



***From the Dinner Table to the Ballot Box:
Tracing Political Vegan Identity
Through Everyday Practice and Digital Media***

Rui Wang

Department of Communication

Supervisor: Michael Bossetta

Examiner: Martin Lundqvist

Word Count: 17,038

Abstract

This thesis examines how individuals form and enact political vegan identity through everyday practice, and the role digital media platforms play in mediating that process. Drawing on 12 semi-structured interviews with vegan participants across 4 groups defined by age and length of vegan practice – New Sprouts, Early Roots, Late Bloomers, and The Oaks – the study traces the specific processes through which private dietary choices become sites of sustained political meaning-making.

The findings demonstrate that political identity is not adopted in a single moment of ideological conviction, but assembled gradually through the interplay of structural conditions, social relationships, and the interpretive environment that digital media provides. The transition to veganism depends on a favorable choice architecture that makes ethical action practically possible: for younger participants, this was often enabled by gaining residential autonomy upon entering university; for others, it was mediated by the proximate influence of vegan social networks. In both cases, the identity label typically arrived after the practice rather than before it, consolidating a process already underway.

Social media's role in this process is neither static nor uniform. During the early stages of vegan identity formation, platforms function as cognitive scaffolding, providing the symbolic and emotional resources through which dietary choices acquire political meaning. As identity matures, however, this dependence recedes. Long-term practitioners turn to platforms as practical everyday utilities rather than as environments for identity work, a shift that mirrors the broader movement from explicit activism toward quiet, everyday integration.

In the domain of consumption, political vegan identity finds its most durable expression, expanding in scope from vegan product categories toward brand ethics, labor conditions, and geopolitical entanglement as experience deepens. Yet when consumption is positioned as a primary mode of political participation, economic inequality translates directly into inequality in political capacity — a structural tension the existing framework does not fully address. Beyond the marketplace, the same ethical commitments extend coherently into formal political participation through value coherence rather than direct media influence, suggesting that veganism functions less as a single-issue lifestyle and more as an integrative ethical orientation through which multiple domains of civic life are navigated.

Acknowledgements

It was such a cultural shock when I first came to Sweden two years ago, that a lot of my classmates in this programme did not eat meat at all, for ethical reasons. Growing up in a country with a meat-dominated food culture, I barely thought about the ethics of every piece of meat that I put in my mouth. As I become friends with more and more vegetarians and pescatarians, I realized that this is not just a trend – it is a commitment to what you believe and what you wish for society. For my friends, they believe that animals should be treated in a better way.

The direct reason that I want to write a thesis about veganism started with watching a video criticizing it on a popular video platform in China. The video creator's arguments contain obvious logical flaws and lack credible data to support them, yet the video has garnered widespread support. The comment section is filled with remarks stigmatizing veganism, claiming it is all the hypocrisy of "white leftists."

This made me feel uncomfortable. According to people in the comment section, to stop eating meat for environmental reasons is hypocritical, and doing so to avoid harming animals is utter nonsense. However, all the people that I know who do not eat meat are kind, empathetic individuals who care about politics and society. Then I started to wonder: what does it mean to change one's diet completely just for political reasons? What makes them do so?

Since then, my thesis journey officially started. Even though it was not a smooth journey, sometimes even painful, I still found it meaningful and fulfilling. By interviewing different vegans, I had the chance to meet so many amazing people with pure hearts. One of the participants said that my questions made her think about many things she had never considered, which gave me more confidence to improve my work. A thousand thank you to all the participants of this thesis! I hope the world will get better as all of you wish.

I also want to thank my supervisor, Michael Bossetta, who taught me how to craft a strong argument and convince readers to think that this is important. This is crucial in all sorts of academic writing, and I had never thought about that before. His advice and feedback make me think and write logically and structurally – it even improved my daily writing style.

Another big thank-you to my boyfriend, Fabian, who supported me the whole time. He witnessed every mental breakdown of mine, every ugly crying and cheer in tears; he was there with me, giving me so much support to finish my thesis.

Thanks to my peers and friends in this programme by creating such a sweet thesis-writing club, I feel less lonely because I know I am not alone.

Since I began writing this thesis, I have consumed fewer and fewer animal products. I feel responsible for making a small change to make this earth a better place. Maybe I will turn vegan eventually – my Chinese ancestors might not be happy about it, but my ethical spirits will be proud.

Table of Contents

Introduction.....	3
Literature review.....	7
1. Introduction of the literature review.....	7
2. Political identity: from a vague concept to everyday practice.....	8
3. Offline practice: political consumerism as a linkage bridge.....	9
3.1 Political consumerism: from elite to everyday maker.....	10
3.2 Veganism, a hardcore lifestyle political consumerism.....	11
3.3 Beyond consumption: bridging practice and political identity.....	12
4. Social media's role in facilitating every transforming process.....	13
4.1 The mediated foundations of political consumerism.....	13
4.2 Social media as a transformative catalyst.....	14
4.3 The reflexive loop: from practice back to identity.....	14
5. Summary of literature review.....	15
Methodology.....	16
1. Qualitative Approach.....	16
2. Qualitative Interview.....	17
3. Data Collection.....	17
3.1 Pilot Interviews.....	18
3.2 Sampling Strategy.....	18
4. Qualitative Coding: Thematic Analysis.....	21
5. Ethics, Limitations, and Positionality.....	23
Finding and Analysis.....	24
1. The Formation of Vegan Identity.....	25
1.1 Structural and social conditions of transition.....	25
1.2 Digital media as cognitive scaffolding.....	27
1.3 The non-linear nature of vegan identity formation.....	29
2. The Evolution of Vegan Identity.....	31
2.1 Building political identity in early veganism: community, social media, and the	

need for belonging.....	31
2.2 Experience without uniformity: diverging trajectories of long-term vegan identity..	33
2.3 Looking back to move forward: tracing the shift from activism to everyday integration.....	35
3. Beyond the Shopping Cart: Consumption, Values, and Political Participation.....	37
3.1 The expanding scope of vegan political consumption.....	38
3.2 The economic limits of political consumption.....	40
3.3 From veganism values to the ballot box.....	41
4. Summary of Findings and Analysis.....	43
Conclusion.....	44
1. Summary of Key Findings.....	45
2. Answering the Research Questions.....	45
3. Reflections and Limitations.....	47
4. Significance and Contributions.....	47
5. Directions for Further Research.....	48
Bibliography.....	49
Other Source.....	52
Appendixes.....	53
Interview guide - Junior vegan (less than 2 years).....	53
Interview guide - Advanced vegans (over 5 years).....	54

Introduction

In 2014 stand-up special *Rocky Mountain High*, comedian Joe Rogan offered what had by then become a familiar cultural observation: you always know when someone at a party is vegan, because they will tell you (Comedy Central, 2014). The joke landed, as it reliably does, on a recognizable social type – the vegan who announces their identity unprompted, performing it as a mark of moral distinction. Joe Rogan was not alone in making his observation. The self-righteous vegan has become something of a stock character in popular culture: preachy, self-congratulatory, eager to convert (Markowski & Roxburgh, 2019; De Groeve et al., 2021). This caricature circulates freshly across stand-up routines, social media memes, and everyday conversation. It does a specific kind of cultural work by framing vegan identity not as a genuine political commitment but as a performance of superiority, something to be mocked rather than taken seriously.

This stigma is well documented. Researchers have found that vegans are among the most negatively stereotyped dietary groups in Western societies, often perceived as morally judgmental, socially difficult, and ideologically rigid (Markowski & Roxburgh, 2019). The hostility is not incidental. It reflects a broader cultural discomfort with the politicization of food, with the idea that what someone eats might constitute a legitimate form of political action, or that a dietary choice might carry genuine ethical weight (Minson, 2012). When veganism is reduced to a punchline, that discomfort is managed, and the challenge it poses is safely neutralized. The stereotype performs a kind of social containment: it dismisses veganism as vanity rather than engaging with it as conviction.

Yet the stereotype also captures something real. Veganism is unusually visible as an identity. It does tend to be announced, explained, and defended (Greenebaum, 2012a). It does carry a strong sense of moral self-definition. The question is not whether this is true, but why, and what it tells us about the relationship between everyday practice, political commitment, and identity formation. If vegans are compelled to articulate their identity, that compulsion itself is worth examining. It suggests that vegan identity is not simply a private dietary preference that happens to have ethical implications, but an actively constructed political selfhood that requires ongoing expression and recognition to be sustained. This thesis takes that observation as its point of departure. Rather than asking what vegans say at parties, it asks how they came to understand themselves as political vegans in the first place, and what role digital media platforms play in that process.

Understanding how that political selfhood is constructed matters beyond veganism itself. The compulsion to announce, defend, and enact a dietary commitment as a political position reflects broader changes in the landscape of contemporary civic life. Across Western democracies, traditional forms of political participation organized around parties, institutions, and collective ideologies have given way to more individualized, practice-based modes of engagement, in which the personal choices of everyday life become the primary terrain on which political convictions are expressed and sustained. In this sense, veganism is not an isolated phenomenon. It is one of the most visible and demanding expressions of a wider shift in how people do politics, and examining it closely offers a window into the mediated processes through which that shift unfolds.

Scholars have traced this shift with considerable precision. Bennett (2012) describes it as personalized politics, in which individuals increasingly construct their political selves through lifestyle choices, personal values, and everyday consumption rather than formal institutional affiliations. This shift has generated substantial interest in political consumerism as a form of civic engagement. Stolle and Micheletti (2013) establish that political consumerism, referring to using the market and enacting political commitments, has become a primary arena through which citizens exercise agency outside of institutional structures. Within this framework, lifestyle political consumerism represents its most demanding expression: a comprehensive restructuring of everyday habits in sustained alignment with political and ethical goals. Veganism is one of the most analytically revealing cases, precisely because the commitment is so pervasive, so daily, and resistant to episodic explanation (Jallinoja et al., 2019; Greenebaum, 2012).

A parallel body of research has examined the role of digital media in enabling market-based political participation. De Zúñiga et al. (2014) demonstrate that it is specifically social use, rather than general internet access, that drives politically motivated consumption behavior, pointing to the particular affordances of platform-based communication. Jallinoja et al. (2019) show that social media functions not as a neutral transmission channel but as the foundational infrastructure through which vegan culture is produced, shared, and made meaningful. Together, these findings suggest that digital media does something more than inform or connect: it actively participates in shaping the conditions under which a dietary choice becomes politically legible.

However, current research has not yet fully explained how this participation operates at the micro level. Existing studies tend to treat media as an amplifier, an external tool that scales up pre-existing convictions or broadens their reach, rather than as an active participant in the internal process through which political identity is formed. The specific mediated mechanisms through which individuals come to interpret their everyday dietary habits as expressions of a coherent political commitment remain underexplored.

This gap has real stakes. Without understanding how digital media intervenes in these micro-processes of identity formation, we cannot adequately account for the emergence of the private sphere as a primary site of political life. We risk misreading contemporary political mobilization: mistaking its outcomes for its drivers, and overlooking the mediated processes that make sustained political commitment possible in the first place. As political participation increasingly unfolds through the accumulation of private daily decisions rather than through institutional channels, understanding what drives that accumulation is not only an academic concern. It is a precondition for grasping the nature of politics in the digital age.

This thesis addresses that gap directly. I aim to study how digital media platforms intervene in the everyday practices of political veganism to understand the specific mediated processes by which individuals reinterpret their dietary habits as part of a coherent political identity, so that we can develop a more grounded account of what drives political mobilization in the digital age.

The goal of this thesis is therefore twofold. At the empirical level, it seeks to trace the specific processes through which vegan political identity is formed, sustained, and expressed in the daily lives of its practitioners across different stages of that journey. At the theoretical level, it seeks to advance the conceptualization of digital media's role in identity formation by moving beyond the amplifier metaphor and toward an account of media as a constitutive force in political subjectivity.

These aims are structured around 1 central research question and 3 sub-questions:

Main question: How do individuals form and enact political vegan identity through everyday practice?

Sub-question 1: What role does social media play in individuals' transition to veganism?

Sub-question 2: How does the relationship between political vegan identity and social media use evolve over time?

Sub-question 3: How does political vegan identity manifest in everyday consumption practices and formal political participation?

The main question focuses on process rather than outcome, and on the everyday rather than the exceptional. The three sub-questions give this inquiry its empirical structure, mapping a trajectory from initial formation through development over time to expression in practice, producing an account of vegan political identity that is attentive to both process and context.

To examine these questions, the thesis draws on three interconnected theoretical resources. Fox and Ward (2008) provide the foundational understanding of identity as an embodied, reflexive process that emerges from practice rather than preceding it. Huddy (2001) offers tools for understanding how identity strength develops gradually over time, shaped by the meanings individuals attach to their commitments. Stolle and Micheletti (2013) establish the marketplace as the primary arena in which political identity finds sustained expression, with lifestyle political consumerism serving as the analytical bridge between private consumption and public political engagement.

