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The Influence of Celebrity Chefs on a Student Population

1. Introduction

Celebrity is much written about by social theorists (McNamara, 2009; Ferri, 2010; Lawler, 2010) and as such there are many taxonomies of celebrity, which Turner (2010) discusses at length. The concept that celebrity is a 'cultural formation that has a social function' (Turner, 2010:11), and the contemporary significance of celebrity itself remains a key topic for debate (Couldry and Markham, 2007). Celebrities are considered as role models for millions of people, especially younger citizens (Couldry and Markham, 2007), who are the focus of this study. Pringle (2004:3) suggests that 'celebrity sells', and outlines the extent to which society becomes influenced by these figures due to their prevalence in everyday life. Becoming well-known public figures, where they have adversaries as well as fans (Henderson, 2011) celebrities have attracted significant literature, which is split on their benefit and detriment to society (Couldry and Markham, 2007). One particular area of this burgeoning celebrity culture is the phenomenon of celebrity chefs.

The term 'celebrity chef', tends to relate to those with an international following, yet Henderson (2011) postulates that there are no formal definitions. Two works (Kelly, 2004; Lang and Heasman, 2004) argue that the celebrity chef is not uniquely modern, whilst Henderson (2011) suggests the concept is more commonly associated with the modern era. Chiaro (2008) defines celebrity chefs as men and women who have become well known as chefs through television exposure, each of whom has their own style of communicating with their audience. It seems that initial success of these individuals can be partly explained by culinary skills (Henderson, 2011), often practiced in their own restaurants, but the cases of individual celebrity chefs and their business activities vary (Caraher *et al.*, 2000). Some consider the contribution of celebrity chefs to television programming as an offering of their skill and knowledge, namely as experts or role models (Boyle and Kelly, 2010). However, the chefs considered here vary in their expertise, including those formerly trained in catering such as Jamie Oliver, Gordon Ramsay and James Martin; self-taught chefs

such as Heston Blumenthal; as well as former food writers or journalists in Delia Smith, Nigella Lawson and Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall.

Delia Smith was perhaps one of the first such personalities in the UK, writing for several years for the Evening Standard in the late 60s, and first appearing on television in 1973 on the BBC1 programme *Family Fare* [I]. With the aim to teach the British public how to cook, Smith has gone on to present numerous 'how to cook' television programmes. The more recently emerging chefs fulfil their own niche: Jamie Oliver launched his career in the late 1990s as the no fuss 'Naked Chef' (Henderson, 2011), alongside a television cookery programme of the same name. Subsequently referred to by only his first name, without fear that an audience would not know who he was (Scholes, 2011), titles of the Channel 4 television shows that followed include *Jamie's Kitchen*, *Jamie's School Dinners*, and *Jamie's Great Italian Escape* (Scholes, 2011), where Oliver is seen as an informal cook, preparing quick, straightforward dishes. Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall came to audiences around the same time, during the series of Channel 4 programmes based on his move to River Cottage in Dorset, starting with *Escape to River Cottage*. Here he was depicted growing the organic, seasonal produce with which he continues to be associated (Scholes, 2011). Also signing a contract with Channel 4, Gordon Ramsay is by contrast, a trained, career chef, who studied at Catering College prior to working in a series of restaurants in London and France [II]. In 1998 Ramsay first appeared on television in kitchen documentaries starting with Channels 4's *Boiling Point* in 1998, and has remained in TV scheduling since, mainly depicting the pressures of working in commercial kitchens. He is known for his ambition, macho attitude to cooking, and hot temper (Scholes, 2011).

