Beyond the blog: The networked self of travel bloggers on Twitter

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Abstract

Studies of the use of social media in tourism rarely discuss various tools in conjunction with each other. The growth of Twitter has attracted the attention of tourism researchers interested in the platform as a marketing tool and a source of information about consumers (Claster, Cooper, & Sallis, 2010; Hay, 2010). Similar studies of travel blogs largely focus on what tourists say about destinations and their own experiences (Akehurst, 2009; Bosangit, McCabe, & Hibbert, 2009; Schmallegger & Carson, 2008). Blogs in general, and travel blogs in particular, are widely regarded as providing credible information about their authors. Both the content and formal features of these online narratives shape the self-presentation and positioning of their authors as bloggers. Given that blogs are increasingly "distributed" (Helmond, 2010) and that independent travel bloggers often link to other platforms, it is necessary to consider author-created content beyond the blog to understand the presentation of what Papacharissi (2010) calls a "networked self". Drawing on the theories of Bakhtin and Goffman, which have informed previous analyses of blogs, and Dann's (1996) concept of tourist discourse, this paper argues that the Twitter pages of independent travel bloggers extend the self-presentation in their blogs. In particular, it focuses on how travel bloggers use specific conventions, formal features, and narrative techniques of Twitter to express a networked self and reiterate themes of the blog. Through a random selection and textual analysis of various messages it finds that while there is some mention of the travel experience, the various conventions and conversations on Twitter are self-presentational elements that generally strengthen the authors' position as travel bloggers. The characteristic narrative techniques of Twitter also reveal tensions between the discourses of travel and tourism. The networked self of the independent travel blogger is negotiated in these discursive tensions.

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Although tourism researchers view travel blogs as a rich resource on consumer behaviour and discuss their potential as marketing tools, such studies generally examine blogs hosted on travel-specific advertising-sponsored websites such as TravelPod and TravelBlog and focus on the content in entries alone (Akehurst, 2009; Bosangit, McCabe, & Hibbert, 2009; Schmallegger & Carson, 2008). However, it is increasingly recognized that blogs have a "distributed nature" (Helmond, 2010, p. 7), often linking to content created by their authors on other social media platforms. Also, the self-presentation that takes place in blogs is dispersed across various social media (Helmond, 2010; Nabeth, 2009; Reed, 2005). This phenomenon is often seen in travel blogs hosted on independent websites that link to social networking sites, bookmarking tools, and microblogging services. Any analysis of how these authors present themselves as travel bloggers and describe their narratives as travel blogs must, therefore, move beyond the borders of the blog and take into account content

created using other social media. This paper discusses how this takes place on Twitter, the microblogging service of choice amongst many independent travel bloggers.

The presentation of a "networked self" (boyd & Heer, 2006; Papacharissi, 2010) is a concept useful for interpreting how authors extend the positions and themes expressed in their blog to platforms such as Twitter. An individual mainly articulates the networked self by connecting to other people online (Baym, 2010; Papacharissi, 2010). Describing self-presentation on social networking sites as implicit rather than explicit, Zizi Papacharissi (2010) observed that "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"(p. 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).

Taken in the context of microblogging, this means the networked self of the independent travel blogger on a platform such as Twitter is expressed in the connections made with other individuals via that platform. 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 can be self-presentational elements. Technical features of online platforms shape this self-presentation to some extent (Merchant). For example, web page authors may manipulate page design, fonts, and other visual elements to create a certain impression of themselves online (Walker, 2004). 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, 2010, p. 414). While this seems deterministic, it does imply that each formal feature of a blogger's Twitter page instrumental in the presentation of at least some aspects of the self as travel blogger.

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" (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 '@' to start a conversation will ultimately figure in the presentation of self as a travel blogger or in the distribution of the content of the travel blog.

