The role of the celebrity chef

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Abstract

The celebrity chef is a phenomenon of contemporary popular culture that shows no sign of decreasing in interest, as reflected in the boom in TV cookery programmes and a number of bestselling cookery books and chef biographies and autobiographies. This has contributed to the professionalization of the industry and to a growing influence of the celebrity chef on consumer food habits and choices. This article makes an original contribution to the literature on chefs by identifying the various roles played by the celebrity chef: the media performer, the writer, the entrepreneur, the role model, and finally the rebel. Implications for practice are drawn.

Key words: **Celebrity chef; identity; occupational culture; occupational roles**

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1. Introduction

Accompanying an expansion of TV lifestyle programming (Ferguson and Zukin 1998; Ashley *et al*. 2004), there has been a surge in popular interest in chefs over the past twenty years. This is reflected in the boom in television cookery and food programmes. Until the early 1990s the majority of culinary-related TV programmes operated within a largely domesticated sphere, offering advice to a predominantly female audience (Wright, 2015). The appearance of the *Food Network* as a 24-hour TV cooking programmes' channel in 1995 changed the way viewers perceived and 'consumed' culinary TV shows. This development gave room to a number of ambitious and talented chefs to be exposed in local national and global media (Henderson, 2011). It also gave those chefs with no formal vocational training or substantial professional experience to emerge either as presenters or as contestants and become famous through these programmes (Hansen, 2008; Mitchell, 2010).

The phenomenon of celebrity chefs began to emerge alongside the growth in popularity of TV food programmes (Scholes, 2011). In the UK, for example, there are

many cookery programmes on daytime and prime-time television on the five terrestrial channels, together with reality TV shows such as *Hell's Kitchen* and *Masterchef* and non-terrestrial channels entirely devoted to food such as *UKTV Food* and the *Food Network*. It is estimated that on average there are 434 hours of TV cookery shows per week in UK terrestrial and on-demand channels (Prince, 2014). Celebrity chefs in the UK include Gordon Ramsay, Jamie Oliver, Heston Blumenthal, Gary Rhodes, Marco Pierre White and Nigella Lawson.

Accompanying this trend, there has been a transformation in the image of the occupation of chef in recent years (Cooper et al., 2017). In addition, the last two decades have witnessed the growing influence of the celebrity chef on consumer trends in terms of food choices (Powell and Prassad, 2010). The celebrity chef thus occupies a role of some societal significance in contemporary culture, and is therefore worthy of study in their own right, but also in terms of their influence on food habits (Stringfellow et al., 2013). Furthermore popular attention to celebrities has led to celebrities becoming trusted sources of information; a direct consequence is the emergence of the ordinary experts (Furedi, 2010). Celebrity chefs have become prominent public figures, and ordinary experts dispensing advice on food (Powell and Prassad, 2010).

This article draws together existing research on chefs, deriving from secondary data and academic literature. It makes an important contribution to knowledge by conceptualising the various roles of the celebrity chef in the contemporary landscape. The chef is viewed as a performer who seeks and attracts media attention. The chef is a writer, offering not only food recipes, but also a glimpse into the culture of the professional kitchen. The chef is an entrepreneur whose celebrity confers a brand that offers a competitive edge. The chef is a role model for future chefs, an inspiration to join the industry. Paradoxically, the chef is also a rebel, resisting the sham of celebrity, in a bid to preserve authenticity and integrity.

2. The performer: celebrity chefs as media stars

Celebrity figures have become central to post WWII western societies because of their enduring popularity with the general public (Rojek, 2001). Celebrities have

penetrated people's everyday lives, and are among the most significant influences on the 20th century from a societal perspective (Furedi, 2010). Celebrity as a phenomenon is multidimensional and difficult to understand or define (Turner, 2013). Marwick and Boyd (2011, p. 140) conceptualise celebrity as *"an organic and ever-changing performative practice rather than a set of intrinsic personal characteristics or external labels"*. On the other hand, Rojek (2001, p. 10) describes celebrity as *"the attribution of glamorous or notorious status to an individual within the public sphere"*.

