

The factors impacting on the travel experience of a vegan lifestyle

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Abstract

Purpose – This study aims to examine the factors of the vegan lifestyle on the travel experience. Special emphasis was placed on difficulties during travel and influencing factors for destination choice.

Design/methodology/approach – The vegan lifestyle has emerged as a growing market. The dietary reference is well-known, but the impact of the vegan lifestyle on tourism has received less attention. Earlier researchers have cited motivations of ethics, the environment and health as key. An online survey was conducted within the target group of vegans to provide more understanding of vegan tourism.

Findings – A few participants stated that they refused to visit countries due to too high meat consumption or due to long flight distances. Nature was named as the most decisive factor for choosing a travel destination among the respondents. Problems that might arise were mainly the general lack of awareness about veganism, as well as the confusion between vegetarianism and veganism in the destinations. Most respondents indicated that these problems were generally prepared for during the pre-planning process.

Research limitations/implications – Research on vegan tourism is a relatively unexplored niche topic, the study used related topics adapted to a vegan tourism context.

Practical implications – Enhanced education about veganism among tourism service providers would be desirable to counteract such problems in the future and make the travel experience more carefree for vegans.

Originality/value – There has been little research in the field of vegan tourism, thus, this study provides valuable information on the needs and challenges of this growing market.

Keywords Vegan lifestyle, Destination choice, Travel experience

Paper type Research paper

Introduction

While not a new trend, veganism is considered a growing lifestyle trend that has found its way into general society (De Boo, House, & Calvert, 2014). The history of the vegan lifestyle dates back to the middle of the 19th century (Davis, 2015) and it is not limited to nutritional considerations. Veganism exists as a choice of diet and lifestyle that refers to everything a person consumes (Prabhu, 2019). While currently still a niche lifestyle, an increasing number of people are choosing to change to a vegan lifestyle for a variety of reasons with the most common reasons including health, ethics, and the environment (Greenebaum, 2012; Prabhu, 2019). If this growth rate continues through 2030, almost 10% of the world's population could be vegan compared to about 1% currently (Meyer, 2020).



A wide variety of economic markets are affected by this growth, including tourism. Vegan tourists travel to destinations to experience animal-free and largely sustainable products, offerings and activities (Fusté-Forné, 2021). There have only been a few studies on the topic of vegan tourism. Vegans represent a unique target group with differing needs, expectations and desires compared to conventional tourists. In most studies, vegan tourism has been combined with more general culinary tourism (Kansanen, 2013; Nguyen, 2019; Fusté-Forné, 2021). In consideration of the sustainable aspect, the tourism industry could benefit from responding positively to this target group. To facilitate sustainable living, changes are needed for travel behavior with vegan tourism representing an important form of sustainable tourism (Dilek & Dilek, 2020).

Because assessing a travel experience can be a complex task, the process has been divided into several phases. These include the pre-trip motivation and planning, the destination decision-making process, the actual trip experiences and vegan-related tourism. This study focuses on two research questions by compiling primary data and synthesizing secondary data from the existing literature relating to vegan tourism, sustainable tourism and travel decision-making. The key research questions include: Which factors are decisive for vegan travelers when choosing their travel destination? And what difficulties can arise while travelling? The primary purpose of this study is to develop a better understanding of vegan travelers and provide tourist service providers with a better understanding of how to facilitate this target group.

Literature review

Veganism

The term “vegan” was formed by Donald Watson, the co-founder of the Vegan Society in 1944, “to describe vegetarians who do not use dairy products” (Stepaniak, Messina, & Adams, 2000, p. 2). The word is made up of the first three and the last two letters of the expression “vegetarian.” Veganism is not only a specific form of nutrition, but also a special way of life. This is explained in the Memorandum and Articles of Association of the Vegan Society:

Veganism denotes a philosophy and way of living which seeks to exclude – as far as is possible and practicable – all forms of exploitation of, and cruelty to, animals for food, clothing or any other purpose; and by extension, promotes the development and use of animal-free alternatives for the benefit of humans, animals and the environment. (The Vegan Society (2021, p. 3)

While this definition assumes that all vegan people have chosen this way of life out of ethical convictions there are several reasons for choosing this lifestyle. Although the Vegan Society equates a vegan lifestyle with a whole-food plant-based diet, there are some differences. For example, people who live purely vegan may also eat processed foods; this is not the case with a whole-food plant-based diet. In addition, vegans do not use any animal products, including leather, wool or beeswax, whereas a whole-food, plant-based diet does not presuppose such use (Prabhu, 2019). It is therefore important not only to design the diet without animal products, but also to do without them in all other areas of life (The Vegan Society, 2021). For instance, the idea of “dynamic harmlessness” (Stepaniak *et al.*, 2000, p. 7) describes the active decision to live in a way that is peaceful and respectful to all and a key vegan principle.

Even though this lifestyle is a choice by a minority, a strong trend is emerging toward increased veganism. Especially in Western countries, Eastern Europe, Israel and Australia, a significant increase toward the vegan movement can be noted (Meyer, 2020). Although veganism is still seen as a very restricted lifestyle by most non-vegan people, it is gaining popularity and integrating into mainstream culture, resulting from many years of development (De Boo *et al.*, 2014; Prabhu, 2019).

History of veganism

Although its popularity has grown in recent years, the beginnings date back to the 19th century (Davis, 2015; Ahrens, 2020). It is claimed that there have always been people who chose to avoid animal products. However, this was mainly for religious reasons (Davis, 2015). Many food traditions can also be traced back to the simple absence of sufficient food. Plant foods were usually cheaper and easier to produce than foods of animal origin (Adams, 2010; Bertella, 2018).

However, the trend of renouncing meat has existed for several centuries. Western vegetarianism has its roots in ancient Greece, where the philosopher Pythagoras pursued the same idea in the 6th century BC for ethical and philosophical reasons (Leitzmann & Keller, 2013). The interpretation of vegetarianism at that time can be equated with veganism today. It was not until the founding of the Vegetarian Society in 1847 that dairy products and eggs were added officially to this diet (Davis, 2015).

