

**School of Media, Culture, and Creative Arts
Department of Communication and Cultural Studies**

Mapping the Travel Blog: A Study of the Online Travel Narrative

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Declaration

To the best of my knowledge and belief this thesis contains no material previously published by any other person except where due acknowledgment has been made.

This thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university.

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Abstract

Blogs are generally described as self-presentational and comprising multiple discourses, and travel blogs are often studied for what tourists say about themselves and places they visit. Yet, little is written about the discourses of travel and tourism informing the narratives of travel blogs or how they influence the presentation of travel bloggers and their travel experiences. Also, much contemporary research uses the terms 'travel' and 'tourism' interchangeably despite evidence of a dichotomy of traveller and tourist manifest in discourse. Travel is generally regarded as being more authentic, adventurous, and worthy of admiration than tourism, which is perceived as being superficial, passive, and has commercial motivations. Several discursive analyses of forms of travel-related communication indicate that authors use specific narrative techniques to present the self as a traveller and associate their texts with a travel experience as opposed to a touristic one. Conversely, the narrative style of tourist discourse has commercial associations and a promotional purpose.

Against this background, this thesis examines the discursive tension between travel and tourism and analyses how narrative techniques negotiate this in travel blogs. The central research question this thesis asks is: **How do travel blogs negotiate the tensions between discourses of travel and tourism?** The response to this involves a discursive analysis of a travel blogs using various theories of narrative and self-presentation, particularly Bakhtin's heteroglossia, polyphony, and speech genres, Goffman's theories of self-presentation, and Graham Dann's framework for tourist discourse.

Through this analysis, the thesis extends previous studies of the discursive construction of the traveller/tourist debate to a recently evolved form of travel-related communication. It finds that the underlying discursive tensions in travel blogs indicate a need for a more flexible approach to defining and analysing this form of communication.

Table of Contents

| | |
|--|-----|
| Acknowledgments | iii |
| 1. The Lay of the Land | 1 |
| 2. Tracing Discourse in <i>Tony Wheeler's Blog</i> | 28 |
| 3. Whose Blog Is It Anyway? | 43 |
| 4. With the Reader in Mind | 72 |
| 5. Beyond the Borders of the Blog | 108 |
| 6. Worth a Thousand Words (or More) | 150 |
| 7. Mapping the Travel Blog | 183 |
| Works Cited | 199 |

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The Lay of the Land

Locating Discourses of Travel and Tourism in Blogs

Travel often inspires writing. The development of the weblog or blog has enabled many of those who travel to publish and publicize personal narratives of their travel experiences online, making these available to a large and diverse audience. Blogs are often described as self-presentational and comprising multiple discourses (Hermans; Hevern; Sanderson; Serfaty). Travel blogs in particular are often studied for what tourists say about themselves and places they visit (Carson; Pan, MacLaurin and Crotts; Pühringer and Taylor; Schmallegger and Carson; Wenger). Yet, little is written about the discourses informing narratives in travel blogs or how they influence the presentation of bloggers and their travel experiences. Furthermore, although contemporary research often uses the terms ‘travel’ and ‘tourism’ interchangeably, the terms suggest different contexts. Travel is generally regarded as being more authentic, adventurous, and worthy of admiration than tourism, which is perceived as being superficial, passive, and commercially motivated (Fussell). Several analyses of forms of travel-related communication indicate that authors use specific narrative techniques to present the self as a traveller and associate their texts with a travel experience as opposed to a touristic one (Dann “Writing out Tourist”; O’Reilly). Conversely, the narrative style of tourist discourse has commercial associations and a promotional purpose (Dann *Tourism*). Therefore, a discursive tension exists between travel and tourism that can be identified through a study of narrative technique. The purpose of this thesis is to examine how travel blogs negotiate the tensions between travel and tourist discourses in light of these issues. It applies theories of discourse, narrative, and self-presentation, with particular reference to the works of Mikhail Bakhtin, Erving Goffman, and Graham Dann to this analysis. This thesis thus demonstrates an alternative approach to studying travel blogs and offers a new perspective on how travel bloggers describe themselves and their destinations.

Blogs are referred to as “online diaries” or “Web diaries” by those who trace the origins of this format to the earlier forms of the personal diary (McNeill “Old Genre”; Serfaty; Sorapure; Van Dijck “Diaries and Lifelogs”). Like their

forerunners, they are generally topical and personal (Rettberg *Blogging*). What is different about blogs is that they have regularly updated reverse-chronologically arranged entries that can contain hyperlinks and allow responses in the form of comments from readers (Bruns and Jacobs; Rettberg *Blogging*). Blogs about travel, or travel blogs, resemble early travel diaries in that they are written as public documents intended for others to read (McNeill “Diary 2.0”). Therefore, it is interesting to note the allusion to travel in the terms “blog” or “weblog,” which originate from the word “log,” referring to the nautical record of a journey (Rettberg 17). However, travel blogs differ from the early travel diaries in that the authors of the latter were, in general, renowned individuals whose travel narratives were usually sanctioned by the state. Recent online developments such as personal home pages, which are similar to personal blogs, have democratized forms of autobiographical writing that were previously considered elitist (Killoran). Blogs describing personal travel experiences are but a part of a larger body of personal digital stories demonstrating the prevalence of “vernacular creativity” on online platforms (Burgess 207).

The theories of Mikhail Bakhtin provide a range of conceptual tools that have proved useful for understanding and interpreting online discourse. Typically in online language, writes Nancy Baym, “we blend and incorporate styles from conversations and writing with stylistic and formal elements of film, television, music videos, and photography, and other genres and practices” (66). Nelson and Hull observe that individuals who create online stories about themselves often use multiple discourses to reflect who they are and to meet the expectations of their audience. The resulting narratives are heteroglossic and characterised by discursive tensions (Nelson and Hull). Bakhtin defines heteroglossia as the presence of multiple forms of language drawn from different spheres of social activity. Using the novel as an example, he writes that a heteroglossic text may incorporate a variety of genres such as speeches, letters, professional jargon, and everyday conversation. Such “incorporated genres” are central to the inclusion and organization of heteroglossia (Bakhtin *Dialogic Imagination* 320). They draw together various narrative forms and techniques and styles of language drawn from different social spheres. A similar heteroglossia has been observed in online texts such as blogs whose different forms of language make up the presentation of an online self (Andreasen; Hevern; Serfaty).

It can be argued along similar lines that authors of travel blogs, who write entries and post photographs and videos, creatively combine multiple discourses from a variety of contexts to construct narratives about themselves and their travel experiences. This thesis considers in particular the discourses of travel and tourism in these blogs.

Although “travel” and “tourism” are often used in the same sense, the two terms suggest very different contexts. Travel, which is generally associated with adventure, independence, and some hardship, forms a contrast to tourism, which is often seen as lacking in spontaneity, devoid of risk, and easily accomplished (Fussell; O'Reilly). Similarly, the traveller is generally defined against the tourist as being a more sophisticated individual who seeks authentic experiences rather than the destinations marketed by the tourism industry. This chapter examines studies of various travel-related texts that indicate how the traveller/tourist dichotomy is constructed in discourse. The research project adapts and extends Graham Dann's framework for tourist discourse and applies this to the study of travel blogs. Similarly, it draws on the findings of previous analyses of backpacker narratives and travel books to identify the narrative techniques associated with travel discourse in these blogs. It will establish a working definition of what constitutes these discourses in order to understand how travel blogs negotiate the tensions between them.

The symbolic interactionist perspective, which stresses the importance of social context to the concept of self, has proven useful for the interpretation of online texts (Papacharissi “Virtual Geographies”; Pinch; Sanderson; Trammell and Keshelashvili). In particular, Erving Goffman's theories of self-presentation, which complement Bakhtin's theories of discourse, are relevant to this examination of travel blogs. To begin with, there is an element of self-presentation in the writing of a diary as a public document (Bloom; Culley). It is already evident that blogs are written with an eye to the audience (Nardi et al.; Serfaty). The idea that authors freely combine “familiar but out-of-place genres” as well as references and links to a variety of other online content to express themselves in home pages is equally applicable to blogs, given that the latter often resemble personal home pages and likewise facilitate self-presentation (Schmidt; Killoran 72; Van Dijck “Diaries and Lifelogs”). Therefore, the multiple discourses in travel blogs, including those of travel and tourism, have some bearing on their authors' presentation of self, although authors may not employ these consciously or intentionally. This has particular

relevance for this thesis because one way in which the traveller/tourist opposition is manifest in discourse is when an author refers to the self as a traveller and describes experiences as travel as opposed to tourism.

This chapter explores various definitions and analyses of blogs in order to identify the common characteristics and qualities generally associated with this form of communication. It demonstrates the need for a more flexible definition of these texts. The chapter then provides an overview of the critical concepts underpinning this discursive analysis of travel blogs. This involves a review of previous applications of concepts such as heteroglossia, polyphony, speech genres, and self-presentation to the study of blogging and discourse. It also examines analyses of travel-related texts in order to determine how discourses of travel and tourism may be identified through narrative technique. In essence, the chapter outlines the theoretical framework on which this research project is based. It also describes the structure of the argument and sets out the limitations and scope of the study.

Contours of the Travel Blog

In order to understand how travel blogs negotiate the discursive tensions between travel and tourism, it is first of all necessary to define exactly what a travel blog is. A number of existing studies of this format fall back on generic definitions and describe travel blogs as being like any other blog but having a travel theme (Bosangit, McCabe and Hibbert; Pan, MacLaurin and Crotts; Schmallegger and Carson; Wenger). However, no single definition of the blog format appears to fit all travel blogs. This chapter reviews the inadequacies of some of these descriptions and the challenges to pinning down the specific characteristics of travel blogs, thus validating Jill Walker Rettberg's observation that it is impossible to arrive at a "water-tight definition" of blogs and indicating how important it is for researchers to recognize the versatility of travel blogs, especially when viewing them as heteroglossic forms of communication (22). In so doing, this thesis demonstrates that the structure of travel blogs is open and "distributed" (Helmond 7). Several other aspects of blogging, identified in previous analyses of this form but not covered by existing definitions, are outlined below for being nonetheless relevant to this examination of travel blogs.

For the most part, generic definitions of blogs emphasize the technical features of this format. Rettberg describes a blog as “a frequently updated Web site consisting of dated entries arranged in reverse chronological order” (19). Likewise, Bruns and Jacobs focus on “the reverse-chronological posting of individual entries that include the capacity to provide hypertext links and often allow comment-based responses from readers” (2-3). In a similar vein, Jan Schmidt writes that blogs are “frequently updated websites where content (text, pictures, sound files, etc.) is posted on a regular basis and displayed in reverse-chronological order” (1409). As Rettberg points out, it is easy to broadly define blogs by their formal features. However, there are several drawbacks to basing a study of travel blogs solely on such descriptions. On the one hand, such definitions create a certain expectation of what qualities a website should have to be called a blog. Yet, and this is the argument of this thesis, the presence of these features in a website does not necessarily make it a blog. Researchers also need to be aware that the blog format in general and travel blogs in particular have evolved considerably, acquiring many more features than those previously identified as being characteristic of this form. For example, a blog may now be viewed not merely as a stand-alone website, as implied by such definitions, but as a “centralizing force,” located in a larger network of online platforms such as social networks, microblogs, and photo-sharing websites (Helmond 8). Also, photographs are now an essential element of most travel blogs, whereas many early blogs had few images.

An alternative approach is to view blogs as a genre (Lomborg; Rettberg *Blogging*). A different set of parameters then comes into play. Stine Lomborg’s genre-based typology of blogs overcomes the limitations of a number of existing technical definitions and categorizations of blogs. Her framework uses very different criteria – content, directionality, and style, as represented by the three axes as seen in Figure 1 – to classify blogs. This is especially useful for demonstrating the particular challenges to describing travel blogs. These blogs shift from intimacy to objectivity, from monologic description to dialogue with readers, and from the topical description of place to the internal reflections of the author. This thesis will illustrate

how this is largely due to the heteroglossia and polyphony¹ in travel blogs. While these inherent qualities may confound any attempts to position these texts on a single fixed point along these axes, such contradictions indicate the presence of multiple discourses in travel blogs.

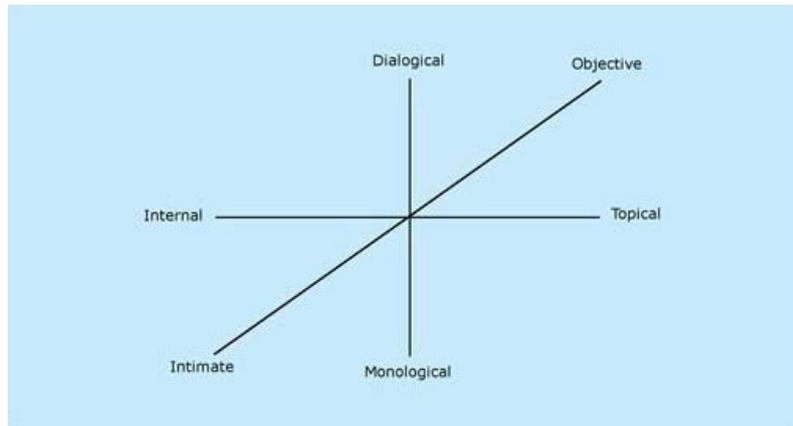


Figure 1: Stine Lomborg's typological dimensions for describing weblogs

Some studies highlight how personal blogs can be, in that they give some sense of who the author is and reflect their point of view (Nardi et al.; Rettberg *Blogging*). There is some debate as to whether authors do indeed play a central role in their blogs. Yet, despite arguments for the lessening of authorial control in hypertext narratives such as blogs, there is evidence to suggest that particular formal features of the blog, such as their entries and links, do in fact highlight authorial presence, authorial voice, and personal ownership (Chesher; Landow). While an author's personality is usually writ large in travel blogs that are hosted independently, it is often less prominent amidst many other voices that also claim readers' attention – that of the web host or advertisers – in the amateur travel blogs found on commercially sponsored travel-specific web hosts such as *Travelpod*, *Travelblog*, and *Bootsnall*. These voices find expression in paratextual elements² such as logos, titles, and other formal elements provided by the web hosts and their sponsors. This suggests that a sense of who the author is differs from travel blog to travel blog and this can be problematic under certain circumstances.

¹ Polyphony is also a Bakhtinian concept and refers to the presence of multiple voices or multivocality in a text. Jaworski and Coupland refer to this multivocality in their definition of discourse, cited later in this chapter.

² Gerard Genette includes titles and pseudonyms in his description of what constitutes the paratexts of a book. This concept has been adapted for the study of film and web pages. A more detailed discussion of paratexts follows in Chapter Three.

That blogs are also social is apparent in the connections made between blogs via hyperlinks and in the conversations bloggers have between themselves and with their readers (Rettberg 21-22). This thesis argues that some travel blogs are social not merely for their connections with other blogs, but also for the way they incorporate a variety of social media, particularly their links to *Facebook* and *Twitter*. These links also mean that the audience for travel blogs is diverse and includes not just the readers of the blog but users of other social media as well. The extent of conversation in the travel blogs studied here may be seen as an indication that authors are conscious of the presence of an audience made up of their readers and peers. While this has some bearing on the self-presentational nature of travel blogs, more significantly the conversational aspect of blogging is a factor that influences the extent to which a blog is polyphonic and heteroglossic.

Blogs are regarded as having these last two qualities for several reasons. Firstly, blogs allow authors to present a self that is “threaded” in that it occupies a variety of positions in the narrative (Hevern 322; Sanderson). These positions are indicated by the different voices in which the self speaks. In other words, this multi-voiced self introduces polyphony into the blog. In a travel blog, for instance, an author may variously speak in the voice of a traveller, a tourist, a travel expert, or a tour guide. Secondly, blogs are usually but not always necessarily open to comments, making them a space where the many voices of readers and authors interact (Serfaty 61). This conversation is characterised by the kind of polyphony that Bakhtin describes – many voices, each of which is autonomous (Bakhtin *Dostoevsky's Poetics* 6; Landow 56; Serfaty). Thirdly, travel blogs often include a number of language forms and narrative techniques within a single post. From a Bakhtinian perspective, each of these reflects a particular social context. Heteroglossia can therefore offer a useful framework for identifying the narrative forms and techniques associated with discourses of travel and tourism.

Although blogs are often described by structure and function, their constantly changing nature complicates definition. As Garden observes, any investigation of blogs must use a definition of the format that is appropriate to the parameters of the study and that recognizes the “shifting boundaries of the blogosphere” (13). This study uses technical definitions as a starting point for this analysis, mainly to demonstrate the need for a broader perspective of the travel blog format.

Accordingly, it moves beyond these definitions and also considers the personal and social nature of travel blogs, describing these as equally significant characteristic elements that influence the discursive tensions in these texts. Cognizant of the versatility of some travel blogs, this research project also considers their connections to online platforms such as Facebook and Twitter.

A Matter of Discourse

Academics have observed a need for a discursive approach to the study of travel and tourism (Jaworski and Pritchard). As an approach that is largely philosophical and theoretical, discourse analysis differs from other qualitative methods, such as content analysis, that are frequently applied to the study of travel-related communication. It enables researchers to engage with the broader issues and social contexts surrounding how individuals use language and create meaning and to consider the intertextuality of their narratives (Bloor and Wood 53-56; Locke 1-10). It is therefore suitable for the study of travel blogs as personal narratives, public documents, spaces of social interaction, and as forms of online language incorporating a variety of media.

This study of travel blogs takes a broad view of discourse and understands it, as Jaworski and Coupland do, to consist not only of written or spoken words but also “non-linguistic semiotic systems” such as performance art, painting, photography, sculpture, etc. (7). That is to say, discourse is multimodal, comprising a number of different media, and even existing in several different formats within a single text. This is particularly applicable to travel blogs, as they contain both words and images. This thesis also takes discourse to mean “language reflecting social order” (Jaworski and Coupland 3). Accordingly, it intends to demonstrate how some aspects of the travel blogs studied here provide a broader picture of some of the social practices or views associated with travel and tourism. For example, taking an iconic photograph of a popular destination signifies that one is a tourist just as going off the beaten path communicates the idea that one is a traveller. In addition, social practices also have some bearing on the construction of discourse. In other words, specific practices related to the promotion of tourism and the presentation of the self as a traveller reflect the discourses of travel and tourism in the blog and influence the tensions between these discourses. Thus, the research project examines several aspects of

discourse in travel blogs. Firstly, it analyses the written text – posts, comments, captions, and titles – that make up travel blogs, as well as visual elements such as photographs, fonts, and the general layout of the narrative. Secondly, it identifies how these elements in combination with the choices and decisions that bloggers make present the idea of either travel or tourism. Finally, it considers how some practices associated with travel or tourism shape the narrative that is the travel blog.

Much contemporary research no longer distinguishes between travel and tourism or between traveller and tourist, although the opposition between the two has in fact long informed academic interest in travellers and their journey experiences (Franklin and Crang). Over the years, the debate has shifted from equating travellers with tourists, to differentiating between the two, and then to such a blurring of these distinctions that travellers have ceased to exist and only tourists remain. In the Western tradition, for instance, especially during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, travel is described as an enriching experience. Wealthy young aristocrats departed on the Grand Tour, which was considered a form of training, a necessary phase of their preparation for entering society (Buzard “The Grand Tour and After” 39-41). The “traveller” of this period is synonymous with the “tourist” (Buzard *The Beaten Track* 1). However, the introduction of mass tourism and the package tour soon led to a distinction being made between the traveller and the tourist, and the words gained different connotations (Hulme and Youngs 7). Writers of this period such as William Wordsworth denigrate the tourist while the traveller is portrayed as individualistic, bold and resilient (*The Beaten Track*). In their texts, the tourist is a shallow-minded figure to be derided, but the traveller is an adventurer to be admired. For the most part, in the literature of the twentieth century, tourism symbolizes the decay of culture, especially for modernist thinkers such as D. H. Lawrence, T. S. Eliot, and Samuel Beckett (*The Beaten Track* 2).

For many academics in the latter half of the twentieth century, there is only the tourist. Among the more prominent of these is American historian Daniel Boorstin, who describes all those who travel as mass tourists. Similarly, Paul Fussell’s *Abroad*, published in 1982, distinguishes between travel and tourism but deplores the replacement of travel by tourism. Boorstin’s critique of tourism as a phenomenon based on “pseudo-events,” or false attractions contrived by the industry, has since paved the way for the “authenticity perspective” in tourist studies (Dann

Tourism 6). This approach views tourism as a quest for authenticity as laid out in Dean MacCannell's seminal book *The Tourist* (1976). Subsequent research frequently stems from or focuses on questions related to MacCannell's concept of "staged authenticity," Erik Cohen's categorization of tourist experiences, and John Urry's theory of a tourist gaze exercised in the consumption of destinations. From a post-modern viewpoint, there is such a blurring of travel and tourism that the distinctions between the two are no longer visible. However, attributing an illusory quality to tourist experience suggests that it is being defined against something more authentic and that some opposition still exists. MacCannell's concept of a "second gaze" that looks beyond staged tourist experiences for something more genuine is one instance of this ("Tourist Agency").

Thus far, academic interest has mainly been concerned with how discourse constructs the tourist experience through media representations of place. Several studies of travel blogs focus on the relevance of these narratives to destination image (Carson; Pan, MacLaurin and Crofts; Schmallegger and Carson; Wenger). Other analyses demonstrate the significance of discourse in organizing the consumption of tourist experiences, and tourism in turn has been regarded as a discourse that shapes globalization and knowledge of the world (Franklin and Crang; Jaworski; Thurlow and Jaworski; Urry and Larsen). Despite this, a number of recent studies of travel-related communication point to a revival of academic interest in how the traveller/tourist dichotomy is manifest in discourse (Gillespie). This validates Franklin and Crang's observation that there is "a continual oscillation between the poles of traveller and tourist" in the study of travel and tourism (8). One such study observes that it is important to understand how individuals "construct" themselves as travellers and not tourists, given the negativity associated with the latter and to look more closely at how people talk about their tourist activities (McCabe). This is a point worth making, considering that discursive approaches to travel and tourism have generally used these terms interchangeably. Yet, several critical discussions of travel-related texts suggest a tension between discourses of travel and tourism that owes something to the very opposition between traveller and tourist. These include analyses of the thematic content and narrative style of backpacker narratives, television programmes, tourism advertisements, and travel books, indicating that an examination of narrative technique is a useful approach to understanding such

discursive tensions (Dann “Writing out Tourist”; Dunn; O’Reilly). This research project extends these findings to the analysis of the discursive tensions between travel and tourism in travel blogs and their associated online media. It takes the road less travelled by referring to travel and tourism as distinct discourses, while acknowledging their intertwining nature and the instability of this binary opposition.

Having said that thematic content and narrative techniques are a key to understanding discursive tensions, it is necessary to establish what these are with reference to discourses of travel and tourism. This section first considers existing research into travel-related communication in order to identify the specific themes and narrative styles associated with the presentation of an experience as travel as opposed to tourism. To this end, it examines studies of backpacker narratives, travel writing, and other forms of travel-related communication, that outline the specific narrative techniques and themes used to present experiences as travel as distinct from tourism. Extrapolating from these, this thesis outlines a general framework for travel discourse, which in later chapters will be applied to the analysis of the blogs selected for this study. For the identification of tourist discourse, it draws largely on Graham Dann’s work on the “language of tourism,” the characteristics of which are exhibited in advertisements, brochures, photographs, posters, and a variety of other similar travel-related texts.

At this point, something needs to be said about the use of and the distinctions between “travel literature,” “travel writing,” and “travel-related communication.” The term “travel literature” tends to be ambiguous. On the one hand, it may be regarded as synonymous with travel writing (Borm). More often, however, it refers broadly to any text related to travel. “Travel writing,” critical discussions of which have included both fiction and nonfiction, is similarly problematic as a descriptive term – as exemplified in the chronology of publications in *The Cambridge Companion to Travel Writing* that lists fictional narratives such as *Robinson Crusoe* and *Gulliver’s Travels* alongside factual accounts of voyages of exploration. Travel writing is a hybrid genre and it may well contain tourist discourse, despite having fewer associations with tourism than texts that have a commercial or promotional purpose, such as the guidebook. In order to overcome the challenges of definition posed by these terms, this thesis describes all texts and forms of communication related to travel as travel-related communication, including under this umbrella term

advertisements, books, brochures, guidebooks, itineraries, photographs, television programmes, and comparatively recent media such as blogs, microblogs, and social networking sites. Any subsequent mention of travel writing refers to analyses that use this term to describe travel books and memoirs.

The Language of Travel

Several discussions of travel-related communication identify some common themes and a specific style of narration that generally defines travel in opposition to tourism. They indicate that authors of such texts often disassociate themselves with the figure of the tourist and the commercial tourism industry, preferring instead to position themselves as travellers. Graham Dann's analysis of works by three writers of travel books reveals how they "write out" the tourist, and manipulate the narration of space and time to present their experiences as travel (Dann "Writing out Tourist"). They describe the travel experience as being timeless, solitary, and focused on the journey rather than the destination. Visiting a place where time appears to pass quicker or slower than one is accustomed to lends authenticity to a travel experience (Molz). The sense of solitude in travel writing owes something to its characteristic personal tone, an emphasis on the self, and an absence of references to fellow travellers (Blanton; Dann "Writing out Tourist"; M. Robinson). The impression of travel as a solitary experience is also explicit in television programmes whose presenters occupy the position of travellers (Dunn). In a similar vein, several studies of backpacker narratives identify particular narrative techniques authors use to create the impression that they are travellers (Noy; O'Reilly). Apart from the obvious strategy of referring to the self as a traveller and not a tourist, these include describing journeys as being adventurous, difficult, and even risky. Here, the journey is narrated as an accomplishment to be admired. A similar study by Richards and Wilson of discussions between backpackers also finds that not being a tourist is a predominant theme. They note that the impression of the individual as a traveller generally arises from toning down references to iconic destinations whilst highlighting "unique experiences off the beaten track" and identifying with values such as adventurousness, spontaneity, and heroism, as expressed by writers like Ernest Hemingway, Jack Kerouac, and Bruce Chatwin (Richards and Wilson 60-61). What emerges from studies such as this last, and as noted by other researchers, is a sense that much travel writing is gendered, masculine, privileging a male gaze, and

centred around the white European male (Galani-Moutafi; Pritchard and Morgan). Studies of travel writing are useful for identifying the narrative techniques of travel. However, as will be further discussed in this chapter, it is necessary to recognize that these texts can also have elements of tourist discourse (Dann).

Following from these findings, it is possible to arrive at a working definition of the discourse of travel. This is largely indicated by aspects of narrative such as theme and tone, organization of and reference to space and time, and in the positioning of the narrator. In general, the travel experience is solitary, which heightens the impression that it is both personal and focused on the self. This emphasis on the personal is often indicated by the first person voice integral to most texts concerned with narrating travel as opposed to tourism. The sense of aloneness is also achieved by writing out fellow travellers and tourists. In this sense, travel is about isolation and frequently uses the metaphor of an inner journey (Noy). A second quality of the travel experience is that it is a difficult one, accompanied by hardship rather than ease. Accordingly, it is an adventure, an exploration of that which is previously undiscovered or unrecognized, accomplished at some cost to the traveller. Thirdly, travel is distinguished by its lack of reference to destination, emphasizing the journey rather than the place. Destinations are thus only mentioned for being unique or off the beaten track. Indeed, travel is characterised by its uniqueness, for being an escape from routine, and so being something out of the ordinary. A fourth feature of travel is its sense of timelessness, and this is usually conveyed by narrating the experience as if it is happening at the present time – an effect generally achieved by the use of the present tense. The spontaneity of travel also contributes to this sense of a lack of preoccupation with time. Consequently, the self as a traveller is generally perceived to be a lone adventurer, indicatively if not actually male, headed for places unknown or hitherto unexplored, more concerned with the hardships encountered during a journey than with following any itinerary.

The Language of Tourism

The analysis of discourse in travel-related communication has been significant for the study of the construction and consumption of tourist experiences. John Urry's work on the tourist gaze, for example, outlines how the representation of tourist destinations in the media directs the consumption of these same places, a

process that ultimately results in a hermeneutic circle of representation.³ This study has formed the basis of several studies that examine how tourists photograph sites they visit (Baerenholdt et al.; Garrod; Jenkins). Taking a similar line, Graham Dann's extensive and in-depth examination of various travel-related texts such as brochures, advertisements, and posters concludes that there is a "language of tourism," incorporating specific narrative techniques that address tourists and stimulate tourist activities. Although Dann considers many different forms of travel-related communication and does not distinguish between discourses of travel and tourism, it is worth noting that the majority of the texts he analyses have a commercial or promotional purpose. Also, while the original purpose of Dann's study is to demonstrate how language constructs and directs a tourist's consumption of destinations, it also reveals the existence of a discourse of tourism, which though not diametrically opposed to travel discourse, has nonetheless several qualities that mirror the traveller/tourist dichotomy.

As with travel discourse, particular themes, narrative techniques, and a certain treatment of time and space characterize the discourse of tourism. If travel discourse emphasizes the personal and is largely concerned with positioning the self as traveller, it does not necessarily follow that tourist discourse presents the self as tourist. Dann's framework for tourist discourse indicates that it is largely impersonal for several reasons. Firstly, there is often a lack of identification of the sender of the message. Secondly, texts in tourist discourse generally address an anonymous audience, an implied and occasionally explicit "you" who is often positioned as a potential tourist and consumer, in a second person voice that is both knowledgeable and authoritarian. While travel discourse generally looks inward to the self and is reflective, tourist discourse tends to look outward. This is the voice Dann identifies in texts such as brochures and guidebooks, whose implicit narrators are usually positioned as guides or experts and use techniques such as "ego-targeting" to promote destinations and direct individuals to consume places in a particular way. Other distinguishing properties of touristic language include a monologic style of address, euphoric adjective-filled descriptions of destinations and the activities they

³ Urry's work on the tourist gaze has popularized the hermeneutic circle, a concept first described by Heidegger. Albers and James's study of travel photography in postcards, which predates Urry's work, similarly argues that photographs captured by tourists complete a hermeneutic circle begun by media representations of the tourist destination.

offer, and tautology. Where travel is fluid, spontaneous and unfettered to itineraries, an organizing principle of tourism is that a certain number of sites must be consumed within a particular period of time. The discourse of tourism essentially focuses on destination and reflects a commercial purpose in its promotion of place. Also, in contrast with the timelessness of travel, tourist discourse is inextricably caught up in time, and this is what makes it superficial according to critics such as Fussell. The preoccupation with time is also evident in techniques such as temporal contrast, indicated by a change of tense, to suggest that individuals can exchange a past state of dissatisfaction for a pleasant experience at some future destination (Dann). The tourist experience is therefore characterised by its passivity – it is organized and planned rather than impulsive, it is guided rather than exploratory or adventurous, and it is perceived as commercially motivated.

Where the Twain Shall Meet

There is some implication here that certain forms of travel-related communication may be classified as being travel discourse while others may be termed touristic. For example, it may appear that travel writing is largely travel discourse whereas the guidebook is comprised of tourist discourse. This is perhaps largely due to the fact that many previous analyses of these discourses tend to focus on a single form of travel-related communication and a single discourse. For example, O'Reilly's study looks mainly at backpacker narratives and analyses how the authors use travel discourse in their self-presentation. Similarly, Dann bases his findings on tourist discourse largely on analyses of guidebooks, posters, and brochures, that is to say texts that have clear associations with the tourism industry. There are few studies that look at how both discourses are manifest in a single form. Nevertheless, Dann also sees some aspects of tourist discourse in travel writing, a form of travel-related communication that he returns to in his later analysis of travel discourse. A classification of travel-related communication as either travel or tourist discourse simply on the basis of genre is too easy and erroneous. A single form of travel-related communication can contain discourses of both travel and tourism and this applies to travel blogs as well.

The discourses of travel and tourism are by no means mutually exclusive or independent of each other. It can be argued that travel paves the way for tourism. For

example, a narrative describing a destination that offers a unique travel experience by being off the beaten path can potentially prompt others to visit the same place, as a result turning it into a popular tourist site. For authors who intend to distance themselves from touristic activities by seeking out such an experience, this is perhaps an unintentional and unwanted consequence of creating such narratives. Sometimes travel is subsumed by tourism. Backpackers generally regard themselves as being different from tourists for seeking adventurous and difficult travel experiences, and yet backpacking itself is now easier to do and is increasingly a mainstream touristic activity with the associated commodification that this implies (O'Reilly).

Conversely, it may be said that travel grows out of tourism when individuals seek experiences that are off the beaten path. There is some suggestion of this in Dean MacCannell's conception of a "second gaze" that begins by looking at a touristic attraction and then looks beyond it for that which is hidden, unexpected, or real (MacCannell "Tourist Agency").

From Speech Genres to Self-Presentation

Theories of both narrative and self-presentation come under the wider umbrella of discourse analysis. The works of Mikhail Bakhtin and Erving Goffman have previously provided critical tools for the study of blogs and for interpreting how individuals use language to express their online selves. Although these theorists are rarely cited in conjunction with each other in studies of online self-presentation (for examples see Killoran; Nelson, Hull and Roche-Smith), the works of both highlight the significance of the social contexts of communication. This study essentially develops a little-used approach and demonstrates its suitability for analysing discourse in travel blogs. Bakhtin's essay on speech genres discusses several concepts that are applicable to the study of discourse in travel blogs. Bakhtin proposes that the basic unit of communication, the utterance, echoes the social context in which it was previously used by others. Each sphere of human activity has a corresponding set of utterances known as a speech genre. A combination of several primary speech genres can form a more complex secondary speech genre. The more familiar an individual is with contexts of the utterances he or she uses, the better his or her expression of ideas. Conversely, a message is more meaningful for the audience if it uses language drawn from contexts they recognise.

Utterances are also characterised by addressivity, that is to say they are audience-oriented, the implication being that individuals use words and sentences with their contexts in mind and in anticipation of the audience's response (Bakhtin *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays*). The concept of addressivity complements Goffman's self-presentation. When presenting the self, individuals will use cues, such as appearance or actions appropriate to specific social situations, to indicate their position with respect to their audience (Goffman). Although Goffman refers mainly to appearance and gestures here, the use of media to express oneself is also a part of self-presentation (Pinch). Controlling the amount of information available, via these features, to an audience is another self-presentational technique that, according to Goffman, influences the impression an audience has of the individual. The presentation of self may serve a broader purpose, describing not just the person but the larger activity in which he or she is engaged (Goffman).

As mentioned earlier, heteroglossia and polyphony are two concepts that underpin this examination of travel blogs. However, it should be noted that there is some ambiguity in how these terms are employed in academic debate. Bakhtin describes polyphony as the presence of multiple voices in a text, "a plurality of independent and unmerged voices and consciousnesses, with equal rights and each with its own world" (*Dostoevsky's Poetics* 6). In a later essay on novelistic discourse, he refers to heteroglossia, the tendency of language to be multi-layered because it comprises multiple forms and refers to various spheres of social activity, such as the "professional language" of law, medicine, politics, or education (289). He goes on to describe each "utterance," that is to say each unit of communication, as having "the 'taste' of a profession, a genre, a tendency, a party, a particular work, a particular person, a generation, an age group, the day and hour...of the context and the contexts in which it has lived its socially charged life" (Bakhtin *Dialogic Imagination* 293). Heteroglossia is not merely the incorporation of different styles of language but also the social contexts to which they refer. Noting that novels may have both multiple voices and heteroglossia, Bakhtin states that each of many voices of a novel – author, narrator, and character – employs a language that is stratified. This implies polyphony is not necessarily a condition of heteroglossia, for a single voice may incorporate many layers of language, but it can amplify the heteroglossia of a text. Bakhtin himself makes no clear distinctions between the two concepts, describing

heteroglossia as “double-voiced discourse” (336). Therefore, it is not surprising that some critics interpret heteroglossia and polyphony as meaning the same thing. For example, Jaworski and Coupland equate heteroglossia with multi-voiced discourse, but for Serfaty the existence of “multiple, often contradictory discourses” and “heterogeneous texts” in a blog corresponds with polyphony.

Drawing on previous research that examines blogs from the point of view of Bakhtin’s theories, this thesis argues that travel blogs are polyphonic when the voices of the author, readers, advertisers, and web hosts interact with each other. They are also polyphonic for an author’s presentation of a self that speaks in many voices – that of a traveller, a tourist, tour guide, and so on. Heteroglossia enters the blog when the author as traveller narrates his or her experience using specific forms or narrative techniques – speech genres – that are associated with travel or tourism. Furthermore, travel blogs may be regarded as a complex speech genre in themselves, for their incorporation of many forms – the diary-like entry, photographs, advertisements, and a range of paratextual elements such as titles, title banners, and a variety of other visual elements, each having its own social contexts and connotations. Each of these components in turn may contain multiple voices – that of the travel writer, the touristic photographer, or the promoter of commercial tourism. As a consequence, as the authors of these travel blogs switch from one voice to another and integrate a variety of media in their texts, they create narratives that are both polyphonic and heteroglossic. The purpose of this research project is to identify and examine the particular voices and forms of language – that is to say, the discourses – associated with travel and tourism, in order to demonstrate how these discourses are interdependent, intertwined, and constantly negotiating each other.

From this critical perspective, new forms of travel-related communication such as the blog may be regarded as innovative combinations of pre-existing discursive forms, especially when viewed as a form of online language as described by Baym. For example, the blog as a whole has been compared to the diary (McNeill “Old Genre”; Serfaty). Individual elements of a blog can be analysed as consisting of utterances that have different contexts and connotations. A post may reflect narrative styles of different travel-related speech genres ranging from the personal voice often reserved for travel writing to the impersonal and factual tone of the guidebook. While this variety of discourses makes for a meaningful heteroglossic text, the

contextual differences between previously disparate discursive forms can produce tensions in the text. Furthermore, travel blogs may also be credibly viewed as complex secondary speech genres for their links to social networks, microblogs, and online photo-sharing services. They are also characterised by addressivity since they are generally available and addressed to a potentially large audience. Also, the formal elements and discourses comprising these blogs act as cues for readers, creating an impression of who the travel blogger is. For travel bloggers, this could involve actions such as responding to comments from readers, deciding which blogs to link to, and what social media to integrate in the text.

By applying concepts such as self-presentation and speech genres, this study provides a symbolic interactionist perspective of the online self of these travel bloggers. Symbolic interactionism is increasingly viewed as a critical approach appropriate for analysing the online self (Wynn and Katz; M. Robinson). Its proponents include George Herbert Mead, Herbert Blumer, and Erving Goffman among many others who argue that the self is constructed through interaction with others (Blumer). Goffman's self-presentation has become widely popular in academic debates on online communication and for interpreting how individuals express different aspects of self across a variety of online platforms including blogs (Ellison, Heino and Gibbs; McCullagh; Papacharissi "Virtual Geographies"; Pinch; Sanderson; Schau and Gilly; Trammell and Keshelashvili; Utz; Walther et al.). As Laura Robinson notes, "The blogger presents the 'I' both through constructing the page and maintaining dialogue with other 'I's' that post reactions and commentary. In blogging, each manifestation of the 'I' is predicated on the self-ing of other 'I's' who form the cyberother. The 'I' is constantly redefined as the 'me' in response to this interactional commentary" (104). This is particularly relevant as bloggers are generally expected to engage readers in conversation (Papworth). Many of the travel bloggers in the sample chosen for this study do in fact respond to their readers. In addition to this, they also interact with other travel bloggers, consequently adding conviction to their own self-presentation. Such conversations may not be limited to the travel blog but extend across several other platforms. Symbolic interactionism provides a number of conceptual tools appropriate for understanding how the self as a travel blogger is constructed through this interaction.

Often, travel bloggers present a self that occupies a number of different positions in the narrative, sometimes within the space of a single blog entry. In Goffman's terms, individuals adopt several faces, each a different aspect of the same self, to meet the needs of the particular social situation they are in and the audience they interact with. In addition to this, the presentation of self as a travel blogger sometimes extends across a variety of online platforms. An online self that is scattered across a number of platforms and presents many different faces within a single blog may seem to be better interpreted from a post-modern perspective. Several early critiques that adopt this theoretical standpoint describe the online self as "decentered," socially isolated, and consisting of discrete personae that have little connection with each other (L. Robinson 98). Although such an approach is applicable to the idea of a self that presents multiple faces, it tends, however, to overlook the significance of social context, which is central to this project's interpretation of discourse.

Symbolic interactionism, on the other hand, better accommodates the concept of a self that is at once distributed, polyphonic, and is negotiated through discourse. From this viewpoint, a travel blog is a centralizing force linking together different parts of a unique self-presentation. In such cases where these blogs link to other online platforms there is a networking of different aspects of self that are nevertheless linked rather than disparate. This critical approach allows for the interpretation of content created on associated social networks, microblogs, and photo-sharing services as a part of the self-presentation in the travel blogs they are linked to. It also enables an understanding of how bloggers speak in different voices within their blogs and their associated online media, and how this contributes to the heteroglossia in these texts. This in turn offers a starting point for understanding how the self as travel blogger and the meaning of the travel experience is negotiated through discourses of travel and tourism.

The theoretical approach outlined above has determined the analytical methods used in this study of travel blogs. By viewing addressivity and self-presentation as attributes of these texts, the thesis argues that travel bloggers are very aware of their audience. As a consequence, they construct their narratives to create a certain impression on their readers. Decisions concerning content, layout, and linking to other blogs all gain significance when viewed as cues that have some meaning.

Bearing this in mind, this study is based on content that is publicly accessible. Furthermore, care has been taken not to contact any of the bloggers included in this study, as any subsequent textual changes made by the authors would compromise the research findings. Individuals who are aware of a researcher's presence could change the self they present in the travel blogs in order to suit what they perceive to be the expectations of their audience. In this respect, the study subscribes to the view expressed by Serfaty, who follows Philippe LeJeune in arguing that "familiarity is likely to induce reluctance to expose certain, sometimes unflattering, perhaps even sordid aspects of the diarist's life and thus may skew research towards a mild form of hagiography" (11).

Approaches to Mapping a Travel Blog (Research Methodology):

As previously indicated, this argument draws on theories, concepts, and methods from across several disciplines in order to arrive at a critical framework by which discourses of travel and tourism in travel blogs may be better understood. This section outlines the significance of each of these conceptual tools. It demonstrates how the theoretical perspective outlined above is suitable for analysing discourse in travel blogs, explains the selection of the sample chosen, and acknowledges some of the limitations of this study.

Travel blogs are generally multimodal texts, both for their integration of multiple media forms such as words, images, maps, and in some cases video clips, as well as their inclusion of narrative techniques from a wide range of different forms of travel-related communication. Bakhtin's theories of heteroglossia and polyphony facilitate their examination as a constantly evolving form that incorporates multiple narrative forms, techniques, and discourses. It is from this critical perspective that this study begins by analysing various narrative styles and forms that constitute some of the posts in *Tony Wheeler's Blog*.

Although Graham Dann does not analyse blogs in *The Language of Tourism*, understandably as this was written when blogs were still an emerging form, this is still a useful starting point for determining how travel bloggers narrate their experiences. Dann identifies four distinguishing features of tourist discourse – a lack of sender identification, euphoric descriptions, tautology, and an authoritarian form of address. His later work on "writing out the tourist" identifies specific narrative

techniques that suggest a travel experience as opposed to a touristic one - solitude, timelessness, and a focus on experience. This thesis adapts this framework by including insights from O'Reilly's study of backpacker narrative and Mike Robinson's observations on the distinctive features of travel writing. All of these are a useful adjunct to Bakhtin's argument that each sphere of social action has its own associated speech forms and narrative techniques. It is possible to apply these to a close textual analysis of heteroglossia in various blog posts. The resulting conceptual framework is then used to identify courses of travel and tourism in blogs for the purpose of indicating how these are perceived to be distinct and oppositional and yet constantly collapsing into each other.

As has been demonstrated, an individual's description of travel or touristic experiences is often connected with the presentation of an online self. Here, online self-presentation is examined as a discursive form, constructed in language and its social contexts. Goffman's theories of self-presentation offer the critical tools necessary for understanding how individuals present themselves as travellers or acknowledge themselves to be tourists. Vincent Hevern's analysis of the "threaded identity" of bloggers may be little known, but it is nevertheless invaluable for it demonstrates how the theories of Bakhtin and Goffman may be used in conjunction to identify the different narrative roles the authors of travel blogs occupy and the different voices they speak in. This thesis develops this critical approach further and adapts it to the analysis of discourse in travel blogs.

The interpretation of the photographs in travel blogs requires a different set of critical tools. Robinson and Picard's work on the distinctive style of tourist photographs is applied here, in conjunction with concepts drawn from Susan Sonntag's work on photography and tourism and Roland Barthes' theories of the connotative meaning of images. Also, John Urry's work on the hermeneutic circle of representation offers a means of understanding how photographic techniques associated with the promotion of tourism may be employed in the presentation of a travel experience and vice versa.

This argument presents travel and tourism as an experience and practice constructed in discourse. That is, as Dann suggests in his own work, particular words and narrative techniques associate the description of a journey with either travel or

tourism. Similarly, the presentation of a blogger as a traveller or tourist is indicated by certain practices, words, or images in travel blogs. While the thesis draws on these concepts and analyses the language of posts and images to reveal the perceived oppositions between discourses of travel and tourism, it does so to demonstrate that these are by no means distinct. Instead, they constantly negotiate each other and that which is presented as travel can have touristic implications.

The immensity of the World Wide Web, the enormous number of publicly available travel blogs, and the distributed as well as the dynamic nature of some blogs all pose a number of challenges to selecting a representative sample for analysis. As Herring observes, new content is continuously added online, some of which may not be indexed by search engines (“Internet Research”). Similarly, it is difficult to access travel blogs that are kept private or created in languages other than English. This makes it impracticable to sample the entire body of travel blogs on the Web. Furthermore, some travel blogs are complete accounts, others are incomplete, and still others are works in progress. A single travel blog can have hundreds of posts, not merely within the blog but also on other platforms such as social networks and microblogs, complicating a close textual analysis of all its content.

Several researchers find that purposive sampling offers a practical approach to the study of online messages such as those contained in blog posts (Herring “Content Analysis”). Combining purposive and random methods of selection can produce a manageable sample, the analysis of which can yield reliable results (Tashakkori and Teddlie). As is often the case with such qualitative methods, a smaller sample offers little material for generalizations on this type of communication. However, it allows for a detailed discussion of the discourses contained in various elements constituting a blog, such as its posts, photographs, links, and comments. Accordingly, the corpus of blogs selected for this study has been defined using mixed methods.