To empirically access this process, the thesis adopts a qualitative approach grounded in an interpretivist epistemological position. Twelve semi-structured interviews were conducted with vegan participants across four groups defined by age and length of vegan practice: New Sprouts, Early Roots, Late Bloomers, and The Oaks. Interview data were analyzed using thematic analysis following Braun and Clarke (2006), attending to both the explicit content and the latent meanings embedded in participants' narratives.

The significance of this study operates at two levels. Academically, it provides a better understanding of political consumerism and digital media by moving beyond the amplifier metaphor to examine how media actively participate in identity formation. Socially, it contributes to a broader understanding of the drivers of political motivation in the digital age. If we cannot explain how private lifestyle choices become sustained political commitments, we might risk misreading not only veganism but the wider phenomenon of lifestyle-based politics that increasingly defines contemporary civic life. Joe Rogan's joke, in this sense, is not just a joke. It is a symptom of a cultural conversation that has not yet found an adequate

vocabulary for what it is actually observing: a new form of political agency taking shape at the dinner table.

The remainder of this thesis is structured as follows. Literature Review develops the theoretical groundwork by examining political identity, lifestyle political consumerism, and social media's constitutive role in identity formation. Methodology outlines the methodology in full. Finding and Analysis presents the analysis across three thematic dimensions, tracing the formation and expression of political vegan identity over time, in media practice, and in everyday life. The thesis concludes by drawing together the analytical threads and identifying directions for further research.

Literature review

1. Introduction of the literature review

The landscape of contemporary democracy is characterized by a fundamental shift away from elite-dominated institutional structures toward personalized, lifestyle-based politics. This transformation reflects a shift from fixed, institutional group memberships toward fluid, network-based identities where individuals prioritize personal lifestyle concerns, such as environmentalism and social responsibility, as the primary sites of political meaning (Bennett, 1998; Bang, 2005). This literature review navigates the scholarly intersections between political identity, market-based activism, and digital media to provide a theoretical framework for this shift. I argue that political identity is a performative project enacted through the repetitive practices of everyday life, where media functions as a transformative force that reconfigures mundane consumption into a resilient political commitment.

The review is structured into three pivotal sections. First, it examines the "practice turn" in political identity, arguing that identity is a dynamic process of self-definition constructed through localized experiences rather than static social classifications. Second, it explores how this identity finds expression in the marketplace through political consumerism. Within this arena, veganism is analyzed as a hardcore manifestation of lifestyle political consumerism, serving as a critical bridge between private ethical convictions and systemic political agency. Finally, the review addresses the role of digital media. Moving beyond the common view of media as a passive amplifier or logistical tool, this section identifies a significant research gap: the lack of understanding regarding how media actively intervene in the micro-processes

of identity formation. By synthesizing these fields, this review establishes that the "personal is political" is no longer just a slogan, but a mediated reality practiced at the dinner table.

2. Political identity: from a vague concept to everyday practice

In this part, I argue that political identity is neither a fixed social category nor a stable psychological trait, but a dynamic process produced and reinforced through repeated everyday practices. While “identity” is often critiqued as a vague and elusive concept in social science, its analytical value lies precisely in its capacity to capture how individuals actively construct and sustain a political sense of self through daily choices.

The theoretical basis for this view draws on converging shifts in the literature. Bennet (2012) observes that the decline of institutional group affiliations has ushered in an era of personalized politics, in which individuals increasingly code their political selves through personal lifestyle values rather than party membership or ideological labels. Huddy (2001) offers a crucial corrective to traditional social identity theory by arguing that what matters is not the existence of group boundaries, but the meaning individuals attach to membership, and that political identities are more often acquired by choice than ascribed by circumstance. Fox and Ward (2008) extend this understanding further by demonstrating that identity is not a pre-existing attribute but emerges from the reflexive interactions between the individual and their social and material environment, stabilized and deepened through the repetition of embodied practice over time.

Building on these perspectives, I understand political identity in this thesis as a meaning-driven process of self-construction through which individuals come to interpret their everyday choices as expressions of a coherent political commitment. It is neither given by group membership nor fixed by ideology, but continuously built and sustained as individuals act, reflect, and act again within the social worlds they inhabit.

Research on consumption behavior supports this understanding. Plante et al. (2019) argue that the act of consuming becomes a symbolic system through which individuals signal and reinforce their political commitments. Aligned with this symbolic function, Jung and Mittal (2020) demonstrate that political identity functions as a persistent cognitive framework shaping the entire consumer journey. Building on this cognitive foundation, Kalte (2021) argues that individuals' everyday consumption behaviors are "politicized" through political motivations, thereby transforming into a form of unconventional political participation. In

practice, this identity construction is maintained and reinforced through an individual's continuous pursuit of consistency between their values and actions in daily life. In short, this cycle of motivated action and self-reflection transforms routine private choices into a stable, lived expression of political agency.

Despite growing recognition that consumption serves as a vehicle for identity-building (Hodson & Earle, 2018; Stolle & Micheletti, 2013), we currently lack insight into how media interventions enable individuals to experience their private habits as politically meaningful acts. It is precisely this mediated process, through which mundane dietary choices are reinterpreted as coherent political commitments, that this thesis seeks to examine.

Understanding this process matters on two levels. Academically, it fills a gap in research on political consumerism and digital media by moving beyond the amplifier metaphor to examine how media actively participate in identity formation. Socially, it contributes to a broader understanding of what drives political motivation in the digital age: if we cannot explain how private lifestyle choices become sustained political commitments, we risk misreading the very nature of contemporary political mobilization. Yet before turning to the media, it is necessary to examine the offline terrain on which this identity is enacted. In the next section, I shift the focus to the marketplace, where political convictions find their most concrete and sustained expression through political consumerism.

3. Offline practice: political consumerism as a linkage bridge

In this section, I argue that political consumerism, and lifestyle political consumerism in particular, serves as the critical bridge through which private ethical convictions are translated into sustained political participation. Within this framework, veganism represents its most demanding and analytically revealing expression. This section proceeds in 3 steps: first, I trace the broader shift from elite-dominated institutional participation toward everyday, decentralized forms of political engagement. Next, I examine how lifestyle political consumerism emerges from this shift as a practice that dissolves the boundary between private consumption and public responsibility. For the last step, I argue that veganism, as the most comprehensive and sustained form of lifestyle political consumerism, offers a uniquely revealing lens for studying the relationship between daily practice and political identity formation.

3.1 Political consumerism: from elite to everyday maker

Contemporary democratic participation is undergoing a profound paradigm shift from institutionalized, top-down activities toward personalized, lifestyle-based politics. Traditional models, such as the Civic Voluntarism Model (CVM) developed by Verba et al. (1995, pp.269–271), suggest that political participation is heavily skewed toward the professional elite who possess the necessary time, money, and civic skills, thereby muting the voices of marginalized citizens. As these vital resources are disproportionately concentrated among the social and professional elite, the CVM illustrates how the participatory process amplifies the voices of some citizens and mutes others (Schlozman et al., 2018; Verba et al., 1995). Similarly, Putnam (2000) interpreted the decline in traditional group memberships as a crisis of social capital, suggesting that the erosion of these formal ties weakens the fabric of democracy.

However, as trust in representative institutions wavers, critical citizens are increasingly seeking more direct and flexible forms of engagement (ed. Norris, 1999). This has given rise to the ‘Everyday Maker’, a type of participant who embodies a lay citizenship rooted in concrete, localized experience. Unlike Expert Citizens who operate within strategic governance networks, Everyday Makers follow a ‘do-it-yourself’ ethic, prioritizing personal development and ‘thin’ democratic communities over the pursuit of institutional power (Bang, 2005; Li & Marsh, 2008). By shifting the focus of politics to the ‘politics of the ordinary’ (Bang, 2005), this model allows individuals to exercise their creative political capacities through daily choices on their own terms.

This shift toward decentralized actions rooted in personal life provides a theoretical bridge to the concept of political consumerism. Broadly defined, political consumerism integrates choice-based interventions as a legitimate form of activism. It enables individuals to manifest their ethical concerns regarding ecological sustainability and human rights violations, such as sweatshop labor and unsustainable agricultural practices, into tangible market-based actions (Stolle & Micheletti, 2013, p.39). In this context, the traditional boundaries between the consumer and the citizen, as well as between economic and political spheres, effectively dissolve (Boström et al., 2019, p.2). If the Everyday Maker’s credo is to ‘do it where you are’ and ‘do it concretely’, the marketplace emerges as a primary arena for such individualized political expression.

By choosing or boycotting products based on ethical values, individuals bypass the traditional elite-managed networks to exercise their creative political capacities through daily economic choices. Consequently, political consumerism serves as a quintessential ‘do-it-yourself’ practice, allowing citizens to merge their private consumption with public responsibility on their own terms. According to Stolle and Micheletti (2013, pp.39–41), political consumerism takes 4 four basic action forms that allow individuals to navigate global responsibilities through their market choices, including:

- (1) Boycotts: The intentional refusal to purchase specific goods or services to punish corporations for perceived social, ethical, or environmental transgressions;
- (2) Buycotts: The deliberate purchase of products to reward companies that demonstrate exemplary ethical standards or sustainable production methods;
- (3) Discursive political consumerism: The use of communicative expressions, such as social media campaigns or public discourse, to challenge or support corporate reputations and market practices;
- (4) Lifestyle political consumerism: a comprehensive restructuring of an individual’s daily habits to align with specific political or ethical goals.

This thesis focuses specifically on lifestyle political consumerism, and within that, on veganism as its most demanding expression. This focus is justified by the research question itself: understanding how media intervenes in the micro-processes of political identity formation requires a practice that is sufficiently sustained, deeply embedded in everyday life, and resistant to episodic explanation. Boycotts and buycotts are targeted and time-limited; discursive consumerism operated primarily at the level of communication rather than embodied practice. Only lifestyle political consumerism offers the kind of continuous, identity-saturating practice through which the relationship between daily habit and political selfhood can be meaningfully observed.

3.2 Veganism, a hardcore lifestyle political consumerism

Within lifestyle political consumerism, veganism stands out as a particularly rigorous case. It extends beyond dietary restrictions to encompass a comprehensive rejection of animal-derived components across diverse sectors, including pharmaceuticals, textiles, and construction materials (Greenebaum, 2012b). Unlike more episodic modes of engagement,

veganism demands total and long-term commitment, requiring individuals to consistently align their mundane consumption habits with overarching ethical and political objectives (Jallinoja et al., 2019). This makes it an ideal case for studying identity formation: precisely because the commitment is so pervasive and sustained, it reveals the mechanisms through which political identity is built and maintained in ways that less demanding practices cannot.

The distinction between politically motivated veganism and other variants driven by health concerns or social pressure lies in the underlying source of motivation. Those who adopt veganism for political or ethical reasons do so out of a deep-seated sense of individual responsibility, which serves as a powerful driver, leading practitioners to impose stricter self-standards (Stolle & Micheletti, 2013). This internalized moral duty also produces greater resilience: political vegans demonstrate a stronger commitment in the face of social challenges or personal inconvenience than those motivated solely by health (Hodson & Earle, 2018). This combination of depth and durability is what positions veganism as more than a lifestyle choice. It is the foundation upon which a coherent political identity can be built and sustained.

3.3 Beyond consumption: bridging practice and political identity

The significance of lifestyle political consumerism lies in its function as a critical bridge between private ethical conviction and public political participation. By utilizing the marketplace as a site for continuous action, vegans exercise a decentralized form of agency that links personal lifestyle choices to broader systemic change without relying on traditional institutional structures (Kalte, 2021). This is what distinguishes lifestyle political consumerism from other forms: it does not merely express a political position, but enacts it repeatedly, through every meal, every purchase, every refusal (Shah et al., 2007).

It is through this repetition that political identity is consolidated. As the preceding section established, political identity is not a fixed category but a dynamic process produced through everyday practice. Lifestyle political consumerism provides the behavioral infrastructure for this process: each act of consumption becomes an occasion for the individual to reaffirm, negotiate, and deepen their political selfhood. What remains to be examined, however, is how this process of consolidation is mediated, and it is here that social media enters as an active participant rather than a passive backdrop.

4. Social media's role in facilitating every transforming process

In this section, I argue that social media does not simply broadcast vegan practices but actively intervenes in the process through which a personal dietary preference is transformed into a resilient political identity. It is central to this thesis to understand media as a constitutive force in identity formation, rather than a passive amplifier of pre-existing convictions. Thus, this section follows a structure of 3 steps: first, it establishes why social media is the appropriate analytical focus, grounding this choice in both empirical research and the specific dynamics of vegan mobilization; second, it examines how social media creates an interpretive environment in which dietary choices acquire political meaning, drawing on the competing discursive strategies that circulate across platforms; finally, it traces the reflexive loop through which media-mediated practice feeds back into identity, continuously deepening political commitment over time.

