



**Exploring Finnish Consumer Attitudes Towards Plant-Based Diets: A
Future Foresight Study of Megatrends in the Food Industry**

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ABSTRACT

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Consumption of plant-based food has been encountering rapid growth all around the globe, and Nordic countries like Finland are of no exception. The aim of this mixed-method study is to offer future foresight on the megatrends which might shape the future consumption of plant-based food items among Finns by evaluating the factors driving their preferences and perceptions on such a diet. The study has three main research questions which include exploring the factors influencing the adoption of plant-based diets among Finns, their current attitudes and perceptions on plant-based diets, and how these perceptions may shape future consumption patterns in Finland. The theoretical framework used in this study is the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB). Both quantitative (survey) and qualitative (interview) methods are employed here. Survey responses were taken from 59 participants, and 3 industry experts answered interview questions regarding the current and future condition of plant-based diet adoption in Finland. The findings suggested that factors affecting the adoption of plant-based diets among Finns include health motivations, environmental concerns, socio-cultural barriers and economic factors. In terms of attitudes and perceptions, the study found that Finns care about health, cultural and social perceptions, as well as environmental considerations. The current perceptions that may shape future consumption include health-driven growth, taste and culinary innovation and sustainability.

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1 INTRODUCTION

All around the world, following a plant-based diet or consumption of more plant-based items has been experiencing rapid growth (Euromonitor International, 2021). This phenomenon is rising due to growing awareness regarding environmental destruction caused by animal agriculture and animal cruelty (Bryant, 2022). Moreover, the negative impacts of increased meat consumption on health are other causes driving this latest trend in the global food industry (Graça, Godinho and Truninger, 2019).

In Nordic countries such as Finland, the market of plant-based food is growing because of heavy demand. As reported by Kirk (2018), a survey found that 24% of Nordic food consumers predicted that they would consume less meat in the upcoming five years whereas 34% expected to consume more vegetarian items. Many companies are emerging that solely focuses on fulfilling consumer demand of wholly plant-based food. Larger businesses also took part in this trend and thus, they are focusing on developing vegan products for the Nordic regions' consumer demand. Ray (2022) sheds light on how popular plant-based products are becoming on a global level, signifying it as a global megatrend that is changing eating habits of people. The term 'Megatrends' was made popular by Naisbitt (1982) who highlighted major societal transformations that define the future. Since then, the concept is being used to guide frameworks for strategic decision-making, scenario planning and future foresight. Megatrends are large-scale and overarching factors which shape global developments across different industries, communities and economies over extended periods (Maggio et al., 2019). Generally, megatrends unfold over decades and affect long-term changes in human behaviour, technology, markets and the environment. They are different from short-term fads or seasonal trends due to their structural nature. Megatrends are generally influenced by deep-rooted shifts in economy, environment, technology, policy landscape and society that go beyond national boundaries (Dartiguepeyrou and Saloff-Coste, 2023). Therefore, not only the immediate industry conditions are affected by megatrends, rather they reconfigure the ways in which businesses, governments and consumers interact with their broader surroundings.

For instance, earlier, plant-based food items were only sought by vegetarians and vegans. However, the emergence of 'flexitarians' or those who do not follow a certain diet is also responsible for the surge in demand for these products (Curtain and Grafenauer, 2019). This shift does not necessarily mean that the focus on meat consumption has declined highly. Clausnitzer (2024) reports that as of 2023, the consumption of meat by Finnish people was almost 78 kilograms per capita, 0.6 kilograms less than that of 2022.

Finland is known for its robust environmental policies. The country ranks high in global sustainability indexes and has seen rising public interest in sustainable consumption practices (Klapp, Feil and Risius, 2022). Finland is embracing the vegetarian food revolution as it attempts to transition towards a more fair and sustainable food system, as evident in the Finnish parliament celebrating its first 'Veggie Day' in 2024 (Biomush, 2024). Ho (2020) reports an investment of USD 2.3 million made by the Finnish government for national plant-based protein initiative. The ecological footprint left by the Finnish food system is a concerning issue that prompted policymakers as well as consumers to find solutions for reducing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, conserving biodiversity and promotion of healthier lifestyles (Kuylenstierna et al., 2019). However, these are not the only factors prompting the adoption of plant-based diets in Finland. There must be also considerations of cultural factors, consumer perceptions of food quality, availability of products and their pricing when it comes to analysing the megatrends in the market when it comes to plant-based food (Perez-Cueto et al., 2022; Pointke et al., 2022). A range of companies in Finland shows collaborative effort by coming together to educate the public about the benefits of consuming plant-based meat, showing focus on national-level activities to broaden the appeal of plant-based diet to mainstream consumers along with those who are early adopters and eco-conscious (Bambridge-Sutton, 2023). In order to develop the country's plant-based sector, an anticipation of future changes in consumer behaviour is required to understand how their attitudes and preferences toward plant-based diets may evolve over time.

Statista report on an online survey done among a little more than 2000 respondents per quarter in Finland shows that the share of vegans in Finland has stayed consistent at two percent since the first quarter of 2021 to 2024 (Figure 1).

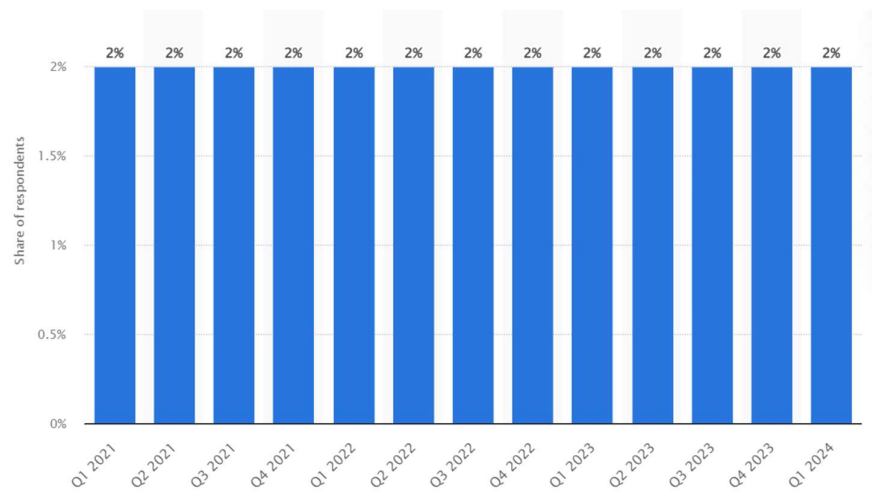


Figure 1: Percentages of Finnish Consumers Adopting a Vegan Diet (Q1 2021 to Q1 2024) (Bashir, 2024a)

Despite of the stability noticed in the percentages, it does not necessarily reflect the growing interest in flexitarianism (reducing meat intake), plant-based alternatives and partial plant-based diets. Moreover, the share of vegans fails to capture the possible increase in demand for plant-based foods among non-vegans. This area is worth exploring as the insights will shed light on what is motivating people to choose plant-based options and which factors shape these choices. In addition, this consistency highlights the necessity of looking beyond strict labels like veganism to understand the broader movement toward plant-based consumption in Finland.

However, the slight increase in meat consumption in Finland, from 90% to 91% between Q1 2023 and Q1 2024 (Figure 2), shows that although much traction has been gained by the plant-based movement in terms of awareness and product availability, it may not be directly translating into a large-scale reduction in meat consumption. This shows a possible gap between consumer attitudes towards plant-based diets and their actual eating habits, posing barriers to adopting plant-based diets on a larger scale. This study will explore these barriers and how they interact with the megatrends pushing consumers towards health-conscious diets.

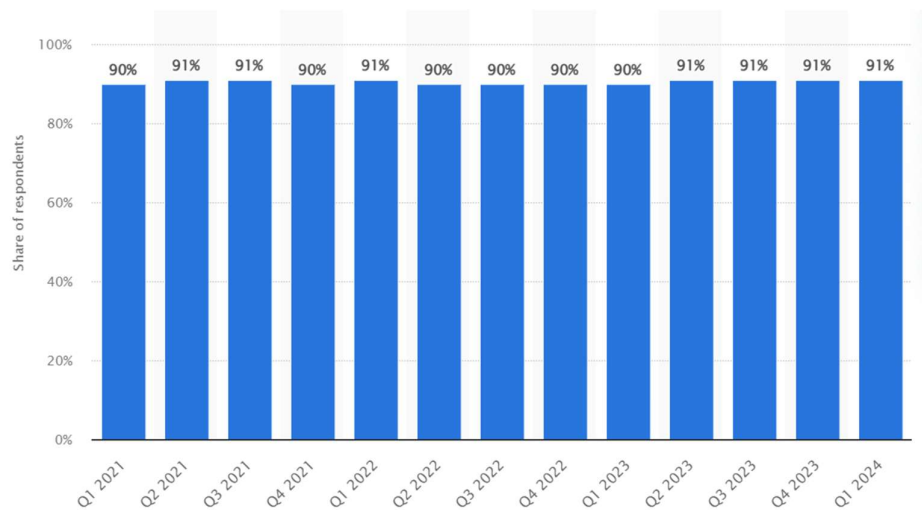


Figure 2: Slight Increase in the Percentage of Meat Consumption by Finnish Consumers (Q1 2021 to Q1 2024) (Bashir, 2024b)

The most recent survey done on Finnish consumers regarding diet and nutrition in 2024 shows that 16% of the 2,028 respondents follow a lactose-free diet whereas 59% does not follow any nutrition rule (Figure 3). The other categories included low-carb diet, flexitarian food habits, gluten-free diet etc. Vegetarian and vegan diets were followed by the least number of people. The insights from these statistical findings reveal inconsistencies and therefore, there is a need to explore plant-based diet adoption in the context of Finland, especially when the Finnish government is encouraging its citizens to do so through its climate-friendly food programme (Nevalainen, Niva and Vainio, 2023).

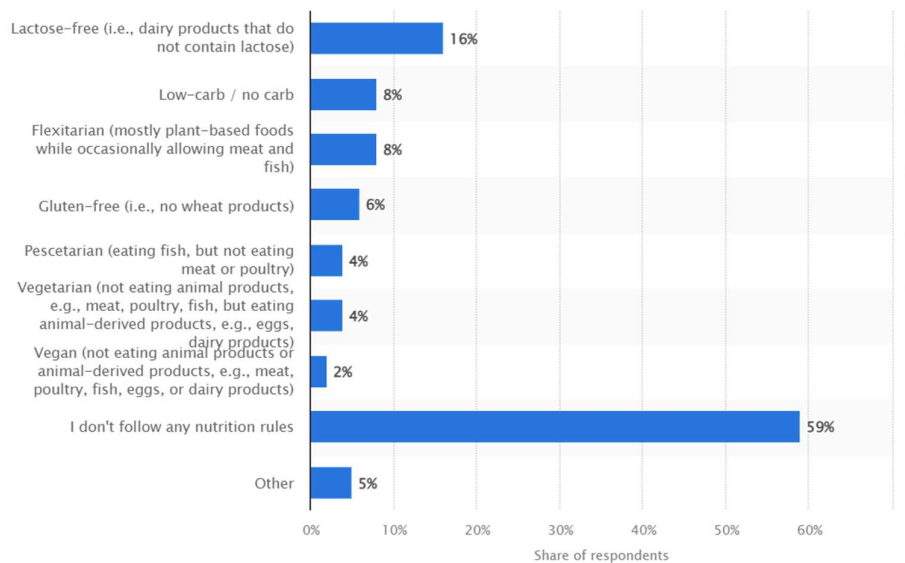


Figure 3: Diets and nutrition in Finland as of June 2024 (Bashir, 2024c)

Studies show that when it comes to meat alternatives or alternative protein consumption, consumers mostly accept plant-based options (Onwezen et al., 2021; Smart Protein Project, 2021). Research by Gómez-Luciano et al. (2019) conducted among four nations with varying economic statuses (The UK, Brazil, Spain and Dominican Republic) found that among three kinds of meat alternatives: (a) plant-based proteins; (b) cultured meat and (c) insects - consumers prefer the first one most. Lundén et al. (2020) conducted a similar study on Finnish consumers and it also showed more interest toward plant-based food ingredients instead of insects or microbial components.

More importantly, companies producing modern meat alternatives not only target vegetarians and vegans, but also flexitarians (Choudhury et al., 2020), who occasionally refrain from consuming meat but do not abandon it completely (Dagevos, 2021). The inconsistencies in recent surveys in Finland on plant-based food and meat consumption may indicate the rise of flexitarian perspectives of food consumption. As there is no standardised category of flexitarians following any specific diet, they fall in the middle of consumers adopting regular meat consumption and those fully abstaining from meat. Due to a lack of specific definition of the term 'flexitarian,' the review by Dagevos (2021) found that studies show skewed proportion of flexitarians which range from 11% to 66%. Despite this variation, there is a greater number of flexitarians than consumers who abstain from meat consumption. In fact, in most countries vegans and vegetarians represent a low percentage of food consumers, including 2% in Finland (Lehto et al., 2022). As a group studied rarely, flexitarian consumers are one of the key demographics explored in the current study.

As this study is aimed to serve as a future foresight for the Finnish food industry, understanding the megatrends driving the changes is necessary. The beginning of a trend is often originated from innovation that trendsetters put to use. A trend may become very popular once a few early adapters adapt the latest ideas. A trend may change because of external environment. The same goes for megatrends; however, those are long-term transitions impacting most of the society and may last for at least five years to forever. Mega-trends are redefining factors for an industry. Some current megatrends affecting the popularity and adoption of plant-based diets include health consciousness, rise of flexitarians in Finland, more focus on environmental issues such as sustainability and climate change,

ethical consumption, animal welfare, technological innovation in the food industry, cultural, societal, generational and demographic shifts etc.

The aim of this research is to offer future foresight on the megatrends that might shape the future consumption of plant-based diet among Finnish consumers by analysing factors driving their preferences toward this diet and their perception on it.

1.1 Research Questions

The research questions are as follows

RQ1: What factors influence the adoption of plant-based diets among Finnish consumers?

RQ2: What are the current attitudes and perceptions of Finnish consumers toward plant-based diets?

RQ3: How might these perceptions shape future consumption patterns of plant-based food items in Finland?

Analysing the consumer attitudes at present and future trends surrounding plant-based diets in Finland is important as it can offer insights on how to respond to changing consumer preferences and environmental imperatives. The knowledge gap in this area can be filled by exploring the main factors encouraging the transition and what megatrends they are heavily linked to. The findings of the dissertation will have significant implications for a wide range of actors in Finland's food business, specifically for plant-based food manufacturers, traders, dietitians and nutritionists. Manufacturers and retailers can better understand which variables are affecting customer decisions in this context. The findings are also expected to guide product development, business models and marketing efforts which align with the shifting consumer demands.

