

THE HOME OF TOMORROW INITIATIVE BY IKEA AS AN EXAMPLE OF CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY AND ITS IMPACT ON THE ENVIRONMENT

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Abstract: Corporate social responsibility is an attitude that involves taking voluntary action for the benefit of the society in general, to support the positive development of a certain community. This attitude demonstrates that we, as citizens, have not only rights but also certain obligations which we should meet. A socially responsible person is someone who knows that his or her actions will affect others and tries to make decisions that benefit his or her immediate surroundings. The objective of the study was to determine the level of environmental awareness and willingness to take environmental action in 165 respondents who filled out a survey.

The paper includes an introduction that presents the main challenges associated with insufficient contribution of the society to environmental protection and its lack of awareness of social responsibility. Subsequently, the findings of the study are presented, followed by a summary and conclusions.

Keywords: social responsibility, environmental protection, recycling, waste reduction

1. INTRODUCTION

Western countries, whose economies are based on capitalist values, are profit- and capital-oriented. This impacts the daily lives of every citizen, pushing people to follow new trends and make purchases, to continuously replace old things with new things, all because new means better. What seems to be a right purchase today may turn into a useless piece of junk tomorrow and will need to be disposed of. This attitude leads to a vicious cycle: buy, use, discard. The consequences of such practices are already perceptible, and they are expected to become irreversible in a decade or so. At this advanced stage of environmental deterioration, inaction means being extremely irresponsible (Wrochna P., 2018).

2. CLUB OF ROME REPORTS 1970/1972

Based on The Limits to Growth published by the Club of Rome in 1972, we can predict the trajectory of environmental damage and natural resource depletion, assuming

constant population growth on Earth. We are talking about an exponential increase in resource consumption parameters, while the reserves are constant. The authors of the report created three possible growth scenarios, and the book ends with the following consideration: "If the present growth trends in world population, industrialization, pollution, food production, and resource depletion continue unchanged, the limits to growth on this planet will be reached sometime within the next one hundred years. The most probable result will be a rather sudden and uncontrollable decline in both population and industrial capacity." (The Limits to Growth, 1972).

One of the scenarios in the book was a model based on sustainable development. According to its underlying assumptions, global stability could be achieved by reducing population growth and consumption of non-renewable resources. Subsequently, the authors calculated the maximum reserve of non-renewable resources and how long it would last assuming rapid and uncontrollable consumption. These assumptions showed that non-renewable resources would be depleted in mid-twenty-first century at the latest (The Limits to Growth, 1972).

Now we arrive at social responsibility and environmental awareness. Relying on observation methods and analysis of the results of a survey conducted on a group of 165 respondents, the paper tries to find an answer to the question "Do we know what social responsibility is?". The objective of the paper was to learn the respondents' opinions on the concept of social responsibility and environmental protection. In addition, a comparison was made of the most frequently reported waste management problems in the context of the solutions proposed by Ikea in its Home of Tomorrow project. The Swedish company's project itself is based on identifying and solving problems associated with sustainable and responsible lifestyles. Groups of volunteers are divided into teams, which are then assigned a topic to work on relating to one of several problems voiced by inhabitants of a given city. The solution is developed under a close supervision of experts and moderators invited to participate in the project, but the project participants work autonomously, the change must be an authentic grassroots idea. This makes it easier to implement such solutions in the later stages of the project, as each proposed solution to the situation is practical and has been discussed by a larger group, which definitely reduces the implementation time by skipping the public consultation step (homeoftomorrow.online, 2019).

Moreover, the company itself relies on sourcing clean energy in its policy. For this purpose, it sets up its own wind farms from where it obtains most of the electricity needed to power Ikea shops. It also harvests rainwater, which is later used for sanitation inside the shops, thus reducing water consumption (Hahn Y., 2015).

3. BODY – ANALYSIS OF SURVEY RESULTS

Based on statistical data from a survey carried out from 30 December 2020 and 15 January 2021 using an electronic questionnaire available on student forums and groups, some correlations were observed between environmental awareness or regular recycling and social factors such as age, gender, or hometown population size. A total of 165 people participated in the survey, of which 60% were female and 40% were male. The majority of respondents were aged between eighteen and twenty-five years and resided in the Zachodniopomorskie Province (Fig. 1 and Fig. 2). As regards the type of locality in terms of population size, as much as 43% respondents declared they lived in cities with a population over 300 thousand (Fig. 3).

