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| Celery apple juice  Research Report  Vegan Lifestyle Change | Abstract  The report summarizes literature analysis as well as surveys of Vegans about the challenges beginner vegans face and main factors that drive them towards such lifestyle change.  Edita Pronckutė  Advanced Smart Mobile |

Contents

[Explore the topic 2](#_Toc116552808)

[Goal 2](#_Toc116552809)

[Applications 2](#_Toc116552810)

[Influencers 2](#_Toc116552811)

[Empathize with target audience 3](#_Toc116552812)

[Goal 3](#_Toc116552813)

[Questions 3](#_Toc116552814)

[Results 3](#_Toc116552815)

[Conclusions 9](#_Toc116552816)

[Sources 10](#_Toc116552817)

Explore the topic  
An online research of existing technologies and applications that beginner vegans can use to gather inspiration and learn to better navigate the new lifestyle. A look into the influencers of the community as well as the most discussed challenges.

## Goal

Understanding what the main influencers of the community are and why.

## Applications

Exploring existing applications to gather inspiration about the help that already exists for the beginner vegans. Some of the main ones are listed below:

* Veggly, VegPal– vegan dating apps
* HappyCow, Vegan Friendly – vegan/vegetarian dining options locator apps
* BeVeg – Alcoholic beverage checking app
* CrueltyCutter – animal testing checker app
* I’m Vegan – Vegan journey log
* SO Vegan, Vegan Diet, Veganized etc. – Recipe apps
* Vegan Additives – checking if food additives are vegan

## Influencers

Gathering names of the most influential people that help beginner vegans in educating them about cooking, navigating social situations and other important lifestyle parts. Some of the most well-known across the world are:

* Ed Winters – a gentle educator, “Earhling Ed” channel owner
* Dr Michael Greger – physician, author, and professional speaker on public health issues, owner of “NutritionFacts.org”
* Chris MacAskill – creator of nutritional education “PlantChompers” channel
* Michael - vegan science writer, that myths about vegan diet, health and environmental impacts in his “Mic the Vegan” channel
* Sadia Badiei – nutritionist, owner of a calm and inspirational “PickUpLimes” cooking channel and website
* Nisha Vora – creator and chef behind the “Rainbow Plant Life” cooking channel and blog
* Tabitha Brown – actress, activist, owner of a humorous and motivational cooking channel
* Gaz Oackly – vegan chef and cookbook author, creator of “Avant-Garde Vegan” channel

# Empathize with target audience

The second part of the document focuses on the potential users themselves. First, gathering information from the vegan blogs and health organizations, then asking relevant questions to actual people within a vegan community.

## Goal

Learning more about beginner vegan experiences by collecting existing information online as well as asking an online community of vegans about their decision to become vegan and the challenges they faced at the early days of their lifestyle.  
  
Beginner Vegan problems and challenges

A list comprised of the publicly available posts and blogs of influencers and content creators.

* **Going out to Eat**  
  People think some foods are not vegan when they are and vice versa.
* **Grocery Shopping**  
  Reading labels is a must, and there are some confusing animal-based ingredients.
* **Social Situations**  
  Interrogations, people feel judged, comments, preaching etc.
* **Other Vegans**  
  Movement is full of difficult people, including racists and sexists, preaching, vegan policing etc.
* **Health Risks**Deficiencies, mainly B12, iron or any other.
* **Lack of Variety**In the beginning of the vegan journey people need to learn to cook without animal products and often end up making the same things over and over.
* **Risk of Depression**An increased risk of depression when discovering the truth behind food industry as well as lack social acceptance.
* **Misinformation**  
  Dairy or meat industry sponsored articles about negative side of vegan diet
* **Discovering Vegan Brands**  
  It may start with food, but cosmetics, clothes and other items are next on the list to being replaced as cruelty free, vegan alternatives.

Questions

Below are the questions that were addressed to the Vegan online community in a polite and open manner:

1. What were the main reasons for deciding to live a vegan lifestyle?   
2. What was the final ‘push’ that tipped you over or inspired to make the change?  
3. What were the initial challenges or difficulties at the early stages of your vegan journey?  
4. How did you know what to cook for yourself back then?   
5. Did you find it difficult to identify vegan products in grocery stores?