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Conceptualising Megatrends

Megatrends are characterised by their global reach and long-term effect which may impact different sectors at the same time (Lichtenthaler, 2021). For instance, advancements in technology like digitalisation, the Internet of Things (IoT) and artificial intelligence (AI) are reshaping industries like healthcare, manufacturing and food production. Similarly, there are societal megatrends such as shifts in demographics, health consciousness and sustainability, which are changing regulatory landscapes as well as what consumers prefer to buy (Martin and Martin, 2016; Lustig and Ringland, 2019). In the food industry, megatrends revolve around sustainability, health and ethical consumption, according to King et al. (2017). Plant-based diets are driven by concerns about environmental impact (Lacour et al., 2018; Krizanova et al., 2021) and animal welfare as well (Rosenfeld and Burrow, 2017; de Boeri and Aiking, 2022). These issues are considered critical to address global challenges like climate change and food security.

2.2 Plant-Based Diet

A plant-based diet is generally defined as one that focuses on foods derived from plant sources, while minimising or excluding animal products (Hargreaves et al., 2023). It is a misconception that plant-based diet is always healthy. With the rising interest in plant-based consumption, there are food options emerging that can be labelled as plant-based "junk" food like cinnamon rolls or donuts (Kennedy, 2023). Alternatives like imitation meat, egg and milk or cheese products, which generally have lower fat and calories than animal products, are also not necessarily nutritious (Katidi et al., 2023). A consumer could have a dietary habit that is plant-based, still contains high sugar and fat with processed food items. This negates health benefits of plant-based diet. It can be healthful if the food components are made of premium quality whole foods such as fruits, vegetables, grains, nuts and seeds (Jakše et al., 2021).

In the last ten years, literature focused on Finland has captured issues such as vegetarianism and veganism (e.g., Elorinne et al., 2016; Huan-Niemi et al., 2020; Päivärinta et al., 2023), flexitarianism (e.g., Dagevos, 2021; Lehto et al., 2022) as well as the plant-based food market (e.g., Huan-Niemi et al., 2020; Niva and Vainio, 2021). More attention has been given to animal-based items being replaced with plant-based alternatives (e.g., He et al., 2020; Alcorta et al., 2021;

Andreani et al., 2023). Awareness about environmental problems, health impacts and worries about animal welfare have also received sufficient focus (e.g., Violi, Kalmpourtzidou and Cena, 2023; Lehto et al., 2023; Klapp, Feil and Risius, 2022).

2.2.1 Finnish Consumer Attitudes and Behaviours Toward Plant-Based Diets

Factors affecting dietary choices have been the central issue for research among Finland's adult population by several studies. As found by Vainio et al. (2016), controlling health factors and weight are the most common causes behind selecting plant-based food choices over meat-based ones. Similar findings are shown by Lehtikoinen and Salonen (2019), who found that health-related results and food origin were the biggest driver of food consumption behaviours in Finland. These two research works also reveals that social status and belonging of participants influenced their desire to follow sustainable diets. Lehtikoinen and Salonen (2019) also found that men who are middle aged and have a lower level of education are not much familiar with the food options offering plant-based protein. Also, they show more reluctance in adoption of sustainable consumption habits (Pohjolainen, Vinnari and Jokinen, 2015). According to the argument by Canseco-Lopez and Miralles (2023), social and cultural norms give birth to the concept of ideal food's mental image and therefore have a partial impact in varying eating behaviours among social groups. For instance, meat is associated with power, strength and wealth, and plant-based foods are often connected to lower nutritious and monetary value, which is why they are not much desired in the conventional culture of Finland. Parker (2020) also shows supporting evidence that shows strong connection between animal and meat-based food choices and masculinity. This, according to Parker (2020), leads to variances in eating behaviours among men and women in Finland. The ultimate conclusion of these studies is that eating behaviour has significant association with cultural images and social identities. Moreover, these behaviours are influenced more by individual goals like staying healthy or losing weight than environmental concerns (Vainio et al., 2016; Lehtikoinen and Salonen, 2019).

Studies by Aavik and Velgan (2021) and Salmivaara et al. (2022) show supporting evidence of earlier findings from the point of view of vegetarians in Finland. The studies conduct interviews with Finnish vegetarian consumers who spoke of

different reasons for following more sustainable eating habits. These reasons include environmental and moral concerns, health drivers and social factors. Therefore, plant-based consumption can be seen in a positive light through the lens of social acceptance, belief systems and knowledge. Salmivaara et al. (2022) show that these factors influence the initial interest in vegetarianism even more than the actual benefits do. Individuals with empirical knowledge of vegetarianism were more motivated in adopting this dietary choice (Aavik and Velgan, 2021). Although consumption of plant-based food was considered a personal choice among research participants, it is noted by scholars such as Rosenfeld and Burrow (2017) and Sirieix et al. (2023) that there is a robust community identity among individuals who are identified as vegetarians. Keskinen's (2017) argument is similar as the author states that self-expression and identification of social groups have significant impact on what young adults choose as their dietary habits (Chuck, Fernandes and Hyers, 2016).

2.2.2 Factors Influencing Plant-Based Diet Adoption Among Finns

The growing trend of transitioning to plant-based diets is driven by a mixture of health, environmental and ethical drivers. According to Beacom (2021), this is why the consumers find information about food taste, health outcomes and manufacturing on the product label. Although there is a rising interest in plant-based alternatives among Finnish consumers, adoption rates are comparatively lower than other countries in Europe (Perez-Cueto et al., 2022). The awareness about possible benefits of this diet faces barriers related to culture, economy and information (Viroli, Kalmpourtzidou and Cena, 2023; Fehér et al., 2020).

Many research cites health as a primary motivation for adopting plant-based diets due to the positive health impacts of reducing meat consumption (Szeda, Urbanovich and Wilks, 2020; Niva and Vainio, 2021). Although significant level of awareness is noticed, the complete transition to plant-based diets still remains a challenge. According to Kaartinen et al. (2023), consumers are specifically worried about the sufficiency of nutritional values offered by plant-based diets and the inadequacy of intaking components such as protein, calcium and vitamin B2. This concern is exacerbated by the limited knowledge regarding the nutritional content plant-based products offer, which is causing many individuals to follow a

"flexitarian" dietary approach where animal products are not completely eliminated but more plant-based meals are incorporated (Ohlau, Spiller and Risius, 2022).

After health benefits, the second most influential driver of plant-based diet adoption is sustainability and environmental concerns (Jahn, Furchheim and Strässner, 2021). In countries like the UK where ethical veganism is on the rise, animal welfare has played a large role in shaping consumer attitudes (D'Souza, Brouwer and Singaraju, 2022). However, it is comparatively lower in terms of impact in Finland (Niva and Mäkelä, 2021). Yet, these drivers do not show any significant behavioural change as an impact as most consumers are still opting for moderate reductions in meat eating instead of fully adopting plant-based diets. Cultural and economic factors are also involved here. The food culture of Finland has long been rooted in meat and dairy consumption (e.g., traditional cuisine such as reindeer stew and smoke salmon) (Kylli, 2018). This cultural attachment is a major barrier to plant-based eating because many consumers see plant-based alternatives as a leave from conventional Finnish dishes (Koponen et al., 2023). Economically, the prices of plant-based products are higher in Finland than their animal-based counterparts, as highlighted by Mäkinieniemi and Vainio (2014). Therefore, the adoption of this diet is problematic for households with lower income level because cost concerns outweigh other motivations in this case (Schenk, Rössel and Scholz, 2018; Bublitz et al., 2023). Although the government of Finland has applied subsidies to promote the development of local plant-based industries (Huan-Niemi et al., 2020), the prices of the products are still high (Meticulous Research, 2024), which limits their accessibility to a wider population.

2.3 Current Megatrends Shaping the Future of Plant-Based Diets

The future of plant-based diets in Finland has intricate links to some major global megatrends which are affecting consumer behaviour, industry practices as well as economic policies. As found in extant literature, the trends with the potential to shape the path of plant-based eating in Finland are presented in this section.

2.3.1 Health Consciousness and the Rise of Flexitarianism

Growing emphasis on health and wellness, as stated in extant literature, is one of the most major megatrends driving the transformation towards plant-based diets (Barrett, 2022; Lonkila and Kaljonen, 2022). As seen in recent surveys by

Statista, many Finns are adopting a flexitarian approach. This trend shows that consumers are shifting towards balanced diets to avoid chronic diseases associated with high meat consumption, such as obesity, diabetes and heart issues (Sares-Jäske et al., 2024). The study by Niva and Vainio (2021) in Finland investigated the previous, present and intended future consumption of red meat, plant-based protein and insect-based food items. The latent class analysis in the study determined five groups of customers, where two groups (around 46% of respondents) were marked by their consumption of both beef and plant-based protein items. This study's findings are in line with the results of Dagevos (2021) who also confirmed that a remarkable percentage of Finnish people are flexitarians. However, it must be mentioned that the motives and challenges of consuming plant-based alternatives of meat are not similar for all individuals. This means that any intervention of plant-based diets which may be effective for one consumer segment, might not be beneficial for another segment (Niva and Vainio, 2021). As a result, the Finnish plant-based food marketers must conduct meaningful consumer segmentation and examine the differences found among them to make marketing and business operations more effective.

2.3.2 Environmental Sustainability and Climate Change

Another powerful megatrend in this case is rising awareness of ecological sustainability and the need to address climate change (Meltzer et al., 2019). As one of the leading countries in sustainability efforts, Finland has ambitious goals to achieve carbon neutrality by 2035 (Shine, 2023). Reduction of meat eating is largely recognised as a vital step in reducing GHG emissions and mitigation of food manufacturing's ecological impact (Theurl et al., 2020). Springmann et al. (2018) highlights the environmental merits of plant-based diets, such as lessened use of land and water as well as reduced carbon emissions (Aleksandrowicz et al., 2016). Yet, the research background shows that meat consumption in Finland still stays high, with 91% of the research sample reporting that they still eat meat as of 2024 (Bashir, 2024c). This indicates that although environmental sustainability is a key factor influencing dietary change, it is yet to lead to widespread adoption of plant-based diets in Finland.

2.3.3 Ethical Consumption and Animal Welfare

The ethical aspects of plant-based consumption have conventionally been less pronounced in Finland compared to countries such as Germany or the UK, where

animal rights movements have achieved major traction (Autio et al., 2023). According to the findings of Kupsala (2018), Finnish consumers show less awareness on the ethical implications of industrial manufacturing of meat, especially when it comes to factory farming and treatment of animals. Although not the primary driver for plant-based diets, animal welfare concerns are gaining importance among the younger Finnish consumers more (Kumpulainen et al., 2018). This trend indicates that future consumer behaviour might be highly regulated by such ethical considerations.

2.3.4 Technological Innovation in the Food Industry

Innovative plant-based products are being developed, such as lab-grown meat and plant-based alternatives of dairy products. These innovations are opening up new avenues for consumers seeking for ethical, sustainable and healthy food choices (De Oliveira Padilha et al., 2022). There are several food tech startups to be found in Finland at present, Solar Foods is one such example. The company work son developing protein-rich food products using air and electricity (Lähteenmäki-Uutela et al., 2021). The business Gold&Green is recognised for its creation of oat-based meat alternatives named "Pulled Oats" (Lonkila and Kaljonen, 2022). A wide range of consumers can be appealed by these innovations, even those who are reluctant about adoption. The Finnish food industry is continuing to invest in research and development (R&D). Therefore, the likelihood of improving product range and quality is increased which will make it easier for consumers to adopt plant-based diets (Saari et al., 2021). It is anticipated that advancements in food processing technologies will reduce the cost of plant-based food items, which is one of the key barriers to adoption by Finns.

2.3.5 Cultural and Societal Shifts

Cultural megatrends include the rising cultural acceptance of plant-based diets driven by the rise in public discourse about sustainability, health and ethical consumption (Bojovic and McGregor, 2023). Although the Finnish food culture conventionally revolves around dairy and meat-based products, it is slowly shifting toward more plant-based options, especially in urban locations where younger generations are more prevalent who are more open to dietary experimentation (Lund Gade et al., 2021).

Regarding societal shifts or megatrends, the proliferation of social media and digital platforms have amplified the voices of advocates for plant-based consumption (Phillipov and Kirkwood, 2019). This influences the perception of the Finnish public and makes plant-based lifestyles more mainstream. The other contributions include the participation of celebrities and influencers, as well as government campaigns to normalise plant-based diet in Finland (Niva, Vainio and Jallinoja, 2017). For instance, the initiative by the Finnish Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry to promote sustainable food consumption incorporates tasks such as improving availability and awareness of plant-based foods (Lehtonen and Rämö, 2023). Moreover, the Finnish government has declared plant-based diets an essential part of its national sustainability strategy, in line with the European Union's overall aims for sustainable food and farming systems (Puupponen et al., 2023). With the evolution of cultural ideals towards increased concern for the planet and moral obligation, plant-based diets are expected to become even more prevalent in Finnish culinary culture.

2.3.6 Demographic Shifts and Generational Differences

Younger generations, particularly millennials and Generation Z, are more likely to adopt plant-based diets compared to older generations. Knaapila et al. (2022) aimed to characterise the consumer segment of millennials depending on their consumption of and attitudes toward meat and meat alternatives. The authors surveyed 546 Finnish millennials, where around 41% consumed plant-based meat alternatives regularly, 43% tried it at least once. According to this study, the percentage of individuals with most positive attitudes toward meat alternatives does not cross 18%. No recent studies focused on the older generation's attitude toward plant-based diet, yet, the findings of Knaapila et al. (2022) are in line with what Lehtikoinen and Salonen (2019) found in terms of demographic data. Among 2052 respondents, plant-based diets were favoured the highest by people under 30 and more than 60 years old (Lehtikoinen and Salonen, 2019).

2.4 Consumer Perceptions Shaping Future Food Trends

Consumer perceptions shape food trends and determine the viability or downfall of food sector developments (Borsellino, Schimmenti and El Bilali, 2020). The impressions of consumers are influenced by a variety of variables like level of health consciousness, moral decisions, social standards, sustainability issues, and marketing. As consumers demand more congruence between their beliefs

and food choices, it is critical to understand how these views influence how eager they are to try new diets and foods (Bekoglu, Ergen and Inci, 2016). Plant-based diets, alternative proteins, and functional foods have grown in popularity in recent years, owing primarily to alterations in consumer views that mirror wider cultural trends (Boukid, 2021; Vallikkadan et al., 2023).

When it comes to plant-based food, the perception of consumers may vary depending on factors such as nutritional value, texture, taste, social influence and norms, price as well as relevant knowledge (Van Loo et al., 2017; Edenbrandt et al., 2021; Beacom, Bogue, Repar, 2021; Rondoni et al., 2021). According to Harman and Siegrist (2017) as well as Michel, Hartmann and Siegrist (2020), demographic factors (e.g., age, gender, educational level, location of residence etc.) can also affect how consumers feel about plant-based protein sources.