4.1 The mediated foundations of political consumerism

The realization of political consumerism as a viable form of activism is fundamentally dependent on the accessibility of information and a favorable choice architecture (Stolle & Micheletti, 2013, pp.21–23). For a consumer to act as a political citizen, they must first possess the information necessary to reveal the political or ethical issues hidden behind a product's facade. This thesis focuses specifically on social media as the primary form of digital media under examination, which is justified on both empirical and theoretical grounds. De Zúñiga et al. (2014) demonstrate that general internet use has no direct effect on political consumerism and that its influence operates entirely through social media use, suggesting that the specific affordances of social media, rather than digital access in general, drive politically motivated consumption practices.

In the context of veganism specifically, Jallinoja et al.(2019) show that social media functions not merely as a transmission channel, but as the foundational infrastructure through which vegan culture is produced, shared, and made meaningful. Social media enables political consumers to access corporate practice reports, product-labeling schemes, and ethical shopping guides, thereby lowering the barrier to entry for market-based activism (Boulianne et al., 2024). Meanwhile, social media influencers and bloggers act as primary catalysts in the normalization of plant-based eating, not only by promoting an attractive lifestyle image but also by equipping consumers with the necessary culinary skills and facilitating the growth of dedicated vegan communities (Jallinoja et al., 2019, p.165). By making the invisible

visible, the media provides the cognitive foundation for Everyday Makers to exercise their agency.

4.2 Social media as a transformative catalyst

I argue that social media does not simply broadcast vegan practices; it actively intervenes in the nuanced process of transforming a personal dietary preference into a resilient political identity. While existing literature has extensively explored the relationship between lifestyle politics and media, a significant research gap remains in how these elements converge within the specific practice of veganism. Current studies tend to treat media as a mere ‘amplifier’, a unidirectional tool used to mobilize pre-existing convictions or to scale up the visibility of certain behaviors (Shah et al., 2007; Boulianne et al., 2024; De Zúñiga et al., 2014). This instrumentalist view frames media as an external resource rather than an active participant in the individual’s internal development.

Central to this transformative process is the interpretive environment that social media creates. Jallinoja et al. (2019, pp. 169–170) identify two competing discursive strategies operating simultaneously on social media platforms: an emancipatory political orientation, which frames veganism as political resistance against animal industries; and an aesthetic orientation, which reframes vegan eating as a desirable lifestyle choice. These strategies shape the narratives through which individuals learn to interpret their dietary choices as politically significant acts, which connects directly to Huddy's (2001) argument that what matters in identity formation is not group membership itself, but the meaning individuals attach to it. Social media, in this sense, does not merely inform; it provides the symbolic resources through which a dietary preference becomes a political identity.

This thesis seeks to fill this void by shifting the focus from media as a passive source of information to media as an active agent in identity construction. Specifically, I investigate how media facilitates the micro-transformation where mundane dietary choices are reinterpreted and crystallized into a coherent political self-recognition. This transformative process, however, is not a one-time event but an ongoing cycle in which media continues to shape identity long after the initial conversion.

4.3 The reflexive loop: from practice back to identity

The transformative power of media is best understood through a continuous reflexive loop where identity and practice mutually reinforce one another. Rather than a linear progression,

the development of a political vegan involves a cyclical process: an initial identity leads to consumption practices, which are then reinforced or reshaped into a more robust political identity. The media acts as the catalyst within this loop, facilitating not only the initial action through information but also providing the space for post-practice reflection and community feedback (De Zúñiga et al., 2014).

Current studies tend to treat media as an amplifier, an external tool that scales up pre-existing convictions rather than an active participant in identity formation. As a result, we lack a theoretically grounded account of how media intervenes in the micro-processes through which individuals reinterpret mundane dietary habits as coherent political commitment. This constitutes a significant gap. Without understanding these mediated processes, we risk misreading the very nature of political motivation in the digital age, mistaking the outcome of a politicized lifestyle for the process through which it becomes political in the first place.

Contemporary mobilization increasingly operates through the accumulated weight of everyday private decisions rather than institutional channels. Understanding the mediated mechanism behind this shift is not only an academic concern but a precondition for grasping how the private sphere has become a primary site of political life today.

5. Summary of literature review

In this literature review, I have argued that social media plays an active and constitutive role in the formation of political vegan identity. Rather than simply broadcasting vegan values to receptive audiences, social media participates in the construction of the interpretive conditions through which everyday dietary choices come to be understood as expressions of a coherent political commitment.

This argument is grounded in a theoretical framework that brings complementary analytical tools. Fox and Ward (2008) provide the foundational understanding of identity as an embodied and reflexive process that emerges from practice rather than preceding it. Huddy (2001) provides tools for understanding how identity strength develops gradually and unevenly over time, shaped by the meanings individuals attach to their commitments. Stolle and Micheletti (2013) establish that the marketplace is the arena in which this identity finds its most sustained expression through lifestyle political consumerism. Jallinoja et al. (2019) and De Zúñiga et al. (2014) together illuminate the specific role of social media as the

infrastructure through which vegan political identity is given meaning, reinforced through peer influence, and connected to broader communities of practice.

Drawing on this theoretical framework, this literature review establishes that the transformation of a private dietary preference into a sustained political commitment unfolds across 3 interconnected dimensions: political identity is gradually constructed through embodied practice, enacted in the everyday terrain of the marketplace, and given meaning through the interpretive environments that social media creates. Yet the identity formation process is barely purely self-directed: individuals bring their own values to the formation of political identity, but the structural conditions of their lives, the social environments they inhabit, and the media landscapes they navigate all determine whether and how those values can be fully enacted.

Methodology

1. Qualitative Approach

This study adopts a qualitative research approach, grounded in an interpretivist epistemological position. Interpretivism holds that social reality is not an objective phenomenon to be measured but is constituted by the meanings that individuals attribute to their experiences and actions (Bryman, 2016). This stance is particularly appropriate for this research, which seeks to understand how individuals make sense of theory and everyday dietary practices as expressions of political identity. This process is inherently subjective, contextually embedded, and resistant to quantification.

A qualitative approach is further justified by the nature of the research question itself. This study examines the mediated processes by which vegan identity is constructed and sustained over time, with particular attention to the role of digital media platforms in shaping individual interpretations and political subjectivity. Such processes cannot be adequately captured through numerical measurement or statistical generalization. What is required instead is a mode of inquiry that can access participants' lived experience, trace the development of meaning over time, and remain sensitive to the complexity and variation within individual accounts. With its emphasis on depth over breadth and on meaning over frequency, qualitative research is well suited to this purpose (Mason, 2002).

The study engages with political consumerism as an analytical resource to orient the inquiry. However, rather than applying these frameworks deductively, the analysis remains primarily inductive, allowing theoretical concepts to inform interpretation without predetermining what the data can say.

2. Qualitative Interview

Within the qualitative approach, semi-structured interviews were selected as the primary method of data collection. Semi-structured interviews occupy a middle ground between the rigidity of structured questionnaires and the open-endedness of unstructured conversation. They are guided by a set of predetermined thematic areas and questions, while allowing the interviewer sufficient flexibility to follow up on unexpected directions, probe for elaboration, and adapt the conversation to the specific circumstances of each participant (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009).

This format is particularly well-suited to the aims of the present study for several reasons. First, the research questions require access to participants' personal narratives, which indicate their accounts of how and why they became vegan, how their relationship to that identity has evolved, and how digital media has been implicated in that process. These are not questions that can be answered with fixed-response options; they require participants to reflect, narrate, and interpret their own experience on their own terms. The semi-structured interview creates the conditions for this kind of reflective, open-ended account while ensuring that comparable thematic ground is covered across all participants (Edwards & Holland, 2013).

Second, this research's comparative design, involving four participant groups defined by age and duration of vegan practice, requires a degree of consistency across interviews to enable meaningful cross-group analysis. This semi-structured format ensures that all participants are invited to address the same core thematic areas, while preserving the depth and individuality of each account.

3. Data Collection

To investigate the specific mediated processes by which individuals reinterpret their everyday dietary habits as a coherent political identity, this thesis collects qualitative, narrative-based data from 12 semi-structured interviews. The design of this data collection phase, including the sampling strategy and interview guide, was substantially shaped by an initial pilot phase conducted prior to the main fieldwork.

3.1 Pilot Interviews

Two pilot interviews were conducted before the main phase of data collection. Both participants were introduced through my personal networks, and both interviews were conducted in person, each lasting approximately 45 minutes and following the same semi-structured format used in the main study. The difference between the two participants in terms of vegan experience was entirely coincidental: one had been vegan for nine years, the other for one year. No deliberate attempt was made to select individuals at contrasting stages of vegan practice.

Despite being guided by the same interview questions, the two conversations produced markedly different kinds of accounts. The newer vegan spoke in actively reflective terms, framing veganism as a conscious political project and drawing heavily on digital platforms for information, community, and identity reinforcement. The longer-practicing vegan, by contrast, described veganism in more naturalized terms, less as a stance to be articulated and defended and more as an embedded background habit that no longer required active justification or digital scaffolding.

These contrasting accounts prompted a fundamental reconsideration of the study's method design. The pilot data suggested that both age and length of vegan practice might be significant variables in shaping how vegan identity is formed and expressed, specifically whether it takes the form of an actively performed political stance or a naturalized, background way of life. It also raised the possibility that these two dimensions might interact in non-obvious ways: an older participant who had been vegan for only a short time might relate to their identity quite differently from a younger participant with the same duration of practice. Rather than treating the participant pool as a homogenous population, this study required a design that could systematically capture variation across both dimensions simultaneously, which led directly to the development of the 2×2 sampling matrix described in the following section.

3.2 Sampling Strategy

Building on the pilot finding that age and length of vegan practice each shape the character of vegan identity in distinct ways, this thesis adopts a stratified purposive sampling strategy organized around these 2 dimensions. Participants are mapped across a four-quadrant coordinate system (see Figure 1), with Age (≤ 22 and ≥ 25) and Length of Vegan Practice (≤ 2

years and ≥ 5 years) as the two primary axes. This design makes it possible to examine not only whether identity formation differs between newer and longer-practicing vegans, but also whether such differences are consistent across age groups or are mediated by generational differences in digital socialization, a question that the pilot data raised but could not resolve, given its limited scope.

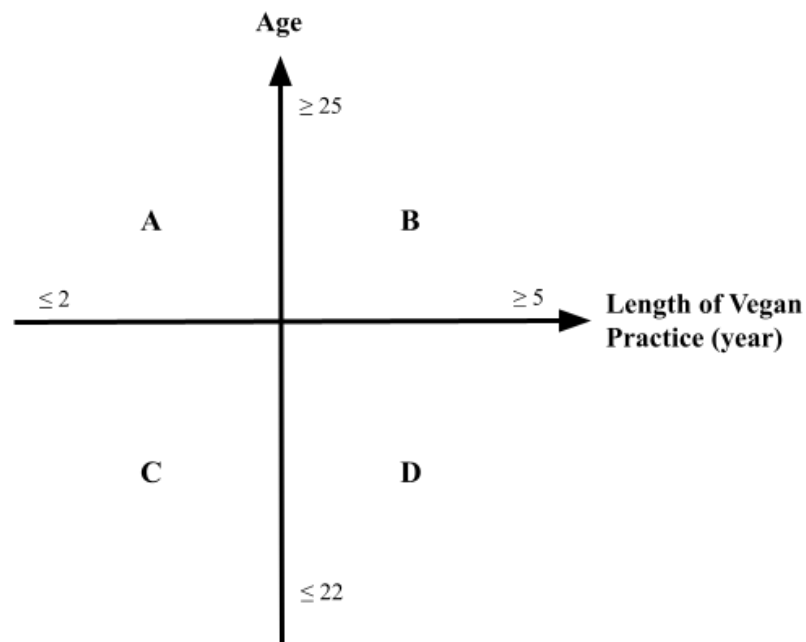


Figure 1: Recruiting Matrix

This coordinate system maps 12 participants across 4 quadrants ($n=3$ per quadrant). The horizontal axis represents the length of vegan practice, while the vertical axis represents age. A three-year contrast gap is maintained between groups (ages 22-25; 2-5 years of vegan practice) to allow meaningful comparisons across different stages of vegan identity. Drawing on a botanical metaphor that reflects the vegan identity of the participants, the 4 groups are named after stages of plant growth to reflect differences in both age and duration of vegan practice:

New Sprouts (Group C): aged 22 or below, vegan for 2 years or less

Early Roots (Group D): aged 22 or below, vegan for 5 years or more

Late Bloomers (Group A): aged 25 or above, vegan for 2 years or less

The Oaks (Group B): aged 25 or above, vegan for 5 years or more

The 2×2 matrix design was developed in response to this question and allows the study to examine whether such shifts are consistent across participants or are mediated by generational differences in digital socialization.

