



Ethnography Report on the Food Blogging Tribe

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Contents

Introduction and Short Literature Review	2
Discussion of Research Methodology	2
Literary review and thematic analysis.....	4
Serious Leisure	4
Convergence Media.....	4
Findings: Themes and Analysis.....	6
Experiencing Appeal and Excitement	6
Hedonistic Consumption	9
Skilled Consumption.....	11
Food as a Social Connector	12
Experiential marketing campaign proposal	14
Conclusion and Marketing Implications	15
1. Understanding Tribal Members & Their Consumer Preferences.....	15
2. Expanding the Tribal Network.	16
3. Help the Tribe – Teach, Train, Comfort and Inspire.	16
BIBLIOGRAPHY	17
Appendices - Interviews.....	19

Introduction and Short Literature Review

The subject of choice for the Ethnography report is Food Bloggers. Although, difficult to analyse the tribe at first due to its fragmented nature, after much research using existing literature and in depth interviews, we managed to create an avenue for investigation into this relatively new tribe - Food Bloggers. The purpose of this report is to give the reader an insight into how different members of the tribe interact with each other using various social media platforms but also the introduction of physical gatherings in which members of the Food Blogging tribe gather to interact with each other in a physical space rather than just a virtual space. This report also analyses the key trends in which were identified throughout our analysis, how they behave and the underlying reason as to why members of the tribe enter the tribe in the first place - underlying motives and linking values.

Discussion of Research Methodology

Based on the type of study we conducted, the methodology we decided to use was online participant observation (*netnography*), web content analysis and semi-structured interviews. According to Kozients (2010) engagement might simply constitute regular readership. In the case of Food Blogging, this involved the regular reading of the different content bloggers post on their blog and the interaction they have with their followers.

Online Participant Behaviour was used as the primary source of methodology research as bloggers and their followers use this virtual space to interact with each other. Everything is online. This allowed us to become more immersed with the members of the tribe as well as analyzing the free behaviour of the followers online. We decided to use Web Content Analysis (Figure 1) as blogs require a more visual style of analysis as well as the textual element (Kozinets, 2010).

Paradigm	Example
Image	Photographs, icons, and banners
Theme	Tags on posts identifying them as containing information on subjects such as "dessert" or "poultry"
Feature	Website design elements including blogrolls, archives, and links to personalized Amazon bookstores
Link	Comments and posts that include links back and forth which snowball into a complex web of interaction
Exchange analysis	Comments and posts that turn into discussions, but also blog events, and bloggers using other media such as email, texting, etc. to communicate with each other
Language (discourse) analysis	Linguistic structures in posts and comments

FIGURE 1 - HERRING (2004) WEBCA ADAPTED FROM MCGAUGHEY (2010)

This enabled us to understand the creativity and content and the interaction rather than just the textual writing evident in these blogs.

As a research tool, particularly in our preliminary investigation, were we tried to extrapolate the emerging themes and patterns, we used scribe.com, a platform that allows to take note and highlight and save content on web-pages (Figure 2).