This selection of three types of travel blogs and the structure of this argument is based on Schmallegger and Carson’s categorization of travel blogs on the basis of authorship. These include travel blogs from guidebook publishers, from individuals publishing on travel-specific web hosts sponsored by commercial advertising, and the independently hosted travel blogs that generally have a single author. While this

classification may be little known, it is nonetheless useful for an investigation of issues of authorship and the tensions between commercial and personal discourses. Lonely Planet's reputation as a leading publisher of guidebooks has been a deciding factor in the selection of *Tony Wheeler's Blog*. Similarly, the sample includes blogs from *Travelblog*, *Travelpod*, and *Bootsnall* because these web hosts figure prominently in the Google search result for "travel blog." Furthermore, samples have previously been drawn from these websites (for examples, see Akehurst; Schmallegger and Carson; Wenger), and using a different approach to analyse their blogs can add a new dimension to earlier findings. As each of these websites hosts a vast number of blogs, the study focuses on a few blogs that receive special mention on the web hosts' home pages. Finally, independently hosted travel blogs have been located both by using search engines as well as blogrolls. Some of the blogs examined here are chosen because they have an established reputation. For example, Gary Arndt's *Everything Everywhere* has featured in *Time* and *Nomadic Matt's Travel Site* is easily located in a Google search for "travel blog" and is listed in many blogrolls.

The practical application of the framework outlined above involves a close textual analysis of randomly selected words, phrases, photographs, and to some extent, the layout and design of travel blogs chosen for this study. Furthermore, the communicative practices of these travel bloggers – their actions and interactions are also examined first, as constituent elements of their self-presentation and second, as elements that contribute to discursive tensions between travel and tourism. The chapters in this thesis are mainly organized on the basis of the authorship of these blogs. However, since independently hosted travel blogs generally have extensive links to content created by their authors on other social media platforms, and to demonstrate the distributed nature of some travel blogs, the argument also contains a chapter on how travel bloggers use Facebook and Twitter. Photographs are an integral element in all of these blogs, and are discussed not only in each chapter but also in depth in the final chapter.

Given the constant evolution of this platform, the exploration of the travel blogosphere could well be a journey without end. However, it is necessary to draw boundaries and indicate the limitations of this study. The sample of travel blogs studied here is by no means exhaustive. Nevertheless, it is sufficient to indicate that

there is a great variety in the age and social background of those who create travel blogs. Here we include individuals who identify themselves as backpackers, grey nomads, members of a tour group, and arguably a corporate blogger in Tony Wheeler. While it is therefore difficult to draw any reliable conclusions about class and gender, it points to further avenues for research into emerging categories of travel bloggers. Ethnographic methods of research could perhaps reveal more about the influence of gender and class. What follows is a description of the ground that this thesis does cover – an outline of the chapters of this thesis, each of which explores how these different travel blogs negotiate the relationship between discourses of travel and tourism.

The Lay of the Land

Chapter Two applies various generic definitions of blogs to the analysis of *Tony Wheeler's Blog*, a travel-related text written by the founder of Lonely Planet. It also explores how this text negotiates the discourses of travel and tourism. The chapter argues that calling the text a blog creates a certain impression of the author and certain expectations on the part of the reader as to the nature of the narrative. The examination concludes that despite answering many of the requirements of being a blog, the text only partially resembles one. Heteroglossia and polyphony are nevertheless central to the text. *Tony Wheeler's Blog*, a text that is essentially positioned as a narrative of travel experiences, nonetheless serves a touristic purpose and is in fact inextricably bound up in discourses of tourism. That is to say, travel discourse often collapses into tourist discourse. The inherent discursive tensions point to a need for a more expansive definition of blogs.

The third chapter examines the extent to which blogs hosted on travel-specific web hosts, which are sponsored by tourism advertising, can be said to give a sense of who the author is. At least some of the content in these blogs, depending on the service of choice, comes from the web host and the advertising sponsor. The three web hosts selected for this analysis are *Travelpod*, *Travelblog*, and *Bootsnall*. Here the discourse of travel encapsulated in blog entries forms the basis for advertisements generated by programs such as Google's AdSense. The chapter also illustrates how authors rely on tourist discourse to authenticate their narratives of travel and the self as traveller. It argues that the tensions between travel and tourist

discourses can in fact complicate authorship, authorial identity, authorial voice, and the positioning of the blog. The aim here is to demonstrate the hybridity of the travel blog and secondly to suggest a broader interpretation of authorship with respect to blogs found on travel-specific web hosts sponsored by advertising.

Chapter Four discusses the self-presentational aspects of independently hosted travel blogs. As in the previous chapter, the idea that a blog gives a sense of its author is examined here, but with significantly different results. In general, the travel bloggers studied in Chapter Four are keen to present themselves as travellers and label themselves as adventurers, explorers, and nomads. In these blogs, narrative techniques of both travel and tourism create the impression that the authors are authentic bloggers. The analysis suggests that discursive tensions play a significant part in this self-presentation.

Chapter Five explores the idea that a blog is a centralizing force whose content is distributed across a range of online platforms. It argues that a number of independent travel bloggers present a networked self. It applies this concept to how authors of independent travel blogs use *Facebook* and *Twitter*, and discusses how the discursive tensions between travel and tourism in these blogs extend to the *Facebook* and *Twitter* pages of the bloggers. Any consideration of blogs as being social in nature needs to account for connections and conversations they have with other platforms. This analysis also indicates the existence of a relationship between Lonely Planet, which as a guidebook publisher has associations with commercial tourism, and several independent travel bloggers. It should be noted here that Lonely Planet itself uses the idea of travel as opposed to tourism to promote its products and services. Thus the networked self-presentation has some bearing on discursive tension.

The thesis argues that visual elements in a travel blog have considerable significance and explores the role of travel-related photographs in some depth in Chapter Six. It finds that discursive tensions extend to photographs as well. Here, the meaning of a photograph and the experience it represents is negotiated in the interaction between bloggers and their audiences. The analysis demonstrates travel-related photographs have considerable bearing on the impression of the travel blogger and the places they visit. It reveals further links between bloggers and

Lonely Planet. The chapter also discusses how tagging influences the meaning of these photographs. It suggests that there cannot be a single fixed meaning for a photograph or the destination it represents.

The seventh chapter concludes the argument. It outlines the particular challenges to defining travel blogs and suggests some key factors that must be taken into consideration while attempting to do so. It also suggests that technology has some bearing on how the self is presented in these texts. It goes on to collate various findings on the relationship between Lonely Planet and those who create travel-related content and considers the implications this may have. The thesis ends with a summary of the different ways in which travel blogs negotiate the tensions between the discourses of travel and tourism.

Tracing Discourse in *Tony Wheeler's Blog*

Few guidebook publishers' websites host a recognizable travel blog. The publishers of the Rough Guides series provide forums for travel communities, in the form of pages on *Facebook* and *Twitter* but prefer not to host blogs. The *Frommers* website does host *Arthur Frommer's Blog*, which it presents as a text written by the founder of the organization. The blog focuses on the travel industry and for the most part publicizes the best travel deals available. While the blog is mainly concerned with travel-related issues, it is not a narrative of the travels of Arthur Frommer and cannot in this sense be called a travel blog. However, *Tony Wheeler's Blog*, hosted on *Lonely Planet*, describes the travels of the organization's founder, Tony Wheeler. *Lonely Planet* is an iconic name in the tourism industry and its guidebooks are perceived as a "definitive information source" that is indispensable to many travellers (Hanlan and Kelly 169). As a guidebook publisher, *Lonely Planet* has a strong association with the discourse of tourism, and yet it also promotes the idea of independent and adventurous travel in order to promote itself. In light of these issues, this chapter takes a case-study approach and examines *Tony Wheeler's Blog* as an example of a guidebook publisher's travel blog in order to shed light on the tensions between discourses of travel and tourism and consider how these are negotiated.

In his analysis of the Kerry-Edwards campaign blog, Robert Glenn Howard observes that labelling a website a blog creates certain expectations in its audience (208). Similarly, the "blog" in the title of *Tony Wheeler's Blog* implies that the text has certain intrinsic qualities, some of which are evident while others are not. This has implications for travel blogs since previous studies of this form, which show that both researchers and potential tourists use blogs as a credible source of information, rarely consider the discursive qualities suggested by the term "travel blog" (Akehurst; Carson; Schmallegger and Carson; Wenger). The technical definitions outlined in the previous chapter indicate that blogs have certain characteristic formal features. This chapter applies these definitions to *Tony Wheeler's Blog*, in order to demonstrate whether the text answers the description of a blog.

Some tourism researchers emphasize the formal features in their description of travel blogs. For example, Wenger includes features such as layout and visual

elements in her definition. Others like Pühringer and Taylor find that travel blogs are online diaries consisting of individual entries on travel-related themes, hosted on “provider sites” that are “tourism specific” (129). For the most part, however, researchers refer to travel blogs as blogs like any other, but with travel as a central theme. For example, Bosangit et al. turn to Herring et al.’s description of blogs as consisting of dated entries arranged in reverse-chronological order. This suggests that any attempt to understand what a travel blog is must begin with a definition of what a blog is.

A comparison of the various definitions of blogs suggests that the typical blog consists of regularly updated, reverse-chronological posts that are often topical, offering personal anecdotes or commentary. These entries are accompanied by hyperlinks and are open to comments or responses by readers. Most of these definitions focus on technical aspects of the blog as a narrative rather than the content. They imply that a blog is defined by its formal elements. This indicates that any website titled “blog” or “travel blog” must contain these elements, and therefore, so must *Tony Wheeler’s Blog*.

Howard notes that a blog also becomes a site of negotiation for various conflicting discourses. Yet, previous analyses of the content of travel blogs often pertain to consumer research and destination marketing and overlook the possibility of discursive tensions existing within travel blogs (Crotts, Mason and Davis; Pühringer and Taylor; Wenger). This chapter explores the tensions between the discourses of travel and tourism in these blogs. These discourses have some bearing on the presentation of the text as a blog and its author as an authentic blogger. However, as *Tony Wheeler’s Blog* negotiates these discursive tensions, it takes on certain aspects of a blog while omitting or only imitating others.

As mentioned earlier, blogs can be described as heteroglossic and polyphonic texts. Consequently, *Tony Wheeler’s Blog* brings with its very title the suggestion that it is heteroglossic. Bakhtin observes that a heteroglossic text will not only contain various discourses, but also “incorporated genres” (*Dialogic Imagination* 320). This may explain how narrative techniques associated with other forms of travel-related communication, such as guidebooks or travel books, may find their way into this text. This would also account for the presence of discourses of both

travel and tourism, amongst other discourses in the text. Accordingly, this chapter examines narrative techniques of various posts to determine the extent to which this text is heteroglossic and polyphonic and considers whether these qualities alone can define it as a blog.

In summary, the purpose of this chapter is threefold. Firstly, it considers the extent to which *Tony Wheeler's Blog* answers technical definitions of blogs and whether it can be said to meet the expectations readers may have of a text that titles itself as a blog. Secondly, it analyses how various narrative techniques in this text create the impression that the author is an authentic blogger and a traveller rather than a promoter of tourism. Thirdly, it examines the discourses of travel and tourism within the text in order to determine how this text negotiates the tensions between these discourses.

The Trappings of a Travel Blog

At first glance, *Tony Wheeler's Blog* is the quintessential travel blog, with reverse chronological posts on travel-related themes, accompanied by hyperlinks, photographs, and an author profile. However, a closer analysis reveals that the text wears the shell of a blog, providing the reader with what they expect to see, at least on a superficial level. The earliest entry in *Tony Wheeler's Blog* is dated 25 March 1994. The date is significant given that the mid-1990s are widely accepted as the period when the earliest blogs were first published (Jones; Rettberg *Blogging*; Rosenberg). The entry itself is prefaced by a note from Wheeler, which begins, "In 1994 I drove coast-to-coast across the USA (and back again) in an ancient Cadillac and posted a daily blog as we went along."

This preface fails to state, however, that the original diary was written for a webzine, a fact only mentioned in the author's book about Lonely Planet where he writes, "Today it would be called a blog" (Wheeler and Wheeler 304). This identification with early blogs is reiterated elsewhere in the blog where he writes, "These days everybody's doing one, but I reckon I did one of the first travel blogs" ("Travel Blogs"). This implies that while it was not originally conceived as one, *Tony Wheeler's Blog* uses the "blog" title to associate itself with the larger body of discourse that is the blogosphere. Such a title also positions the text as a personal narrative.

Also significant is the unexplained absence of entries between July 1994 and February 2005. The title of “blog” implies that the website should have regularly updated posts, but this narrative has a significant gap. It is also difficult to verify when the first post appeared, or determine what happened in the intervening years. In short, the text seems to wear the trappings of a blog with the suggestion that it is as old as the first blogs, and that it was purposely written as a blog.

An analysis of subsequent pages in Wheeler’s blog reveals that the text may resemble a blog in appearance, but not necessarily in content. This is particularly true of the links that are listed alongside the entries. Blogs usually provide hyperlinks to other blogs, older entries, or to an email address (Serfaty; Sorapure; Rettberg *Blogging*). For Madeleine Sorapure linking, both within the blog and to similar blogs, is an important feature that creates “meaningful connections” and “conceptual transitions” (14). Links to other similar blogs are usually listed in a blogroll. Such linking results in the creation of a network of blogs with topical affinity, what Lovink describes as the “enclave culture of blogs” (252). While it is not clear whether such reciprocal linking is mandatory for a text to be considered a blog, it is generally assumed that these links are the author’s choice, and are external. Furthermore, such networking emphasises the social nature of blogging. *Tony Wheeler’s Blog* does not link to other blogs, nor does it offer an email address. “My Lists,” a list of links that appears in a column along the right-hand margin, consists largely of links to older entries. The format, then, is structurally reminiscent of the blogroll, but the “blog” does not participate in the “enclave culture,” or permit feedback via an email address.

Other links that give the text a blog-like structure include a link to Tony Wheeler’s profile in the top left-hand corner, “Blog Categories” and an invitation to “Subscribe to This Blog.” This indicates that the text goes through the motions of being a blog, adopting certain features while discarding others, particularly those that support interactivity with users or other bloggers. So, while the text appears to participate in the “enclave culture,” readers expecting to find links to similar blogs will be disappointed.

Sorapure observes that most blogs encourage feedback through links and comment boxes. For her, such interactive features point to the social nature of the blog. In fact, blogs are often discussed as social or conversational media, implying

that bloggers are part of and engage with a community of authors and readers (Finin et al.; Scoble and Israel; Sorapure). For Lars Andreasen, blogs become heteroglossic when readers post comments, while the same feature makes a blog polyphonic for Viviane Serfaty. The comments feature is therefore a structural element that supports the existence of heteroglossia and polyphony in the blog. However, the comment box is noticeably absent in *Tony Wheeler's Blog*.

That the comments feature is missing is particularly significant, as this is considered a “standard feature of the typical blog” (Rosenberg 149). Howard sees the comments section as a “participatory feature” and suggests that readers expect to be allowed to respond, when they see a website titled ‘blog’ (197). Indeed, comments enhance a blog’s authenticity (Finin; Howard; Scoble; Sorapure). Such views are endorsed by bloggers, such as Laurel Papworth, who criticises marketing expert Seth Godin’s refusal to allow comments on his blog. This has generated a lengthy debate in her blog’s comments section, where a number of respondents insist that comments are a definitive feature of the blog that signal interactivity and engagement. The absence of comments limits self-presentation opportunities for the blogger through such interactivity, and in this case reinforces the corporate voice of Lonely Planet.

In *Tony Wheeler's Blog* the absence of the comments feature means that the text falls short of being “standard” or “participatory.” While the title positions the text as a personal blog, the exclusion of comments, its lack of engagement with readers undermines this impression. In view of Andreasen and Serfaty’s arguments that readers’ comments make the blog heteroglossic and polyphonic, it appears that some of these qualities are lost as well. As there is no discussion of the views expressed in each entry, the narrative on the whole becomes authoritarian and impersonal, in the manner of a touristic text, in addressing its audience. Therefore, such flaws in the mask that *Tony Wheeler's Blog* wears are perhaps best understood through a study of the travel and tourist discourses in the text.

Nothing Personal

The ‘silencing’ of feedback is a characteristic of tourist discourse, which is essentially monologic, unidirectional, an authoritarian (Dann *Tourism* 62-67). The language of tourism, according to Dann, treats the addressee as being less experienced, asexual, ageless, and of indistinct socio-economic status. He argues that

responses to tourist discourse are as rare as comments from a congregation listening to a sermon. These qualities are antithetical to those associated with blogs. In its omission of the comments section, *Tony Wheeler's Blog* appears to support the authoritarian voice of tourist discourse. Not only does the lack of feedback ensure that the discourse remains unidirectional, it also effectively prevents the audience from undermining the author's status as an expert. The authoritarian tone creeps into the text of some entries as well, reflecting the language of the guidebook. Take, for example, the first paragraph of an entry on New York:

It hardly seems the name for a glamorous destination, but in New York in 2009 you can hardly get more hip than the Meat Packing District. Sandwiched between Chelsea and Greenwich Village on Manhattan's Lower West Side as the old meat slaughterhouses shifted out they were replaced by fashion (you'll find Stella McCartney and Alexander McQueen on West 14th), restaurants and very recently two new attractions – the High Line and the *Standard Hotel* (“New York”).

Another entry titled “Ljubljana” begins in a chatty first-person voice, but suddenly breaks into guidebook style direction: “Leave the square, walk a short distance up Wolfova ulica and you'll find a terracotta figure of a woman....” The authoritarian voice of the tour guide is noticeable. Furthermore, such imperative statements directed at an implied “you” emphasise the unidirectional nature of tourist discourse.

Another distinguishing feature of tourist discourse is the ambiguity of the author's identity or an indistinct authorial voice (Dann *Tourism*; M. Robinson). This is a contrast to the blog, which is often seen as a personal narrative that has the distinctive stamp of its author's voice and personality (Kitzmann; Rettberg *Blogging*; Serfaty; Sorapure). It can be argued that in a text titled *Tony Wheeler's Blog*, the identity of the author is quite clear. However, the individual entries themselves often tend to be impersonal, despite the title's suggestion that this is Tony Wheeler's personal narrative. In the New York entry discussed above, the word “I” appears only once in the entire text, and twice in the captions accompanying the photographs.

It is interesting to note, however, that Tony Wheeler's profile photograph (Fig. 1), appearing in the top right-hand corner of every page (as it would in a blog) does introduce a personal touch to each entry. Yet, this is offset by the Lonely Planet logo, placed in the left-hand corner. This is, after all, the brand name of a guidebook publisher, and is associated with the corporation rather than the individual. Guidebooks are tourist paraphernalia, and as Butcher notes, Lonely Planet guidebooks have commercialized travel to the point of "turning traveller heaven into tourist hell" (45). Thus, the banner over every web page becomes a visual representation of the tensions between the presentation of Tony Wheeler as a traveller and the blog as a personal narrative, and the presentation of Tony Wheeler as a tourism promoter and the text as an extension of the commercial discourse that is generally associated with Lonely Planet as a tourism organization.



Figure 1: A screenshot of the title banner and profile picture in *Tony Wheeler's Blog*.

The "sender identification" that Dann finds missing in tourist discourse is also absent in most of the accompanying photographs. These tend to resemble postcards rather than personal travel photographs since they rarely show Wheeler or his wife, who is often his travel companion. Of the eight entries for October 2009, only one has a photograph of the author, taken from a distance. Wheeler's presence in a photograph does not necessarily associate the image with travel discourse. It can be argued that a photograph of an individual posed against the backdrop of an iconic sight is touristic (Robinson and Picard 16). Conversely, if the author's absence makes the photographs impersonal, this alone does not make them touristic. However, the images in this text are usually of sights that are unique to a travel

destination – taxi cabs and the London Eye in posts on London, for example. This is a capturing of signs, itself a touristic practice (Urry 129). Also, the studied composition of many of the photographs suggests a professional touch, more in keeping with promotional tourist photography than an amateur effort.

Tourist photography has certain distinct qualities. Urry, for example, notes that tourist photographs are usually idealized, positive images (129). This view is echoed in Dann's conclusion that most touristic communication is characterised by "euphoria" and generally excludes anything negative (*Tourism* 65). This is often true of the images in *Tony Wheeler's Blog*. The photographs for October 2009 are mainly positive, even artistic, images of various tourist destinations and icons such as the London Eye ("Big Wheels - London, Singapore, Melbourne"). The November entries are filled with photographs of statues in various Slovenian cities. On the whole, such images celebrate the popular and positive sights of a destination.

Also euphoric is the language of some of the entries. "Trieste," for example, describes "the finest town square," "impressive buildings" and "elegant statuary" ("Trieste"). Such positive descriptions tend to be impersonal. In conjunction with photographs that depict iconic sights at tourist destinations, such entries make for a text that reads very much like a guidebook in narrative style. Again, as readers are not allowed to comment on these photographs, there is no discussion of the experience they represent. The photographs are closed to interpretation, and are in this sense an authoritarian description of the destination. There is a touristic focus on place rather than personal experience. So, the title *Tony Wheeler's Blog* does not necessarily meet the expectation that it is a personal text or a personal narrative about Tony Wheeler.

In comparison, euphoria is absent in the entry on Ryanair that notes the flaws of its services ("Ryanair - and the Romance of Air Travel"). The entry is almost completely in first-person voice. Its focus on the self and the difficulties endured while travelling with Ryanair presents this as a travel experience as opposed to a touristic one. Such entries authenticate the author's, and by extension Lonely Planet's, association with travel. The personal tone of this entry is a contrast to the idealized descriptions of destinations in other entries. There is a resulting discursive tension between different posts in this text.

A Turn of Phrase

The slogan “therefore I travel,” on the bottom right-hand corner of every page of *Tony Wheeler’s Blog*, is a clear statement that the author presents himself as a traveller, and that the text employs travel discourse. It is the author’s voice that distinguishes tourist discourse from travel discourse (M. Robinson 309). This is made clear in entries such as “Ljubljana.” The guidebook-style extract quoted earlier is preceded by this paragraph: “A bus took me to Ljubljana a remarkably pretty little city where I did all the Slovenian tourist things including climbing up (well I took the funicular up, I climbed down) to the castle overlooking Prešernov Trg, the town’s main square.”

Here then, is the language of travel. Although the author admits to doing “tourist things,” the phrase is dismissive of tourist activities, and it is the traveller identity that is emphasised in the solitary, first-person “I.” Fellow travellers or tourists are conspicuously absent in the bus, the funicular and at the castle. The impression created is one of independence and solitude. This focus on the self and the conversational tone of this paragraph directly contrasts with the impersonal and imperative voice of tourist discourse employed in subsequent paragraphs of the entry.

Sometimes the change from a travel style to a touristic one or vice versa occurs within a paragraph. For example, “Trieste,” which reads almost entirely like a guidebook entry, has a final paragraph that begins in tourist discourse but ends in the language of the solitary traveller: “There are plenty of churches, museums, bits of Roman ruins and a solid old castle to distract you. The imposing Serbian Orthodox Chiesa di Santo Spiridione has colourful mosaics. I was passing through Trieste on my way to a literary festival in the town of Udine” (Wheeler “Trieste”).

The author occupies several positions within these few sentences. He is both tour guide and traveller. The entry lists the notable features of a church in Trieste in much the same way as a guidebook would. While the indication that the author was only “passing through” suggests a superficial exploration of all that the destination offers, the fact that he is on the way to a literary festival nevertheless presents him as a person of some discernment. It also strengthens his self-presentation as a blogger and a writer. In other instances, an entire entry may read like travel discourse. The

“Ryanair” entry is written entirely in the first-person, describing an apparently solitary flight with no mention of fellow travellers. This is Wheeler at his most personal, and for once the guidebook-style advice directed at an anonymous, implied “you” is absent. These variations make for a sort of ebb and flow between the discourses of travel and tourism.

Plotting the Picaresque

Academics often study travel writing in order to identify the specific features of travel discourse (Dann “Writing out Tourist”; Galani-Moutafi). A definitive trait of travel writing is its picaresque style (Fussell 207; Holland and Huggan 8; Mewshaw 5; Zilcosky 7). The picaresque narrative usually has travel as a central theme and is described as having a panoramic and episodic structure, a first-person point of view, a solitary protagonist in an “inconstant world,” many characters, and themes such as an independent traveller who is free of “the confines of ordinary social life” (Blaber and Gilman 9-26; Wicks 240-249). Some of these traits, such as the solitary traveller persona and first person narration are already regarded as markers of travel discourse (Dann “Writing out Tourist”).

Picaresque episodes are present in many notable travel narratives that are written in a fragmented style (Burton 237; B. Cohen; Holland and Huggan 7). This resembles the sequential entries of the blog. Although blog entries are in reverse chronological order, each of these is usually a closed episode. The panoramic nature of the picaresque narrative also resonates with the blog form. The text of a blog is a work in progress, containing numerous entries, and is in this sense panoramic. In addition to this, the first-person point of view central to picaresque travel writing fits in well with the personal nature of the blog narrative and reinforces the notion that the text is a blog. As a narrative, *Tony Wheeler’s Blog* is far from complete. With entries spanning over five years and many destinations, it can easily be described as panoramic. In addition to this, each entry reads like a complete episode of the journey. The first-person point of view, as already noted earlier, finds expression either partially or fully in various entries. Thus, the picaresque elements of travel discourse accentuate aspects of blog discourse and add credibility to the title.

Descriptions of the resilience of the picaresque traveller are also markers of travel discourse. The picaresque hero describes a struggle to survive a “chaotic

landscape” (Wicks 245). Similarly, the real traveller, writes Galani-Moutafi, is depicted as someone who “stoically endures uncomfortable and unpleasant experiences” (220). These travel experiences are associated with adventure, independence, exploration and going off the beaten path (McCabe 97; O'Reilly 156). Therefore, travel discourse is most emphasised in *Tony Wheeler's Blog* when the author adopts the persona of the traveller who forsakes the mundane to “investigate new travel possibilities or simply to experience something new” (Wheeler “My Profile”).

The presentation of self as a resilient traveller is played out in different ways in the narrative. At times it is the choice of destination that marks the experience as travel. One such example is a trip to Afghanistan in 2006, filled with long journeys to various locations within a country that the author describes as “definitely unsafe, although nothing like Iraq” (Wheeler “Afghanistan Practicalities”). Sometimes, it is a tale of survival limited to a single paragraph of an entry such as the description of a night out in Haiti:

Even our new Haiti edition will warn that you shouldn't venture out on the streets after dark. So it's the early hours, there's nobody out on the streets and no transport to be found. Eventually I got some guys to give me a ride to Champs de Mars, the main square, which I thought might have a little more activity, and from there I managed to get a *moto-taxi*, a motorcycle rider, to take me back to Pétionville....
(Wheeler “Port-Au-Prince”)

Here, travel discourse is set against the warning of authoritarian tourist discourse. There is an element of promotion as well in the mention of the “new Haiti edition.” Yet, it is in disregarding the advice of the guidebook and being out after dark that the adventurous and resilient solitary traveller comes to the fore. The independent traveller plans his own journeys, and this too requires resilience, especially in entries such as “Ryanair” and “Ugly Cars – I Rented One” where air travel and car hire become experiences that are fraught with difficulties. Both entries are written in first-person singular, further emphasising the solitary and independent nature of travel. Once again these examples show that the degree of travel or tourist discourse varies across the entries. While playing the traveller, the author employs

travel discourse and this counters instances of touristic language in the narrative. Travel discourse has a two-fold role here. The first-person voice describing travel experiences is a perfect foil for tourist discourse. Also, by bringing in the personal anecdote that is often characteristic of blogs, it validates the title of “blog.”

The Picture of Travel

Although it is possible to trace the discourse of travel in the entries, it is far more difficult to locate it in the accompanying photographs. Most contemporary research on tourist photography is based on John Urry’s theory that tourists reproduce symbols of tourism seen in brochures and other travel media, thus creating a “circle of representation” (Caton and Santos; Garrod; Jenkins; Urry). Jenkins’ study of backpackers, who often identify themselves as travellers, concludes that photographs they take are no different from those present in tourist discourse (Jenkins; O’Reilly). This not only confirms Urry’s theory, but also suggests that in some cases at least there can be no distinction between travel and tourist discourses in photography.

Photographs in *Tony Wheeler’s Blog* often confirm Urry’s theory. The entries on Slovenia contain photographs of statues and heritage monuments. Dilley points out that such images are characteristic of tourist brochures for European destinations (Jenkins 313). Similar is the case with photographs of a trip to London in October 2009. In “Big Wheels” a photograph of London Eye, shot from inside the ferris wheel, shows an aerial view of London. It is rather telling that the photograph includes Big Ben and the Houses of Parliament – a popular tourist attraction associated with the destination.

It could perhaps be argued that the angle from which this is shot is unusual, and that it signals the need to break away from the vicious circle of reproducing tourist images to add the personal touch of blog discourse or travel discourse. In fact, Garrod’s comparative study of postcards and tourist photographs reveals subtle differences between the two, suggesting this is possible. However, there needs to be more research on the photographic techniques employed by travellers to substantiate this view.

In general, however, the photographs in *Tony Wheeler's Blog* are touristic. A subsequent entry carries a photograph of the iconic London cab. Here the reflection of tourist discourse is offset by the first-person entry placed directly below the photograph: "Recently I spent '60' for taxis between airport and city in these three cities, US\$60 in New York, A\$60 (about US\$55) in Melbourne and £60 (about US\$97) in London. What did I get for my money?" (Wheeler "Airport Transport"). Thus, visual tourist discourse is set against the personal tone of travel discourse, particularly the voice of a traveller enduring the chaos of differing taxi fares.

The choice of image is also interesting. This photograph of the taxis also appears on the bottom half of the cover of the Lonely Planet *London: City Guide* (the top half of the guide carries a picture of Big Ben). The guidebook image has been sourced from Getty Images, but no credits appear under the online photograph, which is a cropped version of the same image. The book was published before the entry, suggesting that the photograph may have been deliberately included here for promotional purposes. For a reader who is aware of the previous contexts of this image, the inclusion of such a photograph in the post makes it touristic. It also destroys the impression that author is trying to create of the self as a genuine traveller and blogger. As the title *Tony Wheeler's Blog* conveys the impression that the text is a personal, original narrative by Tony Wheeler, such content weakens its credibility. Tourist discourse here is being repurposed and presented as travel discourse and promotional material is being presented as a personal text.

The Truth of the Title

In some aspects, the title of "blog" does ring true for *Tony Wheeler's Blog*, for example, in the sense of the blog as a heteroglossic text. The very existence of different speech styles – the personal tone of the blogger/traveller, the impersonal style of the tourist guidebook, and the picaresque style of travel writing – suggests that the text has some degree of heteroglossia. To some extent, the text also corresponds with Hevern's view of the blog as an expression of a polyphonic self (332). According to Hevern, self-identity is constructed through the use of multiple voices that occupy various, sometimes oppositional positions (330). It is possible to identify such conflicting aspects to the self-presentation in *Tony Wheeler's Blog* in the authoritarian voice of the tour guide and the more personal voice of the traveller.

As these often imbue the text with what Bakhtin would describe as the simultaneous co-existence of a “plurality of unmerged consciousnesses,” the narrative often seems polyphonic (*Dostoevsky's Poetics* 9).

The text certainly fulfils Bakhtin’s condition that there should be an “interaction and interdependence” of opposing voices in a polyphonic text (*Dostoevsky's Poetics* 36). The personal and picaresque style of travel discourse offers a distinct contrast to the impersonal language of tourism. Similarly, the impersonal voice of the tour guide often contrasts that of the personal descriptions of the traveller. The discourses of travel and tourism that are indicated by these voices are interdependent. Wheeler’s presentation of the self as a traveller validates his position as a blogger but it also serves to authenticate Lonely Planet’s promotion of tourism.

The second condition of polyphony is that the “consciousnesses” present in a text must be equally authoritative. For Bakhtin, this does not result in a cancelling out of opposite views, but ensures that there is no monologic resolution in which voice emerges dominant (*Dostoevsky's Poetics* 18-26). It can be argued that such polyphony cannot exist in *Tony Wheeler’s Blog* as its often authoritarian tone, some of which is due to its lack of a social nature does not allow for a real interaction of different voices. This means the personal voice of the blogger cannot be fully realized as valid or authoritative until the text incorporates more of the formal elements of a blog or participate in the discourse of blogging. It should be noted, however, that Bakhtin’s concept of polyphony was based on completed novels, whereas *Tony Wheeler’s Blog* is at present a living text. It is possible that the text will eventually evolve, giving greater independence and validity to the personal voice of the blogger and inviting greater participation from its audience. It is equally possible that subsequent entries may give precedence to tourist discourse. Therefore, the narrative has some polyphony and has the potential to be more or less polyphonic.

While heteroglossia and polyphony offer a means of understanding the discursive tensions in *Tony Wheeler’s Blog*, their presence does not validate the title. Certainly, some features of the narrative give it the appearance of a blog. However, a closer look at the content suggests that the text is a blog in name only. The presence

of discourses of both travel and tourism in *Tony Wheeler's Blog* makes this a heteroglossic text. The authoritarian voice of tourism however does not allow a full realization of the text's potential to be a personal narrative and a space for social interaction, both of which are intrinsic qualities of a blog. It also restricts presentation of the self as a traveller. However, the text may in time incorporate more of elements of the blog and become a more credible execution of the format.

No single definition of the blog format is truly applicable to *Tony Wheeler's Blog*. That is to say, going by generic definitions the text is not a blog. There needs to be a more expansive definition for what constitutes a guidebook publisher's blog. A more flexible definition may allow for an inclusion of texts such as *Arthur Frommer's Blog* under this category. Conversely, it can be argued that it is this website that is at fault and that guidebook publishers need to be more attentive to what audiences expect of a travel blog.

Tony Wheeler's Blog is nevertheless clearly self-presentational in its intent to present the author as a credible blogger and a genuine traveller. Various elements in the text act as cues to signal to the reader that the author is recounting a travel experience than a touristic one, that he is something of an adventurer and an explorer, and a serious writer. However, the success of this self-presentation is doubtful when a discerning reader or other bloggers can see through the superficial structure of the text. Given the limitations of this textual analysis, it is difficult to assess how audiences respond to this text.

Finally, it should be noted that Lonely Planet presents itself as an organization associated with travel, committed to discovering "little known facts" and whose authors get to the "heart of the place" ("Our Authors") they are in. Lonely Planet guidebooks recommend possible itineraries for potential tourists. Nevertheless, the author of *Tony Wheeler's Blog* presents himself as a traveller and the blog is presented as a personal narrative of travel experiences despite its commercial and promotional undertones. Thus, Lonely Planet displays an awareness of the negative associations of tourism and skilfully turns travel discourse and an imitation of the blog format to the promotion of destinations via *Tony Wheeler's Blog*.

Whose Blog Is It Anyway?

Seeking the Author in the Formal Features of Travel Blogs

A large number of travel blogs are hosted on travel-specific websites sponsored by third-party advertising. In general, studies of such blogs use ownership or manner of publication as a criterion for differentiating them from those created and managed by tourism organizations or individuals who host their travel blogs independently (Pühringer and Taylor; Schmallegger and Carson 74; Wenger). Such travel blogs are analysed mainly to better understand the tourists who author them. Nevertheless, while such analyses argue that a travel blogger's identity as a consumer of tourism lends credibility to the content, they stop short of examining how blog features contribute to the author's online identity, how these web hosts influence the different positions that an author occupies in the text – traveller or tourist, travel expert or tour guide – or the part played by discourses of travel and tourism. Against this background, this chapter explores the concept that blogs are personal in nature, and that they give some idea of the author's self, with respect to travel blogs hosted on travel-specific web hosts.

The issue of authorship in online narratives such as blogs has been widely discussed with arguments both for and against the centrality of the author. For some, texts such as blogs signal the “death of the author”, since features such as the comments box allow readers to engage with the author, thus undermining authorial control over the text (Barthes *Image, Music, Text* qtd. in Landow). For others, blogs celebrate authorship. Chris Chesher, for example, proposes that the features of a blog facilitate author identification (2005). Such discussions often focus on how the formal features of online texts indicate the self presented by the author and situate the text. Certain features of web pages such as banners, images, and links, are paratextual on-site elements that position the text in terms of genre and reader expectations (Stewart). Similarly, the content and formal features of blogs are generally regarded as self-presentational elements that offer some sense of who the author is (Chesher; Nardi et al. 42; Schmidt 1415).

In the case of personal blogs, it is usually the blogger who selects and provides paratextual elements such as links to other blogs in the form of a list known as a blogroll (Lomborg). Such linking leads to a “cementing of certain chosen connections” and situates the blog in a network of similar online texts (Lovink; Syverson 433). Thus some formal features of personal blogs act as paratexts that situate the text, and provide a sense of who the author is. Although paratexts such as titles, title bars⁴, and banners are rarely the focus of academic debates on how formal elements contribute to an impression of the authors, their role must be considered in discussions of the presentation of the author as a travel blogger and the text as a travel blog. This is particularly significant when paratextual elements produced by web hosts or commercial sponsors frame posts and photographs created by travel bloggers.

Viviane Serfaty, who also supports the idea of the centrality of the author in blogs, observes that while the features of a blog may make it a polyphonic text where conflicting discourses interact, the author still remains in control (61). While this may be true of personal blogs, the notion of authorial control is far more complicated in travel blogs on commercially sponsored travel-specific web hosts such as *Travelblog*, *Travelpod* or *Bootsnall*. Both web host and commercial sponsors contribute to the form as well as content of blogs on these web hosts, providing such features as titles, maps, hyperlinks, blogrolls, and advertisements. However, there has been little academic interest in the implications this has for issues of authorship, the self-presentation of the author, or the heteroglossia and polyphony of the blog. This chapter examines travel blogs on *Travelblog*, *Travelpod*, and *Bootsnall* in order to determine the extent to which different elements present various aspects of the online self of the bloggers. It also identifies the contribution of web hosts and commercial sponsors to the discourses of travel and tourism in these texts and the implication this has for authorship.

Travel blogs on these web hosts are mainly personal in that they generally comprise first-person voice posts describing the bloggers’ travel experiences. The web hosts use these posts as a foundation for producing commercial content, in the form of advertisements and links to other travel-related information, which

⁴ The title bar usually appears at the top of the browser window in the form of a coloured bar that displays the title of the web page being viewed.

accompanies each post. Bloggers, in their turn, rely on web hosts to provide space for their personal travel narratives. There is, therefore, an interdependence of the often travel-themed content provided by bloggers and the generally touristic commercial content from both the web host and third-party advertisers. This makes it difficult to determine the extent of these bloggers' authorial control over various elements of their blogs. Also, features such as advertisements contribute to the heteroglossia and polyphony of the text, which mixing of discourses can potentially blur personal and commercial interests (Howard 194). As a consequence, some features of travel blogs found on such hosting sites may in fact obscure rather than define authorial identity and the positioning of the blog as either a commercial text promoting a destination or as a personal narrative describing a travel experience.

It should be recognised here that while travel blogs may also be hosted, free of advertising, on blog hosting sites such as *Blogger* or *Wordpress*, this research project focuses on those found on travel-specific web hosting services driven by advertising sponsorship. The chapter analyses web-host-provided paratextual elements, third-party advertising, and user-generated text in order to determine the contribution of these formal features to the presentation of these travel bloggers. It also examines the various narrative techniques incorporated in the blog in order to understand the implications of the underlying discursive tensions for the presentation of the author and the positioning of the text.

A Twist in the Title

The idea of paratext was originally used by Gérard Genette with respect to printed books (1997). According to Genette, the paratext includes both "external presentation" elements (peritext), such as the title and the name of the author that are located around the text, as well as "distanced elements," other related texts (epitext). This concept has been adapted, in film and television studies in order to analyse trailers, spin-offs and fan-created texts. Some paratexts are seen to guide viewers' selection, expectation, and interpretation of texts, while others change their initial understanding of the text over time (Gray). In other words, they draw upon and elaborate on existing themes. Therefore, paratexts play a significant role in the positioning of a text.

The concept of paratext has also been useful in the study of online texts. Gavin Stewart's analysis of the paratextual elements of the *Inanimate Alice* website indicates that some formal elements of a web page are in fact paratextual on-site elements that contribute to a reader's understanding of the content and positioning of the text. Applying Genette's framework to web pages, Stewart lists banners, images, links, and the general layout of the web page as paratextual elements. These features are present in most web pages, including blogs. In travel blogs on travel-specific hosting sites, paratextual elements produced by the web host include banners, title bar text, and URLs (Uniform Resource Locators). This suggests that the web host makes a significant contribution to the positioning of the text and thus influences a visitor's evaluation of the narrative. Also paratextual are the bloggers' user names and titles for the blog and its entries.

The principal contribution of the web host is the template of the blog itself – the general layout of elements and their appearance. These are part of the peritext that frames the blog entries. The title and the author's name, also described by Genette as paratext, appear in the form of a title bar, URL, or user name over every blog post. It is reasonable to assume that a text owes positioning to its title and URL and that the user name as it appears in the text must identify the author. However, in these travel blog hosting sites, the content provided by the web host often competes for attention alongside titles created by the bloggers in a manner that can influence readers' impressions of the text and its author. Also, the corporate identity of the web host usually looms large in the form of logos and banners, at times superseding the identity of the blogger. This complicates both authorial identification and authorial control. Therefore, discussions of textual or authorial identity must begin with an examination of the titles and banners in these blogs.

At the time of writing, *Darryl and Sarah – Wallaby Wanderers* was listed as a "featured" travel blog on the *Travelblog* home page, suggesting that the text enjoys some popularity ("Wallaby Wanderers"). With over 300 entries and more than 4000 photographs the contribution of the bloggers is substantial. However the paratextual banners and title bars that appear in the template provided by the web host detract from the presentation of this text as a personal narrative written by the blogger. All pages hosted on *Travelblog* carry the website's signature dark blue banner bearing its name in orange and white lettering alongside a globe motif in the top left corner. The

blogger's title for the post appears immediately under this logo, as it does on the title bar, but the URL for the page itself carries the name of the place being described in the post. For example, "A Peak too Far" (seen in Fig.1) is located by typing the URL: <http://www.travelblog.org/Oceania/Australia/Tasmania/Cradle-Mountain/blog-479978.html>("Wallaby Wanderers"). *Travelblog* differs in this respect from other blog hosts like *Blogger* and *Wordpress* that allow bloggers to use their blog title as part of the URL. The web host uses the URL to position the post as a text on Tasmania, rather than a personal travel narrative. Also, though the title bar expresses the blogger's creativity, it is the corporate identity of *Travelblog* that looms large in the banner and logo over the blogger's name.

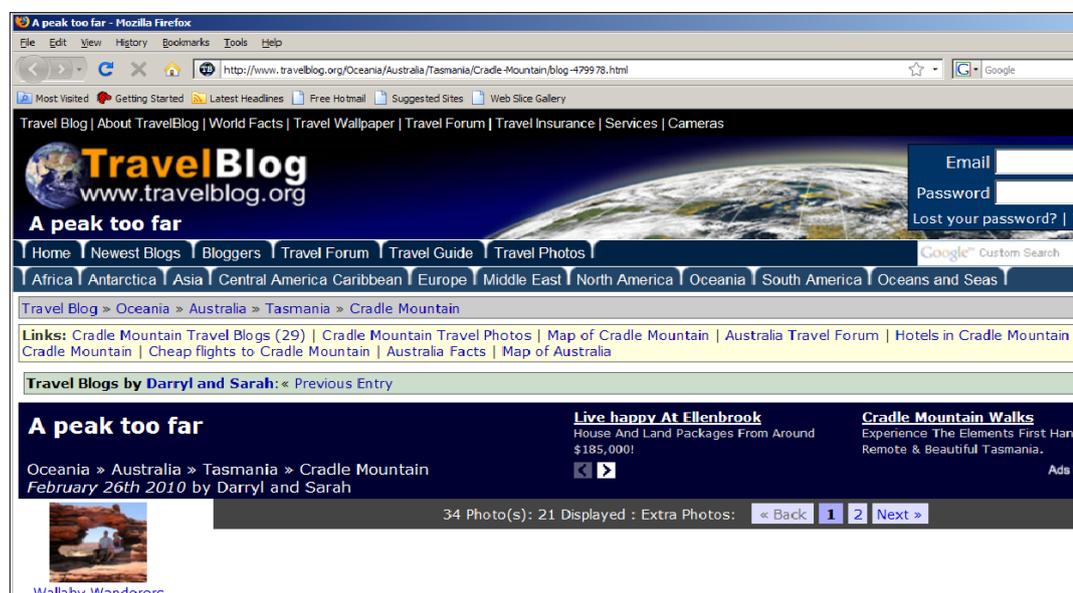


Figure 1: Title bars and banners in *Travelblog* web pages.

Blogs on *Travelpod* resemble those on *Travelblog* with respect to titles and banners but not URLs. Technotrekker's blog *Global Roaming* is listed as *Travelpod's* best travel journal. Both the blog and its author, Ross Pringle, have been featured in the media ("Put It in the Family Blog"). Here, the blogger's title for each post appears in the title bar. The web host modifies this title by adding a qualifying phrase that locates each post in terms of the destination it talks about. So a post ambiguously titled "Life on the Fringe" (seen in Fig.2) reads "Life on the Fringe – Edinburgh, United Kingdom Travel Blog" in the title bar. The web host also provides an interactive map, placed immediately above the post, which indicates the destination as well as the route taken to reach it. Thus the paratexts created by the

web host make the entire post more place-specific and locate it as a travel text on Edinburgh (Pringle). Similarly, the interactive timeline accompanying the map numbers each entry and positions it in relation to other posts on the journey. This indicates where and when a particular destination was reached not just on the journey, but in the travel narrative of the blog as a whole. Consequently, the timeline structures the narrative and gives what is presented as a spontaneous, “roaming” of the world the planned appearance of an itinerary.

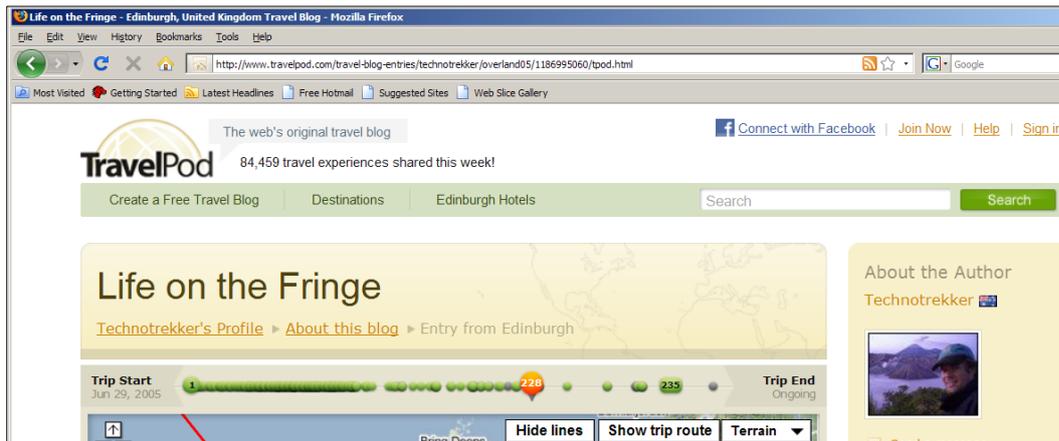


Figure 2: Title bars and banners in *Travelpod* web pages

As with *Travelblog*, the corporate logo enjoys a prominent position at the top left-hand corner of the page. The location of the logo is significant. Although readers may ignore banners, nevertheless they scan web pages beginning at the top-left quarter (Francisco-Revilla and Crow). The blogger’s name appears almost as an afterthought under the post’s title. There is, however, a thumbnail picture and a link to an “About the Author” page along the right hand margin of the page. Unlike *Travelblog*, however, the URL includes the user name “Technotrekker,” lending a clue to the blogger’s identity.

