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Eco Talk: A Podcast on how the Irish Media Frame Veganism and its Environmental Impact

By
Héloïse Chaudot

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for MA in
Journalism & Media Communications (QQI)

Faculty of Journalism and Media Communications
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Declaration

I hereby certify that this material, which I now submit for assessment on the programme of study leading to the award of the MA in Journalism & Media Communications, is my own; based on my personal study and/or research, and that I have acknowledged all material and sources used in its preparation. I also certify that I have not copied in part or whole or otherwise plagiarised the work of anyone else, including other students.

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Abstract

Despite the critical role of agriculture in global emissions, the media coverage often omits dietary choices like veganism from discussions on climate change mitigations. The topic of this podcast is an informative analysis of the framing of veganism and the climate crisis in Irish media. It aims to engage with a broader audience and provide real-world perspectives through an interview with an expert, and the general public. The podcast aims to disseminate the findings in a more accessible and engaging format. This dissertation aims to complement the podcast *Eco Talk*, and discusses how the media artefact was conceived and produced.

The primary research questions of *Eco Talk* are:

- How do The Irish Times, and The Journal frame veganism and its environmental impact?
- What themes and narratives are prevalent in their coverage?
- What are the solutions to transitioning towards more sustainable farming practices and shifting towards vegetable and grain farming?

My findings indicate that the framing of veganism and the climate crisis is predominantly negative, discouraging constructive dialogue on the topic.

The implications of this research are significant for both public understanding and future research. By understanding how media framing shapes public perceptions of veganism, this study can inform future policies to keep the media a medium to relay information. Future research could examine the impact of how media frames influence consumer behaviour and the effects of different framing strategies on public perceptions.

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1. Introduction

Addressing the effects of climate change has been a long-standing battle, affecting various aspects of our planet, such as the melting of the ice caps and rising sea levels to more frequent and severe natural disasters. In a world where scientists are constantly publishing reports, predicting an increase of over 1.5°C if global warming continues to rise at its current rate (Ipcc, 2022), it becomes increasingly important to provide accurate information about the topic. With more than 9% of CO₂ emissions, animal farming has a devastating impact on global warming (Animal aid, 2022).

Yet, there is a clear lack of action from farmers and consumers. Research from the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) states that the farming sector was responsible for 37.8% of Ireland's greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions in 2023 (EPA, 2024). If the farming sector keeps its traditional practices, the 2°C limit agreed in the Paris Agreement (The Paris Agreement, n.d.) will not be achieved. However, eliminating animal agriculture within the next 15 years would result in a 68% reduction in global GHG emissions (Than, 2022).

As individuals, tackling climate change has been mostly associated with reducing travel, not leaving appliances on standby, turning down the heating or the lights when not being used, or hanging the washing to air dry instead of using the dryer. However, veganism is one of the most important behavioural changes individuals can make to help reduce climate change. The representation of the climate in Irish media is significantly lower in Ireland than in other European countries (O'Doherty, 2022). This may suggest that Irish media do not sufficiently inform or educate the public about it.

While modern discussions on veganism often emphasise its environmental benefits, its roots come from ethical and philosophical traditions. Throughout history, Buddhists have adhered to vegan diets for 2,500 years, following the doctrine of *ahimsa* (The American Vegan Society, n.d.), which means 'non-injury' in Sanskrit. This principle advocating for a life free from violence towards people, animals, and even plants, has been central to Buddhism. Around the same time, Pythagoras, a Greek philosopher and mathematician, promoted the Pythagorean diet. The diet focused on avoiding slaughtered animals (Clem and Barthel, 2021). It could be described today as vegetarianism.

Being vegan involves avoiding animal harm and not consuming animal-derived products such as meat, dairy, honey, and the use of leather. The Vegan Society defines veganism as:

a philosophy and 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; and by extension, promotes the development and use of animal-free alternatives for the benefit of animals, humans and the environment. In dietary terms, it denotes the practice of dispensing with all products derived wholly or partly from animals.

(The Vegan Society, n.d.)

Today, cattle ranching and soybean production are responsible for 80% of the Amazon forest clearance (Denicoff and Nielsen, 2024). In 2023, a survey conducted by Opinions Research on behalf of Oatly found that a “third of Irish consumers are buying more meat and dairy alternatives than they were three years ago” (Vegconomist, 2023). This shift shows that awareness has developed among consumers. Whether it is for health, animal well-being, or environmental reasons, veganism has grown in popularity. Over 10,000 people were vegan in Ireland in 2023 (CCSL, 2023).

It is also important to highlight the difference between vegan and plant-based. While plant-based refers mainly to a plant-based diet, it can sometimes include animal products (Panoff, 2020). On the other hand, veganism refers to a philosophy of not participating in any activity which exploits animals, along with an animal-free diet.

Given that these two terms are not interchangeable, my podcast will focus exclusively on veganism and aim to understand how Irish media frame veganism and its environmental impact. By analysing media representation, this research aims to identify gaps in coverage of the broader discourse on sustainable practices and climate change mitigation. This podcast is important for many reasons. Firstly, it addresses the underrepresentation of veganism in public discourse as a viable solution to climate change. Secondly, it provides insights into how media framing can influence perception and behaviour towards veganism and sustainability. Lastly, by identifying gaps and biases in media coverage, this study can inform future media practices and policies to better portray sustainable practices and their benefits. In the past few years, podcasts have become increasingly popular, with over 3 million available all over the world (Molenaar, 2021). Moreover, their versatile accessibility allows listeners to enjoy them regardless of their activity. Finally, podcasts allow for wider dissemination of the research findings. They can be shared across various platforms, reaching audiences who may not typically engage with academic literature. Many podcasts such as *The Guilty Feminist* by Deborah Frances-White, have been highlighted by media outlets (Lukowski, 2023), increasing their visibility, especially when they tackle important societal issues.

