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# **International Food Television Show Formats in the Digital Era**

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Doctor of Philosophy

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# Abstract

A recent pattern has emerged amongst some of the top television production companies in the world – a global investment in a new style of television show format. Food television show formats such as Channel 4's *The Great British Bake Off* in the UK and Fox's *Hell's Kitchen* in the US have consistently topped television ratings and attracted millions of viewers in every episode aired in their home countries and abroad. A range of publications argue that there has been a global demand for factual television formats, yet existing literature has focused primarily on dramas, talent shows and game show television format genres.

From a production perspective, this thesis aims to respond to these industry changes and the gap in the literature by examining the media branding techniques employed by media managers that have contributed to the development of international food television show formats. It analyzes the distinct challenges and opportunities food television format producers of shows such as Endemol Shine Group's *MasterChef* undergo when adapting food formats in international markets. Furthermore, it investigates production decisions around multi-platform strategies. This includes the adaptation of food television show formats onto multi-platform distribution channels such as catch up television like Netflix, Amazon Prime, format brand websites and social media channels like Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and Instagram in order to acquire additional revenue streams.

This thesis examines the managerial decisions that have helped aid the cooking show into becoming a successful, global television format. The research findings are based on a mixed-method qualitative approach featuring 15 qualitative interviews with industry experts from major production companies such as Endemol Shine Group and FremantleMedia and celebrity television chefs, such as BBC One's *MasterChef*'s Gregg Wallace and former Food Network star, Paula Deen. The outcomes of this research provide an empirical analysis of the complex relationship between new media technologies, food television and the internationalization of global television formats. Furthermore, this thesis provides a snapshot of a specific and current media trend that exists within a wide scope of media industry practices and aims to provide valuable insights and build on existing media management, multi-platform, and media production theory.

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# **Author's Declaration**

This thesis represents the original work of Angela Esposito and is compliant with the University of Glasgow's ethical guidelines. The research on which it was based was carried out at the University of Glasgow under the supervision of Professor Gillian Doyle and Professor Raymond Boyle during the period of September 2014 to December 2017.

During this time, I have presented findings of this research at the University of Oslo in Norway on an international exchange program, at the '2016 YouTubers, streamers and online video creators' meet up in London as part of the CREATE Festival and was selected to speak at the '2017 International Conference on Media Studies' in Warsaw, Poland where I presented findings from Chapter Six of this thesis. I have been accepted to speak at Cambridge University in December 2018 at the '2018 International Conference on Gender Studies "Gender (Mis)Representations.'

In 2017, I was one of the lead organizers of the 'Film, Theatre and Television and Centre for Cultural Policy Research Post-Graduate Symposium' at the University of Glasgow where I presented preliminary findings and co-chaired discussions. My research was also accepted in Vancouver, Canada at the '2017 Second International Conference on Communication and Media Studies.' I have been a guest lecturer and conducted academic workshops at the University of Glasgow and was a teacher in high schools across Scotland on multiple occasions.

# Chapter One: Introduction

Food is not only vital for human life, but it has also become a staple part of our sociological discourse. Gourmet food, in particular, indicates status and can even incite fantasies of experiencing the featured destinations that belong to a particular dish (Ketchum, 2005; Wocke, 2016). Food connects with humans on a primitive level and has been exploited through the media and online ancillary circulation via social media networking sites and network television brand websites. Some authors suggest that people receive pleasure from viewing and posting enticing images of food onto social media (Dejmanee, 2015; McDonnell, 2016; Wocke, 2016). Taking photographs of gourmet dishes and uploading them to platforms such as Instagram, Facebook and Twitter has become common practice when dining out to eat and when cooking a new recipe at home. Television producers have caught on to this curiosity and growing fascination with food, which has driven many new production decisions at the global level.

This thesis investigates the production elements that have contributed to the food media revolution and will examine how gourmet food, in particular, has and most likely always will permeate media products, particularly on television and now onto digital platforms. It will also highlight why food is a special theme and how format licensors have found innovative ways to market our intrigue with food as a form of visual entertainment. This is evidenced by popular 24-hour networks dedicated to food programming and the widespread success of global food television show formats such as Endemol Shine Group's *MasterChef* (1990-present) and Channel 4's *Come Dine with Me* (2005-present). Additionally, hedonistic food-centric programming has been recognized for bringing a sense of status to which humans are naturally attracted to (Dejmanee, 2015; Wocke, 2016). Until this thesis, the understanding of the role food has played as a centric theme within the television format industry has been limited and its importance has been overlooked in academic literature.

This research aims to fill this gap and add value to media production, multi-platform and media management studies by adopting a production-based research approach. It is important to note that this thesis is not concerned with audience research.

Instead, it focuses on the managerial decisions made by producers and owners of food television show formats, involving media branding strategies and multi-platform distribution strategies. The following section, Section 1.2, provides an overview of the key terminology and categories associated with this research and in media management and production literature that will be discussed in depth in this thesis. This section aims to clarify the context within which the key terms of this thesis are being used. Section 1.3 describes the three key motivations for this doctoral thesis which include professional experience working on a food television show format, the internationally recognized success of British television show formats, and the widespread adoption of the internet and digital television. These motivations were key drivers for the production-based approach that will be further discussed in Chapter Three of this thesis. Finally, Section 1.4 outlines the research questions and organization of this thesis.

## **1.2 Key Terminology**

The terminology associated with television formats, food television show formats, multi-platform strategies and media branding strategies in academia are dynamic and ever-changing. This is due to the fact that the television industry moves so quickly to respond to new technology, audience behavior and a range of other socioeconomic factors. Therefore, it is essential to clarify the key terms and provide precise definitions of how these concepts will be discussed throughout this thesis in order to avoid any confusion. The following five sections define this thesis's interpretation of television formats, television format licensors and licensees, food television show formats, multi-platform strategies, and media branding strategies. These definitions have been derived from established terminology and a range of academic sources, as well as the research findings.

### *Television Formats*

The term 'format' has multiple definitions and can be interpreted differently depending on the context. For example, a format can refer to any form of a process, not necessarily associated with television production, or it can be used in terms of formatting a computer to its factory settings. The list goes on.

For the purpose of this research, a television format will be defined as: a global television product, in this case, a show, that is licensed and sold for commercial purposes. Once a television format is sold, it is then recreated or 'adapted' to suit the format buyer's local television market. According to Moran and Malbon (2006: 20), television formats are: 'a set of invariable elements in a serial program out of which the variable elements of individual episodes are produced.' These formats are copyrighted and have evolved into a commodity blueprint, which is then imitated, marketed and sold for mass consumption. Many television viewers are unaware that their favorite shows may be local adaptations from television format exports from countries like the US, UK, and Japan, such as ITV's *Who Wants to Be a Millionaire* format that started in Britain and was then adapted in over 80 countries around the world (Moran and Malbon, 2006).

Television companies have imported foreign television concepts and ideas since the 1950s (Bechtold, 2013; Chalaby, 2011; Moran and Keane, 2006). However, official television format agreements were not established until the 1970s and 1980s. In the past, before the format system, ideas were ad hoc, improvised and copied or imitated with very little, if any, payment, due to a lack of formalization in the television industry. Therefore, a license fee system was put in place and has evolved significantly since then in order to stimulate international trade in formats (Moran, 1998). The only way to legally produce a format in a new territory is to purchase what is commonly referred to in the industry as a 'television format license.' A television license grants producers from all over the world with the right to air copyrighted formats that consist of a distinctive narrative that can be customized for local adaptation (Chalaby, 2011; Oren and Shahaf, 2012). Moran's characterization of a format is furthered in his research with Keane which argues that not only is the format trade a profitable business exchange for cross-border partnerships, but that it helps to: 'organize and regulate the exchange of program ideas between program producers' (Moran and Keane, 2004: 6). These 'program producers' are commonly referred to as television format licensors and licensees.

### *Television Format Licensors and Licensees*

The licensing agreement consists of two parties, a television format licensor (the seller) and the licensee (the buyer). Television format licensors are the format owners, originators and creative geniuses behind the format. Meanwhile, television format licensees are local broadcasters and local producers, usually from another country, who purchase a television license in the hope of minimizing commercial risk in their territory. The licensee's territory will be referred to as the 'adapted territory' within this thesis. Rohn (2015) argues that the format licensing arrangement is a mutually beneficial relationship where the licensees usually profit from the international reputation of a brand, whereas the licensors benefit from the increased value of the brand if successfully adapted in different markets. Local broadcasters who purchase television licenses can offset commercial risks such as falling advertising and sponsorship and high production costs by investing in already tried and tested formulas from established format brands (Esser, 2010). The responsibilities of television format licensors and the expectations held by the television format licensees will be addressed in the following chapters.

### *Food Television Show Formats*

Now that the term 'television format' has been defined explicitly, it is important to outline the implicit meanings and the broader context behind the format type under examination, the food television show format. It is also necessary to explain the difference between what a cooking show and a genre is from a food television show format. The definitions are similar but hold differences and, therefore, need to be distinguished for the purpose of this research. Terms such as 'cooking show,' 'cookery show,' and 'food show' are used interchangeably across a range of academic articles and are conveyed in different contexts in different countries. This thesis will refer to 'cooking shows' as programs about food and / or cooking instruction that may be syndicated, or sold as a finished product, also known as a 're-run,' but are not necessarily licensed and sold as television formats.

Some of the most common television genres are drama, sitcom, reality, comedy, sports, and news. These genres can be broken down into further genre categories such as 'romcom,' 'cooking show,' or 'talk show.' Cooking shows are factual

programs and fall into the reality television show genre because reality shows incorporate a wide range of entertainment show attributes that deal with real people rather than fictional characters (Hill, 2005). Yet, agreeing on a universal term for 'genre' is a difficult task across media management and production studies. Holmes and Jermyn (2004) find labeling television genres to be trivial as one show can be fit into a series of sub-categories or sub-genres. For example, a makeover reality show can be labeled as a lifestyle show, competition show and a dating show (as cited by Aslama and Pantti, 2006: 169). The earliest cooking shows relied on a very specific premise of 'how-to' cook style programming where television viewers cooked along with the cook on camera or the radio. For decades, cooking shows were mainly about cooking instruction. Now, the cooking show has evolved into a reality show based format around food. To avoid confusion, this thesis refers to the term 'food television show format' as a show that focuses on one central element, food, and is accompanied by at least one sub-genre.

Furthermore, the context of the term 'sub-genre' in this thesis is defined as a set of television attributes, conventions, themes and/or narrative devices that, in this case, realign and rearrange themselves around food. The use of multiple television attributes has been acknowledged as a hybrid genre theory approach to help reduce commercial failure (Creeber, 2015, Esser, 2010; Packham, 2016; Moran, 2009b; Morreale, 2007). Examples of food television show format sub-genres and format hybrids include competition and game show, dating show, restaurant revival, and business show, weight loss and fitness show, travel show, talk show, and more. A typology of the most common food television show format sub-genres will be expanded upon in the following chapter.

### *Multi-platform Strategies*

We are living in a world more connected than ever before. As of 2016, nearly half of the world's population has adopted high-speed Internet into their homes (ITU, 2016). Now, the television industry has been challenged with the task to alter their current business practices in order to adapt to emerging, online technologies.

In order to remain relevant to digital audiences and competitive within an overcrowded media market, television networks are investing into what are referred to as 'multi-platform strategies' (Bennett, Strange, Kerr, and Medrado, 2012; Doyle, 2013; Sorensen, 2014). 'Multi-platform' is a catchall term that refers to the various, legal ways in which audiences are watching live television or 'linear television'<sup>1</sup> online, such as Video on Demand television (VoD) and digital streaming websites and mobile applications. The move from analog to digital television has had a profound impact on how media content is produced, distributed and consumed (Boyle, 2010; Jenkins, 2006). Furthermore, the shift from digital television to digital platforms has allowed media content to be shared and engaged with through public forums, on blogs, television network sites, (i.e. Food Network and the BBC) and social media channels such as Facebook, Instagram, YouTube and Twitter (Moe, Poell and van Dijck, 2016). A breakdown of the key multi-platform strategies will appear in the following chapter.

### *Media Branding Strategies*

The view of media productions as media brands, such as television format brands, has now become a definitive topic in its own right within media management research. We associate the word "brand" with many companies and such as Chanel, BMW, Shell, and Coca-Cola in terms of their logo, corporate colors, and level of quality. Media branding undergoes the same procedures to achieve recognizable status. According to Needle (2000), media branding involves an eye-catching name or logo attached to the media product that helps distinguish it from rivals in highly competitive and dynamic market environments. Investing in a recognizable product in this fashion enables producers to create awareness and build customer loyalty. This, in turn, ensures repeat purchases, or in this case a loyal audience that continues to tune into shows created by their favorite television networks.

The term 'media branding' has been characterized by various definitions with regards to television formats and in media management literature.

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<sup>1</sup> The term television has many interpretations due to the changes in digital platform distribution. Therefore, 'linear television' will be used throughout this thesis in reference to live viewing on the physical medium.



Baumann (2015) has broken down media branding into two key definitions to address its association with geographical reach and allocation to the stages of the value creation chain. She writes:

An important categorization is the distinction between corporate and product brands. A corporate brand positions and differentiates the company as a whole in its market environment addressing all stakeholders including internal (e.g., employees or owners) as well as external (e.g., investors, politicians or business partners). Product brands focus on single or groups of products and the external stakeholder groups of customers, retailers and other multipliers (Baumann, 2015: 67).

From an audience's perspective, media brands can convey all the connotations of the audience in terms of the emotional, stylistic, cognitive, unconscious or conscious meanings. These meanings can refer to different levels referred to as the media brand's architecture, which typically consists of the corporate or channel brand as well as its sub-brands with genre, format, and persona brands (Siegert, Förster, Chan-Olmsted, and Ots, 2015). Chalaby (2011) argues that internationally consistent branding and the ability to exploit the intellectual property associated with the brand are the two key principles of a successful global television franchise. A strong brand and a distinct level of differentiation make it difficult for other media companies to imitate products and services (Baumann, 2015). This thesis will refer to the term 'format brand' as the portfolio of products (licensed formats and ancillary platforms and offerings) television production companies like Endemol Shine Group and FremantleMedia and Scripps' Food Network and The Cooking Channel offer audiences and media buyers. Additional media branding terms discussed in this thesis include 'brand ambassadors' and 'digital influencers.'

Brand ambassadors in food television show formats consist of onscreen talent, usually in the form of professional television show hosts, judges, and amateur contestants that appear on the food competition show format. Brand ambassadors can also be digital influencers. 'Digital influencers' are individuals who have amassed large followings on social media channels such as Facebook, Twitter and YouTube and, as a result, are paid to place products in their online content via live stories, newsfeeds, and blogs.

Brand ambassadors and digital influencers associated with format brands represent the format's reputation and many producers purposely cast onscreen talent that have the ability to influence audiences to tune into the show or interact with their products online via new multi-platform strategies (i.e., catch up television, social media, online blogs, etc.). The use of brand ambassadors and influencers, both online and on linear television, can build stronger relationships between television viewers and the audience which ultimately helps minimize commercial risk (Barron, 2015; Boyle and Kelly; 2012).

Most media companies offer a portfolio of brands to media buyers (Baumann, 2015). For example, Fox is one of the largest network stations in the US and is host to some of the most highly rated food competition show formats that are presented by celebrity chef Gordon Ramsay, such as Fox's *MasterChef*, *Hell's Kitchen*, *MasterChef Junior*, and *The F Word*. In this scenario, the combination of media branding strategies employed by Fox, the media brand, paired with Gordon Ramsay, the brand ambassador for four of Fox's shows, helps to build customer loyalty for audiences who enjoy watching at least one of these shows. This engenders a legacy in the viewers that encourages repeat purchases, or in this case, view the other food competition show formats starring Ramsay since they have already bought into the brand.

### **1.3 Motivations for Research**

My decision to investigate the managerial actions made around food television show formats stems from three motivations. These motivations include: (1) my professional background, working as a journalist and production runner on the food television show format, ABC's *The Chew*, in New York City, (2) the UK's success in becoming the leader in the exportation of global formats, in particular, the food television format and (3) the rise in digital media and adoption of multi-platform strategies by television companies to provide audiences with new ways to view and engage with their shows. The *Chew* (2011-present) is a food television show format that combines five hosts from different professional backgrounds, whereby only Mario Batali, Michael Symon, and Carla Hall came from cooking backgrounds, and the remaining two hosts, Clinton Kelly and Daphne Oz came from a lifestyle and health and wellness background.

Although cooking did happen on the show in each episode, the narrative around the show went beyond how to perfect the dish on screen. In this program, it was evident that the core focus of the show was not cooking instruction. Instead, the element of cooking on *The Chew* served more like a moving background to the discussions the cast had on the daytime show. For example, there were many occasions when Clinton Kelly was demonstrating how to make the perfect cocktail for an occasion whilst discussing how he celebrates the holiday. The cocktail, or the recipe being demonstrated, was less significant than the narrative around the drink itself.

Following on from my experience working in New York, an increasing number of cooking shows have become licensed and sold within the global television market. What was unique about them was that their narratives were not solely about educating television viewers on how to cook. They were (and still are) repackaged as shows around food mixed with additional television attributes such as competition (game show), business, travel, and even romance. This was the case with many of the food shows that were on the air in 2012 in America where most of their narratives positioned cooking as a secondary element of the show.

For example, even though Food Network's *Restaurant: Impossible* (2011-2016) is technically deemed a food show given that it airs on a cooking channel, the food format focused primarily on the business and entrepreneurial decisions that are made when running a restaurant. In the show, Chef Robert Irvine had two days to save a failing restaurant with only a \$10,000 budget, a storyline similar to Channel 4's *Ramsay's Kitchen Nightmares* (2004-2014) in the UK and its American adaptation, Fox's *Kitchen Nightmares* (2007-2014). Having this pre-existing interest in food shows led me to take notice of the changing nature of these new formats and motivated me to investigate academic literature on the subject when selecting a doctoral topic.

Food television show formats have become so popular that they appear on primetime television slots on par with other popular reality show formats within the US and the UK, such as ITV's *The Voice* (2012-present) and FremantleMedia's '*Got Talent*' format franchises. The *Got Talent* format franchise's first product debuted as NBC's *America's Got Talent* (2006-present) and then in Britain as ITV's *Britain's Got Talent* (2007-present).

A prominent example of this shift occurred in October of 2015 in the UK with Channel 4's (formerly BBC One's) baking competition format, *The Great British Bake Off* (2010-present). In 2015, over 13 million viewers tuned in to watch Nadiya Jamir Hussain win the *Bake Off* title in the show's finale. This was the first time any other show superseded the viewing numbers of ITV's *Britain's Got Talent* since it aired which made *The Great British Bake Off* the biggest show on BBC of 2015 (excluding live sporting events and news) (Sweeney, 2015). More importantly, this event marked the first time a cooking show format attracted more viewers than a talent show format on the BBC. During this time, British food formats licensed in America such as Fox's *Hell's Kitchen* (2005-present) and Fox's *MasterChef* (2010-present) also secured primetime slots and achieved high television ratings. This prompted the need to examine how formats around food have become so popular across television screens worldwide. These noticeable changes paired with a background in conducting interviews and working within the food television industry was what shaped the foundation of this thesis.

The second motivation for this research is the UK's success in becoming the leader in the exportation of global formats which I learned while I was a master's student in Media Management at the University of Glasgow in 2013-2014. The '2012 UK Television Exports Survey' confirms this in their report and reveals that the UK's independent television production sector's export business was worth over £1.2b, where a large percentage of that revenue came from format exportation (PACT, 2013). Original British television formats such as ITV's *Who Wants to Be a Millionaire* (1998-2014), BBC One's *MasterChef* (1990-2001; 2005-present) and ITV's *Pop Idol* (2001-2003) have achieved high levels of success across borders, many of which dominate American television broadcast schedules. Top television British formats that have translated well to American screens and abroad include dramas such as BBC One's *House of Cards* (1990) which was introduced as a universally successful American adaptation on Netflix (2013-present). Sitcoms such as BBC Two's *The Office* (2001-2003) was later introduced to the American network NBC and was also named *The Office* (2005-2013) and factual television and lifestyle formats such as BBC Two's *What Not to Wear* (2001-2007) was released on TLC (2003-2013) with the same title.

Moran (2009a) believes British television is currently at the forefront of television format production due to the UK's strong creative industry and their investment into producing high-quality and flexible storylines that are easily adapted all over the world with little resistance. What distinguishes the UK's television format industry from America's television format industry is production values. Ian Burrell (2014) believes American television to be more of a commodity compared to UK productions which maintain more 'trust and respect' with their audience. He writes: 'British TV is now trusted to teach the world how to do up their homes, run their small businesses and cook dinner – as well as whip up a lemon sponge' (Burrell, 2014). Burrell interviewed John McVay of PACT to determine how the UK has become the 'world's leading production culture' in unscripted television formats (Burrell, 2014). The interview revealed that although the British are the leading format exporters, the Americans continue to dominate the export of scripted programs, particularly television dramas, due to their teams of well-established scriptwriters. McVay believes that the relationships between UK audiences and broadcasters are much stronger than those in outside countries because the programs have been funded by the public through license fees (Burrell, 2014). The BBC has an obligation to produce high-quality programs that would appeal to their funders, which in this case is the entire British population. This investment into high-quality production is one of the core reasons why British formats are licensed all over the world.

The final motivation that stimulated this thesis is the substantial growth in digital distribution rights and multi-platform strategies. In 2013, worldwide digital rights showed the highest percentage increase where they went up 72% from 2012/2013, whilst sales of formats rose up 17% during the same period (PACT, 2014). Television networks have caught on to the widespread adoption of digital technology and are now investing in multi-platform strategies. As a result, these strategies have enabled media brands to remain relevant to digital audiences and competitive within an overcrowded media market (Bennett and Strange, 2008; Doyle, 2013; Sorensen, 2014). The rise of online television (i.e. the availability to view programs online through on demand streaming platforms such as the BBC iPlayer or the subscription Video on Demand (sVoD) platform), Netflix and the ability for audiences to engage with food shows through online portals and social media, have been strong influencers of this research.

The industry trend to invest in digitally produced television programs, platforms, and digital marketing strategies is still new to academic research and has, in turn, significantly contributed to the scope of this investigation.

## **1.4 Research Questions and Organization of the Thesis**

From a production perspective, this thesis investigates how food television show format licensors protect their brands, expand their portfolios and respond to industry changes. It examines the process of integrating food as the main theme within popular reality television genres and the effects of digitization and multimedia distribution platforms. In the digital era, the once highly distinct and separate media are now converging, so it is sensible for media managers to adopt not only an international outlook but also a multimedia, multi-platform approach (Esser, 2013). The findings of this thesis will explain how major television production companies, like Endemol Shine Group and FremantleMedia, develop successful internationalization strategies that do not discount local cultures and national identities. In order to examine how media managers and format licensors have responded to the above-mentioned industry trends, the following research questions will be answered:

1. Why are food television shows so well suited for the development of international formats?
2. What are the managerial challenges regarding the adaptation of food television show formats for international markets?
3. How has the development of formatted television (around food) exploited multi-platform distribution?

This thesis is organized into seven chapters. Chapter One introduced the research motivations, questions, and structure of this thesis. Chapter Two will examine the relevant academic literature around the core themes of this research in its Literature Review. Chapter Three will discuss the research approach and the methodologies employed in order to answer the research questions. This includes 15 qualitative interviews with television format producers, consultants, social media managers and marketers from television formats and networks and other relevant industry professionals. This research methodology paired with case studies, textual analysis, and participant observation will also be discussed.

Chapter Four will discuss the research findings around the internationalization of the food television show format. Chapter Five unveils the managerial challenges throughout the adaptation of international food television show formats and the creative freedoms and constraints experienced by both format licensors and licensees. Chapter Six will reveal the current multi-platform strategies employed by format producers, as well as the inherent risks of adopting new technologies. Finally, Chapter Seven will summarize the thesis findings, acknowledge the research limitations, provide further recommendations for future research and conclude the thesis.





## Chapter Two: Literature Review

Since Moran's pioneering studies on television formats (1998; with Keane 2004; 2005; with Keane, 2006; with Malbon, 2006; with Keane, 2008; 2009a; 2009b; etc), a number of scholars have acknowledged the dynamic nature of the television format industry (Boyle and Kelly, 2012; Chalaby, 2011; Esser, 2010; Hill, 2002; Oren, 2013). Yet, as Esser (2014) points out, most of the academic work around television formats has been dedicated to highlighting differences through local particularities or showing how a particular format affords imagination and means of identification. Likewise, Keinonen (2016) recognizes that format scholarship focuses too much on the final product, 'the television text,' and in turn, ignores the other levels of format industry, like production and reception. Rather than focusing on one final product or format, in particular, this research examines the localization and adaptation processes media managers and format licensors undergo when licensing a rising format, in this case, the food television format.

Food television programming is continually growing as a cultural and global television export. Food formats such as BBC One's *MasterChef* has been licensed internationally in over 50 countries, and Channel 4's *Come Dine with Me* has been licensed in over 30 countries. In addition to their recent rise in the global marketplace, food television show formats have become increasingly popular online. Across the media, many organizations have responded to convergence by migrating towards a diversified multi-platform approach to production and distribution of content (Doyle, 2010). Multi-platform repurposing of content is common practice amongst major media conglomerates (Caldwell, 2006). Audiences can now catch up on their favorite food show formats on online platforms such as the BBC iPlayer in the UK or on subscription platforms such as Hulu in America. Social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram, as well as ancillary online resources such as online recipes and blogs, have improved the way television audiences can interact with food programming. Whilst the digitalization of television may bring about new textual, industrial and audience relationships, the goals for broadcasters remain the same: to attract viewers in a marketplace where there is increasing competition for screen-based leisure time (Bennett and Strange, 2008). Although these multi-platform strategies offer opportunities, they also carry production challenges both new and old to the adaptation of linear television.

Challenges such as the high cost of investment into online content, increase in human labor spend and additional threats to a brand's identity will be discussed in this chapter.

Sitting center to this thesis are three key research themes: (1) food television and reality television show formats (2) media branding and (3) the digitization and multi-platform strategies employed by media brands. These central concepts discussed in this chapter are drawn from the literary works on global television format research set out by Moran (1998; 2004; 2005; 2006; 2008; 2009a; 2009b, etc.), Esser (2010), Hill (2002, 2005, 2007) and Chalaby (2011). To better understand the importance of media branding, scholarly work by Siegert, Förster, Chan-Olmsted, and Ots (2015), Morley (1992b), Baumann (2015), Rohn (2015), and Singh and Nagpal (2011) will be analyzed. Finally, the commercial interest to invest in multi-platform strategies, acknowledged by Sorensen (2014), Bennett and Strange (2008) and Doyle (2010; 2015), will be discussed.

Building on the work put forward by these authors and others, this chapter examines the relevant academic literature around the production of global television formats and innovative strategies concerning the rise of the food television show format. The bodies of work analyzed in this chapter were responsible for driving the following three core questions raised in this thesis:

1. Why are food television shows so well suited for the development of international formats?
2. What are the managerial challenges involved during the adaptation of food television show formats for international markets?
3. How has the development of formatted television (around food) exploited multi-platform distribution?

The organization of this literature review chapter is as follows: Section 2.2 will examine a condensed history of cooking shows on television in the United States and the United Kingdom from the 1940s until now. The decision to incorporate this historical piece was made in order to establish a timeline for how food has evolved from being a main topic on radio segments, to television shows, to 24-hour networks and finally to global television formats online and on linear television.

The decision to focus on the UK and US is due to the scope and feasibility of this research project outlined in the following chapter. Next, Section 2.3 will provide an overview of the widespread adoption of the food television format. Section 2.4 will examine the work written around media branding strategies, television format adaptation in new territories, and the industry challenges that emerge in doing so. Challenges such as creative freedoms and constraints and issues of copyright infringement sketched out in the Format Recognition and Protection Association (FRAPA) report (Singh and Nagpal, 2011) will also be discussed. Section 2.5 of this chapter will offer a summary of the online portals and websites that grant web browsers access to stream and download episodes of cooking show formats via a variety of mediums that include: Video on Demand (VOD) catch-up television services, pay-per-view, and subscription web-based applications and technologies. Social media channels and dedicated websites consisting of ancillary online materials such as food blogs, recipes and video libraries owned and operated by television networks will also be discussed. Furthermore, this section will provide a detailed look at the multi-platform strategies television format producers utilize to attract viewers in the digital marketplace within an increasingly competitive media environment. Finally, Section 2.6 will summarize the themes relevant to this dissertation and will identify strong correlations and gaps within the existing academic literature.

## **2.2 The History of Cooking Shows in the United States and the United Kingdom (1940s-now)**

To better understand the rise of the food television show format, it is important to first trace the origins of the cooking show genre in the media. The first cooking shows to be broadcast originated on the radio. It is generally accepted that the first food radio show aired in France, in 1923. Dr. Édouard de Pomiane was a renowned food scientist at the Institut Pasteur at the time, and his hobby for cooking was shared across the airwaves (Pack, 2011). In 1924, the first American cooking radio show aired on NBC as *Betty Crocker's Cooking School of the Air*. Betty Crocker, the all-knowing housewife, was a fictional character developed by a national Gold Medal Flour campaign in the United States in order to provide cooking advice to an assortment of women via fan mail. The success of the fan mail campaign helped launch the radio program and by 1926, over six million listeners tuned in to listen to the baking secrets broadcasted by Crocker (Betty Crocker, 2017).

Crocker was the brainchild of an advertising campaign in the late 1800s that was developed by the Washburn-Crosby Company, known today as General Mills (Avey, 2013). The character became so recognizable that *Fortune* magazine named Betty Crocker as the second most popular woman in America after First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt (Avey, 2013). In that same year, Crocker appeared on a special segment called 'Our Nation's Rations' for four months at the request of the U.S. Office of War Information (Betty Crocker, 2017). By 1951, Washburn-Crosby put a face to the name and the voice when they hired actress Adelaide Hawley to act as Crocker on television. Hawley was the first of many women to play the Betty Crocker role and appeared on various programs on CBS and ABC as Crocker (Avey, 2013; Betty Crocker, 2017).

The demand for an American show about cooking was born, thanks to the positive response to the Gold Medal Flour marketing campaign. In the same year of Crocker's radio launch, 1926, wartime and unstable economic pressures in America prompted a similar radio show. While Crocker was broadcasting advice for ladies at home, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) launched 'Aunt Sammy,' a five-day-a-week show that would answer homemakers' questions; the character's name was presumably a reference to a female version of 'Uncle Sam. The USDA's Washington office prepared the scripts, and local stations each had their own Aunt Sammy who would teach listeners recipes (Boyd, 2011).

Twenty years later, the first cooking television shows appeared in the UK and America during a time when television sets remained a luxury unaffordable to many. The world's first televised cooking program aired in the United Kingdom on BBC on Wednesday, 12 June 1946 at 8:55 pm. The program, called *Cookery* (1946-1951), starred Philip Harben and was 10 minutes long. In the very first episode, he demonstrated how to make lobster vol-au-vents (Collins, 2009). Just a few months later, cookbook author, James Beard, was the first chef to appear on American television in the cooking show NBC's *I Love to Eat!* (1946-1947). The show was fifteen minutes long and aired from 8:30 pm to 8:45 pm (Collins, 2009; Sethna and Ferguson, 2014). Then, 1947 marked the year when French cooking was said to have revolutionized American cookery television (Collins, 2009; Sethna and Ferguson, 2014).

The first Cordon Bleu-trained professional chef to bring French cooking to American screens was Dione Lucas, who starred in CBS' *To the Queen's Taste* (1948-1949) that would later be named *The Dione Lucas Show* (1953-1955) (Collins, 2009). Lucas has been acknowledged as the first woman to star on a cooking show and closed each segment with a trademark 'bon appetit' (Oulton, 2006). Despite Lucas being the first, many still argue that Julia Child was the American chef that paved the way for French cooking on television. Even today, Julia Child will be remembered for her performance in WGBH's *The French Chef* from 1963-1973. Child went on to develop documentaries around cooking, a blockbuster film, and cookbooks. Numerous biographies are still written and celebrated about *The French Chef* today. Child made cooking a spectacle, which compelled audiences to watch her programs:

The towering Mrs. Child was a maniac with blades, never meeting a knife she didn't like; she once jointed a chicken with a sword and was spoofed bleeding to death on 'Saturday Night Live.' Dishes were tasted liberally, and fingers licked. She drank as she went, recommending a glass for any tired cook, and her sing-song aristocratic tones grew steadily more extravagant' (The Economist, 2004).

In 1969, the first cooking show to incorporate a live studio audience, FremantleMedia's *The Galloping Gourmet* (1969-1971) aired on Canadian television. This program featured a witty married couple that engaged with their audience and is the most comparable to modern cooking talk shows such as ABC's *The Chew* or BBC One's *Saturday Kitchen* (2006-present). From the 1970s onward, the culinary landscape started to shift to more 'everyday' style instruction, budget-conscious cooking and quick-to-prepare dishes from mainly personality-led chefs such as Jamie Oliver and Rachel Ray (Collins and College, 2008; Collins, 2009). Collins and College (2008) believe that many of the modern cooking shows have developed as reproductions of classic cooking shows, this is similar to the popular thrift cooking style programs that existed during World War II. Other personality-led celebrity chef programs popularized in the 1990s and onwards include Food Network's *Emeril Live* (1997-2010) with New Orleans-style chef Emeril Lagasse, Bobby Flay in Food Network's *Grill It! with Bobby Flay* (2008-2010) in the US and Channel 4's *Nigella Bites* (2000-2007) with Nigella Lawson in the UK.

In addition to the rise of personality-led instructional programs, a major ingredient was added to the recipe for creating a successful cooking show over the last fifteen years. This ingredient has been the element of competition. This will be a key theme of this thesis that will be discussed in the proceeding chapters. The rising demand for new form cooking programs has even sparked the introduction of 24-hour television networks dedicated to cooking show and food style content.

#### *24-hour Food Television Networks*

The first network dedicated exclusively to cooking shows debuted in America as Food Network in 1993 and is still running (Sethna and Ferguson, 2014). The network has been distributed to over 100 million US households and has been translated and adapted as a 24-hour network in over 150 countries including the UK, India, Asia, and Africa (Food Network, 2015). In 2014, popular competition shows developed by Food Network such as *Food Network Star* (2005-present), *Worst Cooks in America* (2010-present), and *Chopped* (2009-present), contributed to a significant increase in viewership on the network. According to Nielsen, *Food Network Star* had a .9 rating with an average of just over a million viewers aged 18-49 (Myers, 2014). In addition to the Food Network, Scripps' Network Interactive owns many lifestyle television networks such as HGTV, Travel Channel, DIY Network, Great American Country and the Cooking Channel. The Cooking Channel was established in 2010 by the creators of Food Network and claims: 'it's for food people, by food people' (Cooking Channel, 2015). Other cooking networks have been made readily available on digital channels and online, such as Fox's 24Kitchen, BBC's Good Food Channel and the subscription-based VoD platform, the *Paula Deen Network*.

The *Paula Deen Network* was a pioneering online platform. It was the first digital-only network that was based on a celebrity chef, in this case, Paula Deen. The network included a series of lifestyle, game shows and cooking 'how-to's,' along with some recipes and meal-planning tools (Paula Deen Network, 2014). The subscriber-only digital network was created as a comeback in response to the Deen's forced move off of the Food Network (Gabbatt, 2014).

In response to Deen's dismissal, her supportive fan base motivated Deen's decision to start her own network that could be made available online and on mobile and app devices.

The outcome of this digital network will be examined in Chapter Six of this thesis. Producers of cooking shows have come a long way since the classic genre's origins on radio and early television. The next section examines existing academic literature and theory around television formats, factual programming and the evolution of the cooking show genre into a food television show format.

## **2.3 The Rise of the Food Television Show Format**

American novelist, playwright, and screenwriter, William Goldman (1983) famously said 'nobody knows anything' with regards to how to guarantee success in the film industry. What Goldman infers here is that there is no guarantee of commercial success in media production, even when utilizing and engaging with tried and tested formulas. This is due to the unpredictability that prevails in Hollywood and within the global media industry. However, to offset risk as best they can, television broadcasters from all over the world are investing in the maximum level of expertise and support possible. Various international television exhibitions, such as Marché International des Programmes de Communication (MIPCOM) in Cannes, France, take advantage of the value of expertise by hosting television format trading events for producers and investors in the hope to expand long-lasting business relationships, quicker negotiations, partnerships and networking with media buyers (Moran and Keane, 2006).

In 2014, an increasing number of cooking show formats were purchased at MIPCOM, such as Keshet International's *Help! I Can't Cook* (2014-present). The Israeli food television format *Help! I Can't Cook* is the second highest-rated celebrity reality show of all time in Israel (Keshet International, 2018). Other purchases that year included FYI's *Epic Meal Empire* (2014), a spinoff of the popular YouTube comedy cooking show, *Epic Meal Time* (2010-present), and CBS' *The American Baking Competition* (2013) based on Channel 4's *The Great British Bake Off* (Clarke, 2014). Viacom International Media Networks' *Snack Off* (2014-2015), another popular choice at MIPCOM in that year, was said to capture a young, 'hipster' audience that producer Caroline Beaton labels as 'late-night, irreverent and trashy. You could say it is the antithesis of *MasterChef*' (Clarke, 2014). The appearance of these revolutionized food television show formats at MIPCOM indicates a global demand for change.

The current trend across these newcomers appears to be a combination of pioneering narratives, mixed with additional television elements that have been proven successful across other television programs (i.e., lifestyle, competition, celebrity, dating, lifestyle, business, etc.) and that were not commonly paired with the classic cooking show. Collins (2009) traces the changes that the cooking show genre has undergone in her book *Watching What We Eat: The Evolution of Television Cooking Shows*. In the book, she argues that the food television show format will continue to thrive in the television industry due to its ability to adapt well to cultural trends. The most notable of these trends is the recent shift from an instructional cooking show to an entertainment and lifestyle driven show packaged and sold for global adaptation (Collins, 2009).

Many cooking show formats have been labeled as 'lifestyle' formats. A lifestyle format is a sub-genre of reality television that may include narratives around interior design, food and wine, home improvement, beauty and makeover transformations, and other storylines built around everyday life with the aim to provide practical advice on the subject matter (Moran, 2009b). Thomas (2008) explains how the lifestyle format has made a transition from a show about how to prune a rose or make a cheese sauce to a show that teaches an audience how to cope with larger, fundamental tasks such as: how to bring up children, eat, organize one's finances or buy a house. The focus on lifestyle formats has been steered away from the narrative and has become much more visual (Thomas, 2008). For example, contemporary cooking show formats have adopted a film style that includes close-ups of aesthetically pleasing gourmet plates and beautiful landscapes within formats such as Channel 4's *The Great British Bake Off*.

Much like lifestyle formats as a whole, the cooking television landscape has evolved away from step-by-step instructional style content to a program that contains a series of sub-genres that maintain a high degree of mainstream appeal. When considering the development and distribution of food programming, regardless of the volume of programs, the most remarkable change that has taken place is the radical shift in tone, genre, and narrative arc of global food programming (Oren, 2013). The transformation from the instructional style genre to the popular night-time cooking-elimination competition program is self-evident by their frequency on every programming schedule.



The executive chairman of British media company ITV, Sir Peter Bazalgette, defined the first four successful television format types as: 'super-formats', that 'break new ground' in terms of originality, world domination and cash generation (Chalaby, 2011). These formats included: Sony Picture Television's *Who Wants to be a Millionaire* game show format, Sveriges Television's *Survivor* reality television format, Endemol Shine Group's *Big Brother* reality television format and FremantleMedia's *Idols* talent show format (Chalaby, 2011). Now, there are various television formats available on the market, and it is a much more difficult task to classify a format into one distinctive category. Although there might be an obvious, overarching category of what a show can be labeled as, such as a 'travel program' or a 'drama', there is a consensus across scholars that contemporary television formats employ multiple characterizations within their narratives (Creeber, 2015; Esser, 2010; Packham, 2016; Moran, 2009b; Morreale, 2007). Boyle (2009) finds that the key ingredients that have been added to the docu-soap mix are jeopardy and risk and the arrival of reality television. Television format producers employ these reality elements within their narratives as part of an internationalization strategy.

