

A DIGITAL METIS: COMPOSING THE NETWORKED SELF

An essay submitted in partial fulfillment of

the requirements for graduation from the

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with a Bachelor of Arts in

English with a Writing, Rhetoric, and Publication Concentration and International Studies with a
Europe Concentration

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Preface

While recognizing the importance of the Bachelor's Essay to my Honors Curriculum, I also wanted to make sure that at the end of my senior year I had a (digitally) tangible body of work to showcase my efforts. Through a year of research into rhetoric studies, technical production, and multimodal writing, I gained knowledge of the underlying aspects of digital media, both theoretically and in technical production, and showcased that knowledge in the form of a blog. As it stands, *The Diabetic Princess* is more than just “proof” of application of my research project: it is a multimodal portfolio, and I will continue to use it as a creative outlet as I enter the next phase of my life.

1.1 Introduction

For my Bachelor's Essay, I wanted to examine how rhetorical strategies and rhetorical theory shape multimodal content. I did this through the study of theory and research that focused on classic and digital rhetorical theory as well as digital literacy and technical production. Through the course of this project, I became versed in rhetorical theory relevant to digital and multimodal production. I learned how to make intentional rhetorical decisions as part of digital content creation and developed technical skills required of multimodal production through the creation of the fashion and lifestyle blog, [*The Diabetic Princess*](#). Throughout the 2018-2019 academic year, I also discovered the type of rhetoric I want to produce and participate in on the digital space: a rhetoric that is both inclusive and embodied. I achieved this through studying and implementing invitational rhetoric on my blog, as

well as producing a rhetoric that is informed not only by my mental but also my bodily intelligence; this manifested through a digital metis or practice of embodied intelligence which I will further discuss later in this essay. This Bachelor's Essay has three parts: the rhetoric and technical production research, the creation of the blog itself, and this document that explains how the first two parts relate to one another.

In this critical reflection of my production processes, I define terms important to understanding this project and the larger, overarching theories focusing my study of rhetoric. Then, I explain the purpose of this blog as well as how one concept, metis, informed the content and design of *The Diabetic Princess*. Next, I discuss the audience for my blog, followed by the theories of production that guided my blog's creation before talking about its design and content more specifically. Lastly, I conclude with my goals for this project, why I wanted to perform this research and creation, and the future of *The Diabetic Princess* as a blog.

1.2 Theory-Informed Practice

My proposal for The Bachelor's Essay emerged from and was continually informed by my coursework in the Writing, Rhetoric, and Publication concentration within the English major as well as my own desire to further study and practice digital production. My choice to create a fashion and lifestyle blog in particular came from my own interest in fashion, pop culture, and lifestyle topics; my love of storytelling; and my want to meaningfully contribute to the digital conversation in the fashion blogosphere (**Appendix C**) through the study of rhetorical theory and practice.

Throughout this year of research, creation, and reflection, certain key terms have served as a theoretical foundation for rhetoric and as a guide for the production of *The Diabetic Princess*, allowing me to make intentional choices with the technical elements of the blog and to stay consistently attentive to the needs of my audience. As a kind of review of literature, I have defined these terms-- digital rhetoric, digital literacy, production, and metis-- below as a proper introduction to forecast their application later.

1.3 Digital Rhetoric and Literacy

James E. Porter defines digital rhetoric specifically “as the art of creating discourse, whether speech or writing, to achieve a desired end for some audience” in his award-winning article, “Recovering Delivery for Digital Rhetoric” (210). For Porter, rhetoric is a combination of technical knowledge, defined as “mechanical production skills”, and rhetorical knowledge, which stems from knowing both the target audience of the message and the desired effect of that message (211). Conceptualizing my blog as a digital rhetoric allowed me to anchor the creative aspects of *The Diabetic Princess* in theory, employ multiple rhetorical theories to better understand my audience, as well as write and design with intention, considering along the way how my blog’s content and design might or should affect my desired audience. This included thinking of my blog as a digital metis, and thus producing discourse that was inclusive and female-oriented.

Another necessary factor in producing a digital, metis rhetoric was considering the landscape where my blog was going to exist, and my level of technological

proficiency related to it. Digital literacy is fundamentally different than traditional literacy, as it is “continuously being redefined by a changing context”, as described in “New Literacies: A Dual-Level Theory of the Changing Nature of Literacy, Instruction, and Assessment” (Leu et al. 1151). Because the digital sphere is “ephemeral,” so, too, is digital literacy, meaning that the necessities for gaining or maintaining online fluency are constantly evolving (Leu et. al 1151). Imagining both digital literacy and electronic environments as ephemeral helped me realize the importance of continuing my education in the technical side of the project, prompting me to learn to better utilize different types of media to keep up with the ephemerality of the atmosphere I was producing a blog in. I realized that my own digital capabilities were much less developed than I had originally assumed, having grown up with regular interactions with digital technologies. Given this situation, the “foundational literacies”, or traditional reading and writing skills learned in school, are not as relevant, now no longer enough to properly prepare students, including me, for digital comprehension (1166).

1.4 Production

Present-day production is multimodal, meaning that it is “fluid and shifting” between media. Carey Jewitt explains multimodality in “Multimodality, ‘Reading’, and ‘Writing’ for the 21st Century”, saying that “writing, speech, and image are used to mediate [multimodal] meaning making” (315). This meant that the writing on my blog needed to extend beyond a focus on written text. Although I began this project as a practiced print writer, the digital environment demanded I learn how to write for


the web specifically. Part of this process was learning how to effectively use visual, sonic, and digital media, but it also included reconsidering what I knew about writing in alphabetic text. Jakob Nielsen describes the differences between the genres in “Writing Style for Print vs. Web”. Where “print is linear, author-driven storytelling”, web writing is more specific and comprehensive, explaining key information more quickly and briefly in service to the reader’s preferences (Nielsen). Additionally, I also had to go beyond just reconsidering how writing must change for the screen but also how networked, social media environments demand a new set of writing processes and practices, as most of the promotional content for *The Diabetic Princess* occurred on Facebook and Instagram (**Appendix B**). Since most of the collegiate writing I had produced was longer and more or less purely textual, either for creative writing or literature-related essays, this caused me to be more intentional and brief: to be more mindful with my audience’s time and preferences. Another part of adjusting to digital writing was creating an effective, consistent voice. Kate Moran’s “The Four Dimensions of Tone of Voice” states that tone is a reflection of personality, communicating “how an organization feels about a message” (Moran). I wanted to keep my tone conversational to encourage and invite audience participation, allowing me to foster a welcoming and invitational environment for readers of *The Diabetic Princess*.

Considering the more equal relationship in terms of meaning-making between web text and the imagery and sound associated with it, I also needed to make sure the writing on my blog was understood in relation to the photo, video, and sonic elements of the story, and that they all combined to send the central message of the

blog post (316). Jewitt explains that at times writing has become “fully visual” (316). This reinforced the notion of intentionality for all the differing media elements of my blog to make sure that they were all cohesive, and also highlighted my need for further training on the non-written elements (**Appendix A**). To maximize the impact of my multimodal work, I learned sound and video editing to better be able to produce with intention (fig. 1).

[Home ~ Living](#)
Vegan Cauliflower Tacos with Kale Slaw
by admin - January 18, 2019

[Facebook](#)
[LinkedIn](#)
[Twitter](#)
[Tumblr](#)
[Pinterest](#)
[...](#)
[0](#)



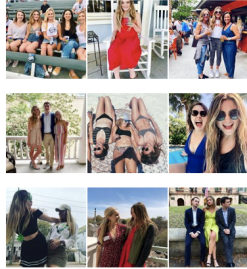
Now that we've heard her story surrounding veganism: introducing Pippa Allen's favorite taco recipe.

Ingredients:

- 2 Tortillas
- 1 Cup Cauliflower (Allen suggests buying a head of cauliflower versus more expensive pre-cut)
- 1 ½ Cups Kale
- 1-2 Baby Carrots
- 1 Can of Black Beans
- 4 TBS Ranch (homemade cashew or pre-made vegan)
- ¼ Cup Salsa
- Spices (feel free to use your own combinations): Oregano, Pepper, Cumin, Paprika, garlic powder
- A Squeeze of Lime
- For the cashew ranch:
 - 1/2 cup cashews
 - 1/4 cup water

Optional additions: Lemon Juice, Apple Cider Vinegar, Salt, Pepper, Onion Powder, Garlic Powder

Instagram



Follow Me!

0:00 / 0:50

Allen explains the dish she chose.

Figure 1: The multimodality of this recipe can be seen through the written text, photo, sound clip, and external link to my Instagram and to social media sharing buttons.