Existing research demonstrates an increasing emphasis on health and wellness in food choices. Monterrosa et al. (2020) found that health views are extremely individualised and impacted by mainstream narratives, peer groups, and individual experiences. For example, foods considered as natural or unprocessed are frequently regarded as healthy, despite the fact that such statements lack scientific support (Gibney and Forde, 2022). As a result, eating trends that reflect similar beliefs, such as organic or plant-based diets, are gaining popularity (Safdar et al., 2022). But this might cause a disparity between genuine health advantages versus perceived healthiness, and therefore lead to inconsistencies in consumer behaviour and trends (Ballco and Gracia, 2022).

Besides health, ethical concerns also shape consumer perceptions when it comes to adopting a plant-based diet (Corrin and Papadopoulos, 2017). Sustainability and animal welfare are now global trends, and the willingness of consumers to lessen the consumption of meat is generally connected to their ethical perspectives on food manufacturing systems (Henchion et al., 2022). Although this is called a global shift, it is not universal because despite ethical motivations, a lot of consumers continue to prioritise factors like taste, price and convenience over animal welfare or sustainability. The inferences of this inconsistency are that although ethical factors shape food trends, maybe they are not strong enough to drive widespread adoption of plant-based foods.

Two more major things that influence consumer perceptions include marketing and food trends (Asioli et al., 2017). Like many other countries, marketing campaigns in Finland promote plant-based diets by emphasising health benefits and ecological sustainability. Nevertheless, marketing may also distort consumer perceptions by promoting products as more beneficial than they actually are (Negowetti, 2020). For instance, plant-based products that are processed or have additives with them are often marketed as 'natural' and 'clean.' These marketing tactics reinforce perceptions which may not be in line with actual health outcomes. understanding of the true benefits or drawbacks of the products themselves.

2.5 Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework used in this study is the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB). It was proposed Ajzen (1991). This framework is used widely to anticipate and comprehend human behaviour in different contexts. According to TPB, the behaviour of a person can be determined by three major elements: attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control.

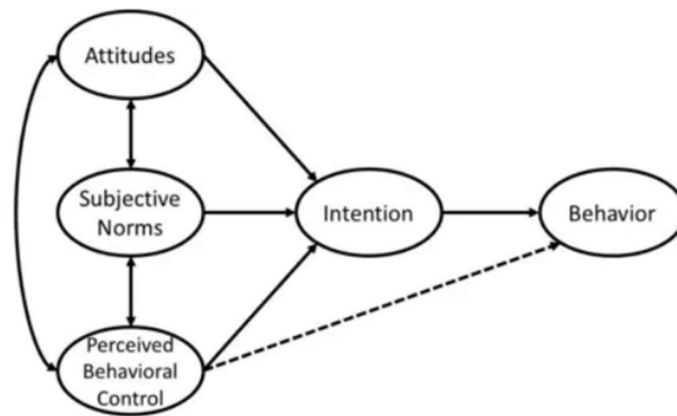


Figure 4: Theory of Planned Behaviour (Ajzen, 1991)

Attitudes refer to the positive or negative judgment of a person while conducting a certain behaviour. In the context of this study, attitudes mirror the views of Finnish consumers on plant-based diets, such as how they perceive the health benefits, taste, ecological impact and moral considerations. Subjective norms are relevant to the perceived societal pressures to either conduct or not conduct a behaviour. In this research, the impact of Finnish societal expectations and cultural norms on the adoption of plant-based diets will be represented by subjective

norms. Lastly, perceived behavioural control is how a person perceives their capability of conducting a behaviour, which is affected by factors like convenience, availability and affordability. The cost of plant-based products and their availability, as well as individual cooking skills are some factors explored by perceived behavioural control in this research.

The application of TPB will be done in the study's quantitative phase through consumer survey. The survey questions are designed to analyse each of these three components of TPB. This will allow for the prediction of the possibility of consumers adopting plant-based diets according to these behavioural predictors. Moreover, the major motivators and challenges affecting dietary choices will also be clear by applying this framework, which may inform future policy decisions and marketing strategies.

3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction to Methodology

The way a research methodology section is designed can tell a lot about the question “how” the research is going to be conducted. Methodology of a research refers to the structured design of a study that supports reliable and valid results (Collins, Joseph and Bielaczyc, 2016). Moreover, it has to help the researcher in fulfilling research objectives successfully. Methodology is the systematic plan about important research decisions such as type of data to be gathered, choice of respondents or participants while sampling, method of data collection and analysis etc. However, research methodology is not to be confused with the term ‘research design’ because it deals with the complete strategy undertaken by researchers whereas the methodology breaks it down into smaller, interconnected portions. In this chapter, the chosen techniques and methods to find answers to the research questions are discussed in detail.

3.2 The Research Onion Model

The dissection of the techniques and methods utilised in the current study is done by following the research onion model introduced by Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2019). The framework presents various stages that should be considered when researchers are making decisions on their research strategy. In the model, six layers can be found (shown in figure 2). The entire figure looks like an onion and its layers to be found once it is peeled from the surface and cut till the bottom. Each of the imaginary onion layers represents a specific phase in the research process. According to Lovino and Tsitsianis (2020), this framework is flexible and therefore beneficial for designing methodology of studies in diverse contexts.

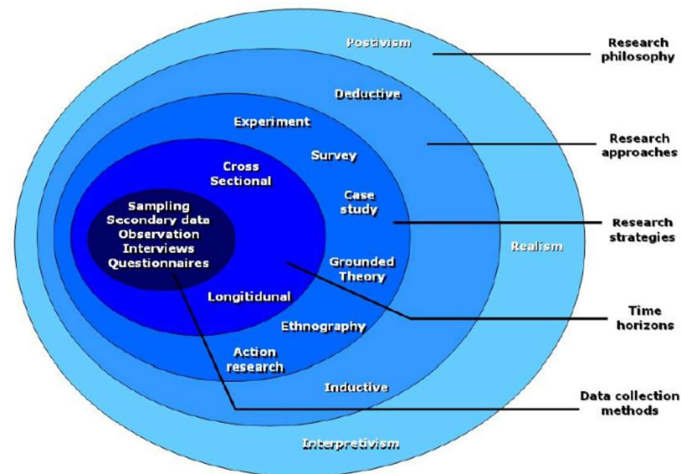


Figure 5: The Research Onion (Saunders et al., 2019)

3.3 Research Philosophy

Tamminen and Poucher (2020) states that research philosophy refers to certain beliefs regarding the nature of reality that is under investigation. The methods utilised within a study's methodology highly depends on the type of assumptions its philosophy makes (Fellows and Liu, 2021). The objectives of a research may indicate the need for different types of philosophies. The choice of a research philosophy is selected by understanding what kind of knowledge is being investigated in the study.

Ontology (the philosophical study of being) and Epistemology (the theory of knowledge) are two important concepts in research philosophy. Ontology reveals how the researcher views reality and to what extent reality exists in their surroundings (Lawson, 2019). Things that are real or true are the prime concerns of ontology. On the other hand, epistemology revolves around the theories about things that can be known and the ways to find that knowledge (Lehrer, 2018). Ontology and epistemology apply to two certain frameworks known as positivism (empiricism) and constructivism (interpretivism), as stated by Omodan (2022).

'Positivism' is related to the belief that the reality surrounding a matter being examined is independent. A practical example of positivist philosophy is that it assumes that there is consistency in a phenomenon between all individuals under investigation and no variance can be found. However, the statement that constructionism makes is that there are inherent meanings to all social phenomena

and these meanings are built differently by different people or groups (Bartmanski, 2018). Constructionism rejects the belief that one phenomenon is seen and interpreted in the same way among various people. As a result, constructivist studies examine nuances, differences and contrasts among views (Charmaz, 2021).

The chosen philosophical paradigm for this research is interpretivism, as it will derive results from primary data found from surveys and interviews among Finnish food consumers and industry experts. The quantitative elements of the study will be found from factors that can be observed and measured (Branne, 2017). The quantification of consumer responses and looking for generalisable patterns from survey findings can help capture empirical findings instead of individual elucidations (Nardi, 2018). However, this will lead to a gap of qualitative understanding of the issue in detail which is why interviews of industry stakeholders and experts will be taken.

3.4 Research Approach

Two kinds of research approaches - inductive and deductive - are considered for the current study. Deductive reasoning begins from a general hypothesis and theory, which is later narrowed down to certain observations or conclusions (Casula, Rangarajan and Shields, 2021). The hypothesis in the beginning is based on extant theory, tested later by collecting data. Generally, deductive studies are connected with quantitative research methods where hypotheses testing is done via surveys or experiments (Mertens and Recker, 2023). This leads to either the confirmation or disproving of the theory. For instance, in this study, literature suggests that Finnish consumers are becoming more health-conscious and adopting plant-based diets. Collection of data through a survey can help test whether this is true.

Inductive reasoning is the opposite of deductive approach as it begins with certain observations and goes towards wider generalisations (Walliman, 2017). Inductive research gathers data without any predefined hypothesis, rather analyses gathered data to find patterns or new theories from them. Exploratory research like the current one tend to follow inductive reasoning and it is generally associated with qualitative methods (Swedberg, 2020). Inductive reasoning will be beneficial for analysing the interviews conducted in this study with Finnish food industry

stakeholders and market experts, as the researcher may develop new theory regarding what factors drive consumers' dietary choices as well as future insights on their plant-based product purchasing habits.

This study will follow a combination of inductive and deductive approaches because of its mixed-method nature (Taherdoost, 2022). The quantitative survey phase will use a deductive approach which will begin with a theoretical understanding of megatrends affecting Finnish consumer attitudes towards plant-based diet and test these assumptions by gathering data from consumers using a structured survey. The qualitative interviews will adopt an inductive approach and data from expert interviews will be assessed to find themes or patterns about the factors driving plant-based diets in Finland.

3.5 Data Type

A study may collect two types of primary data which are quantitative and qualitative. Quantitative data are numerical, and they are confirmed as valid using statistical methods. Quantitative research generally adopts positivist philosophical paradigm (Rehman and Alharthi, 2016). It is most suitable for contexts with a large number of research participants. Qualitative data is gathered in research that follow interpretivist or constructivist philosophy. This approach requires that researchers do not impose their personal point of view on what a phenomenon means over the meanings associated with it by research respondents (Hennink, Hutter and Bailey, 2020). The very goal of qualitative research is to look at the way different subjects make interpretation of the reality surrounding them. As a result, in qualitative research, research subjects frame the findings instead of the incorporation of researcher's own perspectives. With the use of open-ended questions, qualitative research can gain descriptive and textual data for further analysis as these questions are designed to probe respondents to elaborate on the information they offer (Yates and Leggett, 2016). Therefore, unlike quantitative data, qualitative data does not seek causal links among different variables in a study, but seeks the meaning of phenomena.

Both quantitative and qualitative data will be collected for the current study. A structured survey questionnaire will allow for an understanding of consumers' level of interest and perceptions towards plant-based diet in Finland. The survey responses will allow for objective measurements of research variables. This will

also allow for the use of descriptive statistical analysis to understand frequencies and observable patterns in the dataset (Cooksey, 2020). As quantitative studies are replicable, future researchers may conduct the study again in a similar context to verify the results. The qualitative data found from interviews will reveal subjective interpretations of respondents towards plant-based food items and the Finnish food market.

3.6 Research Strategy

Quantitative research incorporates a variety of methodologies, like surveys, experiments, correlational evaluations, and case studies (Mohajan, 2020). Surveys employ questionnaires to obtain information from an extensive sample number. The current study is not causal, rather it is exploratory. That is why the experiment technique will not be utilised because no variables are going to be changed to evaluate their influence on the outcomes. Correlational research is one that investigates the link between two or more variables without changing any of them in order to determine the causal impact (Namazi and Namazi, 2016). Because this research is focused on the certain case of the Finnish food industry and the landscape of the plant-based food market there, it is likely that some components of case study strategy is incorporated here. However, the quantitative dataset will be derived by using a survey strategy in this research to guarantee reliability and consistency across responses. Qualitative data will be gathered by using an interview strategy so that elements that quantitative data alone may not reveal can be analysed.

3.7 Research Choice: Mixed-Method

The research onion paradigm distinguishes the following kinds of research methods: mono-method research, mixed-method research and multi-method research. Mono-method studies employ a single research strategy whereas mixed-method research employ two or more approaches (generally qualitative and quantitative), according to Nanthagopan (2021). Multi-method research may employ either two qualitative or two quantitative approaches. The primary contrast between mixed and multi-method research is the former uses a combined technique that produces a single dataset, and the latter is divided into phases that generate individual datasets for each (Nanthagopan, 2021). Hence, the data processing approach for every phase of multi-method research is based upon either quantitative or qualitative techniques. The present study on Finnish plant-based

food market aims to collect both quantitative and qualitative data which makes it a mixed-method study.

3.8 Time Horizons: Cross-Sectional Study

The time span during which an investigation is expected to be finished is referred to as the time horizon. There are two types of temporal horizons, which are cross-sectional and longitudinal. The predetermined time range within which data has to be gathered can be described as a cross-sectional time horizon since it captures material from a specific 'snapshot' in period of time. Longitudinal investigations, on the other hand, collect information for an extended period of time to evaluate changes in the components that contribute to a phenomenon. Longitudinal studies are particularly useful for understanding evolution and change because they allow some degree of control over the factors under consideration. This study's time horizon is cross-sectional; thus, it is going to gather data from one time period.

3.9 Methods Used in Data Collection

The primary approach for acquiring data in this study will be to run an online survey via Google Forms. The survey link will be shared on two Finland-based plant-based food enthusiast groups on social media platform Facebook. This approach seems especially appropriate considering the setting and intended demographic. Online surveys are extremely convenient and accessible since participants can fill them out at their own time from any place with an accessible internet connection (Ball, 2019). Google Form was elected because of its user-friendliness, which makes it easy to create and share surveys. In addition, this application can immediately aggregate replies into a spreadsheet format which makes managing and analysing data easier for researchers. Furthermore, online survey technique is less expensive and reduces the requirement for tangible items, which traditional methods of surveying generally require. This will enable real-time data collecting. Respondents' apparent anonymity can lead to more openness and candour which will lessen any possible social desirability bias. The survey questionnaire is attached in the appendices (See Appendix 1).

Interviews will be used to collect qualitative data, which will then be recorded and transcribed to identify patterns and themes. Interviews may be performed using audio calls to reduce the effort and time required from both the researcher and

respondents. The interview guide is attached to the appendices (See Appendix 2).

3.9.1 Data Collection Plan

The chosen platform for spreading survey links and call for interviews is Facebook. Two Finland-specific, plant-based and vegan community groups on Facebook are chosen for this purpose:

(a) *Vegaaniset kasvisruuat* - Public group with 59.3K members: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/469092783225565/>

(b) *Vegaanituotteet* - Public group with 27.9K members: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/vegaanituotteet/>

The survey links and calls for interview will be posted through the researcher's designated account to maintain transparency. If the groups allow, the posts will be shared by personal and academic accounts. The groups will have one post three times a week over 1 week until intended participants are reached. Each post regarding consumer survey will include a brief description of the study, a clear call-to-action and the link to the survey (See Appendix – 3). Similarly, for the posts regarding research interviews, an introduction of the researcher, the study's purpose, target interviewee profiles, interview format and duration, contact information etc. will be included (See Appendix – 4). Posts will be made on 7 PM (GMT+2) because these times generally show higher engagement. Survey response rates will be checked daily to adjust the approach if necessary (re-posting or adjusting posting times in case of low response rates). The chosen groups permit direct interaction, therefore, responses to comments or questions will clarify the study's purpose to participants. No incentivisation will be used to ensure genuine and voluntary responses of participants.

