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Assessing socially responsible consumption from a consumer perspective

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Introduction

- ✓ For many years, the free-market economy has promoted consumerism, which has been closely linked to rapid economic growth. Growing social exclusion, climate change, air pollution, rising landfill and poverty are all linked to reckless and irresponsible consumption. These problems affect consumers' decisions, as consumers have become more critical of businesses, more reflective and more responsible in their purchasing and consumption decisions.
- ✓ Based not only on corporate social responsibility, but also on personal interests and the long-term benefits for the environment and society, consumers are determined to change their consumption behaviour towards a more socially responsible one.
- ✓ In this research, based on devised theoretical framework and questionnaire, we attempt to reveal the concept of socially responsible consumption by identifying the stages of consumption as a process and to assess the expression of socially responsible consumption at different stages of consumption in Lithuania from the consumers' point of view.

The Literature Review

The concept of socially responsible consumption

- ✓ Francois-Lecompte and Roberts (2006) have argued that socially responsible consumption also focuses on the well-being of the whole community, so socially responsible consumption and ethical consumption are not the same;
- ✓ Lithuanian researchers Juščius and Maliauskaitė (2015) point out that, although scholars consider socially responsible and ethical consumption to be synonymous, these categories are not identical;

The Literature Review

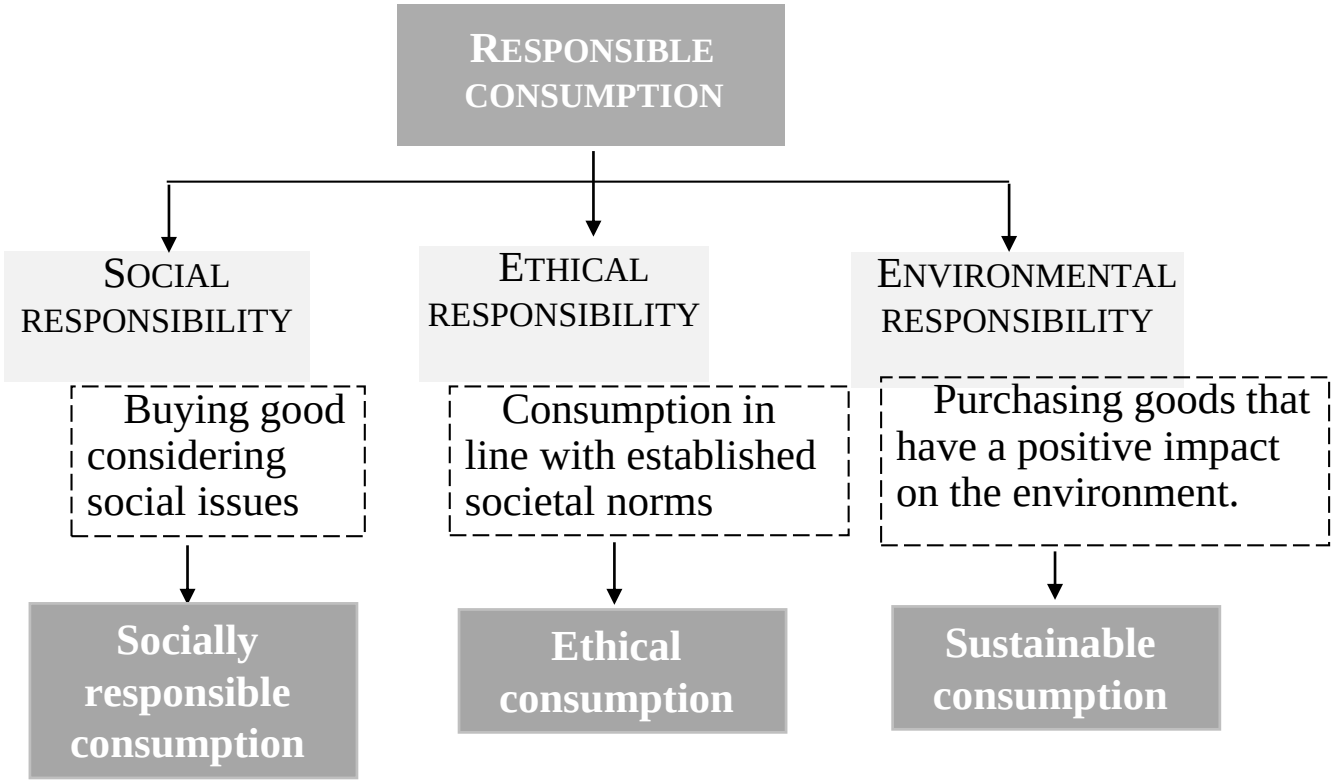
The concept of socially responsible consumption

