Decoding Culinary Power: Discourse Historical Analysis of Instagram Food Trends in the United States

Mitali Singh[1], Dr. Vandana Lunyal[2]

[1]Department of English and Cultural Studies, Panjab University, Chandigarh, India
2019mitalisingh@gmail.com
[2]Director, Regional Institute of English, Sector 32, Chandigarh, India

Abstract— *This paper aims to explore how language and visuals in Instagram posts reflect power dynamics in the food world, focusing on three American foods: burgers, hotdogs and chicken wings as they are deeply ingrained in American culture, reflecting cultural values and preferences. Their popularity cuts across different groups in the U.S. By studying how they're depicted on Instagram, we can uncover hidden power dynamics in food culture. Hence, the paper will dig into how these foods are shown and discussed on the platform using the discourse historical analysis method. Instagram posts to be analyzed will be selected from 2020 onward, including those from chefs, restaurants, and food influencers. The paper shall contend that Instagram content is essentially ideological, reflecting societal beliefs and norms. Language, whether spoken or visual, can reinforce existing power structures. This paper will examine the language in these Instagram posts, focusing on power, history, and ideology. It will also delve into the intricate mechanisms of counter-discourse, exploring how activists strategically design, deploy, and orchestrate digital narratives to challenge prevailing socio-political ideologies. It also underscores the role of Instagram in advocating for justice and amplifying voices in democratic societies.*

Keywords— *Power Dynamics, food posts, Instagram, Discourse Historical Analysis, United States*

I. INTRODUCTION

This paper examines the linguistic and visual elements of these Instagram posts, with a focus on power dynamics, historical contexts, and ideological implications. Food influencers on Instagram can confuse people about food and affect what they buy and eat (Von-Polheim, Cano-Orón & Vengut-Climent, 2023). A study by YouGov in 2023 found that 25% of people worldwide think that famous people are good at promoting food products (YouGov, 2023). Since many young people under 18 follow popular figures on Instagram, it's important to think about whether it's right for these influencers to endorse products, especially considering how persuasive they can be (Herrero Ruiz & Navarro-Beltrá, 2021, pp. 526-554). There is not much research yet on how technology affects our traditional ways of eating and looking at food, even though sharing food pictures is popular worldwide (Hudders, De Jans & De Veirman, 2021, pp. 327-375).

1.1 Instagram as a discursive system

There are several ways to look at Instagram's function as a discursive platform. The text's type or the communication activity's goal is the first dimension. Popular text types on Instagram are debate, education, and self-expression. These kinds reflect the social norms and communication scenarios that the platform facilitates. Self-expression, for example, frequently takes the form of captions and longer text posts that resemble opinion pieces or microblogging. Instagram can be used for both private and public statements, as seen by well-known instances like Naomi Osaka's announcement that she was withdrawing from a tournament because of mental health issues (Schreiber, 2024, pp. 146).

The second dimension concerns the form of (re-)mediation, focusing on whether the poster is the original content creator or is resharing existing content. This dimension also highlights Instagram's participatory intensity, which helps explore authorship and authorization issues (Jenkins & Carpentier, 2013 p. 265). It allows for examining how accounts position themselves within a discourse, differentiating between affirmative or critical stances toward reshared content. The third dimension involves the tone of voice and visual design of text posts, including typography and color choices that reinforce the post's communicative purpose and signal the user's positioning. Instagram posts often integrate self-expression and educational content, particularly on influencer accounts that also engage in activism.

Instagram's use for activism and awareness-raising has also been significantly influenced by its emphasis on visual content. In contrast to offline events and rallies, the platform allows for accessible and affordable strategic activism (Neumayer & Rossi, 2018, pp. 4293-4310). This has been made even more apparent during the pandemic, as Instagram has become a springboard for new political and social initiatives that combine influencer culture, activism, and PR. The platform's ability to encourage sociopolitical engagement is demonstrated, for instance, by the posts made by @queerlexikon on the use of inclusive language in German.

Instagram has shaped modern visual and textual communication in a big way, as seen by the development of its interactive and communicative features and its growing intricacy as a discursive platform. Instagram has been chosen as the field of study for this paper because of its unique ability to facilitate nuanced discourse, making it an increasingly relevant and important subject for academic research.

1.2 Applying Discourse Historical Analysis to Contemporary Food Narratives on Instagram

Discourse Historical Analysis (DHA) is particularly apt for examining Instagram food posts as it contextualizes the interplay between historical and contemporary food narratives. Unlike Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), which focuses on power dynamics and ideological structures, DHA allows a nuanced exploration of how cultural and historical trajectories influence modern culinary practices. For instance, the first two posts exemplify this dynamic, with one tracing the hamburger's evolution as a cultural icon in NYC's diverse foodscape, while the other reflects contemporary concerns like sustainability and health-conscious eating. Instagram's multimodal nature, combining visuals, text, and hashtags, aligns with DHA's capacity to analyze communication in

broader sociocultural and historical contexts. By situating these posts within their historical trajectories—celebrating traditional values while addressing modern challenges like malnutrition and food waste—DHA bridges the gap between tradition and innovation, offering a holistic approach to decoding contemporary food discourse.

CDS looks at language use beyond just sentences, including visuals and sounds, to understand how society is reproduced through communication. It questions how language influences social structures and challenges unequal power dynamics. The DHA is characterized by being interdisciplinary, teamwork-oriented, using triangulation as a key method, and being focused on application (Datondji & Amousou, 2019, pp. 70-80). DHA also integrates knowledge about historical sources and social and political backgrounds to understand discourse events. The DHA follows a critical theory perspective, which involves three types of critique: text-immanent critique, which uncovers inconsistencies in discourse structures; sociodiagnostic critique, which reveals persuasive or manipulative aspects of discourse; and future-related critique, which aims to improve communication (Wodak, 2001, pp. 63-94).

Ideology in the DHA refers to one-sided worldviews shared by social groups. It's seen as a tool for establishing and maintaining power imbalances through discourse. The DHA aims to demystify hegemonic discourses by uncovering underlying ideologies. According to the DHA, power is about exerting one's will within social relationships (Reisigl, 2017, pp. 44-59). Instagram, as a social media platform, reflects ideological struggles for dominance. Analysing Instagram posts through the DHA will reveal how linguistic forms are used to wield power. Context is crucial in the DHA, which considers four levels: immediate language context, intertextual relationships, extralinguistic social variables, and broader sociopolitical and historical contexts (Wodak, 2015, pp. 1-4). These levels help us understand how discourse is shaped and influenced by its surroundings. Specifically, it will delve into the hashtags and captions accompanying these posts to elucidate potential cultural, economic, and social dynamics within American society.

The concept of counter-discourse, rooted in the theories of Foucault (1970) as elaborated by Moussa and Scapp, highlight the empowerment of marginalized voices to resist oppressive power structures by articulating their own narratives (Moussa & Scapp, 1996, pp. 87-112). Such acts of political resistance through counter-discourse can take various forms. As discussed, counter-discourses often emerge from individuals or groups feeling marginalized or misrepresented by dominant discourse.