3.10 Sampling

The term 'sample' in research means a portion that represents a larger population with certain characteristics (Bryman, 2016). According to Lakens (2022), in quantitative research, size and technique of sample influence the validity and reliability of research outcomes. Characteristics of a sample is important for qualitative research as well. However, qualitative studies tend to use smaller sample sizes.

3.10.1 Sample Size

Sample size means the total number of people selected from a research population. Quantitative research generally considers sample sizes less than 30 as biased or compromised, which is why larger samples give more consistent outcomes in empirical research. However, qualitative research does not consider having a large sample size as mandatory because representativeness does not matter in this case as much as depth and proper analysis do (Mthuli, Ruffin, and Singh, 2022). As this is an exploratory study conducted in a small-scale, the chosen sample size for quantitative phase is 50 Finn food consumers, and the qualitative phase will interview 4 to 6 experts and industry stakeholders. The consumers may have different levels of awareness and interest in plant-based diet and can be parts of different demographic.

3.10.2 Sampling Technique

The sampling technique to be used in the study is convenience sampling, which is a non-probability sampling method. Convenience sampling let investigators to select survey respondents at their own convenience, based on the certain characteristics or understanding about the key research questions. Those who are chosen through convenience sampling method are accessible to the researcher and show voluntary willingness to take part in the research. The aim of this research is to understand the attitudes, behaviours and future foresight on Finn plant-based diet consumers. The cost-effective and time-efficient nature of convenience sampling will ensure that the research is completed within time limitations and also have obtained an adequate sample size. Both survey and interview phases of this study will follow this sampling technique.

3.11 Data Analysis

The data analysis for this study will adopt a mixed-methods approach as well where both descriptive statistics will be used for the quantitative data and thematic analysis will be used for the qualitative data. For the quantitative phase, data gathered from a survey over 50 Finnish consumers on their dietary habits, perceptions of plant-based diets, and the factors influencing their adoption of such diets will be assessed using descriptive statistics which will summarise the basic characteristics of the dataset (Ciarli, Coad and Rafols, 2016). By using measures like frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations, the consumer responses can be summarised which will lead to the prevalence of

certain consumer attitudes and behaviours toward plant-based diet (Cooksey and Cooksey, 2020).

Employing thematic analysis technique to the qualitative data found from in-depth interviews with food sector stakeholders, professionals and industry experts will help in the identification and interpretation of patterns and recurring themes (Braun and Clarke, 2022). For this, the researcher will familiarise with the data, conduct coding and develop themes and interpret them within the context of megatrends shaping the Finnish food industry in terms of plant-based food products. By using these two complementary methods of data analysis, the research can discuss the present landscape and also predict future developments in the adoption of plant-based diets in Finland.

3.12 Research Ethics

The code of conduct or ethics in research ensures that study participants' entitlements, respect, and wellness are maintained while the study is being done (Banks and Brydon-Miller, 2018). In this investigation, several ethical norms shall be strictly followed. Informed consent is critical here since surveys of food market end-consumers in Finland will be conducted. Participants will receive detailed information about the study objective, techniques, and contributions at the start of the survey form. Respondents will be permitted to continue with the survey once they indicate their voluntary involvement by answering "yes" to the informed consent questions (Plutzer, 2019). Furthermore, the participant information sheet provided before to the survey will advise participants of their ability to take leave from the study at any moment, with no penalties (Nayak and Narayan, 2019).

This study adheres to strict privacy and anonymity standards. Personal identifiers have been eliminated from the data. Data storage is also safe since solely the researcher has permission to see it. This protects the respondents' privacy. Another important aspect of study ethics is to guarantee non-maleficence towards participants. When developing study topics and methodologies, delicate matters are avoided that may cause emotional distress. Furthermore, the concept of beneficence when conducting studies assures that the research will have potential societal advantages. The researcher is forthcoming and truthful while disclosing study findings. All secondary data utilised in this research is appropriately attributed and referenced.

4 RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

4.1 Chapter Introduction

This chapter presents the findings from this mixed-methods study conducted to explore Finnish consumer attitudes towards plant-based diets as well as how those align with megatrends in the Finn food industry. The results are in accordance with two data sources: survey responses from 59 Finnish consumers and interviews with three industry experts, including a farmer, a journalist and the CEO and editor in chief of Vegelä, Finland's oldest vegan media. The survey data sheds light on consumer perceptions, preferences and behaviours. Interview findings offer in-depth perspectives regarding industry trends, challenges and opportunities. Quantitative findings are represented by using visuals like pie and bar charts, whereas thematic analysis is employed for qualitative data from the interviews.

4.2 Survey Results

4.2.1 Demographic Profile of Respondents

The survey started by understanding the gender distribution of the 59 respondents. According to the results, the majority of respondents were female (55.9%). Male participants comprised of 32.2% of the sample. A smaller proportion chose not to disclose their gender (11.9%). Although it skews towards female participants slightly, a diverse representation is noticed. However, the distribution may reflect wider consumer interest trends in plant-based diets, often known as more prevalent among female consumers (Gorvett, 2020; Rosenfeld, 2020; Lehto et al., 2021). According to Statista, although in 2023 Finns mostly followed an omnivore diet, around 25% of female participants among the diet conscious ones followed a plant-based diet whereas the percentage of male was 18% (Clausnitzer, 2024).

What is your gender?

59 responses

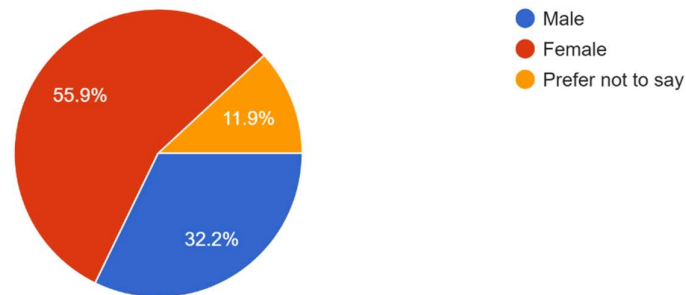


Figure 6: Gender Distribution of Respondents

4.2.2 Dietary Preferences of Respondents

The survey explored the dietary habits of participants by asking them to choose the category that best describes their diet. According to the results, 49.2% of the sample were Omnivorous, 23.7% identified as Vegan, 15.3% as Vegetarian, and 11.8% as Flexitarian. Therefore, almost half of the respondents still consumer both plant-based and animal products. A high proportion (50.8%) lean towards or totally follow plant-based diets (vegan, vegetarian or flexitarian), which indicates a rise in interest in reducing the consumption of animal products (Pohjolainen and Jokinen, 2020). This is consistent with global megatrends suggesting health-conscious choices and sustainability (Perez-Cueto, 2020; van Hoeven et al., 2024).

Which of the following best describes your diet?

59 responses

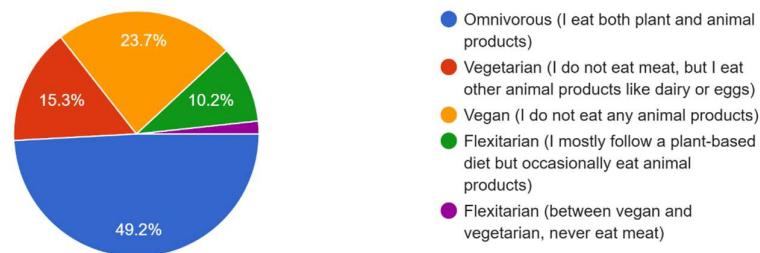


Figure 7: Dietary Preferences of Respondents

4.2.3 Frequency of Plant-Based Food Consumption

Participants were asked about the frequency with which they consume plant-based food products. The majority of the respondents (42.4%) consumed plant-based items daily, 28.8% consumed them several times a week, 8.5% did it a few

times a month. The combined percentage of individuals consuming it once a week, rarely or never was 20.3%. The results indicate that regular consumption of plant-based foods is noticed among a substantial majority of respondents (71.2%), because daily or several-times-a-week consumption are forming the largest segments. Therefore, it can be said that plant-based diets have gained considerable traction among Finn consumers. However, the 20% who consume plant-based foods less frequently or never point to possible barriers in wider adoption.

How often do you consume plant-based food products (e.g., plant-based meat, dairy alternatives)?

59 responses

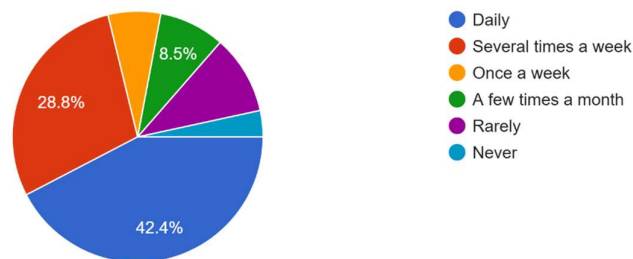


Figure 8: Frequency of Plant-Based Food Consumption

4.2.4 Reasons for Choosing Plant-Based Food Products

In the fourth question, respondents were asked to choose all applicable reasons for eating plant-based food items. 56.9% (33 participants) chose health reasons, 55.2% environmental sustainability (32 participants), 51.7% (31 participants) selected animal welfare. Taste preferences was chosen by 31% of the sample of 59% people. 8 participants said social or cultural influence affect their choice whereas price was considered a vital factor by 6 participants. In the "Others" category, one participant stated they eat plant-based foods "if only option," while another clarified, "I do eat vegetables as a side with my protein and carbohydrates."

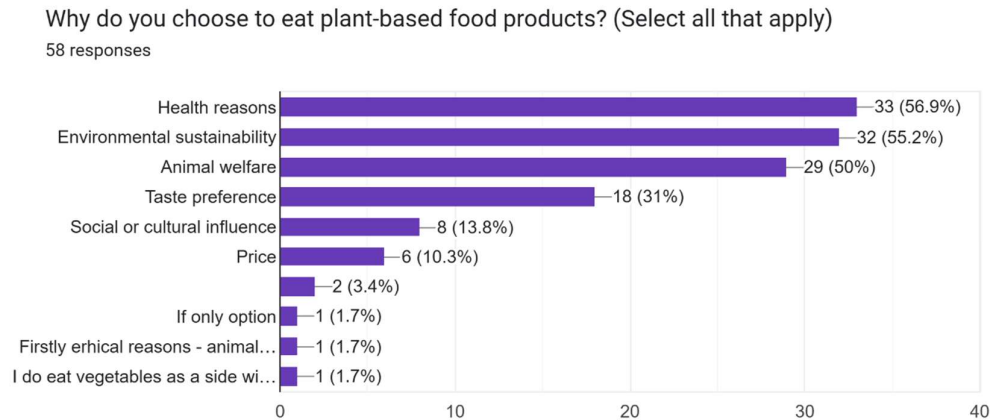


Figure 9: Reasons for Choosing Plant-Based Food Products

These results suggest that health reasons are the most cited motivation for choosing to eat plant-based foods. It is closely followed by ethical reasons such as environmental sustainability and animal welfare. This may mean that Finn consumers are heavily motivated by personal well-being and ethical concerns, which further align with global megatrends where health consciousness and sustainability dominate consumer decision-making (Lehto et al., 2023). The fact that only 10.3% chose price as a reason, may indicate that there has not been any cost-effective alternative of plant-based food items yet. In addition, taste preference being chosen by 31% of respondents signals a shifting perception of plant-based food as enjoyable instead of only functional. The relatively lower percentage of people choosing 13.8% suggests that this diet is probably not yet deeply rooted in the cultural norms of Finland.

4.2.5 Attitudes Towards Plant-Based Diets

The survey participants were asked about overall attitude towards plant-based diets. The majority of respondents (59.3%) described their perspective as very positive. 23.7% indicated a somewhat positive attitude. 13.6% remained neutral.

How would you describe your overall attitude towards plant-based diets?
59 responses

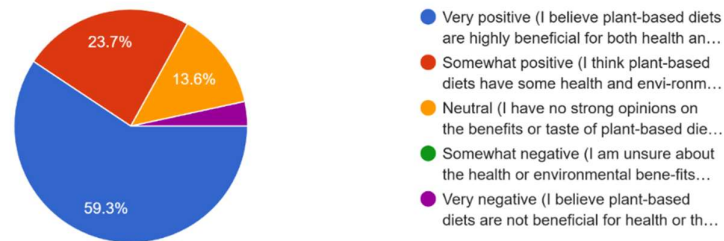


Figure 10: Overall Attitudes Towards Plant-Based Diet

Therefore, favourable attitude is predominant among Finn consumers as almost 83% holds either a very or somewhat positive outlook. This widespread positivity might be attributed to the increasing awareness of health benefits, ethical and environmental concerns associated with plant-based diets, which were also highlighted as major motivations in the previous survey question. The neutral stance of 13.6% warrants attention because it indicates that one segment of the population may not have strong convictions regarding this diet's benefits. The reason behind this could be limited exposure or insufficient knowledge (Lehikoinen and Salonen, 2019). From a market perspective, this group shows an opportunity for targeted awareness efforts and engagement tactics. The small portion of negative responses could have been influenced by sample bias. However, the data is supportive of the idea that plant-based diets are considered appealing and viable as a lifestyle choice, further resonating with the health-conscious and sustainability-oriented morals of Finn customers.

4.2.6 Influence of Social Circle on Plant-Based Food Consumption

The survey also explored how frequently participants' friends or family members consumed plant-based foods. The highest percentage, 37.3% of 59 respondents, stated that their social circles consumed plant-based foods frequently. 30.5% reported that their family and friends did so sometimes and 27.1% mentioned that it happens rarely. The remaining respondents stated that their social groups never opted for such products.

How often do your friends or family members consume plant-based foods?
59 responses

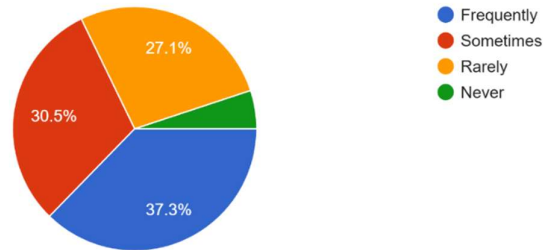


Figure 11: Influence of Social Circle on Plant-Based Food Consumption

Therefore, there are varying levels of exposure to plant-based foods within Finn social settings. The comparatively high portion of participants stating about occasional or frequent consumption by their social groups indicate the increasing normalisation of this diet in daily lives. However, there is still a part of the population anchored in conventional dietary patterns, which can be a major challenge for the wider adoption of plant-based foods (Meinilä et al., 2022). This information is in line with megatrends pointing to the increasing but uneven adoption of plant-based diet within Finnish society (Nevalainen, Niva and Vainio, 2023).