This research will first review the existing literature to identify gaps and explain the technical aspects of creating the media artefact. Following this, the construction and design of my product will be detailed, explaining the practical decisions made during the production. Finally, the production process and the charts illustrating progress will be explained. The conclusion will then summarise the findings and reflect on the overall research and production journey.

2. Evidence of Research

In the contemporary landscape, the junction between media representation, environmental sustainability and the public's interest holds implications for societal behaviours. Understanding how the media frame topics like veganism and its environmental impact is essential in shaping public perceptions and consumer choices. This section will discuss the previous research on this subject. It will also include the technical aspects of creating my media artefact.

2.1 Early research

Similar research on this topic has been carried out over the years with Matthew Cole and Karen Morgan being frequently cited. In their study *Vegaphobia: derogatory discourses of veganism and the reproduction of speciesism in UK national newspapers*, Cole and Morgan illustrate how British newspapers significantly contribute to the spread of negative narratives about veganism and vegans. They analysed the language used to describe veganism in British newspapers for the year 2007. Cole and Morgan used LexisNexis, an online archive tool containing printed media sources. They searched for the following words: vegan, vegans, and veganism. The articles found were classified as 'positive', 'neutral', or 'negative'. Of the 397 articles found, 5.5% were classified as positive, 20.2% as neutral and 74.3% as negative. The derogatory discourses found were:

- Ridiculing veganism
- Characterising veganism as asceticism
- Describing veganism as difficult or impossible to sustain
- Describing veganism as a fad
- Characterising vegans as oversensitive
- Characterising vegans as hostile

The method used by Cole and Morgan allows quick data collection. However, LexisNexis has limitations. For example, it does not allow the identification of instances where veganism is discussed implicitly or tangentially (Cole and Morgan, 2011), nor does it provide access to images accompanying articles. Due to these limitations, I will not apply this research method in my study.

2.2 Environmental research

My podcast solely focuses on the representation of the vegan diet and its environmental impact in Irish media. It does not aim to provide scientific-based research. However, understanding the effect of vegan food production, and consumption, on the environment is an important context for this podcast.

Studies like Peter Scarborough's *Dietary Greenhouse Gas Emissions of Meat-Eaters, Fish-Eaters, Vegetarians, and Vegans in the UK* highlight the importance of understanding the environmental impact of various diets. The study was conducted between 1993 and 1999, with over 65,000 participants residing in the UK. Participants had to answer a semi-quantitative food questionnaire that estimated the intake of over 130 food items.

In his research, Scarborough compares the following diets and their greenhouse gas emissions:

- All meat-eaters
- High meat-eaters (≥ 100 g/day)
- Medium meat-eaters (50–99 g/day)
- Fish-eaters
- Vegetarians
- Vegans

For an average intake of 2,000 Kcal per person, the results show that a male high meat-eater produces 7.26kgCO_{2e} (kilograms of carbon dioxide equivalents) while a female high meat-eater produces 7.17kgCO_{2e}.

On the other hand, the GHG emissions for vegans are significantly lower, with 2.94kgCO_{2e} for men and 2.87kgCO_{2e} for women.

	High meat-eater GHG emissions (kgCO _{2e})	Vegan GHG emissions (kgCO _{2e})
Male	7.26	2.94
Female	7.17	2.87

Scarborough's research was useful as a foundation for later research, but relies on outdated data. However, it does highlight that the vegan diet was already producing less GHG emissions than any other diet.

In more recent research from 2019, Chai et al. evaluated the impact of different diets in *Which Diet Has the Least Environmental Impact on Our Planet? A Systematic Review of Vegan, Vegetarian and Omnivorous Diets*. They classified and analysed 34 relevant research papers from various databases, focusing on greenhouse gas emissions, land use, and water use. The various elements evaluated in the environmental impact included:

- Greenhouse gas emissions
- Land use
- Water use

To better align with my research, I will solely focus on the results of GHG emissions. Red meat production was found to generate 23% of worldwide agriculture-related GHG emissions. On the other hand, livestock GHG emissions are significantly higher. It accounts for 80% of agricultural GHG emissions. It has also been found that high-meat consumers in the UK were producing 2.5 times more GHG emissions than vegans (Chai *et al.*, 2019).

The researchers have also found that switching to a strict vegan diet could reduce CO₂ emissions by 17%, NO₂ (Nitrous Oxide) by 21%, and CH₄ (methane) by 24%.

This review concludes that the vegan diet is generally more sustainable. However, the study faced limitations including a single search strategy, exclusion of certain keywords, and geographic scope restricted to high-income countries. Despite these limitations, the review provides strong evidence that the vegan diet is the most environmentally friendly.

2.3 Recent research

Recent research conducted in 2023 examined the representation of veganism in British newspapers. In *The representation of vegans and veganism in the British press*, Roger Santallusia Lloan analysed four British newspapers in the following years: 2000 and 2015. A corpus linguistic analysis and a concordance analysis were used for this research. Both methods offer advantages, such as providing a comprehensive review of the most representative terms in the corpus and enabling observation of a specific search term within its context. The author's research is divided into three parts. First, he logged the frequency of the word "vegan" and related terms in four British newspapers for the years 2000 and 2015. He then conducted a qualitative concordance analysis, categorising the contexts in which these terms appeared: food, lifestyle, people, associations/organisations, and other. His findings indicated that in 2000, "vegan" was mostly associated with food (42%), followed by people (28%) and lifestyle (24%). By 2015, there was an increase in food and lifestyle mentions and a decrease in people-related mentions.

Lastly, Lloan performed a quantitative sentiment analysis, categorising articles as positive, negative, or neutral. In 2000, 12% of mentions were negative, 2% positive, and 86% neutral. By 2015, mentions were mostly neutral (97.5%), negative mentions were equal to 2.5%. However, there were no positive representations found. His study shows an increased use of vegan-related terms over time (Santallusia Lloan, 2023).

