

Exploring Perceptions of Social Responsibility and Characteristics of Responsible Consumers through Primary Research

Mónika Garai-Fodor¹, Anett Popovics²

¹Professor, Obuda University, Keleti Károly Faculty of Business and Management
Tavaszmező u. 15-17, 1084 Budapest, Hungary
fodor.monika@kgk.uni-obuda.hu; ORCID: 1 0000-0001-7993-2780

²Associate professor, Obuda University, Keleti Károly Faculty of Business and Management, Tavaszmező utca 17, 1084 Budapest, Hungary
popovics.anett@kgk.uni-obuda.hu; ORCID: 20000-0003-3050-6953

Abstract: This study explores the intersection of corporate social responsibility and the conscious consumer, examining the changing roles of businesses and consumers in promoting sustainable practices. The study presents qualitative research findings based on in-depth interviews with consumers to understand their perceptions of CSR initiatives and the impact of responsible consumer behaviour. The findings highlight that while CSR initiatives are becoming an integral part of business strategies, there is a growing demand from consumers for greater transparency, credibility and ethical practices in the marketplace. The study also identifies key drivers of responsible consumption, including environmental concerns, social justice and the desire to support businesses that are in line with personal values. This study contributes to understanding the impact of CSR on consumer behaviour and provides valuable insights for companies seeking to develop effective CSR strategies.

Keywords: social responsibility; responsible consumer; sustainability; ethical consumption; consumer behaviour

1 Introduction

Corporate social responsibility (CSR) refers to corporate practices and strategies that aim to improve society and the environment through the way companies do business. CSR encompasses a broad range of issues including sustainability, community responsibility and compliance with economic, ethical and environmental standards. CSR therefore means that companies not only focus on profit, but also on society and the environment, and through this positive influence stakeholders such as employees, consumers, communities and the environment.

According to Carroll [1], CSR can be conceptualised as a four-layered pyramid: economic, legal, ethical and philanthropic responsibility. At the bottom of the pyramid is economic responsibility, where businesses must generate profits and remain financially viable. The second layer represents legal responsibility, where companies must comply with laws and regulations. The third layer, ethical responsibilities, reflects the expectation that businesses act with fairness, transparency and integrity. At the top of the pyramid is philanthropic responsibility, where businesses voluntarily contribute to social causes and support community development [2], [3].

In the beginning, CSR was seen as a more philanthropic activity, focused on charity and giving. However, over the decades, CSR has evolved into a more complex concept that no longer refers only to donations and charity, but also to the day-to-day operations of companies, their ethical principles and how they integrate them into their business strategies [4]. CSR not only reduces the social and environmental impact of companies, but can also contribute directly to corporate competitiveness. Companies that engage in CSR can build a stronger reputation, which can improve consumer loyalty and brand image, and thus give them a competitive advantage. CSR by companies is often directly linked to financial performance, as consumers are more willing to buy products from companies that are socially responsible and have ethical business practices [5], [6], [7]. Corporate social responsibility also has a direct impact on consumer behaviour. Recent research has shown that conscious and responsible consumers increasingly favour companies that focus on corporate social responsibility, particularly with regard to environmental and ethical aspects. CSR activities not only influence consumers' direct choices, but can also increase their loyalty, as more and more consumers expect companies to generate not only profits but also community benefits [8], [6], [7].

2 Literature Review

Corporate social responsibility involves a range of practices by which companies recognise their responsibility towards society and the environment. Key features include ethical business practices, environmental responsibility and community engagement. CSR has evolved from a peripheral activity to a central element of corporate strategy. Porter and Kramer [9] introduced the concept of "shared value creation" and called for businesses to create economic value while creating value for society. Husted and Allen [10] identified the following key strategic dimensions of value creation through CSR: centrality (aligning CSR initiatives with the core mission and objectives of the company), proactivity (anticipating and initiating CSR activities in advance of regulatory requirements or societal expectations), visibility (raising the public profile of CSR activities to build reputation) and compliance (ensuring that the company retains the benefits of CSR activities).

Recent studies highlight the role of CSR in enhancing organisational resilience. Researchers have conducted a narrative literature review on the topic, which has shown that CSR practices contribute significantly to companies' resilience and performance in the face of crises. Responsible initiatives, such as robust risk management and enhanced reputation, enable organisations to navigate effectively through turbulence, positioning CSR as a strategic tool for resilience [11].

A comprehensive meta-analysis by Gallardo-Vázquez et al. [12] examined the relationship between CSR strategies and various performance indicators. The study found that proactive CSR strategies positively influence future CSR performance, although the relationship between CSR reporting and performance was not statistically significant. Moderating factors such as region, company size and type of disclosure were identified as influencing these relationships.

