

**PARENTS' RESPONSE TO ENVIRONMENTAL  
SUSTAINABILITY RELATED COMMUNICATION ON  
SOCIAL MEDIA CONCERNING PLANT-BASED FOOD  
BRANDS**

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## ABSTRACT

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Title Parents' response to environmental sustainability related communication on social media concerning plant-based food brands	
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<p>Abstract</p> <p>As all consumers are individuals and respond differently to sustainability communication it is utmost important for plant-based food brands to know their target group in order to communicate in the most suitable way for both parties. After researching previous studies on the topic until the point of saturation it could be confirmed that there is in fact a research gap concerning how consumers respond to environmental sustainability related communication. The need for research on the topic led to development of the research questions of this master's thesis. This research aimed to find out what kind of environmental sustainability related communication on social media increases the willingness of parents to consume more plant-based food. And also, what are the reasons for and barriers against consuming plant-based food experienced by parents. The research questions were answered by conducting a mixed method research including both quantitative and qualitative data collection methods. Quantitative data consisted of a food survey conducted by Bilendi Finland trying to find out the eating habits of Finnish people, and reasons to and barriers against eating more plant based. The qualitative data consisted of six semi-structured interviews. Photo elicitation was used in the interviews when analysing altogether six social media posts posted on Instagram and Facebook by plant-based food brands. As a result of this study, it was possible to get an understanding on what parents' value in sustainability communication of plant-based food brands. The main characteristics of sustainability communication on social media that were well received by parents were domesticity, transparency, facts, neutral comparison, authenticity, and visuality. It is generally important for brands to address issues coherently and addressing the communication to a specific consumer group in order for it to be effective. Also, as a result of finding answers to the research questions, this research suggested practical recommendations for how plant-based food brands should communicate to consumers.</p>	
Key words sustainability communication, consumers, social media, response	
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## TIIVISTELMÄ

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<p>Tiivistelmä – Abstract</p> <p>Kaikki kuluttajat ovat yksilöitä ja reagoivat täten vastuullisuusviestintään myös yksilöllisesti. On erittäin tärkeää, että kasvipohjaiset ruokabrändit tuntevat kohderyhmänsä, jotta voivat tuottaa molempia osapuolia hyödyttävää vastuullisuusviestintää. Käymällä aikaisempia tutkimuksia saturaatiopisteeseen asti läpi, voitiin todeta, että siitä, miten kuluttajat ja erityisesti vanhemmat reagoivat vastuullisuusviestintään on olemassa tutkimusvaje. Tutkimusvaje johti tämän Pro-gradun tutkimuskysymysten asettamiseen. Tämän tutkimuksen tavoitteena oli selvittää minkälainen sosiaalisen median vastuullisuusviestintä lisää vanhempien halukkuutta kuluttaa enemmän kasvipohjaista ruokaa. Haluttiin myöskin selvittää mitä syitä ja esteitä vanhemmat kokevat kasvipohjaisen ruuan kulutukselle. Tämän tutkimuksen tutkimuskysymyksiin vastattiin suorittamalla tutkimus joka sisälsi sekä kvantitatiivisen että kvalitatiivisen datan keräysmenetelmän. Kvantitatiivinen data koostui Bilendi Finlandin ruokakyselystä, jolla haluttiin selvittää suomalaisten ruokailutottumuksia sekä syitä ja esteitä kuluttaa enemmän kasvipohjaista ruokaa. Kvalitatiivinen data koostui kuudesta semi-strukturoidusta haastattelusta. Tekniikkaa nimeltä "photo elicitation" käytettiin haastatteluissa analysoimaan kuutta eri kasvipohjaisen ruokabrändin sosiaalisen median julkaisua. Puolet julkaisuista oli julkaistua Facebookissa ja puolet Instagramissa. Tutkimuksen tuloksena luotiin ymmärrys siitä, mitä vanhemmat arvostavat kasvisruokabrändien vastuullisuusviestinnässä. Vastuullisuusviestinnän pääpiirteitä, mihin vanhemmat reagoivat positiivisesti olivat kotimaisuus, läpinäkyvyys, faktat, neutraali vertailu, autenttisuus ja visuaalisuus. On yleisesti tärkeää, että brändit ottavat johdonmukaisesti kantaa vastuullisuuteen liittyviin teemoihin ja kohdistavat viestinnän valikoidulle kuluttajaryhmälle, jotta viestintä on tehokasta. Tämä tutkimus antaa myös tuloksiin perustuvia käytännönläheisiä ehdotuksia kasvipohjaisten ruokabrändien vastuullisuusviestintään.</p>	
Asiasanat vastuullisuusviestintä, kuluttajat, sosiaalinen media, reaktio	
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## CONTENTS

ABSTRACT .....	2
TIIVISTELMÄ .....	3
1 INTRODUCTION .....	7
1.1 Research background .....	7
1.1.1 Verso Food Ltd .....	9
1.2 Research questions .....	11
1.3 Research structure .....	12
2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK .....	14
2.1 Central terminology .....	14
2.1.1 Sustainability vs. CSR.....	14
2.1.2 Sustainability communication.....	15
2.1.3 Passive and proactive sustainability communication.....	16
2.1.4 Purpose of sustainability communication.....	17
2.1.5 Social media communication .....	18
2.1.6 Facebook and Instagram .....	19
2.1.7 Intergenerational transfer of eating habits .....	20
2.2 Literature review .....	21
2.2.1 Communication elements - brand content and channels.....	21
2.2.2 Marketing, advertising, trust, and attitudes .....	22
2.2.3 Brand familiarity and its effectiveness on social media .....	24
2.3 Research gap.....	25
3 DATA AND METHODOLOGY.....	27
3.1 Research design.....	27
3.2 Data collection methods.....	29
3.2.1 Beanit's food survey .....	29
3.2.2 Semi-structured interviews .....	30
3.3 Data analysis methods .....	33
3.3.1 Quantitative analysis for the food survey .....	33
3.3.2 Thematic analysis for qualitative data .....	34
3.4 Reliability and validity of the research.....	36
4 EMPIRICAL FINDINGS .....	38
4.1 Quantitative results .....	38
4.1.1 Backgrounds of the respondents .....	38
4.1.2 Eating habits of the respondents.....	40
4.1.3 Discussion around different diets.....	45
4.2 Qualitative results.....	51
4.2.1 Backgrounds of the interviewees.....	51

	5
4.2.2	Eating habits of the interviewees ..... 52
4.2.3	Environmental sustainability related social media communication ..... 54
4.3	Comparison between both data sets ..... 62
5	DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS ..... 66
5.1	The results in the light of the research questions ..... 66
5.2	The results in relation to Verso Foods communication strategy ..... 69
5.3	Future actions related to sustainability communication on social media ..... 70
6	CONCLUSION ..... 73
6.1	Summary of the research ..... 73
6.2	Theoretical contributions and managerial implications ..... 74
6.3	Limitations and suggestions for future research..... 75
	REFERENCES..... 77
	APPENDIX A SURVEY QUESTIONS ..... 85
	APPENDIX B ORIGINAL INTERVIEW GUIDE ..... 86
	APPENDIX C TRANSLATED INTERVIEW GUIDE ..... 90

## LIST OF TABLES AND PICTURES

### List of tables

- TABLE 1: Situation in life & gender, p. 39
- TABLE 2: Breakdown by age, p. 39
- TABLE 3: Distribution of diets within the respondents, p. 40
- TABLE 4: Willingness to change one's diet towards more plant-based, p. 41
- TABLE 5: Reasons to change one's diet towards more plant-based, p. 42
- TABLE 6: Challenges experienced in changing one's diet towards more plant-based, p. 44
- TABLE 7: Challenges in everyday cooking, p. 45
- TABLE 8: The discussion around diets related to vegetarianism and meat eating has culminated, p. 46
- TABLE 9: The discussion around diets stresses me out, p. 47
- TABLE 10: My eating habits or diet have sometimes been criticized, p. 47
- TABLE 11: There are social or societal pressures to reducing meat consumption, p. 48
- TABLE 12: Different self-selected diets should be more tolerated, p. 48
- TABLE 13: More information, discussion, and transparency would be needed for the public debate around different diets, p. 49
- TABLE 14: Finns should eat less meat, p. 50
- TABLE 15: Meat eating and consumption is being condemned too much nowadays, p. 50
- TABLE 16: Those who follow only a plant-based diet have to justify their eating habits, p. 51
- TABLE 17: Summary of the key points of each theme, p. 54

### List of Pictures

- PICTURE 1, p. 56
- PICTURE 2, p. 57
- PICTURE 3, p. 58
- PICTURE 4, p. 59
- PICTURE 5, p. 60
- PICTURE 6, p. 61

# 1 INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Research background

The environmental impact of a product is for only a share of consumers a factor which affects their purchase decision. Consumers rather pay attention to the price, availability and most importantly taste of the product when examining the food industry. When having environmental aspects and sustainability issues in the centre of a company's communication it does only address a limited group of consumers. This group of consumers includes supposedly consumers with green values and who follow a vegetarian diet, a vegan diet or at the least try to eat sustainably since according to Matthes, Wonneberger, and Schmuck (2014) advertisement with a green tone is perceived positively by the green public. So, these consumers probably already are steady customers when looking at companies working in the field of plant-based food products. Consumers who do not identify themselves with green values, are most likely embracing a mixed diet, and do not consider themselves as "hippies" might think that communication highlighting green values is not meant for them and therefore fail to get addressed with that kind of communication strategy. Nevertheless, a strong and aggressive sustainability communication might push away all consumers, and not only consumers who strongly disagree with green values but also consumers who agree. Supporting this, Bailey, Mishra, and Tiarniyu (2016) suggest that it would be in companies favor to determine consumers receptivity to sustainability communication since all consumers are individuals and some are more receptive to sustainability communication than others.

It is said that green consumers are everywhere these days (Morel & Kwakye, 2012; Ottman, 2017). The response of green consumers to sustainability communication is most likely quite receptive. Chou, Horng, Liu, and Lin (2020) mention that research on consumer studies reveal that consumers value environmental friendliness. But sustainability communication also reaches consumers such as the "sworn carnivores" or in general consumers who have not given a lot of thought towards sustainable eating. It is critical for companies to

incorporate a sustainability communication strategy that is pleasant to all consumers, whether they follow a vegan or a mixed diet, and influences their purchase behavior. To this day what consumers find pleasant in the communication of companies is unknown.

According to Kim (2017) pressure to operating in a eco-friendly matter is put on the food industry. And no wonder, since the food industry impacts the environment for example by having to dispose of a huge amount of solid and liquid waste including food packaging, deforestation, water and soil pollution and of course food waste (Boehlje, 1993); Fox 1997; Wade 2001). Fortunately, sustainable eating is developing as a phenomenon and the vegetarian diet is transferring from a special diet to a new normal which is also an aspect that needs to be taken into consideration in the communication strategies of companies for now on (Beanit, 2020d). It is also confirmed by Hoffenson and Söderberg (2015), that consumers are demanding environmentally friendly food. This study takes an industry-specific approach and focuses on the food industry because it affects everyone on a daily basis. This study also emphasizes the aspect of the environment in sustainability communication since it is highly affected through the food industry.

In general, talk about environmental matters can easily be interpreted as radical and aggressive towards meat and those consumers who eat meat. For example, by talking about our own individual or a company's carbon footprint we inevitably take a stand on other consumers and companies carbon footprint and the sustainability of different diets and furthermore on the meat industry (Beanit, 2020c). Companies operating in the business line of plant-based products are already doing business in a sustainable area which means that those companies do not have to, or maybe even should not, underline the sustainability of their products because it is already given (Beanit, 2020d). The world around us is already doing a great enough job in spreading anxiety. This research takes a closer look on plant-based food brands who carry out sustainability communication.

However, consumers want and need information about the sustainability of the products. The lack of information about the sustainability, functionality, availability, and quality of the product influences the purchase decisions of consumers. Consumers might experience uncertainty in their purchase decision if for example the sustainability of the product has not been certified or they might assume that the sustainability and environmental friendliness of the product has been attained with the expense of the lack of taste. Moreover, a prejudiced consumer might think that an environmentally friendly product cannot taste good. The sustainability communication of a company, and any communication for that matter, demands above all attention to what is happening in the world around us. A company needs to know its customers and their wishes about the quality and tone of the wanted sustainability communication.

Sustainability communication is demanded by consumers, but it also has many advantages for the company itself such as strength of the brand, reputation improvement and meaningful relationships (Eberle, Berens, & Li, 2013;



Mark-Herbert & Von Schantz, 2007). Mangold and Faulds (2009) point out that social media is the place where consumers share their views of companies but it is also the platform to influence consumer behaviour including awareness, information acquisition, opinions, attitudes, purchase behaviour, and post-purchase behaviour. Also, the increase in sustainability awareness among consumers explains and heightens the willingness to behave environmentally friendly (Leonidou, Katsikeas, & Morgan, 2013). Companies aim at different goals when communicating sustainability. According to Signitzer and Prexl (2007) those goals can be divided into marketing goals, business goals and societal goals. This research at hand is narrowed down to studying sustainability communication specifically on social media.

The main question is what kind of sustainability communication strategy companies should pursue for the purpose of accomplishing positive consumer responses and stronger relationships. For example, whether it is a good strategy to emphasize a company's environmental work in their sustainability communication is a question up for grabs. And for that matter not all companies who have taken into consideration environmental aspects in their business want to declare it in public. When pursuing a sustainability communication strategy that emphasizes green values and is rather aggressive and adversarial it might not have the best outcome. Environmental and sustainability related matters can be perceived as sensitive and as a personal attack on one's diet and furthermore lead to alienation or irritation within consumers. When pursuing a strategy that is friendly and conciliatory it might have more effects than realized. The conception behind this research and by what Verso Food Ltd communicates is that a too strong and aggressive sustainability communication strategy does more harm than good.

How consumers, and different consumer groups, respond to sustainability communication has not been studied before. So, it would be in all companies favor to determine the receptivity of different consumer groups to sustainability communication so that companies could construct their sustainability communication strategies based on the results on this kind of research, allocate their communication towards those specific consumers groups, and successfully reach and communicate with them. This research has been narrowed down to studying families and more specifically parents and how they feel about the discussion around different diets and how do they response to environmental sustainability related communication of plant-based food brands on social media. By communicating and targeting families and parents companies could gain competitive advantage for the long run since according to Waldkirch, Ng, and Cox (2004) consumption patterns are transferred to their offspring.

### **1.1.1 Verso Food Ltd**

Verso Food Ltd – also known as makers of Beanit and referred to as Beanit is a small company, only a few steps ahead of a start-up (Beanit, 2020a). Its turnover was 6,6 million euros in 2019 but at the same time its bottom line was 3,9 million euros negative in 2019 (Beanit, 2020a). Verso Food was established in 2010

and operates in the business line of food products, more specifically in the business line of plant-based products (Beanit, 2020a). Verso Food is the market leader in the mentioned area in Finland (market share 17%) (Beanit, 2020a). Verso Food reaches consumer groups – vegetarians and vegans – which represents about 2% of the market (Beanit, 2020a). Verso Food sells to retail and governmental buyers (Beanit, 2020a). Verso Food is owned by Kavli Group, which is a Norwegian food company (Beanit, 2020a). Furthermore, Kavli is 100% owned by the Kavli Trust (Beanit, 2020a). Kavli Trust is a foundation and the basis of Kavli Trust is to do good – all profits are contributed to charity (Beanit, 2020a). So, it can be said that Verso Food has a stable owner and a good starting point to be sustainable.

Sustainable food is in the centre of Verso Food's business (Beanit, 2020a). Important themes are domesticity, delicious and versatile food, and environmental friendliness (Beanit, 2020a). Domesticity refers to raw material, work, and livelihood (Beanit, 2020a). Environmental friendliness refers to low carbon footprint, material choices and waste (Beanit, 2020a). Producing domestic and plant-based food offers Verso Food many assets in trying to pursue as environmentally friendly, low carbon and ethical food production as possible (Beanit, 2020a). Although it needs to be said that Verso Food does not take their sustainability as given but takes it seriously (Beanit, 2020a). Verso Food's sustainability processes have currently still big gaps and many of them are incomplete or are not established practices. For example, currently Verso Food does not have an annual sustainability report. During spring 2021 Verso Food is publishing their sustainability programme which is aiming to improve the sustainability of their operations further for example from the perspective of the environment, the wellbeing of employees, finance and the justice food revolution (Beanit, 2020b). Verso Food's mission is to normalize vegetarian food by producing delicious fava bean products and save the world on the side (Beanit, 2020a). Verso Food's products are produced in their own factory in Kauhava, Finland which was opened in 2019 (Beanit, 2020b). The Carbon footprint of Beanit's Härkis Original is 1,9 kg CO<sub>2</sub>/kg and Beanit's Härkäpapusuikale 2,5 kg CO<sub>2</sub>/kg (Beanit, 2020b). Carbon footprint calculations are a starting point rather than an end point and are a tool for Verso Food's sustainability work which helps to prioritize actions that can lower emissions from their production (Beanit, 2020b).

Verso Food has two different sustainability communication strategies – one for consumer communication and one for corporate communication (Beanit, 2020c). Both strategies can be characterized as friendly, moderate, and conciliatory (Beanit, 2020c). Verso Food tries to find factors that they have in common with consumers and companies rather than factors which separates them from each other (Beanit, 2020c). Verso Food communicates to consumers through Facebook and Instagram and to influencers through Twitter and LinkedIn (Beanit, 2020c). This research is narrowed down to studying sustainability communication to and with consumers and is therefore restricted to studying Facebook and Instagram only. Influencers are considered as reporters, authori-

ties, civil activists, farmers, politicians, competitors, and other food producers (Beanit, 2020c). To consumers Verso Food rather communicates by emphasizing taste and soul and to influencers by emphasizing expertise and chairmanship (Beanit, 2020c). Verso Food's aim is to be an active, distinguishable, and courageous innovator of the food culture since at the moment in the food industry there is no clear chairman to lead the way (Beanit, 2020c).

Beanit is an inspiring and believable expert, who takes its place in the front row of the revolution by refusing to take part in antithesis (Beanit, 2020c). Beanit's strategy for their communication has been conciliatory (Beanit, 2020c). Beanit rather asks questions, brings out topics for discussion and finds out things about important topics than commands, raves and is dominant (Beanit, 2020c). They are inclusive, communal and want to gather people around for discussion rather than egocentric (Beanit, 2020c). Beanit is also well-balanced and considerate in their communication instead of quick-tempered, eager to find faults and emotional (Beanit, 2020c). Beanit appreciates research and their own expertise which also includes sometimes admitting their ignorance (Beanit, 2020c). At the current state the meat industry has taken domestic food as its own territory (Beanit, 2020c). Beanit does not want to be the enemy of domestic food but rather their biggest supporter (Beanit, 2020c).

This research is not studying Verso Food's communication strategies but Verso Food's thoughts about sustainability communication are on the background of this research. This research reflects its findings to Verso Food's thoughts and communication strategy briefly in the discussion section of this master's thesis and states whether Verso Food is conducting a communication strategy in line with the results of this research.

## 1.2 Research questions

The aim of the research is to understand how consumers, more specifically parents, respond to environmental sustainability related communication. This research studies how parents respond to sustainability communication of plant-based food brands. Furthermore, this research studies sustainability communication on social media and is taking a closer look especially on Instagram and Facebook and moreover, on posts that are related to the dimension of the environment when considering the triple bottom line. This research examines the stumbling blocks and the success factors of sustainability communication. Most importantly this research is aiming to fill the existing research gap regarding this topic at hand.

The results of this research can be seen as an instrument for individual companies for enhancing their sustainability communication strategy. The results should provide a comprehensive overview on what kind of sustainability communication consumers find most pleasant to perceive and is therefore most profitable for the company as well since it does not create alienation but creates strong relationships with consumers. This research is trying to find out the per-

ceptions of consumers on what kind of communication they prefer from plant-based food brands. As already mentioned earlier the conception of this research is that communicating aggressively green values towards consumers does more harm than good.