Overall, Santallusia Lloan's research is quite comprehensive, using a wide range of methods to cover his subject. I aim to complement his work by analysing Irish media, which will provide a broader cultural perspective and deeper understanding of the media's representation of veganism.

Broader research, such as Sebastian Leitz's *The Framing of Vegans and Vegan Diets in News Media* analysed two German news media outlets, the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* and *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, over two years using the framing theory. This theory is a mass communication theory that “refers to how the media packages and presents information to the public” (Framing theory, 2011). The media highlights specific events within a particular context, guiding the public toward a certain interpretation.

The author reviewed 771 articles, retaining 63 relevant ones, and logged their details into a spreadsheet. He used Atlas.ti software to mark quotations, group them into broader concepts, and create a frame matrix for comparison.

Leitz's study found that positive framing of veganism highlighted the environmental harms of animal products, health benefits, and nutrient sufficiency. Negative framings emphasised nutrient deficiencies, health risks of vegan alternatives, cultural and social perceptions, impact on masculinity and moral flaws in all forms of consumption.

While the study did not specify the number of positive, negative, or neutral framings, it concluded that positive framings portrayed veganism as a solution to climate change, health, and animal welfare. In contrast, negative framings depicted veganism as “a threat to cultural values” (Leitz, 2022), associating meat with pleasure.

The last paper reviewed is *Frame Analysis of Irish Media Reports on Veganism and Vegetarianism vis-à-vis the Irish Cultural Context in 2019: Veganuary and the Publication of the IPCC Report* by Sinéad Murphy. The author raised questions about recurring themes in discussions of vegetarianism and veganism, as well as whether the framing of these topics has changed over the years in Irish media. The method used was a framing analysis. Two time frames are analysed: the 31 days of Veganuary in 2019, and the 31 days following the publication of the IPCC (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change) report in August 2019. The second timeframe has been chosen to demonstrate how Irish media frame veganism when the discussion is “centred around agricultural industries' impact on the environment” (Murphy, 2020).

A total of five frames are identified in the 31 days of Veganuary 2019. Veganism/vegetarianism (VE/VG) as a:

- Health risk
- Healthy lifestyles
- Other
- Threat to Irish agricultural industries

- The promotion of speciesism in favour of ethical veganism/vegetarianism

The author found that VE/VG is positively associated with a healthy lifestyle, as well as health improvements and athleticism. However, the negative depiction of VE/VG is associated with an unbalanced diet, unsustainable and restrictive. Another narrative reinforces stereotypes by employing an 'us versus them' storytelling approach. This kind of coverage "ostracises vegans/vegetarians and reassures omnivores that their dietary practices are normal" (Murphy, 2020).

For the 31 days following the publication of the IPCC report, the author identified the following frames. Veganism/Vegetarianism as a:

- Healthy lifestyle through the lens of celebrity culture
- Health risk
- The *other* in relation to omnivores and farmers
- A threat to Irish agricultural industries

The author found that VE/VG was being glamorised by the media using the health benefits frame through the lens of celebrity culture. VE/VG was still observed to be portrayed as an unbalanced and restrictive diet through the health risk frame. However, the 'us versus them' frame places the vegans and vegetarians against both omnivorous people and farmers, which reinforces the ostracisation of VE/VG and increases the division between these groups. Finally, the last frame still depicts VE/VG as a threat to Irish agricultural industries.

Of the literature reviewed, the last study most closely aligns with my research project. While it does not provide a detailed analysis of veganism's framing, it solely focuses on the Irish media, a perspective absent in other studies. However, the remaining studies exclusively focused on newspapers, which helped in my comprehension of varied methodologies. I can observe from the literature review that the framing of veganism varies across different countries. In Germany, veganism tends to be often portrayed positively as a healthy choice. In contrast, the British press tends to present veganism in a neutral light, and even sometimes negatively.

2.4 **Technical aspects of the podcast's production**

This section documents the technical aspects employed in the production of my podcast. This includes the research conducted prior to the creation of my media artefact, which podcasts influenced me, where this podcast will be hosted, as well as which software has been used.

In my personal life, I have recently started to listen to the following podcasts regularly: *Hot Girls Only* and *Le Podkatz*. Both feature casual conversations between the hosts and their guests, sometimes tackling deep and serious topics. Listening to them makes me feel like I am part of the conversation. This was a feeling I wanted to recreate with my podcast. The climate crisis and veganism are crucial topics, and I believed a conversational podcast would provide the essential engagement with listeners in the discussion between myself and a professional.

I decided to create a podcast as it offers a unique way to connect with an audience. Unlike other forms of media, podcasts allow listeners to engage deeply with content in their everyday lives. This flexibility makes podcasts an ideal instrument for reaching a broad and diverse audience. Because podcasts deliver information via verbal communication, they can make complex topics more engaging (Aman, 2023). The personal tone of podcasts can help break down intricate topics, making listeners feel as if they are part of the discussion, rather than just passive recipients of information. This was particularly important to me when addressing the representation of the climate crisis and veganism in Irish media, both topics that can often feel overwhelming for listeners who may not be familiar with them. By framing the discussion in a conversational format, I hoped to make the subject more relatable and easier to understand.

Both *Hot Girls Only* and *Le Podkatz* demonstrate how powerful casual conversation can be in creating a sense of intimacy and engagement. *Hot Girls Only* approaches situations many people can relate to, with a light-hearted conversation between two best friends. The subjects approached are break-ups, things that make them angry, or high-school anecdotes. On the other hand, *Le Podkatz* tackles deeper topics by exchanging with guests who are or were, affected by these topics, such as jail, Alzheimers, prostitution, or ghosting.