1.3 Justification for the Choice of Fried Chicken, Hotdogs, and Burgers in the Analysis of American Food Discourse

This study focused on Instagram food posts from three specific food groups: burgers, hotdogs, and fried chicken. This selection was made due to their cultural, socio-economic, and discursive relevance in contemporary U.S. culinary narratives. These items represent American fast-food culture and are central to discussions on globalisation, class dynamics, and health discourse. Their extensive use and strong connections to corporate food chains, street food culture, and regional culinary differences render them suitable for analysing power dynamics, branding approaches, and consumer interaction on social media. These foods are often central to discussions regarding industrial food production, cultural appropriation, and food activism, especially in the post-2020 digital context, where online discourse has increasingly examined labour ethics, environmental sustainability, and dietary inclusivity. The selection of these three categories facilitates a focused and analytically rich examination of how Instagram users and influencers construct narratives surrounding mainstream, highly commercialised food products, despite the contributions of other food items to food-related discourse.

II.   RESEARCH FRAMEWORK: INSTAGRAM FOOD POST DISCOURSE-HISTORICAL APPROACH (DHA) APPLIED

Overview of the Framework: Using the Discourse-Historical Approach (DHA) inside Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), this paper investigates how Instagram posts including four classic American foods—burgers, hotdogs, chicken wings, and pancakes—construct and reflect power dynamics in the food industry. These foods are ingrained in American society; thus, their appearance on Instagram offers insights on ideological narratives, power systems, and society views. This framework methodically reveals the interaction between discourse, history, and ideology in forming food-related power relations by examining textual and visual aspects in posts from chefs, restaurants, and food influencers (2020 onwards).

2.1 Discourse-Historical Approach (DHA) justification:

Because of its interdisciplinary character, emphasis on real-world problems, and methodological rigour in contextualising debate historically, DHA is especially appropriate for this study (Datondji & Amousou, 2019, pp. 70). Originally designed to investigate anti-Semitic stereotypes during Kurt Waldheim's 1986 presidential campaign, DHA has since developed into a thorough method covering identity development, discrimination, and

power relations in many spheres (Wodak, "The discourse of politics in action," 2009, p. 65). DHA offers a strong analytical tool for examining how Instagram food narratives either support or subvert current power structures given its capacity to triangulate many sources of data—including books, images, and contextual history. Applying Wodak's (2015, p. 10) multi-stage process, the study uses DHA in a recursive way to methodically examine Instagram food discourse:

(i)   Theoretical knowledge activation and literature review: Theoretically, orienting the study is informed by a review of past studies on food discourse, power dynamics, and Instagram as a digital platform. Important discussions in CDA and DHA offer the basis for methodological decisions and analytical categories.

(ii)   Methodical Data and Contextual Gathering: Verified accounts or famous accounts of chefs, restaurants, and food bloggers provide Instagram posts including the chosen American foods. Along with the visual components of the posts, metadata—including captions, hashtags, and user involvement measures—is noted. Furthermore, recorded are contextual elements including the sociopolitical environment of food movement post-2020.

(iii) Analysis Data Selection and Preparation: By means of a purposive sampling technique, one guarantees that the chosen postings reflect several points of view within the American food sector. Engagement levels, content themes, and the presence of explicit or implicit power-related language form criteria for choice. Posts are arranged according to genre—e.g., promotional, narrative-driven, advocacy-related—for additional study.

DHA's three dimensions of critique help one to understand findings:

(i)   Text or discourse-immanent critique points up contradictions and inconsistencies in Instagram food narratives.

(ii)   Contextualises convincing and ideological strategies using historical and social knowledge in the sociodiagnostic critique.

(iii) Future-Related Prospective Criticism: Suggests strategies to question negative images and advance more fair communication.

The revelations of the study support debate on food justice, cultural representation, and digital impact in the gastronomic scene. Suggestions for inclusive social media discourse practices and ethical food marketing abound.

2.2 Representation, Power, and Ideology in Instagram Food Discourse: According to DHA, images and words

acquire power when powerful social actors use them to shape conversation (Reisigl, 2017, p. 44). Within Instagram, food stories are moulded by: Corporate and Culinary Elites: Taste preferences and food trends are under control by restaurants and famous chefs. Food bloggers and influencers show well-chosen aesthetics that could either support or challenge popular narratives. Social Media Audiences: User interactions and engagement patterns support either aa challenge to or validation of prevailing food discourses. Fairclough (1989) contends that language and visual techniques either acquire consent or enforce compliance, so acting as a tool of social control. This paper investigates Instagram food posts as sites where power relations are negotiated—by means of branding, cultural narrative, or advocacy campaigns. Future research avenues could delve deeper into the impact of influencer partnerships on shaping consumer perceptions of food brands, ultimately contributing to a more comprehensive understanding of the intricate web of power dynamics at play in the digital realm of food discourse. Additionally, exploring the intersection of gender, race, and class within these narratives could unveil further layers of complexity in how power is constructed and contested in the American food sector.

2.3 Why Discourse Historical Analysis

Due mostly to its methodical emphasis on historical context and its methodological flexibility, the Discourse-Historical Approach (DHA) has been chosen above other Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) theories. Van Dijk, as quoted by Wodak (2009, pp. 13–14), noted that critical discourse studies sometimes fell short in completely clarifying the link between text and context. Context, he defined as a mental picture of pertinent social and situational elements influencing the production and understanding of speech (Van Dijk, 2008, p. 417). DHA is a particularly useful analytical tool since historical continuity is a fundamental concept of CDA and DHA fits this idea rather well. Reisigl (2017, p. 44) backs up this point even more by pointing out DHA as among the most often used and flexible critical techniques for discourse analysis.

DHA's inclination over other CDA approaches stems mostly from its clear inclusion of historical viewpoints. DHA expands Van Dijk's (2008) contention on the need of contextual awareness in discourse analysis by stressing that language is always historical—connected synchronistically to present events and diachronically to past ones. Wodak (2001, p. 65) emphasises that DHA methodically combines a lot of historical knowledge on the sociopolitical settings in which discursive events take place. DHA therefore not only looks at past and present

discourse structures but also takes future consequences into account, so guaranteeing a complete analytical framework (Wodak, 2009, p. 11).

Although DHA shares some traits with other CDA techniques, it has several unique qualities that make it more efficient for examining speech in challenging sociopolitical settings. First, although it conforms with Critical Theory, DHA treats context essentially as historical rather than just situational and stresses historical analysis over broad social theory. Second, by combining several empirical observations, theories, approaches, and contextual data, DHA uses triangulation more methodically than other CDA techniques—especially in large-scale studies. Third, DHA stresses the useful application of discourse analysis, supporting non-discriminatory language use and criticising repressive discourses, such those supporting patriarchal social structures that disadvantage women while privileged men.

