

Consumption | Individual communication

IC - (21201) - FROM MEAT TO BEETS: EXPLORING PATHWAYS TO MORE PLANT-FORWARD DIETS

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Background and objectives

We aimed to understand consumer perceptions of meat alternatives, and how the way meat alternatives are presented/framed affects its appraisal, with the goal of facilitating a shift toward more sustainable food consumption.

Process and methods (for empirical research)

Qualitative and quantitative methods were applied to examine consumer perceptions of five proposed alternatives to meat: legumes, tofu, seitan, lab-grown meat, and insects. In Study 1, participants provided free associations with regards to conventional animal proteins and the alternatives. In Study 2, the presentation of the product was experimentally manipulated: participants evaluated the five meat alternatives along several dimensions (e.g., edibility, healthiness), either when framed as an individual product or as part of a larger meal.

Main results (or main arguments in the case of critical reviews)

Our findings suggested three profiles of consumers: hedonically motivated meat eaters; health-oriented meat eaters; and ethically conscious meat avoiders. It was also observed that meal framing can help promote meat alternatives, either by highlighting well-known products within individual frames (e.g., legumes), or by demonstrating how less familiar products (e.g., tofu) can be incorporated into a meal. Overall, we found that most meat alternatives benefited from a meal framing, with the notable exception of legumes, which benefited from an individual framing, and insects which were evaluated quite negatively regardless of framing.

Implications for research and practice/policy | Importance and originality of the contribution

Previous research focused on evaluations of a single product, treated in isolation, producing a fragmented body of evidence regarding consumer perceptions of meat substitutes. We aimed to provide a more comprehensive approach, assessing multiple perceptions across a range of products, providing an integrative assessment of how consumers perceive conventional animal proteins and meat alternatives. Additionally, we provided applicable insights on alternative protein acceptance, by examining how consumer perceptions differ considering if the meat alternative was framed individually versus in a meal. Current findings point to several directions for improving the marketing of meat alternatives to promote healthier and more sustainable diets.

Palavras-chave : meat alternatives, meat substitutes, plant-based products, meal framing