Such a multimodal approach called for a certain flexibility and adaptation, or *techne*. Janet M. Atwill, in her chapter “*Techne and the Transformation of Limits*”,

defines techne as “a model of knowledge with distinctive form of intelligence and sense of time” (48). Closely related to metis, it is a craft that “intervenes when a boundary or limitation is recognized” (48). For me, these limitations were relative to my audience and usually technological. This “flexible, dynamic knowledge” is what I developed throughout the year of studying rhetoric and producing *The Diabetic Princess*. I learned to adapt my content based on the affordances of technologies, needs of my audience, and goals of a particular story or the overall blog itself.

1.5 Metis

Named after the Greek goddess Metis, Zeus’s first wife known for her cunning and intelligence, Jay Dolmage defines metis as “embodied intelligence” in “Metis, Mêtis, Mestiza, Medusa: Rhetorical Bodies across Rhetorical Traditions”. Metis focuses on the relationship between the physical body and mind, seeing them as closely connected and informing of one’s practice of rhetoric. In overall rhetoric studies, the body and the mind is often separated, leaving metis to be overlooked. This is largely due to the gendered nature of rhetoric, where the body’s inclusion in the rhetorical canon is as swallowed as Metis. This project reconceptualizes metis for digital rhetoric, seeing digital performance as an extension of both the mental and bodily intelligence that an individual possesses.

2.1 Purpose: A Metic and Feminist Digital Rhetoric

As previously mentioned, this project has served as both an exercise in theory and practice. In imagining the purpose for this blog, two theories have really

impacted how it has taken shape: metis and invitational rhetoric. Throughout the history of rhetoric, both the female perspective and physicality has been largely overlooked, covered or replaced by a male-dominated rhetorical history that my project, and many contemporary rhetoricians such as Sonja Foss and Cindy Griffin, aim to challenge. My project serves as a digital metis, an extension of the physical dimensions of myself that fall under the overlooked aspects of rhetoric. The purpose of this Bachelor's Essay is to practice a digital, inclusive, and feminist rhetoric through the study of rhetoric and production and its application to *The Diabetic Princess* blog.

Dolmage's "Metis, Mêtis, Mestiza, Medusa: Rhetorical Bodies across Rhetorical Traditions" is among the bodies of work that fights back against the gendered rhetorical canon, relating Greek mythology and the goddess Metis to contemporary understandings of the term and its close association with the female body. The traditional rhetorical canon "valorizes the split between the mental and the physical", overlooking bodies in general but especially female and disabled ones (Dolmage 3). To conceptualize the inclusion of metis, and thus female and disabled bodies, into the larger study of rhetoric, Dolmage turns to mythological figures Metis and Medusa. Metis is known for her "wisdom and ingenuity" and serves as the ultimate example of rhetorical academia's abandonment of the term metis: her physical body is swallowed by Zeus due to his fear of her mental cunning and her offspring's ability to challenge his sovereignty as ruler (9). This story represents the female voice in the rhetorical canon, as "certain bodies have been eaten, while other bodies have monopolized rhetorical power" (11). The next figure Dolmage turns to is

Medusa, who Athena punishes with a “snakelike head” for her sexual relationship with Poseidon, “a direct symbol of her cunning” (14). These myths communicate that “women who speak out, will be made ugly” or swallowed, and “defend or justify both the fear and violence toward women” in rhetoric (14-15). The female legacy in the rhetorical canon is thus distorted and abandoned, leaving women to be like Metis in Zeus’s head, “the hidden body between the neat and ordered, rational and cerebral, deeply inscribed lines of a masculinist history” (15).

I challenge this perspective by embracing my female status, choosing “Princess” as part of the blog’s name and continuing to produce female-centric content aimed at women rather than the men that have historically silenced the female voice. An example of this female-centric, female-oriented content would be my Galentine’s Day story, where I discuss easy-to-practice party-planning tips and tricks with the help of a young woman throwing a Galentine’s party, a holiday that celebrates female friendships over romantic relationships on February 13. (Appendix A). I practice metis by allowing my digital presence to be an extension of my female physicality-- by letting my bodily intelligence inform my digital presence.

But before “Princess” comes “Diabetic”, a direct acknowledgement of my disability. In Greek mythology, Hephaestus offers an example of the disabled body’s relationship to metis and rhetoric. Hephaestus, the Greek god of fire and metallurgy, had a physical disability: his feet were twisted backwards or sideways in a physical deformity. This resulted in his ability to move very quickly laterally, a motion of “symbolic value” as “his thinking could also be lateral, slippery, and responsive” (7). The connection between his bodily and mental ability is exemplified through his

disability, a direct extension of his cleverness and an example of how “bodily difference fires rhetorical power” (7). My Type 1 Diabetes has impacted not only my physical experience but also my way of thinking; I am much more aware of mental and physical limitations in the people in my physical space. The feeling in my physical body could be considered hyper-connected to my mental--my bodily intelligence informs how I make treatment decisions, often in an anticipatory manner. The digital presence of my blog represents this bodily intelligence through the practice of inclusive rhetoric. I made sure that my site is accessible to screen-readers, so people who cannot read or see can participate in the rhetoric I’m practicing. An example of this “Alt-Text” is attached below (fig. 2).

the most important parts of the experience, both for you and your guests.
And decorations are key to this!

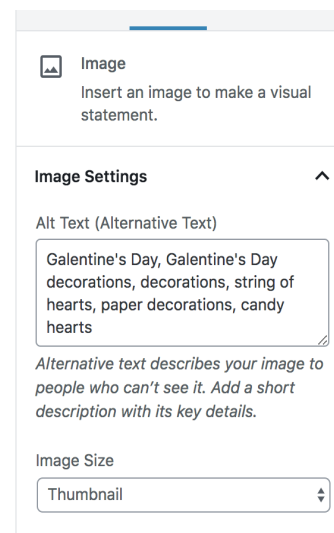
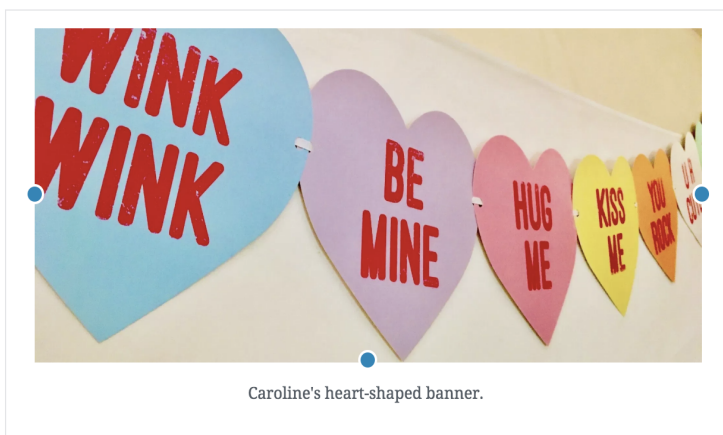


Figure 2: The “Alt Text” in this screenshot shows what a screen-reader would read to a blind site visitor.


Practicing metic rhetoric allowed me to anticipate that users would need or want a variety of ways into the content of the blog, allowing me to take a more active role in shaping the content to different levels of user access. The alt-text is one of

these examples, providing blind visitors a way of interacting with the visuals. A different example is providing image, text, and sound in complementary ways not only in support of developing complete representations of the subjects I was covering in my blog but also to create multiple and different opportunities for my readers to access and engage with my blog's content. And, considering my later discussion of audience limitations in terms of viewing and listening as well as the technologies that they had available to them, these considerations allowed me to offer site content that could be accessible to different audiences in different situations.


Hephaestus practices *techne* when developing *metis*, allowing him to catch his wife cheating on him. When his physical deformity slows him, he uses knots and bondage to catch her, showing the impact of his physical disability on the way his mind works. After being swallowed, Metis transforms her physical body into a voice in Zeus's head in order to survive, a physical application of her cunning and intelligence. By not continuing to "[stigmatize] embodied difference" and rather embracing it as an important tool in rhetoric and delivery, we are able to shine light on contemporary versions of stories like these and celebrate them. *The Diabetic Princess* aims to cover nontraditional identities and the female experience by telling the stories of those who are often overlooked. Through celebrating rhetoric as "fully, strangely, and wonderfully bodied", we can expand the discipline to better encompass diversity, an effort my blog is actively working to contribute to.

Outside of celebrating the female identity within rhetoric and the physical body's relationship to the field, another purpose of this blog is to encourage female participation and engagement, achieved through the practice of invitational rhetoric.

In “Beyond Persuasion: A Proposal for Invitational Rhetoric”, Foss and Griffin discuss rhetoric’s patriarchal bias, which focuses exclusively on persuasion and the power that stems from it (2). This rhetoric is built on the unequal power dynamic between rhetor and audience, where the rhetor’s ability to persuade “not only establishes the power of the rhetor over others but also devalues the lives and perspectives of those others” (3). They then propose a new theory of rhetoric that my blog actively practices. Invitational rhetoric is “built on the principles of equality, immanent value, and self-determination” in an attempt to make a balanced and mutually beneficial speaker-audience relationship (4-5). Instead of convincing tactics, the speaker presents ideas and makes the audience feel “safe and valued” and equally empowered to share their own ideas (5). This gives the exchange equality and freedom (fig. 3).