The titles of the posts discussed here associate the experiences described therein with travel as opposed to tourism. A peak that is “too far,” for example, suggests a journey that is arduous and the post does in fact describe a difficult trek. Similarly, “Life on the Fringe,” an oblique reference to the Edinburgh Fringe festival, echoes of living life on the edge. The connection, made by the web host, between “Fringe” and “Edinburgh” authenticates Pringle’s blog entry. In this particular instance, the web host’s addition of the destination name contextualizes the

title. In the absence of this context, the title would be an otherwise ambiguous phrase that associates the entry with travel. The festival itself is known for its inclusion of experimental art, and is in this sense unconventional. Also, Pringle's participation in cultural activities enhances his presentation of the self as a traveller of with refined tastes. Yet, the Fringe Festival is also a well-established event and a recognizable tourist attraction. For this reason, the festival itself may not be regarded as an experience that goes off the beaten path. Nevertheless Pringle's entry presents this as an experience associated with travel. For web hosts and their sponsors, such titles situate the destinations described as places that offer travel experiences, which in turn validates the accompanying advertisements for various travel services.

Paratextual elements of *Bootsnall* blogs present a clearer sense of the authors' self. The top blog on this website, in terms of posts, is *For Mom, Love Steve*, and the title chosen by the blogger appears without modification or qualification in the title bar. In the case of this particular blog, the URL is www.steveislost.com, indicating that the web page is now an independent website, although it continues to use the *Bootsnall* template and is accessible through the web host's home page (Nakano). The number two blog, *The Laughing Nomads* still uses the *Bootsnall* domain name, but here again the blog's title appears unaltered in the title bar, and the URL (<http://blogs.bootsnall.com/nomads/>) also reflects the blogger's choice of title (Goetz). In comparison with *Travelpod* and *Travelblog* the logo for this webhost occupies only a small corner in the top right of the web page (Fig. 3). The banner for the web page is provided by the web host, but users may choose between pictures of a pair of boots, as is the case with *For Mom, Love Steve*, or the Sydney Opera House, as seen in *Holly's Travels*.

Such banners and visual elements place greater emphasis on the concept of travel or tourism than on the corporate identity of the web host. Rather than highlighting the destination being described in the post, paratextual elements in these blogs allow a better expression of the authors' position and the themes of their narratives. The hiking boots in Nakano's blog could well feature in a number of other travel blogs on *Bootsnall* that use the same theme. However, it enhances Nakano's self-presentation as someone who is "lost" while travelling. The image creates an association with forms of independent travel such as backpacking while also

reiterating the name of the web host. This supports the web host's corporate image as a resource on travel as opposed to tourism.



Figure 3: Titles and banners in *Boots n All* blogs

Thus far, these travel blogs indicate that discussions of the role of blog features in author identification must recognize that a blog as a whole may have multiple authors in the form of a web host and a blogger, or recognize that some blog features constitute a text created by a blogger-author while others are really paratextual elements that appear courtesy of the web host-publisher. Such blogs validate Genette's theory that both author and publisher share the responsibility for authorship of elements such as titles (74). However, it is likely that these bloggers have little control over the creation of title bar text or URLs, which are probably generated by the software used by the hosting website. Regardless of whether the web host is seen as a co-author or publisher, arguments that a blog's features emphasise the author's ownership and identity need to acknowledge the possibility that some formal elements may not identify the blogger.

The multiple voices of the bloggers, the web host, and the sponsors support the existence of heteroglossia in these blogs. Here, corporate discourse of the web host and sponsors can take precedence over the personal discourse of bloggers. To a certain extent, a blogger's presentation of the self as traveller or of a travel experience is either superseded by the corporate identity of the web host or sidelined by the need to give prominence to the destination of the journey described. Ultimately, any discussion of authorial identity or control in such blogs found on hosting sites must recognize that not all elements in the text reflect aspects of the online self presented by bloggers.

The Language of Links

Going by generic definitions, links are indispensable to blogs, and in fact contribute to the impression that the text is an authentic travel blog and that the author is a credible blogger. Conversations about links in blogs usually pertain to the links list known as a blogroll, which positions the blog in a network of other blogs that share the same culture (Lovink; Serfaty 26). This blogroll often appears alongside the text entry and may be regarded as a paratext for several reasons. First, it contextualizes the blog by situating it amongst a number of other similar texts. Second, in personal blogs such as those found on *Blogger* or *Wordpress*, bloggers select their links, and present aspects of their online self through the blogroll. Yet, with travel blogs where web hosts generate the links instead of the blogger, both self-presentation and author identification becomes problematic. In addition to this, any comprehensive study of the links in such blogs must also take into account links to advertisements and other, often annotated, external and internal links also generated by the web host. Furthermore, any analysis of these links must recognise that their function in blogs on travel-specific hosting sites differs greatly from that of links in a hypertext fictional narrative such as *Inanimate Alice*. A technical feature that works as paratext on one web page may not play the same role on another.

Although posts on these travel blogs are usually accompanied by links to other blogs, these link lists are not always blogrolls in the traditional sense of a static list of links that appears alongside all posts. In *Wallaby Wanderers*, for example, a boxed-in menu of links appears over each post. The first of these is always to blog posts on the same destination, while others are to pages offering information on various travel services such as flights or accommodation. So, a post on Orange in Australia links to a page with blog posts on Orange (“Wallaby Wanderers”). Similarly, a post on Canberra in the same blog links to “Canberra Travel Blogs” (“Wallaby Wanderers”). This “blogroll” then, changes for each entry, as do the accompanying links. *Travelpod* entries are similar in this respect, with the only difference being that such links appear below the entry. Links to similar blog posts appear under an imperative heading that directs visitors to “Read about Experiences.” Such link lists indicate that these hosting sites fragment the blog, treating each entry as a separate text on a specific destination, rather than preserving the integrity of the narrative as a whole. Both *Travelblog* and *Travelpod* do allow

bloggers to nominate “favourites” or “recommend” other blogs by providing links to these from their About page, but only to those that are hosted on the same website. Only *Bootsnall* has something resembling a blogroll in a list alongside the posts titled “My Links” that includes links to both blogs and other online texts selected by the blogger.

In all three cases, the web hosts limit the networking capabilities of the blog and its author. The blog itself is not allowed to travel and to extend its content to different platforms. Networking is part of the “enclave culture” of blogs (Lovink 252). Yet these web hosts’ restriction of such networking and participation in blog culture effectively controls and limits textual identity. Blogs on *Travelblog* and *Travelpod* can behave as personal blogs and participate in the blogosphere only as far as their web hosts permit. For a reader, navigating these blogs is an experience not unlike that of a guided tour, whose guide marks out a fixed route or itinerary.

Travelblog, *Travelpod*, and *Bootsnall* also provide links to other web pages and advertisements. Directly below the corporate banner in *Wallaby Wanderers* is a menu with links to information on every continent (Fig. 1.). Each of these leads to other *Travelblog* web pages containing maps, factual descriptions of the region, and more links to other similar resources. Under this is another boxed menu of links relevant to the entry. So “A Peak too Far” is linked to similar blogs, photos, and forums as well as information on Cradle Mountain (the destination described) that includes a brief history, accommodation, and flights. In a similar fashion, *Travelpod* provides a boxed menu of links to hotel reviews, forums, photographs, and videos on Edinburgh, for Technotrekker’s “Life on the Fringe.” Both *Travelblog* and *Travelpod* entries link to pages within the same website. *Bootsnall* entries also link to similar web pages on the same website. However, there are usually a few external links as well. While bloggers may describe an experience or destination as being off the beaten path in a post, web hosts locate the same experience and indicate a path to it. In this sense, travel paves the way for tourism.

There is little presentation of the blogger’s self in *Travelpod* and *Travelblog* ‘blogrolls’. These mainly expand the post’s potential to be a resource on a specific destination. Also, this network is largely contained within the same website. In addition to this the “blogroll” and links break rather than bind the blog narrative,

making use of the episodic structure to turn it into a number of texts on various places, and indeed tries to position each entry as a stand-alone text on a particular destination. Instead of preserving and promoting the interpretation of these blogs as personal narratives, they manipulate the text to serve the web hosts' commercial ends by firmly situating each post among online texts dedicated to tourism marketing. Even *Bootsnall* with its "My Links" gives but a token nod to the blogger's identity and the text's identity as a personal narrative. Thus, the host-provided links in such blogs fail as paratexts in that they do not, to quote Syverson, "cement connections" that are personal, so giving a sense of the author, but often position these blogs among other commercial texts. This strategy serves mainly to guide readers to a point of purchase and encourage them to avail themselves of various travel-related services. As for the question of authorial control, in the case of links in these travel blogs, the web host wields the baton.

Making Sense of Ads

Blogs in *Travelblog*, *Travelpod*, and *Bootsnall* often contain banner advertisements that appear over, below, or alongside entries. These advertisements are generated by third parties. *Travelblog* and *Bootsnall* use Google AdSense, a software program that analyses the words in each blog post and places small advertisements relevant to the destination being described therein (Auletta 91). For example, "Needle in a Haystack," the *Wallaby Wanderers* post on Orange, is accompanied by advertisements placed beside the title and alongside the entry from tour operators offering services in Australia and New Zealand such as "Cradle Mountain Walks" or "Great Divide Tours." Similarly, advertisements for travel and tourism services in Guatemala appear in a little box alongside posts on the same destination in *For Mom, Love Steve*. There are no sponsored advertisements in *Global Roaming*, but this probably indicates that Technotrekker is a paying member of *Travelpod*, and that this permits him to maintain an ad-free blog. Other *Travelpod* blogs, such as *Woodsy79's Great Adventure*, do have a banner that usually has about four "Sponsored Links" promoting travel services pertaining to the destination described in the post which appears below.

Such advertising is dependent on the text generated by the blogger, suggesting that the blogger has some degree of authorial control over content

generated by the web host, however indirect or involuntary this control may be. However, it serves a commercial purpose that has nothing to do with promoting or interpreting the blog narrative, and a lot to do with selling travel-related services for the destination mentioned in the post alongside which they appear. Advertisements that focus on the place rather than the post do little for the positioning of the blog as a personal narrative. It should be noted here that these web hosts do not have complete control over such third-party advertising. Programs such as AdSense may also take a reader's interests and geographical location into account while generating advertisements. In the case of posts on obscure destinations, banner advertisements may not supplement the text at all, and may only be generated for the region, or user's geographical location. Thus an Australian visitor to a *Travelblog* post is likely to see advertising for services in that country. While this advertising can supplement the presentation of the destination, it does little for the presentation of the blogger. In fact, advertisements form a parasitic relationship with the blog posts, feeding off them in order to exist. Conversely, their very presence on the page also pays for the existence of the post itself and the online self it presents.

The touristic content provided by these travel-blog hosting sites and their sponsors generally uses narrative techniques such as an authoritarian and impersonal tone, a lack of sender identification, euphoric description, and repetition. In *Global Roaming*, short but imperative headings categorize the links under each post, directing visitors to the blog to "Read about Experiences," "Get Travel Advice," and "Check out Attractions." Also authoritarian are links to the right of each post that encourage readers to "Print this blog," "Share," or "Turn blog into book." This narrative style is more pronounced in the text of advertisements. An advertisement for Kokoda Spirit in *Wallaby Wanderers* is both imperative and euphoric: "Walk in the footsteps of heroes. One of the world's great adventures" (Howell and Howell "Wallaby Wanderers"). Advertisements in the *Bootsnall* blog entry on Guatemala echo this tone: "Great hotels in Guatemala Official site. Book online today" ("Huehuetenango" Nakano).

The language of such advertisements is largely impersonal, although the sender may be identified in the advertiser's website URL that appears in fine print. This narrative style, commonly used in guidebooks, brochures, or advertisements for the promotion of tourism, is characteristic of tourist discourse (Dann *Tourism*). This

association with forms such as guidebooks and brochures positions the blog as an informational travel text, and this may strengthen the author's reputation as an expert on travel. However, it is the voice of the web host and the sponsor and not that of the blogger that is clearly heard and identifiable here. It weakens the positioning of these travel blogs as purely personal narratives comparable to forms such as the diary by adding touristic overtones.

On the one hand, the touristic discourse represented by these advertisements sets up a tension with entries that present a destination as offering a travel experience. The promotion of hotels in Guatemala makes this a destination that is easier to access and experience for potential tourists while the same country is presented as being off the beaten path in Nakano's blog. On the other hand, there is a tension within the advertisements themselves. The Kokoda trail in New Guinea referred to in advertisements appearing in the *Wallaby Wanderers* blog is generally held to be a harsh and difficult route where many lives were lost during the Second World War. It has since been commercialised as a tourist attraction. Although the advertisers draw on this association with travel, some of the gravity of experience is lost when it is described as a "great adventure."

When considering banner advertising, it should be noted that the discursive tensions set up by the presence of such advertising and web host-generated content may not be recognised by a visitor to the blog. Discussions of advertisements become immaterial when a reader uses filters or ad-blockers that prevent their appearance in the browser. Furthermore, readers may ignore a significant proportion of the banner advertisements on a page, even if they do not physically remove these (Drèze and Hussherr). Such avoidance of advertising is not exclusive to online texts. Studies of television advertising indicate that viewers either deliberately ignore commercials or fail to absorb the message therein after repeated viewing (Calder and Sternthal; Elpers, Wedel and Pieters). However, Drèze and Hussherr suggest that at least some readers recall the advertisements they do look at online. Therefore, it is possible that in such cases the banner advertisements do complicate textual identity and increase the discursive tensions in the text.

While advertisements contribute to heteroglossia, they raise several questions about authorial control. A blog visitor's ability to either physically block

advertisements or read the entry while ignoring the accompanying advertisements has several implications. Firstly, there may not always be a discursive tension between blogger- and web-host-provided content, particularly if the web host's contribution is a banner advertisement. Secondly, although such travel-specific blog hosting sites often have the power to place advertisements, a reader's ability to block these suggests that ultimately the responsibility for the appearance of some blog elements is in fact shared between blogger, web host, and reader. Finally, such advertising introduces a number of third parties. While this brings polyphony to the text, it does not necessarily supplement the identity of the blogger.

In the Blogger's Boots

Bloggers often make use of an "About" page in order to describe themselves and the purpose of their blog. This is perhaps the most obvious means of identifying the author of the posts. All blogs on *Travelblog* and *Travelpod* have this feature. *Wallaby Wanderers* contains a picture of the authors, and a description of the blog itself. The authors choose to present themselves using their first names, Darryl and Sarah. It is only by consulting the bloggers directory in the website that a visitor will know that the blog is written by Darryl and Sarah Howells. Similarly, clicking on the blogger's user name in *Global Roaming* takes a reader to Technotrekker's "About" page. This page, a feature of all *Travelpod* blogs, allows a blogger to provide details of his place of origin, profession, and interests. The amount of detail provided differs in each blogger's About page. Technotrekker chooses not to provide his real name here, but this page too contains a photograph of the author. Indeed, he only reveals his name in the comments feature where he signs replies as "Ross." Woodsy79 is even more reticent and only provides a username, photograph, and the name of his hometown.

The *Bootsnall* template does not provide an About page, but both Steve Nakano's "Now About Me" and Eunice Goetz's "About Me" are posts in which the bloggers write about themselves and their narratives. By deciding just how much they will reveal about themselves, bloggers control the online self they present to readers. The About page feature is restrictive in that it categorizes and offers only certain details of a blogger. It also contributes to authorial identity only so far as the blogger utilizes it for this function. However, in the absence of this feature, the

Bootsnall bloggers choose to create posts function as a About page, suggesting that author identification is important. Also, in the absence of a feature generally held to be essential to blogs, that these authors create an “About” post suggests that this is a strategy intended to highlight their position as bloggers and to strengthen the credibility of the text as a blog.

The user name a blogger chooses to adopt is also indicative of his or her online self. Some bloggers use their own names, as is the case with *Wallaby Wanderers* where both travellers take turns at writing entries. On the other hand, “Technotrekker” and “Woodsy79” are pseudonyms, while the Laughing Nomad only reveals herself as Eunice Goetz in her “About Me” post. Pseudonyms and their connotations create an image of the author for readers, thus influencing their perception of the text (Genette 50). In general, the user names reflect the blogger’s real identity, or suggest a traveller self in their use of travel-related words such as “nomad” or “trekker.” The travel theme is woven into titles and URLs as well, as in the case of *Global Roaming* or *Wallaby Wanderers* and www.steveislost.com. A well-chosen user names or titles can reinforce a blogger’s connection with other bloggers, thus enhancing their own credibility. The *Wallaby Wanderers* blog, for example, links to KangarooJack’s blog. User names thus offer a clear sense of the self a blogger wishes to present in his or her travel blog.

The different positions bloggers occupy are usually more distinct in blog posts. Hevern’s observation that a single blogger has a “threaded” online self whose multiple aspects constitute the self-presentation of the author is at times validated by travel blogs such as *Wallaby Wanderers* or *For Mom, Love Steve* (322). Here, the authors consciously refer to their positions as travellers and bloggers as well as the connection between these two aspects of self. For the *Wallaby Wanderers*, part of the preparation for the trip involves starting a diary, and the first few entries reflect this awareness of the self as blogger. The authors write about acquiring the skills of blogging – “Back in the warm we settle down for a bit of travelblog and facebook training with Tez” (Howell and Howell “Wallaby Wanderers”). They also identify themselves with the larger *Travelblog* blogging fraternity with references to another author:

We've got it on good authority from fellow bloggers **KangarooJack** that solar power is the way forward ... We think we'll need to keep things charged as we're going to try to blog each day separately when we start the adventure, whether we'll manage daily uploads very much depends on the amount of McDonalds and Starbucks Coffee houses we can find! We're learning from others that 'the golden arches' are a welcome sight for Skyping and Blogging! (Howell and Howell "Wallaby Wanderers")

While McDonalds and Starbucks, as places offering free wi-fi services, reflect the thriftiness of backpacker travel, they also represent a convenience and familiarity, which are at odds with the concept of travel as an adventure or an escape. Nevertheless, the narration of "adventure" through regularly updated entries relies on the proximity of these established and recognizable icons of commercialism and consumerism.

A similar awareness of the self as blogger is evident in Steve Nakano's blog where he explains:

I write a blog to let everybody know what I am doing.../ I'm going to rely on this website, a guide book that I pick up here and there, other peoples Blogs, ideas from other travelers I meet, and hopefully suggestions from people I meet on this Blog. So if anybody out there has a suggestion, I can give it a 68% chance of becoming a reality (Nakano "What Am I Doing").

In both these narratives blogging and travel are interlinked, each influencing the other in that blogging may provide the impetus for travel or be integral to the travel experience, while the journey itself inspires the content for the blogs. Technotrekker does not make such connections between travel and blogging, but he does describe himself as an author of a "travelogue" or "diary" in his eighth post in *Global Roaming*:

I also have delusions of grandeur and yearning to write. At least I want to try and give it a go. I have reasonably advanced plans for a novel and am interested in writing articles, reviews and things like

this travel diary. I'll get an idea of how people react to and accept my writing and if worst comes to worst, I'll have a substantial body of work in this diary that will be interesting to both myself and [sic] variety of other people (Pringle).

He also reflects on the writing process in the first entry of the blog, which has clearly been written after the blog was completed. This introductory post lists links to what he feels are his best entries. It describes the entire blog as a “one serious overland odyssey” culminating in Sydney and concludes with more links to posts on the hardware and software used to create the blog (Pringle). In such posts, Technotrekker plays the mentor, giving advice on the blogging process through both entries and answers to comments from readers. Not all blogs may contain such reflections on the writing process, and not all bloggers may identify themselves as bloggers or emphasise their position as authors. However, such entries suggest that for these blogs, posts offer the best means of expressing the blogger’s online self.

Blogging Travel

The presentation of self in the role of a traveller has previously been employed by presenters of television travel programmes and writers of travel books as well as in backpacker narratives (Dann “Writing out Tourist”; Dunn; O'Reilly). Here, the authors construct the traveller self through the use of various narrative techniques such as writing out the tourist, using a first-person voice, and focusing on the journey rather than the destination, to create the impression of detachment, solitude, and timelessness, (Dann “Writing out Tourist”). Descriptions of the discomforts, difficulties, and dangers of a journey are integral to narrating the self as a traveller (O'Reilly).

Several bloggers on *Travelblog*, *Travelpod*, and *Bootsnall* present themselves as travellers and consequently travel discourse often informs their blog posts. Blog entries are usually written in the first-person voice, and this creates the impression of a solitary journey. There is a sense of detachment from home and routine when Technotrekker writes about setting off:

After many months of planning, I finally left Sydney at 14.55 yesterday....As I passed the first sight of the trip, the disused Regent

St station which is sometimes referred to as Mortuary station due to its gothic composition, I began to hope that it might not be a omen of things to come (Pringle).

The “disused” station and the implicit image of death suggest a breaking of ties with the familiar and pave the way for the adoption of the traveller self who then describes the train journey as one not totally free of hardship:

Trying to sleep was not so easy. It was a surprisingly bumpy ride all night, especially in later stages beyond Orange where I think some of the labour who built the railway were so pissed at being stationed way out here that they deliberately built the rails less than perfectly parallel. From the rampant shaking it felt like it anyway. Even if the rails were straight, the Kangaroo class seats aren't made for posturepedic feeling, but I managed to catch a few Zs in spite of them (Pringle).

A later entry in his blog, inspired by a trip to Myanmar also paints the traveller as survivor:

To get here, the bus ride from Yangon was a sixteen hour adventure sport over one of the world's worst major arterial highways. The bus was packed to the gills, with special fold out seats at regular intervals in the aisle completing the concept of sardine heaven. We continuously jolted over ruts and potholes large enough to swallow mopeds, stopped at roadside diners so seedy the moths went elsewhere to buzz the lights, and I doubt we changed driver the whole way through. Whatever your guidebook says - pay the extra money and GET A TRAIN OR PLANE! (Pringle).

Such descriptions of the difficulties of travel are a marked contrast to the more euphoric language of tourism in the web host-provided content and contribute to the discursive tensions in the blog. Writing about getting to a destination is as important as describing what is there to see. In this description of his experiences as a traveller, Pringle positions himself as a more credible authority than a guidebook. At the same time he also employs the touristic discourse generally associated with guidebooks

when he authoritatively advises potential travellers to “pay the money” and “get a train.”

Even when writing about places they visit, Technotrekker and *Bootsnall's* Nakano distance themselves from tourists and experiences that may be seen as common touristic pursuits. While Technotrekker merely avoids company to seek the solitude of necessary for a “travel” experience, Nakano is dismissive of “tourist crap,” and feels the need to justify his visit to a tourist destination in Nicaragua:

As attractive as Pangandaran is, I wanted something more than your average Indonesian tourist town (litter and vendor huts crowding out the nice view), so I left the few local holidayers to their paddling in the surf and headed further round the bay (Pringle).

Masaya is the epicenter for the artisans who make all the touristy stuff. Although it is not a high priority for me, they were also the ones who made hammocks and I figured that would be neat to see. The other reason was that there was a pretty well known crater lake just outside the city limits. Swimming in a volcano seemed nice so it added a day to the stopover and a distraction from having to look at tourist crap (Nakano “Mayasa, Nicaragua: Home of Tourist Crap”).

Both bloggers write of going off the beaten path and being spontaneous. The presence of travel discourse identifies the blogger as a traveller. Although the focus of these entries is on presenting the author as a traveller, this can only be achieved by defining their activities against that which is touristic. The entries strengthen the position of the text as a personal narrative but such passages where tourist attractions are dismissed, or merit little description, offer little information about the destination they refer to.

The Blogger as Tourist

Not all bloggers write as travellers. Kylie Munaro, writing as Bluekat, describes a 16-day European bus tour. Unlike the bloggers discussed earlier, her trip has been planned by a tour operator, and her adherence to an itinerary marks her as a tourist. There are frequent references to recommended activities such as, “We headed off to get pancakes for lunch, as we were told they should be tried” or “We didn't go

to the dinner and was told we could easily walk along the back streets to a set of shops visible from the hotel. We did this in the pouring rain, to find there were no real food shops as such..." or "We had been heavily warned against trying to go to Capri and look around by ourselves as we would apparently be totally ripped off and unable to do much as it was winter." Tourists are often seen as "unadventurous" (Galani-Moutafi), and Munaro's online self shows touristic caution in following advice and heeding warnings. This tourist self is more passive than the travellers presented in *Global Roaming* and *For Mom, Love Steve*.

Yet, Munaro's online self speaks in many voices. She offers her own recommendations as an informed tourist, or perhaps a traveller within a tourist. While she positions herself as a tourist, she is also discerning and critical of the tourist discourse that places her in this position. She sets herself apart from the situation she finds herself in and offers her own recommendations, as an expert on not just a travel destination, but on being a tourist, thus personalizing the experience that has been packaged for mass consumption. Her entry on Capri is written in a tone that is at once authoritative and imperative:

If you are looking at going to Capri as part of a Cosmos tour, please feel free to email me, and I can show you exactly what we did on a map, and you could easily achieve this yourself and save bucket loads of money. Also they try to scare you in saying alot of things will be closed and all, we didn't notice that anywhere! Have found this website <http://www.capritourism.com/en/timetable-and-prices> for 6.90 euro, you can purchase a two way chairlift ride and have access to the bus system for the entire day! (Munaro)

At other times, she is critical of the tour itself, and here the blogger turns reviewer, commenting on the food and facilities offered by the tour operator: "Tea was included that night. I guess in the hotel, the front lobby staff were really nice, the ones in the dinning [sic] room were a bit abrupt though. From all the places we went to, it just stood out that these were not the friendliest by a distance" (Munaro). Descriptions of hotels and meals are supplemented by photographs. She also frequently mentions availability of Internet facilities at each hotel or destination and sometimes these references indicate her awareness of herself as a blogger who is

obliged to update her narrative. Her post on Pompeii illustrates this: “Our hotel...had free internet but if you sat in their lobby (oh the second night, I was up past 11pm in their lobby trying to update my photos for those back home, and apparently upset the owners that wanted to turn out the lights!”

Munaro writes as participant and observer, positioned both inside and outside the touristic experience. She refers to herself as a tourist but also views the tourist experience critically. The voice of the tourist as expert clearly indicates the position occupied by the blogger in this text. The positioning of the blog itself is, however, far more complicated. The narrative technique and content of the commentary shifts from entries that read like the tourist discourse of a travel review, enumerating things to see and do, to posts that describe personal experience, have no references to fellow tourists, and little description of the sights at destinations visited. One stop between Cologne and Heidelberg is described only as “a cute little town”, while the entry on the Colosseum, a popular attraction in Rome, is a single paragraph that says little about the monument but a lot about the tour guide:

We arrived at the Colosseum. Ok, now this was impressive. We were all handed little earphones to be able to listen to our guide. It was kind of funny because she was getting a touch grumpy with our group as she was barking out commands in Italian, and obviously no one had any idea as to what she was talking about so we all just stood around. She also didn't like that an older couple were too “slow” for her liking. It was a case of jump in your chariot and go style! I had to admit she totally lost me inside and I had more fun just looking around at the structure imagining the history that took place within these walls (Munaro).

Here, Munaro writes as a detached observer as she assesses the tour guide, and although the Colosseum is “impressive,” there is a greater attention to details of the experience rather than to the monument itself. Such distancing and lack of emphasis on the destination are narrative techniques often employed in travel writing or narratives employing a traveller persona (Dann “Writing out Tourist”; Dunn). This entry is supplemented by photographs of the Colosseum, but the post itself contributes little to the identity of the web page as a destination narrative. Instead, it

is intensely personal in opinion and tone, and this adds to the tensions between commercial and personal or touristic and travel discourse.

Blogging with a Lens

The study of tourism is inextricably bound up with theories of photography and visual culture. A good deal of research stems from the works of Judith Adler, Susan Sontag, and John Urry, and examines the ocularcentric nature of Western culture and discusses sightseeing and photography as integral to the tourist experience. In particular, Urry's suggestion that tourists try to replicate media depictions of destinations, thus creating a circle of representation, has engaged a number of critics who have since tried to confirm or refute this theory (Caton and Santos; Garrod; Jenkins). This last argument has some relevance for photographs in these blogs. This chapter is concerned in particular with the extent to which photographs in these travel blogs give a sense of their authors. A more detailed discussion of the visual forms of travel and tourist discourse follows in Chapter Six.

While analyses of tourist photographs often consider the image in isolation, there is also some academic interest in the way tourists use both text and images for communicating their holiday experiences. These include studies of established media such as postcards as well as newer digital media. Analyses of postcards examine both the dominant photographic representations of places as well as the messages written by tourists, while similar research into the use of cell phones has demonstrated how digital technologies can be used to create travel narratives consisting of text messages and photographs (Bell and Lyall; Kennedy). Travel blogs are, in general, good sources of tourist photography and text entries, and these images may position a post as a text on a particular destination. However, there is little discussion of the relationship between photographs and text entries in blogs, or how they contribute to the online self of the bloggers.

Sontag argues that tourists use photography to both participate in and distance themselves from places they visit. Her view of tourist photography as something that is used to control and possess place is similar to Crawshaw and Urry's equating the tourist's camera to an instrument of surveillance. Such theories focus on tourists' engagement with and representation of a place and indicate that tourist photography can reveal much about destination image. Particularly in blogs found on travel-

specific hosting sites, photographs may even supplement the place-related content provided by the web host or its sponsors.

Some recent research has attempted to shift the focus from the place that lies before the lens to person who stands behind it, and considers the role of tourist photography in the creation of memories and self-identity. Caroline Scarles' observation that tourist photographs are filtered and selected before they are displayed suggests that photographs in travel blogs may also be similarly chosen by the blogger. Similarly, Steve Garlick's argument that contemporary tourist photography can offer perspectives of a destination that differ from the dominant images of that place indicates that there is some degree of personalization. While images in amateur travel blogs may replicate tourist discourse, these findings open up the possibility that they may also include images that are personalized, and offer some sense of their authors.

Robinson and Picard propose that personal holiday photographs, as opposed to professional travel photography contained in tourist discourse, may be used for "the communication and projection of self" (20). This suggests that photographs in travel blogs must contribute to the identification of the blogger. The framing and composition of these images may offer insights into the blogger's online self and indicate whether the blogger plays the tourist, replicating images seen in media representations, or consciously plays the traveller, capturing more personalized images. Although Robinson and Picard argue that the advent of digital photography and the ability to take many photographs and edit them has drained holiday photographs of their former "honest" spontaneity (22), it is likely that such technological advances have nevertheless allowed a greater expression of authorial voice. It is possible that bloggers actively select and discard digital photographs, both at the time of framing and capturing the sight and when deciding which of these images they will make publicly available on their blog as a supplement to the post. Each photograph, then, as a clear expression of the blogger's viewpoint, is a self-presentational tool.

Bloggers on *Travelblog*, *Travelpod*, and *Bootsnall* differ greatly when it comes to making decisions about posting photographs online. Apart from a thumbnail profile picture, there are no photographs in Woodsy79's blog on

Travelpod. In contrast, Technotrekker's blog on the same website is rich in photographs. Although some entries are free of images, many have over ten images, with one entry on canal boating in the UK incorporating 46 photographs and a short video clip among the paragraphs (Pringle). As with most other entries in this blog, most of the photographs that appear in this post display scenic landscapes, landmarks, or features that are, for Technotrekker, iconic of the places he visits. Some of these pictures are of river banks, valleys and fields that could be anywhere in England. Their location is only occasionally indicated by captions, although the accompanying links to websites of hotels in Llangollen in Wales do give a general idea of where these photographs are taken. Only three photographs show the blogger himself, although all of the photographs are captioned and are placed between paragraphs of the entry, alongside descriptions of the views. Some photographs showing Pringle are in fact contributed by his travelling companions. For the most part, then, Pringle chooses not to emphasise his presence, and presents himself as a solitary observer of the English countryside. While his travelling companions – his parents and their friends – do rate a mention in his post, there is only the one photograph of them, and much in the manner of travel writers who write out tourists, he leaves them out of the picture. There is no touristic foregrounding of the author and his companions against iconic sights. Also, Pringle's absence from a majority of the photographs and the lack of characteristic features that anchor these scenes to specific occasions or destinations create a sense of timelessness and solitude that is an effect often used by travel writers to emphasise the experience of travel.

Not all travel blog photographs show such an emphasis on solitude or place. Subjects vary across blogs. Tourists may photograph places or focus on people (Robinson and Picard 16). The *Wallaby Wanderers* blog contains a large number of entries describing visits with family and friends, and it is photographs of people rather than places visited that occupy such entries. In "Such is Life," a post on the bloggers' visit to an animated theatre and exhibits on Australian outlaw Ned Kelly, photographs of the displays appear alongside personal snapshots taken at a film premiere attended on the same day, while other entries may have only family pictures ("Wallaby Wanderers"). In this blog, photographs create an atmosphere of companionship that is markedly different from the solitary views of *Global Roaming*. While such photographs present different aspects of these bloggers – that of a friend

or a relative rather than solitary traveller – they give little emphasis to the destinations visited. Such photographs enable author identification.

Meanwhile, photographs feature more prominently than text in some entries of *For Mom, Love Steve*, as in his entry on Mexico City in which he explains how he used his camera to capture the essence of the place:

For me it was just strolling around taking snapshots of things that I thought were interesting. If you were really into photography, it would be another one of those places you could get stuck for a while as everything ranges the extremes.

So in no particular order and to use up my memory space, here goes (Nakano).

For Nakano, photographs of Mexico City provide evidence of his visit, but uploading these images reminds him of his identity as a blog author, makes him conscious of the technical considerations of supplementing the online narrative with visuals, and leads him to warn his readers of the lack of organization in his visual material. His images are personal in that he selects “interesting things,” not necessarily popular tourist attractions most of which, he writes in this post, were closed on that day. Images of historical buildings are few, while those of protest marches and crowds predominate. Here, Nakano creates an online self that is consciously non-touristic by presenting the traveller’s perspective of Mexico City (“Day 1797” Nakano). His presentation of a “walking tour,” as stated in the title, is not the touristic activity involving a capturing of iconic sights that the phrase suggests. Instead, the disordered presentation of a series of photographs associates the entry with a travel experience.

For both the Howells and Nakano, photographs are a feature that enables their authorial voice to be heard and contributes to their authorial identity. In these instances, the photographs serve to supplement the personal discourse in the posts. This is not to say, however, that bloggers may not seek to replicate images seen in media representations of a particular destination as described by Urry’s hermeneutic circle of representation. Tourists often anticipate the quintessential shot of a sight that best symbolizes a destination, expressing disappointment and frustration when this is difficult to achieve (Robinson and Picard; Scarles). They often use techniques

such as excluding other tourists from the photographic frame in order to achieve the impression of solitude (Robinson and Picard).

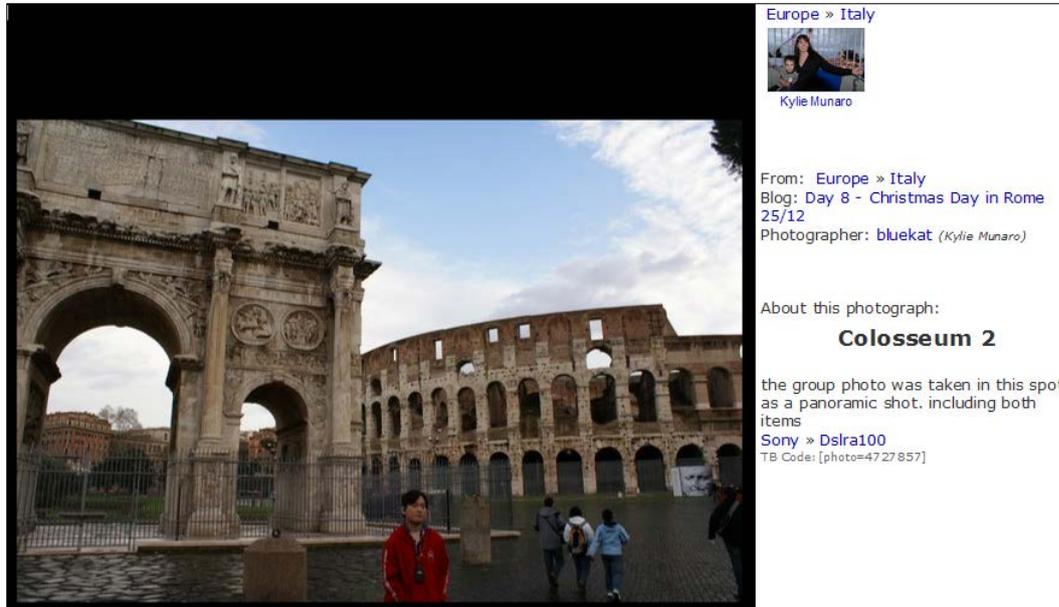


Figure 4: The ‘group shot’ view of the Colosseum used in Munaro’s blog

This is evident in the *Cosmos* blog, particularly in Kylie Munaro’s photographs of Rome and Pisa. The Rome entry has eleven photographs of the Colosseum, and she significantly omits or at least minimizes the presence of other tourists through careful framing. Of particular interest is “Colosseum 2,” a photograph captioned “the group photo was taken in this spot as a panoramic shot, including both items,” suggesting that capturing this view is a mandatory part of the tourist experience (see Fig. 4). However, the inclusion of this photograph, which is nearly empty of fellow tourists, instead of the admittedly touristic group photograph, indicates that Munaro seeks to personalize the scene. Munaro’s description of her efforts to photograph her son striking a typical pose at the Leaning Tower at Pisa also indicates a touristic need to capture the view that exemplifies the destination. She writes: “Everyone was there taking their token photos holding up the tower and I attempted to get my son to do it as well! Weak as effort child! When we got around the corner he played along a bit better. He didn’t want to feel like a dork in the wide open I guess” (Munaro).

She posts the “token photos” on her blog, but describes her second shot taken from around the corner (also in the post) as the better picture. The caption assures readers that it “was taken around the corner so it was pisa” (Munaro). Once again, she is careful to leave fellow tourists out of the frame. This second shot presents a more extraordinary view of the Tower. Furthermore, it is described as being more natural, and therefore perhaps more authentic, than the earlier image of the touristic “dork.” The post also contains photographs of her hotel room and various dishes sampled at a restaurant. These last are similar to photographs of food and facilities in other entries. Whilst being personal, these also position the blog entries alongside the kind of tourist discourse that promotes places on the basis of sights to see, things to do, and where to stay or eat.

So, while Munaro’s blog is openly touristic in its capturing of scenes that stand for particular destinations, there are also photographs that are to some extent placeless, in that they cannot be identified with any particular destination, although they do signify the tourist experience in some way for the blogger. Shots of cats and flowers are interspersed with pictures of Capri, while the bus trip to Florence inspires a photograph of a cigarette stub in the snow captioned “ok, I think it looks kinda like art” (Munaro). Such photographs are part of a self-presentational strategy and offer insight into the blogger’s interests. Others, such as some of the Colosseum photographs, focus on place and validate the post as a destination narrative. Still others, such as the “group shot” view of the Colosseum and the Pisa photographs, serve both purposes, offering a personal slant on the commercialized view of the monument. Munaro’s blog thus includes images that complete Urry’s circle of representation, but also personal photographs that frame a travel experience that is uniquely hers alone. Photographs then become a feature through which authorial control may be exercised, thus influencing the positioning of the entry and textual identity. They may also heighten the tensions between commercial discourses that enter the blog, via the web host and third-party sponsors, and personal discourse contributed by the blogger in the form of entries, depending on how personal or place-oriented these pictures are. Finally, they can support the online self created by the author and so facilitate author identification.

Whose Blog Is It Anyway?

Web hosts play a significant part in determining the extent to which the formal features of travel blogs on these travel-specific websites give a sense of their authors. Those who analyse travel blogs to study destination image must also recognize contribution of the web host to the positioning of the blog as a travel narrative. While bloggers write each entry as an episode of a longer travel narrative, web hosts tend to fragment this larger blog narrative, treating each post as a unique text on a single destination. Often the web host provides paratexts, in the form of maps or title bars that emphasise the destination being written about, while downplaying the personal experience of a journey. Even if the photographs and accompanying descriptions remain neutral, focussing on time spent with family and friends, with no reference to place, the content generated by the web host may still position the entry as a text on a particular destination.

In varying degrees, these web hosts manipulate blog features commercializing personal discourse, changing the positioning of the text, and emphasising their corporate identity over that of the bloggers. While bloggers create user names and titles that reflect their individuality, the corporate identity of the web hosting service looms large in the form of logos, banners, and title bars. Also, templates, URLs, title bar texts, and maps that foreground the reference to place rather than person in a post can detract from a blogger's presentation of an online self. However, the extent to which formal elements contribute to blogger identification varies across features within the blogs and across web hosting services as well.

The kind of linking and networking present in blogs on some other web hosting services that strengthens authorial identity is often not possible on these travel-specific web hosting services. Web hosts such as *Travelpod* and *Travelblog* restrict linking, generally regarded as the bloggers' preserve, in a manner that makes it difficult to get a sense of the author through the links. Bloggers using these services cannot express authorial identity by linking to other external blogs or other websites.

The principal contribution to author identification is made in the photographs and entries in these blogs. In their entries, bloggers occupy a variety of positions

such as that of the traveller or the tourist. Certainly, the titles and user names selected by the bloggers are also self-presentational. Similarly, the photographs they choose to display offer insights into the blogger's online self, while also authenticating the travel experience and supplementing commercial discourse by offering a sense of place.

The amount of third-party advertising and destination-specific links to sponsors web pages in these blogs also varies across individuals and web hosting services. Such content contributes to the heteroglossia in these blogs by incorporating commercial and tourist discourses. However, much of this content can hardly be said to play a significant role in identifying the authors. The nature of programs such as AdSense suggests that advertising content may offer a tenuous link to the blogger through the post that is responsible for generating the advertisement, but then this content may equally be determined by the geographical location or interests of the readers. Thus, sponsored content may influence the discursive tensions in the blog, and also restrict the self-presentation of bloggers.

These travel blogs are polyphonic and heteroglossic for several reasons. First, they provide a space for multiple voices to interact – that of the web host, the sponsor, bloggers, and readers. Second, a single blogger may speak in a number of voices including that of a traveller or a tourist. Depending on the nature of the web host, each element in a blog may reflect the voice of a different person, not necessarily that of the blogger. Furthermore, each of these voices can contain multiple discourses. Those who view blogs as a source of information about consumer behaviour must be aware that features that indicate authorial voice in other personal blogs may not serve the same purpose in the travel blog. It is necessary to note, as Genette did, that both publisher and author are responsible for paratextual elements such as titles, and as such not all formal features in these travel blogs contribute to a sense of who the author is. In such texts, there are limitations to a travel blogger's presentation of self.

With the Reader in Mind

Self-presentation and the Independent Travel Blog

The first travel diaries were written as records of the journey and were intended as public documents that could be later read by others (McNeill “Diary 2.0”). It is reasonable to assume that individuals who host publicly accessible travel blogs must likewise be aware of their potential audience, and that such texts are forms of self-presentation created with the reader in mind. Drawing on these premises, this chapter examines travel blogs hosted on independent websites as forms of self-presentation that involve discourses of travel and tourism. Hosting a blog independently allows an individual greater access to a variety of formal features and consequently more freedom of expression. Accordingly, while the previous chapter highlighted the limitations to self-presentation in travel blogs found on commercially sponsored travel-specific web hosts, this chapter and those that succeed it examine the extent to which formal features of travel blogs present various aspects of a travel blogger’s online self.

According to Lynn Z. Bloom, an individuals’ awareness of a reader’s presence leads to self-censorship and an audience-oriented presentation of the self as a central character in the narrative. She also observes that this reflects in the language and formal features of the text so that “once a writer, like an actor, is audience-oriented, such considerations as telling a good story, getting the sounds and the rhythm right, supplying sufficient detail for another’s understanding, can never be excluded” (24-25). This indicates that specific discourses and narrative forms and techniques are all tools used by an individual to present the self to an audience.

Self-presentation is to some extent shaped by the technical features of the online platforms that individuals use (Merchant). In an online self-presentational narrative this means using a variety of multimedia (Nelson and Hull). This can involve manipulating page design, fonts, and other visual elements to create a certain impression of the self (K. Walker). In fact, an individual’s presentation of self in any given social situation is strongly linked to the technology he or she uses at the time so that “the *staging* of the interaction, the *mediation* of the interaction and its

performance depend crucially on the detailed material and technological arrangements in place” (Pinch). While this seems deterministic, it does imply that each formal feature and integrated social tool of a blog is instrumental in the presentation of at least some aspects of an author’s self.

While theories of both Goffman and Bakhtin have been used to study self-presentation in blogs, much of this research focuses on personal blogs and strategies of self-presentation in blog posts (Hevern; Sanderson; Trammell and Keshelashvili). However, as noted in the previous chapter, other formal elements of a blog also give a sense of its author, suggesting that these must similarly function as self-presentational elements (Carter; Chesher; Gurak and Antonijevic; Reed; Serfaty). Recognizing that a number of factors are involved in the presentation of the author as a travel blogger, this chapter applies the concepts of self-presentation and speech genres to the study of individual entries as well as other formal features and paratextual elements such as templates, titles, and user names. It analyses the contribution of each of these features to the overall self-presentation of travel bloggers who host their blogs independently. It considers in particular the part played by discourses of travel and tourism in indicating the various positions these bloggers occupy in their narratives. This involves the identification and examination of various narrative techniques associated with these discourses. Through this analysis of paratexts, posts, comments, and blogrolls, the chapter determines how these travel blogs negotiate the tensions between travel and tourist discourses while conveying the impression that the author is an authentic travel blogger.

It is also increasingly acknowledged that self-presentation may be dispersed across different social media (Helmond; Nabeth; Reed). Independent travel blogs often link to social networking services, microblogging services, photo and video sharing sites or bookmarking tools. This suggests that links are a key to understanding the travel blog, and that content beyond the blog also defines an author. Another key feature of these blogs is the travel-related photographs that supplement the narrative in the posts. However, it is beyond the scope of a single chapter to discuss the part played by photographs or how the self-presentation in these blogs extends to other platforms, and this will be examined in subsequent chapters.

