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**Past, Present, and Future of Food Programmes
in Public Service Television**

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This paper was completed before The Great British Bake-Off was acquired by Channel 4. The comments in the final section about its role on BBC1 now therefore have a historic relevance only: but in developing a successor, the BBC will no doubt draw on the success factors that I have sought to elucidate in this paper.

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Chapter 1. Introduction

In April 2015, the renowned French chef and presenter Anthony Bourdain came to Seoul for his CNN food/travel programme *Parts Unknown*. In this episode on Korean cuisine and culture, the Peabody-awarded TV celebrity with culinary backgrounds in *haute cuisine* was shown slicing up Spam and cheap frankfurters in front of a live-streaming webcam. Slurping up strands of instant ramen noodle to the thousands of online viewers he had entered into the arena of binge-eating Internet Broadcast Jockeys. Welcome to the world of *Mukbang*, the latest trend in television, or as we broadcasters in Korea would prefer to call it, food porn at its lowest.

The South Korean content market is currently in love with all kinds of food related programmes. Chefs, who previously would have been called cooks on television, are now the hottest celebrities to be invited to take part in newly launched TV shows. And the programmes don't even necessarily have anything to do with food. For a country that used to have only Kimchi to boast about, it is surprising that now you can hear the word "truffle" on television as if it is an everyday ingredient. Despite the economic hardship that is destroying the middle class, everybody seems to be enjoying all kinds of world cuisines and exotic dishes thanks to the surplus of food programmes.

What is unique about the emergence of Korean food programmes is that it was not television but the Internet that started the craze. It was the rise of *Mukbang*, a very original Korean phenomenon which is an acronym made up of two words, "To Eat (*MUK-da*)" and "Broadcast Programme (*BANG-song*)", literally translated as "Eating Broadcast". The term first appeared around 2009 when referring to the live-streamings of people binge-eating on the web.¹ South Korea being one of the best web-connected nations in the world, this crazy yet weirdly-entertaining online content became a major part of the niche web-TV market.

By 2013, the interest had arrived on traditional TV when one reality TV programme won a huge audience with its eating sequence. The adorable child participant who was eating a mix of two different brands of instant ramen hiked up the sales of the products by 30%.² All the media outlets started calling this phenomenon *Mukbang*. Soon the Internet jargon became a regular media term referring to any video content that featured an eating sequence, preferably with the effect of making people either hungry or grossed out.

By contrast, food programmes in the UK have flourished on television, a trend led by the public service broadcasters. *MasterChef* started on the BBC, as did the biggest success of all, *Great British Bake Off*. Food has always been an essential part of television programming. All the public television services have their own army of celebrity chefs teaching the public how to cook and travelling around the world presenting cuisines. The BBC not only has the cookery shows but also has two BBC food magazines that have been successfully running for more than 25 years. And now the programmes, websites, books and magazines have been successfully integrated into each other digitally, making the information more easily accessible to the public.

¹ Kim, Hye-jin (2015), A Study on Food Porn as a Sub-Culture – Centering on Internet ‘Meokbang’(eating scene) in Afreeca TV, *Humanities Research*, Vol. 50, p 437

² Baek, Juhee (2013, 27 Feb), Is it really that good? : Two instant noodles sales shot up 30%, *The Dong-A Ilbo*, Retrieved from <http://news.donga.com/3/all/20130227/53334668/1>

Another UK public service television channel has a different style of food programming. Channel 4, with their array of ex-BBC chefs, has developed food programmes as a way of campaigning for better food policies. Celebrity chefs became not only TV personalities but an influence on public policy. Jamie Oliver has not only changed the school food but now is savouring another triumph with the introduction of UK sugar tax. Food programming that has the intention of bringing public health to the fore seems to be Ch4's strategy to differentiate itself from BBC. And this also seems to be what public television may legitimately be expected to do.³

However Korean public service television was somewhat left out or too slow to adopt this trend on food programming. KBS, the main public broadcaster of South Korea, mostly focused on the cultural and educational programmes when it comes to food. As stated in the Korean Broadcasting System Law article 1, KBS must "establish a fair and sound broadcasting culture." Thus making non-controversial, non-vulgar programmes have been an integral part of KBS. As a result, most food related programmes were documentaries or consumer advocacy magazine shows. The "orthodox" approach towards food programmes at KBS kept it uninfluential in representing the ever-changing taste palates of the audience.

As a TV producer and an avid epicurean, I have been perplexed by the lack of entertainment factors in the food contents made in KBS. There were some attempts but most of them failed due to lack of commercial competitiveness. So what would be the right approach towards food programmes for a public service broadcaster? Should food be only considered TV material for entertainment and education? Is there a way to add both entertainment and journalistic values to food contents? And how can public broadcaster face the new challenges from the Internet and mobile competitors?

These are the questions this paper aims to address. To answer them, the first chapter deals with where food programmes are positioned in the commissioning and scheduling of television programmes at public service broadcasters. 30 years of TV schedules at BBC and KBS have been analysed in order to find the trend of commissioning food programmes during these years. The growing number of food programmes can be verified by these statistics. Moreover, it is possible to see how food programmes that first dealt with only recipes evolve over time into a more complex formats with lots of entertainment approaches blended in. Although slightly different in the years and styles, both BBC and KBS show how food programmes first start out with cookery, then move on to become celebrity based cookery shows, eventually turning into formats with reality elements, evolving into an essential part of public televisions' brand.

The following chapter looks at the factors that have driven the changing trends of food programmes, looking particularly at *The Great British Bakeoff* and *Korean Table*, signature programmes of BBC and KBS, and discussing what the public domain has been trying to accomplish and also been missing out .

³ Caraher, Martin (2000), The Influence of TV and Celebrity Chefs on Public Attitudes and Behavior Among the English Public, *Journal for the Study of Food and Society*, 4:1, p. 27

In the final chapter, this paper draws conclusions from the comprehensive analysis of the programmes and the strategy behind them, placing them in the context of the new challenges public service broadcasters face.

Chapter 2. Overview: Food programmes on public television past.

Have food programmes really become so prevalent on public television? In September 2014, BBC's *Points Of View* showed a viewer's complaint about the 21 hours of cookery broadcast on its channels the previous week. This prompted the *Daily Mail* to do their own count, finding 434.5 hours of food programming a week on all the channels aired in the UK⁴. Sir David Attenborough, who was the controller for BBC2 in the 1960's, is known to have repeatedly criticized the growing number of cookery shows on TV. Yet whether food programmes have actually grown in number a certain period of time has never been statistically proven before.

