

Mapping Consumer Psychological Barriers to Sustainable Eating: A Segment-Based Analysis of Meat Attachment and Food Neophobia

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Abstract

Despite the growing urgency to shift toward plant-based diets, consumer adoption remains limited. This study examines how food neophobia (FN) and meat attachment (MA), jointly shape consumers' willingness to adopt plant-forward diets. Using latent profile analysis on a Flemish longitudinal dataset ($N = 438$), four distinct segments emerged: Resistant, Cautious, Curious, and Open Consumers, each with unique MA–FN profiles. Multilevel analyses showed that willingness to switch is driven mainly by segment membership rather than by product type. Segments high in both MA and FN displayed the lowest switching propensity, whereas consumers low in both barriers exhibit the strongest openness to change. These findings suggest that interventions aiming to promote plant-based eating should target motivational profiles rather than specific products, offering actionable insights for food companies, policymakers, and NGOs seeking to accelerate sustainable dietary transitions.

Track: Consumer Behaviour