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## Fashion Blogs as Social Media Texts: an LIWC Analysis

### Abstract

The present paper presents a linguistic analysis of the texts extracted from the ABOUT pages in 24 fashion blogs topping the list of influential fashion blogs in 2018. The fashion blogs under consideration are viewed as belonging to the personal style fashion blog type. The present research aims at analyzing the way generic features of this type of discourse are displayed by the texts under consideration. The Linguistic Inquiry and Word Count (LIWC) text analysis technique was employed to study the texts in order to explore how consistent they are with social media text type (Twitter, Facebook, blog) according to pre-defined psychological and linguistic categories. LIWC output in relation to each text was interpreted in terms of traditional LIWC dimensions and LIWC variables. The main findings suggest that, linguistically, most texts tend to combine features that are typical of highly personal writing and formal writing intended for official use.

**Keywords:** *Internet genre, fashion blog, personal blog, blog page, textual analysis*

### Abstrakt

Artykuł został poświęcony analizie lingwistycznej tekstów, wybranych ze stron internetowych „O blogu” / „O sobie” 24 blogów, poświęconych modzie i znajdujących się na liście najbardziej wpływowych blogów modowych w 2018 r. Uważamy, że blogi fashion należą do gatunku osobistych blogów modowych. Celem niniejszego badania jest analiza tego, jak specyfika, cechująca ten rodzaj dyskursu, znajduje swój przejaw w tekstach, będących przedmiotem badania w niniejszym artykule. Do badania tekstów korzystano z programu komputerowego do analizy tekstowej „Metoda badania lingwistycznego i kalkulacji słów” w celu weryfikacji, jak bardzo badane teksty odpowiadają charakterystykom rodzajowym tekstów sieci społecznościowych (twitter, facebook, blogi) odpowiednio do określonych za pomocą

programu kategorii psychologicznych oraz lingwistycznych. Wyniki analizy każdego tekstu traktowano pod kątem tradycyjnych i zmiennych kategorii, wytypowanych przez program. Główne wnioski umożliwiają założenie, że z lingwistycznego punktu widzenia większość tekstów łączy w sobie cechy charakterystyczne dla komunikacji personalnej oraz oficjalnej, przeznaczonej do użytku oficjalnego.

**Słowa kluczowe:** *gatunek internetowy, blog fashion, osobisty blog, strona internetowa, analiza tekstu*

Since its emergence in 1989, the World Wide Web (or the Web) has become the most popular Internet application that supports a great variety of communicative practices and enables billions of people to interact with each other. The Web as a new communication medium which is primarily composed of multimedia documents combining text, images, video, hyperlinks, etc. has had a profound influence on the existing genres resulting in their adaptation and in the emergence of new ones. This influence is manifested in the emergence of the term Internet or Web genres which are seen as a combination of classic generic features and ones offered by the new medium of communication (Crețiu, p. 3). Among new Internet specific genres like email message, home page or hotlist, blogs prove to be the most rapidly developed type of communication. Although blogging is a relatively new phenomenon within the cyberspace dating back to the late 1980s, it has immensely grown in popularity and has managed to dominate peoples' lives.

This research paper focuses on 24 texts extracted from influential English fashion blogs. It aims at exploring the way generic features of fashion blogs which are viewed as social media texts are displayed by the texts under consideration.

## **Fashion Blogs**

According to Rasa Stankeviciute (Stankeviciute, 2013, p. 78), the rise of the fashion blog dates back to 2006 when 40 selected bloggers received press cards to attend New York Fashion Week. Shortly afterwards, at the fashion house's Spring Summer 2010 Ready-to-Wear shows in Milan, bloggers were placed in the front rows next to the professional fashion elite such as Anna Wintour, Suzy Menkes and Hamish Bowles.

