Impact of social influences and adoptive community on behaviours: An exploratory study of young French vegetarians

Gilles Séré de Lanauze, Lucie Sirieix

Séré de Lanauze G., L. Sirieix (2021), Impact of social influences and adoptive community on behaviours: an exploratory study of young French vegetarians, *International Journal of Consumer Studies*

Title:

Impact of social influences and adoptive community on behaviours: an exploratory study of young French vegetarians

Running head:

Social influences and adoptive vegetarian community

Authors:

1) Séré de Lanauze, Gilles.

University of Montpellier - Montpellier Business School - MRM

gilles.sere-de-lanauze@umontpellier.fr

2) Sirieix, Lucie.

MoISA, Univ Montpellier, CIRAD, CIHEAM-IAMM, INRAE, Institut Agro, IRD, Montpellier, France

lucie.sirieix@supagro.fr

Funding:

This research received funding from the French State Agency for Research (Agence Nationale de la Recherche) referenced ANR-16-IDEX-0006

The authors confirm that they have no conflict of interest, and agree on the ethical code of conduct of the International Journal of Consumer Studies

Data available on request from the authors

IMPACT OF SOCIAL INFLUENCES AND ADOPTIVE COMMUNITY ON BEHAVIOURS: AN EXPLORATORY STUDY OF YOUNG FRENCH VEGETARIANS

(RUNNING HEAD: SOCIAL INFLUENCES AND ADOPTIVE VEGETARIAN COMMUNITY)

Abstract:

The influence of consumption practice-based communities on consumption patterns is a growing trend in marketing research. Vegetarianism, a diet which usually represents a break away from eating patterns strongly anchored in society, generates psychological and relational tensions for those who adopt it. As such, vegetarians develop specific links with the adoptive vegetarian community, which may strongly influence the adoption and maintenance of this practice. The purpose of this research is to better understand how vegetarians' relationships with their social environment and community impact their consumption behaviours. An exploratory study was carried out based on 23 individual interviews with young adult vegetarians in France. The results shed light on the self-categorization process and show how relationships with the community influence the adoption and maintenance of vegetarian behaviour. In addition, depending on the perceived opposition between society and the vegetarian community and the degree of identification with this community, different patterns of relationships with and expectations of the community are identified and presented in the CBO model (Community Belonging and perceived Opposition between community and society). Understanding the social influences involved in practice-based adoptive communities will help marketers take decisions relating to support, supply and communication with regard to these practices. Beyond describing the practices and motivations underpinning vegetarianism and veganism, previously documented in the literature, this research provides new insights into the impact of communities and social influences on the adoption and defence of a specific diet.

Keywords: Social influences, Community, Vegetarianism, Consumption patterns, Qualitative study

Introduction

Vegetarianism in general and its many different forms of consumption (veganism, strict veganism, flexitarianism, etc.) is a developing trend in contemporary Western societies. This phenomenon is still marginal: about 2% of the population are vegetarians, but percentages vary across the existing studies (for a review, see Jallinoja et al., 2019). In France, the *Nutrinet-Santé* study, based on a sample of 90,000, reports a proportion of 2%, with a vast majority of women (80%), young (under 35) and well-educated people in the vegetarian population (Allès et al., 2017). But this phenomenon may continue to grow because of its topicality, its increasing exposure in the media and social media, and the emergence of new markets (vegetarian restaurants, vegetarian products and dishes, food supplements, etc). The fact that thousands of consumers are deciding to so deeply modify their consumption patterns calls for a better understanding of the social conditions and implications of such change.

Food consumption behaviours and choices are strongly rooted in habits and past experience; they are also related to a number of individual factors, whether cultural, economic or situational. In particular, the image associated with food consumption patterns and the social role of food (Arora, 2012; Vartanian, 2015) are fundamental to our understanding of consumption behaviours. The complexity of eating behaviours, which involve a complex chain of product perceptions, attitudes and behavioural intentions, is particularly acute in the case of meat, a category that combines both cultural rootedness and strong positive attitudes – particularly in France – with increasing criticism and warnings against its potentially harmful effects on health and the environment. There has been an increase in the number of caveats in the media and social media about the dangers of excessive meat consumption in terms of cardiovascular diseases and cancers, or the damaging nature of its production in terms of pollution, public health, waste of resources and disrespectful animal welfare practices (Rosenfeld and Burrow, 2017; Rothgerber, 2020). Alternatives to meat are thus being encouraged (including by public

authorities such as France's National Plan for Health and Nutrition – PNNS) and considered by consumers for a variety of reasons (Zur and Klöckner, 2014). These reasons may be individual, social or biospheric (Stern, 2000) or linked to religiosity and materialism (Raggiotto et al., 2018). In the case of veganism, these alternatives can even take on a more assertive expression, as vegans reject the consumption or exploitation of any kind of animal product (Hoffman et al., 2013) as part of a philosophical approach that goes beyond diet alone (Greenebaum, 2012).

But vegetarianism, and the suppression of meat consumption, is not an easy process. Individual contradictions between perceived benefits and dangers are reinforced by ambient criticism of meat, opposing social pressures, past habits and convictions and practical barriers, leading to states of cognitive dissonance (Séré de Lanauze and Siadou-Martin, 2019; Rothgerber, 2020). Turning to vegetarianism is demanding and involves changing one's relationships with others. The new diet may make it difficult to pursue shared eating habits with family and friends, hindering the adoption process. In order to overcome such difficulties, those new to the diet can find support and comfort in fellow vegetarians within new adoptive groups or communities. Recent studies have described and analysed the behaviours and motivational patterns related to the practice of vegetarianism (e.g. De Boer et al., 2017; Dyett et al., 2013; Neuman et al., 2020; Rosenfeld, 2019). However, little research has so far focused on the social influences involved in this process, either through interactions with the actual social environment or with the new adoptive community.

The goal of this research is to study how social influences and one's relationship with an adoptive community can play a role in the process of becoming and remaining a vegetarian. First, a review of the literature presents how social identity and normative influences, communities and vegetarians' motivations and identity can play a specific role in adopting and maintaining consumption behaviour. This conceptual background is used to explore the social influences leading to the adoption and maintenance of vegetarianism and to investigate the

relationships between the vegetarian, his/her social environment and adoptive community. To this end, an exploratory study was conducted based on individual interviews with 23 young adult vegetarians in France. The results allow us to better understand how vegetarians characterize themselves and how they perceive their relationships with the community, what they expect from it, and how they use it. This leads to a proposed model (Community Belonging and perceived Opposition between community and society – CBO) that depicts the perceived links between vegetarians and the community and the impact on their relationship with society. The results shed light on the social embeddedness of vegetarian practices in two different respects: the importance of the influence of others in the process of adopting and maintaining the practice and the relationships developed with the community; and the role vegetarians expect this community to play. To conclude, the implications are discussed, in particular relating to support, supply and communication regarding these practices.

Conceptual background

An abundant literature in sociology and psychology, as well as marketing, has focused on understanding the psycho-sociological and cultural processes of food consumption (e.g. Kniazeva and Venkatesh, 2007; Vartanian, 2015) and sustainable consumption (White et al., 2014; White et al., 2019). The literature has further shown the importance of social influence and identification in the food choices made by individuals. As regards vegetarianism and veganism, the practices and the different motivations underpinning them have also been studied. However, only a few studies have looked at the role of social influence and relationships with the adoptive community explicitly in the case of vegetarian behaviours.

Social identity, social norms and social influence

Consumption and dietary practices are considered a powerful element of self-construction and social representation (Cornelissen et al., 2007; Reed et al., 2012; Sheth et al, 2011). The products one individual buys (or stops buying), and the other consumers of these products, draw a representational model that this individual wants to identify with or not (Reed et al., 2012). Social identity is the perception of oneself as belonging to a group (Ashforth and Mael, 1989). According to the social identification theory, people tend to classify themselves and others in social groups, according to criteria that they consider relevant. Social categorization helps people to order their environment and define themselves accordingly ("I am a man, I am an American"). Categories tend to be exclusive in their modalities, but at the same time people can position themselves in different categories. They also tend to define themselves both in accordance with similar others but also in opposition to others who do not share the same characteristics (White et al., 2014; White et al., 2019). As a consequence, complex links exist between one's personal identity and the perceived elements of a collective identity, including self-categorization, perceived importance of group membership, attachment and behavioural involvement (Ashmore et al., 2004). Social influence mainly results from the existence of a normative process consisting in compliance with what the group or society usually approves or disapproves of (Cialdini and Goldstein, 2004). In the food choices of individuals, the literature has shown the importance of social norms (Higgs, 2015). According to Higgs (2015), social norms "are implicit codes of conduct that provide a guide to appropriate action" (p. 38). Social norms usually relate to society, but smaller groups can share specific group norms as well (Hogg and Reid, 2006).

