

Original Article

Marketing Strategies of Chefs to Establish Their Personal Brand

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Abstract - This research paper aims to discuss the marketing strategies used by celebrity chefs that profoundly impact the hospitality industry. Celebrity chefs are seasoned restaurant professionals who have gained popularity through various mediums like television shows, cookbooks, social media, and restaurant ventures. Although several research papers focus on celebrity chefs' impact on emerging chefs, shows, and the hotel/restaurant industry, they do not discuss how that impact is created. Existing research papers fail to explain what strategies are used by celebrity chefs to establish themselves as a personal brand. Therefore, this research paper aims to address several marketing strategies celebrity chefs use to establish themselves as a prominent figure in the culinary and hospitality industry. To add a cultural perspective, the research paper focuses on two celebrity chefs in this study, Gordon Ramsay and Ranveer Brar. The major findings of this research indicate that celebrity chefs use a variety of marketing strategies, including television shows and social media engagement, to establish and promote their personal brands. These strategies significantly contribute to their success and recognition. The research offers valuable insights for the hospitality industry, guiding restaurants and hotels to leverage celebrity chef collaborations as a strong marketing tool to enhance brand recognition and appeal. For aspiring chefs and marketers, this research paper serves as a source of inspiration and a blueprint for building personal brands in the culinary world, emphasizing the importance of adapting to modern marketing techniques and utilizing various platforms.

Keywords - Celebrity chefs, Personal brand, Marketing strategies, Cooking shows and social media.

1. Introduction

With over 15,000,000 restaurants in the world, the entire food service market was valued at USD 2,323 billion in 2021 [1]. There are 660,936 restaurants in the United States and approximately 15 million employees in the restaurant industry [1]. The industry generated USD 72.8 billion in the US alone in 2021[1]. With so many restaurants worldwide, it is difficult for new and upcoming restaurant businesses to gain popularity and establish themselves. However, one big way in which restaurants gain popularity is by marketing themselves with the help of celebrity chefs.

In the hospitality industry, hotels and restaurants often leverage the personal branding of their chefs to market their offerings [2]. Collaborations between chefs and hotels have become a global expansion strategy for many restaurant and hotel chains [2]. There are several mediums of marketing, both old and new. Marketing with the help of celebrity chefs falls into the broad category of influencer marketing.

Celebrity chefs are seasoned restaurant professionals who have gained popularity through various mediums like television shows, cookbooks, social media, and restaurant ventures. These celebrities are chefs who have developed their own signature cooking styles and unique recipes. They establish themselves as a brand of their own and play a

significant role in shaping the careers of up-and-coming chefs. Similarly, cooking shows play an essential role in providing up-and-coming chefs a platform to make themselves known to the world and to gain recognition. Shows like MasterChef have provided a platform for talented chefs to showcase their skills and gain a wide audience [3]. These shows also feature celebrity chefs, who often are the mentors or judges of the show.

Using celebrity endorsers in advertising provides several advantages for products and brands. It simplifies the advertising process and generates positive attitudes and behaviors towards the product/brand, thereby improving its market position. Employing celebrities helps create a lasting impression, establish a positive brand image, increase brand familiarity and recognition, attract high-profile customers, and support global or local marketing campaigns.

Celebrity chefs have the potential to influence people's food choices as they serve as role models. They can utilize their influence to promote local food and cooking practices, which can, in turn, support national cuisines or the establishment of restaurants specializing in indigenous food. Developing marketing strategies targeted towards chefs and gourmets can also be beneficial for promoting national cuisine.



The emergence of celebrity chefs, such as Gordon Ramsay and Ranveer Brar, demonstrates that chefs are not just culinary experts, but they also engage in business, public relations, brand endorsements, and personal branding to enhance their image and reputation. Personal branding allows individuals to establish themselves as experts in their field, build credibility, advance their careers, and boost self-confidence. A chef's brand name can be a powerful negotiating tool with suppliers, distributors, and hotel clients. Celebrity chefs can influence both marketing and operational strategies in luxury hotels. Their brand name impacts communication and public relations strategies, and integrating their personal and hotel brands can provide a competitive advantage. The reputation and values associated with the chef's brand ultimately become part of the hotel's organizational culture. Luxury hotels that secure the endorsement of celebrity chefs can also demand premium prices and benefit from their association with the chef's brand.