Furthermore, DHA stresses rhetoric differently than both Fairclough's Dialectical-Relational Approach and Van Dijk's Social-Cognition Approach. In DHA, rhetoric is especially important, especially in argumentation which draws on observational, descriptive, and explanatory phases in discourse analysis (Datondji, André Cocou, and Franck Amousou, 2019, p. 77). DHA also uses a multi-perspectival approach to communication, weighing several points of view on several social levels. This runs counter to Fairclough and Van Leeuwen's mono-perspectival approach, which reads social reality from one point of view. Ultimately, DHA emphasises historical grounding and contextual anchoring more than other discourse analysis techniques since it draws more especially from Functional Pragmatics.

These special theoretical and methodological strengths have made DHA the preferred method over others CDA techniques. Particularly useful for examining power, ideology, and discourse in historical and modern settings, its methodical integration of historical context, dedication to methodological triangulation, emphasis on rhetorical argumentation, and multi-perspectival outlook. Its practical orientation also helps researchers to apply analytical insights to real-world problems, so supporting its relevance in critical discourse studies.

III.   DATA COLLECTION AND SAMPLING

This study systematically collected and sampled Instagram data utilising Traackr, an extensive influencer marketing and analytics tool. Traackr allows researchers to monitor influencer activity, engagement metrics, and content trends, rendering it especially useful for investigations into digital influence and cultural discourse.

This platform facilitates data sampling according to defined keywords, geographic location, and audience engagement metrics, thereby providing a systematic method for analysing food-related discourse on Instagram in the United States after 2020.

The data collection process entailed filtering Instagram accounts according to geographic location (United States) and selecting posts from 2020 onwards. The selection process was informed by specific terms pertinent to the study, including "Burgers of Instagram," "Best Burgers in NYC," "Street Food Hot Dogs," "Hot Dog Lovers," "Crispy Fried Chicken," and "Fried Chicken Lover." The identified keywords enabled the recognition of accounts that significantly influence food discourse on Instagram. The ultimate selection of accounts comprises:

   (i)   Hamburger America has 99.2K followers.
   (ii)   Uptown CLT has 92,000 followers.
   (iii)   She Likes Milk (Verified, 204,000 followers.
   (iv)   Mercy for Animals is an organisation focused on animal welfare and advocacy. Verified account with 508,000 followers.
   (v)   Species Unite: Non-profit organisation with 22,900 followers.
   (vi)   Eater (Verified account, 104,000 followers)

The selection of these accounts was based on their substantial influence on public opinion and discourse surrounding food on Instagram. The integration of verified influencers, substantial follower counts, and content relevance guaranteed that the sampled data accurately reflected prevailing narratives in digital food culture. The study employs a methodological framework that combines quantitative big data techniques with qualitative cultural analytics. Traackr's capability to gather extensive social media data, encompassing engagement metrics, follower counts, and content performance, is consistent with big data analytics, which is crucial for assessing digital influence. The study integrates aspects of digital humanities by analysing the cultural and social significances inherent in food-related Instagram narratives. This hybrid approach, which combines computational analysis and interpretive techniques, facilitates a detailed examination of the representation, discussion, and engagement with food on social media platforms. This approach increases the research's credibility by emphasising content that both mirrors digital food trends and plays a role in shaping consumer perceptions and engagement. This multi-faceted methodology effectively captures the intersection of digital influence, cultural representation, and audience engagement in the evolving landscape of food-related Instagram content.

IV.   REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Zeena Feldman's study from 2021, "'Good Food' in an Instagram Age: Rethinking Hierarchies of Culture, Criticism and Taste", looked at how London's restaurant scene was shown on Instagram and in the Michelin Guide. This study created the idea of the "Instagram gaze." Even though Instagram makes food criticism more open to everyone, Feldman discovered that it often reinforces existing food hierarchies by showing images that favour certain foods and dining experiences. In "Savoring Sundanese Food: A Discourse Analysis of Instagram's Powerful Promotion of Bandung's Culture and Culinary", Rosaria Mita Amalia et al. (2023) looked at the official Instagram account of Bandung's Department of Culture and Tourism and found that it promoted Sundanese food traditions. The study found that Instagram posts that use different language to highlight traditional foods and drinks are a good way to get people to follow you and promote a wide range of foods. Kwok Yingchen et al. (2023) looked at how contradiction is used in Filipino Instagram food posts to show how users deal with the neoliberal dilemma of indulgence and discipline in,"Navigating Discipline and Indulgence: The Performance of Contradiction on Instagram Food Posts in the Philippines". According to the study, privilege is shown by the ability to code-switch between these two extremes, which is affected by history and culture. Gwynne Mapes studied how celebrity chefs use normative language that aligns with elite authenticity to talk about sustainability on Instagram in her 2023 work "Making Privilege Palatable: Normative Sustainability in Chefs' Instagram Discourse." This makes privilege seem acceptable. The purpose of this study is to show how language can reinforce social hierarchies in digital food discourse.

Discourse and digital practises: Doing discourse analysis in the digital age (2015) by Rodney H. Jones demonstrates how critical tools can be used to analyse everything from video games and social networking to apps and photo sharing. A novel framework for discourse analysis is developed by Norman Fairclough in his 2007 book, Discourse and Contemporary Social Change. This framework integrates text analysis, the study of text production and interpretation processes, and the social analysis of discourse events to firmly place discourse within a larger context of social relations. Discourse and Power in a Multilingual World, by Adrian Blackledge, developed a theoretical and methodological framework that drew on critical discourse analysis to reveal the linguistic character of social and cultural processes and structures. G. Bouvier's paper, "What is a discourse approach to Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, and other social media: connecting with other academic fields?" (2015),

delves into the complexities of multicultural discourse within the rapidly evolving landscape of social media. It explores how language, identity, cross-cultural social relations, and power dynamics are manifested and negotiated in various social media platforms. Additionally, "Principles, theories and approaches to critical discourse analysis" (2018) provides a concise historical overview of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and demonstrates its application in a wide range of studies. The SAGE handbook of social media research methods (2022) covers the process of research, from data collection to analysis and interpretation. It focuses on platform-specific analysis, analytical tools, critical social media analysis, ethics, privacy, and the politics of social media data, and includes a range of new case studies and data sets that exemplify the methodological approaches. A succinct summary of the main arguments surrounding the impact and impacts of social media, including Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat, and TikTok, is given in The Social Media Debate: Unpacking the Social, Psychological, and Cultural Effects of Social Media (2022). "Social media critical discourse studies (SM-CDS)" is a chapter in the book The Routledge Handbook of Critical Discourse Studies (2017), written by Majid Khosravi Nik, that discusses how fundamental questions of power and conceptual frameworks may be anticipated for a critical discourse studies approach to social media. Digital Food Cultures (2020), edited by Deborah Lupton and Zeena Feldman, highlights the wide range of food cultures accessible through the internet and other digital platforms. In their work, Talking about Food: The Social and the Global in Eating Communities (2020), Sofia Rüdiger and Susanne Mühleisen delve into the relationship between language and food from various angles. In her book The Insta-Food Diet (2020), nutritionist Pixie Turner explores the influence of social media on our eating habits, the restaurant industry, and food policy. This insightful volume sheds light on how platforms like Instagram have shaped the way we approach food. Culinary Linguistics: The Chef's Special (2013) delves into the field of food and food-related studies from a linguistic perspective and covers various topics, including historical and ethnographic approaches, literary studies, the teaching of English as a foreign language, psycholinguistics, and the study of computer-mediated communication.