The question about the justification of the consumption of dairy products and eggs came finally to an end in November 1944, where “veganism” appeared by the Vegan Society to create a separation from vegetarians (De Boo *et al.*, 2014). With the publication of their manifesto, they became a significant role model for the Vegan Society in the USA, which was founded in 1948. This was followed a few years later by Germany in 1950 and India in 1957 (De Boo *et al.*, 2014).

With the founding of the organization “People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals” (PETA) in 1980, the vegan lifestyle became more widely known among the general population (Stepaniak *et al.*, 2000). In Germany, the number of people living vegan increased from 0.85 million in 2015 to 1.13 million by 2020 (IfD Allensbach and Pawlik, 2020). There were approximately 1 million vegans in America and nearly 720,000 vegans in the UK in 2020. Globally, the proportion of people living a vegan lifestyle is estimated at 1% in 2021, which would correspond to about 79 million people (Meyer, 2020).

Motivations for vegan lifestyle

Frequently, the decision to adopt a vegan lifestyle arises after a catalytic moment. This can be a serious illness, watching a documentary about the suffering of animals in unethical factory farming, reading an article or many other things (Prabhu, 2019). According to a 2019 survey, animal welfare was one of the strongest reasons for the lifestyle (95% of respondents), followed by environment and sustainability (83.9%) and health reasons (55.9%) (Veganz, 2019). Consequently, this study concentrates on the main motives suggested in the literature (Greenebaum, 2012; Prabhu, 2019).

Ethical vegans shape their lifestyle around the philosophy of animal rights and follow it for ethical, moral and political reasons (Greenebaum, 2012). They want to counteract the utilization of animals on factory farms and support species-appropriate animal husbandry, as well as general animal welfare (Prabhu, 2019; Ahrens, 2020). In addition to animal welfare, the well-being of humans also influences the important role for the ethical vegan. *Environmental vegans* want to promote sustainability through their lifestyle by counteracting the environmentally harmful effects of an omnivorous diet and the associated production of greenhouse gases (Prabhu, 2019). *Health vegans* are convinced that a vegan diet improves their health (Greenebaum, 2012; Prabhu, 2019). Their catalytic moment was often a bad illness either of themselves or family member (Prabhu, 2019).

Vegan travel

Veganism refers to the way of life and can also be applied to the way of travelling (Greenebaum, 2012). Dilek and Dilek (2020) define a vegan tourist as “person who has a sense of responsibility, prioritizes sustainability, opposes all kinds of commodification of animals and

transforms this into a way of life."(p. 152). Thus, the difference between a vegan tourist and a "conventional" tourist is that a vegan tourist abstains from any kind of animal products during their travel experience. Furthermore, they seek to make their travel behavior as sustainable as possible, for example, in the reduction of emissions or in the support of local communities (Dilek & Dilek, 2020).

With increasing vegan popularity, the demand for vegan travel has risen drastically. The tourism sector defines this target group as predominantly young, urban, high purchasing power and predominantly female. In addition to packaged travel experiences, vegan travelers have expectations for individually tailored travel with realistic impressions of the countries that are visited without reductions on lifestyle or diet (Holey, 2019).

Most of the research on vegan tourism relates to the culinary experience and thus positions food as one of its main influences. Thereby, the journey is a way to visit different destinations with a view to exploring animal-free cuisine (Fusté-Forné, 2021). However, Kansanen (2013) distinguishes between two categories of vegan tourists: the culinary vegan tourist with a focus on discovering different cuisines and the vegan tourist who travels for different reasons like culture or nature. Travelers with a vegan lifestyle carry similar expectations as people with a different lifestyle including the escape from everyday life, the discovery of new and exotic things, the search for authenticity, exhilaration, esteem and the search for oneself (Farkić, 2016). These consumers seek to gain new knowledge, experience and discover new tastes (Toral, 2016).

Vegan travel problems

Due to cultural differences, language barriers and its relative recency, a vegan traveler may encounter challenging travel situations (Kansanen, 2013). It may even dissuade some from visiting certain destinations or travelling at all (Nguyen, 2019). A major problem that vegans face when travelling is that in many countries, individual hotels or restaurants, the concept of veganism is either not known or is misunderstood. This problem is amplified when travelling in non-urban areas. For the dining experience, vegans often miss out on gourmet cuisine that is usually targeted to non-vegan travelers due to a major challenge for traditional restaurants to develop equivalent vegan dining options (Fusté-Forné, 2021). Some vegans complain about the seriousness and truthfulness of marketers in the entire tourism sector, especially related to gastronomy (Eren, 2020). Based on these experiences, a large proportion of vegans indicated that they do not expect to be able to fully follow their vegan lifestyle while travelling. Many make exceptions to their diet while travelling and consume animal products if no vegan options are available (Kansanen, 2013; Nguyen, 2019). However, vegans with ethical and spiritual motivations appear to be more inclined to maintain their principles even in unsupportive surroundings (Stepaniak *et al.*, 2000).

A vegan lifestyle affects the food consumed and the entire way of travelling (Fusté-Forné, 2021). In most cases, the focus of the vegan traveler's interests refers to other things such as culture and nature. For them, the quality of the food is a less decisive factor and thus has less influence on the travel experience (Kansanen, 2013). The exploitation of animals, for example, in zoos, bullfights or aquariums, as well as environmental factors, can be a contributing aspect of which attractions or destinations are chosen (Shani, 2012). Many vegans only travel within their own continent and try to keep the number of trips low in order to reduce CO₂ emissions or stay at home entirely (Nguyen, 2019). It is up to individuals to decide the extent travelling is compatible with their vegan lifestyle.

Vegan travel solutions

There are various strategies to counteract possible problems vegans encounter when travelling. The most effective method is preparation and research before the trip. This refers

to suitable accommodation where food can be prepared and no animal products are used including in cosmetics or blankets, where vegan food options are available, as well as vegan-friendly attractions and activities, and general dining options in the destination (Nguyen, 2019). This enables travelers to explore which dishes and ingredients are popular and perhaps even vegan-friendly in the regions before arriving in a foreign country (Kansanen, 2013; Nguyen, 2019; Sanders, 2021). The app “Happy Cow” in particular is considered to be a great support in finding vegan restaurants in foreign environments before and during the trip (Fusté-Forné, 2021). Packing snacks and shopping at local supermarkets circumvent situations where vegan food is not available, as well as carrying a “vegan passport” which explains in different languages what veganism means and can help with language problems (The Vegan Society, 2021). Travelling to destinations with similar cultures also presents fewer challenges as it is easier to understand the culture (Kansanen, 2013).

