



BA HONOURS IN STRATEGIC BRAND COMMUNICATION
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RESEARCH REPORT

“The Instant Vegan”

KELLY DIBB - [REDACTED]
SUPERVISOR: CLIVE GREENSTONE

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DECLARATION

I Kelly Dibb hereby declare that this Research submitted for the Bachelor Degree of Honours in Strategic Brand Communication to the Independent Institute of Education is my own work and has not previously been submitted to another University or Higher Education Institution for degree purposes.

Student Number: 

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Signed by Kelly Dibb

23 November 2021

ABSTRACT

This research study has investigated the influence that Instagram has on millennials dietary choices when becoming vegan. Identifying the various factors that help contribute to influencing millennials decisions and persuading them to change their lifestyle was beneficial as it will be able to allow brands to see how they can use various marketing tools to influence people to buy their products or use their services. The research followed a qualitative approach and used online interviews as well as online surveys to collect the relevant data needed for this study. Covid-19 did prevent physical interaction with participants throughout the research, however, the findings that were gathered were conclusive. This study contributes towards a deeper understanding of how the world is changing and how social media applications such as Instagram are being used for millennial to compare themselves to one another and change their lifestyle choices based on the information and visuals they are exposed to on Instagram.

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Research Title: The Instant Vegan

Research Topic: How the promotion of veganism on Instagram has affected millennials dietary choices.

CHAPTER 1: Introduction and Overview

This chapter will provide an overview of the context of this research report as well as the reasoning behind why it was explored in the first place. It will also address the research problem and purpose to gain a better understanding of why this specific topic is being explored. Lastly, it will be looking at the research questions and objectives that will be used to guide this research report that will help contribute to the end findings.

1.1. Contextualisation

The focus of this study is to measure the degree of Instagram's influence on millennials perceptions of veganism and how the way veganism is promoted on Instagram, is changing their dietary choices. Veganism emerged in the 1994 when Donald Watson decided he wanted to create a term for people who do not consume any animal products. During the 20th century, veganism has been driven by animal rights concerns but only recently has it been praised as a healthy and environmental lifestyle which is fuelling the diet. The rising trend of veganism over the years has also been associated with an increase of the number of vegan food products that are being marketed as well as the normalisation of replacing meat with plant-based alternatives. Items such as plant-based milks and yoghurts are taking over the dairy industry as well as initiatives such as meat free Mondays and Veganuary where one becomes vegan for the month of January (Krempholtz, 2021).

Social media application, Instagram, has become a central part of consumers and is also influencing the way they live their lives. Millennials are using Instagram more than any other platform and studies show that they interact more on social media than they do in real life (Benson, 2018). Celebrity endorsements on Instagram are fuelling the vegan trend as well as peer pressure from individuals and brand advertisements that they are exposed to via Instagram posts and stories. Documentaries are also being created and showcased on popular platforms such as Netflix. Examples of these documentaries are What The

Health (2017) and Game Changers (2019) which are trying to influence consumers to change their food choices by using popular celebrities to win over people.

With this in mind, there is little research that has been conducted showing Instagram's influence on millennials dietary choices with regards to veganism. This research study will be exploring how the interpretivist paradigm will be used to guide the research as well as key theories and concepts that will help contribute to this study. A literature review will be conducted and will consist of eight former studies that will identify themes by key authors. Qualitative data collection methods as well as analysis tools will be conducted throughout to contribute to this research study.

1.2. Rationale

This study will provide insight into the beliefs and motivations related to veganism and whether Instagram has a role to play in influencing millennials in this regard (Jones, 2020). Over the past decade, Instagram has become the most used platform among people aged 18-34, making it the most effective platform to reach millennials (Matthews, 2019). This research will be providing insights into how millennials are using Instagram as a main tool for seeking information about brands products and services which will also help brands to discover whether Instagram is an effective tool to influence consumers buying behaviour around lifestyle choices in the age of agile branding. This study is relevant and important as veganism is only just rising and will not be disappearing any time soon as it is growing in popularity and visibility around the world. This is important for brands to take this into account as it is becoming crucial for them to remain relevant and memorable to consumers to keep up with their changing needs. Brands are needing to shift not only in the products they are selling but also in the way that they are marketing their products to reach individuals effectively. (Templafy, 2020). Millennials will also able to use this research to see whether the vegan lifestyle is worth exploring especially with the help of Instagram making the lifestyle look appealing with visuals and information provided by peers and influencers.

1.3. Problem Statement

Over the past decade, there has been a significant rise in veganism and it has become one of the most popular dietary trends amongst millennials. Instagram has played a major

role in the rise of veganism, especially amongst millennials, who gravitate towards Instagram for daily feeds and inspiration (Meager, 2016). Millennials are now viewing veganism as a way to fit in and are partaking in this lifestyle based on peer pressure from celebrity endorsements and brand advertising (Sano, 2018). Social media is a vital asset when it comes to marketing in the food industry and has transformed the way people think about food. In order for brands to attract millennials, they are having to make use of social media platforms such as Instagram, to create a strong position for their brand in the market (Dauby, 2018).

Millennials are using Instagram as a vital source of information about certain food diets and are easily persuaded to believe what they read online, especially if it is coming from someone with an influence. Instagram is full of celebrities and influencer's who are answering millennials questions by showing them what they eat in a day and proving to them that the vegan diet is worth it (Chan, 2021). Millennials are realizing that the need to consume meat and dairy is no longer necessary as a result of the information they are exposed to on social media (Lockwood, 2018). This is not only affecting brands who provide vegan products and alternatives but is also affecting the meat and dairy industry as there will be a shift in consumers consumption patterns in the years to come (Kantar, 2017). Previous research has been conducted on the influence social media has on consumers diets (Radcliffe, 2020). However, there is little research done on the effect Instagram has on Kwa-Zulu Natal millennials with regards to becoming vegan.

1.4. Purpose Statement

A primary goal and purpose of this research is to improve and gain insight and explore whether Instagram is influencing millennials decisions to become vegan.

In doing so, it will collect qualitative data that will help to uncover consumers motivations behind becoming vegan and how Instagram has contributed to their decision. Qualitative questionnaires and focus groups will be conducted with individuals who are vegan as well as individuals who are not vegan to try and gain an in-depth understanding of veganism from both sides. This study sought to uncover the motivations for individuals using Instagram as a platform for information and inspiration and whether it is a useful tool for marketers to use. This research will be able to contribute to existing studies within a global context and potentially add new insights into how the promotion of veganism on Instagram has effected millennials dietary choices in Kwa-Zulu Natal. Additionally, it may be the first

study that will examining Instagram's influence on millennials dietary choices with regards to becoming vegan.

1.5. Primary Research Question

How is veganism being marketed to millennials on Instagram to change their perceptions and persuade them?

1.5.1. Secondary Research Questions

- 1.5.1.1. What are the motivations for millennials to become vegan?
- 1.5.1.2. What are millennials reasons to use Instagram as a source for information for veganism?
- 1.5.1.3. How are celebrity endorsements on Instagram being used to change millennials perceptions of what it is to be vegan?

1.6. Research Objectives

- 1.6.1. To explore how Instagram is influencing millennials perceptions about Veganism through brands advertising.
- 1.6.2. To describe the impact celebrity endorsements have on consumers buying behaviour.
- 1.6.3. To identify whether consumers are vegan based on their own personal beliefs or because of social peer pressure on what they see on Instagram.

CHAPTER 2: Theoretical Foundation

This chapter highlights the two main theories that are used for this research which aim to increase the understanding of the various concepts presented in the literature review in the following chapter. The mainstream vegan movement, the benefits of veganism on consumers and brands, the power of Instagram in food knowledge and the effectiveness of celebrity endorsements on interest in Veganism.

2.1. KEY THEORIES

2.1.1. The Uses and Gratification Theory (1974)

The Uses and Gratification Theory (1974) is useful for this research as it will examine the effect Instagram has on millennials perceptions on vegan diets. The uses and gratification theory is important and helpful when conducting studies and research about social media. When it comes to user behaviour and motivation, this theory is useful to explain why certain behaviours occur on Instagram and what motivates these behaviours (Holmgren, 2017). In a study made by Park and Goering (2016), it described how there has been an increase in seeking health related information on social media platforms. This theory helps to identify what motivates consumers to use a specific media such as Instagram and the satisfaction they get from this specific platform (Holmgren, 2017). This theory will help to identify if consumers specifically choose a certain type of media to gratify and satisfy their specific needs and is useful to this research as it looks at how millennials choose Instagram as a platform to seek information and inspiration about veganism (Bui, 2014).

This theory will be used for this research as millennials are using Instagram as a medium for inspiration to try and fit in or to try and achieve health goals (Abass, 2016). It will also help look at how individuals interpret messages based on their past experiences or backgrounds. An individual's current mood towards a message that is sent out by brands is also impactful on the decoding of these messages. The idea of this theory looks at how the more an individual uses a medium such as Instagram, the more influenced they will be when they are exposed to a message on it and can lead to a person changing their view of the world (Holmgren, 2017). Furthermore, it allows communicators to understand what motivates millennials to choose a vegan lifestyle based on what they see on Instagram

and how it can help brands to increase their engagement with their core target markets (Bui, 2014).

