion y nuevos medios de comunicacion publica: claves para el debate, *Nueve Revista*, vol.70, pp. 44-50; Cfr. PRENSKY M. (2004), SNS especial letter: the death of command and control. Recuperando el 10 de Septiembre de 2009 del sitio Web Marc Prensky-Home: <http://www.marcprensky.com/writing/Prensky-SNS-01-20-04.pdf>; Cfr. ALBERICH J. (2005), notas para una estetica audiovisual digital. En Alberich J. & Roig A (coord) (2005), *Comunicacion audiovisual digital. Nuevos medios, nuevos usos, nuevas formas*, Barcelona, España: UOC, pp. 201 in: BERLANGA, I. & MARTÍNEZ, E. (2010). Ciberlenguaje y principios de retórica clásica. Redes sociales: el caso Facebook. *Enl@ce Revista Venezolana de Información, Tecnología y Conocimiento*, 7 (2), 47-61

¹⁰⁹ According to Ackerman (2008), there are users who are attracted by the idea of creating fake identities and play someone else online. In: ROS-MARTIN M. (2009), Evolucion de los servicios de Redes Sociales en Internet, *El Profesional de la Informacion*, vol.18, n°5, pp. 552-558

¹¹⁰ Cfr. BECOÑA E. (2006), Adicción a nuevas tecnologías. Vigo: Nova Galicia Edicións; Cfr. MARKS I. (1990), behavioural (non-chemical) addictions. *British Journal of Addiction*, 85, pp. 1389-1394; Cfr. POTENZA M. (2006), Should addictive disorders include non-substance related conditions?, *Addiction*, 101 (suppl. 1), pp.142-152; Cfr. TREUER F., FABIAN Z. & FÜREDI J. (2001), Internet addiction associated with features of impulse control-disorder is it a real psychiatric disorder?, *Journal of Affective Disorders*, 66, p. 283; Cfr. DAVIS R.A. (2001), A cognitive-behavioural model of pathological Internet use, *Computers in Human Behavior*, 17, pp. 187-195, in: CHEBURUA E. & DE CORRAL P. (2010), Addicion a las nuevas tecnologia y a las redes sociales en jovenes: un nuevo reto, *Addiciones*, vol.22, n.2 , pp. 91-96

2.2. Community

With the birth and development of Web 2.0, the possibility of real-time communication, of information sharing and the connection between people across the world has increased and web communities have growth in popularity. In fact, community sites are one of the fastest growing categories of Websites.¹¹¹ For example, Facebook is the largest online community and it counts more than 3,3 billion members.¹¹²

Hence, one advantage of OCs is the ability due to technology of sustain larger group than the ones shaped offline.¹¹³ Technologies change the way by which people communicate and contribute to the decline of the face-to-face interaction.¹¹⁴ Internet has become the primary information source and complement face-to-face interaction with family, friends and experts.¹¹⁵ In 1985, the first widely recognized non-technical online community called WELL (acronym of “The Whole Earth ‘Lectronic Link”) was established. WELL and Usenet (1979) are considered as the first virtual communities on Internet. Many authors have proposed a definition of an online community (OC), a virtual group in which its members interact through online channels. It is also defined as “*internet community*” or “*web community*”.¹¹⁶ In virtual communities, people electronically communicate and share interests and goals; people regularly discuss about a topic of common interest and

¹¹¹ Cfr. PETERSEN A. (1999), Some places to go when you want to feel right at home. Communities focus on people who need people, *The Wall Street Journal*, p. B6; Cfr. WINGFIELD N. & HANRAHAN T. (1999), Web firm salon buys ‘the Well’, an online pioneer, *The Wall Street Journal*, p. B9, in: RIDINGS C.M. & GEFEN D. (2004), Virtual community attraction: why people hang out online, *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, Volume 10, Issue 1, 1 November 2004

¹¹² DIGITALIC, <https://www.digitalic.it/internet/social-network/statistiche-social-network-2018>

¹¹³ Cfr. KATZ J.E. & RICE R.E. (2002), Social consequences of Internet uses: access, involvement and interaction, *MIT Press*, Cambridge, MA; Cfr. WALLACE P.M. (1999), The psychology of the internet, *Cambridge University Press*, New York, in: FARAJ S., STEVEN L. JOHNSON, (2011), Network Exchange Patterns in Online Communities. *Organization Science* 22(6):1464-1480

¹¹⁴ Cfr. NIE N.H., HILLYGUS D.S. & ERBRING L. (2000), Internet use, interpersonal relations and sociability: finding from a detailed time diary study, in *The Internet in everyday life*, Wellman B, Haythornthwaite C. (eds.), Blackwell publishers: Malden, MA, pp. 215-244; Cfr. PUTNAM R. (2000), *Bowling alone: the collapse and revival of American community*, Simon & Schuster: New York, in: MILLER K.D., FABIAN F. & LIN S.J. (2009), Strategies for online communities, *Strategic management Journal*, Strat. Mgmt. K., 30: 305-322

¹¹⁵ LEE H.A., LAW R. & MURPHY J. (2011), Helpful reviewers in TripAdvisor, an Online Travel Community, *Journal of Travel & Tourism Marketing*, vol 28, pp. 675-688

¹¹⁶ RHEINGOLD H. (1993), *The virtual community: homesteading on the electronic frontier*, Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley Publishing company

are bonded together by a shared interest.¹¹⁷ Any network presents a community structure (also known as “clustering”) as shown in figure 1.¹¹⁸

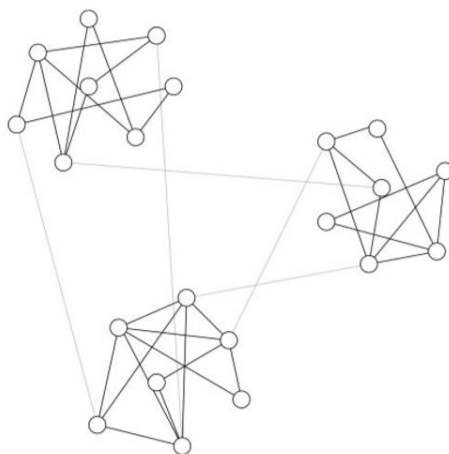


Figure 1. Schematic representation of a network with community structure: the network proposed include three communities. Subsets of vertices within a community present dense vertex-vertex connection (circles with solid lines). On the other hand, grey lines identify a lower density of connection between vertices of different communities.

Inside a community, people can post, comment, share their opinion, give advice, exchange ideas, discuss and seek support: it is demonstrated that social processes are fundamental into the decision making process.¹¹⁹ But, the perceived influence of an OC is characterized by the perception of the knowledge of community’s members: trust is identified by the three following aspects:¹²⁰

- a. *Integrity*: the other part should be perceived as honest and reliable;
- b. *Benevolence*: the other part should be perceived as if he cares about the other’s interests;
- c. *Competence*: the other part should be perceived capable of talking about a certain topic. He should possess a certain level of competences.

¹¹⁷ Cfr. DENNIS A.R., POOTHERI S.K. & NATARAJAN V.L. (1998), Lessons from the early adopters of Web groupware, *Journal of Management Information Systems*, 14 (4), pp. 65-86; Cfr. FIGALLO C. (1998), *Hosting Web communities: building relationships, increasing customer loyalty, and maintaining a competitive edge*, New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc; Cfr. KILSHEIMER J. (1997), Virtual communities; Cyberpals keep in touch online, *The Arizona Republic*, p. E3, in: RIDINGS C.M. & GEFEN D. (2004), *cit.*
¹¹⁸ GIRVAN M. & NEWMAN M.E.J. (2002), Community structure in social and biological networks, *PNAS*, vol.99, n°12, pp. 7821-7826

¹¹⁹ Cfr. BAGOZZI R.P. & LEE K.H. (2002), Multiple routes for social influence: the role of compliance, internalization, and social identity, *Social Psychology Quarterly*, Vol. 65, nNo. 3, pp. 226-247, in: ZHOU T. (2011), “*Understanding online community user participation: a social influence perspective*”, Emerald Insight,

¹²⁰ Cfr. MAYER R.C., DAVIS J.H. & SCHOORMAN F.D. (2005), An integrative model of organisational trust, *Academy of management review*, 20(3), pp.709-734, in: SHARRATT M. & USORO A. (2003), *Understanding knowledge-sharing in Online Communities of Practice*, Academic Conferences Limited

Reputation is the extent to which users believe that an information provided by another member of the community is honest and that who answer cares about the other's problems.¹²¹ So, reputation is a mix of integrity and benevolence. For example, for a food-blogger who wants to share information about a new restaurant on his online blog, his followers expect that he possesses all these characteristics in order to obtain reliable information. If he is known as a restaurant promoter who only cares about his profit due to many partnerships established with restaurant's owners, community's members do not consider his information reliable. Furthermore, the food-blogger lacks benevolence and is perceived unqualified. Web communities represent a source of information and consequently should be perceived reliable.¹²² According to Preece an OC has a purpose, is supported by technologies and is guided by norms and principles.¹²³ Community has become the "in-term" for users who communicate each other through Internet technologies.¹²⁴

In her work "A Typology of Virtual Communities: A Multi-Disciplinary Foundation for Future Research", Porter from the Parisian University of Notre Dame defines online community as it follows: "*A virtual community is defined as an aggregation of individuals or business partners who interact around a shared interest, where the interaction is at least partially supported and/or mediated by technology and guided by some protocols or norms*".¹²⁵ It is important to clarify that the concept of a community is not applicable to all sites of on-line discourse: in fact, although the connection through internet, some discussion groups are just a meeting places for people without any sense of permanence or consistency among the members. People usually participate actively in communities and visit them often, became depended upon them or addicted to them. For this reason, Ridings et al. provide another definition of virtual community considering it

¹²¹ Cfr. HELM R. & MARK A. (2007), Implications from cue utilisation theory and signalling theory for firm reputation and the marketing of new products, *International Journal of Product development*, 4, pp. 396-411, in: LEE H.A., LAW R. & MURPHY J. (2010), *cit.*

¹²² Online channels have supported the tools used to communicate and share information. There are a lot of website or different sources online so, it is sometimes very difficult to analyse the reliability of a source. Uncertainty arise because people use and confront various channel to find what they need and because there are a lot of fake account throughout the web and it is extremely difficult to evaluate the credentials and trustfulness of each online user. So, information is easy to find but difficult to evaluate and judge.

¹²³ Cfr. PREECE J. (2000), *Online communities: designing usability, supporting sociability*, Chichester, England: John Wiley & Sons, in: PREECE J., MALONEY-KRICHMAR D. & ABRAMS C., (2003), *cit.*

¹²⁴ PREECE J., MALONEY-KRICHMAR D. (2005), Online communities: design, theory and practice, *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, Volume 10, Issue 4,

¹²⁵ Cfr. PORTER C.E. (2004), A typology of Virtual Communities: a multi-disciplinary foundation for future research, in: RHEINGOLD H. (1993), *cit.*

as “groups of people with common interests and practices that communicate regularly and for some duration in an organized way over the Internet through a common location or mechanism”.¹²⁶

OCs represent online groups of people who share same interest. They refer to a large range of activities because it is possible to talk about gaming community, food community, motors community and so on. Thanks to Web 2.0 people from all over the world and having no chance to meet each other, can conversate and share their passions thought online channels in an asynchronous, immediate and low-cost way. In fact, virtual space is the only “place” where members of a community could meet and interact.¹²⁷ Although, OCs are not related only to a single web, but they can start from one of it and then spread across different webs, especially nowadays thanks to social media.¹²⁸

In OCs, conversation becomes accessible to everybody who join the community and a single request could obtain many feedbacks from different users. So, everyone can be useful by sharing his knowledge and experiences.¹²⁹ These aspects are extremely important to people who nurture a niche interest and who difficulty met someone with the same interests in the offline communities around them. In the past, people were largely connected by telephones, cars, railroads: nowadays, they are simply connected. Internet does not limited communities in virtual world, but it extends them in real world: people are connected through individualized and flexible online social networks¹³⁰ rather than fixed and grounded community.

The term “virtual” does not reduce the reality of these communities because OCs represent a real environment for users due to the consequential effects on their

¹²⁶ Cfr. ERICKSON T. (1997), Social interaction on the Net: virtual community as participatory genre, *Paper presented at the 30th Annual Hawaii International Conference on System Sciences*, Hawaii; Cfr. FERNBACK J. (1999) There is a there there: notes toward a definition of cybercommunity, in S. Jones (ed.), *Doing Internet research; critical issues and methods for examining the Net*, Thousand Oaks: sage publications, pp. 203-220; Cfr. HILTZ S.R. & WELLMAN B. (1997), Asynchronous learning networks ad a virtual classroom, *Communications of the ACM*, 40 (9), pp. 44-49; Cfr. HILTZ S.R. (1984), *Online communities: a case study of the office of the future*, Norwood, NJ: Ablex Publishing Corporation; Cfr. RIDINGS C.M, GEFEN D. & ARINZE B. (2002), Some antecedents and effects of trust in virtual communities, *Journal of strategic information Systems*, 11(3-4), pp. 271-295, in: RIDINGS C.M. & GEFEN D. (2004), *cit.*

¹²⁷ Cfr. RIDINGS C.M. & GEFEN D. (2004), *cit.*; Cfr. WASKO, M. M. AND FARAJ, S. (2000), It is what one does: why people participate and help others in electronic communities of practice, *Journal of Strategic Information Systems.*, 9(2/3), pp. 155–173, in: PARK J.Y. & KIM H.S. (2010), What makes online community members commit? A social exchange perspective, *Behaviour & Information Technology*, vol. 29

¹²⁸ SOCIAL MEDIA TODAY, <https://www.socialmediatoday.com/content/what-online-community>

¹²⁹ SHARRATT M. & USORO A. (2003), *cit.*

¹³⁰ According to Wellman, it is possible to talk about “networked individualism”: people can personalize their communities and are able to be connected with other users in any place and at any time.

behaviour.¹³¹ So, a virtual community creates “social aggregations that emerge from the Net when enough people carry on those public discussions long enough, with sufficient human feeling, to form webs of personal relationships in cyberspace”.¹³² But paradoxically, Internet provoked fears of losing communities.¹³³

Web community could be considered as a modern face to face communication. At the same time, companies can directly or indirectly host an OC for their brands¹³⁴ and use it in order to put themselves in contact with their customers¹³⁵ or to establish a strong and direct relation with them; moreover, they could encourage customer to customer interaction because the major factor influencing positively clients about a brand is consumer advocacy¹³⁶: relationship marketing and the role of customers are essential in the creation of value. For example, customers community are relevant in high-tech industries, especially in software and communication industries.¹³⁷

OCs are relevant to companies because they represent a source of information around consumption-related topic such as leisure, entertainment or beauty.¹³⁸ For this reason, it is possible to distinguish two categories of OCs:¹³⁹

¹³¹ Cfr. JONES S.G. (1995), Understanding community in the information age, in *Cybersociety: computer-mediated communication and community*, Stephen G. Jones, ed. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, pp. 10-35; Cfr. KOZINETS R. (1998), ON Netnography: initial reflections on consumer research investigations of cyberculture, in *Advances in Consumer research*, vo. 25, Joseph Alba and Wesley Hutchinson, ed. Provo, UT: Association for consumer research, pp. 366-371; Cfr. MUNIZ A.M. Jr. & O’ GUINN T.C. (2001), Brand community, *Journal of consumer research*, 27 (March), pp. 412-432, in: KOZINETS R.V. (2002), “The field behind the screen: using netnography for marketing research in online communities”, *Journal of Marketing research*, Vol. XXXIX, pp. 61-72

¹³² Cfr. RHEINGOLD H. (1993), *cit.*, p.5 in: RIDINGS C.M. & GEFEN D. (2004), *cit.*

¹³³ WELLMAN B. (2008), “*Connecting community: On- and Offline*”

¹³⁴ Cfr. MCWILLIAM G. (2010), Building stronger brands through online communities, *Sloan Management Review*, Vol. 41, No. 3, pp. 43-54, in: JAE WOOK K., JIHO C., WILLIAM Q. & KYESOOK H. (2008), “It takes a marketplace community to raise brand commitment: the role of online communities”, *Journal of Marketing Management*, 24:3-4, pp. 409-431

¹³⁵ On the other hand, firms could evaluate and analyse customer’s behaviour analysing online communities. This method, called netnography, is less obtrusive, time consuming and elaborate and allows to obtain more reliable information because people’s behaviour is analysed into a context that is not create by marketing researchers.

¹³⁶ Cfr. ALMQUIST E. & ROBERTS K.J. (2008), A ‘Mindshare’ manifesto, *Mercer management journal*, 12, p.18, in: KOZINETS R.V. (2002), *cit.*

¹³⁷ Cfr. NORMANN R. (2011), *reframing Business: When the map changes the landscape* (Chichester: Wiley); Cfr. LUSH R.F., VARGO S.L. & O’BRIEN M. (2007), Competing through service insights from service dominant logic, *Journal of retailing*, 83(1), pp. 5-18 in: DI MARIA E., FINOTTO V. (2008), “*Communities of consumption and Made in Italy*”, *Industry and Innovation* vol. 15, No. 2, pp. 179-197

¹³⁸ Cfr. KOZINETS R.V. (2002), *cit.*, in: JAE WOOK K., JIHO C., WILLIAM Q. & KYESOOK H. (2008), *cit.*

¹³⁹ Cfr. LAUDEN, K. C. & TRAVER, C. G. (2004), *E-commerce business, technology and society*, Boston, MA: Addison Wesley, in: JIN B., PARK J.Y. & KIM H.S. (2009), What makes online community members commit? A social exchange perspective, *Behaviour and Information Technology* 29(6), pp. 587-599

- a. *Member-initiated community*: it is organized and managed by its members and focus on networking and social support, such as Facebook;
- b. *Organization-sponsored community*: it is sponsored by commercial or non-commercial firms and established in order to reach a firm's goal, purpose or mission.

Due to the existence of various type of OC, it is important to identify their differences: each of them has a specific goal, exists for a certain reason, focus on a defined target. Hence, it is important to define what community managers, companies or users commonly think of the main core of these communities.¹⁴⁰ Moreover, OCs differ according to the number of members who represent the size of the community, the age and the stage in the life-cycle, the culture of the members (national, international, local, etc.), the software design, the possible existence of an offline community related to it, the purpose, place, population, platform and profit model.¹⁴¹

The most common web communities are represented by the three-following type:¹⁴²

- a. *Blog*: written in a chronological order, it focuses on a specific topic or on a person's life. This type will be better explained in chapter 3 and will focus also on the specific category of food blog (paragraph 3.2);
- b. *Social network*: online platforms which allow its members to create a personal profile and share information, pictures, video, etc. with other members. People create connections with who share their same interest. Also, this type of online community will be detailed explained in paragraph 2.3. in which it will be also described few social networks;
- c. *Bulletin boards*: they commonly known as "Internet forums" are websites in which users post topics (known as *threads*) and discuss about them with other users. They born as a flux of discussion.¹⁴³ Some forum contains sub-forums which contain threads. This subdivision could be due to multiple subject debated. People who operate in bullet boars can be divided in three group:
 - *User*: a standard account with the ability to create topics and reply;

¹⁴⁰ SOCIAL MEDIA TODAY, *cit.*

¹⁴¹ Cfr. PORTER C. E. (2004), *cit.*, in: JIN B., PARK J.Y. & KIM H.S. (2009), *cit.*

¹⁴² RHEINGOLD H. (1993), *cit.*

¹⁴³ TUTEN T.L. & SOLOMON M.R. (2014), *cit.*

- *Moderator*: individual who deal with daily administration tasks such as answering user queries, editing or deletion of topics or posts;
- *Administrator*: individual who deal with the forum strategy, for example the implementation of new features alongside more technical tasks such as server maintenance.

According to Dorine C. Andrews, author of “Audience-Specific Online Community Design”, there are three steps necessary to building an online community:¹⁴⁴

- a. *Starting the online community*: it may be useful to create webpages focused on a specific interest because in this way, they appear more effective;
- b. *Encouraging early online interaction*: privacy and content discussion are essentials;
- c. *Moving to a self-sustaining interactive environment*: a self-sufficiently online community is a successful one.

Depending on the characteristics of a community, each OC has a proper growth cycle: most of them grows slowly at first. In particular, growth speed depends on the size of community. The size of an OC usually increases as a consequence of the growth of comments and interactions: an active community attires new member. Consequently, more people begin to participate, the OC become more dynamic and visible on the web and it enlarges and develops itself faster.

The root of an OC is “*comunicare (to share)*”: the process of sharing and communicating interact among members due to the presence of social networks established within community. When the interaction between members aims to reach the purpose established by the community’s manager, it is possible to talk about *collaboration*.¹⁴⁵ Members of a web community can interact with the other members of the same OC but not with members of other OCs: to communicate and share information with them, users should create a profile and join the other OC too. Hence, we can affirm than the main characteristic of an OC is *sociability*, social relation between members.¹⁴⁶ *Object sociality* is the degree according to which the goals of a community is shared by its members and

¹⁴⁴ RHEINGOLD H. (1993), *cit.*

¹⁴⁵ Cfr, PALOFF R.M. & PRATT K. (1999), *Building learning communities in cyberspace*, San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, p.25 in: VESELY P., BLOOM L. & SHERLOCK J. (2007), “Key elements of building Online Community: comparing faculty and student perceptions”, *MERLOT Journal of Online Learning and teaching*, Vol.3, No.3, September 2007

¹⁴⁶ PREECE J., MALONEY-KRICHMAR D. (2005), *cit.*

depends on the type of audience and their specific interests.¹⁴⁷ Repeated interactions among members give rise to norms and behavioural patterns over time.¹⁴⁸ Shared norms and values of an OCs are formed across time thanks to users interactions.¹⁴⁹ OCs usually have a discussion threads structure: each user represents a node into the process of posting/replying threads: people usually comment a topic because they are interested in its content. The relation between users and threads structure is represented in Figure 2.

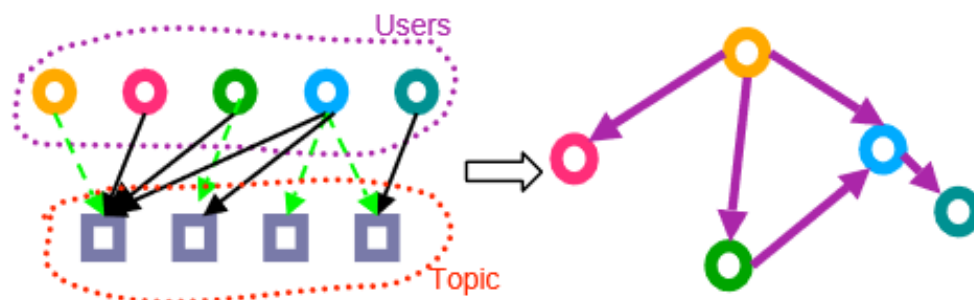


Figure 2. Threads and users' structure: On the left is represented a bipartite graph of users (represented by circles) and discussion threads (represented by squares) in which they participate. On the right, is figured a directed graph where an edge is drawn from the user making the initial post (green circle) to everyone who replied to it.

A community is based on a process of questioning and answering where the communication between members is essential. Individuals sometimes answer to a thread because they consider themselves more expert on the related subject than the writer. In this case, it is possible to talk of CEN (Community Expertise Network).¹⁵⁰ People decide to become member of a community because, for their nature, humans have a need to belong to and be affiliated with others or because they need information about a certain topic: OCs are subject to social contagion effects and consequently there are individuals that sometimes join a community only in order to initiate “epidemics¹⁵¹”.¹⁵²

¹⁴⁷ TUTEN T.L. & SOLOMON M.R. (2014), *cit.*

¹⁴⁸ Cfr. FLYNN F.J. (2005), Identity orientations and forms of social exchange in organizations, *Acad. Management Rev.*, 30(4), pp. 737-750 in: FARAJ S., STEVEN L. JOHNSON, (2011), *cit.*

¹⁴⁹ Cfr. WATSON N. (1997), Why we argue about virtual community: a case study of Phish. Net fan community, in Jones S.(ed.), *Virtual culture*, Thousand Oaks: CA: sage publications, pp.102-132, in: JAE WOOK KIM, JIHO CHOI, WILLIAM QUALLS & KYESOOK HAN, *cit.*

¹⁵⁰ ZHANG J., ACKERMAN M.S. & ADAMIC L. (2007), Expertise networks in Online Communities: structure and algorithms, *World Wide Web Conference Committee (IW3C2)*

¹⁵¹ Users who gave the same advice lead to a cascade effect in using a certain product

¹⁵² Cfr. GLADWELL M. (2002), *The Tipping Point: How Little Things Can Make a Big Difference*, Little, Brown and Company: Boston, MA, in: MILLER K.D., FABIAN F. & LIN S.J. (2009), *cit.*

People sometimes looking for support on a delicate topic, emotional support, encouragement, sense of belonging and affiliation, companionship or look for friendship¹⁵³: they join a group because they feel free to express themselves¹⁵⁴ and their opinions or in order to enhance their reputation and to gain personal benefits: in the last case, it should be introduced the concept of *perceived community value* that indicates the degree according to which an individual think that the community could satisfy its necessities.¹⁵⁵

Individuals commit to OCs because of benefits that they receive by actively participate in the community: for example, if they look for friendship or social support, they join more actively the OC if they consider high the level of social support obtained by the community.¹⁵⁶ People sometimes join an online group after a face-to-face meeting or because, thanks to technologies improvement, an offline community turns online. All these aspect lead people to feel attached to a community: attachment is multidimensional, and it becomes stronger when people cultivate ties and associations with the other members of the *online* group.¹⁵⁷

¹⁵³ “The structure of the Internet makes it easier to find others in similar situations and meet with them than it is in real life”: Cfr. WELLMAN B. & GULIA M. (1999), The network basis of social support: A network is more than the sum of its ties. In B. Wellman (Ed.), *Networks in the global village: Life in contemporary communities* (pp. 83– 118). Boulder, CO: Westview Press, in: WATSON G. & JOHNSON D. (1972), *Social psychology: Issues and insights*. Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott, in: RIDINGS C.M. & GEFEN D. (2004), *cit.*

¹⁵⁴ Cfr. FURLONG M. S. (1989). An electronic community for older adults: The Senior Net Network. *Journal of Communication*, **39** (3), pp. 145– 153; Cfr. HILTZ S.R. (1984), *cit.*; HILTZ S.R. & WELLMAN B. (1997), *cit.*; Cfr. HERRING S.G. (1996), Two variants of an electronic message schema. In S. C. Herring (Ed.), *Computer-mediated communication: Linguistic, social and cross-cultural perspectives* (pp. 81– 106). Philadelphia: John Benjamins ; Cfr. KORENMAN J. & WYATT N. (1996), Group dynamics in an e-mail forum. In S. C. Herring (Ed.), *Computer-mediated communication: Linguistic, social and cross-cultural perspectives* pp. 225– 242. Philadelphia: John Benjamins; Cfr. SMITH M.A. (1999), Invisible crowds in cyberspace: Mapping the social structure of the Usenet. In M. A. Smith (Ed.), *Communities in cyberspace*, pp. 195– 219. New York: Routledge; Cfr. SPROULL L. & FARAJ S. (1997), Atheism, sex and databases: The Net as a social technology. In S. Kiesler (Ed.), *Culture of the Internet*, pp. 35– 51. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates; Cfr. WELLMAN B. (1996). *For a social network analysis of computer networks: A sociological perspective on collaborative work and virtual community*. Paper presented at the SIGCPR/SIGMIS, Denver, CO; Cfr. WELLMAN B. ET AL. (1996), Computer networks as social networks: Collaborative work, telework, and virtual community. *Annual Review of Sociology*, **22**, pp. 213– 238, in: RIDINGS C.M. & GEFEN D. (2004), *cit.*

¹⁵⁵ Cfr. WATSON N. (1997), *cit.* in: JAE WOOK K., JIHO C., WILLIAM Q. & KYESOOK H. (2008), *cit.*

¹⁵⁶ JIN B., PARK J.Y. & KIM H.S. (2009), *cit.*

¹⁵⁷ Cfr. WELLMAN B. ET AL. (2003), The social affordances of the Internet for networked individualism, *Journal of Computer-mediated communication*, in: KAVANAUGH A., CARROLL J.M., ROSSON M.B., ZIN T.T. & REESE D.D. (2006), “Community Networks: where offline communities meet online”, *Journal of computer-mediated communication*

The feeling of belonging to an online group and the fact that members matter to each other is defined *sense of community*.¹⁵⁸

Individual behaviour is affected by three social aspects:¹⁵⁹

- a. *Compliance*: individuals act to comply with the opinions of others. Cognitive identity is the result of a mix between personal and group identity. Compliance is represented by subjective norms. Tao Zhou demonstrated in her work that subjective norms affect new users' behaviours, but this influence reduce with the increase of usage experience;
- b. *Identification*: individuals feel attachment with the other members of a community and a sense of belonging to the online group. Identification is represented by social identity which lead users to act similarly because they are not individuals but members of a community; due to their social identity, users are loyal to the community. It is fundamental to create and maintain relationship within a community. Users may perceive norms and beliefs of a group after a long-term relationship. Affective identity reflects this sense of membership and belonging;
- c. *Internalization*: individuals accept influence of the online group due to the same interests and believes that characterized him and the other users. Group norms characterize internalization. Evaluative identity reflects how much a member of a community can influence other members. Process of social influence leads people

¹⁵⁸ Cfr. MCMILLAN D.W. & CHAVIS D.M. (1986), Sense of Community: A Definition and Theory, *Journal of Community Psychology*, 14(1), pp 6-23, in: SHARRATT M. & USORO A. (2003), *cit.*

¹⁵⁹ Cfr. KELMAN H.C. (1974), *Further thoughts on the processes of compliance, identification, and internalization*, in Tedeschi, J.T. (Ed.), *Perspectives on Social Power*, Aldine Press, Chicago, IL, pp. 126-71; Cfr. VENKATESH V. & DAVIS F.D. (2000), A theoretical extension of the technology acceptance model: four longitudinal field studies", *Management Science*, Vol. 46 No. 2, pp. 186-204; Cfr. DHOLAKIA U.M. ET AL. (2004), A social influence model of consumer participation in network- and small-group-based virtual communities, *International Journal of Research in Marketing*, Vol. 21, pp. 241-63; Cfr. ELLEMERS N. ET AL. (1999), Self-categorization, commitment to the group and group self-esteem as related but distinct aspects of social identity, *European Journal of Social Psychology*, Vol. 29 Nos 2/3, pp. 371-89; Cfr. LIN H.F. (2008) Determinants of successful virtual communities: contributions from system characteristics and social factors, *Information and Management*, Vol. 45 No. 8, pp. 522-7; Cfr. SHEN A.X.L. ET AL. (2010), How social influence affects we-intention to use instant messaging: the moderating effect of usage experience, *Information Systems Frontier*, in press, in: ZHOU T. (2011), *cit.*

to follow other's behaviour so, users decide to act in a certain way because of the behaviour of the other members of the community.¹⁶⁰

As in offline groups, also in online community it is possible to distinguish different positions. Each member of a community gives its contribution to the development of the OC. Positions' role are shown below¹⁶¹:

- a. *Community architect*: it is represented by the person who want to create the community, who establishes a purpose and defines tools used;
- b. *Community manager*: who manages the community. He enforces rules, encourages social norms and assists new members. He sometimes coincides with the community architect;
- c. *Paid members*: also known as professional members, they are people paid to comment the community in order to give it more visibility and to keep it active. Individuals are more motivated to join a community if it is active;
- d. *Free members*: they represent the majority of the users of a community and they free join to it. Nowadays, a lot of communities lead people to join directly from another social media in order to post the same news on both OCs and to respond directly from their profile on a social media;
- e. *Contributor*: is a figure positioned between free and paid members. In some communities they can post only topics related to the audience (in this case they are paid) but in others, they can aggregate freely add several topics in order to obtain a positive image;
- f. *Power users*: they are considered community manager's "best friends" because they push for new discussions, provide feedbacks. They are the most dynamic members;
- g. *Public participants*: also known as "posters" are people who join a community and express their opinion. For example, on a food blog, posters are represented by chefs or other food-bloggers who follow the blog, comment the post sharing their opinion because they are expert of food sector. On the other hand, lurkers (who

¹⁶⁰ Cfr. FRIEDKIN N.E. (1998), A structural Theory of social Influence, *Cambridge University Press*, in: CRANDALL D., COSLEY D., HUTTENLOCHER D., KLEINBERG J. & SURI S. (2008), Feedback Effects between Similarity and Social Influence in Online Communities, *KDD '08: Proceeding of the 14th ACM SIGKDD international conference on Knowledge discovery and data mining*, Seite 160--168. New York, NY, USA, ACM, (2008)

¹⁶¹ SOCIAL MEDIA TODAY, *cit.*

will be described in the following point) are represented by adolescents or other users who are inexperienced and join the community in order to obtain information about a certain topic such as a restaurant where dine or a recipe to prepare;

h. *Lurker*: it is important to consider that not all the members within a community are active. According to the “One percent rule” or the “90-9-1 principle” introduced by Ben McConnell, only 10% of users give a contribute in return to the introduction of a new post. It is possible to distinguish two categories of lurkers:

- *Active lurkers*: they consume community content and share it on their personal network or external communities;
- *Passive lurkers*: they comment, discuss and give advice but they do not share content to other communities or networks.

There are a lot of theories that try to explain the process of member lifecycle: members usually start as lurker until they become elders. Mixing the theories explained by Amy Jo Kim and Lave and Wenger, the process follows these steps: ¹⁶²

- a. *Lurker*: peripheral members who visit the community, view content and do not interact or discuss;
- b. *Novice/Inbound*: newcomers who start to participate in community life and sometimes provide content;
- c. *Regulars/Insiders*: novices who have regularly participate to community life for a certain period of time, discuss contents and interact with other users. Commitment¹⁶³ is a necessary condition to establish a long-term relationship;
- d. *Leaders/Boundary*: they are active participant who frequently join the community. Their opinions are highly considered, and their contributions are well recognized. Leaders sometimes can even try to ensure conformity trying to change other

¹⁶² ALONSO S., PEREZ I.J., CABREIZO F.J., HERRERA-VIEDMA E. (2013), "A linguistic consensus model for Web 2.0 communities". *Applied Soft Computing*. **13**: pp. 149–157.

¹⁶³ According to Mowday, Steers and Porter (1979) and Meyer and Allen (1991), commitment refers to an exchange process in which an individual develops loyalty to another individual or organization, so in this case, it highlights the attachment of a user to an OC and his belief in the value of the relationship (Bettencourt, 1997; Morgan and Hunt, 1994)

members to their way of thinking: they act as advocates and convince members to change their tastes and behaviours;¹⁶⁴

- e. *Elders/Outbound*: members who start to leave the community because of new relationships or positions, new interest, etc. Switching membership between communities is necessary to the evolution of interests, preferences and opinions: without it, a community will be isolated from other's influences;¹⁶⁵
- f. *Newcomers/Inbound*: new members who start to join the community. The lifecycle restarts. In joining a community, individuals might find some obstacles:¹⁶⁶
 - Social interactions with the existing members: they obtain answers to their questions easily if these are related to the main topic of the community or if they provide information about themselves; ¹⁶⁷
 - Newcomers' knowledge: lack of domain or technical expertise, lack of knowledge of project practices;
 - Difficulty in finding a "starting point" to join the community.

¹⁶⁴Cfr. BERRY L.L. & PARASUMARAN A. (1991), *Marketing Services*. New York: *The Free Press*; Cfr. COOK K.S & EMERSON R.M. (1978), Power, Equity and Commitment in Exchange Network, *American Sociological Review*, Vol. 43, No. 5, pp. 721-39; Cfr. KOZINETS R. (1999), E-Tribalized Marketing? The Strategic Implications of Virtual Communities of Consumption, *European Management Journal*, Vol. 17, No. 3, pp. 252-264; Cfr. MOORMAN C. ET AL. (1992), Relationships between Providers and Users of Marketing Research: The Dynamics of Trust within and Between Organizations, *Journal of Marketing Research*, Vol. 29, No. 3, pp. 314-29, in: JAE WOOK K., JIHO C., WILLIAM Q. & KYESOOK H. (2008), *cit.*

¹⁶⁵ MILLER K.D., FABIAN F. & LIN S.J. (2009), *cit.*

¹⁶⁶ ALONSO S., PEREZ I.J., CABREIZO F.J., HERRERA-VIEDMA E. (2013), *cit.*

¹⁶⁷ Cfr. ARGUELLO J. ET AL. (2006), Talk to me: Foundations for successful individual-group interactions in online communities. Proc. SIGCHI Conf. *Human Factors Comput. Systems*, Montréal, ACM, New York, 959–968, in: FARAJ S., STEVEN L. JOHNSON, (2011), *cit.*

2.3. Social network

Networks represent common elements of human cultural and biological life. They moved from niche phenomenon to mass adaptation.¹⁶⁸ While Web is focused on content, social network is user centred.¹⁶⁹ People tend to interact but, with the past of the time, networks have shaped and changed to adapt themselves to the environment. Nowadays, technological progresses in the fields of information and communication create new types of collaboration and collective production. Internet starts to be applied to enhance social flux and interaction by reducing time and costs. Robin Dunbar demonstrated that individuals can create and maintain relationship with a group of maximum 150 people (Dunbar's number): electronic communication allows to increase the size of groups and to reinforce ties with who is usually established a weak connection offline.¹⁷⁰

Nonetheless, online social networks are wider but weaker than offline social networks:¹⁷¹ OSNs are connectors of latent bonds because they are channels at low involvement, perfect to maintain these bonds.¹⁷² New technologies turn a web into a popular social medium used by individuals and companies. People spend more than one third of their day on social media¹⁷³ and the two-third of online population visit SN and blogs.¹⁷⁴ Starting from being a specialized online activity, social networking has become a worldwide phenomenon involving billions on people.¹⁷⁵ Distant nodes could be connected through random nodes; Strahilevitz suggests that as information flow from a node to another, so also personal information may flow through them.¹⁷⁶

¹⁶⁸ GROSS R. & ACQUISTI A. (2005), Information revelation and privacy in Online Social Networks, *WPSE*

¹⁶⁹ MISLOVE A., MARCON M. & GUMMADI K.P. (2007), Measurement and analysis of Online Social Networks, *IMC*

¹⁷⁰ FREIRE J. (2008), Redes sociales: ¿modelos organizativos o servicios digitales?, *El profesional de la información*, v. 17, n. 6, noviembre-diciembre, pp. 585-588

¹⁷¹ GROSS R. & ACQUISTI A. (2005), *cit.*

¹⁷² TUTEN T.L. & SOLOMON M.R. (2014), *cit.*

¹⁷³ Cfr. HABIBI M.R., LAROCHE M., RICHARD M.O. (2014), Brand communities based on social media: how unique are they? Evidence from two exemplary brand communities, *Int J Inf manage*, 34, pp. 123-132, in: OLSEN N.V. & CHRISTENSEN K. (2015), Social media, new digital technologies and their potential application in sensory and consumer research, *Current Opinion in Food Science*, 3, pp. 23-26

¹⁷⁴ BENEVENUTO F., RODRIGUES T., CHA M. & ALMEIDA V. (2009), *Characterizing user behavior in Online Social networks*, In IMC'09 Proceedings of the 2009 ACM SIGCOMM Internet Measurement Conference (pp. 49-62). New York, NY: ACM

¹⁷⁵ CACHIA R. (2008), *Los sitios de creacion de redes, Aspectos sociales*, seminary of Instituto de Prospectiva Tecnologica (ITPS)

¹⁷⁶ Cfr. STRAHILEVITZ L.J. (2004), "A social network theory of privacy", The Law School, University of Chicago, John M. Olin Law & Economics Working Paper N°230, 2D series, in: GROSS R. & ACQUISTI A. (2005), *cit.*

An online social network (OSN), or shortly known as social network (SN), is a type of online community formed by a set of social actors (individual or organizations), dyadic tie¹⁷⁷ and social interaction among members; SN is a set of socially relevant nodes, bound together by one or more ties ;¹⁷⁸ it is a computer network which connect people or organizations: these actors are connected by social relationships, such as co-working, friendship or information sharing.¹⁷⁹

By the Italian dictionary Treccani, a social network is defined as an informatic online service that allow to create social and virtual interaction. On its platform, users can create a personal profile and share images, texts, videos, thoughts, links and ideas. “TheGlobe.com”, an interaction service, and “GeoCities”, a free web space, are the first SNs introduced in U.S.A. at the beginning of '90.¹⁸⁰ After the informational crisis of 2003 where each companies decided to close their Internet website due to the lack of visits, users starts to become the protagonists of the social revolution: three northern-Americans (Marc Pincus, Reid Hoffman and Jonathan Abrams), inspired by the instant chats, created companies in which members could chat and know better.¹⁸¹

Appeared Friendster that introduced the possibility of creating a personal profile, organizing contact and interacting with them using with various tools (emails, messages, chat). Friendster obtained a lot of success but is nowadays disappeared due to the popularity of other platforms such as Facebook, MySpace and the Chines “QQ.com”.¹⁸²

In 1978, the INSNA (International Network for Social network Analysis) was born. Starting from 1979, each year Sunbelt propose an international conference about that topic, for example in Vancouver (Canada) in 2000 and in Cancun (Mexico) in 2003.¹⁸³ Main elements of a SN are the following ones:¹⁸⁴

¹⁷⁷ A tie is an interaction, a relation among actors. Ties are of the same type. In: BORGATTI S. (2003), “*Conceptos basicos de Redes Sociales*”, Boston College, Analytictech.com

¹⁷⁸ TUTEN T.L. & SOLOMON M.R. (2014), *cit*

¹⁷⁹ GARTON L., HAYTHORNTHWAITE C. & WELLMAN B. (1997), Studying Online Social Networks, *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, Volume 3, Issue 1

¹⁸⁰ ENCICLOPEDIA TRECCANI, <http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/social-network/>

¹⁸¹ CALDEVILLA DOMINGUEZ D. (2010), Las redes sociales. Tipología, uso y consumo de la Red 2.0 en la sociedad digital actual, *Documentacion de las Ciencias de la Informacion*, vol. 33, pp.45-68

¹⁸² ENCICLOPEDIA TRECCANI, *cit*.

