

INVESTIGATING ONLINE NUTRITIONAL MISINFORMATION THROUGH  
CREATIVE RESEARCH

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## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Although veganism has been progressively becoming more acceptable in recent years, there are still numerous misconceptions when it comes to receiving the proper protein and nutrients on this diet. To help disprove these misconceptions, I designed and produced a four-minute documentary-short to debunk the myth that vegans do not receive proper protein and nutrients to build muscle.

The goal of the documentary-short was to educate and persuade the target audience's perceptions that it is possible to build muscle on a vegan diet. The strategy is to conduct background research regarding the media's influence on Americans' perceptions of a healthy diet, learn and analyze the target audience's demographics and psychographics, and to design mediated communication messaging for the target audience.

To test if I successfully educated and persuaded the target audience, I created a pre-video and post-video survey to measure if their opinions on building muscle on a vegan diet changed. Prior to watching the documentary-short, I provided the participants with a five-question pre-survey to analyze their current stance on a vegan diet in relation to vegan protein and muscle building. After the pre-survey, the participants watched the video, then took the post-survey, which is identical to the pre-survey, to analyze if their opinions changed. Therefore, I seek to answer the following question:

*Will the strategically designed messaging in the video cause the target audience to develop accurate beliefs about a vegan diet?*

In this paper, I discuss veganism, the malnutrition crisis, the mainstream media and social media influencer's role in vegan misinformation, unconscious bias, the process, and strategy of

my creative research—how I designed my communication messaging, and the overall outcomes of the study.

## **CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **1. Veganism: What is it?**

Veganism is more than a diet; it is a philosophy and lifestyle. Veganism is the practice of not consuming foods and beverages derived from animals and avoiding use of other animal products. A vegan diet avoids meat, fish, eggs, dairy products, and honey. A vegan lifestyle also avoids leather, wool, silk, and fur—any product that was made from part of an animal (Greenebaum, 2012). Veganism often is confused with vegetarianism. Vegetarianism is the practice of not eating meat or fish, but still consuming other animal products such as eggs, dairy products, and honey. Vegetarians also may use animal products such as leather.

Throughout the past 15 years, the number of Americans who have adapted to a vegan diet has drastically increased. From 2004 to 2019, the vegan population in the United States has increased from 290,000 people to 9.7 million people (Ipsos, 2019). Although there is an increase in veganism, dozens of vegan myths and misconceptions remain.

Donald Watson coined the term veganism in 1944 with the intent of creating a new movement for non-dairy vegetarians. Vegetarianism can be traced back to ancient Greece, whereas veganism is far more recent. The idea of non-dairy vegetarians has been repeatedly advocated for by members of the Vegetarian Society in London who argued that there is severe harm to animals during the process of dairy and egg farming (Mann, 2014). Attempting to shine awareness on this issue, Watson, along with four other non-dairy vegetarians formed “The Vegan Society”. They created the term “vegan” by combining the beginning and ending of the word “vegetarian” symbolizing one’s transition to veganism—beginning with vegetarianism, and

transitioning to the rational foremost conclusion, the elimination of all animal products (Mann, 2014).

## **2. Malnutrition Crisis**

During the early twentieth century, a malnutrition crisis arose from the discovery of nutritional science, standards for an optimal height and weight, international food crises that were created by world wars, the increase of consumerism, advertising, and the rise of new forms of mass media (Marcelin et al., 2019). With the concern of malnourished children, the Commonwealth Fund sponsored educators and public health professionals to promote propaganda campaigns to instill nutritional social norms by convincing children that to be healthy, everyone was eating spinach and drinking cow's milk (Marcelin et al., 2019). During this time, the popular phrases such as "eat your vegetables" and "drinking coffee stunts your growth" arose.

The power of social and cultural norms that stem from the media can be displayed by a single cartoon, *Popeye the Sailor Man*. Before the name "Popeye" became associated with a fried chicken fast-food restaurant, *Popeye the Sailor Man* was a popular cartoon that debuted in 1929 but gained most of its popularity in 1933 during The Great Depression era (Lovett, 2005). Popeye was a fictional character who was associated with being a strong, tough, masculine man by communicating strength utilizing visual imagery such as big muscles, tattoos, and his ability to have superhuman strength. Popeye was known for being strong because of his high consumption of spinach, his well-known catchphrase was "I'm strong to the finish, 'cause I eats me spinach".