Community belonging

Joining a group may be a way to reduce isolation, strengthen defences against critics and negative perceptions, and obtain problem-solving advice in everyday practice. A social group

can be considered a community if its members share common values (internalization) and have value-laden relationships with each other (identification) (Etzioni, 1996). Individuals characterize themselves as members of a community on the basis of similarities with other members and dissimilarities with non-members (Ashforth and Mael, 1989). Hence, the community's identification power may have significant effects on the nature and evolution of practices, behavioural attitudes and interpersonal relationships within and between groups (Dahl, 2013; Greenebaum and Dexter, 2017). For instance, people may adjust their food intake to that of others in order to affiliate with them (modelling effect, Exline et al., 2012). However, perceived similarity and sense of belonging to the group are important moderators. Individuals may want to distance themselves from group members; in this case, there is no modelling effect but on the contrary a possible reactance effect (Oyserman et al., 2007).

In marketing, communities have been studied under a number of expressions (ethnic communities, experience-based communities, brand communities and virtual communities, to name a few). Research on brand communities has extensively confirmed that they have significant effects on consumers' attitudes towards the brand and on intentions to consume it in a wide range of product categories, from bicycles to cars, and from computers to fast-moving food consumption products (Cova and Pace, 2006; Heere et al., 2011; McAlexander et al., 2002; Muniz and O'Ginn, 2001; Shau et al., 2009). Identification with and involvement in the community are important explanatory factors of consumption behaviour and observance. In the case of virtual communities, Närvänen et al. (2009) showed that members absorb information and support from the community and that their practices can be either confirmed or challenged by the community. Bagozzi and Dholakia (2002) identified two social influence variables – group norms and social identity – that impact upon virtual community participation. Dholakia et al. (2004) also showed that reasons for community participation and members' relationship with group norms and social identity are not the same for network-based and small group-based

communities. Group norms capture the social influence generated by the internalization of shared values and goals between the individual and the reference group (Bagozzi and Dholakia, 2002; Tuomela, 1995). At the same time, social desirability has been shown to be an important influencer of behaviour. For example, previous research has suggested that sustainable behaviours may be adopted to make a positive impression on others and gain in social status (Green and Peloza, 2014; Salazar et al., 2013). As a consequence, perception of the social acceptance of a community can be a facilitating factor for enrolling in it and complying with the group's behavioural recommendations.

Motivations for being vegetarian and vegetarian identity

The motivations people have for being vegetarian (i.e. what drives them to become vegetarians, Plante et al., 2019) have been studied for more than 30 years (Beardsworth and Keil, 1992; Jabs et al., 1998). Most studies have found that motivations are diverse and intertwined (Fox and Ward, 2008; Rosenfeld and Burrow, 2017) and should be studied with great nuance. For example, environmental and animal welfare concerns are different forms of ethical motivations. Rosenfeld found common points between environmentally motivated and animal welfare-motivated vegetarians (higher prosocial and moral goals and less personal goals than vegetarians motivated by health concerns); however, environmentally motivated vegetarians, like those with health-based motivations, feel less meat disgust and have lower diet adherence (Rosenfeld, 2019).

Motivations determine the maintenance of the diet but also how vegetarians perceive themselves and their community (Greenebaum, 2012). Indeed, vegetarianism has been conceptualized as a social identity (Rosenfeld and Burrow, 2017) and, more recently, the desire to adopt a vegetarian identity has been suggested as a motivation for being vegetarian (Plante et al., 2019).

Research objective

The practice of vegetarianism can be materially supported and maintained: Twine (2018) shows how material substitutes (substitute foods), new food exploration, food creativity and taste transition are significant to the transition to the practice. However, social influences and adoptive communities may play a central role in this process. A few studies have explored the role of social influences in the case of adopting and maintaining vegetarianism (Jabs et al., 1998) or vegan practices (Cherry, 2015). Jabs et al. (1998) highlighted diet-centred family conflicts and the supporting role of vegetarian groups. Cherry (2015) showed that having a vegan identity is not sufficient for maintaining vegan practices. Retention in veganism also requires social support from friends and family as well as the cultural tools to provide skills and reinforce motivations to remain a vegan (Cherry, 2015). The role of communities in the mobilization around the vegan diet has also been studied: awareness-raising campaigns, vegan bloggers, pledges and festivals have helped support the rise of veganism (Jallinoja et al., 2019). Yet no work has been done on the use of communities and their influence on the vegetarians themselves. The only exception is the work of Cherry (2015) specifically on veganism, which shows that retention in veganism is facilitated by participation in the punk subculture. The bundle of social influences and social barriers leading to the adoption and maintenance of these practices thus remains to be identified, and a better understanding is needed of the relationships between vegetarians and both their social environment and the adoptive community. The objective of this research is thus to better understand how vegetarians categorize themselves and how they describe their relationships with the community (motivations for belonging to the community, sense of belonging, perceived downsides, community uses), and finally how these relationships may influence their practices. This leads to the proposed CBO model which

describes the links between vegetarians and the community, and their intertwinement with their relationships with the rest of society.

Research design

Based on a qualitative study, the perceived role of the community is investigated with young French vegetarians, who describe the relationships they developed both inside and outside the self-identification group and the related effects on their practices and motivations.

Data collection

Non-directive in-depth interviews were conducted with 23 young adult vegetarians in France, mostly urban dwellers of a medium-sized city in the south of France. The sample included 15 females and 8 males, ranging from age 17 to 36, with an average age of 23.4. The decision to focus on young adults and a rather narrow age bracket is justified by four main reasons: (1) the documented lower average age of the segment compared to the rest of the population, (2) the age of adoption, which has been shown to most often correspond to independence from the family context, (3) the importance of the external and social environment in the construction of identity at this age, and (4) considering the variability of the phenomenon across age, the higher expected internal validity resulting from a more homogenous sample in studying this specific population. Indeed, previous research has suggested that the adoption and evolution of the practice mostly happen during pre- and early adulthood (Mathieu and Dorard, 2016). The sample also includes a high proportion of students (65%), compared to the equivalent age bracket in the French population (50% of 18–25-year-olds, INSEE, 2016[1]), which is nonetheless consistent with the specifically higher level of education reported for vegetarians (Allès et al., 2017); this limitation was thus considered acceptable. Religious motives, though they may play an important role when it comes to meat-related diets, were not specifically

[1] INSEE: French National Institute of Statistics and Economic Studies

considered as a criterion for variety in the sample construction, and religion-based vegetarians are not represented in the sample. Similarly, lifetime vegetarians, for example born into historically vegetarian families, though not formally discarded, are not represented here. These limitations are judged acceptable considering the low percentage of such sub-populations. The informants were recruited using both convenience and snowball sampling to identify vegetarians, and they were interviewed in their homes or in a private room. They described how they adopted the practice and detailed their daily practices, personal experience of the diet, triggers and barriers. 11 open-ended questions (such as "Could you tell me how you became vegetarian?") structured the collection of their perceptions concerning their vegetarian profile and practices, their knowledge of and attitudes towards vegetarianism, their own personal experience, and the triggers of and barriers to future consumption intentions. Evocation of their relationship with their social environment was naturally part of this discourse, and participants were systematically encouraged to expand on the ways their practices and convictions impacted their relationship with their social environment, both vegetarian and non-vegetarian. Reformulations were proposed at this point, such as "Since you adopted this practice, would you say that it has changed your relationships with others? … Please elaborate." Average duration of the interviews was approximately one hour.

