

# Retweeting, Reposting, Repinning; Reshaping Identities Online: Towards a Social Semiotic Multimodal Analysis of Digital Remediation

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## *Abstract*

The paper focuses on crossposting, as a form of digital remediation consisting in the production and distribution of multimodal texts in multiple online spaces through embedding and sharing. The study sketches the analytical steps to approach the phenomenon, applying them on a UK food blogger's activity spanning her blog, her Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Pinterest, and Instagram accounts. In the instance examined, recontextualized texts are re-genred; genre assignment is given by the combination of the multimodal configuration in each space and the blogger's use of these affordances to her aims. Through minimum new text creation, by recontextualizing her texts in different spaces, the blogger can shape differently her relation with the audience. The analytical framework is intended as a flexible tool that, adjusted as appropriate, can be used for a broader in-depth analysis of crossposting.

Keywords: *crossposting, multimodality, recontextualization, sharing, social networks, transmedia*

## *1. Introduction*

Online environments have new facilities for multimodal text production and dissemination. As for multimodal sign-making, by processing all inputs as bytes, digital technologies afford representation equally through images, videos, writing or audio-files, while the ready-to-use platforms for text publishing afford the combination of signs made in different modes. Consequently, multi-



modal text production coupling, for example, writing and images is no longer the realm of professional elites, such as those in charge of book design and page layout in the publishing industry; rather, it has become ordinary sign-making for everyone participating in online social media. This has given rise to a flourishing of different semiotic practices, genres, and conventions for multimodal meaning-making, which are highly context-, social group- and culture-specific.

As for text dissemination, online environments foster remediation to an unprecedented extent; their multiple and interconnected platforms afford multimodal “representation-through-recontextualization” at the cost of a (sharing) click; any text can be linked to another, forwarded into another space, embedded in some other text. Hence, networked distribution is no longer an exclusive of corporations. Reusing previously made texts into other contexts has become an increasingly frequent form of everyday and mundane text production and communication.

Digital technologies afford multimodal representation and re-use of previously existing texts in new contexts to an unprecedented extent and number of sign-makers. As a consequence, sign-making practices are being considerably reshaped. A changed media landscape necessarily affects sign-making practices; in a social semiotic perspective (Hodge and Kress 1988; Kress 2010; van Leeuwen 2005) these are the result of the sign-makers’ (culturally and socially shaped) interests meeting the affordances of the modes and the facilities of the media used to design, produce and disseminate representations.

In this light, the paper sketches the analytical steps for the investigation of online transformative chains of semiosis, as a part of an ongoing ESRC-funded NCRM collaborative project on the *Methodologies for Multimodal and Narrative Analysis of UK Food Blogs* (Kress, Jewitt, Domingo and Adami 2012-2013). The steps are exemplified through application to the crossposting activity surrounding one of the blogs that constitute the project’s data sample.

Like many digital sign-makers, food bloggers have an intense online text production, which they disseminate through several interconnected platforms. Much of their activity consists in transformative recontextualizations of sign-complexes, re-posted from their blogs to a series of social networks, such as Facebook, Twitter and Pinterest, and vice versa. The analysis of an instance of crossposting suggests that the reposting of texts and artefacts in multiple spaces produces significant changes in meanings, styles and genres, and plays a major role in reshaping the sign-maker’s relation with the audience. This stresses the need for further investigation on the functional transformations taking place in online chains of semiosis and of their effects on identity (re-)making and social (re-)positioning.

## 2. *Scope of the study*

Funded by the UK National Centre for Research Methods (NCRM) of the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC), the project on “Method-

ologies for Multimodal and Narrative Analysis of UK Food Blogs”<sup>1</sup> involves two Nodes: MODE (Multimodal Methodologies for Researching Digital Data and Environments) and NOVELLA (Narratives of Varied Everyday Lives and Linked Approaches). It compares and combines multimodal and narrative frameworks for analysing blogs, to examine the role of food and the construction of mothering and fathering in online visual and textual narratives about feeding families. Selected by NOVELLA, the data sample for the project is constituted by two UK food blogs, both dealing with food in a time when resources are scarce. These are *The Diary of a Frugal Family* (<[www.frugalfamily.co.uk](http://www.frugalfamily.co.uk)>) and *Thinly Spread* (<<http://thinlyspread.co.uk>>). Extant analysis has focused on the blogs, with NOVELLA examining the emerging narratives in their posts, and MODE investigating the meanings arising from their multimodal deployment.

While observing the blog posts, it has emerged that both bloggers often disseminate them in other online social networks. In order to map a larger picture of the bloggers’ activity, it has seemed thus useful to examine these repostings and the ways in which they shape the bloggers’ relation with the audience in each semiotic space.