2. Age

[More details](#)

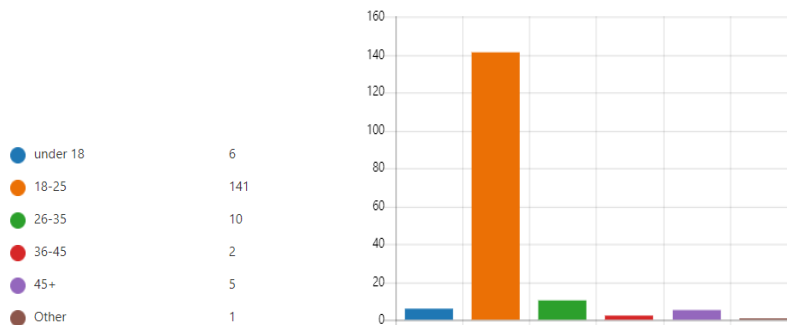


Fig. 1 – Age of respondents

3. Voivodeship

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- lower silesian voivodeship 5
- kujavian-pomeranian 0
- lublin 1
- lubuskie 11
- lodz 1
- lesser poland voivodeship 2
- masovian 1
- opole 2
- podkarpackie 1
- podlaskie 0
- pomeranian 4
- silesian 4
- swietokrzyskie 0
- warmian-masurian 1
- greater poland 4
- west pomeranian voivodeship 128

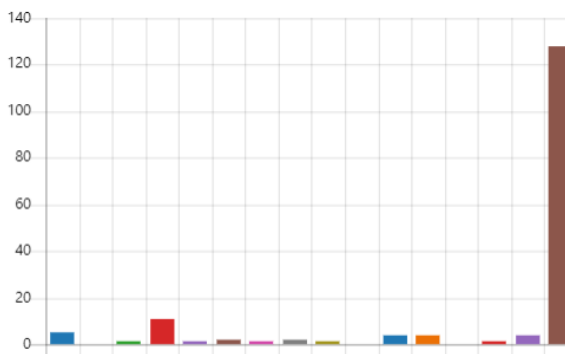


Fig. 2 – Residence: province

4. Domicile

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- Village 34
- a city of less than 100 thousand... 51
- a city of less than 200 thousand... 6
- a city of less than 300 thousand... 3
- city over 300 thousand inhabit... 71



Fig. 3 – Residence by population size

The fourth question concerned separation, or more precisely, whether the respondent actively separated his or her waste. A vast majority (as many as 83% of the respondents) declared they fully separated their waste. Only 27% of the respondents answered that they did not do that. The respondents were then asked about their inaction with respect to separation, and they could specify why they chose not to separate waste. The survey showed that as many as 68% of the respondents were willing to separate waste, but the conditions where they lived did not allow them to do it (Fig. 4). Most respondents stated that their place of residence lacked proper containers for waste separation, or there were not enough of them. The respondents also indicated that chutes were still a very popular solution in multi-family buildings and therefore only mixed waste containers were available. This is a serious problem,

especially for inhabitants of big cities. However, it is also important to note that in smaller localities waste is often collected less frequently, the number of containers is limited, and it is not based on the number of inhabitants and the waste generated.

The respondents also stated that they did not segregate waste because they were convinced that socially responsible waste management measures were too complicated. In addition, some respondents were of the opinion that separation made no sense (7%) and was pointless (7%). Both answers are quite intriguing and warrant further in-depth research in this area. The colour coding of containers and detailed descriptions of permitted waste are already fairly obvious, so what would need to be changed or improved to make the process even easier?

As regards the second answer, we should consider how to encourage citizens to separate waste and how to convince an average Pole that by segregating waste, he or she has a direct impact on the degree of environmental pollution.