Áron Szennay's [13] study analyses the relationship of different CSR orientations to sustainable development, with a focus on shared value creation and triple optimisation. The results show that CSR often focuses on maintaining the current economic structure, prioritising business considerations and the mutually beneficial relationship between economic interests and sustainability goals. There are also articles that look at CSR from a historical and political perspective. They argue that CSR is more form than substance; that companies can create sustainability in the business sense less by advocating good causes than by promoting stakeholder democracy [14].

Domestic researchers discuss the concept of social entrepreneurship and its interpretation in the CSR framework. The authors have developed a questionnaire to measure social entrepreneurial attitudes, which includes three main blocks of questions: entrepreneurial attitudes, social sensitivity and CSR attitudes. Their results suggest that a new generation of entrepreneurs can save the concept of CSR and that the scale created can provide a basis for further research to gain a deeper understanding of social entrepreneurship [15]. Several studies support the research findings that companies that want to be successful in the future need to integrate CSR into their business strategy [16], [17].

Research shows that CSR initiatives are no longer seen as a cost, but as an investment in the future growth of the company, especially in a world where consumers and employees are increasingly making value-driven choices [18]. As a result, non-profit organisations have also started to adopt marketing methods or strategies to make themselves more interesting and attractive to stakeholders [19], [20], [21]. Recent studies have investigated the credibility of CSR activities, emphasizing that consumers are increasingly studying the credibility of corporate efforts. Wang et al. [22] investigated the antecedents and outcomes of consumers' perceived credibility of CSR activities on social media, highlighting that perceived credibility significantly influences consumer trust and engagement. [23], [24].

Socially responsible consumers are individuals who consider the social and environmental impacts of their purchasing decisions. Researchers conducted a

review using the theory of planned behaviour. They found that attitudes, subjective norms and perceived behavioural control significantly influence ethical purchase intentions. In addition, factors such as moral norms, self-identity and environmental awareness were identified as positive predictors of socially responsible consumer behaviour [25], [26].

Conscious consumers are characterised by a conscious consideration of the ethical, environmental and social aspect of their purchases. One research group has focused on identifying socially responsible consumers, noting that such individuals often exhibit high social and environmental awareness, which in turn determines their CSR expectations of companies [27]. A study by Dudás [28] analyses the different dimensions of conscious consumer behaviour, with a focus on responsible consumption focused on the interests of others. The author stresses that conscious consumption includes environmental awareness, social responsibility and ethical purchasing decisions. The research shows that consumers are increasingly taking into account the social and environmental impact of their purchases and are striving for a more sustainable lifestyle. Domestic researchers have mapped the socially responsible consumption habits of university students. Their results show a growing trend among young people towards responsible consumer behaviour, but that they face barriers to practical implementation, such as financial constraints or lack of information. The authors highlight the role of corporate social responsibility in shaping consumer behaviour [29], [22], [23].

As a result of globalisation, consumers are increasingly interested in the origin, production process and ingredients of products. The environmental and social impact of products, as well as ethical considerations, are important aspects for conscious consumers, and the role of product labels and trademarks in consumer decision making is emerging [30]. This is also the conclusion of other national researchers who argue that the basic concept of value-based consumer behaviour models also applies to young people [31]. Research shows that young people are less brand loyal and like novelty and special products. Their brand-critical attitude is emotional and they immediately turn away from a brand if they are disappointed [32], [33].

A group of researchers conducted a quantitative study on the motivation and the effects of psychographic factors on pro-environmental consumer behaviour in Hungary. The study emphasised the role of personal values, attitudes towards the environment and perceived environmental consequences in consumer behaviour. The results showed that environmental motives and psychographic factors have a significant impact on overall pro-environmental behaviour [34]. Researchers have examined consumers' responses to different CSR activities and found that consumers' perceptions of CSR significantly moderate their responses to different CSR activities, suggesting that tailored CSR strategies can be effective in meeting the expectations of conscious consumers [35].

Our previous research has shown that perceptions of CSR are related to the age of the individual, and this is also true for the level of activism on social issues. There is also a generational element of CSR in purchasing decisions and it has been confirmed that CSR is not perceived equally across age groups [36]. When consumers are involved in a company's sustainability initiatives, they develop a sense of psychological responsibility, which leads to an increase in sustainable consumer behaviour. This participation creates a personal connection to the company's sustainability efforts, which motivates responsible consumption [37].

