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Experience in implementing the ecological concept of CSR (On the example of ukrainian fashion brands)

ДОСВІД ВПРОВАДЖЕННЯ ЕКОЛОГІЧНОЇ КОНЦЕПЦІЇ КСВ (НА ПРИКЛАДІ УКРАЇНСЬКИХ ФЕШІОН БРЕНДІВ)

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Abstract


The relevance of the chosen topic is due to the lack of scientific research on the ecological responsibility of Ukrainian fashion brands. The study aims to uncover the significance of the ecological component of corporate social responsibility in the practice of Ukrainian fashion brands and to determine its impact on consumer trust levels. The methodological basis of the research consists of a combination of general scientific and sociological methods.


The study of Ukrainian fashion brand experiences has shown that ecological activities are mostly used situationally, particularly by local-level designer brands. Based on the analysis of Ukrainian experiences, technologies, and tools of ecological practices applied in brand social responsibility programs have been systematized into the following categories: eco-


Анотація


Актуальність обраної теми зумовлена браком наукових досліджень щодо екологічної відповідальності українських fashion-брендів. Мета дослідження полягає у розкритті значення екологічного складника корпоративної соціальної відповідальності у практиці українських fashion-брендів та визначенні його впливу на рівень довіри споживачів. Методологічною основою дослідження є сукупність загальнонаукових та соціологічних методів. Дослідження українського досвіду fashion-брендів засвідчило, що екологічна діяльність здебільшого використовується ситуативно, зокрема дизайнерськими брендами локального рівня. На основі аналізу українського досвіду було систематизовано технології та інструменти екологічних практик, що

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production, eco-products, eco-events, eco-processes, eco-cooperation, eco-strategies, and eco-communications.

The current state of consumer behavior and societal attitudes towards the eco-activities of fashion brands has been investigated. Within the research framework, a sociological online survey was conducted, which confirmed the hypothesis that Ukrainian society recognizes the necessity of transitioning to conscious ecological clothing consumption. However, responsible consumer behavior is not observed simultaneously, leading to the development of a phenomenon where fashion production follows Western trends in implementing eco-initiatives, thereby shaping a culture of conscious ecological consumption.

Keywords: consumer, corporate social responsibility, ecological responsibility, fashion-brand, media activity.

Introduction

The rapid development of entrepreneurship and globalization processes in the environment business raises questions about the environmental responsibility of companies, which is arguably one of the foremost aspects of corporate social responsibility (CSR).

The fashion industry is one of the most polluting industrial sectors globally, so brands producing clothing, footwear, and accessories must rethink their business practices and implement comprehensive systems of effective tools for ethical environmental management as part of CSR. International experience demonstrates numerous practical advantages of conducting responsible business, while the Ukrainian market is only beginning to formulate concepts regarding methods of ethical business activities in its strategies.

The environmental awareness of Ukrainian consumers, which has recently become more pronounced, consistently urges brands to formulate their business concepts consciously and to choose pathways for enterprise development considering the impact the company can project on the environment. Currently, the focus is not only on minimizing environmental harm but also on the contribution an organization can make to enable the world to function sustainably in the future.

застосовуються у програмах соціальної відповідальності брендів, за такими категоріями: ековиробництво, екотовари, екозаходи, екопроцеси, експівпраця, екостратегії, екокомунікації. Було досліджено поточний стан споживацької поведінки та ставлення суспільства до екодійальності fashion-брендів. В рамках дослідження проведено соціологічне онлайн-опитування, яке дало можливість підтвердити висунуту гіпотезу, що українське суспільство усвідомлює необхідність переходу до свідомого екологічного споживання одягу, але водночас не спостерігається відповідальності споживацької поведінки, що зумовлює розвиток такого феномену, коли fashion-виробництво наслідує західні тренди із впровадження екоініціатив, за допомогою чого і формує культуру свідомого екологічного споживання.

Ключові слова: екологічна відповідальність, корпоративна соціальна відповідальність, медіактивність, споживач, фешион-бренд.

The relevance of the chosen topic is driven by the lack of comprehensive and systematized scientific works analyzing the environmental responsibility of Ukrainian fashion brands. Also lacking are studies on Ukrainian consumers' clothing purchasing needs and their expectations regarding the eco-initiatives of Ukrainian fashion brands. Ukrainian consumers are highly reliant on current fashion trends. Despite economic difficulties, they regularly update their wardrobe each season, mostly through brands that promote fast fashion. This consumer behavior is influenced by a certain historical burden when during the times of the Soviet Union, women and men were deprived of the opportunity to have modern, nice clothing.

This necessitates the need for conducting scientific research on such an important component of corporate social responsibility as environmental protection in the fashion industry. After all, the application of eco-initiatives in the practical activities of companies can serve as a communication tool capable of shaping a positive reputation.

The goal of the research is to uncover the essence and significance of the environmental component of CSR in the practices of Ukrainian fashion brands. The working hypothesis of the research is based on the assumption that Ukrainian society recognizes the need to

transition to conscious ecological clothing consumption given quality production and appropriate pricing. However, responsible consumer behavior is not observed simultaneously, leading to the development of a phenomenon where it's not society demanding eco-responsibility from the producer, but rather the producer shaping eco-culture and contributing to raising consumer awareness about environmental threats. This necessitates setting the following objectives for this research: identify and generalize the main directions of environmental responsibility among Ukrainian fashion brands; and determine the level of environmental awareness among Ukrainian consumers of fashion products through sociological research.

