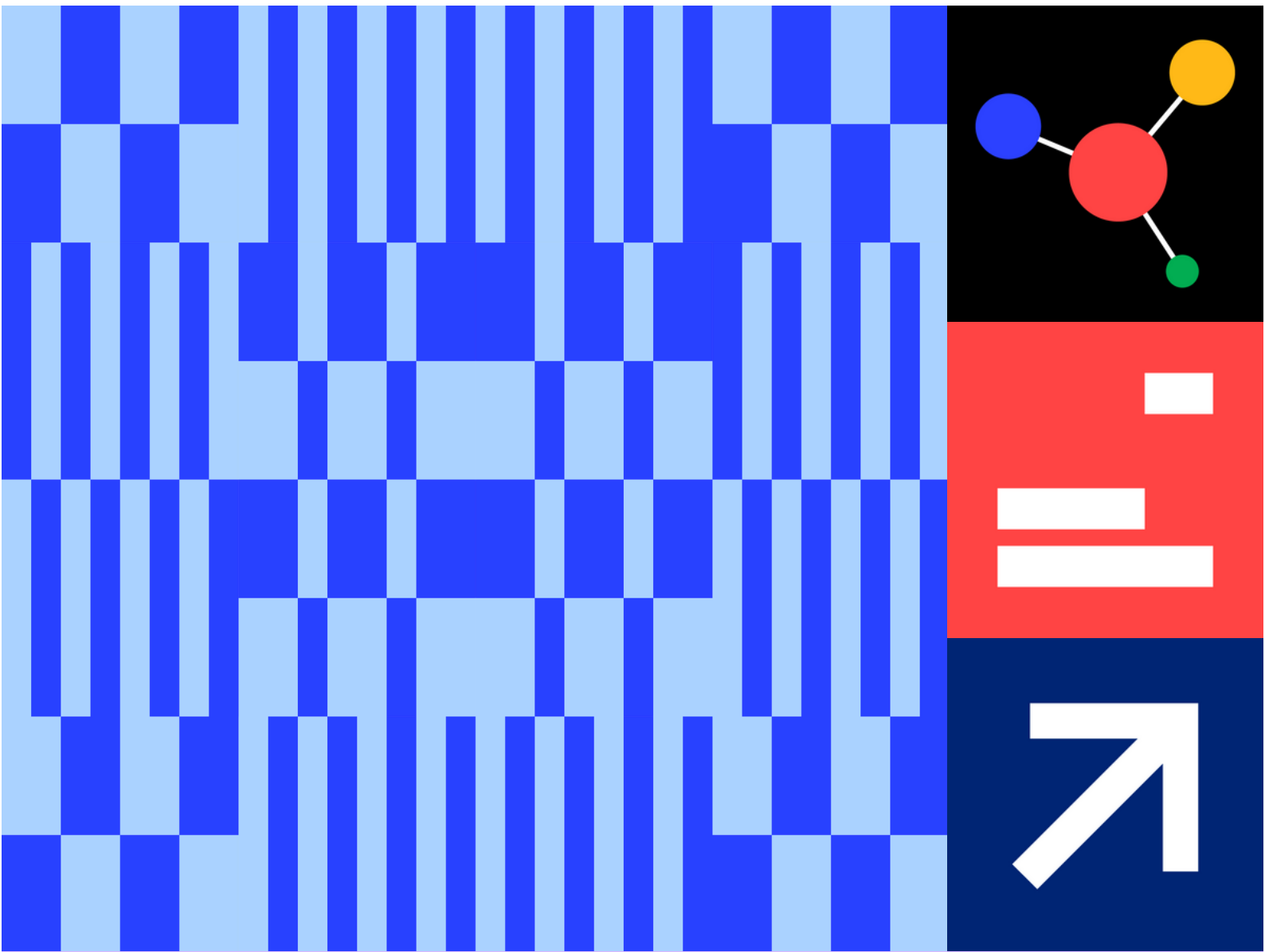


# Nexus: Society and Science



**SMK**

# NEXUS: SOCIETY & SCIENCE

1(1), 2025

**Editor in chief:** Assoc. Prof. Dr. Mehmet Recai Uygur, SMK College of Applied Sciences, Lithuania

**Co-Editor:** Fatma Sever, SMK College of Applied Sciences, Lithuania

## EDITORIAL BOARD

Prof. Andreas Ahrens (information and communication technologies, cybersecurity, *Hochschule Wismar, Germany*)

Dr. Mehmet Recai Uygur (political science, management, *SMK College of Applied Sciences, Lithuania*)

Dr. Zita Gierasimovič (health, medicine, *SMK College of Applied Sciences, Lithuania*)

Dr. Sonata Čerkauskaitė (health, medicine, *SMK College of Applied Sciences, Lithuania*)

Dr. Oleksii Mints (information technologies, management, economics, *SMK College of Applied Sciences, Lithuania*)

Dr. Jelena Zascerinska (education science, *Centre for Education and Innovation Research, Latvia*)

Dr. Olena Chykhantsova (psychology, human resources, *Chamata Laboratory of Psychology of Personality, Kostiuk Institute of Psychology of the National Academy of Educational Sciences of Ukraine*)

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>CROSS-CULTURAL DIFFERENCES IN DIGITAL MARKETING: A CASE STUDY OF PIGU.LT STRATEGIES</b> Basil Ahmed Syed, Muhammad Bilal	3–13
<b>EVOLUTION OF SOUTH KOREA’S CULTURAL PHENOMENON AND ITS INFLUENCE ON CONSUMER BEHAVIOR OUTSIDE OF KOREA</b> Fatma Sever, Victoria S. Belandria Rojas	14–29
<b>FIZINĖ NEGALIAŲ TURINČIŲ ASMENŲ PASAULĖJAUTOS VIEŠINIMAS SOCIALINIAME TINKLE „FACEBOOK”</b> PUBLICIZING THE WORLDVIEW OF PEOPLE WITH PHYSICAL DISABILITIES ON THE SOCIAL NETWORK “FACEBOOK” Evita Mėlinauskaitė, Deimantė Cibulskienė	30–39
<b>THE PERCEPTION OF E-WORD OF MOUTH ON GREENWASHING AND CUSTOMERS' PURCHASING BEHAVIOR IN LITHUANIA</b> Muhammad Bilal, Basil Ahmed Syed	40–48
<b>THE IMPACT OF INFLUENCER MARKETING ON VILNIUS CONSUMERS: EXPLORING PATHWAYS TO SUCCESS AND POTENTIAL PITFALLS FOR BUSINESSES</b> Samson Abiodun Teye, Deividas Mariač	49–65
<b>BARRIERS TO EMPLOYMENT: UNEMPLOYMENT AND LABOR MARKET INTEGRATION OF FOREIGNERS IN LITHUANIA</b> Mehmet Recai Uygur, Ihssane Kharbouch	66–85

## CROSS-CULTURAL DIFFERENCES IN DIGITAL MARKETING: A CASE STUDY OF FIGU.LT STRATEGIES

*Basil Ahmed Syed*

*Kazimieras Simonavicius University, Lithuania*

*Muhammad Bilal*

*Kazimieras Simonavicius University, Lithuania*

### Abstract

In today's digital world, marketing campaigns are increasingly digital. However, there is little attention to the influence of culture in digital marketing. Using Pigu.lt as a case study, this study examines the effectiveness of different strategies, including Social Media Advertising (SMA), User-Generated Content (UGC), Search Engine Optimisation (SEO), and Email Marketing (EM). Using a cross-sectional survey of 266 participants, the study found that social media advertisement and UGC were the most effective across all the Baltic countries, driven by mutual values, trust in references of others, and the demand for practical content. Cultural dimensions, i.e., Uncertainty avoidance, collectivism, restraint, and long-term orientation, were found that these aspects have the greatest impact on consumer preferences or likings. SEO is a modern strategy which had more effect, especially where localisation was weak, while email marketing was less favourite or less liked a strategy due to digital fatigue. The study concludes that culturally adaptive strategies are essential for digital marketing success. It recommends that Pigu.lt should focus on community-based campaigns to strengthen brand trust and cultural connection.

**Keywords:** Cross-cultural marketing, Digital strategy, Baltic consumers, Hofstede dimensions, User-generated content

### INTRODUCTION

**Research Topicality.** Culture has become an important determinant in cross-border marketing communication in today's digital economy. However, despite the processes of globalization and seemingly the homogenization of online consumer environments, studies indicate that cultural values are becoming effective disruptors of consumer behavior over the web (De Mooij & Hofstede, 2010; de Mooij, 2019). Research shows that almost three-quarters of consumers worldwide incline towards marketing messages that are created in accordance with their cultural standards and lingo (CSA Research, 2020). This proves the insufficiency of one-size-fits-all approaches. The Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia case is especially interesting. Their close geographical proximity has caused their post-Soviet experiences to develop into different national identities, with different levels of collectivism, uncertainty avoidance, and restraint (Žemojtel-Piotrowska & Piotrowski, 2023).

**Research Problem.** The majority of study research concerning cross-cultural digital marketing concentrates on big multinational companies or Western economies (Busca & Bertrandias, 2020; Bowman, 2021; Matosas-López, 2021; UAB "Pigu", 2025), leaving small regional firms, such as Pigu.lt, a prominent e-commerce platform in the Baltic region, unexplored. The studies depict the universal applicability of digital marketing, but their effectiveness is determined by the culturally based interpretation of trust, community, and style of communication.

**The aim of the research.** This study brings out the issue of national culture in affecting the effectiveness of digital marketing strategies within a culturally heterogeneous but digitally advanced area, closing the gap in the conceptual and practical sense involving global marketing theory and regional consumer reality.

**The research methodology.** The study identifies how the culture dimensions of Hofstede, especially the uncertainty avoidance, collectivism, restraint, and the long-term orientation, impact the effectiveness of the digital marketing approaches of Pigu.lt. Using a quantitative cross-

sectional survey of 266 respondents in the Baltic States, the study uses descriptive statistical analysis to correlate cultural preferences with consumer reaction to social media advertising, user-generated content, search engine optimisation, and email marketing.

**The research results.** The study found that social media marketing is digital marketing strategy for Pigu.lt, particularly in Estonia (70%) and Latvia (66.3%). Similarly, user-generated content produced favorable results in Lithuania (52.8%) and Estonia (58.8%), although it is less effective in Latvia where the respondents incline towards formalized forms of communication. Comparatively, Search Engine Optimisation is merely moderately effective, and email marketing to a large extent was disliked. Other major cultural dimensions included collectivism, uncertainty avoidance, long-term orientation and restraint, which influenced the consumer inclination towards peer-based, predictable and modest marketing (de Mooij, 2019; Wąsowicz-Zaborek, 2020).

**Originality/Value of the article.** The study focuses on a localised e-commerce site operating in a context that is more culturally diverse than the global enterprises that the existing body of literature is mostly concerned with. Its findings also remind us that there should be culturally adaptable digital solutions even between countries that are geographically close, like the Baltic States (Okazaki & Taylor, 2013). Through the examination of the interrelation of the cultural dimensions presented by Hofstede and the effects of digital marketing, the study also provides new findings, especially among the small and medium-sized businesses (SMEs). The findings enable some practical suggestions to e-commerce websites like Pigu.lt to enhance their activities in respect to more realistic, culturally correspondent, hence building the confidence and interaction of consumers. By doing this, the current article not only enables the connection of theoretical frameworks with the practical issues of business necessities but also sets the basis for further investigations concerning culturally-based digital marketing strategies within the multicultural territories (Żemojtel-Piotrowska & Piotrowski, 2023).

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Theoretical Framework

Hofstede's cultural dimensions provide a theoretical framework for the in-depth examination of cultural distinctions across countries, a vital element for customising online marketing strategies in Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia. According to the theory, the behaviour of people is influenced by their cultural values, which are expressed in six major dimensions in which they are power distance, individualism versus collectivism, masculinity versus femininity, uncertainty avoidance, long-term orientation, and indulgence versus restraint (Hofstede, 2011). This study adds to the framework an additional dimension of The Culture Factor Group (2024) that includes the seventh dimension, which is motivation towards achievement and success, expanding the analytical range to assess the dynamic in the Baltic market.

These cultural dimensions are connected critically in the theoretical application of this study in relation to the variability of consumer response to digital marketing. As an example, it is evident that the power distance and individualism scores were low in all three countries, which suggests that marketing efforts need to focus on independence and equal participation (The Culture Factor Group, 2025). This is due to the high uncertainty avoidance dimension, which implies that the consumers will respond more positively to the campaigns that emphasize guarantees, reliability of products and transparent policies. Besides, the scores of restraint are high, which means that there is a cultural inclination towards self-control and humbleness, and, consequently, the promotion material must avoid explicitly hedonistic appeals.

The framework is useful in that it has a diagnostic capability, whereby the study in question reverse-engineers' cultural drivers that drive consumer behaviour in reaction to certain marketing strategies. The study hopes to provide the actionable information on the maximisation of marketing efforts through the grounding of campaign design in measurable cultural values. However, the model of Hofstede has been criticized as being steady and having a Western-biased approach (Soares et al., 2007; Ailland & Hähnel, 2006; Ansah, 2015; Lindholm, 2022; Darley et al., 2013), which highlights the need to contextualize the model to the socio-historical peculiarities of the Baltic countries (Żemojtel-Piotrowska & Piotrowski, 2023).

### **Empirical Review**

Existing studies in the field of international marketing tend to point to the strong impact of cultural aspects on digital consumer behaviour and brand perception (Żemojtel-Piotrowska & Piotrowski, 2023; Wařowicz-Zaborek, 2020). The model proposed by Hofstede is still at the core of analyzing the need to change marketing strategies to meet the values of the society. However, most empirical focus is on multinational corporations like McDonald's and Volkswagen (Craig & Douglas, 2006; Okazaki & Mueller, 2007), which results in the lack of attention to regional digital platforms, including Pigu.lt, in particular. This gap is especially high in the culturally specific Baltic area, where cross-national digital consumer tastes are being established by intra-regional minor differences. Research like de Mooij (2019) and Gao (2023) highlights the importance of cultural flexibility, and it largely focuses on the Western or Chinese market, thus avoiding smaller and high-context European e-commerce ecologies.

The effect of social media on the online buying decisions and the vitality to digital marketing, as have been established by recent surveys (Hajli, 2014; Cheung & Thadani, 2012), are also applicable to the Baltic population, but the studies do not cover this demographic. Similarly, the studies of influencer marketing (Okazaki & Taylor, 2013) focus on cultural tendencies in the content strategy and do not reflect the practice in the niche Baltic areas. Therefore, the marketing of Pigu.lt with respect to different consumer psychographics based on the cultural values has not been explored. Moreover, research on digital transformation tends to focus on museums or international companies (Douros et al., 2023; Liu & Shrum, 2002), which does not pay much attention to performance indicators that are vital to the retail industry, including the rate of conversion and the suitability of localized content.

The current research fills this important research gap by empirically identifying the ways in which Pigu.lt has adjusted its digital marketing strategies to cultural differences in Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia, thus offering something new to the studies on regional e-commerce strategies and international marketing responsibilities.

## **RESEARCH RESULTS AND DATA ANALYSIS**

The suggested research used a quantitative survey with 266 participants selected in Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia, which assessed its results critical in its approach to scholarly analysis. The demographic population and knowledge and feelings towards the use of digital marketing strategies by Pigu.lt are all explored, as well as the effects of the culture dimensions as put forward by Hofstede on how consumers would behave (De Mooij & Hofstede, 2010; Żemojtel-Piotrowska & Piotrowski, 2023).

### **Survey Results**

Table 1 defines the demographic characteristic of the respondents. Most were male (57.1 %), with Lithuania approximately being balanced between the sexes and Estonia and Latvia being biased in this regard to the male side. There was a significant bias towards younger generation: the

age group between 18 and 27 represents 57.9 % of the sample and the concentration of this age group was found in most concentrated parts of Latvia. The age category in Estonia was also more widespread especially among the respondents aged between 28 and 37 years old. As far as educational level is concerned, most of performers had undergraduate levels of education (48.1 %), which suggests a relatively high level of education in all three countries. The postgraduate degree was also widespread in Latvia (33.8 %) and Lithuania (31.1 %), where the highest rates of people with only secondary education were rather high, as well as in Estonia where the latter was the highest. All in all, this data indicates that the survey was able to draw a very diverse, youthful, and well-educated community of respondents, qualifications that tend to represent the kind of people who would be motivated to engage with digital shopping sites like Pigu.lt.

**Table 1: Demographic data**

Variable	Category	Lithuania (%)	Latvia (%)	Estonia (%)	Total (%)
<b>Gender</b>	Male	48.1	63.7	63.7	57.1
	Female	50.0	33.8	33.8	40.2
	Others	1.9	3.8	2.5	2.6
<b>Age</b>	18–27	57.5	67.5	48.8	57.9
	28–37	11.3	15.0	26.3	-
	38–47	20.8	7.5	6.3	-
	48+	<6%	<6%	12.5	-
<b>Education</b>	Undergraduate	51.9	46.3	45.0	48.1
	Postgraduate	31.1	33.8	-	-
	Secondary Only	0.0	16.3	17.5	-
	Other	17.0	-	-	-

Source: Field Survey (2025)

The empirical review of the shopping activity of the users of Pigu.lt is given in Table 2. The figures indicate that a commendable 62.8 percent of the respondents access the platform on more than one occasion a week, which depicts healthy platform usage. Latvia has the highest purchasing frequency (68.8 %), Estonia (65 %) comes next and Lithuania (56.6 %) is ranked in the third position. At the same time, Lithuania also indicates the largest percentage of non-buying visits to the sites (38.7 %), which are indicative of consumer interest but not a conversion. Estonia also shows a slightly more pronounced propensity to make monthly purchases (15 %) which could be due to the fact that the shopping behavior or other economic indicators would differ. All of them together prove the statement about the huge coverage and popularity of Pigu.lt and also emphasize the fact of heterogeneity in behaviour between nations. This is reflected in the lower purchase frequency in Lithuania and the fact that more powerful call-to-action interventions or pricing interventions should be implemented. On the other hand, the broader buying rates in Latvia and Estonia could also be supported by a good targeting or greater faith by users. These insights on behaviour are important to improve the frequency of marketing, the display and the retention at country level by country.

**Table 2: frequency Shopping on Pigu.lt**

Shopping Frequency	Lithuania (%)	Latvia (%)	Estonia (%)	Total (%)
Multiple times/week	-	68.8	65.0	62.8
Monthly	4.7	-	15.0	-
Regular visits (browse)	38.7	28.8	28.8	-

Source: Field Survey (2025)

Table 3 displays information that explains the evaluations of Pigu.lt in terms of its array of digital marketing strategies by the respondents. In regards to the number of people who place social media advertising as the best approach, nearly 82 percent of the respondents were categorical that it is the best approach, hence its supremacy in the region. On equal terms, the level of endorsement developed by UGC was also extremely high that makes up 78.4% and the reason behind these numbers can be explained by the strong trust in peer-based evidence and social proof values. Search engine optimization (SEO) also proved very effective throughout the vicinity, registering 83.1%. However, it had a lower rating in Lithuania, though higher in Latvia and Estonia; however, this aspect could be explained by differences in digital literacy. In comparison, email marketing received relatively poor judgments, as 84.6 % of the respondents disagreed and strongly disagreed that email marketing was useful. Considering all these facts together, one can see that younger, technologically involved Baltic customers prioritize authenticity and the content that is close and easy to use like UGC, social media but the traditional types of communication, the most remarkable example of which being an email, are relegated to the sidelines of their focus. The findings thus advise committing highly priced assets in interactive, socially supported strategies, adjusted to individualistic digital behaviour patterns of every Baltic country, and curbing dependence on the use of email-based promotions (Boustani & Chammaa, 2023; Kannan & Li, 2017; Pookulangara & Koesler, 2011; Ashley & Tuten, 2015).

**Table 3: Consumers Preferred digital marketing strategies**

Digital Strategy	Strongly Agree (%)	Agree (%)	Disagree (%)	Strongly Disagree (%)	Total Agreement (%)
Social Media	66.5	15.4	18.0	-	81.9
User-Generated Content	52.8–58.8	21.3–27.5	13.8–25.0	6.3 (Estonia)	78.4
SEO	45.9	37.2	16.9	-	83.1
Email Marketing	3.8	11.7	42.5	42.1	15.5

Source: Field Survey (2025)

Table 4 characterizes the cultural dimensions which influence the customer perceptions of Baltic states made with the help of Hofstede scale. A significant number subscribed to power distance values (77.8 per cent) which was the most conspicuous in Estonia and Lithuania, indicating that any message promoted by those in positions of authority will have greater impact. In comparison, individualism was emphatically opposed (86%) and the majority of the culture was found to be collectivist where the appeals to a community or group identity are more compelling. There was also majority rejection of achievement-based marketing (85.8%), meaning that respondents favored collaborative modesty-based marketing. It is evident that uncertainty avoidance was high in Lithuania and Latvia (68% agreement), which is significant of secure and predictable communication. Long-term orientation was also well supported (68.8%), indicating that the culture favors things that have longevity, savings and future-oriented materials. Lastly, the indulgence fared the lowest (88%) as the participants preferred restrained and practical messaging to lavish or enjoyment-focused forms of promotion. All these results provide a cultural guide in which Pigu.lt can design marketing programs, which would resonate with the Baltic consumers based on their common values (Soares et al., 2007; Theodosiou & Leonidou, 2003; Žemojtel-Piotrowska & Piotrowski, 2023).

**Table 4: Cultural Dimensions influencing Digital Marketing**

Cultural Dimension	Strongly Agree (%)	Agree (%)	Disagree (%)	Strongly Disagree (%)	Total Agreement (%)
Power Distance	38.7	39.1	13.2	8.9	77.8
Individualism (rejected)	1.9–3.8	13.2	39.8	46.2	86.0 (disagree)
Achievement Motivation	1.3–1.3	12.5–14.2	41.4	44.4	85.8 (disagree)
Uncertainty Avoidance	44.7	23.3	20.0	12.0	68.0
Long-Term Orientation	41.7	27.1	20.3	11.0	68.8
Indulgence (rejected)	2.5–6.3	9.4	47.0	41.0	88.0 (disagree)

Source: Field Survey (2025)

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The present study used a descriptive design in order to explain the cross-cultural differences in the consumer reactions towards the digital marketing initiatives of Pigu.lt. Existing paradigms make it possible to define this quantitative approach providing accurate measurements and organized comparison of various characteristics (Elliott & Timulak, 2021; Neuman, 2014). Contrary to the exploratory and explanatory methodologies which focuses on finding emergent phenomena or testing causal mechanisms respectively, the descriptive method provides a methodological method of rigorous counting of cultural dimensions and their impact on the consumer perception.

This was based on a quantitative cross-sectional survey method where information was gathered at one time in order to obtain current attitudes and behaviour (Creswell, 2009; Creswell & Plano Clark, 2023). This methodological decision was based on its cost- effectiveness, the ability to deal with large and heterogeneous samples, or the possibility to utilize statistical analysis (Neuman, 2014). A series of questions anchored in a 5-point Likert scale aimed to gather the opinion of respondents to measure Pigu.lt on its digital marketing, such as social media activities, email correspondence, search-engine optimisation, and user-generated content, as well as their judgment of the four cultural components along Hofstede dimensions, including, individualism, power distance, uncertainty avoidance, and long-term orientation (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2023; Soares et al., 2007; Theodosiou & Leonidou, 2003).

The survey was conducted through Google Forms which is efficient and wide-ranging at the same time. Convenience sampling was used in recruiting the participants with a little purposive sampling. Convenience sampling supported the accessibility, and purposive sampling preset the requirements: only people aged 18 and over, who had to live in Lithuania, Latvia, or Estonia, and who had to have been exposed to the digital marketing of Pigu.lt, were subject to the study (Evans & Mathur, 2005; Wright, 2005).

To determine the appropriate sample size, Taro Yamane (1967) formula was applied:

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e^2)}$$

Where:

$n$  = sample size

$N$  = estimated population (1,200,000 customers across Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia)

$e =$  margin of error (6.18% or 0.0618)

$$n = \frac{1,200,000}{1 + 1,200,000(0.0618)}$$

$$n = \frac{1,200,000}{1 + 3000}$$

$$n = \frac{1,200,000}{3001}$$

$$n = 266$$

Thus, the total sample size is 266 respondents, distributed proportionally across the three countries based on their population sizes:

1. Lithuania (40%) = 106 participants
2. Latvia (30%) = 80 participants
3. Estonia (30%) = 80 participants

The research process involved five stages. First, the objectives and scope were defined, focusing on cultural differences in perceptions of Pigu.lt's marketing. The second phase involved questionnaire design and review of relevant literature. In the third phase, data were collected from the calculated sample using Google Forms. The fourth phase focused on data analysis, applying descriptive statistics, frequencies, means, percentages, and standard deviations, to compare responses across demographic and cultural variables. In the final phase, results were interpreted in relation to existing literature and used to propose strategic improvements for Pigu.lt (Douros et al., 2023).

Ethical considerations were strictly observed. Participants gave informed consent and were assured of anonymity, voluntary participation, and data protection. Culturally appropriate and neutral language was used in the questionnaire to avoid bias or offense (Choi & Pak, 2005).

Despite its strengths, the methodology had limitations. The use of self-reported data introduced the risk of social desirability bias, potentially influencing how participants responded. Additionally, while quantitative data enabled generalisability, it lacked the contextual depth that qualitative methods offer. Future research should consider mixed methods, combining surveys with interviews or web analytics, to better understand how cultural differences influence digital marketing engagement (Okazaki & Taylor, 2013; Craig & Douglas, 2006).

## **DISCUSSION**

This paper will discuss the effectiveness of Pigu.lt electronic-commerce advertising campaign within the culturally diverse Baltic area, and it focuses on how these national cultural dimensions can affect whether the consumer would favorably receive the marketing campaign. According to the empirical data, social-media advertising proves to be the most effective option since it has gained approval ratings of 70 % and 66.3 % in Estonia and Latvia, respectively. These figures correspond with the findings of the previous scholarly research stating the efficacy of the agile, copresence, and experiential digital video content to encourage the contact level and the belief of the users (Hajli, 2014; Cheung & Thadani, 2012; Kannan & Li, 2017; Boustani & Chammaa, 2023). Online websites like Facebook and Instagram allow Pigu.lt to create localized content to suit the languages and norms and consequently adhere to Hofstede cultural dependence theory that says advertising effectiveness depends on the congruence with culture (Hofstede et al., 2010; De Mooij & Hofstede, 2010; Theodosiou & Leonidou, 2003; Wąsowicz-Zaborek, 2020).

Another effective strategy is also UGC (user-generated content) particularly in Lithuania (52.8 %) and Estonia (58.8 %) where user reviews and articulations of community add to the credibility of the brand. Nevertheless, Latvian respondents are more dichotomous with 25 %

showing the disapproval. This deviation could be the result of individual cultural preferences of communication: Latvia is also characterized by a higher power distance and would be more inclined to more formal communication and would therefore have a lower level of acceptance of informal online communication (Brodie et al., 2011; Liu & Shrum, 2002; Pookulangara & Koesler, 2011). Findings thus highlight the need to have stringent moderation and curation of UGC to bridge the trust threshold and digital literacy levels at scale of region (Mudambi & Schuff, 2010; Filieri, 2015).

On the other hand, SEO and email marketing are viewed as rather ineffective. Whereas in Estonia and Latvia the SEO proved to be moderately successful, in Lithuania it had to face barriers as 30.2 % of respondents believed it to be redundant. Using emails to market the business was unanimously shot down in all the countries by more than 84 % ratings as not being effective. These observations prompt to realize the digital fatigue of Baltic consumers caused by the excessive number of promotional messages and indicate the necessity to introduce more specific and even more personalized marketing strategies (Lamberton & Stephen, 2016; Jansen & Schuster, 2011; Reinke & Chamorro-Premuzic, 2014; Guo & Jiang, 2024).

Cultural analysis proves that the influence of national culture impressively defines the results of digital marketing. In this context, one of the variables is Power distance to stand out as a very relevant one. Estonia, to cite an example, shows a preference of 51.2 % of the population supporting the hierarchical systems of communication as demonstrated meaning that a considerable percentage still believe in more authoritative or expert-validated messages (Liu & Shrum, 2002; Soares et al., 2007). The Latvian consumers, on the other hand are highly opposed to authority when reading through the advertising medium and they like the egalitarian, peer-soccer form of storytelling. Even though Hofstede initially categorized the Baltic countries as rather individualistic, it can be seen in this research that 86 % of interviewees do not embrace individualism hence showing the collectivist aspect. This fact clearly falls under the influence of the historical development of millions of people in the region, namely after the fall of the Soviet Union (The Culture Factor Group, 2025; Hofstede, 2011; Žemojtel-Piotrowska & Piotrowski, 2023).

The dimensions of uncertainty avoidance, collectivism, long term and restraint turn out to become especially important cultural dimensions. The markets of Lithuania and Latvia were ranked high in the index of uncertainty avoidance, and this facilitated the consumer trend of enjoyable safe and predictable online experiences with the help of clear policy and format of messages (Okazaki & Mueller, 2007; de Mooij, 2019; Craig & Douglas, 2006). The collectivist norms also supported the effectiveness of UGC because the community opinion and the approval of peers strengthen brand loyalty (Brodie et al., 2011; Okazaki & Taylor, 2013; Pookulangara & Koesler, 2011). Moreover, the fact that Estonia and Latvia have high scores on the long-term orientation (71 and 69 correspondingly) enhances the importance of loyalty programs and sustainability-drive propositions. Lastly, the massive majority (88 %) of consumers publishing answers indicate that modest, practical communication is the way to go, which means that any indulgence-related or luxury-focused content is not culturally appropriate (de Mooij, 2019; Usunier & Lee, 2013).

All these findings confirm collectively that the success of Pigu.lt in the digital environment has a direct relationship to the extent to which its strategies match the culture values of the region. The Hofstede dimensions would not hardly point to a culture-specific type of marketing as a recommendation but see it as a necessity of attracting the Baltic market as they are a diverse consumer base (De Mooij & Hofstede, 2010; Theodosiou & Leonidou, 2003).

## CONCLUSIONS

1. In the current research study, the author seeks to examine how national cultural dimensions were perceived to affect the efficiency of digital market marketing approaches of Pigu.lt in Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia. Its results indicate that kind of strategies can only work with an exemplary degree of dependency on the values that have already been put in place. In particular, it appears that social media advertising and user-generated content (UGC) are the most effective channels of brand promotion, especially in Estonia and Lithuania, as both of them align with collective principles and ground themselves on peer endorsement and community-based interaction in order to foster trust.
2. Based on empirical studies, it is observed that, in spite of Hofstede describing the Baltic nations to be an individualistic country, consumer behaviour reflects strong collectivist behaviour. Communications that emphasize peer endorsement and cooperative messages produce better results when it comes to brands, compared to those that focus on the individual.
3. Lithuania and Latvia have a prominent cultural characteristic of uncertainty avoidance which is why there is a desire to operate in an organized and predictable digital space. Consequently, efficient marketing strategies will have to integrate clear processes, risk-free communications, and clear policies toward returns in order to instill confidence among the consumers.
4. The results of email marketing proved to be not that successful due to digital fatigue and the lack of personalization, and search engine optimization (SEO) was moderate, except that it was localized linguistically and culturally.
5. Estonia has strong acceptance of power distance therefore authoritative messages are effective whereas Latvia is egalitarian which makes peer-driven messages more effective. Taken together, strong long-term orientation that can be traced in Estonia and Latvia encourages subject sustainability of branding and loyalty programs. In addition, the three countries are conservative and prefer modest utilitarian message as opposed to luxury-oriented communication.
6. The study recommends that Pigu.lt should focus on community-based campaigns to strengthen brand trust and cultural connection.

