

“Share What and How You Cook at Home!”: Uncovering Social Identity

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Abstract— the passion for food and cooking establishes new social identity. There is a trend in social media usage where people share how and what they cook at home. There are also some applications that enable people to develop, experience and innovate their cooking skills. The aim of this study is to present how, why and what people’s cooking activities are being shared through applications (apps), and its marketing implication. The investigation conducted through qualitative exploratory method. The findings are food and cooking could bring social cohesion and create social images that refer to certain groups or cultures and to certain extent create new groups and culture within the society. This study also finds that the extensive usage of apps by social groups creates opportunities for new marketing strategies to emerge, namely mobile advertising.

Keywords—food; cook; home; social identity; apps; marketing strategies

I. INTRODUCTION

Recently there has been an increased interest in food and cooking in the global world. Both food and cooking are keywords that we could easily find links to and information on and that are widely used on the social media: food blogs, TV programmes, articles, and columns. This was discussed at the conference [1]. Other researches found domestic cooking has been the subject of foundational feminist work on gender inequality, as mentioned by Szabo [2], Buscemi [3] and Meah [4]; the risk associated with unsafe food safety practices and control domestic food hazards [5]; food not only as an important part of a balanced diet but also one of our main routes to pleasure [6]; and genetically modified food, culture, politics, and policy developments [7].

Some cultures prepare food and do cooking in a closed environment where only family members could enter the cooking area. While other cultures, such as the Torajans of South Sulawesi, Indonesia, are so embedded in the culture of food and cooking so much so that when Torajans greet each other they would say “*Manasu mo raka?*”, literal translation means is it cooked. People also have different motives related to food and cooking, among others are the pursuit of healthy lifestyle, dietary needs, as advertising tools, marketing strategies, social identity, and social cohesion.

In this paper, we argue that using food and cooking applications (apps) available on smartphones or tablets

could determine social identity. Food preferences and choices always reflect simultaneously social contexts, cultural influences, and environmental parameters [8]. Nowadays, recipes and cookbooks have come to be a major sector of the publishing industry [9]. However, Cox and Blake [10]; Tarulevicz [11]; Hewer and Brownlie [12] in the fields of food and cooking have not adequately addressed why people allow others to see their constructed social identities through cooking at home and sharing those activities through these apps.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. Social Identity, Food and Cooking

‘Tell me what you eat and I will tell you who you are’ was famous gastronomic essay *La Physiologie du gout* (1826) by Brillat-Savarin, as discussed by Caplan [13]. We are identified by what we eat or consume. Geographical knowledges of food constructed ‘selves’, ‘communities’ and ‘regions’, since human subjects are just as knowable and known through their spatiality and temporality as the ‘places’ and the foods they consume [14]. ‘...People identify themselves primarily with their locality. Territorial identity is a fundamental anchor of belonging that is not even lost in the rapid process of generalized urbanization we are now experiencing...’[15].

‘The act of eating is an active social practice that is related to term “edible identity”, which refers to the complex of culturally significant activities surrounding the preparation and ingestion of food...Individuals act out their self-conceptions as members of a group and their public identifications with a group to form distinct identities: namely, those with whom “We” can eat (“Us”) and those with whom “We” cannot eat (“Them”)’ [16].

There are three forms and origins of identity building: ‘(1) *Legitimizing identity*: introduced by the dominant institutions of society to extend and rationalize their domination *vis à vis* social authors. People grew up in family(s) or institutions that taught them what to eat, why, where, who, when and how to eat the food. Generally speaking, the instructions rooted from norms, ideas, and values that operated by dominant institutions of society, as religions or the elites did. There are also rituals related to food and cooking that have to be respected. (2) *Resistance identity*: generated by those actors who are in positions/conditions devalued and/or stigmatized by the logic of domination, thus building trenches of resistance

and survival on the basis of principles different from, or opposed to, those permeating the institutions of society. We could found resistance identity on motives of eating: refuse to consume local, according to Starr [17] and preference for organic food, and choose food-produce-by-local farmers. Slow Food Movement [<http://www.slowfood.com/>] is a response to the “threats” of globalized and Americanized fast food on local culinary cultures and traditions, has been noted by Bell and Hollows [18]; Sassatelli and Davolio [19]. ‘...food quality as a (battle) field of social practices consists in a given coordination of human and non-human resources in a particular place and time that is open to a change according to the mobilization of such resources due to the power relations that emerge from this coordination’ [20]; (3) *Project identity*: when social actors, on the basis of whatever cultural materials are available to them, build a new identity that redefines their position in society and, by so doing, seek the transformation of overall social structure [21]. Communities mobilizing more people to join and do action related to sustainability and equality issues; and politicizing more people on awareness of public policy related to food chains. Identities related to how individuals ascribe, take-up and perpetuate food, and expressions of the way people conceptualise their own self-image and rationalise their food behaviours’ [22].

B. Apps for Food and Cooking and Marketing Strategy

Apps available on smartphones and tablets as tools to promote healthy eating behaviors [23]. Platforms, as Android, iOS, Windows, Nook or Kindle celebrated nostalgic and authenticity of domestic and local culinary practices. ‘The lure of exotic food and its ephemeral pleasures is differently productive of groups along the food supply chain...The taste and smell of food as well as the aesthetics of its making are central to embodied racial identities...’[24].

