



# The cultural creation of affect amongst vegan consumers:

An ethnographic analysis of online  
consumption communities

2016-05-24

**Master's thesis 30 credits**

Author: Jery Fuller  
Supervisor: Christian Fuentes

## **Abstract**

This thesis addresses a critical research gap in understanding vegan consumer culture and problematizes dominant theory on consumer culture by establishing the cultural importance of affect towards consumption. These goals are researched in tandem by exploring affective expressions and creations of affective orientations amongst vegans in online consumption communities. An ethnographic study was undertaken using a methodological approach influenced by netnography, focused ethnography, and autoethnography. Affective interactions as data were triangulated between three vegan social media communities based in Sweden, South Korea, and the United States. The empirical research and analysis built upon a conceptual framework synthesizing theory on social affect, collective feelings, affective orientations, and digital prosumption. Theory was generated on types of affective expression amongst vegan consumers and the cultural formation of affective orientations towards consumption. Cultural context and a model of affective value creation were used in understanding how these affective orientations are created. The theoretical contributions include forming an affective understanding of consumer culture, a model for understanding vegan consumer culture, and a linkage between affect theory, consumer culture, and service management.

### **Keywords**

Affect theory, consumer culture, vegan consumption, netnography, online consumption communities

## Acknowledgments

In developing this thesis, I was constantly reminded of the emotional and creative importance of community and social support. I would like to give sincere thanks to the following people and institutions in that spirit.

Thank you to the members of online vegan communities, including those that I chose as field sites for this thesis. Their passion, willfulness, diversity, and expressiveness inspired this thesis.

Thank you to my supervisor, Christian Fuentes, for the wonderful support, openness, and constructive critique throughout my process of writing this thesis. It would be quite a different thesis without his guidance.

Thank you to Su-Mi Dahlgaard Park and Korea University for respectively nominating and granting me a scholarship to study in Seoul, South Korea in the summer of 2015. My experience there allowed me to include a Korean community as a field site in this thesis and inspired my interest in studying vegan consumption across cultures.

Thank you to Campus Vänner in Helsingborg, who supported me with a scholarship to study vegan consumption in Sweden and Denmark in late 2015. The project they funded served as motivation and background knowledge for this thesis and informed my inclusion of a Swedish community as a field site.

Thank you to Lund University, Campus Helsingborg, and the residents of Sweden for welcoming me and their relative openness and respect to diversity in people and ideas.

Finally, thank you to my friends, classmates, and family for their ongoing support throughout the development of my thesis and beyond.

# Table of Contents

<b>Abstract</b> .....	<b>ii</b>
<b>Acknowledgments</b> .....	<b>iii</b>
<b>List of Tables</b> .....	<b>vi</b>
<b>List of Figures</b> .....	<b>vi</b>
<b>1. Introduction</b> .....	<b>1</b>
<b>1.1. Vegan consumers in social context</b> .....	<b>2</b>
1.1.1. Vegan consumption practices.....	2
1.1.2. Vegan identities .....	3
1.1.3. Veganism as a cultural movement.....	3
<b>1.2. Social and research relevance of vegan consumption</b> .....	<b>4</b>
1.2.1. Environmental benefits of vegan consumption.....	4
1.2.2. Health benefits of vegan consumption.....	5
1.2.3. Critical theory on the ethics of veganism.....	6
<b>1.3. Vegan consumer culture and the importance of affect</b> .....	<b>7</b>
1.3.1. Identifying a research gap on vegan consumer culture .....	7
1.3.2. Problematizing theory in consumer culture: The role of affect.....	8
1.3.3. Linking affect, consumer culture, and service management.....	9
<b>1.4. Addressing a research gap and a theoretical problem</b> .....	<b>9</b>
1.4.1. Research questions to address the identified gap and theoretical problem .....	10
1.4.2. Research design to address the research questions.....	11
1.4.3. Research contributions across disciplines .....	11
<b>2. Conceptual framework</b> .....	<b>12</b>
<b>2.1. Consumer culture amongst vegans</b> .....	<b>12</b>
2.1.1. The multiplicity of vegan cultural experiences .....	13
2.1.2. Vegans in marginalized social and cultural positions .....	14
2.1.3. Social and cultural influences on veganism .....	14
<b>2.2. Affect and its cultural role in consumption</b> .....	<b>15</b>
2.2.1. Recognizing affect as part of consumer culture .....	16
2.2.2. Collective feelings based on identities and backgrounds .....	16
2.2.3. Affective orientations that shape consumption .....	17
2.2.4. The creation of social affect when consumers come together .....	18
<b>2.3. Online communities of consumption and the creation of affect</b> .....	<b>19</b>
2.3.1. New perspectives on online consumption communities .....	20
2.3.2. Digital presumption as value co-creation in online communities .....	21
2.3.3. Negotiation and creation of affect in online consumption communities .....	22
<b>3. Methodological approach and methods</b> .....	<b>23</b>
<b>3.1. An ethnographic approach</b> .....	<b>24</b>
3.1.1. The choice of ethnographic approach.....	24
3.1.2. Three ethnographic influences .....	25
3.1.3. Comparison and combination of approaches.....	26
<b>3.2. Multi-method data collection of online groups</b> .....	<b>28</b>
3.2.1. Two methods of gathering online data.....	28
3.2.2. Autoethnographic data as a complementary method.....	29
3.2.3. A comparative approach of three online research sites .....	30
<b>3.3. Ethical considerations in collection and use of data</b> .....	<b>32</b>
3.3.1. Evaluating ethics and minimizing harm online .....	32
3.3.2. Ethical concern on uses and boundaries of data.....	33
<b>3.4. Quality criteria in the process of data analysis</b> .....	<b>34</b>

3.4.1.	Quality in capture and analysis of affect: Validity and credibility.....	34
3.4.2.	Quality in the analytical process: Trustworthiness and rigor .....	36
3.4.3.	Quality in application: Transferability and theoretical generalization.....	38
3.4.4.	Quality in openness of results: Confirmability and voice .....	38
3.4.5.	Quality in subjectivity of interpretation: Positionality and reflexivity .....	39
<b>4.</b>	<b>Results and analysis.....</b>	<b>40</b>
<b>4.1.</b>	<b>Negotiating affective orientations towards products and services .....</b>	<b>41</b>
4.1.1.	Positive affect towards shared vegan consumption opportunities.....	41
4.1.2.	Mixed affect towards vegan products: Seeking positive alternatives .....	45
4.1.3.	Creating social affect towards new objects .....	47
4.1.4.	Negotiating affect towards products in a context of distrust.....	50
<b>4.2.</b>	<b>Negotiating affective orientations with consumption infrastructure .....</b>	<b>53</b>
4.2.1.	Positive affect towards improvement in vegan infrastructure.....	53
4.2.2.	Negative affect and emotional support in lacking vegan infrastructure .....	56
4.2.3.	Mourning and affect transfer on closure of a place of vegan consumption.....	59
4.2.4.	Negotiating differences in affect towards places of vegan consumption.....	61
<b>4.3.</b>	<b>Negotiating affective orientations between vegans and others .....</b>	<b>63</b>
4.3.1.	Distinction in affective orientations between vegans and others .....	63
4.3.2.	Support from marginalization and attacks .....	66
4.3.3.	Positive affect towards the future of mainstream consumption .....	68
<b>4.4.</b>	<b>Negotiating affective orientations inward within vegan groups .....</b>	<b>71</b>
4.4.1.	Affective support and solidifying collective feelings within vegan groups.....	71
4.4.2.	Micro-shocking and broadening negative affect.....	73
4.4.3.	Incorporating affective demands due to cultural differences.....	75
<b>5.</b>	<b>Discussion and conclusion .....</b>	<b>77</b>
<b>5.1.</b>	<b>Summary of findings.....</b>	<b>78</b>
5.1.1.	Answers to research questions .....	78
5.1.2.	Theoretical contributions to consumer culture and vegan studies .....	80
5.1.3.	Evaluation of quality .....	81
<b>5.2.</b>	<b>Concluding thoughts .....</b>	<b>82</b>
5.2.1.	Critical reflection and limitations .....	82
5.2.2.	Future research and final thoughts .....	84
	<b>References.....</b>	<b>85</b>
	<b>Appendix 1.....</b>	<b>96</b>

## List of Tables

<b>Table 1.</b> Comparison of ethnographic approaches with chosen ethnographic approach. ....	26
<b>Table 2.</b> Public Facebook groups selected as primary research sites.....	31
<b>Table 3.</b> Posts and comments on Facebook groups retrieved using Netvizz and analyzed. ...	31
<b>Table 4.</b> Summary of analyzed categories of affect expressed in groups and their associated affective orientations created amongst members.....	79

## List of Figures

<b>Figure 1.</b> Estimated mean dietary GHG emissions by diet type in the UK. ....	5
<b>Figure 2.</b> Affective value creation cycle in online communities of consumption. ....	23
<b>Figure 3.</b> Analytical approach using triangulation of methods and sites, in dialogue with guiding methodological concepts. ....	37
<b>Figure 4.</b> Post in Southern Sweden Vegan group sharing and recommending a vegan sandwich. No comments were posted in reply, but the post received many approving likes. ....	42
<b>Figure 5.</b> Post and comments in Southern Sweden Vegan group sharing excitement and approval at a small town supermarket selling vegan cheese prominently. ....	42
<b>Figure 6.</b> Post and comments in Seattle Vegan group expressing positive affect towards a vegan nail polish brand, and additional comments creating related positive affect to other products by the same brand and other brands.....	44
<b>Figure 7.</b> Post and comments in Southern Sweden Vegan group expressing and sharing positive affect towards a grocery store for starting a program to reduce food waste. ....	45
<b>Figure 8.</b> Post and comments in Southern Sweden Vegan group sharing their favorite or recommended brands for plant-based food substitutes. These evaluations carry varying intensities and valences of social affect towards the product, either explicit or implicit.	46
<b>Figure 9.</b> Post and comments in Korea Vegan group seeking community information on a new product; reactions are disgust and hostility when revealed the product presumably contains dairy ingredients. ....	48
<b>Figure 10.</b> Post in Korea Vegan group sharing a photo of a meal and expressing excitement and ambivalence at the similarity between chicken and a vegan chicken substitute. There were no comments on this post but several likes.....	49
<b>Figure 11.</b> Post and comments in Seattle Vegan group negotiating complex affect towards different infant feeding options for vegan parents who can't breastfeed. There is mixed affect towards multiple objects and a rare example of positive affect towards non-vegan consumption. ....	50
<b>Figure 12.</b> Post and comments in Korea Vegan group expressing sadness, anger, and distrust at Korean restaurateurs for claiming products are vegan when they contain milk, as well as empathy and support amongst group members. ....	51
<b>Figure 13.</b> Post and comments in Korea Vegan group expressing excitement towards a discovery of vegan cleaning supplies by the poster and distrust and vetting by commenters. ....	52
<b>Figure 14.</b> Post in Southern Sweden Vegan group that praises cities for changing tradition by removing feathers from traditional Easter decorations. However, both the poster and commenter hope more cities change and indicate they are willing to contribute to change. ....	54

<b>Figure 15.</b> Post and comments in Korea Vegan group expressing intensely positive affect at the start of a project promoting vegan consumption in Korea including support from the Korean government. This post received an unusually large number of likes and positive reactions for the group. ....	55
<b>Figure 16.</b> Post and comments in Korea Vegan group expressing anger, frustration, and bewilderment at the use of non-vegan ingredients in foods that are expected to be vegan. ....	57
<b>Figure 17.</b> Post and comments in Korea Vegan group expressing sadness, frustration, shock, anger, and community support at the difficulties with vegan consumption in Korea. ....	59
<b>Figure 18.</b> Post and comments in Korea Vegan group expressing shock, sadness, and mourning for the temporary closure of one of the few vegan restaurants in the city of Busan. ....	60
<b>Figure 19.</b> Post and comments in Seattle Vegan group reminiscing about Squid & Ink, a vegan restaurant that closed six years earlier. The mourning and reminiscence spreads to emphasize its importance in the vegan community and includes the original poster, who just learned of its existence. ....	61
<b>Figure 20.</b> Post and comments in Korea Vegan group expressing alternatively negative, mixed, and positive affect towards Starbucks in Korea due to possible non-vegan soy milk. ....	62
<b>Figure 21.</b> Post and comments in Korea Vegan group expressing disgust at receiving a vegan product with fish blood on it, using a #koreaproblems hashtag indicating it is a problem with the dominant culture in Korea. ....	63
<b>Figure 22.</b> Post and comments in Korea Vegan group negotiating the differences between vegans and non-vegans and the ethics and effectiveness of convincing other to become vegan. ....	65
<b>Figure 23.</b> Post in Southern Sweden Vegan group that praises a restaurant for offering vegan dishes and encourages support to counteract “haters” attacking the restaurant for doing so. ....	67
<b>Figure 24.</b> Post in Seattle Vegan group with a humorous display of distinction between the poster and the dominant views of their workplace. Hostile expressions were added in the comments. ....	68
<b>Figure 25.</b> Post and comments in Southern Sweden group. The initial poster expresses happiness and hope that her family is changing towards a positive affect towards veganism and the second commenter expresses that positive change for veganism is spreading. ....	69
<b>Figure 26.</b> Post and comments in Korea Vegan group expressing hope and appreciation towards activism and change in acceptance and ease of vegan consumption. ....	70
<b>Figure 27.</b> Post and comments in Korea Vegan group expressing support and bonding amongst each other despite different identities towards vegan consumption and reasons. ....	72
<b>Figure 28.</b> Post and comments in Seattle Vegan group expressing broadening negative affect to objects of consumption which are not traditionally considered core to veganism, such as palm oil, coconuts, genetically modified food, and excessive processing and packaging. ....	74
<b>Figure 29.</b> Post and comments in Seattle Vegan group discussing the pros and cons of moving to a Seattle neighborhood, but becomes a discussion of the acceptability of the word “ghetto”. ....	77

# 1. Introduction

Vegan consumption has attracted attention in recent years in a wide variety of research fields, including sociology, anthropology, psychology, marketing, environmental science, nutrition science, food studies, critical animal studies, and the nascent multidisciplinary field of “vegan studies” (Leitzmann, 2014; Ruby, 2012; Wright, 2015). Veganism is a form of alternative ethical consumption whose adherents avoid consumption of animal products — particularly of animal food products, although vegans can also avoid the use and consumption of other products derived from the use of animals, such as clothing and cosmetics. Veganism is often considered a subset of vegetarianism, which is the avoidance of meat consumption but not necessarily the consumption of other animal products, such as milk, eggs, and honey.

Alternative forms of consumption based on alternative orientations towards consumer products and institutions, like veganism, are increasing in popularity and highlight problems associated with mainstream consumptive practices and showcase possible ways to consume differently (Paddock, 2015; Soper, 2009). These alternative forms of consumption are cultural (Johnston et al., 2011) and affective (Soper, 2007) in nature and, as they become a larger part of the consumer landscape, understanding the cultural forces around them is increasingly relevant to researchers, marketers, and managers (Arnould & Thompson, 2015). A cultural, affective understanding of vegan consumers also informs us on how they approach socially relevant issues of mass consumption, including its impacts towards animals, the environment, and public health (Adams, 2010; Leitzmann, 2014).

The purpose of this thesis is to contribute to understanding of consumer culture and affect, particularly by increasing understanding of the creation of affect in vegan communities. This thesis will address a research gap called for by researchers across disciplines in theorizing vegan consumer culture, as well as problematize current theory about consumer culture by establishing the importance of cultural creations of affect in consumer orientations towards objects of consumption. Vegan consumers are a theoretically useful group of consumers as their alternative orientations towards consumption are clearly based in affect; they feel negatively towards objects that mainstream consumers feel positively towards, and vice versa (Twine, 2014). This thesis is positioned in the field of consumption studies and takes a critical, interdisciplinary approach. The empirical research will include the use of several theories related to veganism, consumer culture, and affect, and use a particular focused, online ethnographic approach to collect data and guide analysis of how vegan consumers culturally create affect amongst each other. This contribution to research is intended to critically inform future research on consumer culture, service management, and consumption practices.

In order to position this research in this section, I will first discuss background on who vegans are and how vegans are socially relevant. Then, I will present existing research on consumer

culture as it relates to vegans and discuss a research gap and problematize the current thinking about consumer culture by understanding vegans as affective consumers. I will conclude the introduction by presenting the research problems, intended contributions, and approach to the rest of the thesis.

## **1.1. Vegan consumers in social context**

The idea to practice an alternative form of consumption to lessen the impact of consumption on animals is not new. Although the word “vegan” was first coined in England in 1944 (Wright, 2015), the practice of avoiding the consumption of animal products has existed to varying degrees in different parts of the world throughout recorded history (Leitzmann, 2014). However, the social context that facilitates and motivates vegan consumption is distinctive today. Vegans have particular consumption practices, identities that shape how they consume, and are part of a growing cultural movement.

### **1.1.1. Vegan consumption practices**

Vegan consumption can be considered as a form of alternative (Paddock, 2015), ethical (Johnston et al., 2011), or political (Bossy, 2014) consumption. It can also be considered a consumer boycott of animal products (Adams, 2010). Regardless of the particular conceptualization, vegans recognize problems with standard forms of mass consumption and attempt to practice a form of consuming differently that avoids or mitigates these problems (Soper, 2009).

Vegans avoid the consumption of animal products, but the particular consumption practices that constitute veganism varies between vegans and between situations. Vegans can be more or less strict in their practice, with some focusing on eliminating meat, dairy, and eggs from their food, while others attempt to avoid any forms of consumption that involves the use of animals, including the use of other animal products such as some clothing and cosmetics, products tested on animals, or products that use animals during production (Greenebaum, 2012). This latter view of vegan practice is exemplified in The Vegan Society’s current definition of veganism: “Veganism is a way of living which seeks to exclude, as far as is possible and practicable, all forms of exploitation of, and cruelty to, animals for food, clothing or any other purpose” (The Vegan Society, n.d.).

Even this strict view of veganism understands that vegan practices are not a prescribed set of rules, but are varied and fluid depending upon realistic circumstances. Vegans often have different standards towards consumption practice between situations, particularly towards “gray areas” in which the implications of their consumption are not clear, such as with honey (Greenebaum, 2012). Vegans with different economic or cultural resources can also practice

veganism differently, as marginalized consumers can have limited capability to practice ethical forms of consumption, which can be expensive or otherwise limited in access (Johnston et al., 2011). However, consumers with limited resources can and do practice veganism in various different, and often creative, ways (Cronin et al., 2014; Harper, 2010).

### 1.1.2. Vegan identities

In addition to their circumstances and position in society, a vegan's consumption practice is also influenced by the way in which veganism constitutes their own identity. Few vegans in most societies are raised vegan, and instead they transition to veganism sometime in their teenage or adult life (Ruby, 2012). The motivations for becoming vegan and the social context in which they do so affect how vegan identities are constituted. A dichotomy between self-identified "health vegans" who become vegan primarily for personal health reasons and "ethical vegans" who become vegan primarily for ethical concerns has been recognized, and these two groups, on average, consume different types of foods, have different standards for acceptable consumption, and maintain their vegan identities for different lengths of time (Hoffman et al., 2013; Radnitz et al., 2015). However, these two identities are not completely distinct, and motivations are typically multiple and include social reasons beyond health and ethical concerns (Fox & Ward, 2008b).

Social interactions between self-identified vegans also affects vegan practice. Rather than adopting veganism in individualistic isolation, vegans typically learn about becoming vegan from other vegans, and other vegans provide social support in maintaining a vegan identity (Cherry, 2015). Other vegans can influence the trajectory in which their vegan practice takes, including broadening their attitudes towards consumption to include motivations beyond their initial concerns (Fox & Ward, 2008a). Vegans also learn and negotiate appropriate forms and standards of consumption from each other (Greenebaum, 2012). The social relations between vegans may play the most important role in shaping and maintaining vegan identities (Cherry, 2015), and are an under-researched area.

### 1.1.3. Veganism as a cultural movement

Vegan consumption is becoming more prevalent. There has been a "substantial increase observed during the past few years" in the number of people adopting vegan diets in many areas of the world, including in the Americas, Europe, and different regions of Asia (Radnitz et al., 2015). There have been surveys conducted in several countries to determine the prevalence of veganism, although they are often conducted by industry or activist groups that may be motivated to exaggerate results (Best, 2012). A limited number of surveys with published details on methods indicate vegans make up between 0.5% and 2% of the population in the USA (Asher et al., 2014; Newport, 2012; Stabler, 2015), 0.9% of the UK (Public Health England and Food Standards Agency, 2014), and 1.5% of Germany (YouGov, 2014). In all surveys with

published results on gender demographics, women are more likely to be vegan or vegetarian than men (Leitzmann, 2014).

The growth in veganism can be at least partially attributed to social support and influence between vegans and others who share similar concerns about ethics, health, or the environment (Cherry, 2006). Vegans can be considered to be a consumer-based cultural movement in response to global concerns about the impacts of animal use for production, and is growing as these concerns grow (Wrenn, 2011). The most prominent socially relevant concerns addressed by vegans are summarized in the next section.

## **1.2. Social and research relevance of vegan consumption**

The personal and social concerns that many vegans cite for motivating their alternative form of consumption are backed by a growing body of research that has started to move into the research mainstream in recent years. Researchers from many disciplines in the natural sciences have begun to form solid evidence that vegan consumption has significant personal, social, and environmental benefits over standard consumption that includes animal products. In addition, theorists in the humanities and critical social science have formed ethical justifications for transitioning towards vegan consumption.

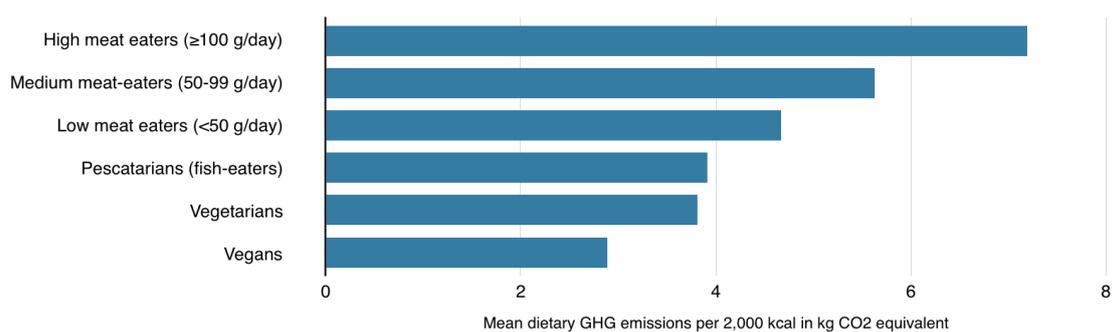
Because of this cross-disciplinary evidence that points to the benefits of vegan consumption, social research into vegetarianism and veganism has grown into “a blossoming field of study” in recent years (Ruby, 2012). Tilman & Clark (2014) conclude their study of the global benefits of transitioning away from the consumption of animal products: “The evaluation and implementation of dietary solutions to the tightly linked diet–environment–health trilemma is a global challenge, and opportunity, of great environmental and public health importance”. The study of vegan consumption is highly relevant in both a research context and a global social context. Three areas of research will be briefly summarized here as motivations for this thesis: environmental benefits of vegan consumption, public health benefits of vegan consumption, and critical theory on the ethics of veganism.

### **1.2.1. Environmental benefits of vegan consumption**

Environmental concerns about widespread animal agriculture for the production of meat, dairy, eggs, and other animal products have been long-standing, but have gained rapidly growing attention in the past decade due to evidence on its role in global climate change. Interest in this research was partially spurred by the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization’s 2006 report, *Livestock’s Long Shadow*, which estimated that animal agriculture is responsible for 18% of anthropogenic climate change – more than all forms of transportation combined – as well as many other severe deleterious environmental impacts (UN FAO, 2006).

Although there is debate on how best to measure animal agriculture’s role in climate change, the 18% figure has been roughly agreed upon in subsequent research (Herrero et al., 2011; Persson et al., 2015). A 2010 report by the United Nations Environment Programme concluded, “A substantial reduction of impacts would only be possible with a substantial worldwide diet change, away from animal products” (UNEP, 2010, p. 82). These reductions appear to be a necessary component of mitigating climate change to meet the UN-endorsed target of a maximum 2 °C average increase of global temperature (Hedenu et al., 2014).

In response to this research on the environmental damage caused by the use of animals in production, several researchers have modelled and compared the benefits of reducing animal product consumption, including vegan consumption. Across studies, researchers find the same trend: the greater the move to vegan consumption, the smaller the environmental impacts including contribution to climate change (Berners-Lee et al., 2012; Bryngelsson et al., 2016; Hedenu et al., 2014; Marlow et al., 2009; Scarborough et al., 2014; Tilman & Clark, 2014; Westhoek et al., 2014). Figure 1 depicts the scale of reduction of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions that contribute to climate change for different steps towards a vegan diet for greenhouse gases, based on a study in the UK.



**Figure 1.** Estimated mean dietary GHG emissions by diet type in the UK. Adapted from “Dietary greenhouse gas emissions of meat-eaters, fish-eaters, vegetarians and vegans in the UK” by P. Scarborough, P. N. Appleby, A. Mizdrak, A. D. M. Briggs, R. C. Travis, K. E. Bradbury, and T. J. Key, 2014, *Climactic Change*, 125, p. 185

### 1.2.2. Health benefits of vegan consumption

Like the recent increased interest in the environmental benefits of veganism, attention has increased in recent years towards health benefits of vegan consumption, particularly in the research fields of nutrition and public health. In the past, nutrition scientists considered vegan diets to be risky or unhealthful, but over the past two decades a growing consensus is forming that vegan diets can not only be healthful, but are more likely to be optimal for health than diets that include meat (Craig, 2009; Leitzmann, 2014). Vegan diets appear to reduce risks of some chronic illnesses associated with affluent societies, such as heart disease and diabetes (Craig & Mangels, 2009; Greger, 2015; Li, 2014), and improve some signifiers of emotional and mental health (Beezhold et al., 2010; Beezhold et al., 2015). A downside of vegan diets is

that they are typically lower in at least one or two essential nutrients, but they are less deficient than standard diets in several others (Craig, 2009; Li, 2014). From a public health perspective, researchers associate massive benefits to public health and quality of life through a widespread adoption of vegan diets (Springmann et al., 2016; Tillman & Clark, 2014).

I separated the environmental and health benefits of vegan consumption into distinct sections here, but they are inextricably linked. Environmental effects of meat production, such as pollution and climate change, indirectly cause severe health problems (West et al., 2013). Animal production systems also have direct and indirect health effects, such as pesticide exposure and spread of zoonotic disease (Westhoek et al., 2014). New scientific fields of nutrition ecology and “new nutrition science” have emerged to consider environmentally sustainability and human health in tandem, and point to combined benefits through adoption of vegan diets (Leitzmann, 2014).

### 1.2.3. Critical theory on the ethics of veganism

Ethical considerations that motivate consumers to choose veganism can relate to the environmental and health impacts of animal use for production, but often focus on animal rights and the treatment and deaths of animals (Ruby, 2012). Over 60 billion animals are slaughtered for human consumption each year, and this figure is rapidly growing, typically through intensification of production with lowering standards of animal treatment (Staples & Klein, 2016). Vegans’ particular ethical stances towards these practices vary, and focus on areas such as concern for animal welfare, respect for the freedom of animals, associations with animal products and colonization or patriarchy, and spiritual beliefs (Fox & Ward, 2008b; Harper, 2010). However, these ethical stances have in common the protest or boycott of animal product consumption for socially conscious reasons (Adams, 2010; Cherry, 2015).

Along with individual vegan beliefs, theorists in the fields of critical animal studies, bioethics, and feminist studies have developed critical theory that supports the adoption of vegan consumption. Critical animal scholars use the term “speciesism” to describe the disparate treatment of animal species – for example, societies value the lives of chickens, cats, and humans quite differently (Wrenn, 2013). Part of the proposed process of ending speciesism is the adoption of vegan consumption. Likewise, bioethicists have noted the wide-ranging social problems with animal consumption, and have promoted a “vegan project” to transition society towards vegan consumption (Deckers, 2013). Ecofeminist scholars note the linkages between systems of oppression towards marginalized peoples, such as women and colonized groups, and the oppression towards animals through their use for production (Wright, 2015). A key idea in this field is that meat and other animal products obscure the “absent referent” of the animals that are killed or exploited for their production, and that part of the process of becoming vegan can include the recognition of the presence of animals in these products (Adams, 2010). All of

these theories take different approaches to understanding the ethical problems with animal production, and the reasons that vegan consumption is at least a partial solution.

