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Bibliometric Analysis of Master's and Doctoral Theses on Vegan Nutrition in Turkey

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Abstract

This study aims to examine the bibliometric characteristics of thesis studies on vegan nutrition conducted in existing academies in Turkey and included in the National Thesis Center of the Council of Higher Education (YÖKTEZ) database. A total of 118 theses published between 2002 and 2023, related to vegan nutrition, were included in the research. Our study revealed that the majority of the published thesis studies on the topic were at the master's degree level and that predominantly female researchers showed interest in the subject. It was also found that the highest number of studies, both at the master's and doctoral levels, were conducted within the Food Engineering discipline. Quantitative research methods were mostly used, and an increasing interest in the topic was observed over the years.

Keywords: *Bibliometric analysis; Vegan; Vegan Nutrition; Veganism*

Introduction

In the realm of tourism, food has gained prominence, especially since the 1980s, extending beyond production and market dynamics. It has become a focal point in discussions of sustainability, green tourism, agro-tourism, rural tourism, slow city slow food, tourism sociology, and food and nutrition sociology. The journey of food from farm to table has introduced a relatively unexplored area for researchers, delving into aspects such as eating habits, cultures, beliefs, ethnicity, production, consumption practices, and societal identities.

Vegan nutrition, or veganism, has evolved into an identity element where individuals consciously avoid consuming or using any animal products. This lifestyle choice is increasingly adopted for various reasons, including ethical values, philosophical critiques, ecological concerns, awareness of non-human animal rights, opposition to societal gender norms and bio-political processes, considerations of food security, spirituality, and speciesism. Research continues to explore these motivations.

Beyond dietary choices, individuals adopting a vegan lifestyle extend their concerns to areas such as clothing, cosmetics, animal feed, cleaning products, textiles, and even architecture. Brands, not limited to the food industry, and the tourism sector are observed to diversify their offerings by including and expanding vegan options.

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Examining national literature reveals a gap in studies disclosing bibliometric characteristics of academic theses, articles, or papers in the fields of vegan nutrition and veganism. This study aims to fill this void and contribute to existing literature.

The decision to conduct this study was prompted by a literature review on vegan nutrition, the subject of the researcher's doctoral thesis. The study seeks to increase visibility for the 118 interdisciplinary theses on "vegan, vegan nutrition, veganism" found in the National Thesis Center and reveal developments related to the subject through various parameters.

The study's goal is to unveil the bibliometric characteristics of all theses published in the National Thesis Center until 07/10/2023, incorporating the keywords "vegan, vegan nutrition, veganism" in their title and abstract. The bibliometric analysis considers parameters such as the researcher conducting the thesis, thesis title, type, gender distribution, year of study, universities involved, main disciplines studied, research methods, and language of the study.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Bibliometric Analysis

The conceptual framework of this study involves the application of bibliometric analysis, which is the quantitative examination of publications generated by individuals or institutions within a specific field, during a defined period, and in a particular region (Ulakbim, 2021). Analyzing written literature in a scientific discipline over specific periods is crucial for unveiling the developments in the chosen field based on the presented data (Kozak, 2001, p. 26). This approach not only guides future studies but also facilitates access to information.

Bibliometric analysis encompasses the numerical assessment of publications to unveil research trends, identify the most cited publications, prolific authors or institutions, and determine the dissemination speed and impact of the publications within a specific field. Such analysis contributes to decision-making in scientific research and aids in identifying future research areas (Borgman & Furner, 2002:4). Bibliometric analysis serves as a vital tool for evaluating scientific knowledge, monitoring research processes, and enhancing scientific communication. It provides valuable insights for researchers, academics, and institutions to comprehend scientific developments in a particular field and drive progress (Zan, 2012:15).