In consideration of the complexity of the phenomenon, which involves multiple representations distributed in different interconnected media, and the absence of studies aimed at developing methodologies to approach it, the paper presents an analytical framework resulting from a two-month observation of the crossposting activity of the blogger of *The Diary of a Frugal Family*. More in detail: section 3 defines crossposting and maps it in relation to cognate terms existing in the literature; section 4 sketches the steps to approach its analysis, and applies them to the crossposting activity involving one blog post of the blogger of *The Diary of a Frugal Family*. As a pilot study, the paper intends to provide methodological indications for investigating the phenomenon of crossposting, which might then be used as a guide to the analysis of (and comparison with) the crossposting activity of the other blog in the data sample, and, possibly, for application to further cases of digital remediation<sup>2</sup>.

### 3. Crossposting and cognate terminology

All academics are familiar with the term “crossposting” in the sentence “apologies for crossposting” frequently opening an email of, e.g., a conference

<sup>1</sup> Principal Investigator: Prof. Gunther Kress, Institute of Education, University of London; for the final report of the project, cf. Domingo *et al.* (2014).

<sup>2</sup> The author wishes to thank the two anonymous reviewers of the paper for their insightful suggestions and comments. The study would not have been possible without the blogger’s involvement in the ESRC-NCRM collaborative project, in the terms detailed in the section of ethics in Domingo *et al.* (2014), for which the author is also thankful.

announcement or a call for papers. This is the sense of the term as originally used in Kollock and Smith (1996), i.e., a (written) message forwarded to multiple mailing lists. The present work extends multimodally the use of the term, and considers crossposting whenever an artefact uploaded on an online platform is re-posted, shared, embedded or copied-and-pasted into another one.

In this sense, crossposting involves inevitably “remediation” (Bolter and Grusin 1999), since by sharing an artefact from e.g. Facebook to Twitter, the medium and site of display of the text changes too. Hence, crossposting can be seen as a very specific text-production/dissemination process of digital remediation, and of recontextualization (Bernstein 1996).

The spanning of thematically-cohesive representations throughout different media has been investigated as “transmedia storytelling” (Jenkins 2006), and “transmedia franchise” (Lemke 2005). Studies employing these concepts (e.g., Lemke 2009; Scolari 2009; Sweeney 2010; Beddows 2012; Scolari, Jiménez and Guerrero 2012) usually focus on narrative instances of mass media corporate productions (such as *Harry Potter*, *Buffy the Vampire*, or *The Matrix*), possibly extended further by fan productions (at times conflicting with the corporate ones). “Crossposting”, a semiotic act that constructs a “transmedia traversal” (Lemke 2005) is preferred to “storytelling” and “franchise” because of its reference to the “bare” sign-making process, irrespectively of its discursive structure and corporate vs. personal nature.

Hence the term “crossposting” is used here to identify instances of recontextualization of textual material published in one online semiotic space and reposted to other semiotic spaces. Throughout the discussion, the other cognate or superordinate concepts will be mentioned when relevant.

Crossposting can be automated through existing facilities available on each social media; for example, Twitter and Facebook account settings afford the automatic publishing of a post to both social media profiles. Automatic crossposting is usually discouraged, in reason of the different spaces’ social uses and audiences; for an effective online presence it is advisable to personalize a post each time it is re-posted<sup>3</sup>. Minimal intervention is needed to reshape generically and discursively a crossposted text to suit the site-specific audience, as will be shown in the application of the analytical steps in the next section.

<sup>3</sup> See in this regard the many advices on avoiding auto-crossposting available online, for example: <<https://plus.google.com/102615863344410467759/posts/GPW1j7JEn2y>> (09/2014); <<http://jeffsarris.com/social-media-cross-posting/>> (09/2014); <<http://www.matthewhurst.com/2011/07/why-you-shouldnt-cross-post-the-same-message/>> (09/2014).

#### 4. Analytical steps for the investigation of crossposting practices

The section details and exemplifies the steps that can be undertaken for the analysis of crossposting. As anticipated, these are the result of a two-month observation of the online activity of Cass, the blogger of *The Diary of the Frugal Family*, which is used to exemplify the application of each step. The following research questions informed the observation and the formulation of the steps:

1. How do genre, meaning and form change, when the same and yet different text is posted on platforms foregrounding different modes?
2. What is the role of contextual modal configurations, such as the platform's layout, font and colour palette, in shaping recontextualized sign-complexes?
3. How do these recontextualizations affect the sign-maker's relation with the audience?

It is understood that other research questions might require different steps or a different sequencing of them. A first step traces "online presence", i.e., the interconnected online spaces where the blogger is active (Section 4.1). A second step maps these online spaces in regard to their afforded directionality for crossposting (Section 4.2). A third step focuses on the recontextualization practices surrounding one textual instance (exemplified in one blog post of *The Diary of a Frugal Family* in Section 4.3). A fourth step combines observation of the crossposting instance and other thematically-related artefacts to identify the sign-maker's main crossposting practices (Section 4.4). A fifth step analyses in detail the changes that a recontextualized artefact undergoes in each online space, illustrated in Section 4.5.