Today's most popular top brands display a keen interest in bloggers, which is attributed to the growing popularity of blogs with fashion consu-

mers. The fashion blog appears to have offered the luxury brands a new more effective and easy tool to promote and advertise their products. To start with, popular fashion blogs boast huge numbers of followers who have already established the largest fashion consumer network. Unlike traditional forms of advertising, fashion bloggers interact with consumers applying a word-of-mouth approach, which is regarded as the most effective form of marketing (Jansen, Zhang, Sobel, Chowdury, 2009, p. 3860; Stankeviciute, 2003, p. 82). By sharing personal interest and opinion through photos, videos and written articles and providing recommendations bloggers create a sense of authenticity and relatability (Jawdat, 2004). What is more, fashion bloggers promote conversations with consumers by creating a platform for exchanging the consumption experience.

There is a great variety of blogs in the field of fashion. Fashion is blogged by individuals and companies, by fashion professionals and amateurs who are fashion connoisseurs having a great deal of knowledge about fashion or who are dedicated consumers of fashion. There is also a diversity of opinion on how fashion blogs should be classified. According to Ida Engholm and Erik Hansen-Hansen (Engholm, Hansen-Hansen, 2013, p. 2-3), by the writer's expertise, on two opposite ends of the web genre of fashion blogs, there are amateur-driven and professional fashion blogs, while depending on the strategy for presenting and interacting with fashion content blogs are categorized into four types: *The Professionals* (blogs produced by fashion magazines with amateur-bloggers appearing as guest writers), *Fashionindustrias* (blogs run either by fashion industry professionals or successful amateur bloggers admitted to the professional fashion events who report on professional style subjects of the fashion industry), *Street Style* (documenting real people's style in the streets) and *Narcissus* (public DIY fashion diary centered on the blogger's style and interest in fashion). The Narcissus type is also referred to as personal style fashion blog or personal fashion diary run by personal style bloggers. Although personal style bloggers are believed to have gained in popularity by posting photos of themselves in their outfits, Layan Jawdat (2004) argues they have succeeded in gaining followers because they also 'were able to appeal to readers through their stylish wardrobes, sense of style, beauty, and other forms of social and cultural capital'. However, it seems plausible to suggest that a blogger's ability to maintain a large readership also depends, to a great extent, on their mastery of language.

## Corpus

Our corpus is comprised of 24 fashion blogs that top the *25 Fashion Blogs You Need to Follow in 2018* list (Denardo, Tai, 2018). According to The Fashion Spot, an influential fashion industry forum, these blogs 'stand out from the pack thanks to their one-of-a-kind sartorial sense and sharp business acumen' (Ibid).

## Method

First, each blog was studied in terms of its type, authorship and title. Second, the Linguistic Inquiry and Word Count (LIWC) text analysis technique was employed to analyse the texts extracted from the ABOUT page in each blog in order to explore how consistent the texts on the ABOUT pages are with social media text type (Twitter, Facebook, blog) according to pre-defined psychological and linguistic categories. The present research is limited to the linguistic analysis of the texts found on the ABOUT pages in the fashion blog corpus. One of the reasons for the material selection is that the ABOUT page is considered to be the most popular and useful since it provides the information about the blogger and the blog in a very concise way. LIWC output in relation to each text was interpreted in terms of traditional LIWC dimensions and LIWC variables (*LIWC Results*). Traditional LIWC dimensions include personal pronouns, social words, positive and negative emotions, and cognitive processes. They are considered to be 'reasonably straightforward' as compared to LIWC summary variables (research-based) comprising analytical thinking (showing the degree to which person's thinking is analytical or formal); authenticity (showing how personal and honest a person is); emotional tone and clout (showing how authoritative and confident the writing is).

## Discussion

All blogs in our corpus belong to the personal fashion blog type. They are run by fashionistas, that is, devoted followers of fashion. Most of the bloggers are women with only two blogs run by men: *One Dapper Street* and *What my Boyfriend Wore*. A catchy, intriguing and creative title performs at least two functions. On the one hand, it attracts readers' attention and contributes to the establishment of a wide followers' network. On the other hand, the title should 'sell' the content, that is, indicate what the blog is about and represent it in

search engines in the way that optimizes for search. In order to perform the latter function, the title should contain the key words that the audience is likely to use to search for the content the blog represents. Only eight of 24 blogs use the key words explicitly related to fashion in their titles: style (*Style me Gracie*), Harper and Harley (*Harper & Harley*), fashion (*My Fash Diary and Hello Fashion*), wear (*What my Boyfriend Wore*), dapper (*One Dapper Street*), fishnet (*Fishnets and Rainbows*) and chic (*That's chic*).