Results

***Betty Broad***

1. What were the main reasons for deciding to live a vegan lifestyle?   
*I became vegan for the environment, but I stay vegan because I now know about the cruelty in animal agriculture.*

2. What was the final ‘push’ that tipped you over or inspired to make the change?  
*My son kept pointing out that I wasn't vegan when I accepted non-vegan food offered to me by others.*

3. What were the initial challenges or difficulties at the early stages of your vegan journey?  
*By far the hardest part of the change in my lifestyle was the negativity of pre-vegans towards veganism. You have to get used to it. I believe this is the biggest reason that many people do not keep at it. I keep at it because so many vegans have encouraged me online that I now regularly get together with many of them in person. There is nothing like being surrounded by vegans. They support me with getting involved with activism. I don't do the big protests more than about once a month as I have a pre-vegan family who I am determined to try and influence positively. I do however try to find opportunities to spread the vegan message every single day. I never leave the house without a Sharpie pen and Post It stickers so I can leave a little message where vegan love is needed. In the photo I have relocated the flowers sold in the shop to say R.I.P. to the innocent animals.*

4. How did you know what to cook for yourself back then?   
*I simply veganized, what I would usually eat (this was the easy bit).*

5. Did you find it difficult to identify vegan products in grocery stores?  
*Yes. Labelling can be terrible. I still struggle to work out whether alcoholic drinks, breakfast cereals or personal hygiene products like shampoo or toothpaste are vegan.*

***Nina Richmond Goring***

1. What were the main reasons for deciding to live a vegan lifestyle?   
*Vegetarian all my life for the animals.*

2. What was the final ‘push’ that tipped you over or inspired to make the change?  
*My husband became a vegetarian when we met (he watched a few videos) & we made the connection together between dairy & the cruelty of the meat industry & decided to switch to vegan about 5yrs ago.*

3. What were the initial challenges or difficulties at the early stages of your vegan journey?  
*I guess the most difficult part for us is not getting upset at terrible cruelty in the world and just how many people try to argue &/or justify their choices!!*

4. How did you know what to cook for yourself back then?   
*Cheese was difficult in the beginning especially traveling in Italy. Family wasn't an issue in fact my parents are now vegan.*

5. Did you find it difficult to identify vegan products in grocery stores?  
*We've always eaten whole foods & organic plus now there are loads of organic vegan options like nut based cheeses so it's not challenging at all! By the way our dog is also vegan and thriving.*

***Lucian Rackam***

1. What were the main reasons for deciding to live a vegan lifestyle?   
*I became vegan for the animals and the environment. I've also seen bad things when I was a kid.*

2. What was the final ‘push’ that tipped you over or inspired to make the change?  
*When I saw my genitor killing animals for food when I was a kid, and when I learned videos about animal cruelty.*

3. How did you know what to cook for yourself back then?   
4. What were the initial challenges or difficulties at the early stages of your vegan journey?  
*It was my parents because I was a teenager and I still lived with them. They got worried about my health.*

5. Did you find it difficult to identify vegan products in grocery stores? It was very easy because I lived in *Germany when I started my vegan journey and being vegan there is not complicated at all, compared to my native country (France).*

***Lacey Kurt Redlefsen***

1. What were the main reasons for deciding to live a vegan lifestyle?   
*Got chickens and after learning more about them decided to go vegan so I did research and found it was the healthiest way to live as well.*

2. What was the final ‘push’ that tipped you over or inspired to make the change?  
*The final straw was an undercover video about animal cruelty that popped up on my feed.*

3. What were the initial challenges or difficulties at the early stages of your vegan journey?  
*The most challenging thing was eating out. Now I can navigate any social situation with ease. \*Also, I definitely went through something similar to the five stages of grief after going vegan. I learned to rely on the serenity prayer to change the things I can, ‘accept’ the things I can’t and hopefully have the wisdom to know the difference. I will never actually accept it but I do as much as I possibly can and hope to do more in the future, but for now I’m a happy vegan.*

4. How did you know what to cook for yourself back then?   
*I didn’t know what to cook at first, just watching YouTube and having vegan cookbooks helped a lot.*

5. Did you find it difficult to identify vegan products in grocery stores?  
*For the first few grocery trips it was hard, but it got really easy really fast. Messed up a couple times, tried not to get upset. Expanded vegan to apply to the rest of my life, beauty products, clothing, shoes. Anything I can I do. It’s not hard and I don’t feel like I’m giving anything up-those things weren’t mine to begin with. When I look back on my life in the end- I want to be happy, healthy and proud of the life I lived, I want to be on the right side of history for my life and for the planet and humanity.*

***Madeline Cates***

1. What were the main reasons for deciding to live a vegan lifestyle?   
2. What was the final ‘push’ that tipped you over or inspired to make the change?  
*My journey has been long & grueling with many relapses along the way mostly I started out as vegetarian not realizing the impact of being vegan, so I ate a lot of cheese along the way I also have an eating disorder which didn't help any, so I have stopped and started many times until the last couple years.*