This research is firstly laying out generally the eating habits of the Finnish population, their attitudes towards food discussion, and presenting the barriers consumers acknowledge towards consuming more plant-based food. Secondly, this research is trying to find out how sustainability communication of plant-based food brands should be constructed in order to be inviting towards consumers and increasing their willingness to consume more plant-based food products. As the research focus is twofold, the research question is also divided into two parts.

Main research question:

- What kind of environmental sustainability related communication on social media increases the willingness of parents to consume more plant-based food?

Sub research question:

- What are the reasons for and barriers against consuming plant-based food experienced by parents?

The main research question will focus on several environmental sustainability related social media posts on Instagram and Facebook published by major plant-based food brands and asking individual consumer to reflect on their feelings that those posts stir. The purpose of the main research question is to investigate what feelings or thoughts specific characteristics and attributes of those environmental sustainability related social media posts awaken. The sub research question is focusing on the barrier's and reasons parents find towards eating more plant-based and tries from that point of view find out how the social media sustainability communication should be constructed.

### **1.3 Research structure**

This research is divided into six noteworthy chapters of which the first chapter is the ongoing introduction – chapter. In the introduction chapter the research background, Verso Food Ltd. and clear research questions are presented. The following second chapter consists of the conducted literature review of this research. The literature review includes several key topics. For starters the concept of sustainability and its various definitions will be introduced. The way sustainability will be viewed in this research will also be clarified. The chapter continues by defining sustainability communication, comparing passive and proactive sustainability communication, laying out the purpose of sustainability

communication, and then taking a closer look on social media communication and furthermore Facebook and Instagram as social media platforms. After this the intergenerational transfers of eating habits are discussed. In the second half of the second chapter previous literature on communication elements, marketing, advertising, trust, attitudes, brand familiarity and the effectiveness on social media is gone thorough. At the end of the chapter justification for the research gap is given based on the previous literature presented. Chapter three justifies the selection of the research approach and explains the characteristics of this research. Data collection methods are explained in detail and furthermore the analysis methods for the data are outlined. At the end of the chapter the reliability and validity of this research is discussed. Chapter four lays out the key empirical findings of this research. First the quantitative results are laid out and after that the qualitative results. At the end of the chapter the quantitative and qualitative findings are compared and discussed together. Chapter five consists of the discussion and analysis of the results in light of the research questions and to Verso Food's communication strategy and to previous literature to the extent that is possible. Chapter five provides also practical suggestions for the sustainability communications of companies. The final chapter of this research consists of the summary of the research, the theoretical and managerial implications as well as the limitations of this research. Suggestions for future research are also offered.

## **2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

### **2.1 Central terminology**

Firstly, this chapter will discuss the difference in definitions regarding sustainability and corporate social responsibility (CSR) and terminate which of the mentioned terms this research will use. After this, this chapter will take a closer look on sustainability communication in general, the difference between passive and proactive sustainability, and the purpose of sustainability communication in order to give a clear ground for the basis of this this research. Furthermore, since this research focuses on social media communication, and more specifically on the platforms of Facebook and Instagram, they will be discussed in detail. At the end of this chapter, this research will take a closer look on intergenerational transfer of eating habits and justify via previous research the sample of the quantitative and qualitative data focusing on families and furthermore on parents.

#### **2.1.1 Sustainability vs. CSR**

Sustainability and corporate social responsibility (CSR) are strongly connected to each other. The difference between both concepts is unclear since they are used as synonyms and are both aiming at creating and maximizing environmental, economic and social aspects (Baumgartner, 2013). Sustainability is defined as: “meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs”, as defined in The Brundtland Report “Our Common Future” by the World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED) (United Nations, 1987). But it can be said that sustainability includes the environmental, economic, and social dimension, whereas corporate social responsibility only covers the social dimension of the sustainability system (Tureac, Turtureanu, Bordean & Georgeta, 2010). According to Kim (2017) corporate social responsibility is more or less a commitment to meeting the economic, legal, and ethical expectations demanded by a compa-

ny's stakeholders and the society in general. It is argued by Hopkins (2005) that CSR is trying to treat stakeholders ethically and in a socially responsible way to meet their interests. Whereas Ebner and Baumgartner (2006) argue that sustainability is more focused on the fact that companies try to focus on their commitments to protecting the environment. Sustainability also includes the three pillars - environmental, economic and social - already mentioned above (Arushanyan, Ekener, & Moberg, 2017). The environmental aspect is the most recognizable and refers for example to the efficient use of resources and environmental footprint produces as a result of a company's business (Gimenez, Sierra, & Rodon, 2012). The economic aspect includes the sustainable economic growth (Székely & Knirsch, 2005) and the contribution of a company to the larger economic system (Reilly & Hynan, 2014). The social aspect refers to the company's impact on the local communities (Reilly & Hynan, 2014). This research uses the terms "sustainability" and "sustainability communication" because this thesis is studying communication with a focus on the environmental dimension as already mentioned above.

### **2.1.2 Sustainability communication**

Communication as one of a company's functions should not be underestimated. The importance of a company's communication is emphasized when noticed that by means of it the attention of stakeholders can be led to essential or non-essential matters of for example the environmental activity of the company and generally influence the public's opinion (Kietzmann, Hermkens, McCarthy, & Silvestre, 2011). Communication does not only mean companies sharing information but also that individual consumers can openly express their opinions and engage in conversations (Castelló, Morsing, & Schultz, 2013). Communication brings a company awareness, hopefully raises positive thoughts in consumers and is a good means to prevent misunderstandings. It has been recognized that communication with a company's stakeholders is essential when it comes to executing corporate social responsibility successfully which furthermore has shed light on the sustainability communication literature (Crane & Glozer, 2016).

According to Tang and Li (2009) sustainability communication can be described as the ways and means how companies present and communicate their sustainability principles and practices to their stakeholders. Whereas Podnar (2008) lays sustainability communication out as a process of anticipating stakeholders' expectations, articulation of sustainability policy and managing of different organization communication tools designed to provide true and transparent information about a company's or a brand's integration of its business operations, social and environmental concerns, and interactions with stakeholders.

Corporate responsibilities have expanded because of the heightened stakeholder expectations (Scherer & Palazzo, 2011) and furthermore as the subject of intensity has become the way brands communicate with their stakeholder thorough sustainability communication (Crane & Glozer, 2016). It is widely

acknowledged according to Du, Bhattacharya, and Sen (2010) that responsible companies should regularly communicate and engage with their stakeholders about their sustainability issues, programmes, products and impacts. Sustainability communication is inevitable because according to Ihlen, Bartlett, and May (2011) not communicating at all on a sustainability matter is also a form of communication.

### **2.1.3 Passive and proactive sustainability communication**

Companies can choose either a proactive or reactive approach to sustainability (Park & Kim, 2016). The difference between these is that, when having a proactive approach a company actively looks for opportunities to be sustainable and a reactive approach means a company is only adopting sustainability when it is demanded by consumers or other stakeholders (Park & Kim, 2016).

Kim (2017) mentions that because so little is known about how stakeholders perceive and react to passive and/or proactive sustainability practices some companies hesitate to commit to it. Companies are also hesitating to which extent to show their commitment to environmental sustainability despite the fact that it is strongly demanded by stakeholders (Kim, 2017). Sustainability practices may reduce shareholder returns since it takes upfront costs and efforts to commit to sustainability practices and on top of that the companies might be at risk of losing their competitive advantages (Kim, 2017). Because of the above companies differ in the extent to which they commit in sustainability practices: some businesses commit to the bare minimum prescribed by laws (passive CSR) and other actively seek opportunities to commit to sustainability practices exceeding the legal demands (proactive CSR) (Kim, 2017). Also the fact that companies don't know how stakeholder react towards their sustainability practices bring about barriers for businesses to commit to them (Kim, 2017).

Kim (2017) found out that towards companies that practice proactive sustainability communication are shown more positive attitudes from consumers and consumers are more likely to engage in positive communication about the company (word-of-mouth/electronic word-of-mouth). Kim (2017) claims that brands that carry out proactive sustainability programs (compared to brands that carry out passive sustainability programs) awaken more and stronger favorable attitudes in consumers' minds and intentions to purchase from the brand in question. The research of Groza, Pronschinske, and Walker (2011) are in line with the findings of Becker-Olsen, Cudmore, and Hill, (2006) and Wagner, Lutz, and Weitz (2009) confirming that consumers react favorably to the proactive form CSR and negatively to the reactive (passive) form of CSR. Becker-Olsen et al. (2006) state that the altruistic nature of proactive CSR is why consumers react favorably to it. A proactive approach tends to lead to positive attitudes towards the company and an increased purchase intention (Becker-Olsen et al., 2006). Contrary to the mentioned reactive CSR leads to negative attitudes towards the company (Becker-Olsen et al., 2006). Groza et al. (2011) mention that on top of the proactive vs reactive CSR approach the source from which consumers receive the information concerning CSR has indirectly an ef-



fect on the response. All findings from the mentioned scholars concerning passive and proactive CSR are in line with each other. Also the study of Smith, Fischer, and Yongjian (2012) shows evidence that consumers develop great brand trust towards brands that are adopting a proactive approach towards sustainability issues and are therefore encouraging brands to be proactive and in that way create and maintain brand trust. In this research we examine consumers response to proactive sustainability communication of companies.

#### **2.1.4 Purpose of sustainability communication**

Practicing sustainability is a powerful way for companies to gain competitive advantage and therefore it is strategically important to communicate it on top of developing and implementing a CSR initiative (Türkel, Uzunoğlu, Kaplan, & Vural, 2016). When practicing sustainability companies need to be careful not to compromise the profitability of the company when fulfilling societal and environmental obligations (Türkel et al., 2016). On top of the mentioned fact that companies should practice CSR, it is also mentioned that companies should communicate these activities (Türkel et al., 2016). Du et al. (2010) also state that responsible companies should regularly communicate with their concerned stakeholders about their CSR programs, products, and impacts. Since practicing sustainability and communicating about it can lead to positive stakeholder responses and stronger relationships, it is utmost important to manage the whole process appropriately (Türkel et al., 2016). According to Türkel et al. (2016) and their research sustainability communication should always be in line of a detailed, carefully planned and effectively managed communication strategy and more specifically it is important to consider how to say something rather than focusing on what to say.

Communication sustainability is seen as critical for various things, starting from convincing consumers to reward sustainable companies (Bhattacharya & Sen, 2004), affecting corporate accountability (Archel, Husillos, & Spence, 2011), and to make it possible for managers and consumers to make sense of the world (Basu & Palazzo, 2008). According to Crane and Glozer (2016) the purpose of sustainability communication can be specified into five points: stakeholder management, image enhancement, legitimacy and accountability, attitude and behavioral change, and identity and meaning creation. In stakeholder management the assumption is that stakeholders are managed through one or two-way communication in order to influence them and make the stakeholders behave in a certain way and furthermore achieve the firms goals (Crane & Glozer, 2016). Sustainability communication is also trying to provide the company's stakeholders specific information which enhances its image by legitimizing its behavior (Crane & Glozer, 2016). A more deeper level goal for sustainability communication is presented as aiming for a greater legitimacy and accountability because sustainability communication is seen as a way of building and preserving a company's legitimacy and accountability for example by "self-reporting of environmental information" (Crane & Glozer, 2016). When looking at the marketing literature, it is mainly focused on attitudinal and behavioral

changes in consumers where sustainability communication has made the impact (Crane & Glozer, 2016). Sustainability communication is also used as creating identity and meaning for the company either on an individual level (employees or consumers) or on a collective level which refers to shared organizational identities (Crane & Glozer, 2016). On top of the above maximizing the returns for a company has also been mentioned as one of the main reasons of sustainability communication (Du et al., 2010). As mentioned above in this research the aim is to affect the attitudes of consumers and achieve behavioral change towards consuming more plant-based products with the means of sustainability communication.

Türkel, Uzunoğlu, Kaplan, and Vural (2016) state that knowledge on factors affecting consumer responses to sustainability communications efforts is highly unlimited although the importance of sustainability communication is acknowledged. Bailey, Mishra, and Tiamiyu (2016) pointed out that consumers are individuals and some consumers may be more receptive to sustainability communication than others. It would be in companies favor to determine consumers receptivity to green communication so that they can allocate resources on consumers who are more likely to support green marketing strategies (Bailey et al., 2016). A scale of green advertising receptivity could be used in segmentation and targeting of consumers since consumers respond differently to green communication and particularly in the form of green advertising (Bailey et al., 2016). This is a way how companies could tailor their sustainability messages so that they speak directly to those consumers who are more receptive to them (Bailey et al., 2016). Such a scale has according to Bailey et al. (2016) not yet been developed and no efforts in doing so have been acknowledged.

### **2.1.5 Social media communication**

The organizational culture creates the basis for all communication and social media channels are a way of reflecting those organizational values (Mangold & Faulds, 2009). The term social media has not even a universally agreed definition but still research on it has produced considerable results (Weller, 2015). Research also found out that the relevance of the food segment is significant on social media since users prefer content related to their day-to-day lives (Coelho, Oliveira, & Almeida, 2016).

It is essential for companies and communication managers to understand online consumer behavior and how consumers response to social media communication since the users of the internet and social media are growing worldwide. Also Mangold and Faulds (2009) state that when examining a company's promotion mix, firm-created social media communication is essential. But there is limited understanding among researchers and brand managers on how social media communication effects the fact how consumers perceive brands (Schivinski & Dabrowski, 2016). Schivinski and Dabrowski (2016) have found through their studies that user generated social media communication has a positive effect on brand equity and brand attitude, and furthermore brand equi-

ty and brand attitude increase purchase intentions. Only brand attitude (not brand equity) was affected by firm-created social media communication (Schivinski & Dabrowski, 2016).

Firm-created social media communication can be seen as advertising, which is usually wholly controlled by the company and has a marketing agenda behind it (Schivinski & Dabrowski, 2016). Still according to Schivinski and Dabrowski (2016) firm-created social media content should be created because it can help spread the original advertising to a larger public by creating a viral response. In order to achieve even better results Schivinski and Dabrowski (2016) suggest that communication managers should maintain an active profile on social media and simultaneously support user-generated communication.

Previous literature on sustainability communication has emphasized that companies are communicating *to* their stakeholders rather than communicating *with* them (Crane & Livesey, 2003). Communication through social media makes it possible for companies to be in contact with their stakeholders in real-time and directly (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). Social media communication offers consumers the opportunity to interact and communicate with each other, which means that companies are not the exclusive source of information and brand communication (Li & Bernoff, 2011). Companies are aware of the necessity to foster their relationships with consumers and have the opportunity to form two-way relationships thanks to social media platforms (Li & Bernoff, 2011). Through social media communication brands have the opportunity to engage with loyal consumers and in that way influence their perceptions of the brand and its products, spread information and furthermore learn from and about consumers (Brodie, Ilic, Juric, & Hollebeek, 2013). According to Li and Bernoff (2011) when aiming to incite peer-to-peer communication, social media channels are a cost-effective option.

### **2.1.6 Facebook and Instagram**

The founding of Google in 1998 probably firstly affected how companies and stakeholders interact (Crane & Glozer, 2016). Television, radio, magazines and in general traditional media is losing its ground and consumers are more and more turning to social media sites for information because the information is available instantly when it is wanted and at everyone's own convenience (Mangold & Faulds, 2009). In 2016 and according to Schivinski and Dabrowski (2016) the most attention of media platforms among researchers and communication managers have gotten Facebook, Twitter and YouTube. Customers frequently use and depend on social media platforms (for example Facebook and Instagram) for interacting with friends and brands which has made social media a strategic tool for business managers (Rapp, Beitelspacher, Grewal, & Hughes, 2013).

Usually research has been focusing on Facebook but nowadays companies in all sizes are also using Instagram (Coelho et al., 2016). Millions of members have been put together by Facebook and Instagram over the recent years (Coelho et al., 2016). According to Facebook (2015) there were 1,49 billion active

users on Facebook and 300 million active users on Instagram in 2015. According to Statista's information (2021) newest Facebook has 2,74 billion active users and Instagram has 1,22 billion active users. The number of the active users on both platforms has increased quite rapidly. The two most popular social media sites according to Coelho et al. (2016) are Facebook and Instagram. The primary metrics for Facebook are comments, likes and shares whereas the primary metrics for Instagram are comments and likes (Coelho et al., 2016).

Facebook has the ability to create groups, pages, events, and advertisements and there can be more than one user in a conversation (Coelho et al., 2016). Instagram has specific characteristics such as the posts are originated exclusively from smartphones and tablets and posts include images and short videos to which an editing tool is available (Coelho et al., 2016). Coelho, Oliveira, and Almeida (2016) found out that Instagram followers were more likely to be greater involved with a brand if they post types were events and promotion. In Facebook on the other hand the post type events only affected likes (Coelho et al., 2016). In conclusion Coelho et al. (2016) state that Facebook and Instagram should be used as a way of promotion when wanting it to be most efficiently utilized.

### **2.1.7 Intergenerational transfer of eating habits**

According to Paroche, Caton, Vereijken, Weenen, and Houston-Price (2017) critical time for establishing dietary habits and food preferences is early childhood. These eating habits established in the early childhood are tracked into adolescence and even adulthood (Coulthard, Harris, & Emmet, 2010; Skinner, Carruth, Bounds, & Ziegler, 2002; Vereecken, Keukelier, & Maes, 2004). Cashdan (1998) recommends that parents introduce new foods to children when they are under 24 months old because at that time, they are more receptive to them than older children. It is also said that until the age of three years it is utmost important to learn about food and develop lifelong food preferences and promotion of eating habits (Paroche et al., 2017). Societal trends are influencing eating habits and these social trends are relayed to children through social influences by parents, peers and media (Westenhoefer, 2001). Also Issanchou (2017) findings are in line with the previous ones that state that eating habits from early childhood are most likely to track until adulthood. If these are sustainable behaviors it most likely has a positive environmental impact.

According Kral and Faith (2007) to the environment and especially the family home plays a crucial role in establishing a child's eating habits. According to Westenhoefer (2001) parents greatly modify the diet of children since they influence what food there is served at home and that is why parents' involvement is crucial. Also Mennella and Ventura (2011) state that already when a child starts to eat solid foods it looks to their mothers to learn on how and what to eat.

According to Westenhoefer (2001) food preferences and food rejections are modified by early learning processes. Westenhoefer (2001) lays out three major processes identified that affect the food acceptance patterns of a child: 1) re-

peated exposure to different food reduces the tendency to reject it, 2) it was stated that social influences modify the food acceptance of food, so children learn to prefer food eaten by adults, and 3) with taste cues from the food children learn to associate the physiological consequences of food intake. Repeated exposure lead to familiarity which increases the liking of flavors and intake of specific foods (Paroche et al., 2017). Mennella and Ventura (2011) state that this exposure is already affected when the infant is in the utero and in the context of breastfeeding as well. Observational learning refers to the fact that children have the tendency to imitate and therefore parents have a high impact in shaping the behavior including eating behavior of their child (Paroche et al., 2017).

This research examines how parents respond to environmental sustainability related communication because the aim is to firstly make a change in parents' diets towards more plant based through social media communication, and secondly rely on the belief that parents transfer their eating habits and knowledge onto their children.

## **2.2 Literature review**

### **2.2.1 Communication elements - brand content and channels**

According to Du et al. (2010) the key issues in sustainability communication are message content and channel which are referred to as the communication elements of sustainability communication. Du et al. (2010) state that when paying attention to the content of the sustainability message the situation needs to be evaluated in terms of its sustainability for a business to make effort to create improvement, how committed is the company to their sustainability initiative, the message content related to the impact of their sustainability initiative, what are the motives to focus on the reasons to carry out sustainability initiatives, and the social issues and the business of the company perceived as congruent. Chang, Zhang, and Xie (2015) studied how message framing would affect the receptivity of consumers to the message. They found out that consumers are most receptive to a loss-framed message with the focus on now and a gain-framed message focused on the future, where loss-framed message mean the message is focusing on the negative consequences of not pursuing an action and a gain-framed message focuses on the positive benefits of pursuing an action. A green ad is taken more seriously when it resonates with consumers concerns (for example environmental concerns) (Chang et al., 2015). It was also found that the gain-framed message affected the environmentally concerned consumers attitude more positively when it focused on the future benefits (Chang et al., 2015).

