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ABSTRACT

Introduction: Currently, it is observed that vegan and vegetarian diets have been much discussed in various media, attracting looks from those who seek to understand it as an awareness movement. In vegetarianism, most or all animal products are excluded, depending on the variations or subtypes. Veganism, in turn, encompasses dietary and social practices motivated by the non-exploitation or use of animals in all possible sectors. Today's society increasingly demands the need to consider ecological and social issues in choices and decision-

making. **Objectives:** To identify the reason for choosing to adhere to a vegan or vegetarian diet in a sample of practitioners from the city of São Paulo. **Methods:** Cross-sectional study with qualitative analysis of the results. An adaptation of the questionnaire "Public opinion survey on vegetarianism" of IBOPE Intelligence (2018) was elaborated with open and closed questions, which was applied through the Google forms platform to a sample of 22 participants, inhabitants of the city of São Paulo and adherents to vegan/vegetarian diets for at least one year. The questionnaire was disseminated through online social platforms. **Results and discussion:** The sample had the participation of 72.7% of individuals aged 18 to 30 years, most of them female (90.9%). The information collected states that the vegan/vegetarian diet is considered today as a 'lifestyle', more than a diet, also associated with 'personal identity'. In addition, the 'strong feeling of empathy for animals and their causes', 'awareness of the environmental impacts of the omnivorous diet', 'improvement in quality of life or health' and 'feeling of lightness or purity in the spiritual and/or mental and/or psychological sphere' were the main motivating items for adherence to the vegan/vegetarian diet, respectively. **Conclusion:** The present study allowed a deeper understanding of the vegan/vegetarian diet in Brazil and the world, its origins, dilemmas and diverse interpretations. The movement is relatively new, not only as a form of food, but also as a lifestyle.

Keywords: Vegan diet, vegetarianism, motivations for veganism/vegetarianism.

1 INTRODUCTION

In contemporary society and in recent years, vegan and vegetarian diets have been much discussed in the various media, which has attracted looks from those who try to understand them as an awareness movement.

Lira (2013) approaches such diets as a theme that involves a relative diversity of factors and that makes associations with other dimensions of existence, such as health, body, morality, politics, economy, social organization, gender relations, kinship, power, among others.

According to the Brazilian Vegetarian Society or SVB (2017), vegetarianism is the dietary regime that excludes products of animal origin, with variations or subtypes in it; such as ovolactovegetarianism (uses eggs, milk and dairy products in the diet), lactovegetarianism (consumes milk and dairy products), ovovegetarianism (includes eggs in the diet), and strict vegetarianism (does not use any animal products).

Markus (2018) exposes that veganism, in turn, encompasses food and social practices motivated by the non-exploitation or use of animals in all possible sectors; from food to consumer items such as clothing, accessories and objects.

From this, it is understood that such practices are a way of living that is linked to the animal cause, involving the boycott of products, events and services that test, exploit or use animals. Consequently, activism is present, sustaining itself in the defense of more sustainable forms in the relationship between the human being and nature.

According to Révillion et al. (2020), veganism gains strength by making use not only of organic and healthier eating practices, but also of a lifestyle that minimizes environmental impact. Thus, the difference between veganism and vegetarianism occurs from the ethical sphere, since the latter does not necessarily imply the recognition and appreciation of animal rights (SCHUBERT; NIEDERLE, 2019).

Therefore, the Brazilian Vegetarian Society (SVB, 2017) states that the main motivating items for adherence to the vegetarian diet/lifestyle are fundamentally based on three main issues, which may or may not merge: health, since practitioners consider this type of diet healthier; ethics, through which compassion for animals is demonstrated, considering their rights as sentient beings, that is, capable of suffering and feeling pleasure and happiness; and sustainability, considering that such a way of living is valued and perceived as an act of respect for the planet and society, acting in ways that minimize the negative impacts on the chain of the current production system and making less corrosive decisions.

Like new adherents to veganism in the world, the American Dietetic Association (2003) maintains that Canada is one of the countries where such practice and way of living is on the rise, being currently pointed out as one of the most promising countries for growth in the sector, since it is a country of low demographic density, but with more than 3 million people who identify as vegan or vegetarian, and another 6.4 million who say they have reduced their meat consumption, with the potential to make the transition to veganism.

In addition, the latest update to the Canada Food Guide qualifies the "vegan" or "strict vegetarian" diet as healthy, as well as highlighting the importance of vegetable consumption and even encouraging the reduction of animal foods.

According to Ribeiro (2019), in Brazil, it is estimated that 4% of the Brazilian population, that is, about 7.6 million people, are vegetarians, and many of them are vegan.

In addition, it is exposed that the growing increase in this niche has been moving the market by approximately 40% per year, facilitating the inclusion of more adherents to this lifestyle and providing a greater and more extensive variety of products than was had long ago.

According to the same author, in current Brazilian supermarkets, as well as in several countries around the world, especially European ones, it is possible to find many vegan versions of meat or dairy products, qualified as substitutes for meats, cheeses, hamburgers, ice cream and curds.

The growth of the Brazilian vegetarian market, then, reflects global trends: in Europe, 14% of all new products launched in 2015 are vegetarian or vegan, and from 2013 to 2015, the launch of new vegan products grew by 150%; in the last decade in the UK, for example, there has been a 360% growth in the number of vegan individuals (SVB, 2019).

