HOW SEVERITY RATINGS LEAD TO CONSECRATION.
THE PATH OF MASSIMO BOTTURA AND HIS OSTERIA FRANCESCANA TO THE OLYMPUS OF CONTEMPORARY CUISINE

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ABSTRACT
Literature conceives consecration as the highest achievement in a cultural producer career. Consecration is usually associated with awards, prizes, and honors, assigned by social audiences that vary from field to field (Anand & Watson, 2004). While it is widely accepted that these achievements are proxies of consecration, there is still need to investigate the role that negative judgments or "severity ratings" (Rao, 1994) might exert on the evolution of consecration. Our inquiry explores, through an in-depth single case study, the development over time of the consecration process of a cultural producer in the cultural field of haute cuisine. Evidences contribute to current literature on the theme shedding new light on the way cultural producers reach consecration and on the way negative judgment can influence the entire process.

Keywords: cultural legitimation, consecration, haute cuisine

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INTRODUCTION

Consecration can be conceived as "the most definitive form of cultural valorization" (Allen & Parsons, 2006:808) and its achievement is usually associated with career accomplishments such as accolades, awards, honors, and prizes conferred by different dedicated audiences (Anand & Watson, 2004). Literature considered these acknowledgements as "tournament rituals" that shape the field, providing borders and contents and assuring its continuity over time (Anand & Jones, 2008). The study of consecration has been conducted most of the times at field/industry level with little consideration of the trajectories followed by single organizations and cultural producers. See as examples the research on baseball conducted by Allen and Parsons (2006), the paper on prizes in book industry by Anand and Jones (2008), or the study on the American film industry by Allen and Lincoln (2004). In this context, we propose that a more in-depth analysis of single cases of consecration might shed new light on the mechanisms that lead to consecration.

Our inquiry, based on a single case study, narrates the career of Massimo Bottura, an Italian three *Michelin* stars chef, owner of the Osteria Francescana, a restaurant located in Modena, Italy. All the Italian guides currently consider Bottura the best Italian chef and he is the 5th Best chef of the World after the international chart *The World's 50 Best Restaurants*. The analysis, in a tentative to depict how Bottura and his restaurant reached the Olympus of contemporary cuisine, shows that the path to consecration might not necessarily be straight. Actually it can be constellated by negative events, "severe ratings" (Rao, 1994), and detrimental attempts coming from the same audiences that are source of consecration for a cultural producer. In 2009 Massimo Bottura and his restaurant Osteria Francescana were almost at the top of all the national charts of high quality restaurants. In the same year they were the highest new entrance in *The World's 50 Best Restaurants* and critics unanimously considered him the new paradigm of contemporary Italian cuisine. Many awards and acknowledgments sealed this enormous success. Nevertheless, this huge attention on Bottura and his restaurant catalyzed also the interest from a popular Italian TV show that in the same period started to blame him – and other chefs – for adopting unsafe ingredients and for cooking behind the molecular cuisine style. The paper illustrates both how negative acknowledgements influenced in the short run the chef and the entire organization and the way these changes led in the medium run the entire consecration process of Massimo Bottura and of the Osteria Francescana.

LITERATURE BACKGROUND

Cultural consecration is the highest achievement in cultural legitimation (Allen & Lincoln 2004). It can be considered as "the social process by which some individuals or objects are collectively identified as worthy of veneration and esteem, whereas others are not" (Allen & Parsons, 2006: 809) within a field of cultural production. Bourdieu refers to consecration as a series of rites and acts of "social magic", "an enshrinement that succeeds in producing discontinuity out of continuity" in the cultural field (Bourdieu, 1991:117). The word consecration has clear religious connotations as it can be seen as a separation from what is sacred and what profane and a distinction between the great from the merely good (Allen & Lincoln, 2004: 874).

The definition of consecration is strictly connected to the concept of legitimation, which can be defined as a collective process that implies the presence of both social objects (e.g. creative works) and audiences that evaluate them, assumed to accept the encompassing framework of beliefs, norms, and values and defining the object as legitimate (Cattani, Ferriani & Allison, 2013). The audiences that confer legitimacy to an organization differ from an organizational field to another. In this paper we consider in particular the role of media legitimacy – "that is legitimacy as reflected in communications through printed media, TV, or radio broadcasts" (Bitektine, 2011:154).

