

Potential Influences of Initiative and Non-Initiative Sources on Young Adults' Food Safety Knowledge and Practices

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Introduction

Young adult consumers are reported to lack food safety knowledge (Lazou *et al.*, 2012), implement unsafe food safety practices when preparing food in the domestic kitchen (Byrd-Bredbenner *et al.*, 2007) and report to behave with more food safety risks than other consumer groups (Byrd-Bredbenner *et al.*, 2008).

Knowledge of food safety may influence domestic practices (Wilcock *et al.*, 2004), therefore there is a need to implement food safety education in order to improve food safety practices (Redmond & Griffith, 2003); however, to enable this, there is a need to determine what sources have influenced young adults' food safety knowledge and the sources young adults prefer to receive food safety information.

Determination of which will inform the development of targeted consumer food safety education, the delivery of which can include initiative or non-initiative sources such as in the media.

Although the use of mass media in delivering food safety education has been assessed (Griffith *et al.*, 1994); in recent years the popularity of food specific media has increased in the UK with food television programs, food magazines, recipe books and online recipes; however little is known on the potential impact of such sources on specific consumer groups such as young adults.

Research Aim

Determine the potential influences of initiative and non-initiative sources on young adults' (≤ 25 years) food safety knowledge and preferred sources for future food-safety information.

Methods

A systematic review of literature relating to consumer food safety education was conducted to inform development of a quantitative survey which was piloted to ensure feasibility.

The questionnaire was designed to determine the sources that had previously influenced and were most favored by young adults to receive food safety education and information.

Self-complete questionnaires were administered to young adults (18-25 years) attending university ($n = 100$) that were recruited according to predetermined criteria. Questionnaire completion took ~20 minutes.

Data was entered into a specifically designed Microsoft Access 2007 database, statistical analysis was conducted using IBM SPSS Statistics 20.

Participant profile

Gender: Female - 60%, Male - 40%.

Age distribution: 18-19 years old - 16%; 20-21 years old - 48%; 22-23 years old - 28%; 24-25 years old - 8%.

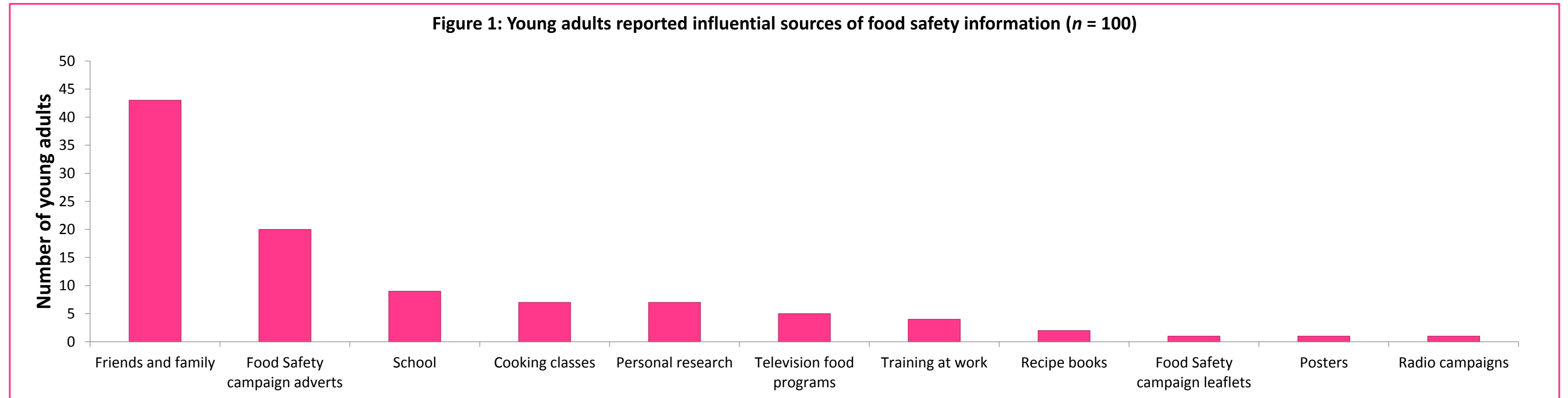
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Findings

