

A Vegan Walks Into a Restaurant: Moralized Consumption and Market Relations

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What is moralized consumption?

Contested consumption guided by deeply held moral beliefs and values that are interpersonally and culturally debated, modified, strengthened or revoked.

Research Questions

- ✓ How and why changes in moralized consumption practices shape interpersonal relations?
- ✓ How do these interpersonal conflicts shape market interactions?

Why should we care?

About moralized consumption ?

- ✓ What is considered right and wrong is relative and contextual
- ✓ A person can have multiple contradictory moral beliefs that he/she has free will over

About Veganism?

- ✓ Vegetarians and vegans now account for nearly 10% of Canada's population
- ✓ Meat consumption has decreased by 10% since 2001
- ✓ Milk consumption has been declining in the last 10 years by around 25%
- ✓ Vegan labeled food products have experienced steady growth over the past few years approximately 3.3 percent in 2015

Methods

Interviews with vegans

Analysis

Netnography Observations

Findings

Interactions create social moral tensions in the form of

Non-vegan

Newly converted vegan

"Getting your protein from alternative sources instead of going for meat is kinda dumb. In my opinion it's the lazy approach to maintaining health and irrational moral thought process. And either way you go about it you're gonna take a life" Seb



Interpersonal level



Negotiating acceptable consumption



Advocating moral superiority



"Yeah but some restaurants are fine. We go to a place for sushi and the owner is vegan but in order to have a restaurant she has two menus. One with fish and one without and we know her and saw how it works there. There are two separate preparations so there is no contamination or things like that. Because she is a vegan and she is very strict on that" Nick

Individual level

Education and learning

Reaffirming moral identity and choice

"why all of the sudden they have memories of me eating the same thing that they do, so that was pretty hard because I started self-selecting out of things, like no I don't want to go to that restaurant with you guys watching like I don't want to sit there and watch you eat all this stuff like killing yourselves killing all of these animals... like these are the kind of things"... Alison

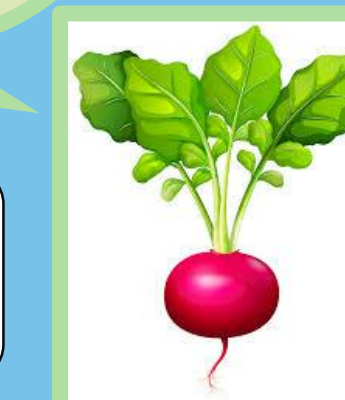
Market level

Skepticism towards market offerings

Harsh judgment on opposing businesses

Leading to

Reshaping of consumption practices and market relations



Managerial Implications

1- Thinking of expanding to vegans?

- Avoid labels that would alienate your current consumers
- Use ethical practices in your non-vegan business (free range animals)

2- Wanting to open a vegan business?

- Avoid moral claims and superiority arguments in your brand's positioning
- Advocate social cohesion and acceptance in advertising messages
- Innovate on vegan products that appeal to some non-vegans (reductionists, clean eating, flexitarian) e.g. mock meat, meat free burgers
- Provide resources (e.g. books, research, magazines, press releases) that aid in resolving interpersonal and individual level conflicts

"Impossible Foods [...] has advised the 3,000 restaurants that serve its [meat free] burgers not to describe them as vegan on menus. For many people, their notion of a vegan is someone who's wagging a finger at them if they eat any animal products. I'm vegan. But for a lot of people that term - it's almost like a cult" (Pat Brown, Impossible food's CEO)