Visual media, such as the television show Popeye, had the ability to persuade a large audience's beliefs on nutrition—that spinach is correlated with strength. The wide reach of the media in conjunction with strong visual communication strategies has a major impact on viewers' unconscious bias on any type of information. Because of Popeye's dedication to spinach being correlated with strength and masculinity, during The Great Depression era, spinach was children's third favorite food, following turkey and ice cream. The creators of this cartoon based the association between spinach and strength through exploiting the social and cultural norms during the time of the malnutrition crisis. Lovett (2005) coined the term "Popeye Principle" which refers to social norms regarding food information and nutrition having a tremendous influence on individuals.

### **3. Unconscious bias**

Through the repetitive messaging from the media shaping people's perceptions and social norms nutrition information, this is creating an unconscious, or also known as implicit bias. Unconscious biases are social stereotypes about topics or groups of people that are learned and exist in the subconscious. These biases are formed outside of their own conscious awareness—people are not aware that they have perceptions on certain topics, ideas, or groups.

A campaign that had a huge influence on the unconscious bias toward vegans was the popular campaign called "Got Milk?". This was a campaign in the United States that had celebrities such as Taylor Swift, Kobe Bryant, Beyonce, and many others pose for photos with a milk mustache with the slogan "got milk" encouraging people to drink three or more glasses of milk per day for strong bones, muscle building, and protein. This led to everyone believing drinking cow's milk is extremely healthy for you, when milk and dairy products are the top

source of saturated fat in the United States, which is a high contributor to diseases such as diabetes, Alzheimer's, cancer, and heart disease. This messaging was set by the milk industry and the media that drinking cow's milk was healthy. This campaign had such a huge success rate, that everyone genuinely believed the messaging put out by the dairy industry. Till this day, people still believe that drinking cow's milk is beneficial for health because of that single campaign. The significant amount of power persuasive designed visual media holds has an immense influence on public opinion and behavior.

#### **4. Influencer Marketing**

With the recent rise of social media, many social media content creators have gained immersive online fame in which they now rely on as their full-time job, they are known as *social media influencers* or *influencers*. Influencers build their audience by building attractive, entertaining social media profiles, and establishing a strong online identity (Hudders et al., 2021). Popular social media sites where influencers can hold a following include YouTube, Instagram, TikTok, Twitter, Facebook, and Snapchat.

Expenditure on social media influencer marketing has seen an exponential growth within the past few years. The new generation of consumers are spending more time on social media versus traditional media outlets. Influencers have a strong influence on their followers' decision making, therefore attracting companies to reach out to them to endorse their products, a marketing tactic known as *influencer marketing* (Hudders et al., 2021). Internet influencers make most of their income off company advertisements and sponsorships, and oftentimes consequently, promote products and information that may not be the best for their followers.

Popular social media influencer, Joe Rogan, is an example of influencer marketing. Some of the things Rogan is known for is health, fitness, hunting animals for food, and masculinity, therefore his advertisements and sponsorships reflect that. Some of his sponsorships include Butcher Box, a box full of different meats; Traeger Grills, a wood-fired grill company; and Onnit, a supplement company. These companies strategically work with Rogan to promote their products because they know he can heavily influence his followers to buy their products since he is known for health and fitness.

## **5. Creative Research**

The creative research is the design and development of the documentary-short. To successfully convey my messaging, I utilized the power of visual communication in conjunction with strategic messaging and communication tactics to dispel the myth that vegans can't build muscle and receive proper protein. Prior to the production of the documentary-short, various types of in-depth research was conducted to create a successful and effective finished product that communicates my message thoroughly.

First, I had to become an expert on the selected target audience. There are significant differences in audiences—knowing how to communicate effectively to the specified target audience is essential in successfully conveying the intended message. For example, a target audience of cheerleaders will have completely different messaging and communication strategies than a target audience of football players.

I then researched Rogan's patterns in messaging, including his content and form. Content and form are complementary components of visual design (Costello, 2016). Content is a tangible essence of a work: stories, ideas, and information; and form, is the way content is designed and



delivered for consumption (Costello, 2016). I used this data to mimic his patterns in messaging to attract his audience.

Last, I studied various aspects of Rogan's visual communication strategies. I strategically planned each visual shot mimicking Rogan's visual imagery. Rogan displays masculinity and strength through his set, clothing, and body language; therefore, I incorporated those aspects throughout the production of my documentary-short.

### *Target Audience*

The first and most important step in the creative communication design process is to establish a target audience. Target audience research is essential while creating a film—knowing who your audience is will inform the producer how to research, shape, and edit their creative decisions. All processes after establishing the target audience are based on how the producer wants the target audience to perceive the film.