Although several research papers exist that talk about the impact celebrity chefs have on emerging chefs, shows, and the hotel and restaurant industry, a lack of evidence exists in terms of how that impact is created. Existing research papers fail to explain what strategies are used by celebrity chefs to establish themselves as a brand and keep audiences entertained. This research paper aims to address this knowledge gap and discuss the marketing strategies used by celebrity chefs that profoundly impact the hospitality industry. By addressing this knowledge gap, the study provides valuable insights into the methods through which celebrity chefs create their influence.

2. Discussion

The discussion section highlights the following parameters of comparison: Cooking/Reality Shows, Social Media, and Restaurants, and provides a mini-case study of two chefs: Gordon Ramsay and Ranveer Brar.

2.1. Cooking/Reality Shows

Reality Cooking shows have significantly impacted the increasing popularity of culinary arts. These shows have effectively fostered a new wave of food enthusiasts, both in terms of cooking and dining [3]. Through these shows, people have developed a greater interest in cooking and have come to appreciate good food more, resulting in a renewed enthusiasm for home cooking and exploring new recipes [3]. The rise of celebrity chefs has brought about a transformative change in the culinary industry, and food TV shows have been instrumental in providing them with a platform to gain widespread recognition. Through cooking competitions, reality shows, and culinary demonstrations, chefs have exhibited their skills and personalities, ultimately amassing a significant following and immense popularity. Renowned chefs like Gordon Ramsay and Ranveer Brar have become synonymous with the culinary world, and their names are familiar in households worldwide. Approximately 500 cooking shows are broadcast on TV channels worldwide daily, with almost 3.5 billion viewers [4].



Fig. 1 Gordon Ramsay cooking while shooting Master Chef

Gordon Ramsay is renowned for hosting a total of eight highly acclaimed television programs. These include *Kitchen Nightmares: Hell's Kitchen*, *The F Word*, and the US version of *MasterChef* [5]. Ramsay takes charge of both these shows' British and American editions, except for *MasterChef US*. In addition, he is involved in both the regular and junior versions of *MasterChef*. Apart from these culinary programs, Ramsay also stars in shows featuring his family, like *Matilda and Ramsay Bunch*. Furthermore, he has made numerous guest appearances in various shows and movies [5].

The wide array of popular television shows and appearances featuring Gordon Ramsay helps him effectively market himself in several ways [5]. By hosting multiple successful TV shows, Ramsay's presence in the media becomes more prominent. This exposure helps him reach a larger audience and build a strong personal brand. His involvement in various cooking shows establishes him as an authority in the culinary world. His expertise and experience lend credibility to the brand, making him a go-to figure for food-related content and advice. His range of shows caters to different demographics and interests. From intense cooking competitions like *Hell's Kitchen* to more family-oriented programs like *Matilda and the Ramsay Bunch*, he expands his reach and captures the attention of various viewer segments. By overseeing both UK and US versions of his shows, Ramsay taps into different markets and expands his international recognition. This global presence helps him connect with a broader audience and increases his marketability. Ramsay's television success also opens doors for brand extensions and collaborations. It provides opportunities to release cookbooks, launch product lines, partner with restaurants, and engage in endorsement deals, further enhancing his personal brand and revenue streams.

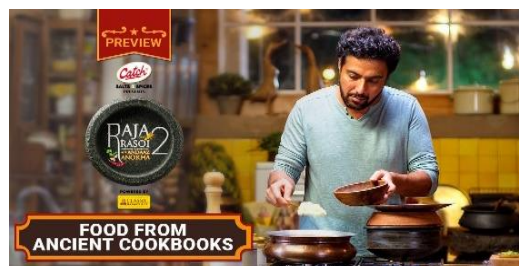


Fig. 2 Ranveer Brar cooking for an advertisement for his show 'Raja Rasoi'

Ranveer Brar is known for participating as a host or a judge in shows like MasterChef India, The Great Indian Rasoi, Thank God It is Fryday, Health Bhi Taste Bhi, and Ranveer's Cafe [6]. In these shows, Brar explored the diverse regional cuisines of India, traveled across the country to explore street food and local culinary delights, shared his insights and recipes, and judged cooking competitions.

Participating in cooking shows offers a versatile platform for Brar to promote himself effectively. These television programs are pivotal in significantly elevating his brand's visibility. As he presents his culinary prowess to a wide-ranging audience, viewers regard him as a trustworthy culinary figure, enhancing his standing.

Furthermore, these appearances frequently involve the utilization of specific ingredients or products, subtly endorsing them and associating them with Brar's personal brand. He cultivates a devoted following of aspiring chefs and culinary enthusiasts by imparting cooking advice and kindling viewers' creativity with new recipes.

