PERCEPTIONS OF ECO-RESPONSIBLE INITIATIVES OF THE BRAND AND THEIR IMPACT ON CONSUMER ENGAGEMENT OF GENERATION Z

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Purpose: The aim of the study is to present the relationship between generation Z consumers' perception of sustainable brand initiatives in the area of environmental protection and the degree of their cognitive, emotional and behavioral involvement in the brand.

Design/methodology/approach: The study was conducted on a sample of 500 consumers in the period August-September 2023 throughout Poland (16 voivodeships). The sample selection was random. The research covered Generation Z consumers (aged 18 to 28), both sexes, and those from towns with different numbers of inhabitants who follow clothing brands on social media. The method used in the study was a diagnostic survey.

Findings: The research results prove that the perception of brand's ecologically responsible initiatives determines young consumers' involvement in all three spheres (cognitive, emotional and behavioral). In turn, the perception of these activities as ecologically irresponsible does not translate into their lack of involvement. Moreover, consumers who have no opinion on the activities undertaken by the brand that demonstrate their ecological responsibility declare their involvement in the brand to a similar extent as consumers who perceive these activities as responsible.

Research limitations/implications: The research results encourage a more in-depth analysis of consumers' involvement in the brand, considering extended scales proving their involvement, as well as covering a larger population of respondents.

Practical implications: Research results prove that a significant percentage of generation Z consumers do not have knowledge about ecologically responsible initiatives undertaken by their favorite brands. Hence, socially responsible brands that consider environmental protection in their activities should use more opportunities to communicate the activities to consumers, which are undertaken in this area, in order to create a more expressive image of a responsible brand, and thus strengthen their relationship with the brand, influencing their commitment.

Social implications: A better understanding of the impact of environmentally friendly practices undertaken by companies/brands on shaping relationships with stakeholders.

Originality/value: The article has primarily cognitive value, emphasizing the importance of the perception of ecologically responsible activities undertaken by brands in creating consumer involvement in the brand. Until now, little research has contributed to understanding the impact of brand activities perceived as sustainable on customer relationships from both cognitive, emotional and behavioral perspectives. The article therefore enriches the current theory of sustainable practices of brands and their relationships with consumers.

1. Introduction

The article addresses the relationship between generation Z consumer involvement in the brand and Corporate Social Responsibility (CRS), particularly in the context of actions towards the environment. CSR is a concept, according to which the aspect of society, environmental protection, and respect for the demands of the broader stakeholders affect the shape of management strategies of business entities (Daszkiewicz, 2009, pp. 205-222). According to the above, a company/brand should be characterized by responsibility for the results of its business activities. More and more consumers are paying attention to the socially responsible aspects of companies/brands. Ethics and morality are increasingly entering the company/brand-consumer relationship and becoming its main glue. By being ethically, socially, and environmentally responsible entities, they build their positive image (Sobotko, Kozłowski, 2017, pp. 387-392), achieve competitive advantages in the long-term perspective (Furmańska-Maruszak, Sudolska, 2017, p. 253; Sudolska et al., 2020, pp. 14-19) and skillfully manage their relations with consumers (Bernatt, 2009, p. 26). For this reason, progressively more companies/brands are committed to increasing the perceived sustainability of the products and services offered to consumers in order to forge close relationships with them (Kim et al., 2015, pp. 182-193), build their loyalty and commitment.

The aim of this article is to examine the impact of generation Z consumers' perception of brand's sustainable activities in the area of environmental protection on their cognitive, emotional and behavioral involvement in the brand. The study assumed that the perception of brand's activities as pro-ecologically responsible, based on the idea of CSR contributes to the increase in consumer involvement in the brand. The perception of the social responsibility of brands in this article is considered from the point of view of a consumer who is increasingly interested in ensuring that the actions undertaken by companies/brands consider the good of society, consumer rights and environmentally friendly practices (Leonidou, Katsikeas, Morgan, 2013, pp. 151-170). The paper considers the environmental perspective of brands' social responsibility. It was defined as the consumer's perception of the practices undertaken by clothing brands in the spirit of ecological responsibility for the state of the environment in the process of producing the offer. To examine the impact of consumers' perceived ecological responsibility of brands on their engagement, reference was made to the customer engagement cycle model of C.M. Sashi's (Sashi, 2012, pp. 253-272). This process begins with the stage of consumers' perceived socially-responsible nature of the offering (Huang, Cheng, Chen, 2017, pp. 63-72), then goes through the stage of short-term consumer satisfaction and the stage of

long-term transactional involvement (Chen, Sun, Yan, Wen, 2020) and finally ends with the stage of non-transactional involvement, when the consumer changes from a passive recipient of values into their active co-creator (Hollebeek, Srivastava, Chen, 2019, pp. 161-185), positively shares information related to the product/brand with others, provides feedback on their improvement, and helps other consumers.

