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**A VEGAN PERSPECTIVE ON ANIMAL-BASED TOURISM
SERVICES: THEMATIC ANALYSIS OF BLOGS**

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Summary:

The present study focuses on the perspective of vegan consumers in regards to animal-based tourism services and addresses the need for understanding the changing values in society concerning the use of animals for tourism and entertainment purposes. In this regard, the study applies theoretical concepts from the fields of animal tourism and animal ethics and approaches vegans as a growing segment of ethical consumers whose consumption practices have already significantly impacted the market and will undoubtedly continue to do so. As such, the aim of the present study is to understand how vegan consumers express their ethical considerations regarding animal-based tourism services.

The study employs a qualitative methodology based on netnographic principles. An inductive thematic analysis was conducted on a data set of eighteen blog entries written by vegan bloggers on the subject of animal-based tourism. The analysis revealed that the participants made a clear distinction between what they considered to be either ethical or unethical animal-based tourism services based on four categorizations of attributes concerning the operational practices of said services; conditions of captivity and animal wellbeing, practices of acquisition, training and disposal, environmental and social impact, and operational purpose and objectives.

The results of the study indicate that the participants showed adherence to an animal rights and ecofeminist perspective, in addition to explicitly opposing speciesist practices on the part of the tourism industry. In this regard, the participants demonstrated a tendency towards boycotting profit-oriented animal-based tourism services that operate mainly for the purpose of visitor entertainment and satisfaction and incorporate such practices as wild animal capture, animal breeding, training of unnatural behaviours, and killing of undesired animals. In contrast, the participants advocated for positive purchasing as a means of expressing favour and support towards non-profit institutions, such as animal sanctuaries and various animal foundations that operate on the principles of rescue, rehabilitation and release. As such, the participants demonstrated a tendency towards economic voting practices aimed at inspiring ethical developments regarding the use of animals in the tourism industry.

Keywords: animal-based tourism services, animal ethics, ethical consumption, vegan consumers, vegan blogs

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“The true test of a moral tourism industry exists not just in how we treat each other, which continues to challenge us on so many levels, but in how we treat the animals that have no other option but to serve our varied interests. If we measure success in tourism as a function of progress or development on this dimension, we have a very long way to go indeed.”

- Fennell (2012, p. 255)

1 Introduction

The present study will examine the ethical perspectives of vegan consumers as they relate to animal-based tourism services. This introduction begins by illustrating the background and focus of the study, as well as outlining and defining any relevant concepts. Next, previous academic literature is examined to reveal a knowledge gap, which serves as a justification for the present study. The research questions are then presented along with a brief description of the purpose of the study, followed by an evaluation of the researcher's position as a vegan. Finally, the methodological approach for data collection and analysis is briefly discussed, followed by an outline of the structure of the study.

1.1 Focus of the study

Animals play a major role in the tourism industry and are incorporated into a variety of tourism practices. As is explained by Hughes (2001), they can be admired in the wild or viewed in captivity and are occasionally utilised as a form of transport. Furthermore, animals often become symbols of a particular region or country (Hughes, 2001) and the facilitation of human-animal interactions is proven to positively impact tourists' choices in terms of holiday packages and travel destinations (Stone, Tucker, & Dornan, 2007, as cited in Shani & Pizam, 2009). As such, it can be noted that certain types of animal-based tourism services, such as elephant riding in South-East Asia or husky safaris in the Arctic, have grown into bucket-list-topping experiences and thus have become a major pull-factor for tourists, as well as a valuable selling point in terms of marketing a country or a destination. Further attesting to the popularity and significance of animal-based tourism, Fennell (2012, p. 70) points out that the yearly number of people visiting zoos and other captive animal environments in certain countries even exceeds the number of spectators to all major professional sports.

Considering the prominent position animal-based tourism services hold, it is important to note that, similarly to the use of animals in other aspects of human life, the leisure, tourism and entertainment industries would naturally also be subjected to rising public concerns surrounding animal welfare. As Fennell (2012, p. 9) states, "there has been a major shift in the way humans regard animals over time, and the transition of thought appears to be getting stronger." On this note, the past several decades have witnessed the birth of numerous animal rights organizations and movements as well as a clear change in terms of everyday practices

and consumer decisions, as evidenced by the rise of vegetarianism and veganism (Shani & Pizam, 2008). In regards to animal-based tourism in particular, the fact that ethical treatment of animals is increasingly becoming a part of consumer values can be noted in the improved animal welfare practices that are being promoted by global tourism firms such as TUI, Thomas Cook and TripAdvisor in response to public outcry regarding incidents of animal abuse within the tourism and entertainment industry (see García-Rosell, 2017; Klos, García-Rosell, & Haanpää, 2018; Ojuva, 2018).

Furthermore, a recent study conducted by García-Rosell and Äijälä (2018) at the University of Lapland found that tourists visiting Finish Lapland expressed strong concerns for the welfare of animals working in the tourism industry. For some of the tourists, animal welfare practices on the part of tourism service providers even played an influential role in deciding which tours to book. This led the study to conclude that tourists place a certain amount of value on the responsible and ethical use of animals in the context of the tourism industry. In this regard, scholars within the field of tourism research (see e.g. Fennell, 2012; Shani & Pizam, 2008) argue that it is vital for the tourism industry to better understand the changing social values concerning animal rights and welfare, since it is an industry that ultimately “capitalizes upon what individuals and groups deem to be important” (Fennell, 2012, p. 248). Within this context, consideration should be given to the growing phenomenon of ethical consumption, as it represents a significant driving force for improved ethical standards in nearly every mainstream market (Tallontire, Rentsendorj, & Blowfield, 2001). As such, the present study will focus on the ethical consumption practices of vegan tourists.

Although ethical consumption practices can to some extent be recognised in people from all walks of life (Andorfer, 2015), an argument can be made for positioning veganism as an optimum form of ethical consumption. As is formally stated by The Vegan Society (n.d.), “veganism is a way of living which seeks to exclude, as far as is possible and practicable, all forms of exploitation of, and cruelty to, animals for food, clothing or any other purpose.” In this regard, it should be noted that academic publications have previously described the motivations of vegan consumers for abstaining from animal products (see e.g. Dyett, Sabaté, Haddad, Rajaram, & Shavlik, 2013; Radnitz, Beezhold, & DiMatteo, 2015; Ruby, 2012; Ulusoy, 2015) and both health and ethical considerations towards animals have consistently emerged as the most often cited reasons for choosing to adopt a vegan lifestyle. Naturally, there are differences between individual motivations as some people do indeed choose to adopt a vegan lifestyle solely for health reasons, but nevertheless it seems that the decision

making process of the majority of vegan consumers is strongly influenced by a desire to cultivate compassion and social justice for animals (Ulusoy, 2015), thus placing them at the forefront of ethical consumption. Satisfying this desire then becomes the driving force behind consumption practices (Moreira & Rosa, 2014).

In the context of ethical consumption, Dickinson and Carsky (2005, p. 36) point out that “as values within a society change, firms would be expected to anticipate and take advantage of these changes.” When examining current changes in society, the impact of and response to vegan ethical consumption practices is undeniable. As the number of vegan restaurants and cafés steadily rises and noticeably more meat and dairy substitute products are made available in supermarkets (Quinn, 2016), it becomes clear that the food and restaurant industries have started answering to the dietary needs and wants of vegan consumers. When looking at veganism in relation to tourism, there seems to be a significant amount of websites and blogs dedicated to aiding this growing consumer segment in finding vegan restaurants, vegan-friendly hotels and hostels, and tourist attractions that in no way endorse animal cruelty. Moreover, an interesting addition to the tourism market is VegVoyages, a tour operator that offers adventure tours specifically designed to adhere to the dietary choices and ethical considerations of vegan tourists (VegVoyages, n.d.). The very fact that restaurants, accommodation facilities and tour operators are making an effort to meet the needs of vegan consumers exemplifies how changes in demand have already amounted to necessary changes in supply.

Considering the steadily growing number of individuals who are choosing to adopt a vegan lifestyle (Google Trends, n.d.; Quinn, 2016; Sareen, 2013) and their ability to significantly impact the market through their consumer choices, it is important for tourism providers to gain an understanding of how vegan consumers navigate ethical consumption. In this regard, Fennell (2012, p. 248) point out that “tourism, both in practice and theory is a reactive industry: its success is contingent on the values that exist within society.” As such, tourism providers need to recognize the consumer demand from current customers as well as potential customers or non-customers, because they all have the power to exert public pressure (Carr, 2016; Shani & Pizam, 2008). In addition, since public demand for products and services that are more in line with specific ethical considerations clearly has the potential to open up entirely new markets and drastically alter existing ones (Dickinson & Carsky, 2005, p. 36), Shani and Pizam (2008) argue that, within the context of animal-based tourism, service

providers should show consideration towards external criticism even if their current customer base takes no issue with their operational practices.

As was previously mentioned, animals are incorporated into the tourism industry in many different ways. Consequentially, the term ‘animal-based tourism services’ can be quite broad and requires further specification in regards to how it will be approached in the context of the present study. Within the academic literature, a clear distinction can be identified between consumptive and non-consumptive forms of animal-based tourism, with consumption-oriented animal tourism generally involving the killing of animals through such activities as hunting and fishing and non-consumptive forms of animal tourism focusing on viewing and interacting with animals (Shani, 2009). In the case of non-consumptive human-animal interactions a further distinction is made based on the settings in which these interactions can take place. As such, Orams (1996, as cited in Shani, 2009) distinguishes between wild, semi-captive and captive settings for the occurrence of non-consumptive animal tourism. In a similar fashion, Bulbeck (1999, as cited in Fennell, 2012, p. 5) also differentiates between three different types of non-consumptive animal encounters, of which the first are defined as ‘authentic sites’, meaning places where wild animals roam freely. The second type are categorised as ‘semi-authentic encounter sites’ which for example allow tourists to walk through safari-like settings and also include various types of sanctuaries where animals can be found in open environments. The final type, ‘staged encounter sites’, include experiences where animals are viewed through the bars of cages or the walls and fences of small enclosures.

Based on these categorizations, as identified from the academic literature, the present study will focus on non-consumptive forms of animal-based tourism due to an assumption that any consumptive encounters where animals are pursued for sport and/or subsistence will undoubtedly be rejected by vegan consumers as they clash with fundamental choices of diet and lifestyle. In addition, considering that the majority of non-consumptive animal interactions take place in either semi-captive or captive settings (Mason, 2000; Orams, 1996, as cited in Shani, 2009), the present study will focus mainly on these two types of sites as they are also most frequently discussed in terms of social and environmental necessity and issues surrounding animal rights and welfare (see e.g. Äijälä, García-Rosell, & Haanpää, 2017; Carr, 2016; Shani, 2009; Shani & Pizam, 2008; Shani & Pizam, 2010). The range of semi-captive and captive animal-based tourism sites is very broad and includes wildlife and

safari parks, conventional zoos, marine parks, aquariums, sea pens, animal shows, and even theme parks, bullfights, and various sporting contests (Shani, 2009; Shani & Pizam, 2009).

Essentially, the present study considers the conceptualization of animal-based tourism services as any non-consumptive tourism, leisure or entertainment venue that involves the captive or semi-captive display of animals, including both profit and non-profit institutions. In addition to this, encounters where animals are utilised as a form of transport or are put to work in the service of the tourism industry in any other way (e.g. photo props, street performances, etc.) will also be considered. Finally, it is important to note that even within this categorization, significant distinctions between various animal-based tourism services can be identified based on the tourism service providers' objectives, activities and experiences offered to the visitors, the predominant species, and the level of confinement experienced by the animals (Shackley, 1996). These variations will be examined more closely as part of the present study.

1.2 Previous research

When examining the tourism literature, it can be noted that a good deal of research has been done regarding the use of animals in tourism, exploring such topics as ecotourism, wildlife tourism, sustainability and conservation (Fennell, 2012; Shani, 2009). However, as Fennell (2012, p. 6-7) explains only a very small amount of the animal research carried out within the tourism literature actually focuses on the ethical issues involved with using animals for tourism and entertainment purposes. In this regard, it should be noted that a significant amount of work concerning animal ethics theory in the context of the tourism industry has been done by Fennell (2012; 2012a; 2012b; 2013; 2015) and Hughes (2001), but less attention has been given to actually exploring the perspectives of tourists regarding the use of animals for tourism and entertainment (Shani, 2009; Shani & Pizam, 2009). This particular gap in the academic literature is significant when considering the growing attention and concern for animal rights and welfare that is evident in society today, as well as the major role that animals play in the tourism industry (Hughes, 2001; Shani, 2009). As such, the need for further studies exploring the ethical perspectives of tourists regarding the use of animals in the tourism industry has been clearly emphasized by various researchers (see Davey, 2007; Frost & Roehl, 2007; Jiang, Lück, & Parsons, 2007; Shani, 2009; Shani & Pizam, 2009).

Regarding the use of animals for tourism purposes, the academic literature has on several occasions examined tourists' attitudes and perception. In this regard, Fennell (2012, p. 17) posits that Stephen Kellert (see e.g. 1993) offers some of the most comprehensive work on the topic through his explorations of attitudes, knowledge, and behaviours of Americans toward animals. In addition, various other researchers (see Carr, 2016; Curtin, 2006; Curtin & Wilkes, 2007; Klenosky & Saunders, 2007; Mason, 2007; Muboko, Gandiwa, Muposhi, & Tarakini, 2016; Packer, Ballantyne, & Hughes, 2014; Rhoads & Glodsworthy, 1979) offer interesting and valuable insights into tourists' attitudes and perspectives, based on specific case studies in terms of locations, tourist segments and animal-based tourism services. For example, Carr (2016) examined the ideal traits of zoo animals from the perspective of the general public in Jersey, UK, whereas Curtin (2006) and Curtin and Wilkes (2007) conducted in-depth interviews with people who swam with dolphins both in captivity and in the wild. In addition, Mason (2007) surveyed visitor demographics as well as people's understanding of the zoo's roles in Wellington, New Zealand. However, for more holistic contributions on the topic, specific consideration is given to two studies conducted by Shani and Pizam (2009) and Shani (2009) (the former serving as a framework for the latter), as they explore the attitudes and opinions of tourists towards the use of animals in tourism and entertainment from a more general perspective.

On this note, Shani and Pizam (2009) conducted an exploratory qualitative study with focus groups in Florida and found that the majority of the participants were aware of various ethical issues involved with placing animals in captivity for entertainment purposes, but still regarded animal-based tourism as a positive phenomenon. In this regard, the researchers explain that "the awareness of the ethical dilemmas involved in seeing animals in captivity led the participants to raise various reasons for the importance of their presence, and in which terms animal attractions can be considered ethical" (Shani & Pizam, 2009, p. 97). As such, the participants offered arguments to justify the existence of animal-based tourism services based on notions of conservation, research and education, which are also extensively discussed in other academic research publications (see e.g. Jamieson, 2006; Mason, 2000, 2007). In addition, other justifications raised by the participants included; the position of animal-based tourism services as an alternative to nature, the benefits experienced by individual animals in captivity, and the perception of animal-based tourism services as a form of wildlife regulation. Furthermore, the study also found that ethical concerns were significantly reduced due to a belief that animal-based tourism services regulate their

practices from a desire to be positively perceived by the general public, in addition to governments and laws ensuring external regulation. Finally, the study identified various conditions that need to be met in order for an attraction to be considered ethical. The findings of the Shani and Pizam (2009) study were later corroborated by Shani (2009) who conducted a similar quantitative study on a much larger scale.