Supply of veganism

Opportunities. As more companies embrace animal-free and sustainable products, an increasing number of vegan-friendly hotels, dining options, excursions, tours and digital travel apps are emerging, along with numerous other innovations (GlobalData, 2021; Huth, 2021). In this respect, the intentionally vegan dining experience can play an important role in place branding and destination distinctiveness (Bertella, 2018). For companies in the travel industry, the trend leads toward more personalization in their products to ensure the satisfaction of different types of travelers, such as vegan travelers (GlobalData, 2021).

The provision of vegan products in the tourism industry is an opportunity that entrepreneurs can take advantage of and offers many possibilities to reach new customer bases (GlobalData, 2021). There is an on-going positive trend toward more vegan-friendly options in the gastronomic sector, which still needs to be improved in the bed and breakfast and other sectors (Fusté-Forné, 2021). Travel companies should be prepared for the provision of different diets to ensure a high-quality service as it can be a crucial factor for provider selection decisions (Toral, 2016).

The context of the rapidly growing tourism industry and the major role of animals as a tourism product seem to indicate an ever-increasing interaction with them. In particular, there seems to be an interest in new and exotic experiences with animals (Yudina, Yudinaand, & Fennell, 2013). The literature indicates that an enormous number of animals used for tourism purposes are exploited and mistreated (Winter, 2020). Through increased consumer education, the circumstances behind certain animal-based attractions are becoming publicized. The offering of vegan products, the complete absence of animals on the menu and the equipment or activities represent a marker for the ethical position of the retailer, as well as the consumers to whom the concept is geared (Bertella, 2018; Fox, 2018).

Vegan businesses. There is a growing market for vegan businesses. “Happy Cow” is one of the most well-known apps and is used by many vegans to find vegan restaurants before or during travel (Kansanen, 2013). The economic market, however, presents several more competitors. In 2021, the animal rights organization PETA awarded companies that have made a conscious decision to enable animal-free and vegan travel. These include the company “Vanilla Bean,” which developed a restaurant guide for vegan restaurants as the best award-winning travel app, or “Vegan Welcome” as the best travel online portal (Huth, 2021). “Vegan Welcome” is a project of “Veggie Hotels,” which in 2011 published the world’s first listing of purely vegetarian-vegan hotels, guest houses, and health centers. The company already comprises more than 500 establishments around the globe (Klein, Klein, & Haunert, 2021). However, companies also exist that have been on the market longer. “VegVoyages” started in 2004 with just three tours in one country. Today, the company organizes up to 27 tours a year in different countries such as India, Nepal or Laos. During these tours, they dispense with the

use of animals in any way (VegVoyages, 2021). The advantage of travelling with a vegan tour operator is that customers can enjoy the local food without worrying about accidentally consuming non-vegan food. Other vegan companies in the tour operator sector are “Green Earth Travel,” “CPG Vegan Trips” or “Vegan Reisen” (PETA Deutschland, 2021). Each of these companies has its own unique selling points, such as offering plant-based cooking workshops, well-known vegan speakers or a specialization in certain countries or continents (Fox, 2018).

Many established companies include the vegan concept in their services. For example, the tour operator TUI offers several vegan options for both accommodations and travel experiences (TUI, 2021). Additionally, the luxury hotel, London’s Bankside Hilton, began offering the world’s first vegan hotel suite in 2019. These suites feature bedding free from animal products, feather-free pillows, plant-based menus, organic cotton carpets, furniture using leather made from pineapple, and toiletries that did not undergo any animal testing (Holev, 2019). These examples provide a glimpse into where travel and accommodation may be heading in the near future to address this growing need.

Destination choice process

The decision to travel is a complex process in which the choice of destination plays a decisive role due to its long planning period and personal relevance. It is classified as the main decision in the decision-making process (Jeng & Fesenmaier, 2002). Several models have been developed to understand the process. The most common representatives are microeconomic and behaviorist approaches (Reintinger, 2016). This is different from the choice set theory; studies using this framework use a macro perspective to describe the destination choice process (Qiu, Masiero, & Li, 2018).

To explain the structure and process of destination decision-making, the choice set theory framework includes evoked inert and inept sets of consumer behaviors that are employed to describe the decision-making process (Sherrell & Woodside, 1977); it was further revised and developed (Um & Crompton, 1990; Karl, Reintinger, & Schmude, 2015). Decision-making processes are, according to the set theory, multilevel processes in which various alternative destinations are minimized in a funnel-like progression (Um & Crompton, 1990; Sirakaya & Woodside, 2005). With this set structure, every possible destination is identified and further subdivided into three subsets: 1) *unawareness set*: destinations of which tourists are still unaware, 2) *unavailable awareness set*: destinations that are known to tourists but inaccessible due to certain barriers and 3) *available awareness set*: destinations that are known and attainable. The destinations that respond to the available awareness set are then divided into three categories: 1) *inept set*: tourists have negative evaluations, 2) *inert set*: tourists are impartial and 3) *relevant set*: destinations that tourists would seriously consider and seek further information (Karl *et al.*, 2015). It should be emphasized that the destinations from the inert set are not completely excluded and may be earmarked for future travelling (Qiu *et al.*, 2018).

The final step is whether the decision was implemented. Tourists might decide against an action, these destinations constitute the inaction set and later transition to the inert set. Another option is that tourists get negative feelings toward a destination, these would then be reverted to the inept set. The process is accomplished when a final destination is chosen (Reintinger, 2016; Qiu *et al.*, 2018).

