

“Journeys towards a green lifestyle”: Metaphors in green living blogs

Cahiers de praxématique

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Abstract

Green living blogs authored by ordinary individuals play an important role in “translating” the complex issue of sustainability into everyday actions. Although bloggers often use metaphors to achieve this and metaphors are recognized as key tools for conceptualizing complex and abstract issues through simpler and more concrete ones, the use of metaphors on green living blogs has been under-studied. This paper analysed 222 posts from ten leading green living blogs and found that they mostly used Journey metaphors to discuss different aspects of green living. Bloggers regularly presented green living as a “journey” and themselves as “travelers” who are “still on the road” and they emphasized the positive aspects of “journeying” and of not having reached their “destination” yet. It is argued that by highlighting these positive aspects of journeys, bloggers inspire and empower readers to adopt green lifestyles.

Keywords: blogs, green living, metaphors, sustainability

« Voyages vers un mode de vie écologique »: des métaphores dans les blogs sur le mode de vie vert

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Résumé

Les blogs sur le mode de vie écologique animés par des personnes ordinaires jouent un rôle important dans la traduction de la question complexe de la durabilité en actions quotidiennes. Bien que les blogueurs utilisent souvent des métaphores pour y parvenir, bien que les métaphores soient reconnues comme des outils permettant de conceptualiser des problèmes complexes et abstraits en problèmes plus simples et plus concrets, leur utilisation dans des blogs écologiques n’a pas été suffisamment étudiée. Le présent article analyse 222 publications tirées de dix blogs sur le mode de vie écologique. Il en ressort que ces

publications ont régulièrement recours à la métaphore du voyage lorsqu'elles traitent de différents aspects du mode de vie écologique. Les blogueurs le présentent régulièrement comme un « voyage », eux-mêmes étant des « voyageurs » « encore en route ». Ils mettent insistent sur le côté positif du fait d'être « embarqué dans un voyage » et de n'avoir pas encore atteint leur « destination ». En soulignant ces aspects positifs du voyage, les blogueurs inspirent et incitent leurs lecteurs à adopter des modes de vie écologiques.

Mots clés : blogs, durabilité, métaphores, mode de vie écologique

Introduction

Recent global developments from Norway's fossil-fuel divestment move which will see its sovereign wealth fund sell stocks in certain oil and gas investments (Vaughan, 2019) to supermarkets in Thailand replacing single-use plastic packaging with banana leaves (Nace, 2019) are among the latest signs of a shift in environmental discourse and action - from a preoccupation with the causes and consequences of climate change to a focus on solutions (Tvinnereim *et al.*, 2017). This shift is accompanied with a growing understanding that the future sustainability of our planet will require both societal-level approaches such as the above and personal-level actions (see Langaas *et al.* in this issue), as green living individuals can generate a sense of agency that transfers to collective action in the public sphere (DeLaure, 2011; Haider, 2016). Many "ordinary" individuals (non-celebrities, non-experts) have publicly committed themselves to behave in environmentally-friendly ways¹ and blogs have emerged as a key site for documenting their sustainable living efforts (DeLaure, 2011; Marres, 2009).

Ordinary bloggers have been credited for "inspir[ing], and empower[ing]" readers with their "journey[s] towards a green lifestyle" (Goldman, 2017). To generate the level of public engagement with sustainability that is required for policy action, sustainability needs to be discussed in ways that increase its relevance to individuals' everyday lives (Nisbet, 2009). Defined as the ability of present generations to meet their needs without compromising future generations' ability to do so, sustainability is both a vague and complex concept (see Dahl & Fløttum in this issue). Personal green living blogs make an overall important contribution by "translating" sustainability to everyday practices from beauty routines to travel (DeLaure, 2011; Haider, 2013) and they often employ metaphors to achieve this. For example, when

¹ For example, the American Colin Beavan became famous as the "no impact man" and there is a book and a movie bearing the same name.

talking about “journey[s]² towards a green lifestyle”, the adoption of environmentally-friendly practices is compared to a physical journey, invoking familiar experiences, emotions and knowledge about journeying that make sustainable living more concrete and simpler (e.g. the feelings associated with encountering and overcoming obstacles along the way or that there may be different ways to get to a destination).