4.2.7 Accessibility of Plant-Based Food Products in Finland

The survey contained a question asking participants regarding the ease of accessing plant-based food products in their areas. The majority (71.2%) reported that it was very easy, 22% found it somewhat easy. A small minority expressed neutral, somewhat difficult, or very difficult experiences.

How easy is it to access plant-based food products in your area?
59 responses

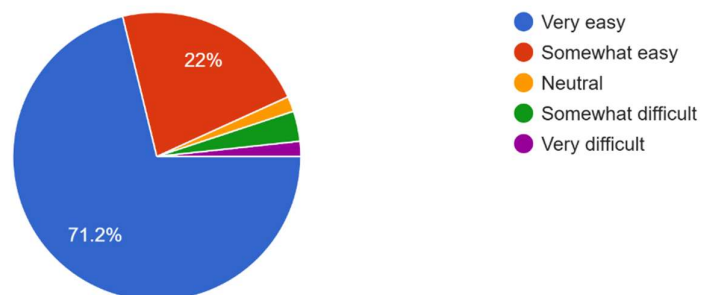


Figure 12: Accessibility of Plant-Based Food Products

Therefore, it can be argued that plant-based food items have wide availability in most parts of Finland. This mirrors the nation's strong infrastructure to accommodate diversity in dietary practice (Mridul, 2024). As positive responses are predominant here, it can be said that Finnish food service providers and retailers have been able to make major strides in fulfilling the demand for plant-based food options. This is consistent with the global megatrend toward the diversification of food offerings (Food Navigator USA, 2024). Nevertheless, the minority of respondents who find accessibility challenging, may live in less densely populated or rural regions where specialised food options are probably less available. Therefore, a potential disparity can be noticed in the distribution of such products, impeding equal adoption across all demographics.

4.2.8 Barriers to Increased Consumption of Plant-Based Foods

Participants had to answer a question about the key barriers preventing them from consuming more plant-based foods. The most cited barrier was the high cost, mentioned by 53.7% of respondents. Taste preference for animal-based products was also a significant factor (31.5%), followed by lack of availability (27.8%) and a lack of knowledge on how to prepare plant-based meals (11.1%).

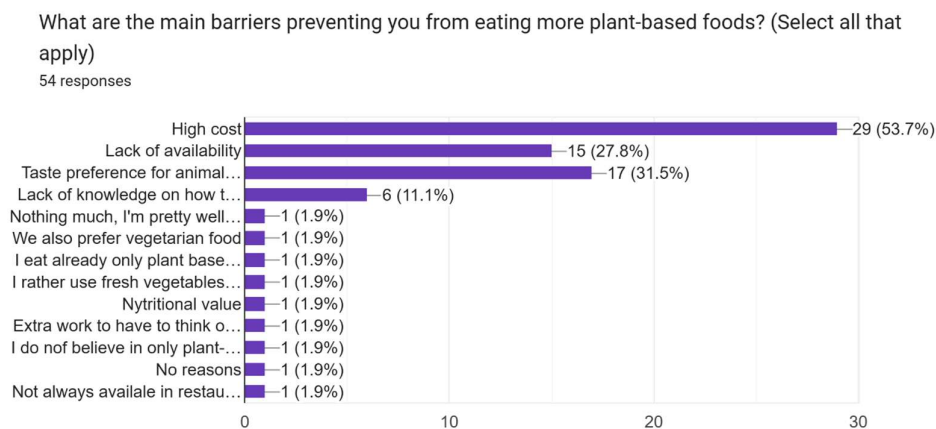


Figure 13: Barriers to Plant-Based Food Consumption

This question got several open-ended responses which offered further insights. One respondent mentioned their preference for fresh vegetables over processed plant-based products, particularly stating concerns about artificial additives and "e-codes" (Maganinho, Almeida and Padrão, 2024). Another noted the nutritional concerns of a fully plant-based diet by stating that it might lack essential proteins,

vitamins and healthy fats. Convenience was also an issue for some, as one participant wrote that creating plant-based meals required extra effort to think of new recipes. One response included limited availability of plant-based options in restaurants as a barrier (Fechner, Grün and Dolnicar, 2024). Finally, one person remarked that no barriers applied to them as they already consumed exclusively plant-based foods.

4.2.9 Future Intentions to Increase Plant-Based Food Consumption

Respondents were asked whether they anticipated increasing their consumption of plant-based foods in the next five years. 61.1% was the majority of participants who showed a positive interest in increasing consumption. 27.8% were unsure about their future choices, and 11.1% stated they did not plan to increase their intake of plant-based foods.

Do you think you will increase your consumption of plant-based foods in the next five years?
54 responses

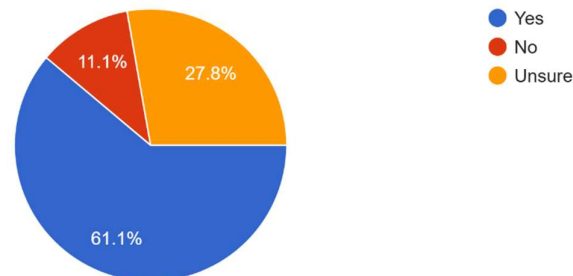


Figure 14: Future Intentions to Increase Plant-Based Food Consumption

The relatively high percentage of unsure respondents may indicate a segment which requires further convincing or support in their transition toward plant-based diets. The percentage not willing to raise consumption invites scrutiny about persistent barriers. As discussed previously, factors like taste preference and cost can contribute to their reluctance (Kuosmanen et al., 2023). Targeted interventions like more affordable options or better nutritional education may benefit this group. The business perspective on the unsure cohort shows an opportunity for plant-based industry firms to convert these hesitant consumers into regular users. Also, public health campaigns and government policies encouraging sustainable

eating habits could further influence this group (Nordic Council of Ministers, 2024).

4.2.10 Perceived Likelihood of Plant-Based Diets Gaining Popularity in Finland

Participants were asked how likely they thought it was that plant-based diets would become more popular in Finland over the next decade. The results were optimistic. 37.3% believes that it is very likely, 39% thinks it is somewhat likely. Only 15.3% stayed neutral and 8.5% thought it as somewhat unlikely.

How likely do you think it is that plant-based diets will become more popular in Finland over the next decade?
59 responses

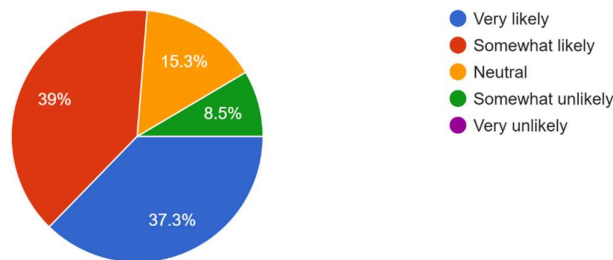


Figure 15: Perceived Likelihood of Plant-Based Diets Gaining Popularity in Finland

Therefore, the results show a general consensus among Finns that plant-based diets are on a path to emerge as more mainstream. The positive reaction from a combined 76.3% of respondents indicate that plant-based lifestyles are gaining growing awareness and acceptance. Broader global trends such as increased investment in plant-based food items and policy efforts to promote sustainable food systems align with this optimism. Areas of uncertainty are highlighted by the neutral and 'somewhat unlikely' responses. These may originate from socio-cultural factors, like the conventional prominence of meat in Finnish cuisine (The Flavor Vortex, 2023). The slower adoption rate among certain consumer segments might also contribute to this hesitancy.

4.3 Interview Results

4.3.1 Profile of Interview Respondents

Table 1: Profile of Interview Respondents

Respondent Code	Role in the Finnish Food Industry	Relevant Experience and Focus Industry
R1	Farmer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 25 years in the Finnish agriculture industry • Transitioned from cattle farming to organic grain production • Main customer is Fazer, though demand for organic products is declining due to high prices and reduced disposable income.
R2	Restaurant owner and chef	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Owner of a fusion restaurant <i>Anne's Vege</i> offering a mix of international and traditional Finnish plant-based dishes • Background as a journalist and photographer, with travel experiences shaping the menu.
R3	CEO and Editor-in-Chief	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leads <i>Vegeä</i>, Finland's oldest vegan media outlet • Focuses on studying market trends and new plant-based products

4.3.2 Finn Consumer Attitudes Towards Plant-Based Diets

The interviewees were asked to offer a nuanced point of view on Finn consumer attitudes towards plant-based food, and if they had noticed any changes throughout the years. The main themes and subthemes are added to the appendices as Table 2 (see Appendix – 6).

The responses indicate a key theme which is ***economic influences***, where affordability is a huge barrier to adopting such dietary practices. Respondent 1 highlights that although consumer attitudes are positive, consumers are deterred by factors such as economic downturns and the premium price of organic products.

"People are still very positive about plant-based food, but they cannot afford to buy this product because it's organic and organic is always more expensive." – R1

This suggests that economic limitations often overshadow ethical or health motivations while adopting sustainable diets (Darmon and Drewnowski, 2015; Langfield et al., 2023). Nevertheless, R2 notes a countertrend during the pandemic, when increased health consciousness encouraged some consumers toward plant-based options (Safdar et al., 2022).

"During the pandemic, there was a decrease in demand due to restrictions, but people became more health-conscious." – R2

This emphasises a complicated interconnection between economic realities and health priorities. The theme of **government and policy impact** shows that official campaigns in Finland have limited reach. According to respondent 1, urban populations are primarily affected by government messaging which leaves the rural regions less affected. R3 further adds that even though officials preach about plant-based foods, consumer resistance remains an issue. This mirrors a cultural hesitation toward dietary guidance. This may mean that there needs to be more nuanced policy approaches which take regional and cultural contexts into consideration.

"People don't want to be guided in what they eat, even though officials are advising plant-based diets." – R3

When it comes to **consumer segmentation**, R2 notices an increase in male consumers adopting plant-based diets. They are motivated by exposure and primary encouragement from partners. This transition in gender norms challenges conventional perspectives and shows scopes for targeted marketing techniques for relevant companies.

"There is a big increase from the male customer segment; they were initially reluctant but later became regular customers." – R2

Shifting attitudes and behaviours of consumers show heightening health consciousness and frustration among vegan consumers with industry practices that are aimed primarily at omnivores. Respondent 3 calls for more sustainability in food productions; this signifies a gap between what consumers expect and what the industry offers.

"From a vegan's point of view, it's frustrating that the industry is only trying to feed omnivores for profit. We would love to see sustainability in our foods—don't change the recipes all the time." – R3

Thus, relevant businesses need to prioritise authentic and sustainable innovations to maintain credibility. It can be said that consumer attitudes in Finland is affected by economic, cultural and policy factors.

4.3.3 Consumer Segments Likely to Adopt Plant-Based Diets in Finland

To understand the demographic factors affecting the adoption of plant-based food choices, the respondents were asked if there are any certain consumer segments (based on age groups, demographics or socioeconomic backgrounds) who are more likely to adopt. Table 3 in Appendix – 6 shows the major themes and subthemes that emerged from the responses.

The responses show major variations in the adoption of plant-based diets across various consumer segments in Finland. There is a notable rural-urban divide which was already revealed in the previous question (Zaleskiewicz et al., 2024). Rural consumers adhere to conventional staples like rye bread because it is more affordable and has more perceived health benefits to Finns. Therefore, food choices in rural areas prioritise cost and accessibility more than dietary innovation (Sundkvist et al., 2020). On the contrary, urban regions like Uusimaa and Pirkanmaa in Finland are found to be hotspots for adoption, driven by younger and more educated populations. These findings are in line with research that link urbanisation and higher education with more dietary diversity and openness (Klink et al., 2022). It is interesting to see that although male consumers are conventionally less inclined toward plant-based food options, they are emerging as a growing segment. This suggests a gradual dismantling of gendered dietary norms, which may be partially attributed to the growing depiction of plant-based foods as compatible with strength and masculinity in media campaigns (YLE News, 2023). The role of social media also stands out as respondents note its impact on engaging younger demographics who generally depend on digital platforms for information and trends on diet. Research by Davies and Mann (2023) also shows that social media affects dietary habits significantly as it amplifies health narratives and peer endorsements.

4.3.4 Influence of Finnish Government Policies and Global Trends on Consumer Behaviour Toward Plant-Based Diets

The interviews answered to the question, "How do Finnish government policies or global trends influence consumer behaviour towards plant-based diets?" This question was posed to explore the external influences shaping dietary habits in Finland, and it relates directly with the study's second research objective. Table 4 in Appendix – 6 shows the major themes, subthemes and relevant quotes.

There are divergent perceptions regarding the impact of government policies and global trends on consumer behaviour, as the responses reveal. As observed by respondent 1, despite efforts such as Helsinki's vegetarian-only festivals, these policies face resistance which comes especially from populations that consumer meat. The decline in festival attendance signifies the challenge in changing entrenched dietary preferences through top-down campaigns. Research also shows that initiatives to change behaviour often need more measures than just policy mandates. The cultural and personal identity factors must also be taken into account (Fresán, Errendal and Craig, 2020; Canseco-Lopez, F. and Miralles, 2023). On the contrary, the response of R2 notes a positive impact of government campaigns on her business in urban centres. Therefore, the receptiveness varies across regions because urban consumers are more responsive to health and sustainability messaging.

R3 points out the backlash against campaigns like 'leikkeleraivo' where public resistance originated from guilt-inducing messaging and media imagery that is unrelatable.

"Search leikkeleraivo and you get the picture. It's a hard issue to campaign as it causes a lot of guilt and resistance. The media doesn't help much with their imageries of deli meat products... It's a fight against the windmills sometimes." – R3

This indicates the need for campaigns to be framed carefully so that customers are not alienated (Isham, Geusen and Gatersleben, 2022). Media plays a huge role in shaping the attitudes of consumers, but they also amplify resistance. Therefore, there needs to be more inclusive and positive framing of plant-based diets to the Finn mass.

4.3.5 Retail Performance of Plant-Based Products in the Finnish Market

The following responses are to the question how plant-based food items are performing in the Finnish retail market. The question was posed to understand consumer behaviour and market trends and the responses revealed those by examining performance metrics such as consumer demand, operational challenges and marketing strategies. The themes emerging from the responses can be found in Table 5 of Appendix – 6.

A recurring theme from the responses is the challenge posed by high costs for both consumers and retailers. As highlighted by respondent 1, although there is growing awareness in Finland, the high price of plant-based products is still a primary impediment to their widespread adoption. Previous studies also indicate that cost is a major deterrent while transitioning to plant-based foods (Pais, Marques and Fuinhas, 2022). Operational difficulties encountered by businesses is another critical factor. As noted by R1, many vegan or vegetarian-focused businesses have closed because of financial challenges like high rental costs and insufficient volume of consumers. B2B marketing holds another key challenge where firms and farmers struggle to get customers. R1 speaks of the issues while creating partnerships with bakeries and cafes, which indicates a reliance on external support for the expansion of customer bases.