2.1.2. Social Comparison Theory (1954)

According to psychologist Leon Festinger's, the Social Comparison Theory (1954) looks at how people evaluate themselves and one of the keyways they do this is through social comparison or evaluating themselves through others (Festinger, 1954). This behaviour is typically demonstrated more by teenagers than older adults (Keles, 2020). Instagram is often used as a tool of comparison where individuals will evaluate themselves against other people based on what they see. Businesses make use of this tool to try and influence consumers to see what they are missing out on. They do this by showing features and benefits of products, services and lifestyles by using celebrity endorsements to influence consumers. Social comparison can often be negative because of consumers wanting to fit in with the rest of society and will change their lifestyles and food choices based on someone else's choices rather than their own. When individuals have low self-esteem, they will listen to whatever someone says who they view as influential (Newport, 2019).

Before social media emerged, social comparison was only possible to do through face-to-face interaction with individuals. Now with the rise of social media applications such as Instagram, it has complicated the social comparison process. Millennials are under continuous pressure because of being exposed to images on Instagram every second of everyday. They are constantly comparing themselves and the way they do things against others, and this has worsened through the social media lens (Bagautdinova, 2018). This theory will be useful to look at how millennials compare their lifestyle and food choices to one another on Instagram and how veganism is being portrayed as a lifestyle that is healthy which is fueling millennials to partake in it because others are doing it.

2.2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.2.1. Introduction

Instagram's influence on millennials dietary choices with regards to veganism will be explored through the review of eight former studies. In doing so, relevant literature from key authors as well as appropriate themes will be discussed to gain insight on the research topic presented.

There has been previous research conducted by Sijum, Exel and Treur, (2020) and Wilson (2019) on reasons why people have decided to explore veganism, however, the exact reason for the rise of veganism in the last decade has not been established. Main reasons why people follow a vegan diet are due to health and ethical reasons, however, Instagram is now being used as a platform for brands and celebrities to try influence millennials behaviour with regards to their lifestyle choices (Sijum et al., 2020). Studies show that the way in which veganism is portrayed in the media has influenced individuals' attitudes, thoughts, and beliefs towards the lifestyle (Wilson, 2019). With the rise of the internet and Instagram, people now have access to any type of information compared to previous decades. Instagram is being used as platform to show and sell products to consumers and has been proved to have an impact on buying behaviour. Social media influencers have also shown to have an impact on consumers lifestyle and health behaviours as products are perceived to be more appealing if an influencer is promoting it (Sijum et al., 2020).

2.2.2. The mainstream vegan movement

Veganism is a way of eating as well as a lifestyle that excludes all animal products. Popular examples of the kind of products that vegans can't use include; leather, fur, meat, dairy and eggs. Individuals who are vegan eat plant-based foods as well as whole foods instead to receive their nutrient intake (Jennings, Danforth, and Dodds, 2019). Veganism has been made out to be a trendy health diet rather than focusing on the ethical and environmental reasons why people choose to become vegan with regards to sustainability. There are many justifications for becoming vegan. According to Hervlevi (2019), the vegan movement is being driven by young consumers who are wanting to make more ethical choices and are aged between 15-34 years old. Studies have found that millennials are demanding more plant-based foods at an earlier stage than previous generations and indicates a growth in vegan diets in the future (Herlevi, 2019). Unlike ethical and sustainable justifications to become vegan such as animal rights and environmental

concerns, veganism is now being rebranded to be seen as a trendy, desirable and healthy mainstream lifestyle. Instagram is presenting veganism as a healthy lifestyle choice instead of a movement that is focused on the ethics behind veganism such as protecting animals' lives (Wilson, 2019). Wilson (2019) argues that veganism is now being centered around slimness and weight loss instead of ethical and environmental reasons. Mainstream depictions of what a vegan diet is about includes smoothies, salads and superfoods which are made visually appealing in the media. Brands are using celebrity endorsements to sell vegan commodities such as protein shakes and vegan food alternatives and the potential it has for weight loss. Veganism is being framed on social media as desirable based on its health effects such as weight loss which can only be achieved through consumption choices (Wilson, 2019).

2.2.3. Benefits of Veganism on consumers and brands

As a result of the vegan diet excluding all animal products, individuals instead consume a larger number of plant-based foods and this comes with many benefits (Jennings et al., 2019). Individuals who follow a vegan diet have less risk of developing cardiovascular diseases such as heart disease and hypertension (Jennings et al., 2019). Consumers are becoming more aware of the health, environmental and ethical benefits of choosing plant-based foods over meat and are opting for brands who offer vegan alternatives. Health benefits of the vegan diet have also now been endorsed by the World Health Organization which is encouraging more people to include a variety of plant-based foods as well as encouraging brands to offer these products to consumers (Halliwell, 2017). There is now a social, environmental and health demand for vegan products from brands (Apostolidis & McLeay, 2016). Supermarkets have now adapted to the vegan diet and are offering consumers their own label of vegan products such as meat alternatives, ready-made meals and snacks. Vegan products are now becoming more affordable and available to consumers and is contributing to the increase of people opting for vegan alternatives (Halliwell, 2017). This is not only benefiting consumers diets but is also creating opportunities for brands as the vegan food industry is increasingly growing and the need for alternatives that stand out from others is in demand from consumers (Herlevi, 2019).

2.2.4. Power of Instagram in food knowledge

Wilson (2019) discusses how Instagram is a powerful tool for sharing information on lifestyle choices and is one of the drivers to become vegan. It can be used as a tool to challenge ways of thinking around food by providing a vast source of information for

consumers. With the rise of awareness of the ethical and sustainable issues around food choice, one of the major tools to help communicate about a healthier lifestyle is through Instagram. Consumers are more connected than ever before and has become an effective communication and promotional platform for brands. Instagram has been used as a tool to expose issues around the meat and dairy industry which is contributing to the increase of consumers converting to the vegan diet (Halliwell, 2017).

There has been a shift in the way the knowledge of food is created within society and consumers are questioning old power regimes from the government and food industries. Consumers today are only interested in new power which involves transparency and social movements (Wilson, 2019). Movements such as Veganuary have become extremely popular over the years where people support the vegan diet for one month to try and support a good cause with regards to animal welfare. Veganuary is also being used to convince consumers that the lifestyle isn't as hard as they think it is and that it is worth exploring for more than one month. Vegan Instagram accounts are becoming incredibly popular and are used as a platform for people to seek inspiration, information and motivation by these pages and users. These accounts are producing an abundance of knowledge with regards to veganism and consumers are being persuaded through these accounts and their content to change their lifestyles (Wilson, 2019).

2.2.5. Effectiveness of celebrity endorsements on interest in Veganism

Celebrities and influencers in the media have been found to play a major role in the popularization of veganism in society. The rise of veganism has been fueled by influencers using their platform on Instagram to share information with people about veganism and providing people with information on how to become vegan and these individuals are predominantly under the age of 35 (Wilson, 2019). Celebrity endorsements are found to be effective in communicating health information about certain products or diets based on the great influence they have over consumers. Celebrities such as Beyonce, Gwyneth Paltrow and the Kardashian sisters have associated themselves with the vegan diet and are using their Instagram platform to spread awareness about it and posting images of their meals which are visually appealing to consumers (Lundahl, 2018). It is evident that influencers and celebrities on Instagram are constructing different ways of how veganism is understood and done. Instagram has different types of vegan influencers as some post about the meals they create, others use their pages to promote animal welfare and some influencers use their platform to talk about the health implications associated with the

vegan diet (Wilson, 2019). Therefore, vegan influencers and celebrities have become a fundamental part of society and the health environment and provide us with information on how to live more sustainably which has made veganism a popular trend (Wilson, 2019). Milner-Gulland (2020) suggested that celebrities or influencers that are connected to a cause on a personal level will be more effective in endorsing products, services, and lifestyles.

Conclusion

This literature review has reviewed previous literature and studies with the aim of providing a clearer understanding of Instagram's influence on millennials decisions to become vegan. The review further found that consumers are more likely to change their lifestyle on recommendations from a celebrity endorsement and influencers on Instagram rather than based on their own beliefs. These studies are relevant to this research topic as it contributes to how Instagram has contributed to the rise of veganism.

2.3. CONCEPTUALISATION

2.3.1. Veganism

Veganism is more recent than vegetarian and is defined as a way of living that excludes all animal products whether it is food, clothing or other purposes. People choose to become vegan based on ethical, health or environmental reasons (Petre, 2019). This research focuses on veganism throughout the study to identify whether this lifestyle choice is chosen amongst millennials as a result of Instagram or based on their own ethical and personal beliefs.

2.3.2. Plant-Based

Plant based eating has become a popular term over the years and is often associated with veganism. Plant based eating focuses on eating foods that are primarily from plants which include fruits, vegetables and legumes but however, can include animal products if one wishes to do so (McManus, 2020). This research is looking at veganism and it is evident that many vegans follow a plant-based diet as there is little to no meat involved.

2.3.3. Instagram

Instagram is a social media application that focuses on mobile use and visual sharing. Instagram allows users to interact with one another by following , commenting, liking and messaging individuals photos and accounts. It allows users to share videos or photos of what they doing throughout the day with other people and can be used as effective way to reach individuals (Moreau, 2021). Millennials use Instagram the most over any other social media platform. Studies have shown that they interact on Instagram with other users more than they do in real life (Benson, 2018).

2.3.4. Millennials

Millennials refer to an individual born between the early 1980's and 1990s and extended in the early 2000s (Main, 2018). Millennials are the most popular generation in modern history and is a generation that was born into a technological world. Millennials can be descried as an adaptive and creative generation especially within in their careers (Indeed, 2021). This is as a result of millennials being easy to win over by brands and influencers. Millennials also are the most active on Instagram and what matters to younger generations will matter on social media platforms such as Instagram (Chan, 2021).