Heston Blumenthal is a self taught chef and owner of three Michelin starred restaurant The Fat Duck in Berkshire [III], known for his creativity and experimentation with new ingredients and cooking techniques, he has been accredited with bringing an understanding of science to his food, and his restaurant has a kitchen dedicated to research and development (Vega and Ubbink, 2008). A proponent of multi-sensory cooking, which has been described in some quarters as 'molecular gastronomy', Blumenthal is part of an international group of experimental chefs (Vega and Ubbink, 2008). Nigella Lawson, also has no formal cookery training, and claims her identity as a cook and never a chef, stating 'I am not a chef. I am not

even a trained or professional cook. My qualification is as an eater' (Lawson, 1998:2). Scholes (2011:48) notes that she 'alludes to a more traditional view of the relationship between the female cook and the domestic space she inhabits'. Lawson was a restaurant critic and journalist, working primarily with the Sunday Times, before publishing her first cookery book '*How to Eat*' in 1998, followed by the more successful, '*How to be a Domestic Goddess*' in 2000. She first appeared on television in 1999 with the Channel 4 series *Nigella Bites* (Hewer and Brownlie, 2009).

Celebrity chefs are by no means unique to the UK, with similar figures featuring in many countries, including French chef Pierre Gagnaire, Spain's Ferran Adrià, and Alex Atala based in Brazil (Vega and Ubbink, 2008), to name a few. Significantly, in the United States there is the Food Network channel featuring extensive food programming; the rationale, format and hosts of which, including the prominent Rachael Ray and Bobby Flay are discussed by Ketchum (2005) and Swenson (2009). Therefore, beyond the chef's traditional realm of restaurant kitchens, the celebrity chef has the ability to reach large international audiences, in a market comprising diners, viewers, readers, internet users and consumers of food and food related products (Henderson, 2011; Scholes, 2011). Several studies (de Solier, 2005; Hansen, 2008; Scholes, 2011) have discussed how changes in media technology have meant celebrity chef exposure is greater now than ever before, as there are more outlets for those who seek it, and multiple sources of media streamed at those who wish to avoid it (Drake and Miah, 2010). The style in which celebrity chefs communicate with their audience has also changed, and today's celebrity chefs are more histrionic than static (Chiaro, 2008). They have therefore, become more personable (Scholes, 2011), where they operate from kitchens in their own homes or are shown shopping in supermarkets or picking their own vegetables whilst engaging with their audience; rather than merely standing in front of a camera delivering recipe instructions (Chiaro, 2008).

It is therefore, widely considered that the celebrity chef is adopting the role of entertainer (Caraher *et al.*, 2000; Chiaro, 2008; de Solier, 2005) and is not someone who will simply provide cookery advice. Scholes (2011) notes that the idea of cookery as entertainment has seen the transformation of chef's names into brands. They have come to possess a commercial importance in sales strategies and

marketing campaigns, and some chefs now lend their personality to product endorsements (Henderson, 2011). In addition, with regular links made between food and health, and food issues appearing on the political agenda, celebrity chefs have come to play an important role in health promotion policies and environmental campaigns (Scholes, 2011; Warin, 2011), where due to their increasing recognition amongst the public, they are thought to influence both attitudes and habits (Ketchum, 2005).

Although there has been significant literature written in the popular and trade press about these individuals, academic research into the phenomenon of celebrity chefs remains limited. Some exceptions include Caraher *et al.*, (1999), Caraher *et al.*, (2000) and Lake *et al.*, (2006), who mainly discuss trends in learning cooking skills and behaviour. Other studies are based on analysis of secondary data (Henderson 2011), or are sociological discussions of the involvement of particular chefs in health promotion (McLean and Stahl, 2007; Warin, 2011), product and brand endorsements (Byrne *et al.*, 2003), and their representation of gender (Hollows 2003; Lawson, 2011; Scholes 2011). Hence, there remains a lack of published research investigating the popular perception of these figures, and the influence they may have. Due to this, it remains questionable as to whether or not celebrity chefs make a difference to culinary practice amongst those who might seek advice on cooking, particularly young people, who are of interest due to the factors that shape their food preferences (Sellæg and Chapman, 2008). University students were chosen here as the study group because they are in the process of learning to prepare and cook food for themselves (Beasley *et al.*, 2004) and are acquiring preferences for food products and brand loyalties (Bush *et al.*, 2004). Numerous works have discussed how students and young people today have grown up in a consumer-oriented society, where they have spending power, the ability to become trendsetters and the potential to become lifelong customers (Bush *et al.*, 2004; Noble *et al.*, 2006). Conversely, others argue how younger citizens are resistant to advertising efforts and are individualistic and anti-corporate (Wolfe and Sisodia, 2003; Pompper and Choo, 2008). Therefore the primary aim of this study is to consider whether celebrity chefs influence the general food behaviour of students.