### **1.3. Vegan consumer culture and the importance of affect**

Researchers who study the above problems associated with the use of animals for production often call for more social research into the mainstreaming of vegan consumption at the end of their articles. These calls for more research tend to suggest research in two directions. Some researchers call for research on how to best change policy to promote or enable lifestyle changes in the direction of veganism (Bryngelsson et al., 2016; Marlow et al., 2009; Vranken et al., 2014). Researchers have looked into various policy interventions, such as instituting meat and dairy taxes (Säll & Gren, 2015). However, policy changes are difficult to enact in democracies without widespread popular support (Beverland, 2014). Policy changes are inextricably linked to society and culture and are not solutions that can be addressed in isolation.

#### **1.3.1. Identifying a research gap on vegan consumer culture**

Calls for more research on mainstreaming veganism also suggest study in socio-cultural areas that can serve as a foundation for these policy changes and other social changes, and the first goal of this thesis is to address this research gap. Some of the proposed research areas to mainstream veganism include educating and enabling consumers to make individual choices informed by the full impacts of products of animal origin (Berners-Lee et al., 2012; Craig & Mangels, 2009), increasing the social acceptance of vegan foods (Tilman & Clark, 2014), and culturally normalizing veganism overall (Greger, 2015; Scarborough et al., 2014; Westhoek et al., 2014). Researchers have begun to explore these areas, noting that consumers are often unaware of benefits of veganism (Beverland, 2014) and are hesitant to form opinions about these benefits due to the complexities surrounding them (Pohjolainen et al., 2016). However, even when consumers are aware of social and environmental impacts of food production and are motivated to make ethical food consumption choices, they often do not follow through with actually making those consumption choices (Johnston, 2008). This inconsistency between a consumer's willingness to make value-based consumption choices and their actual consumption behavior is a noted phenomenon, and has been referred to as the "value-action gap" (Kollmuss & Agyeman, 2002) or "citizen/consumer paradox" (Aerts, 2013).

Other socio-cultural factors include cultural norms and influences related to identity, which can be considered as part of consumer culture (Arnould & Thompson, 2015; Beverland, 2014). Consumer culture is increasingly understood as influencing consumption practices. There is cultural research on vegan consumption, including the cultural influences of veganism, including on symbolic meanings of vegan consumption (Staples & Klein, 2016), vegan identities (Fox & Ward, 2008b), vegan cultural movements (Cherry, 2006), the impact of gender on the experience of veganism (Brady & Ventresca, 2014; Dean, 2014), negotiating social relationships

(Hirschler, 2011), and social influences (Cherry, 2015; Greenebaum, 2012). However, vegans appear to have a stance towards consumption (Wright, 2015) that is emotional in nature, that has not yet been researched in depth.

### 1.3.2. Problematizing theory in consumer culture: The role of affect

In order to change forms of food consumption, Carolan (2016) concludes that it is necessary for people to develop lasting feelings about new ways of relating to food, rather than just changing ways of thinking. Vegans often describe strong affective experiences that first influence them to become vegan and motivate their continued vegan identities, including “epiphanies” (Andreatta, 2015), “catalytic experiences” (Hirschler, 2011; McDonald, 2000), or “moral shocks” (Jacobsson & Hansson, 2014). When studying experiences in becoming vegan, interviewees described the feeling that it “felt right” or “felt inevitable” (McDonald, 2000). Vegans have different feelings towards various aspects of consumption, including particular products, the processes of production, the consequences of production, and other groups of consumers. Vegans may be defined by some of these differences, particularly their feelings towards animal products. The way that vegans can feel differently than others about the way they consume has been described as a difference in orientation (Wright, 2015). This difference in orientation is affective in nature. Thus, in order to understand vegan consumer cultures, it is crucial to understand the role of affect in these cultures.

Affect is a theoretical concept that has a variety of definitions in research across different fields, but for the use of this thesis can be defined as the experience of valenced states, including moods, emotions, and pre- or extra-conscious attitudes (Gross, 2010) in relation to objects or people (Ahmed, 2014; Richard & Rudnyckyj, 2009). Affect can be alternatively described as the particular push or pull felt towards an object, such as a person, thing, experience, or idea (Ahmed, 2010). Affect is defined by a few characteristics: it has positive or negative valence, meaning that people experience emotional states as good or bad (Gross, 2010), has greater or lesser intensity, and includes particular value to the person experiencing it (Paasonen et al., 2015). Simply put, affect relates to how people feel about objects, rather than how people think about them or behave towards them. This is a broad view of affect, and some researchers have used a more piecemeal definition looking at particular embodied, emotional, or attitudinal aspects of affect. In addition, this thesis will make use of understandings of affective orientations, which refer to the particular forms of affect people feel towards different objects. For example, vegans may have a negative affective orientation towards animal products, but experience particular instances of affect when exposed to different stimuli evoking animal products, such as an interpersonal interaction, a smell, or a taste. The term “affective expressions” will be used in this thesis as well, to refer to communicative activities that have affective valence, value, and intensity. Affective expressions are a typical component of communication, and include such examples as laughter at a joke, anger at an injustice, emotional support of a friend, or happiness at an achievement.

The second goal of this thesis is to problematize (Sandberg & Alvesson, 2011) dominant theory in consumer culture by asserting the importance of affect in consumer culture. Vegan consumers are an exemplary group of consumers to empirically examine the role of affect in consumer culture, due to the clear affective and cultural nature of vegan consumption. Although affect plays an important role in vegan consumption, there is no prior research on how these affective orientations are culturally created. Dominant theory on consumer culture typically avoids theorization of affect, as affect has traditionally been confined to psychological, positivist research and theory on consumption (Belk, 2015; Mano 2004).

### 1.3.3. Linking affect, consumer culture, and service management

In order to explore the role and importance of affect in vegan consumer culture, this thesis will examine affective interactions amongst vegans and the affective orientations that are created through these affective interactions. It addresses the call of interdisciplinary research on veganism and this specific research gap to explain how consumers' affective orientations are shaped by cultural processes. It also problematizing consumer culture theory's understanding of consumer culture as the creation of meaning that lacks explicit exploration of affect (Gopaldas & Fischer, 2012). The understanding of cultural affect amongst consumers appears to be essential in order to understand their relations to consumption (Miller, 2014). As vegans are a group of consumers characterized by their affective orientations, they are useful subjects of study in order to understand the link between affect and consumer culture.

The exploration of consumer culture can be a useful contribution to practice and theory in practicable service management. Although consumer culture theory is a dominant group of research strands in the cultural exploration of consumption (Arnould & Thompson, 2015), its focus on understandings of the cultural creation of meanings amongst consumers has been noted as being difficult to use in practice even when using a customer-dominant logic that considers the culture of customers as crucial to management practice (Heinonen et al., 2010). However, the understanding of affective orientations and experiences has a large body of research in its applicability to management (Belk, 2015; Mano, 2004). Affect is culturally created amongst people and groups, and affects consumption behavior (Gopaldas & Fischer, 2012). In addition, using a customer-dominant logic in service management can guide management practice, specifically through understanding the specific contexts and experiences of consumers, including their affect and affective orientations (Heinonen et al., 2010). In these ways, this thesis links the understanding of affect, consumer culture, and service management.

## 1.4. Addressing a research gap and a theoretical problem

The purpose of this research is to address the research gap in vegan consumer culture by problematizing theory on consumer culture by including affective processes. The research gap

that has been identified by researchers across disciplines – environmental scientists, public health researchers, ethicists, and others – has a critical purpose in its goal to enable the mainstreaming of veganism by adding to cultural understanding of vegans as consumers. This is a critical, cultural approach to understanding vegan consumption. This approach is critical in that it has an explicit, socially relevant purpose in its intended contribution to the mainstreaming of veganism, rather than attempting an objective approach in describing consumption without weighing social relevance (Soper, 2009). The approach is cultural in its understanding of consumption in cultural contexts, as opposed to an approach that is strictly managerial or psychological. Researchers, managers, and policymakers have increasingly recognized the role of consumer culture research in informing policy and management practices, particularly in recent years (Arnould & Thompson, 2005; Levy, 2015). This research answers the call of researchers in environmental sciences, health sciences, and the humanities to expand socio-cultural knowledge of veganism and the reduction of animal product consumption in general, and expands theory on consumer culture to a potentially generative area of affective consumer culture.

#### 1.4.1. Research questions to address the identified gap and theoretical problem

Two research questions are presented in order to address the identified research gap and theoretical problem. Although research has established that consumption practices are shaped by affective orientations of consumers (Carolan, 2016; Brinks, 2016), there is little research in how these orientations are culturally created. This understanding is important to understand the role of affect in the creation of specific consumer cultures. Vegan consumers are under study in order to follow the critical purpose of this thesis and as an under-researched and socially relevant form of consumption that has established affective influences. By addressing this research gap, this thesis will address a problem in dominant theory in consumer culture by establishing affect as a vital component in theory about consumer culture.

The first research question explores the specific nature of expressions of affect between vegans in order to understand the cultural and communicative activities involved in creating affective orientations towards vegan consumption. The second research question explores how these orientations are created by these affective expressions in order to understand how vegan consumers' stances towards vegan consumption is shaped by affect. By answering these questions, the resulting generated theory will establish understanding of ways in which affect is culturally created amongst vegan consumers, and its importance in consumer culture.

RQ1: How do vegans express affect about vegan consumption amongst each other?

RQ2: How do these affective expressions shape vegans' affective orientations towards consumption?

Both research questions will be answered through the research design in this thesis, including the collection and analysis of empirical data. By building upon the conceptual framework and analysis, the thesis will conclude by generating theory of affective consumer culture to address the theoretical problem and use this theory to address the research gap in vegan consumer culture.

#### 1.4.2. Research design to address the research questions

In order to answer these research questions, the research design includes an empirical study of vegans in online communities, building on a conceptual framework of theories on consumer culture amongst vegans, cultural affect theory, and online consumption communities. The research design uses an ethnographic approach that draws from netnography and other influences to investigate online vegan cultures and affective expressions within them. The analysis will be highly reflexive, using my own experiences as a vegan in the field sites during analysis. Due to the global nature of veganism and in order to increase validity and transferability across contexts, data is gathered from three sites in the USA, Sweden, and South Korea, where I have experience living and using the online communities as a vegan. The affective expressions and interactions in these groups will be the objects of study to address the research questions.

The use of a specific type of consumption or group of consumers to build theory of consumer culture has a very productive history, and the intention of this thesis is to follow in that tradition by examining vegan consumers in online communities to build theory on the affective nature of consumer culture. Examples of research focusing empirical work on a specific context of consumption to build impactful theory include the empirical examinations of Nordic walking to theorize value creation between producers and consumers (Shrove & Pantzar, 2005), Whole Foods shoppers to theorize tensions between consumers and retailers in ethical shopping (Johnston, 2008), and Burning Man participants to theorize consumer resistance in a capitalist context (Kozinets, 2002a). There are many other examples that follow this tradition; empirical research on vegans in this thesis is not an end to itself, but rather is used to develop theory, including but not limited to theory informing an understanding of vegan consumers. As Arnould & Thompson (2005) write, “consumer culture theorists do not study consumption contexts; they study in consumption contexts to generate new constructs and theoretical insights and to extend existing theoretical formulations”.

#### 1.4.3. Research contributions across disciplines

This thesis is positioned to contribute to research literature in two fields and to serve as a partial bridge between the two. The first area of contribution is in consumption studies, and particularly in developing theory about consumer culture. In addition to theoretically addressing a gap in understanding vegan consumer culture, this thesis problematizes (Sandberg

& Alvesson, 2011) theory in consumer culture by addressing its lack of consideration of affect in consumer culture thus far. Research on consumer culture has begun to be widely used by marketers and managers, but also informs policymakers, activists, and individual consumers (Arnould & Thompson, 2015). Understanding of consumer culture can be practicable and impactful in service management, particularly when using a customer-dominant logic of service management and when focus is on cultural processes rather than the creation of meanings; affect has been identified as an important process of customer-dominant logic (Heinonen et al., 2010) and this thesis adds to theory about the cultural nature of affective consumption.

The second area of contribution is in the interdisciplinary area of vegan studies, which is a proposed interdisciplinary topical field in the study of veganism, drawing from research in cultural studies, food studies, critical animal studies, feminist studies, and social sciences (Wright, 2015). Although vegan studies as a recently defined field does not currently include the study of consumer culture, this research draws from its critical approach and interdisciplinary framework, while using the tools of consumption studies. This thesis extends vegan studies by including theoretical knowledge of vegan consumer culture and furthers its goal of expanding knowledge of veganism. The intention in contributing to this field is to answer the socially relevant call of natural science, social science, and humanities researchers in increasing a cultural understanding of vegan consumers.

This research uses a constant comparative approach between the conceptual framework presented in the next section, the methodological approach after that, and the analysis following that. The thesis concludes by summarizing the answers to the research questions and the research contributions.

## **2. Conceptual framework**

Several theoretical concepts are presented here in order to form a basis from which to empirically investigate the research questions. Recent research in consumer culture theory, affect theory, and online consumption communities, as well as research across disciplines about vegan consumers, are particularly relevant. This section acts as a conceptual framework (Imenda, 2014) synthesizing a set of related, relevant theories and ends with a conceptual model to guide the analysis of data in this thesis. It can be considered the epistemological paradigm with which the research questions are addressed.

### **2.1. Consumer culture amongst vegans**

Research on consumer culture is a starting point for this conceptual framework in combining threads of research and acts as a foundation in which to develop theoretical contributions. Consumer culture is a set of research and separate theories that can be broadly categorized

under the idea that consumption has both individual and cultural meanings and influences. “Consumer culture theory” is a little more than a decade old as a term, but the tradition of thinking about cultural aspects of consumption has a long history across many disciplines, and this interdisciplinary research has been brought under the theory’s umbrella (Arnould & Thompson, 2005; Levy, 2015). Consumer culture researchers have developed several thematic ideas that can form a basis to understanding consumer culture amongst vegans. Also theory on consumer culture can apply across contexts, this section frames vegan consumer culture as the components of broader theory on consumer culture that are directly applicable and relevant in guiding the empirical work and analysis. Although research on vegans explicitly under the umbrella of consumer culture theory is lacking, there is relevant research on experiences and social relations of vegans that can be understood through the lens of these themes from consumer culture.

### 2.1.1. The multiplicity of vegan cultural experiences

Vegans can be understood as belonging to a consumption-based identity group that is shaped by culture. However, particular vegan identities can vary – in research, there is a common dichotomy between “health vegans” who become vegan for personal well-being and “ethical vegans” who become vegans for animal rights, environment beliefs, or other values, although vegan identities are typically more complex and individual (Greenebaum, 2012). Vegan identities are influenced by cultural backgrounds, personal histories, and position in society. In order to understand vegan identities, identity must be understood in an intersectional way by taking into account the multiple identities each individual holds and contextual cultural influences (Wright, 2015). Some of these multiple identities, such as gender, ethnicity, nationality, religion, race, and class, may be less or more relevant for each person at different times in influencing how they practice and experience veganism. However, there are common threads in vegan cultural experience.

A recurrent theme in research on the experiences of vegans is that they face a myriad of social difficulties when transitioning towards veganism and maintaining vegan consumption lifestyles. Hirschler (2011) gathered data from interviews with vegans in North America to understand experiences of becoming and living as vegan. Cultural factors played an important role, including practical knowledge to support a vegan diet, about nutrition, cooking, and navigating restaurants. However, vegans reported interpersonal social pressures to be the most difficult part of being vegan. One interviewee summarized this difficulty by describing the “social difficulty of veganism and the personal ease of veganism.” Vegan social pressures are apparent across cultures. Social pressures were also found to be the most difficult part of being vegan in Korea, where vegans often find great difficulty in maintaining their identity due to social pressure including cultural norms towards group harmony and respect for social hierarchy (Yoo & Yoon, 2015).

### 2.1.2. Vegans in marginalized social and cultural positions

There is evidence of interpersonal bias and disapproval towards vegans from a variety of sources. There appears to be an overall bias against vegans in North Americans, particularly amongst those who subscribe to normative right-wing belief systems (MacInnis & Hodson, 2015). Family, friends, and coworkers of vegans often are at least initially unsupportive of their diets – some so far as to be “shocked” or “horrified” (Cherry, 2015; Hirschler, 2011; Twine, 2014). Although it has been little researched, vegans often have difficulty shopping for food or dining out and service workers are often uninformed about veganism (Rivera & Shani, 2013). In at least western societies, vegans are perceived to be less masculine than vegetarians or meat-eaters, and vegan men are often considered particularly deviant due to veganism’s incompatibility with dominant male gender norms (Thomas, 2016). These biases are primarily derived from the disapproval of deviance from the norm of meat-eating.

In addition to research on the interpersonal difficulties of being vegan, cultural researchers have examined the marginalized position of veganism in mainstream cultural contexts. Newspapers in the UK display “vegophobia” in stories about veganism, overwhelmingly referring to vegans in a negative light, such as by referring to them as ridiculous, pleasure-free, oversensitive, or hostile (Cole & Morgan, 2011). American television shows and movies that play across the world portray vegans as threatening, deviant, or bizarre (Wright, 2015). American media can be particularly critical of vegan men (Brady & Ventresca, 2014). Swedish home and consumer studies courses for schoolchildren emphasize the importance of meat in adopting local culture and maintaining social relationships (Bohm et al., 2015b) and position alternatives to meat consumption such as veganism as unattainable and deviant (Bohm et al., 2015a). These cultural analyses show consistently negative mainstream depictions of veganism.

Despite this marginalized position, veganism is gaining cultural momentum and gaining in popularity. There are several cultural threads that influence veganism, including cultural distinction in members of high-status groups (Johnston et al., 2011), food decolonization movements in marginalized ethnic groups (Wright, 2015), vegetarian tradition similar to veganism in certain groups such as some east Asians (Kim, 2014), and conformity with or rebellion against family and friend groups (Larsson et al., 2003). Some recent sub-cultural movements have had great influence on individuals to adopt veganism, such as punk and hipster subcultures (Cherry, 2006; Cronin et al., 2014). However, likely the greatest cultural shift towards veganism in recent years is in ethical consumption. Consumers are increasingly adopting resistant and alternative forms of consumption to align with their values (Johnston & Szabo, 2011; Soper 2007; 2009). This includes vegan consumers, who adopt veganism to align with animal rights, environmental, health, or other social values.

### 2.1.3. Social and cultural influences on veganism

Although there are many cultural influences for individuals to adopt veganism, the greatest factor for an individual to maintain a vegan identity is social support (Cherry, 2006). A supportive social network can take the form of primary social relationships, such as close friends and family, or other forms of social support networks. Online groups can provide important social support between vegans and act as a way to bond, to share cultural tools, and to create a sense of normal in their identities within a larger social context that considers them to be deviant (Sneijder & te Molder, 2009). Groups of vegans not only provide the support needed to maintain vegan identities, but influence and shape vegan consumption practices (Cherry, 2015). For some vegans, the social bonding and support between vegans is so important to their identities that they choose to engage in intimate relationships only with other vegans (Potts & Parry, 2010).

As this will be a cross-cultural exploration of vegan consumer culture in different geographical locations, including the USA, Sweden, and South Korea, it is important to establish that consumer culture theory examines consumption in context. Most research in consumer culture theory is developed in North American contexts, although there is research on Nordic consumer culture (Østergaard et al., 2014) and East Asian consumer culture (Cayla & Eckhardt, 2008), both of which consider the particular historical and cultural distinctions in each region. In addition to regional distinctiveness, contextual understandings consider the increasing globalization of consumer culture, as culture crosses boundaries (Kjeldgaard & Ostberg, 2007).

Vegan consumer culture is distinguished by both social difficulties and social support. Intersectional identities, social relationships and interactions, larger cultural movements, and geographical location all have influences on vegan cultures. In the next section, I will build upon these cultural understandings of vegan consumer culture by incorporating affect theory.

## **2.2. Affect and its cultural role in consumption**

A recurring theme across much of the research discussed in understanding vegan consumer culture is the affective experience amongst vegans. Using the conceptualization of affect in this thesis, as discussed in the introduction, affect is an experience of valenced states (Gross, 2010) in relation to particular objects (Ahmed, 2010). These states, in addition to having positive or negative valence, have different intensities and values to the person experiencing them (Paasonen et al., 2015). Vegans experience negative and positive affect through the social stresses and social support common amongst vegans, and the negotiation of affect between vegans shapes vegan consumption.

These affective processes are not separate to cultural processes, but an integral part of them. After establishing affect as an important process in vegan consumer culture, three theoretical affective ideas will be discussed at different relational levels. First, individual affective

orientations shape impact stances towards consumption. Second, collective feelings are affective orientations shaped by identity-based groups with similar backgrounds and experiences. Third, social affect is created when individuals interact with each other through affective expressions.

### 2.2.1. Recognizing affect as part of consumer culture

Researchers who make use of consumer culture theory typically explore how consumers think about consumption in cultural contexts, but have rarely explored how consumers feel in those contexts (Gopaldas & Fischer, 2012). The lack of research into consumer affect in consumer culture theory may be because research on consumer affect is typically situated in the fields of consumer psychology and traditional marketing, which typically follow different traditions of epistemology, methods, and overall research approach (Belk, 2015; Mano 2004). These researchers following psychological traditions typically treat affect as a variable, representing an individual's bodily state, in order to predict, understand, and control consumption behavior. However, affect can be understood as a socio-cultural process as well, surfaced and expressed through relations between people (Richard & Rudnyckyj, 2009). Under this conceptualization, understanding consumer affect fits under the umbrella of consumer culture theory and can draw upon burgeoning research in affect studies. In order to place theories of affect in the study of vegan consumer culture, two areas of theory will be discussed: the affective nature of consumer culture, and the how vegans are affective consumers.

Researchers as part of the recent “affective turn” in the social sciences and humanities (Paasonen et al., 2015) have theoretical ideas that are of use in understanding affective consumer culture. Research on the parallels and influence of affect with economic activity can be understood in a consumption context (Richard & Rudnyckyj, 2009). Affect is not only relational like economic activity, being created and transacted socially between people, but it directly influences consumption. This can be seen in various actors in consumptive processes, such as in trade policy that favors nations with close affective ties, retailer social and environmental initiatives with feel-good intentions, and in consumers who make purchasing decisions based on attachment to a favorite brand or the feeling of making perceived ethical consumption choices.

### 2.2.2. Collective feelings based on identities and backgrounds

This relational affective consumption is shaped by cultural identities. A form of consumption does not carry a particular affect within it; the affect of a particular object or practice differs depending on who is relating to it (Miller, 2014). Different people experience consumption differently – for example, shopping at a luxury department store may be pleasant and affirming to one consumer, while anxiety-inducing and repellent to another. Identity plays a role in these differences. People of different gender, class, ethnic, and racial identities experience and create

different affective experiences with consumption. Similarly, vegan identities play a role in affective experiences with consumption. This is not to say all vegans experience consumption in the same or even similar way, just as all people of the same gender or class have similar experiences. Cultural identities must be understood as intersectional to be meaningful in understanding different experiences towards consumption and food consumption in particular within a particular identity group (Williams-Forson & Wilkerson, 2011). Different vegans have different gender, class, ethnic, racial, and many other identities that may interact when creating affect towards consumption. People belonging to these identity groups culturally learn how to relate affectively through shared norms and experiences, which are complex due to the multiplicity of their identities (Gopaldas & Fischer, 2012).

A vegan's affect can be understood as the experience that a vegan has through their life related to their vegan identity in combination with their other identities. A vegan accumulates affective experiences related to their identity as a vegan over time – the familial pressures, social marginalization, ridicule and insults, moral shocks, and a sense of freedom or rightness – that can shape their affective expressions towards particular people and objects. From these accumulated experiences, vegans can be considered “affected” in that particular affective reactions are learned, and can be considered “sensitized” in that they respond with affect to situations in which others may not (Jacobsson & Hansson, 2014). Ahmed (2004, pp. 89-100) refers to the way that historical affective experiences shape a person's affective orientation to people and objects as affective “stickiness”. Affect sticks to people and it shapes how affect is created in future interactions.

Although each vegan's historical affective experiences may be unique, they are partially shared in that their experiences often take place in contexts that place vegans in a similar marginalized position in society. The theory of collective feelings explains how this shared affect emerges (Ahmed, 2004). People with shared or similar identities can have similar histories of affective experiences if they have lived in cultural contexts that share relevant characteristics. Affect sticks in similar ways to different people with shared identity characteristics due to histories of repeated similar interpersonal interactions. This is true with gender identities, racial identities, and class identities, and appears to be true with vegan identities. These collective feelings result in shared affective orientations with particular objects, including people (Ahmed, 2004; Wright, 2015).

### 2.2.3. Affective orientations that shape consumption

The affective orientations that result from collective feelings amongst vegans are different than dominant affective orientations amongst non-vegans. A clear example of the differences in affective responses between vegans and others is in relation to meat. While dominant affective reactions to meat include attachment, pleasure, and comfort (Graça et al., 2015), vegan reactions often include avoidance, disgust, and displeasure (Hamilton, 2006; Twine, 2010).

However, meat and other animal products are not the only objects with which vegans relate differently – socio-cultural differences related to affect extend into other aspects of consumer culture. Soper (2007) describes orientations in which consumers gain pleasure and satisfaction from consumption practices based on ethical or political outlooks as “alternative hedonism”. Alternative hedonists, like vegans and other consumers who seek ethical or green ways to consume, go through a process of disaffection from the pleasures of dominant forms of consumption due to perceived problems, and then become affectively oriented to gain pleasure from alternative consumption.

Non-dominant affective orientations as seen in vegans have also been referred to as “alien affects”. Ahmed (2014) introduced the term in relation to feminists, who experience unhappiness from objects that cause happiness in dominant society, such as those perceived as sexist or unjust. They may even “kill joy” by not enjoying practices that are enjoyed by the majority and by pointing out sexism or injustice. Twine (2014) extended this concept to vegans, who also experience unhappiness in situations when others experience happiness, and can also “kill joy” by not participating in non-vegan consumption and by pointing out its problems. Vegans (and feminists) may be killjoys, but they also work to create a new affective order in which happiness and other positive affect is realized from different sources and practices. This willful re-ordering of affect amongst vegans can be seen as a world-making project to change feelings towards types of consumption.

#### 2.2.4. The creation of social affect when consumers come together

Affect is not only communicated from vegans to non-vegans, but vegans create affect by coming together and interacting amongst each other. Social affect theory considers affect to be transmitted amongst people through affective interactions with each other, with each person’s affect shaped by their individual and collective histories (Seyfert, 2012). This transmission of affect is not one-way, but rather is created through these affective interactions. When people have different orientations towards affect in these interactions, in essence they create and learn new ways to feel. These different orientations come about, in part, due to different intersectional identities between people (Gopaldas & Fischer, 2012; Williams-Forson & Wilkerson, 2011). The theory of social affect has not been applied directly to vegans in research before, but its processes can be seen in empirical studies. As discussed before, social bonding is important to manage the emotional difficulties of being vegan, but vegans also learn from each other the ways in which to feel (McDonald, 2000). This includes emotional strategies to cope with social stress from being vegan and ways to emotionally relate to the world as a vegan, as well as emotional reactions towards ethical or spiritual issues. Thus, a vegan’s experiences in their social world work to establish collective feelings along with other vegans, and social affect works to teach, learn, and collaboratively develop affective orientation amongst vegans. Both processes work together and cannot be separated.

Although much of the theory and research on affect amongst vegans seems to focus on negative emotions, vegans create both positive and negative affect amongst each other, and both types can contribute to creations of new affective orientations towards consumption (Soper, 2007). Positive affect can be reassuring and supportive, while negative affect can work to re-orient affect by sharing alternate affective responses. An example of both valences of affect being negotiated amongst vegans is present in a study of vegan authenticity: vegans can praise and be supportive of other vegans who live according to their ethical ideals, while they can feel negatively or ambivalent towards those who stray from these ideals, such as those who are only vegan for short periods of time for health reasons or those who wear leather clothing (Greenebaum, 2012). The creation of positive affect is seen in the bonding and social support discussed earlier, while the creation of negative affect can be seen as “killing joy” amongst each other. Even amongst affect aliens whose happiness is created from different sources than in dominant society, the sources of happiness within the group are diverse due to the variety of intersectional identities and backgrounds (Ahmed, 2014). Orientations towards both positive and negative affect are socially constructed within the group through interaction amongst vegans.

So far, I have discussed theories of affect relevant to vegans in a somewhat abstract way, as specific affective relations amongst vegans has largely been unstudied. The conceptualization of affect amongst vegans used here places it within consumer culture theory and draws upon theory of collective feelings, affective orientations, and social affect. Consumers’ affective identities shape how they experience and interact with consumption, including interactions with other consumers, at retail places, and with consumer products. Vegans often experience similar affective interactions throughout their life histories resulting in similar orientations towards objects. In addition, when vegans interact with each other they create social affect together. These processes work to create new affective orientations. In order to understand the nature of these affective orientations and creations of social affect, the research design will explore places in which vegans interact and express affect between each other. The next section will present theory and research on the online communities of vegan consumption that will be explored, as a foundation for the empirical research to understand the specific nature of affect amongst vegans.