Metaphors, as the above example has shown, involve talking and potentially thinking about one thing (a target domain) in terms of another (a source domain) (Ortony, 1993). They work by highlighting conceptual similarities between two distinct domains (Lakoff & Turner, 1989) and are widespread in text and talk (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). When using metaphors, we transfer knowledge from a relatively familiar, simpler, more concrete domain (e.g. physical journeying) to a less familiar, more complex and elusive domain (e.g. sustainability) (Lakoff & Turner, 1989). This important role of metaphors to “translate” new, complex, vague issues into more familiar, simpler, more concrete ones has been already recognised in the context of sustainable living: (a) there is a longstanding theoretical and experimental scholarship seeking to uncover “metaphors [to] survive by” (e.g. Karlsson, 2015; Larson, 2011; Meijers *et al.*, 2018; Norgaard, 1995); and (b) researchers have started analysing metaphor use within business and educational sustainability discourses and within the discourse of pro-environmental citizens, identifying Journey³ and Limit metaphors as particularly common (Carew & Mitchell, 2006; Milne *et al.*, 2006; Uren *et al.*, 2019).

This paper advances research on metaphors and sustainability by exploring the understudied area of how sustainable living⁴ is metaphorically presented on top personal green living blogs authored by ordinary individuals. To answer this question, the following section defines personal green living blogs, reviews research about personal green living blogs, elaborates the concept of metaphors and summarises the literature on green living metaphors across different genres. Next, the paper presents the data and methodology followed by the findings and their discussion. The paper concludes that by emphasising the positive aspects of journeying, top green living bloggers work to inspire and empower readers to live sustainably and thus, play an important role in encouraging environmentally-friendly practices.

1 Literature review

² Underlining signals metaphorical expressions within quotes.

³ Initial capitals label metaphors.

⁴ Green, sustainable and environmentally-friendly living are used synonymously (see also Haider, 2013).

1.1 Personal green living blogs

Personal green living blogs are written by “ordinary” individuals (non-celebrities, non-experts), focus on everyday life, are personal in nature in that they share the author’s private experiences, thoughts and reflections with a wider audience (Herring *et al.*, 2004). They are typically single-authored or authored by several individuals who “contribute to the same narrative (...) using the same voice” and thus can be said to “co-construct the personal” (Arsel & Zhao, 2013: 55). This makes them different from: “green blogs” authored by celebrities (e.g. Doyle, 2016) or linked to news organisations, environmental groups or companies (e.g. Bevitori, 2011; Merry, 2010; Swenson & Olsen, 2017); “eco-blogs” defined as blogs that document “acts of environmental injustice” (Tinnell, 2011: 229); and “climate change blogs” which deal with different aspects of climate change from its causes and consequences to the science behind the very existence of anthropogenic climate change (e.g. Elgesem *et al.*, 2015; Flottum *et al.*, 2014; Sharman, 2014). While the statistics about blog readership are somewhat inconclusive, an often-cited figure is that 77% of all internet users worldwide read blogs of one type or another (Nick, 2019), making blogs a potentially important source of knowledge and information about sustainability.

1.2 Research about personal green living blogs

Studies of Swedish and American bloggers (DeLaure, 2011; Haider, 2013; Joosse & Brydges, 2018) have concluded that the content of personal green living blogs is divided between reviewing products and services and outlining attempts to adopt environmentally-friendly lifestyles. Personal green living blogs have also been described as having “a pleasure focus” and “an inward orientation”, as they focused on the implications of sustainable living for individual, not environmental or societal wellbeing (DeLaure, 2011; Haider, 2013; Joosse & Brydges, 2018). Such blogs have been criticized for presenting individuals as the prime location for change and thus, leaving the current economic and political systems unquestioned. While existing studies have acknowledged the focus on individual actions as largely to be expected (because personal green living blogs by definition focus on the personal), they have also warned that, as a result of this focus, “little green steps” (Joosse & Brydges, 2018: 693) might become the widely accepted answer to a problem that requires significant changes to wider economic and political structures.

1.3 Metaphors

To the author's best knowledge, existing studies have not explored the role of metaphors in how sustainability is "translated" into mundane activities. Metaphors are key to "translation", as they involve talking and potentially thinking about one thing in terms of another (Semino, 2008). They are widespread in text and talk and particularly in discussions of complex and vague issues (e.g. Lakoff & Johnson, 1980; Lakoff & Turner, 1989). This makes it unsurprising that the use of metaphors has been investigated in various examples of environmental discourse. These include studies of how metaphors have been employed to conceptualise nature and the environment (e.g. Coffey, 2016), to discuss the causes, consequences and urgency of climate change and to make sense of climate science in different types of text and talk - in print and online media outlets (for an overview see Atanasova & Koteyko, 2017), in policy documents (e.g. Shaw & Nerlich, 2015), in corporate reports (e.g. Kapranov, 2017), in research articles and educational texts (e.g. Deignan *et al.*, 2019) and by young people (e.g. Deignan *et al.*, 2019; Niebert & Gropengiesser, 2014).