2.3.5. Celebrity Endorsements

A celebrity endorsement is when a celebrity promotes a product or a service for a brand. Celebrity endorsements can be used as a promotional tool by brands to help boost awareness about a brand and its products and services which helps gain visibility. Using celebrity endorsements on Instagram can increase the sales of products and especially reaches younger generations. Consumers feel they can trust a brand more with the recommendation of a public figure (Harshaw, 2019).

2.3.6. Consumer Behaviour

Consumer behaviour is the study of individuals on how they choose and consume products and services. Consumer behaviour focuses on the motivations and behaviour of consumers and how consumers think and feel about different brands products and services. Studying consumers behaviour allows brands to identify influences in their environments such as their peers or social media and what drives them to make decisions (Smith, 2016).

CHAPTER 3: Research Design and Methodology

This chapter will be outlining the chosen paradigm that was used for this study as well as the research design. It will also be uncovering the population and sampling that was used to gain a deeper understanding of the topic being explored. The data collection and analysis methods will be discussed and will indicate how each method was applied for the purpose of this research report.

3.1. Research Paradigm

This research will be guided by the interpretivist paradigm as it involves studying the behaviour of consumers subjectively and focuses on understanding meaning and purpose that is attached to individuals actions as well as attitudes with regards to Veganism (du Plooy-Cilliers et al., 2014). The interpretivist paradigm will help to enable this study to look at understanding the world from individual experiences which relates to the research as not all individuals are influenced by Instagram or follow the vegan diet (Reeves & Hedberg, 2003). This research will also make use of qualitative research methods which relates to the interpretivist paradigm as the aim of this paradigm is to gain an in-depth understanding of multiple realities and depends on qualitative research for this.

Interpretivism will aim to provide insight into the focus groups and qualitative questionnaires that will be conducted as well as how individuals feel about the impact that Instagram has on their lifestyle and food choices. The interpretivist paradigm is supported by interpretation and observation, and this will help to explore how brands are using celebrity endorsements on Instagram to try and influence millennials behaviour and lifestyle choices. It will look at how people are manipulated into believing someone or buying something just because society says it's acceptable to do so (Aikenhead, 1997).

The epistemological position of interpretivism refers to how knowledge of individuals relies heavily on context and how the truth is dependent on individual's interpretations and is not interested in generalising results. Interpretivism focuses on understanding human behaviour through common sense and is an essential source of information to try and understand individuals. This relates to the research study as the research methodologies that are being used are relative and sensitive to the specific context of the study and are not generalized (du Plooy-Cilliers et al., 2014).

The ontological position of interpretivism looks at how individuals experience reality differently from one another and that reality is a social construction. The social world is how and what people perceive it to be and when an individual's perception changes, so does reality (du Plooy-Cilliers et al., 2014). This relates to the this research study as the aim of the study is to explore the different experiences, opinions and beliefs of millennials on the topic of veganism and whether Instagram is changing their perceptions.

3.2. Research Design

For the purpose of this research, a qualitative research design will be used for this study due to the researcher studying consumers behaviour, opinions and motivations for becoming vegan based on what they see and are exposed to on Instagram. This research is subjective as it will be based off opinions and experiences of consumers who are influenced by Instagram to become vegan, as well as consumers who are vegan due to their own beliefs. This research design will make use of small sample sizes and involves data collection methods such as qualitative questionnaires/surveys and focus groups. The researcher will be conducting bias-free and open-ended techniques which will be continuously assessed throughout. A qualitative research design is needed for this study to obtain data that is richer and more insightful into underlying reasons within the phenomena (Shuttleworth & Wilson, 2008).

Explanatory research will be carried out to analyse and explain the patterns of the relationship between Instagram and veganism and whether Instagram is persuading millennials to change their lifestyle (Consultores, 2020). Explanatory research will be useful for this study as it will be able to explain more about the phenomena being studied as there is only a small amount of information that exists on this topic. It will help the researcher to have a better understanding of the topic and uses secondary research as a source of information which increases ones understanding (questionpro, 2021). Inductive reasoning will be applied to this research based on the research design of the study. This researcher of this study will begin with specific observations made and will then detect any patterns with the aim of developing general conclusions and theories about the research study (Kalpokaite, 2020).

The research study will make use of a cross sectional studies as it will be conducted quickly as there is a time restraint on the data collection methods. A cross sectional study is also known as an observational study and the population will be studied at a single point in time to examine the relationship between millennials and the influence Instagram has on their dietary choices with regards to veganism. This study will also make use of different samples throughout the research process to gain an in-depth understanding of multiple individuals experiences (du Plooy-Cilliers et al., 2014).

3.3. Population

A population is an entire group of people or artifacts where information can be required from them. The target population for this study will be drawn from the population parameters. For this study, the target population will consist of millennials who have access to Instagram. The accessible population refers to the participants that the researcher for this study is able to include. The accessible population for this study will include individuals who have chosen to follow a vegan diet as well as individuals who have chosen not to follow the vegan diet aged between 20-34 years old and have access to Instagram.

The sample size that will be used for this research study will consist of 30 individuals. The reason for doing so is that there is a limited timeframe with regards to collecting the data which means in order to analyse the findings accurately in a short space of time, a smaller group will be necessary. The sample of this study will be reached through online qualitative questionnaires as well as online interviews to avoid face-to-face contact due to the Covid-19 pandemic in 2021. By doing so, it will allow easier access to the sample and will also allow participants to respond in their own time making it more appealing to them.

Population parameters: Vegans both male and female aged between 20-34 years old, who have access to Instagram.

Sample size: 30 participants

Unit of analysis: Vegan & non vegan millennials who use Instagram

3.4. Sampling

The sampling method that is relevant to this research design is non-probability sampling. Non-probability sampling can be used when the researcher is not able to access an entire

population (du Plooy-Cilliers et al., 2014). This means that individuals will be selected based on the population characteristics and parameters. The participants taking part in this study will not be randomly selected and the researcher will make use of a purposive sampling technique to gain in-depth information for the study (Maxwell, 1996). Purposive sampling methods will be used as the researcher will be specifically choosing elements that need to be included when selecting participants for the study. These elements will consist of all genders aged between 20-34 years old who have access to Instagram and are either vegan or have chosen not to be vegan. The reason for this is that this study is being conducted on millennials and participants need to be over the age of 18 to take part in this study for ethical reasons. The first sample group will consist of 15 vegans and the second sample group will consist of 15 non-vegans for this study to gain insights from both sides. By allowing both vegans and non-vegans to take part in this study, it will allow the researcher to identify the motivations for vegans choosing this lifestyle as well as the motivations that non-vegans have to not partake in this lifestyle and consume animal products. This sampling method will also allow the researcher easier access to participants who will be specifically selected based on the characteristics above that are needed for research (du Plooy-Cilliers et al., 2014).

3.5. Data Collection Methods

3.5.1. Secondary Research

This research was comprised of both primary and secondary research conducted by the researcher themselves. The research highlights the secondary research in the literature review and the theoretical foundations for this research. The secondary research looked at previous sources of data on the research topic and how Instagram has been used in the past as a tool to promote various diets.

3.5.2. Primary Research

Primary research methods that were collected for the purpose of this research study consisted of in-depth semi-structured interviews via telephone and online qualitative questionnaires were conducted with a set of individuals based on the population characteristics that contributed to open discussions and allowed more specific questions to be asked for the purpose of this research. Both data collection methods helped the researcher to gain deeper insights into the thoughts and feelings towards Instagram and veganism. In doing so, the researcher made use of secondary research by using past

studies and articles and primary research in the form of semi-structure interviews and qualitative questionnaires.

Qualitative Questionnaires

Qualitative questionnaires were sent out to individuals using Survey Monkey which is an online platform where the researcher created questionnaires for the purpose of the study. Ten open and closed ended questions were created for both vegans and individuals who are not vegan to gain a more in-depth understanding of millennials feelings and experiences towards Instagram and their decision to be vegan (du Plooy-Cilliers, Davis & Bezuidenhout, 2014).

The questions were designed in a way to help the researcher to formulate a conclusion for the study. The qualitative questionnaires were also able to answer the secondary research questions with regards to the motivation of why millennials become vegan, whether they use Instagram as a source of information for veganism and whether Instagram persuades individuals lifestyle choices based on what they are exposed to through social influences. The qualitative questionnaires and interviews were also able to achieve the objectives of identifying whether consumers are vegan based on their own personal beliefs or because of social peer pressure based on what they are exposed to on Instagram.

Semi Structured Interviews

Semi structured interviews were also used for the purpose of this research study. This data collection method is beneficial for the researcher as it is an effective way to encourage two-way communication. The researcher engaged in a formal interview with the respondents and developed an interview guide beforehand with a list of questions and topics that needed be discussed and covered throughout the interview. The researcher was able to follow this guide but was also able to engage in conversation that steered away from the guide when appropriate to allow the respondent freedom to share their experiences and feelings in their own way. Semi structured interviews is beneficial for this study as it provided the researcher with honest and reliable qualitative data collection (Kabir, 2016).

Both data collection methods are relevant for the purpose of this study as they provided the researcher with knowledge, experiences, and feelings towards whether Instagram has played an influence in millennials decision to become vegan. Qualitative questionnaire and

semi-structured interviews helped the researcher to gain an understanding from a wider and diverse audience about whether millennials are using Instagram as a source of information about food diets and whether they are persuaded by what they read online. These data collection methods helped the researcher to gain more information on this topic within Kwa-Zulu Natal.