### **2.3. Online communities of consumption and the creation of affect**

Despite lacking traditional face-to-face forms of affective expression, online communities have become a clear place where the negotiation of affect takes place (Hillis et al, 2015). These online affective expressions have become commonplace for Internet users, and can be seen in intense online debates, intimate emotional connections from a distance, or outrage and activism in current events, as just a few examples. These online communities when related to consumption are referred in consumer culture research as online consumption communities.

Online consumption communities have emerged over the past three decades as places where consumers with similar consumption interests gather and communicate. Researchers of consumer culture theory have been particularly interested in these communities (Weijo et al., 2014). These communities can be defined as being primarily consocial interactions, meaning that members generally do not know each other outside of the communities and they have relatively friendly but fleeting individual relationships (Kozinets, 2015). Their uses and purposes vary between and within each community, and include instrumental problem-solving, brand enthusiasm, consumer activism, social support, development of consumer lifestyles, and promotion of consumer sub-cultures (Canniford, 2011; Dinhopl et al., 2015; Närvänen et al., 2013; Stokburger-Sauer & Wiertz, 2015). Research on “communities of practice” and “communities of interest” influences thought on consumption communities, as lines between overt consumption and enthusiasm or interest in an activity are blurred in many communities (Brinks, 2016).

### 2.3.1. New perspectives on online consumption communities

In the past few years, cultural research in online consumption communities has grown and evolved with the growth of social media. Early approaches of research into these communities, such as by Kozinets (2002b), have been “redefined” as online consumption communities have grown from being composed of relatively small userbases of enthusiasts to becoming integral parts of mainstream societies (Kozinets, 2015). Notions of what defines an online community and concepts such as the publicness of online activity have changed as well. Online consumption communities have become increasingly delocalized, meaning that the boundaries between these communities are porous. Consumers refer to other sites, share links across the Internet, and are increasingly active in multiple communities (Weijo et al., 2014). This is contrary to earlier research on consumption communities that conceptualized bounded communities and particular cultures that developed within, such as on message boards on branded websites and early Internet newsgroups. Users on these older forms of online communities were often anonymous, while users of newer social media communities typically use their real names and their activity is often public and visible through social media connections or Internet searches (Miller et al., 2016).

Facebook in particular has become a particularly interesting and fruitful social media platform for research into online consumption communities due to its popularity and potential for changes to the way consumers interact. Facebook is the largest social media platform in the world with a userbase of over a billion users and is used nearly globally, with the notable exception of China where Facebook is censored by the government and different national social media platforms are popularly used (Miller et al., 2016). Prevalence of Facebook and other social media use is uneven between social groups, and socially disadvantaged groups are less likely to be users (Murthy, 2008). However, use is still rapidly growing, and a simple search on Facebook finds hundreds of vegan-themed groups. This popularity makes socio-cultural

activity on Facebook groups worth study in itself, and researchers have been particularly interested in the new forms of culture and social interactions that may be created there (Kosinski et al., 2015). Although Facebook is a host and platform for many online consumption communities, social media users are increasingly take a polymedia approach to their Internet use (Miller et al., 2016), meaning that Internet users are increasingly using many social media platforms. While communities may be based on Facebook, their delocalized nature remains and it is important to consider that they do not exist in social isolation – they exist in a cultural context both online and offline.

### 2.3.2. Digital prosumption as value co-creation in online communities

Although direct communication in online groups through posting, replying, and otherwise reacting is the most visible and obvious form of participation in online communities, it is actually not the most common form. Users most often participate more passively, by reading others' contributions, also known as lurking (Schneider et al., 2013; Sun et al., 2014). While lurking, users engage in community activity vicariously largely by viewing and empathizing with others' experiences (Hartmann et al., 2015). The lack of direct communication at a group level is also a form of participation: an absence of reactions to a post, such as comments and likes on Facebook, creates an impression based on the expectation, context, and group norms. While direct participation in the form of posts and other contributions can be seen as production of group experiences, lurking and empathizing with other group members can be seen as consumption of group activities. The combined online role of production and consumption has been theorized under the banner of “digital prosumption”.

Digital prosumption is the online form of prosumption, in which consumers perform some work as producers to co-create value in products or services for consumption (Beer & Burrows, 2010; Ritzer & Jurgenson, 2010). Examples of these earlier-theorized forms of prosumption include an IKEA shopper who assembles their own bookcase or a McDonald's customer who acts as their own waiter. Digital prosumption follows prosumption logic to online spaces, most typically social media such as Facebook, where online content is produced and consumed collaboratively. Examples of digital prosumption include users sharing videos on YouTube, providing reviews for online retailers such as Amazon, or participating in online communities. Rather than contributing to the production and consumption of products such as bookcases or more traditional material services such as restaurant labor, digital prosumers in online communities produce and consume information and shape consumption practices. The recognition that consumers both produce and consume consumption practices pre-dates the explosion of social media research (Shove & Pantzar, 2005). However, online spaces qualitatively change the ways in which production and consumption occur and interact.

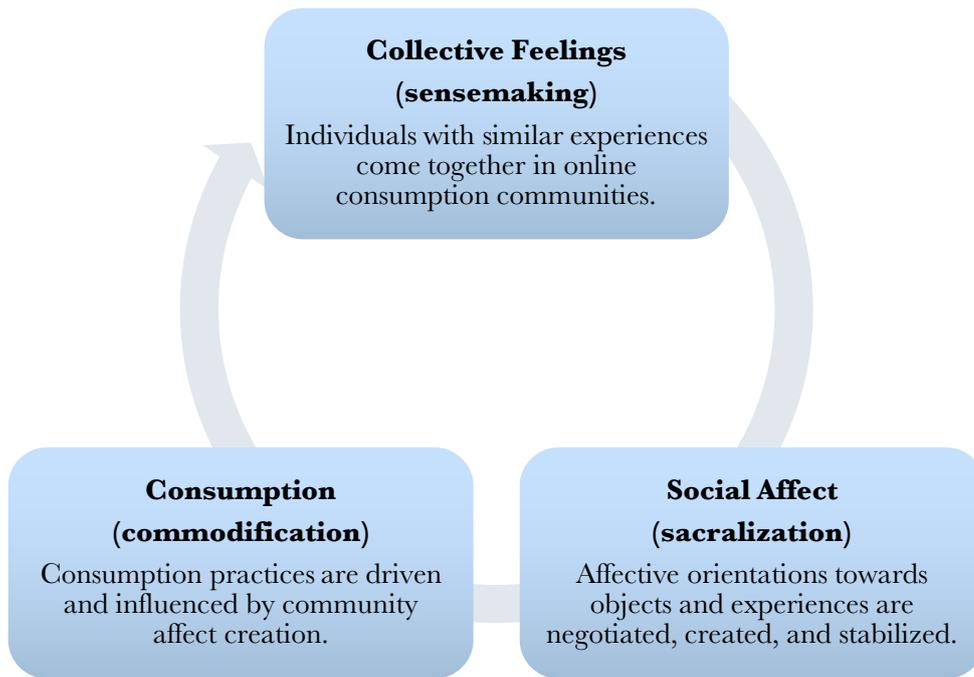
Digital prosumption is a theory used for general cooperative value creation in online communities. However, as this thesis focused on the creation and negotiation of affect towards

consumption, it can be a useful framework for understanding the negotiation and creation of affect in online consumption communities. While some users contribute direct affective expressions to a community, they and others who lurk consume these affective expressions, co-creating social affect in the group.

### 2.3.3. Negotiation and creation of affect in online consumption communities

Affect is a meaningful component of online consumption communities in their formation as well as in the combined production and consumption activities that occur within them. Consumers with similar emotional outlooks on consumption come together, although the reasons they do so “demands further research” (Canniford, 2011). However, consumers with similar emotional outlooks find an emotional sense of belonging in communities and tend to share affective experiences with each other in an empathetic way. Once members join an online community, they can find experiences of emotional support, empathy, pride, and affection through sharing practices (Hartmann et al., 2015). Particular interactions create and share shaped affect, particularly when there are disagreements and demands from community members (Brinks, 2016). Strongly intense interactions in particular draw attention and emotional debate that can have lasting affect in the community (Paasonen, 2015). The ways in which affect is created and negotiated in online vegan communities are the objects of analysis in this thesis, and will be explored further upon empirical work.

The creation of affect in online communities of vegan consumption and the value creating aspects of digital prosumption are tied together. Brinks (2016) theorizes three dimensions of value creation in communities, that are being adapted here to focus on affective value creation, using the previously discussed theoretical concepts of collective feelings, affective orientations, and social affect. First, through a process of “sensemaking”, people come together in communities based on similar affective experiences to collectively practice an activity. These affective experiences can be understood in the case of vegans as collective feelings of similar personal histories related to vegan consumption. Second, through “sacralization”, community members share experiences and stabilize meanings towards experiences and objects. In vegans, through process of social affect, affective orientations are negotiated, created, and stabilized through community members’ affective expressions. Third, through “commodification”, members translate community meanings into commercial activity. In our case, vegans enact consumption decisions based upon the negotiated and created affective processes in online communities. Figure 2 depicts this process as a cycle. The cycle is ongoing and does not progress in a serial fashion, as users join and leave, progress with their lives outside of the group, and affective orientations to multiple objects and experiences are created simultaneously.



**Figure 2.** Affective value creation cycle in online communities of consumption. Based on dimensions of community value creation from Brinks (2016).

This model of affective value creation, along with other theoretical concepts presented in this conceptual framework, will be used as a basis to collect and analyze data in order to answer the research questions and build theory. Online consumption communities will be the sites of study. These communities, particularly those hosted on public social media, accumulate records of the affective interactions that comprise these value creating processes over time. These records can serve as data to provide a window into how affect is created and negotiated within these groups. Pybus (2015) describes these data as “archives of feelings” that are collectively created and, through thoughtful data collection and analysis, can provide insight into the affective relations of a group. The next section details the approach taken in this thesis to gather and interpret affective data of vegan communities of consumption.

### 3. Methodological approach and methods

The approach to empirical research in this thesis is designed to establish validity in answering the research questions, build upon the presented conceptual framework, rigorously evaluate alternatives, and recognize ethical concerns to minimize any potential harm. These criteria are used, along with practical limitations, in the selection of methodological approach, data collection methods, choice of field sites, and approach to data analysis. The establishment of a clear methodological lens is a useful first step to elucidate what types of knowledge are gained through data collection and analysis, particularly in the context of the quickly-evolving platforms and research methodologies of online cultural research (Isomäki & Silvennoinen, 2012). In order to establish this approach, as well as the study’s validity, rigor, and ethical

stance, this section will expand on the reasoning and epistemological stance behind the methodological and method choices.

### **3.1. An ethnographic approach**

A qualitative, inductive research design is suited to develop theoretical categories to answer the research questions, as the goal of this thesis is not consistent with typical strengths of quantitative or deductive research, such as to test hypotheses, measure scale or differences, or generalize from a sample to a population. However, strictly inductive research can be considered as grounded only in data, taking a naive or atheoretical approach (May, 2011, pp. 30-35). The approach of this thesis can be considered abductive as it will be grounded in both data and the conceptual framework, using constant comparison between data, framework, and emerging theory, using a type of grounded theory approach to develop theory to answer the research questions (Czarniawska, 2014, pp. 23-27).

Many different methodological approaches or research paradigms can follow from this general direction, but the object of study can suggest a particular approach. Affective interactions amongst vegans in online communities are the object of study. These affective interactions have been theorized in the previous section as cultural expressions and experiences amongst alienated groups. An ethnographic approach is consistent with the goals of understanding a culture or social scene – vegans in online groups – through empathic observation and participation (May, 2011, p. 166). Ethnography can be broadly described as a research field or practice of studying culture through immersion in a social group and representing it through writing (Van Maanen, 2006).

#### **3.1.1. The choice of ethnographic approach**

Ethnographic approaches vary widely. The traditional anthropological approach to ethnography relies on a researcher physically immersing themselves in a distinct field site for more than a year in order to broadly understand culture in that place. However, different ethnographic styles have emerged throughout the social sciences, largely due to differing ideas about what constitutes good research and the recognition of the globalization and multiplicity of cultures, even within a particular physical site (Van Maanen, 2006). Technological changes have also influenced how ethnography is done, from early uses of tape recorders to newer uses of video and Internet technologies. The social scientific methods of participant observation have converged and mixed with ethnography over time, resulting in an even larger variety of approaches to ethnography (Bryman, 2012, pp. 431-433; May, 2011, pp. 162-189).

Because of this variety in approaches, it is necessary to more clearly define the research paradigm used for this thesis to justify a choice of methods and approach to data analysis. The

ethnographic approach chosen for this thesis is guided by three ethnographic ideas – short-term focused ethnography (Knoblauch, 2005; Pink and Morgan, 2013), netnography (Kozinets, 2015), and autoethnography (Kozinets & Kedzior, 2009; Mkono et al., 2015). The reasons for making use of each of these influences, rather than a traditional ethnographic approach, is due to the specific nature of the research questions, the use of socio-cultural theories to inform methods, and non-traditional sources of data including online communities and personal experience. Each of these three approaches provides guidance on ways of knowing to inform and interpret this research.

### 3.1.2. Three ethnographic influences

First, short-term focused ethnography is helpful to address the specific nature of the research questions and the use of a conceptual framework. While traditional ethnography typically makes use of an open aim in studying culture, focused ethnography has specific aims in understanding particular parts of culture (Knoblauch, 2005) – in this case, the research aim is to understand affect amongst vegans rather than to understand vegans' entire cultural lives. Morgan and Pink (2013) further explain the strength of short-term focused ethnography in using theory in constant dialogue with data collection and an analytical framework to bolster understanding and build upon existing research. The short-term nature of this type of ethnography is also valuable for practical reasons – however, it is not simply a shortened version of traditional ethnographic data gathering. Instead, short-term focused ethnography is data intensive in its empirical work, with researchers using large amounts of empirical data in a short period of time, and in its use of time, by gathering large amounts of data quickly (Knoblauch, 2005). These large amounts of data are often obtained by technical means, such as video recordings or transcripts. In this case, the large amounts of data are obtained through online communities.

The second methodological influence is useful to guide the distinct nature of performing ethnography online. Several approaches to online ethnography have emerged since online cultures have become noticed and commonplace in recent decades, using different names such as virtual ethnography, cyberethnography, digital ethnography, connective ethnography, mediated ethnography, network ethnography, and netnography (Isomäki & Silvennoinen, 2012). Each of these online ethnographies is tailored towards particular aims, such as understanding how online cultures fit into larger cultures and how technology is used in people's lives. For the purposes of this study, netnography is the most appropriate guiding approach, as it is designed to understand online cultures and is particularly suited to studying online consumption communities (Kozinets, 2002b; 2015). Netnography can be considered a flexible set of guidelines or suggestions to performing ethnography with sole or primary online components, and individual research projects can be performed differently due to different needs. Key ideas adopted from netnography include online research procedures to establish validity, particular netnographic methods, and guidelines for ethical considerations. These ideas will be expanded on in the next sections.

The third methodological influence, autoethnography, privileges reflexivity in the research process and provides a unique source of data: my own experiences as a member of the group under study. Autoethnographic research takes many forms, including literary or narrative tales that focus on a researcher’s own life as an object of study (Ellis et al., 2011). However, the intention of using an autoethnographic approach here is not to become focused on my own experiences at the expense of others’ voices, but to enhance understanding of the groups under study. This is achieved in several ways by using an autoethnographic approach as part of a larger research design (Kozinets & Kedzior, 2009). First, this can enhance reflexivity and make clearer my position as researcher in relation to the groups under study. Second, autoethnographic data is used for data triangulation as an experiential source of data to compare with other data from participants. Third, part of my role as researcher is as a “deep N of 1” (Mkono et al., 2015), using access to my own experiential information that would be unavailable through other sources (Gould, 2012). This is particularly useful to understand affective experiences in this study – autoethnography draws from relatively direct access to affect. A small set of research guiding the use of autonetnographic methods in this way is emerging, combining the study of the researcher(s) and their online experience as part of multi-method research in order to provide direct access to information that is difficult to achieve by other means (Kozinets & Kedzior, 2009; Mkono et al., 2015; Weiyo et al., 2014).

### 3.1.3. Comparison and combination of approaches

Although each of these three ethnographic influences has distinct benefits to the overall research approach, they all share some attributes: they study particular cultures or cultural aspects through immersion, they make use of participant observation methods and multiple sources of data, they rely on a large amount of empirical data, and all take a naturalistic and interpretivist stance to understand culture in existing settings. Table 1 depicts the chosen ethnographic approach in comparison with traditional ethnography and the three influences described. The chosen approach is a synthesis of these three influences, targeted towards gaining appropriate knowledge to answer the research questions.

**Table 1.** Comparison of ethnographic approaches with chosen ethnographic approach.

	<b>Traditional ethnography</b>	<b>Netno-graphy</b>	<b>Focused short-term ethnography</b>	<b>Auto-ethnography</b>	<b>Chosen ethnographic approach</b>
<b>Length of fieldwork</b>	Long-term (one year or longer)	Varies	Short-term	Varies	Short-term
<b>Scope of field</b>	Complete	Partial	Partial	Varies	Partial (does not include participants’ entire lives)

	<b>Traditional ethnography</b>	<b>Netno-graphy</b>	<b>Focused short-term ethnography</b>	<b>Auto-ethnography</b>	<b>Chosen ethnographic approach</b>
<b>Primary objects of study</b>	Social groups or fields	Online consocial groups	Communicative activities and experiences in groups	Self as a group member	Affective communicative activities and experiences amongst online consocial groups of vegans, including self
<b>Research aim</b>	Open	Open or focused	Focused on certain aspects of field	Varies	Focused on particular aspects (affective experiences and expressions)
<b>Use of theory in framework</b>	Often atheoretical	Varies	Constant dialogue with theory	Varies	Constant dialogue with theory
<b>Intensity of data collection</b>	Experientially intensive; time extensive	Data intensive	Data and time intensive	Introspection intensive	Data, time, introspection intensive
<b>Access to groups</b>	Negotiated	Negotiated or public	Varies	Own experiences as a group member	Public; own experiences as a group member
<b>Types of knowledge used</b>	Insider knowledge	Insider, background, and shared knowledge	Background and shared knowledge	Shared and self-knowledge	Background, shared, and self-knowledge
<b>Primary role of researcher</b>	Participant	Varies	Observer	Observer and observed	Observer and observed
<b>Data</b>	Data collected as field notes	Data collected through technical means; field notes optional	Data collected as field notes and through technical means	Data collected as field notes or literary means	Data collected through field notes and through technical (Internet) means

In addition, the overall research aim of the project is to contribute to research informing the possibilities of mainstreaming vegan consumption. This is a critical stance to the research aim, but also informs the methodology. The two primary ways that the critical stance informs the methodology are, first, by privileging underrepresented voices so that they are not drowned out, and second, by acknowledging expressions and experiences that are atypical or unusual compared to those that are dominant.

There are limits to using this methodological stance. Unlike many ethnographies, the form of ethnography used in this thesis does not attempt to gain knowledge about an entire culture – this research is not about vegan culture overall, nor is it about how online communities fit into vegans’ lives. Instead, the focused, online, reflexive approach gains knowledge from interpreting and analyzing online communication, reflexive introspection, and background knowledge, in dialogue with the conceptual framework. This is consistent with the specific nature of the research question which focuses on affective experiences and expressions online, but in using this approach there is potential to miss cultural and personal context that could inform analysis. In addition, using online communities as field sites limits participation. People without regular Internet access, people lacking strong literacy in the dominant languages used in the groups, or people otherwise uncomfortable in these groups are underrepresented or not present. These limitations are considered during analysis. In addition, the goal of this research is not to generalize to all vegan populations or even to all members of the groups, but rather to understand particular affective experiences that exist amongst vegans.

### **3.2. Multi-method data collection of online groups**

Following this focused, reflexive, netnographic approach, this study follows a multi-method design in order to understand affective expressions and experience in online groups. Field notes are generated by observing online activity in groups while reflecting on the researcher’s own experience. Understanding that there is no one form of vegan affect, these methods are compared to discover similarities in differences between participants within sites, between participants at different sites, and between participants and the researcher.

#### **3.2.1. Two methods of gathering online data**

The first two methods used are two forms of netnographic participant observation: observation of online communities in real time and analysis of archival data from these communities. Both of these methods have the same primary units of analysis but are conducted in different ways. These units of analysis are communicative behavior: posts, comments, and other interactions including links, likes, and reactions. Because of the fluid boundaries on social media groups, there are related units of analysis including Facebook page descriptions and linked sites. The purpose of this analysis is to understand affective experiences and expressions. Affect is tricky to research as it is not directly observable. However, ethnographers often analyze unseen elements of experience by observing and interpreting behavior, including communicative behavior (Pink et al., 2016, p. 25). As interpretation makes use of the research as a research instrument, I use my experience with these communities, background knowledge from being a member of the selected groups for at least nine months, and the conceptual framework as guides in interpretation. Using the focused ethnographic methodological approach, data intensive immersion in these groups provides a large amount of contextual information as well.

For the first method of real-time observation, I viewed all new posts and their related comments on the groups under study at least daily from April 1 through May 1, 2016. When links and videos were posted, I followed and listened to them when they were in English. I wrote short field notes and used Facebook's save feature to record posts, links, and comments that seemed to have potential value in generating theoretical ideas, contradicting them, or were otherwise unexpected. This capture of contradictory and unexpected ideas aids the abductive analytical process as theory generation and alteration develops (Kozinets, 2015, pp. 170-171). These saved posts and field notes were then coded and analyzed, as described in the analysis section below. Real-time observation does not encompass all interactions on the site, as users can comment on and otherwise interact with posts days after the post is submitted, and the semantic nature of the current iteration of Facebook provides a feed of activity that is not static, so activity can be missed. However, it provides an analogous experience to a typical user. This can be considered a form a systematic "lurking" as method (Murthy, 2008).

Conversely, the analysis of archival data is more comprehensive and does not represent a typical user's experience. Using this method, historical group activity is gathered through technical means and analyzed as a hybrid of participant observation and textual analysis. The harvesting of large amounts of online archival data is perhaps most associated with a "big data" approach to research that loses nuance and focuses on statistical norms. However, the use of targeted data gathering and the ethnographic interpretation of individual expressions and differences is consistent with netnographic methodology (Kozinets, 2015, pp. 172-176; Welles, 2014). I used the Netvizz application to download archived group activity, including posts, links, comments, and likes, for a time period of one month or greater if more data was needed for theoretical saturation (Bryman, 2012, pp. 420-421) to be achieved. Netvizz is a publicly available research tool used to extract data from Facebook (Riedler, 2013). I reformatted the data from Netvizz into a more easily readable PivotTable in Microsoft Excel for Mac 2016. I reviewed the data, followed links, and wrote field notes in a similar way with this archived data as I performed with the real time data. Theoretically relevant data was then flagged and coded. Appendix 1 includes a depiction of the format used during analysis and coding of this data.

### 3.2.2. Autoethnographic data as a complementary method

The third method used in this study is a form of autoethnography. Although autoethnography can take many forms, the particular method used in this study is inspired by consumer introspection theory, which uses subjective personal introspection to create insights that other methods may miss (Gould, 2012). Although understanding the researcher's position during production of field notes while using other methods creates reflective data in itself (Kozinets, 2015, pp. 188-189), understanding autoethnography as a separate method allows comparison between the interpretation of self-experience and those of others. This type of method provides access to information that is difficult to discern from online observation, such as embodied

experience, including affective experience in this case (Kozinets & Kedzior, 2009; Mkono et al., 2015). There is growing recognition that introspective methods complement other methods in studies of consumer culture (Arnould & Thompson, 2005; Weijo et al., 2014). I added relevant introspective data to field notes and wrote additional field notes about my own experiences, which were then coded along with data from the other two methods.

### 3.2.3. A comparative approach of three online research sites

In addition to using multiple methods to triangulate data, a comparative approach between sites is beneficial to validate and understand the contextual differences in data from these methods. Facebook has been identified as a fruitful platform for cross-cultural research, due to its near-global popularity and relative ease of access for researchers, but there are few studies taking advantage of this new opportunity (Wilson et al., 2012). Selecting sites across cultures allows comparison of data to validate findings by recognizing shared and distinctive attributes across cultures. This is important to discovering vegan affects through analysis of data, in order to understand forms of vegan affect that are shared or unique to a culture. Understanding context is important for this process, so the Facebook groups selected as primary sites are all groups that I have personal experience and background knowledge: I have been a member of each group prior to the start of this thesis, I have been in each group's target membership as defined by the group descriptions, and I have lived for at least several weeks as a member in the related geographical location.

Table 2 lists the three chosen primary research sites – all are online Facebook groups for vegans related to geographical locations in the USA, Sweden, or South Korea. The geographical locations are across three continents and represent distinct cultural contexts. The membership of the groups in the USA and Sweden represent vegan residents in general, while the two groups in South Korea are primarily targeted at English-speaking immigrants or expatriates, although native Koreans participate as well. Thus, the comparison between groups is not solely geographical, but recognize the differing compositions of the groups as well, including that all of the groups include some percentage of migrants for whom the location and related cultures are not native. These groups are all listed as public on Facebook, as opposed to closed or secret. The chosen sites all meet general criteria identified by Kozinets (2015, pp. 168-176) for site selection, including relevance, substance in activity as they all receive at least multiple posts and comments per day, and heterogeneity and richness of topics discussed. Social media contributions were primarily in English in the Seattle Vegan and Korea Vegan groups, but were primarily in Swedish for the Southern Sweden Vegan group. I translate quoted communications from that group into English for the analysis, and asked assistance from Swedish classmates the few times the basic meanings were in question.

**Table 2.** Public Facebook groups selected as primary research sites.

<b>Facebook group</b>	<b>Related location</b>	<b>Primary language(s)</b>	<b>Number of members (15 April 2016)</b>	<b>Researcher's time lived in location</b>	<b>Target membership based on group description</b>
<b>Seattle Vegan</b>	Seattle, USA	English	2,886	>10 years (through August 2014)	Vegans and those interested in veganism in the Seattle area
<b>Southern Sweden Vegan</b>	Southern Sweden	Swedish, some English	860	20 months (most of August 2014 - May 2016)	Vegans in southern Sweden
<b>Korea Vegan</b>	South Korea	English, some Korean	1,742	7 weeks (June - August 2015)	Vegans and those interested in animal rights in Korea

The total number of posts reviewed during participant observation, posts and comments retrieved through archival data, and the number of items coded from each group is listed in Table 3. Members posted and commented many more times per month in the Seattle Vegan group than the other two groups, so additional months of data were added for the Southern Sweden Vegan and Korea Vegan groups until theoretical saturation was achieved when no additional thematic categories of data emerged from additional data.

**Table 3.** Posts and comments on Facebook groups retrieved using Netvizz and analyzed.

<b>Facebook group</b>	<b>Time period reviewed</b>	<b>Archival posts reviewed</b>	<b>Archival comments reviewed</b>
Seattle Vegan	April 1 – May 1, 2016	796	8 529
Southern Sweden Vegan	January 1 – May 1, 2016	79	303
Korea Vegan	March 1 – May 1, 2016	90	479

The data sets collected were not symmetrical in sample size between groups, as many more posts were reviewed from the Seattle Vegan group. The large amount of activity in the Seattle Vegan group was included as minimum of a one-month timeframe was deemed necessary to review progression of discussions, particularly related to new issues and events in the community. As a member of these groups prior to the beginning of the study, I judged that the topics and types of expressions did not vary widely throughout the year to necessitate a symmetrical timeframe between groups. However, certain topics with affective intensity occur at times of the year that were not reviewed, such as negotiating holiday family dinners and praise and criticism of events such as vegan and vegetarian fairs. These data may have contained additional forms of intensity with theoretical value, which is a limitation of these data sets.

### **3.3. Ethical considerations in collection and use of data**

Both the observation and historical data harvesting are covert in this design, meaning that participants were not informed that their data would be used in this research. The reasons for a covert design are for integrity of data, as covert methods allow observation in a natural setting without reactivity caused by the known presence of a researcher, and practical, due to the difficulty of obtaining continuous informed consent from large online groups. Covert online ethnographies appear to be more common in published research than those that are overt (Murthy, 2008). However, there are a number of particular ethical issues that arise when using covert methods online. Three sources are used for guidelines to ethical practice in this thesis: standard research practices in online ethnography, writing about ethics in online methods literature, and ethical decision-making recommendations published by the Association of Internet Researchers (Markham & Buchanan, 2012).