Um and Crompton (1990) designed the “Model of Pleasure Travel Destination Choice Process” to examine the role attitudes and behavior play in the destination choice process. The destination decision is divided into two phases: 1) whether to travel generally and 2) deciding where to travel. As part of this process, the three main concepts were defined as external inputs, internal inputs and cognitive constructs (Um & Crompton, 1990). External

inputs are the stimuli generated by destination marketing and communication efforts. Sociopsychological factors such as attitudes, moral values, personal characteristics and touristic motives are classified as internal inputs. Along with the external inputs, these factors influence the cognitive construct, which shows how and at what level the decision is influenced (Hudson, 1999). They further identified five sets of processes: *Belief Formation* (destination characteristics in the awareness set, passive information gathering and unintentional learning), *Initiation of Choice* (the choice that involves consideration of relevant restrictions), *Evolution of an Evoked Set* (development of a set based on the awareness set of the destination), *Belief Foundation* (a subjective belief about the destination through active information acquisition) and *Destination Selection* (choosing a specific destination) (Um & Crompton, 1990).

Methodology

Research design

The methodology section includes an outline of the research design, the research methods, the survey construction and sample used. A questionnaire was created and adopted from the existing literature. This questionnaire was developed in English and German and tested for its reliability and validity. A pre-test was conducted among a smaller group of individuals who had characteristics like the target group but were also neutral on the topic. Once the pre-test was reviewed, the questionnaire was published online. The planned sample size was determined to be 400 useable responses to ensure sufficient power in the tests and a large enough sample to ensure generalizability to the population. When the planned sample size was reached after nine days, the questionnaire was removed from the Internet. The data was evaluated using the software “jamovi” (The jamovi project, 2021).

Based on the theoretical foundation and with reference to veganism, three research questions were elaborated: Do vegan travelers having similar expectations as non-vegan travelers (i.e. Farkić, 2016)? Does the vegan travel expectations impact the motivation to travel? How important are sustainability and culinary experiences as motivators (i.e. Dilek & Dilek, 2020; Kansanen, 2013).

The decision to travel is a complex process that can be influenced by various factors (Jeng & Fesenmaier, 2002); thus, the participants were asked to rate the importance of different influences. Despite a growing trend toward a vegan lifestyle, challenges were assessed as a component of this study.

Questionnaire

Based on a synthesis of the literature, this study used standardized questionnaires (Stier, 1996) and assessed the quality criteria of quantitative research as suggested by Mayer (2007) which includes objectivity, reliability and validity.

An online questionnaire was used to collect the sample due to greater accessibility to the vegan population. The survey was published in about 30 vegan groups on Facebook to obtain a broad spectrum of potential participants and a high representation of the population. Regarding lifestyle, food, health, travel and related topics, social media platforms are important sources to generate insights about these topics. Accordingly, Facebook is one of the largest social media platforms worldwide (Dixon, 2023); thus, it was selected as the primary source for data collection.

Before completing the survey, the participants could choose between a German and an English version. Participants were then asked how long and why they had chosen a vegan lifestyle as well as the “type” of vegan they associated with. The remaining survey sections assessed travel motivations, questions about travel behavior, the decision process and

problems associated with their vegan lifestyle. Finally, respondents were asked about the influence of the vegan lifestyle on travel experiences, worries during travel, problems that respondents have experienced during their travels, and things they do to counteract them as well as inquiring on what requires the most travel planning.

Evaluation and statistical procedure

The data collected was analyzed with descriptive statistics, *t*-test and variance analysis ([The jamovi project, 2021](#)). Multiple five-point rating scales were used, ranging from “not at all important” (1) to “extremely important” (5). Spearman’s Rho was used to determine the monotonic correlation between two variables. Cramer’s V was calculated to determine the correlation between two nominally scaled variables, like the correlation coefficient *r*. However, in contrast to Spearman’s Rho, Cramer’s V only takes values between 0 and 1. Higher values indicate a stronger correlation. Values of 0.1, for example, indicate a small effect, 0.3 medium effects and 0.5 a large effect ([Cohen, 1988](#)).

An exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was carried out to determine the interrelation within different travel motivations or decision factors. In this procedure, Bartlett’s test of sphericity was examined first; when statistically significant ($p < 0.001$), the data set was determined as suitable for factor analysis. The Kaiser, Meyer and Olkin (KMO) standard test procedure was used to assess the suitability of the data for a factor analysis. Using the measure of sampling adequacy, MSA values referred to individual variables, whereas the KMO value generalizes the MSA values for all variables combined. The KMO lower limit of 0.5 was used to determine if EFA could be continued. For determining the factors, a parallel analysis technique was used. The eigenvalues retrieved were compared to those that would have been retrieved from a random data set. The number of factors found was the number of eigenvalues that are greater than those that would be found in a random sample ([Moosbrugger & Harting, 2002](#)).

Results

During the questionnaire period, 472 ($n = 472$) surveys were registered; 402 (85.17%) were completed in full. Looking at the dropout rate for the questionnaire, the largest proportion, i.e. 30 participants (6.36%), dropped out on page two of the questionnaire. The drop-out rate can be explained because participants were advised to only fill out the questionnaire if they follow a vegan lifestyle. On the remaining pages, this decreased significantly ([Soscisurvey, 2021](#)).

Demographics

The gender distribution shows a clear majority of female participants with 84.2% and only 15.1% of male and 0.7% of diverse participants taking part in the survey. According to [Modlinska, Adamczyk, Maison, and Pisula \(2020\)](#), men indicated significantly fewer positive attitudes toward vegetarians and vegans than women. In total, 402 participants indicated their age. The largest share of respondents, 42.5%, is in the age range of 21–29 years. The second-largest age group is the 30–39-year-olds with 27.1%, followed by 13.9% of 40–49-year-olds; 50–59-year-olds accounted for 10.7%, while only 3.2% were older than 60. The smallest group, however, was the 18–20-year-olds with 2.5%. None of the respondents stated they were younger than 18 years old.

In terms of education, 46.8% stated that they had some type of university degree. Those indicating they had either an associate’s level, international baccalaureate or higher education entrance was 25.3%. 10% of the respondents had completed an apprenticeship, 6% had a high school diploma/certificate of secondary school and 5.8% indicated a vocational baccalaureate diploma or vocational secondary certification. 5.2% indicated another qualification such as a master’s degree, doctorate, etc.