To find out, it would be rational to look at the data from the relevant media authorities. But neither the Ofcom (UK) nor the Korean Communications Commission categorizes food contents as a genre. They have been classified as education, factual, entertainment, or reality by the tone of individual programmes, and neither BBC and KBS made any meaningful report solely dedicated to the issue of food programming in the round.

In Korea, Kim, A. (2014) is the only study that has done a quantitative research on the chronological changes of food programmes. She looked at the social and cultural backgrounds for the commissioning of cookeries and food programming formats from 1981 to 2014,. Her main findings are that over the years the viewers of such content have moved from "housewives" to "consumers"; that the "food" itself has changed, from "home-cooking" to "dining-out"; and that value of "nutrition" changed to the "act of eating" itself.⁵

Accordingly, she divided the 33 years of her study into three periods: 1) the "classical" food programmes period (1981~1999), 2) the "gourmet" and well-being programme period (2000~2008); and 3) the Korean food and variety show period (2009~2014). The classification is quite persuasive, but the actual quantitative data behind the study was not presented. Rather she focuses on specific iconic programmes that support the classification of periods, which makes the study more qualitative than quantitative.

In order to find whether the premise of the argument that food programmes have actually increased in numbers is correct or not, a thorough research of the TV schedules for BBC and KBS over a period of 30 years was done. Beginning from 1985 to 2015, TV schedule for every first week of October was picked as a sample for BBC1 and BBC2.⁶ This was because a new television season normally starts in October, which gives a good indication of the commissioning emphasis of the broadcasting organization of that year. As Friday is when the weekend starts, the sample week started from Friday to Thursday.

⁴ Prince, R. (2014, September 27), How we're fed 434 hours of TV cookery a week – but the more they show, the less we cook..., *Daily Mail*, Retrieved from <http://dailymail.co.uk>

⁵ Kim, Ah-Young (2014), *The Changes of Korean Television Food Program and Society: Focusing on the Korean Food Program from 1981 to present* (MA thesis, Sogang University), Retrieved from <http://www.riss.kr/link?id=T13410643>

⁶ TV listings for BBC from 1985 to 2009 are available on <http://genome.ch.bbc.co.uk>, and from 2010 to present is available on <http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes>.

The new fall season of Korea also starts in rather similar time period. So from 1985 to 1999 every first week of October was picked as a sample for KBS1 and KBS2⁷. From 2000 to 2015, the official KBS basic fall season TV schedule was readily available for reference.

With the findings from the quantitative data, we look at the evidence of increase in the number of food programmes. And by interpreting the data, the 30 years of public television programming of food contents are classified in the following table.

1. 30 Years of Korea Broadcasting System food programming

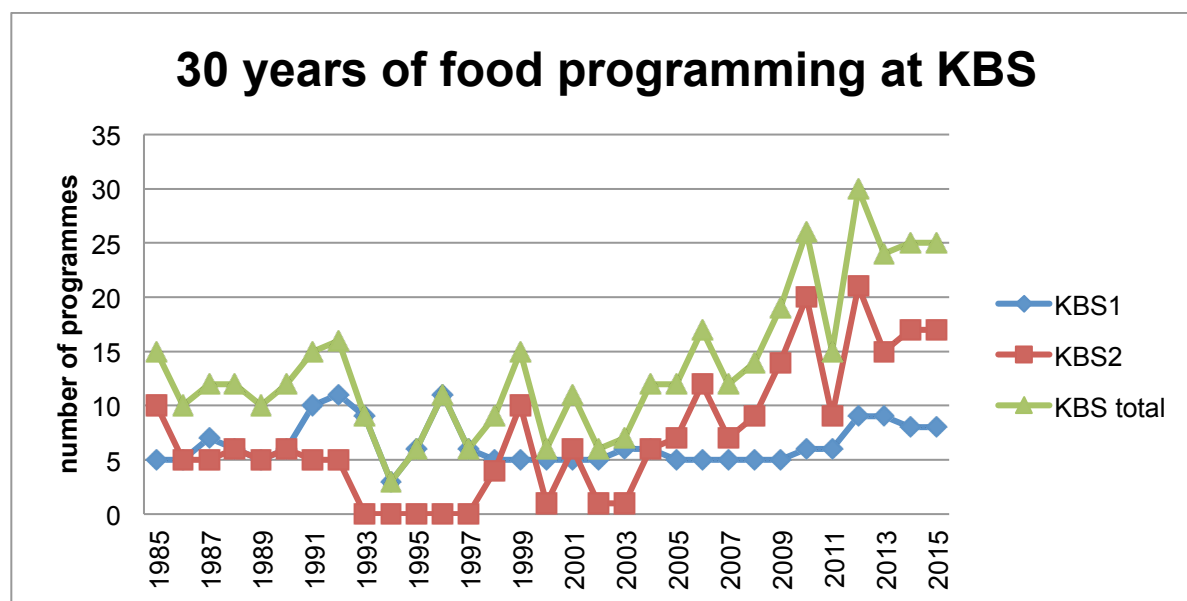


Figure 1 Number of KBS food programmes aired on the first week of October

(1) Period of “cooking” programmes (1985 ~ 1992)

The 80’s was when popular culture in Korea flourished. Colour TV was introduced to the people in August of 1980, and soon it became the dominating disruptive platform. Much like mobile platforms today, it needed lots of new content, in colour, to be created; and cooking shows, which take little budget but make up lots of air time, started to appear.

According to Kim, A. (2014), there had been cookery programmes in the 60’s and 70’s Korea. But they were more of an education programme, and even stopped airing from 1973 when the Korean government banned the morning television broadcast in order to save energy during the oil crisis. It was only 1981 when morning television was revived that traditional cookery returned to the schedules.⁸

⁷ <http://newslibrary.naver.com> provides scanned files of past Korean newspapers up until 1999.

⁸ Kim, Ah-Young (2014), *op. cit.*, pp. 16~17

In the 1980s most of the KBS cookery programmes were morning dailies. KBS1, which is the channel that airs more of the informative and cultural contents, aired *Home Cooking*. This was a cookery education programme which aired weekdays starting from 9:25 a.m. KBS2, which has more of an entertainment strategy, aired a food & travel show called *Taste and Flavour Showoff* also on weekdays. From 1985 to 1988 the programme's transmission time moved between 7 and 9 in the morning. The former was a show aimed at housewives after all the family members had gone to either school or work, while it can be said that the latter was for the whole family to watch while preparing for the day.