The Diabetic Princess
January 29 · 🌐

Man Repeller is always a refreshing and creative read for me. What are your go-to blogs for fashion inspo? 🌟



MANREPELLER.COM
 How to Wear Sweatpants to Make Them Look Cool and Dressed Up

98

6

Boost Post

👍


Like

💬

Comment

➦

Share



👍

Kerri Vyge and Stephanie Cross

Figure 3: I participated in the blogger community further by sharing other fashion bloggers' posts on my blog's social media pages, such as this Facebook post about Man Repeller. I practice invitational rhetoric by inviting my followers to comment their favorite blogs.

I want my audience to feel inclined to participate, whether it be in the comments section of my posts or on social media, and to feel comfortable asking questions or offering their opinions (fig. 3). I want them to do more than consume text, I want them to actively take part in the invitational rhetoric I'm offering to help shape my process of production. If I treat my content as more important than the opinions about or reactions to it, I lose this equal relationship and lack the authenticity and transparency needed to grow my following. Like Griffin and Foss explain, the audience is not my opponent, rather my ally, and my content should "provide the basis for the creation and maintenance of relationships of equality" between us (13).

2.3 Audience Identification and Analysis

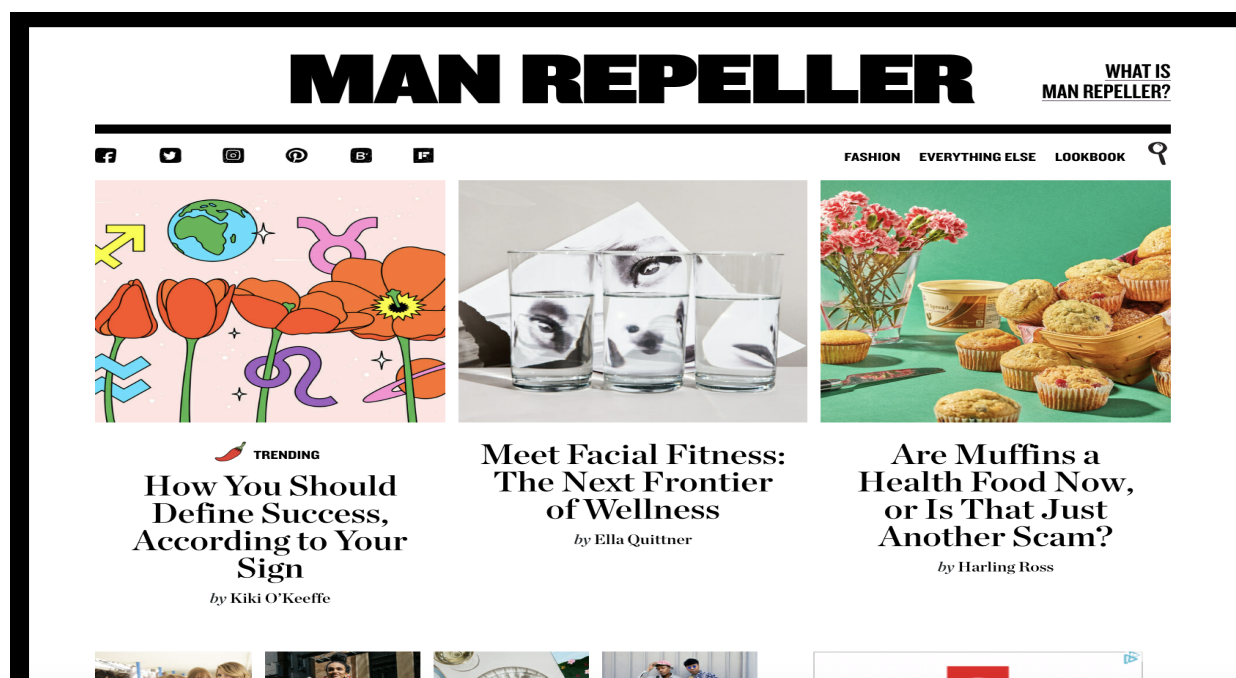
Originally, I assumed the audience for *The Diabetic Princess* to be readers like me: 20-somethings who interact with digital texts and social media daily, if not hourly. They enjoy fashion and lifestyle topics and are already reading and posting the type of content I was aiming to produce. These readers have time as a resource: socializing and social media take up as much real estate in their minds as school and jobs. They are already willing to click on links and pages that pop up on their Facebook and Instagram feeds, so they would be inclined to click on mine if my content caught their interest. This is largely due to their innate curiosity about other people and their experiences, a curiosity that is fueled by online presence. Carolyn Miller and Dawn Shepherd explain this phenomenon in relation to blogging in "Blogging as Social Action: A Genre Analysis of the Weblog", saying that blogs are a

“peculiar intersection of the public and private” like an online version of reality tv (1). They conceptualize this as “mediated voyeurism”, which explains my audience’s desire to follow others on social platforms. Because I am featuring my personal voice in the stories and my face in the content, I meet this desire by offering access to my life and also the life of those I feature, and that is why users will follow my blog’s social media pages and posts (**Appendices A & B**).

However, as the research element of this project continued, I began to realize that multimodal production is shaped by more than just an audience’s demographics or habits; it takes looking into the motivations and preferences of an audience to understand what will motivate their reading. This project helped me to better be able to adjust and create depending on audience needs rather than surface-level understandings of their habits.

Through analysing my audience and their needs, I better built the community aspect of my blog through mutual identification between *The Diabetic Princess* and its readership. In “Networking Hardship: Social Composing as Inventive Rhetorical Action”, Crystal Broch Colombini and Lindsey Hall look at online production as “collaboratively and interactively” creating rhetoric, explaining my desire to better build connection with my audience. This sense of community could also allow for better participation in invitational rhetoric, ensuring that I was meeting the true rhetorical purpose of my blog. Boch and Hall then explain that “as users establish themselves within the community, their interchanges coincide with and are motivated by purposeful efforts to craft appeals that will compel an external audience of leading personnel” (91). I engaged in collaborating with my audience by participating

in the comments section of other popular fashion bloggers' social media accounts and blogs such as [Man Repeller](#) (fig. 4) and [Something Navy](#) that I already followed and enjoyed (Appendix C). My target audience is already liking, commenting, and sharing these blogs' content, so I used them to make connections and drive traffic to my blog. I have also found other, smaller blogs not in the fashion realm that have covered similar lifestyle topics in an attempt to garner further interest in my own blog. Through this commenting process, I learned how to reach my audience outside of just my social media accounts. I also participated in invitational rhetoric on a larger scale within the fashion blogger community by engaging with my audience as their equal (a fellow commenter) and inviting them to engage in similar content. By approaching them this way, I have already cemented myself at a similar status to them, automatically eliminating the unequal, patriarchal condition of rhetor versus audience which I condemned earlier.



[Figure 4:](#) This is a screenshot of Man Repeller’s homepage, and serves to show the type of fashion blogs I was following and enjoying prior to this project.

3.1 Theories and Practices of Production

In the same way that theory informed how I understood the purpose of the blog and the blog’s audience, it also guided the production of the blog. *The Diabetic Princess* distinguishes itself because it is informed by research about rhetoric and multimodal digital writing. Everyone my age believes they are digitally fluent because they grew up with technology but do not possess the true technical skills needed to fully exist in the blogosphere. This knowledge and resulting intentional creation is what makes my blog differ from the other, similar collegiate blogs in this realm.

Though knowledge of technical tools is necessary, the intellectual and rhetorical aspects of online writing are just as important, and often overlooked. Jenny Edbauer [Rice] discusses this in her article, “Rhetoric’s Mechanics: Retooling the Equipment of Writing Production”, making the case that the mechanical tools of online writing are not just grammatical but also technological. Specifically, Edbauer [Rice] argues that “rhetorical producers” should be conceptualized as “*logomechanics*, or creators who can imagine, improvise and enact the material deployment of meaning and its operation” (373). In contemporary writing, there is too much of a focus on the traditional “mechanics of writing” like grammar, making writing “too instrumental, too un-intellectual, too simplistic” (368-372). She argues that technological tools in digital production are a part of the mechanical skills necessary for writing just like grammar, and that understanding and employing them creates a successful rhetorical producer (Edbauer). I attempt to become this type of

rhetorical producer by expanding my focus beyond written text to the mechanical tools necessary to creating multimedia content. Learning the technical skills needed to navigate these tools allow me to produce multimodal work, and my knowledge of rhetorical considerations pushed me to create this work with both my audience and rhetorical theory in mind.

