

# AXIOLOGICAL VALENCES IN THE DISCOURSE OF FOOD

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**Résumé :** *Dans les livres de cuisine, on rencontre un type particulier de discours, principalement centré sur les besoins physiologiques énoncés par A. Maslow dans son schéma des besoins humains. Nous voulons explorer, du point de vue psycho-communicationnel, quels sont les traits de ce discours et comment le récepteur décrypte-t-il, le plus souvent d'une manière inconsciente, le message. Notre démarche est concentrée sur les mots et les expressions verbales à caractère axiologique présentes dans le discours de la nourriture appartenant aux auteurs et chefs Jamie Oliver et Ligia Pop. On se propose de découvrir quelles sont les valeurs et les croyances qu'ils transmettent dans leurs discours et comment sont-elles exprimées dans le corpus analysé. Ce sont des choses qui influencent directement les choix de l'individu, les critères qui le guide vers ses préférences conscientes ou inconscientes.*

**Mots-clés :** *discours, nourriture, communication, valeurs, croyances.*

## Introduction

Our study is based on the way values and principles appear in the discourse of food in the books of the authors and chefs Jamie Oliver and Ligia Pop. The intention is to discover the values and the beliefs of the authors regarding their approach to food and the way they transmit it to the public. The discourse of food is usually related to the importance of health and beauty, but also to the need to be nourished. According to Maslow's hierarchy of needs, this is a primary (physiological) need and also something that people have to deal with daily, many times a day, in a variety of circumstances, facing many challenges.

The values are seen as “ideal objectives from two perspectives: like a mood (well-being, happiness, equity) and instrument, in the sense of how we achieve the goals (ambition, honesty). Therefore, the values can be ways and goals, considering the characteristics as concept and construct” (Boza, 2010: 14). The values can be described as qualities, meaningful and desirable things. Because of that, they have “a primary source of motivation in people's lives” (Dilts, DeLozier, 2000: 1519). The beliefs define the values, which means that a certain value, such as health, for example, can be treated in a different way by two or more individuals: for one person, health is sustained by nourishing the body

with natural food, while for others health consists in taking regular exercise or having a clear and healthy mind.

The behaviour and the attitude of an individual are influenced by his principles and value system. As the neurological levels of learning, changing and communication – presented by G. Bateson (1972) and developed by R. Dilts and J. DeLozier (2000: 866-868) – show values have a huge impact on a person's actions. From bottom to top, the levels are: *the environment* (the external surroundings, the weather conditions, food, etc.), *the behaviour* (the physical actions and reactions of an individual or a group), *the capabilities* (the mental strategies and tactics which drive the behaviours), *the values and the beliefs* (the judgements, the opinions and the evaluation of reality by an individual or a group), *the identity* (the perception of who we are), and *the spiritual* level (the holographic approach to being part of a larger system, beyond ourselves, which is related to the broader picture and the vision of an individual or a group; it is also related to the collective consciousness).

For each of these levels, Dilts and DeLozier suggested a specific question, in order to determine the right answer for each abstraction of the reality, as follows: the environment – *When?, Where? With whom?*; the behaviour – *What?*; the capabilities – *How?*; the values and beliefs – *Why?*; the identity – *Who am I?*; the spiritual – *For whom?, For what?* (2000: 866-868). This model of interpreting the personality of an individual or the characteristics of a group is useful for our research because it shows how we refer to nutrition and especially how the authors and the chefs J. Oliver and L. Pop are infusing their discourse with axiological traits in the books we analysed, which are: *Jamie, ministrul branei sănătoase: oricine poate învăța să gătească în 24 de ore* (2014), by J. Oliver, *Super Food în fiecare zi* (2016), by J. Oliver, *Bucătarul se dezbracă... de secrete*, vol. 4 – *Leguminoase, Rizoto și cușcuș, Pâine*, vol. 5 – *Deserturi, Supe de bază și alte mărunțișuri*, by J. Oliver, *Deserturi pentru părinți și copii sănătoși* (2014), by L. Pop, and *Rețete vegane fără foc* (2014), by L. Pop. Our intention for this study is to discover the values and the beliefs of the authors and how these are expressed in their books and not to compare them. This type of research may be the subject of another study. Also, we mention that we counted only the main occurrences in the five volumes, because many words and expressions kept repeating themselves.