2. The role of companies' ecological responsibility in brand creation

The concept of corporate social responsibility includes the ecological aspect, in addition to the economic and social aspects. The concept of ecological responsibility of companies/brands focuses on environmental protection (Dyllick, Rost, 2017, pp. 346-360). Due to the fact that every business activity pollutes the natural environment, ecological responsibility becomes particularly important. This means the need to take initiatives to reduce the negative impact of the company/brand on the natural environment. This process begins with production planning, through logistics, and ends with the collection and disposal of waste (Musiał, Kubacki, 2017, p. 86). It is directed at eliminating the negative effects of sourcing, packaging, transportation, as well as storage. At the production stage, the activities of a socially responsible company boil down to producing products that do not endanger the customer and the environment. The environmental activities of companies/brands related to production most often include: use of environmentally friendly production methods or technologies, natural reduction of energy, water, materials consumption, reduction of noise intensity, reduction of harmful odor emissions, use of safe chemicals, proper waste management, use of recycling of raw materials, eco-labeling, health and safety of production employees (Musiał, Kubacki, 2017, p. 86; Ratajczak, 2013, p. 152). Also, the area of transportation and warehousing provides an opportunity to introduce several environmentally friendly measures, e.g.: choosing means of transportation with reduced gas emissions into the atmosphere, optimizing storage space, eliminating losses and creating waste during storage (Paliwoda-Matiolańska, 2009, p. 153). A socially responsible company/brand takes appropriate actions to mitigate climate change and protect and restitute the environment (Borkowska-Niszczota, 2015, p. 373), exerts a positive impact on the environment also by monitoring the level of greenhouse gas emissions, supervising the level of emissions of pollutants that have a negative impact on the air, water or soil, and conducting environmental assessments or reports on environmental activities (Olejniczak, 2013, p. 2842).

The listed activities boil down to caring for the environment, to reducing the negative impact on it. A responsible company/brand, by minimizing the harmful effects of production and consumption on the state of the environment, contributes to achieving a balance between economic development and preservation of natural resources for future generations.

Through such actions, the company/brand creates a good reputation with the public, gains the image of a responsible company and thus builds consumer attachment, trust, and commitment.

In view of the above, socially responsible companies that take the environment into account can create a distinctive image of their brand, and thus strengthen their relationship with the brand, thus influencing their commitment. They have a variety of CSR instruments to choose from, which include: social campaigns, ethical programs for employees, employee volunteering, eco-labeling and green investments, corporate governance, social reports, socially responsible investments (Leoński, 2016, pp. 92-96), but also the introduction of transparent and effective management systems (*Quality Management System ISO 9000, Environmental Management System ISO 14000, Social Accountability SA 8000*), supply chain management - the application of the principles of social responsibility of business at every stage of supply (cf: Roztocka, 2018, pp. 225-226).

In conclusion, it should be added that companies should keep in mind that the socially responsible idea they support should match the brand image as closely as possible, so that there is full compatibility between them (Hajdas, 2009, pp. 59-60). This means that each organization can look for a different, previously unused tool and support an original idea (socially important) that has not been supported by any other company/brand before. Conscious consumers strongly prefer companies/brands that are able to demonstrate that they are supporting a given social idea out of pure intentions, not just a desire to raise sales.

