

ROLES OF RESPONSIBLE LEADERSHIP IN DRIVING RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION (SDG 12): A COMPARATIVE STUDY BETWEEN TWO-MICHELIN STARRED CHEF RICHARD EKKEBUS (AMBER) AND ONE-MICHELIN STARRED CHEF SHANE OSBORN (ARCANE)

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Abstract

By comparing the narratives of two prominent restaurant leaders, i.e., Chef Richard Ekkebus from Amber, a two-Michelin-star restaurant and Chef Shane Osborn from Arcane, a one-Michelin-star restaurant in Hong Kong, this research looks at how responsible leaders drives a particular Sustainable Development Goal, Responsible Production and Consumption (SDG 12). A qualitative approach is adopted with the collection of secondary data analysed using content analysis. The finding shows both chef's background and life stories are convincing examples of responsible leadership. Despite the limited time and financial constraints in conducting this study, it is clear that responsible leaders need to have strong relational skills; and through stakeholder engagement, these leaders connect and stay close to their stakeholders to realise their visions.

Keywords: Responsible Leadership, Michelin-Starred Restaurants, SDG 12, Sustainable Development Goals, Comparative Study

Introduction

In the past, leadership was generally considered to be a means of fulfilling a particular task or achieving a specific goal. However, the exact nature of this goal is not always clearly defined and strongly depends on the individual context. And a leadership approach that is successful in one situation may not necessarily produce the same results in the other (Haberthür 2018). When evaluating the leadership effectiveness of a CEO, both researchers and the general public often tend to adopt a shareholder value approach (Waldman and Galvin 2008). In this view, a CEO's sole responsibility is toward the shareholders of his or her company. As their direct employee, the CEO must ensure that the demands of the shareholders are met, a notion that is generally equated with maximising profits, stock prices, and future growth potential (Carson 1993). Other considerations, such as employee or customer satisfaction, are only necessary so far as they contribute to maximising the shareholder value. Proponents of the shareholder value approach frequently argue that the focus on pure profit maximisation is beneficial to the organisation itself and society at large (Waldman and Galvin 2008). Nevertheless, the theory has been heavily criticised for neglecting various people who are of central importance to an organisation's continued operations (Russo and Perrini 2010). Several researchers have pointed out that a pure shareholder orientation does not reflect actual business operations adequately. CEOs should instead incorporate other stakeholders in their decision-making process (Laplume et al. 2008).

In this research, the author looks at how responsible leadership drives a particular Sustainable Development Goal, Responsible Production and Consumption (SDG 12). Specifically, this paper looks at the roles of responsible leaders and how it incorporates other stakeholders in achieving SDG 12 by comparing the narratives of two prominent restaurant leaders, i.e., Chef Richard Ekkebus from Amber, a two-Michelin-star restaurant and Chef Shane Osborn from Arcane, a one-Michelin-star restaurant in Hong Kong.

Literature Review

Elements of Responsible Leadership

Responsible leadership roles relevant to this study are operational roles of the leader as a change agent, an architect, a storyteller, and a coach (Maak and Pless 2006). The strategic direction or redirection of a company may require that leaders act as *change agents*. Yet, compared to transformational leadership theory (Bass, 1990), initiating change seems a desirable way to construct and cultivate responsible business (Maak and Pless 2006). Through businesses and their leaders' power, resources and influence, there is hope that they can contribute to positive and sustainable change for the better. The leader as an *architect* ensures a creation of an inspiring and supportive work environment where people can find "meaning, feel respected, recognised and included" (Pless and Maak 2011) as it contributes to the best of their abilities. The leader as a *storyteller* articulates the organisation's particular purpose and vision, provides direction to his/her followers, and interacts with stakeholders in business and society. It also allows conflicts of interest among stakeholders to be mitigated (Maak et al. 2016). And a *coach* leader supports followers by nurturing an environment of learning and support so that they can achieve their individual and organisational objectives. It is stated by Pless (2007) that the operational roles are driven by values and emotions that evolved from early childhood and continued throughout life. And according to Pless (2007), these drivers include (1) the need for justice, (2) the need for recognition, and (3) the sense of care.