One of the characteristics of *Home Cooking* was that the food introduced was not every day Korean food. Although most were traditional Korean food that required lots of preparation, the programmes moved on to introduce Western or fusion dishes, such as hamburger, spaghetti, meatloaf and such-like which were not only unheard of, but also with ingredients that were difficult to buy. Television was truly playing a part in educating the viewers on getting new information about food and cooking.⁹

This trend can be also found in *Cooking is Joyful*, a new evening cookery show that was shown on KBS2 from 1989 to 1992. Importantly, this show combined the use of celebrities with cooking. Two professionals, one a cook and the other an entertainer, would make a dish together while also having a bit of talk show element during the process. The fact that it aired at 6 p.m. shows that it was not made just for housewives but also for the other family members as their target in mind. A possibility for a format cookery show had opened up in this period of cookery.

(2) Period of food & travel programmes (1993~1997)

This period starts with the end of cookery. By 1993, the new format cookery show *Cooking is Joyful* was no longer in the TV schedule, and the educational morning cookery, *Home Cooking*, on KBS1 was replaced by *Follow the Taste, Follow the Road*, a food & travel programme. This was a revival programme of the similar named *Taste and Flavour Showoff*, which used to air on KBS2 from 1985 to 1988. The two cookery programmes on both KBS1 and KBS2 had been replaced with a single food & travel programme.

One of the most notable programme of this period is *6 O'clock Hometown*. It started airing on KBS1 from 1991 and is still running today. It is basically an agricultural magazine show that comprises of studio and video segments. The 'hometown' in the title implies the countryside of Korea. Although most of the population is living in the metropolitan areas, many older viewers feel connected to their Korean identity by the programme.

The characteristic of this programme was that because of its agricultural aspect, it always introduced a certain kind of food grown or caught in the country. The basic construction of its video segments was a presenter exploring the landscape of the countryside, mingling with the country folks, participating in farming (or fishery), then eating the food made out of the produce. This became one of the most familiar and overused structures of Korean food & travel programmes.

⁹ Kim, Ah-Young (2014), *Ibid*, p. 18

While *6 O'clock Hometown* was a huge success for KBS, there had also been three short attempts to revive cookery shows. In 1996, *Today's Dish*, a programme that aired on KBS1 daily at 10:50 a.m. started out like its predecessors and also ended out as such. In 1997, two new cookery programmes with celebrities were launched on KBS2: *Lee Jungsub's Cookery*, which ran for four months as a daily morning programme, and *Kang and Lee's Cook Show* for two months as a daily evenings show. They both were not counted in the statistics because they were not airing at the time of the TV schedule probed over. But what was behind these short-lived trials?

The scene in the rest of the media market was rapidly changing. SBS, the first commercial terrestrial channel in South Korea, was launched in 1994. Cable television started with an array of twenty channels in 1995. Kim, A. (2014) writes that "in the effort to eradicate banality, the appearance of hybrid genre in the early 1990's can be also seen in the cookery programmes."¹⁰ SBS made several successful variety programmes that combined cookery with entertainment. Cable television started out with many cookery programmes on its specialty channels. Even EBS, the terrestrial educational channel that was most about lifelong education, won a huge audience with a children's cookery.

KBS was therefore trying to follow the new trend in cookery programmes. But its failed celebrity cook shows seems to have been enough. In the case of food programming, it can be said that there was not much going on except for the food & travel programmes at KBS.

(3) Period of formats (1998~2003)

In this third period, the changes in the media landscape and their impact on food programming reached KBS. The huge success of cookery programmes that had flourished on other terrestrial and cable channels finally affected the commissioning strategy of the public broadcaster. In 1998, *Pipi Kitchen* was launched with its new array of celebrities and talk show elements. This new format was about one celebrity cooking for yet another celebrity.

The period of formats had reached all the three main terrestrial channels. MBC had a famous actress doing a cookery/talk show called, *Choi Hwajung's Delicious Stories*. SBS started *The Best Table*, a programme featuring cooking contest between two amateur teams. According to newspaper articles¹¹, the tight production budget control since the 1997 Asian financial crisis combined with the sustained advertising revenues from the less financially affected food industries was behind the rise of food programming. What was different from the past was that this was a sign that the educational aspect has been replaced by an emphasis on entertainment.

¹⁰ Kim, Ah-Young (2014), *Ibid*, p. 23

¹¹ Lee, M.(1998, 10 October), Revival of Cookery with entertainment and information as seasoning, *The Kyung-hyang-shin-mun*, p. 29, Retrieved from <http://newslibrary.naver.com>

Kim, K.(1999, 2 February), TV and Money: (2)Profitable Cookery, *The Dong-A Ilbo*, p. 13, Retrieved from <http://newslibrary.naver.com>

KBS, as a public broadcaster, also tried different approaches other than just entertainment. In 1998, a documentary series on the heritage of Korean food aired on KBS and also won the Grand Prize at the Korean Broadcasting Commission Awards Grand Prize. An animation series much like a cooking version of *Dragon Ball*, named *Cooking Master Boy*, aired in a children's programming slot in 1999 and became very popular. This period was when all kinds of formats were tried out in terms of food programming.

One of the most important new formats that began in this period is the "*matjib programme*", or the food & review programme. Kim A. calls this format "gourmet programming" and Kim C. calls it "renowned restaurant programme,"¹² because it is essentially focused on introducing delicious dishes from popular restaurants. It could be seen as a spinoff of the food & travel format, but without the travel. But the format would not necessarily focus on advertising one restaurant. It might also have a main theme such as "summer noodles" or "chicken" and introduce such menus from several different restaurants with the names hidden in order not to stray into direct advertising.

KBS started this trend in 2000 with a new magazine programme called *VJ Special Forces*. The latest 6mm DV camcorders were beginning to get used in broadcasting, and this created a whole new category of "video journalists". They were director and cameraman in one, light and nimble. And most importantly, VJs were very cost-effective. Thus *VJ Special Forces* was commissioned by KBS with the goal of making simple, light-hearted documentaries.

VJ Special Forces comprised of three to four short and fast paced documentaries. Although it wasn't the case when the show launched, the producers soon found that food items were the most favorable in ratings and from 2002 and on at least one of the magazine video segment became a food & review format. This became so famous that *VJ Special Forces* became somewhat a synonym of *matjib programmes*.