Analysing online self-presentation from a Bakhtinian perspective, Nelson and Hull (2008) observe that individuals use multiple discourses to reflect who they are, always keeping audience expectations in mind. The resulting narrative is heteroglossic and characterised by discursive

tensions. Typically in online language, writes Nancy Baym (2010), "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" (p. 66). The idea that authors freely combine "familiar but out-of-place genres" to express themselves in a new online medium has been discussed in Killoran's study of self-presentation in home pages (72). It can be argued along similar lines that travel bloggers may creatively combine multiple discursive forms and language associated with various contexts in their tweets. This paper considers, in particular, how the discourses of travel and tourism figure in this self-presentation.

The traveller/tourist dichotomy that informs many debates in tourist studies (Franklin & Crang, 2001; Jaworski & Pritchard, 2005) often reflects in the various narrative styles of travel-related communication. For example, the personal tone of travel writing emphasises the adventurous, independent, or solitary nature of the travel experience. This involves what Graham Dann (1999) terms "writing out" the tourist to create a sense of solitude, focusing on the journey rather than the destination, describing a detachment from fellow travellers but a connection with total strangers, a focus on the self, and a tendency to describe experiences as being timeless, or as if they are happening in the present. For many authors, travel writing is the "presentation of multiple personas" and involves a constant switching between different narrative roles such as that of an adventurer or a clown (Holland & Huggan, 1998). The traveller role in particular is frequently used in travel-related narratives. Television travel hosts have played both travellers and tourists to describe destinations (Dunn). Similarly, those who describe their journeys use narrative techniques and themes – such as highlighting the dangers and difficulties faced – to present themselves as travellers and be seen as more authentic and adventurous than tourists (Noy, 2004; O'Reilly, 2005). By contrast, the discursive style of tourism advertising or brochures has commercial associations and is distinguished by its lack of sender identification, its impersonal and monologic style, euphoric language, and tautology (G. M. S. Dann, 1996). Dann's framework is useful for identifying the specific narrative techniques and discursive forms of travel and tourism present in tweets. Travel, with its connotations of adventure and independence, forms a contrast to tourism, which is often seen as passive and superficial (Fussell). These different contexts suggest a discursive tension between travel and tourism.

Bakhtin's (1986) concept of the basic unit of communication as an utterance that echoes the context in which it was previously used by others explains the existence of such tensions. Each sphere of human activity has a corresponding set of utterances known as a speech genre. Utterances 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). The more familiar an individual is with these contexts, the better his or her expression of ideas. The message is more meaningful for the audience if it uses language drawn from contexts they recognise. From this perspective, new forms of travel-related communication such as microblogs may be regarded as innovatively combining pre-existing 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.

Utterances are self-presentational as they are created with an eye to the audience. When presenting the self, an individual will the use cues, such as appearance or actions appropriate to specific social situations, to indicate their position with respect to their audience (Goffman, 1969). In an online self-presentational narrative this means using a variety of multimedia (Nelson & Hull, 2008). In a Twitter page, this includes the content and discourses of posts, visual elements such as photographs and background themes as well features such as lists and hashtags. Controlling the amount of information available, via these features, to an audience is another self-presentational technique that, according to Goffman (1969), influences the impression an audience has of the individual. For travel bloggers who tweet, this could involve actions such as adding a hashtag to make a message available to a wider audience or using the @ symbol for a more private message.

Keeping these discursive differences in mind, this paper looks at how individuals may use Twitter to present themselves as travel bloggers and sustain the themes of their blogs. In order to understand how this is communicated, the paper 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 sections discuss titles, formal features such as profile pictures, user names, and links, and the conventions of Twitter messages relevant to self-presentation. This study 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[1] 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 (2010a) 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 (2010c). 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.