The origins of bibliometrics in the early 1900s, particularly before the 1920s, can be traced back to the application of "quantitative analysis of information sources" (Zan, 2012:15). One of the earliest studies discussing the use of bibliometric methods was conducted by Cole and Eales in 1917, where they performed a statistical analysis of studies in the field of mutual anatomy between 1550 and 1860 (Cole and Eales Dec, 1917). In 1923, Wyndham Hulme conducted a statistical analysis in the field of historical knowledge (Hulme, 1923). Subsequently, in 1927, P.L.K. Gross and E.M. Gross conducted a citation analysis study, evaluating Gross's articles published in the *Journal of the American Chemical Society* (Gross and Gross, 1927). The term "bibliometrics" as a method was first coined by Alan Pritchard in 1969 (Broadus, 1987:373), who defined it as "the application of mathematical and statistical methods to books and other means of communication" (Pritchard, 1969:349).



Bibliometric studies are widely employed in tourism research, particularly for evaluating journals and publications (Hall, 2001). Some studies utilize bibliometric analysis to track the development process of journals and assess their overall status (Çiçek and Kozak, 2012).

In international literature, various categories of bibliometric studies on the tourism and accommodation industry are examined (Köseoğlu et al., 2015). These studies cover diverse areas such as journal evaluation, article analysis, content analysis, citation analysis, interdisciplinary relationship analysis, and country-level research analysis.

When examining bibliometric studies on tourism in international literature, diverse topics are evident. These topics encompass destination management (Capone, 2015), sustainable tourism trends (Ruhanen et al., 2015), innovation in tourism and accommodation (Gomezelj, 2016), tourism and gender (Figuroa-Domecq et al., 2017), adventure tourism (Cheng et al., 2018), crisis management and tourism (Jiang et al., 2019), and tourism and restaurants (Rodriguez-Lope et al., 2019). These studies incorporate bibliometric analyses of research conducted across various fields related to the tourism and hospitality industry.

In the national literature, bibliometric studies explore the relationships between concepts in different disciplines and tourism. Examples include tourism and cultural heritage (Toksöz and Birdir, 2016), tourism and crime (Alp and Ünlü, 2019), tourism and festivals (Boyacıoğlu and Elmas, 2019), tourism and leadership (Çelik, 2019), tourism and entrepreneurship (Işık et al., 2019), a bibliometric analysis of studies addressing the concepts of tourism and food consumption (Nebioğlu, 2019), and tourism and climate change (Polat et al., 2019).

Additionally, research on health tourism (Temizkan et al., 2015), alternative tourism (Düşmezkalender and Metin, 2019), and sustainable tourism (Yeksan and Akbaba, 2019) has been evaluated with bibliometric analysis, providing insights into alternative tourism types beyond mass tourism and the fundamental concepts of tourism. Tayfun et al. (2016) conducted a bibliometric analysis of 367 postgraduate theses on tourism published between 1985 and 2016, categorizing them based on certain characteristics. Sünnetçioğlu et al. (2017) examined gastronomy theses, emphasizing the marketing perspective in gastronomy. Aydın and Aksöz (2019) scrutinized national theses in the field of tourism destinations, finding that master's level theses preferred quantitative research methods, while qualitative research methods were more prevalent in doctoral theses.

Vegan, Vegan Nutrition, Veganism Concepts

Food studies encompass a broad range of disciplines, including agricultural sciences, meat and poultry science, aquaculture, food science and biochemistry, nutrition, and culinary arts. Additionally, branches like cultural nutrition, community nutrition, agricultural economics, and food marketing are relevant to this field. However, food studies goes beyond merely examining food itself; it primarily focuses on the relationship between food and the human experience (Miller and Deutsch, 2009: 3).

Eating is more than a simple act of nutrient consumption; it involves the experience of taste and the consumption of symbolic meanings and "meaning" (Beardsworth and Keil, 2011: 90). Food, from this perspective, is a concept that encompasses meanings associated with actions and generates new meanings.

Determining the edibility of something is a social behavior embedded in a cultural context, extending beyond simple nutritional activities. As attitudes toward food vary among individuals and societies, each culture has developed its unique food culture (Beşirli, 2012: 12). Cultures define rules to establish harmonious unity in social life and shape the general framework of the relationship between individuals, society, and the environment. Culture plays a significant role in shaping beliefs, thoughts, and actions related to nature (Baylan, 2009: 68). Adopting a dualistic view of nature may lead to perceiving the human body as disconnected from the ecosystem and superior to other living beings, enabling humans to control and exploit them for economic interests and arbitrary service (Oppermann, 2006: 2). The separation between "us" and "others" based on consumption choices is evident in all aspects of food, from preparation to table manners (Baysal, 2010: 2).