Celebrity chefs produce a particular aesthetic in terms of food consumption and lifestyle, and they encourage their audiences to aspire to that lifestyle aesthetic (Lee, 2014). Not only have they changed eating and drinking patterns in Europe and beyond, but they have also transformed the basic need for hunger satisfaction into a hedonistic process for a demanding audience (Henderson, 2011). The convergence of print, television and contemporary (social) media to produce an inviting, inclusive and accessible platform on which celebrity chefs build their identity as brand name, and this has changed the occupational culture and occupational identity of chefs (Cooper et al., 2017). In addition, celebrity chefs have become the protagonists in the so called 'celebrity chef economy': they are commodities as a result of their 'celebritisation' (Rojeck, 2001). From a sociocultural perspective, the celebrity chef's cooking show has been used to reproduce hierarchies (Brownlie and Hewer, 2007) and to reinforce gender and ethnicity stereotypes that are present in wider society (Leer, 2018).

The celebrity chef economy is driven by the rapid expansion of consumerism in the context of capitalism and postmodern consumption (Marshall, 2006; Mentinis, 2017). The celebrity chef, according to Lee (2014, p. 51), *"is not confined to the kitchen, but instead must possess a unique skill set demanded by the chef economy and its media constituents"*. Matta (2019) suggests that the celebrity chefs' profile (i.e. professional background, knowledge and appearance) drive the consumption and the audience's interest. The celebrity chef power is cultivated and maintained by the 'publicity machine', which includes all the printed and digital media (Henderson, 2011; Turner, 2013). The public's attention is also stimulated by food critics and the food media with their access to mainstream media such as television and influential on line platforms like Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter.

It is argued that the public interest that celebrities create through their exposure in the mass media adds value to their actions and overall profile; this potentially also leads to financial rewards (Rojek, 2001; Turner, 2013). The work of a chef no longer just revolves around cooking, but also around building a recognisable profile in the social, print and television media. The creation of such a profile requires that the celebrity chef must convey a sense of authority, accessibility, and be in possession of specialised knowledge and skills (Lee, 2014).

A key role in the creation, maintenance and enhancement of the celebrity chef status in a westernised context has been played by the Hollywood movie industry (Wright, 2015), further underlining the blurred line between performer and chef. Hollywood can be viewed as an extension of the celebrity industry, which depends heavily on fans and followers. Hollywood celebrity actors and actresses such as Bradley Cooper and Catherine Zeta-Jones have played roles that portray graphically the 'violent and creative chef' character (see Table 1).

Table 1: Movies about chefs (1996-2016)

Table 1 here

The new millennium has brought changes in the way celebrity chefs communicate with their audience; thus, the use of the Internet and social media has become essential in maintaining and promoting celebrity status (Lee, 2014). The rapid replacement of the traditional media (i.e. printed press, magazines, radio and TV) with the extensive use of the Internet as the main source of information and entertainment has created a social environment in which the measures of ambition, achievement and success are reflected in an individual's on-line presence and profile (Choi and Berger, 2010). This development has not left celebrity chefs unaffected; indeed they were among the first celebrities to dominate social media such as Twitter and Instagram (Lee, 2014) (see Figure 1). Rousseau (2012) profiles several international chefs such as Jamie Oliver, Nigella Lawson and Heston Blumenthal; she argues that the celebrity chef interactions on social media add to their authority, at the same time as cultivating an accessible persona. The use of social media not only

enhances the celebrity chef image but also promotes the chefs as brands in their own right in a very lucrative market.

Figure 1: Celebrity Chefs' social media accounts

Figure 1 here

The instant access that the Internet allows celebrities and their audience provides the opportunity for both parties to interact in 'real-time'. Such expert-public interaction changes the ways in which both experts and non-experts approach and discuss food-related topics in a 'virtual foodscape', which is defined by Johnston and Goodman (2015, p. 206) as 'a socially-constructed view of the field of food'. Thus celebrity chefs have the chance to give advice, comment, share and reproduce information for a wide audience around the world. The creation and development of the celebrity culinary persona is therefore shaped through exposure on virtual foodscapes (Cesiri, 2019). Abbots (2015) argues that the fast growing social media presence has introduced a (pseudo) intimacy and proximity between celebrity chefs and their followers. This intimacy, according to Turner (2013), informs the celebrity chef's identity. Barns (2017) suggests that celebrity chefs aim to establish "*para-social relations*", defined as "*a form of relationship by and through media technologies where an individual is made available to those physically distant to them*" (*ibid.*: p. 171). The celebrity chef phenomenon has become an integral part of our everyday lives, reflected in the fact that we refer to them by their first name (Scholes, 2011). The projected image of the approachable, authentic and familiar face is reproduced through powerful manifestations and images of the celebrity chefs' everyday lives i.e. Jamie Oliver buying fresh ingredients from the local market and interacting with people just like an ordinary person.

