

**DISTINCTION, DIGITALIZATION, AND LEGITIMATION: SOCIAL MEDIA
INCORPORATION IN THE BRAZILIAN GASTRONOMY FIELD**

***DISTINÇÃO, DIGITALIZAÇÃO E LEGITIMAÇÃO: A INCORPORAÇÃO DAS REDES
SOCIAIS NO CAMPO GASTRONÔMICO BRASILEIRO***

***DISTINCIÓN, DIGITALIZACIÓN Y LEGITIMACIÓN: LA INCORPORACIÓN DE LAS
REDES SOCIALES EN EL CAMPO GASTRONÓMICO BRASILEÑO***



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ABSTRACT: To investigate the relationships between the process of social media naturalization and the dynamics of social distinction, this article mobilizes data from the digital profiles of eight São Paulo restaurants and national and international gastronomic guides on Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok. Additionally, the study incorporates media articles and interviews with chefs and restaurant administrators. Grounded in Bourdieu's theory, the analysis indicates that struggles for legitimacy within the culinary field are impacted by the need to accommodate the pressures of new digitized customer habits. Such accommodation can be perceived as objectionable by the established agents of this field. Through the selected sample, the article explores the various strategies implemented by field agents to prevent the characterization of their efforts as "self-interested." Furthermore, it seeks to establish legitimate modes of incorporating social media into the daily operations of restaurants.

KEYWORDS: Gastronomic field. Digital food. Social distinction. Digital sociology. Sociology of food.

RESUMO: Para investigar as relações entre o processo de naturalização das redes sociais e a dinâmica de distinção social, este artigo mobiliza dados dos perfis digitais de oito restaurantes paulistanos e de guias gastronômicos nacionais e internacionais no Facebook, Instagram e Tik Tok, além de matérias e entrevistas na mídia com chefs e administradores desses restaurantes. Calcada na teoria bourdieusiana, a análise aponta que as disputas por legitimação no campo gastronômico são afetadas pela necessidade de atender à pressão dos novos hábitos digitalizados da clientela, posto que tal jogada pode ser julgada como condenável pelos agentes consagrados desse campo. Por meio da amostra selecionada, o artigo explora as diversas estratégias postas em prática pelos agentes do campo para evitar a caracterização do movimento como "interesseiro" e para estabelecer modalidades legítimas de incorporação das redes sociais no cotidiano dos restaurantes.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Campo gastronômico. Comida digital. Distinção social. Sociologia digital. Sociologia da alimentação.

RESUMEN: Este artículo utiliza datos de perfiles digitales de ocho restaurantes de São Paulo y de guías gastronómicas nacionales e internacionales en Facebook, Instagram y Tik Tok, así como artículos y entrevistas en medios de comunicación con chefs y administradores de dichos restaurantes, para investigar las relaciones entre el proceso de naturalización de las redes sociales y la dinámica de distinción social. Basándose en la teoría de Bourdieu, el análisis señala que las disputas por la legitimación en el campo gastronómico son afectadas por la necesidad de responder a la presión de los nuevos hábitos digitalizados de la clientela, ya que esta acción puede ser juzgada como condenable por los agentes consagrados de este campo. A través de la muestra seleccionada, el artículo explora las diversas estrategias que los agentes del campo utilizan para evitar ser caracterizados como "interesados" y para establecer formas legítimas de incorporar las redes sociales en la vida diaria de los restaurantes.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Campo gastronómico. Comida digital. Distinción social. Sociología digital. Sociología de la alimentación.

Introduction

The prominent presence of smartphones on restaurant tables leaves no doubt regarding the advancement of digital technologies in the dining realm, particularly when it comes to eating out. On the consumers' side, the increasing digitization of daily life has resulted in decisions about where to eat, what to eat, and how many calories to consume, mainly taking place within the digital realm, accessed through luminous rectangular screens. The same applies to recommending or complaining about the venue and its service. Among producers, the expectation of achieving "viral" status on social media has become a sound strategy for augmenting customer numbers, prompting numerous establishments to plan their decor and menus based on the potential for success on platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and, more recently, TikTok. This strategy has found particular resonance in Brazil, a country with the fifth-largest contingent of social media users², where internet access is predominantly facilitated through smartphones³.

Merely having an inviting physical space for generating photos for social media, commonly called "Instagrammable," does not seem to suffice within a thoroughly digitized context. Establishments must also immerse themselves within these platforms, presenting their digital facet to the public. Taking the city of São Paulo as an example, it is now commonplace for restaurants to have profiles on social media, at least on the more popular platforms like Facebook and Instagram. Some restaurants do not even have websites; customers must search social media for information about the establishment.

Nevertheless, this has not always been the case. Social media, now an integral part of restaurants' daily routine, was once seen as a threat to their reputations. Deciding to create profiles for restaurants on these platforms involves (and can jeopardize) various factors related to their position within the gastronomic production hierarchy. This pertains to the recognition they receive from guides, critics, gastronomic journalists, and other producers operating within this market. Therefore, grounded in Bourdieu's theory of cultural production fields and based on a sample of eight restaurants in the city of São Paulo, along with data collected from their social media accounts, those of their chefs, and from gastronomy publications and awards, this

² According to a report from *Statista*, Brazil not only ranks among the top 5 countries globally in terms of social media users, but it also holds the second position in the ranking when excluding Asian countries, trailing only behind the United States. Available at: https://www.statista.com/topics/6949/social-media-usage-in-brazil/#topicHeader__wrapper. Accessed in: 26 Oct. 2022.

³ Available at: <https://www1.folha.uol.com.br/tec/2022/07/smartphone-e-cada-vez-mais-dominante-no-acesso-a-internet.shtml>. Accessed in: 26 Oct. 2022.

article aims to discuss some of the factors that have long generated hesitancy in the decision to digitize restaurants. This process involves transforming their offline symbolic recognition into digital strategies of distinction. Furthermore, the article highlights changes that have transpired within the gastronomic landscape, leading local culinary producers to no longer regard digitization with suspicion.