3. What were the initial challenges or difficulties at the early stages of your vegan journey?  
4. How did you know what to cook for yourself back then?  
*I just saw a lot of videos Joey Carbstrong helped and now I can completely resist cheese at the store yes and also people have criticized me along the way.*

***Genni Lee***

1. What were the main reasons for deciding to live a vegan lifestyle?   
*My main reason going vegan was because of the animals. When I fully found out what happens to them, I stopped eating meat immediately.*

2. What was the final ‘push’ that tipped you over or inspired to make the change?  
*My dad had sat me down and told me everything that happens to animals and that’s what gave me the final push to go fully vegan.*

3. What were the initial challenges or difficulties at the early stages of your vegan journey?  
*The most difficult thing was going to school and my friends questioning me and making fun of me. I went vegan in high school so none of my friends understood.*

4. How did you know what to cook for yourself back then?   
*I didn’t really cook much because my parents cooked. But when I got older and started college I really fell in love with cooking and found all the alternatives and new recipes!*

5. Did you find it difficult to identify vegan products in grocery stores?  
*I didn’t find it difficult to find vegan products because you can make so much stuff out of vegetables! I really love being vegan because not only am I helping with animals, I am also helping my body and the earth.*

***Veronique van der Neut***

1. What were the main reasons for deciding to live a vegan lifestyle?   
*I am vegan because I have suffered myself and in my suffering found empathy for others who suffer.*

2. What was the final ‘push’ that tipped you over or inspired to make the change?  
*The final push I guess was seeing a lot of vegan propaganda…*

3. What were the initial challenges or difficulties at the early stages of your vegan journey?  
*Problems in the start were my family and especially friends who became very not-understanding of my choice, as if I forced them to be vegan too.*

4. How did you know what to cook for yourself back then?   
*I had been vegetarian for many Years. I watched a lot of vegan cooking programs on Insta and Facebook.*

5. Did you find it difficult to identify vegan products in grocery stores?  
*In the beginning I didn’t really know what to look at on an ingredients list, but now it’s easy… plus, I mainly eat wholefoods.*

***Janian Thurman***

1. What were the main reasons for deciding to live a vegan lifestyle?   
*I went vegan for my health. I was pre-diabetic with an extensive family history of heart disease and stroke. My doctor wanted to medicate me. I was already doing the exercise, so I went vegan. He gave me a few months. I never needed the medication.*

2. What was the final ‘push’ that tipped you over or inspired to make the change?   
*The threat of medication. Who wants the side effects or cost?*

3. What were the initial challenges or difficulties at the early stages of your vegan journey?  
*What were the initial challenges or difficulties at the early stages of your vegan journey?  
Making the right choices while eating out. Learning how to cook without oil. Coping with the comments from "friends" and family.*

4. How did you know what to cook for yourself back then?  
*My BS is in Kinesiology specializing in fitness, nutrition, and health. I knew I needed to be balanced. I followed blogs and purchased a few key cookbooks. I had to invest in a high-speed blender.*

5. Did you find it difficult to identify vegan products in grocery stores?   
*Kind of. It's better nowadays, with more options. I don't eat faux meats or cheeses but finding certain things like nutritional yeast, silken tofu, and rice syrup proved challenging.*  
  
***Ren VanMeenen***

1. What were the main reasons for deciding to live a vegan lifestyle?   
*During my first semester at university, Fall 1985, I learned about the economics of red meat, the ratio of grain per lb of beef. I gave up beef immediately and started doing more research. Soon I was a vegetarian and an animal rights activist. The health benefits were not important in the beginning. I was concerned about the earth and animals.*

2. What was the final ‘push’ that tipped you over or inspired to make the change?   
*I was moving toward veganism for 3+ years and had given up most dairy with just occasional cheese pizzas with my roommates\*. I was buying only free-range eggs (and rarely) and one day I got a bloody one and that was it....*

3. What were the initial challenges or difficulties at the early stages of your vegan journey?  
*I had to learn to cook for myself as there were not the products or restaurant options there are now, especially where I was living (imagine having avocados only in season!). But I did learn to cook. And I do!*

4. How did you know what to cook for yourself back then?   
*My campus co-op was helpful, and I ordered a lot of books through a local bookstore (this is long before the internet).*

5. Did you find it difficult to identify vegan products in grocery stores?   
*I did not buy many processed things then and do not now. That said, it is easier now because sometimes you can just look at the allergens list. I went vegan with two of my three roommates in Feb 1989 and two of us still are vegan.*  
  
