Good Food, Good Fun:

An exploratory study on Italian audience consumption and perception of TV cookery programmes

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Abstract & Keywords

English:

Since the introduction of digital terrestrial and satellite TV and the advent of food and cooking specialty channels, the food business has definitely transformed the television industry landscape and has brought about an exponential increase in TV cookery channels and programmes worldwide. Following the *fil rouge* of the food mania on TV, this article assumes that the expansion of TV cookery consumption could be a useful tool to monitor more general social and cultural transformations in modern audiences across trans-national boundaries. This contribution presents the results of an exploratory, empirical study conducted in Italy among a demographically mixed sample of television viewers, both satellite and pay TV subscribers and not, in order to investigate if and how their consumption of televised cookery has changed since the introduction of terrestrial digital television in Italy in 2012 and the subsequent increase in the number of factual channels. The study also aims to find out if and how the Italian audience's perception of this kind of programmes has evolved in response to recent technological advances. Combining the results of focus groups, qualitative in-depth interviews and ad hoc questionnaires, the paper considers recent audience evolution in terms of preferences and consumption habits of both subtitled and voiced-over products of foreign cookery programmes vs. Italian cookery programmes.

Keywords: TV cookery, TV consumption, digital terrestrial television, thematic channels, audience evolution

1. Introduction

Interest for food and exotic culinary traditions has undoubtedly increased in recent years, not only in western societies, but also in emerging countries, to the extent that food discourse seems to be one of the most fashionable, vital and productive areas of media output in the new millennium. Since the introduction of cable and satellite TV and the advent of food and cooking specialty channels, the food business has definitely transformed the television industry landscape. The first food-dedicated channel ever conceived was the American Television Food Network, launched in 1993 in the USA, followed by the BBC Food Channel, inaugurated in the UK in 2002 (remarketed in 2008 as BBC Lifestyle international channel). Since then, the exponential increase in TV cookery channels and programmes worldwide has been overwhelming. In Italy, the first thematic channel, *Raisat Gambero Rosso*, was inaugurated in 2003, and after the introduction in 2012 of digital terrestrial TV (henceforth DTT), other food dedicated channels have become important virtual meeting places for Italian and international chefs and food experts.

Following the *fil rouge* of food mania on TV, this paper assumes that the expansion of TV cookery consumption could be a useful tool to monitor more generalised social and cultural transformations in modern audiences across trans-national boundaries. This contribution presents the preliminary outcomes of an exploratory study conducted in Italy among a demographically mixed sample of television viewers, whether satellite and pay TV subscribers or not, in order to investigate if and how their consumption of televised cookery has changed since the introduction of terrestrial digital television in Italy and the consequent multiplication of factual TV channels in 2011-2012. The study also aims to find out if and how Italian audience perception of this kind of programme has evolved in response to recent technological advances, and if and how it has influenced the relationship of Italians with cooking in general. Combining the results of focus groups, qualitative in-depth interviews and purpose-built questionnaires, the paper considers recent Italian audience evolution in terms of preferences and consumption habits of both subtitled and voiced-over products of foreign cookery programmes vs. Italian cookery programmes. After a brief overview of the relevant literature with particular emphasis on audience reception and perception, the methodological design of the exploratory study will be described. The rest of the paper will be devoted to a discussion of the preliminary results.

2. Three decades of TV technological innovations

The impact of new technologies on television broadcasting, such as the introduction of cable, satellite and digital terrestrial systems in Europe, has profoundly changed the traditional broadcasting television landscape and influenced the routines of television audience enjoyment and consumption. For much of its history, television broadcasting in Europe has had a strong territorial and national character. Broadcasters could exchange programmes and build international partnerships, but apart from a few exceptions such as Switzerland and Germany, which had a federal political system and regional-based television networks, until the early 1980s TV broadcasters only operated within

national borders.

Originally, television discourse was central to conveying the cultural values of each nation and to engineering a national identity. From the mid-1980s until the mid-1990s, two opposite processes gradually began to take place. On the one hand, regional and local television networks started to emerge,[1] often supported by pre-existing national broadcasters; on the other hand, the first supra-national, pan-European television networks started up (Galperin 1999).[2] Many factors contributed to the internationalization of television: large transnational media corporations were funded and an increasing number of channels were broadcast beyond national borders, while the trade of international programmes steeply increased since the 1990s (Chalaby 2002; 2003; 2005).

> The first cross-border television channels were launched in Europe in the 1980s. Two decades on, there are more than 100 transnational channels operating across Europe and approximately 80 of them hold a licence from the British Independent Television Commission (ITC 2001). The ITC is a popular regulator because ITC licences are cheap (£250) and simple to obtain. One of the main conditions is that broadcasters must be based in the UK, making London the European centre for transnational television (Chalaby 2002: 185).

The integration of the European media market was further enhanced by the 1989 European Commission Directive 'Television Without Frontiers', that aimed to facilitate the flow of audiovisual products across European space by preventing member states setting up restrictions for television transmissions of other member states. The creation of the *European Audiovisual Observatory* in 1992, which collects statistical and analytical information on the audiovisual market, services and policies and makes them available to the member states, further boosted this trend towards internationalization. Finally, yet importantly, another traditional barrier has fallen in the last decade as, thanks to innovations in the field of satellite and cable communication technologies, the cross-border transmission and reception of television channels has become much easier and more common (Collins 1992).