Theoretical framework or literature review

The scientific discourse on environmental protection began in 1962 after the release of biologist Carson's (1962) book "Silent Spring". A significant breakthrough in the academic discipline of business and strategy was made by Porter & Kramer (2006), who argued that companies should create competitive advantages by integrating social and environmental issues into their core business strategies, thus incorporating sustainability into their strategic framework.

The problem of the impact of fast fashion on the environment is topical in scientific discourse. In particular, researchers De Ponte, Liscio & Sospiro (2023) emphasize the need for implementing effective management strategies to reduce the impact of fashion waste on the environment. Ukrainian researcher Fiialka (2017) pays attention to the behavior of companies regarding the use of greenwashing in the Ukrainian market and argues that environmental initiatives of brands should be supported by effective actions, especially in the context of environmental concerns, as these issues are urgent, and consumer deception can affect companies both financially and emotionally.

Additionally, the research foundation is supported by an interesting approach to the classification of environmental innovations proposed by Zarebska & Michalska (2016), who distinguish between process, product, organizational, and marketing innovations. Ukrainian experience in forming environmental strategy is presented in the work of Kamyshnykova (2017), who has proposed an algorithm of actions for the effective

implementation of environmental initiatives in CSR business.

Dovhun & Krykavskyy (2017), Tarayevska & Rishchuk (2021) focus on the peculiarities of implementing the environmental component of corporate social responsibility in Ukraine. In the research work "Ecodesign and initiatives of sustainable development in the dimension of passion of artistic and design creativity," Ukrainian scientists note that the future development of the fashion industry is linked to the use of environmentally friendly and technological fabrics. Researchers predict that new creative searches are due to the vital need for a new philosophy of world perception, which will influence ecodesign in the future (Lahoda et al., 2023). On the other hand, Mahmoud, Kumar, Fuxman & Mohr (2023) raise the question in the scientific discourse of whether sustainable materials can truly be considered a source of luxury and if the perception of climate change risk will affect that attribution.

The modern legal aspect of regulating state environmental policy in Ukraine, an adaptation of international legal experience within the European integration framework, is disclosed by researchers Kryzhevskyy, Ripenko, Nikitin, Kozin, & Kuzmenko (2023). Separate aspects of the role of social investment projects for business and for the country's economic development in general are considered by researchers Minochkina et al. (2023).

Overall, the topics of development in the Ukrainian fashion business and, in particular, its environmental responsibility, are quite new and under-researched for Ukrainian scholars. Mostly, Ukrainian experts pay attention to the practices of their foreign colleagues and explore the theory and history of environmental responsibility (Galushka & Kondratenko, 2020; Gerasymenko, Chuprina, Davydenko, Chubotina, Khomenko & Kudrevsky, 2023).

Understanding the importance of environmental protection from the harmful effects of fast fashion and implementing appropriate CSR practices in enterprises is crucial for shaping and developing socially responsible businesses in Ukraine. In particular, the studies by Kvasnytsya (2019) and Tymoshenko & Kotsiubivska (2021) emphasize the importance of forming eco-concepts in the fashion industry.

Within our work, the results of research presented by Correa et al. (2021) regarding the attitudes of young millennials towards brand

social marketing actions are also intriguing. In particular, the dependence of the effectiveness of brand communication actions on Generation Y on their alignment with the social ideals of young people. The results of this study are integrated with sociological research conducted within our work. This will allow Ukrainian fashion brands to effectively shape strategies for environmentally responsible business in the future.

Methodology

In the research, the authors employed a comprehensive interdisciplinary approach that combines both general scientific and specialized methods of information processing. Specifically, methods such as description and observation were used to identify primary information. Methods such as analysis and synthesis, comparison and generalization, as well as media monitoring, were used to investigate the key components of environmental responsibility among Ukrainian fashion brands. This allowed us to summarize and identify the main tools for implementing environmental initiatives by Ukrainian fashion brands. Based on this, diagrams were graphically composed to demonstrate a synthesized understanding of the directions for implementing the environmental CSR concept by brands and to determine their relative importance.

Content analysis, conducted based on media monitoring, enabled research into determining the media activity of fashion brands. Within the scope of the work, a sociological research method was also applied to identify the attitudes of Ukrainian consumers towards the environmental responsibility of clothing manufacturers. We surveyed 50 independent respondents of different age groups. Google Forms service was used to organize the survey, which offers advantages such as prompt dissemination and retrieval of data, anonymity, automatic generation of graphs, and a wide selection of resources for survey creation. The survey questions were formulated to cover various aspects of consumer behavior in clothing purchases and to ascertain the importance of environmental aspects of fashion brands for consumers

Results and discussion

Fashion brands are companies engaged in the manufacturing and sale of clothing, footwear, and accessories. Globalization has been a driving force in this direction, contributing to the

maximization of clothing production speed, which, in turn, has led to increased exploitation of natural materials and resources. Therefore, environmentalists consider the fashion industry one of the most polluted industrial sectors.

Closely related to the fashion industry is the concept of "fast fashion," which leads to excessive consumption and a large amount of waste. Clothing categorized as fast fashion is relatively inexpensive because it is of low quality and is not recyclable; it targets consumers who want to change their clothes regularly to follow trends (Fombrun & Shanley, 1990).

