

SOCIAL AWARENESS AND RESPONSIBILITY IN CONTEXT OF POLISH SERVICE COMPANIES

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Abstract:

The enrichment of the society and the consumptive lifestyle caused that customers buy more and more, having different, often very high requirements as to the purchased products and services. They often do not realize that production of such products requires more and more materials, energy and other means of production. All this leads to high exploitation of the environment. Even if the resources of the natural environment are not exhaustible, they do not keep up with their rebuilding at this pace of exploitation. That is why social awareness and responsibility both of producers and customers play such an important role. They are one of the instruments needed to operate in accordance with the concept of sustainable development. The aim of the research was to examine social awareness and responsibility among customers of service enterprises. The research was conducted with the use of an online survey, which allowed to show whether the customers of such enterprises are interested in the concept of the sustainable development, if they take it into account when using various services. The need for environmental education was indicated, which could strengthen the social awareness and responsibility among Polish customers.

Keywords: sustainable development, social awareness and responsibility, customer's requirements, services

1. INTRODUCTION

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) has become an important topic in scientific researches. Due to the interest at a global level over the past two decades, it is now considered a core business. Organizations have realized the need to take into account the needs of society and the welfare of the community in order to survive and gain a competitive advantage (Sajadi Far, 2013; Aastha and Shazi, 2019). Taking into account all the theoretical descriptions and reflections on the fundamental meaning of the

concept and related multi-faceted aspects, CSR quickly spread and developed in both academic and practical fields around the world (Grabara et al., 2016).

It should be emphasized that the environmental awareness makes it possible to realize that every person is responsible for the natural environment, its condition, degradation and protection. Nobody is born with environmental awareness, we acquire it through the process of environmental education, which improves the human value system, its sensitivity, and sensitivity to the good and harm of nature (Żelezik and Sokołowska, 2014; Staniszevska et al., 2020). This means that social awareness and responsibility should apply both to enterprises, but also to customers of these enterprises.

It should be noted that CSR research were conducted mainly from the point of view of enterprises. And it should be remembered that the impact of the activities of enterprises is felt primarily by the customers. People are becoming more and more aware of the impact of business activities on society at an environmental, social or ethical level (Servera-Francés et al., 2020). Morrison and Bridwell emphasize the importance of the customer, pointing out that customer social responsibility is true corporate social responsibility (Morrison and Bridwell, 2011). Recently, Servera-Francés and Piqueras-Tomás confirmed that CSR policy affects customer satisfaction (Servera and Piqueras, 2019).

Social awareness and responsibility is of particular importance in the case of the service enterprises. It should be remembered that in case of services, the customer has direct contact with the enterprise and affects the characteristics of the ordered service (Klimecka-Tatar and Ingaldi, 2020; Rosak-Szyrocka, 2018; Mazur, 2019). Due to the customer's participation, the proper quality of the service, which he should accept, is created (Knop, 2019; Pilarz and Kot, 2018; (Ulewicz, 2016). Whether the customer orders the service reasonably, takes into account the natural environment, the enterprise's closest environment, and employees performing the service directly for him, are also part of social awareness and responsibility, so it is also worth taking a look at customers whether they take into account the element of social awareness and responsibility when ordering various services and making purchases (Pustejovska et al., 2015).

The aim of the research was to examine social awareness and responsibility among customers of service enterprises. The research was conducted with the use of an online survey, which allowed to show whether the customers of such enterprises are interested in the concept of the sustainable development, if they take it into account when using various services. The need for environmental education was indicated, which could strengthen the social awareness and responsibility among Polish customers.

2. MATERIAL AND METHODS

The own author's questionnaire was used to assess the social awareness and responsibility of customers of polish service companies. The questionnaire was addressed to adults people from southern Poland, who make shopping of different type. The respondents were asked to evaluate 15 statements about their social awareness and responsibility when making purchases. These statements were to be assessed on a five-point Likert scale, where 1 means "I completely disagree with it" and 5 means "I completely agree with it". The statements are the following:

1. I am aware of my responsibility for the natural environment.

2. I am aware that each of my choices may have an impact on the condition of the natural environment.
3. I order and buy services when I really need them.
4. I find it superfluous to buy on a whim.
5. I only buy when the previous item is already worn or broken.
6. I don't follow fashion.
7. When buying, I always take quality into account so that I do not have to buy again in a short time.
8. When choosing a service, I take into account its impact on the natural environment.
9. When choosing a service, I take into account what materials will be used during its production.
10. When choosing a service, I take into account what will happen to the product after its use.
11. When choosing a service, I take into account whether the company offering it cares about its immediate surroundings.
12. When choosing a service, I take into account whether the company offering it operates in accordance with the principles of sustainable development.
13. When choosing a service, I take into account whether the company offering it cares about its employees.
14. When choosing a service, I take into account whether the company offering it operates in accordance with the principles of fair trade.
15. When choosing a service, I take into account whether the company offering it is socially responsible.