In his study Shani (2009, p. 213) also points to a particular gap in the academic literature in terms of research focussing on “the effects of popular trends and emerging lifestyles (e.g., vegetarianism and environmentalism) on people’s views of animal-based attractions.” In this regard, when looking at veganism in relation to tourism, it can be noted that this particular consumer segment, which represents a major emerging lifestyle, has been given little consideration in the academic literature. In addition, existing research from the tourism field (see e.g. Bertella, 2018; Kansanen, 2013) has mainly focussed on veganism as a diet and not a lifestyle which possibly extends consideration to other tourism and travel related issues. Furthermore, an evaluation of the current literature showed that veganism has not received much attention from other academic fields either. It can be noted that several studies have focussed on the motivations of individuals for adopting a vegan lifestyle (see Dyett et al., 2013; Radnitz et al., 2015; Ruby, 2012) as well as the manifestation of veganism as a cultural movement (see e.g. Cherry, 2006). Finally, when looking at veganism and consumer research, an exploratory study conducted by Ulusoy (2015) provides some general insight on the topic of vegan consumer practices, but also posits that veganism has thus far not received deserved amounts of attention within the field of marketing and consumer research.

1.3 Purpose of the study

The present study responds to the gap in academic literature by addressing the ethical debate surrounding animal-based tourism and shedding light on the position of vegan ethical consumers regarding this issue. With this in mind, the study will seek to provide an answer to the following research question: How do vegan consumers express their ethical considerations regarding animal-based tourism services? As such, the following sub-questions were developed in order to facilitate this exploration;

- RQ1: Which factors influence the ethical considerations of vegans in regards to animal-based tourism services?

- RQ2: Which ethical perspectives do vegans subscribe to in terms of animal-based tourism services?
- RQ3: What kinds of ethical consumption practices are performed by vegans in relation to animal-based tourism services?

In this regard, the study will aim to achieve a better understanding of the various attributes of animal-based tourism services that prompt certain ethical considerations on the part of vegan consumers. As such, identifying where vegans draw the line on what they consider to be either ethical or unethical animal-based tourism services will in turn shed light on their underlying ethical perspectives in regards to animal-based tourism. Furthermore, this study will contribute to the academic discussion by examining how these ethical perspectives impact various consumer practices on the part of vegan consumers. Consequentially, in the context of the present study, the ‘perspectives’ of vegans will be considered as their ethical evaluations and judgments of either specific animal-based tourism services or animal-based tourism in general, as expressed by some degree of favour or disfavour (see Shani, 2009).

By examining the perspectives of a consumers segment that currently represent a significant emerging lifestyle, the research conducted for the present study will provide a tool for local tourism businesses, global tour operators and the tourism and hospitality industry in general to better meet the needs of vegan consumers. In addition, by addressing the ever-growing awareness and concern for animal rights and welfare, animal-based tourism providers could potentially avoid criticism and improve their image and profitability. Moreover, understanding the progressive public opinion on the matter could ultimately contribute to the positive ethical development of the tourism industry. Finally, when looking at vegans as an emerging tourist segment, there is a clear demand for cruelty-free tourism services which will most likely continue to rise. Hence, it is important to understand the needs and desires of vegan consumers since the current lack of supply offers opportunities for new developments on the tourism market.

1.4 Positioning the researcher

I first met Magda in Peru during the spring of 2014. She had just recently arrived at the San Blas Spanish School, where I was living at the time, and my friends and I wanted to extend her a warm welcome, which on our part meant going out for a nice dinner and intriguing

conversation. So I proposed we go to a really nice burger restaurant just down the street from where we lived since they had the best Alpaca burgers in the city. My offer was quickly rejected when Magda stated that she was vegan and by default had absolutely no interest in Alpaca burgers. Intrigued as I was, my first response was to ask her why. Why she had made a choice to no longer eat meat, eggs, dairy or any other animal by-product, why she had made a choice to make her life more difficult than was necessary. She calmly explained the reasons behind her choices to me and I politely nodded my head, pretending to understand her motivations.

A few weeks after our first meeting we struck up a conversation in the hall and I mentioned that I was going to visit one of the animal parks in the area around Cusco. Being the socially inclusive and blissfully ignorant twenty-year-old that I was, I invited her to come along. It would seem I was not meriting my invitations properly because also this proposal was turned down. Once again Magda calmly explained to me that she does not want to visit the animal park because she is opposed to animals being kept in cages and enclosures. I had not really put much thought into the issue myself, but I did promptly disagree with her, clarifying that the park was in fact a sanctuary that takes in injured animals or animals that have been domesticated to a degree that they can no longer be released back into the wild. After hearing my explanation there seemed to be slight shift in her opposing demeanour, but she still refused to join me for a visit. This experience was my first encounter with anyone who had chosen to adopt a vegan lifestyle and as I learned, it seemed to not only affect her choice of diet, but also her general outlook on life.

If we fast forward to one seemingly unimportant evening in the autumn of 2015, I was sitting in my room watching Netflix when I decided to attempt to educate myself for a change and watch the documentary *Cowspiracy*. By the time it was over I realized I had gone through every possible human emotion in the span of one and a half hours. This film brought to light a whole new truth, which my blissfully ignorant twenty-two-year-old mind had previously been closed off to. Then all of a sudden I was back in Cusco politely nodding my head as Magda explained her reasons for becoming a vegan. The only difference was that at this point I had finally managed to grasp the severity of what she was talking about. Less than a year before that, I had decided to stop eating meat and in the moments after the documentary had ended I made a decision to become a vegan. The process of actually getting there was very slow, since as it turns out, it is not particularly easy to break twenty-two-year long blissfully ignorant habits, but after some initial struggles I seemed to find my way. Interestingly

enough, the more I read, the more I watched and the more I learned, the more I noticed that not only my perspective on the food industry was different, but my perspective on other industries had started to change as well.

Even though I was a vegan now, thinking back I still did not seem to share the same point of view as Magda when it came to visiting the animal park. I evaluated my former stance on the subject in the light of my newly acquired knowledge and I came to the same conclusion as I had less than two years earlier. I would have gladly visited the animal park because I knew that the people who worked there did their very best to care for animals that were abused, abandoned and mistreated. So, was I not a good vegan if I was not resolute in my distaste for viewing animals placed in cages and enclosures? Or perhaps, could it have been possible that I was simply being guided by a different ethical stance than the one Magda had chosen to adopt? Either way, it seemed that becoming a vegan went hand in hand with a change in perspective on many different animal-related issues. Noticing and acknowledging this change is what prompted the desire to explore and understand the ethical positions of vegan consumers regarding animal-based tourism services.

1.5 Methodology and data

The present study applies a qualitative research methodology based on netnographic principles as a means of exploring the perspectives of vegan consumers in regards to animal-based tourism services. The methodology of the study differs from traditional netnography as this would have required a larger amount of research data as well as participation in online discussions on the part of the researcher (see Kozinets, 2015). However, netnographic principles were applied in terms of data collection and research ethics. On this note, the decision to apply a methodology based on netnographic principles was supported by the notion that vegans are not geographically centred (Pires, Stanton, & Cheek, 2003), as well as the preconception that online publications allow for free and honest expressions of individual perspectives (Kozinets, 2015; Ulusoy, 2015). As such, the data for the present study was collected online and consisted of archival materials in the form of blogs. The data sample included eighteen blog posts composed by eleven different bloggers who identify themselves as vegan, which were collected from various blogging platforms through means of observational downloads. The blogs presented evaluations of ethical considerations regarding either specific animal-based tourism services or animal-based tourism in general.

In terms of data analysis, the present study applied thematic analysis following the reflective six-phased process outlined by Nowell, Norris, White and Moules (2017), which revealed four major themes within the data set. These themes all described various attributes of animal-based tourism services that the research participants considered when evaluating the ethical standing of either the specific animal-based tourism services they focussed on in their discussions or animal-based tourism in general. Finally, the researcher determined specific ethical guidelines for the present study based on the academic discussion regarding research ethics of online methodologies (see Kozinets, 2015). As such, the identity of the research participants was kept anonymous, however full untraceability of the research data was not guaranteed due to the incorporation of direct quotes as part of data representation. In addition, the participants were contacted in order to inform them about the study and allow them the possibility to opt out from their blog posts being used as research data.

1.6 Structure of the study

Following this introduction, the second chapter of the study will focus on the theoretical discussion surrounding animal-based tourism by examining the current debate on whether or not animal-based tourism services can be morally justified, followed by an evaluation of the relevant theories from the field of animal ethics. The third chapter will be dedicated to expanding the theoretical framework for the present study by positioning veganism as a growing ethical consumer movement, as well as outlining the implications of ethical purchasing for societal change. In addition this chapter will introduce relevant concepts for evaluating and understanding ethical consumption practices. Chapter four will delve deeper into the specifics concerning chosen methods of data collection and analysis, as well as the ethical considerations for online research practices. The fifth chapter then presents the findings of the thematic analysis conducted for the present study. The four major themes that emerged from the data set consequentially form the four sub-chapters for this evaluation. Finally, chapter six goes on to provide an overview and discussion of the relevant findings along with answers to the research questions, followed by an evaluation of the managerial implications, as well as a presentation of the limitations of the present study and recommendations for future research.

2 Born to be caged, harnessed and saddled

On any given day we experience countless interactions with animals in all sorts of different ways, whether we realize it or not. Animals play a very big role in the way our society is organized, ranging from the food on our plates to the companions we choose to take into our home and even the images portrayed on television and in magazines. Some animals we love and cuddle while others we are afraid of or disgusted by. Some animals we allow to sleep in our beds while others we consume as part of Thursday night dinner. Some animals we admire and fight to protect while others are sacrificed in laboratories all around the world. It seems that this dichotomy of socially and culturally induced attitudes towards different animals has led to more and more people asking the question of whether or not we can morally justify many of the things that we put animals through for the sake of our own benefit.

In regards to animal-based tourism, these questions of morality seem even more vital since tourism and entertainment are recreational in nature and, as such, human health and survival do not depend on the use of animals within this particular industry (Shani, 2009). On this note, the present chapter will shed light on the current state of animal-based tourism with a brief discussion of the main arguments for and against using animals for entertainment purposes, as can be identified from the academic literature. In addition, this chapter will present an evaluation of some of the main theories from the field of animal ethics, as applied to animal-based tourism services.

2.1 Debating animal-based tourism

In recent years, an ethical debate has arisen on the part of both scholars and practitioners surrounding some of the issues involved with incorporating animals into tourism, entertainment and recreational activities (Shani, 2009). As was previously illustrated, on the one hand animal-based tourism services are immensely popular leisure activities, but on the other, their practices and very existence provoke strong emotional responses amongst animal rights advocates as well as the general public (Shani, 2009). In an attempt to ward off some of this public concern towards their practices, animal-based tourism services have begun emphasizing their value for society and the environment, but are nevertheless still faced with harsh criticism from animal welfare and animal rights organizations for their commodification of animals (Shani, 2009). Considering the heated debate between multiple

sides and the reach and popularity of animal-based tourism services, it is important to evaluate the role that these services play within society and how they are impacting the animals that are forcibly placed at the centre of them.

Observing captive wildlife has long been an important leisure activity in contemporary society (Tribe & Booth, 2003). Interestingly enough, it would appear that our fascination with animal-based tourism is not merely a manifestation of our constant hunger for novelty and entertainment, but runs a little bit deeper than that. As such, Hutchins (2003, as cited in Shani & Pizam, 2010) points out that due to the continued processes of urbanization and modernization, we seem to have lost touch with the natural world and our contact and interactions with other animals have become very limited. Hence, we have come to possess a deeply rooted desire for close interactions with other animals. In addition, seeking out wildlife in their natural habitat would often be considered expensive and dangerous for many market segments as it requires traveling to remote destinations (Shackley, 1996). For this reason, in order to answer to the need for human-animal interactions as well as make these interactions more accessible, various tourism services displaying some form of captive wildlife were established (Beardsworth & Bryman, 2001, as cited in Shani, 2009).

Regardless of this apparent societal need for animal-based tourism services, they have still received harsh criticism in recent years. In this regard, various researchers (see Agaramoorthy, 2004; Beardsworth & Bryman 2001; Cataldi, 2002; Hughes 2001; Regan, 1995; Wickins-Dražilová, 2006) have argued against placing wild animals in captive settings based on objections to unethical practices such as the disruption of family and social groups, poor captive environments with low welfare standards, and encouragement of unnatural behaviour through training (Shani, 2009; Shani & Pizam, 2009). Furthermore, it is a fact that many natural conditions such as climate, migration, and hunting cannot easily be simulated in a captive environment and as research has shown a lack of natural conditions in combination with confinement and a constant proximity to humans generally results in stress and unnatural behaviour in wild animals (Wickins-Dražilová, 2006). In addition, there are scholars (see e.g. Jamieson, 2006; Regan, 1995) who completely reject any justifications for the existence of animal-based tourism services based on the notion that these institutions essentially deny the intrinsic value of the animals by regarding them as mere resources. This notion is also supported by Hughes (2001), as he argues that animals in tourism are more often considered objects rather than subjects and as such their value lies only in generating pleasure for tourists and profit for the tourism providers.

On this note, a prevailing argument against animal-based tourism services relates to their role in perpetuating the idea of human superiority and lack of respect towards the animal other (Shani, 2009; Shani & Pizam, 2009). As such, it can be argued that animal-based tourism services actually reaffirm socially accepted practices of speciesism. This term describes discrimination against animals, similarly to how people discriminate against each other (e.g., sexism and racism), but instead of intra-group discrimination it refers to inter-group discrimination based on biological categories, or species (Fennell, 2012, p. 39). In this regard, some species are given preference over others whereas human interests are naturally placed above all else. It is this assumption of human superiority that allows us to justify the use of animals for human benefit (Fennell, 2012, p. 39). The following statement by Dunayer (2004, p. 1, as cited in Fennell, 2012, p. 39) illustrates the extent of speciesism in contemporary society;

“Whenever you see a bird in cage, fish in a tank, or nonhuman mammal on a chain, you’re seeing speciesism. If you believe a bee or frog has less right to life and liberty than a chimpanzee or human, or you consider humans superior to other animals, you subscribe to speciesism. If you visit aquaprisons and zoos, attend circuses that include ‘animal acts’, wear non-human skin or hair, or eat flesh, eggs, or cow-milk products, you practice speciesism.”