#### **3.3.1. Evaluating ethics and minimizing harm online**

The primary guiding principle for ethics in this research is to do no harm, as worded in the generally accepted ethical research tenets of “respect for persons, justice, and beneficence” (Markham & Buchanan, 2012). Some of the particular ethical questions around Internet research revolve around questions of the publicness of data, informed consent, legality, vulnerability, anonymity and traceability, and harm versus benefits to the community under study. Each of these questions must be considered in context to be meaningful. All of the groups chosen for study are classified as public and viewable by any Internet user, even without a Facebook account. The public nature of each Facebook group is clearly stated when a participant joins a group and before they post to a group. Public groups on Facebook are the only option allowed under Facebook’s terms of service for covert research without explicit permission from the company (Facebook, 2015).

Although typical ethnographic research involves continuous informed consent for informants, this consent typically is focused on elicited data, such as interviews, researcher interactions with participants, and observations in private or semi-private spaces (Wilson et al., 2012). No explicit informed consent was obtained in the methods used in this thesis, due to their covert nature. Early online ethnographic research emphasized the need for informed consent in all cases (Kozinets, 2002b). However, online communities have evolved along with the popularity of the Internet, and some communities have become public spaces with less expectation of privacy. Online ethnography researchers now recognize the growing use and benefits of covert data gathering (Murthy, 2008). The growing consensus in online ethnography is that each piece of research needs to assess potential harm and benefits from the use of covert research and what types of informed consent are needed, if any (Kozinets, 2015, pp. 140-145; Markham & Buchanan, 2012).

Vulnerability of the groups under study is an important gauge in assessing potential harm. Vegans and people interested in veganism can be vulnerable people politically and socially. In addition to social pressure and difficulties for vegans, vegans have been added to governmental watch lists in the USA and UK, and perhaps elsewhere, and become under government surveillance due to perceived associations between veganism, animal rights activism, and terrorism (Wright, 2015). Although membership lists in the chosen research groups are public, meaning that it is unlikely that this research would expose any participant who is not already exposed, minimizing any unnecessary risk is an obligation.

A general approach of cloaking is used to anonymize and reduce traceability of participants, meaning that techniques were used to make it difficult, if not impossible, to connect the data in this thesis to any particular person, including through the use of search engines (Kozinets, 2015, pp. 156-159). Specific uses of cloaking include the use of pseudonyms or generic names, such as Commenter 1, for all participants (except the researcher), paraphrasing or summarizing of all quotations while attempting to retain their original meanings, and rephrasing the names of the groups under study. Screenshots were only used and presented for images publicly presented by community members, and posts and comments were reformatted in a table due to restrictions on the use of Facebook's design content (Facebook, 2015). Facebook posts contain replies and reactions, including "likes" and other emotional reactions such as "sad reactions" and "angry reactions" that were included anonymously when a post and comments in reply were included as figures in the analysis. Some comments were not included or were combined in these figures due to judged irrelevance or redundancy, which is a typical cloaking practice (Markham, 2012). Other personally identifiable information, such as faces in photos, was altered. These cloaking practices are growing in use by qualitative researchers due to traceability and privacy concerns (Markham, 2012; Roberts, 2015). However, the name of the social media platforms, including Facebook, and general group information will be maintained, including the related geographical place names, such as Seattle, as these are important for context and theory and present minimal identifiable risks.

### 3.3.2. Ethical concern on uses and boundaries of data

Despite these practices to attempt ethical research, there are researchers who have concerns with the overall approach of harvesting public Internet posts as data for researcher use. Under a dignity-based approach to privacy, the capture of public information for research uses is concerning to human dignity in itself, regardless of proof or identified potential of specific harm (Zimmer, 2010). When participants become aware that a covert researcher has been studying their public online community, some strongly disapprove, particularly in sensitive contexts (Roberts, 2015). Acknowledging this potential that this research goes against participants' imagined uses of their public online activity, the benefits to the communities can be weighed against this risk. The motivations for vegans as discussed in the introduction generally include

social and environmental benefits, such as reduction of animal suffering and benefits to the environment. The critical stance of this research aligns with these goals in contributing to the mainstreaming of veganism by informing management, organizational, and research practices. This alignment of benefits between the researcher and researched is also bolstered by the blurred lines between the two, as the researcher was a pre-existing member of each of the primary groups under study. These benefits are considered to outweigh the minimal and mitigated risks to participants in this research.

Finally, while these ethical considerations are in place for data collection in the primary sites of study, they are not bound to these sites, and ethical recommendations for online research have begun to recognize this (Markham & Buchanan, 2012). Due to the delocalized nature of online communities, references and links to outside communities and sites, such as other groups, blogs, are common. The practices in regards to ethics remain the same for outside communities, including cloaking techniques, and observation only took place in public groups or sites. In addition, the research design makes use of autoethnographic data, including my experiences in private settings. Autoethnographic methods have own ethical concerns when working with autobiographical data, particularly when discussing sensitive issues especially in relation to specific persons, due to potential harm to others and the researcher themselves (Denshire, 2014). However, the methods of introspection used in this research have minimal autobiographical disclosure of sensitive issues or discussion of others and, when they are referenced, they will follow the same approach to ethical protection as with the other methods used.

### **3.4. Quality criteria in the process of data analysis**

The affective data collected using the ethnographic methods in this thesis were analyzed using a thematic analysis inspired by a grounded theory approach (Charmaz, 2006). The purpose of this analysis is to generate theory to understand the creation and expression of affect towards consumption amongst vegans. In order to establish the quality of the analysis several quality criteria were considered, including the usefulness of the conceptual framework, suitability of methods for understanding the objects of study, and ethical considerations discussed earlier. These criteria include: validity in determining whether the analysis of data captures the phenomena under study (affective expressions), trustworthiness and rigor in the analytical approach, theoretical generalization and transferability of research to other contexts, confirmability of data and presentation of voice in the community to accurately represent the subjects of study, and positionality and reflexivity to address and make use of the researcher's subjective position.

#### **3.4.1. Quality in capture and analysis of affect: Validity and credibility**

Although alternative criteria to validity have been proposed for qualitative research, as typical concepts of validity are designed for quantitative, positivist research (Howell, 2013; Lincoln,

1995), validity can be one of many quality criteria for qualitative research such as that used in this thesis (Golafshani, 2003). Of particular importance for this thesis is establishing credibility (Bryman, 2012, pp. 389-393) that the analysis and theory generation regarding affect is actually based on accurately interpreting data that represents affect.

Although affective expressions are not directly observable, as discussed earlier, affective expressions can be interpreted like other forms of communication. As Richard & Rudnyckij (2009) explain, “affect is a powerful form of communicative action that is visible within and outside language”. Researchers have interpreted affect from textual and visual data for decades, often based on Deluzean thought that emphasizes the significance of the “pre-individual impersonal forces, energies, fluxes, flows and sensations” of affect (Rose, 2012). More recently, online affective expressions have been begun to be interpreted with effective results in empirical studies in qualitative social science (Hillis et al., 2015) and psychology (Brooks et al., 2013). Thus, it is not unusual to interpret affect in social data and is based on established, but still developing, research practices in interpreting data.

The interpretation of affective data is based on empathy with the subjects of study (Lincoln, 1995). Empathy in interpretation of social data is bolstered in this thesis through my position as a member of the groups under study. This personal knowledge of the contexts and culture under study that leads to empathetic understanding in research can be referred to as ontological authenticity (Howell, 2013). As a longtime daily user of social media and near digital native, I used personal familiarity of social media contexts to aid interpretation. In addition, I completed a five-week online course starting in February 2016, led by anthropologist Daniel Miller and nine other anthropologists, titled, “Why We Post: The Anthropology of Social Media” (University College London, 2016). The researchers leading this course presented results and offered discussion on a research project on cultural uses of social media across nine global field sites, and the knowledge I gained during the course aided my cross-cultural interpretation of social media data.

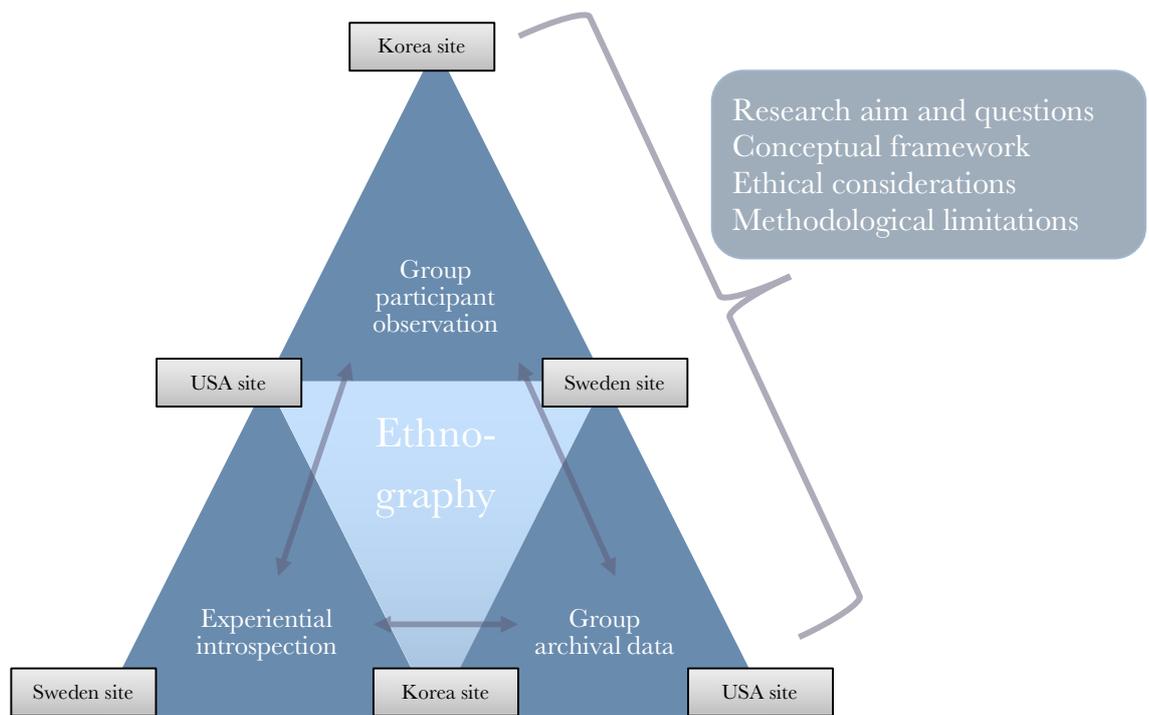
Credibility of accurately reflecting affect is also considered in the process of data capture. In order to accurately interpret the significance and meaning of affective data, reflexive field notes were written related to the affective quality, valence, and intensity in data that were deemed relevant. Notes were also added if my personal experience was immediately relevant to the activity. In addition to this use of empathy and process in capturing affective data, other quality aspects of the research design also address validity in capturing affect. These other aspects are discussed in the next sections, particularly in regards to rigor, confirmability, positionality, and reflexivity.

### 3.4.2. Quality in the analytical process: Trustworthiness and rigor

The use of trustworthiness as a criterion for quality in qualitative research is widely used, but there are varying interpretations of the concept. It has been used as a proxy for the quantitative concept of validity (Howell, 2013), as an umbrella term for evaluating quality (Lincoln, 1995), or as a list of specific criteria to evaluate research (Bryman, 2012, p. 390). In this section, trustworthiness is considered as the rigor in following established research practices, while other quality criteria are discussed separately. This rigor is established through the use of established practices in analytical theory development and the use of triangulation in the methodological design.

In order to establish rigor in the analytical process, units of data – posts and comments – were categorized using a process of open coding to identify themes (Kozinets et al., 2014), along with a process of axial coding to related themes amongst each other (Charmaz, 2006, pp. 45-71). These codes were revised multiple times; as more data was analyzed, themes were changed, combined, and split into multiple categories. Appendix 1 depicts the format used during the coding and note-taking process. These codes were based on affect in a flexible way using constant comparison between pieces of data within the same dataset and between data of different methods and sites. The themes that emerged from this process were theoretical answers to the research questions in relation to how affect is expressed and affective orientations are created towards consumption in the vegan groups under study.

During the analytical process, two forms of triangulation were used to establish additional rigor: data triangulation and method triangulation. Data triangulation took the form of using data from the three different groups under study in order to analyze commonalities and differences between them. When data converged between groups, validity was established as the affective processes were present across contexts. When data diverged, the importance of contextual effects was established. Each of the three sites was analyzed using the three methods presented earlier in this chapter. These methods complemented each other in data analysis, rather than forming separate analyses with different epistemological viewpoints. This method triangulation established rigor in validating data from different perspectives. Figure 3 depicts the data and method triangulation visually, along with the guiding methodological considerations during the data gathering and analytical process.



**Figure 3.** Analytical approach using triangulation of methods and sites, in dialogue with guiding methodological concepts.

Triangulation has been criticized in qualitative research for attempting to map a single reality from different views, despite different methods typically capturing different realities (May, 2011; Silverman, 2013). However, these criticisms are typically directed towards methods triangulation that captures different phenomenon with different methods. The methods triangulation used in this thesis are different approaches to the same data and all make use of the researcher’s interpretation of the data in different ways. Instead of attempting to capture a single reality using different data, the design in this thesis synthesizes the interpretation of data in three complementary ways, all using the same ethnographic research paradigm. This type of approach using additional methods with the same epistemological stance has been shown to be capable of validating qualitative findings (Thurmond, 2001).

In contrast, triangulation of data from different sources using the same methods does not suffer from the same criticism as methods triangulation. The three sites used in this thesis are used to analyze similar and atypical processes between contexts. Data triangulation has been considered “crucially important in naturalistic studies” (Thurmond, 2001) such as this, as single sources of data may have contextual distinctiveness that is not obvious without observing other fields. Although not the case for all types of triangulation, the forms of triangulation used in this thesis add to rigor and trustworthiness by using multiple sources of data and multiple methods with the same epistemological stance.

### 3.4.3. Quality in application: Transferability and theoretical generalization

The thematic categories that emerged attempt to directly answer the research questions presented during the introduction. These categories establish the types of affective expressions and orientations relevant to consumption that are created in the communities that were observed. These categories are not intended to directly generalize, as would be typical in positivist research (Howell, 2013), to a larger population of online community members, vegans in general, or even vegans within the field sites. Instead, the theory generated explains the empirical data in relation to the research questions in context and presents theoretical relations present in the data (Kozinets et al., 2014).

The answers to the research questions are intended to be theoretically generalizable, or transferable to other contexts that share similar relations between people. To this aim, the themes coded and presented are related to affective relations present in the communities under study, rather than based on specific vegan affects that have been previously researched, such as disgust (Hamilton, 2006; Twine, 2010). The use of field site triangulation, using sites with members based in three very different locations, is useful to illustrate some ways in which relations can differ based on context. Likewise, the dependability (Bryman, 2012, pp. 390-393) of the theoretical findings across time will vary based on context; this is true even amongst vegans, as both the cultural position of veganism (Leitzmann, 2014), and the use of social media communities (Miller et al., 2016) are changing rapidly in much of the world. The theory generated, showing that affective expressions can culturally shape group orientations towards forms of consumption, is generally transferable, as there is nothing unique about vegans in the existence of cultural influences on their affect; however, individual affective relations will be different between contexts and across time. However, the particular ways in which cultural affect towards consumption is expressed and created can vary depending on context and background, as shown even between these three sites.

### 3.4.4. Quality in openness of results: Confirmability and voice

As the analysis is interpretative in nature, the researcher influences how the analysis takes shape and subjective biases influence all aspects of the analysis, from site selection to data analysis and presentation. In order to address the ways in which bias can influence the interpretation and transferability of the results, three criteria are presented so that this bias does not diminish validity or trustworthiness. These criteria are confirmability, positionality, and reflexivity.

The first criterion of quality in addressing bias is that the analysis and results are largely confirmable (Howell, 2013). This means that I present data as I write its analysis, including social media transcripts and photos when necessary so that the reader can confirm the analytical interpretations and conclusions in this thesis. I use single quotations, using cloaking techniques as ethical practices, when affective relevance is judged to be apparent without larger

context. When a conversation or multiple quotations are needed in context to interpret affective relations, I include a figure with the initial post and comments that are deemed relevant to the research topic. Presented gender (“m” for male, “f” for female, or “n” for other including indeterminate) is included along with an anonymous name, such as Commenter 1, or a pseudonym for illustration and ease of reading based on the presumed national or ethnic background of the writer for initial posters. The non-textual reactions available to users on Facebook are included in the figures as well, including “likes” that have been included as an option for users to react to posts and comments since 2009 (Kosinski et al., 2015). Five additional non-textual reactions became available to Facebook users on February 24, 2016: “love”, “haha”, “wow”, “sad”, and “angry” (Facebook, 2016). As these reactions are new, but seem to be clear expressions of affect with particular value, they are an interesting source of data on affective expression that is confirmable by the reader.

These reactions, along with text and images, are included as additional affective data to be interpreted by the researcher and for the reader to confirm the interpretation, and are additional data to present the voice of the community. Ensuring the voice of the community is accurately represented is often deemed a hallmark of quality interpretative research (Lincoln, 1995) and follows the critical approach of this thesis that attempts to include underrepresented or marginalized voices. Although cloaking techniques including paraphrasing are used and were deemed necessary for ethical considerations, I attempted to ensure an accurate presentation of the voice of participants.

#### 3.4.5. Quality in subjectivity of interpretation: Positionality and reflexivity

The second and third criteria addressing researcher bias are positionality and reflexivity. Positionality refers to the position of the researcher in regards to the fields of study and subjects of inquiry, and its value as a quality criterion can be judged on whether the researcher is open and discloses their social and cultural positions (Lincoln, 1995). I have previously briefly described my position in relation to veganism and the communities under study: I have identified as vegan for roughly ten years, and have been a minimally active member of each of the Facebook groups for varying time periods. I have typically been a lurker in these groups, like most group members. I have been least active in the Southern Swedish vegan group, where my basic knowledge of the Swedish language has been a barrier to more active participation. As an educated US American citizen with some economic and cultural resources, I may be in a privileged position in relation to others in the group, although my approximate position is not uncommon. Although I was born and raised in the USA, I have a mixed Korean and European racial background, which is an uncommon subjective position in the Seattle and Korea Vegan groups, and a more unusual position in the Southern Sweden Vegan group.

In addition to making clear my social position, I make clear my value position by including one of the explicit goals of this thesis as contributing to the mainstream of veganism for

environmental, public health, and ethical reasons. This value-explicit approach to research follows the stance that value-neutral research does not exist, and by not attempting to achieve value neutrality and instead making value and critical researcher interests explicit, research maximizes “strong objectivity” (Harding, 2006). This is the position that only by making the subjective position of the researcher clear and included as part of the research can a “strong objective” stance be achieved.

In addition to making social, cultural, and value positions open and explicit, these positions are reflected upon throughout the thesis, including not only the analysis but also the development of research questions, conceptual framework, and methodological approach. This reflexive approach emphasizes self-awareness as a quality criterion (Lincoln, 1995). Reflexivity includes the acknowledgement and awareness that the choice of issues presented and the analysis of data is driven by a dialogue between the researcher’s position and background, extant research, and data (Howell, 2013). By including reflexive autoethnography as an explicit, triangulated method, the reflexivity of the analytical process is privileged. This inclusion of reflexive analysis benefits the analysis by acting as an additional source of data (Gould, 2012) as well as acting as a quality criterion to guide interpretation. This is particularly important as the objects of study are expressions of affect, as reflexivity is crucial in establishing an empathetic relationship with others and can enable discernment of subtle differences in emotional states (Lincoln, 1995).

## **4. Results and analysis**

The analysis of data resulted in four broad categories distinguished by the objects of affective expressions and any resulting affective orientations. As defined earlier, affect is always in relation to an object, such as a person, place, practice, idea, or thing (Ahmed, 2010; 2014; Richard & Rudnykyj, 2009). By categorizing the analysis by the type of object, the theory generated can more be directly applicable to answering the second research questions that asks how affective orientations are created between vegans; as affective orientations are directed towards objects, the theory becomes clearer when distinguished by the object. In addition, after initially attempting coding categories in other ways, it became clear that creating themes by object was most coherent, as individual sets of interactions towards an object often have many expressions with different valence, intensity, and value.

The four categories based on object of affect are the negotiations of affective orientations towards products and services, consumption infrastructure, people outside the groups under study, and other people within the groups under study. Within each of these categories, subcategories were identified that describe the particular affective expressions that socially create group affective orientations. The descriptions of these expressions include quotations of representative or exceptional affective interactions and analysis of the negotiation of social

affect within them. This section will conclude with a brief overview of the four themes in answering the research questions.

#### **4.1. Negotiating affective orientations towards products and services**

There were many examples across all three groups of vegans expressing affect towards particular products or services. Some of these expressions were simple and involved minimal social affect, while others were very complex and contextual. The four subcategories that emerged from the data on affective expressions towards products and services were: positive affect towards shared vegan consumption opportunities, mixed affect towards vegan products, the creation of social affect towards new objects, and the negotiation of affect in a context of distrust.

##### **4.1.1. Positive affect towards shared vegan consumption opportunities**

The most common affective expressions in all three groups involved sharing opportunities of vegan consumption to the group and expressions of positive affect towards them, including particular affects such as excitement, surprise, or general approval. These posts and comments involved sharing pictures or descriptions of food at restaurants, food for sale at stores, food cooked at home, recipes, links to other websites or social media groups, and opportunities for vegan consumption beyond food (such as household products, cosmetics, and commercial services).

The affect expressed and created through these interactions varied in their particular social relations, but were characterized by their universally positive affect towards objects. Many of these affective expressions simply included a shared photo or link without any comments. However, approval and positive affect was expressed in the groups through Facebook's like and reaction features. Figure 4 depicts a typical example of such a post that includes a photo and recommendation for a vegan sandwich at a particular restaurant, receiving a relatively large number of likes for the Southern Sweden Vegan group. Other similar posts received comments of excitement and approval, such as the example in Figure 5 depicting a supermarket display of vegan cheese in the same group. While this post also included photos, a positively valenced description of the offer, and information on a specific location, this second example also received comments in reply that reproduced or intensified the positive affect in the group. Some comments also received like reactions of their own.

**Lindy Bergström (f):** The best sandwich I've tasted in a long time! If anyone's in Båstad try the Bakficka at the harbor. They make incredibly good vegan sandwiches.



^ 17 likes

**Figure 4.** Post in Southern Sweden Vegan group sharing and recommending a vegan sandwich. No comments were posted in reply, but the post received many approving likes.

**Erik Viklund (m):** ICA Maxi [grocery store] in Råå. Prominent display. 😊 Good price too. 😊



^ 39 likes

**Commenter 1 (f):** Niiice! 😊

**Commenter 2 (f):** What?!? I'll go there tomorrow! It's great to be able to shop nearby. 😊

^ 1 like

**Commenter 3 (f):** My parents brought one of these home (they know how to feed their vegan daughter right)

^ 3 likes

**Figure 5.** Post and comments in Southern Sweden Vegan group sharing excitement and approval at a small town supermarket selling vegan cheese prominently.

The universally positive affective expressions may be simple and expected for vegan consumption communities, but they depict a relatively simple form of the affective processes apparent in online consumption communities discussed as part of the conceptual framework in this thesis – specifically, the affective value creation cycle inspired by theory on online

consumption communities and digital prosumption (Brinks, 2016). Vegans in these groups come together bringing collective feelings with similar affective orientations towards objects of vegan consumption. This is a sensemaking process that aligns collective feelings in the group with objects. The interactions between group members – even simple interactions such as likes – are a form of social affect that sacralizes affect in the community. In these examples, affect is stabilized in the group as positive towards the shared objects of vegan consumption with varying intensities; they can include passive likes or highly intense excitement. Finally, an affective orientation towards objects of consumption are created, such as positive feelings towards the harbor sandwiches or the vegan cheese offered by ICA Maxi.

Other versions of these unanimously positive affective posts and interactions towards products included comments that increased the intensity of positive affect and added related objects that also received positive affective expressions. Figure 6 shows an example of this from the Seattle Vegan group. The initial poster shared a brand of vegan nail polish with high praise and recommendation, expressing intense positive affect towards the nail polish, and received a large number of positive reactions from the group. As opposed to the previous examples, the commenters, including the initial poster, spread the positive affect in the post towards other products by the same brand (“their perfumes are great”, “I tried other samples and they were great”) and also other brands of vegan nail polish. Although the initial poster expressed positive affect to one particular brand of nail polish at a specific store, through the process of social affect in the group, positive affect became directed towards three associated objects: the particular nail polish by Pacifica, the brand Pacifica itself encompassing other products, and the category of vegan nail polish, specifically towards other brands that the commenters had tried and recommend.

**Miranda Connor (f):** I went to Bartell's [drug store] today and found VEGAN NAIL POLISH! WHAT. It went on so easy and smooth. Why do we use animals at all? That's what I think with every lovely vegan product. I'm a happier person.



*^ 56 likes*

*^ 2 love reactions*

**Commenter 1 (f):** I think Wet and Wild and E.L.F. are vegan nail polishes too

*^ 2 likes*

**Miranda Connor (f):** I didn't know ELF sold nail polish? Awesome! I haven't tried anything beyond their mascara.

**Commenter 2 (f):** I love Pacifica!

*^ 2 likes*

**Miranda Connor (f):** Me too, their perfumes are great. The polish was great. I tried other samples and they were great. They're not afraid to say "vegan" on the packaging. Great!

*^ 1 like*

**Figure 6.** Post and comments in Seattle Vegan group expressing positive affect towards a vegan nail polish brand, and additional comments creating related positive affect to other products by the same brand and other brands.

Positive affect is not only created and sacralized in these groups towards products with targeted value to vegan consumers, such as vegan sandwiches, vegan cheeses, or vegan nail polishes. Other products and services that align with the affective orientations of vegans, such as perceived environmentally-friendly and ethical forms of production and service, were similarly affectively negotiated as positive in these groups. Figure 7 depicts affective expressions towards a service process at the Coop grocery store from the Southern Sweden Vegan group. Coop, a grocery store chain in Sweden, began to offer less attractive vegetables for sale at lower prices; these vegetables would presumably be discarded and not offered for sale otherwise. While the products are vegan, the object that was praised in the group was the practice of a reduction in food waste by Coop.

**Lilly Wallin (f):** Tip! Coop [grocery store] in Lund and other Coop stores are selling “oddball vegetables” to try to reduce food waste. Carrots that are short and parsnips that are long and narrow and beets shaped like small potatoes are 25% cheaper. Cheers Coop!  
[Link to Coop website]



^ 38 likes

**Commenter 1 (m):** Finally. They're thrown away otherwise...

**Commenter 2 (n):** Shame it's only Coop so far but I say cheers to Coop for starting it!

**Commenter 3 (f):** Hopefully it will spread to more stores and more things. I went away with some carrots today in any case. 😊

**Figure 7.** Post and comments in Southern Sweden Vegan group expressing and sharing positive affect towards a grocery store for starting a program to reduce food waste.

The interactions in Figure 7 illustrate additional complexity in affective interactions beyond the universal praise seen in previous examples. The commenters express mild negative affect towards the standard grocery store practice of throwing away unattractive vegetables instead of offering them for sale at a discounted price. They also express hope that these perceived environmentally-friendly practices will spread. These affective negotiations of disappointment and hope will be explored in section 4.2. In addition, the commenters praise Coop specifically at the expense of other similar grocery stores. This mix of positive affect towards what is perceived as the best object and negative affect towards those that may be acceptable, but not exemplary, is explored in the next section.

#### 4.1.2. Mixed affect towards vegan products: Seeking positive alternatives

Unanimous positive social affect was not sacralized towards all vegan consumption opportunities. A recurring theme in the Seattle Vegan and Southern Sweden Vegan groups was negotiating positive affect towards more ideal products: either those with better taste, better price, better accessibility, or were otherwise more desirable in the communities. Figure 8 depicts a typical example of these interactions. The initial poster states dissatisfaction (negative affect) towards particular vegan products – in this case, for a vegan cheese's “disgusting” nature

and a crème fraiche’s “so-so” taste – and asks for alternative recommendations. Commenters then recommend a number of products based on their selection, taste, price, accessibility, or acceptance from others (“even the meat-eaters at work like it”).