Conscious consumers are aware of the environmental and ethical consequences of their consumption. They prefer reliable, high quality and environmentally friendly products, including those made from bio-based materials. This awareness reflects a commitment to reducing the negative impact of consumption [38]. Despite the positive trends, challenges remain. On the one hand, consumers are wary of "greenwashing" and demand a real commitment to CSR, and on the other hand, there is often a gap between consumers' perceived and actual knowledge of companies' CSR activities. Avis et al. [39] highlighted that consumers' objective knowledge of CSR is limited, which affects their evaluation of companies' CSR efforts. The relationship between CSR and consumer behaviour is one of the most important areas in CSR research. Recent studies show that consumers are increasingly taking CSR into account when making purchasing decisions. According to research by 2022, conscious consumers are more willing to pay a premium price for products that are backed by sustainable and ethical practices. CSR therefore directly affects the market position of companies, especially in industries such as food, clothing and energy [40], [41], [42].

2 Material and Method

The aim of the research was to find out how young people feel about responsible consumption. We looked at what corporate social responsibility means to them, in which areas they consider it important and whether they consider themselves to be responsible consumers. In the first phase of the research project, a qualitative approach was used to outline the hypotheses and objectives of the subsequent quantitative data collection and to finalise the research tool.

The specificity of qualitative procedures is that they are well suited for exploratory research, and we kept this in mind during the research procedure. To exclude group effects, we opted for individual interviews. We conducted the guided interviews using a semi-structured interview schedule. The homogeneous snowball sampling procedure was used to recruit interview subjects. The primary population for the snowball sampling – the seeds of the snowball sampling – were the students of generation Z of Obuda University according to age, and their inclusion was used to further expand the number of subjects in the sample. Within the snowball procedure,

we used homogeneous snowball sampling, which aimed at recruiting participants with similar characteristics and life experiences into the sample. Considering the characteristics of Generation Z, we decided to use this sampling technique to take into account generation-specific characteristics in the sampling process, including the seed-assisted procedure, in order to expand the sample by exploiting the own network of Generation Z subjects. This allowed us to conduct 256 individual interviews between September and November 2024. The present study did not aim to quantify the data, so the results are presented in summary form at this stage. We used traditional content analysis methods to present the results, i.e., we coded and summarized individual, repeatedly occurring responses, sentences, and texts. The database containing this summary formed the basis for the research analysis. Thematic qualitative individual interviews were conducted with 256 students of the Keleti Károly Faculty of Business and Management at Obuda University. The interview consisted of 8 thematic questions, including open questions, free word association and projective techniques. The results of the interviews were evaluated using a traditional content analysis method.

3 Results

3.1 Defining the Responsible Consumer

In the first question, we asked respondents to describe what they think of as being a responsible consumer. The responses indicated that the concept of "responsible consumer" is built around several key dimensions. Based on the feedback, the following main themes were identified (Figure 1).

Informed decision making: Consumers think about their purchasing habits and consider the social, economic and environmental impact of products. It is important for them to avoid unnecessary purchases, minimise waste and find out about the origin and production of products before buying. Another opinion was that informed consumers think about their choices, do not buy unnecessarily and pay attention to value for money.

Environmental awareness and sustainability: Respondents prefer energy-efficient, recycled or sustainably sourced products, want to reduce their ecological footprint (e.g. use less plastic, recycle, repair instead of throwing away) and say they avoid overconsumption and support environmentally friendly production processes. They say that using less plastic, choosing sustainable packaging and buying only seasonal fruit and vegetables, supporting local producers and reducing the environmental impact of transport are the most important aspects of environmentally conscious behaviour.

Ethical and socially responsible consumption: Respondents buy products that support fair working conditions (e.g. fair trade products), care about companies operating responsibly and transparently, and support the local economy and small businesses. Respondents said that responsible consumers prefer brands and companies that treat their workers fairly (e.g. do not use child labour).

Economic awareness: The feedback suggests that respondents' purchasing decisions are not only dominated by price, but also by value and long-term utility. Most recognise that conscious consumption can influence market supply and encourage companies to operate more sustainably. Financial awareness is also reflected in the responses, with respondents controlling their spending, not spending unnecessarily and favouring quality over quantity. Responsible consumers allocate their spending sensibly, avoid overspending and look for and take advantage of promotions, but only buy when they really need the product.

Health awareness: Health consciousness is also reflected in the responses to our questions, with responsible consumers choosing healthier foods, such as quality ingredients from controlled sources, avoiding processed foods and products that may be harmful to health.

Values and attitudes: Responses show that responsible consumers not only look at their own needs, but also consider society and the environment, and are community-minded: they favour local producers and businesses, thus helping communities. They buy only what they need, avoid unnecessary consumption and take environmental and ethical considerations into account not only when making larger purchases but also when making smaller decisions. Responsible consumers make decisions based on their own values and are not easily influenced by advertising.

