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## **To believe or not to believe?**

An audience research on the documentary What The Health

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## ABSTRACT

This research employs qualitative methods to look at the audience site of veganism documentary *What The Health*. Through semi-structured interviews with 13 participants (6 non-vegetarians and 7 vegetarians), the thesis attempts to understand the self and individual response to veganism portrayal, truth claims and how viewers learn from the documentary. Exploring audiences' media practices enables researchers to understand diverse strategies that audiences use to engage with and reflect on the changing nature of contemporary media (Hill 2005 and Hill 2007), especially with factual genre like documentary which occupies "an intermediate space" between fact and fiction (Hill 2007, p. 89) and goes through a reformation in the new media environment with the support from digital technology, platforms and infrastructures (Nash et al. 2014). The research is theoretically informed by the concept of spectrum of engagement (Annette Hill), double mode of engagement (Annette Hill) and genre work (Annette Hill).

The findings illustrate that audiences have multiple modes of engagement with the documentary and what they learn from the film is diverse. In terms of truth claims, they employ many different criteria to evaluate including performances, authenticity and even the context of the documentary. As documentary audiences, they are well-aware of the idea of "the two worlds". Their engagement affirms the arguments from Hill (2008), Corner (2005), Nichols (2001) and Lewis (2004) that audiences expect the documentary to show them reality. However, at the same time they acknowledge that the world they see is constructed by the producers. In addition, informants draw on their previous experiences and knowledge when they watch documentary and take some time to reflect on themselves and the act of being an audience. (Hill 2007)

I would argue that there are more similarities rather than differences between the two groups. Informants from the two groups have multiple responses to documentary in terms of veganism portrayal as well as truth claims. Viewers from both groups indicate affective and cognitive engagement and double mode of engagement with the documentary. The difference is that many informants in the vegetarian group perceived Kip Anderson, the host and co-producer of the film, as an activist. Another difference relates to the idea of learning. Many non-vegetarian participants learned about the benefits of a plant-based diet while this kind of engagement was absent in the vegetarian group.

**Keywords:** audience engagement, audience study, documentary audience, engagement with documentary, veganism, veganism documentary, spectrum of engagement, double mode of engagement, truth claims, genre work.

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# CHAPTER 1 – INTRODUCTION

Veganism<sup>1</sup> is growing popularity in modern society (Wright 2015) and there is a rapid increase of people following vegan lifestyle (Horta 2017, p. 360). In the past 10 years, the number of vegans increase 350% in the United Kingdom which leads to around 500,000 people follow this lifestyle. In America, the number of people following a plant-based diet has gone up, it is estimated that there are 1.7 million vegans in America (Cherry 2006, p. 156). Food with a wide variety of vegan options can easily be found in big supermarket chains in The United Kingdom (Bowman 2016). In addition, food chains in highway such as Zizzi, LEON offer various vegan meal options. The retail sales do not only increase in the United Kingdom, but also in America (Ibid). The retail sales of plant-based food increased 17% in 2017 and reach \$3.7 billion USD (Perret 2018).

The internet and online social media play a crucial part in building the cultural content of the “veggies trend” which reach vegans and non-vegans (Erben & Balaban-Salı 2016, Castricano & Simonsen 2016, Jallinoja et al. 2019, p. 164). Celebrities play a significant role to support vegan lifestyle and present it as a fancy lifestyle (Stallwood 2014, p. 20, Wright 2015, p. 32 and Doyle 2016, p. 777). Besides celebrities, vegan bloggers have contributed to the popularization of veganism by sharing recipes, advice as well as building new vegan communities. Another element contributes to the reputation of veganism is the active roles of many animal rights activists in the United States, Australia and many European countries who organize many campaigns including videos about animal suffering and spread on the Internet to raise awareness of animal rights as well as change the positive images of meat (Vinnari & Laine 2017). Aside from activities from organizations and activists, commercial productions and entertainment companies are taking part in the journey to raise awareness about social issues and chip in the development of veganism (Jallinoja et al. 2019, p. 164). Many documentaries from these players mark an important point of veganism mobilization including *Cowspiracy* (2014), *Food Inc* (2008) or *Forks Over Knives* (2011). Distributing on popular streaming platforms such as Netflix and showing aesthetics which brings up environment, health and animal issues related to meat and dairy industry with many

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<sup>1</sup> In this thesis, I refer the term “veganism” to The Vegan Society’s definition which means a way of living which eliminates all forms of exploitation and cruelty to animals including food, clothing and other purposes. (Vegan Society 2020)

appealing elements such as emotions, individual testimonials, visualization of science evidences are the two advantages of this new kind of documentaries (Jallinoja et al. 2019, pp. 164-165)

There has been extensive research on veganism portrayals on both online and offline media (Wright 2015, Aguilera et al. 2011 and Joy & Tuider 2016). Recently there has been a research on veganism documentaries conducted by Christopher et al. (2018). The research focuses on Forks Over Knives (2011) and Vegucated (2011) documentary. There is the gap in the veganism study that it lacks the site of audience. Documentary plays an important role in the spread of veganism in society. Moreover, the questions relating to power, knowledge and subjectivity still play important roles in documentary study (Corner 2008, pp. 13-28). There has been a heated debate on documentary's ability to make sense of the world, impact on people and contribute to social changes (Murphie 2014, p. 188 and Nash & Corner 2016, pp. 227-228). Audience study is highly important because the kind of enjoyment we get from the media as well as the kinds of knowing and mis-knowing the media motivate us to illuminate a continuous, wide-range and deeper relations between ourselves and media activities and our everyday life practices and even structure of society (Hill 2008 and Hill 2019). In addition, documentary is experiencing a shift in a new media environment which impacts the act of being an audience (Nash et al. 20014). Therefore, it is highly essential to delve into audience engagement with documentary. An audience research on veganism documentary What The Health sheds a light on how audiences make sense of the documentary as well as how they act upon. As a result, the research will contribute to veganism study, audience studies and documentary studies.

### **What The Health documentary**

What The health results in 16,800,000 hits on google search and receives 25,598 votes and 797 reviews on IMDb<sup>2</sup>. What The Health is available on Vimeo since 2017 and it is available on Netflix (subscription-based streaming website). The documentary is produced by Kip Andersen and Keegan Kuhn who are the producers of a well-known documentary Cowspiracy (2014)<sup>3</sup>. What The Health was funded via Indiegogo (American crowd-funding) campaign in March 2016 and raised 235,000 USD (Starostinetskaya 2016). What The Health film follows the investigation of

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt5541848/>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.whatthehealthfilm.com/>

Kip Andersen on diseases that lead to many death of American such as heart disease and cancer and exposes the collusion and corruption in the government and meat industry, processed industrial animal foods and questions the practice of health and pharmaceutical organizations in America. The documentary features many interviews including people live a village in North Caroline near the industrial farms, activists against meat industry, lawyers, athletes, doctors and patients who have serious health conditions and feel good after following a plant-based diet.

### **Aims and objectives**

The inspiration for this research project was from a group assignment that I conducted with my teammates in the Digital Research Course. We studied the images on What The Health's social media as well as comments on Youtube. The findings about power relations and various attitudes including negative and positive attitudes with What the Health documentary intrigue me to seek for deeper understandings of audience engagement with the film. In addition, triangulation approaches which gather different types of data will help me to observe the phenomenon in different perspectives. (Hill 2012, p. 301)

The thesis focuses on the self and individual response to the veganism portrayals and truth claims and how they learn from What The Health documentary. Truth claims and learning from the film is important as they are distinctive characteristics of documentary (Hill 2007, Corner 2005 and Nichols 2001). Looking at audiences' media practice enables researchers to understand the diverse strategies that audiences utilize to engage with and reflect on the changing nature of contemporary media (Hill 2005 and Hill 2007), especially with factual genre like documentary. Documentary occupies "an intermediate space" between fact and fiction (Hill 2007, p. 89) and recently goes through a reformation in a new media environment with the support from digital technology, platforms and infrastructures (Nash et al. 2014). Therefore, it is highly important to examine how audiences respond to veganism portrayals, evaluate truths and understand how they learn from the film. Basing on these aims, I came up with three research questions:

- 1. How do viewers respond to the veganism portrayals in What The Health documentary?*
- 2. What are their attitudes towards the truth claims in What The Health documentary?*
- 3. What do viewers learn from What The Health documentary?*



After the introduction, the thesis will provide a review of previous academic discussions which situate the thesis within three areas of interests: veganism study, audience study and documentary study. After the literature review, there will be a discussion on qualitative approach of the research. This part will provide an analysis and reflection of methodology and methods approach to the study of audience engagement with What The Health documentary. It will present the collection and analysis of empirical data. At the end of this chapter, I will address some challenges that I encountered and critically reflect on the research process. In compliance with the research questions mentioned above, the analysis will be divided into three parts. The first one focus on audiences' engagement with veganism portrayals. The second part will touch on audiences' engagement and their evaluations of truth claims. There will be an analysis of how audience experience complex and different kinds of learning from What The Health documentary in the third part of the chapter. Finally, the last chapter will discuss the key findings and provide suggestions for further study.

## CHAPTER 2 - LITERATURE REVIEW

The first part of the literature review will present the development of veganism in Western society. In addition, it provides current research on veganism in popular culture. The second part of the literature review will give an overview of audience study, then it will touch on important theories and concepts relating to audience engagement with documentary as well as truth claims. In the final section of the literature review, there will be some current ideas on audiences' learning and knowledge.

### **Veganism study**

#### *An overview of veganism*

Vegan refers to individuals that refrain themselves from animal production consumption (Stepaniak 2000 & Horta 2017). Vegan Society (2020) defines veganism as a way of living which eliminates all forms of exploitation and cruelty to animals including food, clothing and other purposes. As noted by many scholars, food choice is linked with personal identities which are their values, moral, religious or political beliefs (Lindeman & Stark 1999 and McAdams 1996) and this makes food choice similar to ideology (Solomon et al. 1991). Due to the benefits of health, veganism is becoming more popular in society (Griffin 2017, pp. 7-8, Greenebaum 2012, p. 310 & Green et al. 2010). In The Vegan Research Panel (2003) which surveys 1,249 vegans highlights 82% vegan have this diet because of ethics and moral, 14% is health benefits and 2% accounts for religious reasons. People choose to follow a vegan lifestyle for various reasons ranging from strict vegans to advocate for animal rights (ethical vegans) to vegan diets for personal health reasons or religious reasons (Harper 2010, p. 158) or environmental sustainability reasons (Greenebaum 2012 & Joy and Tuider 2016, p. xi)

Veganism is growing popularity (Wright 2015) and there is a rapid increase of people following a vegan lifestyle (Horta 2017, p. 360). In the past 10 years, the number of vegans increase 350% in the United Kingdom which leads to around 500,000 people follow veganism (Vegan Society 2020). Food with a wide variety of vegan options can easily be found in big supermarket chains in The United Kingdom (Bowman 2016). In addition, food chains in highways such as Zizzi, LEON offer various vegan meal options. The retail sales do not only increase in the United Kingdom but also in America. The retail sales of plant-based food increased 17% in 2017 and reached \$3.7 billion USD. (Perret 2018)

### ***Veganism as social movement***

According to Jasper & Goodwin (2015, p. 11), social movement is considered as the attempt to control “the direction of social change largely by controlling a society’s symbols and self-understandings”. Cherry (2006) and Baumeister (1997) support this idea because many self-defined vegans do not necessitate any groups membership or and many vegans who take part in activism as well as protest while they do not belong to any formal group. Cherry (2006) highlights that while many traditional social movements evaluate their success by the change of legislations or policy, veganism is a new form of social movement which evaluates its success basing on abstract social and cultural terms such as lifestyle/everyday practices changes. Joy (2008) considered veganism as “a form of animal advocacy”. Besides Cherry (2006), Stallwood (2014) asserts that the objectives of animal rights movements do not only aim at institutional changes but also individual changes. He believes that personal transformative movement is instrumental in animal rights movement.

In the book *Critical Perspectives on Veganism*, Joy and Tuider (2016) argue that there are two components which create the shift in attitudes towards veganism. The first one is the “visibility” of animal sufferings. There are more people are exposed to contents about farmed animals due to the advent of the Internet and efforts of vegan activism online. The second one is “viability” of veganism as individual choice as well as moral choices. Thanks to the modernization of food production, meat consumption is no longer essential, therefore, it is a choice. Once behavior becomes a choice, people acknowledge what they consume and they consider ethical dilemma that they do not have before. (Joy and Tuider 2016, p. vi)

### ***The popularization of veganism***

Even though veganism has tremendously recognized as “legitimate lifestyle alternative” recently (Jallinoja et al. 2019) and general public holds positive attitudes towards veganism (Chin et al. 2002), veganism and a plant-based diet were stigmatized on many media years ago and even until now (Greenebaum 2017). Cole and Morgan (2011) examine the discourse of veganism on national newspapers in the United Kingdom. The two researchers analyze 397 articles, and they find that only 5.5% of the newspapers were positive and 20.2% were neutral while 74.5% were negative about veganism. For the negative rhetoric on the media, the two researchers put into 6 categories: ridiculing veganism, characterizing veganism as asceticism, describing veganism as difficult or

impossible to sustain, describing veganism as a fad, characterizing vegans as oversensitive, characterizing vegans as hostile. The two scholars interpret the overall effects of negative portrayals of vegans and veganism as “veganphobia” and they assert that “veganphobia discourse” is a cultural reproduction of speciesism and it promotes the continued “normalization of human violence on unimaginable scale” (Ibid, p. 149). There are many reasons for the stigmatization of veganism in a society and negative portrayals on the media. The practice of eating meat in Western society has a long tradition which relates to prosperity (de Bakker & Davegos 2012), masculinity and strength (Twigg 1983). Meat consumption is widely promoted on television by celebrity chefs (Buscemi 2016). Consumption of meat originated from the notion that meat eating is what human do, it is natural and it is unnecessary to reflect on that (Joy 2010).

There are many factors contribute to the media representation of vegan food from dull to attractive and desirable during the past decades (Gold 2014 and Jallinoja et al. 2019). The internet and online social media play an important role in building the cultural content of the “veggies trend” which reach both vegans and non-vegans (Erben & Balaban-Salı 2016, Castricano & Simonsen 2016, Jallinoja et al. 2019, p. 164). In terms of online and print news channels, the images of veganism are positive. According to de Boo (2014), national and international media in the United Kingdom report news about veganism more frequently and positively compared to the past. Contents about veganism on Daily Mail changes to positive manner which feature lifestyle of celebrity vegans between 2010 and 2011 (Lundahl 2017). In addition, Forbes in the United States declares that “high-end vegan cuisine” is the Top Ten Food trend in 2013 (Gold 2014). Celebrities play instrumental roles in supporting the rise vegan as lifestyle which makes vegan perceived “as a fashion statement” (Stallwood 2014, p. 20, Wright 2015, p. 32 and Doyle 2016, p. 777), positive and accessible lifestyle (Greenebaum 2012). Besides celebrities, the rise of vegan food blogs is essential in building new vegan communities. Bloggers share appealing images of vegan lifestyle, recipes and advice which create a sense of belonging and shared identities (Veron 2016). Another element contribute to the reputation of veganism is the active roles of many animal rights activists in the United States, Australia and many European countries. Those activists organize many campaigns including videos about animal suffering and spread on the Internet to raise awareness of animal rights as well as change the positive image of meat (Laine & Vinnari 2017). Moreover, there are many campaigns against meat industry organized by PETA (People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals) (Jallinoja et al. 2019, pp. 164-165). Besides activities from organizations

and activists, commercial production as well as entertainment companies are the main group of actors in contemporary consciousness-raising that help to promote veganism (Ibid, p. 164). Many products from those players mark an important point of veganism mobilization which include *Cowspiracy* (2014) with the funding from crowdsourcing site and its updated version distributed on Netflix was produced by Hollywood actor Leonardo Dicaprio, *Food Inc* (2008) directed and produced by famous American filmmaker Robert Kenner and *Fork over Knives* by produced by Monica Beach Media. These documentaries have two strong points to reach wide population. The first point is the aesthetics which touch on environment, health and animal issues related to meat and dairy industry with many appealing elements such as emotions, individual testimonials, visualization of science evidences. The second point is the distribution channels. Those documentaries are promoted on social media and distributed on popular streaming websites such as Netflix and Youtube which reach many people. (Jallinoja et al. 2019, pp. 164-165)

Aguilera et al. (2011) examine how veganism is depicted in popular texts including advertisements, films, cooking shows which center in gendering of food (gender difference between masculine and feminine vegans) and everyday life cultural practice with the analysis on texts (narratives) and this research lacks audience study. Wright (2015) works on the cultural representations of veganism in a wide range of media including print and online, literature, television, films and advertising. In the book *The Vegan Studies Project*, she argues that veganism presents identity aspects such as nationality or gender identity and practices aspect which means veganism has to be defined by both what vegans do as well as how vegans perceive themselves and how others perceive vegans within cultures (Ibid).