Türkel et al. (2016) explored whether it would make a difference in the consumer response if the communication would be spread through publicity or advertising. The channels for communicating need to be chosen in a way that the message reaches its intended audience (Türkel et al., 2016). There are many

alternatives such as reports, websites, advertisements, press releases, and product packaging (Du et al., 2010). According to Morsing and Schultz (2006) when a company only communicates through annual reports and websites as little as possible can it be referred to as “subtle communication”. In contrast, communication thorough advertising and public relations can be referred to as broad and open sustainability communication (Morsing & Schultz, 2006). Du et al. (2010) classified the communication channels based on whether the company had control over it or not and in that regard media coverage and word-of-mouth would be seen as independent channels. Controllable channels do not directly mean better because according to Sen, Du, and Bhattacharya (2009) some channels might be more controllable but less credible for example advertising.

There has been effort in the recent years among researchers trying to find out which brand content results in stronger engagement so in other words in more comments, likes and shares (Coelho et al., 2016). Previous literature has mostly focused on the text content or moving-pictures of companies post typology (Coelho et al., 2016). The number of media elements and the presumable impact in consumer responses (such as likes and shares) have been research by some studies (Kim, Spiller, & Hettche, 2015; Rauschnabel, Praxmarer, & Ivens, 2012). The impact of text content is not unanimous since some studies found that entertainment and information content increases likes, comments, and shares (Pletikosa Cvijikj & Michahelles, 2013) and some studies say the controversial (De Vries, Gensler, & Lee, 2012).

News, photos, and videos are posted by brands on social media in order to raise visitor levels (Coelho et al., 2016). Some studies found that images and videos increase likes and comments (De Vries et al., 2012; Sabate, Berbegal-mirabent, Cañabate, & Lebherz, 2014). Other studies state that including brand names and emotional tones on Facebook posts increases the number of likes as well as avoiding hard sell types of posts (Swani, Milne, & Brown, 2013).

## **2.2.2 Marketing, advertising, trust, and attitudes**

There is evidence based on prior literature for and against the fact that consumers’ attitudes and intentions can be impacted through green advertising and marketing (Bailey et al., 2016). It is said that a common way of encouraging sustainable behaviour is green marketing (Chou et al., 2020). Chang (2011) also found that advertisements with high-effort green claims trigger among consumers (especially among consumers with high ambivalent towards going green) low levels of ad believability and high discomfort. The expectation is that green advertising influences consumers who are highly receptive to green advertising since there is evidence that advertising in general influences consumers’ attitudes, intentions, and purchase behavior (Bailey et al., 2016). There has been findings (for example Hu, 2012) that ads that combined environmental claims with emotional benefits have in fact an impact to consumers’ response and are highly effective for that matter. Bailey, Mishra, and Tiarniyu (2018) conducted a study to understand the consumer response to different green marketing communications. The results showed that green consumers respond

positively and in favorable ways to different forms of green marketing communications and therefore it is suggested that brands would integrate a green communication strategy to their green advertising strategy to get the most advantages (Bailey et al., 2018). Also, there has been studies about green consumers socio-demographic factors and their impact on the perception toward green advertising but the result have been equivocal (Bailey et al., 2016). Some scholars have found a positive link between education level and environmental sensitivity, some a negative, also some scholars have found a positive link between gender and ecological concern, some a negative link (Bailey et al., 2016).

It has been confirmed that the green public generally perceives positively green advertising among the consumers in the United States and Europe (Matthes et al., 2014). Matthes et al. (2014) therefore encouraged to pursue green consumers through green advertisement but emphasized that the ads should be detailed, specific, unambiguous, and most importantly truthful. It has been argued that consumers will be more enthusiastic about a brands green marketing activities, assuming also green communication, if the information consumers have and get matches the brands green policy, green education and green promotion (Chou et al., 2020). Some brands leave out critical information from their green advertising and are that way being unethical (Shin & Ki, 2019). Türkel et al. (2016) state that there is no established communication format which will maximize the returns of a company or even one that builds trust and loyalty. It is very critical in a fast-changing environment to gain stakeholders trust and practicing sustainability is one way to do it which on top of the gained trust leads to a strong relationship and loyalty (Türkel et al., 2016). Nowadays it is becoming more challenging to gain consumers trust and meet their expectations (K.-C. Chang, Hsu, Hsu, & Chen, 2019).

A critical factor influencing responses to green advertising are the previous perceptions of a product category (Arias-Bolzmann, Chakraborty, & Mowen, 2000). It is said that the product category of a brand impacts the reputation of it, for example petroleum brands have a negative green reputation whereas sustainable food brands have a positive green reputation and are considered as environmentally friendly by stakeholders (Shin & Ki, 2019). It was also found that consumers perception of the country of origin of the product and the strength of the environmental claim in the ad were factors that influence the consumers response to green advertising (Manrai, Manrai, Lascu, & Ryans, 1997). In the sustainability communication context it is mentioned that if companies tell consumers where a product is made, it can affect the consumers attitude toward the product and furthermore the company and the brand itself (Chan & Lau, 2004; A. Manrai, L. Manrai, Lascu, & Ryans, 1997). Mitchell and Olson (1981) have defined brand attitude as “consumers overall evaluation of the brand”. Important factors in brand evaluation are consumers’ beliefs concerning reliability, safety, and honesty (Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001).

Key consumer concepts that have been linked to green advertising are consumer skepticism and ambivalence (Bailey et al., 2016). Chang (2011) states that when a consumer has simultaneously negative and positive attitudes to-

ward going green is represented by ambivalence towards green marketing. The ambivalence toward going green can further be divided into product- and consumer-related reasons where product-related reasons include assumptions such as that green products are expensive, low in quality and do not actually contribute to protecting the environment whereas consumer-related reasons include thoughts such as to which extent consumers can actually help in protecting the environment, what emotional benefits do consumers perceive in going green and in general skepticism towards green marketing (Chang, 2011). Also, consumer skepticism contributes highly to consumers ambivalent attitudes towards going green (Chang, 2011). Chou et al. (2020) found out that consumers attitude to green products significantly and directly affect the intention to buy green products. It was also found that the consumers support towards green marketing increases significantly if consumers experience that sustainability improves quality of products (Chou et al., 2020). Individual consumers do not anymore just desire quality or low prices but expect companies to contribute to the society (Fernando, 2010). It has been recognized that more and more consumers want their consumption habits to express their concern about the environment (WARC, 2015).

### **2.2.3 Brand familiarity and its effectiveness on social media**

Based on earlier experience individual consumers most definitely associate brands with certain terms, concepts, and features and there are connotations that could affect consumers brand perceptions if they have no experience of the brand (Türkel et al., 2016). It was found that it does not make a difference in the attitude towards a sustainability related message whether the message comes from a familiar or unfamiliar brand or whether the message comes in form of advertising or publicity (Türkel et al., 2016). The research of Türkel et al. (2016) also reveals that if the brand is not familiar to the consumer it will affect the response on CSR initiatives which means that companies need to focus on brand awareness among stakeholder in order to achieve stronger commitment to CSR. The findings were that the consumers attitude towards the message did not differ whether it was a familiar or an unfamiliar brand in question but consumers attitude towards the brand and purchase intentions differed whether it was a familiar or unfamiliar brand (Türkel et al., 2016). Lange and Dahlén (2003) state that communicative advantages are achieved by brand familiarity and furthermore Campbell and Keller (2003) support that finding by claiming themselves that communication effectiveness is higher if the brand is more familiar so the effectiveness of communication is directly related to familiarity of the brand.

There are four kind of measures of social media effectiveness suggested by Jiang et al. (2016); involvement (site traffic, number of views, number of likes, number of shares), interaction (addresses the behavior of consumers for example buying, sign ups, posting comments on Facebook, uploading photos on Instagram), intimacy (examines more deeply the sentiment, affinity, and emotional attachment of an individual consumers behavior and language - meanings



behind comments, posts), and influence (how likely is it that a consumers recommend a product/a service in their social network). According to Jiang et al. (2016) if the target audience is highly engaged is the social media content more likely to be effective but they also state that there is prompt need for more research on social media effectiveness. So, the value of strategic communications is demonstrated by social media engagement (Jiang et al., 2016).

## 2.3 Research gap

In the search for previous literature on consumers response to sustainability communication on social media terms such as 'consumer', 'stakeholder', 'response', 'sustainability', 'CSR', 'communication', 'social media' were used. These search terms offered numerous articles and most of them only included one or two of the search terms. Those articles that included more than two search terms still had a different perspective on sustainability communication than the one this research has. There exists sustainability related articles and they mostly focus on external stakeholders, mainly consumers, but rather focusing on the attitudes and purchase behaviour of the consumers than their response to different kind of sustainability communication.

Earlier research also has rather focused on marketing than communication. Phrases like "green advertisement are generally perceived positively by the green public" (Matthes et al., 2014) came up frequently. There are numerous studies about green marketing (K.-C. Chang et al., 2019), green advertising (A. Bailey et al., 2016), green reputation (Shin & Ki, 2019), green consumers (Cronin, Smith, Gleim, Ramirez, & Martinez, 2011), attitudes (Chou et al., 2020), message framing (Chang et al., 2015), and consumer responses to CSR communication in general (Y. Kim, 2017).

The literature concerning sustainability communication in general is lacking consistency which was also stated by Crane and Glozer (2016). Previous research has not studied how consumers respond to environmental sustainability related communication and why. Previous research has also not highlighted characteristics of the sustainability communication which affect the response to sustainability communication. The search for previous literature on the topic of this research was done until the point of theoretical saturation and beyond to studying articles that were closely related to this research topic.

Research focusing on consumer response towards sustainability related messages and sustainability communication characteristics are literally non-existent. So, there is a research gap in research focusing on characteristics of sustainability communication and how consumers respond to different kind of environmental sustainability related communication. The research gap acts as the scientific motivation for this research. Based on the above this research is very much accurate and needed. This research is determined to fill that specific research gap. Personal motivation for this research is based on the desire to

learn about sustainability communication and its characteristics and, to understand the response of consumers towards sustainability communication.

## 3 DATA AND METHODOLOGY

### 3.1 Research design

This research employs quantitative and qualitative data but its focus is strongly on the qualitative data since individual consumers' response to sustainability communication cannot be objectively measured and qualitative research specifically allows focusing on complex phenomena in their specific context (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2011). Eriksson and Kovalainen (2011) also state that qualitative research is suitable for the research design if the aim of the research is to understand how and why things work in a specific way. Thus, the choice of relying mainly on qualitative methods is in line with the research questions of this study. More specifically, qualitative methods are used in this research to gain information on how individual consumers respond to environmental sustainability related communication on social media and how with the means of communication consumers' response to such sustainability communication could be more pleasant.

Qualitative research has been criticized by the tendency to present the findings in an anecdotal manner (Bryman & Bell, 2011). Criticism of anecdotalism can be countered by adding quantitative aspect to a study (Bryman & Bell, 2011). A quantitative survey is an effective data collection method because in little time many answers can be collected and analysed. A quantitative survey is also for the consumer favourable because it can be answered when it suits for oneself best. The downsides to a quantitative survey are the uncertainty of how seriously it has been answered and have the questions been misunderstood. The risk of the latter downside can be minimized by a careful construction of the survey questions. Quantitative methods are used in this research to gain information on the eating habits of the Finnish population, their attitudes toward food discussion, and to find out the barriers they experience when it comes to plant-based food consumption.

Although in qualitative research a strong connection to pre-existing theory is emphasized, which in this research is nonexistent, the ontological positioning

of this research can be classified as constructivist research since the research focuses on individuals' experiences (Tuomi & Sarajärvi, 2009). Since the pre-existing theory is nonexistent and the research questions are of qualitative nature, can this research be qualified as an inductive research where theory is generated out of this research (Bryman & Bell, 2011). Though it needs to be mentioned that according to Bryman and Bell (2011) no research is entirely inductive. The epistemological positioning of this research relies on interpretivism since it assumes that reality differs considering individuals and is therefore subjective and leads to rich insights instead of universal laws and generalizable results (Alharahsheh & Pius, 2020). The interpretivism positioning is also in line with the research questions which are of qualitative nature since the interpretivist paradigm suits well with qualitative research (Alharahsheh & Pius, 2020). There has been discussion about which philosophy of science and which set of philosophical positions are best compatible with mixed method research but no proper answer has been found (Johnson, Onwuegbuzie, & Turner, 2007). That is why in this research the philosophical positions have been chosen by considering which suits best this specific mixed method research which slightly leans more to a qualitative research design.

A mixed method research is according to Johnson et al. (2007) one of the three notable research methods, including quantitative research, qualitative research, and mixed method research. A mixed method research tries to pursue multiple viewpoints, perspectives, positions, and standpoints (Johnson et al., 2007). A mixed method research design, which has been chosen for this research, simply said combines the quantitative and qualitative research designs (Bryman & Bell, 2011). Although, there has been a lot of critique against the mixed method research design in the past, it is being used on a regular basis as a distinctive research strategy and has also gained credibility among business studies (Bryman & Bell, 2011). As in this research, qualitative data plays an important role in interpreting, clarifying, describing, validating, grounding quantitative results during the data analysis stage (Johnson et al., 2007).

According to Johnson et al. (2007) there are three reasons to for following a mixed method research design: 1) corroboration of quantitative and qualitative research through triangulation, 2) to enable analysis for providing richer data, and 3) to initiate new modes of thinking by attending paradoxes that appear from the two data sources. As said with a mixed method research strategy in this study the quantitative results can be specified and followed up when using a qualitative research approach in addition to it. According to Hammersley (1996) this is referred to as Triangulation which indeed is using qualitative research to corroborate quantitative research findings (or vice versa). Bryman and Bell (2011) define triangulation as "the use of more than one method or source of data in the study of social phenomena so that findings can be cross-checked". It is also stated that conducting a mixed method research does it include more depth, better understanding (Johnson et al., 2007).

In this research semi-structured interviews represent the primary data source where a quantitative survey represents the secondary data source. Alt-

though the research questions of this study guide the research toward a qualitative research, more than one data source is combined (triangulation) since it allows crosschecking of the data (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2011). A mixed method research design has been chosen for this study because from a self-completion questionnaire not all wanted information is obtained, so semi-structured interviews are completed to get access to more and deeper information in order to answer the research question in its entirety. In this study quantitative survey research and qualitative interviewing has been combined. Thus, in this research qualitative methods have been used to supplement the findings of a quantitative survey. In this research a quantitative food survey uncovers regularities whereas the identification of those regularities allows a qualitative processual analysis to be conducted.

## **3.2 Data collection methods**

### **3.2.1 Beanit's food survey**

The secondary data source in this research is represented by Beanit's quantitative food survey which was conducted at the beginning of this year (2021). The data was collected through Bilendi Finland's online panel during the weeks two and three of January 2021. The survey collected approximately 1'000 replies from 18-75-year-old Finnish people. The sample consisted of the entire Finnish adult population in terms of age, sex, and geography which made sure that the data would be rich in heterogenic consumers and their demographical factors. The margin of error in this dataset is +/- 3%. Beanit's quantitative survey was not originally conducted to answer the research questions of this research but to find out general information about eating habits of Finnish people.

The Beanit's quantitative survey contained 16 questions of which two had follow-up questions. Question 11 had nine follow-up questions and question 16 had ten follow-up questions. Most of the survey questions were closed-ended questions and some had an "other" option as an answer on top of the given ones. The answer options in most of the questions were: I don't know, fully disagree, somewhat disagree, neutral, somewhat agree, and fully agree. In this research not all questions are taken into consideration since they are not relevant to the research topic at hand. 5 background questions were asked which were gender, age, situation in life, residential area, and regional division. The situation in life referred to whether the respondent lived with his/her parents, alone, with his/her spouse, with his/her spouse and children, alone with his/her children, or another situation. Based on the background information asked none of the respondents can be identified from the survey. All 16 questions were divided into four parts: respondents' backgrounds, diet, day-today food preparation and habits, and restaurant dining. Since this survey was conducted by Bilendi Finland which is a company that focuses on market research for oth-

er companies next to IT solutions, it can be assumed that the research is done carefully with professionalism and is therefore valid.

In this research we will leave entirely out the section about restaurant dining. From the other sections this research will take into consideration most of the questions and specifically those related to eating habits of the Finnish population, their attitudes toward food discussion, and barriers they experience when it comes to plant-based food consumption. All the survey questions used in this research (excluding background questions) can be found in Appendix A. This research will focus on the answers of those who checked the box for “I live with my spouse and child(ren)” when asking about the respondents’ situation in life. The data analyzed from this quantitative food survey is supposed to give a general idea of how the Finnish individuals who live with their spouse and children consume food, what they think about food discussion in general and what barriers they acknowledge in their own life when it comes to consuming plant-based food. The data from Beani’s quantitative survey is meant to create the basis for this research at hand and introduce the starting point of the food consumption of Finnish people.

### **3.2.2 Semi-structured interviews**

The primary data for this research was collected through six semi-structured interviews after the collection of the quantitative data. Qualitative data and more specifically interviews allow this study to gain access to the perspectives of consumers (Bryman & Bell, 2011). Semi-structured interviews are a common method for collecting data in qualitative research (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2011; Kallio, Pietilä, Johnson, & Kangasniemi, 2016). A semi-structured interview is defined as a “context which interviewer has a series of questions that are in general form of an interview guide but is able to vary the sequence of questions” (Bryman & Bell, 2011). In a semi-structured interview, the interviewer also can ask further questions if the response of the interviewee is not significant enough (Bryman & Bell, 2011). Semi-structured interviews suit well for studies that aim to understand individuals’ perceptions and opinions on sensitive issues, such as sustainability issues as in this research. Also, Rapley (2001) states that a semi-structured interview makes it possible for the interviewer to develop a rich, deep, and textured picture of the phenomenon at hand. As the response to sustainability communication on social media is a construct of an individuals’ collective feelings and perceptions a semi-structured interview is a justified choice for the primary data source of this research. Semi-structured interviews also allow the interviewee space for expressing him/herself verbally (Kallio et al., 2016). An interview, despite of what kind of interview is in question, is always a social encounter which means that both the interviewee and interviewer affect the situation and form an understanding of the reality together (Rapley, 2001). And furthermore, the data collected from the interviews is never entirely objective since it’s always connected to the context in which it is produced (Rapley, 2001).

An interview guide, including questions and print screens of Facebook and Instagram posts, was developed as preparation for the interviews in advance as suggested by Kallio et al. (2016), Eriksson and Kovalainen (2011), and Bryman and Bell (2011). The interview guide should not be followed too strictly since its main purpose is just to offer structure and support for the interview situation (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2011; Kallio et al., 2016). But all themes from the interview guide were covered in one way or another with all interviewees in order to be able to compare the results with each other. The interview guide (list of questions on the themes to be covered (Bryman & Bell, 2011)) was approved by the advisors of this thesis before conducting the interviews so that errors such as misunderstandings due to poorly worded questions or findings that don't answers the research questions would not appear. The questions were also divided into themes which included main questions and follow-up questions as suggested by Kallio et al. (2016) and Rapley (2001). The interview guide of this research included the topics eating habits, social media, preparing questions for analyzing social media posts, social media posts and their analysis and antithesis. When developing the interview guide great emphasis was also put on the fact that the questions would be open-ended, not leading towards any answers, and interviewee oriented (Kallio et al., 2016); Rapley, 2001). An open-ended question is defined by Bryman and Bell (2011) as "a question employed in an interview schedule or self-completion questionnaire that does not present the respondent with a set of possible answers to choose from". The original interview guide can be found in Appendix B and the translated interview guide in appendix C. Most part of the literature review was completed before the development of the interview guide and before conducting the interviews based on the statement of Kallio et al. (2016) that some level of previous knowledge of the topic at hand is required since the interview questions in semi-structured interviews are based on previous knowledge. No background questions were asked in the interview nor are included in the interview guide, since the interviewees were selected based on their background and therefore there was no need to ask them again.