¹⁸³ BORGATTI S. (2003), *cit*.

¹⁸⁴ MISLOVE A., MARCON M. & GUMMADI K.P. (2007), *cit*.

- a. *Users*: individuals should register to a SN in order to join it. Members of a SN are also defined “network units”. They develop a social identity, creating a profile with a username (called *handle*), a photo or an avatar. Some SN offers *identity reflector*, an option that allows a user to view his profile from other users’ perspective.¹⁸⁵
- b. *Links*: a SN is formed by user accounts and links between them. Users can explore SN by following a user-to-user links chain;
- c. *Group*: it is created by users in order to share common interest and could be opened (everyone can access it and view its content) or private (individual should ask the permission to its member in order to join it and view its content). Posting and admission are controlled by a moderator. To analyse a group, it is necessary to considers its membership, growth and change over time.

Nowadays, the use of Internet and consequently of SN is considerably increased. For this reason, SNs have becoming a topic of studies: social networks analysis tries to explain flows of information and the effect that the relations established on SN and SN itself provokes on individuals. This analysis looks beyond the specific attributes of individuals and focuses on relation, ties and exchanges between social actors. Each social exchange represents a node: the degree of interconnection between nodes is measured by *network cohesion*.¹⁸⁶ Some users are more influential than others and can condition their behaviours. Not all nodes are equally significant: influential nodes rare but essential in the influential process of a SN because they can motivate a large audience to follow their behaviour, to build relationships, viral marketing, etc.¹⁸⁷

¹⁸⁵ Cfr. ADAMIC L.A., BUTUKKOKTEN O. & ADAR E. (2014), A social network caught in the Web, *First Monday*, 8(6), in: TUTEN T.L. & SOLOMON M.R. (2014), *cit.*

¹⁸⁶ Cfr. BURT R.S. (1987), Social contagion and innovation: cohesion versus structural equivalence, *American Journal of Sociology*, 92(6), pp.1287-1335 in: WENLIN L., SIDHU A., BEACOM A.M & VALENTE T.W. (2017), Social network theory, *The international Encyclopaedia of media effects*

¹⁸⁷ Cfr. ZHAO ET AL. (2017), Evaluating influential nodes in social networks by local centrality with a coefficient, *ISPRS International Journal of Geo-information*, 6, P. 35; Cfr. ZHAO ET AL. (2016), Identification of influential nodes in social networks with community structure based on label propagation, *neurocomputing*, 210, pp. 34-44; Cfr. ZHANG ET AL. (2010), Identifying key users for targeted marketing y mining online social network, *2010 IEEE 24th International Conference on Advanced Information networking and Applications Workshops (WAINA), IEEE*, pp. 644-649; Cfr. XU ET AL. (2012), Identifying valuable customers on social networking sites for profit maximization, *Expert Systems and Applications*, 39, pp.13009-13018, in: ASIM Y., MALIK A. K., RAZA B. & SHAHID A. R. (2019), A trust model for

Nodes must be trustworthy, and trustworthiness is related to influence. Users are connected to each other through nodes, dyadic nodes (relation between two persons) or triadic nodes (relation between three users): a subgroup arises from an external relation between actors who are not related by a node while a group identifies all the actors that share nodes with other users of the same platform.¹⁸⁸ Ties can be weak or strong according to the type of exchange, frequency of contact, intimacy, etc. Online ties operate as offline ties: friends communicate about different topics and through various tools more frequently than non-friends. Stronger ties are characterized by the following aspects:¹⁸⁹

- Identify friends, close friends, co-workers and team-mates;
- They are frequent, intimate and of multiple types (emotional and instrumental);
- Use multiple tools of communication: so, friends communicate both offline and online through various SN;
- Adapt existing media and modify new media according to local norms;
- They have a high social influence among strongly tied pairs.

Social networks are defined by Luis A. Fernández as a virtual community that are not well defined because its users, characteristics, goals, activities change from a SN to another: so, there are infinity types of SN.¹⁹⁰ They differ for the acoustic, visual and physical content shared.¹⁹¹ Networks have become a third space placed between private and public world where it is possible to maintain relations with old friends. Networks have become a third space placed between private and public world where it is possible to maintain relations with old friends, with people on the other side of the world or where to start new boundaries.¹⁹² It could be studied in order to obtain information about local or global patterns, entities or network dynamics.¹⁹³

analysis of trust, influence and their relationship in social network communities, *Telematics and Information*, vol. 36, pp. 94-116

¹⁸⁸ LOZARES C. (1996), *La teoría de redes sociales*, papers 48, 1996, pp. 103-112

¹⁸⁹ Cfr. RICE R. & ROGERS E.M. (1980), Reinvention in the innovation process, *Knowledge*, vol. 1, no. 4, pp.499-514, in: HAYTHORNTHWAITE C. (2005), Social networks and Internet connectivity effects, *Information, Community & Society*, 8:2, pp. 125-147

¹⁹⁰ FLORES VIVAL J.M. (2009), Nuevos modelos de comunicación, perfiles y tendencias en la red social, *Revista Científica de Educomunicación, Comunicar*, n°33, v. XVII pp. 73-81

¹⁹¹ OLSEN N.V. AND CHRISTENSEN K. (2015), *cit.*

¹⁹² ORIHUELA J.L. (2008), *cit.*

¹⁹³ WASSERMAN S. & FAUST K. (1994). *Social Network Analysis in the Social and Behavioral Science, Social Network Analysis: Methods and Applications*. Cambridge University Press, pp. 1-27

It offers a lot of possible uses and it should be considered as an innovative usage of the network.¹⁹⁴ Firms use them for in various way, to create brand commitment and to distribute products too. People are not only passive consumers but, they actively create and share their personal content.¹⁹⁵ Users' contact, identify as *followers*, *friends* or *fans*, according to the different social network, interact and share contents by using *personal messages* (similar to email but inside a SN), *post on the wall* (a content published on a personal profile but visible by all its friends) and *chat* or *instant messaging*: SN offers synchronous or asynchronous types of communication and its contents could be permanent or temporary. Users interact through *status casting* (change of their personal status on SN that happen when a user decide to communicate an update to his own *newsfeed* or to his own *activity stream*) and comments, *direct message* (also called *backchannel* and are exchanged as an email but are limited to the SN) and *instant messaging* that can be used only when both user are online and want to chat simultaneously. A *nudge* (or *poke*, as it is called on Facebook) allow to catch the attention and to remember to someone how much is important to socialize.

SNs support social activity and sharing:¹⁹⁶

- *Activity stream* allows to share flux of information;
- *Gift application* allows to donate virtual gift to friends, communicating love, friendship or gratitude;
- *Continuous sharing* allows to work with partners by integrating activity from other web sites into a flux of activity on a partner web site;
- *Upload function* allows to share directly a content. For example, after taking a photo with a smartphone, a “share button” can directly post that photo on Instagram or on another SN.

People actively participate in different social network due to the various aims for which they are created, and they spend a lot of time on these platforms also because it is possible to access to them from mobile phones.

¹⁹⁴ FLORES VIVAL J.M. (2009), *cit.*

¹⁹⁵ OLSEN N.V. AND CHRISTENSEN K. (2015), *cit.*

¹⁹⁶ TUTEN T.L. & SOLOMON M.R. (2014), *cit.*

A social network aggregator manages information from various SN and put them into a single location, as shown in Figure 3. An aggregator anonymises users' sensitive information: users' loaded IDs on social network aggregator site, users' IDs in social network, IDs of web content where users access.¹⁹⁷

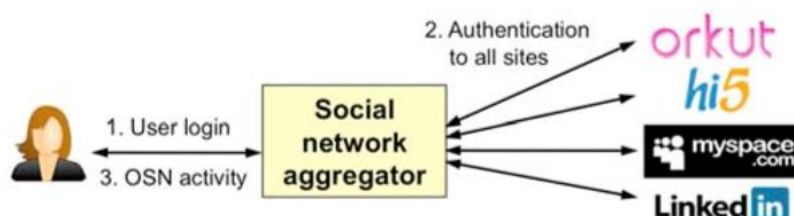


Figure 3. User connection to various Social Network through a social network aggregator: the aggregation operates on two level: the first one between user and SN and the second one between SN and social network aggregator. Using it, an individual can load on a SN and automatically be loaded on the others, without logging separately.

A *social lock-in* shows the inability of a user to transfer his contacts and contents from a SN to another.¹⁹⁸

SN has different functions, such as:¹⁹⁹

- *Keeping friendship*: chats and share photos, videos or information with close friends and with who is physically far,
- *Making friendship*: being friend of someone can create an indirect node with another user. This node may represent the starting point of a new friendship,
- *Entertainment* and
- *Internal management of company's organizations.*

A lot of studies have tried to analyse the correlation among individuals and their affiliation to SN. This correlation could be explained by three different aspects:²⁰⁰

- a. *Influence (induction)*: individual join a SN in order to follow their friends'

¹⁹⁷Cfr. KING R. (2007), When your social sites need networking, *Business Week*; Cfr. SCHROEDER S. (2007), 20 ways to aggregate your social networking profiles, *Mashable* in: BENEVENUTO F., RODRIGUES T., CHA M. & ALMEIDA V. (2009), *cit*

¹⁹⁸ TUTEN T.L. & SOLOMON M.R. (2014), *cit*.

¹⁹⁹ CALDEVILLA DOMINGUEZ D. (2010), *cit*.

²⁰⁰ Cfr. BACKSTROM L., HUTTENLOCHER D., KLEINBERG J. & LAN X. (2006), "Group formation in large social networks: membership, growth and evolution", 12th KDD, pp.44-54, in:

behaviours. The probability of joining a SN is higher when a group of peers has already joined that SN. For example, A decide to eat into a restaurant because his friend B has already eaten there;

- b. *Homophily*: individuals are friends of other with same interest. For example, people who love cooking;
- c. *Environment (confounding factors or external influence)*: external factors are correlated with the new friendship established by two individuals and with their actions. For example, people who live in the same city maybe can post picture of the same steak house.

What they want to share instantaneously is limited by the network they are using. Ties (also known as strands) are stronger if they are multiplex: they are more intimate, voluntary, supportable and durable. The number of actually-occurring ties and the number of theoretical-possible ones represents *network density*. Networks can be analysed by two perspective:

- a. *Ego-centred approach*: analysis of the SN from the perspective of a single individual by counting the number of relations and their typology and diversity;
- b. *Whole network approach*: it describes the totality of ties established and maintained by all members of the same group among them.

Each network is characterized by the following aspects²⁰¹:

- a. *Range*: it is represented by size and heterogeneity. They are defined by type of audience and level of specialization.²⁰² A larger social network is more heterogeneous, has a more complex structure and let to obtain new resources.
- b. *Role*: it is identified by the similarity of network members' behaviour who act

ANAGNOSTOPOULUS A., KUMAR R. & MAHDIAN M. (2008), "Influence and correlation in Social Networks", *Proceedings of the 14th ACM International Conference on Knowledge Discovery and Data Mining (KDD 2008)*

²⁰¹ Cfr. BURT R. (1992), *Structural holes*, Chicago, MA: University of Chicago Press; Cfr. ESPINOZA V. (1997), Social networks among the urban poor: inequality and integration in a Latin American city. In Wellman B. (ed.), *Networks in the global village* (in press), Boulder, CO: Westwood; Cfr. WELLMAN B. & WORTLEY S. (1990), Different strokes from different folks: community ties and social support, *American Journal of Sociology*, 96, pp. 558-588; Cfr. WELLMAN B. & POTTER S. (1997), The elements of personal community. In Wellman B. (ed.), *Networks in the global village* (in press), Norwood: NJ: Ablex, in: GARTON L., HAYTHORNTHWAITE C. & WELLMAN B. (1997), *cit.*

²⁰² TUTEN T.L. & SOLOMON M.R. (2014), *cit.*

toward the same objects;

- c. *Centrality*: represents the level of connection that network members have with other users. Members who have the most connections with others (high degree of centrality) are the ones whose departure could cause the fall apart (cut points) of a network.

Centrality is evaluated according to three attributes and shown in Figure 4:²⁰³

- Degree: number of links owned into a network;
- Betweenness: frequency at which a user node lies on the shortest path connecting other nodes in the network;
- Closeness: distance between a user node and the other nodes.

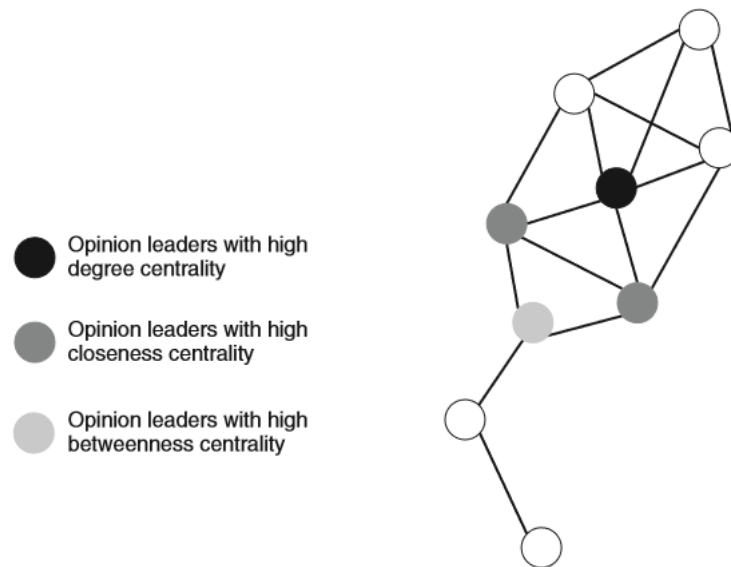


Figure 4. Network illustration on centrality degree: Adapted from Everett's kite, in Brandes and Hildenbrand, 2014

In order to maximize the distribution of influence into a process of “influence maximization”, it is fundamental to analyse the importance of nodes with higher influence by comparing the three factors already described.²⁰⁴

A social network is characterized by many attributes.²⁰⁵

²⁰³ Cfr. WASSERMAN S. & FAUST K. (1994), *cit.*, Cfr. FREEMAN L. (1979), Centrality in social networks: conceptual clarification, *Social Network*, 1, pp.215-239, in: WENLIN L., SIDHU A., BEACOM A.M & VALENTE T.W. (2017), *cit.*

²⁰⁴ FENG L. & DU T.C. (2014), Listen to me – Evaluating the influence of micro-blogs, *Decision Support System* (62), Elsevier pp. 119-130

²⁰⁵ Cfr. PIERRE L. (2004), “Inteligencia Colectiva. Por una antropología del ciberespacio”. Recurso en línea, in: CALDEVILLA DOMINGUEZ D. (2010), *cit.*

- *Simultaneity*: it allows to comment, post or do any other activity and share it with the entire world at the same time;
- *Personalization*: it allows to personalize any profile and activity and to control information and news that a user wants to receive, rejected or share. For example, any member can choose if establish or not a friendship with another user or banner someone from visiting its profile. The anonymity of Internet let users to decide which information they want to share:²⁰⁶ moreover, the use of a real name is encouraged in social networks which try to connect participants' profiles to their public identity and in which they can post information about themselves, but it is preferred the use of a pseudonymous in that social (such as meeting networks) where users want to make more difficult the connection to their personal life;²⁰⁷
- *Multimedia*: digital world allows to combine videos, sounds, imagines and 3D models;
- *Multiple emission*: during his permanence online, a user could be an emissary, receiver or transmitter of an information.

Each social network usually presents the same characteristics in terms of usage. It is possible to highlight the following ones²⁰⁸:

- *Users presentation*: creation of a public personal profile. According to the social network, it is possible to select a privacy option;
- *Data organization*: users can organize their data (photos, contact, post, etc) as the prefer, such as dividing "friends" in subgroups;
- *Network externalities*: a user has the possibility to view its friend's contact and vice versa. This represents the most interesting aspect because it is the first time when users can monitor their personal network;
- *Dynamic connection*: users are connecting by various tools and not only but their contact relation. For example, a user can tag (identify another subject with a sort of virtual etiquette) a friend into a photo that he posts;
- *Down-top activities*: people with same interest and hobbies can join the same

²⁰⁶ ROS-MARTIN M. (2009), *cit.*

²⁰⁷ GROSS R. AND ACQUISTI A. (2005), *cit.*

²⁰⁸ CACHIA R. (2008), *cit.*

social network, collaborate and organize low cost activities although they are in different part of the world. For example, users can organize a crowdfunding in order to collect money for an environment association;

- *Facility of use*: social networks are very easy to use and can be achieved by everyone. They are free and any individual can join them (some SNs present an inscription limitation related to age or a friend's recommendation);
- *Geographical reorganization of Internet*: thanks to SN, users have access to other personal life (profiles, blogs, imagines) although they are geographically distant.

Social networks have become popular tools to communicate and spread information but, at the same time, they could be use in an appropriate way. One of the negative points is represented by cybercriminals who try to lure victims to malicious website or who, for example, use personal information found on the web in order to develop targeted spam campaigns.²⁰⁹ Unfortunately, social networks do not provide a rigid authentication mechanism so, it is easy to create a fake account in order to obtain people's trust. For example, in 2008 Sophos²¹⁰ analysis found that 41% of users receive a fake friendship request on Facebook at least one time per year. Moreover, 45% of users tend to readily click on posts shared by their "friends" on SN, both if they know him personally or not. Consequently, spammers can take advantages of this situation in order to advertise website. Spam bots identify various levels of activity and type of strategy used to do spam. So, it is possible to classify spammers into four categories:²¹¹

- a. *Displayer*: spammers who do not post spam messages, but they post spam contents on their personal profile. To view spam content users should visit spammers page of the bot;
- b. *Bragger*: bots post messages to their own feed in order to distribute it to a larger target. Spams cannot be viewed on user's friends because they are not visible on user's pages;

²⁰⁹ MOYER S. & HAMIEL N. (2008), Satan is on my friends list: attacking social networks, *Black Hat Conference*

²¹⁰ SOPHOS, <http://www.sophos.com/pressoffice/news/articles/2007/08/facebook.html>, 2008.

²¹¹ Cfr. BILGE L., STRUFE T., BALZAROTTI D. & KIRDA E. (2009), All your contacts are belong to us: automated identity theft attacks on social networks, *World Wide Web Conference*, in: STRINGHINI G., KRUEGEL C. & VIGNA G. (2010), Detecting spammers on Social Networks, *ACSAC*

- c. *Poster*: it is the most effective category because bots send a direct message to each user, but it could be seen by everyone who monitor that user's page;
- d. *Whisperer*: as for the previously category, bots send a direct message to each user but in this case only the receiver can view the spam post.

Nowadays, SNs are used in order to sponsor brands or products. Marketers can create a lot of touch-points due to the continuously and increasing presence online of customers. When a user follows a brand, he receives updates and newsfeeds about it. This information is spread faster, to a larger audience and at a lower cost. Consumers shape their personal and social identity by liking and following different brands on different SNs. Many brands propose contest or get online promotional offers.²¹² To conclude this paragraph and to find a common point between food environment (explained in chapter 2) and online environment (analysed in its different aspect throughout chapter 3), it is possible to highlight different elements that evidence how Internet is used in order to spread information about that topic. Research indicate that between 55% and 67% US population use web to look for food information, and from 20% to 34% on these researches are done on social media. In its last report, EFSA's (European Food Safety Association) recommends the use of social media in order to disseminate food safety information and use them carefully in order to avoid panic and hysteria during food crisis situation.²¹³ According to the "uses and gratification theory", people are more active in a social network than another according to their needs: meet people, post photos, play games, etc. SNs usually allow to escape from problems (diversion), to conversate and meet friends (personal relationships), to reinforce values and belief (personal identity), etc.²¹⁴ For these reasons, in the following paragraph, there are explained the salient characteristics of many social media, in order to understand why people and food-bloggers could decide to use it.

²¹² PHUA J., JIN S.V & KIM J.J. (2017), Gratifications of using Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, or Snapchat to follow brands: The moderating effect of social comparison, trust, tie strength, and network homophily on brand identification, brand engagement, brand commitment and membership intention, *Telematics and Informatics* 34, pp. 412-424

²¹³ Cfr. EFSA (2012), When food is cooking up a storm. *Proven Recipes Risk Commun*, pp. 26-27, in: OLSEN N.V. & CHRISTENSEN K. (2015), *cit*.

²¹⁴ Cfr. WU J., WANG S. & TSAI H. (2010), Why people use social media: a uses and gratifications approach, *Qualitative market research: an international Journal*, 16 (4), pp. 362-369; Cfr. MCQUAIL D., BLUMLER J. & BROWN J. (1972), The television audience: a revised perspective. IN D. Mcquail (ed.), *Sociology of mass communication*, pp. 135-165, Middlesex, England: Penguin, in: SHELDON P. & BRYANT K. (2016), Instagram: motives for its use and relationship to narcissism and contextual age, *Computers in Human Behavior* 58, pp. 89-97

2.3.1. Facebook

At first introduced with the name of “Facemash” in 2003, it is an America social media and social networking service created by Mark Zuckerberg and his roommates Eduardo Severin, Andrew McCollum, Dustin Moskovitz and Chris Hughes at Harvard College.²¹⁵ “The Facebook” (thefacebook.com) started in 2004 as a network for Harvard university students: people could join it only if they had the university email address. In 2004, this network was enlarged to Columbia, Stanford and Yale and later to all university, then to companies and at the end, to every individual with a personal email in 2006. By late 2007, more than 100,000 companies promote themselves with a page on Facebook. In 2009, it was blocked in China and it became the second-most accessible website behind Google in 2011.²¹⁶ Nowadays, it is the most know general SN in the world²¹⁷ and it is considered one the “big four technology company” with Amazon, Apple and Google.²¹⁸

This platform represents an online projection of individuals’ interaction in real-world and allows to study information contagious process.²¹⁹ It may be seen as a single medium but, it offers many interconnection and asynchronous modes of interaction (posts, messages, chats, etc.).²²⁰

After registering, Facebook allows to create a personal profile with photos, videos, videoclips and other multimedia contents; it allows to comment, like and share others’ posts, searching and locating other users, share common interests. The most important aspect is the creation of a “list of friends”, number of members of the same sites who can interact with the other members of their personal list of friends:²²¹ a user cannot

²¹⁵ MCGIRT E. (2007). Facebook's Mark Zuckerberg: Hacker. Dropout. CEO. *Fast Company*. Mansueto Ventures

²¹⁶ Cfr. RICHMOND R. (2008), Enterprise: Facebook, a Marketer's Friend; Site Offers Platform To Tout Products, Interact With Users. *Wall Street Journal*. New York. p. B4; Cfr. WAUTERS R. (2017), China Blocks Access To Twitter, Facebook After Riots. *TechCrunch*. AOL; Cfr. FLEMING R. (2017), Google and Facebook top the most visited websites of 2011. *Digital Trends*; in: ROS-MARTIN M. (2009), *cit*.

²¹⁷ CALDEVILLA DOMINGUEZ D. (2010), *cit*.

²¹⁸ RIVAS T. (2017), Ranking The Big Four Tech Stocks: Google Is No. 1, Apple Comes In Last; Bloomberg - Are you a robot?, www.bloomberg.com

²¹⁹ BAKSHY E. & ROSENNI I. (2012), The role of Social Networks in Information Diffusion, *International World Wide Web Conference Committee (IW3C2)*

²²⁰ BAYM N. (2015), *cit*.

²²¹ PAVICIC J., ALFIREVIC N. & GABELICA N. (2007), Electronic communication or electronic communities: (un)common messages from ‘Generation Y’, *6th WSEAS International Conference on E-ACTIVITIES*

have more than 5000 friends.²²²

Personal profile are usually private and other users can view it only by “*becoming friend*” with that person: A asks B to become friends and only when B accept A’s friendships, B can view A’s profile. “Friendships” on Facebook is different from real life: people tend to establish friendships online also with who they barely know.

Until October 2009, people can join grouped networks on Facebook (such as the one from the same neighbourhood, town or school) and starting by them, spammers could create a perfect targeted campaign aimed at reaching a certain geographic area,²²³ so, to avoid spammers, such groups were banned. There are users who add everyone has friends and there are others who are more restrictive in their decisions, but in wider terms, most users tend to list anyone they know and who not dislike: in this way, a friends on a SN became also an individual of whom user do not particularly trust.²²⁴

According to previous literature, Nadkarni and Hofmann analyse that Facebook’s users are usually characterized by narcissism, sense of belonging, a high level of extraversion and neuroticism or a low-level of self-esteem and self-worth.²²⁵

Facebook personal profile is identified by:²²⁶

- a. *A name*
- b. *A profile photo*
- c. *A cover photo’s*
- d. *Information: birth date, gender, work position, attending school, country and city of residence, or other sensitive information.*

By default, a user’s profile is public that means it can be seen by everyone. User can decide to modify his privacy and restrict access only to his friends, friends-of-friends, a list of friends, no one or everybody.²²⁷ The display of a user’s profile photo had a relevant effect in the willingness to initiate friendships with him. Also, physical attractiveness is a significant attribute: both male and female usually prefer to establish

²²² WILSON C., BOE B., SALA A., PUTTASWAMY K.P.N. & ZHAO B.Y. (2009), “*User interactions in Social Networks and their implications*”, EuroSys

²²³ STRINGHINI G., KRUEGEL C. & VIGNA G. (2010), *cit.*

²²⁴ Cfr. BOYD D. 82004), “*Friendster and publicity articulated social networking*”, *Conference on Human Factors and Computing Systems*, in: GROSS R. & ACQUISTI A. (2005), *cit.*

²²⁵ NADKARNI A. & HOFMANN S.G. (2012), *Why do people use Facebook?*, *Personality and individual differences* 52, pp. 243-249

²²⁶ GROSS R. & ACQUISTI A. (2005), *cit.*

²²⁷ WILSON C., BOE B., SALA A., PUTTASWAMY K.P.N. & ZHAO B.Y. (2009), *cit.*

friendship on Facebook with the opposite-sex profile owner with an attractive profile image.²²⁸

Users can interact with each other's, share posts and photos (an album can contain no more than 200 photos) and tag (an online etiquette or label that create a link on a friend's profile) their friend: these actions may represent a form of online friendship. In 2017, Facebook introduced "Facebook Stories", on the model of Snapchat and Instagram, that allow to share photos and videos with friends for only 24 hours.

News feed highlight information as profile changes, upcoming events, friend's birthday etc. On January 2008, Facebook announced that it would change that area in order to give more priority to family and friends' content rather than media companies' content.²²⁹

Each post appears on the "wall" where each user can see what the others are doing on Facebook, including activities in applications and interactions with friends.²³⁰ It works as a bulletin board in which personal posts reach directly end users.²³¹ Users can react to other users' activities using the "like button" and choosing between pre-defined emotions, including "love", "ha-ha", "wow", "sad" or "angry".²³²

In order to talk with other users, Facebook provides a chat for instant messaging that was converted into a mobile app in 2010. It allows to make a one-to-one chat, a group chat, video calls and send voice messages.

Food-bloggers may choose Facebook because it offers various tools to interact with follower: food-blogger can share photos of their plate or video of the recipes they prepare and add description or long text to them. For any problems, users can directly interact with food-blogger to ask curiosity, more information about a recipe or a product used, etc. Moreover, lot of restaurants use this platform to promote their service due to the presence of images and the possibility of adding many information about their activity.

²²⁸ Cfr. WANG S.S. ET AL. (2010), Face off: implications of visual cues on initiating friendship on Facebook, *Human communication research*, 34, pp. 28-49, in: NADKARNI A. AND HOFMANN S.G. (2012), *cit.*

²²⁹ CONSTINE J. (2017), "Facebook Stories puts a Snapchat clone above the News Feed". TechCrunch. AOL. Retrieved March 23

²³⁰ WILSON C., BOE B., SALA A., PUTTASWAMY K.P.N. & ZHAO B.Y. (2009), *cit.*

²³¹ NADKARNI A. AND HOFMANN S.G. (2012), *cit.*

²³² STINSON L. (2017), "Facebook Reactions, the Totally Redesigned Like Button, Is Here", *Wired*

2.3.2. Instagram

Instagram is a new type of social media and communication tools developed by Kevin Systrom and Mike Krieger and introduced in October 2010. It has obtained an exponential growth with an average of 55 million photos shared per day.²³³ In 2012, Instagram was bought for one billion by Facebook Inc. At the beginning, it was available only for iOS system; in 2012 was introduced a version for Android system and at the end, in 2013, it was available also on Windows Phone. In December 2010, Instagram reached one millions of users and after one year, it reached 10 million of users. In July 2011, more than 100 million of photos were shared. It reported more than 400 million monthly active users.²³⁴ In September 2017 it counted more than 800 million of users. As we could analyse from these data, Instagram is the fastest growing social network site.²³⁵ It has been banned in various countries such as China, North Korea and Turkey.

Users can share their photos or videos, modify their colours and resolutions with 16 different filters and directly uploaded them on multiple platforms. Photos can be categorized into eight classes according to their content: self-portraits, friends, activities, captioned photos (image with a text), food, gadgets, fashion and pets.²³⁶

Users can add a hashtag (using the symbol #) in the description of the photo to allow other users to find it, geotag image with the name of the location in which it has taken and tag another user (using the symbol @) creating a link to its profile. Hashtags allow to search other photos with similar subject. The hashtag with the fastest growth in 2018 was #fortnite.²³⁷ In 2012, Instagram added the section “explore” in which are posted popular photos and photos taken in nearby location.

User can only tag their “friends” or “followings”. Instagram is asymmetric and a user can decide to follow back or not another user: A follows B, but B can decide to not follow A back; in this case, B’s photos are posted on A’s wall, but A’s photos are not

²³³ HU Y., MANIKONDA L. & KAMBHAMPATI S. (2014), “What we Instagram: a first analysis of Instagram photo content and user types”, *Association for the Advancement of artificial Intelligence* (www.aaai.org)

²³⁴ Cfr. STATISTA (2016) in: DJAFAROVA E. & RUSHWORTH C. (2017), “Exploring the credibility of online celebrities’ Instagram profile in influencing the purchase decisions of young female users”, *Computers in Human Behavior* 68, pp. 1-7

²³⁵ Cfr. WAGNER K. (2015), *Instagram is the fastest growing major social network*. Retrieved from <https://recode.net/2015/01/09/Instagram-is-the-fastes-growing-major-social-network/>. in: SHELDON P. & BRYANT K. (2016), *cit.*

²³⁶ HU Y., MANIKONDA L. & KAMBHAMPATI S. (2014), *cit.*

²³⁷ WIRED, <https://www.wired.it/internet/social-network/2018/12/13/instagram-2018-tendenze-hashtag/>

directly visible to B. If B wants to view A's photos, he should visit A's profile that is public by default: if A decides to make it private, consequently his photos can be viewed only by his followers. The core page (the wall) shows all the photos posted by friends in a reversal chronological order: users can like or comment these photos and this "notice" appears in his friend's "updates page" where he can monitor likes and comments obtained by the photos he posted.

There is a weak correlation between a user and its characteristic, such as its number of followers: the size of user's audience does not affect the type of photo shared. Photos and video have become the key social currencies online.²³⁸ According to Marcus users prefer to use Instagram to establish personal identity rather than relational identity: people use Instagram to self-promote and this could justify the increased number of "selfies" shared. But other studies show that users chose Instagram for these factors:²³⁹

- a. *Surveillance and knowledge about others*: users want to see what other posts, who like their photos, etc;
- b. *Documentation*: if users want to share their life, they prefer to do it by sharing photos rather than sharing a text, such as a tweet on Twitter. It is rapid, immediate, visual. "Instagram stories" facilitate and increase this phenomenon: for example, users usually post lot of food plate when they enjoy a meal in a new restaurant in order to provide their entire dinner;
- c. *Coolness*: people desire to be considered "cool" by peers and try to reach their goals by using trending tags, following celebrities, obtaining higher level of follower and lot of likes, posting cool photo and showing their cool activities. For example, coolness may be shown by posting a sophisticated and expensive dinner!
- d. *Creativity*: users try to use filter to make their post "artsy". Users who like sharing food photos pay attention to plate presentation, colour and other details on the table.

On the other hand, another study demonstrates that Instagram is chosen to self-

²³⁸ Cfr. RAINE L., BRENNER J. & PURCELL K. (2012), Photos and videos as social currency online, *Pew Internet & American Life Project*, in: HU Y., MANIKONDA L. & KAMBHAMPATI S. (2014), *cit.*

²³⁹ Cfr. MARCUS S.R. (2015), Picturin' ourselves into being: assessing identity, sociality and visuality on Instagram, in *Presented at the international communication association conference*, Puerto Rico: San Juan, in: SHELDON P. & BRYANT K. (2016), *cit.*

expression and social interaction and photos and videos shared show an actual and ideal presentation of the user.²⁴⁰ Instagram users are equally divided into iPhone and Android owners. It attracts new generation: in fact, 90% of users have less than 35 years old. 68% of users are female against 32% of male.

Instagram continuously modifies its characteristic: in its 2.0 version, it added more filter, new icons and new frames.

In its 4.0 version, it added the possibility of upload video from 3 to 15 second and in 7.0 version this length increased to one-minute video. “Instagram stories” were introduced with 9.0 version in 2016: users can upload photos or video that can be view only for 24 hours, then they disappear, following the model of Snapchat.²⁴¹ In 2013, “Instagram Direct” was introduced: users who follow each other can interact using private messaging or sending private photos.

Due to its popularity, many food-bloggers decided to use it as their main social media to be integrated with the blog. They must consider three variables before posting:²⁴²

- *Timing*: a week should be divided into day to understand the most popular days and the most popular hours to post in a day;
- *Engagement*: comparing the frequency of posting help in understanding the best time to post. From Arden’s study result that Friday is the most popular day while Monday is the most engagement day;
- *Hashtag*: they are used to tell the location, food and beverage, food-related on Instagram, photo technique and editing, events and campaign, etc.

Food-bloggers on Instagram beside food itself pay attention to place and location. Sharing homemade meal or restaurant meal has become a common practice and it has arisen the term “foodstagram” to identify the practice of sharing food photos. For example, in 2013, the American restaurant “Comodo” introduced the hashtag #ComodoMenu to share on Instagram and Twitter: clients post photos and comments of their meal and help other customers to choose what they want to eat before going at the

²⁴⁰ MOON J.H., LEE E., LEE J.A., CHOI T.R & SUNG Y. (2016), The role of narcissism in self-promotion on Instagram, *Personality and Individual Differences* 101, pp. 22-25

²⁴¹ CONSTINE J. (2016). Instagram launches "Stories," a Snapchatty feature for imperfect sharing. *TechCrunch*. AOL. Retrieved April 22, 2017.

²⁴² ARDEN J. (2016), Content analysis of Food Instagram account, *The 7th Smart Collaboration for Business in Technology and Information Industries*

restaurant.²⁴³ Food-bloggers do almost the same on Instagram: they post captive food photos and their follower decide to go specifically in that restaurant to try it!

Instagram is an evolving social network and food-bloggers may choose to use it due to its chameleonic aspect: its news, fresh and continuously offers new tools to be innovative. The possibility of posting modified photos, using hashtag to promote them and finding something similar allows food lovers to follow many food-bloggers and be inspired by them. Moreover, individuals spend more time on Instagram than on other similar SN.²⁴⁴ On the platform, 58% of users are considerably interested in food, restaurant and cooking; 36% of them, want to try something new. Instagram helps them to interact with other people who operate in food sector and to find new place and new product to try.²⁴⁵

2.3.3. Pinterest

Pinterest is a social media web and a mobile application company founded by Ben Silbermann, Paul Sciarra and Evan Sharp in 2010.²⁴⁶ In 2011 it was ranked has the third most popular social network in US behind Facebook and Twitter²⁴⁷ and considered the fastest growing social media platform of all time.²⁴⁸ Its name arose from the union of “pin” (tack) and “interest” (attractiveness). It is an image-based social network which allows to share and catalogue images, GIFs and videos.²⁴⁹ Differently from Instagram, it does not focus on original content but on *discovery* and *curation* of images,²⁵⁰ and oppositely from other social media platforms, it focuses on users’ personal interests rather that social graphs of others: users are related to one another by common interests

²⁴³ FOUR MARKETING, <https://four.marketing/2013/04/il-cibo-si-assaggia-online/>

²⁴⁴ Cfr. SHELDON P. & BRYANT K. (2016), *cit.*, in: DJAFAROVA E. & RUSHWORTH C. (2017), *cit.*

²⁴⁵ Business Instagram, https://business.instagram.com/a/inspire-action/food?locale=it_IT

²⁴⁶ FIEGERMAN, S. (2019). "Pinterest hits 300 million monthly users and its stock is soaring". *CNN*. Retrieved 2019-08-03.

²⁴⁷ HALL C. & ZARRO M. (2012), "Social curation on the website Pinterest.com", *ASIST*

²⁴⁸ Cfr. HEMPEL J. (2012), Is Pinterest the next Facebook?, *Fortune*. Retrieved from <http://tech.fortune.cnn.com/2012/03/22/pinterest-silbermann-photo-sharing>, in: HAMBRICK M.E. & KANG S.J. (2015), "Pin it: exploring how professional sports organizations use Pinterest as a communication and relationship marketing-tool", *Communication & Sport*, vol. 3(4), pp. 434-457

²⁴⁹ "New Pinterest features encourage brands and creators to upload more videos". *TechCrunch*. Retrieved 2019-08-03.