<p><b>Josefin Lena Sundberg (f):</b> Now I feel like I need advice. I want to buy a tasty vegan cheese. The only cheese we have here tastes like the most disgusting thing I’ve eaten for a long time. I’d also like a good crème fraiche or sour cream. I tried Oatly’s crème fraiche and it tasted so-so. I live in a small village and there’s not much to choose from. No vegan sandwich toppings at all. I plan to make my own steaks and such but I often get fatigued. I think I’ll go to Hässleholm to do more shopping. What do you usually get when you buy vegan? Thanks for reading</p> <p style="text-align: right;">^ 2 likes</p>
<p><b>Commenter 1 (f):</b> Order from Seitanfoods online, they have the most 😊 Cheeses, sandwich toppings, steaks, etc. etc. 😊</p> <p style="text-align: right;">^ 1 like</p>
<p><b>Commenter 2 (m):</b> Anamma’s ground beef/meatballs/burgers in 1 kilo packs. Cheap and tasty. For dip, try Alpro’s new “quark” or pick any natural (preferably unsweetened) plant yogurt.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">^ 1 like</p>
<p><b>Commenter 3 (f):</b> Oatly’s “imat fraich” wins if you put in some acid, like lemon. I always press fresh lemon into it and usually some herbs too. Even the meat-eaters at work like it with lemon. 😊</p>
<p><b>Commenter 4 (m):</b> ICA Maxi [supermarket] in Hässleholm has a lot of sandwich toppings from Astrid och Aporna.</p>
<p><b>Commenter 5 (f):</b> Astrid och Aporna’s cheese called “Jeezly” is at Maxi in Hässleholm!</p> <p style="text-align: right;">^ 1 like</p>
<p><b>Commenter 6 (f):</b> For dips I usually blend Toffuti’s Sour Supreme with a little plant-based cream for better consistency. I even make tzatziki with Sour Supreme.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">^ 1 like</p>

**Figure 8.** Post and comments in Southern Sweden Vegan group sharing favorite or recommended brands for plant-based food substitutes. These evaluations carry varying intensities and valences of social affect towards the product, either explicit or implicit.

Each of these recommendations carries an affective component. Some are explicit and relatively intensely valenced – “they have the most 😊” – while others are more muted in that they just mention the existence of a product or a preference for it. However, repeated exposures to recommendations for a particular product or brand can sacralize positive affect towards a product in the community. For example, during the observed period in the Southern Sweden Vegan group there were several other mentions and recommendations for “Jeezly” or “Cheezly” vegan cheese from the brand Astrid och Aporna in different posts and comments. Two examples on other dates are, “We have a craving for Astrid och Aporna’s Jeezly, has anyone seen it anywhere in Northern Skåne?” and “I called Miatorp’s Pizzeria just now and they have A&A’s Cheezly mozzarella flavor. You have to know this, of course! 😊”. These repeated exposures create a positive social affect towards a product in the group. In my

experience with these groups prior to the research process, I would become curious about particular vegan products that were repeatedly mentioned over time and would seek them out in stores. These stabilized affects that are socially created impact consumption behaviors, as described in the model of socially created affect in the conceptual framework inspired by Brinks (2016).

#### 4.1.3. Creating social affect towards new objects

While the previous two sections described positive social affect created towards known and recommended products or services, there were also many examples in all three groups of affect being created towards new objects. These examples show a different affective process in which an affective orientation towards a specific object is not brought into the group; rather, the affective orientation is mixed or in question at the start of affective interactions until other group members sacralize group affect towards the object. Some of these objects were completely new to the initial poster, while in other cases the posters expressed mixed affect towards the object, apparently seeking affective clarification from the group.

There were many examples of group members sharing new objects in the Korea Vegan group, because the group was comprised of many immigrant or visiting members new to Korean products. Figure 9 depicts a representative example in which the poster shares a photo of an unknown product, asking for clarification. The first commenter notes that it is a yogurt product, and the poster replies with negative affect towards the product – “gross” – and positive affect towards the commenter for helping her. In this case, the first commenter had no explicit affect and simply stated what the product was. Despite this, the initial poster expressed negative affect. This seems to be because of pre-existing collective feelings within the group – the group members know that a non-vegan product is bad, and responds with negative affect accordingly. This leaves no doubt for the majority of group members, who are lurkers, how the group feels about the product. In addition, the second commenter intensifies the group affect by stating hypocrisy in the bottle labelling and declaring it intensely negative: “what a load of sh--”. The progression of affect in this interaction starts neutrally, becomes negative through sensemaking, and then intensifies with the second commenter.

**Jennifer Riggs (f):** Here's something else I found. Google Translate isn't making sense for me. What is this? I am always weary of new drinks.



**Commenter 1 (f):** This is drinking yoghurt.

*^ 1 like*

**Jennifer Riggs (f):** Gross. Thank you. ☺

**Commenter 2 (m):** the text on the top of the bottle says “where nature begins”. what a load of sh--.

*^ 1 like*

**Figure 9.** Post and comments in Korea Vegan group seeking community information on a new product; reactions are disgust and hostility when revealed the product presumably contains dairy ingredients.

In other cases, affect is mixed within a single post. In these cases, group affect may not be stabilized in a positive or negative valence, but rather it may depend upon the initial affective orientations of the individuals consuming the post. Figure 10 depicts an interesting example of this. The poster posts a photo and describes a dish she made using a new vegan faux chicken product. Although she says it “turned out great” and she “loved it”, she does note negative affect towards the appearance prior to it being cooked. Whether the poster’s positive affect in appreciation for the dish outweighs the negative affect in its pre-cooked appearance is up to the individual affective orientation of the lurker. The photo adds additional dimensions of affective communication, as the appearance of the photo may also trigger affect based upon the individual’s affective orientation. Researchers have documented that vegans sometimes experience intensely negative affect, including disgust and aversion, towards meat-related imagery and descriptions (Hamilton, 2006). Personally, while viewing the photo, I reacted with disgust at the pieces of faux chicken, although I likely would not have if the image was not included. I even considered removing the figure as I did not want such an adverse image in my thesis, but kept it for its theoretical value. Group affect may have slightly stabilized as positive, with the positive final expression from the poster and the 16 likes, but it is not possible to know how many lurkers left the interaction with a positive orientation.

**Andrea Dillard (f):** Made “chicken” noodle soup with udon noodles, haha, and I used the chicken I got from VeganShop Korea. Turned out great, the “chicken meat” has the same texture as real chicken. But it looks pretty gross before it’s cooked... but really, does any meat look appealing before being cooked? Overall I loved it!



^ 16 likes

**Figure 10.** Post in Korea Vegan group sharing a photo of a meal and expressing excitement and ambivalence at the similarity between chicken and a vegan chicken substitute. There were no comments on this post but several likes.

Other mixed affective interactions arose around negotiating novel practices that hadn't been widely negotiated in the community. In these cases, sometimes complex issues arose and different solutions were proposed, with community members expressing positive or negative affect towards different ideas. Figure 11 depicts an example from the Seattle Vegan group discussing vegan options for infant feeding for parents who can't breastfeed. Multiple options are negotiated with conflicting affect. Nut milk is originally seen as potentially positive by the poster, but soon expressed as very negative and dangerous by another poster who received the most likes in the conversation. Soy based formulas is seen as a potential option at first, but then described as “not vegan” with negative valence from another commenter, and then two commenters describe it as the “next best” option after donor milk, despite it not being vegan. Only donor milk, particularly from a vegan donor, had only positive affect created towards it, resulting in a sacralization of this option as the most positive for the group.

A rare occurrence in the example in Figure 11 was the mildly positive affect shown towards non-vegan soy formula for infants. This is one of the few times that non-vegan consumption was an object of positive affect in these groups. This appears to be an acceptable “gray area” (Greenebaum, 2012) for vegans in this group in which a product may not meet the technical definition of vegan, but is still consumed by those who identify as vegan – other researched examples of acceptable gray areas of vegan consumption, to some vegans, include sugar refined with the use of animal bone char or honey. By analyzing the conversations in the online group, the affective negotiations are revealed that determine whether the gray area consumption practice is acceptable or not. Based on this conversation, the use of non-vegan soy formula becomes acceptable for the group through the process of social affect – positive affect is expressed and little negative affect counteracts it.

<p><b>Lalo Zazen (n):</b> I have a question for vegan parents here. For transgender parents, parents who've had breast reductions, or breast removal due to cancer and supplement with donor milk or maybe nut milk, what are your thoughts? What do you say to people who say babies don't need nut based milk or they cause nut allergies? Help!</p> <p style="text-align: right;">^ 2 likes</p>
<p><b>Commenter 1 (f):</b> There are tons of soy formulas. I've never seen a nut based one.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">^ 1 like</p>
<p><b>Commenter 2 (f):</b> Soy based formulas are not vegan. Their D3 comes from lanolin [sheep's wool] and some comes from fish.</p>
<p><b>Commenter 3 (m):</b> That's correct that I think there are no nut based formulas. They are either based on cow milk or soy. Guidelines say no milk should be given to babies for their first year. Only breast milk or formula for the first 4-6 months. If you're worried about allergies, talk to a pediatrician, but new research says exposure to allergenic foods reduces allergies in kids.</p>
<p><b>Commenter 4 (m):</b> Please be careful. There's one important thing. Plant based milk is not formula. Those parents giving plain nut or hemp milk to infants are taking a huge risk.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">^ 15 likes</p>
<p><b>Commenter 5 (f):</b> I'm a milk donor. If you can't breastfeed or get access to donor milk, soy formula isn't vegan but it's the next best option.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">^ 3 likes</p>
<p><b>Commenter 6 (f):</b> Babies must have breast milk or formula until age one. Soy formula isn't completely vegan but it's the next best thing. Donor milk is a great option and there are vegan donors! There are great networks on Facebook to meet donors. Breast milk is amazing stuff!</p> <p style="text-align: right;">^ 1 like</p>

**Figure 11.** Post and comments in Seattle Vegan group negotiating complex affect towards different infant feeding options for vegan parents who can't breastfeed. There is mixed affect towards multiple objects and a rare example of positive affect towards non-vegan consumption.

#### 4.1.4. Negotiating affect towards products in a context of distrust

The Korea Vegan group had contextual elements that made it a special case in the negotiation of affect towards some products and services. Members in the Korea Vegan group often relayed personal stories that expressed frustration at Korean product manufacturers and restaurateurs for not accommodating vegan consumers, either due to ignorance about vegan consumers in society or a language barrier, and gave specific strategies to avoid confusion. As a representative example, a female commenter suggested “Don't ask for 채식주의자라서 [vegetarian food]. They will give you ham inside and say it's just ham, it's vegetarian. Instead, tell them the exact ingredients that you want.”

Members of the Korea Vegan group shared several personal stories of being served non-vegan meals from restaurants after either requesting vegan versions or being told the menu item was

vegan. The affective expressions after such incidents ranged from sadness and empathetic support amongst group members to anger and hostility towards the restaurateur or Korea in general. Figure 12 depicts a representative example in which a group member was served a Korean dish that seemed to contain milk after being told that it did not. The poster and commenters imply that this is a common occurrence by generalizing their reactions to “them”. The first commenter shares a strategy to minimize being served unwanted milk, while the second commenter implies such experiences at restaurants are inevitable and expresses anger at the situation. Despite the two commenters’ different advice, both express negative affect towards Korean restaurants. In addition, the dominant reaction from the community was shock and sadness, indicating empathy and emotional support for the initial poster. The plurality of Facebook reactions were “sad” reactions to the initial post, along with “wow” reactions next. The two commenters began their communications with “Oh no” and “I’m so sorry. ☹️” respectively.

<p><b>Patricia Emerson (f):</b> Be careful when ordering 콩국수 (soybean noodle soup). I had some for lunch today. It seemed milky so I asked if milk was in it. They said no, but I felt sick later after I only ate a third of it! A friend later told me they don’t admit if there’s milk in it because it’s a way for them to cheat and save money, since milk is cheaper than bean paste. Sad vegan! ☹️</p>
<p style="text-align: right;">^ 5 sad reactions ^ 3 wow reactions ^ 2 likes ^ 2 angry reactions</p>
<p><b>Commenter 1 (f):</b> Oh no! Thanks for the heads up. ☹️ Next time maybe tell them you’re allergic to milk? It’s unfortunate we have to do that but sometimes it’s the only way to get honesty.</p>
<p style="text-align: right;">^ 1 like</p>
<p><b>Commenter 2 (f):</b> I’m so sorry. ☹️ I can tell when I accidentally consume dairy products because I feel like such sh-- afterwards. Then I get angry. Good thing you’re such a great cook!</p>
<p style="text-align: right;">^ 1 like</p>

**Figure 12.** Post and comments in Korea Vegan group expressing sadness, anger, and distrust at Korean restaurateurs for claiming products are vegan when they contain milk, as well as empathy and support amongst group members.

Previous studies have discussed ways in which vegans share consumption strategies with each other, including the types of products to seek out or avoid and how to receive vegan products from service workers who aren’t familiar with veganism (Cherry, 2015). However, the contribution by focusing on social affect is that it is revealed how and where reactions are directed. In the case of Figure 12, negative affect is directed towards the restaurant and perhaps a large swath of Korean society as being untrustworthy in accommodating vegan consumption. In addition, it illustrates the emotional support between vegans in online consumption communities upon experiencing difficulties.

The distrust towards potential objects of vegan consumption in the Korea Vegan group appeared to be broader than miscommunications and seemed to pervade many aspects of consumption culture in the group. Figure 13 depicts an example in which a poster shares excitement over the discovery of vegan household supplies, including a photo with a “Leaping Bunny” certification logo and a “Made in Canada” symbol. Despite the excitement and evidence that the product is vegan, two commenters investigate and question its acceptability – the first by checking the company and certification body’s websites to confirm, and the second emailing the company even after the first commenter confirmed its lack of animal ingredients. I empathize with these commenters, as when I was in Korea I began to question many forms of consumption after negative experiences – I received fish sauce in meals when I was told it had none, I entered markets with strong meat and fish smells that were difficult to escape, and it was difficult to determine the origin of ingredients, even once I understood the words on the ingredient labels. It could be said that my affective orientation, and others in the group, was changed in Korea to default to negative towards objects until they were proven trustworthy.

**Rachel Burks (f):** Found at Seoul Mart! Bunny Certified. Whole line of household cleaning supplies



^ 12 likes

**Commenter 1 (f):** Just wondering, did you check to see if it says “no animal ingredients” below the bunny logo too? Leaping Bunny only considers animal testing and not ingredient origin I think. :( The website doesn’t have much information on ingredient origins. [link: <http://www.vipsoap.com>]

**Commenter 1 (f):** Ok, it looks like they told Leaping Bunny that they don’t use animal ingredients. I think it’s odd they don’t make that clear on the company website. [link:<http://www.leapingbunny.org/content/vip-soap-products>]

**Rachel Burks (f):** It says no animal testing or animal products by the bunny logo :) at least on the toilet bowl cleaner.

^ 1 like

**Commenter 2 (f):** Thanks for checking the toilet bowl cleaner! :) I sent an email to VIP Soap’s customer service just to make sure for the rest of their line. I’ll report back when I get a reply.

^ 1 like

**Figure 13.** Post and comments in Korea Vegan group expressing excitement towards a discovery of vegan cleaning supplies by the poster and distrust and vetting by commenters.

## 4.2. Negotiating affective orientations with consumption infrastructure

There were recurring examples across all three studied groups of community members creating social affect around what I term “vegan infrastructure”. I use this term to refer to the array of services, products, events, and places that enable or support vegan consumption, such as online and offline vegan shops, other service businesses, community groups, and vegan food products. Vegan infrastructure can be considered a subset of overall consumption infrastructure that supports vegan consumption. I use the term “places of vegan consumption” to refer to individual components of the overall vegan infrastructure. The affect created towards a place’s vegan infrastructure was typically related to changes, whether positive or negative, to difficulties in managing a lacking infrastructure, or in negotiating whether a place of consumption was part of vegan infrastructure or not.

### 4.2.1. Positive affect towards improvement in vegan infrastructure

Like the overall positive affect sacralized towards vegan products deemed unproblematic in the first section of the analysis, positive affect was socially negotiated as unanimously positive towards positive changes in vegan infrastructure in each of the three groups. The positive affect towards changes in places of consumption towards veganism was not only confined to places that sell products. Vegan infrastructure includes vegan consumption of experiences and traditions, as well. Figure 14 depicts an example in the Southern Sweden Vegan group in which a poster shares a news story that reports that seven cities in Sweden have decided to change traditional Easter decorations by removing bird feathers. The poster praises the cities for changing, but negative affect is also created and becomes salient towards the cities that continue using feathers. This example and similar posts in the groups illustrate ways in which consumption is not confined to the purchase of products. Vegan infrastructure, or consumption infrastructure more generally, includes the “experience economy” that has been touted and researched over the past two decades, in which consumers purchase experiences rather than products (Pine & Gilmore, 1998), but also public experiences that are not directly purchased, such as the city-funded feathers in this example.

In addition, both the poster and the commenter in Figure 14 share ways in which they attempt to stimulate change in the way places of consumption are created – the poster indicates they are “investigating the situation” in the city in which they work and “hope some of you do the same”, while the commenter “thought about hanging up a sign” to express their disapproval. This subjective participation in attempting to shape the future of consumption experiences seems less like the traditional practice of a consumer, and may be more similar to the practice of a “construer” – a subject who contributes to consumer culture by “presenting the possible and the potential”, using their subjective experience to attempt to transform consumption into “what is possible” rather than only consuming what is available (Firat & Dholakia, 2016). This possible shift in the way consumers behave, whether they are called “construers” or not, follows

the participatory consumption logic we see in the acts of digital prosumption in creating affect in the groups under study and elsewhere, as well as in other forms of consumer value co-creation that have gained growing attention in consumer and service research over the past ten years (Galvagno & Dalli, 2014; Ritzer & Jurgenson, 2010).

**Sonja Hermansson (f):** At least seven cities in Sweden have decided this year to celebrate a feather-free Easter. Wonderful, I think, but there can be more! I'm investigating the situation in the city where I work and hope some of you do the same for the cities where you live and work.



[Link to an animal rights group news post: "Seven cities become feather-free for Easter"]

^ 9 likes

**Commenter 1 (m):** I was in Höör and saw feathers. I thought about hanging up a sign that says, "Think about it. The birds have the right to their own feathers" or something but I had nothing to write on. ☹

**Figure 14.** Post in Southern Sweden Vegan group that praises cities for changing tradition by removing feathers from traditional Easter decorations. However, both the poster and commenter hope more cities change and indicate they are willing to contribute to change.

Likely due to the difficulties in being vegan there, members of the Korea Vegan group expressed particularly intense positive affect towards signs that Korea is changing to become more accommodating towards vegans and towards new vegan infrastructure, including new vegan retail products and retail locations (both online and brick-and-mortar). This positive affect was even more intensified when a community member was responsible for the change or contribution.

Figure 15 depicts a particularly intense example in which a community member won a government grant to start a vegan tour program in Korea. This post received one of the three most likes of any contribution during the period of data collection for the Korea Vegan group, along with ten "love" reactions. The poster indicates that they have "great news" and the new tour program "will be a great chance for veganism in Korea". Several commenters share positive expressions of affect and support for the poster – for example, "yes!", "fantastic job", and "congratulations" and two commenters indicate a desire to help with the project. While distrust and negative affect towards some parts of the service industry in Korea were previously established, there was strongly positive affect towards those who enact positive change.

**Ji-Hoon Yi (m):** Hi. I am Ji-Hoon. I am vegan and Korean. I have great news!

Korean Vegan Tours, that I proposed to the government (Korea Tourism Organization) has been selected as a Tourism Venture of the Korean government in a contest that selects creative and promising tourism proposals. I am very happy to be recognized by the Korean government. It means they think veganism in Korea is profitable and promising.

Korean Vegan Tours provides various Korean vegan cultural activities. It just started so I have a lot to do including a pilot tour. I will provide new content for vegans, new customers for vegan businesses and restaurants, and will be a powerful wave of veganism for Korea. I think it will be great chance for veganism in Korea.

I am thinking this project will need some people. So, I will recruit until the end of 2016 people who can help me. If you have the will and ability to participate, please contact me.

Let's make a giant Vegan Action together! ☺

^ 70 likes  
^ 10 love reactions  
^ 2 wow reactions

---

**Commenter 1 (m):** Yes!

^ 1 like

---

**Commenter 2 (m):** whoa fantastic job Ji-Hoon!

^ 2 likes

---

**Commenter 3 (m):** Congratulations!

^ 1 like

---

**Commenter 4 (m):** Congratulations !!

^ 1 like

---

**Commenter 5 (f):** That's great. ☺ I wish I could help but I'm not in Korea right now. I joined this group because I'm thinking of doing a uni term abroad in Korea. I wanted to know options for food and things. Having something like this that promotes veganism will definitely help, so thank you for doing this. ☺

^ 1 like

---

**Commenter 6 (f):** wowww! congratulations, i'm vegan too and I would like to help you!

^ 2 likes

**Figure 15.** Post and comments in Korea Vegan group expressing intensely positive affect at the start of a project promoting vegan consumption in Korea including support from the Korean government. This post received an unusually large number of likes and positive reactions for the group.

While I lived in Korea, I experienced disaffection and distrust with the overall vegan infrastructure there, along with both community support and excitement for positive changes in vegan infrastructure. While lurking on Korean vegan groups, including the one under study here, I found many ideas and suggestions for stores and restaurants, but the enthusiastic positive group affect towards certain establishments led me to visit those (along with other practical

considerations such as distance and cost). I also attempted to contribute to the group while I lived in Korea and found more enthusiasm than I found in groups in other locations. For example, after discovering a western-style farmer's market with locally grown fruits and vegetables, I shared photos to a vegan Facebook group in Korea (not the one under study here). I received many more likes, excited and thankful replies, and curious and hopeful questions than I had experienced with similar posts elsewhere.

The differences in positive affective relations between the Korea Vegan group and the others was both in intensity – supportive and enthusiastic affect was greater in Korea Vegan – and in quality. The type of posts shared about vegan infrastructure in the Korea Vegan group was broader and more appreciated than in Seattle or Southern Sweden.

#### 4.2.2. Negative affect and emotional support in lacking vegan infrastructure

Although positive affective expressions towards positive changes to vegan infrastructure were common in all three groups, they were not the only types of affect created towards vegan infrastructure in the groups under study. Negatively valenced affect and support amongst community members were apparent in situations when vegan infrastructure was insufficient to meet members' affective needs. This was mainly apparent in the context of lacking vegan infrastructure in the Korea Vegan group. The lack of supportive vegan infrastructure was noted in many posts, but a female commenter summarized the community feeling, “Korea is the least vegan-friendly country I've ever been to. There is meat in EVERYTHING. I'm on my way back there, and I guess I'll be losing some weight.”

Figure 16 depicts a typical example of this frustration in the Korea Vegan group. The initial poster reports that a tofu burger, which would typically be vegan in western restaurants, contains dairy and egg ingredients. The commenters agree with the negative affect towards Korean vegan infrastructure, expressing that “Korea is insane randomly putting eggs and milk into food” and that “milk is even in the main ingredients of orange juice here”. The repeated negative affective expressions create an intense, stable, socially created negative affect towards the overall infrastructure and perhaps the entire country.

My experience in Korea additionally illustrates some of the difficulties with the meager vegan infrastructure there. Through my seven weeks living in the largest city in South Korea, Seoul, I became very reliant on the few vegan restaurants on a short subway ride away and formed friendly relationships with two nearby non-vegan restaurant staff members who understood my needs with vegan consumption. I had many moments of frustration, sadness, and even anger when I could not locate any vegan restaurants or find vegan products in mainstream stores.

**Hannah Pak (f):** I emailed Koreaburger to ask whether their tofu burger is vegan, and this is the response I received:

“Unfortunately, the bread (bun) includes milk, eggs, and margarine. Also, the burger includes milk, eggs, and margarine. Um, we recommend a green vegetable salad that is fresh. (and Italian dressing)

Thank you very much.  
Koreaburger CS Team.”

*^ 1 angry reaction*

**Commenter 1 (f):** Korea is insane randomly putting eggs and milk into food even though eggs and milk aren't even typical Korean food.

*^ 1 like*

**Commenter 2 (m):** Milk is even in the main ingredients of orange juice here like wtf.[what the f---]

**Figure 16.** Post and comments in Korea Vegan group expressing anger, frustration, and bewilderment at the use of non-vegan ingredients in foods that are expected to be vegan.

The most affectively negative experience during my seven week stay in Korea was during a two-day trip in the city of Busan, the second largest city in South Korea with around 3.5 million residents but only four vegan restaurants at the time. I planned to visit three of the vegan restaurants that were positively regarded in online vegan communities and accessible to me, although they were scattered around the city with around a one-hour transit time from my hostel. On my way to the first restaurant, I wandered the streets of Busan for around a half hour attempting to locate it, as Korean businesses are often located on 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, and 4<sup>th</sup> floors of buildings with small signs on the street level indicating what is upstairs. When I finally found the restaurant, it appeared closed, and a worker opened the door waving me away, smiling but telling me the restaurant was closed today but not telling me why.

I left discouraged, but took the subway for over an hour, looking for a second restaurant, hungry after not having eaten through the late afternoon, and again could not locate it. I consulted my maps and asked for directions to the address, but the restaurant was nowhere to be found. I returned home distraught, and later found through an online community that the restaurant had recently moved across the city. Even more discouraged but still hopeful, on the last day, I attempted to visit a final vegan restaurant after double-checking the hours and location. When I arrived to the address, I found that it, again, was closed. The sign on the door indicated it was now closed on Tuesdays (the day I had visited), while the restaurant's website and Facebook page indicated it was only closed on Sundays. I sat on the curb for a few minutes distraught, and when I got back to my hostel I left a scathing review for the restaurant on a vegan website – which I later deleted due to guilt for potentially hurting one of the few vegan businesses in the city. I ended up eating nothing but fruits and nuts during my stay. I enjoyed other aspects of the city, but my difficulties and frustration with the limited vegan infrastructure left me with a strongly negative feeling towards my visit overall.

The difficulty of being a vegan consumer in Korea pervades many of the group contributions there, and other posters recount experiences similar to my own. Figure 17 depicts an example of a conversation negotiating affect towards sparse vegan infrastructure in Korea. Sadness and frustration are evident when trying to maintain vegan consumption in such a difficult environment: the initial poster says “I seriously want to cry” and commenters share emotional support and negative affective expressions towards Korea and particular forms of infrastructure, such as the standard of using milk in orange juice. One commenter sums up the situation in Korea around milk in orange juice as “f--ing ridiculous” and the original poster agrees. Other commenters give suggestions for alternatives to standard food infrastructure, such as ordering from specialty vegan websites or by making their own orange juice, which are appreciated by the original poster.

This frustration at vegan infrastructure overall in Korea is exemplified in the last comment which includes, “I make everything myself because pork and milk is in pretty much everything.” Others empathize and express emotional support to the poster: “oh, I feel the same way” and “it is very hard at the beginning [...] but you’ll get the hang of it!” All of these examples of negative orientations towards the vegan infrastructure in Korea illustrate the importance of social, cultural, and service context in the establishment of affective orientations towards consumption, and the use of emotional support in such situations.

<p><b>Sarah Slater (f):</b> It may be I'm just dealing with some culture shock, but I seriously want to cry and I'm hoping to get some clarity. Is MILK seriously in orange juice?!? In the past few days I've accidentally consumed, almost consumed, and just frustratingly haven't eaten because of hidden dairy. Please console me. I need the love of vegans in Korea right now.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">^ 1 like ^ 1 love reaction ^ 1 sad reaction</p>
<p><b>Commenter 1 (f):</b> Oh, I feel the same way.</p>
<p><b>Commenter 2 (f):</b> It is very hard at the beginning and everything seems to come with little eyes in it and tummies go hungry. But you'll get the hang of it! Find a vegan restaurant nearby and start from there. Iherb.com is indispensable and Costco has some surprising vegan snacks with English writing. There is a bounty of beautiful fruits and veggies at local markets and don't be afraid to order online!</p> <p style="text-align: right;">^ 2 likes</p>
<p><b>Sarah Slater (f):</b> I love Iherb. I've been here less than a month and my second order is already on the way. There are so few vegan places here in Daejeon. I just wish I could go to restaurants with my husband and friends and not sit there hungry and sad. You are all great.</p>
<p><b>Commenter 3 (f):</b> Try vegemom.kr and get a Korean friend or coworker to help you order from the site. It's FULL of vegan goodies. It will get better. ☺</p> <p style="text-align: right;">^ 2 likes</p>
<p><b>Sarah Slater (f):</b> Thank you, thank you!</p>
<p><b>Commenter 4 (f):</b> I just looked and milk is in the "100% orange juice" most people buy. F---ing ridiculous. WHY DO YOU NEED MILK IN ORANGE JUICE? That's like putting rice in Coca Cola.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">^ 3 likes</p>
<p><b>Sarah Slater (f):</b> My thoughts exactly.</p>
<p><b>Commenter 5 (m):</b> Make your own orange juice. I make everything myself since it seems like pork or milk is in pretty much everything.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">^ 1 like</p>

**Figure 17.** Post and comments in Korea Vegan group expressing sadness, frustration, shock, anger, and community support at the difficulties with vegan consumption in Korea.