Some *normative* roles of responsible leaders also include stewards, visionaries, servants, and citizens (Maak and Pless 2006). The leader as *steward* is all about bringing vision to life and acts as a "custodian of values and resources with a strong ethical decision-making compass" (Paine 2005). Leaders as *visionaries* have long-term perspectives and foresight and can motivate and inspire followers through a clear sense of purpose directed towards all stakeholders of an organisation. As *servant* leaders, they care about the needs and interests of their followers, both internally and externally. When interacting with various stakeholders, they also show a high degree of relational intelligence (Pless and Maak 2005). Finally, the leader as a *citizen* admits that business is a part of society and recognises his/her co-responsibility in addressing and resolving societal problems. Pless (2007) mentioned that such leaders also show caring behaviour that is aimed at the well-being of the local and global communities that are influenced by business operations. These roles are driven by "intrapyschic drivers", which are based on (1) the need for exploration and assertion, (2) the need for attachment and affiliation, and (3) the sense of enjoyment (Pless 2007). It is believed that the centre of an individual is formed around these drivers, which influence the leaders to make choices and decisions and to act in a certain way.

Responsible Production and Consumption in Restaurants

The tremendous growth of the restaurant industry has raised severe production and consumption problems through excessive energy and water utilisation, substantial amounts of non-recyclable trash and vast amounts of food waste generation (Hu et al., 2013). The Green Restaurant Association has attempted to enhance restaurants' sustainability performance by providing guidelines comprising seven indicators such as building materials, chemicals, disposables, energy, pollution reduction, sustainable food, sustainable furnishings, waste, and water (GRA 2021). Groups of researchers also attempted to provide foodservice operators with different approaches to be more responsible in their production and consumption behaviour (Choi & Parsa, 2007; Hu et al., 2010; Park, 2009; Schubert, 2008; Szuchnicki, 2009). For example, Choi & Parsa (2007) proposed three domains of sustainable practices in the restaurant industry: serving organic or locally grown food, engaging in environmentally friendly practices, and donating money and time to support their community. Therefore, responsible production and consumption in this study refers to a restaurant company's activities to reduce negative environmental impact, including promoting energy efficiency and conservation, reducing waste,

reusing, and recycling, supporting the community, sustainable food, and water efficiency and conservation (Hu et al., 2010; Park, 2009; Schubert, 2008; Szuchnicki, 2009):

Methodology

Due to limited time and financial constraints, this study takes a qualitative approach with the collection of secondary data analysed using content analysis. Although the methodology employed in this research solely involves secondary data, Hakim (1982) claimed that secondary data permits researchers to closely consider the theoretical aims and the substantive issues of the current study rather than consuming most of the researcher's time considering the problem of collecting new data. Hence, only secondary data, including interviews from published written materials, magazines, newspapers, and social media, were involved in this paper. Content analysis is defined as any technique for systematically and objectively making inferences from which the data were classified and evaluated to derive findings and make conclusions (Holsti 1969). In this research, various recorded materials such as YouTube videos, TV shows and documents such as reports, press releases, newspapers, and other public documents have also been examined and re-examined to understand the two chef's backgrounds and personalities. Cross-comparison between the various sources was employed to verify the reliability of key pieces of information. These recorded materials were transcribed, coded, and analysed with the hope of discovering the focus of this study which is the roles of responsible leadership in relation to SDG 12. Similarly, these public documents about these two leaders were also studied with specific emphasis on elements pertaining to responsible leadership.

Leaders' Background and Roles

The primary objective of this study is to analyse and compare the leadership roles of two leaders at Michelin-starred restaurants in Hong Kong, namely Chef Richard Ekkebus and Chef Shane Osborn, in achieving Responsible Production and Consumption (SDG 12).

