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**Food and Language.
A Multimodal Analysis of
Australian and Italian
Vegan Food Blogs.**

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ABSTRACT

The present study investigates the relationship between food and language and, in particular, the language of vegan food blogs. Six popular vegan food blogs have been selected and analysed in order to understand how this specific kind of blogs fall into the genre of computer-mediated communication, comparing them to results from previous studies on food blogs, and how the vegan bloggers present themselves to the public, what kind of online persona they want to create and what kind of relationship they want to build with the users coming across their blogs. Australian and Italian blogs were selected and compared for the purpose of understanding whether variations in communication modes are present between the two languages and cultures. The blogs were analysed using multimodal tools of investigation to describe them in terms of visual analysis and critical discourse analysis. As the sections of the blogs analysed only contain a one-way type of communication, the Instagram profiles of the bloggers were then analysed to investigate the interaction between the blogger and their followers. The comments sections of the Instagram posts were analysed and compared to the comment sections of the recipes present in the blogs. The visual organization and aesthetic aspect of the vegan blogs appears consistent with the results found in previous studies on blogs, with the only relevant difference regarding the choice of colour, as vegan bloggers have the tendency to use colour as an indication of the vegan lifestyle. From the critical discourse analysis of the about pages it emerges that the vegan bloggers tend to present themselves as expert figures in the field, but at the same time, to a different extent depending on the blogger, trying to appear friendly and affable. The analysis of the comment sections highlighted this constant crossing of the expert-non expert border. No relevant differences were found between the two languages and cultures.

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INTRODUCTION

Food, together with water, air, and shelter, is one of the human's basic needs. Cooking not only biologically influenced the lives of our ancestors, but it also shaped the way human beings cared for one another: breakfast, lunch, aperitif, dinner, are among the main reasons for social gathering. Moreover, a large share of the entertainment business is dominated by cooking. Considering the worldwide popularity of cooking shows such as Hell's Kitchen, MasterChef, Bake Off, and the worldwide popularity of celebrity chefs like Gordon Ramsay, Guy Fieri, Giada De Laurentiis, it is clear food and cooking are not only embedded in our day-to-day life for providing us the means for survival, and pretexts for sociality, but it also serves as a distraction or passion. Besides television, other mediums allow to share food content, such as cookbooks, social media, and food blogs.

As food is so central in the lives of people, it has been, is, and will be of interest for scholars. One of the many disciplines that is showing a growing interest on food is linguistic. Food related discourse has been the topic of numerous studies, ranging from gender and feminism to marketing, and it has recently developed an interest regarding computer-mediated-communication (CMC), and since food blogs provide a way for everyone to share their passion for cooking, they are gaining popularity as a topic among linguists. Food blogs are diverse, as the blogger can decide to share knowledge about cooking proposing various types of recipes, or to be more specific and concentrate, for example, only on baking, on patisserie, or on meat. Moreover, others may choose to share only cultural cuisine, like Mexican, Indian, or Russian, and some might want to concentrate on different diets, ketogenic, plant-based, or pescatarian, for instance. Since reviewing previous literature on the issue highlighted a prevalence of English blogs as their topic, and the analysis did not dissect the specific types of cuisine like the ones mentioned above, Australian and Italian vegan food blogs were selected as the topic of the present study. Veganism has become one of the most popular diets in the recent years, with the number of vegans worldwide reaching approximately 79 million. Vegans all around the world can, through blogs, easily share their knowledge in support of other vegans, or in aid to those who would like to become vegan and are experimenting with this more restrictive diet.

The study has been conducted following four research questions: do vegan food blogs' homepages display the same visual characteristics as non-vegan food blogs? And if not, what are the main differences that can be observed? Moreover, to what extent do vegan bloggers cross the expert/non-expert border and consider themselves and appear as authorities in the field of vegan cuisine, with respect to non-strictly vegan food bloggers? Furthermore, how does the direct interaction in the comment sections help the bloggers shape their online public persona? Finally, can we find similarities and/or differences between the Anglo-Saxon based blog and the Italian ones?

This study articulates the answers to the research questions in four parts. Firstly, an overview on the past research on the study of food and language is provided, especially concentrating on the topic of food blogs. Secondly, the data are introduced and described, and the methodology, as well as the frameworks employed, are explained in detail. Thirdly, a multimodal analysis of the 'homepages' of the six blogs will be conducted, concentrating on visual and organizational aspects and on communicative aspects. Lastly, the discourse of the 'about pages' of the six blogs is critically analysed to investigate the crossing of the expert/non-expert border. The interactions found in the comments sections of the blogs and of the bloggers' Instagram pages are then briefly looked at and analysed to better understand the shaping of the online persona of bloggers.

CHAPTER ONE

The Relationship Between Food and Language

1. Food and Language: A Literature Review

Food has been an object of study since at least the 18th century (Gerhardt, 2013: 5) but has started to gain more popularity among scholars since the end of the 20th century. The volume “Culinary Linguistics, The Chef’s Special” (2013), edited by Gerhardt, Frobenius and Lay, includes an important contribution in which the author, Cornelia Gerhardt, compiled a summary on the study of food. The chapter is extensive and consists of the history of food as a subject of study starting from the first publications encompassing the various disciplines that include food as one of their main topics, such as philosophy, psychology, sociology, but also gender studies and feminism, economy, and plenty of other fields whose aim is to analyse the role food has in the human society.

Gerhardt concluded that the study of food has an “interdisciplinary nature” (Gerhardt, 2013: 11) as food is “one central element of human lives, its study profits from an interdisciplinary approach with multiple perspective on food” (ibid: 48). Gerhardt then analyses the available research on language and food, with a brief literature review, concluding that previous research has only touched on the subject but has not narrowly covered the topic of the relationship food-language. The rest of the volume, in fact, is a series of articles on the topic, and is the first ever volume that comprises such a vast quantity of studies on food and language.

The genres of food-related discourse that have been the focus of the majorities of the studies on the language of food are the recipes and cookbooks (Cesiri, 2020) which, citing the words of Gerhardt (2013: 43), “represent a register containing presuppositions on many levels, necessary incompleteness in the steps of preparations or sets of instructions, assumptions about cultural knowledge, practical skills, and technical equipments evoking a complex set of practices”.

Food and discourse have also been a topic of interest for feminism and gender studies. In Fuller et al. (2013), a discourse analysis of Men’s Health and Female’s Health magazines concluded that, while the concept of healthy eating is present in both

formats, “eating for women is portrayed as having the goal of improving appearance, while for men it is more about improving performance” (261). Matwick (2017: 1) has identified, after analysing the discourse of three cookbooks written by female celebrity chefs, “a discourse that continues traditional gender roles of women being predisposed to care, cook, and serve others”. Matwick and Matwick (2018), analysing the same three books, also identifies how “the use of seemingly weak women’s language is used to enhance the celebrity chef’s appeal. Discourses of expertise, politeness strategies, and confessions build trust and rapport between the celebrity chef and the audience” (1).

Food-related discourse has also been investigated in different medias, such as TV shows (see Delia Chiaro, *Passionate about food: Jamie and Nigella and the performance of food-talk*, in Gerhardt et al., 2013), YouTube videos (there are thousands of cooking channels from all around the world), other social media platforms like Instagram (*Food discourse: ethics and aesthetics on Instagram*, Irimiás & Volo, 2022), and food blogs. The pioneer work on food-blogs of Diemer and Frobenius (2013) established the characteristics of food-blogs as full-fledged genres of computer-mediated communication. Food blogs and their language has also been investigated extensively, but a more comprehensive analysis on food blogs will be carried out in the following section of this chapter.

For the purposes of this research, some studies on veganism and language have also been identified, however the literature on the topic is scarce and very recent. Christopher et al., in a 2018, applied the method of discourse analysis to analyse the portrayals of veganism presented by two movies, “Forks over Knives” (2011) and “Vegucated” (2010). The authors conducted a discourse analysis to “discover the substantive messages conveyed in these films, as well as how the discourse they use supports such messages.” (Christopher et al., 2018: 6). The results identified a contrast between the two films, with the former barely using the term “vegan” (only one occurrence in the whole film), preferring to call veganism “plant-based diet”, with an approach called by the researchers ‘health veganism’ as it focused more on the dietary aspect. The rhetorical devices used were “accompanied by a didactic and rational mode of argumentation” (Christopher et al., 2018: 15). On the opposite, in “Vegucated” the term vegan was adopted entirely and described as a “multipronged fashion in terms of

diet and lifestyle, animal welfare concerns, and environmental consciousness” (ibid: 15). The researchers denominated the approach as ‘holistic veganism’. In “Vegucated”, affective rhetorical devices were used, such as poignant audio and stirring music.

Moreover, Wilson (2019) analysed the discourse around veganism of six UK-based vegan Instagram influencers and identified two different themes, hard-veganism and soft-veganism. Hard-veganism was constructed “as a way of practicing one’s moral beliefs and identifying as an educated, responsible, and concerned citizen” (Wilson, 2019: 59), while soft-veganism “aimed at destigmatising veganism as a white practice associated with expensive, branded vegan foods” (ibid: 60). In conclusion, the Wilson’s research found that Instagram is “a space where multiple vegan identities are constructed that with varying levels of political involvement and philosophical engagement” (60).

1.1 Food and Language: The Case of Food Blogs

Food blogs have only recently become an object of study among researchers and have been observed by a plethora of points of view (e.g., gender studies, communication studies, sociological studies; Cesiri, 2017: 113).

The pioneer study of Diemer and Frobenius (2013) on food-blogs established food-blog as a full-fledged hybrid genre of computer-mediated communication. In the study, the researchers conducted a quantitative and qualitative analysis comparing food-blogs to other genres (e.g., cookbooks). They studied the language used by the bloggers, concentrating on lexical choices (vocabulary, verb use, hedging, language innovation, non-standard forms etcetera) as well as syntactic choices (sentence structure, use of particles and punctuation), and explaining how the strategies shape the genre of food blogs. They also analysed how the bloggers address their audience through various strategies (vocatives/terms of address, pronouns, personalized discourse, shared knowledge). A first schematisation of the typical layout of food blogs (Figure 1) can also be found in the study.

In 2014, Adami carried out a multimodal analysis of two versions of a food blog, discussing the visual elements present in the blogs (images, layout, colour, font, and writing) and their role in shaping the aesthetic of digital content. Her study has shown

that “a text’s visual meaning is expressed by the overall multimodal orchestration of a page rather than merely by images” (Adami, 2014: 12).