Methodological Notes

Sources and Methods

This study is based on a sample of eight São Paulo restaurants. Four of them were selected due to their recognition by specialized critics, having won at least one category in the “*O melhor de São Paulo – 2018*”, awards from Folha de S. Paulo newspaper, the “*Veja comer e beber – 2017/18*”, recognition from *Veja São Paulo* magazine, or the 2018 Michelin Guide. The other half of the sample comprises establishments with over 90,000 followers on Instagram⁴, in 2018. In the group of "critically acclaimed" restaurants, we have: *Maní*; *A Casa Do Porco*; *Arturito*; *D.O.M.* In the group of "most liked" restaurants, we have: *Paris 6*; *Sal Gastronomia*; *Président*; *Bar Da Dona Onça*. Each restaurant was visited between March 2019 and March 2020.

Table 1 - Restaurants in the Sample

Critical Acclaim		Follower Success	
Restaurant	Awards in 2017/2018	Restaurant	Instagram Followers in 2018
D.O.M	Holder of Two Michelin Stars since 2015. Ranked as the 16th Best Restaurant in the World by The 50th Best Restaurants in 2017. Honorable Mention in the guidebook <i>O melhor de São Paulo 2018</i> . Winner in the "Author's Cuisine" category of <i>Veja Comer e Beber 2017/2018</i> .	Paris 6	1.1 million
Maní	Holder of One Michelin Star since 2015.	Sal Gastronomia	358 thousand

⁴ According to the Digital 2022 Global Overview Report (Datareportal, 2022), although Facebook remains the largest social media platform globally, it has been surpassed by Instagram in terms of active users in Brazil. This growth trend was already evident since the beginning of this investigation in 2019, when it was observed that the majority of activities of the selected establishments were concentrated on Instagram. In contrast, Facebook, in general, was mainly used to replicate content produced in the format of the other platform.

	Named the Best Restaurant in São Paulo, according to the guide <i>O melhor de São Paulo 2018</i> . Secured Second Place in the "Author's Cuisine" category, as per <i>Veja Comer e Beber 2017/2018</i> .		
A Casa do Porco	Ranked as the Second Best Restaurant in São Paulo, according to the guide <i>O melhor de São Paulo 2018</i> . Winner in the "Cuisine" category of <i>Veja Comer e Beber 2017/2018</i> . Ranked as the 4th Best Restaurant in Latin America by Latin America's 50th Best Restaurants 2019. Awarded the Bib Gourmand by the Michelin Guide 2018.	Président	143 thousand*
Arturito	Honorable Mention in the <i>O melhor de São Paulo 2018</i> . Winner in the "Diverse" category of <i>Veja Comer e Beber 2017</i> . Holder of the Bib Gourmand by the Michelin Guide 2018.	Bar da Dona Onça	95.5 thousand

Source: Author's Compilation.

*The number of followers for the Président restaurant is for January 2020, as the establishment was only inaugurated in December 2019.

The undercover customer observation – "a form of participant observation in which researchers act as customers (real or potential) to monitor processes and procedures used in service delivery" (WILSON, 2006, p. 148, our translation) — was employed to observe how the service was provided, the decoration and arrangement of the dining area, the menu, and the dishes. In essence, everything constitutes the "atmosphere" of a restaurant, signaling to customers its "discourse" and what to expect from that experience (WARDE, 2016).

The profiles of the restaurants and their chefs/administrators, as well as other agents in the national and international gastronomic field (*Veja Comer & Beber*; *Guia Folha*; *Paladar Estadão*; *Revista Menu*; *Revista Gula*; *The 50th Best* and *Guia Michelin*) on the social media platforms Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok, were used as sources from which data about the creation of the investigated profiles were collected. Additionally, interviews granted to magazines, newspapers, YouTubers, etc., were mobilized, allowing for the identification of the disposition of chefs and restaurant administrators towards the use of social media, as well as their respective relationships with specialized critics and other agents involved in the recognition of gastronomic production.

Brief Sample Description

Regarding the gastronomic hierarchy, D.O.M restaurant, led by chef Alex Atala, holds the top position among the sampled restaurants. It has held 2 *Michelin* stars since 2015 when the guide began considering Brazilian restaurants. Moreover, the restaurant is also recognized by *The World 50th Best* since 2006 and *La Liste* since 2018. Nationally, it consistently ranks at the forefront of categories related to chef-driven cuisine. Dining at D.O.M. is a highly formal event. The customer doesn't even choose what they will eat; they decide between two options for the tasting menu size (in terms of courses), whether it will be vegetarian or not, and whether it will be accompanied by a wine "pairing" or "special waters"⁵. Each dish is served with a grand ceremony, accompanied by an explanation of its content, production, and, in some cases, how it should be consumed. Additionally, Atala is part of the first generation of Brazilian chefs who captured global gastronomy's attention by blending "exotic" national ingredients with French and Japanese techniques. In the early 2000s, he hosted the culinary program "*Mesa Para Dois*," broadcast on the private channel GNT. He became well-known to the general public after appearing on open TV programs like "*Caldeirão do Huck*."

Similar to D.O.M, Maní has also been recognized by the *Michelin Guide* since its debut in the country, having received and maintained a star since then. The restaurant has been among the world's top 100 in *the 50th Best* since 2011 and *La Liste* since 2018. Nationally, like D.O.M, it continues to hold leading positions among chef-driven restaurants. In addition to offering tasting menus, Maní also serves *à la carte*, where dishes can be individually chosen and experienced. Its chef, Helena Rizzo, was elected the Best Female Chef in Latin America in 2013 and the World's Best Female Chef in 2014, awarded by *The 50th Best*. Furthermore, she appeared on the GNT channel, serving as a judge on the program *The Taste Brasil* from 2017 to 2018 and on the international reality show *The Final Table*, produced and broadcast by Netflix. More recently, in 2020, she became a judge on the renowned program "MasterChef Brasil," replacing chef Paola Carosella.

A Casa do Porco is a restaurant led by chefs and partners Jefferson Rueda and Janaina Torres Rueda. In addition to offering "the city's most affordable tasting menu" (the chefs proudly state⁶), the restaurant also provides *à la carte* service and options for quick snacks that

⁵ Fermented beverages with indigenous inspiration made from Amazonian fruits such as bacuri, cupuaçu, pineapple, uvaia, soursop, and puxurí.