3. Consumer involvement in the brand

The issue of engagement has received considerable attention in many academic disciplines, including marketing. The marketing literature identifies several concepts based on "engagement," including "consumer engagement." Analyzing the understanding of the concept of engagement in marketing theory, one can see that it is considered in narrow and broad terms. The narrow view treats engagement as a one-dimensional construction, as it focuses exclusively on consumer behavior (Wiechoczek, 2017, p. 205). In the broad view, "engagement" is a multidimensional concept consisting of cognitive, emotional and behavioral elements that characterize the customer in their interactions with a company or brand (Hollebeek 2011a, 2012; Brodie et al., 2013, p. 107). In this approach, commitment is understood as:

- a strong consumer reaction in response to a given impulse/object, e.g. a brand. This reaction may be situational (Celsi, Olson, 1988) or permanent;
- level of the consumer's diverse "presence" in his relationship with the company - this presence involves physical, emotional, and cognitive aspects. In this sense, consumer engagement consists of four elements, namely, vigor, post-sacrifice, absorption and interaction (more extensively: Patterson, Yu, de Ruyter, 2006);

- the level of consumer engagement triggered by the brand and the consumer's attitude formed as a result of interactions with it (Hollebeek, 2011b, p. 559);

- consumers' participation in shaping the company's market offer and other marketing activities as part of its activities (Vivek, 2009, p. 7; Vivek, Beatty, Morgan, 2012, pp. 128-131);

- a consumer's mental state of fluctuating intensity (dependent on the specific context) that determines the importance of an object to the consumer (Mittal, Lee, 1988). This state emerges due to the consumer's interactive, co-creative experience with the brand (Brodie et al., 2011, pp. 252-271; Hollebeek, 2011a, pp. 785-807; Brodie et al., 2013, p. 105), reflects the consumer's motivations (van Doorn et al., 2010, pp. 253-266), his interest in a particular brand product category in the purchase decision process (Shiffman, Kanuk, 2010, p. 229).

These definitions indicate the dynamism and complexity of the engagement concept and emphasize the focus on the interactions/relationships between consumers and the company/brand. Consumers' attitudes, their opinions, positive or negative, as well as the high or low level of importance of the brand, is determined by the nature of the customer's interaction with the various points of physical, possibly virtual, contact with the brand (Witczak, 2016, pp. 371-380). Thus, implementing the concept of engagement requires adopting a consumer perspective and orientation (Rupik, 2015, p. 341). Hence, consumer engagement with the brand, i.e. the opinions, attitudes and behaviors presented, are analyzed in several dimensions: cognitive (information about the brand); affective (emotions, feelings and moods associated with/caused by the brand); behavioral (behaviors towards the brand, e.g. recommendations); social (building a network of relationships within the framework of consumer membership in various groups interested in the brand, i.e. traditional and virtual communities, among others) (Witczak, 2017, pp. 249-258).

The cognitive dimension of consumer involvement is manifested in: extensive consumer knowledge about the brand based on access to many sources of information, obtained at any place and time; knowledge regarding the values and benefits provided by the brand. The emotional dimension is defined by a high level of enthusiasm and perceived pleasure, the joy of consumers from direct contacts with the brand; but also based on the consumer's activity in virtual communities (e.g., posts on a given brand's profile), as well as from comments received by other discussion participants regarding the content created by the consumer on the brand's profile. The behavioral dimension manifests itself in specific consumer behaviors towards the brand, i.e. actions proving the consumer's interest in the brand (e.g. observing the brand profile); actions indicating the consumer's enthusiasm and expectation towards specific brand content, the so-called "like"; tendency to redirect: the so-called "clickability" of links redirecting to content in other media; conducting a dialogue with the brand, among others asking questions on the brand profile and others (Hollebeek, Juric, Tang, 2017, pp. 204-217; Bowden, 2009, pp. 63-74).

In summary, "consumer engagement" is a multidimensional concept, including cognitive, emotional and behavioral elements relating to the consumer and his interaction with the brand.

4. The relationship between the perception of ecologically responsible initiatives undertaken by brands and generation Z consumer involvement – methodology and analysis of own study

Research on the attitudes and behaviors of consumers of generation Z towards clothing brands, undertaken within UGB research grant no. 853, was commissioned to the IPC Research Institute Sp. z o.o. in Wrocław and conducted on a sample of 500 consumers in August-September 2023 throughout Poland (16 voivodships). The method used in the study was a diagnostic survey, the technique was a questionnaire survey, and the tool was an online survey questionnaire. The selection of the research sample was random. Only people aged between 18 and 28 and who follow clothing brands on social media were recruited for the study. The quantitative structure of the respondents adopted in the study included three strata, i.e. gender, age and town of origin of the respondent[1]. The research covered several areas. One of these was the area of brand social responsibility and consumer engagement with the brand. The aim of the research undertaken in this area was, among other things, to determine Generation Z consumers' awareness of socially responsible practices undertaken by their favorites brands and to find out how their perception of the brand in this area of its activity determines their cognitive, emotional, and behavioral involvement in the brand.