Data analysis

The transcripts of the interviews were considered as a text presenting each informant's perceived experience and feelings and relating not the facts but their individual interpretation (Bertaux, 2005). They therefore make it possible to capture what the person projects and values from past experiences. The researchers began by doing an extensive reading of the corpus in order to become familiar with the participants' experiences. They then engaged in an iterative process, by identifying and systematically coding the themes that emerged from the transcripts, based on the constant comparative method (Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Strauss and Corbin,

1998). This method helps to identify rich conceptual categories and their subsequent dimensions and facets (Spiggle, 1994). Their analysis also leads to the proposal of causal patterns linking the concepts, and to an interpretation of how the relationships evolve over time. In concrete terms, the researchers cut the text down into captions corresponding to one specific idea, and then ordered these along an iterative identification and categorization of the themes as part of a comprehensive conceptual framework. Content analysis was conducted, with open coding used to process the data, identification of themes and concepts, and finally an axial and selective analysis of the corpus along themes and respondents.

Results

The analysis provides a better understanding of how vegetarians categorize themselves, allows us to explore their relationships with other vegetarians and non-vegetarians, and to propose the CBO model which describes the links between vegetarians and the global vegetarian community as a group, and the impacts of these links on their relationship with society.

Self-categorization

In order to study vegetarians' sense of belonging to a community, it is important to know if and how they characterize themselves as vegetarians. Respondents display a high level of awareness of the existence of various categories of vegetarians. In particular, they usually have a solid command of the definition of vegetarian, flexitarian and vegan *("Then you've got vegetarians, you've got lots of different types of vegetarians, you've got those who are lacto-ovo vegetarians, in other words they don't eat any meat or fish but they eat eggs and milk. Then you've got the pescetarians, which means they eat fish. Next you've got the vegans, like me, as I said, you don't eat fish, you don't eat meat, you don't eat milk, you don't eat eggs, seafood or honey either. Oh no, honey is the vegans", Florian).* They mainly base their definition of the different categories on the practices implemented, of which they display a good understanding and knowledge. However, because

of the richness and variety of these practices, it remains unclear whether the categories cover the exact same meaning for every respondent. Another result is that in spite of a rather clear definition of the terms, they found it difficult to classify themselves, having adopted these practices, in the various vegetarian profiles. The vocabulary, though in most cases well known and correctly used, is not sufficient to cover the complexity of the practices, resulting in overlapping and blurred boundaries between the formal categories or groups. As a consequence, the respondents found it difficult to rely precisely on the various categories of practices, leading to two observations. First, there is an individual adoption of a set of practices based on what is personally considered feasible and appropriate among a complex range of practices. Second, many respondents expressed the difficulty of fitting into a box, which makes them feel unable to belong to a precise and delineated group. Moreover, the frequent reporting of exceptions to the intended diet accentuates this difficulty. Because of the perceived hurdle and complexity of maintaining this diet over time and, in some contexts, of behaving according to their principles, they may find themselves in contradiction with the community to which they consider themselves closest. As such, an occasional derogation from a dietary principle can be considered inconsequential by some respondents who still feel consistent with the spirit of the rule and do not feel there has been any betrayal in their conduct.

Their sense of belonging to a stated and formal community is therefore questioned by others, and they readily evoke their relationships with others in the group *("by saying I'm a vegan, it means in the eyes of others that if one day I eat chicken that I prepared myself, I'll actually lose all my legitimacy, while in my own mind I'm very clear about my convictions", Marius)*. Finally, each individual decision involves placing a cursor along a continuum, from flexitarian to vegetarian, vegan and strict vegan. Most respondents will defend their position by illustrating what they reject and what they accept on other continuums, from unacceptable to acceptable, in terms of food of course, such as red meat-meat-fish-egg-milk-honey, but also on other continuums that

they find illustrative and relevant in explaining their level of conviction, such as fur-leather-wool-cosmetics, corrida-circus-zoo-pet, or industrial-traditional-family farming.

While declared practices do not fully cover the boundaries used to define each of the communities, motivations are not sufficient either. Motivations are, essentially, of three kinds: (1) health and wellbeing, (2) environmental concerns and (3) animal welfare and antispecism. But the respondents' discourse suggests that in spite of a certain logic, these three types of motivations do not perfectly overlap with the three main vegetarian subcategories that are vegetarian, vegan and strict vegan. Here, again, the boundaries are blurred.

Relationships with the vegetarian community

All respondents mentioned vegetarians as a group or community. They may refer to the community as a group sharing the same identity, based on the vegetarian characteristic, or to more formal and delimited communities. These can take various forms, either close and physical (new friends, members of an association), or remote and virtual (online social communities). Moreover, they can be local (e.g. the city's vegetarian association), national or international.

When they report having links with and relying on a community, respondents cite a wide array of reasons and benefits for being part of it (Table 1).

[Insert Table 1: Motivations for community belonging]

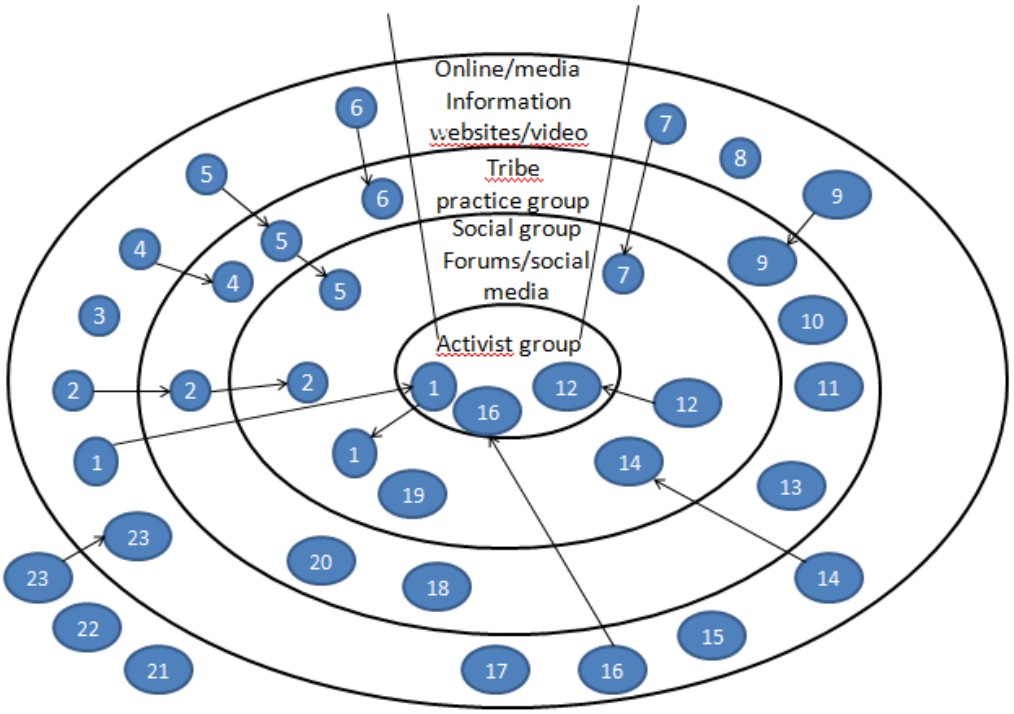
The most common motivation is information. Most, if not all, respondents use groups and communities to get information about products, their benefits and risks, their substitutes, recipes, addresses of stores or restaurants, consequences of vegetarian practices, etc. This first cognitive level is a strong trigger that fosters access to a community, be it real or virtual, close or remote. Those who adopt these practices are – and remain throughout the adoption process

– in need of information every step of the way; but information is particularly key at the beginning of the process. The second stage concerns fewer people and is essentially hedonic and oriented toward the practice itself. People look for pleasure associated with the commensality of vegetarianism. They seek positive emotions, fun, comfort and satisfaction when undertaking a new and constraining diet. They look for new kinds of information about how to take pleasure from this practice, but above all they look for positive experiences. The third level of motivation is social, as people seek interactions with people who share their convictions. The community is required as a source of support for self-esteem and social acceptance. The fourth and final level of motivation is moral or political, and oriented toward action. The community is key to having an impact on society and rallying other congruent profiles around a moral or political project or mission. Each step can also be described as self- or other-centred: functional and hedonic uses of the community are mostly self-centred and reactive: people mainly see the community as a source of information, comfort and self-confidence; the expected benefits are self-centred and can be obtained through actual relationships. Social and moral uses of the community, in contrast, are oriented toward others, and the desired benefits involve interpersonal recognition and contacts and include potential influences on others, based on shared conviction, action and proselytism.