3.5.3. Application of Data Collection Method

Qualitative Questionnaires

The researcher created two online qualitative questionnaires that were made for individuals who are vegan as well as individuals who are not vegan. This helped the researcher to understand both sides of why people choose to become vegan and why they choose not to partake in the lifestyle. A combination of open ended and as well as close ended questions were structured in a way that made it easy for participants to fill out. Due to the third wave of the Covid-19 pandemic in 2021, questionnaires were conducted online to avoid any contact with individuals. The questionnaires were created through Survey Monkey and were sent out via a link on either email or on WhatsApp. Participants were informed beforehand about their participation to make sure that their decision to participate was completely voluntary and were ensured they would remain anonymous. The researcher made sure to send out the appropriate amount of questionnaires which included 13 vegans and 13 non-vegans to get a balanced set of responses and experiences.

Semi-Structured Interviews

The online semi-structured interviews were conducted by the researcher and participants were given an explanation of what would be expected from them throughout as well as an explanation of the topic to give them a background about why this research is being conducted. Each interview was recorded digitally to allow the researcher to analyse the data in an accurate way as well as refer back to information that might be missed. The researcher conducted 2 interviews with individuals who are vegan as well as 2 interviews with individuals who are not vegan. A consent form was sent out to each individual with regards their participation in the study as well as allowing the researcher to record the session to ensure participants are comfortable with this. Interviews were conducted with a different set of questions for individuals who are vegan and individuals who are not vegan. The interviews consisted of a set of questions that will be broken up into knowledge questions and personal questions. The researcher also allowed participants time at the

end to voice any of their other experiences or concerns that may not relate to the questions for further research for this study. An outline of the questions that were asked in the qualitative questionnaires as well as the semi-structured interviews with both vegans and non-vegans will be provided in Annexures D, E and F.

3.6. Data Analysis Methods

Due to the research design of this study being qualitative, the researcher will make use of qualitative data analysis tools to analyze the data that is collected throughout. Qualitative Content analysis will be used to explore themes that will create meaning for this research without collecting a large volume of text. The data will be analysed using line-by-line and thematic coding to categorise answers from participants in this study (du Plooy-Cilliers et al., 2014). These data analysis methods will help the researcher analyze and break down the interviews and qualitative questionnaires being conducted to gain a closer look at what the participants are saying and how they feel about the topic. It will help the researcher to identify any concerns from the respondents and will help the researcher to refocus on the interviews afterwards.

Thematic Coding

Thematic coding is relevant for this research as it will help the researcher to find themes and patterns when analyzing the meaning in the responses within the qualitative questionnaires and the interviews (Medelyan, 2021). The researcher will be able to establish whether certain themes are more frequent than others in the respondent's feedback to try understand whether millennials are influenced by Instagram in becoming vegan. This data analysis tool will help the researcher to gain a better understanding of the issue that is relating to the research problem presented throughout. The researcher will also be able to establish whether the feedback from respondents have common themes that will contribute to the research objectives that are set out for the purpose of the study.

Line-by-Line Coding

Line by line coding is relevant for this study as it will help the researcher to compare data with one another as the objective of this data analysis method is to pay close attention to the data that is being analyzed and to add detail to the codes. It will also help to identify any gaps to see whether the topic being explored is a real concern. Line by line coding will help spark new ideas for the researcher to pursue and will help generate a range of ideas and information (Charmaz, 2006).

3.6.1. Application of Data Analysis Method

When the researcher conducts qualitative content analysis, this will allow for the researcher to read through all of the questionnaires as well as look back on the recordings from the interviews to try and identify participants views on the research topic. This information will be presented in words from the responses of the questionnaire to draw interpretation from results.

Thematic Coding

When using thematic coding to analyse the data that is collected from the responses, the researcher will begin the process of reading through the material that has been collected through qualitative questionnaires and interviews to familiarise themselves with it and then identify any words or passages that are linked by a common theme to establish a framework of thematic ideas for the research (Gibbs, 2007). The researcher will look back on the audio from the interviews and transcribe the data from each interview that will thereafter be analysed. The researcher will reread through the material several times to try and identify new material or any similarities and differences that have emerged. After this, the researcher can then begin to identify themes and trends that can be used for the purpose of the study.

Line by-Line Coding

When the researcher conducts line by line coding to analyze the data, they will read through parts of the text that has been taken from the interviews conducted as well as the research gathered from the qualitative questionnaires. The researcher will read the text line by line and highlighting certain words or phrases that are relevant and useful for the study. The researcher can therefore develop categories to group and code concepts. Although this method can be time consuming, it will help the researcher build a conceptual frame that can be applied to all the data and ensure that they are not missing out on any important information from the data (Kriukow, 2019).

CHAPTER 4: Presentation and Interpretation of Findings

This chapter will be guided by the three research objectives that were set out to collect primary data and investigate the research problem for the study. Within each research objective, various themes will be used to analyse the data and relevant questions from online qualitative questionnaire and online interviews are included to gather primary data for the purpose of the study.

4.1. Objective 1: To explore how Instagram is influencing millennials perceptions about Veganism through brands advertising.

This objective revealed various themes that were used to analyse the data. The two main themes that fall under this research objective are “Awareness of Veganism” and “Instagram’s influence on millennials”

Awareness of Veganism

Question 1: What is your understanding of the term veganism? (Vegans)

Question 1: Are you aware of the term Vegan? If so, what is your understanding of it? (Non-Vegans)

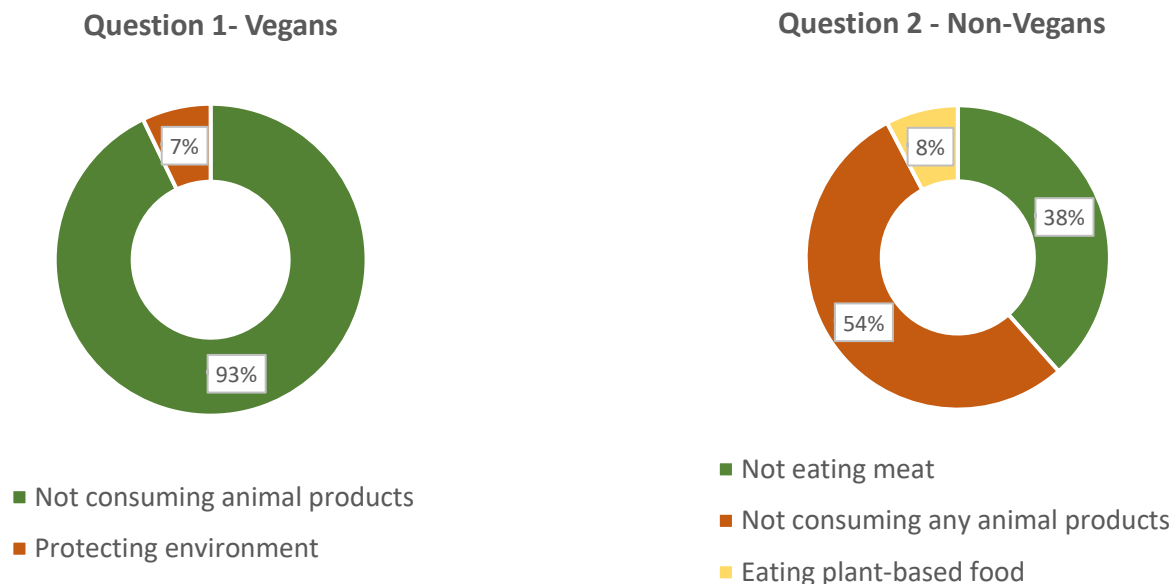


Figure 4.1.1. and 4.1.2.

Question 1 was directed at respondents who follow the vegan diet to give an insight into how they interpret the concept and the diet. Question 2 was directed at respondents who are not vegan to identify if they were aware of the diet and what it means to them to follow a vegan diet. This helped the researcher to understand from both sides what the diet means to them and if people really know what veganism entails. With regards to the first theme, the research concluded that majority of participants who are both vegan and non-vegan understand and are aware of what veganism is and what it entails. A common understanding and theme presented amongst vegans about what it means to be vegan is that you do not consume or use any animal products. A common understanding and pattern amongst non-vegans about what the vegan diet means is that it means you do not eat meat. This shows that people generalize and assume the vegan diet is when you do not eat meat but do not understand that the vegan diet is more than cutting out meat as you cannot consume any animal products whether it be milk, cheese, butter or beauty products.

**Question 3: Were you aware of the vegan diet before it exploded on social media?
(Vegans)**

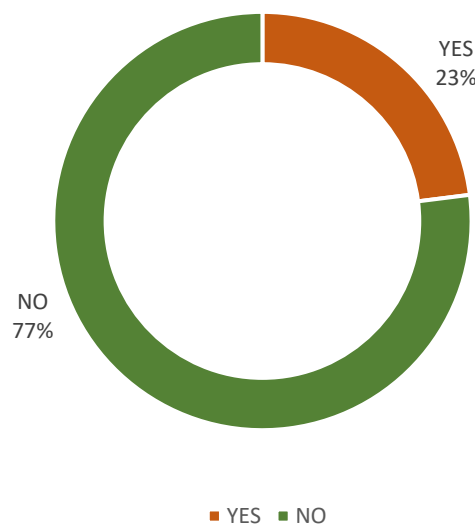


Figure 4.3.

Respondents who are not vegan were asked whether or not they knew about the vegan diet before it exploded on social media and 77% stated that they were not aware of it before social media. Vegan respondents in the online interviews were asked the same question and one respondents stated that they did not know about veganism before social media and it is very new to them and on social media. This shows that Instagram is being

used as a tool to influence consumers by exposing information about the vegan diet and helping industries promote their products through online platforms. This relates to the research problem as it looks at how millennials gravitate towards Instagram for inspiration and are partaking in this lifestyle because brands are influencing them through social media posts and using influencers to persuade individuals.