### Values and Beliefs in the Discourse of Food

In the analysed data we searched for the values expressed in words and expressions and we classified them, in order to determine the quantity of each in the discourses of the mentioned authors. Every person has certain preferences for a specific representational system (visual, auditory, kinesthetic – including olfactory and gustatory) and besides that type of criteria, he/she also has a certain belief system and a hierarchy of values that determines his/her actions and decisions. Generally, the discourse of food has a greater amount of kinesthetic terms (such as *taste, feeling, warm, cold, freeze, sprinkle, wash, frost, sticky, juicy, scrap, stir, fill, delicious, soft, refreshing, etc.*) than the other perceptual systems, the visual and the auditory (this last one being the least visible of all).

As we refer to the words and expressions that express values and beliefs, we explore their appearance in the books we mentioned earlier by observing their occurrences. Therefore, we will categorize the data according to each value we discovered. The belief functions as a way of describing the value, it motivates it and sustains it. As Jamie Oliver states, the food is perceived as “something that satisfies hunger, that offers energy, «repairs you», heals you, being a medicine at the same time” (Oliver, 2016: 9).

*Words and expressions used to express good health:*

- “healthy”,
- “a healthier (...) life”,
- “happy and healthy family”,
- “good health”,
- “ingredients rich in nutrients, vitamins and minerals”,
- “the daily calories requirement”,
- “very healthy”,
- “nutrients”,
- “a great source of protein, fibre and vitamin C”,
- “excellent muscle performance”,
- “nutritional benefits”,
- “a good, real and cheap meal”,
- “to cook simple, nourishing, economically, tasty”,
- “the social benefits on health”,
- “healthy lunch”,
- “unhealthy lunch”,
- “the state of health and cooking”,
- “healthy basic ingredients”,
- “healthy cookies”,
- “more energy”,
- “live food”,
- “to feel hydrated”,
- “to the elimination of the residues”,
- “rich in fresh vegetables”,
- “complex nutrients”,
- “nails full of vitality”,
- “healthy body”,
- “an increased percentage of oxygen”,
- “to feed yourself healthier”,
- “heals the digestive problems”,
- “clean, filtered water”,
- “weakens the immune system”,
- “nutritional deficits”,
- “because of the pollution”,
- “detoxification”,
- “a healthy heart”,
- “the decreasing of the risk of heart attack”,
- “maintaining the blood pressure under control”,
- “life support”,
- “the health of the intestines”,
- “stop the forming of cancer cells”,
- “enhance the functions”,

- “prevent the cancer/diabetes/cavities”,
- “reduce the depression”,
- “helps treating the stomach pains”,
- “maintain an agile mind”,
- “anti-inflammatory”,
- “a healthy lifestyle”,
- “doesn’t oxidate”,
- “doesn’t change the chemical structure”,
- “the amazing fruits and vegetables”,
- “healthy parents and kids”,
- “beneficial nutrients”,
- “nutritional green juice”;
- “to energize the tired body”.

*Words and expressions used to express abundance:*

- “because of the lack of food”,
- “a (...) more abundant life”.

*Words and expressions used to express quality:*

- “a well equipped chef”,
- “quality”,
- “won’t resist too much”,
- “they will cut badly”,
- “of good quality”,
- “it’s worth working”,
- “I don’t see why it wouldn’t be good”,
- “they are not under standard”,
- “quality ingredients”.

