

THE 'VEGETARIAN PROTEIN = LESS NOURISHING' INTUITION: WHEN THE CHOICE OF VEGETARIAN PROTEIN INCREASES CALORIE CONSUMPTION

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Abstract

There are many health concerns linked with the consumption of red meat, such as obesity, diabetes, and some cancers. However, reducing meat consumption is complex and requires consumers to adopt alternative vegetarian protein sources. While previous literature has documented barriers to shifting towards vegetarianism, this paper addresses a gap by exposing biased perceptions about vegetarian proteins. We propose an unexplored bias which we name the “vegetarian protein = less nourishing” intuition. This paper focuses on the consequences of this intuition, which leads to biased consumption behavior. Across five studies, including one field study, we specifically show that vegetarian proteins are perceived as less nourishing than equivalent meat proteins, and these perceptions affect food portion sizes and total calories consumed. This research is essential for marketers and public policymakers, as the proposed bias can add to the worldwide obesity epidemic increasing consumption.

Keywords: *meat consumption; sustainable food; lay beliefs*

Track: Consumer Behaviour