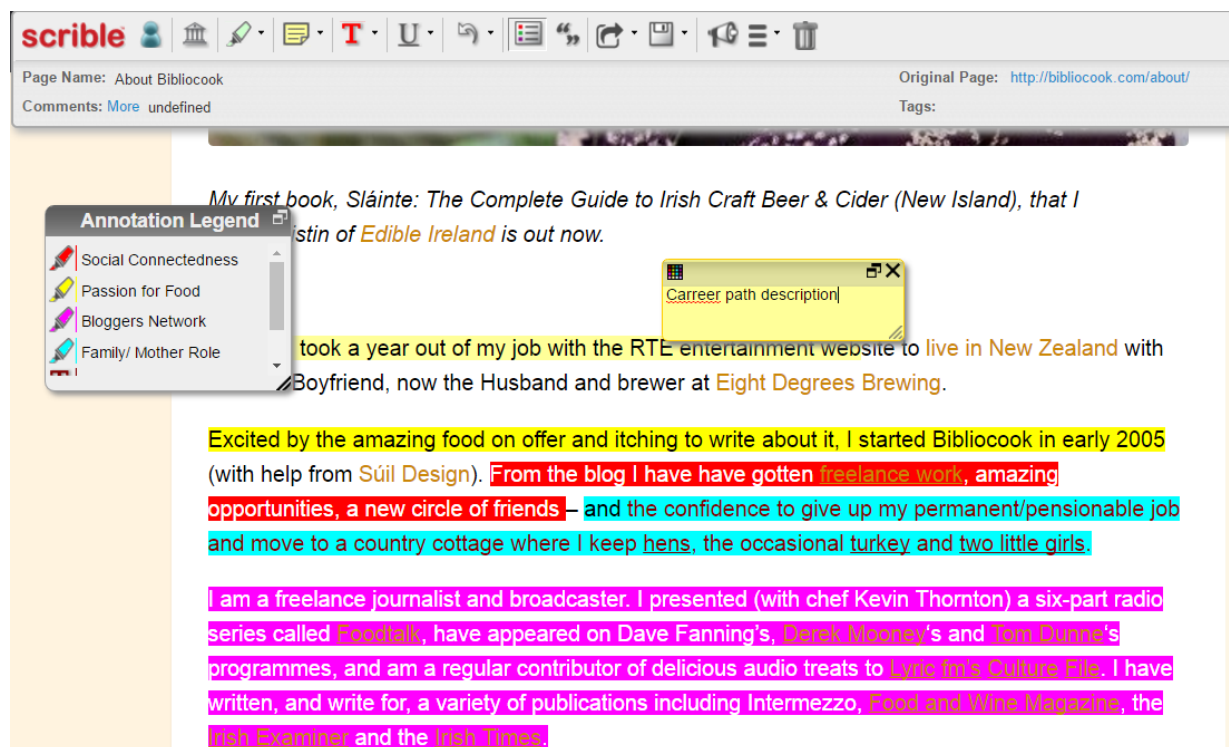


FIGURE 2 - ABOUT PAGE FROM BIBLIOCOOK.COM WITH ANNOTATION AND COMMENTS

After identifying common pattern and some consistent themes across the blogs' contents and conversations, semi-structured interviews were carried out. These interviews were recorded for use afterwards. We interviewed 5 followers and 3 bloggers. This provided a good insight as we got information from members of the tribe as well as the leaders of the tribe. Participants were more than happy to talk about their reasons for following the Food Blogs. We believe this is because people enjoy talking about food and sharing ideas from different Food Blogs - it's a talking point. The Food Bloggers were more than willing to answer any questions we had for them. Caroline Hennessey (Founder of BiblioCook¹) and Wayne and Janice Dunne (Founders of Irish Beer Snob²) were interviewed which was extremely useful. We gathered a substantial amount of information. This gave us the opportunity to gain unbiased information as there was a natural flow to each interview at the same time allowing us to gain relevant information for our ethnographic research. We found that online participant observation was the most useful form of methodology used.

¹ <http://bibliocook.com>

² <http://www.irishbeersnob.com>

Literary review and thematic analysis

Serious Leisure

Blogging falls into what Stebbins describes as serious leisure which is defined as:

the systematic pursuit of a [...] core activity that people find so substantial, interesting, and fulfilling that, in the typical case, they launch themselves on a (leisure) career centred on acquiring and expressing a combination of its special skills, knowledge, and experience (Stebbins, 2009).

In Food Blogging, this characteristic of "serious leisure" is prevalent. The presence of a career in food blogging is quite blurred when deciphering between professionals and amateurs. The Pro-Am revolution described by Leadbeater and Miller is the emergence of non-professional figures, which although engaged in a recreational activity, seek to maintain high levels of quality of their performance (Leadbeater & Miller, 2004). Throughout the progressive era of Food blogging, Food Bloggers have been discreetly setting the standards and practices of communication which can be compared to those of professionals. Being a successful Food Blogger is now recognised as a viable job in the food and communication industries.

For the pre-professional, the personal and relational discourses drawn on to explain blogging are replaced by concerns to be seen as a writer. The type of content, and style of writing change, so that as a result, blogs change, as information sources. There remains a strong interest in reputation within the collegial public, but a less personal interest and a more intense concern with measuring and expanding an audience of strangers (Cox & Blake, 2010).

Convergence Media

Food blogging is reborn as a convergent media which is defined by Jenkins as:

The flow of content across multiple media platforms, the cooperation between multiple media industries, and the migratory behavior of media audiences who would go almost anywhere in search of the kinds of entertainment experiences they wanted. (Jenkins, 2006)

The unique convergence occurring in Food Blogging is explained by the fact that while the Food Blogosphere was born in the realm of new media (the Internet), it must (by nature of its realm) rely on the offline food world, as well as traditional media spheres such as print and television. Food Blogs are a complex combination of different media, interest and content which include cookbooks, photography and logging a personal diary. There are countless variation of Food Blogs, which makes choosing a set for study challenging (McGaunghy, 2010). This was particularly prevalent for our research as we began to recognize the fragmentation of the community and the lackness of interaction on the conventional blogging platforms ie the food blog itself. These interactions have not disappeared but they have shifted and reconfigured toward social media platforms. We see it as a second convergence due to the nature and the receptivity of blogging. This is why we decided to include social media and those food bloggers who use social media to enhance our research. This fits well into the concept of tribes and tribal marketing as postmodern tribes are inherently unstable, small-scale, "affectual" (Maffesoli, 1996a), and they

are constantly in flux, brought ever again into being by the repetitive symbolic ritual of the members but persisting no longer than the power of attraction of these rituals and of their cult-objects. (Cova & Cova, 2002).

This reconfiguration is also acknowledged by the participants. During our interviews, participants expressed their view on the matter and we found that there are different sentiments about this second convergence.

For example, *Caroline Hennessy* (one of the first Irish people to start her own food blog at the very start of the food blogging phenomenon), sees this shift in a somewhat negative way. She views it a loss of both loyalty and interaction with her target audience and followers:

*There have been a lot of changes in blogging due to social media, with
– in some cases - people focusing on the social side and letting
blogging fall by the wayside.*

Also, a loss of relevant content as she feels the effort and shared knowledge she puts into her blog posts is wasted due to the emergence of social media platforms:

*This is a pity as you're putting all your efforts into something that
doesn't belong to you and is ephemeral and just disappears down off
the page*

*...No one looks back to see what I said on Twitter back in 2010
whereas people can still look at 11 years of archive material on
Bibliocook.*

This particular sentiment could be due to the role she occupies in the Food blogging community. She may feel her position of leadership is slightly eroded or negatively impacted by this reconfiguration to social media platforms.

On the other hand, a younger and less involved follower who we interviewed had a dissimilar opinion:

*Funnily enough, I find SnapChat the best social media to get
information from the bloggers. If I was interested in what they're saying
they always say link is on my Facebook, Twitter, etc.. So then I can opt
to go onto that link if I want to. I think snapchat is a very good idea...
you don't get those ads etc... snapchat is like you choose what you
want to see and it's quick and efficient and there's no ads.*

Follower 1 (female, 20)

Her attitude toward social media rectifies how Food Blogging has gone through this second convergence. We noted her likeness to this postmodern way of interaction.

She prefers that she is allowed to choose what information she finds interesting and which content she wants to look at. What we found really interesting was how the same feature of social media, their swiftness, is viewed in a contrasting way - ephemeral by one side and efficient by the other.

Findings: Themes and Analysis

Blogging and the blogosphere are known platforms around which virtual communities are formed (Shen & Chiou, 2009). Community is defined as a set of people who have diverse backgrounds and are linked by social ties, share common values, and even are involved in a joint action in geographical locations or settings (Sproull and Faraj, 1997). However, in terms of our research this definition is not of much interest as we are inquiring that Food Blogging can fall into Cova's definition of a tribe where the aggregating factor is something more than common interests, but non-rational and archaic elements –locality, kinship, emotion, passion; (Cova & Cova, 2002). We believe that Food blogging can configure as a tribe.

