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Media Diets Of Vegetarians. How News Consumption, Media Use And Communication With One's Social Environment Are Associated With Pursuing A Vegetarian Diet

Considering the impact of modern diets and food production on climate change, we want to get a deeper understanding of drivers of sustainable diet choices, especially regarding the avoidance of meat consumption. Whereas research so far has focused on individual motives and attitudes for vegetarianism, such as health or moral concern, the role of the social environment lacks attention. This is especially true for the role of (social) media. Since people nowadays often turn to the internet for information about food, and since communication about diets is prominent in social media platforms, more research needs to be done here. We therefore examine both, whether vegetarianism is associated with news consumption via different media, including social media, and whether having vegetarian friends and family-members or communicating about food play a role with this regard. The data comes from a tailor made survey with 1,311 respondents carried out in Hamburg, Germany, in 2018. We model the association between vegetarianism and news consumption, personal convictions, having vegetarians in the social environment, and communicating about food, controlling for individual characteristics. We find that following a vegetarian diet is significantly associated with having vegetarian friends and family-members. Additionally, vegetarians consume more news via social media, but not via 'traditional' media. As consuming tailored news in the social media is found to be associated with communicating about food via social media, our findings suggest that vegetarians are often embedded in a close knit of like-minded people with whom they often communicate via social media.