Cooking shows also provide invaluable networking opportunities, facilitating connections between Brar and fellow chefs and industry experts. These relationships can lead to partnerships, joint ventures, or guest spots, further enhancing his personal brand. In cases where Brar is affiliated with restaurants or culinary enterprises, exposure on television can result in increased foot traffic and clientele.

Additionally, TV appearances funnel traffic to his social media profiles, affording him the opportunity to interact with his audience, distribute content, and promote his brand and forthcoming ventures. Successful television engagement might also translate into book deals, merchandise prospects, and international recognition, broadening his reach and income streams [7].

Thus, Gordon Ramsay uses his media presence to show audiences his critical culinary side and entertain viewers by, sometimes ruthlessly, commenting on dishes made by up-and-coming chefs on his shows. On the other hand, Ranveer Brar uses his shows to explore different cuisines and connect to the rich history and backgrounds of dishes, thus enriching the experience of cooking and eating these dishes. Through this, he provides his viewers with a heartwarming experience.

2.2. Social Media

Celebrity Chefs are leveraging the power of social media, particularly platforms like Instagram and YouTube, to effectively reach an audience that might have been difficult to engage otherwise. The younger generation, known for being frequent social media users, is highly influenced by celebrity chefs and food influencers.

In the present day, social media has evolved into more than just a means of staying connected with friends and

family; it has become a major source of inspiration, especially when it comes to food and meal planning. Celebrity Chefs have recognized this potential and understand that users often turn to social media to discover new recipes products, and gain knowledge about nutrition and health. Social media users flock to the accounts of celebrity chefs to keep up with the latest food trends, explore new products, and learn about exciting culinary discoveries. Platforms like Instagram, YouTube, and Pinterest are packed with mouthwatering and nutritious recipes, making it a natural choice for these chefs to establish their presence there [8].

For brands seeking to promote their products or services, collaborating with celebrity chefs is an excellent way to introduce their offerings to a fresh and engaged audience. Social media allows food and recipes to be presented in an enjoyable and captivating manner, and celebrity chefs excel at demonstrating this aspect. By partnering with them, brands can highlight the fun and excitement of food, standing out from the crowd with creative content and potentially boosting brand awareness and sales.

Gordon Ramsay possesses an impressive ability to captivate and engage his audience through various social media platforms. He boasts a substantial following with 7.5 million followers on Twitter, 13.4 million on Instagram, 18.7 million YouTube subscribers, and 17 million on TikTok. His marketing strategy involves leveraging the unique features of each platform, demonstrating his in-depth understanding of his target audience. To stay connected with his followers, Ramsay actively posts and shares stories on a daily basis. He intuitively knows their preferences and expectations. As a renowned chef, he consistently provides content by sharing enticing pictures and short videos of delectable dishes from his restaurants, effectively using this as a promotional tool.

Furthermore, Ramsay effectively engages his audience on YouTube by sharing recipes, offering cooking tips, and providing tutorials on culinary techniques. Through interactive content like 'Ramsay in 10', he challenges himself to prepare dishes within 10 minutes, making them easily replicable for viewers at home, even if they are not experienced cooks [8]. This approach encourages followers to participate and feel a sense of interaction with him actively. Ramsay's TikToks, which typically portray him critiquing videos of people preparing food, provide his viewers with the entertainment of watching a character they have come to love- an informal, unedited version of Ramsay.

Similarly, Ranveer Brar stays up-to-date with current trends and effectively utilizes social media to engage with his audience. The celebrity chef has gained recognition for his Twitter video series called #RanveerOnTheRoad, where he embarks on culinary journeys in Australia and Seychelles, exploring local flavors and spices across two seasons [7].

While maintaining an aesthetically pleasing presence on social media, Brar is also mindful of responsible influencer marketing. In an interview, he shared that he selectively chooses brand endorsements, ensuring they align with his values and principles. For instance, he refrains from endorsing aerated drinks and fast-food brands. Fond of live interactions, the chef says, "Social media helps me to express myself beyond a format and showcase content unlike on Television or other mediums."

With over a decade of experience across various social media platforms and his own website, Brar has accumulated 1.2 million followers on Instagram, 1.7 million on Twitter, 2.8 million on Facebook, and 2.5 million subscribers on YouTube. His content on YouTube often includes long-format videos, sharing stories behind dishes and much more.