Introducing the Author

A variety of elements such as titles, banners, and pseudonyms play a part in the initial presentation of an author's self as a central character in the independently hosted travel blog. Pseudonyms such as Nomadic Matt and titles like *Travelling Savage* signal the nature of this character to some extent. Yet, the textual feature that best describes the self that authors wish to present to readers is probably the page that displays their profile. Usually labelled "About Me," this page generally introduces the author and describes the purpose of the blog. It usually provides an overview of the themes of the blog and specifies the different positions an author occupies in the text. In some cases, it distinguishes between the author's past self – life as it was before the individual became a traveller or blogger – and a present blogging and travelling self. It is often this page that most clearly demonstrates a blogger's awareness of the travel blog as a self-presentational tool and of himself or herself as a narrator of a travel experience. As such, this page indicates the specific utterances and discourses the author uses to express the self as an independent travel blogger. The following paragraphs discuss how discourses of travel and tourism communicate a sense of what the narrative is about and the positions occupied by its author.

Enter Author, Traveller, Blogger

Although the About page offers the most complete self-description of the author, a number of bloggers begin their introduction on the home page of their travel blogs. Usually this takes the form of a box containing a short, 30-40 word summary and a thumbnail photograph of the author. Concise as this is, the summary clearly identifies the authors and the positions they assume for readers of their text. The boxed summary on the independent travel blog titled *Traveling Savage*, describes author Keith Savage as "A hunter, oft-stubbled and bleary-eyed, driven by an insatiable hunger for exploration." This description complements the title, itself a play on the author's name, and cues the position he occupies in his narrative (a point examined in greater depth in the following section). This style of phrasing in the introduction is by no means unique to Savage's blog. In a similar box captioned "A Little About Me," Jodi Ettenberg of *Legal Nomads* writes that she is "a former lawyer from Montreal currently eating my way around the world, one country at a time. Marshmallow enthusiast, volcano climber and cave spelunker - and also a

geek.” *Foxnomad* author Anil Polat is equally succinct about the purpose of his blog and the aspects of self that he wishes to present: “My name is Anil, a traveler and travel enthusiast. I created foXnoMad to connect with other travelers, discover their world, and share what I’ve learned about mine.” Readers are encouraged to find out more about the bloggers by clicking on a link to the About page. Each of these descriptions indicates, for readers, the aspects of self these authors wish to emphasize in their capacity as travel bloggers. In *Foxnomad*’s case, it also presents the blog as platform to “connect” and “share,” thus acknowledging the reader and the social nature of the text.

The About page expands the initial introduction and establishes who the authors are. Although this description may run into several paragraphs, the initial statements alone are usually enough to give a sense of the self that the authors wish to present to their audience. In addition to this, authors are quick to indicate various narratorial positions. The suggestion that an author can assume different discursive roles within a narrative is not new to blogs or to travel-related texts. Individuals who write personal blogs sometimes vary their positions across the narrative (Hermans; Hevern; Sanderson). For example, Sanderson’s analysis of a sports celebrity’s blog demonstrates how a single individual discursively constructs the self as a critic, a staunch Christian, and a dedicated player within the same blog. The writing of travel books involves a “presentation of multiple personas” and a constant switching between different narrative roles such as that of an adventurer or a clown (Holland and Huggan 16). Television travel hosts play the traveller or tourist to describe destinations (Dunn). Therefore, a text that is both a blog and a travel-related narrative may well contain a number of different authorial positions. The following paragraphs demonstrate how authors position themselves as travellers through the use of various narrative techniques.

In general, bloggers begin by stating their name and describing their profession or the positions they occupy in their narrative. The author of *A Wandering Sole* writes, “My name is Laura Walker, and I am a professional nomad & amateur runner. I took an 8 month journey around the world in 2010 to travel and volunteer. I have yet to shake the travel bug and am always planning my next adventure!” (“About”). In a similar name-and-vocation style *Foxnomad*’s About page continues the introduction begun on the home page: “My name is Anil Polat, a digital nomad

traveling the world indefinitely. I'm a formally educated anthropologist and former computer hacker (the good kind), currently traveling full-time completely funded by my travel blogs" ("About").

Writing under a pseudonym, independent blogger Nomadic Matt introduces himself on *Nomadic Matt's Travel Site* as

...a twenty-something vagabond who has been on the road regularly since 2005. I'm a native of Boston, Mass but, now, everywhere has been my home. After a trip to Thailand in 2005, I decided to leave the rat race and explore the world so I finished my MBA, quit my cubicle job, and, in July 2006, I set out on an adventure around the world.

("About Me")

Providing details such as an author's name, age, profession and cultural background is often characteristic of the online self-presentation in personal home pages (K. Walker). In the case of travel blogs as well, the same information is available on boxed summaries and profile pages. Both summaries and About pages are often integrated in default blog template. Therefore, technical features play some part in styling the self-presentation.

About pages often display the same techniques seen in the narratives of those who describe themselves as travellers, suggesting that the blog describes a travel experience, as opposed to a touristic one. In most cases, the bloggers use words and phrases associated with travel, particularly terms used in the context of independent travel rather than guided tourism. So Anil Polat's "digital nomad" is in good company with Walker's "professional nomad," and Nomadic Matt's "vagabond." The descriptions support the concept of wandering, the idea of travel as not bound by itineraries, suggested in the titles of these blogs. They indicate the bloggers' position as travellers and imply that the blog will describe a travel experience. Contextualizing the blog in references to adventure and exploration further enhances its association with the concept of travel. Nomadic Matt is on "an adventure around the world" ("About Me"). For *Forks and Jets* authors Eva and Jeremy Rees, travel is an escape: "We are Eva & Jeremy Rees and we are going to escape. We are escaping the 9 to 5, the 40 hour work week, the daily commute, cable television, apartment

rent, owning furniture” (“About Us”). The authors also add that they are exchanging a comfortable lifestyle for a more frugal and difficult existence as travellers:

We had well-paying careers, nice toys like motorcycles and a classic car, and we were working on our investments and retirement. We are going to miss our 50 inch plasma TV and our shows on HBO and Showtime. Even for this trip we look more like a North Face ad than vagabonds, and our major concerns include kidney theft and sunburn. We’re still trying to figure out what some of the straps on our packs are for.

We don’t want to be content with two-week vacations once a year, sitting in front of a computer monitor and buying a home, mowing the lawn. Sometimes you have to escape the box completely to think outside it. (Rees and Rees “About Us”)

For Eva and Jeremy Rees, the traveller position they occupy is carefully constructed through the discourse of travel. First, this involves a distancing of the way they lived before setting off on their journeys. Prized possessions become “nice toys” and daily routine is a confining “box” that must be escaped. Property and practices that tie them down, such as “owning furniture” or “paying rent” must be given up if they are to be rootless nomads. Mindful of the need to be seen as “vagabonds,” the authors discuss their unfamiliarity with this experience with self-deprecating humour – they are not real travellers yet, but they are trying.

The About page of *Forks and Jets* indicates a need to differentiate between a past self (indicated in the past tense) and a present travelling self (described in present tense) that is enlightened and fulfilled by experience. This style of self-presentation is a feature of several other About pages. For Keith Savage, becoming a traveller means exchanging his passive past (tense) self for one that is active, alert and liberated in the present (tense). In the About page of *Traveling Savage* he writes:

I was cowering beneath the covers.

I was a complicit zombie.

...The life was lavish and lazy and full up with things weightier than any ship's anchor if I'd taken the time to notice the pull or the gradual slouch creeping into my posture. There was no destination and no path, just one foot in front of the other...

And then one frigid December night everything tipped over.

The responsibilities and routines and reasons scattered like bugs from beneath a rock. They looked as minuscule and ugly as bugs, too. The feeling? Like catching up on all the sleep you've lost over the course of your life or the sudden unlatching of a Succubus from your mind. It was levitation. It was levity.

... Time will be the storyteller of what lies beyond these familiar confines. But I am awake.

I am clear-eyed and brimming.

I am the me I wanted to be. (Savage "About")

Laura Walker undergoes a similar transformation in *A Wandering Sole*:

I graduated from college in 2008, took a 10 week trip to Africa, and returned home to a crappy economy with \$200 in my pocket. My sister and brother-in-law graciously let me move in with them, and shortly after, I found a job. And then I got antsy.... Now I'm just taking life one day at a time and seeing what adventures/trouble I can get into next! ("About")

Barbara Weibel was "like a donut – a wonderful outer shell with an empty, hollow inside." *Hole in the Donut Travels* now fills the emptiness of her past self, by describing the "inner journey" and "never-ending spiritual lessons that come from travel" ("About"). The present tense of the title echoes the present tense of her travelling self.

Travel is distinguished from the passivity of tourism by its vivacity and spirit of adventure and exploration (Fussell). *Traveling Savage* and *A Wandering Sole*

discursively construct this idea of being active in the traveller role of the authors. The lassitude of Savage's "cowering" zombie is replaced by the energy of a "clear-eyed" person. The unadventurous stability of Laura Walker's life is replaced by the comparatively dangerous thrill of "taking life one day at a time" in search of "adventures/trouble." Even the authors of *Forks and Jets* contrast their present active self as engaged in relatively difficult yet spontaneous undertaking and having a less than comfortable lifestyle with a past self that passively follows daily routine.

The very fact that the traveller role is described in the present tense is significant, given Dann's association of this tense with the narration of travel experiences as opposed to tourism promotion. However, the change from an earlier unfulfilled self to a recent revitalized one is a concept integral to tourist discourse (Dann *Tourism*). Tourism advertising frequently uses "temporal contrast" – indicated by a change of tense – to suggest that individuals can cast off an earlier state of dissatisfaction with mundane routine and enjoy a more pleasant and pleasurable experience at a tourist destination at a later time simply by travelling there (Dann 200). Nevertheless, while the transformation of self is itself a touristic concept, the change described in these About pages is from a mundane but comfortable routine to a more difficult, unpredictable situation rather than a pleasant one. Such skilful rendering of temporal contrast works, therefore, to associate the experiences described in a travel blog with travel as opposed to tourism.

Addressing the Reader

Awareness of the reader usually comes to the fore in the latter half of the About page. A number of actions indicate this consciousness – providing RSS (Really Simple Syndication) feeds or email updates, enabling readers to share the blog's content via services such as *Twitter*, *Facebook*, or *StumbleUpon* and listing an email address for contacting the author. These strategies are self-presentational in several ways. Firstly, the author's role as a blogger is affirmed in the apparent selection of currently popular tools, implying a sound knowledge of social media. The term "apparent" is used deliberately here, as most blogging services freely provide a wide range of tools that authors can use to distribute the blog or embed content from other platforms such as *Flickr* or *Delicious* (Du and Wagner; Schmidt). Secondly, while the display of an easily recognized and perhaps popularly used

service may be unintentional, it indicates an association with a certain culture. Like the references to brands and products in personal home pages, which are a self-presentational strategy that says something about the author (Schau and Gilly), links to well-known services such as *Twitter* or *Facebook* suggest that authors share similar preferences with their readers who use these platforms. Inviting greater reader engagement may well strengthen authors' credibility as bloggers (Schmidt). Furthermore, these actions improve the visibility of the blogs, indicating the author's desire to present their narratives to a large audience.

Another indicator of an author's audience awareness is the use of the second person voice. Authors often directly address the reader in order to explain the purpose of their blog. Nomadic Matt tells his readers, "People always say to me how much they would love to do what I do, even if it just for a little while. I'm here to tell you you can. I'm here to show you how" ("About Me"). On the face of it, these statements tell readers what to expect from the blog – posts on how to travel, especially in the same style as the author. On another level, they position the authors and set the tone of their relationship with the audience. As a person who will show others how to travel, Nomadic Matt becomes something of a mentor and an expert, who will provide valuable advice based on his own experiences. A similar attitude is expressed in *Foxnomad*, whose author Anil Polat writes:

I made the leap to blogging and traveling full time just like I do much everything else, by coming up with a plan to break down a big problem into manageable parts. You can also learn to Overcome The 7 Major Obstacles To Traveling The World or simply learn to become a traveling ninja on any trip –saving money, seeing more of the world, and using your laptop as the wonderful travel companion you never knew you had. ("About")

Such passages are generally monologic, and bring to mind what Dann refers to as "tourism's unidirectional discourse" (64). Generally, in such discourse, the speaker is often unidentifiable and the addressee in turn is equally indistinguishable in terms of age, gender, or economic and social background (Dann). According to Dann, for the most part "the speaker speaks, and the listener listens," and no interaction is expected between them (64). The impression thus created is of a

speaker who is better informed and more experienced than the reader (Dann)⁵. Nomadic Matt and Anil Polat identify themselves, yet the manner in which they address their readers is certainly touristic. Both authors present themselves as having a greater knowledge and expertise, which they will impart to their readers via the blog. Following from Dann's theories, it can be argued that the audience is largely unknown, although the message is intended specifically for readers interested in cheap and independent travel. The change from a first-person voice to a second-person one that emphasises "you" the reader distances the author with its impersonal tone. By positioning the reader as a potential tourist and blogger and the author as a travel expert or tour guide, such statements create an association with commercial tourist discourse. However, this narrative technique allows authors to acknowledge a reader's presence. This recognition is a strategy that adds conviction to an author's position as blogger as it signals his or her willingness to engage with the audience. This engagement is necessary to draw readers' attention to the presentation of the self as a traveller and the narration of travel experiences.

Blog readers often expect to be allowed to interact with authors (Schmidt). Comments from readers may be viewed as an essential aspect of blogging (Rosenberg; Sorapure). . These may well strengthen the self-presentation of the author (K. Walker). Several bloggers use the second person voice when they encourage readers to contact them or leave comments on their blog. Laura Walker of *A Wandering Sole* writes, "I'm always open to comments or suggestions. If there is something you want to know, just ask. If there is something you would like to read about and you haven't found it on my blog, request it. And if you just happen to be traveling anywhere remotely near me, give me a shout out!" ("About"). According to Dann, this is touristic in its singling out of the readers to invite an intimate interaction – a point examined in greater depth later in this chapter with reference to readers' responses to posts. For now, it is enough to recognize that this touristic style of discourse acknowledges the reader's presence, and consequently solidifies Walker's position as a blogger.

⁵ There is an implicit male voice here. Holland and Huggan suggest that the "rhetoric of travel" is masculine, and filled with "metaphors that reinforce male prerogatives" (111). They also suggest that travel itself "is defined by men according to the dictates of their experience" (111). The authoritative tone used here may well remind readers of this male hegemony.

Authors are nevertheless careful to outline the exact nature of their blogs' association with discourses of tourism. The penultimate paragraph of Barbara Weibel's About page tells readers: "If you have a product to promote that would interest my readers, I'll be happy to try it out and write an informative and honest review of your product" ("About"). The products mentioned here are travel-related. The blog has advertisements for services such as Marriott Hotels. It is quite likely that such advertising sponsors the maintenance of *Hole in the Donut Travels*. The message itself suggests an association between the blogger and those who wish to promote tourism. Furthermore, it also implies that entries in the blog may be of a promotional nature. Schmallegger and Carson observe that in order to be credible and successful, a travel blog must not have obviously promotional content but employ a discursive style that is distinct from tourism marketing. Perhaps Weibel is conscious of this as well for she also dissociates herself from promotional discourse by qualifying this statement with a "Disclosure": "If I have received a complementary product or service, or a discount on anything I write about, I will always disclose this information. In addition, I'll always give my honest opinion about any product or service I write about, regardless of whether or not I paid for it" ("About").

Implicit in the content of Weibel's message to the readers as well as in the narrative techniques it uses are two different positions that she occupies in her blog – that of a traveller and that of a promoter of tourism. The implication that the text is a genuine travel blog simply because it is "honest" and thus different from conventional marketing discourse reassures readers who expect genuine accounts of her travel experiences. This disclosure is self-focused and written in first-person voice. The invitation to promote travel-related products, directly addressing potential sponsors, is more impersonal, authoritative, and therefore more touristic. This promotional voice indicates Weibel's affinity with others who speak the language of tourism and establishes her as a reliable sponsor of travel-related products and services. The two positions are interdependent. Weibel must appear to be a genuine traveller to attract readership and also to attract sponsors for whom the authenticity of her narrative is a selling point. However, she also needs to be seen to dissociate herself from tourism to retain her audience and her credibility as a travel blogger. In defining different aspects of her position as a travel blogger, Weibel must negotiate between discourses of both travel and tourism.

A personal tone, the presentation of self as a traveller, and the narration of travel experiences validate the blog and its author. A monologic style places the author in a position of some authority, acknowledges the audience and also strengthens an author's self-presentation. In most cases, it is difficult to establish whether these authors consciously manipulate the contextual differences between travel and tourism to present themselves as travel bloggers. Yet, at least some authors refer to these discursive distinctions. Barbara Weibel, for example, uses her consciousness of this difference as a self-presentational tool to position herself as a credible blogger and suggest that *Hole in the Donut Travels* is not merely marketing spiel. Similarly, for Nomadic Matt, Polat, and Walker, the manipulation of a discursive style associated with tourism cements their position as experts on travel and genuine bloggers willing to engage with their audiences. Therefore, discourses of both travel and tourism play a significant part in adding conviction to an author's presentation of self to readers and adding credibility to a travel blog.

Behind Names and Titles

Titles and user names are two paratextual elements that play a significant role in the self-presentation of independent travel bloggers. While the primary functions of a title are identification and description, it also has a "connotative value" in that the meaning of its constituent words and the style in which they are used may have "echoes" of other texts (Genette 91). A title may bring to mind a particular genre and subject matter, a similar author, or a historical period. These associations help to build an impression of the author and the text. Furthermore, they can supplement the positions indicated by the author in an About page. User names – particularly if they are pseudonyms – could have a similar semantic effect and bring into play certain associations. Therefore, both titles and user names may be viewed as utterances whose contexts contribute to a blogger's performance of self.

Tracking Titles

In general, titles of independently hosted travel blogs incorporate either or both the author's name and the theme of the narrative. So, it is possible to find titles similar to Nomadic Matt's, such as *Adventurous Kate*, *Heather on Her Travels*, or *Wayne on the Road*, that clearly identify both the author and the subject matter

(Cowper; McCulley; Stadler). Alternatively, they indicate the blogger's position, as is the case with *Legal Nomads* or *Foxnomad* (Ettenberg; Polat). They may focus on the concept of travel alone, as in *A Wandering Sole* or *Everything Everywhere* (Arndt "About"; L. Walker) or hint at the nature of the travel experience is hinted as in *Pause the Moment* (Liz and Ryan). Blogs may also combine two concepts – such as travel and food – and consequently their titles play on both themes, as is the case with *The Road Forks* and *Forks and Jets* (Patrick and Akila; Rees and Rees). Still others are comparatively offbeat, humorous, or cryptic, such as *Hole in the Donut Travels* and *Killing Batteries* (Pettersen; Weibel). Alternatively, a title may allude to the blogging process as in *I Should Log Off* (Tobias and Tobias).

This is hardly an exhaustive list of the kinds of titles independently hosted blogs may have, but it does illustrate how these bloggers initially present themselves. For the most part, titles of these blogs, as well as others listed on their blogrolls, contain words such as “adventure,” “nomadic,” “roaming,” or “wandering.” These words suggest narratives of travel experiences that are free, unrestricted, and exciting. Also, presenting the authors as wanderers and nomads implies that they are not itinerary-driven tourists, but rather independent travellers. While a number of titles focus on presenting the blogger as traveller, it should be remembered that this position may be just one of many others occupied in a blog. On the whole, however, themes, names, and positions indicated in the title are characteristically personal and orient the blog towards travel rather than tourism.

The visual elements that supplement the title are also self-presentational tools. In general, titles are prominently displayed on a banner whose background, font, and integrated images suggest travel themes or concepts relevant to the title or user name. Typography, a main component in logos, can convey a particular effect or mood and so shape “identity” (Ryan and Conover 73). So, even the typeface⁶ a blogger selects for a title can add to the impression of the author and the narrative. In *Traveling Savage* two different fonts reinforce the ideas implicit in the title (Fig. 1). The black stencil font of “Traveling” is remarkably similar to the lettering that may be seen on a packing crate. The image is touristic – the journey of a packing crate is probably carefully scheduled, organized, and routed to a specific destination,

⁶ Although typographers prefer the term “typeface,” computer programs often refer to type as “font” (Ryan and Conover).

predictable and lacking the spontaneity of travel. This sense of orderliness is reinforced by the tagline “round the world, one month at a time” printed in the same font. In the context of Dann’s framework, the very fact that the touristic design spells the word “traveling” adds to the discursive tension here. Conversely, the “Savage” with its thick red brush-stroke typeface, the rough and somewhat primitive lines hinting at savagery, is at variance with the clean lines of first half of the title.



Figure 1: The title banner of *Traveling Savage*

Multiple fonts and images in the title banner of *A Wandering Sole* likewise reiterate the themes implied by the words in the title – a footprint of a sneaker sole on a baggage tag, a post-it note with the dictionary meaning of “wander,” a packing list on a scrap of notebook paper, a postage stamp, a travel photograph, and a postal stamp bearing the words “free-spirited” and “adventurous” (Fig. 2.). These images are carefully positioned and clearly intend to present two aspects of Walker’s self revealed in her About page – the marathon runner and the independent traveller. Tellingly, running shoes feature as one of the items on the ‘packing list’ pinned on the corkboard banner. The visual elements suggest the lack of definition associated with ‘wandering’ and the spontaneity of travel in that the banner accumulates ‘stray’ bits and pieces from Walker’s journeys. The lack of direction suggested by “wandering” also is visualized in the deliberately haphazard positioning of the Post-it note with the typewritten definition of “wander.”

While these elements are in keeping with the discourse of travel, the organized presentation of this clutter, testament to Walker’s “background in design,” is nonetheless touristic (“About”). There is a tension between the idea of wandering and the constructed nature of its visualization. Even the baggage tag on the right, although placed slightly askew, is carefully pinned by a “search” button (not functional at the time of writing). Walker also presents herself as a serious marathoner and this is implicit in the image of a shoeprint, carefully centred on the

baggage tag, and phrases such as “Sole Purpose” in the links menu above the banner. Both these elements also tie in with the title concept. There is a wealth of meaning in the use of “sole.” On the one hand it refers to Walker’s marathon running – an activity that involves the company of others – while on the other it reiterates the concept of travel as a solitary pursuit, reinforcing Walker’s presentation of herself as an independent and adventurous traveller. There is also a spiritual connotation here between the words ‘sole’ and ‘soul’, suggesting an experience characterised by inner reflection rather than a superficial consumption of place.



Figure 2: The title banner of *A Wandering Sole*

As with *A Wandering Sole* the visual elements of the title banner in Wayne Stadler’s blog *Wayne on the Road* also allude to the central themes of his narrative (Fig. 3). An SUV (Sports Utility Vehicle) is superimposed on a road map that lies on a black asphalt road. The vehicle itself is generally used on rough terrain and for long road trips, and the image creates an association with travel. The asphalt extends along the margins to the bottom of the page, framing blog entries on his road trip. Stadler’s photograph, also part of the banner, is flanked by a green badge with an eagle emblem bearing his name. Stadler is a professional photographer, and the eagle badge serves as a link to his professional website and online portfolio. The images are a simple visualization of the blog’s tagline of “One Man. A Camera. A Truck. Endless Open Roads,” all of which suggest the solitude and adventure of travel. However, unlike Savage and Walker, Stadler makes it clear that he is willing to place advertising on his banner. The image of a plastic hula dancer doll, the kind of souvenir a tourist would purchase, perches on the menu bar and indicates where the advertisement will appear. By inviting sponsors to fund his travel, Stadler presents his blog as a marketable commodity. The space left for the yet to appear

advertisement jars with the surrounding elements of travel discourse. The banner appears incomplete in the absence of an advertisement, suggesting that both tourist and travel discourses are necessary to complete the blog and the self-presentation of its author.



Figure 3: The banner of *Wayne on the Road*

In comparison with other blogs discussed here, the title banners for *Everything Everywhere* and *I Should Log Off* say little about the bloggers, apart from giving the sense that they have simple tastes. In *Everything Everywhere* the only image alongside the blue and orange title is a stick figure in the same colours. The banner indicates where the author, Gary Arndt, is on any given day, but does not have a tagline or any travel-related images. *I Should Log Off* is even more minimalist in its use of a black scrawl font on a plain white background as its title and banner (Fig. 4).



Figure 4: The title and banner of *I Should Log Off*

At first glance, the simple phrasing and design reflect the themes of their respective blogs but do not suggest any obvious discursive tension. A title like *Everything Everywhere* does not specify any one location but suggests a flexibility that can be associated with the concept of travel. Yet, the accompanying text that locates Gary Arndt in a particular place has a destination focus that is touristic. Similarly, the *I Should Log Off* banner looks hand-drawn, to some extent emphasising both the need to write naturally and be active, and thus “log off and live” as stated in the tag line (however, ironically, this banner is produced by logging on and using a computer). Ryan and Conover suggest that such handwritten typefaces also have a more

personal touch. So there is an association with travel in the idea of “logging off and living” and in the realism suggested by a handwritten typeface. Still the title suggests that the author is in fact *not* logging off and living spontaneously as a traveller should. The very act of blogging prevents travelling. This suggests tensions between blogging and travel, a concept explored by Nomadic Matt in his own blog, which will be analysed later in this chapter. Therefore, regardless of whether they refer mainly to the author’s position or themes in the text, title banners with all their accompanying elements have inherent discursive tensions. Here again, the idea of the author as a travel blogger and the text as a travel blog is situated in both tourist and travel discourses.

Titles of independently hosted travel blogs differ from those found on commercially-sponsored travel blog hosting sites in several ways. Independent travel bloggers usually have their own domain name, and the URL of their blog does not include the name of the blog hosting service. Instead, their blogs generally have domain names that are identical to their blog titles. Commercial webhosts such as *Travelblog* and *Travelpod* usually manipulate title bars and URLs to emphasise the destination being described in the travel blogs that they host. However, title bars in independently hosted travel blogs usually reiterate the title and tag lines of the banner below. Although independent travel bloggers are free to coin blog titles that mention destinations, for the most part user names and titles refer to an aspect of the blogger’s personality or the nature of their travel experience and have little to do with where they are going. This is a major point of difference with both commercially sponsored blogs on travel-specific webhosts as well as with texts such as *Tony Wheeler’s Blog*. Furthermore, this has implications for tourism marketing researchers who base their studies of destination image on content analyses of travel blogs, as it indicates that these narratives are more likely to interpret the experience of travel than describe the destination of a journey.

Exploring Names

User names, whether real or pseudonyms, are important cues in a blogger’s self-presentation. Gary Arndt clearly identifies himself as the author of *Everything Everywhere*, listed in *Time* as one of the best blogs of 2010 (Snyder; “About”). In contrast, Nomadic Matt does not divulge his full name in his About page and always

signs his posts with his user name. All his About page reveals is that he is a “twenty-something vagabond” and “a lazy guy from Boston” (Nomadic Matt “About Matt”). It may be argued that the authenticity of a narrative improves when its author uses his or her real name. So employing “Nomadic Matt” as a user name could weaken the credibility of this travel narrative. Yet, a blogger’s pseudonym can make a certain impression on an audience (Trammell and Keshelashvili). In being “nomadic” the author is an adventurous and spontaneous traveller rather than a guidebook-toting tourist. This in turn lends an aura of authenticity to his travel blog, indicating that it is a narrative about real travel experiences. Therefore, a user name may signal a particular aspect of an independent blogger’s online self, strengthen the positions he or she occupies in the travel blog, and validate the narrative.

In general, blog titles are personal in that they display authors’ first names rather than last names. For example, Kate McCulley writes *Adventurous Kate*, thus creating a fairly straightforward title to present herself as an intrepid traveller. Similarly, Heather Cowper’s blog is titled *Heather on Her Travels*. Such first-name titles suggest an intimacy and emphasis on the personal that is in keeping with travel discourse. An interesting exception is Keith Savage, who uses his last name in the title of his blog, *Traveling Savage*. This phrase is also the title for Savage’s About page, in which he describes himself as a man who has given up humdrum routine to become “A hunter, oft-stubbled and bleary-eyed, driven by an insatiable hunger for exploration and experience....This native is restless” (“Keith Savage”). So the title *Traveling Savage* plays on his legal name and reinforces this blogger’s presentation of himself as a person who forsakes civilization to become a savage, in the sense of someone who is a “hunter” and a “native.” Perhaps, it also alludes to his appearance – Savage posts a profile picture of his “oft-stubbled” self to match his description. This title indicates two aspects of the blogger – the person named Keith Savage as well as that of a travelling “savage.” These positions are spelled out in greater detail in his About page where Savage describes how he alternates between working a regular job and travelling. In a sense *Traveling Savage* is both the narrative and the blogger, reinforcing the notion of the blog as a form of self-presentation.

The wide range of names and titles seen in these blogs indicates that these bloggers enjoy a greater freedom to be creative in their self-presentation as compared to individuals who use commercially sponsored travel-specific web hosts. So authors

have greater control over the content they create and provide to their audiences. A second point to note is the similarity of some of the titles and user names in these independently hosted blogs. Independent travel bloggers who call themselves “nomads” or “wanderers” may link to blogs with similar titles or whose authors have similar user names. So for some independent travel bloggers, user names and titles serve as a badge of membership in the travel blogging community. Furthermore, a number of independent travel bloggers also rely on the contexts suggested by words such as “adventurer,” “wanderer” or “nomad” to present themselves as travellers rather than tourists. Although at first glance it seems that travel discourse is predominant in the titling of independent travel blogs and the presentation of authors, there are touristic elements present in the accompanying visual elements, indicating that both discourses play a significant role.

The Voice of the Post

The content of entries can reveal an author’s intentions, especially as bloggers have been known to show a degree of self-awareness and reflect on the practice of blogging and their role as authors (Serfaty; Trammell and Keshelashvili). Bloggers are also usually aware of their audience, and each post is a self-presentational feature created with the reader in mind (Nardi et al.; Trammell and Keshelashvili). Audiences in their turn expect bloggers to write in their “own personal voice” and “be open for dialogue” (Burg and Schmidt 1413). Such expectations may well shape discursive style as authors incorporate various forms of language whose contexts will present them as travel bloggers. For readers, these narrative forms and techniques are the cues by which they recognize the nature of the author and the text. In Bakhtinian terms, each post is an utterance whose discursive contexts and narrative techniques help identify the author as a travel blogger and the text as a travel blog. Such is the hybrid nature of online language in general and the blog in particular that a variety of discourses and narrative techniques may be employed to achieve this (Baym; Schmidt). However, this analysis of blog posts is concerned in particular with how the discourses of travel and tourism, and the tensions between them, constitute the travel blog and the self-presentation of its author.

As authors reflect on the practices of travel and travel blogging, it becomes clear that the two are sometimes viewed as antithetical. According to Anil Polat of *Foxnomad*, “the more you travel the more difficult it is to keep writing. Blogging requires sitting in front of a computer on a regular basis and traveling removes you from that medium” (“Posting Goal”). In Polat’s case, travel interferes with blogging. For other authors, it is blogging that proves an obstacle to travel. Nomadic Matt associates being a traveller with a certain spontaneity that conflicts with his travel blogging:

This website often doesn’t give me the flexibility to make crazy changes in my plans like I used to be able to do...

As a digital nomad, I think it’s easy for to get trapped in the job. The Internet will always take as much time as you give it. I get stuck behind my computer and stuck in my itinerary, and I feel that I have to go here or I have to do that. I’ve forgotten how travel is always at its best when it isn’t planned. (“Go with the Flow”)

For Nomadic Matt, the practice of blogging imposes a schedule on unplanned travel, turning it into something like tourism. The need to write episodes on certain themes or destinations requires him “to go here” and “do that.”

Nomadic Matt and Anil Polat’s frustration with the regularity demanded of blogging draws attention to a discursive tension that the authors themselves may be unaware of. Travel is generally associated with timelessness and this reflects in the narrative style used by writers of travel books. By contrast, tourist discourse is concerned with time and this is indicated in techniques such as the manipulation of tense in advertisements and brochures or the chronological organization of a tourist itinerary. By styling themselves as “nomads,” Nomadic Matt and Anil Polat suggest that they travel without regard for time and that their descriptions of their journeys may reflect the timelessness of travel (and not tourist) experiences. Nevertheless, the blog format organizes these into time-stamped episodes, imposing a touristic temporality, which is nonetheless important for conveying a sense that the narrative is an authentic travel blog.

Another characteristic feature of the narration of travel experiences, as opposed to touristic ones, is the description of the difficulties faced on the journey. This is a principal theme in *Legal Nomads*, where author Jodi Ettenberg has “a whole tag devoted to Adventures in Transportation.” In Laos, she travels by *songthaew*, a form of local transport, with “irate chickens,” “dirt-covered,” vomiting children, and cardboard boxes filled with nails. Still, the discomforts provide an escape from touristic experience: “Careening past towering karst cliffs, past the emerald green river snaking between them, across bridges with incomparable vistas, we (me and the 37 other people – yes, I counted) were catapulted into an alternate universe, away from the dust and dirt of Luang Prabang, away from the tourists and the touts” (Ettenberg “Laos”). Ettenberg does not simply drive through the country. She is “careening,” “catapulted,” and “trundled” across northern Laos, words that seem calculated to impress, upon the reader, the dangers of travel. Even the river she passes is “snaking” between “towering” cliffs. Although travel is generally conceived as a solitary experience, having to endure the company of thirty-seven other persons and animals in a confined space makes the journey all the more difficult, thus defining it as a real travel. Finally, with a travel writer’s appreciation for the journey rather than the destination, she concludes: “Arriving in Nong Khiaw was rewarding: a tiny town nestled between limestone cliffs and seemingly frozen in time. But the ride to get there? Even more memorable” (“Laos”). This is the narration of travel – adventurous, energetic, and characteristically uncomfortable.

Ettenberg’s entry has a clear personal voice, also a distinguishing feature of travel writing, which is often self-focused (Blanton). The discourses of travel and tourism are set apart by narrative style so that “What is largely missing from travel guide books and is central to travel writing is the distinctive presence of the author’s voice” (M. Robinson 309). Tourist discourse is comparatively impersonal and “unidirectional” in addressing an audience (Dann *Tourism* 64). The obvious or implied use of “you,” which recognizes the reader and establishes the author’s role as a blogger, is also integral to “ego-targeting,” a narrative technique that promotes tourism by directly addressing the audience, engaging them in conversation and encouraging their participation in touristic activities (Dann *Tourism*). *Traveling Savage*’s description of Scottish combines all these techniques within a single paragraph:

I associate Scottish pubs with traditional Scottish **folk music**, but pubs didn't always welcome the sound of reels and strathspeys within their walls. Stop in to so-called "traditional pubs" like The Bow Bar or The Abbotsford and you'll find them noticeably lacking music. It seems the conjoining of pubs with traditional music came into its own during the 1960s folk revival, though I would welcome confirmation on this point. Today, folk music is common in pubs, and listening to it is like an umbilical cord to the past, like the culture audibilized. Perhaps it's only natural for the soul to show when you throw folks in a warm room and plop some pints in their hands. ("Scottish Culture")

The entry combines personal opinion in the style of travel discourse with a monologic, authoritative description of pub culture. It also targets readers and engages their participation in the blog post by asking them to verify Savage's description. Here, the paragraph constantly switches between first and second person voices as he expresses personal opinion and experiences, acknowledges the readers' presence, and invites their participation. The difference lies in the fact that unlike the faceless sender of the touristic message, the author of this text presents a recognizable online self.

The personal voice of the author is a defining characteristic of blogs (Reed; Rettberg *Blogging*; Serfaty; Trammell and Keshelashvili). Blogging is "a first person form of writing" (Rettberg 21), and the use of "I" is a key indicator of the personal nature of the narrative. However, blogging is also a style of writing that acknowledges and engages the audience and perhaps encourages their participation (Schmidt). This requires a constant shift of focus between the authorial "I" and the "you" of the implied reader. The authorial "I" of the blogger describes what Scottish pubs mean to him and by addressing "you" the reader, he engages with the audience. This changing voice, indicated by both travel and tourist discourses, is essential to the presentation of Savage as a blogger.

Factual content and a largely impersonal and a monologic style also place the author as an expert on travel – a position of authority and knowledge that is often claimed by the speaker of tourist discourse. Such tourist discourse comes to the fore in some paragraphs of the same entry on Scottish pub culture:

Since Roman times, pubs, or tabernae as they were known, have played an integral role as the gathering place for communities as well as the accommodation for passing travelers. In some pubs I've visited, like The Abbotsford, there is a cloying sense of accumulated **history** seeping from the very walls, like the ghost of cigarette smoke. In Edinburgh, as in other parts of Scotland, many pubs have been in business for hundreds of years and have provided the background scene for royalty, famous artists, and infamous criminals. Pubs are generally proud of this heritage, and many showcase pictures, paintings, informational plaques, and the original fittings. ("Scottish Culture")

But for the mention of Savage's own visit to The Abbotsford, this paragraph could easily have come out of a guidebook or tourist brochure. Yet, the largely impersonal description is momentarily personalized in the metaphoric first-person description of Savage's travel experience of Abbotsford. This is a reminder that the text is a personal narrative and it validates a post that would otherwise be associated with tourist discourse. This is similar to the switching of voices in *Tony Wheeler's Blog*, but the different context of this description achieves a different outcome.

Keith Savage is similarly touristic when he acknowledges the reader, in the manner expected of a blogger, and recommends a trip to Scotland: "Now it's time to consider where, in this incredibly varied country, you should spend your hard-earned vacation" ("Planning a Trip to Scotland, Part 2"). The conversational style, the suggestion of personalized advice, the promotion of an "incredibly varied country," and the encouragement to consumer Scotland, all involve ego-targeting. However, the sentences that follow lack the characteristic euphoria of tourist discourse: "I won't sugarcoat it; you won't be able to see it all. Not in one trip at least. Planning your destinations in Scotland is at once a horrible war of attrition and some of the most fun I've ever had trip planning. Difficult decisions are ahead. Prepare yourself" ("Planning a Trip to Scotland, Part 2"). The need to make "difficult decisions" suggests that the trip is not something that is undertaken easily, an idea that is more in keeping with the concept of travel rather than tourism. This shift in discursive style suggests the post is not merely promotional, that the destination is not merely a

tourist attraction, and that it offers a travel experience. The touch of realism in narrative style may add to the credibility of the text and its author.

When Readers Respond

A more direct form of audience engagement in the travel blog occurs when authors invite comments from readers, thus initiating a dialogue between the two. Entries on *Traveling Savage* often end with a question that invites the audience to discuss its themes. Concluding a post on Edinburgh, Keith Savage asks, “Have you explored Edinburgh’s underground? Do you have tips for me or suggestions for things I should explore?” (“Edinburgh's Old Town”). Most replies offer few suggestions. Instead readers share their own experiences of Edinburgh or simply express their appreciation for the post. Nevertheless, this provides an opportunity for Savage to address readers personally. Answering a comment describing a “ghost tour,” he writes, “Agreed about the spookiness, but it was fun. Did you do any other ghost tours? My wife and I went on one that took us to the Covenanters’ Prison in Greyfriar’s Kirkyard and it scared the pants off us” (“Edinburgh’s Old Town”).

On the whole, such interaction fulfils audience expectations and so adds credibility to the text as a blog and its author as blogger. Comments, such as the one Savage makes here, addressed specifically to a certain reader, written in the first person voice, and describing a personal experience, highlight the authorial voice that, for Robinson, sets forms like travel writing apart from commercially-oriented texts such as guidebooks (309). At the same time, the “singling out process,” which involves a positioning of the reader as a “confidante” with whom the travel destination and its attendant experiences are shared, is a technique often used in tourism advertising (Dann 186-187). This technique allows Savage to strengthen his relationship with his audience and convince them of his standing as a blogger. While he stops short of openly promoting Greyfriar’s Kirkyard as a tourist destination, his reply suggests a similar intimacy and sharing of the Edinburgh experience. Savage’s manipulation of a touristic style of address in combination with the personal anecdote allows him to strengthen his presentation of a traveller self and his position as a blogger.

There is a reversal of this process when readers address the authors and recommend destinations. Replying to a comment from Jodi Ettenberg in *Legal Nomads*, a visitor going by the user name Thommy advises a trip to Chiang Mai:

...I have great memories...that's one of the places [sic] we found that it is absolutely a place we could stay for a couple of months or even a year or two. We just stayed for a week, just enough time to see the city, ride the scooter to hills and villages around, enjoying a daily massage by the blind people and finding great food every day (we love food as well!) Lovely place! If you haven't been to the so far, you should try the very nice places in the Yunnan province in China and of course Ubud in Bali. They are as well places worth staying for a longer while, touching ground and recharging [sic] for further travels!

Although this begins as a description of personal memories, this sort of euphoric testimonial is typically touristic, according to Dann. This comment is a personalized recommendation that targets Ettenberg and perhaps acknowledges the larger audience of blog visitors. As Thommy engages her in conversation, he describes Chiang Mai in the "positive and glowing terms" characteristic of tourist discourse. The food is "great," and the places are "lovely" and "nice." His promotion of the attractions of China and Bali is almost worthy of a tourist advertisement, but for the errors in grammar that mark it as a personal message. Here, the touristic style places Thommy in a position of authority as he shares his experiences with Ettenberg and other readers.

Here both Ettenberg and Savage become confidantes and recipients of their readers' recommendations. They are placed in this position by readers who respond to the ego-targeting techniques of their entries. However, when readers respond, they do not address not the unknown authoritative promoter of tourism, but the self as traveller that these authors present. Likewise, as the conversation develops between authors and specific readers, the ego-targeting becomes a personal dialogue that adds conviction to the author's position as a traveller. These conversations indicate a genuine polyphony where both authors and readers speak in multiple voices.

Sometimes, tensions arise when readers who assume such a touristic position of authority question the travel discourse in the post. One reader's reaction to Anil Polat's post on "What It's Like to Travel in Northern Iraq" is one such example. Much like Ettenberg in her Laotian post, Polat often refers to the difficulties of travel – the looming threat to "eggshell security" of the region and the scarcity of luxury accommodation are principal themes. Although the entry receives a number of positive and admiring comments, one anonymous user takes exception to this description. Having criticised the post and its accompanying photographs, the visitor simply known as "Onlooker" writes, "I find that your writing is pretty useless and inaccurate, and missing a lot of information, please do us all a favor and don't visit us again"⁷ (Polat "Northern Iraq"). As if to emphasise this, the reader posts links to web pages advertising hotels and sights that Polat has neglected to mention. This is ego-targeting of a different kind. Like Thommy in *Legal Nomads*, this visitor engages not Polat alone, but also other readers of this post. Despite having a user name, Onlooker is something of an unknown sender who assumes a position of touristic authority by recommending other websites, which according to him (or her) describe the authentic Iraq. Onlooker's more positive portrayal of northern Iraq is also comparatively touristic, and readers are invited to participate in this Iraq instead of *Foxnomad*'s. Polat's travel voice and his credibility as a travel blogger are the targets here.

Polat, in his turn, defends his post as accurate, refers to the fact that he was travelling in the company of another blogger, and points out that, "Commenting anonymously on a blog doesn't make you an authority on anything" ("Northern Iraq"). This suggests that to Polat at least, writing of his trip to Iraq as a travel experience – adventurous and possibly dangerous – is important to the credibility of the travel blog. Bloggers usually have the option of deleting or not displaying comments that they dislike. Therefore, it is difficult to establish whether Polat has displayed all of this reader's comments in their entirety. However, he displays enough of the dialogue to drive home his own message about Northern Iraq, and the etiquette expected of visitors to *Foxnomad*. "I'd appreciate it if you'd stop trolling around on my *YouTube* page," he writes, finally asserting that "I've tried my best to

⁷ In the ensuing dialogue, it transpires that the reader is residing in London, although he/she writes as an authority on northern Iraq.

be objective about what it's like to travel in northern Iraq" (Polat "Northern Iraq"). For other visitors, this display of comments, indicating a willingness to engage with readers, regardless of their opinions, may reinforce Polat's own position of authority. His actions, as much as the substance of his defence, support his self-presentation as a travel blogger. Here, comments are a strategically controlled self-presentational space. Consequently, the display may be limited to what is useful to the blogger.

The posts and comments analysed here suggest that the extent to which travel or tourist discourses constitute the text differs from blog to blog, from entry to entry, within an entry or comment and even within the space of a single paragraph. The same may be said of the conversations that develop out of comments from the readers and the author's responses. In both comments and entries, there is a constant shifting between the narrative techniques associated with the two discourses. The resulting discursive tension is a dynamic one, changing as authors write authoritatively about their experiences in tourist discourse or speak in the personal travel voice that establishes their position as bloggers. In the process they reiterate the themes of the blog and engage audiences as expected of bloggers. Both tourist and travel discourses are therefore essential for an author's self-presentation and for the text to work convincingly as a blog.

I link, therefore...

By and large, definitions of blogs refer to links as a principal feature. In fact, early weblogs were "link-driven sites" (Blood). A typical blog usually links to content within the blog itself – other pages, an author profile, photographs, and archived posts – and external links to content hosted on a different website. Providing links, particularly to other similar blogs is generally regarded as an essential practice in blogging. In independently hosted travel blogs, these external links fall broadly into two categories – those that lead to content created by the same bloggers on other social media platforms and those that lead to content by other authors or organizations. The former usually consists of links to a page on a social networking site such as *Facebook*, a microblogging service like *Twitter*, a bookmarking service, or a photo sharing website. In the case of the latter, these could be links to similar travel blogs or other travel-related online resources such as accommodation or flight booking websites or travel forums. Both kinds of links are

self-presentational elements, allowing authors to create a sense of who they are through the associations they have with other individuals or other online content. This section discusses external links to content by other authors, while content on platform such as *Facebook* and *Twitter* is examined in the following chapter.

In general, bloggers link to other sites to increase the visibility of their blogs and to declare their affiliation to a similar group of authors (Lovink). Their selection of links is usually careful and deliberate, creating relations between persons and texts (Reed 235; Serfaty 26). By this means, they engage an audience and present various aspects of their personality through their associations with other individuals (Donath and Boyd; Merchant). Therefore, as a reflection of the personal choices and relationships that these bloggers want to encourage, links are essentially self-presentational. For instance, Barbara Weibel's *Hole in the Donut Travels* links to other independent travel blogs, usually by authors who have a similar content and purpose for their texts. *501 Places* and *Fevered Mutterings*, both on Weibel's blogroll, include the authors' professional portfolios in the same style as *Hole in the Donut Travels*. Both these bloggers also invite advertising sponsorship, just as Weibel does. Such links to similar authors position Weibel as a member of a larger community of travel bloggers that shares a similar vision of how travel blogging is practiced.