In addition to the normal interview questions the photo elicitation technique was used in the interviews. Photo elicitation is defined as "Showing pictures to interview respondents and asking them to explain, reflect and comment on the meaning of the objects in the photograph, the events that are taking place, or the emotions they associate with them" (Bryman & Bell, 2011). In this research and the interviews focus was put on to asking the interviewees to explain, comment and reflect on the picture shown to them, since this research is trying to find out how consumers respond to environmental sustainability related communication on social media. Using the photo elicitation technique there could be discovered how consumers react to different kind of sustainability communication on social media by showing them differently constructed social media post. In the interviews six photos were shown to respondents of which three were sustainability related posts from Instagram and three were sustainability related post from Facebook pages. All six posts were published

by six different major plant-based food brands. The criteria for the brands were that they operated in the plant-based food industry and they had an account on Instagram or a page on Facebook. The posts had to be related specifically to environmental sustainability so, all health-related posts and recipe posts were left out. Since environmental sustainability related social media posts were quite scarce, there was no timeframe for the publishing of the posts. In this research the six posts have been published within the timeframe of September 2016 to February 2021. The plant-based food brands at hand were however not revealed to the interviewees to get impartial results and so that the interviewees' existing opinions and prejudices would not affect his/her feelings of the post. In picture six the caption was so long that it was not visible thorough the screenshot of the post, so it was presented to the interviewees separately on a piece of paper in a reasonable font size and in full length.

For the interviews, the primary data source, the sample size was 6. The interviewees represented couples represented by young adults with a small child under the age of three. In the quantitative data the background group focused on is "I live with my spouse and child(ren)", this was also the criteria for the interviewees so that the results would be somewhat comparable with one another. Fifty percent of the interviewees were female, and fifty percent were male, which is approximately the case in the quantitative data concerning the specific background group as well. This specific background status was selected because the world is going through a revolution where the vegetarian diet is changing from a special diet to a normal one, this research is studying eating habits of Finnish consumers and wants to contribute to this revolution. By studying young adults and their response to sustainability communication and how to conduct sustainability communication to change their diet to more vegetarian based, we inevitably also change the eating habits of their children. According to Waldkirch, Ng, and Cox (2004) consumption patterns are transferred to their offspring. The criteria for the interviewees is also based on the finding from previous research that eating habits are established in the early childhood, already from the utero and breastfeeding until the age of three years, and are tracked into adolescence and even adulthood (Coulthard et al., 2010; Paroche et al., 2017; Skinner et al., 2002; Vereecken et al., 2004).

All of the interviewees were between the age of 26-36, and therefore represent the generation Y which is broadly defined by Bolton, Parasuraman, Hoefnagels, Migchels, Kabadayi, Gruber, Loureiro, and Solnet (2013) as people who were born between 1981 and 1999. This differs one year on both ends compared to the scale in the quantitative data. The generation Y was selected to be studied in this research because the focus of the research was on Instagram and Facebook based on Verso Food's communication channels towards consumers according to their communication strategy and so the interviewees had to be active users of at least one of those platforms. Bolton et al. (2013) define generation Y as "digital natives" who have grown up with social media. So, all interviewees represent the same generation to reduce the potential difference between generations. The final selection was made on a voluntary basis. The sam-



ple of the interviewees could also be classified as a convenience sample, which is defined by Bryman and Bell (2011) as “a sample that is selected because of the availability to the researcher”. None of the interviewees can be identified from the results and all data is dealt with great confidence.

All interviews (6) were conducted within the same week in March 2021. Four interviews were held face to face and two were conducted online via Microsoft Teams. Those interviews which were conducted via Teams included a video connection on top of the sound connection to facilitate the social interaction and to be able to read nonverbal expressions. All interviews were recorded and transcribed as suggested by Tuomi and Sarajärvi (2009). The interviews lasted approximately from 30 to 65 minutes. During the interview’s attention was payed to the interviewer to remain neutral and to encouraging the interviewee to talk without leading the answers to any specific direction, as recommended by Rapley (2001). Before starting the interview, the research question was introduced, and the purpose of the interview was explained so that the interviewees would know for what they were giving up their valuable time. The above also decreased the plausibility for probing to happen, which is described by Bryman and Bell (2011) a situation where the interviewee needs help with his/her answer, or the interviewee doesn’t provide a complete answer. Also, other probing techniques were used such as repeating the heard information or remaining silent as suggested by Kallio et al. (2016) and Rapley (2001). The interviews included also probe questions which filled in the missing information. It should be kept in mind that for example trust might play a significant role while talking about feelings and perceptions on a sensitive topic such as sustainability. That is why creating a safe and comfortable space is likely to affect the results of the research. By communicating clearly about the topic of the study, the confidentiality and anonymity of the conversations, and trying to connect with the interviewees thorough a non-formal tone during the conversations was used to create trust prior and especially during the interviews.

### **3.3 Data analysis mehtods**

#### **3.3.1 Quantitative analysis for the food survey**

A descriptive quantitative analysis and more specifically a crosstabulation analysis is chosen for the quantitative data from the food survey of Verso Food. In analyzing the quantitative data from the survey the main interest was to get a comprehensive overview of the eating habits of the Finnish population, the attitudes against the conversation about vegetarian food, and the acknowledged barriers against consuming a more vegetarian based diet. Crosstabulation was done from eleven questions in total (including follow-up questions) which can be found in Appendix A as already mentioned above. Three background questions are presented on top of the eleven survey questions.

The answers of the entire sample of the respondents who chose the life situation of “I live with my spouse and child(ren)” are analyzed. Those answers can be compared with each other and furthermore the results from the “I live with my spouse and child(ren)”- respondents can be compared with the qualitative data since the samples are somewhat in line with each other. All questions of the quantitative survey are not relevant regarding this research and the topic of consumers’ response to sustainability communication on social media. For example, questions regarding whether respondents choose vegetarian food in restaurants (section four) or not and why, are not relevant in this research. Also, what kind of Plant-based products the respondents use in their day to day cooking (a part of section three) are not relevant. That is why not all questions and their answers are being analyzed. The results of the quantitative analysis presented the base for the qualitative results.

### **3.3.2 Thematic analysis for qualitative data**

One of the most common ways of analyzing qualitative data is to conduct a thematic analysis (Bryman & Bell, 2011) which is also used in this research to perform the analyzation for the qualitative data. The thematic analysis was also chosen because both analyzation methods used in this research, of the quantitative and qualitative data, cannot differ from each other too much in order to be able to compare and unite the results with each other at the end of the research. Most qualitative data analysis methods start with coding which is described as “generating an index of terms that will help you to interpret and theorize in relation to your data” (Bryman & Bell, 2011). Organizing and describing the data through the process of the thematic analysis helps according to Braun and Clark (2006) identify and analyze patterns in the data in rich detail.

The coding can be done in different ways: inductive, deductive, or abductive (Braun and Clark, 2006). The coding process should be in line with the ontological positioning of the research which in this case is inductive. Because of this, the data was coded aiming to find all possible themes from the data but keeping the specific research question in mind. Since the aim of this research was to find out new patterns since no existing theory contains the thoughts of Verso Food Ltd are used to support the defining of the themes. The aim of the interviews was also to deepen the knowledge of the quantitative data and that is why the results of the quantitative data is also used for support in developing the themes. This is also supported by Eriksson and Kovalainen (2011) which state that existing theory, or in this case Verso Food’s principles and the results of the quantitative data, can be used as part of the analysis for support.

When using thematic analysis, the choice between semantic and latent level of analysis needs to be made (Braun & Clark, 2011). In this research the semantic level of analysis is chosen, which focuses on the explicit and surface meaning of the data without trying to analyze the underlying meaning of what is said (Braun & Clark, 2011). In other words, when analyzing the interviews focus is put on what is said by the interviewees and not why the interviewees

said those specific things. The whole process of the semantic approach of the thematic analysis goes from description to interpretation and lastly to discussing the meanings and implications of the found results.

This research followed the thematic analysis method guidelines suggested by Braun and Clark (2011) where the qualitative analysis consisted of the following steps. Firstly, familiarizing with the data was at task to initiate the coding process. This was done by reading through all the transcripts of the interviews and marking the data extracts that were seen relevant in the light of the research questions. However, Braun and Clarke (2006) also state that the familiarizing process already starts during the data collection phase and continues when writing the interview transcripts.

Secondly, the interview transcripts were read through again and at the same time codes to represent each group of transcript extracts were created. After this the interview transcripts were read through once more and at this point new extracts that were missed during the first round could still be added into the groups. During the coding process it was tried to create an expansive amount of codes, maintaining the context in the extracts, including conflicting extracts, and classify some extracts into several codes as suggested by Braun and Clark (2006). After creating all the codes, the codes were gone through once more and they were refined. Some codes contain only a few extracts and were therefore combined with other similar codes, and some codes that were rather broad were divided into two smaller more accurate codes. Since all the interviews were conducted in Finnish and therefore all qualitative data was in Finnish, codes were also created in Finnish and then afterwards translated into English in a sensible way. The interview transcripts were translated into English when writing the results to prevent the translation from affecting the analysis.

Thirdly, codes were classified into themes after the coding process. Each theme should capture something essential related to the research questions (Braun & Clark, 2006). Themes were created with the help of visualization and post-it notes. Some of the themes were temporary and miscellaneous and later dissolved into permanent themes. According to Braun and Clarke (2006) this step already includes interpretation since the themes do not just emerge on their own but are actively created by the researcher. Braun and Clarke (2006) also emphasize that here is the point where a mistake can easily be made if using research questions as themes. So, this was kept in mind when creating the themes and it was put great effort in trying to genuinely create the themes from the empirical data. As suggested by Braun and Clark (2006), the themes were reviewed against the qualitative data set and the research questions. The themes were also checked out regarding their coherence. The final themes formed were: 1) form of address, 2) accuracy, 3) antithesis, and 4) "Not in my backyard".

Fourthly, a thematic map was formed by aiming to identify the themes core and connection between them. This was an iterative process which also included reflecting the thematic map to the whole data set and research ques-

tions. Lastly, after having identified the final themes the results and analysis of this research were written based on the thematic map formed. After having written down the results, the findings were further analyzed in relation to Verso Food's thoughts, ways of action, and their communication strategy towards consumers. The results are also analyzed in the light of the research questions. During the process laid out above a good overall picture and understanding of the data was formed. As already mentioned before in an interview the reality is constructed together between the interviewer and the interviewee. Because of this the transcripts of the interviews also include talk of the interviewer to achieve a more comprehensive analysis, which was also suggested by Rapley (2001).

### **3.4 Reliability and validity of the research**

Reliability and validity are according to Bryman and Bell (2011) the most important criteria for evaluating business research. A study is reliable if repeating the study, the same results are gotten (Bryman & Bell, 2011). Reliability is according to Bryman and Bell (2011) more related to quantitative research and to the question whether the measures are consistent. External reliability is according to Bryman and Bell (2011) difficult to achieve in a qualitative research since no social setting and circumstances stay the same. Reliability parallels with dependability which considers the question if the results are likely to be found at other times (Bryman & Bell, 2011). The main types of validity are internal validity and external validity (Bryman & Bell, 2011). External validity is concerned with the fact that to which degree and whether the research can be generalized across social settings and beyond the context in which it was studied (Bryman & Bell, 2011). Internal validity is concerned with whether there is a causal relationship between the researcher's observations and developed theoretical ideas (Bryman & Bell, 2011). Credibility refers to the questions about how believable the results are, and it parallels with internal validity (Bryman & Bell, 2011).

This research was conducted by following a research plan which was approved by the thesis supervisor and the contact person of Verso Food Ltd. The scope of this research was narrowed down to fit the master's Thesis format and the timeline available but still be useful for Verso Food Ltd and deliver meaningful results. This research states that it is not generalizable to all sustainability communication and consumers but only referable to the specific social media posts studied, the consumers interviewed, and the citizens who answered the quantitative survey.

Research validity can be partly determined based on the foundation of the existing literature (Bryman & Bell, 2011). The review of previous literature was done until the point of saturation and even further to check that a research gap really exists. And even then, the literature review was done researching articles around the topic of this specific research. An understanding of the existing research regarding surrounding topics was formed. The context factors of this

research were also considered and therefore chapter two dedicated sections based on previous literature by going deeper into sustainability communication, passive and proactive sustainability communication, the purpose of sustainability communication, and social media communication. The discussion section is not as closely related to previous research as it could be but keeping in mind that there is a research gap concerning this topic, an extremely close relation to the literature could not have been possible. In that section contributions of this study to the research concerning consumers response to sustainability communication related to environmental issues were outlined and the main findings of gained understanding and learning were underlined.

The data collection process and justifications for the choices made has been outlined above in the Methodology chapter, making the whole process transparent and replicable. The data collection was planned to have quantitative and qualitative data to make the results more reliable and to be able to cross-check them. So, triangulations strategy used in this research also results in greater confidence in the findings. In the quantitative data analysis cross tabulation was used to analyze the data. The sample size altogether was reasonable (n=1 000) and the restricted sample size which was closely analyzed in this research was comprehensive enough (n = 210). As the sample size is quite comprehensive the data is rich in heterogenic consumers and their demographical factors and furthermore contributes to the reliability of the quantitative results of this research. The quantitative survey also contained open ended questions which allowed the interviewees to be more specific in their answers if they felt it was necessary. In the qualitative data analysis, the guidelines by Braun and Clark (2006) for a thematic analysis were followed closely. Since the number of the interviews was small (six interviews) no generalizable conclusions can be drawn, but rough guidelines can still be stated. No conclusions are drawn from a single participant's answers, but each of the main findings relies on multiple perspectives. A carefully prepared interview guide was used in the interviews, just as suggested by Kallio et al. (2016).

Dubois and Gadde (2002) emphasize that the researcher must make the difficult choice of what to include in the final results of the research, as not to end up laying out too vague and confusing theory by describing too much with too little focus. Thus, in this paper when presenting the results only the most remarkable results are presented in aiming to form a clear view of how sustainability communication should be formed and what kind of sustainability communication is best perceived. Easton (2010) warned that when researching complex systems, making causal misattributions on light grounds should be avoided, since multiple overlapping mechanisms might be affecting the system and leading to the same results. In the results of this research not a single attribute of sustainability communication on social media is claimed to be better received by consumers than the other or in general lead to a certain result.

## **4 EMPIRICAL FINDINGS**

### **4.1 Quantitative results**

This section presents the quantitative findings of the study based on the food survey conducted by Verso Food through Bilendi Finland's online panel. The survey included altogether 5 background questions and 16 questions regarding the respondent's diet, day-to-day food preparation and habits, and restaurant dining. This research only focuses on 3 background questions and 6 questions of the actual survey since only those are relevant to this research and the topic at hand. The last question of the included 6 questions is question 16 from which this research focuses on 9/10 follow-up questions. The actual survey questions used in this research can be found in Appendix A. In this survey the original numbers of the questions are used therefore the numbers do not always be in sequence. Based on the background information asked none of the respondents can be identified from the survey. Most of the survey questions were closed-ended questions and additionally some had also an option to answer "other". The answer options in the follow-up questions of question 16 were: I don't know, fully disagree, somewhat disagree, neutral, somewhat agree, and fully agree. Firstly, the backgrounds and eating habits of the respondents are discussed. Secondly, how the respondents felt about statements related to the discussion around different diets are examined.

#### **4.1.1 Backgrounds of the respondents**

From three background questions included in this research table 1 lays out two of them. Firstly, the distribution between genders is presented. But more importantly table 1 shows the size of the group "I live with my spouse and child(ren)" compared to the total respondents of the survey. In this research the focus is on the restricted group of "I live with my spouse and child(ren)" and the answers are compared to the total respondents for getting an outlook on how the restricted group differs from the total respondents. The background

questions of the situation in life of the respondent is referred to whether he/she lived with his/her parents, alone, with his/her spouse, with his/her spouse and child(ren), alone with his/her child(ren), or another situation.

When looking at the total respondents of the survey 50,2% of them were male and 48,8% were female. In the group "I live with my spouse and child(ren)" the gender distribution is not quite as even but quite close. 54,4% of the respondents included in the group "I live with my spouse and child(ren)" were male and 45,6% were female. A total of 210 respondents of the survey clicked the box for "I live with my spouse and child(ren)" which is 21% of the total number of respondents (N=1'000). In this research the focus is mostly on this restricted group of respondents but presents answers of the total respondents for the sense of comparing and having a reference point.

TABLE 1: Situation in life & gender

	<b>I live with my spouse and child(ren)</b>		<b>Total</b>	
	Count	Column N %	Count	Column N %
Male	114	54,4%	502	50,2%
Female	96	45,6%	498	49,8%
Total	210	100,0%	1000	100,0%

The third background question was asking the respondent's age. Below in table 2 the age distribution of the respondents of both groups is presented. The biggest age group is 65+ years which is 18,8% of the total amount of the respondents. The limited group of "I live with my spouse and child(ren)" does not include any answers from respondents' group over 65+ years. This is no surprise since usually at the age of 65+ any possible children would probably live on their own at that point.

TABLE 2: Breakdown by age

	<b>I live with my spouse and child(ren)</b>		<b>Total</b>	
	Count	Column N %	Count	Column N %
< 25 years	9	4,3%	109	10,8%
25-34 years	64	30,4%	177	17,7%
35-44 years	67	31,9%	177	17,7%
45-54 years	47	22,2%	168	16,8%
55-64 years	24	11,2%	182	18,2%
65+ years	0	0,0%	188	18,8%
Total	210	100,0%	1000	100,0%

When observing the total respondents, the following groups are with the highest percentages: 55-64 years with a percentage of 18,2%, 25-43 years and 35-44 years with both the same percentage of 17,7%. The biggest age groups of the respondents who live with their spouse and child(ren) are: 35-44 years with the

percentage of 31,9%, 25-34 years with the percentage of 30,4%, and lastly 45-54 years with the percentage of 22,2%. It is also no surprise that the two biggest age groups in the restricted group of "I live with my spouse and child(ren) are 35-44 and 25-34. These age groups are also more likely to have a rather young child. Of the mentioned age groups, the group consisting of 25-34-year-old Finnish people is in the top 3 groups when looking at both respondent groups, the total respondents and the restricted group of "I live with my spouse and child(ren) which is also approximately the age group on which the qualitative data of this research is focused on.

#### 4.1.2 Eating habits of the respondents

Question 3 asked the respondents whether they follow a specific diet concerning vegetarian food. 79,0% of the total respondents answered that they do not follow any specific diet concerning vegetarian food i.e. are following a mixed diet. This answer was also the most common in the restricted group of respondents "I live with my spouse and child(ren) with a percentage of 77,5%. When examining table 3 below it can be stated that the distribution of answers and percentages are more or less the same regarding the percentages of each answer option in the total respondents and in the restricted group of respondents.

TABLE 3: Distribution of diets within the respondents

	<b>I live with my spouse and child(ren)</b>		<b>Total</b>	
	<b>Count</b>	<b>Column N %</b>	<b>Count</b>	<b>Column N %</b>
I don't follow any specific vegetarian diet nor do I try to follow any specific vegetarian diet	163	77,5%	790	79,0%
I eat primarily vegetarian-oriented but meat from time to time	27	12,8%	107	10,7%
I eat vegetarian-oriented and fish but not meat (pesco-vegetarist)	8	3,8%	33	3,3%
I don't eat meat or fish but i eat eggs and milk products (lakto-ovo-vegetarist)	3	1,4%	15	1,5%
I don't eat anything of animal origin (vegan)	4	1,8%	16	1,6%
Another diet, what kind?	6	2,8%	39	3,9%
<b>Total</b>	<b>210</b>	<b>100,0%</b>	<b>1000</b>	<b>100,0%</b>

12,8% of the total respondents and 10,7% of the restricted group of respondents eat primarily vegetarian oriented but meat from time to time. This is



a group of people who could easily be influenced to change their diet to entirely plant-based. Both respondent groups have a little less than 2% of respondents who are full on vegan and do not eat anything of animal origin. The open-ended answer was selected by 3,9% of total respondents and by 2,8% of the restricted group of respondents. In the open-ended answer of "Another diet, what kind?" respondents mentioned diets such as non-dairy, gluten free, ketogenic, and fodmap (soothing diet for an irritated bowel). Respondents also mentioned different kind of allergies which limit their diet (for example intolerance for grain or seafood) and the fact that they do not eat red meat.