²⁵⁰ MITTAL S., GUPTA N., DEWAN P. & KUMARAGURU P. (2013), "The Pin-Bang theory: discovering the Pinterest World", *Indraprastha Institute of Information Technology*, Delhi

and the follower/followee relationship is not caused by personal status updates.²⁵¹ So, Pinterest is considered more personal than social.²⁵²

Hall and Zarro study's define Pinterest as a *social curation site* because it represents a new way of sharing and curating experience based on use, reuse and creation of information. It combines social features (sharing, liking, commenting and following) and collecting capabilities (creating and curating).²⁵³ It reached 10.000 users nine months after the launch and with the introduction of an iPhone app in 2011, number of users notably increased. Pinterest requires a registration to use and the site ask to like at least five boars to complete the process. Pinterest profile can be connected with others SNs account (if available). Ottoni discovered that the major users are women.²⁵⁴

There is a follower/followee relationship and interaction happens thought pins. Users can upload, save, sort and manage *pins*: a pin is an image, video or another media content linked from a website, uploaded or directly saved on the app. Users copy images from another website sources and rarely post some personal images. *Pinning* is the act of posting a photo and who pins a pin is called *pinner*. *Repinning* is the act of saving on the own boards a pin shared on another user's board. Pins can be liked or shared, and each pin present some data associated to it: unique pin number, description, number of likes and comments, numbers of repins, board name, source (an URL associated with it) and content in comments. Less than 5% of users upload their own photos and over 95% repinn photos from other sources but, half of these images do not give credit to the copyright owners!²⁵⁵ The act of pinning is considered as a marker of record or achievement (been here/done that) or as a reflection of a character (like it/enjoy it/laugh at it).²⁵⁶ Over 80% of the content are repined: this shows the high and dense level of information sharing within the community,²⁵⁷ an aspect that may be useful for food-

²⁵¹ Cfr. BOSKER B. (2012), The secret to Pinterest's success: We're sick of each other. Retrieved from http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/02/14/pinterest-success_n_1274797.html, in: HAMBRICK M.E. & KANG S.J. (2015), *cit.*

²⁵² KIM D.H, SEELY N.K. & JUNG J.H. (2017), "Do you prefer, Pinterest or Instagram? The role of image-sharing SNSs and self-monitoring in enhancing ad effectiveness", *Computers in Human Behavior* 70, pp. 535-543

²⁵³ HALL C. & ZARRO M. (2012), *cit.*

²⁵⁴ Cfr. OTTONI R. ET AL. (2013), Ladies first: analyzing gender roles and behaviors in Pinterest, *ICWSM*, in: MITTAL S., GUPTA N., DEWAN P. & KUMARAGURU P. (2013), *cit.*

²⁵⁵ MITTAL S., GUPTA N., DEWAN P. & KUMARAGURU P. (2013), *cit.*

²⁵⁶ HALL C. & ZARRO M. (2012), *cit.*

²⁵⁷ HAMBRICK M.E. & KANG S.J. (2015), *cit.*

bloggers who want to focus their activity on recipes sharing. A user's pins collection is defined *pinboards* that collect all pins dedicated to the same theme: users can create *secret boards* or, in order to include multiple pins, can divide a board into multiple sections. For example, food-bloggers can create various sections to divide sweet from salty recipes, photos from videos or personal recipes from reproduced recipes.

"Guided Search" suggests keywords when introduces a search term. The home feed collects all pins from users, boards and topic followed. Users can follow and unfollow boards, other users or topics. The "*Pin it*" button allows to search outside Pinterest for others pins similar to the ones published by users: in 2016 it was renamed "Save" button in order to be more intuitive. In 2013, was introduced the "Rich Pin": customer experience increases when customer browse thought companies' pin: business page can include various data such as product price, rating of movies, ingredients for recipes, etc. In the same year, Pinterest introduced the "Promoted Pins", introduced according to user's interests (analysed by actions on Pinterest) or after a visit on an advertiser's site or app. In 2015, Pinterest allowed its users to search pins by using images rather than words.²⁵⁸

Mull and Lee studied reasons why people decide to use Pinterest and they highlighted these five main motivations: fashion, entertainment, creative projects, virtual exploration and organization.²⁵⁹ One of the categories preferred by users is food&beverage: this social network might be used by food-bloggers due to the possibility of pin videos of their recipes or repinn photos of their follower who reproduce it.

2.3.4. YouTube

YouTube is video sharing web platform founded by Chad Hurley, Jawed Karim and Steve Chen in 2005, and bought by Google for 1,65 billion dollars in 2006. It allows to share and watch online multimedia contents. Karim was the first user to upload a video on the platform: "Me at the zoo" in April 2005. Contents published are videoclip, movie trailer, short film, funny video, news, live streaming, video blog, didactical video, etc. Users can vote, add to their "favourite", report and comment videos or subscribe to other

²⁵⁸ LYNLEY M. (2015), "Pinterest Unveils Buyable Pins, A Way To Purchase Things Directly Within Pinterest, *TechCrunch*

²⁵⁹ CFR. MULL I.R & LEE S. (2014), "PIN" pointing the motivational dimensions behind Pinterest, *Computers in Human Behavior*, 33, pp. 192-200, in: SHELDON P. & BRYANT K. (2016), *cit.*

users²⁶⁰ such as food-bloggers' channels. For example, Benedetta Rossi is an Italian food-blogger who provides lot of domestic recipes and her YouTube channel "Fatto in casa da Benedetta" count 1.128.658 subscribers.²⁶¹ She divides her page in various sections: "Dessert, cakes and pies", "Main plait and salty recipes", "Basic recipes", etc in order to simplify users research.

Users can upload videos up to 15 minutes each in duration and of 128 GB in size: 10 minutes limitation was introduced in 2006 when YouTube discovered that the majority of videos which overcome this length were unauthorized uploads of television shows or movies; the limitation was raised to 15 minutes in 2010.

In March 2008, the platform started to offer high quality videos (HQ) and then, in November of the same year, it allowed to watch high definition video (720p). One year later, there was added "full HD" option. In 2013 was added the possibility to directly open another video by clicking on a suggested video in order to create a more dynamic process.²⁶²

YouTube offers different services:

- a. *YouTube Kids*: it is a mobile app based on the idea to allow kids to use it easily. It presents a simpler interface and offers an appropriate selection of contents for that target;
- b. *YouTube Music*: it is a service that includes music videos uploaded on YouTube platform and allows its users to search and select music according to musical genre, playlist and suggestions. In 2010, YouTube signed a contract with SIAE to protect artists and editors;²⁶³
- c. *YouTube Premium*: it has been previously known as "YouTube Red", it allows to use the platform without watching advertisements to watch exclusive contents made by partners and to watch videos offline on the mobile app;²⁶⁴
- d. *YouTube Go*: it is an Android app aimed at making easier the access to the

²⁶⁰ "Youtube.com Traffic, Demographics and Competitors". *www.alexa.com*. Retrieved September 1, 2019.

²⁶¹ Information date back to 22th July 2019:

https://www.youtube.com/results?search_query=fatto+in+casa+da+benedetta

²⁶² FISHER K. (2006). "YouTube caps video lengths to reduce infringement". *Ars Technica*. Condé Nast. Retrieved March 25, 2017.

²⁶³ SNAPES L. & SWENEY M. (2018), YouTube to launch new music streaming service, *The Guardian*

²⁶⁴ SPANGLER T. (2014), YouTube Launches 'Music Key' Subscription Service with More Than 30 Million Songs

platform on mobile devices in emerging markets;²⁶⁵

- e. *YouTube TV*: introduced in 2017 and initially launched in New York City, Los Angeles, Chicago, San Francisco and Philadelphia, the service offers live streams of ABC, CBS, The CW, NBC and Fox's programs and others 40 cables channels' programs.²⁶⁶

YouTube is one of the websites which has shown a continuously and strong growth rate: its growth is due to a strong online word of mouth. In 2006, the company has communicated that more than 65 thousand videos were daily posted and more than 100 millions were watching each day. In 2017, Google communicated that YouTube was obtaining 1,5 billion of users each month! It is the second-most popular and visited website after Google, according to Alexa Internet. It has been criticized due to many aspects of its operations, copyrighted contents, violent and sexually suggestive content involving popular characters, etc.

As Benedetta Rossi, many food-bloggers have decided to open a YouTube channel to share their recipes with users. YouTube let them to create interesting and creative video, to give more information than a simple photo and to reach a large audience. They can organize their page with many sections, each of them dedicated to a food topic: tailoring content allows to fit the needs of their audience.

2.3.5. Flickr

Flickr was introduced in 2002 by Ludicorp, a Canadian company founded by Stewart Butterfield and Caterina Fake. In 2006, it concluded its "beta phase" of development and opened the "gamma phase" considering itself in continuing evolution. Until 2018, when it was bought by SmugMug, it has changed ownership a lot of time. It is an image and video hosting service and it is the biggest internet social network aimed at the sharing of photos for lovers of this sector. It has obtained a lot of success due to the blog phenomenon.²⁶⁷

Photos are organized by tag and place where they are taken. Video cannot be longer

²⁶⁵ PARESH D. (2018), YouTube's emerging markets-focused app expands to 130 countries, *Reuters*

²⁶⁶ LEE D. (2017), YouTube takes on cable with TV service, *BBC*

²⁶⁷ GUYNN J. (2018). "Exclusive: Flickr Bought by SmugMug, Which Vows to Revitalize the Photo Service". *USA Today*. Gannett Company.

than 90 seconds and 150 MB. Users can decide to make their photos private or public. The private section can be divided into three parts: photos that can be viewed only by friends, ones viewed only by family and ones that can be viewed only by their owners. Flickr can be accessed by anyone who can view photos and videos. On the other hand, if a user wants to upload a photo, the registration on the platform is required. “Photostream” is the basis of Flickr account, where all photos uploaded are displayed. Clicking on a photo, a window contained data, comments and facilities opens. Images can be tagged by their uploader or other users (with the permission of the uploader). Users can create album and a photo can be excluded from them or included in more than one album too.²⁶⁸ Each album can be organized in more “collections” and can be geotagged and related to a map using “imapflickr”. There are two types of account: Free and Pro. Until January 2019, free account has a maximum storage of 1 TB; then, this option was modified: users can upload no more than 1000 photos or videos (no longer than 3 minutes). Pro account has an unlimited storage, video can be longer (maximum 10 minutes) than the one posted in free account. If a Free account contains more than 1000 photos, it is automatically deleted, except if user subscribe it to a Pro account.²⁶⁹

Food-bloggers may choose to use Flickr for the same reason of Instagram. Photos have great impact in food sector, users can tag other users on food-blogger’s image in order to spread that recipe, geotags allow to promote restaurants and photos can provide information about products used, recipe procedure and suggestions.

²⁶⁸ "Creating Flickr Sets Video". *Goss Interactive*. February 26, 2010.

²⁶⁹ GARTENBERG C. (2018). "Flickr will end 1TB of free storage and limit free users to 1,000 photos". *The Verge*.

2.4. WOM

Word of mouth (WOM) is defined as an “oral and person-to-person communication between a perceived non-commercial communicator and a receiver concerning a brand, a product or a service offered for sale”²⁷⁰ and consumer-dominated channel of marketing. It is an informal communication among customers and consequently it is considered reliable, credible and trustworthy due to its independence from the market. It provides information about products or services and the social and psychological consequences of purchase decision.²⁷¹ Consumers may want to express their positive emotions about their purchase experience to contribute to a psychological tension of sharing joy with someone else; on the other hand, venting negative feelings associated with a negative experience expressed on a consumer-opinion platform can reduce the frustration and anxiety associated with the event. Sharing his experience, help the consumer to reduce the discontent associated with his negative emotions. Consumers usually search information about a product or a service before buying it: they look for information and ask for feedback from who has already tried it. With the introduction of Internet and consumer community, blogs, virtual opinion platforms and other tools of information sharing, consumers explore different opinions and enlarge their feedback from their family and friends to stranger, opinion leaders, other consumers. For example, opinions platform are managed by a third part and sometimes helps consumers in his purchase process by providing link of online-retailers and rating of the product proposed.²⁷² Considering food-blogger’s profile and webpage, they can be compared to opinions platforms: they sometimes provide also link for product or service they promote and obviously provide a lot of opinions and feedbacks about them. So, rather than trusting of companies, clients prefers WOM and he choose platform they trust; in

²⁷⁰ Cfr. ARNDT J. (1967), Role of product-related conversations in the diffusion of a new product, *Journal of marketing research*, 4(3), p. 190, in: KIM S., KANDAMPULLY J. & BILGIHAN A. (2018), “The influence of eWOM communications: an application of online social network framework”, *Computers in Human Behavior* 80, pp. 243-254

²⁷¹ Cfr. COX D. F. (1963). The Audiences as Communicators. In S. A. Greyser (Ed.), *Proceedings, American Marketing Association*, December, pp. 58–72, Chicago: American Marketing Association, in: BROWN J., BRODERICK A.J. & LEE N. (2007), “Word of mouth communication within online communities: conceptualizing the online social network”, *Journal of Interactive Marketing*, vol 21, n°3, Wiley Periodicals

²⁷² Cfr. SUNDARAM D.S., MITRA K. & WEBSTER C. (1998), Word-of-Mouth Communications: A Motivational Analysis. *Advances in Consumer Research*, 25, pp. 527–531; Cfr. DICHTER E. (1996), How Word-of-Mouth advertising works, *Harvard Business Review*, 44 (November-December), pp. 147-166, in: HENNING-THURAU T., GWINNER K.P.M., WALSH G. & GREMLER D.D. (2004), “Electronic word-of-mouth: motives for and consequences of reading customer articulations on the Internet”, *International Journal of Interactive Marketing*, vol. 18, No 1., pp. 38-52

this way, the receiver is more involved in the process of communication that takes place within an already established relationship between information seeker and his sources. Although 90% of word of mouth conversations take place offline, research in social emotional nature of computer-mediated communication suggests that, given enough time, people can create formed impression on someone else based exclusively on the written content of his online posts. 75% of these interactions are face-to-face conversation while 15% of them are done by telephone. On social media, users carry on computer public discussion long enough to create social relationships. Individuals who search for information about a certain topic trust of social relationship established and consequently trust of the advice obtained online: WOM arose. 84% of Internet users have at least one contact within online community.

WOM influences customers experience because of tie strength, homophily, source credibility:²⁷³

- a. *Tie strength* represents the “potency of the bond between members of a network”. Within online environment, the idea of individual-to-individual relationship is less relevant. Individuals can create strong bond with a website that continuously visit or with food-bloggers who ruthlessly follow: in that case, they start to have a favourable attitude towards their opinions and considers their advice trustworthy;
- b. *Homophily* is described as the degree of interaction between individuals with similar attitudes, age, characteristics, etc. Information exchanged through eWOM is stronger among homophilous individuals than heterogeneous ones. If a consumer has strong homophily with a website of a food-blogger’s profile, he consequently has strong attitude towards the information provided by it;
- c. *Source credibility* indicates communicator’s positive aspects that affect receiver’s acceptance. It depends on website or food-blogger’s perceived trustworthiness and its relative expertise²⁷⁴ (it will be explained in detail in the following

²⁷³ Cfr. KELLER Y. & BERRY J. (2006), Word-of-Mouth: the real action is offline, *Advertising age*, 77, 20; Cfr. RHEINGOLD H. (1993), *cit.*; Cfr. CYBERATLAS (2001), Experienced internet shoppers satisfied with online shopping, *International Journal of Market Research*, January 13, 2001, in: BROWN J., BRODERICK A.J. & LEE N. (2007), *cit.*

²⁷⁴ Cfr. BROWN J.J. & REINGEN P.H. (1987), Social ties and word-of-mouth referral behaviour, *Journal of consumer research*, 14(3), pp.350-362; Cfr. CHU S.C. & KIM Y. (2011), Determinants of customer engagement in electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) in social networking sites, *International Journal of Advertisement*, 30(1), pp. 47-75; Cfr. MITTAL V., HUPPERTZ J.W. & KHARE A. (2008), Customer complaining: the role of tie strength and information control, *Journal of retailing*, 84(2), p.196, in: KIM S., KANDAMPULLY J. & BILGIHAN A. (2018), *cit.*

paragraph dedicated to opinion leaders). Trustworthiness is “a trustor’s expectations about the motives and behaviour of a trustee”. Review is perceived honest, sincere and truthful.²⁷⁵

Online customers are more active and accessible to one-to-one processes so, WOM has a greater impact than formal marketing communication.²⁷⁶ It is demonstrated that word of mouth (WOM) helps customers in their decision process and help them to take better and quickly decisions.²⁷⁷ The facility and rapidity thanks to which information are spread through online network, let marketers to coin the term “*word-of-mouse*”:²⁷⁸ the traditional WOM moves to an eWOM (electronic word of mouth)²⁷⁹ that identifies any kind of information diffusion communicated by potential customers thought Internet. EWOM generates a network of consumers related to one.²⁸⁰ EWOM is a form on online consumer generated media.²⁸¹ It is defined as “any positive or negative statement made by potential, actual or former customers about a product or company, which is made available to a multitude of people and institutions via the Internet”: consumer engage in eWOM communication to participate and to belong to a community.²⁸²

The impact of eWOM is a combination of the receiver’s involvement and the communicator’s credibility.²⁸³ EWOM reaches wider audience and is not limited by social boundaries. According to a survey, 90% of consumers affirm that their purchase decisions are directly influenced by online reviews.²⁸⁴ Consumers trust eWOM for

²⁷⁵ Cfr. DONEY P.M. & CANNON J.P. (1997), An examination of the nature of trust in buyer.seller relationships, *Journal of Marketing*, 61(2), p.21, in: FILIERI R. (2016), “What makes an online consumer review trustworthy?”, *Annals of Tourism Research* 58, pp. 46-64

²⁷⁶ Cfr. BONE P.F. (1995), Word-of-Mouth Effects on Short-Term and Long-Term Product Judgements. *Journal of Business Research*, 69, pp. 213–223, in: BROWN J., BRODERICK A.J. & LEE N. (2007), *cit.*

²⁷⁷ HENNING-THURAU T., GWINNER K.P.M., WALSH G. & GREMLER D.D. (2004), *cit.*

²⁷⁸ TUTEN T.L. & SOLOMON M.R. (2014), *cit.*

²⁷⁹ SOKOLOVA K., KEFI H. (2019), Instagram and YouTube bloggers promote it, why should I buy? How credibility and parasocial interaction influence purchase intentions, *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jretconser.2019.01.011>

²⁸⁰ Cfr. HENNING-THURAU T., GWINNER K.P.M., WALSH G. & GREMLER D.D. (2004), *cit.*, in: DJAFAROVA E. & RUSHWORTH C. (2017), *cit.*

²⁸¹ FORD A., “The influence of online reviews: case study of TripAdvisor and the effect of fake reviews”, *7pm Journal of Digital research & Publishing*

²⁸² Cfr. MCWILLIAM G. (2000), Building Stronger Brands Through Online Communities, *Sloan Management Review*, 41 (Spring), pp. 43–54.; Cfr. OLIVER R.L. (1999), Whence Customer Loyalty? *Journal of Marketing*, 63, pp. 33–44, in: HENNING-THURAU T., GWINNER K.P.M., WALSH G. & GREMLER D.D. (2004),

²⁸³ BROWN J., BRODERICK A.J. & LEE N. (2007), *cit.*

²⁸⁴ Cfr. XIE H., MIAO L., KAU P. & LEE B. (2011), Consumers’ responses to ambivalent online hotel reviews: the role of perceived source credibility and pre-decisional disposition, *International Journal of hospitality management*, 30(1), pp. 178-183; Cfr. DIMENSIONAL RESEARCH (2013), Customer service and business results: A survey of customer service from mid-size companies, *Dimensional research*, in: KIM S., KANDAMPULLY J. & BILGIHAN A. (2018), *cit.*

many reasons:²⁸⁵

- Risk-related theoretical considerations: consumers perceived a reduced risk with regard to buying decisions;
- Reduction of search time: consumers self-perceives lack of time evaluating and confront many products;
- Avoid incongruence between conflicting opinions: incongruence can be reduced by neutral or unbiased information;
- Social and psychological aspect related to the belonging in a virtual community.

Information diffusion through social network is classified in two categories:²⁸⁶

- a. *Discovery*: people made their choices after detailed research and active learning:
- b. *Influence*: people are influenced by peers or by a system. Due to homophily²⁸⁷, people have a high probability of finding same information on the web. Strong or weak ties allow to share information because people are similar to the ones with who they often interact. For example, individuals on Facebook have usually more than two hundred “friends” and information are usually discovered by other community members from a peer who do not correspond with the one who share the information for the first time: this imply an overestimation of information. Another example is when a food-blogger posts on Instagram an image of a pizza made by a new pizzeria. Its followers liked the photo and their peers, who maybe do not follow the food-blogger, are also reached by that photo into the “explore section”. In fact, in that section are proposed photos that could like to a user according to an homophily. People are prone to share a content that their users or friends have shared but, on the other hand, the impact on influence that this

²⁸⁵ HENNING-THURAU T., GWINNER K.P.M., WALSH G. & GREMLER D.D. (2004), *cit.*

²⁸⁶ Cfr. JACKSON A., YATES J. & ORLIKOWSKI W. (2007), “Corporate blogging: Building community through persistent digital talk”, In R.h. Sprague (ed.), *Proceedings of the 40th Annual Hawaii International Conference on System Sciences*, Los Alamitos, CA: IEEE computer Society; Cfr. GODES D. & MAYZLIN D. (2004), “Using online conversations to study word-of-mouth communication”, *Marketing Science*, 23, 4 (Fall 2004), pp. 545–560; Cfr. LESKOVEC J., ADAMIC L.A. & HUBERMAN B.A. (2006), “The dynamics of viral marketing” In J. Feigenbaum ed., *Proceedings of the 7th ACM conference on Electronic Commerce*. New York: acM Press, pp. 228–237, in: GARG R., SMITH M.D. & TELANG R. (2011), “Measuring information diffusion in Online Community”, *Journal of Management Information Systems*, Fall 2011, Vol.28, No. 2, pp. 11-37, M.E. Sharpe Inc

²⁸⁷ Homophily identifies people with same characteristics, beliefs, interests and behaviours

content obtain is higher when it is shared by a reduced number of friends.²⁸⁸ User-generated advice presented within online communities may influence readers. Blogs and online forum can be sometimes more effective than direct marketing tools. Online word of mouth and viral marketing have a positive effect when used in order to influence potential customers. For this reason, firm often prefers to choose to sponsor an influencer rather than a celebrity. Influencer are perceived as peers and their opinion are considered more reliable.

But why people should trust of online review? Online customer reviews (OCR) are the prevalent form of eWOM and are one-way asynchronous communication among the writer and its readers. OCRs are represented by any positive, negative or neutral comment, rating, ranking of a product, brand or service made by a customer. It is shared with other customers in many way such as through blogs or specific websites (example TripAdvisor).²⁸⁹ To facilitate the evaluation of online review, la ot of websites offer the option to vote a comment, indicating its level of utility.²⁹⁰ In fact, one issues related to the credibility of eWOM information is due to the anonymity of the source that make consumers more sceptical about reviews: individuals are unknown and consumers should trust of a text-based format. Credibility is compromised by the difficulty to identify fake reviews.²⁹¹ The report by Rubicon Consulting discovered that 70% of online reviews are written by 10% of web users:²⁹² so, the remaining part is represented by fake reviews. Famous is TripAdvisor's case related to the same problems: although the website has a large team responsible at the evaluation of reviews, it was cited for fake information diffusion. For this reason, for example, TripAdvisor require a text at least of 100 words: a longer review often include more details that explain the reason why a product or a service was useful or not; a longer review is more helpful, and many

²⁸⁸ Cfr. GRAVOTTER M.S. (1978), "Threshohold models of collective behaviour", *Am. J. Sociol.*, 83(6), pp.1420-1443; Cfr. MCPHERSON M., LOVIN L.S. & COOK J.M. (2001), "Birds of a feather: homophily in social networks", *Annu. Rev. Sociol.* 27(1), pp. 415-444, in: BAKSHY E. & ROSENN I. (2012), *cit.*

²⁸⁹ Cfr. CHATTERJEE P. (2001), Online reviews: do consumers use them?, *Advances in consumer research*, 28(1), pp.129-133; Cfr. LITVIN S.W. ET AL. (2008) Electronic word-of-mouth in hospitality and tourism management, *Tourism management*, 29(3), pp. 458-468, in: FILIERI R. (2016), *cit.*

²⁹⁰ ZHU L., YIN G. AND HE W. (2014), "Is this opinion leader's review useful? Peripheral cue for online review helpfulness", *Journal of Electronic Commerce Research*, vol 15, n°4

²⁹¹ Cfr. CHATTERJEE P. (2001), *cit.*, Cfr. ZHANG D., ZHOU L. KEHOE J.L. & KILIC I.J. (2016), What online reviewer behaviours really matter? Effects of verbal and nonverbal behaviors on detection of fake online reviews, *Journal of management information systems*, 33(2), pp. 456-481, in: KIM S., KANDAMPULLY J. & BILGIHAN A. (2018), *cit.*

²⁹² FONG A. (2010), The influence of online reviews , *7pm Journal of Digital Research & Publishing*, in *Digital research & Publishing*, The University of Sydney

details increase information credibility. Details are the keys to distinguish a fake review from a trustful one. Images are also appreciated to evaluate the product and the trustworthiness. Negative reviews are usually read more carefully in order to understand what went wrong with the experience. Similar reviews are considered suspicious.²⁹³

2.5. Opinion leaders

In online word of mouth, opinion leaders have a key role.²⁹⁴ They are people who influence opinions, attitudes, beliefs, motivations, behaviours, etc.²⁹⁵ Lot of studies show how opinion leaders can persuade their peers about news, movies, politics, etc.²⁹⁶ The concept of opinion leaders arise in 1940 as an indirect opinion leading (interpersonal communication).²⁹⁷ For many years, in the field of social psychology, researchers have investigated how the credibility of information sources influences decisions and the effect that new information has on attitude and behaviour change: it has been found that direct and persuasive communications from credible sources influence attitudes more than the same communications made by less credible or peripheral sources. Source credibility effects on attitudes and behaviour are particularly strong when the target of the communication has direct experience with the topic and the topic is relevant to his life. Overall, these various studies are consistent with the psychological literature on source credibility: they show that credible sources can significantly influence behaviour patterns that are driven by beliefs and subjective norms, particularly when the behaviour is very relevant to the target of influence and he or she has a direct experiences with the behaviour. The strategic location of opinion leaders makes them more effective as change agents than are other credible sources.²⁹⁸ Opinion leaders are trusted and informed individuals who influence opinion seekers: who looks for information or advice is more prone to follow and opinion leader's advice

²⁹³ Cfr. MUDAMBI S.M. & SCHUFF D. (2010), What makes a helpful review? A study of customer reviews on Amazon.com, *MIS Quarterly*, 34 (1), pp. 185-200, in: FILIERI R. (2016), *cit.*

²⁹⁴ COREY, L. G. (1971), People who claim to be opinion leaders: Identifying their characteristics by self-report. *Journal of Marketing*, 35(4): pp. 48–53.

²⁹⁵ VALENTE T.W. & PUMPUANG P. (2007), Identifying opinion leaders to promote behaviour change, *Health Education & Behavior*, vol. 34

²⁹⁶ ASIM Y., MALIK A. K., RAZA B. & SHAHID A. R. (2019), *cit.*

²⁹⁷ EL KHOURY J. & FARAHA D. (2018), Opinion leaders in 2019- advertising and public relations, *International Journal of Arts & Sciences*, CD-ROM. ISSN: 1944-6934: 11(01), pp. 451–460

²⁹⁸ Cfr. HOVLAND & WEISS, (1951); Cfr. WU & SHAFFER (1987); Cfr. BEACH, MITCHELL, DEATON, & PROTHERO, 1978; MC- GINNIES (1973), in: LAM S.K.L. & SCHAUBROECK J. (2001), A field experiment testing frontline opinion leaders as change agents, *Journal of Applied Psychology*

than a simple community's ones.²⁹⁹

A “local opinion leader” can influence 500 citizens in two hours by using “one-to-one” technique. Then, the method evolves into a “two steps flow” because it firstly involves a medium (radio, tv, etc) and then an expert (influencer) who delivers the message. Nowadays, a “*multiple opinion leaders' phase*” arose due to the massive usage of social media platforms: the influencer does not have to be an expert but a blogger with lot of followers. He should have excellent communication skills and knowledgeable in various topics.³⁰⁰ Bloggers might become opinion leader and promote product on their blog, they influence potential customers in all sectors: health and fitness, food, fashion and beauty, high-tech, etc. So, businesses should understand the potential of influencers and influencer marketing and invest in them.³⁰¹ Opinion leadership is defined as "the degree to which an individual is able to influence other individuals' attitudes or overt behaviour informally in a desired way with relative frequency".³⁰² Opinion leaders' reputation affect source credibility³⁰³ but, on the other hand, source reputation affects opinion leader credibility.

An opinion leader obtains popularity and become *influential* according to three aspects:³⁰⁴

- a. *Who one is*: his personality traits, charisma, values, etc.
- b. *What one knows*: his competences, knowledge, expertise, etc. It is a model of opinion and people trust its advice because they consider it an expert of the sector although they are unable to verify it: paradoxically, people can evaluate the

²⁹⁹ Cfr. ZACHARIA G. & MAES P. (2000), “*Trust management through reputation mechanisms. Applied Artificial Intelligence*”, 14, pp. 881–907, in: LEE H.A., LAW R. & MURPHY J. (2010), *cit.*

³⁰⁰ EL KHOURY J. & FARAH D. (2018), *cit.*

³⁰¹ Cfr. SMITH ET AL. (2007), Reconsidering models of influence: the relationship between consumer social networks and word-of-mouth effectiveness, *Journal of advertising research*, 47, pp.387-397; Cfr. RAGGATT ET AL. (2018), I aspire to look and feel healthy like the posts convey: engagement with fitness inspiration on social media and perceptions of its influence on health and wellbeing, *BMC public health*, 18, p. 1002; KLASSEN ET AL. (2018), What people “like”: analysis of social media strategies used by food industry brands, lifestyle brands, and health promotion organizations on Facebook and Instagram, *J Med Internet Res* 20, e10227, in: SOKOLOVA K., KEFI H. (2019), *cit.*

³⁰² Cfr. ROGERS (1995), p. 27, in: LAM S.K.L. & SCHAUBROECK J. (2001), *cit.*

³⁰³ Cfr. LAM S. AND SCHAUBROECK J. (2001), *cit.* Cfr. PATZER G. L. (1983), “Source credibility as a function of communicator physical attractiveness”, *Journal of Business Research*, 11(2), pp. 229–24, in: LEE H.A., LAW R. & MURPHY J. (2010), *cit.*

³⁰⁴ Cfr. KATZ E. (1957), Two-step flow of communication: an up-to-date report on a hypothesis, *Public opinion quarterly*, 21(1), pp. 61-78, in: WENLIN L., SIDHU A., BEACOM A.M & VALENTE T.W. (2017), *cit.*

expertise of the expert only if they are expert in this sector too.³⁰⁵

- c. *Whom one knows*: characteristics related to the opinion leader's position into the network, its centrality and level degree of nodes shared.

Considering ELM model (Elaboration Likelihood Model), information content and context influence recipient's perception of information: users with low expertise follow a "peripheral route" and consider the review written by opinion leaders trustful and useful. They give more importance to the source credibility, considering more the quality and attribute of the source rather than the quality and attribute of the information itself. So, in this case is better considering and apply a SCM (source credibility model) that consider a three-dimensional framework based on *expertise*, *trustworthiness* (that will be better explained throughout this paragraph) and *attractiveness* in order to analyse a communicator's (opinion leader) characteristics that positively influence online users. Attractiveness evaluates the degree according to which an opinion leader is considered physically attractive, charming, elegant or sexy: due to the nature of online communities, attractiveness relates to the "online attractiveness", such as the social status or reviews obtained rather than the physical attractiveness.³⁰⁶

An opinion leader has public recognition and it should have at least one these characteristics:³⁰⁷

- Be considered as an expert on a certain product or service;
- Actively and frequently participate into a community;
- Give a substantial contribution within the community;
- Be considered someone with good taste related to purchase decisions.

The quality of publications, the attractiveness, the composition of the images, the

³⁰⁵ Cfr. SHANTEAU J., WEISS D. J., THOMAS R. P. & POUNDS J. C. (2002). "Performance-based assessment of expertise: How to decide if someone is an expert or not", *European Journal of Operational Research* 136, pp. 253-263, in: COREY, L. G (1971), *cit.*

³⁰⁶ Cfr. LUCA M. (2011), Reviews, reputation and revenue: the case of Yelp.com, *Harvard Business School Working paper*; Cfr. OHANIAN R. (1990), "Construction and Validation of a Scale to Measure Celebrity Endorsers' Perceived Expertise, Trustworthiness, and Attractiveness," *Journal of Advertising*, Vol. 19, No. 3, pp. 39-52, in: ZHU L., YIN G. AND HE W. (2014), *cit.*

³⁰⁷ Cfr. MCCRACKEN G. (1989), Who is the celebrity endorser? Cultural foundations of the endorsement process, *Journal of Consumer Research*, 16 (3), pp. 310-321; Cfr. LEAL G.P.A., HOR-MEYLL L.F., DE PAULA PESSOA L.A.G. (2014), Influence of virtual communities in purchasing decisions: The participants' perspective, *Journal of Business Research*, 67 (5), pp. 882-890, in: CASALÓ, L.V., FLAVIAN C & IBANES-SANCHEZ S. (2018), Influencers on Instagram: Antecedents and consequences of opinion leadership, *Journal of Business Research*

comprehensiveness of the content, the level of talkativeness and the linguistic diversity, are drivers of an opinion leaders. Trustworthiness is a competitive advantage and it sometimes increases if opinion leader shares some personal information within the community in order to increase the positive perception of the reviewer and the review:³⁰⁸ by sharing something personal such as photos or events of their daily routine, opinion leaders are perceived more friendly and create a stronger relation with their public. Opinion leaders are usually seen as people of a social status that is similar to that of the people they influence.³⁰⁹ Trustworthiness relates to the perceived caring of the opinion leaders about its followers.³¹⁰

Trust implies two entities: trustor and trustee. The first one is an individual who evaluates how much he credits a trustee. On the other hand, the second one is being evaluated by trustor is termed as trustee. Trust measures the degree of an association between two persons: *direct trust* identifies a direct relationship between trustor and trustee. If trustor and trustee frequently collaborate and interact with each other, it is possible to talk about *relational trust* while if the trust relationship is based on an emotional measure according to which trustor have confidence in trustee, it is defined as *emotional trust*. Trust can be symmetrical (A trusts of B and B trusts of A) or asymmetrical (A trusts B but B does not trust A), it is context-specific (A can trust B in a certain situation but not in another) and it is not transitive (if A trusts B and B trusts C, it does not mean that A trusts C). The frequency of interaction between users can affect the degree of trust toward these actors.³¹¹

Information accuracy increases credibility: an advice or a review about a recent activity are better perceived due to the reduced time between the event and the moment when it is shared: fresh memory allows to give detailed information.³¹²

³⁰⁸ Cfr. FORMAN C., GHOSE A. & WIESENFELD B. (2008), "Examining the relationship between reviews and sales: The role of social information in electronic markets", *Information Systems Research*, 19, pp. 291–313, in: LEE H.A., LAW R. & MURPHY J. (2010), *cit.*

³⁰⁹ LAM S.K.L. & SCHAUBROECK J. (2001), *cit.*

³¹⁰ SOKOLOVA K., KEFI H. (2019), *cit.*

³¹¹ Cfr. BAEK & KIM (2014), Trust-based access control model from sociological approach in dynamic online social network environment, *Scientific World Journal*; Cfr. HAMDI ET AL. (2012), IRIS: A novel method of direct trust computation for generating trusted social networks, *IEEE 11th International Conference on Trust, Security and Privacy in computing and communication (TrustCom)*, Liverpool, UK, IEEE (2012), pp. 616-623; Cfr. VOLAKIS N. (2011), Trust in Online Social Networks, *University of Edenburg, MSc*, in: ASIM Y., MALIK A. K., RAZA B. & SHAHID A. R. (2019), *cit.*

³¹² Cfr. WATHEN C. N. & BURKELL J. (2002), "Believe it or not: Factors influencing credibility on the Web", *Journal of The American Society for Information Science and Technology*, 53(2), pp. 134–144; Cfr. KAHANA M. J., HOWARD M. W., ZAROMB F. & WINGFIELD A. (2002), "Age dissociates recency and lag recency effects in free recall"; *Journal of Experimental Psychology: Learning, Memory, and Cognition*, 28, pp. 530–540, in: LEE H.A., LAW R. & MURPHY J. (2010), *cit.*

Opinion leaders with high audience are more likeable and in spite of the less professionalism and quality of their content, their promotions are better perceived than “classic” ads. Opinion leaders create nodes interacting with users on the web through which they share information; the mechanism that explain their media effect content is a two-flow process: opinion leaders spread information within the group and members’ adoption behaviour is due to a contagion process via structural equivalence.³¹³

Opinion leaders are not necessary the earliest adopters of innovation: they sometimes prefer monitoring the climate of opinion and then exercise their influence; they firstly want to be sure that the change will be applied.³¹⁴ Influence is defined as the ability to drive attention and obtain people’s engagement. If a blogger is influential and reliable, and people trust him, its contribute could be higher into a community in order to spread a certain behaviour. He can positively affect customers’ decision process.³¹⁵ They are leaders who act as gatekeepers: they foster social norms and behavioural changes.³¹⁶ Opinion leaders are influencers, *power users* who are considered a reliable source of information: they are active, connected, of impact, creative and trendsetter.³¹⁷ So, a strict counting of followers owned is of a good indicator of a user’s influence in terms of engaging the audience.³¹⁸

According to the study lead by Zhun, Yin and He, based on the evaluation of reviewer credibility on Yelp, it possible to conclude that: ³¹⁹

- Reviewer expertise positively affects users’ perception of review usefulness,
- Review online attractiveness positively affects users’ perception of review usefulness,
- The positive effect of reviewer online attractiveness on review usefulness

³¹³ Cfr. BURT (1999), The social capital of opinion leaders, *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 566(1), pp. 37–54, in: WENLIN L., SIDHU A., BEACOM A.M & VALENTE T.W. (2017), *cit.*

³¹⁴ VALENTE T.W. & PUMPUANG P. (2007), *cit.*

³¹⁵ ASIM Y., MALIK A. K., RAZA B. & SHAHID A. R. (2019), *cit.*

³¹⁶ VALENTE T.W. & PUMPUANG P. (2007), *cit.*

³¹⁷ TUTEN T.L. & SOLOMON M.R. (2014), *cit.*

³¹⁸ Cfr. CHA M., HADDADI H., BENEVENUTO F. & GUMMADI K. (2010), Measuring user influence in Twitter: The million follower fallacy. In Proceedings of International AAAI Conference on Weblogs and Social Media (ICWSM), in GRUDZ A., WELLMAN B. & TAKHTEYEV Y. (2011), Imagining Twitter as an imagined community, *American Behavioral Scientist* XX(X)

³¹⁹ ZHU L., YIN G. AND HE W. (2014), *cit.*

reduces more in case of reviews with extreme rating than in those with moderate ratings,

- The positive effect of reviewer expertise on review usefulness is lower in case of reviews with extreme rating than in those with moderate ratings.