The first element of my technical production research was learning how to target my ideal audience: the 20-something women on Instagram and Facebook interested in fashion and lifestyle topics and blogs. To appeal to this audience, I needed to understand their rhetorical capabilities. Jennifer Sheppard's "The Rhetorical Work of Multimedia Production Practices: It's More Than Just Technical Skill" explained that "the technological rhetorical considerations of production in relation to audience capabilities and intended contexts of use" can hinder or help the goals of content, causing me to take a closer look at the preferences and capabilities of my audience (126). Put simply, it did not matter how many technical proficiencies I had and employed in my content if my audience did not know how to work them or did not care about them.

My target audience has grown up with technology--they are proficient in social networks for social purposes, and much of their identities are shaped through online activity. Bronwyn T. Williams describes this through the example of Sarah in "Having a Feel For What Works: Polymedia, Emotion, and Literary Practices with Mobile Technologies". Like Sarah, the target audience is accustomed to "interactive communications with others using a device", meaning that their understanding of a conversation has changed and "may involve spoken words, images, audio, and video,

or some combination of all of these” (127). In applying this notion to *The Diabetic Princess*, I began to understand that if I wanted to create an interactive, conversational environment, I’d need to offer the same types of media that my audience is accustomed to communicating with, and thus added photo, video, and sound elements to posts.

Jewitt also contributed to the understanding of my target audience, stating that what is of consistent importance to them is imagery. She explains that the impact of screens has shifted literacy to depend on imagery to create or retain the interest for the writing that exists alongside it. She notes “the visual character of writing and the increasingly dominant role of image”, and how it actually “[unsettles] and [decentres] the predominance of word” (315). Given this, my content needed to have strong visuals that correlated to the stories and drew interest from my audience. Until I had read this, I had been treating visuals as purely aesthetic. This knowledge brought a new level of intentionality to my work, and also highlighted an additional opportunity to emphasize and practice metis. By focusing on imagery, I could also focus on the physicality of the people in the subjects I was covering, allowing me to also reinforce the connectedness of the digital to the physical once again.

On top of images and text, an additional rhetorical, technical consideration was creating multimodal content that my audience could, and would, positively respond to. I saw an opportunity to do this by utilizing the voice to bring both authenticity from my sources and my newly developed technical skills into the blog with audio recordings, which “can often give the illusion of being “truer” than printed words, since we can hear the evidence for ourselves” (Edbauer 384). I incorporated

voice threads and video into my stories, but also discovered that multimodal content would not always be accessible to my audience. A simple but poignant example is a student in class reading my blog or reading it somewhere else without headphones-- I had to capture their attention with visuals and texts and offering too much sound-related content could discourage them from visiting my site again. I aimed to create video and voice thread content that enhanced my storytelling but was not integral to the storytelling itself.

One of the most important reasons I decided to use voice threads on *The Diabetic Princess* was to bring out voices that are not always heard but deserve a platform for speaking. I incorporated the sound clips into stories as an effort to better bring the personality and the physicality of the people I was covering into my content. I participated in invitational rhetoric by allowing a voice outside of mine into my content, ensuring that the storyline was not only through my eyes but also through those who joined me to tell stories.

However, part of creating this equal relationship is recognizing and respecting when voices do not want to be heard. With a story I wrote about summer internships, the women I featured asked me to take down the story for fear they would appear boastful or cocky to the employers who initially hired them. Although proud of my work, my decision to take it down reflects my active participation in invitational rhetoric: our voices were equal on the matter, and I had to respect their wishes of no longer wanting to be heard.

Outside of voice elements, my content also needed to “include considerations of emotion and sociality” when making rhetorical choices. Because I did not have a

close relationship with the majority of my audience, my blog posts weren't going to impact them in a profound emotional or social way. I had to provide content that could provoke simpler emotions like relatability or curiosity. My content either needed to be completely understandable or extremely interesting to recall these kinds of emotions. In the same way that friend groups have "specific expectations of what kind of information gets posted on a particular social media site", to be completely understandable my blog obeys the genre's expectations by exploring lifestyle and fashion topics already popular within the genre and by promoting content through Facebook and Instagram posts (134). To be interesting, I cover these topics with an approachable, everyday angle.

An example of blog content that adheres well to these rhetorical considerations is my story about Tanner Guthrie (**Appendix A**). Tanner's use of nail polish is shown in the featured photo, which can either simply capture an audience's attention and make them want to read the story or enhance their understanding of Tanner. The story also offers voice threads and video content that bring further color and entertainment to the story being told but do not make or break the reader's understanding. By showcasing Tanner's choices for dressing his body, I once again am incorporating metis into the digital rhetoric I'm producing. The connection between his inner identity and his body are thus expressed online and become clear to the reader, emphasizing the connection between the body, mind, and the digital presence through metis. Additionally, the #AskTanner Instagram Story I posted reflected my active attempt to practice invitational rhetoric: my audience could

speak with Tanner about questions they had about androgyny, fashion or queer culture and directly engage with him.

3.1 Introduction to the Blog

Thus far, I have discussed the rhetorical theories and considerations that went into imagining my purpose, audience, and design of the blog. Given these issues, I will now discuss the blog itself in detail, focusing on the architecture, metadata, media, and design, and the decisions I made in relation to them. Considering the theoretical and technical factors as listed above, here is the mission statement for *The Diabetic Princess*:

The Diabetic Princess blog is an exploration of fashion and lifestyle topics for young women, either students or early on in their careers, who enjoy fashion and lifestyle topics but are looking for a new, more relatable way to digest them. I tell fashion and lifestyle stories through the lens of people my audience can relate to, giving them a new perspective on the things they already enjoy. I add a human face or sillier spin to the subjects my audience are already investing their time in.

Although the blog serves to entertain its reader, I am still ultimately the center. This means that the blog will shift and change with me, depending on my job and where in the world I am living. I practice digital metis by anchoring the blog in my

physical being. The research element of my Bachelor's Essay project serves as the basis for technical and rhetorical decisions throughout the blog. Though not a direct part of the mission statement for the blog, the research remains its key guiding force.

3.2 Content Creation and Site Architecture Organization

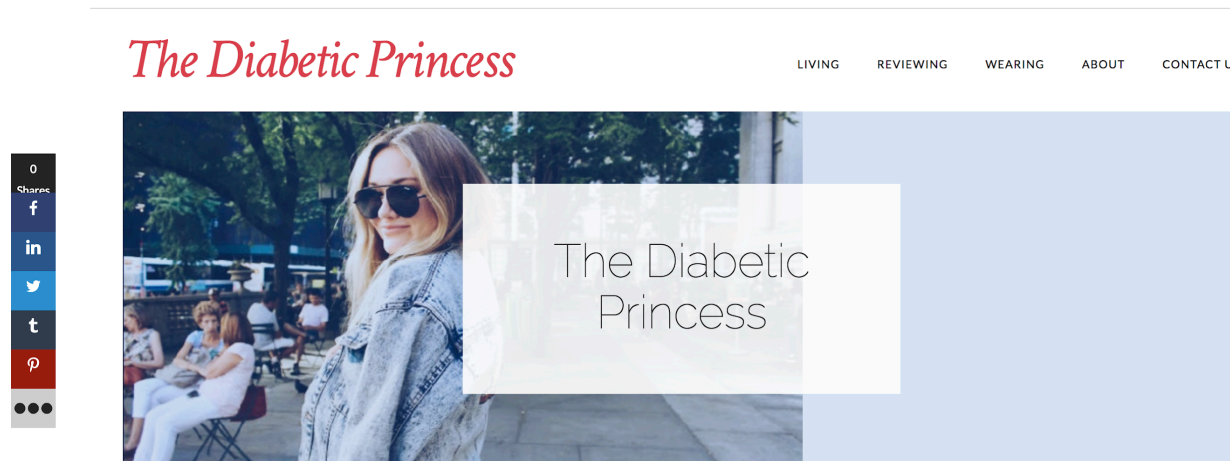


Figure 5: This is a screenshot of my *The Diabetic Princess*'s homepage, which showcases how the site was organized in terms of design.

Part of the creation process was deciding the subjects I wanted to cover and how I wanted to portray them. My posts ended up being about fashion, celebrities, food, people, identities, books, and podcasts. Although a wide range of subjects, I decided to categorize them into three overarching sections: “Wearing”, “Living”, and “Reviewing” (fig.5). Eventually, if my blog gains significant traction, I will incorporate a “Shopping” section in conjunction with the Amazon Associates account I created (just in case it became very popular).

The first section is “Wearing”, which is about the fashion industry and the people and brands involved in it (Appendix A). It’s a mix of interview features and coverage of people and events happening in the fashion world. These stories highlight the cultural impact of brands and the new trends happening in fashion and how both impact regular people as well as my own fashion tastes and advice. This section actively practices metis by centering around choices regarding the physical body-- fashion is undeniably based in the physical, decided through the mental, and then subsequently expressed on my blog in the digital realm.