V.   ANALYSIS OF THE POSTS

5.1 Post 1:

Fig.1: Image of a hamburger representing NYC's cultural diversity. Short interview with George Motz, Burger scholar) (screenshot from the reel) Available at:
[https://www.instagram.com/reel/C1r-kLdud1f/?igsh=eXVrdzJicW9ud2s4)](https://www.instagram.com/reel/C1r-kLdud1f/?igsh=eXVrdzJicW9ud2s4)

5.1.1 Description

This Instagram post (see Figure 1) from welovenyc offers a glimpse into Hamburger America, a prominent NYC restaurant. The dynamic reel features an interview with an owner, showcasing signature burgers and the restaurant's cultural significance. Behind-the-scenes footage reveals meticulous burger preparation and hints at a diverse menu, while shots of a bustling day convey a vibrant atmosphere. The post concludes with a declaration of love for NYC.

5.1.2 Discourse Historical Analysis

The conversation about hamburgers in the given post places the food as both a cultural artefact and a site of conflicting interpretations. Viewed historically, George Motz, owner of Hamburger America and self-described "hamburger expert," presents a story of authenticity and tradition that fits prevailing themes in American cooking history. Motz's focus on "really doing it right" captures a more general ideological dedication to maintain hamburger historical integrity. This is consistent with the opinion of McDonald's founder Ray Kroc on the cultural and aesthetic worth of the hamburger bun since, as he famously said, "It takes a certain mindset to see the beauty of a hamburger bun" (Haig, 2006). Invoking Kroc, a person connected with the worldwide fast-food sector, the post subtly supports the historical continuity of the hamburger's importance and implicitly legitimises Motz's power. From a discourse-historical standpoint, intersecting traditions, modernism, and national identity shapes the development of hamburgers (Reisigl & Wodak, 2017). Reflecting larger socioeconomic changes in American consumer culture, Andrew F. Smith (2008) positions the hamburger's path from street food in the 19th century to a restaurant staple.

Though first stigmatised following World War I, Smith notes that by the 1930s the hamburger had become a staple of American cuisine. This historical path shows how food discourse functions inside hegemonic systems, where once-marginalized foods acquire cultural validity by mass acceptance and commercialisation.

Motz's recognition of New York's function as a culinary melting pot helps to further situate his speech within more general conversations of hybridity and cultural negotiation (Holliday, Hyde & Kullman, 2010). Motz creates a dynamic picture of New York as an always changing environment reflecting its cosmopolitan residents by characterising the city as "alive." This is consistent with conversations about food as a means of expression of cultural identity, in which the variety of burger forms represents the several cultural scene of New York (Bell & Valentine, 2013). Motz's claim that onion is "the original, first condiment" also serves as a historical intertext, tying modern burger culture to its gastronomic beginnings and so supporting his authenticity as a food historian. David Gerard Hogan (1997) builds on the hamburger's evolution into a fast-food icon by placing it in line with capitalist logic of mass production and efficiency. The post's citation of Motz's 33-year tenure in New York supports the idea of ingrained knowledge by tying historical power to personal experience. By presenting his story as anchored in lived experience rather than abstract theorising, such a tactic enhances Motz's ethos (Fairclough, 2003).

5.1.3 Analysis of Hashtag and Caption

The expressive use of the heart emoji in reference to NYC implies a strongly rooted emotional connection, so supporting the city's position as a symbol of cultural inclusiveness and diversity. This fits symbolic ideas of New York as a welcoming gastronomic venue where several culinary customs coexist (Zukin, 1991). Moreover, the reference to websites like Travel Channel and First We Feast strengthens Motz's reputation in the field of gastronomy and helps him to be positioned inside popular food media. Using hashtags like #nycrestaurates, #burgers, and #georgemotz strategically serves as a digital indexing mechanism, raising the visibility of the post and embedding it within pertinent online discussion communities (Page, 2012). This fits the larger digital conversation about food, where consumer involvement and ideological engagement are facilitated by classification using hashtags (Abidin, 2016).

5.2 Post 2

Fig.2: Zucchini turkey burger featured by Shelikesmilk. (screenshot from the reel)

*Available at:*https://www.instagram.com/reel/CvI53tcNghc/?igsh=eTVlY25sZHM0ZW5w)

5.2.1 Description

This selected Instagram post (see figure 2) from the account of Hailey Piper, an entrepreneur residing in New York City provides a step-by-step demonstration of the preparation process for zucchini turkey burgers. Each recipe stage, from gathering the ingredients to cooking the burgers, is visually depicted. Accompanying the reel is a detailed caption, listing all the necessary ingredients and providing a thorough recipe for making the zucchini turkey burgers

5.2.2 Discourse Historical Analysis

Hailey Piper, a New York City-based entrepreneur, chose Instagram post (see Figure 2) that best illustrates the junction of modern health-conscious eating trends and digital food discourse. In order to captivate her readers, Hailey Piper's post offers a detailed step-by-step tutorial of zucchini turkey burgers combining visual and textual components. The allusion to "more pumpkin than I know what to do with" connects with more general seasonal conversation in which local produce availability and food consumption are related with natural cycles (Patel, 2013). Reflecting a larger ideological commitment to organic and environmentally friendly food systems, the focus on fresh, garden-grown foods fits the growing trend towards sustainable eating practices (Guthman, 2003). This trend speaks to modern issues about industrialised food production and the shift towards local and seasonal eating (Pollan, 2006).

The historical background of food security shapes this article even more inside international discussions on dietary health and malnutrition. Although food systems have developed to help to reduce food insecurity over the past century, the continuation of chronic malnutrition

afflicting over 800 million people (FAO, 2021) highlights the disparities in access to wholesome food. Piper's contribution to spreading knowledge about healthy cooking shows how social media influencers help to shape modern food habits, especially in high-income countries where better nutrition has greatly lowered cardiovascular disease (FAO, 2021). This conversation does not, however, fully explain differences in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs), where diet-related diseases remain increasing (Popkin, Adair & Ng, 2012). Thus, the post subtly expresses privilege in food discourse since access to fresh ingredients and time-consuming home cooking is not always possible (Carolan, 2011).

Linguistically, Piper's thorough caption serves as a kind of instructional dialogue, elevating her as a culinary authority by leading her audience through the cooking process. The language is clear and directive, so supporting her position as an expert by democratising cooking knowledge (Gee, 2014). The focus on "eating an extra serving of vegetables" reflects modern nutritional debate, in which vegetable intake is positioned as a key to health and well-being (Nestle, 2002). This fits more general public health campaigns encouraging plant-based diets to fight obesity and associated disorders (Willet et al., 2019). Moreover, the zucchini turkey burger itself stands for a synthesis of conventional and contemporary culinary techniques.