For understanding both how young consumers perceive the brand's activities undertaken as part of ecological responsibility and determining their involvement in the brand, a seven-point scale was used: I definitely disagree, I disagree, I rather disagree, I have no opinion, I rather agree, I agree, I definitely agree.

The brand's sustainable activities in the area of ecology were reduced to six basic statements in the study (Figure 1). When responding to these statements, respondents were asked to refer to the clothing brands they most frequently purchased. Customer favorite brands, in all six areas, are perceived by the majority of customers as environmentally responsible. On average, 65% of those surveyed say this. Only 8% of respondents hold the opposite view. However, there are some respondents (27%) who do not have an opinion about ecologically responsible practices undertaken by brands. This may indicate a lack of generation Z consumers' interest in the socially responsible actions taken by brands during the production of clothing.

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[1] The quantitative structure of the respondents in each stratum was as follows: gender: 50% female, 50% male; locality: rural area - 20%, city with less than 50,000 inhabitants - 20%, city with 50,000 to 100,000 inhabitants - 20%, city with 100,000 to 200,000 inhabitants - 20%, 20% city with more than 200,000 inhabitants - 20%; age: 18 to 22 years - 50% and 23 to 28 years - 50%.

As many as 38% of consumers do not know whether their favorite brand uses recycled plastic in the production of clothing, and 32% whether it offers clothing with ecological markings or certificates. It is encouraging that as many as 78% of consumers say that their brand cares about the quality and durability of manufactured products, and 71% that it limits the use of plastic in packaging (offers paper shopping bags or uses cardboard when shipping clothes).
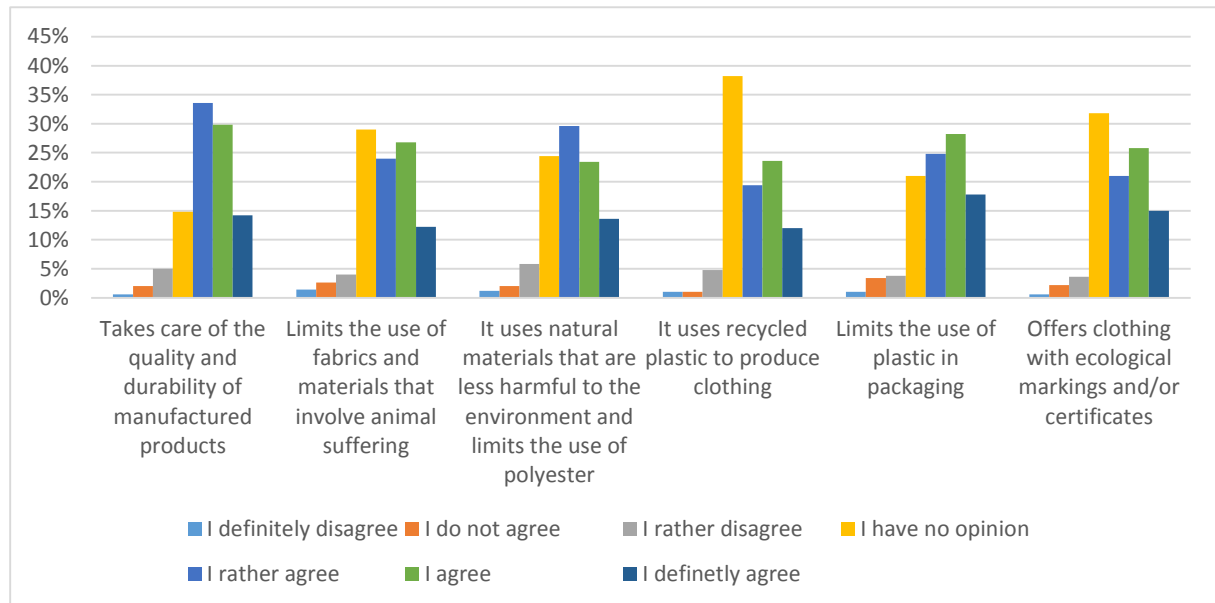

Figure 1. Perception of the brand's responsible activities in the area of care for the natural environment (N = 500).