The specific niche of people I chose to target is those who are Joe Rogan fans. Joe Rogan is a 54-year-old American man from New Jersey. He is a podcast host, UFC color commentator, comedian, health-advocate, and former host of the television show *Fear Factor*. He received most of his recent popularity because of his successful podcast, *The Joe Rogan Experience*, on YouTube with 12.1 million subscribers. He recently signed a deal with Spotify to begin posting his content exclusively on their platform, but still posts highlight clips of his podcast on YouTube. His podcasts are long conversations with interesting and popular guests, which range from 2-4 hours long. Some popular guests he has had on the podcast include Elon Musk, Bernie Sanders, Kevin Hart, Kanye West, Wiz Khalifa, and Miley Cyrus.

I chose to target Rogan's audience because of the nature of his messaging towards vegans and nutritional health. Rogan is an avid weightlifter, takes steroids, and is a big advocate for

eating meat and hunting his own meat for optimal health and muscle growth. He has invited vegan doctors, researchers, and advocates on his podcast to debate with them about the pros and cons of a vegan diet. He believes that vegans are under a placebo effect of being healthy and do not get the right nutrients or protein for a healthy diet. As mentioned previously, influencers have tremendous influence on their followers, therefore Rogan's audience was a perfect target for me to conduct my documentary experiment on since they share similar beliefs as Rogan on vegan diets.

To learn more about the target audience, I conducted research to find their key demographics and psychographics. The target audience consists of 71% male and 29% female Americans aged 24-50. They typically fall into the middle-class socio-economic group, with salaries ranging from \$50k-\$100k. They have an active lifestyle, they like to exercise, hunt, and play sports. A lot of Rogan's fans are bodybuilders, athletes, and MMA fighters or fans. They consider themselves healthy and enlightened because they regularly do health-conscious activities such as exercising, using saunas, cold plunge, hunt or buy locally farmed meat, smoke weed, and eat magic mushrooms, just like Rogan. They claim to know a lot about the subject of healthy eating, believing that vegan diets do not provide you with the right amount of nutrients and protein, vegans can't be healthy and strong, and the best source of protein and other nutrients is from consuming meat.

### *Patterns in Messaging - Visual Communication Theory and Practice*

To engage the target audience, I deconstructed Rogan's messaging patterns and imagery to analyze how he influences his audience's perceptions of strength. I chose to mimic these messaging and visual communication patterns as a communication design strategy to influence

and educate his audience on a diet that is optimal for muscle growth and long-term health. I studied Rogan's communication patterns, tactics, and style in attempts to mimic what I believe his audience would respond to. Understanding his patterns in messaging allowed me to figure out how to communicate my message successfully and strategically to his audience. The importance of developing a structure in messaging patterns is what attracts and keeps the target audience entertained. They watch Rogan's videos because they like his personality and content, therefore, the importance of accurately mimicking his messaging patterns will be key in engaging them with my own content.

Every aspect of the documentary-short was carefully and strategically planned based on Rogan's messaging patterns—from color pallets, editing, camera angles, tone of voice, script structure, location, to the direction in which the on-camera talents are looking. The process of researching and implementing Rogan's patterns in messaging is the essence of my study.

I analyzed some of Joe Rogan's patterns in messaging. He speaks with an authoritative, confident voice and cusses a lot. He is a skilled conversationalist and communicator. His podcasts are hours long with guests, and he is always very engaged, asking open-ended questions, and making his guests feel comfortable. He is brutally honest and straightforward which is another reason why people like him so much—he tells it as he thinks it is, no sugar coating. Rogan is also strategic with the type of guests that he invites onto the show. He invites many entertainers and celebrities, but he also invites intellectual guests on his show, where they converse about certain topics that they specialize in, giving a sense of intellect and credibility to Rogan's podcast.

For my documentary-short, I wanted two components: a visual representation of strength and an intellectual, credible representation of the science behind food in relation to muscle

building to mimic Rogan's podcast setup. To mimic Rogan's patterns in messaging, I recruited strong, athletic, confident male talents to speak about veganism while being brutally honest and using masculine humor. I had the on-camera talent speak with confidence, edge, and witty humor, like how Rogan and his guests speak. I scouted three on-camera talents that fit these criteria well: Charlie Zhang and Jarin Darte, vegan athletes for the visual representation of strength; and Katie Seaton, a Registered Sports Dietitian to talk about the science behind food and muscle building.