Leite (2020), taking into account that all countries of the European Union recognize the importance of nutritional guidance and have a food guide for their populations as an important source of food education, establishes that concrete positions on vegan and vegetarian diets and their respective food guides are not so common.

Despite this, exceptions could be identified, such as Canada, already mentioned above, and the United Kingdom, indicating that well-planned and balanced vegetarian diets may be nutritionally adequate.

Regarding issues related to health, the study by Schüpbach et al. (2015) compared the diet of groups of vegans, vegetarians and omnivores, demonstrating that total energy intake did not seem to diverge within the three groups.

Despite this, the protein contribution was significantly lower in the group of vegetarians and vegans. In addition, the total value of fats, especially saturated fats, was higher in omnivores, while that of polyunsaturated fats was higher in the group of vegans and vegetarians. In addition, micronutrient analyses were performed, establishing that the vegan group was shown to have a higher intake of vitamin B1, folate, vitamin C, and vitamin E, but lower levels of retinol, vitamin B12, and vitamin D.

In addition, vegans were shown to have higher magnesium and iron intake and lower calcium and zinc intakes. Similarly, the authors reported compelling and consistent evidence for lower rates of coronary heart disease, colorectal cancer, obesity, and diabetes in the non-omnivorous diet public.

Moreover, total incidences of cancer presented lower indicators in these individuals, also demonstrating that life expectancy is higher compared to the general population. Finally, Schüpbach et al. (2015) state that such positive effects are mainly related to the higher consumption of vegetables,

fruits, oilseeds, and whole grains, which are known to contribute to the improvement of health in general, regardless of the monitoring of meat and fish in food consumption.

Regarding micronutrients, it is known that vitamin B12 is one of the nutrients that requires greater attention in individuals who base their diet on diets with majority or even exclusive consumption of foods of plant origin, especially the vegan public, since such vitamin is naturally present only in foods of animal origin and that not consumed by these individuals.

Thus, Silva et al. (2015) recommends the inclusion of fortified sources in foods of plant origin, such as flour fortified with vitamin B12, or in supplements, especially for pregnant and lactating women in order to achieve the adequate amount of this micronutrient.

As a main point, it is clear in several studies that vegetarian and vegan diets, as long as they are well done, that is, a diet that is composed mostly of food *Fresh* and high nutrient density, can generate health benefits in general, providing well-being from the adequate nutritional supply and contributing to the prevention of diseases, especially chronic non-communicable diseases, which have some foods as a risk factor and others as a protective factor (BAENA, 2015).

Another crucial point that can serve as a motivating factor for diet change would be access to well-founded information, as well as the intrinsic motivations developed in each individual to become or not vegetarian or vegan (LONDERO, 2019).

Currently, the diet has been debated not only in nutrition, but in several areas, going beyond issues hitherto known, such as benevolence to animals, healthiness and environmental issues; extrapolating and encompassing deeper issues, such as those linked to identity, social representation, politics, globalization and the breaking of cultural paradigms.

Thus, other biases have been shown to be necessary for the awareness and computerization of the public, especially the media community, composed of people increasingly curious and eager to identify ideals to be followed.

Among these values and ideals, we can cite a study conducted in Brazil, in which Markus (2018) indicates that, in addition to the main values linked to veganism, such as "universalism" and "benevolence", there are still other concepts that assume a role of relevance, especially with the advancement of modern society.

Markus (2018), then, mentions the values of "self-direction" and "hedonism", that is, the search for an exciting life, in which what is different is valued, with emphasis on creativity and freedom, associated, also, with the search for pleasure and personal satisfaction within a community.

This same study cites that, to the extent that vegetarianism and its variants are seen as an innovative lifestyle, such practices are positively associated with the dimension of "openness to

change" as opposed to "conservation", values perceived as increasingly necessary and important in various spheres of society.

On the other hand, Ribeiro (2019), explains that the financial viability for adhering to a vegetarian or vegan diet is one of the factors that can be determinant in the thinking and perspective of those interested, and may boost or discourage them from transitioning to this type of diet.

Similarly, the author reinforces that, with the rise of products of this niche in the market, access to these foods has been facilitated, but if limited to higher social classes, where there is greater financial viability and purchasing power to buy the numerous varieties that have emerged.

From what has been exposed, it is possible to understand that the current society is in a condition in which healthiness is not enough as the only factor in choosing a diet.

Thus, the need to incorporate other variables such as those related to sustainability, environmental impacts and the process of identity construction within a social environment is notorious for a better understanding and justification for the choices linked to food consumption.

2 GOALS

2.1 GENERAL OBJECTIVE

The present study sought to identify the reason for choosing adherence to a vegan or vegetarian diet from a sample of participants from the city of São Paulo.

2.2 SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

- Expose the difference between the concepts of vegan and vegetarian food;
- Research on the relationship of veganism/vegetarianism with environmental impact;
- Understand the vision of veganism around the world as a diet and its adaptations to food consumption.
- Identify the correlation between veganism and increased movement in the Brazilian and international markets;
- Raise possible intrinsic motivations in adhering to veganism and vegetarianism.