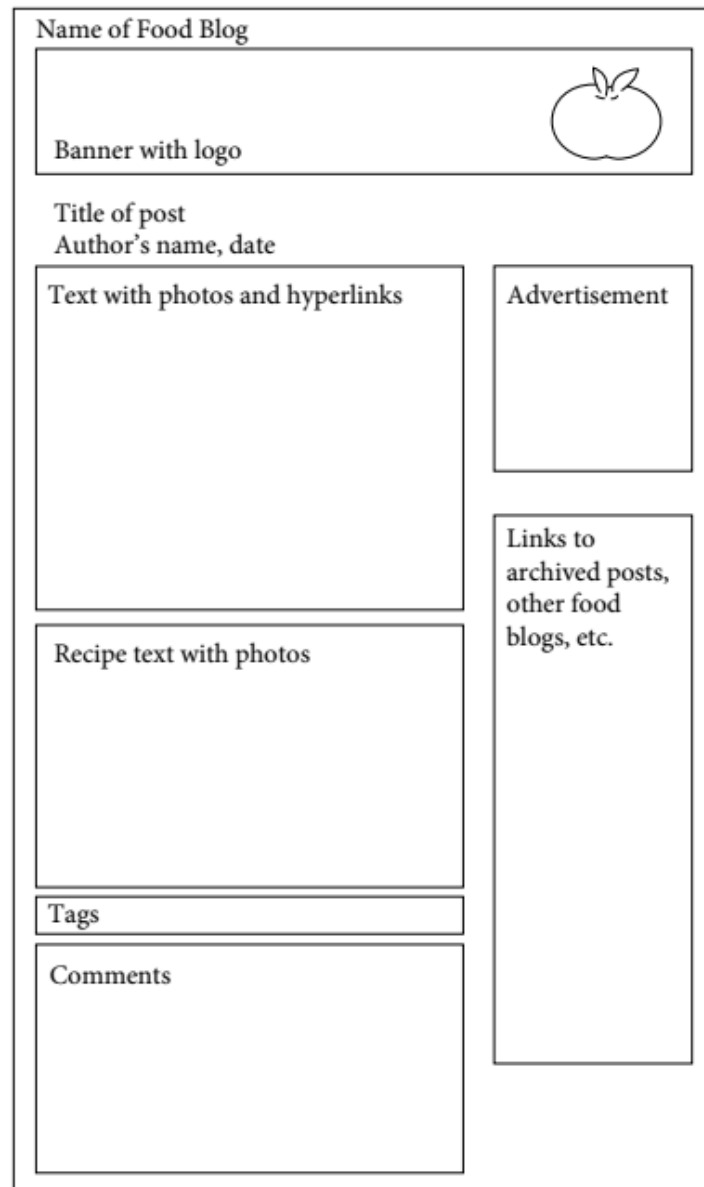


Figure 1. *Food blog layout identified by Diemer & Frobenius (2013: 56)*

In a collaborative project between two nodes of the National Centre for Research Methods, namely Multimodal Methodologies for Studying Digital and Data Environments (MODE) and Narratives of Varied Everyday Lives and Linked Approaches (NOVELLA), methods for analysing food blogs were studied. The team of researchers selected 2 UK-based food blogs made through blogging platforms templates, Wordpress and Blogger. They highlighted the modes used more frequently

by the bloggers and made available by the blogging platforms, namely writing, images, colours, and layout, demonstrating that the customizations of the forms and the content of the blog need to be examined in order to reveal some of the meaning-making work undertaken by the blogger.

Cesiri (2016) investigates the language used by 10 UK food blogs, conducting both a quantitative and a qualitative analysis of the words used by the bloggers in the 'recipes sections'. The aim of the research was to investigate whether definite boundaries exist between the blogger (the expert) and the user (the non-expert), and how the bloggers use language to position themselves along this 'expert/non-expert' border and when they cross-over. The results found by Cesiri (2016) indicate that the bloggers use specialized terms and general terms to a similar degree, suggesting that the bloggers tend to put themselves on both sides of the 'expert/non-expert' border, constantly oscillating between the two sides. Still, when looking at how often the bloggers report personal or private events, their intention to present themselves as "an approachable person sharing food-related everyday experiences with likeminded readers" (Diemer & Frobenius 2013, 72, cit. in Cesiri, 2016: 58), so more friendly rather than distant, becomes clear.

Cesiri then extended her research in 2017 with "Haha, what a twit I am". The construction of a social identity in the comments sections of UK food blogs", where she further investigated the crossing of the 'expert/non-expert border' expanding the research to the comment sections, the place where the real interaction between the blogger and the user takes place. In this research it has emerged how the bloggers seem to present themselves as simple food-lovers only on a surface level, and a more authoritative persona emerges in their interactions with the users, especially when explicitly criticised. Cesiri further identified different 'self-constructed social masks as experts' (Cesiri, 2017: 128): the "expert disguised as food lover", the "expert disguised as a motherly character", and the "open expert". Cesiri also adapted Diemer & Frobenius layout of food blogs to describe the layout found in her analysis (Figure 2).

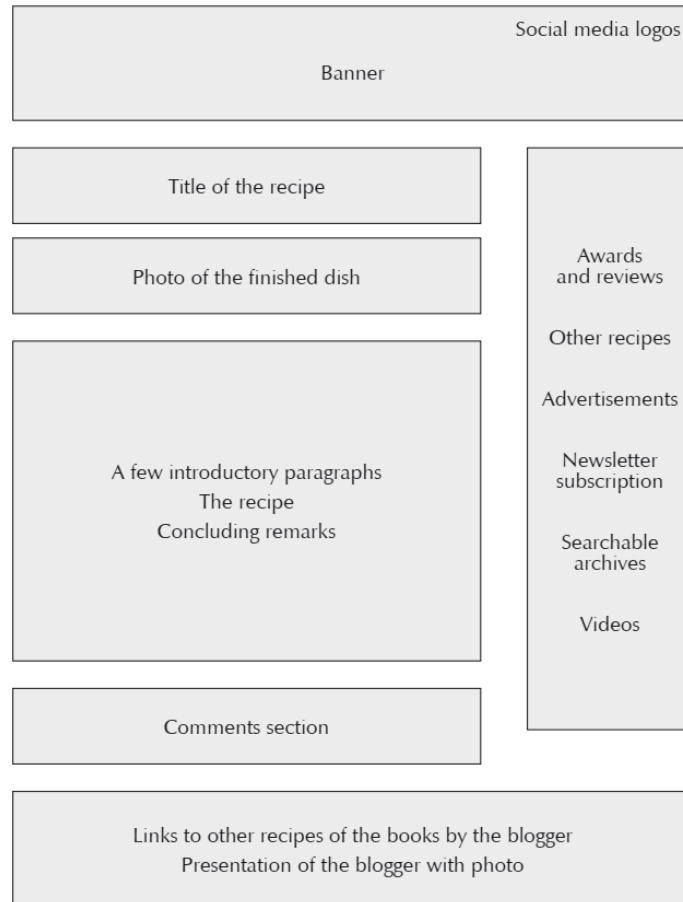


Figure 2. *Layout of the ‘recipe section’ identified by Cesiri (2017: 114)*

A more extensive and complete study has then been conducted by Cesiri in 2020. In this study, Cesiri carried out a multimodal analysis of the homepages, the ‘about pages’ and the ‘recipe sections’ of 32 UK food blogs, discussing the meaning of all the visual elements present in those sections, how they have been selected and organised in order to attract the attention of the user, and how they contribute to the construction of the bloggers’ persona. Cesiri’s schematization of the homepage cluster structure is copied below (Figure 3). Cesiri specifies that the vertical cluster at the right is not present in every blog. In this section, Cesiri also identified two types of food blogs, “Type 1 that contains the logo, the title, and a slogan-loke sentence, and Type 2 that adds to these elements a photo of the blogger” (Cesiri, 2020: 73). She then conducted a verbal analysis, both quantitative and qualitative, of the words used by the bloggers in the ‘recipe sections’ of their blogs, further confirming Cesiri (2016, 2017) affirming that the bloggers constantly oscillate from their expert and authoritative persona to their friendlier food-lover image. Furthermore, she analysed the sensory language

present in the blogs. Finally, she conducted an extensive critical discourse analysis of the language used by the bloggers in the ‘about pages’ and the ‘comment sections’, focusing on the use of presuppositions. In her research, she again discussed how bloggers, to a different extent depending on the blogger, often place themselves in a position of power, behaving like authorities in the field, and appear as food-lovers only on the surface. This trend can especially be found in the ‘comment sections’ while is less prominent in the ‘about pages’.

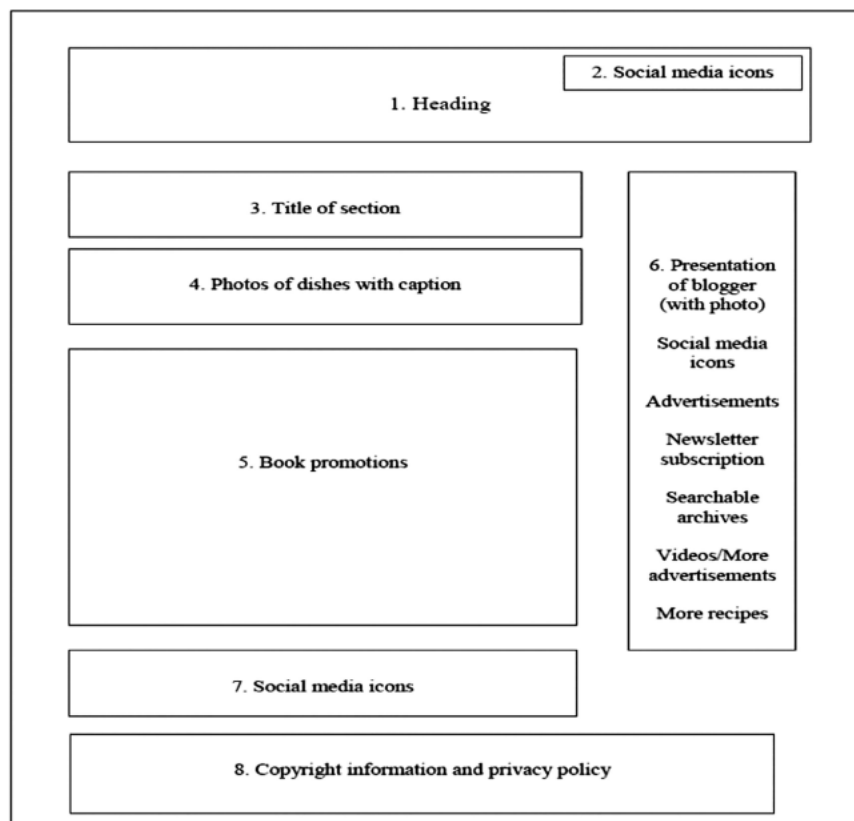


Figure 3. *Cesiri, cluster structure of the homepages (2020: 72)*

Hsiao (2019) conducted a study on Mandarin Chinese food blogs. She selected 112 recipes from five popular Taiwanese food blogs, and investigated the linguistic strategies used by the bloggers in order to prompt interactions from readers. Hsiao concluded that the blogs’ writers adopt three linguistic strategies, namely narrative orientations, speech acts, and direct reported speech from family members. Hsiao also concluded that “the ways writers and readers use language to discuss food and create coherent discourses on food construct food blogs in Taiwan as an online community.” (Hsiao, 2019: 1).

Studies on food blogs have also been conducted by researchers of gender studies and feminism, for example Salvio (2012) and Dejmanee (2015), but although they are interesting branches of study that deserve exploration, they are not relevant to the present research.

CHAPTER TWO

Data and Methodology

For the present study, six vegan food blogs will be analysed, three from Australia and three from Italy. The main reason for selecting Australian blogs is the raising popularity of veganism in the country. According to the Chef's Pencil Blog, whose most recent report of the popularity of veganism was posted May 3rd, 2022, Australia is in the top 5 Most Popular Countries for Veganism and top 3 considering English-speaking countries. Italy has then been selected as the author of the paper is an Italian-speaking user familiar with Italian vegan influencers.