Overall, respondents consider that a responsible consumer is a conscious, environmentally friendly and ethical person who contributes to a sustainable future through their purchasing decisions. In their purchases, they take into account environmental protection (less waste, local products, recycling), social responsibility (ethical companies, support for sustainable production) and individual and community well-being (health awareness, financial prudence). This consumer behaviour not only has a positive impact on the life of the individual, but also contributes to a more sustainable, just and liveable world.



Figure 1

Dimension of responsible consumption based on the opinion of sample

Source: generated by Napkin AI based on own research, 2024, N=256

Responsible consumption is not only based on individual choices, but is part of a wider social movement towards a sustainable future and economic justice. Such consumers influence the market by driving companies to produce ethically and sustainably.

3.2 Responsible Consumer Self-Image

The second question was about consumer self-image, asking how much respondents consider themselves to be responsible consumers. The responses received reflect varying degrees of awareness, commitment and habits in relation to purchasing behaviour. Based on the analysis, the responses fall into three main categories: consciously responsible, partially responsible and not responsible consumers (Figure 2).

Respondents who consider themselves to be consciously responsible consumers pay attention to environmental impact, minimise waste, prefer sustainably sourced, local products and try to buy packaging-free. By their own admission, they collect waste selectively, focus on quality and sustainability when shopping, and consciously avoid waste and impulse buying. They also tend to inform themselves about products before buying (e.g. origin, composition, manufacturing conditions) and some prefer ethical brands and take environmental considerations into account.

Partially aware respondents try to shop responsibly, but there are areas where they do not always adhere to responsible consumer behaviour. Their shopping habits are often different from what would ideally be expected of a responsible consumer, but they still try to be environmentally aware: they sometimes indulge in impulse

buying, sometimes do not choose the most sustainable or environmentally conscious products (e.g. cheaper or branded products) and value for money is important to them, but they look for alternatives where possible.

The last category is the irresponsible consumer: they do not consider themselves to be conscious consumers: they often make impulsive purchases without seriously considering the environmental or social impact of products. They say that they often buy unnecessarily, do not pay attention to the origin or composition of products, do not inform themselves before buying, do not think carefully about the necessity and tend to make impulse purchases, such as cheap products, without taking sustainability into account.

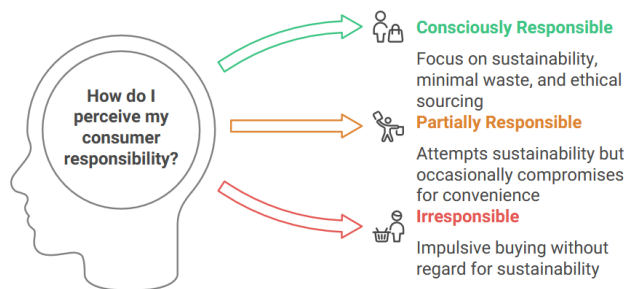


Figure 2

Responsible consumer self-image

Source: generated by Napkin AI based on own research, 2024, N=256

According to respondents, there are difficulties and barriers that hinder informed consumer behaviour. Some people acknowledge that they do not always manage to make responsible choices and that the fast pace of life or the financial environment may influence their purchasing decisions. Some respondents pointed out that it is not always easy to find environmentally friendly or sustainable products, or that they are not always able to choose them because of higher prices. Some respondents mention improvements in their own purchasing habits. Some admit that they were not as responsible in the past, but are now trying to be more careful with their purchases. Many believe that small steps count and are trying to set an example for others to follow in terms of responsible consumption. The responses show that opinions on responsible consumption differ and many people try to do their best, but some respondents admit that they do not always follow the ideal guidelines. Several respondents mention that their purchases also support the community and local economy, particularly by favouring local producers, sustainably sourced products and ethical businesses. In addition, the issues of waste reduction and recycling are also prominent. Financial considerations are mentioned by some respondents, who emphasise that their purchases are made on a budget. Buying economically and avoiding unnecessary expenditure is an important factor for some. Some respondents claim that they are not always able to maintain a conscious buying behaviour due to their hectic lifestyle, limited time and daily tasks. Due to

lack of time, many say they make quick decisions without thinking carefully about their purchases. Most respondents are positive about responsible consumption and are trying to improve in this area. Some respondents also admit that, although not always perfect, they are constantly trying to improve their shopping habits and pay attention to the environment.

Overall, the majority of respondents strive to be responsible consumers, especially in terms of environmental awareness, healthy lifestyles, sustainability and ethical shopping. However, shopping habits often influence their decisions and for many respondents price and availability are important factors. Commitment to conscious shopping and sustainable choices is mixed in the responses, with some still struggling with impulse buying and others making steady progress in this area.

