

UNIVERSITY OF TARTU

Faculty of Social Sciences

School of Economics and Business Administration

Mariann Saabas

THE ROLE OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN PROMOTING SUSTAINABLE  
CONSUMPTION

Bachelor Thesis

Supervisor: Associate Professor Eve Parts

Tartu 2025

I have written this Bachelor Thesis independently. Any ideas or data taken from other authors or other sources have been fully referenced.

**Table of contents**

Introduction.....	4
1. Theoretical background of the relations between sustainable consumption and social media.....	5
1.1. Concepts and theories related to sustainable consumption.....	5
1.2 Attitudes and behavior toward a sustainable lifestyle.....	8
1.3 Social media influence on adopting a sustainable lifestyle .....	10
2. Empirical analysis of sustainable lifestyle and social media .....	13
2.1 Data and Methods .....	13
2.2 Results of the survey and experiment .....	16
2.3 Discussion of results .....	26
Conclusions.....	28
References.....	30
APPENDIX A.....	33
APPENDIX B .....	34
APPENDIX C.....	36
Resümee.....	37

## Introduction

Although the modern economic model is built on the principle of eternal growth, more and more people believe that endless growth is not possible due to the limited resources of the Earth. Therefore, various movements such as degrowth, a-growth alongside green growth, and sustainable growth looking for a more sustainable approach, are rising in the world. Alongside this, social media plays an ever-growing role in how individuals engage with information and make lifestyle choices. With more than 5.2 billion users worldwide (Statista, 2024), social media offers a broad platform for promoting sustainable lifestyle choices and raising awareness about sustainable options.

In 2015, the United Nations introduced 17 sustainable development goals, including goal 12: Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns (United Nations). Companies, politicians, and policymakers, as well as consumers themselves, have a responsibility to work towards the change of sustainable consumption and production. This paper focuses on consumer-level behavior in choosing sustainable options and on ways to change their behavior toward more sustainable and less wasteful options. As social media plays an increasing role in today's society in terms of common space, information exchange, and the time spent there, this work examines how social media influences people's everyday behavior in choosing more sustainable options. With challenges such as authenticity, greenwashing, online trends, and misinformation, promoting sustainability and a green lifestyle is needed to nudge the public towards sustainable practices.

The concept of degrowth emerged in the 1970s, and there is an increasing amount of literature on the topic. Sustainable consumption and lifestyle have also been widely studied. As social media usage and influence grow, an increasing number of studies can be found on social media influence. Yet, the number of studies combining degrowth and sustainability in the concept of social media is limited. This paper will focus on the consumer level of sustainable consumption, analyzing social media's influence on consumer behavior, and will not go in-depth into the political advocacy or business responsibility.

This research paper aims to measure the impact of social media nudging on consumers' purchase intention toward sustainable products.

Research tasks:

- analyze the theoretical background of the concepts of sustainable consumption;
- examine attitude and behavior toward sustainable consumption;
- give an overview of social media's influence on consumer behavior;

- develop an experiment and a survey to measure social media's impact on sustainable purchase intentions;
- distribute the survey and collect data;
- analyze the data and discuss the results.

The paper consists of two main chapters. The first chapter covers the theoretical background of sustainable consumption and sustainable lifestyle. In the second part of the first chapter, social media's influence on adopting a green lifestyle is covered. The second chapter covers the empirical part of the thesis. This chapter includes methodology and samples and gives an overview of the empirical findings. The last part of the second chapter synthesizes the coherence of empirical findings and theoretical background.

Keywords: sustainable consumption, degrowth, green lifestyle, social media, nudging

## **1. Theoretical background of the relations between sustainable consumption and social media**

### **1.1. Concepts and theories related to sustainable consumption**

There are various concepts and theories related to sustainable consumption, advocating for sustainable practices and criticizing classical economic models. In this chapter, the concepts of degrowth, sustainability, sustainable consumption, and sustainable and green lifestyle are covered. The concept of degrowth is an alternative sustainable socio-economic model that contrasts with the classical economic model and advocates for a society where economic growth is not a prime goal and more emphasis is on equality, well-being, and sustainability. The concept of degrowth emerged in the 1970s as a radical economic theory that challenges the sustainability of continuous economic expansion. It advocates for the intentional downsizing of economies to decrease resource consumption and reduce environmental degradation. Over time, the idea has evolved to include critiques of consumer society and development paradigms, particularly from perspectives in both the Global North and South. Degrowth is a normative concept covering various research fields, including history, economy, anthropology and social sciences, ecological economics, political science, and technology. (Kallis et al., 2018) Based on previous literature, degrowth can be considered a diverse and evolving field with no fixed definition, with the main focus on reducing the use of energy and resources as well as addressing inequality and human well-being (Engler et al., 2024). The term "degrowth" itself emerged from the direct translation of the French word

"D croissance" in the early 2000s when activists in France used it in demonstrations against climate change and wasteful economic models (Demaria et al., 2013). Another way to conceptualize degrowth is through frugal abundance. With the example of many indigenous and intentional communities, immaterial abundance can be achieved in a society where individuals have a fulfilling life while maintaining ecological and social justice (Plomteux, 2024). This take conceptualizes degrowth in a way that considers immaterial values and community as part of a good life rather than material wealth. Although degrowth has been defined differently, and the essence of this concept has changed over time, the main vision remains the same. In the end, the goal of this concept is to reduce production, consumption, and waste while improving people's quality of life and the environment they live in.

Although the idea of degrowth is noble, in reality, this idea faces many shortcomings and difficulties in implementation. The theory of degrowth advocates a change in various fields, for example, corporations and the business sphere, politics, and governance, as well as the division of labor and people's habits. The concept of degrowth lacks concrete policy proposals, especially monetary and distributional policies (Engler et al., 2024), making it difficult to implement and achieve the goals presented by the idea. Although people's attitudes toward sacrificing growth in favor of sustainability are mostly supportive (Gugushvili, 2021), change is delayed without political initiative and clear goals. On the other hand, the word "degrowth" itself can have negative connotations, referring to recession or economic contradictions, and it can be more preventive than promotional (Krcan & Basso, 2021). Therefore, this theory still needs some clarity and clear messages to reach people's understanding of the problem and the essence of change toward a more sustainable economy.

As the term "degrowth" may not be the most positive or initiative term for leading the change, related terms like "sustainability" and "sustainable consumption" will be analyzed. "Sustainability" is defined as "the quality of being able to continue over a period of time" (Cambridge Dictionary) or "the ability to be sustained, supported, upheld, or confirmed" (Dictionary). Ruggerio (2021) defines sustainability as a complex interplay of socio-ecological systems (SESs), requiring a balance among economic, ecological, social, and political dimensions (Ruggerio, 2021). This definition of sustainability is in accordance with the concept of degrowth, referring to a system that must last in the long term.

Moving on to the concept of sustainable consumption, the United Nations' 17 sustainable development goals include Goal 12: Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns. Sustainable consumption is defined as "the use of goods and services that respond to basic needs and bring a better quality of life, while minimizing the use of

natural resources, toxic materials, and emissions of waste and pollutants over the life cycle, so as not to jeopardize the needs of future generations.” (Oslo Symposium 1994, cited in Mousumi, 2021) Although there are many definitions for sustainable consumption in the literature, Quoquab and Mohammad identify five main facets of sustainable consumption definitions: satisfying basic human needs, concern toward quality of life, care for environmental well-being, taking a life-cycle approach, and concern for the needs of future generations (Quoquab & Mohammad, 2020). The concept of sustainable consumption plays a big role in the wider concept of degrowth, where consumers' decisions affect the way of the overall economic system, decreasing the demand for unnecessary, unsustainably, or unethically produced products.

Green consumption is defined as "the tendency to express the value of environmental protection through one's purchases and consumption behaviors." (Haws et al., 2014, p 337) While sustainable consumption is a wider definition covering various aspects related to sustainability, green consumption refers to a narrower idea, mostly focusing on the mindset. Green consumption is part of a green lifestyle. Li et al., (2024) define a green lifestyle as a lifestyle that aligns with sustainable development requirements. According to the United Nations Environment Programme, a green lifestyle or sustainable lifestyle is "A way of living, social behaviors, and choices that minimize environmental degradation (use of natural resources, CO2 emissions, waste, and pollution) while supporting equitable socio-economic development and better quality of life for all." (UNEP) These different definitions and concepts cover the dynamics of widespread problems and highlight the importance of systemic changes in economic systems, consumption patterns, and individual behaviors to support long-term ecological and social well-being. A comparison of these concepts and definitions is presented in Table 1.

All concepts presented in Table 1 emphasize reducing the environmental impact of economic activities through minimizing resource consumption, waste, and pollution, and they prioritize improving or maintaining human well-being and quality of life. Degrowth is a wider economic model advocating for economic downsizing and systemic change, while the definition of sustainability covers a broader concept of balance, not prescribing specific systemic shifts in the economy. Sustainable consumption focuses on individual and systemic decisions about goods and services, linking consumption directly to sustainability goals, while green consumption is even more specific, emphasizing environmentally conscious purchasing behaviors. Green lifestyle expands this to include broader social and lifestyle choices that align with sustainability. The concept of frugal abundance stands apart by

focusing on immaterial values, such as ecological and social justice, as a redefinition of what constitutes a fulfilling life.

