

Journal of Energy & Environmental Policy Options



Analyzing Consumer Preferences for Green Products and Environmental Impact

Anna Kosyak^a, Shirokanova Popov^b

Abstract

The main purpose of this article is to identify current trends in consumer behavior toward "green" products, particularly within developed countries. The article presents an analysis of consumer behavior trends in the green market, focusing on how consumers interact with environmental goods and services. The findings reveal that while ecological criteria have been influential in the past, the trend of making purchase decisions based on these criteria appears to be diminishing. Price remains the dominant factor that consumers consider when making purchasing decisions. One significant observation is that the motivation for purchasing eco-friendly products is often driven by the potential savings associated with using energy-efficient appliances. This practical benefit continues to play a crucial role in encouraging consumers to opt for environmentally friendly products. Additionally, the purchase of organic food is largely motivated by perceived health benefits, which consistently emerged as the most important criterion across multiple rounds of the survey. The analysis also identifies a positive trend in post-consumer waste management practices, indicating a growing awareness and effort among consumers to responsibly manage their waste. However, there has been a notable decline in the number of people repairing broken electronic equipment and appliances, which contributes to the increasing quantity of electronic waste. This decline suggests a shift in consumer behavior that may undermine efforts to reduce waste through repair and reuse. Overall, the article highlights the complex factors influencing consumer behavior in the green market, emphasizing the need for ongoing education and policy interventions to sustain and enhance environmentally responsible purchasing habits. Understanding these trends is crucial for businesses and policymakers aiming to promote sustainable consumption practices and reduce the environmental impact of consumer behavior.

Keywords: Consumer Behavior, Green Products, Sustainable Consumption, Environmental Goods

JEL Codes: D12, Q56, M31

1. INTRODUCTION

During the second half of the 20th century, society began to recognize and address the growing threat posed by environmental pollution and resource depletion. Concerns about these issues became more prominent, as people increasingly understood the need for responsible management of natural resources and the reduction of environmental harm. The topic of sustainable consumption and production was formally introduced at the global political level during the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, held in Rio de Janeiro. This landmark event, also known as the Earth Summit, marked a turning point in international discussions on sustainability, setting the stage for the development of global environmental policies. Ten years later, at the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg in 2002, the global community reiterated the urgent need to intensify efforts to improve living conditions while promoting sustainable development principles. The summit called for the integration of sustainability into consumption and production processes, emphasizing that economic growth and environmental preservation must go hand in hand. This growing awareness and commitment to sustainable practices at both the political and societal levels have since driven numerous initiatives aimed at balancing economic progress with the need to protect the environment for future generations. Despite decades of discussions and efforts, current global consumption patterns remain far from sustainable. Several key factors contribute to this ongoing challenge. One major factor is the rapid population growth, particularly in developing countries, which places increasing pressure on natural resources and amplifies consumption demands. Additionally, rising global private wealth has led to an increase in purchasing power, especially among the middle and lower classes, driving higher levels of consumption worldwide. Another significant influence is the culture of "consumerism," which is especially prevalent in groups with the greatest buying power. In many parts of the world, consumerism promotes a lifestyle focused on acquiring and consuming goods, often beyond what is necessary. This culture encourages wasteful consumption and a disregard for the environmental impact of production processes, contributing to the strain on natural resources. These factors, when combined, create a consumption model that prioritizes short-term gains over long-term sustainability, further complicating efforts to promote sustainable development and responsible resource management on a global scale. Although current consumption trends remain

