

How do celebrity chefs and other media influencers affect consumer attitudes about sustainable seafood?

Celebrity chefs and other media influencers have been prominent voices in campaigns for sustainable seafood. Researchers at the Universities of Adelaide, Wollongong and Tasmania are undertaking research supported by the FRDC, on behalf of the Australian Government, into the effects of these media messages on consumer attitudes. We hope this research will help the Australian seafood industry to better understand the media strategies that are most effective in communicating sustainability messages, and to work more closely with media influencers.

We know from the international research that chefs, food celebrities and food media can either encourage or deter seafood consumption depending on the message. We also know that chefs, media producers and industry are operating in an increasingly complex media environment. In the Australian context, as elsewhere, this complexity poses significant challenges to industries seeking to effectively communicate messages about sustainability.

The purpose of our research is to

- develop a comprehensive picture of how relationships between chefs, media and industry shape consumer views about Australian seafood;
- provide recommendations for how industry can better utilise celebrity chefs and other media influencers; and
- offer best-practice guidelines for media engagement across media genres and platforms.

What we have done so far

We have conducted a comprehensive media survey of key media texts across all major genres and platforms for the past 3 years (2015-2018) to identify: the major reported issues affecting seafood sustainability; the role of celebrity chefs and media influencers in this media coverage; and the effects of different media and communications strategies in contributing to 'share of voice' in key issues. This has involved analysis of thousands of social media posts and 'traditional' media texts (including news, television cooking shows, cookbooks and foodie magazines). Preliminary results are included on the following page.

Next steps

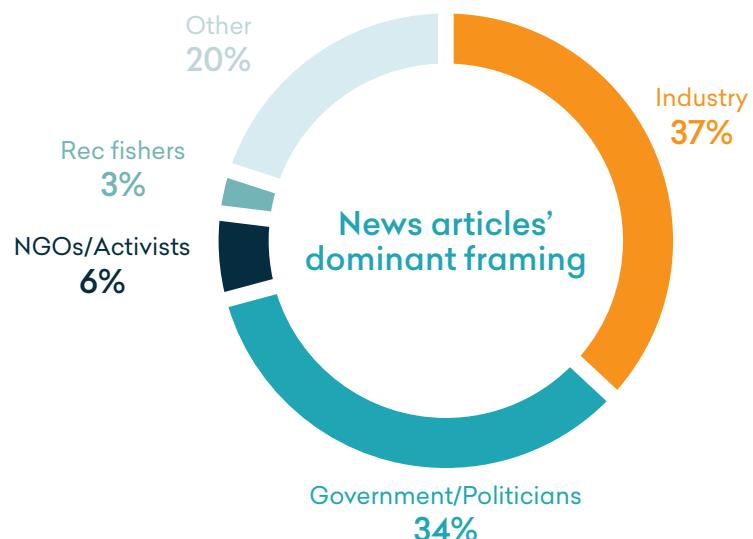
We will next be conducting interviews with chefs, media influencers and media producers, plus focus groups with consumers. Through our focus groups, we will be discussing media examples that feature celebrity chefs or media influencers. Examples will feature different media messages and strategies to communicate sustainability messages, including social media campaigns, eco-labelling, promotion of under-utilised species, and other types of lifestyle media. We will provide updates on these results as they are available.

Notable findings from the media survey so far

News media

The Australian seafood industry has been very effective at engaging mainstream media via traditional media relations techniques, and has consistently secured the greatest 'share of voice' in news coverage.

Across our 3-year sample, industry perspectives have provided the dominant framing for 37% of mainstream news items about issues affecting fisheries sectors, closely followed by governments/politicians at 34%. NGOs/activists and recreational fishers were 6% and 3% respectively, although these groups had louder voices on some issues.



Lifestyle and social media

Industry engagement on lifestyle and social media has been less consistently effective than for mainstream media, but it is here that celebrity chefs and other media influencers can have the biggest impact. Chefs generally acknowledge that Australia's wild-catch fisheries are among the best managed and most sustainable in the world; the picture for aquaculture is a little more complicated.

On social media, there are opportunities for industry to use some platforms more effectively. For example:

- Better and more promptly capitalising on food trends (e.g. poké, fish selfies);
- More effective 'bridging' between social media networks to avoid echo chambers.

Industry messaging also often tends to focus on the provision of 'information', whereas compelling stories, visuals and emotions are often keys to success in lifestyle and social media.

How you can help

We would like to hear from you. Please contact the project's lead researcher, *Michelle Phillipov* (michelle.phillipov@adelaide.edu.au) if you would like to share:

- your successes (and failures!) in media engagement, particularly when working with chefs and other media influencers;
- your thoughts on what resources for media engagement you would find most useful;
- anything else you would like to discuss about the project.

Project team

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