As previously mentioned, Food Blogging, in its convergent nature, is a bundle of different media and represents a complex web of interests: from cooking to photography, through the life of the author and interest for innovation in social technology. The contents of these blogs are accordingly large and diversified, although there are some underlying themes/values that goes across the various configuration that this phenomena can assume. These themes are the basis from where we can understand the experiences and the emotions that create the peculiar linking values of this tribe.

Experiencing Appeal and Excitement

The first recurring theme we inferred from the data collected was the search for excitement and experiencing appeal through food. Moreover, the visual impact of the virtually shared photography of food. These photographs not only accompany the recipes themselves, they also represent content itself, still pictures that have food as the subject, considered as artistic subjects (Abbate, Duca, Manzo, & Zerbo, 2013). It brings aesthetic value, paying particular attention to the presentation. The combination of a vivid photograph of the food and an interesting is commonly referred to on social media as "food porn" or #foodporn. This very well explains the underlying seek for excitement and arousal, which can be translated by the famous phrase "food to eat with your eyes".

Wang defines this experiencing appeal through food blogs as the degree to which visiting gastronomy blogs can drive readers to have mental vibration, including the feeling of excitement, curiosity, attraction and persuasion. With the evolution of media technology towards visual experiences, this influences an individual's perception of what is attractive, exciting, curious, and attention grabbing. Rust and Oliver (2000) indicated that feelings of excitement or curiosity can prompt expectation of food experiences since a need to taste local food or regional beverages may come from excitement seeking, thus pushing people to have exciting experiences. This kind of experience is really evident in social media. Due to the visual nature of social media platforms, such as Instagram, a photo based social sharing space. In fact, originally it became widely recognized for the astonishing

amount of food photos. As we can see, for example by the Instagram page of The Happy Pear (Figure 3):

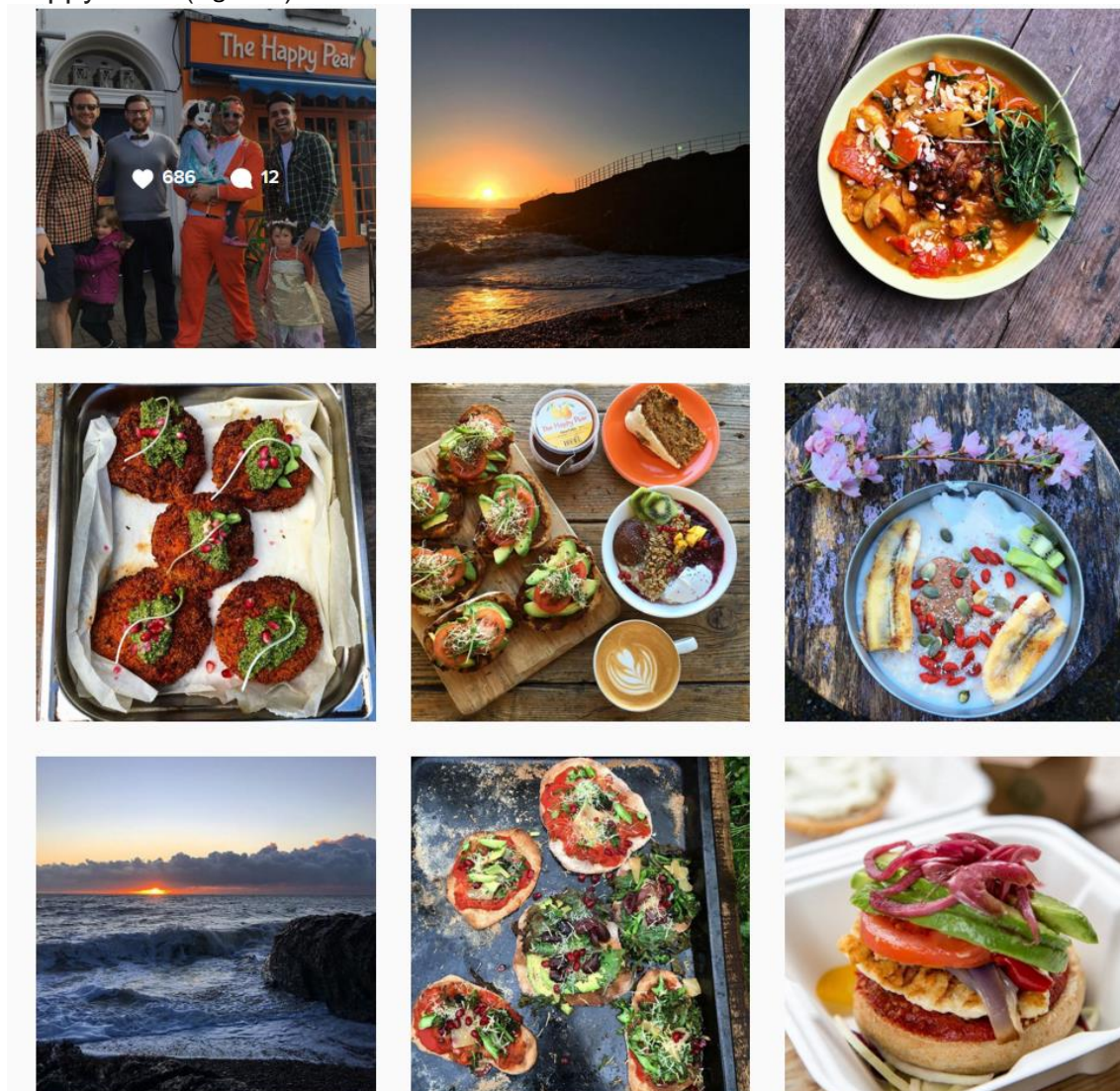


FIGURE 3 - THE HAPPY PEAR INSTAGRAM HOMEPAGE

From observing comments from this visually rich post, people like to tag their friends in these posts. For example, from looking at some chocolate bars³ @rosiekingston, tagged @avcunn, and said:

*“I want **to try and make these!!** “*

Similarly, the excitement observed from jennystack91 who wants to create a new weekly “ritual” of “Sunday baking session” with her friend:

jennystack91 @sarahgleeson1 we can make these next week! 😊 Sunday baking sessions are a new thing. ❤️

³ <https://www.instagram.com/p/BDp8at4huQ5/>

Or put simply, a comment from @darrenbates claims his excitement:

“YES, YES, YES!”