4.2.3. Mourning and affect transfer on closure of a place of vegan consumption

In addition to negative affect being socially created towards vegan infrastructure at large when it is lacking, group members expressed negative affect when individual places of vegan consumption closed. Vegans in these communities develop intense emotional attachment to trustworthy places that enable vegan consumption. Like the affective intensity in other situations, this was especially true in the Korea Vegan group where vegan consumption is socially and practically difficult, due to the lack of understanding and availability of vegan products. Sadness and mourning are socially shared when businesses close that the community

has formed attachment towards. Figure 18 depicts an example of reactions to the temporary closure of a vegan restaurant in the city of Busan. These reactions express shock, sadness, and mourning over the temporary closure and empathy with the business owner, Victoria. They appear to result from the intense attachment between vegans and places of vegan consumption. Incidentally, this restaurant is the restaurant I attempted to visit in Busan that was closed on a Tuesday. Despite my disapproval at their lack of communication, I also felt sadness when I learned they had closed, even temporarily, because of the very few options for vegan dining in Busan.



**Figure 18.** Post and comments in Korea Vegan group expressing shock, sadness, and mourning for the temporary closure of one of the few vegan restaurants in the city of Busan.

The negative feelings of mourning and loss were sometimes expressed long after the closure of a place of vegan consumption itself. Figure 19 depicts an example in the Seattle Vegan group in a discussion of vegan cheese curds. Commenters begin to mourn and reminisce about the restaurant Squid & Ink, which I visited until it closed in 2010. Six years later, the loss of the restaurant became salient in affect once again when commenters began to remember the cheese curds available there. The commenters mourned its consumption opportunities that they express as highly positive (“they used to make this gravy... holy f--“) and its past importance in the vegan community, including its relationships in staff with other vegan restaurants. This positive affect towards the closed Squid & Ink seems to be at least partially transferred to the new related restaurants mentioned, Wayward and Highline, which in my experience seem to hold similar places in the Seattle vegan community as Squid & Ink once did, typically catering to a young, casual, and not especially health-focused clientele.

<p><b>Tyler Washington (m):</b> I drove by an A&amp;W restaurant nearby and they were advertising Wisconsin cheese curds which I was obsessed with before I went vegan. Anyone have suggestions or a recipe on how to make a vegan substitute?</p> <p style="text-align: right;">^ 2 likes</p>
<p><b>Commenter 1 (f):</b> I spent a long time looking for online vegan cottage cheese recipes and found nothing I was happy eating. I can't even imagine how to do cheese curds.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">^ 1 like</p>
<p><b>Commenter 2 (f):</b> Squid &amp; Ink used to have cheese curds... I think.</p>
<p><b>Tyler Washington (m):</b> What is that?</p>
<p><b>Commenter 2 (f):</b> It used to be the best vegan hangout ever. It was owned by the guy who started Wayward [a vegan restaurant]. It was like Kracken Bar in the university district but vegan. They used to make this gravy... holy f---. And beer and cheese soup.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">^ 3 likes</p>
<p><b>Tyler Washington (m):</b> Aww... it didn't survive? ☹</p>
<p><b>Commenter 3 (f):</b> I think some of the old owners of Squid &amp; Ink are the same people who run Highline [another vegan restaurant].</p>

**Figure 19.** Post and comments in Seattle Vegan group reminiscing about Squid & Ink, a vegan restaurant that closed six years earlier. The mourning and reminiscence spreads to emphasize its importance in the vegan community and includes the original poster, who just learned of its existence.

In the affective expressions and orientations towards vegan infrastructure and specific places of vegan consumption discussed so far, the affective valence was uniform towards each object. In the last section on vegan infrastructure, some examples of the negotiation of mixed affect in a community will be discussed.

#### 4.2.4. Negotiating differences in affect towards places of vegan consumption

Affective expressions towards places of vegan consumption was sometimes mixed between community members, rather than clearly negative or positive. In these cases, the sharing of different affective qualities and intensities were negotiated and resulted in different forms of stabilized affect amongst the group. This process of social affect created different affective orientations towards specific places of consumption. The three-step process of affect creation presented under the conceptual framework can be seen in action in these cases. First, group sensemaking was established through the sharing of collective affect. As opposed to the earlier cases, the collective affect is divergent in these cases – individuals express affect that is either positive, negative, or unclear. Second, these different affects are sacralized in the group through a process of social affect. The group's affect is stabilized, even though individuals may have affects that stray from the group's. Third, orientations towards the place of consumption is established, influencing consumption behavior.

An illustrative case of diverse sensemaking towards a potential place of vegan consumption is included in Figure 20. The poster questions the acceptability of Starbucks soy milk to vegans by asking if the brand they use is vegan. Several commenters alternately claim that the soy milk is and is not vegan: “it definitely had cow’s milk in it”, “they always used to use a [vegan] brand”, “it wouldn’t contain cow milk [but] it would have vitamin D3 which is probably from an animal source”, “it seemed like it contained milk from what they told us”, “I know it’s vegan”. The resulting confusion and distrust was expressed by one commenter: “Starbucks isn’t important enough for me to risk ordering soy milk that isn’t vegan”. However, at the end of the conversation, the original poster claimed to verify that the soy milk is vegan, and recommended to the group to “enjoy your lattes”. Upon reading and interacting in these posts, members’ affect towards Starbucks’ soy milk may have stabilized in different ways depending on the empathy with different affects. Upon my reading, regardless of two commenters’ assurances that the soy milk is vegan, I have my doubts that it is always the case.

<p><b>Britt Strom (f):</b> Does anyone know the brand of soy milk that Starbucks uses? Is it Vegemil 우유? Most types of that brand aren’t vegan. ☹️</p>
<p><b>Commenter 1 (f):</b> We asked and looked at the soy milk container at Starbucks and it definitely had cow’s milk in it.</p>
<p><b>Britt Strom (f):</b> Really?? Nooooo! Thank you. ☹️ Maybe we can write to Korean Starbucks and beg them to change their brand.</p>
<p><b>Commenter 2 (m):</b> Milk in potato chips. Milk in soy milk. 우유 [milk] bloody everywhere. ☹️</p>
<p><b>Commenter 3 (m):</b> They always used to use a brand used by vegan restaurants that is definitely vegan. But maybe it’s possible they changed.</p>
<p><b>Commenter 4 (m):</b> It wouldn’t contain cow milk. It would have vitamin D3 which is probably from an animal source. Regardless, I heard it was vegan for a long time but things might change. I can recommend Holly’s Coffee that uses almond milk, if I remember right.</p>
<p><b>Commenter 5 (f):</b> We asked to see the container at Starbucks and it said it had milk. We told the barista we can’t drink milk and she said we can’t drink the soy milk then. I don’t know, maybe check with Starbucks corporate about the ingredients, but Starbucks isn’t important enough for me to risk ordering soy milk that isn’t vegan.</p>
<p><b>Commenter 6 (m):</b> The brand we saw at Starbucks had a Starbucks logo on it. It seemed like it contained milk from what they told us, but I’m not sure.</p>
<p><b>Commenter 7 (n):</b> No wayyy. I know it’s vegan. Soy caffe. It’s vegan. Even vegan markets sell it. [photo of soy milk container]</p>
<p><b>Britt Strom (f):</b> That brand IS vegan!!!</p>
<p><b>Britt Strom (f):</b> Here’s an update: I went to Starbucks today and asked to see their soy milk. It’s a Korean Starbucks brand of soy milk that contains NO milk. ☹️ Drink your lattes!</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">^ 4 likes</p>

**Figure 20.** Post and comments in Korea Vegan group expressing alternatively negative, mixed, and positive affect towards Starbucks in Korea due to possible non-vegan soy milk.

### 4.3. Negotiating affective orientations between vegans and others

In addition to affective expressions towards products, services, overall infrastructure, and particular places related to vegan consumption, members of the three groups also expressed affect towards people outside the group – primarily non-vegans, either individually or as a group. These expressions were categorized in three areas – expressing distinction in affective orientations between vegans and others, supporting group members from perceived attacks from non-vegans, and positive affect towards changes members perceived in non-vegans towards vegan consumption.

#### 4.3.1. Distinction in affective orientations between vegans and others

There were frequent complaints in all three groups about the lack of accommodation and understanding between vegans and the dominant culture. However, the primary distinctions between vegans and others noted the ways in which vegans feel about consumption differently than others – in the terms of this paper, in the differences in affective orientations.

Figure 21 depicts a particularly evocative but representative example of a community member expressing this distinction. The poster relayed a short story in which she received a vegan product with fish blood on the packaging, using a hashtag meme (*#koreaproblems*) to indicate that this is seen as a problem with the overall culture in Korea: most Koreans wouldn't consider fish blood to be a major problem, but it is for vegans there. All of the reactions and comments were negative, including negative expressions including “ugh” and simply “☹”. While it is clear that negative affect towards the incident of leaving fish blood on packaging, and perhaps towards Korea in general, was sacralized in the group, the additional affective expression in this post is the salience that the Korea Vegan members feel differently than Korea at large.

<p><b>Amanda Patterson (f):</b> When your vegan faux meat arrives and the box is covered in fish blood from the delivery truck and no matter how hard you scrub it, your hands still smell like fish <i>#koreaproblems</i></p> <p style="text-align: right;">^ 2 sad reactions ^ 2 angry reactions</p>
<p><b>Commenter 1 (m):</b> uuuuughhh. ewwwwwwwwww.</p>
<p><b>Commenter 2 (m):</b> ☹</p>
<p><b>Commenter 3 (f):</b> ugh!</p>

**Figure 21.** Post and comments in Korea Vegan group expressing disgust at receiving a vegan product with fish blood on it, using a *#koreaproblems* hashtag indicating it is a problem with the dominant culture in Korea.

A frequent topic of research in consumer culture literature as well as other social science fields is on distinction. In the case of alternative food consumption practices such as veganism, consumers distinguish themselves culturally from others by seeking “good food” and may reproduce cultural class divides by seeking consumption experiences “for us” rather than those “for them” (Paddock, 2015). Some alternative food consumers, such as some hipsters, may be covert in their culturally distinct food practices so that their consumption practices are not co-opted by mainstream consumers (Cronin et al., 2014). These processes of distinction may be present in the groups under study, but the distinction between vegans in the groups and non-vegans in affective orientation was very clear. This conceptualization of affective distinction mirrors the theory of “affect aliens” from the conceptual framework, in which vegans feel differently from the dominant affective orientation and often suffer negative affect because of it (Ahmed, 2004; Twine, 2014).

As an additional note from Figure 21, cultural memes such as “#koreaproblems” used here have become an object of cultural study across disciplines. A theoretical conceptualization of these is that they are used to depersonalize feelings and opinions, particularly in tense situations (Miller et al., 2016). Rather than express negative affect directly towards Korea in this case, the meme adds a small amount of humor and deflects these emotions to the entire group – it is a problem for the group in Korea, rather than a personal problem. Although a thorough exploration of cultural memes on social media is out of scope for this thesis, they may be a generative topic of study for understanding the formation of social affect in online communities of consumption.

Affective distinctions became particularly tense when group members explored why others, particularly family and friends, did not choose to become vegan. Affective orientations that are positive towards vegan consumption and negative towards non-vegan consumption appeared to be difficult to reconcile with the distinct affective orientations of close others. Figure 22 depicts an example of a member of Korean Vegan group asking for advice on how to convince his girlfriend to become vegan after she watched a documentary about poor farm animal conditions and continued to eat meat and eggs. While most of the commenters shared strategies including empathy, patience, and leading by example, others expressed hostility towards non-vegan loved ones – one even referring to them as “villains”. The comments on this post were much longer than average comments in the group, relaying to me that the differences in feelings between vegans and loved ones is a particular tense subject.

A particular interesting suggestion from Figure 22 is from a comment that suggests “using literal language like ‘cow corpse’ instead of ‘steak’” that appears to be a strategy to change affective orientations towards meat – the phrase “cow corpse” is likely to draw negative affect rather than “steak”, but perhaps towards the vegan saying such phrases in addition to the meat itself. Such a statement appears to express implicit knowledge that a difference in the way non-vegans feel towards meat is one of the ways in which they are distinguished from vegans.

**Garrett Ferguson (m):** Hi everyone. Has anyone had success converting their girlfriends or boyfriends to veganism? I showed my gf [girlfriend] Earthlings [a documentary about farm animal conditions] today after dating for a while. She cried a bit and then we went to lunch and she happily ate meat and eggs in her bibimbap [Korean rice dish]. Quite a “what the f---“ moment. ☺

*^ 19 likes*

*^ 2 sad reactions*

*^ 1 angry reaction*

**Commenter 1 (f):** I suppose just keep leading by example? Showing her that it’s easy to substitute foods and still enjoy great food without cruelty. I find using literal language like “cow corpse” instead of “steak” really helps to get people thinking.

*^ 3 likes*

**Commenter 2 (f):** I’ve never “converted” anyone and it honestly isn’t a mission of mine. My previous partner definitely adjusted and ate fewer animal products but pressuring him wasn’t my goal and would definitely violate respect. Same as he never pressured me to consume animal products. Their lifestyle is their choice. You can be a resource, but if you’re trying to convert her or make her change, frankly that’s messed up. Support it but don’t force it.

*^ 19 likes*

**Commenter 3 (f):** It’s not “messed up” at all. It’s like, if your partner was racist it wouldn’t be violating respect or be messed up to tell them that’s an issue and they shouldn’t be racist. If we really believe animals matter, we must promote veganism as a moral baseline.

*^ 8 likes*

**Garrett Ferguson (m):** I’m not forcing anyone to do anything, but I don’t feel right smiling happily into the eyes of a loved one while they munch on limbs of dead and tortured animals, increasing their risk of heart disease and cancer and destroy the planet. Go vegan but don’t promote it? Call me “messed up” but I’ll wear it with pride. ☺

*^ 13 likes*

**Commenter 4 (f):** I promote veganism but understand where their social and psychological development comes from, as well as the “disconnection” between where our food comes from. Shaming them over and over does not and WILL not warm them up to trying out veganism. I cook and share vegan food, they try it out, maybe try it out again more and more. Shaming doesn’t work. If you can’t stand looking into her eyes while she eats meat, maybe date someone else. Also, we must realize being vegan is a privilege. Not everyone has the accessibility to be vegan.

*^ 14 likes*

**Commenter 5 (f):** My husband was a total meat eater when we met. It took 4 years of compassionate patience and he went vegetarian, then vegan 2 years later. Best wishes! ☺

*^ 8 likes*

**Commenter 6 (m):** It surprises me to see some of these comments in a vegan group. We vegans are supposed to be on the animals’ side. Lots of fake vegans here who are more worried about the villains’ feelings than the severely brutalized non-humans.

*^ 6 likes*

**Figure 22.** Post and comments in Korea Vegan group negotiating the differences between vegans and non-vegans and the ethics and effectiveness of convincing other to become vegan.

#### 4.3.2. Support from marginalization and attacks

The marginalized position of vegans in societies discussed as part of the conceptual framework in this thesis was salient in affective interactions in all three of the groups under study. In the Korea Vegan group, these interactions were almost exclusively around the ignorance of veganism in society and the lack of accommodation towards vegan consumption discussed previously. However, in the Southern Sweden Vegan and Seattle Vegan groups, where veganism is more well-known in the dominant culture, explicit attacks towards vegans were recognized and affectively negotiated.

The least affectively intense forms of negotiation of attacks towards vegans were those in which part of the local vegan infrastructure was attacked. Figure 23 depicts a mild example of this. The poster recommends a restaurant with vegan offerings, including a photo, and asks group members to support the restaurant to counteract attacks from “haters”. The affective valence remains positive throughout the post and in the reactions, and the mention of attacks may have increased the positive intensity; this post had the third highest number of likes of all the posts in the Southern Sweden Vegan group during the four-month time period analyzed.

In this case, the process of social affect may have stabilized group affect at a higher intensity than would have otherwise been the case without the mention of attacks; a higher intensity of affect leads to a stronger positive affective orientation towards consumption at the restaurant using the model of affective consumption communities from the conceptual framework. I had a similar experience following the same logic while I lived in Seattle; a local vegan café that I had not visited in years had its windows broken in an attack. After hearing about it on social media I visited shortly afterwards to support the restaurant due to attachment stemming from its long-standing importance in the local vegan community, even though it had no particular importance for me prior to the attack.

**Lena Persson (f):** Höganäs has vegan pancakes and now even vegan burgers. PS some haters have commented so support the restaurant!



[Link to Höganäs restaurant Facebook page]

^ 43 likes

^ 2 love reactions

**Commenter 1 (m):** Wow! Impressive! May take a trip over there. Veg meetup in Höganäs? ☺

**Lena Persson (f):** Yes! ☺

^ 1 like

**Figure 23.** Post in Southern Sweden Vegan group that praises a restaurant for offering vegan dishes and encourages support to counteract “haters” attacking the restaurant for doing so.

In contrast to the positive affect directed towards targets of attacks outside the online vegan groups, when perceived attacks targeted a group member, the typical affective reaction was typically either hostility towards the attacker or emotional support to the target. Figure 24 depicts an example of the affective negotiations around a relatively mild perceived attack on a group member at their workplace. The poster shared that their workplace hung a poster reading “omnivorous” as reflecting one of their company values, and the poster replaced it with one in a similar style reading “vegan”. This post received a number of “likes” and “haha” reactions, but two commenters became intensely hostile at the workplace for hanging the poster in the first place, including, “why the f--- would they do that? Are they complete a--holes?” The original poster commented back with even affect explaining that the workplace didn’t mean “omnivorous” in regards to food, even though she still didn’t like it. This authority from the original poster tempered the hostility created through social affect from the two hostile commenters, based on my interpretation of the interactions. Instead, the dominant social affected created was supportive and positive towards the original poster.

**Riley Hardy (f):** My job put up a bunch of posters with company values including the one on the left next to me and a vegan co-worker. It was promptly and quietly replaced.



^ 28 likes

^ 2 haha reactions

**Commenter 1 (f):** You work at a place where killing animals is a company value?

^ 3 likes

**Commenter 2 (m):** Why the f--- would they do that? Are they just complete a--holes? Or was it a "joke"?

^ 1 like

**Riley Hardy (f):** No, the other definition of "omnivorous": taking in and using whatever is available. But you know. Still.

^ 3 likes

**Commenter 3 (m):** I like the improvement!

^ 2 likes

**Figure 24.** Post in Seattle Vegan group with a humorous display of distinction between the poster and the dominant views of their workplace. Hostile expressions were added in the comments.

#### 4.3.3. Positive affect towards the future of mainstream consumption

Members of all three groups expressed positive affect towards signs of change amongst non-vegans towards greater acceptance and adoption of vegan consumption; there were very few signs of mixed or negative affect towards the future of veganism. This optimistic tone may be due to the cultural zeitgeist stemming from empirical data showing the growth of veganism (Radnitz et al., 2015), but hope for a happier future may be a common feature amongst those with non-dominant affective orientations as well (Ahmed, 2014). Different negotiations of hope and other positive affective qualities towards the future were present in all three groups.

Perhaps the most intense positive affect towards the future came from group members who shared personal experiences with positive change towards vegan consumption in non-vegans with whom the group members had close personal relationships. Figure 25 illustrates one

example in which the poster finds a rapid attitude change in her parents from being disapproving of her new veganism to moving in the direction of vegan consumption themselves. This post received the most positive reactions (likes and love reactions) of any post in the Southern Sweden Vegan group during the four-month observation period. The initial poster expresses personal happiness at her parents' changes in attitude, and a commenter indicates that love – possibly referring to interpersonal love, or possibly referring to vegan consumption – “has a way to be infectious”, indicating that it will inevitably spread.

<p><b>Sofia Holm (f):</b> So, I have been vegan since the new year and haven't talked much about it with my parents. They don't seem happy about it. But yesterday my dad showed me that my mom has a whole drawer in the freezer dedicated to vegan meat that she eats! Then my dad called me today and said he was thinking of becoming a vegetarian. I'm so surprised and touched over all this. I can't sleep I'm so excited. 😊</p>	<p>^ 46 likes ^ 10 love reactions</p>
<p><b>Commenter 1 (f):</b> Wow!</p>	<p>^ 1 like</p>
<p><b>Commenter 2 (m):</b> Love has a way to be infectious. &lt;3 [heart emoticon]</p>	<p>^ 1 like</p>

**Figure 25.** Post and comments in Southern Sweden group. The initial poster expresses happiness and hope that her family is changing towards a positive affect towards veganism and the second commenter expresses that positive change for veganism is spreading.

Although hopeful affective expressions were present in all three groups, positive affect towards the future was again most apparent in the Korea Vegan group, where the current lived experience is felt most negatively. Signs of potential social change towards the acceptance and increase in prevalence of vegan consumption was strongly supported. Figure 26 depicts an example of this willfulness and hope. The poster shares his work for a Korea Vegan Association which has lofty goals towards increasing acceptance of veganism in Korea, including growing from 22 to 10,000 members. The commenters share their hope through ideas and appreciation through likes and comments: “there needs to be more in the Korean media about the reasons for veganism”, “they have to be brainwashed out of it”, and “the youth will save the world”.

**Ji-Hoon Yi (m):** I've started some activities related to vegan activism but I have goals that I feel like I can't do on my own. I recently founded the Korea Vegan Association and started a website with the goal of 10,000 members, but we only have 22 so far (10 Koreans and 12 foreigners). Other goals include lectures on veganism, collaborating with vegan companies, press releases, and workshops. I'm recruiting some vegan activists to meet these goals, so please contact me if you're interested. I don't want to disappoint you and will do my best. We will definitely achieve all of these goals.

[Link to Korea Vegan Association blog]

^ 15 likes

**Commenter 1 (f):** Something so useful would be a short explanation to print and give to restaurant staff and shopkeepers to explain veganism. Countless times I've thrown food away because they can't understand. There needs to be more in the Korean media about the reasons for veganism: health, environment, compassion. Some of us just say we have a meat and dairy allergy but that does nothing to educate. They have to hear the reasons why and hear them again and again. They have to be brainwashed out of it like they were brainwashed into it.

^ 1 like

**Ji-Hoon Yi (m):** [In reply to Commenter 1] Thank you for your feedback. I agree with you. Let's make a change. ☺

^ 2 likes

**Commenter 2 (f):** The youth will save the world.

^ 2 likes

**Commenter 3 (m):** I just read through your blog. The posts about juk [Korean porridge] and gondrebap [a rice and vegetable dish] are very useful. Thank you!

^ 2 likes

**Figure 26.** Post and comments in Korea Vegan group expressing hope and appreciation towards activism and change in acceptance and ease of vegan consumption.

The hope for a future with happiness for a marginalized population has been researched under the umbrella of affect theory. Those with collective feelings that are marginalized by a “dominant affective order” (Twine, 2014) sometimes struggle in their daily lives to achieve positive affective states. Rather than feeling happiness or positive affect at their current position in the dominant culture, those who feel happiness from objects not recognized in mainstream culture imagine that the dominant culture will one day bring happiness and positive affect to them (Ahmed, 2014). The concepts of “affect aliens” who feel positive affect in ways that are not recognized by dominant culture was originated by Ahmed (2004) in regards to feminists and subjugated ethnic and racial groups, but was extended to vegans by Twine (2014). Willful consumers, such as Ji-Hoon Yi in Figure 26, actively fight against the dominant affective order attempting to achieve a culture that will fulfill positive affect for vegans in Korea. By coming together in the Vegan Korea group, the processes of sensemaking – sharing of these collective feelings about the culture – and sacralization – the stabilization of social affect towards a feeling of hope – are achieved. Consumption practices are then reoriented along with the willful

consumer who creates affect through at least the ideas of his blog, which are recognized in the comments, and potentially in the consumption-related activities of his vegan association.

#### **4.4. Negotiating affective orientations inward within vegan groups**

The final category of affective orientations observed included affective expressions directed inwards towards other group members or the group as a whole. The types of affective expressions observed in this category included positive support and bonding, micro-shocking and broadening affective orientations amongst group members, and incorporating affective demands from members with diverse feelings within groups.

##### **4.4.1. Affective support and solidifying collective feelings within vegan groups**

Figure 27 depicts a representative, but long, interaction that includes affective bonding amongst group members, including non-vegans. The initial poster asks, “why are you vegan?” and receives a variety of answers, although the most common reply was for ethics towards animals. The support and bonding typically took the form of “likes” and other contributions, and there were no negative comments despite the diversity of reasons. This support included reactions towards two commenters that indicated that they do not identify as vegan, but support vegan consumption. Two comments included intense feelings of inspiration and emotional support towards group members: “it’s amazing you made the connection yourself!” and “fellow vegans, you’re my heroes. [...] keep inspiring.”

Along with emotional support towards other group members and feelings of distinction between group members and the dominant group of consumers, affective interactions such as these appear to solidify collective feelings between members. While particular differences exist for group members, they all have similar positive affect towards vegan consumption and, for those who express it, negative affect towards non-vegan consumption. Solidifying these collective feelings may strengthen the process of negotiating social affect and orientations towards consumption. As the group members share affective orientations in this case, they may ease the process of sacralization (Brinks, 2016) of affect towards other objects, resulting in similar orientations towards consumption.

<p><b>Zach Reeves (m):</b> I'm curious, why are you vegan?</p> <p style="text-align: right;">^ 3 likes</p>
<p><b>Commenter 1 (m):</b> The main reason for someone to go vegan is for the animals, so them!</p> <p style="text-align: right;">^ 5 likes</p>
<p><b>Commenter 2 (m):</b> I woke up one day and made the connection between what's on my plate and all the animals we're killing. Really weird. "Waaaait a minute... that's a steak... and that's a cow... what the f--- have I been doing?" So I went vegan overnight. Told my parents the next day.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">^ 10 likes</p>
<p><b>Commenter 3 (m):</b> I couldn't buy meat after seeing videos of what's happening in meat factories. So I quit and saw what's happening in dairy factories. So disgusting I stopped. Then I found out about egg factories. Yuck! So I stopped one by one and then I found out it wasn't hard at all. So why not? I heard it helps the environment, kids in Africa, and my health of course. And I weight train and after I stopped eating meat my training got better. So many reasons ☺</p> <p style="text-align: right;">^ 4 likes</p>
<p><b>Commenter 4 (m):</b> I'm not but I love vegan food ☺</p> <p style="text-align: right;">^ 4 likes</p>
<p><b>Commenter 5 (f):</b> Commenter 2, it's amazing you made the connection yourself! I was blind until someone pointed it out. I'm a curious person and watched a YouTube video, "how to go vegan and why". Since then I've read/watched so many informational things and there's no denying the benefits to everyone: animals, future people, and your own health.</p> <p>When I talk to other people about it, I'm always surprised by their reaction. It's automatic defense mode. They refuse to change or even think about changing, saying one person can't make a difference. I see rational kind people suddenly turn pessimistic and nihilistic.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">^ 6 likes</p>
<p><b>Commenter 6 (m):</b> I was interested for health reasons but I saw Earthlings [a documentary about the treatment of farm animals] and heard Gary Yourofsky [a vegan activist and speaker] and that was it. I went from eating meat and such all the time to completely hating it.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">^ 4 likes</p>
<p><b>Commenter 7 (m):</b> I realized that life is a test.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">^ 2 likes</p>
<p><b>Commenter 8 (f):</b> Currently vegetarian for the last 4 weeks, but want to be vegan in my lifetime! I watched Earthlings and I was horrified at the truth. I do it for the animals!</p> <p style="text-align: right;">^ 3 likes</p>
<p><b>Commenter 9 (m):</b> It's nice to see more vegans in Korea. Fellow vegans, you're my heroes. I know it's tougher to be vegan in Korea than in most places but keep inspiring.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">^ 2 likes</p>

**Figure 27.** Post and comments in Korea Vegan group expressing support and bonding amongst each other despite different identities towards vegan consumption and reasons.

#### 4.4.2. Micro-shocking and broadening negative affect

In addition to solidifying collective feelings by reproducing affect and reminding members why they became vegan, group members intensified and broadened their negative affect towards non-vegan consumption through affective interactions. These interactions were most common in the Seattle Vegan group. The Southern Sweden Vegan group may have been less active in this way as it was more of a supplementary vegan support group for members as there were larger and more active private groups for vegans in Sweden. The Korean Vegan group had some relatively mild interactions to intensify and broaden affect, but the majority of the posts there were focused on negotiating the difficult geographical environment for vegans in South Korea. However, both intensifying and broadening interactions existed in all three groups.

Interactions that broadened social affect expressed negative affect towards social issues that may not be seen as core to veganism, but were related to issues that vegans in the group seemed to care about. Figure 28 depicts an example of this, in which the poster introducing issues related to palm oil, traditionally considered a vegan product as it is derived from palm trees, and commenters add to the post by expressing negative affect towards other practices. This negative affect broadened towards additional targets – palm oil, chocolate, coconuts, GMO's (genetically modified organisms), and processing and packaging of foods.