Respondent 3 highlights product-related challenges such as the contentious taste and quality of plant-based products.

"Not so many of these products are actually that good. The taste is something different, and if you're not a vegan, you can always choose the meat." - R3

The inferior taste compared to meat items can deter adoption among non-vegan consumers, revealing a gap in product innovation. It is clear that sustainability of the market depends a lot on strong marketing and customer education campaigns. A supportive ecosystem for such businesses, like subsidies or grants is important to solve this challenge.

A contrasting point of view is offered by R2 who points out the success of her own establishment that received recognition for contributing to the market. This shows that even within a competitive environment, success can be found by leveraging targeted marketing and differentiation strategies. A journalistic perspective is added by respondent 3 who critiques the retail industry's reliance on conventional meat items. Therefore, there is an inertia within the supply chain that does not prioritise plant-based products.

4.3.6 Pricing, Availability and Innovation in the Plant-Based Sector

The participants were asked their perception on plant-based sector's pricing, availability of products and innovation to understand the dynamics and challenges in the industry. The emerging themes and subthemes from the participants' responses are included in Table 6 (see Appendix – 6).

The issue of pricing is a common thread in all three responses. R1 speaks of the high price disparity between meat and plant-based products. In addition, despite being cheaper to produce, plant-based foods have high retail prices due to intermediaries like supermarkets. This shows that price points are often a barrier to widespread adoption by consumers. Moreover, R3 mentions that price inflation by supermarket chains indicates the challenge of accessibility in mainstream grocery stores. Research by Szenderak, Frona and Rakos (2022) show that perceived affordability of plant-based options affects the purchase behaviour of consumers.

The sentiment on limited availability of plant-based products in supermarkets was echoed by both R1 and R3. They noted that such products are rare and generally not preferred by customers. Consumer access and slow adoption can be inhibited by this scarcity, especially in less urbanised areas (Safdar et al., 2022). Urban areas of Finland are seeing better product penetration, as suggested by R3's statement about the variance of availability. Although respondent 2 shares that her restaurant business (Anns Veges) has a wide base of consumers, this is more relevant to the context of the foodservice sector and does not address supermarket availability directly.

The response by R2 focuses on innovation by combining different cultural flavours (Asian, Arabic, African) with Finnish local ingredients. This innovative approach reflects the plant-based industry's trend of product differentiation through fusing traditional culinary techniques with modern-day consumer demands (Chhatwal, 2023). Nevertheless, as noted by R3, innovative products are typically driven by niche vegan companies while mainstream brands mostly focus on replicating meat products in different forms. This indicates to limited innovation.

4.3.7 Health Benefits of Plant-Based Diets Resonating with Finnish Consumers

As the literature review revealed that health benefits is one of the major influences behind Finn people adopting a plant-based diet, the experts were asked about the major health benefits of such diets that resonate with Finns the most. The relevant themes and subthemes are presented in Table 7 (see Appendix – 6). The major health benefits mentioned by respondents include lower cholesterol and blood sugar, prevention of chronic diseases, better long-term health and wellness, ensuring a health-conscious lifestyle, and getting food that is clean, organic as well as free of artificial additives.

4.3.8 Strategies for Encouraging Consumer Shift Toward Plant-Based Diets

The interview participants were asked to use their expertise and recommend strategies for the Finn food industry to encourage more consumers to try plant-based diets. This interview question is relevant because one of the research objectives is to understand how the food sector can drive a major shift in dietary preferences using targeted interventions. The themes, subthemes and relevant quotes are presented in Table 8 (see Appendix – 6).

The experts' responses had a recurring theme emphasising innovation and education in overcoming consumer prejudices. Many consumers believe that plant-based meals are bland or have insufficient nutrition, especially the protein content (Pointke et al., 2022). In order to address these issues, the interviewees recommend designing creative menus, integrating diverse culinary traditions, and properly highlighting the nutritional value of ingredients such as lentils and tofu that offer rich protein. Research also suggests that product innovation can play a huge role in changing consumer perceptions (Saari et al., 2021; Van Loo, Hoefkens and Verbeke, 2017).

Another suggestion is the use of premium ingredients to improve taste and health benefits of plant-based food products (Runte, Guth and Ammann, 2024). One respondent promotes the health advantages of components like olive oil, turmeric, ginger etc. and how they appeal consumers who are health-conscious. The growing trend of functional foods, where health benefits and culinary appeal

are mixed, is in line with this recommendation (Corbo et al., 2014). Lastly, participants recommend fostering trust through keeping product quality consistent and practicing business ethically. A brand gets more support when genuine commitment to corporate sustainability efforts is shown. Respondent 3 emphasises on "standing behind products" and avoiding superficial greenwashing.

5 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

This chapter will contain discussion on findings from both survey and interviews to find connection with research questions, and the main megatrends identified. Connection will be made with existing literature.

5.1 Factors Affecting the Adoption of Plant-Based Diets Among Finns

The findings from both the survey and interviews reveal a few factors that may be grouped into four main categories:

5.1.1 Health Motivations

It is highlighted in both survey and interview that health benefits are a major driver. Survey data shows a large percentage of sample who believed that plant-based diets help to lower cholesterol level, reduces the risk of heart diseases and promote overall well-being (Toumpanakis, Turnbull and Alba-Barba, 2018; Mullins and Arjmandi, 2021; Herpich, Müller-Werdan and Norman, 2022). The interview insights are similar as respondents state that health-conscious and sports or fitness loving people are more likely to shift towards plant-based diets (Sharma et al., 2024; Pape, Koenigstorfer and Casper, 2023). This finding corroborates extant literature which identifies health benefits as a major motivator for change in diet (Fehér et al., 2020).

5.1.2 Environmental Concerns

The survey notes environmental sustainability as another vital factor because respondents showed concerns over the environmental effect of producing meat. This was further reinforced by the interviews because respondents recognised the role of the Finnish government in promoting plant-based diets using sustainability campaigns. Nevertheless, the interviewees indicated that the growing awareness regarding environment is not yet a dominant motivator for all demographic groups. This factor, therefore, needs more robust advocacy and education to become a mainstream driver of consumer behaviour.

5.1.3 Socio-cultural Barriers

A major barrier to adoption is cultural attitudes, especially the entrenched preference for meat-based foods. The discussion of the interviewees reveal how traditional Finnish cuisine features smoked and processed meats heavily. In addition,

societal perceptions (particularly among men) associate plant-based diets with insufficient intake of protein, something noted in both interview and survey responses. Therefore, the deeply ingrained habits, cultural norms, etc. act as impediments for dietary transitions (Vermeulen et al., 2019).

5.1.4 Economic Factors

A recurring theme throughout the survey and interviews was price sensitivity. Plant-based products have consumer perception of being expensive in comparison to traditional meat products. This is truer for rural regions with limited availability of plant-based foods. Supermarket markups mainly drive high pricing, which is a deterrent for adoption although the production cost of plant-based foods is comparatively lower. Thus, economic limitation is a major obstacle in the adoption of plant-based diet (Viroli, Kalmpourtzidou and Cena, 2023).

5.2 Current Attitudes and Perceptions of Finns toward Plant-Based Diets

The survey and interview findings collectively reveal that the attitudes of Finns toward plant-based diets are evolving. Although both sources point to a growing awareness of plant-based eating, they also show contrasting degrees of acceptance and engagement based on demographic, cultural and lifestyle factors.

5.2.1 General Attitudes Toward Plant-Based Eating

The majority of survey respondents had favourable opinions of plant-based diets, which indicates a discernible change in consumer views. Many saw plant-based cuisine as an environmentally friendly option and appreciated its nutritional and environmental advantages. Yet, practical aspects like flavour, price, and accessibility reduced the enthusiasm for some.

Interviews offered a more complex viewpoint. One responder highlighted how health-conscious attitudes are causing Finns to progressively embrace plant-based diets, but another noted that misunderstandings still exist, particularly among elderly populations. These myths frequently centre on the idea that plant-based diets are not tasty, lacks variety or sufficient nutrition for important components like protein. Regardless of these objections, respondents pointed out that the change is being driven by younger, urban residents affected by worldwide dietary trends and the growing availability of plant-based choices in stores and

restaurants. This is consistent with survey results that indicated younger participants were more willing to try diets that included plants for moral and environmental reasons (Faber et al., 2020; Krizanova et al., 2021).

5.2.2 Health Perceptions

Both the survey and interviews underscored health as a key motivator for adopting plant-based diets. The highest percentage of survey participants chose health reasons as primary motivator (60%). The interviewees corroborated this by highlighting that fitness enthusiasts and people pursuing active lifestyles are finding it very popular nowadays. They also mentioned the perceived health benefits of plant-based eating which included low cholesterol and blood sugar, prevention of chronic diseases, improved long-term health and wellness. Plant-based foods are known to be clean, organic and free of additives which adds more value to it from a health-conscious consumer perspective (Sharma et al., 2024). Finnish consumers are becoming increasingly conscious of the risks associated with processed and smoked foods, which are mainstays in typical Finnish dietary habits, according to one interview respondent. A trend towards "clean eating," where plant-based meals are seen as a better option, is being fuelled by this understanding. Still, other respondents acknowledged that ease and comfort with conventional meals made it difficult for them to completely adapt to a plant-based diet. This indicates a disconnect between knowledge and behaviour.

5.2.3 Cultural and Social Perceptions

It is highly evident in literature that in terms of food products, consumer attitudes are largely influenced by cultural factors (Nguyen et al., 2019; Chen and Antonelli, 2020). According to the survey responses, acceptance of plant-based diet in Finland is gaining traction. However, they are still seen as trend-driven or niche by some population segments. The interviews also reflected similar results. One respondent said that plant-based foods are generally associated with certain social groups like fitness enthusiasts or environmental activists. This association is a major barrier in ensuring wider adoption. According to another interview respondent, there are gendered perceptions of plant-based eating as some men see vegan or vegetarian diets to be less satisfactory and less aligned with the conventional ideas of masculinity (Velzeboer et al., 2024).

5.2.4 Environmental Considerations

The survey participants with awareness of meat production's environmental impact saw high concern about the environment. The highest percentages of people voted for health reasons, environmental sustainability and animal welfare as major reasons behind pursuing a plant-based dietary habit. Nevertheless, a more complex picture was revealed by the responses of the interviewees. According to them, sustainability is the motivation of only a few customers. Others stay sceptical regarding the ecological claims that come with plant-based products. A lot of people think that they are imported or heavily processed which is a misconception.

5.3 How Current Perceptions Shape Future Plant-Based Food Consumption in Finland

The results of the survey and interviews together show how the present attitudes of Finnish buyers are likely to impact the direction of plant-based food intake in the years to come. Although the advantages of plant-based diets are widely acknowledged, various categories of consumers have differing levels of awareness and perceptions that result in long-term behavioural change.

5.3.1 Health-Driven Growth

One of the main factors influencing future purchasing patterns is health concerns. Plant-based diets were commonly linked by survey participants to health advantages including lower risk of chronic illnesses, stronger heart condition, and easier weight control. Health-conscious populations frequently include plant-based choices in their regular meals and have a strong argument for this. This trend is confirmed by the interviewees who have highlighted the growth of fitness and wellness movements in Finland. According to them, active individuals like those involved in sports, runners, cyclists etc. are adopting plant-based diets to complement their lifestyles. It is emphasised that more publicising of the health benefits will likely reinforce the appeal of plant-based food and inspire wider adoption across different consumer demographics.

Nevertheless, clearing remaining scepticism is necessary for the health-driven expansion of plant-based eating. Acceptance among those who are less knowledgeable of dietary science may be slowed by survey participants' scepticism

about whether or not plant-based goods can provide enough protein and other vital elements. More promotion and awareness on the nutritional value of plant-based meals might help debunk these myths and open the door for broader acceptance, as the experts suggest.

5.3.2 Taste and Culinary Innovation as Catalysts

One important element that will influence future purchasing trends is taste. According to survey results, customers' opinions on the diversity and flavour of plant-based foods were divided. Some voiced disappointment. One interview responder's perspective was that conventional meat-based recipes tend to have more flavour and appeal than plant-based alternatives.

Nonetheless, there is a lot of room for expansion via innovative cooking. According to the interviewees, increasing the sensory appeal of plant-based dishes and introducing a variety of international delicacies might draw in more customers. One participant emphasised how well native Finnish products may be combined with Asian and African spices to produce tasty, eye-catching meals. By dispelling the myth that diets based on plants are boring or unappetising, such advances can increase interest among customers.

5.3.3 Sustainability as a Long-Term Driver

Future consumption of plant-based items is also depending on environmental sustainability. Survey answers showed that some consumers are aware of the environmental effect of producing meat. Many consumers, therefore, show a desire to lessen the carbon footprint. Slowly, sustainability is becoming a core value for Finnish consumers. The interview responses suggest to have a more cautious outlook for the market regarding the future. Although a compelling motivator, simply intentions for sustainability cannot drive widespread behavioural change if there is a lack of affordable and accessible plant-based options. Eco-conscious consumers may lose interest because of false sustainability credentials of heavily processed foods, which is why utmost transparency by such businesses is required.

5.3.4 Barriers to Adoption and Strategies for Growth

There are many positive trends regarding future plant-based consumption, but there are some challenges as well. The high cost of these products, limited availability in rural regions, misconceptions regarding the sufficiency of nutrition are some of these challenges. A multi-dimensional strategy is required to address these barriers. Interviewees focused on education campaigns to inform consumers about the versatility and advantages of plant-based food habits. In addition, they recommended that government subsidies for plant-based food production and innovation could lower prices and improve accessibility.

5.4 Integration of Findings with Chosen Theoretical Frameworks

The Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) posits that a person's behaviour can be determined by three major elements: attitude toward the behaviour, subjective norms and perceived behavioural control. This framework was chosen as this study's core theory to understand and predict consumer behaviour in terms of adopting plant-based diets in Finland.

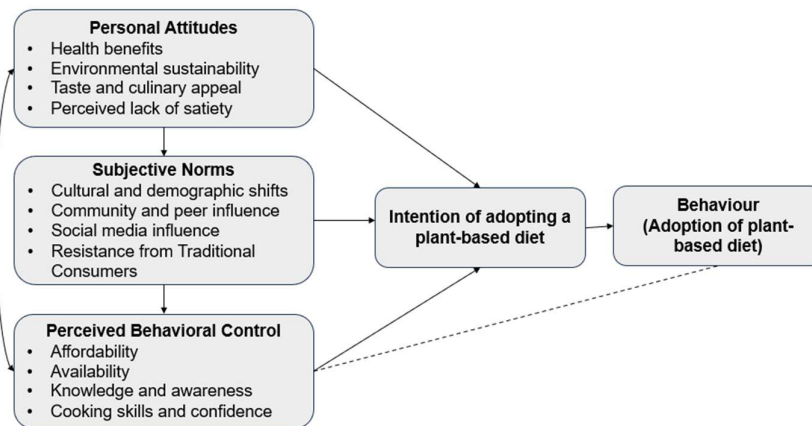


Figure 16: Conceptual Framework (Adapted from the Theory of Planned Behaviour) (Self-Made)

Attitudes Toward Plant-Based Diets: The study shows that Finns generally hold positive attitudes toward plant-based diets which is initially motivated by perceived health benefits and environmental sustainability. Research participants frequently expressed how plant-based diets improve health outcomes (less cholesterol, prevention of chronic illnesses). According to the notion of TPB, these positive attitudes improve the likelihood of adopting the behaviour. The more the consumers recognise the benefits, they will have more favourable attitudes towards plant-based food and it will drive greater intent for consumption. Attitudes

are not positive universally. Taste-related concerns are there as stated by some participants, which is a possible barrier. According to TPB, if the perceived taste of plant-based foods is unfavourable, it could reduce the strength of the positive attitude and thereby limit behavioural intent. Taste and variety can be improved by focusing on culinary innovation, as suggested by interviewees.