In response to the criticism of their practices and overall existence, many animal-based tourism services have started positioning themselves as educational and conservational institutions that are not only of value for society, but play an important role when it comes to tackling environmental issues as well (Ballantyne, Packer, Hughes, & Dierking, 2007; Mason, 2000; Shani, 2009). In this regard, certain animal-based tourism services like zoos and wildlife parks have been credited for raising awareness about global issues such as the loss of wildlife habitats and biological diversity (Falk et al., 2007; Shani & Pizam, 2010), as well as preserving species that would otherwise become extinct (Shani & Pizam, 2008). In addition, as recent times have been characterized by a shift in public opinion in regards to the confinement of wild animals, tourists nowadays express a clear preference for more naturalistic presentations of animals instead of the former and out-dated circus-type presentations (Hughes, Newsome, & Macbeth, 2005). In this regard, it is important to note that many captive animal environments have made significant improvements in regards to the welfare and quality of life of animals through means of providing wide open spaces as well as behavioural and environmental enrichments (Ben-Ari, 2001; Davey, 2006, as cited in Shani, 2009).

Nevertheless, despite the educational and conservational components that are part of the work of many animal-based tourism services and the improvements made in terms of animal wellbeing, these institutions are still more often than not perceived as places for entertainment (see e.g. Clayton, Fraser, & Saunders, 2009; Ryan & Saward, 2004; Turley, 1999). Unfortunately, as the majority of animal-based tourism services are in fact profit oriented, they prioritize visitor satisfaction and will often make compromises in the animals' wellbeing for the sake of better entertainment (Shani, 2009). For example, the desire of many visitors for high visibility of the animals may clash with the animals' need for privacy (Hall & Brown, 2006; Reynolds & Braithwaite, 2001), but will in most cases still be given priority as good visibility results in happy paying customers. So even if we assume that animal-based tourism services can live up to their supposed roles in terms of improving environmental responsibility and conservational awareness, as more and more research on animal sentience and wellbeing becomes available, their negative impacts on animal populations as well as individual animals cannot be overlooked (Shani & Pizam, 2010).

2.2 Animal ethics to the rescue

After logging was made illegal in Thailand in 1989, all of the elephants that were working in the logging industry were placed in camps that would start welcoming tourists and offering them the experience of a lifetime; riding on the back of an elephant. In the eyes and minds of the Thai people, these riding camps gave the retired logging elephants a new job and a new purpose. To this day, elephant riding camps in Thailand are perceived as important institutions because they create a place for the elephants to belong while simultaneously stimulating the local economy as the biggest tourism attractions in the country (see Duffy & Moore, 2011). On the other hand, many animal-rights organizations actually encourage tourists to stay away from elephant camps in Thailand due to moral considerations regarding the physical and psychological abuse that these elephants are subjected to on a daily basis (see ex. World Animal Protection, n.d.).

In this regard, the way people approach the ethical debate on the use of animals for tourism and entertainment purposes will naturally depend on their priorities and values, as well as the ethical positions they consciously or subconsciously subscribe to (see Äijälä, García-Rosell, & Haanpää, 2017; Hughes, 2001). As such, the following subchapter will present an evaluation of the most prominent ethical positions from the field of animals ethics, which

“considers the acceptability of the use of animals in different contexts” (Collins, Hanlon, More, & Duggan, 2008, p. 752, as cited in Fennell, 2012, p. 11). When examining the academic literature on the subject of animal ethics it can be stated that within the existing canon it is possible to identify three broad positions regarding the extension of moral consideration towards animals; the environmental ethics, animal welfare and animal rights perspectives (Äijälä, García-Rosell, & Haanpää, 2017; Hughes, 2001; Fennell, 2012). According to Hughes (2001), the key distinction between these three positions lies in the way they regard the welfare and moral standing of individual animals. The philosophy behind these positions will be discussed in detail below, followed by an evaluation of the concrete application of this philosophy in the context of animal-based tourism. In addition, the ethical position of ecofeminism will also be discussed as a means of exploring how our manifested behaviour speaks to our ethical predispositions and vice versa. This concept is given priority as it closely relates to vegan understandings and beliefs, as well as ethical consumption, and thus is directly relevant for the research at hand.

Environmental ethics

The modern-day position of environmental ethics came into existence as a result of Aldo Leopold's land ethic (see Leopold, 1989), which essentially argues that any action can be ethically justified as long as it does not disrupt the integrity of the ecosystem as a whole (Hughes, 2001). Based on this understanding, the wellbeing of individual animals is not prioritized, but rather it is the ecosystem that is granted moral consideration. According to Hughes (2001, p. 323), “within such a position it would be perfectly acceptable to kill an individual animal, so long as that action did not have wider repercussions that threatened the survival of one or more species.” An interesting example of how this position can come into effect was the global response to the overexploitation of many of the world's whale stocks during the course of the twentieth century. At a time when excessive whaling was threatening the existence of entire species, worldwide limitations were implemented concerning the amount and the kinds of whales that could be hunted (Herrera and Hoagland, 2006, as cited in Shani & Pizam, 2008). Essentially, whaling was still accepted, but limitations were imposed in an attempt to preserve the integrity of the ecosystem and prevent potential species extinction.

In the context of animal-based tourism, Shani and Pizam (2008) argue that tourists and operators who subscribe to the environmental ethics standpoint are for the most part accepting of the current practices of the tourism industry. Only in rare cases, when entire species are threatened with extinction, will advocates of the environmental ethics position object to the activity, for example in the case of hunting of endangered animals, as was previously illustrated. In this regard, zoos, circuses, safaris, hunting trips, rodeos, and other animal-based tourism services are not considered morally wrong, mainly because they attracts visitors and hence improve human economic conditions (Fennell, 2012, p. 6; Shani & Pizam, 2008). Furthermore, advocates of environmental ethics often argue that zoos and other animal-based tourism services preserve species that would otherwise become extinct and for this reason their very existence is perceived as an environmentally responsible act (Shani & Pizam, 2008). However, from another perspective of environmental ethics, one might argue that, “for example, a condor is meaningless outside of its natural habitat; in a zoo it ceases to be a condor because it can no longer do what a condor does or be what a condor is” (Hughes, 2001, p. 324).

Animal welfare

Similarly to environmental ethics, supporters of the animal welfare position also accept the use of animals for the sake of human benefit. However, they are concerned with the quality of life and thus the welfare of individual animals (Fennell, 2015; Hughes, 2001; Shani & Pizam, 2008). In this regard, Blandford, Bureau, Fulponi and Henson (2002, as cited in Shani & Pizam, 2008) argue that the use of animals for the benefit of humans carries with it certain obligations; “these are the provision of essential food, water and shelter, health care and maintenance, the alleviation of pain and suffering, and the ability to enjoy minimal movement” (p. 683). For the most part, animal welfare supporters will accept that if these conditions are met, humans have fulfilled their obligations to the animals (Fennell, 2015). As such, in the context of animal welfare, there is no argument of whether or not animals should be used by humans, but rather a focus on the desire to eliminate animal suffering as much as possible (Fennell, 2015; Hughes, 2001; Shani & Pizam, 2008).

Interestingly, after examining Hughes’ (2001) description of animal welfare, it would appear this position also carries some of the core characteristic of utilitarianism (i.e. an interest to attain the maximum amount of good for the highest number of stakeholders (Fennell,

2012b)). In this regard, Hughes (2001) argues that in situations where the benefits to human welfare, or to the welfare of the animal species as a whole, outweigh the costs to the individual, animal welfare supporters will in fact accept some degree of suffering. Considering this concept in terms of animal-based tourism, Hughes (2001) explains that the captivity of wild animals solely for the purposes of entertainment would generally be considered wrong. It seems that from an animal welfare perspective, entertainment is not a valid enough reason to justify potential suffering on the part of the animals. However, if confinement were considered necessary in the context of education and conservation, it would be accepted by animal welfare supporters based on the notion that the overall benefits by far exceed the cost of suffering to individual animals (Hughes, 2001).

Animal rights

As opposed to environmental ethics and animal welfare, the animal rights position grants moral consideration to animals by virtue of their sentience and their capacity to feel pain (Hughes, 2001; Shani & Pizam, 2008). As is stated by Fennell (2012), the animal rights perspective embodies the notion that “our relationship with animals should not be based on how we manage populations, but rather on the fact that individuals are important in these populations, just as they are with our own species” (p. 50). In this regard, supporters of the animal rights position consider animals to be equal to humans and therefore will perceive any act which affects the wellbeing of an individual animal as being morally wrong (Shani & Pizam, 2008).

In line with this reasoning, supporters of the animal rights position will reject any tourism or leisure activity that involves killing, suffering, and removing animals from their natural environment or placing them in captivity (Fennell, 2012, p. 6; Hughes, 2001; Shani and Pizam, 2008). On the other hand, animal rights proponents will show support for tourism services that allow for viewing animals in the wild, rather than in captivity, and will actively argue for the establishment of animal-free attractions (Shani & Pizam, 2008). One interesting example of the impact of the animal rights movement on the tourism industry can be found in the work of Hughes (2001), where he describes how animal rights activists caused the extinction of dolphinaria in the UK and inspired the growing popularity of dolphin watching in the wild. In addition, Shani and Pizam (2008, p. 685) explain that “evidence as to the influence of the animal rights movement is also found in the growing popularity of animal-

free circuses, which completely avoid the use of animals and feature only skilled human performers.”

It would appear that the philosophy of animal rights supporters in many ways addresses what scholars have deemed to be the core issue related to the use of animals in tourism; the fact that animals are more often considered objects rather than subjects (Hughes, 2001). This notion entails that animals are essentially only ascribed value based on their ability to generate pleasure for tourists and profit for operators, and thus are perceived as having instrumental rather than intrinsic value (Fennell, 2012, p. 6; Hughes, 2001). This commodification of animals is what Fennell (2013) has deemed as a significant obstacle preventing a more ethical relationship with animals in tourism processes, but is not necessarily questioned by environmental ethics and animal welfare supporters. From the perspective of these positions, the tourism industry can always justify using animals on the basis of profit or good animal welfare, but the crucial difference lies in the notion that whereas animal welfare advocates argue for bigger and better cages for animals used in tourism, animal rights advocates argue for empty cages (Fennell, 2012a).

Ecofeminism

Ecological feminism or ecofeminism is essentially an ethical position that developed as a critical response to other mainstream theories (Yudina & Fennell, 2013), the most relevant of which were analysed above. As Yudina and Fennell (2013, p. 57) put it, ecofeminism “is an alternative that emphasizes emotion as well as context in understanding our relation to the rest of the natural world.” As such, this position is often referred to as an ethic of care, because it addresses the importance of empathy as a means of connecting to one another as well as to the natural world (Kheel 2009, as cited in Yudina & Fennell, 2013). Furthermore, unlike the theories that were previously discussed, ecofeminism does not argue either for the preservation of ecosystems and species or for the welfare of individual animals, but instead encourages sympathy towards individual beings as well as larger wholes (Kheel 2008, as cited in Yudina & Fennell, 2013). In addition, where the animal rights perspective grants moral consideration to animals based on their sentience, ecofeminist philosophy would instead emphasize that “more so than sentience, it is important to recognize the sacredness and interconnectedness of all life on this planet” (Yudina & Fennell, 2013, p. 61).

Considering the way that ecofeminism perceives animals and the natural world, it should come as no surprise that, because of the value placed on empathy, individuals who subscribe to this position also tend to lean towards a vegetarian or vegan lifestyle. In this regard, “vegetarian ecofeminism suggests that we express our feelings for others through concrete action, such as refusing to eat meat through the practices of vegetarianism and veganism” (Yudina & Fennell, 2013, p. 57). Essentially, what this statement suggests is that we voice our moral considerations towards the animal other and the natural world as a whole through concrete actions and, in a similar fashion, these actions in turn also speak to our ethics. Considering the climate of modern-day society, where concrete action generally translates to consumer purchasing, it can be argued that it is in fact our consumer choices that eventually end up speaking the loudest.

Based on this notion, understanding the way that people relate to animals can lead to a better understanding of how we choose to consume the products and services that they are a part of. This concept seems to be particularly relevant in the context of animal-based tourism because even though Hughes (2001) states that animals are only occasionally consumed as part of the local cuisine, Yudina and Fennell (2013, p. 62) argue that we do in fact consume animals in more ways than that; “We no longer experience (places, people, nature, etc.) as we once did. In contrast, we consume our experiences. Even in viewing free-living animals, supposedly a non-consumptive activity, we consume them through our camera lenses.” It seems that consuming has become a vital aspect of our lives in the context of modern-day society and as a result requires further consideration. The significance of our consumer choices and how they are impacted by our ethical understanding will be discussed at length in the following chapter for the case of vegan consumers.

3 Veganism as an ethical consumer movement

More and more people are showing interest and concern for the state of the world that we are living in today. For some, concern is all there will ever be, but for others this concern translates into direct action. As people become more conscious about the choices they are making in an attempt to minimize their footprint on the planet, they begin to voice their concerns in the easiest and most accessible way known to them; by spending money. More specifically, by making an informed choice about what they decide to buy and not buy. Interestingly enough, it would appear that as members of a society we all have the ability to voice our concerns about the state of that society through the choices we make as consumers (Dickinson & Carsky, 2005).

Based on this notion, this chapter will present an evaluation of veganism as a movement of people who are consistently voicing their concerns about health, animals and the environment through the consumer choices they make on a daily basis. In this regard, the discussion will firstly introduce vegans as a quickly growing consumer segment that merits consideration from both producers and researchers alike, followed by an evaluation of the implications of ethical purchasing for societal change and the significance of veganism as an ethical consumer movement for the global market. Finally, the present chapter will also discuss the most notable frameworks of ethical consumption practices as a basis for the discussion that will be presented later on.

3.1 Vegan here, vegan there, vegan everywhere

The term ‘veganism’ is most commonly used in relation to specific food choices that involve the abstinence from eating meat as well as any other animal products, such as dairy, eggs and honey (Bertella, 2018, p. 67; Cohen, 2018, p. 4). All throughout human civilization there have been accounts of individuals as well as different cultural and social groups who, for various reasons, have chosen to abstain from consuming animal products (Wrenn, 2011). People such as Albert Einstein, Leo Tolstoy and Leonardo Da Vinci have famously spoken out against the killing of animals for sustenance based on issues of ethics and morality (DeFranza, 2013). In addition, vegetarianism was historically practiced to varying degrees within the Hindu caste system as part of the religious injunction of non-violence (Cohen, 2018, p. 4) and even as early as 500 BC Siddhartha Gautama, better known as the Buddha,

had been discussing vegetarian diets with his followers (The Vegan Society, n.d.). However, it was not until the 19th century that various movements advocating for abstinence from either some or all animal products began making actual social and political headway (Spencer, 1996, as cited in Wrenn, 2011). Consequently, in 1944 the modern vegan movement was initiated with the establishment of ‘The Vegan Society’ in Britain (The Vegan Society, n.d.; Wrenn, 2011). As such, veganism was introduced as a response to some of the ethical inconsistencies of vegetarianism (Watson, 1944, as cited in Wrenn, 2011) and positioned itself as a “movement or philosophy that advocates and entails abstinence from consuming any animal product [...] and stands against widespread animal exploitation and abuse in contemporary society” (Ulusoy, 2015, p. 420).