In the context of the solutions-oriented goal of sustainability, the Limits metaphor expressed through metaphorically used words like "limits", "bounds" and "capacity" has been identified in educational discourse whereby academics have used it to explain sustainability to students (Carew & Mitchell, 2006). Within this metaphor, the environment was understood as having a bounded capacity for regeneration beyond which unfortunate consequences will occur and therefore, sustainability requires staying within these boundaries. The Limits metaphor has been reported missing from sustainability-related business discourse (including corporate reports and advertisements) which was instead dominated by the Journey metaphor. The latter has been employed to emphasize the difficulty of the journey - "sustainability is a jagged trail" and to de-emphasize the importance of the destination - "sustainability is not a destination" (Milne *et al.*, 2006). The Journey metaphor has also been used by pro-environmental citizens to conceptualize their actions towards an environmentally sustainable lifestyle and to express frustration that they will never "arrive at a point" where they are fully sustainable (Uren *et al.*, 2019).

Against this background, the present study analysed leading personal green living blogs guided by two principal research questions (1) What are the most frequently used metaphors when discussing green living? and (2) What functions do metaphors perform?

2 Data and method

2.1 Data

This study analysed ten personal green living blogs (see Table 1) ranked as “top” by Healthline⁵ based on their 2017 posting activity (Goldman, 2017). These blogs represent the English-speaking green living blogosphere (with authors from Canada, the UK and the US). Healthline’s ranking featured 15 blogs but five of them were excluded from this analysis, as they did not fit the definition of a personal blog. They resembled media outlets and professional websites and/or foregrounded an expert identity: *Eco Warrior Princess* described as “a new kind of media brand (...) reporting on sustainability” has an editor-in-chief, a copy editor and sustainability writers (Eco Warrior Princess, 2019); *Get Green Be Well* highlighted the professional identity of the author as a green living expert, journalist and correspondent for sustainable living television programmes (Get Green Be Well, 2019); *Hello Glow* publishes blog posts from a team of contributors and has a social media manager (Hello Glow, 2017); *Jungalow* was referred to as “a go-to source for bohemian design inspiration” supported by an e-commerce manager, a marketing manager and a graphic designer (Jungalow, 2019); and *Wellness Mama* described as “an online resource” is maintained by a team of contributors, a content curator, a chief technical officer and a social media manager (Wellness Mama, 2019).

The final sample included posts published between 1 January 2017 and 31 December 2017 as well as the “About” post of each blog in which authors define the blog’s aim. Two blogs (*Green Global Travel* and *The Pistachio Project*) featured guest posts and one blog (*The Foraged Life*) an interview, which were excluded from the analysis. The final sample was comprised of 222 blog posts (see Table 1). All ten blogs were authored by women except *Green Global Travel* and *My Zero Waste*⁶. Women are more likely to write personal blogs (Herring *et al.*, 2004) and more prone to call for lifestyle changes to solve the climate problem (Tvinnereim *et al.*, 2017). The names of the blogs foregrounded: motherhood as in *Mindful Momma* and *Nature Moms* (see also Haider, 2013); a simpler life or living with less, life close to or inspired by nature, in the countryside or on a farm as in *Going Zero Waste*, *My Zero Waste*, *Nature Moms*, *PAREdown*, *The Foraged Life* and *Tiny Farm* (see also Haider, 2013); the colour green associated with environmentalism (Bevitori, 2011) as in *Green Global Travel*, *Groovy Green Living* and *The Pistachio Project*⁷; the personal nature of the

⁵ Healthline is one of the largest providers of consumer health information on the web actively raising awareness about the negative effects of climate change on human health (Healthline, 2017).

⁶ These two blogs were authored by couples.

⁷ The author writes: “Curious about why this blog is named: The Pistachio Project? My husband came up with it... pistachios are green” (The Pistachio Project, 2019).

blogs as in *My Zero Waste*; and the pervasiveness of metaphors in text and talk as in *Going Zero Waste*.