“Living” is the section of my blog where I feature people’s stories and general lifestyle topics like food and wellness (Appendix A). I want to expose nontraditional identities through the lens of fashion and other popular topics while offering multimodal experiences for readers. I aim to normalize sometimes taboo subjects such as veganism, offering a different, accessible way into these types of topics that my readers might not have seen before. “Living” is metic because lifestyle choices are once again grounded in the body itself. Subjects like veganism involve the bodily act of eating and nontraditional identities are expressed through bodily choices of wear and action.

The Diabetic Princess is not something I created just for my own personal growth. The “Reading” portion tries to make my readers better versions of themselves by exposing them to the immense benefits and entertainment that books and podcasts can offer a young woman (Appendix A). It is crucial to encourage this sort of engagement, particularly with reading but also through podcasts. The goal of this section is to show women that there is a place for reading in their daily lives. I do this

by offering reading as a replacement to something they are already doing daily-- for example a book that is like watching reality tv. Books have gained a negative reputation over the years amongst young people, and it's important to show them that it does not have to be that way. Through this section I also engage in invitational rhetoric, as I encourage my readers to read this book and offer their opinions. By bringing this approachability to the topic of reading, I am offering an avenue for my readers to feel safe to ask questions and offer perspectives on an oftentimes intimidating topic.

3.3 Metadata and Tagging

While the most visible version of writing is in the posts themselves, metadata and tagging--often unseen--achieve an important rhetorical function of making the blog visible (metis) and inviting multiple kinds of viewings and viewers (invitational).

With anyone and everyone able to contribute to the online space, learning how to utilize search engines and tag writing to my favor helped increase the digital visibility of my blog. In "Tag Writing, Search Engines, and Cultural Scripts", Lavinia Hirsu looks at the relationship between tag writing and search engines, the "routine practices" we all engage in daily "whether we reflect on them or not" (39). She defines search engines as "social and political mechanisms that can be easily misused" despite a general trust in them (Hirsu 30). The more popular a tag becomes, the more often it is used, and the better the circulation is for content associated with. By using Google Ad's highly-searched but lowly-used phrases within fashion and lifestyle writing as the tags on my stories, *The Diabetic Princess* becomes more visible

in search. Through understanding tag writing and attempting to use it to my advantage, I increased my blog's digital presence (fig. 6). This allows me to “steer [my blog] in the direction of [my] preferred discourses”, which is the fashion blog discourse that already exists (Hirsu 37). An SEO plugin on WordPress further ensures that my stories are virtually attractive (as searchable as possible). The titles, descriptions and other parts of each story are filtered through this plugin, and I adjust them for maximum searchability (fig. 6). However, implementing tags into stories is not enough to increase traffic. I registered my site on Google Search so that people could find my blog outside of social media so that the tagging could actually drive traffic from Google.




<input type="checkbox"/> Title	Author	Categories	Tags	Stats	SEO								
<input type="checkbox"/> Preparing for Summer Love: Call Me By Your Name — Sticky	admin	Home, Reviewing	Andre Aciman, Book Review, Call Me By Your Name, lifestyle blog, The Diabetic Princess		<table><tr><td>T</td><td>D</td><td>I</td><td>F</td></tr><tr><td>A</td><td></td><td></td><td>R</td></tr></table>	T	D	I	F	A			R
T	D	I	F										
A			R										
<input type="checkbox"/> Galentine's Day Party Planning — Sticky	admin	Home, Living	#fashion, 7 Rings, Ariana Grande, Galentine's Day, Leslie Knope, Parks and REc, The Diabetic Princess, Valentine's Day, valentines		<table><tr><td>TG</td><td>D</td><td>I</td><td>F</td></tr><tr><td>A</td><td></td><td></td><td>R</td></tr></table>	TG	D	I	F	A			R
TG	D	I	F										
A			R										
<input type="checkbox"/> Versace's Most Iconic Moments — Sticky	admin	Home, Wearing	Donatella, Elton John, Gianni Versace, New York Fashion Week, NYFW, supermodels, The Diabetic Princess, Versace, Versace Sale		<table><tr><td>TG</td><td>D</td><td>I</td><td>F</td></tr><tr><td>A</td><td></td><td></td><td>R</td></tr></table>	TG	D	I	F	A			R
TG	D	I	F										
A			R										

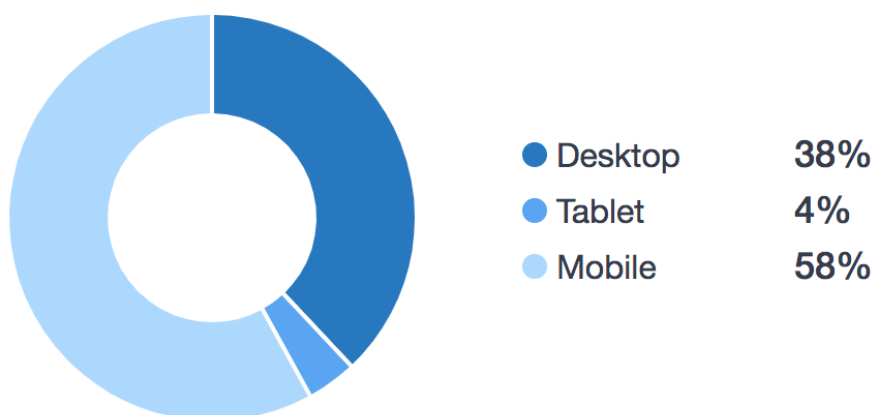
Figure 6: This is a screenshot of the behind-the-scenes portion of WordPress where three posts' tags are listed as well as the SEO plug-in ranking.

Though learning searchability helped create a digital footprint for *The Diabetic Princess*, it also highlighted a fundamental paradox between invitational rhetoric and the internet. In a competitive, patriarchal space, it is undeniable that these

practices, in increasing my traffic, will take away from the traffic of others, challenging the equal online space I'm aiming to create within my site. This reveals the fundamental difficulty of participating in invitational rhetoric in a patriarchal digital environment, as my feminist practice struggles to exist in a competitive space.

Outside of SEO, I tried different approaches to drive traffic, taking note after each approach what difference it made on site traffic. I commented on other bloggers' stories with links to my blog. This did increase my traffic, and so since then I have continued to comment on blog posts that seem related to my topic. I also put my site on Bloglovin and Flipboard so that those sites' users could find my blog as they search for fashion and lifestyle blogs in general (**Appendix C**). I noticed an increase in traffic coming from desktops when I did these things. On Instagram, I've attempted to increase my visibility by commenting on popular bloggers' posts with requests to look at my own content. Both of these strategies were effective the weeks I tried them and prove as helpful ways to increase my online presence.

Device Breakdown



[Figure 6:](#) This is a screenshot of WordPress's device breakdown for traffic to my blog from March 23 to April 23, 2019. It serves as proof of the increased desktop traffic since commenting on other blogger's websites.

3.4 Media

On top of website building, I had little to no experience with video and sound editing. The Writing for the Web course within the Writing, Rhetoric, and Publication Concentration prepared me for the sound editing part through a podcast project where I learned how to use GarageBand. I gained better proficiency as I continued to use GarageBand to edit sound for multimodal blog stories. Additionally, I began to experiment with video on iMovie to better gain technical skills in video editing. I used video and sound bits as supplemental aspects of blog stories, giving my blog's content a multimodal dimension and allowing users to engage in multiple different ways according to their accessibility capabilities at the time of viewing.

3.5 Design

Through the lessons brought by the rhetorical research done for this project, I was able to create my website with more than just technical production in mind. Throughout the creation process, I sought to create a central message of female-oriented, inclusive content. This content was often multimodal and required a lot of my own development in technological production in order to be successful.

The biggest technical setback to building *The Diabetic Princess* was my lack of experience in website building. I used WordPress's easy-to-work platform because of the wealth of information available online about the platform and Dr. Craig's knowledge of it and availability as a resource to me. Through this process, I learned

to be proficient in WordPress through the immersive experience of building a site. It was during this process that I truly realized the importance of mechanical tools to online writing, and that mechanical meant more than grammar and writing.