⁶ Available at: <https://oglobo.globo.com/rioshow/rio-gastronomia/noticia/2021/12/somos-menu-degustacao-mais-barato-do-mundo-diz-janaina-rueda-1-25324177.ghtml>. Accessed in: 10 Nov. 2022.

can be purchased from the street through a window leading into the restaurant's interior. This establishment, inaugurated in 2015, features a relaxed and information-rich decor. The informality extends to the service, the staff uniforms, and even the seating arrangements, where customers can be seated at shared tables. Since 2019, the restaurant has been included in *The 50th Best*. More recently, in 2022, the award named it the best restaurant in Brazil and the 4th best in Latin America. *La Liste* (which was awarded the *Authenticity Award*, in 2019, recognizing the world's most creative cuisine) also deemed it the best in Latin America. A Casa do Porco holds the *Bib Gourmand* seal from the *Michelin Guide*. In 2018, it was ranked as the second-best restaurant in São Paulo according to the guide "*O Melhor de São Paulo*," it won in the "cuisine" category of *Veja Comer e Beber*. Moreover, Rueda earned a Michelin star while working at another restaurant before starting his venture. Despite making sporadic appearances on open TV programs, it was only in 2021 that Rueda and his partner began to feature in a reality show on the private channel *Comida & Arte*.

Arturito, the restaurant of chef Paola Carosella, is included in the *Michelin Guide's Bib Gourmand* selection. In 2018, it received an honorable mention in the guide "*O Melhor de São Paulo*" and won in the "varied" category of *Veja Comer e Beber*. Offering exclusively *à la carte* service, this restaurant serves dishes inspired by Italian cuisine, often involving preparations in a wood-fired oven. Its ambiance is understated, and dish delivery may come with a brief explanation of the ingredients or the preparation process. The restaurant's motto revolves around preserving culinary "traditions," rooted in nostalgia for a time when food would have the "true flavor" of ingredients – something that is now perceived to be threatened by modernity, industrialization, mass production, etc. Carosella, despite her recognition in the culinary sphere and personal awards, such as being named the best chef by the guide "*O Melhor de São Paulo*" in 2014, became a highly influential celebrity among the general public after serving as a judge on the program "*MasterChef Brasil*" from 2014 to 2019.

On the other hand, the *Bar da Dona Onça* aims to pay homage to the bohemian culture of São Paulo. Located near *A Casa do Porco* and at the base of the Copan Building—an architectural landmark in the city's heart—the restaurant is also led by Janaina Torres Rueda and Jefferson Rueda. It attracts customers who don't mind waiting hours for a weekend table and has garnered a substantial following on social media. In 2018, it had around 95.5 thousand Instagram followers, which doubled in just four years. The restaurant has earned some awards, such as Best Bar in 2008 and 2009 and Best Bar Food in 2011 and 2012, from *Veja Comer e*

Beber. While the restaurant hasn't received international recognition, its chef, Torres Rueda, was awarded Latin America's Icon award in 2020 by *The 50th Best*.

Sal Gastronomia is a restaurant owned by Henrique Fogaça. As a judge on MasterChef Brasil since the show's inception, Fogaça initially excited journalists and gastronomic critics early in his career. After being named the Emerging Chef of the Year in 2008 and 2009 by *Veja Comer e Beber* and *Prazeres da Mesa* magazines, respectively, his career stagnated, and his name disappeared from specialized publications until his appearance on the culinary reality show. In 2018, Sal had 358 thousand Instagram followers; by 2022, that number had grown to 746 thousand. The restaurant, offering *à la carte* service, aims to provide contemporary Brazilian cuisine. Despite presenting a specific aesthetic alignment with high-end restaurant dishes, Fogaça often states that he doesn't serve "small bites" – an apparent reference to the small portions typically served in such establishments.

Président is the restaurant of Erick Jacquin. The French chef is a well-known figure in the Brazilian culinary world, with his restaurants having accumulated various accolades, especially La Brasserie, which faced management issues and closed in 2013. After the crisis, Jacquin became a national celebrity as a judge on MasterChef Brasil and through his participation in other culinary reality shows. Specifically, Président debuted on social media before even physically existing. Jacquin announced the creation of the restaurant on his profile, gradually updating the restaurant's profile with images of the construction progress, staff selection process, and so on. Président is a relatively expensive French restaurant. Customers can choose between *à la carte* service or a tasting menu. The decor is rich in red tones and references to France and the chef himself. Despite being relatively new (it opened in December 2019), the establishment has already been awarded Best French Restaurant by *Veja Comer e Beber* for two consecutive years, in 2021 and 2022.

Finally, Paris 6 is the restaurant in the sample with the highest number of followers on social media. It had around 1.1 million followers in 2018 and 1.5 million in 2022. Businessman Isaac Azar, a familiar figure in magazines and business events, leads the chain of restaurants in São Paulo. Initially, in 2006, Paris 6 garnered positive attention from critics. During that time, French chefs worked in its kitchen and contributed to its menu. However, the business was accumulating debts. This was when Azar started naming dishes after celebrities, who then became honored guests of the establishment (i.e., they dined for free). The French chefs were let go, and the dishes served became much more indulgent and "appealing," laden with cheese or overflowing with chocolate in the case of desserts. This strategy was coupled with social

media, where photos of the restaurant filled with famous individuals were posted, and dinners and discounts were raffled. However, as the restaurant grew in popularity among the public and on social media, its standing among critics and specialized journalists dramatically declined to the point where it is now entirely disregarded by these validating agents.

The Culinary Field: A Hybrid Field

The culinary field is a hybrid cultural production field. According to Bourdieu's theory of areas, the cultural field – which constitutes social reality alongside political and economic fields – is structured by the opposition between "cynical" and "disinterested" production (BOURDIEU, 2002, p. 26). On one end, production is guided by commercial commitments, thus being "contaminated" by logic external to the field; on the other is production considered legitimate, anti-commercial, accumulating symbolic capital in the form of prestige or authority (BOURDIEU, 2002, p. 20). By denying the utility of their creations and the interest in accumulating financial profits, the logic of the cultural field would mirror the sense of the economic world in reverse, establishing a "negative correlation between temporal success (notably financial) and artistic value proper, [being] the opposite of the laws of economic exchanges" (BOURDIEU, 1993, p. 164, our translation). The game of cultural production is a game in which "those who lose-win," and in this reversed contest, the acquisition of "symbols of worldly success, success in the world, and success in this world" can compromise salvation in the "other world" (BOURDIEU, 2000, p. 37).