To recruit participants, this study employed a combination of snowball sampling and researcher-initiated social media outreach. Snowball sampling was the primary recruitment method, beginning from the personal networks of the two pilot participants. This approach is particularly appropriate for research involving communities defined by moral and identity-based commitments, as recruitment through trusted referrals helps establish rapport and encourages more candid, less performative reflection on participants' practices and beliefs (Noy, 2008). Given that political veganism is a lifestyle identity that carries social and ethical weight, participants recruited through existing community networks are more likely to engage openly with questions about their motivations, digital habits, and identity formation than those approached through impersonal channels.

In addition to snowball sampling, a recruitment poster was circulated through my personal Instagram accounts. This secondary method served to extend recruitment beyond the immediate networks of the pilot participants and to introduce greater diversity into the sample.

It is acknowledged that this combined recruitment strategy introduces a degree of self-selection bias. Participants recruited through social media are, by definition, active users of digital platforms, and those who responded to a researcher's personal outreach may hold stronger or more articulate views on vegan identity than the broader vegan population. However, this limitation does not undermine the validity of the study. The research does not aim to produce a statistically representative sample of vegans; rather, it seeks to understand the specific mechanisms by which digital media mediates identity formation among individuals already embedded in these environments. In this sense, recruiting digitally active participants is not a source of distortion but rather a reflection of the study's analytical focus. The purposive logic of the sampling design, in which participants are selected precisely because they are likely to illuminate the phenomenon under investigation, is consistent with the study's overall interpretivist orientation (Bryman, 2016).

The final sample of 12 participants is summarized in the table below (see Table 1). The even distribution across the 4 groups resulted from purposive sampling. Participants were

deliberately recruited based on age and length of vegan practice to ensure that each group contained 3 participants. This approach was chosen to enable comparison across groups with different combinations of age and vegan experience.

Table 1: Participant Overview

No.	Age	Length of Vegan practice	Nationality	Group
1	27	8 years	Lithuania	The Oaks
2	39	17 years	Mexico	The Oaks
3	45	13 years	Italy	The Oaks
4	21	7 years	United States	Early Roots
5	20	7 years	Sweden	Early Roots
6	22	5 years	China	Early Roots
7	18	1 year	Sweden	New Sprouts
8	20	8 months	Switzerland	New Sprouts
9	22	1.5 years	Germany	New Sprouts
10	26	4 months	Sweden	Late Bloomers
11	35	10 months	Taiwan	Late Bloomers
12	27	1 year	Germany	Late Bloomers

4. Qualitative Coding: Thematic Analysis

This study employs thematic analysis as the analytical framework for coding and interpreting the interview data, following the systematic approach outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006). Thematic analysis is a method of identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns of meaning

within qualitative data. Unlike methods that are epistemologically committed to specific theoretical traditions, thematic analysis is a flexible, theoretically versatile approach that can be applied across a wide range of research questions and paradigmatic positions (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This flexibility makes it particularly appropriate for this research, which draws on both media studies frameworks and identity theory to examine a complex social phenomenon.

The decision to adopt thematic analysis rather than grounded theory warrants a brief explanation. Grounded theory is primarily designed for theory generation, employing constant comparative analysis to inductively construct new theoretical frameworks from data in fields where existing theory is limited or underdeveloped (Charmaz, 2012). This research, however, does not seek to generate a new theory from the ground up. Rather, it aims to understand and describe the specific mechanism through which digital media intervenes in the formation of political vegan identity, a phenomenon for which substantial theoretical groundwork already exists in the literature on digital media, political identity, and everyday practice. Thematic analysis is better suited to this analytical goal, as it allows for rich thematic description that is sensitive to both the content and the latent meaning of the data, without requiring the iterative theoretical sampling and constant comparison that grounded theory demands (Braun et al., 2019).

The analysis in this study is primarily inductive, meaning that themes were allowed to emerge from the data rather than being imposed from a predetermined coding framework. At the same time, the analysis operates at both semantic and latent levels. It attends not only to what participants explicitly stated, but also to the underlying assumptions and identity constructions embedded in their accounts. This reflects the study's interpretive orientation, which examines how individuals make sense of and articulate their political identities through everyday practice and media engagement.

The coding process followed the six phases proposed by Braun et al. (2019). All 12 interviews were conducted in English and transcribed using transcription software. In the first phase, I engaged in repeated close reading of all transcripts to develop familiarity with the data as a whole. In the second phase, initial codes were generated manually by directly annotating the transcripts, enabling flexible, in-context labeling of meaningful segments. These initial codes captured both specific observations and broader patterns relevant to the research question. In the third and fourth phases, initial codes were grouped into candidate

themes, which were then reviewed against both the coded extracts and the full dataset to assess their internal coherence and distinctiveness. Themes that overlapped substantially or lacked sufficient data grounding were either merged or discarded. In the fifth phase, the final themes were defined and named to accurately reflect their analytical content and their relationship to the overarching research question. The sixth phase, also known as the production of the analytic report, is represented in the findings and discussion chapters of this thesis.

5. Ethics, Limitations, and Positionality

All participants provided informed consent prior to their interviews, either through a written consent form or through recorded verbal agreement. Participants were informed of the purpose of the study, their right to withdraw at any point, and the conditions under which their data would be used. To protect anonymity, all participants are referred to by number rather than name in the thesis. Interview data will be deleted upon completion of the research project.

Several limitations of this study warrant acknowledgment. The most significant concerns the retrospective nature of the interview data. When asked to reflect on their transition to veganism or the evolution of their political identity, participants necessarily reconstruct past experience through the lens of their current understanding. Such accounts are valuable precisely because they reveal how individuals make sense of their own trajectories, but they cannot be taken as accurate representations of what participants thought or felt earlier. This is an inherent constraint of interview-based research into identity formation and is acknowledged here as a boundary on the kinds of claims the analysis can support.

A further limitation concerns the interview guide. While two versions were developed to account for differences in length of vegan practice, the guide was not differentiated along the age axis. In retrospect, younger and older participants may have benefited from questions more specifically tailored to their generational relationship with digital media. This represents a gap in the study's design that future research might address.

Finally, as noted in the discussion of recruitment, the combined use of snowball sampling and social media outreach introduces a degree of self-selection into the sample. Participants are, by definition, digitally active and socially embedded within vegan networks, which means the

findings speak most directly to identity formation among individuals already immersed in these environments rather than to the broader vegan population.

As the researcher conducting and analyzing these interviews, my own position in relation to the subject matter is worth making explicit. I do not identify as a fully committed vegan, which I believe supports a degree of analytical distance from the values and practices under investigation. Rather than approaching participants' accounts as self-evidently meaningful or politically commendable, I have attempted to treat veganism as a social and discursive phenomenon to be understood on its own terms.

I also bring a particular perspective shaped by my background in a non-democratic country. Concepts such as political participation, civic engagement, and identity-based activism carry different weights depending on the political context in which one has been socialized. This background has made me attentive to the assumptions embedded in much of the existing literature, which tends to take liberal-democratic frameworks of political participation as its point of departure. Where relevant, this awareness has informed how I read and interpret participants' accounts of political engagement.

Finding and Analysis

The following analysis examines how digital media platforms (mainly social media) intervene in the daily practices of political veganism across 3 interconnected themes: the formation and evolution of vegan identity, and its expression through consumption practices. To capture the diversity of these experiences, I draw on interviews with 4 groups of participants, differentiated along 2 axes: age and length of vegan practice, referred to throughout as New Sprouts, Early Roots, Late Bloomers, and The Oaks. These axes are not treated as independent variables but as intersecting dimensions that together shape how individuals relate to their vegan identity and their media use. The age axis broadly reflects differences in economic autonomy, with older participants generally having greater capacity to align their consumption with their values. The axis of vegan practice length reflects differences in identity intensity, with newer vegans tending to express a more explicit political engagement, while long-term vegans have largely integrated veganism into the fabric of everyday life.

However, the picture becomes more complex at the intersection of these two dimensions. It is in these intersections that some of the most revealing patterns emerge. The analysis is guided throughout by a theoretical framework that brings together Stolle and Micheletti's (2013) theory of lifestyle political consumerism, Fox and Ward's (2008) understanding of identity as embodied practice, Huddy's (2001) model of identity strength and meaning, and Jallinoja et al.'s (2019) analysis of the discursive strategies through which veganism acquires political significance on social media platforms.

1. The Formation of Vegan Identity

This chapter examines how vegan identity initially takes shape, tracing the structural, social, and media-related conditions that enable the transition to political veganism. Here, I argue that identity formation is not a rational decision triggered by a single moment of conviction, but a gradual process shaped by the interplay of external circumstances and the interpretive frameworks provided by digital media. The analysis draws primarily on the experiences of newer vegans across both age groups, while also attending to the retrospective accounts of long-term practitioners.

1.1 Structural and social conditions of transition

The transition to veganism among the participants in this study was rarely the result of a single ideological conversion. Rather, it emerged from a combination of structural circumstances and social influences that created both practical and relational conditions for a shift in dietary identity to take place.

For New Sprouts, the transition to veganism was closely tied to a specific structural change: moving away from home to study at a university. Living independently for the first time granted these participants full autonomy over their dietary choices, removing the practical constraints that had previously prevented them from fully committing to a vegan lifestyle. As one participant described:

The step that really made me go vegan once I moved here was realizing that I finally have the freedom to eat exactly what I want. Before, I lived with my parents, and of course, it was a bit more difficult to completely control your eating choices in that environment (Participant 8, New Sprouts, 20 years old, 8-month vegan)

For this participant, the values underpinning veganism had long been present; what was lacking was not conviction but the material freedom to act on it. Another participant from the same group articulated a similar experience, noting that living with family had not only constrained their practical choices but had also gradually eroded their motivation:

I think I actually forgot the reasons why I wanted to become vegan in the first place, even though I had first mentioned it many years ago. My family doesn't really understand it — they think veganism is a bit stupid — and I think I was influenced by that mindset while I was at home (Participant 9, New Sprouts, 22 years old, 1.5-year vegan).

These accounts reveal a pattern in which political values and practical commitment were separated by circumstance rather than by ideological uncertainty. Political consumerism depends not only on individual motivation but also on a favorable choice architecture, which refers to the structural conditions that make ethical action practically possible (Stolle & Micheletti, 2013). For these younger participants, cohabitation with non-vegan family members constituted precisely the kind of unfavourable architecture that kept pre-existing values from being enacted. The move to university did not create new convictions; it removed the barriers that had prevented existing ones from being lived out. The formation of a vegan identity was not simply a matter of personal decision-making but was shaped by the degree of autonomy afforded by their living situation. Thus, Veganism, in this sense, required not only a political will but also a structural opportunity.

For participants in other groups, the transition was mediated less by structural change than by close social relationships. Several participants described how living with or being close to a vegan friend or partner gradually normalized a lifestyle they had previously regarded as inaccessible or extreme. For instance, Participant 3 (The Oaks) had long identified as a vegetarian but considered veganism “too extreme,” his understanding of it limited to what he had encountered in mainstream media. It was a vegan roommate who reframed his existing values in a way that made the transition feel both logical and achievable. By demonstrating that a vegan lifestyle could be varied and enjoyable, and by directly connecting his vegetarian motivations to the ethical contradictions of dairy consumption, she effectively dismantled the barrier between his stated values and his practice. As the participant recalled, her question — why being vegetarian “for the animals” was consistent with consuming dairy — “blew his mind.” Similarly, another participant from Early Roots, who had been a vegetarian for seven

years, described how a vegan roommate showed her practically, "how to do it better," making the shift feel manageable rather than overwhelming.

Here too, the choice architecture was transformed, not by physical relocation, but by the presence of a social environment in which veganism was practiced, visible, and relationally supported. Taken together, these accounts point to two distinct but complementary pathways into veganism: one driven by newfound structural autonomy, the other by the proximate influence of social networks. In both cases, the transition was less about acquiring new information than about finding the material or relational conditions that allowed pre-existing values to be fully enacted. This has implications for understanding political identity formation more broadly. It suggests that the gap between holding a political value and acting on it is often bridged not by ideological persuasion alone, but by changes in the circumstances that make action possible.

1.2 Digital media as cognitive scaffolding

If structural and social conditions enabled the transition to veganism, it was digital media that provided the cognitive framework through which participants came to understand and articulate their emerging identity. Across all participant groups, social media platforms played a consistent role during the early stages of vegan identity formation. They served as the primary environment in which participants encountered, processed, and internalized the values, arguments, and emotional appeals that gave their dietary choices political meaning.