Television producers and media managers seek to mitigate their risks with the use of multiple popular genres and formats that have a proven track record, demonstrated by audience autonomy and fragmentation (Creeber, 2015; Esser, 2010; Moran, 2009b; Morreale, 2007; Packham, 2016). Similar to alternative formats, most cooking show formats are developed with at least two sub-genres and come in a range of formats. These formats include everything from food competitions, dating shows, restaurant revivals, and weight loss and fitness programs, to 'docu-soaps', travel, talk shows, and personality-led educational shows. Within her analysis of *Big Brother* and new factual entertainment, Hill (2002) introduces one of the most common factual format genres, the 'gamedoc.' By her definition, a gamedoc is a program that is both a reality and a competition show where the 'game' is to find the 'truth' in the spectacle and performance environment (Hill, 2002: 337). Many of the leading cooking formats fall into the gamedoc distinctive sub-genre Hill (2002) refers to, most commonly referred to as a cooking competition format, such as BBC One's *MasterChef*, Channel 4's *Ramsay's Kitchen Nightmares*, Bravo's *Top Chef* (2006-present), Channel 4's *The Great British Bake Off*, Food Network's *Chopped*, and BBC Two's *Ready, Steady, Cook* (1994-2010).

These formats have become increasingly popular across the US and Europe and amass high ratings during primetime television slots.

Docu-soaps and food show format hybrids have also become popular. Docu-soaps revolve around charismatic personalities that favor entertainment over educational storylines (Sickels, 2009). Brunsdon, Johnson, Moseley, and Wheatley (2001) define a docu-soap as 'the emblematic hard-soft genre, in its combination of hard facts, information, and values of realism' and have examined Jamie Oliver in BBC Two's *The Naked Chef* (1999-2001) as a case study on the subject (Brunsdon et al., 2001). The case study demonstrates that the program is well balanced in order to appeal to a mainstream audience through the contrast between Oliver's 'hard' Essex Boy attitude and the use of 'real time up close' camera work in his traditional family home. In addition to becoming a celebrity chef at only 25 years old and with such a versatile nature, Oliver is an activist for healthier meals for children as shown in his documentary *Jamie's School Dinners* (2005-2006) by Channel 4. When reviewing his recipes online, Oliver incorporates a local and regional feel with the use of unconventional language. For example, parsley is asked to be 'roughly chopped' and two 'glugs' of olive oil can be requested in some of his online recipes and on television.

Another charismatic chef on television is Buddy Valastro, the star of TLC's popular American culinary docu-soap, *Cake Boss* (2009-present). The show follows the day-to-day activities set out by Valastro, the famous Italian-American baker from New Jersey, and his siblings who run Carlo's Bakery. Since the show's airing in 2009, three domestic spinoffs of the format have emerged: cooking competition show TLC's *Next Great Baker* (2010-2014), daytime cooking show TLC's *Kitchen Boss* (2011-2012), and bakery rival show TLC's *Bakery Boss* (2013-2014) (Cake Boss, 2015).

Before *Cake Boss*, it was Gordon Ramsay who revolutionized culinary docu-soaps and kitchen revival genres in programs such as Channel 4's *Ramsay's Kitchen Nightmares*. Ramsay is known for his Michelin star winning restaurants and his well-known frank and fiery demeanor in the kitchen; *Ramsay's Kitchen Nightmares* has earned a BAFTA, an Emmy and a successful adaptation in America known as Fox's *Ramsay's Kitchen Nightmares USA* (BBC Media Centre, 2012).

His success in the restaurant world has brought Ramsay to fame across British and American television. Ramsay's role as a producer and star on the above-mentioned *Kitchen Nightmares* format and his British and American cooking competition show formats Channel 4's *The F Word* (2005-2010) and Fox's *The F Word* (2017-present), Fox's *MasterChef* and Channel 4's *Hell's Kitchen* (2004-2009) and Fox's *Hell's Kitchen* has granted him with international acclaim. Cooking competition show formats, produced by Ramsay along with many others, are now the most popular cooking show format type on television to date (Oren, 2013).

Other unique food television show sub-genres have appeared amongst the traditional and online television schedules, but their viewership remains modest. Cooking dating show formats and food formats involving friends have been on trend for nearly a decade in the UK and abroad with popular titles such as ITVBe's *Dinner Date* (2010-2012, 2014-present) and Channel 4's *Come Dine with Me* which have been aired in over thirty countries in many languages. The independent Web series from Vimeo, *My Life in Sourdough* (2013 and 2015), has also accrued an adequate viewership. This online dating and food hybrid chronicles the culinary adventures of Jeanne, a French girl looking for love as passionate as bread making (*My Life in Sourdough*, 2017). Although these dating and cooking show formats cast some intrigue, they are unable to attain the same level of an audience as the cooking competition show format. Another sub-genre that has evolved across the food format genre is the junior or kids' sub-genre. The 'junior' sub-genre is another newcomer that is predominately derived from an original television show format and is recognized in the industry as a 'spinoff' format. This spinoff format has become popular across all factual formats such as ITV's *The Voice Kids* (2017-present) and FremantleMedia's *American Juniors* (2003), a spinoff derived from FremantleMedia's *Pop Idol*.

Spinoff formats come equipped with extensive production bibles and support from flying producers, similar to the purchase of original format licenses, which will be discussed in further detail in the next section. This format hybrid has become one of the most popular sub-genres for food television show formats. Examples include CBBC's *Junior Bake Off* (2011-2016), CBBC's *Junior MasterChef* (1994-1999; 2010-2014), Food Network's *Chopped Junior* (2015-present) and *Food Network Star Kids* (2016-present).

Although some may argue that this style of show may encourage children to cook and extends its target market to a much larger one, ethical concerns about this format have been raised. Ofcom explained the nature of children-fronted cooking shows in their 2007 *Children in Programmes* report as such:

When considering the prospect of appearing on non-fiction programs, many children said they feared being teased or bullied afterward by people at school. The reaction from peer groups generally was a significant source of anxiety. Therefore, respondents preferred programs that had kudos among their friends and presented children in interesting and positive ways (Ofcom, 2007: 11).

The Ofcom report (2007) identified three levels of responses from the participating children. The responses to the various storylines included: comfortable, mixed or uncomfortable. Program narratives identified within the 'comfortable' territory included ones which featured children learning new skills, feeling 'empowered and confident,' and having a fun and safe space to speak their minds (Ofcom, 2007: 14). These 'comfortable' children's programs incorporated key themes that would pertain to more educational style programming, such as PBS' *Sesame Street* (1969-present). Child participants within cooking competition shows would most likely be characterized within the 'mixed territory' findings of the Ofcom study where children are inspired to become CBBC's next *Junior MasterChef*. Taking part in the program not only boosted their confidence but also indicated their desire to participate in the show (Ofcom, 2007). Based on the main concern of the Ofcom study, which is the fear of adolescent bullying that children may endure from their peers, it is important for format producers, media managers, and television personalities to take into consideration that each child should be treated in a way that best prevents any emotional distresses. This spinoff format genre has become popularized across all factual formats, so it is imperative that producers hold a child's comfort level in the highest regard.

## 2.4 Managerial Challenges Associated with Adaptation

Television formats have changed the nature of the global media marketplace. Esser (2010) argues that television formats are thriving and that the industry has seen an increase in demand for formats and a slight decline in demand for the purchase of imported syndicated shows. However, the globalization of television has welcomed both socioeconomic opportunities and threats for format developers. Television format brands are faced with a number of challenges when exporting media products. Some challenges include coping with threats to brand reputation, format imitation and copyright infringement from producers who do not purchase a license to the format, working with low production budgets, language barriers, and additional cultural concerns bespoke to each territory. One of the key ways format licensors protect themselves against these threats is the establishment of a strong media brand (Baumann, 2015; Creeber, 2015; Rohn, 2015; Siegert, Förster, Chan-Olmsted, and Ots, 2015; Singh and Oliver, 2015).

The key to successful new market entry is to develop and build on an existing established internationally known brand (Rohn, 2015). According to Creeber (2015), media branding is endemic to the success of a television format. Singh and Oliver (2015) believe that a brand exists to help consumers differentiate between various goods or services and choose the right alternative; an option not existing when goods and services are sold as a commodity. Media brands and branding strategies are designed to communicate thoughts and feelings to enhance the value of a product beyond its product category and functional value (McDowell, 2006). Format producers can utilize media branding techniques to create a product that is distinguishable, valuable and competitive (Chan-Olmsted, 2006; Siegert, Förster, Chan-Olmsted, and Ots, 2015).

Rohn (2015: 83) finds that: 'the more consistent a brand is across different markets the more valuable it is, especially to international advertisers. A localized brand, on the other hand, which does not fit the original brand philosophy, may risk damaging the value of the original brand.' She argues that some media brands, such as CNN International, follow a strategy of standardization in response to audience fragmentation and do so in a way to better reach their international audience (Rohn, 2015).

Furthermore, format media brands are capitalizing on the appeal of niche format genres by developing brand portfolios. Commercial success has been seen where companies have a portfolio of brands (Baumann, 2015). This portfolio can consist of brand extensions that leverage an: 'established brand name for a new product to capitalize on the equity of the existing brand name' (Chan-Olmsted, 2006: 63). An example of this is Endemol Shine Group's *MasterChef*. Television companies from all over the world have the option to license the original *MasterChef* format, as well as its spinoff formats that include *MasterChef: The Professionals* (2008-present), *Celebrity MasterChef* (2006-present) and *Junior MasterChef*. The key to the successful adaptation of each of these formats, along with any format genre, is that they are tailored to suit local audiences.

Alterations to certain characteristics of television formats, such as prizes, show titles and studio sets found on gameshow and talent show formats, are relatively easy to replicate during the adaptation process (Esser, 2014). Companies are usually reluctant to change their brand names and logos during the adaptation process, but there are circumstances under which a modification makes sense (Rohn, 2015). Channel 4's food television format *Come Dine with Me* has made many modifications to its show title, so that local audiences do not misinterpret the purpose of the show when it is licensed abroad. For example, in Slovakia, the show has been renamed *Without a Napkin*. The Swedish version is called *Half Past Seven at My Place*. In Chile, the format is renamed *The Divine Dinner*, and in Italy, it translates to *At Dinner with Me*. The list goes on.

Rohn (2010; 2015) explains that other media brands, such as the *Fortune* and *Parents* magazine franchises, carry their original brand names on their covers – mainly in order to attract multinational advertisers, as well as carry translated versions of their titles in order to attract local readers. This was the case in China to ensure that local readers understood the title: 'Localization options range from simple language translations, such as show titles and of pre-produced content, to creating content uniquely for the local audience. Common adaptations are the inclusion of local pictures or cast, the adaptation of the studio design, or the differentiation of storylines' (Rohn, 2015: 88). However, there is a risk that making too many modifications to the original concept can result in a finished program that strays too far away from its original brand's version and this, in turn, can harm the international reputation of the brand.

To combat this, television format licensors have developed detailed manuals that contain the crucial elements of the original brand version that must be incorporated into its local productions (Esser, 2010; Rohn, 2015).

### *Protecting the Brand: Production Bibles*

The nature of licensing a television format is much more than purchasing a ticket to a hit show. According to Esser (2010: 274), formats are commonly described as a 'recipe' that comes with the necessary ingredients. A television license provides local broadcasters with the rights to produce a program along with an abundance of key information about the show known in the industry as the 'production bible' or sometimes called the 'brand bible.' Esser (2010: 274) explains the contents found in these bibles as such:

Formats are the concretization of an idea, sold in the form of a production bible, a compilation of production information, including technical requirements, lessons learned, a shooting schedule, crew list, budget sample, and anything else of value to the production team. Software for the graphics and videos from the original and local adaptations can complement the production bible, together with scripts in the case of scripted formats.

Furthermore, production bibles may include anything from original production notes, television ratings data, target audience information for advertising, as well as musical themes and cues from the original show's local iterations (Oren and Shahaf, 2012). In order to achieve success, the same way the brand has done through its international adaptations, producers need an all-access pass to the 'production bible.' Traditionally, when television formats are produced, format holders send out 'flying producers,' who assist in the local production process so that licensees can adhere to what is written in the production bible and offer additional levels of support (Rohn, 2014). Furthermore, the development of production bibles has proven to be a useful risk management tool for copyright infringement or format imitation (Singh and Nagpal, 2011).

Format imitation poses a threat to licensors in any market due to the absence of effective international copyright regulation (Bechtold, 2013; Moran, 1998; Singh and Kretschmer, 2009; Waisbord, 2004). Even though television formats form a major cultural export, there continues to be no protection under copyright law. Format imitators are often referred to in academic literature and the industry as 'copycats.' A copycat is a local producer who attempts to recreate an original format within their home country without purchasing a license (Singh and Kretschmer, 2009). These copycats freely develop gameshow, reality and talent shows based on successful format ideas without fear of legal intervention (Singh and Oliver, 2015). Format imitation is a constant threat to television brands.

The debate to determine whether or not TV show formats are copyrightable dates back to the 1950s. Yet, international policy intervention has been ineffective. In his work on the television format industry as a low protection industry, Bechtold (2013) discusses many examples of television format copyright infringement and found that countries with inadequate copyright policy framework fail to win at court, such as the famous *Green v NZ Broadcasting Corporation* case. Legal copyright protection still fails to recognize borrowed themes and ideas within unscripted programs as 'not copyrightable' (Bechtold, 2013: 467). However, the 2011 FRAPA report explains how production bibles provide media managers with access to a highly complex product that has inherent value to the licensee which, in turn, makes it very difficult to imitate without purchasing a license (Singh and Nagpal, 2011).

In response to the absence of effective international copyright protection for formats, the 2011 FRAPA report has produced an eleven-part defense list based on ITV's *Who Wants to be a Millionaire* format which seeks to reduce imitation. Some of these tactics include the production bible, pushing a television format to the market faster than any other production company and the distribution of deterrent letters to warn copycat producers they are being monitored. Through these measures, television format producers who invest in creative, high-value productions are best equipped to protect themselves against infringement. The rewards of producing a format thus outweigh the risks of commercial failure. Singh and Oliver (2015: 188) believe that:



Central to a well-developed brand management strategy for a television format is (a) the creation of a formalized brand and design identity, (b) localizing the format to align with particular cultural, linguistic or operational requirements of a local market, (c) innovating the format to align with audiences' changing needs in each localized market, and (d) creating brand extensions and correct merchandising tie-ups.

The construction of an effective brand identity is best established in the form of production bibles and by embracing the cultural requirements of the local market as referred to by Singh and Oliver (2015).

### *Cultural Implications of Globalization*

Debates around the globalization of media have been extensively focused on the impact it has on national and indigenous cultures in academia. For example, in 1990, John Roberts proposed that: 'in spite of new and emerging technology, television simply remains a vehicle for expressing cultures and developing new cultural forms' (Roberts, 1990: 221). Roberts postulated that television could, on the one hand, have the power to strengthen indigenous cultures and bring diversity through revealing the richness and variety of those from other countries, and on the other hand, be realized in a way that makes us all better neighbors. Roberts' beliefs on globalization have been driven by the same school of thought set forward in Marshall McLuhan's well-known 'global village theory' first published in his book *The Gutenberg Galaxy: The Making of Typographic Man* in 1962. In this text, McLuhan argues that through advancements in technology, the television, and the access to the world, would inevitably shrink into a single community deemed 'the global village.' Media research suggests that this theory has, in some ways, predicted the internet, decades prior to its advent. While both McLuhan (1962) and Roberts (1990) perceive the importation of foreign media as a way to effectively bring the world closer together, other authors recognize additional effects media globalization has cross-culturally.

Negus and Roman-Velazquez (2000) identified two specific ways in which the dynamics of media internationalization have impacted culture. Firstly, in some ways, commoditized media forms from other countries, such as television, can create an additional set of lifestyles, experiences, events and daily practices that would not have occurred before. Secondly, in doing so, an anxiety arises, where nations worry that 'traditional,' 'folk' or 'indigenous' cultural practices will increasingly decline by adopting imports. In both scenarios, Negus and Roman-Velazquez (2000) recognize that embracing foreign media cultures will inevitably change for either positive or negative reasons. Nonetheless, their research suggests that there is a pressure for media buyers to conform to a series of corporate and commercial agendas, working practices, production routines and working codes that put an imposition on local businesses.

Waisbord (2004) argues that the rise in television formats has revealed two major business developments in the current television landscape. First, the globalization of the formatted television business model and second, the managerial procedures which international and domestic companies instill in order to deal with the resilience of national cultures. These two developments reveal a crossover between economics and culture that exists within this form of the media globalization process. To best address the anxiety Negus and Roman-Velazquez (2000) acknowledged, television format producers are forced to make various cultural considerations when localizing content. These considerations involve anything from identifying and being respectful of language barriers, being flexible with a format's narrative to best satisfy the audience in that particular country and culture, and adherence to the standard business practices employed by the licensee's production team.

### *Negotiation Procedures Between Cross-border Relationships*

Getting to know the cultural differences and similarities of a local audience when internationalizing television brands is paramount. Media brands must make adjustments to the original format not only in terms of the finished product (i.e., content and promotion) but also through the means of communication and business practice between media brands and licensees cross-culturally (Keinonen, 2016; Morley, 1992b; Rohn, 2015).

In her study of television formats as a form of cultural negotiation, Heidi Keinonen (2016) introduces a holistic approach to understand the broader cultural and symbolic negotiations within and between television cultures. She argues that: 'as local production companies are increasingly owned by global conglomerates, they are faced with the challenge of assimilating their traditions with those of their parent companies, again transforming the local production culture.' The failure to assimilate Channel 4's *Jamie Oliver's School Dinners* to America as ABC's *Jamie's American Food Revolution* has revealed cross-cultural challenges that emerge during the internationalization process.

Using a case study approach, Smith (2012) features Jamie Oliver as an example of the exploitation of popular myths and their ability to inspire reality television viewers. In her work, Smith (2012) traces the success of *Jamie Oliver's School Dinners* and its influence on shaping political opinion within the UK as well as its failure in its adapted version in the US named *American Food Revolution*. The US version was canceled after two episodes due to poor ratings. To help address some of the less obvious reasons for the show's termination, Smith interviewed two prominent industry professionals, one of which was Amanda Murphy, the television producer of successful international format Channel 4's *Supernanny* (2004-2012). Murphy said: 'Americans don't like to see their people being humiliated... It's about working out where the sensibilities lie in the different countries and where you can grow the idea' (Smith, 2012: 13).

Audiences and television critics interpret and negotiate the meanings of international television formats; some formats and related practices are found proximate enough to be accepted, and some are criticized and rejected—for a variety of reasons (Keinonen, 2016: 11). Straubhaar (1991) argues that television audiences seek programming that relates to them nationally and regionally, a concept he deems to be 'cultural proximity.' He suggests that audiences are 'seeking greater cultural relevance or proximity from both national and regional television programs,' a trend that we are expected to view similar to the 'nationalization and regionalization of industries and audiences in music, magazine production, film, and other media' (Straubhaar, 1991: 56).

In his work, he explained that even though the United States dominates the global media market, national and regional media companies have established a more interdependent position in the world television industry due to this attraction to culturally proximate content. Syndicated shows from American and British reality television formats possess what Rixon (2006) refers to as a 'low cultural discount' element. This low discount concept involves the creation of television programs with little national personalization replaced by themes and narratives that can easily trigger emotional sentiment with little resistance in most countries. Although there are many benefits of importing a syndicated show, such as the low cost of investment in an internationally acclaimed product, television formats are developed with a 'low cultural discount' that can then be adapted to offer local broadcasters an established hit show that is personalized to their cultural requirements (Rixon, 2006). Television formats offer the best of both worlds; provided broadcasters can afford it.

The global dissemination of formats not only suggests the integration and understanding of global cultures but that there has been an increasing demand for buying and selling more standardized content (i.e., television format ideas) to reduce commercial risk. With regards to economic market forces, Rohn (2015) argues that companies with considerable financial resources and international business experience find the adaptation process easier than countries with more centralized organizational structures and lower levels of economic development. However, other bodies of literature suggest that consumers in less economically developed countries are drawn to global brands (Alden et al., 1999; Roth, 1995). Even highly developed countries, such as the UK, are being faced with static and diminishing content budgets. Doyle (2010) explains that within the digital era, local UK broadcasters are focusing on fewer, high impact ideas that they can then transmit to multiple viewing platforms. Similar to UK broadcasters, format brands also pursue online opportunities to reach additional audiences and advertisers.

## **2.5 Multi-Platform Expansion Strategies**

Television is changing in ways that make it increasingly difficult to consider linear broadcasting in isolation from other modes of distribution to audiences, such as the internet and mobile devices (Caldwell, 2006).

As of 2016, 95% of the world's population has access to mobile network coverage in their living area, and 84% of them are connected via mobile-broadband networks of 3G or higher (ITU, 2016). Adults in the UK spend almost 8 hours each day consuming media, where television and video is still the largest medium in terms of both weekly reach and average hours viewed daily (four and a half hours), followed by outdoor advertising, radio and social networking/messaging (almost three hours) (IPA, 2017). Even for millennials, television maintains its position as the largest medium overall, however, social media and online messaging are significantly growing in the UK. Given the widespread availability of digital and mobile technology, television networks have found new opportunities to attract audiences, advertisers and alternative revenue streams.

Television companies are investing into multi-platform strategies to capitalize on these new opportunities. As defined in the previous chapter, multi-platforms consist of the various, legal ways in which audiences can watch television online. Doyle (2015: 57) defines the term 'multi-platform' as 'an approach towards production and distribution in which the aim is to engage audiences across multiple platforms or avenues, rather than just one.' Multi-platform channels such as video on demand (VoD) television and digital streaming websites and mobile applications make it easier for media brands to remain relevant to digital audiences and stay competitive within an overcrowded media market (Bennett, Strange, Kerr, and Medrado, 2012; Doyle, 2013; Sorensen, 2014). The following list is a brief itemization of the most common multimedia outlets and websites that many American and British food format brands are active on (excluding linear and time shifting technologies like TiVo):

*TV Network Video on Demand (VoD) Services Available on Brand Websites, Mobile and Tablet Applications*

For a designated period dictated by television networks, many cooking show formats can be streamed for 'free' by viewers that have paid for a cable subscription, UK license fee to fund the BBC iPlayer or by watching advertising in lieu of a pay-per-view option (Jackson, 2016). Most VoD services provide audiences with a menu of viewing options to either catch up on a show that recently aired or to access full episodes and web-based video clips from a list of programs available in their video libraries.

Some of the most popular VoD services made available by food formats on the market, both ongoing and syndicated productions in the UK, include: the BBC iPlayer (BBC One's *MasterChef* and *MasterChef: The Professionals*) and All 4 (Channel 4's *Come Dine with Me*, *The Great British Bake Off*, *Ramsay's Kitchen Nightmares*, and *Gordon Ramsay's F Word*). Some of the American productions include: The Food Network App (Food Network's *Chopped* and *Iron Chef America*), Bravo Now (Bravo's *Top Chef*), Fox Now (Fox's *Hell's Kitchen*, *MasterChef America*, *My Kitchen Rules* (2017), a format originated in Australia, Seven Network's *My Kitchen Rules* (2010-present), ABC (ABC's *The Chew*), as well as others.

#### *Subscription and Pay-per-view VoD Services (sVoDs)*

Usually, in the form of a monthly fee, digital consumers may opt into a subscription-funded contract with websites and mobile and tablet web-based applications such as Netflix, Amazon Prime, the American website and application, Hulu, and the UK's NowTV. Some of the major subscription VoD services (sVods) like Netflix and Amazon Prime provide free trial periods as a promotional tool or as part of a 'commercial partnership' with television and media operators (Ofcom, 2016). Although some of these sVoDs and food show format licensors are engaged in business contracts to air their programs (i.e. Fox's *Hell's Kitchen* available on Netflix), many of these sVoDs have heavily invested in original programming that has posed threats to television broadcasters (Doyle, 2016). For example, the popularity of *Chef's Table* (2016-present), a Netflix original series that follows renowned chefs and tells stories about their culinary je ne sais quoi, has led to the commissioning of four seasons, including a French adaptation in 2016, *Chef's Table: France* (Petski, 2016).

The opportunities and challenges networks face to be competitive against original programming on sVoD sites and applications will continue to heighten. Full episodes and series are available to rent or purchase via pay-per-view distribution portals such as iTunes, Google Play, BBC Store, AOL, Vudu, Amazon Video, Microsoft TV, and more. These sVoDs and pay-per-view models are appealing to audiences that seek control of what and when they want to watch without the interruption of the television schedule (Hardenburgh, 2010).

### *Network Television Owned Social Media Platforms and YouTube*

Before the digital era, viewer engagement with television brands was limited. Now, social media has ultimately lifted the barriers of communication. The 'second screen' use of social media platforms, such as Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube, facilitates engagement with television audiences and fans. Second-screening is defined by McDowell (2015: 148) as: 'simultaneously interacting with more than one item of media content' and comes under the rubric of media multitasking, which typically involves audiences using laptops, tablets or smartphones while watching television. Second screening provides advertising opportunities and establishes a two-way communication flow between their brand and viewers. Picard (2010: 370) describes this shift in audience behavior as being a 'relational concept' where individuals are able to not only select the media and content they want in new forms, but they can now interact directly with television brands and personalize their user experience when doing so. By establishing these strong connections, format brands from both commercial and public service broadcaster backgrounds are able to employ promotional tactics to drive audience engagement and discussion around their show (Moe, Poell and van Dijck, 2016).

The relationship between network television channels with the video-sharing social media site, YouTube, provides additional revenue streams for online advertisers. Format owners can opt to create their own YouTube channel that hosts promotional videos, trailers and ancillary footage pulled from the show. Some YouTube videos are viewed in the thousands which are commonly referred to as 'viral' videos (Hunt, 2014). Viral videos attract sponsorship and can result in a situation where the media producer earns advertising revenue that is then split between YouTube and Google (Sorensen, 2014).

### *Ancillary Materials Available on Network Websites and Elsewhere*

In addition to hosting sVoD services, network television websites provide additional content for fans to learn more about the show in the form of blogs, recipe pages and short video clips that are created specifically for the website as a supplement to the existing content from the linear show. Visitors to these websites can be direct fans of the formats or may have been directed to them from third-party sites such as social media platforms.

Some food television network sites, such as BBC Good Food and the Food Network, attract online visitors to their websites when searching for online recipes and video tutorials. They do this by implementing search engine optimization (SEO) tactics that enable their websites to appear on the first page results across Google, Bing and additional search engines for a number of keyword searches (Ryan, 2014). For example, if someone was to type in 'Croque Monsieur recipe' into Google in the UK, they would find at least one food television show or network's recipe on the first page of results. In addition to network-hosted websites, the Internet is home to several web pages geared towards an interest in food, where those who enjoy cooking can flick through recipes, watch instructional videos or become better educated about food through online blogs and resources.

### *Online Data*

With the advent of more sophisticated tracking data tools, television format producers can access extensive research and marketing information which allows them to be better informed about their audience's preferences (Napoli, 2012). Dynamic changes in technology permits format producers and advertisers to follow an online trail of audience behavior and browsing preferences (Napoli, 2010). This data facilitates the recognition of algorithms (such as the Netflix algorithm) designed for consumers and, based on their online viewing habits, can allow format owners to remain competitive and to: 'satisfy a demand and build public-facing brands that are recognized by advertisers and audiences alike' (Chalaby, 2016: 46). Big data provides direct access to consumers and allows for the tracking and measuring of the full consumer experience. Chan-Olmsted and Shay (2015: 25) argue that: 'the market intelligence extracted from the aforementioned engagement experiences is then used to inform brand managers on how best to integrate the firm's brand message into professionally produced media content.'

Format owners and television broadcasters can utilize audience data to win advertising revenue and monetize audiences. This evidence-based approach of 'predictive power' mitigates the risk of which programs and episodes to produce (or choose to make available online) (Napoli, 2016).

New technology delivers a more interactive experience for viewers, like second-screening capabilities which encourage users to follow updates on their brand social channels and mobile and web applications whilst watching the show (Wilson, 2016).



Big data also provides television brands with tracking information and analyzes how their audiences engage with and around their programs online.

### *Challenges that Emerge Online*

Whilst innovative technologies have opened up new gateways for food format producers to extend their brand reach and enjoy new commercial benefits, multi-platform investment has left format licensors to endure similar challenges online as they do on linear television (i.e., issues of translation, budget, and political intervention). Therefore, it is important to investigate the literature that addresses the challenges and threats that surface as a result of the investment into multi-platform distribution strategies. Consumers want and expect to be engaged in multiple media outlets. If the desired brand presence cannot be found, the fluidity with which a consumer can engage with a competing brand is seamless (Chan-Olmsted and Shay, 2015). For example, say Fox's *MasterChef* is not available to watch anywhere online (i.e., not on Fox's website or a Video on Demand service), fans of food competition formats in America may opt to watch Food Network's *Chopped* instead because it was free to watch on their network site. Although this direct connection to consumers is provided by the new value chains multi-platform technologies present to media owners, format brands are expected to deliver much more, whilst retaining less brand control as they carry out multi-platform strategies (Chan-Olmsted and Shay, 2015).

Brand managers also have: 'to make sure their products and messages are synergistic across different media and channels, while taking advantage of each medium's unique characteristics' (Chan-Olmsted, 2011: 5, as cited by Baumann, 2015). The protection and control of the brand become increasingly challenging if the outcome dilutes brand values, which can then be amplified by audience involvement via social media (Baumann, 2015). Regarding social media and transmedia storytelling, brand managers must also accept a partial loss of control over what happens online, such as online user activity (Chan-Olmsted, 2011). Furthermore, consumers have immediate access to perfect, illegal copies of media content to view and share online, more than ever, before that poses obvious economic threats to format brands (McDowell, 2015). Yet, Bennett, Strange, Kerr, and Medrado (2012), Doyle, (2013), and Sorensen (2014) would all agree that media brands that do not invest in multi-platform strategies are not acting relevantly and competitively.

A world of competition exists within the global television market. Original productions produced by digital kingpins such as Google, Netflix, and Amazon, as well as trans-border distributors like Liberty Global International and Sky Europe, have made it increasingly challenging to compete within the global television market (Bulkley, 2014). That is why strong branded content (mentioned in the previous section) and an effective digital strategy are crucial to television companies operating within the global marketplace.

## **2.6 Conclusion**

This chapter has been an account of the existing work relating to food television show formats, managerial challenges associated with adaptation and the opportunities and challenges multi-platform strategies offer format brands. Due to increasing demand, food format licensors now provide franchise-building promotions and digital offerings designed to build long-lasting relationships with viewers all over the world and online (Clarke, 2014). To make this possible, Oren (2013) argues that global food programming has undergone a shift in tone, genre, and narrative arc, and developed from a program about cooking to a primetime cooking-elimination competition hit. Some academics believe that this shift in programming is indicative of the wider food world, in which consumers extract pleasure from food-based content and hedonistic dishes distributed across all media channels on almost a primitive level given our necessity to eat (Dejmanee, 2015; McDonnell, 2016; Wocke, 2016).

Much like other factual television formats, many food programs are consciously created with the intention to achieve international adaptations due to the high costs of development and production (Moran, 2005). Despite their increasing popularity, the adaptation processes and reasons why these particular television formats have become so popular have been under-represented in scholarly work. Instead, the academic literature has focused on the benefits and challenges of investing in alternative television format genres, such as talent shows and game show formats, and new avenues of distribution (Esser, 2010; Jäger and Behrens, 2009).

Therefore, this literature review investigated the research that was readily available, predominantly relating to the managerial decisions that television format brands across the board make in what is an ever-changing industry.

Television companies have become increasingly focused on the pursuit of the international sales and opportunities that exist in emerging markets and do so by investing in television formats. The television format has been recognized in media economics and management literature as a risk management strategy for content producers and local television broadcasters alike (Chalaby, 2011; Esser, 2010; Moran and Keane, 2004; Rohn, 2015). By creating an original program, the format licensor assumes most of the risk in terms of the cost of production and levels of uncertainty as to what audiences and broadcasters abroad will deem appealing. However, this is an optimistic approach to develop an effective format structure that will allow them to recoup their investment to become an international hit (Downes, 2011). In response to audience autonomy and fragmentation, many authors believe that new narratives and the use of multiple genres appeal to mainstream audiences (Creeber, 2015, Esser, 2010; Packham, 2016; Moran, 2009b; Morreale, 2007). The use of sub-genres and hybrid narratives as a form of risk management is what has given birth to the rise of food television show formats (Oren, 2013). However, beyond this work, there has been a gap in the literature where coverage of this rising format contender has been lightweight and in need of further investigation.

This literature review examined two key strategies that format brands invest in to reduce further risk: (1) the importance of effective media branding strategies, and (2) the investment in multi-platform strategies. These are the two most important managerial strategies that have aided the successful rollout of television formats on an international scale. Doyle (2013) argues that although alterations and local adaptation are part of the process, it is the strength of a television's brand that ensures that it will have some appeal for the same lifestyle group or niche in any different geographic (and different product) markets. Similarly, Rohn (2015) argues that developing an exclusive brand communication for every market is not economically viable, which is why developing a standardized brand approach, such as the development of a format equipped with a set of criteria to follow, is easier to implement and to handle. Production bibles, or brand bibles, not only make a standardized brand strategy possible, they offer protection from copyright infringement or reputation damage to the brand (Baumann, 2015; Creeber, 2015; Rohn, 2015; Siegert, Förster, Chan-Olmsted, and Ots, 2015; Singh and Oliver, 2015). Baumann (2015: 70) writes:

In an environment where products and services are relatively easy to imitate, differentiation serves media companies to protect their output—to some extent— from imitation if the origin and the sources of originality are identified. A strong brand can build up preference, increase customer loyalty, even in experience and credence goods settings, and thereby enhance demand in the long term.

Singh and Oliver (2015) find the best way to combat imitation is by developing an original and sophisticated suite of market-based practices that can only be accessed through a production bible after the purchase of a television format license. While it can be a challenge to maintain a consistent brand image when managing internationalization and new media platforms, format brands are investing in branding strategies, both traditional and online, in order to expand their portfolios for international buyers and to seek additional revenue streams. Doyle (2015) explains how multi-platform expansion is increasingly central to the strategies of media companies and that the successful use of branding as a means to engage audiences effectively and to secure a prominent presence across digital platforms forms a core part of this. She writes: 'The need for high impact brands is affecting how content is selected, produced and presented, with practical and theoretical implications for processes of production, content selection, and distribution' (Doyle, 2015: 54). McDowell (2015) confirms this in his research into the effects of branded media content and explains that within an overcrowded media marketplace, the best way to nurture a sustainable competitive advantage over rivals is to provide audiences with high-quality branded content for both online and via traditional media distribution. Furthermore, Chan-Olmsted (2011) noted that media strategies are strategic assets that help media firms compete in online and offline media markets and provide extra economic value to the company's products and services.

Existing research fails to adequately identify these significant industry trends and changes in relation to the food format: a niche, new genre gaining widespread attention, thus, justifying a need for further analysis. Thus, this thesis will provide valuable insights and build on existing media management, multi-platform and media production theory. It sketches out the unique changes and decisions which food television show format licensors make in order to attain international success for their brand and licensees.

The following chapters will investigate opportunities and threats that surface as a result of the adaptation process and the investment into multi-platform distribution strategies. Whilst new technologies have opened up new gateways for food format producers to extend their brand reach and enjoy new commercial benefits, multi-platform investment has left television producers to endure similar challenges online as they do on linear television (i.e., issues of translation, budget, and political intervention, etc.). The next chapter will outline the research design and the methodologies and research instruments utilized to best answer the core research questions highlighted above.



## Chapter Three: Research Methodology

Producers of food television formats undergo a series of distinct political, economic and cultural procedures to adapt their storylines and elements to new countries. They do this in the hope of creating a successful, localized version of the original show. This thesis aims to better understand the decisions made by food format producers and industry experts to investigate how the cooking show, a classic television programming style, has revolutionized itself into becoming a global contender in the format industry. The motivations of this research are based on the increasing demand for food television show formats for both linear and digital platforms at international television format tradeshow (Clarke, 2014) and the rise in television ratings for food show formats like Fox's *Hell's Kitchen* in the US and Channel 4's *The Great British Bake Off* in the UK.

There is a wide range of academic literature that supports the notion that international television formats are in high demand within the television industry (Chalaby, 2011; Esser, 2010; Hill, 2002, 2005, 2006; Moran, 1998; 2004; 2005; 2006; 2008; 2009a; 2009b, etc.). Existing academic work on television formats has been widely looked at in several fields. In many ways, television formats have been acknowledged as a measure of copyright and intellectual property protection (Bechtold, 2013; Moran, 1998; Singh and Kretschmer, 2009; Waisbord, 2004) and the investment in television formats has also been proven to minimize commercial risk for content selection (Esser, 2010; Thomas, 2008). Academics with a greater scope of food television have analyzed particular programs, such as Network Ten's *MasterChef Australia* (2009-present) and its effects on media production practices and health issues (Van Ryan, 2014; Phillipov, 2013). Additional areas of investigation have focused on the impact that food television programming has on gender and racial issues (Brunsdon, 2005; Inness, 2001).

Yet, as outlined in the abstract and literature review, the academic literature that fixates on the production of international food television formats and multi-platform strategies is limited. To fill the gap in the literature, this thesis incorporates a qualitative, multi-method research design.

This approach aims to provide media management and media production researchers and industry experts with the thorough evidence they need to perform critically engaged, theoretically informed decisions around the management and production of international food television show formats in the digital era. This research investigates the key elements that underpin the development of international formats and managerial challenges during the adaptation process. To do so, this thesis will answer the following research questions:

1. Why are food television shows so well suited for the development of international formats?
2. What are the managerial challenges regarding the adaptation of food television show formats for international markets?
3. How has the development of formatted television (around food) exploited multi-platform distribution?

The organization of this chapter is as follows: Section 3.2 introduces the multi-method approach implemented in this research and provides a justification for a qualitative study over a quantitative study and why a production-based study was selected. Section 3.3 analyzes the research methods that were selected to approach the research questions and what the coding process and emerging limitations were like. Section 3.4 provides a rationale for why the US and the UK are the two main countries discussed in this thesis. Finally, Section 3.5 contains the ethical considerations and conclusion of the chapter.

## **3.2 Qualitative Research Methodology**

The key terminology most commonly associated with qualitative research includes 'understanding, imbued with values, experience, authenticity and subjective' and associates 'hypothesis, experiment, cause and effect, measurement, replication and objective' with quantitative research (Brennen, 2017: 15-16). Where some researchers argue that qualitative research is less rigorous, more controversial and ambiguous than quantitative research, qualitative research has been a way to challenge the status quo and has been proven to be insightful and enlightening when applied to the right research design (Brennen, 2017).



Having established a production-based perspective and approach to this research, qualitative research posed more advantages to my research than a quantitative research design would. Huberman and Miles (2002) believe that effective qualitative research should define internal structures and concepts, map out the interworking of the phenomena, reveal correlations between participants, seek more information and help develop new theories and strategies. According to Doyle and Frith (2004: 6): 'qualitative research is well suited to investigating work practices and managerial styles and carrying out organizational research.' Until now, there has been a lack of interest in the managerial decisions made when producing and distributing food television show formats in scholarly work.

The results of quantifying media output can result in compromised data, particularly when analyzing the responses of industry experts (Doyle and Frith, 2004). According to Gunter (2000), in-depth interviews and ethnographic observational studies can better position the interpretation of media by the receiver. Therefore, a qualitative methodology was most suitable in order to investigate the actions, behaviors, and beliefs of those involved in the decision-making processes of rolling out international food television show formats. Qualitative research instruments, such as semi-structured interviews and participant observation, help to develop a better understanding of the topic at hand. The justification for these particular methodologies was decided after an extensive elimination process. Quantitative questionnaires, surveys, and additional experimental approaches are believed to most suitable for research that wishes to measure and quantify statistics or cause and effect relationship data and therefore were eliminated.

