

# **Does communication format and message content influence vegetarian product choices?**

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## **Abstract**

Reducing meat consumption is crucial for environmental and health reasons, and NGOs have a role to play in terms of advertising to reduce the effects of climate change. Using two studies (n=286), we first compared in an NGO experiment the effectiveness of three communication formats (leaflet, application, website) and two message contents (health, environment) on the guilt of not reducing meat consumption and the intention to eat more vegetarian alternatives. The leaflet induced more guilt and encouraged vegetarian intentions. Second, in an eye-tracked virtual reality supermarket, we examine the influence of in-store posters, on vegetarian product choices, basket quality and the attention to specific interests. Displaying the NGO's posters in shops increased the number of vegetarian choices, thanks to health claims (as opposed to neutral claims) and improved the quality of the basket (impact on the environment and energy). NGO communication strategies are discussed to encourage sustainable food choices.

**Keywords:** Environmental and health claims; guilt, vegetarian alternatives, communication mediums format, eye-tracked virtual reality