## LITERATURE

1. Ailland, N., & Hähnel, O. (2006). *The validity of cultural dimensions in the development process of international advertising*. Kristianstad University College, Department of Business Administration. <http://urn.kb.se/resolve?urn=urn:nbn:se:hkr:diva-4245>
2. Ansah, M. O. (2015). Cultural dimension in marketing managers' decision making: An application of Geert Hofstede Index for Ghana. *European Journal of Research and Reflection in Management Sciences*, 3(2), 5–28.
3. Ashley, C., & Tuten, T. (2015). Creative strategies in social media marketing: An exploratory study of branded social content and consumer engagement. *Psychology & Marketing*, 32(1), 15–27. <https://doi.org/10.1002/mar.20761>
4. Boustani, N., & Chammaa, S. (2023). Youth adoption of innovative digital marketing and cross-cultural disparities. *Administrative Sciences*, 13(6), 151. <https://doi.org/10.3390/admsci13060151>
5. Bowman, T. C. (2021). E-commerce in the Baltics: Culture and online marketing communication in Lithuania (Doctoral dissertation, University of Oklahoma). Retrieved January 25, 2026, from <https://shareok.org/handle/11244/331396>
6. Brodie, R. J., Hollebeek, L. D., Juric, B., & Ilic, A. (2011). Customer engagement: Conceptual domain, fundamental propositions, and implications for research. *Journal of Service Research*, 14(3), 252–271. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1094670511411703>

7. Busca, L., & Bertrandias, L. (2020). A framework for digital marketing research: Investigating the four cultural eras of digital marketing. *Journal of Interactive Marketing*, 49, 1–19. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.intmar.2019.08.002>
8. Cheung, C. M. K., & Thadani, D. R. (2012). The impact of electronic word-of-mouth communication: A literature analysis and integrative model. *Decision Support Systems*, 54(1), 461–470. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.dss.2012.06.008>
9. Choi, B. C. K., & Pak, A. W. P. (2005). A catalog of biases in questionnaires. *Preventing Chronic Disease*, 2(1), A13. [https://www.cdc.gov/pcd/issues/2005/jan/04\\_0050.htm](https://www.cdc.gov/pcd/issues/2005/jan/04_0050.htm)
10. Craig, C. S., & Douglas, S. P. (2006). Beyond national culture: Implications of cultural dynamics for consumer research. *International Marketing Review*, 23(3), 322–342. <https://doi.org/10.1108/02651330610670479>
11. Creswell, J. W. (2009). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (3rd ed.). Sage.
12. Creswell, J. W., & Plano Clark, V. L. (2023). *Revisiting mixed methods research designs: Twenty years later*. In A. Tashakkori & C. Teddlie (Eds.), *The SAGE handbook of mixed methods in social & behavioral research* (3rd ed.). Sage.
13. CSA Research. (2020, June 30). *Can't Read, Won't Buy – B2C: Analyzing consumer language preferences and behaviors in 29 countries*. Retrieved January 25, 2026, from <https://insights.csa-research.com/reportaction/305013126/Marketing>
14. Darley, W. K., Luethge, D. J., & Blankson, C. (2013). Culture and international marketing: A sub-Saharan African context. *Journal of Global Marketing*, 26(5), 261–276. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08911762.2013.849472>
15. de Mooij, M. (2019). *Consumer behavior and culture: Consequences for global marketing and advertising* (3rd ed.). Sage.
16. De Mooij, M., & Hofstede, G. (2010). The Hofstede model: Applications to global branding and advertising strategy and research. *International Journal of Advertising*, 29(1), 85–110. <https://doi.org/10.2501/S026504870920104X>
17. Douros, I., Papageorgiou, K., Miliouris, K., Panagiotakopoulou, A., & Kaldis, S. (2023). Digital transformation: Using marketing tools and customer engagement in the wine industry. *Transnational Marketing Journal*, 11, 199–216.
18. Elliott, R., & Timulak, L. (2021). *Essentials of descriptive-interpretive qualitative research*. American Psychological Association.
19. Żemajtėl-Piotrowska, M., & Piotrowski, J. (2023). *Hofstede's cultural dimensions*. In V. Zeigler-Hill & T. K. Shackelford (Eds.), *Encyclopedia of personality and individual differences*. Springer. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-24612-3\\_2021-1](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-24612-3_2021-1)
20. Evans, J. R., & Mathur, A. (2005). The value of online surveys. *Internet Research*, 15(2), 195–219. <https://doi.org/10.1108/10662240510590360>
21. Filieri, R. (2015). What makes online reviews helpful? A diagnosticity-adoption framework to explain informational and normative influences in e-WOM. *Journal of Business Research*, 68(6), 1261–1270. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2014.11.006>
22. Gao, Y. (2023). Digital marketing strategies for cross-cultural communication. *SHS Web of Conferences*, 174, 01007. <https://doi.org/10.1051/shsconf/202317401007>
23. Guo, R., & Jiang, Z. (2024). Optimal dynamic advertising policy considering consumer ad fatigue. *Decision Support Systems*, 187, 114323. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.dss.2024.114323>
24. Hajli, N. (2014). A study of the impact of social media on consumers. *International Journal of Market Research*, 56(3), 387–404. <https://doi.org/10.2501/IJMR-2014-025>
25. Hofstede, G. (2011). Dimensionalizing cultures: The Hofstede model in context. *Online Readings in Psychology and Culture*, 2(1). <https://doi.org/10.9707/2307-0919.1014>
26. Hofstede, G., Hofstede, G. J., & Minkov, M. (2010). *Cultures and organizations: Software of the mind* (3rd ed.). McGraw-Hill.
27. Jansen, B. J., & Schuster, S. (2011). Bidding on the buying funnel for sponsored search and keyword advertising. *Journal of Electronic Commerce Research*, 12(1), 1–18.
28. Kannan, P. K., & Li, H. (2017). Digital marketing: A framework, review and research agenda. *International Journal of Research in Marketing*, 34(1), 22–45. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijresmar.2016.11.006>

29. Lamberton, C., & Stephen, A. T. (2016). A thematic exploration of digital, social media, and mobile marketing: Research evolution from 2000 to 2015 and an agenda for future inquiry. *Journal of Marketing*, 80(6), 146–172. <https://doi.org/10.1509/jm.15.0415>
30. Lindholm, J. (2022). *Localization in digital marketing: Cultural adaptation strategies in global campaigns*. Metropolia University of Applied Sciences. Retrieved January 25, 2026, from <https://www.theseus.fi/handle/10024/781425>
31. Liu, Y., & Shrum, L. J. (2002). What is interactivity and is it always such a good thing? Implications of definition, person, and situation for the influence of interactivity on advertising effectiveness. *Journal of Advertising*, 31(4), 53–64. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00913367.2002.10673685>
32. Matosas-López, L. (2021). *The management of digital marketing strategies in social networks between America and Europe* (Doctoral dissertation). Universidad Rey Juan Carlos. Retrieved January 25, 2026, from <https://burjcdigital.urjc.es/handle/10115/19155>
33. Mudambi, S. M., & Schuff, D. (2010). What makes a helpful online review? A study of customer reviews on Amazon.com. *MIS Quarterly*, 34(1), 185–200.
34. Neuman, W. L. (2014). *Social research methods: Qualitative and quantitative approaches* (7th ed.). Pearson.
35. Okazaki, S., & Mueller, B. (2007). Cross-cultural advertising research: Where we have been and where we need to go. *International Marketing Review*, 24(5), 499–518. <https://doi.org/10.1108/02651330710827960>
36. Okazaki, S., & Taylor, C. R. (2013). Social media and international advertising: Theoretical challenges and future directions. *International Marketing Review*, 30(1), 56–71. <https://doi.org/10.1108/02651331311298573>
37. Pookulangara, S., & Koesler, K. (2011). Cultural influence on consumers' usage of social networks and its impact on online purchase intentions. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, 18(4), 348–354. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jretconser.2011.03.003>
38. Reinke, K., & Chamorro-Premuzic, T. (2014). When email use gets out of control: Understanding the relationship between personality and email overload and their impact on burnout and work engagement. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 36, 502–509. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2014.03.075>
39. Soares, A. M., Farhangmehr, M., & Shoham, A. (2007). Hofstede's dimensions of culture in international marketing studies. *Journal of Business Research*, 60(3), 277–284. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2006.10.018>
40. The Culture Factor Group. (2024). *Global report 2024*. Retrieved January 25, 2026, from <https://www.theculturefactor.com/resources/report/global-report-2024>
41. The Culture Factor Group. (2025). *Country comparison tool*. Retrieved January 25, 2026, from <https://www.theculturefactor.com/country-comparison-tool>
42. Theodosiou, M., & Leonidou, L. C. (2003). Standardization versus adaptation of international marketing strategy: An integrative assessment of the empirical research. *International Business Review*, 12(2), 141–171. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0969-5931\(02\)00094-X](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0969-5931(02)00094-X)
43. UAB “Pigu”. (2025). Pigu.lt online store. Retrieved January 25, 2026, from <https://pigu.lt>
44. Wright, K. B. (2005). Researching Internet-based populations: Advantages and disadvantages of online survey research, online questionnaire authoring software packages, and web survey services. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, 10(3), JCMC1034. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1083-6101.2005.tb00259.x>
45. Wąsowicz-Zaborek, E. (2020). Cultural determinants of social media use in world markets. *Folia Oeconomica Stetinensia*, 20(2), 423–435. <https://doi.org/10.2478/fofi-2020-0057>
46. Yamane, T. (1967). *Statistics: An introductory analysis* (2nd ed.). Harper and Row.

## EVOLUTION OF SOUTH KOREA'S CULTURAL PHENOMENON AND ITS INFLUENCE ON CONSUMER BEHAVIOR OUTSIDE OF KOREA

*Fatma Sever*

*SMK College of Applied Sciences, Lithuania*

*Victoria S. Belandria Rojas*

*Independent Researcher*

### Abstract

This article is made to analyze the evolution of the Hallyu, or Korean Wave, and since it has been a huge exponential for South Korea as a country, it also seeks to deeply analyze the impact this has had on consumer behavior in Western cultures. We seek to uncover certain reasons behind the rise of Korean culture and its presence in current pop culture, and how this has impacted and what changes it has generated in the public's purchasing and consumption decisions, such as choosing Korean products or content over what they are already accustomed to. In general, we focus on delving deeper into how Korean culture has managed to rise above others in the international market. The way it has become trendy and has set trends around the world, changing the way people used to think about South Korea as a country, and becoming an icon of global pop culture in recent years, including all the ups and downs Hallyu has had to go through to become what we know today.

**Keywords:** Hallyu (Korean Wave); consumer behavior; cultural globalization; K-pop and K-dramas; soft power, marketing strategies.

### INTRODUCTION

**Research topicality.** The Korean Wave (Hallyu) has become a visible part of everyday life far beyond South Korea, shaping global viewing, music listening, beauty routines, food choices, and fashion. This prominence invites a central question for Western contexts: how and to what extent does Hallyu alter consumer preferences and purchasing? The phenomenon is not accidental; it reflects coordinated strategies aimed at exporting culture and products while crafting a persuasive national image. As Adams notes, “*The Seoul government still faced serious harm to Korea’s credibility as a place to do business,*” a challenge to which cultural internationalization responded by strengthening Korea’s soft-power appeal (Adams, 2022). Simultaneously, the K-pop industry leverages an ecosystem of cross-media promotion, “*everything from movies and series to TV shows and advertisements,*” that keeps artists and brands continuously salient (Muros, 2020). Together, these forces raise both opportunities (country-of-origin effects, tourism, brand trial) and concerns (idealized beauty standards, hyper-consumerism), making Hallyu’s impact on consumer behavior a timely problem for investigation.

**Research problem.** How and to what extent does Hallyu alter consumer preferences and purchasing?

**The aim of the research.** To analyze the evolution of Hallyu and assess its influence on consumer behavior outside Korea, identifying which components (K-dramas, K-pop, K-beauty, fashion, gastronomy, technology) most affect preferences, which audience segments are most responsive, and which channels convert cultural exposure into purchasing.

**Research methodology.** A quantitative survey was administered in Lithuania to an international sample (n = 208). The instrument included demographics, multiple-choice items on product/content consumption, and Likert-scale statements measuring perceptions and behaviors (agreement and frequency scales). Data quality was supported by control questions. Descriptive statistics summarized exposure and consumption; Kruskal–Wallis and post-hoc tests explored differences by age, gender, and consumption frequency.

**The research results.** Findings indicate wide yet differentiated influence:

- Penetration. 80.2% consume Korean products/content; 6.1% do not. The most consumed are

series/movies (58%) and cosmetics (57%), followed by music/K-pop (39%), gastronomy (30%), manhwa (32%), and fashion (22%).

- Exposure & channels. Consumption is most often “sometimes” (29%), with 17% daily and 16% frequently; social networks (63%) dominate discovery, followed by friends/family (47%).
- Behavioral change. 46.88% agree (and 4.69% totally agree) they are likely to continue buying Korean brands after trying them; daily consumers are 2.3× more likely than occasional consumers to report lifestyle effects. Women report stronger inspiration from Korean fashion/beauty; the 18–25 group shows the largest shopping-habit shifts.
- Engagement & intent. Though only 22% identify with Hallyu fandoms, this group shows high-intensity behaviors (e.g., 68% merch/album purchases; 39% events). 62% would like to visit Korea (5% already have). Interest in learning Korean is more moderate relative to other effects.

Importantly, these patterns sit alongside critical reflections noted in your introduction: the gap between polished media images and everyday realities (Adams, 2022) and the industry’s deliberate cross-media marketing that fosters persistent attention (Muros, 2020; Ellering, 2024).

**Originality/Value of the article.** This study links Hallyu’s soft-power narrative to measurable consumer outcomes in a Baltic, multi-national sample, clarifying which cultural products most reliably translate into purchase intentions and lifestyle changes, which segments amplify effects, and where benefits (brand trial, loyalty, tourism intent) coexist with risks (idealized beauty standards, potential hyper-consumerism). The results offer actionable insight for marketers, educators, and policymakers working with Korean cultural products beyond Korea.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Evolution of South Korean Cultural Phenomenon

Nowadays, we have all been able to witness how Kpop has become increasingly popular over the years. Today it is very common to see teenagers recreating dance choreographies on the streets or even listening to K-pop songs frequently on social media. But as we have mentioned before, this popularity goes beyond only K-pop. It involves an entire global movement focused on the creation of content and products from South Korea, called *Hallyu* or Korean Wave. The term “*Hallyu*” emerge in China in the late 90’s when K- Dramas began to be a total success in several countries in Asia (Torrero & Hazael, 2021). That is how some pioneer groups of K-pop began to gain some popularity in the Asian continent in the beginning of the 2000’s, until shortly after they gained some popularity in some countries of America, and in that way, they began to create their own audience.

But what is the reason for this success? But what is the reason for this success? In order to understand the rise of this phenomenon, first we have to take a look back to the social, political, and cultural background of South Korea back then. A good starting point for this story could be right after the second world war and the fall of the Japanese empire that kept Korea under a dictatorship for decades. At that time, Korea was a very poor country, dealing with all the side effects of so many years of dictatorship and their own internal issues between the north and south part of the country, which resulted in the separation of these two region becoming independent nations, currently known as North Korea and South Korea through a very tough war that left both countries in a condition of poverty and a tense relationship between both countries that persist to this day. During the following decades, the people of South Korea continued to be victims of totalitarian governments and dictatorships that prioritized industrial production, generating various forms of censorship and a limited capacity for expression in the artistic or cultural aspect, and any

material of this nature had to fit within the parameters of the rules established by the government on what was allowed to be reflected and what was not, therefore, artistic production was quite limited. It was not until 1987/88 that democracy was established in South Korea, which marked a significant change, allowing greater freedom of expression and creativity. This allowed South Korea to better open up and globalize its country to international markets. “Experts agree that much of its success can be attributed to the strategic backing from the South Korean government. It embraces globalization as a pivotal driver for the socioeconomic progress of the nation and as a force shaping its culture” (Stay Curious, 2024). The globalization and opening of the country were a totally new and experimental tactic to project a better image of Korea to the international market and thus take advantage of its soft power. When we talk about Soft Power of a specific country, it refers to the construction of identity and persuasion to change thinking or behavior. “Nye (2005) proposed that soft power consists of a country's history, geography, cultural diversity, economic strength, social pattern, democratic development, civil society organizations, prevalence and impacts, science and technology infrastructure and values like art and sports which the social life produced in the intellectual sense”. Yavuzaslan & Çetin (2016).

### **First Wave of Hallyu**

Hallyu is not something that just immediately appears from nowhere in our daily lives and now we can see it everywhere. The phenomenon of *Hallyu* has been progressively increasing with the passage of time, and as with everything, it has a starting point and a story behind it.

In the 90s, audiovisual content from America was not very well accepted by the Asian public, causing their attention to start to focus on other entertainment genres, specifically in China and some other countries in Asia, and that is when some famous Korean dramas like “Winter Sonata” starting to gain more and more popularity between the neighboring countries of South Korea, and this was the initial key to Korea's success, and that will be the first point that we will analyze in this work. K-dramas are very well known for their visual impacts and strong emotional presence, making everything look aesthetically beautiful, as well as trying to show a beautiful reality in each scene. Color, image quality, sets, casting, make-up, and costumes play an important role in the visual impact that these series generate on the public, attracting more and more audiences to this type of content. This opened a space in the market not only for drama series, but also for films. With the success of the Oscar-winning film “Parasite” (2020), the Western market paid more and more attention to these stories, making North American companies such as Netflix decide to invest in this type of material, and today the Korean series “Squid Game” (2021) has been the most watched Netflix series of all time.

Both materials share a deep dark plot with delicate and sensitive topics, such as differences between social classes, the reality of some economic issues, and of course a lot of mystery and drama. This, combined with the characteristic aesthetic and visual impact that Korean content usually has, makes these shoots totally addictive and impossible to ignore. And like these, there are countless Korean productions that manage to enter not only the eyes of the viewer, but have a very specific way of connecting with the audience through their emotional plots full of strong feelings and more attached to Asian culture than to Western culture, since the value system of the characters focuses on family, respect for parents and elders, loyalty, brotherly love, emphasis on education, etc. These are all traditional Asian cultural elements that are something new and interesting to a large part of the Western audience. Today, this success has led to the increasing number of Korean actors in the cast of many American series and films. Some examples from Netflix are “*To All the Boys I’ve Loved Before*” (2018), “*Always Be My Maybe*” (2019), “*The Half*

*of It*” (2020), “*Never Have I Ever*” (2020) and from Warner Bros Pictures *Crazy Rich Asians* (2018).

Another reason why Korean content was better accepted by Asian audiences and later by foreign audiences is due to the censorship and modesty with which they deal with some explicit topics. Something that differentiates them from Japanese content in Asia, which is usually much more explicit when dealing with issues of sex or violence, just like American content today. Therefore, Korean series have been easier to adapt to different audiences, mentalities, and beliefs, being very well accepted for more conservative audiences. However, Korean culture has successfully blended traditional Confucian values with the globalized Western culture to which we are already so adapted, not only visually but also ideologically. They have also demonstrated their ability to reinterpret certain ideologies of Western and American culture in a way that suits the preferences of Asian audiences. Today, we can find all kinds of genres within Korean dramas, such as romance, mystery, comedy, fantasy, horror, science fiction, and a wide variety of genres that touch on both light and controversial topics without losing their core essence. Although today we have Korean series available on almost all current streaming platforms, Netflix is still one of the most used for this, with a diverse catalog of original series. According to the newspaper *El Confidential*, “Netflix has become one of the largest distributors of south Korean series worldwide over the past five years, and leads the ranking of most popular fictions”, and among its great variety we can count on notable titles such as “*Woo, Extraordinary Attorney*” (2022), “*Crash Landing on You*” (2019), “*True Beauty*” (2020), “*All of us are Dead*” (2022), which is the 9th most viewed series on non-English speaking Netflix, and of course “*Squid Game*” (2021), which is number 1.

One of the most notable things about Korean series is their visual appeal. The quality and the way they are made are naturally beautiful and catching to the eye, as Korea is a country that focuses on visual and aesthetic, as well as taking series not as an art form, but as a product ready to export. Thus, nowadays K-dramas are synonymous with a beautiful and high-quality production, as is the example of “*Mr. Sunshine*” (2018), which had a budget of 40 billion won. But the cast is also a very important factor for the success of K-dramas. Currently, South Korea has very famous actors both inside and outside of Korea, such as the actors Lee Min-Ho or Gong Yoo, who are very popular names in the world of K- dramas. As well some K-pop idols had great relevance in the area of acting, reaching to play notable roles, such as the artist Cha Eun-woo and Yoon San-ha, members of the group Astro, the singer Suzy, member of the group Miss A, and the solo artist IU, who created their reputation within the world of K-pop to later venture into acting, being a great attraction for new audiences.

And this brings us to another massively successful Korean product, and perhaps the most interesting of all, and that is K-pop. To this day, we have all heard about what Kpop is, several very popular names may come to your mind. At some point in our lives we have all heard one or another song by groups like BTS or Black Pink, and whether you enjoy it or not we all agree that the impact and presence that it has had over the current pop culture has been quite remarkable. But K-pop is not just a musical genre, but a complex enterprise with sales strategies that turn out to be quite addictive for the public and have generated their own subculture that has millions of loyal followers around the world. According to Muros (2020), “Accustomed to the global dominance and monopoly of Anglo-Saxon music, even the most loyal K-pop fans are surprised to see how a musical genre that outside of South Korea has always been labeled as geeky is now flooding the screens of half the world.” However, the K- pop industry has a large number of marketing, advertising, promotion and even psychology strategies that have made K-pop what it is today.

## **Second Wave of Hallyu**

The initial interest of the public in K-dramas gradually increased, producing and awakening in the public a certain interest in other types of audiovisual material, or content from this country, which made attention begin to focus on the music industry, what we know today as Kpop.

During the 90s, what we would know as the first generation of Kpop emerged, with elements from more foreign influences, such as rap, house, rave, jungle, etc., but more adapted and focused on the Korean public. As representatives of this generation, we can name the group Seo Taiji and Boys who gained popularity in 1992 with songs like Nan arayo/I know, despite still being a fairly new and strange genre for the general public.

In 1997, South Korea was going through a critical economic crisis that forced them to find a way to bring more funds into their country, so the South Korean Ministry of Culture decided to invest a generous amount of money and time to promote Korean pop music abroad, mainly in China. Unlike K-dramas, whose main consumer was the adult market, Korean pop was more directed towards young people, in order to take full advantage of their Soft Power. This made Korean pop culture begin to have its own fame and reputation within the Asian market, until large Kpop companies conducted large advertising campaigns for their groups to attract a wider international audience.

During the second generation of Kpop, several groups emerged and began to be increasingly recognized worldwide, such as SHINee, Girl's Generation, Super Junior, and of course Big Bang, and many other groups who created the path for current ones. These groups began to spread the word about the Kpop genre as we know it today. The South Korean music industry operates following the business models of large corporate conglomerates. The most successful companies that emerged during this massive K-pop success in Asia in the 90s are SM Entertainment, YG Entertainment, JYP Entertainment and Big Hit Entertainment, which is a little more recent. This last one was founded in the mid-2000s and has gained quite a bit of popularity and power within the industry to the point of surpassing its competitors by having highly successful groups such as BTS, who have become leaders in the American market during the third generation of Kpop. It was during this period that they began to be heard more and more outside of Asia and their impact on the market is still current. Some of these other bands who became more exported alongside BTS are Black Pink, EXO, NCT and Seventeen. After the impact of BTS and Blackpink in countries in America and Europe, Kpop has had a large space within the international music market, especially right now with groups from the fourth generation like Stray Kids, Ateez, and TXT.

## **The Impact of Kpop on Consumer Behavior**

However, this success is not a coincidence. There are a lot of aspects and strategies that have made Kpop relevant in the international market. One of the most important characteristics that made K-Pop relevant (and still is) is the visual appeal and the sensual and striking image of the artists. Catchy melodies and synchronized dances are quite an addictive stimulus for the consumer public. As we mentioned before, South Korea is a country highly focused on appearance, so Kpop is not a music genre that you can listen to, but something you can see. It goes beyond the music, and choreography, outfits and performance are a crucial part of it. In order to take the attention of the American market, which is used to consume content in their own language, a huge visual appeal was needed for them to focus on a foreign content, as mentioned by Muros (2020).

In recent years, the global interest in Korean culture has been reflected in several aspects. According to the website *Soompi Spanish*, a survey made by the Korea Tourism Organization

shows that by the year 2019 of tourists visiting Korea that year, 7.4% were related to the Hallyu, and up to 160,000 won per person went to that area. Of course, this number has increased within the years, and of course South Korea takes advantage of this as much as they can. But not everything in the Korean wave has a positive impact, it can also affect in a negative way. The best case where we can analyze the negative impact of the Hallyu is in the beauty industry. As mentioned by Bicker (2018), “From an early age, women in South Korea are bombarded with advertisements telling them they should be thin, have delicate, pale skin, a flawless complexion and a perfect oval face”. Therefore, this aspect of Korean culture does not go unnoticed, giving this country the world’s highest rate of cosmetic surgery per capita, and of course gaining quite a bit of good reputation within the area of cosmetology worldwide. The perfect faces, skinny body shapes and perfect makeup and hair of the Idols and actors, have become a beauty and role model for all their fans around the world, making the purchase of Korean beauty products in recent years.

Olvera (2023) mentioned that for idols to achieve the appearance they show, it is required an intense diet which can even be dangerous in some cases, so following trends guided by these types of standards may not be healthy, physically, and psychologically. “The majority of the K-pop fandom is young, so they are impressionable and may want to try to look like their favorite idol through dangerous remedies” Olvera (2023). However, taking a logical approach to this issue, the skin care and health care that South Korea promotes can be beneficial in some respects, making thousands of people more aware of the importance of self-care. Of course, this is very beneficial for Korean cosmetics companies, which are becoming increasingly popular not only because of the impact of the Korean Wave, but also because of the high quality and guaranteed effectiveness claimed by loyal consumers of these brands, even gaining an own term for that area, known as K-beauty. As mentioned by the portal Report Asia, Korean women prioritize the skin care in order to have a fresh and natural look and thus reduce the makeup excess. Therefore, Korean companies look forward to developing high quality products that are beneficial in combating skin imperfections, mostly derived from natural products and usually quite affordable, making these companies remain at the forefront of the global industry.

### **Importance of This Study and Effect on Consumer Perception**

The Hallyu or Korean wave has transcended and evolved over the years, leaving different impacts in each of its phases, and it has affected not only on our choices and preferences as consumers in Western cultures, but also for South Korea as a country that has tried and succeeded in emerging and creating its own image and perception before the world, and what used to be seen as a industrialized nation affected by war consequences, Korea is now recognized as a leader in quality, innovation, and trendsetting.

Likewise, outside of Korea, it is not difficult to understand the impact of Hallyu and how it has affected and changed consumer preferences in various aspects. For instance, in the beauty world, pre-Hallyu ideals and standards were dominated by tanned skin and intense, bold makeup. This began to change with the rise of K-beauty and the arrival of new trends based on Korean beauty standards, such as glass skin, clean and radiant makeup, minimalist style, and, above all, awareness about skincare and natural products. Even Western beauty giants like L'Oréal and Estée Lauder have incorporated K-beauty trends into their product lines. However, the entertainment world has also undergone several changes. While Hollywood and Western music like pop and hip-hop dominated the global media market, and subtitled content or content in languages other than English used to be limited to niche audiences, K-drama and K-pop have now garnered the highest number of streams and views worldwide, creating a distinct reputation for Korean audiovisual

content.

Even certain areas of Korean commerce have benefited from Hallyu without being directly related to it, such as the technology sector and its evolution, incorporating an important cultural stamp into the exports of tech companies. The global popularity of K-pop and K-dramas has increased demand for Korean technology products, from Galaxy smartphones to high-definition televisions; and of course, innovations and collaborations like BTS's with Samsung have increased loyalty to several Korean brands, especially among younger consumers.

In short, the Korean Wave has brought about a radical shift in the global image and perception of South Korea as a country. Previously considered industrial and unknown, South Korea is now perceived as a modern and innovative country with a rich culture. This has affected many aspects, not only in Korea but around the world without us even realizing it, and in different aspects such as beauty, gastronomy, tourism, entertainment, and even technology. The change brought about by the standards imposed by South Korean culture has been so remarkable that it has become a social and cultural phenomenon worthy of study. This change has had far-reaching implications, and international companies have had to adapt to consumer trends and view Korea as a benchmark in global consumption.

### **Theoretical and Conceptual Framework**

This work is based on the phenomenon very well known today as “Korean Wave” and everything it encompasses, since the beginning of this growth. This paper intends to investigate more deeply the reasons for this phenomenon and how it has affected our perception and preferences as consumers. We will make an analysis of the evolution and the impact and effect of this phenomenon toward the different countries outside of South Korea, and the impact in the preference and changes of the consumer behavior in western societies.

Consumer behavior is the way people make decisions regarding their purchases of products or goods, including the choices they make, the needs and preferences depending on their social and cultural context. According to Schiffman & Kanut (1997: 6-7), consumer behavior is “The behavior that consumers display in searching for, purchasing, using, evaluating, and disposing of products, services, and ideas”. While Walters (1974), defines it as “The process whereby individuals decide whether, what, when, where, how and from whom to purchase goods and services”.

Popular culture is also a concept that we use to refer to the practices, beliefs, objects, and traditions that include the most basic interest of some societies. It can include different components that will help to connect with the masses, like movies, music, fashion, slang, etc. However, the main way pop culture is seen is in an economic context and could be defined as a group of products that are created to make a profit. As mentioned by Kidd (2017) “Through this economic lens, popular culture is seen as a set of commodities produced through capitalistic processes driven by a profit motive and sold to consumers”.

Consumerism can be defined as the concept of purchasing goods on an exponential level being very beneficial for the market, and the need of a person to fulfill themselves and find happiness in obtaining material possessions, and for them it will be better to buy products and services in big quantities. From the point of view of some economists, consumerism is very beneficial for economic growth. However, hyper-consumerism can develop some side effects and psychological consequences for the consumer, as mentioned by Hayes (2024). This last point is probably the negative effect of the Hallyu on the consumers. The interest in Korean culture sometimes can become an obsession, or at least a big hyper fixation, especially in the area of Kpop.

The material of entertainment is always updating itself continuously and adding the need of the fans to know and get everything from their idols that is available, can become into an over consumption of overpriced products, and even creating a psychological dependence of obtaining every single piece of merchandise, and spending ridiculous amounts of money in this field.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In the course of our research, we are embarking on quantitative research to gain a better understanding of the areas, aspects, and extent to which Korean culture is reflected in consumer preferences and behavior changes in more Western countries. We will analyze the Hallyu components that have most influenced the public's perception of Korean culture, whether through the image or values shown K-dramas or in the K-pop world. Likewise, we will analyze not only the cultural aspect but also the consumer's perspective on the quality and preference of Korean products, whether skincare, fashion, or even technology or food. We will have a close understanding of how people have been influenced by Hallyu weather if they are aware of this or not, and how deeply they have been affected by it, and how dependable it is on their age, nationality, or segment.

This research implemented a survey with close-ended and multiple-choice questions and the Likert scale of agreement (strongly agree - agree - neutral – disagree - strongly disagree) and frequency (never - rarely - sometimes - often - always). The geographical location of the survey was Lithuania, and we used a sample size of 208 participants between Lithuanians and foreigners from different nationalities, in order to have a broader view of the range of impact of Hallyu. Therefore, the questions and interpretation of the answers are made to understand the variety of our participants and how much their perception of Hallyu and consumer habits can change. This will let us make meaningful comparisons and reliable conclusions.

Throughout the survey, we asked the main demographic questions about age, gender, income, and nationality. To better validate responses, certain control questions were implemented in order to maintain participant attention and avoid potential bias. The body of the survey includes questions to determine the participant's tastes and preferences, how and to what extent they relate to Korean culture and how present it is in their daily lives and consumer choices.

## RESEARCH RESULTS AND DATA ANALYSIS

Based on the data that we were able to collect from our survey, we can see reflected the number of consumers of Korean products. From 208 participants, only 6.5% did not consume any kind of product related to Hallyu or South Korea (see Table 4). From the sample size, 99% agreed on participating in the survey (205).

The majority of the participants are in the range of 18-25 years old, being a 60% of the participants, 26% are in the range of 25-35 years old, 5% in the range of 35-45 years old, 4% between the ages of 45-55, 5% the ages of 55-65, and just a 1% left older than 65. (Table 1)

**Table 1. Age**

Options	Percentage
18-25	60%
25-35	26%
35-45	5%
45-55	4%
55-65	5%
65+	1%

Source: Created by the authors

Regarding the gender of the participants, we can see a predominance of the female gender with 50% of the responders and 46% male. However, 2% are non-binary or third gender, and 2% preferred not to answer that question.

**Table 2. Gender**

Options	Percentage
Female	50%
Male	46%
Non-binary	2%
Prefer not to say	2%

Source: Created by the authors

We could see that the majority of the participants were Lithuanians with 29.4%, but we collected a wide variety of different nationalities. (The choice of “Other” includes countries with  $\leq 1$  respondent, for example DR Congo, Liberia, Russia, Argentina, etc.).