Analyzing decision making around food television show formats enters a new area of academic discussion that requires an investigative research approach. Kumar (2005) characterizes such an approach as having three perspective objectives which include: descriptive, correlational and explanatory devices.<sup>2</sup>The descriptive objectives include the managerial challenges that occur in this field and the strategies that are put in place to combat them. The correlational objectives including the impacts the changes to this format and multiplatform strategies have on the television industry.

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<sup>2</sup> Refer to the Appendix 4 on Kumar's perspective objectives.

The explanatory objectives of this research address why the food television show format has been so popular, why some international cooking shows are received well, while others are not. This thesis addresses all three of these objectives through a qualitative multi-method and fully functional research design.

### **3.3 Multi-Method Research Methodology**

#### *Textual Analysis*

Textual analysis is a popular research methodology for cultural studies and media studies scholars seeking to examine popular cultures and media contexts within local, national and globalized environments (Maira and Soep, 2005). Media theorist McKee (2003:1) defines textual analysis as:

A way for researchers to gather information about how other human beings make sense of the world. It is a methodology—a data-gathering process—for those researchers who want to understand the ways in which members of various cultures and subcultures make sense of who they are, and of how they fit into the world in which they live.

Bainbridge (2011) explains that textual analysis can be conducted almost instinctively, to some extent, but that it too can become a skill that as a person involved in media, journalism, business or public life more generally, you can use to understand why certain media texts are successful, subversive or popular. He argues that: 'ultimately, textual analysis is a toolkit for examining the media, applicable to very simple media forms (such as advertisements), up to more complex forms such as news narratives, television series, and films' and that it can be utilized as a guideline for media practitioners who want to 'convey a certain message or try to convince audiences to think in a certain way' (Bainbridge, 2011: 224).

Prior to any fieldwork, the groundwork of this research began with textual analysis, where I observed complex narratives and sub-genres in the food television bracket that were permeating American and British broadcast schedules.

Though this research does not emphasize audience perspective, textual analysis has allowed me to make an educated guess at why some of the most popular 'cooking shows' were straying away from their traditional roots and instead, started chasing other reality television show narratives. In 2013, these shows were not only popular, but they were acquiring some of the highest ratings on television. During this time, I was selecting a PhD topic and was reading a range of blogs and news articles about the changes in food television and decided the next logical step would be to look at the literature to see if anyone had written about this subject. Much to my surprise, the literature came up short. This initial level of observation motivated the formation of my research questions. However, as Hall (1990:16–17, as cited by Morley, 1992a: 6) strongly points out 'textuality is never enough' and cultural studies must learn to live with: 'the...tension which Said describes as its affiliations with institutions, offices, agencies, classes, academies, corporations, groups, ideologically defined parties, and professions, nations, races and genders...questions that...can never be fully covered by critical textuality and its elaborations.'

According to Esser (2010), an extensive body of reality television research has taken a textual analysis approach, whereas only a few publications have offered a culture-based comparative approach to uncover textual analyses of locally adapted formats. Therefore, a combination of desk research, qualitative interviews, case studies, and participant observation have also been conducted to deliver a valuable conceptual framework that accomplishes the research objectives.

### *Desk Research*

Effective desk research has been employed, resulting in a literature review that is thorough and extensive and has identified where the gaps in the current academic literature exist. The desk research conducted in this thesis provided an assessment of academic journals, books and online news based on cooking television and television format trading. Existing materials collected by other researchers such as financial reports are considered as supplementary or secondary sources (Deacon et al, 2007). This research made use of secondary sources such as blogs, television-rating data, international trading policies, and agreements, as well as social media data, alongside qualitative interviews and ethnographic research.

Statistics and data issued by regulatory bodies, networks, and other sources were also used to trace the areas of investment in cooking programs onto traditional, international and digital television platforms. Unpublished academic themes emerging from this research are useful when shaping rational questions around the research.

### *Semi-structured Interviews with Industry Professionals*

Lotz and Newcomb (2012) argue that securing access to those being interviewed or involved in a field visit is the first step to research. Without this, there will be no data to report. As outlined in the Introduction Chapter, one of the key motivations of this research stems from my professional background. The noticeable industry changes I identified, paired with my background and experience conducting interviews, made qualitative analysis with industry experts a strong methodology choice. Although I do acknowledge that a research methodology should be devised specifically to answer the research questions in the best way possible, I was fortunate to have interview experience and the ability to gain access to industry experts where others would not have. This was really an advantage for me and as a result, I have acquired and analyzed quality responses throughout the findings chapters of this thesis.

The main focus of this research is based on the responses of media managers, producers, celebrity chefs, social media and digital marketing experts, format consultants and other industry professionals. In-depth interviews were conducted with fifteen industry experts and each respondent was asked to comment on their strategies and experiences working within the cooking show, food television show format, and digital television sectors. These interviews have been conducted in the United States, United Kingdom, the Netherlands, and South Africa. Face-to-face and telephone interviews took from 30 minutes up to one hour depending on how much time each interviewee was able to allocate to our interview. Snowball sampling techniques were employed in order to produce a more intensive and interpretive research to best engage with managerial practices. According to Deacon et. al (2007), snowball sampling is a method where initial contacts suggest further people for the researcher to approach, who in turn may provide additional research outlets to pursue. Obtaining access to high profile professionals can be difficult, so this sampling method helped connect my work with the necessary interviewees.

Other forms of obtaining access to these respondents involved a mixture of recruiting via LinkedIn, email and word-of-mouth with previous media contacts.

The data was transcribed and then analyzed by identifying common themes and patterns until the research finally reached a theoretical saturation amongst responses. Audio recordings were used to collect data after a consent form was reviewed and signed by the interviewee. The full list of interviewee candidates has been included in Figure 1 below. Likewise, the Ethical Interview Consent Form that was distributed and signed by the research participants has been included in Appendix 1 of this thesis.

**Figure 1: Research Interviewees**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Location of Interview</b>	<b>Date</b>
David Ambler	Producer	London, United Kingdom	August, 2015
Lorenzo Anastasio	Lead Flying Producer at Endemol Shine Group's <i>MasterChef</i>	Amsterdam, Holland	January, 2016
Adam Cooper	Co-executive Producer, Fox's <i>MasterChef</i>	Los Angeles, California, USA	November, 2016
Dave Crear	Director at BBC One's <i>MasterChef</i>	London, United Kingdom	August, 2015
Paula Deen	CEO and Star of the <i>Paula Deen Network</i>	Savannah, Georgia, USA	December, 2015
Julie Donovan	Independent Media Consultant	London, United Kingdom	January, 2016
Aaron Eccles	Head of Social Media, Endemol Shine UK	London, United Kingdom	August, 2016
Gordon Elliot	Producer/Investor of ABC's <i>The Chew</i>	New York City, New York, USA	November, 2015

	and <i>The Paula Deen Network</i>		
David Griffith	Head of Integrated Marketing at Scripps Networks	New York City, New York, USA	December, 2015
Cash Hartzell	Producer at AMC's <i>Talking Dead</i> and FYI's <i>Epic Meal Empire</i>	Los Angeles, California, USA	November, 2015
Hannah Miles	Previous BBC One's <i>MasterChef</i> winner	London, United Kingdom	August, 2015
Tanya Steel	CEO of Cooking Up Big Dreams & Previous Editor-in-Chief at <i>Epicurious</i>	New York City, New York, USA	November, 2015
Mark Turner	Feature Film/TV Talent Agent at Abrams Artists Agency	New York City, New York, USA	September, 2016
Gregg Wallace	Presenter on BBC One's <i>MasterChef</i>	Glasgow, United Kingdom	May, 2015
Katelyn Williams	Social Media Manager at Food Network South Africa and Travel Channel South Africa	Cape Town, South Africa	May, 2016

According to Anderson (2012), the interview process is most effective when the interviewer is facilitating the conversation whilst placing the majority of control in the respondent's possession. However, after analyzing different interview styles, the decision to opt for the semi-structured interview format was most suitable to satisfy the research objectives.

In this particular scenario, I, the interviewer retained a reasonable amount of the control over the conversation, but in a more 'natural' form that is less burdened by standardization in hopes of provoking a more open-ended dialogue (Deacon et. al, 2007: 67). Informal interviews present issues of reliability and too great a focus on the role of the informant. Unstructured interviews are even more difficult to control, and structured interviews or closed interviews shift the majority of control to the researcher with respondents having to answer from a specific schedule of questions that did not seem endearing enough for this particular research (Berger, 2011). Therefore, a semi-structured approach seemed most appropriate to carry out this examination.

### *Interview Transcription and Coding Process*

After I decided upon the research questions and the best methodologies with which to conduct my investigation, it was important to understand the best approach for measuring and defining the data. The data collection process I selected relied on the use of a 'coding frame,' a format on which the occurrences of the different categories relating to the unit of analysis, its features, and attributes, can be numerically cataloged (Jensen, 2014). Once all of the interviews were completed, the data was transcribed and then coded based on the connections and dissimilarities the research questions presented. Coding is both 'reductionist' and 'extractive' on the basis that it can reduce elements that can influence a specific category of content, as well as unveiling the: 'cultural concepts, societal values, and social practices that provide for the meaningfulness of the text' (Anderson, 2012: 312).

To code interview responses, NVivo software was used to flag up common themes that emerged. In the software, I developed a range of 'nodes' which are a collection of references, or in this case interview transcriptions, about a specific theme or case. Nodes are central to NVivo software and allow researchers to organize data sets all in one place to track trends, patterns and ideas (NVivo, 2018). Specific nodes I created include: 'managerial challenges,' 'food television show format attributes' and 'multi-platform strategies.' Coding can be very time-consuming when working on a multi-method approach, so once theoretical saturation was reached amongst the responses, I was able to limit the number of interviews to fifteen.

At one point during the coding process, I had realized that three interviewees that had no relation to one another and worked in three different places all referred to food as 'an international language of love' hence why it became a sub-heading in Chapter Seven. It was recurring patterns like these that confirmed theoretical saturation.

### *Limitations of Interviews*

Interviewing has become the primary method of qualitative data collection of this research. However, there a number of limitations of this research method.

Common limitations of this method are outlined in Berger's (2011) work on qualitative interviews. Berger (2011) explained the limitations as such: (1) people may be lying or exaggerating their responses, (2) memory retention issues, (3) the responses are of little worth, (4) people may base their answers on what the researcher may find acceptable, and (5) issues with semantics and interpretation of language. In some cases, digression can occur, and the interviewer can lose control of the conversation (Deacon et. al, 2007). This can pose a multitude of problems such as wasteful data and a more demanding transcription process. In addition to these common problems, it is possible that the media managers, producers and format consultants that are to be discussed could be subject to exposure and embarrassment that may affect their reputation and self-esteem (Stake, 2005). To reduce such risks, interview questions were customized and provided to the individual prior to the interviews to be sure interviewees were prepared and comfortable for the duration of the recorded conversation. A weak qualitative study often stems from ineffective interview questions where the framing of certain questions and the use of any partial vocabulary can influence bias (Anderson, 2012). That is why all of the interview questions were tried and tested prior to any actual research.

Not having access to all of the television production companies and industry professionals I had hoped for was another limitation in this research. Attempts were made to speak with the producers of Channel 4's *The Great British Bake Off*, Food Network's *Chopped*, YouTube's *Epic Meal Time*'s onscreen talent, and more.



Given the digital angle of this research, it would have been useful to incorporate more digital first production companies such as Vice Media who produce online cooking shows such as *Chef's Night Out* (2014-present) and Netflix who produce cooking shows such as *Chef's Table* and *Cooked* (2016).

One final limitation that must be noted in this research involves my pre-existing relationship with two of the interviewees, which are Paula Deen from *The Paula Deen Network* and Gordon Elliot from ABC's *The Chew*. Paula Deen is the cousin of my stepfather which granted me a level of access that most researchers could not have obtained. To prevent any ethical implications, I made sure to conduct a semi-structured interview style in the same way that I did with all of the other interviews in terms of the question structure, length of time and establishing myself as a researcher, rather than a relative or colleague. I adopted a similar approach when speaking to Gordon Elliot, a producer whom I used to work with at ABC's *The Chew*. Furthermore, because I was fully aware of these ethical issues, I kept an even bigger critical distance in the Deen and Elliot interviews than the other thirteen. I positioned myself as a professional and a student researcher at the University of Glasgow instead of a colleague or distant relative, even though they both knew me.

Much like all of my interviews, I adhered to the ethical guidelines developed by the University of Glasgow to ensure candidates clearly understood the procedure and questions before the interview, that they were comfortable with the location or medium (i.e., telephone, Skype, etc.) and made sure to cover all specific issues regarding confidentiality, how their responses would be used and required permission within a signed consent form (University of Glasgow, 2017). Both Deen and Elliot complied with this format and were treated the same as the other interview candidates with whom I had no personal connection.

### *Case Studies*

A mix of carefully selected case studies and participant observation research was also conducted in order to enhance the value of this thesis. Case studies in qualitative research: 'optimizes understanding by pursuing scholarly research questions.

It gains credibility by thoroughly triangulating the descriptions and interpretations, not just in a single step but continuously throughout the period of study' (Stake, 2005: 443-444). This research will analyze, but not be limited to, three case studies that underpin the managerial changes that have been made to contemporary food television show formats within the digital era. These case studies include Endemol Shine Group's *MasterChef*, *The Paula Deen Network*, and FYI's *Epic Meal Empire*. These case studies, via interviews with key personnel, were carefully selected to help answer the core research questions of this study.

#### *Case study 1: Endemol Shine Group's MasterChef*

Endemol Shine Group's *MasterChef* is one of the most popular cooking show formats in the world that seeks out the best amateur cook in the country based on their degree of talent, creativity, dedication, technical skill and passion for food. The show is produced as local adaptations in over 50 countries and has generated over \$270 million in global revenue (Shine Group, 2017). The program has been highlighted in multiple pieces of academic literature, but never with a core focus on its wide success as an international format ranking number one in the cooking show category in many different countries.

The case study highlights seven countries in particular including United Kingdom, Australia, the United States, Denmark, Russia, China, and India. These seven countries were selected out of the fifty international adaptations because they best illustrate the managerial decisions and challenges that have occurred during the internationalization of Endemol Shine Group's *MasterChef*. Informed by the lead flying producer of the food television show format, as well as local producers from the US and UK, this case study tells a first-hand account of the flying production team's experience when licensing the format and helps satisfy the core objectives of this research. Additionally, this case study hopes to help media managers understand the parameters of the show's success, its hindrances and how it has been reshaped and received in new environments.

The *MasterChef* study addresses all three of the research questions so as to identify the keys to this format's international success, the intricacies of adapting this program in different countries and cultures, and how *MasterChef* has exploited new media platforms such as BBC One online, *Junior MasterChef* on BBC iPlayer, and all of its adaptations through social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter and YouTube.

#### *Case study 2: The Paula Deen Network*

*The Paula Deen Network* was a strictly on-demand online cooking network based on American celebrity chef, Paula Deen, and her family. It was the first digital network based on a single celebrity chef and established a community of Deen's new and existing fans and supporters after her show was canceled from the Food Network. This case study was selected with the hope to help provide industry insight of the exploitation of cooking shows onto new, digital platforms, where in this case the platform consists of solely media texts produced from Paula Deen that can be viewed via a monthly subscription fee online. With this case study, other scholars may be able to test the theory that, although Deen may be the first personality-led chef star on her own platform, there is the potential to create a trend amongst future celebrity chefs. This particular case study focuses on the composition of taking a brand name on linear television and transposing it to suit an entirely online audience. Her channel was made available on Roku, a digital media player for online streaming, available solely in the United States. In addition to her channel's presence online, Deen continues to have a highly interactive and large-scale social media fan base that has been linked to her decision to invest in a wholly digital network.

#### *Case Study 3: FYI's Epic Meal Empire*

FYI's *Epic Meal Empire* is a television format derived from the popular YouTube series, *Epic Meal Time*. The original YouTube version of the show is the most popular online cooking show on YouTube and has over 7 million subscribers alongside millions of views (YouTube, 2016). The success of the web series led to the purchase of the format at the international format trade show MIPCOM by the FYI network.

The *Epic Meal Time* food show format pioneered the first transition of an online cooking show onto linear television. The transition, however, was unsuccessful and the linear adaptation was canceled after the first season. This case study was selected with an aim of providing a better understanding of the managerial challenges that can arise when tailoring a food show format across multiple media platforms.

Case studies have been proven to be an effective way to measure the influence of cooking shows on audience opinion and managerial strategy (Gibson and Dempsey, 2013; Smith, 2012; Soneji, Riedel and Martin, 2015). For example, in their work on the effects of self-concept and clarity and the influence of celebrity endorsements, Soneji, Riedel and Martin (2015) utilized a case study approach in order to examine Gordon Ramsay's success as a chef within a quantitative experiment based on a series of tested hypotheses. They identify Ramsay's role in the public sphere as highly significant and have highlighted a managerial strategy stemming from behavioral consumption data to help identify consumer-buying habits. However, some limitations come with the implementation of a case study approach.

#### *Limitations of Case Studies*

The selection process for specific case studies presents a significant degree of subjectivity and inaccuracy when used as a representative or generalization of the overall health of the food television show format on television and online. I made sure not to position the findings within each case study as a representation of the particular case in question. Formal epistemology requires further development and testing to make such weighty assumptions (Stake, 2005). Another limitation of this approach is that these case studies pertain to the UK and the US only. Section 3.4 of this chapter provides a rationale for why it was most suitable to focus on these two territories but, given that this is an international examination, I would have liked to have conducted additional case studies provided I had more time and less financial and geographic restrictions.

## *Participant Observation*

Based on access, a portion of this study consists of participant observation amongst the production team, television hosts, and contestants at BBC One's *MasterChef* at the Three Mills Studios in London. The amount of time allocated to participant observation was based solely on the organization's schedule. What was interesting about this opportunity was that I was the first postgraduate researcher to ever be granted permission to observe and conduct interviews during a full filming day. Thus, this type of research is best classified as participant observation instead of ethnographic observation, which would have applied if I was observing the show for a number of days, weeks or months. Doyle and Frith (2004) believe that such unobtrusive methods of research can further enhance the validity and strength of the collected data due to a series of factors. They write:

In research related to media economics and media management, observation can be a better research method than interviews or questionnaires for two kinds of reasons. First, it can get directly at information (about work practices, for example) that individuals don't provide in interviews or surveys either because they don't know it, or because they can't articulate it, or because they regard it as commercially sensitive and not be divulged to strangers. Second, there is a category of institutional knowledge, a knowledge of norms of behavior and networks that are so taken for granted that individuals don't know they know it (Doyle and Frith, 2004:5).

To undergo participant observation research, I immersed myself into the production setting and observed how the media managers, producers, and even the talent organize their everyday lives through active communication (Deacon et. al, 2007: 5). I knew how to conduct myself in this fashion because I had worked on television sets before. Systematic and purposeful participant observation provides researchers with the ability to understand relationships, customs, rituals and sense-making practices within a specific organization or group (Brennen, 2017). Observing in this fly-on-the-wall fashion allowed me to examine theory in practice.

As this research aims to adopt a more thematic research approach, the participant observation conducted added credibility and accountability to what the interviewees were saying.

For example, three of the interview respondents from BBC One's *MasterChef* confirmed that their version of the food television show format was about a straight cooking competition, meaning there was no forced reactions or made up tension needed to produce an entertaining British cooking show. As a participant observer, this appeared to be true. The contestants were put under a strict time pressure, just as they are on the show, and were granted not a second extra to complete their dishes. The experience was exciting and did not require any provocation from the production team towards the contestants. Another example of this was revealed when the director of BBC One's *MasterChef*, David Crear, confessed in our interview how frustrating it can be adhering to Ofcom's regulations with regards to banning advertising and product placement on public service broadcasting networks. Crear explained how the production team must cover up all food brand labels to avoid penalty. As a participant observer, I noticed that all of the products on the show were unpackaged or covered up. A full account of the observation has been included in this thesis' appendix.

#### *Limitations of Participant Observation*

There are limitations that come with the participant observation research methodology. Coinciding with the limitations Berger (2011) acknowledges with regards to conducting interviews, participant observers may run the risk of collecting subjective and even invalid data if the participant observer's memory retention is poor. Furthermore, the people being observed may behave in a way that exaggerates or omits certain verbal and non-verbal forms of communication that would normally occur without the presence of an observer in order to be perceived in a specific fashion (i.e. professional, creative, passionate, astute, etc.). Brennen (2017) argues that the mere presence of a participant observer can change the group dynamics and impact the way an organization reacts.

Similarly, Noonan (2008) tested the validity of her findings on the impacts of religious broadcasting in the BBC partly with the use of observational study. During this brief period of her research, Noonan was invited to act as what she referred to as a 'participant-as-observer' where she was given the opportunity to work as a crew member on two editions of *Songs of Praise* (1961-present), the BBC One's most notable religious program at that time.

Although she may not believe that the results were entirely compromised, she admits within her research that attitudes and behaviors can often be altered when a researcher is present at the time of production (Noonan, 2008). Anderson (2012: 372) examines some of the critical limitations of this particular study mechanism and found there to be issues of 'self-centeredness' and the possibility of 'contracting ethnographer arrogance' that can arise from an inexperienced ethnographer who makes assumptions or discoveries that an outsider may believe to seem inexperienced and even 'foolish.' Anderson (2012) believes an observer's main objective is to remain totally exploitive, rather than self-righteous or condescending and must be in accordance with the procedures provided by the organization open to observation. I addressed these limitations by writing a detailed research diary on the same day directly after I conducted participant observation during the live taping of BBC One's *MasterChef* in London. This research diary has been included in Appendix 3 in this thesis and details my behind-the-scenes participant observation including both verbal and non-verbal cues.

### **3.4 US and UK Research Rationale**

Analyzing the developments of food television show formats within different broadcasting environments is significant in understanding the rise of international food shows as a whole. Throughout this research, I interviewed industry experts from the US, UK, the Netherlands, and South Africa. However, the two key countries I focused on were the US and the UK. Hill (2005) explains how in the UK there is a strong historical presence of documentary programming and public service broadcasting that has ensured a certain production quality within their reality television formats. Whereas, the US has a long-standing history of commercial broadcasting and a weak historical presence of documentary television which produces a different style of reality programming. Another key reason for why I examined these two countries, more so over other territories, is that the UK is the leader in television format development and distribution (Moran, 2009a), and the US has the largest production budgets and success rate, predominately for format importation, as well as some successful food television show format exports.

Additionally, there is more academic research relevant to my particular area of investigation that is written about these two countries from a Western perspective. I did consider analyzing other English-speaking countries such as Australia, Ireland and South Africa in further detail or looking at television format literature written in Japan and South Korea, but my time was limited, and the academic and research aim was best concentrated on the US and UK. Finally, easier access to industry experts, due to my experience and the geographic restrictions of living in the UK were final motivators for why these countries were favored over others. Staying focused on these two countries led me to some fantastic research opportunities, particularly with the observation and interview experience with the production team of BBC One's *MasterChef* in London and Fox's *MasterChef* studios in Los Angeles. This resulted in a robust and valuable set of research findings that may not have happened if had I cast the net too wide.

### **3.5 Ethical Considerations**

There are many ethical concerns to be made when collecting data and information from individuals. For the purpose of assuring the review boards as well as interview candidates, a consent form was read and signed by interviewees to prove that participation was 100% voluntary, that the participants were fully informed about the purpose of the study and how their responses would be contextualized, as well as to respect their identities (Marshall and Rossman, 1999). In compliance with The University of Glasgow policy, an 'Ethics Application Form' was filed and approved prior to the thesis. Some of the following information was outlined and addressed within the college ethics committee for non-clinical research involving a human participants' application form: voluntary participation, the manner in which the interviews will be conducted, how and where the results will be published, the adherence to confidentiality and other important ethical considerations. All of the participants in this study were voluntary and were asked to participate in this research project due to their defining knowledge and expertise in television production and management.

The justification of this research is to use the collected data to carry out a gap analysis state of food television formats from an industry perspective.



The ambition of the research has been to explore a theoretical framework using a multi-method qualitative approach. A variety of platforms were used, and the study will show that they have international access and reach conducive to the culinary television genre throughout the rest of this thesis. If I was to conduct this research with a different research methodology, different, and arguably less valuable, data would have been produced. The data presented in the following four chapters features internationally recognized interviewees, a level of participant observation never done before, and touches on challenges previously unexplored within the food television show format area, thanks to this approach. The next chapter answers the first question, which is, why are food television shows so well-suited for the development of international formats?



## Chapter Four: The Internationalization of Food Television Show Formats

Over the last thirty years, television has refashioned itself to suit new technology and the rise of global formatted television formats. Moran (2005) believes that there has been an intersection of modern technologies of transmission and reception, innovative forms of financing, fresh ways of imagining the audience, novel forms of content, and new constructions of the television commodity. In the past, Hollywood dominated global television through dubbed, syndicated programming. These technological advancements and the increasing adoption of formatted television have opened the doors for new market entrants, such as London, Amsterdam, and Berlin. Moran (2005) explains that reality television genres previously regarded as marginally less important, such as game shows, talent contests, self- and home improvement programs, and fly on the wall documentary-style content, have now become the key counterpoints of formatted television. Often, this style of programming highlights the journey of the 'ordinary' person going on television and is part of a 'neoliberal zeitgeist' (Moran, 2005).

Food television used to revolve around cooking instruction. The recipe for the classic cooking show called for a stable format, domestic, kitchen-like set with a celebrity or a friendly face who addressed the camera directly. The instructor would make small talk with their viewers, demonstrate techniques and provide step-by-step instructions when cooking a particular dish. Oren (2013) refers to this style of programming as the 'cook along' where the viewer (presumably a stay at home mother or wife) was an apprenticing home cook. Indeed, the food television genre is older than the television medium itself and was imported from its predecessor on commercial radio (Collins, 2009). It has only been over the last few years that the cooking show has become one of the most popular television formats with there being a rise in shows, such as Endemol Shine Group's *MasterChef* and Channel 4's *Come Dine with Me*.

In order to understand how these food television formats and others have received international acclaim, this chapter charts the innovative strategies media licensors of the format employ in order to achieve international success within such a competitive industry.

This chapter investigates the first research theme, the successful internationalization of food television show formats to better understand why cooking, a seemingly everyday practice, has evolved over time, since its early days on radio onto global television screens and online. Matwick and Matwick (2015) explain how food programming performs social and cultural functions that extend beyond cooking, cooking instruction, and food preparation. Classic cooking shows were instructional in nature and demonstrated information-seeking inquiry more obviously and frequently with each episode built around a certain dish, ingredient, or technique: 'nevertheless, wonder weaves in and out with musings by the host and viewer, whether live or virtual. The shared wonder results in a rich exchange where the expert and novice connect at a deeper level' (Matwick and Matwick, 2015: 316). Now, the instructional nature of cooking shows has started to modernize itself to appeal to a wider audience.

Purchasing an established format license reduces the costs of production and attenuates the risks associated with new programming (Hill, 2002). Nelson (2015) argues that format brands can reduce risk further if they incorporate elements of already successful television vehicles that can be combined to create a new and possibly more successful finished product. Media researchers such as Oren (2013) believe that the cooking competition show format has become one of the most popular reality show genres due to a 'radical shift in tone, genre, and narrative arc' and that there has been a transition from a 'cooking instructional genre to the globally popular night-time cooking elimination competition program' (Oren, 2013: 21). Some cooking shows emphasize the beauty of location and food as a spectacle, rather than the process of teaching how to cook everyday meals is another draw in for audiences (Thomas, 2008). Packham (2016) would agree that the producers of food formats have employed additional reality television conventions, such as mainstream music tracks, handheld cameras, and observational and voyeuristic framing within their show storylines. Buying an established format reduces the costs of production and again lessens the risks associated with new programming (Hill, 2014).

Since food itself has been introduced across different cultures for centuries, it is no wonder that food-centric programming has become an appealing form of entertainment for format creators and television audiences alike.

This chapter extends this notion and focuses on the most recent developments around food television formats in academic research by investigating this chapter's main research question: Why are food television shows so well suited for the development of international formats?

The supporting questions for consideration are:

1. What are the key attributes of successful food show formats?
2. How much do the roles of the participants and hosts contribute to the success of an international food format?
3. How important is the role of the food within the narrative of most food television show formats?

Within the discursive framework of the contemporary food show format, section 4.2 of this chapter will present a new characterization of television attributes and narrative devices that make up the refashioned food television format we watch today. More specifically, this section will highlight the two most prominent sub-genre types that have assisted in the international success and rollout of the food show format. These format types include the light-hearted television and cooking competition sub-genres that have become part of many successful food shows around the globe. Sections 4.3-4.4 will address the decision to incorporate amateur participants and the current trend of appointing industry experts instead of celebrity personalities as the food show format's hosts and judges. It will also discuss how authenticity and credibility have played a role in this decision. Section 4.5 will examine how the convention of the contemporary cooking show genre has rearranged itself around food instead of focusing solely on cooking instruction as an extension of Oren's (2013) findings around cooking competition programs. These managerial decisions have stimulated growth in food programming across a wider audience, now more than ever. The conclusion of this chapter (Section 4.6) provides reasons as to why the following managerial changes have contributed to the successful internationalization of this specific format, as well as revealing how it lends itself to other popular reality television formats in doing so.

## 4.2 Favorite Food Formats: Light-entertainment and Cooking Competition

This section will examine how producers of contemporary food show formats adapt their narratives to integrate popular attributes that have been utilized across a multitude of genres to suit local audience preferences. Based on the interview responses, this research will reveal how food television formats fit into multiple show categories and adopt hybrid genres consisting of food and cooking, plus one or more show categories, as part of a deliberate, production strategy. The two most common categories these formats fall within are the cooking competition format and light-hearted entertainment format categories. The cooking show competition format features high drama, jeopardy and documentary-style attributes and has proven to be the most popular cooking show type amongst primetime schedules (Oren, 2013). The insertion of light-hearted entertainment elements, such as comedy, romance, family and friendship, is prevalent across British food show formats, with there being more family-oriented programming and the rising Juniors spinoff genre. Therefore, this chapter will reveal what lies beneath the two most prominent developments that have occurred within the modern food television show format.

### *The Cooking Competition Format*

The executive producer of BBC One's *MasterChef*, David Ambler, said: 'food television used to be food television. Food television is competition, drama. It has an unfolding narrative. I think it has moved there' (Ambler, Interview: London, November, 2015). Most of the leading food show formats have adopted these new narrative devices. They have evolved from step-by-step instructional style content to a program that contains a series of sub-genres that maintain a high degree of mainstream appeal. Cooking competition format producers have done this intentionally. Now, food programming has strayed away from the classic cooking show storyline that follows a predictable format where the dish under preparation is pre-determined, to a program that is comprised of narrative suspense, conflict, humiliation, and failure" (Oren, 2013). Some of the most popular cooking show competitions include BBC One's *MasterChef*, Channel 4's *Ramsay's Kitchen Nightmares*, Bravo's *Top Chef*, Channel 4's *The Great British Bake Off*, Food Network's *Chopped* and BBC Two's *Ready, Steady, Cook*.

Reality television has combined and recombined older genres time and time again, for its antecedents are many, some of them time-worn. Crisell (2006) argues that reality television incorporates certain elements, and offers certain gratifications, that are distinguishable from other generic forebears. He finds that, over the last few years, television viewers have sought mild pleasure from watching reality show contestants being humiliated when competing on game shows. Oren (2013) would agree that Crisell's (2006) notion applies to the success of the contemporary cooking competition show format. She believes that instead of focusing on cooking instruction, these formats spotlight elements like risk, narrative suspense, conflict, humiliation, and failure. She describes that modern cooking competition shows in the United States focus on the frenzied rush and (more often than not) tears and meltdowns, visits fresh humiliation on the contestants whose dishes—and, by clear extension, personal worth—are scrutinized, criticized, and often rejected by a panel of judges. Here, cooking is far from a means of pleasure or social sharing, but a strictly regimented, highly individuated, labor-hierarchy within an economic circuit (Oren, 2013: 30). Furthermore, she explains:

In these top-rated competition formats, chefs race around in utter panic to complete each 'challenge' under strict time limits, are subject to harsh criticism or a degrading dress-down by a panel of judges, and then, one by one, are dismissed with a gravely intoned catch-phrase ('Pack up your knives and go', 'You have been chopped', or 'Take off your jacket and leave the kitchen')... The narrative structure of each program stresses risk and suspense and the competitive work of encountering the challenge, gathering ingredients and prepping 'dishes', dealing with time constraints and competitors' egos (Oren, 2013: 30).

Oren's (2013) account of the more competitive and entertainment-oriented elements very much exists in popular American food show formats such as Food Network's *Chopped* and Fox's *Hell's Kitchen*. The emphasis on drama and jeopardy in cooking shows varies between formats and can even differ from season to season within the same program. The co-executive producer of Fox's *MasterChef*, Adam Cooper, explains the changes the American version of *MasterChef* has made to the original British format. He claims: 'with our show, it is in some cases drama and reality over content and food. I know in the UK, food forefronts. Where I would say

in America it is less so' (Cooper, Interview: Los Angeles, November, 2016). For example, scenes of Gordon Ramsay spitting out food, contestants yelling at one another and crying that occurs during countdowns at the tail end of a challenge are only some of the intense moments that occur on the American version. However, this dynamic is on the verge of change. Cooper noted that the distance between the British and American adaptations should lessen in 2017, as the American series was aiming to focus more on food instruction than ever before. He claimed that audience ratings are highest when Ramsay is cooking and teaching on camera, which mirrors the more light-hearted approach seen in the British version which will be discussed in the next section (Cooper, Interview: Los Angeles, November, 2016).

In line with what Cooper described, the American version of Endemol Shine Group's licensed format, *MasterChef*, is notably different from its British predecessor. BBC One's *MasterChef*'s director, Dave Crear explained that the original British format will never mimic the hyper-reality driven programs seen across its American and Australian adaptations. The producers of the British format believe their original adaptation maintains a more organic degree of drama and jeopardy by filming a straight cooking competition (Crear, Interview: London, November, 2015). Crear explains that the production decision to adopt a more true-to-life style format is due to the fact that the majority of the film crew come from a documentary film and television background at the BBC. In line with what Crear was saying, Ambler (Ambler, Interview: London, November, 2015) explains what the key attributes are that make the British version of *MasterChef* so successful for their market. Ambler said:

I wouldn't say it was instruction, although there is an element of sort of understanding the food in its element. John and Gregg are experts and they make expert analysis, but it is not generally instructional. It is competition. I wouldn't call it reality actually. I think in some parts of the world it is, but we don't put anyone in a house together. We don't care particularly about their personalities. It is very much about a competition. It is very much a straight cookery competition with which we try to make as entertaining as possible, in a very factual, documentary way (Ambler, Interview: London, November, 2015).



The development of reality programming within different broadcasting environments is significant to our understanding of the factual genres as a whole. In the UK, the strong historical presence of public service broadcasting, like the BBC, and documentary television has ensured that certain types of reality formats are related to public service and documentary ideas and practice (Hill, 2005). This 'strong historical presence' which Hill (2005) acknowledges may suggest why the producers of the UK's version of *MasterChef* decided to take a more documentary-led approach. The selection of the challenges in the British version has been described as 'tense' enough by Gregg Wallace, a co-host on the program for over ten years now. Wallace explains:

There's nothing to be made up there. You're just catching the bits of tension that the cameras are catching, but there is tension throughout. We can't make up tension. You don't have to make up tension. If you take finalists to 10 Downing Street and say "right, you're cooking dinner down here tonight for the Prime Minister," you don't have to invent tension (Wallace, Interview: Glasgow, May, 2015).

Despite being a factual television format, the competitive challenges within the British version of *MasterChef* are pre-scripted, well-researched and have been employed on the basis that they were successful throughout its international adaptations (Anastasio, Interview: Amsterdam, January, 2016). Yet, as Wallace says, the challenges that contestants face are sufficiently tense for the British audience. Manufactured drama deters audiences from buying into the authenticity of reality television. In contrast with the trust inherent in news and documentary programs, audiences are more than likely to spot staged situations and thus distrust what they see on reality television (Hill, 2005). Based on her experience as a former format consultant at FremantleMedia, Julie Donovan explained how culinary formats that focus on sensationalism are more likely to fail. She explained why she believed ITV's *BBQ Champ* (2015) was canceled after only one season:

The BBQ format that ITV tried last year made it like "wow look over here at people making sausages." You can't manufacture that type of drama around cooking shows in that way.

The drama will be in *Bake Off* like "is their croquembouche ready to fall over?" That's genuine jeopardy. They've got to make something really tall and is it going to topple? Rather than trying to build jeopardy in whether or not someone is going to burn their sausages (Donovan, Interview: London, January 2016).

Despite the inclusion of the Travel Channel's *Man V. Food* (2008-present) celebrity host, Adam Richmond, finding the right balance between naturally tense moments and manufactured drama was a difficult task for the television producers of ITV's *BBQ Champ*. The executive producer at the *Paula Deen Network* and the executive producer on ABC's *The Chew*, Gordon Elliot, also commented on the show's inability to win audiences. He said: 'There was another program that I saw called *BBQ Champ* and it was just dreadful. The level of cooking was awful. They were trying to cook desserts on the BBQ. Making cocktails on the BBQ. The format was just so wrong' (Elliot, Interview: New York City, November, 2015). To bridge this gap, particularly in the UK, format producers often reduce their risk of failure by investing in programs that contain more organic forms of tension coupled with light-hearted entertainment elements.

#### *Food Formats Combined with Light Entertainment Television Elements*

Within the context of this research, the term 'light entertainment' cannot be defined as a standalone television genre. Instead, it should be understood as a set of attributes. These attributes include quick-witted jokes and anecdotes, along with soft-hearted banter, that is often addressed directly to the camera (Collins, Turnbull and Bye, 2010). In some cases, food show hosts may address friends and family on the show. Producers, particularly within the UK, have experienced a long-standing history of investment into programs that incorporate elements of light entertainment within their composition due to the fact that they can easily be embedded into programs that are less expensive to produce. Historically, they have a proven track record of winning audience approval (Esser, 2010; Sutherland, 2010). Some examples of light-hearted food television formats include dinner party and dating concentrated programs such as Channel 4's *Come Dine with Me* and ITVBe's *Dinner Date*; culinary talk shows such as ABC's *The Chew* and The *Paula Deen Network* and junior competition spinoffs such as the CBBC's *MasterChef Juniors* and *Junior Bake Off*.

Donovan believes that the production decision to incorporate light-hearted content has been made in response to audience interest in reality programs. Donovan explains the situation that has emerged on British television as follows:

I think at the moment in the UK we want warm and cuddly television. That's what audiences are after, but it's not sexy for the broadcasting industry with the numbers or the advertising industry to know that the older audience is giving them the numbers. They're not the target audience for the advertisers, so something like *Strictly Come Dancing* which is phenomenally successful...and *X Factor* which is starting to fall because the underlying feeling about *X Factor* is, that it's cruel when you talk to people. It's a competition of course, but it's too harsh (Donovan, Interview: London, January 2016).

What Donovan is saying here has been supported by television ratings. As of the end of 2016 and their 12th season, the FremantleMedia, Thames and Syco Entertainment's co-production *X Factor* (2004-present) experienced a pattern of declining ratings and a consistent loss of audience in the millions to BBC One's *Strictly Come Dancing* (2004-present) (Siddique, 2016). Although not a food show format, formats such as *Strictly Come Dancing* have the ability to reach a much wider demographic in the long-term because they combine amateur talent and light entertainment. This was proven to be the case during the Writers Guild of America strike in 2007-2008, when broadcasters made the managerial decision to replace scripted shows with cheaper to produce, light entertainment formats. Many of these formats originated in the UK and from abroad.

According to Andrea Esser's (2010) analysis of the writer's strike in America, light entertainment television formats made up 45% of primetime broadcast schedules and proved to hold consistent ratings due to their low production costs and easily relatable narratives. Esser (2010) explained that during that time, established series, mostly lower in the ratings ranks, were temporarily replaced with formatted light entertainment.

For example, ABC replaced *According to Jim* (2001-2009), *Brothers and Sisters* (2006-2011), and *Desperate Housewives* (2004-2012) with an extra hour of *Extreme Makeover: Home Edition* (2003-2012); NBC replaced the American adaptation of *The Office* and *Scrubs* (2001-2010) with 13 weeks of the American adaptation of the *Celebrity Apprentice* (2008-2017); and *Heroes* (2006-2010) was replaced with the American adaptation of *Deal or No Deal* (2005-present) (Esposito, 2008).