The two podcasts mentioned above have a straightforward structure. They begin with introductory music and then proceed directly into the conversation. I wanted to make my podcast more interactive by actively involving the listeners. I decided to ask the listeners all the same questions and have them respond via voice notes (refer to Appendix 1). This approach made it easier for both them and myself, as we did not need to meet in a studio, especially since most participants were not based in Ireland. Additionally, conducting my main interview over Zoom fit into this online-based

approach. The ability to conduct the interview online and receive listener contributions via voice notes greatly eased the production and geographical limitations. This flexibility allowed me to include a diverse range of voices and perspectives from different countries, which enhanced the conversation and made it more representative of different experiences and perspectives.

Listening to these podcasts made me realise the potential for podcasts to have a community of listeners who feel personally invested in the conversation. This sense of community was something I wanted to replicate with my own podcast. I imagined a space where listeners could not only hear expert opinions but also feel that their own voices were valued. By incorporating listener participation through voice notes, I aimed to build a more dynamic and inclusive dialogue around the framing of veganism and climate change in Irish media. I included diverse voices to ensure a range of opinions and start an international dialogue that is accessible to everyone seeking information.

Ultimately, the influence of *Hot Girls Only* and *Le Podkatz* was instrumental in shaping this vision, showing me how powerful and effective podcasts can be in creating meaningful connections and fostering important conversations. Through my podcast, I hope to inspire and inform my listeners, encouraging them to engage with the climate crisis and take action in their own lives.

I chose to use Zoom over other meeting software because it records different tracks, providing isolated tracks for each participant. This feature significantly eases the editing process. It allows for precise adjustments to individuals' audio levels and quality. Zoom's user-friendly interface and familiarity among users make it a convenient choice for both guests and hosts. Moreover, I had previous experience recording an interview on Zoom for a radio documentary. I was therefore familiar with the process. These advantages made Zoom the ideal tool for creating my podcast.

I chose to host my podcast on Spotify as it is a user-friendly platform for creators to upload podcasts. Additionally, Spotify is the most used platform for podcasts, with 34.4% of the listener share (Buzzsprout, 2024), which will provide me with access to a wider audience.

2.5 **Evolution of the media discourse on the environment**

The reviewed literature provides a comprehensive view of how media representation, environmental sustainability, and public interest relate to each other, shaping societal behaviour towards veganism. Foundational research, such as Cole and Morgan's *Vegaphobia*, highlights the negative portrayal of veganism in British national newspapers and its impact on public perception. Scarborough and Chai's *et al.* research on dietary GHG emissions highlights the environmental benefits of veganism, establishing a scientific basis for promoting the vegan diet.

Recent studies by Santallusia Lloan, Leitz, and Murphy, offer a deeper understanding of the evolving media representations of veganism. Lloan's analysis of British newspapers points out a shift towards a more neutral portrayal of veganism. This shift shows a change in the representation given to veganism by the media. Leitz's study on the German media frames veganism with scientific and cultural contexts, showing the diverse ways the media can influence public interpretation. Murphy's work focuses on the Irish media, identifying specific frames and their impact on public perception, which is directly relevant to my research. However, none of this research analyses the representation of veganism and its environmental impact.

My podcast aims to bridge these findings by exploring how Irish media frame the environmental impact of veganism. By analysing these articles, my podcast explores how both past and present publications portray veganism and its environmental consequences. My podcast aims to contribute to the ongoing dialogue on media influence and societal perceptions.

3. Construction of the media artefact

This chapter provides a thorough overview of the creative and technical processes behind producing the *Eco Talk* podcast, detailing the artistic and practical decisions made, as well as the challenges encountered during production. I aim to provide a critical reflection of the actions and decisions that I made throughout the podcast production process. This reflection will lead to a discussion about the complexities involved in creating media products and the expectations that audiences have for them.

3.1 Design concept

I aimed to create a podcast episode lasting between 30 to 40 minutes, allowing for enough time to explore the topic thoroughly. The majority of the work would consist of the main interview with Paula Feehan who would explore the portrayal of veganism and its environmental impact in the Irish media. The main topics approached would be (i) what are the campaigns run by the British Vegan Society, (ii) an analysis of the different articles and headlines I researched prior to the interview, (iii) an understanding of the issues in the coverage, and (iv) a list of realistic solutions applicable. By offering practical solutions and keeping a sense of optimism, the podcast sought to make listeners positive about the future.

I first intended to have a classical approach regarding the structure (Milling, 2021). It would include an introduction, the main interview and an outro. I designed my podcast to work with two main interviewees: Paula Feehan from the British Vegan Society, and Oliver Moore, a vegetable farmer. They would both bring their own perspectives and experiences, while I would be asking questions. I did not intend to bring in my personal opinion, even though I am personally affected by the topic. I intended to keep my participation as neutral as possible, to not interfere with Oliver and Paula's views.

3.2 Pre-production

My research journey started when I began to listen to podcasts about a year ago. I've always wanted to participate in a podcast, and my interest in topics like global warming and veganism made the creation of this podcast a perfect opportunity to explore these issues. I started by looking for headlines and articles in *The Irish Times* and *The Journal*, as they were the media outlets I chose to analyse. I tried to find a range of headlines and articles, going from positive to negative, to illustrate the media coverage of these topics. I then imagined the design of my podcast as follows: having two guests who worked in different fields so I could have a broad range of opinions, as well as having vox

pops to understand the members of the public views on my topic. I used my own contacts to find the following contributors.

I first started by contacting Oliver Moore, who is a vegetarian farmer. I believe it is important to understand his opinion and point of view on an agricultural level. It would offer a valuable insight into the area of food production, providing an additional dimension likely based on practical experience. I had prepared questions regarding the power of meat lobbies, if veganism was a threat to traditional farmers, and if they understood the benefits of veganism. Unfortunately, I did not get an answer back from him, after contacting him both via email and X.

My second potential interviewee was Paula Feehan, who works at the council of The Vegan Society. As she works for advocating veganism, I thought her views and Oliver's would have been great to address my subject. Paula's advocacy for veganism offers an informed and passionate perspective on the benefits of this lifestyle. Given her position at The Vegan Society, her expertise in the organisation's campaigns was invaluable to understanding how they convey their message to the public. I contacted her via email, to which she positively answered almost immediately. At this time, I only had one interviewee for my podcast which I initially designed to work with two guests.