A "textual instance" or "artefact" is identifiable with the multimodal unit of text that can be uploaded/published in each space. These units have different labels in each space (e.g., blogs, Facebook and Google+ have "posts", Twitter has "tweets", Pinterest has "pins", Instagram has "photos" and YouTube has "videos"), yet they are all identifiable as the uploadable unit on each platform. Platforms afford different multimodal compositions for their posts/units, so every artefact that is crossposted to another space is reshaped according to the multimodal configuration afforded by the hosting platform (as will be discussed in Sections 4.3-4.5).

In their sequencing, the first four steps follow a funnelling process, in that the analysis progresses from a more general phenomenon to a particular instance. In the case exemplified, the observation proceeds from mapping the bloggers' overall online semiotic activity to the analysis of one instance of crossposting. Because of the transmedia character of crossposting, the funnelling process is then followed by a more rhizomatic analysis, in Step

5, which devotes attention to the relation between each crossposted artefact and its context in a single online space, as well as to the overall activity characterizing each space. A final synthesis should compare differences and similarities among spaces.

#### *4.1 Step 1: Tracing interconnected online presence (readers/viewers' perspective)*

This step involves the identification of all online spaces where crossposting activity can take place, by following existing links from a sign-maker's online space to another, in order to trace all interconnected online profiles related to the sign-maker. The step also involves determining whether any of the spaces functions as a centre of the online presence or the presence is equally distributed among spaces. In the presence of authored pages like a personal/professional blog or a website (as in the examined case), the former possibility seems more likely to occur, while the latter might be the case of sign-makers who have only social media profiles – e.g., Facebook and Twitter – all linking equally to the others. The analysis of possible centre-margins relations among spaces is done both qualitatively, on the basis of profile descriptions, and quantitatively, on the basis of the distribution of the links directing from each online space to others.

In the examined case, *The Diary of a Frugal Family* blog homepage links to the blogger's Twitter profile, to the blog's page on Facebook and to her profile on Pinterest. Hence readers/viewers of the blog can easily access these other three social network profiles managed by the blogger. The blog's Facebook page links to the blogger's profile on Instagram and to her YouTube channel. Finally, from YouTube, one can access the blogger's profile on Google+. Twitter is a writing-based social network enabling the posting of messages containing a maximum of 140 characters (including hyperlinks to images and webpages). Facebook is a social network enabling the posting of (combinations of) writing, image and videos. Pinterest is an image-based social network enabling the "pinning" of Web images, and their display and thematic organization on one's "board"; Instagram is another image-based social network where sign-makers can upload their photos, editing them through visual effects; YouTube is a video-based online space; Google+ has affordances similar to Facebook, enabling the posting of images, writing and videos. As known, these spaces afford different degrees of privacy/publicity of posting, but – in the analysed case – all the profiles on these spaces are set to public, so all the blogger's posts are publicly viewable in each social network.

This first analytical step determines which profiles readers/viewers can access by following existing links published on each space as well as which spaces are mostly linked to, hence can be accessed through multiple pathways, and which others are less accessible. In the examined case, the blog links thus to Twitter, Pinterest and Facebook; Facebook links to Instagram and YouTube; YouTube links to Google+. All social network profile pages link in their turn to the blog,

through the description in their “About” sections. In each profile Cass presents herself as a blogger and provides the name and link to her blog, which seems then the centre of her online presence. Table 1 represents the blogger’s interconnected online presence in terms of links present in each space that direct to other spaces. The blog results as the most “linked to” space (all 6 other spaces link to it), while the other spaces can be accessed only from one other online space each. The blog (together with Facebook) is also the space hosting the largest number of links to other spaces (3). Hence, both qualitatively (through markers of identity in the profile description) and quantitatively (through numbers of links to and from each space), the blog results as the centre of Cass’ online presence.

Linked spaces \ Linking spaces	Blog	Facebook	Google+	Instagram	Pinterest	Twitter	Youtube	Tot. links to others
Blog		+			+	+		3
Facebook	+			+			+	3
Google+	+							1
Instagram	+							1
Pinterest	+							1
Twitter	+							1
YouTube	+		+					1
Tot. links from others	6	1	1	1	1	1	1	

Table 1 - Interconnections among online spaces, with details on spaces linking to others (rows) and spaces linked to from others (columns).

The analysis in this step traces only the interconnected online spaces, while it excludes any further online activity in isolated spaces. In the examined case, Cass might have another Facebook profile or a webpage, for example, not related to her blogging activity; yet these would not be accessible from any of the interconnected spaces traced in this step.

#### *4.2 Step 2: Mapping the afforded crossposting directionality (sign-maker’s perspective)*

After tracing the links present on each online space, which readers/viewers can follow to have access to other pages and profiles of the sign-maker, a second step maps the directionality of crossposting afforded by each platform.