Dark veganism is another aspect of veganism in popular culture that should be taken into consideration. Dark veganism is considered as “an unnamed and unexplored phenomenon that has always existed within veganism” (Sloane 2016, p. 127). Dark veganism is animal activism which features scenes and sounds of animal suffering which aims to work toward the end of animal suffering and “achieving nonviolence across as between humans and animals” directly or indirectly (Sloane 2016, p. 127). While dark veganism reveals a dark side of animal agriculture industry, paradoxically it involves with animal ethics. *One Pig* album was produced by Mathew Hebert in 2009 is one example of dark veganism which records the sounds of a pig’s life since it was born till it was served on plate. (Sloane 2016, pp. 137-139)

### *Veganism and social media*

Jennings et al. (2019) study people's perceptions of vegan lifestyle by surveying 510 individuals and social media contents to understand the barrier of following veganism diet. From the result is that non-vegans are not influenced by veganism contents and they do not perceive veganism as healthy or challenging as vegans. In their analysis of Instagram with #vegan results that the content mainly targets at female vegan community with 62% of the posts featuring human are exclusively female. With the sentiment analysis of 5 million Twitter posts that mention the word "vegan", they find that veganism is portrayed in a positive light rather than other topics. They explain the reason for this result that vegans and vegan communities actively promote veganism on social media with positive manners.

Another study looking at the use of veganism on social media by activists is conducted by Erben & Balaban-Salı (2016). The two scholars examine how vegan activists in Turkey use social media (Twitter, Facebook, Instagram) and interact with others. The study from the two scholars highlights that activists utilize social media to share announcements of events and protests as well as veganism-related news. In terms of spreading information about veganism, half of the participants share contents of animal suffering with disclaimers.

There are many researchers working on food issues and culture. However, there are few studies centered food blogs and vegan food blogs study earns much less attention although blogs about veganism play an essential role in promoting veganism lifestyle and building new vegan communities (Veron 2016, p. 289). Blogs reach wide audiences and this media is the reflection of culture as well as a community which create a sense of place, belonging and achievements which are the elements of selves (Gallegos 2005). In addition, blog is a place for shared identity because it allows human interactions beyond individual or family levels (Ferguson 2012). A virtual community formed by this way can be perceived as a sub-culture (Veron 2016, p. 289). Vegan food blogs not only play an important role in enhancing vegan subculture, but also spreading it outside its origin community (Ibid, p. 293). There are two common and effective strategies that vegan food bloggers in France employ to promote veganism. The first one is debunking the myths of being vegans by sharing photos of tasty and elegant vegan meals and desserts which sometimes even captured by professional photographers. The second strategy is making veganism accessible to people's everyday life by portraying that vegan food preparation is simple because vegan food

is considered complex, time-consuming and inconvenient in terms of buying ingredients (Veron 2016, p. 294). Thanks to many efforts of bloggers, vegan food blogs have great impact on French culinary landscape (p. 296). Besides encouraging people to have a plant-based diet by posting recipes, bloggers also share information and their opinions about animal rights and welfare. Therefore, this kind of medium also supports animal right movements. (Ibid)

Another study looking at veganism blog is from Priestley et al. (2016). The group of researchers work on Thug Kitchen blog with attempt to examine the language that Thug Kitchen use to promote veganism by looking at their contents and popular media response to the blog. Thug Kitchen was created by a couple Michelle Davis and Matt Holloway in 2014. Thug Kitchen is a vegan blog that utilizes aggressive and racialized language to make vegan diet popular (ibid). The owners claim that the blog is “verbally abusing you into a healthier diet” on their official website<sup>4</sup>. The blog is controversial because many people accuse the two owners of caricaturing the use of African - American Vernacular English (AAVE) for its contents for the sake of humor. However, Thug Kitchen is one of the most well-known vegan blogs that attract new audiences to veganism practice. Their analysis indicates that Thug Kitchen regularly employ shame strategies which combine aggressive language as well as obscene language to inspire people to try its recipes and eat more plants (Ibid, p. 350). The success of Thug kitchen contributes to spread of vegan lifestyle which emphasizes the benefits of individuals and the visuals of vegan food which is attractive even for people who consume meat. However, the concern from Thug Kitchen is racist language when it uses AAVE for humor which “reinforces harmful assumptions about class and food access” (p. 365). The researchers also suggest that humor to support veganism promotion should take ethical principles into account.

### ***Veganism and celebrity culture***

Doyle (2016) focuses on ethical consumption and celebrity culture with discourse analysis. The researcher examines how celebrities (Alicia Silverstone and Ellen DeGeneres) promote veganism with the analysis of their websites, social media such as Facebook and Twitter, other media activities and published book in order to study the meaning of visual, written, spoken texts with the discourse of veganism and ethical consumption. They find that both celebrities portray

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<sup>4</sup> <http://www.thugkitchen.com/>

veganism as kindness and compassion to animal. However, they have different marketing strategies. Silverstone represents veganism as kindness to animals and the center of her celebrity identity. She actively advocates animal rights and anti-speciesist as approach to vegan lifestyle and make people notice about negative impact of health and ecological impacts of animal and dairy production and consumption (Doyle 2016, p. 788). DeGeneres did it implicitly unlike Silverstone's marketing strategies, she present veganism as a part of her celebrity life.

Besides Doyle's (2016) work on celebrity, there is another research from Phua et al. (2019) which attempts to explore Instagram celebrity endorsements of veganism and effects of messages framing on consumer's veganism attitudes as well as behavioral intention to become a vegan. They recruit 303 female students and among these students, there are 271 meat eaters and 32 non-meat eaters to answer survey questionnaires using Qualtrics. The findings of their study show that compared to meat eaters, non-meat eaters who saw Instagram posts with celebrities discussing their motivations to become vegan developed higher health conscious, intention to spread electronic word of mouths and intention to become vegan. In addition, motivation to become vegan for personal health is more effective than motivation relating to animal welfare or sustainability (Ibid, p. 15)

Another way to look at veganism portrayals in popular culture is examining how meat consumption is depicted in the media by doing textual, image, semiotic analysis of cooking shows by famous chefs. Celebrity chef is an element that contributes to the support of meat consumption since 1990s. Celebrity chef is a manifestation of choice and consumption in food culture. According to Leggott and Hochscherf (2010), celebrity chefs do not simply represent food choices, they use food to "figure something else" beyond ideology or cultural values which is the commercial interest. In the work of Buscemi (2016), he analyzes cooking shows from celebrity chefs which feature Jami Oliver, Gordon Ramsay, Heston Blumenthal and Rachael Ray. His finding indicates that from the four shows, meat is mandatory in our society and "meat is constructed as the medicine to relieve social anxieties" (Buscemi 2016, p. 341). In addition, these programs illustrate a split between Nature (the dead animal) and Culture (cooking and eating meat) which asserts that meat consumption is more powerful than the Nature. (Ibid)



### ***Veganism and documentaries***

Besides online media and celebrity endorsements, researchers are interested in documentaries promoting veganism. Christopher et al. (2018) conduct a research on vegan-promoting documentaries which comparatively analyze *Forks over Knives* (2011) and *Vegucated* (2011) to understand the portrayals of veganism, vegan sub-cultures and define “authentic” veganism as cultural object through discourse analysis in American context. Moreover, their study aims to understand the social construction of veganism at the level of elite cultural creators through narrative and visual methods. The direction of *Forks Over Knives* documentary focuses on the individual health aspect of veganism (health veganism) rather than animal welfare or environmental issues which makes the film less political and radical. In contrast to *Forks Over Knives*, *Vegucated* presents holistic veganism which aims at raising awareness of the animal cruelty and environmental issues. *Fork Over Knives* portrays veganism as “plant-based diet” and in the film “vegan” word is almost absent. However, *Veguacated* is more direct and explicit to depict veganism which embraces the word “vegan” for the entire film. The study also indicates that diverse identities and ideological dexterity characterize veganism as a movement. (Ibid)

Research on veganism in popular media is rich and diverse, ranging from mass media, social media, bloggers, celebrities to documentaries. However, most prior research heavily focuses on media texts about veganism with few studies exploring audience side except Phua et al.’s (2019) study. As mention before, veganism documentaries play an instrumental role in the popularization of veganism in modern society (Jallinoja et al. 2019). Therefore, it is highly important to study how audiences respond to veganism texts.

### **Engagement with documentary**

#### ***Audience study in a glimpse***

Media audience study has an important part in understanding the role that media play in a society (Gunter & Machin 2009, p. 1) and audiences studies “have come a long way over the past 50 years” (Ross & Nightingale 2003, p. 146). From the very beginning of the history, audiences were perceived as passive recipients (Ibid, p. 2). However, there is a momentous increase in audience studies which shifts them from passive to active audiences (Livingstone 1990, Morley 1908, Abercrombie & Longhurst 1998 and Ross & Nightingale 2003).

There are many scholars interested in studying the new role of active audience engaging with the media (Couldry 2011, p. 216 and Das & Ytre-Arne 2018, p. 7). Halloran (1970) suggests in his book *The Effects of Television* that research should consider what people react to the media instead of “what media does to people”. Hall (1980) shares similar idea with Halloran (1970) that audiences becomes more active and less attached to the media texts. Hall (1980) develops the “encoding-decoding model” which focuses on how people make sense of the act of viewing. In this model, the television producers encode message and audiences interpret and understand messages basing on their social contexts (Durham & Kellner 2006, p. 173). The “encoding-decoding model” indicates how hegemony works through popular culture. Dealing with media meaning by accepting, negotiating or rejecting the ideas from the media, audiences illustrate that they are eagerly contribute to the political process. (Ross & Nightingale 2003, pp. 36-37)

Nightingale (2011, p. 1) notes that the act of being an audience is important to cultural participation and it has an impact on our identity and our agency to manage the world around us. According to Livingstone (1990, p. 101), the audiences play active roles and they are well-informed and skilled in interpretation of media content. In the book *Audiences: A Sociological Theory of Performance and Imagination*, they introduce the spectacle/performance paradigm which refers to diffuse and active audiences in late modern society. Abercrombie and Longhurst (1998) argue that there is a crisis of identity in Western world when the modern media is influenced by spectacle, narcissism and aestheticization. Therefore, the performance of identity should be interweaved with media as well as everyday life. In this paradigm, the two scholars suggest that audience research should be conducted with multiple methods including both qualitative and quantitative approaches to explore a variety of audience experiences with media and everyday life context. (Ibid)

Affect theories are growing importance in audience study (Couldry 2010 and Nightingale 2011). One of the highlights of affect theories is from Tomkin (1998). The scholar develops the nine discrete effects which he was inspired by the evolutionary theory of affects from Darwin. To be more specific, positive affect includes enjoyment, excitement, the negative affects includes fear, distress, anger, shame, disgust and dismell. The last one is “resetting” affect which he refers to the feeling of surprised “which simply interrupts any ongoing situation and requires the individual experiencing it to pay attention to something else” (Tomkins 1998, cited in Gibbs 2011, pp. 253, 255)

Besides effect theories, psychoanalysis plays an essential role in media audience study. According to Johanssen (2019, pp. 3-6), psychoanalysis theories were uncommon in media audience field many years ago, however, nowadays psychoanalysis benefits the field and many scholars leverage psychoanalysis concepts in their studies such as Hill's (2007) work on audience factual genre with the concept of genre work, Dahlgren's (2013) development of psychoanalysis for media and participation and Ellis's (2000) idea for TV "work through". From psychoanalysis point of view, early and previous experiences have great impacts on how subjects experience and make sense of themselves and the world (Freud 1981, p. 303). The focus of psychoanalysis is subjectivity which involves not only rational and conscious dimension, but also irrational and unconscious dimension. This strength of psychoanalysis is helpful for researcher to understand the complex process of how people makes sense of media as well as the world in both conscious and unconscious level. (Dahlgren 2013, p. 81)

Engagement is the audiences' interest in media contents which involves subjective relationship between people and media and through engagement, people create worthwhile relationship with popular culture which make this act of viewing "a powerful thing" (Hill 2019, p. 51). Corner (2011) comes up with the concept "stages of engagement" which highlights the "variety of intensities" of both "cognitive and affective work" (p. 91). Cognitive work is what audience think about media texts and affective work relates to audience feelings (Corner 2011, pp. 91-92 & Hill 2017, p. 2). Pushing further from the "stages of engagement" of Corner (2011), Hill (2017) develops the concept "spectrum of engagement". The concept spectrum of engagement illustrates the cognitive and affective work of both producers and audiences which "extend across an emotional range so that people switch between positive and negative engagement, or disengagement" with media (Hill 2019, pp. 7, 55 & Hill 2017, p. 2). Both individual and social relations are the core of affect and emotion which address objective and subjective experience and it helps researchers to explore the "individual-personal and the collective social affective practices within popular culture" (Hill 2019, p. 10)

### ***Multiple modes of engagement with documentary***

Emotion dimension has been the key point of many factual programs which intend to "observe or put people in emotionally difficult situations" (Hill 2007, p. 15). Napoli (2014, p. 17) defines the pathway to audience is the ability to make audiences emotionally connected to social issues. Nash

& Corner (2016, p. 236) highlight that the emotional dimension of documentary representation aims at enhancing social relationships and strategic impact space focuses on making “an affective relationship to social issues and issue networks” in order encourage people to take action. This kind of emotion is more important than “knowledge feed into social subjectivity and the ‘social imaginary’, becoming the generators of collective orientation.” (Ibid, p. 236). In addition, documentary has a dimension of societal engagement that intends to influence and develop our social imagination which impacts how we see society, culture and people and to reach this ambitious goal, this requests creative strategy to involve both rational and emotional dimensions. (Bondebjerg 2014, pp. 48-49)

Audience engagement with documentary has been intensively studied by many scholars recently such as Austin (2012), Corner (2005), Ellis (2011), Bondebjerg (2014), Hill (2007, 2008, 2013) and Hill et al. (2019). In the book *Restyling Factual TV*, Hill (2007) comes up with the term “genre work” which was inspired by Bollas’s (1993) idea of dream work and psychodynamic theories and practices. Bollas believes that modes of engagement involves both conscious & unconscious experience where audiences go into “intermediate space” in which we confront objects which have more meaning to us, we tend to think of our relevant previous experiences while watching documentary (Bollas 1993, cited in Hill 2008, p. 84). Hill (2007, p. 226) asserts that applying the idea of immersive & reflective modes of engagement from Bollas (1993) enables researchers to explore audiences experience real events in the documentary and at the same time how they reflect on authenticity that they are watching and this is how audiences build their real world of documentary and “reflect on the nature of this real world & how it has been stage to watch”. Hill (2007, pp. 27, 81, 84) defines “genre work” as the work that viewers immerse in watching a genre and reflect on their experience of a gene and this helps researches to better their understanding on how audiences respond to factual programs on both conscious and unconscious levels.

In addition, Hill (2008, p. 83) proposes a double mode of engagement which draws on objective and subjective response to understand audience engagement with documentary and the idea of double mode of engagement focus on two aspects. The first aspect of the double mode of engagement is audiences expects documentary to tell them the “real world”, but simultaneously they know that the world they see is represented to them by producers. The second aspect shows that when people watch documentaries, they remember the things that make sense the most to them

and they reflect on it. The idea of double mode of engagement is similar to the modes of experience from Austin (2012) which is the two sets of pleasures feeling and knowing co-present and “they can and do overlap for viewers” (pp. 38-39). The scholar highlights that the act of viewing sometimes unexpectedly leads to “a revision of understandings of self, of others and of the relations between the two” (Austin 2012, p. 181)

According to Hill (2007, p. 230) when factual genre programs are restyled, audiences have to draw up on the elements of documentary and drama, information and entertainment which requires them to be flexible in the act of viewing. The audiences constantly change their responses/modes while watching documentary (Hill 2007, 2008 & 2013). Therefore, audience engagement with documentary needs to be explored with multiple modes of engagement (Hill 2006 and Hill 2013). The response can include physical, sensory, psychological, emotional and cognitive modes (Hill 2013).