Table 1 Number of blog posts and average length, by blog⁸

Blog	Number of posts	Average length
<i>Going Zero Waste</i>	84	980
<i>Green Global Travel</i>	9	1778
<i>Groovy Green Living</i>	30	732
<i>Mindful Momma</i>	38	812
<i>My Zero Waste</i>	11	588
<i>Naturemoms</i>	8	599
<i>PAREdown</i>	3	960
<i>The Foraged Life</i>	12	605
<i>The Pistachio Project</i>	23	580
<i>Tiny Farm</i>	4	144

2.2 Ethics

The studied blogs can be described as public data which does not require formal informed consent. They are in the public domain and may be personal (as reflected in the name of the blog *My Zero Waste*), but not private (Hookway, 2008). They can be considered examples of “mediated intimacy” (Skeggs & Wood, 2008) whereby blog authors purposefully disclose and put on display for public viewing minute aspects of their everyday lives. This discussion of mundane activities provides an occasion to learn (e.g. how the use of certain products is affecting the environment) and to change one’s practices, which makes personal green living blogs a potent device for public engagement (Marres, 2009). It is therefore argued here that the authors of the analysed blogs qualify as public figures and, similarly to journalists, all bloggers are credited when directly quoting their posts. Ethical approval was granted by Lancaster University.

2.3 Method

This study used critical metaphor analysis, which has as its main goal to raise awareness of “the subliminal role of metaphor” in terms of subtly foregrounding (or backgrounding)

⁸ Blogs are listed alphabetically.

certain aspects of issues (Charteris-Black, 2004: 250). The analysis followed the three steps of Charteris-Black’s (2004) critical metaphor analysis: identification, interpretation and explanation. At the identification step, the entire blog posts (including blog titles) were read by the author to identify “metaphor keywords”, referring to words or expressions used in a metaphorical sense (see Table 2). To decide whether a word or an expression was used metaphorically, the author considered whether it has a more basic meaning (more concrete, precise or related to bodily action meaning) in other contexts (see Pragglejaz Group, 2007). Sections containing metaphor keywords were systematically lifted from each blog post and entered into a spreadsheet, the rows of which represented the blog posts and the columns recorded the instances (and frequencies) of different metaphor keywords. At the interpretation step, the metaphor keywords were associated with “conceptual metaphors” understood as stable, widely used conceptualisations of one thing in terms of another such as LIFE IS A JOURNEY⁹ (Charteris-Black, 2004: 38). At the explanation stage, the specific functions that the identified metaphors performed were elaborated.

Table 2 Metaphor keywords

Source domain	Metaphor keywords
Journey	begin (this journey), coming this far, direction, encounter, go (on a journey), guide, (on a) journey, look back, route, start (this journey), stall, step (in the right direction), walk, (along the) way

3 Findings and discussion

The number of blog posts in which metaphors were employed to discuss green living was relatively low (see Table 3). Consistent with findings from past research (DeLaure, 2011; Haider, 2013; Joosse & Brydges, 2018), many blog posts were factual product reviews, recommendations¹⁰ or recipes¹¹, which helps explain the relatively infrequent use of metaphors. When metaphors were employed to talk about green living, Journey metaphors were by far the most frequently used both across the analysed blogs and within individual blogs. Journey metaphors are common in personal blogs in general (see Atanasova, 2018). They have been favoured in business discourse on sustainability where they have been employed to foreground the difficulty of the journey and to background the importance of

⁹ Small capitals indicate conceptual metaphors.

¹⁰ Of anything from different brands producing organic mattresses to reusable water bottles.

¹¹ For a wide range of personal care items (mouthwash, foundation) and household cleaning items.

reaching or having a defined destination (Milne *et al.*, 2006). Milne and colleagues (2006) have criticised such use of Journey metaphors as strategically suitable for businesses - allowing them to present a positive image of being responsible (by attempting difficult tasks) and of being perpetually successful (in the absence of a defined “destination” against which to measure success, the simple act of “moving” is success). The Journey metaphor has also been used by pro-environmental citizens to conceptualize their actions towards an environmentally sustainable lifestyle and to express frustration that they will never “arrive at a point” of full sustainability (Uren *et al.*, 2019).