I then had to contact different people, in the prospect of finding a new interviewee who could replace Oliver Moore. I emailed different farmers, but I only received refusals. I also emailed Mike Berners-Lee, whose *How Bad Are Bananas* I reviewed in my initial dissertation proposal. Unfortunately, he declined my request for an interview.

Being left with one interviewee, I had to rearrange the design and structure of my podcast. I decided that I would use my own voice as part of the narrative I wanted to create. Because I was personally affected by the topic, I could use my own experience to create a discussion with Paula. I also decided to bring vox pops at the start of the podcast to have a broader range of voices and experiences.

To gather the necessary data, I reached out to several friends and peers who I knew were either vegan, vegetarian, or sensitive to the topic. To facilitate the process, I requested that they answer my questions via voice notes. This approach made it easier for them and avoided geographical difficulties.

To widen the number of participants, I asked these friends if they knew anyone who might be willing to contribute. Additionally, I decided to use social media to expand my participant

contributions by posting an Instagram story in both English and French, ensuring that language barriers would not limit the number of potential respondents.

The combination of my personal acquaintances and social media outreach increased the number of participants. Once I received the audio responses, I edited the files selecting only the segments that were the most relevant and impactful for my project. This process allowed me to complete a story that communicated the diverse perspectives of the participants.

3.3 **Production**

To conduct my interview with Paula, I first drew a list of questions. These questions were designed to progressively guide the conversation, with a broad analysis of the issues, and gradually leading into a more in-depth examination of potential solutions. The aim was to create a logical flow that would allow Paula to explore deeply into her insights while keeping the audience engaged.

Paula, who has many thoughts on the topics of veganism and the climate crisis, particularly in the contexts of New Zealand, Australia, Ireland, and the UK, approached the interview with a thoughtful perspective. She understood the importance of conveying her message to the public, and was careful to express her views in a respectful manner. For instance, she made sure to acknowledge meat producers, recognising that farming has been a generational practice for many families and is their livelihood. Her expertise and passion for these subjects became evident throughout our discussion.

During our conversation, Paula demonstrated empathy and understanding. When discussing the role of farmers in the current agricultural system, she avoided any form of judgment. Instead, she highlighted that the farmers were simply trying to make a living. By acknowledging the challenges faced by farmers while promoting sustainable practices and solutions, Paula highlighted the complexities of these issues. Her nuanced perspective showed the importance of addressing these issues with sensitivity and respect.

Throughout the discussion, I addressed my research findings to Paula, such as Scarborough's research on the *Dietary Greenhouse Gas Emissions of Meat-Eaters, Fish-Eaters, Vegetarians, and Vegans in the UK*. This study provides a detailed comparison of the environmental impact of different dietary choices. I shared with Paula how Scarborough's data indicates that adopting a plant-based diet could considerably reduce an individual's carbon footprint.

Paula emphasised the critical role of the government in promoting veganism. She argues that governmental policies and funding are essential in helping this dietary shift. By providing financial incentive and support to farmers, the government can help them transition from traditional livestock

farming to the production of plant-based crops. This approach would not only reduce GHG emissions, but also ensure that farmers are not economically disadvantaged during the transition.

On a personal level, my experiences with vegetarianism and veganism have greatly influenced my perspective. After being vegetarian for a couple of years, I participated in Veganuary, an initiative that encourages people to try a vegan diet for the month of January (Veganuary, n.d.). Through this experience, I realised that changing my diet was not as difficult as I had initially imagined.

Given that I did not have a second guest for this episode, I decided to add my personal experiences with veganism and vegetarianism into the conversation. This decision was partly influenced by my own journey and the challenges I encountered along the way. By sharing my experiences, I aimed to create a more relatable and engaging dialogue with Paula, avoiding a formal interview, but rather a discussion between the two of us.

When bringing up various articles during our conversation, I also added my own opinions. This approach allowed me to engage in a more interactive and collaborative discussion with Paula. By associating my personal experiences with Paula's expert insights, we were able to create a richer and more compelling narrative. This method enhanced the overall quality of the podcast, but also made the content more accessible and engaging for the listeners.

3.4 **Post-production**

The post-production is an essential component of a podcast episode. It allows the creator to cut and edit the sound, add music, an intro and an outro, etc. In other words, it is the final stage of podcast production that allows you to polish the episode before posting it online (Plotkin, 2023).

The initial phase of my editing process was planned carefully to ensure the highest audio quality. I started by listening to both my recording and Paula's, checking for clarity and any technical issues. I realised that my track was not clear enough and had too many imperfections to be used. To ensure better audio quality, I decided to use the radio studio available at Griffith College to entirely re-record my voice.

To begin this process, I first played back my recording and used the dictate function on Microsoft Word to transcribe it. This transcription step was essential for maintaining the accuracy of the transcript and allowed me to correct any errors, such as incorrect words. After refining my transcription, I proceeded with recording it. My goal during this recording session was to capture the

essence of the original conversation with Paula, aiming to replicate the authenticity and spontaneity of our initial conversation.

The second step involved editing the voice notes I received from the different participants. Some of the recordings had significant background noise, which made them difficult to use in the final product. However, since I asked the same set of questions to all participants, I could rely on clearer recordings from other participants to provide an answer. Despite the audio quality issues, I still had comprehensive and coherent responses to each question.

I also had to trim down many of the voice notes, as it would have exceeded the length desired for the episode. This was necessary despite the many interesting experiences shared by participants. After trimming the voice notes, I organised them to ensure that no voice was heard answering two questions in a row. When multiple participants did answer the same question, their responses provided a range of different experiences. I chose to put the voice notes at the beginning of the episode, as an introduction to the topic. By incorporating diverse perspectives and experiences, it allows the listeners to connect more deeply with the subject matter.