The choice to abstain from consuming any or all animal products can be motivated by different factors. In this regard, academic research on the subject (see e.g. Fox & Ward, 2008; Hussar & Harris, 2009; Rozin, Markwith, & Stoess, 1997; White, Seymour, & Frank, 1999) has found that individuals choosing to subscribe to a vegetarian or vegan diet do so mostly out of a concern for the ethical treatment of animals within society (Ruby, 2012). However, other motivations are not so much guided by ethics, but by a concern for personal health or the environmental impact of the meat production industry. In addition, religious and spiritual considerations of purity and cleanliness as well as sensory disgust have been cited as personal motivations for the abstinence from meat and animal products (Ruby, 2012). Furthermore, it is interesting to note that on several occasions scientific publications (see e.g. Filippi et al., 2010; Preylo & Arikawa, 2008) have concluded that individuals who abstain from eating meat, more so than omnivores, express higher levels of empathy for the suffering of both humans and animals alike (Ruby, 2012). As such, this notion directly relates vegetarianism and veganism to the previous discussion surrounding the feminist ethic of care. Finally, in the case of ethically motivated vegans, the choice of abstaining from meat and other animal products can be understood as a tangible expression of personal values and beliefs (Bertella, 2018, p. 67), which present themselves as communicators of identity and lifestyle (Bourdieu, 1984, as cited in Miele & Evans, 2010).

Since the establishment of The Vegan Society, veganism as a movement has steadily been gaining more ground in terms of group membership and social acceptance (The Vegan Society, n.d.; Wrenn, 2011). Nowadays veganism is a fast growing phenomenon (Ruby, 2012, as cited in Bertella, 2018, p. 67) and although a worldwide statistic concerning the number of vegans is yet to be established, various national-level surveys show that this

number has risen exponentially over the past several years (see Radnitz et al., 2015), with a notably increased interest especially visible in more developed and affluent parts of the world, such as North-America, Northern- and Western-Europe, Australia and New Zealand (Figure 1) (Google Trends, n.d.; Key, Appleby & Rosell, 2006). For example, a recent survey commissioned by the Vegan Society found that the number of vegans in the United Kingdom has risen by more than 360% over the past decade, making veganism one of Britain’s fastest growing lifestyle movements (Quinn, 2016). A similar study commissioned by the Vegetarian Resource Group in the United States found that the number of vegans in the US had more than doubled in just three years (Sareen, 2013). Furthermore, in January 2018, Google Trends reported the highest level of searches for the term ‘vegan’ thus far; 100 on a scale of 0-100 (Figure 2) (Google Trends, n.d.).



Figure 1: Interest in veganism by region (Google Trends, n.d.)

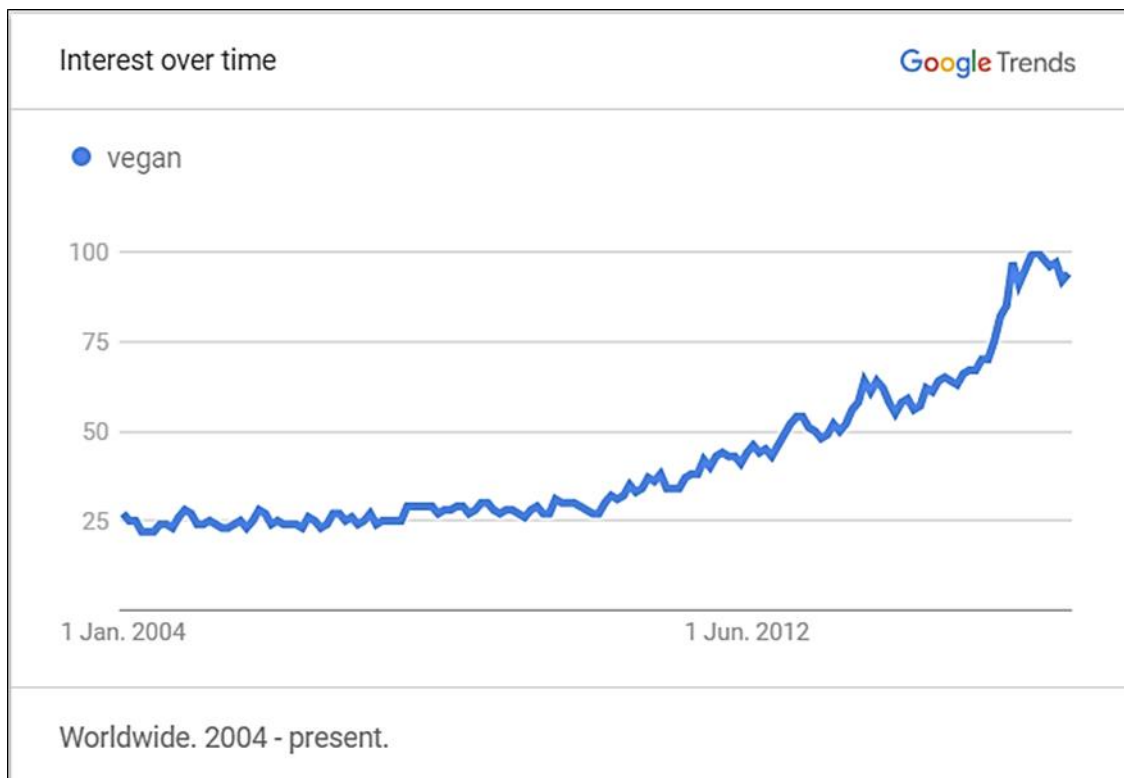


Figure 2: Interest in veganism over time (Google Trends, n.d.)

It can be argued that this increased interest in veganism has resulted from what researchers (see e.g. Barnett, Cloke, Clarke, & Malpass, 2005a; Bryant & Goodman, 2004) have found to be a widespread concern regarding the ethics of modern-day food production in many of the world's most affluent countries (Miele & Evans, 2010). On this note, a recent study published by hospitality consulting firm Baum + Whiteman offers some interesting insight specifically concerning the current and future state of the food industry. The report states that, as a result of the rising number of vegan consumers around the world, the demand for plant-based food is expected to grow at a rate of approximately 10% annually for the foreseeable future (Baum + Whiteman, 2017). Although this report is solely focussed on veganism in relation to food, it can definitely serve as an indicator for the fact that consumers are becoming more mindful of the potential impact of the products they are purchasing. This increase in consumer consciousness has already proven to be a driving force behind societal change (Baum + Whiteman, 2017; Dickinson & Carsky, 2005) and with the amount of vegan consumers expected to continue to rise, it will be important to understand how vegans relate to the products and services around them through their consumer choices, as will be discussed in the following subchapter.

3.2 Understanding ethical consumption

The notion of consumer buying has significant implications for modern-day society for many different reasons. Most notably, buying by consumers is a key component of the economic systems of most industrialized countries and low levels of consumption can potentially lead to an unfavourable economic state (Dickinson & Carsky, 2005, p 26). In addition to the economic significance of consumer purchasing, the social and cultural impact of consumption within society cannot be overlooked. As Dickinson and Hollander (1991, as cited in Dickinson & Carsky, 2005, p 26) point out, “individuals reflect their values and beliefs by what they do or do not buy.” In this way, consumer choices become a signifier of what individuals perceive as good or bad and consumers can show favour or disfavour towards products or services offered by a particular company or produced in a particular country (Dickinson & Carsky, 2005, p 26). Consequently, consumption becomes a means for individuals to construct a sense of identity by expressing what they deem to be important in life (Kozinets, 2001, as cited in Dickinson & Carsky, 2005, p 26). This expression of personal values and beliefs through purchasing behaviour is the essence of ethical consumption (Harrison et al., 2005).

On this note, when considering the psychology of consumer behaviour, general economic theory suggests that people will usually make a purchase based on the price of the product or service in relation to its quality and utility as it compares to similar products or services available on the market. This type of consumer behaviour can be described as ‘traditional purchasing’ or ‘traditional purchase behaviour’ (Harrison, Newholm, & Shaw, 2005, p. 2). Sometimes, however, a different type of behaviour occurs. As described by Harrison et al. (2005, p. 2), people might choose certain products over others because of a concern for the environment or fair trade. Consumers who exhibit this type of behaviour are led by different motivations for choosing one product or service over another and are essentially factoring additional criteria in their decision making process, going beyond the scope of price and quality (Harrison et al., 2005, p. 2). This particular type of consumer behaviour is defined as ‘ethical purchase behaviour’ or ‘ethical consumption’ and can be differentiated from ‘traditional purchasing’ by the notion that ethical consumers are concerned with the potential effects of their personal choices on the world around them (Andorfer, 2015; Harrison et al., 2005, p. 2; Pecoraro & Uusitalo, 2014).

In an attempt to further explore this differentiation, firstly it is important to recognise that all consumer behaviour, be it traditional purchasing or ethical consumption, is rarely individualistic, but instead is mostly based on relationships and is often directed towards others (Sayer, 2003, p. 353, as cited in Barnett et al., 2005a). As a result, it is individual values and a concern for others that will consistently influence and shape consumer choices (Barnett, Cafaro, & Newholm, 2005). However, in the case of ethical consumption practices, instead of a mere sense of concern, the consumer is guided by a sense of responsibility or obligation towards others. In this regard, Barnett et al. (2005a) explain that within the scope of ethical consumption this sense of responsibility towards both human and non-human others is acknowledged and accepted through means of ethical action and becomes an integral part of consumer identity and behaviour. In this way, ethical consumption can be understood as a practice that allows for the articulation of specific ethical values guided by a sense of responsibility towards others and directed at issues of ethical concern, such as for example environmental sustainability or animal welfare (Barnett et al., 2005a).

When it comes to ethical purchase behaviour, it seems that concrete consumer choices carry quite a bit of weight and are even placed on the same level as an individual's political voting agenda (Dickinson & Carsky, 2005, p 25). In this analogy, the market is seen as a democracy in which every penny that is spent constitutes an individual vote. What this means is that essentially "consumers participate in creating the societies of which they are a part by their purchases, just as they may influence their environments by their votes in political elections" (Dickinson & Carsky, 2005, p 25). Based on this notion, going beyond a mere expression of values and beliefs, it appears that consumer choices have the power to introduce notable change in the current marketplace structures. By exerting their consumer votes, ethical consumers are influencing companies in their adaptation of existing products and services or even in the creation of new ones (Dickinson & Carsky, 2005, p 26-27). This concept was already illustrated above in the context of the increased offer of plant-based foods due to a shift in consumer demand.

Furthermore, it is important to note that even though consumption is an individual act, in many ways it also serves as a means of integrating the consumer into a group due to the fact that even though consumers may be voting independently, in most cases the values that drive their purchasing behaviour will be shared by other consumers (Dickinson & Carsky, 2005, p 35; Moreira & Rosa, 2014). Furthermore, it is clear that the choices of a single consumer, much like a single vote, will not carry enough weight to tip the scales in the grand scheme of

impacting the global market. However, if many consumers vote the same way, society will have to respond and this group action can become the driving force for substantial change (Dickinson & Carsky, 2005, p 34-35). In the case of the growing segment of consumers who share the common values associated with a vegan lifestyle, the significance of group action and its implications for society are apparent.

When considering the current position of vegan consumers, it can be argued that vegans have moved past the point of passive purchasing and are actively involved in co-producing the products and services they wish to see on the market (Dickinson & Carsky, 2005, p 26-27; Ulusoy, 2015). As is clearly illustrated above, society can be shaped and benefited by the consumer's economic vote and in the case of ethical consumption, consumers merge economic action with political action in their striving to bring about social change (Parker, 1999, as cited in Wrenn, 2011). According to Wrenn (2011), veganism as a consumer movement directly opposes the commodification of animals as the choices of vegan consumers become a daily, lived expression of ethical commitment and protest. In this sense, vegans do indeed recognize consumption as form of a social and political action (Wrenn, 2011), the extent of which could cause a significant societal shift. As Singer and Mason (2006) argue, a mass adoption of veganism could put an end to the demand for animal products, and cause animal businesses to shift to different industries. The following paragraphs will present an analysis of the most commonly occurring ethical consumption practices in an attempt to better understand the ways in which ethical consumers are able to influence the market with their consumer votes.

Different types of ethical consumption practices can be identified depending on the ways in which consumers relate to a particular product or company (Harrison et al., 2005, p 2). Several different categorizations are commonly used within the academic literature and they all mainly differentiate 'negative purchase behaviour' from 'positive purchase behaviour' (Andorfer, 2015; Harrison et al., 2005; Tallontire et al., 2001). Negative purchase behaviour, also called 'boycotting' or 'negative buying', manifests in a consumer's refusal to buy a product or service based on the understanding that it is in some way harmful to people, animals, the environment, etc. (Andorfer, 2015; Harrison et al, 2005, p. 2). In addition, boycotting on the part of ethical consumers can also go as far as punishing specific companies for their unethical conduct by and outright refusal to purchase any of their products or services. A commonly used example of company boycotting is the case of Nestlé where from 1977 up to the present consumers have been refusing to purchase Nestlé products

because of the company’s aggressive marketing strategy to promote breast milk substitutes in developing countries (Andorfer, 2015; Baker, 1985; Tallontire et al., 2001, p 7). On the other hand, positive purchasing behaviour, also known as ‘positive buying’ or ‘buycotting’, refers to behaviour where consumers consciously choose to purchase what they perceive as ethical products or services over conventional alternatives as a means of rewarding a company for its ethical policies (Andorfer, 2015; Harrison et al., 2005, p 2; Tallontire et al., 2001).

In addition to positive and negative purchase behaviour, several other types of ethical consumption practices can be identified within the academic literature. In their model (Figure 3), Tallontire et al. (2001) include ‘consumer action’ as a third type of ethical consumer behaviour, with the concept of consumer action referring to activities that do not involve direct purchasing, but are still meant to influence the market. As such, examples of consumer action involve lobbying policy makers, writing petitions, and initiating campaigns (Tallontire et al., 2001). A different categorization developed by Harrison et al. (2005, p. 3) also starts out by distinguishing negative and positive purchasing, but in addition identifies three other types of ethical consumer behaviour: (1) ‘fully-screened’ referring to comparative ethical ratings across an entire product range (ex. publishing ethical consumer magazines to inform consumers about ethical/unethical corporate behaviour); (2) ‘relationship purchasing’ via which consumers seek to educate sellers about their ethical needs (ex. community-supported agriculture); and (3) ‘anti-consumerism or sustainable consumerism’ meaning that consumers try to avoid unsustainable products entirely and, in extreme cases, resort to not consuming anything at all (Fournier 1998, as cited in Moreira & Rosa, 2014). The manifestation of these various types of ethical consumption practices, as displayed by vegan consumers in relation to animal-based tourism services, will be given further consideration as part of the present study.