Meanwhile, manufacturers have noticed that consumers are gradually becoming more discerning and increasingly considering the materials and production methods of the clothing they wear. Thus, fast fashion begins to displace "slow fashion" — a movement that combines social and environmental consciousness and responsibility in consumption and is based on the development, production, and purchase of high-quality and durable clothing. Environmental responsibility is manifested in the protection of environmental resources, reducing carbon footprint, and striving for zero waste (Stanton, 2021). In this context, collaboration between business and government in environmental protection is an important direction of activity. In Ukraine, in 2020, the Government of Ukraine approved the Concept for the Implementation of State Policy to Promote the Development of Socially Responsible Business (SRB) for the period up to 2030 (Orden N.º 66, 2020). The main directions of SRB development in environmental protection include:

- Implementation of innovative environmentally safe and energy-efficient technologies;
- Prevention of negative environmental impact;
- Promotion of waste utilization (Orden N.º 66, 2020).

The document outlines ways to address environmental issues through the following tools: organizing environmental protection systems by enterprises; seeking modernized ways to improve environmental indicators; training employees on environmental protection, health, and safety issues; promoting rational consumption of natural resources; reducing harmful emissions into the atmosphere; preserving biodiversity; organizing an environmental management system (Orden N.º 66, 2020).

The level of awareness among Ukrainian businesses about the importance of implementing environmental protection programs is demonstrated by the latest study of the Pro Bono Club Ukraine international network of corporate social responsibility on the Ukrainian market, which was conducted on the eve of the Russian-Ukrainian war. The results of the sociological study allow us to conclude that the majority of companies implement educational projects, improve working conditions and staff development, and organize charity fundraisers. Unfortunately, environmental protection is not a priority for Ukrainian companies (CSR Ukraine, 2021).

Overall, in Ukraine, environmental aspects of the CSR system are manifested in the following types of company activities:

- Formulating policies for environmentally responsible enterprises;
- Conducting environmental audits;
- Collaborating efforts to implement initiatives with internal and external stakeholders;
- Supplying goods according to environmental standards;
- Producing environmentally friendly products (Kamyshnykova, 2017).

In the mass-market segment in Ukraine, clothing manufacturers are beginning to focus consumer attention on certain aspects of their eco-activities. Our attention will be focused on brands that have already taken leading positions in the mass-market segment, including Goldi, JUL.

The Ukrainian women's clothing manufacturer JUL has focused its main efforts on eco-responsibility in the following aspects: primarily using natural fabrics in production; and producing packaging boxes exclusively from recyclable materials. Additionally, the brand releases limited collections, which promotes conscious consumption and reduces waste from unsold items. The brand's main communication platform is its website, where the company should ideally showcase information about its eco-responsibility. However, currently, there is no information about the brand's environmental activities in the media, which is not supported by any evidence in the form of reports, thus it cannot be taken seriously and may not instill trust among stakeholders.

The brand Goldi, a mass-market clothing manufacturer positioning itself as environmentally sustainable and responsible,

informs stakeholders on its corporate website that it uses only renewable energy sources and has completely abandoned natural gas consumption. The company also focuses on preserving Ukrainian water bodies through the use of a special water purification system. Regarding eco-products, the Goldi brand seeks to increase the supply of biodegradable materials (Shtuka, 2021). Similar to the JUL brand, Goldi does not make any informational materials confirming its environmental activities publicly available. Such an approach can be considered irresponsible in terms of communication with consumers, especially considering that the JUL brand has high media activity in Ukrainian fashion publications such as Vogue, Marie Claire, Cosmopolitan, Elle, The Village, Harper's Bazaar, HD Fashion, L'Officiel.

When considering the quality of JUL brand content, the focus in publications is only on presentations of new products, trends, clothing compatibility, etc., with no attention paid to the component of environmental responsibility. The clothing manufacturer Goldi is an inactive participant in the media space, which is a strategic mistake for the brand in communicating with stakeholders.

In Ukraine, business strategies for environmental responsibility are more focused on designer brands, which accordingly do not belong to the mass-market segment but are exclusive manufacturers. Let's analyze the positions of such brands regarding environmental responsibility and the consistent implementation of environmental initiatives, including Ksenia Shnaider, Bevza, Katya Silchenko, Litkovskaya, My Sleeping Gypsy, No Clip Yes Zip (NCYZIP).

Kseniaschnaider brand is a manufacturer of designer clothing that is now well-known and recognized in Europe, the USA, and other countries worldwide. The designers are considered pioneers of eco-friendly fashion in Eastern Europe, primarily based on the production of recycled denim (Marchenko, 2020). The company processes about 500 pairs of jeans for recycling per month, which amounts to nearly 5 tons per year. In one season, Ksenia Shnaider produces approximately 200 kg of textile waste and manufactures about 3,000 recycled products per year. The uniqueness of the brand's offering lies in the fact that each item is exclusive, as it is composed of individual and unique parts of recycled fabrics or those that typically go to waste (Prys, 2020a). In 2016, the company entered the international arena by successfully launching a trendy product called

demi-denim, which introduced the brand's philosophy: combining vintage denim fabric with different clothing pieces. It is worth noting that the brand actively communicates with consumers, and regularly conducts educational activities through its communication platforms regarding environmental responsibility.

Bevza is a Ukrainian clothing brand that emphasizes the ethical treatment of nature as the company's core value. Bevza is one of the most popular Ukrainian brands globally and showcases its clothing at fashion weeks in the USA and Europe. The company collaborates with Italian factories that have a 100% closed cycle and produce environmentally friendly raw materials (organic fabric dyeing, certified recycled materials, etc.) and plans to further expand cooperation with international companies. In the development process of Bevza products, innovative technologies are used to manufacture eco-friendly goods. The Bevza brand actively seeks to popularize conscious consumption and environmental awareness both in the Ukrainian market and abroad. The main environmental responsibility stems from the choice of raw materials, creating clothing using eco-friendly techniques, and promoting understanding of the concept of "sustainable fashion" through initiatives that can draw attention to social issues (Prys, 2020b). The company is quite active in the media. Well-known Ukrainian and international publications such as *Vogue*, *FW-Daily*, *Buro247*, *The Village Ukraine*, etc., write about the brand and its ecological initiatives.