To counter the effects of the strike, the original British game show format, *Deal or No Deal*, was expanded into a two-hour program, and additional episodes were commissioned (Esposito, 2008). Even years after the strike, American broadcasters have embraced light entertainment formats from all over the world. Thus, the connection between what Donovan (Donovan, Interview: London, January 2016) holds to be true about current audiences and Esser's (2010) investigation during the writer's strike in America is evident. Formatted television may only constitute a share of overall television programming in countries like the United States, while light entertainment has remained the most suitable category for global adaptation (Esser, 2010).

BBC One's *MasterChef* has consistently adopted a light-hearted and documentary-style approach to its food competition format under the guidance of the show's executive producer, Karen Ross, as mentioned earlier in this chapter. According to Dave Crear, the current director of the British version of the show, Ross' vision has always been to develop a food show format that boasts a softer approach (Crear, Interview: London, November, 2015). This refers back to what Crear and Cooper both said in agreement about the British version being more of a 'straight cookery competition' format with food at the forefront. Crear described Ross' strong decision to maintain the integrity of the format as follows:

We never encouraged fighting between contestants or anything like that. We shy away from all that kind of stuff... There may be a cross word between the two, we might use that in the edit, but it's not really what we are about. That comes from Karen, our exec, she has always been anti all of that. We cut out a lot of crying. We did one series in the new format when we had lots of tears like an audition process which was the first time we ever tried doing something like that and we let that on the show and there was real negative backlash (Crear, Interview: London, November, 2015).

This trend towards a light-hearted form of entertainment within many of the British factual formats highlights a shift in narrative compared to Bazalgette's four 'super-formats' (Hough, 2012). Instead, light-hearted elements offer a new perspective on the reality show format for television format producers and audiences alike.

Tanya Steel, the former Editor-in-Chief at *Epicurious*, a Condé Nast website dedicated to food media production since 1995, and a guest television judge across multiple cookery programs in the US, also confirmed that television show formats have responded to softer, mainstream tastes. During her time at *Epicurious*, Steel helped produce the Emmy-winning series *Around the World in 80 Dishes* (2008-2017) and found within the research and development of the program that the emphasis on competition and drama can find success by remaining educational and good-natured. Steel explained how the US has also adopted a more light-hearted approach when it comes to reality television and said:

I think that the pendulum has swung so far to the entertainment piece of it that I'm thinking that there will be a centered pendulum, where there still is a lot of reality and competition, but there's also this other side, that's more explanatory in a light and relaxed way (Steel, Interview: New York City, November 2015).

Classic cooking shows from fifty years ago embody light entertainment. This 'pendulum' Steel refers to further underpins the understanding that contemporary food formats pull attributes from across alternative genres and even time periods. Many food formats incorporate the staple cooking show attributes from traditional food shows such as humor, family, and friendship. The idea of wanting to develop a show based on fun with friends and family in the kitchen has been a very distinctive goal set out by Paula Deen, a celebrity chef from Georgia, USA. The southern chef has exhibited this style on television for over 20 years. Reflecting on her experiences of the creation of the *Paula Deen Network* online and when she had her own show at the Food Network, she spoke about the factors which she felt had been lost amongst many other American cooking shows. She said:

I wanted to make cooking fun. I wanted to get people back in the kitchen again with their families and make it a family affair. In order to do that, to pull in the children, it's got to be fun. It can't be stressful and all that stuff, but it's all about the people you surround yourself with.

I like surrounding myself with people that are fun and don't take themselves too seriously, that can laugh at themselves. All of that is important to me. Just being around fun people, fun friends, involving the children, because the children are so fun and funny (Deen, Interview: Savannah, December 2015).

Deen's warm-hearted approach to producing cooking shows has always been directed at a family audience. When asked her thoughts regarding popular cooking competition programs and how her digital network deals with culinary contests, she ensures that they were always 'very playful' and explains:

I have so many years in the kitchen when it would just be me on the line at night, and it was so stressful. So not fun. And so, when I had the opportunity to be on television, I was not interested in those heated competitions, because I felt like I have lived that part of my life and so I wanted something more light-hearted (Deen, Interview: Savannah, December 2015).

Gordon Elliot, the executive producer at the *Paula Deen Network* and the executive producer on ABC's *The Chew*, a successful daytime cooking talk show format led by a celebrity panel, stresses his decision to incorporate friends and family into his productions. He says:

We create family in all TV shows because it's the unit viewers relate to. We created a family on *The Chew*. Family in Paula's case is a gift. In her case, family is actually blood family. [She incorporated] a blend of family with her stepsons and with her husband, Michael's, children. With every member of the family you can bring in many different demographics. The teenagers will see themselves in it. The husbands will see themselves in it. The crazy aunts. I think that Paula had so many opportunities to do that. She's a self-sourcing celebrity (Elliot, Interview: New York City, November, 2015).

According to Elliot, the establishment of a family unit on the ABC program involved a rigorous interview process. They engaged one hundred and eighty people in groups of four or five possible co-hosts over a period of nearly eight months to help create a talk show panel that acted like a family.

He described the casting process of the panel as follows: 'when I set out to create *The Chew*, I wanted to create a show that was simply about spending time with friends and the food was secondary to that sense of belonging... I talked to them about various things, mostly their passions and what motivated them [to do so]' (Elliot, Interview: New York City, November, 2015). Similar to the casting within the makeover television format, casting experts present hosts in lifestyle formats, such as *The Chew* which offers audiences a friendly and credible sense of authority that welcomes hosts into their homes (Smith, 2012). The casting of expert hosts and judges will be discussed in more depth later in this chapter.

Another key indication that audiences have responded well to family-oriented and food-related content is the rise of the 'junior' spinoff format. CBBC's *Junior MasterChef*, part of the Endemol Shine Group's *MasterChef* brand, was the first food television format to make a global impact and has been produced in over 25 countries (Endemol Shine Distribution, 2017). This format incorporates children and young adults who compete against one another, much like the original *MasterChef* format, but with slight modifications to ensure that the children feel comfortable and motivated. Cooper pointed out the reasons why the junior spinoff has become so popular and said: 'everyone wants to see kids doing well because it's inspiring. For that kind of slot where it's feel-good family entertainment, you can't go wrong with kids doing amazing things' (Cooper, Interview: Los Angeles, November, 2016). Examples of other hit food show formats involving junior participants include CBBC's *Junior Bake Off* (2011-2016), CBBC's *Junior MasterChef* (1994-1999; 2010-2014), Food Network's *Chopped Junior* (2015-present) and *Food Network Star Kids* (2016-present). Adding junior spinoffs to brand portfolios is a common trend with reality show genres across the board, such as FremantleMedia's *American Juniors*, Lifetime's *Project Runway: Junior* and CBBC's *Junior Bake Off*.

Other food formats have integrated satirical elements into their narratives. Television Producer, Cash Hartzell, has been involved in a series of comedy programs in LA and has collaborated on FYI's *Epic Meal Empire*, a linear format derived from the most popular cooking show on YouTube, *Epic Meal Time*. Hartzell described the linear format to be a: 'light-hearted comedy program disguised as a cooking show and a reality show combined' (Hartzell, Interview: Los Angeles, November, 2015).

What differentiates the web series and the linear television format from most cooking programs is that the episodes were more like a comedy show.

Hartzell described what it was that made the format special:

The big hook for our show was what they were making. All the food was actually pretty good but making a meal that was interesting and would have jokes in it, that would have a little bit of a wow factor. Not necessarily for the culinary stuff, which I said was pretty good, but because “I can't believe somebody would make that.” We made the world's biggest nacho, it wasn't nachos, it was *nacho* and it was just like “oh that's a dumb idea that we can do and nobody else has done that people would laugh at”  
(Hartzell, Interview: Los Angeles, November, 2015).

FYI's *Epic Meal Empire* broke new ground by taking a food and comedy hybrid YouTube show to linear television. Both the online and linear formats incorporate slapstick comedy and the use of strong language to appeal to the youth demographic. Channel 4's *Come Dine with Me* is one of the most successful 'cooking meets comedy' formats worldwide. According to Donovan, this format was derived from an old ITV production called *Diners* where both celebrity guests' and real people's conversations were recorded at their tables in a sort of hidden microphone style program. Later, the show was renamed *Come Dine with Me* and its narrative was transformed into a successful global format that features amateur chefs competing around a dinner table for a cash prize (Donovan, Interview: London, January 2016). The show incorporates multiple genres, including drama, competition, comedy, friendship and the establishment of relationships. Channel 4's *Come Dine with Me* has significant entertainment value because of its hybrid genre approach and is known for its comical narration and party guests onscreen in over thirty countries. Donovan explained this further and said:

I think people are always trying to find ways of getting inside relationships, so I suppose with *Come Dine with Me* the thing that is fascinating about that is what is going on with the people around the table ultimately and the food is less about how good their food is. It is more about “are they really going to serve that up?” It's a very complex set of ingredients for making *Come Dine with Me* work. It's loosely based on food... The commentary is genius. The voiceover is comedy saying out loud what a lot of us are thinking.



That's really made that into something different at the time when it first appeared and the fact that people who can't cook are on there just because they want to host a dinner party and people's reactions with food [makes this format authentic and unique] (Donovan, Interview: London, January 2016).

Many of the food show formats mentioned within this section have broken the typical codes and conventions that once were within the classic cooking show. However, producers do retain some of the elements that were established in the traditional cooking style shows, such as Julia Child<sup>3</sup> in WGBH's *The French Chef* (Biography.com, 2016). Furthermore, the tendency for food formats to adopt multiple genres is a common trend shared amongst most popular factual formats (Boyle and Kelly, 2012; Hill, 2005; Morreale, 2007). Producers have made additional alterations to the food show format such as the roles of the participants, hosts, judges and, of course, food which serves as a form of exposition within itself.

### **4.3 A Participant's Journey: Storytelling and Identification with Contestants**

Scholars such as Rose and Wood (2005) consider reality television to be a form of pursuit of societal truth. Reality television offers consumers a viewing experience that revels in the: 'ironic mixture of the fictitious and the spontaneous' (Rose and Wood, 2005: 286). Hill (2005) believes popular factual television is meant to present information in an entertaining way, similar to the tabloid news in print. Here, she notes: 'the focus on individual stories is something viewers are attracted to precisely because these particular programs offer narratives they can relate to' (2005: 91). Similarly, Turner (2004) believes audiences seek pleasure in viewing reality programs because they put ordinary people's identities on display for the world to see as a form of spectacle. Knowing this, most producers of cooking competition formats focus on the amateur participant's journey as a main element of the show. This was the case for BBC One's *MasterChef*.

Hannah Miles, a former contestant, and winner on the show identified the part she had played within the composition of the program. Miles explains:

As a viewer... you get behind particular contestants and you want them to do well. It's not so much what they cook, it's watching their development, in particular on *MasterChef* where people start off as amateur kitchen cooks and then they are trained by chefs throughout the program, and by the end you see them produce incredibly quality dishes. And you sort of go on that journey with them, and I think that's what appeals and that's the same in a lot of the others like the *Great British Bake Off*. You want them to do well (Miles, Interview: London, November, 2015).

Miles' quote reflects several themes that shape the relationship between television viewers, such as 'cultural proximity' (Ksiazek and Webster, 2008) and the fascination with the ordinary. Authors such as Couldry (2002) believe that audiences feel inspired by the unique growth and development of ordinary people from their own culture. In contrast to Maffesoli's theory of 'saturated individualism', the direction of reality food television has been in favor of the casting of distinct individuals, rather than a standardization of typecast contestants appearing on the show (Maffesoli, 1996). Wallace agrees that the use of narrative devices such as journeys and the personal storytelling of the contestants has been key in establishing audience engagement for BBC One's *MasterChef*'s. He explains how a participant's journey becomes an emotional investment for the audience:

I think you're watching people succeed or fail. You're watching them aspire. You're getting to know about them. I think it's cleverly cut and well put together how no scene lasts longer than three minutes. There are little mini results throughout coming into major results and by that, I mean if you see me discussing someone's dish with them you want to know how that dish is going to come out. Then if you've now put time and effort into that person you then want to know how they're going to do at the end of the show. You want to look and see how they do until the end of the competition (Wallace, Interview: Glasgow, May, 2015).

This need to witness the participant's journey, as described by Wallace, is common across all reality television programs (Crisell, 2006; Hill, 2005). Similar to television viewers, social media fans of the British cooking competition show enjoy watching a contestant's journey online via updates on Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram.

Aaron Eccles, the Head of Social Media at Endemol Shine UK, has found that social media encourages an audience to follow a contestant's journey unlike ever before. He explains how social media distribution channels have opened an unprecedented level of communication between the viewer and a show's participant, particularly within gamedoc formats owned by the Endemol Shine Group. Eccles explains:

We're seeing there's actually a big desire for it from the public [on social media]. So, when you go out on a competition-based show people get really close with contestants and get really engaged with wanting them to do well. So, being able to give them information about them or behind the scenes content, video or the other kinds of information you can give about the person that you wouldn't really have time to do on the actual television show. It's helpful, so people do really want that especially if they're huge fans of the show. The "super fans" absolutely want those sort of things (Eccles, Interview: London, January, 2016).

In addition to following social media accounts, super fans now have access to online ancillary websites that provide information about show contestants, judges, hosts and recipes. These technologies build stronger relationships between audiences and contestants. In many cases, the viewers and super fans that Eccles refers to, take part in the form of simulation or role-play, where they conduct themselves like external judges or hosts to the show from the comfort of their own homes (Eccles, Interview: London, January, 2016). This audience behavior Eccles refers to coincides with Hill's (2005) belief that audiences seek pleasure in finding the truth in the spectacle environment. Miles argues that cheering for a favorite contestant at home is one of the many reasons why audiences tune in to watch BBC One's *MasterChef*. She says:

I think that the role of the participant is key. Yes, it's a cookery show, and yes, you want to see nice food, but what you really care about is people going on a journey and you can go on that journey with them. You see them develop as a cook and people who start out fairly basic become great. I think you warm to people. Those are the sort of characters that everyone falls in love with, but everybody is talking about who they want to win (Miles, Interview: London, November, 2015).

Co-executive Producer of Fox's *MasterChef*, Adam Cooper, agreed with Miles' statement and explained how the key driver of the American version's success consists of audience interaction between groups matched with an emotional investment into a participant's backstory. He claims:

When you watch our show, we always show a person's face and the dish that they cooked when they are in contention. That is to [ask] the audience this person cooked this dish, what do you think? Do you think it's good or do you think it's bad? That's the game show element. It's like [the audience] decided before [the contestant] even got to Gordon Ramsay whether that dish is good or not, just based visually. That's the game. That's how you draw people in. For the show to be successful, you want families at home to go "oh god that dish looks awful" or "I actually prefer his dish to his dish." Because if you're doing that, you are engaging the audience in your show which means they are going to want to stick around and find out who's right on the sofa. Is mom or dad right or are the kids, right? For me, that's what makes a successful reality show (Cooper, Interview: Los Angeles, November, 2016)

The use of the 'amateur to professional' storyline offers audiences an opportunity to view the personal feelings of the contestants (as cited by Aslama and Pantti, 2006; Lupton, 1998; Foucault, 1978; Furedi, 2004: 167). Social media takes this one step further by bringing the private conversations we make amongst friends and family online for the world to see and build on. The use of social media engagement strategies by food show format producers adds additional value that will be discussed at great length in Chapter Six. In addition to the use of narratives that focus on an amateur participant's journey and alternative genres, food format licensors have accredited casting industry professionals and experts as an additional way to minimize commercial risk.

#### **4.4 The Role of the Hosts: Expertise and Audience Expectations**

In the past, it was common for actors, television personalities, and celebrities to act as the show hosts and judges across factual formats. Now, audiences are looking for expertise. Henderson (2011) believes that chefs with an international following, or 'celebrity chefs,' can be seen as an outcome of the globalization of demand and supply for food-related products and says:

A celebrity chef could be applied to all chefs renowned for their cooking, covering those from the past whose reputations have lingered well beyond their lifetimes, yet the concept is more commonly associated with the modern era. It can be interpreted as embracing successful writers and television performers without the experience as head of a kitchen team that distinguishes chef from cook (Henderson, 2011: 614).

Television has played an integral role in cultivating awareness and disseminating fame. Professional chefs and bakers from all over the world have assumed the role of television hosts and judges in order to add authenticity to these shows. Examples of professionally led food formats include Gordon Ramsay on Fox's *MasterChef* and *Hell's Kitchen*, Bobby Flay on Food Network's *Iron Chef America*, Mario Batali on ABC's *The Chew* and the cooking competition program by Michel Roux Jr., Disney's *First Class Chefs* (2015-present). In their work on business formats on television, Boyle and Kelly (2012) have recognized an industry trend of casting expert hosts on business formats instead of celebrities as they had been done in the past. Their research noted how Lord Sugar, one of the UK's leading entrepreneurs, has made a societal shift from being a prominent business leader to a host on BBC One's *The Apprentice* (2005-present). They explained how the production of BBC's *Troubleshooter* (1990-1993) has created a template for future business television formats to include not only risk and drama, but the casting of a business expert (Boyle and Kelly, 2012). This section will reveal how the use of expert hosts has proven to be a successful managerial tactic for contemporary food formats as well as others across the board. A notable food show format comprised of an expert cast is ABC's *The Chew* in the United States.

The executive producer on the show, Gordon Elliot, has made use of panel casting for this food talk show format, as mentioned above. Elliot underwent months of trial and error before getting the casting of the format right and believed that the end result was central to the show's success (Elliot, Interview: New York City, November, 2015).

The hosts of the show include the following five experts in their fields: (1) Mario Batali, a respected chef, author and restaurateur, (2) Michael Symon, a James Beard Foundation Award winning chef and restaurateur chef, (3) Carla Hall, an American chef and former *Top Chef* finalist, (4) Clinton Kelly, an expert in entertaining and fashion known from TLC's *What Not to Wear* (2003-2013) and (5) Daphne Oz, a health and wellness enthusiast and daughter of Dr. Mehmet Oz, a famous surgeon and another expert host from his daytime health show Oz Media's *The Dr. Oz Show* (2009-present). Elliot emphasized how each of these five hosts own a level of expertise that has helped open up multiple areas of interest between them and the audience. Collectively, the group formulates a hub of knowledge on topics such as cooking, health, food styling and entertaining, and do so in a way in which no host overshadows another (Elliot, Interview: New York City, November, 2015). Elliot explained how his food talk show format was purchased at MIPCOM by a Turkish network, but then failed due to the poor casting of the show's panelists according to Elliot. He argued:

I think the format is simple. What's incredibly hard is the casting...What they didn't get right was that the [hosts were] outstanding in their own field, but when you put them together, they were not a unit. It didn't work. My style and my efforts when creating *The Chew* were in creating that unit and creating that bond. I left the technical aspects of how that one hour was to be constructed to the second part of the development process. Because you have to build the show around the hosts until you know what the strengths of the hosts are individually; but as a group, you can't really give the appropriate tasks (Elliot, Interview: New York City, November, 2015).

Although the Turkish adaptation included expert panel casting, the licensees of the format did not follow the branding guidelines and support provided by the flying production team. The failure of the Turkish adaptation proves that appointing the wrong group of experts can have an adverse effect on a show's success.

Nevertheless, this trend to cast field experts as hosts and judges continues to prevail in reality television formats. Much like the business format of BBC's *Troubleshooter*, viewers of food television show formats want to put their trust in hosts whose knowledge is sound. Mark Turner, a reality television agent in New York City for over 20 years, highlighted the shift from celebrity to reality with regards to the casting considerations of format hosts. He explained:

The evolution (in reality television) is the representation of mainstream hosts, talk show hosts, game show hosts, entertainment reporters. You've got the Ryan Seacrest types, your Letterman types, your Entertainment Tonight types and that still exists, but it has sort of evolved into the next evolution which was the experts. Everyone wanted a real doctor, a real lawyer, a real therapist, a real interior designer, a real travel expert, a real paranormal expert or someone in the military, a nutritionist (Turner, Interview: New York City, September, 2016).

From Turner's perspective, the production tactic to employ an expert host has been a trend across multiple genres. This confirms what Boyle and Kelly (2012) argued with regards to business formats. However, viewers of cookery television formats put more trust into hosts who are proven experts in their fields in a way that is unique to any other factual format genre. Viewers can only visualize what a dish tastes like, whereas it is easier for audiences to judge whether or not a makeover or a home building DIY project was successful or if one singer sounded better than another in a singing competition format. For example, *The Voice*, a popular talent show format created by RTL4, is based on judging contestants from a blind audition. Expert judges on the show cannot see the contestants and must make a decision based solely on what they hear. Formats like *The Voice* can be assessed by judges at home much easier than a food show since we are unable to engage with our senses of taste and smell while viewing. The appointment of show hosts and judges from professional backgrounds, such as head chefs and owner of Michelin star restaurants, provide a sense of tasting authority every time they pick up a fork and critique a dish (Matwick and Matwick, 2015). When speaking about the credibility Gordon Ramsay has in Fox's *MasterChef*, Cooper stated: 'if Gordon Ramsay says its good, it's good. If Gordon says it's bad, it's bad. He has that stamp of approval.... you wait to see what Gordon says because he's the authority' (Cooper, Interview: Los Angeles, November, 2016).

Ramsay is a staple host of the American version of *MasterChef* on Fox, but the format has made alterations to the supporting hosts in order to keep each series fresh. Cooper emphasized that rotating hosts with a certain level of expertise has helped add value in direct relation to the challenges being performed in the newer series.

He explains how in the seventh season, the show rotated guest judges every week to fill their third hosting role which resulted in a very strong and positive response from the show's Twitter fans and in the ratings. He discussed Fox's recent decision to bring in the female, all-star baker, and entrepreneur Christina Tosi to seasons six through eight of the *American MasterChef*:

We brought Christina in because she comes from a baking background and we do a lot of baking challenges on the show now. I think to have someone that is an expert in the baking field, to have a woman on the show helps... She's got that Brooklyn hipster element where she has her bakeshops all across New York... She's got a cookbook, a set bakery, she ran the dessert program in a number of restaurants in New York, so she must know what she's talking about. We're always looking for new hosts and changing things up (Cooper, Interview: Los Angeles, November, 2016).

As seen in this chapter, show hosts from professional cooking and industry-related backgrounds relate more to audiences than actors, celebrities, and media personalities. Couldry (2002) argues that celebrities can bridge the gap between those who are relevant and famous and those who are not. Industry-based and academic evidence support the notion that audiences have become more interested in the development of ordinary people achieving success and place trust in industry professionals. However, in contrast to Couldry (2002), Barron (2015) believes that celebrity influence continues to be a potent social and cultural force, which is why many factual formats continue to incorporate at least one celebrity personality amongst professionals on their judging panel. Turner explained how casting experts and more relevant hosts has been a key part of his decision-making process as a reality television show agent in New York. He says:

We look for authenticity. A lot of the times I get ideas pitched to me and it's like "I want to do a show about backpacking through Europe" and I feel like that is just a general thing. Who would be involved? The difference between if you have say a guide that leads tours of backpacking through Europe and we are just going to put in some young, good-looking guy or girl. You would want the person who is leading the tour to be experienced and good on camera. I might take that show on board then.



Whereas if it's just we have a random guy who's good on camera who will be our host, I'd have to say no, that's not enough there. So, authenticity is very, very important (Turner, Interview: New York City, September, 2016).

From the insertion of competition and light-hearted narratives to expert casting, all of the above-mentioned attributes have greatly contributed to the success of some of the most recognizable food show formats around the world. These attributes, paired with a food-centric storyline, are key to the success of this rising format. How imperative the role of the food is within a cooking program is subject to the design of the individual show format.

## **4.5 The Role of the Food**

Food television shows have experienced a series of evolutionary changes made to the composition of the format, as a response to fragmented television audiences. How integral the role of the food is to a format's narrative and functionality varies. In line with Oren's (2013) main conclusions from her investigation into cooking competition shows, this section reveals how food formats have strayed away from simple cooking instruction and have instead revolved around gourmet food as a format's focal point. The use of food as the centerpiece of a show combined with a hybrid genre approach has proven to be hugely successful for media managers and format brands. Boyle and Kelly (2012) attribute the mixing of successful genres as being a powerful selling tool for television format producers. Mention is made of the use of successful repeatable narratives within differing programs to help increase a following between much wider audiences in response to audience fragmentation. This phenomenon they refer to is prevalent in contemporary food television. For example, the 24-hour US cooking channel, the Food Network, is complemented by a website and has capitalized on shifting culinary content towards an interest in food, rather than for cooking, through new advertising revenue streams online. David Griffith, Head of Integrated Marketing at Scripps Networks, described many of these changes as follows:

We made a conscious decision a few years ago to expand beyond just cooking shows. I think you know cooking is an international language... I think one thing that people share is a passion for food.

Not everyone shares a passion for cooking, so one thing they've been able to do to expand the network is to move beyond just shows that are about cooking into shows that are about entertainment with food as the focus. What we saw as we did that was that we were able to expand the audience of the people who cared about the show because the food competition is a lot more than just the food. Food is obviously the key element, but it's about the personalities and the people who are on the show and how the competition aspect of it which creates an element of excitement [and] attention. It allows people to engage even if they are not cooks (Griffith, Interview: New York City, November, 2015).

Placing food over cooking instruction across food media and marketing enables producers to romanticize food in a very entertaining way. Steel also described the concept of food as an 'international language of love' (Steel, Interview: New York City, November 2015). She explained how engaging food-based content has incited a global discussion online at *Epicurious* during the early stages of the digital era in the late 1990s and early 2000s:

I do feel like food is the international language of love and when I was at *Epicurious* I was very mindful of the fact that the audience, which was predominately [from the] US, Canada was number two, and then we had lots of [people from] the UK, Australia, Italy, Germany. We had people from all over the world commenting and what I loved about it was that they would comment in their own language, so it really felt like a global melting pot of people talking about food in a very meaningful way (Steel, Interview: New York City, November 2015).

In reference to Gary Chapman's (1995) *Five Languages of Love*, Patrick Wanis, P.h.D., a human behavior and relationship expert, believes food to be named as the sixth language. Wanis believes food is much more meaningful, though, because it is an 'international language of love' that everyone speaks from birth (Gould, 2017). The theory of food being an international language is underpinned even further by Deen who argues that the incorporation of international cuisine can remove inter-cultural barriers:

We may have different accents. We may speak a different language, but after all, people are people and food is the common denominator that brings us all together. It's the common denominator between mankind (Deen, Interview: Savannah, December 2015).

As elucidated by Steel, Griffith, and Deen, it is clear that food has an incredible ability to be relatable to viewers across cultures. Additionally, the success of food's televisual image demonstrates a real value in the development of food-centric formats for producers. More obviously, food is a vital part of human survival, so even at a primal level, audiences should be able to relate to national dishes and interesting food. In fact, scholars such as Bradley (2016: 1) believe that media texts focused on food have revealed deep, psychological relationships within ourselves, where each of us endures: 'rituals of preparing, presenting and consuming food and images of food.' Wallace also questioned why food television show audiences continue to grow without them possessing a real desire to learn how to cook what is being shown to them on television, saying:

Cooking is the river the contestants are floating down. You could possibly do exactly the same thing with model aircrafts. The difference is with cooking, of course, everybody has an interest in eating. This term food lover, you show me someone who's not a food lover, and I'll show you a corpse. Some people like me, we live to eat... Other people may not have a great deal of food knowledge and may not have experienced some of the lovelier food, but that doesn't mean they don't have an interest in food. Even if somebody had nothing but fried food they can still tell you which fried food they prefer. So, you have something there in food (Wallace, Interview: Glasgow, May, 2015).

Unlike any other factual format, food programming connects with audiences at the most primitive level. Lorenzo Anastasio, a flying producer for Endemol Shine Group's *MasterChef* format, expressed his views on the impact food has on television and on society. He said: 'food is so universal as a concept that whatever you do around it can be obviously adapted and rebuilt and reinterpreted like everywhere in the world and there's always a way to do it' (Anastasio, Interview: Amsterdam, January, 2016). What is imperative to take away from Anastasio's experience is that food has flexibility when it comes to successful adaptation.

## 4.6 Conclusion

Since its origination in books and on the radio, the cooking show has been one of the longest standing genres in media history. Food television has an ability to conform to other attributes of many reality television formats that audiences deem appealing, such as game shows and talent shows. Most contemporary food show formats consist of a series of sub-genres that then incorporate food, such as light entertainment programs, gamedocs, and competition formats. There has been a long history of light entertainment programming on public service broadcasting in the UK which has, and continues to, offer viewers the opportunity to negotiate their identity (in national and other respects) and, due to their enormous audience appeal, is also a truly communal viewing experience (Esser and Jensen, 2015). Some reality programs appropriate these light entertainment elements along with additional pre-existing attributes from cop shows, dramas, sitcoms, game shows and so on, in order to reach a wider audience (Hill, 2005; Morreale, 2007). Producers adopt this hybrid genre strategy and mimic successful format narratives in order to reduce risk and increase their viability as an international format. In addition to adopting multiple genres within the composition of their formats, format licensors have added additional reality television elements into their narratives such as mainstream music tracks, handheld cameras, and observational and voyeuristic framing (Packham, 2016).

Oren (2013) believes that what is most striking about the contemporary cooking show is not the recent ubiquity of programming about cooking and eating or how such programming feeds the current cultural mainstreaming of 'foodism.' The composition of the most successful style of cooking competition show formats, such as BBC One's *MasterChef* and Food Network's *Chopped*, is very unique. The recipe for success was revealed in this research and comprises four key elements: (1) sub-genres pulled from other popular formats i.e. traditional game show elements such as jeopardy, risk, and head-to-head challenges against contestants; (2) expert hosts and a professionally led judging panel relevant to the hospitality industry (i.e. award-winning star chefs, bakers, restaurateurs, etc.); (3) intriguing contestants and rising stars (i.e. amateur to experts, celebrities, juniors and professionals); and (4) gourmet food and interesting stories told around it.

Producers of food formats satisfy the demands of the mainstream television audience by casting intriguing participants and contestants that audiences can connect with or be inspired by, similarly to how other reality formats do so. Food television formats like BBC One's *MasterChef Juniors* and Channel 4's *The Great British Bake Off* have become major contenders in the format industry. This is due to a number of factors, such as their ability to entertain audiences with the use of journey in their narratives where the ordinary person (or young adult) advances to become a greater chef or baker throughout the show. The use of amateur to professional storylines also allows contestants to be able to display their personal feelings for the world to see (as cited by Aslama and Pantti, 2006; Lupton, 1998; Foucault, 1978; Furedi, 2004: 167) as it has done for alternative genre formats such as Endemol Shine Group's *Big Brother*, FremantleMedia, Thames and Syco Entertainment's co-production *X Factor* and ITV's *Britain's Got Talent*. Again, this stems back to the weight that authenticity holds within a successful reality television format.

As Aslama and Pantti (2006) suggest, a paradox exists concerning reality television participants in which, on one hand, he or she (the participant) is talking alone about one's deepest emotions, or expressing their struggle and determination within their journey. At the same time, they are selling their own authenticity to viewers. As a result, this paradox has established a deeper connection between viewers and participants. Some viewers have become so invested in the contestants on food television programs that they assume the roles of critics, diners, foodies and even 'wannabe' professional chefs when watching (Oren, 2013: 33). This relates back to Cooper's explanation about the intra-competition between family members, judging the show from the pleasure of their own sofa.

Professional chefs on television have been afforded unprecedented opportunities for success and fame at home and overseas. Certain modern celebrity chefs have been considered products of an era of globalization of business and markets (Henderson, 2011). The industry shift from celebrity hosts to vocational experts has provided a much needed and newfound sense of credibility within programming. Bennett (2011) relates the concept of credibility to the growing number of vocational professionals that are hosting formats, particularly within the lifestyle format. His analysis suggests that expert credibility is crucial to the formation of successful and entertaining television personalities.

This is a situation in which hosts and judges reassure the viewer that their skills or judgments on the show are legitimate and authentic. The food format is unique because it relies on a blind trust in its hosts, unlike other popular format genres that are easy to self-judge, such as talent-driven programs like BBC One's *Strictly Come Dancing*. Whether it be a competition format such as BBC One's *MasterChef*, a talk show such as ABC's *The Chew*, or even a box standard instructional cooking show, audiences primarily seek out the guidance of experts to make informed decisions about how the food tastes.

These professional judges and hosts of television formats not only entertain and educate audiences, but some have also become so influential that they have created a discourse on policy reform. One example of this includes Channel 4's *Jamie's School Dinners*, where the purpose of the food documentary format was to improve the health of school dinners UK-wide and eventually in the US. Though Oliver may not have been the first figurehead for the reformation of healthier British school dinners or school lunches in America, his role in the media not only helped contribute to promoting and further developing existing policies, but he convinced the public that a change was needed in the UK (Naik, 2008). This political scenario is similar to the national response to American journalist, Upton Sinclair's, novel *The Jungle*, written in 1906. The novel has been attributed to the public reform of food safety laws and the eventual formation of the Food and Drug Administration in America (The Lancet, 2006). This, again, underlines the influence experts have over the public domain.

What separates the food show format from the classic cooking show is its fixation on food, rather than cooking. Chapter Seven will offer a better understanding of how food has become a mediated norm and a main focal point across traditional, digital and social media. To return to what BBC One's *MasterChef* host, Wallace, said about the success of the food show format: 'everybody has an interest in eating' (Wallace, Interview: Glasgow, May, 2015). Therefore, viewers may not necessarily be interested in cooking but, naturally, humans all share the common need and desire to eat. It is this common denominator, this 'language of love' that the respondents have explicated, that has transcended the cookery show into a well-suited style format for global audiences.

The case of food television as a television format is a particularly interesting vantage point from which to observe how the format industry operates. This chapter has examined how format producers incorporate traditional television conventions into new creations, how they realign and rearrange programming around food, and how the tried-and-tested conventions of alternative formats adapt with changing cultural values and requirements. It makes an important contribution to the growing literature on modern television format discourse in the media. Due to the recent production changes discussed above, food formats offer audiences unique stories told around a plate of colorful and aesthetically pleasing dishes. The chapters to come will interrogate the motivations and decisions behind food format brands when coming up with ways to adapt existing food television formats in order to take them to a global audience.





## Chapter Five: International Customization for Adapting Food Television Show Formats

Never before in media have we had an environment that has been so susceptible to change. This change is geographical, cultural, technology-driven and at the hands of regulators. Globalization, the gradual erosion of boundaries, drives the need for any media engagement to be cognizant of all these factors. Improved communication and transport infrastructures, a more liberal trading environment, and an acknowledgment of regional and cultural differences are all ways to cope with these changes (Doyle, 2006). The previous chapter outlined several strategies that food format licensors have employed in order to successfully internationalize their formats and to establish long-term growth for their licensees. Although these format narratives have been tried and tested in multiple territories, several challenges remain.

A commercial risk management control process is vital when transposing anything into different national and cultural environments. With particular reference to international licensing agreements involving the purchase and sale of popular food television show formats, the challenges can sometimes outweigh the benefits. The challenges and commercial risks that occur during the adaptation process of a format which will be addressed include the protection of an established format brand's identity and the tensions involving creative freedoms and constraints shared between format licensors and licensees. To explore these challenges, a case study on Endemol Shine Group's *MasterChef* will be discussed later in this chapter.

Brent Rosso, an organizational psychology professor at Montana State University clearly stated: 'Paradoxically, creativity thrives on the tension between freedom and constraint... They are the yin and yang of creativity' (Goodman, 2017). On the one hand, format producers have developed a high level of expertise that is intended to translate into a successful show across numerous territories. On the other, managing another culture's media production without substantial local input can result in market failure. When transposing an established television format from its country of origin into other cultures, it is critical to engage with and be mindful of local input.

Even the most established media brands have failed where local audiences were unable to relate to them within their unique, familiar national television cultures and experiences.

On the subject of predicting success, New York City reality television agent, Mark Turner, said: 'We always look for what is the original thing. What is the new thing? It's very difficult to find an original. That's a pretty common cliché. Every idea is out there' (Turner, Interview: New York City, September, 2016). Nobody has a crystal ball to predict the performance of a successful television format when transposed to a different country. Applying media branding strategies will improve the probability of success and effectively reduce the commercial risk for both licensors and licensees. To consider this in more detail, the following questions are addressed in this chapter. The second research question answered in this chapter is: What are the managerial challenges regarding the adaptation of food television show formats for international markets?

The supporting questions for consideration are:

1. What measures have food television format licensors employed to maintain brand integrity and to ensure protection when exporting formats abroad?
2. How do food television format licensors utilize media branding strategies to extend their global revenue and protect their established media brands from copyright infringement?
3. What sort of tensions arise during the negotiation and initial stages of production processes regarding socioeconomic factors?
4. How much creative freedom is granted to the food television show licensees after purchasing the rights to produce a food television show format within their territory?
5. What are the essential requirements that format licensors adhere to in order to become more culturally aware while engaging in the collaboration process?

Section 5.2 of this chapter will examine the variety of measures that food format licensors take in order to protect their brand's ethos when it is promoted abroad. Section 5.3 will offer an inside look at how format brands integrate the tried and tested formulas set out by their successful formats with the international business culture that has long been established in the licensee's country. Section 5.4 will introduce the creative freedoms and constraints that emerge when engaging with this collaboration process. In order to illustrate the managerial concerns and distinctive priorities food format licensors address during format adaptation, a case study featuring the international rollout of the most successful food format, Endemol Shine Group's *MasterChef*, will be discussed in Section 5.5 of this chapter.

By focusing on *MasterChef*, the second part of this chapter will reveal an in-depth analysis of the most common managerial challenges associated with the internationalization of food television formats, such as the need to both extend and protect the *MasterChef* brand and its popular spin-offs including Endemol Shine Group's *Junior MasterChef*, *Celebrity MasterChef*, and *MasterChef: The Professionals*. From the perspective of the format's flying production team and the original production crew at BBC One and Endemol Shine Group, this case study will convey how the format has adapted itself both internally and throughout its many international versions. The *MasterChef* case study will also provide some of the key strategies format licensors exercise for minimizing the risks that will be set out in the first part of this chapter. Finally, Section 5.6 will consider the outcome of these findings which will be summarized in this chapter's conclusion.

## **5.2 Brand Identity and Protection**

Media brands are not created by chance, nor are they random or 'one-hit-wonders.' Media brands are a consequence of institutionalization and systematization of branding activities (Siegert, Förster, Chan-Olmsted, and Ots, 2015). Much like magazines, a television format's 'principal asset and core source of strength is its title or, more accurately, the brand associated with its title' (Doyle, 2006: 106). This section focuses on the procedures format brands put into place in order to increase their global revenue and to protect their brand from imitation. More specifically, it examines the protectionist measures that media managers of food formats, as well as other format genres, employ.

These measures include the creation of the production bible and the investment into high-quality production and expertise. As referred to in the literature review in Chapter Two, the development of a production bible (also known as a brand bible) is one of the most important ways a television format achieves internationally consistent branding (Chalaby, 2011). These bibles consist of both high-quality content creation and a robust level of expertise that can be packaged, sold and transferred repeatedly to format licensees.

In a production bible, expertise is shared in a way that teaches format licensees everything they need to know in order to produce a successful adaptation. These bibles include all of the essential branding elements, some of which include graphic design components, brand logos, and fonts. Other contents of the bible can contain anything from original production notes, television rating data, casting considerations, tried and tested storylines and episodes, target audiences, budget guidelines, host profiles, and every other possible aspect relevant to the show's production (Chalaby, 2011; Oren and Shahaf, 2012). One could go as far as to argue that the term 'bible' was deliberately used because the teachings were to be taken as sacred truths. In other words, the earliest formats such as ITV's *Who Wants to Be a Millionaire* were sold as a set of strict instructions without cognizance of regional nuances.

