

Marketing the Meatless: Social Media's Role in Shaping Vegan Buying Habits in the UAE

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ABSTRACT

With the rise of social media and the globalisation of lifestyle trends, veganism has transitioned from a niche choice to a mainstream movement. This study addresses a gap in the literature by exploring how social media marketing influences consumer behaviours within the vegan industry, specifically in the United Arab Emirates. The objective is to determine how digital platforms impact purchasing decisions and the adoption of vegan lifestyles in a region where traditional diets are often meat-based. Using a mixed-methods approach that included a literature review and a consumer survey, the research collected data on consumer perceptions and habits.

The study's key findings indicate that social media significantly shapes consumer behaviour by normalising vegan choices and promoting health and nutritional benefits. The survey results show that nutritional facts and recipe videos are the most influential content types, while the impact of influencers and sponsored ads is surprisingly limited. A weak but statistically significant positive correlation was found between exposure to vegan content and an increase in vegan meal consumption and visits to vegan restaurants. These findings suggest that social media is a powerful tool for promoting long-term lifestyle changes, offering valuable insights for future marketing strategies in the vegan industry and other emerging lifestyle sectors.

Keywords: Veganism, Consumer choice, Ethical choice, Lifestyle industry.

Introduction

From a niche criticised lifestyle choice to the newest trendy topic, veganism has grown, especially on social media. In the UAE, where a meat-based diet is embedded in many cultures, social media campaigns are beginning to urge consumers towards plant-based alternatives. But how is this trend translating to consumers' daily lives? In 2023, the global vegan food market grew to over \$20 billion according to Fortune Business Insights.. This number raises the question: what made people swap their shawarma for soy? In the UAE, where many people use

social media, could digital marketing particularly influence this shift towards vegan diets?

Social media and its impact have been heavily researched across the globe, making observations on how each type affects a range of people. Yet, that still does not study specific industries such as the vegan industry, unlike other sectors, which are not just selling a product but an environmentally beneficial lifestyle. Social media is yet to be tested in an industry that feeds off the moral rigidity of the people and how it can change the very ideology of the people who consume its content. The UAE is a diverse country known for its tourism and significant social media presence, making it an ideal place to explore the moral impact of social media.

The research question for this study is: *How does the Social Media Marketing of the Vegan Industry influence customers' purchasing habits in the UAE?*

This study explores the impact of social media marketing on consumers' purchasing behaviours within the vegan industry in the United Arab Emirates. We aim to gain insights into how social media can affect a lifestyle, such as the vegan industry.

Both a qualitative and quantitative methodology approach was used to gain an insightful understanding of the question. A literature review was done to understand previous researchers and their approaches. A survey was conducted to gain knowledge of the consumers' point of view, better grasp their choices, see if they chose to market through social media, and see how it has affected sales.

This research begins with exploring the research methodology in Section 2, followed by a comprehensive literature review in Section 3. Section 4 presents the survey questionnaire. Section 5 highlights the analysis and findings of the survey questionnaire. Section 6 discusses the study's implications, with Section 7 addressing the limitations and future research directions. The paper concludes with a summary of key insights in Section 8.

Research Methodology

Social media is deeply ingrained in everyday life in today's digital era. According to Forbes, businesses have begun to leverage social media as their channel to build their brand, promote products, and interact with clients. At the same time, the plant-based market is growing rapidly across the globe because of increased awareness of health, the environment, and animal rights.

In the UAE, wellness culture is an ever-growing interest, and harmful practices are looked down upon according to the healthcare world. This research examines how social media allows for the development of the vegan industry in the UAE by examining consumer behavioural patterns and product marketing. A mixed-methods methodology was adopted, including literacy reviews and

a survey-based method for quantitative information and interviews for qualitative data. The target audiences are UAE residents aged between 15 and 35 years old because they are likely to be educated about current environmental concerns and to be health-conscious. 100 online survey respondents, a mix of current/past vegans and those who have chosen to be non-vegans. This has been done to collect a diverse viewpoint.

Primary information was acquired through an internet consumer survey sent using Google Forms. Secondary information was also acquired from peer-reviewed journals, marketing research, and statistics regarding veganism and online marketing. The survey had typed and multiple-choice questions. The quantitative data was analysed using statistics. A broad analysis of the qualitative data was conducted.

Triangulation was used to make our findings more reliable by comparing responses from different sources. Strict ethical guidelines were followed by obtaining informed consent, keeping data anonymous, and getting permission from the research supervisory body. This approach provides a solid basis for understanding how social media marketing is linked to the growth of vegan businesses in the UAE. Strict ethical guidelines were observed by obtaining informed consent and keeping data anonymous. This research will provide a solid basis for understanding how social media marketing is linked to the growth of vegan and other such businesses in the UAE.

Literature Review

According to Chan (2022) and Helali (2023), this literature review examines how social media, especially influencers and digital marketing, affects consumers' purchasing habits and how they pursue veganism. Studies from the VeganSociety show that as veganism has moved from a niche lifestyle few choose to a common trend everyone has tried, social media plays a key role in this change.

This review will investigate how online content influences consumer choices, what people see as the benefits and challenges of veganism, and how influencers shape lifestyle decisions across different age and demographic groups. The review is structured around key themes: The psychological and demographic factors influencing consumer behaviour on social media; the role of influencers in encouraging lifestyle and dietary change; the health, environmental, and ethical motivations behind veganism; and how veganism is marketed and received in both local and global contexts. Studies conducted by Mulla (2025) and more offer insight into how factors shape these trends. A comprehensive review of research gaps follows the discussion.