Subjective Norms: This refers to the perceived social pressure to do or not to do something. To understand how subjective norms influence Finns to adopt a plant-based diet, the survey asked participants how frequently people from their social groups consume plant-based food. The findings showed that cultural shifts such as rise of outdoor activities, fitness trends and a focus on well-being are increasing the social desirability of such diets. Interview findings reveal that social media presence of plant-based food companies, and engagement from communities (e.g., sharing plant-based recipes, showcasing meals on social media) are significant drivers reinforcing these norms. There are some challenges to the formation of these norms, such as resistance from traditionally meat-focused groups. TPB's notion confirms that weaker subjective norms in these groups may lessen the perceived social pressure and therefore, affect adoption negatively. From a marketing perspective, using targeted strategies like employing influencers and conducting social campaigns may address this issue and strengthen normative support across different demographic groups.

Perceived Behavioural Control: This element speaks of how a person perceives their ability to conduct a behaviour, affected by external and internal factors. In this case, these controls include affordability and accessibility of plant-based foods, as well as consumers' knowledge and confidence on the products. The research findings suggest that cost and availability are the major barriers to plant-based consumption in Finland. Interview participants add that despite having low production costs, retail prices are high and products are not available enough in rural places. As TPB's premise is, this lower perceived behavioural control can make behavioural intentions weak. Perceived control is increased with more awareness regarding nutrition and cooking techniques of plant-based foods. Therefore, there is need for education and exposure of protein-rich ingredients like lentils and tofu. More information will make consumers feel more capable of adopting such diet.

5.5 Conclusion and Recommendations

This mixed-method research explored the landscape of plant-based diets in Finland. It focused on consumer attitudes, their perceptions, and the factors affecting future adoption. By integrating survey and interview data, some major insights were found regarding the drivers and obstacles affecting consumption of plant-based food by Finns. According to the findings, Finns are embracing plant-based diets gradually. They are motivated by a mix of health, environmental and sustainability-related considerations. Plant-based food has numerous health benefits that ensure overall well-being, which is why health-conscious and active individuals are showing more interest in it. Environmental sustainability is a concern for many Finns, further strengthening the case for plant-based diets. However, there are challenges in terms of taste, affordability and accessibility. These barriers are more strongly felt by some demographics such as the elderly and rural communities. Therefore, Finnish plant-based food business must take targeted strategies to broaden acceptance. This research also identified gaps in consumer knowledge regarding the nutritional sufficiency of plant-based diets which underscores the necessity of consumer education and awareness initiatives. Cultural traditions, social norms etc. highly influence dietary selections. Many consumers are driven by their friends, family and wider trends in the society. One interesting finding from expert opinion is that the integration of plant-based choices in mainstream food is becoming more popular. Innovations in product development and design of menu in restaurants is getting more attention so that plant-based dishes can be made more appealing and accessible.

From a theoretical point of view, this study's results are in line with the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB), showing how individual attitudes, subjective norms and perceived behavioural control shapes dietary behaviours of Finns. Having a positive attitude toward health and sustainability, coupled with supportive social norms and perceived ease of adopting plant-based food can increase future consumption patterns. On the contrary, perceived barriers like high price or taste can lessen consumers' sense of control over what they consume. The megatrends include political support, economic opportunities, social shifts, technological advancements, environmental imperatives, and legal frameworks - which altogether determine the trajectory of the industry.

In order to capitalise on the rising interest in plant-based diets, food sector stakeholders in Finland may focus on the following strategies:

- Innovation needs more focus so enhance food's taste, texture and visual appeal which will cater to diverse consumer preferences.
- Companies should work towards cost reduction and expansion of distribution channels, so that plant-based food businesses are more competitive and products are widely available.
- Targeted campaigns should be implemented to address misconceptions regarding plant-based diets, where the health benefits and nutritional sufficiency will be highlighted.
- Businesses can utilise influence marketing and other community efforts to encourage social acceptance and normalise plant-based eating.
- The environmental benefits using certification labels and transparent sourcing practices should be highlighted so that consumer trust is strengthened.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1. Survey Questionnaire

1. Are you a citizen of Finland?
 - Yes
 - No

2. What is your gender?
 - Male
 - Female
 - Other (please specify):
 - Prefer not to say

3. Which of the following best describes your diet?
 - Omnivorous (I eat both plant and animal products)
 - Vegetarian (I do not eat meat, but I eat other animal products like dairy or eggs)
 - Vegan (I do not eat any animal products)
 - Flexitarian (I mostly follow a plant-based diet but occasionally eat animal products)
 - Other (please specify):

4. How often do you consume plant-based food products (e.g., plant-based meat, dairy alternatives)?
 - Daily
 - Several times a week
 - Once a week
 - A few times a month
 - Rarely
 - Never

5. Why do you choose to eat plant-based food products? (Select all that apply)
 - Health reasons
 - Environmental sustainability
 - Animal welfare
 - Taste preference
 - Social or cultural influence
 - Price
 - Other (please specify):

6. How would you describe your overall attitude towards plant-based diets?
 - Very positive (I believe plant-based diets are highly beneficial for both health and the environment, and I find them as tasty as animal-based foods)
 - Somewhat positive (I think plant-based diets have some health and environmental benefits, but I'm uncertain about the taste)

- Neutral (I have no strong opinions on the benefits or taste of plant-based diets)
- Somewhat negative (I am unsure about the health or environmental benefits and do not find plant-based foods as tasty as animal-based foods)
- Very negative (I believe plant-based diets are not beneficial for health or the environment and I do not enjoy the taste)

7. How often do your friends or family members consume plant-based foods?

- Frequently
- Sometimes
- Rarely
- Never

8. How easy is it to access plant-based food products in your area?

- Very easy
- Somewhat easy
- Neutral
- Somewhat difficult
- Very difficult

9. What are the main barriers preventing you from eating more plant-based foods? (Select all that apply)

- High cost
- Lack of availability
- Taste preference for animal products
- Lack of knowledge on how to prepare plant-based meals
- Other (please specify):

9. Do you think you will increase your consumption of plant-based foods in the next five years?

- Yes
- No
- Unsure

10. How likely do you think it is that plant-based diets will become more popular in Finland over the next decade?

- Very likely
- Somewhat likely
- Neutral
- Somewhat unlikely
- Very unlikely

Appendix 2. Interview Guide

1. Can you briefly describe your role in the Finnish food industry, and how it relates to plant-based diets?
2. From your experience, how would you describe Finnish consumer attitudes towards plant-based diets? Have you noticed any significant changes in recent years?
3. Are there specific consumer segments (age groups, demographics, or socio-economic backgrounds) that are more likely to adopt plant-based diets? Why?
4. How do Finnish government policies or global trends influence consumer behaviour towards plant-based diets?
5. From a retail perspective, how are plant-based products performing in the Finnish market?

Follow up question:

6. Are there any challenges with marketing or promoting these products to consumers?
7. How do you see pricing, availability and innovation in the plant-based sector?
8. What are the major health benefits of plant-based diets that resonate most with Finnish consumers?
9. Based on your expertise, what strategies should the food industry adopt to encourage more consumers to shift towards plant-based diets?

Appendix 3. Survey Recruitment Post on Social Media

Survey on Plant-Based Diets in Finland – Your Insights Matter!




Hei everyone!!!

I'm Baljit Kumar, studying Master of Business Administration in Risk Management and Circular Economy at Tampere University of Applied Sciences. I'm conducting a study on Finnish consumer attitudes towards plant-based diets and the trends shaping this growing sector. Your views as Finnish consumers are essential to understanding how preferences and perceptions change in this area, and I'd love for you to participate.

Please take a few minutes to complete our survey.

 Quick Survey: <https://lnkd.in/dsRbJJTB>

It would mean a lot if you could take a moment to complete this survey. Your feedback is valuable and will help us improve! I want you to know that your responses are completely anonymous and will only be used for academic purposes.

-  Like this post if you find it interesting.
-  Comment with your thoughts or suggestions.
-  Share this with your network to help us reach more people.

Thank you so much for your time.

Baljit Kumar

Appendix 4. Interview Recruitment Post on Social Media

Seeking Experts/Professionals for Research Interviews on Plant-Based Diet Trends in Finland

Hello!

I'm Baljit Kumar, a student at Tampere University of Applied Sciences. I am currently conducting a study on consumer attitudes and future trends in Finland's plant-based food industry. To gain a deeper understanding, I'm looking to interview industry experts, stakeholders, nutritionists, and food professionals who have experience or insights on plant-based diets in Finland.

Interviews are 25-30 minutes, and can be conducted via Zoom or in-person based on your preference.

If you'd like to participate, or know someone who might, you may comment below/ message me directly on LinkedIn or send an email at Baljit.kumar@tuni.fi. Thank you for considering sharing your expertise for this research!

Regards,
Baljit Kumar

Appendix 5. Interview Transcripts

Interview Question 1: Can you briefly describe your role in the Finnish food industry, and how it relates to plant-based diets?

R1: My role in Finnish Industry is Farmer. I am working for 25 years in this industry in Kiikala South Finland. I have had cattle farm about 10 years ago. Continuing the cattle farm business. And I changed my business idea into growing organic plants still in the same area of southern Finland. All the grain types. My main customer, at the moment, is Fazer. Because it is a bread factory producing all kinds of pastries, cakes, cookies and bread. Fazer is a very important customer for my business Jukka but then now Fazer is reducing the demand according to Jukka. The demand from the customer is lower because the organic products price is quite high and people don't have as much disposable income as before.

R2: In my previous profession as a journalist slash photographer, I did a lot of traveling, and thus became familiar with the different foods that foreign cultures have to offer. These travels have been a vital source of inspiration in creating the menu of the restaurant. The fusion kitchen of Anne's Vege offers various delicious flavours, such as those from Thailand, India, Middle East, Korea, Vietnam and Italy. We also serve traditional Finnish food.

R3: I'm the CEO and editor in chief of Vegelä, Finland's oldest vegan media. I study the market especially on new plant-based products.

Interview Question 2: From your experience, how would you describe Finnish consumer attitudes towards plant-based diets?

R1: He mentioned that in the past 5 years the demand for his product is lower, but he has seen peak demand before, which was about 10 years ago when the trend of organic product was at its high in Finland. So, the attitude and the reality of the purchase doesn't have anything to do with the ethics. Truth is still very high. People are still very positive about plant-based food, but they cannot afford to buy. This. This product because its organic and organic is always more expensive.

R2: It was a very big surprise that there is a very big increase from the male customer segment. First, they were very reluctant to come to the restaurant and try the vegetarian food. They first came accompanied by their wives and they

didn't want to try. But then once they try and later on, they came back by themselves. Can become regular customers.

R3: Yes. There is turmoil around them especially now with leikkeleraivo going on. People don't want to be guided in what they eat, but officials are more and more advising people to go plant based or at least try it (a few times a week). The industry is trying to make money out of this offering many kinds of ways to achieve this. From a vegan's point of view this is quite frustrating. We feel that the industry is only trying to feed omnivores, since the money is there. We would love to see sustainability in our foods (don't change the recipes all the time etc.)

Follow up question:

Interview Question 3: Have you noticed any significant changes in recent years?

R1: Economic situation has changed. And it has affected his business. But just now we had a interview with one restaurant. But I have going to him. according to Jukka, the government official statement about eating healthier doesn't affect his business. It means that whatever the government is saying regarding peoples with more vegetables to reduce the carbon emission, extradition influences business and he's guessing that it influences only the people's lifestyle or behaviour in the big cities. It means about consuming the product. The people in the big cities are more aware about the government campaign and they do try to reduce waste and then using biodegradable materials and then eating more vegetarians.

R2: I am in this AINOA shopping centre, Tapiola for about 6 years. Of course, during the Pandemic time, there was a decrease in the demand because there was a restriction of how many people can be. Inside a restaurant. But then there are also blessings in disguise, people are more conscious about health and more and more people want to have better food. So, they would like to try eating more vegetarian food and drinking herbal drinks. So, she saw an increase even during the pandemic. He noticed that her customers are basically from the capital city area, especially in Espoo. she Noticed that the customers are more educated, more aware, more exposed to their social media and they really realise the benefit of health.

Interview Question 4: Are there specific consumer segments (age groups, demographics, or socioeconomic backgrounds) that are more likely to adopt plant-based diets? Why?

R1: Not really. Customers are mostly business customers, such as Father. A bread factory and things like that and his customers only one daily bread that they are used to eat. Since 100 of years ago, so following the tradition and they always want to have. Lybrate, that is very hard brown bread. And then rye bread there is a little bit softer. And kaura or old bread and multi grain bread because they believe that bread which has a lot of grains. Yes Sir, better fibre is good for their digestion, but they are not really thinking about the other help. Issues So the reason why people in Finland or in the countryside mostly eat bread is just because. It's feeling and its basic diet and it's cheap. Easy to get and they can even make it by themselves they just by the flower and the kilogram price per for flower is very cheap. People in the countryside, they are used to make their own. Breads or bones such as Karelian pies, pastries and cakes so they are very sale of them to buy ready bread in the show. I think the writer of this article needs to investigate on how many people live in the countryside and how many people live in the big cities in Finland, when we think about the elderly Finns, yeah, they like to have rye bread much more because they think they believe that it's healthy. Games. Seshadri, there's a girl keeping the tradition of eating the rye bread for breakfast. And then also for lunch and other meal they always add the companies by road and they believe that growth is healthy and it has a lot of a grains and 5 bucks that is helping their digestion and helping for the longevity.

R2: Basically, she has no special customer segments that she wanted to target, but she saw in the recent years more men customers have become regular customer. So, there is an increase, the clear, clear increase in the segment. Is hoping the CD will get much more customers from the young segment and even the elderlies and according to her, she has a lot of followers in her social media and with is a very positive sign.

R3: Young urban adults with studies or degree. Teenagers and middle-aged people come next. According to Google Trends the word vegan was searched most in Uusimaa, Pirkanmaa, Varsinais-Suomi and Pohjois-Karjala within the last 90 days.

Interview Question 5: How do Finnish government policies or global trends influence consumer behaviour towards plant-based diets?

