

Knowledge Dissemination and Cultural Specificity in Greenpeace's Canned Tuna Guides¹

Abstract: Spurred by scientific discoveries on the benefits of omega-3 fatty acids on human health (Galli/Risé 2009), the consistent rise of global per capita fish consumption (FAO 2016: 2) has dramatically bred overfishing. Particularly, tunas are often caught through unsustainable practices that lead to bycatch and push marine species to the brink of extinction. This ‘tuna crisis’ is bioethically relevant as it calls on companies and consumers to reflect upon “the responsibility to maintain the generative ecology of the planet, upon which life ... depends” (Post 2004: xi). Generally uninformed of what lies behind tuna cans or sashimi menus, consumers must rely on the investigations carried out by environmental organisations to make ethical purchasing choices. Against this backdrop, this paper analyses the knowledge dissemination strategies (Garzone 2006) whereby environmental organisations try and influence the dietary and purchasing choices of tuna lovers. The analysis focuses on three ‘tuna guides’ issued by Greenpeace in the USA, Australia and Italy. Adopting a Cultural Discourse Studies perspective (Shi-xu 2015), the contrastive examination unveils few differences and numerous similarities in the texts analysed. This discursive uniformity is determined by Greenpeace authorship and the global nature of the tuna crisis, but also by the discursive conventions of environmental activist culture (Horton 2004), which promote local solutions to global crises. American, Australian and Italian cultural specificities are, therefore, only apparently stifled by these discursive conventions, as total homogenisation is thwarted by the constraints of the local markets and by language, which reveals cultural specificities through idioms and puns.

Keywords: *canned tuna guide, environmental activist culture, Greenpeace, knowledge dissemination*

1. Background

The benefits of omega-3 fatty acids on human health have been confirmed in scientific settings and disseminated to the general public since the 1970s,² gradually turning the sentence ‘Eating fish is good for your health’ into a proverb or, rather, a health mantra. Together with “vigorous growth in aquaculture, which now provides half of all fish for human consumption”,³ the ever-growing demand for seafood has, thus, determined a consistent rise in global per capita fish consumption,⁴ now risen to above 20 kilograms a year for the first time.⁵

¹ This study contributes to the national research programme “Knowledge dissemination across media in English: continuity and change in discourse strategies, ideologies, and epistemologies”, financed by the Italian Ministry of Education, University and Research for 2017-2019 (nr. 2015TJ8ZAS).

² Claudio Galli and Patrizia Risé, “Fish Consumption, Omega 3 Fatty Acids and Cardiovascular Disease: The Science and the Clinical Trials”, *Nutrition and Health*, 20.1 (2009), 11-20.

³ FAO, *The State of World Fisheries and Aquaculture: Contributing to Food Security and Nutrition for All* (Rome: Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, 2016), ii.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 2.

⁵ FAO, *Global Per Capita Fish Consumption Rises above 20 Kilograms a Year* (2016), www.fao.org.

If it is true that oceans and inland waters are contributing and, especially, will contribute “significantly to food security and adequate nutrition for a global population expected to reach 9.7 billion by 2050”,⁶ it is also true that their regular and indiscriminate exploitation raises environmental sustainability concerns. In other words, however ‘good for our health’ in the short term, eating fish without pondering on the need to ration our victuals will eventually turn out to be fatal in the long run. For the moment, marine species are paying the prices of human gluttony and orthorexia, because the seafood market is plagued by overfishing and stock depletion.⁷

More than other species, the tuna has marked record catches over the last few years,⁸ and the demand continues to grow⁹ despite the scourge of illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing practices;¹⁰ in addition to their manifestly negative attributes, these practices often entail the use of destructive fishing methods (e.g. bottom trawling, cyanide fishing and ghost fishing) that often lead to bycatch. Understood as the incidental capture and killing of non-target species such as sharks, dolphins, marine turtles and seabirds (which are then generally discarded overboard), bycatch is one of the most widely recognised scourges of the Anthropocene,¹¹ as it is pushing the tuna and other marine species to the brink of extinction.¹²

This ‘tuna crisis’ is bioethically relevant as it calls on companies and consumers to reflect upon “the responsibility to maintain the generative ecology of the planet, upon which life and human life depends”.¹³ Generally uninformed of what lies behind tuna cans or sashimi menus, consumers find a precious advisor in environmental organisations, which commission scientific investigations to assess the environmental impact of human activities and subsequently disseminate their findings, primarily through the Web. In this regard, environmental NGOs have embarked on a challenging argumentative mission over the last few decades, that of trying and influencing consumer behaviour in the era of consumerism. Consumers are seen as the “unwitting accomplices”¹⁴ of environmental crises, because they are deemed to be deceived into buying environmentally-unfriendly products. This deception perpetrated by raising barriers to knowledge transfer and sharing lies at the heart of the problems of the Anthropocene; as a consequence, environmental NGOs such as Greenpeace react by launching knowledge-dissemination campaigns, aimed at empowering consumers through the acquisition of relevant knowledge that, when applied to buying, will indirectly challenge corporations to modify their ways of doing business in order to make sure that their market shares do not shrink.

2. Materials, Methods and Aim

⁶ FAO, *The State of World Fisheries and Aquaculture*, ii.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 40.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 5.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 39.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 97.

¹¹ Malin L. Pinsky and Rebecca L. Selden, “Climate Variability, Climate Change, and Conservation in a Dynamic Ocean”, in Phillip S. Levin and Melissa R. Poe, eds., *Conservation for the Anthropocene Ocean: Interdisciplinary Science in Support of Nature and People* (London, San Diego, Cambridge, Oxford: Elsevier Academic Press, 2017), 28.