In terms of music selection, I chose to add a Lo-Fi-style track to create a soothing atmosphere for the episode. The subjects of the climate crisis and veganism are both important and current, yet they can easily become overwhelming when discussed in detail. The chosen music aimed to present the episode to the listeners in a positive manner, similar to how the two podcasts mentioned earlier have successfully used relaxing music to approach sensitive topics.

The duration of my podcast was carefully considered to align with industry standards. On average, radio shows typically last around 46 minutes. For instance, NPR adheres to this duration with their podcast *Fresh Air*, which varies between 44 and 48 minutes (NPR, 2024). Additionally, research has demonstrated that 45 minutes is often considered the ideal length for a podcast episode. This preference is based on listener feedback, which indicates that audiences generally desire episodes that fit the duration of a run (Harris, 2021). This deliberate consideration of duration points out my commitment to producing high-quality content that fits within the media landscape. By adhering to these standards, I ensure that my podcast remains both engaging and accessible to a wide audience, maximising its potential impact.

For the recording and editing of the final product, I used Adobe Audition, a software with which I am very familiar. This familiarity was advantageous as it allowed me to efficiently edit without facing

major technical difficulties. The editing and recording of my transcript took place in the penultimate week of July 2024. After some hesitation on the introduction of the different participants' voices at the beginning, the final product was ready by the 28th of July 2024.

3.5 Ethical considerations

Throughout the development of this project, I was aware of the different ethical aspects involved, and that I should strictly follow journalistic ethical guidelines. In *Journalism as research: Developing radio documentary theory from practice*, Lindgren argues that "journalists must follow set ethical guidelines when collecting interviews for a story" (Lindgren, 2011).

During the pre-production process, I made sure to integrate these ethical principles. It included obtaining explicit and informed consent from all interviewees through a consent form, clearly communicating their right to voluntary participation, and assuring them of their ability to withdraw from the project at any time.

As a committed vegetarian, I was particularly interested in examining the media's framing of veganism and the climate crisis. To adhere to the NUJ Code of Conduct, and ensure objectivity in my research, I deliberately tried to distance myself from my personal beliefs to the analysis. A diverse range of articles and headlines were included, representing both positive and negative perspectives on the subject matter. Nevertheless, a careful analysis of the collected data pointed out a predominance of negative framing and coverage. This disparity in tone is a significant finding that demands further exploration. It was not easy to differentiate my personal beliefs from journalistic principles, as my commitment to vegetarianism conflicted with the need to maintain and provide unbiased analysis.

Throughout this podcast, I was motivated to ensure the public are being well informed about veganism its environmental impact, following the NUJ Code of Conduct which states that a journalist "defends the principle of media freedom, the right of freedom of expression and the right of the public to be informed" (NUJ, n.d.).

I also aimed to obtain my material by honest means, ensuring that all my contributors were fully aware of how their recording would be used. I required each participant to sign a consent form before including their contributions in my final product. This approach guaranteed that everyone involved in the podcast gave informed consent, aligning with the NUJ Code of Conduct.

Producing this material had the potential to provoke negative reactions from, and towards farmers. However, Paula and I were committed to demonstrating an empathetic and respectful discourse, acknowledging the challenges faced by farmers without passing any form of judgment. I tried my best to ensure that my content would not lead to hatred towards any group.

4. Discussion

This chapter outlines the progress of the production of *Eco Talk*. It documents the previous work achieved throughout the coursework, explains the exchanges with my supervisors, and charts the progress until the final product is completed.

4.1 Previous work throughout the year

I chose the subject of veganism and climate change as I have been researching and learning about these topics in my personal life. My relationship to the climate crisis started years ago, as members of my family work in this field. Therefore, it was a very present and discussed subject in our household. I started to be involved in veganism two years ago when I began to change my diet from flexitarian to vegetarian. This moment corresponds to my arrival in Ireland. As I moved here from France, I realised that many options were available for vegetarians and vegans in supermarkets and restaurants. Having a severe egg allergy since birth, discovering fully vegan restaurants in Ireland was a revelation. A whole new diet was being offered to me, and I could try many new dishes without worrying about cross-contamination.

I then started to research the climate crisis and veganism, and slowly changed my diet as I was feeling guilty when consuming dairy products. Today, I am still not fully vegan, but my diet mostly is. After doing the Veganuary in January 2024, I drastically changed my dairy intake and have tried as much as I can to avoid it since then.

Studies have shown that adopting a vegan diet can significantly reduce personal greenhouse gas emissions by up to 75% (Carrington, 2023). Global warming is a critical issue impacting our planet, and understanding how it's framed in Irish media is essential. By analysing the media's portrayal of this crisis and veganism, I could better comprehend public perception and address effective solutions. To address the climate crisis effectively, I had to understand its local impact on Ireland, explore practical steps individuals can take and analyse the government's role in addressing and diminishing this issue.

Throughout the coursework, we were asked to submit different proposals. My final proposal was submitted on the 20th of March 2024. It contained a detailed outline of my initial approach to the topic. I had planned to interview different people ranging from journalists and vegan and non-vegan members of the public. As discussed in the previous chapter, the direction of the choices for interviews changed when I corresponded with Francesca Lalor, my podcast supervisor. She suggested to me a few people that fit better in my project. I also realised that voice notes would be easier than bringing in participants in the studio.

4.2 Supervisors and workflow

On April 26th, I received the assignment from my supervisors. Francesca Lalor was designated to supervise the podcast component, while Ryan Brennan was assigned to the creation of the supporting documentation.

A few weeks later, I had my first meeting with Francesca. We designed a workflow to be followed in the upcoming weeks. I took the responsibility of adhering strictly to this workflow, ensuring that all the tasks were completed on schedule.