Evolution of community's uses

Interestingly, we observe that the uses and types of communities also tend to evolve over time and follow very different paths according to individual lives and personalities. Figure 1 shows how each respondent declared their use of communities evolved over time and the evolution of their trajectory, where applicable.

Figure 1: Evolution of respondent uses of communities



While some respondents clearly remain on the fringes of any community, a large majority initially connected with the global vegetarian community as a group. Some continue to occupy a distant and mostly virtual position, while others feel the urge for more personal links with a closer and more formal community, developing a close group of friends and relatives (2, 4, 5, 6, 9), becoming more involved in and sharing with a specific community (2, 5, 7, 14), or participating in more activism (16). A number of respondents directly entered a small community of close acquaintances to share their experiences without using any online community (10, 11, 13, 18, 20); such profiles usually show motivations for the practice related to health (rather than animal welfare) and, like the first category of "out-of-community" respondents, remain focused on their individual daily practice, sharing it only within a close perimeter. The last category directly enters an active community as soon as they first adopt the practice, and in line with strong convictions related to animal welfare. They tend to dissociate their daily practice, which they consider and manage individually, from the general philosophy (12, 19) or engagement (1, 12) for which the support of the community is needed.

Sense of belonging to a community

Because of the commitment required in day-to-day vegetarianism (practical strains, need for information, monitoring health, monetary pressure, time or social costs), and because their behaviour remains in the minority, the respondents systematically raised the issue of their relationships with others. They sketched out the shifting and varying outlines of a community comprising similar-minded vegetarians who share their new practices and convictions, and with whom they identify. The definition of such a community is structured around food practices, but also around shared values, the benefits expected from the group (information, conviviality, sharing, support, commitment) and the nature of their relationships (interpersonal, associative, media-related, virtual).

All of them positioned themselves in relation to the other vegetarians as a group. But when questioned about their link to a community, their sense of belonging varied greatly. Some of them denied any membership of any form of community. Others included themselves in an abstract definition of a community, as a way to define themselves as part of an identification process. Here, the global vegetarian community is presented more as a label and does not involve any contact. Conversely, others described a sense of reassurance from an actual social group, including contacts and sharing. Still others consider the community as an ideological support, providing ethical comfort, linked to the existence of the community itself. The last group clearly expressed a feeling of belonging to the community, including virtual or real relationships with other members and comprehensive sharing of convictions and actions (Table 2).

[Insert Table 2: Sense of community belonging]

First, we observe that belonging to a community can encompass several dimensions. The most general one is related to identity. The sense of community belonging corresponds to the feeling of belonging to a group because it shares some specific identity characteristics. Such characteristics may relate to behaviours, but also opinions, values or convictions. As a consequence, it can be split into two main dimensions, one related to the practice, the other related to convictions. "Practice community" is generally cited as a means, a way to initiate or improve the practice in terms of information or practicalities. "Conviction community" is seen more as an end, the anticipated outcome of the practice and the sharing of identical values and convictions. Examples of practice communities are physical groups of relatives, friends or fellow vegetarians who share the same practice, as well as online blogs or forums providing advice and recipes. Conviction communities can encompass practice communities, but they can also be independent, such as active associations or virtual social communities that defend animal welfare or advocate health benefits.

Interplay between social influences and adoptive community in the process toward practice adoption and continuity

We observe that both types of communities can have an influence on the processual factors driving the individual toward the adoption and continuity of the practice (see Figure 2).

Figure 2: Graphical presentation of social influences and community influence on vegetarian behaviour process

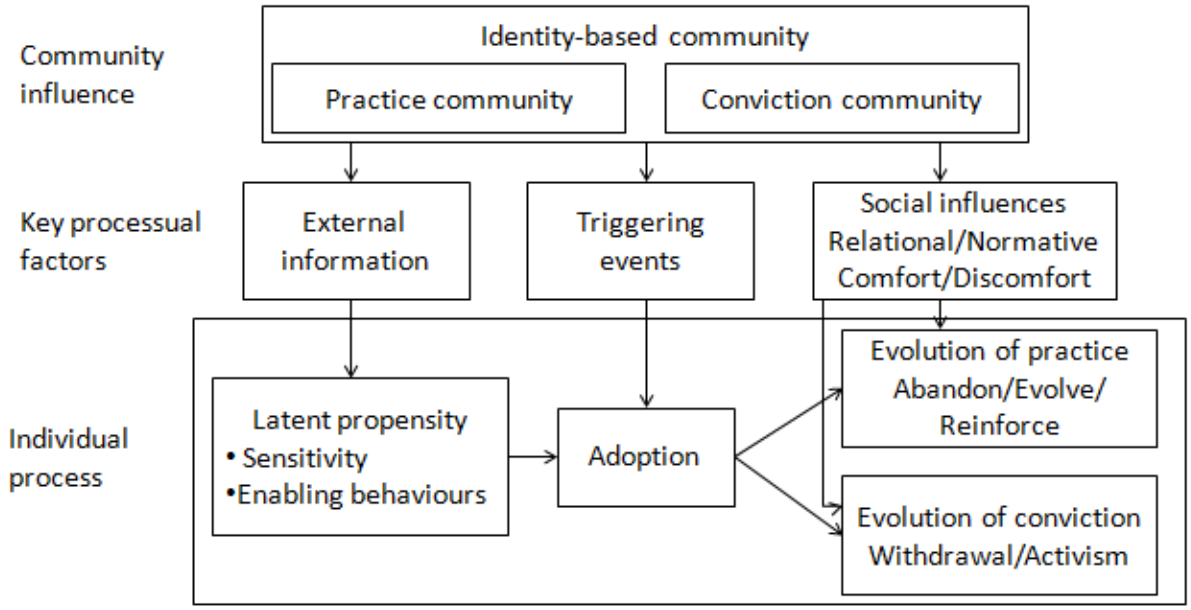


Figure 2 shows how communities can play a role during the three steps of the process (latent propensity, adoption, evolution), and the main key factor involved in each one. These factors can influence each step of the process, but they are particularly influential in the step mentioned in the graph. Before adoption, latent predispositions are usually observed; these progressively prepare the individual to move to adoption. The growing sensitivity to the negative consequences of a meat-based diet is strengthened by the information gathered and may accompany some preliminary behaviours (such as reduction of meat consumption) or attitudes (growing disgust, psychological discomfort). Adoption is then usually triggered by a specific event. It can be totally personal (as in the case of an illness, surgery or a Christmas dinner) but it can also be triggered by an event, a contact or information shared by the community. Examples of an encounter with a vegetarian or a particularly shocking message from a vegetarian forum are often mentioned as the determining event that led to the decision. Lastly, after adoption, contact and relationships with the community are crucial in the evolution of the practice. Perceptions of sharing with other practitioners are key to maintaining and strengthening the behaviour, as well as dealing with normative pressure.

Reliance on the community is particularly important during the search for information. Both types of community can be effective during this step: a practice community can positively impact behavioural control and barrier reduction, and a conviction community can extend one's awareness of the consequences and motivations. Both types of communities can also be at the origin of the triggering event leading to the adoption decision, though there may be many other triggering events not related to any community (e.g. a personal incident, as mentioned). A new and more interesting finding is that communities play a huge role in the evolution of both practice and conviction, especially when the vegetarian encounters normative pressure or dissonance. Community support appears to be a major factor in helping vegetarians to improve their practice, make it more convenient and pleasant, and to strengthen their conviction, by resisting extra-group criticisms, and increase their psychological commitment. This support may be relational, when the community provides a new and supportive social circle; it can also be normative, when the community helps the individual to optimize the adequacy between self-identity and social environment.