*Words and expressions used to express beauty:*

- “the amazing fruits and vegetables”,
- “to keep you in shape”,
- “a beautiful piece of”,
- “a beautiful aspect”,
- “shiny hair”,
- “a young and radiant skin”.

*Words and expressions used to express an organic/ natural way of living:*

- “vote for the organic food”,
- “natural food”,
- “natural detergent”,
- “natural sweetener”,
- “natural vanilla”,
- “raw cocoa”,

- “natural cream”,
- “extra-virgin oil”,
- “grown as natural as possible”,
- “a natural source of”,
- “full of chlorophyll”.

*Words and expressions used to express power:*

- “the power of proteins”,
- “the information indeed means power”,
- “investment in health”,
- “the power that it has to influence you”,
- “one of the most powerful in the world”,
- “the « chemical » power to fight against”,
- “the powerful taste of the raw food”,
- “a powerful magnetic field”.

*Words and expressions used to express longevity:*

- “if you want to live until 100 years old”,
- “imperishable products”,
- “they won’t alter”,
- “prevents the aging”,
- “have a long life”.

*Words and expressions used to express transformation:*

- “a revolution in shopping”,
- “to experiment new things”,
- “to think different about the food”,
- “you feel rebellious”,
- “flourish”,
- “positive changes”,
- “that changes the rules of the game”,
- “I tried to change the menu in the schools”,
- “a radical change”,
- “measures of extreme urgency to change that”,
- “to bring your contribution to change”
- “to learn *new things*” (also included in the *learning/ teaching/ evolving* category),
- “to completely transform”.

*Words and expressions used to express the idea of fun:*

- “to laugh as much as possible”,
- “a reason to celebrate”,
- “funny”,
- “organizing a party”,
- “how fun it would be to”.

*Words and expressions used to express fairness/honesty:*

- “the right choices”,
- “the correct quantity of food”,
- “in all honesty”,
- “I must admit”,
- “correct combinations”,
- “the correct nutrition”,
- “the basic rules are not correctly applied”.

*Words and expressions used to express balance:*

- “the philosophy of the balanced dish”,
- “a balanced meal”,
- “the recipes from here will not put your budget off balance”,
- “a balanced week and month”,
- “an appropriate weight”,
- “to keep you in shape”,
- “the appropriate equipment of the kitchen”,
- “will restore the balance of the PH”,
- “a balance in everything”,
- “the balance of the friendly bacteria”.

*Words and expressions used to express learning, teaching and evolving:*

- “the best learning method is the dynamic one”,
- “to teach”,
- “to transmit to the others”,
- “transmitting the knowledge”,
- “to learn new things” (this can be also included in the *transformation* category),
- “I was teaching”,
- “how to contribute everyday”,
- “I’m committed to learning”,
- “I will personally teach”,
- “to become as better as possible”,
- “lots of practice”,
- “we all should learn to”,
- “the repetition is the mother of learning”.

*Words and expressions used to express success:*

- “to be successful with”,
- “Good luck!”.

*Words and expressions used to express happiness:*

- “happy”,
- “happier”,

- “a (...) happier (...) life”.

*Words and expressions used to express efficiency:*

- “to accomplish many things in a short time”,
- “to use your time well”,
- “excellent results in a very short time”,
- “to prepare a table very quickly”,
- “ready to cook”,
- “to be very organized”,
- “to prepare and to cook in the same time”,
- “faster with time”,
- “how quickly I can cook”,
- “extremely rapid”,
- “rapid recipes”,
- “incredibly fast”,
- “how quickly the food is ready”,
- “a quick meal”,
- “they are efficient”.