The blogs chosen for the analysis are the following:

- 1- *Rainbow Nourishments*, < <https://www.rainbownourishments.com/> >.
- 2- *Amanda Ducks*, < <https://www.amandaducks.com/> >;
- 3- *That Vegan Dad*, < <https://www.thatvegandad.net/> >;
- 4- *Cucina Botanica*, < <https://www.cucinabotanica.com/> >;
- 5- *Cucina Verza*, < <https://www.cucina-verza.com/> >;
- 6- *Essenza Vegetale*, < <https://essenzavegetale.com/> >.

The blogs were chosen following three main criteria. Firstly, the age of the bloggers was considered: all six bloggers are in their thirties. Secondly, the popularity of their Instagram profile was considered, and only bloggers who had more than 15 thousand followers were chosen (see Table 1). Thirdly, the presence of at least one other social media platform other than Instagram was considered (see Table 1). Five bloggers out of the six have an active TikTok account, Amanda Ducks being the only exception, however she has a very popular YouTube page. Lastly, only blogs that focused entirely on vegan food and lifestyle were selected, leaving behind blogs that also talked about private life (family, travel, fashion etc...).

RAINBOW NOURISHMENTS		IG: 409K	YouTube, TikTok, Facebook, Pinterest
AMANDA DUCKS		IG: 35,5K	YouTube,
THAT VEGAN DAD		IG: 19,1K	YouTube, TikTok, Pinterest
CUCINA BOTANICA		IG: 959K	YouTube, TikTok, Facebook, Pinterest, Twitter
CUCINAVERZA		IG: 107K	YouTube, TikTok, Facebook, Pinterest
ESSENZA VEGETALE		IG: 42,8K	Facebook, TikTok

Table 1. The blogs, their owners' Instagrams followers number, and their other social media accounts. Data from 11/10/2023.

As regards the gender of the bloggers, the majority are women with only one exception, That Vegan Dad from Australia. No Italian male-bloggers were found during the research. This is in line with the sample analysed by Cesiri (2016).

Both a visual and a discourse analysis of the blogs will be conducted. It is necessary to conduct a multimodal analysis as blogs are the result of a multiplicity of modes, they combine complex sets of choices that realize them as food blogs, and that help to differentiate a food blog from the other (Cesiri, 2020: 68). Food blogs contain a multitude of visual and verbal elements that are equally important for understanding how the bloggers decided to draw the attention of users, how they chose to present themselves to the public, and how they decided to communicate with the public coming across or checking their blogs and their social media profiles.

The theoretical-methodological framework that will be employed for the multimodal analysis of the 'homepages' are the Baldry and Thibault (2006) framework

for visual analysis, as it allows to take into account all the visual elements present in the pages as well as text and hyperlinks, and the Kress and Van Leeuwen (2006) framework for the meaning-making in images, as blogs contain a large quantity of images that not only allow to visually and aesthetically shape the page, making it unique, but also allow the bloggers to realize their online persona. Specific attention will be given to the homepages' Clusters. According to Baldry and Thibault, Clusters are "local grouping of items on a printed or web page" (2006: 31). The items in these groupings can be of various types, e.g., visual and verbal, and "are spatially proximate thereby defining a specific region or subregion of the page as a whole". It is important to carefully analyse said groupings as the organization of the Clusters of a page determines the reading paths that the viewer employs while scrolling a page, they determine how the viewer jumps from a section to another, so the careful positioning of the elements by the blogger is important in terms of visual perception and cognitive processes. Moreover, it is important to analyse the elements present in the pages and how they are positioned because the proximity or distance between them hold significance as regards the general impression that the viewer has about the page, and therefore can be an indication of the purpose of the blog and the attitude of the blogger. Furthermore, the elements that the blogger decided to position in the homepage serve as a prediction of what the viewer will find in the blog.

As food blogs often contain numerous images, it is important to analyse the participants, the actions of the participants, the processes represented, as they are all carefully constructed by the blogger to convey a precise perception of said participants and of the blog in general. If the interaction of the participants depicted in the image is significant, "visual communication also has resources for constituting and maintaining another kind of interaction, the interaction between the producer and the viewer of the image." (Kress and Van Leeuwen, 2006: 131). Interaction between all the participant, including the viewer, is important to understand the relationship that the blogger desires to construct between them and the viewer.

As regards the verbal analysis, the theoretical framework adopted to analyse the discourse of the 'about pages' of the blogs is Fairclough (1995, 2003). It is important to conduct a critical discourse analysis to understand once again the attitude of the blogger, and to furthermore draw a picture of what type of online persona they are

building, and the type of relationship that can generate between the blogger and the user. The analysis is carried out concentrating on how the bloggers decided to present themselves to the user through textual strategies.

A final analysis will be conducted on the real, direct interaction between the blogger and the user, comparing the comment sections of the blogs' recipes and the comment section of the Instagram posts of the bloggers. The last three recipes and the last ten posts will be selected, and the comment sections will be briefly analysed in order to see whether or not the bloggers answer the comments, and if they answer, to how many comments and to which kinds of comments, meaning positive comments, negative comments, or neutral comments. The two different sections (recipes and posts) will be then compared to understand whether the attitude of the blogger changes between platforms.

CHAPTER THREE

Multimodal Analysis

3.1 Multimodal Analysis: The Homepages

In this section, the homepages of the six blogs will be analysed using multimodal analysis tools and compared to the data from the already existing literature. Homepages are the first pages a user sees when they come across any type of blog, and for this reason these pages hold significance as they “are carefully constructed to represent the rest of the website as well as to attract the user’s attention and keep it engaged throughout the whole navigation experience” (Cesiri, 2020: 70), and they furthermore give a first idea of how the blogger decided to present themselves. The homepages will be analysed using Baldry and Thibault’s framework for clusters. Kress and Van Leeuwen’s framework will be employed for the analysis of images.

The sections 3.1, 3.2 and 3.3 will be dedicated to the analysis of the Australian blogs, while sections 3.4, 3.5 and 3.6 will be dedicated to the analysis of the Italian blogs. Section 3.7 contains the conclusions and a discussion of the analysis conducted.

3.1.1 Rainbow Nourishments’ Homepage

The Cluster distribution of RN’s homepage is schematically represented in Figure 1. Repeated clusters have not been included in the schematization but noted and reported in the analysis. Cluster 1, the heading, is the very first Cluster the user encounters when opening the blog. It contains the logo of the blog right in the centre, and a description of the blog right below it. Inside Cluster 1, can be found a micro-cluster containing the menu with clickable links that take the user to the various sections of the blog. This macro-cluster introduces the main topic of the blog to the user and directs them on how to navigate the site. Cluster 4 contains the first photos of dishes with captions and a search bar, showing the viewer the latest recipes. The user can find Clusters similar to this distributed along the homepage, but addressed differently: for example, just under Cluster 4, there is a similar Cluster but dedicated fully to vegan fall recipes. In

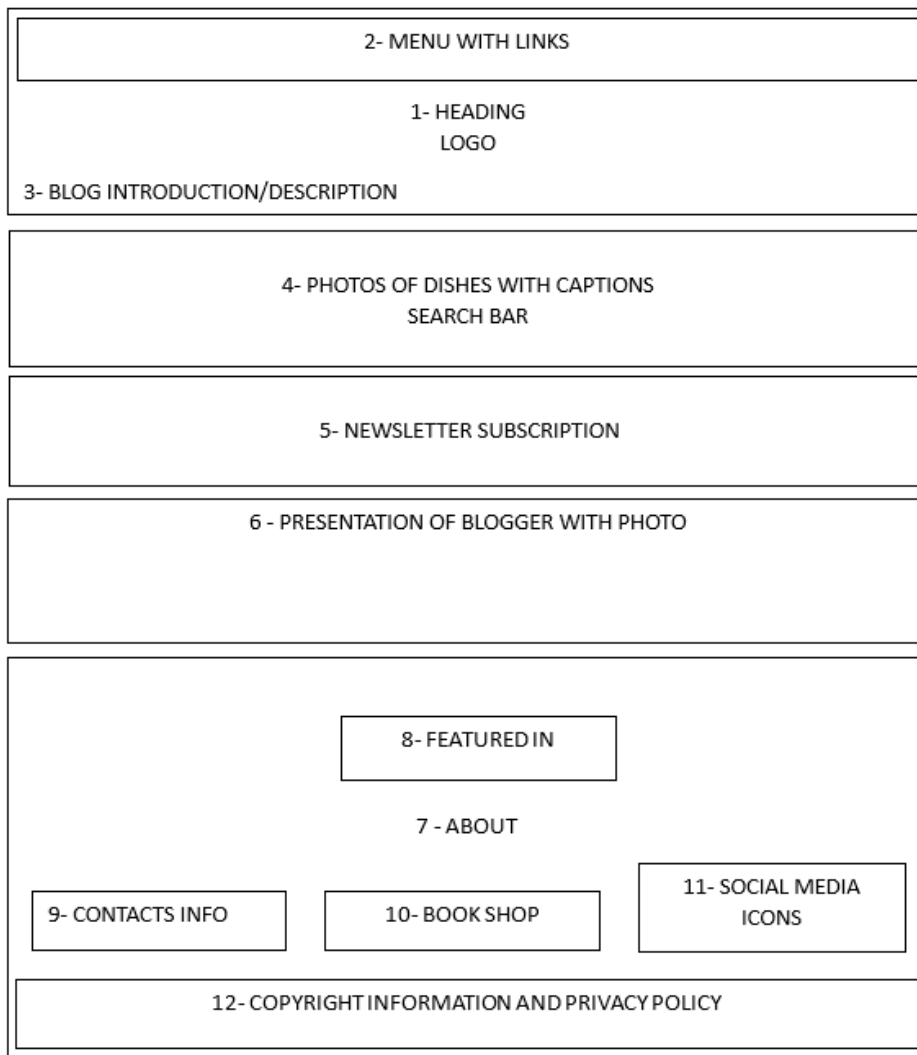


Figure 1. Cluster structure of Rainbow Nourishments' Homepage

Cluster 4 there is the first indication of the social media presence of the blogger. In fact, when the user's cursor passes above one of the pictures, the logo of Pinterest pops up as can be seen in Figure 2. The Pinterest logo pops up in all the images of the dishes from that point forward, indicating the intention of the blogger to give importance also to her social media profiles. Cluster 5 is small and simple and contains the newsletter subscription section. Cluster 6 is the verbal presentation of the blogger with a photo of Anthea (the owner) herself. It contains a link to the 'about me' page. The final Cluster (Cluster 7) is a macro-cluster that contains various micro-clusters: the 'featured in' Cluster, another menu with links, the book shop, the copyright information and privacy policy Cluster, and finally, at the bottom right corner, the clickable social media icons

BRAND NEW RECIPES

Fresh from my kitchen, here are my latest vegan recipes.



Figure 2. *Pinterest Icon.*

that takes you right to the social media pages. The Clusters are usually divided by appropriate titles and a pastel yellow line.

The pastel yellow line is also the only colour in the white background that characterises the whole homepage. The verbal elements in the page help to create cohesion between the clusters, taking the user smoothly from section to section. The colours used by the blogger do not seem to be an indication of the nature of the blog and of the vegan lifestyle, but just seem to be a stylistic choice. The photos of the dishes that the user finds in the homepage are usually close shots with little to no background shown, they are also colourful and carefully constructed in their composition, and as a result the dishes shown are visually attractive and appetizing (Figure 3). The first and only time the user shows her face, is, as said before, in Cluster 5, almost at the end of the page. This choice makes the viewer concentrate more on the dishes rather than on the blogger.