During the scouting process, I interviewed a few different athletes and dietitians to see who would fit best with the visual communication and messaging of my project. I strategically chose Charlie, Jarin, and Katie based upon their looks, personality, and who would be most engaging and likable to my target audience.

My two male on-camera talent, Charlie and Jarin, are people who look like the stereotypical men who are in the target audience. Having my main on-camera talent as people who the target audience can identify with, will allow them to subconsciously respect, pay attention to, and be more visually persuaded by. Based on data gathered about my target audience, Charlie and Jarin were strategically chosen because they will connect my video with the target audience since they have the same goals (weightlifting and getting buff), therefore making it relevant to their personal lives. Having strong, confident, masculine on-camera talents utilize visual communication design principles to visually persuade the target audience, breaking the illusion that vegans can't be big and strong.

The other on-camera talent in the documentary-short is Katie, her purpose was to bring scientific reasoning and explanations to the video to influence the target audience on my messaging that vegans can be strong and build muscle. Katie brings science and credibility to my

documentary-short, but also brings confidence and humor to appeal to my target audience. I believe that once the target audience sees Charlie and Jarin, they will be visually persuaded that vegans can be big and strong, therefore, the science portion will interest them because they will be curious as to how this is possible. The data collected from the survey portion of my study would help prove this strategy is effective in persuading the target audience.

### *Visual Communication*

The power of visual communication in modern communication is irrefutable, people are far more inclined to show interest and digest content that is visually appealing. Film primarily focuses on visual communication to tell a story; it is a key element that provides stronger examples for the director to communicate their messaging to the audience. Successful and effective visual communication will allow the audience to create meaning from the visual signs (Animbom, 2018). Strategically planning each visual shot was necessary to convey my messaging to the audience with strong visual communication.

Like patterns in messaging, I also had to mimic Rogan's visual communication patterns. Rogan's visual imagery communicates strength and masculinity by his large muscular build, tattoos down his arm, and having a red-colored studio. As described earlier, my male subjects, Charlie and Jarin, both communicated strength and masculinity visually through their muscular builds. I shot both subjects in gym settings which included red accents to mimic Rogan's studio.

The principles of design play a key role in the process of creating similar visual imagery as Rogan. The principles of design incorporate the elements of design when making visual art (Costello, 2016). The principles of design have been formalized to utilize these art design concepts to optimize visual communication (Costello, 2016). A principle of design that I utilized

to achieve strong visual imagery was depth of field. The term depth of field in videography describes the portion of the z-axis that the viewers perceive as being in focus at any specific time (Costello, 2016). Utilizing depth of field is a powerful tool to add emphasis on a design. While I was filming, I utilized depth of field by positioning my camera to emphasize the heavy weights—allowing the audience to focus on how large and heavy the weights that my on-screen talent is lifting.

Another principle of design I utilized throughout the documentary-short was proximity. Proximity states that objects are more likely to be perceived as related when they are positioned close together (Costello, 2016). In Rogan’s visual podcast, his camera angle is in proximity with his and his guest’s face, leaving not much white space. To mimic Rogan’s visual patterns, I also positioned my camera in proximity with my on-camera talent.

Since my documentary-short was focused on vegan protein and muscle building, it was important to display strength. To achieve this, I used another principle of design, emphasis, which suggests that a good design should have a primary focal point or center of interest (Costello, 2016). The shots I chose to put emphasis on were those showing off the on-camera talent’s muscles to show that vegans can look just as good and are just as strong as people who eat meat. For the dietitian portion of the documentary-short, it was important to find an attractive woman, someone visually nice to look at, while also being smart, informative, and convincing.

The editing process plays another critical role in visual communication and messaging patterns because it is the strategy of blending the visual and audio together to create an emotional response from the audience. There are dozens of nuances that go behind video editing—transitions, pace, color correction, audio adjustments, cutaways, and shot sizes to name a few. The importance of creating a visually appealing video, heavily relies on the editing process.

## *Concept and Creative Development*

After completing my creative research, I began conceptualizing my communication design strategy to effectively communicate my message that vegans can be strong and build muscle. I started with a draft of my concept creative form and used this as a working document during the entire process of production which included how to communicate to my target audience, my communication ideas, choice of talent, choice of location, and creative stylistic approaches. See table below for my concept creative form:

<b>Brief Project Description</b> <i>What/who is the overall topic of the video? In your own words, tell us what you're looking to accomplish with this video (or series of video). What makes that person/topic interesting and/or relevant?</i>
<p>My video will be using visual communication, science, and strategic messaging to change the mindset of my specific target audience, that it is possible to build muscle on a vegan diet.</p> <p>What makes this video interesting and relevant is my talent/subjects. What makes my video relevant is that two of my main subjects/talents are people who look like the stereotypical man who is my target audience. Having my main subjects/talents as people who my target audience can identify with, will allow them to subconsciously respect, pay attention to, and be persuaded by. Having these key subject/talents will connect my video with my target audience, because they have the same goals (weightlifting and getting buff), therefore making it relevant. Having strong, confident, 'manly' subject/talents, will be using visual communication to speak to my audience to change the mindset that it is possible to gain muscle and be strong on a vegan diet.</p> <p>Another one of my subjects/talents will be a healthcare professional, Registered Dietitian. This subject/talent will bring scientific reasoning and explanations to the video, making it interesting for my target audience because they are not educated on the science behind vegan foods. Once my target audience sees my first subject/talents, sees how buff and strong they are, the science portion will interest them because they are curious as to how this is possible.</p> <p>I hope to accomplish a change of mindset; I want my target audience to learn that there are other ways to get buff and strong without eating meat. I hope to accomplish a shift in their beliefs that vegans are weak.</p>
<b>Target Audience</b> <i>Who is the intended audience? What do they already know about our subject? What misconceptions or misinformation might they have about it? Explain.</i>
<p>The specific niche of people I want to target is those who are Joe Rogan fans. Joe Rogan is a 54-year-old American from New Jersey. He is a podcast host, UFC color commentator, comedian, and former host of the television show <i>Fear Factor</i>. He received most of his recent popularity because of his successful podcast, <i>The Joe Rogan Experience</i>, on YouTube with</p>

12.1 million subscribers. He recently signed a deal with Spotify to begin posting his content exclusively on their platform, but still posts highlight clips of his podcast on YouTube. His podcasts are long conversations with interesting and popular guests, which range from 2-4 hours long. Some popular guests include Elon Musk, Neil deGrasse Tyson, Bernie Sanders, Kevin Hart, Kanye West, Wiz Khalifa, Miley Cyrus.

Joe Rogan is a big advocate for hunting his own meat. He sometimes comes to the island of Lanai to hunt. He believes that hunting his own meat is the best possible way to receive healthy nutrients. He has invited vegan researchers and advocates on his podcast to debate with them about the pros and cons of a plant-based diet. He believes that vegans are under a placebo effect of being healthy, and never get blood work done or go to the doctors to see how healthy they are. Joe Rogan also takes steroids to aid him with getting bigger/stronger.

My target audience consists of 71% male and 29% female Americans aged 24-50. They typically fall into the middle-class socio-economic group, with salaries ranging from \$50k-\$100k. They have an active lifestyle, they like to exercise, hunt, and play sports. A lot of Joe Rogan fans are MMA fighters/fans. They consider themselves healthy and enlightened because they regularly do health-conscious activities such as exercising, using a sauna, cold plunge, hunt or buy locally farmed meat, smoke weed, and eat magic mushrooms, just like Joe Rogan.

They claim to know a lot about the subject of healthy eating, believing that plant-based diets do not provide you with the right amount of nutrients and that vegans can't be healthy and strong. They believe that the best source of protein and other nutrients is from consuming meat.

**Single Communication Idea**

*What is the one thing you want the target audience to take away? (single most compelling idea that will motivate the target audience to do what you want them to do)*

The main thing I want my target audience to take away is the benefits of consuming a higher number of vegan foods and reducing the amount of meat and dairy in their daily diets. Like I mentioned earlier, my goal is not to convert my audience to a full vegan diet, but to educate them on how their current diet may not be the healthiest. I already know that my audience is passionate about their health, so I want to give them information about health that they may have not previously known to improve their overall health and lifestyle.

**Single Communication Idea (expanded)**

*What do you want the target audience to feel about the subject and explain the importance of that?*

To start, I DO NOT want the audience to feel as if I am attacking them and their beliefs. Once they feel as if they are being attacked, they won't listen with an open mind. I want to gauge the target audience in an approachable and scientific way to package information so they will listen and acknowledge some of the benefits. A huge stereotype about vegans is that they are 'pushy' and 'think they are better than everyone else', I do not want this video to come off like that, rather, an unbiased, strictly informational video. I want my target audience to feel inclined to giving a more vegan lifestyle a try without feeling like they are being forced to do so. I want them to feel as if it is their own decision.