Instagram's influence on Millennials

Question 8: Do you use information to search or share information about the vegan diet?

Vegan respondents were asked this question in the online survey and it showed that 83% stated that they do search for information to share information about the diet on Instagram. Findings from the literature reveal that as a result of consumers being more connected than before, Instagram is being used as a tool to expose issues surrounding the meat and dairy industry and encouraging consumers to be vegan. Vegan Instagram accounts are becoming increasingly popular for people to seek inspiration and information from these pages. These pages allow for consumers to seek knowledge about veganism and different recipes that they can make which is persuading consumers through content to change their lifestyle and try the vegan diet (Wilson, 2019).

Question 9: Has information about the vegan diet on Instagram made you act in a certain way? If yes, how? (Vegans)

This question was asked to vegans in the online survey and all respondents agreed with the question above and stated that information obtained from Instagram about the vegan diet has made them act differently and in a certain way. One of the biggest themes that was taken from this question was motivation. Respondents felt that the way veganism is portrayed on Instagram has motivated them to try new meals and experiment with food as a result of images and recipes being posted on the platform to encourage people to try them out. Respondents felt that veganism being portrayed as a way to help the environment and save the planet, has motivated them to try cut back on their meat consumption.

4.2. **Objective 2:** To describe the impact celebrity endorsements have on consumers buying behaviour.

This objective revealed various themes that were used to analyse the data. The main theme that falls under this objective is “the influence of celebrity endorsements on buying behaviour”

The influence celebrities on Instagram have on buying behaviour

Question 7: Are you easily influenced by celebrities and influencers on Instagram to try out products and services?

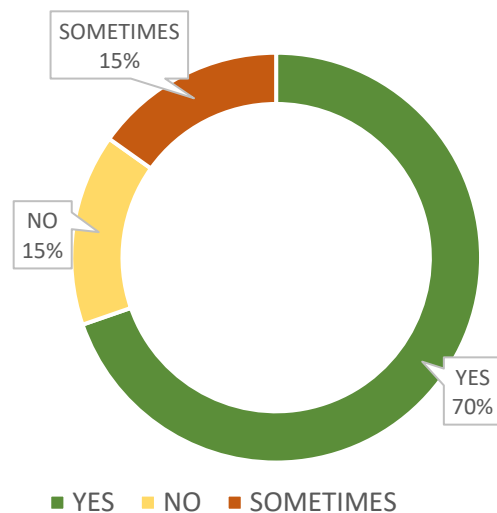


Figure 4.2.1.

From the research conducted, it was found that 70% of respondents are easily influenced by celebrities while the others only feel influenced sometimes to try out new products and services. Furthermore, findings related to previous literature revealed that celebrities and influencers are fuelling the rise of veganism by having a voice and using their platforms to share information about the diet and communicate with people on the benefits of it. It is also evident that people feel easily influenced by celebrities on Instagram when the cause they are promoting is relevant to them on a personal level and will purchase products and services they advertise if it relates to them (Milner-Gulland, 2020).

Question 7: Do you think Instagram has contributed to your choice to becoming vegan based on visuals and information from peers and celebrities?

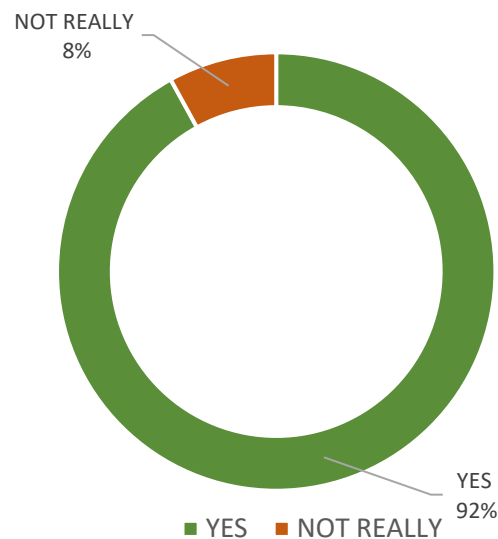


Figure 4.2.2.

Respondents were asked whether or not Instagram contributed to their choice of becoming vegan as a result of the information and visuals that they are exposed to everyday from peers and celebrities. 92% of respondents stated that Instagram has contributed to their choice.

One respondent stated that it did not really help them choose to become vegan but has helped to them to feel motivated to remain vegan. This relates to the research problem being explored as it is evident that celebrities are influencing the way in which millennials act and eat and that Instagram has played a major role in the rise of veganism.

Respondents stated that when they see celebrities' vegan meals on their feed, this motivates them to copy them and try out the same meals so that they can be more like them. Furthermore, this relates to the Social Comparison Theory (1954) that has been used for this study as respondents are using Instagram as tool to evaluate themselves against other people based on what they are exposed to on Instagram and therefore is negative as consumers are wanting to fit in with society and are willing to change how they act and eat based on someone else's choices (Newport, 2019).

Question 8: Are you easily influenced by celebrities on Instagram?

Question 9: Do you think celebrities and influences have encouraged you to remain vegan? (Vegans)

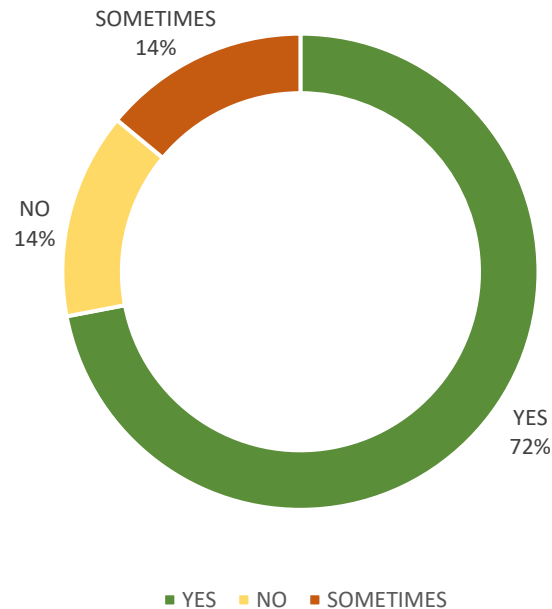


Figure 4.2.3.

The two questions above were asked in the online interview conducted with vegans as well as the online questionnaire sent to non-vegans. Overall combining the answers from the two groups, 72% of respondents stated that they are definitely influenced by celebrities on Instagram and seeing them eat vegan food influences them to do so as well. Respondents also believe that celebrities and influencers have encouraged them to remain vegan more so every day as more celebrities are joining the vegan diet and promoting it through their Instagram feed making it appealing. This relates to the previous literature conducted for the study which suggests that celebrity endorsements have found to be effective in communicating health information and diets or products and have major influence over consumers.

4.3. Objective 3: To identify whether consumers are vegan based on their own personal beliefs or because of social peer pressure on what they see on Instagram.

This objective revealed various themes that were used to analyse the data. The two main themes that fall under this research objective are “External Pressure” and “Maintaining Veganism”

External pressure

Question 6: Do you feel pressured to try the vegan diet and cut back on animal products because of what you are exposed to on social media?

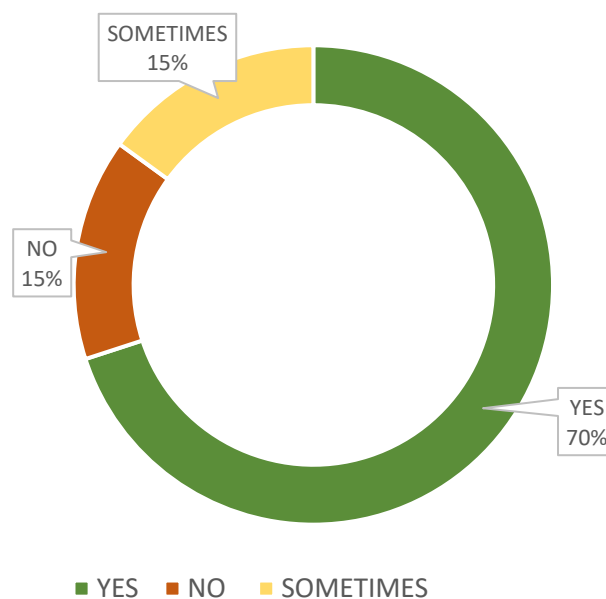


Figure 4.3.1.

From the research conducted it was found that 70% of respondents who are not vegan feel that they are often pressured by society to try and cut back on meat and try the out vegan diet because of what they are exposed to on Instagram. This shows a large proportion of the population feeling obliged to partake in the lifestyle because it's a trend and because others around them are doing it. furthermore, this also relates to the Social Comparison Theory where respondents are comparing their lifestyle choices to others on Instagram and can be negative as it results in consumers wanting to fit in with society and

will change their food choices based on others around them and not their own choices (Newport, 2019).

This question also relates to the research problem for the study which is being investigated where millennials are easily pressured to believe what they read online especially if it comes from someone with influence. An interesting finding that was derived from this question which was asked in the online interview is that a participant stated that they feel pressured to cut back on animals' products when exposed to certain advertisements they see that make them feel sorry for animals. Therefore, this shows how effective brand advertising can be with the vegan diet and how they can play on the emotions of consumers to influence them to make different lifestyle choices.

Question 6: Does your family or friends eat a similar diet to you, if yes, have they influenced you to eat less meat?