5.2.3 Caption Analysis

First, several discourses intersect in the caption: Words like "healthy," "easy," and "extra serving of veggies" are part of a larger neoliberal wellness culture that promotes self-control, individual accountability, and efficiency in all aspects of life, including food. In terms of sustainability and home gardening, the idea of courgette "taking over your garden" alludes to current discussions about growing one's own food, being self-sufficient, and being environmentally sensitive. Concerns about food security and home gardening in the wake of a pandemic are congruent with this. Subtly establishing a tone that associates cuisine with culture, jazz, and comfort—building an idealised domestic scene—the musical allusion ("Benny Goodman. Stompin' at the Savoy") recalls a vintage, romanticised America. The author, Hailey, is positioned as an approachable peer or trusted friend by using direct address, which establishes an intimate and warm tone. As is customary in influencer branding, the last "Enjoy! xo Hailey" statement emphasises a friendly, feminine persona. "S&P" stands for salt and pepper; its use of ampersands, acronyms, and minimum punctuation exemplifies the casual, efficient, and aesthetically appealing character of Instagram's digital discourse. The staged casualness that characterises influencer culture is

also reflected in this. Even though the caption doesn't say anything about gender, it fits within feminised narratives about housework, caregiving, and nurturing through food. The art of healthful vegetable sneak-ins delicately evokes conventional maternal metaphors. The caption also engages in soft-branding even though no products are advertised directly: Just by using the handle @shelikesmilk, the poster fits into a certain lifestyle niche that is probably associated with dairy, health, or homesick nostalgia. Important for Instagram's social capital is the option to share a precise recipe with measurements and "hacks" (such freezing patties for grilling) since it adds practical value that increases engagement and credibility. Mentioning home gardens and ground turkey in passing suggests that the speaker has time and resources that others do not. It embodies a stratified discourse in which the economic and time affordances of "healthy" and "simple" cooking are still relevant. The gentrification of food culture on Instagram and similar platforms involves the aestheticization, photography, and narrativization of regular meals for social consumption. This caption is in line with this trend.

5.2.4 Comparison of the two posts

Despite their shared subject matter—burgers—the two Instagram posts reveal very different worldviews and cultural narratives. There is a lot of cultural symbolism and historical discourse in Post 1, which features George Motz and Hamburger America. It shows the hamburger in a new light, highlighting its symbolic value as a symbol of urban diversity, industrial heritage, and American identity. Motz's focus on tradition and authenticity is in line with larger discussions regarding the preservation of culinary heritage. With a focus on New York City as a dynamic, multicultural centre, the post places food within power structures, cultural legacies, and national pride. Post 2 by Hailey Piper, on the other hand, is a symbol of how digital domesticity, influencer branding, and contemporary wellness culture all come together. The neoliberal logic of self-care and individual responsibility is framed within her zucchini turkey burger tutorial, which emphasises health-conscious living, sustainability, and seasonally eating. The gentrification of social media food discourse is emphasised by the caption's informal tone, friendly language, and aestheticized portrayal of everyday cooking. Piper portrays herself as an approachable colleague, providing advice that presumes access to time, fresh ingredients, and home-cooking facilities, in contrast to Motz, who embodies culinary authority grounded in personal experience and historical knowledge. Post 2 is concerned with the individual's wellness and care practices, while Post 1 is more focused on the public's historically informed portrayal of food heritage. Despite this, both posts establish

food as an important cultural practice. Doing so exemplifies how online discussions about food can honour the past while also advancing values informed by the modern social, economic, and technological landscape.

5.3 Post 3

Fig.3: Instagram post about @the_chili_man, a hot dog vendor in Uptown Charlotte. (screenshot from the reel)Available:https://www.instagram.com/reel/CjSwp1JDozC/?igsh=d3JjOXVlemI5Zmdk

5.3.1 Description

This Instagram post (see Figure 3) curated from the Uptown Charlotte handle, presents a captivating reel featuring the renowned Chili Man in action. The reel provides a compelling glimpse into the culinary artistry of the Chili Man as he skilfully prepares a variety of delectable hot dogs at his vibrant stall. From the sizzle of the grill to the artful assembly of toppings, each scene offers a tantalizing peek into the vibrant street food culture of Uptown Charlotte.

5.3.2 Discourse-Historical Analysis

The examined Instagram reel from the Uptown Charlotte account highlights the cultural and sociological importance of the Chilli Man's hot dog cart. The post situates the Chilli Man within the broader context of American street cuisine, bolstering his reputation by citing Yelp's designation of his hot dogs as "#1 in America." The historical aspect of street food culture is fundamentally embedded in urban environments, where mobile vendors have offered accessible and economical food to varied people for millennia (Farrer, 2015, pp. 7-19). The Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) characterises street food as food that is cooked and sold in public areas, enhancing urban food security and promoting social connections (Joint FAO, 2001). Street food vendors, exemplified by the Chilli Man, significantly influence local culinary landscapes. Their presence is frequently associated with cultural history and authenticity, as seen by the Chilli Man's enduring establishment in Uptown Charlotte since 2005. This historical reference corresponds with scholarly discussions that regard food vendors as key contributors to

the preservation of culinary traditions and community identity (Pappalardo, Allegra & Pecorino, 2014, pp. 83-92). Nonetheless, despite their cultural significance, street food vendors frequently encounter obstacles with food safety and regulatory adherence. Privitera (2014, pp. 1-10) emphasises that cleanliness issues and irregular implementation of health rules might affect the viability of street food enterprises. The utilisation of hashtags like #uptownclt, #exploreclt, and #charlottesgotalot demonstrates a calculated approach to enhance digital interaction and captivate local audiences. Hashtags serve as digital indicators that classify information and enhance its visibility within online communities (Page, 2012, pp. 181-206). The post not only chronicles the Chilli Man's culinary expertise but also engages in the internet narrative of Uptown Charlotte's urban culture. Visual components, like photographs of hot dogs and the Chilli Man's cart, collaborate with verbal descriptions to provide an immersive experience. Kress & van Leeuwen (2006) assert that multimodal communication improves audience engagement by stimulating several sensory impressions. This hybrid narrative technique renders the Chilli Man's legacy accessible to a broader audience, including individuals unacquainted with his oeuvre. The post serves as a conduit for cultural translation, rendering local food culture comprehensible to wider audiences. This coincides with current discourse on the globalisation of food culture, wherein traditional cuisines are reinterpreted through digital and commercial perspectives (Johnston & Baumann, 2015, pp. 55-77). Social media platforms not only record culinary culture but also significantly shape consumer views and economic dynamics (Abbots & Lavis, 2013).