In question 4 the respondents were asked whether they would be interested in changing their diet towards more plant-based with the answering scale of: I don't know, extremely unlikely, quite unlikely, quite likely, and extremely likely the answer of quite likely got the most selected in both of the groups of respondents. Below in table 4 the distribution of the answers is represented. 32,6% of the total respondents are quite likely willing to change their diet towards a more plant-based one. 33,3% of the respondents included in the group of "I live with my spouse and child(ren)" are quite likely willing to change their diet towards a more plant-based one. In both respondent groups the answer of "quite unlikely" got only approximately 5% less answers than "quite likely". "Quite unlikely" is the second popular answer with the percentages of 27,6% in total respondents and 28,7% regarding the respondents of "I live with my spouse and child(ren)". The answer of "I don't know" was chosen by approximately of 10% in both respondent groups. Also, approximately 10% of both respondent groups are "extremely likely" willing to change their diet towards a more plant based one. So, approximately 40% of both respondent groups are "quite likely" or "extremely likely" willing to change their diet towards more plant-based, approximately 50% of both respondent groups are "quite unlikely" or "extremely unlikely" willing to change their diet towards more plant-based, and as already mentioned 10% of both respondent groups don't know whether they would be willing to change their diet towards more plant-based. There are no mayor differences regarding the answers of this question between the total respondents and between the respondent group of "I live with my spouse and child(ren)".

TABLE 4: Willingness to change one's diet towards more plant-based

	<b>I live with my spouse and child(ren)</b>		<b>Total</b>	
	Count	Column N %	Count	Column N %
I don't know	21	10,4%	77	7,8%
Extremely unlikely	34	16,5%	216	21,9%
Quite unlikely	59	28,7%	272	27,6%
Quite likely	69	33,3%	320	32,6%
Extremely likely	23	11,1%	99	10,1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>207</b>	<b>100,0%</b>	<b>984</b>	<b>100,0%</b>

From approximately 40% of the respondents of both respondent groups who answered in question 4 that they would be interested in changing their diet towards a more plant-based one (either “quite likely” or “extremely likely”) were asked in question 5 to choose up to three main reasons for why they would be willing to do so. The answer choices and distribution of answers are laid out below in table 5. The three main reasons for wanting to change one’s own diet towards a more plant-based one are in both respondent groups the same: desire to eat healthier, making ecological choices (e.g. climate reasons), making ethical choices (e.g. animal welfare). The desire to eat healthier is clearly the number one reason to eat more plant-based with a percentage of 77,5% regarding total respondents and 71,5% regarding the restricted respondent group.

TABLE 5: Reasons to change one’s diet towards more plant-based

	<b>I live with my spouse and child(ren)</b>		<b>Total</b>	
	<b>Count</b>	<b>Column N %</b>	<b>Count</b>	<b>Column N %</b>
Desire to eat healthier	66	71,5%	325	77,5%
A recommendation from a close friend or from a intimate circle	5	5,5%	19	4,4%
Interest in trying new vegetarian foods and ingredients	32	35,0%	135	32,2%
Better taste of vegetarian food	10	11,0%	28	6,7%
Interest to increase seasonal eating of vegetables	28	30,5%	123	29,3%
Making ecological choices (e.g. Climate reasons)	33	36,0%	183	43,6%
Making ethical choices (e.g. Animal welfare)	35	37,7%	155	36,9%
Economic reasons (e.g. Lower price of vegetables or vegetarian food)	14	15,4%	64	15,2%
Good experiences with vegetarian food in restaurants	8	9,0%	23	5,5%
Somethign else, what?	3	3,2%	14	3,3%
Nothing / I can't say	0	0,0%	3	0,7%
<b>Total</b>	<b>92</b>	<b>100,0%</b>	<b>420</b>	<b>100,0%</b>

In second place when observing the total respondents comes the willingness to make ecological choices with the percentage of 43,6% and in third place the willingness to make ethical choices with the percentage of 36,9%. In the re-

stricted group of “I live with my spouse and child(ren)” the reasons selected in second and third place are the other way around: willingness to make ethical choices in second place with a percentage of 37,7% and the willingness to make ecological choices in third place with the percentage of 36,0%. A recommendation from a friend as a reason to change one’s diet towards more plant based was selected in both respondent groups approximately by 5%. A little over 30% in both respondent groups would be willing to change their diet towards more plant based because of curiosity to try new vegetarian dishes and ingredients. Only approximately 15% of both respondent groups are not willing to change their diet towards more plant-based because of economic reasons. 11% of families think that vegetarian food tastes better. 6,7% of the total respondents agree. Reasons that were not included in the given ones could be told in the second last choice of “Something else, what?”. Reasons given were mainly the well-being of one’s stomach, wanting to lose weight, and not liking the taste of meat. Yet again there are no mayor differences when examining this question between the answers of the total respondents and between the respondent group of “I live with my spouse and child(ren).

Question 6 asked the respondents to select up to three main challenges or obstacles (if any) they experience in changing their diet towards a more plant based one. This question was asked from all respondents. The answers are displayed below in table 6. A little less under 20% of the respondents in both respondent groups (total and “I live with my spouse and child(ren)”) do not experience any obstacles in changing their diet towards a more plant-based one. This question revealed that both groups of respondents find that the biggest challenge in changing their diet towards more plant based is the familiar taste of meat with percentages of 35,0% in total respondents and 30,08% in the restricted respondent group. The second biggest obstacle in both groups of respondents is the belief that only eating plant-based is not nutritious enough with the percentages of 31,4% by the total respondents and 25,3% by the restricted group of respondents. The third biggest challenge experienced by the respondents of both groups is the opinion of the huge amount of effort the change in one’s diet would require with the percentages of 22,6% within total respondents and 25,1% in the restricted group of respondents. The biggest difference regarding the percentage between both respondent groups is the opinion of vegetarian food not tasting good. This challenge was selected by 20,9 of the group of “I live with my spouse and child(ren)” and by 15,7% by the total respondents. A little less than 10% of both respondent groups do not like the structure of vegetarian foods. Social reasons as a challenge were selected by 5,8% of the total respondents and 7,6% of the restricted respondent group. In the open-ended answer “something else, what?” respondents mentioned the importance of domesticity, deliciousness of cheese, pickiness regarding food, one’s spouse, laziness, the fact that humans are born to be carnivores, and the facts that they do not care and do not see any reasons why they should change their diet towards more plant-based.

TABLE 6: Challenges experienced in changing one's diet towards more plant-based

	<b>I live with my spouse and child(ren)</b>		<b>Total</b>	
	Count	Column N %	Count	Column N %
Price of vegetables or plant-based products	42	20,2%	205	20,8%
I don't know how to cook vegetarian food	34	16,2%	136	13,8%
Switching to a more plant-based diet requires a lot of effort (e.g. Finding suitable recipes)	52	25,1%	223	22,6%
My diet prevents it (e.g. Stomach does not tolerate legumes, gluten free)	16	7,7%	79	8,1%
Vegetarian dishes do not taste good	43	20,9%	155	15,7%
The composition / structure of vegetarian foods is not good	20	9,7%	92	9,4%
Only eating plant-based is not nutritious enough	52	25,3%	309	31,4%
Social reasons / pressures (e.g. My family or intimate circle does not accept vegetarianism)	16	7,6%	57	5,8%
I'm used to the taste of meat dishes	64	30,8%	345	35,0%
Something else, what?	12	5,7%	59	6,0%
I do not experience any challenges or obstacles in making my diet more plant-based	37	18,1%	193	19,7%
<b>Total</b>	<b>207</b>	<b>100,0%</b>	<b>984</b>	<b>100,0%</b>

Question 8 of the food survey was scouting challenges in everyday cooking experienced by the respondents. Everyday cooking in this context means food (lunch or dinner) prepared at home for oneself or possibly for the family or other members of the household. The answers are presented below in table 7. It is no surprise that the most respondents from the restricted group of "I live with my spouse and child(ren)" selected "everyday urgency/lack of time" as the biggest challenge in everyday cooking since family life is known to be hectic with the percentage of 24,3%. "Everyday urgency/lack of time" was only selected by 13,7% of the total respondents. Also, the challenge of "family eating habits" differs with no surprise between the total respondents and the restricted

respondent group. Family eating habits as a challenge is selected by 23,5% of the “I live with my spouse and child(ren)” respondent group whereas it was selected only by 10,3% of the total respondents. The challenge of inventing or finding everyday food recipes was found as an obstacle in both respondent groups: 14,9% by total respondents and 18,3% by the restricted respondent group. Both respondent groups believed they don’t experience any special challenges in everyday cooking: total respondents by 33,9% and “I live with my spouse and child(ren)” by 21,2%. The respondents mentioned on top of given challenges obstacles such as food waste, succumbing to ready meals, economic limitations, lack of equipment, and illnesses.

TABLE 7: Challenges in everyday cooking

	<b>I live with my spouse and child(ren)</b>		<b>Total</b>	
	Count	Column N %	Count	Column N %
Inventing or finding everyday food recipies	38	18,3%	149	14,9%
Everyday urgency / lack of time	51	24,3%	137	13,7%
I'm not interested in cooking	23	10,8%	165	16,5%
Family eating habits (e.g. Pickiness, the same food is not suitable for everyone)	49	23,5%	103	10,3%
The difficulty of cooking alone for one person	2	0,9%	93	9,3%
Somethign else, what?	2	0,9%	14	1,4%
I don't experience any special challenges in everyday cooking	45	21,2%	339	33,9%
<b>Total</b>	<b>210</b>	<b>100,0%</b>	<b>1000</b>	<b>100,0%</b>

### 4.1.3 Discussion around different diets

This section takes a closer look on the discussion around different diets from various perspectives. Answers of the total respondents and the restricted respondent group of “I live with my spouse and child(ren) are compared. The answering scale in all questions is: I don’t know, fully disagree, somewhat disagree, neutral, somewhat agree, and fully agree. This section and all tables below are concerning 9/10 follow-up questions of question 16 of the food survey.

Table 8 below demonstrates the answers to the first follow-up to question 16, and furthermore whether the respondents, both total and in the restricted group, think that the discussion around different diets related to vegetarianism and meat eating is culminated. From the distribution of the selected answers in

table 8, it can be stated that there is more pressure on the side that the discussion has reached an acute stage. When observing the total respondents, the most selected answer was “somewhat agree” with a percentage of 39,6%. The second most selected answer was “fully agree” with a percentage of 24,0%. “Neutral” was selected by 21,7% of the total respondents. Answers “I don’t know”, “fully disagree”, and “somewhat disagree” have all an answering percentage just below 10%, so only a poor number of the total respondents feel that the discussion around diets related to vegetarianism and meat eating has not been culminated.

TABLE 8: The discussion around diets related to vegetarianism and meat eating is culminated

	<b>I live with my spouse and child(ren)</b>		<b>Total</b>	
	<b>Count</b>	<b>Column N %</b>	<b>Count</b>	<b>Column N %</b>
I don't know	8	3,7%	58	5,8%
Fully disagree	3	1,4%	16	1,6%
Somewhat disagree	18	8,6%	72	7,2%
Neutral	50	23,9%	217	21,7%
Somewhat agree	96	45,8%	396	39,6%
Fully agree	35	16,6%	240	24,0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>210</b>	<b>100,0%</b>	<b>1000</b>	<b>100,0%</b>

The restricted group of respondents “I live with my spouse and child(ren)” does not have as strong of an opinion as the total respondents. The most selected answer in the restricted group is the same as when observing the total respondents, “somewhat agree” with the percentage of 45,8%. This is almost half of all the respondents in this specific group. The second most selected answer is not “fully agree” as in the total column but “neutral” with the percentage of 23,9%. “Fully agree” has only been selected by 16,6% of the respondents “I live with my spouse and child(ren)”. Answers “I don’t know”, “fully disagree”, and “somewhat disagree” have all an answering percentage just below 10% almost identically like when observing the total respondents, so only a poor number of the respondents of “I live with my spouse and child(ren)” feel that the discussion around diets related to vegetarianism and meat eating has not been culminated.

The second follow-up of question 16 asked whether the respondent is stressed out about the discussion around different diets. Table 9 below shows that respondents of both groups are rather not stressed out about the discussion concerning different diets. The highest percentages regarding both respondent columns can be found on the row of “fully disagree” with almost 30% in both columns. 29,7% of the total respondents and 29,1% of the restricted group of “I live with my spouse and child(ren)” fully disagree on the fact that the discussion around different diets stresses them out. The second and third popular answers are within the total respondents “neutral” with the percentage of 22,8% and “somewhat disagree” with the percentage of 21,9%. Within the respondents

of “I live with my spouse and child(ren)” “somewhat disagree” is the second most popular answer selected with 27,0%. Furthermore, the third most popular answer within the restricted group of respondents is “neutral” with the percentage of 19,7%. Only around 2-3% do not know if the discussion around diets stresses them out. 6,2% of total respondents and 2,5% of the respondents who live with their spouse and child(ren) experience that the discussion around different diets stresses them out. There are no mayor differences between the total respondents and with those who live with their spouse and child(ren).

TABLE 9: The discussion around diets stresses me out

	<b>I live with my spouse and child(ren)</b>		<b>Total</b>	
	Count	Column N %	Count	Column N %
I don't know	5	2,3%	29	2,9%
Fully disagree	61	29,1%	297	29,7%
Somewhat disagree	57	27,0%	219	21,9%
Neutral	41	19,7%	228	22,8%
Somewhat agree	41	19,4%	164	16,4%
Fully agree	5	2,5%	62	6,2%
<b>Total</b>	<b>210</b>	<b>100,0%</b>	<b>1000</b>	<b>100,0%</b>

TABLE 10: My eating habits or diet have sometimes been criticized

	<b>I live with my spouse and child(ren)</b>		<b>Total</b>	
	Count	Column N %	Count	Column N %
I don't know	8	3,7%	47	4,7%
Fully disagree	59	28,2%	302	30,2%
Somewhat disagree	38	18,0%	178	17,8%
Neutral	42	20,0%	190	19,0%
Somewhat agree	44	20,8%	199	19,9%
Fully agree	20	9,3%	84	8,4%
<b>Total</b>	<b>210</b>	<b>100,0%</b>	<b>1000</b>	<b>100,0%</b>

The third follow-up of question 16 asks whether the respondent has experienced criticism towards his/her eating habits or diet. The distribution of the answers can be seen in table 10 above. Approximately 30% of both respondent groups do not have experienced any criticism towards their diet or eating habits. In other words, they “fully disagree” with the given statement with the percentages of 30,2% by the total respondents and 28,2% by respondents who live with their spouse and child(ren). Only a little less than 10% of both respondent groups fully agree and have experienced criticism against their eating habits or diet: 8,4% by total respondents and 9,3% by respondents who live with their spouse and child(ren). The distribution of answers between “somewhat disagree” and “somewhat agree” is quite even in both respondent groups. The Distribution of answers regarding the total respondents goes from 17,8% “somewhat disagree”, to 19,0% “neutral”, and 19,9% “somewhat agree”. The distribu-

tion of answers regarding the restricted respondent group goes from 18,0% “somewhat disagree”, to 20,0% “neutral”, and 20,8% “somewhat agree”. There are no mayor differences between the total respondents and with those who live with their spouse and child(ren).

TABLE 11: There are social or societal pressures to reducing meat consumption

	<b>I live with my spouse and child(ren)</b>		<b>Total</b>	
	Count	Column N %	Count	Column N %
I don't know	6	2,8%	51	5,1%
Fully disagree	11	5,1%	53	5,3%
Somewhat disagree	26	12,3%	85	8,5%
Neutral	54	25,7%	233	23,3%
Somewhat agree	85	40,5%	402	40,2%
Fully agree	28	13,5%	177	17,7%
<b>Total</b>	<b>210</b>	<b>100,0%</b>	<b>1000</b>	<b>100,0%</b>

The fourth follow-up to question 16 states that there are social or societal pressures to reducing meat consumption. Above in table 11 it can clearly be seen that approximately 40% of both respondent groups (40,2% of total respondents and 40,05% by the restricted respondent group) “somewhat agree” with this statement. Fairly over 50% in both respondent groups rather agree (somewhat or fully) with the statement: 57,9% by the total respondents and 54% by the respondents who are included in the restricted respondent group of “I live with my spouse and child(ren). But still, approximately 25% of both respondent groups feel neutral about the statement (25,7% of total respondents and 23,3% by the restricted respondent group). Only roughly 13-18% disagree (“somewhat” or “fully”) with the statement that there are social or societal pressures to reducing meat consumption. There are no mayor differences between the total respondents and with those who live with their spouse and child(ren).

TABLE 12: Different self-selected (e.g. value-based) diets should be more tolerated

	<b>I live with my spouse and child(ren)</b>		<b>Total</b>	
	Count	Column N %	Count	Column N %
I don't know	10	4,6%	64	6,4%
Fully disagree	7	3,3%	25	2,5%
Somewhat disagree	7	3,3%	37	3,7%
Neutral	63	29,8%	295	29,5%
Somewhat agree	76	36,1%	351	35,1%
Fully agree	48	22,9%	228	22,8%
<b>Total</b>	<b>210</b>	<b>100,0%</b>	<b>1000</b>	<b>100,0%</b>

Table 12 above displays the distribution of answers regarding the statement that different self-selected diets should be more tolerated. The results suggest that mainly the respondents agree with the statement since 57,9% of the



total respondents (35,1% + 22,8%) and 59% (36,1% + 22,9%) of the respondents who live with their spouse and child(ren) either “somewhat agree” or “fully agree” with the statement that different self-selected (e.g. value based) diets should be more tolerated. Approximately 30% in both respondent groups feel neutral about the statement, and only a little less under 10% “somewhat disagree” or “fully disagree” with the statement. There are no mayor differences between the total respondents and with those who live with their spouse and child(ren).

TABLE 13: More information, discussion, and transparency would be needed for the public debate around different diets

	<b>I live with my spouse and child(ren)</b>		<b>Total</b>	
	Count	Column N %	Count	Column N %
I don't know	11	5,2%	68	6,8%
Fully disagree	8	3,8%	33	3,3%
Somewhat disagree	9	4,3%	56	5,6%
Neutral	68	32,1%	313	31,3%
Somewhat agree	72	34,1%	349	34,9%
Fully agree	43	20,5%	180	18,0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>210</b>	<b>100,0%</b>	<b>1000</b>	<b>100,0%</b>

Table 13 lays out the answers regarding the sixth follow up to question 16 regarding claiming that more information, discussion, and transparency would be needed for the public debate around different diets. As in table 12, the distribution of answer in table 13 follows the same kind of pattern. Only about 8-9% of both respondent groups feel like more information, discussion, and transparency is not needed around the public discussion around different diets. A good 30% feel neutral about this statement. The majority of the respondents feel like more information, discussion, and transparency would be needed for the public debate around different diets. This is concluded from the fact that 52,9% (34,9% + 18,0%) of the total respondents and 54,6% (34,1% + 20,5%) of the respondents who live with their spouse and child(ren) either “somewhat agree” or “fully agree” with the statement. There are no mayor differences between the total respondents and with those who live with their spouse and child(ren).

The seventh follow-up to question 16 is displayed in table 14 below which states that Finns should eat less meat. Yet again approximately 30% (27,7% of total respondents and 30,1% of the respondents included in the restricted group) of the respondents feel neutral about whether Finns should eat less meat. This time approximately 40% of the respondents of both groups rather agree with the statement (39,8% of the total respondents and 43,1% of the restricted respondent group) that Finns should eat less meat. 28,7% of the total respondents and 22,2% of the respondents who live with their spouse and child(ren) feel like Finns should not decrease their meat consumption, so they either “fully disagree” or “somewhat disagree”. There are no mayor differences between the total respondents and with those who live with their spouse and child(ren).