The internal hierarchy of the cultural production field features one of its principal axes as the opposition between the autonomous pole — dominant and based on the specific interests of the area — and the heterodox pole — dominated and oriented by external factors (JOHNSON, 1993, p. 16). In Bourdieu's works, this opposition is also expressed through antinomies between erudite production and the cultural industry⁷, restricted production and vulgar production, elite culture and mass culture, and so on (BOURDIEU, 1993; 2002; 2007). The author has examined various cultural subfields, such as literature, painting, fashion, journalism, science, and more. However, the schematic representation of the gastronomic area as a cultural subfield was proposed by Priscilla Ferguson (1998).

⁷ It is important to emphasize here that throughout this work, the term "cultural industry" refers to Bourdieu's conception (2007, p. 105, our translation), that is, a field organized to produce "cultural goods intended for non-producers of cultural goods (the 'general public') who can be recruited from both the non-intellectual fractions of the dominant classes ('cultivated public') and other social classes".

Informed by Bourdieusian theory, the author identifies the factors that provided the conditions for establishing this specific subfield, emphasizing the process of its autonomy. Given that (relative) autonomy is a necessary prerequisite for the existence of a field, it is through this differentiation from the dynamics of other areas that specific objects and capitals contested by "competent" agents—those endowed with a *habitus* that allows them to recognize the laws structuring the game they are involved in—are shaped. According to Ferguson (1998), following the French Revolution, the relative strength of the gastronomic field was established due to factors such as: 1) the formation of a broader consumer audience, no longer limited to aristocratic courts; 2) the intensification of competition among chefs who gained greater creative autonomy to innovate techniques and recipes; 3) the consolidation of modern restaurants as primary sites of gastronomic production and consumption; and, above all, 4) the intersection with other cultural fields that enabled the establishment of a corpus of written works, be they literary, technical, or academic, systematizing and disseminating the norms of the activity.

While agreeing with the proposition that intersection with more established fields (such as the literary) was necessary for the gastronomic field to gain prestige when it still had little autonomy, Fantasia (2010, p. 29) argues that the relative independence of this field was not founded on a relationship of solidarity with other cultural areas, but rather on its capacity to establish its own rules and evaluation standards. The author highlights the social construction of the chef as a central factor in this dynamic, as it was through this figure that oppositions between artisanal and industrial production, amateur and homemade, and artistic and professional began to operate. With the proliferation of guides, newspapers, magazines, journalists, critics, awards, and gastronomic competitions, the field succeeded in establishing an internal system of recognition that followed its own rules of production, classification, and hierarchization.

Having established its relative autonomy, the French gastronomic field exerted significant influence on the emergence and characterization of high gastronomy restaurants and their chefs in other countries around the world (LANE, 2014, p. 11; POULAIN, 2011; PREVIATTI, 2019). The high degree of autonomy outlined by Fantasia (2010), began to erode in the 20th century, as the economic logic of the industrial kitchen—represented primarily by the image of the *fast-food* chain McDonald's (FISCHLER, 2015) — started to pervade high gastronomy productions. Simultaneously, chefs become celebrities, recognized beyond the legitimizing instances of the gastronomic field, appearing in mass media outlets (FERGUSON,

2005). The cultural industry thus increasingly becomes intertwined with the consecrating circuits of gastronomic production.

Consequently, chefs begin to have the opportunity to capitalize on their status through restaurants that are more oriented towards the economic logic of the market and the promotion of products (not necessarily related to cuisine) that bear their signature (ABBOTS, 2015). It is also undeniable that the commercial nature of restaurants, which ensured the material foundation of chefs' autonomy and gastronomy, freeing them from court control, imposes the law of economic profit on this cultural production. After all, to the extent that chefs and their restaurants rely less on patrons and more on a broad paying audience, they must adapt to the "intense competition for customers, money, and financial imperatives" (GUALTIERI, 2018, p. 7, our translation). The gastronomic field acquires the character of a hybrid cultural area, in which the inverted economic logic does not predominate as determining over the traditional economic reason (GUALTIERI, 2018, p. 7). Consequently, the boundaries between the legitimate and the vulgar are unclear. This requires producers aiming to occupy the top of the hierarchy to resort to artifices to reconcile contradictory logic and thus gain recognition.

In this context, social media emerges as another factor that gastronomic producers must balance. On the one hand, integrating these platforms into customers' daily lives compels their adoption by restaurants. On the other hand, their promotional potential can lead them to be perceived as tools of massification linked to a manifest economic interest, which restrains their utilization by producers striving to accumulate internal recognition. As demonstrated below, precisely from the calibration of these strategies, the heterogeneous nature of the restaurant digitization process arises.

Recognition in the Brazilian Gastronomic Field

While in the French gastronomic field, interaction with the cultural industry occurred only after establishing its (always relative) independence from other fields (FANTASIA, 2010), this relationship has been present in Brazil. The foundational bases of the Brazilian gastronomic area were laid around the same time celebrity chefs emerged in France, and celebrity chefs began occupying space in American TV programming. In the mid-1970s, international hotel chains, attracted by the boost in tourism, established themselves in the country, specifically in Rio de Janeiro, hiring acclaimed chefs to lead their restaurant kitchens (BUENO, 2014, p. 11).

Here, the limited or nonexistent penetration of gastronomy guides and specialized publications meant that the legitimation of chefs' authority primarily passed through the cultural industry's consecration circuits (PREVIATTI, 2019). The "popularization" and legitimation of these producers began through features in widely circulated magazines in the country intended for diverse audiences. Television only entered the equation a bit later since, until the 1960s, television sets were rudimentary in Brazil, and their subsequent popularization was limited to wealthier households due to their luxury price tags (RIDENTI, 2014). It was through widely circulated magazines of various themes, especially from the 1980s onwards, that the "right of entry" of chefs into the gastronomic field and the definition of legitimacy criteria started to be disseminated in Brazil (PREVIATTI, 2019, p. 361).