**Table 3. Nationality**

Country	Percentage
Lithuania	29.4%
Venezuela	16.2%
Other	12.7%
Türkiye	7.1%
Ukraine	5.1%
Bangladesh	4.6%
Morocco	3.6%
India	3.0%
Pakistan	3.0%
Georgia	2.0%
Spain	1.5%
Nigeria	1.5%
Cameroon	1.5%
Iran	1.0%
Brazil	1%
Colombia	1.0%
Greece	1.0%
Algeria	1.0%
Germany	0.5%
France	0.5%
Latvia	0.5%

Source: Created by the authors

In order to have a better idea of nature and reasons for their behavior as consumers, we added 2 questions about their salary and employment status. In regard to the employment status, we could notice that the majority of the responses were given by students, with 36.48% of the answers. However, in a very close amount, 35.22% of the respondents appear to be full-time

employees. 13.84% were part-time employees, 10.06% self-employed, 2.52% unemployed, 2.26% preferred not to answer that question, and we had a margin of 0.63% of missing responses.

**Table 4. Employment Status**

Options	Percentage
Student	36.48%
Full-time employee	35.22%
Part-time employee	13.84%
Self-employee	10.06%
Unemployed	2.52%
Prefer not to say	1.26%
Missing response	0.63%

Source: Created by the authors

In the same way, in regard to the monthly salary of the participants, the majority of the respondents chose 500-1000 eur with 30.19% of the answers. 24.53% of the respondents preferred not to say their monthly salary, 1000-1500 eur were 21.38%, less than 500 eur got 11.95%, 1500-2000 eur were 6.92%, and just 4.40% chose more than 2000 eur a month. In the end we got a margin of 0.63% of missing responses.

**Table 5. Monthly Salary**

Options	Percentage
Less than 500 eur	11.95%
500-1000 eur	30.19%
1000-1500 eur	21.38%
1500-2000 eur	6.92%
More than 2000 eur	4.40%
Prefer not to say	24.53%
Missing response	0.6%

Source: Created by the authors

Next is when we asked if they consume any type of product, such as K-pop, K-dramas, movies, food, cosmetics, etc., where 80.2% answered Yes, 6.1% answered No, and 13.7% answered Maybe.

**Table 6. Consumption Participation**

Options	Percentage
Yes	80.2%
No	6.1%
Maybe	13.7%

Source: Created by the authors

In order to know the frequency of consumption, we asked the participants how often they consume Korean content/products, where the majority of the respondents choose Sometimes (29%), 17% Daily, 16% Frequently, 20% Hardly ever, and 19% never.

**Table 7. Frequency of Purchasing/Consumption**

Options	Percentage
Daily	17%
Frequently	16%

Sometimes	29%
Hardly ever	20%
Never	19%

Source: Created by the authors

We were interested in knowing how long the participants had been consuming this type of content or products, so we asked them when did they start consuming Korean products or content, where the majority of responses choose 1-5 years ago with 32% of the answers, more than 5 years ago 26%, less than 1 year ago 12%, 30% stated that they do not consume any product.

**Table 8. Timeframe**

Options	Percentage
More than 5 years ago	26%
1-5 years ago,	32%
Less than 1 year ago	12%
I do not consume them	30%

Source: Created by the authors

In order to find out the most popular type of product or the one most commonly consumed by the public, we gave participants a multiple-choice question asking them to choose what kind of product or content they usually consume. In here we could see that the most consumed product were the series and movies with 58%, followed by cosmetics with 57%, music (K-pop) 39%, fashion 22%, gastronomy 30% and we gave them the option to add any other product out of the list where we got 7%. In here we were provided with answers like electronics, snacks and alcohol, football, and even Samsung products.

**Table 9. Most Consumed Products (multiple choice)**

Options	Percentage
Music	39%
Series/Movies	58%
Fashion	22%
Cosmetics	57%
Gastronomy	30%
Manhwa (comics)	32%
Other	7%

Source: Created by the authors

To know the principal channels for spreading the voice and where Korean culture is more present, we asked through what medium they first learned about this topic. As expected, social media is the most common, with 63%. However, different channels are very noticeable, like friends and family with 47%, traditional media 26%, articles or blogs 16%, cultural events or festivals 7%. And finally, we gave them the option to mention another channel that was not on the list, where different answers were provided, like Netflix, traveling, or through collaborations with other companies and brands.

**Table 10. Channel Through Which It Became Known**

Options	Percentage
Social networks (YouTube, Instagram, etc.)	63%
Friends or family	47%
Traditional media (TV, newspaper, etc.)	26%

Articles/blogs	16%
Cultural events/festivals	7%

Source: Created by the authors

The next part of the survey was a Likert scale, in order to measure the agreement of the participants with different statements about consumer behavior and perception of Korean culture itself. We rate the opinion of the respondents with different levels: Totally agree, agree, neutral, disagree, totally disagree (in a scale from 1-5).

**Table 11. Perception of Korean Culture**

Options	I have applied some things from Korean culture in my daily life	I have been interested in learning Korean due to my interest in this culture	I consider that K-pop/K-dramas have affected my lifestyle in some way	I think that South Korean culture has given me a different perspective on social and family values
Totally agree	7.03%	13.28%	3.91%	3.13%
Agree	28.91%	14.84%	26.56%	28.91%
Neutral	32.81%	19.53%	26.56%	29.69%
Disagree	18.75%	31.25%	24.22%	25.78%
Totally disagree	12.50%	21.09%	18.75%	12.50%

Source: Created by the authors

**Table 12. Changes in Consumer Behavior**

Options	I have changed my shopping habits or preferences due to the influence of South Korean culture	I have been inspired by the fashion or style of Korean celebrities	South Korean culture has changed my perception of beauty and personal care	I am likely to continue buying products from Korean brands after trying them
Totally agree	3.91%	7.81%	10.94%	4.69%
Agree	24.22%	28.13%	36.72%	46.88%
Neutral	39.06%	28.13%	29.69%	24.22%
Disagree	17.19%	20.31%	16.41%	8.59%
Totally disagree	15.63%	15.63%	6.25%	15.63%

Source: Created by the authors

We focused on the participants that are fully involved in the Hallyu and how dedicated they have been to Korean culture. So, we first asked the question to the participants if they belong to any part of K-pop/K-drama community or fandom. And as we expected, only a small, but still significant part of the participants answered Yes (22%). 70% answered No, and just 9% maybe.

**Table 13. Belonging to a Community Related to Hallyu**

Options	Percentage
Yes	22%
No	71%
Maybe	9%

Source: Created by the authors

Only to the participants who answered “Yes” in the previous question, we wanted to dive

a little bit deeper in their own consumer behavior, since it is more oriented to the Hallyu than the casual consumers. We asked a multiple-choice question, asking which activities they do as part of a Hallyu-related community, if they belong to one. The majority of the participants agreed that buying related products and merchandise of their fandom is the most common activity (68%). 35% selected the option of participating in online discussions, 39% attended concerts and/or events, and 16% contributed with their support on social media and other platforms. We added one more option to give the opportunity to give options that were not on the list, where we received answers from 16% of the respondents, with activities like making fanarts, watching series, staying tuned with the news and content, and passive consumption.

**Table 14. Fandom Activities**

Options	Percentage
Buy merch (albums, etc.)	68%
Online discussions	35%
Attend concerts/events	39%
Support idols on social media	16%
Other	16%

Source: Created by the authors

The last question related to the Hallyu consumption or interest in the culture; we added a question to level the interest of the participants to visit South Korea as a motivation led by the influence of the Korean wave. In this question we found out that only 5% of participants had traveled to South Korea. On the other hand, 62% of the respondents expressed their desire to visit the country. 25% are only interested in the idea, and 8% are not interested in visiting this country.

**Table 15. Motivation of Traveling to South Korea**

Options	Percentage
Yes, I traveled	5%
Yes, I would like to travel	62%
No, but I am interested	25%
I am not interested	8%

Source: Created by the authors

The results of this research can be analyzed through different points of view, and different variables can affect the perception and consumption of products related to Korean culture. Some of the key findings demonstrated in this survey are:

1. 60% of the daily consumers highly agreed with the statements of the Likert scale, and the implementation of Korean culture and values in their daily life, which are also mostly the young participants between 13-25 years old.
2. 70% of the women that participated in the research seems to be more inspired by the Korean fashion and beauty trends.
3. K-pop music, cosmetics, and K-dramas are the most consumed products, which was to be expected since they are the main elements of Hallyu. However, the participants demonstrated themselves to be aware of the kind of products they consume even if they are not fully involved in the culture. This is the case with casual consumers.
4. As we expected, social media is the principal channel to spread awareness of the Hallyu, especially between the young participants. However, communication with family or friends that participate in the trend has been very relevant when it comes to recommendation.
5. core audience for the Hallyu-related content or products are young women (18-25 years old) who consume Korean content daily via social media

6. The strongest cultural impact is on shopping habits, fashion influence, and lifestyle, but weaker in the language learning area.
7. We performed a Kruskal-Wallis test to compare some statements on the Likert scale with the variables that appear to most affect the respondents' results. In this regard we could find the answers to the statement (Fig. 1).

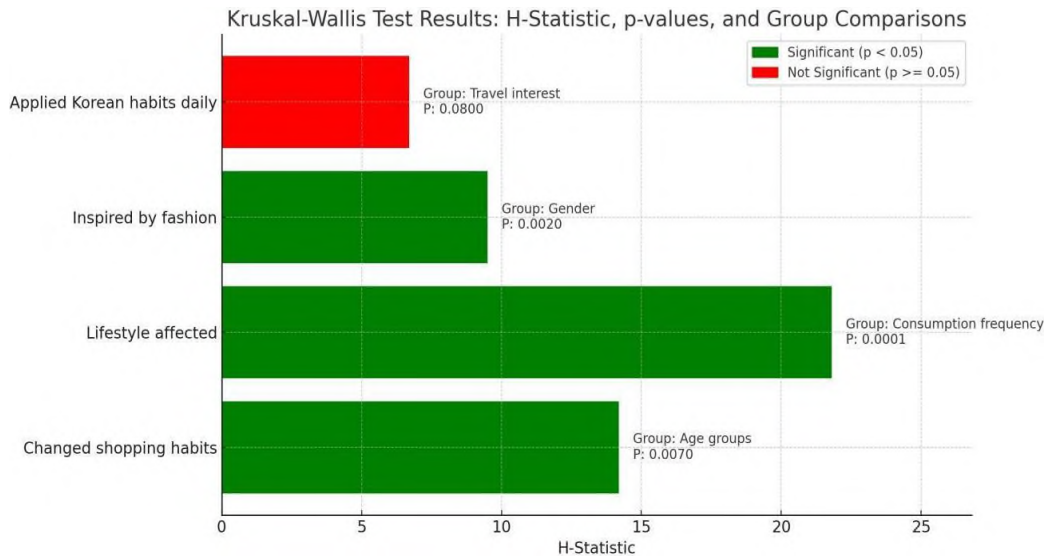


Fig. 1. Kruskal-Wallis Test Results

Source: Created by Authors

In this table we can interpret that 18–25-year-old agree more than older groups that Korean culture changed their shopping habits. As well, the daily consumers showed the strongest lifestyle impact. And, as expected, women are significantly more inspired by Korean fashion or celebrities. By implementing a post-hoc test, we could find some difference regarding the consumption frequency. We can interpret that daily consumers are 2.3 times more likely to agree that Korean culture affects their lifestyle than occasional consumers.

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Hallyu is a mainstream consumption driver outside Korea. A clear majority of respondents consume Korean content/products, with series/movies and cosmetics at the forefront; K-pop and gastronomy also contribute meaningfully to category demand.

Youthful, socially networked audiences amplify impact. Consumers aged 18–25, exposed chiefly via social media, exhibit the strongest lifestyle and shopping-habit changes, underscoring the role of digital channels in converting cultural exposure into consumption. This supports the view of Korean culture as a strategic soft-power tool that improves South Korea's image and reinforces its brands in global markets (Adams, 2022; Yavuzaslan & Cetin, 2016; Kidd, 2017). The heavy role of social media and the 18–25 age group confirms that digitally connected youth are the core engine translating cultural exposure into everyday consumption choices.

Frequency matters for behavioral change. Daily consumers are substantially more likely than occasional consumers to report lifestyle effects, indicating that repeated exposure intensifies cultural adoption and purchasing. This aligns with consumer-behavior theories that repeated

contact strengthens attitudes and habits (Schiffman & Kanuk, 1997; Walters, 1974). A relatively small but highly engaged fandom segment drives intense behaviors, such as album and merch purchases, event attendance, illustrating how niche groups sustain high sales for pop-culture commodities (Kidd, 2017).

Gendered effects are salient in fashion and beauty. Women report greater inspiration from Korean fashion/beauty, mirroring the high penetration of K-beauty and its influence on routines and product trial. About half of respondents expressed intent to continue purchasing Korean brands after trial. On one side, K-beauty encourages skincare routines and supports the image of Korean products as innovative and high quality. On the other, idealized Korean beauty standards and idol body images mirror concerns about appearance pressure and hyper-consumerism, especially among young women (Bicker, 2018; Olvera, 2023; Hayes, 2024). Thus, the study confirms that Hallyu can promote positive self-care and cultural interest while also intensifying materialistic and perfectionist expectations.

Fandoms are smaller but high-intensity. While only about one-fifth of respondents identify with Hallyu fandoms, these consumers show outsized engagement, merch purchases, and event attendance, suggesting a concentrated engine for sustained sales and visibility.

Benefits coexist with risks. Hallyu strengthens country-of-origin perceptions and tourism interest, yet the study also notes concerns tied to idealized beauty standards and potential hyper-consumerism, areas where responsible communication and consumer education are warranted. Overall, the results position Hallyu at the intersection of soft power, popular culture, and consumerism: it shapes preferences and brand choices globally, but calls for critical media literacy and responsible marketing to balance cultural appeal with consumer well-being.

## LITERATURE

1. Adams, T. (2022, September 4). *K-everything: The rise and rise of Korean culture*. The Guardian. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/sep/04/korea-culture-k-pop-music-film-tv-hallyu-v-and-a>
2. Bicker, L. (2018, December 10). *The women who challenge South Korea's strict beauty canons*. BBC News Mundo. <https://www.bbc.com/mundo/noticias-46503160>
3. Blanco, C. (2023). *2023 Duolingo language report*. Duolingo. <https://blog.duolingo.com/2023-duolingo-language-report/>
4. Yavuzaslan, K., & Cetin, M. (2016, January). Soft power concept and soft power indexes. In *Business Challenges in the Changing Economic Landscape-Vol. 1: Proceedings of the 14th Eurasia Business and Economics Society Conference* (pp. 395-409). Cham: Springer International Publishing. DOI:10.1007/978-3-319-22596-8\_28.
5. Ellering, N. (2024, July 24). *Marketing strategy: Templates, definition, importance, benefits, steps, and types*. CoSchedule. <https://coschedule.com/marketing-strategy>
6. Torrero, J., & Hazael, J. (2021). Hallyu: un breve recorrido histórico del ascenso de la ola coreana.
7. Hayes, A. (2024, July 14). *Consumerism: Definition, economic impact, pros & cons*. Investopedia. <https://www.investopedia.com/terms/c/consumerism.asp>
8. Kidd, D. (2017, February 28). *Popular culture*. Oxford Bibliographies. <https://www.oxfordbibliographies.com/display/document/obo-9780199756384/obo-9780199756384-0193.xml>
9. Kim, J. Y. (2023, January 17). *The Korean language could be next global trend thanks to Hallyu*. CNN World. <https://edition.cnn.com/2023/01/17/asia/korean-language-learning-rise-hallyu-intl-hnk-dst/index.html>.
10. Korea Tourism Organization. (2023). *Cha Eun-woo to represent Visit Korea Year*. VISITKOREA. <https://english.visitkorea.or.kr/svc/contents/contentsView.do?menuSn=177&vcontsId=172532>
11. Muros, S. (2020, September 8). *K-pop: The five keys to their marketing strategy*. Qualsevol Nit. <https://qualsevolnit.com/marketing-k-pop/>
12. Netflix. (2024, September 29). *Most popular TV (non-English)*. Netflix Tudum. <https://www.netflix.com/tudum/top10/most-popular/tv-non-english>

13. Olvera, A. (2023, June 25). *Korean beauty standards (and the dangers of following them)*. Melodrama. <https://melodrama.mx/2023-06-belleza-coreana/>
14. Nye, J. (2005). Soft power and higher education. *Harvard University*, 14.
15. Redacción RA. (2024, October 15). *Record growth in South Korean cosmetics exports*. ReporteAsia. <https://reporteasia.com/economia/consumo/2024/10/15/crecimiento-record-exportaciones-cosmeticos-surcoreanos/>
16. Richart, A. (2023, May 6). *The 10 best South Korean series that have crossed borders*. El Confidencial. [https://www.elconfidencial.com/television/series-tv/2023-05-06/listado-mejores-series-surcoreanas-netflix\\_3606132/](https://www.elconfidencial.com/television/series-tv/2023-05-06/listado-mejores-series-surcoreanas-netflix_3606132/)
17. Rossanna23. (2020, July 16). *Korea Tourism Organization shares survey results on K-pop's influence on tourism*. Soompi Spanish. <https://www.soompi.com/es/article/476273wpp/la-organizacion-de-turismo-de-corea-comparte-los-resultados-de-la-encuesta-sobre-la-influencia-del-k-pop-en-el-turismo>
18. Schiffman, L. G., & Kanuk, L. L. (1997). *Consumer behavior* (6th ed.). Prentice Hall.
19. Stay Curious. (2024, January 23). *Korean Hallyu: The history of the Korean wave* [Video]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0MNHwz8YoQM>
20. Walters, G. C. (1974). *Consumer behavior: Theory and practice*. Richard D. Irwin.
21. Yeung, J. (2023, January 17). *South Korea brought K-pop and K-dramas to the world*. CNN. <https://edition.cnn.com/2023/01/17/asia/korean-language-learning-rise-hallyu-intl-hnk-dst/>.

**FIZINĘ NEGALIĄ TURINČIŲ ASMENŲ PASAULĖJAUTOS VIEŠINIMAS  
SOCIALINIAME TINKLE „FACEBOOK”**  
PUBLICIZING THE WORLDVIEW OF PEOPLE WITH PHYSICAL DISABILITIES ON THE  
SOCIAL NETWORK "FACEBOOK"

*Evita Mėlinauskaitė  
Deimantė Cibulskienė  
SMK aukštoji mokykla, Lietuva*

**Abstract**

This article examines the public representation of the worldview of people with physical disabilities on the social networking platform “Facebook”. According to the latest statistical data, approximately 1.3 billion people worldwide live with disabilities, accounting for about 16% of the global population. People with disabilities face various barriers in their daily lives, including inaccessible physical environments, limited employment opportunities, high healthcare costs, as well as prevailing societal stereotypes and stigmatization. A lack of information and the aforementioned barriers may contribute to the exclusion of people with disabilities from social participation and to the experience of negative emotional states. One of the most widely used tools for public communication in today’s world is social media, among which “Facebook” remains the most popular platform. Appropriately selected social networks and their functionalities enable the attraction of a large audience’s attention to publicly disseminated content.

**Keywords:** disability, physical disability, publicizing, social network “Facebook”.

**Anotacija**

Straipsnyje nagrinėjama tema apie fizinę negalią turinčių asmenų pasaulėjautos viešinimą socialiniame tinkle „Facebook“. Remiantis naujausiais statistiniais duomenimis, apie 1,3 mlrd. žmonių pasaulyje gyvena su negalia, o tai sudaro maždaug apie 16 % pasaulio gyventojų. Negalią turintys asmenys kasdien susiduria su įvairiomis kliūtimis: nepritaikyta fizinė aplinka, ribotomis darbo galimybėmis, didelėmis sveikatos priežiūros išlaidomis bei visuomenėje vyraujantiems stereotipais ir stigmatizacija. Informacijos trūkumas ir minėtos kliūtys gali būti priežastis, kad negalią turintys asmenys nedalyvauja visuomeninėje veikloje, patiria neigiamas nuotaikas ir pan. Vienas dažniausiai naudojamų viešinimo įrankių šiandieniniame pasaulyje yra socialiniai tinklai, iš kurių populiariausias – „Facebook“. Tinkamai pasirinkti viešinimui socialiniai tinklai ir jų funkcijos leidžia atkreipti didelės auditorijos dėmesį į viešinamą turinį.

**Raktiniai žodžiai:** negalia, fizinė negalia, viešinimas, socialiniai tinklai, „Facebook“.

**ĮVADAS**

**Tyrimo aktualumas.** Pasaulio sveikatos organizacijos (World Health Organization) duomenimis, apie 1,3 mlrd. žmonių pasaulyje gyvena su negalia, o tai sudaro maždaug 16 % pasaulio gyventojų. 2023 m. pabaigoje Lietuvoje gyveno apie 224,9 tūkst. asmenų su negalia. Remiantis statistikos duomenimis, daugiau yra negalią turinčių moterų negu vyrų. 2023 m. negalią turinčių moterų dalis daugelyje valstybių buvo didesnė nei vyrų. ES vidutiniškai 29,2 % visų moterų turi negalią, palyginti su 24,3 % visų vyrų. Šie statistiniai duomenys mums rodo, kad negalią turintys žmonės sudaro nemažą dalį žmonių populiacijos ir to negalima ignoruoti. Taip pat svarbu ir tai, kad daugelis žmonių gali turėti net ir kelias negalios rūšis, pavyzdžiui, gali būti kurčias ir fiziškai neįgalus. Tai parodo, kad bendras pasaulyje žmonių su negalia skaičius nėra lygus žmonių su negalia sumai pagal negalios rūšį. Yra daug įvairių negalių, kurias pagal sutrikimo pobūdį galima suskirstyti į keturias pagrindines rūšis: protinė negalia, sensorinė negalia, psichinė negalia ir fizinė negalia. Kaip teigia Coleman (2024), asmenys, turintys kurios nors rūšies negalią, susiduria su įvairiais iššūkiais, kurie priklauso nuo to, kokia negalia asmenį kamuoja. Dažniausiai tai – prieinamumą ribojantys aplinkos veiksniai, švietimo sistemos spragos, skurdas ir daug kitų kliūčių, kurios gali turėti neigiamos įtakos negalią turinčio žmogaus pasaulėjautai. Calvert (2021) akcentuoja, kad negalią turinčio asmens pasaulėjautą paveikia socialinė atskirtis, taip pat ir neigiami stereotipai, kurie gali privesti prie socialinės atskirties ir izoliacijos, bei finansiniai

sunkumai, kurie lemia prastesnę gyvenimo kokybę ir tai gali privesti prie psichinės sveikatos pablogėjimo. Pasaulio sveikatos organizacijos duomenimis (2023), viena iš dažniausiai pasitaikančių negalių yra fizinė negalia, kurią turi apie 8–10 proc. pasaulio gyventojų. Fizinė negalia neapsiriboja diagnoze, o apima realius funkcionavimo sunkumus kasdieniame gyvenime, kurie gali paveikti asmenų su negalia gyvenimo kokybę: pradedant lipimu laiptais ir baigiant buities reikalais (Berg, 2025). Viena didžiausių problemų, su kuria susiduria negalią turintys žmonės, tai yra darbo prieinamumas. Žmonėms su fizine negalia yra sunkiau susirasti darbą. Daugelis darbdavių atsisako įdarbinti negalią turinčius žmones, nes jie mano, kad neįgalus asmuo negalės 100 % savęs atiduoti darbui (Luc, 2021). Aktualios informacijos viešinimas socialiniuose tinkluose būtų efektyvus būdas sulaukti didesnio visuomenės dėmesio. Socialinį tinklą „Facebook“ naudoja nemaža dalis populiacijos, dėl to tai būtų tinkamiausia platforma dalintis turiniu su visuomene, diskutuoti įvairiomis temomis, apie kurias mažai kalbama žiniasklaidoje.

**Tyrimo problema.** Nors apie 16 proc. visuomenės sudaro asmenys, turintys negalią, tačiau vis dar susiduriama su problema, kad šalia neįgalųjų esantiems žmonėms yra sudėtinga įsijausti į kito žmogaus situaciją. Todėl būtų labai svarbu daugiau kalbėti apie asmenis su negalia ir apie tai, kaip jie jaučiasi, kaip būtų galima jiems padėti arba netrukdyti. Viena pagrindinių tyrimo problemų: ar viešojoje erdvėje yra pakankamai kalbama apie negalią turinčius asmenis?

**Tyrimo tikslas.** Išsiaiškinti turinio viešinimo galimybes socialiniame tinkle „Facebook“, kurios leistų atkreipti dėmesį į fizinę negalią turinčių žmonių pasaulėjautą.

**Tyrimo metodologija.** Mokslinės literatūros analizė, kiekybinis tyrimas (anketinė apklausa). Tyrime dalyvavo 420 respondentų.

**Tyrimo rezultatai.** Atlikus kiekybinį tyrimą, paaiškėjo, kad didesnė dalis respondentų yra asmenys, kurie neturi negalios. Kita dalis atsakiusių įvardijo, kad jie arba jų aplinkos žmonės turi fizinę negalią. Analizuojant gautus duomenis apie iššūkius, su kuriais susiduria negalią turintys asmenys, išsiaiškinta, kad vienas didžiausių ir dažniausiai pasitaikančių yra darbo paieška. Taip pat nemažai respondentų išskyrė, kad nedalyvauja visuomeninėje veikloje dėl tam tikrų priežasčių. Respondentų buvo klausama, ar apie negalią ir jų kasdienybėje iškylančius sunkumus yra dažnai viešumoje kalbama. Atsakymai parodė, kad apie tai nepakankamai diskutuojama, nėra daug aiškaus, įtaigaus turinio, todėl kitiems gali trūkti informacijos ir sunku yra įsijausti į negalią turinčio žmogaus kasdienybę. Norint aktualizuoti temą ir viešinti sukurtą apie negalią turinčio žmogaus pasaulėjautą turinį rekomenduotina rinktis populiariausią socialinį tinklą „Facebook“ bei jame talpinti medžiagą. Atlikus tyrimą, išsiaiškinta, kad viena įdomiausių, labiausiai patraukiančių dėmesį formų socialiniuose tinkluose yra vaizdo įrašai.

**Tyrimo originalumas / vertė.** Pristatoma jautri ir aktuali visuomenei tema, nes vien Lietuvoje apie 8 proc. šalies gyventojų yra asmenys, turintys oficialiai pripažintą negalią. Tyrimas atskleidė, kad apie negalią turinčius asmenis, jų kasdienybę ir iššūkius turi būti kalbama dažniau, o su socialinių tinklų pagalba ši informacija, leidžianti suprasti negalią turinčių asmenų pasaulėjautą, galėtų pasiekti didelę auditoriją. Atliktas tyrimas yra vertingas, nes šia tema panašaus pobūdžio tyrimų trūksta, todėl gauti rezultatai yra nauji, aktualūs, skatinantys toliau tyrinėti šią temą kitais aspektais.

## NEGALIOS SAMPRATA

Negalios apibrėžimas kaskart paskatina daug diskusijų. Negaliai apibrėžti nėra vienos pagrindinės vartojamos sąvokos. Negalios apibrėžimą autoriai supranta skirtingai: vieni ją apibrėžia medicininiu, kiti – socialiniu modeliu. Medicinos modelis – tai požiūris į negalią kaip į individualią žmogaus problemą, požiūris į asmenį, kuris turi sveikatos sutrikimų. Socialinis

modelis – požiūris į negalią ir kaip tai yra formuojama visuomenės (Makštutytė, Naujanienė, 2008). Akcentuojama, kad žmogų riboja ne jo sveikatos sutrikimas, o visuomenės ir aplinkos sukurti barjerai. Negalia suprantama kaip socialinė problema. Analizuojant mokslinę literatūrą ir įvairiausių autorių pateiktus negalios sąvokų apibrėžimus, išryškėja, kad vienas modelis pabrėžia individo būklę, kitas – socialines ir struktūrines kliūtis. Pagal medicininį modelį, negalia – tai ilgalaikiai fizinių, psichikos, intelekto ar jutimo sutrikimai (Dubrauskaitė, 2018), pagal socialinį modelį, negalia – tai situacija, kai žmogus negali dirbti, pasirūpinti savimi ir yra priklausomas nuo kitų (Ruškus, 2019; Owen, 2017).

Visuomenėje visa dar vyrauja stereotipai apie negalią. Stereotipas yra teigiamas arba neigiamas įsitikinimas apie tam tikrą žmonių grupę (McLeod, 2023). Žmonės, kurie priima neigiamus stereotipus, juose kyla neigiami jausmai ir nusistatymai. Iš neigiamų jausmų bei nusistatymų atsiranda diskriminacija arba neigiamos mintys bei jausmai žmogui, esančiam stigmatizuotoje grupėje. Nuomonę apie negalią visuomenėje sustiprina žiniasklaidoje viešinama informacija, negalia dažnai vaizduojama dramatiškai ir stereotipiškai. Ši informacija gali lemti negalią turinčių asmenų izoliaciją bei socialinės įtraukties problemas.

Remiantis Coleman (2024), negalią turintys asmenys dažnai susiduria su įvairiais iššūkiais, kurie riboja jų gyvenimo būdą. Iššūkiai, su kuriais susiduriama, priklauso nuo negalios rūšies. Yra daug įvairių negalių, kurias pagal sutrikimo pobūdį galima suskirstyti į keturias pagrindines rūšis:

- protinė negalia;
- sensorinė negalia;
- psichinė negalia;
- fizinė negalia.

Protinė negalia – tai akivaizdus protinių sugebėjimų nukrypimas, pasireiškiantis elgesio, emocijų sutrikimais. Ši negalios rūšis yra įgimta ir išryškėja vaikystėje, pirmaisiais gimimo metais arba vėliau. Protinei negaliai priskiriami Dauno sindromas ir autizmo sutrikimai. Jei jie nenustatomi vaikystėje, vėliau tai gali neigiamai pasireikšti bendraujant su kitais žmonėmis, darbo aplinkoje ar pan. Sensorinė negalia – tai daugiausiai regos ir klausos sutrikimai. Pagal Pasaulio sveikatos organizaciją (2024), sensorinė negalia nėra vien tik medicininis sutrikimas, ji vertinama per asmens jutimo funkcijų ir aplinkos veiksnių sąveiką. Kita negalios rūšis – psichinė negalia – matoma neakivaizdžiai. Tai – ilgalaikiai psichikos funkcijų sutrikimai, kurie daro reikšmingą poveikį asmens mąstymui, emocijoms, elgesiui, pasireiškia depresija, šizofrenija, nerimo sutrikimais. Fizinė negalia – tai ilgalaikiai ar nuolatiniai kūno sutrikimai, kai dėl tam tikrų priežasčių žmogus negali tinkamai judėti, yra kitokio, neįprasto sudėjimo arba visiškai negali judėti. Remiantis Pasaulio sveikatos organizacija (2024), fizinė negalia suprantama ne tik kaip medicininė būklė, bet kaip asmens funkcionavimo ir aplinkos veiksnių sąveika. Bet kokios rūšies negalią turintys asmenys dažnai jaučia visuomenės spaudimą, socialinę stigmatizaciją ir diskriminaciją vienokiu ar kitokiu požiūriu. Dėl to jie gali būti apimti neigiamų emocijų: pykti ant savęs, komplikuoti įprastas situacijas, nervuotis, kad visuomenė kokia nors forma juos atstumia. Neįgalaus asmens nusivylimas savimi gali nesąmoningai formuoti jo pasaulėjautą. Pasaulėjautos apibrėžimas yra labai platus, nes apima daug žmogaus gyvenimo aspektų. Iš esmės, šis apibrėžimas nusako, kaip formuojasi žmogaus mąstymas per visą gyvenimą. Analizuojant įvairią mokslinę literatūrą pasaulėjautos samprata yra apibrėžiama kaip žmogaus formavimasis, patiriant gyvenimiškas situacijas. Žmogaus pasaulėjautą formuoja aplinka, kurioje jis gyvena, jaučia, išgyvena, mato. Aplinkos veiksniai daro įtaką žmogaus jausmams, santykiui su savuoju Aš. Pasaulėjauta yra glaudžiai susijusi su pasaulėžiūra (Mifsud, Sammut, 2023).

Apibendrinant galima teigti, kad negalia neturi vienos pagrindinės sąvokos. Moksliniuose šaltiniuose negalia autorių yra apibrėžiama skirtingai. Vieni autoriai negalią priskiria medicinos modeliui, kai tai yra susieta su fiziologija, kiti negalią apibūdina socialiniu aspektu.