(4) Period of food & review programmes (2004~2011)

This is the period when food and review programmes, or *matjib programmes*, became the main format for all food programming, not just for public broadcasters but in the commercial broadcasters as well. After the huge success of *VJ Special Forces*, all the channels commissioned their own versions of VJ programmes, with their focus on food and review. It was so successful that in 2004, KBS launched a daily version VJ programme called *Infinite Zone Q*. This programme aired in the evening, just before dinner time and won huge audience with its food & review segments. Even the rerun and re-edits of the original programmes were delivering strong audiences.

After the 2002 Korea World Cup, all TV advertising revenues fell drastically. KBS is a public service broadcaster that depends on advertisements for 60% of its spending. The fall

¹² Kim, Cho Hee. (2012), *A Study on Format Changes of TV Renowned Restaurant Introducing Program: focusing on changes according to effects of documentary movie <True Flavor Show>*, (MA thesis, Yonsei University), p. 91, Retrieved from <http://www.riss.kr/link?id=T13159751>

eventually led to cuts in production costs, and such cost-saving VJ programmes became increasingly important.¹³

On the entertainment side, a health show named *Vitamin* was launched in 2003. It contained a segment on healthy eating named *Great Table*, which gained fame with its introduction to super foods. But other than several failed attempts on introducing a bit of cooking or eating on talk shows, there were no entertainment programmes that had food as their main theme.

The documentary series on the history of noodle and its relations to civilization, *Noodle Road*, which aired in 2009, gained much fame and again won the grand prize from the Korean Communication Commission Awards and also a Peabody Award. It showed the possibilities that lie in food contents for public television, which led to the launch of a weekly food culture programme in the next period.

(5) Return of formats (2011-2015)

Although the food & review programmes were still the main formats for KBS, different approaches were tried in this most recent period, principally because food programming was evolving into a genre in itself. This change came mostly from the expansion of video content both on cable television and online, which impacted the public broadcaster.

Food and review programmes became overwhelmingly overused in this period. In 2011, *Fresh Information Source*, the revamped version of the daily VJ magazine programme, *Infinite Zone Q*, doubled its air time by dividing it up into two parts. Later KBS would even launch *Fresh Information Source Plus*, which meant the programme eventually tripled its airtime. And the food & review segments were still the most popular.

But there also were backlashes. The format had become so overwhelmingly overused in the broadcasting market that in 2011, one former producer at MBC made a documentary disclosing the trade secret behind the trend. *True Taste Show*, the controversial documentary, revealed secret payoffs between the production companies and restaurants in order to get on air. It fundamentally criticized the negligence of broadcasters who traded editorial and ethical responsibility for the benefit of low production costs.

This fundamentally changed the way food & review programmes were made in Korea. Less focus was put on the restaurants and more focus was put on the food. The production companies set up panels that would honestly assess the food. Some would visit the restaurants without informing the owner beforehand in order to see the real experience.

¹³ At a 2003 broadcasters' seminar that took place on the topic of "Appearance of Video Journalists and shift in the Korean Broadcasting Production Paradigm", Lee Hongki, production director of *Arirang TV*, proclaimed that "terrestrial broadcasters introduced 'low cost mass production' VJ system and achieved the goal of budget reduction, but now faces deterioration of journalism."

Lee, Jaehwan.(2003, 4 May), VJs must become journalists, not technicians, *Ohmynews*, Retrieved from http://www.ohmynews.com/NWS_Web/View/at_pg.aspx?cntn_cd=A0000116277

The broadcasting companies also sought out new formats for food, incentivized by the emergence of government funding for programming about Korean food. In 2009, the South Korean First Lady headed a campaign that endorsed Korean food all around the world, and in 2011 the Korean Food Foundation was born, with the goal of establishing, promoting, and globalizing Korean food. As part of its goal, it funded lots of television content that celebrated Korean food.

One of the most influential entertainment programmes on KBS, *Happy Together*, came up with a successful section named *Night Snack* in 2012. In this celebrity talk show, the guest stars would cook their favourite night time snacks and have a little competition between themselves. The recipe was also made available on one of Korea's most frequented web portals and got huge response from the audiences.

New approaches were also tried out in the documentary side. In 2010 *Korean Food Expedition* was launched, and in 2011, *Korean Table*. The latter became a huge success with a famous old actor as the trustworthy presenter. It dealt on history and heritage of Korean Food and won praise from intellectuals for its exploration of the cultural context, not to mention the good ratings it delivered. A large scale documentary on the history of cooking was also made, called *Food Odyssey*. This series was revamped into a traditional daily cookery called *Wook's Food Odyssey Kitchen*, which was named after the producer and presenter of the programme.

In summary, we can see that, as the quantitative analysis shows that food related programming grew over the years, this was driven by an increased diversity in the role food programming was expected to play within the main-stream schedule: from a focus purely on education, it came to appear within highly popular entertainment programmes, as well as expanding into high quality documentary and pioneering the relationship between television and on-line.

2. 30 Years of British Broadcasting Corporation food programming

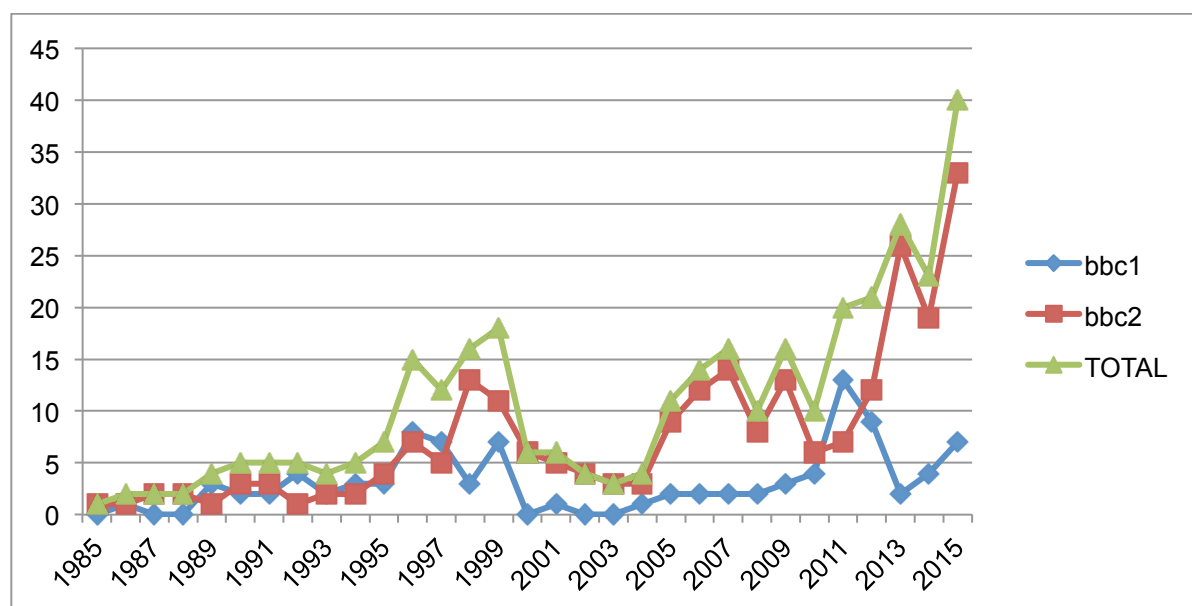


Figure 2 Number of BBC food programmes aired on the first week of October

(1) Period of cookery (1985~1994)