^a National Research University Higher School of Economics, Moscow, Russia

^b National Research University Higher School of Economics, Moscow, Russia

unsustainable, there is a growing shift in environmental awareness and eco-friendly behaviors among consumers. Increasingly, sustainability is becoming a key criterion in market segmentation, with consumers' preferences for environmentally conscious products influencing how companies approach their business strategies. The rising demand for "green" products is evident across various industries, as more consumers prioritize sustainability in their purchasing decisions. This shift in consumer behavior has prompted companies to adapt, leading to changes in their product portfolios and operations. Businesses are increasingly integrating eco-friendly practices into their production processes and offering products that meet consumers' environmental concerns. From adopting sustainable packaging to reducing carbon footprints, companies are recognizing that aligning with green values is not only a competitive advantage but also a necessary response to changing market demands. As the popularity of green products continues to grow, it is driving a larger transformation in the marketplace, where sustainability is becoming a defining feature of brand identity and customer loyalty. The primary objective of this article is to thoroughly explore and identify the current trends in consumer behavior towards "green" products, with a particular focus on the Silesian Voivodeship as a case study. As environmental concerns continue to shape consumer preferences and market dynamics, understanding these trends is critical for both academic research and practical applications in business and policy-making. By examining the behavior of consumers in the Silesian region, the article aims to provide a comprehensive overview of the factors driving demand for eco-friendly products and services, as well as the challenges and opportunities this market presents. The research methodology applied in this study involves several key approaches. First, a detailed literature review was conducted to gather insights from existing studies on consumer attitudes toward green products, both globally and within Poland. This review provides a foundation for understanding how environmental awareness has evolved and how it influences purchasing decisions. Second, the study utilizes an in-depth analysis of available data from various institutions that specialize in studying environmentally conscious consumer behavior. These data sources include reports, surveys, and statistical analyses from environmental and market research organizations, offering a broad view of the green product market.

In addition to these secondary sources, the article incorporates original research conducted by the author, drawing on two key surveys carried out in the years 1999/2000 and 2012/14. These surveys were part of a broader research initiative led by the Department of Environmental Protection at the University of Economics in Katowice, which focused on the development of the eco-friendly goods and services market within the Silesian Voivodeship. By comparing results from these two periods, the article is able to highlight significant shifts in consumer behavior over time and provide a longitudinal perspective on the growth of the green product market. The surveys conducted by the author collected valuable data on consumer preferences, awareness levels, and motivations for purchasing eco-friendly products. They also examined the role of various demographic factors, such as age, income, and education, in shaping attitudes toward green consumption. This data is critical for identifying key consumer segments that are driving the demand for eco-friendly products and understanding the barriers that may be preventing wider adoption of sustainable practices. Furthermore, the article explores how businesses in the Silesian Voivodeship have responded to these trends, including changes in their product portfolios and marketing strategies to cater to the growing demand for environmentally sustainable goods. The study sheds light on how companies are integrating green practices into their operations, from adopting eco-friendly packaging to reducing their carbon footprints, and how these efforts resonate with consumers in the region.

This article offers a detailed and data-driven analysis of the evolving consumer behavior towards green products in the Silesian Voivodeship. The findings are not only relevant for understanding regional trends but also contribute to the broader discourse on sustainable consumption. The insights gained from this study have practical implications for businesses seeking to tap into the green market and for policymakers aiming to promote sustainable development through consumer behavior. By examining the intersection of environmental awareness, consumer preferences, and market response, this article provides a valuable contribution to the field of environmental economics and consumer behavior studies. The first part of the article presents an overview of trends in consumer behavior within the eco-friendly market in developed countries. This section explores how consumers in these regions have increasingly prioritized sustainability in their purchasing decisions, driven by growing environmental awareness, stricter regulations, and the influence of corporate social responsibility initiatives. The analysis covers key factors such as the rising demand for green products, shifts in preferences toward sustainable brands, and the influence of certification and labeling schemes, such as organic and fair-trade labels, in shaping consumer choices. This section also discusses the role of innovation in product development, as companies in developed nations are increasingly investing in sustainable technologies and eco-friendly materials to meet consumer demand for environmentally responsible goods and services. The second part of the article shifts focus to the Silesian Voivodeship, offering a detailed examination of consumer behavior toward environmental goods and services in this region, based on survey data.

This section highlights key findings from the surveys conducted by the author, comparing changes in consumer attitudes over time and identifying the specific factors influencing eco-friendly purchasing decisions in Silesia. The analysis provides insights into how local consumers perceive green products, the extent of their environmental awareness, and the demographic factors that play a role in shaping their behavior. Additionally, it explores the barriers to wider adoption of eco-friendly products in the region and offers recommendations for how businesses and policymakers can address these challenges to promote more sustainable consumption patterns. Together, these two parts of the article provide a comprehensive understanding of both global and regional trends in eco-friendly consumer behavior, illustrating how broader global movements are reflected in local markets like the Silesian Voivodeship. This dual approach offers valuable insights for

businesses seeking to adapt to the growing demand for sustainable products and for policymakers aiming to encourage environmentally responsible consumption through targeted interventions.