Table 1: Selected Literature Review

Study	Methods	Country	Factors	Findings
Chan, 2022	Quantitative	UK	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Identifying the personality - Content features elicited by SMIs - Customer loyalty - Demographic factors such as gender, income, and education levels - Choice imitation. 	<p>-Influencers with expertise in niche areas attract loyal, high-value audiences</p> <p>- A loyal fan base is more likely to make similar purchases as what is seen online</p> <p>-Educated followers are more influenced by niche influencers with expertise than mass influencers.</p> <p>The following of an influencer does not always matter, if they instead have a weather audience that has more. The following of an influencer does not always matter if they instead have a small, wealthy audience.</p>
Alexy, 2023	Qualitative	Global	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Diet comparison -Long-term health effects in children -Need for dietary supplements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Vegetarian and vegan diets can support a growing child. -Vegan diets can help prevent obesity -B12 supplements are essential for vegan children -Meat consumption must decrease to reduce climate change.
Helali, 2023	Quantitative	UAE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Email marketing -Social media marketing -Online 	<p>-The demographic of the consumers and one of the main influencing factors on their purchasing habits, the factors include-</p>

			<p>advertising</p> <p>-Mobile marketing</p>	<p>age of customer, gender, and education level</p> <p>- Email Marketing has no significant influence on consumer purchases.</p> <p>- The consumers living in the UAE are significantly affected by social media.</p> <p>-Consumer purchasing decisions differ according to demographic factors</p>
Mulla et al, 2025	Quantitative and Qualitative	UAE	<p>-Attitudes to words that substitute foods</p> <p>-Awareness</p> <p>-Peer influence</p> <p>-Environmental sustainability</p> <p>-Nutritional values.</p>	<p>-Many consumers choose plant-based meat for its health benefits, including lower cholesterol and improved nutrition.</p> <p>-Plant-based meats are seen as eco-friendly alternatives that help reduce emissions and protect biodiversity.</p> <p>-Social media influencers and peer groups significantly impact consumer interest and adoption of plant-based diets.</p> <p>- Concerns remain about the adequacy of plant-based meat in providing essential nutrients like amino acids.</p> <p>-High visibility of plant-based lifestyles on social media helps normalise and encourage such dietary choices.</p>

<p>Yousaf et al, 2023</p>	<p>Quantitative</p>	<p>UAE</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Impacts of attitude - Brand loyalty - Brand image - Brand awareness on interactive advertising 	<p>-Brand familiarity is a key driver of consumer trust and engagement in the UAE digital lifestyle market.</p> <p>-Consumers firmly intend to purchase from brands they consistently recognise through logos, names, and messaging.</p> <p>-Consistent brand presentation across digital platforms enhances credibility and emotional reassurance.</p> <p>-Long-term branding efforts are more effective than short-term promotions in influencing purchasing behaviour.</p> <p>-This emphasises the importance of sustained brand visibility to improve conversion rates and maintain a competitive edge.</p>
<p>Aleixo et al, 2020</p>	<p>Quantitative</p>	<p>Global</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Vegan Culinary Recipes - Negative Comments - Socio-Environmental & Political Activism - Defects between vegan and plant-based. 	<p>- After 5315 tweets analysed, it showed that vegan and plant-based perceptions differ significantly.</p> <p>- The vegan group had more posts, criticism, and a higher cost. The plant-based diet generally had a better quality of life due to the lower cost index and more options.</p>

<p>Drescher et al, 2023</p>	<p>Quantitative</p>	<p>Global</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Analysis of trends - Stakeholder Engagement - Marketing Impact - Real-Time Insights on food trends 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Analysis shows the hashtag carries a positive tone across most user discussions, promoting acceptance of veganism. -Consumers, businesses, and farmers engage in conversations in the vegan movement. -The Veganuary challenge functions like a campaign, encouraging people to try veganism and share experiences online. -Many tweets connect veganism with the climate crisis, reinforcing ethical and environmental motivations.
<p>Sijm et al, 2020</p>	<p>Qualitative</p>	<p>Global</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Willingness to learn about veganism -Ability to access information -The power of social media influencers -Desire to educate others -Health and ethical motivations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Social media influencers may impact interest in veganism over time. - Social media networks heavily affect/influence people into going vegan. - Found that the growth in veganism directly affects the increase in vegan influencers.

Omarien, 2019	Qualitative	Global	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Impact of social media on vegan lifestyles - Emotional influence -Investigates both positive and negative outcomes -Awareness of environmental impact 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The study shows that the more likes/interactions a post has, the more likely they are to believe it is right/normal. - Emotional content is often used in tweets to persuade others. There are mixed opinions that state veganism improves health.
Lundahl, 2017	Qualitative	Global	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Role of Media -Celebrity-Led Promotion & Branding -The ethical change in consumer 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Social media prioritises casting veganism as trendy instead of ethical, creating short-term veganism instead of creating a lifestyle.

The Influence of Social Media on Veganism and Plant-Based Diet Adoption

Research shows that social media affects how people view vegan diets. Consumers often choose veganism for its health benefits and positive environmental impact. Research from Chan (2022) shows that social media influencers are essential in shaping consumer perception and behaviour. Followers of the influencer have reported a boom in interest in plant-based diets. Emotional content on social media posts has been found to enhance the persuasiveness of vegan messages, resulting in increased follower engagement and a higher likelihood of changing diets. In addition, the #Veganuary campaign has proven effective in promoting veganism, generating significant interest and positive debate on the challenge across various social media sites. The campaign has caused around 25.8 million people to go vegan in 2025, as found by Veganuary.

Looking at multiple studies, it seems that while Mulla et al. (2025) suggest health and environmental motives for adopting plant-based diets, Sijm et al. (2020) refer to the role of social media influencers in creating interest, suggesting a complicated model within consumer behaviour analysis. Chan (2022) highlights niche influencers' role in securing loyal followers,

contradicting Helali (2023), who argues that macro social media marketing strategies are optimal in the UAE context. Besides, Omarien (2019) adds that emotional engagement through social media may enhance belief in veganism. In contrast, Aleixo et al. (2020) note that beliefs about veganism also differ and therefore may not be appealing to different groups of consumers in the same manner.

When comparing different studies, it becomes clear that while Mulla et al. (2025) emphasise health and environmental motivations for adopting plant-based diets, Sijm et al. (2020) focus on the role of social media influencers in driving interest, suggesting a multifaceted approach to understanding consumer behaviour. Chan (2022) highlights the importance of niche influencers with expertise in attracting loyal audiences, contrasting with Helali (2023), who suggests that broader social media marketing strategies are more effective in the UAE context. Furthermore, Omarien (2019) points out that emotional engagement through social media can lead to increased belief in veganism. Meanwhile, Aleixo et al. (2020) note that perceptions of veganism can change significantly, meaning that emotional appeals may not resonate similarly across different consumers.