There are different techniques of using opinion leaders:³²⁰

- a. *Celebrities*: they are often used by firm to promote their product. They could promote healthy food behaviour because they are highly visible and are already popular within the society. Disadvantages are represented by celebrities' behaviour: if they act differently from what they promote, the effect of the message decreases;
- b. *Self-selection*: an individual should propose himself as a volunteer to act as an opinion leader. He could not represent a popular individual in the community, but he should be guided by a personal desire to serve his community. He is often referred to as peer educators, mentors, etc. This technique is not expensive; volunteers are similar to target audience and they are interested in the topic promoted due to their volunteering. For example, analysing food sector in order to promote healthy food behaviour, a "self-selection opinion leader" may be identified with a restaurant's owner.
- c. *Self-identification*: to the population is provide a survey related to the self-perception of their own position as opinion leaders within a community and the individual with the highest score will be selected as leader;
- d. *Staff selection*: a project staff should select a leaders after community observations; for example, in promoting healthy food behaviour it could be choose someone who frequently buy healthy and biological product, fresh fruits, who cook at home and who prefers eating in local restaurant rather that fast food chains;

³²⁰ Cfr. CHILDERS T.L. (1986), Assessment of the psychometric properties of an opinion leadership scale. *Journal of Marketing Research*, 23, pp. 184-188; Cfr. ROGER E.M. & CARTANO D.G. (1962), Methods of measuring opinion leadership. *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 26, pp. 435-441; Cfr. WEIMANN G. (1991), The influentials: Back to the concept of opinion leaders? *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 55(2), 267-279; Cfr. HAMILTON H. (1971), Dimensions of self-designated opinion leadership and their correlates. *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 35(2), pp. 266-274; Cfr. BULLER ET AL. (2000), Implementing a 5-a-day peer health educator program for public sector labour and trades employees. *Health Education & Behavior*, 27(2), p.233, in: VALENTE T.W. & PUMPUANG P. (2007), *cit.*

- e. *Positional approach*: project staff select an opinion leader according to his occupational position or organizational role within a community;
- f. *Judge's rating*: key information helps identifying potential opinion leaders;
- g. *Expert identification*: a trained scientist act as a participant observer in order to choose an opinion leader. In this case and in the previously one, who choose is a knowledgeable individual rather than a project staff individual;
- h. *Snowball method*: it uses a social network analysis method starting from a randomly selected sample. Any individual of the sample (Index cases) should mention an individual of the community who can act as an opinion leader;
- i. *Sample sociometric*: it uses a social network analysis method but starts with a representative sample of possible opinion leaders. The sample is much larger than in the snowball method;
- j. *Sociometric*: it is a costly and restrictive method because almost all members of a community are interviewed. According to the nomination obtained, the social network or matrix is constructed. People who are nominated at least by 10% or 15% of interviewed are defined opinion leaders. For example, in a project aimed at the increase of fruit and vegetable consumption in a worksite, the opinion leaders were selected because considered as “central individuals” in their social groups at work.

The growth of social media has completely changed the way by which people interact, communicate and engage: a higher influence on a specific social media is directly proportional to higher engagement and visibility. Influence considerably depends on media and content type of posts. For example, considering Facebook, Twitter and Instagram, it is possible to calculate various index.³²¹

- *Overall footprint (OF)*: it measures the overall presence on the three channels, and it is given by the sum of Twitter followers, Instagram followers, Facebook page likes and Facebook people talking about;
- *Engagement & Outreach (EO)*: it measures the average engagements per post obtained by an influencer, and it is measure by the sum of Twitter replies,

³²¹ ARORA A., BANSAL S., KANDPAL C., ASWANI R. & DWIVEDI Y. (2019), “Measuring social media influencer index-insights from Facebook, Twitter and Instagram”, *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, vol. 49, pp. 86-101

favourites, retweets, likes, comments, shares and reactions;

- *Hourly Engagement Velocity (HEV)*: it measures the engagement change per hour starting from the creation of the post;
- *Daily Engagement Velocity (DEV)*: it measures the engagement change per day instead than per hour. For example, related to Instagram and Facebook, it is given by the following equation:

“(comments + likes + shares) x (total span count/total posts collected every span)”.

For Twitter, the equation is the same one, but it considers the sum of retweets, favourites and replies instead than the sum of comments, likes and shares.

So, with the diffusion of social media, it is possible to analyse a growth of “pro-am”, professional amateurs who are not professional but want to be evaluated in that manner. They are innovative and passionate amateurs who spend their free time in online blogging activities and maintain high-quality standard level. Social networks create new job positions and new working methods.³²² “Pro-Ams” behaviour can be seen in food blogging community where “amateurs work to professional standards” and are actively engaged with online community by establishing relationships and interacting with users across the food blogosphere.³²³ As Warhol predicted, all people in the world want to live their 15 minutes of fame: with social network it is possible! Higher is the number of followers and of network established, higher is the probability to be “famous” outside the network too³²⁴: for this reason, users with lot of contacts and influence become opinion leaders; they start their activity online and move it to the real world. It is the practical example of the Campanian food-blogger “Puekemed” who started its activity on a blog and ended with the opening of two sub shop.

³²² Cfr. LEADBEATER & MILLER (2004), The Pro-Am Revolution: how enthusiasts are changing our economy and society, *Demos*, p.12; Cfr. FLIHCY (2010), in MANZO C., PAIS I. & DE VITA R. (2003), “Reti personali e reputazione online ai tempi della crisi economica: il caso dei foodblogger” in *Sociologia del lavoro*, 131 (3), Franco Angeli

³²³ Cfr. LEADBEATER C. & MILLER P. (2004), *cit.*, in LOFGREN J. (2013a), *cit.*, p. 15

³²⁴ CACHIA R. (2008), *cit.*

3. Blog

One of the advantages of new technologies is that they allow to communicate with a larger group of interlocutors: communication remains interpersonal and directed to the individuals within the group but at the same time, it enlarges to the mass of readers. When people create blogs, what is personal may become mass.³²⁵ A lot of bloggers have reached higher level of trust and credibility within their peers.³²⁶ For generation Y (individual born between 1980 and 2000 and who possess advanced computer skills), blogging, SMS and instant messaging represents a common element of everyday life and a “more fashionable” tools to communicate. In this chapter, there will be explained the main characteristics of a blog and one of its sub-categories, micro-blogs, with an analysis of the most known of them: Twitter. Moreover, it will be focused the attention of food-blog that represents the first tools used by food-bloggers to communicate online. Many examples are provided to confirm the influential effect that they provoke on customers.

3.1. What it is?

A blog is an online platform that allows individuals to create a sort of “personal diary” in which they talk about different topics, share opinions, experience or personal life.³²⁷ It is considered as a revolution for communication sector.³²⁸ It arose from the mix of the word “Web” an “Log”. A Web Log is a web’s diary: it is not a private diary, but a public one, opened to everyone³²⁹ and it could be compared to an online journal. The final term “Weblogs” appeared in 1997. The earliest blog appeared in 1991 and was created by Tim Berners-Lee but, in considering the actual format, the first real blog appeared in 1996.³³⁰

³²⁵ BAYM N. (2015), *cit.*

³²⁶ MENDOZA M. (2010), “I blog. You blog. How bloggers are creating a new generation of product endorsers”, *7pm Journal of Digital Research & Publishing*, in *Digital research & Publishing*, The University of Sydney

³²⁷ PAVICIC J., ALFIREVIC N. & GABELICA N. (2007), *cit.*

³²⁸ KELIWEB, <https://blog.keliweb.it/2017/04/che-differenze-ci-sono-tra-un-blog-e-un-sito-web/>

³²⁹ DIFFERENZA TRA, <https://www.differenzatra.it/differenza-tra-forum-e-blog/>

³³⁰ Cfr. WINER D. (1999), The history of weblogs, <http://newhome.weblogs.com/historyOfWeblogs>, in: HERRING S. C., SCHEIDT L.A., WRIGHT E. & BONUS S. (2005), “Weblogs as a Bridging Genre”, *Information Technology & People*

A blog is a website in which posts are published in reverse chronological order to allow readers to view firstly news. Who writes a blog is called *blogger*. Blogs are characterized by different goals, topics, writing styles: the only common aspects of every blog is the format.³³¹ Each new content uploaded is defined *blog post*: it is characterized by highly dynamic and “short-lived” nature.³³² Posts may have different topics, they can be a combination of text and images and may include a lot of hyper-link called “*blog roll*” that create connection between blogs.³³³ The term “blog” is usually identified by its content: if a user looks for a certain topic on the web, it is quite sure to find one or more blog that talk about it, or, if not, it has the possibility to start its own because there are hosted sites, such as “Blogger” or “WordPress”, that are free to use or that propose an optional “premium” style: these sites have helped a lot of bloggers to start their activity and to obtain popularity because they are easy to use and are reached by a vast audience within worldwide web. Thanks to the Web 2.0., blogs operate in an open and free-to-access space: it is a context of participatory culture and that support the creation and sharing of contents.³³⁴ So, the easy access and availability of blog sites encourages users to be provider of content and information rather than just consumers.³³⁵

Individuals usually create blogs to express themselves and for self-empowerment.³³⁶ They should focus only on the content and do not be worried about low level programming details.³³⁷ The universe that include all blogs is called *blogosphere*, a web space where hyperlinks are very sparse. Hyperlinks are static, if they refer to a list of blogs usually located in the sidebar, or dynamic if embedded in blog entries: the first category usually represents a symbol of social affiliation because they suggest a regular visit from the author; the second category indicates a status of high level reputation and influence within the blogosphere and does not necessarily indicate a relationship

³³¹ EFIMOVA L., HENDRICK S. & ANJEWIERDEN A. (2005), “*Finding “the life between buildings”:* an approach for defining a weblog community”,

³³² AGARWAL N. & LIU H. (2008), “Blogosphere: research issues, tools and applications”, *SIGKDD Explorations*, vol 10, issue 1

³³³ BAYM N. (2015), *cit.*

³³⁴ Cfr. RETTBERG W. (2008), Blogging. *Digital Media and Society Series*, Cambridge: Polity, p.18 in: LOFGREN J. (2013b), *cit.*, p.4

³³⁵ KIEN-WENG TAN L., JIN-CHEON NA, YIN-LENG THENG, (2011) Influence detection between blog posts through blog features, content analysis, and community identity, *Online Information Review*, Vol. 35 Issue: 3, pp.425-442, <https://doi.org/10.1108/14684521111151450>

³³⁶ Cfr. BLOOD R. (2002b), *The Weblog Handbook: Practical Advice on Creating and Maintaining Your Blog*. Cambridge, MA: Perseus Publishing, in: HERRING S. C., SCHEIDT L.A., WRIGHT E. & BONUS S. (2005), *cit.*

³³⁷ AGARWAL N. & LIU H. (2008), *cit.*

between the two bloggers.³³⁸ Links can add an additional information by referring to other weblog sources or be considered as a sign of value and personal recommendation.³³⁹ Blogs from the same community might influence each other. Blog outside a community could influence blogs inside the community and vice versa. A content analysis is fundamental for measuring influence effectively within the blogosphere: for example, in their study, Kien-Weng Tan, Na and Theng, discovered that linking blogs with influence are usually shorter than the one without influence or that blogs with high authority values are frequently linked to other blogs.³⁴⁰ A link could exist between two or more blogs or do not. There are two classes of links: “reciprocated” when blogs explicitly link to each other, and “unreciprocated” when a one-way link exists between them.³⁴¹ Links propagate content information through an “influence flow”. So, writing blogs helps the creation of relationships in two ways: hyperlinks, as already explained, and comments. A higher level of hyperlinks is not directly correlated to a higher level of comments. Moreover, it is inadequate to consider the existence of social ties among these people: commenting and interact do not necessarily increase the level of trust.³⁴²

A blog is a type of web site although with the last term usually are identified only static project: web sites are characterized by a home page with a series of channel used to interact with the public and usually based on email rather than conversation. It may present upgrades but nothing relevant. Instead, a blog’s home page is dynamic and changes constantly because new articles are frequently published: a blogger can decide the frequency by which he want to publish a new article. Blog connects people due to

³³⁸ Cfr. MARLOW C.A. (2006), Linking without thinking: Weblogs, readership, and online social capital formation. Retrieved April 10, 2007, from <http://alumni.media.mit.edu/~cameron/cv/pubs/2006-linking-without-thinking.pdf>; Cfr. EFIMOVA L. & DE MOOR A. (2005), Beyond personal webpublishing: An exploratory study of conversational blogging practices. *Paper presented at the Thirty-Eighth Hawaii International Conference on System Sciences (HICSS-38)*, Big Island, Hawaii, in: QIAN H. (2008), *Social relationships in Blog webrings*”, Dissertation for PhD

³³⁹ Cfr. MORTENSEN T. & WALKER J. (2002), *Bloggning thoughts: personal publication as an online research tool*. In A.Morrison (Ed.), *Researching ICTs in Context*. InterMedia report 3/2002 (pp. 249-278). Oslo, in: EFIMOVA L., HENDRICK S. & ANJEWIERDEN A. (2005), *cit.*

³⁴⁰ Cfr. ADAR E. & ADAMIC L.A. (2005), Tracking information epidemics in blogospace, *Proceedings of the 2005 IEE/WIC/ACM International Conference on web Intelligence*, IEEE Computer Society, Washington DC; Cfr. AGARWAL N. (2008), A study of Communities and Influence in Blogosphere, *Proceedings of the 2nd SIGMOD PhD Workshop on Innovative database Research*, Vancouver, ACM; New York, NY; Cfr. GHOSH R. & LERMAN K. (2008), Community detection in using a measure of global influence, *Proceedings of the 2nd SNA-KDD Workshop on Social Network Mining and Analysis*, Las Vegas, NV, Springer, Berlin, in: KIEN-WENG TAN L., JIN-CHEON NA, YIN-LENG THENG (2011), *cit.*

³⁴¹ ADAR E. & ADAMIC L.A. (2005), *cit.*

³⁴² QIAN H. (2008), *cit.*

the presence of comments in which users can interact and share information and opinions. Comments and replies to a blog post, distinguish a blog from the web. Using simple and friendly words help in creating relationships between writer and readers.³⁴³

A blog allows to have a direct relationship with users who can interact with each other.³⁴⁴

A blog should be distinguished from a forum too. A forum is an open space on the web based on the communication style “many-to-many” and focused on specific and technical discussion, on help request and opinion sharing. On the other hand, a blog is bidirectional and based on the model “one-to-many”: a blogger decides what write and readers may comment it.³⁴⁵

It can be compared to a social network because it encompasses interaction among users from all around the globe. But there are some similarity and some differences among their characteristics:³⁴⁶

- Social friendship and blogosphere both create a sense of community and experience sharing;
- Blogosphere does not explicitly create links between nodes: it has “been influencing” fellow bloggers while social friendship’s nodes are the one who “could influence” fellow members;
- The main purpose of blogosphere is sharing ideas and opinions while social networks are used to keep or make new friendships;
- In blogosphere members’ trust and reputation is based on the response to other members’ solicitation while in SN is based on user connections and position in the network.

Authors distinguish various kind of blogs. According to Blood there are three type of blogs:³⁴⁷

³⁴³ YOUR BRAND, <http://www.yourbrand.camp/marketing-camp/blog-marketing/le-vere-differenze-tra-blog-e-sito-web>

³⁴⁴ KELIWEB, *cit.*

³⁴⁵ DIFFERENZA TRA, *cit.*

³⁴⁶ AGARWAL N. & LIU H. (2008), *cit.*

³⁴⁷ Cfr. BLOOD R. (2002a), Introduction. In J. Rodzvilla (ed.), *We've Got Blog: How Weblogs are Changing Our Culture* (pp. ix-xii). Cambridge, MA: Perseus Publishing.; Cfr. KRISHNAMURTHY S. (2002), The multidimensionality of blog conversations: The virtual enactment of September 11. Paper presented at Internet Research 3.0, Maastricht, The Netherlands, in: HERRING S. C., SCHEIDT L.A., WRIGHT E. & BONUS S. (2005), *cit.*

- a. *Filter*: its content is external to the blogger who want to talk about events, online happening, etc;
- b. *Personal journal*: a blogger talks about its activities and internal states;
- c. *Notebook*: it is a blog that contains both internal and external content; it is characterized by long post.

On the other hands, according to Krishnamurthy, there are four types, according to a comparison between personal (focused on the blogger's own life and experiences) and topical (oriented around a certain topic) or individual (single authored blog) and community (multiple authored blog):

- a. *Online diaries*: they are personal and individual;
- b. *Support group*: they are based on personal and community aspects;
- c. *Enhanced Column*: they are individual and topical. It could be considered as “filter” according to Blood's division;
- d. *Collaborative content*: they are topical and based on community.

Bloggers interact within the blogosphere: the *link-back* and *track-back* allow to send a notification to a blogger to monitor if someone has linked his blog into another page.³⁴⁸

Bloggers often introduce in their posts link to other blogs: in this way, any blog serve as an “entry point” to the whole webring. In this way, readers can have easier access to relevant information related to the same topic. Webring bloggers want to expand their net of social relationship rather that expand their readership as perceived by typical bloggers. Webrings represent a mechanism of effective information seeking and readership expansion. Bloggers who belong to the same webring share somethings in common such as an interest, a location or a hobby: webrings connect people and might create social relationships.³⁴⁹

But why does a person decide to blog? The reasons are pinpointed by Nardi, Schiano and Gumbrecht in their work “*Bloggging as social activity, or, would you let 900 million*

³⁴⁸ PAVICIC J., ALFIREVIC N. & GABELICA N. (2007), *cit.*

³⁴⁹ Cfr. DEVITT M. (2000), Ring around the Net: The advent of webrings. *Dynamic Chiropractic*, 18(1), Retrieved March 1, 2007, from <http://www.chiroweb.com/archives/18/01/04.html>; Cfr. MARLATT A. (1997), “Web rings” emerge as alternative to search engines. *internet.com*, Retrieved March 1, 2007, from http://uhoh.org/internet_dot_com_19971020.htm in: QIAN H. (2008), *cit.*

people read your diary?” in which they highlight the following five reasons:³⁵⁰

- a. *Updates others on activities and whereabouts*: bloggers use blog to record their events and activities, document their lives, maintaining and strengthening social bonds;
- b. *Express opinions to influence others*: bloggers want to share their ideas, beliefs and advice;
- c. *Seek other’s opinions and feedback*
- d. *“Think by writing”*: having an audience stimulate bloggers and provide them new ideas and topics about discuss. “Thinking” is an individual process but the writer’s consciousness of the audience introduces the social aspect into an individual activity;
- e. *Release emotional tension*.

The para-social interaction theory expresses the relationship between a spectator and a performer: this relation might be established between bloggers and their followers. The relationship is unidirectional because users can add comments and discuss the content on the blog, but for an influencer is difficult to respond and to engage a true discussion with each follower due to the high level of audience.³⁵¹ Until 2000, 77% of online users read blogs.³⁵² nowadays, this percentage is reduced due to the presence of new forms of online communication and the multitude of social networks in which bloggers have moved their activities. This situation can be confirmed by the data obtained in the survey and explained in chapter 5. The number of followers or friends identifies the blogger’s influence: more followers it has, the higher is the potential influence of the blog. Similarly, when more followers depend on the blog, the blogger has more probability to be considered an opinion leader.³⁵³ Nardi suggests that readers create blogs as much as writer: readership is one component of being part of a blog! Blogs are sometimes read for boredom or to chilling, but other times they are habitually read. Users usually read the first posts that occur in a blog: readers prefer these one rather than more recently

³⁵⁰ NARDI B.A., SCHIANO D.J. & GUMBRECHT M. (2004), *Blogging as Social Activity, or, would you let 900 million people read you diary?*, *ResearchGate*

³⁵¹ SOKOLOVA K., KEFI H. (2019), *cit.*

³⁵² MENDOZA M. (2010), *cit.*

³⁵³ FENG L. & DU T.C. (2014), *cit.*

posts shared on other blog but that are not the first ones that appear on that blog. So, what matter is the order in which posts appear on the blog. A blog is perceived as “one person’s ‘take’ on an issue, one person’s perspective on a story, left open to the evaluation of the reader rather than as an unbiased source of information”. Readers are interested into a blog for their content more than for the blogger. In Baumer, Sueyoshi and Tomlinson’s study, are highlight the following reasons according to which and how readers read a blog:³⁵⁴

- *Routine*: individuals habitually read blogs;
- *Not information overloads*: there are so many information about a certain topic due to the presence of numerous blogs and other sources that readers are unable to distinguish relevant or important information;
- *Non-chronous*: the exact time of the post does not affect readers’ activity;
- *Identity*: online and offline readers’ identities are not separate;
- *“Being a part”*: regular reading creates a sense of belonging a to blog community and a sense of connectedness;
- *Interactional approach*: blogs are not a genre but a medium that present multi-directional communication characteristics.

Users’ identification with a blogging community positive affects their attitude towards using the blogging community but does not reduce their perceived community pressure and consequently does not increase their attitude in using the community. Perceived usefulness refers to the likelihood that the use of new technology will increase performance and benefit. Users’ perceived usefulness of a blogging community increases users’ attitude in using it and consequently users’ intention in remaining in the community.³⁵⁵

³⁵⁴ Cfr. LENHART A.B. (2005), *Unstable texts: an ethnographic look at how bloggers and their audience negotiate self-presentation, authenticity, and norm formation*, Washington DC; Cfr. NARDI, B.A., SCHIANO, D.J. & GUTMBRECHT M. (2004), *cit.*, in: BAUMER E., SUEYOSHI M. & TOMLINSON B. (2008), *Exploring the role of the reader in the activity of blogging*, *International World Wide Web Conference Committee (IW3C2)*

³⁵⁵ Cfr. DAVIS F.D. ET AL. (1989), “User acceptance of computer technology: a comparison of two theoretical models”, *Management Science*, Vol. 35 No. 8, pp. 982-1002, in: CHUNG-CHI SHEN, JYH-SHEN CHIOU, (2009) "The effect of community identification on attitude and intention toward a blogging community", *Internet Research*, Vol. 19 Issue: 4, pp.393-407, [https:// doi.org/10.1108/10662240910981362](https://doi.org/10.1108/10662240910981362)

A blog post is considered influential if it characterized by these attributes:³⁵⁶

- *Recognition*: a post is recognized by many. It could be measure by the numbers on “inlinks” to a post;
- *Activity generation*: a post’s capability to generate interactions is due to the number of comments it receives and to the amount of discussions it initiates;
- *Novelty*: a large amount of outlinks suggest that the post refers to other previously posts and so it is perceived as less new. Less number of outlinks are related to a higher novelty;
- *Eloquence*: the length of a post could be used to measure if a post is influential or not. Longer posts are considered “bored” and less individuals are prone to read it.

A phenomenon that arose from the popularity of blog is called “Blook” and is the result of a process in which a blog is published as a book: blog has revolutionised the way of communicating and interact. Many of them have attracted lot of readers so, they have already a well spread audience. Blook obtains success due to the simplicity of its writing style: bloggers write mixing various styles and use a familiar form. So, blook could be seen as a hybrid literature.³⁵⁷ A lot of food-bloggers are writing and publishing their book, such as “Everyday cooking from Italy” by Benedetta Parodi or “Food-blogger in viaggio. Ricette con e senza glutine con la conta dei carboidrati” by Ilaria Bertinelli.

At the same time, companies require customers relationship to create and to develop brands’ values. Customers apply brands’ meaning and identity to everyday life, enriching it and redefining its content. Firms need customers’ opinions in order to understand their point of view, their inner and tacit needs. For example, companies may create blogs in which customers can share their opinions, suggestions, original contents or ideas.³⁵⁸ Companies can analyse blogs to track consumers’ behaviours and beliefs, reaction to the launch of a product, changes in consumers’ attitudes and interests.

Recent studies have tried to explain the blurred line between blogging and journalism:

³⁵⁶ AGARWAL N. (2008), *cit.*

³⁵⁷ LANSDOWNE A. (2010), “Blooks: a new era of literature?”, *7pm Jourman of digital research & publishing, in Digital research & Publishing, The University of Sydney*

³⁵⁸ Cfr. LEONARD D. & RAYPORT J.F. (2000), Spark innovation through empathic design, *Harvard Business Review*, 6, pp. 103–115, in: DI MARIA E., FINOTTO V. (2008), *cit.*

while some people consider blog a sort or mainstream media ideal for personal expression, others consider they have a fundamental role in journalism.³⁵⁹ Journalists consider blogs as an alternative form of new and public opinion.³⁶⁰ Unlike journalistic or political blog, food blogs are independent.³⁶¹ Amateurism of food-bloggers has seen as “citizen journalism”.

3.2. Microblog

Microblogs arose with the spread of Web 2.0 and present a great value due to their creative language, real-time, dynamic and direct nature.³⁶² They create a new easier way to communicate and spread news and information and they could be defined as a mix of blogging and instant messaging: such platforms have become very popular because they make communication with the others more convenient.³⁶³ They have obtained a lot of popularity since their introduction in 2005 because they distinguish themselves from the other social networking tools due to their shortness, responsiveness, spontaneity and mobility.³⁶⁴ Microblogging is an online broadcast medium and it refers to the act or practice of posting brief and short entries on a blog or social media website: it is smaller than classic blogs and include short posts whom length is limited, with no more than 200 characters.³⁶⁵

According to the Cambridge dictionary³⁶⁶, a microblog is a type of blog developed in form of short messages usually sent from a mobile phone. These short messages (defined *micro posts*) include images, video, audio and hyperlinks. While blogs share information, micro-blogs are used to share opinions.³⁶⁷ Web pages are rich, less frequent

³⁵⁹ Cfr. HAAS T. (2005), From “public journalism” to the “public’s journalism”? Rhetoric and reality in the discourse on weblogs." *Journalism Studies*, 6(3), pp. 387-396; Cfr. MILLER C.R. & SHEPARD D. (2004), Blogging as social action: A genre analysis of the weblog. In L. Gurak, S. Antonijevic, L. Johnson, C. Ratliff & J. Reyman (Eds.), *Into the blogosphere; rhetoric, community and culture of weblogs*, University of Minnesota; Cfr. REESE S.D., RUTIGNANO L., HYUN K. & JEONG J. (2007), Mapping the blogosphere: Professional and citizen-based media in the global news arena. *Journalism*, 8, 235-261. in: QIAN H. (2008), *cit.*

³⁶⁰ Cfr. LASICA J.D (2001), Blogging as a form of journalism. *USC Annenberg Online Journalism Review*, <http://www.ojr.org/ojr/workplace/1017958873.php>, in: HERRING S. C., SCHEIDT L.A., WRIGHT E. & BONUS S. (2005), *cit.*

³⁶¹ Cfr. HARTEL J. (2010) Information activities and resources in an episode of gourmet cooking, *Informationr.net*, in: LOFGREN J. (2013a), *cit.*, p.57

³⁶² MEIJ E., WEERKAMP W. & DE RIJKE M. (2012), “Adding semantics to microblog posts”, *WSDM*

³⁶³ LIFEWIRE, <https://www.lifewire.com/what-is-microblogging-3486200>

³⁶⁴ LI FENG & DU T.C. (2014), “Listen to me – Evaluating the influence of micro-blogs”, *Decision Support System* (62), pp. 119-130

³⁶⁵ DICTIONARY, <https://www.dictionary.com/browse/microblogging>

³⁶⁶ CAMBRIDGE DICTIONARY, <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/it/dizionario/inglese/microblog>

³⁶⁷ LI FENG & DU T.C. (2014), *cit.*

and evolve after creation while microblog posts do not change after being posted.³⁶⁸

Microblog could be used for organizational usage due to their free and open source software. It should increase the social and emotional welfare of the workplace. For this usage, microblog activities are divided in three categories (information, community and action) and into twelve subcategories in which tweets are divided according to their functions:³⁶⁹

- a. *Information*: it includes one-way interaction;
- b. *Community*: it is divided into two subcategories:
 - *Community building*: they create online community and enforce ties;
 - *Dialogue*: it creates interactive dialogue due to the possibility of tweet and retweet;
- c. *Action*: this category allows to promote events, to ask for donation or volunteers, to sell product, etc.

Hillstrom identify four categories of users:³⁷⁰

- a. *Elite*: they provide mass content and are considered influencers;
- b. *Difference maker*: they “make the difference” and participate when they can identify a shared value;
- c. *Knowledge seeker*: they use a community to learn and to grow;
- d. *Attention seeker*: they exist both in online and offline communities.

The advantages offered by microblog are multiple, such as the following one:³⁷¹

- *Less time spent developing content*: posts are short and take less time to be written or developed;
- *Less time spent consuming individual pieces of content*: short posts allow to

³⁶⁸ TEEVAN J., RAMAGE D. AND MORRIS M.R. (2011), “#TwitterSearch: a comparison of microblog search and web search”, *WSDM*

³⁶⁹ ZHAO D. & ROSSON M.B. (2009), "How and why people Twitter". *How and why people Twitter: the role that micro-blogging plays in informal communication at work. ACM GROUP2009 Conference.* p. 243. doi:10.1145/1531674.1531710

³⁷⁰ TUTEN T.L. & SOLOMON M.R. (2014), *cit.*

³⁷¹ LIFEWIRE, *cit.*

be quickly informed and reduce time needed to read or watch something;

- *The opportunity for more frequent posts:* posts are shorter than the one prepared for a classic blog so, it is possible to produce shorter but more frequently posts;
- *An easy way to share urgent or time-sensitive information:* for example, with a single tweet on Twitter, it is possible to upload a news in the same moment it is going to happen. For this reason, lot of catastrophes, such as Mumbai terror attack in 2008, are communicated through microblog. Understanding the geolocation information is fundamental for quickly responses.³⁷²
- *Easier and more direct way to communicate with followers:* communication and interaction are facilitated and encouraged by commenting, retweeting, reblogging, liking, etc;
- *Mobile convenience:* it is possible to manage a microblog from mobile phones or tablet. Its shortness does not create problem for reading or writing a post from a phone.

For all these advantages, microblogs have become platforms for marketing and public relations. They have revolutionized the way information is consumed. The main issue is privacy: users may broadcast sensitive and personal information of anyone who visit their public feed.³⁷³

There are many differences between microblogs and web page:³⁷⁴

- Microblogs are used to search relevant temporary information;
- Microblogs are used to monitor contents while web pages are used to search and learn topics;
- Microblog queries are more static and change less than web queries;
- Microblogs include social contents and events information while web include more basic facts;

³⁷² IKAWA Y., ENOKI M. & TATSUBORI M. (2012), Location inference using microblog messages, WWW

³⁷³ *The Telegraph*. "Google Buzz redesigned after privacy complaints". London. February 15, 2010. Retrieved March 25, 2010.

³⁷⁴ TEEVAN J., RAMAGE D. AND MORRIS M.R. (2011), *cit.*

- Microblogs are specialized in minimal content.³⁷⁵

3.2.1. Twitter

Twitter was founded in 2006 and obtained public notice in 2007. In 2009, he grown amazingly and obtained media attention. It represents the most successful example of micro-blogging application.³⁷⁶ Twitter is one of the largest microblog services with more than 100 million of users around the world: users can send messages from their home or office because Twitter works perfectly with smartphones too.³⁷⁷ Twitter is designed a microblogging network in which users send *tweets* that are short messages with no more than 140 characters: if a message exceeds 140 characters it could be split into more parties (X of Y) or (X/Y) that are indicated at the end of the message.³⁷⁸ There is no personal profile and users are identified only by their username and, optionally, by real name. Profile are public by default, but users can modify it and make it private. A profile includes the full name, the location, a web page, a quickly biography, number of tweets of the user, number of followers and number of people who follow it back.³⁷⁹ After is growth, new concepts have arose: *hashtags* (indicate with the # symbol) that refers to a topic, *mentions* (identified with the @ symbol) that refers to another user and *retweets* that can be compared to an e-mail forward. Hashtags allow to monitor events and trending topics³⁸⁰ that are indicate in the right sidebar of the homepage by default into a “top ten list”.

Unlike other social networks friendship on Twitter can be unidirectional (as on Instagram): if A follows B, B can decide to not follow A back. Tweets appear on users’ friends’ pages and they could decide if *retweet* (repost) it or not: if A tweets something and B retweets it, B’s friends can view it. A can become B’s friend although B does not return friendship: in this case, A can view B’s tweet, but B cannot view A’s tweets.³⁸¹

³⁷⁵ Cfr. REUBER A.R. & FISHER E. (2011), Social interaction via new social media: (how) can interactions on Twitter affect effectual thinking and behaviour?, *Journal of Business Venuting* (26), pp. 1-18, in : FENG L. & DU T.C. (2014), *cit.*

³⁷⁶ FENG L. & DU T.C. (2014), *cit.*

³⁷⁷ IKAWA Y., ENOKI M. & TATSUBORI M. (2012), *cit.*

³⁷⁸ GRUDZ A., WELLMAN B. & TAKHTEYEV Y. (2011), *cit.*

³⁷⁹ KWAK H., LEE C., PARK H. & MOON S. (2010), “What isTwitter, a Social Network or a News Media?”, *WWW*

³⁸⁰ Cfr. KWAK H., LEE C., PARK H. & MOON S. (2010), *cit.*, in: MEIJ E., WEERKAMP W. & DE RIJKE M. (2012), *cit.*

³⁸¹ STRINGHINI G., KRUEGEL C. & VIGNA G. (2010), *cit.*

The retweet mechanism allows to spread information. Kwak et al.'s study shows that a retweet usually reaches an average of 1000 users and reach a large audience no matter what the number of followers of the original tweets is: they spread fast because once retweeted, a tweet is almost instantly retweeted again. So, retweets can be considered as a communication channel of information diffusion.³⁸² Every time a message is retweeted by someone, his name is indicated into the message in order to create a chronological chain of people who retweeted a message after whom: when the chain become too long, only the name of the original poster and the most recent poster are indicated.³⁸³

Tweets are grouped by hashtags (identified by the # symbol) that allow users to search easily for their topic of interest.³⁸⁴ Kevin Hillstrom, CEO of "MineThatData", has identified twitter posts in categories and divided it into *original statement*, *reply to an original statement* and *repost (retweet)* of others' statement.³⁸⁵

Users consider a tweet credibility based on trust relationship with its author: but what happen when a user search a topic rather than follow a single author? Evaluate credibility has become an important topic so, a lot of researchers have begun to create systems to automatically classify a tweet credibility. Credibility can be influenced by features of the page itself, properties of the user, username or user image. Pal and Counts 's study shows that an author who has more followers received higher interesting rates for his content because it is considered as a credible source. In general, Twitter helps in content sharing and increase credibility of tweets due to the connection among posters.³⁸⁶

Network aimed at interchanging of opinions about literature and professional activities. It allows to follow international convention, congresses, events and so on. It is going to

³⁸² KWAK H., LEE C., PARK H. & MOON S. (2010), *cit.*

³⁸³ GRUDZ A., WELLMAN B. & TAKHTEYEV Y. (2011), *cit.*

³⁸⁴ STRINGHINI G., KRUEGEL C. & VIGNA G. (2010), *cit.*

³⁸⁵ TUTEN T.L. & SOLOMON M.R. (2014), *cit.*

³⁸⁶ Cfr. LAZAR J., MEISELWITZ G. & FENG J. (2007), "Understanding Web Credibility: a synthesis of the research literature", *Foundations and Trends in Human-Computer Interaction*, 1(2), pp.139-202; Cfr. FLANAGIN A.J & METZGER M.J. (2000), "Perception of Internet information credibility", *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly* 77(3), pp. 515-540; Cfr. PAL A. & COUNTS S. (2011), "What's in a @name? How name value biases judgement of microblog authors", *ICWSM*, in: MORRIS M.R., COUNTS S., ROSEWAY A., HOFF A. & SCHWARZ J. (2012), *Tweeting is believing? Understanding Microblog credibility perceptions, Twitter and Social Transparency*

revolutionize the journalistic world because it offers an immediate connection between emissary and receiver.³⁸⁷

A study on food consumption through social media examines the potential of Twitter to provide insight into US dietary choices: results show how dietary habits (indicated by food mentions) are strictly correlated with the state-wide obesity and diabetes rates, although women usually tweet about less caloric food than men. In fact, tweets allow to analyse dining experience, nutritional values of the food tweeted, demographic characteristics and interests of users who made the tweet.³⁸⁸

3.3. Food blog

Cookbooks were among the first books published in Nuremberg in 1485! Since then, recipe collection has been shared by the emerging media such as television or radio. Food-related media has professionalised and depersonalised their activity so, in order to re-establish communal recipe-sharing traditions, the advent of blog, and especially food blog, propose a new way for sharing information about food in non-professional ways and to a larger audience than the one formed by families or friends: blogs give voice to “ordinary” people. “Amateurs” could broadly share their recipes online, write restaurant reviews, give product advice and talk about issues such as seasonality, locality or diet; blogs can be considered more dynamic than cookbooks because they have multiple entry points and means for people to discover them. Some bloggers have started to write blog and have obtained professional aspirations such as Ganda Suthivarakom who started her activity writing a blog and becoming the director of the “Saveur” online journal (www.saveur.com); others, just want to remain hobbyists.³⁸⁹

Food blogs have become a popular tool used by people to share their recipes and food experiences and they are considered a relevant source for food research. With smartphone users can post on their blog in any place and any time: so, food culture may

³⁸⁷ CALDEVILLA DOMINGUEZ D. (2010), *cit.*

³⁸⁸ ABBAR S., MEJOVA Y. & WEBER I. (2015), You tweet what you eat: studying food consumption through Twitter”, *ACM CHI Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems*

³⁸⁹ LOFGREN J. (2013b), “Food Blogging and Food-related Media Coverage”, in *Cookbook. A new scholarly view*, Donna Lee Brien & Adele Wessell (ed.)

be spread globally.³⁹⁰ The term “recipe blog” could be used but food-bloggers prefer to remain more generalist due to the presence of different topic categories.

Food-bloggers who usually write restaurant reviews are geographically delimited and are not accessible to everyone while who write recipes reach a wider audience. They are not geographically bounded and do not depend on time: although food is seasonal, a recipe shared two years ago has the same value as a recipe shared today.³⁹¹ Food blogs usually represent a mix of “foodie” or gourmet interest, blog writing and photography: they can focus on personal, physical or emotional aspects of food, they concern about health or well-being, they engage with global concerns, etc.³⁹² Due to their large audience and their various topics, food-bloggers can influence food choices and changes dietary behaviour. Food blogs share similar characteristics of format and style: they are based around a recipe or a review and include photos of the products described. Writing a post focused on a recipe involves the selection or creation of it, the research and list of ingredients, the preparation and photo- and video-documentation of the making process.³⁹³ The prototypical structure of food blog is the one represented in Figure 5 and proposed by Diemer-Frobenius:³⁹⁴

³⁹⁰ Cfr. MCGAUGHEY K. (2010), Food in binary: identity and interaction in two German food blogs, *Cult Anal*, pp. 68-98; Cfr. LEE S.H., SAMDANIS M. & GKIOUSOU S. (2014), Hybridizing food culture in computer-mediated environments: creativity and improvisation in Greek food blogs, *International Journal of Human-Computer Studies* (72), pp. 82-89, in: OLSEN N.V. AND CHRISTENSEN K. (2015), *cit.*

³⁹¹ LOFGREN J. (2013a), *cit.*, p.10

³⁹² COX A.M. & BLAKE M.K. (2011), "Information and food blogging as serious leisure", *Aslib Proceedings*, Vol. 63 Issue: 2/3, pp.204-220, <https://doi.org/10.1108/00012531111135664>

³⁹³ LOFGREN J. (2013a), *cit.*, pp. 5-8

³⁹⁴ DIEMER S. & FROBENIUS M. (2013), “When making a pie, all ingredients must be chilled. Including you. Lexical, syntactical and interactive features in online discourse”- A synchronic study of food blogs in Culinary Linguistic: The Cheft's Special, Gerhardt C. et al., John Benjamins (ed.), Amsterdam, pp.53-81

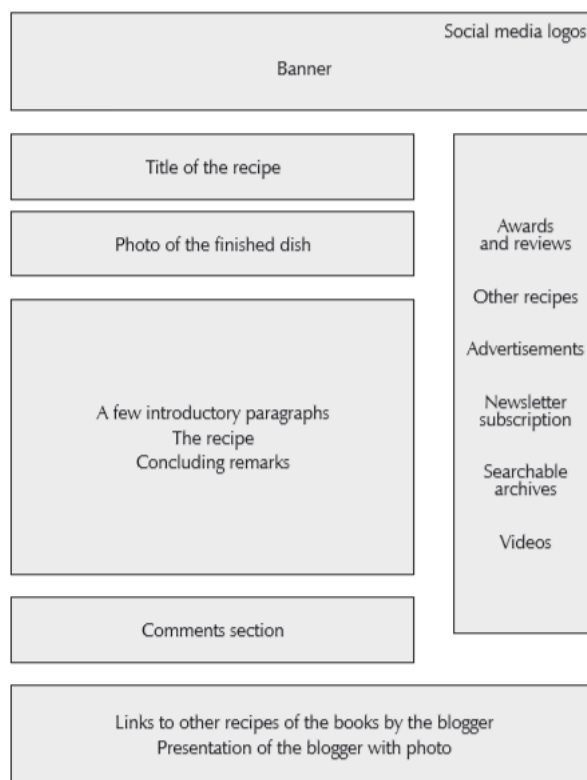


Figure 5. Prototypical structure of the food blogs in the corpus.