Paucity on this topic in the literature could suggest that celebrity chefs, along with their income-generating activities (Henderson, 2011), remain transparent and so do

not merit detailed investigation (Strange, 1998). However, the existing cultural work about food suggests this is a rich field for research (Wright *et al.*, 2001; Ashley *et al.*, 2004; Wurgaft, 2005), and given the frequent suggestion that contemporary consumer culture is largely filled with commodified celebrity products (Wicks *et al.*, 2007; Brownlie and Hewer, 2009; Ferris, 2010), the study of celebrity chefs could offer insights into their place in food culture in contemporary society. Research suggests that entertainment value is the greatest strength of celebrity chef programming (Caraher *et al.*, 2000; Lang and Heasman, 2004; Henderson, 2011), therefore, a primary issue concerns whether or not they actually educate viewers in cooking practices (de Solier, 2005), and this question will also be addressed.

As well as a potentially positive influence, it has also been suggested that celebrity chefs are little more than media creations, implying an arbitrary relationship between food and celebrity in society today (Hansen, 2008). Furthermore, it is thought that their concept has undergone a transformation due to the emergence of new media such as the internet, reality television and social media (Hansen, 2008; Ferri, 2010). This is further demonstrated in the work of Drake and Miah (2010) who discuss the shift of the term celebrity from a positive to a negative in the last 50 years; raising the question of how celebrity chefs are perceived amongst the study group, and this will also be addressed.

Therefore this study's overall aim is to investigate the extent, influence and perception of exposure to celebrity chef culture among a student population, and in doing so, increase knowledge of this under-researched field.

2. Methodology

2.1 Survey and recruitment

SNAP 9 Survey Software was used to construct the questionnaire, which was then published online. A link to the survey was sent via email to all students at Bath Spa University (Bath, UK) using the University's email distribution list; the survey was distributed on 24th March 2012 and remained active for two weeks. A total of 238 complete responses were returned from students between the ages of 18 and 54

years. The questionnaire was approved by the Bath Spa University ethics assessment process.

2.2 The study population

Of the respondents, 82% were female ($n=194$) and 18% male ($n=44$); the majority of respondents were aged 18-24 years (82%), with those 25-34 years making up 7%, 35-44 years also 7% and 45-54 years making up 4% of the study population.

Respondents were mainly Caucasian (94%), although 3% were Asian, 1% African, and the remaining 3% classified themselves as other ethnic backgrounds.

2.3 Questionnaire design

Celebrity chef exposure was measured using an adapted version of the format used by Caraher *et al.* (2000), and Henderson (2011) also informed the questions included. Routing rules were applied during questionnaire design in order for appropriate questions to be answered depending on earlier responses. For example, following the question ‘Do you ever watch food/cooking television programmes featuring celebrity chefs?’ those answering ‘yes’ were then routed to the related question ‘Do you agree or disagree with the following statements about why you watch food/cooking television programmes featuring celebrity chefs’?

Influence was measured by asking respondents to choose from a list, the celebrity chef who most influenced their food habits; an open ‘other’ section was provided in the event that a particular celebrity chef was not included. The specific celebrity chefs listed were selected on the grounds of their degree of recent exposure through book publications and television broadcasting. Book publication data was taken from the top ten UK bestseller list of celebrity chef cookbooks sold by the online retailer Amazon [IV]. These names were compared to broadcasting data taken from the Broadcasters’ Audience Research Board (BARB) which provides in-home television viewing figures in the UK. This search confirmed that the celebrity chefs chosen had been featured in television programmes during the previous two years [V].