For some participants, engagement with vegan-related content on social media was an active and intentional process, reflecting a pre-existing set of values that digital platforms helped to deepen and connect. Participant 7 from New Sprouts described how his social media consumption was shaped by a long-standing commitment to animal rights that predated their veganism, drawing him towards activist content that extended well beyond conventional vegan discourse:

I follow a lot of different activists who try to fight the meat industry in various ways. Some of them might not strictly be 'vegan content creators,' but they share the same values — people who rescue animals or those who break into animal farms to free dogs that would otherwise be used in dog races (Participant 7, New Sprouts, 18 years old, 1-year vegan).

Jallinoja et al. (2019) distinguish between 2 discursive strategies circulating on social media: an emancipatory political orientation, which frames veganism as a form of political resistance, and an aesthetic orientation, which foregrounds lifestyle and personal well-being. For Participant 7, social media functioned almost exclusively within the emancipatory register, serving as a space for ideological consolidation in which dispersed forms of activism were connected into a coherent political worldview. The platforms did not introduce new values so much as they provided a landscape in which existing commitments could be mapped, expanded, and given concrete expression.

For other participants, the process was less deliberate. Rather than actively seeking out vegan content, they encountered it gradually through algorithmic recommendation, a process of incremental exposure that slowly reframed their understanding of their own dietary habits. Participant 11 from Late Blommers described how her transition began through a personal connection. A vegan friend introduced her to information about the cognitive capacities of farm animals before social media became the primary vehicle of persuasion.

After that, it was Instagram. I slowly started seeing a lot of vegan-related content on my feed, and it gradually came across very distressing images of animals being killed. I started feeling that something was wrong. I saw how various animals are born and then killed by humans, and I realized I could no longer continue eating meat (Participant 11, Late Bloomers, 35 years old, 10-month vegan).

This account illustrates a qualitatively different mechanism. Here, social media served as the initial trigger through which vegan identity began to take shape, rather than deepening a pre-existing political framework. What distinguishes social media from general Internet use is the capacity to deliver peer-influenced content and intensify exposure through algorithm feedback loops (De Zúñiga et al., 2014). The platform did not merely inform this participant; it calibrated and accumulated until the weight of repeated exposure made previous habits feel untenable. In this sense, the algorithm did not amplify a pre-existing conviction; it gradually constructed the interpretive lens through which her dietary choices came to feel politically charged.

Whether the process was deliberate or gradual, what these accounts share is that social media provided more than just information. It also provided a framework through which dietary choices began to acquire political meaning. Fox and Ward (2008) argue that identity emerges

from the reflexive interactions between the individual and their social and material environment, and that it is stabilized through the repetition of embodied practice over time. Social media constitutes precisely such an environment by repeatedly exposing participants to vegan values, arguments, and communities, and it actively participates in the process through which everyday dietary choices came to be understood as expressions of a coherent political identity. Yet this process of identity formation was rarely straightforward or linear, and understanding its complexity requires closer attention to the trajectories through which participants' vegan identities developed over time.

1.3 The non-linear nature of vegan identity formation

The interview data collected in this study consistently resist the idea that becoming vegan is a discrete, definitive moment. Rather than describing a clear before-and-after transition, participants across all groups tended to narrate their vegan journey as an extended, uneven process, one marked by ambivalence, partial commitment, and gradual realignment between values and practice.

This non-linearity manifested in several forms. For some participants, the early stages of the transition involved repeated negotiation with deeply habituated food preferences. Participant 3 (The Oaks, 45, 13-year vegan), for example, described going back and forth in the initial period of his vegan journey, finding it difficult to fully relinquish certain dairy products. What eventually consolidated his commitment was not a further accumulation of information but an emotional confrontation: watching a documentary about the animal industry produced a level of discomfort that made continued ambivalence feel unsustainable.

This pattern points to the limited explanatory power of purely rational accounts of dietary identity change, in which intellectual conviction is assumed to precede and produce behavioral commitment. Vegan identity is an embodied practice in which affective experience plays a constitutive role in bringing intellectual conviction and behavioral commitment together (Fox & Ward, 2008). For this participant, it was not further information but an effective confrontation that ultimately closed the gap between values and practice. In this case, emotional experience did the work that reasoning alone could not.

For others, non-linearity was less about internal conflict than about the practical demands of everyday life. Participant 2 (The Oaks, 39, 17-year vegan) described a transition that unfolded over several years and was shaped by the constraints of frequent travel, which

necessitated a degree of dietary flexibility, making a full vegan commitment temporarily impractical. She had identified as a vegetarian from the age of 18 but did not consistently practice veganism until her early 20s, leaving a gap of several years during which her beliefs and behavior remained only partially aligned. Crucially, she described this period not as a failure of commitment but as a process of progressive learning: the more she researched, the more products she came to associate with the animal industry, until the cumulative effect of that knowledge meant she was "basically living as a vegan anyway" before she had formally adopted the identity.

Taken together, these two accounts point to a consistent pattern in that data: the identity label often arrives after the practice, not before it. Participants did not typically decide to become vegan and then change their behavior accordingly; rather, their behavior shifted gradually in response to accumulating knowledge and evolving values, and the identity of "vegan" was retrospectively applied to a process that had already been underway. This is consistent with Fox and Ward's (2008) argument that identity emerges from reflexive interactions between the individual and their environment and is stabilized through the repetition of embodied practice over time. In this sense, identity is the consolidation of a process rather than its cause. What this means for this study is that the question is not when someone decided to become a vegan, but how the accumulated weight of practice, knowledge, and emotional experience gradually made that identity feel both inevitable and their own.

The non-linear trajectories described by participants have significant implications for how political identity formation should be understood more broadly. Huddy (2001) demonstrates that political identities are rarely adopted all at once; rather, they develop along a continuum from weak to strong, as individuals accumulate experience, deepen their engagement, and internalize the meaning of their commitments over time. The trajectories described by participants in this study reflect this gradual strengthening process. If identity is not the cause but the consolidation of a gradual process of reinterpretation, then the role of digital media — as a continuous supplier of information, emotional content, and community belonging — is not simply to persuade individuals to adopt a new identity, but to sustain the conditions under which that reinterpretation can unfold over time.

Across the 3 sections of this chapter, a consistent picture emerges: vegan identity formation is neither a rational decision nor a discrete event, but a gradual process shaped by structural conditions, social relationships, and the interpretive environment provided by social media.

What remains to be examined is how this identity, once formed, continues to evolve, and how the relationship between political selfhood, everyday practice, and media use shifts as individuals move further along their vegan journey, which will be further explained in the next chapter.

2. The Evolution of Vegan Identity

This chapter traces how vegan political identity evolves over time, focusing on the shift from an explicitly activist orientation toward a more integrated, everyday expression of political selfhood. Here, I argue that this evolution is a deepening of political commitment, as veganism gradually becomes inseparable from how long-term practitioners understand themselves and navigate the world. The contrast between newer and longer-term vegans is central to this chapter, as is the role of social media in mediating and reflecting these shifts.

2.1 Building political identity in early veganism: community, social media, and the need for belonging

For participants in the earlier stages of their vegan journey, the formation of a political vegan identity was not a solitary process. Rather, it was actively sustained through a search for community, social legitimacy, and shared frameworks of meaning, a search in which both physical communities and digital media played a central role. This pattern resonates with Bennett's (2012) theory of personalized politics, in which individuals increasingly express political commitment through lifestyle values and personal action frames rather than formal ideological affiliations. For early-stage vegans in this study, digital platforms and community organizations functioned precisely as the kind of dense social networks Bennett (2012) describes – spaces where personal stories and values circulate, connecting individuals to a broader political project without requiring membership in a formal political structure.

Among the Late Bloomers, this dynamic was particularly visible. Several participants described a period of hesitation before fully committing to veganism that was driven not by uncertainty about their values, but by anxiety about their social identity. Participant 10, for example, had already internalized the ethical case for veganism before making the transition, yet continued to postpone it out of concern about how it would affect her social life:

Before I fully switched to vegan, I actually joined the Plant-based Campus community because I felt like I needed a support system. I was worried that being vegan would be hard, even though I knew it was probably the right thing to do. That fear actually delayed my

transition for a while; I kept telling myself that I would become vegan at some point...But I also thought it would be awkward to be with people and have to say, 'I can't eat this'.

(Participant 10, Late Bloomers, 26 years old, 4-month vegan)

Her narrative illustrates how the threshold for adopting a political identity is shaped not only by conviction but by the social costs that identity is perceived to carry. Joining Plant-based Campus before completing her dietary transition suggested that community belonging functioned as a precondition for identity adoption rather than a consequence of it. This finding aligns with Jallinoja, Vinnari, and Niva's (2019) observation that social media and vegan community networks are central mobilizers in cultivating a new image of veganism, one that makes plant-based living feel accessible and socially viable rather than marginal or extreme.

Where Participant 10's engagement with the community was primarily about finding support, Participant 11's (Late Bloomers, 35 years old, 10-month vegan) was oriented towards outreach. After being introduced to the question of animal intelligence through a conversation with a vegan friend, she began actively seeking out content on how different animals are treated in the food industry, following vegan activists online and immersing herself in increasingly detailed material on farming practices. Rather than remaining a passive consumer of this content, she began curating and sharing it on her own Instagram profile:

I was very actively searching for and consuming vegan-related content, and just kept watching. I don't remember which vegan activist's video I came across first, but I just kept following from there. I wanted to document the lifecycle of each type of animal and pin it as a highlight on my Instagram profile — from the birth of a pig to the piglets being separated, then slaughtered, and so on. I hoped that someone would click on it out of curiosity and discover what a pig's life actually looks like. Maybe that could raise awareness among people. (Participant 11, Late Bloomers, 35 years old, 10-month vegan)

This behavior exemplifies what Bennett (2012) describes as the logic of connective action: personally expressive content that circulates through social networks, connecting individuals to larger political causes without requiring formal organizational membership. By curating and disseminating content about animal agriculture, Participant 11 was not only affirming her own political identity but also attempting to extend the same process of reinterpretation to others, using Instagram's affordances to turn her personal conviction into a form of distributed political communication.

Together, these narratives suggest that for participants in the early stages of vegan identity formation, social media and community function as mutually reinforcing resources. As Jallinoja et al. (2019) argue, lifestyle decisions of this kind are simultaneously about how to act and about who to become, and it is this dual function that social media platforms and vegan communities serve for early-stage vegans. What unites both dimensions is the underlying need for confirmation to situate one's emerging political identity within a network of shared values, whether encountered in person or online.

2.2 Experience without uniformity: diverging trajectories of long-term vegan identity

If early-stage veganism is characterized by an active search for community, confirmation, and political expression, the narratives of long-term vegans in this thesis suggest that the relationship between vegan identity and political engagement does not follow a single trajectory over time. Rather than converging towards a common endpoint, experienced vegans in this study – drawn from both The Oaks and Early Roots – described markedly different evolutions in how they understood and inhabited their vegan identity, shaped in part by the intersection of age and duration of practice.

From Participant 3 (The Oaks, 45, 13-year vegan), the shift over time was one of progressive de-escalation. In the earlier years of his vegan journey, he described himself as easily angered and judgmental towards non-vegans, actively engaged in debate and advocacy, and deeply invested in the political dimensions of veganism as a cause to be defended. Over time, however, this posture gave way to something considerably quieter, shaped in part by an engagement with Buddhist and Hindu philosophy that reframed his understanding of the relationship between human and animal life. Through years of reading in these traditions, he came to see animal lives as part of a broader life cycle, equal in value to human lives — a perspective that dissolved the anger and judgment that had once driven his activism, turning it into something closer to acceptance.

Currently, his media use is almost entirely practical, limited to recipes and food-related content. Most strikingly, while he continues to regard veganism as part of his political identity, he no longer applies the vegan label to himself, which captures the paradox at the heart of his trajectory: the deeper his commitment has become, the less he feels the need to name it. This process of quiet internalization resonates with Jallinoja et al.'s (2019) characterization of long-term veganism as a form of self-realization and identity integration, in which political commitment becomes embedded in everyday life rather than expressed

explicitly. For Participant 3, this integration has taken a distinctly spiritual form. His political conviction, once demanding external expression, has been absorbed into a personal philosophy in which the ethical treatment of animals is not a stance to be defended but a way of being in the world.

Participant 5 (Early Roots, 20, 7-year vegan), in contrast, described a trajectory that moves in the opposite direction – not away from politics, but deeper into it. Having become vegan at the age of 13, her initial motivation was immediate and intuitive rather than ideological: growing up near a farm and surrounded by animals, she could no longer eat any of them. What has changed over time is not the commitment but its scope and complexity.