The BBC's founder Lord Reith famously summarized the task of BBC in three words; to inform, educate and entertain. To this day these three words are still the mission of BBC is trying to accomplish while enriching people's lives with its programmes and services. But of the three, to educate seems to have been the main task of food programmes in this first period of study. Indeed, the Continuing Education Department was the main production department for the cookery programmes at the BBC.¹⁴

There were very few food related television programmes during this period. On BBC1 and BBC2 combined, there were fewer than five programmes a week. Indeed, up until 1989, BBC1 did not show any food programming other than *Farming* in 1986. *Farming* was an agricultural magazine show which can be said to have been a food programme in a broad sense, but it is clear that BBC1 did not consider food programming to be an important part of its schedule.

Meanwhile on BBC2, a cook named Keith Floyd was educating the British public about "why the British are so boring when it comes to sampling the delicious varieties of fish"¹⁵ with his famous *Floyd on Fish* in 1985. He was known to be one of the first to combine cookery and travelogue, with several similar series such as *Floyd on Italy* that followed.

¹⁴ Orlebar, Jeremy (2013), *The Television Handbook*, 4th Edition, Abingdon, UK, Routledge, p. 106

¹⁵ The opening monologue for the documentary series *Floyd on Fish*(1985, BBC). The full version: "A personal and passionate view by cook Keith Floyd on why the British are so boring when it comes to sampling the delicious varieties of fish landed on our shores"

According to Clare Peterson, the current commissioning executive for BBC, Keith Floyd left the “chop and cook” style of cookery and “changed the shape of cookery programmes,” influencing a whole generation of cooks that came along after him.¹⁶ Several more food & travel programmes such as *A Cook’s Tour of France* (1992) and *Spain on a Plate* (1992) were scheduled in the latter part of this period.

Nevertheless this period was essentially when “chop and cook” cookery programmes were still the main format of food contents in BBC. It was in 1989 when cookery first got scheduled in BBC1 with *Hudson and Halls*. John Tovey made his cookery programmes both on BBC1 with *Eating Out with Tovey* (1990) and on BBC2 with *Entertaining on a Plate* (1991). *Fast Feasts*, *Taste of Japan*, *Today’s Gourmet*, *Raymond’s Blanc Mange*, and *Mary Berry’s Ultimate Cakes* were some of the cookery programmes that aired in BBC.

(2) Period of daily formats (1995~1999)

This is the period when new formats other than cookery or factual documentaries began to be developed, attracting new audiences with a new style of public television entertainment. The two most notable programmes are *Ready, Steady, Cook* and *Can’t Cook Won’t Cook*.

Peter Bazalgette, the current ITV chairman and better known as the producer who brought *Big Brother* to a UK audience, launched *Ready, Steady, Cook* on BBC2, which ran from 1994 to 2010. A some-time producer of the BBC’s food magazine programme *Food and Drink*, he was able to test out different formats which then became the bedrock of the new cookery challenge show. In an interview, Bazalgette said that *Ready, Steady, Cook* was about, “taking stuff that people wanted information about and making it more entertaining and creating a bigger audience for it. So it was a desire to entertain and to inform.”¹⁷

Can’t Cook Won’t Cook was a daily morning show that aired on BBC1 between 1995 and 2000. It was a cooking challenge show which was more about entertainment than cooking, with two inexperienced cooks competing against each other and making a mess along the way. Presenter Ainsley Harriott, who had established himself as the *Ready, Steady, Cook* presenter, took over *Can’t Cook Won’t Cook* as well, becoming one of the first chefs who became more famous as a very charismatic entertainer. This opened up a new profession called the celebrity chef.

What was remarkable was that both these programmes were daily shows. Bazalgette said that “a good idea can be repeated every day for the rest of one’s life. With just that one format, we turned over about £100m in 16 years.”¹⁸ *Ready, Steady, Cook* evolved into *Celebrity Ready, Steady, Cook*, bringing in the new concept of spin-offs of successful TV series.

¹⁶ Quote from an interview with Clare Paterson, 16 June 2016

¹⁷ "Interview: Sir Peter Bazalgette: Television Entrepreneur". *How Did They Do It?*. N.p., 2013. Retrieved from <https://howdidtheydoit.net/creative/sir-peter-bazalgette-television-entrepreneur>

¹⁸ "In Conversation With Peter Bazalgette | FRAPA". *Frapa.org*. N.p., 2016. Retrieved from <https://www.frapa.org/news/newsletter-archive/in-conversation-with-peter-bazalgette>

This turnaround of cookery programmes as a very resourceful entertainment format was partly influenced by the emergence of independent productions. Channel 4, which was required to commission all its content from independent producers, was launched in the 1982. In 1990, the Broadcasting Act also required that 25% of BBC's programmes be made by outside production companies. This change in the production base of the broadcasting market grew a competitiveness and diversity of talents, while the long-running series or returning strand was commercially attractive to independent producers. These factors inevitably encouraged the rise of formats.¹⁹

The food and travelogue tradition also evolved into successful format. *Two Fat Ladies* was commissioned for four series, from 1996 to 1999. The traveling cookery show was a huge success, selling all over the world. Just like how *Ready, Steady, Cook* and *Can't Cook Won't Cook* had brought in the members of the public, *Two Fat Ladies'* straight-forward and unpretentious attitude was what the audiences had been waiting for. This buddy film food and travelogue genre became even more famous with another successful series name *Hairy Bikers*.

(3) Period of stagnation (2000~2004)

Digital broadcasting started in November of 1998, and huge increase in the number of available channels accelerated the decline in audience for all the terrestrial services.²⁰ Lorraine Heggessey was appointed the Controller of BBC1 in 2000 as the competition for viewers between BBC1 and ITV became increasingly fierce. During her five years as Controller, much change was brought into the schedule. A revamped *Dr. Who* became a huge success, along with some controversial changes of scheduling with the *Nine O'Clock News* moving to 10 pm and *Panorama* losing its guaranteed Monday night prime time slot.²¹ And among other changes, food programming almost disappeared from BBC1.