As collective constructions of social reality, legitimation and, as a consequence, consecration have "a cognitive dimension, whereby agents recognize a social object as valid and taken for granted, and a normative/prescriptive dimension that represents the social object as right" (Cattani, Ferriani, Negro & Perretti, 2008:145). The issue of consecration is particularly relevant in cultural fields since artists, inventors, or scientists – in general cultural producers – can be difficultly recognized as such until their social systems do not accept them and endorse their work, giving value to their production. Consecration occurs "whenever distinctions are imposed that serve to separate individuals and their achievements that are worthy of admiration and respect from those that are not" (Allen and Lincoln 2004, p. 872). Therefore, social recognition is fundamental in cultural or artistic fields as it provides legitimation. Despite this issue assumes specific relevance in cultural fields, also organizational and strategic literature dedicated particular attention to the topic of legitimation in organizational context, especially in relationship to themes such as visibility, reputation, celebrity, and popularity (e.g. Pollock & Rindova, 2003; Rindova, Pollock & Hayward, 2006).

In current literature the achievement of cultural consecration is often associated with honors, awards and prizes that recognize observable differences among the actors in a specific social field. In this context, such accomplishments have been conceived as proper "tournament rituals" and symbolic tools for shaping the field evolution (Anand & Watson, 2004). However, while existing literature offered contributions that consider the role of positive awards and acknowledgements to shape a cultural field and to define cultural producers that are legitimated and consecrated, very poor is our knowledge about the effects of negative judgments – or "severity ratings" (Rao, 1994) – on the development of consecration. As a consequence, the aims of this paper are: 1) to explore how the process of consecration unfolds over time; 2) to inquire the potential role of negative acknowledgements on the process of consecration and the eventual effects on cultural production.
This objective is consistent with Anand and Jonson call (2008) to understand how honors, awards, and prizes, as "tournament rituals", substantively shape the content of what is produced within the field.
The research question that the paper address is: *how do severity ratings influence the development of a consecration process?*

METHODOLOGY

The empirical field

Our research has been conducted in the empirical cultural field of haute cuisine. Nowadays, Italian haute cuisine is experiencing a new vivacity with a higher awareness of local productions and traditions that contemporary chefs enhance through innovation. At the same time there's been a huge increase of public and media attention on the field: chefs are seen as movie stars, the restaurant experience is perceived as entertainment and one of the last accessible luxury experiences, and the number of TV shoes dedicated to cuisine is increasing. Haute cuisine can be considered both as a cultural field as it is based on food and wine, one of the essential elements of national cultural heritage and a creative field as it is strictly based on creative productions. In addition, especially in Italy, haute cuisine plays a pivotal role in the development of different industries such as restoration, food and wine production and distribution, tourism, and hospitality, exerting a pulling function in the internationalization process of the entire field.

The *Michelin* Guide is widely recognized as the gate to the hall of fame of the field. The guide was born in 1900 in France and originally it was a handbook for travellers, including information about hotels and restaurants, only in the recent years it became a bible for gourmands and food enthusiasts who rely on its ratings to decide the restaurants to visit. The system is based on anonymous inspections and it awards restaurants adopting five criteria: (1) quality of products, (2) mastering of flavors and cooking, (3) personality of the cuisine, (4) value for money and (5) consistency. The rating is based on three levels: *one star* for the restaurant that is "very good in its category", *two stars* for "excellent cooking, worth a detour", *three stars* for restaurants with "exceptional cuisine, worth a special journey". Generally every award of a star is seen as a "duly-deserved recognition of achievement and excellence" (Surlemont & Johnson 2005: 580). The executive chefs and their restaurants that obtained the third star are widely assessed as consecrated in the Olympus of haute cuisine.