A blogger should firstly identify a platform such as WordPress, Tumblr, etc. Cucumbertown for example is dedicated exclusively to food blogs. Then, a food blog should have a name easy to recall, spell and not too long; in the last step, a blogger could start with the creation of a blog identity, an identity that reflect its writer. Finally, a blogger can start writing his content: the more content he creates, the more valuable keywords he is gathering on his blog. Photographic contents are relevant.³⁹⁵ Food-bloggers avoid “off topic” and although they talk about matters non-related to food, such as personal experience but, they unlike to post political or controversial topics. Sharing personal stories and experience create a sense of authenticity and honesty: for example, they named a recipe with the name of who transmit it to them; if they wrote a grandma-cake recipe they could talk about their family, a special event where their grandmother has prepared the cake or add a photo to extend the blog far beyond online space. Interrelation between on- and offline community in the case of food blogs are fundamental aspects of culture and identity: sharing recipe within a

³⁹⁵ CUCUMBERTOWN, <https://medium.com/cucumbertown-magazine/what-is-food-blogging-and-how-to-become-a-food-blogger-2b8a6f96a07d>

community allows to spread food traditions and customs and to contribute to the creation of food cultural identity. Food blogs consider Internet as an “arena for thinking about how contemporary culture is constituted”. Food blogs do not attract negative comments because they include the act of sharing and not discussing about a certain topic: when food is shared or offered, people are less prone to be critical.

“Epicurious” by Condé Nast introduced in 1999 and “Chowhound” launched in 1997 are considered precursors of food blogs. David Lebovitz launched the first food blogs to promote his first cookbook in 1999. “Julie/Julia project” was the first food blog created by an “ordinary” user.³⁹⁶ Writing about food or belonging to a community of foodies gives people a sense of achievement, authenticity, belonging and stimulating environment: blogs represent a marketing platform where food-bloggers can interact with followers.³⁹⁷ In addition to training and experience, if they have it, food writers share an intimate bond with their followers: they can disseminate information about what readers put in their mouth.³⁹⁸

For example, the Australian Lorraine Elliott created her food blog “Not Quite Nigella” (www.notquitenigella.com) in 2007: she started her activity by proposing her favourite recipes with demonstration, restaurant reviews and sometimes interviews with chefs. Her blog ranked the 45 position in the “top 100 Australian Blog” published in April 2009 and presented 95.000 unique readers and 270.000 pages views per month. She obtained so much popularity to feature in “The Sydney Morning Herald’s 2010 edition” of “The Foodies’ Guide to Sydney”. Companies and brands started to understand Lorraine Elliott’s potential in order to communicate with customers through her blog: she collaborated with Toyota in promoting the new model of the

³⁹⁶ Cfr. HINE C., KENDALL L. & BOYD D. (2009), "Question One: how can qualitative Internet researchers define the boundaries of their project" in *Internet inquiry: conversations about method*, Baym, N.K. & Markham A.N., Sage (ed), Los Angeles, pp.1-32; Cfr. SUTHIVARAKOM G. (2011), How food blogging changed my life, *SAVEUR*, 9 May, <http://www.saveur.com/article/Kitchen/How-Food-Blogging-Changed-My-Life>; Cfr. SENYEI K. (2012), *Food Blogging for dummies*, Hoboken: John Wiley & Sons, Inc, in: LOFGREN J. (2013a), *cit.*, p.5-8

³⁹⁷ Cfr. MOHSEN M. G. (2017). *Foodies in the UK: A sense of self, connection and belonging beyond the passion?* In M. Stieler (Ed.), *Creating marketing magic and innovative future marketing trends: Proceedings of the 2016 Academy of Marketing Science (AMS) Annual Conference* (pp. 457–467). Cham, CH: Springer; Cfr. ROUSSEAU S. (2012). *Food and social media: You are what you tweet*. Lanham, MD: AltaMira/Rowman & Littlefield. in: CUOMO M.T., TORTORA D., FESTA G., GIORDANO A. & METALLO G. (2017), Enablers for end.user entrepreneurship: an investigation on Italian food bloggers, *Wiley Periodicals: Psychology & marketing* (2017), vol 34, pp.1109-1118

³⁹⁸ COLUMBIA JOURNALISM REVIEW, https://www.cjr.org/from_the_archives/food-writing-cookbook.php

Prius. She was invited to many restaurants with the hope to obtain a review in her blog. She has always tried to be honest, providing also negative feedbacks. Moreover, Elliott recognized that food blog impact with their activities³⁹⁹ and their impact may be used by companies and food industry in general.

Food blogging may be constructed as follow:⁴⁰⁰

- a. *The cooking and posting bloggers*: bloggers cook extensively and post their final product. They monitor each step and often combine it with a story;
- b. *The restaurant reviews*: bloggers evaluate restaurants according to the quality of food, service, ambience, price range, etc. They may tell why they choose that restaurant, what they have loved or hated and the reasons why;
- c. *The super niche blogs*: they are focused on a specific niche subject such as no bake, gluten-free, vegan, etc.

Many blog overlap elements of these themes. There is not a common rule: each blog is a personal journal.

In the following chapter, will be detailed explained the characteristic of food-bloggers and their activity, how they can influence customers' opinions, the reason why companies prefer them rather than celebrity in order to promote a product, and other aspects of this new career.

³⁹⁹ Cfr. EVANGELOU P. (2009), Not Quite Nigella, Upstart, viewed 28 April 2010, <http://www.upstart.net.au/notquite-nigella/>; Cfr. ELLIOT L. (2009a), Made From Scratch: Mascarpone Cheese & A Feature in The Foodies Guide to Sydney 2010!, Not Quite Nigella, viewed 28 April 2010, <http://www.notquitenigella.com/2009/10/12/made-from-scratchmascarpone-cheese/>; Cfr. ELLIOTT L. (2009b), Emmilou Lounge and Tapas Bar, Surry Hills, Not Quite Nigella, viewed 28 April 2010, <http://www.notquitenigella.com/2009/08/25/manifold-destiny-cooking-an-environmentally-friendlymeal-on-your-car-engine/>; Cfr. ELLIOT L. (2010), Advertising, Sponsorship and PR, Not Quite Nigella, viewed 28 April 2010, <http://www.notquitenigella.com/working-with-not-quite-nigella/>; Cfr. TSIASMIS M. (2009), Top 100 Australian Blogs Index, Dipping Into the Blogpond, viewed 28 April 2010, <http://blogpond.com.au/top-100-australian-blogs-index/>, in: MENDOZA M. (2010), *cit*

⁴⁰⁰ CUCUMBERTOWN, <https://medium.com/cucumbertown-magazine/what-is-food-blogging-and-how-to-become-a-food-blogger-2b8a6f96a07d>

4. Food-bloggers

4.1. Who are they?

Food-bloggers are considered a new form of amateur professionalism. A food-blogger is an individual who has a strong passion for cuisine, who loves undergoing new recipes and seeing the satisfaction into the eyes of his tablemates. Being a food-blogger is not just a matter of having a blog and sharing recipe. The passion for food is a necessary element but is not a sufficient condition to be considered a food-blogger. Paola of “Cucina vista mare”, a blog hosted by “Giallo zafferano” in the post “What does it mean to be a food blogger?” writes:

*“The job of a food-blogger seems to be easy: cook, put the plate on the table, take a photo and post a recipe. Reality is a little bit different...and being a food-blogger means more than simply cook; food passion is a necessary but not sufficient condition to create a blog. A food-blogger should have general knowledge and can correctly write. He must have informatic skills: SEO, indexing, fine-tuning, update...because blog should be update. [...] A food-blogger must know food world, raw materials, producers and companies, local “excellence”, traditional and regional recipes, food intolerance, because the blog is online, and a blogger is in contact with a large audience with different needs and difficulties and that usually ask something very specific. A blogger must be able to correctly provide information. To specialize and to be prepared, a food-blogger attends classes: cooking class, planning class, class to learn how to use ‘pasta madre’ and how to make delicious bread using home oven, etc. [...] Recipes are tested and shared online only if there are sure of the ending result. [...] Seriousness and professionalism are important qualities for a food-blogger!”*⁴⁰¹

Food sector is one of the main markets in which these new jobs are arising, especially for new recipes introduction. One of the most used channels is represented by “YouTube” (whose characteristics has been explained in paragraph 2.3.4) that includes more than 46% of food contents, Twitter (explained in paragraph 3.2.1) with 15% of content and Facebook (paragraph 2.3.1) with 8%. Food-bloggers, also defined “foodie”,

⁴⁰¹ GIALLO ZAFFERANO, <https://blog.giallozafferano.it/cucinavistamare/cosa-vuol-dire-essere-una-food-blogger/>

are mostly formed by women, probably because of the traditional and symbolic dimension related to the food and cuisine world: food blogging is related to a domestic daily dimension, connected with female world, rather than the “haute cuisine” related to male chefs. Average of bloggers have 30 years old. They usually transform their passion for food into an activity when there is a significant step in their life: maternity, loss of the job or other cases when they decide to transform a simple hobby into a shared activity.⁴⁰²

During an interview with Emanuele Orlando for “Business Insider Italia”, Egidio Cerrone, a Campania food-blogger whose activity is explained in paragraph 5.6 focused on his interview, explain his decision to work with food:

“I have naturally created my blog, as an evolution of my way of writing about the place where I have eaten. I started by simply talking about my emotion as if I was always doing new discoveries, that deserve to be described and shared. Then the turning point. I understood that Puokemed made me happier than ever and to keep it, I should have taken many risks so, I decided to quit my job. Moreover, I would not transform it in something commercial so, I have decided to maintain it “pure”, as it has always been, and I have created two commercial variations: “Puok Burger Store”, my local, and “Fatelardo”, my communication factory. This has always been fundamental to me: keeping Puokemed a blog with a completely not commercial nature. Nowadays, tons of people decide to become food-blogger exclusively for economic reasons and this is a mistake: maybe, the fact that I am transparent and that this characteristic emerges from my communication, is the reason of my great number of followers. Economical satisfactions are just a consequence of what I do, they have never been a reason otherwise I would have made a completely different choice.”⁴⁰³

With the increase of social media and the desire to become “influencer”, thousands of users try to become food-bloggers. Emerging from the mass of “colleagues” is difficult due to the increasing number of profiles dedicated to food and created on Instagram: housewives who want to share their creations, aspiring pastry chef who share their cakes, teenagers who post pizza or sushi photos, etc. Between billion of users, a food-

⁴⁰² MANZO C., PAIS I. & DE VITA R. (2003), *cit.*

⁴⁰³ BUSINESS INSIDER ITALIA, <https://www.msn.com/it-it/lifestyle/notizie/ferragni-fatti-più-in-là-è-l'ora-dei-foodblogger/ar-BBSEZNF>

blogger, or at least someone who aspire to be considered as a real food-blogger, should try to distinguish himself! In doing so, he should be accurate with details, for example about the topic proposed; he should be clear in his post; he should create user experience, be precise and transparent in the language used, be captive and innovative. On the other hand, if he wants to focus on a blog rather than social media, food passion is not enough and a food-blogger should be accompanied by writing capabilities, managing of a blog or social networks profiles and food photos. Images are a fundamental aspect to consider because the visual part is necessary to obtain a good confirmation from the followers. Sometimes food-bloggers also participate to photography classes in order to give value to their plate.

Casalò and others, in their work focusing on Instagram account and the influence of opinion leaders on fashion industry, analyse various hypothesis related to the quality, quantity, uniqueness and originality of an Instagram account and conclude with these evaluations:

- Perceived originality has a positive effect on perceived opinion leadership;
- Perceived uniqueness has a positive effect on perceived opinion leadership;
- Perceived quality has not a positive effect on perceived opinion leadership;
- Perceived quantity has not a positive effect on perceived opinion leadership;
- Opinion leadership has a positive effect on user intention to interact in the Instagram account;
- Opinion leadership has a positive effect on user intention to recommend the Instagram account online;
- Opinion leadership has a positive effect on user intention to follow the advice obtained in the Instagram account;
- The consumer's online interaction propensity reinforces the influence of opinion leadership on his intention;
- The consumer's online interaction propensity does not reinforce the influence of opinion leadership on his recommendation intention;
- The perceived fit of the account with the consumer's personality does not strengthen the influence of opinion leadership on his intention to follow the advice offered by the account.

These conclusions have certain limitations because they are related to a study focused on fashion-bloggers' accounts rather than food-bloggers' ones. Nevertheless, considering the increasing use of social media and the reliability associated to the by new generations, it is possible to consider trustworthy these data also for food-bloggers cases.

As it emerges from Casalò's study, originality is one of the characteristics that should distinguish an influencer: originality has been seen as a degree of newness and differentiation achieved by someone by doing some activities considered unusual, innovative or sophisticated.⁴⁰⁴

Create original content has higher impact on audience and the originality of an Instagram post may have a direct impact on user's perception. For example, it is possible to mention the promotional campaign provided by the Neapolitan food-blogger Puokemed for the relaunch of the "Aegon Targaryen burger", whose name celebrate the famous international HBO series "Game of thrones". Puokemed's communication factory (Fatelardo studios) realises a promotional video based on a soccer game modifying footballers' faces with different images. The commentator announces a strategic change in the team: the coach decides to replace Demogorgon (another burger whose name is inspired to the Netflix original tv series "Stanger things") with Aegon Targaryen burger which was absent in the "Puok burger store" for 3 months and that was reintroduced in occasion of the exit of the last season of the HBO series. In the video, commentator says: *"Be careful! Start signal of the referee. On the side-line, the bleachers stood up in order to host, as it deserves, one of the most loved players by the fans. Mr Puok makes a change and say goodbye to Demogorgon, director of the best assist of the championship"*⁴⁰⁵. *In exchange, "the number one" of the zucchini in double compactness*⁴⁰⁶ *enter in the field after 3 months of recovery*⁴⁰⁷. *It is him: Aegon Targaryen!"*. The video ends with the phrase "Aegon Targaryen is back" and the soundtrack of Game of thrones.

Such as it is shown in the example, uniqueness characterizes Puokemed's posts. Uniqueness is considered a state in which a person feels differentiated from the other

⁴⁰⁴ CASALÓ, L.V., FLAVIAN C & IBANES-SANCHEZ S. (2018), *cit.*

⁴⁰⁵ It refers to the fact that the burger is really loved by customers and it is the most sold.

⁴⁰⁶ It refers to one of the ingredients of the burger.

⁴⁰⁷ Puok burger store presents a variable menu. It offers different burgers in each store, some burgers are available or at dinner or only at lunch, and there are some fixed burger and few monthly ones. Each month, it introduces a new burger that is temporary sell. Aegon was eliminated for a certain period.

around him and can attract attention. Being perceived as unique and original allows to be admired by others and be distinguished as an opinion leader.⁴⁰⁸

Some bloggers consider their activity as a purely hobby, while others consider it as a springboard for an activity. In each case, the key for success is passion. Passing down the passion for cuisine and food and showing that what is doing is done with care, help in reaching success. Food blogging might provide an opportunity for commercial purpose. Many food-bloggers such as Giulia Scarpaleggia, creator of Jul's Kitchen, proposes cooking class and take photos for agency and companies: she has used her blog as a springboard and as a business card for her complementary career. Chiara Maci too, after her activity as a blogger has decided to provide cooking classes and blogging classes aimed at aspiring young followers or people who want to reinvent their life and who want to turn their passion into a job. Moreover, she works as consultant for many companies, she is testimonial of many brands, she participates to events and to television programs and she has her personal show "Chiara Maci #VitaDaFoodblogger".

Food-bloggers' main activity consists writing recipes but they also provide evaluation on food product or kitchen utensils.⁴⁰⁹ Food-bloggers consider themselves as a community whose intensity arises from cultural tradition of food sharing. In creating and sharing recipes, food-bloggers acquire cultural capital: they could be considered "taste-makers" because they set trends and consequently create large amount of cultural capital. They are food fans and their interest crosses the pure consumption: they also produce contents. They interact and connect with other bloggers of the community. Once they identify with a community, food-bloggers keep blogging in order to increase their reputation and strengthen social relationship: food-bloggers also follow other food-bloggers' profiles and read food blogs; so, they are in two-way engaged within a community, both as readers and writers. Non-blogging readers are sometimes

⁴⁰⁸ Cfr. MASLACH C., STAPP J. & SANTEE R.T. (1985), Individuation: conceptual analysis and assessment, *Journal of consumer research*, 16(3), pp. 310-321; Cfr. GENTINA E., SHRUM L.J. & LOWREY T.M. (2016), Teen attitudes toward luxury fashion brands from a social identity perspective: a cross-cultural study of French and US teenagers, *Journal of business research*, 69(12), pp. 5785-5792; Cfr. CHAN K.K. & MISRA S. (1990), Characteristics of the opinion leader: a new dimension, *Journal of Advertising*, 19(3), pp. 53-60; Cfr. TSANG A.S. & ZHOU N. (2005), Newgroup participants as opinion leaders and seekers in online and offline communication environments, *Journal of Business research*, 58(9), pp.1186-1193, in: CASALÓ, L.V., FLAVIAN C & IBANES-SANCHEZ S. (2018), *cit.*

⁴⁰⁹ NAULIN S. (2014), « La blogosphère culinaire. Cartographie d'un espace d'évaluation amateur », *La Découverte*, vol 1, n° 183, pp. 31-62

“invisible” because they act as lurkers and remain anonymous: it is difficult to define how many they are unless they comment. Bloggers consider audience attention, feedbacks and feeling: their consciousness is central to the blogging experience. In order to create relationships with their followers, many food-bloggers create events, contests or friendly competition. For food-bloggers who consider their “fans”, appreciation provided by them represents a motivation for blogging, a sense of satisfaction and of obligation to produce high-quality contents. They find comfort in considering that there are other individuals who share their interest and enthusiasm for food and who appreciate their activities.⁴¹⁰ On Instagram, food-bloggers can approximately calculate the number of their follower: the app indicate this number, provide statistical graph about number of interaction, users reached, growth or reduction of follower, etc. Although it should be considered that there are users who do not follow a profile but that can interact, like or comment a photo founded in the “explore section”. The number of lurkers are usually higher than the number of active followers. One of the questions provided in the survey aims at analysing this situation.

Obviously, an interest in food represent the main reason for many food-bloggers. Foodista survey identifies “a passion for food” as the main reason of 88% of the respondents for blogging. For example, Tea, writer of “Tea & Cookies” food blog, considers herself as obsessed with food and writes in one of her post:

“You know you’re an obsessed food blogger when: a full 80% of the photos in your computer files are of food. Your fridge and freezer are stuffed with ingredients you’re wanting to try and use. Your stove is splattered, and your kitchen floor needs to be swept often. You have a stack of cookbooks by your bed. You check your blog comments before checking your email every morning”.

Tea might be considered a Pro-Am. So, food-bloggers should be categorized according to their motivations for blogging or their level of professionalism; for example, hobbyist bloggers may use a blog as a tool to document their interest in food and photography or to share recipe and food images with families or friends.⁴¹¹ They also propose video-recipes in which food-blogger can “bring” their follower into their kitchen: video-

⁴¹⁰ Cfr. BOURDIEU P. (1984), *Distinction: a social critique of the judgement of taste*, Routledge, p.51; Cfr. NARDI, B.A., SCHIANO, D.J. & GUTMBRECHT M. (2004), *cit.*, in: LOFGREN J. (2013a), *cit.*, pp. 28-44

⁴¹¹ Cfr. FOODISTA (2012), *The state of food blogging survey results*, <http://www.foodista.com/static/foodblogging-report>, in: LOFGREN J. (2013a), *cit.*, p.39

recipes has a double function because they both teach how to prepare a recipe and to live a more complete experience, sharing something more than a simple photo, for example identifying better the concept of “a little bit of salt” or “ a cup of milk”. Food-bloggers usually define themselves as “food lovers” and tend to reinforce their status of “expert” when interact with followers.⁴¹²

Food-bloggers who share information about writing a blog or about how they have reached their success are identified as community leaders by their followers. For their posts, bloggers are inspired by various sources: they create new recipes, they transform and readapt existing recipes, they decide to reproduce other bloggers’ recipe,⁴¹³ they describe a new food tendency or a new kitchen utensil bought, they decide to review a restaurant where they had dinner with friends or just decide to share a photo of a delicious meal.

Each food-blogger could be categorized into one of these three groups:⁴¹⁴

- a. *Amusing*: a group formed by who wants to share hobby and interest with others in order to amuse them. They are entertainment oriented and do not aim at transforming their activity into a job;
- b. *Functional*: food-bloggers use their activity for opportunistic purposes. They want to increase their follower and obtain higher reputation. They aim at advertising or commercial purposes;
- c. *Fervent*: they are driven by fascination with food and want to share their passions and ideas. Differently from the other two categories, they want to establish strong relationships with their followers and increase personal and collective knowledge.

To expand their activity, many food-bloggers start providing information about wine and they sometimes attend sommelier classes, such as Angela Maci. Other times, it is possible to exclusively talk about beverage bloggers, bloggers who became new opinion leaders in wine and want to share their passion through microblogs such as Twitter. For example, according to “Lifestyle Blogging Report”, 84% of wine bloggers used Twitter to promote their blogs in 2015. They provide information obtained from personal

⁴¹²CESIRI D. (2017), Haha, what a twit I am. The construction of a social identity in the comments sections of UK food blogs, *Jan Kochanowsky University Press*, p.127

⁴¹³ LOFGREN J. (2013a), *cit.*

⁴¹⁴ CUOMO M.T., TORTORA D., FESTA G., GIORDANO A. & METALLO G. (2017), *cit.*, p.1114-1115

experiences: for certain categories of product, customers search for information of the web during decision process. They began as a small community of citizens, then they obtained contacts with companies and to wine industry or press. They are wine tourist organizations that restrict their activities to the use of website. Their followers can determine if a product is good or not, and wine industry professionals do not control their ability to influence.⁴¹⁵

4.2. Birth and development: from blog to social network

The first food blog was published in America in 1997: “Chowhound” was a bulletin wall where exchange advice about restaurant in New York introduced by Jim Leff and Bob Okumura. This website gives rise to a new revolutionary medium because it takes distance from food forum and presents a more literary style and a platform where share emotions. Now it counts 22 employees. In Italy, the phenomenon of food-bloggers arose in 2005, when users started to follow food-bloggers online. Many authors start to write food blog but, the first Italian food blog is considered “Il cavoletto di Bruxelles”, created by Sigrid Verbet, a Belgian girl who moved to Rome. She is the first “food blog star” of our country. In the same year, “Un tocco di zenzero” was launched by Sandra Salerno, another pioneer of the sector who define herself as a “food-reporter”. “Giallo zafferano” by Sandra Peronaci appeared in 2006 but, now it could not be defined a food blog because it has become a real web site and a good platform to host other blogs. It has been defined “the best Italian blog” for many years by BlogFest. In 2009, “Sorelle in pentola” debuted: the blog was introduced by Chiara Maci and her sister Angela.⁴¹⁶ Chiara continues her career with the blog www.chiaramaci.com, a food-love rather than a food-porn oriented blog. She is now one of the most known Italian food blogger.

At the beginning, food blogs were reserved to amateurs, especially women, who

⁴¹⁵ Cfr. OREGON WINE BOARD (2015), Oregon Wine Tourism. *Oregon Wine Board 2015 Official Tour Guide*; Cfr. CHRISTOU E., KASSIANIDIS P., SIGALA M. & TSIKALI K. (2009), Electronic Marketing System of Wine and Wine Tourism: Best practices and growth prospect, *E-business forum R report*, in: MARLOWE B., BROWN E.A., SCHRIER T. & ZHENG T. (2017), “Beverage bloggers: a developing relationship between wine blogger expertise and twitter followers”, *International Journal of Hospitality Beverage management*, vol 1, n°1

⁴¹⁶ SCHACHTER M. (2013), I food blogger da seguire, *Vanity Fair*, <https://www.vanityfair.it/vanityfood/food-news/13/11/04/migliori-blog-di-cucina-da-seguire-foodblogger-di-tendenza>

combine their passion for food and their desire to communicate themselves. The growth of numbers of amateurs and the spread of digital media have increased the interest in food and the possibility to create a career using online channels such as YouTube where show how to organise and to prepare a meal. Their success brings to new professional roles. Blogs and social networks represent places where “expert” and “non expert” meets each other.⁴¹⁷ Blogs stop to follow the format of a cookbook and become content of marketing communication. Reports show that blogging being decline due to the increase of social media and the consideration of blog as a rudimental medium. Bloggers do not stop to write blog, but they support their activity with the use of social media too, especially Twitter.⁴¹⁸

During an interview on Rai 3 with the journalist Bernardo Iovine, Chiara Maci affirms:

*“I am what nowadays is define an ‘influencer’. Until some years ago, we were defined bloggers but, actually the term ‘blog’ is considered old!”*⁴¹⁹

Nowadays, people who start their activity on blog are rare. People are digital users and if they aspire to become influencer, they start from social network. For example, on Instagram there are millions of profiles dedicated to food and individuals who define themselves ‘food-bloggers’.

When the number of food blogs has increased, the community has become more established and the genre recognised. The phenomenon is continuously increasing and for example, in 2009, is arose the “Foodista’s International Food Blogger Conference”, a two-day event where food-bloggers from all over the world participate. Annually many magazines or newspapers propose articles and lists dedicated to them, such as the Times Online “50 of the world’s best food blogs” or the SAVEUR Food Blog Awards.⁴²⁰ Also, in Italy, this phenomenon has increasing and give rise to the AIFB, “Associazione Italiana Food Blogger” aimed at defining the role of food-bloggers, strengthening their skills, organizing food camp, events, workshops, etc. It represents an opportunity for all food-bloggers who want to interact with their pairs. It nurtures the knowledge about raw materials and products, it promotes respect, valorisation, cuisine

⁴¹⁷ CESIRI D. (2017), *cit.*, p.88

⁴¹⁸ KAPYTOFF V. (2011), Blogs Wane as the Young Drift to Sites Like Twitter, *The New York Times*

⁴¹⁹ RAI REPORT, <https://www.rai.it/programmi/report/inchieste/Food-influencer-16022230-f7b3-4f91-bc4f-72ee43ec437d.html>

⁴²⁰ LOFGREN J. (2013a), *cit.*, p.69-77

and territorial culture, it organises training courses focused on photography, writing, communication, web marketing and others activities that a food-blogger can do, it collaborates with companies associated to AIFB, it provides technical and legal consulting related to the management of a food blog, it fosters the creation of regional committee of food-bloggers and many other activities.⁴²¹ Hence, it is possible to highlight that in Italy the figure of a food-blogger is not underestimate.

During last years, many food blogs have become a sort of “magazine” by including in their work voyages, trends, beauty and collaborations. On the other hands, there are other food-bloggers who have chosen a different path and that have decided to file their blogs and to focus on a sort of “web-window” such as Instagram where photos become the main element: they use an approach less focused on “food” and more focused on “lifestyle” by publishing attractive and almost professional photos. Cooking become a secondary activity: they prefer eating, travelling, taking photos and decide to reduce their description and to focus on the use of many hashtag!

The success of food blogs pushes starry chef and professionals of the sector to open their food blogs. Blogs dedicated to each niche of the sector are opened, for example exclusively dedicated to vegan, food intolerance, food for babies, etc. Many hotels decide to describe themselves through a personal food blog in which share their menu. So, if they start publishing recipes, nowadays food-bloggers enrich their profile with restaurant rank, wine, gastronomic voyage and moments of their personal lives too. The goal of food-bloggers become narrate through personal “storytelling”: followers want to be touched and be involved with all senses.

“Blogometer”, a company specialized in the analysis of social media, has realised a study on the 30 Italian food-bloggers more engaging of 2017 though Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and YouTube. The results show that the most engaging food-blogger is Benedetta Rossi, authors of the blog “Fatto in casa da Benedetta” who counted 3,5 million of fans. Benedetta is a common woman who works in an agriturismo in the Marche region. She obtained her success by focusing on a public who love rustic, home-made and easy to prepare recipes. In this case, she represents the original “type” of food-bloggers. On the other hand, the silver medal is Chiara Maci. She decides to follow a

⁴²¹ ASSOCIAZIONE ITALIANA FOOD BLOGGER, <https://www.aifb.it/associazione/cosa-facciamo/>

different path and to eliminate her blog: she became a television personality and a professional influencer. Her 472 thousand of interactions take place on Instagram: the number of recipes reduces, and her personal experience, voyage and dinner become the main attraction for her followers.⁴²² According to the 2015 “Macchianera Awards”, she represents the best example of an end-user entrepreneurship.⁴²³

Food-bloggers are aware of reputational mechanism and try to strengthen their position using different strategies: they must create a self-image, to develop their network and social relationship, to monitor popularity index. Many food-bloggers prefer using capital obtained from their online reputation in order to transform their food-blogging into a profession. For example, Sonia Peronaci of Giallo Zafferano started her blog by hoping to obtain a career from it! She proposes simple recipes, but she opened her blog, no companies were prone to invest in advertisement. Her blog started to include other blogs too and was bought by Mondadori. So, Sonia decided to quit. Then she opened her personal pages “Sonia Peronaci” in which she provides direct and indirect sponsorship. She defines herself as an “entrepreneur” because her work has been differentiated from what was a food-blogger ten years ago: she participates to television program, she writes recipes and publishes book, she is on magazine, she participates to show-cooking, etc.

To conclude with some data, according to the research made by Buzzoole’s “Osservatorio sull’Influencer marketing” that has monitored more than 2000 Instagram profiles dedicate to food during November 2018, it results that the most engaging Italian “food creators” are Benedetta Rossi (alias @fattoincasadabenedetta) with 21,2 thousand of interactions per post, Chiara Maci (alias @chiarainpentola) with 8,2 thousand interactions per post , Enrica Panariello (alias @chiarapassion) with 7,4 thousand of interactions per post, Vincenzo Falcone (alias @vincenzofalconedelicious) with 7,2 thousand interactions per post and Egidio Cerrone (alias @puokemed) with 6,7 interactions per post.⁴²⁴

⁴²² SCHACHTER M. (2017), Food blogger e influencer: chi seguire?, *Vanity Fair*,

<https://www.vanityfair.it/vanityfood/food-news/2017/09/17/foodblogger-e-influencer-chi-seguire>

⁴²³ CUOMO M.T., TORTORA D., FESTA G., GIORDANO A. & METALLO G. (2017), *cit*, pp.1112

⁴²⁴ BUSINESS INSIDER ITALIA, *cit*.

In conclusion, starting from blog ten years ago, food-bloggers began their activity by publishing recipes. With the increase of Internet, they have expanded their activity and moved to social network. They post photos, suggest restaurants and the number of recipes reduce. Obtaining a large audience, evaluated by the number of followers obtained on social networks, they could be considered “food influencer”: they participate to television show, write books and are invited to food events. With time, they obtain visibility and catch the attention of companies who want to use food influencers’ popularity to promote their products or decide to use their popularity to create a personal commercial activity.

4.3. A new form of restaurant review

Long time ago, restaurant reviews were limited to the elite of professional food critics. Food journalism has increased in content and prestige in contemporary media and in television. Reviews began in gastronomic literature, pass through journalism and then established in newspapers and magazines: restaurants have high consideration of them because can boost or reduce their activity; reviewers pay for their meal and visits of journalists are unexpected. Critics “*train themselves to be critical of eating in restaurants*”: their reviews are completely different and analysed by another perspective from the ones written by bloggers or social media reviewers. Consumer-feedback, bloggers and social media influencers are considered “the cheerleading media”: reviews are supportive and have a positive coverage. A blogger who reaches a status of “influencer” or “opinion leader” has impact on WOM including restaurant reviews. While journalists target middle-class or aspirational readers, bloggers and influencers have a larger target. Positive reviews made by bloggers and high online rating provide benefits to restaurants and are used to influence consumers attitude and behaviour.⁴²⁵ A study provided by the French journal “Divinemenciel” suggests that 85% of consumers research information on digital platform before going to a restaurant. Moreover, food

⁴²⁵ Cfr. BROWN D. (2004), Haute cuisine, *American Journalism Review* 26 (1), pp. 50-55; Cfr. PHILLIPOV M. (2016), The new politics of food: television and the media/food industries, *Media International Australia* 158 (1), pp. 90-98; Cfr. DAVIS M. (2009), A taste for New York: restaurant reviews, food discourse, and the field of gastronomy in America, *PhD Thesis*, New York; Cfr. JONES S. & TAYLOR B. (2013), Food journalism, *Specialist Journalism*, pp.96-106; Cfr. LETHLEAN J. (2016), Restaurant reviews: bloggers don't cut the mustard, *The Weekend Australian*; Cfr. ROGERS E. (1983), Diffusion of innovation, *NY: free press*; Cfr. TITZ K., LANZA-ABBOTT J., CORDUA G. & CRUZ G. (2004), The anatomy of restaurant reviews, *International Journal of Hospitality & Tourism Administration* 5(1), pp. 49-65; in: ENGLISH P. & FLEISCHMAN D. (2019) Food for Thought in Restaurant Reviews, *Journalism Practice*, 13:1, 90-104, DOI: 10.1080/17512786.2017.1397530

lovers access on Instagram at least 18 times per day.⁴²⁶ But sometimes, reviews may be “falsified” due to the popularity of the reviewer: for example, the American reviewer Craig Claiborne preferred to maintain anonymity because he did not like to be fawn over; the acceptance of free food or expensive bottle of wine create a sort of journalistic conflict of interest. If a reviewer or a food-blogger wants to be trusted, he should adhere to the rules that conferred credibility to his review. Nonetheless, with the appearance of food blogs in 2003, lot of bloggers rejected anonymity and accepted or even solicited free food in restaurants!⁴²⁷

A larger range of cultural intermediaries are involved in the process of sharing food information and restaurant reviews: they produce various culinary discourse across different levels of status, genres and platforms. Nowadays, food information is shared by the voice of food-bloggers or customers through Online Consumer Review (OCR) site such as TripAdvisor (described in the following paragraph 4.3.1). The “Michelin Guide” is still considered the most influential gastronomic guide in the world, but it is limited to an elite group of customers. Amateurs represent a blurred line between mainstream media arts and cultural journals: they use digital media to produce and distribute their own writing. Social media are considered the “new front page of journalism”: a new type of journalism has arisen and is going to erode the traditional and established systems of knowledge. Everyone can supposedly be a critic. Restaurant reviews on blogs stand in judgment due to blogger’s lack of credentials to do so: nevertheless, bloggers lack in food qualification but, neither professional critics have such credentials since there is no formal qualification. So, the status of reviewer is unclear! During “leisure time”, foodies⁴²⁸ try to learn boost their “gastronomic education” and acquire food-related knowledge and skills.

The expansion of dining out as cultural activity and the digital revolution have increased the participation of consumers in the critical discourse related to food and dining experience. In contrast to professional restaurant reviews, a food-blogger wants to focus on information more than influence: Searl suggests that they are intrinsically motivated

⁴²⁶ DIVINEMENCIEL, <http://www.divinemenciel.com/>

⁴²⁷ COLUMBIA JOURNALISM REVIEW, https://archives.cjr.org/feature/everyone_eats.php

⁴²⁸ The term “foodie” was introduced in 1982 by “Harpers and Queen” magazine. It was defined by Barry and Levy in 1984 as a person who is very interested in food, who talk about food, who eat something in a restaurant and desire to replicate it at home, who consider food as an art. A foodie is someone who consider food as part of his personal lifestyle.

in active engagement with cultural product. They can “free” enjoy and discuss about cuisine without “the old metanarratives of social status, class and ethnicity” and focus on food for self-expression and identity. The level of details in blogs and SNs profiles, the online reviews and the numerous photographs shared online, allow consumers to “pre-visit” restaurants. Moreover, food-bloggers provide foodies a creative means of making memories of food experiences in the form of restaurant cuisine. In conclusion, online foodie community and food-bloggers, can be considered potential competitors to professional reviewers and cultural intermediaries of gastronomic field.⁴²⁹ In conclusion, the figure of gastronomic critic has lost influence and it has almost disappeared. Food critics become available to everyone due to the spread of online communication and social media. “Ordinary” people who write online are considered reliable: they share the same interests of their readers and usually write just to communicate information. In their research for a restaurant abroad, consumers trust of online reviews: they usually confront TripAdvisor or other OCR evaluation with what they found on online blog; consumers mainly trust people with their same background. For example, an Englishman provides a positive reviews about restaurant and an Italian user writes negative comments about the same restaurant; although an Italian reader does not know any of the two reviewers, he will trust Italian negative review: it is a cultural consequences due to the cultural dietary behaviour and habits. On the other hand, if online there are many positive reviews about restaurant and various bloggers recommend it, the reader will trust the advice: he relies on them because he perceives that the blogger does not have nothing in return and that he wants to share these information just for the pleasure of doing it. In that case, a food-blogger is considered as a friend and his advice are deemed trustworthy especially if the blog is one of the mostly read and appears in the first research on Google. Food joins people, network

⁴²⁹ Cfr. BARDOEL J. & DEUZE M. (2001), Network journalism: converging competencies of old and new media professionals and professionalism, *Australian Journalism Review* 23(3), p. 91; Cfr. BROWN B. (2012), Beyond recommendations, *ACT Transactions of Computer-Human Interaction* 19(4), pp. 1-24; Cfr. DESOLIER I. (2013), Food and the Self: consumption, production and material culture, *Bloomsbury Academic*; Cfr. DESLOIER I. (2010), Liquid Nitrogen Pistachiod: Molecular Gastronomy, *eIBulli and Foodies, European Journal of Cultural Studies* 13(2), p. 165; Cfr. DUNLOP T. (2013), The new front page: new media and the rise of the audience, *Scribe publication*, p.4; Cfr. LANE C. (2013), Taste makers in the "Fine-dining" restaurant industry: the attribution of aestetich and economic value by gastronomic guides, *Poetics* 41(4), p. 344; Cfr. SEARL D. (2001), Post-Industrial Journalism, *Doc Searls' Weblog*, October 2, 2011, p.2; Cfr. WATSON P., MORGAN M. & HEMMINGTON N. (2008), Online communities and the sharing of extraordinary restaurant experiences, *Journal of Food Service* 19(6), pp. 289-302; in: KOBEZ M. (2019), “Restaurant reviews aren't what they used to be: digital disruption and the transformation of the gastronomic field”, Thesis for the degree Doctor of Philosophy

strengthens this relationship, blogs creates union.