Not only have changes taken place in the industrial sphere, but audiences have changed considerably as well. The expansion of viewing choices, the growth of niche programmes, as well as the concurrent development of new opportunities offered by the exponential increase in the use of the Web and of portable electronic devices have radically affected the relationship between television and its users. The technological revolution has influenced media audiences' consumption habits, allowing consumers a more interactive and pro-active role than they ever had in the past. Futurist author Toffler had foreseen this tendency back in the 1980s, when he wrote that technological developments would "heal the historic breach between producer and consumer, giving rise to the 'prosumer' economics of tomorrow" (1980: 11). As also argued by Napoli (2011:1), the technological advances in the realm of media have led to an empowered and more active role of media users:

> The explosion of Web sites, the proliferation of television channels, and the emergence of new content-delivery platforms - ranging from hand-held devices, to satellite radio, to on demand and interactive television services – all are contributing to exponential increases in the fragmentation of the media environment. We also know that new media technologies are providing media audiences with unprecedented control over the media consumption process. From the time-shifting and commercial skipping capabilities of the DVR, to the personalization of online new sites, to the unprecedented content portability offered by hand-held devices, individuals have acquired ever growing levels of control over when, how, and where they consume media.

3. Audience evolution

In Italy as everywhere else, the way audiences watch television has radically changed over the last few decades. Consumers are more autonomous in their choice of what, when, and on which support to watch favourite TV products. Reaching out to viewers and influencing their TV viewing behaviour has become more and more challenging for TV and advertising industries alike. In turn, the newly gained power of audiences is clearly contributing to the evolution of the media industry. The increased interactive potential of the new media is blurring the boundaries that traditionally separated content providers from content consumers (Napoli 2011: 11). Two key aspects of this new television paradigm are the fragmentation and interactivity of audiences. Both trends have surpassed the conventional concept of audience exposure to advertisements. An unprecedented revolution is occurring as regards mechanisms used by media organizations and advertisers to generate audience understanding. New data flows are becoming progressively available, which is why the advertising industry is trying to intercept and exploit them for business purposes.

> While the fragmentation of the contemporary media environment makes basic exposure metrics increasingly difficult to generate and increasingly unreliable in their interpretation, the autonomy and interactivity of the new media environment facilitate feedback mechanisms and data streams that can increasingly be fed into new audience information systems that provide portraits of other aspects of audience behaviour that go well beyond basic exposure (Napoli 2011: 14-15).

Some television genres have always had a fruitful relationship with their audiences. Engaging in an active exchange with viewers, they managed to impact on their consumption behaviours, tastes and purchases. One of the most representative genres in this respect is TV cookery, especially in the British and North American contexts, where cookery programmes have a long and established tradition.

Cookery shows are niche TV programmes in terms of audience numbers and profiles; moreover they are followed by passionate viewers, who tend to get involved and become active viewers. TV cookery consumers are expected to change their behaviour in response to watching their favourite programmes by buying new ingredients, trying out new recipes, or purchasing the TV series-related cookbooks, for example. The interaction between TV cookery producers and consumers has become even more explicit, since the advent of superstar chef websites, where fans of food TV can comment on their favourite chef's recipes or post their own. Food blogs can be considered as a further step in this process. Foodies publish their own recipes, take pictures of the food they prepare, give advice on food

preparation and cooking; they also promote food related events, festivals and happenings. Some food bloggers even choose to be filmed in their own kitchens, like pseudo TV chefs. In many cases their body language, the way they dress and the way they speak about food reveal a certain familiarity with the genre of TV cookery shows. Let us mention just one example of audience pro-activity, by reporting a fruitful interaction between audience and broadcasters in the field of TV cookery. Sonia Peronaci, an Italian food blogger, became very popular among web surfers and beginner cooks before landing on television. Her career started on the web in 2006, when she launched a food website and a blog, together with her husband. Five years later, her blog *GialloZafferano.it* reached two million users per month, had 130,000 users in the community and 40,000 followers on social networks. In 2013, Sonia Peronaci was invited to host her own cookery programme on TV: *In Cucina with Giallo Zafferano*, broadcast by FOX life (Ziino 2011).

> Unlike other kinds of TV series, cookery programmes are inclined to involve audiences, to inspire viewers to take action, to engage with cooking, to buy ingredients and kitchen utensils. DVDs, booklets and cookbooks are simple annexes to this concept. Fan communities form around the chefs' websites, viewers are invited to share their recipes and their experiences with cooking as well as their success and failures while trying out the proposed recipes. Some celebrity chefs' websites are provided with a shopping menu, where viewers can find information about the chefs' cookery books, DVDs and kitchenware (Rossato 2010: 70).

All these factors render the TV cookery case both a special interest and a special challenge for the purpose of the present study.