Links to other travel blogs often appear alongside entries in the form of a blogroll, a sidebar of links. The blogroll usually consists of a blogger's *personal* selection of links, generally to other *personal* narratives in the form of blogs. In effect, the content of a blogroll presents the blogger. Some independent travel blogs use a separate page, in place of a blogroll, to locate external links to other similar blogs and/or travel-related websites. This allows authors to segregate content they have created themselves, such as entries, from links to content outside the blog created by others. The display style on this page reflects the actions of the authors and can provide useful insights into their self-presentation. For example, bloggers such as Anil Polat and Gary Arndt group their links into categories that reflect their personal interests and the goals and positions expressed in their About pages. It should also be noted that linking to other similar blogs creates an association with the personal discourse of other bloggers whereas linking to websites that promote travel services connects the blog with the commercial contexts of tourism. When an

independent travel blog has links to both personal and commercial content within a single page, the inherent contextual differences create discursive tensions in their self-presentation.

Getting Personal with Blogrolls

Forks and Jets, *Hole in the Donut Travels*, *Killing Batteries*, and *Wayne on the Road* all use the blogroll format to display their links to other blogs. In each of these blogs, a great deal of commercial content in the form of advertising appears over or alongside the blogroll. In *Wayne on the Road*, the blogroll itself appears halfway down the page on a sidebar titled “Other Travelers” (a label that clarifies author Wayne Stadler’s own position), just above a panel of advertisements sponsored by Google (Fig. 5). Similarly, the blogroll listing Barbara Weibel’s “Favourite Travel Blogs” in *Hole in the Donut Travels* appears below a series of advertisements for travel-related services (Fig. 5). There is a similar juxtaposition of advertising and blogrolls in *Killing Batteries* and *Forks and Jets*.

The very different discursive contexts of these link sets can create tensions, both between the various link sets and between links and posts in the blog. A blogroll represents a connection with other forms of personal discourse. On the other hand, external links to advertisements can be seen as elements that tie the blog to forms of commercial discourse. The advertisement for Disney World tickets in Weibel’s blog is touristic, while her blogroll with its links to other similar independent travel bloggers associates the author with other travel voices. A second point to consider here is the tension between a set of external links and the blog post itself. In Weibel’s blog, the advertising for tourist services often frames a post that is very personal, written in the discursive style of travel. This creates a perhaps unforeseen discursive tension between the external links and the entry. In both cases this indicates personal and commercial discourses are interdependent since the advertisements probably sponsor *Hole in the Donut Travels* and thus support the existence of both the blogroll and the post (which in turn provide the authenticity that makes the blog a viable commercial venture).

Some of these authors also use their blogs to promote their professional interests and provide links to their portfolios. Wayne Stadler of *Wayne on the Road* mentions his experience in the film industry as well as website design, while Barbara

Weibel provides links to her travel writing. Similarly, Leif Pettersen’s *Killing Batteries* also promotes the Lonely Planet guidebooks he has co-authored and provides links to *Amazon.com* so that interested readers can purchase these books online. The “Privacy Policy” on each of these advertisements indicates that Pettersen an “Amazon Associate,” is a website owner who earns “referral fees” by placing links to *Amazon.com*. So the links serve to promote Pettersen’s work, earn money, and engage with the commercial discourse of *Amazon.com*. Although each set of links is personal in the sense that the authors have chosen to include them in the text, they represent a different aspect of the authors and their blogs - their commercial concerns, personal preferences, and professional interests. Furthermore, the discursive contexts of such links may be quite different from the personal voice suggested by the blogroll.

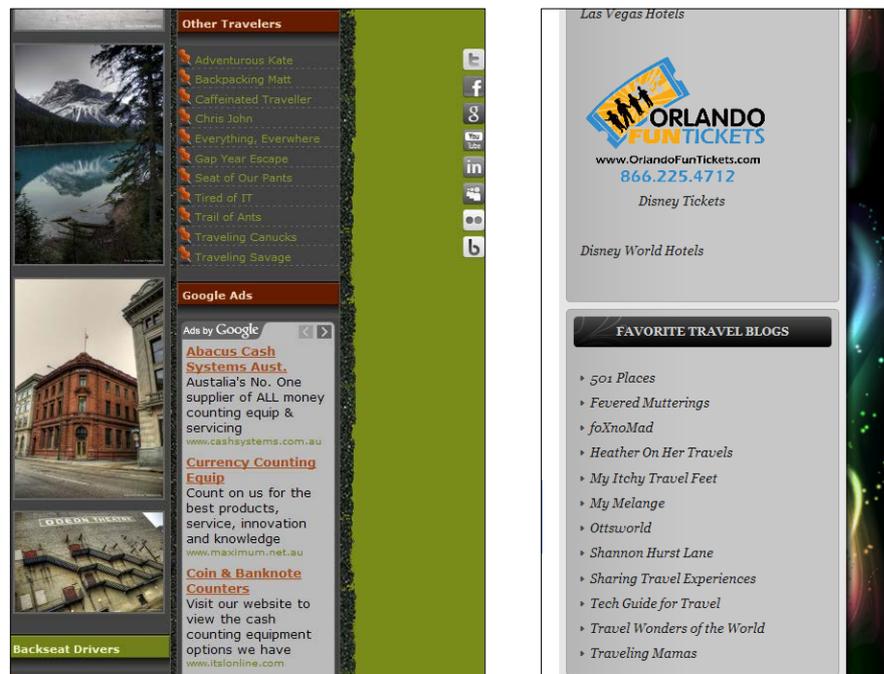


Fig. 5: The blogrolls and advertisements in *Wayne on the Road* (L) and *Hole in the Donut Travels* (R).

Although most of these blogrolls list other travel blogs, there are exceptions. The different positions an author occupies, as well as his or her unique interests, are often reflected in the way links are chosen and blogrolls are constructed. For example, *Wayne on the Road* is more unusual with its two blogrolls – one that lists personal blogs of friends and another that features independent travel blogs such as *Traveling Savage* and *Adventurous Kate*. Here, the blog’s author, Wayne Stadler

indicates his affiliation with two different communities and presents two different aspects of himself – the personal friend and the independent traveller. Similarly, travel is just one of many interests for Leif Pettersen whose *Killing Batteries* includes links to cartoonist Scott Adams’ “Dilbert” blog, a website for freelance writing, and other travel-related resources. Such links indicate the other positions that Pettersen occupies and performs in his blog – a Dilbert fan, a writer, etc. Thus the blogroll primarily affiliates these authors with the travel blogging community and validates their performance as bloggers. In addition to this, the content of the blogroll itself supplements their initial self-presentation by revealing other aspects of self. Therefore, the blogroll shares the author’s culture with others, and does not merely indicate the culture shared with a larger community of bloggers.

Saying it with a Links Page

Instead of a blogroll, some blogs display links to other travel blogs or travel resources on a separate page, a strategy evident in *Everything Everywhere*, *Traveling Savage*, *Nomadic Matt*, *I Should Log Off*, *Heather on her Travels*, *A Wandering Sole*, and *Legal Nomads*. Allocating a separate page for such external links allows these independent bloggers to do a number of things with the content. First, they draw a clear line between content that is their own and material that is hosted on other websites. Second, these authors often use the available space to preface their links list, usually with an explanation of their selection criteria. Third, they also use the extra space to provide more links. Some of these authors annotate the links, describing the blogs or indicating the usefulness of a particular online travel resource. Both the choice of links and the accompanying explanations can offer a better understanding of the nature of the self-presentation of these bloggers.

Linking in blogs is, according to Geert Lovink, mainly about indicating that “I share your culture” (252). This is often evident in independently hosted travel blogs, whose authors can be quite discerning when it comes to displaying their affiliations. *Traveling Savage* contains an annotated list of a number of independently hosted travel blogs on a page titled “Good Reads.” Keith Savage, the author, introduces these links as “other interesting stories from travelers around the world” (“Good Reads”). This preface supports his position as a “traveler” and situates his blog as one of many “interesting stories” with links to other similar blogs

that “share his culture.” What this culture constitutes exactly becomes evident when a reader scrolls down the page. Savage tends to link to bloggers who also use *Twitter*, like himself, and each blog link is accompanied by a link to corresponding *Twitter* feeds. According to his annotations, the bloggers on Savage’s list share his need to escape the routine of life in the city to travel the world. Titles such as *The Jungle Princess*, who has “ditched the big-city life” echo *Traveling Savage* while *The Wanderlass* is, like Keith Savage, “casting off the mold of society” (Savage “Good Reads”). Even if the “tourist” label features in a blog, as it does in *Tourist2townie* the accompanying explanation that this author “gave upstate New York the pink slip and jetted off to Buenos Aires,” suggests a shared interest in the kind of travel experience Savage himself would seek. A number of these bloggers are in their thirties, about the same age as Savage. Many of them are described as independent travellers on solo round-the-world trips. Thus the links page, on the whole, solidifies Savage’s own traveller position by placing him in a larger community of like-minded individuals.

Authors such as Anil Polat of *Foxnomad* and Gary Arndt of *Everything Everywhere* also reserve separate pages for external links. Both Arndt and Polat preface their links with an invitation to other bloggers to exchange links with them. This serves the twofold purpose of increasing the visibility of their blogs and engaging an audience of other bloggers. These bloggers group their links on the basis of content and format. These categories often reflect the bloggers’ interests, and become a self-presentational tool. Polat, for example, lists a number of independent travel blogs under “Green Travel” and “Technology” and other travel-related websites under “Travel Resources” (“Links”). The categories show him to be a technology enthusiast with an interest in the environment, thus reinforcing the “digital nomad” of his About page. *Foxnomad* also advertises travel-related services, and Polat’s personal selection of links is offset by commercial advertising along the right-hand margin of the page. On the other hand, Arndt’s “Travel Blog Directory” is free of advertising and is largely organized according to destination, although there are also “Travel Industry/Consumer Blogs,” “Travel Podcasts” and “Travel Resources” (“Travel Blog Directory”). So, the “Travel Blog Directory” is not strictly a list of blogs. Both authors list links to other travel-related resources on the same page as independent travel blogs. Thus tensions may exist between the different

categories, just as they do between the different sets of external links in *Wayne on the Road* or *Hole in the Donut Travels*. Although the links themselves may represent tourist discourse, by categorizing these, authors authenticate their own position as experts on travel. For the owners of these travel-related websites, these bloggers’ position as travellers and the inclusion of these links in a travel blog validates the websites and promotes tourism.

Nomadic Matt uses both annotation and categorization in two separate pages for external links – one listing independent travel blogs, the other providing categorized, annotated links to travel-related resources. Like Arndt and Polat, he positions himself as something of a travel advisor by providing links to various travel-related resources on a “Travel Links” page. The language of his annotations is impersonal and even imperative, much like the tourist discourse described by Graham Dann, as is evident in this description of *JohnnyJet*: “A great booking and information resource for travelers. They have a link to just about anything you need. If you are looking for good deals, don’t forget to sign up for his newsletter” (“Travel Links”). There is also a touch of touristic euphoria as well as more advice in his description of another website named *Couchsurfing*: “This website allows you to stay on people’s couches or in spare rooms for free!! It’s a great way to save money and meet people” (Nomadic Matt “Travel Links”).

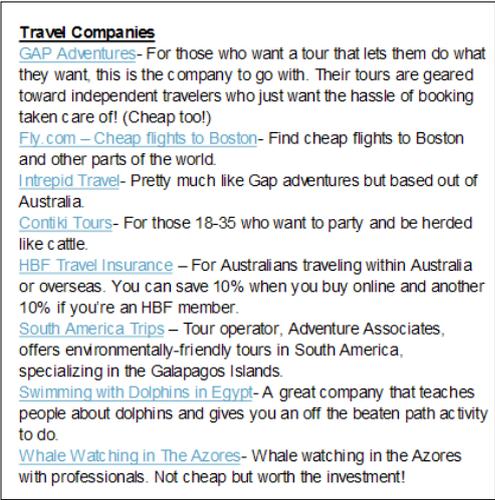


Fig. 6: The “Travel Links” page on *Nomadic Matt’s Travel Site* (L) and the annotated list of links to “Travel Companies.”

Such touristic annotations place Nomadic Matt in an authoritative position and acknowledge the readers. Yet, the links themselves represent personal travel discourse. *JohnnyJet* appears to merit inclusion because it is a website for “travelers.” Similarly the *Couchsurfing* concept, where travellers are guests of local residents who are willing to offer a bed, suggests an accommodation style that is an alternative to tourist hotels. Thus, in the midst of tensions between the contexts of these websites and the annotations, Nomadic Matt achieves both the audience engagement that presents the self as a blogger and positions himself as a proponent of travel, as indicated in his About page.

Discursive tensions in other annotations further reinforce this and reveal different aspects to Nomadic Matt’s self. Some of the descriptions indicate his contempt for guided tourism and the need to be a “Nomadic” and independent traveller. This is evident in the annotated links to “Travel Companies,” seen in Fig. 6. Here GAP Adventures heads the list as a company that allows travellers to “do what they want” (Nomadic Matt “Travel Links”). Similarly, Swimming with Dolphins in Egypt is praised for being “A great company” that “gives you an off the beaten path experience” whereas there is a touch of scorn for those who prefer to “be herded like cattle” with Contiki Tours (Nomadic Matt “Travel Links”). This subtle message that “I *don’t* share your culture” is perhaps unintentionally ironic, given that the selection and inclusion of this link suggests that there is a shared connection between the two websites. Clearly, there is a tension between the author’s position as a blogger who provides travel-related information and as an independent “nomadic” traveller.

The last item on the “Travel Links” page is a link to Nomadic Matt’s “Travel Blogs” page where readers can find “the BEST travel blogs and trips on the Internet” (Nomadic Matt “Travel Links”). This page has neither categories nor annotations and consists of an extensive list of links to independent travel blogs. In effect, the entire page is one long blogroll, across several columns. Locating the blogs on a separate page allows Nomadic Matt to differentiate between two different positions he occupies – that of the expert travel advisor, and that of an authentic blogger.

The different styles of linking in these independent travel blogs is another indication that these authors enjoy greater flexibility when presenting themselves, as compared with those who use commercially sponsored travel blog hosts. The use of

blogrolls or links pages in various ways also shows how the same features may be used differently as self-presentational tools. Various strategies such as categorization and annotation reveal different aspects of the independent travel blogger's self. Keith Savage's annotations, for example, allow him to reinforce the notion of a shared culture between his and other blogs as well as the particular positions he occupies. Bloggers such as Arndt and Polat use their selection and categorization of particular travel blogs and websites for a similar purpose. Using a slightly different technique, Nomadic Matt also indicates the different positions he occupies by using annotations. Therefore, regardless of how links are displayed, they ultimately reinforce the positions stated in the authors' About pages. As in other features discussed here, the position is often that of the traveller, and this is constituted in travel as well as tourist discourses.

The Shape of the Independent Travel Blog

The personal voice of blogger is more easily identified in independent travel blogs than it is in *Tony Wheeler's Blog*, or the travel blogs on advertising sponsored travel-specific webhosts. One principal difference between these blogs and those found on sponsored web hosts is the greater flexibility that authors enjoy when creating content and designing web pages. More features are available for use as self-presentational tools, with the result that the author as travel blogger is defined not just in the language of the post, but in visual elements as well. Here, the paratextual elements indicate a greater individualism, the About pages elaborate on the themes of the blog and the positions of its author, and both posts and links build on the self that is initially constructed in these elements. Furthermore, the greater interaction between authors and readers highlights the audience-oriented and self-presentational nature of the narrative.

If the self as independent travel blogger finds greater expression because of this flexibility, then so do the discursive tensions between travel and tourism. The main difference is that the tensions in sponsored blogs arise in part from the relationships between the authors, webhosts, sponsors, and readers. Simply put, the nature of the publisher plays an important part in the discursive tensions. In independent travel blogs, a good deal of the tension between travel and tourist discourses grows out of an author's awareness of the reader and the need to indicate

various positions that support the presentation of self as a traveller and as a blogger of travel experiences. An author's manipulation of narrative techniques central to tourist discourse enables him or her to acknowledge and address readers. Both discourses are integral to engaging the audience and placing the blogger in a position of authority and defining the relationship between bloggers and their audiences.

Finally, it must be said that features such as the blogroll and the comments box, both of which are widely regarded as essential to blogs, are developed to a greater extent than they are in *Tony Wheeler's Blog* and in the blogs on *Travelpod*, *Travelblog*, and *Bootsnall*. Bloggers manipulate these formal features to suit their self-presentation. Technical features are therefore a principal means of displaying individuality. The discourses of travel and tourism are variously integrated in these features so that the tensions between these discourses play out differently in each blog. However, the analysis is as yet incomplete as it does not consider the content created by the authors on other social media platforms. Visual elements contribute significantly to the online presentation of self, but this chapter has not discussed the role of photographs. Accordingly, the following chapter considers the notion that these other online platforms disperse the content of the independent travel blog and extend the self-presentation of its author. The penultimate chapter then examines the photographs hosted both in independent travel blogs as well as on other photo-sharing services.

Beyond the Borders of the Blog

The “Networked Self” of the Independent Travel Blogger

Blogs tend to have a “distributed nature” and link to content created by their authors on other social media platforms (Helmond 7). Generally, such content is either embedded in the blog or accessed via a sidebar of links, usually in the form of buttons known as “widgets”⁸ (148), which is something of an anchor that helps to “embed the scattered self in one place” (Helmond 7). The inclusion of widgets and dispersion of content across several online platforms is often seen in independent travel blogs. An analysis of how independent travel bloggers present themselves and describe their narratives as travel blogs must therefore move beyond the borders of the blog. Accordingly, this chapter examines several online platforms linked to independent travel blogs. It demonstrates how bloggers extend their self-presentation through a display of connections to people and other online resources, through audience engagement, and through specific affordances that are particularly useful for highlighting themes and positions in the blog. Furthermore, it discusses how strategies and narrative techniques of self-presentation on these platforms also involve a negotiation of the discursive tensions between travel and tourism.

Several researchers of social networking sites write of a “networked identity performance” or a “networked self” (Boyd and Heer; Papacharissi “Virtual Geographies”). While the word “scattered” implies disorder and fragmentation, the term “networked” suggests connectivity or even unity and is therefore more suitable for describing a presentation of self that extends from a travel blog onto other platforms. Many of the independent travel blogs included in this study link to the same social media platforms. Social networking site *Facebook* and microblogging service *Twitter* are widely used and widgets for these appear on the home pages of *Everything Everywhere*, *Forks and Jets*, *Hole in the Donut Travels*, *Legal Nomads*, *Nomadic Matt’s Travel Site*, *Traveling Savage*, *A Wandering Sole* and *Wayne on the*

⁸ Kruse et al define a “widget” as “a simple graphical object, such as a pushbutton...or menu that allows users easy interaction with the program” (148). They also list different types of widgets such as buttons, sliders, and lists. Although this definition is taken from the context of a computer program written for the study of spectrometry, it is equally useful to describe the widgets that appear in blogs.

Road. In addition to this, most blogs also use *StumbleUpon* as a bookmarking tool. Several blogs use photo-sharing services. One of the most attractive features of *Everything Everywhere* is the embedded slideshow of photographs shared via *SmugMug* that heads its front page. A few blogs such as *Hole in the Donut Travels* and *Nomadic Matt's Travel Site* share videos via *YouTube*. The idea of a networked self is therefore useful for examining how authors re-present and enhance positions stated in their blogs – such as travel blogger, travel expert, or travel enthusiast – on these websites.

Each independent travel blog can, however, have a very different mix of social tools. For example, *A Wandering Sole* does not link to a bookmarking tool, whereas *Traveling Savage* does. Such differences indicate that presentation styles can vary according to the social tools being used. Choice of social tools is significant to the self-presentation that takes place in independent travel blogs, and there is ample scope for further research in this area. However, it is difficult to fully analyse the presentation of self as travel blogger across all the aforementioned platforms in the space of a single chapter. Therefore, this chapter focuses on two social tools that many independent travel bloggers use – an online social networking service (*Facebook*) and a microblogging service (*Twitter*).

One of the principal means by which individuals articulate a networked self is by connecting to other people online (Baym; Papacharissi *Private Sphere*). Describing the style of self-presentation on social networking sites as implicit rather than explicit, Zizi Papacharissi writes, “individuals use the tools at hand to present themselves in ‘show not tell’ mode by pointing and connection to individuals, groups, or points of reference” (“Virtual Geographies” 141). This implies there are two dimensions to the networked self. Not only is it situated in a network of social media surrounding the blog (technological), but also displayed via networking between individuals (social). A second point to note here is that a presentation of the networked self ultimately involves “tools at hand,” suggesting that formal elements and technical features of online platforms may be used as self-presentational elements. This chapter focuses on how travel bloggers and their narratives are presented across a network of social media and how these individuals “network” themselves, using the diverse affordances available to them.

Social media allow users to structure information about themselves in different ways (Rettberg “Freshly Generated for You, and Barack Obama' How Social Media Represent Your Life”). The same technical features of an online platform can be used variously by different authors as self-presentational elements (Pinch). According to Papacharissi, the architecture and tone of a social platform indicates how users should “condition their self-performances” (“Virtual Geographies” 211). She also concludes that applications provided by a website like *Facebook* can in fact shape the presentation of self:

On Facebook, initial introductions may be more playful and the network provides a wider set of props or applications to assist in self-presentation....this expressive equipment is employed to construct not necessarily a more convincing performance of the self, but a potentially more flamboyant one. The props do not necessarily enable authenticity, but they do facilitate multiplicity, showing audiences the many ‘faces’ of one’s identity and simultaneously negotiating and presenting identity to a variety of audiences. (“Virtual Geographies” 211-212)

Based on this research, it can be argued that formal features of *Facebook* can be self-presentational elements. An individual’s selection of the applications available on a single platform has significance as well. For example, the very fact that a blogger uses a *Facebook* page instead of a profile influences the extent and intimacy of social interaction.

The content distributed across these social media platforms can also reveal a great deal about these authors. By constructing such “controlled performances,” individuals can ensure that they present only what they intend an audience to see (Papacharissi “Virtual Geographies” 210). In the case of social networking sites, this means deciding who has access to this information or restricting interactivity. On a *Facebook* profile, this could involve adding an individual to one’s “Friends List” or limiting access to the Wall application. Authors may also use specific narrative techniques to reinforce the themes and positions they present in their blogs. Thus, both the nature of the content on a social media platform and an independent

blogger's actions and decisions with regard to how this is made available can contribute to self-presentation.

Several factors must be considered in a discussion of the "networked self" in independent travel blogs. First, the way in which specific features are used for networking the self as travel blogger is important. Keeping this in mind, this chapter discusses how various formal features of *Facebook* and *Twitter* present independent travel bloggers. A second important factor is the manner in which individuals network with others via these platforms. Both *Facebook* and *Twitter* are used to connect with people and it is necessary to examine the implications of these connections. A third factor to be considered is authorial decisions regarding display of information. What is *not* said on these platforms can be as informative as the content that is created and made available to an audience. It should be noted that the travel experiences narrated on these platforms and the independent travel blog itself may form just a small part of an individual's online performance of self. Content on these platforms may reveal aspects to a blogger's personality that have little to do with the self as travel blogger. However, this chapter is concerned with how self-presentation on *Facebook* and *Twitter* relates to the travel experience and the author as travel blogger.

Find Me on Facebook

By and large, the independent travel blogs included in this study link to at least one social networking service, usually *Facebook*. The principal purpose of connecting to this social networking service is to improve the visibility of the travel blog by creating and sharing relevant content on a page or a profile. Given that many other travel bloggers link their blogs to *Facebook*, it is possible that connecting to a social networking site is in itself a self-presentational strategy that validates the author's position as a genuine blogger. The selection of *Facebook* as a social tool also enhances the impression of the blogger as a networked self. This is not merely because *Facebook* is a highly popular social networking service with over 900 million users (Hachman). Authors have been known to use the symbolic meaning of a brand to enhance their online self-presentation (Schau and Gilly). By exhibiting a connection to a well-known service, these bloggers claim an affinity with other *Facebook* users within their audience. They imply, "I'm like you, I use *Facebook*

too. Follow me, ‘Like’ me.” In other words, authors simultaneously network the self as travel blogger across a social network, while also indicating that their travel blogger self is a networked self. Thus the link to *Facebook* both expands the blog’s audience and draws on the contexts of the service to present an independent travel blogger as networked because he or she is using particular recognizable brands of social media.



Figure 1: Clockwise from top left, widgets for *Facebook* and *Twitter* as seen on the pages of *A Wandering Sole*, *Traveling Savage*, and *Legal Nomads*

Several different techniques are used to display the link to *Facebook*, each offering its own advantages as a self-presentational strategy. Often, this connection takes the form of a button-like widget on a sidebar, as is the case with *A Wandering Sole* and *Legal Nomads*. These button widgets appearing, as they often do, below the profile picture of the blogger (see Fig. 1) are a clear visualization of the “distributed nature of the blog” and the travel blogger as a networked self. Also, the style of the button itself ensures that the *Facebook* symbol is distinctly visible, and makes obvious the author’s affiliation with the brand. Alternatively, a section of the *Facebook* page is embedded within the home page of the travel blog – a style

preferred by *Hole in the Donut Travels* – showing visitors thumbnail pictures of users who “Like” the blogger’s *Facebook* page. While button widgets present the travel blogger self as networked across various platforms, the embedded page section shows the blogger in a network of other *Facebook* users. *Traveling Savage* uses both widgets and embedded pages, thus giving the sense of Keith Savage as a travel blogger who is networked across platforms and networking with people. Most blogs also incorporate a *Facebook* “Like” button that appears usually below each entry. When readers click on this button to share a link to a blog entry with other *Facebook* users, they effectively help authors distribute the content of their blog across the social networking site. Thus, an author can potentially present the self as travel blogger to a wider audience simply through the network of connections made with other *Facebook* users.

The decision to distribute a travel blog via *Facebook* essentially requires balancing two different aspects of the online self presented in the blog. Although travel is generally presented as an experience that is solitary, blogging is by nature communal. The writing of a travel blog requires a balancing of the presentation of a self as networking with others, while also retaining the position of a solitary traveller. In the process of networking the online self of their travel blogs, individuals begin to demonstrate a professional approach in addressing mass audiences that is comparable to that of tourism promoters who use social media to increase awareness of their brand. Lonely Planet’s *Facebook* page, for example, promotes articles on the company’s website and engages visitors in conversation in much the same way that independent travel bloggers address audiences and promote blog posts on their *Facebook* pages.

That’s What Friends Are For

According to Boyd and Ellison, “social network sites are web-based services that allow individuals to (1) construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, (2) articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and (3) view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system” (211). This definition implies that a “semi-public profile” and a “list of connections” are the main features of a social networking site, with an

emphasis on the latter. In another study, Donath and Boyd similarly focus on connections as essential to self-presentation:

Social networking sites are on-line environments in which people create a self-descriptive profile and then make links to other people they know on the site, creating a network of personal connections....their network of connections is displayed as an integral piece of their self-presentation.

The public display of connections is one of the most salient features of the social sites. (72)

This research suggests that the making and displaying connections to others via *Facebook* is integral to the presentation of independent travel bloggers.

Authors may distribute content from their blogs and extend the presentation of self as travel blogger either to a personal profile on *Facebook* or to a *Facebook* page. By and large, the independent travel bloggers in this study prefer to use the latter. “Links to other people” are a principal feature in both profiles and pages. Writing from the perspective of Goffman’s theories, Papacharissi argues that such linking is a crucial element of “face,” or the performance associated with self-presentation,⁹ which is “established and verified by displaying one’s circle of association. Similarly, inferences about tastes, social habits, routines and character are made by the company one keeps” (“Virtual Geographies” 210). Visitors to a page may interact with a number of other users who “Like” the content, while visitors to a profile may (if the privacy settings permit) see an author’s “Friends,” persons whose profiles they link to. There are other kinds of connections as well – links to “Favourite Pages” on *Facebook*, links to *Facebook* pages of other blogs, links to other websites created by the same author, and links to other online content of interest to the author. Each of these indicates a blogger’s personal interests and the kind of associations he or she wishes to make. So an examination of self-presentation in the “network of connections” in these *Facebook* pages and profiles must take into account links to both people and other content.

⁹ Papacharissi sees self-presentation as performance. Basing her interpretation on Goffman’s *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (1959), she describes the process of self-presentation as “a performance taking place on a single or multiple stages” (210).

A Profile in My Links

Forks and Jets, *Foxnomad*, and *Killing Batteries* all link to the personal *Facebook* profiles of their authors. *Forks and Jets* display a widget at the bottom of the home page. *Killing Batteries* simply provides a link from within a box that reads, “I’m on Facebook too: Will you be my friend?” In a more unusual style, *Foxnomad* links to author Anil Polat’s personal profile via a page titled “Facebook,” where Polat explains why readers should visit his *Facebook* profile:

There are two ways you can get more from foXnoMad on Facebook, meet other foXnoMad readers, and learn more about me. The first and simplest way is to add me as a friend.

Add Me On Facebook

To see more about me, Anil Polat, send a request to add me on Facebook. This is my personal profile, not one for this site so you can see other pictures I’m tagged in, read my status updates, and drop me a message from time to time. I look forward to being your digital friend. (Polat “Facebook”)

Polat’s dedication of an entire page to promote his *Facebook* connection is a complex self-presentational strategy. By indicating that this page is “not one for this site” and in offering access to his “personal profile,” Polat suggests that this is more authentic than other *Facebook* profiles or pages that solely promote blogs. His “other pictures” offer a glimpse into the real Polat, the person behind the travel blogger. On the one hand, the invitation to go behind the scenes suggests that the travel blog itself as a performance and, by extension, the blogger but an actor playing a part. At the same time the intimacy it offers strengthens the rapport between Polat and his reader, and consequently his position as a genuine blogger.

While phrases such as “get more from foXnomad on Facebook,” indicate the distributed nature of the blog, the invitation to “learn more” and “see more about me” evidence a self that extends beyond the blog and onto *Facebook*. Implicit in this invitation is the idea that readers will get additional value from the *Facebook* profile. While the profile bears the name “Anil Polat,” the URL (<http://www.facebook.com/foxnomad>) incorporates the title of his blog (“Anil

Polat”). This suggests that the self as Anil Polat is but an extension of the self as travel blogger, and that the *Facebook* page is an extension of the blog.

That Polat’s *Facebook* profile largely reinforces themes and positions expressed in the blog is manifest in links to other pages on *Facebook* as well as links to other *Facebook* users via a Friends list. Polat lists his “Likes and Interests” under the Info tab of his profile. This includes *Facebook* pages for his favourite music (Michael Jackson and The Beatles), movies (*Star Trek*), and television shows (*Dexter*). However, it is in his more extensive list of “Other” interests that the travel theme comes to the fore. This consists mainly of links to the *Facebook* pages of other independent travel blogs such as *Traveling Savage*, *Hole in the Donut Travels*, *Everything Everywhere*, and *Legal Nomads*. Also listed are links to travel-related *Facebook* pages (“Budget Your Trip,” “Hostelworld.com”) as well as blogging-related *Facebook* pages (“Freelance Writers International,” “Travel Writers Exchange,” “World Bloggers Day”). Several of Polat’s Friends are travel bloggers like Keith Savage, Barbara Weibel, and Gary Arndt.

Both linking to Friends and listing one’s interests are self-presentational strategies often seen on social networking sites (Boyd and Ellison; Liu). Titles of pages such as “Hostelworld.com” draw on the contexts of cheap and independent travel and reinforce Polat’s position as a traveller and an advocate of cheap travel. Similarly, the titles of writing-related pages support his self-presentation as a blogger. In this sense, the same aspects of self presented in the travel blog are networked across Polat’s *Facebook* profile. Furthermore, the list of Other Interests reads almost like *Foxnomad*’s blogroll, mirroring and reinforcing the connections in the blog and the blogger’s association with the independent travel blogger community. For an audience that is familiar with *Foxnomad* or other travel blogs, each of these names is an utterance associated with the context of travel. If his blogroll indicates Polat’s membership in a network of independent travel bloggers, the *Facebook* links show this travel blogger not merely as a networked self, but also as the same networked self of the travel blog. Therefore, while the links reveal new aspects to Anil Polat, for the most part they reiterate positions and discourses of *Foxnomad*. Polat the “digital friend” on *Facebook* is not necessarily distinct from the Polat of *Foxnomad*.

There is a wealth of information on Rees's personal interests, indicated in the links in the Info tab of her *Facebook* profile and her Friends List. Yet, few of these links are related to travel, and Rees does not appear to list other travel bloggers among her Friends. Rees does link her profile to *Facebook* pages for hiking, travelling, and travel, which she lists as her favourite activities. However, most of the other pages she links to have little to do with travel. Instead, these indicate her liking for cooking, design, and fashion, and her tastes in film, literature, and music (Rees "Eva Rees"). Links to pages such as "Pixels," "Fonts," and "Photography," reinforce her position as a design graduate (as indicated by her *Facebook* profile and not her blog), rather than her position as a travel blogger. This is not to say that Rees's self-presentation on *Facebook* has little relevance to aspects of her online self revealed in her travel blog. *Forks and Jets* describes itself as "the true story of a couple of amateur foodie traveloguers going around the world," and this culinary interest is supported by links in Rees's profile to pages on "Cooking," "Belgian Beer," and "Indian Food" (Rees and Rees). Yet, for the most part the Info tab and Friends list present new aspects of Eva Rees, suggesting that on this platform Eva Rees the person takes precedence over Eva Rees, "traveloguer." Perhaps the clearest indication of this is the URL of the profile (<http://www.facebook.com/evarees>), which includes the author's name rather than the blog title. The point to be drawn from this section of Rees's profile is that the self as travel blogger may not always be networked across a *Facebook* profile.

The "Cities Visited" tab on Rees's *Facebook* profile is the principal indicator of her traveller self. This application from Trip Advisor consists of an interactive map dotted with markers showing the places Rees has visited. Thus, it is a visualization of what the authors of *Forks and Jets* hope to achieve, "escaping our small corner of the world, known as Los Angeles, because we believe there is a bigger world out there. We want to meet it, eat it, bump into it and get a better look at it" (Rees and Rees "About Us"). This theme of "escaping" is repeated several times in *Forks and Jets*'s blog profile, referring to the notion of travel as something adventurous. In this respect, the pin-dotted map extends the self described in the travel blog onto Rees's *Facebook* profile.



Figure 2: A screen shot of Eva Rees’s “Cities I’ve Visited” page on Facebook

The map itself is associated with both travel and tourism, and the contexts of the application introduce some degree of discursive tension. Trip Advisor is a company whose website is known for hotel reviews, and Rees herself is a contributor. She is, in this capacity, a trip advisor or a guide. Her *Trip Advisor* user name (sometourista) is prominently displayed alongside the map, as is her real name at the top of the page (see Fig. 2). The name “sometourista” is very similar to the Spanish *turista*, meaning ‘tourist’. Both the Trip Advisor brand and Rees’s *Trip Advisor* name create an association with commercial and tourist discourse. Readers who encounter this map via the link from *Forks and Jets* to Rees’s profile may also find the use of “sometourista” ironic or self-deprecatory, given that the blog is about trying to be an adventurous traveller. For some readers at least, the map can be a polyphonic feature where the traveller escaping to a “bigger world” described in the blog meets “sometourista.” Thus, as a point of convergence for the self-presentations of both the blog and the *Trip Advisor* page, the *Facebook* application introduces discursive tensions in Eva Rees’s profile.

Interestingly, Rees’s *Trip Advisor* page does not link to her *Facebook* profile or her blog, and a person reading her reviews may not be aware of Rees as a travel blogger. A point to note here is that *Facebook* is itself a platform where various applications draw together diverse aspects of an individual’s self, sometimes via self-presentations constructed by the author on other platforms. However, the focus of

this chapter is the self-presentation of the travel experience and the author as an independent travel blogger. It is beyond the scope of this thesis to examine aspects of self-presentation on *Facebook* applications and websites that do not directly relate to these themes.

Polat and Rees's profiles affirm Goffman's theories in several ways. Papacharissi's interpretation of Goffman suggests that the various applications on *Facebook* "facilitate multiplicity" and allow users to present "the many 'faces' of one's identity" to a number of different audiences ("Virtual Geographies" 212). Certainly, the map application from TripAdvisor allows Eva Rees to show her audience her "sometourista face" and her "Eva Rees" face, these different aspects of self creating discursive tensions within a single application. In addition to this, links to *Facebook* pages that indicate her tastes and preferences allow her to show her "design graduate" face. While utterances from a variety of contexts such as design, travel, and tourism indicate the different positions Rees occupies, references to her designer self have little relevance for the self she presents in her travel blog. By contrast, most links on Polat's profile duplicate the connections he makes through his blog. Thus for Polat, links are a self-presentational element to display the same self of the travel blog, a self that networks with other travel bloggers. Such links also give a sense of continuity by replicating the themes and connections made in *Foxnomad*. So while Anil Polat's *Facebook* profile presents the networked self of the independent travel blogger and the dispersed content of the blog, Rees's profile merely displays the network of different aspects of her online self. Ultimately, this validates Trevor Pinch's conclusion, also based on Goffman's theories, that the same technology can be used differently as a self-presentational tool.

Presenting the Facebook Page

Although the previously cited analyses of social networking sites focus profiles rather than pages, many of their findings are equally applicable to the pages created by these bloggers. (Boyd and Ellison; Donath and Boyd). As with profiles, authors of *Facebook* pages can display links to other users and so describe themselves through their circle of associations. In addition, a page shares a number of features with a profile – an "Info" tab, a Wall, and lists of links to other *Facebook* pages and profiles. However, there are some differences between pages and profiles

with respect to how links to other people are made and displayed on a page. So while the “public display of connections” is equally relevant to *Facebook* pages, the style of presentation may vary from blogger to blogger and from page to profile.

The choice of a *Facebook* page over a profile can be seen as a self-presentational strategy that has something in common with the promotion of tourism. A number of tourism organizations, including publishers such as Lonely Planet, use *Facebook* pages rather than profiles as promotional tools. Pages tend to be less personal than profiles. Friends listed on a profile are easily viewed while most users who like a *Facebook* page remain unknown to other visitors. Anyone can “Like” a page, whereas users must be approved by a blogger to be displayed on a Friends List. Thus there is more anonymity, less intimacy, and less interaction in a page. Nevertheless, a *Facebook* page can be very effective in promoting the blog as a narrative of travel experiences and enhancing the author’s position as a traveller.

Most independent travel blogs in this study, including *Everything Everywhere*, *Hole in the Donut Travels*, *Legal Nomads*, *Nomadic Matt’s Travel Site*, and *A Wandering Sole*, link to *Facebook* pages by the same titles (Weibel “Hole in the Donut Travels”; Ettenberg; Nomadic Matt; Arndt “Everything Everywhere”; L. Walker “A Wandering Sole”). The repetition of title suggests that these *Facebook* pages reiterate or extend the narration of the travel experience begun in the blog. Genette’s theory of the connotative value of titles based on phrases from other texts suggests that this naming technique allows the two texts to support each other (91). Certainly, for visitors who are familiar with the blog, the title provides a context for the page, reaffirms the travel theme, and indicates the distributed nature of the blog. The repeated title signals that the author remains in character, as an independent travel blogger, yet it foregrounds the blog rather than the blogger.

A profile bearing the author’s real name can convey the impression that the text is more private, the discourse more personal, and that a different aspect to the author is being revealed. By contrast, a blog-titled page is less intimate and distances authors from their audiences. Bloggers such as Barbara Weibel of *Hole in the Donut Travels* and Jodi Ettenberg of *Legal Nomads* have a *Facebook* page using their blog title as well as a personal profile under their own name. However, both authors choose to link their blogs to pages rather than their profiles. In Ettenberg’s case, her

“Legal Nomads” page on *Facebook* displays a public self as travel blogger to a large public audience, while her personal profile has little public information and presents a private Ettenberg who is only accessible to those she accepts as a Friend. In general, therefore, linking to profiles focuses on the self as travel blogger, while linking to pages shifts audience attention to the narrative within the blog.

Although connections on social networking sites are often based on an individual’s offline social networks, the “friends” linked to via these sites are not necessarily personal acquaintances of the author (Boyd; Boyd and Ellison). This is especially true of *Facebook* pages due to the nature of the technology. A *Facebook* page lists users instead of “Friends.” Anyone may become a user by clicking on the “Like” button for the page, whereas becoming a “Friend” on a profile requires an author’s approval. Authors of *Facebook* profiles can, if they choose, make their Friends list available to visitors. An author like Anil Polat who opts for a page has more control over connections made to other people and can use “friendship links” to independent travel bloggers as “identity markers,” to quote Boyd and Ellison, to present the travel aspect of his personality (220). By contrast, this is not as easily accomplished on *Facebook* pages, which do not have a similar list feature.

By choosing to link to a *Facebook* page, authors may find it difficult to express their affiliations and aspects of their personality via links to other people. For example, visitors to *Everything Everywhere*’s page on *Facebook*, which listed 11, 025 users at the time of writing, will see links to just six user profiles within the box below this number, apart from the names of visitors who post comments on the Wall (see Fig. 3). This number and the six profile pictures are also embedded on the *Everything Everywhere* home page. There has been research to suggest that the number of friends indicated on a profile can influence a visitor’s impression of the author (Utz). It is possible that the number of users has a similar function for readers of *Everything Everywhere* and its corresponding *Facebook* page. Displaying the number of *Facebook* users on his blog page allows Arndt to present a well-networked self. However, while Polat lists travel bloggers amongst his Friends to make a statement about his own position as a travel blogger, Gary Arndt’s followers do not have a similar function.



Figure 3: The number of users on Arndt's *Facebook* page as seen on 28 October 2010

Bloggers who use *Facebook* pages can, however, articulate the self as travel blogger by indicating their interests via the "Favourite Pages" feature to "establish 'face'," as Papacharissi puts it. The "Everything Everywhere" page links to "Nomadic Matt's Travel Site" and "Legal Nomads" on *Facebook*. These links enable the author to express his connection to the travel blogging community. Links to "Amateur Traveler Podcast" and "This Week in Travel," *Facebook* pages on travel shows, indicate Arndt's interest in travel. They also associate the blog with a larger body of discourse on themes related to travel as opposed to tourism. Thus, the Favourite Pages feature on this page works as a self-presentational element that strengthens Arndt's image as a travel blogger.

The Favourite Pages feature can also reaffirm the connections and tensions of the corresponding travel blog. "Hole in the Donut Travels" has links to travel blog pages on *Facebook*, such as "A Wandering Sole," as well as to pages for "Lonely Planet," "Randonnée Tours," and "Mexico Boutique Hotels" ("Hole in the Donut Travels"). The connection to the travel blogging community reiterates Weibel's affiliation with similar individuals, as stated in her travel blog. The display of links to travel-themed pages enhances the travel theme of her narrative. Finally, while links to boutique hotels and tour operators have touristic associations that contrast this travel theme, they strengthen Weibel's position as an authority on travel, capable of judging and filtering the best travel-related resources for her readers. This is similar to the discursive tensions in Weibel's travel blog, where she links to advertisements for travel-related services as well as independent travel blogs (Weibel). Also, where *Hole in the Donut Travels* links to *Lonely Planet* via a "Lonely Planet Featured Blogger" icon on its home page, the "Hole in the Donut Travels" *Facebook* page

links to “Lonely Planet” on the same website. So the page reiterates affiliations stated through the links in the blog, ensuring uniformity of self-presentation across different platforms.

Networking on the Wall

In general, the best means of displaying connections to other people – and therefore, show the self as networked – is via *Facebook*’s Wall, an application seen on both pages and profiles. The “Wall” allows both authors and visitors to create content on the page or profile. Author-generated content usually consists of comments, links, photographs, and responses to messages posted by visitors. Visitors may post questions, reply to statements from the author, or indicate that they “Like” something on the page or profile. It may be argued that authors have little control over what others say and cannot use such content to create a sense of the self as a travel blogger. Nevertheless, both author- and user-generated content have been the focus of academic interest and there is some indication that the conversations and connections that occur via features such as the Wall give a reliable impression of the author (Boyd; Utz; Walther et al.). The Wall enables authors to emphasize narratorial positions and themes in their blogs by engaging audiences and networking with other bloggers.

Authors of *Facebook* pages generally post updates of travel plans, questions directed at readers, or requests for travel advice. These are usually a means of engaging the audience and reinforcing the travel theme. Nomadic Matt often posts questions and updates on his Wall and invites readers to respond:

Nomadic Matt's Travel Site If you could travel with one person (real or imaginary), who would it be? I'd go with Anthony Bourdain.

3 November at 05:10

Nomadic Matt's Travel Site is going to Australia today for the next two weeks. I'm going back to Perth after 3 years and going up towards Broome. Very excited to see Western Australia. It's the best part! Where does your next trip take you?

19 October at 05:38 (Nomadic Matt “Nomadic Matt's Travel Site”)

Such questions are meant to start a conversation related to travel. Nomadic Matt adopts a personal tone while reflecting on his own thoughts and preferences, and the utterances are drawn from a travel context. Comments such as these sustain the travel discourse in *Nomadic Matt's Travel Site* and cement Nomadic Matt's position as a traveller. For example, mentioning Anthony Bourdain implies a connection between the author and the television travel show host. Bourdain's television show on the Travel Channel is called *No Reservations*, and he writes a travel blog, which is hosted on the programme's website. For an audience familiar with the contexts of the name, the association with Bourdain validates Nomadic Matt's own position as a traveller and blogger. Even the name of the television show draws on the concept of independent or adventurous travel, rather than tourism. A discerning reader may find a resonance in being "Nomadic" and travelling with "*No Reservations*."

While the question is meant to invite responses in a similar vein, it can attract unanticipated comments. Some simply indicate that they "like" the post (Fig.4), while others write replies. Some name other persons associated with travel such as Richard Branson, Mark Twain, and Ewan McGregor, each of these an utterance that builds on connotations of travel suggested by Bourdain's name, thus reiterating the travel theme of Nomadic Matt's blog. However, other answers are flippant. Raven Yaw Garcia writes, "My thoughts exactly. Or Jessica Simpson (For obvious reasons)." His response paves the way for similar suggestions.

This is similar to the ego-targeting discussed in the previous chapter. In a subtle tweaking of touristic narrative technique, the author positions the reader as a confidante, but also positions himself as a potential confidante, eager to receive their recommendations. This invitation to engage in conversation is a self-presentational strategy that indicates that the author is networking. The action validates and enhances Nomadic Matt's presentation of self as a genuine travel blogger. While this is ego-targeting of a sort, it is different in that the reader is invited not to participate in a touristic experience, but to speak as an authority on a travel-related matter. At the same time, Nomadic Matt's use of the Wall for this conversation ultimately serves a promotional purpose – to increase the visibility of *Nomadic Matt's Travel Site*.