I immediately started to design the foundational structure of my podcast. This involved determining the theme and targeted audience, as well as identifying potential guests whose insights and experiences would significantly enhance the content. I considered a variety of participants for the vox pops segment, weighing the pros and cons of conducting these interviews in person or digitally. Each decision was made to maximise the quality of the podcast.

I decided that my podcast should be accessible to a broad audience, specifically targeting those who either have little knowledge about the topic or have some familiarity but want to deepen their understanding. The reason I chose not to interview a scientist is that such content would have become too specialised and niche, which would likely have significantly reduced the size of my potential audience.

Moreover, I planned each step carefully, from initial contact with guests to the logistics of recording and editing the podcast. I aimed to create a cohesive narrative that would engage and inform my audience. This detailed planning set the successful execution of the podcast, ensuring that all elements were planned.

This meeting was followed by my first meeting with Ryan on May 23rd, where we explored various potential topics. We brainstormed discussing how examining small media outlets could reveal differences in the coverage of veganism and the climate crisis compared to larger media organisations. We also considered the idea of comparing similar stories across different media platforms to analyse varying narratives and perspectives.

Another interesting angle we discussed was the public's potential fatigue with these subjects, exploring whether repetitive coverage was diminishing their impact. To add another element to this investigation, we considered the idea of meeting a chef to add to my research. This meeting would aim to gather views on how the general public perceives veganism and its association with the climate crisis from a dietary perspective.

By exploring these diverse topics, I aimed to create a comprehensive podcast that not only highlighted the varying media portrayals but also incorporated expert opinions and public perceptions. This approach would ensure that the supporting documentation provided an insightful analysis, complementing the podcast effectively.

Faced with these tasks, I decided to create a detailed schedule, assigning one or multiple tasks for each week leading up to the submission date (refer to Appendix 4).

I initially reached out to Oliver Moore via email, hoping to secure an interview for the podcast. Unfortunately, he did not respond. After waiting a couple of weeks, I tried contacting him again through X, but this attempt did not work either. During this period, I had managed to secure Paula Feehan as an interviewee, but I could not confirm the recording date with her, as I was still waiting for Oliver's response to coordinate both interviews. Just a week before the scheduled meeting with Paula, I realised I needed to completely restructure the podcast. I had to adjust the format to accommodate only one interviewee and incorporate my insights and experiences to fill the gap. Francesca has been extremely helpful in this process. Her quickness to organise online calls with me and approve my new structure allowed me to prepare my questions and refine them before I met with Paula over Zoom.

The production of *Eco Talk* was a highly enjoyable experience that taught me valuable lessons in organisational skills, balanced reporting, and the principles of bias and ethics in journalism. During the production process, I became self-aware of my own biases. While researching articles for my discussion with Paula, I noticed that I was mostly selecting negative articles. I then made a conscious effort to seek out a broader spectrum of coverage, ensuring that the information I brought to the conversation was balanced. This experience not only improved the quality of my podcast but also reinforced the importance of maintaining objectivity in journalism.

Ultimately, I believe that the most crucial aspect of the podcast is recognising that the growth of human knowledge relies heavily on maintaining an open mind. This doesn't mean we have to accept every claim or idea, but rather we should approach topics with a willingness to explore and research them. By doing so, we can develop well-informed opinions and make more relevant contributions to the discussion. Embracing curiosity allows everyone to engage with information more effectively and build a more nuanced understanding of the world.

5. Conclusion

The preparation and production of *Eco Talk* took approximately two months. This podcast was a direct outcome of my commitment to addressing the climate crisis and exploring the benefits of a vegan diet. It was also a commitment to my belief that the media has a responsibility to provide well-informed and objective reporting on important issues. Finally, it reflects the journalistic skills and interests I developed throughout my course, mixing my passion for these issues with the professional techniques I have learned.

While the topic of veganism can seem overwhelming depending on how it is presented and discussed, I believe that fostering well-informed conversations will give people a more positive view of it. Veganism represents a thoughtful and sustainable lifestyle that more individuals could consider adopting, while recognising that it can be adaptable to personal circumstances such as specific dietary needs, or health conditions.

Based on my conversation with Paula Feehan in the podcast, I have come to the following conclusion. The Irish government must not neglect the fact that animal farming is not a viable path to achieve net zero emissions. Instead, the government must focus on providing sustainable alternatives. This includes offering financial support to farmers and supplying them with the necessary resources and equipment to transition from producing dairy, beef, and poultry to growing vegetables and grains. By doing so, the government can help to ease a shift towards more environmentally friendly agricultural practices.

In terms of advocacy, the British Vegan Society is actively running several important campaigns that are crucial for starting an international dialogue on veganism. These initiatives are playing a significant role in raising awareness and promoting the benefits of a vegan lifestyle. For instance, international campaigns like Veganuary have received widespread media coverage, with various newspapers reporting on their success, such as "Ireland ranked among top ten countries globally for veganism" (IrishCentral, 2023). The growing number of vegans in Ireland, as highlighted by the article previously mentioned, points out the effectiveness of these campaigns in encouraging more people to adopt a plant-based diet. This increased visibility and engagement are vital for advancing the global conversation on sustainable and ethical food practices.

From my own research, and drawing from my conversation with Paula, I have come to a few other conclusions. In various dimensions, there are instances where coverage of veganism and its environmental impact are being misrepresented within Irish media. There are organisations with interests in the success of animal products, paying for articles negatively portraying veganism. It is

essential to ensure journalism is unbiased and fair around veganism amongst all topics. Paid for articles by organisations with financial incentives prevent this lack of bias. Even though it is difficult to avoid biased journalism, the media should work to ensure that readers are well informed about the funders of different articles and media organisations.

I have also learned that veganism is underrepresented within the media. Not relating to Irish media specifically, Paula explained that in the US, a study found that only 7% of climate media coverage discussed animal agriculture (Arévalo, 2023). This is despite it being responsible for 11-20% of the US's greenhouse gas emissions. It could be useful for a similar study to be conducted in Ireland, as my research and experience has suggested there is an underrepresentation of this issue in Irish media as well.