Awareness of campaigns lead by celebrity chefs was assessed by giving a description of four celebrity chef fronted campaigns, selected from the previously named celebrity chefs, and their campaigning activity in the UK. An internet-based popular and trade press search and BARB [V] findings revealed four UK based

campaigns that were accompanied by television programmes in the previous seven years. Respondents were asked to give the name of the chef relating to each campaign. This question was left open for respondents to write down any name they thought related to the campaign described, without prompting.

Perception of celebrity chef culture was assessed by compiling six statements, three of which were positive and three negative, to present to the respondent, who needed to state whether they agreed or disagreed, they could also select 'don't know'. This was in order to gain an understanding of overall opinion on celebrity chefs without showing bias towards positive or negative statements i.e. by providing an equal number of each. All statements were original in their design, derived using information from Hansen (2008) and Henderson (2011), to reflect ideas of perception previously reported for these figures.

3. Results

Eighty four percent of respondents ($n=200$) reported watching food/cooking related television programmes featuring celebrity chefs; this was significantly more than those who did not watch such programmes ($\chi^2 = 110.27$, $df = 1$, $p<0.001$).

Table I shows whether respondents agreed or disagreed with statements about why they watched these programmes. The statements with which the highest number of respondents agreed, were that they 'watched for entertainment', to 'get recipe ideas', and to 'relax'. The statements with which most respondents disagreed were that they 'watched them as a hobby', to 'learn about different cultures', and to 'learn about the exotic and different'.

When participants were asked if they thought celebrity chefs had influenced their food habits in some way, 55.5% of respondents ($n=132$) reported being influenced, and 44.5% ($n=106$) reported no influence; this difference was not significant ($\chi^2=2.84$, $df=1$, $p>0.05$).

Table II shows the most influential chefs when respondents were asked to select the single celebrity chef who had most influenced their food habits. Jamie Oliver was reported as the most influential, followed by Delia Smith. The 'other' category

consists of additional names written down by respondents, these were each reported by less than 2% of respondents and included James Martin, The Hairy Bikers (Simon King and David Myers), Anthony Worrall Thompson and Raymond Blanc.

Table III shows that the most correctly named celebrity chef relating to a described campaign was Jamie Oliver and the ‘Feed Me Better’ campaign to improve school meals. The least correctly answered was Gordon Ramsay and the ‘Shark Bait’ campaign to raise awareness of the shark fishing industry in Taiwan.

The results in Table IV show whether respondents agreed or disagreed with statements relating to celebrity chefs. The statements with which the most respondents agreed, were that celebrity chefs ‘promote and use high quality food in their restaurants’, and that celebrity chefs have ‘helped raised their awareness of food issues’. The statements, with which most respondents disagreed, were that ‘celebrity chefs have double standards’ and that they are ‘overused in the media’. Overall, there was significantly higher agreement with positive statements ($n=465$), than with negative statements ($n=261$) ($\chi^2=57.32$, df = 1, $p<0.001$).

4. Discussion

4.1 Exposure

The television has been fundamental in disseminating the fame of modern celebrity chefs (Henderson, 2011). It is widely accepted that televised cookery programmes dominate primetime broadcast scheduling in the UK (Lang and Heasman, 2004; de Solier, 2005), and programme related books written by celebrity chefs currently occupy six of the top ten general food and drink books sold by the online retailer Amazon [VI]. However, there has been a change in style, which has seen the role of celebrity chefs shift from cooks to performers (Chiaro, 2008), where they are now seen interacting with the public, as their main concern is to amuse. This is demonstrated in the variety of food related programming, which includes cooking shows (such as *Baking Made Easy* presented by Lorraine Pascale), docu-soaps (*Jamie’s Kitchen* by Jamie Oliver), those featuring struggling food premises (*Ramsay’s Kitchen Nightmares* fronted by Gordon Ramsay) and cookery

competitions (*Masterchef* judged by John Torode and Gregg Wallace) (de Solier, 2005).