There is a reform of documentary in the new media environment. In the book *New Documentary Ecologies*, Nash et al. (2014) state that the rapid development of digital technology, platforms and infrastructures bring new opportunities to filmmakers to produce and promote their work. The reform of documentaries leads to new means of audiences, they are not only viewers, but also navigators, users or collaborators. Strategic impact documentary is prominent in the reform of documentary (Nash et al. 2014 and Nash & Corner 2016). Strategic impact documentary model is introduced by Nash & Corner (2016). Strategic impact documentary refers to the documentary that strive for social activism as well as promote public engagement through campaigns, the press and social media (Nash & Corner 2016). According to Napoli (2014) and Nash & Corner (2016), besides understanding how the whole production works, it is highly important for researchers to consider emotional engagement from audiences to conceptualize the link between documentary and social changes (Napoli 2014).

### ***Engagement with truth claims in documentary***

Another aspect of documentary engagement should be taken into account is how audiences respond to truth claims. Hill (2007, p.112) emphasizes truthfulness is the characteristic that makes factual television different from other genres. According to Hill (2013, p. 87) we can understand the ideas of truth in many ways and one of which is through individual viewing experience.

Audiences tend to use a variety of “notions of truth within various context” and this practice reflects in their process of watching (Hill 2017, p. 85).

Evaluation of truth claim in documentary also requires multiples modes of engagement (Hill 2007, p. 114). Corner (2005, p. 56) coins the two notions “looking at” & “looking through” which describe the mix of objective & subjective dynamics. He defines the act of looking at something is the first-order observation and looking through something is the second-order observation which we transform the experience “without losing in touch with what is real the experience to begin with” (Hill 2008, p. 225). Corner (2005) and Nichols (2001) share similar idea that documentary captures the world and events, but at the same time it has “cuing function” which presents perspectives of producers on it. In addition, Lewis (2004, p. 295) highlights the space between fact and fiction that television audiences have “two adjacent realities” which is the real world we live and media landscape that we take part in and these two worlds sometimes overlap. Hill (2013, p. 83) highlights that truth claims in documentary do not only involve in images, but also the reception of these images. While this is important aspect of documentary engagement, it is under research. Although documentary is considered to be more non-fictional than film which presents real events or worlds (Bondebjerg 2014, p. 61 & Bruzzi 2006, p. 186), there is a question of how truth is produced in documentary as it was selected and edited by producers. “Any documentary story of reality must make choices and select material, perspective and frame – the reality we see on the screen is always an edited.” (Brylla & Kramer 2014, p. 9). In addition, although truthfulness is a significant characteristic of factual television (Hill 2007, p. 112), documentary is a hybrid genre of fact and fiction and audiences “use the ambiguous associations of reality and illusion to be skeptical of truth claims in the media and to believe in the truth as they see it.” (Hill 2013, p. 83).

Authenticity is one of the elements to look at truth in documentary (Hill 2007, p. 113). Although Van Leeuwen (2001, p. 397) argues that there is a crisis of authenticity definition because different people draw different meanings to this term, Nichols (2010) refers authenticity with realism which is “things as they are” (p. 17) and Hill (2005) defines authenticity as something that “signifies the genuine article” or “like the original” or “something real” (p. 74). She also asserts that performance coexisting with authenticity work was a standard which enables viewers to react to audiovisual representation (Hill 2007, p.115). Performances of characters should be taken into consideration

for the evaluation of truth claim in documentary which audiences “respond to creativity within audiovisual representations” (Hill 2007, p. 115) and “within the context of different characters within the film” (Hill 2013, p. 85). Performance is how audiences emotionally respond to real people and their experiences (Hill 2007, p. 113). “The way real people and their stories are represented on television is closely connected to how we judge the truthfulness of visual evidence.” (Hill 2005, p. 57). In addition, Verellen (2010, p. 3) highlights that “strong character drive” story generate emotional connection between audiences and the documentary which may inspire social changes.

Truth claims are the backbone of documentary, however, audiences’ attitudes towards truth claim is ambivalent and complicated (Spence & Navarro pp. 21-22). The effective approach to understand audience engagement with truth claim is to study in specific event or social context because the notice of truth is a part of individual experience (Hill 2013, p. 87). Therefore, instead of treating truth as a public knowledge or reality project, we should study truth as “a social process shifts an understanding of documentary towards individual experience” (Hill 2013, p. 87). It would be highly essential to study how audiences perceive and evaluate truth claims and their attitudes towards the accuracy of information in *What The Health* documentary.

### **Knowledge and Learning**

In a broad picture, the educational role of television is discussed by Hoggart (1960) and Hartley (1999). From Hoggart’s (1960, p. 41) viewpoint, television is “an important primary educator” or “general educator” whose major role is to improve people manners and attitudes. Television teach us about different segments of the population how they look, what others do, or behave and “television is a source of people watching for comparison and possible emulation” (Hoggart 1960, cited in Hartley, p. 155). Hartley (1999, p. 155) believes that television provides general knowledge and facts about the world and about everyday conduct of both public and private affairs. In addition, television teaches “various ethical, ideological and moral precepts, prejudices and perspectives”. Although Hoggart’s (1960) thoughts on the educational value of television were developed in the time when television was a different medium in some senses, his ideas are relevant to apply for documentary. Documentary is perceived as media art which gives a link between emotion as well as adult education because it sheds a light on complex world we live in (Ellis and McLane 2008) and provides “flexible and integrative forms of thinking” for audiences

which contributes to an “important holistic approach to learning” which helps us to see and know other things in the world or issues at the same time (Butterwick & Dawson 2006, pp. 282-283). In addition, Nichols (2010) asserts that documentary is a public sphere which “debated and contested issues” (p. 100) is presented and discussed and at the same time, people try to bring a claim, offer points of view as well as evoke feeling about issues which activate social consciousness (p. 68).

Knowledge and learning are intrinsic to documentary (Hill 2007, p. 146 and Nichols 2010, p. 40) and this type of factual television plays essential role in providing information, knowledge to audiences as well as forming opinions about subjects (Hill 2007). Documentary is considered as one of the most sufficient ways to make information easily accessible to wide range of busy people such as those who do not have time to read a whole book relating their interested topics (Roy & Steinberg 2016, p. 31) as well as build up understanding on a mass level (Ellis and McLane 2008, p. 326)

According to Hill (2007), learning is a spongy term because the meaning depends on different contexts. Knowledge, learning and information maybe similar, however, they are not the same. Information is something we accumulate (Hill 2007, p. 151), and information is also power (Jenkins et al. 2016, p. 104). Information can be empowering, however, sometimes it can be used as a tool for disempowerment as well as manipulation (Ibid). Learning is perceived as knowledge we attained by studying. In the context of factual genre, knowledge stands for “awareness gained through the experience of learning” (Hill 2007, p. 146), in other words, knowledge can be understood as experience. There is another interpretation of learning which is “information is giving form to something” (p. 146), we form our knowledge of a subject through our experiences. In a broad term, we can say that there are two types of knowledges. The first one is knowledge considered as facts when it “signifies specific information about subject, events or situations” (p. 146). The second idea considers knowledge as experience of learning and we learn in both normal and informal ways. What she means by formal learning is getting something from official and academic source such as educators and formal learning is something we “get from our own and other people’s experience” (p. 146). Learning while watching factual program or documentary is about getting something from a program, or something for ourselves. When we watch documentary, we tend to take out information that is relevant to ourselves and “information can go into learning reserve and can be drawn when needed” (p. 146). This idea is similar to Jenkins



et al. (2016, p. 91) and Hansen (2015, p. 208), when we “get stuff into our head”, we can carry that knowledge around and apply it in different settings whenever we need it.

There is another kind of learning which is related to the media itself (Hill 2007, p. 146). This kind of learning requires high media literacy levels which audiences critically engage with the presentation of knowledge and information in factual genres. In addition, audiences’ critical engagement indicates that audiences are resourceful “in learning about the media from the media” (Livingstone 2001 and Buckingham 2003, cited in Hill 2007, p. 146). Hill (2005, p. 165) asserts that “to learn to trust the news or not trust the news is a crucial part of media literacy.”

The process of learning from audiences is various and even complicated. According to Corner (2005), one single documentary can convey many different kinds of knowledge to audiences at the same time which make its knowledge profile rich and complicated. Audiences need to differentiate between knowledge about the world, knowledge about the media and self-knowledge so that they can understand the range of knowledge. Moreover, they have to distinguish between knowledge as facts and learning as experience. Therefore, people attain knowledge and learn about people and experiences in various and different ways. (Hill 2007, p. 216). Elias (1958) asserts that learning is subjective experience and audiences are more associated with their process of learning. The notion of “genre work” from Hill (2007, p. 159) includes reflective modes of engagement which is possibly in discussion of learning includes personal and emotional learning that build up self-awareness. Audiences are self-reflective when talking about learning. This indicates that viewers see themselves watching television, and thinking of themselves of an audience (ibid, p. 159). In the book *Making Sense of Television*, Livingstone (1998) refers that as resourceful audiences will rely on their social knowledge together with their genre knowledge and this creates multilayered ways to look at audiences learning.

## CHAPTER 3 - METHODS & METHODOLOGY

In the beginning of media audience study, the main approach is quantitative research which employs experimental and survey methodologies and qualitative research for media audience is new in the round recently (Jensen 2002, p. 60). According to Flyvbjerg (2001), when it comes to choosing appropriate approaches for the study, researchers should bear in mind that the methods should “clearly depend on the problem under study and its circumstances” (p. 75). The approach of this study is social constructionism which perceived knowledge as “something people create and enact together” (Burr 2003, pp. 9, 11). This thesis aims to explore how individuals make sense of the text, understand their response to it as well as how they act on it. In other words, the interest of this research is studying personal experiences, opinions as well as their values. Therefore, the research method employed for the thesis is qualitative research with in-dept interviews and semi-structured questions. While in-dept interview allows informants to elaborate and give detailed answers (Rapley 2004, p. 15), semi-structured questions is a flexible approach that allows researchers to “get in someone head” for in-dept information (Seale 2012, pp. 218-219). According to Kvale (2007), interview is a sensitive and powerful approach for researchers to comprehend experiences as well as lived meaning of people’s everyday life which allows them to “convey to others their situation from their own perspective and in their own words” (p.13).

As Flyvbjerg (2001, p. 78) highlights, “critical case” can be a strategic importance in relation to study the general problem. In addition, he suggests that the case study should be close to real-life situations and paradigmatic which brings research adequate materials to have in-dept understanding of causes or results (Flyvbjerg 2001, pp. 72-80). Although the analysis of audiences engagement with veganism portrayals and truth claims and what they learn from *What The Health* documentary is a small case, it still sheds some lights on the study on audience engagement with documentary as well as veganism portrayals in popular culture.

This part of the thesis will provide an analysis and reflection of methodology and methods approach to the study of audience engagement with *What The Health* documentary. It will present how the data was collected and analyzed using qualitative approach. At the end of this chapter, I will address some challenges that I encountered and critically reflect on the research process.

The strategy for the recruitment is snowball samplings which is recruiting further participants from the initial contact (Jensen 2002, p. 239). My friends introduced me to some of their friends who

might be interested in my research project and I also visited a class at Lund university. In addition, to reach more people with interest in veganism, I posted a message on a vegan group in Lund (Veganer i Lund) to recruit participants. Finally, I had 13 participants<sup>5</sup> aging from 22 to 34 years old and living in Sweden and The Netherlands. Their background education ranges from bachelor to doctor degree. Six of them have a regular diet<sup>6</sup> and seven of them are vegetarians<sup>7</sup>. There were 5 interviews conducted online and 8 interviews conducted in physical locations (5 interviews in Lund, 1 interview in Helsingborg and 2 interviews in The Netherlands). Before the interviews, participants were asked to watch the documentary even for those who have watched the documentary because the film is long and it has many scientific facts and people may forget information from it. After they watched the documentary, the interviews were conducted within one to two weeks after. Time efficiency is the advantage of snowball sampling because it requires short time to start primary data collection process and study with convenient sampling can be attained in short amount of time (Dudovskiy 2018 and Bryman 2012). However, snowball sampling has some drawbacks such as community bias because the first informants may have strong influence on the sample and result from snowball sampling is difficult to generalize beyond the sampled studied (Ibid).

### **In-dept interview**

According to Bower (1973, p. vi) and Mason (2002, p. 1), the most effective way to understand people's opinions about something is to ask them. The advantage of semi-structured interview is flexibility. The researcher prepared an interview guide which includes relevant questions to the interested topics, however, during the interview, researchers do not strictly follow the question orders or exactly same words from the guiding questions, but rather depend on interviewees' responses and interests to generate conversations (Bryman 2012, p. 471). Therefore, semi-structured interview is employed in this research project.

Kvale (2007, p 15) and Jensen (2002, pp. 269-270) raise ambiguity as an epistemological issue of interviewing because interviewees may give ambiguous contradictory sometimes which is due to

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<sup>5</sup> See Appendix 1 for informant profile

<sup>6</sup> Informants have meat in their diets

<sup>7</sup> Although there are two informants identified themselves vegans, I prefer to call this group vegetarian because it is more inclusive.

the faulty communication or “adequate reflections of objective contradictions in the world that they live”. Therefore, the role of the interviewer is to clarify statements from interviewees, in order words, “tease out the meaning and implications of what people say” (Jensen 2002, p. 270). This issue come up during my interviews sometimes especially when it comes to question about truth claims, therefore, I asked some clarification questions to double check or ask the interviewees to give examples whenever applicable to avoid any misinterpretation and ambiguous statements.

The interviews last in a range between 40 to 60 minutes and was recorded with mobile phone. Hansen (2010, pp. 26-27) suggests researchers to conduct pilot interview before working on full data collection to make sure that the method and sample are appropriate with the research purpose. I did one pilot interview to test interview guide. Pilot interview helps me to see how interviewees respond to questions, how those questions work which helps me to adjust and add more relevant questions that I missed in the beginning<sup>8</sup>.

The interviews were conducted in cafes near and in university public area. These locations were chosen by the interviewees in terms of their convenience (Rosalind and Holland 2013, p. 44). These public places are challenging because people come, talk, and walk and there were noises most of the time (Rosalind and Holland 2013, p. 44 and Bryman 2012, p. 473). However, we tried to choose the spots where there were fewer people sitting or walking, for example at the corner of the café which gave us less noisy atmosphere.

For this time, 4 interviews were conducted through video calls on Messenger and 1 interview through Facetime. After World Health Organization declared coronavirus a pandemic, my interviewees and I preferred online interview instead of face to face interview to prevent the risk of getting infected. Online interviews have many advantages that informants are flexible with time and location (Burkitt 2004, p. 222), interviewees also feel more comfortable with their own places. Also, internet is accessible to those interviewees as well as they embrace and are confident with technology such as laptops and phones.

Building rapport can be a challenge while doing online interview (Cater 2011). Before, the interview I also asked few questions about interest like documentary, TV programs and diet that they prefer and before the interview I also introduced myself, my education, inspiration and asked

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<sup>8</sup> See Appendix 3 for the final interview guide

some question about their jobs, studies, hobbies and after that I started to interview. My point here is to make them feel comfortable and open to talk. During the interview, I showed them photos of all interviewees in the documentary. People tend to forget many information as they have watched a long documentary which has many interviewees and scientific facts, so conducting interviews with photos is helpful for interviewees to recall memories and impressions they have while watching *What The Health* documentary and encourage people to talk more. Duguay (2014) and Harper (2002, p. 13) point out that photo is an elicitation and memory aid for researchers when conducting interviews. However, I only showed the photos after the interviewees had talked about who and what scenes or information they remembered or impressed the most to avoid leading conversations.

I have one incident that the Internet connection was not stable so sometimes we have to repeat what we said, or when I was doing the transcript and if the sound was not clear, I reached out to the informants for clarification. Background noise is another problem. Although all online interviews were conducted at researcher and interviewees' home which were quiet most of the time, however, while I was conducting the interview with Cici, there was unexpected hailstorm. The sounds of hailstorm were very loud which disrupted our interview around 15 minutes. The rest of the interview was fine, but that disruption was awkward for both of us.