TABLE 14: Finns should eat less meat

	<b>I live with my spouse and child(ren)</b>		<b>Total</b>	
	Count	Column N %	Count	Column N %
I don't know	10	4,6%	39	3,9%
Fully disagree	23	10,9%	147	14,7%
Somewhat disagree	24	11,3%	140	14,0%
Neutral	63	30,1%	277	27,7%
Somewhat agree	48	22,6%	230	23,0%
Fully agree	43	20,5%	168	16,8%
<b>Total</b>	<b>210</b>	<b>100,0%</b>	<b>1000</b>	<b>100,0%</b>

The same kind of pattern of answers as in the previous tables can be acknowledged in the distribution of answers in table 15 below. Although respondents rather think that Finns should eat less meat, they strongly feel like eating meat is being judged. 60,3% (31,5% + 28,8%) of the total respondents and 57,2% (33,5% + 23,7%) of the respondents who live with their spouse and child(ren) feel like meat consumption is being condemned too much nowadays. Approximately 20% of both respondent groups feel neutral about the statement. Approximately 20% of both respondent groups feel like meat consumption is not being judged too much nowadays. Yet again there are no mayor differences between the total respondents and with those who live with their spouse and child(ren).

TABLE 15: Meat eating and consumption is being condemned too much nowadays

	<b>I live with my spouse and child(ren)</b>		<b>Total</b>	
	Count	Column N %	Count	Column N %
I don't know	4	1,9%	25	2,5%
Fully disagree	18	8,4%	77	7,7%
Somewhat disagree	25	11,7%	93	9,3%
Neutral	44	20,8%	202	20,2%
Somewhat agree	70	33,5%	315	31,5%
Fully agree	50	23,7%	288	28,8%
<b>Total</b>	<b>210</b>	<b>100,0%</b>	<b>1000</b>	<b>100,0%</b>

Table 16 below displays the distribution of answers to the statement that those who follow only a plant-based diet i.e. are vegans have to justify their eating habits. Interestingly, although only 1,6% of the total respondents of this entire food survey followed a vegan diet (table 3), but 35,6% (26,0% + 9,6%) think that vegans must justify their eating habits. 1,8% of the respondents who lived with their spouse and child(ren) followed a vegan diet, and 35,5% (28,1% + 7,4%) think that vegans need to justify their eating habits. Furthermore, because of the small number of vegans within the total respondents it is no surprise that

by the highest individual percentage of 27,9% respondents the option of “neutral” was selected for this statement. Approximately 30% in both respondent groups “somewhat” or “fully disagree” with the fact that vegans do not need to justify their eating habits. But still, approximately 35% of both respondent groups feel like vegans have to justify their eating habits.

TABLE 16: Those who follow only a plant-based diet have to justify their eating habits

	I live with my spouse and child(ren)		Total	
	Count	Column N %	Count	Column N %
I don't know	12	5,6%	75	7,5%
Fully disagree	22	10,3%	109	10,9%
Somewhat disagree	47	22,2%	181	18,1%
Neutral	56	26,4%	279	27,9%
Somewhat agree	59	28,1%	260	26,0%
Fully agree	16	7,4%	96	9,6%
Total	210	100,0%	1000	100,0%

## 4.2 Qualitative results

This section presents the qualitative findings about the responses of individual consumers, more specifically parents, to environmental sustainability related communication on social media. The interviews included 5 themes including topics eating habits, social media, preparing questions for analyzing social media posts, social media posts and their analyzation, and antithesis. When analyzing environmental sustainability related social media posts of plant-based food brands, the brands in question were however not revealed to the interviewees since previous perceptions of a product or brand critically influence the responses (Arias-Bolzmann et al., 2000). The original interview guide can be found in Appendix B and the translated interview guide can be found in Appendix C.

Firstly, some background information is discussed including living situation, gender, age, and social media usage of the interviewees. Secondly, eating habits of the interviewees and identified reasons and challenges for changing one's diet toward more plant-based are discussed. Thirdly, the six social media posts of plant-based food brands and the interviewees' photo elicitation analyzation is presented based on the four themes identified from the thematic analysis.

### 4.2.1 Backgrounds of the interviewees

Six interviews were conducted in total from which three of the interviews were held with a male interviewee, and three with a female interviewee. This is approximately in line with the respondents of the total of the original quantitative

data. All interviewees were between 26-36 years which is a little off on both ends compared to the age scale used in the quantitative survey (which was 25-34 years). This can be explained by the difficulty during COVID-19 to find respondents who have a young child under 3 years. The interviewees represent couples who have a child under three years of age. So, the situation in life of the interviewees is the same as within the restricted group of respondents "I live with my spouse and child(ren) in the quantitative food survey. There were no other background demands than the three mentioned above. None of the interviewees can be identified from these findings.

Consumers read and predispose themselves to content on social media that they are interested in and they have the power to do so. This was acknowledged by the interviewees and it was stated that because of the power of consumers the information and communication should come from a source where you would have to read or listen to it, for example the ten o'clock news. None of the interviewees like any plant-based food brand on Facebook and only one interviewee followed a plant-based food brands (Beanit) account on Instagram. Facebook was not popular in any way among the interviewees. Some of the interviewees followed social media influencers (mainly fitness related) on Instagram from where they would get recipes and new ideas how to eat healthier. According to the interviewees sometimes the influencers also included plant-based meat substitutes in their food recipes. Some of the interviewees follow restaurants or well-known cooks on Instagram. For recipes the interviewees would use Google to get more inspiration or they would watch cooking clips for example Tastemade's.

#### **4.2.2 Eating habits of the interviewees**

Four out of six interviewees are following mixed diets and meat plays a big role in their day-to-day eating habits. Meat was found every day on the interviewee's plate in one way or another. Those interviewees who followed a mixed diet ate vegetarian food maximum once a week at the most and once every three weeks the least. Usually eating vegetarian food was occurring by accident or the dish in question did not contain meat to begin with (e.g. spinach soup or avocado pasta). The biggest reason why the interviewees were eating meat was the force of habit which would go as far as their own childhood. During the pregnancy of one interviewee she had to switch to oat-based products since her stomach didn't digest dairy. After her pregnancy she switched partly back to dairy products. Especially cheese is considered as something that could not be replaced.

One of the interviewees eats primarily plant-based but from time to time meat and even then, he prefers fish. Meat is usually present in restaurants but with a maximum of one time per week and sometimes cheese as a bread topping at breakfast. He finds vegetarian/vegan food sometimes tastier and states that the fact that his wife is vegan affects his diet strongly as well. One of the interviewees eats entirely plant-based, so she was following a vegan diet mainly because of the love for animals and their wellbeing. She mentioned that from

time to time she might out of courtesy eat milk products or eggs if someone else had cooked. From the interviews it could be identified that the interviewees were all more or less satisfied to the part they were themselves taking in living sustainably, especially related to their food consumption.

The biggest reason why the interviewees would be willing to change their diet towards more plant based would be the desire to eat healthier. Also, ecological and ethical reasons were mentioned and stated as highly important. For some interviewees the wellbeing of themselves and the world are at priority when consuming food. It was also mentioned that when eating vegetarian food, one would feel lighter. Friends were mentioned as influencers when eating vegetarian food. According to the interviewees their vegan/vegetarian friends have given them information on the matter, tasty recipes and were making it super easy to taste plant-based food with them.

There were numerous challenges mentioned of which probably the most difficult one, is the unsuitability of leguminous plants for the bowel of which two interviewees were suffering. Interestingly, in two out of three couples the women blamed their husband's stubbornness for their diet containing meat and the men blamed their wife's digestive issues for not eating vegetarian food. Family was mentioned as an obstacle to eat more vegetarian/vegan food. According to the interviewees their families did not understand why to give up eating meat and they were also having trouble to understand the concept of plant-based food. This had according to the interviewees to do with growing up on a farm, lack of knowledge, and strongly rooted habits. The interviewee who followed a vegan diet, mentioned that she would not want to be extremely strict with her diet (concerning milk products and eggs) only to make her life easier since she mentioned that people would often comment and react rather negatively on her eating habits.

*"Other people stressing about your diet is extremely exhausting especially when you are yourself fine with guiding, informing, and even with bringing your own food with you."*

Laziness, lack of time, and lack of resources to put effort in making changes towards a more plant-based diet were also mentioned by the tired parents of a small child. It was mentioned by some of the interviewees that they did not know in general how to make and more specifically how to spice vegetarian food. One interviewee said that she categorizes meat substitutes with ready meals and has the presumption that meat substitutes are heavily processed which is not at all appealing to her. It was quite divided whether the interviewees liked the taste of vegetarian food, some preferred the taste of meat substitutes some preferred the taste of meat. But it was stated by one interviewee that everything is just a question of what one is used to. Also, there is a belief under some interviewees that one would need to eat more vegetarian food in order to feel full when eating meat dishes. By the interviewee who followed a vegan/mainly vegetarian diet economic reasons were also mentioned as a challenge since some vegan products are extremely expensive. But other than that,

no challenges were seen, and it was stated that if some nutrients are not gotten from the followed diet it can be taken in a form of a pill.

### 4.2.3 Environmental sustainability related social media communication

The social media posts analyzed are presented in this section without any cover-ups to maintain the quality of the picture. The pictures used in the semi-structured interviews including the cover-ups of the brand in question can be found in Appendix B the original interview guide. For repetition, the brand which posted the specific post, all products with identifiable packaging, or other identifiable features were covered up in order to prevent prejudice opinions to affect how the social media post is received.

TABLE 17: Summary of the key points of each theme

Theme	Key points
1) Form of address	Aiming for "we are all in this together" - mentality
	Highlighting domesticity
	Aiming for authentic communication
	Using inviting vocabulary
	Focusing on visualization
2) Accuracy	Having a wide outlook
	Basing communication on facts
	The importance of references
3) Antithesis	Avoiding culminating facts
	Avoiding putting people with different diets against each other
	Aiming for neutral comparison
4) "Not in my backyard"	Aiming the communication at individuals
	Highlighting the difference one person can make when eating sustainably

Based on the thematic analysis process four different themes were identified: 1) form of address, 2) accuracy, 3) antithesis, and 4) "Not in my backyard". Above in table 17 a summary of the key points regarding each theme is listed. The first theme form of address is based on the "we are all in this together" - mentality. On top of this by parents nicely perceived features of environmental sustainability related communication were the highlighting of domesticity and if the communication is authentic. Form of address includes also features such as inviting vocabulary and visual features of the communication. The second theme accuracy highlights facts and references used in sustainability communication. A wide outlook on matters is also emphasized. The third theme antithesis emphasized that when using fact in sustainability communication they should not be culminated. This theme stresses that the focus should be on neutral comparison of for example products and not pit people with different diets

against each other. The fourth and last theme highlights that communication should be pointed at individuals in order to prevent the “not in my backyard” - phenomena to arise. Emphasis should put on the impact even just one consumer can make by making more sustainable choices is the future. The following sections will discuss each theme in detail and go through the most important points of each theme.

#### 4.2.3.1 Form of address

The first theme, form of address, refers to features that make the consumers feel the brand is talking directly to them and are trying to influence the emotional side of consumers. Also, the fact that whether the communication and the information given is relatable to the consumer is important. These are details that possibly can make an impact in the consumers mind to increase or decrease the willingness to consume more plant-based food. Firstly, ending the sustainability message with a question mark was nicely perceived by all interviewees, for example in picture 1 and 5. It was perceived as warm and with a kind of “we are all in this together”-mentality. Also, in picture 3 consumers are asked if there is a fact, they would like information on. Picture 5 was liked because it involved the consumer in joining the challenge of meatless October.

Secondly, demanding too much too quick is something that might create alienation among consumers. For example, in picture 1 Beanit’s challenge to only eat meat on Saturdays was perceived by some interviewees as too much. They felt that the post would have been more inviting if it would challenge consumers to start eating vegetarian food once a week on Saturdays. On the contrary, some interviewees thought that Beanit’s suggestion to eat meat only on Saturdays was inventive and amusing based on the word play of “lihalauantai” which goes in the same category as “pitsaperjantai” or “mässymaanantai”. This was a really relatable feature to use in communication. Picture 5 also had a nice caption with the message that by preferring vegetarian dishes one can make an impact on various matters. It was gently put and did not refer to drastic measures.

“I like this concept, it’s really funny! At first it seems like the brand is trying to encourage to eat meat, but the hidden message is that you don’t have to eat it every day.”

Thirdly, making presumptions when posting environmental sustainability related messages is twofold. In picture 1 Beanit assumes that the consumers reached by this post know that eating meat is bad. But whether it is bad for the consumer, for the environment, or for animal welfare is not specified in the post. Consumers are interested in different things. This can either leave the consumer high and dry in need for more information, or the consumer might even be flattered for Beanit to assume that the consumers know this kind of consequences. Also, if things are expressed too complicated can it create confusion among consumers which is according to the interviewees not effective sustainability

communication. For some interviewees the first paragraph of picture 1 was phrased too complicated. But mainly Picture 1 was also perceived as simple and clear.

Fourthly, one topic that came up frequently in the interviews was the importance of domesticity. Whereas for example soy and other meat substitutes that were transported from afar were immediately not tempting to the interviewees. This was especially visible when analyzing picture 1 and 2. Picture 1 refers to Finnish people and how they can reduce the consumption of meat. This was perceived nicely. But in picture 2 the whole post is about promoting soy products which cannot be produced in Finland. In the other pictures it was unclear whether it was a Finnish product/brand in questions which was of course also affected by the fact that the pictures were shown to the interviewees as anonymous. The interviewees mentioned that they gladly support Finnish farmers. So, according to the interviewees if domesticity would be brought up in the sustainability communication of brand it would probably have a greater impact on the consumer.

Fifthly, the interviewees would prefer authentic and simple social media content which is created from a consumer's point of view who is following a mixed diet in order to make it more relatable. Picture 1 has nicely done so.

Sixthly, some words are more tempting than others. For example, in picture 2 it says that these products help the consumer to "balance their diet" and more or less everyone wants to have a balanced diet and even a balanced life. But nevertheless, picture 2 includes also the word "vegan" which was by some interviewees associated with positive thoughts and by some with negative. Positive because it was said that veganism is gentle to the environment and the whole world. And, negative since the word vegan refers to something strict and drastic. Picture 6 does not particularly have a word which raises negative



PICTURE 1 (Beanit Suomi, 2021.)



feelings but rather the whole style of the writing is provocative and aggressive according to the interviewees. On top of words and writing style, the length of the caption has a great impact. The caption of picture 6 is too long and none of the interviewees would read it if it came up on their Instagram feed.

Seventhly, the visualization of picture 4 was commented by all interviewees. The colorful packaging in picture 2 was also perceived nicely by some interviewees. The interviewees mentioned that tasty, beautiful, and visual pictures and videos have a huge effect on whether the social media post is tempting to read. After said this, picture 6 only created confusion among the interviewees.

Eighthly, drawing on upon consumers emotions through animals is perceived as shocking but yet affective as in picture 3. Approximately half of the interviewees say that picture 3 made them feel sad but in a good way because it would probably affect their willingness to decrease their meat consumption. The content of picture 6 was also perceived as highly shocking and effective for that matter, especially since it concerned the whole world.

Ninthly, the caption of picture 4 was perceived by some interviewees as quite neutral but by some interviewees as condemnatory and trying to make the consumer feel guilty. One interviewee mentioned that the caption reminded her of weight loss ideology (“have another weight loss bar it has only so little calories”) and therefore awakened negative feelings.



PICTURE 2 (VegeSun, 2016.)

#### 4.2.3.2 Accuracy

Theme two, accuracy, considers the basis behind all sustainability communication. Firstly, it is important for a brand to have wide outlook on sustainability matters. For example, it was nicely perceived that in picture 1 Beanit had considered domesticity and was not just blindly encouraging consumers to eat less meat but focusing on other possible consequences and factors concerning meat consumption. Also, picture 5 had taken the water footprint into account which surprised some of the interviewees since normally it is discussed rather in re-

gard to the textile industry. Although the interviewees responded positively to communication that spoke directly to them or in general to Finnish people, it was also mentioned as a positive thing that the perspective of picture 6 was the whole world.

“Raising awareness and spreading information is always a good thing.”

Secondly, facts were mentioned by all interviewees to be impressive and affective. The reaction to the percentages used in picture 1 was positively impressed and seemed like it got the interviewees to realize that also small steps count. But references and links to more information is needed in order to give the message more credibility and transparency. Facts also work in a choking way as in picture 3 still being perceived well among the interviewees. References are perceived by the interviewees as a positive feature of a social media posts. For example, in pictures 1,5, and 6 references existed which was noticed by the interviewees. Picture 3 was criticized by the fact that it only has information about how many animals would have been needed if the product would be meat but not specifically about the product itself.

Thirdly, picture 4 was perceived as hypocritical by some interviewees. The posted picture was not in line with the caption. The caption said “have another one, the climate won’t judge you” but in the picture was a corn on the cob which is known to cause a lot of harm to the environment.

Fourthly, information on how to eat plant-based in a diverse way while getting all the needed nutrients was an aspect that was hoped for in the communication of plant-based food brands. And not just encouraging consumers to



PICTURE 3 (Vöner, 2019.)

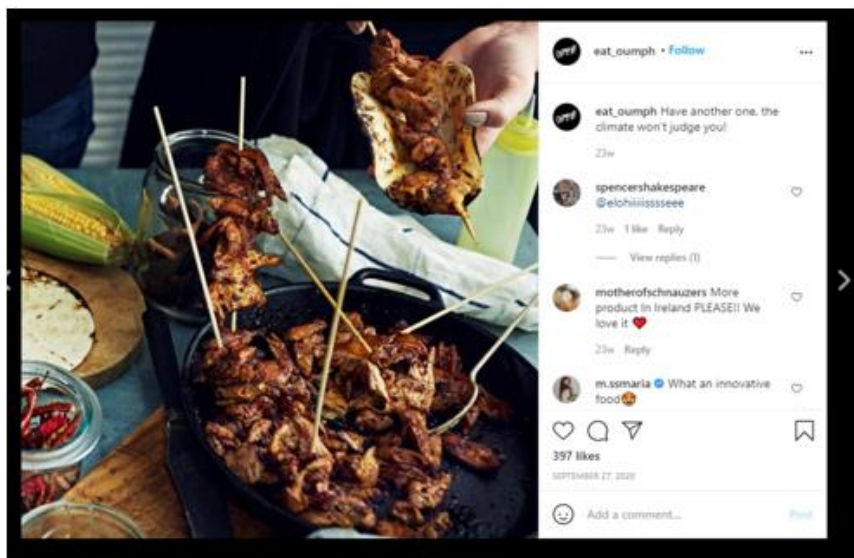
eat more plant-based but rather communicate on how. They would prefer information on different ways of using a specific product including recipes and pictures of delicious looking dishes. According to some interviewees plant-based meat substitutes have not been brought up enough. As an example, the interviewees mentioned that picture 2 is lacking practicality, since a consumer wouldn't know how to prepare soy products if she/he hasn't used them before.

#### 4.2.3.3 Antithesis

The third theme, antithesis, refers to how the information is laid out. Using antithesis in a brands sustainability communication is usually perceived as aggressive, provocative, and annoying which was pointed out by all six interviewees. Most interviewees also mentioned that other consumers express their opinion on social media posts aggressively and stubbornly without looking at the facts that clearly overthrow their point of view.

“It's always carnivores against vegans. It shouldn't be like that. Humans should not be put against each other. We should rather think about the reasons why people consume in a way that it's harmful to the environment.”

Firstly, according to the interviewees antithesis is especially negatively received when it puts consumers with different diets against one another compared to drawing a comparison between two products. Using antithesis in a way of putting down the competitor



PICTURE 4 (Oumph!, 2020.)

product is also perceived as negative. According to the interviewee's communication should rather be about highlighting the good features of the brands own products and sophisticate consumers through examples.

“Actively putting down a competitive product or brand immediately sends shivers down my spine.”