Twitter users can display a personal name and a user name on their web 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 create several title styles ranging from

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[1] Kruse et al (1993) define a "widget" as "a simple graphical object, such as a pushbutton…or menu that allows users easy interaction with the program" (148). Although this definition is taken from the context of a computer program written for the study of spectrometry, it is useful to describe widgets in blogs.

impersonal and blog-oriented to personal and self-oriented. Laura Walker of A Wandering Sole (2010a) and Eva and Jeremy Rees of Forks and Jets (2010a) use their blog title as a personal name and as a username. The resulting Twitter page titles read A Wandering Sole @awanderingsole (2010b), 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. This narrative technique increases the visibility of the blog, thus networking it, but downplays the self as blogger. 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 "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 also clearly shows 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 (2010b), for example, titles his page "Leif Pettersen" @leifpettersen. While this style is more personal, suggesting an intimacy suited to the discourses of travel, it does not refer to the author as blogger. In fact, as a "freelance travel writer" of guidebooks and a "Lonely Planet author" rather than a blogger, Pettersen associates himself with the discourse of professional writing rather than the personal discourse of the travel blog (2010b).

Profile descriptions often describe 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, 2010b). 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 (2010c) and Legal Nomads (2010c), respectively (Ettenberg, 2010a; Polat, 2010). 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, Twitter users post a profile picture and a short author description. Independent travel bloggers often use the same photograph of themselves that they display on their 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 (2010b) do not have a photograph of themselves, but instead use a logo based on their initials "EJ" (see Fig. 1) in a font that is identical to the one in their blog title. The "EJ" logo also

appears as a URL icon or favicon. The logo resembles the "LP" logo used by guidebook publishers Lonely Planet on their Twitter page (Fig 2.). 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"(2010b). Furthermore, 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. The design of the logo reflects the distributed nature of the blog rather than the networked self of its authors. Yet, the allusion to Eva and Jeremy Rees, indicated in the initials that make up the logo, has an element of personal discourse and is a reference, however oblique, to the self as travel blogger.
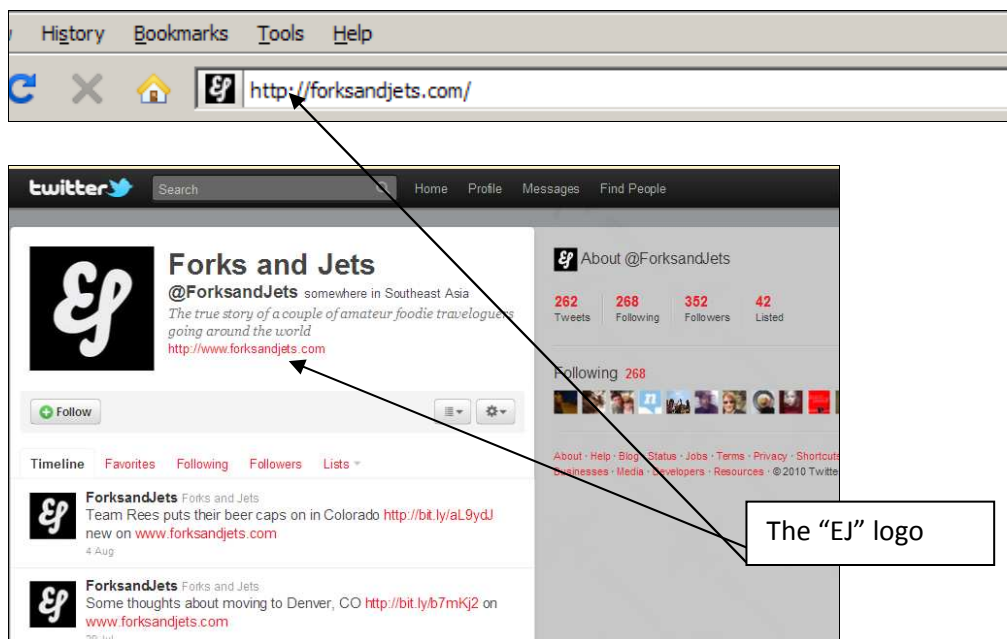