Consumer Perceptions and Motivations for Veganism and Plant-Based Diets

Regarding consumer choices, many choose plant-based meat for its health benefits, including lower cholesterol and improved nutritional value. As Meati Foods proves, Plant-based meats are also considered eco-friendly alternatives that help reduce emissions and protect biodiversity. The primary motivations for adopting veganism are health and ethical concerns, although there are mixed opinions regarding whether veganism improves health. Aleixo et al (2020) study shows that vegan and plant-based perceptions differ significantly on social media, with veganism often associated with more criticism and higher costs, while plant-based diets are linked to a better quality of life due to lower costs and more options. Additionally, Drescher et al (2023) provide insights into the tweets that frequently connect veganism with the climate crisis, reinforcing ethical and environmental motivations. It is also noted that vegetarian and vegan diets can support a growing child, but B12 supplements are essential for vegan children, and vegan diets are believed to help prevent obesity.

When comparing studies, Mulla et al. (2025) and Sijm et al. (2020) identify health and environmental benefits as key motivators for adopting plant-based diets and veganism. However, Omarien (2019) introduces a slight difference by stating that opinions on the health benefits of veganism are mixed, suggesting that this motivation might not be universally accepted. Aleixo et al. (2020) highlight a crucial distinction between "vegan" and "plant-based" perceptions, indicating that the terms carry different meanings and public reception. This suggests that marketing and communication strategies must be precise in their terminology to align with

consumer expectations and avoid negative associations. Alexy (2023) provides specific insights into the health implications of vegan diets for children, emphasising the need for B12 supplements, which addresses a common concern about nutritional adequacy in plant-based diets.

The Economic and Environmental Implications of Plant-Based Diets

Studies indicate that plant-based diets can significantly decrease greenhouse gas emissions and resource use, making them more sustainable than traditional meat-based diets (Mulla et al., 2025). Additionally, the economic benefits of plant-based diets are becoming more apparent as consumers seek healthier and often more affordable alternatives to meat products. Research shows that many consumers perceive plant-based meats as cost-effective options contributing to personal health and environmental sustainability.

In comparing studies, Mulla et al. (2025) highlight the environmental sustainability of plant-based diets, while Alexy (2023) discusses the health benefits and nutritional value of vegan diets for children. However, there are conflicting views regarding how accessible and affordable plant-based options are, with some studies indicating that the perception of higher costs associated with veganism may discourage potential adopters (Aleixo et al., 2020). This highlights the need to explore further how economic factors influence consumer decisions regarding plant-based diets.

Media Representation and Its Impact on Veganism

Veganism is now more accepted and trendy than it used to be. Media portrayals of veganism have changed over the years, shifting from a stigmatised lifestyle to a popular choice. Research shows that how the media represents veganism affects how people view it. This representation can either support or challenge common stereotypes. Earlier studies found that many people associated veganism with aggression and extremism, which led to negative views (Cole & Morgan, 2011). However, recent studies suggest that this perception is changing. More lifestyle media now show veganism in a positive light, linking it to health, beauty, and celebrity culture (Lundahl, 2017; Sijm et al., 2020).

When comparing different studies, it is clear that earlier media framed veganism negatively, as noted by Cole and Morgan (2011). In contrast, recent studies, like those by Drescher et al. (2023) and Sijm et al. (2020), show a significant shift towards more positive portrayals. This change highlights how media narratives can change and affect how society views veganism. Additionally, while Lundahl (2017) criticises the media for focusing on trends instead of ethics, Drescher et al. (2023) point out the positive community-building aspects of veganism that social media campaigns promote.

This study examines the impact of social media on consumer behaviour regarding veganism and plant-based diets in the UAE. In a country where approximately 45% of the population are meat-eaters, 25% are flexitarians, and only 3% identify as vegans, as reported by YouGov, this topic has not been thoroughly explored in existing research. By integrating insights from studies conducted by Mulla et al. (2025) and Yousaf et al. (2023), this research provides a comprehensive understanding of how social media marketing strategies can effectively promote plant-based diets. Given the increasing popularity of plant-based diets and the rapid growth of social media as a marketing tool, understanding influencer marketing in this context is essential for academic research and industrial practice.

This study demonstrates how ideology and morals can be influenced by external factors, such as the type of media a person consumes. The UAE was chosen as the base country for this study because it is a diverse nation, home to hundreds of cultures and ethnic backgrounds, allowing for a broader demographic scope. The study offers actionable insights for future industries and businesses to leverage to their advantage.

Despite extensive research on how social media affects consumer behaviour, few studies focus on its role in promoting veganism and plant-based diets in the UAE. Most existing research has not examined how social media influencer marketing impacts eating habits over time. The study focuses on short-term effects, especially considering the unique cultural factors of the UAE. Future studies should examine how different types of social media content, like educational versus emotional posts, influence different demographic groups towards plant-based or vegan diets. It would also be helpful to explore how cultural and religious beliefs shape consumer attitudes towards veganism and plant-based diets in the UAE. This can give valuable insights for marketers.

Hypothesis Development

Drawing from the themes identified in the literature review and supported by the research's findings, three hypotheses are developed to examine how social media marketing influences consumer purchasing habits within the vegan industry in the UAE.

The literature review and the study's survey findings highlight the importance of health benefits as a primary motive for consumers. The survey showed that 85.3% of respondents chose health benefits as nutritional facts influenced a top reason for trying vegan products, and 72.4% in marketing. This aligns with Mulla et al. (2025) and Alexy (2023), who also emphasise health and nutritional value as key drivers for adopting plant-based diets. Therefore, the first hypothesis (H1) proposes that:

H1: Social media content focusing on vegan products' health and nutritional benefits is more effective when influencing consumer purchasing decisions in the UAE than emotional or ethical appeals.