Additionally, the questionnaire contained a respondents' characteristics, which, however, was omitted in this paper, only a standard respondent was presented. The questionnaire had an electronic form. The link to the survey was made available on various portals, which allowed reaching a larger group of customers. It should be noted that due to the pandemic, other options for collecting responses were very limited. It was assumed that the questionnaire must be completed by at least 1,200 people.

The survey was conducted in January-August 2020. 1 657 people took part in it. Due to the electronic form of collecting answers and including the option of obligatory questions, there was no problem with missing or incorrect filling in the questionnaires by respondents. Therefore, all the questionnaires could be analyzed.

The use of the five-point Likert scale allowed for the analysis of the survey results in terms of the reliability of the answers. For this analysis, the Cronbach Alpha and Cronbach Alpha standardized tests were used (Hair et al., 2003). The analysis was carried out for the entire survey (for all 15 statements together). Next, the evaluation results were analyzed, i.e. basic statistics and percentages of individual evaluations were calculated.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The most frequent participants in the research were women aged 20-30, working or studying, with higher or secondary education, from towns with 201,000-300,000 inhabitants or from large cities with more than 300,000 inhabitants. It should be remembered that the statistical respondent, and thus the structure of the respondents, could have a large influence on the answers given by them.

At the beginning, the reliability of the survey's results was analyzed using the Cronbach Alpha coefficient and the standardized Cronbach Alpha coefficient. The value in both

cases is in the range (0.8; 0.9), which means very good strength of association. Such results prove the reliability of the data, and therefore responses can be further analyzed.

Table 1

Cronbach Alpha - coefficients

	Cronbach Alpha	Standardized Cronbach Alpha	No of items
All survey	0.812	0.824	15

Source: own study

The average assessment for all statements was 3.13, which is slightly above the average. As assessment of 3 means indifference to given statements. Unfortunately, this means that the respondents who took part in the survey, on average, do not have high social awareness or responsibility in case of services they order and buy.

In figure 1 the average assessment for individual statements according to the respondents' answers are shown. A full scale of the survey was shown in the figure on purpose in order to show the true level of the assessment.

It can be seen that these averages did not differ that much from each other, but some differences can be noted. The highest average assessment was obtained for statement 9 (When choosing a service, I take into account what materials will be used during its production) and immediately after statement 11 (When choosing a service, I take into account whether the company offering it cares about its immediate surroundings). In the first case, it can be assumed that for the customer, the material used during production (service or product) should be of good quality so that it has a positive effect on the final result. In case of purchased products, it also means that it will last longer for the owner and will not have to spend additional money on buying a new one. Respondents often choose services from enterprises that are located in their city, sometimes even close to home. Therefore, this impact directly affects them, and they take it into account when ordering services.

The worst assessment was noticed in the case of statement 3 (I order and buy services when I really need them) and 12 (When choosing a service, I take into account whether the company offering it operates in accordance with the principles of sustainable development). Unfortunately, the opinion about the consumptive lifestyle is confirmed. The development of the economy, society which is getting richer, at least partially, force people to buy more and more, without looking at whether a given service is needed, or whether it is just a whim or an "interesting opportunity". A low assessment of the statement regarding the principle of sustainable development may be due to the fact that some respondents do not fully know what that term really means.

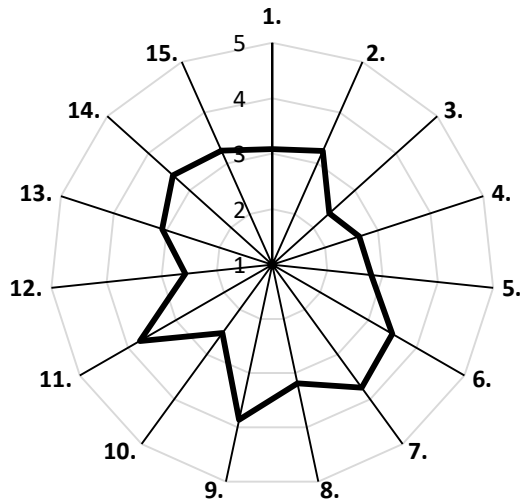


Fig. 1. Average assessment for individual statements

Source: own study

Subsequently, the structure of assessment for individual statements was examined. Despite the fact that the average assessment was slightly higher than 3, the most common grades were 4 and 3, and the least frequent 1. The percentage structure of the assessment was shown in figure 2.

As shown in Figure 2, the assessment 5 was most often given to statements 7, 9 and 11. These are also the statements with the highest averages. As far as the assessment 1 is concerned, it was most often given to statements 3, 4, 5, 10 and 12. In case of statements 3, 4, 10 and 12, there were many indications for the assessment 2. In the end, they were these grades that contributed to the low average assessment for these statements. Additionally, it also influenced the overall results of the research.