Table 1

*Comparison of definitions about sustainability*

Term	Definition	Reference
Degrowth	Economic model advocating for intentional downsizing of economies to decrease resource consumption and reduce environmental degradation.	(Kallis et al., 2018)
Sustainability	A complex interplay of socio-ecological systems (SEs), requiring a balance among economic, ecological, social, and political dimensions.	(Ruggerio, 2021)
Sustainable Consumption	The use of goods and services that respond to basic needs and bring a better quality of life, while minimizing the use of natural resources, toxic materials and emissions of waste and pollutants over the life cycle, so as not to jeopardize the needs of future generations.	(Oslo Symposium 1994, cited in Mousumi, 2021)
Green Consumption	The tendency to express the value of environmental protection through one's purchases and consumption behaviors.	(Haws et al., 2014, p 337)
Green Lifestyle or Sustainable Lifestyle	A way of living, social behaviors, and choices, that minimize environmental degradation (use of natural resources, CO <sub>2</sub> emissions, waste, and pollution) while supporting equitable socio-economic development and better quality of life for all.	United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)
Frugal Abundance	A society where individuals have a fulfilling life while maintaining ecological and social justice.	(Plomteux, 2024)

Source: Compiled by the author

In conclusion, sustainable consumption and sustainable lifestyles are the most relevant terms in this paper as they directly connect individual and collective consumption habits with achieving sustainability goals. The rest of this paper will primarily focus on these two terms and examine how these concepts can be promoted in the sphere of social media.

## 1.2 Attitudes and behavior toward a sustainable lifestyle

As mentioned in the previous subchapter, a change towards a more sustainable economy requires a systematic approach in various fields. Yet, analyzing all the different dimensions of the idea is out of scope for this thesis. Therefore, this subchapter focuses on attitudes and personal lifestyle choices individuals can make to initiate the change toward a sustainable economy.

The attitudes toward sustainable consumption vary according to different sources. According to PwC's Voice of the Consumer Survey 2024, 43% of consumers report making more sustainable purchases, yet only 9,8% are willing to pay more for sustainably produced products (Durand-Hayes et al. 2024). In most European countries, the majority of people are in favor of reducing growth for the protection of the environment. According to Gugushvili (2021), on the individual level, support for environmental protection is higher among post-materialists, left-leaning individuals, the better-educated, and those with higher incomes, whereas materialists, right-leaning individuals, and socioeconomically disadvantaged groups tend to prioritize economic growth (Gugushvili, 2021). Another study found that attitudes towards environmentally friendly products are affected by ecoliteracy, interpersonal influence, and value orientation (Cheah & Phau, 2011). Therefore, attitudes towards sustainability are affected by people's personal values as well as the socio-economic factors surrounding them.

While attitudes towards sustainability and sustainable consumption may be favorable, they are not always in line with the real actions of the individuals. This attitude-behavioural gap can have various reasons. A study by Johnstone & Tan (2015) identified three main aspects of why individuals do not act based on their view of sustainability while making purchase decisions for green products. Firstly, perceived external factors complicate adopting sustainable behavior; second, the stigma of negative perception around green products, for example, greenwashing, makes them less favorable; and third, consumers are uncertain that their behavior will make any difference to the environment (Johnstone & Tan, 2015). These aspects often unconsciously prevent people from making sustainable choices, yet there are opportunities to empower individuals to make better decisions independently.

One way to influence people's decision-making is through "nudging". The idea of nudging was introduced in 2008 in the book "Nudge" by Thaler and Sunstein. According to them, people's decisions are influenced by the architecture of choices while still maintaining freedom of choice. They define nudging as "any aspect of the choice architecture that alters people's behaviour in a predictable way without forbidding any options or significantly changing their economic incentives." (Thaler & Sunstein, 2008, p 6) This concept of nudging has been used widely in the context of behavioral economics. In this paper, the focus will mainly be on digital nudging.

Social media platform providers such as Meta or Google use various nudging techniques, like notifications, to bring users to their platforms. The user-generated content on those platforms is used in nudging through algorithms and data. These powerful tools can

make nudging personalized based on individual context. (Sadeghian & Otarkhani, 2024) This concept can have positive as well as negative effects. While influencing people on social media can make them positively change their behavior, it can also have consequences for echo chambers and the spread of harmful misinformation. Although a content creator or influencer can use different ways of nudging on social media, it is always influenced by the platform they operate on.

Mirbabaie et al. (2020) identified 12 types of nudges used on social media: anchoring and adjustment, striking visuals, status quo bias, visual cues, framing, positioning of crucial information, social norms, the messenger effect, simple-to-process visualizations, emotive wording, monetary incentives, and commitment cues. Among these, anchoring and adjustment, striking visuals, and status quo bias were found to be the most effective, as they led to the highest number of retweets in disaster communication on Twitter (Mirbabaie et al., 2021). These nudging strategies proved influential in encouraging behavioral change during natural disasters. Additionally, nudging social norms toward sustainability tends to be more effective in homogeneous groups than in heterogeneous ones (Mundt et al., 2024). Furthermore, positive reinforcement messages are generally more impactful than negative ones in social media nudging techniques (Ong et al., 2023). Overall, these findings highlight the strategic potential of tailored nudges in shaping public behavior through social media communication.

In conclusion, nudging on social media has shown various effects, and it is difficult to conclude a real-life situation where no other indicators, such as algorithms and platforms or real-life events, play a role in influencing one's behavior. Still, experiments show that the effect may exist, and therefore, it is important to understand in what ways this concept can be used in nudging people toward more sustainable behavior.

### **1.3 Social media influence on adopting a sustainable lifestyle**

There is an increasing number of influencers and social media content creators whose messages may have a significant influence on their audience. According to Statista, there are more than 5.2 billion social media users worldwide in 2024 (Statista, 2024). A study by Li et al. (2024) found that people mainly depend on social media as their source of information for discovering ideas and news about sustainability. Social media is seen as a reliable source of information about sustainability and a green lifestyle (Li et al., 2024). Various aspects affect consumers, their decisions, behaviour, and attitudes in the sphere of social media. A

comparison of previous empirical studies on social media's effect on sustainability and sustainable consumption is presented in Table 2.

Table 2

*Overview of previous empirical studies*

Reference	Methodology	Types of influencers used	Focus	Sample
Li et al., (2024)	Survey, statistical analysis	overall	value-cocreation, social media engagement	China
Buvár et al., (2023)	Experiment, statistical analysis	non-green	expert opinions, dynamic norms	Various
König & Maier, (2024)	3 Experiments, statistical analysis	green and non-green	audience	Germany and USA
Nazir and Wani (2024)	Likert scale survey, statistical analysis	green	Influencer characteristics	India

Source: compiled by the author based on the literature

Influencers on social media represent a range of profiles, each with specific goals and areas of focus. The influence is often measured through engagement metrics such as likes, comments, and shares, which serve as indicators of audience involvement and content effectiveness. Many influencers, mainly in the beauty and lifestyle sectors, engage in regular partnerships with brands to promote products to their followers (Lopez & Islam, 2021). Influencer marketing significantly impacts consumer attitudes and purchase intentions (Jin et al., 2019). Understanding the dynamics of influencer marketing is essential to highlight the ability of influencers to shape consumer behavior as well as to spread values and ideas concerning sustainability.

For this study, influencers are divided into two groups: green and non-green influencers, or lifestyle influencers. A green influencer's prime goal is to educate and inform their audience about sustainable lifestyles and promote sustainable products. Green influencers are more likely to bring in green alternatives even when posting about other topics like beauty and lifestyle. Non-green influencers are considered typical lifestyle influencers whose main messages do not revolve around sustainability, yet they can occasionally promote it. (König & Maier, 2024) This distinction is important because it

highlights how sustainability messaging can be strategically integrated even outside explicitly eco-focused communities.

One of the most common aspects in the empirical studies about social media influencers and their influence on consumers is the influencers' credibility. Influencers perceived as credible positively affect consumers' attitudes toward both the influencer and the endorsed. Authentic content and high-quality posts enhance consumer trust and engagement, which in turn increase purchase intentions. Having an influencer refer to an expert opinion can enhance the credibility of a message from a non-green influencer while posting about sustainable topics (Buvár et al., 2023). A study by Nazir and Wani found that influencer characteristics such as trustworthiness, credibility, and commitment significantly increase followers' probability to respond favorably to environmental messages, adopt eco-friendly behaviors, and deepen their environmental knowledge (Nazir & Wani, 2024).

Another aspect is people's relationship with the influencer, whether they relate to the public figure and how authentic they seem. Parasocial relationships, where consumers feel a personal connection with influencers, amplify the influence of endorsements (Jin et al., 2019). The lack of perceived similarity with the influencer can diminish their authenticity of the influencer, reducing the impact of the sustainable message on the followers (Buvár et al., 2023). Yet, Nazir and Wani (2024) found no significant effect of familiarity and similarity of an influencer on the green buying behavior of consumers.