Figure 3. *Screenshot of some photos of dishes.*

In the presentation photo of the blogger (Figure 4), she appears to be standing in her kitchen, with a plate of delicious-looking food in her hands that she is about to eat. Her gaze is directed towards the viewer, she is smiling and as a result it almost seems that the blogger is offering the user food.



Figure 4. *Photo of Anthea, the owner of RN.*

3.1.2 Amanda Ducks' Homepage

AD's blog appears as plain, with only 4 macro-clusters schematically represented in Figure 5. The very first Cluster, the heading, contains a micro-cluster with the logo of the blog and a menu with links on the left, and a micro-cluster containing the social media hyperlinks and the shop's cart icon on the right. This Cluster introduces the user to the blogs sections and already tells the user about the social media presence of the blogger. Under the first macro-cluster, the user encounters Cluster 4, which is the introduction of the blog and the blogger, with a short, written presentation and a photo of Amanda Ducks. Cluster 5 contains some photos of dishes with captions, showing the viewer what are some of the favourite recipes from the blog (Figure 6). The very last Cluster, the 'about' cluster, is a macro-cluster made of several micro-clusters: the copyright information, the social media and contact information, and again a menu

with links to navigate the site. The macro-cluster are divided by a background colour that is different from each Cluster, and are sometimes introduced by a title.

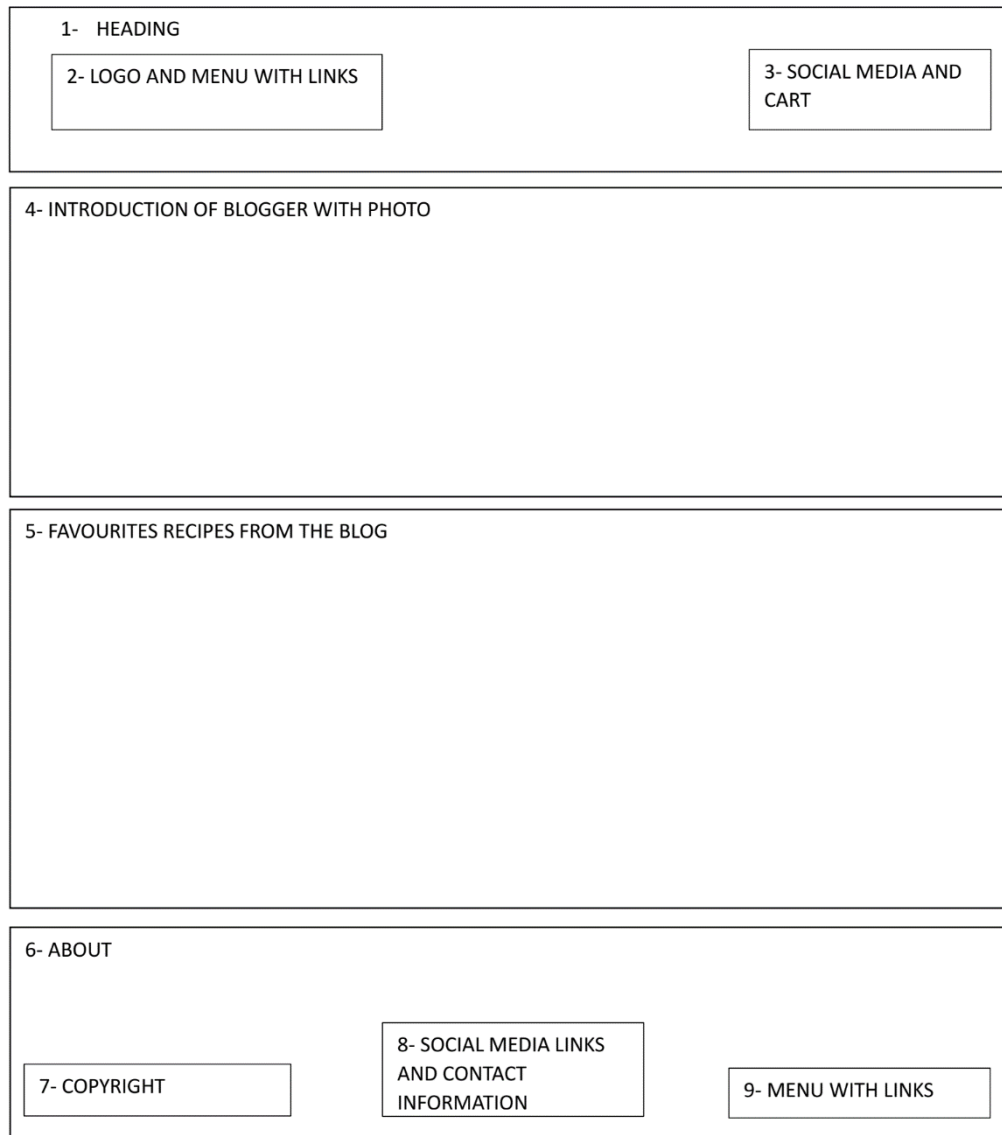


Figure 5. Cluster structure of Amanda Ducks' homepage.

The use of verbal language is limited, and more importance seem to be given to images and colours, as well as fonts. The main colours are green, yellow, and copper, all muted. The colours do not seem to give an indication of the nature of the blog but seem to be a stylistic choice of the blogger. The photos of the dishes in the Amanda Ducks blog are close shots with little to no background shown, and are carefully composed to appear appetizing.

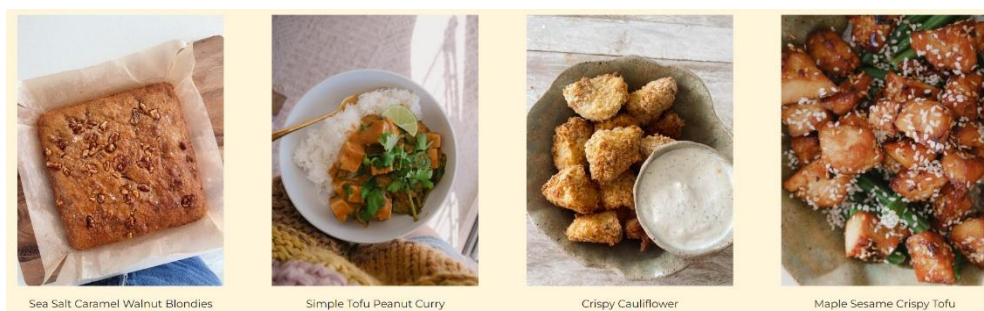


Figure 6. Screenshot of some photos of dishes.

A photo of the owner of the blog (Figure 7) appears right when the user opens the blog, making the viewer concentrate on the person behind the blog before seeing the content of it. In the presentation photo of the blogger, she is standing in her clean and tidy kitchen, and this background takes a lot of space in the picture, with the result of acquiring importance. There are seemingly handmade, fresh muffins on the counter, and she is about to eat one of them. Her facial expression tells us she is proud of her creation. Her gaze is directed towards the muffin and not towards the viewer.



Figure 7. Photo of Amanda, the owner of AD.

3.1.3 That Vegan Dad's Homepage

The Cluster distribution of TVD's homepage is schematically represented in Figure 8. At the top of the page, there's the heading's macro-cluster, containing the logo icon on the left and a micro-cluster with a menu with links and social media icons on the right. This section remains still at the top of the page while scrolling, so the user can access

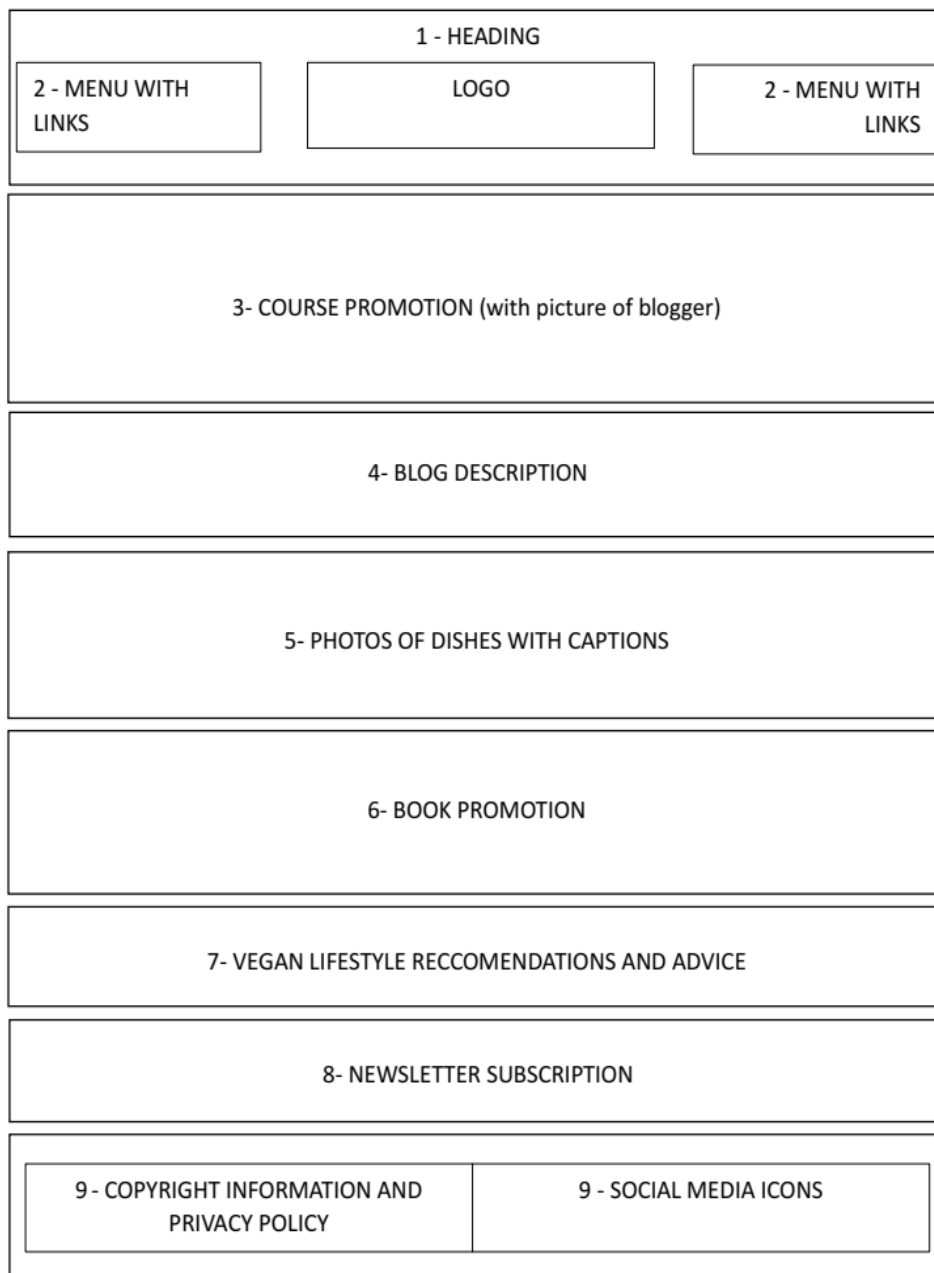


Figure 8. Cluster structure of *That Vegan Dad's* homepage

to the blogs sections and to the social media profiles whenever they want without going back to the top of the page. Under this Cluster, are present two vertical Clusters side by side: the one on the left contains the presentation of the blogger with a photo, while the one on the right contains a menu with links again. Under these two vertical Clusters, Cluster number 5 shows the viewer some picture of dishes with captions (Figure 9), shoving the viewer the latest recipes from the blog. A Cluster dedicated to recipes is also found under Cluster 5 but is slightly different in its contest as it shows