3 MATERIAL AND METHODS

This research was characterized by a cross-sectional study, with qualitative analysis of the results. As an instrument for data collection, a questionnaire was elaborated online by the platform Google Forms, adapted from the "Public Opinion Survey on Vegetarianism" conducted by IBOPE (Institute of Opinion and Statistics) Intelligence in 2018 in Brazil, with open and multiple-choice questions that addressed topics related to the motivations of choosing to adhere to a vegan or vegetarian

diet from a personal point of view and what concerns the relationship of adherents with the environment, sustainability and with its supportive community.

In addition, we were asked about the intrinsic behavior of each participant regarding the issues that interfere and affect the choice and adherence to the diet.

The questionnaire was divided into 3 parts, the first being the "identification of the profile of the interviewee", the second the "multiple choice questions / check boxes / descriptive answers about values and personal opinions related to the diet practiced", and the third, containing the question regarding the participant's preference to receive or not the research as soon as it is approved. Data were collected between the months of March and April 2021.

The inclusion criterion of the participants was conditioned on the individual being adept of the vegan or vegetarian diet for at least one year.

The questionnaire was disseminated through digital media such as Facebook and Instagram, in communities of activists and/or supporters, and nutritionists who serve the vegan/vegetarian public, working in the city of São Paulo; as well as Whatsapp contacts of adherents to the diet.

The audience chosen from among those interested in answering the questionnaire could belong to any social class, be of any sex (female, male or other) and be between 18 and 50 years old. Initially, the sample aimed to contain between 20 and 30 participants. Thus, information was collected from a sample of 22 participants.

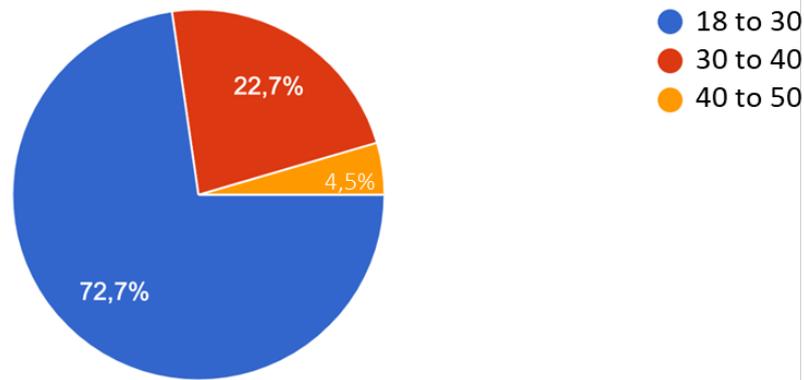
The survey participants were told that they would receive a return of the results. Before answering the questionnaire, the participants signed an Informed Consent Form to participate in the research.

This study had its research project approved by the Research Ethics Committee (CEP) of Universidade Presbiteriana Mackenzie under the CAAE: 49688715.4.0000.0084.

4 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Graphs 1 and 2 present the sociodemographic characterization of the members of the research sample, and out of a total of 22 participants, 72.7% fit into the age group of 18 to 30 years of age, 22.7% in the age group of 30 to 40 years; and 4.5% in those aged 40 to 50 years (Graph 1).

Graph 1 – Distribution of participants according to age. São Paulo, 2021.



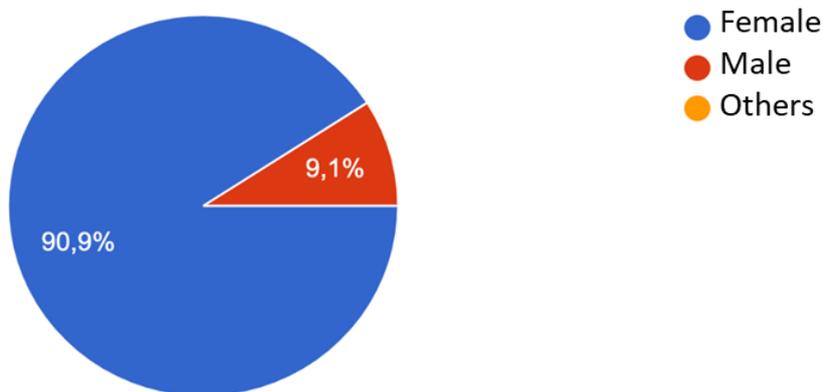
Source: Prepared by the authors.

In contrast to this, the IBOPE Intelligence survey (2018) conducted with the vegetarian and vegan public of Brazil, exposes that the sample of 2002 people interviewed had a predominance of people aged 55 years or older (22%), followed by the age group of 25 to 34 years and the 35 to 44 years, represented by 21% of the sample each.

Similarly, people aged 45 to 54 years accounted for 18% of the sample, while the age group of 16 to 24 years had the same representativeness, that is, 18%.

Regarding gender, Graph 2 shows that the sample of participants was characterized, in its great majority, by females, accounting for 90.9% of the interviewees.

Graph 2 – Distribution of the sample according to sex. São Paulo, 2021.



Source: prepared by the authors

In the same IBOPE Intelligence survey (2018), cited earlier, of the total sample (n=2002), 48% were male under a prevalence of 52% female. Thus, the study in comparison with the present research also obtained a greater number of female audiences, but with a less expressive difference.