I think my veganism has evolved into something more political over time. When I was 13, I didn't have a very complex understanding of the world; back then, it was just about what was right in front of me. Now, however, it has become much more about the environment, which is an extremely political issue because it affects everyone. Climate change isn't just about the weather; it is a human rights issue because it disproportionately affects certain people and places. (Participant 5, Early Roots, 20 years old, 7-year vegan)

While Participant 3's political identity has become less visible marked over time, Participant 5's has expanded outward, from a personal ethical commitment to a structural political analysis that connects dietary practice to climate justice and human rights. For her, veganism is not a label she has outgrown; it is a framework that has grown with her, absorbing new political meaning as her understanding of the world has developed. This aligns with Bennett's (2012) account of personalized politics, in which lifestyle values increasingly serve as the vehicle for political engagement – but in Participant 5's case, the lifestyle has become more rather than less explicitly political over time.

The divergence between these two trajectories is not incidental. It points to the role of age as a variable that intersects with duration of practice in ways that produce meaningfully different identity outcomes. One moves towards philosophical quietude and spiritual integration, while the other moves towards expanded political consciousness.

Yet despite the differences in how their identities have evolved, both participants converge on a similar relationship with digital media in the present. Participant 5 noted that her current social media consumption is largely limited to vegan recipes and food-related content; like Participant 3, she no longer turns to platforms for knowledge or ideological reinforcement,

having long since developed a settled understanding of the ethical and political dimensions of veganism. For both participants, social media has gradually shifted from a space for identity formation to a practical, everyday resource.

From active ideological engagement to quiet utility, this shared media shift in social media use suggests that the external scaffolding of digital platforms, so central to the early stages of vegan identity formation documented in the previous section, becomes progressively less necessary as vegan identity matures. Whether that maturation takes the form of inward spiritual integration or outward political expansion, experienced vegans in this study appear to have internalized enough to no longer depend on social media environments for confirmation or direction. What platforms once provided, such as knowledge frameworks, communities, and emotional resonance, have been absorbed into the fabric of everyday life itself.

2.3 Looking back to move forward: tracing the shift from activism to everyday integration

The trajectories described in the previous section do not only exist as present-day snapshots; they are also retrospective narratives, shaped by how experienced vegans look back on who they once were. Across The Oaks, a recurring pattern emerged: participants described their earlier selves as more passionate, more confrontational, and more publicly committed to vegan activism, and they reflected on that period with a mixture of understanding and distance. These retrospective narratives reveal the full arc of long-term vegan identity, lending the clearest meaning to the concept of everyday integration.

Participant 3's (The Oaks, 45, 13-year vegan) trajectory, introduced in the previous section, provides a natural entry point. His shift from anger and judgment towards acceptance and equanimity was gradual rather than sudden, shaped over years by philosophical reading and personal reflection. His early activist self, who debated, judged, and felt the injustice of non-veganism acutely, is a necessary stage of a longer vegan journey. This retrospective framing recurs across other participants in The Oaks, suggesting that the movement from activism to integration is now experienced not as a loss of conviction but as its maturation.

Participant 1 (The Oaks, 27, 8-year vegan) articulated this most directly. She described a past defined by visible, collective activism by organizing protests, giving speeches, and leading marches, in which environmental and vegan commitments were a central and publicly

performed part of her political identity. That mode of engagement has largely receded. She reflected that the activist part is much less central to who she is.

Yet this withdrawal from public activism has not diminished the depth of her vegan commitment. Rather, it has deepened its integration into her sense of herself. As she described it, veganism is so embedded in who she is that it rarely surfaces as a conscious identity marker – it has become her “baseline”, something so normalized that it no longer needs to be named or defended. The political aspect has not disappeared; it has simply moved inward, becoming part of the background of her life. This is the dynamic that Jallinoja et al. (2019) describe, that long-term veganism increasingly takes the form of self-realization and identity integration, a process in which lifestyle and political commitment become inseparable from the fabric of everyday life.

Participant 2’s account adds a further dimension to this retrospective narrative, one that centers on a growing discomfort with the more exclusionary forms of vegan activism she encountered in her younger years. She described a period of traveling the world for vegan activism, during which she was exposed to what she characterized as rigid, boundary-drawing vegan communities.

The older I get, the more extreme and counterproductive those things sound to me. I want to be the sort of person who is simply successful in making their own choices without it being a big deal. For me, that feels like a more positive way to impact change rather than trying to force it. It creates a positive association. (Participant 2, The Oaks, 39 years old, 17-year vegan)

Her current approach to veganism is almost entirely implicit: friends and acquaintances ask her about it out of genuine curiosity, without her ever having to bring it up herself. This resonates with Bennett's (2012) observation that personalized politics increasingly operates through lifestyle demonstration rather than formal advocacy, with individuals expressing political commitments through the choices they make and the way they live rather than through explicit mobilization. For participant 2, she is currently “being vegan without performing veganism,” which represents a deliberate rejection of the confrontational model she once inhabited and a conscious embrace of a more integrative, less boundary-marking mode of political identity.

Together, these retrospective accounts illuminate the temporal dimension of vegan political identity in ways that cross-sectional data alone cannot capture. The contrast between these participants' earlier and current selves suggests that the movement from activism to everyday integration is not a retreat from political commitment but a transformation in its form, from visible, community-oriented, and outwardly directed to quiet, personal, and deeply embedded.

Read alongside the narratives of early-stage vegans in section 2.1, this trajectory also sheds light on the role of digital media across the full arc of vegan identity: where platforms once served as the primary environment for identity formation and political expression, they recede over time into the background, their scaffolding no longer needed once the identity it helped construct has become stable enough to stand on its own. Yet if the performative and community-oriented dimensions of vegan identity tend to quieten over time, the political commitments that underpin it do not disappear. Instead, as the following chapter explores, they find their most consistent and durable expression in everyday consumption.

3. Beyond the Shopping Cart: Consumption, Values, and Political Participation

In the previous chapters, I explored how political vegan identity is formed and evolves by presenting the vegan journeys of various participants. With a solid identity foundation, how do political vegans enact their convictions in everyday life? In this chapter, I argue that consumption is not merely a reflection of political identity but one of its primary modes of enactment, a space where commitment is continuously performed, tested, and reinforced. Yet, as the following analysis shows, the political dimensions of vegan identity do not stop at the shopping cart. For many participants, veganism is understood as part of a broader ethical framework, one that connects animal rights, human rights, and environmental justice as expressions of the same core conviction. Rather than veganism as a dietary practice alone, this underlying value system simultaneously shapes consumption habits and formal political participation.

The chapter proceeds in three steps. Section 3.1 maps the expanding scope of vegan political consumption, tracing how participants' engagement moves from everyday food choices to brand politics and beyond, and how this range tends to widen as vegan identity matures. Section 3.2 examines the structural limits of this form of political participation, arguing that when consumption is positioned as a mode of political action, economic inequality translates directly into inequality in political capacity, a tension that cuts along lines of economic

autonomy rather than age alone. Section 3.3 turns to formal political participation, showing that the connection between veganism and voting behavior is not one of linear causation but of value coherence: the same ethical commitments that guide purchasing decisions also orient participants' choices at the ballot box, suggesting that vegan political identity reflects a consistent orientation across multiple domains of civic life.

3.1 The expanding scope of vegan political consumption

For the participants in this study, vegan consumption begins with the most immediate and tangible choices: what to eat, where it comes from, and how it was produced. All 12 participants expressed a preference for local and seasonal produce and indicated support for second-hand consumption as an extension of their vegan values. At this foundational level, the logic is consistent across groups, which involves avoiding unnecessary harm, reducing environmental impact, and aligning everyday purchases with a broader ethical commitment. In this sense, even the most basic act of grocery shopping becomes, as Stolle and Micheletti (2013) argue, a form of political participation: an exercise of consumer power in the service of values that exceed the purely personal.

Yet the scope of what counts as politically relevant consumption does not remain fixed. For newer and younger vegans, the primary focus tends to center on the vegan status of the products themselves. Participant 7 (New Sprouts, 18, 1 year vegan) describes her shopping experience in terms that are immediate and visceral:

I am really focusing on buying products that are vegan, all sorts of products, hair products, or whatever. I think in that way, it changed the way I started to live. When I'm shopping, I obviously head straight for the vegan section. However, I always have this recurring thought about the extreme reality we live in—a reality where we have all these dead animals and animal products from creatures that were born and raised in captivity. We use them as mere products and no longer think of them as animals.

This narrative captures a mode of political consumption that is still largely organized around the boundary between vegan and non-vegan. The ethical awareness is intense and genuine, but the frame of reference remains primarily focused on animal exploitation, as it is immediately visible in product categories. This can be understood as a starting point, a foundation from which the scope of political consumption can expand.

Among participants with longer vegan experience, this expansion is more evident. For Participant 2, the supermarket shelf has become a site of layered political judgment that extends well beyond veganism:

Right now, there are so many things that go beyond just veganism. For instance, I avoid buying American products and brands that support Israel. I have so many thoughts while shopping, such as looking for things that are fair trade. I drink way too much coffee, so I'm always looking for options that are ethical in more ways than one... I look for items that use less plastic, things produced more locally, and products from companies where I don't support unhealthy industry practices. There are just so many aspects of this that extend beyond the scope of veganism. (Participant 2, The Oaks, 39, 17-year vegan)

The phrase "beyond the scope of veganism" is analytically significant. It suggests that for Participant 2, vegan consumption has become a gateway into a wider politics of production, trade, and geopolitical solidarity. A similar pattern is evident in Participant 3 (The Oaks, 45, 13 years vegan), who carefully selects ethically produced coffee with attention to supply chain conditions, avoids brands with connections to Israel, and prioritizes local vegan businesses.

Both participants attribute their awareness of specific brands' political stances to information encountered on social media, a point that underscores the role of digital platforms not only in facilitating political consumerism but in continuously expanding its horizons. As Yang and Baringhorst (2019) note, the rise of online media has transformed ordinary consumers into active recipients and distributors of politically relevant information, enabling the kind of granular brand scrutiny that Participants 2 and 3 describe.

What emerges from this comparison is a picture of political consumption as a practice that deepens and broadens over time. The difference between newer vegans like Participant 7 and longer-term vegans like Participants 2 and 3 is not one of underlying values – all 3 participants are motivated by a commitment to reducing harm and acting ethically in the world – but of scope and elaboration. With time and experience, and with the information flows that social media makes available, the question "Is this vegan?" expands into a more complex set of questions about labor conditions, environmental impact, corporate ethics, and geopolitical entanglement. In this case, consumption is a developing practice shaped by the accumulation of knowledge, identity, and political awareness over the course of vegan life.

3.2 The economic limits of political consumption

The previous section showed that vegan political consumption expands in scope as identity matures, from product categories to brand politics and geopolitical entanglement. Yet this expansion assumes something that is not equally available to all participants: the economic capacity to act on one's values in the marketplace. When consumption is positioned as a primary mode of political participation, as Stolle and Micheletti (2013) argue, a critical question follows: what happens to political engagement when consumption is constrained by economic circumstance?

The data suggest a clear pattern. For several participants, the desire to purchase organic and ecological products is present, but its realization is deferred by the realities of a student budget. Participant 4 (Early Roots, 21, 7 years vegan) expressed this tension directly:

That's definitely a plus, but I feel like it will become a higher priority once I'm making more money and working full-time. At this point, I'm on a student budget, so I have to look for cheaper options rather than focusing on whether they are organic or ecological. Still, it is definitely a goal I would like to achieve in the future.

A strikingly similar account comes from Participant 6 (Early Roots, 22, 5 years vegan), who explains that although she would like to purchase organic and ecological products, the cost is prohibitive while she is a student living on family support abroad. She does what she can within her budget, but a fuller alignment of consumption with values is something she anticipates for the future, when she has her own income.

What is notable in both narratives is not an absence of political commitment, but a temporal displacement of it. Both participants frame ethical consumption as a goal they intend to fulfill. Their vegan identity remains intact, while their capacity to express it is constrained through consumption. This distinction matters because it reveals a tension within the political consumerism framework. Stolle and Micheletti (2013) position consumption as an accessible and individualized form of political participation, one that bypasses institutional gatekeepers and allows citizens to act politically in everyday life. Yet the data here suggest that this accessibility is unevenly distributed. When purchasing power determines the extent to which one can align consumption with values, economic inequality translates directly into inequality in the capacity for political engagement, a structural contradiction that the framework does not fully address.

This pattern emerges specifically along lines of economic autonomy rather than age alone. Both Participant 4 and Participant 6 are among the younger participants in the study, but the constraint they describe is explicitly tied to their student status and financial dependence rather than to age. A participant of the same age with financial independence would face a different set of constraints, just as an older participant on a limited income might face similar ones. It should be noted that the sample in this study skews towards students, which may shape the prominence of this finding. This limitation will be addressed further in the conclusion.

Yet if economic constraints reveal the limits of consumption as a form of political engagement, the data in this study also suggest that vegan political identity finds expression beyond the marketplace altogether, extending into the domain of formal political participation in ways that cannot be reduced to purchasing power alone.