2. ECO-FRIENDLY MARKET

Research on environmental responsibility dates back to the 1970s and 1980s, a time when relatively few consumers were aware of how their purchasing decisions impacted the natural environment. During this period, the availability of green products was minimal, and consumer consciousness around sustainability was just beginning to take shape. Early research primarily focused on specific issues such as energy conservation and eco-friendly policies advocated by political leaders. These studies were foundational in raising awareness, but they addressed only a narrow spectrum of environmental concerns. The 1990s marked a significant shift and are often described as the "environment-centered decade." During this time, social and ecological factors gained considerable importance in the decision-making processes of consumers. There was a growing recognition that individual choices, particularly in consumption, had a direct impact on the environment. The market responded with a wider availability of eco-friendly products, and businesses began to integrate sustainability into their practices more actively. This era saw an increase in environmentally conscious purchasing behavior, with consumers paying closer attention to factors such as sustainable production, ethical sourcing, and the overall environmental footprint of goods and services. Today, the term "green consumption" or "sustainable consumption" is widely recognized, and eco-friendly practices are increasingly incorporated into consumer culture. However, this concept continues to generate debate in both the scientific and consumer worlds. One ongoing discussion in academic literature, at both national and global levels, revolves around the most effective and sustainable forms of consumption and how they should be classified. There are also disputes about which consumer behavior patterns are most preferable when it comes to sustainability. For instance, some scholars advocate for minimalism and reducing consumption altogether, while others focus on promoting the consumption of green products as a viable solution. These differing perspectives reflect the complexity of achieving true sustainability in consumer behavior, highlighting that the journey toward environmentally responsible consumption is still evolving and far from settled. While green consumption has become a mainstream concept, it continues to raise questions about the best approaches to sustainability. These debates point to the need for continued research and discussion to refine our understanding of sustainable practices and their implications for both the environment and society.

For instance, some researchers argue that one of the most effective forms of green consumption is purchasing local products from local producers, which reduces the environmental impact associated with transportation and supports the local economy. Others, however, suggest that buying organic foods from the poorest countries is more beneficial, as it not only promotes environmentally friendly practices but also helps support vulnerable economies and provides fair trade opportunities to farmers and producers in those regions. More recent research has shifted its focus to examining the intricate relationships between consumer behavior and the environment. As a result, the modeling of eco-friendly consumption patterns has become a critical aspect of what is now referred to as "green consumerism." This movement is characterized by the rise in ecological awareness, prompting consumers to make decisions that reflect a growing concern for sustainability. The eco-consumerism of the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s, which primarily focused on avoiding products known to harm the environment, has evolved into a more comprehensive concept of "sustainable" or "green" consumerism. This modern form of consumerism takes a holistic approach, considering the entire life cycle of products—from production and distribution to usage and disposal. Instead of merely avoiding harmful products, sustainable consumerism encourages individuals to make choices that minimize environmental impact at every stage, including opting for products made from renewable resources, those with low carbon footprints, or items that are recyclable or biodegradable. This shift reflects the growing recognition that consumer behavior can have far-reaching impacts, not just on the environment, but on social and economic sustainability as well.

In this context, green consumerism is no longer just about individual purchasing decisions but about creating a broader culture of sustainability, where consumers actively engage in practices that consider the long-term health of the planet and future generations. After years of research, it has been established that a specific segment of consumers, often referred to as "ecological consumers," can be identified as a relatively homogeneous group based on shared characteristics and behaviors. These consumers demonstrate a strong commitment to environmental sustainability and strive to act in a rational, eco-conscious manner. This includes purchasing energy-saving products, conserving water, minimizing waste, and seeking out goods that have a lower environmental impact. Their buying decisions reflect a deep concern for the planet, and they tend to prioritize products that align with their eco-friendly values. A similar form of segmentation applies to consumers who are driven by ethical standards. These individuals make purchasing decisions based on factors such as fair treatment of workers, opposition to child labor, and adherence to fair-trade policies. For both ecological and ethically-driven consumers, their values and awareness are critical in shaping their purchasing habits and directly influence the business strategies of companies aiming to target these segments. Consumers' ecological awareness and their adherence to ethical standards play a crucial role in shaping market trends and driving corporate strategies. It is the consumer, through their purchasing decisions, who can influence businesses to adopt more sustainable or ethical practices. As a result, understanding these segments is vital for companies, as managerial knowledge of consumer behavior and attitudes provides a foundational basis for developing effective business strategies. This insight helps companies tailor their products and services to meet the expectations of environmentally and ethically conscious customers.