Analytic strategy

Given the exploratory nature of the research we conducted a qualitative analysis based on a single case study. The choice of a single case relies in its uniqueness and extremeness (Yin, 2003). The single case that we selected is the case of Massimo Bottura, an Italian three *Michelin* stars chef who currently seats with his restaurant, the Osteria Francescana, at the top of the national and international chefs rankings. We selected this case as an exemplar case to explore how severity ratings or negative acknowledgements from selected audiences might impact the entire process of consecration. In fact, Bottura went through a highly criticized period in his career when he was blamed by a popular Italian TV show of adopting molecular cuisine techniques and using unsafe ingredients, cooking mindless of the Italian food traditions. We selected this case for several reasons: 1) Massimo Bottura is today's the most admired Italian chef worldwide; 2) his cuisine is influencing haute cuisine cultural field in Italy and abroad; 3) a specific period of his career was characterized by severe media critiques; 4) when the negative media storm ended Bottura definitely achieved consecration.
In order to respond to the theoretical research question we adopted a research approach that is mainly based on a narrative strategy that involves the construction of a story from raw data (Langley, 1999). In our case the temporal presentation of the case in different phases is not just related to the need of data organization, but it is also related to the need to highlight the theoretical linkages existing among the phases. Data collection is based primarily on interviews to the chef, to field critics and journalists. In addition we have collected extensive

secondary data (articles from magazines, television shows on this topic, blog articles) to give a shape to the narration.
Our orientation to data collection and analysis was exploratory. This approach allowed unexpected themes to emerge. We initially retrieved secondary documentary data on the case subject in order to familiarize with the career of the chef and with the story of his restaurant. We conducted observations, especially of field conferences and meetings where the chef was hosted as guest speaker to get more in touch with the empirical field. We visited many times the restaurants getting to know more his cuisine and his philosophy. Only at the end of the analysis of these data we conducted semi-structured interviews. The combination of different data sources helped the triangulation of the results. Finally we also went back to the chef to have a comment on our interpretation of the data. We used inductive qualitative techniques to analyze the data (Eisenhardt, 1989).
Table 1 sumps up the data that we used and how we adopted them in the paper.

TABLE 1 – DATA SOURCES

Data Source	*Type of data*	*Use in the analysis*
Interviews	*Semi-structured interviews* to - MB - MB wife - critics	Describe MB biography Describe MB creative process Understad the impact of accolades and ratings on his creative process
Observations	*Non partecipative observation to field events* *Visits to the restaurant*	To familiarize with the field and triangulate data To get in touch with the chef's philosophy and style
Documents	*Menus from the restaurant* *Articles on MB* *Tv interviews and magazine interviews to MB* *Blogs articles on MB*	Describe MB biography

FINDINGS

Massimo Bottura and the Osteria Francescana

The earlier stage of Massimo Bottura professional life and career

Massimo Bottura was born in Modena, Emilia Romagna, Italy, on September 30th of 1962. He studied to become an accountant since his high school and after that he joined law school. However his love for cooking was fairly clear since his childhood. Growing up, Massimo could always be found under the kitchen table. In fact he was fascinated by his family's women ways of cooking. He found peace at his grandmother's feet as she rolled out the dough for tortellini. Among the smells of broth and roast meats, the young Bottura was silenced by the constant chatting of his grandmother, mother and aunt who prepared meals for the entire family, every lunch and dinner. Together with his brothers and friends he started very early to go around Italy and Europe to visit great restaurants, developing a superior taste for good food and excellent wines. During the 70's he and his friends organized trips to Gaja winery or to Cantarelli, the San Domenico, and Gualtiero Marchesi restaurants that were considered at that time the non plus ultra of food and wine culture in Italy. Without a classical cooking school education, these trips represented for Massimo the first basics for his formation. The same chef said to us:
During high school my entire group of friends loved cuisine and I engaged them in many pilgrimages... One day, instead of going to school, I took the spider that my dad gave me as a present and since I wanted to share the experience with my friends, we went to Cannes to eat oysters and to drink Chablis...

His teenage years were characterized by such events and the interest became so pervasive that in 1986 he decided to drop off law school and the initial job in his family's company, to follow his disposition toward cooking and decided to buy a "trattoria" in the countryside near Modena: Trattoria del Campazzo.

The Trattoria del Campazzo

At the beginning he was helped by his mom, then he started to work alongside with Lidia Cristoni, a woman with 35 years of traditional cooking experience, who represented one of the initial mentors for Massimo and left as he said:
A huge imprinting on my soul. She has been the one who taught me – among the other things - the professional mise en place and the way to cook for 70 people. Thanks to Lidia the Trattoria became a referee point and obtained a huge success.