The next brand we present for consideration is the Coat by Katya Silchenko, which is also well-known in Ukrainian and international markets. According to the concept of sustainable development underlying the brand's philosophy, responsibility is based on intelligent production. K. Silchenko sees awareness of environmentally sustainable consumption in planning the demand for her clothing offerings (Bilous, 2021). In 2020, the brand presented an autumn collection made from environmentally sustainable materials, stating that the raw materials were sourced from factories collaborating with global brands, such as the environmentally conscious brand Stella McCartney. Famous online publications such as *Vogue.ua*, *L'Officiel*, *Elle.ua*, and others have noticed the ecological approaches in the production of the Coat by Katya Silchenko.

The designer clothing brand Litkovskaya declares its environmental responsibility mainly

through specific collections dedicated to environmentally sustainable motives. For example, in the fall of 2020, Litkovskaya presented a demi-couture clothing line called Artisanal, which translates to "made traditionally or non-mechanically," corresponding to the concept of ecological sustainability. In this collection, the designer used fabric scraps, vintage items, and remains of archival collections. The products from the collection were unique, and due to the limited nature of the collection, they will not go to waste. Additionally, the garments were crafted by artisans from Carpathian villages using ancient techniques on wooden looms. The main focuses of the collection are preserving Ukrainian traditions and adhering to the principles of environmental sustainability and slow fashion (Misyuk, 2020).

Therefore, it is evident that Litkovskaya's brand's commitment to sustainable development is limited and manifested in specific clothing collections rather than in overall production. Regarding communication coverage, the brand has high activity indicators in both Ukrainian and international publications: *Vogue*, *Harper's Bazar*, *L'Official*, *Elle*, and others.

My Sleeping Gypsy is a Ukrainian brand of unique women's clothing that produces embroidered shirts, embroidered dresses, jumpsuits, and more. The brand focuses on "slow fashion" production and states that it will never sell clothing on a mass scale. The clothing is made from natural fabrics such as linen and silk. The company sources linen fabrics from local producers and processes silk from second-hand sources. My Sleeping Gypsy also adheres to limited edition collections, focusing on the quality and environmental sustainability of its products. The production of My Sleeping Gypsy clothing takes place in Ukraine, minimizing transportation and aiming to reduce carbon emissions. Only local artisans are involved in creating the garments to control the production chain in line with principles of environmental sustainability, thereby supporting small artisan communities. The brand has completely abandoned sales and does not have outlet stores (Nyzovets, 2023), instead focusing on the quality of its products. My Sleeping Gypsy primarily emphasizes environmental sustainability in production and products (Birkner, 2020). Despite being recognized in Europe and the USA, information about the brand in the online space is scarce, although it is represented on many international online platforms for sales (such as *farfetch.com*).

The next clothing brand we include for consideration is No Clip Yes Zip (NCYZIP), founded by blogger M. Tymoshenko and designer N. Fishchenko in 2019. The concept of this young brand aligns with conscious consumption and emphasizes the importance of moving away from the principles of fast fashion. The brand creates modular clothing from recycled materials. Overall, the brand's products allow for interchangeable sleeves, collars, pockets, hoods, etc., in different colors and materials of varied textures. This concept fits into the framework of ecological consumption because instead of buying multiple garments, one can constantly modify the existing clothing by using individual components as needed. There is limited information about the brand online, indicating its relative novelty and the Ukrainian audience's unpreparedness to accept such an approach to consumption. However, there are noticeable active communication strategies on social media, especially on Instagram, indicating a focus on a young audience, which nowadays holds an active stance on ecological and conscious consumption.

Therefore, the main activity of designer fashion brands is focused on producing eco-friendly goods using innovative technologies, making the companies unique both in the Ukrainian market and worldwide. Ukrainian brands actively promote the wearing of ecological items through fashion events such as global fashion weeks and various Ukrainian or international ecological projects. Brands also aim to obtain ecological certifications, as seen in the case of Bevza, which attests to the seriousness of their sustainable development intentions. However, complying with international standards is an expensive procedure, and not every young brand can afford it. Additionally, information about the awareness of Ukrainian brands is increasingly spreading, and in recent years, international online publications have been writing about them, confirming the relevance and success of their ecological statements in the fashion space.

Based on the analysis of the activities of Ukrainian designers advocating for ecological clothing consumption, a histogram of the most commonly used sustainable development initiatives has been compiled (see Figure 1).