Figure 1: The title banner and logo of the Forks and Jets blog (above) reflect in the Twitter profile picture (below) as seen on 22 November 2010.
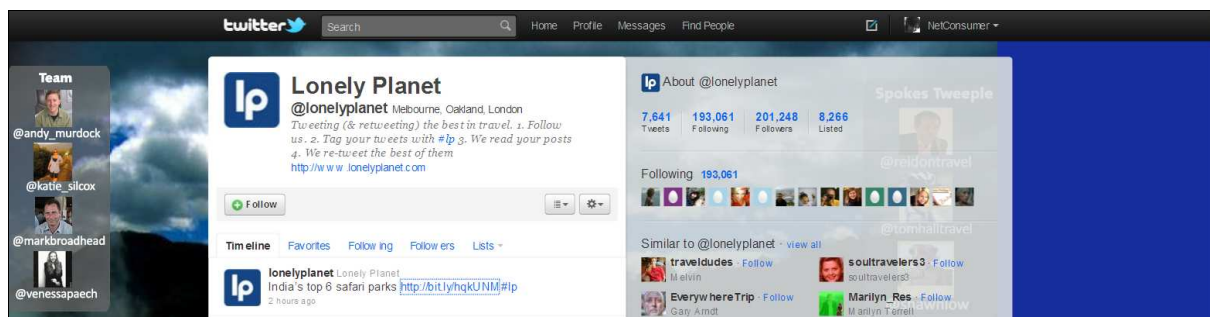

Figure 2: Authors are quite literally sidelined on Lonely Planet's page on Twitter. The title and profile picture emphasises the company logo and name.

Another alternative to using a personal photograph is to have an image that reiterates themes in the blog. The profile picture of a travel blogger who uses the pseudonym Nomadic Matt depicts Uncle Traveling Matt, a character from the television show Fraggle Rock, who sends postcards and tells stories of his travels. The connotations of the character's name act in the same manner as Gerard Genette's "pseudonym effect" (1997, p. 48-50). 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 influences the reader's impression of the author and the work itself (Genette, 1997, p. 48-50). As an adventurous explorer, Uncle Travelling Matt is associated with travel rather than tourism. As a teller of stories, he symbolizes the narration of travel. Thus the contexts and connotations of the image work to present Nomadic Matt as a 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 (Walker, 2010b). 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 (2010b) is an echo of the blog title, Everything Everywhere (2010a). 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, 2010; Honeycutt & Herring, 2009). They may also "retweet" information or comments from other users (boyd, Golder, & Lotan, 2010). 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, Bandari, Kong, Qian, & Roychowdhury, 2010). 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 (2010b). 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, 2010, p. 182). 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, et al., 2010). 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" (2010b). Interestingly, "A comprehensive list of travel bloggers/podcasters on Twitter" is differentiated from "People involved in travel related public relations and marketing" (2010). 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.
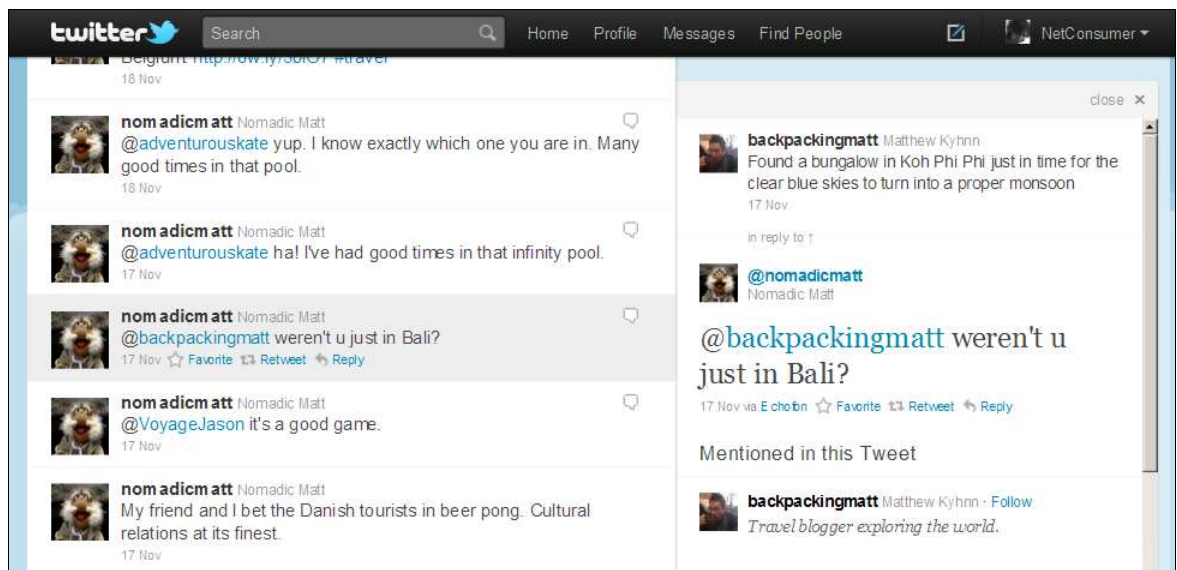