Downsides of community belonging

Belonging to a community is a way to ease the challenges of vegetarian practices and make them more comfortable and pleasant; it is also a way to strengthen and diffuse convictions throughout society. However, communities are not untainted by critiques and negative perceptions. They may be perceived as useless, demanding, sectarian or conflictual: *"I'm not a fan of sects, I am my own group. If you feel ok by yourself, you don't need to belong to a community" (Laetitia). "I wanted to enrol in totally vegan groups but I didn't stay long because it didn't interest me, I didn't learnt anything because there is no point speaking only to vegans" (Fiona). "It's a pity to belong to a community which sometimes shows off on social media, it's too much! ... there will always be extremists" (Manon).* Furthermore, when considering the

negative aspects of the community, respondents distinguish practice-related from conviction-related aspects (Table 3).

[Insert Table 3: Perceived downsides of communities]

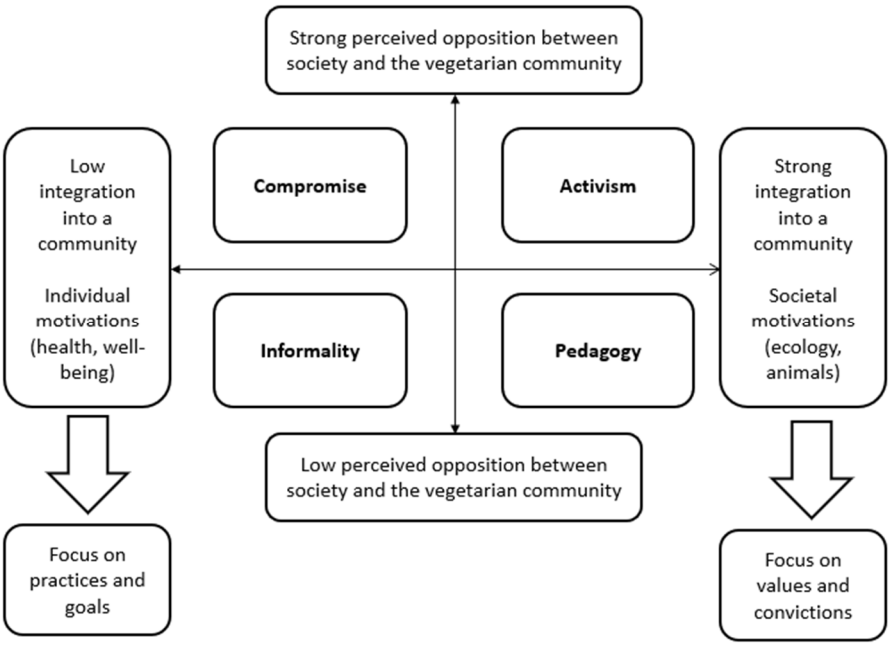
Community is perceived as useless when the consumer's expertise exceeds the information gains from the community or when the information provided is not reliable. Some respondents raised the issue of relational commitment in terms of the time and effort required to effectively share practices, but also to hold continuous discussions with the other members of the community. The specificities of each individual diet can be a hindrance to their belonging to a community on a very practical level, but also on a moral level, as their psychological self-esteem may suffer from judgements from more fundamentalist members of the community. Lastly, several respondents expressed the fear of conflict and violence associated with the community's possible actions, and the threat to their relationships with other communities (such as friends and relatives).

Community Belonging and perceived Opposition between community and society: the CBO model

With regard to their motivations, sense of community belonging and the perceived downsides of communities, the respondents are included in, use and adopt a community or, on the contrary, prefer to keep their distance from any. Moreover, whatever their perspective, they systematically feel the urge to position themselves regarding both the minority vegetarian community and the majority in society. Their feeling of affinity with one or the other is combined with the perception of opposition, or even contradiction, between the two. These two dimensions structure the following conceptual relational framework (Figure 3). Four situations

are presented; they characterize the links between the vegetarian and the community, what they expect from it, how they use it, and how it impacts on their relationship with society. Verbatims illustrating these four situations are presented in Table 4.

Figure 3: CBO model: Community Belonging and perceived Opposition



"Compromise" characterizes the first group of individuals, who (1) believe that vegetarianism is not a common and well-accepted practice in society, and (2) are not personally integrated into any community. They consider their approach to be strictly personal and often in opposition with mainstream food practices. As such, they tend to withdraw from sharing their personal experience with others and when social situations require it, they would rather compromise, tolerating exceptions to the diet and avoiding discussions on the subject. Consequently, they show limited use of the community, except for the occasional interest in objective information from websites or experts in the field.

"Informality" is characteristic of another kind of person, who, in contrast, considers vegetarianism to be quite well accepted in society, but nonetheless remains at some distance from communities. They have an easy-going relationship with the practice and a casual and

loose link to the community, mainly looking for local, convivial and informational exchanges with close social groups, friends and relatives. They also share their practices, without conflict, on website forums and online blogs.

"Pedagogy" refers to those who believe that vegetarianism is well accepted in society and are strongly invested in a community. They consider the community as a leading guide for society as a whole, with an informative and warning role aimed at persuading people that this diet is beneficial in several respects. They have a strong sense of belonging to the community, and as members of it they are spontaneously eager to talk about and share their practices, but without conflict, which makes them more active within the digital or physical community but rather distant from society, relying on the community to spread the message about the benefits of their diet.

"Activism" describes the last group, who consider that vegetarianism is not well accepted in society and at the same time see themselves as firm members of a community. They feel an urge to actively disseminate the convictions of the community in the hope of changing society. They tend to take every opportunity to share their views, both inside and outside the community, using social networks as well as physical group meetings, events and demonstrations. In so doing, they might accept some forms of opposition and adopt a strongly persuasion-oriented discourse.

[Insert Table 4: Verbatims illustrating the four situations]

Discussion

The results shed light on the social embeddedness of vegetarian practices in two different respects: the importance of the influence of others in the process of adoption and maintenance

of the practice, and the relationships developed with vegetarian communities and the role members expect them to play.

Social influences

In accordance with transformation theory (Mezirow, 1996), social influences appear to be key in the process of adopting and maintaining vegetarian behaviour. The initial social context involves both descriptive (i.e. based on what people do) and injunctive (i.e. based on what people should do) norms that influence attitudes toward the practice and may act as barriers to behaviour adoption. Similarly, triggering events appear to be often linked to social influences from experts or relatives who have themselves adopted or support the practice. One verbatim reveals that another person initiated, convinced and guided the respondent toward actual adoption of the practice. Regarding relationships with family and friends, while Jabs et al. (1998) highlighted diet-centred family conflicts and Cherry (2015) stressed the importance of social support from family and friends, this study shows the diversity of situations depending on the links between the vegetarian and the community.

Adoptive communities

In respect of their chosen practice, individuals tend to join related groups or communities with specific intentions, motivations and desired benefits.

Dholakia et al. (2004) proposed a model including the different motivations for virtual community participation: purposive value (informational value and instrumental value), self-discovery, maintaining interpersonal connectivity, social enhancement and entertainment value. In the present research, the desired benefits can be divided into four categories: informational, hedonic, social and moral/political. Moreover, in adding the perceived downsides of the

community, this study complements Dholakia et al.'s results, which focused on the community benefits only.

The links to the community can also be diverse – information exchanges, meetings, sharing, discussions, joint action – and relate either to the practice itself (product information, recipes, product availability, meal sharing) or to its psychological or political dimensions (convictions, values, activism) (Johnson et al., 2013).

Beyond confirming well-known theories about consumer decision-making processes (Ajzen, 2002; Mezirow, 1996; McDonald, 2000), and in accordance with the core aim of this research, our results specifically shed light on the role and use of the group as moderators of the evolution of the behaviour. In particular, the analysis of our respondents' discourse led to a proposed conceptual model with the aim of explaining how the maintenance of the practice may rely on one's personal sense of belonging to a community and on the perceived opposition between the adoptive community and society (CBO – Community Belonging and perceived Opposition). The CBO model takes into account vegetarianism as political consumerism and the importance of pedagogy, as studied by Jallinoja et al. (2019), but goes further by providing a better understanding of vegetarians who do not feel integrated into a community.