3.1 TV cookery programmes and their audiences

In the early days of television, British cookery programmes were auxiliary segments in TV scheduling; nonetheless, they soon proved particularly powerful in terms of ability to influence audiences' behaviour and consumption preferences. Cookery demonstrations on TV, the forerunners of cookery shows, were designed for commercial purposes, a trend that started in the 1930s and continued well into the 1950s. Moira Meighn, for example, one of the first celebrity TV cooks, first appeared on TV in a commercial for testing her recipes on a Primus Stove, while Fanny Cradock's first live cooking show in 1955 was sponsored by the British Gas Council (Allen and Albala 2007: 367). Delia Smith, who started her career as a TV cook in 1973, is still one of the UK's best-selling cookery authors, with sales of her 27 works on British cookery exceeding 21 million copies (Boffey 2001). Furthermore, the phrase "Delia effect" has been coined to describe a run on a previously poor-selling product resulting from a recommendation during an episode of her TV cookery series[3] (Rossato 2011: 225).

Today television superstar chefs advertise food and cookware products, restaurant and supermarket chains equally successfully. Their cookery shows are powerful driving forces for the publishing industry. According to a survey[4] conducted in 2006, Britons owned all in all 171 million cookbooks, but the most popular ones on the shelves of UK kitchens were those based on TV cookery series (Philips 2006). Further data rated Delia Smith first on the list, followed by Jamie Oliver and Nigella Lawson (Rossato 2011: 227).

In Italy, the tradition of televised cookery is more recent and has not yet had the strong impact on society seen in the UK or America. The first cookery show appeared on the small screen in Italy in 1974 (Granello 2009). Ave Ninchi, a former theatre, cinema and television actress turned chef, presented the cookery segment *A Tavola alle 7* together with Luigi Veronelli, one of the country's first TV gastronomes and food experts. They inaugurated a season of nutrition education on Italian TV (Grasso 2004). The next in line was television chef Wilma De Angelis, a former singer, who first presented *Telemenù* in 1979, a cookery series on the commercial television channel *Telemontecarlo*. The programme ran for eighteen years under different titles: *Sale, Pepe e fantasia, La spesa di Wilma*, *A pranzo con Wilma*. Her first cookery book, *Le mille meglio,* was not published until 1988. More recently, *La prova del Cuoco,* a cookery competition hosted by sports journalist Antonella Clerici as part of the state television channel *Rai1*'s daytime programming, witnessed a significant upturn in TV cookery in Italy. The successful programme, based on an Endemol format that also underlies the British *Ready Steady Cook*, first started in Italy in the year 2000, six years after the British version had been launched. The series was accompanied by numerous book publications and significant cookware and gadget production. After the success of this show, cookery segments were increasingly introduced in a number of programmes, ranging from magazine format shows to inserts in the daily news. Yet, it was after the arrival of satellite TV and the founding of Sky Italy in 2003, that the thematic channel *Raisat Gambero Rosso* became an important showcase for international television chefs and food experts (Rossato 2010: 71-72). A new wave of cookery themed channels has entered the Italian television market since 2012, when digital supplanted traditional analogue signals.

3.2 Audience reception and perception

When reviewing scholarly literature on audience research in the field of television studies, Clarke (2000) registered a shift towards active audience research occurring mainly among European scholars and made a powerful case for the necessity of a stronger ethnographic approach to any audience research.

> The television audience is composed of a wide variety of groups and is not a homogeneous mass… these groups actively read television in order to produce from it meanings that connect with their social experience." (Fiske 1987: 84)

Drawing on Fiske's concept of an audience made out of individual viewers (1987), on Morely's work (1974) that insists that demographic and social characteristics of audience groups must be taken into consideration in any audience analysis, and on Ang's emphasis on studying everyday practises of actual audiences in order to gain true insights into television viewers (1991), Clarke endorses audience research carried out by academia, hopefully in collaboration with the TV industry, that combines both micro and macro aspects of TV viewing. According to Schroeder (1994) much of the methodological complexity of designing audience research lies in the fact that specific readings of media texts originate in both macro-social factors such as class, ethnicity, gender, age etc. as well as in

micro-social or interactional /contextual relations such as household dynamics. He invites researchers "to use the individual interview in the informant's home as the research setting that best does justice to the whole array of cultural discourses that the individual inhabits" (Schroder 1994: 342).

While in the field of Television and Media studies audiences are considered a fundamental part of the media communication paradigm, and literature on empirical and theoretical studies on monolingual spectators is plentiful (Morley 1974; 1980; 1986; Lull 1988; 1990), in Audiovisual Translation Studies the cross-cultural audience perspective tends to be under-researched and rather neglected both by scholars and the TV industry. There are some exceptions to this, such as the works conducted on cross-cultural perception of translated humour by Fuentes Luque (2003), Bucaria (2005), Antonini (2008), Antonini and Chiaro (2009), Rossato and Chiaro (2010), and studies conducted on the interferences caused by subtitling reading (Tuominen, 2012). These works have provided evidence that the audience perception of translated audiovisual products can be very different from the perception of the source texts by viewers of their original version, thus also confirming that more extensive cross-cultural research on audience perception of audiovisual translated products is needed.