Furthermore, the study found a weak but statistically significant positive correlation between the frequency of viewing vegan content on social media and increased visits to vegan restaurants. This shows that social media exposure impacts consumer actions beyond online engagement. The finding also supports that 37% of respondents have tried a vegan product after seeing it on social media. This leads to the second hypothesis (H2):

H2: There is a positive correlation between consumer exposure to vegan content on social media and an increase in their visits to vegan establishments.

The research shows that the influence of social media trends and individual influencers' perceived impact is insignificant. While studies like Sijm et al. (2020) and Chan (2022) note the role of influencers, the study's survey found that only 1.7% of respondents were motivated to try vegan products due to influencer impact, and 9.5% by social media trends. This suggests that while social media as a platform is influential, the specific role of influencers might be limited compared to other forms of content, like recipe videos or nutritional tips. This informs the third hypothesis (H3):

H3: The influence of social media content on consumer purchasing decisions is driven more by practical content like recipe videos and nutritional information rather than by influencer reviews or brand campaigns.

Consumer purchasing decisions in the vegan industry are more heavily influenced by practical, educational content, such as recipe videos and nutritional information, than marketing strategies involving influencer reviews or brand campaigns. It suggests that consumers prioritise content that provides tangible value and utility over promotional or endorsement-based messaging.

Survey

The survey took place on Google Forms from July 3 to July 17, 2024. It included residents of the UAE from different ages and backgrounds. The goal was to gather views from everyday consumers instead of industry experts, to understand buying habits and social media influence. The questionnaire examined how social media platforms like Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube affect people's attitudes toward vegan products. It asked multiple-choice and ranking questions about how often people eat vegan food, how social media influences them, their engagement with influencers, marketing visuals, brand views, and reasons for trying vegan products. The main aim was to find out how digital marketing creates awareness, encourages trial, and

influences purchasing decisions in the vegan market. To share the survey, we used various methods, including Instagram stories, direct messages, emails, and word of mouth. We followed ethical guidelines throughout the research. Participants learned about the study's purpose and were assured that their answers would be confidential and used only for academic purposes. Participating in the survey was voluntary, and we collected no identifying personal information.

Table 2: Survey Questionnaire

Hi! My name is Haya Shukkoor, and I'm a Year 12 student studying in the UAE. I am researching how social media marketing affects customer behaviour in the vegan industry, especially in the UAE's growing plant-based food market. This study aims to understand how businesses engage consumers, how digital platforms influence purchasing choices, and how vegan-friendly companies adapt to these trends. Your insights are important and will help us understand this new sector better. All responses will remain confidential and will only be used for academic purposes. Thank you for your time and support!

Questions	Options	%age response
1) What is your age group (If underage, there is an extra question confirming consent.)	1. Under 18	20.5%
	2. 18–25	5.5%
	3. 26–35	30.1%
	4. 36-45	13.7%
	5. 46-55	30.1%
	6. 56+	20.5%
2) What is your gender	1. Male	30.1%
	2. Female	67.1%
	3. Prefer not to say	2.7%
3) How long have you lived in the UAE?	1. Less than 1 year	8.2%
	2. 1–3 years	19.2%
	3. 4–7 years	
	4. More than 7 years	

		9.6%
		63%
4) What is your ethnicity	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Asian 2. Arab 3. Caucasian 4. African 5. Other 	<p>91.8%</p> <p>1.4%</p> <p>0%</p> <p>1.4%</p> <p>5.5%</p>
5) What best describes your dietary preference?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Non-vegetarian 2. Flexitarian 3. Vegetarian 4. Vegan 5. Other 	<p>63%</p> <p>24.7%</p> <p>8.2%</p> <p>1.4%</p> <p>2.8%</p>
6) How often do you consume vegan or plant-based meals	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Rarely (less than once a month) 2. Sometimes (1–3 times a month) 3. Often (once a week or more) 4. Very often (daily or almost daily) 5. Always (strict vegan) 	<p>9.6%</p> <p>20.5%</p> <p>28.8%</p> <p>41.1%</p> <p>0%</p>
7) How often do you come across vegan-related content on social media?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Rarely 2. Sometimes 3. Often 4. Very often 5. Always 	<p>34.2%</p> <p>45.2%</p> <p>15.1%</p> <p>4.1%</p>

		1.4%
8) Which platforms most often expose you to vegan food promotions?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Instagram 2. TikTok 3. YouTub 4. Snapchat 5. Facebook 6. Other 	<p>49.3%</p> <p>5.5%</p> <p>26.1%</p> <p>0%</p> <p>12.3%</p> <p>7%</p>
9) Have you ever tried a vegan product after seeing it on social media	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Yes 2. No 3. Not sure 	<p>37%</p> <p>50.7%</p> <p>12.3%</p>
10) Which type of social media content most influences your purchasing decisions?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Influencer reviews 2. Sponsored ads 3. Recipe videos 4. Brand pages and campaigns 5. Customer testimonials 6. Nutrition tips 7. Sustainability messaging 	<p>35.6%</p> <p>11%</p> <p>54.8%</p> <p>11%</p> <p>16.4%</p> <p>16.4%</p> <p>46.6%</p> <p>5.4%</p>
11) What would be your top reasons for trying vegan products?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Health benefit 2. Environmental concerns 3. Animal welfare 4. Trends/social media 	<p>86.3%</p> <p>17.8%</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 5. influency 6. Curiosity 	<p>17.8%</p> <p>11%</p> <p>2.7%</p> <p>26%</p>
12) What kind of marketing would cause you to buy a vegan product?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Emotional/ethical storytelling 2. Nutritional facts or comparisons 3. Before-and-after health results 4. Minimalist clean branding 5. Other 	<p>13.7%</p> <p>74%</p> <p>45.2%</p> <p>19.2%</p> <p>5.5%</p>
13) How likely are you to search for it online or in stores?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Not Likely 2. Somewhat likely 3. Likely 4. Very likely 	<p>31.5%</p> <p>54.8%</p> <p>12.3%</p> <p>1.4%</p>
14) How satisfied are you with the vegan food options available in the UAE?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Dissatisfied 2. Somewhat satisfied 3. Satisfied 4. Very satisfied 	<p>12.5%</p> <p>52.8%</p> <p>27.8%</p> <p>6.9%</p>
15) Have you ever visited a vegan restaurant or café after seeing it advertised on social media?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Yes, several times 2. Yes, once or twice 3. No, but I plan to 4. No, and I don't intend to 	<p>12.3%</p> <p>20.5%</p> <p>42.5%</p> <p>24.7%</p>