3.3 Corporate Social Responsibility from a Consumer Perspective

In the next section, we looked at what corporate social responsibility (CSR) means to consumers. The responses reflect that CSR is not just about maximising profits, but also about being responsible for society and the environment (Figure 3). Companies are asked to consider their environmental impact, ethical business practices, workers' rights and support for local communities.

One of the key elements highlighted by respondents was the environmental awareness and sustainability. Companies should pay attention to reducing their environmental impact, for example by using environmentally friendly technologies and minimising emissions of harmful substances. It is important to use environmentally friendly solutions in production processes and to use energy efficient technologies. Reducing energy use, using renewable energy sources and waste management are also key.

Social responsibility and community support was the third key element. Companies should help local communities, for example through charitable projects, educational programmes, health initiatives or cultural events. Social responsibility can also be expressed through companies' attention to the well-being of their employees, ensuring decent working conditions and fair wages. They support initiatives for the common good and champion issues that are important to the community, such as the environment or social equality. According to respondents, responsible companies should operate in an ethical manner and avoid unfair or illegal business practices. Transparency and business ethics are key as they can help build trust and improve the image of companies.

Taking responsibility for products was mentioned as another key part. Companies must take responsibility for the products they sell. If a product does not meet company standards, they should guarantee its quality and not use false advertising. Companies must ensure that their products meet high standards of quality and safety. CSR requires long-term thinking that takes into account the

balance between society, the environment and the economy. The aim of this type of company is not just to generate short-term profits, but to contribute to a sustainable future, both for local communities and the global environment.

Companies must play a role in solving society's problems. Examples include community development, such as improving local transport infrastructure (e.g. building cycle paths) or supporting education and health. The opinions received show that people are increasingly more aware of their choice of products and services and are more willing to support companies that behave responsibly. CSR is, therefore, not only about corporate social responsibility, but also about creating a win-win situation: companies gain a good reputation while contributing to a better world. For companies, CSR not only generates immediate profits, but can also create long-term value, whether through brand reputation or sustainability for future generations. CSR is, therefore, an investment that pays off in the long-term.

Corporate social responsibility is not only an ethical or legal issue, but can also be beneficial for companies from a business perspective. Responsible companies build trust with their customers and partners, which can lead to positive long-term brand equity and lasting customer relationships. In this way, CSR (Corporate Social Responsibility) can bring not only social but also economic benefits. Some argue that CSR is often just a PR tool to improve the image of companies. CSR is often used by companies to try to improve their public image, while its real impact may be questionable.

Extracts from the interviews: *what do you think corporate social responsibility means?*

"They act for the sustainability of their products, for the education of society. They act for the well-being of their employees, for the education of their employees."

"Producing/providing a stable product/service"



Figure 3
Elements of CSR based on the respondents

Source: generated by Napkin AI based on own research, 2024, N=256

In conclusion, respondents consider CSR to be a comprehensive commitment in which companies not only seek profit but also actively contribute to the well-being of society and the environment. Sustainability, ethical business practices, respect for workers' rights, and support for communities and local initiatives are all essential elements of CSR. Such companies aim to create long-term value, not only economically but also socially and environmentally.

3.4 Areas of CSR according to Consumers

Based on the opinions, the most frequently mentioned area for consumers is the environment. Companies have an important role to play in implementing sustainable practices such as improving energy efficiency, minimising waste and recycling. According to the responses, companies have a responsibility to reduce emissions of pollutants and carbon dioxide and to use renewable energy sources. Protecting the environment is a priority to safeguard future generations, especially in reducing environmental damage. Ensuring workers' rights and welfare is also a major focus. Feedback suggests the need to ensure a decent working environment, fair pay and job security, as well as opportunities for development and training, including free training and apprenticeships for new entrants.

Companies play an important role in the development of local communities, for example through charitable programmes, education and health initiatives, or cultural support. Companies can also support voluntary work and donations, helping those in need and contributing to social well-being. Support for education has been given a high priority, in particular through free training for students and traineeships that can help those starting out in their careers. The application of ethical principles and transparency in the way companies operate are essential. Companies must ensure that their operations comply with ethically accepted standards and that all stakeholders, whether employees, consumers or partners, are treated fairly.

Economic responsibility, in particular with regard to workers' rights and the environment, has also been brought to the fore. Economic development is based not only on corporate profits but also on ethical and responsible behaviour. Charity, promoting social equality and helping disadvantaged groups are also important areas. Companies can contribute to child protection, promoting healthy lifestyles, education and social equality.

Our research shows that corporate social responsibility covers a number of areas, but the most important are environmental protection, employee rights and welfare, community support, education and ethical responsibility. Stakeholders include local communities, workers and the environment, while the role of companies is to promote sustainability, social well-being and economic development (Figure 4).