It is noted that this study may have selected those individuals with a greater interest in the topic (Bosnjak and Tuten, 2001); none the less, a significant proportion (84%) of the survey population reported watching food related programmes featuring a celebrity chef. Results on why respondents watch such shows are consistent with other studies (Caraher *et al.*, 2000; Lang and Heasman, 2004; Henderson, 2011), in that they are watched primarily for entertainment by the majority of viewers. However, a high proportion of respondents also used them to gain recipe ideas, although a smaller number used them to actually learn new ‘food skills’. Chiaro (2008:207) discusses how several chefs (i.e. Jamie Oliver and Nigella Lawson) entertain audiences as much as they teach them how to cook, particularly by ‘abandoning traditional culinary English for a more colourful style of language’. Ashley *et al.* (2004) also observe that whilst cookery programmes have emerged primarily for entertainment, cookery itself is also now portrayed as entertaining.

Caraher *et al.* (2000) conducted a study ($n=5,000$) which provided useful insights into the means by which food knowledge is transferred. It found that whilst many respondents saw cooking programmes primarily as entertainment, 19% found such shows useful to learning about cooking in later life (as opposed to first learning, which was primarily from mothers). This supports the idea that some viewers do learn cooking skills from culinary television and do not just see it as entertainment. The findings of the current study and those previously carried out, therefore point towards exposure to celebrity chefs in the form of television programming, as a tool to help people expand their cooking knowledge, and gain confidence with new ingredients and how to cook them, once they have acquired the basic skills. This is of importance as lack of cooking skills and poor knowledge of ingredients are acknowledged as barriers to healthy eating during University (Deliens *et al.*, 2014), and into adulthood (Lappalainen *et al.*, 1997; Hartmann *et al.*, 2013). Although it should also be noted that the nutritional value of recipes used by television chefs has been questioned (Howard *et al.*, 2012).

4.2 Influence

In order to assess overall influence on behaviour, respondents were asked if celebrity chefs had influenced their general ‘food habits’, which could encompass purchasing, preparing, and cooking food. Although over half agreed, this was not significantly more than those who were not influenced, further suggesting that influence on practical cooking skills, food habits and behaviour is limited. The influence reported in this study, however, is slightly greater than that found in a poll carried out by the Nestlé Family Monitor (Ipsos MORI, 2001); which although not an academic study, found that 55% of respondents were not influenced by celebrity chefs in their cooking. However, the age demographic in this group differed from the population in the current study with 66% aged over 55 years (Ipsos MORI, 2001). The Nestlé poll, surveyed 525 adults using named celebrity chefs, and attempted to elucidate their influence in the UK (Ipsos MORI, 2001). Although carried out over a decade ago (and prior to the ‘Feed Me Better’ campaign), the study found that Jamie Oliver was the most influential chef when respondents were asked to select the chef who most influenced their cooking. Oliver was selected by 20% of respondents in the previous study, compared to 58% in the current study, where he was also reported as the most influential. This suggests that his influence has remained and possibly increased during his time in the public domain.

Jamie Oliver is therefore ‘high profile’ and his personality has seen him gain wide appeal with young people (Henderson, 2011). Alongside his television shows and books, Oliver has been used in advertising campaigns for the supermarket Sainsbury’s, discussed by Byrne *et al.* (2003). His sustained popularity has therefore made Oliver a household name, which has endured longer than many other chefs, possibly giving him the ability to influence the food habits of some of the British public; as discussed elsewhere (Warin, 2011).