Market segmentation, in particular, offers a powerful tool for businesses seeking to understand and respond to the specific

behaviors and needs of different consumer groups. By segmenting the market, companies can better grasp the unique preferences and values of ecological and ethical consumers, enabling them to adjust their business offerings accordingly. This targeted approach not only helps companies meet the demands of their customers but also fosters brand loyalty among those who prioritize sustainability and ethical standards in their purchasing decisions. Ultimately, market segmentation is instrumental in aligning business development plans with the growing demand for sustainable and ethical products, ensuring that companies remain competitive in an increasingly conscious marketplace. One of the most significant differentiating factors in terms of geographic location is the income disparity between poorer nations and developed countries. In countries such as the USA, Canada, Western Europe, Australia, and New Zealand, more than 80% of the population can be classified as affluent consumers. In contrast, in nations like India or China, this figure falls below 20%. Wealthier consumers in these developed regions often understand and actively seek to implement sustainable development practices. These individuals include LOHAS (Lifestyles of Health and Sustainability) consumers, who prioritize healthy and sustainable living, as well as LOVOS (a lifestyle of voluntary simplicity) consumers, who embrace minimalism and reduced consumption. This segment of eco-conscious consumers represents a rapidly expanding market for green products and services, particularly in countries such as Australia, Germany, France, Italy, Japan, Canada, and the USA. Approximately 20% of the population in these countries is willing to pay a premium for environmentally friendly products and services, including ecological foods, energy-saving technologies, renewable energy sources, eco-friendly homes, and sustainable fashion and furniture (Belz & Peattie, 2012: 153-155). There are many examples of how the green market is segmented based on these consumer preferences. This article will present two such examples of market segmentation in the context of sustainable consumption, illustrating how businesses and marketers can effectively target the growing demand for green products and services. These examples highlight different approaches to understanding the preferences and behaviors of eco-conscious consumers, providing insights into how sustainable values shape purchasing decisions in diverse markets.

Roper Starch has been analyzing the green market and consumer behavior patterns in the United States since 1990, revealing a significant shift in consumer attitudes toward environmental issues over the years. One of the most notable changes is the increase in the number of consumers classified as "True Blues." These individuals possess a strong pro-ecological value system and are politically active in advocating for environmental causes. The percentage of True Blues has risen dramatically, from 11% in 1990 to 31% by 2007, reflecting a growing commitment to sustainability among a large portion of the population. In contrast, the "Apathetics" group, which consists of consumers who are disengaged and uninterested in environmental concerns, has seen a sharp decline. In 1995, 35% of consumers fell into this category, but by 2007, this number had dropped to 18%, suggesting that environmental awareness has penetrated much deeper into mainstream society. Similarly, the "Grousers" group, composed of individuals who believe they cannot change their behavior or lack the necessary environmental education, also saw a significant decline, shrinking from 24% in 1990 to 15% in 2007. Meanwhile, two other segments of green consumers, "Greenback Greens" and "Sprouts," remained relatively stable over the years. Greenback Greens are consumers who care about sustainable development but are not politically active, whereas Sprouts are aware of critical environmental issues but fail to let this knowledge influence their purchasing decisions. These stable segments indicate that while awareness and concern for the environment have grown, there remains a portion of consumers whose behavior does not fully align with their environmental values (Dahlstrom, 2011: 98-99).

These findings illustrate the evolving landscape of consumer attitudes toward sustainability in the United States, with an increasing number of people adopting a more active role in supporting environmental causes, either through their political engagement or purchasing decisions. However, they also highlight the challenges in translating awareness into action for certain consumer groups, pointing to the need for further education and motivation to help these segments make more eco-conscious choices. The topics of ecological marketing and pro-ecological consumer behavior were further explored in the Boston Consulting Group's report, *"Capturing the Green Advantage for Consumer Companies"* (2009). This report was based on a survey of nine thousand consumers aged 18 to 65, across nine different countries: Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Spain, Great Britain, the United States, and China. The analysis revealed that the importance consumers place on specific pro-environmental behaviors varies significantly depending on their geographical location and cultural context. For example, Italian consumers highly value the exclusion of animal testing as a key aspect of "acting green," viewing it as a crucial indicator of ethical and sustainable business practices. In contrast, this issue does not carry the same weight for Japanese consumers, who are less likely to view it as a significant factor when evaluating companies. Similarly, when it comes to the use of recyclable materials, this is a priority for American consumers, who consider it an essential aspect of environmental responsibility. However, Germans, while generally environmentally conscious, do not place as much emphasis on recyclability in their purchasing decisions as Americans do.