Starting in the 1990s, in addition to national magazines, television programs, and publishers also began to provide visibility to professional chefs working in the country and to gastronomy as a whole (BUENO, 2013, p. 99). In the 2000s, the media began highlighting the first native chefs who, having interned in prestigious restaurants in the United States and Europe, returned to Brazil and opened their establishments, becoming references for the subsequent generations (BUENO, 2013, p. 101-102). Essential consolidation phases in the Brazilian gastronomic field coincide with the global expansion of TV programs related to haute cuisine. Without diverging from this global trend, Brazilian television channels, whether open or cable, started to feature renowned chefs as hosts, transforming them into celebrity chefs (BUENO, 2013, p. 103).

It is worth noting that the high permeability between "high culture" and "mass culture" in Brazil is not exclusive to gastronomic production. This phenomenon exists in production and the market for other cultural products, such as music, theater, cinema, and literature. Ridenti (2014) argues that this is due to the late formation of a distinctive "erudite culture," which practically coincided with the consolidation of the country's cultural industry during industrialization. As a result, autonomous production poles, with legitimization rules defined by peers and clear boundaries between arts considered legitimate and "vulgar," were "contaminated"⁸ by the rationality of mass production even before they fully developed.

⁸ The notion of "contamination" here is not a value judgment but rather relates to the conception above of the social world as a space composed of relatively autonomous fields in which specific interests are at play. In other words, even though the "unfolding" of meanings articulated within these frameworks is analytically perceptible, their dynamics are permeable and constantly influenced by social agents. To provide an example beyond the realm of gastronomy, while the secularization of art is an analytically perceptible process at the macrosocial level, it is not uncommon for religious agents to still use categories like "blasphemy," "sin," and the like to contest artistic representations of figures they deem sacred (SANTOS; CRUMO, 2019).

Ridenti (2014, p. 32) argues that "artistic culture and market culture were not opposed" in Brazil. An artist could be popular with the lay public and produce "alienating" or "vulgar" symbolic goods without affecting the recognition of specialized critics and the production of goods they deemed legitimate. However, this does not mean that the standards of opposition between what is judged "erudite" or "popular" were abandoned entirely. The same holds for chefs and their productions within the gastronomic field: certain types of media exposure contribute little prestige or are considered less worthy for chefs, while others are acceptable (sometimes even desirable).

As stated by Previatti (2019, p. 361-2), the cultural industry is one of the critical factors in establishing a decisive boundary for the symbolic demarcation that distinguishes the amateur cook from the professional chef. According to the author, it is possible to position chefs in the hierarchy of the field based on the type of media product they are part of or endorse. Whether in the realm of television or publishing, such products are often categorized as "culinary" or "gastronomic" (PREVIATTI, 2019, p. 363). The former refers to lesser-prestige cooks, programs that teach practical cooking, and non-biographical recipe books. On the other hand, the latter category, reserved for celebrity chefs who occupy the highest positions, is generally associated with media products about lifestyle (such as travel to discover new ingredients), behind-the-scenes glimpses of these personalities' kitchens, and literary works that combine recipes and biography (PREVIATTI, 2019).

The early relationship between Brazilian high gastronomy production and the cultural industry was, therefore, a significant factor in shaping the specificities of the national field. The ease with which highly renowned chefs move between their restaurant kitchens and television studios is a consequence of this formative dynamic, and this is a component that currently weighs in the balance of legitimization for chefs' use of social media.

The television program *MasterChef Brasil*, which premiered on the open channel *Rede Bandeirantes* in 2014, is an essential example of the continuity established between the mediatization of chefs through television and social media. Even in its initial season, the premiere episode reached the status of a *Trending Topic*⁹ on Twitter, while in terms of television

⁹ Expression, translated as "trending topics," is a feature of the social media platform Twitter that generates a dynamic list of the most discussed subjects on the platform at that moment. Initially, only hashtags were considered for the ranking, but currently, a word or expression only needs to be repeated frequently to be considered a "trend." The list displayed on the right side of the platform's homepage can be adjusted to show topics trending globally or in specific countries, states, and even cities.

viewership, it only ranked fourth¹⁰. Since then, the show has developed ways to associate its broadcast with the use of social media, creating hashtags with the program's name or topics mentioned in each episode and promoting them during transmission, standardizing the usernames of its participants on Twitter and Instagram, and creating extra content exclusively available on social media after the TV broadcast. In this context, the kitchen chefs who played the role of judges were also propelled into the online world, quickly amassing significant followers. Thus, they were transformed not only into mere celebrity chefs but into celebrity chef digital influencers.

As a result, social media has become another media channel where gastronomic producers can seek legitimacy and authority. Some platforms have absorbed many field agents in gastronomy, including chefs, restaurants, esteemed critics¹¹, gastronomy magazines and newspapers, and significant world awards. However, linking restaurants to these digital media did not occur as smoothly as the transition of celebrity chefs from TV screens to smartphones.

Digitalization Strategies as Strategies of Distinction

All the restaurants in the sample have a certain degree of familiarity with the cultural industry, whether through the media exposure of their chefs or the incorporation of "celebrity capital" (DRIESSENS, 2013) from their customers, as in the case of Paris 6. Therefore, associating themselves with mainstream media would not be a novelty for any of them. However, it is interesting to note, right from the start and considering only the quantitative aspect, that they maintain different levels of engagement with social media: while some have decided to associate with the majority of the most widely used platforms in the country, others have preferred to select two, one, or even remain outside this realm.

¹⁰ Available at: <https://televisao.uol.com.br/noticias/redacao/2014/09/03/masterchef-conquista-internautas-e-faz-sucesso-no-twitter.htm>. Accessed in: 17 May 2022.