These comments clearly show how the visual appeal of these photo and videos attract the attention of followers. It sparks their excitement and willingness to try new food and new experiences with their friends they mentioned in the comments. This is not just confined in the scope of social media but also on the food blog itself. We noted this is mostly confined to the more traditional blogger. One example is what *Kristin* wrote as a comment to a BiblioCook post:

This sounds – and looks – so delicious, can’t wait to give it a go.

Love your suggestion of having it with chutney or a pickle.

The consistency of this theme emerged also in our interviews. The second follower we interviewed stated:

*If the food **looks tasty**... would be straight away the main thing [that attracts my attention] and then stuff that doesn’t look too hard to make and doesn’t look too expensive and not too hard to get*

Follower 2 (female, 21, student)

And another quote from the third participant distinctly showed how the visual appeal encourages their willingness to try new experiences:

Vivid, vivid posts...*Mainly pictures of food. Or I love like pictures of them prepping the food.*

*...I would be more willing to try something new if I had seen a **picture** of someone doing something successfully then I would be tempted to make it too cause I can see that it worked... if you get me...*

Follower 3 (female, 24, student)

Hedonistic Consumption

Holbrook and Hirschmann (1982) believe that experiences are subjective, emotional states laden with symbolic meaning. Consumption is hedonic and not utilitarian - particularly in leisure situations, in which the phenomenon of food blogging lies. The utilitarian viewpoint values a product or service on its use value, whereas this standpoint considers the linking value (Cova & Cova, 2002). Hedonic consumption is defined by Holbrook and Hirschmann (1982) as those facets of consumer behaviour relating to the affective aspects of the product usage experience [...] in multiple sensory modalities including tastes, sounds, scents, tactile impressions and visual images

The consumer is looking less for the maximisation of benefits as traditional marketing presumes; they are seeking experiential gratification within a social context (Carù & Cova 2007). The overall experience is what the consumer gets in return for their money and the “festive” or hedonic value is reflected in the potential entertainment and emotional aspects obtained (Babin et al.1994). In particular, they highlight the multisensory and fantasy aspects, which relate well to the consumption of a dining experience.(Watson 2013)

This kind of multisensory experiences are spread an usual in the food blogging tribe, for example⁴:

We also spent two incredible days in Kevin Thornton’s kitchen, recording the sounds of him cooking: cream boiling, knives sharpening, the sizzle of frying tuna, the crunch of a lobster shell being penetrated by a knife. It was like having a personal cooking class from the best chef in the country, with the added benefit of getting to eat the finished product. Noisettes of venison, flambéed with Madeira? Yes please!

The recordings gathered together, my producer got to work and I have to credit him with having the vision to produce such an amazing finished piece. He wove the interviews with the people featured, evocative introductions that I wrote and recorded, chats between myself and Kevin and the sound of Kevin’s kitchen with beautiful original music into a dream-like, seamless whole. I loved working on this series, getting to talk to many amazing people and – always important – getting to eat the very best food.

This is also acknowledged by the most skilled and involved member of the tribe, as *Wayne & Janice from Irish Beer Snob* put it:

*We quickly expanded our blog into other aspects such as food, and now the blog holds more of a lifestyle focus, we look to capture and give our readers a good insight into our **hedonic experiences of food and drink along with the atmosphere and culture these experiences carry.***

⁴ <http://bibliocook.com/2010/04/spices-from-up/>

Fantasy aspects are also evident and widespread. Let's consider some examples from a few comments left on a post of a porridge dish on The Happy Pear Instagram⁵:

catherineeager What time do you serve this until @thehappypear ? Divine.

qwerkymiss Breakfast of dreams ❤️

The peculiar choice of words, “divine” or “dreams”, strongly relate to the imaginary and oniric interests. Another second meaning overlaid on food is emotional elements, we see this evident in a comment to this posted image from The Body Coach⁶:



holly_doherty Yum!! @sheldeanperrett plate of love ❤️

⁵<https://www.instagram.com/p/BDnLinjhuXn/>

⁶ <https://www.instagram.com/p/BDpjXcBOcyn/>

Skilled Consumption

Foodies focus on the aesthetic and the sensual appreciation of food as a form of claim to cultural distinction (Watson et al., 2008; De Solier, 2006). Thus, Watson et al.'s (2008) analysis of one food blog sees it as part of the blogger's search for personal significance and identity through "skilled consumption" experiences, shared with a "community of consumption", other bloggers. They are also exhibiting their skilled consumption. The time and effort expended allow them to move up their **Serious Leisure career ladder** in the eyes of their **community of consumption**. The main examples of this behaviour are the recipe instructions that food bloggers publish. However, there are other forms of skilled consumption in the sharing of culture capital, this includes food-related knowledge about restaurants, food fairs, nutritional information, etc. They are appealing to a more generalness, but always keep it relevant to the tribe, such as showcasing their photography and blog writing tips.

In our research we encountered many examples that fell into this particular form of consumption. For example, we can see how *Caroline Hennessy* climbed to her leadership role by diffusing her knowledge about food and recipes from a post in her blog:

*Click on the link below to see **the notes that I wrote up for my sourdough talk**. These are adapted from the recipe that I started working with **more than three years ago** in Ballymaloe. Have you ever tried making sourdough yourself? **If you do decide to try this out – it truly is worth it! – please do let me know how you get on.***

To which one of her follower replied:

*I love sourdough bread and wish it was as widely available as it is back home in the US. I've always been intimidated by all the long-winded recipes for starters, **but you've inspired me to finally give it a go!***

Another example is the showcasing of knowledge and specific jargon by *Wayne of Irish beer snob*:

*Our third course was a baked sweet potato and cumin soup with sweet potato crisp and home-made bread. Young Dave Guilfoyle of Bo Bristle brought along a **specially brewed beer for the evening**. A simply **stunning Strong Amber** at 7.8%. I thought this was the perfect match. There was a **slight kick to the soup that was complemented by the sweet caramel goodness of the beer.***

Food as a Social Connector

Food blogging can be seen as the "grandmother's recipe book 2.0". With this comparison, the values brought from publishing a recipe in a culinary blog post is not the simple physical sequence instruction that leads from raw ingredients to a finished dish, but as a traditional recipe handed down. It is the culture, the interests and passions of the blogger.