Graph 3 shows the distribution of participants according to the classification of the diet practiced, with the majority (54.5%) adhering to an ovolactovegetarian diet, followed by 40.9% of

participants following a strict vegan or vegetarian diet, and only 4.5% (1 person) adhering to a vegetarian diet.

Graph 3 – Distribution of participants according to diet classification. São Paulo, 2021.



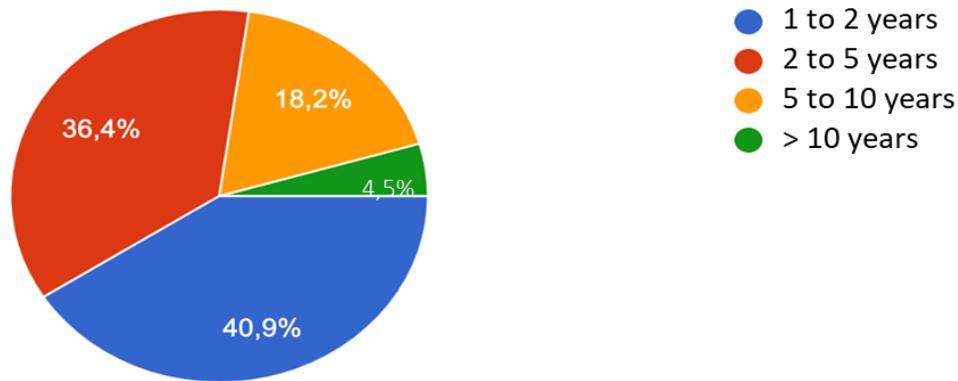
Source: prepared by the authors

There are still no studies on the percentage of a population group delimiting the 3 categories of types of vegetarianism in Brazil. Despite this, the IBOPE Intelligence study (2018) shows that 14% of its population sample (n=2002) declared itself vegetarian, also showing a growth of 75% compared to 2012, mainly in metropolitan regions.

Even without data collected in the present study, there is evidence that indicates a gradual increase of vegan and vegetarian people not only in Brazil, but in many other countries around the world, especially in Europe and the Americas, as well as sympathizers and people willing to hear more about the proposals and reasons for following such a diet (RÉVILLION et al, 2020). Therefore, with the increase in media coverage on issues related to the environmental impacts caused by diet or lifestyle, it is possible to infer that there may be a tendency of the world population to lean and become more interested in issues such as sustainability, food, health, and diets, opening more space for vegetarian and vegan diets.

Graph 4, in turn, shows the time of adherence to the diet until the moment of the interview, showing that 40.9% were following one of the vegetarian diets for 1 to 2 years; 36.4% for 2 to 5 years; 18.2% from 5 to 10 years, and 4.5% over 10 years. Thus, the time of adherence was inversely proportional to the number of interviewees.

Graph 4 – Distribution of the sample according to time of adherence to the diet. São Paulo, 2021.



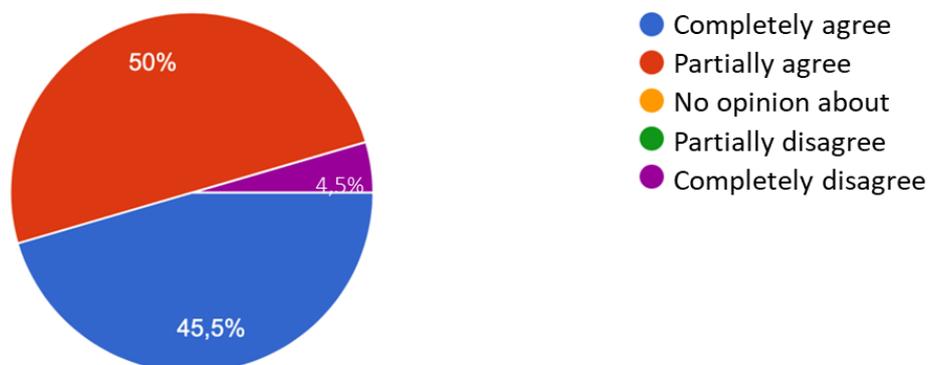
Source: prepared by the authors

A study done in Germany by Hamburg (2015), demonstrated that out of a total of 848 respondents, 16.5% followed a vegan diet for less than 6 months, 19.3% from 6 months to a year, 27.6% 1 to 2 years, 24.4% from 2 to 5 years, and 12.1% over 5 years. In this case, the study showed a direct increase of adherents as the increase of years, until reaching 2 to 5 years and above 5 years, presenting a decrease.

In the second part of the questionnaire, multiple choice questions, check boxes and descriptive answers about personal opinions about the chosen diet and the position regarding the relationship between the diet and economic and cultural issues were addressed.

Graph 5 presents such data, and 50% of the sample partially agreed with the statement "I consider that the environmental impacts of the current society influenced me in the choice of diet", while 45.5% completely agreed and 4.5% completely disagreed.

Graph 5 – Distribution of participants according to agreement with the phrase "I consider that the environmental impacts of the current society influenced me in the choice of diet". São Paulo, 2021.