Figure 4: Types of ethical consumer behaviour (Tallontire et al., 2001, p. 7)

4 A netnographic approach

After careful consideration regarding the purpose and exploratory nature of the present study, as well as the research questions it aims to answer, the decision was made that a qualitative research methodology informed by the interpretive social sciences paradigm would be best suited to generate knowledge grounded in the lived experiences (see Nowell et al., 2017) of vegan consumers in regards to animal-based tourism services. As such, this choice of method is useful for exploring and understanding meanings (Creswell, 2009, p. 4, as cited in Kozinets, 2015, p. 54) and allows for the researcher's insider's perspective to serve as a tool in terms of data interpretation (Jennings, 2010, p. 42). Consequentially, traditional ethnographic research practices, such as participant observation, in-depth interviews, focus group discussions, etc. were given consideration, but finally the decision was made that a research approach based on netnographic principles would be best suited for the study at hand.

The following sub-chapters will present a detailed overview of the methodological choices concerning the present study, starting with an evaluation of the applicability of online research methods to the study of the vegan consumer segment as a means of justifying the choice of a netnographic approach. Furthermore, the process of data collection will be outlined, followed by a detailed description of the thematic analysis conducted for the present study, in an attempt to take into consideration various arguments (see Braun & Clarke, 2006; Malterud, 2001; Thorne, 2000) relating to the notion that "researchers need to be clear about what they are doing, why they are doing it, and include a clear description of analysis methods" (Nowell et al., 2017). Finally, the application of various ethical considerations for online research practices will be discussed.

4.1 Researching vegan consumers online

"Through their media shall ye know them" (2015, p 24); a phrase used by Robert V. Kozinets in his book 'Netnography: Redefined' and a phrase that captures the essence of our 21st Century society in regards to the way we communicate, interact and express ourselves. As Kozinets (2015) explains, online media offer new and fascinating insights into the realities and lived experiences of their users, who nowadays amount to billions of people worldwide. Consequentially, online media have become an invaluable source of information, not only for

researchers, but also businesses, product developers and marketers wishing to grasp the needs and wants of their desired consumer segments. In addition to being a source of information, online media have also opened a new door for social and political activism. As Kozinets (2015, p 22) states “in recent history, we have seen multiple instances of connective technologies fomenting revolutionary ideas that have turned into political action.” One obvious example is of course the Arab Spring, but in general the internet has created an outlet for critique and call-to-action regarding any and all social justice issues, no matter how big or small. Animal exploitation and abuse is one such social justice issue and vegans all over the world speak out against it every day through their consumer choices and of course online.

As such, it is clear that the impact of the internet and online media goes beyond simply offering a platform for people to speak their mind and connect with others who share their interests and opinions. In this regard, it is interesting to consider one particular notion presented by Kozinets, De Valck, Wojnicki and Wilner (2010), namely that online social interactions have given rise to what they have termed the ‘consumer-marketer hybrid’. To illustrate this notion, it can be argued that vegan bloggers for example are more than just consumers expressing their personal views and opinions as they are also simultaneously marketing an ideal, product, service, way of life, etc. Considering the reach of the internet and its potential for behavioural impact (Kozinets, 1998, p. 366, as cited in Kozinets, 2015, p. 24), studying the online presence of these consumer-marketers can offer valuable insights when it comes to understanding social change.

In terms of online research, Kozinets’ netnography is one of several practices used as a means of studying the complex world of the internet. As such, netnographic research aims at understanding personal ideas, opinions and behaviours (Kozinets, 2015) by taking advantage of the aforementioned freedom of expression that the internet provides. In this regard, netnographic methodology is often considered to be highly useful when it comes to studying the consumption practices of cultures and communities who interact and express themselves online (Kozinets, 2015). In addition, netnographic research practices offer a less intrusive approach to researching such personal ideas, opinions and behaviours that might be of a more sensitive variety (Kozinets, 2015; Langer & Beckman, 2005), as well as offering access to a wider group of participants and respondents that are not geographically bound (Pires et al., 2003). As was previously discussed, the objective of this particular study is to explore the ethical consumption practices of vegan tourists in regards to animal-based tourism services. For the purpose of this exploration, it was deemed that a research approach inspired by

netnographic practices would be best suited to shed light on these ethical consumption practices since “veganism is a phenomenon that deals with mostly ethical and thus sensitive issues and it is not very convenient to gain access to such communities with conventional ethnographic methods as vegans are not geographically concentrated” (Ulusoy, 2015, p. 421).

On this note, it is important to acknowledge that the methodological choices of the present study differ from what Robert V. Kozinets (2015) has described to be the common research practice constituting archetypal netnography, namely “a specific set of related data collection, analysis, ethical and representational research practices, where a significant amount of the data collected and participant observational research conducted originates in and manifests through the data shared freely on the Internet” (p 47). In this regard, the present study follows netnographic research practices in terms of focussing on archival data, which will be collected from online sources through means of observational downloads. In addition, the study takes into consideration the specific ethical guidelines concerning online research practices. However, as Kozinets (2015) describes, traditional netnography should be rooted in core ethnographic principles of participant observation, which generally entail the researcher observing as well as participating in the activities under study (Musante & DeWalt, 2010). This practice will not be applied in the case of the present study as the focus will solely be on readily available online archives as opposed to participating or engaging in online discussions.

This decision was made based on the notion that participant observation in the context of ethical consumer research mainly serves to provide the researcher with the proximity to observe behaviour that might not be openly shared in interviews or discussions due to restrictions concerning social desirability bias (Marshall & Rossman, 2014). However, this particular drawback could possibly be avoided within the context of online archival data, considering the freedom of expression the internet provides (Andorfer, 2015; Tallontire et al., 2001). For this reason, participant-observation will not be integrated into the methodology of the present study. In addition, regarding data analysis and representation, the present study will apply thematic analysis as opposed to other analytic practices that are commonly used within the context of netnographic research. The reason for this being that thematic analysis is often considered a foundational method for qualitative research and is thus well suited for researchers with little experience in qualitative research methodology (Braun & Clarke, 2006), which is applicable in the case of this researcher. Considering these deviations from

the common research practices of archetypal netnography, the term netnographic approach is assigned to the methodology of this study.

4.2 A quest for data

As was previously explained, this study will focus on archival materials in terms of data collection. On the topic of internet archives, Kozinets (2015, p. 71) states that “participant demography behaviours of consumption, choice, attention, reaction, learning and so forth, are widely captured and logged.” As such, studying these readily available internet archives is deemed highly beneficial for the research at hand. Considering the research questions the study seeks to answer, it was decided that the most beneficial internet archives would need to allow for expression of deep personal thoughts and opinions. According to Kozinets (2015, p 146), this kind of deep personal data that does not centre around interactions, but instead is a pure expression of individual perspectives, is most appropriately found in the form of blogs. In this regard, the data collection process was initiated by identifying personal vegan blogs as well as vegan websites and online communities that allow for guest blog entries, through the use of online search engine Google. Once a personal blog or a blogging community was identified, individual blog entries within that particular space were examined for relevancy to the research topic.

During this examination any individual blog entries that in some way related to animal-based tourism services were narrowed down based on the criteria that the blogs do not simply offer a mere description of a visit or an experience, but actually present an evaluation of ethical considerations regarding either a specific animal-based tourism services or animal-based tourism in general. In this regard, the goal was to identify data sources that provide a sense of the lived experiences of vegan consumers (see Kozinets, 2015). In addition to relevancy, consideration was also given to the richness of information provided in the blog entries, as well as the length and quality of the text. The data collection process was put to a halt at the point when new and informative insights regarding the research topic were no longer being identified (see Höckert, 2009).

The final data sample was composed to include blog posts that were (1) written in English (2) by individuals who identify themselves as vegan and (3) describe personal ethical considerations regarding animal-based tourism services. Since the segment under study is

vegan consumers in general, specifications concerning geographical location and demographic characteristics of the research participants were not influential factors in terms of sample composition. The only common denominator is that all of the research participants are vegan. In addition, as this study is exploratory in nature and seeks to examine the perspective of vegan consumers in regards to animal-based tourism services in general, there were no specifications for the types of animal-based tourism services discussed in the various blog posts. In a similar fashion, there were no restrictions of geographical location for the animal-based tourism services under study. Consequentially, the only criterion was that the blog entries discussed animal-based tourism services that fit within the categorization that was previously developed for the present study. Finally, judgment sampling was used to compose a versatile segment regarding the types of animal-based tourism services under discussion.

The end sample included eighteen blog entries composed by eleven different bloggers who identify themselves as vegan, of which seven female and four male. The blog post were collected over the course of the first week of September in 2018 and originated from seven different online blogging platforms. Five of the participants are professional bloggers who write on a personal blogging platform while the other six have written guest entries for vegan community platforms. Only three of the guest blog posts contained a reference to the biographical information of the bloggers. For the remaining four guest bloggers biographical information was gained through a Google search. All of the participants have presented themselves using their real names and are seemingly quite active in various communities so their nationalities were easily determined to include the United States, Canada and the United Kingdom. The blog entries were written between the years 2012 and 2017. The animal-based tourism services that are discussed include wildlife, domestic and farm animal sanctuaries, elephant riding camps, tiger temples, monkey schools, crocodile farms, traditional zoos, petting zoos, a sheep farm, an elephant festival, an exotic pet café, a horse race, and a circus that uses animal acts. The majority of the bloggers discuss specific animal-based tourism services in specified locations, such as Thailand, South Korea, Kenya, Mexico, India, the UK and the United States. However, eight of the blog posts also discuss various issues related to animal-based tourism in general. For the purpose of reference during data analysis, the blog entries were assigned identifiers B1 through B18.

Considering that in the case of netnographic data collection, the researcher benefits from the nearly automatic transcription of the online data (Kozinets, 2002), the first step before

commencing the data analysis process was simply to create a workable data set by copying the eighteen selected blog entries into a word processing document. While doing so, photographs and other visual materials were omitted, since the approach to the data collected for the present study is text-based. In addition, this preparatory phase also involved the elimination of digressing text segments from the data (see Höckert, 2009), i.e. any objective and factual descriptions that do not relate to the participants' experience or ethical considerations of animal-based tourism services. For example, one of the blog entries begins by presenting a historical overview of a wildlife rescue organization and this information was subsequently omitted from the data corpus. The final product consisted of 41 pages of text to be analysed.

4.3 Analysis and representation

After careful evaluation of previous academic literature and various methods for data analysis and representation, some specific to netnographic research practices while others more generally applied to qualitative research methodology, the decision was made that the data collected for the present study will be approached through means of thematic analysis. This method of analysis was chosen because it is considered useful for examining the perspectives of research participants (Braun & Clarke, 2006; King, 2004). Even though thematic analysis has been widely used in qualitative research, various researchers (see e.g. Boyatzis, 1998; Ryan & Bernard, 2000) have argued that it is merely a process used in qualitative methods, as opposed to a method in its own right. However, in concurrence with other researchers (see Braun & Clarke, 2006; King, 2004; Nowell et al., 2017; Thorne, 2000), the present study applies thematic analysis as a separate and self-sufficient method that assists with the identification, analysis, organization, description, and report of themes within the data set (Braun & Clarke, 2006, as cited in Nowell et al., 2017).

The thematic analysis for the present study followed the reflective six-phased process outlined by Nowell et al. (2017). The first phase of analysis involved initial immersion into the data by means of repeated reading and active searching for emerging patterns. During this immersive reading, the researcher documented any theoretical and personal insights, as well as initial ideas for coding and categorization. Due to the exploratory nature of the present study, the second phase of generating initial codes was approached inductively by identifying concepts grounded in the present data as opposed to following any pre-determined coding

frame (Nowell et al., 2017). This process was followed by phase three, which involved classifying, categorizing and grouping coded data segments into themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). These themes, as is explained by Aronson (1994, as cited in Nowell et al., 2017, p. 8), “are identified by bringing together components or fragments of ideas or experiences, which often are meaningless when viewed alone” As such, the prominent concepts of the participants’ accounts were integrated to generate core themes that speak to the vegan bloggers’ perspectives regarding animal-based tourism services. After the first round of analysis, phase three resulted in the following set of themes identified from the data corpus;

- Considerations for animal wellbeing
- Practices of animal-based tourism providers
- Objectives of animal-based tourism services
- Perceptions of animals in the tourism industry
- Call to action from readers

Processes of reviewing and recoding as part of phase four of the analysis revealed that two of the themes (‘Perceptions of animals in the tourism industry’ and ‘Call to action from readers’) encompassed data aspects that could easily be integrated into the other three themes as a means of better representing and expanding upon the concepts brought forward by the research participants. In addition, as part of phase four and five, the first three themes (‘Considerations for animal wellbeing’, ‘Practices of animal-based tourism providers’ and ‘Objectives of animal-based tourism services’) were re-evaluated and redefined to include miscellaneous codes that at first did not seem to belong to any one particular theme. Furthermore, during this reviewing process it was determined that one of the themes (‘Objectives of animal-based tourism services’) contained text segments that could be representative of two separate and different topics. As such, these text segments were respectively grouped together to form two separate themes. Finally, all themes were refined and specified further in order to capture the ideas contained in the numerous remaining text segments. The themes were finalized at the point when there were no longer any relevant sections of text that had not yet been included anywhere (King, 2004).

Consequentially, the thematic analysis of the present study revealed four major themes within the data set which all describe attributes of various animal-based tourism services that the research participants consider when evaluating the ethical standing of said animal-based tourism services. New names were assigned to these four major themes as part of phase five of the analysis process and the themes were renamed as follows;

- Conditions of captivity and animal wellbeing
- Practices of acquisition, training and disposal
- Environmental and social impact
- Operational purpose and objectives

In terms of reporting the findings as part of phase six, a detailed analysis was written for each of the four individual themes, clearly describing the scope and content of each theme. The data was organized and summarized into emerging patterns and interpreted in relation to theory and previous academic literature, in an attempt to identify broader meanings and implications of the aspects of each individual theme (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The final discussion of the findings was constructed to represent an overall story regarding what the different themes reveal about the topic. Finally, while reporting the findings, direct quotes from the data were used to illustrate specific points and offer insights into the original texts (King, 2004).

4.4 Ethical considerations for online research

In terms of research ethics, there is no consensus among scholars regarding any predetermined set of ethical guidelines for conducting online research or netnography (Kozinets, 2015). As such, this study attempts to follow the ethical recommendations for netnographic research practices, as described by Kozinets (2015), but the specific ethical guidelines that are applied in the context of the present study were determined by the researcher based on the nature of the research data as well as the purpose of the study (see Kozinets, 2015). In this regard, when considering the level of anonymity required for the representation of the research data it is important to note that in the case of online archival materials, ethical guidelines do not automatically entail that all research subjects should be anonymous (Kozinets, 2015). Instead, the level of anonymity required should be determined by the potential risk involved for the author of the online publication in regards to sensitive content (Kozinets, 2015, p. 136).