In terms of profession and employment, 51.1% stated their professional status as employed. 25.1% were university students, 9.5% were self-employed and 6% were civil servants. 3.8% belong to another group such as pensioners, on parental leave, homemaker, student or partly employed. 2.5% of the respondents were currently unemployed or looking for work, and 1.3% trainees/apprentices.

On the question of the country in which they live, 82.3% indicated Germany, 6.4% UK, 4% Switzerland, 3% Austria and 1.2% the USA. Other countries included the Netherlands, Belgium, Estonia, Luxembourg, Portugal, Spain and Sweden (all below 1%).

Vegan lifestyle and travel habits

At the beginning of the survey, participants were asked questions about their vegan lifestyle. These included questions about what type of vegan, reasons for choosing a vegan lifestyle, and for how long they have been vegan.

On average, the respondents had been vegan for 5.39 years, with a minimum of only a few months and a maximum of 40 years (a mode of 1). The standard deviation of 5.14 suggests that responses varied widely. The majority (67.2%) classified themselves as primarily ethical vegans, followed by 20.7% environmental vegans, 8.5% health vegans and 3.5% felt they belong to another category. Respondents commented that they felt they belonged to all three categories equally, that ethics and environmental protection/sustainability meant the same thing, that they did not want to belong to one specific group, or they had changed from being environmentalists to ethical vegans over the years.

When examining the correlation between gender and the type of vegan, a weak correlation of 0.164 was found using Cramer's V. The contingency coefficient of 0.226 indicated a low level of dependence between the two variables. 68.7% of the female participants felt they belonged to the group of ethical vegans, 20.3% to the environmental and 8.4% to the health vegans. Among men, 52.5% felt they belonged to the ethical vegans, 30.5% to the environmental and 13.6% to the health vegans.

Reasons for choosing a vegan lifestyle included seven choices: Animal welfare, sustainability and environment, taste, health, religion, trend and other (selecting "all that apply" was possible). These seven items are included based on the 2019 European Vegan Diet Reasons Survey (Vegan, 2019). 91.7% of respondents gave animal welfare as the most common reason, with sustainability and the environment as the next most important reason (79.9%), followed by health (54.7%). Reasons such as taste (8.7%), trend (1.9%) and religion (1.3%) were selected by a minority of participants. 5.3% selected other reasons described as disgust, the social environment, lactose intolerance, athletic performance or cost savings.

Regarding travel behavior, the respondents were asked about the continents they have travelled, countries they would or would not travel, as well as how and how often they travel each year. 91.5% indicated they travel for leisure, 1.6% for work and 6.9% travel equally for work and for leisure. 96.2% said they mostly travel independently with only 3.8% preferring to travel with a tour operator. The tour operators mentioned were TUI, Vegan Surf Camp, Vegan Travel, Trailfinders, Neckermann, Schauinsland, Alltours or Dertour.

21.4% indicated there were some countries they would not travel. These included Turkey, Russia, the USA, China, South Korea, Mongolia, Greece, Egypt, Morocco, India, Argentina and Saudi Arabia. The reasons most often given were bad travel experiences in the past, high meat consumption, difficult political situations and long flight distances.

The mean number of travel times per year was 2.67 times per year and mode was 2. Ethical vegans travel on average 2.57 times a year, environmental vegans 2.91 times and health vegans 2.76 times. For all three groups, the minimum ranged from about 1 to a maximum of 5 or more.

Destination choice

Participants rated how 13 different factors influenced their travel destination using a five-point rating scale (“not at all” [1] to “extremely” [5]).

As shown in Table 1, the greatest influence on the travel behavior was the nature at the destination with a median rating of 4 and a mode of 5. Disposable time, climate and distance, culture and safety, all had a median and mode of 4. Apart from the vegan lifestyle item, all had a negative skewness and were slightly left-skewed. Vegan lifestyle, however, shows a weak right-skewed distribution of 0.0326 and was close to a normal distribution. Respondents also mentioned that family and children may influence the destination choice.

To investigate the relationship between the influencing factors, an EFA was conducted. Bartlett’s test was significant ($p < 0.001$) making the data compatible for factor analysis. The KMO measure of MSA was 0.646 overall. Oblique rotation of the extracted factors was performed; four factors were identified. The total variance of the data explained by the factors was 37.4 %. Factor 1 explains 10.75% of the variance, 10.43% for factor 2, 9.78% for factor 3 and 6.46% for factor 4. Table 2 shows the factor loadings of the 13 items loaded on the four factors influencing the travel decision.

Destination choice	Total	Median	Mode	Skewness
Nature	423	4	5	−1.28
Disposable time	406	4	4	−0.741
Climate	424	4	4	−0.536
Political situation	418	4	4	−0.438
Distance	419	3	4	−0.412
Culture	425	4	4	−0.393
Safety	422	4	4	−0.337
Architecture/cityscape	423	3	3	−0.255
Budget	422	3.5	4	−0.253
Food/gastronomy	424	3	3	−0.191
Tourism infrastructure	422	3	3	−0.053
Leisure activities	418	3	3	−0.0773
Vegan lifestyle		3	3	−0.0326

Source(s): Table by authors

Table 1.
Destination choice of
participants

	1	Factor 2	3	4	Uniqueness
Culture	0.855				0.2825
Architecture/cityscape	0.611				0.5867
Leisure/cultural activities	0.349				0.7920
Safety		0.737			0.4185
Tourism infrastructure		0.636			0.6083
Political situation		0.425			0.6701
Vegan lifestyle			0.965		0.0754
Food/gastronomy			0.469		0.6791
Disposable time				0.445	0.7437
Distance				0.437	0.8001
Climate				0.326	0.8149
Budget				0.326	0.7952
Distance				0.302	0.8687

Source(s): Table by authors

Table 2.
Factor loadings –
destination choice

Culture, architecture and leisure and cultural activities are loaded on Factor 1; tourism infrastructure, security and political situation are loaded on Factor 2. While vegan lifestyle and food and gastronomy loaded on Factor 3, items that loaded on Factor 4 included disposable time, distance, climate, budget and nature.