Figure 3: A Twitter conversation between bloggers. The screenshot shows messages addressed to @backpackingmatt, @VoyageJason, and @adventurouskate

Dawn R. Gilpin (2010) also 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" (p. 234). Most Twitter conversations are prefaced by the @ symbol and user name (Honeycutt & Herring, 2009). 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? (2010)

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. 3).

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" (2010a). 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.

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 (2010b). 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 @landlopers: The 2nd LandLopers Pick of the Week offers inspiration and gorgeous photos http://ht.ly/3cXmU" (Polat, 2010b). Such posts give a clear sense of the author as a networked travelblogger.
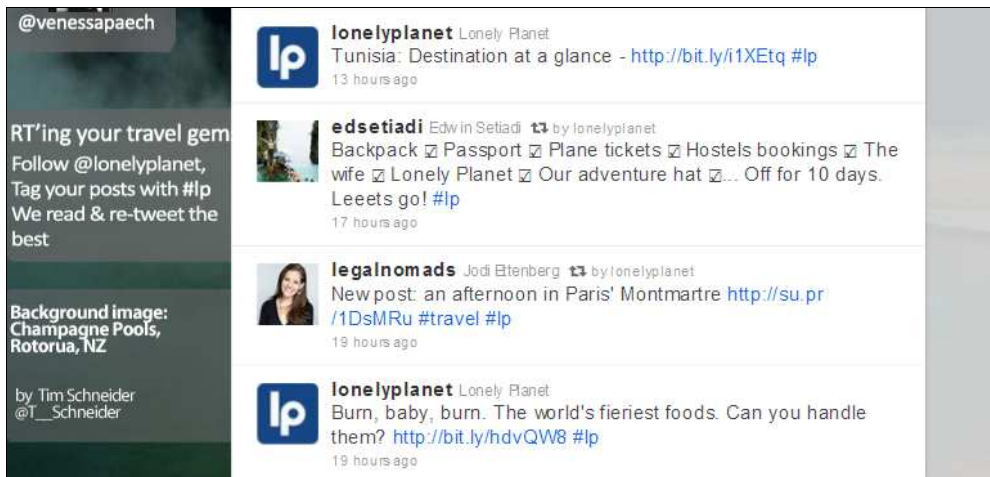
Figure 4: A legalnomads message using #lp is retweeted by Lonely Planet.

