

Commercialization and the Future of Vegan Culture

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Abstract:- Veganism has been one of the mainstream trends in the food & beverages industry in the recent years. Increase in incidence of such health disorders, rise in number of health-conscious consumers, increase in disposable income of target customers have been some of the key factors driving the trend of veganism in key regions specifically North America and Europe. This has increased the demand for different types of plant-based food products such as dairy alternatives and meat substitutes. In Asia-Pacific, millennials account for a larger population, especially in countries such as China, India, and Australia as compared to other population groups. Millennials, population aged between 20 and 35 years, are health-conscious, broad minded, and actively involved in various physical activities. They have been influential in evolving various global industries in terms of product offerings and services. Thus, they are also anticipated to trigger demand for vegan food products during the vegan food market forecast. The study aims to understand how many consumers and public in general have an awareness or knowledge of veganism as well as consider veganism as a dietary lifestyle, which demographic this has mainly hit, how prevalent it is in South India compared to people living abroad, what factors affecting these choices are etc. The survey is designed to ascertain the consumer's attitude, perception and feeling towards vegan products, ingredients and its impact on the environment. The paper also aims to measure the difference between the anticipated demand of vegan & animal-friendly food substitutes and the actual supply and consumption of such products and acceptability of such a health culture. This study has primary and secondary data. All findings are from first hand data collection. The questionnaire was circulated amongst Students in college, school as well youth that are currently employed, retired senior citizens and middle-aged population spread all over India. About 8.1% of the respondents were also extracted from Outside India from the US, and Australia. This paper finds that most consumers while aware of veganism to a certain extent, often confuse it with vegetarianism and find both to be one and the same, when in fact there are noticeable differences between the two.

I. INTRODUCTION

Veganism is based on an ideology that humans should not exploit animals to fulfil their needs and people who practice this ideology are termed vegans. Vegans refrain from using any kind of animal or animal products for food, clothing, entertainment, or work amongst others. These people do not differentiate between species and consider all animals equal. Veganism is gaining increasing adoption in recent years not just because of animal cruelty but also due to related concerns on environment, antibiotic resistance, zoonotic diseases and health.

Data from Google AdWords show that vegan-related searches shot up by 47 per cent in 2020. Clearly, people, forced to examine their lifestyle in the wake of the coronavirus pandemic, were curious and willing to ditch meat, and adopt a plant-based dietary habit.

Elitism is a regrettable tattoo that veganism seemingly cannot remove. Veganism by default is associated with one litre of almond milk worth Rs 300, or pricier meat substitutes.

Following this pattern, the recent trends seem to suggest that the exploitation of this very elitism is exhibited by charging exorbitant rates on all vegan goods and vegan ingredients. There is also discrimination in the accessibility to such goods not only class-wise but also location wise. This is suggestive of commercialisation and saturation of the market by few food conglomerates There is also a lot of marketing via aesthetic appeal.

A lot of signs point to a strong connection between the wealth levels and conversion to veganism of an individual. More often than not, it is the people who can afford to and have a choice in that matter, who convert to veganism.

The social outlooks on this matter are a touchy subject as well, as most of the population don't consider this dietary lifestyle necessary in the slightest.

While the growing market shows promise, it is yet to fully set its roots deep in India. This must be monitored and further encouraged for the progress to have an uphill ride. Furthermore it is to be analysed if there is any potential for growth in India at all.