While working at the Campazzo he met George Cogny who was based at that time in Piacenza, in Emilia Romagna and taught him the basics of French classic cuisine. This relationship was extremely important for Massimo and it lasted until Cogny's death. Every time that he needed help or during the weekends or the closing days he visited the French cook to work with him, moved from the desire to learn and from the need to demonstrate that he was doing well with this new experience in the restaurant world. He started to apply the knowledge acquired from Cogny to the traditional dishes from Modena creating a new mix of ideas. As Massimo said:
The biggest lesson that I learnt from George was to always follow my palate. Probably this idea unconsciously led my entire career. I always need to believe in what I do and go through the things that I do without listening to the others. Criticisms are fundamental to grow, but you need to let it there for a moment, try to understand, reason about it and then correct yourself but your palate is the thing that you need to follow.

The first experiences outside his restaurant

Time after time the Campazzo gained more success until Alain Ducasse, the great French chef visited the Trattoria and being enchanted by Massimo cooking invited him to practice in his kitchen at the Hotel de Paris. It was 1994. During this time Massimo learnt about the value of quality products from the Mediterranean and how to reinvent classic recipes by lightening them up. Massimo said about Ducasse:
He was the one who taught me what does it mean the respect for raw materials, the obsessive research of the perfection in the raw material, the person who taught me how to deal with the suppliers... he was the first to create a vegetarian menu in the 80's! A 3 Michelin stars! He subverted completely the French cuisine and he recreated the code.

When he finished studying, Ducasse looked at Bottura's notebook and tore it in two, tossing into the trash can and said: "You don't need this. You have it all inside you. You can walk on your legs. Now make it your own." That was the best present he ever received in his life. After that experience he started to create his own dishes, based on that knowledge.

Then Massimo leaves for New York to work at Le Cirque:
At that time the restaurant was making 400 seats a day, full of stars, it was the place to be if you wanted to learn about the mise en place, I stayed there 10 days, I loved to be in New York, I love music contemporary arts... I found a place to stay... there I started to live the city and its life. One day I was in Soho and I got into a bar to drink a coffee - since I saw the Illy sign outside. I proposed me to them to work for them in the kitchen. The same day that I started to work there also my future wife – Lara – started to work in the same place and that's how we met.

The Osteria Francescana

In 1995 Bottura opened Osteria Francescana in Modena's Medieval city centre, with a cuisine juxtaposing tradition and innovation with contemporary art and design. In the beginning it seemed difficult just paying the bills, dishwasher and waiter, yet Massimo's desire to satisfy the gastronomic curiosities of his guests, whose palates had matured alongside his own, motivated him to excel as both a chef and restaurateur.
At the end of 1999 he met Ferran Adrià and he went to work with him at the famous El Bulli restaurant for three months during the summer. Adrià encouraged Bottura to continue pushing the envelope. With Adria, Massimo's whole vision of contemporary cuisine was cracked open. Adria's deconstructions taught Massimo that he could bring conceptual premises into the kitchen. This is the greatest lesson he learned from Adria - to keep possibilities open and to widen one's concept of 'cooking'. After those experiences it started the great raise. In 2001 he received the award "chef of the year" by the Italian guide "Gambero Rosso". After two weeks the Espresso Guide awards him as "performance of the year" and one month later he received the first Michelin star.
The second star arrives in 2006 joint with extremely high ratings from the Italian guides: three forks from Gambero Rosso guide, and a huge increase in the Espresso guide.
In 2008 Massimo and his restaurant go through an international fame explosion. He travels to all the most important gastronomic conferences: lo Mejor de la gastronomìa in San Sebastiàn, Spain, Identità Golose in Milan,

Italy, Madrid Fusiòn (Spain). At the same time he strengthens his relationships with those chefs that happen to be in that specific moment and for the years to come the most important and appreciated in the world: Alain Ducasse, René Redzepi, Ferran Adrià, Alex Atala, Pascal Barbot, Luis Andoni, Inaki Aizpitarte. In 2009 Massimo Bottura and the Osteria Francescana reach a great acknowledgement: the entrance in the *World's 50 Best*, a ranking promoted by Restaurant Magazine and sponsored by San Pellegrino water that, as the name says, awards the 50 best restaurants in the world every year after a selection made by gourmands, critics, journalists and chefs. That entrance as number 13th was extremely relevant since it was the highest entrance of an Italian restaurant ever and the most significant jump in the chart for that year.
The attack from the TV show
During that very night of the 50 Best Award Ceremony in April 2009, when Massimo was achieving great recognition of his success, he received many calls about a TV show that was criticizing him and his cuisine:
It probably was a desire to shoot me down by who owns the power. It was an operation made on purpose since the story was transmitted the same night of the 50 best.