### **The results of the analysis**

As we may observe in the examples above, some of the values are recognizable by their opposite, such as: “healthy” – “unhealthy”, “the abundance” – “the lack of food”, “quality” – “they are not below standard”, “healthy” - “weakens the immune system”, etc. When we deal with an antagonistic situation, we can determine the value by the way the author rejects its opposite or its opposing characteristics. In many cases, the values are not expressed explicitly, such as: “health”, “healthy”, instead they are suggested by other terms and expressions which are part of that specific paradigm, such as: “maintaining the blood pressure under control”, “life support”, “enhance the functions”, “anti-inflammatory”, “doesn’t oxidate”, “to feel hydrated”, “to the elimination of the residues”, “rich in fresh vegetables”, “complex nutrients”, etc.

Certain formulas are suitable to be included in two categories at the same time. For example, “to learn *new things*” may be in *the learning/teaching/evolving* category of values and in *the change* category of values. The receiver will choose how to interpret them, according to his/her own values system. If change is an important factor in that person’s life, then he/she will decrypt it as change, and if learning and evolving is important, then he/she will choose this direction of signification. The receiver may also determine his/her values and the hierarchy of values, by analysing the preferred values expressed in these cookbooks. Each individual will choose the book and the recipes only according to his personal beliefs. For example, if health is important to someone, then that person will search for the information which expresses the idea of healthy food. There is also a certain amount of other beliefs that contribute to this decision. For example, if someone defines healthy food and life by eating raw food, then a cookbook with cooked meals, meat and fried food will not be a choice. Instead, that person will be interested in natural meals, recognizable in expressions such as: “vote for the organic food”, “natural food”, “natural detergent”, “natural sweetener”, “natural vanilla”, “raw cocoa”, “natural cream”, “extra-virgin oil”, “grown as natural as possible”, “a natural source of”, “full of chlorophyll”.

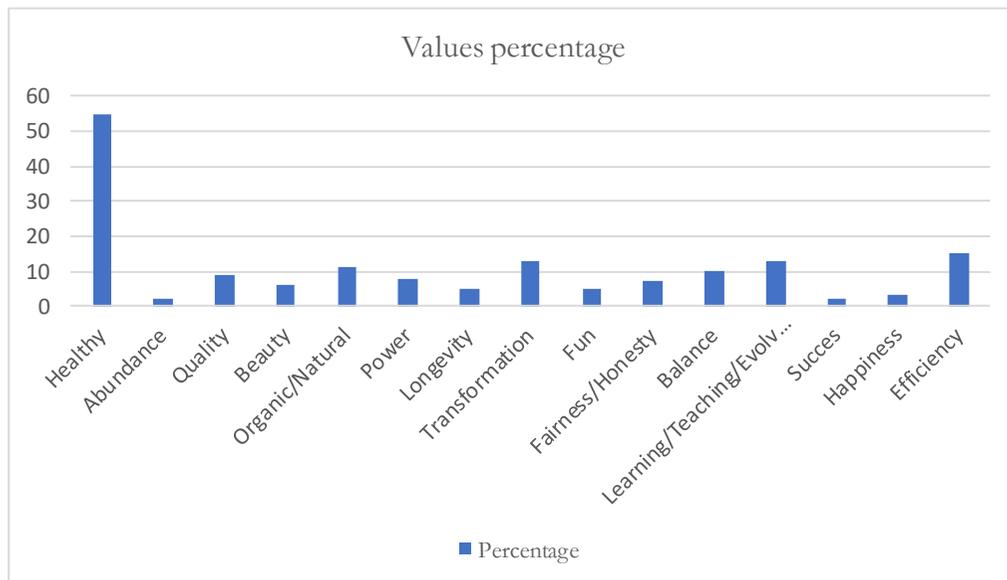
These criteria determine the choices regarding the type of food and the type of cooking, even no cooking (in the case of the raw vegan meals). If for someone else, beauty represents an important value, maybe even a primary one, then expressions such as: “a beautiful aspect”, “shiny hair”, “a young and radiant skin” will be the criteria of choosing that specific book.