Source: own research.

The issue of considerations regarding generation Z customer involvement in the brand has been reduced to three areas: cognitive, emotional, and behavioral involvement. In each of these three areas, several statements were identified indicating commitment to the brand (figure 2). These scales were adopted from existing literature (Hollebeek, Glynn, Brodie, 2014; Sarkar, Sreejesh, 2014), but adapted to the context of this research. Two scales were adopted to measure cognitive involvement and emotional involvement, and three scales were used to measure behavioral involvement. They are the following statements: for cognitive involvement - (1) "I am interested in information about my brand and its products", (2) "I am willing to expand my knowledge about my brand"; for emotional involvement - (3) "I would feel sorry if this brand disappeared", (4) "Using my brand evokes positive emotions in me"; for behavioral involvement - (5) "I pass on information about the brand to my friends", (6) "I recommend the brand's products to my friends", (7) "I pass on my complaints and ideas to the company in order to improve the brand".
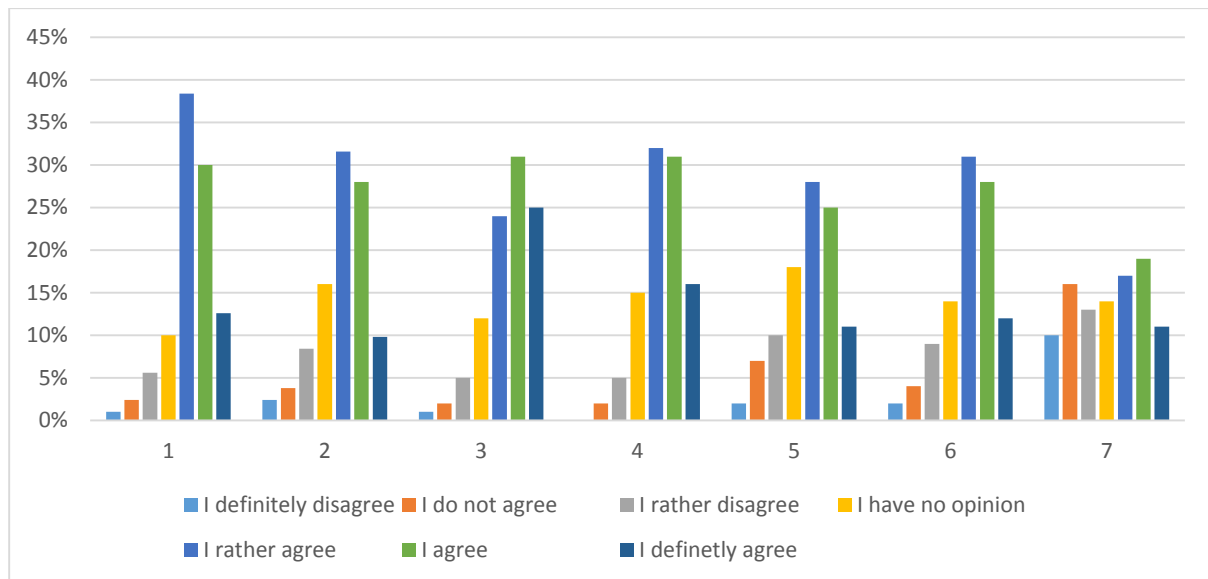
Figure 2. Generation Z consumers' cognitive, emotional, and behavioral involvement in the brand (N = 225).

Source: own research.