6. If you ticked "No" in question 5, mark why

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● I don't have time	1
● I don't see the point in that	2
● It's too complicated	2
● I have no conditions (no conta...	20
● Other	4



Fig. 4 – Reasons why respondents do not separate waste

These are relatively common community problems. Many citizens believe that their opinion does not matter, and their actions do not affect anyone but them. However, the progressive reversal of this trend is a cause for optimism. Fortunately, more and more people, mainly young generation Z or late millennials, are actively engaged in combating the effects of long years of environmental neglect, keeping a keen eye on the future. However, it is important to remember that the involvement of a single social or age group will not be sufficient, considering the scale of damage we have already done, and we keep on inflicting. According to a study conducted in 2010 by J. Przewłocka in cooperation with the Klon/Jawor Association entitled *Zaangażowanie społeczne Polaków w roku 2010: wolontariat, filantropia, 1%*, vast majority of people engaging in environmental initiatives are citizens under twenty-five years of age, which accounts for some 22% of all respondents of this study (J. Przewłocka, *Zaangażowanie społeczne Polaków w roku 2010: wolontariat, filantropia, 1%*, 2010)

Carrying on with the series of questions relating directly to waste separation, a question was posed concerning the awareness of waste container colours. As many as 80% of respondents stated they knew the colours of particular waste containers, 16% said they knew some of them and only 4% of respondents were not aware of the markings on waste containers (Fig. 5).

7. Do you know the colors that mark waste containers?

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● Yes	132
● Not all	27
● No	6



Fig. 5 – knowledge of colour coding of waste containers

The answers to the following question in the survey, question number six, were not any different from commonly known claims. The vast majority, as many as 95% of the respondents, stated that they knew what social responsibility was. (Graph 6). The validity of this claim was not challenged in any way, but it was assumed that most people were aware of what this responsibility meant, but they had certain problems in living up to it.

8. Do you know what social responsibility is?

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● Yes	156
● No	9



Fig. 6 – knowledge of the term 'social responsibility'

The next part of the survey was more complex. The respondents were asked to specify how much they agreed with certain statements on a scale from one to five, where 1 meant 'strongly disagree' and 5 'strongly agree'. The considerations addressed in this part focused on environmental aspects of broadly understood waste. Obtaining responses in this format was aimed at demonstrating the diversity of opinion among the respondents, their deeper thoughts and differences in opinion, and providing insights into what is commonly regarded by the majority of the population as an appropriate response to a given claim (Fig. 7).

The first part of the question concerned the individual attitude towards putting an end to the degradation of our planet, and it read as follows: "Everyone has an impact on the future of the planet." As many as 81.2% of the respondents approved of this statement (24.8% agree, 59.4% strongly agree). This points to a kind of a social need to contribute to stopping climate change, but also strong civic awareness and emergence of self-accountability. Only 11.6% of the respondents disagreed that a single person's approach to environmental protection could be, in any way, meaningful or cost-efficient. The remaining 7.3% do not have a strong opinion on this issue and they remain in between.

The next issue the respondents were asked about was: "Separating garbage reduces future waste". Here, the distribution of votes was similar to the previous subsection. The majority of respondents (79.4%) agreed with this claim (29.7% agree and 49.7% strongly agree). 10.9% were undecided, which may imply that the issue of recycling and

minimising waste production was complex. Only 9.7% of the respondents disagreed with this statement. On the one hand, this is a cause for optimism, but on the other hand, it shows that sustainability and recycling supporters still have a lot of work to do. Another survey claim was: "Most 'garbage' can be given a second life". Here, the vast majority of respondents are aware that most objects ending up in landfills can be reused for other purposes. This was the opinion of 72.1% of the respondents (33.3% agree, 38.8% strongly agree). There were many more people who were undecided or had no opinion on the matter (18.2%). 9.7% of all respondents disagreed with this claim to varying degrees (7.3% disagree, 2.4% strongly disagree).

The claim made in the survey that "Everyone should be obligated to separate waste" also proved to be non-controversial and the percentages of answers were quite easy to predict. 60% of respondents strongly agreed, while 13.3% somewhat agreed. The percentage of those with no opinion was the same as in the previous question. However, it is interesting to note the percentage of those who somewhat disagreed with the claim, merely 1.2% (7.3% disagreed strongly).