***Michele Kendzie***

*(“I'm not fully vegan yet, but if you're interested in someone mostly vegan, I've eliminated all animals from my food except salmon, which will also be going away once I'm assured that I'm getting enough omegas another way. I stopped eating dairy in 2008, meat sometime last winter, and eggs last May.”)*

1. What were the main reasons for deciding to live a vegan lifestyle?   
*I've read so much about how much healthier plant food is than animals, and I'm appalled by the animal food industries and concerned for the environment. Ethical reasons are actually still not strong in me, but I'm learning a lot about those this year from people like Earthling Ed on YouTube.*

2. What was the final ‘push’ that tipped you over or inspired to make the change?   
*My mom died of Alzheimers in March 2021 and that summer I read Dr. Michael Greger's How Not To Die. I'd already been increasing the plant food in my diet for many years and decreasing the meat, influenced by vegan travel vloggers I watch, but last year I really sped that up the change.*

3. What were the initial challenges or difficulties at the early stages of your vegan journey?  
*I wouldn't say I had any challenges since I did it so gradually, as far as giving up meat. I never loved meat anyway, I just thought I had to eat it for protein. However, it was very challenging to give up dairy in 2008. I had actually given it up from 2004 to 2006 because my second child had severe food allergies yet I wanted to continue to breastfeed. But when that child weaned and I tried to eat dairy again, I had developed lactose intolerance. I gave up most dairy (especially milk) pretty easily, because I had already found decent alternatives for my dairy-allergic child, but it took me many uncomfortable bathroom visits after pizza before I fully stopped that. And eventually I learned to make much better pizza with no cheese at all. As for the last year, I don't feel much need for vegan products. I much prefer beans and veggies in bowls and burritos; I don't buy meat alternatives and only use vegan milks and cheeses occasionally. I don't have any interest in vegan egg replacer product; I learned how to make scrambled tofu.*

4. How did you know what to cook for yourself back then?   
*I just continued to cook veggies and beans and grains but not meat or eggs. That isn't hard. I did have to learn how to use tofu; that has been my biggest progress this year. Rainbow Plant Life and Pick Up Limes on YouTube have helped me the most.*

5. Did you find it difficult to identify vegan products in grocery stores?   
*No, they're well labeled, and I've got about 19 years of practice reading ingredients labels for food allergy reasons.*

***Mark L. Rieke***

1. What were the main reasons for deciding to live a vegan lifestyle?   
*First and utmost, it was my own health (I was fine, but knew it can help me stay healthier and live a longer life), then the planet (environmental benefits) but I am also staying for the animals now.*

2. What was the final ‘push’ that tipped you over or inspired to make the change?  
*It was 'the game changers', before then I was a quiet admirer but never thought I could actually do it myself.*

3. What were the initial challenges or difficulties at the early stages of your vegan journey?  
*Learning to cook all over again, or at least that's what it felt like. Replacing animal products with fitting subs (I mean, eggs with flax seeds or banana in pancakes, scrambled egg with scrambled tofu etc.), finding friends with similar beliefs, family and strangers' comments, eating out and last but very big, is the weight of the whole thing. It almost felt like waking up from an intense dream or discovering the biggest conspiracy of the world and no one believes it somehow due to meat and dairy industry propaganda. I saw it like smoking, since long time ago it was advertised as a healthy habit and people actually believed it.*

4. How did you know what to cook for yourself back then?  
*As i mentioned above, I learned to cook again, but going vegan opened a whole new cooking world with new flavors and ingredients. I love it now.*

5. Did you find it difficult to identify vegan products in grocery stores?  
*Yes, made many mistakes until I got into the habit of reading EVERY SINGLE label. Though, I do see a lot of progress over the last 3 years in supermarkets here in NL.*

# Conclusions

Main reasons of going vegan are:

* Ethical (not contributing to animal farming industry, minimizing animal cruelty, caring about animals without eating them at the same time)
* Health (vegan diet has been proven to help prevent many heart and coronary diseases, improve longevity and overall health)
* Environmental (animal farming contributes to deforestation, high water consumption, land degradation and many other environmental impact issues of today)

Main challenges when becoming vegan:

* Peer pressure (negative reactions from people - close circle to complete strangers)
* Learning to cook again (veganizing known recipes and learning new ones)
* Recognizing products that are vegan/cruelty free

Key factors of successful approach:

* Kindness and respect
* Calmness
* Humor
* Supportive attitude

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