4. Aims and objectives of the study

The relationship of Italian audiences to cookery shows has significantly changed over the last decade. From a very ancillary position, cookery has now acquired a more central position in Italian television programming and has progressively gained a loyal and lively audience. In what follows I will introduce the outcomes of an exploratory study conducted in Italy between 2012 and 2014, immediately after the introduction of digital television channels in the country, with the aim of collecting qualitative data on television watching practices by general television viewers. The research revolves around changes in attitudes and tastes following the digital switchover, especially regarding the Italians' relation to television factual programmes and televised cookery. The ultimate objective of this research is to monitor emerging trends in viewership and to verify if the fruition of cookery programmes is actually increasing or decreasing, and whether this has an influence on the audience's relationship to food and cookery. The exploratory research also focuses on changes in audience preferences in terms of translation modes, since there has been a sharp increase in the amount of translated products broadcast owing to satellite and digital channels.

In order to thoroughly explore these aspects, previously only touched upon in the literature and never examined in depth for the Italian situation, a significant part of this study has been devoted to finalizing the research tools, before any actual field work could be carried out.

5. Methodology

The exploratory study reported in this paper was conducted between summer 2012, after most of the Italian regions had switched to DTT, and early summer 2014, two years after the digital switchover. The aim was not only to test different data-gathering methods, in order to verify which one was the most appropriate to conduct more extensive and systematic field work, but also to study those micro-factors of TV viewers that Schroeder (1994) and Clarke (2000) were hinting at (see section 3.2).

The research project presented here was designed to include a heterogeneous group of informants: general Italian TV viewers, both subscribers and non-subscribers to Satellite TV and Pay TV; from different geographical areas in Italy (northern, central and southern regions); from various age groups; and of mixed educational and social backgrounds. However, informants of the exploratory study (both respondents of the in-depth interviews, focus groups and questionnaires conducted in 2012 and respondents of the questionnaires distributed in 2014) were also acquaintances of the researcher, who was aware of the informants' household organization and could thus retrieve further personal information, if needed, in order to contextualize their responses. In the first stage of the exploratory study, conducted in 2012, data was elicited through two focus groups by means of a semi-structured template of questions, which were in turn verbalized on the basis of preliminary individual interviews carried out with representatives of different genders and age groups who volunteered to take part in the experiment. Soon after the conclusion of the in depth-interviews, two focus groups were carried out with fourteen informants. Individual interviews were conducted in the informants' homes, while focus groups were conducted in the informants' classroom, in one case, and in the researcher's home, in the other case. The researcher conducted, audio-recorded and transcribed both the individual interviews and the focus groups. All interviewees and focus group participants were also asked to fill out a short questionnaire, aimed at gathering personal details and testing a draft version of a survey tool on television viewing practices and translation mode preferences.

The interview protocol that was used for individual interviews, focus groups and draft questionnaires entailed an introductory section, gathering socio-demographic information about respondents, a section with general questions on television viewing habits prior to and after the introduction of DTT in the respondents' region of residence, followed by a short section focused on factual programmes and cookery shows.

The second stage of the exploratory study, carried out in 2014, was devoted to the construction of a more extensive and thorough research tool to elicit information on the respondents' TV viewing habits after the introduction of DTT, with a particular focus on cookery shows. This revised questionnaire contained a set of 10 questions for gathering personal and household information, followed by 42 questions, divided into 3 sections, that collected data on: A) preferred modes and supports for television fruition; B) changes in programme choice following the availability of DTT channels C) differences as regards TV cookery consumption and preferred translation modes after the digital switchover. This purpose built questionnaire was tested and circulated in early 2014 via e-mail contacts. Fifteen of the fifty-five questionnaires that were sent out were actually completed and made available to the researcher for analysis.

Based on this testing, minor revisions were made and a few extra questions were added to complete the questionnaire, which is now ready to be converted into on-line format and circulated via food-related TV websites or social networks, to reach larger numbers of TV viewers with a special interest on food and cookery programmes, however

this further development of the study is beyond the scope and purpose of this article and will not be covered here.

6. Discussion of Results

This section provides an overview of the results of the study of four in-depth individual interviews, two focus groups with seven people each, eighteen draft questionnaires collected from the four interviewees and fourteen focus group respondents, in addition to fifteen in-depth questionnaires circulated via e-mail.[5] This investigation was carried out with mixed samples of TV viewers from different educational, social and geographical backgrounds. Overall, informants can be grouped into five age groups: eight young adults in the age range of 20 to 30, sixteen adults aging from 30 to 40, six middle-aged adults between 40 and 50 years old, two people between 50 and 65 years of age and one elderly person over 70 years old, for a total of thirty-three people: twenty-three females and ten males.[6]

Admittedly, the different sampling methods implied potentially different levels of involvement and cooperation on the part of the subjects. Moreover, differences in research tools adopted determined that some of the data was difficult, if not impossible to compare. However, respondents were asked to express their feelings and opinions on practically the same subjects throughout the whole study and across different research methods. In addition, many questions occurred both in the draft questionnaire filled out by individual interviewees and focus group respondents at the end of each interview, and in the final in-depth questionnaire circulated via e-mail. What we will therefore discuss in the following paragraphs is a selection of information items that were significantly persistent throughout the different phases of the exploratory survey and across the research methods used to obtain them. Even though our sample of informants is clearly too small and too heterogeneous to provide significant quantitative results, and although the interview and focus group questions were mainly open-ended and formulated to gather qualitative data, it may be hypothesized that some of the recurring trends that emerged from our investigation could be confirmed through further and more systematic testing, with larger numbers of respondents via the finalized in-depth questionnaire.