The most diverse results were obtained for the claim: "There should be sanctions for not separating waste". It needs to be added that neither the type of sanction nor the enforcement method were specified. Here, only 35.2% of respondents expressed strong support, and 20% partially agreed. This is the least supported claim out of all questions in the survey. It also has the highest percentage of undecided or no opinion responses (20.6%). Many respondents were opposed to this solution (13.9% of respondents), while 10.3% somewhat disagreed. This claim had the most evenly distributed answers from respondents, which means that many respondents do not approve imposing penalties for failing to separate waste.

Another claim presented in the survey was: "Every individual has a strong impact on the environment in which he or she functions". This claim was inserted purposefully, as it is very similar to question number one, to check the consistency of the answers. The respondents remained consistent in their beliefs and their responses were almost identical. 52.7% were strongly in favour of this claim, while 24.2% somewhat agreed. However, a sharp increase in people having no opinion can be observed, to 12.7%. 10.3% of the respondents disagreed with this statement.

The last statement was intentionally reversed in relation to the other claims. Answering 'strongly agree' to the remaining questions represented a sustainable attitude, while 'strongly disagree' meant the opposite. In this case, the seemingly negative response was welcome and expected. The next sentence in the survey was: "Burning waste is not a bad thing". Most respondents were strongly against such practice (as many as 70.9%), while 15.8% were not totally convinced whether it was harmful or not. Similarly, to the previous questions, 7.3% of the respondents did not have an opinion. 6% of the respondents support burning waste (1.2% answered 'agree' and 4.8% 'strongly agree').

9. Indicate to what extent you agree with the following sentences (1 means strongly disagree, 5 strongly agree)

[More details](#)

■ 1 ■ 2 ■ 3 ■ 4 ■ 5

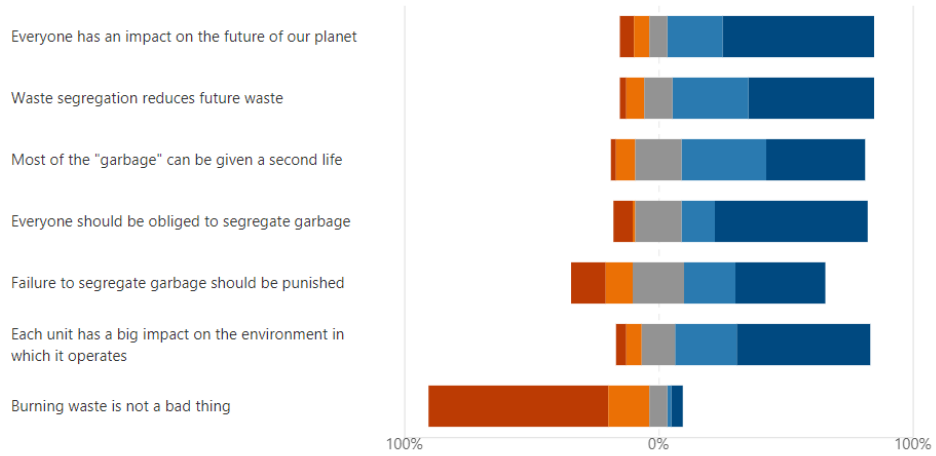


Fig. 7 – Answers given by respondents expressed in percentages

In this study, it was important to check how much the respondents knew about recycling and separation. It is common knowledge that recycling means processing segregated waste and materials to enable reuse. Segregation, on the other hand, means collecting waste into appropriate containers which are marked in accordance with the law. When asked if they knew the difference between the two concepts, 95% of the respondents answered ‘Yes’ (156 votes) and 5% answered ‘No’ (9 votes) (Fig. 8).

10. Do you know the difference between recycling and segregation?

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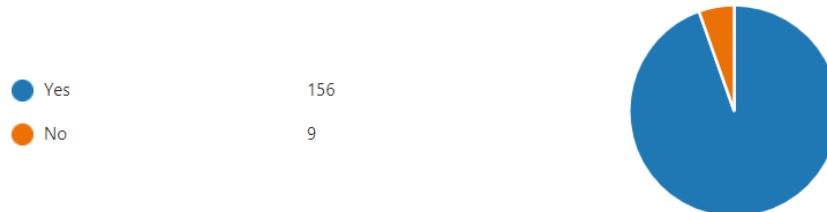


Fig. 8 – Distinction between recycling and separation

Another important aspect that was addressed in the survey was to test the respondents’ current commitment to reducing the pollution of our planet (Fig. 9). To obtain the most accurate answers, a semi-open question was used where more than one answer could be selected. The possible answers were divided into several categories: answers concerning the reduction of raw material consumption, answers concerning product reuse and other.