Social media alone is not the only aspect influencing people's purchasing decisions and consumer habits. A significant factor is an individual's attitudes and knowledge on green topics. Consumers with high sustainability concerns are more likely to follow and be influenced by green influencers (Rajput et al., 2024). Green influencers typically have high influencer-audience alignment, where the followers also mainly communicate about green topics, making the green message less effective as people who see it already share similar attitudes towards green consumption (König & Maier, 2024). The study by König and Maier also studied consumers' reactions to influencers' posts. Being exposed to green content increases consumers' green usage intentions when the consumer has lower green attitudes to begin with. Yet, Nazir and Wani (2024) claim that influencers who consistently signal genuine concern for environmental issues can effectively shape followers' attitudes and behaviors (Nazir & Wani, 2024). A study by Haws et al., (2014) developed a GREEN Scale to measure green consumption values. According to them, consumers with high green scores are more likely to choose environmentally friendly alternatives; pay more for eco-friendly options; and select an environmentally friendly option in a real choice setting (Haws et al.,

2014) . These findings highlight that while social media and influencers can support sustainable behavior, the effectiveness of such messages ultimately depends on the consumer's existing environmental attitudes, values, and willingness to adopt green alternatives.

In conclusion, social media and influencers play a role in shaping consumers' awareness, attitudes, and behaviors toward sustainability. With billions of users worldwide relying on social media for information, influencers, both green and non-green, can use it as a tool for promoting sustainable values and consumption practices. The effectiveness of their influence is shaped by various factors, including credibility, authenticity, audience alignment, and the nature of their relationship with followers. Non-green influencers can be more effective in reaching those with lower initial engagement in sustainability, especially when their messaging appears genuine and is supported by credible sources. Cultural context and individual values further mediate the impact of influencer content. Thus, understanding the dynamics of influencer marketing is essential in assessing how social media can drive the adoption of sustainable lifestyles.

## **2. Empirical analysis of sustainable lifestyle and social media**

### **2.1 Data and Methods**

This study employs an experiment and a survey to investigate the influence of social media content on promoting sustainable consumption behaviors. The methodology is based on similar approaches in König & Maier (2024), Buvár et al. (2023), and Nazir & Wani (2024), combining exposure to social media stimuli with measurement of attitudinal and behavioral responses.

The data was collected through non-probability convenience sampling and the snowball method. The survey was distributed digitally using social media platforms Facebook and LinkedIn. On Facebook, the survey was shared by the author in suitable groups covering topics related to clean and healthy eating, foodsharing etc. The survey was eligible for Estonian-speaking social media users. Responses were gathered from 25.03-04.04.2025. The final sample size was 147 respondents who fully completed the survey.

The survey was done using the Lime Survey platform. The foreword of the survey stated that by participating in the survey, the respondent agreed to have their personal data processed for the purpose of this study. The responses were anonymous and could not be traced to a specific respondent, as IP addresses were not gathered. All personal data collected

during the survey was stored in the University of Tartu cloud system and deleted after completion of the study.

The survey consisted of five parts:

1. Demographic information: age, gender, education, income level, and occupation.
2. Social media usage: Frequency of use, platforms used, and usage purpose.
3. Attitudes toward sustainability: questions adapted from the GREEN scale (Haws et al., 2014), to assess the predefining attitudes of a respondent towards environmentally friendly behaviour.
4. Exposure to stimuli: Participants were randomly assigned to view one of four real Instagram posts (Appendix B):
  - Lifestyle influencer with a sustainable consumption message
  - Lifestyle influencer with a regular message
  - Green influencer with a sustainable consumption message
  - Green influencer with regular message
5. Purchase intention: overall and specific purchase intentions of sustainable products were measured using a 5-point Likert scale for statements adapted from König & Maier, (2024) and Kumar & Pansari, (2016).

The survey questions can be found in Appendix A.

For assessing respondents' preexisting green attitudes, a GREEN score based on questions modified from Haws et al. (2014) was calculated. Attitude towards sustainable products or green scores was calculated as an average score out of 6 statements from a 5-point Likert scale. The statements were as follows:

*"It is important to me that the products I use do not harm the environment."*

*"I consider the potential environmental impact of my actions when making many of my decisions."*

*"My purchase habits are affected by my concern for our environment."*

*"I am concerned about wasting the resources of our planet."*

*"I would describe myself as environmentally responsible."*

*"I am willing to be inconvenienced in order to take actions that are more environmentally friendly."*

After being exposed to the stimuli, general and specific purchase intention scores were calculated. The general purchase intention score measured the overall purchase intention of sustainable products. Specific purchase intention score was calculated to measure

the specific intention of buying food near expiry, as shown in the influencer posts. General purchase intention and specific purchase intention scores were calculated as an average score out of 4 statements from a 5-point Likert scale. The statements were adapted from König & Maier (2024) and Kumar & Pansari (2016).

General purchase intention statements (sustainable products):

*"I will buy sustainable products in the near future."*

*"A sustainable product purchase makes me content."*

*"I do not get my money's worth when I purchase sustainable products."*

*"Owning sustainable products makes me happy."*

Specific purchase intention statements (saving food):

*"I would buy food that needed to be saved if I happened to see it in a store."*

*"I would actively look for food that needed to be saved in the store."*

*"I would buy food that needed to be saved if it were advertised separately or offered at a discount."*

*"I would buy food that needed to be saved if friends or family recommended it."*

The stimuli chosen for this experiment were real-life social media posts by Estonian influencers. The influencers whose content is used in this experiment are Liisa Aaviksoo (@suletudring), a green influencer, and Liisu Miller (@liisumiller), a lifestyle influencer. The influencers have given written permission via email to use their content. The posts are related to saving food, namely nudging people to buy food products on their due date to decrease food waste. Two regular posts with similar visuals were also chosen as control variables from their feed.

An analysis of the Estonian lifestyle and green influencers was done to choose suitable influencers. Liisa Aaviksoo was found to be the only active green influencer in Estonia whose social media content mainly focuses on sustainability, minimal waste, and eco-conscious behavior. For a lifestyle influencer, several profiles were analyzed, and Liisu Miller was found to be a suitable example, as her lifestyle-based content occasionally included posts related to sustainability. The topic of food saving was chosen as both of the influencers posted about this topic. For comparison, one post with a similar visual was chosen from both of the profiles that do not nudge people towards food saving. Green posts were considered the ones that actively promote saving food or buying food, or on its due date. Regular posts were posts that did not actively encourage buying food that needed to be saved. One post was about a recipe, and the other about meal prepping. The posts can be found in Appendix B.

Data analysis was done using Stata. The results cover descriptive statistics of the sample. The respondents were assigned to four groups based on the post they saw, and comparison of means tests were carried out using Kruskal-Wallis comparison of means tests, due to ordinal values and small subgroups. Familiarity with influencers was tested using the Mann-Whitney U Test, as two groups were compared and ordinal values used. The correlation between green attitudes and purchase intentions was tested using Spearman's Rank Correlation test. Lastly, a regression model was developed and tested using demographic data as independent variables and green attitude as dependent variables.

## 2.2 Results of the survey and experiment

The survey included 170 responses, of which 147 were fully completed. Not completed answers were excluded from the sample. Descriptive statistics of the sample, including demographic factors, are presented in Table 3.

Table 3

### *Sample overview*

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Female	109	74.15
	Male	35	23.81
	Other	3	2.04
Age	19 or less	1	0.68
	20-29	83	56.46
	30-39	25	17.01
	40-49	23	15.65
	50-59	12	8.16
	60 or more	3	2.04
Education level	Basic education	6	4.08
	High school diploma	36	24.49
	Vocational degree	14	9.52
	Baccalaureate or applied science degree	61	41.5
	Master degree or higher	30	20.4
Net income per month	600 or less	25	17.01
	601-1000	21	14.29
	1001-1600	36	24.49
	1601-2200	28	19.05
	2201-3000	20	13.61
	3001 or more	14	9.52
	missing	3	2.04

*Note: N=147*

Source: Compiled by the author

Based on these demographic factors, the sample is not equally distributed and is biased toward younger people, highly educated and women. 74.15% of the respondents were female, and 23.81% were male. Age-wise, the most represented group was 20-29 year olds with 56.56% of the respondents, followed by 30-39 year olds (17.01%) and 40-49 year olds (15.65%). For education level, the biggest group was respondents with a baccalaureate or applied science degree with 41.5%, followed by high school diploma with 24.49%, and master's degree or higher with 20.4% of the respondents. The sample was more equal income-wise, with the biggest group of net income of 1001-1600€ per month, with 24.49% of the respondents, followed by 1601-2200€ per month with 19.05% of the respondents, yet it is still biased towards higher income than the average population. This bias can be explained by the snowball distribution method, due to people being acquainted with the author.

Alongside demographic information, the social media usage of participants was measured. One third of the participants reported that they spend 1-2 hours daily using social media, and 29.93% reported using 2-3 hours of social media a day. This is in line with average social media usage in the world of around 2 hours and 23 minutes a day (Kemp, S. 2025). Social media usage of respondents by time online is presented in Table 4.

Table 4

*Time on social media*

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Time on social media	less than 1h	18	12.24
	1-2h	49	33.33
	2-3h	44	29.93
	3-4h	23	15.65
	more than 4h	13	8.84

*Note: N=147*

Source: Compiled by the author

The three most commonly used social media platforms were also asked of the respondents. From the results, Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube were the most commonly used platforms among respondents, see Figure 1. Although the distribution of platform usage differs from worldwide usage patterns, for example, Instagram is much more popular in the sample than on average in the world. It must be noted that social media usage is dependent on cultural context, and different platforms are popular in different regions. The popularity of Instagram shows that this platform is used often and is suitable for sharing sustainable ideas.

As the stimuli chosen for this experiment are taken from Instagram, this result shows that respondents are familiar with the platform, which was expected from the sample.

