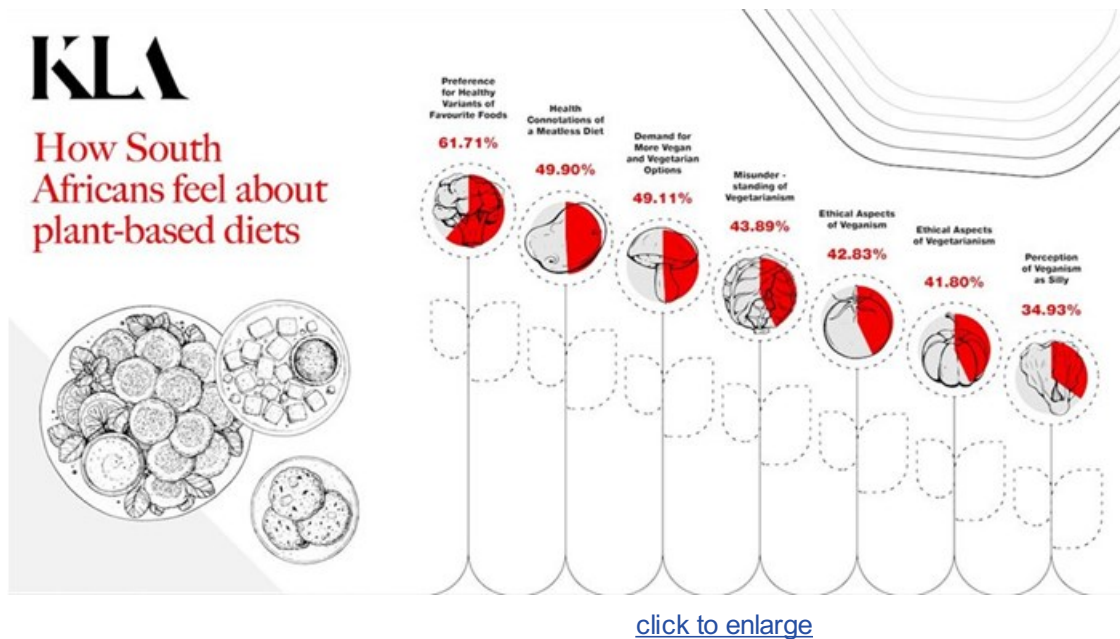


Embracing plant-based lifestyles: A look at vegan and vegetarian trends among South African consumers

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Veganism and vegetarianism are impacting dietary preferences in South Africa, driven by a surge in environmental and health-conscious decisions. Notable industry players, including McDonald's and Burger King, are adapting their menus to meet the growing demand, while retailers like Woolworths and Checkers are expanding their vegan product offerings. This shift is substantiated by a study carried out by consumer insights agency KLA, using the YouGov tool, indicating a mindset change toward plant-based diets, with 49.90% of respondents viewing a meatless diet as a healthier option.



Reasons behind the shift

The adoption of vegan and vegetarian lifestyles in South Africa is fuelled by various factors outlined by the South African Vegan Society:

1. **Health benefits** – well-planned vegan diets are nutritionally adequate and suitable for all life stages, offering health advantages over animal-based diets.
2. **Environmental concerns** – vegan diets use fewer resources, aligning with global calls to combat environmental destruction and climate change.
3. **Ethical considerations** – growing awareness of animal exploitation prompts a shift toward more compassionate living, reducing cruelty in various aspects of life.
4. **Holistic lifestyle** – beyond diet, being vegan encompasses a broader lifestyle aimed at minimising exploitation and cruelty in all aspects of daily living.

South African consumer sentiments

Public opinion on veganism and vegetarianism in South Africa is diverse, with varying perspectives on ethics, health benefits, and understanding of these dietary choices, as revealed by YouGov Profiles data:

1. Preference for healthy variants: 61.71% opt for healthier versions of favourite foods, indicating a potential market for businesses offering healthier alternatives.
2. Health connotations of a meatless diet: 49.90% believe a meatless diet is healthier, signalling a shift in perceived dietary norms.
3. Demand for more options: 49.11% suggest the need for more vegan and vegetarian alternatives in restaurants, highlighting interest in plant-based diets.
4. Misunderstanding of vegetarianism: 43.89% admit a lack of understanding about vegetarian habits, emphasising the need for public discourse and education.
5. Ethical aspects of veganism and vegetarianism: 42.83% and 41.80% respectively believe in the ethical aspects of these lifestyles, showcasing a significant segment valuing moral considerations.
6. Perception of veganism as silly: Despite the growing trend, 34.93% consider veganism silly, indicating an opportunity for education and awareness to dispel stereotypes.

Conclusion

The South African market presents a dynamic landscape for veganism and vegetarianism, with a discernible trend towards plant-based lifestyles. While challenges such as misunderstanding and resistance persist, businesses can capitalise on this transition by expanding offerings and educating consumers. There is immense potential for growth in the vegan and vegetarian market, offering opportunities for businesses to align with evolving consumer mindsets toward healthier and more ethical dietary choices. For more information, visit www.kla.co.za.

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