The general summary of the results shows that most generation Z consumers are committed to their favorite brand, both in the cognitive (76% of the total), emotional (80%) and behavioral (60%) areas. In the case of all types of involvement, a similar percentage of generation Z consumers (14%) have no opinion about their attitudes and behaviors that would indicate their involvement. The average percentages also show that the largest percentage of respondents (24%) are behaviorally disengaged. The percentages for lack of cognitive and emotional engagement are slightly lower (11% and 7.5% respectively). In the area of cognitive involvement, slight differences were found in relation to the two analyzed statements. 11% more surveyed consumers admitted that they were interested in information about the brand and its products (81%) than were willing to expand their knowledge about the brand (70%). 5% more consumers believe that they are not willing to expand their knowledge about the brand (14% of the total) than those who are not interested in information about the brand (9%). The situation is similar for people who had no opinion (16% and 10% respectively). In the case of emotional involvement, the percentages for the two analyzed statements are similar. This applies to both commitment and lack thereof. 80% of customers would feel sorry if their favorite brand disappeared, and 78% say that using the brand evokes positive emotions in them. 8% of consumers indicated a lack of emotional involvement, manifested by the lack of feeling regret if the brand disappears, and a lack of positive emotions when using the brand - 7%. In the case of behavioral involvement, significant differences are noted in relation to the analyzed statements. Consumers of generation Z largely recommend the brand's products to their friends (71% of the total) and provide them with information about the brand (63%). However, they try to enter relationships with the brand to a lesser extent, sharing their complaints and ideas with the company in order to improve the brand (only 47% of respondents). In this case, as many as 39% of consumers do not undertake such activity at all.

About 18% of respondents also have no opinion on whether they share information about the brand with their friends. In the case of behavioral involvement, activity in the three indicated areas is much lower than in the case of cognitive and emotional involvement. It can be assumed that the reason for this may be the lack of motivation among young people to put effort into specific behaviors aimed at communicating the brand to the environment.

In order to show the relationship between generation Z consumers' perception of the brand's ecologically responsible activities and their involvement in the brand, a three-level scale was adopted: involvement (responses: I rather agree, I agree, I definitely agree), no opinion on the display of specific attitudes and behaviors that indicate involvement (response: I have no opinion) and lack of involvement (responses: I definitely disagree, I disagree, I rather disagree) - table 1. The study confirmed that most young consumers who perceive the brand's activities as ecologically responsible also declare their involvement in the brand, both cognitive, emotional, and behavioral. Only in the case of behavioral involvement, these indicators are slightly lower than in the case of the other two types of involvement. The percentage of surveyed consumers who notice the brand's ecological initiatives and who also share their complaints and ideas with the company in order to improve the brand is on average 60%. For comparison, among consumers who perceive the brand as ecologically responsible, as many as 88% are interested in information about the brand and its products (cognitive involvement), and 86% claim that using the brand evokes positive emotions in them (emotional involvement). Therefore, the perception of a brand as ecologically responsible determines generation Z consumer involvement. According to previous considerations, it can be assumed that the lack of perception of a brand as ecologically responsible will result in lower engagement. This thesis, however, has not been confirmed by research. Even though the percentage of young consumers who do not notice environmentally responsible practices undertaken by their brands was relatively small, accounting for 8% of the total, a significant number of them declare their involvement. Consumers who believe that the brand does not offer clothing with markings and/or certificates also declare their emotional involvement, i.e., 78% of them claim that they would feel regret if the brand disappeared, and 69% that using the brand evokes positive emotions in them.

Table 1.

Generation Z consumers' perception of the brand's ecologically responsible activities and their cognitive, emotional, and behavioral involvement in the brand (markings: Y – yes, DK – I don't know, N – no) (N = 500)