In addition to analyzing perceptions, the report also examined the actual actions taken by respondents to protect the environment. The findings underscored the diverse ways in which consumers across different regions engage with environmental issues, reflecting varying priorities and behaviors in response to sustainability concerns. This variation in emphasis highlights the importance of tailoring ecological marketing strategies to specific regional preferences and values, ensuring that companies can connect with consumers on the environmental issues that matter most to them. Ultimately, the report provided valuable insights into how businesses can better align their strategies with consumer expectations and capitalize on the growing demand for environmentally responsible products and services. Consumer preferences for environmentally-friendly products, such as organic items, vary significantly depending on the country. For instance, a study

by Manget et al. (2009) highlighted that organic chocolate in Italy was purchased by 4% more people than the average interest in green products in the country. In contrast, in Canada, organic chocolate was 11% less popular compared to the overall interest in organic products. These variations underscore the need for market strategies to be tailored to specific national trends in green consumption. Similar patterns were observed in the 2013 survey titled “*Attitudes of Europeans Towards Building the Single Market for Green Products*,” which surveyed 28 European Union member states. Conducted via telephone interviews on behalf of the European Commission, this study involved 25,568 respondents from various social and demographic backgrounds. The findings indicated that 80% of European consumers considered the environmental impact of products an important factor and expressed a willingness to change their purchasing habits in favor of more eco-friendly products. However, the survey also revealed a significant gap in consumer trust and information. Many respondents felt they were not sufficiently informed about the environmental credentials of products and expressed skepticism about the validity of manufacturers’ claims regarding the organic or eco-friendly nature of their goods. This lack of trust proved to be a barrier to purchasing green products, despite the strong willingness to pay more for them. The survey showed that over three-quarters of respondents (77%) were willing to pay a premium for environmentally-friendly products, provided they could be assured that the producers’ claims were genuine (European Commission, 2013). These findings highlight both the growing demand for green products across Europe and the critical role that transparency and consumer trust play in fostering a sustainable marketplace. Without credible and reliable information about the environmental impact of products, consumer engagement with green markets may be limited, even if there is a strong inclination to support sustainable consumption.

3. DISCUSSION

In the context of the Spanish economy, the segment of ecologically driven consumers is notably smaller compared to other developed nations. A study by the Institute for Sustainable Development, which analyzed ecological awareness in Spain from 1992 to 2011, revealed an interesting contrast between the deeply ingrained pro-environmental values held by the respondents and their actual behavior when faced with practical challenges. While many Spaniards expressed strong support for environmental protection in principle, their willingness to bear the economic and social costs of sustainable solutions, such as implementing renewable energy regardless of the expense, prioritizing environmental protection over job preservation, and adopting eco-innovative technologies, declined when confronted with real-world issues like product pricing, job security, and resistance to lifestyle changes (Strumińska-Kutra, 2011). Further confirmation of this behavior comes from a series of cyclical analyses conducted as part of a research program run by Spain’s Ministry of the Environment, launched in 2011. A study commissioned by the Ministry in 2013 found that pro-environmental behavior among consumers was becoming less prevalent. The most commonly adopted eco-friendly practice was the use of reusable shopping bags, cited by 65% of respondents. Half of those surveyed (51%) stated they tried to avoid durable and disposable products. However, fewer people made purchasing decisions based on eco-friendly packaging, with only 42% considering the recyclability of packaging materials. Supporting local goods was similarly less common, with 41% of respondents expressing a preference for local products.