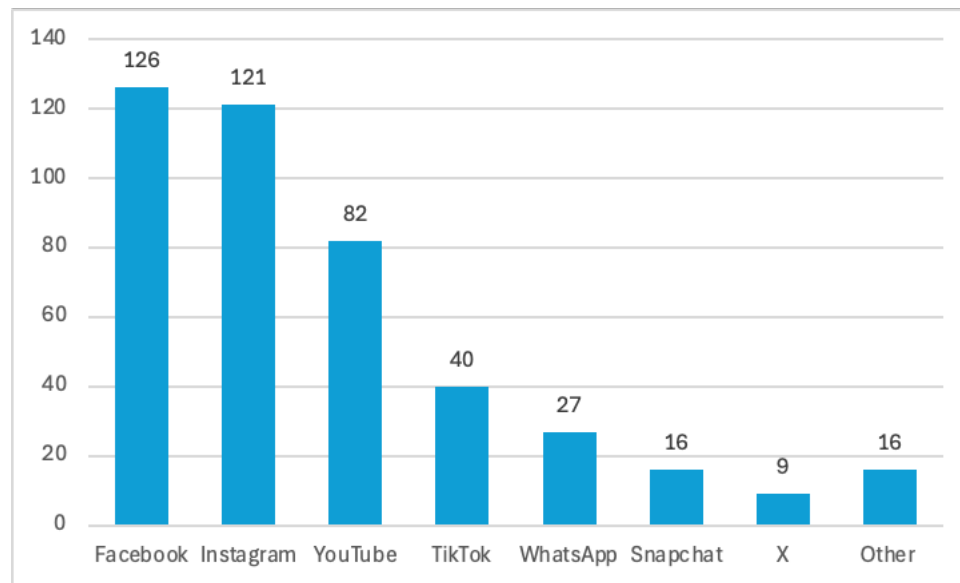


Figure 1: Social media usage among platforms

The most common reasons for using social media were keeping in touch with friends and family, filling spare time, and reading news stories. 45 respondents answered "finding inspiration for things to do and buy" as one of the reasons, and 16 chose "finding products to buy", see figure 2. As people report themselves to use social media with the intention of finding inspiration and products to purchase, this could influence the intention to find sustainable ideas and products as well, as social media is the main source for people finding information and inspiration about sustainable products and ideas (Li et al., 2024).

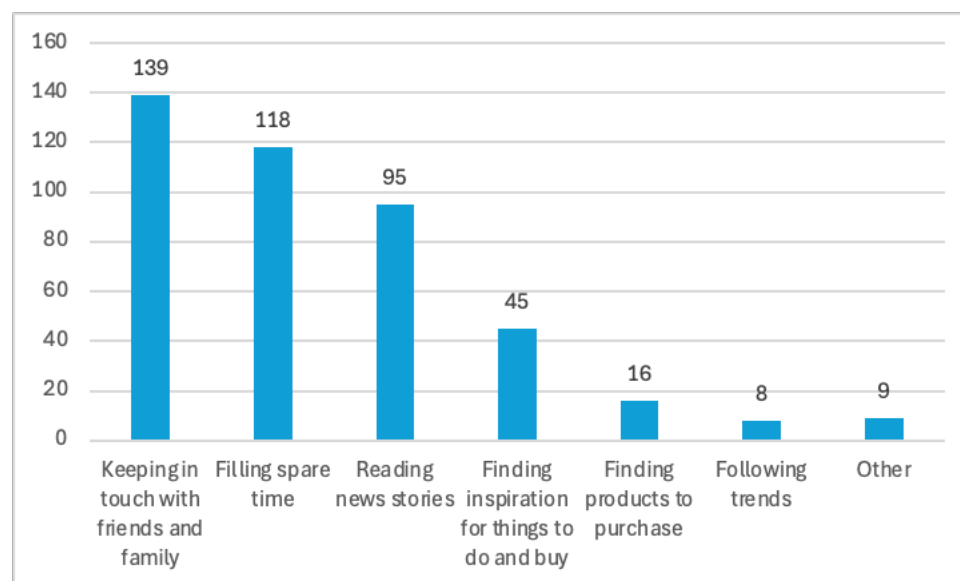


Figure 2: Reasons for using social media

After gaining background information about the respondents, their preexisting green attitudes were measured with the GREEN score. Green attitude scores were calculated as a mean from six 5-point Likert scale questions. General and specific purchase intentions were measured after being exposed to stimuli. General and specific purchase intention scores were calculated as the mean of four 5-point Likert scale questions. The specific statistics and questions can be found in Appendix C. Table 5 presents an overall overview of the scores.

Table 5

*Purchase intention and green attitude scores*

Variable	Mean	Standard deviation	Min	Max
Attitude towards sustainable products	3.42	0.82	1.33	5
General purchase intention	3.41	0.85	1.25	5
Specific purchase intention	3.70	0.96	1	5

Source: Compiled by the author

The respondents' attitudes toward sustainability were measured using a GREEN score based on six statements from Haws et al. (2014), and it revealed a moderate average score ( $M = 3.42$ ), indicating a generally positive environmental attitude among participants. General and specific purchase intention scores, based on adapted statements from König and Maier (2024) and Kumar and Pansari (2016), were similarly moderate, with means of 3.41 and 3.70, respectively. These results suggest that while participants show favorable attitudes toward sustainable consumption, their intentions to act on those attitudes are only slightly higher in specific situations, in this example, buying food that needs to be saved.

Participants were randomly assigned to see one of the four posts, which can be seen in Appendix B. Post number 1 was a green post by a non-green influencer, post number 2 was a regular post by a non-green influencer, post number 3 was a green post by a green influencer and post number 4 was a regular post by green influencer. 43 respondents saw post number 1, 36 saw post number 2, 36 saw post number 3, and 32 saw post number 4. The unequal distribution of participants between those four posts is due to the eliminated responses that did not fully complete the survey.

The main goal of this experiment is to investigate the effect that a sustainable social media post has on an individual's purchase intention of sustainable products. For that, the respondents were randomly assigned one of the four posts and divided into groups based on the post. To assess the difference in purchase intention relative to prior green attitude, the difference between GREEN scores and purchase intention was calculated as  $\Delta_{\text{general}}$  and

$\Delta$ specific. A comparison of means was done between those four groups based on change between pre-existing green attitudes and change in general and specific purchase intention scores. The division of scores based on groups is presented in Table 6.

Table 6

*Scores based on post type*

Post	Sample size	GREEN score	General purchase intention	$\Delta$ general	Specific purchase intention	$\Delta$ specific
1 (Non-green influencer, green post)	43	3.40	3.37	-.033	3.68	.281
2 (Non-green influencer, regular post)	36	3.34	3.32	-.019	3.79	.454
3 (Green influencer, green post)	36	3.44	3.57	.134	3.60	.162
4 (Green influencer, regular post)	32	3.52	3.39	-.125	3.74	.227

Source: Compiled by the author

As we can see from Table 6, general purchase intention scores are lower than the green attitude score in 3 groups out of 4. Only the group that saw post 3 had a greater average ( $\Delta$ general = 0.134) score for the general purchase intention of green products. For specific purchase intentions, the intention to purchase food that needs to be saved, all the groups showed a higher score than their initial green attitudes. Yet, the highest difference of 0.45 points is for group 2 (Non-green influencer, regular post), and the smallest difference of 0.16 is for group 3 (Green influencer, green post) is not consistent with expected results. Therefore, we test the statistical significance between those four groups.

To test the statistical significance of this result, the Kruskal–Wallis comparison of means test is carried out twice between the 4 groups. The  $\Delta$ general and  $\Delta$ specific scores are used as dependent variables in the comparison of means test. A non-parametric approach is used due to small samples and ordinal values; therefore, testing homogeneity of variance is not applicable. For the statistical test, two hypotheses are given:

H<sub>0</sub>: The distribution of the  $\Delta$ general and  $\Delta$ specific is the same across all four groups.

H<sub>1</sub>: The distribution of the  $\Delta$ general and  $\Delta$ specific differs for at least one of the four groups.

The results of the Kruskal–Wallis comparison of means test are presented in Table 7.

The significance level is 0.05, p-values are 0.528 and 0.657, meaning that the results showed no significant effect.. This means that the average difference of purchase intention scores based on prior green attitudes is not statistically different. No relation between the type of social media post shown and sustainable purchase intention based on this experiment. This is not in line with the experiment carried out by Köning and Maier (2024).

Table 7

*Kruskal–Wallis comparison of means test results*

<i>Dependent variable</i>	<i>Test Statistic (H)</i>	<i>p-value</i>
$\Delta$ general	2.221	0.528
$\Delta$ specific	1.613	0.657

*Note: significance level is 0.05*

Source: Compiled by the author

As there was no relation found between purchase intention and post type, the next thing tested was familiarity with the influencer. 5 respondents were followers of @liisumiller (posts 1 and 2), and 9 respondents had heard of her; 7 were followers of @suletudring, and 5 had heard of her. All together, 24 respondents were familiar with the influencer and 123 were not. Based on this, the participants were divided into two groups, whether they did or did not know the influencer. Mann–Whitney U Test was carried out twice to test the general and specific purchase intention by influencer familiarity. The hypotheses are as follows:

H<sub>0</sub>: There is no difference in purchase intention scores between respondents who are familiar with the influencer and those who are not.

H<sub>1</sub>: There is a difference in purchase intention scores between respondents who are familiar with the influencer and those who are not.