50% of respondents who are vegan stated that they have not been influenced by family members or friends and therefore, they have not influenced them to eat less meat. However, the other 50% stated that either their family or their friends have played a role in decision to become vegan or cut back on meat. It was found that friends played more of an influential role to become vegan than family members as majority stated their family does eat meat and their friend eat a similar diet to them.

In response to both question 1 and 2, an interview conducted with a non-vegan stated that at certain times they do feel pressured to try out the vegan diet specially when they are around their friends who are mainly vegetarian or vegan and therefore outside influences add certain pressures to the topic. They also stated that when they are around friends who are passionate about the vegan diet and have good reasons such as for environmental reasons or animal welfare, they are influenced.

Question 10: Do you think you would have considered veganism before the diet became such a trend in society?

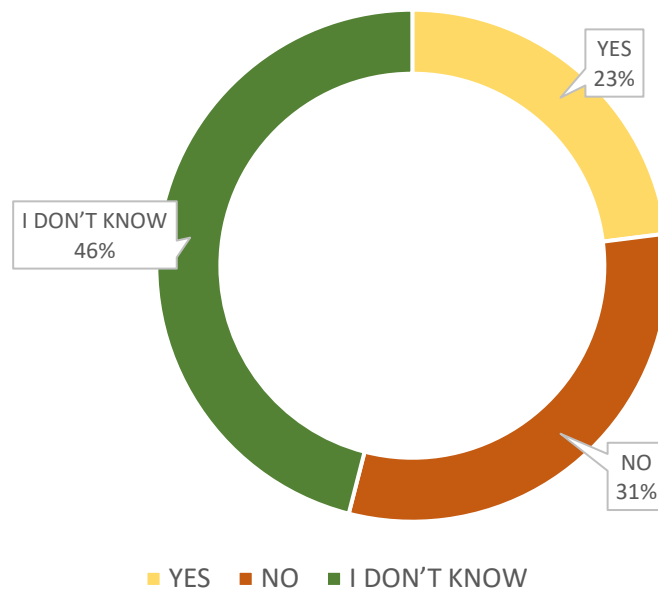


Figure 4.3.2.

Question 10 was asked in the online questionnaire to vegans. Majority of their respondents around 46%, in the online questionnaire were not sure if they would have considered the diet before it became such a trend. The next majority was 31% of respondents stated that they would not have considered the diet and lastly 23% stated that they would have considered it despite social media. By having majority of vegans state that they don't know if they would have considered becoming vegan before it was such a trend, shows that the rise in the vegan diet is because of society and the influence of social media which relates to the research problem being explored in this study. Without the abundance of information that people are exposed to on Instagram and the pressure to fit in with society and their followers, majority of the respondents in this study who are vegan would most likely not be vegan today based on statistics.

Maintaining Veganism

Question 2: How long have you been vegan for?

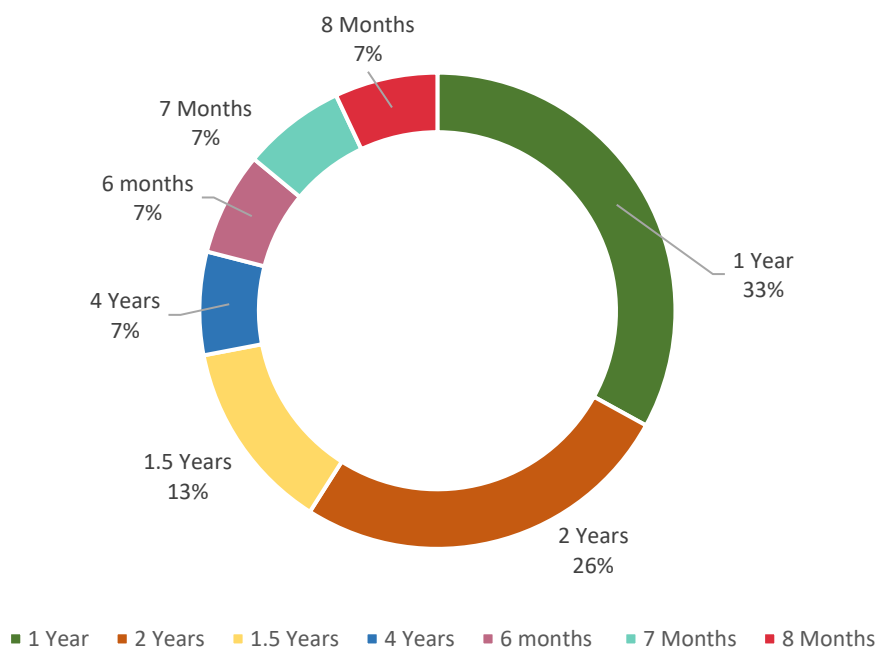


Figure 4.3.3.

Vegan respondents in both the online survey and online interviews were asked this question to gain an idea of how long they have been following this diet. Results show that respondents have only been following the vegan diet for a minimal amount of time which indicates that the vegan diet has not too been popular up until the past 2 years seeing as majority of respondents have only been vegan for 2 years. This is relevant to the research problem being explored as it shows that Instagram has played a major role in the rise of veganism and bringing it to people's attention over recent years.

Question 3: What is your reasoning for becoming vegan?

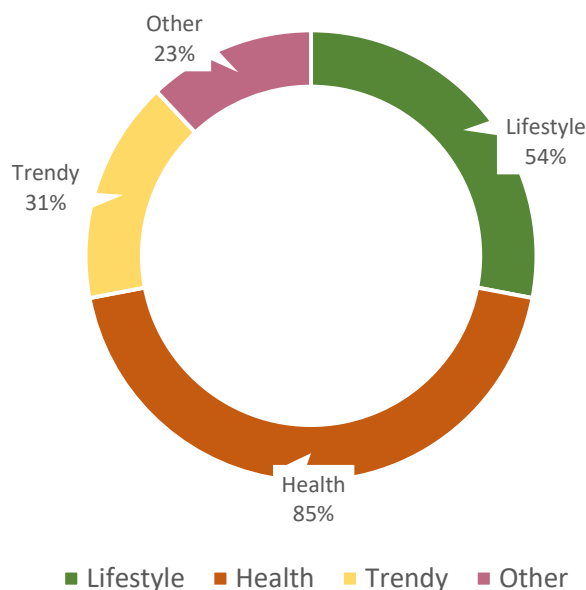


Figure 4.3.4.

According to the research conducted, there are 4 predominant factors as to why people have chosen to become vegan. 83% of respondents for the survey stated that they are vegan based on health reasons. The next popular factor and reason was for lifestyle reasons which accounted for 50% of the population for the survey study. Lastly, 33% said they were vegan because it is a trendy diet and lifestyle and 25% said they were vegan based on other reasons. When asked if they selected other to state their reasons, respondents stated they were vegan based on environmental reasons and animal welfare. The same question was asked during the online interviews with vegans and the respondents stated that their reason for becoming vegan was initially for health reasons but as they got to know the benefits of the diet and how much more common it was becoming in society, it started to inspired them to continue with the diet.

Question 5: What is it like to be vegan? Please share your thoughts and experiences.

According to the research gathered, 50% of vegans stated that they enjoy being vegan. There was a common theme amongst respondents answers which included energy levels. Majority of respondents who enjoy the diet say that they feel that their energy levels have improved and are more energetic than ever before making the diet worth following.

Another theme that was common was the difficulty when eating out or going to people's houses who are not vegan. It is evident that this is one of the biggest challenges when becoming vegan. One of the respondents in the interview felt that going out to restaurants is easier than eating at friends' houses as they don't cater for vegans. Although this can be challenging, a few respondents stated that the increase of vegan alternatives being produced by brands is making the diet a lot easier to follow as shops are becoming more dedicated to catering for vegans.

Conclusion

This chapter presented and interpreted findings that were obtained from the primary data collected through online interviews and online qualitative questionnaires. The findings gathered relate to the research problem and the research objectives, thus answering the research question for the study. This was also supported by previous literature on the influence Instagram has on millennials with regards to the vegan diet. Therefore, despite gaining additional insight from the research, the results are what the researcher expected at the beginning of the study.

Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness is used in qualitative research as the aim of the research is not to generalise results but to provide an in-depth understanding of a phenomena. Therefore, this research will be using trustworthiness to measure the reliability and validity within the qualitative study by looking at credibility, transferability, confirmability and dependability (du Plooy-Cilliers et al., 2014).

In order for the researcher to enhance the credibility of this study, the researcher ensured that the research design aligns with the theoretical framework and in turn be aligned with the research question. The researcher spent time with the participants to gain insight into their lives and help to understand their experiences with veganism as well as Instagram's influence it has over their decisions. This also helped the participants provide honest answers to the questions that are provided in the data collection methods. To increase credibility, triangulation was used for this research as it used more than one method including online interviews and online qualitative questionnaires (statisticssolutions, 2021).

Trustworthiness was ensured through transferability where the researcher provided background context with regards to the research study that was being conducted as well as informed and substantiated the research design to participants. This allowed the readers to make informed decisions with regards to the transferability of the study. The researcher used thick descriptions to show that the findings for the research can be used and applicable to other circumstances or situations. The results of the findings were not affected by the researcher which were provided that results that are similar and alike were gained from other researchers (statisticssolutions, 2021).

Confirmability looks at the degree of neutrality in the research findings. This helped ensure that the researcher showed no bias in the study as the findings were based on participants responses. In order for the researcher to establish confirmability, the research provided an audit trail which highlighted every step of the data analysis to provide a rationale for the decisions made (statisticssolutions, 2021).