Those chefs shown to have more limited influence in the current study (selected by 5-10% of the study population), were, in order, Delia Smith, Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall, Gordon Ramsay and Nigella Lawson. Delia Smith, who was also included in an earlier partnership with Sainsbury’s in the 1990s (Byrne *et al.*, 2003), was reported as the third most influential chef in the Nestlé consumer survey (Ipsos MORI, 2001) where she was selected by 11% of respondents, (compared to 9% in the current study) hence, her influence has seemingly remained relatively stable. Smith is seen as an old-fashioned celebrity chef; she represents an approach and

style to cooking which is thought to be becoming a minority (Caraher *et al.*, 2000), in that she provides basic instructions to carry out a recipe without concern of entertaining her audience (Chiaro, 2008). Therefore, it is perhaps surprising that she still holds influence amongst younger viewers.

Despite their differing personas, Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall and Gordon Ramsay have reportedly both used their masculine credentials to gain fame (Brownlie and Hewer, 2007; Hollows, 2003; Scholes, 2011), whereby it has been suggested that Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall advocates campaigns for masculine interpretations of 'real food' (Scholes, 2011), whilst Gordon Ramsay exerts authority with outbursts of temper and coarse language (Henderson, 2011). In contrast, Nigella Lawson purportedly portrays a glamorous version of femininity (Scholes, 2011) to which some women may aspire (Hewer and Browlie, 2009). It is interesting that these findings highlight both male and female chefs as similarly influential; though they may appeal more to consumers of a specific gender, according to their presentation style (Scholes, 2011), which could be a point for further study.

Within the 2001 Nestlé poll, the second highest percentage of respondents (15%) reported that Ainsley Harriott was the most influential chef; not featuring in the current study, he is likely to have been popular due to television programming around the time the survey was conducted (Caraher *et al.*, 2000). The remaining celebrity chefs reported as having influence in the 2001 survey were Gary Rhodes (7%), Rick Stein, Anthony Worrall Thompson and Nigella Lawson (3%) and Keith Floyd (who has since passed away), Madhur Jaffrey and Ken Hom (2%), most of whom also do not feature in the current study. This perhaps demonstrates how the popularity of some chefs is more transient than others, and may rise and fall with the television programming schedule.

4.3 Campaign awareness

Celebrity chefs have led a number of campaigns in recent years, primarily to promote healthy and sustainable food choices amongst the British public. Names linked with food related public campaigns include Jamie Oliver, Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall, Gordon Ramsay and Heston Blumenthal (Henderson, 2011). It should be noted that there are very few examples of similar campaigns being fronted by female chefs in the UK. Jamie Oliver's 'Feed Me Better' campaign to improve school

meals was the most correctly answered (and therefore recognised) campaign amongst the study group, with 96% of people naming him as the chef who fronted the campaign. This may be linked to the earlier finding that he is seen as by far the most influential chef. Although some years older than the other campaigns, ‘Feed Me Better’ may also have been more relevant to the survey population, many of whom would have been in secondary education around the time of the campaign’s launch. McLean and Stahl (2007) suggest that Jamie Oliver’s celebrity status has been advantageous in raising the profile of this campaign, and in securing a Government pledge to invest more money in school meal provision. The campaign followed a television documentary named ‘*Jamie’s School Dinners*’ (2005) and it is thought to have gained the support of many viewers of the programme. Evidence for this is provided in the quantity of signatures (over 270,000) on the campaign’s online petition (Oliver, 2006), and there is some suggestion of improvements in the provision and consumption of food in schools since the campaign was launched (Nelson, 2011).

‘Hugh’s Fish Fight’ was a campaign launched by Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall in 2011, which attempted to raise public awareness of the practice of discarding dead fish back into the sea once caught, due to EU quotas (Hugh’s Fish Fight, 2011). The response from the public has seen over 850,000 names appear on a petition to implement a discard ban in the new Common Fisheries Policy, which should be in place by the end of 2014 [VII]. This was the second most correctly recognised campaign; it was partnered with Channel 4’s ‘Big Fish Fight Season’ championing sustainable UK seafood, and produced a range of television programming on the issue, which saw a collaborative effort from other chefs, including Jamie Oliver and Gordon Ramsay.