This means analysing where, among the sign-makers' spaces, an artefact uploaded on a single space can be crossposted. If the first step adopts readers/viewers' standpoint, in determining which links they can follow to have access to other pages and profiles of the sign-maker, this second step adopts the sign-maker's standpoint, in mapping what s/he can repost where from which space.

Cass' crossposting activity can span throughout all the interconnected online spaces identified earlier. The directionality afforded by the different platforms is complex and differentiated, as illustrated in Fig. 1. Whenever she publishes a blog post on her blog, she can re-post it to Google+, Twitter, Facebook and Pinterest. Any of Cass' YouTube videos can be embedded within her blog post, and/or reposted on Google+, on Twitter and on Facebook. The same is for her Instagram photos, which she can embed in her blog post and/or share on the other social networks. On Pinterest, she can pin a photo published on her blog, thus establishing a link to it. Finally, Facebook posts can be shared on Google+ and vice versa, and she can repost any of her Tweets onto Facebook and Google+ and any of her Facebook and Google+ posts can be twitted.

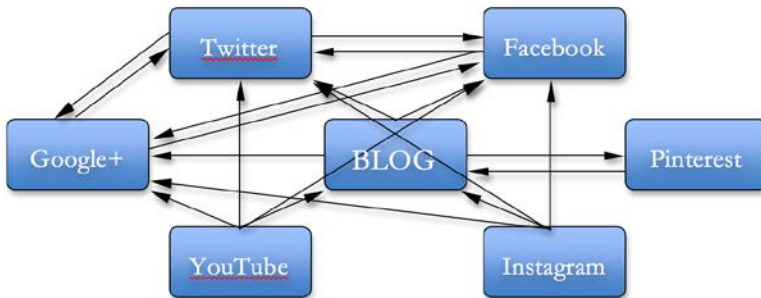


Fig. 1 - The crossposting directionality afforded by the blogger's online spaces

Against the directionality for crossposting afforded by each space, the analysis of one crossposted instance in the following two steps will determine preferences in the use of the different spaces for sharing and distributing representations, hence the sign-makers' preferred and dispreferred spaces for crossposting activity.

#### *4.3 Step 3: Following the reposting of one artefact across spaces*

After identifying the pathways and connections afforded by each online space available to the sign-maker, a third step analyses which of these affordances are used in the crossposting of one textual instance. This analytical



step should be ideally carried out repeatedly for a sample of uploaded artefacts in order to determine patterns of preference in the use of the spaces for crossposting along with the intensity and frequency of crossposting activity.

In the case where the interconnected online presence is organised around a central space (i.e., the blog in the examined case), the textual instance is preferably selected among the artefacts uploaded in the central space, in order to maximize the possibilities of observing dissemination practices. A further step (Step 4 below) should then consider the possible crossposting of other artefacts thematically related to the former, either recontextualized in the central space or reposted to other spaces.

In order to trace all crossposting instances, the sign-maker's activity in each space needs to be screened starting from the date when the original artefact was first uploaded on the central space. Given that an uploaded artefact can be reposted to other spaces at any time after its original upload, it might be advisable to monitor the activity on the other spaces for a certain period of time, or, retrospectively, to set a time-frame within which all posts in each space are screened. For example, in the examined case, given a blog post as the selected textual instance, the posts in the other online spaces have been screened for a two-month time period starting from the date when the blog post was first published. Within that time frame, observation in each space has identified and included in the analysis all instances of reposting of the blog post.

The textual instance selected in the pilot study is the blog post titled *Does it Hurt when you get your ears pierced?*, published on 6<sup>th</sup> August 2013. The specific blog post has been selected since it was the latest published on the blog when the observation of the blogger's crossposting activity has started within the wider ESRC-NCRM collaborative project (cf. Section 2). Given that its analysis has the unique purpose of exemplifying the analytical steps, no further criteria were considered for its selection; specific research questions might require the definition of more refined selection and sampling criteria.

Figure 2 shows the screenshot of the blog post<sup>4</sup>, which deploys a title and a body text, composed of writing, pictures and a video. In spite of the argumentative title, the post is narrative, telling and showing the event of Cass' daughter's ear-piercing. As a format/genre, the text is a blog post; discursively, it is a multimodal story framed argumentatively in its header.

<sup>4</sup> All materials published in the paper are taken from online spaces that the blogger has set as publicly accessible. For the ethical concerns and the terms of use of the data, cf. the section on ethics in Domingo et al. (2014). Images portraying children have been concealed following the ethic guidelines discussed in the section.



Fig. 2 - The blog post *Does it Hurt when you get your ears pierced?*<sup>25</sup>

Cass has reposted the blog post to Facebook (Fig. 3), Twitter (Fig. 4) and Pinterest (Fig. 5): Facebook lays out automatically the post displaying the blog post's title, first paragraph and last picture, while the blogger has introduced her repost with a typed "She did it!"; the Tweet displays the title together with the link to the blog post; Pinterest shows the first picture of the blog post, while its title is turned into a caption.

