

# RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN ATTITUDES AND BEHAVIOR OF POLISH CONSUMERS TOWARDS CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY (CSR)

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## ABSTRACT

The purpose of the article is to explain the relationship between attitudes and behavior of Polish consumers towards corporate social responsibility (CSR). The article identifies relationships with consumers making their purchases in shopping centers in 2016.

The paper focuses on empirical research conducted on a group of 415 Polish consumers who do their shopping in stores. The study used a questionnaire, including interviews with the consumers.

The article presents empirical insights on the relationship between attitudes and behavior of Polish consumers towards corporate social responsibility (CSR). The research of the authors confirmed the growing interest of consumers in the issue of social responsibility, especially regarding the producers of purchased products. This issue was examined through questions about the consumer's interest in information about the socially responsible activities of producers of purchased products.

The article indicates the willingness of consumers to adopt new rules in business activity. The growing awareness of consumers and their increasing requirements in comparison with the requirements set by other stakeholders, mean that the trends of sustainable development and social responsibility will be implemented by most enterprises.

This article meets a specific need to investigate how one can diagnose consumer attitudes towards corporate social responsibility (CSR), which point to growing market, social and environmental awareness. It can be said that this awareness influences the functioning of enterprises and the way in which they will perceive social and environmental issues.

***Keywords: relationships, consumer attitudes, CSR***

## INTRODUCTION

Providing products and services in accordance with the defined needs, stated in the placed order, is expressed not only by the act of delivery itself, but also by meeting the recipient's specific expectations closely related to the order. From the consumer's point of view meeting these conditions is the source of satisfaction, while from the point of view of assessing the quality of the logistics

process, it determines the level of supplier's adaptability, i.e. the ability to adapt to the customer's needs.

The level of consumer service is a determinant of the efficiency and quality of the supply chain operation. Therefore, enterprises should carry out the assessment of potential and existing suppliers and make their choice on the basis of the supplier's ability to deliver a product compliant with the organization's requirements. It is therefore justified to define the requirements for these suppliers. In the context of the above, it is necessary to assume that some of the criteria are more important and it is on their basis that a system of such evaluation should be built and focused on. The aim of the article is to explain the relationship between the attitudes and the behavior of Polish consumers towards corporate social responsibility (CSR). The article identifies relationships with consumers making their purchases in shopping centers in 2016.

### **COSTUMER ATTITUDES AS A SUBJECTIVE DETERMINANT**

Attitudes are developed in the process of thinking and feeling on the basis of knowledge and the opinions of other people. They are manifested by expressing subjective judgments, beliefs and preferences, and are the causative factor of human behavior towards similar events and by solving similar problems [1].

The term attitude in the present sense was introduced by sociologist F. Znaniecki, who applied it to call the state of mind of an individual in relation to certain values of a social nature [2]. In literature, we meet many definitions of the attitude concept. L. Rudnicki classifies the definitions into three main groups referring to [3]:

- behaviorist tradition or learning psychology W.M. Fuson, W.A. Scott, D. Drob [4] describing attitudes as a kind of disposition to behave in a certain way,
- definitions referring to the sociological concept L.L. Thurstone, H.A. Murray, C.D. Morgan, M. Fishbein, J. Reykowski [5] defining attitude as a specific, relatively permanent, emotional or judgmental relation to the subject or disposition for such a relationship to occur, expressed in positive, negative or neutral terms.

Many researchers adopt the so-called a three-element definition of attitude, according to which the attitude is formed by such components as:

- emotional-judgmental (emotional),
- cognitive (beliefs about a given object),
- behavioral (tendencies to positive or negative behaviors towards a given object).

Concluding the analysis of the definition of attitude, the approach by J.F. Engel, R.D. Blackwell and D.T. Kollat [6] is worth quoting, who describe attitude as a learnt predisposition to a favourable or unwilling response in relation to specific action options, and state that an attitude is an assessment of the expected results of the use of a given product. From among many interpretations of the concept of attitude, Z. Kędzior [7] chose the following properties:

- "Attitude is a predisposition of reacting to an object, not actual behavior towards this object.
- Attitude is permanent over time. A change in attitude requires sufficient pressure.
- Attitude is a dormant variable that causes consequences in verbal or physical behavior.
- Attitude is given the primacy of direction. It is related to preferences referring to the object's assessment or feelings towards the object (...)".

The attitude structure consists of three elements: cognitive (information possessed by the individual, allowing to express an opinion about it), emotional (refers to feelings and emotions related to the object) and motivational (a tendency to act, expressing the individual's readiness to a particular behavior towards an object) [8].

Attitudes are among the determinants that are subjective (psychological), i.e. as previously quoted after G. Światowy they make up the "whole of mental properties, processes, and spiritual human values" and are classified as factors related to activating processes (related to human instincts, motivation and emotions creating a motor force that stimulates human action) as well as conceptual and cognitive processes (conscious perception and assimilation of information messages, process of learning and remembering experiences, and thus the elements of mental information processing aimed at getting to know oneself and one's environment with the help of intellect) [9]. As subjective determinants constitute an element that is difficult to assign to any of the above categories, because "apart from the emotional component also cognitive elements participate in developing attitudes, which indicates the comprehensive character of this variable".