## VIEŠINIMAS IR JO REIKŠMĖ

Įvairioms technologijoms tobulėjant atsiranda ir įvairiausių viešinimo būdų. Viešinimas yra informacijos perdavimas visuomenei per žiniasklaidą (Apuke, 2018). Remiantis Aula (2010), yra dvi viešinimo rūšys: internetinis viešinimas ir neinternetinis viešinimas. Internetinis viešinimas yra atliekamas, naudojant interneto pagrindu veikiančią platformą. Į internetinį viešinimą įeina įvairios socialinės medijos, tinklaraščiai, produktų apžvalgos, interviu, reklama, įvairūs pranešimai. Tuo tarpu neinternetinis viešinimas yra naudojamas be interneto pagalbos. Toks viešinimas yra atliekamas žurnaluose, laikraščiuose, reklaminiuose stenduose. Portwood (2023) teigia, kad viešinimas atlieka labai svarbų vaidmenį, platinant įvairiausias žinias, idėjas, aktualias temas. Viešinimas paskatina diskusijas tarp žmonių. Diskusijos aktualiomis temomis turi labai svarbų vaidmenį visuomenei, nes tai padeda suvokti žmonėms juos supančius įvykius. Portwood (2023) išskiria atsakingą viešinimą kaip patikimą, prieinamą, teisingą, įtraukiantį turinį ir pabrėžia, kad visuomenė turi žinoti visas aktualijas.

Apibendrinant galima teigti, kad tobulėjant technologijoms, kito viešinimo būdai ir komunikacija. Terminas „viešinimas“ yra apibūdinimas kaip informacijos perdavimas visuomenei per žiniasklaidą. Efektyvus viešinimas gali pagerinti produkto, prekės ženklo, įmonės, įvairaus turinio žinomumą. Norint viešinti įvairių, įdomų turinį, pirmiausia reikia atkreipti dėmesį į pagrindinius viešinimo aspektus, t.y. kokia žinutė bus transliuojama, kurioje platformoje bus viešinama, kokiai auditorijai, kuriuo laiku ir kaip dažnai bus skelbiamas turinys. Taip pat vienas pagrindinių viešinimo vaidmenų yra įvairių naujienų platinimas, o tai atveria erdvę viešai diskusijai. Diskusijos padeda žmonėms suprasti, kas vyksta jų aplinkoje ir pasaulyje.

## Socialinio tinklo „Facebook“ ypatumai

Norint suvokti, kas yra socialiniai tinklai, pirmiausiai reikia išsiaiškinti, ką reiškia šie du žodžiai. „Socialinis“ reiškia, kad žmogus, bendraudamas su kitais, kuria santykius, dalinasi mintimis. Socialumas yra būtinas žmogaus gyvenime, nes kitaip nebūtų ryšio su kitu žmogumi. Ryšį su žmogumi palaikome, kai dalinamės pomėgiais, idėjomis, kalbame apie tam tikras temas, kurios yra svarbios, įdomios. „Tinklas“ – sistema, komunikacija per įvairiausius kanalus. Taigi, socialiniai tinklai yra žmonių nuomonės, idėjų, nuotraukų, kūrybinių idėjų skleidimas per pasirinktas sistemas (Luttrell, 2016). Paljug (2025) socialinius tinklus įvardija kaip internetines platformas, kuriose galima dalintis įvairia informacija, virtualiai bendrauti žinutėmis bei vaizdo skambučiais. Socialinius tinklus naudoja daug pasaulio gyventojų ir tai vienos populiariausių erdvių ryšiams plėtoti. (Appel, Grewal, Hadi, 2019).

Socialiniai tinklai gali turėti tiek teigiamos, tiek neigiamos įtakos vartotojui. Kaip teigta anksčiau, socialiniai tinklai padeda susisiekti, bendrauti su draugais, artimaisiais, bendradarbiais, palaikyti ryšius per atstumą. Tai puiki vieta dalytis idėjomis, originaliu turiniu, pasiekti plačią auditoriją, būti pastebėtam, įvertintam. Šios platformos turi itin teigiamą poveikį tuomet, kai reikia greitai pranešti apie įvykį bei pasiekti didelę auditoriją. Socialiniai tinklai vienija panašių interesų žmones, motyvuoja siekti bendrų tikslų, o tai skatina pozityvius pokyčius visuomenėje (Hashem, 2024). Kiekvienas socialinis tinklas yra savaip naudingas, viešinant įvairų turinį. Viešinant įvairų turinį svarbu išnaudoti visas galimybes, kurias suteikia socialiniai tinklai, todėl reikia išsiaiškinti, kokios aktualiausios funkcijos gali užtikrinti norimus rezultatus.

Socialinių tinklų lyderis, remiantis 2024 m. duomenimis, yra „Facebook“. Tai 2004 m. pradėtas projektas, kurio autoriai – „Harvardo universiteto studentai: Mark Zuckerberg, Chris Hughes, Andrew McCollum, Dustin Moskovitz, Eduardo Saverin. Šio socialinio tinklo populiarumą galimai lėmė tai, kad jis nemokamas, patogus naudoti, turi daug funkcijų, galima greitai prisiregistruoti. „Facebook“ vartotojai turi galimybę viešinti informaciją, dalintis nuotraukomis, vaizdo medžiaga ir naudoti kitas funkcijas (Kerner, 2021). Šio socialinio tinklo naudotojų keliamas turinys gali susilaukti įvairių reakcijų, komentarų, pasidalijimo. Grupėje galima tapti vienodų pomėgių bendruomenės dalimi, dalintis naujienomis, idėjomis. Laiko juostoje dažniausiai vartotojų tikslas yra pasidalinti su kitais informacija bei pamatyti savo draugų, artimųjų viešinamą turinį. Pokalbių programėlė „Messenger“ leidžia socialinio tinklo naudotojams susirašinėti arba susisiekti vaizdo skambučiu su šeima, artimaisiais bei draugais. Renginių funkcija padeda planuoti laisvalaikį su draugais, skatina vartotoją domėtis kultūriniu gyvenimu. Pranešimų funkcija padeda socialinio tinklo vartotojui iš karto pastebėti, kas sureagavo į jo paviešintą turinį arba ką kiti žmonės paskelbė, pasidalino, pakomentavo viešai.

Apibendrinant galima teigti, kad socialiniai tinklai yra labai populiarūs, juos naudoja apie 5 milijardai žmonių. Socialiniuose tinkluose galima bendrauti su artimaisiais ir visuomene, taip pat galima kelti įvairias naujienas, reklamą, greitai ir patogiai sužinoti visas aktualijas. Socialinis tinklas „Facebook“ yra visų laikų vienas populiariausių socialinių tinklų pasaulyje.

## **TYRIMO METODOLOGIJA**

Pasirinktas kiekybinis tyrimo tipas, nes tai leidžia gauti objektyvius duomenis. Šie duomenys yra perteikiami statistiškai ir leidžia daryti prognozes (Williams, 2021). Kiekybinis tyrimas pasirinktas, norint sužinoti žmonių nuomonę apie asmenis, kurie turi negalią. Kiekybinio tyrimo duomenys buvo renkami, pasitelkiant struktūrizuotą apklausos metodą. Anketa sudaryta iš uždarų ir atvirų klausimų. Respondentai lengvai, patogiu laiku galėjo užpildyti formą, atsakymų pateikimams taip pat nebuvo laiko limito ir respondentai galėjo pagalvoti prieš atsakydami (Kuphanga, 2024). Anketoje pateikti klausimai leido sužinoti respondentų nuomonę apie negalią turinčius asmenis. Surinkti duomenys buvo perkelti į „Microsoft Excel“ programą.

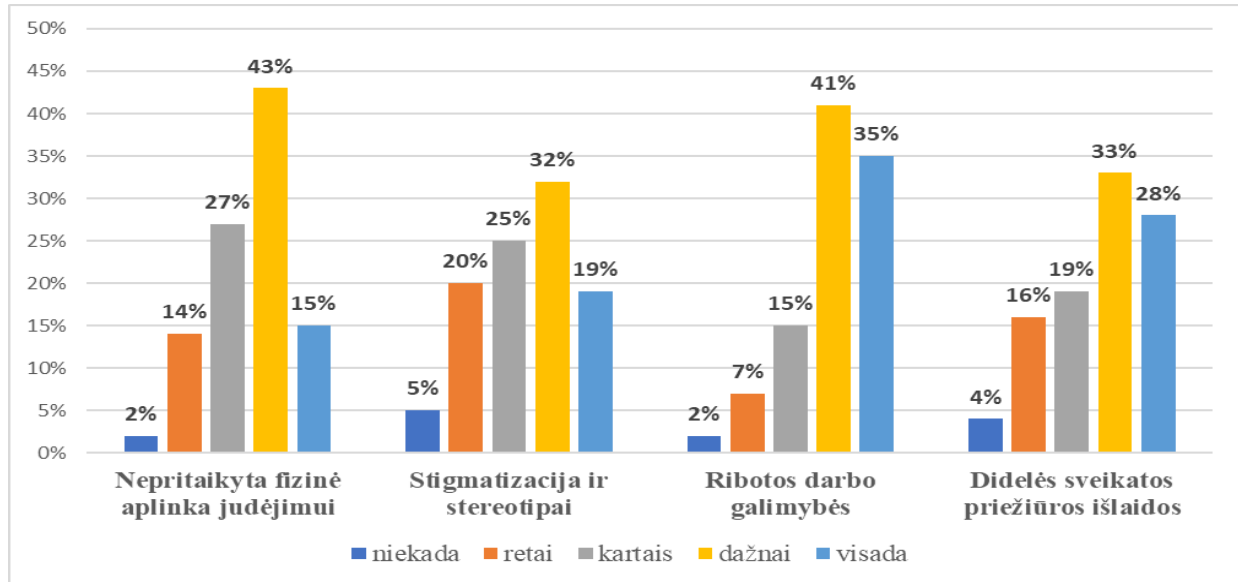
Tyrimo instrumentas – klausimynas. Kiekybinio tyrimo duomenys buvo renkami naudojant „Google Forms“. Apklausa buvo vykdoma per socialinį tinklą „Facebook“: siunčiama į grupes, apklausos nuoroda dalintasi su asmenimis per „Messenger“ programėlę. Iš viso buvo suformuluota 16 klausimų, iš jų – 15 uždarų ir 1 atviras. Visi gauti duomenys buvo perkelti į „Microsoft Excel“ programą, kurioje buvo sudaromos diagramos pagal pateiktus atsakymus.

**Tyrimo imtis ir atrankos būdas.** tyrimo metu buvo apklausiami Lietuvos gyventojai. Tyrimo populiacijos dydžiui apskaičiuoti buvo pasitelktas Oficialiosios statistikos portalas, kurio 2024 m. duomenimis Lietuvoje buvo 2 513 279 gyventojų nuo 15 iki 65 m. ir daugiau. Tyrimo imčiai apskaičiuoti buvo naudota internetinė skaičiuoklė „Sample size calculator“. Šioje skalėje buvo pasirinktas patikimumas 95 procentai, paklaidos tikimybė – 5 procentai ir populiacijos proporcija – 50 procentų. Pagal gautą rezultatą tyrimo imtis – 385.

**Tyrimo etika.** Prieš respondentams pradėdant atsakyti į klausimus, informuota, apie ką yra apklausa ir kokių tikslų yra daromas šis tyrimas. Taip pat tyrime sutikusiems dalyvauti respondentams buvo pranešta, kad gauti rezultatai bus naudojami baigiamojo darbo rašymo tikslais. Respondentams, dalyvaujantiems tyrime, buvo garantuojamas anonimiškumas. Atliekant tyrimą buvo laikomasi geranoriškumo, pagarbos asmens orumui, teisingumo principų.

## TYRIMO REZULTATAI IR DUOMENŲ ANALIZĖ

Atliekant kiekybinį tyrimą buvo siekiama išsiaiškinti, su kokiomis kliūtimis, respondentų nuomone, susiduria negalią turintys asmenys (žr. 1 pav.).

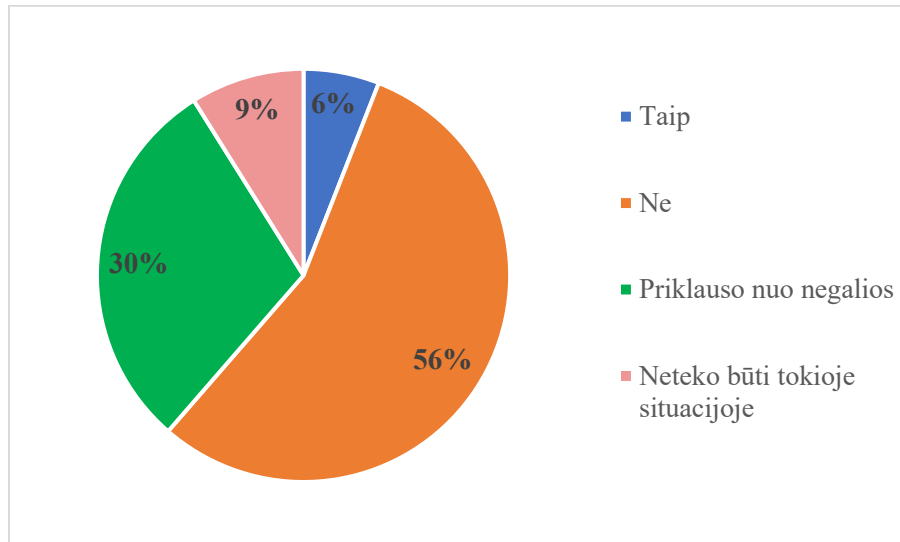


1 pav. Tyrimo dalyvių nuomonė apie negalią turinčių žmonių kliūtis

Šaltinis: sudaryta autorių, remiantis tyrimo rezultatais, 2025

Kai kurie gauti duomenys nustebino, nes, kaip matoma pateiktoje diagramoje (1 pav.), 2 % apklaustųjų galvoja, kad negalią turintis asmuo nesusiduria su nepritaikyta fizine aplinka, o 14 % mano, kad susiduria retai. 27 % respondentų atsakė, kad susiduria „kartais“, o daugiausia apklaustųjų (43 %) teigė, kad negalią turintis asmuo „dažnai“ susiduria su nepritaikyta fizine aplinka. 15 % respondentų mano, kad negalią turintys asmenys visada susiduria su šia kliūtimi. Respondentų teiraujantis apie stigmatizaciją ir stereotipus (žr. ten pat), 5 % atsakiusiųjų mano, kad negalią turintys asmenys gyvenime nepatiria stigmatizacijos ir stereotipų. 20 % apklaustųjų atsakė, kad patiria retai, o atsakymą „kartais“ pažymėjo 25 % visų atsakiusiųjų. Daugiausiai, 32 % respondentų, mano, kad negalią turintys žmonės „dažnai“ susiduria su šia kliūtimi, o „visada“ pažymėjo 19 % tyrimo dalyvių. Respondentų klausiant apie galimai vieną aktualiausių kliūčių – ribotas darbo galimybes, net 76 % teigė, kad su šia problema negalią turintys asmenys susiduria visada arba dažnai. Tik 15 % atsakiusiųjų pažymėjo atsakymą „kartais“, 7 % – „retai“, 2 % – „niekada“. Paskutinėje dalyje, išreiškiant nuomonę dėl didelių sveikatos priežiūros išlaidų, 33% respondentų manymu, negalią turintys asmenys dažnai patiria šį iššūkį. Kad tai mažiausiai aktuali problema pažymėjo 4 % apklaustųjų. Taip pat didelė dalis tyrimo dalyvių (28 %) mano, kad negalią turintiems žmonėms visada kyla sunkumų dėl sveikatos priežiūros išlaidų, 19 % galvoja, kad tokios problemos kyla tik kartais, 16 % – retai. Taigi, iš pateiktų atsakymų galima daryti išvadą, kad didžioji dalis respondentų mano, jog negalią turintys asmenys visada susiduria su ribotomis darbo galimybėmis bei viena kliūčių, su kuria taip pat susiduriama, yra nepritaikyta fizinė aplinka judėjimui. Šiek tiek daugiau nei pusė respondentų teigė, kad didelės su sveikatos priežiūra susijusios išlaidos yra aktuali problema neįgaliesiems. Šis teiginys gali būti tiesiogiai susijęs su kita, jau anksčiau minėta kliūtimi, – ribotomis darbo galimybėmis.

Kadangi tyrimas yra apie negalią turinčių žmonių pasaulėjautą, buvo norima sužinoti, ar respondentus trikdo šalia esantys žmonės su negalia. Atsakymą į klausimą „Ar Jus trikdo šalia esantys žmonės su negalia?“ (žr. 2 pav.) respondentai rinkosi iš visų pateiktų variantų.

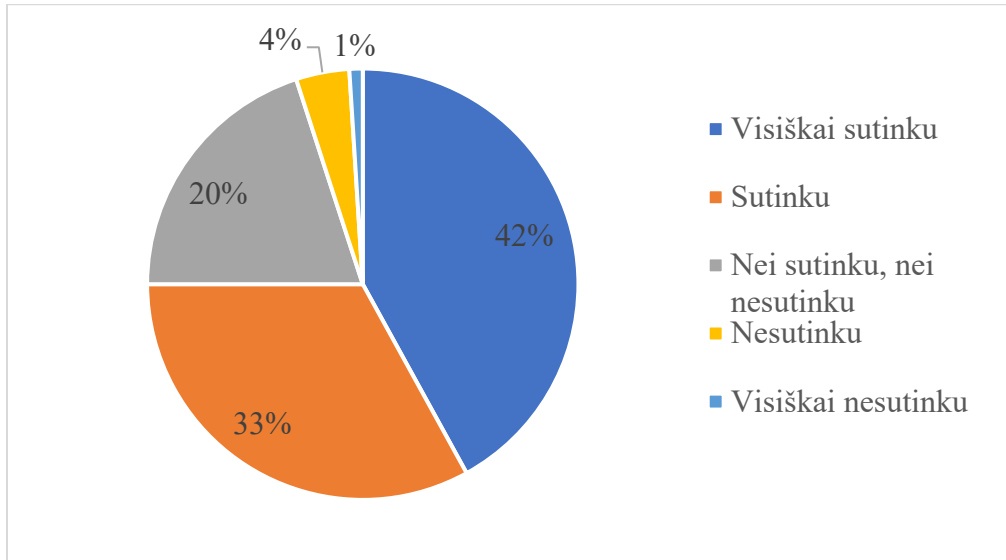


2 pav. Tyrimo dalyvių bloga savijauta šalia negalią turinčio asmens  
Šaltinis: sudaryta autorių, remiantis tyrimo rezultatais, 2025

Iš visų 420 apklaustųjų 56 % atsakė, kad jų netrikdo šalia esantys žmonės su negalia. 30 % respondentų teigė, kad juos trikdo tik tam tikrą negalią turintys asmenys. 9 % respondentų nebuvo tokioje situacijoje, o 6 % apklaustųjų prisipažino, kad yra nejauku būti prie negalią turinčio asmens. Apibendrinant, galima teigti, kad didelė dalis respondentų nesijaučia nejaukiai prie negalią turinčio asmens, nepaisant negalios rūšies, tačiau, atsižvelgiant į kitus gautus atsakymus, būtų galima daryti prielaidą, kad žmonėms trūksta informacijos apie negalią turinčius asmenis, kaip bendrauti su jais, kokią pagalbą pasiūlyti ar pan.

Atliekant tyrimą buvo norima sužinoti negalią turinčių asmenų arba tų, kurie savo artimoje aplinkoje pažįsta negalią turinčius asmenis, nuomonę, apie jų dalyvavimą visuomeninėje veikloje. Apklausos rezultatai parodė, kad 56 % negalią turinčių asmenų negali arba nenori dalyvauti visuomeninėje veikloje dėl įvairiausių priežasčių.

Respondentai turėjo galimybę atsakyti į klausimą „Kaip jūs manote, ar pakankamai yra diskutuojama apie negalią turinčių žmonių kasdienybę?“. Tyrimo duomenys rodo, kad daugiausia apklaustųjų pažymėjo atsakymą „Ne“ – net 69 %, o tai veda prie išvados, kad apie negalią turinčių žmonių kasdienybę kalbama nepakankamai dažnai ir skiriamas per mažas dėmesys problemoms, su kuriomis šie žmonės susiduria. Netikėta pasirodė tai, kad 22 % respondentų atsakė neturintys nuomonės, ar apie negalią turinčių asmenų kasdienybę diskutuojama pakankamai. Tai galėtų reikšti, kad net viena penktoji visų tyrimo dalyvių nesusimąsto ar nepastebi žmonių su negalia temų viešumoje. Tik 9 % apklaustųjų mano, jog šia tema yra diskutuojama pakankamai. Galima teigti, kad rezultatai rodo, jog apie šią temą diskutuojama mažai, o ji yra labai svarbi negalią turintiems asmenims ir tiesiogiai siejasi su jų gyvenimo kokybe bei pasaulėjauta. Atsakymai į kitą klausimą (žr. 3 pav.) dar kartą patvirtino būtinybę kalbėti viešoje erdvėje apie negalią turinčius asmenis dažniau.

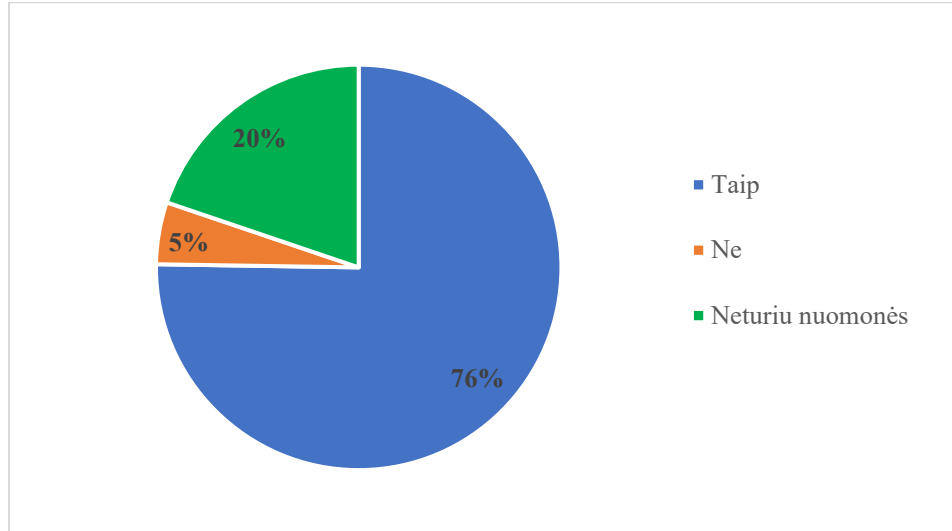


3 pav. Tyrimo dalyvių nuomonė, ar dažniau turėtų būti kalbama apie negalią turinčius asmenis  
Šaltinis: sudaryta autorių, remiantis tyrimo rezultatais, 2025

Šiuo klausimu savo nuomonę išsakė visi respondentai. 75 % tyrimo dalyvių visiškai sutinka arba sutinka, kad apie negalią turinčius žmones turi būti kalbama dažniau. Vėlgi, nuomonės apie tai neturėjo viena penktoji visų atsakiusiųjų. Kad apie negalią turinčius asmenis būtų kalba dažniau nesutiko arba visiškai nesutiko 5% respondentų. Atsižvelgiant į rezultatus, galima teigti, kad mūsų visuomenėje trūksta informacijos apie negalią turinčių asmenų kasdienybę. Džiugu tai, kad dauguma atsakymų parodė, jog visuomenė nori žinoti ir, tikėtina, prisidėti prie to, kad negalią turintys žmonės jautųsi patogiau ir gyventų kokybiškiau.

Kaip buvo išsiaiškinta anksčiau, populiariausias socialinis tinklas yra „Facebook“ ir visi atsakiusieji turi savo paskyras jame arba/ir naudojami pokalbių programėle „Messenger“. Tai dar kartą įrodo, kad šis socialinis tinklas yra puiki erdvė informacijai viešinti ir kad ta informacija gali pasiekti didelį žmonių skaičių, ypač naudojant įvairias „Facebook“ funkcijas.

Respondentų buvo pasiteirauta, ar turinys apie negalią turinčių žmonių pasaulėjautą galėtų būti viešinamas socialiniuose tinkluose. Didžioji dalis atsakiusiųjų (žr. 4 pav.) yra įsitikinę, jog tai būtų tinkamas sprendimas.



4 pav. Tyrimo dalyvių nuomonė, atskleidžiant žmonių su negalia pasaulėjautą per socialinius tinklus

Šaltinis: sudaryta autorių, remiantis tyrimo rezultatais, 2025

Analizuojant rezultatus, paaiškėjo, kad 76 % tyrimo dalyvių atsakė teigiamai. Neigiamą atsakymą pažymėjo 5 % respondentų. Remiantis surinktais duomenimis, socialiniai tinklai galėtų padėti atskleisti žmonių su negalia pasaulėjautą, viešinant įvairiausių turinį.

## IŠVADOS

1. Negaliai apibrėžti yra vartojama daug sąvokų. Kiekvienas žmogus ją supranta skirtingai. Medicininis modeliu negalia yra apibūdinama kaip ilgalaikis, fizinis, psichikos, intelekto ar jutimo sutrikimas. Tuo tarpu socialiniu modeliu negalia yra apibrėžiama kaip visuomenės požiūris ir negalios formavimas per visuomenę. Žmogaus su negalia iššūkiai priklauso nuo to, kokią negalią asmuo turi. Negalios sutrikimai skirstomos į 4 rūšis: protinė negalia, sensorinė negalia, psichinė negalia, fizinė negalia. Fizinė negalia yra dažniausiai pasitaikanti negalios rūšis. Fizinė negalia apibrėžiama kaip trumpalaikė arba ilgalaikė būseną, kai negalima judėti. Kiekvienas asmuo, kuris turi kokios nors rūšies negalią susiduria su įvairiaisiais iššūkiais, bet pagrindinės yra šios: nepritaikyta aplinka judėjimui, stereotipai ir stigmatizacija, ribotos darbo galimybės ir didelės išlaidos sveikatos priežiūrai.

2. Vienas populiariausių socialinių tinklų yra „Facebook“. Šis socialinis tinklas turi daug funkcijų, kurios leidžia sėkmingai viešinti įvairų turinį. Viena pagrindinių funkcijų, leidžiančių viešinti informaciją, yra „laiko juosta“, kurioje galima talpinti vaizdo įrašus, nuotraukas ir kitą įdomų turinį. Socialinis tinklas „Facebook“ taip pat turi ir kitų funkcijų, kurios leidžia reaguoti į viešinamą turinį. Tinkamai parinktos funkcijos suteikia galimybę pasiekti didelį ratą žmonių ir pasidalinti aktualia informacija.

3. Atlikus kiekybinį tyrimą, galima teigti, kad respondentų požiūris į negalią yra skirtingas. Verta pastebėti, kad daugumai respondentų negalia nesukelia neigiamų emocijų. Daugiausiai apklaustųjų mano, kad negalią turintys asmenys dažniausiai susiduria su nepritaikyta fizine aplinka ir ribotomis darbo galimybėmis. Taip pat tyrimo rezultatai atskleidė, kad apie negalią yra kalbama nepakankamai ir apie tai turėtų būti kalbama dažniau. Respondentų nuomone, efektyviausias būdas skleisti apie negalią turinčių asmenų pasaulėjautą, yra socialiniai tinklai.

## LITERATŪRA

1. Appel, G., Grewal, L., Hadi, R. The future of social media in marketing. *Journal of the Academy Marketing Science*, 48, 79–95 (2020). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11747-019-00695-1>.
2. Apuke, O. (2018). Understanding the Concept of Publicity in Public Relations : A Synoptic Review. *Arabian Journal of Business and Management Review (Kuwait Chapter)*. 7. 10.12816/0046066.
3. Aula, P (2010) Social media, reputation risk and ambient publicity management. *Strategy and Leadership*, 38(6).
4. Berg, V. (Updated 2 Jan 2025) *Types of physical disabilities*. <https://www.carehome.co.uk/advice/types-of-physical-disabilities>.
5. Calvert, S. (2021). *Challenges for People with Disabilities*. <https://ballardbrief.byu.edu/issue-briefs/challenges-for-people-with-disabilities>.
6. Coleman, C. (13 May, 2024). *Challenges faced by people with disabilities*. House of Lords Library. <https://lordslibrary.parliament.uk/challenges-faced-by-people-with-disabilities/#heading-2>.
7. Dumbraskaitė, A. (2018). Kultūros paslaugų prieinamumo žmonėms su negalia didinimas. *Esamos situacijos analizė*. Vilnius. <https://data.kurkl.lt/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/2018-04-30-Esama-situacija.pdf>.
8. Hashem, H. (Sausis 18, 2024). *13 positive effects of social media on our society today*. Scale Your Brand Faster Using Social Media. <https://www.kubbco.com/blog/13-positive-effects-of-social-media-on-our-society-today>.
9. Kerner, S., M. (2021). *What is Facebook?* <https://bbf.lt/pTmKJ>.
10. Luc, K. (October 12, 2021). *Disability in the workplace: Barriers to employment & retention*. <https://www.cultureamp.com/blog/disability-employment-barriers>.
11. Luttrell, R. (2016). *Social media: How to engage, share, and connect*. Rowman & Littlefield.
12. Makštutytė, R., Naujanienė, R., (2008). Medicininio ir socialinio negalės modelių požymiai socialinių darbuotojų veikloje. *Socialiniai mokslai: Sociologija*, 2 (19), 67 – 78.
13. *Mano teisės*. (2020) Tarptautinė žmonių su negalia diena. <https://manoteises.lt/kalendarius/tarptautine-zmoniu-su-negalia-diena/>.
14. McLeod, S. (2023, November 10). *Stereotypes in psychology: Definition & examples*. Simply Psychology. <https://www.simplypsychology.org/katz-braly.html>.
15. Mifsud R, Sammut G. (2023). Worldviews and the role of social values that underlie them. *Plos One*, 18(7), e0288451. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0288451>
16. Owen, A. L. (2017). Defining Disability: Understandings of and Attitudes Towards Ableism and Disability. <https://doi.org/10.18061/dsq.v37i1> .
17. Paljug, K. (February 19, 2025). *Social Media: Definition, Importance, Top Websites, and Apps*. <https://www.investopedia.com/terms/s/social-media.asp>.
18. Portwood, N. (30 May, 2023). The impact of publishing with purpose. <https://corp.oup.com/spotlights/the-impact-of-publishing-with-purpose/>.
19. Ruškus, J. (2019, January 4). *Apie klaidingą, bet alternatyvos neturintį žodį „neigalus“*. VDU. <https://www.vdu.lt/lt/apie-klaidinga-bet-alternatyvos-neturinti-zodi-neigalus/>.
20. Williams, T. (June 14, 2021). Why Is Quantitative Research Important?. <https://www.gcu.edu/blog/doctoral-journey/why-quantitative-research-important>.
21. World Health Organization. (2023). Disability. [https://www.who.int/health-topics/disability#tab=tab\\_1](https://www.who.int/health-topics/disability#tab=tab_1).

## **THE PERCEPTION OF E-WORD OF MOUTH ON GREENWASHING AND CUSTOMERS' PURCHASING BEHAVIOR IN LITHUANIA**

*Muhammad Bilal*

*Kazimieras Simonavicius University, Lithuania*

*Basil Ahmed Syed*

*Kazimieras Simonavicius University, Lithuania*

### **Abstract**

This research explores how electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM), greenwashing, consumer trust, and buying behavior in the Lithuanian cosmetics market relate to each other, based on a case study of SOLIDU. The research mainly examines how eWOM influences both greenwashing and customers' buying behavior by using customers' trust as a mediator. In particular, it aims to: (1) investigate the link between eWOM and consumer purchasing behavior, (2) investigate the relationship between eWOM and greenwashing, (3) measure eWOM's effect on consumer trust and purchase intention, and (4) identify the mediating effect of consumer trust. In terms of methodology, the research is quantitative through a structured survey given to 384 Vilnius residents using convenience sampling. The results indicate that eWOM has a significant positive influence on consumer trust and buying intention. In addition, consumer trust was also found to partially mediate the influence of eWOM on buying behavior. The research suggests that cosmetic firms invest in honest and transparent sustainability efforts instead of deceptive marketing, and utilize credible eWOM strategies to build long-term consumer relationships and increase brand credibility.

**Keywords:** Electronic Word-of-Mouth (eWOM), Greenwashing, Consumer Trust, Purchase Intention, Cosmetics Industry in Lithuania.