- ✓ Socially responsible consumption is sometimes referred to as sustainable or ethical consumption, as both socially responsible and ethical or sustainable consumption include similar categories of prosocial behaviour (Prendergast and Tsang, 2019);
- ✓ Many authors (Yan and She, 2011; Balderjahn, Buerke, Kirchgeorg, Peyer, Seegebarth and Wiedmann, 2013; Ertz, 2016; Xu, You and Liu, 2019; Paužuolienė and Pikturnaitė, 2020; Betzler, Kempen and Mueler, 2022) analyse socially responsible consumption from environmental, social and economic approach.

The Literature Review

The concept of socially responsible consumption

A framework of categories of responsible consumption



The Literature Review

Summarising the concept of socially responsible consumption as presented by different scholars in the scientific literature, it can be stated that ***socially responsible consumption*** ***is a consumer behaviour that is environmentally friendly and benefits not only the consumer but also society and covers actions from the purchase to the disposal stage***.

The Study

The aim of this study is to find out how socially responsible consumption manifests itself in Lithuania and which stages of consumption are dominated by socially responsible consumption.

Methodology

- *Data collection and sample*

- To find out consumer behaviour, the empirical study on socially responsible consumption was carried out in Lithuania in November 2022 by surveying consumers who buy consumer goods.

  - Based on the literature reviewed (Mohr, Webb and Harris, 2008; Gupta and Agrawal, 2017; Geiger, Fischer and Schrader, 2018; Karaca, 2019), the study uses the stages of socially responsible consumption analysed in the theoretical part of the research: purchase - buying, exchanging, sharing or renting; use - displaying, possessing, actually consuming; and disposal - discarding, giving away, selling, donating.

- The survey sample is based on the number of permanent residents of Lithuania who, according to the data of the Lithuanian Statistics Department (2022), are adults aged 18 years and over and who use the internet

Methodology

- The sample size was determined using the Piano formula, after first establishing a 95% confidence interval (with a 5% margin of error) and a population size of 400 respondents.
- The questionnaire consisted of 45 statements, including 4 demographic questions. The questionnaire assesses the statements related to consumer behaviour on a 5-level scale (from 1 - strongly disagree to 5 - strongly agree). The consistency and reliability of the questionnaire was assessed using Cronbach's α, which was 0.916 (with a recommended minimum of 0.7), suggesting that the questionnaire is reliable and reveals the phenomenon under study.

Methodology

- The questionnaire was administered to 328 women (81%) and 77 men (19%). The analysis of the data shows that the largest proportion of participants (38%) were aged between 18 and 34 years. The 35-44 age group accounted for (24%) of the respondents, while the smallest (3%) were in the 65+ age group. Almost half of the respondents (49%) had completed tertiary education, while 14% of the respondents indicated that they had completed tertiary education. A quarter (25%) of the respondents had a secondary education. The income of the participating respondents was evenly distributed between those with an income of €1,100 or more (28%) and those with an income of €901-1100 (21%).