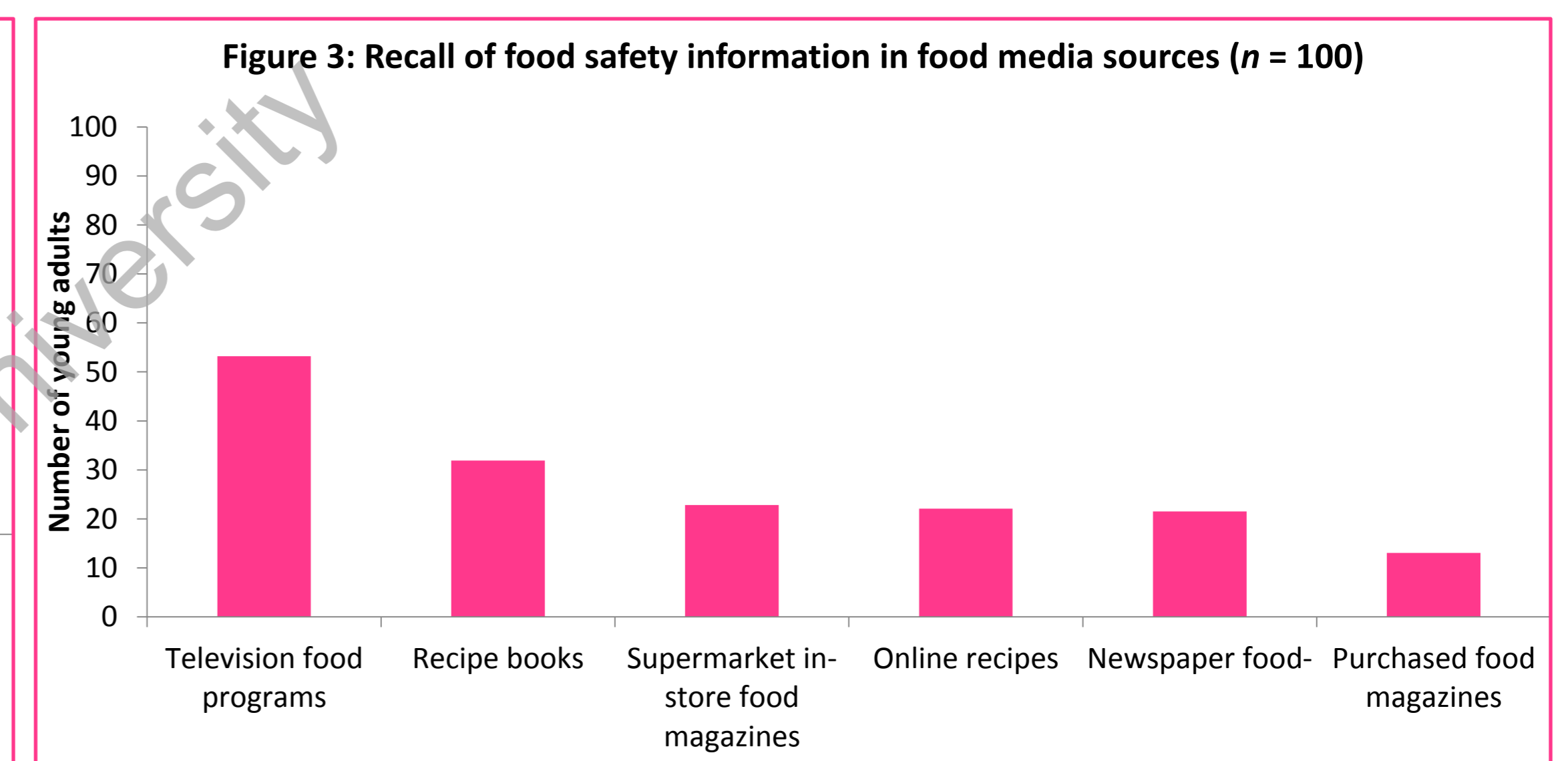
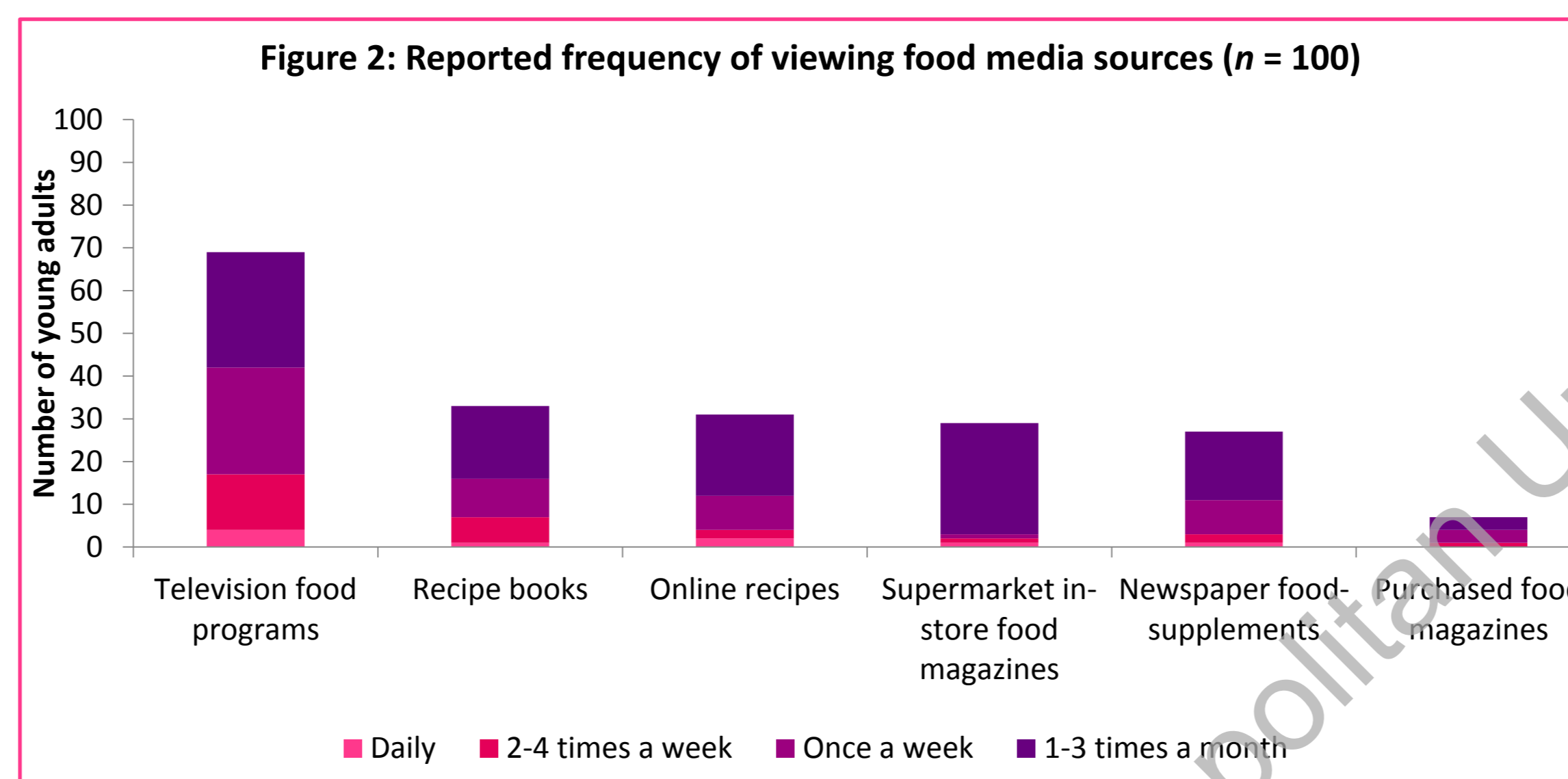
From 20 possible initiative and non-initiative sources as presented in Figure 1, the most frequently reported (43%) influential sources of food safety education/information were family and friends; however 20% reported that food safety campaign adverts had been influential on their food safety knowledge, along with school and cookery classes.