3.3 From veganism values to the ballot box

For several participants, the values that orient their consumption choices extend visibly into their engagement with formal political institutions, though the relationship between veganism and voting behavior is better understood as one of value coherence than linear causation. As the data suggest, it is less that veganism produces particular voting patterns, and more that both consumption practices and electoral choices are expressions of the same underlying ethical commitments, which aligns with what Stolle and Micheletti (2013) describe as the expansion of political responsibility into domains beyond conventional participation.

This dynamic is articulated most explicitly by Participant 2, for whom veganism is inseparable from a broader moral framework:

Veganism, like I said, is an extension of the idea that every human deserves rights and freedom. I don't think it should be any different for animals. Because of this, when I talk about veganism, what I'm often actually talking about is human rights. I see the way animal exploitation is inherently tied to human exploitation; to me, they are effectively the same thing... For me, veganism is a major component of intersectionality. I am deeply interested in ethics in general, and I view non-human rights as a natural extension of human rights. They are both part of the same core idea. (Participant 2, The Oaks, 39, 17-year vegan)

This narrative is significant because it reframes veganism as an already political stance rooted in a coherent ethical system, not as a dietary practice that subsequently generates political

commitments. Animal rights, human rights, and environmental justice are inseparable concerns that happen to cluster together; they are understood as structurally connected expressions of a single conviction. It is this integrative logic that links consumption to formal political participation: if veganism is always already about right and exploitation in a broader sense, then how one votes is as much an expression of vegan values as what one puts in a shopping cart.

This pattern is evident across participants from different groups. Participant 5 explicitly connects her voting behavior to the values she associates with veganism, while carefully distinguishing between the practice and the principles behind it:

Though perhaps it isn't veganism as such, but rather the values that come with it... It's more about the values I share with the vegan community that influence my vote, rather than just the diet itself. (Participant 5, Early Roots, 20, 7-year vegan)

This distinction suggests that veganism serves as a carrier of a broader value system rather than a direct political directive, aligning with Stolle and Micheletti's (2013) argument that political consumerism is driven not by single-issue concerns but by a sense of global responsibility that extends across multiple domains of civic life. Participant 5 further notes that parties aligned with her environmental and ethical views also tend to share her positions on migration, healthcare, and education, suggesting that the value coherence she experiences reflects a more comprehensive political orientation.

Among New Sprouts, this connection is expressed more simply. Participant 8 (New Sprouts, 20, 8-month vegan) states that she votes for the Green Party in Switzerland because their platform corresponds closely with her personal values, even though the party does not campaign specifically on veganism. Similarly, Participant 9 (New Sprouts, 22, 1.5-year vegan) votes for vegan-friendly parties, having found that these parties also prioritize the environmental and climate issues she cares about. While these narratives are less elaborated than those of Participant 2 or Participant 5, they point to the same logic: political choices are filtered through a value system in which animal welfare, environmental concern, and broader ethical commitments are experienced as mutually reinforcing.

Notably, the participants who articulate this connection mostly fully (Participants 2 & 5) belong to groups with longer vegan experience, The Oakes and Early Roots, respectively. This echoes the pattern observed in 3.1, where a longer engagement with veganism was

associated with a broader and more elaborated political awareness. For newer vegans, such as Participants 8 and 9, the connection between veganism and formal political participation is already present, but it has not yet been worked into an explicit ethical framework.

Importantly, participants rarely cited specific media content or platform use as a direct influence on their final voting decisions. This absence of direct media intervention in formal political expression is consistent with this thesis's overall findings in Chapter 2.2, which showed that social media's role shifts from a cognitive scaffolding environment during identity formation to a practical utility resource as the identity matures. Once the vegan commitment is fully integrated into a participant's core values, media use typically transitions from actively building their political awareness, as described in Chapter 1.2, to primarily supplying practical information for everyday life. Consequently, deeply ingrained ethical values, rather than immediate media exposure, primarily guide formal political actions such as voting.

Together, the 3 sections of this chapter reveal that consumption operates as a central but structurally uneven site of political vegan identity enactment. The scope of what counts as politically relevant consumption is not fixed; rather, it expands alongside identity maturity, moving from vegan product categories toward a broader engagement with brand ethics, labor conditions, and geopolitical entanglement. This expansion is enabled in part by the information flows that social media continues to supply, even as its roles shift from identity formation to practical utility. Yet when consumption is positioned as a primary mode of political participation, economic inequality translates directly into political capacity inequality, a tension that the political consumerism framework does not fully resolve. Crucially, however, the data suggest that vegan political identity is not exhausted by the marketplace. The same ethical commitments that orient purchasing decisions extend coherently into formal political participation, suggesting that veganism functions less as a single-issue lifestyle and more as an integrative value system through which individuals navigate multiple domains of civic life.

4. Summary of Findings and Analysis

Across the 3 chapters of this analysis, a coherent picture emerges: political vegan identity is not adopted in a single moment of conviction, but assembled gradually through the interplay of structural conditions, social relationships, and media engagement, as well as continuously re-enacted through everyday practice. Chapter 1 established the foundational conditions of

this process; Chapter 2 traced how the identity evolves and internalizes over time; Chapter 3 showed how it finds durable expression in consumption and formal political participation.

Several patterns cut across all 3 chapters and cannot be fully appreciated within any single one. Most notably, digital media's role is neither uniform nor static. Platforms function as cognitive scaffolding during identity formation, as community infrastructure during early political engagement, and as practical background utility once identity has matured, a trajectory that mirrors the broader shift from explicit activism to quite everyday integration.

Running alongside this is the persistent weight of structural conditions: whether in the form of living arrangements that delay vegan transition, social environments that normalize or inhibit identity adoption, or economic constraints that limit ethical consumption, the data consistently show that individual agency is practiced within a choice architecture that is not of the individual's making. What holds these dimensions together is the integrative character of vegan political identity itself. Rather than a single-issue commitment, veganism serves as a carrier of a broader moral orientation, one in which animal rights, environmental justice, and human rights are experienced as structurally connected and that extends coherently from the shopping cart to the ballot box.

Together, these findings suggest that individuals form and enact political vegan identity through an ongoing negotiation between personal values, structural circumstances, and the interpretive environments that digital media provides. The broader implications of this for understanding lifestyle politics and the limits of consumption as civic participation will be addressed in the conclusion.

Conclusion

This thesis set out to examine how digital media platforms mediate the formation of political vegan identity through everyday practice. Drawing on twelve semi-structured interviews across 4 participant groups — New Sprouts, Early Roots, Late Bloomers, and The Oaks — and guided by a theoretical framework integrating lifestyle political consumerism, embodied identity formation, identity strength, and the discursive strategies of digital veganism, the analysis has traced the processes through which private dietary choices become sites of sustained political meaning-making. The following sections synthesize the key findings,

address the research questions, reflect on the study's limitations, and situate its contributions within the broader field.

1. Summary of Key Findings

Across the 3 analytical chapters, this study identifies a consistent pattern: political vegan identity is assembled gradually through the intersection of structural conditions, social relationships, and the interpretive environments that digital media provides. The transition to veganism is rarely the outcome of a single ideological conversion; it depends on a favorable choice architecture that makes ethical action practically possible. Social media functions not as a neutral information channel but as cognitive scaffolding that actively constructs the interpretive lens through which dietary choices receive algorithmic exposure. Crucially, the identity label tends to arrive after the practice rather than before it: what participants experienced as a decision was, on closer examination, the consolidation of a process already underway.

Over time, the relationship between political vegan identity and social media shifts considerably. In the early stages, social media platforms serve as community infrastructure and primary sources of political orientation; as identity matures and internalizes, this dependence recedes into the background, becoming a matter of utility. Long-term practitioners diverge in the direction of their trajectories. Some move toward quietude and spiritual integration, while others move toward an expanding political consciousness. Yet they converge on a similar disengagement from social media as a site of identity work.

In the domain of consumption, political vegan identity finds its most durable expression, expanding in scope from vegan product categories toward brand ethics, labor conditions, and geopolitical entanglement as experience deepens. Economic constraints translate directly into limits on political capacity, revealing a structural tension within the lifestyle political consumerism framework. Beyond the marketplace, the same values that orient purchasing decisions extend coherently into formal political participation — not through direct media influence, but through the internalized ethical commitments that, for these participants, veganism carries and expresses.

2. Answering the Research Questions

The overarching research question asks how individuals form and enact political vegan identity through everyday practice. The analysis demonstrates that this is a multi-layered

process unfolding across time, shaped by structural conditions that determine whether and how values can be enacted, social environments that normalize or inhibit identity adoption, and the interpretive landscapes provided by digital media. Formation is not a moment but a trajectory; enactment is not a single domain but a consistent value orientation that extends from the shopping cart to the ballot box.

The three sub-questions map this trajectory in sequence, tracing how digital media first enables the transition, then recedes as identity matures, and ultimately gives way to the embodied practices through which political commitment finds its most durable expression.

The first sub-question focuses on the role social media plays in individuals' transition to veganism. In the analysis, I identify two distinct mechanisms by which social media contributes to the transition to veganism. For some participants, platforms served as a space for ideological consolidation, deepening, and the connection of a pre-existing political worldview by providing a landscape in which dispersed commitments could be mapped and given expression. For others, algorithmic exposure functioned as the initial trigger, incrementally constructing the interpretive lens through which familiar dietary habits became politically untenable. In both cases, social media provided not simply information but the symbolic and emotional resources through which a dietary preference became a political identity.

The second sub-question concerns how this relationship between vegan identity and social media use evolves as practice deepens over time. The analysis shows a consistent trajectory across participants: in the early stages of their vegan journey, social media platforms serve as cognitive scaffolding and community infrastructure; as identity matures, this dependence recedes to a practical background utility. The scaffolding becomes redundant once the identity it helped construct is stable enough to stand on its own, showing a shift that mirrors the broader movement from explicit activism to quiet, everyday integration that characterizes the long-term trajectories of vegans described in the Finding and Analysis Chapter 2.

The third sub-question asks how political vegan identity manifests in everyday consumption practices and formal political participation. Consumption serves as a central yet structurally uneven site of political enactment, expanding in scope as identity matures. Economic constraints reveal a tension within the political consumerism framework: when market-based participation is positioned as an accessible form of political agency, purchasing power determines the extent to which values can be acted upon. Beyond consumption, the same

ethical commitments extend coherently into formal political participation through value coherence rather than direct media influence. In this case, veganism functions less as a single-issue lifestyle and more as an integrative ethical orientation through which multiple domains of civic life are navigated.

3. Reflections and Limitations

Several limitations of this study warrant reflection. The sample, while purposively constructed to capture variation along two analytically significant axes, remains small and makes no claim to representativeness. The reliance on retrospective self-reporting introduces a further constraint: participants' narratives of their transitions are shaped by the identities they currently hold, and the process of recollection is itself a form of meaning-making that may smooth over ambivalences that were more acute in the moment.

A second limitation concerns the composition of the sample. The participant groups skew heavily toward students, which shaped the prominence of findings around economic constraint and structural autonomy. Individuals with greater financial independence, or those navigating veganism within different occupational or family contexts, may express and enact political vegan identity in ways that this study could not capture. A more socioeconomically diverse sample would allow future research to test whether the patterns identified here hold across a broader range of structural positions, and to examine more fully how economic autonomy shapes the relationship between values and practice over time.

4. Significance and Contributions

Despite the limitations, this study also contributes to the literature on political identity, lifestyle politics, and digital media by attending to the mediated processes through which political motivation itself is constituted. Without understanding these processes, we risk misreading the very nature of political motivation in the digital age, in other words, mistaking the outcome of a politicized lifestyle for the process through which it becomes political in the first place. The analysis responds to this risk by tracing the mechanisms of formation, evolution, and enactment at the level of individual practice.

Theoretically, the study extends the lifestyle political consumerism framework by demonstrating that structural opportunity is a precondition for ethical action, not merely a facilitator. It elaborates Fox and Ward's (2008) account of embodied identity by documenting

the constitutive role of affective experience in closing the gap between values and practice. It develops Jallinoja et al.'s (2019) distinction between emancipatory and aesthetic orientations by tracing how these registers are differentially activated depending on participants' prior commitments, and advances Huddy's (2001) model of identity strength by showing how the trajectory from weak to strong identity is mediated by the specific affordances of platform-based communication.

The study also identifies a structural blind spot in Stolle and Micheletti's (2013) framework. By positioning consumption as an accessible and individualized form of political participation, the framework implicitly assumes an economic capacity that is not equally distributed. The findings suggest that when purchasing power determines the extent to which values can be acted upon, economic inequality translates directly into inequality in political capacity, presenting a tension that invites a more explicit engagement with material constraint as a constitutive dimension of the framework, rather than a peripheral variable.

Empirically, the study documents a mechanism of political identity formation that operates largely below the threshold of deliberate political engagement: the gradual accumulation of mediated exposure, emotional confrontation, and relational support through which private choices come to be experienced as expressions of political selfhood.