Veganism is a cultural movement advocating for changes in consumption and dietary habits in response to the violation of animal rights. The earliest concepts of veganism were formulated in 1806 by Dr. William Lambe and Percy Bysshe Shelley, who found the consumption of eggs and milk morally objectionable (The Vegan Society, 2023). The term "vegan" was introduced by Donald Watson, the founder of The Vegan Society, in 1944, defining a lifestyle that avoids the use of animal products (Turkish Vegan Association, 2023).

The Vegan Society's 1979 definition states that veganism is the practice of avoiding all forms of animal exploitation and cruelty for food, clothing, or any purpose, as far as possible and practicable. It promotes the use of animal-free alternatives for the benefit of humans, animals, and the environment (The Vegan Society, 2018). Francione and Charlton (2016: 14) define veganism as not consuming animals or animal-derived products based on the moral standpoint that animals have equal or similar importance to humans. Vegans avoid not only meat, fish, dairy, and eggs but also products made from animals, like leather, fur, and wool, and items tested on animals (The Vegan Society, 2018). Veganism transcends diet; it is considered an ethical approach, a philosophy, and a way of life (Singer, 2005: 224).

Veganism influences various aspects of life, extending beyond dietary choices to impact household items, beauty products, and medical treatments. Individuals choosing veganism for ethical and environmental reasons often experience significant health benefits (Jamieson, 2017: 17).

RELATED STUDIES

There is a noticeable gap in the tourism sector concerning veganism and vegan nutrition, despite the increasing popularity of vegan diets. As more individuals choose a vegan lifestyle, the tourism industry should adapt by offering diverse vegan cuisine options to cater to this demand. Researchers highlight the importance of vegan cuisine in the context of sustainable tourism and gastronomy, as it can contribute to reducing environmental impacts and promoting the use of local agricultural products. Emerging trends in the tourism sector, such as green tourism, agro-tourism, health tourism, and gastro-tourism, further fuel the interest in veganism and vegan nutrition. In this regard, it is essential to compile and analyze studies specifically focused on veganism, vegan nutrition, and vegan cuisine. Such studies can serve as a basis for the tourism sector to develop strategies that meet the expectations of vegan guests, create vegan menus, and enhance overall consumer satisfaction.



The existing literature encompasses various studies on veganism, particularly those emphasizing health and education aspects. These studies delve into the potential health benefits of a vegan diet and examine its impact on different health outcomes. Additionally, they stress the crucial role of education in promoting and facilitating the adoption of a vegan lifestyle. International literature on veganism (Fraser, 2003; Waldmann et al., 2003; Dyett et al., 2004; Rosell et al., 2005; Larsson and Johansson, 2005; Majchrzak et al., 2006; Barnard et al., 2006; Key et al., 2006; Kornsteiner et al., 2008; Dewell et al., 2008; Craig, 2009; Ho-Pham et al., 2009; Fuhrman and Ferreri, 2010; Ambroszkiewicz et al., 2010; Gilsing et al., 2010; Crowe et al., 2011; Dyett et al., 2013; Dyett et al., 2014; Le and Sabate, 2014; Clarys et al., 2014) predominantly focus on health and education. Overall, these studies contribute to understanding the health implications of veganism and underline the importance of education in advocating and supporting individuals in adopting a vegan lifestyle.

In a study by Pimentel and Pimentel (2003: 660-663) focused on the environment, the utilization of land and energy resources for an average meat-based diet was compared to that of a lacto-ovo vegetarian (plant-based) diet.

International studies exploring the motivations for adopting and sustaining veganism are summarized below, as adapted from Janssen, Busch, Rödiger, and Hamm (2016: 16-17). (Cited by Tural, 2018: 30).

Table 1. In the study by Janssen, Busch, Rödiger and Hamm, motivations for adopting and sustaining veganism.