5.4 Post 4

Fig.4: (Reel on reasons to avoid meat-based hot dogs) (screenshot from the reel https://www.instagram.com/reel/C9iAuY2xCct/?igsh=ZWl3ZWNoZTZtNmtw)

5.4.1 Description

This Instagram post selected from the posts of the Instagram handle mercyforanimals sheds light on the dark realities behind hotdog production. "Mercyforanimals" is a non-profit organization dedicated to animal protection in the United States and Canada, focusing on raising awareness about the consequences of food choices. The video showcases the process of hotdog production and highlights the ambiguous ingredients, including animal trimmings such as skin, blood, liver, and other slaughter by-products.

5.4.2 Discourse-Historical Analysis

This Instagram post, created by Mercy For Animals, contests prevailing narratives on hot dog eating and highlight the ethical issues associated with meat production. This perspective attacks industrial food production while simultaneously engaging in broader discussions on vegetarianism, ethical consumerism, and internet activism. The introduction of the post characterises hot dogs as a prevalent and culturally important food, especially within North American customs. This perspective illustrates the normalisation of meat consumption in Western diets, frequently disconnecting people from the realities of food production (Loughnan, Haslam & Bastian, 2010, pp. 156-172). Meat is frequently intertwined with national and cultural identities, rendering challenges to its consumption especially contentious (Potts, 2018, pp. 45-63). By revealing the components and methods involved in hot dog manufacture, the post challenges the prevailing narrative that depicts meat as a nutritious and indispensable part of the diet. Rather, it offers a contrasting viewpoint, highlighting the ethical and environmental ramifications of meat consumption. This method corresponds with the concept of "counter-hegemonic discourse" articulated by Almiron, Cole, and Freeman (2018), wherein media contests prevailing power structures, namely the meat industry's representation of its goods. The post identifies with Rüdiger and Mühleisen's (2020) concept of the evolution of veganism from a "marginal radical movement" to a widely accepted mainstream lifestyle. Veganism has historically faced stigmatisation in media narratives, frequently portrayed as radical or unfeasible (Turner, 2020). Increased celebrity endorsements and rising environmental concerns have facilitated its normalisation, altering public view towards a "eco-chic" and ethically aware lifestyle (Consumerism, 2019, p. 157). The post connects with broader societal developments by emphasising "hard veganism," which underscores moral responsibility and the ethical imperative of plant-based diets, framing veganism as an activist position (Christopher, Bartkowski & Haverda, 2018, p.

55). The language in the essay frames veganism not merely as a dietary choice but as a moral obligation, attributing responsibility to individuals for the repercussions of their food selections. This discourse mirrors extensive debates in food ethics, wherein consumers are progressively encouraged to contemplate the environmental, social, and ethical ramifications of their dietary choices (Singer, 2011). The post's call to action—urging individuals to "advocate for animals" and adopt plant-based diets—demonstrates the function of digital media in modern activism. Social media has emerged as a potent instrument for social movements, facilitating swift distribution of information and interaction with worldwide audiences (Poell & van Dijck, 2015, pp. 527-543). Hashtags like #mercyforanimals and #plantbasedfoods function as tools for online community formation and visibility, linking individuals with analogous ethical concerns (Page, 2012, pp. 181-206). Furthermore, the incorporation of visual narrative in the reel amplifies its persuasive efficacy. Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) contend that multimodal speech, which integrates visual and textual components, may more effectively shape public perception than conventional text-based arguments. The post juxtaposes familiar visuals of hot dogs with disturbing footage of meat manufacturing, creating cognitive dissonance that compels viewers to reevaluate their ideas about food. This method corresponds with the notion of "shock advocacy," wherein emotive and graphic material is employed to enhance awareness and induce behavioural modification (Cole & Morgan, 2011, pp. 134-149).

5.4.3 Comparison of the Two Instagram Posts

Both Instagram posts—one from Uptown Charlotte highlighting the Chilli Man's hot dog cart, and the other from Mercy For Animals revealing the ethical issues of hot dog production—contribute to the dialogue on food culture from markedly divergent viewpoints.The Uptown Charlotte post idealises the act of consuming hot dogs by highlighting artistry, nostalgia, and regional culinary traditions. The Chilli Man is depicted as an expert in his field, while the street food culture is presented as a dynamic component of Uptown Charlotte's cultural character. This corresponds with wider cultural discourses that honour food as a fundamental component of place-making and shared experiences (Pappalardo, Allegra & Pecorino, 2014). Conversely, the Mercy For Animals piece dismantles the ostensibly benign pleasure of consuming hot dogs, revealing the industrial mechanisms that underlie their production. It compels the audience to examine the ethical and environmental ramifications of meat consumption, promoting plant-based alternatives. A fundamental distinction between the two postings lies in their portrayal of the consumer. The Uptown Charlotte

post presupposes a passive customer who enjoys street cuisine without scrutinising its sources. It characterises food intake as an act of enjoyment and cultural engagement, so promoting dominant narratives regarding food as a source of individual and collective pleasure (Potts, 2018). The Mercy For Animals post, however, presupposes an engaged consumer capable of ethical reasoning and transformation. It portrays consumption as a political act, wherein individuals are accountable for the ethical ramifications of their food decisions (Christopher, Bartkowski & Haverda, 2018). The post's call to action—"speak up for animals"—positions consumption as a kind of activism, consistent with the principles of ethical consumerism (Singer, 2011). Both posts strategically utilise Instagram's features—hashtags, reels, and visual storytelling—to influence public perception. The Uptown Charlotte post utilises social media to advertise a business and improve local involvement, illustrating the growing significance of digital platforms in food marketing (Page, 2012). Simultaneously, the Mercy For Animals post utilises social media as an advocacy instrument, including strong imagery and emotive appeals to enhance interaction. This corresponds with the notion of "shock advocacy" (Cole & Morgan, 2011), wherein digital activism depends on impactful graphics to provoke emotional reactions and stimulate behavioural transformation.
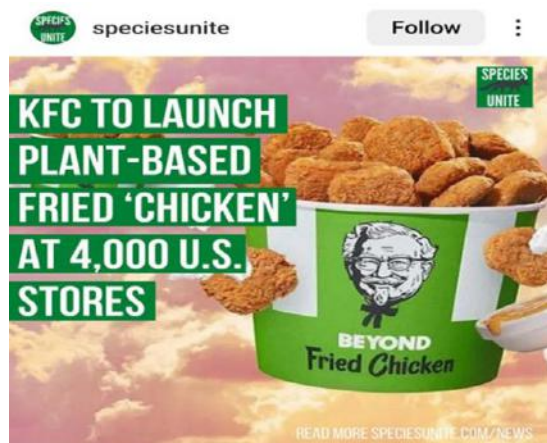
5.5 Post 5

Fig.5. (KFC's Launch of plant-based chicken) (Photo by author)
(https://www.instagram.com/p/CYbOmSXqAMG/?igsh=MXAyYW11YTVhZHJ1OQ%3D%3D)

5.5.1 Description:

This Instagram post, sourced from the account "Species Unite," features a bold green caption announcing KFC's groundbreaking move to introduce plant-based fried chicken at 4000 of its U.S. stores. The visual component of the post showcases a basket of chicken wings adorned with

the iconic KFC logo, set against a backdrop of a white and green painted bucket. This imagery serves as a striking representation of the fusion between traditional fast-food aesthetics and the innovative shift towards plant-based alternatives.