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

- Siddharth Kothari (Is India heading towards a vegan future, 2021) stated that consumer behaviour has also shifted towards a vegan diet as the threats and effects of climate change become ever more real. At present, almost 65 percent of India's greenhouse gas emissions from agriculture come from livestock. Increasing awareness of the environmental impact of industrialised animal agriculture has made Indian citizens realise the enormous consequences of their food choices.
- Anoop Haridasan (Is vegan food successfully penetrating the Indian market? 2021) stated that the vegan customers in India, although small currently, are growing rapidly. The product offerings, however, are quite limited, especially when customers are looking for a replacement of a meat-based product. However, achieving the same meat-like taste, texture and aroma, using only plant-based ingredients is a difficult task. We use the latest innovations to ensure that each product is developed such that even a meat-eater will enjoy the product just as much.
- C B Insights (Our Meatless Future: How The \$2.7T Global Meat Market Gets Disrupted,2021)stated that traditional meat distribution channels were and remain upended, as restaurants, schools, and other facilities closed. Declining output and rising prices left consumers with fewer options, and plant-based meat alternatives began to see a lift.
- Manya Singh (The Vegan Diet Is Becoming a Trend in India, Is It Recommended for Growing Kids, 2022) stated that as a conscious consumer, it is really a beneficial way of life because by going vegan, one would distance themselves completely from hazardous antibiotics, hormones, and adulteration which is common culture to ensure greater shelf life for most animal products. As exports increase and the world becomes smaller and smaller, more preservatives and chemical compositions are at play to ensure your food survives the journey.

- Forbes India (Can India lead the 'vegan economy' against future pandemics? 2020) stated that it is interesting to note, many vegans abroad choose Indian vegetarian restaurants over others as they guarantee a cuisine closer to their dietary preferences. In this regard, India has the potential to export its diverse culinary arts in addition to limited Indian cuisines available abroad and promote them in the line of plant-based, healthy, tasty and nutritious food for good health.

III. OBJECTIVES

- To discover if commercialisation causes a barrier to turning vegan.
- To establish a relationship between wealth levels and vegan turnover.
- To establish a relationship between social culture and outlooks on veganism.
- To determine if there is a future for such plant-based lifestyles in India.
- To find other factors that contribute to lack of interest in veganism.

IV. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

- *Population*
The population of this study are consumers in general irrespective of whether they have tried vegan food or not and of all ages between 15-70.
- *Sample*
The sample size for this study is 130.
- *Data Collection Method*
Data for this research has been collected with the help of both primary as well as secondary sources.
- *Primary Data*
Primary data was collected from the consumers of different age groups with the help Google Forms questionnaire in the form of a survey and personal observations.
- *Secondary Data*
Secondary data was collected from research articles, publications, journals, business magazines and newspapers and online articles.

V. DATA ANALYSIS

Table 1 Demographics

Particulars	Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	42	32.30%
	Female	87	66.90%
	Prefer not to say	1	0.80%
Age	Below 18	4	3.10%
	18-30	64	49.20%
	31-50	28	21.50%
	50 and above	34	26.20%
Occupation	Student	59	45.34%
	Employed	11	8.46%
	Unemployed	60	46.20%
Income	Under 50,000Rs	6	4.60%
	50,000-1,00,000Rs	7	5.40%
	1,00,000-5,00,000Rs	18	13.80%
	5,00,000Rs-7,00,000R	7	5.40%
	7,00,000Rs and above	45	34.60%
	Prefer not to say	47	36.20%
Residence	Own Home	102	78.46%
	Hostel or PG	28	21.54%
State of Residence	Chennai	40	32.82%
	Kerala	65	47.69%
	Other States	10	7.69%
	Outside India	15	11.53%

Table 2 Vegan Exposure

Particulars	Response	Frequency	Percentage
Have you Ever Tried Vegan food?	Yes	81	62.30%
	No	49	37.70%
How willing are you to try vegan food	Not willing	18	18.38%
	Somewhat willing	8	6.20%
	Undecided	26	20%
	Somewhat willing	26	20%
	Willing	52	40.00%
How often do you see people around or celebrities turning vegan?	Never	7	5.40%
	Rarely	36	27.70%
	Sometimes	61	46.90%
	Often	24	18.50%
	Always	2	1.50%
Has your culture or tradition ever posed as a barrier to turning vegan?	Yes	18	13.80%
	No	112	86.20%
Has your income posed as a barrier to veganism? If yes, to what extent?	Greatly	4	3.10%
	Sometimes	7	5.40%
	Neutral	31	23.80%
	Not much	37	28.50%
	Never	51	39.20%
To what extent do you find a price variance in normal food ingredients and vegan food ingredients?	A great deal	12	9.20%
	Much	45	34.60%
	Somewhat	38	29.20%
	Little	20	15.40%
	Negligent	15	11.50%