Analysis and Findings

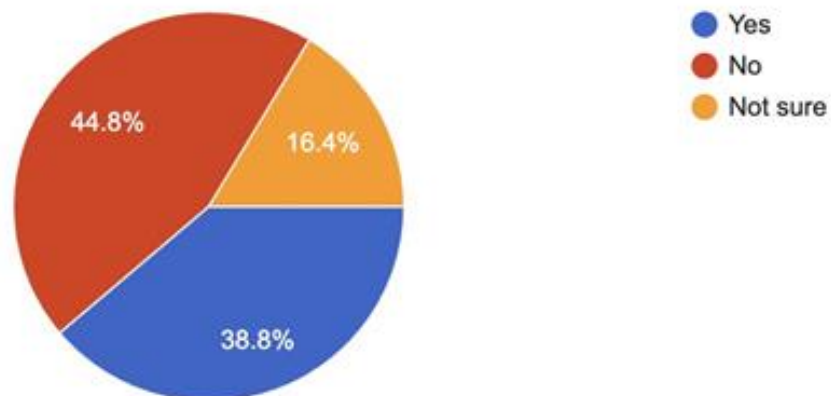
The survey's primary objective is to understand social media's impact on consumers and what type of content best gets a response from consumers. The questionnaire employed multiple-choice, Likert scale, and "select all that apply" formats to examine consumer behaviour and attitudes toward veganism, particularly about social media marketing. The survey sought to understand the frequency of exposure to vegan content, platforms used, types of content that influence buying behaviour, and motivations for trying vegan products.

The survey results indicated that 44.8% of individuals have not encountered information regarding veganism through various platforms. However, it is noteworthy that 38.8% of respondents indicated social media has influenced them, with Instagram identified as the predominant source, while an additional 16.4% were unsure. This suggests that, despite the visibility of vegan-related content, it may not effectively translate into increased sales.

Figure 1: Percentage of Individuals Influenced to Try Vegan Products via Online Exposure

Have you ever tried a vegan product after seeing it on social media?

116 responses

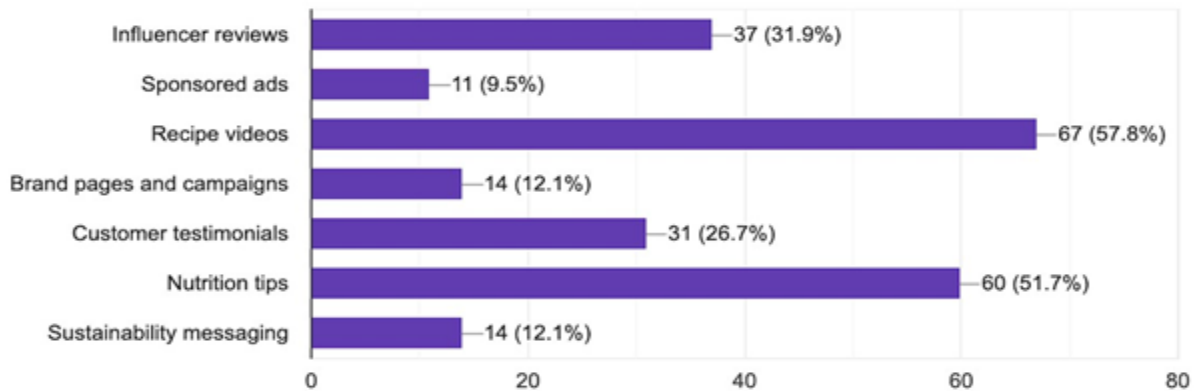


The survey indicates that recipe videos are the most influential content for consumerism, accounting for 57.8% of responses. This is followed by nutrition tips at 51.7%, while 31.9% of respondents noted that influencer reviews significantly affect consumer perception. Customer testimonials garnered 26.7% of responses; sustainability and brand pages received 12.1% each. Lastly, sponsored ads were the least selected option at 9.5%. These results suggest that the practical application of products is the most effective marketing strategy.

Figure 2: The most impactful consent for shaping consumer purchasing decisions

Which type of social media content most influences your purchasing decisions?

116 responses

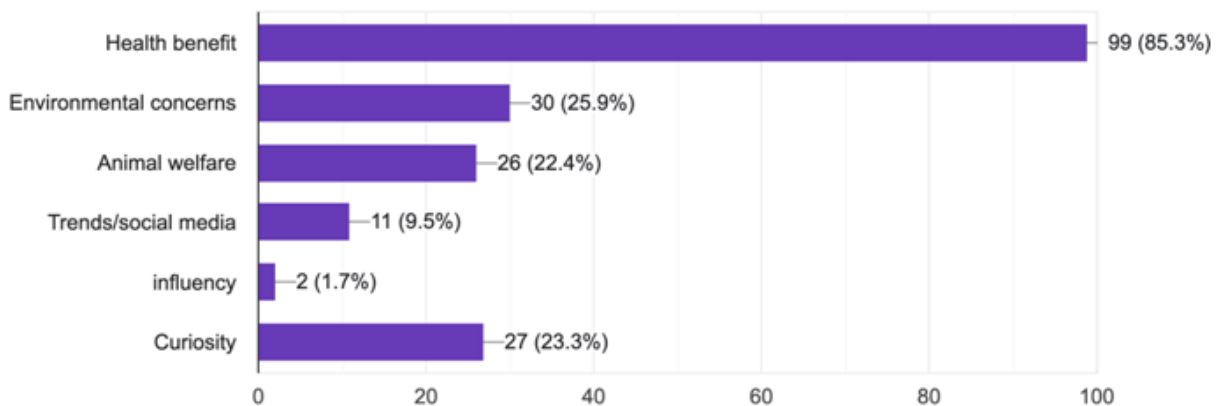


The primary factor motivating individuals to adopt veganism is the health benefits, which account for 85.3% of the responses. Following this, environmental concerns are a significant influence at 25.9%. Curiosity receives 23.3%, with animal welfare at 22.4%. Social media trends are noted by 9.5%, and influencer impact is 1.7%. This data suggests a limited presence of influencers within the vegan community. Despite the prior findings indicating that influencers considerably affect consumer choices, the responses highlighting their influence have notably decreased.