What follows is a more detailed description of the qualitative results derived from the four tools used for the exploratory research (namely individual, in-depth interviews; focus groups; draft questionnaires and in-depth questionnaires) with regards to the informants' preferences in terms of TV channels, programmes and translation modes, particularly as far as cookery shows are concerned.

6.1 Free time matters … particularly for some age groups

The "free time" factor seemed crucial for two of the age groups involved in the exploratory study. One of the recurrent refrains, consistently emerging from both in-depth interviews and focus groups, also largely confirmed by questionnaire results of respondents between 30 and 40 and from 40 to 50 years of age (very predictably), was a general lack of time to devote to watching television in a traditional way, due to long working hours, family duties and spare time devoted to sport and hobbies. This time factor seemed to have two important consequences: on the one hand, respondents tended to resort to web resources to enjoy TV programmes (streaming, video on demand, internet download), and on the other hand, they tended to prefer pay TV and new digital terrestrial channels which offer around-the-clock programming. Similar reasons lay behind the preferred options of recording TV programmes, or purchasing DVD boxes containing all the episodes of respondents' favourite TV series, to be enjoyed with friends or family over the weekend, or otherwise in their free time. One more reason that was mentioned for preferring TV via streaming or through DVD was the absence of commercial interruptions.

Picking from a provided list of self-descriptions, ranging from 'non TV consumer' to 'compulsive consumer,' the vast majority of respondents between 30 and 50 years of age (sixteen out of twenty-two) defined themselves as 'occasional TV consumers,' independently of the stated number of hours watched.[7] Four defined themselves as 'non consumers' (two of them decided not to buy a DDT TV or decoder for ideological reasons), while just three described themselves as 'habitual TV consumers.'[8]

As for the age group of 20 to 30 years old, most of them (six out of eight) defined themselves as 'habitual TV consumers.' One informant described herself as an 'occasional consumer,'[9] and one defined herself as 'non consumer,' but then admitted watching programmes downloaded from the internet in their original language both with or without subtitles. It is worth mentioning though, that the younger age group was mainly made up of media experts, attending a specialization course on audiovisual translation (seven out of eight) who were therefore particularly interested in TV at the time the survey was conducted. As for the other two age groups (50-65 and over 70), the number of respondents is too low to allow for any generalizations, but the three female respondents defined themselves as "usual consumers". One of the respondents from the 20 to 30 age group mentioned that he preferred watching television via streaming directly on the channel website because he could choose the most suitable time schedule; besides he could decide to watch more than one episode of his favourite TV series, if he wished to do so. TV channels on websites were also perceived as a useful repository of episodes that were missed when shown on TV.

Age also influenced the choice of technological support for watching TV programmes. Younger respondents were more likely to watch TV online via streaming, or products downloaded to their mobile phones, tablets and laptops, while informants aged between 40 and 75 tended to watch TV either on their television set, or via their home computer.

6.2 More freedom of choice or more indecision?

Generally speaking, our respondents, who were predominantly aged between 20 and 50, showed no particular preference regarding the choice of the platform or support for TV fruition, but they were more conservative when it came to their choice of preferred channels and programmes. After the first stage of the survey was concluded (in 2012), we assumed that acclimatization with a broader range of digital programmes would require more time. Nevertheless, in-depth questionnaires collected in 2014 confirmed that the general trend among viewers was still one of very little variation in their viewing habits after the the introduction of DTT, which was quite unexpected. The first interviews and focus groups were conducted soon after the new DTT channels were launched in Italy. At the

time, one third of the respondents stated they had not yet familiarized themselves with the new channels and programmes (six out of eighteen), and one had stopped watching TV after the introduction of DTT channels. Those who did familiarize themselves with at least some of the channels, tended to continue watching either the same channels they watched before, or the pay TV channels to which they subscribed (seven out of eighteen). Only four informants admitted that the way they watched TV had changed positively after the introduction of DTT. Still, in-depth questionnaires circulated two years later showed that one third of respondents had not become acquainted with the new channels and programmes (four out of fifteen); one had stopped watching TV after the digital switchover, and those who did familiarize themselves with the new channels (ten out of fifteen), also tended to follow the same channels and programmes as before. Four respondents had started watching a couple of DTT channels alongside previously watched analogue ones; four informants said they watched equal percentages of new channels and old ones, while just two showed strong enthusiasm for the new channels. One of these admitted watching more TV since the DTT channels had been introduced, while the other stated that he simply watched television differently and in a more satisfying way.

The contrasting preferences expressed by respondents in individual interviews, focus groups and questionnaires concerning the new channels have convinced us that correctly interpreting viewers' opposite reactions towards DTT programming is not an easy task for the researcher and deserves further reflection. The different attitudes may well be dependent on individual inclinations and household characteristics and may simply prove that audience fragmentation is extreme, as we mentioned in the introductory sections, and as will be illustrated in the following examples.