¹² Angela H. Arthington et al., “Fish Conservation in Freshwater and Marine Realms: Status, Threats and Management”, *Aquatic Conservation: Marine and Freshwater Ecosystems*, 26.5 (2016), 838-857, onlinelibrary.wiley.com.

¹³ Stephen G. Post, *Encyclopedia of Bioethics* (New York: Macmillan Publishers, 2004), xi.

¹⁴ Greenpeace, *Toxic Threads: The Big Fashion Stitch-Up* (Amsterdam: Greenpeace International, 2012), www.greenpeace.org.

Against the background described in section 1, this paper analyses the discursive strategies whereby environmental organisations try and influence the dietary and purchasing choices of tuna lovers in the attempt to lead canned-tuna companies to revise their unecological production practices and consequently curb overfishing. In particular, the study focuses on three *Tuna Shopping Guides* issued by Greenpeace in the USA, Australia and Italy to assist and advise consumers in the purchase of sustainably caught tuna. The topic of the documents in question is the analysis of the performances of those tuna brands that have committed to go green by relinquishing their detrimental fishing practices and by shifting to sustainable fishing methods. The progress of each tuna company is scrutinised and described, enabling the reader to gain clearer insights into sustainability in the tuna market. This ‘educational’ role played by Greenpeace is instrumental in revealing the deception perpetrated by certain tuna companies and empowering consumers in their daily shopping. As a matter of fact, it is not unusual to read green claims of all sorts on the various tuna cans found on supermarket shelves; the average consumer is overwhelmed by pictures of fishermen using fishing rods or by signs reassuring buyers about the fact that dolphins are not caught during the capture of the tuna on display in the shop. However, considering “the uniformly profit-driven logic of corporations”,¹⁵ it is fairly easy to guess that corporate claims of environmental sustainability are not always backed by actual commitment.

The guides precisely serve the purpose of exposing the truth behind the tuna industry by establishing a relationship of trust with consumers. The very nature of a ‘guide’ presupposes the existence of a guiding subject and a guided subject. The name of the documents, therefore, already suggests that the author is presented as an authority in the field in question, who is able to accompany the non-expert to the world of tuna fishing and marketing. The consumer is the subject who needs to be guided and educated, because they have been kept in the dark for too long. The guides, thus, present themselves as texts whose aim is to put witting activists in touch with unwitting consumers.

The communication channel selected by Greenpeace to disseminate knowledge to consumers is, quite obviously, the Web, in that it “potentially ... provides a global audience to anything that is published on it”.¹⁶ Activist organisations exploit the global reach of Web-communication to spread their messages globally,¹⁷ in order “to solve global problems”¹⁸ in a globalised era. Therefore, by virtue of the medium whereby they are popularised, Greenpeace’s canned tuna guides “can reach a potentially planetary audience of experts and laymen alike”.¹⁹

¹⁵ Carl E. Boggs, *Ecology and Revolution: Global Crisis and the Political Challenge* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 191.

¹⁶ Giuliana Garzone, *Sharing Professional Knowledge on Web 2.0 and Beyond: Discourse and Genre* (Milano: LED, 2020), 18.

¹⁷ Chiara Degano, “Visual Arguments in Activists’ Campaigns: A Pragmadiialectical Perspective”, in Cornelia Ilie and Giuliana Garzone, eds., *Argumentation Across Communities of Practice: Multi-disciplinary Perspectives* (Amsterdam and Philadelphia: John Benjamins, 2017), 291.

¹⁸ Dustin Mulvaney, ed., *Green Politics: An A-to-Z Guide* (Los Angeles, London, New Delhi, Singapore, Washington DC: SAGE, 2011), 402.

¹⁹ Garzone, *Sharing Professional Knowledge*, 19.

The hypertextuality of the Web-mediated environment²⁰ has been taken into account while investigating the most significant knowledge dissemination strategies²¹ used by Greenpeace to reveal the alarming scientific data on tuna fishing activities. The three tuna guides provide an example of “the fact that the hypertext system induces users to activate (alongside the traditional linear ‘reading-as-such’ modality) a non-linear reading modality, denominated ‘hyper-reading’”,²² whereby “the reader can navigate the site and actively construct his/her own reading path”.²³ Issues of co-articulation, intertextuality and granularity²⁴ are explored in sections 3 and 4, showing the extents to which the text of each guide “unfolds in discrete units to which access is given by means of navigation devices”.²⁵

In examining the three tuna shopping guides issued in the USA, Australia and Italy, the study of the promotional component inherent in Web-mediated genres²⁶ and in activist communication²⁷ has not been overlooked. Theoretical insights have been drawn from argumentation theories, including Pragmadiialectics²⁸ and the Discourse-Historical Approach (DHA),²⁹ to account for Greenpeace’s discursive efforts to empower consumers through the acquisition of relevant knowledge.

The multimodal nature of Greenpeace’s guides has not been neglected, either, as the methodology also draws on Multimodal Discourse Analysis,³⁰ harnessed to investigate the interplay between words and pictures and its role in the creation of meaning in the three documents.

Moreover, the methodological toolkit also includes Cultural Discourse Studies (CDS).³¹ Reference has already been made to the fact that, since Greenpeace’s tuna guides are online texts, their “potential audience ... also includes a virtually infinite number of Internet surfers who simply come across the document by chance and can be potential readers”.³² In this regard, the guides might be thought to disclose the shared problems of the global tuna market to a global and globalised audience; however, they have primarily been published for the benefit of specific national audiences to foster change from the grassroots in specific national markets. A Cultural Discourse Studies approach is, therefore,

²⁰ Ibid., 21.