3. The celebrity chef as writer

The explosion of interest in food and cooking has permitted public exposure to chefs across several media forms (Wood, 2000; Ashley et al., 2004). Thus, whilst the activities of celebrity chefs are frequently reported in daily newspapers and magazines, there is also a flourishing trend for cookery books authored or compiled by Michelin-starred chefs, together with biographies and other written accounts of high-profile chefs and kitchen life (Cooper, 2012). There is a paradox between a trend towards a decrease in home cooking

and an increase in cookbook sales that suggests that cookbooks serve a wider purpose beyond cooking (Matwick and Matwick, 2018). Rather, cookbooks can be seen as lifestyle guides that can often uphold class and gender roles (Matwick, 2017). Table 2 presents examples of chef-related books published between 1990 and 2019:

Table 2: Examples of Chef related books (1990 – 2019)

Table 2 here

Through various media and through their own publications, the voices of elite chefs are increasingly heard, informing the public about the nature of their occupation and the working culture. The value of autobiographies for an understanding of work identity should not be underestimated, a point also made by Strangleman (2005, p. 148) in his study of railway workers: '*…oral histories and autobiography offer us access to a truth in both a subjective and objective sense and that it is a mistake to believe that we can jettison the one while valuing the other*'.

In his autobiographical novel *Kitchen Confidential*, New York chef Anthony Bourdain (2000) presents a detailed and vivid account of kitchen life from an insider's point of view. Despite the flourishing trend for chef biographies and kitchen life written accounts, *Kitchen Confidential* is unique in that it provides a particularly insightful depiction of the culture of professional cooking, whilst pointing to the relevance of the kitchen environment to understanding the identity of chefs. Bourdain (2000, p. 124) claims that chefs share a particular world-view, as well as unusual customs, rituals and practices that identify them as a *'tribe'*. Their unsocial working hours exacerbate their exclusion from 'normal' social interaction and their deep commitment to their colleagues. Bourdain (2000, p. 56) refers to this as a *"blind, near-fanatical loyalty … under battlefield conditions"*. Bourdain indicates a sense of solidarity among chefs. He claims that a chef "*never shows up late, never calls in sick, and works through pain and injury*". At the same time, he paints a grim portrait of chef culture whereby new staff are routinely treated as '*cattle*' depersonalised and verbally abused about their personal circumstances, sexuality and physical appearance. Such examples underpin Bourdain's (2000, p. 3) depiction of the chef's world as "*…a culture whose centuries-old militaristic hierarchy and ethos of 'rum, buggery and the lash' make for a mix of unwavering order and nerve-shattering chaos*".

Michelin-starred chef Marco Pierre White (1990, p. 12) argues that the stigma and low status accorded to chefs have persisted whilst the occupation continues to attract under-achievers: *"The catering world in Britain is like the French Foreign Legion; it's the last resort of the inadequate. Anyone who falls out of school falls into catering"*. Similarly, Bourdain (2010, p. 61) points out that before cooking became *'cool'*, it was portrayed as being *'for girls'*, or, *'for queers'*. Furthermore, he asserts that: *"As chefs, we were proudly dysfunctional. We were misfits. And we knew we were misfits ... this was what had brought us to our profession, had made us what we were"* (Bourdain, 2010, p. 2). In addition, the Michelin-starred French chef Raymond Blanc (quoted in Barber, 2005, p. 24) pointedly remarks that:

> *"To be a chef in Great Britain you have to have a frontal lobotomy and then your whole world is the low ceiling, the white tiles, the strip lights, the aluminium. So you can understand why the violence does happen, because none of these chefs have been trained to be a manager".*

In line with Bourdain's (2000) US account, the Michelin-starred chef Gordon Ramsay bolsters the notion that aggressive and violent behaviour are part of the stereotype of professional kitchens: *"Kitchens aren't hairdressing salons or playgrounds. They're battlefields"* (Delingpole, 2000 cited in Cooper, 2012). In other words: *"A kitchen has to be an assertive, boisterous, aggressive environment, or nothing happens"* (quoted in Hollweg, 2001, p. 9). Ramsay also observes that *"...you need to get a beating to do well. Cooking is dog eat dog. The weak disappear off the face of the Earth"* (quoted in Duncan 2001, p. 10).