When disseminated in other social networks, the textual elements of the blog post are cannibalized; the post is dismembered, chopped and reshaped specifically in the text displayed in each environment. Cass<sup>7</sup> followers in each social network can only see a selected excerpt of the blog post, while they need

<sup>25</sup> The blog post is available at <<http://www.frugalfamily.co.uk/2013/08/does-it-hurt-when-you-get-your-ears-pierced.html>> (09/2014).

to access the link to the blog post to read/view the full content. The crossposting activity in this case has the effect of disseminating the news about the publishing of a post on the blog, thus creating multiple pathways that give access to the blog post and augment the possibilities for reading/viewing it. Cass has used all the affordances available for crossposting from the blog to the other spaces (identified in Step 2 and illustrated in Table 1), except the crossposting from the blog to Google+. Hence, in this instance, Facebook and Twitter are preferred destinations for reposting over Google+. This might suggest little interest in promoting the blog post in this space – reasons for this might reside in the sign-maker's little familiarity with the space and/or little expectations in its potentials/capabilities of attracting readers/viewers' towards the blog; further ethnographic research could explore these hypotheses.



Fig. 3 - The blog post crossposted on Facebook<sup>6</sup>

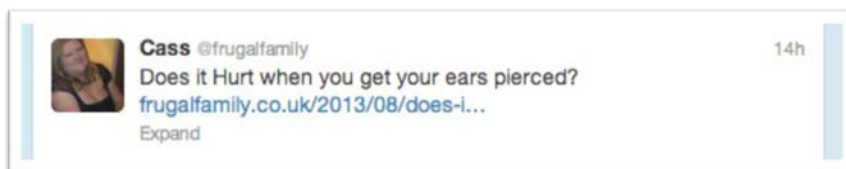


Fig. 4 - The blog post tweeted on Twitter

<sup>6</sup> All figures of crossposted artefacts are screenshots taken from portions of the pages where the crosspost was displayed; hence hyperlinks to the artefacts cannot be provided. They can be retrieved through search on the blogger's page on each social network, all of which are publicly available and can be accessed following the indications given in Step 2 (Section 4.2).

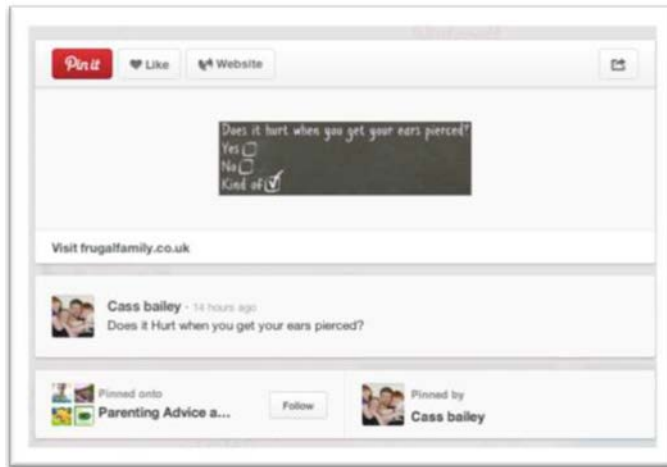


Fig. 5 - The blog post pinned on Pinterest

#### 4.4 Step 4: Identifying thematically-related artefacts

After tracing the crossposting activity involving the selected textual instance (Step 3 above), a fourth analytical step involves the screening of the sign-maker's other spaces for the identification of artefacts uploaded there that are thematically-related to the central instance examined in the earlier step. Step four can determine two types of crossposting activity, namely, (a) whether the central textual instance is itself the result of any crossposting activity from other spaces and (b) whether any thematically related crossposting activity has taken place among other online spaces without involving the central one, along with thematically-related artefacts that have not been subject to any crossposting.

As for activity (a), in the examined case, the compositional process of the blog post is indeed the result of several crosspostings. The 13"-long video embedded in the blog post comes from YouTube (Fig. 6), where it has been uploaded with the same title that (arguably later) has been used also for the blog post, and with the description "I filmed my daughter getting her ears pierced to show anyone who's wondering that she didn't even finch when they did it!". Instagram has provided both the second and the last photos of the blog post (Fig. 7 and 8), each with a caption ("Waiting to get her ears pierced" and "Done!" respectively). Hence the process of text-production of the blog post is the result of assemblage. It indeed combines writing produced from scratch for the blog post with a series of artefacts that were created and uploaded earlier on other social networks.

Cass' followers on YouTube and Instagram could watch the video and see the photos of the ear-piercing event in isolation, before the blog post was composed, i.e., before reading and viewing the multimodal story of the event

as narrated through writing, still and moving images on Cass' blog. The constructed knowledge of the event in each space is different, in that both the YouTube video and the Instagram photos are representations of selected excerpts and moments of the event as it was still unfolding, whereas the blog post provides the representation of the event as a concluded story which embeds, in its overall multimodal composition, also the excerpts and moments represented in the video and in the photos. In sum, while the blog post is a retrospective narration (framed argumentatively) of an event presented as concluded, the functions of the YouTube video and Instagram photos are rather of epitomizing selected significant moments in the event.