There are four functions of consumer attitudes [10]:

- practical, related to the benefits or negative consequences of using products by consumers,
- defensive, related to the protection of the consumer against external or internal threats,
- cognitive, connected with understanding the world and orientation in the world,
- valuing, helping to express emotions or self-concept important to the consumer.

Knowledge of consumer attitudes is the way to effective action through its better adjustment to market requirements in the modern economy.

## **RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN CONSUMER ATTITUDES AND BEHAVIOR**

Consumer behavior on the market, however, is not always directly correlated with the manifestation of certain consumer attitudes. The relationship between consumer attitudes and consumer behavior is determined by many factors, the multiplicity and complexity of which makes it difficult to measure and assess the

impact of attitudes on actual behavior. L. Rudnicki divides these factors into two groups [11]:

1. personality-related, including: other attitudes, contrary to the attitude that affects the behavior, motives contrary to a given attitude, verbal skills, social skills - knowledge about the appropriateness of behavior in a given situation;
2. situational, including: presence of other people, which may restrict the freedom of behavior, regulations defining the social roles in which the individual is active, which are related to the regulation of specific behaviors, occurrence of other behaviors, changes in the level of generality of the subject of attitude, ability to predict the consequences of events, appearance of unforeseen events causing the disclosure of existing attitudes.

However, one must take into account a very important aspect of attitude, which is decisive for the fact that it determines consumer behavior. The internalization process, i.e. the internalization of influences consistent with the individual's value system, affects the depth of attitude change. The degree of internalization of attitude determines to a large extent its impact on consumer behavior [12].

The influence of attitudes on behavior is explained by the theory of planned behavior of M. Fishbein and I. Ajzen. This theory presents human intentions as factors that are the basis for predicting the purposeful behaviors of man. The basis for predicting these intentions are attitudes towards specific behavior and subjective norms. According to the authors, in the case when planned and thought-out action is possible, attitudes towards specific behaviors in connection with subjective norms have the greatest impact on behavior [13].

The tendency to behave, in accordance with the attitude is influenced by the availability of attitude, that is, the strength of the relationship between the object and the evaluation of this object, measured by the time in which the man realizes his feelings towards the object of the attitude. The availability of attitude also affects the resistance of this attitude to change - the more accessible the attitude is, the greater the compatibility of behavior with it. People with more accessible attitudes, being more inclined to disregard arguments that contradict their beliefs, are more resistant to change. The experience gained due to contact with the object of the attitude makes the attitude more accessible and resistant to change. It is difficult to change important attitudes. The more a man is connected with the concept of his own person, the more important is the attitude is to him.

In psychology it is assumed that the compliance of attitudes with behavior is high, although many studies have not been able to demonstrate it, because they measure attitudes and behaviors at different levels of generality [14]. It should be noted that in certain situations there are objective difficulties in displaying specific behaviors, which may also weaken the relationship between attitudes and behaviors. According to A.W. Wicker individual's behavior is influenced not only by one particular attitude, but also by other attitudes and motives that are often in conflict with a given attitude [15].

## DATA AND EMPIRICAL RESULTS

The research was conducted on a group of 415 Polish consumers making their purchase in shopping centers in 2016. The research focuses on examining consumer attitudes based on their statements regarding the CSR concept. Consumer behavior results from these attitudes.

The data contained in Table 1 show that consumers were in favour of holding unethical companies accountable for their activities - as much as 44.5%.

*Tab.1 Consequences for an unethical company*

No..	Should the company bear the consequences?	%
1.	Yes, definitely, legal, financial and image consequences adequate to the act committed	44.5
2.	Yes, legal consequences without publicity	28.8
3.	It depends on the harmfulness of the act, if the act is - yes	25.0
4.	If insignificant, then no. No answer given	1.7

Source: own elaboration on the basis of the questionnaire research data

Tables 2 and 3 show that the consumer's purchasing decision is influenced by the knowledge about negative or positive actions of the producer. Answers to these questions, as in the case of attitudes, were constructed in such a way as to avoid the need to choose extreme answers - they included a strong, indirect and indifferent option, which did not show any reaction.

*Tab. 2 How does the knowledge about the positive qualities or actions of the producer affect your purchasing decisions?*

No.	The impact of knowledge on the decisions	%
1.	No influence on my purchasing decisions	13.4
2.	I sometimes choose the products of this producer	47.7
3.	I definitely choose the products of this producer	38.9

Source: own elaboration on the basis of the questionnaire research data

In the case of negative features or actions, a decisive reaction is declared by nearly 55% of consumers - they definitely do not choose products of this producer.