In June 2009, Heston Blumenthal was commissioned by the UK Government to improve hospital food (Dalmeny and Jackson, 2010), and enhance the flavour of meals to help tackle the problem of malnutrition in this setting. The campaign was accompanied by the Channel 4 television programme ‘*Heston’s Mission Impossible*’ (2011). In addition, James Martin presented the BBC television programme ‘*Operation Hospital Food*’ (2011) in the same year, to raise public awareness of this issue. Therefore, respondents who had written either Heston Blumenthal or James Martin were considered to have correctly matched the chef to this campaign. Despite

this, the campaign to improve hospital food was the third correctly answered from the list of four. The most incorrectly answered campaign was Gordon Ramsay's 'Shark Bait', raising awareness of the shark fishing industry in Taiwan (Gordon Ramsay: Shark Bait, 2011). This campaign was featured under the umbrella of Channel 4's 'Big Fish Fight Season' collaboration, along with 'Hugh's Fish Fight'. Therefore, it may have been overshadowed by the Fearnley-Whittingstall campaign.

4.4 Perception

There was significantly more agreement with the positive statements about celebrity chefs than the negative statements. The statements eliciting the most agreement related to use of high quality ingredients and raising awareness of food issues. Fifty four per cent of respondents agreed that celebrity chefs have improved their cooking and preparation skills; again suggesting that exposure is not simply for entertainment value. Henderson (2011) notes that there is an enthusiasm and willingness to purchase products linked to celebrity chefs in the UK, where they provide expertise not only in terms of their skills, but also with sourcing the best or most suitable ingredients; this also supports the reasons respondents gave for watching food related television, (i.e. to learn about new ingredients). This positive perception may be important in terms of future endorsement, where celebrity credibility can influence endorser effectiveness (Amos *et al.*, 2008). These results also counter studies that have considered celebrity chefs as a negative influence, with the view that their media exposure saturates audiences (de Solier, 2005; Hansen, 2008; Ferris, 2010; Scholes, 2011), or that their involvement with campaigns is inappropriate (Warin, 2011; Scott, 2013). Henderson (2011) discusses the criticisms of celebrity chef endorsement, outlining the possibility that excessive use of the chef's name could be counter-productive in terms of consumer opinion; this was shown to be the case with some respondents in the current study, but almost half disagreed with the statement that they were overused by the media. Bailey (2007) discusses how consumer scepticism can affect consumers' perceptions and attitudes regarding product endorsement; although this focuses on sports celebrities and little is known of the effect of celebrity chef endorsement effectiveness on the study population. The finding that celebrity chefs are perceived in a positive light suggests that endorsement by these individuals may continue to be successful.

The elevated profile of celebrity chefs also means they become closely scrutinised in their business decisions, where depicted support for fresh ingredients and ‘cooking from scratch’, clashes with promotion of packaged and processed foods, leading to criticism that they have double standards (Henderson, 2011). However, only 16% of respondents agreed with this statement, although it also had the highest percentage of respondents who were unsure of their opinion. The negative statement gaining most agreement was that chefs ‘do not appreciate typical household budget restraints’; this may be due to the variety of ‘high quality ingredients’ used in recipes being perceived as expensive, or the perception that cost is a barrier to dining in one of the chef’s flagship restaurants (Henderson, 2011).

5. Limitations and recommendations for future work

Women responded to the survey at higher rates than men, which is consistent with studies showing food and cooking habits primarily being a female domain (Lake *et al.*, 2006; Swenson, 2009) but also with other work on gender and survey response rates (Lyness and Kropf, 2007; Bech and Kristensen, 2009). The response rate also largely reflects the male/female ratio at Bath Spa University (Bath Spa University, 2012), so males were likely to be under represented in the study population. This study only aimed to analyse results from a specific student population, so findings might not be consistent with other consumer groups, particularly those with a different age demographic.