²¹ Giuliana Garzone, *Perspectives on ESP and Popularization* (Milano: CUEM, 2006).

²² Garzone, *Sharing Professional Knowledge*, 23.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid., 21-24.

²⁵ Ibid., 24.

²⁶ Ibid., 19-20.

²⁷ Emanuele Brambilla, “Prototypical Argumentative Patterns in Activist Discourse: The Case of the Greenpeace Detox Campaign”, in Frans H. van Eemeren and Bart Garssen, eds., *Argumentation in Actual Practice: Topical Studies about Argumentative Discourse in Context* (Amsterdam and Philadelphia: John Benjamins, 2019), 179.

²⁸ Frans H. van Eemeren and Rob Grootendorst, *Speech Acts in Argumentative Discussions: A Theoretical Model for the Analysis of Discussions Directed towards Solving Conflicts of Opinion* (Dordrecht: Floris Publications, 1984).

²⁹ Martin Reisigl, “Argumentation Analysis and the Discourse-Historical Approach: A Methodological Framework”, in Christopher Hart and Piotr Cap, eds., *Contemporary Critical Discourse Studies* (London and New York: Bloomsbury, 2014), 67-96.

³⁰ Gunther Kress and Theo van Leeuwen, *Reading Images: The Grammar of Visual Design* (London: Routledge, 2006).

³¹ Shi-xu, “Cultural Discourse Studies”, in Karen Tracy et al., eds., *The International Encyclopedia of Language and Social Interaction* (Boston: Wiley-Blackwell, 2015), 288-296.

³² Garzone, *Sharing Professional Knowledge*, 18.

functional to investigating how Greenpeace harmonises the activist need for transnational advocacy³³ with the local specificities of tuna fishing and marketing.³⁴

This methodological approach, which draws on ‘traditional’ language-centred analytical tools but also acknowledges the semiotic complexity of Web discourse, has been adopted to answer the following research questions: what are the discursive characteristics and the popularisation features of Greenpeace’s canned tuna guides? Which aspects of activist discourse³⁵ does the peculiar, Web-mediated sub-genre of the activist guide to shopping display?

3. Argumentative Patterns and Specialised Discourse in Greenpeace’s Canned Tuna Guides

The canned tuna guides published by Greenpeace aim at advising consumers on the ‘right’ and ‘wrong’ tuna cans commonly found on supermarket shelves. This objective is achieved by describing the commitment, progress and setbacks of specific tuna companies in the national markets under analysis. The American guide presents the verdicts on twenty brands, the Australian reports on the findings of the analysis of ten companies, and the Italian displays the assessment results for eleven firms.

Despite the different national and cultural contexts in which the guides have been produced, a lot of discursive regularities stand out during the analysis. In all the guides, the bioethical nature of the tuna crisis is described by resorting to the topos of threat, positing that “if specific dangers or threats are identified, one should do something about them”.³⁶ This premise of argumentation, which is not fallacious but based on solid scientific groundwork, is mainly conjured up by the iteration of the adjective ‘destructive’ (‘distruttivo’ in the Italian guide). Take these excerpts from the American (1), Australian (2) and Italian (3) (4) guides.

- (1) Some of SUPERVALU’s Essential Everyday brand tuna is caught with *destructive fishing methods* like purse seines fishing on FADs and conventional longlines.
- (2) Don’t be fooled by their name! Greenseas is showing no signs of keeping its commitments and is the only brand that still uses *destructive FADs*. Most Australian tuna brands are striving to do the right thing, but Greenseas has unfortunately gone backwards. We urge Greenseas to reaffirm its commitment to *end destructive fishing practices* and to improve their transparency. In the meantime, choose another brand.
- (3) Mareblu è di proprietà della più grande compagnia al mondo di tonno in scatola: Thai Union. Nonostante le promesse fatte, ad oggi non ha fatto nulla per *eliminare metodi di pesca distruttivi* dai prodotti venduti in Italia, nel Regno Unito ... o in Francia.

Mareblu is owned by the world’s biggest canned tuna company: Thai Union. Despite the promises made, it has done nothing so far to *eliminate destructive fishing methods* from the products sold in Italy, in

³³ Mulvaney, *Green Politics*, 401.

³⁴ Arthington et al., “Fish Conservation”.

³⁵ Elizabeth A. Brunner and Kevin M. DeLuca, “The Argumentative Force of Image Networks: Greenpeace’s Panmediated Global Detox Campaign”, *Argumentation and Advocacy*, 52 (2017), 281-299.

³⁶ Ruth Wodak, *The Discourse of Politics in Action: Politics as Usual* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 44.

the United Kingdom ... or in France.³⁷

- (4) Nostromo fa parte del gruppo spagnolo Calvo, di cui Bolton (l’azienda di Riomare) ha recentemente acquisito una considerevole quota. Il gruppo inizia a muoversi, ma nonostante posseda flotte proprie, non ha alcuna intenzione di *ridurre* l’uso di *metodi di pesca distruttivi* come i FAD.