The layout of my blog contributes to its overall interpretation and meaning, so it was crucial to find a WordPress theme to accurately represent the blog I wanted to create (Jewitt 316). I chose “Blossom Fashion” as my WordPress theme at first due to its simplicity and pre-made toolkit plugin that included Author Bio, Instagram, and a “Recent Posts” section. However, I quickly outgrew this theme as I realized I needed something that could expose more stories to its front page and reflect the community-feeling I wanted to build. I changed to “Juliet”, allowing me to showcase multiple stories on the homepage all at once (fig. 7). This gave my blog a feeling of group identity as multiple people were constantly exposed on the front page, and a diversity of topics reinforced the inclusivity I wanted my blog to possess. Although still using “Juliet”, this is service to change as my blog continues to evolve, reflecting the “versioning” that Kathleen Yancey explains as the heart of digital production in “Print, Digital, and the Liminal Counterpart (in-between)”. Additionally, Jewitt explains that “sites of displays are always socially shaped and located” and therefore change based on the situation in which they live (317). As my blog shifts and grows in meaning and focus, and as I better understand the rhetorical concerns of my audience, the design will update to reflect that.

Another important consideration in site-building was selecting a font. I wanted to reflect my audience’s social media usage to enhance their identification, and thus decided to look into fonts that were used on social platforms. I came across Proxima

Nova, which is what Instagram uses in their smaller typefaces. I decided to use a font that reminded me of Instagram's font but wasn't the exact replica to emphasize the relationship between my blog and Instagram. I chose Raleway (fig. 7). With Raleway, readers could feel better connected to my blog based on its ties to Instagram alone. This is also seen in the square-shaped post previews on my homepage, which resemble an Instagram post.

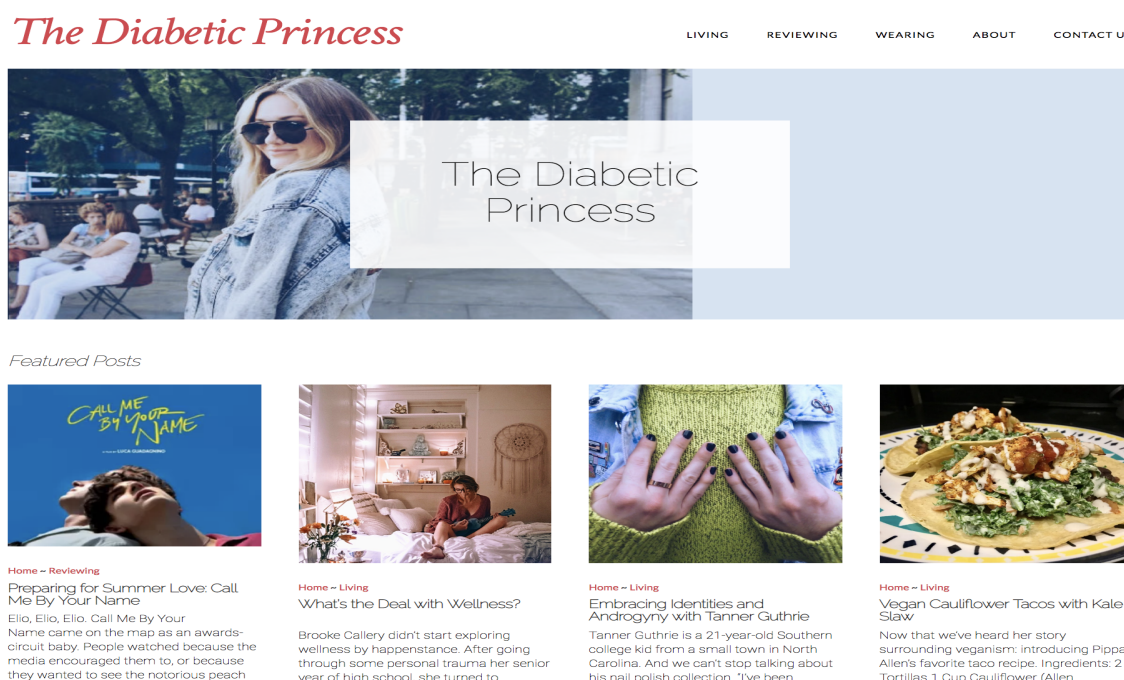


Figure 7: This is a screenshot of the Juliet WordPress theme and the Raleway font on the homepage of my website.

4.1 Conclusion

The combination of rhetoric study and creation of *The Diabetic Princess* offered me the opportunity to create invitational, feminist rhetoric online. I was able to gain a well-rounded understanding of theories of digital rhetoric and how to

incorporate those theories into multimodal production. I created a digital, metic rhetoric, where the blog was an extension of both my body and mind and those same parts of others who have been silenced in rhetorical history.

However, this process was not without some questions, particularly around digital fluency and virality. Every American college student seems to think they're digitally fluent; we all believe that because we have access to certain technological tools, we fully understand how to use them. My year working on my Bachelor's Essay showed me that this is not the case and armed me with the tools needed to become better at digital communication and production. As I prepare to graduate and hope to work in fashion media, this new knowledge sets me apart from competitors. It gives me a certain techne to apply to my future endeavors.

This experience also raised questions about what constitutes a viral moment. I assumed that if I did everything rhetorically "correct", my blog would become extremely popular. However, this proved not to be the case. My lack of "virality" ultimately highlights the reality of the internet: that popularity is as much about chance and luck than intention.

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Appendix A: WordPress Posts

This Appendix offers a link to all of my live posts, as well as some of the pages on my site. It serves as a navigational basis for anyone interested in seeing the stories referenced above.

A.1 Linked Posts

[Home Page](#)

[About](#)

[Contact Us](#)

[Living](#)

[Reviewing](#)

[Wearing](#)

[New Year, Slightly Modified You](#)

[Your Reality TV Flx: When Life Gives You Lululemons](#)

[Tommy Hilfiger's Most Iconic Moments](#)

[Exploring Veganism with a Food Blogger](#)

[Vegan Cauliflower Tacos with Kale Slaw](#)

[Galentine's Day Party Planning](#)

[Versace's Most Iconic Moments](#)

[Embracing Identities and Androgyny with Tanner Guthrie](#)

[For the Commute: Getting Curious with Jonathan Van Ness](#)

[What's the Deal with Wellness?](#)

[Preparing for Summer Love: Call Me By Your Name](#)

A.2 Unpublished Posts

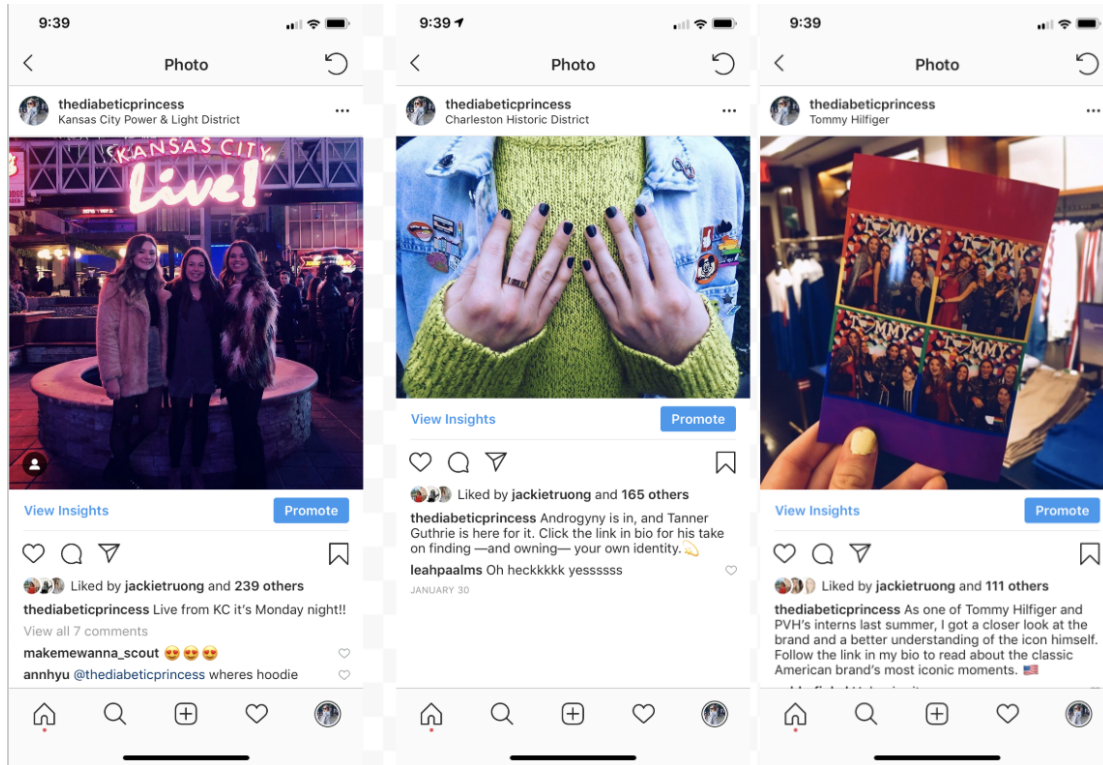
Finance and Fashion: How to Land the Internship (no longer available)

Red Rose Vintage: Highlighting Female Entrepreneurs (draft stage)