Other researchers have noted that vegans educate each other about broader concerns that are addressed by vegan consumption (Fox & Ward, 2008a), so, for example, a vegan who begins vegan consumption for health reasons may learn and solidify their vegan identity after learning about the ethical and environmental impacts of animal production. However, the focus on affect in this analysis illustrates how the broadening of these issues around veganism is culturally and affectively managed. The repeated, and often intense, negatively valenced affective expressions in these groups socially create negative affect amongst the group. The repeated exposure to negative affect towards palm oil, and its result in changing a group member's orientation towards consumption, can be seen in one comment, "I need to better educate myself about the palm oil thing. I keep seeing complaints about it here."

The final commenter links to a YouTube video in which a character says, "I'm a level five vegan. I don't eat anything that casts a shadow". This serves, from my experience, as a humorous way to moderate the negative affect and indirectly posit that it is not possible to be perfectly ethical. This use of a video and humor to relay a possibly unpopular expression of affect seems similar to the use of cultural memes discussed earlier (Miller et al., 2016).

<p><b>Jenn Trujillo (f):</b> I must be a serious vegan because I don't understand seeing products that are vegan but contain palm oil. I must be the only one concerned about the environment.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">^ 31 likes ^ 1 love reaction</p>
<p><b>Commenter 1 (f):</b> You're not the only one. [heart image]</p> <p style="text-align: right;">^ 2 likes</p>
<p><b>Commenter 2 (m):</b> I need to better educate myself about the palm oil thing. I keep seeing complaints about it here.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">^ 2 likes</p>
<p><b>Jenn Trujillo (f):</b> Palm oil basically destroys rain forests and kills animals during the process. That's my fast knowledge to you.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">^ 4 likes</p>
<p><b>Commenter 3 (f):</b> Also, from what I know about slavery in the chocolate and clothing industries, coconut ice cream makers probably also contract out to middlemen who buy from local companies that may or may not have serious human rights violations. Coconuts are often harvested by monkeys taken from the wild and trained to climb trees (with whips, etc.)</p> <p style="text-align: right;">^ 4 likes</p>
<p><b>Commenter 4 (m):</b> I get that vegans oppose palm oil but I don't understand how vegans have no problems with GMO's [genetically modified organisms]. They're sprayed with glyphosate and neonicotinoids that kill off birds, bees, and butterflies amongst others in record numbers.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">^ 6 likes</p>
<p><b>Commenter 5 (f):</b> I wrote to Earth Balance [vegan margarine company] and they said they're working towards eco and animal friendly palm oil. They said the majority is right now.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">^ 2 likes</p>
<p><b>Jenn Trujillo (f):</b> I feel there are just other options to using palm oil.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">^ 1 like</p>
<p><b>Commenter 6 (f):</b> I see a lot of vegan processed and packaged goods – doesn't seem environmentalist to me! Let's stick to basic ingredients.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">^ 1 like</p>
<p><b>Commenter 7 (n):</b> [Link to YouTube video of a short Simpsons clip in which a character says, "I'm a level five vegan. I don't eat anything that casts a shadow".]</p> <p style="text-align: right;">^ 9 likes</p>

**Figure 28.** Post and comments in Seattle Vegan group expressing broadening negative affect to objects of consumption which are not traditionally considered core to veganism, such as palm oil, coconuts, genetically modified food, and excessive processing and packaging.

Although previous research on relations between vegans indicated that vegans can be hostile and judgmental of other vegans for not being sufficiently authentic in their consumption habits (Greenebaum, 2012), that type of interaction, affective or otherwise, did not appear commonly in any of the three groups under study. This may be because the hostility at inauthentic vegans

in Greenebaum's (2012) study was directed from vegans who base their consumption on ethics towards those who base their consumption on health or weight loss. While both types of vegans appeared to be present in all three groups, members interacted with others in the group so their collective feelings about veganism may have tempered hostility amongst each other about inauthenticity.

Drawing from my own experience in vegan groups, the lack of affective expressions towards other group members about vegan authenticity may also be due to a change in vegan culture over the past five years, hastened by the speed of social media – vegans now seem to be more aware that different people have different capabilities and accessibility to become vegan, and any effort should be appreciated. Some comments hinting at this attitude include encouraging ability of others to become vegan, rather than only making a choice, such as “I want to help make veganism affordable and accessible for everyone in the Pacific Northwest ☺”. Others explicitly state that not everyone can be vegan, as indicated in the example, “being vegan is a privilege. Not everyone has the accessibility to be vegan”.

Instances in which group members share alarming examples of the treatment of animals has been theorized as “micro-shocking” (Jacobsson & Hansson, 2014). These sometimes disturbing images, videos, and descriptions of the treatment of animals can solidify or strengthen the resolve of vegans to continue practicing vegan consumption. Although all three of the groups under study discouraged graphic imagery of farm animal conditions or even images of meat, there were non-graphic examples of micro-shocking present. One example is a video based on YouTube that spread to all three groups that included the practice of “enslaving” monkeys to pick coconuts from trees. This practice was mentioned by a commenter in Figure 28.

#### 4.4.3. Incorporating affective demands due to cultural differences

Despite the lack of hostility between group members for reasons of authenticity, there were occasional instances of negative affect within groups – mostly within the Seattle Vegan group. In these instances, some group members established affective demands from other group members who were perceived to hurt them, their intersectional social group such as their gender or race, or a marginalized social group that the group member didn't belong to but recognized as being hurt. The reasons why these expressions were mostly confined to the Seattle Vegan group were unclear to me – perhaps it is a reflection of “digital call-out culture” in which social media users attack others for perceived oppressive slights such as racism and sexism (Arvidsson & Foka, 2015), which may be more prevalent in Seattle than the other two groups. However, this is only speculation, as the three groups have other different characteristics besides location.

Unfortunately for my data analysis, the group moderators or the original posters in the Seattle Vegan group typically deleted the more affectively intense of these demands and interactions after a group member was deemed racist or sexist by other commenters. Thus, data for these interactions was unavailable in my extracted data archive. However, I did observe some interactions during my real-time participant observation. Two particularly heated discussions stood out during the period of observation. First, negative affect was exchanged between group members who supported a vegan cookbook titled “Thug Kitchen” and others who found the title and content racist against African-Americans. Second, there were a series of interactions with negative affect between commenters who expressed that they no longer trusted Asian-run vegan restaurants after one in Seattle was found to be serving non-vegan dishes, and those who found it unjust or racist to discriminate against all Asian-run vegan restaurants.

One relatively mild interaction is depicted in Figure 29. Although the original topic of the post is about the safety of a particular Seattle neighborhood, it becomes a discussion of one member’s use of the word “ghetto” in describing the neighborhood. Although one commenter defends the initial user of the word, several others decry its use and those who criticize the initial member are the only ones in the interaction who receive likes. In this case, group affect stabilized negatively towards the initial user of the word and towards the use of the word in general, although there may be members who still feel positively about the word.

These examples illustrate diverse feelings in the process of sensemaking – although group members share collective feelings from being vegan, they have different collective feelings from other identities, such as their gender, race, and background (Ahmed, 2004). These diverse backgrounds result in different affective orientations and a tense and affectively charged interactions during the process of social affect in the group. The members who express unhappiness with an interaction they deem as sexist, racist, or otherwise unacceptable, can be seen as “killing joy” by asserting their negative affect towards an action that may be deemed positive or innocuous in the dominant culture (Twine, 2014). Although affective orientations may or may not change in the members who use expressions deemed problematic, the overall group affect is sacralized as negative towards these words, at least in the cases observed.

<p><b>Jordan Holt (f):</b> What does everyone think of Columbia City [a relatively diverse neighborhood in Seattle]? My family is thinking of moving there in a month. We have a small child. We found a great apartment and are looking at it this weekend, but we looked it up online and crime looked pretty bad... we think the apartment will be safe, but not sure about walking, car theft, etc.</p>
<p><b>Commenter 1 (f):</b> I love that area.</p>
<p><b>Commenter 2 (f):</b> Sorry honey I would not move there. It is part of the ghetto. I would move to Cap Hill, Ballard, Fremont, Greenwood, or Queen Anne before Columbia City.</p>
<p><b>Commenter 3 (m):</b> The ghetto? A rather harsh comparison... There are multi-million dollar houses in that neighborhood. It has great vegan food and is close to some nice parks.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">^ 5 likes</p>
<p><b>Commenter 4 (f):</b> It's not the first place I would choose. ☹️ That said there is crime everywhere.</p>
<p><b>Commenter 5 (m):</b> "Sorry honey I would not move there. It is part of the ghetto." Please avoid using racially charged terms such as "ghetto".</p> <p style="text-align: right;">^ 8 likes</p>
<p><b>Commenter 6 (m):</b> The term ghetto comes from Jewish segregations. It's only racially charged if you make it. I use ghetto to describe a downtrodden area with high crime regardless of race.</p>
<p><b>Commenter 7 (m):</b> Hmm, do you call white populated trailer parks "the ghetto"? It's consistently used in our culture as code for a black neighborhood. Even if your intentions are innocent it's still problematic to use that term because of its current meaning in our culture.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">^ 3 likes</p>
<p><b>Commenter 6 (m):</b> I actually do yes.</p>
<p><b>Commenter 5 (m):</b> [Link to an opinion article titled "Ghetto – the New N-Word" that begins, "Ghetto, when used colloquially, is the most racist, derogatory term in the common lexicon"]</p> <p style="text-align: right;">^ 2 likes</p>

**Figure 29.** Post and comments in Seattle Vegan group discussing the pros and cons of moving to a Seattle neighborhood, but becomes a discussion of the acceptability of the word "ghetto".

## 5. Discussion and conclusion

During the analysis, several themes emerged about the types of affective expressions and factors influencing the creation of social affective orientations. In the final chapter, I will summarize the findings in relation to the research questions, as well as contributions to theory and an evaluation of quality and limitations. Finally, I will end with critical reflections and avenues for future research and application.

## 5.1. Summary of findings

The research design of this thesis and the analysis of empirical in particular were targeted towards answering the two research questions:

RQ1: How do vegans express affect about vegan consumption amongst each other?

RQ2: How do these affective expressions shape vegans' affective orientations towards consumption?

The purpose of these research questions was to address two theoretical shortcomings in existing research. First, by answering the research questions, this thesis addresses a gap in forming an understanding of consumer culture amongst vegans. This answers the call of scientists across several disciplines to research the cultural influences of veganism in order to enable socially relevant change towards the reduction of animal agriculture's deleterious impacts on the environment, public health, and animals. Second, in answering the research questions, the theory emerging in this thesis problematizes dominant theory in consumer culture by establishing the importance of cultural creations of affect amongst consumers.

### 5.1.1. Answers to research questions

Table 4 depicts a summary of the analysis in this chapter in answering the research questions in brief. The types of affect expressed towards vegan consumption expressed in the groups are listed along with the typical associated affective orientations created amongst the group members through a process of social affect. These two columns directly answer RQ1 and RQ2 respectively.

It is clear from this table that affective expressions and the resulting affective orientations towards consumption are not directly correlated; positive expressions towards an object do not necessarily lead to positive affective orientations towards the same object, for example. The cultural processes of social affect along with the cultural processes in the cycle of value creation in online consumption communities moderate the types of affective orientations created within the groups under study.

**Table 4.** Summary of analyzed categories of affect expressed in groups and their associated affective orientations created amongst members.

<b>Objects of affect</b>	<b>Affect towards vegan consumption expressed in groups</b>	<b>Associated affective orientations created amongst members</b>
<b>Products and services</b>	Positive towards vegan consumption opportunities	Positive towards consumption of specific products/services
	Positive towards objects that move towards aligning with values	Positive towards object; negative towards competitors
	Repeated valence over time	More intense orientations
	Mixed towards acceptable but not ideal products/services	Positive towards alternative products/services
	Uncertainty	Depends upon community reaction and pre-existing orientation
	Any in a context of distrust	Distrust intensifies
<b>Consumption infrastructure</b>	Positive towards changes towards vegan infrastructure	Positive towards those who change; negative towards others
	Positive towards group members who work towards change	Positive towards individual, group, and society
	Negative towards lacking infrastructure	Negative towards places, industries, and overall society
	Negative towards closure of a place of vegan consumption	Positive towards owners, community, and alternatives
	Mixed towards acceptability of a place	Negative towards the place due to unnecessary risk
<b>People outside groups</b>	Negative towards unpleasant but typical experiences	Negative towards society; positive towards group
	Negative towards close relations' lack of vegan consumption	Mixed; tense
	Negative towards a perceived attack	Positive towards target of attack; negative towards attacker
	Positive towards person who moves towards vegan consumption	Positive towards person, group, and society
	Positive towards close relation or member who makes change	Intensely positive towards person, group, and society

<b>Objects of affect</b>	<b>Affect towards vegan consumption expressed in groups</b>	<b>Associated affective orientations created amongst members</b>
<b>People within groups</b>	Positive towards group	Positive towards group; facilitates future social affect
	Negative towards novel shocking practices	Positive towards group; negative towards particular products
	Negative towards group members who say something problematic	Negative towards practice, word, or idea

These answers to the research questions as included in the table are not all-inclusive; as the analysis emphasized, context is critically important in understanding how affect is negotiated in groups. The differences in how affect is created between the three groups clearly illustrates some of the ways in which this is true. Several theoretical concepts were presented in the analysis section to explain the cultural creation of affective orientations in these groups. Perhaps the most universal theoretical concept was the use of the cycle of affective value creation presented in the conceptual framework.

### 5.1.2. Theoretical contributions to consumer culture and vegan studies

In answering the research question, theory was developed on the cultural role of affect in vegan online consumption communities. This theory built upon existing research on consumer culture, affect theory, and online communities. This theoretical contribution was relevant in addressing the two problems identified at the beginning of this thesis and revisited throughout it.

First, this thesis contributes to addressing the socially relevant research gap in understanding vegan consumer culture that has been called for by researchers across disciplines in environmental science, public health, nutrition science, ethics, and other fields. This thesis services a bridge between these fields, cultural consumption studies, and service management – particularly service management that makes use of a customer-dominant logic. This thesis establishes a view of vegan consumer culture as driven by culturally- and socially-shaped affect. This is a new understanding of vegan consumer culture in particular, although previous researchers have noted that affect, or personal feelings, are relevant in adopting new patterns of food consumption.

Second, this thesis contributes to theory on consumer culture by problematizing dominant ideas that consumer culture is largely driven by the creation and negotiation of meanings. Rather, this thesis posits that consumer culture can largely be driven by cultural negotiations

of affect towards different objects of consumption. Although this contribution is not intended to replace current theory on consumer culture, it adds a different perspective to understanding consumer cultures and may be useful in understanding emerging forms of consumers, or construers, who evaluate and participate in the creation of consumption. By understanding affect as a vital process in consumer cultures, the large and interdisciplinary field of affect theory resulting from a recent affective turn in various fields of research can inform theory on consumer culture.

In addition, although this was not an explicit goal of the thesis, ideas in this thesis from the conceptual framework and methodological approach were novel and could be useful for future research. The conceptual framework that synthesized theory from consumer culture, affect theory, and online consumption communities was novel and was a useful epistemological foundation from which to study affect online. Specifically, the cross-disciplinary theories of collective feelings, affective orientations, and social affect synthesized with the cycle of affective value creation were valuable and generative in analyzing affective data in online communities. I had not previously found a similarly thorough framework to culturally analyze affective data, so I built off solid theory from different disciplines to create a new framework.

The methodological approach used in this thesis was also novel. Various approaches have been introduced to study culture online, but none specifically targeted understanding a particular aspect of online culture such as affect, particularly making use of a researcher's personal experience in an online field site's related geographical location. In order to use a suitable methodological approach, I combined aspects of three different ethnographic influences: netnography, short-term focused ethnography, and autoethnography. I found this combination to be very useful and epistemologically consistent in research affect amongst my three groups.

Finally, the use of three separate field sites was not novel, but was valuable, in developing theory to understand the role of cultural and geographic context in cultural processes. With the near-global and growing use of social media, Facebook in particular, the opportunities and relative ease of such cross-cultural research are growing as well. I believe this use of cross-cultural research will not only be useful in generating meaningful theory, but can also allow a critical stance that privileges underrepresented voices across the world who may not be heard often in western research contexts.

### 5.1.3. Evaluation of quality

In order to evaluate the quality of research done in this thesis, I will discuss the different quality criteria established in the third chapter. These include validity and credibility, trustworthiness and rigor, transferability and theoretical generalization, confirmability and voice, and

positionality and reflexivity. However, these quality criteria are related, so they will be addressed in tandem.

Validity and credibility of the research done in this thesis is evaluated by how accurately the data collection and analysis captured the objects of study – in particular, affective expressions and orientations amongst vegans. The interpretation of online data for affective expressions is an emerging field of research (Paasonen et al., 2015) and my background and position as a member of the online communities under study, as at least a temporary resident of the sites under study, and as a user of the social media platforms in which affective communication took place aids in my empathetic interpretation. In this way and others, openness of positionality and continuous reflexivity aid in the empathetic process required for interpretation of affect (Lincoln, 1995).

Adding to credibility of the data analysis, I attempted to enable confirmability of results by presenting my analysis with quotations and images, albeit cloaked for ethics reasons. This practice allows the reader and other researchers to confirm the credibility of the analysis. It also allows the voice of participants to be heard. In order to establish trustworthiness and rigor, a consistent and established data collection and analysis process was followed, making use of an established tool to extract archive data and coding processes that are often used in social science research. Triangulation of data and methods also added to trustworthiness and rigor by allowing confirmation and contrast between methods and sites located in different contexts.

Finally, transferability and theoretical generalization are enabled by the broad and context-dependent nature of the results. The primary finding of the thesis is that cultural processes shape affective orientations towards consumption depending on cultural context. This finding is transferable to other consumption contexts, including other vegans and other consumer groups, by exploring the affective social relations of a consumer culture in an empathetic way. The generated theory has already been transferred through the three sites examined in the thesis, resulting in contextually-sensitive understandings of affective processes. The transferability of theory was particularly apparent when comparing the Korean site against the US American and Swedish sites; affect was negotiated quite differently due to the difficult vegan consumption context in Korea compared to the other two sites.

## **5.2. Concluding thoughts**

### **5.2.1. Critical reflection and limitations**

Following my autoethnographic methodological influence, I will take a moment to reflect upon the research undertaken in this thesis and some limitations. During the process of developing this thesis, the data gathering and analytical process was the most worrisome for me, as I was

concerned in genuinely representing the voice of the participants in an ethical way. Covert observation of online groups, even public groups viewable by anyone who knows where to look, is tricky to ethically manage. I believe with the extensive considerations I reviewed, I made ethically-guided choices in the research design, data collection, and data presentation. However, it is not accurate to say this is an “ethical” piece of research as research on people or animals may never be assured to be completely ethical, as harm can be done to subjects of study even when significant precautions are taken. However, it can be said that ethical considerations were thoroughly weighed against the benefits of research. The potential for harm in this thesis, I believe, is very minimal.

The data gathered in the thesis were great in number. Because of this, it is possible that a more thorough analysis may have led to forms of affective expression and negotiation present in that data that I missed. However, that is likely unavoidable using an interpretive approach with a large amount of data – there is always more interpretation and understanding that could be done. In addition, my Swedish language skills are weak and my Korean language skills are almost nonexistent, so while I believe that I captured the literal meanings of posts, my interpretation of cultural nuance was limited. This was bolstered by my limited time spent in Sweden (almost two years) and Korea (only seven weeks). However, due to the multiplicity of cultures even within each site, no researcher can understand all cultural nuance. A different approach to methods, such as one that included confirmation by participants, may have avoided cultural misinterpretation. However, due to the naturalistic design and large number of participants, this would have been difficult to practice without large scale changes to the research design and, potentially, the research aims. I believe that despite these limitations in analysis, the themes presented a credible answer to the research questions and useful theory to explain the ways in which affect is culturally expressed and affective orientations towards consumption are negotiated.

Although several themes and underlying mechanisms of cultural affective negotiations were analyzed in this thesis, they were presented very broadly. It is difficult to parse specific affective mechanisms using such a broad approach to understanding affect. However, in developing critical theory, it may be “better to be vaguely right than precisely wrong” (Syll, 2013). Although the analytical answers in this thesis were not precise, the developed theory reflects one view of actual complex and fuzzy phenomenon occurring amongst vegan consumers. In a similar way, the theories combined in the conceptual framework are presented in an intentionally fuzzy way, as precise conceptualizations of theories such as affect, consumer culture, and cultural processes in consumption communities would not have been complementary to an imprecise, but accurate, analysis. As an example, making use of a particular affect theory that breaks down concepts such as embodied experience, emotion, feelings, pre-conscious or extra-conscious perceptions, and attitudes, would be useful for a different study, but not this one. However, such precision in theory could be more applicable for management, marketing, and activist purposes.

The selection of vegan consumers as subjects of study was not coincidental, which should be clear by now. Although vegan consumers exemplified the affective cultural negotiations towards consumption under theoretical study in this thesis, making them useful for generating theory on cultural consumer affect, they also also worthy of study in themselves. I believe this link between theory and real socially relevant phenomenon is important, particularly in a world with so many social problems, only a few of them addressed by vegan consumers (and they are certainly not the only solution to the problems they do address). However, I find that this connection between a critical realist approach towards social problems and a cultural exploration of theory meets dual goals in a complementary way.

### 5.2.2. Future research and final thoughts

As this thesis included only an initial exploration of the ways affect is shaped in vegan consumer culture, future research on affect in other consumption contexts could be fruitful. An exploration would likely be particularly effective in studying consumers who are active figures in the consumption process, such as craft consumers, other ethical or green consumers, or resistant consumers. However, cultural affect could also be explored in mainstream or dominant consumption contexts in order to understand how positive and negative orientations are created en masse. As this thesis is also an initial exploration into vegan consumer culture, future research could expand the use of vegan consumer culture theory to more effectively understand the spread of veganism as critical research.

As the research goals and analysis were quite broad, future research could also explore specific phenomenon in more depth. Examples of specific topics briefly discussed during the analysis that could be fruitful areas of study include distrustful marginalized consumers like the vegans group members in Korea, hopefulness of consumers in a context of lacking consumption infrastructure, or the broadening of ethical considerations in values-based consumption communities. A further possible field of research is in strengthening the link between affective consumer culture and practicable service management. Although understanding consumers using a customer-dominant logic is a starting point to make use of theory on cultural consumer affect, this link could be more strongly theorized. This would be particularly useful in the case of vegan consumers to extend research into the role of service management practice in the socially relevant goal of mainstreaming vegan consumption.

## References

- Adams, C. J. (2010). Why feminist-vegan now? *Feminism & Psychology*, 20(3), 302–317.  
<http://doi.org/10.1177/0959353510368038>
- Aerts, S. (2013). The consumer does not exist: Overcoming the citizen/consumer paradox by shifting focus. In H. Röcklinsberg & P. Sandin (eds.), *The Ethics of Consumption: The Citizen, the Market, and the Law* (pp. 172-176). Wageningen Academic Publishers.  
<http://doi.org/10.3920/978-90-8686-784-4>
- Ahmed, S. (2004). Collective feelings: Or, the impressions left by others. *Theory, Culture & Society*, 21(2), 25–42. <http://doi.org/10.1177/0263276404042133>
- Ahmed, S. (2010). Happy objects. In M. Gregg & G. J. Seigworth (eds.), *The Affect Theory Reader* (pp. 29-51). Durham & London: Duke University Press.
- Ahmed, S. (2014). Killing joy: Feminism and the history of happiness. *Signs*, 40(1).  
<http://doi.org/10.1086/648513>
- Andreatta, M. M. (2015). Being a vegan: A performative autoethnography. *Cultural Studies ↔ Critical Methodologies*, 15(6), 477–486. <http://doi.org/10.1177/1532708615614025>
- Arnould, E. J. & Thompson, C. J. (2005). Consumer culture theory (CCT): Twenty years of research. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 31(4), 868–882. <http://doi.org/10.1086/426626>
- Arnould, E. J. & Thompson, C. J. (2015). Introduction: Consumer culture theory: Ten years gone (and beyond). In A. E. Thyroff, J. B. Murray, & R. W. Belk (eds.), *Consumer Culture Theory* (Vol. 17, pp. 1–21). Emerald Group Publishing Limited.
- Arvidsson, V. & Foka, A. (2015). Digital gender: Perspective, phenomena, practice. *First Monday*, 20(4). <http://doi.org/10.5210/fm.v20i4.5930>
- Asher, K., Green, C., Gutbrod, H., Jewell, M., Hale, G., & Bastian, B. (2014). Study of current and former vegetarians and vegans [report]. Retrieved from [https://faunalytics.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/Faunalytics\\_Current-Former-Vegetarians\\_Full-Report.pdf](https://faunalytics.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/Faunalytics_Current-Former-Vegetarians_Full-Report.pdf)
- Beezhold, B. L. & Johnston, C. S. (2012). Restriction of meat, fish, and poultry in omnivores improves mood: A pilot randomized controlled trial. *Nutrition Journal*, 11(1), 1.  
<http://doi.org/10.1186/1475-2891-11-9>
- Beezhold, B. L., Johnston, C. S., & Daigle, D. R. (2010). Vegetarian diets are associated with healthy mood states: A cross-sectional study in Seventh Day Adventist adults. *Nutrition Journal*, 9(1), 1. <http://doi.org/10.1186/1475-2891-9-26>
- Belk, R. (2015). Consumer behavior. In D. T. Cook & J. M. Ryan (eds.), *The Wiley Blackwell Encyclopedia of Consumption and Consumer Studies* (pp. 105-109). Malden, MA: John Wiley & Sons.
- Beezhold, B., Radnitz, C., Rinne, A., & DiMatteo, J. (2015). Vegans report less stress and anxiety than omnivores. *Nutritional Neuroscience*, 18(7), 289–296.  
<http://doi.org/10.1179/1476830514Y.0000000164>

- Berners-Lee, M., Hoolohan, C., Cammack, H., & Hewitt, C. N. (2012). The relative greenhouse gas impacts of realistic dietary choices. *Energy Policy*, 43, 184–190. <http://doi.org/10.1016/j.enpol.2011.12.054>
- Best, J. (2001). *Damned lies and statistics: Untangling numbers from the media, politicians, and activists*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Beverland, M. B. (2014). Sustainable eating: Mainstreaming plant-based diets in developed economies. *Journal of Macromarketing*, 34(3), 369–382. <http://doi.org/10.1177/0276146714526410>
- Bohm, I., Lindblom, C., Åbacka, G., Bengs, C., & Hörnell, A. (2015a). Absence, deviance and unattainable ideals—discourses on vegetarianism in the Swedish school subject Home and Consumer Studies. *Health Education Journal*. Advance online publication. <http://doi.org/10.1177/0017896915611923>
- Bohm, I., Lindblom, C., Åbacka, G., Bengs, C., & Hörnell, A. (2015b). “He just has to like ham” – The centrality of meat in home and consumer studies. *Appetite*, 95, 101–112. <http://doi.org/10.1016/j.appet.2015.06.015>
- Bossy, S. (2014). The utopias of political consumerism: The search of alternatives to mass consumption. *Journal of Consumer Culture*, 14(2), 179–198. <http://doi.org/10.1177/1469540514526238>
- Brady, J., & Ventresca, M. (2014). “Officially A Vegan Now”: On Meat and Renaissance Masculinity in Pro Football. *Food and Foodways*, 22(4), 300–321. <http://doi.org/10.1080/07409710.2014.964605>
- Brinks, V. (2016). Situated affect and collective meaning: A community perspective on processes of value creation and commercialization in enthusiast-driven fields. *Environment and Planning A*. Advance online publication. <http://doi.org/10.1177/0308518X16633470>
- Brooks, M., Kuksenok, K., Torkildson, M. K., Perry, D., Robinson, J. J., Scott, T. J., Anicello, O., Zukowski, A., Harris, P., & Aragon, C. R. (2013). Statistical affect detection in collaborative chat. In *Proceedings of the 2013 Conference on Computer Supported Cooperative Work* (pp. 317–328). ACM. Retrieved from <http://dl.acm.org/citation.cfm?id=2441813>
- Bryman, A. (2012). *Social research methods* (4th ed). Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Bryngelsson, D., Wirsenius, S., Hedenus, F., & Sonesson, U. (2016). How can the EU climate targets be met? A combined analysis of technological and demand-side changes in food and agriculture. *Food Policy*, 59, 152–164. <http://doi.org/10.1016/j.foodpol.2015.12.012>
- Canniford, R. (2011). A typology of consumption communities. *Research in Consumer Behavior*, 13, 57–75. [http://doi.org/10.1108/s0885-2111\(2011\)0000013007](http://doi.org/10.1108/s0885-2111(2011)0000013007)
- Carolan, M. (2016). Adventurous food futures: Knowing about alternatives is not enough, we need to feel them. *Agriculture and Human Values*, 33(1), 141–152. <http://doi.org/10.1007/s10460-015-9629-4>