As his wife Lara says:

Everything started when he went to lo Mejor de la Gastronomìa and he made this dish "Sud", it was a dessert made with olive oil, with this dish he made a lot of provocations, from dish on people started to call him as a speaker on the stage. That was the moment when he turned up the heat when people started to look at him...

"Striscia la Notizia", an Italian extremely popular satirical TV show, accused Massimo to adopt molecular cuisine and to use chemical additives that are potentially unsafe for health.
The "investigation" conducted by Striscia la Notizia started in April 2009 with a denunciation from a German journalist towards contemporary cuisine restaurants to use chemical additives for cooking. The journalist named Adrià, Blumenthal, and Bottura as the main representatives of this style.
After the inquiry, that involved many other Italian famous restaurants, a visit from the TV show correspondents to Massimo's restaurant with and hidden camera, a visit from the NAS (the nucleus for anti-sophistication and healthcare of the Carbineers, which are a unit of the Italian military policy) followed.
The visit resulted in a clear absence of any irregularity in the kitchen of the Osteria Francescana. The NAS in fact did not find anything dangerous or against the law. They studied all the menus – past and current they controlled everything in the restaurant, even the way the dishes were prepared and assessed that the Osteria Francescana was a restaurant respectful of territory products. For this reason "Striscia la Notizia" needed to smooth over the claims toward Bottura and his restaurant and the TV show started to switch the attention from the chefs system to the guide system, attacking all the Italian food and wine guides.

A note on Massimo Bottura cooking style

Massimo's cuisine is based on great ownership of techniques rooted in the desire to valorize the territory where he was born, with its traditions and its products. About his creative process he says:

> *My creative process looks like a pyramid with the idea at the edge that is the only step that you have to develop working constantly and never losing yourself in the daily goings on. You develop it reading and learning. To make avantgard cooking you have to know everything and forget everything. Going down a step of the pyramid there are the raw materials and only then the techniques applied at the materials. Some people think that the technical gesture is fundamental for their expression, I rather think that the you need techniques to sublimate the great raw materials that you work with. There are no techniques that are ends to their selves, but only techniques function of raw materials, not made to amaze, but to exalt the product. Then I define the shape that encapsulates the idea. At the next lower step is your personal culture, your approach to see things... in these compartments I put the different phases of a dish development. When I travel I always have open ears and eyes, I continuously search, I learn a technique, I go on an airplane, I reflect on that technique and I go through my memory combing the emotions, the experience and then I start working mentally, travelling, dreaming...*

His creative style and process are deeply influenced by its main passions that are music, in particular jazz music, and contemporary art. These influences are more easily recognizable in his dishes as for example "the Homage to Thelonius Monk" that is named after the great piano player. In other cases are major streams as the Italian '70 avantgards that inspire his connection with the raw materials:

> *The artists that you prefer influence you. From the transavantgard that goes back drawing after the informal style of the 70's: shapes and colors on the canvas come back and each artist transforms his ideas walking through his past, his land. His a return of worlds, small realities based on the safety of territories against a globalized world... there is a sort of return to the order of the things and I can do this also through avant-garde cooking.*
>
> *For example, I present a roasted guinea fowl, with the shape of a guinea fowl, I don't decompose it, I don't destructure it, my aim is different. The shape of the thigh is the same, the breast... the sides, but what is missing is all the rest, there is no oven cooking, which defines the roasted guinea fowl, but low temperature vacuum cooking. The tradition in this sense does not respect the raw material (because roasting might be too aggressive for the meat) and I have to change this. However, if I don't cook in the oven the guinea fowl I can lose smells – from the roasting – and I have to use avant-garde to give this smell back, making a concentrated distill from roasted bones that I can vaporize at low temperature on the dish when it's served.*

The Osteria Francescana menu is divided in three areas: the traditions, the classics, and the sensations. The tradition section includes dishes that are extremely rooted in territorial productions, such as "Culatello di Zibello" (a special cured pork meat), the "traditional Modenese tortellini" or "tagliatelle with Bolognese ragù". The second section includes dishes that are mainly based on local traditions, in terms of adopted products – as in the case of "the guinea fowl not roasted" - or in terms of a story related to the territory – as "five ages of parmigiano reggiano". These are the dishes considered as must in Bottura's kitchen. The third section is dedicated to seasonal journeys that the kitchen executes.