## **Ethics**

Ethics are highly essential for the research project (Hansen & Machin 2010, pp. 24-25). Therefore, when I briefed people about how I conduct the interview, I clearly mentioned their rights as a participant in the beginning. I let them see the consent form<sup>9</sup>, mention that I will record them with my phone, have opportunities to choose time and place of the interviews and they can reject any questions if they don't want to answer, they can opt out the interviews and project anytime.

In terms of recruiting on social media and online interview through Facetime and Messenger video call, there are additional ethical concerns (Aldawsari 2016). The interview is conducted through technologies which is owned by third parties and that means discussions online may lead to the issue that data is "accessed and stored by governments agencies or corporations." (Lo Iacono et al. 2016, p. 13). When I recruited online via Facebook group, in the recruitment post, I stated that if

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<sup>9</sup> See Appendix 2 for the consent form

anyone interested in my project, they were highly encouraged to contact me through email and private message to ensure their identity is not exposed online. Although, there are some challenges as I mentioned, those interviews provide sufficiently data for the project to cope with the pandemic time.

### **Data Analysis<sup>10</sup>**

To ensure confidentiality, I changed the name of all interviewees. Transcripts was done 1 or 2 days after the interviews. After transcribing the interviews, I did an open coding by applying inductive approach to avoid missing any codes (Seale 2012, pp. 370-371) and applied traditional approach “pencil and paper” strategy for coding (Bazely 2013, p. 133). During the coding stage, I made some memos as suggested by Kuckartz (2014, p. 57) and Bazeley (2013, p. 103) which is useful for forming categories. When the descriptive code step was done, I put all of the codes in a list for putting into categories and colors were applied for the codes and categories. After that, in order to develop categories, deductive approach from Seale (2012) was employed to help me to answer the research questions smoothly and logically (Bazely 2013, p. 142). I developed a table which included codes, interview numbers, sub-categories to make the descriptive codes and categories organized and easy for analysis and putting to conceptual themes. I realize it is impossible to come up with appropriate categories in the first place. Therefore, after re-reading the codes and memo notes during the open coding many times, I came up with 9 main categories for the final category system which is relevant to the research questions: Diets, documentary genre, positive engagement, negative engagement, critical engagement, provocative engagement, distribution, knowledge & learning and others.

### **Reflection on methods**

Seven of the interviews were conducted in second language for both researcher and participants. Although participants spoke good English, there were language barriers in the interviews. Sometimes participants struggled to express how they felt and perceived the documentary in secondary language (Bazely 2013, p. 77). For example, one Dutch interviewee could not come up with an appropriate word to describe his opinion about the mood and tone of the film. We tried Google translate to deal with the situation and as a researcher I also asked more relevant questions

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<sup>10</sup> See Appendix 5 for the example of the coding and analysis process

to clarify and avoid misunderstandings and confusions. There was another challenge relating to language. Three interviews were conducted in Vietnamese and it was easy for both researcher and interviewees because Vietnamese was our mother tongue. Bazely (2013, p. 77) points out that translation of interviews could lead to confusions and many expressions cannot be fully translated into English while keeping the same meaning. There is a language gap when it comes to translating from Vietnamese to English, so I decided to make full transcripts in Vietnamese instead of translating all of them to English and coded the transcripts with English and carefully considered the context to minimize language translation gap. (Ibid, p. 77)

As Jensen (2002, p. 240) raises the issue that “people do not always say what they think or mean what they say”. Therefore, as an interviewer, I tried to tease out and ask follow up questions to clarify or encourage people to talk more whenever possible, especially when it comes to audience study which involves with psychoanalysis which means interviewees’ opinions or experiences of something are a complex, ambiguous and confused process (Dahlgren 2013, p. 81). I experienced this situation when I asked Anan if he believed the athletes’ interviews. He just said that he was impressed with athletes’ performance and then he said he was confused and did not give any explanations. I asked him if it was ok if he could tell me why he was confused about the athletes’ interviews, he tried to explain to me, but his explanation was full of confusions and hesitants “I think it’s quite weird to link with religion [...] I don't think it's reasonable because there are some people who can't have a plant-based diet and I don't know why [...] I'm not sure [...]”

In terms of statistics, I am aware that the size of my sample is small which is 13 interviewees and many of the interviewees are students. Therefore, they cannot represent all veganism documentary audiences in different contexts because our behaviors and practices depend on specific situations/contexts rather than personal characteristics (Burr 2003, p. 31 & Hermes 2009, p. 116). In addition, scientists are human and as human we look at the world with stands or positions or perspectives which depend on theories, hypothesis or assumptions that we have or draw from (Burr 2003, pp. 152-153) and the knowledge from social constructionism approach is coproduced between researchers and participants in the study (Burr 2003, pp. 152-153). Consequently, fact is not impartial, instead, fact is more to “validate some representation of the worlds [...] forms of human life [...] and to validate others” (Ibid, p. 153)

According to Hansen et al. (2010, pp. 30-31) the purpose of academic is “to contribute to the development and advancement of knowledge and understanding in the relevant field of inquiry”. Qualitative research aims at generalizing theories instead of populations of specific fields (Bryman 2012, p. 406) and the “usefulness” of social constructionist research is generating theories development and helping people to have further understandings of previous research findings (Burr 2003, p. 159). Therefore, the study is a process of learning (Flyvbjerg 2001, p. 73) and it focuses on understanding “social practices” of what people do in a specific context (Burr 2003, p. 11) with attempt to understand how individuals in the two groups engage with the portrayals of veganism, truth claims and knowledge which aims at contributing knowledge to reception study and vegan studies rather than proving something (Flyvbjerg 2001, p. 73) or claiming truths (Burr 2003, p. 158)



## CHAPTER 4 – ANALYSIS

For the first part of this chapter, I will explore audiences' attitude towards veganism portrayals in What The Health documentary. In the second part, I will analyze their attitudes towards truth claims. In the third part, there will be an analysis of what kind of knowledge that informants learn from the documentary.

### **Engagement with veganism portrayals**

Some participants in vegetarian group complimented the narrative of What The Health documentary. Camcam, Fifi, Soso, Mama, Sasa agreed that the film had good narrative with hospitable approaches which portray the health aspect of a plant-based diet, the corruption of health institutions in America and examples of people trying a plant-based diet. Camcam (female, vegetarian) explained that the documentary had a gradual flow and it approached veganism in scientific ways. The documentary started with the problems from institutions and its websites which supposed to provide healthy diet information to people, however, their advices were impacted by animal product industries and it explained why meat is not good for the body with many interviews from experts and provided examples of healthy people who follow a plant-based diet:

*In the beginning, it presents the issue about our knowledge about healthy diet that we read on credible websites, but in fact it's not and then it brings a new perspective, totally different view for audiences [...]. Secondly, What The Health explains why eating meat makes the body bad. I mean it explains in a scientific way and it has advice and opinions from experts. Thirdly, it gives solutions and examples of people who transform their body and health after they change their diet. And this is a good structure. (Camcam, female, vegetarian)*

Camcam elaborated that the documentary did not address veganism with aggressive approach “[...] it's not showing slaughterhouse [...] it's kind of gradual and it's not too much against the meat industry or people who eat meat [...]”. Camcam had positive attitudes towards the storytelling of the documentary because it did not follow the approach of dark veganism which features scenes of animal suffering (Sloane 2016, p. 127). Disturbing contents put people off and may cause resistance in society (Veron 2016, p. 300). In addition, Camcam's comment indicates the

viewpoint of Greenebaum (2012, p. 322) which states that when it comes to communicating about veganism, many vegans agree that non-confrontation methods are effective to avoid ignorance or tensions.

Not only did vegetarian participants, but also non-vegetarian participants had positive attitudes towards the documentary when it presented the bad effects of eating meat and the corruption of the pharmaceutical and health institutions which accepted sponsorship money from meat and dairy industry in America. As this participant put it “They mention about health issue when we eat too much meat. That's good because for sure it's true, and that's good that the film shows a dark truth behind these organizations.” (Kaka, male, non-vegetarian)

Riri and Anan in the non-vegetarian group thought that What the Health documentary tried to make the narrative catchy like a movie, so the audiences follow the whole story from the beginning until the end:

*It's very entertaining & interesting because it brings [...] in a way that keeps you kind of connected to the television [...] The more you go into the documentary, the more things will be revealed. For instance, he was wondering why he went to those official health organizations in the United States and they are very reluctant to give information or to go for interview and then when he searched online, he found out those companies or health institutes are sponsored by all those products that they are against them He found the relation and that was the reveal later[...] They are not gonna reveal anything from the beginning, so it has to be like a movie, it has to be some suspension [...] (Riri, male, non-vegetarian)*

Although Soso was positive about the narrative of the documentary, he thought that the mood and tone was depressing for the whole film: “I think it has depressing tone, it's not a happy or optimistic tone of the entire thing. And I don't think that is a good approach” and that explained why he did not recommend What The Health film to his younger brother “[...] the mood is depressing. It's too depressing. I didn't like that and I didn't recommend it to my younger brother.” (Soso, male, vegetarian).

Fifi highlighted one important point that What The Health documentary did not bring up veganism in the beginning, instead the film made it like journey. It started with the problems which was the

cause of serious diseases by consuming too much meat and found the solutions through the interviews with doctors and other people who were impacted by meat industry and in the end the solution was a plant-based diet. Fifi thought it was a good approach to depict veganism since “people don’t want to be triggered by the word veganism”. As she put it:

*I think it's good because it's one of the first one that really brought up the health point of view for veganism [...] it was like this movie is about veganism, it was more highlighting of problems that we have and saying that these are solutions, eat more veggies, cut down meat and dairy but it wasn't that in your face the word vegan and I think for some people that's a good strategy because they don't want to see veganism and they don't want to be like they were triggered by the word vegan perhaps and so then I think it was good taking that standpoint and interviewing people like this and showing lots of different perspectives and taking a journey [...]* (Fifi, female, vegetarian)

The comment of Fifi also relates to Greenebaum’s (2015) argument that communicating and promoting veganism has been an issue with people who consume meat, especially veganism is stigmatized in media as well as in society. Instead of using confrontational approach, it is better to focus on health benefits as well as lead by examples to communicate about veganism. (Ibid)

According to Nichols (2001, p. 63) “Every view comes to a film with perspective and motives based on previous experience”. During the interview, there were many times people from both vegetarian and non-vegetarian group compared What The Health documentary with prior documentaries that they have seen before and they compared before I asked the questions about comparing What The Health with other documentaries. Fifi critically compared What The Health with Cowspiracy which were both co-produced by Kip Anderson. She thought that What The Health had a similar story with Cowspiracy. However, What The Health was more emotional and in terms of visuals, Cowspiracy was better:

*Yeah it's interesting because Kip Anderson did a similar narrative for Cowspiracy and I think it's a very good way to make people think because he was really like showing he's critical and he also shows he's not perfect so he's sort of explains his journey as he goes along and I think that can be helpful but it's a little bit emotionally based. They might throw out a lot of facts, but actually it's just done in a very emotional way.* (Fifi, female, vegetarian)

Fifi compared the visuals of What The Health with Cowspiracy “Cowspiracy was much better in terms of visual but that's because they have a lot of office interviews or like small room interviews so it's not aesthetical but I think it still has nice cohesiveness to it.” (Fifi, female, vegetarian)

During the interviews, two non-vegetarian participants and most vegetarians compared What The Health with The Game Changers which is the current documentary about veganism. Mama complimented The Game Changers and he thought it had a better story than What The Health. Mama’s comment illustrates that as viewers, people tend to draw on their previous experiences and knowledge when they watch factual program. (Nichols 2001 and Hill 2007)

*I like the story of The Game Changers more and it was about this guy James Wilks, so he is a martial athlete and he tries to find like the truth about how to cure and what to eat to cure for sports so it was a good story [...]* (Mama, male, vegetarian)

This participant explained enthusiastically why he thought the mood and tone of The Game Changers was better than What The Health:

*The Game Changers even though it has elements of like doubts but it still like ups and downs, from high point to low point but this one is very low for the entire duration of a documentary. It did not feel a lot of high point when you feel good or happy. I think the mood and tone of this documentary is really low [...]* (Soso, male, vegetarian)

Riri, Anan and Nana from the non-vegetarian group and Fifi, Mimi and Mama from the vegetarian group were aware of the idea of “the two worlds” in documentary and they acknowledged that the healthcare system in their countries were different from American system which was portrayed in the film. Riri commented:

*I think the documentary focuses on the United States health industry and institutions, the sickness like cancer, obesity and I don't think they under-present one or the other, but then again here in The Netherlands we have different health system so what they say there in the documentary is not necessarily true for our system because those institution are the United States institutions. Maybe here in The Netherlands we have different kinds of ways they are telling you how to eat [...]* (Riri, male, non-vegetarian).

The comment from Riri indicates the notion of double mode of engagement from Hill (2007) which is audience immerse themselves in the documentary and reflect that documentary aims at presenting the real world, but at the same time they know the world in documentary is represented to them (Corner 2005, Nichols 2001 and Lewis 2004). Riri was well-aware that What The Health constructed the healthcare system and related issues in American and he believed that the film presented the reality in America, but at the same time he believed that American system is different from the Dutch system. His comment shows that he could define “the world” he lives in (The Netherlands) is different from “the world” that was represented in the documentary (America).

In terms of the visuals, Nana criticized the images of emergency rooms, images of blood and people going through operation in hospitals in the film and she thought it was unnecessary and unethical to use these images and it made she believe that the documentary exaggerated the medical situation in America:

*When I watch this and I asked myself if he records these or he gets it somewhere else because I don't think he can go to these place like this to film and I think it's not. It's not moral because I think these scenes do not support much for this documentary and don't deal with any argument of him. It's just an element to exaggerate this documentary to strengthen the emotions and make people believe their points. (Nana, female, non-vegetarian).*

Not only did Nana in the non-vegetarian group, but also Fifi and Camcam in the vegetarian group criticized the visuals of What The Health. Some images in the film made three of them believed the documentary exaggerated the situation of American healthcare system in order to strengthen their arguments about the bad sides effects of meat consumption and benefits of a plant-based diet. The three opinions from Nana, Fifi and Camcam confirms Barnouw's (1993) and Ellis' (2011) statement that audiences notice producers use visuals as evidences to support their arguments. In addition, their comments indicate cognitive engagement which means audiences acknowledge that documentary is a construction rather than “a direct record of reality” (Hill 2013, p. 83)

Although Riri thought the documentary provided biased arguments including doctors' interviews as well as athletes' interviews, he held positive attitude towards the visuals of the film because the

visuals make it easy for him to understand lots of facts and numbers. His comment confirms that illustration of visualization of science evidences is a strong advantage of documentary (Jallinoja et al. 2019, pp. 164-165). As Riri put it:

*[...] if they present facts and numbers or they just put it out on a sheet it doesn't have any meaning to me But I think in this documentary [...] visual and they make it very easy to understand, you know. They give some easy examples because they know that's a lot of information and I think they want this documentary to be understood by audiences as wide as possible so they have to make sure everyone with all education level can understand what's going on and I think they do a very good job put it down in a very understandable even the complicated things [...]* (Riri, male, non- vegetarian)

One participant in the non-vegan group expected something more than the positive impact of a plant-based diet. Anan (male, non-vegetarian) acknowledged that the documentary was supporting a plant-based diet and in the end of the interview he raised a question about what to eat when we follow a plant-based diet. He commented “I mean the film suggests us to have a plant-based diet and that’s good. But my question is what is a plant-based diet? How to eat? What about drinking? What to drink?”

The comment from Anan relates to Bourdieu’s (1997) definition of tacit knowledge, Bourdieu demonstrates “people do not just need to know ‘that’ but also need to know ‘how’, which exists in a practical state in an agent’s practice and not their consciousness” (Skeggs & Wood 2012, p. 100). What Bourdieu means is knowing the skill is not enough, we also need to know to “perform the skills in order to act appropriately” (Ibid, p. 100). In this case, What The Health documentary highlights the benefits of a plant-based diet, however, the documentary did not have a clear guideline for this diet.