Nostromo is part of the Spanish group Calvo, of which Bolton (the company that owns Riomare) has recently acquired a substantial share. The group is starting to move, but even though it has its own fleets, it has no intention to *reduce* the use of *destructive fishing methods* such as FADs.³⁸

The adjective ‘destructive’ always qualifies the fishing practices used by certain tuna companies; it is generally found as a left collocate of ‘fishing methods’, or ‘fishing practices’ and, especially, of the acronym ‘FADs’, a technical term just as ‘purse seines’ and ‘longlines’ (1). Owing to structural differences between English and Italian, the Italian plural adjective ‘distruttivi’ is generally found as a right collocate of ‘metodi di pesca’ (‘fishing methods/practices’), but the predilection for qualifying fishing practices and methods as destructive holds true for all the guides. These frequently occurring collocations clarify that certain fishing practices are seen as the main problem underlying the environmental crisis in question, because they are ‘destructive’, in the sense that they ‘destruct’ marine life by leading to excessive and wasteful bycatch. As attested by the verbs ‘to end’, ‘to eliminate’ (‘eliminare’ in Italian) and ‘to reduce’ (‘ridurre’ in Italian) in excerpts from (1) to (4), Greenpeace’s standpoint rests on the conviction that this environmental problem can be solved by the elimination, or at least by the reduction, of destructive fishing practices. Since the texts in which environmental issues are addressed often hinge on the argumentative pattern problem-solution,³⁹ the scheme of problem-solving argumentation as described by Garssen⁴⁰ helps to reconstruct the basic argumentative pattern underlying Greenpeace’s canned tuna guides that identify bycatch as the result of using destructive fishing methods.

1. The proposed legislation X should be adopted

1.1a Because: There is a problem Y

1.1b Because: Adoption of the proposed legislation X will solve problem Y

(1.1a-1.1b’) (And: If there is a problem Y and the proposed legislation X solves this problem, it should be adopted)

This is actually the version of complex problem-solving argumentation, whereby the arguer first establishes “that there *is* a problem in the current situation, because it is not automatically accepted by

³⁷ Author’s translation.

³⁸ Author’s translation.

³⁹ Maria Bortoluzzi, “Energy and Its Double: A Case-study in Critical Multimodal Discourse Analysis”, in Elizabeth Swain, ed., *Thresholds and Potentialities of Systemic Functional Linguistics: Multilingual, Multimodal and Other Specialised Discourses* (Trieste: EUT, 2010), 167.

⁴⁰ Bart Garssen, “The Role of Pragmatic Problem-solving Argumentation in Plenary Debate in the European Parliament”, in Frans H. van Eemeren, ed., *Prototypical Argumentative Patterns: Exploring the Relationship between Argumentative Discourse and Institutional Context* (Amsterdam and Philadelphia: John Benjamins, 2017), 37.

the audience”.⁴¹ The simpler version of pragmatic problem-solving argumentation⁴² could also be applied to Greenpeace’s tuna guides, but “in this type of argumentation it is clear from the outset that there is a problem and that the removal of the problem is a positive thing”.⁴³ Since consumers are deemed to be unaware of the problem of bycatch, the scheme of pragmatic problem-solving argumentation (which simply lacks premise 1.1a) does not do justice to Greenpeace’s effort in explaining the environmental predicament; the scheme of complex problem-solving argumentation, thus, seems to be more relevant to the purposes of the present study.

Even though the above scheme refers to argumentation in the political context of parliamentary debates, it can be applied to the activist context by ‘replacing’ given elements. Considering that activist discourse generally revolves around the promotion of an environmental (or human rights) goal, the discursive implementation of the scheme of complex problem-solving argumentation in Greenpeace’s canned tuna guides can be represented as follows:

1. Destructive fishing practices should be ended

1.1a Because: There is a problem with bycatch

1.1b Because: Ending destructive fishing practices solves the problem of bycatch

(1.1a-1.1b’) (And: If there is a problem with bycatch and ending destructive fishing practices solves this problem, the action should be carried out)

As the following sections will demonstrate, argumentation in Greenpeace’s tuna guides also relies significantly on visual arguments; however, language plays a crucial role in the argumentation against the tuna industry. In the light of their recurrent character, the adjective ‘destructive’ – found within the noun phrase ‘destructive fishing practices/methods’ – and the verbs ‘to end’, ‘to eliminate’ and ‘to reduce’ appear as the lexical pillars of an argumentative pattern which is prototypical⁴⁴ of Greenpeace’s discourse regarding tuna fishing activities.

Examples from (1) to (4) also suggest that most of Greenpeace’s argumentative endeavour revolves around claiming that specific companies still use destructive fishing methods (1) (2), have done nothing to eliminate their use (3), have no intention of doing it (4), show no signs of keeping their commitments (2) or, more broadly, must improve or reaffirm their commitments (2). Argumentation in favour of the elimination of destructive fishing practices, therefore, builds on recurrent detractive and derogatory assertions regarding what tuna companies are doing, have not done and must do. From an argumentative point of view, these statements function as “specific examples ... [used] to defend the claim that there is a problem”;⁴⁵ these instances of argumentation by example,⁴⁶

⁴¹ Ibid., 36.

⁴² Ibid., 35.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Frans H. van Eemeren, “Argumentative Patterns Viewed from a Pragma-dialectical Perspective”, in van Eemeren, ed., *Prototypical Argumentative Patterns*, 19-20.