The first category included the following answers:

- reducing water consumption (81 votes);
- use of energy-saving equipment (73 votes);
- reducing the use of plastic (65 votes);
- reducing food waste (117 votes).

The second category included:

- use of reusable containers (124 votes);

- buying second-hand items (78 votes);
- choosing reusable grocery bags (148 votes);
- waste segregation and recycling (133 votes).

The third category comprised:

- use of public transport (97 votes);
- informed product purchases (92 votes);
- growing some vegetables at home (55 votes).

There were some respondents who did not select any of the above responses (2 votes).

11. Do you use any of the following ways to reduce the pollution of the planet?

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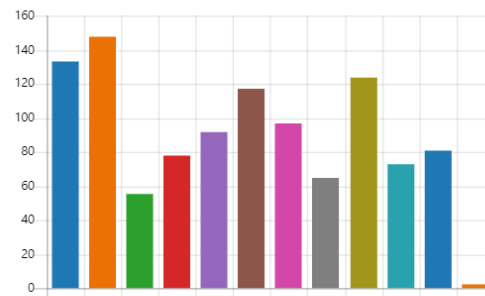


Fig. 9 – Action already taken by the respondents

The purpose of the next question was to check the respondents' opinion on barriers preventing them from engaging in sustainable behaviours. Five possible answers were given, of which only one could be selected. This way, the discussion could be narrowed to focus on a few selected problems (Fig. 10).

Among the answers, the claim about lack of social responsibility education ranked first (34%). The respondents considered it as the biggest obstacle to the development of green initiatives. The second most important problem seemed to be the unwillingness of the society to engage in sustainable behaviours (32%). One might be tempted to say that the latter stems from the former. Citizens who are ignorant of social responsibility will not be willing to work for the benefit of the environment because they often do not understand why it is so important. Some of them may not even be aware of the current state of the planet and that we all contribute to it with our consumer and personal choices. This means that introducing solid social responsibility education would solve the two biggest problems associated with sustainable behaviours.

The next most popular answer was inaction of authorities (18%). The question did not specify whether it concerned local or national authorities. Acting globally rather than locally ranked fourth (13%). The least frequent answer was insufficient funds to promote environmental activities (3%).

13. In your opinion, what hinders the operation of pro-ecological initiatives the most?

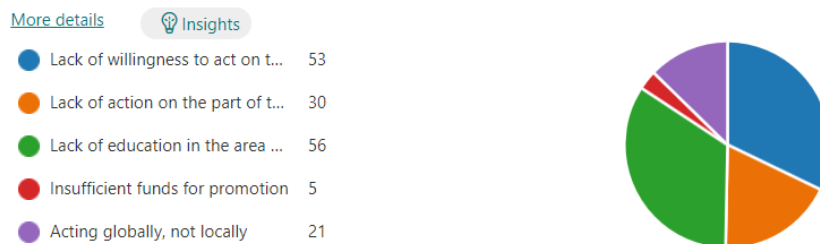


Fig. 10 – The biggest obstacles to sustainable behaviours

Considering what may pose an obstacle to the implementation of environmental initiatives according to the respondents, a question about degradation of the environment was included in the form. The respondents were asked to choose which of the economic sectors specified had the most detrimental impact on the environment. The question referred to carbon dioxide emissions, forest clearance and raising animals for meat. The respondents' answers offered a general picture of their worst concerns about rapid economic growth. It is clear that some economic sectors named in this part of the survey are now developing taking into account the environmental aspects (Fig. 11).

According to a large proportion of the respondents, manufacturing plants and large companies have the most detrimental impact on the environment (64 votes). Mining and metallurgy ranked second (40 votes). The meat processing industry and agriculture were next in line (28 votes), followed closely by the transport sector (20 votes). The tourism industry came second to last (9 votes). The list ends with the paper and furniture industry (2 votes).