In the corpus, blog titles display a tendency to make use of the bloggers' first or full names. These names can serve as the key words performing the optimizing-for-search function only if readers are familiar with them. To be more specific, seven blogs contain the bloggers' real names in their titles – either first names or full names: *Style me Gracie* (Gracie Mercedes), *Aleali May*, *Kyrzada* (Kyrzayda Rodrigues), *Zanita* (Zanita Whittington), *Rachel and Nicole* (Rachel and Nicole Effendy), *Brooke Testoni*, and *Gabi Fresh* (Gabi Greg). Two blogs, *Andy Heart* and *The Daileigh*, have nicknames standing for the bloggers Ann Kim and Ashleigh Hutchinson respectively. The tendency to employ bloggers' names in blog titles seems to be attributed to the fact that the fashion blogs under consideration refer to personal style fashion blogs or fashion diaries. Traditional personal diaries were named after people keeping them and were not meant for anybody else's use. On the contrary, using their names in blog titles, bloggers establish personal relationship with the intended audience by showing that the content they are sharing is very personal. The same function is performed by the blog titles that display bloggers' personal information in an implicit way. The following examples illustrate the point. The *Atlantic-Pacific* blog got its name thanks to the blogger's style: Blair Eadie is known for her combination of east coast and west coast style that symbolizes her origin and current place of residence. The *Girls with Curves* blog is run by Tanesha Awasthi who is one of the most popular plus-size fashion blogger. Evidently, the word *curve* refers to a body size and shape which are usually associated with overweight women. The blog name which openly displays one of the issues women are worried about has enabled Tanesha to inspire many plus-size women to love and respect themselves and to become part of the fashion world. Erica Choi says that the name of her blog *Egg Canvas* comes from her nickname from childhood *dalgyl* which is *egg* in Korean. She got the nickname because her face shape resembles that of an egg. Canvas is a metaphor representing her view of life: life is a blank canvas to be dreamt up and painted a new very day.

Most of the blog titles do not differ from their URL addresses. The *Hello Fashion* blog's URL address has an additional word 'blog' added to the title.

The only blog whose URL address is different from the title is *Style me Grasie*: its URL is composed of the first and last name of the blogger *Grasier Mercedes*.

