



Responsible Consumption and Production as a Part of CSR

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Abstract: *The paper is devoted to responsible consumption and production as a part of the Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) of companies. Achieving responsible consumption and production is one of the United Nations's twelve sustainable development goals. Partial goals are waste reduction and the adoption and promotion of sustainable actions by companies. As part of the research, the authors investigated consumers' interest in sustainable actions in terms of their willingness to apply them in their consumption. The research was conducted on a sample of 535 respondents. The contribution aims to recommend companies to apply such sustainable actions as part of CSR, which will be significant from the point of view of their application by consumers.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Responsible consumption is a broad concept based on consumer behavior. It is the process by which consumers satisfy their needs in a way that ensures that the needs of future generations are met. It is a multidimensional concept including economic, environmental and psychological variables (Syed et al., 2024). Together with responsible production, they form one of the sustainable goals set by the United Nations by 2030. Currently, more and more people understand that they must contribute to the protection of the environment themselves, that they cannot rely on the sphere of business or politics (Wang et al., 2014). Responsible consumption is considered the most effective way to achieve sustainable goals (Mukendi et al., 2020).

Companies respond to this with their socially responsible behavior, which serves as a company strategy of fulfillment of ethical responsibilities in business and interaction with their stakeholders (Hamdani et al., 2024). From this point of view, CSR is recognized for having both internal and external typologies depending on its focus. Internal CSR refers to a company's social responsibility initiatives aimed at its employees, whereas external CSR involves activities directed towards society and the environment (Bolton, 2020). In general, it could be said that through CSR, companies want to achieve a balance between economic, environmental, and social priorities while simultaneously meeting the expectations of both shareholders and stakeholders, such as employees, local communities, government, customers, and the environment (Apsari & Mansur, 2016). CSR speaks of incorporating societal and moral practices into business strategies that help consumers in building an optimistic brand image (Mohan, 2020).

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Responsible consumption and production are the twelfth of the 17 sustainable goals defined by the United Nations. The partial objectives of this objective are: to reduce waste generation through

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prevention, reduction, recycling and reuse; reduce food waste; achieve sustainable management and efficient use of natural resources; ensure that people everywhere in the world have relevant information and awareness about sustainable development and a lifestyle in harmony with nature; develop and implement tools for sustainable tourism that creates jobs and promotes local culture and products (United Nations, 2022).

There are many definitions of responsible consumption. Each of them emphasizes fulfilling the needs of consumers in a certain way and respecting a certain factor. The most common ways include the purchase of eco products, recycling and reuse, efficient use of products and services, support of the local economy (Kempton et al., 2019; Gordon et al., 2006; Seyfang, 2013; Barrera-Verdugo & Durán-Sandoval, 2024). The factors most often mentioned in connection with responsible consumption are mainly the satisfaction of future needs, respect for the capacity of the ecological system, respect for biodiversity, or respect for the ecological and socioeconomic conditions of all people (Vantamay, 2018; Di Maio & Rem, 2015).

People are increasingly interested in sustainability, but their interest is not always reflected in their consumption (Cornelissen et al., 2008). One of the reasons why consumers do not behave sustainably is the cost (Follows & Jobber, 2000). This opens opportunities for businesses to offer solutions that are socially responsible, sustainable, and also financially acceptable.

In the business sphere, CSR is crucial in promoting an empowered and sustainable society, especially concerning environmental conservation initiatives (Apriliani et al., 2024). In this context, organizations usually take actions to prevent pollution, identify the possibilities of energy savings, workforce improvement, or deal with raw material efficiency, as well as waste control and reduction. Companies realize the importance of their environmental behavior with the aim of attracting an increasingly demanding and aware customer. Companies are trying to gain positive public opinion and company support, but achieving these goals is not possible only by meeting legal requirements and preventing incidents. Companies should take a more proactive approach. Thinking about sustainable development gives many opportunities to enrich the way of influencing the environment through: resource efficiency, sustainable economy, development of new processes and technologies, green technologies, strengthening the competitive advantages of companies, building customer awareness of the value of resources and energy efficiency, efforts to reduce emissions CO₂, preventing damage to biodiversity and the climate-resilient economy (Arsić et al., 2016).

3. METHODOLOGY

We carried out the research using the survey method through a questionnaire. The questionnaire consisted of 24 questions related to consumers' perception of ecological problems and their willingness to contribute to fulfilling responsible consumption. The questionnaire was distributed in the Slovak Republic in October and November 2024 and was filled out by 535 respondents.

In order to generalize the results of the survey to the entire population, an analysis of representativeness concerning gender was done in use chi-square test. The null (the sample set is representative according to gender of consumers) and alternative (the sample set is not representative according to gender of consumers) hypotheses were set. The testing was done in SPSS Statistics and as shown in Table 1.

The value of Chi Square Test statistic is 2.265. That is, with one degree of freedom and a level of significance at 0.05, less than the critical value (3.84). It means that the null hypothesis can be

confirmed, and the sample set is representative according to gender of the consumers. This fact is also confirmed by p-value (Asymp. Sig.) which is at level 0.132 which is more than the level of significance (0.05).