Figure 3: Most common reasons for trying vegan products?

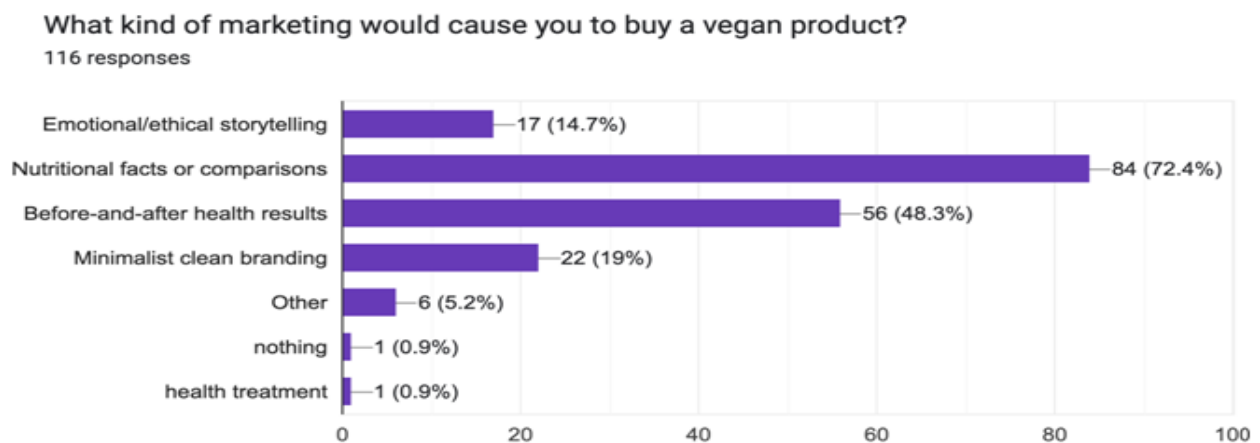
What would be your top reasons for trying vegan products?

116 responses



The research findings indicate the factors that most significantly influence consumer behaviour in marketing. 72.4% of respondents indicated that nutritional facts or product comparisons are the primary aspects affecting their decisions. Additionally, 48.3% reported being influenced by before-and-after health results. Minimalistic and clean branding appealed to 19% of consumers, while 14.7% were swayed by emotional or ethical storytelling. Lastly, 6.9% of respondents selected other influences.

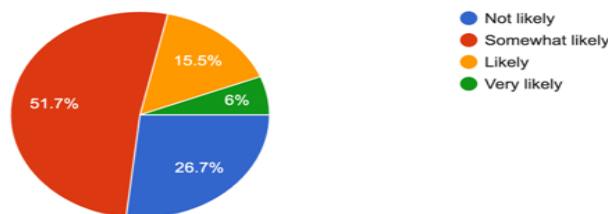
Figure 4: Most Influential Types of Marketing



The following data addresses the inquiry, “After seeing a vegan product on social media, how likely are you to search for it online or in stores?” The results indicate that 26.7% of consumers responded with "not likely," while 51.7% selected "somewhat likely." Furthermore, 15.5% of respondents indicated they are "likely" to search for the product, and 6% expressed they are "very likely" to do so.

Figure 5: Analysis of Consumer Search Behaviour Regarding the Likelihood of Trying Vegan Products Influenced by Social Media

After seeing a vegan product on social media, how likely are you to search for it online or in stores?
116 responses



Correlation and Regression Analysis

Correlation and regression analyses examined the relationships between key variables related to vegan content consumption and consumer behaviour. The aim was to find essential connections and possible influences on vegan meal consumption, the role of recipe videos, the significance of nutritional marketing, and visits to vegan restaurants. A measurement of the strength and direction of relationships between the variables using the correlation coefficient (r) was conducted. Regression analysis allowed a better understanding of how certain factors predict vegan food choices. The results show how exposure to vegan content and marketing shapes consumer habits and interest in vegan products.