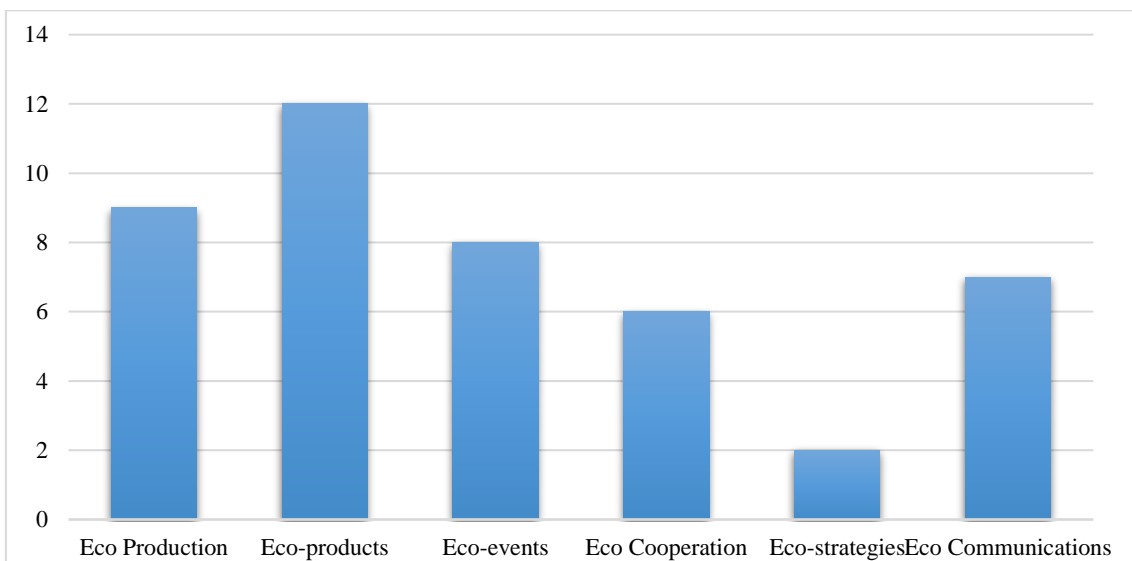


Figure 1. The using ratio of eco-categories by Ukrainian companies.
Source: Authors' computation.

Leading positions are occupied by eco-product categories as the primary element through which brands can demonstrate their attitude towards the environment. Eco-production ranks second in both histograms as a complement to eco-products. In Ukraine, eco-strategies, about which companies still express uncertainty at the official level, hold a low position, while international companies express a clear position on ways to achieve environmental goals. It is also worth emphasizing cooperation, which helps to achieve

a common environmental objective. Foreign companies are more open to cooperation and strive to expand their network of external stakeholders as much as possible. In Ukraine, brands are only beginning to unite efforts to implement environmentally sustainable projects.

Similarly, we detail the process of environmental initiatives for each Ukrainian designer brand to make a comprehensive comparative analysis. (see Figure 2).

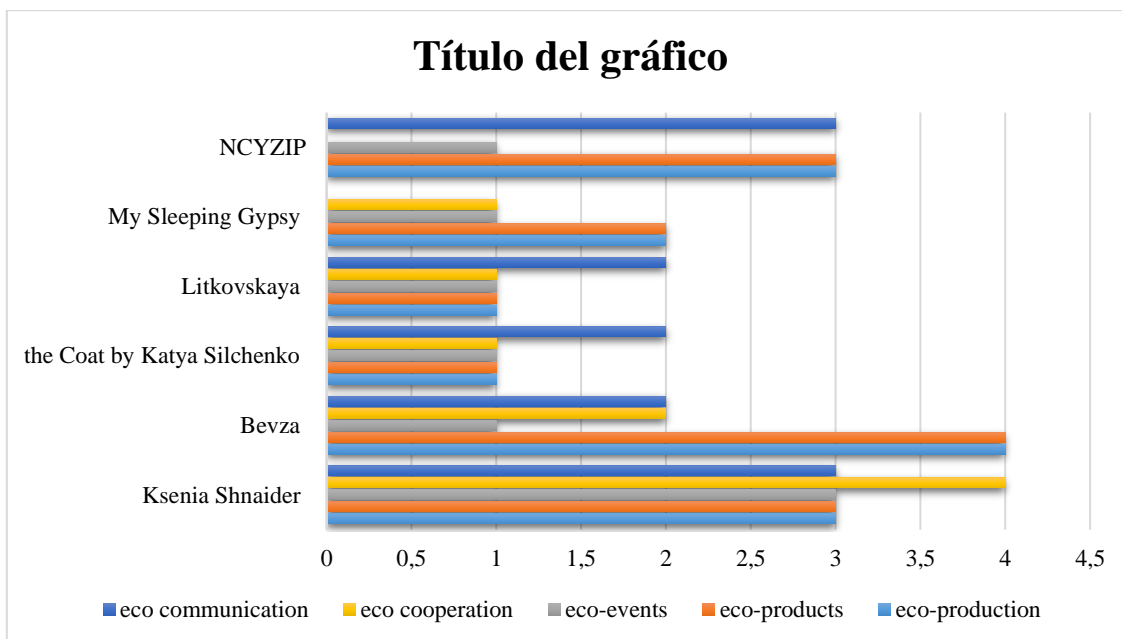


Figure 2. The distribution of the use of eco-categories by Ukrainian companies. Source: Authors' computation.

On the histogram (see Figure 2), we can see the parallel involvement of all environmental responsibility processes used by Ukrainian brands. Most companies are just beginning to implement eco-initiatives, but some activists have already achieved positive results in terms of paying attention to social issues both locally and internationally. It is possible to talk about the prospects of Ukrainian business, which can pay attention to the environmentally sustainable fashion industry as business communities and society in general.

However, none of the investigated Ukrainian brands have an environmental responsibility

strategy reflected in the company's goals, mission, values, etc. We only observe individual components of communication initiatives based on environmental initiatives. There is no mention of corporate social responsibility as an official system regulating the processes of brand activities in all analyzed Ukrainian fashion brands. It can be noted that most eco-initiatives have a situational nature, corresponding to the concept of current implementation "here and now" (see Table 1). Therefore, Ukrainian fashion brands need to focus primarily on implementing a comprehensive environmental management system as a separate concept or as a component of an integrated CSR.