⁴⁵ Garssen, “The Role of Pragmatic Problem-solving Argumentation”, 44.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

thus, integrate the basic problem-solving argumentation pattern by adding vivid details and providing evidence of practical cases that are used to highlight the presence and seriousness of the environmental problem of bycatch. This slightly more complex and specific structure can be reconstructed by drawing on the argumentative pattern outlined by Garssen,⁴⁷ which stems from acknowledging that “the existential presupposition that a certain problem situation exists can be defended by ... argumentation by example: ‘situation x exists because of example y’”.⁴⁸

1. Destructive fishing practices should be ended
 - 1.1a Because: There is a problem with bycatch
 - 1.1a.1 Company x has not ended its destructive fishing practices
 - 1.1b Because: Ending destructive fishing practices solves the problem of bycatch
(1.1a-1.1b’) (And: If there is a problem with bycatch and ending destructive fishing practices solves this problem, the action should be carried out)

Despite the presence of this basic and pivotal argumentation structure, which is prototypical of argumentative discourse in the activist context,⁴⁹ Greenpeace’s guides to the purchase of sustainable tuna are not simplistic or merely promotional texts; as excerpts (1), (2), (3) and (4) show, the guides are not devoid of technical terms and their associated concepts. ‘FADs’, ‘purse seines’, ‘longlines’, ‘pole and line’ are continuously mentioned, together with the names of various tuna species (e.g. ‘albacore’, ‘bigeye’ or ‘skipjack’ tuna). Yet, the presence of these technical terms does not automatically render the guides technical texts and does not automatically exclude the non-expert from the intended audience. If the average reader does not know what a ‘FAD’ is, glossaries come to the rescue to help them not to lose their bearings in the world of fishery. In the American and Italian guides, all technical terms are underlined; when clicking on an underlined word, a scrolling section appears on the right part of the computer screen, and the user is automatically directed to one of the dedicated boxes, containing an explanation of the term at issue. This glossary, therefore, presents itself as an easy-to-use device of knowledge dissemination and acquisition, as it helps the user understand key concepts and referents of the tuna crisis. For example, after clicking on *FAD*, the interactive glossary shows that the acronym stands for ‘fish aggregating device’ and provides a brief explanation of the concept.

FADs or Fish Aggregating Devices

Fish and marine life are attracted to these floating objects. When used with purse seine nets they can result in the catch and death of various species.

Fig. 1: Definition of ‘FAD’ provided by the interactive glossary in the American Guide

⁴⁷ Ibid., 44-45.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 40.

⁴⁹ Brambilla, “Prototypical Argumentative Patterns”, 179.

The same happens in the Italian guide (see figure 2), where a much more detailed definition of ‘FAD’ is supplied.

FAD o Sistemi di aggregazione per pesci

I FAD sono oggetti galleggianti per attirare pesci e altre specie marine. Possono variare da semplici zattere di bamboo a grandi piattaforme dotate di sonar e radar. I FAD vengono usati per "concentrare" i tonni e poi prelevarli con ampie reti, conosciute come reti a circuizione (purse seines). I FAD, però, non attirano solo i tonni, ma causano l'uccisione di altri animali, tra cui esemplari giovani di tonno ("baby-tuna"), e squali, tra cui specie in pericolo.

Fig. 2: Definition of ‘FAD’ in the interactive Italian glossary

The translation of the text shown in figure 2 reads: “FADs or Fish Aggregating Devices. FADs are floating objects that attract fish and other marine species. They can vary from simple bamboo rafts to large platforms equipped with sonars and radars. FADs are used to gather tunas and subsequently catch them with large nets, known as purse seines. FADs, however, do not only attract tunas, but also lead to the killing of other animals, including baby tunas, endangered and non-endangered species of sharks”. The reason lying behind the different length and completeness of the American and Italian definitions of ‘FAD’ must probably be sought in the fact that the Italian guide was the first to be drafted (in 2011), followed by the others; a possible translation process from Italian to English for compiling the American glossary may, thus, have resulted in a condensation of the propositional content,⁵⁰ thereby determining the more succinct nature of the American definition. However, the extent to which the American guide is the product of translation from the Italian has yet to be ascertained, and the above comment is speculative. If the Italian glossary seems more accurate and technical, it is also true that the American glossary is made up of a higher number of entries. For instance, the term ‘purse seine’ (‘rete a circuizione’, ‘sciabica’ or ‘senna a sacco’ in Italian) is not present in the Italian glossary; it is mentioned in the entry explaining the meaning of ‘FAD’ (see figure 2), where its English counterpart is, incidentally, misspelled (‘purse seins’), but an explanation of this term is not provided. This discrepancy between the American and the Italian lexicographic effort has unknown causes, too.

What is sure is that these interactive glossaries, whose entries pop up only when the user clicks on the underlined terms, are a prerogative of the American and Italian guides. In the Australian guide, a link at the bottom redirects to the “Tuna glossary”, a dedicated webpage helping the reader “understand all of the different labels and technical terms that are used to describe the tuna on supermarket shelves”. Despite more or less slight formal differences, however, the three guides all contain the definitions of the key terms used to argue about the tuna crisis; they include, among others,

⁵⁰ Giuliana Garzone, *Le traduzioni come Fuzzy Set. Percorsi teorici e applicativi* (Milano: LED, 2015), 37-53.

‘bycatch’ (‘bycatch o catture accidentali’), ‘longline’ or ‘longline fishing’ (‘palamiti’), ‘IUU illegal, unreported, unregulated fishing’ (‘IUU/INN Pesca illegale, non documentata e non regolata’) and ‘skipjack tuna’ (‘tonnetto striato’).

4. Rankings, Colours and Visual Arguments

If the regular recourse to a problem-solving argumentation pattern and the presence of glossaries are enough to suggest the non-scientific nature of the three tuna guides, the layout of these activist texts can be said to be the main indicator of their hybrid nature. All the three guides are governed by a short stretch of text clarifying the topicality of what the reader is about to read: despite minor differences, all the three introductory texts posit that the content of the guide will have to do with assessments and rankings. The American guide starts by specifying that “*We’ve ranked 20 well-known can tuna brands that can be found in grocery stores nationwide based on how sustainable, ethical, and fair their tuna products are for our oceans*”; this introductory text is flanked on the right by the picture of a tuna can, containing the writing “*20 brands ranked*”. Similarly, the Australian guide begins with “*We’ve ranked the major Australian canned tuna brands and supermarkets on their commitment to sustainability and human rights*”. The Italian guide is also opened by a similar sentence, namely “*Abbiamo valutato gli 11 marchi di tonno più diffusi sui nostri scaffali ... in base alle loro politiche di sostenibilità e equità, le specie catturate, i metodi di pesca usati e le informazioni che forniscono ai consumatori*” (*We have assessed the 11 most common tuna brands on our shelves ... based on their sustainability and fairness, the species caught, the fishing methods used and the information they disclose to consumers*).