Results

Questionnaire and analysis

- The first set of statements (1-9) sought to find out **how consumers purchase consumer goods** based on environmental, social and economic criteria. Statements 1 to 3 covered the **environmental criterion**

Statement	Distribution of respondents' answers (percentage)				
	Totally disagree	Disagree	Partially agree	Agree	Totally agree
1. I avoid buying goods made from animal fur, skin or bones.	9,1	20,0	28,4	20,5	22
2. Avoid buying goods with excess packaging.	5,4	16,5	35,1	27,9	15,1
3. I prefer organic food products.	5,7	15,3	43,2	22,2	13,6

Results

- Statements (4-6) were used to find out whether respondents take the **social criterion** into account when **purchasing consumer goods**

Statement	Distribution of respondents' answers (percentage)				
	Totally disagree	Disagree	Partially agree	Agree	Totally agree
4. I prefer to buy goods from companies, employing people with disabilities.	8,6	25,7	42,2	17	6,4
5. I buy goods where part of the price goes to humanitarian causes to support a third country (against war, poverty, famine).	5,9	15,8	42,5	27,2	8,6
6. I buy handmade products to support Lithuania's artisans.	3,5	19,3	35,1	27,2	15,1

Results

- The data on the dimension of **purchase** according to the **economic criterion**

Statement	Distribution of respondents' answers (percentage)				
	Totally disagree	Disagree	Partially agree	Agree	Totally agree
7. I usually buy in small shops in small businesses (bakeries, butcher shops).	4,4	21,5	31,4	28,4	14,3
8. My preference is always Lithuanian products.	3,5	9,9	27,9	35,1	23,7
9. I plan my shopping, making a shopping list.	4,7	9,6	31,1	28,9	25,7

Results

- The second block of questions (10-21) sought to find out **how consumers use consumer goods** taking into account environmental, social and economic criteria.
- The statements (10-12) covered the **environmental criterion**

Statement	Distribution of respondents' answers (percentage)				
	Totally disagree	Disagree	Partially agree	Agree	Totally agree
10. I walk more, ride more, I walk, cycle or use public transport more often than I use my own car.	9,6	24	25,7	18,5	22,2
11. I avoid using products in my household that are harmful to the environment (chemical detergents, washing-up liquid, pesticides).	5,9	26,9	39	17,8	10,4
12. I limit the use of energy, such as natural gas or solid fuels to reduce my environmental impact.	6,2	17,8	41,7	25,4	8,9
13. I give up animal agriculture to reduce CO2 emissions products of animal origin.	28,4	38,3	19,8	7,2	6.4

Results

- The data on the ***use*** *of goods according to the social criterion*

Statement	Distribution of respondents' answers (percentage)				
	Totally disagree	Disagree	Partially agree	Agree	Totally agree
14. I prefer goods or services from companies that support my local community.	7,2	24	41,7	21,2	5,9
15. I prefer to buy goods or services from companies that are involved in charitable activities.	5,2	21	44,9	23,5	5,4
16. I volunteer with the Food Bank or other organisations that help address poverty issues.	32,1	28,9	22,7	9,9	6,4

Results

- The data on the **use of goods according to the economic criterion**

Statement	Distribution of respondents' answers (percentage)				
	Totally disagree	Disagree	Partially agree	Agree	Totally agree
17. I use household items bought second-hand shops.	6,2	14,6	32,6	28,4	18,3
18. I always unplug electrical appliances as soon as I stop using them.	6,2	12,3	24,9	28,4	28,1
19. I use water sparingly.	4,7	10,1	30,4	29,6	25,2
20. I choose energy-efficient household appliances.	4,9	8,1	25,7	36,8	24,4
21. I don't buy things that I can make myself.	4,7	17,3	37,5	22,7	17,8

Results

- The third block of statements (22-29) sought to find out how consumer behaviour in the **disposal process** is influenced by environmental, social and economic criteria. Statements (22-24) covered the **environmental criterion**

Statement	Distribution of respondents' answers (percentage)				
	Totally disagree	Disagree	Partially agree	Agree	Totally agree
22. I sort household waste.	2,5	5,7	24	29,9	38
23. I only deliver to designated sites (galvanic cells, batteries, paints, etc.).	3,2	6,2	22,5	34,1	34,1
24. Food waste compost.	12,1	21,7	24,9	17,3	24