The Mann–Whitney U test found a statistically significant difference in general purchase intention between those familiar and unfamiliar with the influencer ( $z = -2.51, p = 0.012$ ). This suggests that familiarity with the influencer is associated with a greater intention to purchase sustainable products.

Although the difference in specific purchase intention between groups did not reach statistical significance ( $z = -1.84, p = 0.065$ ), the result suggests a positive effect; those familiar with the influencer showed slightly higher intention to purchase food needing to be saved. This aligns with previous literature emphasizing the role of influencer credibility and

familiarity in promoting sustainable behavior (Nazir & Wani, 2024). Given the small subgroup size ( $n = 24$ ), future studies with larger and more balanced samples may reveal stronger effects.

The previous analysis, which examined the effect of post type and influencer type on purchase intention, revealed no statistically significant differences in purchase intention scores. This suggests that the external factors manipulated in the study (e.g., post format or influencer characteristics) may not be the primary drivers of participants' willingness to purchase. Therefore correlation between prior green attitude scores and purchase intention scores was tested. For this, Spearman's Rank Correlation test is carried out. The hypotheses are as follows:

H<sub>0</sub>: There is no statistically significant correlation between green attitudes and purchase intention.

H<sub>1</sub>: There is a statistically significant correlation between green attitudes and general purchase intention.

The results of Spearman's Rank Correlation test are presented in Table 8. All the results were statistically significant with  $p < 0.05$ , meaning that there is a correlation between prior green attitudes and general and specific purchase intentions, as well as between general and specific purchase intentions.

Table 8

*Correlation between variables*

<i>Variable</i>	Green attitude	General purchase intention	Specific purchase intention
Green attitude	1	0.676	0.391
General purchase intention	0.676	1	0.389
Specific purchase intention	0.391	0.389	1

*Note: significance level is 0.05, N=147*

Source: Compiled by the author

For general purchase intention ( $\rho = 0.676$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ), there is a strong, positive, and statistically significant correlation between green attitudes and general purchase intention, that is statistically significant. This suggests that individuals with stronger pro-environmental attitudes are more likely to intend to purchase sustainable products in general.

For specific purchase intention, the ( $\rho = 0.391, p < 0.05$ ), there is a moderate, positive, and statistically significant correlation between green attitudes and specific purchase intention. This indicates that while stronger environmental attitudes are associated with a greater intention to engage in specific sustainable behaviors (like buying food that needs to be saved), the relationship is not as strong as with general sustainable purchasing. This supports the theoretical assumption that individuals with more positive environmental attitudes are more likely to show stronger intentions to consume sustainably, both generally and in specific contexts.

Lastly, regression analysis was conducted to better understand the factors that may influence individuals' green attitudes. The aim of this analysis is to determine whether demographic factors such as gender, age, education, and income, as well as time spent on social media, predict individuals' self-reported green attitude scores.

Based on the data, gender is a binary variable, and all other variables are categorical variables. The initial categories are presented in Table 8. For the regression analysis, dummy coding is used to compare each level of a variable to the reference level. As there are five categories and altogether 25 variables in the categories, the data was re-grouped to reduce the number of dummy variables and exclude marginal variables. The group "other" was excluded from gender; age was divided into two groups: under 30 and 30+. Education was divided into two groups: secondary education and higher education, and income was divided into three groups: 1) less than 1000, 2) 1001-2200, and 3) more than 2201 net income per month.

The initial regression model is as follows:

$$Y_i = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_{1i} + \beta_2 X_{2i} + \beta_3 X_{3i} + \beta_4 X_{4i} + \beta_5 X_{5i} + u_i$$

$Y_i$  = Dependent variable – green attitude

$X_1$  = gender

$X_2$  = age

$X_3$  = education level

$X_4$  = income

$X_5$  = time spent on social media

$\beta_0$  = intercept

$\beta_1, \dots, \beta_6$  = model parameters

$u_i$  = error term

The model was run through Stata using dummy variables for the categories. The reference categories were female, age  $\leq 30$ , higher education, low income, and 0–1 hour of social media. The dummy variables were male, age over 30, secondary/vocational education, middle income, and high income, and four variables for time spent on social media. The results of the initial regression model are presented in Table 9.

Table 9

*Initial regression model (green attitude)*

Variable	coefficient	SE	p-value	95% CI [LL,UL]
Male (vs. female)	-0.15	0.17	.381	[-0.50, 0.19]
Age over 30 (vs. 30 and under)	-0.23	0.16	.165	[-0.55, 0.09]
Secondary/vocational (vs. higher education)	-0.27	0.17	.110	[-0.59, 0.06]
Middle income (vs. low)	0.11	0.17	.522	[-0.23, 0.44]
High income (vs. low)	0.16	0.22	.466	[-0.28, 0.60]
1–2 hours social media (vs. <1)	-0.14	0.24	.554	[-0.61, 0.33]
2–3 hours	-0.19	0.25	.442	[-0.68, 0.30]
3–4 hours	-0.04	0.28	.897	[-0.60, 0.53]
More than 4 hours	-0.32	0.32	.321	[-0.96, 0.32]
Constant	3.68	0.27	<.001	[3.15, 4.22]

Note:  $R^2=0.0518$ ,  $F(9,131) = 0.80$ ,  $p=0.621$ ,  $N=141$ . Reference categories are female, age  $\leq 30$ , higher education, low income, and 0–1 hour of social media.

Source: Compiled by the author

A multiple linear regression was conducted to examine whether demographic variables and time spent on social media predicted participants' green attitudes. The overall model was not statistically significant,  $p=0.621$ , and explained approximately 5.2% of the variance in the dependent variable  $R^2=0.0518$ . Therefore, the included variables do not collectively explain a significant portion of the variance in individuals' green attitudes.

All the variables were insignificant, yet education level showed the highest level of significance. Variables were removed one by one, excluding the variable with the highest p-value, to find a model including significant variables. The final model included only one variable, and that was education level (secondary vs. higher education), which was significant.

The model is presented here:

$$Y_i = \beta_0 + \beta_3 X_{3i} + u_i$$

$Y_i$  = Dependent variable – green attitude

$X_3$  = education level

$\beta_0$  = intercept

$\beta_1$  = effect of education on green attitudes

$u_i$  = error term

The results of the final model are presented in Table 10.

Table 10

*Final regression model (green attitude)*

Variable	coefficient	SE	p-value	95% CI [LL,UL]
Secondary/Vocational (vs. higher education)	-0.28	0.14	.050	[-0.55, 0.00]
Constant	3.51	0.09	.000	[3.34, 3.68]

*Note:  $R^2=0.0267$ ,  $F(1,142) = 3.90$ ,  $p=0.0502$ ,  $N=144$ . The reference is higher education.*

Source: Compiled by the author

The regression equation for the final model is as follows:

$$Y_i = 3.51 - 0.28 * X_{3i} + u_i$$

With this model, we can conclude that respondents with secondary or vocational education score 0.28 points lower on the green attitude scale than those with higher education. This suggests result suggests that the level of education has a modest effect on environmental attitudes. While the overall explanatory power of the model was limited, the findings support the conclusion that education may play a role in shaping pro-environmental attitudes. Other demographic and behavioral variables, including gender, age, income, and time spent on social media, did not significantly predict green attitudes in this sample.

Similar regression models were tested using general and specific purchase intention, and  $\Delta_{\text{general}}$  and  $\Delta_{\text{specific}}$  as dependent variables. Yet, none of the independent variables showed a significant impact in those models, either. Therefore, we can conclude that

demographic variables such as gender, age, education level, income, and time spent on social media are not significant predictors of sustainable purchase intentions.

### 2.3 Discussion of results

The aim of this study was to measure the impact of social media's influence on sustainable consumption, specifically through exposure to influencer content and users' underlying attitudes toward sustainability. While previous studies (e.g., König & Maier, 2024) have indicated a measurable effect of sustainability-themed social media posts on consumer behavior, the results of this experiment suggest varying effects.

Firstly, the type of social media post (green or regular content by green or non-green influencers) did not significantly affect purchase intention in this sample. Kruskal–Wallis tests revealed no statistically significant difference between the four experimental groups in terms of general ( $p = .701$ ) or specific ( $p = .617$ ) purchase intentions. This outcome is not consistent with prior findings (König & Maier, 2024), where green posts positively affected consumer intentions. One explanation could be the small and uneven sample sizes or limited exposure duration to the stimuli, which may not replicate the cumulative effects of repeated exposure observed in real-life influencer interactions. Additionally, the chosen influencers and the topic (food-saving) may not have been stimulating enough to trigger behavioral change.

However, a notable pattern was seen when considering familiarity with the influencer. Respondents who were familiar with the influencers had higher general purchase intention scores. While the difference in specific purchase intention did not reach statistical significance ( $p = .065$ ), a positive effect was observed. This finding supports previous research that highlights the importance of trust, credibility, and parasocial relationships in influencer marketing (Nazir & Wani, 2024; Jin et al., 2019). It implies that consumers are more responsive to sustainability messages when they are communicated by familiar and trusted figures.