Since 2000, food blogs occupied an indefinite position toward food journalism. With the boost of technological context, food blogs have actively challenged them: food-bloggers differ from journalists but at the same time they consider themselves and are considered as information providers and influencers. The monetization of influence leads food-bloggers to face new questions about their role, responsibility and professionalism.⁴³⁰ The Brescian writer Camilla Baresani wrote a book “Gli sbafatori” to shape an ironic and critical portrait of food-bloggers. To contest it, Angela Maci, co-author of “Sorelle in pentola” affirms:

*“I do not think I want to substitute a chef or a journalist. We are food-blogger. And much more. [...] Our love for food is the same of their [...]. I do not have a journalism pass but, journalists do not have many of mine”.*⁴³¹

As shown in Marlowe and others’ study, also in beverage sectors, the figure of the expertise is reduced to give more space to bloggers who operate on social media. But, on the other hand, it is also demonstrated that wine bloggers with certification have more followers than the one who do not. So, these data want to communicate to wine bloggers that to increase follower participation they must become certified.⁴³²

4.3.1. TripAdvisor: food-bloggers main competitor

The case of TripAdvisor shows the growth in popularity of online reviews. Tripadvisor Inc. is an American trip and restaurant’s company that shares reviews about B&B, hotels, restaurants and other contents related to voyages. It was founded in 2000 by Stephen Kaufer and bought by Sebastian Mendoza in 2004; nowadays, it is spread all over the world and includes more than 200.000 hotels and touristic sites and more than 30.000 destination: moreover, if a site is not available on the webpage, customers could add him. The website hosts customers’ reviews that are analysed and judged by TripAdvisor’s staff

⁴³⁰ HAL (Sciences de l’homme et de la société), <https://halshs.archives-ouvertes.fr/halshs-02085712>

⁴³¹ VALENZA A., “Angela Maci: ‘Definire i food blogger sbafatori? Lo trovo infantile’”, *Il giornale del cibo*, <https://www.ilgiornaledelcibo.it/angela-maci-intervista/>

⁴³² MARLOWE B., BROWN E.A., SCHRIER T. & ZHENG T. (2017), *cit.*

before their publication in order to evaluate their reliability and conformity to the website's norms. The final review presents an evaluation on a scale from 1 to 5, where 5 stars represent the highest evaluation: customers must not provide the scale evaluation but, in order to give reliability to the review, they must support their vote with a comment of at least 100 words. Customers should be inscribed to the website to write a review. It attracts more than 45 million monthly visitors. A study independently conducted in 2007 (but sponsored by TripAdvisor) shows that 83% of surveyed read, write and post reviews. Although the majority of surveyed were individuals between 35- and 64-years old while, according to Rubicon survey the most frequent contributors are individuals between 19 and 25 years old and the ones who comment more frequently are between 31- and 40-year old. These differences affect source credibility. Respondents indicated that they evaluate TripAdvisor's reviews according to many factors: details provided, the date of the post, demographic factors such as age, etc. As the site increase in popularity, the likelihood of finding fake reviews increase. TripAdvisor does not publish inappropriate (such as the presence of swear words) or fraudulent content (such as a review made by an owner, his friends or relatives). The Communication Manager of the platform states that the integrity of the TripAdvisor is guaranteed because specialists read each post before publishing it. TripAdvisor proposes links to third party booking sites.⁴³³

Although a food-blogger is considered reliable and has high reputation, customers often confront their advice with the one provided by other customers on TripAdvisor and if the "stars" are not enough, food-blogger's evaluation are set aside. Other data related to the source of information used by customers and the usage of TripAdvisor are provided in chapter 5.

⁴³³ FONG A. (2010), *cit.*

4.4. Influence on food choice

Social media influencers (SMIs) are a new type of independent third-party endorsement who influence customers attitudes using blog or other forms of social media.⁴³⁴ User-generated information provides a description of a product or service and plays an important role in the decision-making process due to the effect of the eWOM.⁴³⁵ Consumers talk to each other about new pubs or restaurants, new recipes or new food products. They exchange information and put forward suggestions, which highlight the role that social communication plays in diffusing food information.⁴³⁶ On Facebook, users are highly exposed to food photos but many nutritionists affirm that 75% of these food is not healthy.⁴³⁷ Food-bloggers and food blogs' readers use food blog community to test and challenge popular perception about food and to expand the practice of sharing food beyond space and time.⁴³⁸ Food-bloggers are "market-movers" because they can influence buying decisions and promote them as ambassadors for product or restaurant. If they are considered influencer, it does not mean that they necessarily publish daily: they are identified in the list of "top food bloggers" and, although they publish information rarely, their opinion is highly considered. A food-blogger's influence can be temporary or permanent. So, it is possible to classify them in four categories:⁴³⁹

- a. *Long-term influentials*: they maintain the status of being a food-blogger for a very long time. They are considered "authority" in their sector. For example, Benedetta Rossi is always on top in food-bloggers ranks!
- b. *Average-term influentials*: they maintain their status for 4-5 months;
- c. *Transient influentials*: they are food influentials for a short period of time;
- d. *Burgeoning influentials*: they are emerging food bloggers.

Influence and reputation are mainly established through comments: their public nature makes it a double-edged sword because they can both positively and negatively affect food-bloggers' reputation.⁴⁴⁰

⁴³⁴ FREBERG K., GRAHAM K., MCGAUGHEY K. & FREBERG L.A. (2011), "Who are the social media influencers? A study of public perceptions of personality", *Public Relations Review*, 37, pp. 90-92

⁴³⁵ ZHU L., YIN G. AND HE W. (2014), *cit.*

⁴³⁶ CASALÓ, L.V., FLAVIAN C & IBANES-SANCHEZ S. (2018), *cit.*

⁴³⁷ 4 GRAPH, <https://www.4graph.it/blog/cibo-e-social-media-dalla-gastronomia-alla-gastromania/>

⁴³⁸ LOFGREN J. (2013a), *cit.*

⁴³⁹ AGARWAL N. & LIU H., *cit.*

⁴⁴⁰ MANZO C., PAIS I. & DE VITA R. (2003), *cit.*

Food-bloggers are food enthusiasts or “foodies”: they are deeply engaged with food and have influence beyond their blog community. For example, the popularity of macarons was spread by the blog “*A la cuisine!*” that shared one of the first example of the recipe of these meringue-based biscuits into food blogging community.⁴⁴¹

Another example is represented by the Lebanese food blog “*No Garlic No Onion*”. It was created by the dentist Anthony Rahayel who was allergic to onion and garlic and who offers advice to find restaurant, bars, recipes, hotel, services and product where eat food without these ingredients. The blogger has partnered with different business such as “Souk ElAkel” (a huge mobile market food), “Fairy” (dish washing detergent) and “Scoop Lab” (a restaurant). Therefore, thanks to a summons in Rahayel’s blog, the small Lebanese bakery “Emm Salim Bakery” notably increased its revenue and clientele. Tourists started to go there after checking online some local blog, such as No Garlic No Onion in order to find delicious and cheaper shops.⁴⁴²

Instagram is a platform that is most used by food influencers because its images give a sense of immediacy and presents a higher engagement rate than other SNs, in particular in the case of influencer.⁴⁴³ Due to their large number of followers on social media platforms, some well-known bloggers are influential online and obtain fame also in offline world: this popularity allows to establish a public persona.⁴⁴⁴

Another aspect is the research for recipes. With the growth of social network and Internet, public health professionals are aware of the quality of recipe information available on the web. Several factors may influence the nutritional contents of recipes posted: for example, the use of colourful photographs attract readers and emphasize food appearance. Due to the partnership between food-bloggers and food companies, recipes online can influence the purchase choice of a product rather than another and consequently the realization of a recipes with certain nutritional level rather than others.

⁴⁴¹ LOFGREN J. (2013a), *cit.*

⁴⁴² EL KHOURY J. & FARAH D. (2018), *cit.*

⁴⁴³ Cfr. LOCOWISE (2017), Instagram follower growth is now lagging behind facebook page likes growth. Retrieved from goo.gl/m0sVm2; Cfr. INFLUENCE.CO (2017), Influence.co (2017). Influencer rate and engagement report. Retrieved from goo.gl/UN4m2h; In: CASALÓ, L.V., FLAVIAN C & IBANES-SANCHEZ S. (2018), *cit.*

⁴⁴⁴ Cfr. ENGHOLM I. & HANSEN-HANSEN E. (2014), The fashion blog as genre-between user-driven bricolage design and the reproduction of established fashion system, *Digital Creativity* 25(2), pp. 140-154; in: LIU R. & SUH A. (2017), “Self-Branding on social media: an analysis of style bloggers on Instagram”, *Sciencedirect, Procedia Computer Science* 124 (2017), pp. 12-20

With the return of cooking at home and choosing biological and fresh product, food blogs may affect nutrient intake. Readers' trust in food-bloggers may have positive implication on consumerism.⁴⁴⁵

An article published on the online magazine "Huffpost" in 2012, focused on the need of promoting better dietary style, informing and educating, encouraging and inspiring readers to bake and cook from scratch. Food blogs were just a "money machine", an entertainment and a trend, a promotion of unhealthy and packed product. But, food-bloggers have the responsibility to move beyond the junk food and the chemical product, must inspire and spur families to cook better. Junk food promoted in food blog contributes to the increasing of health problems. Food porn photos are rampant: do not food-blogger have the desire and the goal to achieve something healthier and tastier?⁴⁴⁶ Probably this problem is more related to the social network world in which food-bloggers prefer to focus on photos sharing: obviously, but unfortunately, "guilty pleasure" and "food porn" are more attractive than a healthy salad! On their blogs or on YouTube channels, food-bloggers usually promote homemade recipe, including variant based on gluten free or targeted to other dietary disease.

Internet is turning into one of the main channels through which communicate health information. So, blogs might have a great impact on understanding dietary behaviour and food choices. For example, Elisa Prioli, in her blog "Food Immersion" writes:

"I have always had a correct dietary behaviour and with low fat. Probably for this reason, my cooking style is based on healthy recipes. I sometimes concede some treats; everyone should concede them! I take care of the ingredients and the product I use. Everyone know that 3 of 10 tumours are caused by what is put on the table. Thai is fundamental to know raw materials. When you go shopping, look to all ingredients contained in the food we bought. It is our right to know what we assume. Try to buy local food, help small producers and valorise what we have, although if we are not food-bloggers".⁴⁴⁷

⁴⁴⁵ Cfr. TLAPA C., MILLER R. & WASHINGTON K. (2010), *Eating at home: restaurant, food and beverage market research handbook*, Richard K. Miller & Associates (ed.), Logaville, GA; Cfr. HUI-YI H. & CHANG P.C. (2010), Influence of message trust in online word-of-mouth on consumerism behaviour by example of food blog, *International Conference on Electronic and Information Engineering*, pp. 395-399; in: SCHNEIDER E.P., MCGOVERN E.E., LYNCH C.L. & BROWN L.S., Do food blogs serve as a source of nutritionally balanced recipes? An analysis of 6 popular food blogs, *Journal of Nutrition Education and Behaviour*, vol 45, n°6, 2013

⁴⁴⁶ HUFFPOST, https://www.huffpost.com/entry/food-bloggers-dilemma_b_1336500

⁴⁴⁷ FOOD IMMERSION, <http://www.foodimmersions.com/2017/08/professione-foodblogger.html>

Elisa is born in Pesaro and has opened her blog in 2014. She wants to promote and valorise locality. She believes in the potential that Marche region has and wants to communicate it through her blog. At the same way, Erika Brugugnoli in her blog “Cuor di ciambella” proposes a quick description “healthy food” that directly expresses which kind of recipes she proposes. She is a pharmacist with a passion for food. In one of the sections of her blog, she gives many healthy advice too.⁴⁴⁸

Bloggers sometimes provide and promote “healthy living style” sharing their behaviour associated to dietary restraint. Food is described as a fuel when related to exercise: food-bloggers recommend protein bars, usually post cereal pictures and recommend to “fuel” the body before exercising. They say they could eat when they have compensated with exercise: when food photos are shared, they highlight the fact that eating is required for an energizing workout and not for the pleasure of eating! If a blogger confesses to eat a biscuit, he directly confesses to compensate by walking. Food is described as a reward for exercising. Food-bloggers say that they could eat more after exercise: a longer meal is a consequence of a stronger training.⁴⁴⁹ If food-bloggers are considered “influencer” and a “example to follow”, in this way they negatively influence their followers, especially young female users who perceived the negative “consequences” of food. Many studies show blogs where unhealthy dietary behaviour are shown, but there is no evidence of promotion of this unhealthy style within the blogosphere. Healthy dietary behaviours promoted within blogs represent a source of nutritional health information. Bloggers report their diets using photos of each meal or snaked consumer: most of them posts the photo of the final meal, while other share the entire preparation process, starting from a list or photos of the grocery or the contents of their fridge. If a portion appears too big, bloggers justify it specifying that is due to the camera angle or plate size; chocolate is considered as a “consolation” after a stressful day and other food are defined “food for the soul”.

Bloggers themselves describe food blogging community as source and social support for dietary practices: it is comforting and encouraging have a community of people who share the same values and represent a source of support. Dietary restraints are mainly shared by women from Western culture, followed by meal plans low in variety and calories documented by repetitive photos. Researches have shown how important is

⁴⁴⁸ CUORI DI CIAMBELLA, <https://www.cuordiciambella.com/>

⁴⁴⁹ LYNCH M. (2010a), From food to fuel: perceptions of exercise and food in a community of food bloggers, *Health Educational Journal* 71 (1), pp. 72-79

Internet as source of dietary habits and that when dietary restraints are established in younger individuals, it is difficult to remove them.⁴⁵⁰ According to Byrne and his colleagues, 32% of users listen advice related to healthier food and 41% are motivated sometimes. Even though, lot of influencers do not have dietitians' education or certificate.⁴⁵¹ So, bloggers should help users and in particular young users, to follow a regular and equilibrate dietary behaviour and to communicate that a "small pleasure" eaten sometimes does not hurt and should not be justified. On the other hand, many Instagram profiles are dedicated to "foodporn" images that can transmit the opposite situation and focus the attention on high-calories and apparently delicious meals. Food companies are trying to increase their responsibility in order to reduce obesity and to promote health; consequently, bloggers use information shared by companies and respond to them within the blogosphere: in America for example, blogosphere is very active and influence of media attention of obesity and health issue is high. Food-bloggers may positively react to new products or high-fit-activities promoted by companies.⁴⁵²

Another example is the use of blog to communicate food waste. Lisa Casali in her blog "Ecocucina" and with her book "Quanto basta" wants to communicate to her followers and readers how to use leaves, stems and other parts of the product that we usually throw away. She tries to provide a book to explain how buy, cook and eat in order to avoid food waste.⁴⁵³

A lot of magazines have dedicated articles to food-blogger and many of them highlight the "influential power" carried out on readers' purchase choices and dietary habits. This effect can be verified due to the interest that communication agencies, food companies or restaurants' owner show over them. For example, a Nutella pie recipe include

⁴⁵⁰ Cfr. HAWKS S. R., MADANT H.S. & CHRISTLEY H. S. (2008), Psychological associations of dietary restraint: Implications for healthy weight problems, *Ecology of Food and Nutrition* 47 (5), pp. 450-483; in: LYNCH M. (2010B), Healthy Habits or Damaging Diets: An Exploratory Study of a Food Blogging Community, *Ecology of Food and Nutrition*, 49:4, 316-335, DOI: 10.1080/03670244.2010.491054

⁴⁵¹ Cfr. BYRNE E., KEARNEY J., & MACEVILLY, C. (2017). The Role of Influencer Marketing and Social Influencers in Public Health. *Proceedings of the Nutrition Society*, 76. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0029665117001768>, in: GRAFSTROM J., JAKOBSSON L. & WIEDE P. (2018), *The Impact of Influencer Marketing on Consumers' Attitudes: A Qualitative Study on What Reasons Affect Millennials' Attitudes by Influencer Marketing in Sweden*, Bachelor in Business Administration, p.8

⁴⁵² Cfr. SOBEL I. (2010), Technorati's state of the Blogosphere; Cfr. YOUNG L. R. & NESTLE M. (2007), Portion sizes and obesity responses of fast-food companies, *Journal of public health policy*, 28(2), pp. 238-248; in: LEE H.H.M., VAN DOLEN W. & KOLK A. (2013), On the role of Social media in the 'responsible' food business: blogger buzz on health and obesity issues, *Journal of Business Ethics*, vol 118, pp. 695-707

⁴⁵³ NERVO E.R. (2017), Lisa Casali e la filosofia del "Quanto Basta": intervista alla food blogger, *Il giornale del cibo*, <https://www.ilgiornaledelcibo.it/lisa-casali-quanto-basta-intervista/>

indirectly a promotional message and valorise a specific product.⁴⁵⁴

Another example of the influence that food-bloggers should produce on customers' food choices is due to the creation of an online community called "iFood.it" created in 2015: the community gathers together more than 200 bloggers. It connects food and cuisine lovers, foodies and web influencers. It wants to provide to customers a tool being able to satisfy different needs related to the food sector. At the same time, agricultural industries can be directly connected with final clients and have the opportunity to develop projects, contents, surveys, statistics and testing.⁴⁵⁵

4.5. Enterprise sponsor and food-bloggers' credibility

Nowadays, presence on social networks is become a fundamental element for marketing strategies because the promotion of product online has revealed to be efficient.⁴⁵⁶ When a social network becomes a central tool and obtain tremendous popularity within its community, companies can use this new platform to obtain more popularity, to aggregate and to distribute opinions among their participants, both clients⁴⁵⁷ and potential customers. For a promotional campaign, it is fundamental for a company to identify the right promoter or influencer to enhance the sale of its products or services. Firms decide to use opinion leaders in order to promote their product: SI (social influencer) index is one of the strategies used in order to discover the right influencers required for a brand promotion. SI index is affected by total engagement, reach, sentiment and growth. Social media influencers have a large audience and are perceived as authentic and reliable.⁴⁵⁸ Authenticity is defined as "something real, something true, something moral, something apart from the crass, commercial, social world" but, scholars have argued that it is possible but hard to maintain authenticity during the process of online self-creation.⁴⁵⁹

⁴⁵⁴ NAULIN S. (2014), *cit.*, p. 31-36

⁴⁵⁵ MARK UP, <https://www.mark-up.it/nasce-ifood-it-il-blogging-al-servizio-dellagroalimentare/>

⁴⁵⁶ Cfr. DE VRIES N.J & CARLSON J. (2014), Examining the drivers and brand performance implications of customer engagement with brands in the social media environment.; Cfr. GENSLER S. ET AL. (2013), Managing brands in the social media environment. *J. Interact. Mark.* 27 (4), pp. 242–256; in: SOKOLOVA K., KEFI H. (2019), *cit.*

⁴⁵⁷ LI FENG & DU T.C. (2014), *cit.*

⁴⁵⁸ ASIM Y., MALIK A. K., RAZA B. & SHAHID A. R. (2019), *cit.*

⁴⁵⁹ Cfr. MARWICK A. E. (2013), 'They're really profound women, they're entrepreneurs': Conceptions of authenticity in fashion blogging. *Paper presented at the Seventh International AAAI Conference on Weblogs and Social Media*, Cambridge, MA. July 8. in: LIU R. & SUH A. (2017), Self-Branding on social

In order to evaluate an opinion leader, company must consider nine factors:⁴⁶⁰

- a. *Amplification capacity*: quantity and quality aspects measured by number of followers (extension of the network) and quality of network itself (how many contacts each contact has);
- b. *Social reputation*: competence and skills used by a food-blogger to communicate his advice;
- c. *Professional credibility*: it is directly connected with food-blogger's reputation, contents and engagement level;
- d. *Frequency of activity*: continuity of his activity and use of the major social platform;
- e. *Competence*: professionalism and knowledge of the content shared;
- f. *Relevance of contents*: ability in answering followers' requests, accuracy and quality of content;
- g. *Trust obtained*: it is an emotional index strictly related to the ability of influence his followers;
- h. *Involvement ability*: companies chose a food-blogger rather than another due to his capability of actively involving his followers. In relation to social network, it is identified by the number of posts reshared or retweeted, of the positive comments obtained.

Jansen et al.'s study demonstrates that 20% of micro-bloggers evaluate a brand product: 50% of them provide a positive evaluation and 33% of them a negative one. At the same time, Fisher and Reuben noted that negative feedbacks and reviews on micro-blog cost more than 30 customers to a company.⁴⁶¹ Starting from these data, it is evident how strong is the position of food-bloggers and their partnerships with companies.

Companies propose various types of partnership to food-bloggers in order to obtain an explicit promotion of their products or a mention in the recipe. Food-bloggers should

media: an analysis of style bloggers on Instagram, *ScienceDirect, Procedia Computer Science* 124, pp. 12-20

⁴⁶⁰ SURE-COM AMERICA, <https://alessandrosicurocommunication.com/2015/04/29/social-influencer-opinion-leader-nuove-figure-professionali-quale-il-loro-ruolo-nelle-community/>

⁴⁶¹ Cfr. JANSEN B.J., ZHANG M., SOBEL K. & CHOWDURY A. (2009), Twitter power: tweets as electronic word of mouth, *Journal of the American Society for Information Science and Technology* 60 (11), pp. 2169-2188; Cfr. REUBER A.R. & FISHER E. (2011), *cit.*; in: LI FENG & DU T.C. (2014), *cit.*

promote products due to the channel used and to the trustworthy relationship established with their followers. Social network permits a fast and cheap communication. Bloggers target food lovers and when they talk about a product, sales notably increase. Naulin's study identifies the following kind of partnership established between companies and food-bloggers:

- a. Companies freely donate a product to a food-blogger in exchange of a spontaneous or established review;
- b. Sponsor ticket: a company pays a food-blogger to obtain a review. In this case, product evaluation is always positive;
- c. Food-blogger participates to an event organized by the company, such as a cooking class, where the blogger should promote and highlight the quality of the product sponsored.

Food-bloggers prefer selecting products or brands they like and prefer avoiding a false positive review about a product that they have tested and that have not appreciated.⁴⁶² Differently from journalists who must respect a deontological code according to which *“they should guarantee to citizens the right to obtain a correct information, always different from an advertisement. It cannot include name, voice, images for advertisement initiative (art 10)”*, food-bloggers do not have a deontological code, so companies are agreeable to pay for a review on their social networks.⁴⁶³

During an interview with Rai 3, the Italian food-blogger Chiara Maci highlighted the importance of the relationship between blogger and followers. She thinks that each influencer should have a personal ethic. For example, she considers very important her relationship with readers and prefers promoting products that she deems valuable. She has established partnership with a lot of brands and companies but prefers waiving revenues and promoting a quality product rather than promoting everything and lose her credibility. She always tests the product before sponsoring it. Influencers need to be careful before accepting a collaboration in order to avoid losing trust and reduce the number of followers. For example, to increase credibility, influencers could share photos while they are using the product. Moreover, the influencer should be trustful in order to

⁴⁶² NAULIN S. (2014), *cit.*, p. 36-38

⁴⁶³ RAI REPORT, *cit.*

avoid that the brand will lose credibility.⁴⁶⁴

Food-bloggers may collaborate with agencies and companies in various way:

- By promoting companies' products, as already explained;
- By creating recipes for companies' websites;
- By realising App for smartphone dedicated to food in which food-bloggers act as consultants;
- By participating at events as testimonial;
- By providing reviews for restaurants' guides or web portals;
- By consultation for companies.

For example, Chiara Maci collaborates with many companies. Her style is creating recipes with the product produced by the company she is collaborating with. If she collaborates with a Gorgonzola company, she starts to provide on her blog and social media various recipes using Gorgonzola cheese. During her collaboration with the car brand "Mini" she provided a collection of recipes for car trip. In another case, during her collaboration with "Kartell", a company that produces design products, she tries to use food as a glue by proposing a fairy tale and a recipe for each product: on her Instagram profile, she published a photo with her daughter and a Kartell lamp. She added a link for her blog in which she narrated a story of a mother who donates a magic, raspberry coloured lamp to her bored daughter. The colour made the child think about the smell of a pie and then, Chiara proposed the recipe of a raspberry pie. She publishes lot of photos with her daughter and for example, she collaborates with "Mellin" by provided the recipes she did for her daughter during the weaning. During her interview with Rai 3, she clarifies that what she does is not publicity: she suggests product that she personally uses. She wants just to recommend something. Influencers are followed by more than 11 million of users and collect more than 33 million of like. These huge numbers attract companies that want to take advantage of that situation and create advertisement for more than 6,3 million of euros.⁴⁶⁵ In a way or another, her followers are influenced by her popularity and to perfectly recreate a recipe, they decide to buy the same Gorgonzola cheese, they choose Mellin's products for their child or buy a

⁴⁶⁴ GERARDO A.D. (2017), What is influencer marketing and how can marketers use it effectively, *Forbes*, November 14; in: GRAFSTROM J., JAKOBSSON L. & WIEDE P. (2018), *cit.*, p. 2-40

⁴⁶⁵ Data provided by Rai 3, obtained from "Food influencer Italiani" and elaborated with the Social Index Platform by Extreme (2017): Rai report, *cit.*

Kartell lamp to furnish their home. What customers put in their shopping cart is often persuaded by influencers. Food influencers start from food but can expand their activity and become sponsors or testimonials of many other products and brands that operate in different sectors. They can monetise every part of their life. Some of them consider exclusively the monetary aspect of their success, others have a personal ethic and decide to sponsor what they believe valuable. Consequently, customers must understand the reliability of food-bloggers' advice before completely trust of them.

Another example is given by Erika Brugugnoli, author of "Cuor di Ciambella", who collaborates with Granarolo company. "Pastificio Granarolo" website is simple and intuitive and has a section dedicated to recipe: Erika proposes recipes that valorise brand and egg-pasta.⁴⁶⁶

Relationship between companies and food-bloggers is usually based on a "merchandise exchange": companies freely donate products to food-bloggers and restaurants freely offer dinner to them in exchange of publicity on their blogs or social networks profile. Does the exchange happen after the evaluation of food-bloggers' popularity or reputation? May these practices corrode reputation? Italy is late in the "professionalization" of food-bloggers. Manzo, Pais and De Vita's study shows that of the nine more "considered" food-bloggers, only four belong to the "top 20 popular food bloggers".⁴⁶⁷

El Khoury and Farah's study⁴⁶⁸ supposed that in 2019, 53% of the total population will be internet users and that e-commerce will continue to rise: consumers will be influenced by "brand-new" opinion leaders and will shift their loyalty from their habitual product to the one recommended by them.

Due to the growth and emerging popularity of Instagram, this social media are becoming a credible source and eWOM is increasing. Celebrity endorsement is considered a credible source in order to obtain information about product and services. Consumers with low self-confidence are more easily influenced by celebrity endorsements. Recently, new figures are arising and it is possible to talk about "digital" celebrity groups, such as bloggers or Instafamous who can transform unknown good into a well-

⁴⁶⁶ MARK UP, <https://www.mark-up.it/granarolo-realizza-due-nuovi-siti-web/>

⁴⁶⁷ MANZO C., PAIS I. & DE VITA R. (2003), *cit.*

⁴⁶⁸ EL KHOURY J. & FARAH D. (2018), *cit.*

known product due to their persuasive techniques and positive self-image. The large number of followers they have, the largest social influence they obtain.⁴⁶⁹

Cuomo et al.' study report that interaction between food-bloggers and their community affect end-user entrepreneurship due to a virtuous circle based on collective interactions of passion, experience and sharing and rooted in knowledge, innovation, judgement and decision making. The professional activities of Italian food-bloggers generate almost 3 million euros thought web advertising, more than 15 million online interaction and 240,000 posts. Interaction are mainly based on suggestion done to food-bloggers aimed at proposing recipe in a novel way.⁴⁷⁰

4.5.1. Viral/influencer marketing

Viral marketing has been defined as a process on consumer communication in which consumers spread the brand name of a product or a company.⁴⁷¹ When a consumer's opinion becomes relevant for a large group of people, the consumer turns into an opinion leader. Its position could be defined by a large impact on social media, a high level of followers. Opinion leaders, who are also defined as influencers, give rise to a new phenomenon: influencer marketing that is defined as "a type of marketing that focuses on using key leaders to drive a brand message to the larger market".⁴⁷²

Singh define it: "*a technique that employs social media (content created by everyday people using highly accessible and scalable technologies such as blogs, message boards, podcasts, microblogs, bookmarks, social networks, communities, wikis, and vlogs) and social influencer (everyday people who have an outsized influence on their peers by virtue of how much content they share online) to achieve an organization's marketing and business needs*".⁴⁷³

⁴⁶⁹ Cfr. CHANTAL M (2016), *Four trends that will shape media in 2016*, [online] Marketing Week. <http://www.marketingweek.com/2016/01/08/four-trends-that-will-shape-media-in-2016>;

Cfr. THOUMRUNGROJE A. (2014), The influence of social media intensity and EWOM on conspicuous consumption, *Procedia- Social and Behavioural Sciences*, 158, pp. 7-15; in: DJAFAROVA E. & RUSHWORTH C. (2017), *cit.*

⁴⁷⁰ Cfr. ANSA (2016), Foodblogger italiani "valgono" quasi 3 milioni di euro, www.ansa.it, in: CUOMO M.T., TORTORA D., FESTA G., GIORDANO A. & METALLO G. (2017), *cit.*, p.1112

⁴⁷¹ HENNING-THURAU T., GWINNER K.P.M., WALSH G. & GREMLER D.D. (2004),

⁴⁷² Cfr. BYRNE E., KEARNEY J., & MACEVILLY, C. (2017), *cit.*, in: GRAFSTROM J., JAKOBSSON L. & WIEDE P. (2018), *cit.*, p. 7

⁴⁷³ Cfr. SINGH S. & DIAMOND S. (2012), *Social Media Marketing For Dummies*, John Willey & Sons (ed.), p p. 130; in: BIAUDET S. (2017), *Influencer marketing as a marketing tool. The process of creating an Influencer Marketing Campaign on Instagram*, Degree thesis, Yrkeshögskolan Arcada, p.12

The impact of the influence of food-blogger adds value to firms. In fact, food-bloggers are better perceived than celebrities by customers because they establish with them a stronger relationship. Moreover, companies may monitor food-blogger's community and website in order to understand what customers look for and draw for suggestions, such as the SME Italian company Alpinestar did with the major motorcycling blogs.⁴⁷⁴ Influence marketing connects online users with brands: relationships are based on trust and engagement.⁴⁷⁵ In line with the actual influencer-consumer liaison, a lot of companies are partnering with the top social media influencers for the promotion of their product and services.⁴⁷⁶ Millennials are more likely to engage in social media and they integrate them into their marketing process.⁴⁷⁷ For example, Djafarova and Rushworth (2017) note that Instagram celebrities have a great impact on purchasing behaviour for young female users in fashion sector and that non-traditional celebrities (indeed known as influencers) have more influence than "classic celebrities".⁴⁷⁸ For this reason, food industry should start using "viral marketing" or "influencer marketing" to promote new products or new restaurants. A lot of small entities, such as local restaurants, are going to promote their activity on social media such as Facebook and Instagram, because they had understood the potential offered by these SNS. Sometimes they also decide to hire a food-blogger only for this kind of promotion. The choice related to this figure had to be focused on someone who is popular in the area in which the activity should be promoted. In that way, people, especially millennials, are incentivized in discovering a certain place. Obviously, a food-blogger must evaluate first the activity and then promote it. A bad advertise should reduce the popularity and the reliability of a blogger too.

Food-bloggers take roles as community organiser, archivists or curators: they document community's practices and consequently influence community behaviour. They may organise or participate to events to extend their popularity, to facilitate sociability and interpersonal relationships and strengthen ties with participants. Interacting and

⁴⁷⁴ DI MARIA E., FINOTTO V. (2008), *cit.*

⁴⁷⁵ ASIM Y., MALIK A. K., RAZA B. & SHAHID A. R. (2019), *cit.*

⁴⁷⁶ EL KHOURY J. & FARAH D. (2018), *cit.*

⁴⁷⁷ Cfr. MOORE M. (2012). Interactive media usage among Millennial consumers. *Journal of Consumer Marketing*, 29(6), pp. 436-444. <https://doi.org/10.1108/07363761211259241>; in: RAFSTROM J., JAKOBSSON L. & WIEDE P. (2018), *cit.*, p. 4

⁴⁷⁸ CASALÓ, L.V., FLAVIAN C & IBANES-SANCHEZ S. (2018), *cit.*

participant to events is one of the parts of food blogging.⁴⁷⁹ For example, Neapolitan food-bloggers Puokemed and “Jana_italyfoodporn” sponsored “Christmas markets” in Naples through continuous posts and videos uploaded on their Instagram profiles. On the other hand, the “Italian Chamber of Commerce for France” in Marseilles invites food-bloggers to its events in order to promote and transmit food culture, in that case related to “Made in Italy” products.

4.6. The importance of using images

Visual information plays an important role in the choice and acceptance of food.

“You eat with your eyes first”: if food appears unappetising it will not be eaten. Visual stimuli have been shown to alter the perception of taste, smell and flavour. Food presentation can influence the assessment of colours, and consequently flavour perception. For example, wine colour or the shape of the glass in which it is contained can change the perception of wine’s flavour or the way by which it is described. Moreover, some chefs modify the way in which they present food by creating something that look familiar but that have an unexpected flavour, such as “fried egg” where the yolk is mango puree and the white part is panna cotta, or when a familiar flavour is presented in unfamiliar form, such as fruit flavoured caviars.⁴⁸⁰ Hence, colours play a major role in modulating food perceptions and impact consumers’ evaluations.⁴⁸¹ Food blogging involves the creation of a lot of content especially photos.⁴⁸² Paola in her blog “Cucina vista mare” writes:

“Photos are essential. Food-bloggers prepare a real photographic set so, it is necessary to have a good photographic equipment [...] and learn how to “dose” the light. “Props” occurs: they are accessory that are not used to cook or to prepare the table; they are appositely bought for the set: plates, glasses, cups, pots, cutting boards, pan, piece of cutlery, tablecloth and napkin. [...] More than 300 photos are taken. Then they are evaluated and the best one is chosen. An imperfect photo is not good for a blog. Photos should stimulate hunger and should incentivize to prepare the plate: if a photo is too ‘perfect’ is not good because readers may think that the meal is impossible to

⁴⁷⁹ LOFGREN J. (2013a), *cit.*, p.65

⁴⁸⁰ DELWICHE J.F. (2012), You eat with your eyes first, *Psychology & Behaviour* 107, pp. 502-504

⁴⁸¹ PEREIRA L.J. & VAN DER BILT A. (2016), The influence of oral processing, food perception and social aspects on food consumption: a review, *Journal of Oral rehabilitation*, vol 43, pp. 630-648, 2016

⁴⁸² COX A.M. & BLAKE M.K. (2011), *cit.*

replicate".⁴⁸³

A picture tells more than thousand words. In a blog, pictures become even more important due to the development of platforms such as Instagram or Pinterest. A food-blogger should constantly improve on the photography.⁴⁸⁴ Internet is turning into a visual medium and its users can express themselves using images: Instagram perfectly matches these aspects and it represents an appropriate platform for establishing a self-branding practice.⁴⁸⁵ A lot of fashion bloggers are trying to create their careers starting from Instagram but, at the same time, food-bloggers may do the same. The attractiveness, quality and composition of images have significant importance to follower and represents one of the reasons why a user decide to follow new profile⁴⁸⁶ and new food influencer.

The practice of image-sharing has a high impact in food sector because the way in which food is plated impacts flavour perception and can modify people's food choices and maybe consumption behaviour too. Food is one of the most effective stimuli in terms of modulating brain activity. At the behavioural level, consumers rate taste significantly more pleasant in high-calorie food than low-calorie food images. For this reason, there is a real concern related to the deleterious impact that certain photos can have on our eating behaviour.⁴⁸⁷ The perception of product quality can be influenced by the interaction effect between self-monitoring and types of advertisement: high self-monitoring perceived more quality than low self-monitoring when exposed at the same ads but, on the other hand, the situation is opposite when they evaluate product quality.⁴⁸⁸ Food-bloggers have contributed to the increasing image-driven nature of food-related media and have played a crucial role in the popularity of sharing photos through social network. In Lofgren's study emerges that in food blog textbook "Will

⁴⁸³ GIALLO ZAFFERANO, *cit.*

⁴⁸⁴ CUCUMBERTOWN, <https://medium.com/cucumbertown-magazine/what-is-food-blogging-and-how-to-become-a-food-blogger-2b8a6f96a07d>

⁴⁸⁵ LIU R. & SUH A. (2017), *cit.*

⁴⁸⁶ DJAFAROVA E. & RUSHWORTH C. (2017), *cit.*

⁴⁸⁷ Cfr. OUWEHAND C. & PAPIER E.K. (2010), Eat it or beat it. The differential effects of food temptations on overweight and normal-weight restrained eaters, *Appetite* (55), p. 56-60; in: SPENCE C., OKAJIMA L, CHEOK A.D., PETIT O & MICHEL C. (2016), "Eating with our eyes: from visual hunger to digital satiation", *Brain and Cognition*, 110, pp. 53-63

⁴⁸⁸ Cfr. DE BONO K. & PACKER M. (1991), The effects of advertising appeal in perceptions of product quality, *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 17(2), pp.715-738; in: KIM D.H, SEELY N.K. & JUNG J.H. (2017), *cit.*

Write for Food”, the author Dianne Jacobs defines “good photos of food” as a “critical” element for the creation of a food blog. Photos and images are a food blog standard! Bloggers often use expensive digital SRL cameras and users sometimes consider more important photos than recipes. Taylor in his blog “Taylor Takes a Taste” notes that in currently world, food is firstly judge by its aspect so, in the case of blogs, by its pictures. Images obtain higher impact than contents.⁴⁸⁹ In her study, Lynch reported that lot of bloggers usually apologize for their low-quality photos, for photos taken with flash or for “weird”, “poor” or “unphotogenic” pictures.⁴⁹⁰

SNs are perfect for image-sharing has obtained a lot of success: for example, Instagram has reached 800 million users in 2017 and it could be said that it plays a crucial role in food context.⁴⁹¹ There are some profile considered “aggregators”, a sort of an “art gallery” and being selected by them represent is a sort of validation and particularly successful for food-bloggers.⁴⁹² On Instagram there are a lot of aggregators profile that repost photos taken from food-bloggers’ profiles or restaurant’s profile, such as “Italyfoodporn” that post general photos of attracting and delicious food or “Mortazzasuprema” that shared only photos in which mortadella is the main ingredient.

Sometimes food photos stand alone in blog: blog are dedicated to deliciousness and “the high-res image will have you salivating click after click”.⁴⁹³ The last few years have seen the growth of obsession of taking food photos during dinner and share it thought social media network. One restaurant consultant and publisher suggest that “some restaurants are preparing food that is going to look good on Instagram”. People are spending more time looking appetizing food images than paying attention to the actual food consumed. So, one of the goals to reach is understanding how make healthy food more attractive in order to encourage people to eat more healthily.⁴⁹⁴

⁴⁸⁹ Cfr. JACOBS D. (2010), *Will write for food: the complete guide to writing cookbooks, blogs, reviews, momeoir, and more*, De Capo Press, Philadelphia; in: LOFGREN J. (2013a), *cit.*, pp.73-74-88

⁴⁹⁰ LYNCH M. (2010b), *cit.*, p. 323

⁴⁹¹ CASALÓ, L.V., FLAVIAN C & IBANES-SANCHEZ S. (2018), *cit.*

⁴⁹² LOFGREN J. (2013a), *cit.*, p. 75

⁴⁹³ GOHAR L. (2011), Top 5: food porn specialists, *Food republic*, in: LAVIS A. (2017), “Food porn, pro-anorexia and the viscosity of virtual affect: exploring eating in cyberspace”, *Geoforum* 84, pp. 198-205

⁴⁹⁴ Cfr. SANER E. (2015), Plate spinning: the smart chef's secret ingredients, *The Guardian*, May 12; in: SPENCE C., OKAJIMA L, CHEOK A.D., PETIT O & MICHEL C. (2016), *cit.*, p. 55

4.6.1. #Foodporn

Blogs and social networks have become image driven. Many food photos are uploaded and shared with online community. Evocative food styling, photography and writing are often referred as “food porn” that can be considered as a general style.⁴⁹⁵ The term was originated in 1979 in a “Center for Science in the Public Interest Nutrition Action Healthletter” and, although it is usually used to indicate food itself, it can be also used to describe chefs and the mingling of food and bodies in cookery programs.⁴⁹⁶

In her book, Luisa Stagi defines foodporn as voyeuristic pleasure of food, a mental hedonism than nourish itself by the wait rather than the experience. The practice of photographing food and share it on social network is a consequence of food porn. Another concept of foodporn was introduced by Michael Jacobson who counterposed this term with the “right stuff” in order to identify a term that represented an “out of order” food, something that exceeded everything that food should represent and that may be considered even pornographic! Foodporn evokes something unreachable that incite fantasy and imaginary.⁴⁹⁷ Visual hunger is one of the reasons why SNs are obtaining so much success. Food 2.0. is not eaten only: it is shared, admired and sold. For example, a lot of users decide to follow food-bloggers due to their gluttony and desire to watch food images. The data obtained from the survey will better explained this motivation in graphs shown in chapter 5.