**Creative Stylistic Approach**

*What is the stylistic approach best suited to our content and audience? What other creative elements or resources should be considered? Include your cinematic stylistic ideas that you feel may be appropriate to further your story content and communicate well to your intended audience. List any other creative digital media elements or resources that should be considered.*

The overall stylistic approach that will best suit my audience is confidence, edge, and sassy/witty humor. I tend to achieve this by having my male subjects make witty remarks about the myth that vegans can't build muscle while mimicking Joe Rogan's messaging styles. My male subjects will be filmed in a gym setting, wearing athletic clothes showing off their muscles. There will be clips of him lifting heavy weights with masculine music.

For my female subject, they will achieve this stylistic approach by channeling a more masculine energy. Femininity will not be well received. Since my target audience is influenced by a confident and sharp attitude, my female subjects will make their arguments with a strong, confident voice. Her interview will be shot in a professional kitchen setting and speaking about the science behind vegan and protein building with an attitude of high intelligence, edge, and sass that communicates that there is actual science behind the role of protein and food, not just what it looks like from the outside.

**Video Subjects (if any)**

*Who would be featured in this video? If not a specific person, maybe a course/organization/department.*

Charlie Zhang

Vegan Athlete

- Body builder
- Can lift 400 lbs.+
- Attractive
- Confident

Jarin Darte

Vegan Athlete

- Strong/lean
- Funny
- Attractive
- Confident

Katie Seaton, RD, LD

Registered Sports Dietitian

- Knowledgeable/intelligent
- Attractive
- Likable
- Confident

## **6. Video Analysis**

The goal of the documentary-short is to strategically educate the audience on vegan diets by learning as much as we can about the audience. I hope to accomplish a change of mindset that vegans are weak; I want the target audience to learn that there are other ways to get strong without eating meat. The goal is not to convert the audience to a vegan diet, but to educate them on how their current diet may not be the healthiest and provide alternative food sources that will still be optimal for muscle growth and strength. I already know that my audience is passionate about their health, so I want to give them information about health that they may have not previously known to improve their overall health and lifestyle.

Based upon the intensive visual and strategic communication research on Rogan, I plan to design a documentary-short with the intention to influence the target audience and change their mindset on a vegan diet. This study addressed the following research question:

**RQ:** Will the strategically designed messaging in the video cause the target audience to develop accurate beliefs about a vegan diet?

## **CHAPTER 3: METHOD**

### **1. Pre-test/Post-test Evaluation**

To test if I successfully educated and persuaded the target audience, I created a pre-video and post-video survey to measure if their opinions on building muscle on a vegan diet changed. Prior to watching the documentary-short, the participants took a five-question survey to display what their current stance on vegan diets were. After they took the five-question survey, they watched the four-minute documentary-short, followed by the same five question survey to see if by watching the documentary-short, their answers changed.

## 2. Survey Questions

The pre and post survey is structured having true, false, or uncertain answers. This survey structure allowed me to easily analyze the differences in opinions before and after watching the video. The survey was created via Qualtrics.

Pre and post survey questions:

3. To build muscle, you need to consume meat
  - a. True
  - b. False
  - c. Uncertain
4. You can get all the protein you need from a vegan diet
  - a. True
  - b. False
  - c. Uncertain
5. Vegan diet lacks proper nutrients
  - a. True
  - b. False
  - c. Uncertain
6. Vegan diet lacks protein
  - a. True
  - b. False
  - c. Uncertain
7. Vegans are just as strong as people who eat meat
  - a. True
  - b. False
  - c. Uncertain

### 3. Storyboard: 4:03 Minutes

#### **Charlie 0-25 seconds**

- *You think a meat diet is superior to a vegan diet? Cause we can go right now*
- *Begin music*
- *Bench shot*
- *Weighted pull-up shot*
- *Shirtless leg-up shot, showing off abs*

#### **Charlie 26 -46 seconds**

- *How do I build muscles when I'm vegan? How the hell do you build muscle when you eat meat? Same thing! Calories in calories out!*
- *Deadlift shot*
- *Squat shot*

#### **Jarin 47 seconds-1:08**

- *Even till this day the biggest land animals are herbivores, ox, moose, bison, Jarin*
- *Tire flip shot*
- *Bench shot*
- *Rope shot*
- *Deadlift shot*
- *Vegans can't get protein? I mean \*checks/flexes muscles\* guess I'm doing something wrong here*

*\*Dip to black transition*

#### **Katie 1:08-1:35**

- *Intro: often athletes think they can't consume protein other than meat, dairy, eggs, but that is incorrect*
- *Talks about amino acid component responsible for muscle growth*
  - *Visuals of amino acid component leucine*
  - *Visuals of leucine rich plant foods*