Table 3 Frequency of metaphor use, by blog¹²

Blog	Posts with Journey metaphors	Posts with other metaphors ¹³	Posts with metaphors ¹⁴
<i>Going Zero Waste</i>	21 (25.0%)	9 (10.7%)	25 (29.8%)
<i>Green Global Travel</i>	1 (11.1%)	1 (11.1%)	2 (22.2%)
<i>Groovy Green Living</i>	2 (6.66%)	0 (0%)	2 (6.66%)
<i>Mindful Momma</i>	7 (18.4%)	1 (2.6%)	7 (18.4%)
<i>My Zero Waste</i>	1 (9.1%)	1 (9.1%)	2 (18.18%)
<i>Naturemoms</i>	2 (25.0%)	0 (0%)	2 (25.0%)
<i>PAREdown</i>	2 (66.6%)	1 (33.3%)	2 (66.6%)
<i>The Foraged Life</i>	1 (8.3% ¹⁵)	0 (0%)	1 (8.3%)
<i>The Pistachio Project</i>	1 (4.35%)	0 (0%)	1 (4.35%)
<i>Tiny Farm</i>	1 (25.0%)	0 (0%)	1 (25.0%)

In the analysed personal green living blogs, Journey metaphors performed various functions which can be summarised as: (a) conceptualising the adoption of green living practices as a “journey”; (b) presenting the blog author as a “still-on-the-road traveller”; (c) expressing approval of specific green living solutions as a “step in the right direction”; (d) inviting conversation about green living by asking readers to share their “journeys” in the comments; and (e) arguing the importance of individual-level change as a “step in the right direction” and a “first step” towards societal change. While examples of the functions described in (a),

¹² Blogs are listed alphabetically.

¹³ Including Medicine, Test and War metaphors.

¹⁴ Numbers may not add up as several metaphors may be used in the same blog post (e.g. Journey and Test).

¹⁵ Calculated as percentage of the total number of blog posts within the respective blog.

(b) and (c) occurred across all analysed blogs, examples of (d) and (e) were limited to specific blogs. In what follows, these functions are explained using direct quotations from the blog posts (see Table 4). The quoted examples are not exhaustive. Although each quoted example is only listed once, some of them demonstrate more than one of the described metaphor functions.

3.1 Conceptualising the adoption of green living practices as a “journey”

Like businesses (Milne *et al.*, 2006) and the Australian pro-environmental citizens in Uren and colleagues’ study (2019), bloggers used Journey metaphors simply to conceptualise their own and others’ adoption of green living practices as a “journey”:

[1] Bea describes her family’s journey to zero waste as a natural one after educating themselves on the issues we face in our future through films like In Defence of Food, Home or Cradle to Cradle. It really was a journey too, one that started by watching (and cutting) their energy consumption and their water consumption before finally, their waste consumption.

Journey metaphors were further employed to demonstrate that, much like in physical journeys, there is no “one way” or “right way” to live sustainably:

[2] I’ve come up with an outline of a step-by-step zero waste process, but it by no means has to go in this order. You can go in any direction you like (...) Going zero waste really is a journey. When, I started this lifestyle, I knew I wanted to avoid making trash and bringing plastic into my home.

Some blog posts employed more than one metaphor (see Table 3), and, in such cases, the Journey metaphor was recruited to reject a Test metaphor which conceptualised green living as a “test” with “right” and “wrong answers” that one may “fail”:

[3] I cringe every time I hear someone say, “Zero waste fail.” (...) I want you to know there is no failure here. This isn’t a test. You aren’t going to be graded.

Journey metaphors were also used to express the possibility that there may be difficulties when trying to lead a green life (example [4]), but these experiences were minimised as being

a normal part of the journey (example [5]) or accompanied with the presentation of methods for dealing with them (example [6]):

[4] We've talked before about the best way to begin your healthy, natural living journey. The key to making a permanent lifestyle change is to understand your motivation. (...) If you don't have a plan, you're likely to stall somewhere along the way.

[5] I've been on a "green" journey for many years, trying to live a healthy, toxin-free life. I know firsthand that it's challenging at times. I'm doing my best to walk the walk, but many times I fall short. That's part of the journey.

[6] As an admitted perfectionist, I too have felt the guilt and fear of not choosing the healthiest, most eco-friendly route every time. (...) I do use some mindful principles to help guide me along the way.

This use of Journey metaphors can be interpreted as overall positive. Deep knowledge of the different options involved in sustainable living can make one feel “at a crossroads, not knowing the right way to proceed” (Longo *et al.*, 2017: 771), but these were not the personal stories that bloggers told through Journey metaphors. In the analysed blogs, Journey metaphors were used to present green living in an inspiring manner by (a) emphasising that there is no “right way”, but “different ways” to be sustainable and (b) that it is possible for one to “stall”, but this is a normal part of the experience and there are mechanisms to deal with such events.