If the cost liability of turning vegan was reduced, how likely would you be to convert?	Very Unlikely	43	33.10%
	Not likely	41	31.50%
	Somewhat likely	4	30.80%
	Very likely	6	4.60%
Your accesibility to vegan food	Excellent	19	14.60%
	Good	42	32.30%
	Neutral	43	33.10%
	Bad	18	13.80%
	Horrible	8	6.20%
How easy or difficult do you think it would be to follow a vegan diet in the future?	Very Easy	9	6.90%
	Easy	20	15.40%
	Neutral	41	31.50%
	Hard	31	23.80%
	Very hard	29	22.30%
How big of an impact do you think turning vegan will have on the environment?	A great deal	26	20.00%
	Much	24	18.50%
	Somewhat	48	36.90%
	Little	23	17.70%
	Negligent	9	6.90%

Table 3 Factors Affecting Vegan Turnover Several Factors that Contribute could be Ticked

Factors	Frequency	Percentage
High cost of vegan food products	30	23.1%
Taste Difference	63	48.5%
Not enough market accessible for such products	38	29.2%
Variety of food items are limited	64	49.2%
Unwillingness to ditch meat	76	58.5%
Stigma in social situations such as weddings, casual gatherings, workplaces etc.	20	15.4%
Other	12	9.6%

Table 4 To what Extent do you Agree with the following Statements?

Statement	Degree of agreeability	Frequency	Percentage
It would be inconvenient forme to eat a reduced-meatdiet.	Strongly Disagree	25	19.23%
	Disagree	20	15.38%
	Neither agree nor disagree	32	24.61%
	Agree	37	28.46%
	Strongly Agree	16	12.32%
I would be satisfied with myfood options if I ate areduced-meat diet.	Strongly Disagree	14	10.77%
	Disagree	27	20.77%
	Neither agree nor disagree	36	27.70%
	Agree	44	34%
	Strongly Agree	9	6.92%
It would cost too much to eat a reduced-meat diet	Strongly Disagree	14	10.77%
	Disagree	41	31.54%
	Neither agree nor disagree	46	35.38%
	Agree	26	20%
	Strongly Agree	3	2.31%
It would be difficult for meto stay motivated enough to eat a reduce d-meat diet.	Strongly Disagree	15	11.54%
	Disagree	32	24.61%
	Neither agree nor disagree	37	28.46%
	Agree	36	27.69%
	Strongly Agree	10	7.69%
A reduced-meat diet would be good for my health	Strongly Disagree	15	11.59%
	Disagree	20	15.38%
	Neither agree nor disagree	42	32.30%
	Agree	31	23.85%
	Strongly Agree	22	16.92%
A reduced-meat diet wouldcreate issues in my socialand personal life	Strongly Disagree	36	27.69%
	Disagree	33	25.38%
	Neither agree nor disagree	35	26.92%
	Agree	15	11.54%
	Strongly Agree	11	8.46%

VI. FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

- Although almost 40% of the sample size is ready and willing to try vegan food, less than 10% can see themselves convert to veganism as a dietary lifestyle. This suggests that a very negligible portion of the population only find veganism as a sustainable and effective form of diet in the long run.
- Even though there is good accessibility to vegan food and food products, most of the population claims to be unwilling to convert even if the cost liability were reduced.
- A good portion of the sample size fails to see the environmental impacts that ditching meat and animal-based products could have with one respondent even claiming that it “effects the normal balance in ecosystem”.
- *The factors that contributed most to deciding against a vegan lifestyle were:*
Taste difference, unwillingness to ditch meat as well as the limited variety of food items.

This shows us that it isn't necessary that income, affordability and accessibility be the only contributors to vegan turnover. Rather it is the texture, taste and overall enjoyability of the food that still gives a lot of consumers a mind block to convert. It follows the mindset that no other substitute could possibly compare to the real feel and taste.

- A shift in the mindset of people towards vegan food can also be noticed. Earlier, even the suggestion of such as lifestyle was not appreciated. But with the changing times, there seems to be more acceptability and a reduction in the stigma around such a diet. This can be attributed to the growing concern against animal cruelty as well as a rise in concern for the global health crisis.

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