In the case of the present study, this potential risk is seemingly low, but not non-existent. As is explained by Ulusoy (2015), the fact that veganism deals with the ethical issues surrounding animal rights and welfare makes it a sensitive subject. In this regard, any online publications portraying this ethical stance could potentially be subjected to scrutiny and controversy. On the other hand, it could be argued that the possible risk from a traceable

feature in an academic research publication is not in any way higher than the risk vegan authors subject themselves to when publishing ideas and opinions regarding their ethical perceptions online. With this in mind, the decision was made that the research data will be presented anonymously as a means of honouring the perceived sensitive nature of the research subject, but will not be made entirely untraceable. As such, identifiers are assigned to the blog entries of the research participants and the names of the online platforms from whence the data originated are not disclosed. However, the study does incorporate verbatim quotes due to a desire to avoid overly protective research ethics that risk diminishing cultural capital and marginalizing the bloggers by treating them and their texts as ‘too sensitive’ to cite or quote (Kozinets, 2015, p. 120). In this regard, it is important to note that this use of direct quotes from online publications allows for the possibility of the subjects’ identities to be traced back to them through the use of online search engines (Kozinets, 2015, p. 121).

With this in mind, it is important to consider the issue of informed consent in the context of online archival materials. As such, arguments can be found in the academic literature supporting the notion that informed consent must always be gained in any case where the research subjects’ identities can be traced back to them (see Kozinets, 2015; Markham & Buchanan, 2012), for example through the use of verbatim quotes. On the other hand, there are researchers (see Hookway, 2008; Kozinets, 2015, p. 121) who pertain that informed consent is not required if a blog post is publically accessible, in the sense that there is no need to register to a particular online group in order to gain access to it. In the case of the present study, all of the blog entries were publically accessible. Still, the researcher deemed it appropriate to contact the participants in order to inform them about the study and allow them the possibility to opt out from their blog posts being used as research data. Eight of the bloggers were successfully contacted by means of email communication in which the researcher openly identified herself as a university student following a vegan lifestyle, as well as openly disclosed the purpose of the present research (see Kozinets, 2015). The remaining three bloggers were all guest contributors to vegan blogging platforms that did not display any contact information for guest bloggers. Furthermore, any attempts to establish direct contact with these participants through various social media channels were unsuccessful. Nevertheless, since these blog entries were publically accessible, they were still incorporated into the research data.

5 The ethics of animal-based tourism services

Throughout the data, the participants discuss various animal-based tourism services that they have either visited or have heard and read about. In some cases the bloggers offer an evaluation of concrete animal-based tourism services and in others they discuss animal-based tourism in general. The analysis of the data revealed that the most frequently discussed topics relate to various attributes of animal-based tourism services and how these are perceived either as ethical or unethical by the participants. In this regard, the data reveals a clear distinction between ethical and unethical animal-based tourism services, based on certain desirable conditions that serve as reference points for ethical evaluations. During the thematic analysis for the present study, these attributes of animal-based tourism services were grouped into four separate themes, which will be discussed in detail below. The personal opinions and perspectives of the participants will be illustrated by quotations from their individual blog entries.

Many of the issues discussed by the participants were found to bear similarities to commonly raised arguments for and against animal-based tourism services, as identified from the academic literature. In an attempt to understand the perspective of the bloggers in terms of the wider debate surrounding animal-based tourism, the ethical evaluations of the research participants are examined in relation to the theoretical discussion regarding justifications for and arguments against the operation of animal-based tourism services. Furthermore, the findings relating to the four separate themes are evaluated by looking at possible similarities and differences between the perceptions of the vegan bloggers and the attitudes of the general public, which were previously examined by Shani and Pizam (2009) and Shani (2009). These studies were deemed as suitable reference points for the present discussion due to their general approach, both in terms of animal-based tourism services and tourist segments. In addition, the bloggers' ethical evaluations of animal-based tourism services are interpreted as indicators of their ethical positions based on the previously examined theory on animal ethics. Finally, when the distinction between ethical and unethical animal-based tourism services becomes clear, the bloggers also present various considerations regarding personal consumption practices, which are then interpreted in the context of ethical consumption.

5.1 Conditions of captivity and animal wellbeing

Some of the most prominent arguments against animal-based tourism, as identified from the academic literature, relate to various issues involved with placing wild animals in captivity. In this regard, Wickins-Dražilová (2006) argues that captive settings often fail to simulate the conditions of the animals' natural environments and prevent animals from expressing natural behaviours. When examining the perspective of the research participants in regards to animal-based tourism services, the present study found that objections are raised against keeping wild animals in captivity based precisely on the notion that these environments are unnatural. As such, the bloggers posit that even in the best conditions, captive animal-based tourism services are not able to provide wild animals with enough space considering that "in the wild, many of these non-human animals would have hundreds if not thousands of miles to explore" (B16). In addition, the bloggers argue that captive environments expose wild animals to "excessive human interaction" (B1) and are not always able to meet the animals' needs concerning their natural social grouping or solitary status. On this note, one of the bloggers explains that "sometimes social animals are kept alone, and those who prefer isolation are caged with or next to other animals" (B16). The participants' position is illustrated by the following quotes from the data, discussing zoos as one example of captive animal environments;

There's no denying that zoos are unnatural. Visit one and you'll see animals designed for completely different climates, in enclosures that come nowhere near close to what they would have in the wild. For example, Singapore Zoo has a Polar Bear in an enclosure the size of an apartment, when in the wild they can swim over 48km a day. They are also exposed to loud noises such as children all day every day, and often have cameras flashing in their faces. Zoos severely restrict the natural behaviour of animals, such as swimming, flying and hunting. The animals are confined in unnatural enclosures, and forced to act in unnatural ways. (B11)

Despite the best intentions of zoo employees to create a happy environment for an animal, zoos are fundamentally unable to recreate the wild setting. Cheetahs cannot run at maximum speed, elephants cannot walk hundreds of miles (except in circles), birds cannot migrate and fly long distances. Animals are unable to hunt, choose who to spend time with and find their suitable home. Another problem is privacy and noise levels. Human interaction is not normal and constant noise can cause problems. (B14)

In addition, throughout the data, the argument is made that the inability of captive animal-based tourism services to provide wild animals with similar conditions to their natural environments often leads to stress and unnatural behaviour. In this regard, the animals'

psychological wellbeing is compromised. As one of the bloggers explains, “captive animals often show signs of distress, including exhibiting ‘stereotypic’ behaviours. This can be seen in the form of making repeated movements, pacing, or harming themselves” (B16). Similar arguments have been presented by researchers in regards to the negative impact of animal-based tourism services on animals’ wellbeing (see Agaramoorthy, 2004; Beardsworth & Bryman 2001; Cataldi, 2002; Hughes 2001; Wickins-Dražilová, 2006).

Based on the findings presented above, it can be argued that the research participants do not wish to see wild animals in captivity. However, wild animals find themselves in captive environments all around the world and if this is to be the animal’s fate, then the bloggers at least wish to see these animals living in an environment that closely resembles their own. In this regard, one of the bloggers explains that “tigers should not be in captivity period. But for the ones that are held captive, they should be living in large natural areas, and people should not be getting in their personal space” (B2). More importantly, it can be noted that the participants wish to see the effort on the part of the animal-based tourism provider to place these animals in an environment that closely resembles their own. In this regard, the following statement describes one of the bloggers’ impressions of an elephant sanctuary in Thailand;

We absolutely loved that the people in charge of this project made a clear and genuine effort to place these rescued elephants [...] in an area that closely resembles their natural habitats and that allowed them to roam and do what elephants do in peace.
(B4)

In addition to the actual living area, the bloggers also express concerns for the captive animals’ ability to follow natural feeding and sleeping patterns, as well as the tourism service provider allowing animals “time to themselves” (B9). Animal-based tourism services that keep animals on chains, in cages or confined to small areas, do not respect natural feeding and sleeping patterns, and expose animals to continuous human proximity and interaction are perceived as highly unethical. In terms of actually placing wild animals in captive environments, the purpose of the captivity will play a role in weighing whether any particular animal-based tourism service can be perceived as ethical, as will be discussed later on.

Based on these considerations, it can be noted that the concern expressed by the research participants regarding the physical and psychological wellbeing of wild animals in captive environments speaks to an adherence to personal values that allow for animals to be perceived as individuals worthy of dignity and respect (see Bertella, 2018, p. 68). As the data

revealed, captive wild animals are referred to as ‘prisoners’ and racehorses are perceived as individuals “with a unique personality” (B15). In addition, one of the bloggers argues that when it comes to extending ethical considerations to both animals and humans, “there is no difference in [the animals’] worth, or suffering. There is only difference in how we were taught to view, and understand them” (B9). This consideration of equal standing to humans also speaks to strong feelings of empathy towards animals on the part of the research participants. In this sense, it is important to acknowledge that the perspectives of the bloggers are impacted not only by the context of an animal’s circumstances in captivity, but also by an emotional reaction that occurs when exposed to these circumstances. This emotional response and the empathy expressed towards individual animals are exemplified by the following recounts of visits to a zoo and an animal sanctuary;

And then that giant bird took off. She leapt from her perch, and spread those mighty wings, and flapped once, twice, aaaaand three times got her to the other side of the enclosure. Three flaps and that was the complete extent of her ability to fly – this bird of prey that, were she free, would soar in lazy sweeping circles hundreds of feet above the canyons. And my heart broke for her, and then more tears came, and that was the end of my zoo patronage right then and there. (B12)

There is something deeply moving about visiting an animal sanctuary, and it’s something that in my experience, even the children can sense. Personally, I always find myself emotionally affected when I get to spend time with the lucky few who are saved. It’s a confusing mixture of joy – watching them revel in a dust bath or kick their legs at a good tummy rub, knowing that they will never have to hurt again – juxtaposed against the reality of the horrible, heart sickening conditions that their billions of brothers will have to endure. (B13)

Considering this particular emphasis on emotions as driving factors for awarding moral standing and influencing ethical perception and conduct, it can be stated that the participants are guided by an eco-feminist ethic (see Bertella, 2018, p. 68), which is characterized by sympathy towards individual animals as well as larger groups and “views animal others as grievable, vulnerable, and valuable” (Jenkins, 2012, p. 504). Furthermore, one of the core tenets of the feminist care tradition in animal ethics is the understanding that humans have a moral obligation of care towards the animal other (Donovan & Adams, 2007, as cited in Bertella, 2018, p. 68), which in turn requires raising awareness about various mechanisms of oppression as well as performing actions that bring about an end to such mechanisms (Birkeland, 1983; Gruen, 1993, as cited in Bertella, 2018, p. 68). On this note, the present study found that the participants express this underlying sense of responsibility and obligation towards animals through their striving to inform readers about ethical and unethical animal-

based tourism services, as well as call them to action. In addition, regarding the unethical practices of horse racing competitions, one of the bloggers also encourages her readers to “raise awareness of this important issue among [their] friends and family” (B15).

Finally, in terms of evaluating captive animal environments, the current study draws some similarities to previous studies (see Shani, 2009; Shani & Pizam, 2009) examining the attitudes of tourists towards animal-based tourism services. As such, these studies have found that the animals’ ability to express natural behaviours in their captive setting, as well as this captive setting closely resembling the animals’ natural environments, were the most frequently cited considerations for the ethical evaluation of animal-based tourism services. In this regard, the participants of the present study also place a high importance on natural living environments and ability to express natural behaviours, but the difference for the vegan bloggers lies in the core premise that even if these conditions are met, “humans still don’t have the right to take [the animals’] freedom away” (B16).

5.2 Practices of acquisition, training and disposal

One particular issue that is not frequently discussed in the academic literature, nor appears to be given much thought by participants of previous studies, is the acquisition and disposal of animals in the tourism industry. In this regard, the present study found that when it comes to animal-based tourism, the bloggers are highly concerned with where the animals come from and what happens to them after they are no longer of use. The data reveals discussions of various cases of animal-based tourism in Thailand where animals are “stolen from the wild, separated from their families, broken, and used for profit” (B2). The disruption of family groups that occurs when capturing animals from the wild, as well as the stress to the animals that comes along with it, are frequently mentioned in the academic literature as arguments against the operation of animal-based tourism services (see e.g. Hughes, 2001; Wickins-Drazilova, 2006). The data for the present study reveals that the participants are concerned with these issues and will not support animal-based tourism services that acquire animals through such practices. In addition, the breeding policies of animal-based tourism services are also condemned by the participants. In the example of zoos, the bloggers express their distaste for zoos’ policies to breed a “surplus of animals” (B14) in order to acquire desirable characteristics, after which the animals that are not deemed desirable are simply disposed of.

Essentially, animal rescue is the only means of animal acquisition that is accepted by the participants. In this regard, animal-based tourism services that take in animals which are orphaned or have sustained varying injuries, as well as animals coming from unsuitable or abusive situations (examples discussed in the data include exotic pets, abused pets, circus animals, and riding elephants), are regarded as ethical institutions worthy of visitation and support. A certain similarity can be drawn between these findings and Shani's (2009) study on the attitudes of tourists towards animal-based tourism services. Namely, this study found that tourists do indeed exhibit a certain amount of concern regarding the origin of the animals on display in captive animal environments. As such, tourists would rather see rescued animals in the exhibits as opposed to animals that were captured in the wild. However, this finding represents only an extra consideration and not an important condition for the ethical operation of animal-based tourism services. As such, it is clear that the participants of the present study show a greater concern for animal acquisition as opposed to the general tourist, since the vegan bloggers are uncompromisingly unaccepting of wild animal capture and breeding for the purpose of animal tourism and entertainment.