### **Engagement with truth claims**

This analysis will examine how audiences engage with the truth claims in the documentary. The analysis will indicate the intensity of engagement from audiences when they respond to facts, performances of interviewees and authenticity. Also, it shows that audiences evaluated the credibility of the documentary basing on the context of the film. In the end, there will be a discussion of “the third person effect”. While the notion of double mode of engagement and genre

work highlight that viewers reflect on their feelings as well as experiences as an audience (Hill 2008, p, 85), “the third person effect” extend the experience of being an audience because when people watch television, they do not only reflect on themselves but also others (Hojjer 1999).

Watching factual genre, audiences live in the two worlds between fact and fiction (Corner 1995, Nichols 2001, Brylla & Kramer 2014 & Lewis 2004, Austin 2012). Hill (2008, p. 83) proposes the concept double mode of engagement to demonstrate that audiences expect documentary to tell them the “real world”, but at the same time they know that the world they see is represented to us by producers. A quote from Riri validates this point. Riri believed the story of the athletes, but he acknowledged that few cases did not fit all cases and there were many factors contribute to amazing sport performance. Also, he knew this is the purpose of the producers to indicate a plant-based diet will result in good sport performance. In addition, his comment shows that he believed athletes, yet at the same time he reflected on himself as an audience, he noticed that he was watching a documentary and what he saw was the representation of the real world that was constructed by the producers.

*I don't have any reason not to believe that this is not the true story, but you know then what might be true for 1 person but can't not work for all people. And I think there are more aspects contribute to it, not only diet, there are many more things that make these people incredible and impressive in what they achieve. But of course in the documentary this diet is the only thing that pointing out so it's easy to believe that I just focus on that part. (Riri, male, non-vegetarian).*

Another one from the vegetarian group shared similar idea with Riri. She said:

*I am not fully convinced by their sayings. I believe they're telling their stories but having a better performance in doing sport has several factors including sleep, diet, supplement, etc. Since there's no further evidence that those factors remained, the effect cannot all attribute to the change of the diet. (Cici, female, vegetarian)*

While watching a documentary, audiences switched between positive and negative engagement or disengagement (Hill 2019, p. 55). One non-vegetarian said:

*I think in the beginning of the film I liked it and it was quite good because they explain things very logically and scientific but in the end all of them advocate for a plant-based diet [...] I feel like everyone supports a plant-based diet and I think it's kind of exaggerating (Kaka, male, nonvegetarian).*

He also elaborates in the end of the interview with an ironic tone:

*But after this movie, I think I have a negative feeling of a plant-based diet because they try to direct me to have a plant-based diet. Maybe because of this film I even hate a plant-based diet [...] (Kaka, male, nonvegetarian).*

As we can see how this participant switched from positive to negative engagement which relates to the idea of spectrum of engagement. In the beginning, Kaka positively engaged with doctors' interviews because of their rationality in explaining information. However, when he continued to watch it until the end, he switched to negative engagement because he realizes all of doctors supports a plant-based diet which make he think the doctors exaggerate the benefits of a plant-based diet.

Another comment from Riri not only indicates the spectrum of engagement from Hill (2019), but also shows the double mode of engagement which audiences "slip in and out of immersive and reflective mode of engagement" (Hill 2008, p. 231):

*Shocking in a way if [...] that meat and animal based products are apparently so unhealthy for you because I have been eating meat and dairy and animal products for the whole of my life and I don't feel unhealthy, you know I work out, take care of myself in the best way that but in the documentary they also mention, this is something that I remember a guy or a female that feel really healthy, feel really good...but they can suddenly get the disease and you know there is no DNA or genes of disease in the family history and they say it relates to your eating patterns and which is that your diet having too much meat and too much milk. And I also thought that meat has some essential nutrition that you need for your diet, as for milk, you get stronger bone for milk. They debunk that in this documentary and this is the thing that interesting to me but shocking ofc, basically they have been telling you that you do it wrong for your whole life [...] You feel guilty yourself about having meat*



*consumption and it will make you think twice the next day when for breakfast when you have bacon and eggs and you think like Should I eat this? [...] I really don't like the way they try to convince you or they try to tell you because it makes you feel really bad about yourself. So if it's really true and shocking of course everyone should try to adapt to the new lifestyle but I think it's one-sided, it's biased.* (Riri, male, non-vegetarian)

This participant was fascinated about the relation between a plant-based diet and diseases. However, he expressed that What the Health documentary made him feel bad about eating animal products and he also criticized that the film was biased. He switched from positive engagement (feeling interested) to provocative engagement (feeling shocked) to negative engagement (feeling guilty) and critical engagement (thinking the documentary is biased). This participant indicates the intensity of engagement from Corner (2005) and Hill (2019). In addition, the comment from Riri illustrates the double mode of engagement which refers to a psychodynamic aspect of viewing documentary (Hill 2008). Viewers tend to consciously reflect on factual contents, however, when they talk about various representations of reality, they are likely to move into “uncharted territory, exploring more unconscious aspects of their viewing experiences” (Hill 2008, p. 231). While Riri was watching the documentary, he reflected on his daily diet (he eats meat) and his habit (he does sports), Riri never considered animal products unhealthy and he also did sport and did not feel unhealthy, but then documentary shocked him that consuming animal products was the cause of many severe diseases. This indicates the “uncharted territory” or “unconscious aspect” of his viewing experience because he never considered animal products harmful to health, and then the documentary debunked this which “brings about the intense feeling” and made him shocked. The moment he recognized this information and acknowledged that he was watching the documentary, he was troubled by information and he was “unhappy with what this personally mean” to him (Hill 2008, p. 231).

While watching documentary, people may feel ambiguous, contradictory or unclear (Hoijer 1998, Hill 2008 and Austin 2012). The comment from Anan indicates the arguments of the three scholars. Anan’s shared his opinions about the athletes’ interviews:

*I'm impressed! But I question...I mean diet is just a part of health. Looking broadly, for example the monks who practice Buddhism, they have happy, peaceful and they long*

*lifespan but what I question is they say they have a plant-based diet for the whole life, but I don't know[...]. I mean if we just have a plant-based diet and you have those things, that means all people who have a plant-based diet have a good life? Really? I don't think it's reasonable because there are some people who can't have a plant-based diet and I don't know why. Is it their mind or habit or something else? Because if it's habit, we can change it right? I think all of those things are just a part of the problem. Some people who do sport they don't have a plant-based diet and they still achieve so many things in their sports career and ofc without doping. So I'm not sure [...]* (Anan, male, non-vegetarian).

In the beginning, Anan related to his understanding of people following Buddhism who he thought they had a plant-based diet and they had a good life, and then he critically questioned if anyone could have a plant-based diet. He did not believe that a plant-based diet itself would lead to a good life, but he could not give the reason why and in the end he was still unsure. During the interview, Anan shared that he was interested in religion and when he was watching the documentary and he drew on his knowledge about religion. This illustrates the idea of double mode of engagement from Hill (2008). There is another point to note from his comment. We see that this one started with the positive feeling about athletes, but he also had critical engagement which he related to people practice Buddhism and questioned if a plant-based diet can contribute sport performance. However, in the end he felt confused to give a clear answer. Anan's comment confirm Hill's (2007, pp. 109-110) statement, "...audiences process the knowledge and experiences represented on television and also the relationship between these representations and viewers' own knowledge and experience" and the act of watching are sometimes contradictory, ambiguous and unclear (Hill 2007 and Hill 2008)

Not only non-vegetarian participants, but also vegetarian participants went through an ambiguous process of being an audience while watching factual programs. When Fifi was asked to give her opinion on the accuracy of truth claims in What The Health film, she expressed:

*I mean this is when it comes to research that a lot of it are just numbers and you can't make up numbers to fit your agenda, but the research behind it wasn't done in a good way and I have not go into every research paper that they link to, but I mean I do know that the same*

*way that a lot of research is funded by corporations who want to drive the dairy agenda or the meat agenda, you know. [...] I mean most likely the viewers will believe it and continue saying it and that's good for plant-based diet but in terms of scientific points of view very few people are critical. So personally, I'm not sure how much of it is true or not. I know the majority of it I found in other places similar data, similar statistics and when I watch these similar videos like "Debunking the myths of What The Health", these types of videos. So of course, I doubt that but I don't know how to say it, I just think sometimes research is hard to understand [...]* (Fifi, female, vegetarian).

The comment of Fifi shows that although she was critical of the research articles, however, she found it difficult to understand and confusing to understand research process at the same time. Considering the psychodynamic perspective from Hoijer (1998) and genre work from Hill (2008), "genre work takes place in conscious and unconscious moments in our life" (p. 109), we can see that viewers experience conflicts or ambiguities or confusions in their responses and these contradictions is a part of how they make sense of themselves and understand the world. (Hoijer 1998, p. 179 & Austin 2012, p. 181)

Examining how audiences critically engage with the stories of people in the program, we can understand their identity at some point. According to Gauntlett (2002, p. 98), information from media presents the world, more importantly, it "contributes to its shape and are central to modern reflexivity". According to Hetherington (1998, p. 15), the notion of identity is about similarities and differences between subjects and others. As Hill (2005) points out, when we immerse in a program, we gather information as well as ideas which assist us to "construct and maintain our own self-identities or life biographies" (p. 90). The two comments of Anan and Mama illustrate Gauntlett's (2002) and Hill's (2005) statement. In the interview, Anan shared that he did not like the medical system in France and America because doctors prescribed too many medicines. In this comment we see that he felt happy in the end when the sick people did not need to go through many medical treatments and have many medicines "I'm happy that when they don't use medicine, I'm happy because it's something I believe." (Anan, male, non-vegetarian). Besides Anan, other participants in this group and some participants in the vegetarian group related themselves with people in the documentary. Mama was interested in sports and he related himself with Rich Roll,

one of the athletes in the film. He admitted that Rich Roll was the athlete that impressed him the most and he also followed Rich Roll's channels before watching the documentary. He shared "I think they are inspiring [...] this sportsman, especially Rich Roll. He does running and biking just like me so I can relate to him [...] I really feel like them when I have this diet and doing sports [...]" (Mama, male, vegetarian). The two comments from Anan and Mama also indicate the notion of double mode of engagement from Hill (2008), when people watch a documentary, people remember the things that made sense the most to them and they reflect on it. More importantly, the act of watching a documentary sometimes unexpectedly leads to "a revision of understandings of self, of others and of the relations between the two" (Austin 2012, p. 181).

In addition to understanding the self-reflexive process of an audience, the next analysis will look at provocative engagement which relates to intense feeling such as feeling shocked (Hill et al. 2019). When I asked Sasa to share her opinion about the village people in What The Health documentary, she emotionally reflected on her life growing up in the same state of the village people and she felt sorry for those who lived next to the industrial farms and she acknowledged the gap between black and white community. Bollas (1993) coined the term "intermediate space" where "we encounter objects, some mean more to us than others; they might evoke previous experiences" [...] and "the object is not object [...] but psychically connected to us" (Bollas 1993, cited in Hill 2008, p. 226). Sasa and Mimi's emotions and reflections about the village people is an indication of "intermediate space" from Bollas (1993):

*Actually, I'm from North Carolina so I remember these people so of course I remember these 2 people were in North Carolina [...]. It hurts[... ] It hurts [... ] It was very emotional for me because in the States, where I grew up and then it's disgusting when you see people life was affected like that and her talking about her neighbors being [...] all of them have cancer, diabetes, asthmas, like there is no one healthy because it's impossible to be healthy in that community and I know how much it means to these people and how much it's like to be born in that experience and it's just like this person is entitled to many rights as my grandfather but my grandfather was also white so it didn't go up in this area that just like giving all of the pollution because they're minority. It's just honestly terrible. (Sasa, female, vegetarian).*

Mimi, a vegetarian participant from The Netherlands, emotionally reflected on her childhood living near the farm and empathized with the village people and she thought that their interviews were honest and shocking to her:

*[...] Around where I grew up there are lots of farms. I mean that I could relate to those people's concern about their health. It made me feel how close such risks can be, without us really realizing it. For example, I love the village I grew up, I loved playing outside, loved cycling around cattle farms. And I still love that once I'm back home. But the movie made me realize there's another side to it that affects our health negatively. And it used to make me very happy too. I still love watching cows in the fields but it's a double feeling too. Because I don't support the reason they are in that field for our consumption. And that this large-scale farming or at least many smaller farms together can pose a serious threat to our health."* (Mimi, female, vegetarian).

Besides Sasa and Mimi, Riri went through similar experiences:

*The thing that I remember the women that he interviewed that she lives near the field that they were spraying the water with the pigs were being killed and she has all the health related issues and also her family. That's was shocking to me if it's really because of that they spray the field with that and they pointed out in the documentary that they only do this in the areas where this minority or low-income, they won't do that in a white state or where white people are living, only in Black communities where people are not original American. It was such an unequal world. I feel bad about that honestly. I can't imagine me living a life like them. [...]* (Riri, male, non-vegetarian).

Those reflections of participants when they talked village people in the documentary is an indication of emotional response of audiences to specific person in documentary (Hill 2013, p. 84). In addition, their comments confirm Hill's (2008, p. 226) argument, after we watch documentary and when we watch something that is meaningful to us "we will consciously and unconsciously store generic content and experiences in a holding area, ready to be drawn on at certain moments in our lives." The three comments from both vegetarian and non-vegetarian participants also relates to Verellen's (2010, p. 3) argument about the notion of "strong character-driven" which creates emotional connection between the viewers and the film. In addition, these comments relate to the notion of the "world views" from Austin (2012). The three respondents, Mimi, Sasa and

Riri, are given a stance or “invitation to view” on specific topics, events and people. Their reflections show that their viewing process is shaped by their own experiences, values and their sense of self. (Austin 2012, p, 179)

As mention before, in order to explore how viewers respond to truth claims, it is important to analyze their evaluations of performances of people in the documentary. According to Hill (2007), the essence of performance evaluation is the assessment of viewers of real people and their experiences, and their emotional response. An understanding of “normal” everyday life is juxtaposed by an awareness of the performance of selfhood, where people “act their way’ through life” (p. 116). Therefore, it is essential to take a close look at their reactions to performances of the interviewees presented in the documentary. Many informants from both vegetarian and non-vegetarian group agreed that attitudes of doctors made them believe their interviews and made doctors credible. One informant from the non-vegetarian group believed that the doctors were experienced, confident and doctors’ attitudes made him think they were credible “I think they are very confident. They are from different areas and in the end all of them conclude that a plant-based diet is good for health. For me, they are credible [...] I mean their attitudes when he interviews them”. He also gave an example “I’m impressed with Dr. Michael Greger because he protects his argument drastically. For example, a plant-based diet does not provide enough proteins.” (Anan, male, non-vegetarian).

Mimi from the vegetarian group thought the doctors in the film were experienced and their interviews were good and with their blouses, they were more respectable:

*Good corporation of people in the field so you have information with people who work with diseases and their experience in hospitals so you see the other side so I think that's the good part of the documentary. I think if they are in their suit, they have more respect and they seem more respectable.”* (Mimi, female, vegetarian)

The engagement of the two participants is relevant to Bondebjerg’s viewpoint (2014). He highlights that when we watch and listen to a character in documentary, we tend to judge and we react to this character on “personal, emotional and rational level.” (p. 45)

Besides doctors, informants were critical of the performance of Kip Anderson who is the co-producer and the host in the film. Both Silverstone (1999) and Goffman (1990) argue that we have

our presentational performance in our everyday life and in order to evaluate performances, we tend to refer to our social behaviors, everyday performances as well as performances in media (Silverstone 1999, p. 71). This participant thought how Kip Anderson interviewed people who worked in the health and pharmaceutical institutions made she believe What The Health documentary presented facts in an emotional way and the film was exaggerating the situation of the institutions:

*When he interviewed people, instead of allowing them to speak freely, it might be impactful for him to go strong and like "What do you mean? Why it's not on here or why do you have this on your website?" instead of being more like "Could you please explain why you have these things on instead of Why do/don't you have this/that?". You know it has many dramatic effects so then it might be then exaggerated instead of allowing the person to defend themselves. (Fifi, female, vegetarian).*

Another element should be taken into consideration when it comes to audiences' evaluation of performance is authenticity. Nichols (2010) and Hill (2005) share similar ideas of authenticity in factual genre. Nichols (2010) refers authenticity with realism which is "things as they are" (p. 17) and Hill (2005) defines authenticity as something "signifies the genuine article" or "like the original" or "something real" (p. 74). Two participants shared their opinions about the interviews of the village people. Riri believed that people in the documentary told their stories and they did not make up truths. However, he was critical and he encouraged people to do more fact check about what people said in the documentary before coming to a conclusion about a specific issue:

*I really believe that what everyone saying in this documentary is sincere and then again what they think and what they say, I think you need to double check or fact with more people's opinion and the real truth or story should be somewhere in the middle and that's why I have a little bit of my reservation and I'm not doubting in this documentary was lying or make their own version of the truth. Basing on doctors, they are saying their opinions and I don't think they're lying [...] I think for anyone who watch this we should have some reservation and not just take it as it is, do your own research first before you make your conclusion how you want to apply anything that said in the documentary said to yourself. (Riri, male, non-vegetarian)*

One participant was asked if he believed in the stories of the village people, he commented:

*I don't live in America so I'm not sure and I think yeah these things happen and I believe what I see. And when they tell stories like this, it's hard to tell. When they said the pollutants smell bad, but I'm not there to experience. In general, I trust them somehow but not fully.”*  
(Anan, male, non-vegetarian).