3.2 Presenting the blog author as a “still-on-the-road traveller”

Journey metaphors were used to suggest that there is always something to learn and improve when living sustainably and the blog authors are still “on a journey” to becoming sustainable:

[7] Wanting the best for my children, I started on this journey of becoming green and crunchy¹⁶. (...) I started on this journey after having my first baby. I started making baby food for my firstborn. Not a huge step in crunchiness but it was a step. (...) I don't

¹⁶ In informal, everyday language, “crunchy” has acquired the meaning of “being environmentally-aware”. This is also the meaning with which the word is used on this blog (see The Pistachio Project, 2011).

proclaim to be 100% crunchy. I don't believe any one can be 100% crunchy. I am however on a journey to becoming crunchier."

In a post titled "Pursuing Zero Waste: Lessons We Are Still Learning", one of *PAREdown's* authors writes:

[8] I can hardly believe that January 2017 marks the beginning of our family's fourth year of pursuing Zero Waste by living with less. Looking back over the previous three years I am proud of how far we have come, but I continue to encounter important lessons along the way¹⁷.

What emerges from these quotes is an image of "still-on-the-road-travellers" who are, similarly to the businesses from Milne and colleagues' study (2006), on "a journey to somewhere undefined". There was no discussion of a "destination" or a timeframe for achieving sustainability in the analysed blogs (see Dahl & Fløttum in this issue) and the possibility of becoming "100% crunchy" was explicitly rejected (example [7]). However, unlike the pro-environmental citizens from Uren and colleagues' study (2019), bloggers did not conceptualise this as a source of frustration. Being on a physical journey with no destination can, indeed, feel disempowering, but the bloggers in the above examples did not present themselves as "reluctant travellers" on a "never-ending journey". Instead, they presented themselves as lifelong learners (example [8]) who are on course to becoming something more (that is, "crunchier", see example [7]). Such uses of the Journey metaphor can be interpreted positively, as the Journey language was recruited to highlight the significance of everything achieved so far (see example [8]) and to portray the enjoyable aspects of sustainability as a "never-ending journey" (example [7] and [8]).

3.3 Expressing approval of specific green living solutions as a "step in the right direction"

Journey metaphors were recruited to support specific solutions by conceptualising them as "a step in the right direction":

¹⁷ Here we see another case of Test and Journey language being used simultaneously.

[9] get out there, and do the best you can! Even if it's one change. Even if it's only buying a lonely banana¹⁸. Every single step in the right direction is just that, a step in the right direction.

[10] [t]he plastic bag ban is a baby step, but a step in the right direction and I'm proud to have been a small part of the process.

Similar examples of expressing approval for specific courses of action by conceptualising them as movement in the right direction have been found in studies on the related topic of carbon capture and storage (Nerlich & Jaspal, 2013). But instead of expressing disapproval for certain solutions by presenting them as “a move in the wrong direction”, blog authors invoked other metaphors and particularly, Medicine (example [11]) and War metaphors (example [12]) to fulfil this function:

[11] Recycling isn't the answer but rather a band-aid, and beyond that... One of the main appeals of zero waste, to me, is only having to buy something one time.

[12] [recycling] should be viewed as a last resort and not the first line of defense. We should first refuse unnecessary waste, then reduce what we need, reuse what we have then and only then should we recycle.

3.4 Inviting conversation about green living by asking readers to share their “journeys”

This is a strategy used by two bloggers only. The author of *Going Zero Waste*, recurrently ended her posts with a question to the blog readers and followers inviting them to share their “journey” (examples [13], [14] and [15]), while the blogger behind *Mindful Momma*, used it as a one-off strategy (example [16]):

[13] I'm curious if your journey looked like this? Have you gone through all the steps? Were they in a similar order? What step are you on now?

[14] I would love to hear stories about you and your partners on the zero waste journey. How has lifestyle differences impacted your relationships?

¹⁸ Bananas travel far to reach supermarkets worldwide, but those not in a bunch are typically thrown out by grocers. The author has written a song about this issue - “Love a lonely banana: a song about food waste”.

[15] Are there any zero waste tips I left out? What would add to the list or tell someone who's just starting the zero waste journey?

[16] Tell me about your green & healthy journey. Do you have any insecurities, frustrations, dreams or questions to share?