On the one hand, a 39-year-old engineer, living on his own, admitted that since the introduction of the DTT channels his traditional TV watching had significantly decreased because he considered there were too many programmes, so that he could not simply zap from one to the other to select which programme he was going to watch that evening, as he used to do before. This apparently discouraged him from watching television and often he simply turned the television off. Also a 36-year-old university researcher living on her own said that paradoxically she was watching less TV, now that the choice had increased, but could not say why. On the other hand, a 38-year-old yoga trainer and naturopath, sharing an apartment with her elderly grandmother at the time the survey was conducted, expressed her enthusiasm for the new DTT channels. She reported that before the digital switchover, she had stopped watching TV because she found the programmes uninteresting, while she was very fond of the new DTT factual and specialty channels and she regularly followed do-it-yourself and creativity programmes, as well as cookery shows and reality programmes. One questionnaire respondent, a 32-year-old shop assistant living with her elderly mother, stated that since the digital channels were introduced she watched more TV, because DTT programming was more in line with her interests. Among the favourite new programmes she mentioned there were cookery shows and infotainment programmes. Another questionnaire respondent, a 41- year-old full-time translator in a two-children household stated that her traditional viewing habits had only slightly changed since the introduction of DTT channels. She explained that she turned on the TV when she was doing housework or cooking, as TV provided a comfortable background noise. She surfed the channels to find something that could do for the purpose and often ended up on one of the digital channels. She often chose programmes she had never watched before the digital switchover, like the Italian cookery show *Cuochi e Fiamme* or the reality programme on real estate sales *Vendite impossibili*, both broadcast on DTT factual thematic channels. In response to another question, she commented that cartoon channels were sometimes useful to alleviate the burden of childcare. A 36-year-old purchasing manager, living in a two-people household, reported liking new DTT thematic channels such as Real Time and DMAX very much, considering them both very entertaining and to some extent more interesting than general channels.

To sum up, the overall reaction towards new digital television channels and programmes seemed to be rather weak both immediately after the introduction of DTT and two years later, as if the vast majority of our respondents were somehow indifferent to these new viewing options. Yet, those viewers who had a strong opinion on DTT channels, displayed extremely fragmented attitudes. Some of the respondents were enthusiastic about the broader choice of channels and programmes, whereas other viewers were very sceptical, and some even stopped watching TV due to the perplexity caused precisely by the wider range of options. Though these findings must be considered exploratory, they do suggest that further research is warranted to explore why these contrasting trends co-exist to an almost identical extent. The motivations behind individual preferences, as well as the interplay between relational and household organizational issues and more systemic or even political issues, particularly characteristic of Italy and its anomalous duopolistic television system (see Matteucci 2010)[10], also bear further investigation.

6.3 Thematic channels and different translation modes

The most striking innovation introduced by digital television in Italian TV programming is the overwhelming presence of specialty channels. These are mainly Italian but pan-regional, transnational and cross-border thematic channels in a foreign language are also on offer at no extra cost. Before the digital switchover, thematic channels were mainly prerogative of satellite and pay TV subscribers. This fact, we are convinced, has important consequences on the exposure of Italian audiences to foreign programmes and to a broader variety of translation modes. Before digital TV, foreign programmes on national TV were practically all dubbed. In order to watch either subtitled, voiced-over or original language foreign programmes, Italian viewers had to either resort to satellite platforms, streamed TV, or to watch DVDs or otherwise download their favourite series in the original language from the internet. These options are still available to the Italian viewer with a special interest in foreign languages, but DTT's broader range of foreign factual programmes and reality TV with a lower budget for translation than TV series and films, has exposed the general audience to other translation modalities than dubbing. Digital TV has potentially increased the opportunity for Italian viewers to be exposed to larger quantities of foreign programmes and to become familiar with different translation modes and to a certain extent, languages. Besides, some DTT decoders used in Italian households, have a "language" option, through which viewers can decide to watch a programme either in the original language with no translation or in the translated version.

Some of the thematic DTT channels that were mentioned by our respondents as their favourite clearly include non-

dubbed foreign programming such as *Real Time* or *DMax*, *Cartoon Network*, *Cielo*, *Alice*, *France 24*. Other channels that were mentioned either broadcast exclusively Italian products or offer dubbed foreign programmes (*La7d*, *La5*, *Rai4*, *Rai5*, *Rai Premium*, *Rai Movie*, *Rai Storia*, *Rai Sport*, *Rainews 24*, *IRIS* etc.) Factual programmes have a lower budget at their disposal for screen translation than fictional products. They are mainly voiced-over, but the latest trend in the translation of factual programmes for Italian TV is the so-called "similisync", a translation mode which is very similar to dubbing, but has no lyp-sinc (Rampazzo 2013). When asked to indicate their preferred translation mode for their favourite foreign programmes, our respondents were quite clear: either they preferred dubbing (ten respondents out of thirty), especially for fictional products (TV series and films), or they preferred to watch TV programmes in original language with subtitles (ten out of thirty). Five people preferred to watch programmes in their original language without subtitles, four respondents declared that they would like to be given the possibility to choose between translation modes. Only one respondent preferred to have all programmes translated in "similsync" mode; a result that is strikingly in contrast with the translation industry's trend to provide increasing volumes of programmes with this translation mode.