AUTHORS & YEAR	SAMPLING	METHOD	FINDINGS
Larsson et al. (2003)	*6 vegan *Schools and advertising *Sweden	*Qualitative *Open-ended questions	*Ethical reasons: 6 people
Waldmann et al. (2003)	*154 vegans *Newspaper advertisements *Germany	*Quantitative * Closed-ended questions	*Health Related reasons: 75 people *Ethical reasons: 64 people *Taste and aesthetic reasons: 7 people *Hygienic reasons: 2 people *Environmental (nature) reasons: 1 person *Social reasons: 1 person *Other reasons: 2 people
İzmirli & Phillips (2011)	*14 vegans and 3,419 other students *Universities *China, Czech Republic, United Kingdom, Macedonia, Norway, Serbia, Spain, Sweden	*Quantitative * Closed-ended questions	*Health related reasons: 3 people * Environmental (nature) reasons: 2 people *Ethical reasons: 1 person * Religious beliefs: 1 person * Reasons reported for 7 of 14 vegan participants.
Greenebaum (2012)	*16 vegans * Internet * United States of America	*Qualitative *Open-ended questions	* Ethical reasons: 16 people *Vegans with different reasons were excluded from the study.

Timko et al. (2012)	*35 vegans, 111 vegetarians, 75 semi-vegetarians, 265 omnivores * Universities; internet and Health food shops *United States of America	*Quantitative * Closed-ended questions	<u>Reasons to start a vegan diet:</u> *Ethical reasons: 23 people * Health reasons: 7 people (hence weight loss: 2 people) *Environmental (natural) causes: 4 people <u>Reasons to continue a vegan diet:</u> * Ethical reasons 26 people * Health-related reasons: 4 people * Environmental (natural) causes: 4 people
Dyett et al. (2013)	*100 vegan *Print and electronic advertising *United States of America	*Quantitative * Closed-ended questions	*Health related reasons: 47 people *Ethical reasons: 40 people *Religious beliefs: 9 people * Environmental (natural) causes: 2 people *Family and other reasons: 2 people
Rothberger (2013)	315 vegans and 200 vegetarians *United States of America *Australia, Canada, Europe and other countries	*Quantitative * Closed-ended questions	*Ethical reasons: 177 people *Health related reasons: 40 people *Mixed and different causes: 98 people
Kerschke—Risch (2015)	*852 vegan *Internet, Snowball sampling *Germany	*Quantitative * Closed-ended questions	*Industrial agriculture reports: 4.4 *Climate protection: 3.8 *Health Related reasons: 3.2
Radntz et al. (2015)	*246 vegan * Vegan events and social media *United States, Canada and other countries	*Quantitative * Closed-ended questions	*Ethical reasons: 201 people *Health related reasons: 45 people

Altaş and Acar (2017: 290-291) conducted a study examining vegan cities worldwide and aimed to assess the current status of Turkey's vegan tourist market. This research is a theoretical study that compiled data obtained through a literature review. According to the study, Barcelona is considered the world's first vegan city. The claim for the first vegan city in Turkey is asserted to be Didim (Altaş and Acar, 2017: 293). However, another study suggests that Didim is not yet a vegan city but rather a vegan-friendly city (Gürkan, 2017). The research underscores the necessity of implementing regulations to include Turkey in the list of destinations for vegan individuals and to increase the number of vegan-friendly cities in the country (Altaş and Acar, 2017: 293). As of now, no information has been found regarding the existence of a fully vegan city in Turkey.

Method

In this study, a comprehensive analysis was conducted on all the theses available in the National Thesis Center that included the keywords "vegan, vegan nutrition, veganism" in their title and abstract. The aim was to uncover the bibliometric characteristics of these theses based on various parameters. The research included all the theses accessible in the National Thesis



Center (<https://tez.yok.gov.tr/UlusalTezMerkezi/>) until 07/10/2023. During the scanning process, 118 academic studies meeting the criterion of having relevant keywords in their title and abstract were identified. Among these studies, 102 were master's theses, and 16 were doctoral theses.