### **INTRODUCTION**

**Research topicality and problem.** In a world that is continually basing itself on the green agenda, the consumer market of products being produced with the realization of sustainability has exploded, especially in industries such as cosmetics. Nevertheless, such a swing has also actively promoted the spread of greenwashing- the promotion of something that is not clear, ambiguous, or outright false to make a profit related to the unclear or ecologically correct buyer (Delmas & Burbano, 2011; Making Effective Sustainability Claims, 2016; Changing Market Foundation, 2024). Research found that 95% of the products in the retail shops used deceptive environmental messaging, with 70% of the products using unsubstantiated claims and 65 % of the products using ambiguous terms like the eco-friendly (Making Effective Sustainability Claims, 2016). This deception does not appear to be casual; it dampens trust and causes the misrepresentation of sustainable consumption behavior among consumers (Sun & Shi, 2022; Nygaard & Silkoset, 2022).

To add to this problem is the rise of electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) as a means of influencing consumer outcomes. Electronic word-of-mouth is formed through social media and product review sites, which act as a factor that heavily shapes consumer purchasing decisions, particularly when it comes to the cosmetics industry, where the quality of a product may be highly tied to the approval of peers online (Muniweera et al., 2020; Kamalaseena & Sirisena, 2021). With such markets as Lithuania, where the cosmetics market constitutes a prominent part of the economy, eWOM can directly guide its success or failure of a brand (Samarasinghe & Jayawardhana, 2020). In addition, eWOM could confirm or disapprove green marketing statements and it would serve as a necessary tool to unmask greenwashing or lend credibility to a brand (Mehyar et al., 2020).

Nonetheless, there is hardly any research that has captured the relationship between greenwashing, eWOM, and consumer trust, especially in the cosmetics business. It is hoped that the present study would fill the gap by examining the influence of deceptive environmental claims in the process of moderation by eWOM-related trust and the effect on consumer behavior. The

question is necessary since, according to literature, trust greatly reduces the perceived risk and increases the desire to purchase (Mayer et al., 1995; Kim et al., 2007; Rachbini, 2018). The realization of this interplay will help marketers draft more genuine messages on sustainability, and it will allow the consumer to make better choices in a rather competitive online market environment.

**The aim of the research.** This paper examines the association between greenwashing and electronic word of mouth (eWOM) and how they affect consumer confidence and product purchase in cosmetics industry in Lithuania. It will attempt to find out whether eWOM can support or undermine environmental claims, especially where there is greenwashing of an environmental product or service. The study focuses on the links between eWOM and consumer behaviour, how this relationship correlates with that of greenwashing, and whether trust functions as a mediating variable. With digitalization taking a stronger shape in the market and an increased level of concern regarding environmental aspects, the results are expected to facilitate transparency in marketing and further ensure that consumers question the validity of green claims as skepticism rises.

**The research methodology.** The research study selected a quantitative research design where a structured survey of 23 questions was used to explore the effect of eWOM and the impact of greenwashing on consumer trust and the behavior of consumers in Vilnius, Lithuania. It is calculated using the Paniotto formula of the Vilnius population and 5% margin of error to get a non-probability convenience sampling ratio of 384 respondents. The survey, which was sent out in hard copy and electronic form, was only administered to people who are 18 years old and older and focused on demographics, eWOM activities, greenwashing attitude and perception and the perception of the cosmetics brand, SOLIDU. Descriptive statistical analysis was adopted to establish patterns and relationships among the variables, especially the trust, greenwashing, and purchasing behavior.

**The research results.** The research revealed that electronic word of mouth (eWOM) influences consumer trust moderately positively and has a strong effect in the process of purchasing intention in the cosmetics industry in Vilnius. The greenwashing perceptions, however, had a robust negative impact on the purchase intention of consumers. These findings present two points of eWOM, promoting trust and motivation and greenwashing, which violates the credibility of a brand. The results strongly argue that businesses need to employ open, ethical, and engaging tactics during digital communication as a way of establishing trust among consumers and preventing a loss of reputation in more environmentally aware markets such as Lithuania.

**Originality/Value of the article.** The proposed study is an innovative and original contribution as it will consider the effects of the interaction of two concepts of electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) and greenwashing on consumer trust and consumer purchase intention in the environmentally conscious Lithuanian cosmetics industry. It is one of the first to apply SOLIDU as a case study to the discussion of building consumer decisions based on perceived authenticity and through digital communication. The research offers significance as it has brought out the mediating which is that of trust, where transparent and ethical marketing is considered strategically important. It comes up with practical suggestions to be taken by the business enterprise to ensure that the sustainability claims match the actual practices in order to have long-term consumer loyalty in the digital-led business environment.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### ***Theoretical Framework***

The theoretical foundation of the research lies in the intertwined relationship among the electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM), greenwashing and consumer trust, especially in the case of consumer purchasing behaviour in the cosmetics industry.

eWOM is placed at a pivotal position in the consideration of consumers through submitting real-life feedback of users on social media and online platforms. Lee et al. (2017) and Mehyar et al. (2020) indicate that the quality of messages, their quantity, and their credibility are some of the factors that define the effectiveness of eWOM. This is further augmented by the impact of influencers and peer networks, particularly among the younger consumers (Kamalasena and Sirisena, 2021). Persuasion of eWOM is based on collective consumer experience and can be more credible than direct advertising (Martin & Bolliger, 2018), which makes it especially important in situations in which the environmental claims are doubted.

Greenwashing presents a false point that alters brand credibility. According to Chang and Hung (2022), greenwashing is the false environmental statements that are used to control the viewpoints of consumer perceptions. In the case of uncovering this disinformation, the Psychological Contract Theory, which elucidates the disappointment of consumers and the loss of brand loyalty in the event of statement breach, is violated (Parguel et al., 2011; Rousseau, 1995). Empirical evidence has always revealed that greenwashing has a negative effect on consumer purchase intention because it erodes brand credibility and causes skepticism (Xiao et al., 2021; Zhang et al., 2018).

Consumer trust therefore, comes out as a mediating variable between eWOM and purchase behaviour. In the digital market, trust is one of the pillars that can influence consumer trust and lessen perceived risk (Guo et al., 2021). The Trust Transfer Theory states that trust may intermediary between platforms, e.g. between a website of a retailer and its social media or live-streaming location (Ma et al., 2023). When eWOM supports brand values and sustainability statements, it builds trust; once it finds greenwashing, it destroys it, and the persuasive power of eWOM is weakened (Sun et al., 2021; Cui et al., 2022).

The theoretical analysis integrates the psychology of consumers and communication theory, as well as brand ethicality. It successfully puts the dynamic involved in sustainability-oriented industries into context and offers a solid basis on which the mediating effect of trust in the impact of eWOM on purchasing behaviour can be analysed.

### ***Empirical Review***

Empirical studies have studied the nexus between greenwashing, electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM), consumer trust, and buying intentions; however, significant gaps can be observed, especially when it comes to sector-specific and geographically grounded studies. Sun et al. (2022) created a moderated mediation framework based on the psychological contract theory by proving that the perceptions of greenwashing negatively influence purchase intentions, which can be mediated by the perceived betrayal factor, and moderated by the environmental responsibility construct. However, the cross-sectional nature and a narrow scope of the sample restrict the application of these results to other specific products or cultural settings. Likewise, at least, the study of Silva et al. (2024) showed that greenwashing reduces the perception of quality and purchase intentions of highly engaged consumers, although its sample was limited to the context of the automobile industry.

Conversely, Vithana (2024) validated the positive impact of eWOM on purchase intention mediated by brand image in the beauty industry, but the study was limited in its scope to users of

Facebook in one geographic area, which further limits the generalizability of the results to other platforms. Duong et al. (2024) contributed to the literature by implementing the concept of transferring trust to e-commerce and live-streaming scenarios and determining the dimensions of trust that drive the intention to purchase; however, the study did not consider the disrupting effect of greenwashing or the presence of a larger eWOM dynamics. Lastly, Rachbini (2018) correlated trust, perceived risk, and benefits with e-commerce decision-making in Indonesia and did not incorporate the environmental issues or online consumer discussion.

The current study aims to address the gaps by locating the phenomena of greenwashing, eWOM, and consumer trust in the context of the Lithuanian cosmetics industry, which is an insufficiently explored research field, but where sustainability claims and online interactions have a critical effect on the perception of consumers. The study integrates a variety of digital platforms and focuses on the issue of green products to develop a sophisticated model explaining the interdependence of eWOM and greenwashing in influencing consumer confidence and behaviour within the emergent e-commerce markets.

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

For this study, a quantitative research method, a survey, was chosen. It was important for this research in order to get an accurate insight into how EWOM impacts green washing and consumer purchasing behavior. The methodology employed in this thesis involved non-probability sampling, specifically the use of convenience sampling to select participants. Non-probability sampling is a non-random sampling method that involves using specific criteria, such as availability, proximity, or expertise, of the individuals being studied to answer a research question. Non-probability sampling is employed when the population parameters are either not known or difficult to identify individually (Kassiani, 2022). Considering the focus group of this work, which was the Vilnius population, the sampling method described the best case and was chosen. Under the non-probability sampling, the convenience sampling method was selected because it's first determined by the convenience of the researcher. It was accessible for the author to reach its focus group based on their geographical proximity.

Considering the population of Vilnius of 581,475, according to the Statistics Department of Lithuania (Statistics Department of Lithuania, 2023), the study used a sample size of 384 participants following the Paniotto formula (Kardelis, 2016), where:

$$n = 1 / (\Delta^2 + 1/N) \quad (3.1)$$

n – Sample size,

N – The size of the general whole, in our case the Vilnius population

$\Delta$  – The margin of error allowed (with a probability of 0.954,  $\Delta = 0.05$ ).

Empirical research involved the identification of the most effective digital advertising channels for influencing consumer behavior in Vilnius, as well as an examination of the impact of digital advertising on consumer behavior. By using the quantitative research method, the different digital advertising channels and consumer behavior regarding advertising were analyzed, and numerical data was generated. In this research, primary data were gathered via a customized questionnaire (quantitative approach). To carry out the survey and collect information from residents of Vilnius, Lithuania, a survey with closed questions and semi-closed-ended questions was developed and distributed to 400 respondents. The survey was dedicated to people aged 18 and above. The respondents were diversified by demographic groups, income levels, and other variables. The survey aimed to identify the advertising platforms with the most potential to impact Vilnius consumers' buying behavior and to analyze the effects of Ewom on green washing and

consumer purchasing behavior. The conclusions and recommendations drawn by the researcher were based on the fair and constructive analysis of data collected from the respondents.

## RESEARCH RESULTS AND DATA ANALYSIS

The demographic representation of the respondents of the 384 people who are being sampled in this study has been as follows: a successful demographic representation as per gender, age, school levels, occupation and income levels has been represented (see 1 Table). In regard to gender distribution, a small disparity is seen by the male respondents (54.4%) as compared to the female respondents (45.6%). Regarding age, the survey was more or less even, though the highest age bracket (25 to 34 years) amounted to 23.4 %, 35 to 44 years is 22.1 % and 15 to 24 years is 21.4 %. The %age of the respondents within the ages of 45-64 and 65 years and above were 19 % and 14.1 % respectively.

In terms of education, a great majority of the respondents had at least higher education (29.9 % of them had a bachelor's degree, 22.7 % a master's degree, and the same number of them had a PhD). Eight point nine % and fifteen point nine % were awarded SSC and HSSC qualifications, respectively. Occupationally, the leading group was the self-employed (43.5 %), then full-time workers (21.9%), government workers (16.7%), lower %ages were part-time workers and students.

With regards to monthly income, 84.6 % of the respondents earned less than 1000 Euros monthly, 41.9 % less than 500 Euros and 42.7 % between 500 and 1000 Euros. The number of people falling under the salary of 1000-2000 (13.5%) and above 2000 (1.8%) was Euros. This means that it is a socioeconomically broad area with the majority of the people being young in age, educated and of moderate income.

**Table 1. Detailed Demographic Characteristics of Respondents (n = 384)**

Demographic Variable	Category	Frequency (n)	%age (%)
<b>Gender</b>	Male	209	54.4%
	Female	175	45.6%
<b>Age Group</b>	15–24 years	82	21.4%
	25–34 years	90	23.4%
	35–44 years	85	22.1%
	45–64 years	73	19.0%
	65 years and above	54	14.1%
<b>Education Level</b>	Secondary School Certificate (SSC)	34	8.9%
	Higher Secondary School Certificate (HSSC)	61	15.9%
	Bachelor's Degree	115	29.9%
	Master's Degree	87	22.7%
	Doctorate and above	87	22.7%
<b>Occupation</b>	Full-time employee	84	21.9%
	Government employee	64	16.7%
	Self-employed	167	43.5%
	Part-time employee	32	8.3%
	Student	37	9.6%
<b>Monthly Income (EUR)</b>	Less than €500	161	41.9%
	€500 – €999	164	42.7%
	€1000 – €1999	52	13.5%
	€2000 and above	7	1.8%

Source: Researcher's Field Study (2025)

According to the statistical analysis of this research, there is a thorough knowledge of the influence of electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) and green-washing on consumer trust and buying intention in the Lithuanian cosmetics industry (see 2 Table). The reliability analysis was conducted using SPSS, and the results revealed that all constructs, eWOM, greenwashing, customer trust and purchase intention, indicated acceptable internal consistency as the Cronbach alpha values exceeded 0.7, which reflects that the measurement tools are good.

**Table 2. Summary of Key Quantitative Findings**

Variable Relationship	Statistic Type	Coefficient/Value	Direction & Significance
eWOM ↔ Greenwashing	Pearson Correlation	$r = 0.748$	Strong Positive, $p < 0.01$
eWOM → Purchase Intention	Pearson/Regression	$\beta = 0.477$ ; $B = 0.522$	Moderate Positive, $p < 0.001$
Greenwashing → Purchase Intention	Regression	$\beta = -0.435$ ; $B = -0.460$	Moderate Negative, $p < 0.001$
eWOM → Consumer Trust	Regression	$\beta = 0.346$ ; $B = 0.241$	Moderate Positive, $p < 0.001$
Trust → Purchase Intention	Regression	$B = 0.2662$	Positive, $p = 0.0004$
Indirect (eWOM → Trust → Purchase Intention)	Mediation	$B = 0.0643$	Significant Mediation, $p = 0.0004$
Explained Variance (eWOM → Purchase Intention)	$R^2$	0.227	eWOM explains 22.7% of variance in PI
Explained Variance (eWOM → Trust)	$R^2$	0.12	eWOM explains 12% of variance in Trust

Source: Researcher's Field Study (2025)

Table 2 presents the major quantitative associations between electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM), greenwashing, consumer trust and purchase intention. The correlation between eWOM and greenwashing was strong ( $r = 0.748$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), and it may indicate that the conversation about sustainability, whether sincere or deceptive, tends to be spread simultaneously in the online space. It was also discovered that eWOM has a moderate, statistically significant positive impact on purchase intention ( $\beta = 0.477$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), with a 22.7% variance in consumer behavior. On the other hand, the medium, but noteworthy, negative effect of greenwashing on the purchase intention is ( $\beta = -0.435$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), meaning that misleading claims on sustainability decrease the willingness of consumers to buy.

eWOM positively affects consumer trust ( $\beta = 0.346$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) that positively affects the purchase intention ( $\beta = 0.2662$ ,  $p = 0.0004$ ). The mediation analysis proves that the relation between eWOM and purchase intention is partly mediated by trust ( $\beta = 0.0643$ ,  $p = 0.0004$ ); eWOM can directly influence the purchase decisions, but the process is enhanced by consumer trust. In general, the results indicate that eWOM is a two-sided tool with the power to stimulate trust and purchase intentions and a reduced level of effectiveness in combination with greenwashing.

## DISCUSSION

The strong correlation between eWOM and greenwashing implies that the online debate on sustainability is swamped with sincere and deceitful assertions. This leads to a lot of mixed messages being presented to the consumers, and this may be confusing and skeptical. According to Zhang et al. (2018) and Hameed et al. (2021), the situation is that, when unverified sustainability

content goes viral through eWOM, it can enhance incorrect accounts, particularly in a scenario where consumers do not have the skills to be critical. However, eWOM continues to contribute positively towards influencing purchase behavior. Kamalasena and Sirisena (2021) have discovered that peer-reviewed posts and social-media promotions have a huge impact on purchasing behaviour in the reputational and social-validation industries.

The greenwashing is, however, a loss to consumer confidence. In the event of perceived deception by the brand, consumer confidence declines, which Sun et al. (2022) and Silva and Ce (2024) found through their discovery that false environmental statements undermine brand credibility and loyalty. Trust is thus an intermediary between eWOM and purchase intention as a representation of the Trust Transfer Theory (Lim et al., 2006). Trustworthy eWOM has the ability to enhance brand perception, provided that the actions of a brand really correspond to its declared values. In the case of such brands as SOLIDU, sustainability communication authenticity is essential. It helps them to leverage the persuasive power of eWOM without taking the reputational risks of greenwashing.

The Trust is an intervening concept between eWOM and purchase intention, which is one of the central concepts of the Trust Transfer Theory (Lim et al., 2006). Credible eWOM may reinforce brand perception, though it appears that only when the actions of a brand are consistent with the values it announces.

Therefore, when using eWOM to communicate sustainability, brands like SOLIDU need to be genuine to take advantage of the persuasive effect of the eWOM and prevent the reputational consequences of greenwashing.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

1. This study has investigated the relationship between electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) and greenwashing on consumer trust and purchase intention in the Lithuanian cosmetic market by discussing the example of SOLIDU. It concluded that eWOM positively and moderately influences trust and more so on purchase intention, which affirms that digital reviews and online activities have a great influence on consumer decisions.
2. Nevertheless, a high relationship between eWOM and greenwashing perception indicates that consumers can be exposed to true environmental communication and false/misleading claims of being environmentally responsible on the web. This demonstrates that it is significant that the companies are able to provide truthful and moral online sustainability stories.
3. It is reasonable to point out that greenwashing had a very negative influence on purchase intention, as earlier studies indicated that people would tend to respond negatively to false sustainability claims since they would be less trusting in the brand name and therefore less likely to purchase. Therefore, ethical transparency is not only a moral discussion but a strategic discussion.
4. Such an outcome revealed that part of the relationship between eWOM and purchase intention was mediated by trust. Here, it is noted that eWOM is more effective when there is also trust involved, and it is always worth the effort to have a consistent message promotion and brand action.
5. According to these findings, the companies, such as SOLIDU, ought to: not engage in green washing, but in actual practices of sustainability; Employ responsible online marketing to create the sense of truthfulness; Promote user-generated content and collaborate with

people who are influential in the real sense of the brand values; and follow up on how effective your marketing is using analysis of data, and optimise on the same.

6. Any firm aiming to become successful in the sustainable cosmetics market should integrate effective eWOM strategies and sincere information about environmental impact. This would help create more tethering, in gaining more customers and maintaining it, and also contribute to the long-term development.

## LITERATURE

1. Chang, T. W., & Hung, C. Z. (2022). Sustainable consumption: Research on examining the influence of the psychological process of consumer green purchase intention by using a theoretical model of consumer affective events. *Environment, Development and Sustainability*, 1-21.
2. Changing Markets Foundation. (2024, July). *The New Merchants of Doubt: How Big Meat and Dairy Avoid Climate Action*. Changing Markets Foundation. <https://changingmarkets.org/report/the-new-merchants-of-doubt-how-big-meat-and-dairy-avoid-climate-action/>
3. Cui, Y., Liu, Y., & Gu, M. (2022). Investigating the key drivers of impulsive buying behavior in live streaming. *Journal of Global Information Management (JGIM)*, 30(1), 1-18.
4. Delmas, M. A., & Burbano, V. C. (2011). The drivers of greenwashing. *California Management Review*, 54(1), 64–87.
5. Duong, N. T., Lin, H. H., Wu, T. L., & Wang, Y. S. (2025). Understanding consumer trust dynamics and purchase intentions in a multichannel live streaming e-commerce context: a trust transfer perspective. *International Journal of Human–Computer Interaction*, 41(14), 9123-9136.
6. Guo, L., Hu, X., Lu, J., & Ma, L. (2021). Effects of customer trust on engagement in live streaming commerce: mediating role of swift guanxi. *Internet Research*, 31(5), 1718-1744.
7. Hameed, I., Hyder, Z., Imran, M., & Shafiq, K. (2021). Greenwash and green purchase behavior: An environmentally sustainable perspective. *Environment, Development and Sustainability*, 23, 13113–13134.
8. Kamalaseena, B. D. T. M., & Sirisena, A. B. (2021). The impact of online communities and eWOM on purchase intention of Generation Y: The mediating role of brand trust. *Sri Lanka Journal of Marketing*, 7(1), 92.
9. Kardelis, K. (2016). *Mokslinių tyrimų metodologija ir metodai* [Research methodology and methods]. Šiaulių universiteto leidykla.
10. Kassiani, M. (2022). *Research methods and data interpretation: A practical guide*. Vilnius University Press.
11. Kim, D. J., Ferrin, D. L., & Rao, H. R. (2007). A trust-based consumer decision-making model in electronic commerce: The role of trust, perceived risk, and their antecedents. *Decision Support Systems*, 44, 544–564.
12. Lee, W. I., Cheng, S. Y., & Shih, Y. T. (2017). Effects among product attributes, involvement, word-of-mouth, and purchase intention in online shopping. *Asia Pacific Management Review*, 22(4), 223-229.
13. Lim, K. H., Sia, C.-L., Lee, M. K. O., & Benbasat, I. (2006). Do I trust you online, and if so, will I buy? An empirical study of two trust-building strategies. *Journal of Management Information Systems*, 23(2), 233–266. <https://doi.org/10.2753/MIS0742-1222230210dl.acm.org>
14. Ma, L., Yu, S., & Ye, C. (2020). Research on the Influence of Consumers' Environmental Responsibility on Green Consumption Intention. *J. Shandong Technol. Bus. Univ*, 34, 104-112.
15. Ma, L., Yu, S., & Ye, C. (2021). Research on the influence of consumers' environmental responsibility on green consumption intention. *Journal of Shandong Technology and Business University*, 34, 104–112.
16. Making Effective Sustainability Claims. (2016). UL. <https://www.ul.com/insights/making-effective-sustainability-claims>
17. Martin, F., & Bolliger, D. U. (2018). Engagement matters: Student perceptions on the importance of engagement strategies in the online learning environment. *Online learning*, 22(1), 205-222.
18. Mayer, R. C., Davis, J. H., & Schoorman, F. D. (1995). An integrative model of organizational trust. *Academy of Management Review*, 20(3), 709–734.
19. Mehayar, H., Saeed, M., Baroom, H., Al-Ja'afreh, A., & Al-Adailch, R. (2020). The impact of electronic word of mouth on consumers' purchasing intention. *Journal of Theoretical and Applied Information Technology*, 98(2), 1–10.
20. Muniweera, C. D. W., Balawardhana, K. P. I. A., Rajapaksha, M. S. N., Chamara, M. A. D. S., & Jayasuriya, N. A. (2020). The importance of factors influencing on e-WOM engagement towards consumer purchase

- intention in clothing retailers, Sri Lanka. *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences*, 10(5), 349–360.
21. Nygaard, A., & Silkoset, R. (2022). Sustainable development and greenwashing: How blockchain technology information can empower green consumers. *Business Strategy and the Environment*, 32(6), 3801–3813. <https://doi.org/10.1002/bse.3338>
  22. Parguel, B., Benoît-Moreau, F., & Larceneux, F. (2011). How sustainability ratings might deter 'greenwashing': A closer look at ethical corporate communication. *Journal of business ethics*, 102(1), 15–28.
  23. Rachbini, W. (2018). The impact of consumer trust, perceived risk, perceived benefit on purchase intention and purchase decision. *International Journal of Advanced Research*, 6(1), 3287–3297.
  24. Rousseau, D. (1995). *Psychological contracts in organizations: Understanding written and unwritten agreements*. Sage.
  25. Samarasinghe, G. D., & Jayawardhana, W. S. (2020). Determinants of purchase intention of men's fairness cream: The role of electronic word of mouth (eWOM) communication in formation of product specific attitudes of Sri Lankan millennials. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 10(5), 221–233.
  26. Silva, B. G. da, & Cé, F. R. (2024). The effects of greenwashing on purchasing intention and perceived quality by the consumer. *Revista Brasileira de Marketing – ReMark*, 24(Special Issue), 152–174.
  27. Statistics Department of Lithuania. (2023). Resident population by city / town at the beginning of the year: Vilnius. <https://osp.stat.gov.lt/web/guest/statistiniu-rodikliu-analize?hash=671bd94d-a0f4-424f-b919-f5da1d19c30a#/>
  28. Sun, Y., & Shi, B. (2022). Impact of greenwashing perception on consumers' green purchasing intentions: A moderated mediation model. *Sustainability*, 14, 12119. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su141912119>
  29. Vithana, L. V. M. G., & Fernando, P. I. N. (2024). Impact of E-Word of Mouth (E-WOM) on Consumers' Purchase Intention for Cosmetic Products: The Mediating Role of Brand Image (With reference to Facebook Users). *Sri Lanka Journal of Marketing*, 10(1).
  30. Xiao, Z., Wang, Y., Ji, X., & Cai, L. (2021). Greenwash, moral decoupling, and brand loyalty. *Social Behavior and Personality*, 49, 1–8. <https://doi.org/10.2224/sbp.10038>
  31. Zhang, L., Li, D., Cao, C., & Huang, S. (2018). The influence of greenwashing perception on green purchasing intentions: The mediating role of green word-of-mouth and the moderating role of green concern. *Journal of Cleaner Production*, 187, 740–750.

## **THE IMPACT OF INFLUENCER MARKETING ON VILNIUS CONSUMERS: EXPLORING PATHWAYS TO SUCCESS AND POTENTIAL PITFALLS FOR BUSINESSES**

*Samson Abiodun Toyé*  
*SMK College of Applied Sciences, Lithuania*  
*Deividas Mariač*  
*Independent Researcher*

### **Abstract**

This study focuses on exploring and observing the behavior of consumers throughout Vilnius to see what they personally think about the impactful nature of influencers being marketed under a brand by applying various of theories, models and examples, which will uncover these important findings by using the quantitative method of an online survey to see the general impact between the relationship of a consumer and the brand while examining the good and bad sides of that spectrum. By using 384 valid responses that we have conducted and collected from Vilnius residents, we can examine the impactful nature of influencers under the umbrella of this marketing tool that has been expressed into the business landscape. Based on the results, it shows that it is rather complex from the consumer perspective, which represents three sides to the argument within the spectrum of full potential, abusive in nature and both in-between towards regulating it in the approach of Vilnius business. In conclusion, it highlights the importance of authenticity and trust in influencer marketing as it can create many valuable opportunities for Vilnius businesses, in which they must carefully select influencers whose values align with the brand to maintain consumer trust in a skeptical environment, where most of the consumers are clinging onto the shoulders of influencers.

**Keywords.** Influencer marketing, consumer behavior, brand endorsement, business landscape, Lithuania.

### **INTRODUCTION**

This study will discuss how this promotional form of marketing can impact the behavior of an average consumer in the current landscape. It will entail a deep dive into this concept and see how its impact has evolved over time, judging how good or bad it can be for any business. It's not just that, but we will also observe the behavior of a consumer and see how they truly feel about it, which will show how important this can change your business overall. However, this particular idiom from The Free Dictionary by Farlex explains its continuous impact as it implies to be "a ticking time-bomb" that is awaiting to implode itself, meaning that "a person, thing, or situation that can at any moment cause much havoc or result in a disastrous outcome". This statement reveals a sad, but harsh truth as we will explore deeper into influencer marketing.

Therefore, how does the consumer play into this promotional form of marketing? In comparison to traditional marketing, how can this impact their reach to consumers? What role do traditional and digital platforms play into the efficiency of marketing campaigns under the influencer's corporate image and if so, are they on the same level of spectrum, in terms of its impact? How does the influencer's credibility have a direct effect on the consumer's trust with their image towards the brand? What are the potential risks and challenges that many businesses should take into consideration whenever they rely on influencers for marketing purposes? Does the aspect of parasocial relationship heavily influence the loyalty of a consumer and the attachment to the brand itself?

**Research topicality and problem.** Many influencers have come in during the rise of social media to gain popularity and create some substantial followings through their online presence. That's when influencer marketing comes in as it can be used to effectively break out of their silence and reach out onto their audience to turn them into potential loyal customers.

According to Influencer Marketing Hub (2024), that in 2016 before the 2025 results, the industry of influencer marketing has risen to \$1.7 billion, then it has continuously grown until

2024, which expects to expand that market size further to \$24 billion. Therefore, it indicates that there is more room for continuous growth as the momentum isn't going to stop anytime soon.

However, while influencers can provide great results for many businesses, they should consider these potential problems that could come for influencer marketing. Firstly, it's whenever you involve influencers into your corporate image. By choosing the right influencer to represent your brand, that partnership must develop some success, otherwise, your reputation will impact as the result of negative backlash from the public that will make it difficult to bounce back from. Secondly, it's important to give a brief description of who they are affiliated with. By carrying out in-depth research into the influencer, they will find someone who resonates with the brand's image as well as their values, otherwise, the brand endorsement can come across as hypocritical, either on the influencer's trust and credibility or the brand's image and loyalty. And lastly, if you decide to partner with the influencer, that person will always be a part of your brand for the foreseeable future, even if you stop working with them. Otherwise, if the influencer gets involved in some controversy, it will impact directly on the sales and reputation of your brand by putting both - your brand and the influencer - into a disastrous situation (Viira, 2024).

**Aim of the research.** We are aiming to explore and observe the behavior of consumers throughout Vilnius to see what they personally think about the impactful nature of influencers being marketed under a brand by applying various theories, models and examples to further explain their judgement. And with that, we will uncover these important findings by using the methods of data collection to see the general impact between the relationship of a consumer and the brand whilst examining the good and bad sides of that spectrum.

Overall, it's such an important topic to research as many influencers have been entering to either create their own business or collaborate with other brands to expand their portfolio and shine a bright light to their audience. However, according to Collins Dictionary, it can also be a "double-edged sword", which means that it can have its positive and negative effects. On one hand, the impact of influencers is beneficial for immediate success in their future career, but on the other hand, if an influencer has committed any wrongdoing, they will suffer the consequences of their actions and that the business will go on an impending PR disaster to seek immediate action before that time bomb ticks over to zero.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

Contributing to the rise of influencers into the business landscape, there was an interesting study conducted by Hudders & et al. (2021) to demonstrate how this can be used in a strategic manner. This study was presented through a mix of qualitative and quantitative methods, such as interview, survey, content analysis, and empirical evidence. While a few of them were focused on how these influencers can encourage a change in behavior or affect its public opinion, most of them were focused on how it can be used as a marketing tactic for commercial purposes. They were analyzed based on the theoretical approach of Stern's Revised Communication Model for Advertising under these specified characteristics, which are the source, message, and audience. Firstly, the source focuses on the influencer's perspective and its practitioners of communication. Secondly, the message creates some concern on the strategy from the influencer's sponsored content. And finally, the audience focuses on appealing to the influencer with their efficient use of sponsored recommendation, which relies on the aspect of transparency. Therefore, it needs to have implications by regulating this marketing tactic as well as public policy in business.

However, Olsen & Sandholmen (2019) address its disadvantages by looking into how influencer's negative behavior can affect them and the brand. These authors have contributed to

the research between two diverse studies. The first study discusses the negative behavior around micro influencers by performing test experiments. It seeks to understand how brands can be affected by the negative behavior of influencers and if various combinations of influencers (lifestyle and expert influencers), products (either hedonic or utilitarian) and comment section (either none, negative or positive) will be involved in moderating that effect. With the results evaluated, it was revealed that the expert influencers received a lower level of attitude on the expertise of micro influencers when pairing up with hedonic products. Moreover, the expert influencer tends to be less positive when seeing a negative comment. Another thing is that they can create an illusion by promoting the product to be highly recommended than a commercial, which enables it to encompass the necessary harm in relation to negative publicity for bad behavior. And finally, whenever the brand decides to collaborate with controversial influencers, they will experience that fallback from the respondent's attitude in having low willingness to purchase the product.