As discussed, gender differences of both the chefs and the study population would be an interesting area for further analysis, as would the media by which exposure occurs. This study largely focussed on television exposure, but it has been suggested that celebrity chefs may have become ubiquitous due to improved technology allowing more direct access to fans (Ferri, 2010) and the emergence of social networking sites allowing celebrities to reach further into consumers’ lives (Boyle and Kelly, 2011). There has so far been little consideration given to the impact of celebrity chefs in these new hybrid media forms (Eagle and Brennan, 2007). Therefore, further study on this may reveal whether traditional recipe books and television programmes still have a place in delivering cooking information, or if they have been superseded by these new formats.

6. Conclusions

A significant number of students in the surveyed population were exposed to celebrity chefs through the television shows they present; and whilst these were generally watched for entertainment, they also gave recipe ideas. Over half of respondents reported being influenced by celebrity chefs, though this was not significant. Those who were influenced selected Jamie Oliver as the single most influential chef; and he was also correctly recognised as the face of the campaign to improve school meals by nearly all of those surveyed. Generally, celebrity chefs were perceived as a positive influence, particularly for their promotion of quality ingredients and their ability to raise awareness of food issues.

These findings give a better understanding of the potential of celebrity chefs to become involved in a range of food issues. These individuals, at least in part, promote basic cooking practices, which could address some of the known barriers to healthy eating in terms of lack of skills and confidence with a range of ingredients. This study also highlights how celebrity chefs, through high profile ongoing campaigns, are able to bring attention to topical food issues, such as sustainability and ethical practices; a situation which may continue as long as they are respected as experts by consumers. Alongside this, the positive perception of these individuals amongst the study population, suggests that they could continue to successfully endorse products and brands in the future, particularly to young adults. Therefore, the significant levels of celebrity chef exposure to young people, as presented here may have quite wide reaching effects.

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Table I. Reasons why respondents ($n=200$) watched food/cooking related television programmes featuring a celebrity chef. Reasons are listed in the order they were presented to respondents.

Reason for watching	Agree		Disagree	
	%	n	%	n
For entertainment	96.5	193	3.5	7
To relax	81.0	162	19.0	38
As a hobby	52.5	105	47.5	95
To get recipe ideas	82.0	164	18.0	36
To learn food preparation skills	65.5	131	34.5	69
To learn about new ingredients	71.0	142	29.0	58
To learn about different cultures	59.5	119	40.5	81
To learn about the exotic and the different	58.5	117	41.5	83

Table II. The celebrity chefs who respondents ($n=131$) selected as having the most influence, when asked to select a single chef's name from a list in the order shown.

Celebrity chef	Influenced	
	%	<i>n</i>
Delia Smith	9.2	12
Gordon Ramsay	6.9	9
Heston Blumenthal	0.8	1
Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall	8.4	11
Jamie Oliver	58.0	76
Lorraine Pascale	0.8	1
Mary Berry	1.5	2
Nigella Lawson	5.3	7
Nigel Slater	3.1	4
Rick Stein	2.3	3
Other	3.8	5

Table III. Respondents ($n=238$ for each campaign) giving the correct answer when asked to name the celebrity chef involved with the described campaign.

Campaign	Correctly named	
	%	<i>n</i>
To improve hospital food	18.1	43
To raise awareness of sustainable fishing	40.0	95
To improve school dinners	96.2	229
To raise awareness of shark fishing industry	14.7	35

Table IV. Perception of celebrity chefs (*n*=238 for each statement)

Statements	Agree		Disagree		Don't know	
	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>
Celebrity chefs;						
Have improved my cooking and preparation skills ^P	53.8	128	37.8	90	8.4	20
Are overused by the media ^N	39.9	95	48.3	115	11.8	28
Have helped raise my awareness of food issues ^P	68.5	163	25.6	61	5.9	14
Do not appreciate typical household budget constraints ^N	53.4	127	32.8	78	13.9	33
Promote and use high quality food in their restaurants ^P	73.1	174	7.1	17	19.7	47
Have double standards and are hypocritical ^N	16.4	39	47.9	114	35.7	85

^Ppositive, ^Nnegative