Table 1. Verification of representativeness using Chi-Square test

Test Statistics	
	OT18
Chi-Square	2,265
df	1
Asymp. Sig.	0,132

Source: Own processing

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

According to the results of the research, Slovak consumers currently prefer to separate waste in order to protect the environment. Furthermore, they are willing to save electricity and water and also buy and use ecological packaging (e.g. bags, bottles, etc.). They are also willing to buy products in ecological/separable packaging and local products or grow and produce own products. They also showed a high willingness to manage products: either to buy fewer products, or to use them as long as possible after purchase and thus eliminate waste. On the contrary, they are the least willing to rent, share or swap products. The following figure 1 shows the degree of willingness of Slovak consumers to implement the mentioned activities.

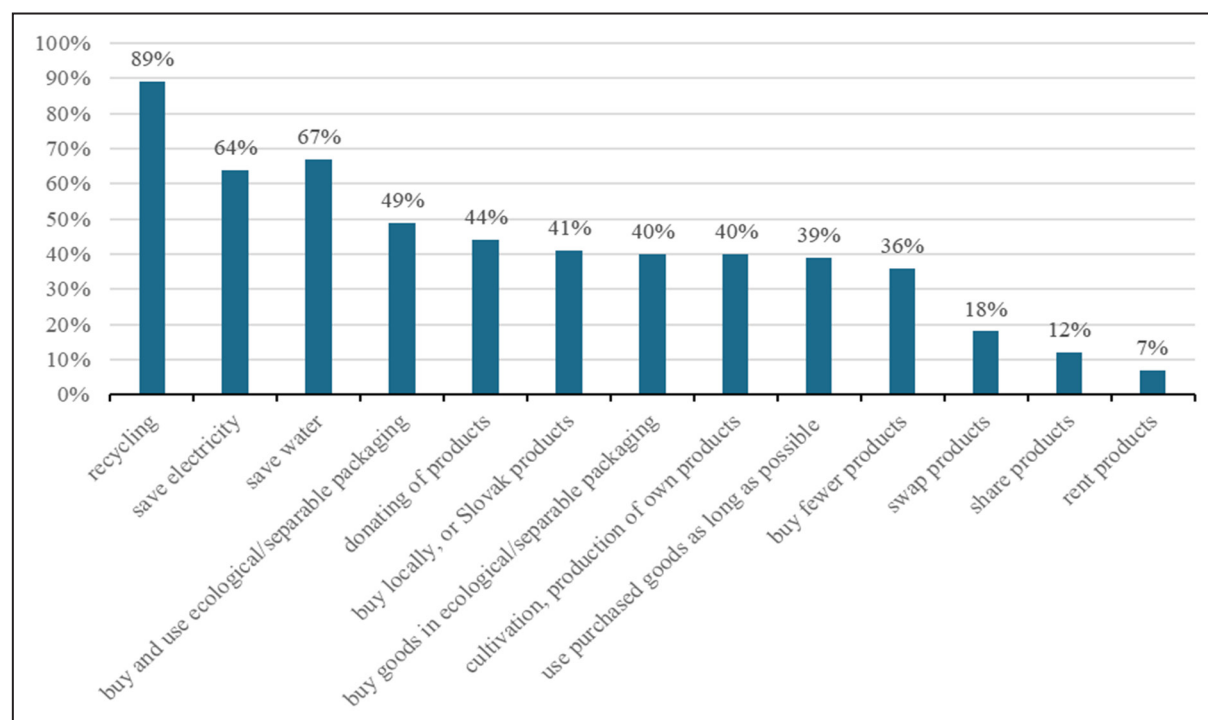


Figure 1. The degree of willingness of Slovak consumers to implement selected activities within the framework of responsible consumption

Source: Own research

As can be seen from the results of secondary research, similarly in other countries, these activities are perceived by consumers as ecologically beneficial and sustainable. Buying a smaller amount

of products, or long-term use of products is especially evident in the fashion industry (Rhee & Johnson, 2019; Chang & Jai, 2015).

On the other hand, about swap, sharing, or renting products (use of used products) is not a big interest even abroad. If consumers share some products, they do so mostly on an informal basis with close people, such as family members, neighbors or colleagues (Ribera Jemio et al., 2024). It turns out that emphasizing the ecological nature of the use of used products as well as economic savings are the main motives for implementing this activity in the framework of responsible consumption (Piscicelli et al., 2018; Aptekar, 2016; Becker-Leifhold, 2018; Day et al., 2020; Park & Joyner Armstrong, 2019).

However, it should be noted that, e.g., when comparing EU countries, the new member countries lag in their willingness to apply responsible consumption for the so-called old member countries (Jankiewicz, 2024). Responsible consumption is inextricably linked to responsible production. Companies should target the practices and techniques to produce goods and services outside of it that minimizes environmental impact, maximizes resource efficiency, and promote social and economic well-being. These methods aim to balance the economic, environmental, and social aspects of production and ensure that the resources used in the production process are managed responsibly and sustainably (Kirchherr et al., 2017). This is possible to do by using green energy sources, recycling and reusing materials, and coming up with ways to make things that use less energy (Moses et al., 2024).

5. CONCLUSION

According to the research results, most respondents are willing to recycle products. However, responsible consumption does not only include getting rid of products, but also their purchase and use. It is therefore important to focus attention on these stages of the purchasing process and inform consumers which products are sustainable and how to use them to make them last as long as possible. It is important to educate people about why sustainability should be preferred over materialism. In this area, space for businesses and CSR is opening. Businesses should focus on activities that are closest to consumers in terms of their consumption.

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