The reaction of Massimo Bottura

Straightaway Massimo started to search for suggestions from his nearest friends on what to do:
Ferran (Adrià) told me to remain silent and calm, but from my inclination I am neither silent nor calm... so I have motivated to replicate, but after the first two or three days I understood that the show made cut and paste of all the interviews that they had with the chefs, they made them say whatever they want to make them say, so it

would have not been useful to replicate.... By chance it happens that a food blog came here and shoot a video to show what you eat at the Francescana in the "Classics" menu that was the same menu the TV show was accusing during the hidden camera filming...they recorded everything and my description of the dishes where I say that there was nothing more than a spoon of soy lecithin and a pinch of agar agar which is a gelatin, a natural seaweed that tolerates the heat. There was no molecular cuisine as they intended it. The blog putted online the video and received hundreds of thousands of clicks.

At the same time, despite a huge attention from the media, he starts to pack the defense:
My reaction was clamming up and I had a meeting with the entire team (both waiting room and kitchen). During that meeting I said: woe betide someone who talks or who gives up.

The episode covers many months from April to January. During this period many people that were supposed to battle on Massimo's side tried to exploit the situation just to appear on TV while media attention increased significantly. In January 2010, the TV show correspondent approached Bottura at an important chefs' congress where he was called as guest speaker:
When I was preparing my presentation the news that the reporter was outside the conference room came to me... you can imagine my mood! I went on the stage and the entire audience stood up. I felt good because I saw all the people that I loved by my side... Furthermore, there was Ducasse, my mentor, in the first line. He reached the stage, ate the dish that I prepared and said in front of everyone: "Massimo is the best Italian chef, current and future".

Massimo remembers his impression about that moment in this way:
That was the moment when I understood the warmth of Italian people.

The effects on Osteria Francescana and on Massimo Bottura

The overall blame towards Massimo Bottura and the Osteria Francescana was to cook not respecting the Italian traditions. A first result was a huge increase in media and public attention. A lot of people started to question about his cuisine, especially those people that are not experts in the field. In fact while gourmands and critics always supported the famous chef, there was a common idea shared among the large public that Massimo Bottura was a molecular chef not pursuing the value of real Italian cuisine and using uncommon ingredients in his preparation. As Massimo says:
The worst thing about that period was that all the family's friends, including my kids' friends made questions and chit chatting about me and sometimes behind my back.

This experience produced some changes:
I didn't know how wicked the world could be, before this experience I was open, ingenuous, I said everything, I became cynical because it made me trust people much less than before, I needed years to come back as I am. I learnt another thing, to communicate to the TV to magazines, I had my truths but I could not communicate them, I needed to change and be more incisive.

As his wife Lara adds, this bad experience also helped Massimo:
To be more specific about the work that he was doing on the territory, about the tradition. We understood that we needed a language to better communicate. You have to accompany people through a journey. We learnt that in order to communicate Massimo we needed to communicate the territory, the tradition, the artisans, as a whole, it is a team, it is a "We".

Most of the Osteria Francescana dishes have always been extremely related to the territory. However, this strong connection was not clear to the public. After the 2009 blames a great effort was made by Bottura and his team to convey the link existing with the local producers, the artisans, and the traditions. The process conducted to negative effects in the short run but also positive effects in the medium run:
Under attack we created a strong group and we started to communicate the importance of thoughts in cuisine.