Figure 4

Key elements to empower communities through sustainable and ethical business practices

Source: generated by Napkin AI based on own research, 2024, N=256

3.5 The Impact of Responsible Companies on the Consumer

An analysis of the responses to this question shows that the different impact of corporate social responsibility are perceived differently by different customers. The answers can be grouped in two main ways: positive impact, neutral or negative impact.

Positive impact: For several respondents, CSR has a positive impact and a significant influence on their purchasing decisions. The main themes that stand out are: trust and loyalty: for several respondents, CSR increases trust in companies. Purchasing from these companies means not only acquiring a product, but also contributing to a community.

"The socially responsible behaviour of companies increases my trust in them."

"I prefer companies that pay attention to sustainability and social values."

Community and environmental contribution: for many respondents, it is important that their purchases contribute to protecting society and the environment. Buying from such companies is not just about buying a product, but also about supporting something good.

"It feels good to know that my purchase supports sustainable and ethical practices."

"I feel like I can contribute to society and the environment through my purchases."

Healthier quality of life and environment: some respondents believe that products from sustainable and responsible companies contribute directly to a healthier environment, which improves quality of life.

Neutral and negative impact: For another group of respondents, corporate social responsibility practices have little or no impact on their purchasing decisions.

The most common reasons are: Importance of quality and price: for some respondents, corporate social responsibility is a secondary consideration to product quality and price.

"For me, the quality and affordability of the product is more important."

"If a company cares about the environment or the community, but it doesn't influence my purchasing decisions."

No direct impact felt: some respondents believe that responsible behaviour by companies does not directly affect their lives or their purchases. This may be the result of CSR not being a feature or not visible enough to them.

"It has no effect on me."

"I don't feel the effect/not aware of it."

Lack of corporate social responsibility by some companies: several respondents also expressed that they could not find companies that practiced corporate social responsibility properly and, therefore, did not perceive a significant impact.

"I don't know of any company that is adequately addressing this."

"It is disappointing because I rarely encounter companies playing a real role in CSR."

Neutral feelings about CSR: For some respondents, CSR has a rather neutral impact, as they feel it does not affect their lives or their purchasing decisions.

"No negative impact has affected me so far."

"I don't feel any impact at all."

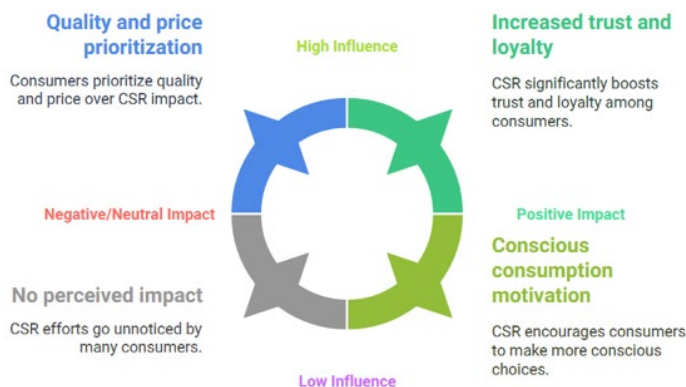


Figure 4
Impact of CSR in case of consumer behaviour based on respondents

Source: generated by Napkin AI based on own research, 2024, N=256

It is clear from the responses that corporate social responsibility has a generally positive impact on the trust, loyalty and choices of customers, especially for those who value sustainability, community responsibility and ethical operations. Conscious consumer behaviour and protection of the environment can be inspirational and motivate customers to make responsible choices. However, for many respondents, socially responsible behaviour is not emphasised enough to have a direct impact on purchasing. Quality, price and practical factors remain paramount and many do not perceive or experience a direct impact from responsible corporate behaviour.

Summary

This article explores the perception of corporate social responsibility (CSR) and the characteristics of responsible consumers through primary research. The research aims to explore the impact of CSR on consumers' decisions and attitudes. Qualitative research was conducted through interviews with consumers to understand how companies' CSR activities are perceived and how they influence consumer choices. The results of the research show that responsible consumers are people who make informed choices, take into account the economic, environmental and social impact of their purchases and minimise waste. They give preference to local, sustainable and ethical products and seek to have as little negative impact on the world as possible. The majority of respondents strive to be responsible consumers, especially in terms of environmental awareness, healthy lifestyles, sustainability and ethical shopping. However, shopping habits often influence their decisions and for many respondents price and availability are important factors. Commitment to conscious shopping and sustainable choices is mixed in the responses, with some still struggling with impulse buying and others making steady progress in this area.