Participants were also asked whether their vegan lifestyle influenced their choice of destination. For this purpose, they rated the statement: “My vegan lifestyle has a strong influence on the choice of my destination.” on a five-point scale (“strongly disagree” [1] to “strongly agree” [5]). Out of 406 responses, a median of 3 and a mode of 2 was determined. Looking at the frequency of responses, 30.5% of the subjects indicated “disagree” and 26.4% “agree.”

Travel difficulties

Before the trip. In relation to difficulties that can arise with a vegan lifestyle, questions on pre-trip issues such as worries respondents had before travelling, and what they most planned to do before travelling were included. Respondents were given seven possible concerns rating on a five-point rating scale (“strongly disagree” [1] to “strongly agree” [5]). The items of finding vegan food and harming the environment found the most agreement with a value of 4. The other concerns such as language barriers, accidentally consuming non-vegan products, no awareness about vegan lifestyle, as well as eating less healthily, also where important with medians of 3 (except eating less healthily has 2.5) and mode values of 4. The item “being forced to participate in non-vegan activities” with a mean of 2 and mode of 1 indicates this was a more limited issue. Using EFA, one factor included all items except for harming the environment. This factor explained about 31.4 % of the variance.

Participants were also asked what they plan most before a trip (Table 3). They were asked to choose one item with the highest time commitment. The search for accommodation takes the most time in planning, followed by sights. The planning of events during a trip seems to be the least important for the respondents. Other options mentioned included the country and culture, finding “nature sights,” photo locations, leisure activities, travel routes, supermarkets and preparing for work.

During the trip. Participants ranked problems they encountered (Table 4) on a scale from “never” (1) to “always” (5). Seven problems that can occur during a journey were suggested. The confusion between veganism and vegetarianism had the highest median and mode with a value of 4. 51.5% of the subjects indicated they encountered this problem “often.” The second most common problem seems to be unawareness about veganism. The smallest problem appears to be activities that involve animals.

For this area, two factors were determined using EFA. These described 46.4% of the variance between the items, with factor 1 describing 33.6% and Factor 2 for 12.8%. Factors 1

Table 3.
Planning before
the trip

Planning	Count	Percent
Accommodation	148	36.5%
Sights	111	27.3%
Finding food/restaurants	88	21.7%
Nothing	28	6.9%
Other	17	4.2%
Meet-ups w/people/other vegans	9	2.2%
Events	5	1.2%
Total	406	100%

Source(s): Table by authors

included no vegan food available, lack of awareness about veganism, poor quality of vegan food, confusion with veganism and vegetarianism and language barriers, while Factor 2 included activities involving animals and animal products in the accommodation.

Question 16 asked participants about what they do to counteract difficulties when travelling (Table 5). Eight options were listed, which could be rated from “never” (1) to “always” (5). Few comments were raised relating to carrying vegan passport, accept exceptions, travel with tour operators and meet local vegans. Likely counteractions included carrying vegan snacks, planning ahead, locating supermarkets and only visiting vegan restaurants were common approaches among respondents.

Two factors could be determined; items of plan ahead, carry snacks, locate supermarkets in the vicinity and only visit vegan restaurants loaded on Factor 1. Whereas counteractions of meet local vegans, only visit vegan restaurants and travel with (vegan) tour operator loaded on Factor 2. The two options of accepting exceptions and carrying a vegan passport do not load on any of the factors.

Statements

In addition to survey items on difficulties and what can be done to counteract them, statements were explicitly suggested to the participants, which they could “strongly disagree” (1) or “strongly agree” (5). Statements included 1) travelling is more difficult with a vegan lifestyle and 2) vegan food was always available resulting in medians and modes of 4. For the statement that they missed out on experiences while travelling because of the vegan lifestyle, a median of 3 and a mode of 4 were determined. Most participants would probably not make an exception in their lifestyle while travelling with only a mode of 1 and a median of 2.

When calculating the correlation between food/gastronomy as a motivation or decision factor for the travel destination and the statement of having missed experiences, Spearman’s

Difficulties	Median	Mode	Skewness
Confusion veganism vs. vegetarianism	4	4	−0.902
Unawareness about veganism	3	4	−0.582
Poor quality of vegan food	3	3	−0.335
No vegan food available	3	3	−0.239
Animal products at accommodation	3	3	−0.232
Language barriers	3	3	−0.11
Activities involving animals	2	1	−0.492

Source(s): Table by authors

Table 4.
Difficulties during
the trip

Counteract situations	Median	Mode	Skewness
Carry snacks	4	5	−1.33
Plan ahead	4	4	−0.954
Locate supermarkets in the vicinity	4	4	−0.878
Only visit vegan restaurants	3	3	−0.23
Accept exceptions in diet and lifestyle	1	1	1.11
Meet local vegans	1	1	1.6
Carry vegan passport	1	1	2.63
Travel with tour operator	1	1	3.34

Source(s): Table by authors

Table 5.
Counteract difficult
situations

Rho of 0.097 (motivation) and 0.095 (decision) was calculated. These values were not significant indicating a lack of established between food/gastronomy as a travel motivation or decision factor.

Looking at the distributions of vegan types on whether they have made exceptions to their lifestyle while travelling, 51.1% of ethical vegans have never made an exception, while only 32.1% of environmental and 29.7% of health vegans have. When asked about partial exceptions, 22% for ethical vegans, 36% for environmental vegans and 41% for health vegans.

Discussion

The objective of this study was to investigate the influence of a vegan lifestyle on travel. The focus was placed on travel motivation, the decision-making process and the difficulties that might arise. Based on the results, it is apparent that a vegan lifestyle can impact the travel experience. When planning a trip, most respondents have already encountered difficulties and prepare for them beforehand. However, the vegan lifestyle rarely discourages most vegans from travelling.

First, when inquiring about the main reasons participants chose a vegan lifestyle, the priorities were similar to an earlier study (i.e. [Veganz, 2019](#)); ethical vegans were the main reason given by 91.7%, followed by environmental (79.9%) and health vegans (54.7%). The proportion of those describing themselves as ethical vegans was larger than the other groups; however, comments by respondents pointed out that ethics and the environment/sustainability rationale are not mutually exclusive. When comparing the division of men and women into these categories, both genders indicated ethical reasons as the largest share of responses, but women had the highest percentage overall. Male participants had a larger proportion within the environmental and health vegan categories.