Leaders' Background

Currently the Director of Culinary Operations and Food and Beverage, Richard Ekkebus has been the name behind the acclaimed two Michelin-starred restaurant Amber at The Landmark Mandarin Oriental since February 2005 and serving the Mandarin Oriental Hotel Group for nearly 17 years. The Mandarin Oriental name was established in 1985 following the merger of the Mandarin International Hotels Limited with its namesake hotel, The Mandarin, which was opened in 1963 and the holding company of the hotel, The Oriental, which was opened in 1876. Ekkebus is also the chef consultant of Fifty 8° Grill at the Mandarin Oriental Hotel in Pudong, Shanghai. As for Chef Shane Osborn, he landed in Hong Kong in 2012 and has made himself one of the most recognisable figures in the local hospitality industry (Alicia, 2019). His restaurant Arcane, which opened in 2014, has won multiple awards and currently holds one Michelin star (LUXE City Guides, n.d.). In 2018, Chef Osborn's fame was further uplifted after participating in Netflix's global culinary competition, The Final Table. Surprised by Netflix's effect in Hong Kong, Chef Osborn opened his second restaurant, Cornerstone, a casual all-day dining bistro in the heart of Soho, Hong Kong. And the latest project that Chef Osborn launched is his new restaurant group, The Arcane Collective, a "socially and environmentally aware, ingredient-driven group of restaurants" (Lai, 2021). This project includes his third restaurant, an all-day venue for breakfast, lunch, dinner, named Moxie (Colombo, 2021). *Error! Reference source not found.1* is a comparison of the backgrounds between Chef Richard Ekkebus and Chef Shane Osborn:

	Richard Ekkebus	Shane Osborn
Age	55	51
Nationality	Dutch	Australian
Job Title	Director of Culinary Operations and Food and Beverage	Founder
Restaurant	Amber	Arcane
Michelin-Starred	❁ ❁	❁

Table 1: Comparison of Leaders' Background

Leadership Roles of Chef Richard Ekkebus

Chef Ekkebus has led a quiet revolution at Amber over the past six years in Hong Kong in terms of sustainable food. In 2020, Amber became fully dairy- and gluten-free, leading a healthy eating trend in luxury dining (Furniss 2020a). He is also looking to source 100% grass-fed, organically grown, hormone-free beef, working with local fishers to highlight other types of previously unpopular but equally delicious seafood, and importing vegetables from countries closer to Hong Kong to reduce their carbon footprint from 2020 onwards (Li 2020). Chef Ekkebus also has a myriad of tools to aid his team in "Responsible Production," which is a problem with an abstract nature. Therefore, during one of his pre-service briefings, Chef Ekkebus measured the amount of butter, cream and milk used in a full Amber tasting menu and put the equivalent quantities of raw products on a tray to show the entire team. With the menu at Amber being 50% plant-based, Chef Ekkebus strongly advocates syncing with nature and more considerable respect for carbon footprint (Amber 2021). Being part of an international hotel group Chef Ekkebus uses the 34 Mandarin Oriental hotels to launch research and test alternatives. With the faith in reusing and recycling, he successfully eliminated all single-use plastics, including piping bags, cling film rolls, and all single-use plastics employed at the restaurants in 2020. And in 2021, this specific responsible change has been rolled out to all hotels across Asia, America, Europe, and Africa under the Mandarin Oriental Hotel Group management. Additionally, being influenced by one of his mentors, Chef Guy Savoy, that "success is not based on individualisation but rather team performance, he sets on challenging the restaurant industry's preconceived notions, including issues around long working hours, equality, and parental leave (Maier 2012). Apart from the above, Chef Ekkebus and his team also engage and collaborate with the local community and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) by taking turns cooking for Food Angel, a local soup kitchen that prepares meals for the homeless (Ho 2018) and using local tailors for all his team's uniforms and chef jackets (MILK 2021). For waste reduction, Amber has been donating its abalone leftover shells to a sustainable jewellery brand called Niin for accessories production, and a percentage of the sales proceeding went to sustainable sources such as World Wildlife Fund (Ho 2018; NIIN 2021).

Leadership Roles of Chef Shane Osborn

Chef Osborn has led the sustainable food movement in Hong Kong by chairing the advisory board of Food Made Good Hong Kong, with the idea to create an accessible framework and an organised network in dealing with the different facets of sustainability challenges, including plastic pollution, food waste, climate change, deforestation, and biodiversity (Spurrell 2019). Apart from the no-straw policy and using only seasonal produce, Chef Osborn took a step further by growing and harvesting his own herbs, fruits, and vegetables (Lee, 2017). Additionally, at Arcane, 50 per cent of its dinner menu is vegetarian. On top of this, there is also a seven-course meat-free-Monday menu available. At Moxie, the latest venture by Arcane Collective, Chef Osborn takes "a

soft-touch approach to mindful eating” with a menu that features 80 per cent vegetables and fruit and 20 per cent sustainable seafood (Chan 2021). In supporting the community, all produce under the Arcane Collective family comes from the same suppliers since Chef Osborn believes that it is essential to build a relationship with farmers to know where all his produce is coming from (Chan 2021). Instead of serving bottled water, Chef Osborn encourages reusing and recycling by introducing a filtration system for still or sparkling water at his casual eatery Cornerstone (Furniss 2020b). Moreover, the Arcane Collective works with suppliers to reduce the amount of plastic they use in hopes that they share the knowledge with their contemporaries within the restaurant industry (Furniss 2020b).