In their examination of the symbolic meaning of food Kniazeva and Venkatesh (2007) identify one of the dimensions of the multifaceted nature of food in its function as a social connector.

This relates very strongly to the ritual shared in the tribe that help to form and reinforce the linking value. The main way through which food can function as a social connector is by sharing it. For Belk sharing food is very characteristic of ritual consumption behaviour, and in that function food performs as a symbolic way of sharing group identity and bonding through food (Belk, 1988). As a ritual artifact, food and its consumption are included not only in holiday celebrations, but also in such everyday occasions as the coffee break, the dinner, the business lunch, and the courtship ritual (Kniazeva and Venkatesh, 2007). Due to the convergent nature of food blogging this ritual of sharing happens both in the virtual and in the physical world.

In the virtuality of blogs and social media sharing is aided by the platform, through reblogging, tagging and mention in comments. Follower share the content with friends and loved ones as explained by some of our interviews:

*Like I would **often tag my boyfriend under the posts** but that would be about it.*

Follower 4 (female, 24)

*...I would **tag or comment my friends name** under a blog post if I found it interesting or whatever... **So I would share it.***

Follower 1 (female, 20)

We believe that this kind of behaviour, as we saw in previous example, this practices are not just used for letting other know about interesting content, but also share the over imposed meaning that people give to food. Another reason in sharing experiences around food and blogging is to create bonding and a sense of community, as well explained by *Caroline Hennesey*:

*I gradually got to know other NZ food bloggers - at the time Ernie Whalley (forkncork.com) was the only other Irish person writing online about food - and people like Barbara (from Winos and Foodies) and Bron Marshall **became online friends and they gave me a sense of connection and a sense of place in my new home.** I also got the feeling – very exciting for a long-time food lover – that I'd **just joined in this world wide conversation about food.***

In its Physical form the rituals of food blogging can be used for maintaining or (re)-creating the social link (Maffesoli, 1996a). Bloggers do this by sharing their passion and previous experiences of food to their readers:

*...This was the **kingdom ruled by Nana** [...] It was where I learned how to transform simple raw ingredients - field mushrooms, crab apples, fruit from the orchard - **into something that everyone would appreciate.***

*At home, **Saturday mornings were for baking.** [...] As a result, I always had an interest in food and was determined to be a chef, until – aged 16 – I worked in a hotel kitchen and had that knocked out of me.*

Caroline Hennesey (BiblioCook)

And Followers also try to capture and make this experiences available to their cohort:

*Yea, **whenever I make something I always invite my friends over and share it with them.** And they might end up making it themselves then. **Me and my boyfriend always cook for each other and stuff** and sometimes there would be recipes I find on blogs. I always have baked goods that I share with my family.*

Follower 2 (female, 21, student)

Blogger and follower experiences collide whenever the tribe gathers in ad-hoc events where they can share together and directly food, passion and emotion:

*So Friday night **we joined Simon Says and the Athlone beer club** for one of their monthly meetings. While it was **my first time to meet up,** Wayne had the pleasure of attending before. **Simon organized a great event for the night,** [...] the guys put together a wonderful menu with some great beers.*

This was a fantastically well organised event** [...] Well done to Simon and all the staff at The Ritz. **We'll definitely see you again!

Janice Dunne (Irish beer snob)

Experiential marketing campaign proposal

- Food blogging Festival - #FoodieFest16
- Invite 20 influential food bloggers - each have their own pop up stand
- The festival will occur four times a year on a seasonal basis - Autumn, Winter, Spring, Summer
- Use Social Media and Food Bloggers to market the event - the usage of the #hashtag will create awareness
- Event will take place in one of the four provinces each season - ie *#MunsterFoodieFest16*

In order to further enhance the bond between the tribe and Food Bloggers, we aim to create a fun and memorable experience for them in which they can all be involved together. Based on the research and information we have gained throughout this mini-ethnography project, we are proposing an exclusive experiential marketing campaign for the food blogging tribe. The launch of #FoodieFest16. The use of the #hashtag here implements we will use social media to promote this new and exciting food blogger festival. It will happen seasonally (four times a year) and the event will take place in one of the four provinces of Ireland each season. We hope this will expand the tribes network in terms of active participants throughout the whole country, this campaign will look to create more awareness and encourage people from the four corners of Ireland to attend and indulge themselves within the tribe. There will be an inherent theme to the festival in relation to the season we are in. For instance, during the summer we will have the #MunsterFoodieFest16, the event will happen in Dingle and Seafood will be the primary theme of the festival. Fresh fish from the Wild Atlantic Way.

The food bloggers will all have their own pop-up stands where they will showcase their most impressive recipes. This event will also appeal to local producers as locally grown ingredients will be used to promote local suppliers in the area also. We want to further engage the members of the tribe with the food blogger while at the same time immersing the tribe into the delicacies of the area. Cooking demonstrations, food exhibitions, photography classes and social media workshops will all be held by the food bloggers themselves. This allows the food bloggers to showcase their cooking skills, social media knowledge, photography skills and expertise to the tribe followers.. This will enhance further engagement, communication and interaction among the tribe. It will also attract new members to the tribe by introducing this new and exciting social scene of the *#FoodieFest*. Instead of it being showcased in a virtual space (social media), we want to add more meaning to it and transfer food bloggers from online to offline. It enables members of the tribe to interact face to face with the bloggers, this will allow all tribal followers to experience first-hand the beautiful recipes in which the bloggers exhibit on their social media platforms as well as their general knowledge of food and style of cooking in a physical space. We hope to get new tribal members on board by creating a fun and memorable experiential campaign that will involve everyone and provide more scope for the food blogging tribe to grow.