The success of an international format has been and always will be in the hands of the flying production team. Flying producers are the professionals who engage in the initial development strategies and local customization of the established format within newly adapted territories. Therefore, they retain the defining knowledge and experience required to produce the original television format and as such can maintain the foundations of the original brand's success while welcoming in local input by licensees. In the past, flying producers believed that the successful adaptation of a television format was made possible by enforcing the teachings of the production bibles in a force-fed fashion. Chalaby (2011:295) compared the original formats to a bridge where: 'its architecture is not a matter of mere aesthetics but of civil engineering and those who tamper with it risk seeing it collapse.' Now, format brands have altered their internationalization process to welcome more creative input by licensees.

Industry leaders from Endemol Shine Group's *MasterChef*, Scripps' Food Network, and other international food formats, were asked to explain how the ecology of production values and the role of advertising of such formats have changed since the establishment of Sir Peter Bazalgette's original four 'super formats,' as mentioned in the previous chapter. Former format consultant at FremantleMedia, Julie Donovan, explained her experience at FremantleMedia in order to trace the changes in the production bible and the level of know-how that is now provided to new licensees. She says:

During the time that I have been working in formats, it has gone from a bit of scrap paper, documents that may be 10 or 15-years-old, photocopied and stuffed in a folder and somebody going out [to visit], to very professional bibles. You do not get the format bible until you license and pay for the format and inside that agreement, you pay for consultancy. You are getting a very experienced flying producer who usually worked on the show to go and help you to transfer their knowledge and help you make the best show you can make. And then you've also got the backing of the big companies like the Endemol Shine Group's and the FremantleMedia's, the back office, the resource libraries, the marketing department and whatever that can help you with logos to be re-skinned and the digital packages to be sold, stats on how it's doing around the world, tools that help you sell it and also people that can help you make it the best possible production it can be... Now, the big companies like FremantleMedia moved away from 'well this is how it's going to be' to 'okay, let's work with our partners in more of a partnership and collaboration' (Donovan, Interview: London, January 2016).

Donovan's inside look at the internationalization process of formats at FremantleMedia suggests that it is no longer practical for flying producers to enforce expertise. Instead, flying producers must find the right balance between introducing local input into the format and managing the expectations of the licensees looking to develop a hit show in their home country. To find this balance, flying producers proceed to fall back on the production bible in order to protect the brand's reputation across linear television and now online. Endemol Shine UK has introduced an assortment of production bibles that come with added chapters and sets of rules for brand protection via digital marketing in new territories.

Aaron Eccles, the head of social media at Endemol Shine UK referred to this as the 'social media bible.' According to Eccles, there are numerous global cues to consider when advertising on such an up-to-the-minute media, like Facebook or Twitter. These innovative and forward-thinking social media bibles are believed to be the best way to protect the original format from external risks faced online by Endemol Shine UK. One wrong social media message can quickly put a brand in jeopardy, making the perceived value of these guidelines very high for licensees. Eccles described the motivation behind the new edition of the production bible for Endemol Shine UK as such:

You're doing things in different languages as well, so you have to make sure it's all correct. You're working with the local partners to make sure everything is relevant and written the right way. That's a challenge. You've got to test and learn a lot... We're kind of protecting the brand internationally but still having its local counterparts. You've got a chance to look at what works in what territories. Give suggestions and guidelines. Just simple things where a local should go in a picture, what you can or can't say about the brand and the presenters. It's good that we try to create these social media bibles... Nothing too dense, just helpful things that you can give to your social media producer in another territory that they can read and understand what worked in other territories and what to avoid. What to try out and the dos and don'ts of the brand (Eccles, Interview: London, January, 2016).

Television production companies such as Endemol Shine Group in the UK are conscious of the threat that the adoption of new technology poses to a format's reputation. Strong media branding underpins the successful expansion of media products across different platforms, as it does on linear screens internationally (Doyle, 2006). However, as television brands become more successful, additional stresses and challenges emerge, such as the need to protect a format against copyright infringement. Copying an international format is difficult to police, and historically there has been minimal legal bearing for international intellectual property protection (Singh and Nagpal, 2011). There have been a number of cases where countries have made attempts to copy these formats without purchasing a license that would grant them access to the above-mentioned production bibles.

In their 2011 FRAPA report, Singh and Nagpal outlined various anti-copyright infringement practices television formats should take in place of coercive legal action, due to an ineffective level of legal prowess when dealing with international intellectual property trials. The 'managing brand identity' section of the report encourages format licensors to manage their brands closely and to maintain the innermost details of the format behind closed doors as a trade secret, in order to prevent copycats. According to the report, this code was one of the most powerful strategies that helped prevent ITV's *Who Wants to Be a Millionaire* television format from being imitated. A successful strategy that protects copyright and maintains integrity results from a well constructed and an in-depth production bible combined with difficult to replicate style guides and a well-informed, experienced and effective flying producer system. Those who try to recreate a show without this important set of criteria often fail to protect their brand, as opposed to those who pay for the expert knowhow found within licensed production bibles. An example of this occurred on the food talk show format, ABC's *The Chew*.

The executive producer of the daytime cooking show format, Gordon Elliot, explained how the attendees of the international format trade show, MIPCOM, were confident that they could develop the format without the need to license the format. He explains:

There's a lot of copycats. There's a lot of imitators and a lot of issues with copyright infringement. All (format copycats) do is a really poor job of something they thought was so easy... I think many countries have looked at (our format) and thought "I can do that without paying for a license" and I say, "good luck with that." I think that daytime in most countries is not considered prime money-making areas for networks. They tend to do loads of local productions or repeats of primetime or longstanding local shows. You see it around the world. These heritage programs that will live forever. There aren't a lot of networks, motivation or capital to start something like *The Chew* (Elliot, Interview, New York City: November, 2015)

In some cases, format imitation can occur between different television networks in the same country. Elliot suspected that the Food Network's *The Kitchen* copied many of the same elements of his food talk show format.

Elliot identified and stressed the most notable differences between his format and the alleged imitator. He argued that casting, above all else, was what made ABC's *The Chew* so successful and unique. In order to gain access to the casting guidelines, producers of Food Network's *The Kitchen* would have had to purchase ABC's *The Chew*'s production bible. He said:

I think the format is simple. What's incredibly hard is the casting. The only show I know that has tried to copy it, and I'm not saying it did a very good job, was on Food Network which is *The Kitchen*. And all good television shows should look easy. If they looked hard they wouldn't be suitable to watch. I'm flattered when people try to copy us (Elliot, Interview, New York City: November, 2015).

In line with what Elliot is describing, format copycats can end up developing less impressive imitations of a show. In this situation, they would have probably been better just to have paid for a license at the outset. There are some cases whereby imitators have ended up paying for the format the second time around after their imitation failed to appeal to their local television culture. Donovan explained how China ended up paying double for the Australian game show Network Ten's *Take Me Out* (2008-2009), first for the production of an unlicensed version, followed by a second time for a licensed version in order to establish a more fruitful, long-term business relationship with FremantleMedia and to gain access to their content library (Donovan, Interview: London, January 2016).

What Singh and Nagpal (2011) and Chalaby (2011) debated about concerning the need to establish internationally consistent branding is directly linked to the successful internationalization of television formats and is indeed confirmed by Donovan, Eccles, and Elliot within this research. By employing these media branding strategies, format licensors are not only extending their global revenue, but are protecting themselves from format imitation. Furthermore, these practices allow brands to retain control over their media products so that the licensed adaptations do not stray too far away from the original production. To minimize the risks of format failure and negative backlash to brand reputation, format brands execute further actions to manage international cultures effectively.



### 5.3 Managing International Business Cultures

*As a consultant, you need to face many issues, not only on the production level but the cultural. You need to be extremely aware of what cultures you're dealing with and how and which kind of people and what kind of expertise you have around and how much money they have to work with. So, there's so many more elements you need to control. You want to try to keep the show successful and the format successful, but you also need to be realistic to deal with what you have (Lorenzo Anastasio, lead flying producer at Endemol Shine's MasterChef, Interview: Amsterdam, January, 2016).*

With over ten years experience rolling out Endemol Shine's *MasterChef* brand as the lead flying producer, Lorenzo Anastasio explains that the bedrock of success for any internationalization of a television format is welcoming local input, as shown in the quote above. To him, it is non-negotiable. Up until this point, this chapter has concentrated on the legal issues and brand protectionist strategies associated with licensing international food formats. Guidelines from producers and publications such as the FRAPA report have identified several mechanisms for brands to employ in order to reduce format imitation. Once a license is sold to a new territory, there are additional considerations format producers face geographically, economically and culturally (Moran, 1998; Picard, 2002).

The impact of the globalization of media on national and indigenous cultures continue to be the subject of considerable debate. Negus and Roman-Velazquez (2000) identified two specific ways in which the dynamics of media internationalization have impacted culture. As summarized in Chapter Two of this thesis, these two ways include: commoditized media models from other countries which can influence additional set of lifestyles, experiences, events and daily practices that did not previously exist before and the subsequent rise in anxiety as nations worry that 'traditional', 'folk' or 'indigenous' cultural practices will decline by adopting foreign imports. To address the second impact, television format producers are forced to make cultural considerations involving anything from language barriers, the development of an accurate sense of national identity and the adherence to mediated cultural norms.

We know that the cultural dynamic of each country is different and yet even the Food Network, the largest food television network and food media brand in the world, has experienced issues within their organization following the high-volume selling of their syndicated cooking shows without considering the national television cultures of the countries who purchase their programs. Taking South Africa as an example, a country that has eleven official languages, it is clear just how difficult it is to satisfy an entire national culture without local input. The social media manager of the South African version of the Food Network, Katelyn Williams, pointed out how the country tends to reject 'force-fed Americanisms' on the linear television network and Food Network online. She explains how part of her role is translating American English to South African English:

You can tell when a brand comes from the US. Even though we syndicate the content, I've got to rewrite it, because a lot of the ingredients you can't get here. We changed that, and we changed the oven temperature because Americans have that Fahrenheit thing and so I change that and make sure that we don't call it cilantro, we call it coriander. We don't have things like bittersweet chocolate. Here we call it dark chocolate so we will even swap out an ingredient if we do not get it here. That's what makes the difference between you cooking on a recipe and actually making it and [our local audiences] just saying 'I can't be bothered to Google conversion changes' (Williams, Interview: Cape Town, May, 2016).

Television broadcasters have more options to import media than ever before. From finished programming such as the syndicated show from Food Network, *Diner's, Dives and Drive-Ins* (2007-present), to digital accompaniments such as online recipes, broadcasters are spoiled with choice and can now opt for bespoke media packages to fit their needs economically and culturally (Doyle, 2006: 107). Since these formats are custom made and produced within the country which has purchased a license, format brands are not concerned with language in the sense of needing to dub episodes or translate recipes from Fahrenheit to Celsius, as much as they are with the need to adopt a fluent understanding of their licensees' local character and their national television system. If miscommunication occurs between media brands and buyers, both parties may be exposed to commercial risks and even failure (Keinonen, 2016).

Unfortunately for local broadcasters, purchasing a television license does not guarantee success. Ryan (1992) argues that the production bible and knowhow that comes with the purchase of a television license cannot entirely instruct on-screen talent or teach local producers how to perform in a way that would guarantee a finished product that local audiences would find entertaining. As the last few chapters have demonstrated, a successful television format combines the cultural elements of a national television system with professional expertise from the format licensors. In many ways, the format industry provides smaller countries, with a thriving television culture, a means for their distinct voices to be heard beyond the confines of their borders (Chalaby, 2011).

When the realized ambition is to establish the right balance between maintaining the original format guidelines and the additional bespoke local input, there are several challenges to be addressed. The main issue is that the original product tends to get lost in translation when it is localized. Previously successful television formats do not guarantee success in a new territory, which is why many adaptations fail to impress local audiences (Moran, 1998: 20). Again, the role of the flying producer is to advise the local licensees on how to benefit from the teachings of the original format.

However, there will always be times when the local broadcasters do not recognize the value of this knowledge and expertise, thus exposing them to risk. When exporting Channel 4's *The Great British Bake Off* to the United States, failures occurred most likely linked to a lack of trust by the local American broadcasters. Donovan explained that this failure was attributed to the excessive degree of creative freedom given to the local producers or licensees. She discussed the differences between the American and British national identities, saying:

I think if you're talking about the nuances of *Bake Off*, for example, and I don't know what those conversations were between LOVE productions and the original US production, but it does take a lot of discussion about what does baking mean to Americans and getting it right for America... The format is a competition about baking at its bottom level, home bakers, rather than professional bakers.

And you have a lot of home bakers in America obviously and there's a high history of baking so the network, and I'm sure the production companies on both sides, have had lots of conversations about what it was about that show that didn't quite hit the mark (Donovan, Interview: London, January 2016).

The failed attempt to attain success in both CBS' *The Great American Baking Competition* in 2013 and the four-week Christmas-themed *The Great Holiday Baking Show* by ABC (2015) to America from the UK suggests a serious disconnect or breakdown in communication. The American licensees and flying producers from the original UK format were unable to establish a strong collaboration. What is evident is that there is something about this format that becomes misinterpreted when it is exported to America. Donovan continued:

You can sit back and see it's absolutely obvious why it hasn't worked because for some reason it's failed in the translation from the original series into the production and getting to air because possibly there are way too many people in the decision-making chain. There are very big management challenges [when] managing the production company who's licensed the format and usually, it's the network that chooses the production company and all the people involved in that process on how they want to get it to air. So, I think often, anything which is designed by committee, that's where a lot of your problems are going to go (Donovan, Interview: London, January 2016).

Television critics and viewers believe that it is the light-hearted and authentically British elements that drove the popularity of *The Great British Bake Off* when it first aired on BBC One. The way in which the show incorporates Victoria sponges and daffodil fields is reminiscent of a quintessentially English image (Moylan, 2015). In this example, the format was not flexible enough to lend itself internationally. So much so, that the word 'British' is actually in the name of the program and although it was the authentically British elements that were attributed to the show's success in the UK, it is the very reason for why the show has been too difficult a program to replicate well in other countries. The licensing of ABC's *The Chew* to a production company in Turkey again demonstrates reasons for failure as tensions arose after local broadcasters and producers skipped over the guidelines and suggestions by the format creator.

In the last chapter, Elliot explained how the local broadcasters' disregard for the food talk show format's casting guidelines was the leading cause of why the show came to an abrupt end.

A clear example of cross-cultural failure can be seen when Channel 4's *Jamie Oliver's School Dinners* failed to translate to the American market as ABC's *Jamie's American Food Revolution* as explained in Chapter Two. These critical challenges could not be met. Poor ratings of the show have been linked to the fact that the American audience was not ready to have their school lunches 'revolutionized' nor did they enjoy watching the delivery of Oliver's political agenda (Smith, 2012). Gibson and Dempsey (2013: 56) also utilized Oliver as a similar case study within their work on the political economy of childhood nutrition, to find that the show was: 'less likely to stress the structural and institutional barriers that delimit children's choices in a reality TV meme set up in relation to artificial constructions of tension and competition.' In this scenario, Oliver's production team was faced with a serious challenge. Although this investigative reporting approach may have worked for the UK, the British food format team failed to adjust itself to America's local television production culture. It is also interesting to consider the comments of Mark Turner who points out that even though Jamie Oliver is well received as a chef in the United States, the majority of shows fail when they enter the American market. He explains as follows:

I just don't know what the reason why specifically Jamie Oliver's Food Revolution didn't do well. He, himself has had a lot of success in the United States on the Food Network, so I don't believe it has to do with that people don't resonate with him. He's obviously done well. I think it just shows that the majority of shows do fail, so I don't think there is any correlation between in them being British or from other countries coming here and not, I think there are just many more shows that fail than succeed (Turner, Interview: New York City, September, 2016).

Endemol Shine Group's *MasterChef* has also encountered issues concerning adaptation that will be discussed in the case study later in this chapter. The tensions that arise around creative freedom and constraints when undertaking the adaptation process remain the most challenging area for flying producers to address (Goodman, 2017; Singh and Nagpal, 2011).

## 5.4 Creative Freedoms and Constraints

Based on what Doyle (2006) says about transnational challenges, we can see that it is difficult for content producers to popularize an adapted format that follows brand guidelines while maintaining the identity of the original format. In short, it is essential to allow leeway to ensure input with cultural insight from local producers and broadcasters, which again creates risk for the media brand. Finding this balance has proven to be trivial in many cases in this research. Once a format is funded and ready to be licensed, some of the common pressures for content producers include knowing how to work with a production budget, gaining trust from the local broadcasters and producers and trying to develop an understanding of the political and cultural needs of each new territory.

### *Financial Constraints*

Purchasing a format license is an incredibly costly endeavor. One of the first questions format producers ask a potential licensee is 'what is the available budget?' (Donovan, Interview: London, January 2016). Donovan explains how expensive formats and lengthy the business development process of a format in a new territory can be. In fact, against the requirement to negotiate the terms for local customization, Donovan described what the research and development process incurs as:

It tends not to be one person in a room coming up with ideas. It tends to be teams of people who work on ideas, and that's an expensive business to maintain a development team. That's the other reason why the format industry isn't going anywhere soon because effectively your research and development are outsourced, so you don't necessarily need to host a development team on your own. You just pay a license fee to someone else who's done that work for you. There are so many people who want to hit gold on the format sales front... but there are certain countries, the UK being one of them and the Netherlands, who are much more willing to take risks and ideas which is where the formats come really (Donovan, Interview: London, January 2016).

As a result of what Donovan has explained, format licensors assume a more substantial portion of risk than licensees. The format brand has a strong reputation to uphold in order to export to the most amount of countries as possible. Establishing licensing agreements in countries that are unable to afford large production budgets can prove extremely challenging for format brands who want the adaptation to succeed. Budgets within the United States are much more generous than in European countries and across Latin America and Asia. These other nations tend to want to emulate the American versions of their formats and are unable to afford it, as is shown in the case of Endemol Shine Group's *MasterChef*. This scenario will be explained further in the next section (Anastasio, Interview: Amsterdam, January, 2016). Government policy, like budgetary constraints, is another obstacle that cannot be bypassed or ignored.

### *Policy Intervention*

Although the US has far fewer budgetary concerns than some of the countries that will be mentioned in the case study to follow, food format licensors have learned to be very flexible with their formats/ narratives in order to appeal to American audiences. The majority of American cooking competition formats air on commercial networks like Fox, ABC, NBC, Food Network, Bravo and more. Therefore, they adopt a different funding model than British public service broadcasters. This ultimately affects the localized format's narrative. Product placement is forbidden on public service broadcasting stations such as the BBC in the UK. This is in great contrast to its use in Fox's *MasterChef* where Gordon Ramsay explicitly advertises Walmart steaks across multiple episodes of the American version of the cooking competition show. According to BBC One's *MasterChef*'s director, Dave Crear, the British format must adhere to strict regulatory guidelines that prevent any form of promotion on the show enforced by the BBC Trust.<sup>4</sup> He explained the frustration the British production team endures each season as such:

We can't [mention] names and product names and we have to be very careful of what we say, and we do not say. It also means when it comes to money and sponsorship we are very restricted.

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<sup>4</sup>Effective from 3 April 2017, Ofcom becomes the BBC's first external regulator (Ofcom, 2017).

When we go on an overseas trip we can't say the name of the restaurant or film the sign... We are only allowed to film the restaurant sign once. So, we will go to a restaurant and we will have a shot of them walking in and get a quick shot... We spend a lot of time covering [brand labels] up or cutting around things, which from our perspective, you can imagine is sometimes a pain. We can't even say 'marmite' (Crear, Interview: London, November, 2015).

Though this scenario is challenging for the British format producers to cope with, it is clear that by allowing the American team to have the freedom to commercialize the content dilutes the original brand's 'straight cookery competition' style.

There are even more severe cases in which culture and government intervention become worrisome for format brands. In some territories, cultural and governmental sensitivities are again non-negotiable and must be carried out with the utmost respect. The head flying producer at *MasterChef*, Lorenzo Anastasio, explains how difficult the exportation of the format in Saudi Arabia was to redevelop due to restrictions regarding government-mandated gender laws. Even though filming took place in Dubai and outside of Saudi Arabia, male members of the flying production team and male contestants on the show were not allowed to be in the same room as the women at any time. Culturally, format licensors must be aware of such restrictions. Finding a balance between integrating the cultural needs of a new territory along with what format licensors feel to be the more successful way to produce a format can be tricky, which is further elaborated through the following case study on Endemol Shine Group's *MasterChef*.

## **5.5 *MasterChef* Case Study**

With regards to the global impact made by Endemol Shine Group's *MasterChef*, Anastasio says: 'territory after territory we started to realize what was really powerful in the format and what we needed to keep from the original format everywhere in order to make it successful' (Anastasio, Interview: Amsterdam, January, 2016). The desire to take a deeper look at Endemol Shine Group's *MasterChef* as a case study was motivated by the format's global success and ability to adapt easily to almost any new culture and business climate.

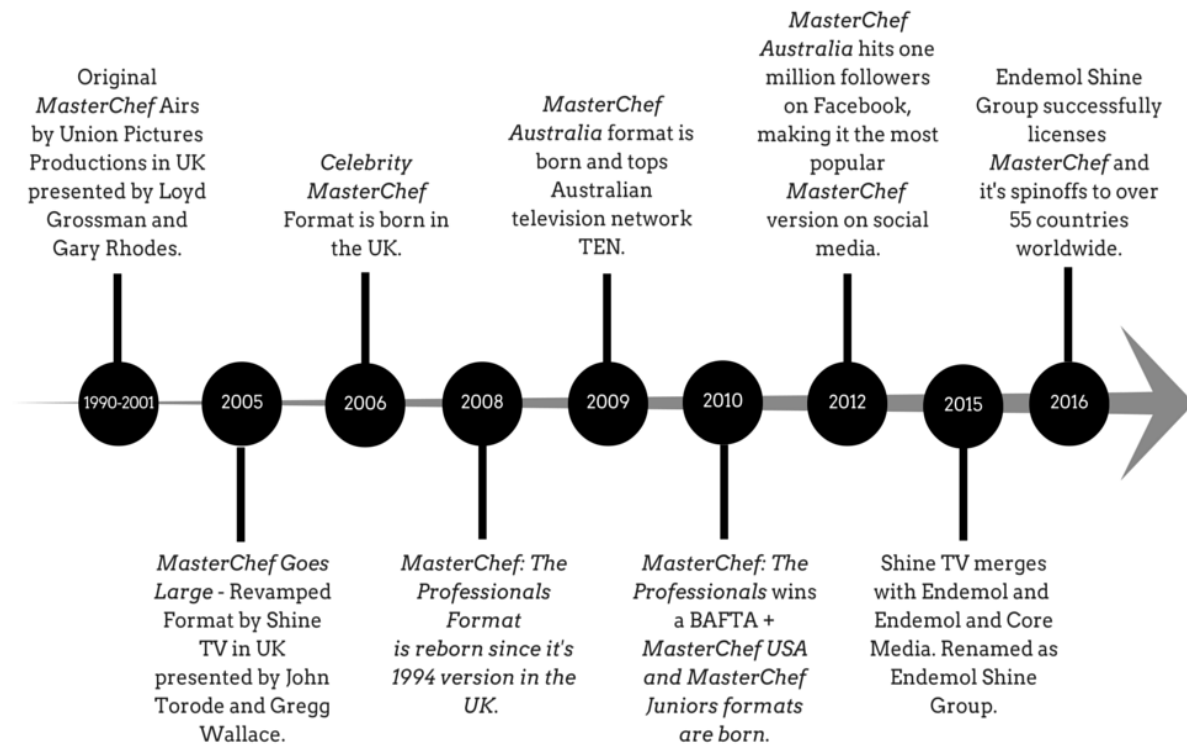




Currently, Endemol Shine Group's *MasterChef* is at the height of its success with global audiences in more countries than any other cooking television format in the world. As demonstrated in the map above, Figure 2 represents the countries where Endemol Shine Group has licensed their format over a lifetime, including formats that are no longer airing. However, reaching this level of acclaim was a lengthy process that had to be reworked, reformatted and remarketed in an entirely different way to the original and current British versions. The first-ever *MasterChef* pilot aired in the UK on BBC One in 1990 for ten years. Grossman described the original show he hosted on as 'light entertainment' with a heavy focus on food and less on the cooking competition (Hogan, 2010; Radio Times, 2012), 5

In an interview with *Radio Times* (2012) the current co-host on the show, Gregg Wallace, disagreed with Grossman's previous remarks, and instead commented on how the new rendition of the *MasterChef* format is more food focused and enthralling than ever before. This was attributed to the leadership of the production team. After the initial eleven years, the program went on a three year hiatus, after which *MasterChef* was renamed to *MasterChef Goes Large* in 2005 (and then back to *MasterChef* in 2008). The show was then stripped from its original rendition into an entirely new game show - a documentary-style cooking competition format led by the creative production powerhouses Franc Roddam, John Silver and Karen Ross (Anastasio, Interview: Amsterdam, January, 2016). Significant changes from the original and current versions of the UK's *MasterChef* include: the use of professional chefs and restaurateurs as hosts instead of celebrity presenters, a voice-over narrator, India Fischer, a new television airing schedule that aired five nights per week during primetime slots, as well as entirely new challenges and ground rules for elimination.

**Figure 3: Endemol Shine Group's *MasterChef* Format Historical Timeline**



Under new leadership and a new production company, Shine TV (the precursor to Endemol Shine), the *MasterChef* format was reborn and quickly readapted into format spinoffs such as *Celebrity MasterChef* in 2006, *MasterChef: The Professionals* in 2008 and *Junior MasterChef* in 2010 (reworked since its original runs from 1994-1997 and 1999). *Junior MasterChef* has recently been reintroduced as a format since 2010, and its newest adaptation has become increasingly popular in mainstream media around the globe (Anastasio, Interview: Amsterdam, January, 2016). In 2010, BBC Two's *MasterChef: The Professionals* won a British Academy of Film and Television Arts (BAFTA) Award, accepted by their production team including Karen Ross, Carla-Maria Lawson, Antonia Lloyd, David Ambler amongst others (BAFTA Awards, 2010). According to Anastasio, the real triggers for the success of the *MasterChef* brand came after its first licensing agreement with Australia's TEN Network in 2009 and America's Fox Network in 2010. All of these critical events and others are further detailed in the show's historical timeline in Figure 3 above.

## *MasterChef Case Study*

While this long-running show was created with the intention to be a light-hearted, cooking competition show, Endemol Shine Group's *MasterChef* format injects unique and culturally specific elements into each of its many adaptations. The result is a revolutionized format that unsurprisingly strays away from the British version. This case study draws on both the managerial decisions and challenges that have occurred during the internationalization of the format. Issues such as maintaining brand integrity and striking a balance between creative freedoms and constraints are made apparent in the adaptation process. These issues will be discussed with regards to the flying production team's experience when licensing the format in the following territories: the United Kingdom, Australia, the United States, Denmark, Russia, China, and India.

### *United Kingdom*

It is interesting to note that the amateur cooking show's original production of BBC One's *MasterChef* has never been sold as a one-size-fits-all format to license because it is too bespoke to Great Britain.

It was not until the widespread success of the tailor-made Australian and American adaptations that the international rollout of the format started to become a popular and profitable business endeavor. Now, new versions of the British format are mixed with the attributes unique to these two renditions, along with Canadian, European and other territorial influencers. Producer and Executive Editor on the British adaptation, David Ambler, explained a phenomenon which revealed how the international format focuses on the country's culture through the national dishes they cook and how they prepare it, saying:

Our format is really different from the rest of the world. It is really different than the American version or the Australian version. The successes being that the Australians, Americans and the Portuguese and everyone else is taking whatever version and making it their own. I think it reflects the culture of the food in the country that has made it (Ambler, Interview: London, November 2015).

Since the British format has never translated as an exact reproduction abroad, Endemol Shine Group's flying production team have faced many issues on both a production and cultural level. Anastasio dictated how essential it is to be aware of the countries they are dealing with, what kind of people the licensees are and what level of expertise is available to make the show successful in a new territory. He believes that there are many more elements needing control, such as budget, which continually causes his team to make realistic expectations during the adaptation process. He explains how the British version first saw signs of becoming a global concept:

At the beginning when we realized *MasterChef* had the potential, every time we had a new commission, we started to deal with the local producers and local broadcasters always in a very receptive way. And we tried to understand how the food within the guidelines of the format and the structure, which had to stay pretty much the same everywhere, content wise, could be adapted to fit the content request and the audience in the local countries... Considering the result, and we've seen through the years, that has been, I would say, the key element for why this format has traveled so much. We've tried to be open-minded. We've tried to meet the needs of the local culinary communities and the audience in general (Anastasio, Interview: Amsterdam, January, 2016).

Though this alteration process sounds straightforward enough, finding the balance between integrating the cultural needs of a new territory, along with what format licensors feel to be the more successful way to produce a format, is a complex process. This is evident since the show took over 15 years to perfect itself into becoming an economically attractive food television show format abroad. Yet, by meeting the needs of the local culinary communities and television audiences, with regards to the dishes cooked on screen, as Anastasio put it, concerns of brand protection inevitably come into question. Format brands need to make managerial decisions based on how far local storylines may divert from the original British format. Crear claimed that the adapted versions tend to implement a much more reality-driven storyline instead of staying true to the food. He spoke about the differences between the UK, Australia and New Zealand:

Our sort of format here in the UK is a lot less reality-based than say Australia, so even though it is the same show they are quite different. They just sort of basically adjust it all for their particular liking. I don't think that reality, real hard reality style would work over here.... I know Australia and New Zealand are wilder. I think with strong reality shows they peak but they also lose their audience. For whatever reason, with this particular *MasterChef* in the UK, we have always been consistently strong without being too outlandish. There have been five to six to nine million viewers in 12 years (Crear, Interview: London, November, 2015).

What Crear holds to be true about why audiences find BBC One's *MasterChef* popular on television is in relation to meeting the UK's demand for soft and cuddly, light-hearted television as explained by Donovan (Interview: London, January 2016). Whereas, other countries such as Australia, New Zealand, and the United States may adopt a higher reality approach that works for them but could never be successful in the UK. This confirms what Donovan said in Chapter Five with regards to *X Factor* becoming too harsh to appeal to British audiences, and as a result, has lost a large portion of its audience to the light-entertainment format BBC One's *Strictly Come Dancing*. The next territories in this case study reveal the exceedingly successful changes that were made to create Network Ten's *MasterChef Australia* and Fox's *MasterChef*.

### *Australia*

In 2009, the Australian version of *MasterChef* debuted on Network Ten and aired six days a week for over 12 weeks, a significant change to the original weekly format structure of the British version. By 2010, the Australian adaptation reached such high levels of acclaim that it broke a rating record in which 3.9 million people tuned in to watch season two's finale (Bowden, 2015) and hit over one million followers on Facebook in 2012, making it the most popular *MasterChef* version on social media (Knox, D., 2012). Anastasio explained how the Australian version became 'supersized' from the start due to its 'completely new interpretation' of the original format. He says:

It made magic. It made a trip. Let's say it connects with the food and the reality show elements of the emotions and the dreams of normal people and that magic made the show incredibly successful in Australia.

Our rollout has literally begun mainly because the Australian version has been so successful, so the international adaptations of *MasterChef* have started after the first series of the Australian version in 2009 (Anastasio, Interview: Amsterdam, January, 2016).

While the British version is more oriented towards the food instead of the contestant's ability to entertain, the Australian version is invested in the competitive nature of winners and losers. The decision to take a more reality television-based approach in comparison to a straight cookery competition show was a bold move that appealed to the Australian national television audience. Seale (2012) proposed that *MasterChef Australia*'s success can be linked to its narrative that transforms ordinary home cooks into professionals and where the everyday practice of cooking can be turned into a grand display, throughout *MasterChef* and *Celebrity MasterChef*. Yet, the nature of the Australian adaptation is driven by dramatic entertainment elements, which deviates far away from the original British production. The fear is that this could lead to a decline in audience interest in the future, just as Crear forewarned.

### *United States*

The American version of *MasterChef* was another one of the first adaptations of the format and employs an entertainment, reality-driven approach similar to that of the Australian series. Throughout this version, there is a consistent tendency to put the contestant's emotions on display during high-pressure moments of the show, whereas in the UK, the food is at the forefront (Cooper, Interview: Los Angeles, November, 2016). What sets the American version apart from all other versions of the format is its renowned and sought-after main host, Gordon Ramsay. The multiple Michelin star winning chef has epitomized himself as an international brand for high-stakes reality food show formats and has drawn in audiences for many of his programs. Some of these programs include: Channel 4's *Ramsay's Kitchen Nightmares*, Channel 4's *The F Word*, Fox's *Hell's Kitchen*, and Fox's *MasterChef*. What makes Ramsay so appealing to these programs is his unique demeanor and his culinary aptitude.

Therefore, it is difficult for the Endemol Shine Group's production team to help local audiences cast a show host of his caliber. Anastasio explained this impossible task as a production 'headache' and said:

Most of the territories I've traveled to, the first thing they would tell you is 'we want to do [the format] like the US. We want to have a show like the US. We want to have our Gordon Ramsay.' That actually is one of my biggest headaches, because Gordon Ramsay is one in the world and everyone is trying to imitate him and all his crazy things (Anastasio, Interview: Amsterdam, January 2016).

The Spanish adaptation, in particular, has cast a professional chef as their host in an obvious attempt to mimic Ramsay with their homegrown version, but in Anastasio's opinion, the host sometimes behaves in a way that is just 'nasty' rather than being 'incredibly talented' (Anastasio, Interview: Amsterdam, January, 2016). Ramsay's personality on Fox's *MasterChef* has been deliberately readjusted and toned down to suit more of a game show style format in hopes of staying true to the brand. This is a far less intense demeanor than that which we see on some of his food business formats he has created and hosted. Nonetheless, it is clear that while the *MasterChef* brand is not exactly a strictly controlled format, the drama, and jeopardy-driven elements and larger production budgets spent across the Australian and the American versions have stimulated over fifty licensing agreements worldwide. The levels of success can be far less attainable, as it was in the cases of countries like Bulgaria and Romania with smaller production budgets. Smaller production budgets can result in a show so far away from the British, American and Australian versions that it flops and fails to finish a single season. Trying to deliver a comparable level of production on such an inferior budget has been a common frustration for licensors, but not an impossible one. In this scenario, format producers advise potential licensees with smaller budgets to embrace their local traditions and provide them with alternative tools they can use to shape a successful show in their country.



## *Russia*

The Russian version of *MasterChef* strays furthest away from the British format. The focus on cooking ability in this version is marginal. Instead, the Russian producers' approach to the show focuses on the harshest reality television elements like humiliation, conflict, and failure Oren (2013) described. Trying to produce a lot of interactions and reactions amongst show contestants. The Endemol Shine Group's production team felt that the food was not the most crucial aspect of the show because, historically, the country has not developed its cooking in comparison to countries like France and Italy. During the flying production visits, the format licensors had to propose only simple culinary challenges from their international encyclopedias of successful mystery boxes and pressure tests. For example, countries such as the United States, the United Kingdom, and France have all performed the croquembouche challenge in their versions, which is essentially the formation of a pyramid of donut-like choux pastries cemented with caramel. This a complex challenge that the Endemol Shine Group pre-scripted for its international adaptations.

Since the Russian licensees could not handle as sophisticated a challenge, the flying production team suggested they bake apple tarts instead, which was a much more straightforward task by comparison (Anastasio, Interview: Amsterdam, January 2016). In order to win over Russian broadcasters, the Endemol Shine Group had to allocate more creative freedom to the local broadcasters and allow them to produce more of a reality show instead of a cooking competition show. This was a risk the *format* brand had to take to win the licensing agreement, a move that solely comes down to dollars and cents. Sometimes compromise is the only way to satisfy the local audience, similar to the localization process of *Celebrity MasterChef* on Danish television.

## *Denmark*

In Denmark, the amateur *MasterChef* format was referred to as 'a real failure' from the flying producers of the show since the local licensees superseded many of the guidelines from the production bible. The adaptation seemed to get lost in translation, and no matter how many meetings the flying production team had with their local producers, the show simply did not work.

Then, Endemol Shine Group made the right decision to license the *Celebrity MasterChef* format which was less concerned about the contestants' cooking skillset and instead was more focused on celebrities who approached challenges in a funny and ironic way. Anastasio described how the team was able to come to this creative solution that has enabled the long-term success of the Danish *Celebrity* version:

It's difficult to create something that is 100%. In my experience, I know for sure now after 100 trips if you enter a situation or enter a room of broadcasters that have a very aggressive confrontational attitude, that's not going to bring you anything good. This job is about listening to all sorts of people. Many people think you go into the room and you tell people what to do. No, actually you sit down, and you listen to them because by listening to them you understand what they want out of this show, the vision they have. You try to use your expertise to make their vision come true... it's something you really need to feel within your gut and if you do not agree with them, then you fail, because I often agree. When I don't agree people listen to me quite a lot because there is a reason why (Anastasio, Interview: Amsterdam, January, 2016).

Adaptation requires a balancing act. Format flying producers, like Anastasio, continually encounter stressful negotiations between what is locally suitable and what is in the best interest of the show economically. As a format transcends borders, new translations of the format emerge. Within the majority of the *MasterChef* adaptations, the format tends to position traditional cuisines of that region as the centerpiece of the show. By examining territories like Denmark and Russia, we can see that licensors adjust the narrative to take account of the fact that food cannot always lead the program or attract audiences. Instead, they incorporate elements from harsher reality shows, as established in the American and Australian versions. European countries, like France, Spain, and Italy, have an excellent cooking legacy by comparison. Format licensors can be more food-focused and produce a show that spotlights the advanced culinary traditions and techniques from their local heritage in order to win audiences. In these countries, food drives the narrative.

## *China*

The Chinese adaptation of *MasterChef* took a unique journey. *MasterChef* was one of the first cooking shows to air on primetime Chinese channels. In the past, programs about cooking in China were restricted to daytime television viewing and pertained primarily to home cooks and aspiring chefs. From the start, the Chinese broadcasting team found it difficult to take advice from the flying producers, simply because they found a format about food to be too difficult for their audience to understand. In addition, they were unable to see the value in the show's narrative elements, such as the transformations and the journeys of the amateur contestants developing into master chefs. According to Anastasio (Interview: Amsterdam, January, 2016), they did not expect the emphasis on food to resonate emotionally with their viewers.

Another important aspect Endemol Shine Group had to get across to the Chinese broadcasters was that the show was not just a game show or about winning money and prizes. Nor was it about fighting between the contestants (Anastasio, Interview: Amsterdam, January, 2016). Instead, the core element of what most audiences liked when they watched *MasterChef* in the UK, and even Australia and America, were the personal journeys the show told from start to finish. Trying to liaise with the Chinese production team before Endemol Shine Group merged between 21<sup>st</sup> Century Fox's Shine Group and Apollo's Endemol and CORE Media Group, also posed a big challenge. Before the merger, Shine did not have as many offices around the world, so the majority of their clients were third-party clients which meant that Shine had less brand protection to see what occurred on a global scale. Now, since the merger, Endemol Shine Group has commissioned a team on the ground to work directly with the local Chinese broadcasting team in order to protect their brand reputation, to provide a better service and increase the show's level of success.

## *India*

Since *MasterChef* has been internationalized for nearly a decade, Endemol Shine Group has been able to establish an experienced production team, equipped with the knowledge to foster a deep understanding of how their format can work across a wide variety of countries and cultures. A prominent example of this occurred during the rollout of the format in India.

Through negotiation between the flying production team and the local licensees, one season of the show consisted of solely vegetarian challenges thanks to collective decision making. The reason for this was that vegetarian food is more common and more respected in India. Unfortunately, the season did not acquire as high a rating as the network had hoped for, but as Anastasio has put it, the local producers insisted that this was a cultural need that had to be respected (Anastasio, Interview: Amsterdam, January, 2016). Countries such as China and India have made the internationalization process somewhat challenging for *MasterChef*'s flying producers. Knowing which elements to pull from the original format and how much freedom to allocate to local producers has been an arduous yet rewarding journey for licensors.