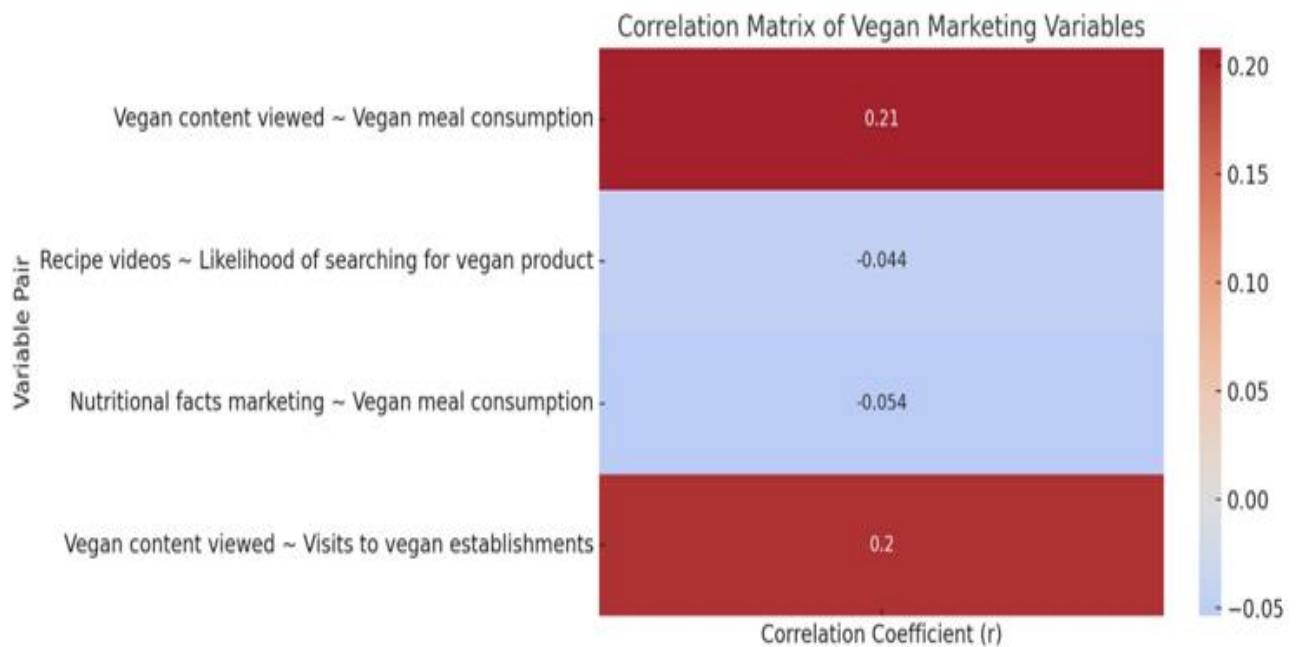
Correlation

Table 2: Correlation Analysis

Variable Pair	Correlation Coefficient (r)	p-value	Interpretation
How often vegan content is viewed, and the frequency of vegan meal consumption	0.208	0.024	There is a weak relationship, however is statistically significant; the number of views is weakly linked to the frequency of vegan meal consumption.
Recipe videos influence the likelihood of searching for a vegan product	-0.044	0.632	There was a weak negative relationship between being influenced by recipe videos and the likelihood of searching for a vegan product.
The importance of Nutritional facts marketing and the frequency of vegan meal consumption	-0.054	0.558	There was a weak negative relationship between the importance of nutritional facts in marketing and the frequency of vegan meal consumption.

How often vegan content is viewed, and the change in visitors to vegan establishments	0.196	0.034	There was a weak positive relationship between how often vegan content is viewed and visits to vegan establishments
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The correlation analysis examined the strength and direction of relationships between variables related to vegan content consumption and behavior. A weak but statistically significant positive correlation was found between how often vegan content is viewed and the frequency of vegan meal consumption ($r = 0.21$, $p = 0.025$). Similarly, a weak positive relationship was observed between viewing vegan content and changes in visits to vegan establishments ($r = 0.20$, $p = 0.035$). In contrast, the influence of recipe videos on the likelihood of searching for vegan products and the importance of nutritional facts marketing showed very weak negative correlations, both of which were not statistically significant ($p > 0.55$). These findings suggest limited but meaningful links between exposure to vegan content and consumer behaviour patterns.



Regression

Model	R-squared	Coefficient	P-Value	Interpretation
The frequency of vegan meal consumption and the frequency of seeing vegan content	0.043	0.208	0.024	The analysis revealed a weak positive relationship between the frequency of seeing vegan content and the frequency of vegan meal consumption.
The impact of recipe videos and the probability of looking for vegan products	0.002	-0.044	0.631	The results show a very weak negative relationship that is not statistically significant.
The frequency of vegan meal consumption and the significance of nutritional facts marketing	0.003	-0.054	0.556	Very weak negative relationship between the frequency of vegan meal consumption and the perceived importance of nutritional facts marketing
The frequency of viewing vegan information and the shift in the number of people visiting vegan restaurants	0.038	0.196	0.034	The viewing of vegan information and the increase in visits to vegan restaurants have a weak positive relationship that is statistically significant.

A regression analysis was performed to explore the connections between various vegan-related behaviours and influences. The model evaluating the frequency of vegan meal consumption, as influenced by the frequency of encountering vegan content, indicated a weak but statistically significant positive correlation ($R^2 = 0.043$, coefficient = 0.208, $p = 0.024$), suggesting that greater exposure to vegan content is slightly linked to increased vegan meal consumption. On the other hand, the effect of recipe videos on the probability of seeking vegan products demonstrated a very weak negative correlation that lacked statistical significance ($R^2 = 0.002$, coefficient = -0.045, $p = 0.631$), implying no substantial impact. Likewise, the link between vegan meal consumption and the emphasis on nutritional facts marketing was weak and negative, without statistical significance ($R^2 = 0.003$, coefficient = -0.055, $p = 0.556$). Finally, the frequency of accessing vegan information showed a weak positive and statistically significant association with an increase in visits to vegan restaurants ($R^2 = 0.038$, coefficient = 0.196, $p = 0.035$), indicating that more exposure to vegan information is associated with a slight increase in vegan restaurant attendance.

Hypotheses and Analytical Approach

H1: Social media content focusing on vegan products' health and nutritional benefits is more effective when influencing consumer purchasing decisions in the UAE than emotional or ethical appeals.

- Variable Mapping: Influence of content type (predictor), Consumer purchasing decision (outcome)
- Analysis: The survey data strongly support this hypothesis. 85.3% of respondents identified health benefits as a top reason for trying vegan products; nutritional facts or comparisons influenced 72.4%. This indicates a significant relationship between health-focused content and consumer behaviour.
- The literature review consistently reinforces this finding, highlighting health consciousness as a primary driver for adopting plant-based diets. The data suggests that consumers prioritise practical benefits over ethical reasons when purchasing in this sector.

H2: A statistically significant positive relationship exists between consumers' exposure to vegan content on social media and their likelihood of visiting vegan establishments.

- Variable Mapping: Frequency of viewing vegan content (predictor) ~ Increase in visits to vegan restaurants (outcome)

- Analysis: The correlation analysis showed a weak but statistically significant positive relationship ($r = 0.20$, $p = 0.035$). This suggests that while the impact is not substantial.
- Survey results also show similar results, with 32.8% of respondents indicating they had visited a vegan restaurant or café after seeing it advertised on social media. This shows a direct link between online content and real-world actions.