5.5.2 Discourse-Historical Analysis

The Species Unite Instagram post regarding KFC's launch of plant-based fried chicken illustrates how fast-food companies adapt to evolving consumer preferences and ethical concerns. The post highlights the shifting power dynamics within the food sector, namely the increasing impact of plant-based food movements on prominent fast-food corporations. KFC, traditionally linked to industrial poultry production, is increasingly adopting plant-based alternatives, indicating a strategic transition in response to increasing consumer demand for sustainability and ethical consumption. This corresponds with research indicating that large firms embrace plant-based products not primarily due to ethical considerations but as a market-driven reaction to evolving consumer tastes (Potts, 2018). The collaboration between KFC and Beyond Meat exemplifies the interaction between established fast-food brands and burgeoning plant-based food enterprises, highlighting the normalisation of alternative proteins (Bryant, 2020). The contextualisation of this transition within an animal welfare framework—emphasizing the millions of chickens slaughtered each year by KFC—introduces an additional dimension to the conversation. It contrasts corporate accountability with consumer autonomy, prompting viewers to view the initiative as advancement while concurrently questioning the overarching industrialised beef system (Almiron, Cole & Freeman, 2018). This dual stance allows the post to attract both ethically driven consumers and broad audiences who may prioritise novelty or health-oriented dining. The post engages with the discourse of soft veganism, which presents plant-based diets as accessible, visually appealing, and health-focused rather than explicitly political (White, 2018). This corresponds with corporate marketing techniques that reposition veganism as a conventional, consumer-oriented option rather than an anti-capitalist or radical ideology (Harper, 2012). The promotion of plant-based fried chicken targets meat-eaters interested in veganism, thereby reinforcing a hybrid consumer identity that allows for gradual dietary changes without necessitating full commitment to veganism (Christopher, Bartkowski & Haverda, 2018). This perspective on veganism differs from conventional ethical veganism, which condemns systemic animal abuse and advocates for a fundamental re-evaluation of food production (Cole & Morgan, 2011). The narrative behind plant-based diets highlights choice, individual health, and sustainability, rendering it more

appealing to broader audiences. This reflects trends in "flexitarian" consumption, wherein plant-based products are promoted to omnivores instead of hardcore vegans, so enhancing market penetration without explicitly confronting prevailing dietary patterns (Bryant, 2020). The post illustrates the hybrid marketing tactics employed to launch plant-based products to mainstream consumers. KFC, a company traditionally associated with animal consumption, incorporates plant-based alternatives while maintaining its fundamental fast-food identity. The visual components of the post—a basket of plant-based fried chicken adorned with KFC's recognisable branding—emphasize this hybridity, presenting the product as a seamless addition to the current menu rather than a significant divergence. This corresponds with studies on how firms manage ethical consumerism by implementing sustainability measures while maintaining their existing economic strategies (Gunderson, 2021). Furthermore, the utilisation of Instagram as a platform exemplifies the digital techniques that corporations and advocacy organisations implement to influence culinary discourse. Hashtags and visual storytelling augment participation, enabling ethical consumerism storylines to penetrate varied audiences outside conventional activist realms (Page, 2012). The post functions within the wider framework of social media-influenced food politics, where visual culture significantly influences ideas of sustainability and ethical consumption.

5.6 Post 6

Fig.6: (How Mahalia Jackson Imagined Fried chicken as a path to black Success) (Collage of the pictures by the author:
https://www.instagram.com/p/ChfgUeduSGG/?igsh=NXV 2MzRoZXdmMnc0&img_index=5)

5.6.1 Description:

The Instagram post features an image of Mahalia Jackson delivering a speech on stage, accompanied by a series of text posts. The text discusses Mahalia Jackson's

perspective on fried chicken as a pathway to success for Black Americans. It highlights the historical context following the Civil War, where African American women, known as "waiter carriers," established fried chicken businesses at train stations across the American South. The narrative delves into the appropriation of Black success by opportunistic white individuals, including Harland Sanders, also known as Colonel Sanders, who founded Kentucky Fried Chicken in 1930. The post explores the contrast between Jackson's vision of fried chicken as a means of financial empowerment for Black communities and the challenges faced due to systemic racism and white supremacy

5.6.2 Discourse-Historical Analysis

The examined Instagram post underscores the convergence of cuisine, ethnicity, and economic exploitation, utilising Mahalia Jackson's perspective on fried chicken to investigate Black entrepreneurship and white appropriation. The post highlights the historical significance of fried chicken as a vehicle for financial autonomy among Black entrepreneurs, especially African American women after the Civil War. The account of "waiter carriers" vending fried chicken at Southern train stops corresponds with historical studies on Black entrepreneurship during Reconstruction, a time when previously enslaved folks pursued economic independence despite pervasive racism (Hunter, 2017). Fried chicken, a dish originating from African American culinary traditions, evolved into an accessible and lucrative enterprise, enabling Black women to establish economic autonomy in a racially divided society (Twitty, 2017). The discussion transitions to demonstrate how Black achievement in the food industry has been systematically subverted by white appropriation. The case of Harland Sanders, who established KFC in 1930 and developed a worldwide enterprise based on a cuisine traditionally linked to Black culinary traditions, underscores how racial capitalism facilitates the commodification of Black culture while sidelining its original inventors (Robinson, 2020). This corresponds with extensive critiques of cultural appropriation within the food industry, wherein white entrepreneurs capitalise on the culinary inventions of marginalised communities while frequently disregarding their contributions (Nkrumah, 2021). The piece addresses the racial politics surrounding fried chicken, recognising the entrenched racist prejudices linked to Black individuals and the cuisine. Fried chicken has historically been utilised as a racialised stereotype, perpetuating anti-Black narratives that portray African Americans as indulgent or uncultured (Miller, 2017). These prejudices obfuscate the historical importance of the dish among Black communities and disregard its culinary hybridity, which