¹¹ I identify established critics as those who work or have worked for some form of press producing specialized gastronomy content. In other words, the authority of judgment by these agents has been conferred and recognized by their peers in the field of journalism and gastronomy itself. This distinction is significant because, in modern times, social media platforms are the stage for a variety of self-proclaimed amateur gastronomic critics who enjoy recognition from a broad audience of followers but not from authoritative instances. Since the early days of Web 2.0, which grants anyone with internet access the ability to digitally publish their ideas, a dispute has developed between amateur and professional critics. On the one hand, there is the argument that amateur critics help deconstruct the snobbery that limits the restaurant universe to specific consumer categories; on the other hand, it is claimed that, unlike professional critics, amateurs are not under the auspices of a "regulatory authority" that leads them to follow certain codes of ethics, which dictates the transparency and integrity of their judgments. For a more in-depth analysis of the subject, refer to Rousseau (2012); Koberz (2018); Mellet *et al.* (2014); and Vásquez and Chik (2015).

While *A Casa do Porco*, *Bar da Dona Onça*, *Maní*, *Président*, and *Sal Gastronomia* have profiles on Facebook and Instagram, *Paris 6* adds Twitter, YouTube, and TikTok, the latest trendy social media platform to its list. *Arturito*, on the other hand, only has an Instagram profile, created during the coronavirus pandemic to serve as a communication channel between the restaurant and customers while in-person services were suspended. Finally, *D.O.M* is not present on any of them.

The presence on various social media platforms is a good initial indicator of how comfortable a chef or restaurant owner is with associating their establishment's image with these platforms. However, adding a temporal perspective brings greater complexity to this picture. Data concerning the intervals between the dates of restaurant openings, social media platform launches, and profile creations highlight a sense of estrangement before the "naturalization" of the use of these platforms by restaurants with high symbolic capital volumes.

The table below provides the year the establishments studied here were opened and the years in which they became part of the social media platforms Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok. To better understand the data, it is crucial to bear in mind a few facts. Facebook was launched in 2004 as a university-based social network, initially limited to use by students at *Harvard University* in the United States. Over time, its usage was extended to other American and Canadian universities until 2006 it became available to anyone who registered. This social network began gaining many users in Brazil around 2011 and became the most widely used platform in the country in 2012¹². At the end of 2010, Instagram emerged as a mobile application (cell phone app) that initially only worked on iPhones. In 2012, the Instagram app became available for Android smartphones, which are much more prevalent among Brazilians than Apple devices, which operate with the IOS (*iPhone Operating System*) system. TikTok, on the other hand, is the most recent successful social media platform. Launched globally in 2018, it gained popularity in early 2020¹³ and has reached an increasing number of users in Brazil.

¹² Available at: <https://g1.globo.com/tecnologia/noticia/2012/01/facebook-passa-orkut-e-vira-maior-rede-social-do-brasil-diz-pesquisa.html>. Accessed in: 19 May 2022.

¹³ In the first four months of 2020, the platform reached 2 billion downloads in mobile app stores. In July of the following year, this number reached 3 billion, a milestone previously achieved only by social media platforms within the Facebook group. Available at: <https://sensortower.com/blog/tiktok-downloads-2-billion>; <https://sensortower.com/blog/tiktok-downloads-3-billion>. Accessed in: 22 May 2022.

Table 2 – Opening Date and Entry into Social Media Platforms

Restaurant	Year of Establishment	Year of Entry to Facebook (open to any user in 2006)	Entry Date to Instagram (launched in 2010)	TikTok
D.O.M	1999	-	-	-
Sal Gastronomia	2005	2009	2014	-
Maní	2006	2012	2013	-
Paris 6	2006	2009	2011	2019 (2021)
Bar da Dona Onça	2008	2011	2013	-
Arturito	2008	-	2020	-
A Casa do Porco	2015	2015	2014	-
Président	2019	2019	2019	-

Source: Self-prepared with data collected from the digital profiles of the restaurants.

It is noticeable that most restaurants only created profiles on Facebook when the platform was already on the verge of becoming the most used social media in the country. Excluding establishments opened from 2015 onwards (when smartphones and social media as a whole were well incorporated into the daily lives of a considerable portion of Brazilians residing in major urban centers), it is evident that only Paris 6 and Sal Gastronomia established profiles on the platform before it began to solidify as a popular space for online sociability. These establishments share the fact that their owners are "outsiders" to the gastronomic field, having embarked on their careers in the restaurant industry without a sort of "sponsorship" that ensures the transmission not only of symbolic capital but also knowledge about the field's nomos (as well as its boundaries)¹⁴. Azar was an automobile industry businessman who decided to switch fields while remaining in management rather than entering the kitchens. Fogaça worked at Banco Real in São Paulo when he learned to cook¹⁵, and after developing a taste for the practice, he decided to study gastronomy at FMU (*Centro Universitário das Faculdades Metropolitanas Unidas*¹⁶). After short internships at restaurants such as D.O.M — where he

¹⁴ Among the other chefs in the sample, Janaina Torres Rueda also did not undergo extensive internships abroad in restaurants led by highly acclaimed chefs, which is often a stage in the training of a significant portion of the first generation of highly renowned Brazilian chefs (BUENO, 2016, p. 457). However, her "transformation" process into a chef was mentored by her then-husband, Jefferson Rueda, who was already widely recognized in national and international culinary spheres.

¹⁵ According to her biography, *Um Chef Hardcore*, Henrique Fogaça "didn't even know how to fry an egg," but tired of relying on frozen food sent from the countryside by his mother, he asked his grandmother to teach him how to prepare breaded steak. From that point forward, he began to spend more time in the kitchen, broadening his culinary repertoire (Fogaça, 2016).

¹⁶ The Centro Universitário das Faculdades Metropolitanas Unidas, also known as FMU, is a private higher education institution in São Paulo, Brazil.

stayed for only a month — and Julia Cocina (Carosella's former establishment) and working for about a year at Namesa (also owned by Atala), he opened Sal.