## 5.6 Conclusion

Formats that can transcend cultures and gain local cultural value throughout the internationalization process are found to be the most likely to achieve success (Esser and Jensen, 2015). This chapter has examined this notion by taking a close look at the internationalization of the food television show format and by examining how formats such as Endemol Shine Group's *MasterChef* have encountered new, creative territories. Television production companies such as Endemol Shine Group and FremantleMedia have done this by increasing their international brand awareness. This coupled with the recent rise in demand for food-oriented media has led to investment in high-quality cooking shows all over the world. It appears that programs such as Endemol Shine Group's *MasterChef* have been successful in capturing more market opportunities thanks to such investment.

Building these international relationships has helped offset the costs of production for British format brands by sharing risks with their format licensees, as well as by making it increasingly difficult to replicate such high-quality productions without having paid access to extensive show materials, such as a production bible or access to expert know-how from the format production teams. The investment into highly valuable production has also allowed infringers to become easier to spot and, in most cases, fail before purchasing a license.

Beyond the need to defend a format against copyright infringement, there are additional obstacles that the producers of food formats face, some of which cannot be controlled, such as financial constraints and governmental requirements.

Having explored the questions posed in the introduction of this chapter, two main conclusions can be taken away from the adaptation process of food television show formats. Firstly, the members of the local production team, i.e. the licensees, are central to the acceptance of a food television show format into their adapted territory. The changing nature of format negotiation relies mostly on local input and is symptomatic of an institutional shift towards the importance of the development of national identity on television, rather than importing a global product with little cultural significance. The context of national identity is always a conversation concerning the negotiation process and is 'constituted in and through the relations to each other,' thus, there is a need to create a more dynamic view of how groups 'recompose and redefine their boundaries' (Morley, 1992b: 65-67). Nevertheless, it is not safe to assume that all local broadcasters can determine the best way to produce a show. When local broadcasters are granted too much creative freedom, format failure can arise.

Secondly, sometimes the needs of the television format brand overshadow the cultural needs of the local licensees. An experienced flying production team and the detailed production bible will know everything about the show, but there are specific nuances and traditional television elements that must be added as the format travels. Television brands that fail to develop an understanding of local tastes and sensibilities will lessen the chance of a show's success. Doyle (2006: 110) explains that brand values must be translated in a way that: 'sits comfortably with domestic tastes and avoids provoking local prejudices or treading on sensitivities.' Some food television show formats have failed due to a mixture of licensees ignoring the guidelines provided within the production bibles or licensors refusing to recognize the needs of local audiences. Some examples include the American adaptations of Channel 4's *The Great British Bake Off*, CBS' *The Great American Baking Competition*, and ABC's *Jamie's American Food Revolution*. Collaboration, above all else, is essential to the negotiation process between format licensors and licensees.

Food on television should be indicative of national identity. Whether it is the decision to introduce a strictly vegetarian season of *MasterChef* in India or choosing to bake an apple tart instead of a croquembouche in Russia, any form of food programming should be inherently linked to a nation's food culture.

Format producers have abandoned the obligatory 'this is how you do it' approach when internationalizing food television show formats abroad. Instead, they have started to welcome local input and have adjusted their efforts on establishing cultural collaboration. Cultural collaboration results in a mixed identification of how a format can be positively embraced into new indigenous media societies, without changing its core brand messages and ethos. It is essential that format brands understand the cultural differences and similarities of the licensee's culture in order to make adjustments to their format and the way they do business cross-culturally (Keinonen, 2016; Morley, 1992b; Rohn, 2015). Keinonen (2016) explains that as global conglomerates continue to internationalize into local markets, format brands are faced with the issue of assimilating their traditions with those of the local producers.

Based on the responses that have emerged from this investigation, there appears to be a greater need for social and cultural conversations when transferring content on a global scale. Long-term, successful business relationships, which require more time and effort through the adaptation process, tend to develop more impactful programs, particularly within the culinary television formats. Globalizing media products and services has opened doors to new markets and has created opportunities for format brands. In doing so, format companies are now required to adjust to the demands of the market values of the territory they export to in a way that acknowledges their geographical, economic and cultural needs (Moran, 1998; Picard, 2002). Most of all, media products, such as television formats, engage in global agreements to increase ownership, capital, product demand and to acquire more market share than they would be serving the domestic market (Picard, 2002). However, Cross (2000) argues that cross-border partnerships can result in disagreements given the distance involved and the need to negotiate across different international business cultures.

The last few chapters have explained how food television formats translate well across borders and have increasingly become embedded within primetime slots all over the world.

What makes the cooking show format so unique is that food has always been a very influential contributor to the formation of local culture. Traditions, especially when told through the lens of a hybrid reality show, have considerable potential to spark an interest in local audiences. The following chapter will discuss how food television show format brands have pursued additional revenue streams by rolling out their product offerings and local traditions onto new multi-platforms. It will examine how format brands cope with many of the same risks that have been involved within the globalization of their format onto linear television.





## Chapter Six: Multi-Platform Strategies

As noted in the previous chapters, food television show format brands frequently undergo a series of political, economic and cultural procedures. Format licensors adapt their products' storylines and elements to new countries with the hope of creating a successful, localized version of the original show. Now, to procure further success, producers of food television formats are adapting their business practices in order to adjust to the advancements in digital technology. Therefore, at the core of this chapter is a broader argument about the nature of the food television landscape and the pressures managers face in order to adapt their content to suit digital audiences. Contextualized by existing academic research, this chapter examines the transition of the food television show format onto digital platforms and how format licensors and networks employ international multi-platform strategies. Furthermore, this chapter answers the third key research question, which is: How has the development of formatted television (around food) exploited multi-platform distribution?

This chapter also answers the supporting questions for consideration which include:

1. How have formatted cooking shows exploited online, multi-platform distribution outlets and social media channels (within their business practices)?
2. What are the commercial advantages food format licensors and licensees seek by investing in digital modes of distribution and by curating digital content?
3. What risks and challenges do producers of food television formats face by investing in multi-platform strategies?

The outline of this chapter is as follows: Section 6.2 focuses on the unique ways in which food television format brands invest in and execute multi-platform strategies in order to attract wider audiences, create new revenue streams and to extend their brand's reach. This section provides a better understanding of how multi-platform technologies enable closer engagement between format brands and viewers in innovative ways that were not possible before the digital era.

Section 6.3 will investigate the risks and challenges of multi-platform adoption, such as the costs of adapting content to new platforms, risks to a brand's integrity, issues of temporality and show spoilers when curating social media campaigns. Section 6.4 reveals a risk management processes for food television show format brands table based on the findings from all three findings chapters. This risk management process identifies, measures and addresses the potential commercial risks media brands encounter when attempting the internationalization of established successful television formats. The table created in this section brings together all of the managerial processes that have been engaged with and discussed throughout this thesis. Furthermore, it combines the core findings of this investigation and cross-analyzes them with existing academic literature. Finally, Section 6.5 includes a summary of the critical insights about the cooking television format on digital screens, as part of a broader discussion on multi-platform theory.

## **6.2 Multi-Platform Strategies for Food Television Show Formats: Commercial Advantages and Extending Brand Reach**

The two most obvious advantages for a television format producer wishing to distribute their show's content across multiple platforms are: the ability to create additional revenue streams and to attract new audiences. In the words of David Griffith, the vice president of digital ad sales and marketing for Scripps Networks Interactive, multi-platform strategies allow brands such as the Food Network and the Cooking Channel 'to be everywhere' their consumers are (Griffith, Interview: New York City, November, 2015).

Griffith's statement charts a shift from the traditional broadcasting strategy to a new age multi-platform strategy which acknowledges changes in consumption practices and therefore offers alternative viewing options to capture the largest market share for a format brand. Likewise, Roscoe (2004:364) believes that television programs, in general, are: 'no longer produced (or engaged with) in isolation from other media texts, and new viewing practices are emerging.' The Executive Producer of ABC's *The Chew*, Gordon Elliot, is confident that traditional network television continues to thrive in today's multimedia environment.

According to Elliot, the media managers of this daytime food talk show employ a multi-platform strategy that includes a fusion of technologies both new and old that, in turn, supports the promotion of other ABC products, particular on primetime. He said:

Roku, HULU, AOL. They are all in that race. Ultimately, all of these screens are getting merged. The distribution form doesn't matter. It is whether or not you connect with the audience and producers of successful content that will only become more valuable. Network television is the strongest and safest. [Daytime] television on broadcast networks serves a very important role in pushing primetime promotion. Primetime is a multi-billion-dollar business and your daytime audience is sitting there ready to be marketed to (Elliot, Interview, New York City: November, 2015).

Elliot's examination places the importance of linear television above any VoD, Subscription Video on Demand service (sVoD), or pay-per-view model, but at the same time recognizes the roles they play in providing high-quality visual content and engaging experiences for consumers. His belief that 'network television is the strongest and safest' may appear to be built upon his many years of experience working in television, but there is evidence to support his claim. In the Communications Market 2016 report, Ofcom (2016) revealed that linear television still reigns as the most popular platform for television, at least in the UK. Therefore, the integration of such technologies has added perceived value to network television rather than overtaking linear television.

The Internet is home to many web pages geared towards an interest in food, where those who enjoy cooking can flick through recipes, watch instructional videos or become better educated about food through online blogs and resources.

Other browsers may hop onto these sites because food provides an instinctual degree of pleasure given that food is one of life's necessities (Dejmanee, 2015). One of the earliest websites and online forums dedicated to cooking is the American site *Epicurious*. *Epicurious* started its journey as a recipe database in 1998 and has now evolved into a multi-platform food destination hosting over 330,000 recipes, an extensive video gallery, blog and millions of social media followers and downloads in the App Store and Google Play for smartphones and tablets (Epicurious, 2017).

The former editor-in-chief of Epicurious, Tanya Steel, discussed many of the modifications the website has made over the last twenty years in order to adapt to new technologies. She believes the key to their success now is the integration of engaging and robust content on social media platforms and mobile applications:

What I always say with my consulting hat on is that everything needs to be seen through the lens of two things: one being social media and the other is the phone. Those are the critical components of any sort of content whatsoever. Once you figure those points out then the rest is added on. (Steel, Interview: New York City, November 2015).

While her views on multi-platform strategies are in relation to the ongoing success of a popular food website, Steel's point about making mobile-conscious business decisions is beneficial to food television producers due to the significant rise in smartphone penetration worldwide. According to the 2016 ICT Facts and Figures report, 95% of the world's population, or seven billion people, have mobile network coverage in their living area and 84% of them are connected via mobile-broadband networks of 3G or higher (ITU, 2016). Given the widespread availability of mobile technology, television networks have found new opportunities to attract audiences and alternative revenue streams through the use of mobile technology and other digital modes of distribution. From an evolutionary economics perspective, Doyle (2010) argues that media industries who fail to adopt these new technologies will most likely encounter missed opportunities for growth and could run the risk of extinction. Extending brand reach is one of the most important reasons why producers of food television formats invest in multi-platform strategies.

### *Extending Brand Reach*

Multi-platform strategies provide opportunities to increase the audiences of both commercial and public service broadcasters but do so in different ways in the UK. Commercial networks invest in nonlinear on-demand content in order to generate additional advertising revenue and online sponsorship whereas public service broadcasters, such as the BBC, are publicly funded in the UK by a national license fee (Chalaby, 2016). Since advertising revenue is not an option for the British PsBs like the BBC, the investment into their own VoD service, the BBC iPlayer, was a forward-thinking approach aimed at their audience.

The BBC iPlayer has significantly helped build engaging relationships with their television products and viewers and has better positioned itself as the strongest public service provider in the UK (Bennett and Strange, 2008).

Ofcom's 2016 Communications Market report confirmed this and revealed that the iPlayer was watched by 32% of adults, compared to 16% of adult audiences who watched the commercial VoD, Sky19, and another 16% of adult audiences who watched the non-broadcaster VoD service, Netflix. The report also highlighted how linear television had been gradually in decline in the UK, down from 92% of viewership in 2010 to 83% by the end of 2015 while the use of on-demand services and recordings has almost doubled. Furthermore, recorded television, or time-shifted viewing, accounts for 10% of overall consumption practices in the UK, with on-demand accounting for 7% in the same time period (Ofcom, 2016). Though the findings of the report claim that linear television still reigns as the most popular platform for television, it also suggests that digital viewership has grown at a rapid pace.

Many media managers of food television formats have recognized this shift from linear to digital and have invested in proactive multi-platform strategies in order to capture a wider audience. An example of this occurred in 2015 when the British food television show format, BBC One's *MasterChef*, found significant growth in its catch up consumption via the BBC iPlayer. The executive producer of the show, David Ambler, recognized a notable increase in *MasterChef*'s television ratings after the show was made available on iPlayer. He explained:

The numbers are growing on catch up. Our ratings bizarrely have held for over 12 years. Our last series, our 11th series was our highest rated series we have ever had in absolute numbers. Catch up is now an increasing share of consolidated numbers. It is up to sort of 15-25% on catch up. I think we all have to accept catch up if you have busy lives. People do watch on catch up (Ambler, Interview: London, November, 2015).

In this example, catch up television may not have accounted for the majority of viewership, but it did account for nearly a quarter of the show's ratings that year.

This viewing trend implores two questions: would the viewers Ambler refers to with the 'busy lives' have gone out of their way to watch the show without the opportunity to catch up or would they have tuned in to a different program that was available on demand? There are no definitive answers to these questions, but ratings data provides some insight from which to draw conclusions about who is watching and how they are doing it. In both the UK and the US, the 12-24 age bracket is beginning to abandon linear television viewing and accounts for the largest percentage of online television viewers over the last five years (Nielsen, 2016; Ofcom, 2016).

According to Nielsen's Total Audience Report for Q2 2016, American teens aged 12-17 experienced a 13.5% drop in weekly linear TV viewing and a 36.2% reduction rate over the last five years. The millennial television audience aged between 18-24 experienced an 8.2% drop in weekly linear TV viewing and a 38% reduction rate over the last five years. The report revealed that there is more justification for why there has been an increase in online users given that there are thousands of video sites and apps accessible online. According to the report, adults visited 55 PC sites and used 28 smartphone apps on average in a month (Nielsen, 2016). Tanya Steel believes that ignoring changing consumption patterns would be unwise and explains the current situation within the context of her children. She said:

What's so fascinating to me is watching how my teens consume media, because they basically never turn the television on. Never, never, never. They do occasionally with a live sporting event and that's it. One of them only exclusively has not turned on a television since he was about five. He exclusively watches everything through the computer. He's very up on things, although everything is through the lens of YouTube. The other will occasionally watch sporting events and watches a lot of shows I watched in my life on the computer like *Monty Python and the Holy Grail*. He would never think to go to the TV, search on Netflix and watch on our big 20 whatever it is, 30-inch screen. He will look on it on his laptop and search on YouTube and find it. All the kids watch everything on their phones and on their iPads (Steel, Interview: New York City, November 2015).

Though anecdotal, the scenario Steel describes can pose a challenge for commercial broadcasters that rely primarily on advertising around scheduled, linear television. This paradigm shift was what forced the television company, Scripps Network Interactive, to look for alternative advertising solutions online. Griffith explained how these changes in consumption have brought success to Food Network and the Cooking Channel (the brand's two food-dedicated stations) due to their extensive development of more competitive and in-depth multi-platform strategies targeted to the 'digital first' and younger audiences. Griffith describes how Scripps Networks Interactive has executed an over-the-top solution that incorporates digital advertising and product sponsorship agreements across all of the major digital players in the US. He says:

We're trying to be everywhere our consumers are and everywhere our consumers are engaging with this type of content. I think that the focus in the media industry, in general, is how you engage with younger audiences that don't spend a lot of time necessarily watching traditional TV and spend most of the time on their mobile devices and hitting platforms like Netflix and some of those other platforms as an alternative to broadcasters or network television. We have distribution deals with all the major partners. We have an over-the-top solution which is available on IOS devices but we're getting ready to move onto Roku and to Apple TV platforms. We are on the Netflix platform and then we have a distribution network which is our own digital video player that allows us to be integrated into partner sites, the same way as YouTube allows you to. We have partnerships with other food-related sites and other portals like AOL and Yahoo that allows our content to be integrated into their food content within their destinations and they will engage with consumers on those platforms (Griffith, Interview: New York City, November, 2015).

It is evident that Scripps Networks Interactive has taken proactive steps regarding technology and that, through their efforts, their media managers have made conscious considerations about younger audiences and digital adopters. While Griffith's position suggests that their advertising strategy is designed with the consumer in mind, it also demonstrates the number of opportunities commercial networks can pursue to further their overall digital presence.

In the case of Food Network and the Cooking Channel, embedding their content onto food-focused websites and online portals allows them to both broaden and narrow down their audiences thanks to concise digital data that is collected from online browsing history and tracking (Ryan, 2014). Both commercial and public service broadcasters broaden their audiences by extending their online reach which in turn keeps them competitive in the market. They narrow down their audiences by targeting their promotional materials to audience segments that are most relevant to their genre, which is in this case cooking shows or shows based around food (Ryan, 2014).

Food format brands, such as Endemol Shine Group, can now offer a multi-platform advertising portfolio to their licensees airing adaptations on commercial networks that allow an advertiser to sponsor content within and around the linear format, as well as through online means via product placement. In this scenario, an advertising company pays a television network to incorporate specific products, usually food related, into the show (Donders, Pauwels and Loisen, 2013). The co-executive producer of Fox's *MasterChef* in Los Angeles, Adam Cooper, described how the show had established product placement agreements with major American companies. Cooper described how the big discount American department store, Walmart, made an agreement with the American version of *MasterChef* that would require the hosts and the script to specifically mention and incorporate their signature 'Walmart Steaks' into multiple episodes of the live show and within the commercial ad breaks. Without a multi-platform strategy, Walmart would have only been able to reach the television viewers that tuned in to watch the show. Now, their branded steaks can be seen by a much wider audience online through catch up television viewing on Hulu and through Fox's website and press clips that are distributed across a large network of online news outlets and social media pages (Cooper, Interview: Los Angeles, November, 2016). The pressing issue of not appeasing advertisers or losing funding for commercial cooking shows became another strong motivator behind the Food Network's active pursuit to develop creative partnerships and new means of advertising.

Griffith has spoken about a particular aspect of Food Network and the Cooking Channel's digital strategy that has helped monetize their multimedia productions domestically and abroad. He says:



That's primarily what we do when new shows come out. Whether it is content we create custom for an advertiser or if it is integrated into the show. How you create an experience that allows them to become part of the actual content and having a deeper level of engagement than just an ad placed around the content is key. Digital platforms have made that more relevant than ever (Griffith, Interview: New York City, November, 2015).

According to Griffith, many of Scripps Networks Interactive's competitors face difficulties in allowing brands to integrate organically into both digital and linear ad placements, but he explained how his team had invested a great deal of research into finding ways to create connections between a brand and their content (Griffith, Interview: New York City, November, 2015). Griffith has attributed much of their success to creating deeper connections between the audience and food through smart advertising strategies and the availability of extensive audience data online. Similar to the early programming of Music Television (MTV) in America that helped to support and advertise recording artists, the programming on the Food Network highlights not only cooks, but the associated food products and brands they use. Ketchum (2005) describes how this form of advertising can offer viewers a type of pleasure, which is linked to consumption. This confirms what Griffith explains above with regards to building a connection between viewers and brands or what he deems as allowing the audience 'to become part of the actual content' (Griffith, Interview: New York City, November, 2015). Within this consumption-driven world, the Food Network promises pleasure of either fantasy-based or real sensual delights in both their programs and advertisements. Now, with the introduction of multi-platform technologies and online data tracking, viewers can engage in a 'converged experience,' that pleases both audiences and advertisers (Chalaby, 2016; Ketchum, 2005; Napoli, 2012).

#### *Closer Audience Engagement through Interactivity and Social Media*

Within a highly interactive media environment, television formats have access to an unprecedented level of marketing information about digital television audiences thanks to extensive and more precise Internet tracking data (Napoli, 2012). Dynamic changes in media technology allow format brands and advertisers to follow an online trail of audience behavior and browsing preferences (Napoli, 2010).

Having access to online audience data and the development of recommendation-based algorithms (such as the Netflix algorithm) designed for consumers and based on their online viewing habits allows format owners to remain competitive and to: 'satisfy a demand, and build public-facing brands that are recognized by advertisers and audiences alike' (Chalaby, 2016: 46). Viewers can now log on to a food format brand's website or social media channel before or after a show to download recipes and have the chance to chat directly with show chefs and contestants (Ketchum, 2005).

Television licensors and licensees make use of advertising data for several reasons. Winning advertising revenue, having the power to monetize audiences with more accurate data reporting, and the ability to obtain more 'predictive power' in order to reduce risk over which programs and episodes to produce (or choose to make available online) are some of the many reasons (Napoli, 2016). The chance to increase linear television viewing by delivering a more interactive experience with the use of second-screening technologies is another benefit (Wilson, 2016). These technologies encourage users to follow updates on their brand's social channels and mobile and web applications while watching the show (Wilson, 2016). The availability and breadth of this data are unique when compared to the information available in the pre-digital era, in that format producers have more knowledge about their consumers than they could have ever dreamed of. One of the most recent developments in television viewing trends is 'multi-screening' (also known as 'second screening') where audiences are frequently accessing and using second or third screens while watching their favorite programs and movies (Lynch, 2016; Moe, Poell and van Dijck, 2016). Multi-screening is facilitated by the readily available access to the Internet via laptops, smartphones, and tablets (McDowell, 2015). From a brand commercialization point of view, Sloan (2014) observes that: 'Twitter has spent much of the past year touting its symbiotic relationship with TV, promoting its ability to harness data and insights for advertisers to reach those viewers.'

Social media has enabled food television shows to grow their fan base organically and at a rapid pace. In particular, television producers of factual formats (i.e. game shows, competitions, talent shows, etc.) have a better understanding of their audiences thanks to the social sentiment data and audience viewing information that is accessible online.

These producers make use of this information to drive interaction and participation around their programs as part of a fan-building strategy (Roscoe, 2004). There are many commercial benefits that social media networking can offer to both format brands and social media fans. Ryan (2014: 155) describes five positive impacts which effectively managed social media has on enhancing an organization's online profile. These five impacts include creating and satisfying happy customers, hosting a space to provide feedback, gather insights to enhance their product (or program), evangelize or (widely promote their show in attempts to convert online browsers into customers or viewers) and finally, to attract new customers and business.

Social media networking sites, such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram, also have the capacity to incite highly interactive computer-mediated communication that mimics the practices of face-to-face communications (Rafaeli and Sudweeks, 1997). These platforms allow users to 'maintain, create and augment connections with other people of similar interests' on both a person-to-person and person-to-institution level (Abanoz, 2012: 76). Food television show format producers have sought to build their person-to-institution relationships to establish a deeper connection between a show and its fans that in turn drives an interactive discussion around their brand. Once a significant social media following is established (i.e., over a thousand followers), the show can use their digital status to extend their show's reach by solidifying their online relationship with existing fans or by attracting new ones. This is achieved through the curation of trend-worthy content that is tagged by topic with the use of custom hashtags. Hashtags have been used to reach as many people as possible around a real-time event, such as the airing of a television series, and allow television brands to track conversations around their show (Abanoz, 2012).

Out of the leading networking sites mentioned, Twitter is seemingly the easiest platform to monitor social chatter around a show. Twitter is seen as the social networking site that: 'best offers access to, and monitoring of, audience responses to output (including adverts as well as program content)' (Wilson, 2016: 179). Fox's *MasterChef* makes use of Twitter's hashtag function to encourage fans to tweet (send a public message on Twitter) and enter into a global discussion about what happens on the show during live viewing, a concept referred to as 'second-screening' (Caldwell, 2003; Wilson, 2016).

The co-executive producer of the American adaptation, Cooper, explains the multi-pronged approach their marketing team employs to encourage second-screening via Twitter hashtags and live showings: 'We have hashtags placed during the show. They've done research and they figured out what gets the most hits and what points of the show gets the most hits and that's where we insert #mysterybox or #pressuretest' (Cooper, Interview: Los Angeles, November, 2016). In this scenario, custom hashtags appear during the show which allows the format to narrow down the social chatter to an exact moment of the show. Tracking hashtags allow the producers of the format to receive a better understanding of who is watching at that moment in time. Implementing the most reliable and successful hashtags that television viewers would most likely use around each show is an integral part of a second screening strategy for the television industry in general (Lynch, 2016).

According to the head of social media Endemol UK, Aaron Eccles, most reality formats tend to have a 'big social element now,' so by utilizing hashtags throughout the live show, producers receive a much larger reach and noticeable spikes in audience ratings appear that had not existed before the web (Eccles, Interview: London, January, 2016). The most popular hashtags around a food television show are normally a variation of the show's name such as #masterchef that is overlaid during the live show (Cooper, Interview: Los Angeles, November, 2016). In 2016, viewers were encouraged to use the abbreviated hashtag #gbbo for BBC's *The Great British Bake Off* by the show which incentivized this by automatically installing a white tent emoji<sup>6</sup> after the tag when it was used on Twitter (Foster, 2016).

In an attempt to attain more followers or attract more likes and social interactions, many social media users tend to adopt a trending hashtag that has been recommended as a 'trending' topic on social media platforms and try to work it into posts they create, in this case involving food. These social media users might utilize Twitter and Instagram hashtags named after popular cooking shows in relation to the dishes they have cooked or baked at home, ordered at a restaurant or if they were inspired by a photo online.

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<sup>6</sup>An emoji or an emoticon is a digital icon used to express a particular emotion and is popularly used on smartphones and social media platforms.

Some authors suggest this is because the world is undergoing a 'food porn' movement, whereby people are posting enticing images of hedonistic-style dishes onto social media as a form of ecstasy (Dejmanee, 2015; McDonnell, 2016; Wocke, 2016). Wocke (2016: 235) explained this phenomenon as follows: 'the resulting gastronomic 'pornography' serves at once as a symbol of status and privilege, but also as a tool of inspiration, discovery, and delight, reinforcing the objectified nature of avant-garde cuisine, where food is the chef's artistic vehicle of expression.' McDonnell (2016) believes the capturing and viewing of gourmet images of food to be a form of food porn. She defines food porn as a voyeuristic practice that consists of: 'a set of visual aesthetics that emphasizes the pleasurable, sensual dimensions of food, derived from (but not employed) in human sexuality.' Even the American celebrity chef, Anthony Bourdain, talks of food pornography on television and in the media as a form of: 'looking at people doing things that you're not going to do yourself anytime soon' (Shapiro, 2005).

Tanya Steel agrees that there has been a notable trend to post and enjoy sensual food images distributed by food media producers in both television and print. She says:

I think it's critical now more than ever that visuals really rule the day now that people are so used to seeing via the lens of Instagram. If the content is not overtly visual and graphic, you are going to lose... At the end of the day, if you want to make money, [the digital content] has got to be highly visual (Steel, Interview: New York City, November 2015).

This idea of food porn is one that is greatly visual and has become increasingly popular on Instagram and other media. This may be due to the adoption of a more visually focused approach across all lifestyle formats (Thomas, 2008), but there undoubtedly is a unique link between food and sex. An example of this appeared on the Food Network South Africa's Twitter when the social media manager, Katelyn Williams, was forced to make a decision to either humor a trending comment around food porn or disregard it to act in a more politically correct manner. According to Williams, one of the show's online followers claimed that the voiceover in a promotional video sounded 'saucy' and 'pornographic' when the ad spoke in a seductive tone about a dark chocolate Oreo cheesecake with salted caramel, that was pictured in the clip.

She explained how she dealt with the situation and described the importance of intentionally curating digital content with controversial elements to stimulate more reactions.

She didn't mean it in a rude way she said: "is it me or are the Food Network fillers really saucy?" I didn't say anything else but "bow chicka wow wow" and in hindsight maybe I was admitting it was saucy. In a way, I didn't really say anything wrong and it actually got 70 retweets because people just thought that it was kind of funny, but you know that's what I'm talking about when we try to get a little bit controversial. The cheekiness really works (Williams, Interview: Cape Town, May, 2016).

Williams' decision to participate, albeit carefully, in what would have been a provocative subject of the past, indicates a trend in popular culture and the changing nature of how audiences perceive food and sex. Williams was appointed to her role based on the popularity of her local baking blog and not as a direct employee of the Food Network, which is why she has been more inclined to take calculated risks that she knows would work in her home country. Keeping up-to-date with social media marketing strategies and food hashtags, no matter how controversial they may sound, is proving to be very important to food formats and networks. If they decide not to engage with their digital followers, they could disappoint their fan base and would be missing out on the opportunity to obtain an optimal digital footprint. Second screening offers new ways to engage with audiences through mobile apps and social media channels and add commercial value to television brands (Wilson, 2016). Apps, like BBC iPlayer, are designed to harvest viewer data through enhanced engagement before, during and after the broadcast of a program. This presents an interesting paradox, for: 'the importance of the social is acknowledged, but as a means to gain viewer attention, that is to say, the commercial imperatives driving innovation to reduce audience connectivity to the commodification of attention' (Wilson, 2016: 178). With regards to this complex and somewhat contradictory paradox, Wilson (2016) shines a light on the shared importance of creating media content that is aimed at encouraging social engagement and pursuing an increase in the physical viewership of a program or format.

Audiences feel connected to food show formats more now through their ability to communicate directly with onscreen talent, including celebrity chefs, judges, and contestants via social media channels. Establishing a digital relationship via Instagram, Facebook and Twitter can help to build trust between a product brand and its followers. This ties in with the conception that social media technologies have distinctly transformed fan behavior towards celebrities and that a 'para-social relation distance' has diminished (Barron, 2015). This relationship Barron (2015) refers to is one in which fans are familiar with and feel as if they know celebrities, whereas the celebrities have little to no knowledge of their online fans. Since Twitter permits fans to write directly to particular celebrities, it appears that the media has re-addressed and made alterations to the balance of the para-social realm (Barron, 2015). Boyle and Kelly (2012: 144) believe that: 'social networking provides added interactive and instantaneous elements by allowing the other users to comment and post messages and by revealing the location of the celebrity or the types of activities they are engaged in at any given time.' With regards to the food television industry, Henderson (2011) believes that celebrity chefs can be seen as public figures in that they prove to be of valuable importance both 'individually' and 'collectively' and notes that the majority of them are active users on social media. In the past, chefs made a name for themselves from rave restaurant reviews. Henderson (2011) argues that the widespread adoption of social media by top chefs has transformed their names into brands and attracted new revenue streams. She says: 'branded lines of food and drink, kitchen utensils and household goods act as multiple revenue sources and the output of other companies and even causes are also endorsed.

The contribution of the media, especially television, should not be overlooked and can lead to large audiences within and beyond the country of production in front of whom personality and talents can be exhibited (Henderson, 2011: 617). Associated literature and magazines are also promoted around television programs, which again results in the successful expansion of brand reach and the acquisition of additional revenue sources. For example, Jamie Oliver has successfully engaged social media by way of Twitter, Facebook, MySpace (in the past) and YouTube. This, in turn, has helped Oliver build a reputable brand both online and offline.

However, it is important to remember that some chefs prefer to separate the promotion of themselves as a celebrity and their restaurants when using social media platforms. Either way, chefs tend to focus their social media marketing content on their strong reputation in the industry and their unique culinary artistry through powerful images, videos, and taglines (Henderson, 2011). Mark Turner, a New York City reality television agent at Abrams Artists Agency, describes how their factual programming department focuses primarily on signing digital influencers or building an online brand profile for their existing clients. He explains:

Many of the popular reality shows like the *Real Housewives* franchises, *Deadliest Catch*, *Cake Boss*, *Street Outlaws*, *Wicked Tuna*, are all thriving docu-soaps. Something my department really focuses on now is finding digital influencers and these are talent that have large social media followings primarily on YouTube and Instagram, which would be the two most prevalent platforms. With them, we are doing a lot of branded content deals to do a video that will live on the influencer's YouTube channel as well as the brand's. In many cases, the talent we have made a substantial amount of money. There's obviously talent that we do not represent that are huge that are making just enormous amounts of money in this endeavor. With these influencers, the primary way we are monetizing them is through brand and contract deals, but we are also looking to get them hosting opportunities and looking to get them on television in other ways (Turner, Interview: New York City, September, 2016).

Based on what Turner describes, the bottom line is that new distribution platforms equal new opportunities for breeding brand ambassadors and amassing social reach. Gordon Ramsay is a prime example within the cooking television format industry. Ramsay may be one of the biggest brand ambassadors and television personalities out of all food show formats (Bennett, 2011). His celebrity status has added to the high number of views of many of the video clips and social media posts by Fox's *MasterChef*. Cooper gave an example of this from the seventh season of the show when the producers circulated a three-minute video clip via various distribution channels and news outlets of Ramsay conducting a demo where he was teaching his contestants on the show how to take all of the meat out of a lobster. That press clip was then picked up by one particularly popular blog that was shared so often that the video was viewed over a million times in the first week.



Cooper relates this success to Ramsay's credibility in the industry and a demand for culinary instruction via online channels. He explains:

When you see Gordon cook, more people tune in. If by the end of it you learn what Gordon taught you, then you have educated your audience to stick around seasons in the future...I guess that's the power of the internet and social media. When I need to cook something at home I type the name of it and then I type Gordon Ramsay because I know that it's going to be a good recipe and a better than the average dish online. It's that kind of trust, just knowing he will have the best recipe (Cooper, Interview: Los Angeles, November, 2016).

Fox also added the clip Cooper is referring to on their YouTube channel where it accumulated nearly 2.5 million views. Cooper highlighted Ramsay's expert ability to both entertain and instruct audiences (Cooper, Interview: Los Angeles, November, 2016). Bennett (2011: 108) suggested that 'in the global marketplace of formats, the use of the same personalities,' such as Gordon Ramsay on Fox's *MasterChef*, *MasterChef Juniors*, and *Hell's Kitchen*, 'is demonstrative of the limited substitutability some television personalities achieve.' Furthermore, it verifies that Ramsay's relationship with his fans (online and offline) makes him an excellent ambassador for the brands he represents.

Celebrity chefs are more permanent influencers on the cooking competition format, whereas having new contestants each season can offer another surge in a show's online following, but on a more temporary basis. As mentioned in Chapter Five, many cooking competition show formats cast amateur chefs to compete, making it easy for contestants on the show to become relatable to their audience by location, profession, gender, ethnicity, and other determinants. A key to this format type's success is the relationship between the participant on the show and the home viewer who can be seen as a fly-on-the-wall. As a former winner of BBC One's *MasterChef*, Hannah Miles revealed that many viewers get behind their favorite contestants and formulate strong opinions on why they feel someone should or should not win on that particular talent-driven show (Miles, Interview: London, November, 2015). Now, social media has opened the door to connect audiences with contestants, so viewers or fans have the opportunity to learn even more about a contestant's journey.

Many competition cooking show contestants amass a large social media following and are mentioned and hashtagged by other users throughout an entire show season. Past winners and even runner-ups have utilized their social networking pages to become strong advocates for the show after they have been on and lost the competition.

**Figure 4: Andrew Smyth on Instagram, Brand Ambassador for Channel 4's *The Great British Bake Off***



In 2016, Instagram user 'cakesmyth', also known as Andrew Smyth, one of the finalists on BBC One's *The Great British Bake Off* (now Channel 4's *The Great British Bake Off*) posted this gingerbread man photo and used the show's bespoke hashtag on his page, as shown in Figure 4 above. This Instagram post exemplifies how a food format's brand hashtag can thrive when used by a former contestant on the show. Smyth's use of #gbbo in his post demonstrates how his popularity on Instagram can raise awareness of the brand even weeks after losing that season. In actuality, this image had no relation to the show itself and was not taken during the production of the program (GBBO, 2016). Judging by the context of this post, Smyth was highlighting his superior gingerbread man baking skills which helped raise over £200 for a charity event.

The popularity of this trending post can most likely be linked to Smyth's fan base established while he was on the show and the use of the GBBO hashtag. What both Smyth and Ramsay's popularity on social media suggests is that show producers support and may even encourage their show hosts and contestants to be active on social media. This is only true provided that they adhere to brand guidelines and that they behave professionally and in a likable fashion both on-screen and online.

### **6.3 Costs and Risks of Adaptation**

Food television format producers who invest in multi-platform strategies will come across some, and sometimes more, commercial risks as they do opportunities. These producers and local broadcasters encounter a series of new socioeconomic challenges associated with the digitization of their programs such as budget, issues curating social media content, online adaptation, temporality and additional risks to a brand's reputation that will be explained in this section. In fact, producers of food television show formats face many of the same issues of adaptation online as they do offline. Finding the right location to transfer their format to (i.e., country, culture and even physical medium) is one of the most common issues. To better understand the obstacles that emerge when transferring an online television show onto a television network, a brief case study of YouTube's *Epic Meal Time* transition onto linear television as FYI's *Epic Meal Empire* will be discussed at the end of this section.

#### *Costs of Adapting Content*

The investment in digital platforms can be an expensive and challenging endeavor to manage. Due to budgetary constraints, the high costs associated with multi-platform delivery must be managed and controlled appropriately. Doyle (2010) explains that a common strategic response to the constant conundrum of having to meet audience and advertiser demands for multi-layered 360-degree output from within static or diminishing content budgets has been to focus on fewer, high-impact ideas. Decisions about which digital platforms to adopt and the amount of time and budget to invest in them by show producers varies. These decisions can differ between the same format offered in different locations. Budgets have been a constant issue for the production of television formats and other media across the board.

Contrary to the notion that creating digital content is cheap, there are a number of food format producers who have shifted their investments away from digitally produced content bespoke for ancillary platforms (i.e. recipes, additional web clips on the website, etc.) to more advertising-driven opportunities mentioned in the previous chapter due to the high risks involved. There is one case in particular in which an American celebrity chef was unable to make the transition from television to online television successfully.

After Paula Deen was let go by the Food Network, she created her own subscription video-on-demand platform called *The Paula Deen Network* (PDN) that would charge viewers a monthly fee to access it. Her account of why she chose a subscription model was due to the network's difficulty in attracting enough advertising and online revenue to offset the high costs of production. She said:

These networks are very, very expensive. You're talking about a pile of money to get one started. You are talking in the millions to get one started. I was fortunate to have a partner who wanted to accomplish this, so it's very expensive. Like I said, there's no formula you can go out there to buy and say this is the way to do it, because it's still so new (Deen, Interview: Savannah, December, 2015).

Deen's digital strategy was unprecedented for a celebrity chef. It came as a great surprise that the PDN was not successful given Deen's active social media following and former fan base when she was on the Food Network. Unfortunately, the number of subscriptions to the online network was not high enough to finance the operation. This could also be since digital television adoption in the United States is only gradually growing and is used primarily by the youth demographic (Nielsen, 2016). Still, it is not just Deen that has found difficulty in allocating enough capital to produce and distribute digital food-themed content.

The South African version of Food Network does not have its own VoD and has no opportunity to catch up on missed food shows on their website. According to Williams, the South African Food Network is only allocated a small budget to invest in online strategies in comparison to the US and UK versions. She believes this to be due to a poor economic situation in South Africa and explains:

Locally, satellite television is considered sort of a luxury. The price just went up drastically. Most households can't really afford it, so it's only really reaching your higher, wealthier [audience]. It's considered one of those aspirational things. You've made it if you have a TV kind of thing (Williams, Interview: Cape Town, May, 2016).

In addition to this, Williams described how only a few South African households have access to the internet via an ADSL line at home or through cellular data devices due to the exorbitant costs and barriers to entry. Most of the fans of Food Network in South Africa choose to browse their network brand Facebook and YouTube channels while they are at work between the hours of 10:00 a.m. and 12:00 p.m. and 3:00 p.m. and 5:00 p.m. From Williams' perspective, South Africans must be very selective in what videos they stream outside working hours, since the cost of data is so high. Therefore, the investment in locally produced digital content is not feasible for the South African Food Network unless that content becomes attractive enough to suit mainstream tastes (Williams, Interview: Cape Town, May, 2016). Generally, format producers and media managers adopt a multi-platform approach in order to reap economies of scale and scope (Doyle, 2010). In this case, it would not be economically viable for Food Network South Africa to do so, given that online access is so costly and restricted.