Secondly, the conversation around different diets is according to the interviewees usually negatively loaded and aggressively perceived which means that people automatically go on defense and start attacking each other with abysmal

statements such as “you eat soy and it is transported from afar” without actually having a conversation around the topic and taking into consideration various point of views. Also, according to the interviewee’s justifications are usually not included and the message usually is that “meat is bad eat this instead”. But yet again as already mentioned the consumer has the power to alter oneself to the content, he/she wishes to perceive, so the comments of a social media post that include provocative antithesis are often be left unread by the interviewees.

However, picture 5 was best received by all respondents and contained antithesis. Post 5 compares the nutritional content of beef and a plant-based substitute but does not make the consumer feel guilty when buying the plant-based option but rather just presents facts about both options and leaves the consumer to make the decision on their own. Some interviewees mentioned that it is important for them to know that they make their decisions themselves. So thirdly, according to the interviews to force something on consumers creates immediately irritation. Since post 5 was conducted in a neutral way, it did not create alienation or irritation among the interviewees.

“Post number 5 is in my opinion successfully implemented.”

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PICTURE 5 (Gold and Green Foods, 2020.)

Picture 5 did not include culmination of facts but just neutral information according to the interviewees. It lets the consumer make their own choice of what to consume with the information he/she has gotten. Comparison is according to the interviewees important, and since it takes effort to do it on one’s own, it is easy when a brand hands over neutral information through social

media. Fourthly, it was also pointed out by some interviewees that they feel like nowadays facts are being denied. Picture 1 analyzed in the interviews compared small and big actions that could be taken by consumers which was nicely perceived since it was also neutrally done.

“Neutral comparison which displays facts is highly welcome and effective!”

In conclusion, if antithesis is done in a neutral way including justification with references, leaving the decision to the consumer it is considered a good and affective way of spreading information and making an impact.

#### 4.2.3.4 “Not in my backyard”

The fourth theme, “not in my backyard” refers to the phenomena of opposition arguments and protectionist arguments for preventing projects, for example building of treatment centers or halfway houses, from being sited near one’s own home (Dear, 1992). All the interviewees felt like



PICTURE 6 (Oatly, 2020.)

they do not need themselves more informative communication on plant-based food and environmental impacts of the food industry. Either because they felt that they know enough, or they were just not interested. But nevertheless, the interviewees thought that the environmental impact of food is an important topic which should be discussed more in public. Overall, the emissions from cattle but also introducing plant-based substitutes should be covered. The interviewees were aware that by consuming food in an unsustainable way the whole earth could be destroyed since it has such far-reaching impacts. It was stated that it is an important matter in terms of our planet’s future how 7 billion people consume food all the while knowing that if everyone consumed how Finnish people do, the planet would be in big trouble.

“It’s sad that many people don’t even care. They buy foreign meat from the grocery store and don’t even realize how much antibiotics it contains. So, communication on food consumption regarding its impacts is definitely still needed!”

The interviewees mentioned that more information on the matter should rather be focused at their families and the so called “sworn carnivores” than consumers such as themselves.

“The information wanted to communicate to consumers should somehow be disguised in a clever way. I remember my parents reading somewhere that there is the same amount of sugar in a banana as in a doughnut and stating that of course they would start eating doughnuts instead of bananas. A kind of clever enlightenment on plant-based food so that even a sworn carnivore would think that this product is worth testing!”

The interviewees also justified their eating habits to themselves by stating that living sustainably is not all about the diet but also about how you consume other things such as clothes or how you travel.

All matters related to sustainable eating is constant enlightenment, there is no right answer!

Also, it was mentioned that the environmental point of view with vegan food is getting tiring. The environment is an important factor when it comes to food, but palm oil is usually not included when examining the environmental effects of vegan food. So, the interviewees wished for a fresh angle on the matter. It was also stated by one interviewee that information on how much the consumption of meat has increased over the years would be interesting and give consumers some perspective since according to him many people think that meat consumption has always been this high.

All in all it was stated by the interviewees themselves that changing ones diet is a long and slow process and it would take rather a series of many rightly conducted social media post and information from other sources as well than just one separate social media post or a separate piece of information in order to make a difference in once eating habits. It was also mentioned that the willingness to change one’s diet towards more plant-based needs to thrive within themselves in order to make it a permanent and successful change. But on the bright side it was also acknowledged by the interviewees that although not on single social media post analyzed in this research would change their willingness to eat more plant-based it would probably stick in the back of their minds and after receiving more and repeatedly information on the matter it could have an effect later in time.

### **4.3 Comparison between both data sets**

Both quantitative and qualitative data sets have a similar sample. Regarding the quantitative data set, this section will focus only on the data based on the restricted group of respondents of “I live with my spouse and child(ren)”. Both samples consist of approximately 50% of male respondents/interviewees and 50% of female respondents/interviewees. The focus is on families in both data

sets whereas in the qualitative data all interviewees have one child under the age of three. In the quantitative data it is unknown how many children and of what age the respondents have. The quantitative data focuses on those interviewees who live with their spouse and children from all age groups whereas the interviewees of the qualitative data are between ages of 26-36.

Both data sets included respondents/interviewees with various diets. The most common diet followed was a mixed diet with a percentage of 77,5%. Within the interviewees four out of six followed a mixed diet. 12,8% of the survey respondents ate primarily vegetarian oriented but meat from time to time. One of the interviewees could have been categorized in this group. 1,8% of the survey respondents and one interviewee followed a vegan diet.

Approximately 45% of the respondents answered in the quantitative survey that they would be willing to change their diet towards more plant based, 45% were not willing to change their diet towards more plant-based, and 10% did not know. According to the interviews all interviewees, except the one following already a 100% plant-based diet, answered carefully that they would be willing to change their diet a little bit towards more plant based. Only one interviewee would be willing to start eating entirely plant-based. Four out of six interviewees were willing to increase the amount of vegetarian food in their diet.

Based on both data sets the main reason for wanting to change one's diet toward more plant-based is the desire to eat healthier. According to the quantitative survey it was 71,5% of the respondents. Based on the interviews and the answers of those interviewees who were following a mixed diet the desire to eat healthier was also the main reason to change one's diet toward more plant-based. Ethical choices (e.g. animal welfare) was the second most popular answer with the percentage of 37,7% and the third most popular reason was ecological choices (e.g. climate reasons) with the percentage of 36,0% for changing one's diet toward more plant based. Ethical and ecological choices were also mentioned several times by the interviewees. Friends and family were also mentioned in the interviews as a factor for eating more vegetarian food, which was selected by 5,5% of the respondents in the food survey. On top of the mentioned ones feeling better and lighter in one's own body was mentioned as one reason to eat more vegetarian food in the interviews. Supporting this, in the quantitative survey in the open-ended answer respondents mentioned reasons such as the well-being of one's stomach.

The biggest challenges and obstacles identified in shifting towards a more plant-based diet were according to the quantitative survey the rooted habit of eating meat dishes and the taste of them by 30,8%, the belief that vegetarian dishes are not nutritious enough by 25,3%, and that switching one's diet takes a lot of effort by 25,1%. Approximately 20% did not experience any obstacles. The rooted habit to eating meat dishes was also the first obstacle mentioned by five out of six interviewees and it came up several times within the interviews. During the interviews the belief that vegetarian food is not nutritious enough came up by a few of the interviewees. Laziness was mentioned as one obstacle in both data sets. In both data sets the ability to digest leguminous plants was men-

tioned: by 7,7% of the survey respondents and by two interviewees. Economic reasons as a challenge was only mentioned by one interviewee but by 20,2% of the survey respondents. Also, when asking about challenges experienced in everyday cooking everyday urgency and lack of time was clearly the biggest obstacle which was chosen by 24,3% of the respondents. This came up also by the interviewees who followed a mixed diet stating that being a tired parent one easily yields to cooking familiar and therefore easy dishes especially since it was mentioned by some of the interviewees that they do not know how to make and more specifically how to spice vegetarian food. "I do not know how to cook vegetarian food" was selected by 16,2% of the survey respondents.

Approximately 60% of the survey respondents felt like that the discussion around different diets has culminated which can also be stated based on the qualitative interviews. The interviewees all mentioned how many information sources discussing different diets and their pros and cons do not actually base these as facts presented statements on anything. The tone of these statements is also usually stated to be aggressive and provocative. Many of the interviewees mentioned that they often do not even read comments on social media posts related to different diets because they anticipate the abysmal comments of other consumers irritating them. Although the respondents feel like the discussion around different diets is culminated only about 20% feel stressed about the discussion. From the interviews it could be concluded that the interviewees are also rather not stressed about the discussion since on social media they can themselves decide to what kind of content they are exposed and according to the interviews it seemed like the close circle they were surrounded with followed the same kind of diet as themselves.

Almost 50% of the survey respondents have not been criticized because of their eating habits. Approximately 30% have experienced criticism based on their eating habits. Based on the interviews the interviewees eating habits have been criticized through advertisement and sustainability communication from plant-based food brands. It was stated by the interviewees that the sustainability communication by some brands is oppressive and is making the consumers feel guilty about eating meat. Approximately 50% of the survey respondents feel like different self-selected and value-based diets should be tolerated. Less than 10% feel like they should not be more tolerated. When examining the interviews all interviewees valued domesticity, those four out of six interviewees who followed a mixed diet claimed they would always buy domestic meat, and two out of the four grew up on a farm with cattle as family members. So, based on the interviews a mixed diet is also a value-based diet valuing domesticity. At least 50% of the interviewees were also examined from every social media posts the Domesticity. Approximately 35% feel like vegans need to justify their eating habits and approximately 25% think they do not need to. Based on the interviews the interviewee who followed a vegan diet supported the quantitative result and stated that she has had to justify her diet to others. But during the interviews it could also be noticed that the interviewees who followed a mixed



diet needed to justify their eating habits as well by pointing out that they would be sustainable in other areas in their life although they eat meat.

It seems to be a vicious cycle since over 50% of the survey respondents feel like there is societal pressures to reducing meat consumption. But also, proper 40% of the survey respondents feel like Finnish people, assumingly including themselves, should eat less meat. Only about 20% of the respondents feel the opposite way. Over 55% of the survey respondents feel like meat consumption is being condemned too much nowadays. Also, by themselves since they think that all Finnish people should eat less meat. So, the survey revealed that although Finnish people have mostly not been criticized about their eating habits, there is still experienced a societal pressure of reducing meat consumption and they themselves feel like Finnish people should eat less meat. From the survey answers, it seems like there is the same phenomenon to be seen as in the interviews where the respondents do think better choices concerning food needs to be taken but at the same time do not think it is concerning themselves.

Approximately 55% of the survey respondents feel like more information, discussion, and transparency is needed for the public debate on different diets. Only approximately 8% feel the opposite way. During the interviews all interviewees believed that more information is needed and especially comparison between products is needed. But although they felt like more information is needed, they felt like that they themselves know enough and that the information should rather be targeted at their family members and specifically towards the "sworn carnivores". The interviewees are of the opinion that transparency is vital. This could be based on the fact that when analyzing the social media posts references were perceived positively and when they were missing it affected negatively how the interviewees responded to the post.

The quantitative and qualitative data set do not have any major differences in the answers of the respondents and interviewees and even support each other's findings. As a conclusion after pursuing triangulation and cross-checking the data it can be stated that these results are reliable within these specific circumstances, respondents, interviewees, and social media posts analyzed.

## 5 DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS

### 5.1 The results in the light of the research questions

This section discusses the results in light of the research questions. The main research question was concerned about what kind of environmental sustainability related communication on social media increases the willingness of parents to consume more plant-based food. Based on the interviews it needs to be stated that a single social media post does not make a difference in consumers eating habits. But sustainability communication needs to be continuous and coherent in order to make a difference in consumers' eating habits. As Du et al. (2010) state that responsible companies should communicate and engage regularly with their stakeholders, it also came up during the interviews that too little communication is irritating to parents. And as mentioned by Ihlen et al. (2011) not communicating on sustainability issues at all, or communicating fragmentarily or electedly, is also a form of communication. According to the quantitative survey approximately 55% of the restricted group of respondents feel like more information, discussion, and transparency is needed for the public debate around different diets. Kim (2017) has also found that when a company adopts a proactive approach to sustainability issues does it stir positive attitudes and feelings among consumers towards the company and adds that it might also lead to positive electronic word-of mouth. By communicating regularly it also affects how familiar the brand is to consumers. Lange and Dahlén (2003) state that communicative advantages are achieved by brand familiarity and furthermore Campbell and Keller (2003) support that finding by claiming themselves that communication effectiveness is higher if the brand is more familiar so the effectiveness of communication is directly related to familiarity of the brand. And as the research question wanted to know what kind of sustainability communication increases the willingness to consume more plant-based food, it is stated by Chou et al. (2020) that in general sustainable behavior can be encouraged by green communication and marketing.

According to Castelló et al. (2013) communication includes on top of brands sharing information also that consumers can participate in the discussion and share their thoughts. Previous literature has brought up the problem of companies been communicating *to* consumers rather than communicating *with* them (Crane & Livesey, 2003). This is an aspect that came up during the interviews and is related to the first theme “form of address” of the qualitative data. As already mentioned in the introduction chapter of this research, if the consumer feels like the message is not meant for her/him, she/he does not pay attention to the social media post in this case and fails to get addressed. The interviewees stated that sustainability communication which engages the consumer by asking questions or encouraging them for example to participate in experiments such as meatless October is a warm form of communication.

On top of the fact that sustainability communication needs to be continuous to make a difference in consumers eating habits, according to Türkel et al. (2016) the communication needs to be also detailed, carefully planned, and affectively managed. Bailey et al. (2016) support the findings of this research by stating that some consumers are more receptive to sustainability communication than others. They also state that companies should tailor their sustainability message so that they would target one specific consumer group and hopefully one that is highly receptive to sustainability communication (Bailey et al., 2016). The results and suggested actions concerning sustainability communication are concerning the consumer group of parents. This is supported by previous research stating that eating habits are transferred by parents to their offspring (Waldkirch et al., 2004). Based on the results of this research communication that is authentic, relatable, linguistically and visually pleasing and is radiating “we are all in this together”- mentality is most likely to increase parents’ willingness to consume food more plant-based in the future.

Based on the food survey it can be stated that transparency is wanted by the respondents as well as by the interviewees based on the qualitative data set. When analyzing the social media posts during the interviews doubt could be identified regarding posts that did not have references to back up its claims. Social media posts which included references were immediately more believable and better perceived by parents. Not being transparent and leaving out critical information (and not backing it up with references) is a way that brands are being unethical (Shin & Ki, 2019). Attitudes towards a brand is highly affected by consumers’ beliefs of whether the brand is reliable, safe, and honest (Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001). It is also stated by Türkel et al. (2016) that gaining consumers trust is critical in a fast-changing environment since trust leads to a strong relationship and brand loyalty which furthermore is a way of maximizing the returns of a company.

The role of antithesis in sustainability communication is clearly visible in the results of this research, confirming that it raises contradictive feelings among the consumers. On the one hand, antithesis is perceived as provocative, annoying, and aggressive. Specifically, when comparing different diets or putting people against each other. But on the other hand, a kind of neutral antithe-

sis or even more accurately said comparison between products is highly welcomed among consumers and perceived as helpful information. Highlighting the fact that it needs to be carried out in a way which leaves the consumer to make the decision on his/her own. As already mentioned, 55% of the respondents long for more discussion and information on matters regarding different diets.

The sub research question focuses on the reasons for and barriers against consuming plant-based food experienced by parents. Although this research was narrowed down to studying environmental sustainability related social media posts, based on the results of this research the main reason for wanting to consume more plant-based food according to both data sets is the desire to eat healthier which was selected by 71,5% of the respondents in the food survey. Wanting to make ethical choices was selected by 37,7% and wanting to make ecological choices was selected by 36,0% of the respondents as reasons to consume food more plant-based. Ethical and ecological aspects were also mentioned as reasons to eat more plant-based in the interviews. Based on this research consumers want authentic and relatable content on social media for it to be interesting. Coelho et al. (2016) support this by stating that according to their research consumers prefer content related to their everyday lives.

The biggest obstacle based according to the food survey was the familiar taste of meat which was selected by 30,08% of the restricted respondent group. this was also supported by the interviews, where interviewees who follow a mixed diet mentioned that meat dishes go way back to their childhood. Second biggest obstacle according to the food survey was the belief that eating plant-based is not nutritious enough which was selected by 25,3% by the restricted group of respondents. The third biggest obstacle concerning the consumption of plant-based food is the effort one needs to put to it which was selected as an answer by 25,1% of the restricted group of respondents. All of the mentioned obstacles which came up in the quantitative food survey were also discussed in the qualitative interviews. The force of habit was mentioned several times by five of six interviewees for the biggest reason why they consume meat products. As this research was narrowed down to examining parents, a hectic lifestyle and therefore lack of time and tiredness were also mentioned during the interviews as obstacles for consuming more plant-based food. Some interviewees were also in disbelief about meat being more nutritious than a plant-based meat substitute and mentioned that some of their acquaintances think that way as well. According to Chang et al. (2015) consumers take information more seriously when it resonates with the concerns of consumers.

## 5.2 The results in relation to Verso Foods communication strategy

In this chapter the results of this research are discussed in relation to Verso Food's communication strategy which was gone through in the introduction chapter of this research. Verso Food states that it wants to take its place in the front row of the food revolution and normalize vegetarian food (Beanit 2020a). This research would suggest Verso Food to allocate its resources on young adults based on the fact that a critical time for establishing eating habits that can be tracked into adulthood is when the child is still in the utero, during the time of breastfeeding, and in general until the age of three years (Coulthard et al., 2010; Paroche et al., 2017; Skinner et al., 2002; Vereecken et al., 2004). This way Verso Food could really be making a greater impact which has long reaching influence.

Verso Food communicates through Facebook and Instagram to consumers so also to parents which are studied in this research (Beanit, 2020c). But based on the results of this research none of the interviewees use Facebook nowadays or are in fact fond of the particular social media platform. Even though Facebook has 2,74 billion active users (Statista, 2021), this research recommends Verso Food to allocate its resources rather on Instagram.

Domesticity is mentioned as an important theme for Verso Food in their communication strategy (Beanit, 2020a). As the results revealed domesticity is highly valued among the interviewees. So, it can be stated that concerning domesticity, Verso Foods communication strategy is in line with the results of this research. Supporting this Manrai et al. (1997) have found that mentioning the country of origin of the product affects the attitude towards the company and how the consumers responses to the communication. So, in the context of this research mentioning that a product is domestic it most likely has a positive effect to the response towards the communication.

Further themes that are important to Verso Food are delicious and versatile food and environmental friendliness (Beanit 2020a). It was mentioned by most of the interviewees that they consume food with the priority of taste. It was also stated by the interviewees that concerning social media posts the visual factors have a huge impact whether or not the post is tempting to read. And approximately 21% of the restricted group of respondents were based on the survey of the opinion that vegetarian dishes do not taste good. So, delicious as an important theme is supported by the findings of this research. Verso Food wants to emphasize taste and soul in the communication (Beanit, 2020c) which is also in line with the empirical findings of this research.

Versatile food as an important theme in the communication strategy of Verso Food is supported by the empirical findings of this research since 35% of the respondents are interested in trying new vegetarian foods and ingredients, 16,2% of the respondents don't know how to cook vegetarian food, and 18,3% find it hard to invent and find everyday food recipes. Recipes were also men-

tioned by the interviewees as pleasing social media content. So, emphasizing versatile food in Verso Food's communications strategy and providing tips and recipes would most likely be perceived as highly welcome by the consumers.

The theme of environmental friendliness is based on the empirical findings of this research a good theme to focus on. The respondents ranked ecological choices as third important factor for wanting to consume more plant-based. Environmental friendliness was also mentioned as highly important during the interviews. It is also stated by Chou et al. (2020) that consumers value environmental friendliness.

Verso Food is committed to ask questions and bring out topics for discussion (Beanit, 2020c). This is supported by the results of this research, since according to the quantitative survey since approximately 55% of the respondents think that more information, discussion, and transparency is needed for the public debate around different diets. Also previous research states that towards companies that pursue a proactive approach sustainability is shown more positive attitudes from consumers as to those companies who pursue a reactive approach (Kim, 2017).