In the bibliometric analysis, multiple parameters were considered, such as the researcher conducting the thesis, thesis title, thesis type, gender of the researchers, year of the study, universities involved, main disciplines, research methods, and language of the study. To determine these parameters, a literature review was conducted, and relevant bibliometric studies (Kozak, 2001; Güçlü Nergiz, 2014; Sünnetçiöglü et al., 2017; Altürk, 2018; Akkaşoğlu et al., 2019) were consulted. The studies included in the research were analyzed based on these parameters.

Results

A total of 118 theses related to the subject were found through the research conducted in the National Thesis Center. Table 2 illustrates the breakdown of the 118 theses categorized as Master's and Doctoral theses. According to the data, it is evident that a substantial majority, specifically 86.4%, of these theses are at the Master's degree level. In comparison to Master's theses, there is a notable scarcity of research on the subject within Doctoral theses.

Table 2. Master's and doctoral theses among 118 theses.

MASTER'S THESIS	102	%86,4
DOCTORAL THESIS	16	%13,6
TOTAL	118	%100

Table 3 displays the gender distribution of the 118 Master's and Doctoral Theses. It is noteworthy that 84% of the researchers contributing to these theses are female, indicating a substantial interest and engagement from women in the field.

Table 3. Analysis of gender in 118 theses.

FEMALE	92	%84
MALE	26	%16
TOTAL	118	%100

The significant majority of research in both Master's and Doctoral theses, 84%, respectively, has been carried out by female researchers. This observation may indicate a notable interest, participation, and contribution of women in the field of study. Further exploration could delve into the reasons behind this gender distribution and its implications for the broader academic and research community.

The distribution of doctoral theses over the years is presented in Table 4. The first study on the subject entered the YÖKTEZ system in 2002, and a noticeable surge in interest is observed after 2021.

Table 4. The distribution of 16 doctoral theses by year.

YEAR	UNITS	PERCENT
2023	5	%31,2
2022	4	%25
2021	1	%6,25
2020	2	%12,5
2019	1	%6,25
2017	1	%6,25
2016	1	%6,25
2002	1	%6,25
TOTAL	16	%100

The distribution of master's theses over the years is illustrated in TABLE 5. It's important to note that, within the study's scope, the thesis defense process for the spring semester of 2023 is not yet completed. The table indicates a significant surge in interest in the subject starting from 2020.

Table 5. The distribution of 102 master's theses by year.

YEAR	UNITS	PERCENT
2023	18	%17,6
2022	36	%35,2
2021	17	%16,6
2020	13	%12,7
2019	9	%8,8
2018	7	%6,8
2015	1	%0,9
TOTAL	102	%100

The distribution of doctoral theses according to universities is presented in Table 6. So far, there have been two doctoral thesis studies in Ankara, Başkent, and İnönü Universities, and one doctoral thesis study in each of the other universities, including Anadolu University.

Table 6. The distribution of 16 doctoral theses by universities.

UNIVERSITY	UNITS	PERCENT
Ankara University	2	%12,5
Başkent University	2	%12,5
İnönü University	2	%12,5
Sakarya University	1	%6,25
Ankara Hacı Bayram University	1	%6,25
Anadolu University	1	%6,25
Mersin University	1	%6,25
Yıldız Technical University	1	%6,25
Istanbul Technical University	1	%6,25
Pamukkale University	1	%6,25
Akdeniz University	1	%6,25
Necmettin Erbakan University	1	%6,25
Loughborough University	1	%6,25
TOTAL	16	%100

The distribution of doctoral theses according to the main disciplines is illustrated in Table 7. It is evident that the subject is predominantly studied within the Department of Food Engineering and the Department of Nutrition and Dietetics. Only one doctoral thesis is observed in the field of Tourism Management and Gastronomy and Culinary Arts. The



presence of sixteen theses conducted in nine different disciplines indicates that the subject is perceived as an interdisciplinary field at the doctoral level.

Table 7. The distribution of 16 doctoral theses according to main branches of study.