Regarding Instagram, Paris 6 is the only one to create a profile in the platform's inaugural year. The other restaurants that opened before 2015, except for D.O.M and Arturito, only appeared starting in 2013, when Instagram was already globally popular¹⁷. What should not be overlooked here is that the gap between the opening of the establishments and their registration on Facebook and Instagram disappears in the case of establishments inaugurated after 2015. This interval becomes negative considering the months of operation commencement and social media appearance. *A Casa do Porco* opened in October 2015, but its Facebook profile creation was recorded in July 2015 and on Instagram, even earlier, in December 2014¹⁸. *Président*, on the other hand, commenced operations in December 2019, but profiles on both social media platforms had already been created in March of the same year¹⁹²⁰.

The difference in the time it took for older and more recent restaurants to join social media is related to the attenuation of the initial threat they posed. According to Baym (2011, p. 1), when new technologies are introduced into social life, they can be met with enthusiasm and skepticism. Fear arises from uncertainty about the effects of such additions, which inevitably alter how the world is perceived and certain relationships are established, leading to social and cultural reorganization (BAYM, 2011, p. 2). These reactions are not limited to digital technologies and have been prompted by inventions such as the telephone, telegraph, and indoor plumbing (BAYM, 2011; FISCHER, 1992; MARVIN, 1998; PANTZAR, 1997). Only through these technologies do individuals gradually understand their possibilities and imbue them with new services and meanings (FISCHER, 1992; MILLER *et al.*, 2019). The process unfolds until the new artifacts become so integrated into daily life that they become almost invisible (BAYM, 2011, p. 45).

¹⁷ According to the *GWI Social* report, compiled by *GlobalWebIndex* (2014), in the last quarter of 2013, Instagram exhibited global growth more significantly than the combined growth of the Twitter, Facebook, and Pinterest platforms.

¹⁸ Information was collected from their respective Facebook and Instagram pages on May 22, 2022.

¹⁹ Same.

²⁰ Notably, the images posted on Instagram by both restaurants up until their respective openings, rather than merely generating anticipation among followers and potential customers, served as a means of conversion and transmission of specific capitals from the chefs/owners to their future establishments. In the case of *Président*, Jacquin capitalized on his celebrity status to convert it into digital money for the establishment, which in turn might have been converted into advantages such as gifts from suppliers (as per Jacquin's post on November 30, 2019, where he mentioned that the *La Grand Maison*, cookware brand sent eight personalized pans to the restaurant as a gift). On the profile of *A Casa do Porco*, photos of cured ingredients and books about pork production and preparation functioned as indicators that the cultural capital accumulated by its chefs in the gastronomic field would be transmitted to the restaurant.

In the present case, restaurants concerned with maintaining or building their reputations only begin associating their images with newly launched social media platforms after users have already developed their dynamics within them, having constructed through usage different "netiquettes" (LÉVY, 1999, p. 128), that is, the set of implicit norms about what is acceptable or not on that platform²¹. Furthermore, when a significant number of restaurants joined Facebook, for instance, several other businesses had already begun mobilizing it as a space for customer interaction, so these establishments did not have to play the risky role of pioneers. Moreover, various sections of significant newspapers and specialized gastronomy magazines had already created pages on this network²². With the "guardians" of the national field legitimizing that channel, concerns about the risks that presence on the platform would pose to the restaurants' symbolic capital were mitigated.

A similar dynamic occurred on Instagram. In this case, however, the domestication of Facebook made the process relatively faster, as both platforms operate similarly. Profiles of national authoritative agents such as *Guia Folha* and *Paladar Estadão* were created as early as May 2011²³. On an international scale, significant gastronomic awards, such as *The 50 Best*, began joining the platform in 2014²⁴, coinciding with the same period when many restaurants in the sample also created their profiles. Later, in 2016, the Michelin Guide appeared on this network. Currently, numerous gastronomic awards and esteemed establishments have pages on Instagram, solidifying this platform as a "potentially" legitimate means to attract notoriety—potentially because, even though resistance to the social network itself has been mitigated, the various modalities of its use remain a determining factor in the game of distinction (CRUMO, 2022).

This "authorization" to digitize restaurants through Facebook and, significantly, Instagram does not eliminate the distinctive weight contained in the decision to ignore the appeals of the digital world. Until 2020, Arturito and D.O.M did not have profiles on social media platforms. On the other hand, other less prestigious establishments by the two chefs have

²¹ It is important to emphasize that the netiquettes in this passage pertain to the more general rules of sociability within the platform. For instance, they include the types and formats of posts that are considered acceptable or not. Of course, upon closer examination, within each user group, netiquette rules become more refined and specific, much like what occurs in the offline social realm. Similarly, profiles of restaurants with owners or chefs possessing distinct habitus and dispositions (oriented more or less towards restricted production or the market) will be guided by the corresponding netiquette of the position they occupy in the social space.

²² Facebook Page Creation Dates: *Veja Comer & Beber* – May 24, 2010; *Guia Folha* – January 8, 2011; *Paladar Estadão* – July 5, 2011; *Revista Menu* – October 21, 2010; *Revista Gula* – June 16, 2010. Information was collected from respective Facebook pages on May 22, 2022.

²³ Information was collected from respective Instagram profiles on May 22, 2022.

²⁴ Same.

had Facebook profiles since 2014 and Instagram profiles since 2014 and 2015, respectively. The difference lies in the category they are classified under. Carosella defines her empanada shop, La Guapa, as an "industry" that produces food on a large scale²⁵. In an interview on the program "*De frente com Gabi*,"²⁶ Atala, despite assigning the noble mission of representing regional Brazilian cuisines to his secondary restaurant, Dalva e Dito, does not deny that it serves as compensation for the low revenue of D.O.M²⁷. The distinction between establishments made by the chefs themselves—keeping the "conceptual" houses with high reputations offline while the "commercial" ones are digitized—is a significant indicator of how the decision to stay off social media could be instrumentalized from the classical opposition between "erudite" production with "pure" intentions and "vulgar," utilitarian," and "self-interested" show, as identified by Bourdieu (1993).