The strongest results were observed in the relationship between green attitudes and purchase intentions. Spearman's rank-order correlation showed a strong, positive relationship between green attitudes and general purchase intention ( $\rho = .676$ ,  $p < .001$ ), and a moderate, positive relationship with specific purchase intention ( $\rho = .391$ ,  $p < .001$ ). These findings suggest that underlying pro-environmental attitudes are significant predictors of sustainable consumer behavior. This aligns with the attitude-behavior consistency framework in consumer psychology and validates the GREEN scale as a reliable predictor of eco-conscious

action (Haws et al., 2014). While specific purchase intentions scores show positive differences relative to green attitude scores across all experimental groups (regardless of content type), this may reflect a general awareness or acceptance of sustainable behaviors (like reducing food waste) among respondents, independent of the influence of the presented social media content.

Lastly, the regression model using green attitude as a dependent variable and demographic factors as independent variables showed only one significant factor – education level. People with higher education (baccalaureate degree or higher) showed, on average, 0.28 points higher green attitude scores than respondents with high school or vocational education. Previous research has shown that individuals with higher education, among other factors like higher income, left-leaning political views, and post-materialism, tend to have more favorable attitudes toward sustainability (Gugushvili, 2021).

The demographic profile of the sample, young, highly educated, and largely female, may have also influenced the results. The overrepresentation of these demographics may have affected the results, as attitudes and intentions were already high, leaving little room for the stimuli to create additional impact.

While this study offers valuable insights into the role of social media and influencer content in shaping sustainable consumption behaviors, several limitations must be acknowledged, which also point toward meaningful directions for future research.

Firstly, the study sample was not demographically representative of the broader population. The respondents were predominantly young, female, and highly educated, which is a result of the snowball sampling method and online distribution channels used. These characteristics are commonly associated with more favorable attitudes toward sustainability, potentially introducing a bias that may have elevated green attitudes and intentions in the dataset. Therefore, the generalizability of the results is not possible, particularly considering other demographic groups or less sustainability-engaged populations.

A second limitation lies in the relatively small size of key subgroups, especially those familiar with the influencers used in the experiment. Only 24 respondents indicated prior familiarity, which constrained the statistical power of the analyses and may have masked potentially significant effects, particularly regarding specific purchase intention. A larger and more balanced sample would allow for more reliable subgroup comparisons and a deeper understanding of the role of influencer familiarity.

Additionally, the experimental design relied on a single exposure to a social media post. In contrast, real-world social media interactions are cumulative, involving repeated

exposure to content over time. More sustained or frequent interaction with influencer content would likely have stronger effects on consumer behavior. Future studies should consider longitudinal or multi-exposure designs to better replicate the actual influence of social media in daily life.

### **Conclusions**

The aim of the study was to explore how social media influences consumers' purchase intentions toward sustainable products, particularly through the concept of digital nudging and influencer content. As concerns about environmental degradation and overconsumption intensify, understanding how social media platforms shape individual behavior has become increasingly important. With more than five billion users globally, social media offers a powerful tool to raise awareness and encourage positive behavioral change, yet it can also have negative effects like spreading misinformation and promoting unsustainable trends.

The theoretical foundation of the study emphasized key concepts including degrowth, sustainable consumption, green lifestyles, and digital nudging. Prior research indicated that social media, and particularly influencers, can play a meaningful role in shifting consumer behavior toward sustainability. However, few studies have combined these perspectives with an experimental approach in the Estonian context.

The results of the empirical study were not exactly consistent with previous literature. The main experimental finding was that the type of influencer post (green or regular content by green or non-green influencers) did not have a statistically significant impact on either general or specific purchase intentions among the respondents. This outcome diverges from previous literature and may reflect the specific content used, the demographic composition of the sample, or the one-time nature of stimulus exposure.

However, familiarity with the influencer proved to be a meaningful factor. Participants who were familiar with the influencer featured in the content displayed significantly higher general purchase intention scores, and a similar, though not statistically significant, trend was observed for specific purchase intentions. This finding supports the importance of trust, authenticity, and parasocial relationships in influencing consumer behavior, as suggested by existing literature.

The strongest result was the positive correlation found between participants' prior green attitudes and their purchase intentions. This suggests that internal attitudes toward sustainability are a much stronger predictor of behavior than brief exposure to external stimuli. In other words, while social media may be an important platform for sharing

sustainability messages, the effect of such messages is probably significantly moderated by the preexisting values and motivations of the individual.

Regression analysis, including prior green attitudes and demographic variables like gender, age, education level, and time spent on social media, showed education level as the only significant variable to predict green attitude. No significant factors were found using purchase intention scores. Therefore, demographic factors other than education are not reliable measures to predict green attitudes or sustainable purchase intentions.

While the study provides useful insights, it is not without limitations. The sample lacked demographic diversity, and the small subgroup sizes limited the statistical power of the tests. Future research should strive for greater demographic representativeness and explore the impact of repeated exposure to sustainable messaging over time. Furthermore, additional variables, such as the perceived authenticity of the influencer or the emotional tone of the message, could offer deeper insights into what makes sustainable messaging effective on social media.

In summary, the findings suggest that while social media posts alone may not dramatically shift sustainable consumption behavior, the relationship between consumers and influencers, as well as preexisting environmental attitudes, plays a crucial role. Social media remains a valuable channel for promoting sustainability, but its effectiveness depends on long-term engagement, trusted messengers, and alignment with personal values. Understanding these dynamics is essential for designing more effective sustainability campaigns and interventions in the digital age.

## References

1. Buvár, Á., Zsila, Á., & Orosz, G. (2023). Non-green influencers promoting sustainable consumption: Dynamic norms enhance the credibility of authentic pro-environmental posts. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 14, 1112762. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2023.1112762>
2. Cheah, I., & Phau, I. (2011). Attitudes towards environmentally friendly products: The influence of ecoliteracy, interpersonal influence and value orientation. *Marketing Intelligence & Planning*, 29(5), 452–472. <https://doi.org/10.1108/02634501111153674>
3. Demaria, F., Schneider, F., Sekulova, F., & Martinez-Alier, J. (2013). What is Degrowth? From an Activist Slogan to a Social Movement. *Environmental Values*, 22(2), 191– 215. <https://doi.org/10.3197/096327113X13581561725194>
4. Dictionary.com | Meanings & Definitions of English Words. (2025). In Dictionary.com. <https://www.dictionary.com/browse/sustainability>
5. Durand-Hayes, S. (n.d.). Voice of the Consumer Survey 2024: Shrinking the consumer trust deficit. PwC. <https://www.pwc.com/gx/en/issues/c-suite-insights/voice-of-the-consumer-survey.html>
6. Engler, J.-O., Kretschmer, M.-F., Rathgens, J., Ament, J. A., Huth, T., & Von Wehrden, H. (2024). 15 years of degrowth research: A systematic review. *Ecological Economics*, 218, 108101. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ecolecon.2023.108101>
7. Gugushvili, D. (2021). Public attitudes toward economic growth versus environmental sustainability dilemma: Evidence from Europe. *International Journal of Comparative Sociology*, 62(3), 224–240. <https://doi.org/10.1177/00207152211034224>
8. Haws, K. L., Winterich, K. P., & Naylor, R. W. (2014a). Seeing the world through GREEN-tinted glasses. *Journal of Consumer Psychology*, 24(3), 336–354.
9. Jin, S. V., Muqaddam, A., & Ryu, E. (2019). Instafamous and social media influencer marketing. *Marketing Intelligence & Planning*, 37(5), 567–579. <https://doi.org/10.1108/MIP-09-2018-0375>
10. Johnstone, M.-L., & Tan, L. P. (2015). Exploring the Gap Between Consumers' Green Rhetoric and Purchasing Behaviour. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 132(2), 311–328. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-014-2316-3>
11. Kallis, G., Kostakis, V., Lange, S., Muraca, B., Paulson, S., & Schmelzer, M. (2018). Research On Degrowth. *Annual Review of Environment and Resources*, 43(1), 291– 316. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-enviro-102017-025941>

12. Kemp, S. (2025, March 23). The time we spend on social media — DataReportal — Global Digital Insights. DataReportal – Global Digital Insights.  
<https://datareportal.com/reports/digital-2024-deep-dive-the-time-we-spend-on-social-media>
13. Krpan, D., & Basso, F. (2021). Keep Degrowth or go Rebirth? Regulatory focus theory and the support for a sustainable downscaling of production and consumption. *Journal of Environmental Psychology*, 74, 101586. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jenvp.2021.101586>
14. Kumar, V., & Pansari, A. (2016). Competitive Advantage through Engagement. *Journal of Marketing Research*, 53(4), 497–514. <https://doi.org/10.1509/jmr.15.0044>
15. König, S., & Maier, E. (2024). Preaching to the choir: Do green influencers make a difference? *Journal of Cleaner Production*, 447, 141449.  
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jclepro.2024.141449>
16. Li, J., Chiu, D. K. W., Ho, K. K. W., & So, S. (2024). The Use of Social Media in Sustainable Green Lifestyle Adoption: Social Media Influencers and Value Co-Creation. *Sustainability*, 16(3), 1133. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su16031133>
17. Lopez, J., & Islam, S. (2021). Beauty Influencers and Instagram Usage. *Journal of Applied Business and Economics*, 23(6). <https://doi.org/10.33423/jabe.v23i6.4686>
18. Mirbabaie, M., Ehnis, C., Stieglitz, S., Bunker, D., & Rose, T. (2021). Digital Nudging in Social Media Disaster Communication. *Information Systems Frontiers*, 23(5), 1097–1113. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10796-020-10062-z>
19. Mousumi, R. (2021). *Sustainable Development Strategies*. Elsevier.  
<https://doi.org/10.1016/C2018-0-00100-0>
20. Mundt, D., Batzke, M. C. L., Bläsing, T. M., Gomera Deaño, S., & Helfers, A. (2024). Effectiveness and context dependency of social norm interventions: Five field experiments on nudging pro-environmental and pro-social behavior. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 15, 1392296. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2024.1392296>
21. Nazir, M., & Wani, T. A. (2024). Role of social media influencer toward environmental involvement and green buying behavior. *Business Strategy & Development*, 7(2), e390. <https://doi.org/10.1002/bsd2.390>
22. Ong, D., Chiu, S., Andrews, E., & Nadarajan, G. (2023). One needs to be reminded and motivated: Mediating role of digital nudging for food waste reduction. *Journal of Social Marketing*, 13(3), 449–471. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JSOCM-02-2023-0025>
23. Plomteux, A. (2024). Frugal abundance: Conceptualisation for degrowth. *Ecological Economics*, 222, 108223. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ecolecon.2024.108223>