Food formats such as Fox's *MasterChef* have also experienced difficulties in securing adequate funds to curate digital content. Their co-executive producer, Adam Cooper, believes that Fox.com could benefit by creating more digital content, provided budgets were not so limited. At the moment, the network site does not offer an online recipe database to encourage viewers to try out recipes cooked on *MasterChef* as it did with *The Great British Bake Off* on the BBC iPlayer when it aired on BBC One. The winner of the American adaptation of *MasterChef* does get a cookbook that is printed, but only the winner gets the prize of showcasing their recipes from their journey on the show. Other tie-ins with print media include their relationship with *Family Circle Magazine* where the winner of a mystery box challenge would have their recipe of the night featured in the magazine's next edition (Cooper, Interview: Los Angeles, November, 2016). Yet, Fox is missing the opportunity to drive viewers to their websites and to engage with home cooks looking to learn how to make the dish they saw on television.

Cooper describes how Fox's digital strategy for *MasterChef* has been significantly scaled back in terms of the production of unique digital content, as they now create only one clip per year for their network site. He says: 'we used to supply digital clips to Fox for their website and we still do, but the best is the stuff you don't see on the show because people want to see something behind the scenes and it's definitely time consuming to do that on top of the show' (Cooper, Interview: Los Angeles, November, 2016). Digital content can be expensive for television networks to invest in because it requires more human labor costs. Hiring staff who can curate online content effectively and regulate digital chatter around a show can also be costly and difficult to manage correctly.

### *Costs of Curating Social Media Content*

Social media networks are technically free to use, but the investment in paid advertising on Facebook, Twitter and now Instagram is costly yet often necessary to make an impact and establish and sustain social media followings for television brands (Nayak, 2016). The cost of employing staff to monitor and curate content 24 hours a day is another obstacle and not a cheap endeavor. Managing social media accounts requires active supervision, such as responding to and creating constant updates, monitoring, and time spent on engagement strategies. There have been instances in which too much freedom has been granted to social media marketers, subsequently leading to negative backlash for a media brand. Williams has witnessed many companies who have made mistakes on social media that have resulted in negative PR through the form of viral complaints in South Africa. Williams explains:

Sometimes you can send something that you think is perfectly harmless and someone can just feel like particularly sensitive that day and it can go crazy viral. There have been some horrific social media examples here in South Africa, mostly with a couple of brands. People who are employed by the company say something on social media and then the company gets thrown into it. It can really go wrong (Williams, Interview: Cape Town, May, 2016).

The suggestion here, then, is that there are externalities of increasing a format brand's reach on social media, and in this case, there are tangible economic costs and issues involving miscommunication.

Television networks have taken formal measures to regulate their social chatter as best as they can, but due to the widespread power and depth of social media content, conflicts can occur outside of their control.

### *Temporality and Show Spoilers*

Cooking shows have received criticism from announcing winning results too early, known most commonly as 'spoilers' online. Proulx and Shepatin (2012) argue that spoilers pose problems for television shows since one single tweet containing a spoiler could amplify and spread to hundreds of thousands, if not millions, of people in a matter of hours or even minutes. Show producers must ensure that the staff they appoint to manage their social media accounts are allocating some time before announcing winners on competition shows as they occur live on television, as well as not waiting too long to miss out on trending conversations for those who were able to watch live. Organizations such as Endemol Shine Group try to find a balance between the two by writing 'spoiler warning' and 'click here to find out more' across all of their formats' social media posts to avoid disappointment (Eccles, Interview: London, January, 2016). The producer of BBC One's *MasterChef*, David Ambler, found social media to be a hindrance for viewers who have missed the most recent episode and have not had time to catch up on BBC iPlayer or elsewhere. He explains:

Social media is a pain for us. We don't allow contestants to go on social media whilst they are in production. Obviously, it can give stuff away and we have to be careful even if we are going to air what they say... We have had most problems in the past with certain things, we don't immediately release the winner on social media ourselves because a lot of people watch on catch up TV. We are careful on social media. It's not the be all and end all. For us it's very much old media (Ambler, Interview: London, November, 2015).

Unfortunately, format brands do not always have control over what their brand ambassadors do online, in this case, the celebrity chefs and talent on the show. The co-host of BBC One's *MasterChef*, Gregg Wallace, has interfered with anti-spoiler strategies on a few occasions as Ambler discussed.

In defense, Wallace believes that fans of the show should watch the finale on live television if they want to avoid frustration, arguing:

What I find quite unusual is when I congratulate certain winners on Twitter the day after the final, I get people on Twitter that say "Spoiler! Thanks for that! I haven't watched it yet!" as if it is my fault. I say to them "if you didn't want to know, what are you doing on social media, because people on social media are going to talk about what's current?" So, it is not my fault I mentioned it (Wallace, Interview: Glasgow, May, 2015).

Having to monitor the social activity of celebrity hosts like Wallace poses a challenge when they decide to tweet a result too early in a way that can offend and possibly wear down the relationship a brand has worked so hard to establish with its online audience. However, television hosts like Wallace and guests on the show represent the format brand every time they engage with their audiences online and on television. Their actions, as well as all of the related challenges mentioned above, have profound implications on a format's ability to recruit and retain audiences and maintain its brand integrity. Further challenges arise when an online show is reformatted to suit traditional, network television, as in the case of YouTube's *Epic Meal Time* and FYI's *Epic Meal Empire*.

#### *Failure to Adapt from Digital to Linear: FYI's Epic Meal Empire*

As of 2016, almost a third of the 7.4 billion world population has internet access and over a billion of those people are YouTube users (YouTube.com, 2016).

The video streaming social media platform attracts more 18-49-year-olds than any cable network in America. YouTube users can create and host their video content on YouTube channels in the hope of attracting subscriptions and advertising revenue. YouTube's *Epic Meal Time* (EPT) is one of the most popular online cooking shows on YouTube (Epic Meal Time, 2016) and has over 7 million subscribers and millions of views across their extensive video library (as of 2016). The web show is widely based on the main character, Harley Morenstein, and his Canadian friends 'dining themselves to death' on some of the most unusual and often unappetizing looking dishes that are exponentially high in fat and calories.



Former producer of the linear format on FYI, Cash Hartzell, described the show as being more about appalling food than it is about cooking and claimed that there is entertainment in watching the reactions of the participants after they taste these dishes (Hartzell Interview: Los Angeles, November, 2015). The big success of the web series led to a television format licensing agreement with FYI network to develop a one-hour linear adaptation called *Epic Meal Empire* (Clarke, 2014).

Obtaining a bigger production budget to shoot longer segments and have access to an art department was one of the most appealing aspects of airing on linear television to the EPT members. Yet, as a result, the creators of the format were faced with many obstacles that they were not equipped to deal with during the switch over to broadcast television - many of which included legal issues that were never an issue for the YouTube production. Hartzell explained a scenario in which the *Epic Meal Empire* crew developed an episode around food and the 150 year history of mariachi bands in Los Angeles. According to Hartzell, in one particular area of the city, it is common for mariachi bands to congregate in front of a specific square and are available to hire for a party that same day. The television crew wanted to film one of the musicians outside, but because they were shooting a reality television show in Los Angeles, they would have had to complete nearly ten hours' worth of filling out applications in a permit office. He said:

When you do it for YouTube all you have to do is go shoot it, edit it and put it up. When you do a television show, you have to make sure all the permits are cleared because if not there's going to be a crowd of lawyers that come from True TV that says, 'you didn't get a permit for this show. We can't show it on TV.' Or we shot in front of this sign and we have to blur it out or we have to cut this thing out because the guy in the background said something and he never gave a release. Whereas with YouTube you can leave it out until somebody sues you (Hartzell Interview: Los Angeles, November, 2015).

Though not overtly discussed, reasons for why the linear format may not have been renewed for another season is most likely due to too many storyline alterations made to the new format and the significant extension of time of the show.

According to Hartzell, one of the Canadian members of the YouTube series was unable to obtain a work visa in the United States and so was not allowed to appear in the American adaptation. The show instead introduced a female character on the linear show, which radically altered the chemistry that existed between the original characters on the web series (Hartzell Interview: Los Angeles, November, 2015). When an audience has a pre-existing expectation for a show after having watched the original, sometimes modifying even one element of the format can result in the new version's failure. A similar example of this occurred on another food television show on the Travel Channel called *Food Wars* (2010). As described by Turner, *Food Wars* was an imitation of the Travel Channel's *Man Vs. Food* where instead of Adam Richmond hosting and tasting the dishes, Camile Ford hosted the show and had two locals take the food challenge. Turner explained: 'they changed that one element and it totally did not work at all. When watching it, even though it was my client, without that pay off it's not as interesting' (Turner, Interview: New York City, September, 2016). It comes as no surprise that audiences failed to be won over by the revised concept, considering the talent agent representing Ford was disinterested with how the show translated onscreen.

Fortunately, the creators of the original YouTube format did not cease production of *Epic Meal Time* online during the *Epic Meal Empire*'s short reign on FYI. Hartzell explained how their digital channel continues to be a large corporation that makes sizeable revenue from digital advertisers, merchandise sales and vendors whom they work with via product placement. He explained that many of the dishes on the web series involve bacon which had created a way to incorporate a specific brand to appear in multiple web episodes that resulted in a secured, ongoing product placement agreement (Hartzell Interview: Los Angeles, November, 2015). This again is fortunate for the EMT format brand. However, most food television show formats would struggle to secure this level of sponsorship and success by creating content for YouTube alone.

There is a wealth of competition that exists between YouTube's one billion users. Turner concurs and explains how the problem with original series on YouTube is that they generally tend to pay very little. He explains that although his talent recruitment agency actively seeks commercial opportunities through YouTube and branded content deals on digital channels with large social media followings, there is no guaranteed success for smaller YouTube channels.

He explains that sometimes: 'the dollars aren't there so there's no promotion. The other thing with YouTube channels is no one knows about it. It's very hard to have long-term success there' (Turner, Interview: New York City, September, 2016). Food television formats with an international following can be seen as an outcome of strong branding and a growing demand for food-related media products. However, given the novelty of the technologies and the unpredictability of what will be successful online, food television format producers are forced to experiment with an unprecedented level of distribution channels.

## **6.4 Managing Risk for Food Television Show Formats**

This research has confirmed that producers of food television show formats undergo similar and unique processes to the development of other formats in order to attain international success. Since there is no specific set of criteria for dealing with the internationalization of television formats, I applied a core minimization of risk strategy to identify the commercial challenges and the managerial decisions format producers face when adapting their product into international markets and on multi-platform distribution channels. The Association for Project Management (2018) defines 'risk management' as 'a process that allows individual risk events and overall risk to be understood and managed proactively, optimizing success by minimizing threats and maximizing opportunities.' To risk manage the internationalization of television formats, it is essential to identify, measure and address any potential issues that may emerge. Risk management practice applies to all industries regardless of what business sector one wishes to address (Pinedo and Walter, 2013).

Within any commercial environment, there is always risk. When a company extends a product beyond a local and regional environment, the risks become even more difficult to quantify because there is a range of differences culturally, geographically, technologically, economically and so forth. Thus, the potential risks to media organizations and enterprises can only be reduced. No risk can entirely be eliminated. The key to television format companies is that both licensors and licensees work together to adapt to market expectations on the one hand, and the expectations of society on the other (Siegert, 2015). This, however, is a complex recipe to get right. Not all food television show formats have been successful, but these format failures are revealing and allow us to identify potential risks for the future.

Risks are negative outcomes from hazards. The hazard, in this context, is the formatted content where format television producers must identify and take measures to minimize the risks of commercial failure and putting their brand's reputation at jeopardy when they change and transfer this content across borders and online. Hazards are not always fixed. Changes in the environment, engagement, technology, and audience consumption create risks for the hazard. To draw upon an unrelated but relevant example, imagine a glass of clear liquid that looks like water was a glass of acid. If a glass of acid is sat in front of someone unaware of what was in the glass, there is a risk they will drink it, and if they drink it, they will be harmed. If we take the acid away and we lock it in a cupboard, the acid is still a hazard. The acid will always be a hazard, but we have taken steps to reduce the risks, which is what happens when minimizing risks when dealing with television formats. The changes to the quality of production, the fragmented audience, and emerging technologies will always be risks to the television format industry. It is how individuals and organizations manage these risks that makes the difference because risks are always in existence and we can merely put steps in to manage them.

Developing a risk management strategy is key when transposing any media form into different national and cultural environments (Pinedo and Walter, 2013). The following table, Table 1, demonstrates a risk management methodology that focuses on business outcomes, risks, and the risk management strategy. Risk management is a dynamic process. It never stops. This table evaluates the possible risks that can affect the business outcomes faced by television format licensors and is modified to include the distinct practices carried out by food television show format owners. This process is based on the interview data that has been collected and analyzed in this research and includes the risks and solutions for the following five key business outcomes: (1) the successful internationalization of food television formats, (2) the maintaining of a strong brand identity, (3) effective management of international business cultures, (4) development of a multi-platform strategy, and (5) effective monitoring of online activity. This table provides valuable insight for both scholars and the global media industry because it highlights industry trends that have aided the successful production and distribution of global television formats and the internationalization of cooking programming.

**Table 1: Risk Management Processes for Food Television Show Formats**

<b>Business Outcome</b>	<b>Risk</b>	<b>Risk Management Strategy</b>
The successful internationalization of food television formats	Commercial failure	Identify successful television format attributes (i.e. competition, drama, light-hearted); utilize amateur show participants and expert show hosts; prioritize food over cooking instruction
Maintain a strong brand identity	Failure to enter international markets; exposure to copyright infringement; loss of control over a format brand and damage to reputation; allowing too much creative input from local broadcasters resulting in a format that strays too far from the original	Establish an effective media branding strategy to create a product that is distinguishable, valuable and competitive that will attract international buyers and advertisers; development of the production bible that contains all of the essential production information, including branding elements, successful episodes and scripts, technical requirements, casting notes, etc., in order to produce a highly complex product that has inherent value to the licensee and cannot be easily replicated; appoint a flying production team to manage the adaptation process and to ensure the main aspects of the format are being executed in new markets
Effectively manage international business cultures	Commercial failure; poor communication between format producers (licensors) and local broadcasters (licensees); policy intervention and financial constraints	Develop effective negotiation practices with licensees to identify key cultural considerations, language barriers, national television cultures, and other important criteria; adjust business practices and television format to adhere to local policy regulation and budgetary allowances; embrace some, but not all, of the cultural requirements of format licensees to reduce commercial risk
Develop a multi-platform strategy	Missed commercial opportunities; failure to reach non-linear television audiences	Repurpose existing content and make it available across online distribution channels; create ancillary content and an online fan base through social media to increase online engagement and extend brand reach
Effectively monitor online activity	Loss of control of the format brand online	Provide guidance to local licensees that advises on how to effectively manage online channels and staff; manage budget; set clear guidelines on how to make use of online data, how to advertise and promote a local adaptation online (i.e. Endemol Shine Group's social media bible), and how staff, show hosts and participants behave online

## References for Table 1: Risk Management Processes for Food Television Show Format Brands:

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The first business outcome, the successful internationalization of food television formats, has confirmed that producers of food television show formats undergo similar and unique processes to the development of other formats in order to attain international success. The use of hybrid genres and media branding strategies employed by contemporary food television show format producers are prevalent across various format types (Boyle and Kelly, 2012; Hill, 2005; Morreale, 2007). Food television show format licensors must make alterations to their international adaptations' show narratives, hosts, and participants to satisfy audience demands, but still focus on food as a key theme to distinguish itself from other formats.

Even the most successful formats continue to struggle through the assimilation process online and on linear television. The following four business outcomes reveal solutions to the risks associated with the internationalization process. Food format producers must make additional considerations regarding brand protection, managing business cultures by establishing effective negotiation practices between format licensors and licensees and over digital distribution, all in order to avoid commercial failure. Cross-border partnerships can result in many economic, political and social implications that can end badly for all parties involved. To prevent commercial failure, food television show format producers have revamped their negotiation practices to introduce more creative input from their licensees.

The managerial decision to adjust a food television show format to the local food cultures and their licensees' needs requires negotiation. It is no longer common practice for flying producers to make unilateral decisions about the composition of a format when it is to be adapted into a new territory (Donovan, Interview: London, January 2016). In order to prevent commercial failure, media brands must establish clear communication between their format producers and local broadcasters. This inclusionary process is challenged by the format brand's need to maintain brand protection and integrity. Issues of creative freedoms and constraints arise, along with other common managerial challenges such as dealing with budgetary requirements, cultural sensitivities, translation issues, government constraints, and unique to the food format genre, recognizing a country's culinary legacy and aptitude. The development of effective negotiation practices with licensees that embrace some, but not all, of the cultural requirements of format licensees, is the best strategy proven to reduce commercial risk. The exact measure will differ on a case-by-case basis.

At the same time, format licensors employ a number of media branding strategies to protect their brand integrity, such as the creation of the production bible (Chalaby, 2011; Esser, 2010; Oren and Shahaf, 2012; Rohn, 2014), and to ward off format imitators (Singh and Nagpal, 2011, Bechtold, 2013, Waisbord, 2004, Moran, 1998, and Singh and Kretschmer, 2009). It is the combination of the strengthened relationships of licensors and licensees and the managerial decisions discussed throughout this thesis, that have resulted in the successful internationalization and adaptation of food television show formats. Many of the elements that make cooking formats unique on television are consistent with those attributed to a food format's success online.

Some of these elements include alterations to the show's narrative to suit a more mainstream audience, the use of hybrid genres such as YouTube's comedy and cooking show mashup, *Epic Meal Time*, and the incorporation of expert hosts and amateur contestants as show influencers and promoters. Format licensors encourage onscreen chefs and amateur contestants to establish an active online following across social media channels such as Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter. By doing so, they can connect with audiences on a much deeper level and, in turn, attain a higher level of influence that actively promotes the shows they are on, such as Channel 4's *The Great British Bake Off* and Fox's *MasterChef* as mentioned above.

Implementing multi-platform strategies has helped to provide television formats with the tools they need to increase their ratings, create business relationships with major digital distribution platforms and expand their abilities to communicate and better understand their audiences. The multi-platform model for food television show formats comprises a set of industry practices (i.e., digital marketing, online distribution platforms, and social media campaigns) and specific practices bespoke to the cooking show (i.e., food marketing and product placement, recipe databases, and videos). These multi-platform strategies provide format producers with comprehensive solutions to help them face the pressures of losing parts of their linear audiences. These strategies also assist in recuperating loss from advertising revenue for commercial networks like Food Network and Fox in the US. However, further managerial issues and opportunities emerge when format producers invest in multi-platform strategies.

If a media company decides not to invest in a multi-platform strategy that provides online materials (episodes, social media content, and blogs), they may fail to capture non-linear television audiences, such as the youth demographic, as well as experience commercial failure (Bennett and Strange, 2008; Doyle, 2010; Sorensen, 2014). Those who do invest may run the risk of losing control of their brand online when engaging with 24/7 social media channels across their licensees' networks. Setting clear guidelines that advise licensees on how to effectively manage online channels by appointing and training the right staff, how to utilize online data for advertising, and setting codes of practice for how show hosts and participants behave online are some of the many ways to reduce risk.



## 6.5 Conclusion

The television industry as a whole endures a constant need to rework and refashion itself to embrace future emerging technologies such as catch up streaming services and social media platforms as they enter the marketplace (Bolter and Grusin, 1999; Boyle, 2010; Doyle, 2013; Kompare, 2010). In *The Death of Television*, Margaret Hardenbergh (2010: 173) asks and answers a simple question: 'is television of this decade the same as television of the 1960s? No.' By examining television ratings data and the growing number of pilots each year, format producers are relieved to know that television has not died (Hardenbergh, 2010; Kompare, 2010). Instead, it has refashioned itself to suit newly adopted technologies which have fortified its position as a multimedia, entertainment powerhouse. This is somewhat attributed to the inclusion of new multi-platform strategies. This chapter outlined the opportunities and risks food television formats face by investing in these new initiatives and answered the final research question, how has the development of formatted television (food shows) exploited multi-platform distribution?

The rise of social media paired with the promotion of live shows appears to be fundamentally changing the television landscape. Moe, Poell and van Dijck (2016) argue that audiences are moving from the development of 'second screen' applications to integrated systems of watching. The opportunity to attract younger audiences via social media strategies has nurtured fruitful connections between the youth population and brands. What makes cooking and online content for food television formats truly unique is its ability to attract attention from web browsers who might not necessarily be interested in their show. Instead, browsers can enjoy the digital content format brands produce and identify with these brands in new ways.

Food format brands distribute desirable images of food through social media and ancillary materials, such as instructional videos and recipes on their network's website, that tap into a universal adoration and an instinctive draw towards good looking food. Due to the fact that we all need to eat, online content around food can attract a wider audience than some of the more niche genres.

For example, factual business formats, such as ABC's *Shark Tank* (2009-present), the American adaptation of the Japanese format by Nippon TV, *Dragon's Den* (known as *Money Tigers* (2001-2004) that has become popularized in the UK as BBC's *Dragon Den* (2005-present), only offer small scale business tips regarding entrepreneurship and how to pitch business ideas. When compared to food-themed networks' extensive recipe databases, it is certain that online content relating to food attains a higher reach.

Social media has also helped shape established television celebrities like Gordon Ramsay into becoming established digital influencers and online ambassadors for their shows. In turn, their social media followings help stimulate the growth of the brand's social media followings and open additional gateways to new audiences through promotional campaigns. As mentioned in the previous chapter, Endemol Shine Group has invested in the creation of the social media bible for their formats, such as *MasterChef*, as an extension of their production bible to better support the online promotion of their formats for licensees, whilst retaining control over their product brands.

There are a variety of multi-platform strategies that can be implemented to raise a brand's visibility, increase viewership and create new revenue streams for formats. For example, when BBC One produced *The Great British Bake Off* (now produced by Channel 4), audiences were able to go on their website and follow the recipes the contestants made on the show. However, due to rapid changes in the digital media environment, format brands are up against an assortment of obstacles. Picard (2010) describes the five decisive media trends and production challenges faced in the news media. They include: abundance, or too much choice, for consumers and advertisers; fragmentation and polarization, where audiences spread their media usage inconsistently or not at all; portfolio development; eroding strength of media firms; and finally, a power shift in communications from a supply-driven demand determined by media companies, to a demand-driven model controlled by the user (Picard, 2010: 366-369).

Some authors, such as Caldwell (2003), would reject the fifth decision Picard speaks of and argue that audiences feel an 'illusory' notion of the power of what, when and how they view or catch up on linear shows through online portals since they are not restricted by the television schedule.

In reality, television networks exploit multi-platform strategies for that very reasoning: to retain control over what, when and how their audiences are allowed to view their content (legitimately), as well as appearing relevant to new audience behaviors (Caldwell, 2003). Mark Turner predicts that the traditional television schedule may be eradicated in ten years due to the popularity of on-demand consumption but is confident that television networks will retain power over their audiences. Turner used a metaphor in reference to the car industry to clarify, saying:

We live in a society that can easily create electric cars, and everyone can own a hybrid. The reason we don't have that nearly as much as we should is because the oil industry is very powerful and they don't want people to give up their gas guzzling cars. The TV industry is very, very powerful and has a lot of money and they would slow down anything that could take away their livelihood. I think you'll see resistance (Turner, Interview: New York City, September, 2016).

Arguably, the perception of power seems to have been in the hands of both the consumer and the producer, as the actions of the former must always be considered by the latter in order to stay relevant to viewers through means of recent technological developments.

Whereas Hardenburgh (2010: 174) believes that the 'viewer is the programmer' since they can select what they want to watch and are not confined to the classic schedule, but ultimately, that choice is still being dictated by the media producer. Within the context of any television show format, we can find the truth on both sides, but it is clear that consumers have more power and control over their content within the digital era. Format producers and local broadcasters must again make onerous decisions regarding wealth opportunities and risks about the adaptation of an original format into a new territory or, in this case, online. Retaining control grants franchise owners the ability to exploit storylines and character development across new media which is similar to how Lucasfilm adapted their *Indiana Jones* films into a popular television rendition, ABC's *The Young Indiana Jones Chronicles* (1992-1993), or when the *Star Wars* films carried onto print (Jenkins, 2006). This proves just how advantageous it is for networks to own the production and distribution rights that now extend online (Doyle, 2013).

By obtaining this level of control, format producers can take advantage of commercial opportunities and extend their brand reach to non-linear television audiences.

Even in the midst of audience fragmentation and the introduction of more competition and newfound obstacles online, the food television show format has and will continue to thrive and adapt to industry changes. In order to stay relevant and competitive, food television formats have found success online the same way they have on television, by focusing on the food. The exploitation of gourmet food across the social media accounts and network sites of popular food show formats has increased brand awareness and opened up a series of new revenue streams. Furthermore, contracting deals with VoDs and online advertisers, as well as the creation of Endemol Shine UK's social media bible, as mentioned in the previous chapter, demonstrates the lengths format producers will go to in order to appease their audiences and their licensees through means of innovative digital offerings. The following chapter will summarize the key research themes found across all of these findings chapters.



## Chapter Seven: Conclusion

The task of a doctoral thesis is to add value and build on existing academic research in order to generate knowledge to be used by fellow scholars. The outcomes of this research provide an empirical analysis of the complex relationship between new media technologies, food television and the internationalization and digitization of global television formats. This thesis provides a thorough understanding of a very specific and current media trend that exists within a broad scope of media industry practices and aims to provide valuable insights and build on existing media management, multi-platform, and media production theory.

The purpose of this research has been to examine the phenomenon of food television show formats and their growing international success. The decision to investigate the food television show format, in particular, was made to build a stronger understanding of how media managers have adapted one of the earliest television show types, the cooking show, and transformed it to create a relevant and competitive format that audiences enjoy today. By examining the current managerial changes, this thesis has demonstrated how the cooking show has reinvented itself to move across new countries and innovative technologies. This research set out to address the following three questions:

1. Why are food television shows so well suited for the development of international formats?
2. What are the managerial challenges regarding the adaptation of food television show formats for international markets?
3. How has the development of formatted television (around food) exploited multi-platform distribution?

This final chapter explains how the use of media branding and hybrid genre strategies has reshaped the classic cooking show into a reality show format orchestrated around food, rather than cooking, in order to relate to a mainstream audience.

These management strategies have led to the successful internationalization of many food television show formats that have been more successful with a wider audience than the traditional classic cooking show would normally be.

To conclude this research, Sections 7.2-7.5 will examine both the unique and similar managerial challenges food format producers face when managing international brands of other factual format genres on television and online. Furthermore, it will highlight why the topic of food is special, investigate the rise of branded content and consider the benefits and challenges that multi-platform strategies present when utilizing digital platforms. Sections 7.6 and 7.7 of this chapter will discuss some of the limitations of this research and summarize the value it adds to existing and future research for media managers, organizations and researchers.

## **7.2 The Rise of Branded Content**

Television formats are not new. They have been present in the industry for over fifty years but never as prevalent as in the 21st century (Bechtold, 2013; Chalaby, 2011; Moran and Keane, 2006). Currently, there is a proliferation of television formats populating primetime slots on screens all over the world. Although finished or syndicated programs continue to surpass the sale of television formats, many scholars believe that we are in the midst of an endemic and rising format revolution (Chalaby, 2016; Moran, 2009; Oren and Shahaf, 2012). The findings chapters of this research have touched on a series of factors that have contributed to this rise and have revealed two major developments that have emerged at a managerial level. These two developments are: (1) the decision to utilize multiple television sub-genres, and (2) the development of an effective media branding strategy.

### *Multiple Sub-Genre Approach*

Reality television genres have started to fuse together with it becoming difficult to categorize a reality television show into one succinct genre (Holmes and Jermyn, 2004). Format brands have incorporated multiple sub-genres, also known as a hybrid genre approach, in which format producers pull elements of hit shows and mix them with a single overarching theme. The use of multiple genres is a strategy that mitigates commercial risk in response to audience autonomy and fragmentation (Creeber, 2015, Esser, 2010; Packham, 2016; Moran, 2009b; Morreale, 2007). To

better understand this current development, this thesis examined the narrative changes focusing on one particular television format: the food television show format.

Although, there might be an obvious, overarching category of what a show can be labeled as, such as a 'travel program' or a 'drama', there is a consensus across scholars that contemporary television formats employ multiple characterizations within their narratives as part of an internationalization strategy that would best satisfy mainstream television tastes (Moran, 2009b; Thomas, 2008; and Holmes and Jermyn, 2004). Moran (2008) described how even though comparable formats such as *Ground Force* and *Extreme Makeover* may fall under the 'makeover show' classification, there are 'quite different and specific social, ethical, cultural and even personal matters raised by their particular dramatic premises' (Moran, 2008: 462). Much like these makeover formats, changes within the cooking show format are becoming increasingly apparent on television. From food competitions, dating shows, restaurant revivals, business programs, and weight loss and fitness programs, to 'docu-soaps,' travel shows, talk shows, and personality-led educational shows, many of these formats are focused on food instead of cooking instruction, as has been done in the past. To better understand these changes, a brief typology of some of the most popular hybrid food television formats has been categorized in Figure 5 below.

**Figure 5: Typology of Food Television Show Formats**

Sub-genres and attributes	Format Examples
Business	Channel 4's <i>Ramsay's Kitchen Nightmares</i>
Celebrity	BBC One's <i>Celebrity MasterChef</i>
Comedy	FYI's <i>Epic Meal Empire</i> ITV's <i>Come Dine With Me</i> YouTube's <i>Epic Meal Time</i>
Competition	Bravo's <i>Top Chef</i> Food Network's <i>Chopped</i> Food Network's <i>Cutthroat Kitchen</i> Food Network's <i>Star</i> Fox's <i>Hell's Kitchen</i>



	Fuji Television's <i>Iron Chef</i>
Dating	ITV's <i>Come Dine with Me</i> ITV's <i>Dinner Date</i>
Digital/online	<i>The Paula Deen Network</i> YouTube's <i>Epic Meal Time</i>
Educational and instructional	Channel 4's <i>Jamie's School Dinners</i>
Fitness and weight loss	NBC's <i>The Biggest Loser</i>
Juniors and kids	CBBC's <i>Junior Bake Off</i> CBBC's <i>Junior MasterChef</i> Food Network's <i>Chopped Junior</i> Food Network's <i>Star Kid</i>
Lifestyle	ABC's <i>The Chew</i>
Light entertainment-driven <sup>3</sup>	ABC's <i>The Chew</i> BBC One's <i>The Great British Bake Off</i> BBC One's <i>Celebrity MasterChef</i> BBC One's <i>MasterChef</i> BBC One's <i>MasterChef: The Professionals</i> CBBC's <i>Junior Bake Off</i> CBBC's <i>Junior MasterChef</i> Food Network's <i>Chopped Junior</i> Food Network's <i>Star</i> ITV's <i>Come Dine with Me</i> ITV's <i>Dinner Date</i>
Professionals (non-amateur cooking competition show format)	BBC One's <i>MasterChef: The Professionals</i>
Talk show	ABC's <i>The Chew</i> Food Network's <i>The Kitchen</i>
Travel	Travel Channel's <i>Man v. Food</i>

As demonstrated in Figure 5, two things are certain about contemporary food television formats. First, each one of these formats can fit into multiple categories

and adopts hybrid genres consisting of food and another category; and second, most of these formats fall within the competition and light-hearted labels. By utilizing these key attributes and components of alternative factual format genres, television format producers have established a popular media product that appeals to a wider demographic. How integral the role of the food is to a format's narrative and functionality varies, as was proven in the Endemol Shine Group's *MasterChef* case study seen in Chapter Six. Following the cases of Denmark and Russia's adaptations of the cooking competition format, it was clear that in some countries, food must become less of a focal point, since cooking ability is not as highly regarded. This is the adverse scenario for countries with advanced cooking aptitudes and more passionate food cultures, such as France, Spain, and Italy.

The most explicit change to the current food television formats is that they are no longer teaching audiences how to cook. This was revealed in Chapter Five of this thesis and has been confirmed by Oren (2013). Instead, producers are capitalizing on the allure of gourmet food, alongside elements derived from alternative and popular genres such as travel shows, competition shows, talk shows, reality programs and more. Oren's (2013) theory that there has been a dramatic shift in the narratives of modern cooking shows from instruction to competition verifies what a number of interviews in this research explained. For example, BBC One's *MasterChef*'s director, Dave Crear, explained how the original British format maintains a strong emphasis on a more light-hearted, documentary-style cookery competition with a more natural incorporation of drama and jeopardy elements to suit the UK audience (Crear, Interview: London, November, 2015).

In contrast, the American adaptation of the format is more entertainment-led and driven by dramatic moments that occur between contestants and hosts on the show. Fox's *MasterChef*'s co-executive producer, Adam Cooper, described how their version had, in some cases, favored these reality show elements over food. He claims: 'I know in the UK, food forefronts. Where I would say in America it's less so' (Cooper, Interview: Los Angeles, November 2016). Similar to the American adaptation, the Australian version also focuses on the more competitive angle within its rendition, compared to the original British version that is more food-oriented. Instead, it focuses on the contestant's ability to entertain (Anastasio, Interview: Amsterdam, January, 2016).

Despite the significant differences in narrative within the same format, the *MasterChef* format has exploited this multi-genre hybrid approach in over 50 of its adaptations worldwide. Having analyzed several factual formats, this thesis identifies that the multiple sub-genre approach is commonly used in order to appeal to a wider audience across all format genres (Creeber, 2015; Morreale, 2007; Packham, 2016). Boyle and Kelly (2012) attest to this within their work on factual business formats. They discuss in detail the business entertainment hybrid format and describe the motivation of this hybrid format as follows:

The broad format of business entertainment is designed primarily to entertain an audience (even within the public service tradition) but in so doing can, of course, achieve other things and this is heavily shaped by the attitudes and particular demographics that audiences bring to the viewing experience (Boyle and Kelly, 2012: 157).

This explanation holds true for the case of Channel 4's *Ramsay's Kitchen Nightmares*, a food, business and entertainment format crossbreed. Although the Michelin star chef and television personality, Gordon Ramsay, is recognized by audiences for his use of harder personality traits on television (i.e. vulgar language, constant shouting and outbursts) when he is faced with restaurant owners on the show, many entrepreneurs would agree that Ramsay puts forward an honest account of the operational challenges of running a restaurant or catering business (Parks, 2006). Hybrid genre approaches are not limited to factual television. Nelson (2015) also confirms that there has been a trend to adopt a hybrid genre production strategy when examining television dramas. From a financial investment standpoint, he believes producers can reduce risk if they incorporate elements of already successful television vehicles that might be: 'woven together in a new, and hopefully, even more colorful, braid' (Nelson, 2015: 10). This interweaving braid he refers to has emerged across a number of popular genres, such as the telefantasy, crime and popular plot hybrid, BBC's television drama *Life on Mars* (2006-2007), he refers to in his research. Much like *Life on Mars* and *Ramsay's Kitchen Nightmares*, food television format producers from shows like Endemol Shine Group's *MasterChef* and Channel 4's *The Great British Bake Off* implement a hybrid genre strategy to generate the same motivation: to sustain viewers of a multi-channel and digital age by maintaining a broadly popular narrative (Nelson, 2015).

Therefore, following Nelson's reasoning, the broader the format, the easier it is to appeal to new audiences and territories.

In addition to adopting multiple sub-genres, food format producers have integrated supplementary narrative devices from popular reality show formats such as the use of amateur show participants and expert show hosts. Most cooking competition shows cast intriguing participants and contestants that audiences can connect with or be inspired by their journeys. Mainstream audiences have responded positively to the approach of watching an amateur cook progress to a professional chef (Couldry, 2002; Crisell, 2006; Hill, 2005; Maffesoli, 1996). The decision to cast professional hosts and judges, rather than television personalities or celebrities as was done in the past, now builds credibility and reassures the viewer that their skills or judgments on the show are legitimate (Bennett, 2011; Turner, Interview: New York City, September, 2016). Boyle and Kelly (2012) confirmed this with regards to business television formats. However, what is unique about expert hosts in food show formats, is that viewers can only visualize what a dish tastes like. Going back to what Cooper said about Gordon Ramsay's credibility: 'if Gordon Ramsay says it's good, it's good. If Gordon says it's bad, it's bad. He has that stamp of approval...you wait to see what Gordon says because he's the authority' (Cooper, Interview: Los Angeles, November, 2016). Audiences rely on an expert palette from Michelin star chefs and restaurant owners to help them critique a contestant's performance (Matwick and Matwick, 2015). Therefore, the use of multiple genres, amateur contestants and expert hosts has proven to be an effective brand management strategy for both food format producers and across the television format industry.

### *Effective Media Branding Strategies*

There are many reasons why format brands should invest in an effective media branding strategy. By establishing a strong brand, format producers are able to create a product that is distinguishable, valuable and competitive, and one that will attract international buyers and advertisers (Chan-Olmsted, 2006; Siegert, Förster, Chan-Olmsted, and Ots, 2015). Creeber (2015) argues that without an effective media branding strategy, the success rate of a television format entering international markets is low. In addition, media branding engages audiences through digital gateways, shapes managerial decision-making with regards to content and assists with business planning (Doyle, 2015).

Media branding is an effective risk management tool for copyright infringement or format imitation (Singh and Nagpal, 2011).

Chalaby (2011) argues that format creators must develop a recognizable brand that combines both high-quality content creation and a unique level of expertise that can only be replicated by the purchase of a license. Format television brands are unique. They offer expertise and minimize risk for international buyers. Media production companies such as Endemol Shine Group and FremantleMedia achieve this through the development of the production bible. This bible contains all of the essential production information, including branding elements, successful episodes and scripts, technical requirements, casting notes, etc., in order to produce a highly complex product that has inherent value to the licensee and cannot be easily replicated (Chalaby, 2011; Esser, 2010; Oren and Shahaf, 2012). The investment into brand bibles is essential for at least two core reasons: (1) to ensure the successful internationalization of the format by rights holders and (2) for the protection of the brand.

Developing a recognizable brand is key to the success of any format genre (Baumann, 2015; Creeber, 2015; Rohn, 2015; Siegert, Förster, Chan-Olmsted, and Ots, 2015; Singh and Oliver, 2015). Once a brand has been established, format creators can expand their portfolios from more than just a single format with offerings such as international merchandising and series spinoffs. Endemol Shine Group's *MasterChef* clearly demonstrates that when the media branding is robust it is a natural development to create spinoffs within the international market. *MasterChef* has expanded their brand portfolio in order to provide creative television solutions by offering the *Celebrity MasterChef*, *MasterChef: The Professionals* and *Junior MasterChef* spinoffs. Lorenzo Anastasio, the head flying producer at Endemol Shine Group's *MasterChef*, explained that these spinoffs were developed to create additional value for the *MasterChef* format brand and the best solutions possible for international media buyers (Anastasio, Interview: Amsterdam, January, 2016). There have been occasions when the spinoffs have been more successful than the original *MasterChef* format in countries such as Denmark. Anastasio's flying production team chose to substitute the original *MasterChef* with the *Celebrity MasterChef* format after the original format received such poor ratings. This was due to miscommunication between the producers and the audiences of the Danish *MasterChef*.

Spinoff formats have been developed and sold primarily as extensions of format brands and are increasingly being adopted by factual formats across the board, such as Endemol Shine Group's *Celebrity Big Brother* (2001-present), ITV's *The Voice Kids* and more. The most popular spinoff genre across different cooking competition show formats are the juniors and kids' versions such as CBBC's *Junior Bake Off*, CBBC's *Junior MasterChef*, Food Network's *Chopped Junior* and *Food Network Star Kids* (2016-present). Spinoff formats, much like the original formats, come equipped with extensive brand bibles and support from flying producers to increase the success rate of new territorial adoption.

Protecting intellectual property rights and warding off copyright infringers has been another principal reason why format developers invest in strong media branding. As there is no effective international policy for copyright protection, format producers must develop a way to manage their brand identity through means of a hard-to-imitate format bible, extensive style guides, and the flying producer system (Bechtold, 2013; Singh and Kretschmer, 2009; Singh and Nagpal, 2011; Singh and Oliver, 2015). This, in turn, allows format producers to extend their brand identity to merchandising, off-air licensing and spinoff programming to drive audiences back to the on-air product (Singh and Nagpal, 2011). When producers of the format have established a consistent brand identity, they can then create a lasting brand image in their audience's minds that reduces illegal imitation (Singh and Oliver, 2015). This was the case when countries outside the United States imitated food talk show format ABC's *The Chew* without purchasing a television license. The executive producer of *The Chew*, Gordon Elliot, explained how these imitations failed as the producers did not have access to their branding guidelines or production bible. He explained how although the format may seem easy to imitate, the ABC program endured an intense interview process over the course of nearly eight months. Elliot attributed the extensive casting guidelines for the format to be the key element of the brand's success (Elliot, Interview: New York City, November, 2015). In addition to the production bible, format brands appoint a flying production team to manage the adaptation process and to ensure the main aspects of the production bible and format are being implemented in new markets (Rohn, 2014).