Significant changes occurred after the onset of the coronavirus pandemic. Carosella began using her Instagram profile to showcase the daily dishes available for pickup or delivery to keep the restaurant functioning while in-person service was suspended. This started to blur the careful separation between her famous persona and her restaurant. Shortly after that, she finally created the Arturito page, where she continued to present the "dishes from farmers," which change daily based on received ingredients from suppliers. However, using a personal Instagram profile to promote the restaurant's menu wasn't a pandemic-forced innovation. The chef had done this in the past on her profile to promote the "Friday executive lunch," which changed weekly. In this way, she utilized her celebrity capital and the dynamics of social media in favor of her establishment without tainting it. A similar approach is taken by Atala, who frequently uses his account to share content related to D.O.M, such as awards won, photos with customers, or even videos of recipes for some dishes served at the restaurant. This way, the exposure of the prestigious restaurant on social media happens indirectly, mediated by the chef's persona, an authorized figure seeking notoriety in mass media without compromising the accumulation of symbolic capital of the establishment.

Moreover, it is essential to emphasize that the naturalization of platforms and the "authorization" for their use mentioned here are specific to Facebook and Instagram. As each new social network engenders specific dynamics, newly emerging platforms need to undergo

²⁵ A statement was made on the *Cozinha do Lorençato* (16min 19s). Available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sMpRMRaDuZk&list=PL7F_4bPLJxQSV5zGoIKSohAqz9BqXa3yz&index=13. Accessed in: 28 Apr. 2020.

²⁶ "*De Frente com Gabi*" is a Brazilian television interview program hosted by Marília Gabriela.

²⁷ (27min 46s). Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WRcFnth7O-Q>. Accessed in: 11 Apr. 2020.

estrangement, exploration, assimilation, and, eventually, naturalization. This is happening now with the TikTok platform, which, quite distinct from the other two discussed here, is solely based on publishing short videos. The dynamics of TikTok are still met with skepticism by a considerable portion of restaurants and renowned agents in the Brazilian gastronomic field²⁸. Nevertheless, adhering to the strategy of always embracing new social networks early, Paris 6 has been on TikTok since 2019 and has started publishing more consistently on this platform since 2021.

Such a digitalization strategy is closely related to Azar's disposition (or, in this case, disinclination) to subject himself to the rules of the gastronomic field, especially those that value establishments that exhibit a selfless attitude, thus sacrificing part of their potential economic profits. Upon realizing that his strategies to expand financial gains were taking away his objective chances of ascension within the gastronomic field, he doubled down on tools that would provide notoriety to his business without endorsing a specialized intermediary. Thus, the very characteristic of social media that initially caused unease in many renowned restaurants perfectly fit Paris 6's needs. If gastronomic media doesn't grant him space for reputation and prestige, the "democratic" social media platforms do, and the number of followers becomes juxtaposed against the stars of "snobbish" guides as the "true" source of legitimacy.

Final Considerations

The specificities of the formation of the Brazilian gastronomic field led to the exposure of chefs and their restaurants in popular media, whether in print or television, being seen as a legitimate means to seek notoriety—provided, of course, the involvement occurred with the "appropriate" media products. Participation in TV programs tends to be regarded as natural by both chefs and Brazilian culinary critics. News related to culinary reality shows can even be found on gastronomy-focused websites, such as *Veja Comer e Beber*. Currently, the use of specific social media platforms has also become naturalized by most restaurants in Brazil and worldwide as a legitimate means of acquiring notoriety. However, although this process occurred within a relatively short timeframe, incorporating these digital tools was neither immediate nor free from producers' skepticism.

²⁸ It is worth noting that some chefs have already created accounts for themselves on this new platform. Among those whose restaurants are included in the sample of this research are the judges of MasterChef, Érick Jacquin, and Henrique Fogaça. However, specialized publications in gastronomy, as well as the major national and international awards, do not yet have profiles on this new network.

Considering the dynamic of reproducing hierarchies that permeates the entire field of cultural production, such hesitation is related to the fact that these online channels are entirely new media platforms where there is no professional curation of the exhibitions presented to the public. Social media spaces, theoretically, are "unmediated" (VAN DIJCK, 2013) by specialized consecrating agents who, as in television and magazines, would be responsible for pre-selecting, screening, and categorizing products, thus shaping how viewers understand and classify them. Therefore, any individual or company begins their journey on these platforms on an equal footing: with zero followers and zero likes. Notoriety (or popularity) only begins to be built as other users pay attention to what is being posted. Moreover, within the logic of these platforms, the "value" of a particular profile is determined by widespread acclaim, which can be expressed by the number of followers a profile has or the number of views an individual post receives. Once again, unlike television, there are no classification principles based on elements such as the airing time of content (for example, prime time or afternoon), its format (reality show or cooking program), or the target audience (homemakers, gastronomy enthusiasts, young people, adults, etc.).

The elimination of the "expert," who holds the power to define what is considered legitimate or vulgar within that medium, is thus one of the motivators of uncertainty regarding the possibility of converting notoriety gained on social media into stardom in the gastronomic field. The hierarchy primarily based on the number of followers generates insecurity in those who go against the economic logic, making them hesitant to reveal their interest in leveraging economic profits through expanding their audience. In this sense, the historical record of the entry of sample restaurants into social media shows a particular caution concerning these environments when they were still a novelty—even among producers accustomed to media exposure of themselves and their productions.

Without an authority to define the hierarchy of published content (as is the case with television, magazines, and books), it is up to the agents of the field themselves to explore and establish the boundaries of what is legitimate and what is vulgar in terms of using these platforms. This only occurs after users develop the dynamics of that online space and its netiquettes (LÉVY, 1999, p. 128), through daily use. Furthermore, as pointed out, digitizing becomes more comfortable when many consecrating agents have already entered social media. Comparing the entry dates of gastronomic guides/magazines and restaurants into social media shows that the presence of individuals or institutions with the power of consecration legitimizes their presence in these digital spaces without being classified as inherently unworthy.

The movement of critically acclaimed restaurants towards digitalization becomes legitimate only when at least some authorities in the field have already tested the waters of the new media, not merely because its use has become widespread in the population. On the other hand, the data from this research has shown that restaurants with less recognition from consecrating instances tend to jump ahead of this kind of "adaptation period," embracing social media as soon as they show signs of success. Conversely, this distinct relationship is also evident in the current hesitation of most restaurants in the sample—except for Paris 6—to join TikTok, a platform that is exponentially growing in terms of downloads and users but has yet to convince many producers to associate their restaurants with it (up to this point).

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