14. In your opinion, which area of the economy has the greatest impact on environmental degradation?

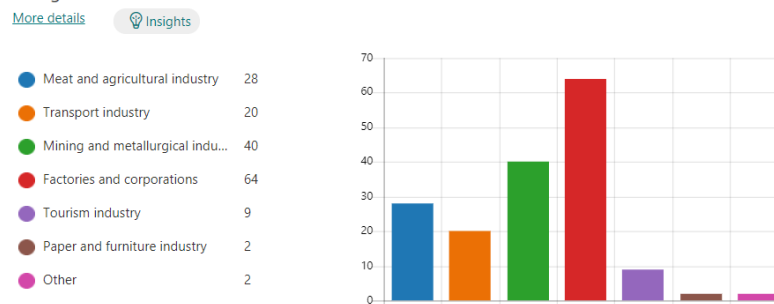


Fig. 11 – Economic sectors and their degree of environmental risk

The distribution of votes was quite interesting in this case. The mining and metallurgical industry ranked high, showing that citizens definitely perceive this economic sector as an environmental threat, despite repeated reassurances that activity in this sector would be reduced.

The penultimate question in the survey was aimed at verifying how the respondents thought the global environmental situation would develop over the next 50 years as compared to today (Fig. 13). Out of the total of 165 respondents, as many as 87% (144 people) believed that the condition of our planet would deteriorate. Only 13% of the respondents (21 people) were convinced that over the next 50 years, degradation would

not stop, and it would even step up. These responses show that a large proportion of the population is genuinely concerned about the environmental future of our planet.

15. What do you think the situation of our planet will look like in 50 years compared to today?

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Insights

● It will improve	21
● Will get worse	144



Fig. 13 – Predictions about the situation of our planet in the next 50 years

The survey was summarised by means of an open-ended question: “What measures can each of us take to improve the condition of the environment?”. What is very important and positive is that each respondent answered this question, which shows that the society is committed to environmental issues. One of the most common claims of the respondents was that we should start the rehabilitation of the environment from ourselves, by making small changes in our daily lives. There were also declarations about better waste separation, recycling, using reusable packaging and sustainable grocery shopping, and more. Some of the respondents also referred to active support for social attitudes, as every citizen has the duty to support activities aimed at making laws that promote environmental action. Some respondents also addressed the zero-waste philosophy. This approach relies on minimising waste and thereby reducing environmental pollution. This is an ethical, economic, as well as visionary objective which supports the preservation of natural environmental cycles. Living up to this concept requires some compromise, but research shows it has real effects on waste management. Some respondents referred to this philosophy indirectly, stating that households should minimise waste. Respondents were almost unanimous as regards the need to take measures to protect forests and water bodies, mainly in the context of contamination due to poor waste management practices. In addition, they voiced the need to reduce water and energy consumption. This environmental concern shows that well-managed environmental action can strengthen environmental attitudes of the public. An important aspect that was often mentioned by the respondents was educating one another on sustainability and environmental protection. It is therefore necessary to instil sustainability values in the youngest generation, because what we learn at home stays with us for life. According to the respondents, adequate environmental education and information flow could resolve most problems related to the degradation of the environment and help identify new ways of taking care of our planet.

Relatively often, the respondents spoke about the idea of becoming a vegetarian or vegan. They believe that reducing meat consumption or excluding it from their diet altogether should improve the condition of the environment..

4. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The survey showed strong interest in the concept of social responsibility and environmental protection and demonstrated that the respondents took active measures to improve the quality of life through environmental protection. A surprisingly large

proportion of the survey participants (80-90%) responded affirmatively to questions about measures taken by them to actively minimise waste. This is very important in order to foster the right environmental attitudes among the public.

When considering social responsibility from the perspective of multinational corporations, the example of Ikea should be considered, as it has been cultivating a sustainable business model for many years. Sustainable attitudes of companies can directly contribute to achieving meaningful environmental benefits and economic advantage for the businesses themselves. Building a sustainable image is now becoming a very important factor to which an environmentally conscious society pays particular attention.

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