Furthermore, many businesses are implementing their marketing strategies throughout YouTube with the involvement of influencers. The authors have used the heuristic-systematic model to investigate YouTube influencers and analyzed how informational cues can influence the evaluation of information credibility. It was conducted through an online survey on Amazon's MTurk platform to see if the two-step SEM approach can be utilized in exploring the correlation between those variables. In the survey, 497 respondents have listed their favorite YouTube influencer they have visited during the week and out of 356 YouTube influencers, the biggest ones were the Swedish video gamer and vlogger PewDiePie (7.2%) followed by the female comedian Jenna Marbles (3.2%) with all the variables being evaluated individually, judging by the total number of 176 million YouTube users from the United States in 2016 (eMarketer, 2016). With the results accumulated, it shows that the factors affecting the consumer's perceived information credibility were trustworthiness, social influence, argument quality and information involvement throughout YouTube (Xiao et al., 2018).

Therefore, many consumers have their sense of forming a one-sided relationship with an influencer, which is a parasocial relationship as they are more likely to get intimidated and influenced into their purchasing decision. In the recruitment process, they need to have some familiarity with this topic and be a young woman within the years of 1995 and 2000, which are considered to be the active users of social media with them valuing the essence of authenticity and its realness to it (Djafarova & Rushworth, 2016; Escalas & Bettman, 2017; Theran et al., 2010, Chaney et al., 2017). The authors of this study have conducted a qualitative approach of focus groups and in-depth interviews to distinguish and examine the nature of a parasocial relationship. In the first method, four interviews were coordinated under the focus groups, which will generate and analyze the data from their discussion by having an interaction with each other. In the second method, six in-depth interviews were organized to target various individuals with the same demographic profile, which were recruited from one of the researcher's networks under the snowball sampling method (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008). With the results accumulated, it shows the reason for having a parasocial relationship by considering these four requirements ("being portrayed something real and relatable about their everyday lives" (1), "having reported their company-sponsored posts" (2), "being true to themselves" (3) and "carefully chose which brands they support to personalize their endorsements" (4)) with its three types as well ("close personal friendship" (1), "ex-friendship" (2) and "casual friendship" (3)), which will form an intimacy between the consumer and the influencer (Närvänen et al., 2020).

## THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study delves into its process that could impact the mind of a consumer coming from a business perspective whilst incorporating various theories and concepts that will assist in explaining this certain phenomenon.

### 1. *Influencer Marketing*

Influencer marketing is a recent addition to the branch of social media marketing, where its popularity has grown rapidly among its marketers with influencers taking over the social media space (Sharma & Khanchandani, 2021). It has shown similarities to the word-of-mouth marketing as according to Kotler et al. (2002), it is a form of personal communication that will reach buyers onto the product through different forms of channels with no direct control of the company, such as the autonomous experts, consumer advocators, guides on consumer purchasing and personal familiarity. In the digital context, while the traditional form of word-of-mouth is a freely form of communication, this modern form involves the owner of that brand, who confronts these famous influencers with a large followership to speak on the brand's behalf by marking the post as an advertisement, so that the users can identify whether the post is a paid promotion from voluntary (genuine) endorsements. Therefore, it is a process of digital marketing, where the presence of opinion leaders (influencers) can be identified and integrated into the brand's communication for social platforms (Bakker, 2018).

### 2. *Consumer Behavior*

From a European perspective, it has been described as “the study of the processes involved when individuals or groups select, purchase, use or dispose of products, services, ideas or experiences to satisfy needs and desires” (Solomon et al., 2006).

However, from a wider perspective, it is "the study of how individuals, groups and organizations select, buy, use and dispose of goods, services, ideas, or experiences to satisfy their needs and wants" (Kotler & Keller, 2006). With this, it can provide clues towards improving or introducing products or services, setting prices, devising channels, crafting messages, and developing marketing activities (Kotler et al., 2008). By taking this into consideration, it will show us on (Perner, n.d.):

- How the consumers do personally think, feel, reason and select between various alternatives, like brands, products and retailers;
- How the consumer can be affected from their surrounding environment, like culture, family, signs and media;
- How the behavior of consumers can be examined whilst in the process of shopping or making other marketing decisions;
- How the consumer's knowledge or information processing can provide limitations in influencing several outcomes based on decisions and marketing;
- How the strategies of consumer motivation and decision-making can differ between the selection of products, judging by their importance or interest level;
- How marketers can adapt and improve their marketing campaigns and strategies for creating some consumer reach more effectively.

### 3. *Sigmund Freud's Theory of Personality*

Sigmund Freud, an Austrian neurologist, has divided the mental life into three forces in the psychic apparatus: id, ego, superego. The ID is considered the ancient branch, which represents the biological foundation of personality, like the perception of attitudes whenever they feel like a kid. The ego is a remodeled version under the design of ID, which is an “executive” of the personality that influences the external world, like the process of a teenager. The superego is a far

more differentiated approach from the ego, which is our self-esteem. Therefore, ID is operated for the pursuit of pleasure, the ego is governed by the principle of reality, and the superego is pursued to perform idealistic goals with pure perfection (Lapsley & Stey, 2012).

#### 4. *Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM)*

The elaboration likelihood model of persuasion is contemplated as a "dual process" approach of processing certain social information, such as changes to attitudes that come out as the result of persuasion (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986; Fleming et al., 1999). There are two different ways of processing the ability of persuasion, but it depends on which recipient will engage in elaborating the information that is relevant to the persuasive topic (O'Keefe, 2013). This can be done between the "central route of persuasion" and "peripheral route of persuasion". Under that central route of persuasion, it causes the attitude to change because of the person's attempt in evaluating the merits of that favored position. However, under the peripheral route, it causes the attitude to change because of its association with an issue or object between the positive and negative cues (Petty & Cacioppo, 1984).

Whenever you include influencers into the picture, their social status becomes reliable, attractive, and compatible with the brand as well as changing the consumer's attitude in the process of an altercation. According to Ohanian (1990), the credibility of that message sender could change the persuasion and attitude of that recipient. Similarly to Lisichkova & Othman (2017), the characteristics of an influencer, such as originality, reliability, expertise, and honesty, may influence the consumers' intention of purchasing a product or service. As stated by Bruns (2018), the factors of originality and trust had some influence on the consumers' purchase intention within the role of influencer marketing (Erkli, 2022).

#### 5. *Social Proof Theory*

When individuals determine their appropriate behavior within a situation, then social proof comes into play to examine the behavior of others, in terms of similarity (Cialdini, 1993; Goethals & Darley, 1977; Miller, 1984). This can be done by socially comparing with others that will validate the correctness of their opinions and decisions (Festinger, 1954; Cialdini et al., 1999). However, it can occur whenever the person is under time pressure or is in the moment of distraction, which is based on the simple mental shortcuts (Huh et al., 2014). Whenever there is some uncertainty around the correctness of behavior, it can lead to having a large group of people in establish a certain norm for that behavior, so that they can be similar to that individual (Baron et al., 1996; Milgram et al., 1969; Platow et al., 2005). Therefore, these behaviors can be influenced from various scenarios of everyday life, ranging from littering to providing help for increasing treatments in certain phobias and addictions. As for the area of influencer marketing, it can be used to acquire these influencers in orchestrating online reviews for their product or service as a chance to boost sales for their business (Scott & Barden, 2022).

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

Throughout the course of our research, we applied the quantitative approach of an online survey to understand the impact of influencer marketing between the relationship of a consumer and the brand in the province of Vilnius with the use of data analysis techniques whilst uncovering the benefits and challenges of this marketing tool in business.

**Research methodology.** We have made a survey with the ability of providing close-ended and multiple-choice questions that is established under the 5-point Likert scale of agreement (strongly agree - agree - neutral - disagree - strongly disagree) and frequency (never - rarely -

sometimes - often - always). We also included several screening questions that will filter out the respondents before proceeding further with the survey, such as their current status of residency and even their familiarity with influencer marketing based on the 5-point Likert scale of familiarity (not familiar at all - slightly familiar - somewhat familiar - familiar - very familiar). This survey was distributed on the Internet for people between the ages of 18 and over with our geographical location to be focused on the Lithuanian province of Vilnius. As noted above, our inclusion in this survey were the residents and visitors of Vilnius, including citizens, foreigners and international students, to capture a comprehensive perspective onto influencer marketing. Judging by the diversity of our participants, we fully acknowledged the varied experiences and perspectives from our respondents, in terms of their status of residency and the time duration that they have spent in Vilnius. Therefore, we have investigated their opinions and considered them valuable for our research to show the feel of a meaningful contribution.

**Research sampling.** To make our sample size, we have preferred methods of non-probability sampling, such as purposive and snowball sampling. Firstly, we used the purposive sampling method to target the group of Vilnius residents and visitors, who are familiar with influencer marketing. And secondly, if we cannot reach our target, then the snowball sampling method could be implemented for that case more effectively. Therefore, we have conducted our sample size that is based on the formula of  $n = N/(1+N(e)^2)$ , where the variables will be:

- $n$  = the sample size;
- $N$  = the population of the study;
- $e$  = the margin error in the calculation, which is 5%;
- Confidence level - 95% (indicating that if the survey was repeated, the results would be matched with the actual opinions of the population in 95 out of 100 instances).

Based on the formula that was provided with the population number of Vilnius in 2024 - 542,366 (Worldometer, 2019), our preferred sample size will be around 384 participants. With this number, it gave us a comprehensive and realistic perspective on the general impact that will affect the relationship of a consumer and the business with both sides to the spectrum.

**Research process.** Prior to our survey, we provided the letter of information and consent to inform the participants about the survey requirements and additional info as listed to fully comply with the guidelines. As we began our survey, there were some screening questions that are related to the status of residency and familiarity of influencer marketing, which decides the fate of respondents as to whether they will proceed with this survey alone. Throughout the survey, we covered the frequency of influencer marketing, purchasing habits, and consumer behavior based on advertisements. However, to validate our results, the control questions were implemented to ensure that they paid close attention to the survey questions while mitigating these potential biases along the way. There was also a psychological question that tested their perception to see what image sways them the most with proper reasoning. After that, we had our core demographical questions, which included age, gender, nationality, social class, employment and education. And finally, we included the self-reflection question, where it will make them feel open-minded about the current state of influencer marketing with a certain caveat of its dependent future ahead.

**Research ethics.** As an authority of the research, I was born in Vilnius and with the capability of my language skills, I have put it to good use in which I have prepared the methodological process to manipulate the variables, so that we can reach our conclusion. Therefore, we have surveyed the people throughout the internet and various institutions by emailing them to acquire the full permission first before partaking in the research as well as the inform of consent to fully act and comply with the ethical considerations.

**Research limitations.** It was only generalized within the province of Vilnius, because it will be a lengthy and difficult process to gather the data from all the provinces in making it representable to the entire population of Lithuania. Therefore, we have performed time and budget limitations with the sampling use of subjectivity, prone to bias, lack of representation at large, and reliance on the network of participants.

**Future studies.** We have mentioned multiple scholars throughout the literature review with the recency of their works being contributed into the current landscape, which will be used in targeting our research questions while keeping the core focus of our topic in line as it will be continuously built with the existing knowledge or understanding that were obtained throughout this research. Therefore, we provided some theoretical input by filling in the gaps to be later referenced in the future and the practical input by having the Vilnius businesses use this research for implementing or improving their business model through our strategy.

## RESEARCH RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

Our survey data shows that 388 people participated, however, with further quality checks, 384 people have fully managed to proceed with the survey from start to finish, but the other 4 people did not fully succeed due to certain limitations as mentioned above.

To start off, the general scope of survey respondents falls into the age range of 25-31 (23%) as well as 46 and above (23%); however, the lowest number of participants being 39-45 (16%) and even 18-24 (16%), which will affect their perception onto the topic – see Table 1.

**Table 1. Age**

Options	Percentage
25-31	23%
46 and above	23%
32-38	21%
39-45	16%
18-24	16%

Source: Created by the authors

Most of them are predominantly female (52%), which somewhat justifies the current population of Vilnius as a whole (Brinkoff, 2024) – see Table 2. Based on this, females are slightly more engaged in influencer marketing than males do.

**Table 2. Gender**

Options	Percentage
Female	52%
Male	48%
Non-binary/third gender	0%

Source: Created by the authors

Many respondents are Lithuanian (97.14%), followed by a wide range of nationalities, which will provide us with obligatory information, judging by their national background (World Population Review, 2024) – see Table 3.

**Table 3. Nationalities**

Answers	Percentage
Lithuanian	97.14%
Russian	0.78%

Italian	0.52%
French	0.26%
Belarusian	0.26%
Ecuadorian	0.26%
Pakistani	0.26%
Ukrainian	0.26%
Latvian	0.26%

Source: Created by the authors

To follow up, they mostly speak Lithuanian (41.93%), English (28.14%) and Russian (18.27%), followed by a wide range of spoken languages, which will provide us with the necessary information to further describe the residents in Vilnius – see Table 4.

**Table 4. Languages**

Answers	Percentage
Lithuanian	41.93%
English	28.14%
Russian	18.27%
Polish	4.93%
German	2.24%
French	1.23%
Spanish	1.01%
Italian	0.67%
Ukrainian	0.34%
Latvian	0.22%
Swedish	0.22%
Belarusian	0.11%
Lithuanian Sign Language	0.11%
Norwegian	0.11%
Urdu	0.11%
Japanese	0.11%
Pashto	0.11%
Finnish	0.11%

Source: Created by the authors

The greater number of respondents are classified in the middle class (64%), followed by lower middle class (16%) and upper middle class (15%) – see Table 5. This will generalize the overall, average salary of Vilnius residents as according to Jankienė (2024), they mostly earn between the range of 75-200% of the average median in Lithuania, which classifies them in the middle class with earnings going between €1,363 - €3,634 before tax or even €930 - €2,200 after tax, making them capable of spending money on influencer-related products.

**Table 5. Social Class**

Options	Percentage
Lower Class	3%
Lower Middle Class	16%

Middle Class	64%
Upper Middle Class	15%
Upper Class	2%

Source: Created by the authors

Judging by the age range, most of them have completed the level of bachelor's degree (40%), master's degree (29%) as well as secondary school (22%), which means that they can grasp onto the concept of influencer marketing, judging by their ever-expanding knowledge within the education system – see Table 6.

**Table 6. Level of education**

Options	Percentage
Primary school	0%
Secondary school	22%
Associate's Degree	4%
Bachelor's Degree	40%
Master's Degree	29%
Doctoral Degree	1%
Prefer not to say	4%

Source: Created by the authors

Based on the employment status, they are mostly employed full-time (66%) with a small majority of them being self-employed (10%), which can be related to their initial experience of influencer marketing within the business landscape – see Table 7.

**Table 7. Employment status**

Options	Percentage
Employed full-time	66%
Employed part-time	5%
Self-employed	10%
Unemployed + work	6%
Unemployed + no work	1%
Student	5%
Retired	3%
Other	4%

Source: Created by the authors

For the screening question, a significant portion of participants are somewhat familiar with the concept of influencer marketing (37%), which allows them to further develop their personal thoughts about the perceived behavior and frequency of influencer marketing as well as examining at a psychological level – see Table 8.

**Table 8. Familiarity of influencer marketing**

Options	Percentage
Not familiar at all	0%
Slightly familiar	33%
Somewhat familiar	37%
Familiar	24%

Very familiar	6%
---------------	----

Source: Created by the authors

Now, let's measure the perceived behavior of influencer marketing and with that, we have surveyed our participants and have found out that 40% are being neutral on the essence of trusting product recommendations from influencers. It also shows that 32% have remained neutral, in terms of influencers providing honest and reliable information on their products. To follow up on this, 30% do disagree on following some advice from the influencer whenever they are trying to make purchases. After that, most of them are on the fence with 38% thinking that influencers might or might not seem genuine and authentic in their brand endorsements. Furthermore, 48% do agree that digital platforms are a more effective way of providing influencer marketing rather than traditional ones, which means that many businesses must create their reach within the digital world as many influencers have adapted to the digital landscape – see Table 9.

To further continue this table, the response on the likelihood of buying products that are endorsed by influencers to be around 31% being neutral on it. We can also distinctly see that 33% do not feel connected with products that are linked to influencers, since it relies on their personal experience with the influencer. However, 42% do believe that the influencer's credibility can affect their view of the brand, which relies on how well-educated you are to create that perception towards any kind of influencer from your experience. In addition, 55% do think that influencers can help brands to succeed in the long-term, which relies on how well-managed the influencer can be to fully represent the brand. And finally, 34% do not believe that their brand loyalty is solely tied to their relationship with the influencer, which means that they still remain loyal to the brand, depending on their personal background, since most of them are employed full-time and have no time to invest in a parasocial relationship – see Table 9.

**Table 9. Perceived behavior of influencer marketing**

<b>Options</b>	<b>I trust product recommendations from influencers</b>	<b>I think that influencers can provide honest and reliable information on the product</b>	<b>I follow the advice from influencers when making purchases</b>	<b>I think that influencers seem genuine and authentic in their brand endorsements</b>
Strongly disagree	14%	13%	23%	12%
Disagree	29%	27%	30%	34%
Neutral	40%	32%	27%	38%
Agree	17%	25%	19%	16%
Strongly agree	1%	3%	1%	2%
<b>Options</b>	<b>I find that digital platforms are better for influencer marketing than traditional ones</b>	<b>I am more likely to buy products that are endorsed by influencers</b>	<b>I feel more connected with products that are linked to influencers</b>	<b>I do believe that influencer's credibility can affect my view of the brand</b>
Strongly disagree	5%	17%	20%	8%

Disagree	7%	30%	33%	16%
Neutral	26%	31%	29%	25%
Agree	48%	20%	16%	42%
Strongly agree	15%	2%	2%	9%
<b>Options</b>	<b>I believe that influencers can help brands to succeed in the long-term</b>	<b>I believe that my loyalty to a brand depends on my relationship with the influencer</b>		
Strongly disagree	3%	25%		
Disagree	6%	34%		
Neutral	20%	23%		
Agree	55%	16%		
Strongly agree	17%	3%		

Source: Created by the authors

Moving on, let's now measure the perceived frequency of influencer marketing, therefore, we asked our participants how often they find new products coming from an influencer that will make them end up purchasing and have discovered that 34% have rarely experienced that. Likewise, 40% have often questioned themselves as to whether the influencers are being authentic within their brand endorsements, which feels like influencers want to be a part of this endorsement, but doesn't match their image well-enough with the product's vision. Furthermore, 40% have rarely felt that influencers are providing fair and unbiased reviews on the endorsed products, which shows the reputation that influencers have impacted with their endorsements on the business landscape. Especially, 38% have often experienced that influencers are taking advantage of their audience for personal gain, which leads to a loss of that longing trust with no real intention being put towards the endorsed product. After that, 59% have never partaken in influencer-led campaigns or challenges if they perceive a risk, which shows their self-awareness on the kind of decisions they make, depending on their levels of familiarity, social class and education – see Table 10.

To carry on with this table, the responses on how often they buy products from an influencer for the value, even if that influencer seems controversial has been amassed to around 51% never perceived it in that way, which makes them wisely careful of their relations or attachment with the product being reflected onto their personal background. Also, we can see that 32% rarely get inspired into trying out new trends or products due to the influencer's involvement in it, which relies on how well-attached their pattern of behavior really is, in terms of their overall satisfaction. Moreover, 30% sometimes avoid buying products that are being promoted by influencers, which will affect their public perception towards the brand due to the influencer's attachment to the product. In addition, 34% have rarely shaped their opinion on products because of influencer's word-of-mouth, which somewhat establishes their sense of appeal towards influencers due to the kind of credibility that they have impacted onto the business landscape. And finally, 57% never buy influencer-related products to relate with them,

which shows that their intent of purchasing an influencer-related product falls back through the effect of credibility – see Table 10.

**Table 10. Perceived frequency of influencer marketing**

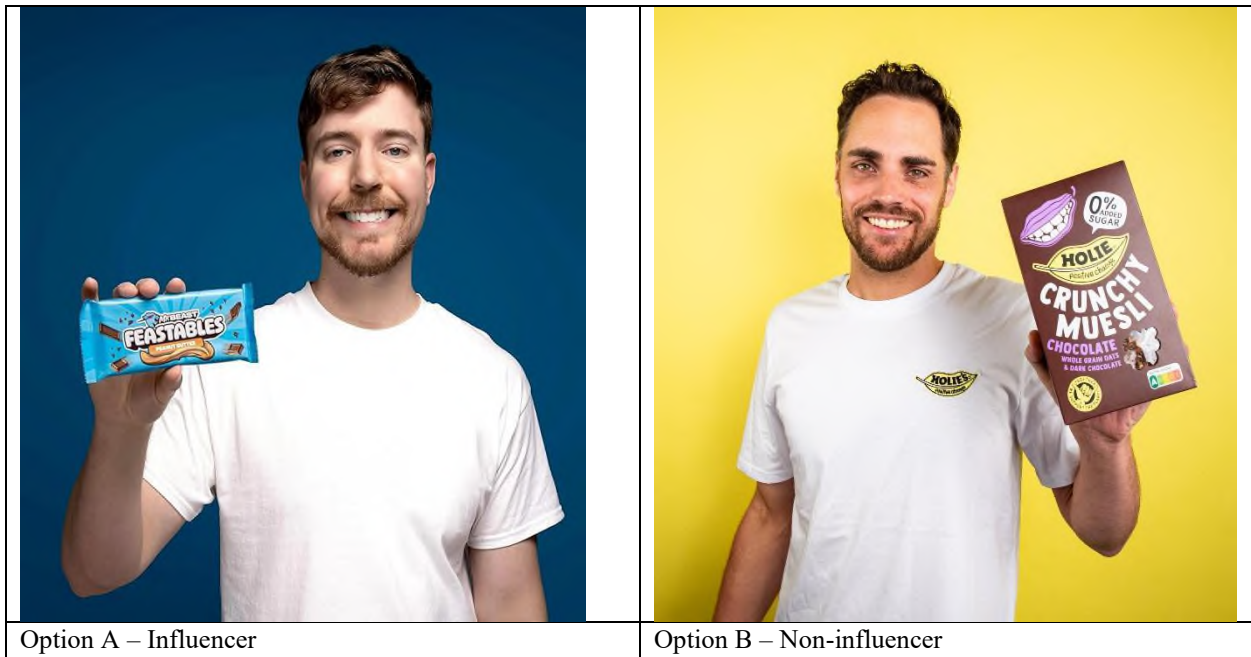
<b>Options</b>	<b>I often discover new products from an influencer that will make me end up purchasing</b>	<b>I frequently question whether influencers are authentic in their endorsements</b>	<b>I often feel that influencers provide fair and unbiased reviews on endorsed products</b>	<b>I often feel that influencers can take advantage of their audience for personal gain</b>
Never	20%	3%	14%	2%
Rarely	34%	10%	40%	6%
Sometimes	31%	30%	33%	23%
Often	15%	40%	13%	38%
Always	1%	17%	1%	32%
<b>Options</b>	<b>I frequently take part in influencer-led campaigns or challenges, even if it seems risky</b>	<b>I often buy products from an influencer for the value, even if the influencer is controversial</b>	<b>I often get inspired into trying out new trends or products because of influencers</b>	<b>I frequently avoid buying products that are promoted by influencers</b>
Never	59%	51%	25%	8%
Rarely	27%	28%	32%	25%
Sometimes	10%	16%	29%	30%
Often	3%	4%	13%	28%
Always	1%	1%	1%	9%
<b>Options</b>	<b>I frequently shape my opinion of products because of the influencer's words</b>	<b>I often buy influencer-promoted products because I want to relate with them</b>		
Never	29%	57%		
Rarely	34%	24%		
Sometimes	28%	14%		
Often	9%	5%		
Always	1%	1%		

Source: Created by the authors

Nearing the end of the survey, we have included a psychological question, where there will be two options with option A having a classified influencer while option B having a classified non-influencer as each of them providing their own essence in a similar setting.

For option A, with 144 (38%) out of 384 respondents, they see their reasoning in several categories with the first one being its familiar recognition of MrBeast, knowing that he has built himself an online presence on the internet with developing factors of trust and credibility due to his popularity and with that, he can reflect towards his audience in creating an external exposure to the world with his influence into business. Another thing is the visual elements with the preference of having a blue scheme, making it appealing, pleasant and eye-catching. They also commented on his appearance, saying that it was more attractive to look at or something that easily pulls you in. While it's attractive to have better composition and lighting to the photo, it even calls upon their positive experience with the product being the "Feastables" chocolate bar, which is available in most of the grocery and candy shops in Vilnius. Overall, their decision for option A is based on its familiarity with the influencer due to its enormous popularity across the world as well as attractive visual elements that are just appealing to the eyes of a consumer.

However, for option B, with 240 (62%) out of 384 respondents, they also see their own reasoning, which is due to the person's natural and authentic appearance. They have described it to be rather sincere, credible and even believable to look at, contrasting with MrBeast's smile as unnatural, artificial, forced and repulsive or even intimidating. The visual element also plays a crucial role in respondent preferences in being perceived as cheerful and relatable, making it appear more genuine. They also glorified his relatability as some ordinary person with a passion project, not some kind of cliché, famous face. With their personal dislike or distrust of MrBeast, it is frankly due to his controversial situation with their internal shady practices as well as questioning his authenticity or influence into the business landscape. Also, the way that the product positions itself to be a positive preference, saying that it has a large consumer surplus and better visibility. Overall, their decision for option B is based on its genuine appearance, stark contrast of preferable visual elements, non-controversial background, appropriate use of authenticity, non-celebrity endorsement and even the product positioning.



38%	62%
<p>Fig. 1: YouTuber MrBeast doing a photo shoot to promote their influencer-led chocolate bar Feastables to the world. Adapted according to Ref: <a href="https://beastinsider.com/assets/jimmy.png">https://beastinsider.com/assets/jimmy.png</a> Fig. 2: Hollie’s Head of Sales Ruben doing a photo shoot to showcase their world’s first crunchy chocolate muesli with 0% added sugar. Adapted according to Ref: <a href="https://images.squarespace-cdn.com/content/v1/5e9b555d0d780c12418a6021/09b3bed3-0753-49e9-8f31-db7ff973f2a4/RUBEN+PROFILE-4.jpg">https://images.squarespace-cdn.com/content/v1/5e9b555d0d780c12418a6021/09b3bed3-0753-49e9-8f31-db7ff973f2a4/RUBEN+PROFILE-4.jpg</a></p>	

Fig. 1. Psychological attraction of influencer marketing  
Source: Created by the authors

At the end of the survey, there is a self-reflection question, where it includes the following question of "What are your overall thoughts on influencer marketing in general? Do you think this has some potential for the future of business, or will it get heavily abused down the pipeline? If so, why?", which will create the general sentiment from the eye of a consumer towards the approach of business in Vilnius.

The general sentiment that has been conveyed is that they remain nuanced on the future of influencer marketing with most of them falling into three separate segments. Firstly, many of them believe that it has the potential to succeed due to business growth, because it serves as an effective way for influencers to promote the product easily through digital advertising, which helps many brands to create a reach in pushing their targeted audience more authentically. It also leverages the essence of trust within a relationship between the influencer and its followers, especially with younger demographics, who seek their guidance with their purchasing decision. Secondly, some of them are also concerned as it can be abused for several reasons, such as influencers being able to prioritize their financial gain over the quality of a product, promoting products that has no genuine motive to it, exploiting the trust of followers as well as creating a saturated marketplace with pure unauthenticity. And thirdly, there is a subtle position, where its own success being relied on certain factors, like the credibility of an influencer, role of transparency on sponsorships, alignment between the product and influencer, audience demographics as well as its implementation of ethical standards in regulating the current space of influencer marketing to prevent further consequences in the process. Overall, it will create such valuable opportunities for many Vilnius businesses, where it will increase their visibility and connect with their consumers more effectively, but on the contrast, it mostly depends on its long-term viability in maintaining the essence of trust and authenticity, especially in a skeptical environment, where most of consumers are clinging onto the shoulders of influencers.

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

In comparison from the literature to our research, it was revealed that they also have their own ways of seeing the attachment for influencer marketing, specifically that the non-influencer being more preferred to be the source of authority, remained neutral on seeing honest and reliable information as well as trusting product recommendations from influencers and even rarely shaped their opinion on products due to the influencer's credibility and transparency onto the sponsorships. Also, they do not feel connected when influencers pair up with products, in case of taking advantage of their audience for personal gain as well as having a controversial background, which creates some concern from the public perception towards the brand due to their personal experience with the influencer. Furthermore, the influencers can shape the consumer's perception by utilizing the factors of trust and credibility as well as the effectiveness of their influence into the product, but at the cost of being authentic to the product’s vision. And most importantly, they do not feel dependent on having a relationship with the influencer in relation to brand loyalty, which makes

them not invest in a parasocial relationship due to their personal background and the effect of credibility. Overall, some of these results are in line with several earlier researchers but have a differing contrast to the parasocial relationship.

The survey provides data insights from a diverse range of audiences with most of them being Lithuanians within the age range of 25-31 as well as 46 and above, which affects their perception coming from a consumer-to-business perspective. Moreover, they are predominantly female, which suggests that they are slightly more engaged with influencer marketing than males do.

Based on the data collected, they are mostly classified under the middle class, which makes them fully capable of spending their value on influencer-related products. They have mostly completed the level of bachelor's degree, which showcases their acquired knowledge of influencer marketing. They are also highly considered to be employed full-time, which could relate to their initial experience of influencer marketing in the context of business.

The data analysis has measured the perceived behavior of influencer marketing, and it suggests that the impact of influencers heavily varies among different individuals, which means that Vilnius businesses should maintain the effectiveness of their influence by considering these perceptive factors, such as the essence of credibility and consumer trust.

The data analysis has also measured its perceived frequency of influencer marketing, and it reinforces the idea that trust plays a vital role for influencers and that Vilnius businesses should prioritize transparency and credibility to effectively connect with their audiences.

The psychological part of the survey had attested their minds and we can see that picture B is more selected with a 36% difference due to its genuine feel of that appearance, stark contrast of preferable visual elements, non-controversial background with proper use of authenticity, no involvement of an endorsed influencer as well as its additional benefits on the product.

Based on their general sentiment for the future on influencer marketing, it highlights the importance of authenticity and trust as it can create valuable opportunities for many Vilnius businesses, where they must carefully select influencers, whose values heavily align with their brand to maintain that consumer trust and credibility, especially in a skeptical environment, where most of the consumers are clinging onto the shoulders of influencers.