The excerpts presented are the first sentences of the introductory texts, which are not much longer than the excerpts themselves. Incidentally, they show that the first-person plural possessive adjective (‘for our oceans’, ‘sui nostri scaffali’) is often used inclusively, to enlist the support of the readership to the activist cause and further isolate the guilty tuna companies. The same holds true for the first-person plural subject in the Australian guide, which is later used to celebrate the activist ‘victory’ over Greenpeace (‘Thank you for taking action! We won!’).

As regards the verbs ‘rank’ and ‘assess’ (‘valutare’ in the Italian text), from a pragmatic point of view they are functional to presenting the subject and arguer (i.e. Greenpeace) as an expert and a moral authority, in charge of assessing tuna brands and judging their conduct. Moreover, the verbs in question serve to introduce and anticipate the content of the guides, i.e. the appraisal of brands, because the results of the investigations carried out by Greenpeace on corporate performances (to be found below the introductory lines) are reduced to rankings, whereby the companies are listed from the most to the least sustainable. As figure 3 shows, the brand names are flanked on the left by numbers specifying their positions in the ranking. The challenging resolution of the tuna crisis is, therefore, discursively constructed as a competition, in which tuna brands vie for greenness. Figure 3 displays the ranking of the Italian guide, which also exemplifies the American.



Fig. 3: Company ranking in the Italian Guide

The three guides are interactive texts: even though the ranking (as shown in figure 3) might appear poor from an informative point of view, specific and more detailed information can be retrieved by clicking on the names or boxes of the single companies. A key on top of the ranking also guides the reader in the correct consultation of the text, as it invites them to “Click on a can to see the results” (American guide) and “Clicca sulla scatoletta per leggere i risultati” (Italian guide). However, the ranking already provides substantial information to the audience, who capture the essence of the tuna guide at a glance: the findings of the investigations are arranged linearly, enabling the reader to grasp which companies are performing well and which ones are not, which ones are keeping their promises to stop using destructive fishing methods and which ones are not. The ranking, thus, appears as a simple but powerful instrument of knowledge dissemination and consumer empowerment, which is also harnessed in other Greenpeace campaigns, such as Toxic Tech.⁵¹

The Australian guide, which has already been said to present a few formal peculiarities, has its own layout, but discovering the causes of this dissimilarity is beyond the scope of the present paper. The most striking difference between the Australian guide and the others is that the numbers showing the positions of the companies within the ranking are omitted; the brand names are, instead, flanked by a happy smiley, an indifferent smiley or a sad smiley. This guide is, however, also interactive, and a click on the names of the companies provides access to more exhaustive information.

Despite this difference, the documents share a crucial discursive feature, i.e. the fact that argumentation is also advanced visually “through the choice between different uses of colour or

⁵¹ Greenpeace, *Guide to Greener Electronics 18* (Greenpeace International, 2012), www.greenpeace.org.

different compositional structures”.⁵² Each company is associated with one colour among green, yellow and red, which are used to corroborate the ideas expressed by means of language and contribute to the creation and transfer of meaning. In the Australian guide, the happy smiley is green, the indifferent smiley is yellow, and the sad smiley is red; the association of evocative smileys with the three colours of the traffic lights incontrovertibly prove that green has a positive meaning (especially in environmental discourse, as it considered “the colour of nature”),⁵³ yellow refers to something incomplete or in-between, and red is used with a negative connotation. Figure 3, displaying the Italian guide, offers clearer insights into Greenpeace’s use of colour. Despite their almost universally accepted connotations, a key at the bottom of the guide helps the reader understand that ‘green’ means ‘good’ (‘bene’), ‘yellow’ means ‘not enough’ (‘non è abbastanza’) and ‘red’ means ‘not good’ (‘non ci siamo’). Therefore, in addition to the shopping advice provided by means of the basic argumentative pattern, Greenpeace also resorts to a very simple and almost universal code to suggest which tuna cans consumers should or should not buy. If the reader wishes to be given more detailed information, they can click on each specific company and a dedicated box will appear providing indications on the brand’s commitment, progress and setbacks. As specified in section 3, glossaries can also be accessed by further clicking on specific words in the company boxes, and the definitions of technical terms will pop up, enabling the curious consumer to acquire relevant knowledge by selecting their preferred navigation paths.

Not only colours but also pictures play a crucial role in the knowledge-dissemination process, and the most meaningful example is provided by the slogan of the campaign, ‘Not Just Tuna’. This elliptical clause is used in the Italian website, as well, proving that English is often used as a lingua franca in activist campaigns, possibly to highlight the global and, therefore, shared and serious nature of environmental crises. The meaning of this clause is obscure or, rather, incomplete, because it can only be grasped by considering the whole picture in which it is inserted.

Figure 4 shows the visual argument that is put forward transnationally to raise awareness of the environmental scourge of bycatch.

⁵² Kress and van Leeuwen, *Reading Images*, 2.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 269.