Figure 4: Users replies to Nomadic Matt's question as of 4 November 2010

Authors of pages and profiles often post links to their most recent blog entries on their Wall. This is another simple technique for increasing the visibility of a blog and reminding audiences of the author's position as an independent travel blogger. Authors can also display their connections to independent travel bloggers through their Wall posts, and thus reinforce links made via their blogroll. Heather Cowper of *Heather on Her Travels* does this by recommending entries by other bloggers, such as Anil Polat of *Foxnomad*:

Heather on her travels Warning - nervous flyers should not read this article from Anil Polat. But if you have a more pragmatic disposition, you may want to know what to do if the worst happens!

7 Plane Crash Facts That Could Save Your Life | foXnoMad

www.foxnomad.com

Many people have at least a slight apprehension about flying, looking at each takeoff as a crap shoot in the game of life. Although it seems like pure luck as

31 October at 19:56 (“Heather on Her Travels”)

Interestingly, Cowper also links to Barbara Weibel’s *Hole in the Donut Travels*, which is not listed on her blogroll:

Heather on her travels Here's a story from Hole In The Donut Travels - beware the scams in Kathmandu but admire the slice of daily life and there's even a tooth fairy - well tooth god to ward off your tooth ache.

Touts, Scams in Kathmandu, Nepal | Hole In The Donut Travels
holeinthedonut.com

Touts in Kathmandu will try to suck you into using them as a guide by claiming they just want to practice their English.

30 October at 19:39 (Cowper “Heather on Her Travels”)

The recommendation of online content via links is viewed as an essential part of blogging, and is characteristic of filter blogs (Rettberg *Blogging*). Readers who are familiar with the practices of blogging may feel that Cowper remains in character as a blogger by sharing links on her *Facebook* page. The act of sharing links in itself has little significance for self-presentation. However, by including this link to a travel blog, Cowper expands her connections with the online community of independent travel bloggers. Through this act of networking, she implies that she too is a travel blogger and that her travel blogger self is a networked self.

That the *Facebook* page is an extension of the blog is demonstrated in a number of ways. Firstly, travel is, for the most part, the central theme of Cowper’s links. Secondly, connections with other travel bloggers reiterate the blogroll, and the predominance of references to travel give a good sense of Cowper as an author who is interested in travel. Lastly, although visitors to this page may well be aware that

she is a travel blogger, links to *Heather on Her Travels* are a clear indicator of this, such as this link below:

Heather on her travels Heathercowper: New Blog post: Hotel Slalom in Les Houches – a boutique hotel for skiers and walkers: As we arrive at Hote... <http://bit.ly/dtQynC>

Read:Full story

Source:Heather on her travels

Published:2010-10-29 20:53:51 GMT

30 October at 11:51 (Cowper “Heather on Her Travels”)

Authors may also link to websites where their blog has been mentioned as in this post from Jodi Ettenberg on her *Facebook* page for *Legal Nomads*:

Legal Nomads Wow. Klout's top online travel influencers list came out and I'm listed at number 8. Very flattering! List is updated daily but it's a great start.

The Top Online Travel Influencers - Ranking List | Influencers in Travel

influencersintravel.com

A ranking list of the top online travel influencers that is published daily.

03 November at 13:35 (“Heather on Her Travels”)

Gary Arndt’s “Everything Everywhere” page also has similar posts:

Everything Everywhere Interview with Gary Arndt of Everything-Everywhere: Lucky 13 Questions

www.goseewrite.com

Interview with Gary Arndt of Everything-Everywhere. one of the best most popular travel bloggers and photographers on the web.

03 November at 23:54 (“Everything Everywhere”)

What really strengthens the position of these authors as experts on travel and as travel bloggers is the one-line article summary that appears with the link itself. This allows Jodi Ettenberg to present herself as one of the “top online travel influencers” and Arndt to point out that he is “one of the best most popular travel bloggers.” Recommendations of others may be viewed as being more credible than any form of self-promotion. Furthermore, such references from other websites locate these blogs in a larger body of discourse on issues related to travel or tourism. *GoSeeWrite*, for example, is also a travel blog, and the interview with Arndt authenticates his position as a travel blogger.

A travel blogger’s *Facebook* Wall often displays two types of photographs. The first consists of photographs posted by the authors themselves, and are usually travel photographs sourced from the travel blog. Nomadic Matt’s Wall features “The Weekly Photo” while Gary Arndt posts a “Daily Travel Photo.” The accompanying caption indicates the travel destination and invites readers to visit the blog or, as in Nomadic Matt’s case, his newsletter: “Looking for travel deals, news, and tips? Sign up for my bi-monthly newsletter! You’ll get all the deals, tips, and advice I can’t squeeze into a blog!” (“Nomadic Matt’s Travel Site”). A link to the blog appears below this (see Fig. 5). Gary Arndt’s “Daily Travel Photo” similarly functions as a promotional element for his blog. The photograph seen in Figure 6 shows a meadow in Montana. The accompanying description notes that the photograph was “Originally posted on Everything Everywhere Travel Blog,” and adds “Discover great travel photos” (“Everything Everywhere”). A link to the blog follows this description as well. With the annotation and link, each photograph functions principally as a feature that distributes the content of the blog.

Both photographs depict a personal travel experience and therefore can be described as personal travel discourse. The content of the photographs itself suggests the kind of solitude, timelessness, and lack of focus on destination that is characteristic of a travel experience. Both photographs do not depict easily recognizable tourist icons and could, in fact, have been shot in a number of locations. This lack of emphasis on destination in the image creates an association with travel. Yet, the accompanying descriptions are impersonal, and even authoritative in their

exhortation to “discover travel photos” and “sign up” for travel deals. The blog, rather the place depicted in the image, becomes ‘a place to discover’. The narrative style of tourist discourse is thus skilfully turned to the presentation of the blog and the narrative of travel contained therein.



Figure 5: This weekly photograph on Nomadic Matt’s *Facebook* page also serves as an advertisement for his newsletter (accessed on 9 November 2010)



Figure 6: Gary Arndt’s daily travel photo publicizes *Everything Everywhere* (9 November 2010)

A second type of image that features prominently alongside each post on the Wall is the thumbnail profile photograph of the person who contributes content. There has been research to suggest that profile pictures of “friends” who post content on a person’s social networking site help an audience form an impression of the author (Donath and Boyd; Utz). Those who look at profiles on social networking sites usually expect the author to have similar friends. So the profile pictures of the persons an author connects to, easily visible on features such as the Wall, become important self-presentational elements, leading Sonia Utz to observe that “To make a good impression, it is not enough to carefully construct one’s profile; it is also wise

to carefully select one's *friends*." As explained earlier, an author has greater control over connections made with Friends rather than users. Still, it can be argued that both types of visitors to the Wall represent the community that an author engages with and their photographs also contribute to the public display of connections.

It is beyond the scope of this study to analyse audiences, as Utz does. Therefore, it is hard to determine to what extent visitors to the Wall rely on thumbnail profile photographs or others in order to get a sense of the author as a travel blogger. In the case of authors like Gary Arndt who have a very large audience, the visitors (and their profile photographs) are likely to be quite diverse. It is also very likely that thumbnails will change frequently, as profile users update their photographs. It is also possible that a profile picture whose contexts and connotations have little to do with travel can introduce discursive tensions in the text. Yet, at least some of the photographs of visitors to the "Everything Everywhere" page, at the time of writing, resembled Arndt's own profile picture. One such image is that of visitor Alex Berger, pictured in Figure 7, who also stands, as Arndt does, on a mountainside. Another visitor, Jennifer Crites, is also backgrounded by a snow-covered landscape. Given that this is content generated by users other than the author it may be difficult to view these images as a self-presentational element. Here, inadvertently, the technical features of the Wall work to Arndt's advantage. The thumbnail pictures ultimately form a public display of connections to persons who are travellers, who visit similar destinations, and who have similar travel experiences. Although Arndt does not consciously control the content of these photographs, the images show his affiliation with a community of travellers. Such is the nature of the tool that it can, although not necessarily, enhance the presentation of his position as a traveller and as a travel blogger.

Evidently, various features of the Wall can be directly or indirectly self-presentational elements. Comments can initiate a conversation around travel, and so reinforce the themes of the blog. Links can reiterate connections made in the travel blog or expand an existing network of bloggers. In Heather Cowper's case, links and annotations enable her to position herself as a travel blogger and as something of an expert on travel and blogging. Authors may also use links as self-recommendations, as Arndt and Ettenberg do. Photographs posted by the author can be used to present the self as blogger and to promote the blog. The thumbnail profile photographs of

visitors can work to an author's advantage and strengthen the position and personality they wish to convey to their audience. Connections and content work together to contribute to the sense of the author as a travel blogger and supplement the narrative.



Figure 7: Thumbnail photographs of some visitors resemble Arndt's profile picture (8 November 2010)

Although this section has focussed on the Walls of *Facebook* pages, much of what has been written applies equally to those on *Facebook* profiles. Travel updates, links to recent blog entries, and conversations with other travel bloggers such as Barbara Weibel, all appear on the Wall of Anil Polat's *Facebook* profile. Leif Pettersen of *Killing Batteries* also links his blog to a *Facebook* profile and posts travel-related comments and links via *Twitter* (*Killing Batteries*). This indicates that there is little difference between pages and profiles included in this study in terms of the comments, conversation, and links that appear on a Wall that is accessible to a general public. However, independent travel bloggers who use profile pages or profiles may choose not to use some affordances as self-presentational elements. In addition to this, the same features can be used differently and an application used by an individual to present the self as travel blogger may not be utilised by another

author. For example, Pettersen's Wall has few references or links to his blog, while Nomadic Matt and Gary Arndt make full use of this feature. In contrast, the Wall is not publicly visible on Eva Rees's profile. Thus, where the Wall does appear, it can be used to extend and support the presentation of a travel experience described in the blog. This validates Trevor Pinch's observation that the same technology can be used in various ways in a presentation of self.

Putting a Name to the Face

Several studies of social networking sites suggest that profile photographs are an important element in self-presentation and provide valuable clues to the author's personality (Boyd and Heer; Utz; Ellison, Heino and Gibbs; Siibak). According to Boyd and Heer, photographs are "the most noticeable component of Profile Identity performance and active users update their photos regularly to convey various things about themselves." Ellison, Heino and Gibbs's study of online dating sites and Siibak's analysis of photograph selection by teenagers on social networking sites concludes that profile owners may deliberately select and display images that best represent what they want to say about themselves. Ellison et al. also argue that profile photographs can be used to support textual statements and descriptions. These findings are based on analyses of profiles rather than pages, and self-presentation in these profiles is directed at very different audiences – potential dates or peers. However, it can be argued that profile photographs can be a useful element in presenting oneself, and may well have a similar function on pages related to travel blogs. Therefore, it is worth considering how authors use profile photographs to indicate that they are independent travel bloggers.

Of the three profile owners – Anil Polat, Eva Rees, and Leif Pettersen – only Rees uses a photograph that hints at her position as a traveller. The photograph shows Rees posing beside a motorcycle parked on a road. Details such as the luggage strapped on the back of the motorcycle and the remote landscape in the background suggest that Rees is on a journey (see Fig. 8). By contrast, Polat's photograph shows the author in a domestic setting, holding a bottle of wine. The differences are intriguing, particularly as travel is only one of many themes in Rees's profile, while it appears to be the central theme of the posts and comments on Polat's Wall. Although Polat's photograph does not present him as a traveller, it fulfils his promise

that the profile will offer “more about me.” The travel photograph used by Rees may seem out of place in a personal profile where travel is not the predominant theme, but it provides a link to the self she presents in her travel blog, and is a good contextual clue. Thus, both profile photographs support the self presented in the travel blog. It should be said, however, that this may change each time an author changes the image.



Figure 8: A comparison of profiles shows how authors use photographs (10 November 2010)



Figure 9: The profile photograph for “Nomadic Matt’s Travel Site”

By and large, the *Facebook* pages analysed in this study use photographs that reinforce the title and themes of the blog. Gary Arndt’s photograph, seen in Figure 7, bears the title of the blog and shows the author standing in a snow-covered landscape. The caption below this reminds visitors that the blog has been mentioned in *Time* magazine. “Nomadic Matt’s Travel Site” also uses a travel photograph bearing the blog’s title (Fig. 9). A text box below this lets visitors know that this is “The journal of a world nomad.”

In a similar reiteration of the themes of the travel blog, the *Facebook* page for *A Wandering Sole* uses the same baggage tag that features on the blog’s title banner (Fig.10). The title and tag lines also appear identical to the style used in the blog. While this photograph does not identify Laura Walker, the author, it does function as a link to her blog and indicates the contexts of the page. Likewise, Jodi Ettenberg of *Legal Nomads* uses the same photograph of herself on her blog’s profile as well her *Facebook* page, clearly identifying that the same self is “scattered” across the two texts (“About Me”; “Legal Nomads”). Barbara Weibel also uses this technique in her blog and *Facebook* pages. This does not necessarily mean that all *Facebook* pages will have a photograph with a clearly defined link to the corresponding travel blog. In general, however, photographs of *Facebook* profiles and pages create a connection with the contexts, positions, and self presented in the blog.



Figure 10: The *Facebook* page for *A Wandering Sole* (L) shows the same detail as the blog’s banner (R) as seen on 10 November 2010.

Although the features and applications of *Facebook* pages and profiles are used in different ways, they share a common purpose – to distribute the blog and present a networked self. Both pages and profiles allow for a deeper audience

engagement, although the level of intimacy varies between pages and profiles and between profiles. Both pages and profiles allow for a display of connections with individuals and online resources, both of which function as a self-presentational strategy for reiterating positions that these authors occupy in their blogs.

The tensions between travel and tourism on these *Facebook* pages and profiles play out in several ways. Some bloggers manipulate narrative techniques associated with the promotion of place to the promotion of their blogs as an online destination that offers a travel experience. In other instances, the connection to online resources related to tourism creates a commercial association that nevertheless serves to validate the author's position as an authority on travel and a discerning consumer. Similarly, while authors reiterate connections with other travel bloggers, they also engage audiences in conversation using techniques similar to those used by tourism organizations such as Lonely Planet. The presentation of the self as networked and networking therefore requires a negotiation of the discourses of both travel and tourism.

To Tweet is to Travel

Microblogging is often defined against blogging as a form of communication characterised by brief blog-like posts or updates published on the Web via a computer or a mobile client (Java et al.; Oulasvirta et al.). *Twitter* is a microblogging platform, the central feature of which is a short post published on the Web via a computer or a mobile client (Java, Song, Finin, & Tseng, 2007; Oulasvirta, Lehtonen, Kurvinen, & Raento, 2010). Oulasvirta et al. observed that these posts are self-presentational in nature because

these messages function in two directions: (1) through creation of the sender's persona in the eyes of others similar to Goffman's notion of self-presentation...or at least keeping him or her "alive" as a poster who is interesting enough to be followed, and, secondly, (2) via the deepening interest followers find in his or her life (2010, p. 248).

This explanation is significant to this study for two reasons. First, it implies that individuals may use *Twitter* posts to 'create' themselves as authors of independent travel blogs. Secondly, by posting frequently, an author who uses *Twitter* to re-

present his positions occupied in the travel blog can keep this impression of the self as travel blogger ‘alive’ for readers. In order to understand how authors achieve this using *Twitter*, it becomes necessary to examine how conventions and techniques such as “retweeting” a message, using the ‘#’ or hashtags, and the ‘@’ or at signs to start a conversation, ultimately figure in the presentation of self as a travel blogger or in the distribution of the content of the travel blog.

When analysing the tweet, it is important to be aware of the parallels between the content and narrative style of the post and other forms of travel-related discourse such as the travel book and holiday postcards. *Twitter* allows users to include links to multimedia. Consequently, as in postcards, a message may be accompanied by a photograph which can be viewed within the *Twitter* page. Likewise, the narrative techniques of a tweet may also resemble those in a message written on a postcard. According to Graham Dann, writers describe travel experiences as being timeless, or as if they are happening in the present:

...traveller/travel writer is to present what tourist is to past and future. Extending the dichotomy still further, it is in the act of promotion that tourist becomes cast into the past tense...the travel writer’s account is often framed as if actually taking place in the eternal “now.”

Likewise, Chris Kennedy’s examination of the discursive features of messages on holiday postcards indicates that they have much in common with tweets with respect to content, function, and narrative technique. These characteristics include a lack of detail regarding destinations, the description of everyday activities, and the overall brevity and public nature of the message. This supports Oulasvirtas et al.’s findings, based on a study of messages on microblogging service *Jaiku*, which describes the distinguishing characteristics of microblogs posts as “I-centred” content, the “mundane...reporting of ordinary, predictable, and repetitive life events,” and “an illusion of real-time connection” (238). While these studies suggest that the discursive style of microblogging – self-centred, focused on routine activities, and creating the sense of a real-time connection – suits the narration of travel, this chapter will demonstrate how certain conventions of *Twitter* as used by travel bloggers can in fact incorporate tourist discourse.

In order to understand how this is communicated, this section of the chapter analyses the content and style of *Twitter* posts, considering in particular references to the travel blog, the author as blogger, and the narration of the travel experience. Consequently, the following paragraphs discuss titles, formal features such as profile pictures, user names, and links, and the conventions of *Twitter* messages relevant to self-presentation. This section also examines how links to other people and online content reiterate themes and connections of the travel blog. Ultimately, it considers how the networked self of the travel blogger and the dispersed content of the blog are negotiated in the discursive tensions between travel and tourism.

Titles and Profiles on Twitter

In general, the link to *Twitter* is indicated by a widget on the blog – a style used in travel blogs such as *A Wandering Sole*, *Traveling Savage*, and *Legal Nomads*. The clearly visible *Twitter* logo enhances the impression of a travel blogger as networked and of the travel blog as having distributed content. Some bloggers, like Leif Pettersen of *Killing Batteries*, embed their *Twitter* stream in the home page of their travel blog, indicating that the blogger is in the process of networking with others. The *Traveling Savage* blog goes a step further by listing the *Twitter* usernames of authors featured on its blogroll (2010b). As the author, Keith Savage, links mainly to other travel bloggers who use *Twitter*, this display of connections to similarly networked travel bloggers via the blogroll shows him to be a networked travel blogger. It also suggests that, at least for Keith Savage, the presentation of the self as travel blogger involves displaying a connection to *Twitter* and presenting himself as a *Twitter* user.



Figure 11: Authors are quite literally sidelined on Lonely Planet's page on *Twitter*.

The title and profile picture emphasises the company logo and name.

Twitter allows its users to display a personal name and a user name on their pages. This personal name forms the page title, followed by the user name in the format personal name @user name. In general, the independent travel bloggers in this study adapt this feature to create several title styles ranging from impersonal and blog-oriented to personal and self-oriented. Laura Walker of *A Wandering Sole* and Eva and Jeremy Rees of *Forks and Jets* use their blog title as a personal name and as a username. The resulting titles read “A Wandering Sole” @awanderingsole, or “Forks and Jets” @ForksandJets respectively. Commercial tourism organizations use a remarkably similar style in their *Twitter* pages to emphasise corporate identity. Guidebook publisher Lonely Planet, for example, is “Lonely Planet” @lonelyplanet on *Twitter* (see Fig. 11). While this repetition of the blog title clearly identifies the context of the messages and keeps the blog “alive” for any visitor, for an audience familiar with this and similar *Twitter* pages such as “Frommers” @FrommersTravel, or “Virgin Atlantic” @VirginAtlantic, can associate this style with commercial tourist discourse. In increasing the visibility of their blogs, these authors ultimately engage in discourse that is touristic, while the presentation of self as a travel blogger becomes secondary.

Most other independent travel bloggers in this study use their personal names as their *Twitter* titles, followed by the name of their blog as a user name. Titles such as “Gary Arndt” @Everywhere Trip, “Jodi Ettenberg” @legalnomads, “Keith Savage” @travelingsavage, or “Anil” @foxnomad give prominence to the authors, but also contextualise the page and call attention to their position as travel bloggers. This positions the page as an extension of the content in the blog. However, titles may focus solely on the author as an individual and have little or no reference to the travel blog. Leif Pettersen, for example, titles his page “Leif Pettersen” @leifpettersen. While this style is more personal, suggesting an intimacy suited to the discourses of travel, it can seem ironic to a visitor given that Pettersen associates himself with tourist discourse by describing himself as a writer of guidebooks and a “Lonely Planet author.”

Profile descriptions often refer to the author as a travel blogger, recapture themes of the blog, and end with a link to the blog. Gary Arndt, for example, is a “Travel blogger and photographer... a one man National Geographic” (Arndt “Everything Everywhere”). Likewise Anil Polat is a “Digital nomad traveling the

world indefinitely” while Jodi Ettenberg is a “World traveller...writer & former lawyer” – terms that reflect the titles and profile descriptions of their blogs *Foxnomad* and *Legal Nomads*, respectively (Ettenberg “Jodi Ettenberg”; Polat “Anil”). These profiles restate positions occupied within the blog. However, Polat’s presentation of himself as a “digital nomad” is significant for its reference to travel as nomadic, or in other words, timeless and not bound to destinations of a tourist itinerary. By calling himself a digital nomad, he clearly draws on the contexts of travel, and indicates that he is a traveller. Yet, the same term also implies that this self is also nomadic in a “digital” sense – not limited to the travel blog, but extended or “networked” across various digital platforms. He travels “indefinitely” not just in the offline world, but online as well.

In general, independent travel bloggers use the same photograph on their *Twitter* pages and blog profiles. The effect of this technique is twofold. It extends the self as travel blogger to another platform and keeps it “alive” for the audience. In addition to this, it signals a discursive style that is personal and consequently, more in the context of travel than tourism. Keith Savage’s *Twitter* profile photograph, for example, is identical to the one he uses in *Traveling Savage*, thus sustaining the self as travel blogger.

Those who do not use a personal photograph – and there are few such users in the sample selected for this study – may use visual elements from their blog. *Forks and Jets* authors Eva and Jeremy Rees do not have a photograph of themselves but instead use a logo based on their initials “EJ” (see Fig. 12) in a font that is identical to the one in their blog title. The “EJ” logo also appears as a URL icon or favicon in the blog. The logo resembles the “LP” logo used by guidebook publishers Lonely Planet (Fig. 11) on their *Twitter* page (“Lonely Planet”). The page is impersonal in its reiteration of the “Forks and Jets” title, and the sparse description that identifies the authors merely as “a couple of amateur foodie traveloguers.” Having a logo rather than a personal photograph can seem touristic, when seen in the context of tourism-related pages such as “Lonely Planet” that use similar visual elements. Yet, the allusion to Eva and Jeremy Rees, indicated in the initials that make up the logo, personalizes a touristic style of presentation and refers, however obliquely, to the self as travel blogger.

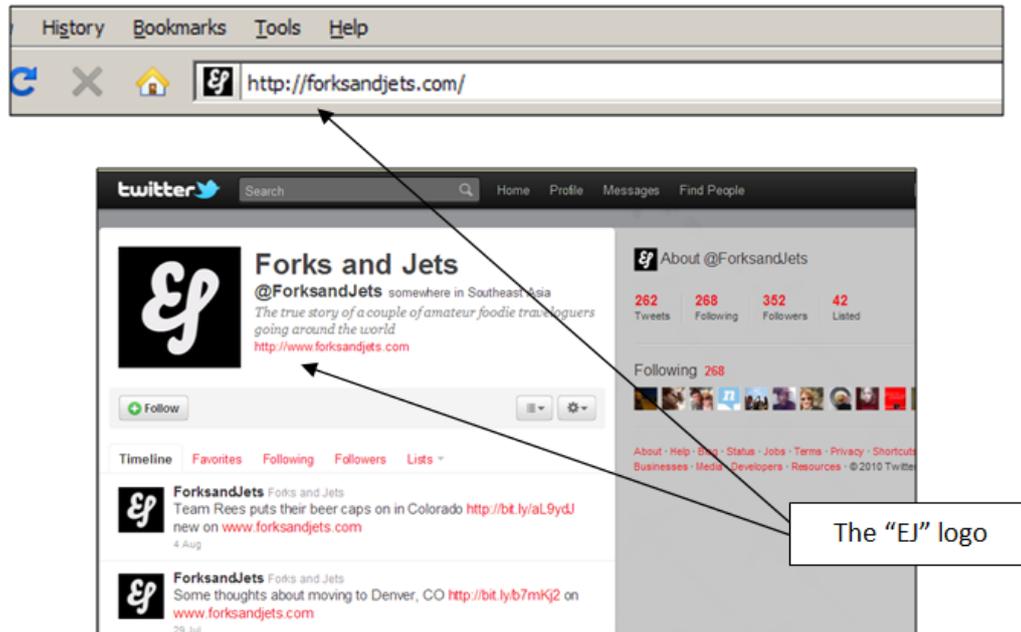


Figure 12: The favicon of the *Forks and Jets* blog (above) reflects in the *Twitter* profile picture (below) as seen on 22 November 2010.

Another alternative to using a personal photograph is to have an image that reflects the themes of the blog. Nomadic Matt's *Twitter* profile picture depicts Uncle Traveling Matt, a character from the television show *Fraggle Rock*, who sends postcards and tells stories of his travels. According to *GoGalavanting*, the absence of the author's own photograph is a deliberate move on his part to avoid unwanted female attention. The resemblance of names makes Uncle Travelling Matt an ideal choice as a profile photograph. The connotations of the character's name act in the same manner as Gerard Genette's "pseudonym effect." Genette suggests that a name may be chosen deliberately, with an eye to its meaning and contexts, in the hope that a reader will recognize the connotations and contexts it is associated with. This induces an effect in the reader's mind and influences his or her idea of the author and the work itself (48-50). This holds true for the image of Uncle Traveling Matt. As an adventurous explorer, Uncle Matt is associated with travel rather than tourism. As a teller of stories, he symbolizes the narration of travel. Thus by referring to Uncle Travelling Matt, the author overcomes the hurdle of not having a personal photograph and uses the contexts and connotations of the image to present the self as travel blogger.

The customized background of a *Twitter* page may also reflect the themes of a travel blog. The same sole-printed baggage tag featuring in the title banner of *A Wandering Sole* also appears on its *Twitter* page (L. Walker “A Wandering Sole”). This indicates the distributed nature of the blog, provides a context for the audience, and implies that the same self as travel blogger is networked across these platforms. However, not all bloggers who use *Twitter* pages achieve such uniformity of theme. Gary Arndt’s page on *Twitter*, titled *Everywhere Trip* is an echo of the blog title, *Everything Everywhere*. The complex background displays a number of travel-related icons such as postcards, a suitcase, and a pair of binoculars, against map wallpaper. While this gives a sense of the page as a travel-related text, the connection to the blog is not as obvious as Walker’s page, as it does not share visual elements with the blog itself.

Connections, Conventions, and Conversations @ Twitter

Twitter users connect with each other in several ways. Individuals may link to others on the platform and “follow” them. They may, in turn, have “followers.” Users can use the “@” symbol to engage others in conversation (Gilpin; Honeycutt and Herring). They may also “retweet” information or comments from other users (Boyd, Golder and Lotan). Individuals may also use the hashtag “#” followed by a specific key word to start, contribute to, or follow a conversation surrounding a particular topic (Zhou et al.). The following section discusses how authors employ technical features such as lists and conventions such as @, @user name, RT @user name, and hashtags to connect with others and present the self as travel blogger through the networking that takes place in these connections and conversations.

Each *Twitter* page displays the number of persons an author follows and is following. However, the follower count on *Twitter* is a poor indicator of how interesting or popular an independent travel blogger is. Gary Arndt had 106, 351 *Twitter* followers at the time of writing. While this may seem impressive to some visitors, others may be aware that some of these followers may in fact be web bots or spiders gathering data about certain topics (Teutle). Evidently, the number of followers is a poor self-presentational element. However, a person may follow any number of users, and in fact individuals have different strategies for doing this (Boyd, Golder and Lotan). Arndt categorizes the users he follows into lists on travel-

related themes. These reflect the themes of his travel blog, and support Arndt's description of himself as a "one man National Geographic." Interestingly, "A comprehensive list of travel bloggers/podcasters on Twitter" is differentiated from "People involved in travel related public relations and marketing." This implies that, in Arndt's eyes at least, the discourse of travel bloggers is distinct from the discourses of tourism marketing or public relations. The bloggers list also supports Arndt's position as a travel blogger and places him in a network of similar authors. The second list positions him as an authority on the best online resources on travel and tourism.

Dawn R. Gilpin argues that follower counts on *Twitter* are not as significant as the connections displayed when users communicate with each other. Conversations and interactions that take place on *Twitter* are essential to "identity construction" (234). Most *Twitter* conversations are prefaced by the @ symbol and user name (Honeycutt and Herring). The display of user names in each message means that by simply addressing comments to other bloggers, authors can indicate an association with the travel blogging community. Take, for example, this exchange between Nomadic Matt and another travel blogger, Backpacking Matt:

backpackingmatt Matthew Kyhnn: Found a bungalow in Koh Phi Phi just in time for the clear blue skies to turn into a proper monsoon

nomadicmatt Nomadic Matt: @backpackingmatt weren't u just in Bali?

Although the tweets are in a travel context, they can hardly be regarded as distributing the content of the travel blog. However, the user names (identical to blog titles or pseudonyms) clearly identify this as a conversation between two bloggers for anyone familiar with the travel blogging community. If the audience does not recognize the authors' user names, clicking on the message displays the accompanying description of backpackingmatt as a "Travel blogger exploring the world." This clearly indicates Nomadic Matt's association with other travel bloggers (see Fig. 13).

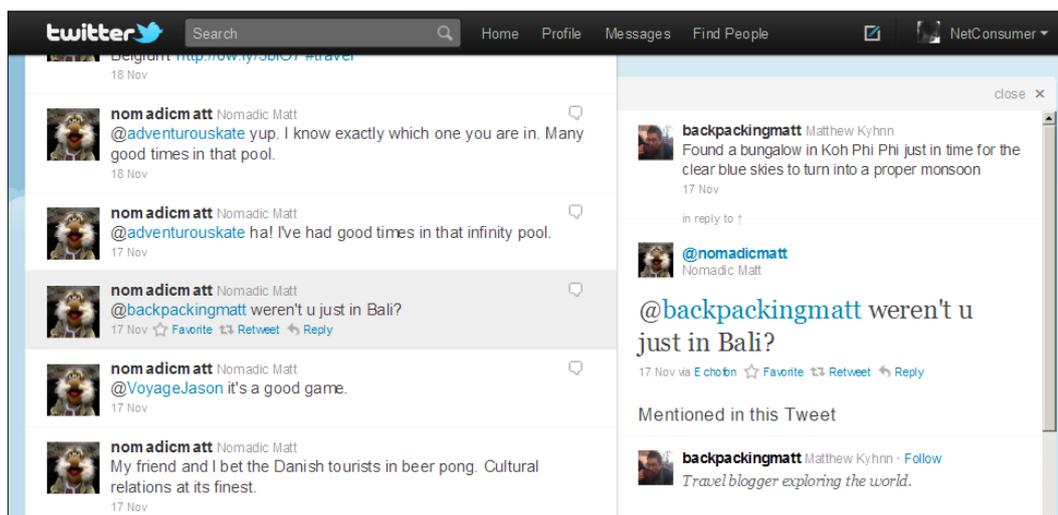


Figure 13: A *Twitter* conversation between bloggers. The screenshot shows messages addressed to @backpackingmatt, @VoyageJason, and @adventurouskate

It should be noted here that this conversation is only visible to those who visit the *Twitter* pages of either blogger. Such is the nature of the technology that a person who follows either only Nomadic Matt or Matthew Kyhnn will not see any conversation between them that begins with the @username syntax on his or her (the follower's) own page. However, a travel blogger can deliberately make such conversations more easily visible to their audience and so display the connection with similar authors by using a different narrative technique that places the @username later in the message, as Keith Savage does in this post: "[travelingsavage](#) Keith Savage: Having a brainstorm session with @globetrooper and @thefutureisred in #Argentina" (Savage "Keith Savage"). This tweet works as a self-presentational element by showing Savage as networking with other travel bloggers (both offline and on *Twitter*) and validating his position as a traveller through the mention of Argentina. The hashtag is also significant, and this will be examined in greater detail presently.

Bloggers often use the RT @user syntax to "retweet" a message from another user. A retweet may also be indicated by 'retweeting @', 'retweet @', 'via @' or by clicking on the retweet button in *Twitter*. Messages may be retweeted to attract attention, indicate loyalty, or to publicly agree with someone or validate their thoughts (Boyd, et al., 2010). As the source of the retweet is usually easily visible, regardless of narrative technique, authors can indicate engagement with other travel

bloggers, gain attention for themselves, show themselves to be loyal to this community, and so remind visitors that they are travel bloggers. For example, Gary Arndt's retweet of Jodi Ettenberg's post, "RT @legalnomads: New post: an afternoon in Paris' Montmartre <http://su.pr/1DsMRu> #travel #lp," identifies the context of this conversation as travel blogging and shows his connection with another travel blogger (Arndt "Gary Arndt"). He also strengthens his ties with this community by promoting Ettenberg's new blog post, indicated in the link. In this case, the "#travel" and the mention of Paris also emphasises the travel theme. Retweeting a message that is a retweet in the first place also enhances presentation of a networked self via a display of several connections, if the original user's name is retained, as with this *Twitter* post from Anil Polat: "foxnomad Anil: RT @holeinthedonut: RT @landloppers: The 2nd LandLopers Pick of the Week offers inspiration and gorgeous photos <http://ht.ly/3cXmU>" (Polat "Anil"). Such posts give a clear sense of the author as a networked travelblogger.

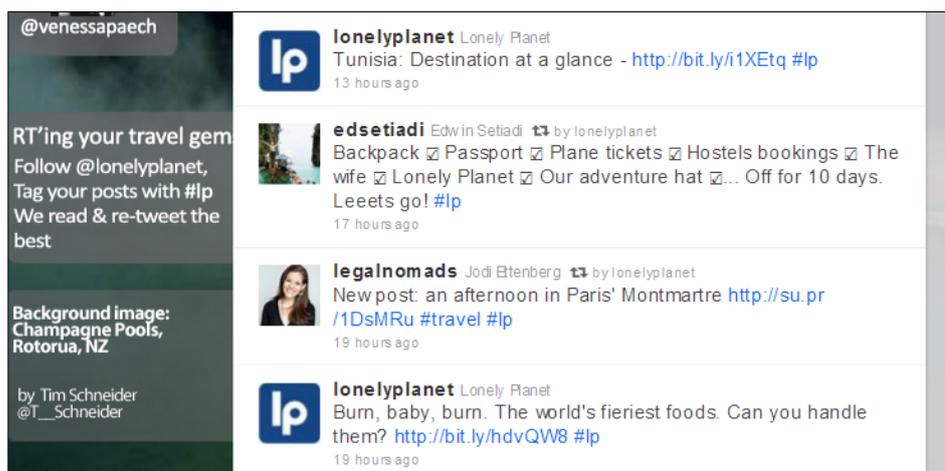


Figure 14: A legalnomads message using #lp is retweeted by Lonely Planet.

Hashtags are used in *Twitter* messages to engage in a more public conversation on a particular topic. The hyperlinked keyword used with the hashtag indicates the topic relevant to the content of the tweet and links to a public listing of all *Twitter* messages on the same subject. Therefore, hashtags related to travel or blogging can link a user to a public conversation around these themes and may be used to present the self as an independent travel blogger. Jodi Ettenberg's message on her new post (see Fig. 14), mentioned as a retweet by Gary Arndt," uses #travel with the link to her blog post in a clear indication of its themes and to join the larger

conversation on *Twitter* surrounding issues related to travel. For Arndt, retweeting a message containing a hashtag allows him to capitalize on the visibility this offers and direct potential visitors to his own blog. The #Argentina used by Keith Savage has a similar function. It disseminates the tweet to a large and unknown audience beyond the one consisting of his followers. In this sense, the message that is personal in its mention of fellow bloggers also takes on a touristic quality in addressing a largely unknown audience to promote the blog and its author.

The most interesting hashtag by far is the #lp tag in Ettenberg's message. Guidebook publisher Lonely Planet instructs visitors to its *Twitter* page to use the #lp in any post they would like to have retweeted. In using #lp, Ettenberg associates herself with the touristic discourse represented by Lonely Planet, relying on the brand name to validate her message and promote her blog. The hashtag also associates her tweet with a brand name whose touristic contexts of guidebook-directed sightseeing are quite different from the "nomadic" style of travel suggested by *Legal Nomads*. Conversely, the #lp allows Lonely Planet to curate and provide access to a large amount of travel-related content created by travel bloggers. This has implications for self-presentation – Lonely Planet positions itself as an arbiter of taste, picking out content that is genuine and proving itself capable of recognizing the unique and extraordinary, that is to say what is travel-like, in destinations that have become clichéd or touristic. By retweeting Ettenberg's post the company manipulates the content of a personal message – in this case the link to the *Legal Nomads* – and draws on the reputation of the bloggers to enhance its own brand image. At the same time it potentially sells travel-related products and services, and thus paves the way for tourism to the places described therein. This is by no means a one-sided relationship as such recognition from Lonely Planet reinforces Ettenberg's position as an expert on travel.

It is not uncommon for marketers to manipulate trending topics for their own purposes. In their study of *Twitter* use during the 2009 Iranian elections, Zhou et al. observe that spammers used #IranElection to advertise their own websites. Similarly, most posts using containing #travelblog are generated by Travel Shop @travelagentshop, a website that promotes travel-related services in the UK ("Results for #Travelblog"). Although #travelblog seems to be the obvious choice as a self-presentational element, it was in fact rarely used by travel bloggers at the time of

writing. At least some bloggers are keen to avoid #travelblog's association with commercial tourist discourse. This validates the observation that while "many marketers wish to be in conversation with their consumers, not all consumers are looking to be in conversation with marketers" (Boyd, Golder and Lotan). Ironically, it is in *not* using #travelblog that these authors present themselves as travel bloggers. Furthermore, it seems unlikely that this hashtag will prove useful in distributing the content of the blog.

Linking to the blog is perhaps the most straightforward technique for presenting the self as travel blogger and increasing the visibility of the blog via a post. In the period between July and November 2010, the Eva and Jeremy Rees had three tweets, all of which distributed the content of their travel blog:

ForksandJets @Forks and Jets: Team Rees puts their beer caps on in Colorado <http://bit.ly/aL9ydJ> new on www.forksandjets.com

4 Aug

ForksandJets @Forks and Jets: Some thoughts about moving to Denver, CO <http://bit.ly/b7mKj2> on www.forksandjets.com

29 Jul

ForksandJets @Forks and Jets: Is British food boring and gray? <http://bit.ly/cm2CCv> Team Rees Investigates on [forksandjets.com](http://www.forksandjets.com).

23 Jul (Rees and Rees "Forks and Jets")

It is possible that there were other posts during this period that were later deleted. Even so, it is significant that the Rees's use tweets to present themselves as bloggers, and point audiences to their travel blog. Tweets may also link to content on travel-related websites and while these do not necessarily refer to the blog or the author as travel blogger, they are valuable contextual clues. Authors may also share links that are not travel-related or blog-related, thus revealing personal interests and aspects of self that have no relevance to the travel blog as in this tweet from Jodi Ettenberg: "The neuroscience of magic: <http://bit.ly/fQfpPH>" ("Jodi Ettenberg").

Tweeting Travel Discourse

There are a number of striking similarities in the discursive style of tweets and travel discourse, bearing out Baym's observations on online language. Microblog posts are often personal and self-centred, describe activities and experiences, and are written in the present (Honeycutt and Herring; Oulasvirta et al.). To that extent, they employ the same narrative techniques as travel writing, which is also personal, focused on experience rather than destination, and written as if happening in the present. This is certainly the case with at least some of the posts from independent travel bloggers. For example, Jodi Ettenberg tweets about her trip to Milan, "Eating roasted chestnuts after climbing the Duomo and soon running off to my meetings. Trying to make the most of my 1 day in Milan!" ("Jodi Ettenberg"). Similarly, Nomadic Matt also tweets while he travels on 22 November 2010: "30 more minutes and I land in Portland. Thank god. What a long day of travel. Must. Sleep. Soon" ("Nomadic Matt").

Each of these tweets describes personal experience, is written in the present tense, and mentions but does not describe destination. For Ettenberg, the activity of eating chestnuts takes precedence over the destination – either Milan or Duomo. The assertion that she is making the most of her trip implies a travel experience. Still, the fleeting nature of a day trip suggests a touristic superficiality. Meanwhile, Nomadic Matt highlights the experience of travelling, particularly its discomfort – a theme that is characteristic of a travel experience rather than a touristic one. While he suggests that the journey has been arduous, the fact that he is tweeting while in an aeroplane indicates a connectivity with the world that is at odds with the rootlessness implied by being a nomadic traveller. Thus, while using *Twitter* allows him to keep the traveller 'alive' for his audience, it also detracts from the idea of real travel as something of an escape.

There is also much in common between the travel-related tweet and the holiday postcard. Chris Kennedy finds that holiday postcards are generally used as a "relational" device, meant to strengthen ties between people. Messages are usually written without much thought or planning and are essentially public, as anyone may read them. Content is usually general and lacking in detail, with locations mentioned but not described. Noting that the messages usually describe activities,

accommodation, or personal physical appearance, Kennedy concludes that the language is generally positive and uses general terms. Although this research is based on a narrow sample, it is hard to ignore the resemblances. A message on *Twitter* is probably as unplanned and is definitely public. The conversations and connections made via *Twitter* clearly indicate the relational aspect of travel bloggers' tweets. In addition to this, the content of the messages is mundane and general in nature.

The postcard-like nature of the message is reflected in Leif Pettersen's tweet on Bogota: "Bogota's center teems with informal vendors. Absolute bedlam. Can buy anything. <http://twitpic.com/3clodr>" ("Leif Pettersen"). This mention rather than the description of location, the emphasis on experience – "Absolute bedlam" – and the unplanned nature of the message all reflect the discursive style of the holiday postcard. The tweet links to a photograph of a market scene, but Pettersen does not specify where in Bogota this is. More significantly, the link to the photograph strengthens the parallels with the postcard in that it provides an image of the destination to accompany the message. Unlike postcards, however, this image does not depict an easily recognizable tourist icon. Firstly, this exemplifies how authors can manipulate familiar genres to a new form of communication. Secondly, it indicates how such changes can be self-presentational strategies. Tweets with links to travel-related photographs enhance the traveller position presented by authors in their blogs.

Some travel tweets resemble postcard messages in their use of positive language to describe travel experiences. Nomadic Matt is enthusiastically tweets, "BKK is a city you grow to love. There's a ton of great areas in it. It's not a tourist city" ("Nomadic Matt"). Even the word "not" is used in a positive context, highlighting that this is a traveller's destination in being "not a tourist city." Yet, there is also a touch of tourist discourse in the euphoric description of "a ton of great areas." Keith Savage is similarly positive when he tweets, "Have you tried the fish and chips at the Pierowall Hotel in Westray, Orkney? Amazing!" (Savage "Keith Savage"). While the relative obscurity of the destination suggests travel rather than tourism, the focus on place and the exclamation is more suited to promotional tourist discourse. Thus the author's presentation of the travel experience is situated in the discourses of both travel and tourism.

The Networked Self of the Travel Blogger

Central to the argument in this chapter is the idea that the self as travel blogger is networked across multiple online platforms. Each of these tools comes with its own set of affordances that travel bloggers use in various ways to distribute their blogs. This mainly involves making careful choices and controlling the information publicly displayed to audiences. In general, the display of connections to other travel bloggers presents these bloggers as networked and networking with others. Therefore, the staging of a blogger's self-presentation is, to a large extent, determined by the affordances and limitations of their platforms.

Quite often, a decision that emphasises themes and content of the blog detracts from a sense of the author as travel blogger and vice versa. For example, "Forks and Jets" on *Twitter* clearly distributes the blog, but cannot be said to network the bloggers. Authors such as Anil Polat appear to manage this well, easily incorporating references to both the blog and the self as blogger on both *Facebook* and *Twitter*. Others manage such complexities by using one platform mainly to refer to their blog and another to express themselves as travel bloggers. For example, Keith Savage uses detail from his blog on both his *Facebook* and *Twitter* pages. However, the former displays a section of the blog's title banner, while the latter uses his profile photograph as seen in *Traveling Savage*. Similarly, bloggers may interact with a more general audience on their *Facebook* page, and refer to the themes and content of their blogs, while using *Twitter* principally to connect with other travel bloggers.

Evidently, authors use various techniques to move beyond the boundaries of their travel blog, distribute its content, and express themselves as travel bloggers. Ultimately, their self-presentation involves a skilful management of discourses of travel and tourism. As bloggers strive to describe travel rather than tourism, they focus on personal experience. Yet, in order to gain visibility for their blogs, engage audiences and authenticate their position as travel bloggers, they often use a discursive style that is touristic. In the end, networking the self and presenting the travel blog requires a negotiation of the discursive tensions between travel and tourism.

Worth a Thousand Words (or More)

Framing the Discursive Tensions in Travel Blog Photographs

Generic definitions rarely mention photographs as being essential to blogs because earlier forms of this genre were incapable of including images. Nevertheless, travel-related photographs are integral to the independent travel blogs discussed in this study, appearing alongside entries, as entries in themselves, in galleries, and in the form of slideshows. Photographs in personal online narratives are generally self-presentational elements that provide a context for the experiences described therein (Nelson and Hull; van Dijck “Digital Photography”). Moreover, tourism and photography are inextricably linked to each other, so much so that they are described as “modern twins” (Baerenholdt et al.). Against this background, this chapter examines the contribution of photographs in independent travel blogs to the overall presentation of the self as travel blogger. Some analyses of travel-related photographs identify a discursive style that is either associated with or distinct from tourist discourse (Dann *Tourism*; Robinson and Picard; Urry and Larsen). Accordingly, the chapter determines how various narrative techniques in these images associate the experience represented within with travel and tourist discourses and examines the discursive tensions that arise.

The practice of tourism is essentially the practice of photography, as tourists “appropriate” and consume places they visit via the images they capture using cameras (Sontag 4). Due to recent advances in mobile phone technology and location-based services, tourists can also photograph destinations using camera phones and share these images, which can be contextualized in online maps (Bamford, Coulton and Edwards). This has facilitated photo blogging and the instant sharing of travel-related images via online platforms (van Dijck “Digital Photography”). Images in advertisements and brochures organize such consumption of place by showing tourists what sights to visit, “gaze upon,” and photograph (Urry). Indeed, visitors to a place may even find signposts at a monument or tourist site, indicating the best views and ideal backgrounds for taking photographs (Baerenholdt et al.; Dann “Notices”). What follows is a circle of representation as more images of the destination are created, reiterating themes from tourism

advertising and potentially directing the gaze of future visitors (Urry). In this sense, photography both produces and is a product of tourism.