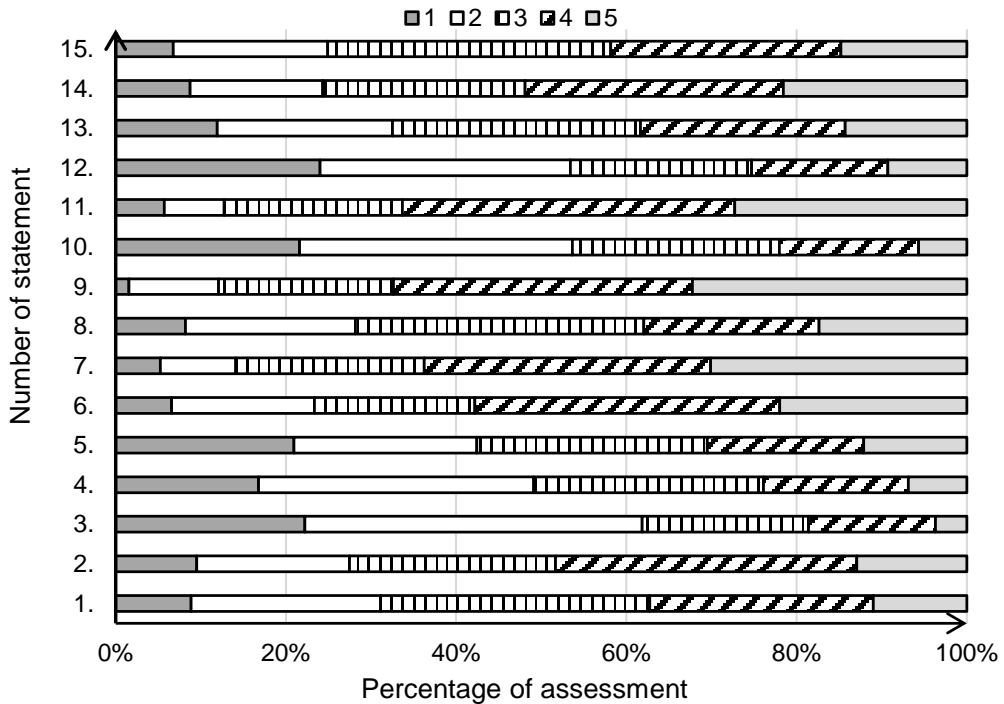


Fig. 1. Percentages of assessment for individual statements

Source: own study

The analysis of the results of the above research shows a rather indifferent attitude of customers towards the services they buy and towards the service providers themselves in terms of their social awareness and responsibility. They do not fully understand this need, perhaps they believe that it is the role of enterprises themselves, not customers. Customers are more worried about what they buy, what materials it is made of, whether it is of high quality, but not taking into account the impact of purchased services and products on the environment and the community around the enterprise offering them. Many authors indicated the need to conduct research in the field of social awareness and responsibility, especially from the customer's point of view. For example, according to the research of Van et al, (2020), consumers are very interested in an organization that they consider responsible for their employees and the local community. Consumers expect business organizations to take their social responsibilities seriously, in line with society's expectations. Interesting research was presented by Suki et al. (2015). According to this research, consumers are developing a positive awareness of green marketing based on growing environmental awareness. The enterprises inform the public about their green marketing efforts by disseminating eco-friendly leaflets that help increase sales revenue, raise consumer awareness and develop greater willingness to buy their products and services. According to Servera-Francés et al. (2020) 74% of consumers are open to news about the social behavior of enterprises, and 59% of them would like to change their purchasing behavior based on social values. These results, however, are far from those presented in the paper.

However, it can be observed that there are researches where, as those presented in the paper, a low social awareness and responsibility of customers has been demonstrated. Grinberga-Zalite (2014) claims that there is still an information gap in corporate social responsibility in Latvia - almost two-thirds of Latvian respondents are interested in what enterprises are doing to behave responsibly, while only one-third of respondents say they feel to be well-informed in this area.

To help customers understand that their attitude, environmental awareness and responsibility are also important, the environmental education should be also considered. Ecological awareness is the thinking and experiences of individual people and the functioning social standards of understanding and evaluating the biosphere. Therefore, it is important to develop this awareness in people through various actions, research and published paper (Hassan et al., 2010; Marinho et al., 2016; Dulaska et al. 2016).

4. CONCLUSION

With the development of industry and lifestyle changes, the environmental impact of humans has increased. More and more elements of this environment were being degraded. It must be remembered that it is impossible to get a new environment. People should take care of this they have.

In the paper the results of research on social awareness and responsibility among customers of service enterprises were presented. The research was conducted with the use of an online survey, which allowed to show whether the customers of such enterprises are interested in the concept of the sustainable development, if they take it into account when using various services. The results were different from those previously published. It turned out that Polish customers are rather indifferent to the services they buy and to the service providers themselves from the point of environment

and society. The need for environmental education was indicated, which could strengthen the social awareness and responsibility among Polish customers.

The performed and presented studies are not free from limitations. The research was general in nature and did not contain in-depth questions. The questionnaire itself was created for the purposes of the research based on the author's experience, hence its subjectivity. Some important aspects may have been omitted. The method of publishing the survey and collecting data could have had an impact on the structure of respondents, which may be related to the electronic exclusion of people who do not have Internet access or with limited access.

In further research it is planned to extend the research to the entire territory of Poland, to see if the statements presented in the article apply only to southern Poland or its entire territory. The research will also be more in-depth so that it is possible to analyze the reasons for the achieved results.

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