*Tab. 3 How does the knowledge about the negative qualities or actions of the producer affect your purchasing decisions?*

Lp.	The impact of knowledge on the decisions	%
1.	No influence on my purchasing decisions	14.9
2.	I sometimes choose the products of this producer	30.5
3.	I definitely don't choose the products of this producer	54.6

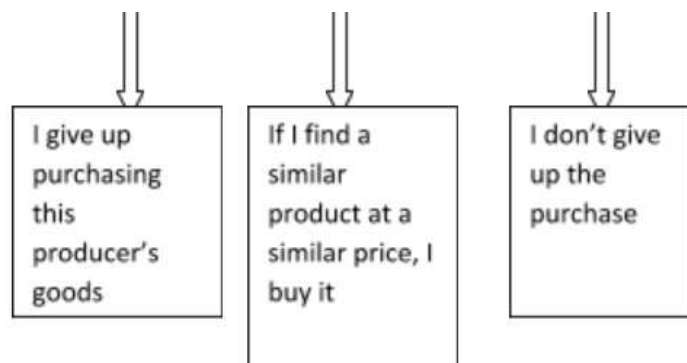
Source: own elaboration on the basis of the questionnaire research data

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A number of indications in this question presented an ambivalent attitude - the people presenting it on the one hand highly appreciate and expect responsible business, and on the other hand do not feel enough motivation to "reward" or "punish" the company for certain positive or negative actions with its purchasing decision.

**Tab. 4** How did you react to the following information about the producer of the product you intend to buy?

No.	Information	I give up buying	If I find a similar one	I don't give up buying
1.	Production of defective products	80	18	2
2.	Harmfulness of a product batch or line	75	13	12
3.	Dishonesty towards customers	51	46	3
4.	Activities harmful to the environment	49	25	26
5.	Corruption and dishonesty of owners and employees	45	23	32
6.	Exploiting employees	67	18	15
7.	Not responding to social criticism	47	11	42
8.	Non-compliance with the law	17	25	58
9.	Lack of care for the common good	20	49	31



Source: own elaboration on the basis of the questionnaire research data

In another question, asking respondents to declare whether they would buy their favourite product (e.g. food, clothing, cosmetics) knowing that its production or use is associated with:

1. significant damage to the natural environment (water, air, soil),

2. killing / destroying any species of animals or plants,
3. employee abuse,
4. fraud, corruption, breaking the law,
5. uncertainty as to the safety of its use,
6. a threat to the existence of certain social values,
7. doing harm to other people.

Answers to this question were ranked on the five-point Likert scale from: "definitely yes", through "rather yes", "rather not" to "definitely not", with the additional answer "I don't know".

The large percentage of respondents declaring that they would not abandon buying their favourite product, even if its production was associated with significant damage to the environment. This attitude is characterized by the tendency of some Poles to specifically justify unethical activities with a different cause, subjectively more important to them. It is also known that often the greatest enemies of social values are producers of goods and services that replace people's family ties, take time, and degrade traditions.

*Tab. 5 Would you buy your favourite product (e.g. food, clothing, cosmetics) knowing that its production or use is connected with:*

No.	Action / effect	Definitely yes	Rather yes	Rather not	Definitely not	I don't know
1.	Significant damage to the natural environment (water, air, soil)	10	7	49	28	6
2.	Killing / destroying any species of animals or plants	5	11	36	40	8
3.	Employee abuse	10	19	40	22	9
4.	Fraud, corruption, breaking the law	8	22	30	31	9
5.	Uncertainty as to the safety of its use	6	19	25	46	4
6	A threat to the existence of certain social values	5	16	42	22	15
7.	Doing harm to other people	5	2	30	55	8

Source: own elaboration on the basis of the questionnaire research data

Another question from the group of questions diagnosing consumer attitudes towards the concept of corporate social responsibility concerned paying for

purchased products and services. Consumers were asked there if they would be willing to pay more and how much more for a product of a socially responsible producer.

The answers to this question are optimistic. About 90% of respondents are willing to accept a higher price of the product to a greater or lesser extent, provided that its producer is a socially responsible business.

*Tab. 6 Would you be willing to pay more for a product knowing that its producer is a socially responsible business?*

No.	Consumer decision	%
1.	Yes, definitely, pretty much more	15.7
2.	Reluctantly, but a small amount - yes	52.3
3.	Yes, but not much more	22.6
4.	No	9.4

Source: own elaboration on the basis of the questionnaire research data

## CONCLUSION

In Poland, corporate social responsibility is a relatively new concept, which has been present in public discourse recently in a specific socio-economic situation, unfinished market reforms, openness to the world economy and deepening European integration. Thinking in long-term categories this concept is based on is undoubtedly difficult in Poland, especially when the main problem of many entrepreneurs is the struggle for survival, paying salaries to employees, gaining capital for development, debt collection from debtors or settling disputes with tax offices. In Poland, according to entrepreneurs, the social and political climate is not conducive to the dissemination and application of the concept of corporate social responsibility.

The research results indicate that consumer attitudes towards corporate social responsibility are definitely positive. The research confirms that consumers have a positive attitude towards the concept of CSR and expect enterprises to implement such activities. They want to be informed about the socially responsible activities of producers of goods and services that they purchase. In addition, they declare their strong reactions to information about negative or positive actions of enterprises.

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