- Cayla, J., & Eckhardt, G. M. (2008). Asian Brands and the Shaping of a Transnational Imagined Community. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 35(2), 216–230. <http://doi.org/10.1086/587629>
- Charmaz, K. (2006). *Constructing grounded theory*. London: SAGE.
- Cherry, E. (2006). Veganism as a Cultural Movement: A Relational Approach. *Social Movement Studies*, 5(2), 155–170. <http://doi.org/10.1080/14742830600807543>
- Cherry, E. (2015). I Was a Teenage Vegan: Motivation and Maintenance of Lifestyle Movements. *Sociological Inquiry*, 85(1), 55–74. <http://doi.org/10.1111/soin.12061>
- Cole, M., & Morgan, K. (2011). Vegaphobia: Derogatory discourses of veganism and the reproduction of speciesism in UK national newspapers. *The British Journal of Sociology*, 62(1), 134–153. <http://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-4446.2010.01348.x>
- Craig, W. J. (2009). Health effects of vegan diets. *American Journal of Clinical Nutrition*, 89(5), 1627S–1633S. <http://doi.org/10.3945/ajcn.2009.26736N>
- Craig, W. J., & Mangels, A. R. (2009). Position of the American Dietetic Association: Vegetarian diets. *Journal of the American Dietetic Association*, 109(7), 1266–1282. <http://doi.org/10.1016/j.jada.2009.05.027>
- Cronin, J. M., McCarthy, M. B., & Collins, A. M. (2014). Covert distinction: how hipsters practice food-based resistance strategies in the production of identity. *Consumption Markets & Culture*, 17(1), 2–28. <http://doi.org/10.1080/10253866.2012.678785>
- Czarniawska, B. (2014). *Social science research: From field to desk*. London: SAGE.
- Dean, M. (2014). You Are How You Eat? Femininity, Normalization, and Veganism as an Ethical Practice of Freedom. *Societies*, 4(2), 127–147. <http://doi.org/10.3390/soc4020127>
- Deckers, J. (2013). In Defence of the Vegan Project. *Journal of Bioethical Inquiry*, 10(2), 187–195. <http://doi.org/10.1007/s11673-013-9428-9>
- Denshire, S. (2014). On auto-ethnography. *Current Sociology*, 62(6), 831–850.
- Dinhopl, A., Gretzel, U., & Whelan, A. (2015). Labeling as a Social Practice in Online Consumption Communities. *Psychology & Marketing*, 32(3), 240–249. <http://doi.org/10.1002/mar.20777>
- Ellis, C., Adams, T. E., & Bochner, A. P. (2011). Autoethnography: an overview. *Historical Social Research/Historische Sozialforschung*, 273–290.
- Facebook. (2015, January 30). Terms of service. Retrieved from <https://www.facebook.com/terms>
- Facebook. (2016, February 24). Reactions now available globally. Retrieved from <http://newsroom.fb.com/news/2016/02/reactions-now-available-globally/>
- Fox, N., & Ward, K. (2008a). Health, ethics and environment: A qualitative study of vegetarian motivations. *Appetite*, 50(2-3), 422–429. <http://doi.org/10.1016/j.appet.2007.09.007>
- Fox, N., & Ward, K. J. (2008b). You are what you eat? Vegetarianism, health and identity. *Social Science & Medicine*, 66(12), 2585–2595. <http://doi.org/10.1016/j.socscimed.2008.02.011>

- Firat, A. F., & Dholakia, N. (2016). From consumer to construer: Travels in human subjectivity. *Journal of Consumer Culture*. Advance online publication. <http://doi.org/10.1177/1469540515623605>
- Galvagno, M., & Dalli, D. (2014). Theory of value co-creation: a systematic literature review. *Managing Service Quality: An International Journal*, 24(6), 643–683. <http://doi.org/10.1108/MSQ-09-2013-0187>
- Golafshani, N. (2003). Understanding reliability and validity in qualitative research. *The Qualitative Report*, 8(4), 597–606.
- Gopaldas, A., & Fischer, E. (2012). Beyond gender: Intersectionality, culture, and consumer behavior. In C. C. Otnes & L. T. Zayer (eds.), *Gender, Culture, and Consumer Behavior* (pp. 393–410). New York: Routledge.
- Gould, S. J. (2012). The emergence of Consumer Introspection Theory (CIT): Introduction to a JBR special issue. *Journal of Business Research*, 65(4), 453–460. <http://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2011.02.010>
- Graça, J., Calheiros, M. M., & Oliveira, A. (2015). Attached to meat? (Un)Willingness and intentions to adopt a more plant-based diet. *Appetite*, 95, 113–125. <http://doi.org/10.1016/j.appet.2015.06.024>
- Greenebaum, J. (2012). Veganism, identity and the quest for authenticity. *Food, Culture and Society: An International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research*, 15(1), 129–144. <http://doi.org/10.2752/175174412X13190510222101>
- Greger, M. (2015). Plant-based diets for the prevention and treatment of disabling diseases. *American Journal of Lifestyle Medicine*, 9(5), 336–342. <http://doi.org/10.1177/1559827615579180>
- Gross, J. J. (2010). The future's so bright, I gotta wear shades. *Emotion Review*, 2(3), 212–216. <http://doi.org/10.1177/1754073910361982>
- Hamilton, M. (2006). Disgust reactions to meat among ethically and health motivated vegetarians. *Ecology of Food and Nutrition*, 45(2), 125–158. <http://doi.org/10.1080/03670240500530691>
- Harding, S. (2006). *Science and social inequality: Feminist and postcolonial issues*. Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press.
- Harper, A. B. (2010). *Sistah vegan: Black female vegans speak on food, identity, health, and society*. New York: Lantern Books.
- Hartmann, B. J., Wiertz, C., & Arnould, E. J. (2015). Exploring consumptive moments of value-creating practice in online community. *Psychology & Marketing*, 32(3), 319–340. <http://doi.org/10.1002/mar.20782>
- Hedenus, F., Wirsenius, S., & Johansson, D. J. A. (2014). The importance of reduced meat and dairy consumption for meeting stringent climate change targets. *Climatic Change*, 124(1-2), 79–91. <http://doi.org/10.1007/s10584-014-1104-5>
- Herrero, M., Gerber, P., Vellinga, T., Garnett, T., Leip, A., Opio, C., Westhoek, H. J., Thornton, P. K., Oleson, J., Hutchings, N., Montgomery, H., Soussana, J.-F., Steinfeld, H., & McAllister, T. A. (2011). Livestock and greenhouse gas emissions: The

- importance of getting the numbers right. *Animal Feed Science and Technology*, 166-167, 779–782. <http://doi.org/10.1016/j.anifeedsci.2011.04.083>
- Hirschler, C. A. (2011). “What Pushed Me over the Edge Was a Deer Hunter”: Being Vegan in North America. *Society & Animals*, 19(2), 156–174. <http://doi.org/10.1163/156853011X562999>
- Hoffman, S. R., Stallings, S. F., Bessinger, R. C., & Brooks, G. T. (2013). Differences between health and ethical vegetarians. Strength of conviction, nutrition knowledge, dietary restriction, and duration of adherence. *Appetite*, 65, 139–144. <http://doi.org/10.1016/j.appet.2013.02.009>
- Howell, K. (2013). *An introduction to the philosophy of methodology*. SAGE: London.
- Hutton, L., & Henderson, T. (2015). “I didn’t sign up for this!”: Informed consent in social network research. In: *Proceedings of the 9th International AAAI Conference on Web and Social Media (ICWSM)*. Retrieved from <https://research-repository.st-andrews.ac.uk/handle/10023/6691>
- Imenda, S. (2014). Is There a Conceptual Difference between Theoretical and Conceptual Frameworks? *Journal of Social Science*, 38(2), 185–195.
- Isomäki, H., & Silvennoinen, J. (2012). Online ethnographies. In Isaias, P. & Nuñez, M. (eds.), *Information systems research and exploring social artifacts* (pp. 124–141). Hershey, PA: IGI Global Publishing.
- Jacobsson, K., & Hansson, N. (2014). Learning to be affected: Subjectivity, sense, and sensibility in animal rights activism. *Society & Animals*, 22(3), 262–288. <http://doi.org/10.1163/15685306-12341327>
- Johnston, J. (2008). The citizen-consumer hybrid: ideological tensions and the case of Whole Foods Market. *Theory and Society*, 37(3), 229–270. <http://doi.org/10.1007/s11186-007-9058-5>
- Johnston, J., & Szabo, M. (2011). Reflexivity and the Whole Foods Market consumer: the lived experience of shopping for change. *Agriculture and Human Values*, 28(3), 303–319. <http://doi.org/10.1007/s10460-010-9283-9>
- Johnston, J., Szabo, M., & Rodney, A. (2011). Good food, good people: Understanding the cultural repertoire of ethical eating. *Journal of Consumer Culture*, 11(3), 293–318. <http://doi.org/10.1177/1469540511417996>
- Kim, J. H. (2014). The Reinvention of Traditional Cuisine as Counterculture. *The Journal of the Korea Contents Association*, 14(11), 944–954. <http://doi.org/10.5392/JKCA.2014.14.11.944>
- Kjeldgaard, D., & Ostberg, J. (2007). Coffee Grounds and the Global Cup: Glocal Consumer Culture in Scandinavia. *Consumption Markets & Culture*, 10(2), 175–187. <http://doi.org/10.1080/10253860701256281>
- Knoblauch, H. (2005). Focused ethnography. *Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung/Forum: Qualitative Social Research*, 6(3), Art. 44.
- Kollmuss, A., & Agyeman, J. (2002). Mind the Gap: Why do people act environmentally and what are the barriers to pro-environmental behavior? *Environmental Education Research*, 8(3), 239–260. <http://doi.org/10.1080/13504620220145401>

- Kosinski, M., Matz, S. C., Gosling, S. D., Popov, V., & Stillwell, D. (2015). Facebook as a research tool for the social sciences: Opportunities, challenges, ethical considerations, and practical guidelines. *American Psychologist*, 70(6), 543–556.  
<http://doi.org/10.1037/a0039210>
- Kozinets, R. V. (2002a). Can consumers escape the market? Emancipatory illuminations from burning man. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 29(1), 20–38.
- Kozinets, R. V. (2002b). The Field Behind the Screen: Using Netnography for Marketing Research in Online Communities. *Journal of Marketing Research*, 39(1), 61–72.  
<http://doi.org/10.1509/jmkr.39.1.61.18935>
- Kozinets, R. V. (2015). *Netnography: Redefined*. London: SAGE.
- Kozinets, R. V., Dolbec, P.-Y., & Earley, A. (2014). Netnographic Analysis: Understanding Culture Through Social Media Data. In U. Flick, *The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Data Analysis* (pp. 262–276). London: SAGE.
- Kozinets, R. V., & Kedzior, R. (2009). I, Avatar: Auto-netnographic research in virtual worlds. *Virtual Social Identity and Consumer Behavior*, 1.
- Larsson, C. L., Rönnlund, U., Johansson, G., & Dahlgren, L. (2003). Veganism as status passage. *Appetite*, 41(1), 61–67. [http://doi.org/10.1016/S0195-6663\(03\)00045-X](http://doi.org/10.1016/S0195-6663(03)00045-X)
- Leitzmann, C. (2014). Vegetarian nutrition: past, present, future. *American Journal of Clinical Nutrition*, 100(supplement), 496S–502S. <http://doi.org/10.3945/ajcn.113.071365>
- Levy, S. J. (2015). Roots and Development of Consumer Culture Theory. In A. E. Thyroff, J. B. Murray, & R. W. Belk (eds.), *Consumer Culture Theory* (Vol. 17, pp. 47–60). Emerald Group Publishing Limited.
- Li, D. (2014). Effect of the vegetarian diet on non-communicable diseases: Effect of the vegetarian diet on non-communicable diseases. *Journal of the Science of Food and Agriculture*, 94(2), 169–173. <http://doi.org/10.1002/jsfa.6362>
- Lincoln, Y. S. (1995). Emerging criteria for quality in qualitative and interpretive research. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 1(3), 275–289.
- MacInnis, C. C., & Hodson, G. (2015). It ain't easy eating greens: Evidence of bias toward vegetarians and vegans from both source and target. *Group Processes & Intergroup Relations*. Advance online publication. <http://doi.org/10.1177/1368430215618253>
- Mano, H. (2004). Emotion and consumption: Perspectives and issues. *Motivation and Emotion*, 28(1), 107–120.
- Markham, A. (2012). Fabrication as ethical practice: Qualitative inquiry in ambiguous Internet contexts. *Information, Communication & Society*, 15(3), 334–353.  
<http://doi.org/10.1080/1369118X.2011.641993>
- Markham, A., & Buchanan, E. (2012). Ethical decision-making and Internet research: Version 2.0. Recommendations from the AoIR Ethics Working Committee. *Association of Internet Researchers*. Retrieved from <http://aoir.org/reports/ethics2.pdf>
- Marlow, H. J., Hayes, W. K., Soret, S., Carter, R. L., Schwab, E. R., & Sabate, J. (2009). Diet and the environment: does what you eat matter? *American Journal of Clinical Nutrition*, 89(5), 1699S–1703S. <http://doi.org/10.3945/ajcn.2009.26736Z>

- May, T. (2011). *Social research: Issues, methods, and process* (4th ed.). Maidenhead: Open University Press.
- McDonald, B. (2000). "Once You Know Something, You Can't Not Know It" An Empirical Look at Becoming Vegan. *Society & Animals*, 8(1), 1–23.
- Miller, D., Costa, E., Haynes, N., McDonald, T., Nicolescu, R., Sinanan, J., Spyer, J., Venkatraman, S., Wang, X. (2016). *How the World Changed Social Media*. London: UCL Press.
- Miller, J. C. (2014). Affect, consumption, and identity at a Buenos Aires shopping mall. *Environment and Planning A*, 46(1), 46–61. <http://doi.org/10.1068/a45730>
- Mkono, M., Ruhanen, L., & Markwell, K. (2015). From netnography to autonetnography in tourism studies. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 52, 167–169.
- Moon, S. (2008). Buddhist Temple Food in South Korea: Interests and Agency in the Reinvention of Tradition. *Korea Journal*, Winter 2008, 147–180.
- Murthy, D. (2008). Digital Ethnography: An Examination of the Use of New Technologies for Social Research. *Sociology*, 42(5), 837–855. <http://doi.org/10.1177/0038038508094565>
- Newport, F. (2012, July 26). In U.S., 5% consider themselves vegetarians [web page]. Retrieved from <http://www.gallup.com/poll/156215/Consider-Themselves-Vegetarians.aspx>
- Närvänen, E., Kartastenpää, E., & Kuusela, H. (2013). Online lifestyle consumption community dynamics: A practice-based analysis. *Journal of Consumer Behaviour*, 12, 358-369. <http://doi.org/10.1002/cb.1433>
- Paasonen, S. (2015). A midsummer's bonfire: Affective intensities of online debate. In K. Hills, S. Paasonen, & M. Petit (eds.), *Networked Affect* (pp. 27-42). Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Paasonen, S., Hillis, K., & Petit, M. (2015). Introduction: Networks of transmission: Intensity, sensation, value. In K. Hills, S. Paasonen, & M. Petit (eds.), *Networked Affect* (pp. 27-42). Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Paddock, J. (2015). Positioning food cultures: "Alternative" food as distinctive consumer practice. *Sociology*. Advance online publication. <http://doi.org/10.1177/0038038515585474>
- Persson, U. M., Johansson, D. J. A., Cederberg, C., Hedenus, F., & Bryngelsson, D. (2015). Climate metrics and the carbon footprint of livestock products: where's the beef? *Environmental Research Letters*, 10(3), 034005. <http://doi.org/10.1088/1748-9326/10/3/034005>
- Pine, B. J., & Gilmore, J. H. (1998). *Welcome to the experience economy*. Harvard business review, 76, 97-105.
- Pink, S., & Morgan, J. (2013). Short-Term Ethnography: Intense Routes to Knowing. *Symbolic Interaction*, 36(3), 351–361. <http://doi.org/10.1002/symb.66>
- Pink, S., Horst, H., Postill, J., Hjorth, L., Lewis, T., and Tacchi, J. (2016). *Digital ethnography: Principles and practice*. London: SAGE.

- Pohjolainen, P., Tapio, P., Vinnari, M., Jokinen, P., & Räsänen, P. (2016). Consumer consciousness on meat and the environment — Exploring differences. *Appetite*, 101, 37–45. <http://doi.org/10.1016/j.appet.2016.02.012>
- Potts, A., & Parry, J. (2010). Vegan Sexuality: Challenging Heteronormative Masculinity through Meat-free Sex. *Feminism & Psychology*, 20(1), 53–72. <http://doi.org/10.1177/0959353509351181>
- Public Health England and Food Standards Agency. (2014, May 14). National Diet and Nutrition Survey: Results from years 1 to 4 (combined) of the rolling programme for 2008 and 2009 to 2011 and 2012 [web page]. Retrieved from <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/national-diet-and-nutrition-survey-results-from-years-1-to-4-combined-of-the-rolling-programme-for-2008-and-2009-to-2011-and-2012>
- Pybus, J. (2015). Accumulating affect: Social networks and their archives of feelings. In K. Hills, S. Paasonen, & M. Petit (eds.), *Networked Affect* (pp. 235-249). Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Radnitz, C., Beezhold, B., & DiMatteo, J. (2015). Investigation of lifestyle choices of individuals following a vegan diet for health and ethical reasons. *Appetite*, 90, 31–36. <http://doi.org/10.1016/j.appet.2015.02.026>
- Richard, A., & Rudnyckij, D. (2009). Economies of affect. *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, 15(1), 57–77. <http://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9655.2008.01530.x>
- Rieder, B. (2013). Studying Facebook via data extraction: the Netvizz application. In *Websci '13 Proceedings of the 5th Annual ACM Web Science Conference* (pp. 346–355). New York: ACM.
- Ritzer, G., & Jurgenson, N. (2010). Production, consumption, prosumption: The nature of capitalism in the age of the digital “prosumer.” *Journal of Consumer Culture*, 10(1), 13–36. <http://doi.org/10.1177/1469540509354673>
- Rivera, M., & Shani, A. (2013). Attitudes and orientation toward vegetarian food in the restaurant industry: An operator’s perspective. *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, 25(7), 1049–1065. <http://doi.org/10.1108/IJCHM-07-2012-0116>
- Roberts, L. D. (2015). Ethical Issues in Conducting Qualitative Research in Online Communities. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 12(3), 314–325. <http://doi.org/10.1080/14780887.2015.1008909>
- Rose, G. (2012). *Visual methodologies* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.). London: SAGE.
- Ruby, M. B. (2012). Vegetarianism. A blossoming field of study. *Appetite*, 58(1), 141–150. <http://doi.org/10.1016/j.appet.2011.09.019>
- Sandberg, J., & Alvesson, M. (2011). Ways of constructing research questions: gap-spotting or problematization? *Organization*, 18(1), 23–44. <http://doi.org/10.1177/1350508410372151>
- Saunders, J. B. (2007). “I don’t eat meat’: Discourse on food among transnational Hindus. *Contributions to Indian Sociology*, 41(2), 203–223. <http://doi.org/10.1177/006996670704100203>

- Scarborough, P., Appleby, P. N., Mizdrak, A., Briggs, A. D. M., Travis, R. C., Bradbury, K. E., & Key, T. J. (2014). Dietary greenhouse gas emissions of meat-eaters, fish-eaters, vegetarians and vegans in the UK. *Climatic Change*, 125(2), 179–192.  
<http://doi.org/10.1007/s10584-014-1169-1>
- Schneider, A., von Krogh, G., & Jäger, P. (2013). “What’s coming next?” Epistemic curiosity and lurking behavior in online communities. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 29(1), 293–303. <http://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2012.09.008>
- Seyfert, R. (2012). Beyond personal feelings and collective emotions: Toward a theory of social affect. *Theory, Culture & Society*, 29(6), 27–46.  
<http://doi.org/10.1177/0263276412438591>
- Shove, E., & Pantzar, M. (2005). Consumers, producers and practices: Understanding the invention and reinvention of Nordic walking. *Journal of Consumer Culture*, 5(1), 43–64.  
<http://doi.org/10.1177/1469540505049846>
- Silverman, D. (2013). *Doing qualitative research* (4<sup>th</sup> ed.). London: SAGE.
- Sneijder, P., & te Molder, H. (2009). Normalizing ideological food choice and eating practices. Identity work in online discussions on veganism. *Appetite*, 52(3), 621–630.  
<http://doi.org/10.1016/j.appet.2009.02.012>
- Soper, K. (2007). Re-thinking the “good life”: The citizenship dimension of consumer disaffection with consumerism. *Journal of Consumer Culture*, 7(2), 205–229.  
<http://doi.org/10.1177/1469540507077681>
- Soper, K. (2009). Introduction: the mainstreaming of counter-consumerist concern. In K. Soper, M. Ryle, L. Thomas, & (eds.), *The Politics and Pleasures of Consuming Differently* (pp. 1-21). Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Springmann, M., Godfray, H. C. J., Rayner, M., & Scarborough, P. (2016). Analysis and valuation of the health and climate change cobenefits of dietary change. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*. Advance online publication.  
<http://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.1523119113>
- Stahler, C. (2015, May 29). How often do Americans eat vegetarian meals? And how many adults in the U.S. are vegetarian? [blog post]. Retrieved from  
<http://www.vrg.org/blog/2015/05/29/how-often-do-americans-eat-vegetarian-meals-and-how-many-adults-in-the-u-s-are-vegetarian-2/>
- Stokburger-Sauer, N. E., & Wiertz, C. (2015). Online Consumption Communities: An Introduction. *Psychology & Marketing*, 32(3), 235–239.  
<http://doi.org/10.1002/mar.20776>
- Sun, N., Rau, P. P.-L., & Ma, L. (2014). Understanding lurkers in online communities: A literature review. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 38, 110–117.  
<http://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2014.05.022>
- Syll, L. P. (2013). Economic theory—A critical realist perspective. In H. Corvellec (ed.), *What is Theory? Answers from the Social and Cultural Sciences*. Copenhagen: CBS Press.
- Säll, S., & Gren, I.-M. (2015). Effects of an environmental tax on meat and dairy consumption in Sweden. *Food Policy*, 55, 41–53.  
<http://doi.org/10.1016/j.foodpol.2015.05.008>

- The Vegan Society. (n.d.). Definition of veganism. Retrieved from <https://www.vegansociety.com/go-vegan/definition-veganism>
- Thomas, M. A. (2016). Are vegans the same as vegetarians? The effect of diet on perceptions of masculinity. *Appetite*, 97, 79–86. <http://doi.org/10.1016/j.appet.2015.11.021>
- Thurmond, V. A. (2001). The point of triangulation. *Journal of Nursing Scholarship*, 33(3), 253–258.
- Tilman, D., & Clark, M. (2014). Global diets link environmental sustainability and human health. *Nature*, 515(7528), 518–522. <http://doi.org/10.1038/nature13959>
- Twine, R. (2010). Intersectional disgust? Animals and (eco)feminism. *Feminism & Psychology*, 20(3), 397–406. <http://doi.org/10.1177/0959353510368284>
- Twine, R. (2014). Vegan killjoys at the table—contesting happiness and negotiating relationships with food practices. *Societies*, 4(4), 623–639. <http://doi.org/10.3390/soc4040623>
- UNEP. (2010). *Assessing the environmental impacts of consumption and production: Priority products and materials*. Paris: United Nations Environment Programme. Retrieved from [http://www.unep.org/resourcepanel/Portals/24102/PDFs/PriorityProductsAndMaterials\\_Report.pdf](http://www.unep.org/resourcepanel/Portals/24102/PDFs/PriorityProductsAndMaterials_Report.pdf)
- UN FAO. (2006). *Livestock's long shadow: Environmental issues and options*. Rome: UN Food and Agriculture Organization. Retrieved from <http://www.fao.org/docrep/010/a0701e/a0701e00.htm>
- University College London. (2016). Why We Post. Retrieved from <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/why-we-post>
- Van Maanen, J. (2006). Ethnography then and now. *Qualitative Research in Organizations and Management: An International Journal*, 1(1), 13–21. <http://doi.org/10.1108/17465640610666615>
- Vranken, L., Avermaete, T., Petalios, D., & Mathijs, E. (2014). Curbing global meat consumption: Emerging evidence of a second nutrition transition. *Environmental Science & Policy*, 39, 95–106. <http://doi.org/10.1016/j.envsci.2014.02.009>
- Weijo, H., Hietanen, J., & Mattila, P. (2014). New insights into online consumption communities and netnography. *Journal of Business Research*, 67(10), 2072–2078. <http://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2014.04.015>
- Welles, B. F. (2014). On minorities and outliers: The case for making Big Data small. *Big Data & Society*, 1(1). <http://doi.org/10.1177/2053951714540613>
- West, J. J., Smith, S. J., Silva, R. A., Naik, V., Zhang, Y., Adelman, Z., Fry, M. M., Anenberg, S., Horowitz, L. W., & Lamarque, J.-F. (2013). Co-benefits of mitigating global greenhouse gas emissions for future air quality and human health. *Nature Climate Change*, 3(10), 885–889. <http://doi.org/10.1038/nclimate2009>
- Westhoek, H., Lesschen, J. P., Rood, T., Wagner, S., De Marco, A., Murphy-Bokern, D., Leip, A., van Grinsven, H., Sutton, M. A., & Oenema, O. (2014). Food choices, health and environment: Effects of cutting Europe's meat and dairy intake. *Global Environmental Change*, 26, 196–205. <http://doi.org/10.1016/j.gloenvcha.2014.02.004>

- Williams-Forsen, P., & Wilkerson, A. (2011). Intersectionality and Food Studies. *Food, Culture and Society: An International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research*, 14(1), 7–28.  
<http://doi.org/10.2752/175174411X12810842291119>
- Wilson, R. E., Gosling, S. D., & Graham, L. T. (2012). A Review of Facebook Research in the Social Sciences. *Perspectives on Psychological Science*, 7(3), 203–220.  
<http://doi.org/10.1177/1745691612442904>
- Wrenn, C. L. (2011). Resisting the globalization of speciesism: Vegan abolitionism as a site for consumer-based social change. *Journal for Critical Animal Studies*, 9(3), 9–27.
- Wright, L. (2015). *The vegan studies project*. Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press.
- Yoo, T., & Yoon, I.-J. (2015). Becoming a Vegetarian in Korea: The Sociocultural Implications of Vegetarian Diets in Korean Society. *Korea Journal*, 55(4), 111–135.
- YouGov. (2014, December 3). Frühlingssalat statt Osterbraten: Vegane Ernährung auf dem Vormarsch [press release]. Retrieved from <https://yougov.de/loesungen/ueber-yougov/presse/presse-2014/pressemitteilung-vegane-ernaehrung/>
- Zimmer, M. (2010). “But the data is already public”: on the ethics of research in Facebook. *Ethics and Information Technology*, 12(4), 313–325. <http://doi.org/10.1007/s10676-010-9227-5>
- Østergaard, P., Linnet, J. T., Andersen, L. P., Kjeldgaard, D., Bjerregaard, S., Weijo, H., Martin, D. M., Schouten, J. W., & Östberg, J. (2014). Nordic Consumer Culture: Context and Concept. In J. W. Schouten, D. M. Martin, & R. Belk (eds.), *Consumer Culture Theory* (vol. 16, pp. 245–257). <http://doi.org/10.1108/s0885-211120140000016012>

# Appendix 1

The image in this appendix depicts the format used in Microsoft Excel for Mac 2016 for data analysis and coding in this thesis. One file was used for each of the three field sites and included the entire data set for each site, so each data file was many pages long. The green section on the right includes reformatted data extracted from the field sites using NetVizz (Rieder, 2013). Data extracted from NetVizz that was redundant or not relevant for the thesis was not coded in the analysis. The blue section on the left includes field notes and coding manually entered. These fields were revisited and changed as the analysis progressed. The far-left column was used to mark data of particular relevance to the development of analysis. Not all relevant data was explicitly coded, due to the large volume of data and emergence of recurrent themes. The data fields depicted below are contrived examples and not actual data, codes, or field notes used in the analysis.

Example of field notes and coding						Example of reformatted NetVizz data extraction used during analysis						
Relevance	Category	Affect - Valence	Affect - Quality	Affect - Intensity	Reflexive notes	Post Date	Link to FB Post	Post Type	Post Text	# Post Likes	Comment Text	# Comment Likes
X	New object	Negative	Distrust	High	Notes about my relevant experience.	2016-05-01	<a href="https://www">https://www</a> link		This is a sample post.	11	Sample Comment #1	1
	New object	n/a	n/a	n/a							Sample Comment #2	0
X	Bonding	Positive	Support	Low							Sample Comment #3	1