amalgamates African, European, and Indigenous traditions (Twitty, 2017). Moreover, the post views food as an indicator of gentrification, broadening the discussion from physical environments to digital realms. Alkon and Agyeman (2011) contend that food justice movements must confront the influence of racial and economic disparities on food accessibility and representation. Digital platforms, particularly social media, perpetuate power disparities, since algorithms, visibility, and monetisation frequently advantage white creators over Black food entrepreneurs and historians (Noble, 2018). Researchers like Benjamin (2019) and Zukin (2010) have analysed the parallels between digital dynamics and offline gentrification, wherein Black cultural contributions are commodified while Black communities are uprooted or excluded from mainstream narratives. The examination of fried chicken's origins underscores the hybridity intrinsic to American culinary traditions. Fried chicken, frequently linked to Southern cuisine, is a result of transatlantic cultural interchange, amalgamating African seasoning skills, European frying processes, and Indigenous ingredients (Twitty, 2017). The post's recognition of these influences challenges the prevailing narrative that depicts Southern food exclusively as a product of white Southern traditions, instead highlighting the vital contribution of Black cooks in the formation of American cuisine. The phrase "waiter carriers" illustrates linguistic reappropriation among Black communities. Language develops within cultural frameworks, frequently functioning as a tool for resistance and self-identification (Rickford & Rickford, 2000). The employment of historically specific vocabulary in the post demonstrates an endeavour to recover and emphasise Black culinary labour that has been neglected or omitted in predominant historical accounts. Hashtags like #friedchicken and #blackhistory serve as a mechanism of digital activism, enhancing the post's visibility and contextualising it within current dialogues on race, food justice, and cultural appropriation. Hashtags function as discursive instruments that link users to extensive dialogues, promoting community involvement and alternative narratives to prevailing histories (Brock, 2018). The post connects fried chicken to Black history, challenging simplistic preconceptions and prompting audiences to perceive food as a locus of cultural resilience and structural oppression.

5.6.3 Comparison of the two posts

 The two analysed Instagram posts—one about KFC's introduction of plant-based fried chicken and the other depicting Mahalia Jackson's perspective on fried chicken as a means of Black economic empowerment—both address food as a cultural and political construct. The former investigates corporate transitions to plant-based diets, while the latter analyses the historical erasure and appropriation of Black culinary contributions. The post regarding KFC's plant-based fried chicken underscores the adaptability of fast-food firms to evolving consumer preferences, especially the increasing popularity of plant-based diets. This signifies a transformation in the power dynamics between conventional meat businesses and plant-based alternatives, illustrating a wider trend of ethical consumerism (Christopher, Bartkowski & Haverda, 2018). KFC's partnership with Beyond Meat is framed as a corporate strategy rather than a significant ethical overhaul, enabling the corporation to sustain its supremacy in the fast-food sector while attracting new populations. Conversely, the post regarding Mahalia Jackson and fried chicken emphasises historical power disparities within the food business, wherein Black entrepreneurship was systematically subverted by white appropriation. Fried chicken is not simply a culinary choice, but a historical artefact influenced by racial capitalism and Black resistance (Twitty, 2017). The portrayal of food as a mechanism for economic empowerment and racial justice contrasts with the apolitical depiction of plant-based fast food in the KFC advertisement. This contrast highlights the divergent implications of food discourse: veganism as a personal or consumer decision versus food as a historical locus of oppression and resistance. The KFC announcement introduces plant-based fried chicken as a novel offering, merging conventional fast-food visuals with contemporary plant-based options. This corresponds with trends in food marketing, wherein plant-based diets are promoted as fashionable and progressive rather than extreme or restrictive (White, 2018). In contrast, the Mahalia Jackson piece condemns the appropriation and commercialisation of Black culinary traditions, which did not help the original inventors. KFC's plant-based push indicates a corporate rebranding of fried chicken; however, the Jackson post underscores that historical power relations continue to influence who benefits from culinary trends. Both posts employ internet activism, however their techniques diverge. The KFC article employs hashtags such as #plantbasedfoods to connect with a worldwide audience focused on ethical consumerism, whilst the Mahalia Jackson post utilises #blackhistory to frame the historical challenges faced by Black businesses. This contrast underscores the distinctions in digital discourse, as corporate narratives promote brand engagement, whereas activist narratives cultivate historical reflection and resistance (Brock, 2018)

VI.   CONCLUSION: THE IDEOLOGICAL CHARACTER OF DIGITAL FOOD DISCOURSE

This paper has illustrated through discourse-historical analysis of diverse Instagram posts that no post exists in isolation; each embodies ideological significance, mirroring extensive socio-political, economic, and cultural frameworks. These posts serve as vehicles for certain narratives, influencing public perception and consumer behaviour, whether by promoting plant-based fast food, highlighting the exploitation of Black culinary traditions, or challenging industrialised meat production. Social media, commonly regarded as a platform for informal interaction, operates as a battleground for conflicting ideas, where corporate branding, historical revisionism, ethical consumerism, and social justice movement converge. Posts that seem neutral—like an announcement of plant-based fried chicken—are integrated into corporate methods that use ethical movements for profit. Likewise, blogs that recover Black culinary history contest prevailing power systems, exposing the erasure and appropriation that have historically influenced food markets. Content promoting animal rights, although presented as an impartial ethical position, is fundamentally anchored in a certain worldview that contests conventional eating practices and scrutinises industrialised agriculture. This investigation highlights the unavoidable presence of ideology in digital discourse. Social media posts are not simply reflections of reality; they are creations that influence reality, deliberately selected to reinforce, contest, or redefine prevailing power dynamics. Through corporate rebranding, activist storytelling, or historical reclamation, each post contributes to the preservation or challenge of prevailing narratives. Understanding this ideological role is essential for media literacy, promoting critical interaction with digital content instead of passive consumption. Ultimately, the discourse-historical method demonstrates that food—rather than being a neutral topic—remains

profoundly intertwined with issues of power, identity, and justice. In a time when digital platforms are central to cultural discourse, comprehending the ideological foundations of ostensibly trivial posts is crucial for navigating the wider social and political contexts they embody.

List and References of the figures:

Figure 1: America H. We ❤️ that NYC is America's melting pot for everything, including hamburgers) [Instagram] 2024 Jan 4. Available from: https://www.instagram.com/reel/C1rkLdud1f/?igsh=eXVrdzJicW9ud2s4.

Figure 2: Shelikesmilk. "ZUCCHINI TURKEY BURGERS 🍔." Instagram. 2023 July 26. Available from: https://www.instagram.com/reel/CvI53tcNghc/?igsh=eTVlY25sZHM0ZW5w

Figure 3: uptown.clt. "Do you know @the_chili_man?! 🛷🚙🛷👁🏆." Instagram. 2022 October 4. Available from: https://www.instagram.com/reel/CjSwp1JDozC/?igsh=d3JjOXVlemI5Zmdk

Figure 4: Mercyforanimal. "There are SO many reasons to avoid meat-based hot dogs. 😱 🌭 What's yours?". Instagram. 2022 July 17. Available from: https://www.instagram.com/reel/C9iAuY2xCct/?igsh=ZWl3ZWNoZTZtNmtw

Figure 5: Speciesunite. "@kfc, one of the world's most famous chicken brands, is launching plant-based fried "chicken" at 4000 restaurants across the United States." Instagram. 2022 January7. Available from: thttps://www.instagram.com/p/CYbOmSXqAMG/?igsh=MXAyYW11YTVhZHJ1OQ%3D%3D

Figure 6: Eater. "Despite being universally loved and devoured, fried chicken has long been, in the United States, a topic fraught with racist stereotypes and politics." Instagram. 2022 August 21. Available from: https://www.instagram.com/p/ChfgUeduSGG/?igsh=NXV2MzRoZXdmMnc0&img_index=5

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