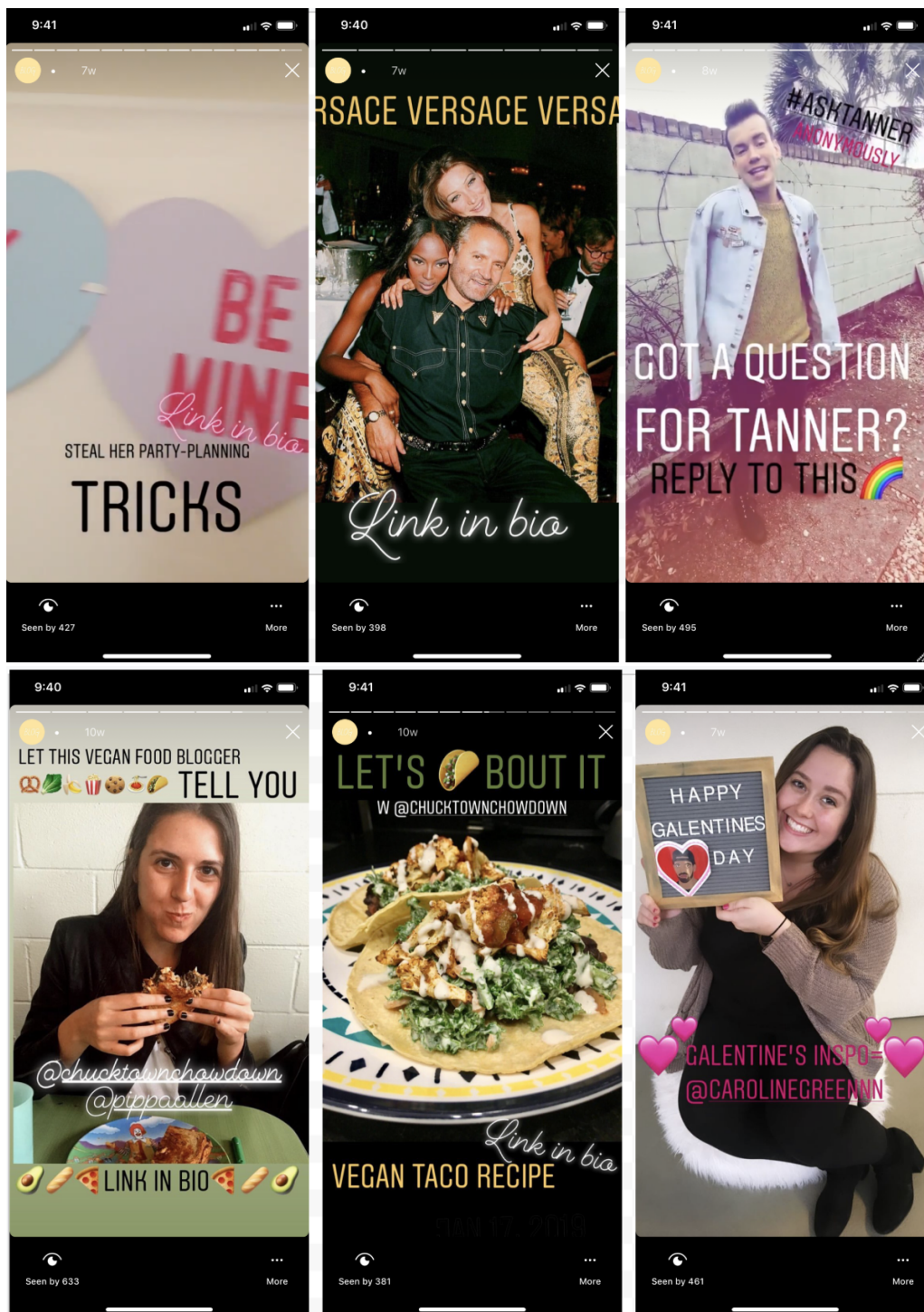
Appendix B: Social Media

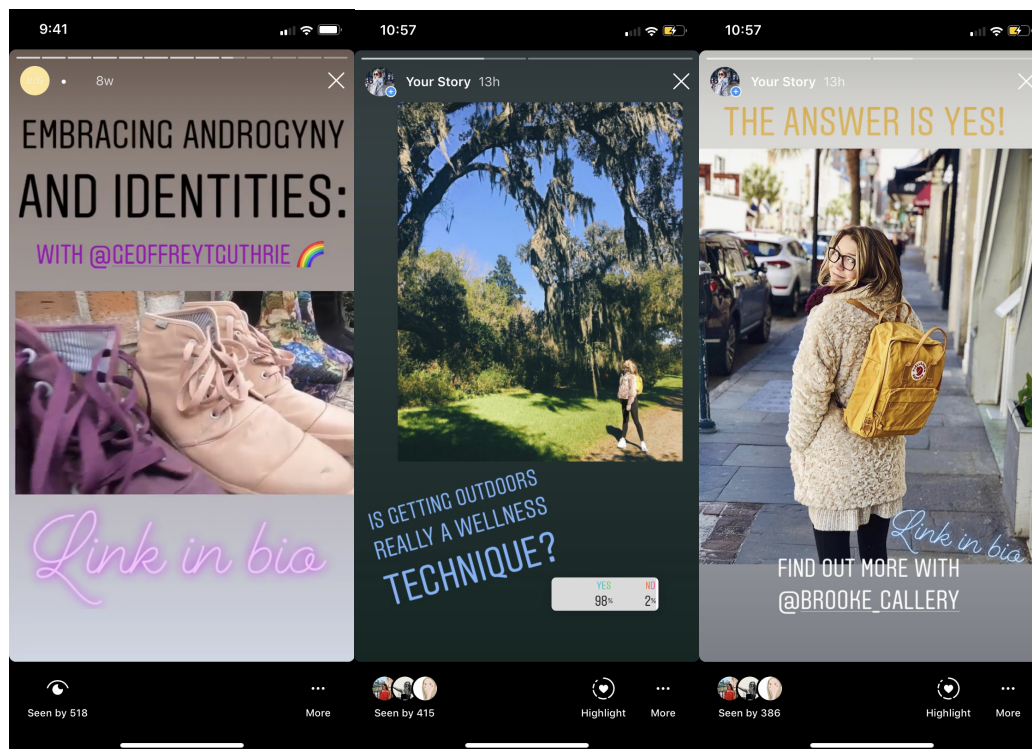
Social media was the central driver of traffic to my blog. I posted on both Instagram and Facebook to promote its content due to my audience's presence on these platforms.

B.1 Instagram Posts (3) and Stories (13)









B.2 Facebook Posts (26)

B.3 To promote the Diabetic Princess:

Post Details Reported stats may be delayed from what appears on posts

The Diabetic Princess
January 1 · 🌐

New year, New Blog! Officially launching the Diabetic Princess, my fashion/lifestyle blog. Help me spread the word by sharing my first post is about rethinking the concept of resolutions!

THEDIABETICPRINCESS.COM

New Year, Slightly Modified You
About the Diabetic Princess. The New Year. Everything is supposed to...

1,489 People Reached **440** Engagements [Boost Post](#)

👍❤️ Graci Conner, Erin Wilkie and 11 others 15 Shares

👍 Like 💬 Comment ➦ Share 🌐

Performance for Your Post

1,489 People Reached

204 Reactions, Comments & Shares

137 Like	10 On Post	127 On Shares
27 Love	3 On Post	24 On Shares
1 Wow	0 On Post	1 On Shares
20 Comments	0 On Post	20 On Shares
19 Shares	15 On Post	4 On Shares

236 Post Clicks

0 Photo Views	16 Link Clicks	220 Other Clicks
---------------	----------------	------------------

NEGATIVE FEEDBACK

0 Hide Post 0 Hide All Posts

0 Report as Spam 0 Unlike Page


Reported stats may be delayed from what appears on posts

B.4 To promote other bloggers:

The Diabetic Princess

January 29 · 🌐

Man Repeller is always a refreshing and creative read for me. What are your go-to blogs for fashion inspo? ☀️