Customers' perception of the brand's ecologically responsible activities		Customer cognitive engagement						Emotional involvement of customers						Customer behavioral engagement								
		I am interested in information about the brand and its products			I am willing to expand my knowledge about the brand			I would feel sorry if the brand disappeared			Using the brand evokes positive emotions in me			I pass on information about the brand to friends			I recommend the brand's products to my friends			I convey my complaints and ideas to the company to improve the brand		
		N	DK	Y	N	DK	Y	N	DK	Y	N	DK	Y	N	DK	Y	N	DK	Y	N	DK	Y
Takes care of the quality and durability of manufactured products	N	34%	13%	53%	47%	24%	29%	34%	13%	53%	24%	29%	47%	50%	21%	29%	45%	18%	37%	68%	8%	24%
	DK	16%	24%	59%	18%	36%	46%	8%	24%	68%	8%	31%	61%	24%	36%	39%	19%	28%	53%	43%	30%	27%
	Y	5%	7%	88%	11%	11%	78%	5%	10%	86%	4%	10%	85%	14%	14%	72%	11%	10%	79%	35%	11%	54%
Limits the use of fabrics and materials that cause animal suffering	N	35%	13%	53%	43%	23%	35%	18%	15%	68%	15%	33%	53%	43%	15%	43%	45%	13%	43%	55%	18%	28%
	DK	11%	15%	74%	19%	24%	57%	13%	16%	71%	8%	23%	68%	26%	23%	50%	19%	28%	54%	54%	14%	32%
	Y	5%	7%	88%	9%	11%	79%	3%	10%	86%	4%	9%	87%	12%	15%	73%	9%	7%	83%	30%	13%	57%
For production, it uses natural and environmentally friendly materials and limits the use of polyester	N	22%	16%	62%	27%	22%	51%	22%	9%	69%	20%	20%	60%	42%	20%	38%	44%	18%	38%	71%	4%	24%
	DK	16%	16%	68%	25%	24%	51%	11%	18%	71%	9%	21%	70%	22%	26%	52%	18%	27%	55%	47%	26%	27%
	Y	5%	7%	88%	9%	12%	79%	4%	11%	85%	4%	12%	85%	14%	14%	72%	10%	8%	82%	31%	11%	58%
It uses recycled plastic to produce clothing	N	29%	24%	47%	35%	24%	41%	15%	12%	74%	9%	35%	56%	47%	9%	44%	44%	12%	44%	71%	9%	21%
	DK	11%	12%	77%	21%	21%	58%	9%	16%	74%	10%	20%	70%	24%	25%	51%	19%	23%	58%	54%	21%	25%
	Y	5%	7%	88%	7%	12%	81%	5%	9%	85%	3%	9%	88%	11%	13%	76%	8%	7%	85%	24%	9%	67%
Reduces the use of plastic in packaging	N	24%	22%	54%	29%	29%	41%	17%	22%	61%	22%	20%	59%	34%	24%	41%	41%	15%	44%	54%	22%	24%
	DK	15%	17%	68%	23%	28%	50%	12%	20%	68%	12%	23%	65%	22%	28%	50%	19%	27%	54%	53%	24%	23%
	Y	5%	6%	88%	10%	11%	79%	5%	9%	86%	3%	12%	85%	16%	14%	71%	10%	10%	80%	32%	10%	58%
It offers clothing with markings and/or certificates	N	25%	13%	63%	31%	28%	41%	22%	0%	78%	13%	19%	69%	47%	13%	41%	47%	9%	44%	69%	13%	19%
	DK	13%	14%	73%	20%	24%	56%	9%	16%	74%	9%	22%	69%	26%	28%	45%	20%	25%	55%	57%	21%	22%
	Y	6%	7%	87%	10%	11%	79%	5%	11%	84%	4%	11%	85%	11%	13%	76%	9%	8%	83%	26%	10%	64%

Source: own research.

Respectively, 69% and 60% of young consumers declaring the above attitudes believe that the brand does not use natural materials for production (cotton, viscose) and that are less harmful to the environment (bamboo and cellulose fibers) and does not limit the use of polyester. Consumers who have a similar opinion on not using these materials in production also demonstrate cognitive involvement, i.e., 62% of them are interested in information about the brand and its products, and 51% are willing to expand their knowledge about the brand. Therefore, not in every case the perception of a brand as ecologically irresponsible translates into lower cognitive and emotional involvement. In the case of behavioral engagement, generation Z consumers are less engaged when they believe the brand is not responsible. On average, 42% of customers who perceive a brand as ecologically irresponsible recommend the brand's products to their friends, 39% provide them with information about the brand, and only 23% provide the company with their suggestions for brand improvements. Regarding behavioral involvement, young consumers who perceive the brand's lack of commitment to ecology are less committed to the brand than in the case of cognitive and emotional involvement. A much larger group consisted of young people who have no opinion on ecologically responsible initiatives undertaken by brands. They constituted 28% of the total. Among this group of consumers, as many as 61% declare cognitive involvement, 69% emotional involvement and slightly less, 43% behavioral involvement. The largest percentage of consumers who have no opinion on the ecologically responsible practices of their brand declare that they would feel sorry if their brand disappeared (71%) - emotional involvement, and 70% of them are interested in information about the brand and its products - cognitive involvement. The smallest percentage of respondents who have no opinion on the ecologically responsible practices of their brand (24%) claim that they share their complaints and ideas with the brand to improve it. Therefore, the lack of opinion on initiatives that consider the good of the natural environment determines young consumers' behavioral involvement in the brand to the least extent.