The consecration of Massimo Bottura and the Osteria Francescana

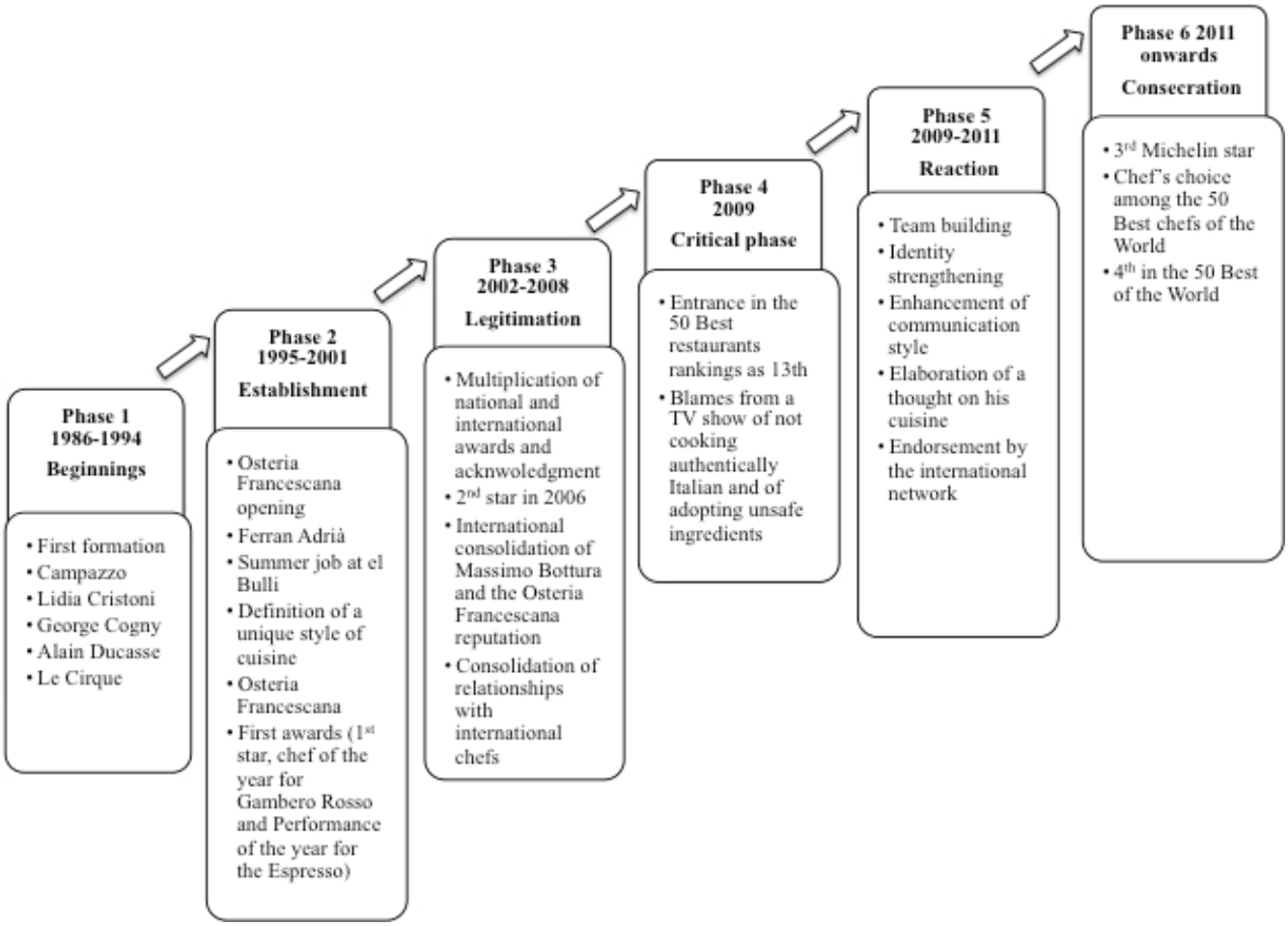
In January 2011, Massimo Bottura received the "Grand Prix de l'Art" by the International Culinary Academy in Paris. He was later decorated with a medal of honor for his contribution to Culture and the Arts by the city of Modena. In 2011 in London, during the *World's 50 Best* he is appointed as the "Chef's Choice" for his vanguard approach to Italian cuisine. Of course reaching the top of the chart would be the best apparent recognition,

but the award that Bottura received is probably the most significant acknowledgement for a chef because it is appointed by those same chefs that are your peers but also your competitors.
The same year he reached the 4th position in the ranking of the *50 Best*. In 2012 Osteria Francescana achieved near perfection with the highest vote ever assigned by the Espresso guide – 19.75 out of 20 – and finally Massimo reached a life long ambition when The Michelin Guide awarded Osteria Francescana with its third star. After the third star Massimo closed temporarily the restaurant to realize a huge renovation and to reopen after several months. As he said:

I had a meeting with my wife and Beppe (business partner and responsible for the cellar and the waiting area) and I decided that between doing nothing and doing everything I wanted to do everything. So I started to make changes… if everyone says that you have to go in that direction go in the opposite direction because is going to be the right one. You have to project yourself in the future.