Advertising through apps on smartphones and tablets are an increasingly growing segment in the advertising industry [25] known as mobile marketing. While the transition of advertising expenditure from traditional media to digital channels has not kept up with the changes in consumer behaviour, the direction of the development is clear. The unique targeting possibilities and new creative advertising units suitable for mobile devices will spur mobile ad spend to increase several fold in the medium-term [26]. Apps for food and cooking are certainly venues for marketers to promote related products. Consumers love food. Therefore, marketers have a wealth of consumer enthusiasm to tap into and many ways—particularly in digital channels—to spark conversations around their products and services [27].

Platforms where the apps can be found ensured interests of consumers through sum of reviews, ratings and download of apps. Issues on sustainable, back to traditional recipes and nature, share to more people, also healthier lifestyle are rooted on apps’ timelines. Apps platforms operated in acculturation process by using food technology and created virtual communities. Some apps are free but some must be purchased.

TABLE I. FOOD AND COOKING APPS

Apps (Platforms)	Apps Features	
	Contents	Social Identity Created
Epicurious (iOS, Android, Windows, Nook, Kindle)	The best of Epicurious recipes and includes a shopping list app.	Virtual community who could post and share what they cook. Members could vote whether they like posts
Fooducate (Ios, Android)	Recipes; daily tips related to diet, healths and fitness goals; scan a food product barcode to what is really in your food and it will also offer healthier alternatives. Not just counting calories.	Virtual community who could post any technics of cooking at home
BigOven (Ios, Kindle, Android, Nook, Windows)	350.000 free recipes and grocery list used by millions of cooks.	Virtual members are sharing any food and cooking at home through Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, Pinterest, and Google+
Allthecooks (Android, iOS, Windows)	Help many people to start cooking at home by free recipes, and to live healthier and discover the taste of real food	Forums with emphasis in recipes, food and health; sharing of recipes to: email, sms, twitter, Facebook and others
Foodily (iOS)	“Share what you cook with your friends and followers”; recipes by ingredient or diet type, like gluten-free or paleo. “Food Friends”: Discover people with similar tastes by following celebrity chefs, bloggers and cookbook authors.	Virtual community who connected by Google+ and Facebook
Cookit-allergyfree (iOS)	Hundred of classic recipes to fit allergy need	Interactive community through Facebook

Adapted from various sources, September 2015.

III. USING APPS TO CREATE SOCIAL IDENTITY AND SOCIAL NETWORKS

Smartphones software applications are programs able to run on mobile devices [28]. Through these apps, individuals tend to look for shared interest and similarities in other users. In this case, common mission(s) on food and cooking have been the uniting factor for people not only to use food and cooking apps, but also to manifest the missions or actions in the name of equality and humanity. These actions could create *new socio-cultural commonalities* that had been able to form social movements and citizens’ groups as reaction toward modernization risks and risk situations, as mentioned by Beck [29] ‘...Risk brings people together as publics. For Beck, this is risks’ essential feature, what it actually does; it creates ‘a public by promoting public awareness of risk’ [30].

‘Learning communities’ was institutional networks that have a common purpose and provide their members with cohesion and benefits as being learning and exchange, common business activity, and community building [31]. Food involves senses of taste and touch, which constructed by self and culture [32].

Smartphones apps connected to Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest and other social networks, which to certain extent create new groups and culture within the society. People are familiar to term 'foodies' that refers to amateur and professional lovers of food with an investment in knowing about all aspects of food [33]. Foodies extended their social networks by sharing and caring healthier and easy cooking. Social identity that raised up from apps users had crystallized into virtual communities who came from any traditions of cookings, countries, gender, age, and ethnics. There is vegan or '...vegetarian could be one of autonomous female identity as a rebellion against dominant culture whether or not it is stated to be a rebellion against male structures, which resists the structure of the absent referent, which renders both women and animals as objects...' [34].

Food industries not only expanded to food tour, cooking demonstration, cooking clubs, photography food, and food classes, but also made fetish on food. This strategies became a food related new ritual. Smartphones apps are being used as tools for these rituals, as identified by: meetings scheduled by cooking clubs; made more pictures and videos on cooking before shared to social networks; and educated more people to engage in food campaigns as supported by The Jamie Oliver Food Foundation (UK and US) who expected "...create a strong sustainable movement to educate every child about food, inspire families to cook again and empower people everywhere to fight obesity" [<http://www.foodrevolutionday.com/>]. Media has opened public domain for food and cooking informations which consist of words, images and symbolic content that compete for attention as individuals and organizations seek to make themselves seen and heard [35].

IV. CONCLUSION

Smartphones not only used as communication tools but also spread social networks where social identity could be traced by food behaviors of food and cooking apps users. Social identities included gender, food allergic communities, cooking at home lovers, and the most are foodies who expected healthier and tastier homemade food. There are new ways of thinking to give good marks to food related behaviors: consume and cultivate organically owned food resources; share the photos and videos; and inspire more people to do the same way.

Food and cooking apps could create new social identities that expanded to wider social networks, political actions and policies on food consciousness. Furthermore, apps platforms open new ways for advertising and create new possibilities for marketing strategies to emerge, e.g. mobile marketing.

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