Anan did not fully believe in the experience of the village people who live near industrial farm because he does not live in America and he does not smell pollutants. The comment of Anan relates to Ellis' (2011) concern about audiovisual aspect of documentary. Ellis (2011) states that recorded images and sounds surely present the event, however, “they deprive us of other sensory data [...] there is no sense of smell [...] we see and we hear, but we know that these sense alone can be deceptive.” (p. 31)

Mama and Cici from the non-vegetarian group expressed their thoughts on the edit of interviewees in the film. Both informants preferred full interviews instead of short and edited interviews in the documentary. Mama and Cici explained their definitions of authenticity:

*They have a lot of facts, especially in the beginning of the documentary, they were like putting many facts and it's hard to keep track because it was so many facts and it was [...] the reason why I prefer to see only interviews because they talked for like an hour or more like not interrupted so it's getting more real and authentic then it's in the documentary. So there is nothing bad about interview in this documentary but I like the real interview more because it's more authentic and it's less edited.* (Mama, male, vegetarian)

*I think they have great questions and the doctors answer very clearly. However, I don't see the doctor or experts being interviewed....um...I mean would prefer the whole long interview [...] In the film. I don't know what the questions that the interviewers ask the doctors [...] I mean in the one to one response to the questions.* (Cici, female, vegetarian)

In terms of genuity, Ellis (2011) asserts that some characters in documentary were presented “to be more truthful than others” (p. 70). The two comments confirm Ellis' (2011) statement. Two participants believed that there was a different level of genuity among the interviewees in the film. Toto believed that the interviews from the sick people and village people were based on their true stories, the two doctors' interviews were nonetheless emotional and unprofessional:



*[...] some people seem more genuine than others. I think the regular people who old about their sickness, someone was at their home talking. I think they seem just telling about themselves, what happens to them, based on facts, but some other interviews are acting. For example, someone, he said something...I don't remember what it was [...] if protein matters, one says that this makes me so tired, for this I think interviewee should answer based on facts, not emotional reply. And another doctor was more joking I will jump of that building now. (Toto, male, non-vegetarian)*

Mimi (female, vegetarian) believed that the interviews of the village people was the most genuine part of the documentary and the lawyers were acting in the documentary “I think I am aware that people are prepared for the interviews so they are part of acting [...]”. This participant illustrates that audiences are well-aware of ordinary people “acting up” in front of the camera (Hill 2005, pp. 12, 57). Looking at how people judge performances is helpful to understand their engagement with the “evidence of the truthfulness of the program” (Ibid, p. 64).

Besides critically evaluate performances of the interviewees in the documentary, Plantinga (2013, pp. 43-46) mentions another criterion that audiences utilize to evaluate truth claims is the context of the film. The scholar highlights that audiences use textual cues such as producers of the film (filmmaker or institution) and reviews from critics to evaluate the credibility of the documentary. This participant illustrates this point from Plantinga (2013, pp. 43-46). “What The Health is uploaded on Netflix which is a credible streaming site and it was promoted by a famous actor [...] the one who starred Joker... Joaquin Phoenix [...] so it has credibility [...]” (Camcam, female, vegetarian). What makes this participant thought What The Health film credible was the distribution channel and it was promoted by famous an actor who follows a plant-based diet. Another vegetarian informant judged the documentary’s credibility basing on producers. He compared What The Health and The Game Changers during the interview and he thought that The Game Changers had better quality. The first reason was The Game Changers had a good story and the second reason he referred to the producers of the film “It has better quality. It's like top quality and it also has a good story [...] the quality in The Game Changers was better because they had these top producers James Cameron and Pamela Anderson.” (Mama, male, vegetarian)

While the notion of “genre work” emphasizes that viewers reflect on their feelings as well as experiences as an audience (Hill 2007), the concept “the third person effect” helps to extend our

understanding of the act of being an audience. When people watch a program, they do not only reflect on themselves, but they also reflect on others (Hoijer 1999). According to Gunther and Thorson (1992), Hoijer (1999) and Dahlgren & Hoijer (1996), people do not only use different criteria to judge themselves, but they also judge others and we tend to hold a belief that others are more influenced by the media than ourselves. Davidson (1983) called this phenomenon the “third-person effects”. The “third person effect” is applicable to understand documentary audiences, especially some people are likely to associate documentaries with truths (Spence and Navarro 2011, p. 13). The comment from Fifi indicates the notion of “the third person effect”. She thought that people may perceive information presented from the documentary as truths without being critical. As she put it:

*[...] as a viewer it's a tough little line because not many people will go and look at the research and most of people will not understand what the research means so then I think to have all these statistics thrown at you it can sometimes [...] I mean most likely the viewers will believe it and continue saying it and that's good for a plant-based diet but in terms of scientific points of view, very few people are critical [...]* (Fifi, female, vegetarian)

Besides Fifi, Riri from the non-vegetarian group talked about other people who watch the documentary and easily believed in information and evidences without being critical. Riri commented:

*[...] You know, some people they are not critical while watching the documentary, I mean I know those people [interviewees in the film] are honest but of course people [viewers] should have reservation because the documentary is just an opinion or based on one research so that it shouldn't be conclusive of everything [...]* (Riri, male, non-vegetarian)

### **Knowledge and learning from What The Health documentary**

The desire to know is the central of documentary appeal (Austin 2012, p. 40, Ross & Nightingale 2003, & Corner 2005). In addition, factual program is believed to be more informative than other programs (Alasuutari 1992) especially when people can learn from those programs (Hill 2005, p. 89). Therefore, it is essential to understand how audiences learn from documentary.

The mode of audience engaging with knowledge from the What The Health is diverse and it highlights the dynamic process of learning which transforms “an environment of information into learning experiences, taking facts and doing something with them” (Hill 2007, p. 169). In the beginning, people turned to the documentary to search for specific information in order to learn new perspectives about the issue that they have known before. The film gives them opportunities to learn from others’ people as well as cultures (Hill 2007, p. 146 and Hartley 1999, p. 155). Participants learn about the media which relates to genre knowledge and they also not to “trust the truth claim” (Hill 2007, p. 181). They have emotional learning when they see people in the film go through difficult challenges (Hill 2007, pp. 161-162). Watching What The Health documentary helps them to form opinions, give them “idea” to switch diet, trigger interests to learn more about the topic. Moreover, they recommended the documentary to their friends and family.

According to Roy and Steinberg (2016, p. 53), sometimes people intend to watch a film as they want to search for specific information which they assume that there is another side of the issue than they have known before. The three vegetarian participants decided to watch What The Health since it was released in 2017 because they wanted know different opinions relating to a plant-based diet. One participant commented “I’m interested in what vegan food can actually does for health ” (Mimi, female, vegetarian). Another one was interested in watching What The Health as she was eager to know more arguments and counter-arguments about a plant-based diet:

*Because for me my whole life not eating meat and you always have questions, concerns, and critiques about it and I think it has been helpful to have much data to back up like arguments for it. So I want to find more arguments, but I want to get a balanced view cause I make sure not to look at pro-veganism arguments but also opposite so that I know and then I compare and check which makes the most sense. (Fifi, female, vegetarian)*

The idea of learning does not happen with formal ways such as learning from official or academic sources, we also learn from our own experiences as well as others’ people experience (Hill 2007, p. 146). This comments from Anan illustrates Hartley (1999, p. 155), Hill (2005, p. 180) and Hill (2007, p. 146) arguments which emphasize television and factual genre help people to learn about the difference or similarity between us and others as well as our culture and the world. This person compared the difference between France and America in terms of medicine prescription “[...] The documentary is very American style. But in France, what I observe and listen to others and friends,

they say this is like America, but I feel different [...] I think they don't prescribe as many medicines as America." (Anan, male, non-vegetarian).

The comment of Kaka touches on the viewpoint of Hill (2005) that we do not only learn from factual genre, but we also learn "not to trust the truth claims" (p. 181) and audiences are well-aware of media power which tries to manipulate people (Grossberg 1992, p. 53). This participant criticized *What The Health* documentary that it was biased because it presented few people (sick people and athletes) who have plant-based diets and the producers only selected academic articles which supported a plant-based diet without mentioning other articles with counter arguments:

*The samples are too small, I mean the data is small and they choose the one that supports their arguments" [...]. He just finds the articles that supports his ideas. And when he got the articles that support his argument, he presented it in the film [...]* (Kaka, male, non-vegetarian)

Besides Kaka, Camcam (female, vegetarian) did not trust the documentary. She shared that she did not trust the interviews of the sick people who recovered from serious illness after trying a plant-based diet. She expressed:

*I don't fully believe because this is media and media can make up everything even though when you watch or hear it seems credible. Although I'm in favor of a plant-based diet and I think it's better than eating meat, I don't think those cases are fully credible.* (Camcam, female, vegetarian)

Her comment indicates that even though Camcam follows a plant-based diet, she was doubtful of information presented by the media. Another participant from the vegetarian group was critical of doctors' interviews. She trusted the doctor because he provided convincing evidences to support a plant-based diet, but at the same time she was doubtful because he had his own clinic which made him less credible:

*He's [Doctor Greger] really convincing I think and he's like talked about medical community but he also works on his own clinic and it's a bit [...] it's like 2 sided I wanna trust them because they're very convincing and there are so many good stuff but yeah I also don't want to be naive about it and this doesn't help when they have their own clinic [...]* (Fifi, female, vegetarian)

Expanding on the idea of audience learning that related to the media itself from Hill (2007, p. 146) in previous part, audiences compare different genres and they perceive some programs are more informative and valuable than other programs (Alasuutari 1992 and Gunter & Wober 1992). The ways that audiences involve themselves deeply in factual programs draws attention to their knowledge as well as awareness of different kinds of genres and they “have learned to compare genres and make evaluations based on the differences and similarities of a never-ending range of programmes.” (Hill 2007, p. 229). Toto appreciates the value of the documentary which provided lots of information and he compared documentary to other genre, TV series. He criticizes that people did not learn from TV series:

*I think it's sad that there are not more well-known documentaries [...] I think only few people watch them. For example, if you compare with some series like Game of Thrones I'm sure there are more people watching that and I think it's a little sad because people could learn much more. They don't learn anything from Game of Thrones [...] they are just entertainment and that doesn't matter [...]* (Toto, male, non-vegetarian).

In addition to learning related to the media itself, Hill (2007, pp. 161-162) highlights that watching people undergo challenging experiences can be considered as a source of emotional learning. Fifi emotionally talked about the interviews of sick people:

*Oh my god, that's very awful! It's horrible I think they're so close to the factory and how they still live in this condition, that brings lots of emotional aspect to it. Oh and Amy she couldn't breathe and this guy as well [pointing to the photos of the sick people] ... Oh and these sick people, this guy has obesity. Just see all the medicines they are taking and things that they're doing and then to like cut to the solution, you know, you can do it without taking any pills if you just switch the diet and I think it's very powerful!* (Fifi, female, vegetarian)

Xiuxiu (female, non-vegetarian) expressed her feelings about the transformation of the sick people after they tried a plant-based diet and they felt better “It was unsettling feeling when I see how these people suffer like this, so many medicines [...] it was good to see they feel better after changing to a plant-based diet [...] That's amazing!”. The two comments of Fifi and Xiuxiu indicates the idea of genre work from Hill (2007, p. 159) which includes reflective modes of engagement which includes personal and emotional learning and these kinds of learning can build up self-awareness.

Many participants from the vegetarian group shared that they already knew many scientific information about benefits of a plant-based diet from prior veganism documentaries as well as other sources such as books and online articles. As this participant put it “I don't think that this documentary has more information or that much new information compared to The Game Changers or compare to other health documentaries.” (Soso, male, vegetarian). Many participants in vegetarian group had knowledge about the benefits of a plant-based diet, so the question is what do they learn from What The Health documentary? Mama, Camcam and Cici commented that after they watched the documentary, they learned about the corruption of health organizations in America. “[...] most of the things that were brought up in the documentaries I have heard about. What's new was that this financial connections between these orgs like American Heart Association and Diabetes Association. The financial tights were a bit new for me [...]” (Mama, male, vegetarian). Soso and Sasa live in America for a long time and they shared that they were not surprised by the truths about health organizations and institutions. However, they said that they still learned some research that they did not know before:

*[...] I was a vegetarian I've been told that fish, I don't eat fish but people who have fish and fish is healthier than meat and [...] I was shocking that we have polluted our water so much that the mercury level in fish is so high, so even for people who are pescatarian [...] and it's still not all that healthy with higher mercury level”* (Soso, male, vegetarian)

Soso also shared that he was interested in fact-checking about the bad effects of milk, cheese, eggs “The thing that shocked me was about the milk, cheese and eggs [...] it never comes to my mind [...] I feel the need to fact-check [...] with the milk, eggs and cheese as they are cancer causing as they claim”

Sasa’s comment shows that she learned about research about the relation between diabetes and meat consumption and sugar and she thought the research conducted in 1940 was contradictory to the current research:

*[...] there's over 600 things saying meat is carcinogenic, it seems to[...] it was very interesting the research in 1940 with this guide, people treating diabetes people and giving them just like natural plant based food and lots of sugar, and yeah it was something opposite today, you shouldn't eat much sugar cause that raises your sugar level in your blood and that's not good for your diet [...]* (Sasa, female, vegetarian)

There is another question that needs to consider which is what do people do with the knowledge they have learned from What The Health documentary? Will watching documentary inspire people to change anything or do anything? According to Hill (2007) documentary can form people's opinions about subjects. The comments from Xiuxiu, Riri and Camcam prove her point of view. Xiuxiu shared that the documentary helped her to form an opinion about a plant-based diet. She was so surprised when she learned about the benefits of a plant-based diet because she never thought about it before "I form positive opinion about plant-based diet after watching this [...] I didn't know plant-based diet is that good [...]". Not only did Xiuxiu but also Riri form positive opinion about a plant-based diet, even though Riri criticized the film presented many biased interviews which promoted a plant-based diet:

*[...] I haven't changed my way of eating yet but it has changed my way of thinking about it [...]um...I didn't really thought about vegan diet really beneficial, eating meat or animal products also relates to all kind of health issues [...]* (Riri, male, non-vegetarian)

Camcam from the vegetarian group also changed her opinion about health organizations and institutions. She used to think that they provided credible information, however, she changed her mind after watching the documentary. As she put it:

*[...] In the beginning the film points out American Society was sponsored by big business and I used to believe these orgs, then when I hear about these doctors [those works in these institutions], I'm also in favor of them but it makes me doubt because I don't know what the truth is.* (Camcam, female, vegetarian)

Besides forming audiences' opinions, What The Health documentary also inspires people to consider to change their diet. This non-vegetarian informant considered to change to nut milk and avoid bacons after watching the documentary:

*[...] I change my mind about drinking nut milk instead of cow milk a little. Because now I'm aware that they contain hormones and it doubles the amount of hormone that people need, so I may change. So I change a little bit about my diet. [...] Bacon is made from dead pigs and even until now I'm still scared. And I think that I won't eat bacon.* (Nana, female, non-vegetarian).

Although we do not know for sure if the person will change or not, the documentary gives her an “idea” to change her diet (Hill 2005, p. 97)

Hill (2008, p. 160) asserts that the value of documentary is that it triggers audiences’ further interests. This informant appreciated *What The Health* film which stimulated him to learn more about diet and health: “I feel like intrigue, curious and wanting to know more, want to look up stuff and it’s like this is interesting.” (Toto, male, non-vegetarian). Another participant eagerly commented:

*I haven’t heard about this guy [The host - Kip Anderson] before watching the documentary so I would like to know more about him, because you know this documentary is 2017, so how does it affect his current lifestyle maybe he’s already have What The Health part 2, I don’t know. And I’m curious to follow up [...]* (Riri, male, non-vegetarian).