Source: prepared by the authors

As illustrated in Graph 5 and adding the two concordance responses, a significant majority was obtained, accounting for 95.5% of the sample affirmed agreement regarding social and sustainability

motivations. Thus, it is understood that for the vast majority of the sample, the choice to be vegetarian or vegan comes from factors such as the environmental impact of food on society.

As stated by Springmann et. al (2016), reducing the consumption of animal foods at the population level, making a transition to a plant-based diet, is a potential approach to manage nitrogen emissions on the planet, in addition to bringing other environmental benefits, such as reducing the water footprint, reducing greenhouse gas emissions, and improving land use from sustainable agriculture. Of all these indicators, the focus is on nitrogen emission as a parameter for the environmental impacts of the food chain.

According to Révillion et. al (2020), the concern with climate change affects about 60% of the world population and in Brazil, approximately 70%. Within this percentage, 27% intend to reduce meat consumption. This, then, is in line with the results of the present study, demonstrating that the concern with environmental impacts is a factor on the agenda today and relevant for many in choosing the diet of preference.

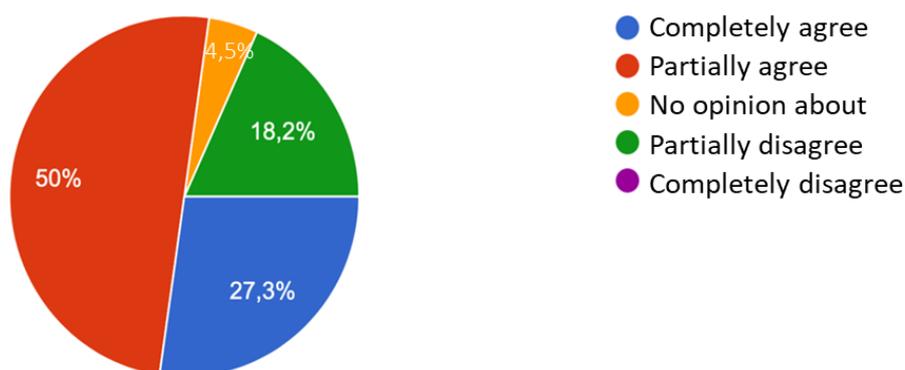
In addition, another study by Fox and Ward (2008) pointed out three main motivations for abstaining from meat consumption: health, animal welfare and environmentalism (defense of the environment).

Thus, in today's society, where awareness is constant in several areas of media information propagation, it is certain that environmental awareness information exerts influence at a personal level in decision making about which food to eat.

Graph 6 shows the distribution of participants according to the statement that the market for vegan/vegetarian products presents greater diversity and more affordable prices compared to the diversity and prices of 3 years ago.

The results obtained show that 77.3% of the interviewees agreed (totally or partially), 4.5% did not have an opinion on the subject and 18.2% partially disagreed. None of the interviewees stated that they completely disagreed with the statement.

Graph 6 – Distribution of the sample according to the sentence "The market for vegetarian/vegan products is more diversified and more affordable, in its majority, compared to 3 years ago". São Paulo, 2021.



Source: prepared by the authors

Illustrating the implications of the results obtained, the IBOPE Intelligence Survey (2018) found that 60% of respondents stated that in the event that vegan products have the same price as other products of animal origin, they would give preference to them at the time of the purchase decision.

From this, it is understood that, even though many have the perception that prices are more affordable, the perception that vegan and vegetarian products have a higher cost remains for others, and may influence the choice of food by the population in general.

Kapp (2017) observed in a comparative study between Brazil and Canada, that the Brazilian industries of vegan products have a greater variety of products of the same brand, while in Canada, the focus is on only one product or line of products, with the same ingredient in common of the brand.

This can be evaluated as positive for the Brazilian market, if we consider the greater variety and diversity of products, offering multiple possibilities of choice.

It is observed, then, that there is a wide variety of products offered with vegan certification in the current market. Kapp (2007) states that there are 28 companies in Brazil that offer products certified with the vegetarian seal, and 20 of these are food producing companies.

It was also exposed that they were small to medium-sized companies, of Brazilian capital located near the main centers of consumption, but that serve markets in different states of the country or even in other countries.

Compared to the market for conventional products, the number is still small, and there are barriers to be overcome, especially those related to pricing, so that it is more accessible to consumers.

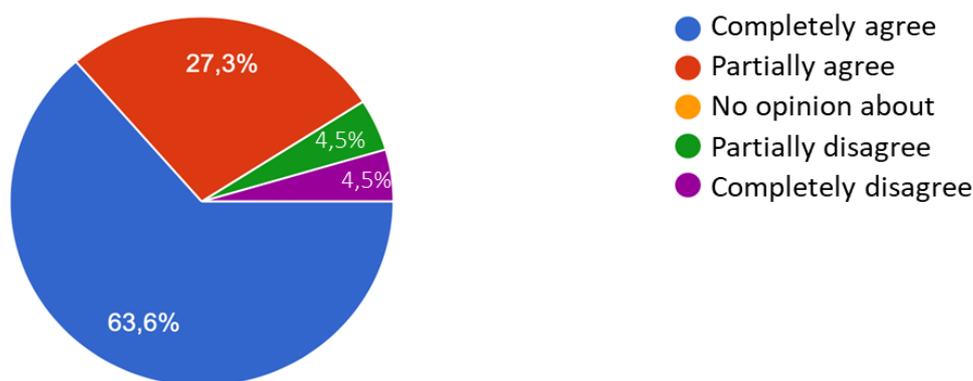
Despite this, Vasconcellos and Garcia (2009) maintain that most brands seem to be aware of this, but the implementation and implementation of the cheapening of products is not simple due to the possible amplified risk of the non-survival of the brand in the market.