Though recent research into travel-related photography is largely based on theories concerned with the consumption and practice of tourism, it still reveals some insights into the nature of tourist discourse. Several studies that test, and for the most part confirm, the validity of Urry's concept of a "hermeneutic circle" (129) of representation suggest that tourists' photographs largely replicate existing images of the destination (Caton and Santos; Garrod; Jenkins). These findings are based on analyses of images captured at tourist sites and do not consider whether tourists also photograph other locations. Still, this suggestion that the subject matter of travel-related photographs is predetermined leaves little possibility for new and original content creation. It also implies that there is little distinction between the content and style of photographs created for personal purposes and those created for commercial ones. According to Graham Dann, the latter have certain characteristic visual techniques. These include an emphasis on colour in the image and its accompanying narrative, attention to its format (placement, size, shape, content, and structure), the use of visual clichés such as bright sunshine or pristine beaches, and connotation procedures such as specific effects, poses, objects, lighting, sequencing, and artistic composition (Dann *Tourism*).

Tourists are far from being the mindless consumers and producers of the tourist gaze suggested by these studies. In fact, individuals often personalize photographs of a place by foregrounding family members and thus ensure that "it isn't just a postcard" (Baerenholdt et al. 90). The attractions they photograph generally remain in the background. In this respect, such photographs are a departure from commercial tourist discourse by not being postcard-like in composition and content. Nevertheless, this "family gaze" is carefully choreographed, as individuals strike a suitable pose to demonstrate that they are a family on holiday. The studied nature of such an image – Baerenholdt et al appropriately describe this as a performance – suggests a "staged authenticity," to borrow a term from Dean MacCannell, albeit in a slightly different context ("Authenticity"). It is contrived in the manner of tourism rather than spontaneous in the manner of travel, even though the intent of the photographer is often to create an image that is not touristic. This suggests tensions between travel and tourism in the practice of travel-related

photography. Photographs can have touristic associations without necessarily possessing the characteristics of commercial tourist images.

Robinson and Picard identify two distinct styles in travel-related photographs, based on which they categorize these images as “the professional travel photograph” and the “vernacular tourist photograph” (8-9). The difference between the two lies in the photographic technique as well as the contexts in which they are likely to appear. Echoing Dann’s assessment of tourist discourse, they write that the professional travel photograph “borrows strongly from the techniques of the artist” and features in forms of commercial tourist discourse such as postcards, magazines, guidebooks, and brochures (Robinson and Picard 8). Perhaps in an acknowledgement of Urry’s work, the authors add that these photographs are “reproduced, copied, mimicked, and parodied,” thus attracting academic interest (9).

In contrast, “vernacular tourist photographs,” which include the holiday snapshot, are

...located largely in the private rather than the public sphere...and linked to their public absence, their social impact is somewhat minimal.... Regardless of various degrees of competency and artistic flair with which the photographer may capture the occasion of travel, and the holiday experience as a series of frames, the process of photography is divested of technical reference points and the holiday photograph is almost entirely an amateur object. (Robinson and Picard 9)

A distinguishing feature of such photographs is their function as storytelling devices, souvenirs, and a means of representing social relationships and constructing identity (Lo et al.; Robinson and Picard). Furthermore, they are characteristically spontaneous and “uncontaminated by technical over-indulgence” (Robinson and Picard 22). Thus, for these authors, the personal and unplanned nature of such photographs sets them apart from commercial tourist images.

This recognition that travel-related photographs are not necessarily reproductions of commercial images owes something to Dean MacCannell’s theory of a “second gaze.” This involves looking beyond the attractions represented in

commercial travel-related discourse, seeking out “openings and gaps....the unexpected, not the extraordinary, objects and events that may open a window in structure, a chance to glimpse the real” (“Tourist Agency” 36). If the work of Urry and Dann provides a means of understanding what constitutes tourist discourse in a travel-related photograph, then MacCannell’s second gaze offers a means of distinguishing travel discourse in the image. Extrapolating from this, one may argue that photographs that contain travel discourse capture “real” sights rather than ones indicated by tourist brochures, “unexpected” events that are not organized specifically as tourist attractions, and on the whole look at places in a new way. Apart from suggesting that those who photograph from this perspective are more discerning, the second gaze may appear to be an ambiguous concept for identifying travel discourse. However, in conjunction with the work of Robinson and Picard, it can be argued that photographs that contain travel discourse are also distinguished by amateur technique, a focus on real and unexpected events or objects that are not part of the designated attraction, and an emphasis on personal experience. Along with their accompanying text, they form part of a larger narrative about the travel experience. The travel-related photographs in independent travel blogs, however, often resist such neat distinctions and this is in part due to the technology of the blog or the hosting service, as well as the advances in digital photography.

Digital travel-related photography is one of the latest developments in the increasingly visual turn in tourism, first noted by Judith Adler. Digital photographs may be easily edited or altered, and this in turn allows individuals to manipulate their self-presentation in these images (van Dijck “Digital Photography” 66). The differences between the sophisticated professional techniques associated with tourist discourse and the amateurish style of travel discourse are blurred when individuals use photo-editing software to edit and enhance images either directly on their cameras or on a computer. The discursive distinctions are further complicated when the photograph is displayed online. To begin with, the ability to share images online means that personal travel-related photographs are no longer mainly privately or temporarily displayed. Photographs on a travel blog can be potentially as accessible to a large audience as are tourism advertisements. In addition to this, features like comments and tags enable a constant reinterpretation of the photograph’s meaning via the addition of accompanying text (Davies), a phenomenon that is particularly

relevant to independent travel blogs that often invite and receive comments from readers. Also, the structure of a photo-sharing website may permit or limit certain display styles, and this in turn can shape the meaning of the image (Davies). Such advances tend to blur the distinctions between travel-related photographs that may be classified as tourist or travel discourse.

There is a tendency on the part of both researchers and tourists to differentiate between a photographic style that is associated with commercial tourism and one that is not. However, technologies of digital photography and online photo-sharing complicate these distinctions, some of which are unclear to begin with. In light of these issues, this chapter identifies and analyses the discourses of travel and tourism in photographs on independent travel blogs. It begins with the premise that the tensions between travel and tourism are expressed in the content of travel-related photographs and the manner in which they are presented on the blog. It also discusses the contribution of the accompanying text, particularly captions, comments, and tags to these discursive tensions. It extends the argument of previous chapters that identifying destination is but a minor concern when travel bloggers post images. More importantly, photographs shared via services such as *Flickr* distribute the content and inherent discursive tensions of the independent travel blog and extend the self-presentation of its author.

The Photographic Post

Travel-related photographs are often discussed in connection with the narrative they supplement or form a part of. Several such studies are based on Roland Barthes' view of text as "a parasitic message designed to connote...sublimate, patheticize, or rationalize the image" (*Image, Music, Text* 25). For example, Dann's analysis of tourism advertisements considers the relationship between their words and images. Based on their analysis of postcard images, Albers and James argue that travel photographs are closely intertwined with an accompanying text, without which they would be devoid of any connotative meaning. Others describe personal travel-related photographs as a device that prompts the telling of a story about the travel experience (Robinson and Picard; Walker and Moulton). Photographs shared online are generally self-presentational and provide a talking point about personal experiences (Nelson and Hull; van Dijck

“Digital Photography”; Van House). Like Barthes, all of these authors argue that text illustrates the image instead of vice versa. So it is possible that accompanying text in the form of captions, comments, and entries supplements an author’s presentation of the self as a travel blogger via the photographs in independent travel blogs.

This is not to say that travel-related photographs without captions, entries, or tags, are devoid of meaning. Photographs in themselves validate the travel experience (Sontag 9). Furthermore, images can have “semiotic autonomy,” that is to say that they can still have depth of meaning in the absence of an accompanying text such as a caption (Chaplin; Lindekens qtd. in Dann 189). Even though this view opposes Barthes’ position, it should be remembered that meaning derives from the contexts the image was previously used in or the texts they previously accompanied. After all, if tourists photograph “classic sights,” this is because they recognize what they see before them from “markers” in advertisements, brochures, and guidebooks (MacCannell *The Tourist* 124; Robinson and Picard 16). The image, once captured, will still make sense independent of an accompanying text because of these other existing contexts. This is perhaps something that Barthes himself recognises in his later works, particularly in *Camera Lucida* where he discusses the meaning of images based on his prior understanding of and familiarity with the contexts of the subject pictured rather than the accompanying text. He acknowledges that the reading of a photograph relies on “a certain knowledge on the reader’s part” (*Image, Music, Text* 28). This is similar to Bakhtin’s argument that an individual’s knowledge of the social contexts of a message influences how well its meaning is communicated.

Travel-related photographs in independent travel blogs are almost always accompanied by words in the form of captions, comments, and the blog entry itself, each of which provides a context that shapes the meaning of the image. The following section discusses the contribution of each of these elements to the self-presentation of the independent travel bloggers selected for this study, and considers the tensions between travel and tourism present in the accompanying text.

Seeing Bloggers in the Sights:

Although travel-related photographs in blogs often illustrate an entry and validate the travel experience described therein, the reverse can also happen – sometimes the

entry illustrates the photograph and situates it in discourses of travel and tourism. Some independent travel bloggers construct an entire post around a single photograph. *Traveling Savage* has a series of photo-based posts titled “Picture This,” each of which centres on an image of a location that author Keith Savage describes. One such entry, “Picture This: The Castle on the Rock” (Fig. 1) features a photograph of Edinburgh Castle, described on the *Lonely Planet* website as one of the sights to see in Edinburgh (“Edinburgh Castle”). Various elements within the image suggest a tension between travel and tourism, which is enhanced by the accompanying entry.



Figure 1: Keith Savage’s photograph of Edinburgh Castle as seen from the Sir Walter Scott monument

The picture of Edinburgh Castle posted on *Traveling Savage* closely resembles a similar photograph on the official website for the Castle (Fig. 2), although the latter is taken from a different angle. Both photographs place the Castle in the centre of the composition, clearly showing its position atop a hill, trees in the foreground, and a blue sky behind it. The image is, at first glance, touristic in that it captures an iconic monument rather than an unexpected sight. The similarities with the Edinburgh Castle website image suggest that this picture reproduces tourist discourse and completes the circle of representation that Urry defines as characteristic of touristic consumption of place. This sense of replication is reinforced by the absence of people in the photograph – a characteristic of

commercial forms of tourist discourse such as postcard images (Garrod). Yet, the image is neither impersonal tourist discourse, nor is its author wholly inconspicuous. The bottom right corner of the photograph bears a watermark of a circular buckle, a visual element of the *Traveling Savage* title banner. The watermark is a stamp of the author's ownership and is self-presentational in that it showcases the photo-editing skill of the blogger. Moreover, it enhances the validity of the photograph, the travel experience, and the accompanying travel narrative by differentiating it from similar images in guidebooks or postcards. Savage's copyrighting of his work has an undertone of commercialization that feeds into promotional tourist discourse and associates him with those who photograph such monuments to sell their images as postcards or for brochures.

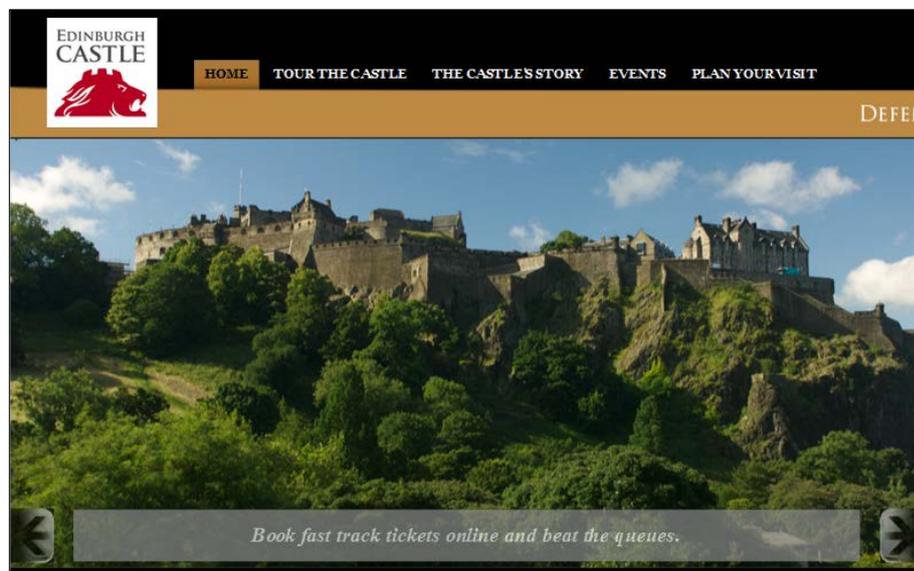


Figure 2: A similar photograph of the monument on the Edinburgh Castle website

Various statements in the accompanying entry contextualize the image in discourses of both travel and tourism. Initially, the entry describes the image and the experience it refers to in terms generally associated with travel – as something involving danger and difficulty. It also reveals that the castle is not Savage's intended destination, although it is the subject of the photograph:

After 297 spiraling steps, I reach the top of Edinburgh's Sir Walter Scott monument. Dizziness from the climb and a sudden sense of vertigo assault me, and for a split second I lament that I hadn't

purchased any insurance for travel for this trip. Erratic winds rip at my jacket, blur my vision with tears, and roar in my ears. It's a trial by wind to reach Edinburgh's upper levels.

But the reward is immense.

In all directions the city seems to bow before me. Only Arthur's Seat, in the distance, looks at me with a level gaze. Then, curling around the monument's uppermost and tiny viewing deck, I spot it: **Edinburgh Castle [sic]**. (Savage "Castle on Rock")

To begin with, the image does not represent the attraction Savage has visited – the Sir Walter Scott monument. Instead, the real tourist destination is framed out of the picture. Apart from a passing reference, it is written out like the tourists that Dann speaks of "writing out." Thus, in looking beyond the Sir Walter Scott monument and focusing unexpectedly on Edinburgh Castle, the photograph constitutes a second gaze. Subsequent statements draw on the contexts of travel – the climb is described as steep and difficult, a central theme in narratives of travel experience as opposed to touristic ones. Savage makes a point of mentioning the number of steps (297), the dizziness and vertigo which "assault" him, strong winds that "roar" and "rip" at his jacket, all of which suggest that the journey is particularly arduous and even dangerous (Savage "Castle on Rock"). This is accentuated by the fact that he braves all of this while travelling without insurance, suggesting the risk and adventure associated with travel. On the face of it, this photograph of Edinburgh Castle may appear to be a touristic appropriation of a well-known monument. In the context of these accompanying statements, however, it is situated not as a touristic destination that is easily accessed, but as a goal achieved at some cost to the traveller.

Having presented this as a travel experience and himself as a traveller, Savage draws readers' attention to the vivid colours of the scene depicted in the image. He writes that "It glows in the morning light, fencing with the clouds above it, like some computer-generated fantasy." This suggestion of artificiality and colourfulness imbues the image with touristic qualities, as does the implication that it is manipulated on a computer. What is more significant, however, is the metaphor employed here. Although similes and metaphors are present in many forms of travel-

related communication, they are most often associated with travel writing (Dann). In his profile, Savage describes the blog as a step towards achieving his goal to be a travel writer. Thus, the literary tropes in this entry are self-presentational elements strengthening his position as an amateur travel writer and his travel blog as an example of a travel narrative.

At first glance, the content and composition of this photograph suggest touristic discourse. The Castle is after all primarily a tourist icon. However, a closer look at the photograph reveals that it is not entirely impersonal tourist discourse. The personalized watermark identifies the author, even though he does not feature in the image. The picture is already a reflection of the second gaze for its depiction of the Castle rather than the Scott monument, thus strengthening Savage's position as a traveller who goes off the beaten path in search of something more authentic. If the accompanying entry draws attention to the touristic qualities of the image, it also makes it part of a travel experience. Elements of tourist discourse locate this experience in Edinburgh, allowing Savage to present and validate the blog as a travel narrative. Elements of travel discourse enable him to reinforce the traveller position he describes in his profile and occupies in the travel blog. The presence of discourses of travel and tourism create tensions in the narrative, and yet both are necessary to the presentation of blog and its author.

Placing Blogs in Comments and Captions:

Accompanying text, such as captions, guides a reader's interpretation of an image and so fixes its meaning (Barthes *Image, Music, Text*). It plays a large part in determining the reading of newspaper and magazine photographs (Hall; Westman and Laine-Hernandez). Similarly, comments that readers add to online photographs and conversations that develop when authors reply can alter, emphasise, or undermine existing contexts and meanings (Davies). As noted in earlier chapters, comments are a definitive feature of blogs as is interaction between readers and authors. The very presence of comments and a conversation about this photograph confirms the text as a travel blog and its author as a blogger. This interaction produces a self that is located in multiple discourses (Serfaty 61). Following from previous studies of the relationship between image and text, it can be argued that captions and comments enable authors to emphasise specific elements of travel and

tourist discourse in the photograph that best reinforce the positions they occupy in their blog. Consequently, this accompanying text locates the photograph and the travel blogger in the tensions between these discourses.

Traveling Savage's photograph of the castle does not have a caption. However, there are a number of comments from readers, several of which frame the photograph as travel discourse. Islandmomma writes, "I've never seen a photograph taken of the castle from the monument before," to which Savage replies, "I can't recall one either." Another visitor, Flexicover, echoes this with the observation that "it's quite rare to see it at that angle." This emphasis on the rarity – the unexpectedness – of the image, and its apparent difference from existing representations of this monument, place it as travel discourse. Although Savage himself does not emphasise this aspect of the image in his entry, such statements supplement his presentation of the Castle as part of a travel experience. The suggestion that he has gone off the beaten path to get this photograph solidifies his position as an exploring traveller and "hunter" of new experiences.

Other comments question the authenticity of this experience. Fellow travel blogger Backpacking Matt reflects on the more technical aspects of the image: "This must be photoshopped, the sun never comes out in Edinburgh! :-)." The smiley added at the end suggests that this accusation of manipulation is made in jest. Nevertheless, this is a reference to the unrealistic technical perfection of photographs that Dann notes as a feature of tourist discourse, and reiterates Savage's own remark that the photograph seems "computer-generated." Savage in his turn assures him, and perhaps others who may read this conversation, that the image is real: "Matt, more than half of my three weeks in Edinburgh were sunny days!" Conversely, in reply to another comment from Serena that compares the image to "a lovely Miazaki cartoon¹⁰," the author writes "I can't say you're wrong." In both cases, Savage's replies enable him to enhance his self-presentation as a travel blogger. While his affirmation of the cartoon-like quality of the photograph may seem to acknowledge an artificiality and inauthenticity that is associated with tourist discourse, his acknowledgement of the image's stylistic affinity with the works of a renowned

¹⁰ This is a common trope in Japanese animator Hayako Miazaki's films. An example of this is *Howl's Moving Castle* that features in the eponymous animated-film distributed by Disney. Here, the castle is featured atop a green hill against a backdrop of a blue sky and white clouds.

animator implies that Savage is similarly talented, even artistic. His rejection of any hint of inauthenticity likewise reassures readers of his credibility as a travel blogger.

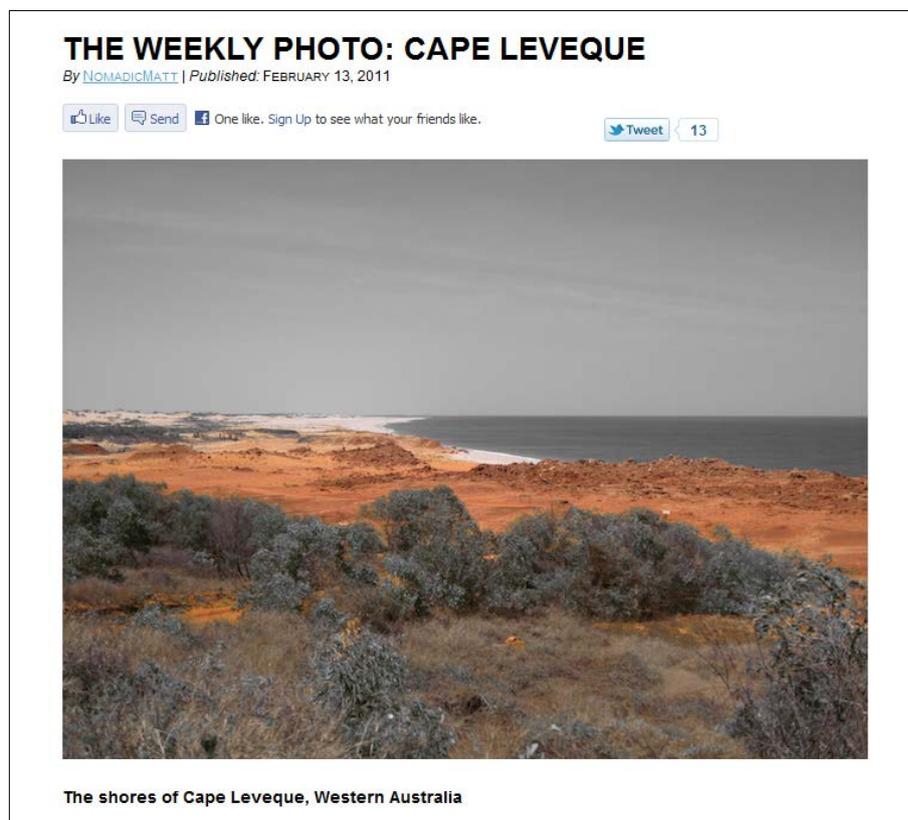


Figure 3: Nomadic Matt’s photograph of a beach in Western Australia

Captions and comments are all the more essential to shaping meaning when a photograph is the principal component of a post and has no accompanying paragraphs of description. This is especially true of forms of travel-related communication such as postcards, where a caption can determine the meaning of the image it refers to and locate it in a larger discursive context (Goldsworthy). Like *Traveling Savage*, *Nomadic Matt’s Travel Site* runs a series of photo-based posts titled “The Weekly Photo.” Unlike Keith Savage, however, Nomadic Matt only provides brief captions to describe the images. For example, “The Weekly Photo: Cape Leveque” (Fig. 3) is simply labelled, “The shores of Cape Leveque, Western Australia.” There is a touristic element in the postcard-style brevity of this phrase. Assigning a clear destination to the experience presented in this photograph is also, in light of Dann’s theory, a touristic concern. However, it is this accompanying text that fixes a location – Nomadic Matt’s photograph does not depict any iconic tourist

marker that indicates the destination. Many of the basic rules of composition that usually govern landscape photographs seen on postcards, such as the rule of thirds, leading lines, and the golden rule are glaringly absent (Long 215-220). A photograph based on these principles would be more dynamic, whereas Nomadic Matt's image is mundanely amateur.

Before considering how comments highlight elements of tourist and travel discourse in this photograph, it is necessary to consider what these are. Sun, sand, sea, and sex are generally regarded as the four S's that govern the advertising of beach tourism (Lowry qtd. in Hobson and Dietrich). Broadly speaking, at least three of these elements are present in this photograph, making its content something of a touristic cliché. However, this sea shore is not a gentle beach but a stretch of scrub desert. The rough, shrub-lined shore is more easily associated with the treacherous terrain explored by a traveller than with touristic activities such as sunbathing. Similarly, the sea and skies are a stormy grey rather than a sunny blue. Thus, themes drawn from travel discourse are presented via contexts generally associated with tourism.

Several comments that note these aspects of the photograph present contradicting interpretations of the scene. For Erica, the sea "Looks so calm." By contrast, GoingPlaces.sg writes: "I can't figure out how the sea turns into grey colour. It looks calm yet dangerous" (Savage). Another reader writes, "Like the color contrast!" To these, Nomadic Matt replies, "I love the color accent feature on Canon cameras! They do great things." Although this admission suggests the kind of image manipulation generally associated with tourist discourse, such editing is increasingly typical of online digital photographs. More importantly, the resulting modifications can change the meaning of a photograph so that there is "a shift from capturing a meaning to simulating it, from illustrating what perhaps is, to what could or ever should be" (Richter and Schadler 171). Here, the added colour accents change what might have been elements of tourist discourse into those associated with travel. Turning the sky and sea into a stormy grey makes them "dangerous." The new colour implies that this should be viewed as a travel experience. The change heightens the discursive tensions between travel and tourism. Here, as in *Traveling Savage*, the author's response adds to his presentation of self in the blog. Nomadic Matt's

responses have less to do with describing his destination, and more to do with his being a photographer and blogger.

On the one hand, Liudmila's comment picks up on the location mentioned in the photograph's caption. She writes, "I imagine Australia just this way. I understand that it's a splendid place with cities etc, with dazzling greeneri [sic]-but I imagin [sic] it this way. A kind of "legend" that was created in my head after I've seen too many documentaries about the desert maybe" (Nomadic Matt). On the other hand, her remark suggests that for this reader the image is not "unexpected" travel discourse. In fact, as a reminder of "documentaries about the desert" it presents a pre-existing idea of Australia. Nevertheless, her interpretation of the scene also alludes to concepts associated with travel. The Australia of "documentaries" may be viewed as a destination that is more authentic than that of the guidebook. The Australia of the "desert" is off the beaten path, a unique and unexplored destination. The comment reinforces Nomadic Matt's position as a "vagabond" in search of adventure and so is a self-presentational element. Although Nomadic Matt does not affirm this interpretation, it is significant that he does not contradict it either.

In this photograph the author's caption directs readers to particular aspects of the photograph. However, it does not fix meaning, but encourages polysemy by raising questions about the photograph. The caption invites comments, which shape meaning by referring to contexts of both travel and tourism. Replies to these comments become self-presentational as authors reinforce positions and themes stated in their profile. In the ensuing conversation, the meaning of the experiences and destinations depicted in the image are negotiated in discourses of both travel and tourism. Both discourses are therefore integral to the authors' presentation of self and the blog.

The Album Online

Images from the blog that are shared via services such as *Flickr* or *SmugMug* acquire an additional accompanying text on these platforms. Sequencing and tagging in particular provide additional contexts that can influence the meaning of a photograph and a viewer's sense of its author (Davies; Richter and Schadler; Van House; Walker and Moulton). A photograph that appears in a blog entry may form

part of a sequence of images on a *Flickr* page, some of which may not appear in the blog. Its position in this sequence can add to its meaning. Captions placed on this platform can differ from those in the blog. Authors (and visitors, if the authors so permit) may also tag photographs, possibly using terms relevant to themes in the blog. Such labelling of images and embedding them on other websites allows authors to distribute content and extend their self-presentation across several platforms (Richter and Schadler). In particular, tagging can locate the photograph in a larger pool of images and a variety of discourses, some of which may have little relevance to the blog. Services such as *Flickr* also enable geotagging and sharing of EXIF (Exchangeable Image File Format) data, which includes such details as camera settings, the time at which the image was captured, and perhaps the geographic location of the scene in the photograph. It is likely that these techniques locate the photograph in discourses of travel and tourism and have implications for the positions authors occupy in their blogs. Thus, the words and images accompanying photographs on these platforms can give an idea of what constitutes independent travel blogs and those who create them.

A Blogger in the Sequence

Walker and Moulton's extensive analysis of print photo albums has formed the basis of several studies of online travel photography and the sharing of digital photographs online (Lo et al.; Van House). Some of their conclusions are especially applicable to the study of travel bloggers' photographs on platforms such as *Flickr* and *SmugMug*. Firstly, they argue that a travel photo album is about its creator. As "a thematic whole" (171) and "the context for a life" (173), an album is a self-presentational element whose themes and contexts offer insights into its owner – in this case, the independent travel blogger. Secondly, they observe that a photograph derives meaning from structural elements such as sequence. So, the position of a photograph amongst other images in a blog entry or on a *Flickr* page and their arrangement on a page may have thematic significance and say something about a blog and its author. Finally, they conclude that images are consciously selected and displayed to illustrate specific themes. Extending this argument to bloggers' *Flickr* or *SmugMug* pages, it can be argued that photographs shared via these services may be chosen to reflect themes in their blogs or the positions occupied by the blogger.

Similarly, where only a few photographs from an online album are embedded in the travel blog, it can be argued that this controlled display also says something about the constitution of the blog and its author.

Writing about museums in Europe in an entry titled “Culture Vulture,” the authors of *Forks and Jets* post a series of photographs of art galleries, memorials, and museums they have visited (Rees and Rees “Culture Vulture”). Four of these depict the Auschwitz-Birkenau Memorial and Museum near Krakow in Poland. Each image links to Eva Rees’s *Flickr* album where it is displayed on a separate page along with captions and tags. Readers are invited to post comments, but they rarely do so in this album. The page also provides a link to the EXIF data for the image. In addition to this, a thumbnail of the photograph locates it in a “photostream,” a sequence of other images, some of which do not feature in the blog entry. Clicking on this thumbnail displays the photograph on a separate page among these other images. This last feature is particularly significant to this study. Since the same Auschwitz photograph may be viewed in different sequences, and therefore contexts, in the blog and the *Flickr* album, it can have very different meanings on each platform. This in turn has implications for the presentation of the authors and their blog.

The Auschwitz death camp, where many Poles perished, including a large number of Polish Jews, is generally regarded as an icon of the Holocaust and an epitome of what researchers increasingly refer to as dark tourism, a term that describes the commoditization of places connected with disasters, genocide, and other such tragic events (“Auschwitz Museum”; Beech; Lennon and Foley; Tarlow). As this is a death camp located in Poland, it is reasonable to view it as a site that evokes considerable angst for those who live here, justifying the blog entry’s description of Auschwitz as a place that “must leave the Poles feeling trapped.” It may be argued that such sites are hardly the stuff of superficial tourism, are generally off the beaten path, and encourage a deeper consideration of the cultural and historical importance of the destination. To that extent the photographs extend the travel theme of *Forks and Jets*. Nevertheless, the images are a result of the authors’ visit to a recognizable tourist destination, and locating them in the blog does little for the bloggers’ self-presentation as travellers searching for “a new perspective of the

world” (“About Us”). The iconicity of Auschwitz has special significance in the *Forks and Jets* blog because author Eva Rees mentions her Polish origins here (“About Us”). This is reiterated in her *Flickr* profile, where she indicates that Warsaw is her hometown, although she currently resides in Los Angeles. Even though this entry does not indicate whether the image has personal relevance for her, it extends her self-presentation, and readers who view this in the context of her self-description may find additional meaning.

The “Culture Vulture” entry is essentially a column of photographs interspersed with lines of description. The Auschwitz photographs derive their meaning from their place in this series of photographs as well as the position of the sequence as a whole among other elements of the entry. The sequential arrangement reinforces the narrative structure and theme of the entry – primarily a list of recommended European museums and art galleries. The display is easily associated with the narrative style of tourist brochures, and appears to be a visual itinerary of things to see and do. In fact, some of the recommended destinations are featured in travel guides. *Lonely Planet* lists Auschwitz, the Warsaw Rising Museum, and Wieliczka Salt Mines near Krakow, all pictured in this *Forks and Jets* entry, among the most popular sights of Poland (“Krakow Sights”; “Warsaw Sights”). As a thematic whole, the sequence also supports the notion that the authors are “culture vultures.” The superficiality of a culture vulture may be associated with tourists and occupying this discursive role requires the language of tourism. It is difficult to establish whether the *Forks and Jets* authors, whose “About Us” page presents them as “escaping to a faraway place,” use this phrase self-deprecatingly. It could be argued that visiting museums is a passive touristic activity, and that these photographs reflect guided tourist experience rather than spontaneous travel. To that extent, theme and structure locate this sequence in tourist discourse. However, as a selection of the “few [museums] which we loved,” it also reflects the bloggers’ personal preferences and does not merely reiterate a tourism advertiser’s impersonal recommendation of things to see and do in Europe.

The first of the four Auschwitz photographs, depicting a gallery in the Museum, is the third image in this series and is placed between two similar images taken inside art galleries in Germany and Poland. Here, it is one of several examples

of what the authors refer to as “traditional museums” (Rees and Rees). The remaining three photographs appear together between photographs of Memento Park in Budapest and others of Edinburgh and Berlin, as examples of “places that have become museums in themselves” (Rees and Rees). Thus, the adjacent photographs situate the Auschwitz images in a narrative about travel in Europe. Within the sequence as a whole, these photographs are also located in the impersonal discourses of tourism and in the personal narrative of travel in Europe. The lines of text immediately below the last Auschwitz photograph reiterate this:

Of course there is the granddaddy of all, **Auschwitz** (sic) outside Krakow, Poland. A massive, unrestored piece of land-locked anguish that must leave the Poles feeling trapped with a place and time that can not be allowed to be forgotten. You can understand how it must feel to be occupied, forced to help in building this monstrosity and then to have this scar never heal, to continue to exist to this day as part of a greater good, and common education. (Rees and Rees)

If these lines have the impersonal, monologic tone of tourist discourse and address an undefined audience, their content is nevertheless a more personal reflection than a guidebook-style description.

On Eva Rees’s *Flickr* pages (Fig. 4), the same Auschwitz photographs appear in a different context, occupy a different position, and consequently have a different meaning. Here, each image may be viewed separately on its own page, or among a sequence of other images. Rees’s “photo stream” displays the four blog photographs alongside five more images of Auschwitz, each captioned “Near Krakow, Poland.” Also on the same web page are photographs of Krakow – featuring restaurants, streets, night life, and local cuisine such as *pierogi* (dumplings) and *miodowka* (honey vodka). On the whole, the page reinforces the themes of *Forks and Jets*, particularly the authors’ position as “amateur foodie traveloguers” (Rees and Rees). It extends Eva Rees’s presentation of self, in *Forks and Jets*, as a person of Polish origin. Notably, each caption ends with the line “Read about our trip around the world at Forks and Jets,” directing viewers to the blog narrative. There is also one photograph of author Jeremy Rees and another of an old car, a Trabant, that has

special significance for the authors. By and large, these images capture experiences that could be described as personal and off the beaten path.

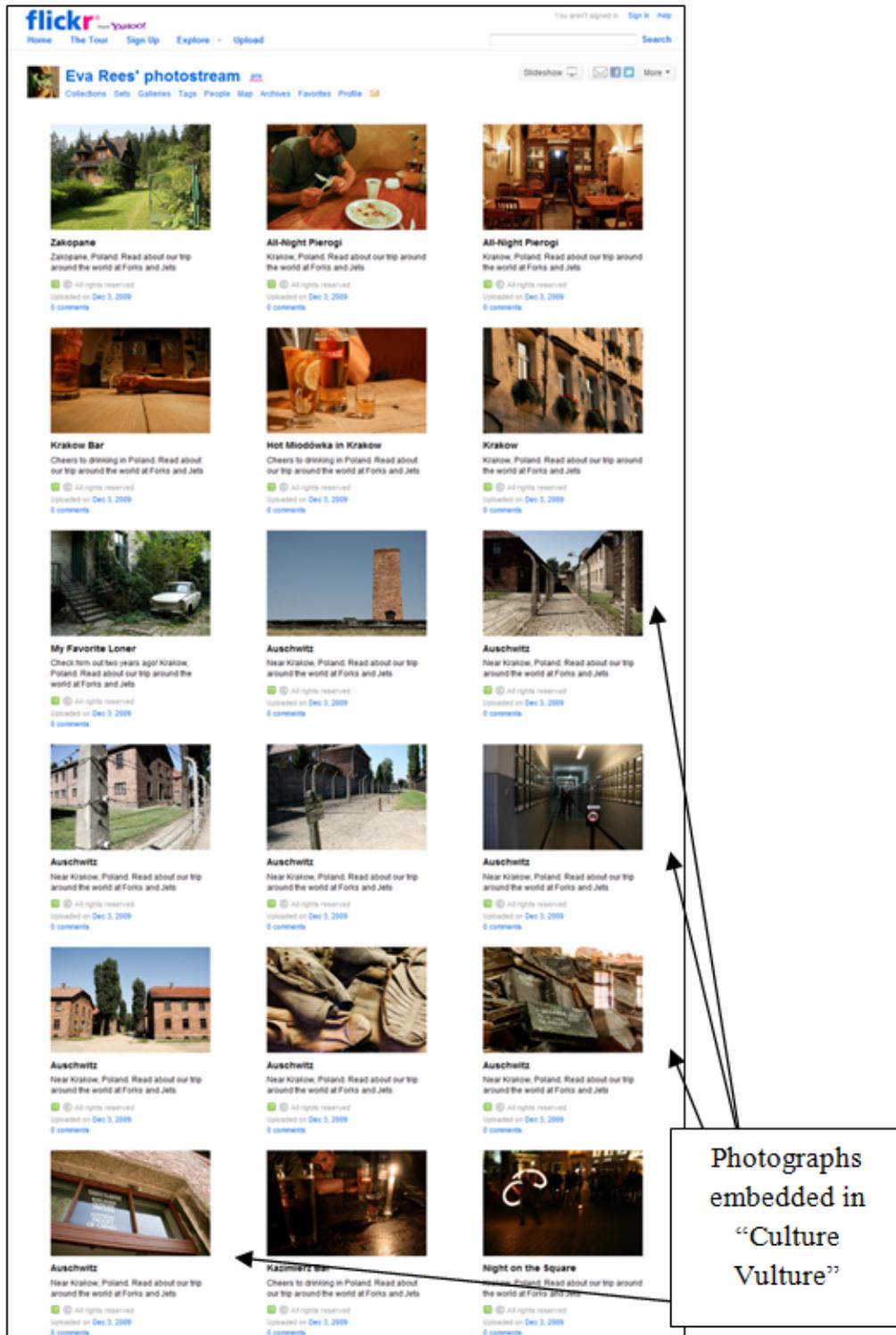


Figure 4: The Auschwitz photographs among images of Poland on Flickr

This is not to say that the *Flickr* page is purely travel discourse – at least some of the destinations shown here, such as Kazimierz and Auschwitz itself, find mention in forms of travel-related communication generally associated with tourism, such as the *Lonely Planet* guide to Poland. Nevertheless, it can be argued that this sequence as a whole tells a travel story that differs significantly from the blog entry. Here, the Auschwitz images are part of a more detailed visual description of the concentration camp, as well as a larger narrative about Polish culture, particularly in the region around Krakow. The gravity of these images is incongruous with the vivacity of photographs of the restaurant scene and night life in this town. The sequencing juxtaposes themes of life and death, past and present, dark and light. However, in the context of discourses of travel and tourism, this arrangement signals an insensitivity that is touristic. Although this may be an inadvertent effect of *Flickr*'s photostream feature, to display photographs of a death camp alongside others that depict the authors enjoying a night out on the town trivializes all that Auschwitz symbolizes and suggests a touristic superficiality on the part of the authors. Such are the affordances of this platform that images such as the Auschwitz photographs can appear in a sequence that is at odds with their implicit or explicit meaning.

For a reader approaching the *Flickr* page from the blog, the position of the Auschwitz photographs in the photostream is particularly significant. Only some photographs of the memorial are embedded in the blog and arranged in an order different to that of the *Flickr* page. One of these images shows the concentration camp surrounded by a barbed wire fence, while another displays victims' suitcases. Both of these are symbolic of the site, and perhaps this was a factor that influenced the authors' selection. The *Flickr* album predates the blog entry. A more discerning reader may find some humour in the idea that *Forks and Jets* is something of a "vulture" that scavenges photographs from Eva Rees's *Flickr* page. In this sense, the different sequencing and the controlled display of only certain photographs reinforces the theme of the blog entry.

Readers may also have the sense that the *Flickr* page takes them backstage, showing them the real story behind the writing of the entry and offering a deeper insight into experiences of the bloggers. With *Forks and Jets*, they get the highlights

of the journey, but with Eva Rees's *Flickr* page they can view the complete experience. In both the blog and *Flickr* sequences, the Auschwitz images are situated in discourses of travel and tourism. However, the discourses work very differently on each platform. In the discursive contexts of tourism suggested in the "Culture Vulture" sequence, these photographs are a self-presentational element that supports the theme of the entry and the author's position as an expert on the European cultural experience. Within the elements of travel discourse on the *Flickr* page sequence, they are a self-presentational element that supports the central theme of *Forks and Jets*. Here, alongside images that have personal significance for the authors, these photographs form 'a context' for Eva Rees's life and offer insights into the positions she occupies in the blog. Thus a photograph's varying location in the discourses of travel and tourism on each platform plays some part in distributing the content of the travel blog and the self-presentation of its author.

Tagging the Blogger

Several aspects of tagging are particularly relevant to the study of photographs on Eva Rees's *Flickr* page. In effect, every tag added to a photograph is itself an accompanying text and brings with it additional accompanying texts. Firstly, as a technical feature, each tag links the image to a larger body of discourse that consists mainly of images added and similarly tagged by other users (Richter and Schadler 174). If an image has multiple tags, it will be linked to multiple image sequences and consequently a variety of discursive contexts. Secondly, each tag is a word (or a phrase) that comes with a set of connotations that adds meaning to the photograph. In addition to this, tags are self-presentational elements and authors can attract attention to their images by using a common tag that features prominently in the *Flickr* tag cloud (Marlow et al.). Tagging an image on *Flickr* heightens its visibility, distributes it to a large audience and situates it, along with its author, across a network of photographs and photographers (Van Dijck "Flickr and Connectivity"). In the case of Eva Rees's album, the use of a common tag attracts attention to the blog and her role as a travel blogger. It would also potentially connect her to others interested in travel-related photography. The Auschwitz photographs in particular could be located in a larger discourse surrounding the site.

Eva Rees’s photograph of a barbed wire fence at Auschwitz (Fig. 5) is perhaps one of the most iconic of her photographs of this concentration camp. It is simply captioned, “Near Krakow, Poland,” followed by a link to the blog where, viewers are promised, they can read more about the trip. Similar images of the fence feature on the Auschwitz-Birkenau Memorial and Museum’s website. Furthermore, clicking on the “concentration camp” tag leads to a display of the “Most Interesting” images from other users, a number of which are similar in theme. Like the *Forks and Jets* authors, other users also post “concentration camp” photographs of Auschwitz’s barbed wire fence, and the discarded shoes of Holocaust victims. *Flickr* user brunoats’s photograph in particular is nearly identical in content, except that it foregrounds a section of barbed wire. He asks viewers to “please contact me, or buy a print here, but do not use my photographs without my consent,” indicating that this photograph has commercial attributes.

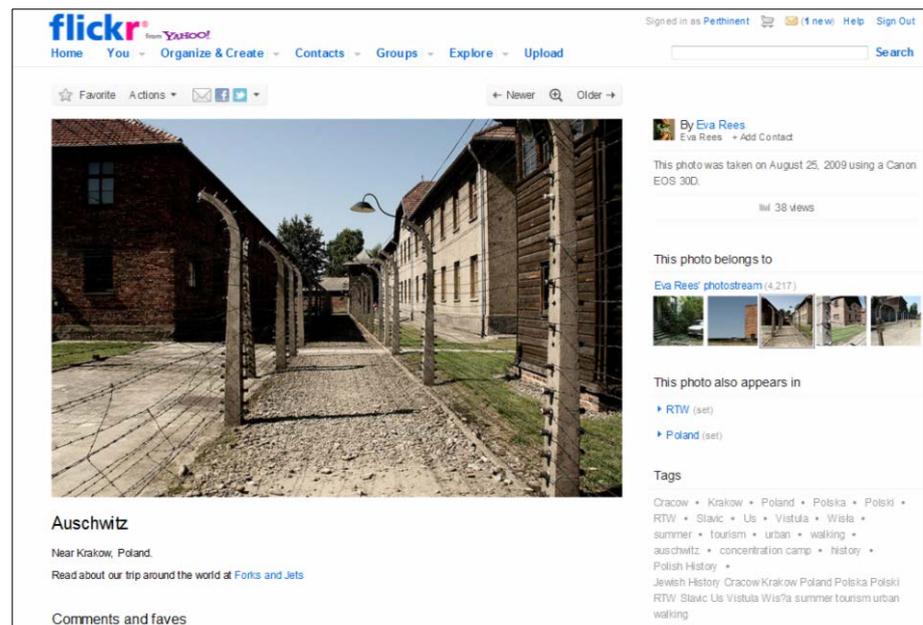


Figure 5: Eva Rees’s photograph of the barbed wire fence at Auschwitz, which also appears in *Forks and Jets*

This can influence the meaning and position of Rees’s own photograph for a viewer who sees both images. The replication of a theme from tourist discourse and the parallels with images captured by other users suggests that Rees’s photograph is part of the hermeneutic circle of representation and is located in tourist discourse.

This also bears out Richter and Schadler's observation that tagging digital photographs has made them "completely disconnected from authenticity or uniqueness, characteristics that used to go with private photography" (175). What appears to be a unique personal travel-related photograph in Rees's album and on *Forks and Jets* becomes increasingly touristic as the accompanying texts and contexts change in the process of distribution and dissemination via *Flickr*.

Of all the Auschwitz photographs in their *Flickr* collection, the images of the fence and the discarded shoes are the ones that the authors embed in *Forks and Jets*. Although the *Flickr* page predates the blog entry, it is difficult to establish whether the recognizable theme is a factor determining the authors' selection. However, it is reasonable to argue that *Flickr* demonstrates that this is an "interesting" theme for viewers, and therefore one likely to turn up in search results. Having these particular images in the entry is most likely to gain visibility for the blog, particularly as each links to *Forks and Jets*. Ultimately, this travel blog is positioned by the authors as a narrative of travel but is, perhaps unwittingly, also located and disseminated, via this photograph, in discourses of tourism.

Nevertheless, it should be noted that each pool of other images linked to this photograph via its tags is constantly revised as other users add and tag photographs on *Flickr*. At the time of writing, clicking on the "concentration camp" tag beside this photograph, as well others of Auschwitz with the same tag, also displayed a page of recently uploaded images of the concentration camp at Dachau. Thus, Eva Rees's Auschwitz image is effectively related to a larger body of discourse about concentration camps, and acquires a context and meaning additional to that of the blog and her *Flickr* album. Conversely, recently uploaded images using the "Auschwitz" tag included photographs of buildings in Budapest and Prague. Here this image is linked to discourses about travel in Europe. This effectively demonstrates the semantic ambiguities governing tagging systems as well as how photographs constantly change meaning in the process of distribution (Golder and Huberman).

Such is the brevity of the Auschwitz photograph's caption that the accompanying tags play a considerably significant part in describing the image. Chaplin argues that in the absence of captions, viewers will interpret the meaning of

an image from the other writing surrounding it. In the context of *Flickr* pages, this surrounding text consists mainly of any tags accompanying in the image, which contribute to its meaning. Indeed, tags are generally used for communication and an individual's audience awareness has some impact on how these tags are used (Oded and Chen). In this sense, they are self-presentational and this reflects in Eva Rees's choice of tags – Cracow, Krakow, Poland, Polska, Polski, RTW, Us, Slavic, Vistula, Wisla, summer, tourism, urban, walking, history, and Polish history.

