

Processed vegan food packaging: influencing vegan diet and lifestyle consumption choices

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As the demand for plant-based meat analogues (PBMA) continues to surge globally, understanding the marketing strategies that drive consumer choice becomes imperative⁽¹⁾. This research project, part of a larger study at Massey University, explores the design and packaging of vegan food products, specifically focusing on processed PBMA and how this influences vegan diet consumption choices in New Zealand vegans. We examined the packaging of vegan processed food available in New Zealand supermarkets and those promoted online, with a focus on processed PBMA. This informed the development of an online survey including: demographics, motivations for following a vegan diet, and questions related to perceptions and preferences about vegan diets and processed PBMA packaging. The survey was offered to individuals who had previously participated in vegan research at Massey University and followed a strict vegan diet. There were 235 participants of whom 198 completed the survey. This consisted of primarily females (n = 156, 74%) and individuals of New Zealand European descent (n = 159, 71%), aged 18 to 76 years (37.8 ± 12.3). The participants had varying durations of following a vegan diet, with the largest group (n = 87, 42%) adopting it for 5 to 10 years. The primary motivation for following a vegan diet was animal welfare (n = 205), followed by environmental concerns (n = 189) and health (n = 175). Participants were able to select more than one option, suggesting there are often multiple reasons for choosing to follow a vegan diet. Factors influencing purchase decisions for PBMA included nutrient claims on packaging, with protein having the highest positive influence. Environmental concerns also played a significant role, with eco-friendly packaging and positive environmental claims being important. Packaging images, particularly of the final prepared product, had a significantly positive impact on purchasing decisions (4.12 ± 0.78) where 1 represented a negative influence and 5 represented a positive influence on a Likert Scale. The majority sometimes, or always checked the nutrition information panel (n = 167, 85%) and examined the ingredients (n = 191, 98%). Participants reported concern about the nutritional value of processed PBMA (n = 94), and reported that they are aware that these foods are classified as ‘ultra-processed (n = 91). This research provides valuable insights into the reasons people choose vegan diets and what influences their choices when it comes to purchasing PBMA. It highlights the significance of marketing strategies in the plant-based meat alternatives industry. However, to gain a more comprehensive understanding of this evolving market, further research is necessary. Future research should consider a wider range of demographics and regional distinctions to better understand how consumer preferences in plant-based diets are changing. This should also include looking at how the market is maturing, with buyers becoming more aware of things like nutrients and the processing of food, which can impact the sustainable food choices individuals make.

Keywords: vegan; New Zealand; plant-based; packaging

Ethics Declaration

Yes

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Reference

1. Brooker G, Henfrie GA, Anastasiou K *et al.* (2022) *Front Nutr* 9, 1087194.