## LITERATURE

1. Bakker, D. (2018). Conceptualising Influencer Marketing. *Journal of Emerging Trends in Marketing and Management*, 1(1), pp. 79–87. [https://www.etimm.ase.ro/RePEc/aes/jetimm/2018/ETIMM\\_V01\\_2018\\_57.pdf](https://www.etimm.ase.ro/RePEc/aes/jetimm/2018/ETIMM_V01_2018_57.pdf)
2. Baron, R. S., Vandello, J. A., & Brunsman, B. (1996). The forgotten variable in conformity research: Impact of task importance on social influence. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 71(5), pp. 915–927. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.71.5.915>
3. Brinkoff, T. (2024). Vilnius (City Municipality, Lithuania) - Population Statistics, Charts, Map and Location. *Citypopulation.de*. [https://www.citypopulation.de/en/lithuania/admin/vilnius/107\\_vilnius\\_m\\_sav/](https://www.citypopulation.de/en/lithuania/admin/vilnius/107_vilnius_m_sav/)
4. Bruns, I. (2018). 'Perceived Authenticity' and 'Trust' in Social Media Driven Influencer Marketing and Their Influence on Intentions-to-Buy of 18-24-Year-Olds in Ireland. *Master of Business Administration in Marketing*. Dublin Business School, Ireland. <https://esource.dbs.ie/server/api/core/bitstreams/bcd1bd12-12bc-466e-9a68-690265044e6f/content>
5. Chaney, D., Mourad, T., & Slimane, K. B. (2017). Marketing to the (new) generations: summary and perspectives. *Journal of Strategic Marketing*, 25(3), pp. 179–189. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0965254X.2017.1291173>
6. Cialdini, R. B. (1993). *Influence: Science and practice*. Third Edition. New York: HarperCollins.
7. Cialdini, R. B., Wosinska, W., Barrett, D. W., Butner, J., & Gornik-Durose, M. (1999). Compliance with a Request in Two Cultures: The Differential Influence of Social Proof and Commitment/Consistency on Collectivists and Individualists. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 25(10), pp. 1242–1253. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0146167299258006>

8. Collins Dictionary. (n.d.). *A double-edged sword*. <https://www.collinsdictionary.com/us/dictionary/english/a-double-edged-sword>
9. Djafarova, E. & Rushworth, C. (2016). Exploring the credibility of online celebrities' Instagram profiles in influencing the purchase decisions of young female users. *Computers in Human Behaviour*, 68, pp. 1–7. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2016.11.009>
10. eMarketer. (2016). Number of YouTube users in the United States from 2014 to 2019 (in millions). *Statista*. <https://www.statista.com/statistics/469152/number-youtube-viewers-united-states/>
11. Eriksson, P. & Kovalainen, A. (2008). *Qualitative Methods in Business Research*. London: Sage
12. Erkli, Y. T. (2022). Social media influencers: The perspective of elaboration likelihood model. *Journal of Academic Tourism Studies*, 3(1), pp. 1-12. <https://jatosjournal.org/files/jatos/65c56a7f-af95-4116-87f2-ef1b7a3a612b.pdf>
13. Escalas, J. E. & Bettman, J. R. (2017). Connecting with celebrities: How consumers appropriate celebrity meanings for a sense of belonging. *Journal of Advertising*, 46(2), pp. 297–308. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00913367.2016.1274925>
14. Festinger, L. (1954). A Theory of Social Comparison Processes. *Human Relations*, 7(2), pp. 117–140. <https://doi.org/10.1177/001872675400700202>
15. Fleming, M. A., Wegener, D. T., & Petty, R. E. (1999). Procedural and legal motivations to correct for perceived judicial biases. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 35(2), pp. 186–203. <https://doi.org/10.1006/jesp.1998.1375>
16. Goethals, G. R., & Darley, J. M. (1977). Social comparison theory: An attributional approach. In J. M. Suls & R. L. Miller (Eds.), *Social comparison processes: Theoretical and empirical perspectives*, pp. 43-68. Washington, DC: Hemisphere/Halsted.
17. Hudders, L., Jans, S. D., & Veirman, M. D. (2021). The Commercialization of Social Media Stars: A Literature Review and Conceptual Framework on the Strategic Use of Social Media Influencers. *Social Media Influencers in Strategic Communication*, pp. 24–67. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003181286-3>
18. Huh, Y. E., Vosgerau, J., & Morewedge, C. K. (2014). Social defaults: Observed choices become choice defaults. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 41, pp. 746–760. <https://doi.org/10.1086/677315>
19. Influencer Marketing Hub. (2024, August 8). The state of influencer marketing 2024: Benchmark report. *Influencer Marketing Hub*. <https://influencermarketinghub.com/influencer-marketing-benchmark-report/> Available at: October 2, 2024
20. Jankienė, G. (2024, October 19). How much money makes you middle class in Lithuania? *LRT*. <https://www.lrt.lt/en/news-in-english/19/2390215/how-much-money-makes-you-middle-class-in-lithuania> Available at: February 3, 2025
21. Kotler, P., & Keller, K. (2006). *Marketing Management*. 12th Edition. Prentice Hall, Upper Saddle River.
22. Kotler, P., Armstrong, G., Saunders, J. & Wong, V. (2002). *Principles of Marketing*. Harlow, Pearson.
23. Kotler, P., Armstrong, G., Wong, V. W. Y., & Saunders, J. A. (2008). Principles of marketing. In *Aston Research Explorer*. Financial Times/Prentice Hall. <https://research.aston.ac.uk/en/publications/principles-of-marketing>
24. Lapsley, D. K., & Stey, P. C. (2012). Id, Ego, and Superego. *Encyclopedia of Human Behavior*, pp. 393–399. <https://doi.org/10.1016/b978-0-12-375000-6.00199-3>
25. Lisichkova, N. & Othman, Z. (2017). The Impact of Influencers on Online Purchase Intent. *School of Business, Society and Engineering*. Mälardalen University. <https://www.diva-portal.org/smash/get/diva2:1109584/FULLTEXT01.pdf>
26. Milgram, S., Toch, H., & Drury, J. (1969). *Collective behavior: Crowds and social movements*.
27. Miller, J. (1984). Culture and the development of everyday social explanation. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 46(5), pp. 961-978. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.46.5.961>
28. Närvänen, E., Kirvesmies, T., & Kahri, E. (2020). Parasocial relationships of Generation Z consumers with social media influencers. *Influencer Marketing*, pp. 118–135. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429322501-10>
29. O'Keefe, D. J. (2013). The elaboration likelihood model. *The SAGE Handbook of Persuasion: Developments in Theory and Practice*, 2nd Edition, pp. 137-149. Sage Publications, Inc.
30. Olsen, C. Ø., & Sandholmen, G. M. (2019). The Dark Side of Influencer Marketing. *Master of Science in Strategic Marketing Management*. <https://biopen.bi.no/bi-xmlui/bitstream/handle/11250/2622034/2287695.pdf>
31. Perner, L. (n.d.). *Consumer Behavior: The Psychology of Marketing*. <https://www.consumerpsychologist.com/>
32. Petty, R. E., & Cacioppo, J. T. (1984). Source Factors and the Elaboration Likelihood Model of Persuasion. *Advances in Consumer Research*, 11(11), pp. 668–672. [http://www.communicationcache.com/uploads/1/0/8/8/10887248/source\\_factors\\_and\\_the\\_elaboration\\_likelihood\\_model\\_of\\_persuasion.pdf](http://www.communicationcache.com/uploads/1/0/8/8/10887248/source_factors_and_the_elaboration_likelihood_model_of_persuasion.pdf)

33. Petty, R. E., & Cacioppo, J. T. (1986). *Communication and Persuasion*. Springer New York. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4612-4964-1>
34. Platow, M. J., Haslam, S. A., Both, A., Chew, I., Cuddon, M., Goharpey, N., Maurer, J., Rosini, S., Tsekouras, A., & Grace, D. M. (2005). "It's not funny if they're laughing": Self-categorization, social influence, and responses to canned laughter. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 41(5), pp. 542–550. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jesp.2004.09.005>
35. Scott, W. B., & Barden, J. (2022). *Social Proof*. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780367198459-REPRW112-1>
36. Sharma, P., & Khanchandani L. (2021). Influencer Marketing: Concept and Approaches. *Journal of Commerce & Management*, 10(1), pp. 97–105. <http://iisjcm.org/sites/default/files/IISJCM/2021/10.pdf>
37. Solomon, M., Bamossy, G., Askegaard, S. & Hogg, K. M. (2006). *Consumer Behavior: A European Perspective*. Third Edition. Pearson Education.
38. The Free Dictionary by Farlex. (n.d.). *A ticking time bomb*. <https://idioms.thefreedictionary.com/a+ticking+time+bomb>
39. Theran, S. A., Newberg, E. M., & Gleason, T. R. (2010). Adolescent girls' parasocial interactions with media figures. *The Journal of Genetic Psychology*, 171(3), pp. 270–277. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00221325.2010.483700>
40. Viira, K. (2024, August 7). Can influencers actually harm your brand? *Motive PR*. <https://www.motivepr.co.uk/blog/can-influencers-harm-your-brand> Available at: October 2, 2024
41. World Population Review (2024). *Vilnius, Lithuania Population 2024*. <https://worldpopulationreview.com/cities/lithuania/vilnius>
42. Worldometer. (2019). *Lithuania Population - Worldometers*. <https://www.worldometers.info/world-population/lithuania-population/>
43. Xiao, M., Wang, R., & Chan-Olmsted, S. (2018). Factors Affecting YouTube Influencer Marketing credibility: a heuristic-systematic Model. *Journal of Media Business Studies*, 15(3), pp. 188–213. <http://doi.org/10.1080/16522354.2018.1501146>

## **BARRIERS TO EMPLOYMENT: UNEMPLOYMENT AND LABOR MARKET INTEGRATION OF FOREIGNERS IN LITHUANIA**

*Mehmet Recai Uygur*

*SMK College of Applied Sciences, Lithuania*

*Ihssane Kharbouch*

*Independent Researcher*

### **Abstract**

The purpose of this article is to investigate the problem of unemployment amongst immigrants living in Lithuania which does not receive a lot of attention but is very important for assessing the employment situation in the country. The goal is to examine how various factors such as education, language proficiency, nationality, and others impact a foreigner's likelihood of getting a job. This study attempts to explore the employment realities of foreigners by conducting a qualitative survey with 210 respondents from different countries who have lived in Lithuania for no less than six months. Our findings suggest that language barriers and assumed biases are some of the greatest inhibiting factors for employment. Moreover, it was noted that longer residents of the country had a greater likelihood of being employed and earning higher wages, as well as more educated individuals. There was also observation that citizens from non-EU countries tended to take a longer time to secure employment compared with EU citizens. We aim to describe the practical challenges that non-Lithuanian citizens face entering the Lithuanian labor market and propose practical measures such as enhancing access to language services, combating biases in recruitment, among others, and enhancing the prospects for mentoring and internships. The aim is to shine a light on what needs to change so that anyone, whatever their background, has an equal chance of success in the Lithuanian workplace.

**Keywords:** unemployment, foreigners, Lithuania, labour market

### **INTRODUCTION**

**Research topicality and problem.** Unemployment is a phenomenon that has existed in most human societies in the past. It is usually and generally linked to the state of the economic cycle of countries, and its rate increases in the event of a general economic recession, when temporary economic crises occur, and many countries in our contemporary world seek to study unemployment and analyze it. Its causes and consequences in their societies are constantly and persistently studied. It is one of the most important problems that most contemporary societies suffer from, regardless of their social and economic systems. This problem appears in any country around the world and developing countries also, despite the differences in development between them. This great interest in the issue of unemployment undoubtedly stems from the importance of the unemployment phenomenon itself and the serious effects it has on the structure of society, especially those related to the security, social and health effects on individuals and institutions of society. Stankūnas et al. (2006) implemented a study among local citizens in Lithuania to know the correlation between unemployment and mental health and he found out that depression became more common for the long-term unemployed citizens. Another research by Rakauskienė and Ranceva (2013), found out that the lack of opportunities in the Lithuanian labour market pushes Lithuanian youth to immigrate, leaving their country in a bad economic situation. Many researchers implemented several methods to analyse the unemployment inside the Lithuanian labour market focusing on local citizens but leaving the unemployment among foreigners without any analysis.

**The Aim of the study** is to understand the causes of unemployment among foreigners. And shed light on how the language barrier affects the employment opportunities of foreigners. We will understand the socio-economic factors that are influencing unemployment rates among foreigners in Lithuania, regarding their educational background but also language skills and nationality etc., which can be used to inform policymakers, decision makers or stakeholder consultations with a deeper level of understanding of where root-causes might lie. Furthermore, the research will

address the influence of knowledge of the Lithuanian language on employment opportunities for foreigners and therefore indirectly on language training policies and integration efforts made by the government. In our research we assume that each factor economic or social can influence directly or indirectly the unemployment trends among foreigners.

**Research methodology.** To achieve the aim, the research methods used were literature review and a questionnaire survey as a quantitative method for empirical research data analysis.

**Results.** The findings of the study suggest certain underlying causes of unemployment of foreign nationals in Lithuania. The research suggests that language proficiency and perceived discrimination are substantial barriers to employment. Moreover, long residency periods in Lithuania and better educational attainment, improve employment prospect. Finally, the results also suggest that non-EU citizens have longer job search durations than EU citizens, which highlight the impact of nationality on labor market access.

The Scope of the Research is narrowed down to the examination of factors that contributes to the unemployment of foreigners in Lithuania, their unemployment rate and how such factors influence the labor market. Such research would consider barriers, gaps and immigration issues affecting foreign workers in Lithuania's labor market. Such findings would not be aimed at rounding off the results in relation to other nations. Emphasis of the study is therefore on expatriates who experience unemployment in Lithuania, more particularly quantitative data from surveys.

To better understand this problem, we will highlight its causes and the factors that contributes to the unemployment, Therefore, the research aims to find out How do various factors such as education level, language skills, and nationality influence the unemployment rate among foreigners in Lithuania; What role do educational qualifications play in the employment prospects of foreigners in Lithuania.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Theoretical Framework

The current research examines unemployment rates among foreigners in Lithuania revealing the effects of social and economic determinants, such as education, knowledge of the language, nationality (Bardasi & Taylor, 2005). The framework employs several theories to contextualize and analyze the findings:

*Unemployment:* In this investigation, unemployment is defined as a situation where people who can work, are willing to work, and actively looking for work fail to secure a job. In accordance with the ILO, an unemployed person is defined as someone who does not have work but is capable of work and has undertaken job-search activity in the recent past. This definition will be important in understanding the unemployment rates that will be examined in Lithuania especially among the foreigners who are oriented as looking for work but are unemployed and who are occupationally active in seeking to join the labor market but are unable to do so due to various reasons economic, social or institutions. (International Labour Organization, 2013).

*Foreigners:* Foreigners in the context of this research are understood to be persons who are non-Lithuanians within the territory of Employment in Lithuania and actively looking for a job. The group includes people of different cultures, education, and professional experience, who have such problems as inability to speak Lithuanian, low competencies, and various socio-economical concerns which inhibit their integration to the job market in Lithuania Is also the aim of the term. Such people are those who have lived in Lithuania for more than six months, which suits the scope

of the research focusing on the problems of integration into the labor market of long-term residents rather than the short-term visitors.

*The Skills Mismatch Theory:* attempts to explain why the labor demand and supply from job seekers and employers does not tend to balance equally. Such deficiency can be the so-called skills lost in translation, for example when mismatch occurs because of rapid tech changes, level of education, or local economy needs (Brown & Hesketh, 2004). In Lithuania, this problem is more pronounced regarding foreign workers, who have been trying to fit into the market but have had difficulties because of their schools, qualifications, and industry expectations in their native countries. Furthermore, this theory explains how skill deficiencies are linked with unemployment and how immigrants are unable to fully assimilate into the workforce as employers look for individuals possessing certain skills that can be provided locally.

*Human Capital Theory:* This theory suggests that education and skill or competence factors of a person affect the chances of being employed as well as how much he can earn. According to Becker (1993), human capital is enhanced through investment of time and money in education and training. This research will examine how the educational qualifications of the foreigners influence their likelihood of getting employed in the Lithuanian job market and whether such foreign qualifications get recognition in the local market.

*Social Capital Theory:* Social capital is basically the social networks of individuals that allow for effective operations of society to take place. Putnam (2000) also stresses that social connections facilitate the acquisition of useful resources and opportunities. This framework will investigate the relationships of foreign nationals, with locals and other foreigners to seeking employment.

*Language Proficiency:* Language proficiency both as an employment and integration aspect has proven to be of great importance. Research has indicated that low proficiency in language characteristically impedes potential employment opportunities and integration into uprightness in the workplace (Dustmann & Fabbri, 2003). This study will investigate ways the failure to observe the parameters of the language in Lithuania creates employment problems to non-nationals.

*Structural Unemployment Theory:* This theory puts emphasis on how the inability of workers to match the skills they possess with the requirements in the labor market creates unemployment (Blanchard, 1997). This theory is particularly useful in developing economies because of potential changes in the market that may require different skills. The study will seek to assess the extent to which the skills or qualifications of foreign workers fit into the industry demands of Lithuania and pinpoint some industries which are likely to have more of these gaps.

*Discrimination:* The economist Gary S. Becker, in his well-known book *The Economics of Discrimination*, defines discrimination in a narrow, and more practical way: discrimination is the practice of treating people of the same group differently than the criteria of the group would suggest. Becker (1971) distinguishes two basic forms of discrimination: taste and statistical. Taste discrimination is caused by certain individuals' or groups' preferences towards not employing specific groups, which causes people to be treated unfairly as members of particular groups and not on individual merits. That type of discrimination leads to inefficiency, since the employer does not hire the best candidate and the labor market does not perform its function of distributing resources efficiently. In our study, we will include the rubric of discrimination into our research question as we are interested in how such attitudes affect the integration of foreign workers in the Lithuanian labor market. With the help of both taste and statistical discrimination on the labor market we will be trying to answer the question of what the causes of higher unemployment rates among non-EU foreign job seekers are.

## Empirical Review

### *Unemployment Rate in Lithuania in 2024*

According to the Bank of Lithuania (Lietuvos bankas), the unemployment rate increased to 8.2% in the first quarter of 2024. This worsening situation of unemployment is being caused partially by an increasing labour force, because of increased immigration and higher labour force participation. Wage growth remained strong, rising to 10.3% early in 2024. However, the Bank of Lithuania forecasts a modest recovery due to the economy's projected growth of 1.9% in 2024, which is forecasted to improve in the coming years. It is expected that this improvement in the economy will ease pressures pertaining to unemployment in the future, still the key concerns will be around labour productivity and competitiveness. The year 2024 may mark the beginning of a slow recovery of Lithuania's unemployment rate although certain areas still face problems. As stated by the Bank of Lithuania, the unemployment rate has been able to show a decrease because of a recovering labor force and good economic conditions. However, large regional imbalances continue to exist. For instance, rural areas in the eastern and southern provinces are characterized by higher unemployment rates than urban agglomerations like Vilnius (Bank of Lithuania, 2024).

Again, factors of educational levels remain crucial when discussing employment rates in the country. Research tends to indicate that the unemployment level for those with lower education is higher than those with tertiary education (OECD, 2024). This trend emphasizes the country's problem of skill shortage that causes many of the unemployed to not be able to live up to the requirements set forth by the growing areas. In addition, there are also structural factors, including low geographical mobility as well as skills gaps that contribute to the layer of unemployment that already exists. In their report, the European Commission (2024) stated that a number of challenges exist for foreign workers, especially non-EU migrants owing to missing skills set necessary to fulfill the local market requirements. Particularly in the context of these challenges, Lithuania has formulated a variety of policies aimed at enhancing the level of employment, especially for underrepresented groups. Such supportive measures as professional qualification courses, assistance in finding a job, and moving people to job openings in rural areas are also pronounced as tackling unemployment issues (OECD, 2022).

### *Mental and social impacts of long-term unemployment*

Stankunas et al. (2006), made archetype investigation of rapport amongst length of unemployment and mental health outcomes among unemployed citizens in Lithuanian. The response rate to this cross-sectional study among 429 unemployed persons registered at the Kaunas Labour Market Office was estimated at 53.6%. Using Beck Depression Inventory (BDI) to measure depressive symptoms and adjusting for gender, age, place of residence, marital status, education attainment level, monthly income level and religious belief in logistic regression analysis as independent variables. The labour department defined 'long-term unemployment' as 12 months or more. Unsurprisingly, the long-term unemployed reported rates of depressive symptoms significantly higher than never unemployed group and other categories of the unemployed. Supporting those longer stints of being unemployed are associated with an increasing risk for mental health difficulties. The risk factors for depression among short-term unemployed individuals were female sex, higher age and more unemployment episodes. For all spells of unemployment, older age was associated with depressive symptom severity and educational functioning, professional activity, and income showed a protective effect among subjects under 35 years old.

What is clear from this study is that there is a strong association between long runs of unemployment and higher rates of depression, and this is something that must worry policymakers. The findings, reported in the *Journal of Health and Social Behavior*, underscore the need for counseling services and community support programs to aid the long-term unemployed persons. Like target characterization, they should also be linked back to identified risk factors and with older persons and women having unique characteristics that must be considered in developing tailored interventions. In the end, better mental health care could help build resilience in jobless people and return them to work. The results presented in the research are important for the understanding of the external factors of households residing in Lithuania. Language and social network barriers, and general lack of knowledge about the local job market may also result in foreigners experiencing long periods of job searching as it is the case with locals who are long term unemployed. These considerations are important in understanding the need for enhancing the mental wellbeing of foreigners in Lithuania and their integration into the local population.

*The socioeconomic impact of unemployment*

“Unemployment causes depression, poor health, high criminality and suicide of the young generation, at the same time young and ambitious people looking for opportunities in other countries are creating families there and thereby damaging the demographic prospects of old Europe”. This is how Rakauskienė and Ranceva (2014) give attention to wider socio-economic consequences of high unemployment in Lithuania with special emphases on the youth migration. The study disputes that decrease in unemployment are the result of job creation, instead attributing them to further emigration. As a result, after graduation, many give up their ambitions and leave the country causing a loss of education investments as well. The competitive future for Lithuania is being threatened due to permanent destructive migration that removes economic potential. The article also claims that high levels of income inequality and socio-economic disparities have fueled the unemployment crisis, so much that youth are more likely to be trapped in low-paying or unstable jobs. Rakauskienė and Ranceva (2014) argue that youth unemployment exacerbates Lithuania’s broader socio-economic problems on the perception map of youth migration. There are serious questions about Lithuania’s future workforce. The number of young, highly educated citizens preparing to settle abroad is not only evidence that individuals are seeking better opportunities, but the comparative figures also suggest that Lithuania is losing its human capital, which poses a potential risk to national economic stability. In addition, the study shows that rising income inequality and socio-economic disparities are systemic factors in the unemployment crisis. This suggests that those who improve governance and develop it for economic development are sustainable evidence that youth employment is not about creating jobs, but about ensuring that the overall economic industry remains strong and provides equal opportunities.

These socioeconomic impacts usually overlap with the problems of unemployment among foreigners residing in Lithuania. Inasmuch emigration dwindles the number of locals, the labor market might become tough for the foreigners due to lack of the language or relevant connections that can aid their job search. What is more, this immigration of highly educated manpower may also cause economic distress which may lead to little focus on integration measures, leaving unemployed immigrants with very scarce assistance in two, recognition of qualifications and adjustment to the labour market of Lithuania. In focusing on these processes in the context of unemployment, the current investigation demonstrates the integration of policies towards foreigners in Lithuania as extremely urgent given the demographic destiny of the country.

### *Flexibility of the Lithuanian labour market*

We cannot talk about the Unemployment in Lithuania without talk about the flexibility of the labour market in Lithuania. Previous research Rutkowski (2003), emphasize that the Lithuanian labour market is known for its high job turnover, as evidenced by increased employee mobility, meaning it is relatively easy to adjust in terms of hiring and firing. Job turnover is the term used to express the amount of employee movement or change for a given position, while these employees filled jobs in sectors which were growing in employment and needed workers. Job reallocation is the term for the movement in the availability of jobs from the contracting to the expanding sectors. Nevertheless, the problem of long-term unemployment, especially for low skilled workers who are pushed out of the labour market as wage levels ensure they will not get a job remain. And while job creation and job destruction are fluid, they usually just lead to movement between jobs rather than providing the long-term unemployed with any opportunities. Additionally, an increase in the vacancy deadline which measures job reallocation – a form of an indicator of market mobility implies that even though workers are transferred from consolidating companies to expanding, only portions of the workforce are gaining from these transfers. This heavy job rotating results in a precarious position for the foreigners who may lack requisite skills or relations to leverage such apparent job switching. Therefore, due to the frequent changes of jobs, it is expected that there would be a decrease in unemployment rates. Such high unemployment rates will apply especially to the most peripheral segments of the labor market, immigrant and unskilled workers.

It is pertinent to explore whether the restructuring of enterprises which incidences are pegged at high rates, and the movement of labor from one industry to another which is significant may be the causes of the high unemployment levels in Lithuania. In their findings, Boeri and Garibaldi (2006) found a link between the level of job reallocation and unemployment levels and the average unemployment duration in any economy. This connection, however, is co-determined by other linkages. More job restructuring results to high rates of unemployment, as there are more opportunities to go about; only if workers are not inclined to transfer from one employer to another, will job reallocation be associated with low unemployment rates. In addition, Rutkowski (2003) has described those relationships in an empirical framework, stating that in the OECD countries, low job reallocation corresponds to long-term unemployed people. For instance, regarding Poland such a study determined that the active shifts in employment in the second half of the 1990s led to the rise of unemployment World Bank in Rutkowski (2003) as cited therein. So, we have mentioned already that there is a fair employment level of turnover in Lithuania, but in the same breath there is a long unemployment duration persistence which is at variance and contradicts the theories postulated. The perspective is that the high job turnover rate should enable the unemployed to have higher chances of getting employment, yet the situation does not paint a good picture.

### *The impact of brain drains on Lithuanian labour market*

As noted by Thaut (2009) the cause of brain drains when educated and qualified people leave to another country and this has a negative impact on most of the countries and in this case, Lithuania. The immigration of the qualified human resources, on the one hand, seizes the structural reserves of this country while on the other hand, it makes the market of foreign unskilled labors in the area additional competition. Such situation may render it easy for unskilled immigrants to get jobs. This is because there will be a great excess of natives with the relevant talents. With thousands of new graduates anticipating moving overseas to seek better opportunities, it becomes markedly tougher for people who are still in the country to find suitable employment. Skill loss

may, on the other hand, raise unemployment among the low-skilled and new entrants who are likely to be the last to fill the positions in the increasingly skilled labor market. It has been demonstrated that nations lose economically productive groups due to over-education human capital stock rather than just failing to capture an optimal proportion of the workforce, which may make it difficult for economic advancement to expand and a vicious cycle, higher unemployment, and increased migration.

In a different context, the International Monetary Fund (2006) anticipates that a significant segment of the working-age population in Lithuania may leave the country by the year 2032, thus exacerbating the already high levels of competition within the labor market. This tendency brings forth the necessity of addressing the policies aimed at talent retention and generating job vacancies for local and international migrants. The retention strategies towards the qualified manpower in any country should also be supplemented with the strategies that deal with the integration and support of the foreign workforce. In such way, the adverse effects of talent immigration can be mitigated, and a more balanced employment marketplace can be created in the local people and migrants' favor. I find that Lithuania presents a rather peculiar scenario in its labour market where on one hand, labour market flexibility and unemployment seem to go hand in hand yet on the other hand, it remains a concern worth looking into. Usually, a flexible labour market is a plus as it enables people to get work associated with an advantage but in the case of Lithuania, it appears that this flexibility does not benefit all workers particularly the foreigners and low skilled workers.

However, there is a challenge; instead of the high pace job changes addressing the gaps in the lacking structure, a scenario that appears to be more dominant is created where people's workplaces are always changing which affects their development in the end. The discontent over the outsourcing of services to other lateral centers and the lack of labor resource Base Push and Brain Drain perspectives would be even more exacerbated by importing average unskilled workers who compete for positions where qualifications do not meet industrial requirements in the region. Also, it raises the issue of the effectiveness of the labor market for various demographic segments. And policymakers should have an active vision to endorse the efforts of reducing unemployment while trying to incorporate different ethnicities. The existence of a large proportion of people with longer-term unemployment and who regularly shift workplaces demonstrates the problems of this type within the structure. However, there is optimism regarding the reduction of unemployment in Lithuania and even increasing economic expectations for her people through measures which will ensure a more equitable distribution of benefits that will result from liberalization of the labor market.

The impact of soviet-era economic structure on foreign worker integration in Lithuania's labor market:

Aspects of a planned economy remain in Lithuania's occupational specialization and workforce mobility systems which have Soviet roots. According to Smallbone and Welter (2001), however, it is argued that a planned economy system had workers with highly specific skills but only low generic ones. These circumstances have led to some imbalances between the level of skills of foreign workers and the more specific skills which are in demand due to structural changes in the Lithuanian economy. For foreign workers the situation is in fact two pronged. First, they may have been trained to use skills that were appropriate for a different type of environment, especially if they are from countries with a more organized education system. They are more likely do not possess the necessary extra local context, and modifications required of a Lithuanian employee for example. Such worker shortages for particular jobs because of this provision cause enormous problems as far as the occupational adjustment of foreigners is concerned which in turn

results in their massive unemployment. In the analysis of the labor market in transition economies, understanding the evolution of institutional framework is of great importance. According to Smallbone and Welter (2010), in this type of economy, a transition away from central planning and towards a market economy entails radical transformations in both the formal rules including laws and regulations, and the informal rules like culture and values. Such changes determine the structure of the employment market in terms of the number of jobs available, forms of employment and the degree of foreign employment. The pace of reform in Lithuania's case may be too quick to rectify the 'institutional holes or gaps that have implications for the labour market for foreign workers. Indeed, since foreign workers are likely to operate in areas where such gaps are pessimistic, they do experience instability that is associated with limited institutional framework and regulation.

Along the lines of the instability in transitional economy markets as in the case of Lithuania, enterprises started to diversify their products and services. Moreover, this variety in roles has made the working chances of foreign workers, many of whom are trained to do only one very narrow job many times tougher. The move to market economies has led to instability and foreign workers may find it difficult to cope with the changes. (Uhlenbruck, Meyer, & Hitt, 2003).

Transitional economy and skill mismatch of Lithuania and its impact on foreign workers:

Foreign workers, notably those from outside the EU; appear not to have appropriate reskilling options and find it hard to pursue multi-functional jobs. It is further disadvantaged by the fact that, and to worsen the situation, Lithuania's job exchange for foreigners with local experience, talent will continue to seek outside. As a result, a great number of foreigner workers are unemployed or underemployed as they cannot meet the skill level requirements of the Lithuanian employers. The shift which took place within the Lithuanian economy in this case the transition from large scale industries to small scale ones has only made the demand for skills possessed by foreign workers even more skewed. The decline of large firms and growth of small and medium sized enterprises changed the employment structure and increased the demand for management and entrepreneurial skills. However, the data from the 5th Annual EuroMed Conference of the EuroMed Academy of Business Study also stresses: such demands are not necessarily met in the functional skill set available to the labor market.

Foreign workers try to fit into this mismatch, but they are often disadvantaged as most of their acquired skills, experience or education may not be enough to succeed within the employed environment in Lithuania which is rather new and ever evolving. The answer is obviously no but those engaged in certain industrial and technical trades will certainly have more problems in today's world where transitional roles, towards service industries, SMEs, and small-medium enterprises, are becoming increasingly common. The EuroMed study (Vrontis et al., 2012) also explains that Lithuania could be characterized as having low productivity, as the level of wage segmentation practically leaves the labor market filled with poorly skilled, poorly paid jobs. However, to gainful overseas professionals, it poses a considerable barrier. It is even possible that the highly educated are underutilized in low paid jobs as corporates attempt to cut costs on their investments in expensive skilled laborers.

This polarization in Lithuanian labor market also causes emigration, as both the local, as well as foreign employees move beyond Lithuanian borders in search of better opportunities. In case of foreigners, especially those hailing from non-EU countries, it results in a vicious cycle in which even quite skilled workers may migrate away in view of the lack of suitable vacancies, thereby deepening the unemployment levels in Lithuania. However, the focus of EuroMed study (Vrontis et al., 2012) in Vilnius where also skilled labor is concentrated poses an obstacle for

foreigners. Majority of skilled jobs are available in the capital. Its implication is that smaller towns and cities stand a chance to miss out on the opportunity to widen their employment base with high skilled jobs. The geographically fragmented nature of job opportunities in Lithuania means, especially for foreign workers staying away from Vilnius work finding would be a big problem. These long distances imply that foreign workers, even if they are qualified, will be unable to get to work unless they first relocate to a larger city like Vilnius. This issue becomes worse to people who are already poor making moving out even a remote possibility.

*The impact of covid-19 on the Lithuanian labour market*

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought unprecedented challenges to global labour markets, and its impact on employment in Lithuania has been significant. Some set forth in their studies the analysis of the direct and indirect effects of the pandemic on unemployment, underemployment and the labor market in general in the broader sense of unemployment and considered also the marginally attached and underemployed individuals. COVID-19 aftershocks have significantly impacted Lithuania with more people being unemployed or underemployed with reference to the hospitality and manual labor sectors as stated by Garcia-Louzao and Vélyvis (2021). The report points out however, that such disadvantaged groups as women, young and rural workers were also the most affected in terms of unemployment and underemployment during the pandemic. Remember that Lithuania, for instance, has a lot of foreign workers in these very sectors and they too probably suffered the most from the unemployment in that economic crisis. These findings support the idea that the employment of foreign workers in Lithuania during the times of the pandemic was no less affected than their Lithuanian counterparts, the general observation of unequal distribution of labor among different societal segments requiring more studies of the adversities faced by this group.

The economic impact of the pandemic in Lithuania has also been evaluated by placing the country in the space of Eurozone peers. However, despite the rise in the unemployment rate in Lithuania along Covid-19, conditions were better established there relative to other countries. The report of the Bank of Lithuania suggests that the recession caused by the pandemic was less painful in Lithuania than previous recessions and was also somewhat milder than in other countries of the Eurozone (Garcia-Louzao & Vélyvis, 2021; Fana et al., 2020). Nevertheless, behind the figure of the national unemployment rate, there are negative movements as well, among them is the growth of potential labor force members who do not belong to the active workforce, and expansion of underemployment – when people are able and willing to work additional hours but are unable to find suitable jobs. According to a report by the Bank of Lithuania, there exist two schools of thought, urban and rural what's the difference. In cities (Vilnius, Kaunas, Klaipeda) the unemployment rate rose by 2.7 percent points, compared to 2.3 percent points in rural areas. But there was a higher though gradual increase in underemployment in rural regions, rising from 3.5 percentage points against 2.6 percentage point increases in urban regions. This geographic difference is explained by the structure of industry and the adjustment of firms where, for example, in rural localization the employment rate was reduced more than in urban areas and in urban stratification more people were left without employment than in rural areas. These results point out the need to pay attention to the geographic characteristics in the assessment of the effects of the economic shocks such Covid-19.