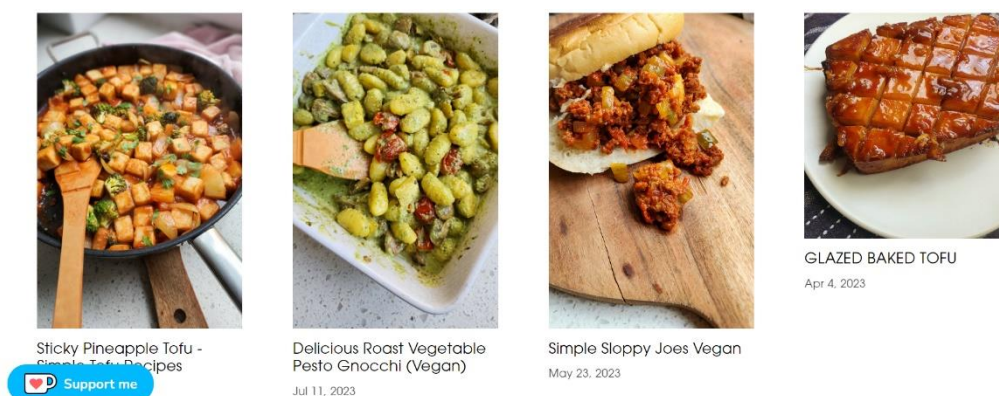


Figure 9. Screenshot of some photos of dishes.

the user some of the blogger’s ideas specifically for vegan lunch boxes. In this Cluster, the user can see a cartoon version of the blogger’s face, which also is the logo image of the blog found at the top-left corner of Cluster 1. Cluster 6 is then dedicated to hyperlinks for blog’s posts and in this cluster are present the post’s titles and some pictures related to the topics of the posts. The posts linked in this section are not recipes but are instead dedicated to the vegan lifestyle (see Figure 10, post for “vegan leather”). The seventh and final macro-cluster contains various micro-clusters: the newsletter section, the partnerships and promotions section, and finally on the bottom right corner of the page are again present the social media icons. On the bottom left



Figure 10. Screenshot of blog posts links.

corner, staying still while scrolling just like the heading Cluster, is a pop-up section that when clicked becomes a donation section (Figure 9). The clusters are divided and indicated by titles or appropriate descriptive phrases.

The colour used is primarily white, with some pops of bright yellow and black. The colours used by the blogger does not refer to veganism and are most likely a

stylistic choice. Verbal language is minimal and is mainly used to introduce the blogger and to title the clusters, helping the user to navigate through the blog. The photos of the dishes that the viewer finds in the homepage of TVD are close shots with little to no background shown, and are carefully constructed in their composition to appear appetizing. The face of the blogger is one of the first things that the user sees when opening the blog, in Cluster 3. This choice makes the viewer concentrate more on the blogger rather than on his recipes. In the presentation photo of the blogger (Figure 11),



Figure 11. *Photo of Jack, the owner of TVD.*

he is standing in his kitchen with his arms folded on top of the counter. On the counter, there are several vegetables and kitchen utensils. The blogger is leaning forwards, his gaze is directed at the viewer and he is smiling, in a welcoming manner.

3.1.4 Cucina Botanica's Homepage

The Cluster distribution of CB's homepage is schematically represented in Figure 12. At the top part of the page, the first Cluster is the heading, containing the logo at the centre and a micro-cluster comprised of the menu with clickable links at the sides of the logo. This section remains still at the top of the page while scrolling, so the user can access to the blogs sections whenever they want without going back to the top of the page. Below this first Cluster, there is Cluster 3, which is a promotion of the vegan cuisine course taught by the blogger. At the bottom of this cluster, there is an interactive

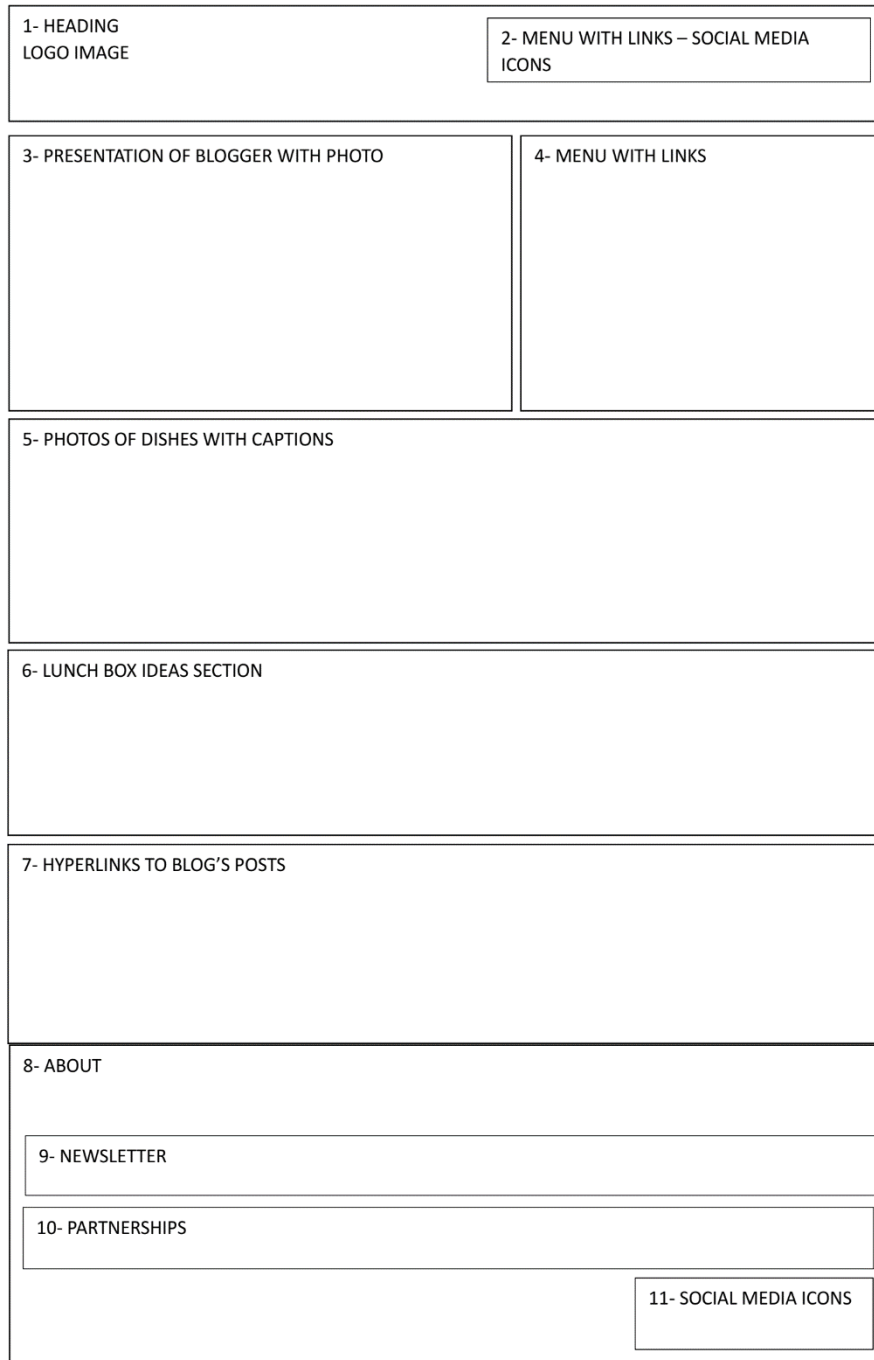


Figure 12. Cluster structure of Cucina Botanica's homepage.

bar that makes the section slide to left with the click of the mouse and reveal other sections of the blog (e.g., the 'recipes section'). This Cluster also contains a photo of the blogger. Cluster 4 contains a short description of the blog and its contents. Below Cluster 4, in Cluster 5, the user finds the first photos of dishes with captions (Figure 13). After this Cluster, the user finds a section with the blogger's books' promotion with a link to the shop. Cluster 7 contains pictures with clickable links that take the



Figure 13. Screenshot of some photos of dishes.

user to sections of the blog that are dedicated to vegan lifestyle and recommendations. Next is a Cluster with the newsletter subscription section and below this Cluster is Cluster 9, the final Cluster. Cluster 9 contains the privacy policy and the copyright information at the right and all the social media icons at the left that takes the user right to those social media pages when clicked. The social media icons are shown only at the very end of the page, indicating that the blogger does not seem to give much importance to her social media presence. The clusters are divided visually by the use of colours.

The prevalent colours used by the blogger are green, white, a neutral beige/brown colour, and red. The colour green and the neutral colour likewise might have been chosen to indicate the vegan and ecologist nature of the blog, while the colour red just seem to be a stylistic choice. The photos of the dishes shown in the homepage are close shots with little to no background shown, and they are colourful and carefully composed to appear pleasing to the eye and appetizing. While scrolling, the user sees a photo of the blogger in Cluster 3 (Figure 14). At the centre of the picture there is Carlotta, the owner of CB, holding a plate with a slice of a delicious-looking

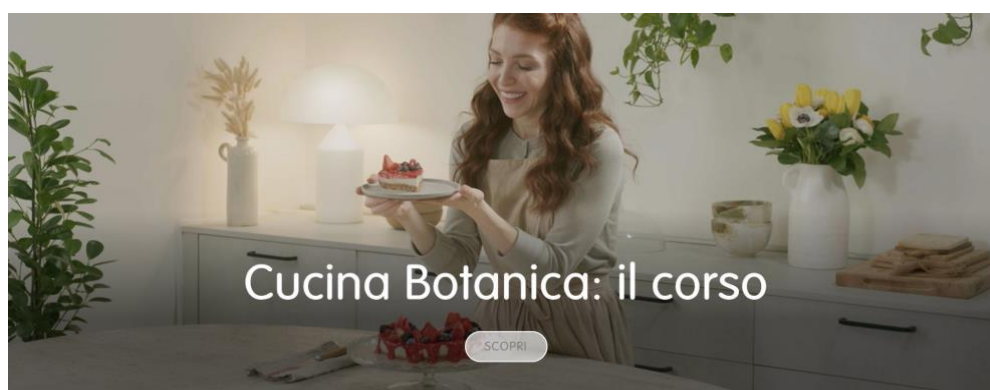


Figure 14. Photo of Carlotta, the owner of CB.

homemade cake while smiling, seemingly proud of her creation. She appears to be in her dining-room, and the environment she is in takes a lot of space in the picture with the result of acquiring importance. In fact, on the drawer behind her she carefully placed two vases with plants, two bowls, and a pile of cutting boards. Other plants are also present in the photo, reinforcing the fact that the blog and blogger encourages a plant-based and ecologist lifestyle.