Another value of television is “a resource for personal development” (Hill 2008, p. 160 and Bell & Hollows 2005, p. 9). The argument from the three scholars is illustrated by Toto’s comment (male, nonvegetarian) “[...] the more I learn, the more it shapes my opinion. It does lead to my action about what I choose to eat, my lifestyle.”

According to Hill (2005, p. 89), when people consider the information in a reality program, they tend to talk about “information as learning and learning as practical tips and advice for themselves and their loved ones.”. The idea of learning in reality programs can be applied for documentary learning. The two participants recommended the documentary to their friends and family, their purpose was to provide information from this documentary to their beloved ones which they thought the information from the documentary was relevant and helpful to their friends and family “I have also recommended this documentary to some of my friends after seeing them myself [...] For instance, my brother or my friends, some of them concern about healthy lifestyle and I point out to them to watch [...]”. (Riri, male, non-vegetarian). One participant from the vegetarian group recommended *What the Health* documentary to her father:

*I think he will think it's interesting too because he's a health nerd ... I think he would be interested to see a new perspective if he hasn't already known about this. He always learns new things, so I think it's something for him to learn.* (Sasa, female, vegetarian)



## CHAPTER 5 - CONCLUSION

In this last chapter, I will discuss the key findings from the analysis to answer the research questions. Also, I will bring some thoughts on the differences and similarities between the vegetarian and non-vegetarian group. In the end, there will be some suggestions for future study.

### **How do viewers respond to the veganism portrayals in *What The Health* documentary?**

Some participants had positive attitudes towards the narrative of the documentary. The film has hospitable approaches which portray the health aspects of a plant-based diet, discuss the negative effects of consuming too much meat and reveal the corruption of the health and pharmaceutical institutions in America and provide examples of people trying a plant-based diet. In addition, the film did not bring up veganism in the beginning, instead the film made it like a journey for viewer and for participants, this a good approach to talk about veganism because “people don’t want to be triggered by the word veganism” (Fifi, female, vegetarian). When it comes to communicating about veganism, non-confrontation approaches are effective to avoid ignorance or tensions. (Greenebaum 2015). The film also receives compliment on visuals because the film presents complicated facts and data with attractive visual which helps viewers to digest heavy information. However, the film received criticism from participants because the mood and tone were depressing. In addition, participants criticized the visuals of *What The Health* which made them thought the film exaggerated the situation of American health system to enhance their arguments about the profits of a plant-based diet. Their comments confirm Ellis’s (2011) argument, viewers acknowledge that “[...] the filmmaker [...] structuring film as their own attempt at communication” (p. 70).

Viewers from the two groups were critical of the film. During the interviews, there were many times vegetarian and vegetarian informants compared *What The Health* with previous documentaries they have watched before. Their comparison indicates critical engagement with the film. In addition, it illustrates the statements of Hill (2007) and Nichols (2001) on audiences’ experiences when they watch documentary. People tend to draw on their previous experiences and knowledge when they watch factual program. Moreover, it is noteworthy to point out that audiences were aware of the idea of the “two worlds”. They know the film presents to them the “real world”, simultaneously they acknowledge that world is constructed by producers. (Hill 2008, Corner 2005, Nichols 2001, Lewis 2004)

Another highlight from the analysis of engagement with veganism portrayals is that non-vegetarian participant expected the film to offer him guidelines to follow a plant-based diet. His expectation affirms Bourdieu's (1997) idea of tacit knowledge, people do not just need to know "that", but they also need to know "how" (Skeggs and Wood 2012, p. 100). His comment also illustrates that he knew *What The Health* documentary supports the benefits of a plant-based diet, however, the documentary did not include information on what to eat or what to drink for this diet.

### **What are their attitudes towards the truth claims in *What The Health* documentary?**

Informants switched from positive to negative engagement. When the doctors were rational and they present many facts, the viewers felt positive and they trusted the doctors, however, when they continued to watch other interviews they realized that the documentary lack counterarguments of eating plants or exaggerates the effects a plant-based diet, they switch to negative attitudes. Also, when some viewers saw some facts against their prior knowledge such as bad effects of eating meat or eating fish or cheese are bad for health, they felt that "was kind of shocking", they had a wide range of emotions, they felt shocked, they reflected to their diet and their knowledge, considered if these statements were true or not, and then they acknowledged that the information from the documentary was biased. These experiences from the informants indicate the idea of affective and cognitive engagement from Hill (2019) and Corner (2005).

In addition to the intensity of engagement, viewers from the two groups experienced the double mode of engagement (Hill 2007) when they expected the documentary to present to them the "real world", but at the same time they knew that the world they see was represented by producers. Moreover, they remembered things that make sense the most to them and they reflected on it. There were many times informants reflected on themselves when they found the interviews or events relevant to them. They emotionally empathized with the village people and reflected on their childhood or their experience living near the farm in North Carolina where the village people live. They related to the athletes in the documentary because they did sports and they felt the same vibes with the athletes or when they saw sick people recovered without serious and excessive medical treatments and medicines, they felt happy because it was their belief that we did not need too many medicines. As documentary audiences, they "slip in and out of immersive and reflective mode of engagement" (Hill 2008, p. 231). Moreover, the act of documentary viewing unexpectedly

leads viewers to “a revision of understandings of self, of others and of the relations between the two” (Austin 2012, p. 181).

For some participants in the two groups, they were able to provide clear answers that the documentary was trying to promote a plant-based diet or they shared that they did not fully believe in some interviews and facts presented by film. However, other participants were quite confused when they expressed their opinions about the interviews as well facts in the documentary. Their experiences affirm the idea of genre work as well as the process of being a factual program audience which is sometimes contradictory, ambiguous and unclear (Hill 2007 & Hill 2008).

While the notion of double mode of engagement and genre work highlights that viewers reflect on their feelings as well as experiences as an audience (Hill 2008, p, 85), “the third person effect” extends the experience of being an audience because when people watch television, they do not only reflect on themselves, but they also reflect on others (Hoijer 1999). Some participants assumed that people tend to believe the information and evidences from the documentary without being critical or doing fact check.

In terms of authenticity, some participants think that there were different levels of genuity among the interviews. Toto believed that the interviews from sick people and village people were based on their true stories, however, two doctors’ interviews were emotional and unprofessional. Another participant thought that the interviews of the village people were the most genuine part of the documentary. She thought that lawyers were acting. It is also noteworthy to point out that although authenticity defined as “genuity”, “true to life” or “real” is another criterion for audience to evaluate truth claims in documentary (Hill 2007), some participants defined authenticity relate to film editing. From their perspectives, a full interview with less edits were more authentic.

Besides performance and authenticity, audiences depend on the context of the documentary to evaluate its credibility. The finding confirms Plantinga’s (2013) statement that audiences use textual cues when it comes to judge the credibility of documentary.

### **What do people learn from What The Health documentary?**

The modes of audience engaging with information from the What The Health is diverse and it highlights the dynamic process of learning which transforms “an environment of information into learning experiences, taking facts and doing something with them” (Hill 2007, p. 169). In the beginning, people turned to the documentary to search for specific information to learn new perspectives about the issue that they have known before. The film gives them opportunities to learn from others’ people as well as cultures (Hill 2007, p. 146 and Hartley 1999, p. 155). Participants learn about the media which relates to genre knowledge and they also not to “trust the truth claim” (Hill 2007, p. 181). Even though the vegetarian participants were well-aware of the benefits of a plant-based diet, they were still skeptical of the media because they thought that media “can make up things” to serve their purposes. Expanding on the idea of audience learning related to the media itself from Hill (2007, p. 146), audiences compared different genres and they perceived some programs were more informative and valuable than other programs (Alasuutari 1992, Gunter & Wober 1992). In addition, during the interview the viewers emotionally reflected on the interviews of the sick people and empathized with them or were impressed when they saw health improvement of the sick people after trying a plant-based diet. This confirms Hill’s (2007, pp. 161-162) argument that people have emotional learning when they see people in the film go through difficult challenges. In addition, their engagement illustrates the idea of “genre work” from Hill (2007, p. 159) which includes reflective modes of engagement which is possibly in discussion of personal and emotional learning that helps to build up self-awareness.

Many participants in the vegetarian group have knowledge about the benefits of a plant-based diet, so the question is what do they learn from What The Health documentary? Mama, Camcam and Cici from the vegetarian group shared that after they watched the documentary, they learned about the corruption of health and pharmaceutical organizations in America. “[...] most of the things that were brought up in the documentaries I have heard about. What's new was that this financial connections between these orgs like American Heart Association and Diabetes Association. The financial tights were a little bit new for me [...]” (Mama, male, vegetarian). Soso and Sasa lives in America for a long time so they shared that they were not surprised by the truths about the organizations, however, they shared that they still learned some research that they did not know before such as research on mercury in fish and research about the relation between diabetes and meat consumption and sugar. Watching What The Health documentary helps audiences to form

opinions, give them an “idea” to switch diet, trigger interests to learn more about the topic. Moreover, they recommended the documentary to their friends and family when they thought that the documentary brought their friends and family some perspectives about healthy lifestyle or relevant to their beloved one’s interests.

### **Comparison between the two groups**

I would argue that there are more similarities rather than differences between the two groups. Informants from the two groups have multiple responses to documentary in terms of veganism portrayals as well as truth claims. Viewers from both groups indicate affective and cognitive engagement and double modes engagement with documentary. The difference is that many informants in the vegetarian group perceived Kip Anderson as an activist, for those who have known him before and for those who have not heard of him before the film. Another difference relates to the idea of learning. Many non-vegetarian participants admitted that they were surprised by the benefits of a plant-based diet, while this kind of engagement were absent in the vegetarian group.

Both groups compared *What The Health* with prior documentaries that they have seen and the documentary that many of them they compared was *The Game Changers* which was a new documentary about many athletes who have a plant-based diet. It is noteworthy to point out from the analysis of the truth claims that although vegetarian participants follow a plant-based diet, they were critical of the interviews in the documentary including the interviews of doctors, athletes and sick people. As for the sick people and athletes, participants thought that there were many aspects that contribute to the improvement of health besides a diet. Many participants in the two groups believed that the documentary lacked counter argument against a plant-based diet. Also, some of them thought that the documentary exaggerated the situation of the healthcare system in America when the film features many horrible images in emergency rooms and hospitals. Most participants in the two groups were aware of “the two worlds” in the documentary, they acknowledged that the documentary presents the situation in real world, however, they are that what they witness is constructed by producers. (Hill 2008, Corner 2005, Nichols 2001 and Lewis 2004)

### **Implications for future study**

This research employs qualitative methods to look at the audience site of *What The Health* documentary to understand how audiences respond to veganism portrayals as well as truth claims.

In addition, the thesis aims to examine the value of knowledge that the documentary brings to the audiences. Documentaries are changing in the new media environment and they are being leveraged to promote many social movements. Therefore, besides audience study, it is highly essential to consider online channels as well as production study to understand the new phenomenon of activism documentary or strategic impact documentary (Nash & Corner 2016, p. 228). In addition, triangulation approaches which gather different types of data will assist researchers to observe the phenomenon in different perspectives. (Hill 2012, p. 301)

The research sheds a light on how vegetarian and non-vegetarian viewers respond to veganism portrayals in the media, especially research on veganism heavily focus on the contents instead of giving voices to viewers. Consequently, the study provides audiences' insights for producers and activists to develop appropriate approaches or messages related to veganism. In terms of audience study and documentary study, the research expresses some thoughts on how viewers respond to truth claims by adopting many different criteria. In addition, with the development of "the new documentary", audiences consider other factors such as the context of the documentary to evaluate its credibility, especially "the new documentary" utilizes many resources like digital technology, different platforms and infrastructures. (Nash et al. 2014)

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## APPENDICES

### Appendix 1: Informant Profile

#### *Non-vegetarian group (Informants consume meat)*

Name	Sex	Age	Occupation	Nationality	Education	Interview Location
Toto	M	32	Student	Swedish	Bachelor	Lund
Riri	M	34	IT Support	Dutch	Bachelor	The Netherlands
Nana	F	22	Student	Vietnamese	Master	Lund
AnAn	M	30	Consultant	French	Master	Online
Kaka	M	31	Engineer	Vietnamese	Doctor	Helsingborg
Xiuxiu	F	26	Student	Canadian	Bachelor	Online

#### *Vegetarian group*

Name	Sex	Age	Occupation	Nationality	Education	Diet	Interview Location
Fifi	F	23	Student	Swedish	Master	Vegan	Lund
Camcam	F	29	Student	Vietnamese	Master	Vegetarian	Online
Soso	M	31	Student	Swedish - American	Master	Vegetarian	Online
Cici	F	24	Student	Taiwanese	Master	Vegetarian	Online
Mama	M	31	Unemployed	Swedish	Bachelor	Vegan	Lund
Mimi	F	23	Student	Dutch	Bachelor	Vegetarian	The Netherlands
Sasa	F	22	Student	America	Bachelor	Vegetarian	Lund



## Appendix 2: Consent Form

### Consent Form

*Thesis Topic: Audience engagement with What The Health documentary*

MKV N13 – Thesis course

MSC Media and Communication Studies, Lund University

**Researchers:** Trang Nguyen Ha Linh

This research seeks to understand how people engage with What The Health documentary. Each interview will last around 60 minutes. Participants are requested to watch the documentary before the interview. The data will only be used within the thesis course.

I would like to record the interview and use the dialogue to present my findings. I will record the interview only with your written consent. Please feel free to say as much or as little as you want. You can decide not to answer any question, or to stop the interview any time you want.

I ensure that your identity will remain anonymous.

If you agree to take part in this study, please sign your name below:

Age \_\_\_\_\_

Nationality \_\_\_\_\_

Job \_\_\_\_\_

Signature & Date \_\_\_\_\_

## **Appendix 3: Interview Guide**

### ***Warm-up questions***

What kind of diet do you have?

How long have you been on this diet/vegan?

What make you choose this diet? Can you tell me more?

Do you watch documentary about health/diets/veganism/animal issues?

Where do you watch it? (Online, download, BBC, etc.?). and with whom?

What makes you watch WTH documentary?

### ***Documentary definition***

What do you personally consider to be a documentary? If it would help, please use examples to explain your personal definition.

What's the most important factor of documentary?

Does documentary help you to form any opinion about any subject? (such as health, food industry, vegan, animal rights, etc.)

### ***Documentary aesthetics***

What do you think about the narrative/storytelling of WTH?/ What do you think about the flow of WTH documentary?

What do you think about visual/images of WTH documentary? Can you give me example? (Is it lively/dark/scary?/ Background of interview? etc.)

What do you think about music, sounds in the documentary? Can you give me example?

### ***Truth claims***

What do you think about performance/interview in WTH documentary? (doctors, officers/lawyers, village people, sick people, activists, sportspeople)

What do you think about the truth claim in the documentary? (Interviews of doctors, activists, ...?)

What do you think about the accuracy of the truth claim/evidence? Do you believe what people say in this documentary? (Doctors, officers/lawyers, village people, activists, sportspeople)

Does WTH documentary present what happens in real life? Is it subjective/bias? (If yes/no, why so?/ In what way you think it's subject or objective?). Do you think this documentary present facts?

### ***After watching WTH film***

What's good about the documentary? (Why do you think it's good?)

What's not good about the documentary? (Why do you think it's not good?)

Do you have any comparison between WTH and other documentaries? (Different/similar in what ways?)

Have you heard of other people talking about this documentary?

Have you seen any other people have watched it or change something after watching it?

Do you recommend WTH documentary to anyone such as your friends/family?

Do you read articles or watch any clips debunk on WTH documentary?

Anything from WTH documentary surprise you? (visual, facts, stories, people, etc.)

What do you think the purpose of producer to produce WTH documentary?

***Others***

Do you have any suggestions for further documentary like this?

Do you have anything else to discuss?

#### **Appendix 4: Interview Transcript**

*Sasa, 22 years old, student, American, Vegetarian*

T: What kind of diet do you have?

S: Yeah, I'm vegetarian but I eat dairy products and no meat or fish

T: When did you start to have this diet?