The research also revealed that, alongside environmental protection and employee well-being, community support is cited as the most important area of corporate social responsibility. Ethical business practices, consumer protection and philanthropic activities are also central. A broad spectrum of industries and social issues is represented, reflecting respondents' different priorities and commitment to global responsibility. It is clear from the responses that corporate social responsibility generally has a positive impact on customer trust, loyalty and choice, especially for those who value sustainability, community responsibility and ethical behaviour. Conscious consumer behaviour and environmental protection can be inspirational and motivate customers to make responsible choices. However, for many respondents, socially responsible behaviour is not emphasised enough to have a direct impact on purchasing. Quality, price and practical factors remain paramount and many do not perceive or experience a direct impact from responsible corporate behaviour. In this study, the results are presented in summary form for the entire sample, but in further research, we plan to differentiate the opinions of students studying in different fields of science and from different socioeconomic

backgrounds, as well as to break down the results according to demographic data in order to obtain a more accurate picture of the target group's specific perceptions.

References

- [1] Carroll, A. B. (1999) Corporate social responsibility: Evolution of a definitional construct. *Business & Society*, 38(3), 268-295 <https://doi.org/10.1177/000765039903800303>
- [2] Ruso Armada, F; Armada Trabas, E; Verez García, M. A., Santos Cid, C. M. (2024) Corporate Social Responsibility, a Development Alternative for Small Businesses. June 2024
- [3] Modreanu, A.; Andrisan, G. N., Sarbu, M. A. (2021) Corporate Social Responsibility: An Overview. August 2021 Ovidius University Annals Economic Sciences Series 21(1) 359-368 <https://doi.org/10.61801/OUAESS.2021.1.50>
- [4] Maignan, I., & Ferrell, O. C. (2004) Corporate social responsibility and marketing: An integrative framework. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 32(1), 3-19, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0092070303258971>
- [5] Godfrey, P. C. (2005) The relationship between corporate social responsibility and firm performance: The role of stakeholder perception. *Academy of Management Review*, 30(1), 131-146
- [6] Claessens, S. Fan, P. H. Joseph (2022) Corporate Governance in Asia. *International Review of Finance*, 2022, 23(2), 71-103 <https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-2443.00034>
- [7] Chen T, Dong H., Lin C. (2020) Institutional Shareholders and Corporate Social Responsibility. *Journal of Financial Economics*, 2020, 135(2), 483-504, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jfineco.2019.06.007>
- [8] Branco, M. C., & Rodrigues, L. L. (2022) Corporate social responsibility and consumer behavior: Evidence from Portuguese consumers. *Sustainability*, 14(11), 6933-6947
- [9] Porter, M. E. & Kramer M. R. (2011) Creating Shared Value. *Harvard Business Review*, 89(1)2011, pp. 2-17
- [10] Husted, B. W., & Allen, D. B. (2007) Strategic Corporate Social Responsibility and Value Creation among Large Firms: Lessons from the Spanish Experience. *Long Range Planning*, 40(6), 594-610 <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.lrp.2007.07.001>
- [11] Chaou, S., & Oubrahimi, M. (2024) Corporate social responsibility and building organizational resilience: Literature review. *International Journal of Accounting, Finance, Auditing, Management and Economics*, 5(10), 227-243

- [12] Gallardo-Vázquez, D., Valdez-Juárez, L. E., & Lizcano-Álvarez, J. L. (2019) Meta-analyses on corporate social responsibility (CSR): A literature review. *Management Review Quarterly*
- [13] Szennay, Á. (2020) Approaches to corporate social responsibility and sustainable development. *Közgazdasági Szemle*, 67(10), 1057-1074 <https://doi.org/10.18414/KSZ.2020.10.1057>
- [14] Braun, R. (2013) Corporate policy – corporate social responsibility, corporate communities, and the future of corporate strategy. *Vezetéstudomány - Budapest Management Review*, 44(1), 18-28 <https://doi.org/10.14267/VEZTUD.2013.01.02>
- [15] Putzer, P., & Bányai, E. (2019) One possible future for CSR is the measurement of social entrepreneurship and social entrepreneurial attitudes. *Marketing & Menedzsment*, 53, 15-25 <https://doi.org/10.15170/MM.2019.53.EMOK.02>
- [16] Karácsony, P. (2020) Analysing the relationship between leadership style and corporate social responsibility in Hungarian small and medium-sized enterprises. *Acta Polytechnica Hungarica*, 17(7), 183-198 <https://doi.org/10.12700/APH.17.7.2020.7.10>
- [17] Martínez, F., Sánchez, M., & Pérez, A. (2021) Corporate social responsibility and financial performance: A strategic perspective. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 173(1), 89-104
- [18] Aguinis, H., & Glavas, A. (2019) Corporate social responsibility and firm performance: A meta-analysis. *Journal of Management*, 45(7), 2301-2335
- [19] Hasaj, A., & Kruja, D. (2023) The Influence of Brand Orientation Dimensions on Organizational Performance of Non-Profit Organizations in Albania. *Acta Polytechnica Hungarica*, 20(3) <https://doi.org/10.12700/APH.20.3.2023.3.11>
- [20] Xinning Dong (2025) Institutional Investor Shareholding and Corporate Social Responsibility. February 2025, *Advances in Economics Management and Political Sciences* 167(1), 73-78, <https://doi.org/10.54254/2754-1169/2025.21152>
- [21] Cheng X, Wang H., Wang X (2022) Common institutional ownership and corporate social responsibility. *Journal of Banking and Finance*, 2022, 136, 106218, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbankfin.2021.106218>
- [22] Wang, C., Kim, Y., & Kim, C. (2022) Are all CSR Activities in Your SNS Authentic? The Antecedents and Outcomes of Consumer Perceived Authenticity of CSR. *SAGE Open*, 12(4) <https://doi.org/10.1177/21582440221139453>