3.1.5 Cucina Verza's Homepage

Cucina Verza's homepage Cluster distribution is represented in Figure 15. Repeated clusters have not been included in the schematization but noted and reported in the analysis. At the top of the page, the user finds the first macro-cluster, the heading, that contains various micro-clusters: the book promotion at the very top, a section with a search bar, the logo, and the cart and subtotal under it, and a menu with links at the bottom. The Cluster below, Cluster 5, contains photos of dishes with captions (Figure 16). Similar Clusters also repeat in the page, with slight differences, for example, right under Cluster 5 is present a section dedicated the recipe's categories and scrolling the page, is present is a macro-cluster that contains photos with captions of the most loved dishes, and again links to recipes' categories. Cluster 6 contains the blogger's e-book promotion with a picture of the cover and a hyperlink that takes the user to the shop. Under this Cluster, in cluster 6, Cristiana the owner of the blog presents herself to the viewer with a photo and a written text. It contains a hyperlink that takes the user to the 'about me' page. Cluster 8 is the introduction to the blogger's Instagram profile, with pictures that, when clicked, take the user to her latest IG's posts. Cluster 9 is small and simple and contains the newsletter subscription. Cluster 10 is a macro-cluster that contains 3 micro-clusters: the description of the blog with social media icons, a menu with links so blog's sections, and a newsletter section again. The last Cluster, Cluster 14, contains the copyright information and the privacy policy. The Clusters are properly divided either by titles or by a colour change of the background.

As far as colour is concerned, the main colours used by CV are white, yellow and green, with a pop of purple. The background is, in one instance, decorated with drawings of vegetables. The colours and the drawings are reminiscing of the colours

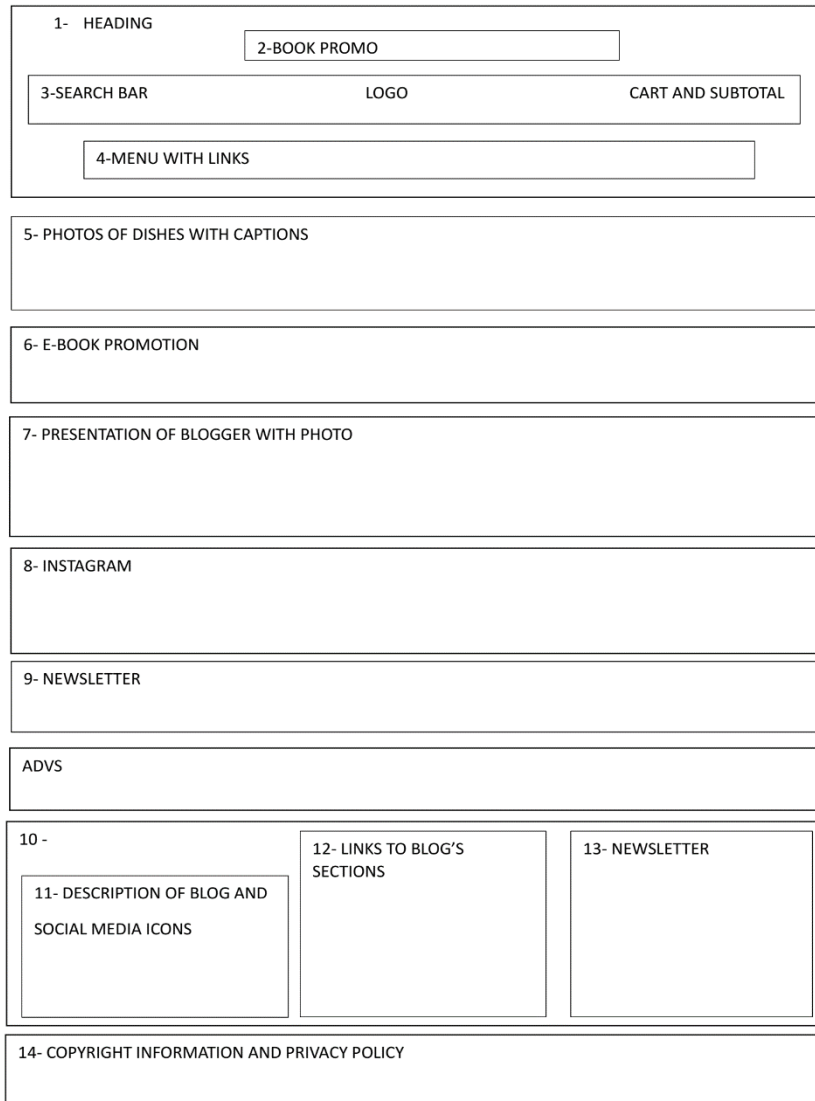


Figure 15. Cluster structure of Cucina Verza's homepage.

of nature and might have been chosen as a reference to the vegan lifestyle. The homepage contains a lot of written language, used primarily to describe the dishes and to present the blogger. The blog is packed with pictures, and the logo also contains a



Figure 16. Screenshot of some photos of dishes.

cute drawing of cats and vegetables, that already tells the viewer about the lifestyle proposed in the blog. The photos of the dishes are close shots with little to no background shown, and they are colourful and carefully constructed in their composition. As a result, the dishes look appetizing.

The first time the user sees the face of the blogger is in Cluster 7 (Figure 17), and as a result the viewer concentrates more on the dishes rather than on the blogger. The presentation photo of the blogger is actually composed of two different pictures, in fact the photo changes if the cursor passes over it. The first photo is a close-up of her face. She is looking directly at the camera, smiling, holding a broccoli over the side of her face. In the 'hidden' photo, she is looking at the camera, wide a wide smile, holding her two cats. Both of the pictures engage the viewer and make the blogger look friendly and welcoming.



Figure 17. Photo of Cristiana, the owner of CV.

3.1.6 Essenza Vegetale's Homepage

The Cluster distribution of EV's blog is schematically represented in Figure 18. Cluster 1, the heading, is the first Cluster at the top of the page, and it contains the logo of the blog right in the centre. This Cluster is also made of two micro-clusters, a cart and search bar on the left and a menu with links at the bottom. The menu with links stays

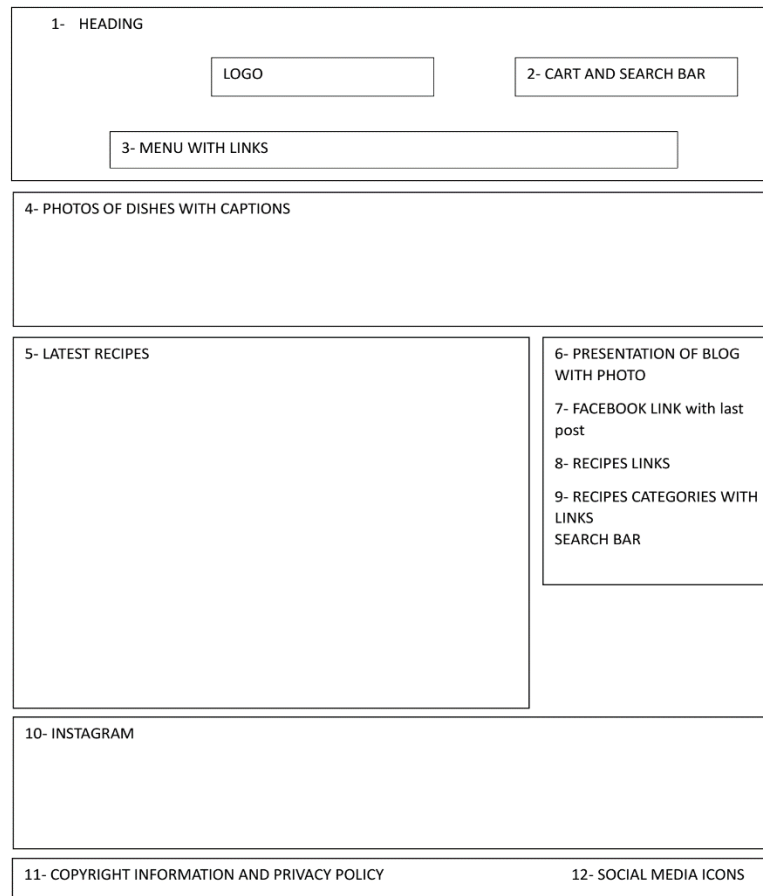


Figure 18. Cluster structure of Essenza Vegetale's homepage.

still when scrolling so the user can access to those section whenever they want without going back to the top of the page. Under this first macro-cluster, the viewer finds Cluster 4, that contains photos of dishes with captions (Figure 19). This Cluster is repeated in a similar manner for Cluster 5, which contains the blog's latest recipes with photos and captions. Cluster 5 is vertical and long, and is adjacent to another vertical macro-cluster that contains the presentation of the blog with a photo of the blogger, a Facebook hyperlink with pictures of her latest posts, a section with links to recipes, and a section with links to recipes' categories and a search bar. This is the first time

that the user is told about the blogger's social media, making them focus more on the dishes of the blog. Cluster 10 introduces the blogger's Instagram profile and contains the links to the latest posts, with pictures. The last Cluster the bottom of the page is small and simple and contains the copyright information and privacy policy and social media icons. The Clusters are divided by proper titles or colour changes in the background.

The most prevalent colours are white and sage green, and the choice of the green might indicate the nature of the blog, which is focused on the vegan diet and lifestyle. Written language is mostly used for descriptions and introductions to recipes, or is used to help the user navigate through the site. The photos of the dishes shown in the homepage are close shots with little to no background shown, they are carefully constructed in their composition and are colourful, with the result of appearing pleasing to the eye and appetizing. The photo of the blogger (Figure 20) is a close-up of Silvia, the owner, she appears to be standing in the kitchen but the background barely present and blurry. She is looking at the user, smiling softly, looking friendly and welcoming.

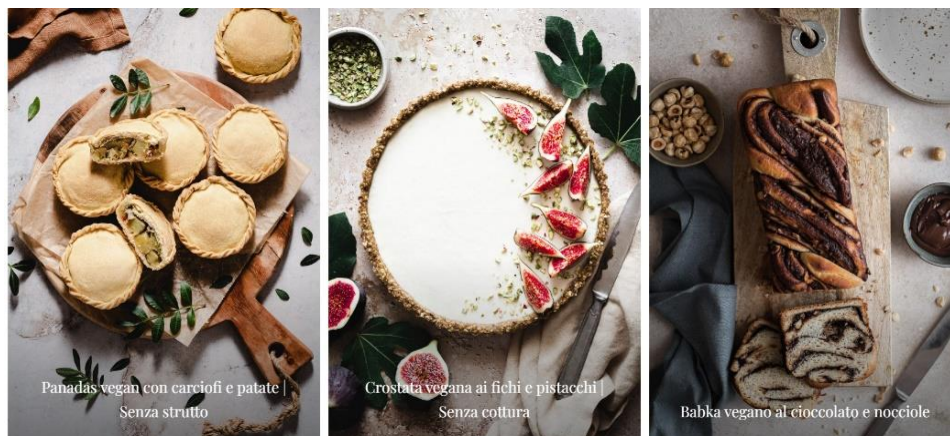


Figure 19. Screenshot of some photos of dishes.