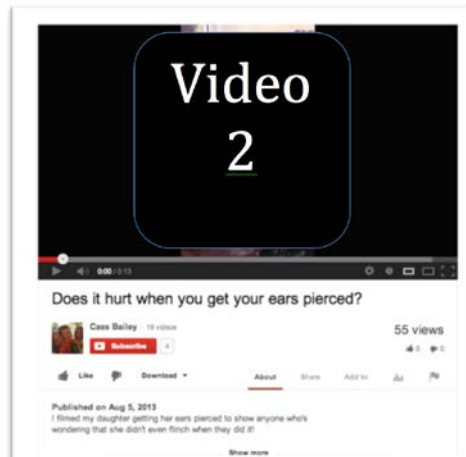


Fig. 6 - The video of the ear piercing event uploaded on YouTube and later embedded in the blog post



Fig. 7 - Instagram photo with caption: Waiting to get her ears pierced, later embedded in the blog post



Fig. 8 - Instagram photo with caption: Done!, later embedded in the blog post

As for thematically-related crossposting activity outside the central space, the examined case offers two examples. One is a tweet (Fig. 9) reposting the Facebook post (shown earlier in Fig. 3) which was itself the crossposting of the blog post: as discussed in Section 4.3, the blog post has been reposted on Facebook, recontextualized with an introductory “She did it!” (Fig. 3); then, this latter Facebook artefact has been reposted on Twitter (Fig. 9), through the writing in the Facebook status “She did it!”. The other example involves a third Instagram photo (shown in Fig. 10) related to the event which was not included in the blog post, and that has been twitted through its caption, “She’s looking very grown up today!” (Fig. 11). While again no crossposting activity involves Google+, at least in the examined instance, the blogger uses Twitter as a preferred destination of crossposted artefacts that link back to other spaces, seemingly as an elected means for promotion of her online activity elsewhere.



Fig. 9 - The tweet reposting the Facebook post shown in Fig. 3 (itself a reposting of the blog post)



Fig. 10 - Instagram photo with caption: She's looking very grown up today!, not included in the blog post but tweeted (Fig. 11)



Fig. 11 - Tweet crossposting the Instagram photo shown in Fig. 10

Steps 3 and 4 highlight a three-fold crossposting activity which can be identified in three main recontextualizing practices, namely (a) the forwarding of the blog post into other spaces; (b) the production of the blog post through the assemblage of artefacts previously uploaded in other spaces; and (c) recontextualizations of artefacts involving spaces other than the blog. No artefacts related to the ear-piercing event have been retrieved that have not undergone crossposting.

Out of a family event, the blogger has produced a series of photos, a video and written materials; then by using the affordances of each platform, she has assembled them multimodally and disseminated in the different spaces where she is active. There is a certain amount of redundancy among the different posts, yet there is not complete coincidence. While each artefact can stand and make meaning on its own in one specific-space, a larger picture of the event can be constructed by accessing all of them.

Although the case under examination is everyday and mundane sign-making (rather than mainstream media production), the network of representations of the event constitute an instance of transmedia storytelling; audiences in different spaces can have a distinctive take on the event and, as in transmedia franchise, seem triggered to explore the event further by accessing other spaces, through the links present in each crosspost.

This fourth step provides insights into the different perspectives of a single event/fact/phenomenon offered to readers/viewers by the representations in each space. It also maps the different recontextualizing practices along with the extent of crossposting that each representation undergoes. This observation might provide further insights into the sign-maker's preferences in his/her semiotic activity. In the example of Cass, all uploaded artefacts are subject to some crossposting, either/both as reposts (a form of dissemination) and/or as embedding (a form of text production). By extracting, re-assembling and sharing multiple times the artefacts produced to represent a given event, Cass' sign-making practices seem to embody the "frugality" theme of her blog; in a sense, waste is minimized and all is re-used to maximize the communicative effect and disseminate her online presence to multiple audiences, all triggered to access the blog (and hence augment its readership).

The analysis of other sign-makers' crossposting practices at this step might identify different patterns and preferences and, at a deeper level, different correlations with projected identity values.

#### *4.5 Step 5: analysis of the crossposted artefacts within the environment of each space*

After the identification of all thematically-related crossposts with the changes that each underwent both as a result of the sign-maker's intervention (e.g., through addition of introductory writing) and of each platform's automatic reconfiguration of the posts, a fifth step needs to consider relations between each post and its context in each space. It involves the observation of the page/screen in each space where the crossposted artefact(s) is displayed and the analysis of the meanings it achieves in the specific environment.