Table 1. Types of brands' environmental responsibility

Brand	Eco-concept as positioning	Eco-responsibility as part of CSR	Situational eco-responsibility
Ksenia Shnaider	+		
Bevza	+		
the Coat by Katya Silchenko			+
Litkovskaya			+
NCYZIP	+		
My Sleeping Gypsy	+		

Source: Authors' computation.

To determine the need for the implementation of brand environmental responsibility, an online survey of 50 independent respondents from different age groups was conducted. The purpose of the sociological study is to identify existing and potential consumer needs of Ukrainian

society when purchasing clothing, assess the level of environmental awareness, analyze expectations for the launch of eco-initiatives by Ukrainian fashion brands, evaluate the nature of perception of environmentally responsible brands, and understand which communication

channels contemporary society trusts the most. The demographic data of the participants are as follows: 69.4% are women and, accordingly, 30.6% are men. Age indicators: 40% are aged 20-24 years; 34% are 32+; 14% are 16-20 years old; 8% are 24-28 years old, and 4% are 28-32 years old.

The main group of questions related to consumer characteristics, respondents' attitudes toward Ukrainian manufacturers, ecology, and changes

regarding sustainable development in the fashion industry. The next question of the survey was dedicated to the quality of goods: "What do you pay attention to when buying clothes?", and a whopping 86% of respondents emphasized the quality of products. In second place is attractiveness (64%), followed by the naturalness of materials (54%), compliance with trends (30%), and the environmental friendliness of materials (only 20%) (see Figure 3).

What do you consider when buying clothes?

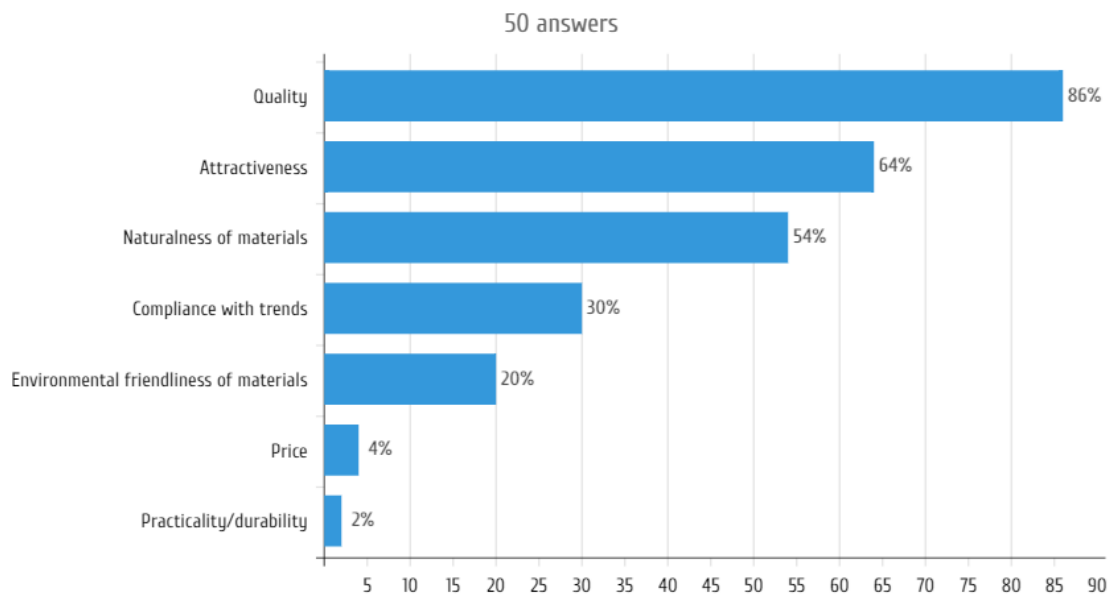


Figure 3. Criteria for choosing clothing by respondents. Source: Authors' computation.

Therefore, quality is the most important criterion for Ukrainian consumers when choosing clothing, while environmental friendliness is the least demanded. Questions regarding the environmental aspects of brands' work focused on the methods of clothing production before

purchase: 81.6% of respondents are not interested in how clothes are made, with only 8.2% willing to learn about the specifics of garment creation. Meanwhile, 6% indicated occasional interest, and 2% would like to show interest in the future. (see Figure 4).

Are you interested in the production methods of clothes before buying?

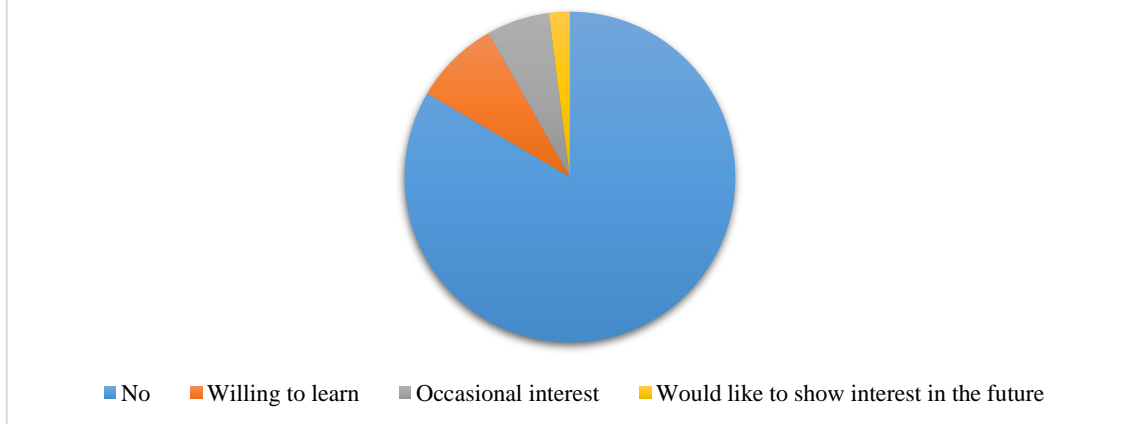


Figure 4. Respondents' awareness of the methods of creating clothes.