Figure 20. *Photo of Silvia, the owner of EV.*

3.2 Homepages Multimodal Analysis: Conclusions

The purpose of this Chapter was to analyse the visual elements present in the blogs and to compare them to previous literature on food blogs. The Cluster structures identified in all the blogs follow the results found by Cesiri (2020). 5 out of 6 blogs follow Type 1 blogs identified by Cesiri, and only That Vegan Dad includes a (cartoonized) photo of the blogger at the top part of the page. All blogs contain a Cluster with photos of recipes with captions, a Cluster with social media icons, and a Cluster with a menu with links. All the picture of the dishes shown in the blogs are carefully constructed to stand out, they are usually colourful, close shots with little no background shown. The composition of the images follows the results found in Cesiri (2020). The presentation photos are constructed in a similar way for all 6 bloggers, and only 2 out of 6 bloggers do not look directly at the viewer. Written language is used by all bloggers to help the user navigate through the sections. Some of the bloggers use colours to indicate the nature of the blogs, while some use colours (as well as fonts) purely with aesthetic purposes. This aestheticism hunt is also in line with previous studies on food blogs (Cesiri, 2020; Adami, 2014).

While the cluster structure is similar to the blogs analysed in previous studies, the use of colours to refer to veganism, ecologism, and nature (like green and beige, prevalent colours in the blogs) seem to be peculiar of vegan food blogs, as it was

observed for 4 blogs out of 6. No notable differences were found between Australian and Italian Blogs, hence language and culture do not seem to interfere with the food discourse of these specific blogs.

It can be concluded that even though the six blogs are composed and structured akin to the blogs analysed by previous research, vegan bloggers have a tendency to construct a blog that is visually representing of their lifestyle, even before the viewer could read the blog.

CHAPTER FOUR

Critical Discourse Analysis and Interactivity

This Chapter is divided into two parts. The first Section is dedicated to the critical discourse analysis of the ‘about pages’ of the six blogs. The second segment is dedicated to an analysis of the ‘comment sections’ of the blogs and of the Instagram pages of the six bloggers and focuses on the interactivity aspect. The ‘about pages’ are of particular interest as they are the sections in which the blogger present themselves to the public, hence they are carefully constructed pages with carefully chosen language.

The research will be carried on by looking at the textual strategies used, concentrating mainly on presuppositions, as “the distinction between what is explicit and what is implicit in a text is of considerable importance in sociocultural analysis” (Fairclough, 1995: 6) and gives indications to the approach of the blogger and how they want to present themselves to the public. The aim is to verify whether the six bloggers tend to present themselves as expert figures in the field with a more authoritative tendency, or if they try to reduce the distance between them and the readers by presenting themselves a simple food-lovers, creating a friend-like relationship. The verbal content of the ‘about pages’ of the two blogs will be analysed giving and explaining examples using Fairclough’s framework for critical discourse analysis. The interaction between the blogger and the public will be analysed to further investigate the kind of relationship that the blogger desires to construct between them and the viewer.

English translation of Italian sentences is provided inside footnotes.

The Sections 4.1.1, 4.1.2 and 4.1.3 will be dedicated to the analysis of the Australian blogs, while Sections 4.1.4, 4.1.5 and 4.1.6 will be dedicated to the analysis of the Italian blogs. Section 4.2 is dedicated to the analysis of the interactions, and finally Section 4.3 contained the conclusions and a discussion of the analysis conducted.

4.1 Critical Discourse Analysis: The About Pages

In the following Sections, the ‘about pages’ of the about pages are analysed in their verbal component, one by one, considering the strategies used by the bloggers to present themselves.

4.1.1 Rainbow Nourishments’ About Page

The language used by the blogger is friendly and informal. She makes extensive use of exclamation points and uses ellipsis. The sentences are short and simple. Anthea begins her presentation talking about her origins and passions, and after she presents herself as a vegan food blogger. In this sentence is present some interactive language that she uses other times also (e.g. ‘Noticing a trend here?!’). In this paragraph, she also adds that she is a freelance recipe developer, food photographer and a chef. Later, she also lists her majors and previous jobs, hence appearing as highly educated and professional. She does not tell the reader about her vegan journey.

The owner of RN also makes use of a large number of presuppositions, three examples are reported below:

- 1) I love sharing wholesome vegan recipes with a twist [...].
- 2) My childhood was deeply embedded in food because my parents owned restaurants. They cooked everything from Chinese to Italian to French food! As a kid, I learnt how to peel carrots, pipe cream on cakes and prepare food for weddings.
- 3) I also used produce hundreds of cakes each week (!) for popular cafes around Canberra.

Example 1 is a first indication of the nature of the blog, implying that the idea of veganism is of a boring and plain lifestyle but that the user will find exciting recipes in her blog. In Example 2, the blogger implies that she is somewhat different than other bloggers as her parents transmitted her cooking knowledge since she was just a child. She is also telling the user that cooking is a family business and therefore implying that her recipes must be high quality and appreciated by the public. In Example 3 the blogger places herself in a status of authority as her job was to produce cakes for

businesses, further implying that her cakes had been appreciated by the public and by business owners.

4.1.2 Amanda Ducks' About Page

The 'about me' page is short and straightforward. The language used by Amanda is friendly and informal. In the first section, she briefly talks about herself and her career, and in the second, still brief, section, she tells the reader about her vegan journey. She introduces herself with her real name but immediately suggests a nickname, with which she also ends the first section of the about page. After the nickname, she also uses the 'x' abbreviation. Britainexplained.com explained the use of this symbol in written discourse, saying that "the custom of having an 'x' at the end of a message started as a way to symbolise a kiss. It was used between lovers. However, these days it is more often used as a way of implying you are being friendly, not formal."¹

The blogger also uses exclamation points throughout the page, as well as other symbols and abbreviations such as '&' and ':)'. She uses direct language that involves the reader, for example in sentences like "thank you for being here and supporting me!" and "enjoy sharing delicious recipes [...] for you to try".

The blogger does not use presuppositions much and is instead seemingly spontaneous and direct. One presupposition in particular has been observed:

- 4) I do a handful of things! Online you'll see me sharing videos on YouTube and on Instagram, as well as weekly podcast episodes on Spotify and Apple Podcasts. I am also a PA to two online creators, and assist a local business with their social media management.

This paragraph is meant to share her work but makes her look like a professional, a very experienced creator with managerial skills, placing herself in a position of authority in the field.

¹ <https://britainexplained.com/what-that-x-means-on-messages/>

4.1.3 That Vegan Dad's About Page

This 'about page' displays a noticeable difference as it is called 'my story'. In fact, the blogger starts the introduction of himself saying he is a father and a husband and the year he began his vegan journey. Jack then continues to tell the reader about his vegan journey, why he tried reducing dairy and how his family adopted the vegan diet in order to manage his son's symptoms and health struggles.

The language used is informal and friendly. The sentences are short and simple, and the blogger often uses exclamation points and caps lock for emphasis. The blogger then proceeds to explain why he started his blog, and tells the reader more about himself, his life, and his career.

The blogger produces some presuppositions in this page, reported below are the ones that have been identified:

- 5) Over the years I have noticed the misconception behind males and the vegan community - males need to eat steak, protein, you're not manly eating just plants etc. This is why I begun THAT VEGAN DAD - to change this image!
- 6) My idea behind That Vegan Dad is to show EVERYONE that adopting a vegan lifestyle can be easy and highly accessible for just about anyone!
- 7) My passion for trying to connect more people with veganism has also since expanded to begin a vegan-friendly Hamper business, delivering vegan friendly and gluten free hampers across Australia.

In Example 5, the blogger infers that there are misconceptions about being male and being vegan, misconceptions that the user may not be aware of. The blogger also believes that action need to be taken to erase those preconceptions, and that he has the will and the skill to begin that sort of revolution. In Example 6, Jack is indirectly telling the reader that in this blog they will find accessible and inclusive recipes and suggestions that the user might not find in other blogs. In Example 7, the blogger is informing the user about his business, placing himself in a position of authority in the field of veganism.

4.1.4 Cucina Botanica's About Page

The language used by this blogger is friendly but formal altogether. She introduces herself and her blog and then proceeds to tell the reader about her career journey. Carlotta does not inform the reader about how she became vegan. She makes extensive use of bold type to direct the attention of the user specifically to those words and sentences. Carlotta also used some presuppositions, four are copied below, maintaining the bold type:

- 8) Mi chiamo Carlotta e nel 2018 ho fondato Cucina Botanica.²
- 9) [...] ho deciso di volare fino a Los Angeles dove ho studiato **cucina vegetale** e nutrizione. Ho poi lavorato come assistente per **Plantlab**, una scuola di cucina vegetale che mi ha accolta nel suo team, facendomi diventare, alla fine, **insegnante di cucina vegetale**, portandomi in giro per il mondo in una meravigliosa avventura.³
- 10) Ho inoltre avuto modo di far conoscere la mia cucina tramite i **250.000 libri firmati "Cucina Botanica"** venduti in Italia.⁴
- 11) Tornata in Italia, ho deciso di portare qui quello che ho imparato: la cucina vegana non è né triste né sfigata.⁵

In Example 8 the blogger is telling the viewer that she is the mind behind the project of Cucina Botanica, already implying her role of expert in the field. In Example 9, the blogger is informing the user about her formative experience abroad in plant-based cuisine and her job experiences. It is evident how the blogger is describing herself as highly educated in the field therefore appearing as a professional figure. Then again, the expert persona is reinforced in Example 10, where she is sharing with the viewer that she sold 250.000 of her cookbooks, implying that she is an authority

² English translation: "My name is Carlotta and in 2018 I have founded Cucina Botanica."

³ English translation: "I've decided to fly to Los Angeles where I studied **vegetal cuisine** and nutrition. I then worked as an assistant for **PlantLab**, a plant-based cuisine school that welcomed me in its team, letting me become, in the end, a **vegetal cuisine teacher**, taking me all around the world in a wonderful adventure."

⁴ English translation: "I was also able to publicise my cuisine through **250.000 books branded 'Cucina Botanica'** sold in Italy."

⁵ English translation: "When I came back to Italy, I've decided to bring here what I've learned: vegan cuisine is neither dull nor uncool."

highly specialized in the field of vegan cuisine. The final example, Example 11, implies that the general idea of vegan food is of a sad and plain diet, and the user is encouraged to take a look at the blog and find all the interesting recipes that they will enjoy.

4.1.5 Cucina Verza's About Page

The 'about me' page of Cucina Verza is lengthy and dense with information, but is a light read as the language is friendly and informal, and she often reports fun facts about herself. Cristiana talks in detail about her life and her health struggles and how she started to approach the vegan cuisine to manage her symptoms, and she tells the reader how much that has helped her. She also makes suggestions about documentaries that might describe the vegan lifestyle. She barely touches on the fact that she is a blogger and the creator of Cucina Verza, and we find her comments on this only at the end. She also introduces her family and her beloved cats.

She uses the bold type often, as well as exclamation points, to give emphasis to her paragraphs. She uses inclusive language (e.g. "Anche se non sei vegan*"). The blogger does not make use of a large number of presuppositions, and in fact only one has been observed, and is reported below:

12) Le ricette che troverai qui sono state tutte cucinate, testate, fotografate e, ovviamente, mangiate, da me e da Mattia.⁶

With this sentence, the blogger ensures the reader that the recipes have been tested and enjoyed, creating a sense of trust in the viewer.

4.1.6 Essenza Vegetale's Homepage

The language used by the blogger is simple and friendly. She uses emojis and strategies aimed at involving the reader, such as the second person singular (e.g. "pensa che [...]"; "voglio essere sincera con te"). Silvia also uses inclusive language (e.g.

⁶ English translation: "The recipes you'll find here have all been cooked, tested, photographed and, of course, eaten by me and Mattia."