As the analysis shows, the number of food programmes dropped drastically during these six years. Although *Ready, Steady, Cook* was still scheduled on BBC2, it was reduced to three days a week (from Monday to Wednesday). *Can't Cook Won't Cook* series ended and there were no more cookery programmes on BBC1 during this period. *Country File* and *Fat Nation: the Big Challenge* appear to be the only broadly food related programmes that aired in BBC1.

However, *Saturday Kitchen*, another successful BBC cookery franchise, started in 2002 on BBC2. It became rather successful and got moved to BBC1 from 2004. It was first produced for Open University, starting out as an educational recipe programme. Also on BBC2, *Delia's How to Cook* aired in Monday evenings, with Ainsley making his own cookery programme on *Gourmet Express* and Rick Stein on *Food Heroes*. From 2002 to 2004, *Ready, Steady, Cook* doesn't appear in the statistics because it wasn't scheduled during the first week of October. But it is clear that BBC2 became the channel for food programmes during this

¹⁹ "Interview: Sir Peter Bazalgette: Television Entrepreneur". *Ibid*.

²⁰ Byrne, Ciar (15 February 2005). The first woman at the helm of BBC1 quits to go commercial. *The Independent*. Retrieved 20 January 2007 from <http://new.independent.co.uk>

²¹ Wells, Matt (17 October 2000). 1m viewers lost as BBC shifts Panorama to Sunday 'graveyard' slot. *The Guardian*. Retrieved from <https://www.theguardian.com/media/2000/oct/17/bbc.uknews>

period, as the strategies of the two channels became more sharply delineated by the type of genres they showed.

(4) Return of formats (2005~2015)

This period can be divided into two different stages: the return of formats, and then the “big bang” of food programmes.

In the first stage, cookery came back to BBC1. According to the analysis, the successful *Saturday Kitchen* started airing on BBC1 from 2005, and *Rachel's Favourite Food for Living* followed it. On BBC2, the ever popular *Ready, Steady, Cook* came back to air every evening also starting in 2005. From 2006, *Big Cook Little Cook*, a children's cookery show was scheduled every morning, marking the return of daily formats.

One of the most significant moments of this period was the launch of *MasterChef*, self-billed as “the bestselling cooking format in the world”²² First aired in 1999, it was revived on BBC2 starting in 2005. Not only had food programme formats as entertainment made a full comeback: with this programme they showed that they could also become a global franchise. The revamped series was first named *MasterChef Goes Large* but changed its name back to its original title in 2008 and moved to BBC1 in 2009.

The second stage of this period can legitimately be called the “big bang” of food formats. The analysis shows that from 2011, the number of food programmes on BBC channels has skyrocketed, never falling below twenty a week. This implies that formats have not just returned, but have become an intrinsic part of the public television schedule. What is different from the first stage is that the formats have become a franchise.

MasterChef would be a good example that shows the big bang of food formats. After building its audience after its launch in 2005, *Celebrity MasterChef* was created in 2006. In order to keep developing a successful brand, more spinoffs such as *Junior MasterChef*, and *MasterChef Professionals* were also commissioned. The series became one of the most profitable formats, sold to more than forty countries around the world, with each of them making various versions of spinoffs.²³

The term “big bang” can be applied because this is not an isolated phenomenon. From 2010 on, the acceleration of formats can be seen in other programmes and channels. The most notable is the even more popular baking competition show, *The Great British Bake Off*. A programme which took the less obvious approach of watching people kneading and baking breads grew so big that it won not only numerous BAFTA awards but also the hearts of British audience. The 2015 finals achieved an audience of 15 million viewers, which made it the biggest programme in the UK outside sports, and is in its seventh season as of 2016.

²² "Masterchef - B&B Endemol Shine". *B&B Endemol Shine*. N.p., 2016. Retrieved from <http://bbendemolshine.ch/portfolio/masterchef>

²³ Lee, Young-Eun (2015), Foreign TV Content Analysis: Adaptation, Transformation and Koreanization, *Journal of the Korea Contents Association* 15(3), p 318-326

This programme has also has given rise to many successful spin-offs such as *The Great British Bake Off: An Extra Slice*, *Junior Bake Off*, *The Great Sport Relief Bake Off*, and *The Great Comic Relief Bake Off*. Spin-offs that do not have the baking theme have also been made, which are *The Great British Sewing Bee*, *The Big Allotment Challenge*(on gardening), and *The Great Pottery Throw Down*. This is not to mention all the different formats that have been sold all over the world. Thus in this stage of “big bang”, a successful TV programme becomes a format that can exploited internationally for as long as it will still create profit and enhance the public broadcaster’s brand.²⁴

²⁴ Tasha Oren (2013), On the Line: Format, Cooking and Competition as Television Values, *Critical Studies in Television*, Vol 8 No. 2, p. 33

Chapter 3. A Case Study of Food Programmes

The past 30 years of public television show that food programmes have evolved as society itself has changed, and keeping step with changes in television production and distribution market. In the early days of television when the programme market was more or less monopolized by the public broadcasters, food programming concentrated mainly on informing and educating the people with recipes: “chop and cook” shows. Then entertainment factors were added to the programmes, later developing into formats. As the media landscape changed with multiple actors and platforms, formats became large franchises of brands that emphasized profits, utilizing all the available resources.

In the comparison study of KBS and BBC, common characteristics and responses to the changing trends in public television food programming can be found. First, from a very simple cookery model, both services developed a complex hybrid of different genres. Secondly, whereas both services started out with the goal of education or information, the entertainment factor becomes the principal focus. Thirdly, a new profession in the broadcasting arena arises: the celebrity chefs who either participate or even produce the contents. And fourth, as public broadcasters, exploring and celebrating the cultural and national identity through the food it portrays is a major role. Not only would this become the main reason of commissioning such food programme but also the reason of its huge popularity among the audience.

This analysis can be developed through closer look *The Great British Bake Off* (BBC1) and *Korean Table* (KBS1), the two major food programmes of UK and South Korea, which clearly represent the current status of public television food contents.

1. Overview

The Great British Bake Off first began as a documentary on British bakery when it first reached BBC. For that reason it is still being commissioned by documentary department. But as it took shape it evolved into a 60 minute reality TV show where ten to twelve amateur contestants compete with each other on baking. Although it started out with mixed reviews for the first season in 2010, it grew into a very successful franchise of programmes which is in its seventh season as of 2016.