Conclusion and Marketing Implications

While carrying out our ethnography research on Food Bloggers, we came across some very interesting findings. The main finding for us is the excitement and experiencing appeal that members of the tribe participate in. The vivid food photography along with interesting recipes are really enjoyed by members of the tribe and enhance interaction with the food blogger as well as their peers.

Another interesting finding was the idea of hedonic consumption. The fact that followers want to enjoy the fun part of life by interacting with food bloggers. There is barely no utilitarian value to these food blogs. It's all fun, flashy, informative, vivid content with a personable touch which comes from both the blogger and the followers. It is a perfect example of hedonic consumption which is why we propose the experiential marketing campaign of the *#FoodieFest* which will further enhance the hedonic side of food bloggers.

Skilled consumption was identified as Foodies focus on the aesthetic and sensual elements of food through their visual content. This is evident through the various examples we gave above.

We found that food is a social connector to people and this has been enhanced even more since social media has become more widespread. Food bloggers are sharing their own recipe cook books creating more symbolism and sharing group identity online.

There were many different themes identified from our ethnography project. We discussed the relevant topics on the basis of the conceptual framework - the tribal clover (Cova & Cova, 2001) which aided us hugely in our research. Ultimately, we found that food blogging can really be seen as a tribe. Although a tribe with no real heritage or tradition to date, we hope to create tradition with our experiential marketing campaign to further engage the tribe where they can collectively join into ritual behaviour together and create something memorable, exciting and fun which will further enhance positive emotions and associations with food blogging.

Although in order to gather a further investigation and research into the food blogging tribe, we feel that a larger study needs to be carried out in the future.

In terms of marketing implications for our experiential campaign in which we hope to bring food bloggers from all around the country together in a physical environment but also heavily document and follow these campaigns online we have highlighted the following areas in which we can make the most of our campaign and achieve our aim of surrounding ourselves within the food blogging tribe:

1. Understanding Tribal Members & Their Consumer Preferences

The effects of the economic downturn in relation to consumer behaviour are still evident today, underlying attitudes and values have changed drastically, with people looking for value now more than ever as well as the very predominant marketing trend of consumers looking to lead a healthier lifestyle. The market place is becoming increasingly more competitive due to these factors, with the power now being with the consumer. It is critical to look at the members of the tribe and understand what their preferences are and look to satisfy them.

2. Expanding the Tribal Network.

In these times, growth may be easier to come about through geographical expansion as opposed to focusing all efforts of tribal formulation online. Through our experiential marketing campaign we will look to target smaller towns and villages and bloggers around these locations. There is only so much appeal you can bring when in a virtual space and that is why we feel it is important to come in contact with the food blogging tribe in a physical sense rather than just digitally.

3. Help the Tribe – Teach, Train, Comfort and Inspire.

We have found from our analysis that one of the focal points of the blogging community is the educating and informative nature of its members. It is a platform for people who love to cook, eat and drink to share and exchange their different experiences of food with people who have similar interests.

An important implication of our campaign is for the tribal followers to improve their skills and knowledge of food as well as their skills in social media and photography in order to be more actively involved in the tribe. We will put in place relevant pop up kitchens, social media workshops and quick photography demonstrations in our event to ensure the tribal followers have a platform to enhance to the next level in the tribe and/or just for their own benefit and personal experience.

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Appendices - Interviews

Caroline Hennessy (Bibliocook) -

Ø When did you start your blog? And why did you decide to start one?

I started Bibliocook: All About Food in February 2005 while I lived in New Zealand. Excited by the amazing food on offer in NZ and itching to write about it, I started blogging to share food-related experiences and document my own food experiments for friends and family in Ireland. I never really expected it to have such a wide readership!

I gradually got to know other NZ Food Bloggers - at the time Ernie Whalley (forkncork.com) was the only other Irish person writing online about food - and people like Barbara from [and Bron Marshall](#) became online friends and they gave me a sense of connection and a sense of place in my new home. I also got the feeling – very exciting for a long-time food lover – that I'd just joined in this world wide conversation about food.

While in NZ, I did some writing about food for Food & Wine Magazine in Ireland and The Christchurch Press in NZ. I realised that this was an area that made much more sense for me than my then job in RTE, which involved writing for their entertainment website (the precursor to <http://www.rte.ie/ten/>).

Ø Have you always had a strong passion for food?

Yes. A lot of my childhood was spent at my grandparents' busy mixed farm near Kildorrery where everyone was expected to do their share: collecting eggs, shutting up the hens, feeding turkeys and calves, stooking bales of straw and hay, collecting apples, picking blackcurrants, getting in the way of my uncle as he tried to milk the cows. The kitchen, Aga range always lit, was the centre of the household. This was the kingdom ruled by Nana, who commanded my mother and aunts as they turned out sponge cakes and buns by the dozen, potted up cauldrons of jam and did all the Christmas baking with numerous kids underfoot. It was where I learned how to transform simple raw ingredients - field mushrooms, crab apples, fruit from the orchard - into something that everyone would appreciate.

At home, Saturday mornings were for baking. I remember listening to Scrap Saturday on the radio as my mother, the queen of scone-making, got out the mixing bowls to make her own brown bread, maderia cake and - if we were very good! - fudge. As a result, I always had an interest in food and was determined to be a chef, until – aged 16 – I worked in a hotel kitchen and had that knocked out of me.

Ø Did you start the blog with the aim of it to be a full time career or is it just a leisure activity for you?

I started Bibliocook to showcase my food writing, which was an area that I wanted to move into on a full time basis. That happened in 2007.

From the blog I have have gotten freelance work, amazing opportunities, a new circle of friends and the confidence to give up my permanent/pensionable job and move to a country cottage where I keep hens, the occasional turkey and two little girls.