In this regard, it is useful to consider a theoretical insight offered by Shani (2009), as he explains that in regards to animal ethics, supporters of the animal rights perspective will perceive the removal of wild animals from their natural environment and their placement in captivity as "a violation of the animals' right to equal consideration of their interests or as a denial of the animals' inherent value" (p. 171). As such, it can be argued that the participants of the present study demonstrate adherence to an animal rights perspective as they extend consideration to animals based on their interests and inherent value as subjects rather than objects. The following quote from the data clearly expresses this position;

Like in most countries; animals are seen as objects, property to possess, and money making machines. They are not seen as sentient beings who feel, suffer, stress, love, think, and desire to be free as much as you and I. In our eyes this is a crime. The time has come to recognize the rights of all sentient beings, and stop taking what does not belong to us. (B6)

In a similar fashion, the participants of the present study express concern for what happens to the animals that have seemingly surpassed their usefulness, with one of the bloggers discussing petting zoo animals and wondering "what would happen to them when the petting zoo didn't need them anymore" (B17). The data revealed discussions about how older animals as well as animals that can no longer perform the tasks required of them by the

tourism providers are simply killed. On this note, one of the bloggers explains how “in Europe, hundreds of healthy zoo animals are put down each year” (B16). The following quote discusses the breeding and disposal of horses within the horserace industry and captures the essence of the participants’ objections to these common practices on the part of animal-based tourism and entertainment providers;

The industry purposely breeds a surplus of horses, to increase the likelihood of producing foals with the most desirable characteristics. It’s not hard to guess the fate of the foals not deemed raceworthy, many of whom find themselves in neglectful environments or meet the same fate as ‘old’ racehorses: the meat market. (B15)

In addition, the present study found that the participants will not support animal-based tourism services that include animal shows and performances. In this regard, the bloggers argue that any performance of unnatural behaviour generally involves cruel training practices and in the case of wild animals in particular, these practices are especially brutal since they are designed to make the animals submissive to humans. Throughout the data, cases of elephant riding and shows are most frequently discussed in relation to the Thai ‘phajaan’ or elephant crushing practice which “is designed to break [the elephants’] spirits and brutalize them into submission” (B4). Essentially, the participants regard such practices as physical and psychological abuse. The issue of inhumane training methods is also discussed by researchers when proposing arguments against animal-based tourism services (see e.g. Carmeli, 2002). Similarly, the study conducted by Shani and Pizam (2009) found that in order for an animal-based tourism service to be perceived as ethical, the training methods needed to be considered humane. Naturally, a question can be raised as to what exactly constitutes as humane training. In the case of the participants of the present study there seems to be no such thing and any practice that forces animals to perform unnatural behaviour is viewed as unethical.

In this regard, the participants’ opposition to placing wild animals in captivity as well as training animals to perform unnatural behaviours can be identified as a more general objection to globally accepted human superiority in regards to the animal other. On this note, it is interesting to consider how the bloggers experience the notion of speciesism, while influenced by an animal rights and eco-feminist perspective. As such, the acknowledgement of inherent worth through an animal rights ethic as well as the empathy expressed towards individual animals based on the notion of equal consideration, indicate objections to speciesist practices. In addition, the present study identified one concrete mention on the

topic of speciesism which exemplifies that not only human superiority over animals is rejected by the participants, but also the perpetuation of superiority of certain species of animals over others is considered unethical and unacceptable. As such, the following quote expresses a negative impression of an elephant sanctuary in Thailand due to the fact that the sanctuary served its visitors meat;

Can someone explain to me how they run a sanctuary for one kind of animal, to do so much to protect the life of this animal that it would be so absurd to eat it as food. That they decided this animal was okay to love and spend time with, but that they could turn around and kill a different kind of animal, and feed it to the volunteers. How is this justified? It just isn't. I don't pay sanctuaries to kill animals not lucky enough to have sanctuaries of their own. (B1)

Finally, one particular point of interest which is directly related to animal training practices is the behaviour of employees. In this regard, previous studies have found that tourists place a certain value upon the education and sensitive behaviour of zoo keepers (see Shani, 2009). In a similar fashion, the present study found that employee behaviour in regards to respectful treatment towards animals is given consideration in terms of the participants' ethical evaluations of animal-based tourism services. In this regard, one of the bloggers offers the following impression of his tour guides during a visit to an elephant sanctuary in Thailand; "These people truly care and respect these animals and want to make their lives as comfortable as they can" (B4).

5.3 Environmental and social impact

As is frequently discussed in the tourism literature, animal-based tourism services, such as zoos, aquariums and wildlife parks, are often credited for playing a significant role in global conservation efforts, through means of educating the general public about various environmental issues, as well as protecting and preserving endangered species (see e.g. Ballantyne et al., 2007; Falk et al., 2007; Shani & Pizam, 2010). Previous research on the subject of tourists' attitudes towards animal-based tourism services found that wildlife conservation and education of children are amongst the primary justifications for the existence of these captive animal environments (see Shani & Pizam, 2009). An interesting finding of the present study is that the vegan bloggers firmly disagree with the notion that animal-based tourism services contribute to conservation efforts and, in fact, argue that the opposite is true. In addition, several of the bloggers expressed that, from their perspective,

captive animal environments were sending children the wrong message about what constitutes ethical treatment of animals.

In terms of conservation, the data shows that the participants will not support animal-based tourism services that operate primarily for profit and visitor entertainment, whilst advertising themselves as places that help protect endangered species. Traditional western zoos are most frequently discussed throughout the data in terms of their alleged conservation efforts. In this regard, the bloggers ascribe to the position that the majority of animals kept in zoos are “‘wow’ animals” (B11) who are not threatened or endangered and instead are being bred and displayed for the purpose of drawing in visitors, whereas truly endangered species are given little to no consideration. In this regard, it is argued that “zoos are commercial enterprises, and their priority lies in getting hold of animals popular with visitors, rather than those who face extinction” (B16). In addition, another argument raised against the conservation value of zoos is that animals bred in captivity have very small chances of being released back into the wild. As such, the majority of animals that are bred as part of a zoo’s conservation program will in fact spend their entire lives in captivity. For one of the bloggers this notion raised an interesting question regarding the conservation value of captive breeding;

So, I know you may be getting ready to tell me that there are some zoos out there that are good. It was, in fact, the San Diego Wild Animal Park in partnership with the LA Zoo that facilitated the program to bring the condors back from the brink of extinction. And I concede that it’s possible there are animal parks out there doing good work. Sure. But then I have to ask, what’s really the point of breeding condors just to spend their lives in tiny cages? Cages which deprive them of their basic rights to act on their natural instincts and urges (such as soaring, and hunting)? (B12)

This thought process relates to a previously mentioned statement offered by Hughes (2001) and exemplifies one perspective of environmental ethics which argues that wild animals in captivity offer no benefit to the ecosystem because they cannot perform their natural behaviour within their natural environment. Consequentially, the present data revealed that the participants stand behind the notion that “conservation should tackle why these animals are endangered in the first place. It should look at ways to keep animals in the wild, in their natural environment and away from human interaction” (B11). In this regard, one of the blogs discussed a visit to an elephant and rhino orphanage in Africa whose work focussed on the protection and conservation of these animals within their natural environment. This particular animal-based tourism service did not prioritize profit or visitor entertainment and, as such, was praised for its conservation efforts; “The project offers hope for the future of Kenya’s

vulnerable rhino and elephant populations as they clash against the poaching of their horn and ivory” (B5).

Furthermore, the data revealed that the participants will avoid zoos and other profit-oriented animal-based tourism services based on the preconception that they are actually contributing to various environmental issues. On several occasions the bloggers explore the notion that in certain countries (ex. Thailand) demand for animal tourism leads to poaching of endangered animals from the wild, which in turn often involves killing entire family groups in order to capture baby animals. On a different note, one of the bloggers connects the dots between zoos’ alleged conservation efforts and their willingness to serve their visitors meat when animal agriculture is the leading cause of loss of habitat and biodiversity as well as and species extinction;

Zoos show little interest in tackling the root causes of wildlife destruction. Species-rich habitats are being converted to pasture and feed crops as the human appetite for meat swells. Many of the places expected to see the greatest shift in land use from forest to livestock are in 15 ‘megadiverse’ countries, which harbour the largest number of species. As wildlife disappears, zoos ignore the problem. Instead, they contribute to it by feeding millions of customers meat. (B14)

This statement expresses a position that is perhaps uniquely applicable to vegan consumers since the majority of the general public is not aware or remains passive to the environmental impacts of animal agriculture. In a similar fashion, another perspective possibly unique to vegan consumers relates to the message that captive animal environments are sending to young children. In regards to families visiting a petting zoo, one of the bloggers argues that;

We are exploiting the innocence, the openness of children by teaching them from a young age that animals don’t have their own interests at heart – that they are here to be fed from our hands, to allow us to sit on their backs to “give us” their milk and eggs, to “give us” their lives because we “need to” eat meat. (B17)

This is an interesting notion to consider since previous academic research shows that, regardless of actual conservation efforts, animal-based tourism services are still widely credited for their educational function in society and are often seen as places that keep people informed about various environmental issues (Hutchins et al., 2003, as cited in Shani & Pizam, 2010). In addition, the study conducted by Shani and Pizam (2009) revealed that tourists believe such captive animal environments contribute to the development of wildlife awareness amongst children and teach them how to responsibly treat animals. The present study however encountered a completely different perspective on the part of the vegan

bloggers. As can be deduced from the previous quote, animal-based tourism services are believed to be sending children the wrong message about the commodification of animals. In a similar fashion, as another one of the bloggers addresses animal-based tourism, she explains that “this is a form of animal exploitation proudly on display. It promotes the idea that other animals are ours to treat as we wish” (B15). It is interesting to note that this point of view speaks to an objection to animal-based tourism services based on the premise that the existence of these services fuels the perpetuation of human dominion over animals. This notion once again exemplifies an objection to speciesism guided by an animal rights and feminist care ethic which attributes inherent value to animals and perceives them as individuals whose interests and rights need to be respected.

On this note, the perceived function of animals as educational tools, as opposed to individuals possessing inherent worth, is also rejected. As such, one of the bloggers writes; “No one can deny that it is a good idea to educate children about other animals. However, to imply that an animal’s function is to educate is skewed” (B16). In addition, the need for animal interactions to facilitate the education of children is also questioned; “Do children need to see the animals up close to learn about them? Many children seem to have an encyclopaedic knowledge about dinosaurs, far more so than lions and tigers” (B14). In this regard, one of the bloggers posits that she does “not believe that children need zoos in order to fall in love with the animal kingdom” (B12).

Finally, it is important to consider that the need for animal-based tourism services is often supported by the idea that seeking out wildlife in their natural habitat would be considered expensive and dangerous for many market segments as it requires traveling to remote destinations (Shackley, 1996). This notion is consistent with the findings of Shani & Pizam (2009), as they explain that from a general public perspective animal-based tourism services are seen as institutions that offer an affordable and accessible way to see wildlife. In doing so, they also counter the increasing alienation of people from the natural world (Hutchins, 2003, as cited in Shani & Pizam, 2010). However, from the perspective of the vegan bloggers there are alternatives to profit-oriented captive animal environments that can undoubtedly fulfil the same functions. In this regard, the participants discuss the educational benefits of visiting museums, as well as the positive message send by animal sanctuaries;

This sets museums apart from zoos. Zoos participate in an active machine of animal oppression: capture and confinement. In contrast, museums provide a passive vehicle for education. Natural History Museums familiarize children with the biological

world by allowing them to view representations of animals in their natural habitats, to interact with zoological artefacts, and to begin their exploration of the Earth sciences. (B12)

Sanctuaries give children the opportunity to connect with non-companion animals; to meet them, observe them, and often times even to touch them. But unlike traditional petting zoos which position animals as monetized commodities who exist to serve as tactile entertainment, sanctuaries do not exploit the animals in their care. (B13)

In addition, one of the bloggers explains how at the Natural History Museum her son “is learning to tune into the biological world” (B12). Furthermore, animal sanctuaries are perceived as viable alternatives in terms of fulfilling the desire for close interactions with other animals, since they “provide the same in-person, interactive experience that many folks really miss when they give up going to zoos” (B13). Finally, when considering the issue of accessibility, one of the bloggers posits that “there are animal sanctuaries literally everywhere” (B13). As such, the participants stand behind the notion that places like museums and animal sanctuaries are not only affordable and easily accessible options, but will also allow children to discover the natural world while inspiring responsible and respectful treatment towards animals.

5.4 Operational purpose and objectives

When considering the notion of ethical consumption practices, the academic literature (see Andorfer, 2015; Harrison et al., 2005, p 3; Moreira & Rosa, 2014) explains that consumers will actively avoid unethical or unsustainable products and in some cases will refuse to consume anything at all. On this note, the present study identified an insightful comment offered by one of the bloggers in regards to visiting an elephant sanctuary in Thailand; “Our trip to Thailand wouldn’t have been complete without spending time with elephants, but if we couldn’t find a sanctuary that promotes and practices ethical tourism, we would have gladly left Thailand without ever seeing an elephant” (B1). In this sense, it is interesting to consider that the participants of the present study are uncompromising in their desire for ethical animal experiences and thus exemplify a very strong adherence to ethical consumption practices. In terms of what constitutes as either ethical or unethical animal-based tourism from the perspective of the research participants, various influential factors have already been discussed. However, the present study identified that the most prominent distinction was made based on the differentiation between profit and non-profit institutions in regards to their

operational purpose and objectives. As one of the bloggers puts it, “when it all boils down, the difference is the bottom line” (B13).

In this regard, it can be noted that prior academic research on the subject of animal-based tourism (see Turley, 1999, Ryan & Seward, 2004, Shani, 2009) has found that “despite new management philosophies that embrace education, research, and conservation, visitors still mainly appreciate the zoo as a recreational tourist attraction” (Shani & Pizam, 2009, p. 86). It is not too far of stretch to assume that the reason for this is that, despite extensive efforts of rebranding, the primary purpose of zoos and other similar animal-based tourism services is and always has been entertainment. As such, the present study found that the main objections raised against animal-based tourism services by the research participants were based precisely on the notion that “zoos are places of entertainment, where animal welfare is governed by financial feasibility and entertainment value” (B14). As such, the bloggers reject the validity of any animal-based tourism services that prioritizes visitor entertainment. On this note, one of the bloggers addresses elephant tourism in Thailand and argues that “there are no elephant camps that include riding, painting, shows, training, or any kind of entertainment for the benefit of humans that are good for elephants” (B2). The following quote from the data captures the essence of how the participants distinguish between ethical and unethical animal-based tourism services based on a company’s purpose and objectives;

A traditional zoo or petting zoo is a for-profit institution, whereas sanctuaries are always non-profit organizations. To me, this distinction makes all the difference. Because in any for-profit setting, the money is, unfortunately, the primary motivating factor. Increasing revenue will always take precedence over the interests of the animals because that is the way the system is designed to work. Conversely, in non-profit organizations, the welfare of the animals always comes first. Because that is the reason the organization exists! I think about it like this: a traditional zoo or petting zoo is a place that exists for human entertainment, and animals happen to live there. In contrast, a sanctuary is a place that exists for animals to enjoy their lives in safety, and humans happen to go there. (B13)

In regards to opposing animal-based tourism services that use animals for profit and entertainment while simultaneously supporting others whose work focuses on animal rescue and rehabilitation, the data for the present study revealed that the bloggers will encourage ethical consumption practices in the form of positive and negative purchasing in their readers. As such, the participants posit that “instead of giving your money to money-making machines” (B11) support should be shown to non-profit organizations that seek to help animal in need. On this note, one of the bloggers pleads for readers to “please boycott all

types of animal entertainment” (B7) and instead to “visit and support [...] reputable wildlife reserves, and sanctuaries” (B7). In this way, it can once again be noted that the bloggers are expressing eco-feminist considerations regarding raising awareness and inspiring actions that bring about an end to mechanisms of animal commodification within the tourism industry. The following quote from the data provides an illustration of this call to action as well as the general perspective of the blogger in terms of what constitutes ethical animal-based tourism;