The use of both English and Polish destination names (Cracow/Krakow, Polska/Poland, Wisla/Vistula) supports the authors' self-presentation in two ways. To begin with, it ensures a greater connectivity and networking of the *Flickr* album and, in the process, the blog. Moreover, using Polish terms expands on and validates Eva Rees's description of her Polish origins. They also add a depth of meaning to what would otherwise be merely a series of words denoting place names. Using the local language adds a dimension of authenticity to both the image and the author's self-presentation. The extensive use of destination names as tags is therefore at once touristic in its focus on destination, and personal in its reference to the author's roots.

The choice of tags is also self-presentational, as it reveals the authors' awareness of their audience and demonstrates how they publicize their photographs and travel blog. Tags such as "summer" and "urban" are generic and are comparatively ambiguous, given the subject of the Auschwitz fence photograph. In particular, "summer," a word often used in the context of holidaymaking, suggests a superficiality that can be associated with tourism. While this supports the touristic aspects of Auschwitz, and the fact that the photograph is embedded in an entry termed "Culture Vulture," it seems oddly situated amongst terms that reflect the gravity of the site. Despite this, the words are nonetheless significant. Both feature in *Flickr's* tag cloud of most popular tags, and consequently their use ensures a greater visibility for the Auschwitz photograph, Rees's album, and *Forks and Jets*. Also generic is "tourism," which implies that this photograph has a touristic theme.

The authors' decision to use "travel" instead of "tourism" in other albums is particularly meaningful. The difference may be due to the blog having two authors, but it also indicates the Rees's awareness of their audience and how *Flickr* works. The "travel" tag features prominently on the popular tag cloud and is thus likely to

gain better visibility for an image than “tourism,” which does not appear at all. Images that display a “travel” tag are not necessarily viewed as travel discourse. Nevertheless, affixing this tag has touristic implications as it is primarily a promotional strategy meant to distribute the content of the blog and attract the attention of potential readers.

Two tags that particularly reinforce the themes of the blog and the authors’ position as travellers exploring the world are “RTW” and “Us.” The former refers to a Round-The-World trip and using this for the Auschwitz image highlights the travel theme of *Forks and Jets* and the author’s intention to explore the world. The “Us” tag is self-referential and may serve to organize the photographs or indicate ownership (insert G&H citation here). On Eva Rees’s *Flickr* page, the tag draws together a variety of images mostly featuring food from different parts of the world. In essence, the “Us” tag presents the “foodie traveloguers” of *Forks and Jets*. It reinforces and extends the bloggers’ self-presentation, and validates the central theme of their travel blog.

Lastly, some photographs on Eva Rees’s *Flickr* page carry geotags¹¹, which contextualize each image in a map. Most of her images depict the ruined Mayan city at Palenque in Mexico. One such image is “Temple of the Inscriptions,” indicated on a map as located in a hilly region at some distance from the nearest town. Eva Rees’s photograph indicates that the temple itself is easily accessed via well-defined paths. However, the map indicates that the destination as a whole may be regarded as being off the beaten path. To this extent, the image as contextualized by its geotag suggests a travel experience. Yet, geotagging allows the authors to present themselves as explorers of the world or as travellers going off the beaten path to a place that has not been publicized by others.

Flickr also displays other users’ images of the same location that have the same geotag. *Flickr* indicates that only two other users posted images of the Temple around the same time, some of them taken twenty-eight months prior to the Rees’s visit in 2009. Since then, however, many more *Flickr* users have posted images of

¹¹ Goodchild defines a geotag as “a standardized code that can be inserted into information to note its appropriate geographic location” (216). In other words, geotags are metadata that represent the location where an image was captured, generally expressed in terms of latitude and longitude (Yanai and Bingyu).

Palenque, and Eva Rees's photograph is now part of a large collection of similar images captured by visitors to the region. Amongst the few other images dated at around the same time as their own, the Temple photograph appears unique. It is, in this context, a location that is appropriate for a travel experience as opposed to a touristic one. Within the larger sequence, however, it suggests neither the extraordinary or unique quality of travel, but appears entwined in the circle of representation that characterises tourist discourse. This image functions like the photograph in a brochure that invites tourists to visit the destination. In effect, Palenque is depicted much like a tourist site marked on a guidebook map, indicated as a destination worth visiting. By utilising the geotagging feature, authors validate their position as travellers exploring the world and suggest that they are experiencing travel rather than tourism. In doing so, they also engage in touristic discourse and pave the way for making the destination itself part of a tourist's itinerary.

While putting Palenque on a *Flickr* map reflects the themes of exploration and discovery generally associated with travel, the fact that the entire region has been mapped and reproduced online using satellite imagery suggests that 'real' travel is arguably no longer possible. Although within the map the Temple of Inscriptions appears to be a fairly remote destination, being able to locate it on a map and so 'box' it in suggests that Eva and Jeremy Rees's desire "to escape the box completely" and find "a new perspective" of the world is not really an achievable goal ("About Us"). In the context of the *Flickr* map, particularly at the time when the Temple image was uploaded, Palenque appears to be the kind of destination that would be classified as a travel destination as opposed to a touristic one. This is in part due to the scarcity of photographs of the temple displayed on *Flickr* at the time. However, it is worth noting that *Flickr* is but one of many services that allow images to be contextualized in maps. It is quite possible that other services such as Google Maps may display a large number of images of the same Temple. In such different contexts, Palenque may not seem as unique as Eva Rees's photograph suggests.

Much like sequencing, the use of tags changes the meaning of a photograph and locates it discourses of both travel and tourism. When photograph captions are sparing in detail, as is the case with the Auschwitz photographs on Eva Rees's *Flickr* page, tags provide an additional context for the images they accompany. The

presence of tags has implications for the blog in which the photographs are embedded, *Forks and Jets*. As a technical feature, they locate the blog, via the embedded image, in a larger body of discourse about travel and tourism in Poland, particularly with reference to Auschwitz as a tourist site and the Krakow region in general. A large number and variety of tags increases the chances of the image, and consequently the blog, being viewed. As words, tags distribute the themes of the blog to a potentially large audience. In this way, they extend and expand on the authors' self-presentation in their travel blog. At the same time, the different discursive contexts of each word also create tensions between discourses of travel and tourism in the image, and by extension in the blog. Following from authors such as Marlow et al, tags are referred to here as self-presentational elements. However, the term self-presentation suggests that the authors have some control over how tags work, which is by no means the case. Such is the nature of the platform that photographs may shift between various discourses as both the bloggers as well as other users add and tag their own images. Thus, the discursive tension is a dynamic one.

The Profile as a Frame

Although user profiles are not immediately visible alongside photographs posted on *Flickr*, they are important as an accompanying text. What is said in a profile can frame the meaning of the album. The template of the profile pages allows users to post a thumbnail photograph or avatar, referred to as a "buddy icon" on *Flickr*. Users can also post a description of themselves and their albums. In this space, *Flickr* users may describe the theme and purpose of their albums. They may also indicate details such as name, gender, relationship status, occupation, current location, hometown, and a link to their website if they have one. Several rows of the user's "Favorite" images occupy the centre of the page. In addition to this, the profile page also lists other *Flickr* members who are the user's "contacts," and the *Flickr* groups that he or she belongs to. Thus, the profile is a self-presentational space where individuals may reveal something of themselves and the self they wish to present via their images. This self-presentation is shaped in some part by the template of the *Flickr* profile, which according to Pinch, is often the case where technology is involved. The self-presentational elements of the profile are particularly significant to the study of Eva Rees's *Flickr* page as it begs the question

as to whether the profile and the connections displayed therein reiterate themes of the travel blog and the authors' position as travel bloggers. It is therefore necessary to examine the profile to determine the nature of the relationship between Eva Rees's *Flickr* page and *Forks and Jets*. Accordingly, this section discusses how the profile description, contacts list, and *Flickr* groups contribute to the idea of *Forks and Jets* as a travel blog and its authors as travel bloggers.

A number of elements of Eva Rees's *Flickr* page refer to aspects of the self she presents in *Forks and Jets*. A paragraph at the top of the page describes her, much as the blog does, as a Polish-born resident of Los Angeles. The listing of Warsaw as her "Hometown" and Los Angeles as her current location reiterates this. The paragraph goes on to state: "Since March 2009 my husband and I have been traveling around the world with our backpacks and a camera. We blog about the trip at [Forks & Jets](#). I have a little blog over [here](#), too" (Rees "Photostream"). Brief as this may seem, these lines contribute significantly to presenting the blog and its author. First, they draw attention to the link to *Forks and Jets*. In addition to this, reference to travelling "with our backpacks and a camera," suggests that the *Flickr* album is mainly concerned with the photography of travel experiences, the central theme of the blog whereas in fact, Rees has been a member of *Flickr* since 2006, and her archive displays images on a variety of subjects posted since that time. Although Rees's "little blog," which is at *LiveJournal*, seems a secondary concern, both in its later mention and the apparent absence of a name, its entries are nevertheless relevant as they describe the lead up to the creation of *Forks and Jets*. In general, the paragraph highlights the *Flickr* album's relevance to the travel blog and Rees's role as a travel blogger.

Although the descriptive paragraph creates the impression that the *Flickr* page is mainly concerned with themes of relevance to *Forks and Jets*, other elements of the profile present different aspects of Eva Rees – her position as a travel blogger and in particular her professional role as a graphic designer. The "Website" link leads to *Design Domesticated*, a website where she showcases the work she has done. Her list of contacts includes *Flickr* members with user names such as "Wide Wide World" and "road triper" [sic] (Rees). It has been argued that the connections and associations that users display in an online profile are self-presentational (Boyd

and Heer; Donath and Boyd; Papacharissi “Virtual Geographies”). In this context therefore, linking to such users presents Rees as a member of an online community that similarly views travel as an escape and an exploration of the world. This reinforces the author’s self-presentation as a travel blogger and reiterates themes of the blog. It should be noted though, that not all of Rees’s contacts have such travel-themed user names.

A similar display of connections is visible in Eva Rees’s membership in various *Flickr* groups, which include “Typography and Lettering,” “Light and Shadow,” “Your ‘Postcard’ Shot,” and “Lonely Planet” among others (Rees). Here again, Rees’s association with communities interested in travel-related photography reinforces her position as a travel blogger. At the same time her interest in typography strengthens her position as a graphic designer. This is not unlike her *Facebook* profile, where links to pages that Rees likes indicate her interest in graphic design as well as themes of relevance to *Forks and Jets*. For readers of the blog who are familiar with these parallels, the *Flickr* profile validates the *Facebook* profile and vice versa. This particular element of the *Flickr* profile presents two different aspects of the blogger, and opens the possibility for other discursive tensions.

This closer look at other aspects of Rees’s personal life may also give readers a sense of greater intimacy with the author. On the one hand, such a personal voice suggests a tone in keeping with travel discourse. At the same time, the *Flickr* profile launches the blogger’s profession as a graphic designer. This subtle self-promotion, which has little to do with the blog, nonetheless has the commercial overtones common with tourist discourse. Despite these tensions, the *Flickr* page acts as a centralizing force for the different strands of Rees’s online self. For some readers, therefore, it may seem that Rees’s *Flickr* page is the blog.

Eva Rees’s membership of the “Lonely Planet” group is particularly significant. The guidebook publisher’s official website, *Lonely Planet*, runs two groups on *Flickr* – “Lonely Planet Photo Challenges” and “Lonely Planet Photobook” – each of which is easily identified with the Lonely Planet brand because of the LP logo in the profile picture and a link to the *Lonely Planet* website. However, the “Lonely Planet” group is not endorsed by the company, although it is a community of individuals interested in travel-related photography. Nevertheless,

those familiar with the guidebook publisher may well associate the “Lonely Planet” label and the group itself with the contexts of commercial tourism suggested by the name. Through this association, the group capitalizes on the popularity of Lonely Planet as a brand, and manipulates tourist discourse to gain visibility. This creates some free publicity for Lonely Planet. However, the comparative lack of restrictions governing image submissions for this group (the company-endorsed groups run themed competitions) suggests that this is a community that is more engaged with the kind of spontaneous and personal discourse associated with travel. Given the nature of this study, it is difficult to establish whether Eva Rees is aware that the group is not associated with Lonely Planet, the publisher. Nevertheless, her membership in this group is self-presentational, validating her role as a travel blogger by drawing on the contexts of the name “Lonely Planet.” Consequently, and perhaps unintentionally, her position as a travel blogger is also situated in discourses of both travel and tourism.

Another principal element of the *Flickr* profile is the thumbnail display of photographs from other *Flickr* users that Rees considers to be her “Favorites.” Some of these are travel-related photographs depicting landscapes, aerial snapshots, and tourist destinations. Others include posters and images of various subjects that are notable for their colour and composition. As with the group membership, this wide range of photographs presents two different aspects of Eva Rees – the self as travel blogger as well as the self as graphic designer. Linking to these photographs, and through them to other *Flickr* users, strengthens her association with two different communities, both of whom are essential to her overall online self-presentation.

Ultimately, the *Flickr* profile describes those interests and aspects of her online self that Eva Rees wishes to explicitly present to an online audience. As a result, it is situated in a wide range of discourses, including those of travel and tourism. Although the paragraph description suggests that the album and images contained within are mainly concerned with *Forks and Jets*, this is not necessarily the case. In fact, there is an overlapping of the different online roles that Rees plays. As her website *Design Domesticated* does not link to the travel blog, or vice versa, these are two distinct roles. However, the *Flickr* profile tries to do justice to both aspects of Rees’s personality and shifts between a presentation of her professional

life and her interest in travel blogging. Although *Forks and Jets* names both Eva and Jeremy Rees as its authors, the *Flickr* profile suggests that the latter plays a secondary role in the creation of the album. The profile contributes a sense of only one author as a travel blogger, and this is Eva Rees. The focus on Eva Rees is to some extent a result of the limitations of the template of *Flickr*'s profiles. There is only room for the name of one user, one person's hometown, or one website link. Rees overcomes some of these limitations by linking to her blogs via the paragraph describing the album. However, the architecture of the platform forces Rees to choose what information she will provide here, and some of these decisions relegate her co-author to the sidelines.

Worth a Thousand Words...or More:

The old saying that a picture is worth a thousand words implies that images are a simpler and more explicit form of expression than words. This chapter began with the argument that there is nothing simple about the discourses that make up travel-related photography. The photographs on *Traveling Savage* and *Nomadic Matt's Travel Site* analysed here suggest that an image in itself combines discourses of both travel and tourism. Furthermore, the accompanying text for these photographs, regardless of whether this is contributed by the author or the audience, plays a significant role in muddying the waters when it comes to determining meaning. Comments, captions, and blog entries that constitute the writing surrounding a photograph may, in fact, make its meanings more ambiguous. This is contrary to Barthes' proposition that accompanying text fixes the meaning of the image. In the travel blogs studied here, such text encourages polysemy and situates each image in a variety of discourses including those of travel and tourism.

The chapter additionally argues that the manner in which photographs are displayed and distributed also contributes to the ambiguity of meaning. In particular, sequencing and tagging of photographs, as evidenced by the Auschwitz photographs in Eva Rees's *Flickr* album and the corresponding blog entry, locates them in various discursive contexts. The meaning of a single image changes with the change in its position from a blog entry to a *Flickr* album to a sequence of random images bearing the same tag. In the process, tensions may be produced between discourses of travel and tourism. The *Forks and Jets* entry on museums, as well as its links to *Flickr*

suggest that sequencing and tagging are self-presentational in that they can contribute to the idea of the author as a travel blogger and reinforce themes of the travel blog. It is worth noting, however, that describing this as self-presentation implies that the authors can control the way the information is presented, which is not necessarily the case. Quite often the features of the platform play a significant role in determining what will accompany a user's image, contextualize it and influence how it might be read.

This chapter also supports findings that suggest digital photography and its associated technologies tend to blur the lines between the professionalism and amateurism. In fact, when travel bloggers strive to imitate and adopt the sophisticated techniques of professional photographers, it becomes more difficult to categorize the resulting images as either travel or tourist discourse. This demonstrates the inefficacy of existing frameworks for studying travel-related photography. Although only *Flickr* is analysed in some depth here, there is sufficient indication that techniques such as tagging can locate an amateur image amongst professional ones. Differences become increasingly indistinct, and this is perhaps best exemplified in the "Lonely Planet" group.

Finally, the chapter extended the notion that destination is not a key concern for travel bloggers. Most of the travel-related photographs in the blogs as well as in albums on platforms are not concerned with iconic sites of tourist destinations. Even if they do focus on well-known monuments, as is the case with *Traveling Savage*, authors attempt to present a perspective different from the one commonly seen in tourist brochures. Images are contextualized to create the impression that the authors are in most cases travellers seeking experiences off the beaten path. If destination does become a focus, as is obviously the case with geotagging on *Flickr*, this only serves to associate the narrative and the experience described or visualized therein with travel as opposed to tourism. The decision to indicate a decision may therefore be self-presentational and have a specific purpose. Nevertheless, affixing a place name to a photograph only heightens the tensions between the discourses of travel and tourism present in it, as is evidenced by the Eva Rees's geotagged Mayan temple image and Nomadic Matt's Australian landscape.

In conclusion, a picture may well be worth a thousand words. However, a picture that is digitally altered may be worth much more than this as it says something about the self that the author wishes to present to the travel blog reader. Furthermore, when words and other images accompany a picture in a travel blog, it is located in a variety of discursive contexts and gains more meaning. Photographs hosted on independent travel blogs contribute to the self-presentation of the blogger. Networked across other online platforms, they gain visibility for the blog and its author. Contextualized within the other texts on these platforms, images have a lot more to say. Thus, for these travel bloggers, a picture is worth a thousand words and more.

Mapping the Travel Blog

Conclusions on the Discourses of Travel and Tourism

Travel and tourism often inspire blogging and vice versa. The discourses of travel and tourism are interrelated, and each travel blog negotiates the tensions between these discourses differently. By approaching the travel blogs selected for this study as heteroglossic and polyphonic texts, this research project has demonstrated how this discursive tension informs the presentation of travel experiences, tourist destinations, and the individuals who write about them. It has also revealed how this relationship complicates the notion of blogs as personal and social narratives with definitive formal features. This chapter begins by reflecting on how travel blogs' negotiation of travel and tourist discourses ultimately indicates the need for a more flexible definition of these texts. It then considers the centrality of technology to how discursive tensions are set up and play out in the self-presentation of travel bloggers. Finally, it discusses the online relationship between Lonely Planet and individuals who create travel-related content. Based on these findings, this chapter ultimately presents the conclusions of this research project on how travel blogs negotiate the discursive tensions between travel and tourism.

The discursive relationship between travel and tourism plays out in many ways across the various travel blogs investigated in this study. *Tony Wheeler's Blog*, essentially a text with a commercial purpose, promotes tourism via a personal narrative in which the author strives to speak as a traveller and styles himself as a blogger. In blogs on travel-specific webhosts, entries that dissociate travel experiences from touristic ones are framed within advertisements from sponsors and web hosts. These sponsors rely on authors to generate travel-related content that underwrites their own promotion of tourism. Similarly, independent blog authors who use the themes and language of travel to position themselves as adventurous nomads publicize their texts and validate their position as experts on travel through the use of touristic narrative techniques. The relationship is therefore largely determined by the constantly changing narratorial positions of travel bloggers and the interaction they have with others. Moreover, discourses of travel and tourism in these blogs, though dissonant, are not mutually exclusive.

Travel blogs are often analysed to gain an understanding of how individuals describe destinations. However, most of posts in travel blogs in this study, with the exception of *Tony Wheeler's Blog*, focused on the experience of travelling rather than the destination to be reached. This is understandable, given that many bloggers position themselves as travellers and associate their experiences with travel rather than tourism. In the case of blogs hosted on *Travelblog*, *Travelpod*, and *Bootsnall*, which do have a touristic focus on destination, this is usually imposed by the web host or sponsor. Viewing travel blogs as forms of self-presentation and as polyphonic texts enables a better understanding of how individuals and destinations are described in these narratives. It also may help explain why some travel blogs may be inadequate as sources of information on destination image.

The multimodality and multivocality of travel blogs support the intertwining of forms of discourse associated with both travel and tourism. This in turn complicates the notion of these texts as personal narratives. If *Tony Wheeler's Blog* lacks conviction as a personal narrative and a travel blog, this is due in some part to the links and paratextual elements that display its connection with Lonely Planet. Likewise, *Travelblog* and *Travelpod* frame personal travel narratives in tourist advertising by virtue of platform structures that include third-party advertising and web-hosted content. Faced with a multiplicity of voices, it is sometimes difficult to interpret these travel blogs as texts that are personal in the sense that they express a blogger's views and choices.

Nevertheless, a number of formal features and paratextual elements are integral to presenting the travel blogger. The design of title banners, the displayed links, embedded photographs and their accompanying captions and tags, and hashtags on *Twitter* all contribute to this self-presentation. While some of these formal elements draw on the contexts of travel to position the blogger as a traveller, others draw on discourses of tourism to validate this position and the narrative. This confirms Papacharissi and Pinch's observations on the centrality of the applications and architecture of online platforms in self-presentation. However, it also points for a need for technical definitions of travel blogs to be more expansive.

While this analysis of travel and tourist discourses affirms the social nature of blogging, it finds that that interaction is not limited to conversations within the blog

and between bloggers. At the time of writing this chapter, independent travel blogs were comparatively social in nature, exhibiting reciprocal links, reaching out to readers across a multiple platforms, and engaging them in conversation. These bloggers also shared content on *Facebook* and used *Twitter* to increase their visibility and keep in touch with audiences. Lonely Planet repeatedly featured in this interaction as bloggers commented on its guidebooks, used its hashtags, or displayed its logo on their web pages. Likewise, this publisher engaged with travel bloggers across a variety of platforms and manipulated their personal narratives of travel experiences in order to promote tourism. This supports Helmond's concept of blogs as distributed. It also reiterates the need for examining blogs not as stand-alone texts, but as networked narratives. Furthermore, it points to a need for flexibility in defining blogs.

Keeping these key issues at the forefront, this concluding chapter reflects on how the discourses of travel and tourism contribute to the complexities of defining travel blog. It then considers how the affordances of different platforms influence the discursive tensions in the text. Finally, by outlining the significance of Lonely Planet to travel and tourist discourse online, the chapter recognizes the opportunities this offers for further research while also acknowledging the limitations of this thesis.

Where the Travel Blog Lies

The findings of this discursive analysis of travel blogs indicate a need to re-evaluate existing definitions of this form. *Tony Wheeler's Blog* tries very hard to create the impression that it is a travel blog. It is personalized to the extent that a photograph of Wheeler forms part of the title banner – a technique that no other text in this study employs. Furthermore, its claim to being one of the earliest travel blogs ever written underscores the author's reputation as an authority on travel. Here, the voice of the adventurous traveller vies with the impersonal tones of the tour guide to describe destinations, many of which are popular tourist attractions. Also, intimate as links to "My Events" and "My Books" may seem, these are equally a promotion of Lonely Planet and Tony Wheeler's publications. So, the intimacy that suggests travel often serves an underlying touristic commercialism. It is also worth noting that while each publication sold potentially drives tourism to the places described therein, it often packages the experience as travel, thus making it attractive. The text is

heteroglossic, but there is no reciprocal linking with other blogs, no interaction with readers, and therefore no real participation in the blog culture. The text is but the hollow shell of a travel blog and this consequently weakens the credibility of the author's self-presentation as a blogger. *Tony Wheeler's Blog* indicates that formal features alone cannot define a travel blog.

The relationship between travel and tourism in the blogs found on travel-specific web hosts such as *Travelblog*, *Travelpod*, and *Bootsnall* is best described as one of dissonance and mutual interdependence. Here, web hosts and their sponsors rely on the narratives of bloggers to promote travel-related services via third-party advertising. That is to say, tourism needs travel to discover and write about places that it can then promote. Conversely, authors who use these services need advertising to sponsor their narratives of travel experiences. The authority of these bloggers, and the authenticity of their blogs, validates the advertisements that frame the narrative. The relationship between travel and tourism in these texts is therefore one characterised by a polyphony that is exhibited in diverse formal elements such as paratexts and links. Consequently, there needs to be a more expansive approach to the definition of travel blogs that accounts for the contribution of paratextual elements and the role of the web host.

The attribution of authorship is sometimes difficult in these blogs, and this has consequences for definition as well. Some content in *Travelblog*, *Travelpod*, and *Bootsnall* blogs is generated by the bloggers, and the rest by the webhost and advertisers. It is difficult to view these texts as personal commentary because there are at least three contributors of content – the blogger, the web-host publisher, and the advertiser. Definitions that emphasize a personal voice as a characteristic quality of blogs therefore need some refining to be applicable to such texts. To consider only the content created by the blogger as comprising the blog is equally problematic, for this would mean ignoring several distinctive features usually regarded as being definitive to blogs. The role played by the web host needs to be considered, both when defining a blog by its formal elements and when viewing it as a text that gives a sense of its author.

A greater degree of customization is possible in blogs that are hosted independently, and consequently the author's self is writ large across these texts.

Often, these bloggers position themselves as travellers who go off the beaten path. At other times, they adopt the stance of experts or tour guides. As they occupy a variety of narratorial positions, the discursive style of the blog shifts from the monologic tones associated with tourism to the personal voice associated with travel. The distribution of these blogs across a variety of social media platforms has the effect of engaging a diverse and largely unknown audience in a conversation about journey and the content of the blog, turning what is presented as an intimate and solitary travel experience into one that is shared and whose meaning is negotiated in the conversation between authors and readers. This combination of monologue and dialogue complicates the positioning of the blog, with reference to frameworks such as those suggested by Lomborg.

Each travel blog negotiates the discourses of travel and tourism differently, making it difficult to arrive at a generic definition of this format. On the whole, travel blogs exhibit multiple narrative styles. Also, technical features alone do not a blog make. The distribution of independently hosted travel blogs across a variety of social media platforms is testament to the evolution of this format and also points to a need for technical definitions to be more expansive. It does not follow that defining travel blogs by their constituent travel and tourist discourses is more practicable. Each text variously incorporates these discourses. Ultimately, discursive tensions are negotiated in a manner that ensures the text has at least a superficial integrity as a blog, while presenting bloggers, describing experiences, and promoting destinations. A discursive approach to these texts can, therefore, provide a broader interpretation of what constitutes a travel blog.

Technology and the Travel(ler) Blogger

Many of the travel bloggers studied here present themselves as travellers and associate their experiences of places with travel as opposed to tourism. How they achieve this is due in part to the affordances of the platform they use, be it the blog itself or the social media it links to. Bloggers generally utilize a variety of formal features – title banners, posts, blogrolls, visual elements, etc. – to present several narratorial positions. However, there are also instances when the platform determines discursive tensions and this is beyond a blogger's control – as indicated by the way tags work with photographs in *Flickr*, the inclusion of advertisements in *Travelpod*,

and the blogrolls provided by *Travelblog*. Affordances can therefore strengthen a narrative's connection with discourses of either travel or tourism. They may even shape how readers view a travel blog. Thus, technology is a key aspect of self-presentation in travel blogs, and it influences how travel and tourist discourses inform this self-presentation.

For all that Tony Wheeler styles himself as a traveller, this position is also grounded in discourses of tourism. The resulting discursive tension owes something to the structural elements of the blog. Hosting *Tony Wheeler's Blog* under the auspices of *Lonely Planet*, instead of using a domain name to match the title, has several implications for the presentation of the text as a travel blog and its author as a travel blogger. The Lonely Planet logo on the top-left corner of each web page and the company's name in the website's URL validates Wheeler's position as a travel expert. This enhances the text's reputation as a reliable source of information on travel. Likewise, the 'blog' title adds a personal touch to the corporate profile of Lonely Planet that makes up the main website. The author's assessment of different destinations via posts supports the company's assertion that its publications are based on the first-hand experiences of its authors. Wheeler continues to create content under the Lonely Planet banner despite having sold his remaining shares in the company. This association benefits both the presentation of the travel blogger and the guidebook publisher.

In a similar manner, the negotiation of travel and tourist discourses is predicated on the technology of the web hosting service. For the most part, authors blogging on *Travelpod*, *Travelblog*, and *Bootsnall* attempt to style themselves as wanderers, adventurers, and nomads. Accordingly, they narrate experiences of travel as opposed to tourism. Regardless of an author's effort to present this as being off the beaten path, the technology inscribes a route. In general, these travel-specific webhosts gather entries from across a number of blogs, categorize them by destination, and package them in a uniform template. These platforms restrict how authors create texts, in this sense guiding their blogging experience and prescribing a structure for their narratives. Also, such is their design that they usually accentuate destinations. *Travelblog* and *Travelpod* in particular locate the place described in the post in its town or city, state, country, and continent. The way these platforms organize content creation and distribution and impose conformity parallels touristic

practices. In addition to this, hosting a blog on these services hardly constitutes going off the beaten path.

Technology also plays a twofold role in deciding how tourist discourse in the form of advertisements forms a part of these travel blogs, and the implications this has for discourses of travel in the text. On the one hand, the structure of the platform decides how these appear alongside blog entries on *Travelblog*, *Travelpod*, and *Bootsnall*. This is something that authors cannot control, although what they write in their posts does determine the content of advertisements generated by Google's AdSense. On the other hand, a more technically adept reader can choose to view the text free of advertising by using suitable ad-blocking software. These advertisements authenticate the destination and validate the entry by promoting travel-related services available at or near the places mentioned in the post. In effect, they encourage readers to visit these places themselves – to book a flight, rent a room, or sign up for a tour. The dissonance lies in the fact that a place described as being off the beaten path by the blogger is made easily approachable or accessible by the advertiser. In this sense, travel paves the way for tourism.

It is also worth noting that the technology of these platforms also guides readers' reception and response to the narrative. Perhaps symbolically, blogs on *Travelblog* and *Travelpod* are restricted to linking with other texts within the same website. Individuals using this service cannot distribute their content, via their travel blogs, across other social media in the manner of independent travel bloggers. Consequently, readers are also 'guided' to other *Travelblog* or *Travelpod* content, which includes other blogs using the same web hosts. In this sense, both the blogs and their readers are not allowed to wander or be spontaneous. The presentation and reading of this narrative is managed to a large extent by the web host for the purpose of promoting tourism to audiences.

This is not to suggest, however, that technology is wholly deterministic. Bloggers such as Eunice Goetz and Steve Nakano work around the limitations of *Bootsnall* to ensure that the text looks like a blog. Their inclusion of an "About" post in their blogs, makes up for the absence of an "About" page in the web host's template. Both the act of creating this post and its content indicate a singularity (in comparison with other *Bootsnall* blogs) that enhances these authors' positions as

travellers and strengthens the impression that they are bloggers. Therefore, while technology is important to self-presentation, how authors utilize the tools available is also significant.

Independently hosting a travel blog facilitates the presentation of travel in a number of ways. In the first place, a greater degree of customization is possible, so authors have greater freedom of self-expression. For bloggers like Eva Rees and Laura Walker, it is an opportunity to demonstrate their competence as designers. For others like Keith Savage, it enables a more controlled presentation of the self as a travel writer – he is the sole author of all content in *Travelling Savage*. Each of these authors strives to create a sophisticated text, both in terms of visual appeal and informative content, which reflects their individuality. At the same time, the more polish these texts acquire, the more they slip into the superficial perfection of tourist discourse, which these authors are keen to avoid. Formal elements are therefore self-presentational elements that indicate a blogger's narratorial position, and are consequently integral to the negotiation of travel and tourist discourses. A second point worth noting is that by not following the crowd regarding choice of webhosting service, authors' enhance their position in the blog as travellers or adventurers. Indeed, the individualistic website design and personalized titles, banners, and logos of these blogs complement the presentation of a self that seeks experiences that are far from commonplace. The display of technological competence supports this self-presentation.

The way in which travel blogs network their narratives across a variety of online platforms also has implications for the relationship between travel and tourism. Most independent travel blogs link to *Facebook* and *Twitter*. The majority also link to each other. Some even have similar titles. Here again is the enclave culture of blogs. As this community grows, the travel experiences they describe become increasingly distributed and publicized, and thus less unique. Over time, multiple narratives about a single destination accumulate in the travel blogging community. From the point of view of a reader faced with a wealth of information about the same place, there may appear to be few travel experiences left to discover. The more a destination is written about, the less off-the-beaten path it can seem to be.

It is worth noting the significance of a travel blog's interactivity for a convincing presentation of the self as travel blogger. Blogs that best impress on their audience the position of its authors and the nature of the text are often those that facilitate conversations between bloggers and readers and linking to other similar blogs. In this way, these blogs become a "dialogical space," to borrow a phrase from Serfaty, which allows the manifestation of multiple voices and discourses. In such a space authors interact with readers and in the process define their role as travel bloggers and their texts as blogs. The presence of a dialogical space is therefore integral both to the interplay between travel and tourist discourses that inform a blogger's self-presentation. Still, the extent to which this influences a reader's perception of a blog and its author as authentic and credible can only be determined by further research and by applying different methodologies.

The blogs studied here confirm findings that technical features of online platforms are self-presentational elements. Bloggers manipulate a number of available online tools to present themselves as best as they can, but it is necessary to recognize that at times they can go only as far as the technology permits. This bears out Papacharissi's and Pinch's observations on the importance of technology to mediating online behaviour. On the other hand, the polyphony of these blogs makes it difficult to describe blogging, as Trammell and Keshavili do, as a deliberate self-presentational process in a virtual environment controlled by the author. Digital technologies in particular can change a text in ways that bloggers often cannot foresee. As a result, the impression that authors think they are creating is not necessarily the one that readers see. However, it is beyond the scope of this study to ascertain whether these travel bloggers have experienced this with their readers.

Ultimately, a blogger's choice of platform plays a significant part in how discourses of travel and tourism inform their blogs. Specific features of a platform often play a crucial role in how discursive tensions are set up, displayed, or managed. On the one hand, contextualization of a narrative in discourses of travel and tourism is in some part decided by its underlying technologies. On the other hand, the way authors, web hosts, or sponsors utilize these technologies also has some influence on the presentation of self as traveller or the touristic promotion of a destination. Therefore, their intrinsic structure and the affordances they offer to users of the platform are important factors in how travel blogs manage discursive tensions.

Going Everywhere with Lonely Planet

This research project began with an analysis of *Tony Wheeler's Blog*, and therefore it seems only appropriate to conclude with a discussion of Lonely Planet's relationship with travel bloggers. By interacting with individuals who create travel-related texts online, this publisher has reinforced its own reputation and online presence. A large number of individuals, including travel bloggers, are constantly creating a vast store of travel-related content online including blog entries, microblog posts, and photographs. Through its website and its own pages on websites such as *Flickr* and *Twitter*, Lonely Planet curates this information and facilitates access to it. This process links themes and ideas usually associated with travel to places that are generally acknowledged as being touristic destinations. This has implications for self-presentation – Lonely Planet positions itself as an arbiter of taste, picking out content that is genuine and proving itself capable of recognizing the unique and extraordinary, that is to say what is travel-like, in destinations that have become clichéd or touristic. Lonely Planet's mobilization of travel and tourist discourses can offer a wider perspective on how similar tourism organizations position themselves online to promote their services.

The *Lonely Planet* website is “a network of connections between travellers...between travellers and Lonely Planet...all bound by a passion for hitting the road.” Its purpose is to fulfil the publisher's commitment to providing readers with credible, carefully researched information about destinations, including maps for places for which no maps exist. This is neatly summed up in the promise: “It's a big world, but we try to cover it all at Lonely Planet.com.” The statement refers to Lonely Planet's intention to map real places, but is equally applicable to the company's online presence. There are two networks of connections at work here. The first is at a textual level and consists of travel-related content drawn together, in the case of *Flickr* and *Twitter*, by tags such as “LP,” “#lp,” or “LPimages.” The other involves the relationship between the organization and a vast number of individuals who author travel-related online texts, including travel bloggers whose blogs and images are featured on *Lonely Planet*. The publisher's vast network of web pages across a variety of social media suggests that it certainly tries to “cover it all” in the online world, and its relationship with travel bloggers across multiple online platforms contributes significantly towards achieving this goal.

Through both networks, LP creates an association with travel that enhances its own self-presentation. The company positions itself alongside travellers and sells the idea of travel. When bloggers create travel-related content on *Flickr* and *Twitter*, and appropriately tag this to make it easily accessible to Lonely Planet, they help the publisher discover the “little-known facts” for its readers, and to collate firsthand information on destinations across the world. Lonely Planet repurposes this material, distributing it across its own web pages, thus enhancing its credibility as a producer of authentic content. It also encourages individuals to produce a certain type of content, as is the case with themed competitions on *Flickr*, and thus organizes narratives of travel experiences for consumption by potential tourists. This places Lonely Planet in the role of facilitator. In this manner, the publisher initiates a potential circle of representation of destinations and travel-related concepts as described by John Urry. For bloggers, such competitions are an opportunity to enhance their reputation as authors and to publicize their travel blogs. By amassing a wealth of user-generated travel-related content through these connections across various online platforms, Lonely Planet manages to cover both well-known and remote destinations across the world. Yet, covering everything everywhere makes ‘real’ travel and writing about ‘real’ travel increasingly impossible.

Lonely Planet also awards “Featured Blogger” badges to some select blogs. These are hyperlinked to its website, thus increasing the latter’s visibility. Here, content that comes straight from the pages of travel blogs enhances Lonely Planet’s reputation. At the same time it potentially sells travel-related products and services, and thus paves the way for tourism to the places described therein. This is by no means a one-sided relationship as bloggers benefit from this link as well. Such recognition from Lonely Planet reinforces an author’s position as an expert on travel. In this sense, discourses of travel and tourism complement each other. It is possible that content created subsequent to this recognition is influenced by this corporate association, and that “Featured Bloggers” may therefore appear less genuine. While it is difficult to establish this, given the approach that this study takes, there is room for further research into how readers perceive travel narratives that receive the stamp of approval from corporate tourism.

Not surprisingly, Lonely Planet itself figures in several blog entries. Some travel bloggers consult its guidebooks, assess their reliability, and measure their own

experiences against them. Darryl and Sarah Howells frequently refer to Lonely Planet's guidebook on Australia, and mention this in their blogs posts in *Wallaby Wanderers*. Some of these analyse the accuracy of its descriptions while others focus on places that deserve mention principally because they are "left out of publications such as Lonely Planet (guess they can't mention everything!) and therefore is not on most tourist's radar" (Howell and Howell "Paradise"). While there is a touristic aspect to using a guidebook that is at odds with these bloggers' position as wanderers, mentioning Lonely Planet, an organization that associates itself with offbeat travel, is also self-presentational, serving to define experiences as travel as opposed to tourism. Also paradoxically, in this particular instance, destinations acquire the distinction of being travel as opposed to tourism, simply because they do not figure in the guidebook.

Brian Thacker's eponymous blog is probably one of the best examples of a travel blog inspired by a Lonely Planet guidebook. Using the original 1975 edition of *South East Asia on a Shoestring* as a guide, Thacker travelled through East Timor, Indonesia, and Malaysia, retracing Tony and Maureen Wheeler's journey through this region. His blog about his experiences describes his rediscovery of places mentioned in the guidebook. Tony Wheeler accompanied Thacker during part of this "retro-travel trip," and this inspired the writing of an entry in *Tony Wheeler's Blog*, which promotes both the latest edition of the South East Asia guidebook as well as Thacker's own blog on the journey (Wheeler "Tell Them to Get Lost"). Thacker's trip inspired the writing of his travel book *Tell Them to Get Lost*.

This is admittedly an exceptional case – not all blogs are based on Lonely Planet's guidebooks, and even Thacker's blog describes other journeys not based on *South East Asia on a Shoestring*. Still, the links between *Brian Thacker* and *Tony Wheeler's Blog* reveal how discourses of travel and tourism are constantly collapsing into each other. Guidebooks are generally regarded as touristic objects and the author is clearly retracing a well-beaten path. Yet, his take on *South East Asia on a Shoestring* turns an itinerary originally planned for potential tourists into a travel experience based on the adventure of rediscovering what still remains of the places first visited in 1975. *Brian Thacker*, with its themes of travel, in its turn becomes a self-presentational tool for *Tony Wheeler's Blog*, enhancing the latter's association with travel as opposed to tourism. At the same time, it promotes Lonely Planet's

more recent publications on the region and potentially encourages a new wave of tourism to the places described in the guidebook.

What all of this points to is the centrality of Lonely Planet and its discourse to the narration of contemporary travel experiences and the presentation of authors as travellers in the blogs studied here. Blogs that focus on descriptions of travel as opposed to tourism are equally important to the online presentation and the reputation of Lonely Planet. The relationship between the publisher and travel bloggers has mutual benefits. Ultimately, this is an association established through the negotiation of both travel and tourist discourses.

Of Travel, Blogging, and Mapping the Travel Blog

Like journeys, narratives have a beginning, middle, and end. However, while there are some structural parallels between the serial narrative that is the travel blog and the journey it describes, many of these narratives seem to have no clear ending. This is not to say that a conclusion is not possible. Indeed, the *Wallaby Wanderers* blog has a definite conclusion, although there is a suggestion that the authors may continue the narrative sometime in the future. However, many of the other travel blogs here describe successive trips and there appears to be no imminent closure. Also, many of the independently hosted travel blogs analysed here distribute content across several platforms and this too makes for a narrative that seems infinite. Furthermore, readers can enter the narrative at a number of different points, none of which may be the travel blog entry, which implies that it is they, and not the author, who decide where the narrative begins and ends.

It is also often difficult to achieve a balance between travel and blogging, and this is a dilemma that is discussed at some length in the blogs of Nomadic Matt and Laura Walker. Both authors agree that it is hard to keep up with blog updates while travelling. Certainly, the idea of travel as being a journey of exploration and discovery suggests that real travel should be to destinations that are so remote that an Internet connection may be difficult to find. Consequently, there must be a gap between the experience of real travel and its narration in a blog. Conversely, as Nomadic Matt points out, the demands of maintaining a website make it difficult to travel spontaneously. Still, it is increasingly possible that mobile phone technology will compress the time difference between travelling and blogging. With the

appropriate applications, travelling while blogging or vice versa may become a real possibility.

The downside to advances in technology is that ‘real’ travel becomes hard to achieve. Already, Eva Rees’s *Flickr* album demonstrates how the effects of geotagging and mapping make it difficult to find places that are off the beaten path. Indeed, the very existence of travel blogs and their associated media shows that travel is intricately bound up with the use of various technologies of the Internet. This too is a matter that occupies Nomadic Matt who wonders whether we have become “too wired in our travels” (“About Us and Our Books”; Nomadic Matt “Are We Too Wired While Traveling?”). He points out that the Internet enables travellers to find places, stay in touch with each other and the rest of the world, and to keep themselves occupied during the journey. Consequently, he argues, travellers spend more time exploring the digital world than the place they are in. This suggests a touristic lack of involvement or investment in the visited destination. Real travel, according to this blogger, is only possible when technology is turned off.

This research project has analysed examined various travel blogs, particularly those that are hosted independently, as a centralizing force for different threads of an individual’s online self-presentation that is networked across multiple platforms. However, it is equally possible that a different online platform acts as the focal point. Eva Rees’s *Flickr* page is one example of this. For others, the travel blog may form one part of a networked presentation of self that centres on their *Facebook* page or profile. Furthermore, as individuals explore and develop content on new applications that are constantly emerging, the centre of their networked self may shift from their travel blog to a different online platform.

The thesis examined three aspects of discourse – the utterances that make up the narrative, the manner in which narrative techniques are used, and the practices of travel and tourism that shape the blog. The outcomes of this analysis have determined that travel blogs negotiate the discourses of travel and tourism on all three levels. First, each element of a blog draws together utterances associated with both discourses into a presentation of travel blogger and the narrative of what is usually described as a travel experience. An utterance associated with travel can however be strategically employed to promote tourism or be associated with a

touristic concept and vice versa. This is exemplified in Tony Wheeler's London taxi image, in the title of Ross Pringle's "Life on the Fringe" and in Keith Savage's photograph of Edinburgh Castle. These findings support Goffman's theory that a single self-presentational cue can be meaningfully employed in different contexts. Travel blogs negotiate discursive tensions by combining narrative forms and techniques – cues – that best indicate narratorial positions and themes within the text.

Travel blogs also manage discursive tensions through a manipulation of both the narrative as a whole and relating this to other texts. This is best demonstrated in the way sponsors of travel-specific web hosts frame their advertisements on blog posts that describe travel in order to promote touristic services. It is also indicated in the way independent travel bloggers link to Lonely Planet to support their own blogger's own presentation of travel experiences. The use of particular affordances such as hashtags on *Twitter* allows bloggers to draw on discourses of tourism to establish and promote the blog as a whole and the traveller self presented within.

Finally, concepts and practices associated with travel and tourism play an important role in shaping travel blogs to some extent. Tourism's focus on destination finds expression in the content provided by the sponsors and web hosts of *Travelblog*, *Travelpod*, and *Bootsnall* blogs. Yet, the content of these advertisements and links is based on blog posts that usually describe experiences of travel. Conversely, where travel's focus on experience is often expressed in the content of photographs and blog posts these are equally framed in or contain discourses of tourism. Therefore, travel blogs negotiate discursive tensions through the narrative forms and techniques that present and promote authors, destinations, and experiences. How they do this depends largely on what is being presented and the technologies available for this self-presentation.

This study contributes to research into travel blogs in several ways. A discursive examination of the same categories of blogs suggested by Schmallegger and Carson, for the purpose of marketing research, reveals a different aspect to how individuals present their travel experiences. Tourism marketing researchers who regard these texts as accounts of consumer experience may gain a better understanding of how travel bloggers position themselves in their narratives and describe destinations. In particular, the theoretical approach outlined here suggests

that there is a self-presentational aspect to the narration of travel in several online platforms and that this heteroglossic. As mentioned in the introduction, this conceptual approach develops out of Hevern's analysis of blogs and has, it is hoped, provided a better understanding of discourse in travel blogs. A juxtaposition of the theories of Bakhtin and Goffman may be similarly useful to the study of other travel-related texts as forms of self-presentation as well as discursive tensions in other genres of blogs – corporate or political blogs, for example. The thesis also proposes a conceptual approach to the analysis of travel-related images and folksonomies. This is particularly relevant at the time of concluding this study as image-oriented platforms such as Instagram and Tumblr are increasingly popular as are practices such as moblogging and tagging. Given the rapid rate of change of such technologies, the approach outlined can by no means be a definitive model. However, it could be developed further and adapted to the study of discourse and meaning in images on other such platforms.

What this analysis has found is that the blog itself travels. It is sometimes distributed across many online platforms. It continuously evolves in form and content. Its narrative is generally continuous, heteroglossic, and polyphonic. It is constituted in discourses of travel as it is in discourses of tourism. It escapes definition. It is therefore difficult to establish exactly where a travel blog lies. Although there is much more to discover about these texts and their authors, the journey of this thesis, and its mapping of the path the travel blog takes, must end here. The journey of the travel blog is, however, one marked by constant transformation as new forms of travel-related communication emerge online. It is, therefore, one that is constantly evolving and never-ending.

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