Lastly, dependability was used for this study as it looks at the extent that the research study can potentially be repeated by other researchers and the findings would be consistent. This study provided enough information and research to obtain similar findings in the study. The researcher provided clear explanations throughout the research study as well as a detailed report on how the tasks within the study were performed (statisticssolutions, 2021).

CHAPTER 5: Conclusion

5.1. Research Question

Primary Research Question:

Are millennials choosing to becoming vegan based on what they are exposed to on Instagram?

The research question above provided a path through the research process for this study. With the information provided, Instagram has a major influence on millennials decisions to become vegan based on what they are exposed to because of external influences. Overall, it was found that the conducted research supports the literature with the research question. From both the literature and primary research that was conducted, it is evident that Instagram is a viable platform to promote the vegan diet as well as other diets through celebrity endorsements and external influences. An important finding that came from the primary and secondary research conducted is that people want to be more like the celebrities that they follow such as the Kardashian sisters, so they copy their routines that are shown on Instagram. This was further supported by the key theory of Social Comparison that was used for this study as millennials use Instagram as a tool of compare themselves more than ever before and to try and be like others through the platform.

Primary research shows that majority of millennials are motivated to try the vegan diet based on health reasons. This relates to the literature that was found where individuals who are vegan have a less risk of developing cardiovascular diseases and primary research revealed vegans have more energy since they have started the diet. Primary research shows that millennials feel more motivated to become vegan as well as maintain the lifestyle as result of what they are exposed to on Instagram as well as the people they follow.

5.2. Ethical Considerations

The researcher needed to ensure confidentiality and anonymity of all participants before the research was conducted. Participants were selected by the researcher based on the population and sampling methods for this study. Participants names on the qualitative questionnaires were not required to ensure anonymity. All participants were required to give consent to their responses being used in the research. The researcher also required

consent from the participants in the online interview sessions to ensure that no information is lost. Participants were informed of their participation in this research which was voluntary and they were able to withdraw at any time. The researcher ensured that all participants are aware of all the requirements for the research in the beginning so that no one was unaware of their participation. No under eighteens were allowed to take part in this research and as a result of this research which was based on millennials, participants were not required a parent or guardian to act on their behalf (du Plooy-Cilliers et al., 2014).

Ethical considerations that the researcher needed to consider was the misuse of information. The researcher needed to ensure that research findings were not misrepresented as a result of dishonesty, bias and accidental reasons. Any data that was collected was not used for any other reason but this specific research study. The researcher also ensured they did not falsify any information for this study to try and avoid a lengthy process during the data collection and analysis (du Plooy-Cilliers et al., 2014).

5.3. Limitations

There are several limitations to this study. A limitation of this study is a shift in conditions because of the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020 and the current third wave in 2021. The nature of data collection methods had to be reconsidered and face-to-face contact with participants was limited. This meant that the researcher has to do their interviews and qualitative questionnaires online. These methods limited physical contact with participants which in turn limited the researcher with regards to observing facial expressions during the interviews as well as body language of the participants involved. Another limitation for this study was the timeframe available to carry out the data collection methods and analysis. This therefore limited the amount of data that the researcher was able to collect when looking at how Instagram is influencing millennials dietary choices with regards to veganism. Therefore, by the researcher using non-probability sampling according to the specific population characteristics, it helped the researcher to not be biased when selecting participants for the research study.

Another limitation for this research study is because it is qualitative research, this meant that it can often be a time-consuming process compared to quantitative studies. As a result of there being a time restraint to collect and analyse data, the researcher was only able to use a smaller sample group to gather information from. There was also a lack of secondary research surrounding the topic for this study which suggests that there is a

limited scope with this topic. This meant the researcher had to take into account the gaps in knowledge and therefore took more time to do further research (Radu, 2019).

The last limitation for this study that had to be taken into consideration is that participants who are Vegan, might not consider all the factors that have influenced their dietary choices which can have an impact on this research. This could also result in participants being untruthful when answering questions in the surveys or in the interviews as they don't want to admit that they are Vegan based on what they are exposed to on Instagram and social peer pressure.

5.4. Anticipated Contribution

This research will be able to contribute to existing studies within a global context and potentially add new insights into how the promotion of veganism on Instagram has effected millennials dietary choices in Kwa-Zulu Natal. The study will help to provide an in-depth insight into the vegan lifestyle and how this lifestyle is interpreted by different individuals and the benefits that are associated with it. This study will further provide insight of brands to see how they can reach millennials with marketing especially in the food industry. The research findings will help to provide a deeper understanding of consumers attitudes towards the vegan lifestyle as well as towards Instagram when searching for information about current and potential trends in the market. This will help to assist food brands to identify what communication tools can be used for food marketing and whether consumers are influenced by what they are exposed to on their Instagram feed. The findings of this research can be of potential interest for consumers wanting to become vegan as it will provide insight into people's experiences of the vegan lifestyle.

5.5. Concluding Remarks

In conclusion to the above study, the primary goal of the research was to determine whether Instagram has played a role in influencers millennials dietary choices and whether this tool is being used to persuade millennials to change their thoughts and opinions on various topics. The study was based on the interpretivist outlook throughout the research report and qualitative data was collected through online interviews, online questionnaires and a literature review to support the foundation of the study. The research was then analysed using thematic coding and line by line coding which helped the researcher identify various patterns and themes that were relevant for the study.

This research supports the belief that Instagram is influencing millennials to become vegan and is most likely used as a tool for seeking information about the diet. Although the researcher was faced with limitations with regards to Covid-19 and not being able to interview people face to face, the research that as collected was valid and extremely insightful for the research question that was being explored.

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ANNEXURE A – Research Report Summary Document Table

Research Purpose/ Objective	Primary Research Question	Research Rationale	Seminal Authors/ Sources	Literature Review – Conceptual Framework	Paradigm	Approach	Data Collection Method(s)	Ethics	Anticipated Findings	References
The objective of this study is explore how Instagram is being used as a platform to influence and encourage consumers to become vegan.	How is Veganism being marketed to millennials on Instagram to change their perceptions and persuade them?	To provide insight into the beliefs and motivations related to the vegan diet and whether Instagram has a role to play in influencing millennials.	Elihu Katz Leon Fertinger			Qualitative	Qualitative online questionnaires Online interviews	Confidentiality and anonymity Informed consent No under 18s Misuse of information	Instagram has contributed to the increase of millennials becoming vegan based on what they are exposed to by others. Celebrity endorsements on Instagram are being used to persuade millennials to be vegan.	Du Plooy-Cilliers, F, Davis, C. and Bezuidenhout, R, 2014. <i>Research Matters</i> . Claremont: Juta and Company LTD. Chan, J., 2021. <i>Vegan Social Media: How Food Trends and Social Movements Grow Online</i> . [online].
						Population Population Parameters Vegan millennials on Instagram between the ages of 20-34 years old				
Research Problem	Secondary Questions/ Hypotheses/ Objectives	Key Concepts	Key Theories	Theme 1: The mainstream vegan movement	Paradigm	Sampling	Data Analysis Method(s)	Limitations	Anticipated Contribution	
Millennials are using veganism as a way to fit in based on peer pressure. There is no real research done on the effect Instagram has over Kwa-Zulu Natal millennials decisions to become vegan.	What are the motivations for millennials to become vegan? What are millennials reasons to use Instagram as a source for information for veganism? How are celebrity endorsements on Instagram being used to change millennials perceptions of what it is to be vegan?	Veganism Plant-Based Instagram Millennials Celebrity Endorsements Consumer Behaviour	Uses and Gratification Theory Social Comparison Theory	Theme 2: Benefits of veganism on consumers and brands	Interpretivism	Probability or Non-probability Non Probability Purposive Sampling Sampling method Size 30	Unit of Analysis Vegan & Non-Vegan millennials who use Instagram Data Analysis Method(s) Qualitative content analysis Line by line Selected Thematic coding	The study may be limited due to the Shift in the Cvoid-19 conditions There is a limited timeframe to conduct primary research Analysing data is time consuming for the researcher Vegans might not consider all factors influencing their dietary choices	The study will contribute to existing studies within a global context and potentially add new insights into how veganism is promoted on Instagram and how this influences millennials. The study will provide insight for brands to see how they can reach millennials Findings can be of potential interest for consumers wanting to become vegan	Holmgren, H., 2017. <i>Plant-based diets on social media: How content on social media influence for maintaining a lifestyle</i> . Marsh, S. and readers, G., 2021. <i>The rise of vegan teenagers: 'More people are into it because of Instagram'</i> Media, S. and Media, S., 2021. <i>Increase in Veganism: Why Is Veganism on the Rise in 2021?</i> . [online] Small Business - Chron.com. 2021. <i>The Effect of Celebrities in Advertisements</i> . [online]
				Theme 3: Power of Instagram in food knowledge Theme 4: Effectiveness of celebrity endorsements on interest in veganism	Epistemology Ontology Reality is fluid and subjective and is created by human interaction					

ANNEXURE B – Explanatory Information Sheet



To whom it may concern,

My name is Kelly Dibb and I am a student at Vega, Durban. I am currently conducting research under the supervision of Clive Greenstone about how the promotion of veganism on Instagram has affected millennials dietary choices. Over the years, the rise of veganism has been fuelled by Instagram providing and promoting the lifestyle through celebrity endorsements and brand advertising.

I would like to invite you to participate in my study. In order to explain to you what your participation in my study will involve, I have formulated questions that I will try to fully answer so that you can make an informed decision about whether or not to participate. If you have any additional questions that you feel are not addressed or explained in this information sheet, please do not hesitate to ask me for more information. Once you have read and understood all the information contained in this sheet and are willing to participate, please complete and sign the consent form below.