One of the more revealing findings was that only 33% of respondents opted for eco-friendly products despite their higher costs, a decrease from previous years. However, there was a rise in the percentage of people willing to accept the additional cost of ecological solutions, increasing from 43% in 2011 to 60% in 2013. This suggests a gradual shift in consumer attitudes, although price remains a critical factor. In comparison, Polish consumers exhibited similar behavior, often choosing eco-friendly products for economic reasons but reverting to conventional habits to save money. Even when they could afford to pay more for sustainable options, many prioritized other financial obligations. Interestingly, the willingness to pay extra for ecological solutions was most prevalent among consumers who regularly paid attention to labels related to environmental impact, with 69% of such individuals consistently opting for green products regardless of the higher price. This indicates that environmentally conscious behavior is more likely to be sustained by those who have a strong and informed commitment to ecological values, as opposed to those driven by external factors like trends or economic incentives alone. Studies conducted on households in the Silesian Voivodeship in the years 1999/2000 and 2012/2014 offer valuable insights into consumer behavior toward eco-friendly products. These studies, funded by the State Committee for Scientific Research (grant no. 1H02C03615) and later as part of statutory research by the Department of Environmental Protection at the University of Economics in Katowice, reveal a decline in the tendency to base purchase decisions on ecological criteria. In 1999/2000, over 20% of respondents considered ecological factors in their purchases, but by 2012/14, this figure had dropped to just 12%. Price remains the dominant factor influencing purchasing decisions, cited by more than 80% of respondents in both studies. However, there is still a significant emphasis on savings related to energy-efficient appliances, with 91% of the 2012/14 respondents indicating that they equipped their homes with energy-efficient light bulbs, appliances, and electronics to reduce costs.

The research also tracked trends in packaging preferences among consumers. The number of people preferring products in plastic disposable packaging declined from approximately 19% in 1999/2000 to 11% in 2012/14. Similarly, the number of respondents opting for returnable packaging dropped from 20% to 16% over the same period. Preferences for glass and cardboard packaging also saw a decline, from 43% in 1999 to about 30% in 2012/14. Conversely, the number of consumers who did not pay attention to packaging increased significantly, rising from 33% in 1999 to more than 51% in 2012/14. A positive development can be observed in consumer attention to eco-labels. In the 1999/2000 survey, approximately 75% of

respondents did not consider ecological labels when purchasing goods. However, by the 2012/14 study, this figure had dropped to around 65%, while the percentage of those actively considering environmental labels for their purchases increased to 26%. The research also highlighted the growing presence of organic food production in the Silesian region. The number of certified organic farms rose from 23 in 2005 to 205 in 2013, with an additional 37 farms in the process of certification. The total area of organic cultivation expanded from 138 hectares to 5,661 hectares during this period (GUS 2014). Despite this increase, the percentage of consumers buying organic food remained at around 37%, indicating that more than half of respondents still did not purchase organic products. Financial reasons, particularly the higher cost of organic food, were the primary barriers to wider adoption, as these products typically carry a higher price tag. The studies also investigated consumers' willingness to pay a premium for organic food. The cost of producing organic food is higher due to stricter cultivation and breeding requirements, higher crop losses, and additional costs associated with certification and production controls. As a result, many consumers in the Silesian region expressed reluctance to pay extra for organic products. The number of households unwilling to buy organic food increased from 23-25% in 1999/2000 to 37.7% in 2012/14. Acceptance of a price increase of up to 10% for organic food dropped from over 50% in 1999/2000 to less than 35% in the 2012/14 study. Additionally, none of the respondents in any of the survey rounds expressed willingness to accept a price increase of more than 20% for organic products. These findings underscore the ongoing challenges in promoting eco-friendly consumption in the Silesian Voivodeship. While awareness of environmental issues has grown, the willingness to make purchasing decisions based on ecological factors remains limited, particularly when higher prices are involved. This highlights the need for more accessible and affordable eco-friendly products if broader changes in consumer behavior are to be realized.