Table 1: LIWC Results Displayed by the Texts on the ABOUT Pages of Fashion Blogs

Blog Number	Traditional LIWC dimensions					Summary Variables			
	I-words (I, me, my)	Social words	Positive emotions	Negative emotions	Cognitive processes	Analytic	Clout	Authenticity	Emotional tone
1	0.0	15.9	4.1	0.4	9.0	63.9	99.0	18.0	88.2
2	10.1	5.8	3.8	0.0	9.1	68.0	26.6	92.9	89.8
3	9.4	5.5	4.4	1.0	13.1	72.8	24.8	89.3	85.3
4	4.2	7.4	9.5	0.0	8.4	63.2	73.6	36.6	99.0
5	0.0	10.6	2.8	0.0	11.7	89.0	73.1	12.1	77.2
6	0.0	4.0	3.2	0.0	8.1	95.5	65.7	17.2	83.2
7	0.0	4.8	1.8	0.4	4.4	95.8	64.3	20.8	53.3
8	4.2	8.3	7.5	0.0	12.5	79.1	77.3	43.4	99.0
9	0.0	13.9	4.2	0.7	12.5	45.1	89.4	66.8	86.1
10	6.1	14.1	4.0	0.0	12.1	79.2	76.0	85.2	91.5
11	0.0	7.3	2.4	0.0	7.8	99.0	76.7	10.9	71.4
12	10.9	6.4	4.2	0.3	11.5	57.3	23.3	90.5	90.5
13	0.0	5.3	3.2	0.0	6.3	98.2	70.1	3.4	82.4
14	0.0	4.5	2.3	2.3	4.5	94.8	67.5	2.4	25.8
15	8.1	9.7	6.2	2.2	13.8	75.5	45.9	81.1	91.4
16	5.4	9.5	4.8	0.6	7.0	71.9	60.0	19.7	92.1
17	6.7	7.0	4.6	0.0	9.5	83.8	50.0	55.5	94.9
18	16.0	8.5	8.5	0.0	9.6	38.8	19.7	99.0	99.0
19	9.2	15.5	6.3	0.0	6.8	43.7	76.6	64.2	99.0
20	9.5	9.9	4.5	0.0	14.4	57.9	48.4	89.1	94.6
21	0.0	9.8	5.7	0.0	9.8	82.9	83.6	28.1	98.5
22	1.6	5.2	4.0	0.4	3.2	83.5	58.0	12.6	87.8
23	0.0	10.3	5.3	0.4	9.6	76.5	83.6	10.7	96.6
24	0.5	11.3	1.6	0.0	5.9	95.5	84.7	12.1	56.2
Average for Social Media	5.51	9.71	4.57	2.10	10.77	55.92	55.45	55.66	63.35

The texts extracted from the ABOUT pages were analysed according to the text type 'Social media: Twitter, Facebook, blog' selected from the LIWC options (Table 1). The blog numbers in the Table correspond to the blogs in the List of Blogs provided at the end of the research paper.

Pronouns refer to function words the use of which reveal a lot of information about his/her values, relations with other people and sense of self. Pronoun use is the key to establishing the quality of close relationship due to the fact that the way pronouns are used shows how a person identifies himself or herself in relation to others. According to the findings of the present research, in most of the texts the use of I-words (I, me and my) by the bloggers remains within the average value for social media texts (5.51%). What is more, half of the texts do not display any use of I-words at all. 9 texts of 24 show the extensive use of I-words: their I-words values are much higher than the corresponding average value. The ABOUT pages display two types of writing: 3rd person writing and 1st person writing. The texts which have low or zero I-words value use the 3rd person version of the text. Although most of these texts are signed by the blogger, the blogger introduces herself by using her name and the 3rd person pronouns (she, her). The following example from *Fishnets and Rainbows* illustrates the point: 'Rita Saraci, was born in Prishtine, capital city of Kosovo (South Eastern Europe). She attended the American University in Kosovo, majoring in Media & Communications and Public Policy. The love for photography, music, and media in general has always been a part of Rita's life. Also, travelling around the world and being in different artistic environments has helped her discover more and more about her passions. [...] Rita Saraci, founder of *fishnetsandrainbows*'.

As compared to the 1st person writing, the 3rd person attaches a sense of objectivity. The ABOUT pages of two blogs *Style me Grasie* and *Girls with Curves* contain two full versions of the text: 1st and 3rd person writing. Some bloggers combine two types of writing within one single version. For example, most part of the text on the ABOUT page of the blog *My Fashion Diary* is written in the 3rd person which is followed by a short piece of 1st person writing: 'Born in Chicago, originally Syrian, and grew up in Dubai, The London College of Fashion graduate edits the first blog to come out of the UAE in 2009. Her style blog, Myfashdiary.com has been nominated in Ahlan! Magazine's Best at the Dubai awards, as well as at the Marie Claire, UK Blog, and Twitter awards. Tala was also named one of Dubai's Hot 100 in 2011. She has collaborated with Net-A-Porter, ASOS, Tom Ford, and Halston. [...] Myfashdiary.com is a celebration of what I love in Fashion, Beauty,

Travel & Food. You won't be seeing anything negative because I don't blog about something I don't genuinely love.'