Brar uses Twitter for online discussions, sharing #FoodFactFun posts philosophical musings, and occasionally redirects users to his other social media profiles. On Facebook, he frequently leverages Facebook Watch. Instagram serves as a platform for showing aesthetics, hosting Live sessions, and engaging in conversations with musicians, poets, independent filmmakers, and others. Thus, while Ramsay has a more entertainment-focused way of marketing on social media, Brar uses empathetic marketing to connect to his audiences.

2.3. Restaurants

Owning restaurants can serve as an effective strategy for celebrity chefs to market themselves and strengthen their brands through various means. Restaurants allow celebrity chefs to exhibit their culinary expertise and unique cooking style to a wide range of audiences. Customers visit their establishments to experience the chef's creations firsthand, reinforcing their reputation and personal brand. Running successful restaurants demonstrates the chef's proficiency in the culinary world.

It adds credibility to their name and establishes them as authorities in the field, making them more appealing to potential customers and media outlets. Owning restaurants provides celebrity chefs with more media coverage, including reviews and features in food-related publications. This media attention keeps their name in the public eye and draws new customers to their restaurants. Chefs can leverage their restaurant's popularity to promote their cookbooks, cooking shows, merchandise, and other ventures, expanding their overall reach.

Additionally, owning restaurants can provide abundant content for celebrity chefs' social media platforms and online presence. Sharing behind-the-scenes insights, new dishes, and customer experiences helps engage their followers and cultivate a devoted fan base. Satisfied customers at a celebrity chef's restaurant will likely become loyal fans, following their work and endeavors beyond the restaurant. This devoted customer base supports the chef's other ventures and contributes to their long-term success.

As of January 2023, Gordon Ramsay possesses a collection of 58 restaurants under various titles. He stands as one of the foremost privately owned restaurant conglomerates in the United Kingdom, with his dining establishments reaching across the UK and extending to the US, France, Dubai, Singapore, and more [9]. Owning so many restaurants provides Ramsay with all the benefits mentioned above, thus boosting his personal brand. On the other hand, Ranveer Brar opened his first restaurant in Goa, India, in 2001, followed by two more restaurants in Goa. He then went on to open several restaurants in cities like Boston and GTA, Canada and Dubai [10]. Although Brar does not own nearly as many restaurants as Ramsay, owning these restaurants gave him the opportunity to expand his areas of expertise, increase his customer base, and boost his personal brand, too.

3. Conclusion

In a world where culinary choices abound, establishing a restaurant as exceptional can be quite challenging. Nevertheless, renowned chefs have demonstrated that their talents extend beyond the kitchen; they possess the skill of self-promotion, which significantly benefits the restaurant industry. This research paper examined the methods employed by these chefs, focusing on avenues such as television shows, social media, and restaurant ownership, with Gordon Ramsay and Ranveer Brar serving as illustrative examples. Cooking shows on television play a pivotal role in bringing chefs to fame. These shows ignite culinary enthusiasm and offer chefs a platform to showcase their expertise and personalities. Gordon Ramsay, for instance, has successfully hosted numerous cooking shows, further establishing himself as a prominent figure in the culinary industry.

Social media platforms like Instagram and YouTube have become invaluable tools for chefs to engage with their fan base. With their substantial followings, Gordon Ramsay and Ranveer Brar employ distinct approaches on these platforms. Ramsay shares images and videos of delectable dishes while actively interacting with his followers. Conversely, Brar takes his audience on culinary journeys, sharing his thoughts on food and life. Owning restaurants provides another avenue for chefs to bolster their personal brand. Diners at a restaurant owned by a celebrity chef get to savor their creations and experience their culinary prowess firsthand. This elevates the chef's credibility and fame. Ramsay and Brar's extensive portfolio of restaurants worldwide has notably contributed to their fame and status.

Celebrity chefs have transcended their culinary achievements to become prominent personal brands in a world saturated with dining choices and food influencers. Their journey from the kitchen to stardom underscores that they are both culinary experts and strong marketers. As time progresses, it can be anticipated that celebrity chefs will continue to innovate in self-promotion. They will persistently fuse their culinary skills with contemporary marketing techniques, ensuring their enduring success.

Examining these strategies not only enriches our comprehension of the culinary realm but also serves as an inspiration for aspiring chefs and marketers.

In conclusion, celebrity chefs wield considerable influence in the restaurant industry, extending beyond their

culinary talents. Their marketing strategies through television, social media, and restaurant ownership are not only recipes for culinary triumph but also serve as instructive lessons in effective marketing. This emphasizes the ever-evolving nature of the culinary landscape, where celebrity chefs play a pivotal role.

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