Impact of social influences and adoptive community on behaviours

The perception of an existing community can support an individual's vegetarian self-identity. On a daily basis, it will help the vegetarian to find tangible ways to deal with the constraints and practical difficulties of the diet. The adoptive community also appears to help in resisting contradictory external pressure at both psychological and social levels, and to be a trigger toward increased involvement at a more philosophical level. In most cases, we observe that the narrated processes show parallel reinforcement of practices and convictions and use of the community. Every life path is different, and the individual stories express a variety of uses of

communities, but they usually convey increasingly close and demanding links to them. They also suggest an important role of emotions and empathy within the group (Shultz et al., 2007; Sturmer et al., 2005). A passive use of available and anonymous information is followed by more effective virtual or physical contacts, identification of fellow vegetarians, dialogue and a quest for feedback and sharing, actual experience-sharing, conviction-sharing, and ultimately, possible common action and activism to defend and generalize the practice. Not all steps are mandatory however, and some of them can be skipped. Some individuals may reach a plateau and remain at a specific stage in their relationship with the community. Some may even demonstrate withdrawal from their initial involvement in a community. Such examples represent a minority in our respondents, but the recruitment process, based on the requirement of vegan and vegetarian informants, letting aside possible ex-vegetarians, may have generated a bias minimizing such a possibility. While communities provide a range of benefits, they are sometimes perceived as a normative barrier to the continuity of the practice, especially where there is a perceived normative conflict between the community and society. For some respondents, when perceived social pressure against the practice is too high, support and even the mere existence of the community turns out to be detrimental to the individual practice itself.

Limitations and directions for future research

The limitations of the present study stem from its inherent and exploratory nature as qualitative research, which does not allow generalization of the results. Even if a certain level of data saturation has been achieved, it can only be considered within a limited perimeter, especially in terms of age, and cannot claim any completeness of the results. Other vegetarian profiles, beyond those that have already been identified and discarded herein, such as vegetarians for religious reasons or born vegetarians, exist and may have shed a different light on the issue. Furthermore, although this research has led to interesting conceptual propositions regarding the

links between vegetarian trajectories, social influences and communities, there is now a need for quantitative confirmation and strengthening of the suggested causal relations.

In that respect, the present exploratory step opens up an extensive research agenda. In order to confirm the explanatory power of these two concepts – sense of belonging to a community and perceived opposition with society – on behaviour adoption and continuity, dimensions of the related constructs and measurement tools have to be developed and tested. In the next step, descriptive confirmation of the identified categories and evaluation of the causal links of the CBO model on major response variables such as involvement in the community, conflict perception, behaviour solidity and behaviour evolution, is needed using confirmatory quantitative analyses.

The present research shows that consumers differ regarding the social contexts and social consequences of their specific behaviour, as well as their use of a related community. However, the results cannot be used to superimpose the typologies of practices (i.e. vegetarian/vegan/strict vegan) onto the identified community framework, even though there could be a certain logical correspondence between the Flexitarian-Vegetarian-Vegan-Strict vegan continuum and the four categories of use (Compromise-Informality-Pedagogy-Activism) and four categories of motivations identified (Informational-Relational-Social-Political).

More investigation is also needed to better understand the evolution of the use of the communities over time. The present study interestingly shows that people experience their practice with a variety of relational embeddedness and uses of the communities. It also shows that these uses may (or may not) evolve over time. When use of the community evolves, our results show that it usually follows a strengthening process, in line with more personal involvement in terms of time, conviction and willingness to defend the behaviour. But we have no certainty that a reverse process of detachment from and reactance to the community is impossible (Algesheimer, Dholakia and Herrmann, 2005).

Conclusion

This research sheds light on the perceptions of the vegetarian community and the position adopters take relative to it. Adoption of vegetarian practices is a personal decision which has social consequences, compelling vegetarians to deal with their original social groups and position themselves in relation to the global vegetarian community. From a theoretical point of view, this research examines the role of communities in the development of a specific behaviour. It identifies two important factors that determine four different possible ways of positioning oneself relative to the practice, depending on how one deals with the communities. The first is the sense of belonging to a community, which can take several forms (identity marker, actual social group, ideological support, political involvement) and have various levels of strength. The second is the perceived opposition between the global community and society. The extent to which the global community is well accepted, or on the contrary marginal, in society seems to impact how people will rely on it for support, identity design, and action development based on convictions. We propose the CBO model in order to better understand the development of the behaviour over time and the different patterns in terms of community support, involvement and perceived conflict.

From a managerial point of view, this research provides some insights for actors in the field. It points to the need to include the role of the communities in the comprehensive conceptual model of behaviour adoption. Communities defined as social, physical or virtual groups sharing common practices and convictions may be positively perceived and useful when it comes to obtaining information, enhancing motivation, clearing one's conscience and developing trust and self-esteem. In this respect, communities can be efficient and useful intermediaries for those who have an interest in encouraging adoption of the vegetarian or vegan diets. Vegetarian product manufacturers and vegetarian restaurants or associations may find such communities

very helpful in reaching their objectives. But the research also shows that some individuals, though they might be deeply involved in the practice, may at the same time find the related communities a burden more than a help, and systematically avoid them.

The research also clarifies the various motivations to use a community. The most common motivation is getting information (about products, practices, benefits and consequences), but other, less cognitive, motivations do exist. Three more motivational categories which encourage consumers to contact and relate to a community were identified: emotional, social and moral. The community can help people to get used to the practice, maintain self-confidence when faced with adverse contexts, and actively participate in the diffusion of such practices when believed to be good. However, communitarian phenomena are complex and directly related to the construction of one's identity in the framework of such a major and debated trend. Cognitive arguments and product information can easily and efficiently be spread throughout communities for promotional goals directed at targets.

This exploratory research points to openings that can be useful for the actors concerned. It calls for awareness of the complex role played by communities in the evolution of consumer trends which, albeit still marginal, are at the heart of current concerns. The commercial pitches and offers of new products from agribusiness companies would thus be more effective if based on a direct approach to individuals, with reliance on information mechanisms targeting loved ones and peers rather than social networks or associations. On the other hand, social networks and associations can help communicate ecological or societal messages emanating from public authorities. Further exploration of these rich results is also to be expected, as well as phases of confirmatory development of the evolution of consumption behaviours according to individual life paths and influences, resistance and conflicts emerging from the groups and communities concerned.

References

Ajzen, I. (2002). Perceived behavioral control, self-efficacy, locus of control, and the theory of planned behavior 1. *Journal of applied social psychology*, 32(4), 665-683.

Algesheimer, R., Dholakia, U. M., & Herrmann, A. (2005). The social influence of brand community: Evidence from European car clubs. *Journal of marketing*, 69(3), 19-34.

Allès, B., Baudry, J., Méjean, C., Touvier, M., Péneau, S., Hercberg, S., & Kesse-Guyot, E. (2017). Comparison of Sociodemographic and Nutritional Characteristics between Self-Reported Vegetarians, Vegans, and Meat-Eaters from the NutriNet-Santé Study. *Nutrients*, 9(9), 1023.

Arora, R. (2012). A mixed method approach to understanding the role of emotions and sensual delight in dining experience. *Journal of Consumer Marketing*, 29(5), 333–343.

Ashforth, B. E., & Mael, F. (1989). Social identity theory and the organization. *Academy of management review*, 14(1), 20-39.

Ashmore, R. D., Deaux, K., & McLaughlin-Volpe, T. (2004). An organizing framework for collective identity: articulation and significance of multidimensionality. *Psychological bulletin*, 130(1), 80.

Bagozzi, R. P., & Dholakia, U. M. (2002). Intentional social action in virtual communities. *Journal of interactive marketing*, *16*(2), 2-21.

Beardsworth, A., & Keil, T. (1992). The vegetarian option: varieties, conversions, motives and careers. *The Sociological Review*, 40(2), 253-293.

Bertaux D (2016). *Le récit de vie-4e édition*. Armand Colin

Cherry, E. (2015). I was a teenage vegan : motivation and maintenance of lifestyle movements. *Sociological inquiry, 85*(1), 55-74

Cialdini, R. B., & Goldstein, N. J. (2004). Social influence: Compliance and conformity. *Annual. Review of Psychology,* 55, 591-621.

Cornelissen, G., Dewitte, S., Warlop, L., & Yzerbyt, V. (2007). Whatever people say I am, that's what I am: Social labeling as a social marketing tool. *International Journal of Research in Marketing*, *24*(4), 278-288.

Cova, B., & Pace, S. (2006). Brand community of convenience products: new forms of customer empowerment–the case "my Nutella The Community". *European journal of marketing*, 40, 9/10, 1087-1105.