24. Quoquab, F., & Mohammad, J. (2020). A Review of Sustainable Consumption (2000 to 2020): What We Know and What We Need to Know. *Journal of Global Marketing*, 33(5), 305–334. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08911762.2020.1811441>
25. Rajput, A., Suryavanshi, K., Thapa, S. B., Gahlot, P., & Gandhi, A. (2024). The Impact of Social Media Influencers on Ecoconscious Consumers. *2024 ASU International Conference in Emerging Technologies for Sustainability and Intelligent Systems (ICETISIS)*, 1–6. <https://doi.org/10.1109/ICETISIS61505.2024.10459444>
26. Ruggerio, C. A. (2021). Sustainability and sustainable development: A review of principles and definitions. *Science of The Total Environment*, 786, 147481. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.scitotenv.2021.147481>
27. Sadeghian, A. H., & Otarkhani, A. (2024). Data-driven digital nudging: A systematic literature review and future agenda. *Behaviour & Information Technology*, 43(15), 3834–3862. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0144929X.2023.2286535>
28. *Sustainable consumption and production*. (2023, October 20). United Nations Sustainable Development. <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/sustainable-consumption-production/>
29. Sustainable lifestyles. (n.d.). UNEP - UN Environment Programme. <https://www.unep.org/explore-topics/resource-efficiency/what-we-do/sustainable-lifestyles>
30. *sustainability*. (2025). <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/sustainability>
31. Thaler, R. H., & Sunstein, C. R. (2008). *NUDGE: Improving Decisions about Health, Wealth, and Happiness*. Yale University Press.
32. Topic: Social media. (2024, July 16). Statista. <https://www.statista.com/topics/1164/social-networks/#editorsPicks>

## APPENDIX A

### Survey questions

Demographics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Vanus</li> <li>• Sugu</li> <li>• Elukoht</li> <li>• Tööstaatus</li> <li>• Netosissetulek kuus</li> </ul>	
Social media usage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Milliseid sotsiaalmeedia platvorme kasutate?</li> <li>• Kui palju aega päevas veedate sotsiaalmeedias?</li> <li>• Mis eesmärgil kasutate põhiliselt sotsiaalmeediat?</li> </ul>	Based on statistics from Digital around the world (2025)
Attitudes towards sustainable consumption (Likert scale questions)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Minu jaoks on oluline, et tooted mida ma kasutan ei ole keskkonnale kahjulikud.</li> <li>• Ma võtan otsuste tegemisel arvesse enda käitumise võimalikke keskkondlikke mõjusid.</li> <li>• Minu ostuharjumusi mõjutab minu mure keskkonna pärast.</li> <li>• Olen mures meie planeedi ressursside raiskamise pärast.</li> <li>• Iseloomustaksin end keskkonnasäästlikuna.</li> <li>• Keskonnasõbralikumate valikute nimel olen valmis tegema ebamugavaid samme.</li> </ul>	Retrieved from (Haws et al., 2014)
Stimuli	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Postitus 1</li> <li>• Postitus 2</li> <li>• Postitus 3</li> <li>• Postitus 4</li> </ul>	taken from @liisumiller and @suletudring instgaram
Questions about the post	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ma jälgin seda sisuloojat Instagramis.</li> <li>• Ma olen kuulnud sellest sisuloojast.</li> <li>• Ma ei tea seda sisuloojat.</li> <li>• See sisulooja jagab jätkusuutliku elustiiliga seonduvat sisu.</li> <li>• See sisulooja jagab jätkusuutlike väärtusi.</li> <li>• See sisulooja ei jaga jätkusuutlikku sisu.</li> </ul>	
General purchase intention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ma ostan jätkusuutlikke tooteid lähitulevikus.</li> <li>• Jätkusuutlike toodete ostmine teeb mind õnnelikuks.</li> <li>• Jätkusuutlike toodete ostmine pole seda raha väärt.</li> <li>• Jätkusuutlike toodete omamine teeb mind õnnelikuks.</li> </ul>	Retrieved from (König & Maier, 2024) (Kumar & Pansari, 2016)
Specific purchase intention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ma ostaksin päästmist vajavat toitu, kui seda poes juhuslikult näen.</li> <li>• Ma teadlikult otsiksin päästmist vajavat toitu poest.</li> <li>• Ma ostaksin päästmist vajavat toitu, kui seda eraldi reklaamitakse või soodushinnaga pakutakse.</li> <li>• Ma ostaksin päästmist vajavat toitu, kui sõbrad või pere seda soovivad.</li> </ul>	Retrieved from (König & Maier, 2024) (Kumar & Pansari, 2016)


## APPENDIX B

### Stimuli

#### Post 1 (lifestyle influencer, green post)

LIISUMILLER  
Posts

liisumiller and rimieesti  
Tallinn, Estonia



674 23 2

liisumiller VÄLJAKUTSE VASTU VÕETUD! 🙌 Toidu päästmine ja "eimillestki" söögi valmistamine on mu südameasi olnud juba aastaid. Kuna teile on need minu katsetused alati meeldinud, siis esitas @rimieesti mulle väljakutse:  
"Valmistada 3 päeva kogu perele sööki kasutades päästmist vajavaid toiduaineid".  
Täiega põnev, onju! 🥰

Esiolgne entusiasm korra rauges, kuna kartsin, et äkki peame kolm päeva söönuks saama asjadest, mis meie perelaul midu ei käi või pean muul moel oma tooraine-standardeid langetama hakkama, AGA...!!!  
Swipe left ja vaadake palun neid pilte ja seda videot!!! 👁️  
\*\*  
Suur osa päästmist vajavaid toiduaineid on tegelikult asjad, mida me kogu aeg ostame. Asjad, mida enamasti igas peres vaja läheb!

Rimi võtab toiduraiskamise vähendamist väga tõsiselt (nagu ma eelmisel aastal teile näitasin, kui koos Sotsiaalministeeriumiga Rimis toitu sorteerimas käisime). Et nende süsteem veelgi parem oleks, on kõik aegumistähtajale lähenevad tooted märgistatud oranžide kleebistega - seda selleks, et püüda sinu tähelepanu! Nii saad selle toote olulisemalt (!) soodsamalt koju viia ja kohe toidus ära kasutada. Võidab sinu rahakott, võidab keskkond! 🍀

PS! Rimi äpp on läbinud uuenduskuuri, tänu millele näed ära enda lähedal asuvate Rimide aeguma hakkavad tooted. 🙌 Vt. pilti nr.4 (või lae ise äpp alla ja vaata, mis sinu kodupoos toimub!) 🥰

Lisaks on rõõmusõnum ka kõikidele kliendikaardi omanikele - nüüdsest saad iga ostuga raha tagasi teenida! Selle lühikesel ajaga on mul juba 21.38 eur kliendikaardile tagasi laenukunu ja saan seda kasutada uute ostude tegemisel. Kuna meie ostukorvid on igal nädalal päris suured, siis selline lojaalsussüsteem oli väga- väga oodatud! ❤️

LIISUMILLER  
Posts


liisumiller

liisumiller VÄLJAKUTSE VASTU VÕETUD! 🙌 Toidu päästmine ja "eimillestki" söögi valmistamine on mu südameasi olnud juba aastaid. Kuna teile on need... more

#### Post 2 (lifestyle influencer, regular post)

LIISUMILLER  
Posts

liisumiller



356 2 1

liisumiller Siin sai kirja meie lemmiku nuudlisalati retseptike. 🙌 Kuna panniloosi boonusena saab õnnelik võitja ka 100€ @kaubamaja Toidumaailma krediiti, siis sobib see nuudlisalat suurepäraselt, kui otsid inspi, et mille peale krediiti kulutada. 🥰👍

Vaja läheb:  
Klaasnuudlid  
Viilutatud porgand (hästi õhukeseks)  
Viilutatud peakapsas (hästi õhukeseks)  
Praetud seened  
Roheline sibul  
Praetud muna  
Pruunistatud tiigerkrevetid  
Purustatud/hakitud maapähklid  
Kuhjaga koriandrit

Kastme jaoks:  
4 SL sojakaste  
4 SL vahtrasiirup  
1 SL seesamiõli  
1 SL riisitäidis  
3 SL kuhjaga maapähkliivõid  
2 küüslauku  
1 TL karripastat  
Veerand klaasi vett  
Värsket pipart

Viiluta köögiviljad õhukeselt ja pane suurele serverimisvaagnale. Prae seened ning krevetid. Prae muna ja viiluta see ribadeks.  
Valmista klaasnuudlid vastavalt pakendil olevale juhendile ja loputa. Kuna mulle täiesti külmad nuudlid ei meeldi, siis ma soojendan neid korra enne kas potis või pannil ja alles seejärel segan köögiviljadega vaagnal kokku.  
Surista saumiksriga kõik kastme koostisosad ühtlaseks kreemjaks massiks. Kalla kaste nuudlitele.