In addition, the authors highlight the basic notion of economics that the more the movement reaches adherents, the greater the demand, and therefore the more affordable these foods will become. On the other hand, this is a process that can take time.

Thus, it is understood that, even if vegan and vegetarian products present greater diversity and more affordable prices today, the perception that the diet without animal products is more expensive and inaccessible may prevail.

Or Graph 7 illustrates the agreement of the participants with the statement that the diet represents something greater than simply food for them, being considered a lifestyle. From this, 63.6% of the interviewees totally agree, 27.3% partially agree, 4.5% partially disagree and the representativeness of those who completely disagree totals 4.5%. Thus, 90.9% of the sample sees veganism as a lifestyle beyond food.

Graph 7 - Distribution of participants according to agreement with the phrase "My diet currently represents something bigger for me than simply eating, I consider it a lifestyle". São Paulo, 2021.



Source: prepared by the authors

From a few years until today, the expression 'lifestyle' has come to have a broader and more significant meaning. It refers both to personal habits and customs, as well as to the emphasis on the possibility of choice and decision-making in relation to health and social responsibility (FINOTTI, 2004).

Still, Giddens (2002) reiterates that lifestyle cannot be thought of as something trivial, being associated only with a superficial consumerism; But it must be understood as something that is linked to modernity and "can be defined as a more or less integrated set of practices that an individual embraces, [...] give material form to a particular narrative of self-identity."

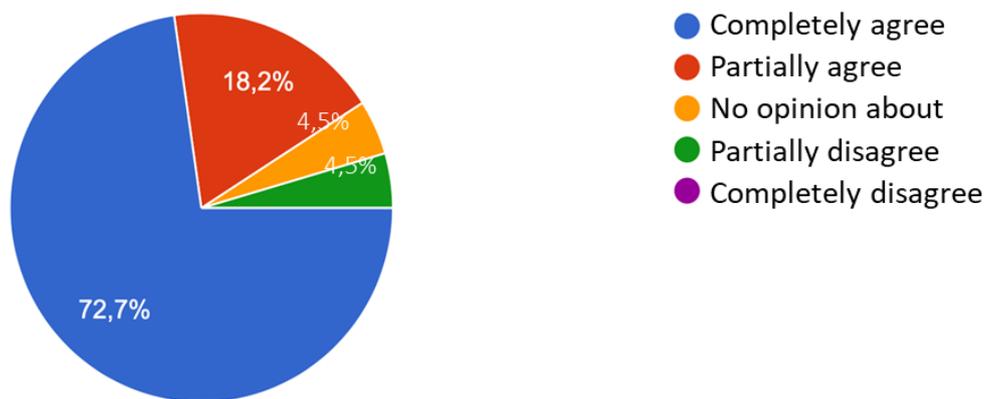
It is widely known from the literature that the vegan diet and even vegetarian diets are in many of its adherents also related to sustainability practices and other behaviors such as meditation, physical activity and a more compassionate and conscious life, not only in relation to animals, but to the environment and other people as well (MANN, 2014).

From this, it is understood that the term 'lifestyle', encompasses all choices regarding the way of living, thinking and acting, since all impact on the idea of identity and lifestyle of the individual. Since food encompasses a way of thinking, acting and living, it is understood that vegetarianism and veganism can be part of the notion of lifestyle of adherents to such diets.

Reinforcing Chart 8 addresses the agreement with the phrase "The way I eat today is strongly tied to what I consider my personal identity." Thus, since the questions dialogue with each other, the percentage of people who agree, completely or partially, with the statement was the same (90.9%).

Despite this, the percentage of the sample that totally agrees with the phrase was higher (72.7%) and there was no total disagreement. 4.5% of the people disagreed partially and 4.5% did not present an opinion on this theme.

Graph 8 – Distribution of participants according to agreement with the phrase "The way I eat today is strongly linked to what I consider my personal identity". São Paulo, 2021.



Source: prepared by the authors

As well as lifestyle, another anthropological and behavioral issue that was incorporated into this research was the idea of identity. Because identity encompasses several spheres of life that go beyond what to eat, Markus (2018) states that veganism is strongly related to the term's 'lifestyle' and 'personal identity'.

The results obtained contribute to this, demonstrating that there is a link between veganism and the conception of being a lifestyle and component of identity, which may come from the fact that sustainability, care for animals and other behaviors are associated both with food and with the individuals' own way of living.

Bisogni et al. (2002) explain that the relationship between identity and food choices is bidirectional, that is, food choices not only encompass personal meanings, but also lead to the creation of groups of people who have similar eating patterns in addition to similarities with respect to personal identity and social role, which leads to a certain similarity between lifestyle, sense of identity and

everyday practices and actions of such individuals. In addition, it is understood that veganism is closely related to personal values and ethics, locating it as a diet and way of facing life.