MANREPELLER.COM

How to Wear Sweatpants to Make Them Look Cool and Dressed Up

98
People Reached

6
Engagements

Boost Post

👍 Like

💬 Comment

➦ Share

Kerri Vyge and Stephanie Cross

Performance for Your Post

98 People Reached

2 Likes, Comments & Shares ⓘ

2 Likes	2 On Post	0 On Shares
0 Comments	0 On Post	0 On Shares
0 Shares	0 On Post	0 On Shares

4 Post Clicks

0 Photo Views	1 Link Clicks	3 Other Clicks ⓘ
---------------	---------------	------------------

NEGATIVE FEEDBACK

0 Hide Post

0 Report as Spam

0 Hide All Posts

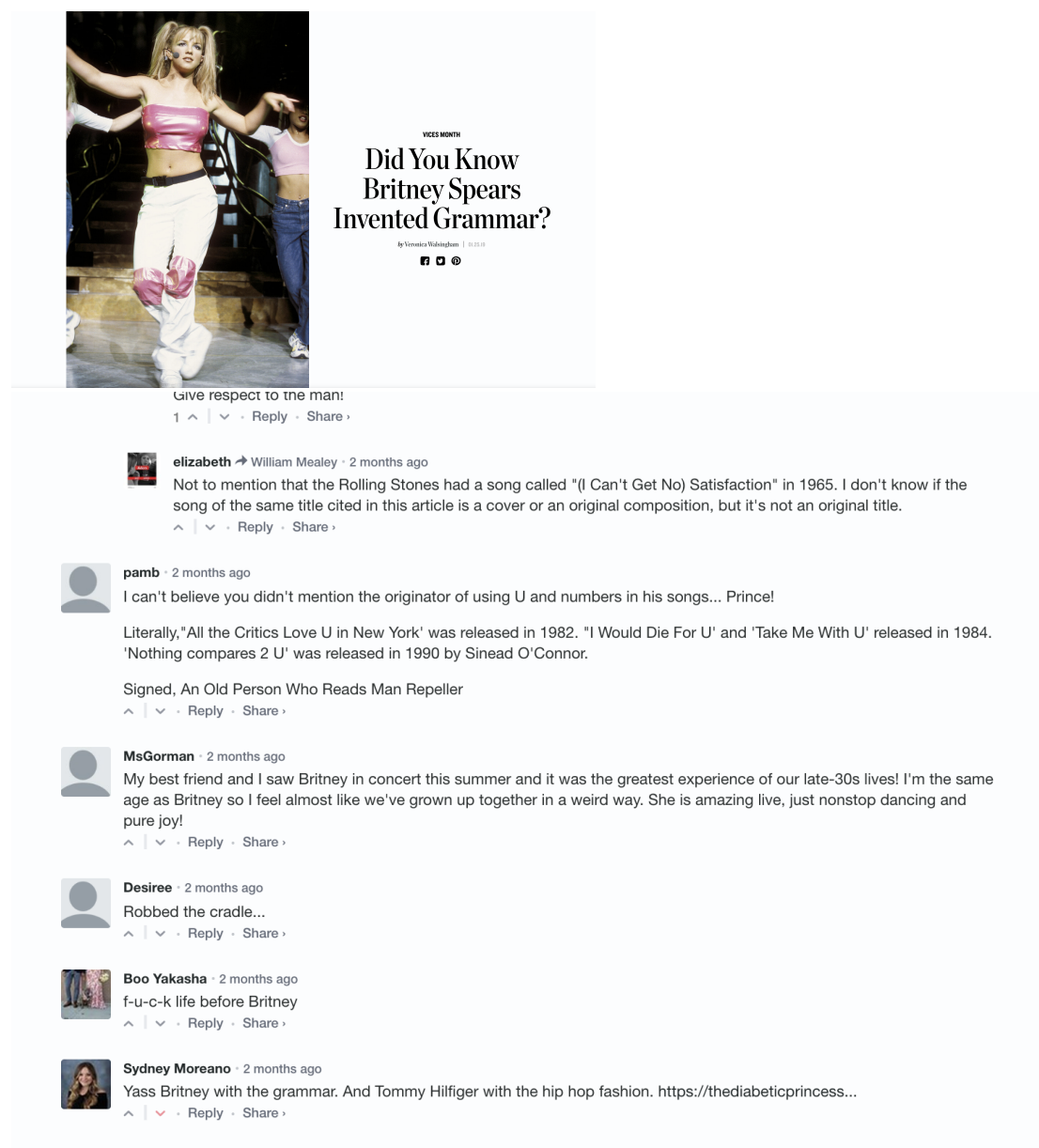
0 Unlike Page

Reported stats may be delayed from what appears on posts

Appendix C: Interactions with the Fashion-sphere

This is a small sample that showcases my attempt to integrate myself into the blogger community. I did this through commenting on other blogs and bloggers' social media, by posting my stories to a larger conglomerate site, Bloglovin', and also by sharing their blog content on my blog's Facebook page.

C.1 Examples of Comments on other Blogs



Did You Know Britney Spears Invented Grammar?
by Veronica Waldman | 10.25.18

Give respect to the man!
1 ^ | v · Reply · Share ·

elizabeth → William Mealey · 2 months ago
Not to mention that the Rolling Stones had a song called "(I Can't Get No) Satisfaction" in 1965. I don't know if the song of the same title cited in this article is a cover or an original composition, but it's not an original title.
^ | v · Reply · Share ·

pamb · 2 months ago
I can't believe you didn't mention the originator of using U and numbers in his songs... Prince!
Literally, "All the Critics Love U in New York" was released in 1982. "I Would Die For U" and "Take Me With U" released in 1984. "Nothing compares 2 U" was released in 1990 by Sinéad O'Connor.
Signed, An Old Person Who Reads Man Repeller
^ | v · Reply · Share ·

MsGorman · 2 months ago
My best friend and I saw Britney in concert this summer and it was the greatest experience of our late-30s lives! I'm the same age as Britney so I feel almost like we've grown up together in a weird way. She is amazing live, just nonstop dancing and pure joy!
^ | v · Reply · Share ·

Desiree · 2 months ago
Robbed the cradle...
^ | v · Reply · Share ·

Boo Yakasha · 2 months ago
f-u-c-k life before Britney
^ | v · Reply · Share ·

Sydney Moreano · 2 months ago
Yass Britney with the grammar. And Tommy Hilfiger with the hip hop fashion. <https://thediabeticprincess...>
^ | v · Reply · Share ·





C.3 Example of Highlighting Other Bloggers on my Social Media

**The Diabetic Princess**
February 14 · 🌐







[SOMETHINGNAVY.COM](https://www.somethingnavy.com)
The History of Valentine's Day - Something Navy
Valentine's Day has become such a thing and it feels like everyone has...

151
People Reached

7
Engagements

Boost Unavailable

 Caroline Elizabeth Green and Pippa Allen 1 Share

 Like

 Comment

 Share



C.4 Presence on Blog Search Sites

Top posts



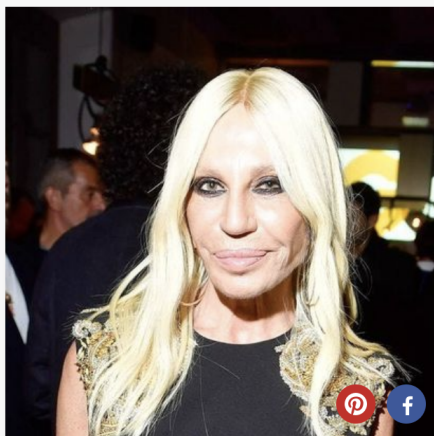
Vegan Cauliflower Tacos with Kale Slaw

The Diabetic Princess · 18 Jan

Now that we've heard her story surrounding veganism: introducing Pippa Allen's favorite taco recipe. Allen explains

#home #caulifour #chsfoodie #foodie

[Add comment](#)



Versace's Most Iconic Moments

The Diabetic Princess · 5 Feb

It was announced last fall that Donatella Versace has sold her soul (and the Versace brand) to Michael Kors at the hefty price of

#home #donatella #eltonjohn

[Add comment](#)



...



FOR YOU FASHION WHAT'S YOUR PASSION?



STORIES



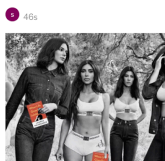
MEMBERS



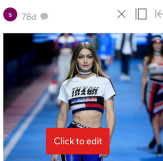
ANALYTICS



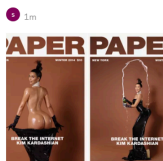
SETTINGS



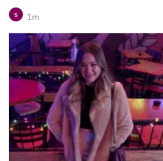
Your Reality TV Fix: When Life Gives You Lululemons
thediabeticprincess.com
[Add comment](#)



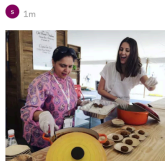
Tommy Hilfiger's Most Iconic Moments
thediabeticprincess.com
1 refill



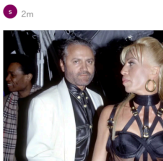
For the Commute: Getting Curious with Jonathan Van Ness
thediabeticprincess.com
[Add comment](#)



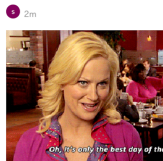
New Year, Slightly Modified You
thediabeticprincess.com
[Add comment](#)



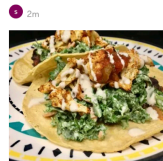
Exploring Veganism with a Food Blogger



Versace's Most Iconic Moments



Galentine's Day Party Planning



Vegan Cauliflower Tacos with Kale Slaw