5. Summary

Changes taking place in the world influence the evolution of the approach to consumption, sales, and marketing. Thanks to brands, social responsibility practices are implemented, and companies that implement the CSR concept build long-term and positive relationships with consumers. These practices concern not only initiatives undertaken by companies/brands towards the social environment or consumer protection, but also initiatives aimed at limiting their negative impact on the natural environment.

The analysis of the perception of initiatives undertaken by brands as part of ecological responsibility gives positive results. About 2/3 of consumers of generation Z perceive their favorite brands as ecologically responsible in the activities specified in the study. This may indicate that young consumers are aware of socially responsible practices undertaken by their favorite brands. However, what may be disturbing is the fact that almost 1/3 of them have no opinion on the environmentally responsible activities undertaken by the brand. This, in turn, may indicate young consumers' lack of interest in socially responsible activities undertaken by the brand, their low level of awareness or the fact that these activities are insufficiently communicated to them by the brand.

Research has also shown that consumers of generation Z declare a high level of involvement in the brand. This particularly concerns cognitive involvement, which comes down to obtaining information about the brand and striving to get to know it better, as well as emotional involvement expressed in the emergence of emotions related to the brand. Consumers' cognitive involvement in a brand can be justified by the development of modern communication technologies and the ease of using them. Thanks to them, young consumers have no problems in obtaining information about the brand. To a slightly lesser extent, consumers declare behavioral involvement, which requires them to take appropriate actions and interact with others. This involvement is manifested to a greater extent in communicating the brand to friends, and to a lesser extent it comes down to consumers entering relationships with the brand. This may be related to communication barriers between them and the brand and the much greater effort that must be put into communicating their comments and suggestions to the company/brand.

The research results provide the basis for stating that the perception of a brand as socially responsible determines consumer involvement of generation Z. Young consumers who perceive the brand's activities as ecologically responsible also declare involvement in the brand, both cognitive and emotional, and to a slightly lesser extent behavioral. An interesting observation is that the perception of a brand as ecologically irresponsible does not translate into lower consumer involvement, mainly cognitive and emotional involvement. Moreover, a significant percentage of young consumers who have no opinion on ecologically responsible activities undertaken by brands declare their involvement in the brand, both cognitive, emotional and, to a slightly lesser extent, behavioral. Therefore, generation Z consumers' lack of knowledge regarding ecologically responsible initiatives undertaken by the brand does not determine their lack of involvement.

The cited results are part of a stream of studies presented previously by other researchers. As companies/brands increasingly provide sustainable products and services, numerous studies have discussed the impact of the products/services offered on customer relationships. These studies have mainly focused on customer identification and loyalty to sustainable companies/brands (Martínez, del Bosque, 2013, pp. 89-99; Huang, Cheng, Chen, 2017, pp. 63-72), customers' willingness to pay for sustainable products (van Doorn, Verhoef, 2011,

pp. 167-180), customers' evaluation of environmentally friendly practices (Galbreath, Shum, 2012, pp. 211-229; Liu et al., 2014, pp. 181-194; Chung et al, 2015, pp. 542-547) or the impact of sustainable actions taken by companies/brands on customer attitudes and behaviors, both transactional (van Doorn, Verhoef, 2011, pp. 167-180; Galbreath, Shum, 2012, pp. 211-229; Liu et al., 2014, pp. 181-194; Chung et al, 2015, pp. 542-547) and on non-transactional behaviors, which is beyond purchase (Chen, Sun, Yan, Wen, 2020). However, these studies have paid little attention to young consumers. Therefore, the current study not only provides further insight into the understanding of the relationship between consumers' perceived sustainable actions taken by companies/brands and engagement, both cognitive and emotional, as well as behavioral, but also succeeds in looking more closely at generation Z consumers. The study conducted captured the different engagement orientations of young consumers and understood engagement from both rational (cognitive and behavioral) and emotional perspectives, as customers with different engagement orientations interact with the company/brand in different ways. Unlike most previous studies that have focused solely on emotional engagement (Chen, Dahlgaard-Park, Wen, 2019, pp. 141-15), this study took the next step to provide a holistic view of understanding engagement from both cognitive, behavioral, and emotional perspectives and to empirically test the relationship between the three engagement orientations and perceptions of the brand as eco-logically responsible.

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