Meanwhile, A.A. Gill, the restaurant critic who has worked in such kitchens, writes: *"No other business would dare to treat its workers as they are treated in a restaurant kitchen"* (quoted in Hennessy 2000, p. 67). Gill points out that chefs are very protective of their *'Edwardian'* working conditions and resist efforts to improve their hours, for they *"take stoical pride in the assault course of the training in the school of hard knocks, branding burns, blistered feet and cirrhosed livers"* (Gill, 1997, p. 96). Hennessy (2000, p. 67) similarly argues that chefs perpetuate the system through their obsession to their craft: *"any suggested amelioration to the madness of the normal kitchen tends to be opposed by the inmates themselves".*

Cooper (2012) notes that not all chefs approve of kitchen violence and mistreatment. Former Michelin-starred chef Prue Leith, accuses Marco Pierre White and Gordon Ramsay of *"peddling 'macho nonsense' and bullying staff to raise their profile"* (Foggo, 2006, p. 10). She notably denounced White's claim that a chef has to be a *'pain junkie'* (White, 2006, p. 152) as *'arrogant rot'* (Leith, 2006 cited in Cooper, 2012). In another article (Pyke, 2002, p. 5), Prue Leith is quoted as saying that:

> *"There are still a few megalomaniac chefs and managers who think that you can frighten people into good performance. That 'kicking ass' works… Unhappily these flawed geniuses sometimes make it on to television and give our industry a name that it does not deserve".*

These comments subvert and challenge the norms of the kitchen culture as vividly portrayed by the male chefs' autobiographies cited above, and point to the possibility of a change in the brutal management techniques that appear to be endorsed by some chefs.

4. The entrepreneur: celebrity chefs as brands

The rise of celebrity chefs has had the effect of transforming the image of the occupation and redefining the relatively low status of professional chefs in the UK (Chivers, 1972, 1973; Gabriel, 1988; Mennell, 1996; Saunders, 1981) *"to a much enhanced role of chef/entrepreneur, expert and intellectual; a kind of modern-day renaissance man"* (Randall, 1999, p. 49). Indeed, although the world of chefs and their brigades has traditionally been private, the emergence of celebrity chefs and their 'open kitchens' has introduced the public to the *'backstage'* (Goffman, 1959) of professional cooking, whilst conferring an element of glamour onto the occupation. As a result of their *'celebritisation',* chefs have become commodities themselves (Lee, 2014) and transformed their names into brands (Henderson, 2011).

A number of authors (Ashley *et al.*, 2004; Ferguson and Zukin, 1998; Gillespie, 1994) have pointed out that chefs' stardom also has clear connections with the rise of *nouvelle cuisine* which brought to the fore the artistic status of chefs whilst stressing the *"visual aesthetics of dishes"* (Gillespie, 1994, p. 21) and therefore making food *"more televisual"* (Ashley et al., 2004, p. 177). *Nouvelle cuisine* is also associated with the rise of the chef–owner/entrepreneur (Henderson, 2011). Ashley et al. (2004, p.

175) explain that the high capital investment required to launch a new restaurant has led many chefs to actively cultivate publicity, notably through *'branding'* of their image as they become associated with a distinctive visual trademark. By diversifying their activities and becoming media personalities and *'brands'* in their own right (see Bourdain, 2006; Ruhlman, 2006), chefs gain a distinctive identity which gives their restaurants a competitive advantage and ensures commercial success in a highly competitive restaurant trade (Ashley et al., 2004; Ferguson, 2004; Gillespie, 1994; Ferguson and Zukin, 1998). This trend is particularly interesting in light of the changes that it has brought to the culture of chefs, notably in terms of encouraging an entrepreneurial ethos and flattening the status hierarchy of chefs.

As Gillespie (1994, p. 21) argues, the Escoffier-inherited ranking system based on time-serving and the acquisition of skill (through training and apprenticeships) has largely been *"supplanted at the level of the entrepreneurial 'chef as star' by a system of personal association and mentoring"*. As Gillespie (1994, p. 22) further states, *"serving in the world's great hotels is no longer a guarantee of star status, recognition or deference – either from peers or public"*. Today, *"those who occupy positions at the apex of the modern culinary hierarchy are those who have demonstrated individualism, entrepreneurship and a willingness to take risks"* (Gillespie, 1994, p. 22) – qualities which, interestingly, Wood (1991) also related to the advent of *nouvelle cuisine* and its effects on the culture of chefs as already discussed above.

From an industry/business perspective, Henderson (2011, 2018) views celebrity chefs and their '*empires*' as byproducts of globalisation, which creates numerous opportunities for international expansion and access to different markets. Celebrity chefs are viewed as a contemporary global phenomenon, as key players in what Phillipov (2017) terms 'the new politics of food'. Contemporary food media act as multi-platforms where the branded identities of celebrity chefs are forged through the convergence of the media and the food industry (*ibid.* p.3). Celebrity chefs can be seen as powerful intermediaries who use (and sometimes abuse) their public profile to address food ethics and sustainability issues (i.e. ethical, organic or sustainable food). Consequently, they may shape consumer 'choice', sometimes advocating for the consumption of labelled and certified food products that are not always compatible with the established labelling and certification systems (Phillipov and Gale, 2018).