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. 4), mentioned as a retweet by Gary Arndt", uses #travel with the link to her blog post in a clear indication of its themes (2010b). However, the more interesting hashtag by far is the #lp tag in the same message. Guidebook publisher Lonely Planet instructs visitors to its Twitter page to use the #lp in any post they would like to have retweeted. On the one hand #lp is a self-promotional device for Ettenberg who seeks the attention of Lonely Planet and hopes to gain visibility in the process. On the other hand, it is also a means by which Lonely Planet generates content for its own page. 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. Simultaneously, by retweeting her 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 on its own brand image. Thus the #lp turns the message into a self-presentational element for both the blogger and the company. It represents the travel discourse of the blog and at the same time is turned into tourist discourse for the promotion of Lonely Planet. The resulting discursive tension is further heightened, in this case, by the presence of the #travel.

It is not uncommon for marketers to manipulate trending topics for their own purposes. Zhou et al.'s (2010) study of Twitter use in the 2009 Iranian election reveals 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," 2010). Although #travelblog seems to be the obvious choice as a self-presentational element, it was in fact rarely used by these travel bloggers at the time or writing. At least some bloggers seem 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, et al., 2010). 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.
> 23 Jul (Rees & Rees, 2010b)

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. However, authors may also share links that indicate aspects of self that have no relevance to their position as travel bloggers, or to themes in the blog, as in this tweet from Jodi Ettenberg: "The neuroscience of magic: http://bit.ly/fQfpPH" (2010c).

Tweeting travel discourse

There are a number of striking similarities in the discursive style of tweets and travel discourse, bearing out Baym's (2010) observations on online language. Microblog posts are often personal and self-centred, describe activities and experiences, and are written in the present (Honeycutt & Herring, 2009; Oulasvirta, et al., 2010). 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!" (2010b). 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" (2010b). 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 (Milan). Meanwhile, Nomadic Matt highlights the experience of travelling, particularly its discomfort – a theme that is characteristic, according to Camille O'Reilly (2005), of a description of a travel experience rather than a touristic one.

There is also much in common between the travel-related tweet and the holiday postcard. Chris Kennedy (2005) 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"(2010b). 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" (2010a). 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!"(2010b). While the relatively 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 this argument is the idea that the self as travel blogger is networked across multiple online platforms. As travel bloggers on Twitter use conventions and formal features in various ways to distribute the content and themes of their blogs, they draw on techniques familiar in other forms of travel-related communication. As various discourses and narrative techniques of travel and tourism combine on these Twitter pages, sometimes authors successfully extend their self-presentation and themes in the blog. In general, the display of connections to other travel bloggers through the use of various messaging conventions presents these bloggers as networked and

networking with others. Visual elements, although sometimes touristic in style, often emphasise themes in the blog. However, the different discourses bring an underlying tension to these pages.

The significance of context is revealed in the use of hashtags. While a hashtag such as #Argentina links the tweet to a public conversation about this place, it serves mainly to position the author as a traveller. In Savage's case, little is said about Argentina. Instead, the message highlights his association with other travel bloggers. This focus on experience is characteristic of travel discourse. Similarly, Ettenberg's use of #lp, 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 her blog *Legal Nomads.* Thus, the contexts of such hashtags introduce some discursive tension in the message.

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 achieve a balance between dispersing the content of their blog and networking the self as travel blogger, easily incorporating references to both the blog and the self as blogger on the Twitter page. Others like Leif Pettersen make little reference to the blog itself. Furthermore, a feature that distributes the blog on one page may be used to present a blogger on another. The profile picture of "Forks and Jets" echoes the blog's themes, but the photograph of Keith Savage refers to the self as travel blogger.

Authors can use Twitter in different ways to move beyond the boundaries of their travel blog, distribute its content, and express themselves as travel bloggers. In doing so, they combine discursive forms drawn from a variety of contexts. As authors control how information is dispersed and connections displayed, in order to maintain their self-presentation, they often employ narrative techniques drawn from the contexts of both travel and tourism. Although Twitter seems suited to the discursive style of travel and the presentation of a personal travel experience, elements of tourist discourse are also essential to increasing a blog's visibility and expressing the self as travel blogger. Thus, the networked self of the independent travel blogger as presented on Twitter is ultimately located in the tensions between the discourses of travel and tourism.

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