Source: Authors' computation.

Considering the almost total indifference of Ukrainian consumers to how manufacturers produce clothing (from what materials, with what equipment, under what conditions, etc.), it is interesting that when asked, "Are you concerned about the environmental damage caused by the fashion industry?" 58% answered "yes," and 38%

answered "no" (see Figure 5). In response to the question, "Do you think Ukrainian fashion brands should pay more attention to their environmental footprint?" 92% answered affirmatively, and 6% expressed indifference (see Figure 6).

Are you concerned about the environmental damage caused by the fashion industry?

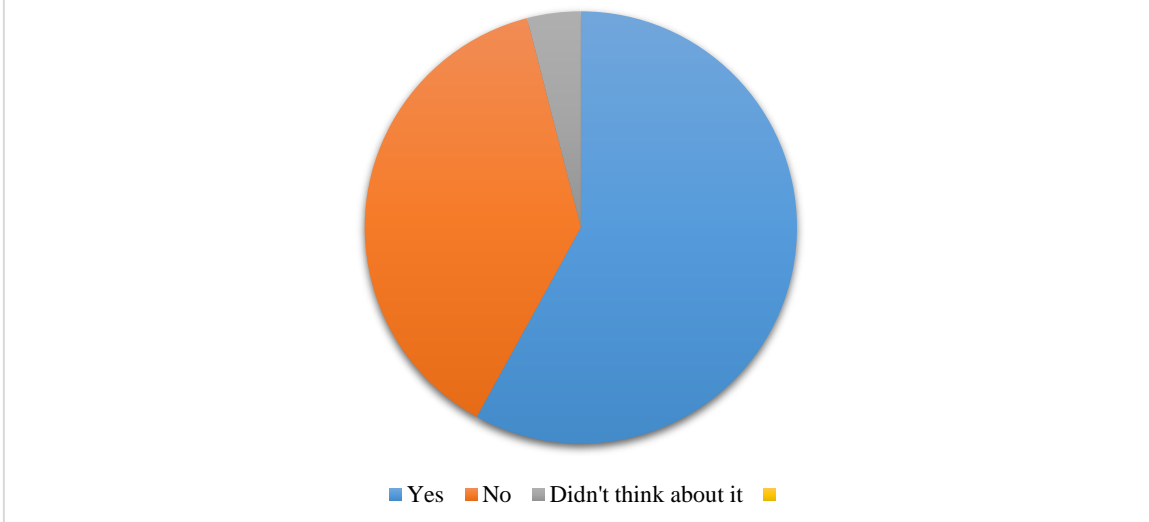


Figure 5. Respondents' attitude towards environmental damage caused by Ukrainian brands.

Source: Authors' computation.

Do you think Ukrainian fashion brands should pay more attention to their environmental footprint?



Figure 6. Respondents' attitude towards the responsibility of Ukrainian clothing manufacturers for the ecological footprint.

Source: Authors' computation.

The survey results reveal a dissonance in respondents' answers to questions regarding the environmental practices of Ukrainian brands, as the first directly relates to the consumer's actual attitude toward one aspect of eco-friendliness in clothing production, while the second and third encompass the global context of the harm caused by the fashion industry to the environment. This is a kind of manipulative tactic because, essentially, all three questions have a similar underlying message but are formulated differently. Society reacts actively to the loud phrases "environmental damage" and "fashion industry" and agrees that the textile industry indeed negatively impacts the environment, so it's worth paying attention to and worrying about. However, when the question is straightforward and doesn't contain any triggers, respondents honestly admit that they are not particularly interested in the methods of clothing production, even though it is one of the key factors that cause the most harm to the environment. In other words, it can be argued that Ukrainian society is indifferent to the environmental threats of the fashion industry, likely due to low awareness.

It's worth focusing on the environmental activities that respondents expect from Ukrainian clothing brands: 68% of survey participants indicate that manufacturers should produce items from environmentally friendly materials, 60%

emphasize adherence to international standards, 50% support measures to promote conscious consumption and the implementation of the "green office" concept. Slightly fewer, 48%, agree on the creation and promotion of eco-projects; 40% are interested in implementing eco-efficient consumption; 34% expect the formulation of environmental goals and their publication on official websites; 30% support collaborations with partners and the publication of environmental reports; 28% advocate for cooperation with NGOs.

Studying the perception of information regarding the environmental activities of Ukrainian fashion brands through communication channels will help understand which dissemination tools are currently more effective. This will help orient in the aspects of developing an environmental concept. Thus, in response to the question "How do you feel about information in the news/internet/social media about the environmental initiatives of Ukrainian fashion brands?" 77.6% of respondents give a positive answer, meaning they believe the company is making an important contribution to sustainable development; 12.2% of respondents do not trust information sources and perceive it as a planned PR campaign, while 10.2% show absolute apathy towards this issue (see Figure 7).