The emergence of celebrity chefs as international brand names and entrepreneurs is not always smooth. The example of Jamie Oliver's near bankruptcy of his *Jamie's Italian* restaurant chain demonstrates how fragile the celebrity chefs' businesses are: "*we had simply run out of cash*", Oliver claimed in an interview with the Financial Times (Davis, 2018). Another example of a successful celebrity chef-entrepreneur is Gordon Ramsay: his company Gordon Ramsay Holdings Ltd (GRH) grew rapidly in global scale after the establishment of a partnership with Blackstone, a private equity company in 2001 (Jones, 2009). The global economic crisis has led GRH to a difficult financial situation; as a result the company went through radical measures that included restaurant closures, redundancies, new project cancelations or postponements (Henderson, 2011). The group recently reported return to profits after the implementation of a long term restructuring programme and international expansion (Sullivan, 2017).

5. The role model: professionalization and recruitment

It is often argued that the phenomenon of the celebrity chef has helped to improve the image of the career as a chef, as illustrated in the rise in culinary trade school applicants (Pratten and O'Leary, 2007). Trubek (2000) argues that the advent of television and celebrity chefs in a society that values fame and individual merit has enabled chefs to claim professional status. Trubek records that, since the nineteenth century, chefs involved in public cooking had worked hard to fulfil the conditions for professional status (by forming associations and schools, holding conferences and competitions, and consistently claiming the expert knowledge required to adequately perform their work) and yet, struggled to obtain the social, political, and economic approbation that would validate their professional claims.

Drawing upon the work of Larson (1977, 1990) on the nature of professions in modern capitalist society, Trubek (2000) argues that chefs' attempts to professionalise their occupation were in vain because they lacked the necessary *'closure'* to organise a protected market for their services. Since higher education is, according to Larson (1977, 1990), the primary means of attaining and maintaining closure (by controlling membership through educational credentials) and since cooking as a mode of expertise

cannot be easily incorporated into a system of higher education, it is therefore the nature of chefs' knowledge which separated cooking from other professions. In addition, Trubek (2000) argues that the difficulty in separating the practice of cooking from the domestic sphere, together with the ephemeral nature of chefs' end products, also facilitated the constant negation of their professional claims.

Another interesting observation is that celebrity chefs tend to come from socially and economically deprived backgrounds (Hyman, 2008; Miller, 2018) and tend to use the survival strategies learned whilst growing up to survive and thrive within the kitchen environment (Barrow et al., 2015). Indeed, the biggest influence on the restaurant industry in Britain in recent times has been Marco Pierre White (Cooper, 2012; Zopiatis and Melanthiou, 2019). His book *White Heat* was read by what became the next generation of Michelin-starred chefs and in it many saw somebody from their own socio-economic background who had achieved an enviable and desirable position within society, and they wanted to emulate him. As Cameron (2004) argues, it is common to hear Michelin-starred chefs, such as Marco Pierre White or Nico Ladenis referring to their occupation as a profession, although the latter do not refer to all chefs but primarily to those who have proved their standing in a hierarchy of high culinary skills, by progressing through the different positions of the *partie* system, over many years. Although professional status is likely to apply more to those adequately experienced chefs, the rising popularity of celebrity and Michelin-starred chefs can nevertheless be said to have raised the standing of the occupation and brought it close to professional status in the eyes of the public.

Marshall (2006) suggests that the emergence of the celebrity chef as a product and a brand name is used as a means of transformation and self-actualisation. It is argued that celebrity chefs are used as role models from the industry in order to inspire and recruit young candidates in a sector that chronically suffers from a poor image due to poor working conditions and the way its workers are treated (Barrow et al., 2015; Cameron, 2004; Pratten and O'Leary, 2007). Jamie Oliver is chef with the most influence on a student population (Lane and Fisher, 2014) with initiatives such as the *Fifteen* restaurant that attracts and trains young unemployed people as kitchen workers and chefs (Mentinis, 2017). Celebrity chefs are also very active as social campaigners i.e. Raymond Blanc and Gordon Ramsay have supported *Action Against Hunger* (https://www.actionagainst

) for many years. In a recent development, a number of celebrity chefs, Michelin starred chefs and restauranteurs have voiced their support for a new campaign backed by Prue Leith that hopes to recruit 100 professional chefs to work in 100 state schools in the U.K. over the next five years (Turner, 2018).