#### **Katie 1:36-2:00**

- *Talks about benefits of tofu*
  - *Visual of tofu and text displaying 1 cup tofu: 20g protein*
  - *Different visual of tofu and quinoa, displaying 1 cup quinoa is 8g protein*
- *Talks about tofu protein role in building and maintaining muscle*
  - *Shot of Jarin flexing muscles*

#### ***Katie 2:01-3:04***

- *Talks about carbohydrates role in muscle growth and energy*
  - *Visual of peanut butter banana sandwich, displaying 18g of protein*
- *Talks about consequences of high protein diet and why more carbohydrates are necessary*
- *Talks about increasing carbohydrate consumption with vegan protein sources and why it's important*
  - *Visual of a bean burrito, displaying 15.2g protein*
  - *Visual of edamame, displaying 17g protein*
- *Benefits of plant-based protein*

#### ***Katie 3:05-4:00***

- *Talk about relatable athlete goals*
  - *Visual of Charlie's back muscles*
  - *Visual of Jarin on monkey bars*
- *Talks about a typical bodybuilder/gym athlete diet and how it is unhealthy*

#### ***4:00-4:03***

- *Transition logo*
- *End music*

## **4. Mode of Delivery for Creative Content**

### *Process of Video Production*

Through the video production process, I served as the producer, director, camera and audio operator, casting director, and video editor. To film, I used a Sony Alpha a7 II Mirrorless Digital Camera with a 70mm lens for wide shots and an 85mm lens for tight shots. I used an external wireless lavalier microphone and studio lights to enhance the audio quality and lighting for my video. For the editing software, I used Adobe Premiere Pro.

As the producer, I conducted the necessary research, created all the scripts and storyboards, as well as managed the film budgets. As the director, I directed the on-screen talents on how to speak, what to do, and how to act. As the camera and audio operator, I determined all aspects of shots and sound, selected, assembled, and positioned equipment, and shot all scenes.

As the video editor, I selected the best shots to utilize, cut, assembled, and eliminated clips, as well as incorporated transitions, pace, color and audio correction, and cutaways to mimic Rogan's style. As the casting director, I virtually met with a few other athletes and one other Dietitian. I put them through the process of reading the script to analyze who could deliver my intended messaging appropriately. I carefully selected Charlie, Jarin, and Katie due to their ability to successfully deliver my messaging both visually and verbally. Although they were great during the casting, to get the perfect shots, there were multiple filming days and many rehearsals. The on-camera talent were compensated \$200 for their time and efforts.

The editing process plays an equally significant role to the filming process as I explained in the *Visual Communication* section of this paper. There were hours of content that was filmed, but I narrowed it down to a four-minute video to attract viewers and engage my audience. This was a rigorous process that included many edited versions, having to make difficult choices of what to keep or cut out before finalizing the production.

### *Creating a YouTube Channel*

To adhere to Rogan's platform, I chose to post the documentary-short on YouTube. For personal safety, I created a YouTube channel specifically for the purpose of this project. With the strategy of mimicking Rogan's messaging and humor, I came up with the name "Vegan Myth Buster". This name was strategically chosen because it speaks to what I am trying to accomplish with my documentary-short, while also having a fun component that will attract viewers. I got the idea from the popular television series, *Ghostbusters*, a comedy show about trapping ghosts. Since *Ghostbusters* was such a popular show, Vegan Myth Buster might sound familiar to my audience.

To provide more content to the YouTube channel, I created a YouTube playlist titled *Vegan Athletes*, where I added videos of vegan bodybuilders and professional football players such as Tom Brady and Tony Gonzalez, who talk about the benefits of a vegan diet to optimize their strength and training. Including this playlist not only gives the YouTube channel more content, but also gives viewers' similar educational and persuasive videos to watch.

### *Logo*

To legitimize the YouTube channel, I designed a profile picture that mimics aspects of Rogan's logo, as well as incorporating humor and relevancy. The purpose of mimicking Rogan's logo was to give my audience a sense of familiarity and be comedic while displaying the purpose of my video and channel. I implemented visual communication design principles such as the choice of the red color, the use of the general "no" prohibition sign symbolizing no violence, no weapons, no killing of animals, and even the smiling of the pig mirroring Rogan's smiling in his logo. Below is a comparison of my logo and Rogan's logo:



## *Recruitment*

For consistency and reliability, I created a corresponding Vegan Myth Buster email to recruit my participants for this study. Participants were found via Joe Rogan's Instagram account, @joerogan, where he has 14.8 million followers. Instagram allows users to link their email to their account, which is how I was able to recruit many of my participants. Other participants were Rogan fans that I personally know, so I forwarded them the recruitment email from the Vegan Myth Buster account. There were 70 recruitment emails sent total. See recruitment email below:

*Aloha!*

*We are Vegan Myth Busters, a new YouTube channel creating educational vegan-related videos. **You are being invited to participate in a study about misconceptions about the vegan diet.** This online study will take less than 10 minutes to complete. Your participation in the study is completely anonymous and voluntary!*

*You will be asked to take a 5-question survey, followed by watching a 4-minute video, and to conclude, take another 5-question survey.*

*Here are the links to the surveys and video (please follow this order):*

1. **Pre-survey:** <http://go.hawaii.edu/xyK>
2. **Video:** <http://go.hawaii.edu/qyx>
3. **Post-survey:** <http://go.hawaii.edu/xyz>

*Please contact [veganmythbuster@gmail.com](mailto:veganmythbuster@gmail.com) with any questions or concerns. Thank you so much for your interest in participating in this study!*

*Best,*

*Vegan Myth Busters*



## CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

The documentary-short was posted on YouTube and sent to 70 participants. The participants were recruited via email and found through Joe Rogan's Instagram followers. There were 52 survey participants.

### 1. Data Analysis

According to the data shown below, there was a significant shift in survey answers after watching the documentary-short. The research question: *will the messaging in the video cause my target audience to develop accurate beliefs about a vegan diet?* Has proved to be true. For each question, the answers towards accurate beliefs on vegan diets have drastically changed. See survey results below:

#### Pre-survey Results

Question	True	False	Uncertain
To build muscle, you need to consume meat.	76.92% 40	15.38% 8	7.69% 4
You can get all the protein you need from a vegan diet.	25.00% 13	61.54% 32	13.46% 7
Vegan diet lacks proper nutrients.	75.00% 39	13.46% 7	11.54% 6
Vegan diet lacks protein.	71.15% 37	21.15% 11	7.69% 4
Vegans are just as strong as people who eat meat.	32.69% 17	57.69% 30	9.62% 5

## Post-survey Results

Question	True	False	Uncertain
To build muscle, you need to consume meat.	5.77% 3	49.23% 49	0.00% 0
You can get all the protein you need from a vegan diet.	92.31% 48	3.85% 2	13.46% 2
Vegan diet lacks proper nutrients.	11.54% 6	86.54% 54	1.92% 1
Vegan diet lacks protein.	5.77% 3	92.31% 48	1.92% 1
Vegans are just as strong as people who eat meat.	90.38% 47	7.69% 4	1.92% 1

## CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

Providing the target audience with appealing, scientific information with communication styles analogous with Rogan, compelled them to be more inclined to trust and consider the information provided, therefore changing their prior beliefs on veganism, and shifting their survey answers. My communication strategy that was researched and implemented successfully changed the perception of vegan diets to my target audience due to the distinct research that was conducted on Rogan and his audience.

The creative research was the design and development of the documentary-short. Without the intensive research that was conducted on Rogan, the target audience, messaging patterns, and visual communication, the message to my target audience would not have been well-received. Adhering to Rogan's communication tactics and strategies allowed me to efficiently persuade and manipulate the target audience's unconscious bias towards vegans.

This study demonstrated that there are still a lot of misconceptions on vegan diets, but there is a large audience who is willing to be educated on the subject if communicated strategically and effectively. Social media plays a huge role in the distribution of information, and it is crucial that influencers are not putting out misinformation. The 24/7 access to the internet allows the convenience of looking up nutritional content and is driving people to get all their information online without knowing where credible information is. The issue with retrieving information off the internet is that individuals seek out information to reinforce their prior beliefs. Influencers have a great responsibility to prioritize sharing accurate information, since they have the ability and platform to influence millions of people.

## **1. Limitations**

There are a few limitations of this study. Not all of Rogan's fans are athletes, bodybuilders, or against vegan diets, therefore some of the participants were not the exact type of person I targeted my documentary-short for. Since there were some participants who are not in the bodybuilding or athlete community, most of my messaging was not applicable to them and may not have digested well.

Another limitation of this study was the credibility of the YouTube channel. Since this was a non-randomized study, I wanted to keep my identity private by creating a separate YouTube channel versus posting the documentary-short on my personal channel. The *Vegan Myth Buster* YouTube channel has only 7 subscribers and 1 video. This may have influenced people's perceptions to believe that this video was not credible.

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