Results

- The data on the **disposal** dimension according to **the social criterion**

Statement	Distribution of respondents' answers (percentage)				
	Totally disagree	Disagree	Partially agree	Agree	Totally agree
25. Things I don't need I give away to people in my neighbourhood.	1,7	4,9	24,4	38,8	30,1
26. I give things I don't need to charity (Red Cross, Caritas, etc.).	5,9	19,3	30,4	27,4	17

Results

- The data on the **disposal** dimension according to the **economic criterion**

Statement	Distribution of respondents' answers (percentage)				
	Totally disagree	Disagree	Partially agree	Agree	Totally agree
27. I sell things that I do not need and do not use	7,7	22,5	31,1	24,2	14,6
28. I reuse things, thereby reducing resources usage	2,7	10,4	35,3	33,8	17,8
29. I am happy to rent or lend my belongings	7,4	18,5	29,4	27,4	17,3

Results

- Summary of means for purchase, use, and disposal dimensions

Dimension	Criterion	Scale average (M)
Purchase	Environmental	3,27
	Social	3,11
	Economical	3,51
	Overall dimension average	**3,30**
Usage	Environmental	2,89
	Social	2,76
	Economical	3,52
	Overall dimension average	**3,06**
Disposal	Environmental	3,68
	Social	3,61
	Economical	3,33
	Overall dimension average	**3,54**

Discussion

- Socially responsible consumption is consumer behaviour that does not harm the environment and benefits not only the consumer, but also society and includes actions from the acquisition to the disposal stage.

Discussion

- After evaluating the expression of socially responsible consumption in the Lithuanian consumer goods market, summarizing the results, it can be said that the strongest expression of socially responsible consumption appeared in the disposal phase. It was established that the respondents are most strongly guided by the environmental protection criterion when disposing of waste: they sort household waste and deliver hazardous waste only to designated places. Also, in the disposal stage, a strong expression is found in the social criterion.

Discussion

- At the purchase stage, the expression of socially responsible consumption was weak, as it was found that the respondents do not take environmental and social criteria into account when purchasing consumer goods. It was found that the expression of socially responsible consumption was weak in the social criterion, since the majority of respondents refuse to buy goods, part of the price of which is allocated to support humanitarian needs of a third country.

Discussion

- In the usage phase, the expression of socially responsible consumption was the weakest. It was established that most respondents do not take social criteria into account when using consumer goods, do not engage in volunteering, and do not prefer the goods of companies that support the community or engage in charitable activities

Implications

- Based on the results of the conducted empirical research, it is possible to evaluate the manifestation of socially responsible consumption in Lithuania: it was found that socially responsible consumption in the consumer goods market is most strongly manifested in the disposal phase, when consumers take environmental protection into account.
- This is reflected in the behaviour of consumers when sorting household waste, delivering hazardous waste to designated places and composting food waste. It was also established that consumers consider the social criterion in the disposal stage, give away or donate unnecessary items, and the economic criterion showed that Lithuanian consumers reuse items, thus reducing the use of resources.
- In the stages of acquisition and use, the expression of socially responsible consumption is assessed as weak, consumers do not take environmental and social criteria into account.

Implications

- In summary, it can be stated that consumers of two age groups: younger (18-34 years) and older (65 years and over) are more socially responsible when purchasing goods than consumers of other age groups.
- It can be concluded that women with higher education and higher incomes are more inclined than men to consider environmental protection at the stage of their purchase, while for men the social consequences of consumption are more important, they volunteer more often at "Food Bank" or other organizations that help solve poverty problems.
- It was also found that as the age group, level of education and amount of income of the research participants increases, the expression of more responsible disposal increases.

Suggestions for Further Research

- Extend the study considering other EU countries and make a comparative analysis of the countries under research.

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