Verso Food states that it refuses to take part in antithesis rather emphasizes factors they have in common with consumers or other brands (Beanit, 2020c). However, based on the results of this research the interviewees prefer neutral comparison between products. This research suggests based on its empirical findings that Verso Food uses comparison in its sustainability communication but does it according to other values included in their communication strategy such as friendliness, moderateness, and conciliatoriness communication (Beanit 2020c). And as Verso Food appreciates research so do parents as well, as long as references are at hand (Beanit, 2020c).

As a conclusion based on Verso Food's conception of that a too strong and aggressive sustainability communication does more harm than good, it can be stated that based on the empirical findings of this research that this research agrees with Verso Food's statement.

### **5.3 Future actions related to sustainability communication on social media**

As mentioned above in this research the aim is to affect the attitudes of parents and achieve attitudinal change and behavioral change towards wanting to consume and actually consuming more plant-based products with the means of sustainability communication. So most importantly this research encourages companies to adopt a proactive approach to sustainability issues and communication in order to create brand trust.

This research suggests on focusing on having the outlook on the future and allocate resources on communicating towards young adults in order to achieve future oriented and far reaching changes in eating habits of Finnish

consumers. As already mentioned eating habits are already established in the early childhood (Paroche et al., 2017) through getting influenced by the family home and parents (Kral & Faith, 2007; Westenhoefer, 2001).

Since communication is taken more seriously when it resonates with consumers concerns (Chang et al., 2015) this research would suggest to focus on the challenges experienced by families such as everyday urgency/lack of time which was selected by 24,3% of the restricted respondent group as the biggest challenge in everyday cooking. Or since the desire to eat healthier was the main reason to eat more plant-based which was selected by 71,5% of the restricted respondent group this research would suggest focusing on the health impacts in a company's communication as well. Based on the empirical findings of this research, this research suggests also to highlight domesticity since it is an important aspect when consuming food among parents. The importance of domesticity was highlighted in the interviews and it is also stated by Manrai et al. (1997) that perceptions of the country of origin affect the response to sustainability communication, so this research suggest to focus on highlighting domesticity if possible. All the mentioned features will most likely increase the authenticity and relatability of the sustainability communication in parents' minds and therefore be more effective.

Since question 6 from the quantitative survey revealed that the second biggest obstacle in changing one's diet towards more plant-based is the false belief that a plant-based diet is not nutritious enough, and the fact that the social media post number 5 was most liked among the interviewees since it gave accurate information about nutritional facts of meat and a plant-based substitute in an neutral form, leaving the consumer to make their own choice, this research suggests companies to continue with this kind of communication spreading information in a neutral way but still making comparisons in order to give the consumer a reference point. The qualitative findings of this research support this suggestion. This research suggests adding references always when possible since it was always positively noticed by the interviewees when references were present, and they highly affected the believability of the communication.

None of the interviewees followed a plant-based food related brand on Facebook and only one interviewee followed Beanit's account on Instagram. In the future this research would suggest focusing rather on Instagram than on Facebook in general despite Statista's statistics about their active users. Also, during the several interviews it came up that the interviewees followed influential persons or trend-setters on Instagram and would feel that information coming from them is received as more authentic.

Based on the whole data set and the identified theme of "not in my backyard" the assumption can be made that people are more likely to put effort into changing their rooted eating habits if it benefits themselves. So, this research would suggest highlighting benefits the consumer can gain when consuming more plant-based food, for example the already mentioned health impacts. Also, conducting communication where individuals' inputs are emphasized, and

their engagement is acquired is a good way to focus on so that companies would communicate *with* consumers and not *to* them.

This study suggests based on the empirical findings that companies would always use visual and tasty pictures in order to awaken interest in consumers' minds when scrolling down Instagram. Supporting this it has been found that images and videos increase likes and comments (De Vries et al., 2012; Sabate et al., 2014). Referring to emotional themes increases the stage of engagement as well according to Swani et al. (2013).

Based on the quantitative data most respondents think themselves that Finns should eat less meat but feel like meat consumption is being condemned and that there are societal pressures for reducing meat consumption. At the end most respondents still followed a mixed diet. During the interviews it was mentioned several times that more information and enlightenment on how to eat more sustainably and the on consequences if not doing so is really needed but none of the interviews meant themselves but rather the neighbor next door. In both of the data sets the phenomena of "not in my backyard" is clearly visible, this research suggests that companies would emphasize the input of individuals on increasing the environmental impact of food consumption and the industry in general. This research suggests in phrasing the communication in a way that it speaks directly to the person reading the social media post.



## 6 CONCLUSION

### 6.1 Summary of the research

This chapter offers concluding remarks about this research, highlighting the theoretical contributions and managerial implications. Limitations of the study are also discussed and on top of that suggestions for future research are presented at the end of this chapter.

It is utmost important to acknowledge the fact that consumers are individuals and respond to sustainability communication differently. For this reason, it is essentially important for plant-based food brands to know their audience so that they can communicate in the most suitable way for both parties. When composing the theoretical framework of this research by going through previous research on the topic until the point of saturation it could be confirmed that there is in fact a research gap concerning how consumers respond to environmental sustainability related communication. The need for research on the topic of how consumers respond to environmental sustainability related communication on social media led to development of the research questions of this thesis. This research aimed to find out what kind of environmental sustainability related communication on social media increases the willingness of parents to consume more plant-based food. And also, what are the reasons for and barriers against consuming plant-based food experienced by parents.

The research questions were answered by conducting a mixed method research including both quantitative and qualitative data collection methods. Quantitative data consisted of a food survey conducted by Bilendi Finland trying to find out the eating habits of Finnish people, reasons to eat more plant-based, and barriers when doing so. The qualitative data consisted of six semi-structured interviews. Photo elicitation was used in the interviews when analysing altogether six social media posts posted on Instagram and Facebook by plant-based food brands.

As a result of this study it, it was possible to get an understanding on what parents' value in sustainability communication of plant-based food brands. The

main characteristics of sustainability communication on social media that were well received by parents were domesticity, transparency, facts and neutral comparison, authenticity, and visuality. It is generally important for brands to address issues coherently and addressing the communication to a specific consumer group in order for it to be effective. Also, as a result of finding answers to the research questions, this research suggested practical recommendations for how plant-based food brands should communicate to consumers.

As mentioned above in this research the aim is to affect the attitudes of consumers and achieve behavioral change towards consuming more plant-based products with the means of sustainability communication. The research was positively received by all interviewees, agreeing that sustainability communication is important since it makes a huge impact on the environment how 7 billion people consume food. Furthermore, it seems that simply taking a moment to reflect on the topic during the interviews might have caused some positive changes among the participants towards vegetarian food.

## **6.2 Theoretical contributions and managerial implications**

This study has strengthened the understanding about how consumers, more specifically parents, perceive environmental sustainability related communication on social media and proven that many aspects affect to the response to it. This research has contributed to the understanding of what kind of environmental sustainability related communication on social media increases the willingness of parents to consume more plant-based food. And also, studied reasons for and barriers against consuming plant-based food experienced by parents. Additionally, this study has provided several practical suggestions for companies practicing sustainability communication on how sustainability communication on social media should be carried out in order to not alienate consumers.

As Bailey, Mishra, and Tiarniyu (2016) pointed out that consumers are individuals, brands should keep in mind that some consumers may be more receptive to sustainability communication than others and all consumers cannot be included in the same consumer group and cannot be therefore reached at the same time with the same communication. So, as all consumers are individuals and unique, there is no fixed way of practicing sustainability communication on social media. Rather, brands should take an allocated approach, ensuring that the communication toward a specific customer group would be effective. In an optimal situation, the food company would gain a reputation of communicating sustainability issues in an approachable way.

As much of the sustainability communication with consumers is two-way and strongly depends on the consumers, the brands should pay special attention to ways how to get consumers to interact and participate in the discussion. This can include facilitating the communication on social media between the brand and consumers, encouraging the consumers to communicate back to the

brands in order to build trust and strong relationships, framing the consumers as part of the brand. As mentioned, the communication is two-wayed and partly out of the company's hands since consumers, and what they like, comment, and share cannot be controlled. But with the company's communication and its authenticity, the brand can affect consumers word of mouth and how consumers communicate with each other about the brand in question.

Abstract contributions are also valuable in terms of sustainability communication, so engaging the employees working with communication and sustainability of a company to find their own uniform way of communicating on social media and ways how to build trust in consumers should be paid attention to in addition to the more concrete contributions. In this, training the employees in the areas of sustainability awareness, communication tools, and language parlance is recommended.

### **6.3 Limitations and suggestions for future research**

While this research has been planned and performed carefully it has certain limitations. Firstly, as the research was done for Verso Food Ltd. and the quantitative data package came as given, the quantitative data is richer in terms of the sample than the qualitative data conducted by the researcher due to better access and resources for market research.

Secondly, the Covid-19 pandemic limited the data collection slightly by not allowing face-to-face interactions. Due to this, two out of six interviews were performed remotely via Teams, marginally limiting the ability to read the body language of the interviewee. Conducting the interviews via Teams might also have made the interactions slightly more formal, since it was not possible to create a relaxed atmosphere for conversations.

Thirdly, since the interviewees were selected lastly on a voluntary basis and by convenience, the sampling process can be defined as limited. This might indicate that people participated in the interview as a favor for the researcher and not because they were especially enthusiastic about the topic at hand.

Fourthly, the time limit and COVID-19 also affected the number of the interviews, since interviewees were selected on convenience and only the interviewed consumers checked the other requirements of having a child maximum at age two, who lived with their child and spouse, and were willing to participate in this research. So, all of the results should be treated as rough guidelines rather than generalizable truths.

Fifthly, the researchers position as a student and the study being a master's thesis might have affected the level of seriousness in the answers in the conducted qualitative interviews. However, the interviewees seemed genuinely interested in the topic and looking at the length of the interviews the interviewees seemed also sufficiently engaged in the matter.

Sixthly, as a person's reactions and feelings are sometimes even difficult to explain to oneself interviewing people and asking them to explain how they feel

and why can also result in vague or even erroneous conclusions interpreted by the interviewees. However, having the interviewees reflect on their feelings and reactions on an intuitive basis and immediately report those to the interviewer was seen as valuable data and more accurate than if interviewees would have a long period of time to reflect on how they feel about an environmental related social media post. This could have led to a different set of feelings and reactions.

Lastly, the researcher has definitely affected the results of the research with personal biases and during sense making process since the results are the researcher's interpretation of the data. Kallio et al. (2016) suggested to use previous literature in aim of reducing the subjective role of the researcher which in this research has not been carried out because of the research gap related to the topic at hand. Also, recommendations on data collection and analysis were followed. Interviews were conducted according to suggestions and the iterative thematic analysis process was also followed carefully so that the richness of the data was not compromised.

This research has verified that what kind of environmental sustainability related communication on social media can increase the willingness of parents to consume more plant-based food has not been studied before. Thus, this research suggests that this very topic would be studied more thoroughly in the future since the wrong kind of communication can be fatal for a company. This research would suggest performing studies with larger sample sizes, especially concerning qualitative data, in order to yield to more depth to the results. This could result in a deeper understanding of what kind of sustainability communication is best perceived by consumers and has the greatest impact on eating habits. This research angle could also be in close association with the Finnish language studies and language expression.

How parents or even in general consumers react to environmental sustainability related social media posts could also be studied as a cross-sectional study in order to see how the reactions of consumers develop over time since the revolution of sustainable eating is at its finest at the moment. A cross-sectional study with big sample sizes would enable rich comparisons between different times. Repeating studies concerning the same topic would also at the end lead to rather generalizable results. Additionally, similar studies could be performed with a focus on B2B sustainability communication.

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## APPENDIX A SURVEY QUESTIONS

- Question 3: Do you follow any special diet concerning vegetarian food?
- Question 4: Would you be interested in changing your diet towards a more plant-based diet in the future?
- Question 5: You answered in the previous questions that you would be interested in changing your diet towards a more plant-based diet. From the list below, select up to three main reasons why you would want to change your diet towards a more plant-based diet.
- Question 6: Do you experience any challenges or obstacles in making your diet more plant-based? Choose up to three of the biggest challenges or obstacles for you.
- Question 8: Do you experience any challenges in everyday cooking (everyday cooking in this context means lunches or dinners prepared at home for yourself and possibly for the family or other members of the household)?
- Question 16, follow-up 1: The discussion around diets related to vegetarianism and meat eating has culminated - what do you think about the following statements?
- Question 16, follow-up 2: The discussion around diets stresses me out - what do you think about the following statements?
- Question 16, follow-up 3: My eating habits or diet have sometimes been criticized - what do you think about the following statements?
- Question 16, follow-up 4: There are social or societal pressures to reducing meat consumption - what do you think about the following statements?
- Question 16, follow-up 5: Different self-selected (e.g. value-based) diets should be more tolerated - what do you think about the following statements?
- Question 16, follow-up 6: More information, discussion, and transparency would be needed for the public debate around different diets - what do you think about the following statements?
- Question 16, follow-up 7: Finns should eat less meat - what do you think about the following statements?
- Question 16, follow-up 8: Meat eating and consumption is being condemned too much nowadays - what do you think about the following statements?

Question 16, follow-up 9: Those who follow only a plant-based diet have to justify their eating habits - what do you think about the following statements?

## APPENDIX B ORIGINAL INTERVIEW GUIDE

Ennen haastattelun aloittamista tämän tutkimuksen tutkimuskysymykset ja "photo elicitation"- tekniikka esiteltiin haastateltaville.

### Teema 1: Ruokailutottumukset

- Kerro omista ruokailutottumuksistasi?
- Noudatatko jotain tiettyä ruokavaliota? Kasvisruokavaliota?
- Minkälainen rooli kasvisruoalla on ruokailutottumuksissasi?
  - Kuinka usein syöt kasvisruokaa?
- Minkälainen rooli liharuoalla on sinun ruokailutottumuksissasi?
  - Kuinka usein syöt liharuokaa?
- Mitkä tekijät vaikuttavat siihen, että tulee tai ei tule valittua kasvisvaihtoehtoa?
- Mitkä tekijät vaikuttavat siihen, että tulee tai ei tule valittua lihavaihtoehtoa?
- Olisitko kiinnostunut muuttamaan ruokavaliotasi nykyistä kasvipainotteisemmaksi?
  - Miksi? Miksi et?
- Näetkö jotain haasteita kasviruokan lisäämisessä?
  - Miksi koet nämä haasteeksi?
  - Kaipaisitko enemmän informatiivista viestintää kasviruokan ravintoarvoista/terveellisyydestä/ympäristövaikutuksista sosiaalisessa mediassa?

### Teema 2: Sosiaalinen media

- Seuraatko Instagramissa jonkun kasvipohjaisen ruokabrändin tiliä? Tykkäätkö Facebookissa jonkun kasvipohjaisen ruokabrändin sivusta?
  - Jos kyllä, niin esimerkiksi mitä brändiä?
  - Miksi seuraat kyseistä tiliä Instagramissa tai tykkäät kyseisestä sivusta Facebookissa?
  - Miksi et?
    - Minkälainen viestintä saisi sinut seuraaman jonkin kasviruokabrändiä Instagramissa tai tykkäämään jonkun kasvisruokabrändin Facebook sivusta?
- Minkälainen sosiaalisen median sisältö on mieluisinta seuraamiltasi brändeiltä?

### Teema 3: Sosiaalisen median postauksien analysointia pohjustavat kysymykset

- Pidätkö tärkeänä tuoda esille ruoan ympäristövaikutuksia sosiaalisessa mediassa?
- Puhuttaessa ruoan ympäristövaikutuksista sosiaalisessa mediassa, onko viestinnässä jotain mikä on kyseenalaista tai ärsyttävää?

### Teema 4: Some postaukset ja niiden analysointi

- Mitä tunteita ja ajatuksia tämä postaus herättää?
  - Osaatko analysoida miksi tulee tällainen tunne/ajatus?
- Mihin kiinnitit ensimmäisenä huomiota? Miksi?
- Voisiko tällä postauksella olla vaikutusta positiivisesti/negatiivisesti ruokailutottumuksiisi?

### Teema 5: Vastakkainasettelu

- Miten koet liharuoan ja kasvisruoan tai lihan ja lihasubstituutin vastakkainasettelun ja vertailun sosiaalisessa mediassa? Mitä ajatuksia se herättää?

Picture 1:



(Beanit Suomi, 2021)

Picture 2:



(VegeSun, 2016)

Picture 3:



(Vöner, 2019)



Picture 4:



(Oumph!, 2020)

Picture 5:

**HYVÄÄ SINULLE JA MAAILMALLE**

**VEGE VS NAUTA**

100 g		100 g
30 g	Proteiinia	19,1 g
5,9 g	Kuitua	0 g
5,7 mg	Rautaa	1,8 mg
420 mg	Kaliumia	250 mg
0 mg	Kolesterolia	51,7 mg
137 l	Vesijalanjälki	1496,4 l

Vertailu kypsentämättömillä tuotteilla.

Lähteet:

Instagram post showing a comparison of protein and other nutrients between a vegetable-based product (left) and a meat-based product (right). The post includes a caption and several comments.

**dyer\_adrian** Good timing, my son and I have just had your "balls" for breakfast.  
21s · 2 likes · Reply

238 likes  
October 11, 2020

(Gold and Green Foods, 2020)

Picture 6:



(Oatly, 2020)

So, Earth Overshoot Day marks the date when humanity's demand for ecological resources and services exceeds what Earth can regenerate that year. And when will the 2020 overshoot day land? Well, um...it was August 22. Hopefully, that's a wake-up call which does more than make this photo work nicely with this caption. And don't feel too bad that the energy lighting your screen right now is borrowed from 2021, because scientists say we humans can do something easy to move next year's date by like 17 days, and that's to opt for plants instead of animals for nourishment—even just 50% of the time. See, animal calories take a lot more resources to produce than plant calories, which you already know if you hang around this account at all, but we think it can be good to repeat things, especially if those things will give us all more days on this planet.

Source: Earth Overshoot Day & Global Footprint Network

## APPENDIX C TRANSLATED INTERVIEW GUIDE

Before beginning the interview, the research questions of this research were presented and the photo elicitation - technique was explained to the interviewees.

### Theme 1: Eating habits

- Tell me about your eating habits?
- Are you following a specific diet? Vegetarian diet?
- What kind of role does vegetarian food have in your eating habits?
  - How often do you eat vegetarian food?
- What kind of role does meat have in your eating habits?
  - How often do you eat meat?

- Which factors affect the decision of you choosing or not choosing the vegetarian option?
- Which factors affect the decision of you choosing or not choosing the meat including option?
- Are you interested in changing your diet to more vegetarian based?
  - Why? Why not?
- Do you see challenges in increases vegetarian food in your diet?
  - Why do you consider these as challenges?
  - Are you longing for more informative communication on the nutritive values/healthiness/ environmental effects of vegetarian food on social media? And in general?

### **Theme 2: Social media**

- Do you follow a plant-based food brands account on Instagram? Do you like a plant-based food brands Facebook page?
  - If yes, can you give me an example?
  - Why do you follow that/those accounts on Instagram or why do you like that/those Facebook pages?
  - Why not?
    - What kind of communication would make you want to follow a plant-based food brand on Instagram or like a plant-based food brand Facebook page?
- What kind of social media content is the most pleasant for you?

### **Theme 3: Preparing questions for analyzing social media posts**

- Do you find it important to highlight the environmental impacts of food on social media? What about in general?
- When talking about the environmental impacts of food, is there something about the communication that is questionable or irritates you?

### **Theme 4: Social media posts and their analyzation**

- What kind of emotions or thoughts does this post awake in you?
  - Can you analyze why do you feel that way or think that way?
- What was the first thing you paid attention to? Why?
- Could the post have an effect on your eating habits?
  - What factor or feature in this post could affect positively your eating habits?
  - What factor or feature in this post could affect negatively your eating habits?

### **Theme 5: Antithesis**

- How do you experience the antithesis of meat and vegetarian substitutes or food including meat and vegetarian food in social media? What about in general? What kind of thoughts does it bring up?