Ø **Is your blog purely food related or do you touch on other life related things also?**

It's all about food – but, then again, life is all about food!

Ø **Could you please explain the relationship you have with your followers? Is that relationship it Strong/weak? Personal/impersonal?**

I think it is a personal relationship with the followers, that stems from a lot of interaction on a weekly basis with them.

Ø **Do you find your followers to be loyal to your blog?**

There have been a lot of changes in blogging due to social media, with – in some cases - people focusing on the social side and letting blogging fall by the wayside. This is a pity as you're putting all your efforts into something that a) doesn't belong to you and b) is ephemeral and just disappears down off the page ie no one looks back to see what I said on Twitter back in 2010 whereas people can still look at 11 years of archive material on Bibliocook).

If I like/are loyal to someone's Instagram feed or their Twitter comments, I'm more likely to go to see what they're blogging about.

Ø **What do you think the linking values for the Irish Food Blogging community are and why?**

That was an easy question back in 2010 when Kristin Jensen (Edible Ireland) and I set up the Irish Food Bloggers Association! There were just about 30 Food Blogs in Ireland, most interested in writing and communicating with both each other and the general public about Irish food and championing small producers around the country. Now the blogroll has over 450 blogs on it and it would be impossible to say what links them, other than an interest in food.

Ø **What social media platforms do you use to engage with your followers?**

Which one do you find the best way of engaging with your followers?

Instagram, FB, Twitter with occasional forays into Snapchat, Vine, Periscope.

FB seems to drive more people to the blog.

Ø **Where do you see your blog/self brand to be in 5 years time?**

An acknowledged authority on Irish beer and cider with several more books under my belt!

Wayne & Janice (Irish Beer Snob) -

Ø **When did you start your blog? And why did you decide to start one?**

We started the IrishBeerSnob.com blog in September 2013 as a way of chronicling all the different beers we were beginning to try. We had taken a huge interest in craft beers before this point and before its popularity had reached Ireland. We quickly expanded our blog into other aspects such as food, and now the blog holds more of a lifestyle focus, we look to capture and give our readers a good insight into our hedonic experiences of food and drink along with the atmosphere and culture these experiences carry.

Ø Have you always had a strong passion for food?

Both Janice & I have a strong passion for food. We are very lucky to live not far from a regular farmers market, and have always been keen to try use local produce in the food we cook at home. I've always enjoyed cooking, and Janice has always enjoyed baking and now we enjoy trying to introduce beer into our cooking too.

Ø Did you start the blog with the aim of it to be a full time career or is it just a leisure activity for you?

Janice and I maintain full time careers, in industries entirely unrelated to our blog. Given how much we do with it, it's like a second full time job on top. It definitely started out as a leisure activity but it is certainly becoming more than that as we are pleased that it's like that.

Ø Is your blog purely food related or do you touch on other life related things also?

The primary focus of our blog was always to highlight great craft beer, and cider products in Ireland. There are so many excellent small local producers of craft beer around the country in particular since the beginning of this decade. Craft beer consumption in Ireland can still be regarded as small but more and more people have begun to consume and enjoy craft beer here. So our main focus is to promote and inform and encourage our network of followers about these different businesses and products who deserved to be recognised and helped in any way they can. But we have expanded the blog to include organising events, in the past year we have also started to review a lot of new venues and include cooking recipes which contain beer or work well with a certain type of craft beer too. The Food blogging community in Ireland has become quite broad with many different spectrums; it is often difficult to reach all aspects of it. But we are enjoying covering as much areas of the community that interest us as we can.

Ø Could you please explain the relationship you have with your followers?

Is that relationship it Strong/weak? Personal/impersonal?

I'd like to think we both have a strong, personal relationship with the majority of our followers, the craft beer community is growing but still remains relatively small in Ireland as opposed to other countries so everyone kind of knows everyone and we share a level of social connectedness. It's great to be able to contact a follower to suss out an area before we take a trip there and get their opinions. It works both ways in terms of being informed on a particular aspect of what we blog about, that interaction with our followers is one of the reasons we keep blogging and both Janice and myself have made many friends over the years because of it.

Ø Do you find your followers to be loyal to your blog?

If they are like us, I'm sure they're reading multiple blogs regarding similar areas of interest. We have built up a loyal listenership to our podcast, and it's fun to interact with our listeners when the episodes air and get their opinions on a particular topic.

Ø What do you think the linking values for the Irish Food Blogging community are and why?

I think there are a growing number of people out there who realise; we should be supporting locally produced goods, whether that is food, beer, cider, or whatever. We seem to be returning to a more community feel like days gone by.

"I love telling people about something new I've discovered, I think that is the same for all bloggers, informing others for their benefit. These local producers don't necessarily have the resources to run national ad campaigns, and it's great to promote great products"

Ø What social media platforms do you use to engage with your followers?

Which one do you find the best way of engaging with your followers?

We both use twitter quite a lot for engaging with followers. Of course we have a facebook page and our personal email but Twitter engagement is instant.

Ø Where do you see your blog/self brand to be in 5 years time?

I'd like to think in 5 years time we will be one of the most revered blogs/brand in the Irish Blogging community. I think we have come a long way since 2013, and we are always open to listening to feedback, good bad or indifferent. Personally I've had the honour of hosting events for O'Haras, and have been on panels at Kilkenomics. Craft Beer might be small at the moment, but it's growing all the time and it's great to be involved at this stage.

Interview 1**Female(20)****Q: Which Food Bloggers do you follow? And why do you follow these Food Bloggers?**

A: I follow Roz Purcell's blog because... I suppose she's young and she's a girl and she has cool recipes... I also follow the Body Coach... I follow him because he is very healthy and the recipes are really easy and a lot of the ingredients you would kind of have at home or have easy access to them.

Q: Have you ever interacted directly with any of these bloggers online? Through Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, etc?

A: I have never directly interacted with any of the Food Bloggers but I would tag or comment my friends name under a blog post if I found it interesting or whatever... So I would share it

Q: Do you find that any of the bloggers interact with their followers online? Do they have conversations with their followers online?