Final essential ideas the podcast covered, brought up by Paula, were about habits, belief reinforcement, and behaviour. We discussed that articles criticising veganism, especially when framing the diet as lacking nutrients, can help people reinforce their own existing habits, and reduce guilt about potential harm caused. This is despite the scientific research continually displaying the environmental and health based benefits of the vegan diet. Overall, I think there are a few forces at play influencing the framing of veganism in Irish media. Animal farmers and their related lobbies provide financial offerings, and people with lifelong habits and the human struggle to change, offer strong incentives for Irish media to portray veganism with negative framing. On the other side, the positive framing of veganism has incentives of capturing new and young audiences, and the perception that they are helping with the fight to slow down climate change.

My podcast *Eco Talk* provided me with a comprehensive understanding of podcast production including the different nuances in having a non-judgemental and insightful discussion. Through this experience, I gained valuable insights into the complexities of creating engaging content, and learned how influential the podcasting medium can be. The process showed me the power of podcasts as a tool for effective communication and highlighted the importance of presenting information in a balanced and accessible manner.

To further develop my project, it would be interesting to understand the impact of media framing of veganism and the environment on public perception and behaviour, with a particular focus on how different frames influence consumer choices and decision-making processes. Media framing refers to the way information is presented to the public, which can significantly shape individuals' attitudes. Analysing frames could reveal how they affect consumer behaviour, particularly in terms of their

purchasing decisions. By analysing how different media frames change individuals' perceptions and preferences, the expanded analysis could also discover how consumers' choices are driven. For instance, examining how environmental issues are framed in media and advertising could provide valuable insights into how such representations influence consumer preferences for sustainable and eco-friendly products.

Research in this area could involve a comparative analysis of different framing techniques, such as emphasising the urgency of environmental crisis versus highlighting the benefits of sustainable living, to determine which approaches are more effective in influencing consumer attitudes.

This expanded analysis could also include studying the long-term effects of media framing on consumer habit, including how maintained exposure to particular frames might lead to lasting changes in purchasing behaviour and brand loyalty. The research could offer a more comprehensive understanding of the implications of media representations on consumer behaviour, specifically towards veganism. This could provide valuable insights for media professionals seeking to understand public perception.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: List of questions asked to participants:

- What's your name? Where are you sending this from?
- Are you vegan? If not, do you know any vegans?
- If vegan, why did you become vegan?
- What do you think of the introduction of Meat Free Monday (not eating meat on Mondays to reduce your meat consumption)
- Have you ever done it yourself or plan to do it?

Appendix 2: SFX and music used in the podcast:

- LoFi Rhodes: music by TuesdayNight from Pixabay.
- Ringtone: SFX by UNVERSEFILED from Pixabay.

Appendix 3: Interview consent form:

Podcast Recording Consent Form

Title of Podcast: Eco Talk

Podcast Host(s): Héloïse Chaudot

Recording Date: N/A

Recording Location: Online via Social Media

Thank you for agreeing to participate in my podcast. Please read the following information carefully before giving your consent.

Purpose of the Podcast: The podcast aims to analyse how Irish newspapers frame veganism and its environmental impact. Your participation will help me to understand how the framing is perceived.

Nature of Participation: You will be participating in a recorded interview/conversation. The recording will capture your voice and any other sounds made during the session. The content may be edited for clarity, length, and quality before being published.

Use of Recording: The recording will be used for the podcast and may be distributed on various platforms, including but not limited to iTunes, Spotify, and YouTube. Excerpts from the recording may also be used for promotional purposes on social media and other channels.

Rights and Usage: By signing this form, you grant the podcast host the right to use, reproduce, distribute, and publicly display the recording, in whole or in part, in any media format. You also waive any rights to inspect or approve the finished product wherein your likeness or voice appears.

Confidentiality: We will not share any personal information that is not part of the recording. Any sensitive topics you wish to exclude from the recording should be communicated prior to the recording session.

Voluntary Participation: Your participation in this podcast is voluntary. You may withdraw your consent at any time before the recording is published by contacting me at heloise.chaudot@hotmail.com or +353 89 987 5691 (Whatsapp). Withdrawal of consent will result in the removal of your segment from the podcast.

If you have any questions or concerns about this consent form or the recording, please contact us at:

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Francesca Lalor
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+353 86 373 4308

Consent:

I, the undersigned, have read and understood the above information. I voluntarily agree to participate in the podcast and consent to the recording and use of my voice as described.

Participant's Name:

Participant's Signature:

Date:

Appendix 4: Chart Activity

	03/06 - 07/06	10/06 - 14/06	17/06 - 21/06	24/06 - 28/06	01/07 - 05/07	08/07 - 12/07	15/07 - 19/07	22/07 - 26/07	29/07 - 02/08	05/08 - 08/08
Book radio studio										
Find participants										
Podcast Production A-Z										
Record the podcast										
Edit the podcast										
Literature search										
Reading										
Write Literature review										
Write Dissertation										
Fine-tune diss										
Submit										

Appendix 5: Sample email correspondence

Subject: Invitation to Participate in Podcast on Veganism and Environmental Impact

Dear Paula Feehan,

I hope this email finds you well.

My name is Héloïse Chaudot, and I am a Master's student at Griffith College, Dublin. I am currently working on a podcast for my dissertation, exploring how Irish newspapers frame veganism and its environmental impact. I am being supervised by Francesca Lalor.

Given your role as Vice Chair of the Vegan Society, I would be honored to have you as a guest. I believe that your insights on the subject would be great to contribute to this podcast.

The recording will take about 45 minutes to an hour and can be scheduled either in the week of the 24th to the 28th of June, or the following week (first week of July).

I am planning to record remotely, via Zoom.

Please let me know if you're interested and your availability in the coming weeks.

Thank you for considering this invitation. I look forward to your response.

Best regards,

Héloïse Chaudot