Fig. 4: Visual argument in the tuna campaign (version 1)

Understood as “image-based messages that are inherently argumentative”,⁵⁴ visual arguments are frequently “exploited in activists’ campaigns to try and win supporters to their causes, images having a stronger and more immediate impact than words”.⁵⁵ As most visual arguments, the one shown in figure 4 “is not purely visual, but mixed, since the argumentation is both verbal and visual”.⁵⁶ In addition to proposing the elliptical clause ‘Not Just Tuna’, it displays the picture of a tuna, ‘containing’ another picture that shows a purse seiner; within the seine, countless marine species battle for freedom, but their destiny seems inescapable. This brutal but realistic representation of business as usual in the tuna industry clarifies that ‘not just tuna’ is caught, but also other marine species, such as sharks or swordfish. The persuasive power of this argument lies in its enthymemic,⁵⁷ i.e. partially implicit, nature: if the clause is not enough to clarify the argument, by casting a glance at the picture the reader immediately understands what tuna bycatch is. Similarly, the picture could not be enough to fathom the content of the argument, but its interplay with the elliptical clause engenders a simple and vivid description of the problem at issue. In the light of its focus on the problem of wasteful bycatch, this visual argument can be said to integrate the prototypical pattern of complex problem-solving argumentation used in the three tuna guides and reconstructed in section 3. It colours, livens up and sheds light on premise 1.1a, summarised in the sentence ‘There is a problem with bycatch’ (see section 3) and expressed verbally in the three guides. Through the use of evocative visuals devised and drawn

⁵⁴ Degano, “Visual Arguments”, 291.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 312.

⁵⁶ Frans H. van Eemeren and Bart Garssen, “Some Highlights in Recent Theorizing: An Introduction”, in Frans H. van Eemeren and Bart Garssen, eds., *Topical Themes in Argumentation Theory: Twenty Exploratory Studies* (Dordrecht, Heidelberg, London, New York: Springer, 2012), 11.

⁵⁷ Reisigl, “Argumentation Analysis”, 72.

by artist Aaron Staples, the argument helps the reader capture the essence and gravity of the main problem lying at the basis of the tuna crisis.



Fig. 5: Visual argument in the tuna campaign (version 2)

Figure 5 displays a second version of the picture, with seabirds, turtles, sharks and dolphins accidentally caught through longlines. This second picture, showing a different destructive fishing practice, nevertheless focuses on the inevitable outcome of the use of any of such methods, and further clarifies that the clause ‘not just tuna’ acts as an enthymemic argument, an incomplete argument that has “to be completed ... in the mind by inferences”⁵⁸ thanks to the explanatory power of pictures. Notably, this visual argument functioning as a knowledge dissemination device is characterised by the two main features of advertising, multimodality and succinctness,⁵⁹ and therefore acts as an advertisement, unleashing all its persuasive potential.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Paul Bruthiaux, “In a Nutshell: Persuasion in the Spatially Constrained Language of Advertising”, *Language & Communication*, 20 (2000), 297-310.

5. Cultural Homogenisation or Cultural Specificity? A CDS Perspective

Coupled with the recourse to complex problem-solving argumentation, the use of glossaries and the practice of resorting to the ranking as a knowledge-dissemination device, the visual argument described in section 4 further points to a certain discursive uniformity in the three guides. The causes of these similarities must be sought in Greenpeace authorship and in the global nature of the tuna crisis, but also in the discursive conventions of environmental activist culture,⁶⁰ which aim at “responding to ... a variety of ‘natures under threat’”.⁶¹ The results of the analysis, thus, seem to suggest a certain cultural homogenisation, understood as one of the fundamental aspects of cultural globalisation.⁶² Yet, the impact of the discursive conventions of environmental activist culture on text configuration suggest the adoption of a broader, “culturally conscious and reflexive approach”⁶³ to discourse in order to acknowledge “the actual cultural diversity”⁶⁴ of the three tuna shopping guides.

By adopting a CDS perspective, “culture is understood holistically ... locally, and globally”;⁶⁵ therefore, in the analysis of the tuna shopping guides, national culture must be acknowledged besides environmental activist culture, and sociolinguistic factors in general cannot be overlooked.⁶⁶ Indeed, American, Australian and Italian cultural specificities are only apparently stifled. Total homogenisation is, first of all, hampered by the constraints of the local markets. If it is true that canned tuna brands are assessed and ranked in all the three guides, it is also true that each guide presents the assessment of its specific American, Australian or Italian companies. For example, readers are informed about the performances of ‘Wild Planet’ and ‘American Tuna’ in the American guide, ‘Fish 4 Ever’ and ‘John West’ in the Australian guide, ‘Rio Mare’ and ‘Nostromo’ in the Italian guide. These basic topical peculiarities are enough to ensure a certain degree of discursive specificity in each text; yet, this difference among the guides is just the tip of the iceberg, because language also reveals the presence of cultural specificities, especially when language creativity⁶⁷ is resorted to for persuasive purposes. Understood as “the bending and breaking of rules that is at the heart of originality in style”,⁶⁸ language creativity also lies at the heart of activist discourse, as it enables and fosters the recourse to attention-seeking devices⁶⁹ that maximise the potential reach of non-conventional and non-mainstream environmental messages.

All the guides provide examples of this tendency to ‘bend and break linguistic rules’, though to differing extents. For instance, the American guide shows off a creative subtitle: ‘How does your can

⁶⁰ Dave Horton, “Local Environmentalism and the Internet”, *Environmental Politics*, 13.4 (2004), 734-753.

⁶¹ Dave Horton, “Green Distinctions: The Performance of Identity among Environmental Activists”, *The Sociological Review*, 51 (2003), 6.

⁶² Justin Ervin and Zachary A. Smith, *Globalization: a Reference Handbook* (Santa Barbara, Denver, Oxford: ABC-CLIO, 2008), 35-38.