Korean Table also first began as a documentary, and still is. First commissioned in 2011, it introduced itself as a “foodmentary” that aimed to fill each episode with the history, culture and people of various regions of Korea, thus creating a “Korean Food Geography.”²⁵ It is a weekly documentary that introduces a region, a food, or an ingredient for each episode. Amid all the entertainment format cookery programmes in the “Return of the formats period”, *Korean Table* stood out because of its slow-pace and well-researched information on the Korean food culture. It is still airing on KBS1 with good ratings and reviews.

²⁵ "Korean Table > Current Affairs and Cultural Programs > 1TV > KBS". *KBS*. N.p., 2016. Retrieved from <http://www.kbs.co.kr/1tv/sisa/table/about/index.html>

The Great British Bake Off (BBC1)	Korean Table (KBS1)
Entertainment factual (reality TV)	documentary
Currently at 20:00 on Wednesdays	Currently at 19:35 on Thursdays
10 episode 60 minutes	Weekly 50 minutes

Table 1 General information of two TV food programmes

2. Public service broadcaster food programme success factors comparison

From the analysis of food programming on both BBC1 and KBS over the last thirty years, it is possible to deduce the key factors that drive the popularity of food programmes on both services.

- 1) Hybrid of formats
- 2) Entertainment
- 3) Celebrity Chefs / Professionals
- 4) National Identity

(Just to be clear, these factors should not be taken as a description of what public service broadcasters must serve, but rather the characteristics of the successful programmes that have been served by both broadcasters.)

The two main programmes of BBC and KBS can be assessed against each of these four factors in a scale of one to five. The results show that *The Great British Bake Off* gets a perfect score of 20 points, while *Korean Table* gets 14 points.

	The Great British Bake Off	Korean Table
Hybrid of formats	5	2
Entertainment	5	3
Celebrity Chefs / Professionals	5	4
National Identity	5	5
Total	20	14

Table 2 Four factors of successful PSB food programming

Hybrid formats

The Great British Bake Off is given a 5 on Hybrid of formats scale because it created a whole new format on a brand new theme for a reality show. The current commissioner for the programme also thinks it changed how reality TV shows can be portrayed.

I think when people think competition they immediately think harsh, eliminations. [On *The Great British Bake Off*] we don't think about eliminations, we think about

staying in.....I think it showed real vision to have done that and I think most people would not have thought of it in those terms²⁶

Korean Table is given a two because there was little new formatting involved. However, the fact that it was a rather successful presenter-led participatory documentary in a market where such formats are mostly unpopular, it is given a 2 instead of 1.

Entertainment

The entertainment factor for the former is given a 5 and latter a 3. *The Great British Bake Off* is classified as an entertainment factual in the BBC website, even though it was first commissioned by the documentary department. This suggests that the entertainment factor has been deliberately emphasized from the outset. The result is that it breaks its own ratings record with a higher rating every new season. For the year 2015, *The Great British Bake Off* took seven of the top ten most watched programmes in the UK.²⁷

As for *Korean Table*, its ratings were more or less above 10% until 2016, when it started to go below 10%.²⁸ Nevertheless this is still considered high in Korean television industry.

Celebrity Chefs

The Great British Bake Off stars the two very talented presenters; professional baker Paul Hollywood and cookery writer Mary Berry. The chemistry of these two professionals, assisted by two presenters (Sue Perkins and Mel Giedroyc) who are well-established television comedians, became an intrinsic part of the programme, building up the whole atmosphere of empathy in the competition.

It's something you couldn't create by putting people together, that's really special and lovely. The sheer niceness of it simply celebrates what we can all do at home and no one's ever horrible on it.²⁹

Presenter Choi of *Korea Table* is an established actor known for his role as the farmer and father in *Country Diaries*, an agricultural weekly drama that ran for 22 years in Korea. His new stint as a television presenter was very well received, giving the audience the feeling of nostalgia. Although he is not a food expert, his fatherly figure and image of farmer made it persuasive for the viewers to see him explore the nooks and crannies of Korea and its food.³⁰

²⁶ Quote from an interview with Clare Paterson, 16 June 2016

²⁷ Conlan, Tara. "The Great British Bake Off: 2015 Ratings Win Will Be The Icing On The Cake". *the Guardian*. N.p., 2015. Retrieved from <https://www.theguardian.com/media>

²⁸ "Nielsen Korea". *Nielsenkorea.co.kr terrestrial television ratings section*. N.p., 2016. Retrieved from <http://nielsenkorea.co.kr>

²⁹ Quote from an interview with Clare Paterson, 16 June 2016

³⁰ "The viewers like seeing me in person and I like them, too. Everybody tells me that I look younger in real life. That's because I've played the role of an old man since fifty years ago... I was everybody's father in that drama. That makes all the people my family, my brothers and sisters."

Lee, Jungbong (27 December 2014). Choi leads 200th episode of *Korean Table*. *JoongAng-Ilbo*.

National Identity

As for the last factor, both programmes drew on a deep affection for some element of the national identity expressed through the food they portrayed. The bakery challenges in *The Great British Bake Off* only reminded the British people of their own baking tradition, but also have revived home baking of British bread.³¹ Britishness was a factor that had to be inherent from the designing of *The Great British Bake Off*.

There has also been a move to try and reflect Britishness and the craft of food... Also it's reflected in the presenters because we've got more British presenters.³²

Korean Table also got 5 points on this factor because Korean history and culture of either a dish or an ingredient is always covered in the documentary series. The programme calls for the need to restore national identity with its narrative structure that conveys a sense of loss.