The term “foodporn” identifies any food that looks good to eat, it represents a “guilty” pleasure, something unhealthy that should be avoid, or is depicted as something desirable and great. Food is one of the hashtags most used. According to Instagram.com, in 2014 more than 25 million posts contained the word or the hashtag *foodporn*. In January 2017, a research for the term obtained 149.185.046 on Instagram results and 812.500 on Flickr.⁴⁹⁸ On 2nd august 2019, the same research provides 240.000.000 results on Instagram! Food-bloggers, and users in general, use the hashtag #foodporn to

⁴⁹⁵ Cfr. BUFORD B. (2006), TV dinners, *The New Yorker*, in: KOBEZ M. (2019), *cit.*, p.118

⁴⁹⁶ Cfr. MCBRIDE A.E (2010), Food Porn, *Gastonomica (10)*, pp. 38-46; Cfr. KAUFMAN F. (2005), Debbie does salad: the Food Network at the frontiers of pornography, *Harper's Magazine*; in: LAVIS A. (2017), *cit.*

⁴⁹⁷ STAGI L. (2016), “Food porn: l’ossessione del cibo in Tv e nei social media”, *Cultura e società, EGEA*

⁴⁹⁸ Cfr. ROUSSEAU S. (2014), Food ‘porn’ in media, in THOMPSON P.B. & KAPLAN, D.M., *Encyclopedia of Food and Agricultural Ethics*, Dordrecht:Springer (ed.), pp. 748-754; in: KOBEZ M. (2019), *cit.*, p.118

indicate fast-food product or high-calories food but, they should add this hashtag to healthy product too in order to communicate an equilibrate dietary behaviour.

Paradoxically, the consumption of “foodporn” give rise to a new contingent form of eating. Food porn contrasts the materiality of food itself: it concerns “the surface appearance of food, since that is all that is available” and it represents a “precursor” or a “trigger” to an alternative eating that take place later and that takes place offline. On the website “*Xojane*” food photos are described as “something that don’t expand your waistline quite like the real thing” so food porn has paradoxically been as something that “helps stay in shape”. A recent study suggests that viewing food photos may reduce the desire to eat. This suggests going beyond the paradigm mouth-stomach and to considering that eating requires both factors such as brain and eyes: viewing and digesting intertwined themselves into food porn. Considering this aspect, food porn reshapes and re-contextualises the concept of eating!⁴⁹⁹

⁴⁹⁹ Cfr. MAGEE R.M (2007), Food puritanism and food pornography: the gourmet seiotics of Martha and Nigella, *Popular Cult* 6(2); Cfr. XOJANE (2013), Unpopular opinion: I use food porn to help me stay in shape; in: LAVIS A. (2017), *cit.*

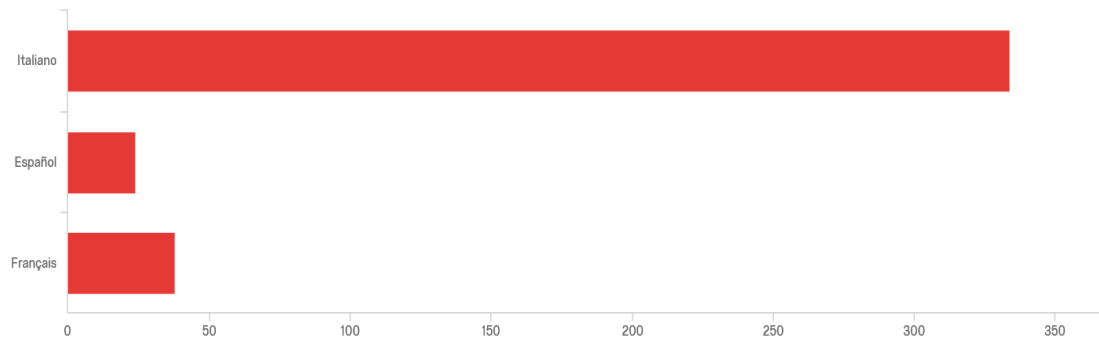
5. Empirical analysis

5.1. Method and sample

The intent of the survey is analysing if and how customers are influenced by food-bloggers in their food choices. In their blogs or on their profiles on social network, food-bloggers give information about products to buy, new food tendencies, new products introduced in the market or restaurants and pubs in which they had eaten and that they have appreciated. The increasing popularity of these influencers attract interest of many companies, brands and restaurants that want to take advantages of the them in order to promote their products or commercial activities. So, these advice are sometimes steered by partnership relations. Hence, the survey wants to understand which factors influence food-bloggers' advice according to the opinion of customers. The empirical analysis is divided in two parts: a survey and an interview. The questions provided in the survey are supported by previously studies of scientific papers and the information obtained during the interview. This one (provided in paragraph 5.6) focuses on a very know Campanian food-bloggers, Puokemed, who started his activity on blogs and opened his second sub shop in 2017.

The survey has been developed on “Qualtrics” platform and is divided into three section: question related to food-bloggers' knowledge and influence, questions used to identify dietary behaviours and questions aimed at sketch customers' sociodemographic variables. In order to reach different target, the survey has been spread through various channel: Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn and WhatsApp. The first publishing was on 25th of July on Facebook and shared by other users in the following days. On 6th August, it was shared on LinkedIn. During the forty days in which it has been online, it has been shared on WhatsApp and through direct messages on Instagram.

At the beginning of the writing, the intent was to provide a three-country survey in order to analyse the impact that food-bloggers have on Italian, Spanish and French customers. Unfortunately, during the development of the thesis, the survey spread in foreign country has not obtained the success desired. The first question allows to choose a language because the survey was spread in Italian, French and Spanish in order facilitate the interviewer and then, data obtained has been translated in English.



#	Field	Choice Count
1	Italiano	84.34% 334
2	Español	6.06% 24
3	Français	9.60% 38

Graph 1: Language selected by interviewers

As it has shown in graph 1, the interviewers were 396. According to the languages chosen, considering that only one or two interviewers (for each language) have not chosen their native language, we could say that 84,3% of interviewers are Italian, 9,6% are French and that 6,1% are Spanish.

To give validity to the analysis, it has been chosen to focus the investigation on 334 Italian interviewers because this number could identify a reliable sample. Despite, if we analyse the answers obtained from the first two questions “*do you know what a food-blogger is?*” and “*do you follow any food-blogger?*”, data obtained shows the following consideration:

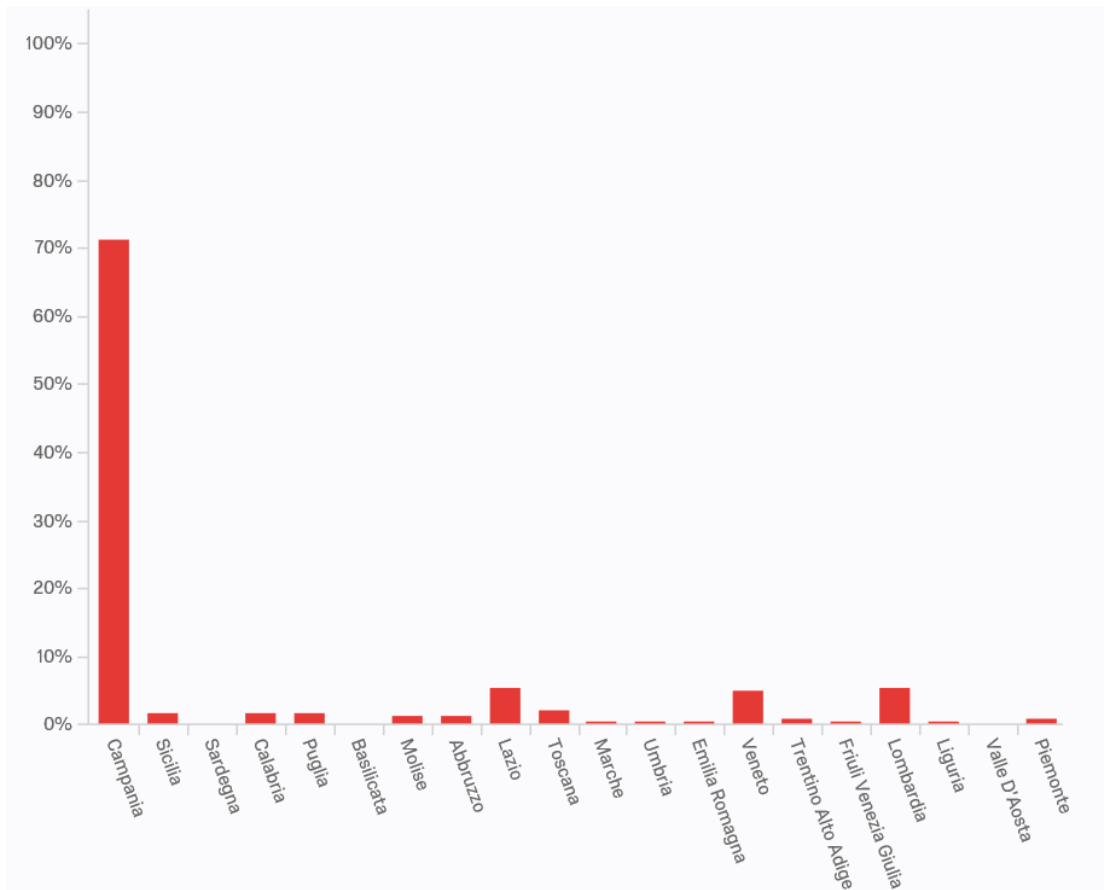
- 83,33% of Spanish interviewers know what a food-blogger is;
- 29,17% of Spanish interviewers follow at least one food-blogger;
- 80,60% of French interviewers know what a food-blogger is;
- 19,4% of French interviewers follow at least one food-blogger.

Compared these two foreign countries, it is possible to notice that the interest toward food-blogger is higher in Spain than in France. In the following paragraph, data related to Italian case will be explained.

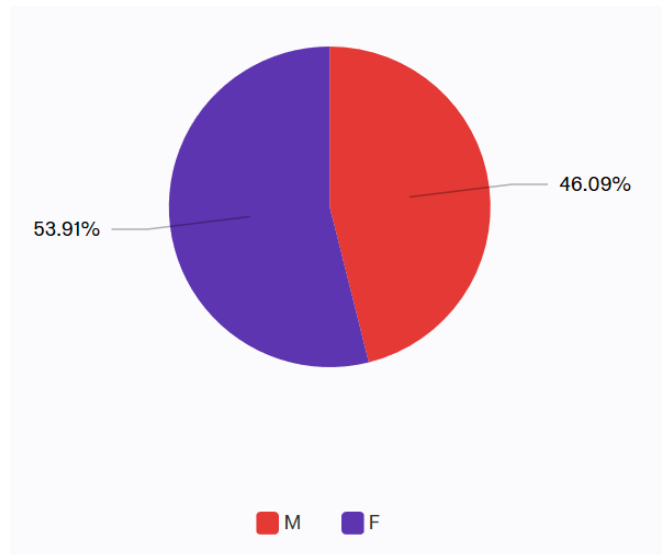
5.1.1. Consumers' profile: socio-demographic characteristics and dietary behaviours

Due to the choice of focus only on Italian interviewers, consumer's profile described in this paragraph refers exclusively to Italian users. To define a profile, the survey aims to focus on generic socio-demographic characteristics, such as gender, age, level of education, working position and place of residence. Moreover, it wants to trace a profile related to dietary behaviours of users and their interest toward food-world.

In the first part of this paragraph, graphs related to socio-demographic characteristics are shown (from graph 2 to 6). From them, it is possible to say that the user is a woman between 18 and 25 years old. She possesses a high-school degree or a master's degree and consequently she is still a student, or she works as an employee. Users come from Campania region. This percentage is very high to the fact that the survey was launched in Campania.



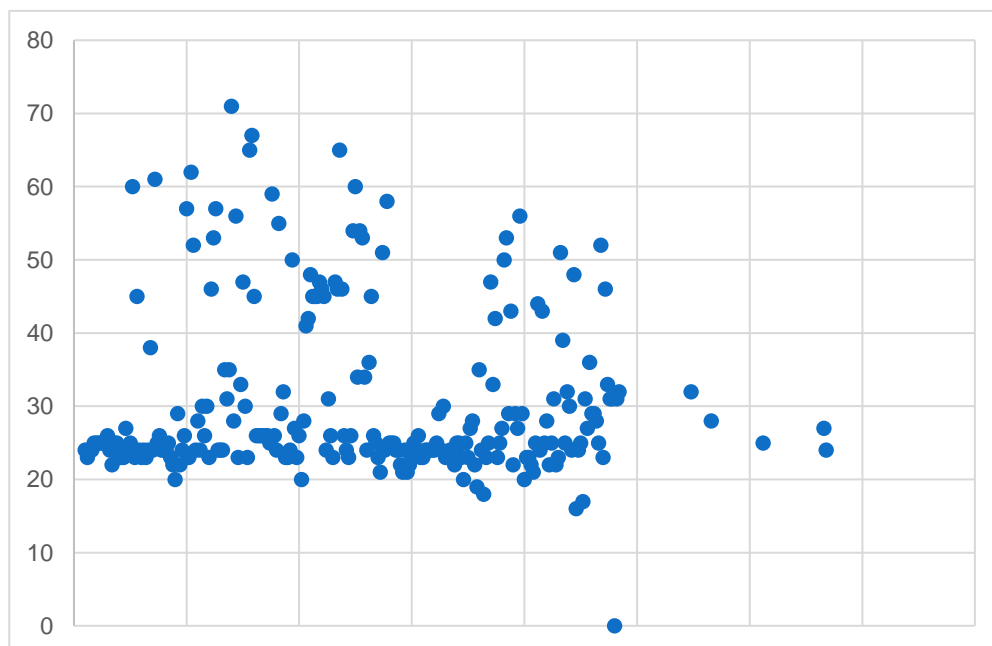
Graph 2: Distribution of the sample according to region of residence



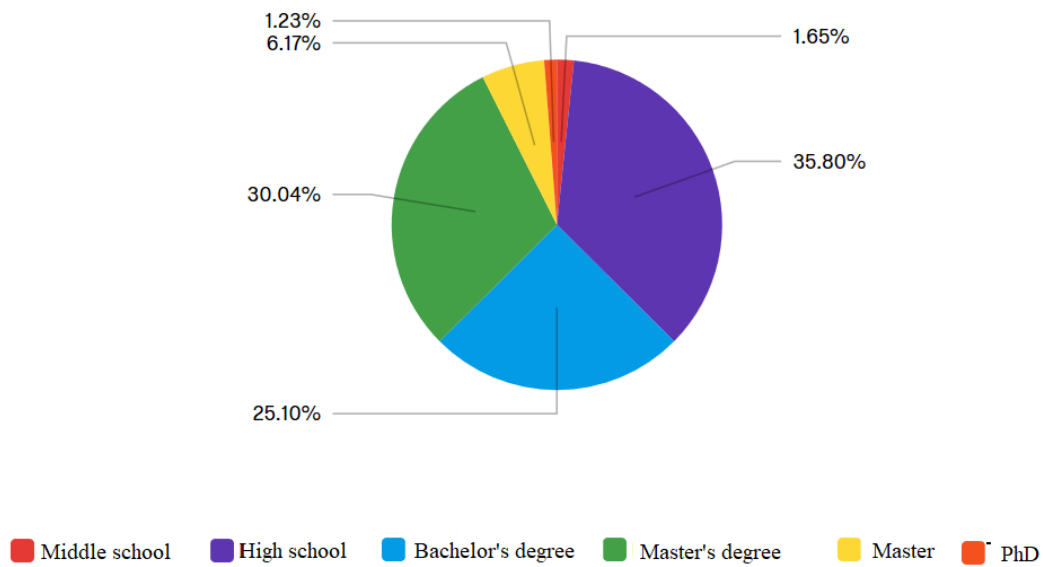
Graph 3: Distribution of the sample according to gender

From the data obtained, interviewers have gathered in various groups according to their age. The sample is formed in the following way:

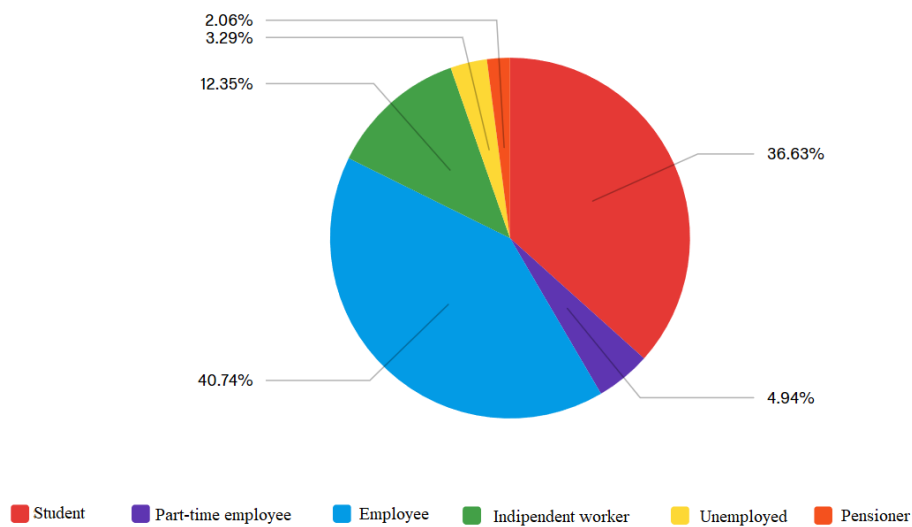
- 50,82% of users are between 18 and 25 years old;
- 26,03% of users are between 26 and 35 years old;
- 12,40% of users are between 36 and 50 years old;
- 9,92% of users are older than 50 years old;
- 0,82% of users are younger than 18 years old.



Graph 4: Distribution of the sample according to age



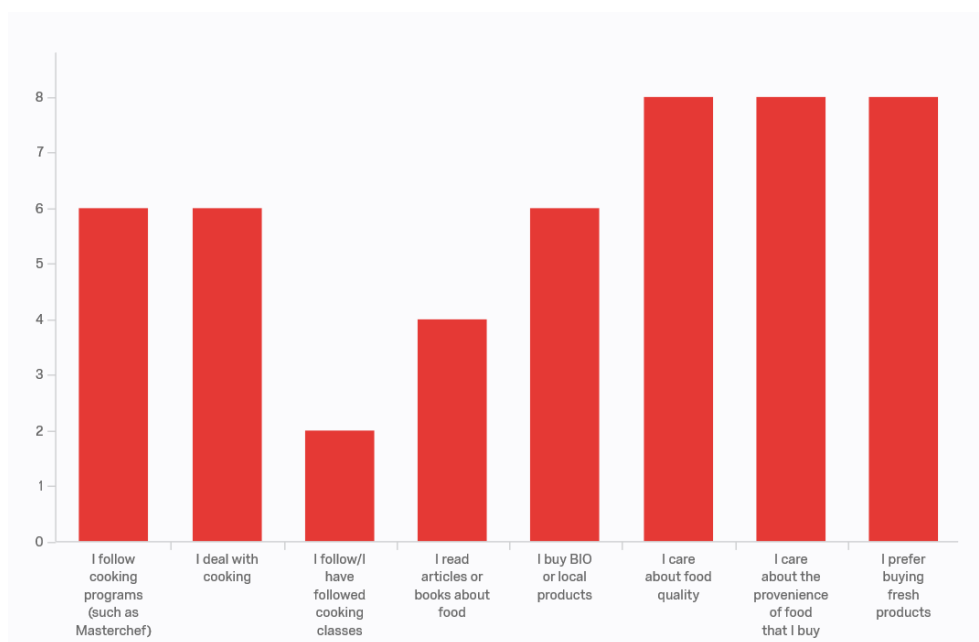
Graph 5: Level of education of interviewers



Graph 6: Occupation of interviewers

In order to analyse consumers' dietary behaviours, many questions related to extra-domestic consumption were been submitted, as well as the kind of product they usually buy and their general interest toward food world. Graphs from 7 to 10 provide data obtained from the survey. Graph 7 shows the mean obtained by each quote proposed. Interviewers should evaluate on a Likert scale, from 1 to 10, their level of interest for each action. The histogram highlights the following data:

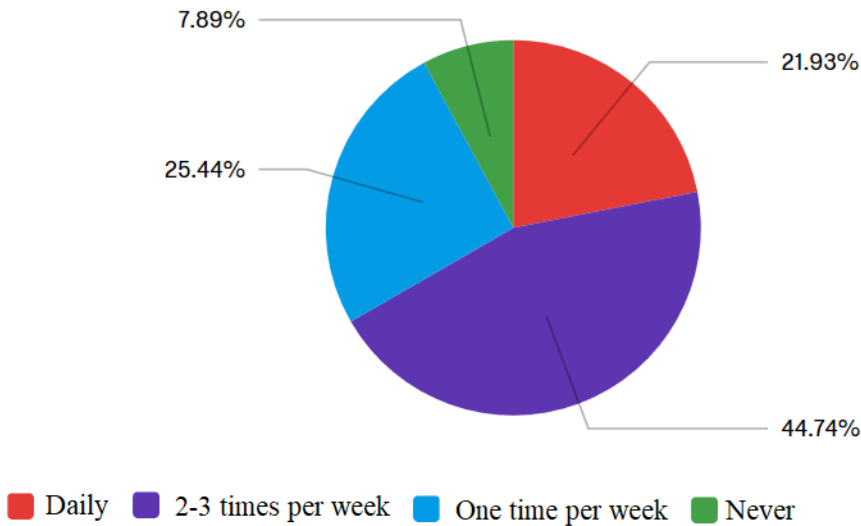
- Consumers are quite interested in cooking programs. The average vote is 6. Nowadays, television offers many programs dedicated to cuisine: some aims to explain recipes, others are dedicated or created by food-bloggers, others focused on competition between amateur chefs, etc.
- The same level of interest is attributed to dealing with cuisine;
- Few users have followed or are following cooking class: almost 47% of interviewers have voted 1/10 and the average voted is 2;
- Users are almost completely disinterested in reading books or articles about food: the average vote in this case is 4;
- Due to the increasing of problems related to food, environmental issues and the return to “green product”, customers take care of the products they eat. Biological and local food are sometimes preferred, although there is a large part of market who does not care about it: in this case the average of vote is 6. On the other hand, voted with an average of 8 is the interest in quality, provenience and freshness of products.



Graph 7: How much are you interested in food world? Evaluate this interest from 1 (not interested at all) to 10 (completely interested).

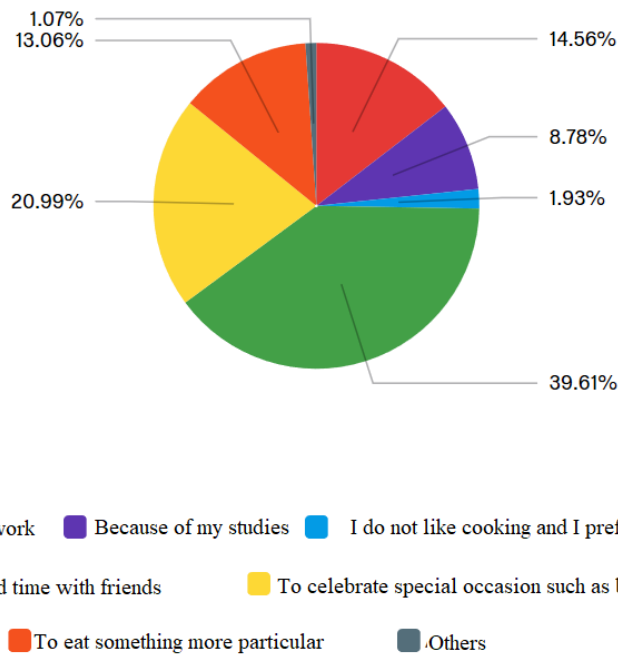
As explained in chapter 1, extra-domestic consumption has notably increase. Wealth, globalization and working positions facilitate this kind of consumption: employees go to the restaurant in their break, friends share their free time eating a pizza, foreign

student looks for ethnic restaurant to eat something familiar, etc. Consumers do not eat at home at least 1 or 2 times per week (as shown in graph 8).



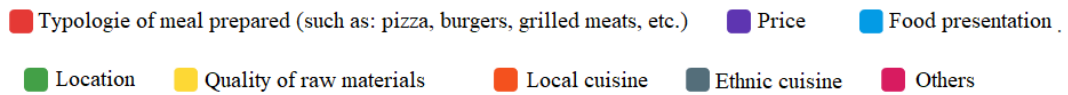
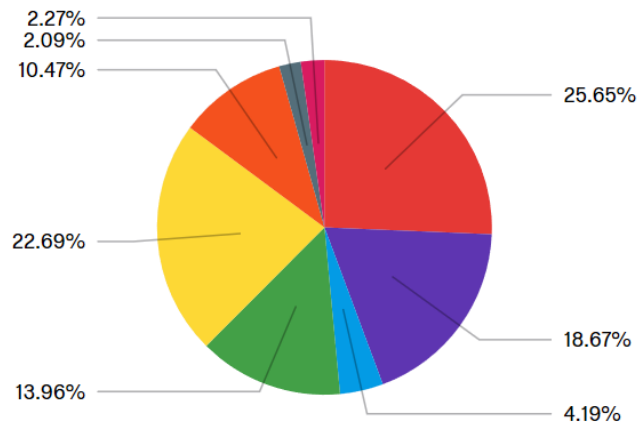
Graph 8: How many times do you not eat at home?

The reasons of these extra-domestic consumptions are not always related to the “obligation” of eating at restaurant: 14,5% and 8,8% of users do not eat at home due to their works or studies. Research of sophisticated and more elaborate food has been indicated by 13% of consumers. The theory related to the food as aspect of culture and as a social agent (explained in chapter 1) are confirmed by the data obtained: 39,6% of users go to restaurant to spend time with friends, and 21% due to special occasion. Food allows to meet up. Other reasons are the research of new cooking style and culture or the necessity to stop the routine.



Graph 9: Why do you not eat at home? Choose no more than 3 options.

The selection of a restaurant is the results of different factors. The one that counts more is the typologies of food (25,7%): obviously, consumers that want to go to restaurants decide where to go depending on what they want to eat. The quality of raw materials as also been considered a relevant factor by 22,7% of interviewers: the provenience and quality of food has already been evaluated important in graph 6. Another relevant factor is the price, followed by the location. In selecting a restaurant, food presentation is not considered an important factor, but it will become in the moment of taking a photo! Other elements that can influence the choice are the fastness of service, presence of vegetarian or gluten free meal, attention to food intolerance and online reviews.



Graph 10: Which parameter do you consider in choosing a restaurant? Select no more than 3 options.

To conclude, consumers chose extra-domestic consumption in order to meet friends or celebrate special occasions: going to restaurant represents a social and cultural activity. The selection of the restaurant depends on typologies of food prepared and price but also quality of raw materials is considered very important. Users take care of what they eat and want to be sure of the provenience, quality and freshness of the product they buy. Watching cooking television programs has become an activity that passionate each kind of consumers while reading books or magazine focused on food and participate to cooking classes are activities that remain circumscribed to the lovers or expert of the sector.

5.2. Hypothesis

In developing the survey, many hypotheses have been introduced according to what had been discovered in previously studies or papers about food-bloggers or food blog in general. To verify or not these hypotheses, the study is based on a quantitative investigation and a descriptive analysis of the sample. So, the data obtained are partially limiting. To better verify if accepted or rejected above-mentioned hypotheses, it will be necessary a statistical test.

Nowadays, the phenomenon of influencer has been increasing. Influencers have developed their activity through social network and refers to various activity. Although the ones who operate in the fashion sector are probably the most know, there is a large part of the market taken by food-influencers. As already explained in paragraph 4.3 “at least 85% of customers search information on digital platform before choosing a restaurant”: information is provided by OCR or by food-bloggers. Due to the increase of cooking television programs, in which food-bloggers often participate and the attention that they are obtaining on newspapers, magazines and social networks, it is difficult to be unaware about what they are. So, the first two hypotheses are:

H1: The majority of customers know what a food-blogger is

H2: A large part of users follow food-bloggers online.

Technology and social media are usually used by millennial, also know generation Y, that indicate people born between 1980 and 2000. They are highly exposed to Internet and they are born in a digital world hence, influencer marketing has higher effect on millennials due to their frequent use of Internet and social network.⁵⁰⁰ Considering what indicated by Jade, another hypothesis is:

H3: The percentage of customers between 19 and 39 years old who know and follow a food-blogger is higher that the number of customers who do not belong to generation Y that do the same.

⁵⁰⁰ Cfr. JADE Z. (2018), How to reach millennials through influencer marketing, *Hire Influence*; in: GRAFSTROM J., JAKOBSSON L. & WIEDE P. (2018), *cit.*

Within chapter 4, it has been explained the evolution of food-bloggers' careers and their adaptation to the innovative social network. If at the beginning of their career, food-bloggers operated exclusively on blogs, with the advent of SNs their activity moved on these platforms. They conserve both profile and when they post photos on SN they usually share the link of their blog. Due to recently "unpopularity" of blogs, users prefer following food-bloggers on other platforms, such as Instagram, Facebook or Twitter. Customers usually refer to blog in researching for recipes but they prefer other forms of community to be informed about restaurant or just to be inspired by food images. Moreover, SNs usually present a homepage in which are shown all profiles followed so, lurkers have access to food-bloggers' profile easily: they scroll the homepage, watch food-bloggers' post both if they want or not, catch information without be active fans. Since users use SN for boredom, they prefer to passively obtain information and this is allowed by SNs more easily than by blogs. Only when they need information, they actively research it: for example, if they want to try a new restaurant, they explore food-bloggers' profile looking for inspiration or if they must prepare a cake, they research a recipe on blogs. Focused researches are sporadic.

H4: Users follow food-bloggers on social networks rather than on blogs.

H5: Customers rarely inform on purpose about news posted by food-bloggers.

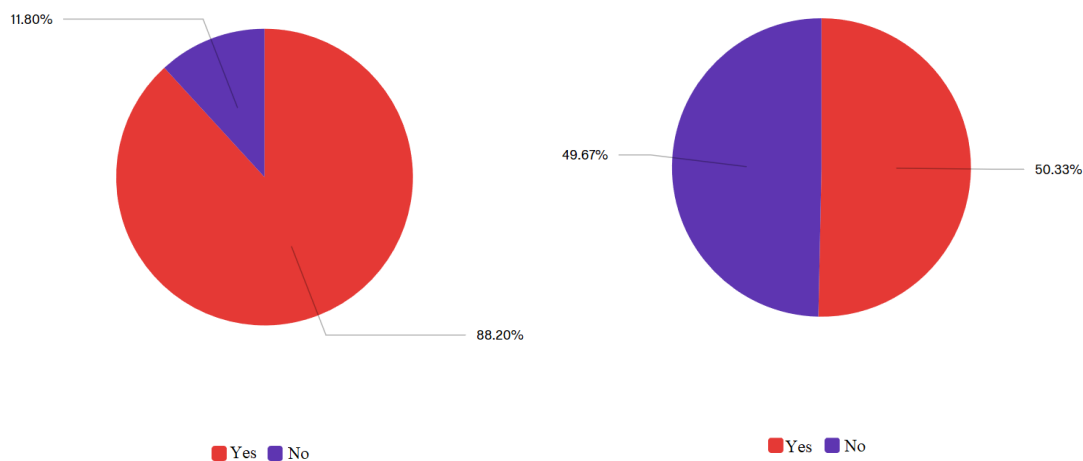
OCR are the prevalent form of eWOM and sites, such as TripAdvisor, represent the main source of information. The WOM is considered the more reliable source of information. Moreover, in the purchase process that does not involve expensive or difficult decision, according to the ELM model, customers follow a peripheral route and trust of information obtained by their peers, although if they are not expert of the sector. Food is a cultural and sociological aspect so a customer trust of individuals with his same background, tastes and culture, such as family or friends.

H6: Researching information about restaurant, customers prefer advice obtained from OCR or their friends and family rather than suggestions of food-bloggers.

5.2.1. Results

In this section, the graphs introduced aim to explicate the data obtained from the survey, in order to verify or not the hypotheses explained in the previously paragraph.

Analysing the graph 11, it is possible to notice that at the question “do you know what a food-blogger is?”, 88,2% of interviewers answered positively. Hence, H1 seems to be verified. In the right graph (graph 12), H2 can be neither verified nor nullified. At the question “do you follow any food-blogger?”, 50,33% on interviewers answered positively against the 49,67% who answered negatively. The difference is so infinitesimal that to verify hypothesis 2 is better to obtain a larger sample or to provide a statistical test, as already suggested. The reasons why customers decide to follow or not a food-bloggers are analysed in paragraph 5.3.



Graph 11: Do you know what a food-blogger is?

Graph 12: Do you follow any food-blogger?

Considering users of generation Y, the interviewers have been classified in two categories: the ones that belong to this generation (users between 19 and 39 years old) and the ones who not belong to it (users who have at least 40 years old or who has no more than 18 years old). Considering these categories, 77,8% of interviewers belong to generation Y. Of them, 81,7% of interviewer know what a food-blogger is and 86,4% follow at least of them. On the other hand, between users who do not belong to generation Y, 18,4% know what a food-blogger is but, only 13,6% follow any of them. Detailed data are provide in the following table (table 1). Analysing these data, H3 seems to be verified because the percentage of users between 19 and 39 years old who know and follow food-bloggers is higher than the percentage of users who do not belong to that range.

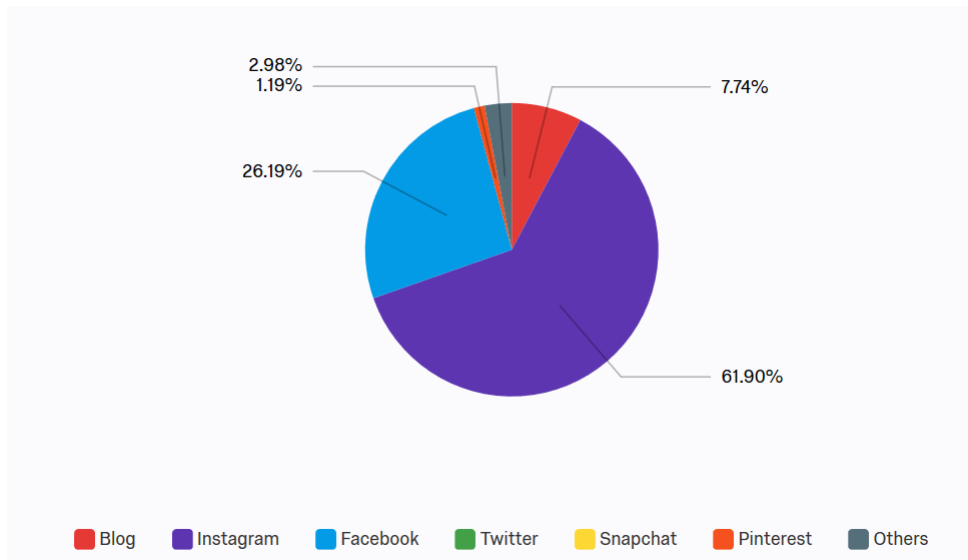
	Do you know what a food-blogger is?			Do you follow any food-blogger?		
	Total	No	Yes	Total	No	Yes
≤ 18	1,3%	0,0%	1,4%	1,3%	1,6%	0,9%
19 - 39	77,8%	38,1%	81,7%	77,8%	70,5%	86,4%
≥ 40	20,9%	61,9%	17,0%	20,9%	27,9%	12,7%

Table 1: Analysis of users who know and follow food-blogger in relation to their age

According to the answer given to the second question (do you know follow any food-blogger?), the survey follow two different paths.

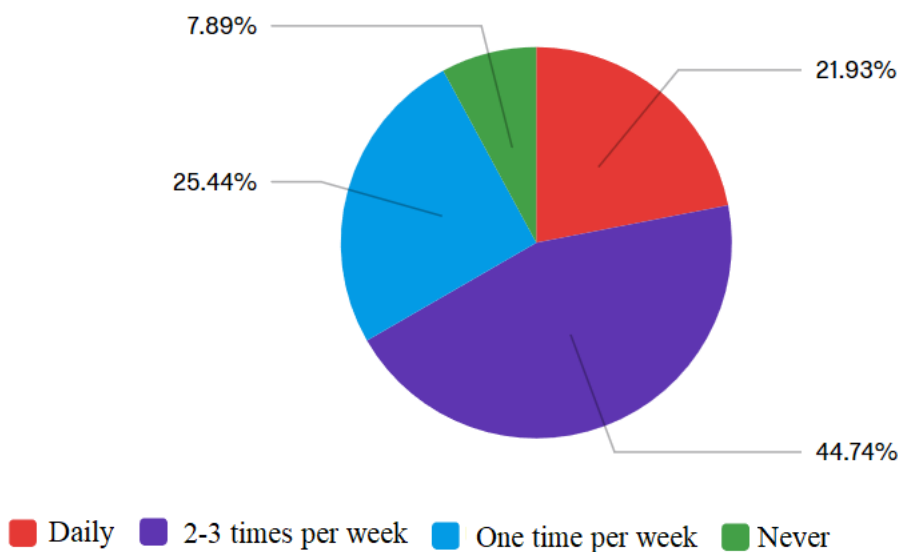
- If the answer is “no”: the survey aims to identify the reasons why users do not follow any profile and then try to shape consumer’s profile and his dietary behaviour;
- If the answer is “yes”: the survey tries to identify the reasons according to which users had decided to follow food-bloggers, how many, which one, their influence and so on. At the end, it provides final questions necessary to shape consumer’s profile.

At the questions “*which platform do you use to follow a food-blogger?*”, interviewer could express no more than 3 preferences. In graph 13, it is shown that blogs are used by 7,74% interviewer. Instagram is the social network most used (61,90%), followed by Facebook (26,19%). Snapchat and Twitter are not used for this activity. Pinterest, another social network dedicated to photo such as Instagram, is not very diffused and obtained only 1,19% of votes. Another SN suggested is YouTube. Also in this case, it seems that H4 is verified.



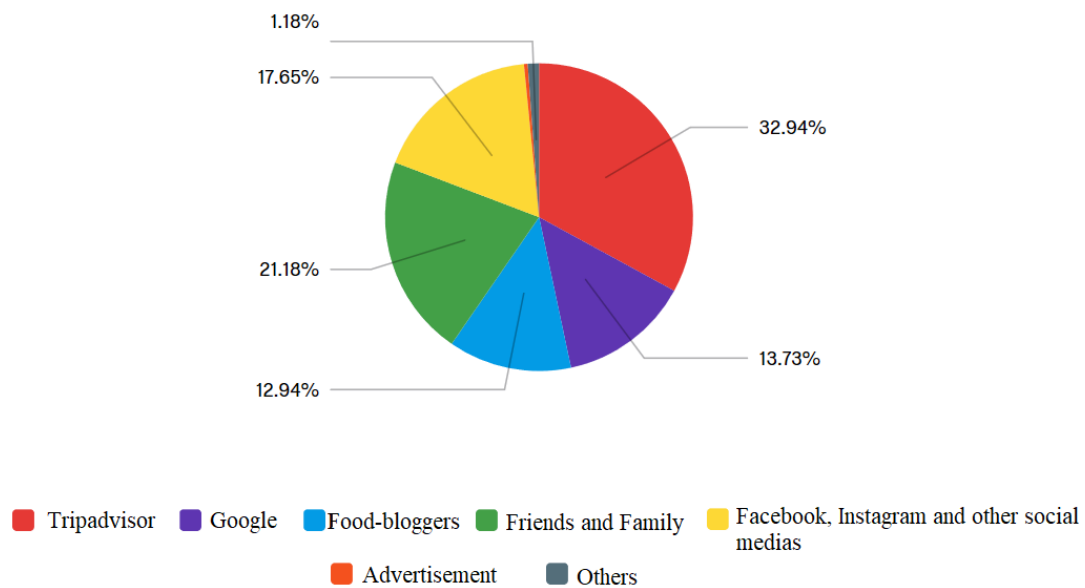
Graph 13: Which platform do you use to follow a food-blogger?

According to what explained in the preamble of hypothesis 5, as a direct consequence of the validation of hypothesis 4, H5 should be verified too. Due to the large use of social networks, it is possible to say that consumers do not directly monitor food-bloggers' profiles but they are informed of their news by chance. This idea contrasts the data obtained in the survey (graph 14), according to which almost 22% of interviewers inform about news posted by food-bloggers every day and 25,4% with a frequency of 2-3 times per week. Being informed with this frequency does not imply being informed for chance. Hence, hypothesis 6 is contrasted and should be nullified. Also in this case, a statistical test should provide a more reliable judgment.