Comparative Analysis of Leadership

Chef Ekkebus acts as an *architect* in responsible leadership by creating an environment where his team can find “meaning, feel respected, recognised, and included” (Maak and Pless 2006). This can be shown clearly during the times when he was the executive chef in Barbados. He built a moral infrastructure and constructed an inclusive system by increasing the number of female staff members, including a sous chef position, on his team. Additionally, Chef Ekkebus’ role as a *change agent* in “Responsible Production and Consumption” is prominent, evidenced by his gradual reduction in meat, dairy, and refined sugars on the menu. His desire to create high-end food that not only tastes good but also makes diners feel good has driven him to a leap of faith in creating a dairy- and gluten-free menu for his two-Michelin-starred restaurant Amber. He believes in breaking through the preconceived ideas that “a good sauce has a little bit of cream or a little bit of butter” and showing that there are other healthier, ethical alternatives (Sgarbi 2020). On top of this, Chef Ekkebus, as a *storyteller*, tells stories to convey his core values and demonstrates to his internal stakeholders what is at stake, e.g., concerning health and ethics (Sgarbi 2020). Apart from the above, Chef Ekkebus also sees himself as a *steward* since he believes in protecting “what one is entrusted with” (Maak and Pless 2006, p. 46). He strongly advocates syncing with nature and more considerable respect for carbon footprint (Amber 2021). He also wants to raise awareness and make people realise that indulgence and health can go hand in hand (Sgarbi 2020). In addition, Chef Ekkebus also acts like a *visionary*, hoping that the changes he has constantly put forward at Amber would have a more significant impact. He explained his trouble-making and rebellious behaviour in one of the interviews which allowed him “challenge the status quo and look at different ways to doing things differently and diligently” (Sgarbi 2020). Chef Ekkebus also performs as a *citizen* in responsible leadership who actively promotes citizenship within and outside the organisation (Maak and Pless 2006). He plans to write a book on how he leads his team to redefine cooking by rethinking the process and looking for alternative solutions and ingredients. He also advises all chefs and restaurateurs in town in his interview with Sgarbi (2020) to reach out if “true difference” can be achieved.

On the other hand, Chef Osborn acts as a *coach* in responsible leadership. By putting his protégé Chef Neal Ledesma in charge of his causal bistro, it is clear that Chef Osborn facilitates development, enables learning, and supports individuals in achieving their objectives. Moreover, Chef Osborn also supports the relational process and fosters collaborative interactions and open communication (Anggakara 2015). Apart from being a leader as a coach, Chef Osborn also performs as a *servant* in leading responsibly by having a willingness and desire to support others and care for their interests and needs. From taking up the role as the president of the Food Made Good Hong Kong to promoting the food and beverage sustainability framework to the industry, Chef Osborn has shown his “ethics of care” by serving others within and outside the organisation (Noddings 1984; Hartouni 1996; Held 2005; Torres and Garcia 2019). Like Chef Ekkebus, Chef Osborn also acts as a *storyteller* to spread his mission and communicate his vision of an environmentally friendly operation that can make a difference in the world through his various projects. For instance, from harvesting his herbs, fruits, and vegetables to working with smaller farms based around Asia, Chef Osborn tries to create a dialogue in Arcane that although 95 per cent of our produce is inevitably imported, what can do though is to try to reduce the miles (Lee,

2020). On top of this, the leader role as a *steward* is also shown by Chef Osborn in one of his interviews with Lee (2020), where he considered himself as “a guardian of value” that constantly questions himself, “What am I passing on to the next (and future) generations?” (Maak and Pless 2006, p. 46). And as a *visionary*, he envisioned a desired future where vegetables are not simply garnishes and that they should play the leading role. The concept of Moxie, Chef Osborn’s latest venture, is a fresh approach to conscious dining that encourages guests to rethink their connection with food, how it impacts their health and how their dining decisions can help create a positive influence on their local environment. The leader role as a *citizen* is also apparent in Chef Osborn. In a video demonstrating how to cook vegan Michelin quality sustainable dishes at home, Chef Osborn sought to set an example to his staff by “normalising vegetarian and vegan food” and expected to create a ripple effect that spread to his customer base and suppliers (*SCMP Style* 2020).