R1: As mentioned above it doesn't really influence his business. He is aware about the campaign of Helsinki City Mayor. Last year 2023 last year 2023 all the festivals in Helsinki city area that is organised by the city. And where there are so many food vendors selling food, they are only allowed selling vegetarian food and they traded last year. We saw a very big decrease in terms of the. People are coming, the visitors, The number of visitors dropped because people. People who are eating meat, they don't like to come to the festival because they will not find their favourite meal. So, this campaign has started, but not really very attractive to everyone, only certain segment. it is going to take some time for people to finally base the idea of having less myth product and it more plant-based food. But it is anyway very good for the government. Prostar campaigning now and little Bear Little people will learn the health part, the health benefit of plant-based food.

R2: she noticed the many campaigns that the government has towards eating better food and healthier food especially in the capital city. See notices as well the increase of the demand based on that. conclusion! the government policies or campaign benefits her Business.

R3: Search leikkelaivo and you get the picture. It's a hard issue to campaign as it causes a lot of guilt and resistance. The media doesn't help much with their imageries of deli meat products. It's a fight against the windmills sometimes.

Interview Question 6: From a retail perspective, how are plant-based products performing in the Finnish market?

R1: he would say that there is awareness but it has not reached the peak. The biggest reason is the price. Budiman is not very high. He realises that if and in the big cities in Finland, many restaurants that are offering vegan or vegetarian fried has gone bankrupt as well. Even some health shop also stopped coming. New startups on this kind of business model also stopped coming, but he saw also some biographies in. In the retail business, because especially it might not. Necessarily because of the low demon in the vegetarian meal, but also because retail business owners face very high cost in terms of rent. The business place rent so they would need at least 150 launch customers if it is a restaurant. And reaching their target is rather hard. So, you need 150 vegetarian meal eaters and

Friday and it's pretty challenging. If somebody decides to do retail business based on this. Vegetarian or vegan products, ethnics, very heavy marketing and a lot of campaign on the health part as well as education sessions or events organised by the business itself such as cooking courses or consultation, trainings, speeches. Everywhere about this part and then very active social media.

R2: her role as a retailer is very important in Finnish market. She got attention even by some association and get the award as restaurant guru 2024 Best take away food in Espoo City.

R3: From my point of view as a journalist, they're not selling well enough to be valued like meat products. Could be that the shop owners don't care. They're usually raised up to shops relying on sales of beef, pork, fish and poultry. It's hard to turn that wheel.

Interview Question 7: Are there any challenges with marketing or promoting these products to consumers?

R1: Yes, it's pretty challenging since the customers are businesses. So this company or this farmer needs our help and other people's to get him a new customers such as Bread factory bakery shops or cafes that are making their own bread.

R2: I am not facing more challenges with in these markets because these days like people are more health conscious, they prefer to eat more healthy food. Meanwhile my sale is going high so my business is going great. And we have noticed that the people who live in this area are very educated. I have a lot of followers in my social media, both in Instagram, in Facebook. I even have a lot of queues for the take away as you see in my posting in Instagram and Facebook.

R3: Yes. First of all, not so many of these products are actually that good. The taste is something different, and if you're not a vegan you can always choose the meat product instead. For a vegan, the taste is not an issue. We just don't eat meat. We could but we don't. That's values, not taste.

Interview Question 8: How do you see pricing, availability, and innovation in the plant-based sector?

R1: Plant based products are much expensive as compared of meat products. The companies producing the plant-based sausages and balls, it's really expensive. And the selling of these plant pairs, sausages and balls are very rare in the supermarkets. Because the people are not preferring to eat more plant-based food and the production is more. The manufacturing cost of plant-based food is like very cheap, but while sending and we will introduce as material like product into the market that time like the supermarkets and intermediate person they put their prize and they make it the plant-based food. Is very expensive.

R2: Icon Chicken My pricing is very moderate, even sometimes very competitive compared to the neighboring restaurants. And my innovation is in terms of the fusion itself combining. Asian. African. Arabic spices into the Finnish Local ingredients. People are happy as well, take side dishes and pay more because they believe that everything that is offered in my restaurant is healthy. There is a clear great combination of the vegetables based on colour with each health benefit. For example, red colour, green colour and white colour of vegetables. I combine the mixture to give a balance for Health benefit for everyone.

R3: The supermarket chains charge extra for plant-based stuff. Producing them is actually often cheaper, but the take more profit from them. Availability varies and true innovations are made by vegans. Big companies make mostly sausages, balls and tv-dinners based on meat products.

Interview Question 9: What are the major health benefits of plant-based diets that resonate most with Finnish consumers?

R1: they believe that getting more non meat will lower their cholesterol level and then lower blood sugar. And then also on top of that, Finns have started new trend for sport, outdoor sport, cycling or biking and then walking, jogging and then the Nordic walks. those who are basically very active In terms of sport and care for wellbeing, they start also to eat more vegetarian meals. So anyway, people who are more into sport or exercises, they care more about their meal or what they eat, which is always more vegetarians.

R2: we believe that will be have been eating so far is unhealthy because of Finns love salty food smoked food and processed food now with the healthy and food they believe they would have longer and healthier life. In one of the articles in

local newspaper it said that number one most popular food in Finland is smoked food, which is smoked fish smoked, processed food, and the Finns eat too much of that. And according to that article there is a very big health risk of getting too much of this smoked food. Pure & Natural food - We don't use any additives, gluten, or white sugar in our cooking. All of our food is made entirely in our kitchen and is also vegan. We use organic products within availability.

Our menu changes weekly.

R3: Less diabetes, vascular diseases and obesity. As a vegan there's much more. Try it.

Interview Question 10: Based on your expertise, what strategies should the food industry adopt to encourage more consumers to shift towards plant-based diets?

R1: People have prejudices, their vegetarian food is not delicious, is cold and not very attractive looking. My idea is for the innovation in terms of menu building, by combining Asian or African spices to local ingredients. And make the food spicier nor necessarily hot with chili and tastier, more herbs and looking much better, not only just salad. Because salad has been always the conception or the Assumption that we as non-Europeans used to have regarding vegetarian food and even the male Society of the Europeans. They don't really believe in vegetarian food because they think it doesn't give them enough protein. So, by looking at some Asian Diets, or menus. The Europeans should know that there are so many vegetarian ingredients that Give them a lot of protein such as lentils, tofu, and other soya bean products. So basically, the Europeans need to be educated more on the delicious menus. And mostly from Asia we present that that it looks more appealing.

R2: We use high-quality ingredients that are beneficial for your health and high-quality every day: Olive oil, garlic, ginger, turmeric, coconut oil and unrefined sea salt. By offering the customers food made from the best ingredients. For instance, I have been using olive oil in most of my product. And I have written about it in my blogs with the link below.

<https://www.annesvege.fi/blogi/korvaamaton-oliivioljy/>

R3: Stand behind your products. Don't change the recipes. Do actual good deeds, not emissions trading. Mikko

Appendix 6: Thematic Analysis Tables

Table 2: Themes on Finn Consumer Attitudes Towards Plant-Based Diets

Main theme	Subthemes	Quotes
Economic influences	Affordability of organic products	"People are still very positive about plant-based food, but they cannot afford to buy this product because it's organic and organic is always more expensive." – R1
	Impact of economic downturn	"Economic situation has changed, and it has affected my business." – R1
	Pandemic effects on demand	"During the pandemic, there was a decrease in demand due to restrictions, but people became more health-conscious." – R2
Government and policy impact	Limited regional influence	The government's campaigns influence only people in big cities. In rural areas, it doesn't impact consumption patterns much." – R1
	Consumer resistance to guidance	"People don't want to be guided in what they eat, even though officials are advising plant-based diets." – R3
Consumer segmentation	Geographic and educational differences	"Customers are more educated, more aware, and exposed to social media, especially in the capital city area." – R2
	Emergence of new demographics	"There is a big increase from the male customer segment; they were initially reluctant but later became regular customers." – R2
Shifting attitudes and behaviours	Health consciousness	"More people want better food, trying vegetarian food and herbal drinks." – R2
	Frustration with industry trends	"From a vegan's point of view, it's frustrating that the industry is only trying to feed omnivores for profit." – R3
	Demand for sustainability	"We would love to see sustainability in our foods—don't change the recipes all the time." – R3

Table 3: Consumer Segments Likely to Adopt Plant-Based Diets in Finland

Main theme	Subthemes	Quotes
Consumer segmentation by location and tradition	Rural and urban divide	"In the countryside, people eat bread as a basic diet because it's cheap and easy to make. They stick to traditional bread types like rye, which they believe helps digestion." – R1
	Tradition and age influence	"Elderly Finns prefer rye bread for its health benefits and stick to traditional eating habits." – R1
Emerging consumer segments	Male consumers	"In recent years, there has been a clear increase in male customers. Initially, they came with their wives but now return on their own as regular customers." – R2
	Young adults and social media users	"Young urban adults, particularly those with higher education, are leading the adoption of plant-based diets. According to Google Trends, the word vegan was searched most in Uusimaa, Pirkanmaa, Varsinais-Suomi and Pohjois-Karjala within the last 90 days." – R3
	Teenagers and middle-aged customers	"Teenagers and middle-aged people follow young adults in adopting plant-based diets." – R3
Influence of digital media platforms	Social media engagement	"We have a lot of followers on social media, which has been a positive sign in attracting diverse customer segments, including younger and older groups." – R2

Table 4: Influence of Finnish Government Policies and Global Trends on Consumer Behaviour

Main theme	Subthemes	Quotes
Impact of government campaigns	Limited influence on rural customers	"As I've said before, it doesn't really influence my business... People in rural areas are less attracted to government campaigns promoting plant-based diets." – R1
	Mixed reception to government initiatives	"Helsinki festivals allowed only vegetarian food... number of visitors dropped because meat-eaters didn't attend." – R1
	Positive influence in urban areas	"Government campaigns, especially in the capital city, have increased demand for plant-based foods." – R2
Challenges in advocacy	Resistance and backlash	"Search <i>leikkeraivo</i> and you get the picture. It's a hard issue to campaign as it causes a lot of guilt and resistance." – R3
	Media's role in resistance	"The media doesn't help much with their imageries of deli meat products... It's a fight against the windmills sometimes." – R3
Gradual behaviour change	Slow adoption across segments	"It's going to take some time for people to accept the idea of eating less meat and more plant-based food." – R1
	Health-focused messaging	"Little by little, people will learn the health benefits of plant-based food." – R1

Table 5: Retail Performance of Plant-Based Products in the Finnish Market

Main theme	Subthemes	Quotes
Market awareness	Awareness yet limited demand	"I would say that there is awareness but it has not reached the peak. The biggest reason is the price." – R1
	Challenges for startups	"New startups on this kind of business model also stopped coming." – R1
Retail challenges	High operational costs	"Retail business owners face very high costs in terms of rent...they would need at least 150 launch customers if it is a restaurant." – R1
	Lack of support from mainstream retail	"From my point of view as a journalist, they're not selling well enough to be valued like meat products...shops relying on sales of beef, pork, fish and poultry." – R3
	Consumers' perception of value	"They're not selling well enough to be valued like meat products." – R3
	Customer acquisition as B2B marketing challenge	"...Companies or farmers need help to get new customers, such as bread factory, bakery shops or cafes" - R1
	Product-related challenges	"Not so many of these products are actually that good. The taste is something different, and if you're not a vegan, you can always choose the meat." - R3
Successful examples	Award-winning plant-based businesses	"Ann's Vege got attention by some association and got the award as Restaurant Guru 2024 Best Take Away Food in Espoo City." – R2
	Active marketing and consumer engagement	"Very heavy marketing and a lot of campaigns on health...organizing cooking courses or consultation, trainings, speeches...active social media." – R1
		"I have a lot of followers on Instagram and Facebook, and I even have a lot of queues for takeaway, as you see in my postings." – R2

Table 6: Pricing, Availability and Innovation in the Finnish Plant-Based Sector

Main theme	Subthemes	Quotes
Pricing	High price due to intermediaries	"The manufacturing cost of plant-based food is cheap, but supermarkets and intermediaries put their price and make plant-based food very expensive." – R1
	Perception of affordability in restaurants	"My pricing is very moderate, even sometimes very competitive compared to the neighbouring restaurants." – R2
	Profit-driven pricing practices	"The supermarket chains charge extra for plant-based stuff... They take more profit from them." – R3
Availability	Limited availability in supermarkets	"Selling of these plant-based sausages and balls are very rare in the supermarkets because people are not preferring to eat more plant-based food." – R1
	Wider availability in specialised outlets	"People are happy... because everything that is offered in my restaurant is healthy." – R2
	Regional variability	"Availability varies..." – R3
Innovation	Culinary innovation in small businesses	"My innovation is in terms of the fusion itself, combining Asian, African, Arabic spices into Finnish local ingredients." – R2
	Limited creativity in large corporations	"True innovations are made by vegans. Big companies make mostly sausages, balls, and TV dinners based on meat products." – R3

Table 7: Health Benefits of Plant-Based Diets Resonating with Finnish Consumers

Health Benefits	Quotes
Lowering cholesterol and blood sugar	"They believe that getting more non-meat will lower their cholesterol level and then lower blood sugar." – R1
Prevention of chronic diseases	"Finns love salty food, smoked food, and processed food. Now with the healthy food they believe they would have longer and healthier life." – R2
Improved long-term health and wellness	"Less diabetes, vascular diseases and obesity. As a vegan there's much more. Try it." – R3
Health-conscious lifestyles	"Those who are basically very active in terms of sport and care for well-being, they start also to eat more vegetarian meals." – R1
Clean, organic and additive-free food	"We don't use any additives, gluten or white sugar in our cooking. All of our food is made entirely in our kitchen and is also vegan." – R2

Table 8: Strategies for Encouraging Consumer Shift Toward Plant-Based Diets

Main Themes	Subthemes	Quotes
Product innovation	Enhancing flavour profiles	<i>"My idea is for innovation in menu building, combining Asian or African spices with local ingredients... Europeans need to be educated more on the delicious menus."</i> – R1
	Highlighting nutritional value	<i>"There are many vegetarian ingredients that give a lot of protein, such as lentils, tofu, and other soy products."</i> – R1
	Visual appeal of plant-based dishes	<i>"Make the food look better, not just salad... it should look more appealing."</i> – R1
Quality ingredients	Use of premium and health-focused items	<i>"We use high-quality ingredients such as olive oil, garlic, ginger, turmeric, and unrefined sea salt... the health effects are researched and indisputable."</i> – R2
	Health messaging through blogs	<i>"I have written about the benefits of olive oil in my blogs... Italians believe it thins the arteries and nourishes the mind."</i> – R2
	Consistent quality standards	<i>"Stand behind your products. Don't change the recipes."</i> – R3
Ethical branding	Authenticity over greenwashing	<i>"Do actual good deeds, not emissions trading."</i> – R3
	Building consumer trust	<i>"Stand behind your products."</i> – R3
	Transparency in ingredient sourcing	<i>"By offering food made from the best ingredients..."</i> – R2