The previous steps had mainly descriptive purposes, which served as a basis to identify (a) the spaces where the sign-maker is active, (b) her preferences in use among them for crossposting purposes, (c) all thematically-related artefacts involved in crossposting, and (d) the different crossposting practices. This step can finally begin to address the research questions mentioned earlier, namely (1) any possible changes in genre, meaning and form of the post, (2) the role of contextual modal configurations (e.g., the platform's layout, font and colour palette) in shaping these recontextualizations, and (3) any resulting changes in the sign-maker's shaping of his/her relation with the audience in each space. For a more in-depth analysis, this fifth step needs to be integrated with an observation of the broader activity in each space, also considering other non-thematically-related posts, and through comparison of the activity among spaces, so as to identify more regular patterns, in terms of the sign-maker's preferences in shaping crossposts and relation with audience in each space (this is done by way of example in the examined case, by mentioning briefly similar patterns in other Facebook posts, in the discussion concerning Figure 13 below).



As to Cass' example, while the sequencing of the photos in the blog post (Fig. 2) shows a story chronologically, through positioning and through the change in the daughter's face expressions, serious in the first, smiling in the last photo – on Instagram these shape a recollection of visual memories laid out with other photos portraying family participants and their actions in occasions not related to the ear-piercing event. In this, the blogger's Instagram page recalls the genre of the family photo album. The photos' relation to the event of ear-piercing is not foregrounded, so it might not be immediately grasped by viewers of Cass' Instagram page. Indeed, the photo with the caption "done!" (Fig. 8) and the one with "she's looking very grown up today" (Fig. 10), when viewed individually on Instagram do not refer explicitly to the event. This is in line with the family photo album genre, which is usually shown to viewers (usually family and friends) supplemented by a spoken recount of the circumstantial events surrounding the taking of the pictures. Although public, the shaping of the genre of the Instagram page opens to an intimate, familial relation with the blogger.

On Pinterest, the image of the post is displayed as a thumbnail that indexes the blog post on a thematic board and Cass has tagged it thematically as "Parenting advice and support". The layout afforded by the platform shapes the page following the genre of the noticeboard. Here, Cass' pins frequently combine images and writing (Fig. 12), thus she uses the affordances of the space to shape distinctively the genre of her pins as advices and tips. In addressing the viewer (by means of "you" in the pins), yet without displaying images representing family participants, hence without offering visual insights into Cass' personal environment, the relation with viewers entexted in the pins is more at a social than a familial distance in this case, although within specific social groups of interest (parenting).

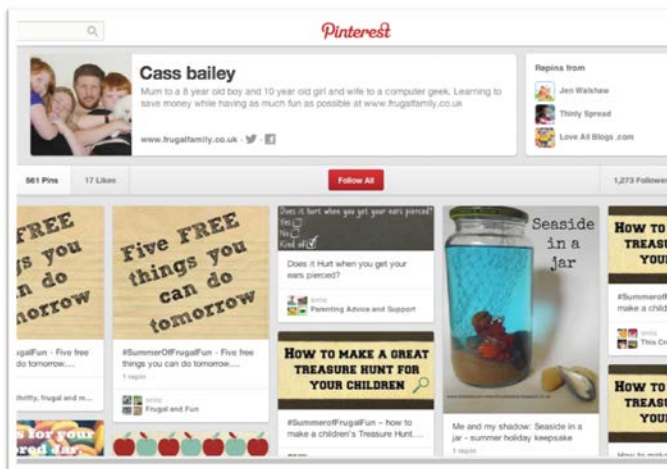


Fig. 12 - The blogger's Pinterest page where the image of the ear-piercing event is displayed

Twitter affords only writing in tweets, with other modally-composed artefacts (such as videos and photos) displayed as written hyperlinks. In the formulation of her tweets (in Fig. 9 and 11), the captions' original anaphoric reference (i.e., "she") to the daughter's face portrayed in the Instagram and Facebook picture is turned into a cataphoric personal reference to the content of the tweeted link. It functions as an anticipatory device, which triggers followers' curiosity and prompts them to access the link to see the reference. When tweeting a link to a picture or to the blog post, Cass' tweets function generically as announcements. By tweeting the title of the blog post (Fig. 5), Cass triggers expectations for an argumentative text in the blog post, while the latter is in fact a narrative.