The adoption of new technology has called for additional changes to the international rollout process. Endemol Shine Group's recent release of a social media bible, a new chapter of the production bible that includes a set of rules for brand protection online, advertising guidelines and digital marketing tips was created in response to such changes. Aaron Eccles, the head of social media at Endemol Shine UK explained how these bibles include extensive detail and advice for licensees wanting help with advertising on such up-to-the-minute social media platforms like Facebook or Twitter. The application of these production bibles is the best way to protect the original format from external risks that can occur on social media (Eccles, Interview: London, January 2016).

Though these media branding and minimization of risk strategies are not necessarily new, the nature of their use for globalizing television formats has evolved. The former format consultant at FremantleMedia, Julie Donovan, explained that there have been significant changes to the internationalization process assisted by the production bible and the level of know-how that is now provided to new licensees by the flying production team. She explained that, in the past, it was common practice for the flying production team to enforce the guidelines found in the production bible verbatim. Now, flying producers have welcomed local input from licensees. Today, they make use of the brand bible predominately to protect the brand's reputation across linear television and online (Donovan, Interview: London, January 2016).

### **7.3 Food is Special: The International Language of Love**

This thesis investigated many of the reasons why food television has become so well-suited for internationalization. Food translates well across global cultures and television for a number of reasons. One of these has already been examined in this chapter, which is that a format revolving around food can be easily mixed with other popular television genres and attributes like reality, lifestyle and documentary-style programming. The exploitation of the #foodie revolution trending across social media channels and the demand for online recipes on network websites also indicate the ways in which format brands have capitalized on food-centric content.

Food itself is international. In today's world, everyone is exposed to and enjoys dishes that have been introduced from other countries. The popularization of international cuisine, like Chinese, Thai, Italian, Indian and a wealth of other food options, has become a staple part of the Western world's diet. Interestingly enough, these international dishes are often adapted to suit the new territory where they are introduced. For instance, a number of 'Indian' curries, such as the Balti curry from Birmingham and the chicken tikka masala, have originated from within the UK, after the proliferation of Indian restaurants at the end of the twentieth century in Britain (Carnevali and Strange, 2014). Specific dishes can represent a particular social status and class. A great example of this is the story of jambalaya (Bradley, 2016). This economical and easy-to-prepare dish, similar to paella, became popular in the 1920s and 30s, because it was filling and more a cost-effective option for the lower class that was inspired by the state's original Spanish and French settlers' culinary traditions (VeeTee, 2017). Stories such as these have been traditionally told behind the lenses of television chefs in a one-to-one instructional manner but are now coming from amateur contestants in food show formats all over the world.

Food has been traveling cross-culturally for centuries. It has become an appealing component for format creators and television audiences. Paula Deen, a celebrity chef from Georgia, U.S., explained how although we all come from different places and speak our own languages, food can be seen as a common denominator that can bring all cultures together (Deen, Interview: Savannah, December 2015). David Griffith, the head of integrated marketing at Scripps Networks, and Tanya Lee, the former editor-in-chief of *Epicurious* both referred to food as an international language. In the context of global media production, former Editor-in-Chief at *Epicurious*, Tanya Steel, believes food to be an international language of love, because of its ability to appeal to audiences and readers on a global level (Steel, Interview: New York City, November 2015). Likewise, Griffith touched on one of the pivotal reasons why food has become such a popular theme in modern media. The shift from cooking instruction to food-centric entertainment is a key reason why food content has become so fashionable (Griffith, Interview: New York City, November, 2015). Looking back to Griffith's interview transcript in Chapter Five, he explained:

I think you know cooking is an international language...I think one thing that people share is a passion for food.



Not everyone shares a passion for cooking, so one thing they've been able to do to expand the network is to move beyond just shows that are about cooking shows that are about entertainment with food as the focus (Griffith, Interview: New York City, November, 2015).

Food, therefore, is special. Formats based on food are unlike any other format type; even though viewers may not necessarily be interested in cooking, everyone shares the common need and desire to eat. Gregg Wallace, the co-host of BBC One's *MasterChef*, too, confirmed this conclusion when he discussed the term 'food lovers' in Chapter Five. Wallace said:

Cooking is the river the contestants are floating down. You could possibly do exactly the same thing with model aircrafts. The difference is with cooking, of course, everybody has an interest in eating. This term food lover, you show me someone who's not a food lover, and I'll show you a corpse (Wallace, Interview: Glasgow, May, 2015).

Before the days of BBC One's *MasterChef* and Channel 4's *Come Dine with Me*, cooking shows focused primarily on education and instruction. According to Oren (2013), food television has reinvented itself in accordance with the changing attitudes around cooking and television over the last few decades. More specifically: 'the emphasis of popular 'foodies' television has shifted from the home to the restaurant, from the friendly to frenzied, and most importantly, from cooking to critique' (Oren, 2013: 31). Oren's work confirms what the interview responses by Deen, Griffith, Steel and Wallace each claim about the ubiquitous allure of food. By adopting new narrative devices and multiple genres, producers of food formats should also be wary not to stray too far away from the classic cooking show's roots. Donovan (Donovan, Interview: London, January 2016) referred to this when she explained how culinary formats that focus on sensationalism, such as ITV's *BBQ Champ*, are more likely to fail. She explained that the extreme grilling cooking show failed because it was reaching too far. This begs the question, what's next? *Strictly Come Cooking on Ice*? Or, will producers take their cooking show concepts out of this world with *Intergalactic MasterChef* at the International Space Station where we learn what happens when we crack an egg without gravity?

Producers of food television format brands endure these managerial challenges and more when internationalizing alternative television formats in order to meet the demands of their national and international audiences.

Food is a fascinating sociological phenomenon. From scarcity to a source of pleasure, food remains essential to our daily lives and our history and culture. Now, food has transformed from a 'necessity' to a form of entertainment. During the last 20 years, technology and consumer demand have changed how we access, engage with, educate and entertain ourselves about food. Foods, particularly hyper-palatable ones, demonstrate similarities with addictive drugs (Gearhardt et al., 2011). The potentially addictive nature of food contributes to the many reasons why format brands are willing to invest in food style programming.

The physical act of eating is intrinsically rewarding. Food consumption has proven to actually activate the reward system in the brain (Gearhardt et al., 2011; Hebebrand et al, 2014; Sedgwick, 1993). Psychological cues like boredom, perceived stress or a negative mood may potentially trigger overeating in the absence of hunger that would lead to neurobiological alterations in complex central regulatory systems related to addictive behaviors (Hebebrand et al, 2014). Much like other addictions such as exercise, relationships and work, binge eating behavior may seem life-fulfilling but will eventually spiral out of control. Sussman and Moran (2013) acknowledge this and argue that there is evidence to support television addiction where TV addicts are likely to watch television to: 'sate certain appetitive motives, demonstrate preoccupation with TV, report lacking control over their TV viewing, and experience various role, social, or even secondary physical (sedentary lifestyle) consequences due to their out of control viewing. These consequences are in part contextually driven, due to the amount of viewing time contrasted with competing time demands' (Sussman and Moran, 2013: 130). Therefore, the chances of success for television formats based around food should be high, at least on an instinctual level.

Food as a form of entertainment is evident when studying relationships between television format producers and global partners and format licensees. Whether it is a show about cooking, a competition, eating habits or shows that focus on travel and unique food cultures, audiences are entertained by a range of different food options. Television producers have capitalized on the intrigue of food.

Now that there are so many ways to watch and engage with television, this thesis aimed to better understand how the licensors of food television formats combine the most desirable elements of food and television to attain international acclaim.

## 7.4 Managing International Expansion

The nature of television format transfer has changed. Production bibles and flying production teams still exist, but format brands are encouraged to develop a more robust exchange of information with their licensing partners. Television format brands must be willing to negotiate and adapt their business practices to be mindful of outside cultures. Expanding upon Anthony Giddens' (1984) structuration theory, Heidi Keinonen (2016) suggests analyzing television formats as a form of cultural negotiation in order to make visible the various reasons for changes in the adaptation process. In her work on television formats, she wrote: 'program pilots, viewer ratings, critics' reviews and public debates about these programs are the sites where these negotiations become visible and are subsequently integrated into broadcasters' and production companies' decision making' (Keinonen, 2016: 9). Keinonen (2016) believes that through negotiation, format producers can overcome the local–global dichotomy and avoid methodological nationalism. Format negotiation relies largely on local input and is symptomatic of an institutional shift towards the development of national identity on television, unlike the sale of dubbed or subtitled finished programming that can be imported as a global product with little cultural significance. The purpose of interviewing the international flying production team at Endemol Shine Group's *MasterChef* was to develop a better understanding of how food format producers manage global business cultures during the internationalization and adaptation processes.

After analyzing Endemol Shine Group's *MasterChef*, it is clear that each adaptation of the food competition show format told its own unique story through the lens of their historical and contemporary national dishes. This is the key to the show's widespread success and demonstrates that the content within food formats must adapt to satisfy the local, national dish ideologies. In countries with more diverse backgrounds and cultures, such as the U.S., cooking show contestants tend to reveal their traditional cooking methods within food challenges.

For example, in Fox's *MasterChef* adaptation, the producers of the show consider the use of a contestant's background to be the primary storytelling element. According to the co-executive producer on the show, Adam Cooper, the two most common questions show hosts ask contestants are 'what are you making?' and 'why are you making it?' In one episode of the American adaptation, the producers devised a rice-themed mystery box challenge where a Mexican American cooked a Latin dish, a Chinese American prepared an Asian dish, and so on. He believed this to be one of the highest rated episodes because: 'everyone dropped into his or her comfort zone of their ethnicity. It made such an interesting story because they weren't having to force it. One contestant grew up in Mexico and was cooking with her roots where she dug up an old recipe from her grandmother' (Cooper, Interview: Los Angeles). Similar to what Cooper describes, Bradley's (2016) research on food, representation, and identity reveals the role of food to be characterized as a cultural voice and identity, where historical and cultural ideologies can be communicated through food voices of the class and identity they represent. Format television show format licensors are tasked with the need to identify the right food identity in each new territory where a food format license is sold. Once that is established, the stories around food are what make the local adaptations so successful because they are unique and relatable to their audience.

## **7.5 Utilizing Digital Platforms**

The investment in multi-platform strategies is an important decision for both television producers and local broadcasters. The previous chapter examined a series of online distribution and advertising platforms media managers can choose from in order to seek additional commercial opportunities and revenue streams. Producers also adapt their shows online to extend their brand reach and to establish closer audience engagement through interactivity and social media. Most of all, media managers adopt these technologies in order to remain relevant to digital audiences and competitive within a crowded media market (Bennett, Strange, Kerr, and Medrado, 2012; Doyle, 2013; Sorensen, 2014). From an evolutionary economics perspective, Doyle (2010) believes that media industries which fail to adopt multi-platform technologies run the risk of missing out on commercial opportunities that can result in brand extinction.

To avoid this extinction that Doyle refers to, many producers of the food television show format invest in Video-On-Demand (VoD) platforms on their brand websites and via subscription sites such as Hulu, Netflix, and Amazon Prime to ensure that their shows are available and accessible wherever their viewers are.

To alleviate some of the pressures of licensing television formats, both globally and online, media brands have developed guidelines around online practice and promotion. For example, the advent of the social media bible by format producers from Endemol Shine Group recognizes the need to support format licensees who seek online marketing assistance. This means that those who purchase a license from Endemol Shine Group will learn precisely what and how to write on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram with impact. These digital brand bibles are based on the successful social media campaigns from other adaptations of the same format and digital marketing techniques, i.e., keyword strategies and paid advertising campaigns. Audiences feel more connected to the people they watch on food shows than ever before because they can communicate directly with celebrity chefs, judges, and contestants via social media channels. The producers of these formats have identified this and have encouraged the adoption of social media channels by their show contestants and judges. This notion reinforces what Barron (2015) expressed about the breakdown of the para-social relation distance between viewers and celebrities, which in this case would be star chefs and amateur talent. Fans feel closer to their favorite hosts, whereas the hosts still know relatively little about their online fans.

The decision to cast expert show hosts and judges to become brand ambassadors is a recurring finding in this thesis. This can be a measure to minimize risk, both on linear television and online distribution platforms. YouTube has allowed food show formats like Fox's *MasterChef* to take this one step further. Cooper referred to this phenomenon when he spoke about Gordon Ramsay on Fox's *MasterChef*. He described how easy it was for Ramsay to amass large audiences on television and social media. His already established reputation pre-social media has heightened two-fold with YouTube and additional online platforms. According to Cooper, Ramsay is a renowned chef that viewers and online users trust and 'when you see Gordon cook, more people tune in' on YouTube and on the show (Cooper, Interview: Los Angeles, November, 2016).

This scenario is not limited to food formats. Based on their work on business entertainment formats, Boyle and Kelly (2012) would also concur that social media networking allows viewers to experience closer engagement with onscreen celebrities. However, closer engagement between audiences and food television shows can also be problematic to brands.

Onscreen talents are expected to be respectful online and not to reveal show spoilers until a certain duration after the season finale, as explained by the producer of BBC One's *MasterChef*, David Ambler, in the previous chapter. When show contestants and hosts do not comply with these standards set out by the rights holders, format brands can encounter damage to reputation and backlash. Gregg Wallace, the co-host of BBC One's *MasterChef*, openly disregarded the network's advice not to reveal show winners too soon after they are announced on live television. As a result, there have been multiple instances in which audiences who had not had time to tune in were unhappy with what Wallace had publicly posted to the winners. Staff members employed by food programs to monitor and create social media content are also expected to adhere to strict social media rules. Yet, there have been instances when social media managers create content that can be deemed inappropriate by the brand. In South Africa, there have been many cases in which people who are employed to represent brands on social media say something online that was misconstrued and resulted in backlash to the brand. Katelyn Williams, the social media manager for Food Network and The Travel Channel explained how the brand is accountable for the actions carried out by their staff (Williams, Interview: Cape Town, May, 2016). Though the adoption of an interactive social media presence has become an industry standard by many food television shows, format producers must be mindful of the obstacles, including online monitoring, that are attached to these new technologies.

Similar to formatting linear television adaptations abroad, the investment in multi-platform technologies presents additional managerial challenges such as budgetary constraints and translation issues. Format producers must allocate enough budget to supporting online licensing deals and round-the-clock members of staff in order to support their multi-platform endeavors. Both Paula Deen and the former producer of FYI's *Epic Meal Empire*, Cash Hartzell, described how difficult it could be for food television show format brands to create digital or linear versions of their formats in the previous chapter.

Deen developed the first ever VoD platform based on a celebrity television chef, *The Paula Deen Network*. She believed the network failed mainly due to the fact that her fans were not willing to pay the monthly subscription fee. Since the cost to produce the network was in the millions, she eventually had to cease production. People are just not used to having to pay to access a channel unless it was HBO in the U.S. or Sky Sports in the UK.

The failure to adapt a digital first food show on television was also discussed in the case of the popular YouTube cooking show, *Epic Meal Time*. The format, *Epic Meal Empire*, was purchased by FYI at MIPCOM. Even though the budget was significantly increased in the linear version of the show, the popularity of the YouTube version did not translate well to network television. While the main reason for why any show fails remains uncertain, *Epic Meal Empire*'s cancellation on FYI was mostly attributed to a storyline that strayed too far away from the original, including the change of medium, co-host, and the significantly extended length of time. Fans of the online version were accustomed to food challenge segments that lasted a few minutes and could be watched at any time online, so audiences found it difficult to adjust to an hour-long show airing at a specific time on television (Hartzell Interview: Los Angeles, November, 2015). The producers of *The Paula Deen Network* and *Epic Meal Empire* failed to overcome the issues that arise when transferring a food format to and from linear and digital platforms because these issues are still very new and therefore hard to manage within the recent digital era. In time, we can expect that format brands will be able to make more informed decisions about the investment into their multi-platform strategies after rigorous trial and error.

## **7.6 Limitations of this Research**

The research carried out in this thesis was designed to better understand the television format industry at the managerial level. Knowing that the subject of television formats would be too broad to investigate given the limited time and budget constraints, the scope of this analysis was narrowed down to the food television format in order to interpret the recent developments of managing international cultures and media branding strategies within a new format genre.

To achieve this, a semi-structured qualitative interview approach was implemented that involved format and media producers, marketing managers, television show format consultants, celebrity chefs and other relevant industry professionals within the food television show format and digital television sectors of the media. Since this research was a qualitative investigation, it was necessary not to generalize or inject any personal, preconceived notions regarding the rising interest in food television show formats within the coding and analysis stages of the research. Instead, the ambition was to communicate the opinions accurately and established managerial practices described by interviewees working across media organizations such as Endemol Shine Group, Scripps' Network's Food Network, The Cooking Channel and The Travel Channel, FremantleMedia, ABC, Fox and FYI Network. The analysis was driven by the respondents' principles and has added to an academic area that has had little investigation until now. In this section, the limitations that arose throughout this research journey are highlighted.

The first limitation concerned legitimacy. The possibility of bias and inaccurate responses was unavoidable. As Berger (2011) and Deacon, et. al (2007) have explained, it is common for interviewees to exaggerate, omit information intentionally or unintentionally, tailor their answers to satisfy the interviewer and to go off topic which results in insufficient responses. Since my analysis was governed predominately by interview responses, these issues were addressed by conducting an optimal number of interviews with the most relevant individuals to reach theoretical saturation, which was 15 in this case. In addition to this, it was noted that respondents speaking on behalf of an organization or position of stature could not represent an industry standard. Hence, it was vital to maintain a critical distance between the interviewees and myself and not to make overly broad claims about their responses that could misconstrue the analysis. With more time and resources, I would have liked to conduct qualitative focus groups and examine the perspectives of the audience. Unfortunately, that would have been an unmanageable and much wider research project. That said, having a mix of this managerial based study with an audience research study could have added additional value to this research investigation.



Another limitation encountered within this thesis was the use of one significantly larger case study, Endemol Shine Group's *MasterChef*. The focus of this primary case study raised issues of the generalization of international food formats throughout the research process. To address this, it was necessary not to relay assumptions of the health of the television food format genre based on this production alone by developing purposive sampling of respondents outside of Endemol Shine Group and by investigating existing scholarly theory. As Stake (2005) argues about formal epistemology, weighty assumptions can only be made with extensive development and testing. Therefore, interviews were conducted with industry professionals across multiple food television backgrounds such as Cash Hartzell from FYI's *Epic Meal Empire*, Gordon Elliot of ABC's *The Chew*, Katelyn Williams from Scripps' Food Network in South Africa and Paula Deen from *The Paula Deen Network*. The derivatives of the case study of the *MasterChef* format by Endemol Shine Group, helped provide a much greater insight into the international rollout of the world's most successful food television format. A distinguished account of the managerial considerations made throughout the industry was confirmed and discussed alongside sources outside of the case study to strengthen this analysis. Since time constraints made it impossible to cover all the areas of investigation that I would have hoped to examine, the next section will provide suggestions for future research.

## **7.7 Further Research**

This thesis has investigated food television format brands, and quality food television shows, from a media management and production standpoint. It has discussed media branding with regards to their contribution to the rising success of a modern format genre. The thesis has questioned how television format licensors and media brands have adjusted their media products and distribution channels, as well as identified the challenges that emerge along the way when dealing with licensees. Furthermore, this thesis offers a unique snapshot of the food television format industry. Snapshots are limited because they are defined by a particular moment in time and subject area. This does not render the research that was conducted invaluable. Instead, it suggests that further areas of research should be examined to enhance our knowledge of the television format industry, food programming and the impacts of the digital era.

After years of researching the key themes of this thesis, I have identified at least three avenues of research that would merit further investigation on completion of this analysis. They include (1) ethical implications for formats spinoffs around children, (2) the use of digital algorithms by food television format brands and networks and (3) the perception of the professional female chef as a format host.

The first area concerns the ethical implications of popular children-fronted competition show formats. These formats are developed as spinoffs, such as CBBC's *Junior MasterChef*, CBBC's *Junior Bake Off* and Food Network's *Chopped Junior*, under the cooking show umbrella, as well as across additional television formats such as ITV's *The Voice Kids* and Lifetime's *Project Runway: Junior* (2015-present). The introduction of children into a competitive televised environment exposes show producers to ethical risks involving psychological impacts. Shmueli (2015) explained how although children can be charming and captivating on reality television programs, they do not have the natural advantage of knowledge, physical ability, and emotional stability to withstand the same hardships and failures that adults would on television. He explained that once the camera stops rolling, the viewers do not know how embarrassed or humiliated the children are after losing a competition. This level of humiliation is often omitted from the show and there is little opportunity to address this on television (Shmueli, 2015). Yet, the president of the unscripted division of Shine America, Eden Gaha, believes junior formats, such as CBBC's *Junior MasterChef*, can be adaptable in every territory (Horst, 2014).

Producers of the format have to make significant alterations to the original show concept, particularly with the ways in which hosts interact with the young contestants. Horst (2014) believed that Gordon Ramsay appeared much softer on the junior contestants when compared to his other food formats like Fox's *Hell's Kitchen*, Fox's *MasterChef* and his *Kitchen Nightmares* format in the U.K. (Channel 4) and U.S. (Fox). Even though Ramsay undergoes a recognizably different, light-hearted nature in the junior edition of *MasterChef* (Cooper, Interview: Los Angeles, November, 2016), it is unclear what the psychological effects are for the young contestants after elimination and whether or not there is adequate legislation for the protection of children on reality television. Hence, further investigation into the ethical implications of developing reality television formats around child contestants would be useful and topical, provided little research has been with regards to the junior food television show format.

The second area to explore includes the use of digital algorithms and search engine optimization marketing strategies employed by food dedicated television networks, television chefs and on subscription Video on Demand (sVoD) platforms such as Netflix. Throughout this study, I noticed that networks such as BBC Good Food and the Food Network, as well as celebrity television chefs, tend to rank highest on page one of Google's search engine results when browsing for an online recipe. Since the focus of many food-centric programs has shifted from cooking instruction to entertainment-led cooking competitions, it appears that food networks are implementing digital marketing strategies to continue to deliver cooking instruction to viewers, but by means of different media platforms. I would suggest taking a quantitative approach that would analyze various search results to answer the question: 'how important are digital algorithms to television food networks and celebrity chefs within the digital era?'

In addition to this question, more research can also be conducted into the effects of predictive Video on Demand (VoD) algorithms on the television format industry and via digital formats, as in the case of Netflix. According to Napoli (2016), the availability of a growing store of data was a primary catalyst (along with content licensing costs) for Netflix to vertically integrate into content creation. Furthermore, Netflix can utilize their consumer viewing and preference data to suggest specific content for viewers through their predictive algorithm. For example, since watching Fox's *Hell's Kitchen* on Netflix, I have received suggestions based on Netflix's predictive algorithm to watch *Chef's Table*, a Netflix original food format. Predictive algorithms should be analyzed in further research to determine whether or not audiences are being led to sVOD original programming and, if so, what that means for linear first programming.

Finally, an examination of the patriarchal male chef on television should also be investigated. There has been a significant discrepancy in the balance between the number of professional female chefs portraying television hosting and judging roles on food television formats. Although there are many female cooks within cooking shows, they are most commonly perceived as domestic cooks who are filmed in a kitchen setting of the home, rather than in a professional setting like a commercial kitchen. Matwick and Matwick (2015) address the gender issue in their investigation of cooking shows. They believe that language and cooking are important mediums through which particular attitudes and behaviors are conveyed.

They argue that: 'while wonder is innate since we strive to understand the world we live in by our very nature as humans, inquiry is not the same for everyone' (Matwick and Matwick, 2015: 323). Matwick and Matwick (2015) proposed that preferred types of inquiry emerge in the kitchen more than others, depending on gender, historical influences, and socio-cultural contexts.

This imbalance of male and female expert chefs exists on the Netflix original food format, *Chef's Table* described in Chapter Seven. The format follows six of the world's most renowned chefs each season to reveal their roads to success as an international expert chef, where five out of the six selected subjects were men for Seasons 1, 2 and 3, and 3 of out 4 were men in Season 4. The rationality behind this could be indicative of what Packham (2016) addressed in her work on male-centric, heavily masculinized professional chef programming versus the archetypical domestic female cook. This raises questions about gender equality in the hospitality industry and research in this area would add value to feminist and media studies.

Distinctive connections have been made between all the findings chapters within this research. What makes food entertainment so popular across all media (i.e., magazines, films, and television), is that people are almost inevitably bound to have an interest in food given our universal need to eat. More importantly, we all love food whether it is gourmet, fried or vegan. We are all passionate about what we eat. The way in which producers incorporate new narrative devices, aesthetically pleasing dishes and the unique stories that are told around food's cultural heritage has made the food television show format a mainstream contender. Food carries cultural significance. As long as producers of food television show formats can find the balance between embracing the cultural requirements of format licensees without eroding their brand reputation, the food show format will continue to thrive. The television format's ability to lend itself well to industry changes and the modern audience will only increase our appetite for food entertainment in years to come.



# Appendix 1: Ethical Interview Consent Form

## CONSENT TO THE USE OF DATA

University of Glasgow, College of Arts Research Ethics Committee I, \_\_\_\_\_, understand that: **Angela Esposito** is collecting data in the form of: **Taped Interviews** for use in an academic research project at the University of Glasgow.

The scope of this research is to survey the decision-making practices of television format producers, commissioners, regulators, writers and onscreen talent and will be best addressed by creating conversations with informed consent with industry professionals, as well as through some content analysis and participant observation.

**I give my consent to the use of data for this purpose on the understanding that:**

- All names and other material likely to identify individuals will be anonymized if asked by the interviewee.
- The material will be treated as confidential and kept in secure storage at all times.
- The material will be retained in secure storage for use in future academic research.
- The material may be used in future publications, both print and online.

Signed by the contributor: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

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## Appendix 2: Abbreviations

ABC	American Broadcasting Company (American TV network)
BAFTA	British Academy of Film and Television Arts
BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation (British TV network)
CBS	Columbia Broadcasting System (American TV network)
EMT	Epic Meal Time
FYI	For Your Inspiration (American TV network)
GBBO	The <i>Great British Bake Off</i>
GOV	Government
Ofcom	Office of Communications
ICT	Information and Communication Technologies
ITU	International Telecommunication Union
ITV	Independent Television (British TV network)
MIPCOM	Marché International des Programmes de Communication
NBC	National Broadcasting Company (American TV network)
PACT	Producers Alliance for Cinema and Television
PDN	Paula Deen Network
PsB	Public Service Broadcaster
SEO	Search Engine Optimization
sVoD	Subscription Video on Demand
VoD	Video on Demand

## Appendix 3: Research Diary

*Research Diary at BBC One's MasterChef studio in London, UK, 9<sup>th</sup> of November, 2015:*

I arrived at the visitors' desk at BBC One's *MasterChef*'s Studio in London around 10:30 a.m. on the 9<sup>th</sup> of November, 2015. I was then ushered into the green room that was set up for the show guests for the day. After meeting some of the judges for that episode, a group of previous BBC One's *MasterChef* winners of the show, I was then led by a member of staff who worked with the audio team on the show who had asked me to wait around for producer David Ambler to arrive. Next, I was asked to see the set to meet with Gregg Wallace, John Torode, the contestants and the entire film crew. The director and film crew made swift introductions and one of the audio team members placed a viewing camera in my hands, as another strapped a pair of headphones over my ears. The film crew was very supportive and encouraged me to observe and take notes during the taping of the show.

Shortly after, Gregg Wallace greeted me with a big smile and hello. This was the second time we had met after our interview in Glasgow in May, 2016. During our initial meeting, I was fortunate enough to make an introduction, conduct an interview and make arrangements for my visit over to the BBC studio in London to further discuss my research project with the production team. Now, after a few months, I have been welcomed to the studio.

Shortly after my reconciliation with Wallace on set, the director asked if I could make my way to one of the contestant's kitchens. They wanted to shoot some commentary with the hosts about the final four's performance so far and needed someone to remain eye level with them to help avoid direct contact with the camera. I felt totally immersed in the show at that point. The crew was very hospitable and accepting of a PhD student observer.

After 15 minutes, the next contestant was asked to come on set and John Torode shouted "60 minutes" to the young, blonde finalist. During her time on camera, she roasted shallots, made preparations for her fudge brownie, and quickly made her way through the challenge within the allocated time period.



After the contestant filming, a quick lunch followed, where I had the opportunity to speak further with some of the previous BBC One's *MasterChef* winners. One of the previous winners included Hannah Miles, who has published 28 books since she won in 2007. Miles and I spoke about the experience she had as an amateur contestant on the show, her feelings on the cooking television format genre in general and how influential social media has become as part of promotion for *MasterChef*. Miles had then asked me to deliver an elegant chocolate cake to deliver it to Wallace as a thank you.

Whilst still waiting for Ambler, the producer of the show and one of the people responsible for having me observe today, I was lucky to have some extra time to sit down with Dave Crear, the director of the British cooking show format. Crear spoke about the beginning of *MasterChef*, how the format changed and it's growing number of spinoffs which include *MasterChef Professionals*, *Celebrity MasterChef* and *Junior MasterChef*. According to Crear, the only hang up when shooting *Junior MasterChef* was that the film crew was not allowed to swear when they were around the young contestants. Crear found working with amateur young chefs to be very fun and exciting. Crear also stressed the importance of timing when it came to the spinoffs during our interview, as well as some of the challenges the producers have when adhering to Ofcom's regulations.

Later, David Ambler showed up with a sense of urgency and invited me to sit in to observe the production of the judging tables. Miles and two other previous winners were invited to return to *MasterChef*, this time as judges instead of competitors. The behind-the-scenes of the judging panel appeared to be very natural, like a documentary, and in no way appeared scripted or coerced. There was a moment when the American judge had a gotten frustrated over a lack of salt on one of the dishes. When this happened, the production team took very little interest in sensationalizing this and Ambler assured me that it would not make the final cut of the episode. The guest judge's reaction would have most likely been included in some of the more high-drama reality driven adaptations of this format such as *MasterChef America* and *MasterChef Australia*. Ambler explained why this scene would not be used and said Karen Ross, the show's executive producer, has worked really hard to make the format strictly about the food and not the drama.

Since it is difficult for the audience to truly know what the dishes taste like, Ambler and the film crew asked the contestants and the judges to describe the food in full detail for the camera. The contestants would be asked to give some background knowledge on the dishes in front of them, and how the dishes were prepared, and the judges were asked to provide feedback on how they would improve the dishes and so on. According to the production team, in order for food programming to be interesting, the audience needs to trust the hosts and judges' verdict and live vicariously through their tasting journey.

Once the judging portion of filming was through and the workers and I were done taste-testing the leftovers, Ambler and I sat down to chat about *MasterChef* and its documentary-driven success. According to Ambler and Crear, the majority of the production and film crew came from a BBC documentary background, which is now evident to me when I think about how unique this format is to its adapted versions. In the interview, he spoke a lot about Karen Ross' leadership and the reasons for success over the years to what he attributes to the decision to stay "true to the food" and the format.

Ambler was my last interview and finished at the end of the workday. I had everyone sign a consent form before I left and let everyone know just how thankful I was for allowing me to observe.

## Appendix 4: Kumar's Perspectives of Objectives (2005)

TABLE 1.1 *Types of research studies from the perspective of objectives*

Examples	Aim	Main theme	Type of research
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Socioeconomic characteristics of residents of a community</li> <li>Attitudes of students towards quality of teaching</li> <li>Types of service provided by an agency</li> <li>Needs of a community</li> <li>Sale of a product</li> <li>Attitudes of nurses towards death and dying</li> <li>Attitudes of workers towards management</li> <li>Number of people living in a community</li> <li>Problems faced by new immigrants</li> <li>Extent of occupational mobility among immigrants</li> <li>Consumers' likes and dislikes with regard to a product</li> <li>Effects of living in a house with domestic violence</li> <li>Strategies put in place by a company to increase productivity of workers</li> </ul>	<b>To describe what is prevalent regarding:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a group of people</li> <li>a community</li> <li>a phenomenon</li> <li>a situation</li> <li>a programme</li> <li>an outcome</li> </ul>	To describe what is prevalent	Descriptive research
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Impact of a programme</li> <li>Relationship between stressful living and incidence of heart attacks</li> <li>Impact of technology on employment</li> <li>Impact of maternal and child health services on infant mortality</li> <li>Effectiveness of a marriage counselling service on extent of marital problems</li> <li>Impact of an advertising campaign on sale of a product</li> <li>Impact of incentives on productivity of workers</li> <li>Effectiveness of an immunisation programme in controlling infectious disease</li> </ul>	<b>To establish or explore:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a relationship</li> <li>an association</li> <li>an interdependence</li> </ul>	To ascertain if there is a relationship	Correlational research
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Why does stressful living result in heart attacks?</li> <li>How does technology create unemployment/employment?</li> <li>How do maternal and child health services affect infant mortality?</li> <li>Why do some people have a positive attitude towards an issue while others do not?</li> <li>Why does a particular intervention work for some people and not for others?</li> <li>Why do some people use a product while others do not?</li> <li>Why do some people migrate to another country while others do not?</li> <li>Why do some people adopt a programme while others do not?</li> </ul>	<b>To explain:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>why a relationship, association or interdependence exists</li> <li>why a particular event occurs</li> </ul>	To explain why the relationship is formed	Explanatory research

## Appendix 5: List of Television Programs

ABC	<i>The Chew</i>	2011	present
ABC	<i>Jamie's American Food Revolution</i>	2010	2011
ABC	<i>According to Jim</i>	2001	2009
ABC	<i>Brother and Sisters</i>	2006	2011
ABC	<i>Desperate Housewives</i>	2004	2012
ABC	<i>Extreme Makeover: Home Edition</i>	2003	2012
ABC	<i>The Great Holiday Baking Show</i>	2015	2015
ABC	<i>Shark Tank</i>	2009	present
ABC	<i>The Young Indiana Jones Chronicles</i>	1992	1993
BBC	<i>Cookery</i>	1946	1951
BBC	<i>Troubleshooter</i>	1990	1993
BBC	<i>MasterChef Goes Large</i>	2005	2005-present
BBC	<i>Life on Mars</i>	2006	2007
BBC	<i>Dragon's Den</i>	2005	present
BBC One	<i>MasterChef</i>	1990-2001	2005-present
BBC One	<i>House of Cards</i>	1990	1990
BBC One	<i>Saturday Kitchen</i>	2006	present
BBC One	<i>Songs of Praise</i>	1961	present
BBC One	<i>Strictly Come Dancing</i>	2004	present
BBC One	<i>The Apprentice</i>	2005	present
BBC Two	<i>The Office</i>	2001	2003
BBC Two	<i>What Not to Wear</i>	2001	2007
BBC Two	<i>Ready, Steady, Cook</i>	1994	2010
BBC Two	<i>The Naked Chef</i>	1999	2001
Bravo	<i>Top Chef</i>	2006	present
CBBC	<i>Junior Bake Off</i>	2011	2016
CBBC	<i>Junior MasterChef</i>	1994-1999	2010-2014
CBS	<i>The Dione Lucas Show</i>	1949	1955
CBS	<i>To the Queen's Taste</i>	1948	1949
CBS	<i>The American Baking Competition</i>	2013	2013
CBS	<i>The Great American Baking Competition</i>	2013	2013
Channel 4	<i>Come Dine with Me</i>	2005	present
Channel 4	<i>Ramsay's Kitchen Nightmares</i>	2004	2014
Channel 4	<i>Nigella Bites</i>	2000	2007
Channel 4	<i>Jamie's School Dinners</i>	2005	2006
Channel 4	<i>The F Word</i>	2010	2014

Channel 4	<i>Hell's Kitchen</i>	2004	2009
Channel 4	<i>Iron Chef UK</i>	2010	2010
Channel 4	<i>Supernanny</i>	2004	2012
Channel 4 (formerly BBC One)	<i>The Great British Bake Off</i>	2010	present
Disney	<i>First Class Chefs</i>	2015	present
Endemol Shine Group	<i>MasterChef</i>	1990	present
Endemol Shine Group	<i>MasterChef: The Professionals</i>	2008	present
Endemol Shine Group	<i>Celebrity MasterChef</i>	2006	present
Endemol Shine Group	<i>Big Brother</i>	1999	present
Endemol Shine Group	<i>Celebrity Big Brother</i>	2001	present
Epicurious (online)	<i>Around the World in 80 Dishes</i>	2008	2017
Food Network	<i>Restaurant: Impossible</i>	2011	2016
Food Network	<i>Emeril Live</i>	1997	2010
Food Network	<i>Grill It! With Bobby Flay</i>	2008	2010
Food Network	<i>Worst Cooks in America</i>	2010	present
Food Network	<i>Food Network Star</i>	2005	present
Food Network	<i>Chopped</i>	2009	present
Food Network	<i>Chopped Junior</i>	2015	present
Food Network	<i>Food Network Star Kids</i>	2016	present
Food Network	<i>Iron Chef America</i>	2005	2014
Food Network	<i>Diner's, Dives and Drive-Ins</i>	2007	present
Fox	<i>Hell's Kitchen</i>	2005	present
Fox	<i>MasterChef</i>	2010	present
Fox	<i>American Juniors</i>	2003	2003
FremantleMedia	<i>The Galloping Gourmet</i>	1969	1971
FremantleMedia	<i>Idols</i>	2001	present
FremantleMedia	<i>X Factor</i>	2004	present
Fuji Television	<i>Iron Chef</i>	1993	2000
FYI	<i>Epic Meal Empire</i>	2014	2014
ITV	<i>The Voice</i>	2012	present
ITV	<i>Britain's Got Talent</i>	2007	present
ITV	<i>Pop Idol</i>	2001	2003
ITV	<i>Who Wants to Be a Millionaire</i>	1998	2014
ITV	<i>The Voice Kids</i>	2017	present
ITV	<i>BBQ Champ</i>	2015	2015
ITVBe	<i>Dinner Date</i>	2010-2012	2014-present
Keshet International	<i>Help I Can't Cook</i>	2014	present
Lifetime	<i>Project Runway: Junior</i>	2015	present
NBC	<i>America's Got Talent</i>	2006	present
NBC	<i>The Office</i>	2005	2013
NBC	<i>The Biggest Loser</i>	2004	2016

NBC	<i>The Office</i>	2005	2013
NBC	<i>Scrubs</i>	2001	2010
NBC	<i>Celebrity Apprentice</i>	2008	2017
NBC	<i>Heroes</i>	2006	2010
NBC	<i>Deal or No Deal</i>	2005	present
NBC (Radio)	<i>Betty Crocker Cooking School of the Air</i>	1924	unknown
Netflix	<i>Chef's Table</i>	2016	Present
Netflix	<i>Cooked</i>	2016	2016
Network Ten	<i>Take Me Out</i>	2008	2009
PBS	<i>Sesame Street</i>	1969	present
Seven Network	<i>My Kitchen Rules</i>	2010	present
Sveriges Television	<i>Survivor</i>	1997	present
Sveriges Television	<i>Survivor</i>	1997	present
Ten Network	<i>MasterChef Australia</i>	2009	present
TLC	<i>What Not to Wear</i>	2003	2013
TLC	<i>Cake Boss</i>	2009	present
TLC	<i>Bakery Boss</i>	2013	2014
TLC	<i>The Next Great Baker</i>	2010	2014
Travel Channel	<i>Man V. Food</i>	2008	present
USDA (multiple radio stations)	<i>Aunt Sammy</i>	1926	1944
Viacom International Media Network	<i>Snack Off</i>	2014	2015
Vice	<i>Chef's Night Out</i>	2014	present
Vimeo	<i>My Life in Sourdough</i>	2013	2015
WGBH	<i>The French Chef</i>	1963	1973
YouTube	<i>Epic Meal Time</i>	2010	present

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