The vegan target group in the tourism sector is thought to be predominantly young, urban and with a high purchasing power and a larger share of women ([Holev, 2019](#)). Our sample followed this definition with a significantly higher proportion of women (84.2%) and a young target group with the largest proportion of 21–29-year-olds and the second largest of 30–39-year-olds. Of course, the young age of the respondents could be partially explained by the reliance on an online questionnaire and a social media modality of data collection. The high purchasing power of the target group described in the literature suggests a somewhat higher income and educational attainment. A clear majority of respondents possess a university degree (46.8%), followed by other forms of higher education (25.3%), suggesting a higher educational class.

In the literature, veganism is often described as a fairly new lifestyle, with demand and supply having only grown significantly in recent years ([De Boo et al., 2014](#)). On average, participants had been following the vegan lifestyle for 5.39 years, with a modal value of 1 year as the most frequent response. Vegans are proposed to pay special attention to sustainable travel and try to travel mainly within their own continent and thus causing little CO₂ ([Nguyen, 2019](#)). While a mean value of 2.67 for the frequency of travel of the participants (travelling an average of 2.67 times per year), many stated that they refrain from travelling because of their vegan lifestyle. Surprisingly, environmental vegans traveled more (2.91 times a year on average), and thus most frequently, while health vegans travel 2.76 times and ethical vegans only 2.57 times a year. It should be highlighted that the COVID-19 pandemic has influenced the frequency of travel and that “new” vegans in particular were unable to provide clear information ([Bundesministerium des Innern für Bau und Heimat, 2021](#)). However, the distance seems to be an accurate indicator; most respondents travelled in Europe, therefore on their own continent, which represents a relatively small distance. However, almost half of the respondents have also travelled further afield, such as Asia or North America. Therefore, it cannot be precisely interpreted whether the vegan lifestyle is the

motive for most travel decisions. Other influencing factors such as time, budget and interest undoubtedly play a role.

Factors when choosing their travel destination

Regarding the decision-making process for a destination, the participants were directed to focus on the influences that occur with particular attention to the vegan lifestyle. Earlier study emphasized that this target group does not only want packaged holidays, but also individual travel experiences with real impressions of the countries and without exceptions for their lifestyle or diet (Holev, 2019).

The decision-making process could be influenced by travelers' assumptions of certain countries' environment and cultures being not compatible with their lifestyle. Respondents cited reasons such as high meat consumption, long flight distances or bad experiences in the past as reasons why they would not visit countries such as Russia, Argentina or China. Thus, according to the example of the destination set structure, these countries would be added to the inept set at the third stage of the tunnel-like diagram by Karl *et al.* (2015). In the model of Um and Crompton (1990), these influences would affect the internal inputs, as certain destinations would be sorted out based on the values and personal characteristics of the travelers. In the survey conducted, no direct significant influence of the vegan lifestyle on travel decisions was found. The opinions of the participants were more in the neutral range with a slightly larger distribution rejecting an influence rather than agreeing. Participants noted that their lifestyle would not necessarily influence their choice of destination but would strongly influence their choice of accommodation. Particular attention was paid to a positively rated cuisine, such as breakfast, as well as general vegan offers. Furthermore, it was stated that travelling to countries where it is not common to follow a vegan lifestyle is possible if travelers are prepared and willing to self-cater and consider accommodations with cooking facilities, such as guest houses.

Regarding culinary tourism in the travel decision, no significant result was identified. Food or gastronomy does not seem to be a decisive factor among respondents when choosing a destination. When travelling, many vegans had rather low expectations regarding the food experience. A positive dining experience was seen as a good addition to the trip, but not necessarily a prerequisite. However, a moderately strong connection between food and gastronomy as a travel motivation and a vegan lifestyle was present. This suggests that the participants who indicated food as a travel motivation, a vegan lifestyle as a travel decision is important. Contrary to what is described in the literature, vegan culinary tourism here could perhaps be seen more as a niche market within a niche market instead of a real focus on the vegan travel market (Kansanen, 2013).

Considering the remaining influences, the results can be assigned as follows: Factor one with the influences of culture, architecture and leisure activities can be assigned to the destination's resources and characteristics in the process. Factor two with safety, tourism infrastructure and political situation also falls into this category but also to the trip features due to the item safety. Factor three, which includes food and gastronomy as well as the vegan lifestyle could be influenced by the destination's resources and characteristics regarding how "vegan-friendly" a destination is. The last and fourth factor is then assigned to trip features. These relate to the cost/budget, travel duration, distance and safety in the country. Previous literature did not highlight any of these factors that could have a particularly important impact on the travel decision. It emphasized that tourism influences are dynamic and can change with the associated fluctuation in destination features, trip characteristics and behavioral characteristics (Hudson, 1999). Nature of a destination (which received the highest ratings), disposable time, climate, distance, culture and safety were moderately important for respondents.

Difficulties while travelling

The study also focused on concerns and advance planning, as well as what can be done to counteract difficulties. [Kansanen \(2013\)](#) highlights cultural differences, language barriers and the still relative newness of veganism as potential problems. In this study, attention was drawn to the food on offer, as the range of vegan options is frequently small in many destinations ([Fusté-Forné, 2021](#)). It was noted that the problem of finding suitable food while travelling was indeed one of vegans' biggest concerns before travelling, in addition to the concern of harming the environment. This is consistent with the research of [Dilek and Dilek \(2020\)](#) who highlight in their work that vegans try to travel sustainably. A few of the respondents refrained from travelling altogether, which was also mentioned in the literature ([Nguyen, 2019](#)). However, this response was only a minority of participants eliminating the general conclusion that vegans travel less because of their lifestyle. The problems indicated by [Kansanen \(2013\)](#) also seemed to be of concern to the participants. Language barriers, accidental consumption of non-vegan products, lack of awareness about veganism, and unhealthy food all received some agreement, albeit a moderate level of concern.