⁶³ Shi-xu, “Why Do Cultural Discourse Studies? Towards a Culturally Conscious and Critical Approach to Human Discourses”, *Critical Arts. South-North Cultural and Media Studies*, 26.4 (2012), 484.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Shi-xu, “Cultural Discourse Studies”, 291.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Rodney H. Jones, ed., *The Routledge Handbook of Language and Creativity* (Abingdon and New York: Routledge, 2016).

⁶⁸ David Crystal, *Making Sense: The Glamorous Story of English Grammar* (Oxford: Oxford U.P., 2017), 260.

⁶⁹ Judith Munat, “Lexical Creativity”, in Rodney H. Jones, ed., *The Routledge Handbook of Language and Creativity* (Abingdon and New York: Routledge, 2016), 100.

stack up?’ The verb ‘stack up’ provides a clear picture of cans forming a pile and anticipates the linear disposition of the propositional content; when scrolling down the page, the ranking appears and it becomes clear that at the top and bottom of the ideal pile there are, respectively, the best and the worst companies. A figure of speech indicating a certain creativity in the American guide can also be found in the glossary, which is not simply named ‘glossary’ but ‘decode the can’, with a plosive consonance that seems to contribute to inviting readers to explore the guide and acquire new knowledge about the key issues of the tuna crisis.

The Australian guide, instead, urges readers to ‘vote with their wallets’. The idiom means “to show what one likes and dislikes by choosing where to shop and what to buy”,⁷⁰ “to express an opinion through your actions, for example by not going to a place or by deciding not to spend money”;⁷¹ notably, it is the British English version of ‘to vote with one’s pocketbook’, ‘to vote with one’s dollars’ or ‘to vote with one’s purse’, typically American.⁷² From a sociolinguistic point of view, since Australian English follows British English and the RP accent in many respects,⁷³ the use of this idiomatic expression reveals the Australian (or at least non-American) nature of this guide. The fact that British English still has some prestige in Australia is further attested by the British English spelling used in the guide, as in “Sole Mare ... should improve human rights and *labour* commitments ... improved *labelling*, but should be clearer on catch area”.

The Italian guide provides another indication of the cultural specificity of these documents. The ranking of the companies is entitled ‘La classifica rompiscatole’. ‘Rompere le scatole’ is an Italian idiom meaning to annoy, to irritate, and here it refers to Greenpeace’s role in challenging and irritating canned tuna brands until they go green. The Italian guide was the first to be published and is, therefore, often quoted as a landmark achievement in other Greenpeace national websites. The text shown below is an excerpt drawn from the American website of the NGO:

Since Greenpeace Italy’s campaign to change the tuna industry’s sourcing policies began in 2010 with our Italian tuna ranking *La Classifica Rompiscatole (breaking cans)*, the major brands had only taken small steps. At the end of last year, we exposed the lack of transparency in the industry’s labelling practices by releasing an investigation called *The secrets of tuna: what is hidden in a tin?* At that time, no brands were offering 100 percent sustainable tinned tuna in Italy.

The author of the text is Giorgia Monti, a Greenpeace Italy activist, but it is uncertain whether the text was drafted in English or translated from Italian; in this latter case, the identity of the translator cannot be ascertained either, also considering that translation in the activist context is often carried out by non-professional translators or by activists themselves.⁷⁴ Curiously, the idiom was translated literally, ‘breaking cans’. Despite preserving the denotative meaning of the word ‘scatole’ (‘cans’), the translation is not effective, as it does not transpose the reference to the ‘annoying’ role played by

⁷⁰ From the Merriam-Webster Dictionary, www.merriam-webster.com.

⁷¹ From the Macmillan Dictionary, www.macmillandictionary.com.

⁷² Cambridge Dictionary, dictionary.cambridge.org; Longman Dictionary, www.ldoceonline.com.

⁷³ Peter Trudgill and Jean Hannah, *International English: A Guide to the Varieties of Standard English* (London and New York: Routledge, 2013), 22.

⁷⁴ Anthony Pym, “Translation Skill-sets in a Machine-translation Age”, *Meta*, 58.3 (2013), 492.

Greenpeace; consequently, the connotative meaning of the Italian expression is lost, and the translation probably left the American reader stunned before the mental picture of activists destroying tuna cans for unknown reasons.

This brief and non-exhaustive analysis of creative language shows that, despite being online documents dealing with a global predicament, Greenpeace’s tuna guides remain culturally-specific texts addressing specific national audiences because, as with most activist campaigns, Greenpeace’s campaign against the unethical practices of some tuna brands has “allowed local autonomy within a larger international crusade”.⁷⁵ The canned tuna guides, thus, pursue and achieve the most significant aim of activist discourse, namely creating “a rooted but networked sense of local belonging to a globalised green community”;⁷⁶ they aim to explain and narrativise a ‘global’ bioethical crisis to spur ‘local’ action. Therefore, any attempt to consider activist discourse as a standardised product of cultural globalisation is bound to generate misunderstanding and to result in a dangerous underestimation of the need for localisation⁷⁷ in the activist context.

⁷⁵ Katrina Lacher, “Where’s the Beef... From?: Boycotting Burger King to Protect Central American Rainforests”, in Louis Hyman and Joseph Tohill, eds., *Shopping for Change: Consumer Activism and the Possibilities of Purchasing Power* (Ithaca and London: ILR Press, 2017), 241.

⁷⁶ Horton, “Local Environmentalism”, 28.

⁷⁷ Federica Scarpa, *La traduzione specializzata: un approccio didattico professionale* (Milano: Hoepli, 2008), 293.