If you're as desperate as I am to see the world's most gorgeous creatures for yourself, make sure for their sake that you do it responsibly. Visit only respected and trusted sanctuaries, ignore like the plague any Tiger Kingdoms or Elephant Rides, and do not put an animal's wellbeing at risk for a shitty selfie. See them in the wild, their natural habitats, where they're naturally meant to be and not manhandled by tourists who are willing to do anything to show off to friends back home. Animal tourism doesn't need to be a thing. It's just called being a decent human being. (B10)

In addition, this striving to inspire action from readers concerning boycotting or buycotting certain types of animal-based tourism services speaks to the participants' understanding and practice of group action, which essentially entails consumers making use of their economic votes and voting the same way so that society will eventually have to respond (Dickinson & Carsky, 2005, p 35). In this regard, within the context of ethical consumption, Wrenn (2011) has argued that vegan consumers perceive their consumer choices as a form of political action “which can protest or perpetuate the injustices done to non-human animals” (p. 22). In this sense, it is maintained that vegans understand and choose to act upon the notion that society is shaped by the economic votes of consumers. In concurrence with this theory, the present study found that the research participants are highly aware of the power of their consumer votes and have adopted an attitude towards consumption as a medium for social and political action. The following quote from the data illustrates one of the bloggers perspectives on the subject;

Hitting a corporation's profit margin matters. Are any of us really expecting a corporation that exploits animals for profit to suddenly care about animals? No, that would be naïve. We need to speak to them in the language that matters to them: money. If public perception affects their profitability, you can bet it's behind their decision. Keep in mind, ethical vegans: you already speak with your money and vote with your dollar. Every dollar you spend on vegan items is a vote against non-vegan items. And every dollar you don't spend on products or services you don't believe in counts, too. (B18)

Finally, it can be argued that underlying various arguments for boycotting certain types of animal-based tourism services while actively supporting others, is a certain kind of objection

to the general commodification of animals, which is all too common in the case of animal-based tourism. On this note, Hughes (2001) explains that animals in the tourism industry are more often treated as objects rather than subjects and as such, are only ascribed instrumental rather than intrinsic value. It is exactly this commodification of animals that the vegan bloggers object to. As such, from their perspective animals “are not objects to be used, and thrown away” (B9). This perspective can also be found in the academic literature where various researchers (see Hughes, 2001; Jamieson, 2006; Regan, 1995) have argued against the existence of animal-based tourism services based on the notion that animals are solely regarded as resources that facilitate the entertainment of tourists and financial gain for the tourism providers.

As such, the present study found that the participants will object to any animal-based tourism services that perpetuate the commodification of animals by prioritizing visitor entertainment and company profits, despite supposed efforts towards conservation and education. As one of the bloggers explains, “exploitation occurs whenever other animals are treated as commodities rather than individuals” (B16). On the other hand, preference will be given to non-profit organizations such as animal sanctuaries, because they are perceived as institutions that “pledge to put the interests of animals first and foremost” (B13) and, as such, emphasize the inherent value of individual animals. In this sense, the findings of the present study support the notion that “veganism [...] explicitly challenges the property status of non-human animals” (Francione, 2008, as cited in Wrenn, 2011, p. 16). Finally, considering the value attributed to individual animals, an adherence to the animal rights position on the part of the research participants can once again be identified.

6 Discussion and conclusions

The present study sought to develop an understanding of the perspectives of vegan ethical consumers in relation to animal-based tourism services. In this regard, the study revealed that the participants made a very clear distinction between what they considered to be either ethical or unethical animal-based tourism services based on four categorizations of attributes concerning the operational practices of said services; conditions of captivity and animal wellbeing, practices of acquisition, training and disposal, environmental and social impact, and operational purpose and objectives. As such, this chapter offers a discussion of the most relevant findings in an attempt to provide answers to the research questions of the present study. This discussion is followed by an evaluation of managerial implications, limitations of the study and recommendations for future research.

When considering the ethical evaluations of vegan consumers in regards to animal-based tourism services, the participants of the present study expressed a desire to see animals in either their natural environments or environments that closely resemble them, where they would be free to express natural behaviours without being overly exposed to human interaction. Similar preferences for seeing animals in settings resembling their natural environments and expressing natural behaviours have been identified in previous studies (see Shani, 2009; Shani & Pizam, 2009) and have already been addressed by animal-based tourism services in terms of improving animal displays (see e.g., Hughes et al., 2005). However, one significant difference is that the participants of the present study will only accept the captivity of wild animals under certain conditions, as they express a high level of awareness and concern for the negative impacts of captivity on the physical and psychological wellbeing of the animals.

In this regard, the participants give further consideration to practices of animal acquisition, as captivity of wild animals is only deemed acceptable if these animals are rescued from worst situations and a life in captivity is their only viable option. In contrast, practices which are characteristic of profit-oriented animal-based tourism services, such as capturing healthy animals from the wild and removing them from their natural environments, or breeding either wild or domesticated animals for the purpose of tourism and entertainment, are considered highly unethical by the participants as these practices do not afford consideration to the animals based on their inherent value as individuals, but treat them only as commodities.

In a similar fashion, the common practice of disposing of animals who no longer serve the purpose of drawing in visitors or stimulating financial gain is also condemned by the participants. It is interesting to note that in this regard, the participants of the present study want to be aware of the behind the scenes practices of animal-based tourism services and actively seek out information. This notion differs significantly from previous studies which show that tourists will not pursue their ethical concerns surrounding the various practices of animal-based tourism services, because they still want to partake in the experiences these services offer (see Curtin, 2006; Curtin & Wilkes, 2007; Shani, 2009; Shani & Pizam, 2009). On this note, Shani and Pizam (2009, p. 97) explain that “in order to develop a favourable ethical attitude toward animal attractions, one should be convinced of the validity of the ethical arguments in favour of their presence in the first place.”

Interestingly, the participants of the present study were not convinced by any popular arguments in favour of conventional animal-based tourism services. As such, the rebranding of zoos and other captive animal environments as institutions for education, research and conservation was dismissed, since the participants argued that alleged conservation efforts on the part of these institutions seem superficial and hypocritical as they do not tackle the core issues of species extinction and breeding programs tend to focus on popular animals that bring in visitors, while mostly ignoring other endangered species. In addition, profit-oriented animal-based tourism services are perceived by the participants as sending the wrong message in terms of educating children about environmental issues and the natural environment, as they essentially perpetuate the commodification of animals and do not encourage any respect towards them.

This position also differs significantly from previous findings on the attitudes of tourists towards animal-based tourism services. As such, on several occasions academic research has concluded that tourists tend to use the supposed conservational and educational roles of animal-based tourism services as means of justifying their support for them, even though they are aware of the ethical issues involved with keeping wild animal in captive environments (see Curtin & Wilkes, 2007; Shani, 2009; Shani & Pizam, 2009). In this regard, it is interesting to consider that the participants of the present study did not exhibit cognitive dissonance in this way and did not attempt to find justifications for supporting profit-oriented animal-based tourism services while ignoring all of the ethical issues involved, since they express an awareness of the notion that whenever people’s interests are placed first, animal suffering will be inevitable. On this note, in terms of the various attributes of animal-based

tourism services that prompted certain ethical evaluations on the part of the participants, it can be stated that the participants of the present study were mainly concerned with the purpose and objectives of the services in question.

In essence, after careful examination of the various evaluations of animal-based tourism services, the present study concluded that the participants made the distinction between ethical and unethical animal-based tourism services by examining the ascribed value to the individual animals. As such, the analysis revealed that from the perspective of the participants, animals are seen as individuals with inherent value as opposed to commodities with only instrumental value. This perception points to a clear adherence to the animal rights perspective on the part of the research participants. In addition, the present study found that the participants exhibit an eco-feminist ethic through their expressions of empathy towards the animals that they encountered at various animal-based tourism services. In terms of animal ethics, the participants also expressed that they do not feel superior to animals and would not support any animal-based tourism services that would perpetuate human superiority as well as the superiority of one species over another. In this regard, the participants of the present study were found to oppose speciesist practices on the part of the tourism industry.

When looking at ethical consumption practices, the present study can conclude that as a result of eco-feminist empathy and the opposition to widely accepted practices of speciesism and commodification of animals, the participants demonstrated a tendency towards boycotting or negative purchasing in regards to profit-oriented animal-based tourism services that operate mainly for the purpose of visitor entertainment and satisfaction and incorporate such practices as wild animal capture, animal breeding, training of unnatural behaviours, killing of undesired animals, and compromising animal wellbeing for the sake of profit. In contrast, the participants advocated for positive purchasing or boycotting as a means of expressing favour towards non-profit institutions that place the interests and wellbeing of the animal before all else. In this regard, animal sanctuaries and various animal foundations that operate on the principles of rescue, rehabilitation and release were perceived as ethical institutions worthy of support.

Finally, in the context of ethical consumption it is interesting to consider the following statement by Barnett et al. (2005a, p. 15-16); “The growth of ethical consumption marks a significant new moment in a broader history of consumer activism, one in which large

numbers of people are explicitly mobilised in support of various political causes through a shared identity as consumers.” On this note, as this study has shown, the participants express a strong awareness of the power of consumption as a driving force for social change and actively seek to inspire others to implement this power in order to oppose unethical practices on the part of animal-based tourism services. Considering the notion that in this day and age corporations are understood to be the new governments, it seems that vegan consumers might be ahead of the curb in terms of understanding and taking advantage of the impact of collective economic votes. In this regard, it can be argued that the present study offers more than simply an exploration of the perspectives of individuals who represent changing social values towards the use of animals for tourism and entertainment purposes, but actually shines a light on a powerful movement of political and social activists.

As such, the findings of the study can be beneficial for adapting operational and marketing strategies for existing animal-based tourism services, as well as developing new tourism services that are able to answer to the growing consumer demand for more ethical experiences. Based on the participants’ expressed distaste for seeing wild animals in captivity as well as their adherence to an animal right perspective, it can be argued that future developments should focus on tourism services that allow for viewing animals in their natural habitat. In this regard, consumer action on the part of animal rights proponents has previously proven to be very powerful in changing existing practices of animal-based tourism, as is evidenced by the case of the UK dolphinarium (see Hughes, 2001). As such, tourism operators aiming to implement new services would be wise to consider the growing change in public perception and demand. However, when considering animal-based tourism services that allow for viewing animals in the wild, there is and always will be the issue of accessibility in terms of location and cost (see Shackley, 1996), which is essentially one of the main justifications for the existence of zoos and other such institutions. With this in mind, it is important to consider how the findings of the present study can be implemented to address the ethical development of existing profit-oriented animal-based tourism services.

Unlike other consumers who have been found to show support for animal-based tourism services based on their repositioning as institutions for conservation, research and education, as evidenced by previous studies (see Shani, 2009; Shani & Pizam, 2009), the participants of the present study do not consider this repositioning as sincere. In this regard, existing animal-based tourism services might benefit from re-focusing the aim of their conservation efforts on admittedly less popular species that are currently endangered. The issue of popularity as a

tool for drawing in visitors can be easily addressed with effective marketing strategies. On this note, an open and honest flow of information concerning conservation and research programs in terms of why certain species become the focus of these programs as well the results that are being achieved, could also help improve public perception. In addition it is important for there to be transparency in terms of where the animals come from, as well as an assurance that they will get to live out their lives peacefully. As such, practices that put down animals when they are no longer profitable or entertaining should be discarded since they have already proven to lead to public outrage as evidence by the case of Marius the giraffe in the Copenhagen zoo. Such practices can be replaced by genuine efforts to rehome animals that are perceived to no longer be of value to the institutions and publicizing such efforts can result in positive marketing.

In this regard, cooperation between profit and non-profit institutions could also be beneficial for both parties as well as for the animals involved. As such, one way to tackle the public desire to see rescued animals as opposed to animals that have been captured or bred in captivity could be for profit-oriented animal-based tourism services to take in animals from sanctuaries around the world. In many cases, ethical sanctuaries are forced to turn animals away due to restrictions in space and budget and this is where cooperation between the two would benefit both parties as non-profit organization would be able to facilitate the rescue of more animals and profit organizations would be able to display rescued animals and offer visitors a more comprehensive educational experience about issues concerning animal conservation around the world. Finally, practices of training animals to perform unnatural behaviour for shows and performances should be abandoned. This notion is also evidenced by the rising pressure on institutions such as Sea World to move away from their animal shows. Animal-based tourism services can still be profit-oriented institutions, but as more and more people are showing concern for issues surrounding animal rights and welfare, these institutions will greatly benefit from incorporating more ethical practices that show a greater consideration and respect towards the animals they are profiting from.

When considering the methodology of the present study, it can be stated that a qualitative netnographic approach has limitations mostly in the sense that the findings are specific to the chosen sample of participants and thus cannot be generalized to represent a wider population (Jennings, 2010, p. 42; Kozinets, 2002). On this note, in terms of animal-based tourism services the study only considers semi-captive and captive non-consumptive services and thus does not represent a perspective on animal-based tourism in general. In addition, since

the study focussed on blogs as a form of archival data, an argument can be made that vegan bloggers represent only a small, possibly more engaged, segment of the vegan community, which is not representative of the community as a whole. In this regard, the study also does not account for the distinction between ethical vegans and individuals who follow a vegan diet for health reasons, who might be less outspoken about any ethical issues concerning the use of animals in various industries. Furthermore, the study is also limited in the fact that only blogs written in English were considered and as such, the final sample is not representative of a wide range of nationalities. Finally, in terms of judgement sampling, thematic analysis and data interpretation, the study was informed by the insider's perspective of the researcher and is thus subjective in nature.

Considering the use of online archival data did not allow for further questioning of the participants or asking for clarifications, only a relatively small amount of data segments deal with the topics of animal ethics and ethical consumption. The data was sufficiently rich to develop an initial understanding in the context of this exploratory study, but further research concerning the ethical positions of vegans as well as their consumption practices would be necessary to corroborate the present findings and offer more insight on the matter. In addition, it would be interesting for future research to consider other factors related to the ethical consumption practices of vegans towards animal-based tourism services, such as; the willingness and ability to pay an ethical premium, the way that vegan consumers become aware of various ethical issues, and whether or not their tendency towards ethical consumption practices goes beyond negative and positive purchasing to include for example legislative action (see Tallontire et al., 2001). Furthermore, the link between awareness and concern for ethical issues and actual manifested consumer action regarding animal-based tourism also requires further exploration (see Tallontire et al., 2001). Finally, an interesting finding of the Shani and Pizam (2009) study highlights the importance of self-regulation and external regulation in order for animal-based tourism services to be perceived as ethical. In this regard, it would be insightful to examine the vegan perspective on national/international responsibility regarding ethical practices of animal-based tourism services.

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