A close look at the texts employing 1st person writing suggests that I-words are used by the bloggers in order to establish close relationships with the reader. The bloggers address their readers either in the form of an informal letter or a kind of an informal talk. In both cases, the use of I-words is combined with an extensive use of the pronoun you, which intensifies a sense of closeness with the reader. What is more, the use of both pronouns (I and you) corresponds to one of the purposes of blogging – making followers part of the blogger's experiences. The following example from *One Dapper Street* illustrates the point: ' "What's this all about?" You might ask. Well, here it goes. This website is a way for me to share a passion. A fascination that brought me here, thousands of miles from Germany to New York City: fashion. So here I was, going to fashion school, modeling here and there, loving shopping and photography – one thing lead to another and One Dapper Street was a website. I hope you find lots of inspiration on this page, from dapper combinations to edgy streetwear and from daily outfit inspirations to curated shopping selections!'

The research findings show that in most cases the I-word category was closely related to the Authenticity variable. It can be assumed that the use of I-words contributes to the perception of pieces of writing as true, honest and personal. The texts under consideration tend to display high levels of authenticity.

The emotional tone dimension as well as positive and negative emotion categories deal with the way people express emotion. The valence of the emotion which measures emotional response shows how people are experiencing the world and how they react to certain events (Tausczik, Pennebaker, 2010, p. 32). It can be assumed that the emotional dimension displayed by the texts under consideration can tell us how the bloggers react to their blogs and intended readers. According to the findings of the previous research (Holmes et al., 2007), the higher use of emotion words, the more immersed a person is in the event. According to the emotional tone values identified for each of the texts under analysis, most of them tend to display high levels of emotionality. As compared to an average value of 63.35% defined for social media texts (which is high itself), only three texts display lower emotional value: *Aleali May* (56.2%), *Dear Milano* (53.3%) and *Lust for Life* (25.8%). The values provided for the positive and negative emotion dimensions show that most of the texts express only positive emotions. Very high degrees of intensity of emotions displayed by most texts under consideration provide

information about their psychological meaning: the bloggers are very emotional about their fashion blogs and readers, their blogging activity evokes only positive emotions and they are highly immersed in blogging.

The Clout category relates to the language that can reveal something about the extent to which people are uncertain or insecure about their topic as well as to the degree of leadership and confidence they display through their use of language. According to the research findings, most texts under consideration have values which are higher than the average established for social media texts. This can be attributed to the fact that the bloggers have already formed and established perspective on their blogs. What is more, the bloggers feel knowledgeable and confident enough to perform the role of fashion leaders for their readers.

## Conclusion

The LIWC text analysis technique allowed analysing the texts extracted from the ABOUT page of 24 most influential fashion blogs in terms of their consistency with social media text type according to pre-defined psychological and linguistic categories. The findings of the present research show that the texts display the greatest variability in the use of pronouns, I-words in particular. Although the texts tend to use either 1st or 3rd person writing, in both cases the bloggers' purpose is to establish close relationship with readers and make them part of their experiences. Both types of writing are seen as different tools in attributing a sense of authenticity and confidence to the blog content. The high levels of positive emotion displayed by the texts provide useful information about the way bloggers treat their blogs and readers.

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## List of Blogs

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<http://thatschic.net/>  
<http://gabifresh.com/>  
<http://onedapperstreet.com/>  
<http://www.brooketestoni.com/>  
<http://www.andyheart.com/>  
<http://www.dearmilano.com/>  
<http://wideeyedlegless.com/>  
<http://racheletnicole.com/>  
<https://whattmyboyfriendwore.com/>  
<http://www.eggcanvas.me/>  
<https://thedaileigh.com/>  
<http://harperandharley.com/>  
<http://www.lusttforlife.com/>  
<https://girlwithcurves.com/>  
<https://www.grasiemercedes.com/>  
<https://the-atlantic-pacific.com/>  
<http://kyrzayda.com/>  
<https://www.hellofashionblog.com/>

<http://www.double3xposure.com/>  
<http://www.fishnetsandrainbows.com/>  
<http://myfashdiary.com/>  
<http://zanita.com/>  
<http://alealimay.com/>

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