The main discourses that is underlying in the story structure of *Korean Table* are 'healing', 'nostalgia', 'affection', and 'grudges'. The 'grudges' discourse is comparable to the structure of 'nostalgia'. And all four discourses share the similar feeling of sadness on the disappearing local and historical food culture, thus the diminishing Korean sentiment.³³

3. Conclusion

The overall outcome of this analysis indicates that BBC has combined the key factors in making *The Great British Bake Off* a very successful food programme, not just in the public service television market but across the whole industry. In fact, the government even appeared to suggest it might be moved in the schedule or channel for the sake commercial rivals – a suggestion that Lord Patten, the former chairman of BBC, described as “ridiculous”.³⁴

For *Korean Table*, the scores against the success criteria are not as high its UK counterpart. The lowest point was on the “hybrid of formats” factor, followed by “entertainment”. It is essentially a slow paced documentary whose main audience belongs to a rather old aged

Retrieved from <http://news.joins.com/article/16793920>

³¹ "Great British Bake Off Helps Fuel A 62% Baking Goods Sale Rise". *This is Money*. N.p., 2014. Retrieved from <http://www.thisismoney.co.uk>

³² Quote from an interview with Clare Paterson, 16 June 2016

³³ Park, Sin-Ja (2013) Formats and contents of TV food programs and their meanings: A Semiotic study on <Korean Cuisine and Dining> of KBS-TV, *Korean Semiotic*, Vol. 36, p. 97

³⁴ Martinson, Jane and John Plunkett.(3 May 2016) "Government Threats To Make BBC Move Strictly Are Ridiculous, Says Lord Patten". *the Guardian*. N.p., 2016. Retrieved from <https://www.theguardian.com/media>

group. The reason for its high ratings can be attributed to the loyal KBS1 viewers who enjoy the nostalgic tone of the programme. According to a study commissioned by KBS, the average age of overall television viewers have gone up from 43 years old in 2010 to 50 years old in 2016. And to top this, the average age of KBS1 viewers have reach 62 years old³⁵

As the ratings have started to fall starting from 2016, the old fashioned and old viewer-centric structure of this documentary faces a difficult future.

The *Great British Bake Off* by contrast is not narrowly targeted to a certain population. It is instead a programme whose audience covers a wide demographic range. With one fourth of the population watching the finals in 2015, it even embraces the diversity of race and religion into the British identity.

In the finals there was somebody who was a Buddhist, somebody who was a Hindu and somebody who was a Muslim. Completely by chance and absolutely on their cookery skills alone. But that did make it particularly remarkable and I think as a portrait of the nation the series worked very effectively and felt very optimistic, it had something very special about it.³⁶

As public service broadcasters, both corporations face the difficulty of having to target the broad population in an era when all other media outlets are increasingly trying to reach a specific target audience. Bringing in the national identity as a factor to capture the attention of the viewers seems like a good strategy. But it would also be the responsibility of public service broadcasters to correctly represent what the national identity really is, embracing the diversity of society in a way that accurately reflects, and unites, the audience.

³⁵ "Nielsen Korea". *2016 Viewer's Age Distribution Ratio*. All Platforms. Retrieved from Korean Broadcasting System reports.

³⁶ Quote from an interview with Clare Paterson, 16 June 2016

Chapter 4. Future of food contents

The media landscape has changed drastically over recent years, with the digital and mobile becoming major platforms. These disruptive players are changing the rules of the game for the television content industry, and even more so for the public television services. And one of the newest phenomena that has started in Korea and is now trending around the world is *Mukbang*, the live streaming of people eating on the web. Even Steve Chen, the co-founder of *YouTube*, has jumped on the band-wagon with the 2015 start-up named *Nom*, a social network service which only focuses on live streaming of cooking.

Korean broadcasters have been trying to follow up the trend, and have succeeded to some degree. In 2015, *My Little Television*, a programme that brought the Internet live-streaming events into a very well edited television variety show, was the first format that embraced *Mukbang* elements. In this show made by MBC, another public service broadcaster in Korea, five or six celebrities and professionals compete each other for three hours in front of a live webcam. The one with the most viewers win, and the event is later cleverly edited with the comments from the live-cast put in with CGs.

The most successful contestant was a restaurateur and chef Baek, who won consecutive episodes with his tips on how to cook easily. This in itself turned Baek into one of the most sought-out celebrity chefs, and prompted a rise in the number of cookery shows across all platforms. There is now a cable show where young female idol stars just eat and a whole panel of celebrities watch it as a sport event, commentating on how the girl eats. Another cable show has adopted the “slow TV” concept that started in Norway³⁷, and just airs a celebrity eating a nice meal in real time.

Other public service broadcasters, such as KBS, have been slow to follow the trend. KBS has been reluctant to follow the formats developed by commercial rivals, and may even have regressed given the narrow and mostly derivative range of food documentaries that are being commissioned.

What are the lessons that can be learned from this study?

The answer must lie in focusing on the core public service mission. As public service broadcasters that receive license fees from its viewers, both BBC and KBS are relatively free from the need to commercialise their content. This is a key part of what has kept the BBC ahead of its competitors. It was able to take risks in developing and trying out new formats that commercial rivals wouldn't have dared to take. *The Great British Bake Off* is the proof that an apparently absurd yet very distinctive proposal can be made into a successful format if the organization is willing to take risks. Such kind of creative risk can only be executed in the public service sector. As the current commissioner puts it;

³⁷ "Slow TV". *NRK*. N.p., 2016. Retrieved from <https://www.nrk.no/presse/slow-tv-1.12057032>

I don't think any other channel would have commission it. I think it would be crap to be anywhere else, I don't think it would survive... BBC1 is the channel of the nation. It is the big one so that's where I think it should be.³⁸

The future of food contents is increasingly demanding. BuzzFeed Tasty, a cookery video publishing branch of BuzzFeed, is one of the most watched branded pages on Facebook. When *New York Times* closed down their youth-targeted *NYT Now* app, they announced that they will be putting more focus on their main products, which are Cooking, Crosswords, and Watching.³⁹ Steve Chen, the co-founder of *Nom*, has said that he started the new interactive live-streaming cooking community because “food is something cultural and global that interests millions of people.”⁴⁰

The explosion of interest in food-related content across all platforms is an opportunity as well as a threat to Public Service Broadcasters. Despite fierce competition, public service broadcasters can take comfort from the history that this study has explored. As the past thirty years have shown, both Korean and UK PSBs have experimented with a variety of formats and production styles, responding effectively to multi-channel competition with low-cost formats, without compromising their public service goals of information as well as entertainment. Even more important, public service broadcasters have the tradition of risk-taking, supported by the security of public funding but energized by a strong ethos of supporting innovation and focusing on real audience need. This should ensure that these broadcasters will still be able to keep food programming that is innovative, entertaining, relevant and resonant of shared culture at the heart of their schedules.

³⁸ Quote from an interview with Clare Paterson, 16 June 2016

³⁹ "The New York Times Is Shutting Down Its Lauded, Younger-Reader-Seeking NYT Now App". *Nieman Lab*. N.p., 2016. Retrieved from <http://www.niemanlab.org/>

⁴⁰ "Meet Nom: Food And The Future Of Live Video | SXSW Interactive 2016". *YouTube*. N.p., 2016. Web. 17 Sept. 2016.

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