	DEPARTMENT OF SCIENCE	UNITS	PERCENT
1	Department of Food Engineering	6	%37,5
2	Department of Nutrition and Dietetics	3	%18,7
3	Department of Business Administration	1	%6,25
4	Department of Tourism Management	1	%6,25
5	Department of Gastronomy and Culinary Arts	1	%6,25
6	Department of Public Health	1	%6,25
7	Department of Philosophy	1	%6,25
8	Department of Social Environmental Sciences	1	%6,25
9	Department of Psychology	1	%6,25
	TOTAL	16	%100

Master's theses also exhibit a similar distribution. The studies are distributed across various disciplines: Department of Food Engineering 32, Department of Nutrition and Dietetics 11, Department of Gastronomy and Culinary Arts 11, Department of Sociology 6, Department of Business Administration 4, Department of Tourism Management 3, Department of Philosophy and Religious Sciences 3. In total, the subject has been studied in 37 different disciplines, indicating an interdisciplinary nature.

In the mentioned doctoral theses, it is observed that researchers predominantly use quantitative research methods, constituting a rate of 56%. Additionally, there is one thesis employing a mixed-method approach, combining both quantitative and qualitative methods, accounting for 37.5% of the total.

In the analyzed master's theses, it is observed that 64% of the researchers utilized quantitative research methods. Additionally, some researchers conducted product development studies related to the subject, applying the sensory analysis method in this context.

The language analysis conducted on doctoral theses indicates that 87.5% of the studies at the doctoral level are written in Turkish. The language analysis conducted on master's theses reveals that 80.3% of these theses are written in Turkish.

Discussion

The analysis of the theses retrieved from the National Thesis Center YÖKTEZ system sheds light on several key aspects regarding research on veganism, vegan nutrition, and veganism. Firstly, it is evident that there is a significant interest in the topic, with a total of 118 theses identified, primarily comprising master's theses (86%) compared to doctoral theses (14%). Moreover, the gender distribution among researchers reveals a notable trend, with a substantial majority being female across both master's (84%) and doctoral (68.7%) levels. This gender disparity underscores the prevalent interest among female researchers in exploring vegan-related topics, particularly within academic contexts.

Furthermore, the interdisciplinary nature of the research is evident, as reflected in the diverse range of disciplines involved in investigating veganism. While the Department of Food Engineering emerges as a prominent area for research, other fields such as Nutrition and Dietetics, Gastronomy, Culinary Arts, and even Sociology contribute significantly to the body of knowledge on vegan nutrition. This interdisciplinary approach underscores the multifaceted nature of veganism, necessitating insights from various academic domains to comprehensively understand its implications.

In terms of research methodologies, quantitative approaches are predominantly favored among both master's and doctoral researchers, comprising 64% and 56%, respectively. However, qualitative methods also feature prominently, particularly in doctoral-level studies, indicating a balanced blend of quantitative and qualitative insights into veganism. Additionally, the language of dissemination primarily aligns with Turkish, with the majority of theses being written in Turkish (80.3% for master's and 87.5% for doctoral).

Conclusion

The analysis of theses related to veganism and vegan nutrition underscores the growing interest and significance of this topic within academic discourse. The predominance of female researchers suggests a gender-related inclination towards investigating vegan-related subjects, emphasizing the need for gender-inclusive approaches in research and academia.

Moreover, the interdisciplinary nature of research on veganism presents unique opportunities for collaboration and knowledge exchange across diverse academic disciplines, particularly within fields such as tourism management, gastronomy, and culinary arts. Collaborative efforts between researchers from different backgrounds can lead to innovative insights and solutions in areas such as vegan tourism and gastronomic experiences.

Furthermore, the COVID-19 pandemic has accentuated the importance of healthy nutrition and plant-based diets, thereby amplifying the relevance of veganism in contemporary discourse. Understanding the pandemic's impact on vegan nutrition and tourism is crucial for anticipating future trends and demands, particularly in terms of consumer preferences and behavior.

In conclusion, fostering interdisciplinary collaboration, promoting gender diversity in research, and contextualizing research within the broader socio-economic landscape are essential for advancing knowledge and practice in veganism, vegan nutrition, and veganism-related fields. By embracing these principles, researchers can contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of veganism and its implications for society, health, and the environment.

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