Dahl, D. (2013). Social influence and consumer behaviour. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 40(2), iii-v.

De Boer, J., Schösler, H. & Aiking, H. (2017). Towards a reduced meat diet: Mindset and motivation of young vegetarians, low, medium and high meat-eaters, *Appetite, 113*, 387-397

Dholakia, U.M., Bagozzi, R.P. & Pearo, L.K. (2004). A social influence model of consumer participation in network- and small-group-based virtual communities. *International Journal of Research in Marketing*, *21*, 241-263.

Dyett, P. A., Sabaté, J., Haddad, E., Rajaram, S., & Shavlik, D. (2013). Vegan lifestyle behaviours. An exploration of congruence with health-related beliefs and assessed health indices. *Appetite*, *67*, 119-124.

Etzioni, A. (1996). The responsive community: A communitarian perspective. *American Sociological Review*, 61(1), 1–11

Exline, J. J., Zell, A. L., Bratslavsky, E., Hamilton, M., & Swenson, A. (2012). People-pleasing through eating: Sociotropy predicts greater eating in response to perceived social pressure. *Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology*, *31*(2), 169-193.

Fox, N., & Ward, K. (2008). Health, ethics and environment: A qualitative study of vegetarian motivations. *Appetite*, 50(2-3), 422-429.

Glaser, B., & Strauss, A. (1967). *The discovery of grounded theory*. 1967. Weidenfield & Nicolson, London, 1-19.

Green, T., & Peloza, J. (2011). How does corporate social responsibility create value for consumers?. *Journal of consumer marketing*, 28(1), 48-56.

Greenebaum, J. (2012). Veganism, Identity and the Quest for Authenticity. *Food, Culture & Society: An International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research, 15*(1), 129 – 44.

Greenebaum, J., & Dexter, B. (2017). Vegan men and hybrid masculinity. *Journal of Gender Studies*, 1-12.

Heere, B., Walker, M., Yoshida, M., Ko, Y. J., Jordan, J. S., & James, J. D. (2011). Brand community development through associated communities: Grounding community measurement within social identity theory. *Journal of Marketing Theory and Practice*, 19(4), 407-422.

Higgs, S. (2015). Social norms and their influence on eating behaviours. *Appetite*, *86*, 38-44.

Hoffman, S.R., Stallings, S.F., Bessinger, R.C. & Brooks, G.T. (2013). Differences between health and ethical vegetarians. Strength of conviction, nutrition knowledge, dietary restriction, and duration of adherence, *Appetite*, *65*, 139–144.

Hogg, M. A., & Reid, S. A. (2006). Social identity, self-categorization, and the communication of group norms. *Communication theory*, 16(1), 7-30.

Jabs, J., Devine, C. M., et Sobal, J. (1998). Model of the process of adopting vegetarian diets: Health vegetarians and ethical vegetarians. *Journal of Nutrition Education*, 30(4), 196-202.

Jallinoja, P., Vinnari, M., & Niva, M. (2019). *Veganism and plant-based eating: Analysis of interplay between discursive strategies and lifestyle political consumerism.* The Oxford handbook of political consumerism, 157-179.

Johnson, Z., Massiah, J. & Allan, J. (2013). Community identification increases consumer-to-consumer helping, but not always, *Journal of Consumer Marketing*, *30*(2), 121–129.

Kniazeva, M., & Venkatesh, A. (2007). Food for thought: A study of food consumption in postmodern US culture. *Journal of Consumer Behaviour: An International Research Review*, *6*(6), 419-435.

McAlexander, J. H., Schouten, J. W., & Koenig, H. F. (2002). Building brand community. *Journal of Marketing*, 66(1), 38-54.

McDonald, B. (2000). "Once you know something, you can't not know it" : An mpirical look at becoming vegan. *Society & Animals 8*(1), 1 – 23.

Mezirow, J. (1996). Contemporary paradigms of learning. *Adult education quarterly*, 46(3), 158-172.

Muniz, A. M., & O'guinn, T. C. (2001). Brand community. *Journal of consumer research*, 27(4), 412-432.

Närvänen, E., Kartastenpää, E., & Kuusela, H. (2013). Online lifestyle consumption community dynamics: A practice-based analysis. *Journal of Consumer Behaviour*, 12(5), 358-369.

Neuman, N., Mylan, J., & Paddock, J. (2020). Exploring (non-) meat eating and "translated cuisines" out of home: Evidence from three English cities. *International Journal of Consumer Studies*, 44(1), 25-32.

Oyserman, D., Fryberg, S. A., & Yoder, N. (2007). Identity-based motivation and health. *Journal of personality and social psychology*, *93*(6), 1011.

Plante, C. N., D. L. Rosenfeld, M. Plante and S. Reysen. 2019. The role of social identity motivation in dietary attitudes and behaviors among vegetarians. *Appetite*,141, 104307

Raggiotto, F., Mason, M. C., & Moretti, A. (2018). Religiosity, materialism, consumer environmental predisposition. Some insights on vegan purchasing intentions in Italy. *International journal of consumer studies*, 42(6), 613-626.

Reed II, A., Forehand, M. R., Puntoni, S., & Warlop, L. (2012). Identity-based consumer behaviour. *International Journal of Research in Marketing*, *29*(4), 310-321.

Rosenfeld, D. L. (2019). Why some choose the vegetarian option: Are all ethical motivations the same?. *Motivation and Emotion*, 43(3), 400-411.

Rosenfeld, D. L., & Burrow, A. L. (2017). The unified model of vegetarian identity: A conceptual framework for understanding plant-based food choices. *Appetite*, *112*, 78-95.

Rothgerber H., (2020), Meat-related cognitive dissonance: A conceptual framework for understanding how meat eaters reduce negative arousal from eating animals, Appetite, in press

Salazar, H. A., Oerlemans, L., and van Stroe-Biezen, S. (2013). Social influence on sustainable consumption: evidence from a behavioural experiment. *International Journal of consumer studies*, 37(2), 172-180.

Schultz, P. W., Nolan, J. M., Cialdini, R. B., Goldstein, N. J., & Griskevicius, V. (2007). The constructive, destructive, and reconstructive power of social norms. *Psychological science,* 18(5), 429-434.

Séré de Lanauze G. & Siadou-Martin B. (2019). "Dissonant cognitions: from psychological discomfort to behavior change?", *Journal of Consumer Marketing*, 36(5), 565-581.

Schau, H. J., Muñiz Jr, A. M., & Arnould, E. J. (2009). How brand community practices create value. *Journal of marketing*, 73(5), 30-51.

Sheth, J.N., Sethia, N.K. & Srinivas, S. (2011), Mindful consumption: a customer-centric approach to sustainability, *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, *39*, 21–39.

Spiggle, S. (1994). Analysis and interpretation of qualitative data in consumer research. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 21(3), 491-503.

Stern, P. C. (2000). New environmental theories: toward a coherent theory of environmentally significant behaviour. *Journal of social issues, 56*(3), 407-424.

Strauss, A. &Corbin, J. (1998). *Basics of Qualitative Research: Grounded Theory, Procedures and Technique*, 2nd Edition. Sage, Newbury Park, London.

Sturmer, S., Snyder, M. & Omoto, A.M. (2005), "Prosocial emotions and helping: the moderating role of group membership", *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *88* (3), 532-46.

Tuomela, R. (1995). The importance of us: A philosophy study of basic social notions. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

Twine, R. (2018). Materially constituting a sustainable food transition: The case of vegan eating practice. *Sociology*, 52(1), 166-181.

Vartanian, L. R. (2015). Impression management and food intake. Current directions in research. *Appetite*, 86, 74-80.

White, K., Simpson, B., & Argo, J. J. (2014). The motivating role of dissociative out-groups in encouraging positive consumer behaviors. *Journal of Marketing Research*, *51*(4), 433-447.

White, K., Habib, R. and Hardisty, D.J. (2019). How to SHIFT Consumer Behaviours to be More Sustainable: A Literature Review and Guiding Framework, *Journal of Marketing*, 83(3), 22–49.

Zur, I. & Klöckner, C. A. (2014). Individual motivations for limiting meat consumption. *British Food Journal, 116*(4), 629-642.