There are also strong indications that celebrity chefs have contributed to an increase in the number of applicants to culinary arts courses in the past two decades (Zopiatis and Melanthiou, 2019). However, Pratten (2003) observes that the glamour of the industry brought about by the advent of celebrity chefs and ubiquitous TV cookery programmes has had the effect of obscuring the hard work and level of dedication required to become a chef and *'make it to the top'*. Pratten's research highlights that chef trainees tend to cite many of the characteristics of the kitchen work environment as their main reasons for leaving the industry: the poor working conditions (extreme heat in a cramped environment), the long and anti-social hours, poor pay and enduring sexism. It is easy to see why these working conditions and attitudes are significant deterrents for many chef trainees, but Pratten suggests that the glamorous image of the industry is to blame for trainees' lack of awareness of the demands of cheffing.

Indeed, Zopiatis and Melanthiou (2019) show that although the reasonably high amount of students starting culinary college training indicates that the industry is healthy, the UK hospitality industry is currently undergoing a shortage of experienced chefs, because many new entrants tend to leave the industry within a few years of on-the-job training. The higher the level of experience, the more serious the shortage – a situation which, according to Pratten, can be accounted for by the reluctance of many cooks to take on supervisory responsibilities. Becoming a *sous* chef or head chef indeed involves more administrative and managerial tasks, as well as more *'risk and stress'* (Pratten, 2003, p. 240).

6. The rebel: celebrity chefs' rejection of celebrity

Stigma theory reveals that the views and perceptions of others significantly influence self-conception (i.e. Goffman, 1959; Jenkins, 2000). Similarly, occupational sociologists have demonstrated the linkages between the societal status conferred to a person's profession and their self-image and self-esteem (Giddens, 1991; Gold, 1964;

Hughes, 1958). Thus, it can be assumed that the image change brought about by the rise of celebrity chefs must have profoundly affected the identity of chefs and raised their self-esteem. However, despite the benefits of this improved social status for both self-esteem and financial reward, there has been a somewhat paradoxical trend among some Michelin-starred and celebrity chefs to distance themselves from other celebrity and television chefs *"in an attempt to assert their cultural legitimacy within the culinary field"* (Ashley et al., 2004, p. 179).

Drawing upon Bourdieu's (1971, 1993) discussion of cultural and economic capital, Ashley et al. (2004, p. 179) explain that chefs' skills, imagination and artistry gives them legitimacy - something they put at risk losing by attracting a *'mass'* audience and financial gain through television. To illustrate their argument, Ashley et al. (ibid.) use the case of Jamie Oliver who claims that *"he's probably spent more time in the kitchen than most of the 'slightly wanky, cheffy circle of TV chefs'"* (quoted in Lane, 2000, p. 3). Whilst still chasing television and book contracts, celebrity chefs must attempt to *"distance themselves from 'media sell-outs' like Ainsley Harriott, who, they have been assuring themselves for years, is not a real chef at all"* (Brockes, 1999, p. 6). In the words of Gordon Ramsay: *'Ainsley's not a chef. He's a fu**ing comedian'* (quoted in Evening Standard, 2004, p. 13).

Chef Anthony Bourdain's restaurant memoir, *Kitchen Confidential* (2000), *"presents itself as a backstage encounter with the 'culinary underbelly'"* (Ashley et al., 2004, p. 164) in which the occupation's practices and argot are crudely exposed. By setting itself in opposition to *"the inauthenticity offered by the 'frontstage' world of restaurant dining and television chefs"* (ibid.), the memoir also helps Bourdain (2000) differentiate himself from celebrity and television chefs and legitimise his own professional status (see also Bourdain, 2001, 2006). Although the opportunity to gain celebrity status is willingly embraced by chefs to ensure the economic success of their restaurant, the *'celebrity'* chef raises the issue of cultural de-legitimation and therefore remains alien from the genuine culture and identity of professional chefs (Cooper, 2012).