In our investigation, we analysed the criteria of the two authors and chefs regarding their styles and their preferences. Their values are present in the words and the expressions we mentioned above and which we included in a few categories, in order to see what is actually important for them in the area of nutrition in their lives. We only considered the formulas that were present at least two times in the discourse. We determined a percentage of each of these categories as in the table below:

Values	Percentage
Health	55%
Abundance	2%
Quality	9%
Beauty	6%
Organic/Natural	11%
Power	8%
Longevity	5%
Transformation	13%
Fun	5%
Fairness/Honesty	7%
Balance	10%
Learning/Teaching/Evolving	13%
Success	2%
Happiness	3%
Efficiency	15%

**Table 1 – The results of the investigation**

The values presented here are the most common in the analysed books of J. Oliver and L. Pop. The higher percent of the health (55%) is in contrast with the small percentages of the abundance (2%), the success (2%), and the happiness (3%). The gap decreases when the other values are making their presence known: longevity (5%), fun (5%), beauty (6%), fairness/honesty (7%), power (8%), quality (9%), balance (10%), the organic/natural (11%), followed by two equal percentages of transformation (13%) and learning/teaching/evolving (13%). The next value close to the last ones but still far away from the 55% of the health is efficiency (15%). We may also observe the chart below, in order to determine the differences between the values in a visual representation:



According to these data, the most important thing for the authors in their books is the health and they transmit that in their discourse in various ways, from specific terms like “health”, “healthy” or “healthier” to expressions of which we deduce these values, such as: “life support”, “enhance the functions”, “anti-inflammatory” and many others. If we make the hierarchy of these values, they appear in the order presented in the following table:

Values	Percentage
Health	55%
Efficiency	15%
Transformation	13%
Learning/Teaching/Evolving	13%
Organic/Natural	11%
Balance	10%
Quality	9%
Power	8%
Fairness/Honesty	7%
Beauty	6%
Longevity	5%
Fun	5%
Happiness	3%
Abundance	2%
Success	2%

Table 2 – The scale of the values in the analysed discourses

### Conclusions

We may conclude by saying that some values are not very important for this chefs (such as success and abundance or happiness), but their interest in appreciating food and cooking increases when fun appears, when their work concentrates on longevity, beauty

and fairness/honesty. Then, the information from the books has a more pronounced character of power, quality and balance, and insisting on the organic or natural way of living and cooking. Jamie Oliver uses a variety of ingredients and classic recipes containing meal and cooked meals, while Ligia Pop combines a huge variety of natural, raw and raw vegan meals, which involve no cooking at all. Even if they use different approaches to cooking and different types of ingredients, they still consider health as the most important value, which is the most present in the books we analysed.

The terms used by the two chefs transmit the huge worth they attribute to the food and to the way they cook the food. Health is their primary source of motivation, followed by efficiency, transformation and learning/teaching/evolving. We may combine these results to observe the dynamics between the values with closed percentages. Thus, health is not far away from the efficiency of cooking, the mentality of the chef and the changes that he/she should do in order to create and maintain “a healthier life”.

From the level of the values, all the strategies and the behaviours are organized, because, on the scale of the neurological levels, they are on an inferior stage. The higher levels always have a direct influence on the levels below them, while these ones only have the potential to influence the upper levels. That means that the most worthy and desirable things for us will automatically determine the way we act, the way we feel and all our decisions. The values are at core of our belief system, of our perception about life, about the world, and about our attitude towards the most specific things in our everyday life, such as the food. We will choose what to eat and what to cook according to what is important for us on the values scale. Even if there are other interferences, the main direction is already established by the core values and beliefs and we act consequently, by filtering all the information in order to match the primary values. As we observed in the case of the discourses of J. Oliver and L. Pop, there are no differences regarding the main value (health).

When we set a goal regarding the healthy food and cooking, this will be “the tangible expression” (Dilts, DeLozier, 2000: 1519) of health. Our actions, reactions, our motivation, the choices of the ingredients and the way we cook the food, what to eat and how much to eat will be completely under the control of our scale of values.

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