6.4 TV Cookery channels and programmes

Despite the fact that Italians are among the world's most renowned food gurus, a large part of the TV cookery programmes available to Italian viewers are imported from British and American TV, and are therefore broadcast as translated versions. Many different translation modes have been tried out for TV cookery shows so far. SKY *Gambero Rosso* satellite channel first broadcast series in their original language with Italian subtitles, but this mode was then supplanted by voice-over. As for DTT channels such as *Real Time*, *Alice* or *Cielo*, cookery shows are aired with "similsync," a translation mode which is generally disapproved of by many dubbing artists (Rampazzo 2013).

Cookery shows were rarely mentioned by our respondents (only seven out of thirty-three) as their favourite TV genres, favourite thematic channels, or favourite TV programmes, yet they were frequently listed under new programmes that the informants had started watching after the arrival of digital TV channels (fourteen out of thirty-three respondents). The culinary programmes they mentioned for example, were both Italian and British or American: *Hell's Kitchen*, *Master Chef*, *Cuochi e Fiamme*, *Giorgione Orto e Cucina*, *I Menù di Benedetta*, *Cucina con Ale*, *Jamie Oliver Food's Revolution*, *Cake Boss*.

As for the preferred translation mode for cookery programmes, eight respondents expressed no clear preference while the rest of the respondents almost unanimously dismissed the "similsync" translation option. Just two informants out of thirty-three selected "similsync" as the most suitable translation mode for cookery programmes, while the translation option preferred by twenty-three respondents ranged from dubbed (six respondents), to original language without subtitles (five respondents), original language with subtitles (four respondents), voice-over (four respondents), depending on their competence in English and other foreign languages. One respondent commented that he would prefer subtitles to be in the language of the original rather than in Italian, and one respondent commented that "similsync" sounds fake, whereas voice-over accounts for the authenticity of the product as the original language and voices are audible in the background.

Questionnaires distributed in early 2014 included a set of questions aimed at collecting specific information on the audience's active engagement with cooking in relation to TV cookery programmes. This section was not included in the previous survey tools, so we can only report the answers of fifteen respondents, of whom no more than eleven actually watched TV cookery programmes. Almost equal numbers of respondents watched these shows because they found them either relaxing, or entertaining, or because they wanted to improve their cooking skills. Just one respondent mentioned that he actually watched them because he wanted to learn how to cook. More than half of the respondents sometimes took notes while watching TV cookery programmes, and an equal percentage had tried at least once a recipe seen on TV. Almost all of the eleven respondents admitted being sometimes inspired by TV for their cooking or for food aesthetic composition, food arrangement on the plate, or on the table, while three of the respondents had actually bought a book by a favourite TV chef. One respondent stated that he only tried out recipes that he read in traditional cookery books such as Artusi's compendium of Italian cuisine. Three female respondents mentioned women's magazines or specialized cookery magazines as their source of inspiration, but all the respondents stated that they consulted new recipes on the internet, either from their favourite TV chef's website, or from food blogs, or other websites. In fact, internet was second only to the word of mouth and pass-it-on modality for the acquisition of new recipes. All but two of the respondents said they had a personal or family recipe book that they regularly used and updated, and a male respondent stated he had an electronic one where he collected both his own family recipes and recipes that he downloaded from the internet. He also added pictures of the dishes he prepared each time he tried out a new recipe. Three of our respondents also followed and commented their favourite TV chefs on their websites, discussed recipes on web forums, published pictures of their culinary efforts on social networks.

Our findings show that there is an undeniable correlation between viewing TV cookery and actual cooking, but there seems to be an even stronger relation between watching these TV programmes and buying TV chef books, surfing TV chefs' websites and active participation in food blogs and forums. While TV cookery programmes seem to be chosen mostly for their entertainment and relaxation value, when actively cooking, TV viewers seem to resort to the internet or to printed manuals to improve their cooking skills or to get inspiration for new recipes. TV cookery seems to be a very influential TV genre, although it targets small groups of viewers. Yet, the influence TV cookery exerts is not on the way people cook but on the way people become more interested in food.

7. Conclusions

This paper has outlined the results of an exploratory study which gathered detailed information on the changes which have taken place in Italian TV audiences, both in terms of their tastes and preferences and in terms of media interactivity, after the introduction of Digital Terrestrial Television in Italy, in 2012. The survey was conducted with different purpose-built research tools: namely individual interviews, focus groups and questionnaires. It was carried out in two phases, the first part of the research was conducted in 2012 and the second part took place in

2014. A total of 33 respondents were approached individually and asked whether they would be willing to participate in an exploratory study where they would be asked to report on their TV watching habits prior to and after the switchover to digital TV in Italy. Despite an admittedly small and heterogeneous sample of respondents, this paper draws on the theoretical premises of both reception and perception studies, and summarizes the most relevant results of the investigation in terms of channel and programme preferences, new trends in TV viewing habits and awareness of product availability, both as regards programmes and translation options, as both aspects clearly emerged from the survey. The paper basically confirms that Italian audiences are undergoing a slow transformation process that is determined not only by the introduction of Digital Terrestrial Television, but more generally by the availability of a broader range of satellite and cable channels, as well as a combination of technological advances and other factors that have influenced the general fruition of media and the way audiences access TV. The age of the respondents seems to be one of the most relevant factors in determining the time spent watching TV in the traditional way. The 30 to 50 age group of our sample was more likely to watch TV only occasionally and in a non conventional manner, preferring streaming, on demand and DVD options or DTT and satellite channels to traditional television watching, all of which allow greater flexibility when compared to normal programming. The reactions of our respondents to the availability of new channels and to the overwhelming presence of factual programmes were very mixed. The availability of a broader choice was generally perceived as positive by our respondents. Yet, a few informants found the new offer puzzling and a deterrent to actual television viewing. Theoretically, almost everybody was happy with this larger freedom of choice and the availability of thematic channels for specific interests, but when it came to the concrete choice of channels and programmes after the digital switchover, most of our respondents admitted they tended to watch just a couple of new channels besides the old analogue ones. More data is required before any generalization can be attempted on this subject. Our analysis reveals that this reluctance cannot simply be justified as resistance to innovation; it may be dependent on the fact that such a change requires acclimatization and that 2 years may not be a suitable time span to monitor such changes; or it could be for more profound reasons that, we are convinced, are worth investigating further with a larger numbers of respondents.