A: Well, the BodyCoach definitely interacts with his audience more. If anyone comments a question he will answer it or if people just have something nice to say he will recognize their comment. Roz Purcell just kind've shares them on facebook, she doesn't really interact with the audience but she does more on Twitter I think

Q: How much trust do you have in thee Food Bloggers? How genuine do you think they are?

A: I would really trust what the BodyCoach says 'cause he is a personal trainer and he's a nutritionist so like I feel food would be his area of expertise... Whereas Roz has kind've just like picked it up... so...like some of the stuff she does post I would believe but then other things I wouldn't be so sure about...

Q: Have you learned anything new since following these Food Blogs? Have you gained extra knowledge?

A: I've learned that it's not that hard to be healthy... And that there's always ways around like trying to keep a clean diet or even if you want to eat like chocolate and stuff that you know there is ways to do it in a healthy way. One thing I will say about the BodyCoach is that when he does have a cheat day or whatever he completely shows his followers exactly what he has... He shows that it's ok to have those cheat days... So he's very honest and stuff

Q: Have they ever convinced you to try something new or different?

A: If you mean recipes.... Ive tried both of their recipes... And I have also recently purchased both their books so it's kind've like easier 'cause then all of their recipes are in the one place but still they're always updating their blogs online so there's newer recipes on that... I have also found easier and quicker ways to cook food from their blogs and the Body Coach slogan is lean in fifteen so it doesn't take any longer to cook the food in fifteen minutes which is very handy when you're on the go!

Q: What is your favourite way of communicating with Food Bloggers? Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat, etc?

A: Funnily enough, I find SnapChat the best social media to get information from the bloggers. If I was interested in what they're saying they always say link is on my Facebook, Twitter, etc.. So then I can opt to go onto that link if I want to. I think snapchat is a very good idea... you don't get those ads etc... snapchat is like you choose what you want to see and its quick and efficient and there's no ads.

Interview 2 (Female, 21, student)

R: Which (food) blogger do you like? Why? Which you dislike/hate? Why?

A: I follow Roz Purcell, The Happy Pear, Rosanna Davison (kind've)... Can't think of anyone else. I follow them 'cause they post healthy recipes and stuff and I like the content they post. I also follow a thing called Blogilates... And it's not just to do with food but also exercises too and she also posts recipes so I follow that as well

R: What in a post manage to capture your attention?

A: If the food looks tasty... would be straight away the main thing and then stuff that doesn't look too hard to make and doesn't look too expensive and not too hard to get

R: Have you directly interacted with a blogger (or some of it's follower) ?

A: No I've never directly interacted with one... Sometimes I read the comments and stuff from other viewers but I might tag a friend under a blog post... That's about it really

R: Have you ever tried a recipe that you saw on a blog? (With who did you share it? / in which occasion?)

A: Yes, I've tried a good few recipes... But they wouldn't always be from the people I follow on Food Blogs... Sometimes I just like google the recipe and would come across ones like

the Little Green Spoon and some other random blogs that come up when you search the recipe

R: Have you ever shared some recipe/food/dish that you made? (With who did you share it? / in which occasion?)

A: Yea, whenever I make something I always invite my friends over and share it with them. And they might end up making it themselves then. Me and my boyfriend always cook for each other and stuff and sometimes there would be recipes I find on blogs. I always have baked goods that I share with my family.

R: Have you learned something new following a Food Blog? Have you used that knowledge?

A: I don't know if I have learned anything new... I guess I have... Oh what sweetners are good for you... Which I have put into every day life!

R: Did blogger convinced to try something different/new? What?

A: Yea definitely... Desert wise and healthier treats wise... Made me try stuff I probably wouldn't have otherwise... This truffle thing before...

Interview 3 (Female, 24, student)

Q: Which Food Bloggers do you follow and why?

A: I follow the Happy Pear 'cause their food looks really good. Eh, I follow... There's a few fitnessy people that I follow... A lot of them combine fitness and food together so it's all the one. The Body Coach, Strong is the new Skinny93... Mainly Instagram people

Q: What kind of posts would capture your attention?

A: Vivid, vivid posts... Mainly pictures of food. Or I love like pictures of them prepping the food.

Q: Have you ever directly engaged with any Food Bloggers online?

A: NO...

Q: Do you read other comments/ discussions on different posts from bloggers?

A: Ehm.. Depending what it is... If it interests me then yes... Or if it was a topic I was interested in... So like something like that interests me

Q: Have you ever read a recipe that you saw on a blog that you shared with anyone?

A: No but I have tried recipes that are on bloggers cookbooks that they have published... Does that count? So like the BodyCoach, he has a cook book and so do the Hemsely sisters but I wouldn't particularly...like I get inspiration from the food online... Like I would often tag my boyfriend under the posts but that would be about it

Q: Have you learned anything new from following a Food Blogger? Do you use any of this knowledge in every day life?

A: I couldn't say anything in particular, but like you know, you pick up stuff like... when I was looking up how to make almond milk there for a while... well it was an interest...I never actually did it... But I was able to look it up on Instagram and get the info I needed but again I didn't do it. Or you might see new food trends and you might use it in the end like quinoa and stuff but its not a direct result from the blogger... I think anyway

Q: Has a Food Blogger ever inspired you to try something new?

A: in terms of food, no. I don't think so. I would be more willing to try something new if I had seen a picture of someone doing something successfully then I would be tempted to make it too cause I can see that it worked... if you get me... well actually cauliflower rice was something that I tried

Q: In general how do you feel about Food Bloggers?

A: I quite like Food Bloggers... I think their there for inspiration mostly... I know the recipes online are more accessible but I tend to cook from an actual book... I know the ideas are online but I might adapt my recipe to that idea if you get me

Q: how genuine do you think Food Bloggers are?

A: I place a lot of trust in them. I think they're all genuine... I think they eat what they post to eat... Food bloggers started off as nothing like... They have to build a good reputation so that's why I would trust them. They are clearly passionate about what they do!