No significant differences were determined according to age groups or gender and sources deemed as influential on food safety knowledge.



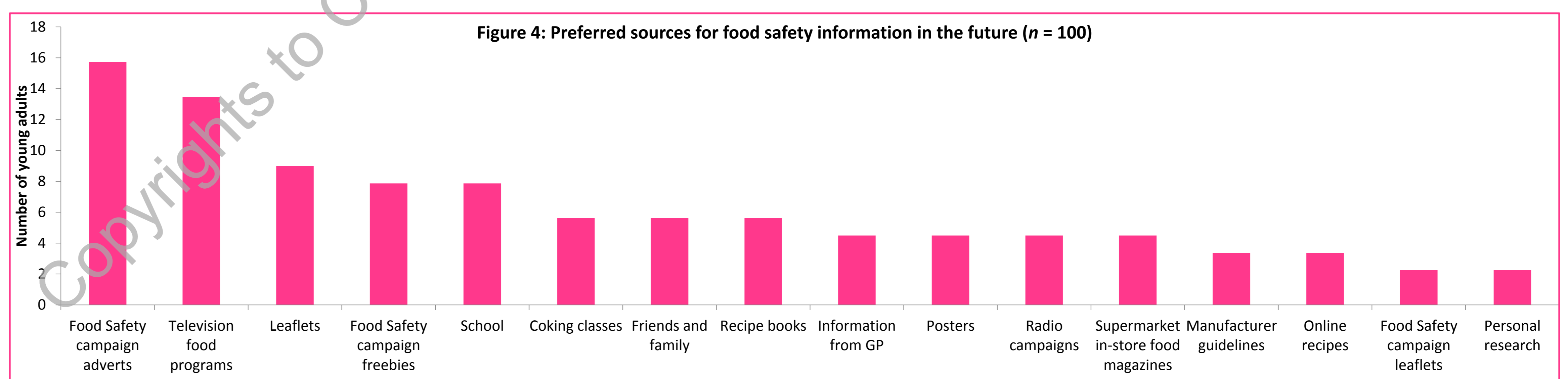
Food media sources including food television programs, food magazines, recipe books and online food sources were not reported to have been the most influential sources in young adults food safety knowledge.

However as illustrated in Figure 2, young adults frequently viewed various sources of food media; the most viewed source was television food programs and recipe books. Purchased food magazines and newspaper food supplements the least viewed. Thus suggesting that young adults are subjected to food media sources, however food safety information is not provided in such non-initiative sources. Furthermore, as indicated in Figure 3, a greater number of young adults (53%) recalled that television food programs included information of food safety information than in other non-initiative food media sources.



With regards to receiving food safety information in the future, the most frequently reported methods included the utilisation of audio-visual means; with 16% of young adults selecting initiative television adverts and 13% preferring the inclusion of information in non-initiative food television programs.

Furthermore, the majority of young adults (78%) stated that if the information was an integral part of television food programs, it would be 'fairly likely' to 'very likely' of influencing them, food magazines and online recipes were the least preferred and reported to be the least likely non-initiative food media sources of influencing young adults food safety knowledge and practices.



Additionally; 77% of young adults indicated that a campaign involving celebrity chefs to inform consumers on food safety in the domestic kitchen would be 'fairly likely' or 'very likely' of influencing their food safety practices at home.

Discussion

Family and friends were reported to be the most influential sources of food safety information for young adults in this study; which may have been as a result of learning to cook from observing family practices, as reported by Jevnsnik *et al.* (2008), more than half of consumers have learnt cooking practices from parents; however, the adequacy of this information is unknown.

In relation to previous research; recipe books were reported to have influenced a greater number of young adults than food safety leaflets, it has been previously reported that recipe books were relied on more than Government sources for food safety information in the USA (Byzby & Ready, 1996).

Although television personalities are reported to be the least likely to be believed in the conveying of food safety information (Redmond and Griffith, 2006), and that television food programs are often seen as entertainment as opposed to factual or educational (Caraher *et al.*, 2000); however, given the increased popularity of celebrity chefs in recent years, the majority of young adults in this study reported that celebrity chefs and food safety information being an integral part of food television programs would be likely of influencing their food safety practices.

Conclusions

- Preferred sources of received food safety education among young adults are reported to be from ones which the adequacy and accuracy of the information is unknown.
- Young adults should be specifically targeted through the combination of non-initiative food media sources (such as inclusion of food safety information in television food programs) and initiative lead food safety campaign adverts.
- Communication of food safety information with credible celebrity chef endorsement may increase awareness and likelihood of adopting food safety practices in the home.
- Such findings may be used to inform the future development of targeted food safety education.