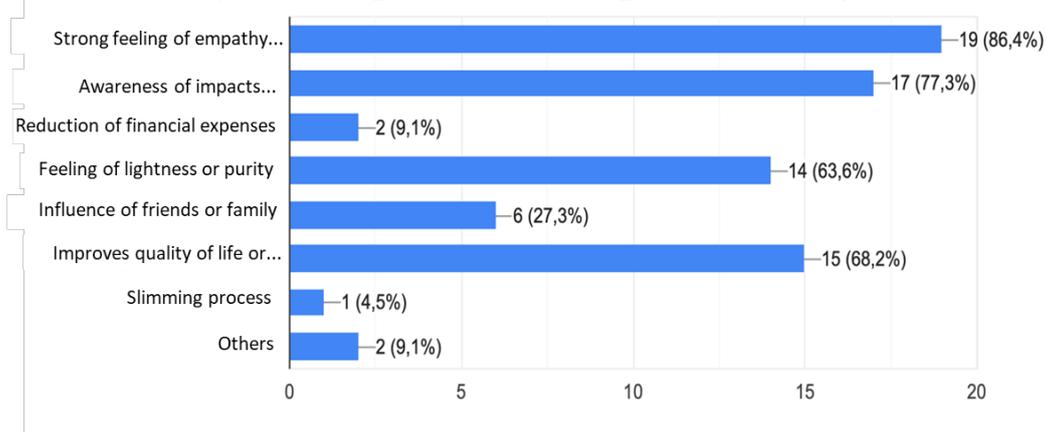
Thus, an individual's identity as well as social community are indisputably linked, not only to veganism and its variants, but to any other diet or everyday habit. As cited by Finotti (2004), in today's society, the choices made by man, however trivial, are intertwined with personal motivations, and to understand such choices, one must consider the individual as a whole; Your way of thinking and relating to the world around you are decisive for understanding your position of preference.

Technically, according to Kotler (1998), lifestyle "represents your standard of living expressed in terms of activities, interests, and opinions. It depicts the 'whole person' interacting with their environment."

Graph 9 shows the distribution of participants according to the main motivations for adhering to veganism/vegetarianism.

The alternatives provided for this question were: 'Strong feeling of empathy for animals and their causes', 'awareness of the environmental impacts of the omnivorous diet (consumption of all food groups without exclusion)', 'reduction of financial expenses', 'feeling of lightness or purity in the spiritual and/or mental and/or psychological sphere', 'influence of friends and/or family and/or community', 'improvement in quality of life or health', 'weight loss process' and 'others'.

Graph 9 – Distribution of participants according to the main motivating items for diet/lifestyle adherence. São Paulo, 2021.



Source: prepared by the authors

The answer that got the most votes was the 'strong feeling of empathy for animals and their causes', followed by 'awareness of the environmental impacts of the omnivorous diet'.

The study by Londero (2019), where an interview was also made by virtual questionnaire to a Facebook group of the vegan public, demonstrated that before the question "why did you become vegan?", the vast majority of the answers brought the ethical bias in a concrete and clear way as the main motivation.

The third most voted item was the 'improvement in quality of life and health'. As explained by Fox and Ward (2008), the improvement of health and quality of life is one of the main reasons for the transition to a vegan lifestyle, being alongside ethical reasons regarding animal rights and the search to adhere to a cause that contributes to sustainability to the planet.

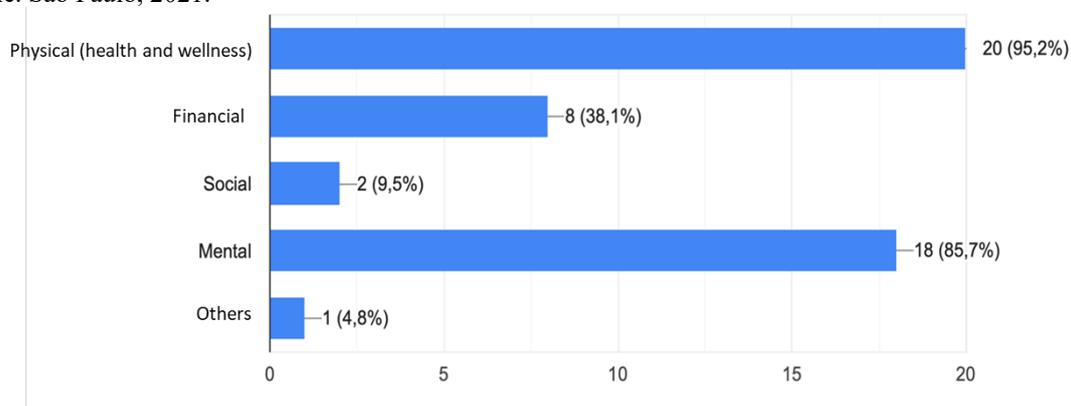
Still, Fox and Ward (2008) brought up in the discussion of their results that many of the motivations correlate and merge after a few years of practicing the diet.

It is also exposed that the interest in understanding the other factors that motivate adherence to veganism or vegetarianism, such as animal ethics and sustainability, lead to the incorporation of such motivations in its ideals and principle, being derived from the primary motivator, which are shown to be particular to each individual.