H3: Practical, educational content (e.g., recipe videos, nutrition tips) is the primary driver of consumer purchasing decisions in the vegan industry, rather than influencer marketing or sponsored advertisements.

- Variable Mapping: Type of social media content (predictor) ~ Influence on purchasing decisions (outcome)
- Analysis: The study's findings reveal a clear preference for informational content. Recipe videos (57.8%) and nutrition tips (51.7%) were cited as the most influential types of content, while influencer reviews were only influential for 31.9% of respondents. A regression analysis shows that practical content types predict consumer behaviour more than influencer marketing.
- Qualitative data shows the survey respondents indicated a greater trust in educational content that provides clear, actionable information.

Discussion

These results align with Mulla et al.'s (2025) and Alexy's (2023) findings, who emphasised that health and nutritional value are the primary motivators for adopting plant-based diets. This explains why nutritional comparisons and recipe videos more influence consumers in the UAE than emotional appeals or ethical storytelling.

This study challenges the views of Omarien (2019) and Sijm et al. (2020), finding that while influencers are essential, informative content has a greater impact on vegan behaviour. This trend indicates increasing consumer scepticism, as people prioritise evidence over promotion.

For Vegan Brands, focus on fact-based, visual content such as nutrition breakdowns, comparison infographics, and recipe demonstrations. Influencer partnerships should focus on authenticity and education, not just promotion. For Social Media Marketers, developing campaigns that prioritise functionality and health impact may help. Include “before-and-after” health stories or fundamental user transformations to enhance credibility.

Given the dominant health motivation observed, policymakers may consider integrating vegan education into public health campaigns, especially in schools and wellness centres.

This study reinforces that social media can shape awareness and value systems if the messaging aligns with personal priorities. In the UAE, a health-forward narrative remains, suggesting that consumer behaviour is not always morally driven, even in industries like veganism, which have strong ethical foundations.

Implications

This study contributes to existing academic studies insofar as it has analysed the impact of social media marketing on the vegan industry, a previously overlooked yet rapidly growing marketplace. While previous studies have established that social media significantly affects the consumer's attitude, this study specifically focuses on the impact on veganism in the UAE. Social media influences consumer purchasing behaviour and can create moral ideologies around environmental issues and animal welfare. The spiral study combines an analysis of privacy data and a new data collection better to understand the relationship between social media and consumers.

Previous research has focused on the impact of social media on consumer behaviour, the challenges faced, or the motivations behind adopting veganism. However, there is no reason not to combine the two and focus on the UAE, a diverse country home to over 200 nationalities that focuses on niche markets like veganism. The research aims to cover these perspectives.

The findings of this study are important to policymakers, businesses, and educators. The UAE government is made aware of which residents are making environmental and ethical choices and how social media is taking part in it. The study shows how consumer opinions may change. This is helpful information for future sustainability policy, which the UAE is known for. The study shows how social media usage can expand brand visibility and grow business engagement, particularly in the food and lifestyle industry. Educators and social activists can also use these findings to improve the creation of awareness campaigns.

This study helps reduce environmental harm and animal farming by showing how social media influences moral consumer choices. According to Humane World for Animals, approximately 92.2 billion animals are raised and slaughtered annually for consumption. The rise of veganism can play a vital role in gradually reducing this number. The study also indicates how social media can give smaller businesses an inexpensive way to promote their businesses.

Limitations and Future Directions

Acknowledging this study's limitations is essential, as it provides context for the findings and potential for future research. While the research offers valuable insights into the role of social media in shaping consumer behaviour within the vegan industry in the UAE, certain methodological and contextual limitations should be noted.

One of the primary methodological limitations of this study is the relatively small and uneven sample size. While responses were collected from individuals across various age groups, the results may vary due to the diverse demographics. Future research should consider expanding the sample size and including a more balanced representation of producers and consumers to improve their final results.

In terms of scope, this study focuses specifically on the vegan industry within the UAE. According to YouGov, vegans make up only around 3% of the UAE population, and that fully vegan establishments are limited; the data was mainly collected from vegan-friendly rather than fully vegan businesses. As such, the findings may not directly apply to other lifestyle industries such as fashion or home décor. Future studies could investigate how social media affects consumer behaviour in other lifestyle sectors and a globalised setting.

The study also depended on self-reported data from producers and consumers, and potential biases such as social desirability or selective memory. Future research could use more factual data, such as sales numbers, growth rates, or social media engagement.

The theoretical framework helped us understand consumer behaviour, but didn't consider outside factors like culture or the economy. Future research should include these elements to understand how social media drives lifestyle changes.

Conclusion

The primary aim of this study was to investigate how social media influences consumer purchasing decisions in the vegan industry within the United Arab Emirates. With the rise of social media as a marketing platform, this research focused on understanding how digital content shapes consumer perception, values, and lifestyle choices, particularly regarding ethical choices such as veganism. This study explored both consumer behaviour and the strategies employed by vegan-friendly businesses.

However, this research was limited by its narrow geographical scope and the relatively small size of the UAE's vegan population, representing only about 3% of the total population. As a result, data was primarily collected from vegan-friendly rather than fully vegan establishments, which

may have influenced the accuracy of the data. In addition, the reliance on self-reported data from consumers and producers introduced the possibility of bias, which may have affected the data. Future research could broaden the demographic scope to include more global samples.

Additionally, expanding the scope to explore other lifestyle industries, such as the wellness, fashion, or home décor industry, would provide a complete understanding of how social media marketing shapes ethical consumption.

This study has significant practical implications. Businesses can use these findings to create targeted campaigns that resonate with ethically motivated consumers. Social media can influence what people buy, how they live, and what they believe. Understanding these dynamics can help brands adapt their messaging to the changing values of their target audience.

In conclusion, social media significantly impacts consumers' everyday lives and moral choices. As digital platforms continue to grow, they will likely play an even greater role in shaping consumer behaviour and the direction of entire industries. This study highlights the importance of using ethical, data-driven marketing strategies in lifestyle industries, such as veganism.

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