Graph 14: How many times do you inform about news posted by food-bloggers?

In their research about restaurant or other places where eating, customers prefer advice obtained by TripAdvisor (32,94%) or friends and family (21,18%). Food-bloggers are used as source of information in 13% of cases. So, H7 seems to be verified. Furthermore, social media are used more often (17,65% of times). In other cases, consumers trust of their sixth sense and chose a restaurant that looks good or visit restaurant’s webpage to evaluate the menu. Results are shown is graph 20.



Graph 15: In researching a restaurant/pub/pizzeria/etc., which kind of source of information do you use?

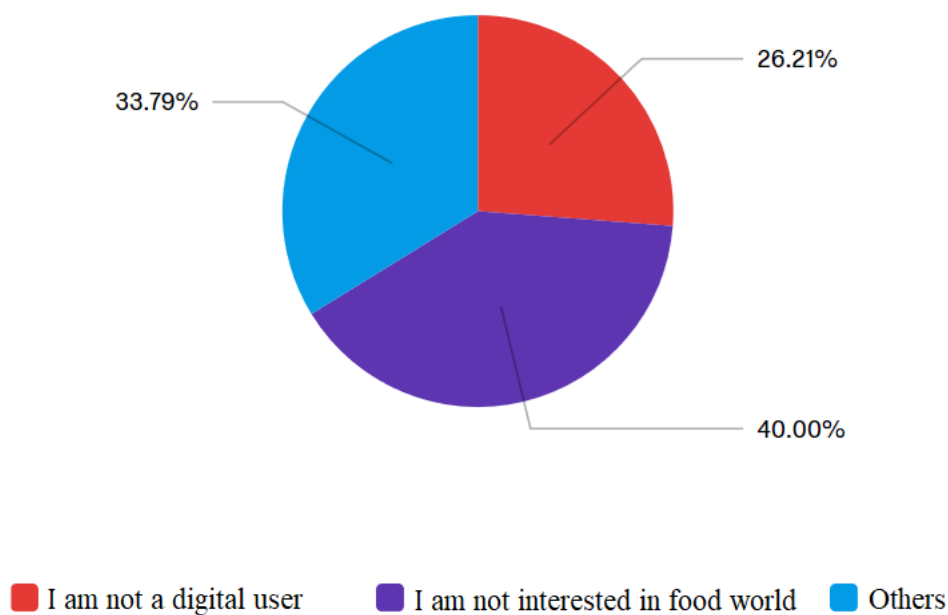
5.3. Market analysis

There are various reasons according to which users join online community and social networks, as explained in paragraph 2.2 and 2.3. The survey aims at understanding why customers decide to follow or not food-bloggers and in which cases they directly refer to their profiles.

Graph 16 highlights reasons why consumers do not prefer following food-bloggers. Interviewers seems to be not interested in food world and do not care about information related to new product, recipes or restaurant. Many of them (26,21%) do not considered themselves as digital users so that they do not have the possibility of follow them, although they may be interested in their activities. Others interesting reasons shared are

the following one:

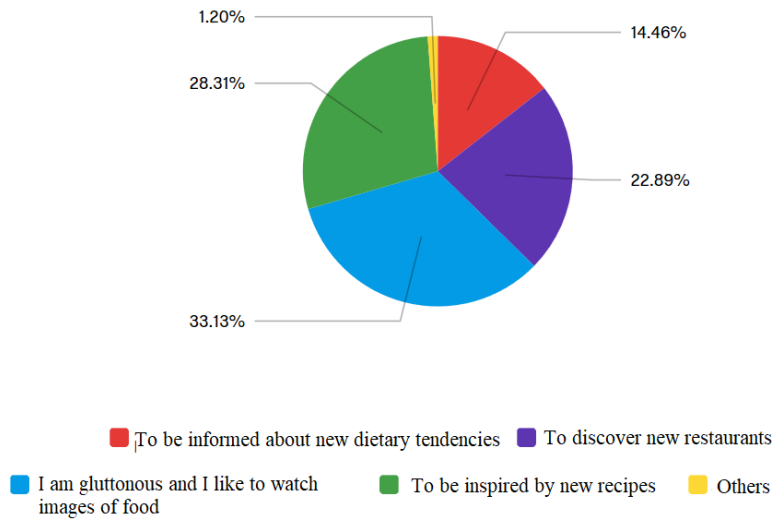
- Lack of time
- Disinterest towards their figure and interest in following other kind of contents
- Lack of value given to the photography and judgment provided by individuals who lack of experience
- Disdain toward “influencer world”
- Interest for food world but not for food-blogger.



Graph 16: Why do you not follow any food-blogger?

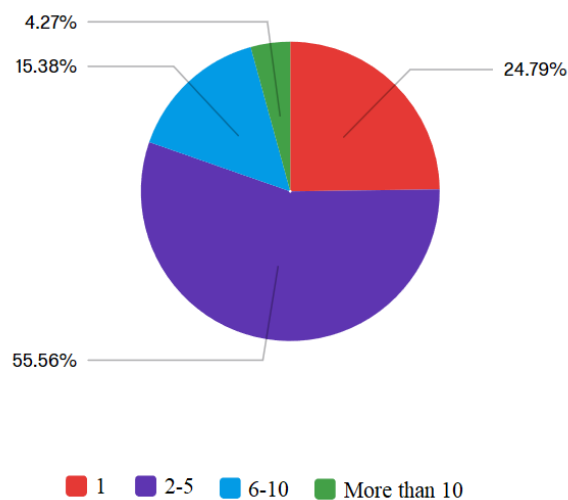
Instead, graph 17 shows the motives that prone individuals to follow food-bloggers. As already anticipate in paragraph 4.6.1. dedicated to foodporn, due to the increasing value given to images and photography, to the presence of aggregators (introduced in paragraph 4.6.), to the remarkable use of Instagram (paragraph 2.3.2.) and the increasing number of profile dedicated to food and created on that platform (paragraph 4.1.), users like to be “entertained” by food images. Pictures inspires recipes, tempt to try the product or restaurant. What consumers look for in food-bloggers’ profiles are picture: pictures that whet users’ appetite! So, the main reason indicated by consumers is related to gluttony and delicacy. Moreover, most users want to be inspired by new recipes (28,3%) or want to discover new restaurants and places to try (22,9%). Few interviewer, only 14,5% want

to be informed about new products or dietary tendency. In answering this question, interviewers could express no more than two preferences.



Graph 17: Why do you follow food-bloggers?

A very small part of interviewers (4,3%) is very interested in food word and give high consideration to food-blogger: they follow more than ten profiles. More than half of interviewers (55,6%) follow between two and five profiles and a large part of users (24,8%) follow just one food-blogger. Data are shown in graph 18.



Graph 18: How many food-bloggers do you follow?

I have also asked to cite some food-blogger followed. Other users have cited chefs, such as Antonino Cannavacciuolo, Alessandro Borghese or chef Barbato, who have opened their profile and that could not be considered “food-blogger”. Other users cited some aggregator such as “SorrentoFood”, “SicilyFoodPorn” or “NapoliFoodPorn”. The last one has been cited 13 times! From the data obtained, it results that the most known Italian food-bloggers are almost the same that have been cited in other ranks already shared throughout the thesis. The most mentioned is “Puokemed” (28 mentions), the one interviewed in paragraph 5.6, followed by Chiara Maci (16 mentions), Giallo Zafferano (14 mentions) and her creator Sonia Peronaci (6 mentions), Benedetta Rossi (9 mentions), Vincenzo Falcone (8 mentions) and “Chef in camicia” (7 mentions), that is a blog created by Nicolò, Lello and Andrea, three young and creative foodies. The high level of mention related to Puokemed could be justified by the presence of 70% of Campanian interviewers. Analysing all answers obtained, it is possible to discover the existence of millions of not very known food-bloggers and blogs :“La cucina salutare”, “Un terrone a Milano”, “Dolci delizie”, “Italia squisita”, “Sinfonie di sapori”, “Super pizza Bros”, “Valeria gluten free”, “Nonna Paperina”, “Jova pizze fantastiche”, “Un biscotto al giorno”, “Mamma Gy”, “Misya”, “Chiara Passion”, “Roberto Valbuzzi”, “Canna92”, Benedetta Parodi, “Cucinandomelagodo”, Marco Bianchi, Valeria Aioli and many more. The majority of them have been cited just one time and all of them have not been mentioned more than three times. This long list allows to understand the size and importance of the phenomenon of food-bloggers.

Since the goal of this thesis is understanding how much customers are influenced by food-bloggers in their purchase process and food choices, the questions proposed refer to the reliability that customers confer to food-blogger both in general situation and in relation to the evaluation of restaurants and if they trust food-bloggers’ advice in the purchase process of a product sponsored by them. Graph 19 and 20 shown the level of references to food-blogger and graph 21 the case in which consumers visit food-bloggers’ profiles. At the end, graph 22 indicate the percentage of users who are prone to a product sponsored by food-bloggers.

In graph 19a, it is shown the frequency by which interviewers refer to food-bloggers. Interviewers are spit in three categories:

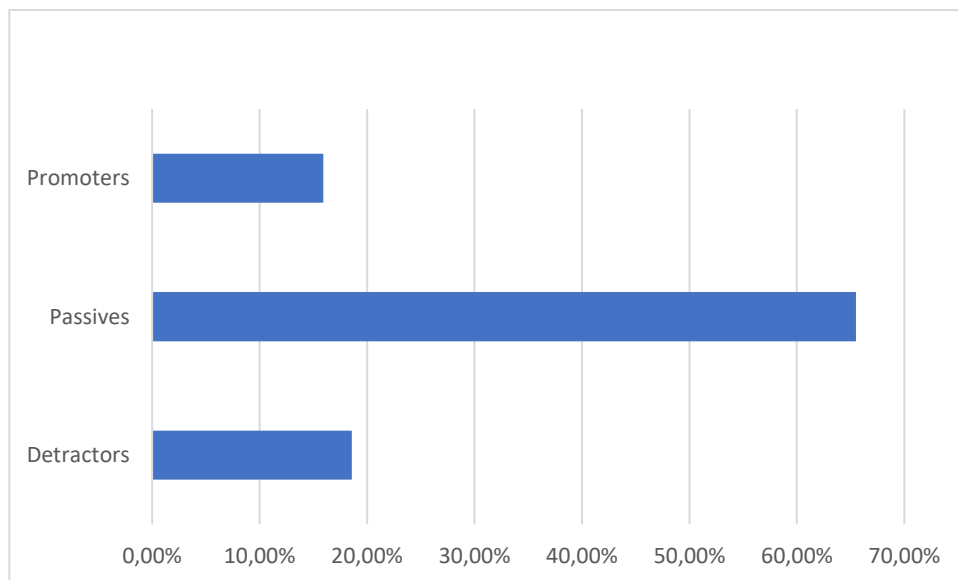
- Detractors: interviewers who refer to food-bloggers no more than 4 times over

10. They are 18,58% of interviewers;

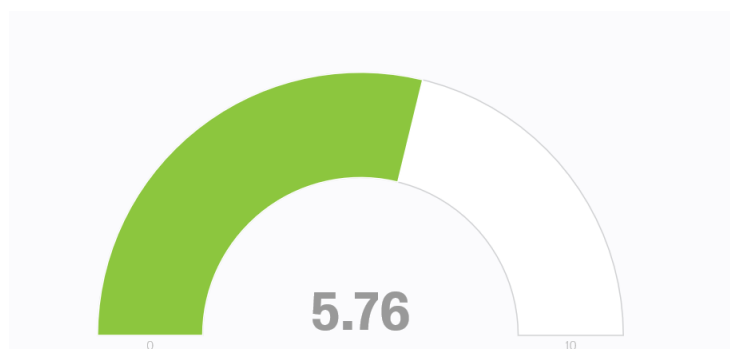
- Passives: interviewers who refer to food-bloggers between 5 and 7 times over 10. They are the larger group, represented by 65,49% of interviewers;
- Promoters: interviewers who refer to food-bloggers at least 8 times over 10. They are 15,93% of interviewers.

Confronting the data obtained in these categories, it is possible to highlight that users usually refer to food-bloggers, but they do not completely trust of food-bloggers' advice. In fact, promoters are the smaller category.

The average of reference conferred to food-bloggers is 5,76 over 10 (graph 19b).

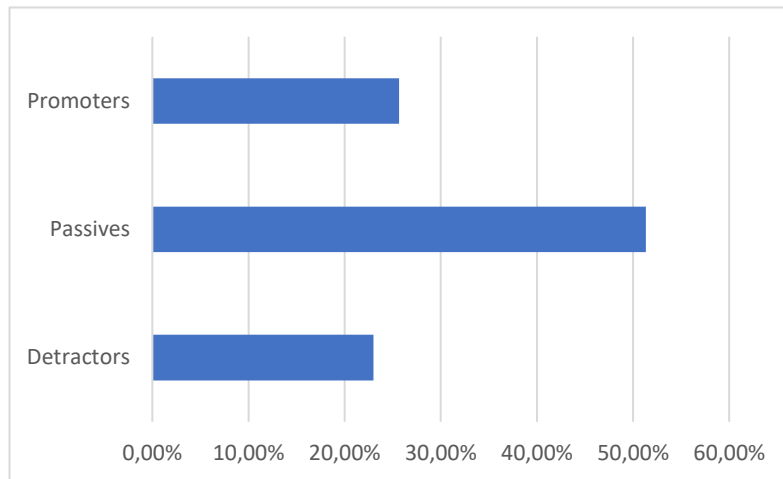


Graph 19a: On a scale from 0 to 10, in which 0 represent the lowest value, how often do you refer to a food-blogger? Division in three categories of the level of reference conferred

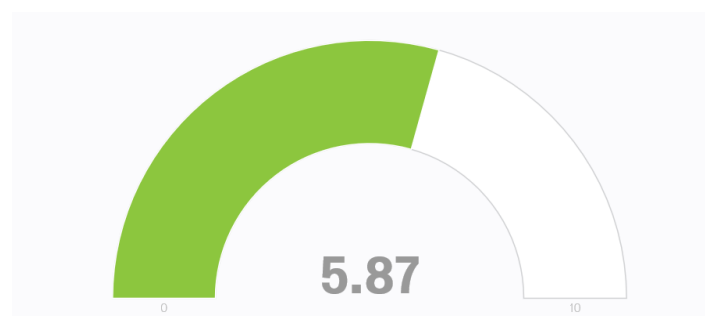


Graph 19b: Average of reference conferred to food-bloggers

Differently from graph 19 where the general level of reference to food-bloggers is shown, graph 20 highlights how often customers refer to food-blogger in choosing a restaurant. In this case too, interviewees are divided into detractors, passives and promoters (graph 20a). Detractors are 23% of users and promoters 25,67%. The majority of users are passive and represent the 51,33% of interviewees. The average of reference conferred to food-bloggers in choosing a restaurant is 5,87 (graph 20b).



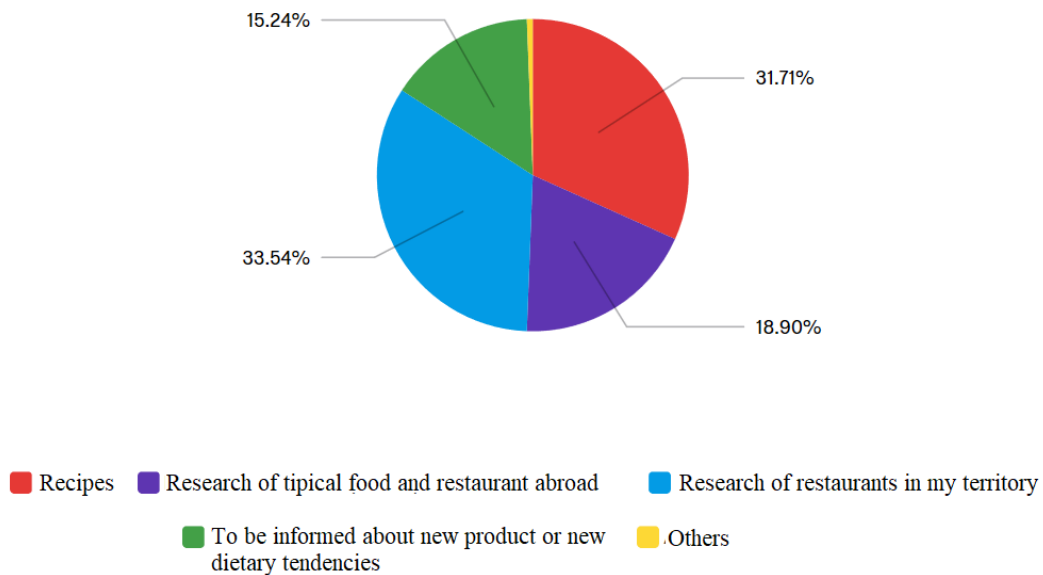
Graph 20a: On a scale from 1 to 10, in which 1 represent the lowest value, how often do you refer to a food-blogger in choosing a restaurant/pub/etc.? Division in three categories of the level of reference conferred



Graph 20b: Average of reference conferred to food-bloggers in restaurant choices

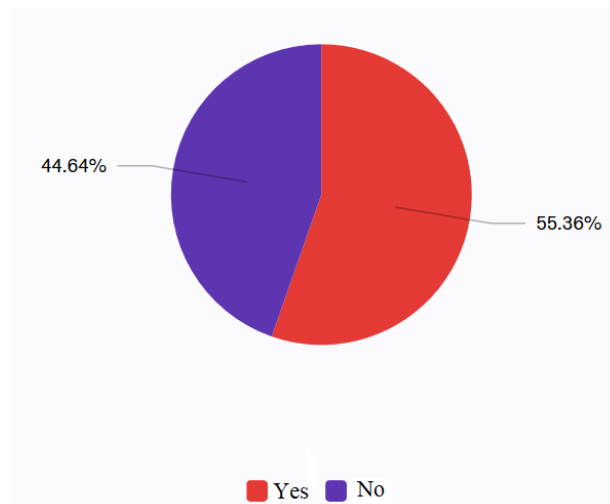
Consumers can refer to food-blogger in many cases. Graph 21 shows the motives that prone users to research information using food-bloggers' profiles. The strongest motivation refers to the research of restaurants and other place where eat (33.5%) or the research of recipes (31,7%). Be informed about new product or dietary tendency do not

results, as already shown in graph 17, a relevant reason to follow or refer to food-blogger. Other users refer to food-blogger in order to obtain information about how combine healthy products.



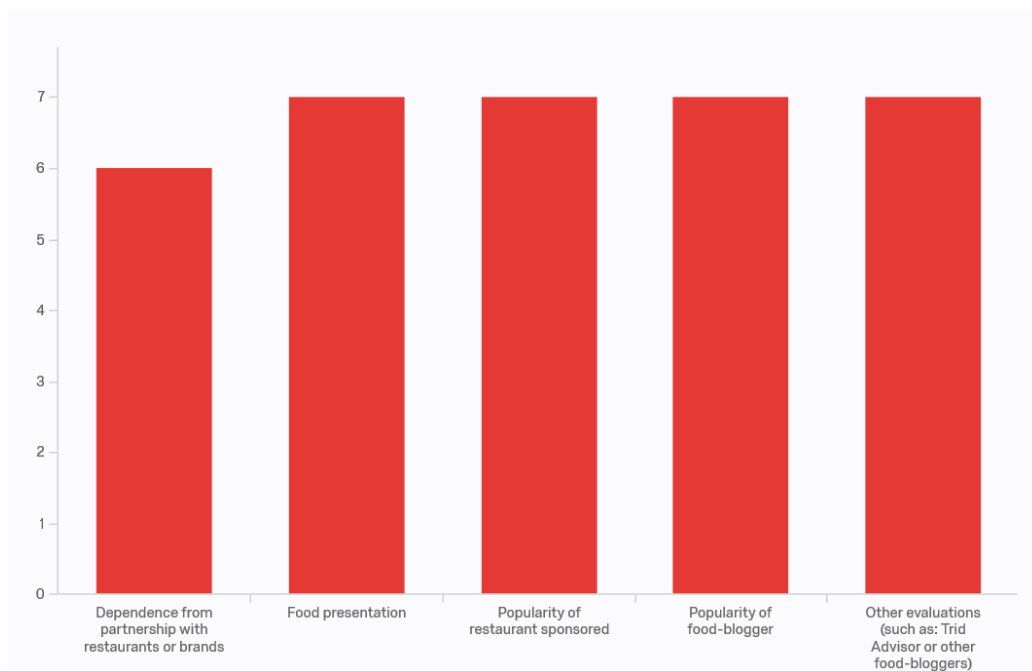
Graph 21: In which case do you refer to a food-blogger? Select no more than 2 options.

Due to the popularity of food-bloggers they are considered “influencer” and their advice are taken by a large part of consumers. As shown in graph 22, 55,4% of consumers would buy a product sponsored by food-influencer. For these reasons many companies are choosing food-bloggers for their promotional campaign and are establishing relationship with them, such as been explained in chapter 4 and the various example provided about Chiara Maci.



Graph 22: Would you buy a food product, or a kitchen utensil sponsored by a food-blogger?

Due to presence of millions of online users that define themselves as “food-bloggers” and due to increasing popularity of many of them, understanding if they are reliable or not is not so easy. There are many factors that can influence the dependability of their advice. As many renowned food-bloggers, such as Chiara Maci or Puokemed, confirm that credibility is the most important quality a food-blogger must possess. Bloggers who exclusively looks for a monetary reward, can easily lose their credibility. Partnering with brands, companies or restaurant is part of the work but, choose carefully a partner influence reliability of both parties. For example, popularity of one of the parties may affect judgment. Hence, a list of different possible factors that can condition food-bloggers evaluation has been proposed and to interviewers have been asked to evaluate this influence on a scale from 1 to 10, where 1 was the lowest rate. Results are highlight in graph 23. Dependence from partnership with restaurants or brands seems to be not so relevant according to consumers. This factor has been evaluated as “by no means” relent in the reliability of advice. Nonetheless, the dependence from partnership as obtained an average vote of 6/10. All the other factors have obtained an average of 7/10. So, all factors are considered quite relevant.



Graph 23: On a scale from 1 (noway) to 10 (completely), how much these factors can affect the reliability of advice provided by food-bloggers?

5.4. Consideration and limitation

For the construction of the sample, the common users come from Campania and, from the data obtained, it is a woman between 18 and 25 years old. Nonetheless, the difference between the percentage of women and men is not very disproportionate.

Common consumer is a student who attends high-school or is concluding her master's degree. She likes cooking programs and prefers being informed about food world through this mean of information rather than books or articles. She likes dealing with cooking and uses to buy biological or local products. She takes great attention to the quality, freshness and provenience of the food she buys or eat. In fact, these factors condition her selection of a restaurant rather than another. Due to her study or work, she must choose extra-domestic consumption one or two times per week but, at the first place she loves going to the restaurant to meet friends or to celebrate special occasion. In choosing a restaurant, she considers the kind of food proposed (local food is preferred to ethnic food), quality of raw materials, as already said, and price.

In resuming this market analysis, the data obtained allows to discover that food-bloggers are a well-known phenomenon: most of interviewers know what a food-blogger is, and half of the interviewers follow any profiles. The difference between generation is evident: the percentage of users who belong to generation Y and that know and follow food-blogger is higher than the percentage that does not belong to that generation. If users decide not to follow a food-blogger is due to their few interest in food-world but, if they care about this argument, the main reasons that prone them to follow food-influencers are based on their gluttony. Probably for this reason, the platform most used to follow a food-blogger is Instagram, due to its graphical characteristics and the presence of a lot of "foodporn" pictures. Other relevant motives that prone users to follow a food-blogger are the research of recipes or new restaurants. A small category wants to be informed about new dietary tendencies too.

Users usually follow no more than five profiles and the percentage of lurkers is higher than active followers. In fact, individuals look for information on food-bloggers' profiles only two or three times per week. In addition to Instagram, other platforms chosen by users in order to follow food-bloggers are Facebook and blogs. The second ones, compared to Instagram, have lost their relevant position as sources of information. A very small percentage of users still use blogs.

On a scale from 1 to 10, consumers usually generally refer to food-blogger in 5,76 cases;

this level minimally increases to 5,87 in case of trust related to restaurants. In both cases, passives users are more than detractors and promoters. Users usually refer to food-bloggers in order to obtain information about restaurants in their territory or to be inspired by new recipes. In their food choices, they prefer trusting other sources: TripAdvisor, family and friends or information founded on social network. Customers perceived the advice provided by food-bloggers in relation to restaurants as conditioned by dependence from partnership with brands or restaurants and by the popularity of the food-blogger or the restaurant itself. The difference between these various factors is imperceptible: popularity of food-blogger affects evaluation of 70,6%, other advice obtained such as the ones obtained by other food-bloggers or TripAdvisor, affect the reliability of 69,9%, food presentation of 69,6%, popularity of the restaurant sponsored of 67,4% and at least the partnerships established with brand or restaurant of 62,1%. So, although food-bloggers phenomenon is spread all over social networks and individuals know about the existence of influencers, this figure as not taken the advent. This does not change the fact that most consumers will buy a food product or a kitchen utensil if sponsored by a food-blogger. Other sources of information are considered more reliable and the vastity of profiles throughout Internet makes difficult to understand which influencers worth trust.

Unfortunately, this study presents some limits that may affect the reliability of the answers obtained: half of the interviewers is between 18 and 25 years old and the 71% of respondents come from Campania. This last factors for example influence the high level of mention of Puokemed.

Nonetheless, this study could be a first step of a wider study that could be enlarge to other regions and to other nations because influencers do not represent an emerging phenomenon anymore but something that has already been well rooted.

5.5. The opinion of an expert: interview with “Puokemed”

Behind the identity of “Puokemed” is hidden a Neapolitan citizen. Egidio Cerrone is an Italian food-blogger, very known in Campania Region. He starts his activity on blog and then move it on Instagram. In 2016, he opened his first “paninoteca” (a sub shop) in Vomero, a quartier in Naples and, due to the success of it, he decided to open another headquarters in Spaccanapoli in 2017. He is also active on Instagram through the profile of “Italyfoodprn” that he had created in collaboration with Gian Andrea Squadrilli, alias “Jana_italyfoodprn”, another Italian food-blogger. Through his profile, follower can perceive his passion and love for food. He always proposes delicious meals and has no problem in sharing the recipes. He suggests place where eat and he asks for suggestions. Egidio represents one example of how food-bloggers are not an emerging phenomenon anymore, but they are an established reality, and how they can create a professional activity starting from the web. His creativity represents a way by which food-blogger use marketing tools in order to promote themselves. Instead, as already mentioned in other paragraphs of this thesis, credibility is one of the main characteristics that a food-blogger should have, and it is one of the quality most important to Egidio.

Egidio does not like the term “food-bloggers”: it is an etiquette and as all other etiquettes he does not love it. He focused on the emotional component of this figure: he wants to talk about food but he admits he prefers focusing on his feelings and emotions. He claims to talk about food at 360 degree. He has always had a passion for food. At the question “*When, where and how does your passion for food arise?*”, he answers as it follows:

“When I was a child, while my friends playing on football, I stopped because my grandmother was going to fry meatballs. I cannot lose that moment. That moment worth more than the meatball itself. Do I explain, don’t I?”

Before becoming a food-blogger, he used to talk with his friends about his culinary adventures: he talks to his friends and they eat with their eyes and their mind. In 2013, when he was with his friends at “Ciro Mazzella’s paninoteca”, he felt the need to talk about his experience to a larger audience. He has always loved writing, but he prefers to add some dialectal phrases to be closer to his followers: Naples and neighbourhood. So, he decided to create a blog and a Facebook profile in order to tell food thought his sensibility and fantasy. Later, he moved on Instagram, a social network that he has not understood completely: he does not use tools in order to manage it, he just makes the

difference by communicate in natural way. Instagram is the reign of food pictures. Choose the right angle, create the perfect scenario, colours and details are fundamental elements of a food images: at the restaurant, people usually take a photo and then start eating. So, food presentation became relevant. Times ago, for Egidio it was the same. But now, he considers social media as a democratic tool. New smartphone allows to take perfect photos or make professional videos, so he considers flavour and history as the main difference between two meals. With the pass of the time, he felt the needs of increasing his passion and turning that into a work. So, he resigned and on 6th June 2016 the first “PuokBurger Store” opened. During my interview he affirmed:

“I did not do it for the fame or because I had planned it. I just feel the need of talk about myself in a direct and tangible way. In my burgers, there is a lot of my imagination.”

He divides his commercial activity in two variants: PuokBurger Store focus on products, and “Fatelardo Studio” is considered as a communication factory. Through the PuokBurger Store he sells burger, through FateLardo he sells know how. Quality products are necessary. For example, his burgers are numerically limited so, when the raw material is finished, the burger is not available from the menu: quality is guarantee. Egidio always wants to improve himself and its products. For example, he has a basic burger “Ken”, prepared with hamburger, molten Emmenthal cheese, bacon and caramelize onion. It has become his obsession: Ken is the test burger and every time he tries to improve the taste of the bread and of the hamburger. One day, he will hope to make a perfect Ken.

He also creates two Instagram pages completely dedicate to the FateLardo studios and PuokBurger Store: in the first one, he usually publishes recipes or shows what they do in their office; in the second one, he sponsors his store with many creative ideas. For example, the reintroduction of “Aegon Targaryen burger” has been already described in paragraph 4.1. Another brilliant idea was to create the “Game of Puok Burger League 2019”, a competition among all burgers that have been proposed in his store in order to identify the best one and the most appreciated by clients. The store proposes some fixed burgers and the “burger of the month”. Egidio has created a very large offer, with some burger available only in one of the two stores or available only for a short time, in order to encourage clients to try it. As for Champion league, Egidio create a match board (Figure 6) with all burgers that has been proposed. Every day there were two competitions and followers could vote their favourite burger through survey in Instastories.

A creative marketing idea to understand the opinion of customers and think about what burger re-introduce in the menu or propose as a fixed one.

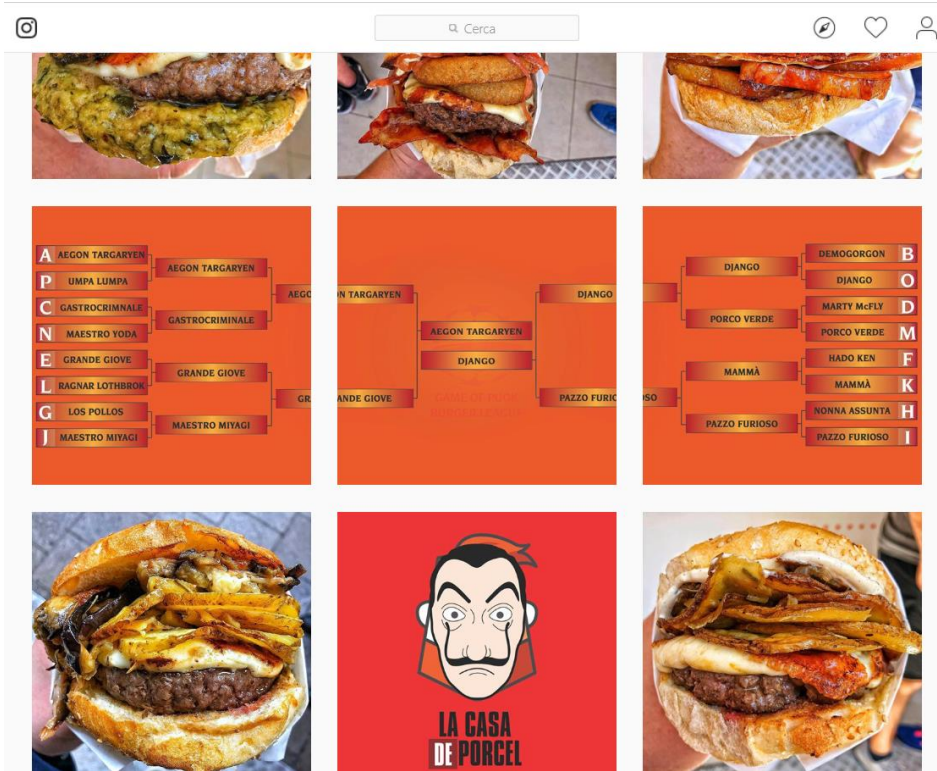


Figure 6: Match board of the “Game of Puok Burger League 2019”. The last “battle”.

Moreover, Puok uses Instagram to sensitise about many topics. For example, during New Year’s Eve in Naples, there are a lot of tragedy related to people who lose their fingers due to shot fireworks. Egidio promoted a consciousness campaign using his profile and sharing the payoff: “Asshole! Do not shot fireworks. You need finger to eat burger!”

In addition to creativity, credibility is the element that generates reliability and popularity of a food-blogger. Egidio considers *credibility* as the first fundamental characteristic of a food-blogger:

“A food-blogger, such as any other person, as the responsibility to be himself or he will be not credible.”

For example, he always refuses offer to sponsor restaurants or events, save if they are done for a good motivation. He participates for example to the Massimo Bottura’s project “Food for soul” where he and FateLardo team had the pleasure to help the chef Sabrina

Russo in preparing a dinner for forty homeless people. The project usually asks the participation of starry chef but, Sabrina wanted Egidio's staff due to their passion for food and for food sharing. Moreover, another example is the store. Egidio has preferred to open a personal commercial activity in order to reach monetary goals and avoid losing credibility:

"I have never received a euro from restaurants which I have talked about. I have preferred to maintain my integrity and image, and create two parallel activity, right and honest."

Many ranks have been published to classify the most reputed or the most know food-blogger: unfortunately, Egidio do not think that exist a "pure food-blogger" as he considers a food-blogger should be. For example, before choosing a restaurant he asks advice to "common people". He is attracted by the people's stories. Within other food-bloggers he does not find advice like theirs; he does not trust anyone. So consequently, he finds difficult to find worthy food-bloggers who want to economically collaborate with him. Food is tangible and in quite subjective. Food-bloggers who want to speculate on it will have a short "career". Relation with followers is very important to him: he always comments and responds to his post and in the chat too. Moreover, he has created another Instagram profile "iampuok", a sort of aggregator in which he posts the best photo that PuokBurger Store's clients sent to him.

On Instagram in the description of the photos he posts, he sometimes adds the recipe and the procedure to replicate the meal or he tags FateLardo's profile to communicate that the recipes and information are provide there or in Instastories. At the beginning, in his blog, he wrote about feeling and sensation of each meal, but he did not provide recipes. He is not a chef and he does not want to publish recipes, but he is thinking about the production of a book: his last culinary adventures take place in people's houses rather than in restaurants. In these houses, there is still the magic he likes, and he want to communicate it using Puokemed. Maybe, he will write a book about the recipes he discovers there or create a YouTube page as already done for FateLardo.

Egidio believes that a food-blogger could influence dietary behaviour. For example, he always uses local product and promote traditional recipes. In 2016 he was the protagonist of one of the episodes of "Dolce series" by Davide Rocco completely dedicate to street food in Naples and transmitted on National Geographic. He considers cuisine as the

greatest invention that human made. Food, and cuisine in general, are the great social glue of history: sharing work and results. Consequently, he always responds to his followers' comments because social networks are not a virtual world anymore: they are a "square" in which people meet each other every day and where confrontation and discussion take place naturally.

Conclusion and suggestions for future works

With the pass of the time, dietary habits have changed many times: from biological product to “ready to use” product, to biological product again. Few years ago, people started to be more focused on environment and health: customers attribute highly importance to quality, provenience and freshness of food; if they have the possibility of choosing different product, they prefer “green”, biological or local ones. Food and cuisine have become a topic of interest: the level of cooking programs, such as “Masterchef”, or programs related to food, such as “Quattro ristoranti”, have catch the attention of the audience. On the other hands, book and magazines remain strictly related to a specific target. While tv programs are considered a diversion and are followed by teenager too, books catch the attention of people who work in food sector, such as chefs. The desire to attend cooking class is very low, while the interest in “dealing with cooking” is an emerging phenomenon, probably related to the attention given to tv programs. Another phenomenon is the increment of extra-domestic consumption: since the prehistory, food has always been considered as a social and cultural element. Although a lot of people consume extra-domestic meal due to their work or studies, most of them choose to go to a restaurant as a moment of reunion with their friends or for an occasion with their family. Due to globalization, nowadays it is possible to find various ethnic restaurant, and many ethnic products, such as sushi, have become a trend. Moreover, cuisine has being reinvented, with the introduction of sophisticate composition or combination of flavours. So, despite consumers prefer choosing local restaurant rather than ethnic ones, they sometimes chose an extra-domestic meal in order to discover new tastes of to try more elaborated meals. With the development of Internet and the introduction of Web 2.0, online world has become the principal source of information. Communities and social networks connect people who can interact, discuss and exchange opinions. Users who reach popularity have a large network and are considered reliable source of information, being defined as opinion leaders. Food-bloggers are ones of them: they are amateurs professional who want to share their passion for food. They started by providing recipes and then have enlarged their activity with ranks of restaurants, suggestions of product or wines, information about dietary trends, culinary voyage or moment of their personal life.

As done by customer online reviews, they have changed the way of writing restaurant

reviews. They have started their activity on blogs but, with the introduction of social networks, they have supported their activity with them. Instagram represents a perfect window for their profile and YouTube a channel through which sharing video-recipes and be closer to followers. Instagram is the principal source that customers use to be informed about the news posted by food-bloggers, followed by Facebook and later by blogs. But Instagram is sometimes chosen due gluttony: people likes being inspired or “starved” by food images. Users who defines themselves food-bloggers and aggregators fill Instagram homepage. “Food” is one of the hashtags most used and bring to the phenomenon of foodporn. On the other hand, blogs are preferred for recipes. Users are usually lurkers: they are passive followers who monitor food-bloggers profile no more that 2-3 times per weeks. Paradoxically men follow more profiles than women, but women are more active followers than men; the difference is explained by the kind of information searched: while men are more captivating by food photos or restaurant suggestions, women scroll food-bloggers’ profiles in order to discover new recipes, product or dietary trends. Although the majority of population know what a food-blogger is and follow at least one of them, the principal source of information for restaurant remains TripAdvisor. Users prefer trusting of other people or of their family and friends. Advice provided by food-boggers are not always considered reliable: food-blogger or restaurant popularity, food presentation and partnership between food-bloggers and brands or restaurant affect the credibility of advice. Analysing the figure of opinion leaders and from the testimony of food-bloggers such as Egidio Cerrone or Chiara Maci, the main characteristics that a food-blogger should have is credibility: being itself is the key. Working only in relation to monetary goals brings to success but at the same time brings more rapidly to decline. Food-bloggers must create a personal relationship with their followers, be perceived as friends and not as distant celebrities. In general, users tend to follow food-bloggers in 57,6% of cases, and in choosing a restaurant in 58,7% of cases. The level is not elevated but it could increase. As shown, food-bloggers are obtaining even more attention, being considered “food influencer”. They create commercial activity, such as Egidio Cerrone, or have their personal tv shows such as Chiara Maci or Sonia Peronaci. So, a food-blogger activity can be sometimes a springboard for the success. Brands and companies prefer being sponsored by them rather than celebrities: most people affirm that they should buy a food product, or a utensil sponsored by a food-bloggers. What customers put into their shopping carts is suggested by them. Food-bloggers suggest what and where eating but at the same time

they are an example of dietary behaviour. For example, food blogs and online community represent a support during diet periods. But influencers should be careful about what they communicate. The opposite poles of food-blogging are foodporn and the consideration of food as a reward for physical activity. Balancing this two side represents the goals that food-bloggers should aspire: to communicate healthy but not restrictive dietary behaviour. Food-bloggers must consider that they do not represent an emerging phenomenon anymore but are a rooted reality. If the one that are more influenced are users who belong to generation Y, which was born in parallel with the introduction and boost of Internet, new generations live in a technological world where influencers represent an example to follow. So, future research should focus on a deeper analysis of that phenomenon, with a larger and less restrictive sample (in terms of age and geographic location), in order to understand the influence that food-blogger have on the entire market.

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