What will I be doing if I participate in your study?

I would like to invite you to participate in this research because your input will enable me to explain whether Instagram is persuading and influencing millennials behaviour and perceptions with regards to the vegan lifestyle. If you decide to participate in this research, I would like to conduct a focus group/questionnaire with you about the topic at hand.

You can decide whether or not to participate in this research. If you decide to participate, you can choose to withdraw at any time or to decide not to answer particular interview questions.

Are there any risks/or discomforts involved in participating in this study?

Whether or not you decide to participate in this research, there will be no negative impact on you. There are no direct risks or benefits to you if you participate in this study. You might, however, indirectly find that it is helpful to talk about the how the promotion of veganism on Instagram is affecting millennials dietary choices. If you find at any stage that you are not comfortable with the line of questioning, you may withdraw or refrain from participating.

Do I have to participate in the study?

- Your inclusion in this study is completely voluntary;
- If you do not wish to participate in this study, you have every right not to do so;
- Even if you agree to participate in this study, you may withdraw at any time without having to provide an explanation for your decision.

Will my identity be protected?

I promise to protect your identity. I will not use your name in any research summaries to come out of this research and I will also make sure that any other details are disguised so that nobody will be able to identify you. I would like to ask your permission to record the interviews, but only my supervisor, I and possibly a professional transcriber (who will sign a confidentiality agreement) will have access to these recordings. Nobody else, including anybody at IIE and Vega, Durban, will have access to your interview information. I would like to use quotes when I discuss the findings of the research but I will not use any recognizable information in these quotes that can be linked to you.

What will happen to the information that participants provide?

Once I have finished all interviews, I will write summaries to be included in my research report, which is a requirement to complete my Honours in Strategic Brand Communication (HNC). You may ask me to send you a summary of the research if you are interested in the final outcome of the study.

What happens if I have more questions about the study?

Please feel free to contact me or my supervisor should you have any questions or concerns about this research, or if there is anything you need to know before you decide whether or not to participate. You should not agree to participate unless you are completely comfortable with the procedures followed.

My contact details are as follows:

Kelly Dibb

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

The contact details of my supervisor are as follows:

Clive Greenstone

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

ANNEXURE C – Consent Form for Participants



I, _____, agree to participate in the research conducted by Kelly Dibb about how the promotion of veganism on Instagram has affected millennials dietary choices and whether millennials choose this specific lifestyle as a result of their own ethical or beliefs or because of what they are exposed to.

This research has been explained to me and I understand what participation in this research will involve. I understand that:

- I agree to be interviewed for this research.
- My confidentiality will be ensured. My name and personal details will be kept private.
- My participation in this research is voluntary and I have the right to withdraw from the research at any time. There will be no repercussions should I choose to withdraw from the research.
- I may choose not to answer any of the questions that are asked during the research interview.
- I may be quoted directly when the research is published, but my identity will be protected.

Signature _____

Date _____

ANNEXURE D – Consent form for Audio-Recording Focus Groups



I, _____, agree to allow Kelly Dibb to audio record my focus group as part of the research about how the promotion of veganism on Instagram is affecting millennials dietary choices.

This research has been explained to me and I understand what participation in this research will involve. I understand that:

- My confidentiality will be ensured. My name and personal details will be kept private;
- The recordings will be stored in a password-protected file on the researcher's computer; and
- Only the researcher, the researcher's supervisor and possibly a transcriber (who will sign a confidentiality agreement) will have access to these recordings

Signature _____

Date _____

ANNEXURE E – Qualitative Questionnaire – Vegans

This questionnaire will be used for data collection for a research study that will be looking at how the promotion of veganism on Instagram has affected millennials dietary choices. Please note that participation for this research study is voluntary and all participants who take part will remain anonymous throughout. Thank you.

Q1: What is your understanding of the term veganism?

Q2: How long have you been vegan for?

Q3: What is your reasoning for becoming vegan?

Option 1: Lifestyle

Option 2: Health

Option 3: Trendy

Option 4: Other

Q4: if you selected other in the above question, please state reasoning.

Q5: What is it like to be vegan? Please share your thoughts and experiences.

Q6: Does your family or friends eat a similar diet to you, if yes, have they influenced you to eat less meat?

Q7: Do you think Instagram has contributed to your choice to becoming vegan based on visuals and information from peers and celebrities?

Q8: Do you use Instagram to search or share information about the vegan diet?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Sometimes

Q9: Has information about plant-based diets on Instagram made you act in a certain way? If yes, how?

Q10: Do you think you would have considered veganism before the diet became such a trend in society?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ I don't know

ANNEXURE F – Qualitative Questionnaire – Non-Vegans

This questionnaire will be used for data collection for a research study that will be looking at how the promotion of veganism on Instagram has affected millennials dietary choices. Please note that participation for this research study is voluntary and all participants who take part will remain anonymous throughout. Thank you.

Q1: Are you aware of the term Vegan? If so, what is your understanding of it?

Q2: Do you think that a vegan lifestyle could potentially be beneficial for you?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ I don't know

Q3: Do you think that the vegan diet is a trend more than a lifestyle?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ I don't know

Q4: Were you aware of the vegan diet before it exploded on social media?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ I don't know

Q5: When you think of the word 'vegan', what is the first thought that comes to mind?

Q6: Would you consider cutting back on your meat consumption? If so, temporarily, or permanently?

Q7: Do you feel pressured to try the vegan diet and cut back on animal products as a result of what you are exposed to on social media?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Sometimes

Q8: Are you easily influenced by celebrities and influencers on Instagram to try out products?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Sometimes

Q9: Do you look at posts on Instagram of food and feel encouraged to eat a certain way?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Sometimes

Q10: If you were to become vegan, what would be your reason?

ANNEXURE G – Interview with Vegans

[Brief introduction to the topic will be given by the researcher to allow participants to have a better understanding of the topic that will be explored and the reasoning for their participation]

Knowledge:

1. What is your understanding of the term veganism?
2. How long have you been vegan for?
3. What do you think the benefits of a vegan diet consist of and have you experienced any benefits?
4. Were you aware of the vegan diet before it exploded on social media?
5. Where do you find information regarding veganism?
6. Do you think brands in South Africa are incorporating more vegan alternatives than before?

Personal:

1. Why did you decide to become vegan and what inspired you?
2. Are you easily influenced by celebrities on Instagram?
3. Do you think celebrities and influences have encouraged you to remain vegan?
4. Has your social life been affected by the way you eat?
5. Do you feel that Instagram is a useful source for veganism?
6. Has information and accounts on Instagram helped you and inspired you to maintain a vegan lifestyle?
7. Do you think you would have considered veganism if you weren't exposed to the abundance of information that is out there today?

ANNEXURE H – Interview with Non-Vegans

[Brief introduction to the topic will be given by the researcher to allow participants to have a better understanding of the topic that will be explored and the reasoning for their participation]

Knowledge:

1. Are you aware of the term veganism? If so, what is your understanding of it?
2. Do you think that a vegan lifestyle could potentially be beneficial for you?
3. Were you aware of the vegan diet before it exploded on social media?
4. When you think of the word vegan, what is the first thought that comes to mind?

Personal:

1. Would you consider cutting back on meat? If so, temporarily or permanently?
2. Do you feel pressured to try the vegan diet and cut back on animal products as a result of what you are exposed to on social media?
3. Are you easily influenced by celebrities and influencers on Instagram to try out products and services?
4. Do you look at posts on Instagram of food and feel encouraged to eat a certain way?
5. If you were to become vegan, what would be your reason?

APPENDIX I – Ethical Clearance Letter



Date 02/07/2021

Student name: Kelly Dibb

Student number: [REDACTED]

Campus: Vega Durban

Re: Approval of RESE8419 Proposal and Ethics Clearance

HONOURS ETHICAL CLEARANCE LETTER

Your research proposal and the ethical implications of your proposed research topic were reviewed by your supervisor and the campus research panel, a subcommittee of The Independent Institute of Education's Research and Postgraduate Studies Committee.

Your research proposal posed no significant ethical concerns and your supporting documents and instruments are in order to proceed. We hereby provide you with permission to proceed with your research.

In the event of you deciding to change your research methodology in any way, kindly consult your supervisor to ensure all ethical considerations are adhered to and pose no risk to any participant or party involved. A revised ethical clearance letter will be issued.

We wish you all the best with your research!

GENERAL CONDITIONS TO BE FULFILLED IN RELATION TO RESEARCH

Permission is granted to proceed with the above study subject to the conditions listed below being met and may be withdrawn should any of these conditions be flouted.

Please note: The panel has not considered the merits, accuracy or ethical soundness of the research. The only merits examined are the use of The IIE as a sample.

Permission is granted subject to the following conditions:

1. The researcher(s) will need to obtain informed consent in writing from all of the participants in his/ her sample if the study is not anonymous.
2. The researcher(s) may only use the data collected for research purposes and in no other way.

3. Photographs of human subjects may only be taken if relevant to the research, informed consent was obtained, and even with informed consent, the photographs may not be published on any online platforms.
4. The researcher is responsible for supplying and utilising his/her own research resources, such as stationery, photocopies, transport, faxes and telephones and should not depend on the goodwill of the institutions and/or the offices visited for supplying such resources.
5. No names or identifying information of participants may be used within the research and the research must be voluntary.
6. Please make it clear that the information will not be used punitively in any way and participants may in no way be counselled/advised based on this.

Supervisor name: Clive Greenstone

Signature



Campus Postgraduate Coordinator (CPC) name: Carolanda du Toit



Signature:

7 July 2021