As for cookery programmes, although they were rarely mentioned as favourite shows or genres by the respondents of this study, they were often referred to as new entries, especially in connection with foreign programming that was unavailable before DTT television. Our small sample seemed to watch TV cookery shows for leisure and entertainment rather than to improve cooking skills or to learn how to cook. Yet, most of the respondents admitted having taken notes while watching TV cookery programmes and acknowledged having tried out some of the TV chefs' recipes, either based solely on television notes or after looking up the recipe on the programme website or in TV chefs' cookbooks. TV cookery programmes are more often a source of inspiration for food presentation, than for cooking. While the Internet seems to be the natural repository for new recipes, word of mouth among friends and relatives is still the most popular way for recipes to pass from one kitchen to another, at least among our respondents, some of whom also had a personal cookery notebook or collection of recipes. A small number of respondents seem also to be active in a "prosumer" perspective, as they post their culinary efforts on social networks, participate in food forum discussions and follow food blogs. The findings of this exploratory study suggest that future research, aimed at investigating the link between individual, social and educational characteristics of TV viewers and their behaviour and preferences is warranted. It basically confirms that more extensive field research, combining micro factors (individual, relational, educational) with macro factors (social environmental, economical, political, technological, etc.) is required to understand new trends in Italian TV consumption in the digital television age, as regards specifically foreign programming and translation mode preferences.

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Notes

[1] TeleAlto Veneto, Canale 68, Telerama, Teleriviera are just a few examples of autonomous regional channels that were activated in the 80s in Italy, while in Spain La 1 and La 2 were the only allowed television channels until 1982, when **Euskal Telebista** was launched in the **Basque Country** and **TV3** was started in **Catalonia** the following year. **Antena 3**, **Telecinco** and **Canal+** were inaugurated in 1990, ending the monopoly of Spanish public television.

[2] BBC Prime was launched in January 1995 as a general entertainment TV channel in Europe and the Middle East; while ARTE a Franco-German TV network was started in 1994.

[3] See. BBC News 2008 "Delia's flour power" 25 November, 1998. <http://www.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/entertainment/221711.stm.> Accessed on 12 June 2014.

[4] The survey was conducted by the *Food Uncut Show* on *UK TV Food* among 2893 people and results were published on-line in the *Independent* in February 2006. See Philips, Lucy. "Celebrity chefs fail to spark adventure." The *Independent*. 13 February, 2006: < **http://www.independent.co.uk/life-style/food-and-drink/news/celebrity-chefs-fail-to-spark-adventure-525795.html>** Accessed on June 12, 2014.

[5] All interviewees and focus group respondents were personally contacted by the researcher and they were asked if they wished to take part in the survey. The in- depth-questionnaires were bulk sent via e-mail to fifty-five of the researcher's e-mail contacts who were invited to participate in the survey, again on a voluntary basis.

[6] Details of the individual interview respondents were as follows: a 39-year-old male engineer; a 38-year-old female yoga trainer and naturopath; a 55-year-old female researcher, a 61-year-old female housewife. The first focus group involved seven humanities graduates, aged between 22 and 25, attending a post-graduate course in screen translation, with special interest in media and translation studies. The second focus group purposefully targeted a more general and heterogeneous group of respondents, involving seven people aged between 33 and 41, holding a secondary school diploma, a degree or a PhD. They were a mix of blue and white collar workers plus a university lecturer. The fifteen in depth-questionnaire respondents were aged between 27 and 74, of mixed demographic and social background. The geographical origin of all respondents was also mixed, with informants coming from different towns of southern, northern and central regions of Italy.

[7] The information on the number of hours of TV watching was the object of a separate question, which also made clear that the amount of hours of TV watching included both traditional and non traditional viewing modes.

[8] Details of those who described themselves as 'usual TV consumers' were as follows: a PhD student who watched TV 28 hours per week, a part-time teacher who watched TV 24 hours per week, and an administrative employee with 30 hours of TV watching per week.

[9] This respondent stated that the average amount of hours per week she spent in front of the TV was 6.

[10] Matteucci argues that the troublesome and long lasting switch over to DTT in Italy, a process that started in 2008 and was concluded in 2012, may have been an intentional, profit-oriented strategy to the benefit of cable pay per view televisions and that were supposed to make up for DTT technical, reception, and programming shortcomings in the meantime.