5. Directions for Further Research

The findings open several directions for future inquiry. Tracking participants over time, rather than relying on retrospective accounts, would yield a richer understanding of how the relationship among values, practice, and media use evolves at different stages of the vegan journey. The role of algorithmic recommendation in constructing political identity raises important questions about platform design; future research might examine how changes to algorithmic logic affect the mechanisms of identity formation documented here. The economic constraint finding points to the need for research that systematically attends to class and material circumstances as important considerations of political consumerism, an underexplored dimension in the existing literature.

Contemporary political mobilization increasingly operates through the accumulated weight of everyday private decisions rather than institutional channels. Understanding the mediated mechanisms behind this shift is not only an academic concern but a precondition for grasping how the private sphere has become a primary site of political life today.

When Joe Rogan joked that you always know when someone at a party is vegan because they will tell you, he was identifying a symptom without accounting for its cause. What this thesis has argued is that the compulsion to announce is the compulsion to make visible a political identity assembled, piece by piece, through structural circumstances, social relationships, and the interpretive environments that digital media provides. The joke mistakes conviction for vanity. Understanding the difference is, in the digital age, a political question as much as an academic one.

Bibliography

- Bang, H. (2005). Among Everyday Makers and Expert Citizens, in J. Newman (ed.), *Remaking Governance: Peoples, Politics and the Public Sphere*, [e-book] Policy Press, p.0, Available Online: <https://doi.org/10.1332/policypress/9781861346407.003.0009> [Accessed 3 March 2026].
- Bennett, W. L. (1998). The UnCivic Culture: Communication, Identity, and the Rise of Lifestyle Politics, *PS: Political Science and Politics*, vol. 31, no. 4, pp.741–761.
- Bennett, W. L. (2012). The Personalization of Politics: Political Identity, Social Media, and Changing Patterns of Participation, *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, vol. 644, pp.20–39.
- Boström, M., Micheletti, M. & Oosterveer, P. (2019). Studying Political Consumerism, in M. Boström, M. Micheletti, & P. Oosterveer (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of Political Consumerism*, [e-book] Oxford University Press, Available Online: <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780190629038.001.0001> [Accessed 15 February 2026].
- Boulianne, S., Copeland, L. & Koc-Michalska, K. (2024). Digital Media and Political Consumerism in the United States, United Kingdom, and France, *New Media & Society*, vol. 26, no. 4, pp.2110–2130.
- Braun, V. & Clarke, V. (2006). Using Thematic Analysis in Psychology, *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, vol. 3, no. 2, pp.77–101.
- Braun, V., Clarke, V., Hayfield, N. & Terry, G. (2019). Thematic Analysis, in P. Liamputtong (ed.), *Handbook of Research Methods in Health Social Sciences*, [e-book] Singapore: Springer Singapore, pp.843–860, Available Online: http://link.springer.com/10.1007/978-981-10-5251-4_103 [Accessed 3 May 2026].
- Bryman, A. (2016). Social Research Methods, [e-book] Don Mills, Ontario, Canada : Oxford University Press, Available Online: http://archive.org/details/socialresearchme0000brym_o2i8 [Accessed 7 May 2026].

- Charmaz, K. (2012). *Constructing Grounded Theory: A Practical Guide through Qualitative Analysis*, Repr., Los Angeles: Sage.
- De Groeve, B., Hudders, L. & Bleys, B. (2021). Moral Rebels and Dietary Deviants: How Moral Minority Stereotypes Predict the Social Attractiveness of Veg*ns, *Appetite*, vol. 164, p.105284.
- De Zúñiga, H. G., Copeland, L. & Bimber, B. (2014). Political Consumerism: Civic Engagement and the Social Media Connection, *New Media & Society*, vol. 16, no. 3, pp.488–506.
- Edwards, R. & Holland, J. (2013). *What Is Qualitative Interviewing?*, London: Bloomsbury Academic.
- Fox, N. & Ward, K. J. (2008). You Are What You Eat? Vegetarianism, Health and Identity, *Social Science & Medicine*, vol. 66, no. 12, pp.2585–2595.
- Greenebaum, J. (2012a). Veganism, Identity and the Quest for Authenticity, *Food, Culture and Society: An International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research*, vol. 15, pp.129–144.
- Greenebaum, J. (2012b). Veganism, Identity and the Quest for Authenticity, *Food, Culture & Society*, vol. 15, no. 1, pp.129–144.
- Hodson, G. & Earle, M. (2018). Conservatism Predicts Lapses from Vegetarian/Vegan Diets to Meat Consumption (through Lower Social Justice Concerns and Social Support), *Appetite*, vol. 120, pp.75–81.
- Huddy, L. (2001). From Social to Political Identity: A Critical Examination of Social Identity Theory, *Political Psychology*, vol. 22, no. 1, pp.127–156.
- Jallinoja, P., Vinnari, M. & Niva, M. (2019). Veganism and Plant-Based Eating: Analysis of Interplay Between Discursive Strategies and Lifestyle Political Consumerism, in M. Boström, M. Micheletti, & P. Oosterveer (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of Political Consumerism*, [e-book] Oxford University Press, Available Online: <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780190629038.001.0001> [Accessed 15 February 2026].
- Jung, J. & Mittal, V. (2020). Political Identity and the Consumer Journey: A Research Review, *Journal of Retailing*, vol. 96, no. 1, pp.55–73.
- Kalte, D. (2021). Political Veganism: An Empirical Analysis of Vegans' Motives, Aims, and Political Engagement, *Political Studies*, vol. 69, no. 4, pp.814–833.
- Kvale, S. & Brinkmann, S. (2009). *InterViews: Learning the Craft of Qualitative Research Interviewing*, SAGE.
- Li, Y. & Marsh, D. (2008). New Forms of Political Participation: Searching for Expert Citizens and Everyday Makers, *British Journal of Political Science*, vol. 38, no. 2, pp.247–272.

- Markowski, K. L. & Roxburgh, S. (2019). "If I Became a Vegan, My Family and Friends Would Hate Me." Anticipating Vegan Stigma as a Barrier to Plant-Based Diets, *Appetite*, vol. 135, pp.1–9.
- Mason, J. (2002). Qualitative Researching: Second Edition, [e-book] SAGE Publications, Available Online: http://archive.org/details/isbn_2900761974283 [Accessed 7 May 2026].
- Minson, J. (2012). Do-Gooder Derogation, *Social Psychological and Personality Science*, vol. 3.
- Norris, P. (ed.). (1999). Critical Citizens: Global Support for Democratic Government, [e-book] Oxford University Press, Available Online: <https://doi.org/10.1093/0198295685.001.0001> [Accessed 2 March 2026].
- Noy, C. (2008). Sampling Knowledge: The Hermeneutics of Snowball Sampling in Qualitative Research, *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, vol. 11, no. 4, pp.327–344.
- Plante, C. N., Rosenfeld, D. L., Plante, M. & Reysen, S. (2019). The Role of Social Identity Motivation in Dietary Attitudes and Behaviors among Vegetarians, *Appetite*, vol. 141, p.104307.
- Putnam, R. D. (2000). Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community, in *Proceedings of the 2000 ACM Conference on Computer Supported Cooperative Work*, 1 December 2000, New York, NY, USA: Association for Computing Machinery, p.357, Available Online: <https://doi.org/10.1145/358916.361990> [Accessed 2 March 2026].
- Schlozman, K., Brady, H. & Verba, S. (2018). Unequal and Unrepresented: Political Inequality and the People's Voice in the New Gilded Age, [e-book] Princeton: Princeton University Press, Available Online: <https://www.degruyter.com/document/doi/10.23943/9781400890361/html> [Accessed 5 March 2026].
- Shah, D. V., McLeod, D. M., Kim, E., Sun Young Lee, Gotlieb, M. R., Ho, S. S. & Breivik, H. (2007). Political Consumerism: How Communication and Consumption Orientations Drive "Lifestyle Politics", *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, vol. 611, no. 1, pp.217–235.
- Stolle, D. & Micheletti, M. (2013). Political Consumerism: Global Responsibility in Action, [e-book] Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, Available Online: <https://www.cambridge.org/core/books/political-consumerism/5A4E8DD6893B2EC8406BC0328E2BF595> [Accessed 15 February 2026].
- Verba, S., Schlozman, K. L. & Brady, H. E. (1995). Voice and Equality: Civic Voluntarism in American Politics, Vol. 111, [e-book], Available Online: <https://doi.org/10.2307/2152095> [Accessed 2 March 2026].
- Yang, M. & Baringhorst, S. (2019). Studying Media within Political Consumerism: Past and Present, in M. Boström, M. Micheletti, & P. Oosterveer (eds), *The Oxford Handbook*

of Political Consumerism, [e-book] Oxford University Press, p.0, Available Online: <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780190629038.013.7> [Accessed 15 May 2026].

Other Source

Comedy Central. (2014). Joe Rogan - A Vegan's Favorite Thing to Say, *Comedy Central Stand-Up - Joe Rogan Video - Joe Rogan Has No Patience for Goofy Vegan Arguments*, Available Online: <https://www.cc.com/video-clips/ru6wnc/stand-up-joe-rogan--a-vegan-s-favorite-thing-to-say?> [Accessed 16 May 2026].

Appendix

The following appendices contain the interview guides used in data collection. Two versions were developed to account for differences in the length of vegan practice: one for participants with 2 years or less of vegan experience, and one for participants with 5 or more years of vegan experience. Both versions follow the same semi-structured format and cover the same core thematic areas, while allowing for questions more specifically tailored to each group's relationship with their vegan identity.

Interview guide - Junior vegan (less than 2 years)

Veganism/consumerism

- Can you tell me how long you have been vegan?
- And what makes you vegan?
- After becoming a vegan, were there any changes that happened in your daily life? (purchasing habits, mental & moral awareness, food taste...)
 - a. When you're standing in front of a supermarket shelf, what goes through your mind as you decide what to put in your cart?
 - b. When you're grocery shopping or eating at a restaurant, what would you consider except for the taste and price?

Political identity

- If you could use 3 words to describe who you are, what words would you choose?
 - a. What about politics? Is that something you see as part of your identity?
- How would you place veganism in these aspects that you mentioned before?
- How do you understand the connection between personal diet choices and bigger social issues?
- Specifically, what kind of social issues are you interested in/focus on?
 - a. In what way do you express your opinions about it?
- Some people see their shopping cart as a way of 'voting' for the kind of world they want to live in. How do you feel about that perspective?
- Do you think that your veganism belief influences your political choices? Like voting?

Social media

- Have you followed any vegan content on social media?
- What kind of content can make you stop and check for a moment?

- Have you seen any veganism-related content on social media that you can relate to?
Can you share your experience?
 - a. How about content that makes you uncomfortable?
 - b. Did these contents influence or change some of your opinions on certain social issues? (Or your purchasing decision?) In what way?

Backup questions

- When you are in a social circumstance (e.g., having a dinner party with your friends or colleagues), how would you explain your diet preference?
- Do you feel like being vegan has connected you to a larger community, or has it made you feel more like an individual outlier?
- If you could change one thing about how our society handles food production, what would it be?

Interview guide - Advanced vegans (over 5 years)

Veganism/consumerism

1. Can you tell me when you became a vegan?
2. And what makes you vegan?
3. After becoming a vegan, were there any changes that happened in your daily life?
(purchasing habits, mental & moral awareness, food taste...)
 - a. When you're standing in front of a supermarket shelf, what goes through your mind as you decide what to put in your cart?
 - b. When you're grocery shopping or eating at a restaurant, what would you consider except for the taste and price?
4. Are there any differences in your understanding of veganism now in comparison to the earlier years in your vegan journey? Can you tell me more about it?
 - a. What made you change your understanding?

Political identity

5. If you could use 3 words to describe who you are, what words would you choose?
 - a. What about politics? Is that something you see as part of your identity?
6. How would you place veganism in these aspects that you mentioned before?
7. How do you understand the connection between personal diet choices and bigger social issues?
8. Specifically, what kind of social issues are you interested in/focus on?
 - a. In what way do you express your opinions about it?

9. Some people see their shopping cart as a way of 'voting' for the kind of world they want to live in. How do you feel about that perspective?

Social media

10. Have you followed any vegan content on social media?
11. What kind of content can make you stop and check for a moment?
12. Have you seen any veganism-related content on social media that you can relate to?
Can you share your experience?
 - a. How about content that makes you uncomfortable?
 - b. Did these contents influence or change some of your opinions on certain social issues? (Or your purchasing decision?) In what way?

Backup questions

13. When you are in a social circumstance (e.g., having a dinner party with your friends or colleagues), how would you explain your diet preference?
14. Do you feel like being vegan has connected you to a larger community, or has it made you feel more like an individual outlier?
15. If you could change one thing about how our society handles food production, what would it be?