Blogs have been described as an inherently interactive genre and questions have been identified as one of the most common interactivity strategies used by blog authors (Myers, 2010). The above examples demonstrate how Journey metaphors are embedded into established practices that bloggers use to make their readers feel addressed.

3.5 Arguing the importance of individual-level change as a “step in the right direction” and a “first step” towards societal change

Examples of employing Journey metaphors to explicitly argue in favour of the importance of personal-level change were only found in *Going Zero Waste* whose author argued that:

[17] [w]hether you've just started going zero waste or you're trash in a mason jar level¹⁹ with just one step in the right direction, you can change the world.

Such individual-level change was presented as a “first step” towards wider, societal change:

[18] Once you feel like you've got the individual action step down, it's time to go one step further. (...) Maybe there's a restaurant you frequent and they put straws in your drink automatically. Write a letter (...) asking that the owner instate a new policy.

[19] Once you've changed [your habits] where can you go? What's next? I think the next step is group action, then putting pressure on businesses, then working on policy change. (...) Local government is almost more important than the federal government. If you want to start seeing change fast, this is where you need to start.

Table 4 Blog posts used to demonstrate metaphor functions

¹⁹ This refers to the goal of minimising the amount of trash one generates and being able to fit the waste produced over a year in one mason jar is considered good practice (Leahy, 2018).

Example	Blog post title	Blog
[1]	Waste less, live more	<i>The Foraged Life</i> ²⁰
[2], [13], [18]	The ultimate step-by-step guide to going zero waste	<i>Going Zero Waste</i>
[3]	3 reasons the trash jar is bullsh*t	<i>Going Zero Waste</i>
[4]	How to get in your healthy living groove!	<i>Mindful Momma</i>
[5]	About	<i>Groovy Green Living</i>
[6], [16]	Organic apples & diet coke	<i>Mindful Momma</i>
[7]	About the pistachio project	<i>The Pistachio Project</i>
[8]	Pursuing zero waste: lessons we are still learning	<i>PAREdown</i>
[9]	Four tips for starting a zero waste lifestyle	<i>Going Zero Waste</i>
[10]	A night to remember	<i>Groovy Green Living</i>
[11]	How to maintain a healthy safety razor	<i>Going Zero Waste</i>
[12]	31 day zero waste challenge - for kids!	<i>Going Zero Waste</i>
[14]	Going zero waste when your partner doesn't want to	<i>Going Zero Waste</i>
[15]	101 easy eco friendly, zero waste tips	<i>Going Zero Waste</i>
[17]	What is zero waste?	<i>Going Zero Waste</i>
[19]	How to get involved with local government	<i>Going Zero Waste</i>

Conclusion

This study analysed metaphor use in ten leading green living blogs and found that Journey metaphors were most frequently employed both in the overall sample and within individual blogs. Overall, the encountered use of Journey metaphors can be positively evaluated, and it can be concluded that bloggers worked to inspire and empower readers with their “journey[s] towards a green lifestyle” (Goldman, 2017). When conceptualizing the adoption of green living practices through Journey metaphors, bloggers: (a) emphasized that there is no “one way” or “right way” and recruited Journey metaphors to reject the conceptualization of sustainable living as a “test” with “correct answers” which can be “failed”; and (b) they

²⁰ As the analysed blogs are publicly searchable and URL links tend to change, URL links were not included. Blog posts can be found by searching online with the blog title.

acknowledged the difficulties that one may encounter, but presented them as a normal part of “journeying” and offered techniques for overcoming them. Instead of seeing themselves as “reluctant travelers” on a “never-ending journey”, bloggers highlighted the positive aspects of being “still-on-the-road-travellers” (in terms of continuous personal development).

Despite this study’s contribution to the under-researched area of metaphor use in personal green living blogs, it has limitations which can be divided into limitations of the analysis and of the data. In terms of analysis, metaphor identification relied solely on the author’s interpretation and intercoder comparisons were not conducted. Other limitations of the analysis are that it focused on one year of posting only and examined top green living blogs from the English-speaking green living blogosphere. Limitations of the data are that some blogs published few posts during the analysed timeframe and some of the functions of the Journey metaphors were elaborated in one or two of the blogs, not across all blogs. These limitations point to fruitful directions for future research such as studying more green living blogs (particularly, blogs written in other languages) over an extended period of time to better understand what green living means to ordinary people and whether (and how) this changes over time and across languages and cultures.

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