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Gastropopulism: a sociosemiotic analysis of politicians posing as "the everyday man" via food posts on social media

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Abstract

Author keywords

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Abstract

Scholars have highlighted the bond between contemporary right-wing populism and social media. They have also shown how populist features such as anti-elitism, nationalism and people-centrism are manifested through the exhibition of the leaders' private lives and everyday habits on social media. This paper contributes to this scholarship by looking at how two of these leaders–Matteo Salvini and Jair Bolsonaro–use one everyday feature of life on their social media accounts: food. Combining discursive semiotics and multimodal critical discourse analysis, I investigate how Salvini and Bolsonaro's food posts uphold their image of right-wing populist leaders. I argue that food images allow them to strategically communicate features such as being close to the common people, nationalism and the "us versus them" rhetoric, humbleness and authenticity. I also claim that these values are built both by the food represented in the images and their framing, lights, colours, shapes and textures, which allude to the amateur aesthetic of everyday social media use. As much as other features of the everyday social media use, food posts appear to be an ideological tool through which right-wing populism is communicated as a soft, safe and worthwhile political ideology. © 2021 Informa UK Limited, trading as Taylor & Francis Group.

Author keywords

authenticity;   Food;   populism;   social media;   sociosemiotics

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