Chart 10 illustrates the last question of the questionnaire, and the alternatives as an answer to the question "After I became adept to this diet/lifestyle, I felt a significant improvement in my life in areas", were: physical (health and well-being), financial, social, mental and others.

Participants could mark more than one response and could write personal comments if they wanted to describe why they ticked off such items.

Graph 10 – Distribution of participants according to the scope of feeling of significant improvement after adherence to the diet/lifestyle. São Paulo, 2021.



Source: prepared by the authors

The graph shows that the most marked item was the physical benefits (health and well-being), marked by 95.2% of the participants, followed by mental (85.7% of the participants), and then financial (38.1% of the sample).

A study by Kaplan (2020) established that vegans and vegetarians often attributed health benefits as a major contributor to deciding to adhere to the diet. In it, 76% of the participants chose the diet for the general well-being of the body or prevention of diseases.

Half also said they improved energy and immunity. In addition, they stated that the choice of diet made them feel better in control over their lives and emotional health, compared to when they were omnivores.

The comments of the present study in relation to the improvement of the health of the participants were: "I feel that I have more disposition and sustenance in the diet [...]"; "I lost weight, I don't have repeat tonsillitis as I always did when I was omnivorous[...]"; "Well-being, because I had to regulate my diet better and consequently my routine, so I'm more disciplined"; "[...] My gut improved a lot, improved the maintenance of my weight tb. I'm consuming healthier foods."; " Health has improved infinitely, I have no allergies, pathologies linked to food, nutritional deficiencies.

My body became lighter[...]"; " [...] My blood tests improved significantly after I stopped consuming animal products, consequently I feel more willing."

Next, the mental issue was the most chosen as a beneficial consequence of the diet. Reinforcing this, the following statements were mentioned: "mental, I thought it was my obligation because I have been rescuing stray animals since I was a teenager, it would make no sense to keep animals on the plate"; "[...] it got lighter, as did my conscience!"; " [...] I also continue to be more consistent with my ideals and happy to be part of such a beautiful cause!"; " [...] emotional and spiritual well-being." From what was addressed, the improvement in mental awareness and feeling of "light consciousness" is evident, which demonstrates agreement between ideals, values and beliefs, and the alignment of these with the actions of the individual.

This makes the mental aspects a valuable motivator for diet adherence. Still, the knowledge and feeling of making a difference through their actions, whether in relation to the environment, production systems, animal suffering, and/or their health, results in a good psychological and mental state, prolonging the continuity of these actions, especially in veganism, which has as its ideological bases ethical and sustainable consumption.

Regarding the financial part, some reported "[...] And I can invest in more expensive foods, such as nuts, grains... After all, it ends up being economical to buy vegan vegetables, vegetables and cosmetics"; "Financial because the meat is very expensive and this would generate an extra expense with food." It is noted here that there is a break from concepts that vegan food is necessarily expensive.

According to the reports of study participants, meat has a higher economic value, making food cheaper when it is removed from shopping carts, replacing such expenditure with foods such as nuts and grains, as well as vegetables and legumes. The issue of high pricing refers to specifically and industrially vegan products, such as substitutes for animal products such as meat and dairy.

In addition, As mentioned earlier, although the vegan and vegetarian market is composed of mostly less accessible products, there are media channels that intend to show a veganism accessible and possible to all classes.

5 CONCLUSIONS

The present study allowed a deepening and evaluation of the vegan/vegetarian diet movement in Brazil and in the world, its origins, its dilemmas, and its various interpretations.

As demonstrated in the results and discussion, the motives, origins, discussions and opinions of each individual vary greatly, however, reasons such as the health and welfare and appreciation of animals seem to be all too common among those who make the decision to become vegan or vegetarian.

The fact is that they all converge to the same guiding axis, by the implicit definition and perhaps, the main guiding principle of the vegan movement: respect for animals (SVB, 2017).

There were limitations due to the small number of the sample, and its delimitation, restricted to residents of the city of São Paulo.

Despite this, it was possible to collect, in addition to the assertive answers of the questionnaire online, personal opinions and descriptive reports, allowing the closer and more detailed observation of the opinion of each interviewee on the various themes surrounding veganism.

Through this study it was possible to prove that the movement is not something fleeting or frivolous, or even, dare we say, characterized in the food culture of society as mere 'fashion'.

This is due to the fact that veganism is strongly based on ethical issues, based on and based on animalistic ethics and morality, as well as sustainability.

There is, then, a complex philosophy regarding the planet that is propelling adherents. Thus, there is a high probability of greater quantity and depth in studies on the movement of vegan and vegetarian diets.

The present study can then contribute to the expansion, even if in a small way, the understanding of the main motivations and issues related to the vegan movement, in addition to the concept of the movement, its relationship with the environmental impact, the challenges of the market, its acceptance by public agencies as a possible diet and the intrinsic reasons for the adherence and permanence of vegetarian diets and variations.

Finally, it is necessary to deepen veganism as a social movement, its acceptance and associated nutritional factors. It is believed that much of what is good and accepted today was a fruit of ideals and innovative thoughts carried with persistence, one day at a time, and perhaps, a touch of idealism.

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