S: Since 2016.

T: What makes you choose this diet?

S: Because the way meat is processed in the US is very disgusting and I decided I don't want to be a part of it, so I stopped eating meat for that reason.

T: Do you usually watch documentaries about this kind of topic?

S: Not on purpose, most of the time when my friends recommend them to me. Very few actually, I read my own I read books like a book from researchers talking about how the production of animal causes more pollution than the transportation industry and this was really shocking how people overlook that and but I read that after 2016.

T: Do you usually watch other kinds of documentaries?

S: Sometimes I do, but it's not so often.

T: What makes you watch documentary like this?

S: Recommendation from friends. If I think that's interesting to me, I will watch but I don't watch it much in general

#### **Documentary definition**

T: What do you personally consider to be a documentary? If it would help, please use examples to explain your personal definition

S: It's something informs people about is there someone's stories individual level or more environmental level of impact. It's just something true, real.

T: What's the most important factor of documentary?

S: That you learn something or you have a new perspective with the knowledge that you learn or reinforce perspectives. It should affect the perspective in some way, it should add to what you think about something.

T: Does documentary help you to form any opinion about any subject? (such as health, food industry, vegan, animal rights, etc.)

S: Of course, anything in this life and every conversation is biasing people towards thinking like meat is absolutely terrible and this Carcinogen but then maybe there's some other food that also causes Carcinogen but they just point this one right now because someone got persuaded that it's the biggest issue. But ofc this is the issue but I don't know the other issue out there and someone decided to pick them up and told them and society.

## Documentary aesthetics

T: What do you think about the narrative/storytelling of WTH?

S: I thought it was pretty great in showing how these orgs that are supposed to promote health and they are taking money from orgs that cause the health problems that they're saying what they are trying to solve and then promoting medicines and stuff for that and it's all like trying to help people because they can profit more from that rather than actually helping people and I think it focuses more on that then how Carcinogen. It was just pointing out the contradiction that we believe and are told and that was pretty disgusting.

T: Do you know about these issues about this before or until you watch this documentary?

S: I knew about this kind of issues for a long time actually it's clear that what we eat are going to affect the health of people and the more processed we have developed, the more health problem we have and it's not a coincidence and in the US where I'm from it's like so prominent that people have obesity and other things like when I go back, people think I'm weird but here are normal. It's very strange! And people are sort of reconsidering about their diet and many people are taking medication all the time and people don't looking at the cause of their problems instead of the symptoms and I thought it was very good in the documentary that they make it very clear that the medicine doesn't have anything to deal with the cause of the problem at all.

T: What do you think about the mood and tone of this documentary?

S: I mean it's clearly biased towards these orgs are not supposed to do what they need to do and they... like eggs have no nutrition or other stuff and maybe it's true you have to read upon that because you have been propagandized for the whole life that eggs are nutritious and they're healthy for you and then they said that eggs are not nutritious at all and it's like...umm I have to look more into but...yeah...

T: What do you think about visual/images of WTH documentary?

S: It's kind of humble, it's not so professional. it's like they just take cameras into buildings, it's really... well we make this kind of documentary very much to sympathize with the person like character and the character he's very much of character himself, the filmmaker of the documentary and saying his personal experience with diabetes and cancer and that's... yeah

T: What do you think about this character?

S: I think he's really honest, he comes as a very honest person which is nice because we don't know the truth and when someone trying to find the truth, you admire their effort and you definitely want them to get to the bottom of it and it's quite frustrating when people don't have answer that you want so it has a lot of good questions I think and like everyone can do it. It's not like only smarter or intelligent people can solve, it's something that a normal consumer can ask questions about and change.

T: What do you think about the theme (mood and tone), like is it inspiring/dark/lively?

S: I think it's...everything is gray, nothing as black and white and so yeah it's quite dark when you learn about how much lobbying and money is paddling around to make people to take these drugs and eat really shitty food without any regulations whatsoever and like Michelle Obama when she came to office, she started like eating right campaign like eat good food, eat healthy food but then

she changed it to get active because clearly there is lobbying going on because she couldn't promote good food or take away some bad food because many unhealthy food are very popular in America and if you're being honest with your citizens but being get active and they're also emphasizing on the video Yeah being healthy is not just active like you can die and the answer like working out but if you're not eating probably you're just eating calories that's not healthy and also, yeah.. there are a lot of corruption in the US politics around it and so with that in mind, it's super dark. These orgs are supposed to help you but they just take advantage of you. But it's good that you can realize it so that's the bright side when you're realizing these things still exist that's the start.

T: What do you think about music, sounds in the documentary? Can you give an example?

S: Umm... it's not impressionable to me honestly, I have a very different music taste. I didn't leave a strong impression on me overall.

T: What do you think about performance/interview of doctors?

S: I thought it was very good because ofc you want to hear this coming from a professional not a random person not really know about medical advice so when you have people that are experience working with patients and generally their intention is to help people, it's greater than other doctors who just want to gain more money by prescribing drugs and not caring about like how well a patient actually is. It was good to have perspective because it's not often that you have doctors that are changing the causes of the problem as much as treating the people with the symptoms.

T: Do you trust what these doctors say?

S: Umm, depends on which doctors but for the one that he was interviewing, I think that they seem pretty reliable in a sense that... I don't know...like full vegan is the answer for everyone and I think environmentally there is probably the best. Well, that's another topic actually. Yeah I trust that they believe what they're talking about and they think that their experience is applicable.

T: Among these doctors, who do you have more impression of?

S: The one I have the most impression was this one Dr. Niel Barnard.

T: What makes you remember or impressed by him?

S: I think he has more screen time than the other people. And I think the other doctors were verifying things that he's said for the most part.

T: What about these doctors (showing photos)?

S: Ummm there is like aspect... this was the guy he interviewed that got very angry at him and that reminds me of my dad because when people don't agree with something or they don't think something would be right, they get offensive and it's really...yeah that's the psychological problem. And I was like these doctors, they really say the common sense? Yeah, all of them kind of did that to some extent. The one that has the most impression was the 1st person (Dr. Neal Barnard) and then the second one Dr. Michel Klapper.

T: Do you remember he interviewed some people who work in laws?

S: Well he talked to some associations but...

T: I mean these people...lawyers...

S: Oh yeah, I remember. I remember Jaydee....I mean he's like very honest and in a sense that I remember like yeah they're just making shit tons of money out of people, and then what he said is just repeating to everyone, so it's just a repetition, the other people want to like...they didn't drive the point as hard.

T: Do you believe what they say?

S: I think generally it's true I mean I can only agree with what I remember so... from what I remember.

T: What do you think about people who are sick when they feature people who have serious diseases?

S: There was only a 2 weeks period that they changed their diet that they drop the medications but I'm interested in the longer period of time instead of 2 weeks for that, really to see if they can maintain the diet and how it affects their life in a longer end. I feel it was way too short for that.

T: What do you think about those people who live in the village?

S: Actually, I'm from North Carolina so I remember these people so ofc I remember these 2 people were in North Carolina and then...this guy was from Georgia or something. It hurts...it hurts...it was very emotional for me because in the States, where I grew up and then it's disgusting when you see people life was affected like that and her talking about her neighbors being...all of them have cancer, diabetes, asthmas, like there is no one healthy because it's impossible to be healthy in that community and I know how much it means to these people and how much it's like to be born in that experience and it's just like this person is entitled to many rights as my grandfather but my grandfather was also white so it didn't go up in this area that just like giving all of the pollution because they're minority. It's just honestly terrible.

T: How do you feel when the documentary mentions people dying of obesity, the emergency room with images, graphs, doctors' interviews, people getting sick, etc.?

T: Do you remember any activists in this documentary? Like these people? (pointing to the photos)

S: They don't stand out that much. We remember to what we relate to the most.

T: What do you think about sportspeople?

S: It was really cool to see cause they like meat equals like big muscles or that's how you're a man and things like that and these people have improved their performance with a vegan diet, which is very cool because they're pushing the barriers and of course I respect this person who did 5 ironman on 5 different islands of Hawaii and then I really like what he said as for Mu Jin Han.. I can't pronounce that name....yeah he has very positive vibes and sayings and I mean other people share similar things but he expresses it more.

T: Do you believe what they share?

S: Yeah. I think I mean... they're really show that it works for them and their health is very good and they say that it works right, so it's better than celebs endorsement just randomly getting hands of products, it takes so long to train for these things and my dad's training for like marathon now

and he's doing it and it takes months, it takes years, and so if these people are doing what they are doing it has been for years and living with that years is kind of the testament for themselves.

T: In this documentary they have some images of people under operation or in the emergency room, what do you think about these?

S: Yeah to the extent, it was just... oh people may experience these situations, but I mean the graphic medical things, they don't stick in my mind that much.

T: What's good about the documentary? (Why do you think it's good?)

S: How it points out the contradiction of how big pharma, the food industry, the health orgs, etc. they are just have super power and then they just exploding people and how government are apart of it, they take the money from those superpowers to allow them to do what they want to do, they are not regulating people or doing what best for their citizens and then I thought it was really good because it said or sharing the things that people talked before and they have studies for things they are saying, I don't know exactly if they're reliable or not, but I haven't watched The Game Changers, that's another popular documentary about this and one of my friend said they said a lot of stuff but they didn't have like sources like when they said it.. I'm not sure about that but this one he looked it up and show studies and that was good because I think with the doctor saying and studies show that meat is carcinogen that they processed meat are just as bad as tobacco and people eat it every day and I thought it was really good that they're showing. They like to pick certain things that they can show to make it an important issue like the saturated fat or the trans fat as well, like there is not trans fat in anything that's really show in the grocery store. But it's not every label and it's super important and things like that don't actually matter and so it's important to show like the stuff that you don't think it matters like they matter way more than that.

T: What's not good about the documentary? (Why do you think it's not good?)

S: With the people he was talking about with plant-based diet for 2 weeks, it's like I don't think it's the one side fit all solutions and I don't think it's possible for a lot of people that out of all medicines at that time and I think it was kind of really short sign, it's super rush and that part has more potential.. I want to see more there. And another thing is ofc everyone's biased when they do this but it could have been a bit more neutral by providing some counter arguments as well.

T: Have you heard of other people talking about this documentary?

S: No but the one who watched TGC also watched it also, people have watched it but they don't talk about it so often. But I talked to my parents about this so they probably watch it now.

T: What makes you suggest this to your parents?

S: Because my mom has a catering company and I think there is so much potential to minimize the environmental impact and encourage how their choices if you find good vegan options and prices below the other one and maybe you even provide free samples, you can promote it and that would be amazing because so many people, but it's hard to change habit so...

T: What about your father?

S: I think he will think it's interesting too because he's a health nerd and he knows everything about this health because in the US you get tested annually and if you test and you have high blood pressure, your insurance is gonna go up because you're throne to medical problem and so he has



the whole excel spreadsheet, I mean I would go over 30-50 charts of like how data throughout his life as he collected cause everything is in it. So I think he would be interested to see a new perspective if he hasn't already known about this. He always learns new things so I think it's something for him to learn.

### **Truth claims**

T: What do you think about the truth claim in the documentary?

S: You know when there's over 600 things saying meat is carcinogenic, it seems to...and they have nice visual showing it affects your blood vessels and the fats, it was very interesting the research in 1940 with this guide, people treating diabetes people and giving them just like natural plant based food and lots of sugar, and yeah it was something opposite today, you shouldn't eat much sugar cause that raises your sugar level in your blood and that's not good for your diabetes, that's looking at the wrong thing and I think the research presented is relevant and I think like sometimes it was like I have question about it, like eggs, marketing in a certain way that make me ask question about that cause maybe I shouldn't do over more like not eating egg at all and then again something that need to look at like environmental stuff.

T: Do you read articles or watch any clips debunked on WTH documentary?

S: No I haven't, I'm not so... I don't have enough time frankly and I think for the stuff that was more important like the question checking eggs more because that's weird to me about and I mean the other things are less of the question mark in my head like there is... it does cause a lot of problem for people, human are not meant to consume...I mean frankly like not really consume eggs either.

T: If you have more time, do you intend to watch or read these things or do the fact check?

S: I probably will because... but I mean something that I'm interested in

T: Anything from the WTH documentary surprise you besides eggs? (visual, facts, etc.)

S: I mean it's not really surprising it's just the reconfirm information I know. Oh the amount of the money lobbying. The surprising thing is the diabetes, it was caused by processed food, like more sugar makes you fat but not make you have diabetes.

T: What do you think the purpose of producer to produce WTH documentary?

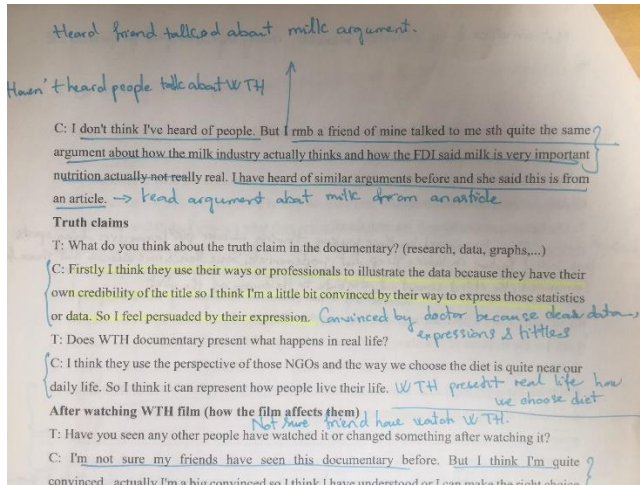
S: I was wondering because there is so many directions to go actually, because you have the corruptions, very big industry giants and then you have meat are carcinogenic and eggs are also carcinogenic and like all the meat dairy and stuff are bad and then it's vegan promotion which is good but there are a lot of things...it depends on what's you interest and you take away from it. So the purpose was all of the topics he touches on but yeah it couldn't be one sentence, the industry impact people and why they should be vegan.

T: Do you have any further suggestions for further documentaries like this?

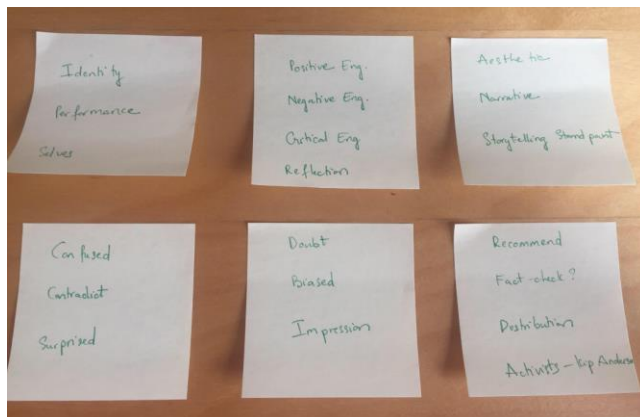
S: Yeah, the suggests are have counter arguments like both sides, have a longer period of studies and how a vegan diet can impact a person with a lot of medication like that in the long time...

## Appendix 5: Sample of the coding and analysis process

### Descriptive code with inductive approach



### Memos



### Color coding scheme

Diets

Documentary genre

Positive engagement

Negative engagement

Critical engagement

Provocative engagement

Distribution

Knowledge and learning

Others

### Codes with colors

1. Curious to know WTH
2. 1<sup>st</sup> interview interesting because they show truth about orgs
3. Watch WTH because friend recommend
4. Ambiguous doctor interview
5. Don't trust all doctor interviews
6. Biased doctor interview
7. Don't think sick people make up stories
8. Repetition information of TGC
9. Recommend WTH to friends & family

### Category table

Themes	Category	Sub-category	Codes – Non vegetarian	Vegetarian
Engagement	Positive Engagement	Doctors	1 <sup>st</sup> interview interesting because show truth about orgs (1), doctors are confident (2), Like the beginning of doctor interview (3)	Good to have doctor suggestions (11), Impressed with doctors (7), Doctors in WTH are reliable (9)
	Negative Engagement	Doctors	Don't trust doctor interview (1), Ambiguous doctor interview (1), Dr Miller is emotional (1)	Don't like the title best-seller author because it's not relevant (8), Robert Ratner is emotional (9)
	Critical Engagement	Doctors	Doctors support each other argument (5), Doctors should give facts (1)	Trust & doubt Dr. Greger (8), Trust for doctor depends on doctors (9), WTH only show doctors' responses not whole interviews (13), Good doctor interview but lack credibility (8)