Discussion

With Chef Osborn having more substantial normative roles such as steward, visionary, servant, and citizen, it can be concluded that his intrapsychic drivers are stronger in motivating him to lead responsibly. From the analysis above, the ability of Chef Osborn to experience joy, have fun and be playful, i.e., *the sense of joy*, is a crucial dimension for him to successfully lead his team in achieving “Responsible Production and Consumption.” This can be easily seen in his creation of the Cornerstone restaurant, a framework of a sunny Australian café, and the Moxie restaurant, an all-day concept that serves conscious cuisine; both of which he has claimed that he had a lot of fun creating (Yeh 2019; Yeung 2021). It is also clear that *the need for exploration and assertion*, which is having the ability to play, experiment, learn, and work, allows Chef Osborn to accomplish restaurant sustainability. And this is shown by the fact that he built his “dream restaurant with an in-house garden” where Chef Osborn and his team can harvest their own crops and put them into production (Lee, 2017). Similarly, *the need for attachment and affiliation* where Chef Osborn can be connected and be close to others plays a vital role in aiding Chef Osborn and his team to realise SDG 12. This is proven to be valid, as mentioned in the interview between Chef Osborn and Anggakara (2015), that being engaged with customers and staff is what “gives him the kick”.

It is also noticeable that Chef Ekkebus has a great balance between operational and normative roles in responsible leadership. While intrapsychic drivers determine the normative roles, the operational roles are based on values and norms. And based on the above findings, it is not only the drivers that are motivated by individual personal needs but also these emotions-based drivers that influence how Chef Ekkebus developed his responsible leadership behaviour. For instance, Chef Ekkebus understood the fundamental human need for fairness and that it is a basic framework for human interaction; hence, this need for justice drives and guides Chef Ekkebus’ actions in attaining “Responsible Production and Consumption.” This is reflected by his work in creating gender diversity in his Barbados and Hong Kong teams (Nakayama 2021). On top of this, Chef Ekkebus also realised the essential human need to be respected and valued. This matches his decision to self-nominate his restaurant Amber to enter the Sustainable Restaurant Award 2020 (Terry 2020). Driven by the *need for recognition*, Chef Ekkebus participated in this global competition and allowed the work from his team at Amber to be publicly recognised. The *sense of care* has also driven Chef Ekkebus in realising sustainability through his recognition that waste has been one of the significant issues in Hong Kong. Motivated by this, he birthed creative solutions to resolve the waste issue, including working with NGOs and other charitable institutions to turn old kitchen uniforms into coasters (Sgarbi 2020).

Conclusion

In conclusion, this study used two Michelin-starred chefs to reach a better understanding of the concept of responsible leadership and how it drives achieving “Responsible Production and Consumption” (SDG 12). Both chefs’ backgrounds and life stories are convincing examples of

responsible leadership. From the analysis of Chef Ekkebus and Chef Osborn's narratives, it is clear that responsible leaders are more inclined to support others, especially their stakeholders, and are more caring concerning their interests and needs. *Ethics of care* is deeply rooted in responsible leadership, especially in achieving SDG 12, which is driven by the desire in serving others. In addition, responsible leaders developed a *sense of responsibility* over a period of time. It is strongly linked with childhood experience and is further developed and reinforced by life experiences. This study shows that this sense of purpose is heavily driven by care, love, and passion. Moreover, to create a sense of identity among followers and to foster a more cooperative working environment, responsible leaders use *storytelling* as a leadership method to connect different stakeholders and lead responsibly, as found in this research. Finally, both responsible leaders in this study share a similar vision that leaders should aspire to be true global citizens with responsibility for planet Earth. It is required that responsible leaders have relational skills, and through stakeholder engagement, these leaders connect and stay close to their stakeholders to realise their visions.

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