Cooper (2012) claims that despite an improvement in the image of the cheffing profession, the attention afforded by the media and celebrity culture are not necessarily altogether positive from the working chefs' (practitioners) point of view. The media and

celebrity and television chefs (TV chefs) tend to portray a false image of the professional chef, blurring the boundaries between reality and entertainment in the eyes of the outside world and distorting the reality of professional cooking and what 'being a chef' actually means (Cooper, 2012; Mentinis, 2017). It is argued that the industry has experienced a rapid growth since the early 1990s and the working conditions for chefs and commercial kitchen workers have significantly improved (i.e. Cooper et al., 2017; Giousmpasoglou et al., 2018). Although celebrity chefs have contributed to the elevation of chefs' status and the improvement of working conditions in commercial kitchens, they are treated cautiously by their occupational peer group. Cooper (2012) found that 'working' chefs actively seek to distance themselves from celebrity chefs and TV chefs, who they evidently perceive as making a mockery of and devaluing the craft thereby demeaning the occupation. In order to differentiate themselves from celebrity chefs and TV chefs, 'working' chefs highlight their superior technical abilities, or in other words, 'the knowledge', thereby distinguishing themselves as those who can and do cook well, in contrast to those who cannot and do not, thus identifying themselves as proper chefs.

7. Conclusion

This article has documented a surge in popular interest in chefs over the past two decades. This has been accompanied by a transformation in the image of the occupation of chef and a growing influence of the celebrity chef on food trends. Celebrities have become trusted sources of information on food. The celebrity chef occupies an important role in contemporary society, and therefore merits academic attention. This article makes an important contribution to knowledge by conceptualising the various roles played by celebrity chefs. Five overlapping roles have been identified, as shown in the figure below. The chef is portrayed as a performer who seeks and attracts media attention. The chef is also a writer, offering not only food recipes, but also a glimpse into the culture of the professional kitchen. The chef is an entrepreneur whose celebrity confers a brand that offers a competitive edge. The chef is a role model for future chefs, an inspiration to others join the industry. Paradoxically, the chef is also a rebel, resisting the sham of celebrity, in a bid to preserve authenticity and integrity.

7.1. Practical implications

A number of practical implications emerge from this study that categorisises the roles of the celebrity chef. This article indicates that through their roles as media star and writer, celebrity chefs can be understood as 'cultural intermediaries' (see Bourdieu, 1984) whose possession of culinary cultural capital leads to an important impact on food tastes and trends. Beyond their core activity of cooking in commercial kitchens, celebrity chefs have the ability to reach a global diverse audience that includes '*diners, viewers, readers, internet users and consumers of food and food related products*' (Lane and Fisher, 2014, p. 616). The utilisation of celebrity chefs as 'destination ambassadors' is already employed by some tourism destinations (i.e. Singapore, Israel, Japan and the U.S.A.). Of particular interest is that celebrity chefs have the potential to play a key role in promoting ethical and sustainable practices, in relation for example to responsible food sourcing. Celebrity chefs can play a significant role in informing a shift in social values, particularly in regard to animal welfare. Phillipov (2017) calls for a detailed representation of farming practices in the food media in order to improve trust in the source of products and to improve the treatment of animals. Celebrity chefs can help in this move to more accurate reporting.

The dominance of social media as a vehicle for the promotion of celebrity chefs and their message is something that needs to be recognised by bodies with a responsibility for food consumption and sustainable food practice. Governments can work with celebrity chefs to promote positive messages that link food with health and well-being.

This article also observes that the celebrity chef has a hand in changing the image of work in professional kitchens. The emergence of the celebrity chef as a contemporary phenomenon allows chefs to act as ambassadors for the restaurant industry and promoters of the culinary arts discipline, as well as being role models for the next generation. They can also act as ambassadors for the improvement of employer/staff relations, in a bid to improve employee wellbeing and to help to improve the retention of talented chefs. Indeed, a positive intervention on the part of popular celebrity chefs could help the UK hospitality industry to address the challenge of the shortage of chefs, especially after BREXIT (Lewis, 2018). The recent Tourism Sector Deal (Gov.com, 2019) recognises the hospitality and tourism industry as one of the three biggest employers in the UK. Both

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Government and the service sector call for coordinated action to attract, develop and retain talented employees in the post-BREXIT hospitality industry.

7.2. Limitations and Recommendations for future research

This paper is based on an extensive review of academic literature and related secondary data. This represents the key limitation of the study, which is conceptual in nature and unsupported by empirical data. This limitation will be countered in future research on the celebrity chef phenomenon. There is a need for systematic research on the roles and impacts of the celebrity chef phenomenon, which will help to fill important gaps in knowledge. A number of areas worthy of further investigation are identified below:

1. There is a need to explore the impact of celebrity chefs' social media accounts on their followers, and toanalyse the online interactions between chefs and followers. This could be done through netnographic research, the impact of the celebrity chef phenomenon on industry standards and industry image deserves research attention as this study reveals that there is a potential link.