The report prepared by the Bank of Lithuania notes that women younger ones and people in rural areas were hit harder during the economy downturn. Policy Implications and Recommendations The insights of the Bank of Lithuania study do bring valuable contributions for policymaking. The research shows that policymakers should not intentionally aim to lowering the

unemployment figure only which would hide the issue of underemployment or increase the tendency of the discouraged worker hypothesis. The measure of labor market performance in its broader sense should include other two: extent of underemployment and number of marginally attached workers. This would enable to present a more realistic picture of how the labor market operates and thus the policies undertaken would be more efficacious (Giupponi et al., 2022).

Giupponi et al. (2022) emphasized that unemployment insurance and job preservation measures during downtimes also offers some insight on persecution reasons of certain labor segments like foreign workers. Two approaches are available: buying workers' employment through provision of unemployment benefits or paying attention to protective measures on jobs through short-term work schemes. While unemployment is often seen as today's ultimate relief for the unemployed, programs that are designed to ensure temporary lay off employees during recessional periods seem more beneficial to the economic system. In the case of Lithuania's foreign national workers that work within the construction, hospitality and manufacturing industries for example, such measures would safeguard employment during recessions. Such policies may alleviate the impact of unemployment of foreigners who are often the first to be let go from jobs as they are the most insecure due to their employment type or a temporary contractual agreement.

#### *The Ukraine-Russia war impact on foreign unemployment in Lithuania*

The war between Russia and Ukraine has produced notable economic effects as far away as Lithuania which has cultural and geographical proximity to the region. The Russian military invasion of Ukraine disrupted the growing trends of Lithuania's economy which had started recovering from COVID in recent months. After COVID-19 Lithuania known a strong economic growth due to a raise in their exports and their integration in the global trade. However, in the early 2022 was a different reality for Lithuania, after the Ukraine- Russia war the inflation increased in the European area leaving Lithuania in a difficult situation. (OECD, 2022).

#### *Economic slowdown and its impact on employment*

This can be attributed to trade choke points, high energy costs as well as inflation rates that were indeed among the highest in the euro area. This caused an increase in overall operational costs for many companies in energy heavy industries such as manufacturing and logistics, subsequently, a significant number of them froze recruitment, expansion of business plans and in more severe cases, retrenchment of workers was carried out. These setbacks in the labor market cut across the locals and foreigners alike, but foreigners experience greater setbacks of language barriers and lack of qualification recognition.

#### *Increased competition in the labor market*

Ukrainians are now the largest foreign diaspora in Lithuania, with 75,959 Ukrainian document holders living in the country out of more than 200,000 other foreigners according to Lithuanian Migration Department (Migracija). There has been an increase in competition for available positions because of the arrival of many Ukrainian refugees, some of whom have joined the labor pool. This is particularly true for industries such construction, transport, and hospitality where less Lithuanian language proficiency or specializations is required. Consequently, the employment and retention of employment by non-Ukrainian foreigners, mainly those from non-EU countries, has become more precarious.

#### *Sectoral effects*

The energy crisis has adversely affected some specific sectors within Lithuania, making it more difficult for foreign workers in these areas to find employment opportunities. With respect to employment, energy crisis has affected several sectors including manufacturing and logistics

which depend on uninterrupted energy to operate. Such companies in these sectors have reduced their manpower or recruitment of new employees to cope with overhead costs and other operational expenditures. Since these industries mostly employ foreign workers, it implies that they are likely to lose their jobs or have limited job opportunities during this phase.

*Policy focus on Ukrainian refugees and the skills mismatch*

The Lithuanian government has developed different programs of a social and economic nature that seek to integrate the Ukrainian refugees into the labor market. However, these programs, although important and noble, might have the unintended effect of causing some alien workers' groups to be left out. For instance, non-Ukrainian foreigners may be unable to access job training or language or even integration programs, worsening their unemployment problems. Skills Mismatch in the Labor Market Lithuania has had a long-standing problem of skills mismatch from its labor market and economic disruptions caused by the Ukraine-Russia crisis have only made matters worse. Demand for skills, especially those related to the nascent industries such as renewable energy and digital technologies, is on the increase. However, foreign workers coming from traditional sectors such as manufacturing might encounter barriers in making the shift without the help of retraining or upskilling programs. In the absence of adequate help, these workers are prone to long unemployment spells and hence perpetually add to the country's already high structural unemployment rate (2022).

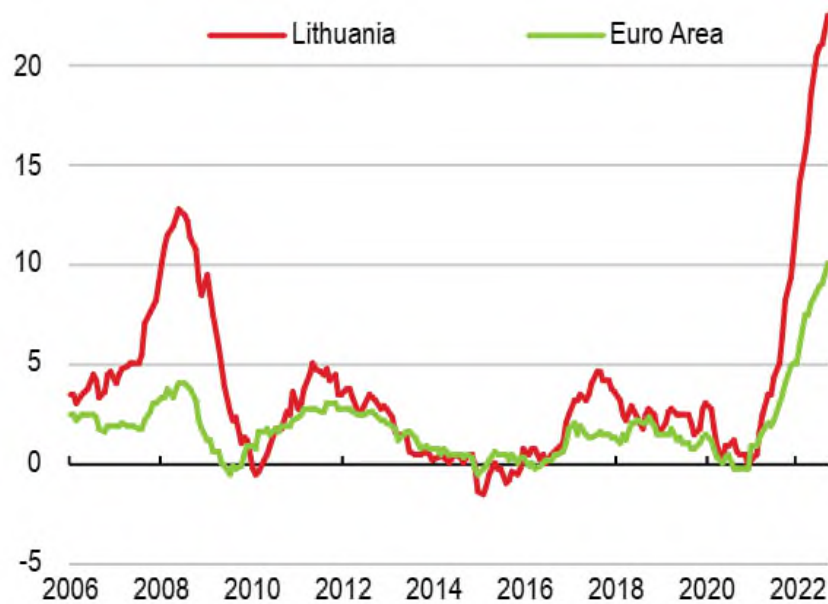


Fig. 1. Inflation rates

Source: OECD Economic Survey: [https://www.oecd.org/en/publications/oecd-economic-surveys-lithuania-2022\\_0829329f-en.html](https://www.oecd.org/en/publications/oecd-economic-surveys-lithuania-2022_0829329f-en.html)

According to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD, 2022), The graph seeks to compare the developments in the inflation rate both in Lithuania and in the Euro (Fig. 1), Area depicting the years 2006–2022. Among the most relevant events is Lithuania going into a steep inflationary curve growth since 2021 and reaching more than 20% in 2022, as opposed to the Euro area which did experience a growth in inflation but by a relatively fair margin. This trend only confirms the fact that Lithuania's economy is sensitive to external economy events like the COVID-19 pandemic or the Russia-Ukraine war which is known to have

disrupted energy supplies while also leading to higher costs. The graph assists in proving the point of the relative debt of inflationary pressures across the various regions of the Euro Area but in this case, Lithuania which is smaller. The trends depict that the challenges of inflation in Lithuania economy also affects employment especially of overseas workers reducing their purchasing power leading to increased unemployment rate in such countries.

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

This study was performed in Lithuania, one of the Baltic states located in Northern Europe. The population of the country (beginning of 2024) was about 2,885,900, with more than 200,000 foreign residents (Statistics Lithuania, 2024; Migration Information Centre, 2024). The official rate of unemployment among the working-age population of Lithuania in June 2024 was 7.20% (Eurostat, 2024). The International Labour Organization defines an unemployed person as someone who is currently without a job, is available to work, and is actively seeking employment (International Labour Organization, 2013). This is a cross-sectional study. Questionnaires were distributed to purposively selected sample of foreigners both employed and unemployed focusing on those who have experience with Lithuanian market and may have faced challenges related to employment and integration. The respondents were informed about the aims and process for the study, Ethical clearance for the study was obtained from the institutions, and the places where survey was conducted. We made a survey with close-ended and multiple-choice questions and the Likert scale of agreement (strongly agree - agree - neutral - disagree - strongly disagree) and frequency (never - rarely - sometimes - often - always). The questionnaires were distributed to 250 foreigners living in Lithuania through multiple channels.

A purposive sampling method is conducted and is going to target Foreigners who have been Lithuanian residents at least 6 months. The survey was distributed online to encourage a broad range of participation. The diversity of national backgrounds, education degrees and duration of stay in Lithuania aims to provide an overview of the challenges faced by foreigners.

### *Sampling and Sample Size Calculation*

The study focused on a target population of Foreigners immigrants residing in Lithuania, using the following inclusion criteria:

1. Must be 18 years old or above.
2. Must be a foreigner living in Lithuania.
3. Must complete at least 6 months living in Lithuania.
4. Must be able to complete the survey in English.

Power analysis for the sample size was also performed to ensure that our study would have an adequate number of subjects to detect potential patterns, if they were real. We determined that we required 200 participants to achieve satisfactory reliability with a medium effect size, 80 % power, and 5 % significance. We figured that some people would drop out, so we aimed at 250 people. Ultimately, a total of 210 individuals completed the survey, even further

Of the set 250 participants, 210 completed the survey. This sample size was statistically robust to test the regression model for direct and interaction effects and to check model fit diagnostics according to the power analysis assumptions (medium effect size,  $\alpha = 0.05$ , power = 0.80). The sample was diverse with in terms of work status, income, years of residence in Lithuania and Nationality, and enabled satisfied comparison and analyses among subgroups.

## RESEARCH RESULTS AND DATA ANALYSIS

Among respondents 142 (67.8%) were males and 68 (32.2%) females (Table 1). Respondents were aged as follows: 18–25 years (51.2%), 25–35 years (35.6%) and 35–45 years (13.2%). (Table 2).

**Table 1. Gender**

Gender	
Male	67.8%
Female	32.2%
Age Range	
18- 25	51.2%
25-35	35.6%
35-45	13.2%
45-55	0%

Source: created by the authors

The respondents in this research represent different national origins, which proves the heterogeneity of the foreign community in Lithuania. The most numerous response groups are Moroccan citizens (20.6%), Pakistani citizens (14.7%) and Bangladeshi (11.8%). Other nationalities are Turkish (8.8%), Italian, Iranian, Ukrainian, and Venezuelan (each 5.9%). This wide diversity of nationalities can be used to describe the variety of backgrounds and experiences of foreign citizens residing in Lithuania (Table 2).

**Table 2. Nationality**

Nationality	
Italian	5.9%
Moroccan	20.6%
Turkish	8.8%
Iranian	5.9%
Ukrainian	5.9%
Indian	2.9%
Spanish	2.9%
Nepalese	2.9%
Venezuelan	5.9%
Nigerian	2.9%
Colombian	2.9%
Bangladesh	11.8%
Pakistani	14.7%
Cameroonian	2.9%
Latvian	2.9%

Source: created by the authors

The occupation of the respondents indicates a variety of state. The most numerous categories are that of students (35.3%). Then full -time (18.8%) and part -time (14.1%) workers. The minority of respondents are unemployed and looking for work (10.6%) or self-employed (4.7%). These findings suggest that a considerable proportion of foreign nationals in Lithuania are still students, and some are working or attempting to be in the labour market (Table 4).

**Table 3. Employment status**

EMPLOYMENT STATUS	
Employed Full-time	18.80%
Employed Part-time	14.10%
Unemployed, Looking for work	10.60%
Student	35.30%
Self employed	4.70%

Source: created by the authors

The main sources used by foreigners in Lithuania to look for job are social media (56%) and job portals (44%), (see Table 5). The data shows that social media, job portals are the preferred and most accessible channels for job search, the services from the recruitment agency and government employment service are less used by foreigners in Lithuania

**Table 4. Sources used to find a job**

SOURCES USED TO FIND A JOB	
Job portals	44 %
Personal Networks	22 %
Social media	56 %
Government employment services	11 %
Recruitment agencies	11 %

Source: created by the authors

The majority graduated with a bachelor's degree (74.07%), followed by master's degree (12.96%), high school certificate (9.26%) and doctoral degree level (3.70%) (Table 6). Which mean that the majority of foreigner in Lithuania are educated

**Table 5. Level of Education**

Education Level	
Bachelor's degree	74.07%
Master's degree	12.96%
High school diploma	9.26%
Doctoral degree	3.70%

Source: created by the authors

On the other hand, 42.59% of foreigners have been visiting Lithuania for 1-3 years and 22.22% from 6 month to 1 year (Table 7). The results demonstrate that we are capable to understand the experiences and difficulties of non-Lithuanians that have been residing in Lithuania for a variety of timeframes, particularly those who have lived enough to adapt to the local way of life as well as the job market.

**Table 6. Living Duration in Lithuania**

Duration Level	
Less than 6 Months	14.81%
6 months to 1 years	22.22%
1 year to 3 years	42.59%
More than 3 years	20.37%

Source: created by the authors

To provide a more detailed insight into discrimination in the Lithuanian labour market, respondents were given the opportunity to specify how frequently they are subjected to or feel subjected to unequal treatment related to nationality or ethnic background. According to the findings, more than 60% of respondents frequently or all the time think that companies prefer to employ locals instead of foreigners regardless of their skills. Moreover, 47.37% often or very often believe that because of their ethnicity or nationality, the chances of being hired are lower.

In terms of direct experience, around 35% of respondents reported that they have often or very often faced discrimination when applying for jobs. These findings indicate that perceived and experienced discrimination remains a significant barrier for foreigners seeking employment in Lithuania (Table 7).

**Table 7. Frequency of perceived discrimination**

Options	I believe employers prefer to hire local candidates over foreigners, regardless of qualifications.	I feel that my chances of being hired are lower because of my ethnicity or nationality.	I have experienced discrimination based on my nationality when applying for jobs.
Never	3.77%	12.28%	21.05%
Rarely	0%	14.04%	24.56%
Sometimes	33.96%	26.32%	19.30%
Often	32.08%	28.07%	17.54%
Very Often	30.19%	19.30%	17.54%

Source: created by the authors

To gain a deeper insight into the mismatches and the competition aspects on the Lithuanian labor market, we asked the respondents to indicate their level of agreement (on a 5-point Likert scale) with the following assertions. Results indicate that 57.7% of respondents indicated that they agree or strongly agree that low number of job openings in the field caused problems for them. And 49.3% said they were intimidated by a crowded jobs market. These results shows that the number of job openings and the strong competition are challenges for foreigners seeking job (Table 8).

**Table 8. Mismatch and competitiveness**

Options	I faced challenges due to a lack of job openings in my field.	I felt overwhelmed by the competitive job market in Lithuania.
Strongly Disagree	5.60 %	4.20%
Disagree	15.50%	21.10%
Neutral	21.10%	25.40%
Agree	40.80%	38.00%
Strongly Agree	16.90%	11.30%

Source: created by the authors

Measurements on perceived difficulty in the job market in Lithuania considered language and communication aspects. The results show that more than 80% of the respondents agreed and strongly agreed that requirements to the Lithuanian language create obstacles to the employment. Furthermore, 65.3% felt that as a foreigner, they didn't have many opportunities to network, showing the barrier that lies ahead in the world of work. For job interviews, 57.7% indicated that they had communication difficulties during the interview, reflecting persistent communication

problems in accessing job openings. These results underscore the impact of systemic linguistic and social exclusion on the employment experiences of foreigners.

**Table 9. Language Barrier**

Options	I found jobs requiring Lithuanian language skills.	I found networking opportunities limited as a foreigner.	I found that job interviews were challenging due to language barriers.
Strongly Disagree	2.80%	6.10%	2.80%
Disagree	5.60%	2.0%	23.90%
Neutral	9.90%	20.40%	15.50%
Agree	39.400%	65.30%	33.80%
Strongly Agree	42.3%	6.10%	23.90%

Source: created by the authors

## RESEARCH DATA ANALYSIS

### Kruskal-walis Test

For employment outcomes comparisons among the groups, we used the Kruskal-Wallis H test in SPSS. It is a non-parametric test and is used to compare a single factor that has three or more levels, particularly in cases when the data isn't normally distributed. Interest predictors were language skill requirement, discrimination, years of residency, and networking.

**Table 10. Employment Status Differences by Predictor**

Predictor	H-Statistics	Df	p-value	Effect Size ( $\eta^2$ )	Post-Hoc Findings
Lithuanian language requirements	18.2	3	<b>0.002</b>	0.24 (Large)	Unemployed > Employed ( <b>p&lt;0.01</b> )
Discrimination by nationality	14.7	3	<b>0.008</b>	0.19 (Large)	Unemployed > Students ( <b>p=0.003</b> )
Residency duration (>3 years)	22.1	3	<b>0.001</b>	0.29 (Large)	Employed > Unemployed ( <b>p&lt;0.001</b> )
Limited networking opportunities	10.4	3	<b>0.018</b>	0.14 (Medium)	Unemployed > Part-time ( <b>p=0.02</b> )

Source: created by the authors

H: Kruskal-Wallis statistic (higher values indicate greater differences between groups).

$\eta^2$ : Eta-squared, an effect size measure (0.01=Small, 0.06=Medium, 0.14=Large effect).

Source: the authors

Results showed that language and discriminatory hiring practices based on nationality significantly contribute to employment outcomes (H = 18.2, p = 0.002 and H = 14.7, p = 0.008, respectively). More specifically, among the unemployed individuals, “language” and “discrimination” had higher levels of difficulty, and their effect sizes were critical (with effect sizes of 0.24 and 0.19, respectively). Length of residency was another significant factor, foreigners who have lived in Lithuania for more than 3 years are more likely to be employed compared to those who lived less than 3 years (H = 22.1, p = 0.001,  $\eta^2 = 0.29$ ).

**Table 11. Monthly Income Differences by Predictor**

Predictor	H-Statistics	p-value	Effect Size	Interpretation
Education level	12.1	<b>0.012</b>	0.16 (Large)	Master's > Bachelor's ( <b>p=0.01</b> )
EU vs. Non-EU origin	9.3	<b>0.022</b>	0.12 (Medium)	EU > Non-EU ( <b>p=0.025</b> )

Source: created by the authors

Level of education was practically significant factor also for monthly income ( $H = 12.1$ ,  $p = 0.012$ ,  $\eta^2 = 0.16$ ); those with master's degree earned more than those with Bachelor's. EU-origin persons also earned more than non-EU-origin ones ( $H = 9.3$ ,  $p = 0.022$ ,  $\eta^2 = 0.12$ ).

Source: the authors

**Table 12. Job Search Duration Differences by Predictor**

Predictor	H-Statistics	p-value	Effect Size	Interpretation
Non-EU origin	11.3	<b>0.042</b>	0.15 (Large)	Non-EU > EU ( <b>p=0.038</b> )
Limited networking	8.9	<b>0.018</b>	0.11 (Medium)	Limited > Strong ( <b>p=0.016</b> )

Source: created by the authors

Duration of job search was significantly longer for non-EU origin than for EU-origin individuals ( $H = 11.3$ ,  $p = 0.042$ ,  $\eta^2 = 0.15$ ). In addition, participants who lacked networking were needing more duration to find a job ( $H = 8.9$ ,  $p = 0.018$ ,  $\eta^2 = 0.11$ ).

### Regression Analysis Results

Associations between different predictors and employment status were assessed with ordinal logistic regressions. The dependent variable, Employment Status, was from 1 (Unemployed) to 5 (Employed full-time), which was given to 250 participants. The regression examines the influence of age, gender, level of education, duration of residence, the requirements of the Lithuanian language, and perceived discrimination on employment status.

**Table 13. Ordinal Logistic Regression Analysis of Employment Status Predictors**

Predictor	$\beta$ (coefficient)	SE	Odds Ratio (OR)	95% CI for OR	Forest $x^2$	p- value	Interpretation
<b>Age</b> (25-35 vs. 18-25)	0.45	0.12	1.57	[1.22, 2.01]	14.1	<b>0.001</b>	Older age → 57% higher employment odds
<b>Gender</b> (Male vs. Female)	-0.21	0.11	0.81	[0.65, 1.01]	3.2	0.074	Non-significant effect
<b>Education Level</b> (Master's degree vs. Bachelor's)	0.67	0.15	1.95	[1.45, 2.62]	18.9	<b>&lt;0.001</b>	Higher education → 95% higher odds
<b>Residency</b> (>3 years vs. <6mo)	0.89	0.13	2.44	[1.89, 3.15]	46.3	<b>&lt;0.001</b>	Longer residency → 144% higher odds
<b>Lithuanian</b> language required	-1.12	0.18	0.33	[0.23, 0.47]	38.7	<b>&lt;0.001</b>	Language barrier → 67% lower odds

<b>Discrimination experienced</b>	-1.05	0.17	0.35	[0.25, 0.49]	36.2	<b>&lt;0.001</b>	Discrimination → 65% lower odds
-----------------------------------	-------	------	------	--------------	------	------------------	---------------------------------

Source: created by the authors

$\beta$  (coefficient) – The estimated effect of each predictor on employment status.

SE – Standard Error The standard error of the coefficient.

OR – Odds Ratio The odds of being employed based on the predictor.

p-value – Significance level for each predictor.

95% CI for OR – The confidence interval for the odds ratio.

The regression analysis allows us to go into further detail to understand the working conditions of foreigners employed in Lithuania. The data show that age is a crucial determinant of employment results. Respondents aged 25 to 35 were much more likely to be employed than those of age 18 to 25, signaling that there could be an association between maturity, years of experience or adaptability in the workplace.

Level of education was additionally an important determinant, as individuals with a master’s degree were nearly twice as likely to work full-time as individuals with only a bachelor’s degree. This is consistent with general developments in the labor market in which higher education enhances job market prospects and the quality of jobs. In addition, length of stay in Lithuania seemed to affect labor market integration. Employment opportunities were much stronger for those who had been in the country for more than three years, and were weakest for recent arrivals, especially those in the country less than six months. This could be due to the time it takes to create social networks, improve language skills, and work through local job search systems.

On the other hand, the results identified obstacles which diminish employment chances such as the need to speak Lithuanian at work. The ability to be employed was significantly lower for participants, indicating linguistic exclusion as a structural barrier to employment. Discrimination in hiring was another significant barrier. The odds of employment were significantly reduced among respondents who perceived discrimination, demonstrating the impact of bias and exclusion. The results demonstrate that while factors like age, education and time spent in the country help foreigners to find a job, others like language barrier and discrimination may marginalize foreigners.

## CONCLUSIONS

The present research is of importance to policymakers, academic institutions, non-governmental organizations, and employers aiming to promote the labor market integration of third-country nationals in Lithuania. It will be important to address structural and social barriers in moving towards more equitable access to work.

1. Expanding Language Education Within Higher Education: Language skills are key for the long-term settlement and labor market integration. Lithuanian language should be included in all programs of studies of the universities, especially in the fields that require communication in the workplace. At the end of the day a certificate of language proficiency should be awarded upon completion to enhance employment prospects and formalize language competency.
2. Subsidizing Language Training for Newcomers: Language exclusion in the early phase of settlement restricts the ability to access labor markets. The government and local municipalities need to continue the support for Lithuanian language courses, either free of cost or at a discounted rate, especially for the newcomers in their first year. They

need to be flexible (for example, in the evenings or on weekends) and located regionally.

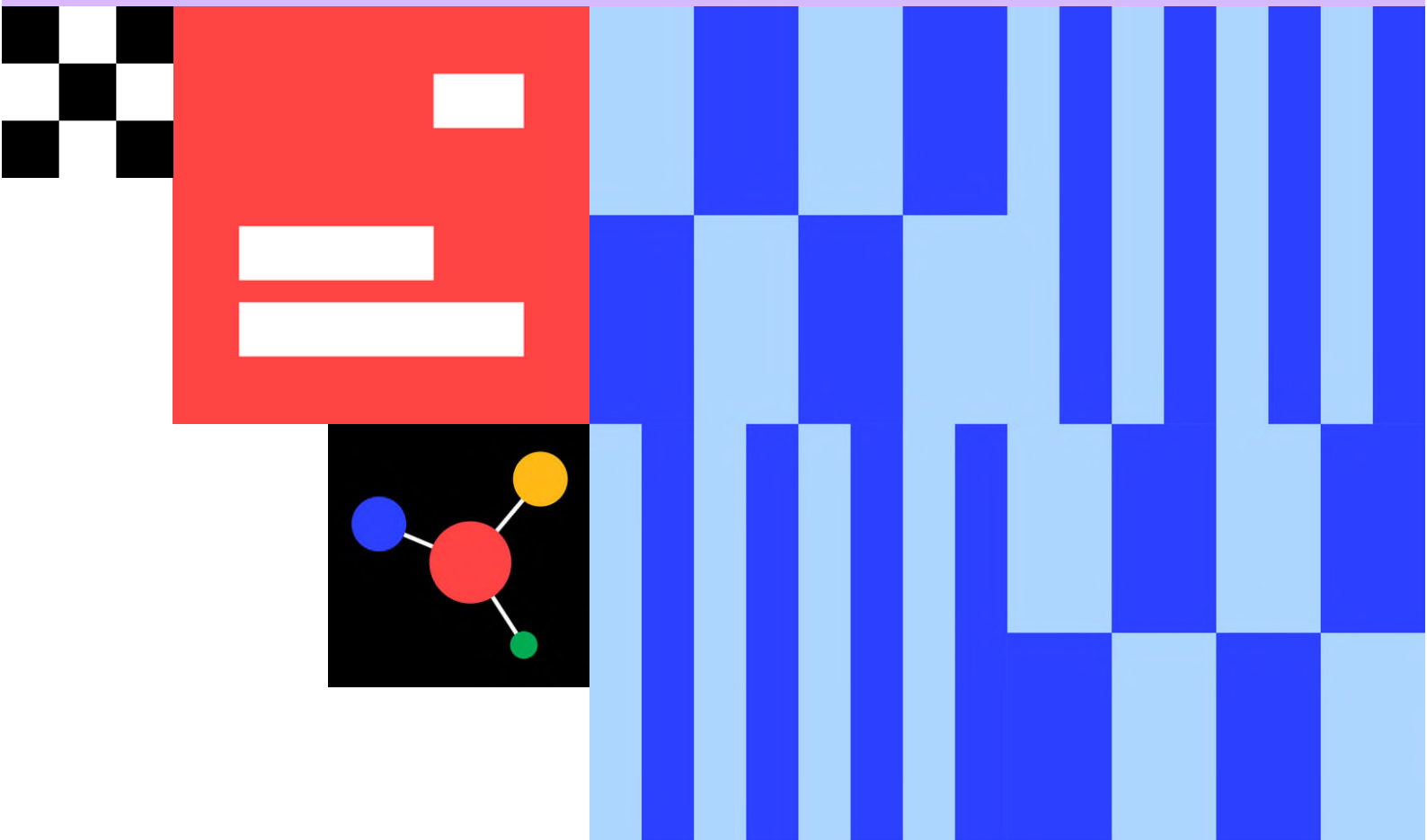
3. Fighting Discrimination in hiring places Through Policy and Practice: Hiring discrimination is the significant barrier to employment. Anonymous CV submissions and legal frameworks with stronger enforcement against bias and lunch campaigns for public awareness on diversity and inclusion is a necessary step to Promote a fair employment environment.
4. Facilitating Mentorship and Internship Programs: Employability is hindered by the absence of networks and local experience. Mentoring and structured internships, especially for beginners, may help cultural adaptation, improve communication skills in the workplace, and facilitate integration into the workplace.
5. Collaboration with International Organizations: In cooperation with international organizations, such as the International Labour Organization (ILO), Lithuania could support promotion of equal opportunities for all when hiring, through workshops, conferences, and employer networks. This would enable employers to discover best practices and ways to better integrate foreigners into the workplace.
6. Creating a National Diversity Standard for Employers: This step could also establish a national diversity certification for employers. Companies that meet certain diversity standards would get a certificate or official recognition. This could be a great marketing tool for some organizations

## LITERATURE

1. Bardasi, E., & Taylor, M. (2005). International migration and the labour force participation of women from the EU accession countries in Britain. *Labour*, 19(4), 641–666.
2. Becker, G. S. (1971). *The economics of discrimination* (2nd ed.). University of Chicago Press.
3. Becker, G. S. (1993). *Human capital: A theoretical and empirical analysis, with special reference to education* (3rd ed.). University of Chicago Press.
4. Blanchard, O. (1997). The medium run. *Brookings Papers on Economic Activity*, 1997(2), 89–141.
5. Boeri, T., & Garibaldi, P. (2006). Are labour markets in the new member states sufficiently flexible for EMU? *Journal of Banking & Finance*, 30(5), 1393–1407.
6. Brown, P., & Hesketh, A. (2004). *The mismanagement of talent: Employability and jobs in the knowledge economy*. Oxford University Press.
7. Dustmann, C., & Fabbri, F. (2003). Language proficiency and labour market performance of immigrants in the UK. *The Economic Journal*, 113(489), 695–717.
8. European Commission. (2024). *Country Report Lithuania 2024*. Accompanying the document: Recommendation for a Council Recommendation on the economic, social, employment, structural and budgetary policies of Lithuania (SWD(2024) 615 final).
9. Eurostat. (2024). Unemployment by sex and age – monthly data (une\_rt\_m) [dataset].
10. Fana, M., Tolan, S., Torrejón Pérez, S., & Fernández-Macías, E. (2020). The COVID confinement measures and EU labour markets. *Publications Office of the European Union*. <https://doi.org/10.2760/079230>
11. Garcia-Louzao, J., & Vélyvis, K. (2021). *Beyond the traditional unemployment rate during Covid-19 in Lithuania* (Occasional Paper Series No. 40). Bank of Lithuania.
12. Giupponi, G., Landais, C., & Lapeyre, A. (2022). Should we ensure workers or jobs during recessions? *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, 36(2), 29–54.
13. International Labour Organization. (2013). Resolution concerning statistics of work, employment and labour underutilization (19th International Conference of Labour Statisticians).
14. International Monetary Fund. (2006). Republic of Lithuania: Selected Issues (IMF Country Report No. 06/163).

15. Bank of Lithuania. (2024, June). Macroeconomic projections. <https://www.lb.lt/en/publications/macro-economic-projections-june-2024>
16. Migration Information Centre. (2024). Migration statistics: Valid residence permits by nationality (Lithuania).
17. OECD. (2022). *OECD Economic Surveys: Lithuania 2022*. OECD Publishing. <https://doi.org/10.1787/0829329f-en>
18. OECD. (2024). *Unemployment rate by educational attainment* (indicator). OECD Data.
19. Putnam, R. D. (2000). *Bowling alone: The collapse and revival of American community*. Simon & Schuster.
20. Rakauskienė, O. G., & Ranceva, O. (2013). Threat of emigration for the socio-economic development of Lithuania. *Business, Management and Education*, 11(1), 90–100.
21. Rakauskienė, O. G., & Ranceva, O. (2014). Youth unemployment and emigration trends. *Intellectual Economics*, 8(1), 165–177.
22. Rutkowski, J. (2003). *Rapid labor reallocation with a stagnant unemployment pool: The puzzle of the labor market in Lithuania* (World Bank Policy Research Working Paper No. 2946). World Bank.
23. Smallbone, D., & Welter, F. (2001). The distinctiveness of entrepreneurship in transition economies. *Small Business Economics*, 16, 249–262.
24. Smallbone, D., & Welter, F. (2010, May 17). *Entrepreneurship and institutional change in transition economies: A discussion paper*. Seminar presented at St. Petersburg State University, St. Petersburg, Russia.
25. Stankūnas, M., Kaledienė, R., Starkuvienė, S., & Kapustinskienė, V. (2006). Duration of unemployment and depression: A cross-sectional survey in Lithuania. *BMC Public Health*, 6, Article 174.
26. Statistics Lithuania. (2024). *Resident population at beginning of 2024*. Official Statistics Portal.
27. Thaut, L. (2009). EU integration & emigration consequences: The case of Lithuania. *International Migration*, 47(1), 191–233.
28. Uhlenbruck, K., Meyer, K. E., & Hitt, M. A. (2003). Organizational transformation in transition economies: The role of international business. *Journal of International Business Studies*, 34(2), 126–145.
29. Vrontis, D., Weber, Y., Kaufmann, R., & Tarba, S. (Eds.). (2012). *5th Annual EuroMed Conference of the EuroMed Academy of Business: Conference Readings Book Proceedings*. EuroMed Pres

# SMK



**SMK College of Applied Sciences**

ISSN 3120-9106

[www.smk.lt](http://www.smk.lt)