Kaunistada koriandri ja hakitud maapähklitega.

Head isu! 🌱

LIISUMILLER  
Posts

liisumiller

liisumiller Siin sai kirja meie lemmiku nuudlisalati retseptike. 🙌 Kuna panniloosi boonusena saab õnnelik võitja ka 100€ @kaubamaja Toidumaailma krediiti... more

## Post 3 (green influencer, green post)



33

suletudring 🌱 Kõik sellel pildil on päästetud toit 🌱  
Rimis võid leida oranžid allahindluskleebised ka eksklusiivsematel päästmist vajavatel toodetel. Hää abiline nende märkamiseks on neid kuvav @rimieesti äpp. Oleme kõik ilmselt harjunud sirutama käe pigem oma tavakaupade poole, aga kindlasti soovitav on kiigata ka n-ö eksklusiivsemaid päästmist vajavaid kaupu:

- 🌱 kiirel päeval valmistoitu vajades
- 🌱 päevamatkale minnes, kus on rohkem kaloreid vaja
- 🌱 kohe külakostiks või külalistele pakkumiseks
- 🌱 oma toidulaua vegan- või mahetoodetega rikastamiseks
- 🌱 sügavkülma pistmiseks ja hiljem tarvitamiseks

Pildil on Rimist saadud peedimääre, lisaks martsipanikook, minipaprikad, beebiporgandid ja salat. Peedimääre all on iseküpsetatud rukkipalad, mis on valmistatud päästetud rukkijahust. Kõik asjad olid imemaitavad! Olen näinud äpis pakkumisel nt suurt brie juustu, pulgakooke, torte, kõiksugu valmistoitu.

Meil on parajasti Rimi "Tarbime targalt" grupis käimas ka eksklusiivsemate leidude jagamise väljakutse, kuhu sind ka osalema kutsun. Inimesed on seal näidanud näiteks vaarikaid-maasikaid, makroone, kollageeni toidulisandit, talutoodangut, kirsi- ja trühvlid, mahetooted, sinihallitusjuustu, palju vastlakukleid, rummpalle, veganjuustu ja mida kõike veel. Kõigi osalejate vahel läheb loosi 2 x 50 € Rimi kinkekaarti.

## Post 4 (green influencer, regular post)



106 6

suletudring Sain sel nädalal võimsa kogemuse mealpreppimise katsetamisest. Ausalt, esimene päev oli kurnav teha kaheksa uut retsepti, kuid järgmised kokkamiseta päevad tegid selle tasa. Nädala teine mealprep oli koguste poolest lihtsam ja valmistasin eri toidukordade ajal lihtsalt mitu toitu. Märkasin, et toidu raiskamine muutus võimatuks, kalorieelarvesse jäämine lihtsaks ning kadus vajadus impulsivselt toitu koju tellida. Pärast esimesest päevast üle saamist tekivad mh ka sügavkülma varud ja asi läheb lihtsamaks.

Millest selline katsetus? Sain inspiratsiooni ühe jälgija küsimustest. Mina viskan tavaliselt lihtsalt kapis leiduva maitsvaks kraamiks kokku. Kindlate retseptide järgimine võib lihtsalt jäätmeennetuse mõttes väljakutsuv olla. Minu testitud mealprep retseptid koosnesid aga juhuslikult suuresti mulle pakendivabalt kättesaadavast töötlemata toidust. Võrreldes kunagise aastatetaguse katsetusega on see toit päriselt nauditav, mitmekülgne ja tean paremini, mida teen. Mõtlen hetkel, kuidas luua lihtsat süsteemi, et iga inimene saaks oma piirkonnas kättesaadava pakendivaba toidu mealprepi menüü luua.

Kas sa oled varem mealpreppimist proovinud? Millised retseptid on sinu lemmikud?

APPENDIX C  
Green scores and purchase intention

Statement	Mean	Standard deviation	Min	Max
1. It is important to me that the products I use do not harm the environment.	3,65	0,977	1	5
2. I consider the potential environmental impact of my actions when making many of my decisions.	3,42	0,993	1	5
3. My purchase habits are affected by my concern for our environment.	3,02	1,107	1	5
4. I am concerned about wasting the resources of our planet.	3,81	1,125	1	5
5. I would describe myself as environmentally responsible.	3,46	0,938	1	5
6. I am willing to be inconvenienced in order to take actions that are more environmentally friendly.	3,14	1,020	1	5
7. I will buy sustainable products in the near future.	3,63	0,893	1	5
8. A sustainable product purchase makes me content.	3,32	1,194	1	5
9. I do not get my money's worth when I purchase sustainable products.	2,54	0,931	1	5
10. Owning sustainable products makes me happy.	3,24	1,190	1	5
11. I would buy food that needed to be saved if happen to see it in a store.	3,90	1,056	1	5
12. I would actively look for food that needed to be saved in the store.	3,24	1,251	1	5
13. I would buy food that needed to be saved if it was advertised separately or offered at a discount.	4,02	1,076	1	5
14. I would buy food that needed to be saved if friends or family recommended it.	3,64	1,140	1	5

## Resümee

### SOTSIAALMEEDIA ROLL JÄTKUSUUTLIKU ELUVIISI PROPAGEERIMISEL

Mariann Saabas

Antud bakalaurese öö uurib, kuidas sotsiaalmeedia mõjutab tarbijate hoiakuid ja ostukavatsusi seoses jätkusuutlike toodetega. Töö keskendub digitaalse nügimise ja sotsiaalmeedia sisuloojate mõjule inimeste tarbimisotsustele võttes arvesse roheline eluviisi ja säästva tarbimise kontseptsioone.

Teoreetiline osa käsitleb peamisi mõisteid, mis on seotud tasaarengu, jätkusuutlikkuse ning roheline tarbimise ja elustiiliga. Käsitletakse tarbijate hoiakuid ja käitumismustreid ning olukordi, kus keskkonnasõbralikku maailmavaadet ei pruugita igapäevastes ostuotsustes rakendada. Tuuakse esile „nügimise“ kontseptsiooni, mis võimaldab mõjutada inimeste otsuseid ilma nende valikuvabadust piiramata. Sotsiaalmeedia pakub platvormi, kus nügimist saab rakendada visuaalsete ja tekstiliste mõjutusvõtete kaudu.

Empiirilises osas viidi läbi eksperiment ja veebiküsitlus 147 sotsiaalmeedia kasutaja seas. Uuringus mõõdeti osalejate hoiakuid jätkusuutliku tarbimise suhtes ning üldist ja spetsiifilist ostukavatsust pärast kokkupuudet vastavate sotsiaalmeediapostitustega. Kasutati nelja tüüpi postitusi: roheline või tavaline postitus roheliselt või mitte-roheliselt sisuloojalt.

Tulemused näitasid, et postituse tüüp ei avaldanud olulist mõju ostukavatsusele. Siiski ilmes seos sisulooja tundmise ja kõrgema ostuhuvi vahel. Tugevaim seos ilmnes osalejate eelnevate keskkonnahoiakute ja jätkusuutliku ostukavatsuse vahel. Mida tugevam oli inimese roheline hoiak, seda suurem oli tema soov teha jätkusuutlikke oste. Regressioonanalüüsi tulemusena leiti, et haridustase on ainuke demograafiline näitaja, mille põhjal on võimalik ostuhuvi ennustada. Ülejäänud tunnusega nagu sugu, vanus, sissetulek või sotsiaalmeedias veedetud aeg mõju ei avaldanud.

Uurimusest järeldub, et sotsiaalmeedi, ei pruugi ühekordse mõjutusena oluliselt muuta tarbijakäitumist ja ostuhuvi jätkusuutlike toodete osas. Suurem mõju jätkusuutlikel nügimistel on siis, kui jätkusuutlikke neid edastavad usaldusväärsed, tuntud ja autentse sisuga sisuloojad. Põhiline mõjutegur tarbija jätkusuutlike valikute tegemiseks on siiski tema eelnev hoiak jätkusuutlikkuse suhtes.

Non-exclusive licence to reproduce thesis and make thesis public

I, Mariann Saabas

herewith grant the University of Tartu a free permit (non-exclusive licence) to

1. reproduce, for the purpose of preservation, including for adding to the DSpace digital archives until the expiry of the term of copyright,

THE ROLE OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN PROMOTING SUSTAINABLE CONSUMPTION

supervised by  
Associate Professor Eve Parts

2. I grant the University of Tartu a permit to make the work specified in p. 1 available to the public via the web environment of the University of Tartu, including via the DSpace digital archives, under the Creative Commons licence CC BY NC ND 3.0, which allows, by giving appropriate credit to the author, to reproduce, distribute the work and communicate it to the public, and prohibits the creation of derivative works and any commercial use of the work until the expiry of the term of copyright.

3. I am aware of the fact that the author retains the rights specified in p. 1 and 2.

4. I certify that granting the non-exclusive licence does not infringe other persons' intellectual property rights or rights arising from the personal data protection legislation.



*Mariann Saabas*

**13/05/2025**