2. Researchers could focus on the failure of celebrity chefs to comply with labelling and certification standards, as this study points to possible legal complexities.

3. Future research could investigate the philanthropic actions of celebrity chefs who attempt to make improvements to social welfare as demonstrated in Jamie's *15* project.

4. The role of celebrity chefs in the improvement of vocational training and curriculum development and in the evolution of the chef's occupational identity could be explored.

5. A Human Resources Management approach to the role of the celebrity chef as manager as well as entrepreneur would be an interesting line of enquiry.

6. Future research could adopt a cross-cultural approach to the study of the public's perception of the celebrity chef as there may be cross-national differences in attitudes and perceptions.

7. Finally, the celebrity chef persona could be studied as a contemporary phenomenon linked to consumerism and post-modernism, thereby necessitating an interdisciplinary perspective.

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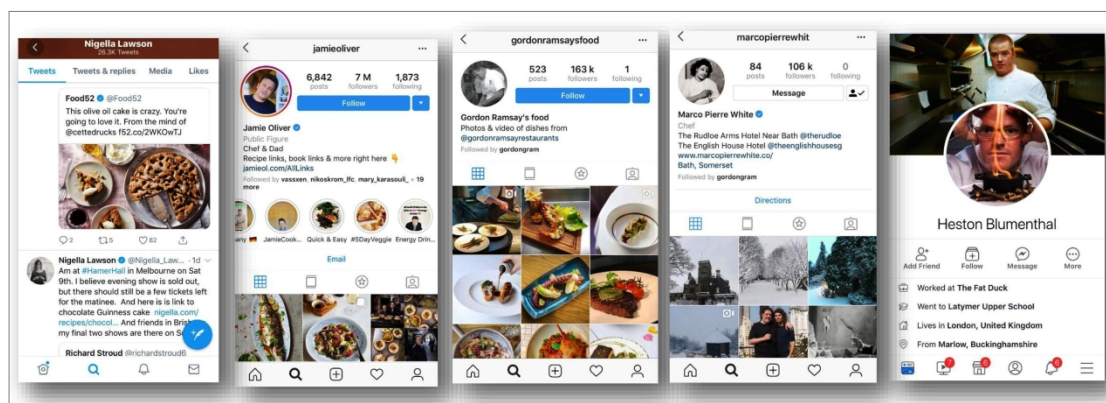
Figure 1

Table 1:

Burnt (2015) Starring: Bradley Cooper Directed by: John Wells	**Chef (2014)** Starring: Robert Downey Jr., Scarlett Johansson / Directed by: Jon Favreau
Julie & Julia (2009) Starring: Meryl Streep Directed by: Nora Ephron	**Today's Special (2009)** Starring: Aasif Mandvi Directed by: David Kaplan
No Reservations (2007) Starring: Catherine Zeta-Jones, Aaron Eckhart / Directed by: Scott Hicks	**Ratatouille, (2007)** Directed by: Brad Bird, Jan Pinkava
Woman on Top (2000) Starring: Penelope Cruz Directed by: Fina Torres	**Chocolat (2000)** Starring: Juliette Binoche, Johnny Depp Directed by: Lasse Hallström
Vatel (2000) Starring: Gérard Depardieu, Uma Thurman Directed by: Roland Joffé	**Big Night, (1996)** Starring: Tony Shalhoub, Stanley Tucci, Marc Anthony / Directed by: Campbell Scott, Stanley Tucci

Table 2:

Chefs' autobiographies	Written accounts of both high-profile chefs and kitchen life
White, (1990, 2007); Ladenis, (1997); Bourdain, (2000); Hennessy, (2000, 2011); Ramsay, (2006, 2007); Smith, (2006); Simpson, (2006); Newkey-Burden, (2009); Roux, (2009); Blumenthal, (2012); Leith, (2012); Samuelsson, (2013); Lakshmi, (2016); Jefferson & Ellis, (2016); Matsuhisa, (2017)	Ruhlman, (1997, 2001, 2006); Bramble, (1998); Mullan, (1998); Bourdain, (2001, 2006, 2010); Parkinson and Green, (2001); Dornenburg & Page, (2003); Kelly, (2003); Wright, (2005); Buford, (2006); Chelminski, (2006); Achatz & Kokonas, (2011); Baltzey, (2013); Blackhall, (2013); Gibney, (2014); Austin, (2015); Andres,(2018); Onwuachi & Stein (2019)