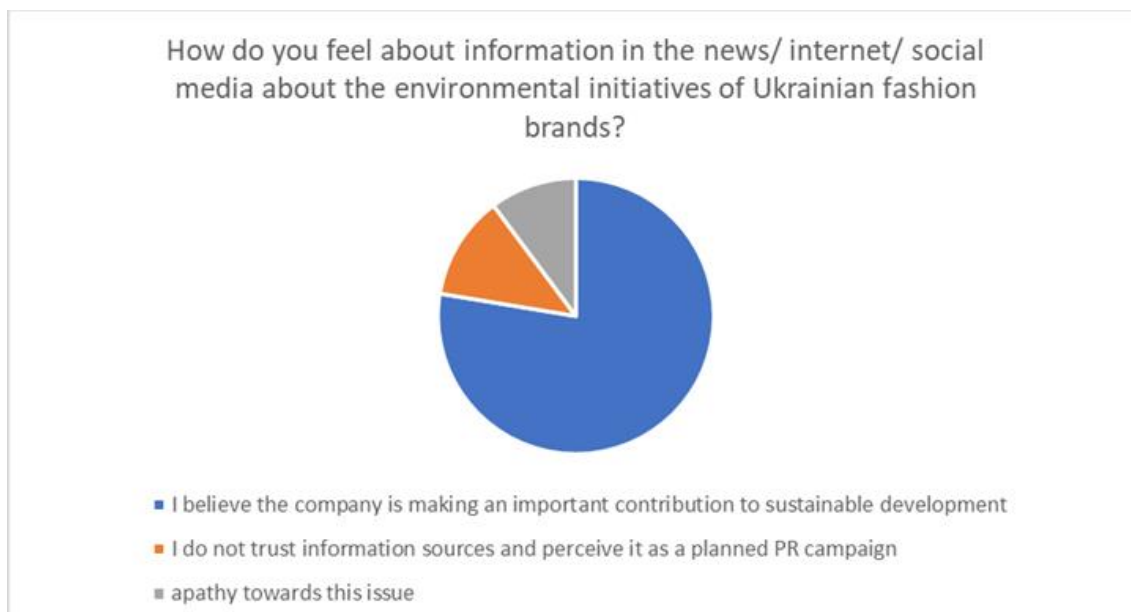


Figure 7. Respondents' perception of information about environmental initiatives of brands in social networks.

Source: Authors' computation.

The online survey also included an open-ended question about respondents' expectations of the environmental activities of fashion brands. In particular, survey participants mentioned the following aspects of their vision of sustainable development: prospects for rapid growth; adherence to European norms and rules; affordability of eco-friendly clothing in terms of pricing policy; environmental responsibility of mass-market brands; creating clothing from recycled materials that will shape the values of conscious consumption and provide a new perspective on waste and excessive consumption; active promotion of conscious consumption. In response to the question "Are you ready to fully transition to conscious consumption?" 54% answered "yes" and 36% answered "no". Additionally, 4% openly responded "50/50" and indicated that they are willing to switch to conscious consumption if it does not force them out of their comfort zone.

More than half of the surveyed respondents stated that they are willing to transition to conscious ecological consumption but on the condition of quality production. As seen from the survey results, the audience is ready to endorse such environmental initiatives by brands that will contribute to building a positive reputation and contribute to the growth of business efficiency and success.

Overall, we can observe the situational implementation of environmental initiatives by fashion brands. Our analysis only confirms the

findings of the international network Pro Bono Club Ukraine (CSR Ukraine, 2021), which were mentioned earlier, regarding the low prioritization of environmental protection projects for businesses. The fashion brands selected for our analysis mostly target not only the Ukrainian audience but also the international one, which is more demanding in terms of business environmental responsibility. Therefore, most of the eco-initiatives of these brands were directed towards external consumers. Ukrainian consumers, as indicated by the results of our sociological research, are less demanding regarding the environmental responsibility of businesses. This suggests that at the moment, the environmental responsibility of brands does not have a significant impact on consumer preference or sales levels.

Conclusions

Based on the results of the study, it can be concluded that the Ukrainian market is only beginning to take environmental issues seriously. In turn, brands have successful corporate responsibility results within global and large enterprises present in the domestic space. In a broader context, issues of conscious consumption and environmentalism are raised by designer brands that, in addition to ecological sustainability, also focus on social initiatives, particularly caring for employees. However, such activities still have a situational character as there is no clear ecological concept within the

comprehensive CSR of Ukrainian fashion companies.

Based on the analysis of the domestic experience of integrating the environmental component of CSR into the activities of fashion brands, as well as the results of the conducted sociological research, we have managed to confirm the hypothesis of this study that a trend is emerging in Ukrainian society regarding the importance of transitioning to conscious clothing consumption. However, consumers are currently exhibiting passive behavior regarding environmental responsibility. This has led to the emergence of a phenomenon where Ukrainian fashion brands are adopting the practices of foreign companies regarding the application of the environmental component of corporate social responsibility during production and sales activities through situational methods, shaping the culture of "eco-fashion." Meanwhile, in the United States and Europe, consumers demand that companies conduct eco-responsible business activities, where neglecting consumer needs can worsen reputation indicators.

Based on the research findings, it can be assumed that in Ukraine, it is necessary to activate the implementation of brand environmental responsibility - raising awareness among Ukrainian society about environmental threats and meeting their interests or even the need for the production of quality clothing from organic materials.

It should not be expected that all fashion brands will be environmentally conscious, just as consumers are not. However, as our research has shown, brands that enter the international market feel the need to develop and implement environmental concepts. The main directions of their future activities include the comprehensive development of the brand's mission, vision, and values as integral components of brand reputation formation. The development and implementation of individual elements forming a comprehensive environmental concept should include:

- Designing environmental responsibility policies;
- Developing a plan of action for joining the UN Global Compact;
- Collaboration with organizations certifying materials and production methods;
- Active informational campaigns promoting conscious consumption and environmental responsibility.

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