As preparation was often mentioned in the literature ([Nguyen, 2019](#)), this study explicitly asked what the participants would plan most before a trip. The search for accommodation was frequently mentioned, followed by sightseeing. It is not possible to ascertain what exactly was focused on during the search for accommodation or whether the distribution would be the same for non-vegans. Nevertheless, a consistency with the existing literature can be seen and highlights the priority of finding accommodation for travelers with a vegan lifestyle. Especially noteworthy is that several respondents remarked that they would rather focus on the accommodation, as this can help to facilitate the journey. Travelling by campervan or finding a holiday home with cooking facilities was highlighted.

When asked directly what problems the respondents had already encountered, the confusion between veganism and vegetarianism, as well as the lack of knowledge about veganism, were noteworthy. Other problems are situational and mostly dependent on other people, such as language problems, the poor quality of the food on offer or confusion between vegetarianism and veganism. Regarding the supply side, these problems could be counteracted by increased training of employees of tourism services or by enhanced general education about different eating habits or lifestyles in general.

Most vegan travelers prepare for these problems prior to a journey. When respondents were asked which pre-planning tactics were most likely to be used, notable ones were planning, packing snacks and locating local supermarkets in advance. These were also recommended by [The Vegan Society \(2021\)](#) on their website and by [Kansanen \(2013\)](#). Some options mentioned in the literature to counteract difficult situations were not supported, such as the existence of a vegan passport. Travelling with a tour operator also did not seem to be an option for most of the participants, as most of the participants preferred to travel individually. There were several comments by participants about the app "HappyCow" to counteract vegan food problems. This app helps to find vegan food options. Thus, adequate dining options can most likely be found at the destination ([Kansanen, 2013](#); [Fusté-Forné, 2021](#)).

Few respondents accepted exceptions in their lifestyle, with only a small number indicating they had made exceptions. In a comment section, this was clarified as restricted to vegetarian options exclusively. The consumption of meat seems to be a greater barrier than eggs or milk. This contradicts [Kansanen's \(2013\)](#) findings that most vegans do not expect to be able to fully follow their vegan lifestyle while travelling. Ethically motivated vegans appeared more likely to follow through with their lifestyle than those of the other groups ([Stepaniak et al., 2000](#)). Although this was confirmed, only small differences between the groups were found.

Several difficulties that vegans may encounter during a trip were confirmed by this study as most respondents have experienced some challenging situations while travelling. Most participants appeared to agree strongly that they perceived it to be more difficult as a vegan. Nevertheless, locating suitable food during the trip was not a major problem, as the majority stated that they had always been able to find something to eat. However, no statement was made about the quality and quantity of this selection of food. This was elaborated on by several participants. While restaurant options may sometimes be limited, regional markets offered a wide range of locally sourced fruits, vegetables, spices and oils, which enabled vegans to acquire culinary experiences in all countries. It should be highlighted that although diet reflects a large aspect of the vegan lifestyle, it is more multi-faceted (Fusté-Forné, 2021). Despite this, these difficulties do not seem to discourage respondents from continuing to follow their lifestyle. The respondents clearly rejected the statement about having made exceptions during a trip.

Conclusion

This empirical study on the influence of a vegan lifestyle on travel decisions and the difficulties of a vegan lifestyle that can influence the travel experience. Finding suitable places to eat and not harming the environment emerged as the biggest concerns before embarking on a journey. When planning a trip, the search for accommodation occupies most of the time, followed by sights. No exact reference to the vegan lifestyle is apparent, even though it is possible that vegans might need to pay additional attention to multiple features when looking for accommodation, such as vegan dining options, animal products in the bathroom or bedding. Furthermore, the study found that vegans are aware of difficulties that may arise during a trip before they start and prepare themselves accordingly.

In terms of the decision-making process, it was found that the vegan lifestyle prevents some travelers from visiting destinations, for example, due to high meat consumption or long flight distances, as this is not compatible with their basic values. A minority do not travel at all because of this. For the vast majority, however, the vegan lifestyle does not present an obstacle to travel. The responses were rather neutral when the participants were asked directly whether a vegan lifestyle had an influence on their decision to travel. The general responses to the presenting influences were similar, mostly positive/neutral, with the nature of a destination being identified as the most important influencing factor. As in the literature, however, no clear tendencies toward particularly important influencing factors were identified. The influences of the travel decision are dynamic and can change depending on the individual's life situation, travel features or destination features (Hudson, 1999).

In general, the vegan lifestyle can have an impact on the travel experience, especially in terms of challenges that may occur, but this does not seem to stop a clear majority of vegans from travelling while holding on to their vegan lifestyle. As veganism is still a relatively recent lifestyle emerging into the mainstream, more understanding and further education in the tourism sector about veganism or other types of lifestyles would be a desirable development that would make travelling easier and more enjoyable for this target group.

Limitations and future research

Research on vegan tourism is a relatively unexplored niche topic, therefore the literature used as a basis for this study was limited. To address this issue, the study used related topics adapted to a vegan tourism context. Second, the online questionnaire resulted in a more limited group of people who could be reached via this method. The rationale was that this online process and respondent characteristics matched that of vegan travelers defined in the literature as relatively young and educated. A question remains on whether a comparison

between vegans and non-vegans would have provided additional understanding of the impact of vegan lifestyle on travel. Further, most respondents were from Germany, which limits some generalization of findings.

As there has been so little research in the field of vegan tourism, more studies are needed. This study presents incomplete information on vegan tourism and explores a small fraction of the subject; therefore, it leaves room for many aspects of vegan tourism to be explored further. It would be interesting to have a more detailed study of tourists who prefer to travel with a tour operator, vegan tourists in business tourism or with a focus on different groups of vegans. The consideration of different family situations could likewise be explored in more depth, as it has not been addressed in this work.

Since mainly German vegans participated in the study, it would be interesting to perform a similar study in another country to get an impression of vegan travelers from all over the world. Also, a larger proportion of male or diverse participants in terms of gender would be beneficial to observe a better differentiation between the genders. Undertaking research into other companies, tour operators and other tourism providers the opportunity to better cater to this niche market and make travelling easier, especially for vegans, leading to a more satisfied customer base. While this is a niche subject, but with the increasing focus on sustainability globally, it seems that additional investigation in North America and Oceania may reveal important information germane to hospitality and tourism industries.

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