Table 1: Motivations for community belonging

Motivations	Benefits	Verbatim
Functional	Community as a **source of information** • Information about practices • Information about consequences	*"At first I think you need it to get started and obtain all the information, recipes and all that" (Marlène)* *"The people I knew had been practicing vegetarianism for a long time, so they had a lot of information about it. They also advised me to look at websites specially developed for us" (Prisca)*
Hedonic	Community as **a tribe/group for actual practice sharing and assistance** • Recipes • Meal sharing • Product supply	*"But it is certain that when we share a meal with people with whom we have exactly the same norm, the same diet and ... it is immediately more pleasant since we feel good so yes my vegetarian friends my vegan friends, I love sharing meals with them; so, I see them a little more!" (Vincent)*
Social	Community as **an identity group** • Sense of belonging • Self-confidence • Reassurance/comfort • Motivation enforcement	*"You're less alone, you feel better, you don't feel rejected by everyone at least, there are people who understand you" (Ella)* *"it's good to know there are people who have made the same choice, they have the same opinion" (Rémi)* *"We give huge support to one another. We all know what's going on, we share the latest news on these issues. We also cheer each other up a lot" (Angèle)*
Moral/political	Community as **an action group** • Activism • Spreading convictions • Conflict management	*"we try at demonstrations and especially by talking to people, that also works quite well, to engage with everyone like that, and so you know, we try to make progress on the cause for the protection of animals, and the more there are of us, the more impact we have" (Jenna)*

Table 2: Sense of community belonging

Not belonging to a community	*"I'm not into sects: I am my own group. As long as you feel good on your ow you don't have that need to belong to a community. Also, don't mix with the guns, apart from those on social media whom I look to for information. I'm big into books, I read a lot about this subject and other things." (Sophie)* *"I don't do small discussion groups between vegans, I continue to be myself and I haven't changed my social circle based on the idea of becoming vegan." (Marie)*
Belonging to a community as an identity marker	*"it's easy to put a label on it, vegetarian can have several different connotations if you like, I mean it's quite complex to explain but let's just say it's a community ... yeah that's it, it's a community ... I mean it's very complex, it's as if you had people saying, yeah I love rap and then you're identified with rappers like Jul, you know? I mean you don't necessarily identify with all vegetarians because there are as many different ways to be vegetarian as there are vegetarians, so it's a bit of a catch-all term let's say. I think it just works for the literal dictionary definition" (Sébastien)*
Belonging to a community as an actual social group	*"This community brings me security. Knowing I'm not alone is reassuring, and I feel more comfortable with those around me. In terms of my vegetarian practices, no doubt about that. We meet up to eat together, if someone discovers a new restaurant that serves vegetarian dishes they let me know, or even a shop that sells stuff for us. For me, YES it's super important, first of all for moral support but also the practicality. I can really count on this little community, especially with work, I'm always in a mad rush, so I count on them to choose the restaurant, bring ingredients back from the supermarket, chat and be open about our practices". (Angèle)*
Belonging to a community for ideological support	*"Let's say what I get out of it is, I wouldn't necessarily say community, but more of a movement, it's a source of pride you see, I'm seriously proud of my ideologies on this. I mean it's kind of weird to get indignant about the fact that I don't want to eat animals, and so I don't want to kill them. After all, it's more positive than negative as an ideology" (Marion) So being able to rely on these people has really helped me overcome certain difficulties". (Prisca)*
Belonging to a community as political involvement	*"I'm interested. I took some actions, like the « standing night » in front of the slaughterhouse in Pézenas ; it was a peaceful action, we really wanted to pay tribute to the slaughterhouses' victims. We hold a vigil from 5 PM to 5 AM until the trucks arrived, and then there were some discussions. The goal was to be heard. Some people were challenged by the protest, they stoped to discuss with us". (Gabriel)*

Table 3: Perceived downsides of communities

	Practice-related	Conviction-related
Useless	Information saturation, or not needed	Scepticism, credibility
Demanding	Excessive time and efforts required	Excessive involvement required
Sectarian	Incompatible with individual practice	Judgmental attitudes
Conflictual	Threat to usual daily relationships	Violence and conflict

Table 4: Verbatims illustrating the four situations

Compromise (3-4-10-15-17)	**Activism (1-7-16-18)**
"Nowadays it's not always easy to define yourself as a vegetarian because, well, there is a lot of, how can I put it? ... there are loads of people who speak badly about it, it can be perceived negatively. And generally, when you say you're a vegetarian, you're immediately associated with something that in some cases has nothing to do with you. Like ... OK, often people have often said to me that I was a hippie or granola or whatever. I don't know if they're right, but what I mean is I was immediately associated with something ... That's why I generally prefer saying I don't eat meat instead of saying I'm a vegetarian" (Sébastien)	*"we're a small group, we always hook up in cities across the country, we all sort of know each other in France actually, and every time there's a demonstration we make the journey [...] we meet up and we all try to talk to move things forward, even if they don't become vegetarians it's good for them to be aware of how meat is made and all that. Also some of them hold get-togethers in restaurants and organize tasting sessions for loads of vegetarian specialties [...] and eh, we also communicate on Facebook […] A lot of people visit these websites or Facebook pages to talk about it, to begin to understand […]. Personally I mainly see them to try to make progress on the cause for the protection of animals, and the more there are of us, the more impact we have. That's the purpose the association serves for me […] there's a real desire to communicate a message" (Jenna)*
Informality (2-6-8-11-13-20-21-22)	**Pedagogy (5-9-12-14-19-23)**
"Yes but I don't really share that perspective, for me it's a bit too 'I belong to a community, we keep to ourselves', that's what turns me off. Personally I have friends who eat meat, but I'm not about to remove them from my life" (Rémi). *"I mean, I didn't do this to prove anything to other people, etc. I just did it for myself. That's advice I would give too, to anyone who wants to try it, I have lots of advice to give (laughs): don't judge people. Because you used to eat everything yourself before, you know, so you have to respect that" (Florian)*	*"I talked to a lot of people who have become aware of the problems facing society" (Agnès)* *"When they come to my house they know they'll be eating things they're not used to eating. They'll eat the way I eat. But in general they like what I prepare for them, and it dispels the idea of vegetarians that all they eat is seeds and lettuce (laughs)" (Gabriel)* *"My plan is to stop working as a nanny and instead set up cookery workshops, so I can present what I'm talking about to people interested in learning more." (Sophie)*

Appendix 1: Sample composition

	Respondent	Sex	Age	Activity	Veg. status	Duration
1	Roseline	F	23	Student	Strict vegan	6 years
2	Prisca	F	29	Teacher	Flexitarian	Several years
3	Marius	M	20	Student	Vegan	3-4 months
4	Sébastien	M	21	Student	Vegetarian	2 years 6 months
5	Agnès	F	20	Student	Strict vegan	3 years
6	Vincent	M	18	Student	Vegetarian	2 years
7	Angèle	F	25	Translator	Vegetarian	2 years
8	Rémi	M	22	Student	Vegan	2 years
19	Pauline	F	24	Student	Strict vegan	4 years
10	Nina	F	27	Housewife	Vegetarian	3 years
11	Florian	M	23	Student	Vegan	3 years 6 months
12	Gabriel	M	23	Student	Vegan	2-3 years
13	Marion	F	21	Student	Vegetarian	2 years
14	Marlène	M	19	Student	Vegetarian	10 months
15	Capucine	F	26	Student	Vegetarian	1 year
16	Jenna	F	27	Student	Vegetarian	5 years
17	Cécile	F	17	High school pupil	Vegetarian	1 year 6 months
18	Ella	F	19	Student	Strict vegan	3 years (vegan 1 year)
19	Louise	F	28	Student	Strict vegan	1 year
20	Noémie	F	24	Photographer	Vegetarian	1 year 6 months
21	Arnaud	M	25	Audiovisual contractor	Flexitarian	Several years
22	Marie	F	22	Biology student	Vegan	4 years
23	Sophie	F	36	Self-employed	Vegan	10 months

Sample structure

	Sex		Avg. age	Practice	
	Male	8	23.4	Flexitarian	2
				Vegetarian	10
	Female	15		Vegan	6
				Vegan	5