Facebook displays any posted webpage by indexing its title, website address, one of its pictures, and the very first lines of its body text. The layout of a webpage posted on Facebook resembles the genre of a "news bite" (Knox 2009), i.e., of news as published on an online newspaper homepage. Clearly, the blogger is aware of the multimodal configuration afforded by Facebook; knowing that the title and the link of the blog post will be displayed automatically, she does not need to type them in her status; rather, she chooses to personalize the post introducing it with a written exclamation, i.e., *She did it!* (Fig. 3) using cataphoric cohesive ties of reference and substitution, which can raise readers/viewers' curiosity towards the posted content. Compared to the argumentative title of the blog post, the exclamation is personal and, by referring to a past action, it re-frames the post narratively. So, not only does the genre change but also does the discursive function of the title; indeed, most of Cass' Facebook reposts are personal, frequently inviting interaction from the audience. Examples of this include: (1) a photo reposted from Instagram portraying her children eating ice cream, posted on Facebook on July 24<sup>th</sup> with the typed introduction "This month is Ice Cream month, so it would be rude not to have a lick – what's your favourite flavour?"; (2) the reposting of another blog post (with an original impersonal title: "Ear piercing for boys – yay or nay."), reposted on Facebook on 4<sup>th</sup> August reframing it personally through the typed introduction "I'm after your opinions on the blog today"; (3) another Facebook reposting of a blog post (always impersonally titled "Snowballing.") on 7<sup>th</sup> August introduced by "If you're paying off debts, have you tried snowballing to get there quicker?" (Fig. 13).



Fig. 13 - A Facebook crossposting of a blog post inviting interaction from the audience

When recontextualized, the textual materials related to the ear-piercing event undergo a process of “re-geneing” (English 2011), in that they are assigned a different genre in each space they are reposted. The assignment of a new genre through recontextualization is done both as a consequence of the different functional load attributed to each mode in the affordances of each social networking site and through the sign-maker’s aware use of these affordances in personalizing each instance of crossposting. The long vertical multimodal display afforded by the blog is shaped by Cass in the blog post as an argumentatively framed multimodal narrative. The image-based affordances of Instagram are used to shape her Instagram page as a personal photo album, while she employs the hyperlinked image-based affordances of Pinterest to shape her pins as advices and tips. The written-based affordances of Twitter are used to shape Cass’ tweets as announcements triggering the audience’s curiosity to access further content, while the distinctive “image+writing+layout” resources afforded by Facebook enable Cass’ newsbites to reshape her blog post story dialogically and personally.

Within each space the individual artefacts make meaning together with the others on that page while linking to other spaces as well. The blogger seems well aware of that and uses the affordances of each space differently to maximize their communicative effect. Judging from this instance of crossposting, her online presence looks very cohesive, so that it cannot be said that her representations project different identities in the different spaces; however she does shape her presence as discursively different in each space, i.e., as more or less personal and dialogic, as either anticipatory, argumentative, narrative or more counselling like. In this sense it seems that, in the very few clicks needed to select, edit and repost each artefact in other spaces, Cass is able to reshape their genre and discursive function to suit the particular relation with the audience that she has established in each environment.

Combined with the others, this final analytical step can then provide insights into any possible changes in meaning, form, discursive function and genre of the crossposted artefacts and into how these changes shape differently the sign-makers’ relation with the audience in each space. Further investigation of the other artefacts and previous posts in each space, and comparison among spaces, can provide a broader picture of the sign-makers’ preferences in shaping his/her online presence.

### *8. Concluding remarks*

The paper has presented a 5-step analytical framework for the investigation of the phenomenon of crossposting specifically aimed to (a) trace a sign-maker’s interconnected online presence, (b) determine preferences in the use of the crossposting directionality afforded by the different spaces, (c) identify different crossposting practices, (d) analyse changes in meanings, forms and genre that each crossposted artefact undergoes in other spaces, and (e) examine how the sign-maker’s crosspost-

ing combines with the multimodal affordances of each platform to shape identity, discursive functions and relations with the audience differently in each space.

The very mundane instance of digital remediation used to exemplify the application of the framework suggests that transmedia storytelling and transmedia franchise are no longer the exclusive realm of mass media, film industry and corporate productions. Cass' example suggests that the transformative dissemination of one's texts through different spaces has become part of an everyday sign-making ecology. Other uses of the crossposting affordance are rising, such as the posting of web images and videos as a comment or reply to a friend's Facebook post.

We increasingly make meaning multimodally in online environments. Relations and identities here are "entexted" rather than enacted. And can be entexted through edit and re-use of our and others' previously made texts. Brief text input is needed to reframe functions and genre, and hence the way we shape our relations with others. The possible changes in habitus and the related social (semiotic) implications of such a new interconnected semiotic and media landscape can hardly be predicted. The very early analysis presented above has aimed only at drawing attention to an increasingly frequent and widespread form of contemporary sign-making. Thorough and in-depth analysis is needed not only to refine and adjust the 5-step framework on the basis of different research questions, but also to understand the phenomenon of crossposting and to trace possible social implications.

While traditional (offline) forms of sign-making generally require production from scratch of texts in each context (even when re-narrating an event to a different audience, for example), such an interconnected online presence requires minimum production from scratch while promoting maximum dissemination of regenerated signs in different spaces, to different audiences, shaping different communicative functions and social relations with minimum intervention. This traces a shift from production to re-use and might imply a redefinition of the requirements needed for successful communication. It is hoped that the analytical framework presented here can serve as a flexible and adaptable tool to shed some light onto this new and far-reaching phenomenon.

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