4. CONCLUSION

Although consumption patterns remain far from uniform, the current level of ecological awareness and environmentally conscious behaviors among consumers have emerged as one of the key criteria for market segmentation in developed countries. Today, consumers in these markets are increasingly interested in "green" products, which has a direct impact on how companies operate and structure their product portfolios. This growing demand for eco-friendly goods is reshaping industries, prompting businesses to prioritize sustainability in their operations, marketing strategies, and product offerings. Companies that have successfully integrated ecological considerations into their marketing strategies have not only enhanced their brand reputation but have also achieved remarkable financial success, even during periods of economic downturn. By aligning their products with the values of eco-conscious consumers, these businesses have tapped into a lucrative and expanding market. Their focus on sustainability, whether through environmentally responsible production methods, energy-efficient solutions, or ethical supply chains, has allowed them to differentiate themselves and build customer loyalty in an increasingly competitive landscape. This shift toward sustainability is not merely a trend but a significant and lasting change in consumer behavior, pushing companies to continually innovate and adapt to meet the rising demand for green products. As a result, businesses that place ecology at the core of their marketing strategies are well-positioned to thrive, both by satisfying consumer preferences and by aligning with global movements toward sustainable development. On the other hand, while consumers may express heightened ecological awareness, this does not always translate directly into their purchasing behavior, especially when it comes to decisions about product choice. This discrepancy is evident in various economies, including Spain.

According to a study conducted in the Silesian province, price remains the dominant factor guiding consumer purchases, with ecological considerations taking a secondary role. Even though consumers might be aware of environmental issues and support sustainable practices in principle, their behavior often reflects a prioritization of affordability over eco-friendliness. This trend is largely influenced by economic factors, as the wealth of a society significantly impacts consumer choices. Many individuals, particularly in lower-income groups, may not be able to afford the higher prices associated with ecological products, even if they support environmental values. Additionally, a perception of a seemingly improving environmental situation may lead some consumers to believe that their individual actions are less urgent, resulting in a lower commitment to sustainable behaviors. This attitude reduces the perceived need to choose eco-friendly products, as respondents no longer feel a pressing responsibility to address ecological concerns or make changes in their purchasing habits. While ecological awareness is on the rise, its impact on market behavior remains limited in certain regions, underscoring the need for broader accessibility to affordable green products and increased public education to sustain momentum in pro-environmental purchasing habits. The primary factors motivating people to purchase pro-ecological products are health-related benefits and potential cost savings. For example, organic food is widely perceived as being healthier than conventionally produced food, making health one of the most significant drivers behind its consumption. Similarly, consumers are attracted to energy-saving products, which offer long-term financial benefits, as well as the advantages of engaging in post-consumer waste segregation, which can also result in cost savings. However, research consistently points to the high price of organic products as the main barrier to their widespread adoption. As the cost of organic food is typically higher than that of conventional alternatives, many consumers are unwilling to pay the premium, especially as acceptance of these higher prices continues to decline. A key issue is that consumers often do not understand why organic products are more expensive, and they are generally reluctant to spend time investigating the reasons behind the price difference. This lack of awareness, coupled with financial constraints, leads to a hesitancy to choose eco-friendly options despite their perceived health benefits or long-term savings potential. This highlights the need for greater consumer education on the production processes, certifications, and added costs associated

with organic and sustainable products. By increasing awareness and understanding, businesses can potentially reduce the price sensitivity barrier, making pro-ecological products more appealing and accessible to a broader audience.

REFERENCES

- Belz, F.M., & Peattie, K. (2012). *Sustainability Marketing. A Global Perspective*. West Sussex: Wiley.
- Dahlstrom, R. (2011). *Green Marketing Management. International Edition*. Stamford: South-Western Cengage Learning.
- European Commission (2013). Flash Eurobarometer 3. *Attitudes of Europeans Towards Building the Single Market for Green Products*.
- GUS (2014). *Rocznik statystyczny województwa śląskiego [Statistical Yearbook of Silesia province]*. Katowice: GUS.
- Manget, J., Roche, C., & Muennich, F. (2009). *Capturing the Green Advantage for Consumer Companies*. Boston: Boston Consulting Group, Inc.
- Ministerstwo Środowiska (2013). *Badanie świadomości i zachowań ekologicznych mieszkańców Polski [The study of environmental awareness and behaviour of Polish citizens]*.
- Natural Marketing Institute (2014). *Consumer Segmentation*. Available at: <http://www.nmisolutions.com/index.php/custom-research-tools/consumer-segmentation>.
- Strumińska-Kutra, M. (2011). *Świadomość ekologiczna Polaków. Analiza wyników badań ilościowych z lat 1992–2011 [Environmental awareness of Polish citizens. Analysis of the results of quantitative research from the years 1992–2011]*. Instytut na Rzecz Ekorozwoju.