“benvenuto*”). She introduces her blog and its purposes, then proceed to talk about her vegan story. She suggests the user some documentaries about veganism. Silvia then goes on to talk more in depth about her blog. The blogger uses presuppositions in her writing, three examples are reported below.

13) In questo spazio voglio condividere con te le mie ricette a base vegetale dolci e salate, facili da preparare per ogni occasione [...] e mostrarti che la cucina vegana può essere deliziosa, ricca di colori e alimenti versatili. Eh no, i vegani non mangiano solo tofu e quinoa.⁷

14) Non è stato un percorso graduale come succede per molte persone.⁸

15) Sono rimasta sopraffatta dai tanti blog di cucina vegetale che mi proponevano menu lontanissimi dal tipo di cucina a me familiare. Così ho iniziato a focalizzarmi sul rivisitare i piatti della mia infanzia, quelli che sanno di casa, quelli che hanno il profumo del calore domestico e delle domeniche passate in famiglia.⁹

In Example 13, the blogger is highlighting that her vegan recipes are easy to make, and moreover, she implies that the idea of vegan cuisine is boring and that in her blog the user will find interesting and tasty recipes, that they may not find in other blogs. In Example 14, she implies that the journey to veganism is gradual for most people, fact that the user may not be aware of. In Example 15 she informs the reader that vegan food blogs usually offer recipes that are unattainable, but she has experimented with dishes from her childhood to create authentic and mundane recipes, that the user may not find in other blogs.

⁷ English translation: “In this space I want to share with you my plant-based, sweet and savoury recipes, easy to make for every occasion [...] and show you that vegan cuisine can be delicious, full of colours and versatile ingredients. No, vegans do not eat only tofu and quinoa.”

⁸ English Translation: “It was not like the gradual process that happens for many people.”

⁹ English translation: “I was overwhelmed by the number of plant-based cuisine blogs that proposed menus that were so far from the type of cuisine I am familiar with. So I started to focus on revisiting the dishes from my childhood, the ones that taste like home, the ones that smell like domestic warmth and like Sundays spent with family.”

4.2 Interactivity: The Comment Sections

The real interaction between the blogger and the viewer happens in the comment sections. Since all the bloggers have active and popular Instagram (hereinafter IG) profiles, where they post the video-recipes, the comments sections of the latest posts will be analysed to see how the bloggers approach the comments, how much they answer and to what kind of comments. The same analysis is conducted on the comment sections of the blogs' recipes.

Rainbow Nourishments' IG comment section is peculiar because for most recipes she posts the video then ask the viewer to visit the blog or to comment a specific word in the comments to receive the recipe in DM, so she receives lots of comments asking for the recipes and she answers to all. She also answers to most of the other comments that are not associated with the recipe request, for example comments giving her compliments, and she also answers question about the recipe for example if using a different ingredient is ok, mostly by giving suggestions. It appears she does not get negative comments. The same can be found in her blog comment section, where the blogger answers all comments, thanking the user for trying the recipe or giving suggestions when asked to.

Amanda Ducks answers to most of her IG's comments, she mostly receives positive comments, and she answers thanking the viewer, she answers giving suggestions to whom asks, and it appears she does not get negative comments. Peculiarly, she do not have a comment section in her blog, so an analysis and comparison cannot be conducted.

That Vegan Dad answers to almost all of the comments on IG, thanking the commenters for compliments or for trying his recipes, and giving suggestions when asked to. Similarly to Amanda Ducks, Jack does not have a comment section in his blog.

Cucina Botanica answers to some of the comments under her IG posts, she thanks the commenters who give her compliments, and she answers to almost all of the comments asking questions or clarifications, giving every kind of suggestion. She sometimes, but rarely, answers to negative comments, even though she gets many. The comments section of her blog appears "temporarily disabled", and it has been like so since the beginning of the present study.

Cucina Verza answers to almost all of the comments under her IG posts, she thanks the users who give her compliments, or she thanks the users for trying the recipes, and she answers all the comments that contain questions, giving suggestions. She always replies to the negative comments she gets, but they are very few. Similarly, she answers to all of the comments in the blog, with the same attitude, so she gives suggestions and thanks the commenters. She does not get negative comments under her blog's recipes.

Essenza Vegetale answers to all of her comments, thanking the users that compliments her and giving suggestions when asked. She does not get negative comments. Likewise, she answers to all the comments under her recipes in her blogs.

4.3 Critical Discourse Analysis and Interactivity: Conclusions

The purpose of this Chapter was to understand how the bloggers present themselves to the public and what kind of relationship they chose to keep with the public, and the analysis was conducted investigating the language and the linguistic strategies used to present themselves in their about sections and investigating the type of interaction they have with the public in the comment section of the blog and of their Instagram posts.

It is difficult to truly determine the approach of the bloggers, as the about pages are carefully constructed and as a result appear artificial and calculated. However, similarities between the blogs have been found, and together with the analysis of the comments section can help to determine how the bloggers decided to shape their online persona. Firstly, all bloggers tend to use simple language, with different levels of formality but friendly overall. All blogs use strategies for emphasis (such as exclamation points or the bold type), and most of them shared their story and their struggles. Moreover, all the bloggers use presuppositions. This strategy is usually present when the blogger wants to emphasize the purpose of their blog, when they describe the type of recipes they share in the blog, and when they talk about their past, their studies and their job. This is a first indication of how the bloggers present themselves as experts in the field, describing their blog as special and different, and guaranteeing the public how easy and tasty and healthy their recipes are. Still, they appear as friendly and down-to hearth when sharing their personal struggles. They often use emojis, abbreviations and inclusive language, thus further appearing as food-

lovers that are simply sharing their stories and their recipes with like-minded people. But again, they share their knowledge about the vegan lifestyle, the movies and the documentaries, thus appearing even more educated.

The constant crossing of the expert/non-expert border becomes even more easily identifiable when looking at the comments sections, where all the bloggers extensively give advice and suggestions dispensing their wisdom to the less navigated users, but looking at the replies on the neutral and positive comments it can be noticed how the blogger tries to appear as friendly, thanking the user for trying their recipes. It seems that the bloggers want to maintain a friendly relationship with their followers, they want to communicate with them directly in the comment section, but still keeping a position of authority, creating a power imbalance in the relationship. Overall, the six bloggers display different levels of authority, with the extreme 'open expert' persona being Cucina Botanica and the extreme 'expert disguised as food-lover' persona being Cucina Verza. No differences have been detected between the two different languages and cultures.

What is curious is that half of the blogs does not have a comment section, but nonetheless, they describe themselves as bloggers. Without investigating directly with the creators of the blogs, some comments and hypothesis can be made for this feature. A first assumption is that this absence may be indicative of a will to be more detached, or even a desire to redirect the readers to the social media profiles. This is in contrast with the idea of blogs as virtual communities, as interaction is completely absent, and they serve more as websites than blogs. Another explanation could be related to technical difficulties, or a lack of competence in programming or website managing. In fact, Cucina Botanica's blog is all in Italian but the absence of the comment section is notified to the viewer in English. This may be a system/platform failure that the blogger is unable to fix.

The specific content of the comments has not been studied extensively but has only been looked at superficially, and it would be interesting in a future study to specifically analyse the type of language used by the bloggers in their comments sections, and it would be interesting to analyse the language of the recipes sections as well, to further confirm or refute the theory initially supported by Cesiri (2020) or food blogs in general and now applied to vegan food blogs.

CONCLUSIONS AND DISCUSSION

The aim of the present study was to further investigate food blogs as genres of computer-mediated communication, and to gain a better understanding of the tendency, individuated by Cesiri (2016; 2017; 2020), of food bloggers to constantly cross the expert/non-expert border. The ‘homepage’ and ‘about pages’ of six Australian and Italian vegan food blogs, as well as the blogs’ recipes comment sections and the bloggers’ Instagram profiles comment sections, were chosen as the topic of the analysis and were then compared to results found on previous literature on food blogs.

From the cluster analysis of the ‘homepages’, it has emerged how the overall configuration of the cluster structure of the vegan blogs, both Australian and Italian, is consistent with the structure individuated and proposed by Cesiri (2020). The analysis of images and visual elements also highlighted a pattern of results which is consistent with previous literature. All the photos of the dishes are carefully constructed to look appetizing, and are usually bright, close shots with little to no background shown (Cesiri, 2020); all the visual elements, namely images, layout, colour, font, and writing, cooperate to shape the aesthetic of the pages (Adami, 2014). In this regard, a specific feature emerged from the analysis of the vegan blogs: the use of colours. For 4 blogs out of 6, the use of colours seems to not only be an aesthetic choice but seems to refer directly to veganism, ecology, and nature, with a prevalence of green and beige as the main colours. As a result, the blogs are visually representing the vegan lifestyle even before the viewer starts to read the page.

The critical discourse analysis of the ‘about pages’ provided interesting results in the way the bloggers decided to construct their online persona. All bloggers seem to constantly cross over the expert/non-expert border, and this tendency can be identified by looking at the textual strategies used to present themselves to the public. All the bloggers use predominantly informal, simple, and friendly language, catered to every English/Italian speaking person coming across their blogs. The majority of the bloggers also use strategies for emphasis (exclamation points; bold type) and emojis and abbreviations, further appearing as simple food-lovers sharing recipes and stories with the readers. As regards stories, vegan bloggers often share their health struggles with the public, and the readers can empathize with them in a friendly, compassionate

manner. However, they also overtly and covertly share their expertise with the public, therefore appearing as professionals in the field. A strategy that is used by all bloggers, to different extent depending on the blogger, is presuppositions. Presuppositions are used by the bloggers specifically to tastefully emphasise the purpose and the singularity of their blogs, and when talking about their experience with the vegan lifestyle. Moreover, this authoritative, expert persona emerges when bloggers share with the public some suggestions of documentaries and movies about the vegan lifestyle. This constant crossing of the expert/non-expert border is further supported by the findings from the analysis of the ‘comment sections’, where all the bloggers always give comprehensive advice when asked to, sharing with the users their knowledge on cooking. The bloggers also always friendly and humbly thank the commenters for trying their recipes. When considering the absence of the comment section for half of the blogs, the open-expert persona is even more prominent especially when this absence is explained as a desire from the blogger to be more detached, causing their blogs to lose the status of virtual community. Taken together, the findings indicate that a power imbalance is present in the relationship blogger-viewer, an imbalance that is greater for some bloggers and smaller for others. These findings are all in line with the theory proposed by Cesiri (2020).

As regards the language and culture of the bloggers, no differences were detected neither from the multimodal analysis of the homepages nor from the critical discourse analysis. It would be interesting, in future research, to specifically focus on Italian blogs, as the existent literature, as of now, mainly concentrates on English blogs. Another path that research could follow to better understand food blogs and food discourse, is the ‘specific diet’ path, since vegan bloggers seem to display some specific differences with respect to more generic food blogs. As regards these differences, it is difficult to confidently affirm their consistency, as the sample analysed is limited to only 6 blogs and a more extensive analysis needs to be carried out to confirm these findings. Moreover, a broader analysis, both quantitative and qualitative, that also considers the recipes sections, and focuses in depth on the comment sections, would be interesting to further substantiate the claims advanced by the present study. Despite these limitations, the present study has enhanced the understanding of food

blogs as a genre of CMC and the understanding of the relationship between food bloggers and the public.

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