The development of the consecration process
The case of Massimo Bottura and the Osteria Francescana is unique since it is not a representation of a linear process of consecration. The following figure, adopting a temporal perspective, highlights the main phases that characterized the process over time.

FIGURE 1 – THE PATH OF MASSIMO BOTTURA AND OSTERIA FRANCESCANA TO THE OLYMPUS OF HAUTE CUISINE



The first phases of Bottura professional life represent the founding of his future career, encompassing not just the acquisition of technical knowledge, but also an early definition of a personal cooking style. Since the beginning of his career the chef created a strong professional network whose main nodes are some of the greatest contemporary chefs as Alain Ducasse and Ferran Adrià. These are the years when he and his restaurant received the first positive acknowledgements by critics and guides.

The third phase represents the quick and sharp rise of Bottura and the Osteria Francescana: the years of the second Michelin star, of the intensification of his presence in international congresses and the consequent strengthening of his professional network that somehow became his affective network too. Consistently with existing literature we named this phase the "legitimation phase", that means a stage when the cultural producer is legitimately considered as such by specific audiences of his cultural field (Cattani et al. 2013). This legitimation conducted as expected to an increase in Bottura and Osteria Francescana reputation (Rao, 1994).

Bottura escalation to consecration continues until 2009, a year that is signed contemporarily by the greatest international success until that moment in his career – the highest entrance in the 50 Best restaurants of the World – and by the attack from a popular Italian TV show aimed at damaging his strong reputation. This episode represents an evident attempt coming from an audience in the field to reduce the legitimacy of a cultural producer. Media confer legitimacy and their actions influence other audiences that provide additional legitimacy, such as critics, peers, and the general public. In the same way the analyzed case shows how media ignited a detrimental spiral influencing negatively other audiences of the field. In this context, the analysis reinforces the relationship hypothesized by literature (Rao, 1994) between reputation and legitimacy where the latter is a collective process by which reputation is created and sustained.

The immediate reaction of Bottura, using his words, was to "clam up" with his team. This closure resulted in different effects: 1) a consolidation of the organizational identity; 2) team building; 3) the possibility for the cultural producer to concentrate even more deeply on his production; 4) the generation of new capabilities in terms of communication; 5) the creation of an international network that endorsed the path to consecration. These profound changes represent the same mechanisms that led to the consecration of Bottura and of the Osteria Francescana. The consecration is reached in 2011 both at national and at international level overlapping with the highest achievements: the third Michelin star, the 4th place in the 50 Best Restaurants of the World, and the "Chef's choice" award among the 50 Best. The consecration process covered multiple audiences: peers, guides, journalists and the public.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The aim of this paper was to contribute to existing literature on consecration providing an in-depth case study based on the consecration process of a cultural producer in the field of haute cuisine.
The inquiry offers multiple contributions. First, it proposes a dynamic perspective on consecration. Despite their processual nature legitimation and consecration have most of the time been approached with a static perspective that considered consecration as the final stage of a more complex legitimation process. Our paper highlights that the process of consecration is ongoing and it changes continuously. Second, while existing literature considers acknowledgement as proxies of consecration, this paper offers a different point of view on how the process of consecration of a cultural producer might be affected also by negative episodes. Third, the paper assumes an organizational level of analysis, while existing studies on consecration investigated the whole industry as unit of analysis (e.g. Allen & Lincoln, 2004; Allen & Parsons, 2006). Forth, the paper illustrates the elements that influenced and shaped the process of consecration over time. Finally, the result of the analysis shows how a cultural producer might react to negative acknowledgements to generate unexpectedly positive outcomes that strengthened the path to consecration.

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