-
- [23] Pei, W. (2023) Public Intervention on Rural Poverty Alleviation: A Case Study Between China and India. *Journal of Soft Computing and Decision Analytics*, 1(1), 238-246, <https://doi.org/10.31181/jscda11202318>
 - [24] Kara, K., Özyürek, H., Yalçın, G. C., & Burgaz, N. (2024) Enhancing Financial Performance Evaluation: The MEREC-RBNAR Hybrid Method for Sustainability-Indexed Companies. *Journal of Soft Computing and Decision Analytics*, 2(1), 236-257, <https://doi.org/10.31181/jscda21202444>
 - [25] Han, T.-I., & Stoel, L. (2017) Explaining socially responsible consumer behavior: A meta-analytic review of theory of planned behavior. *Journal of International Consumer Marketing*, 29(2), 91-103, <https://doi.org/10.1080/08961530.2016.1251870>
 - [26] Popa, A., Blidisel, R., Farcane, N. (2009) Corporate social responsibility in Romania. *Accounting and Management Information Systems* 8(3) pp. 372-387
 - [27] Marschlich, S., & Dhanesh, G. (2024) Corporate Social Responsibility in Hypermodern Times: How to Identify Socially Responsible Consumers. *American Behavioral Scientist*, <https://doi.org/10.1177/00027642241246682>
 - [28] Dudás, K. (2019): Dimensions of conscious consumer behavior, with a particular focus on responsible consumption that takes into account the interests of others. *Marketing & Menedzsment*, 46(1-2), 52-63
 - [29] Csigéné Nagypál, N., & Görög, G. (2019) A társadalmilag felelős fogyasztás egyes jellemzőinek vizsgálata egyetemi hallgatók körében. Examining certain characteristics of socially responsible consumption among university students. *Marketing & Menedzsment*, 49(2), 3-18
 - [30] Csapóné Riskó, T., & Péntek, Á. (2014) A tudatos fogyasztás megjelenési formái. Forms of conscious consumption. *Táplálkozásmarketing*, 1(1-2), 73-80, <https://doi.org/10.20494/TM/1/1-2/10>
 - [31] Garai-Fodor, M. (2021) Food Consumption Patterns, in a Values-based Approach, for Generation Z. *Acta Polytechnica Hungarica*, 18(11) <https://doi.org/10.12700/APH.18.11.2021.11.7>
 - [32] Dajnoki, K., Kun, A. I., Poór, J., Jarjabka, Á., Kálmán, G. B., Kőműves, S. Z., Szűcs, P. B., Szabó, K., S Szabó, S., Szeiner, Z., Tóth, A., & Csehné Papp, I. (2023) Characteristics of Crisis Management Measures in the HR Area during the Pandemic in Hungary – Literature Review and Methodology. *Acta Polytechnica Hungarica*, 20(7), 173-192, <https://doi.org/10.12700/APH.20.7.2023.7.10>
 - [33] Dajnoki, K., Poór, J., Jarjabka, Á., Kálmán, B., Kőműves, S. Z., Szűcs, P. B., Szabó, K., Szabó, S., Szeiner, Z., Tóth, A., Csehné Papp, I., & Kun, A. I. (2023) Characteristics of Crisis Management Measures in the HR Area During the Pandemic in Hungary – Results of a Countrywide Survey of
-

- Organizations. *Acta Polytechnica Hungarica*, 20(7), 193-210, <https://doi.org/10.12700/APH.20.7.2023.7.11>
- [34] Hofmeister-Tóth, Á., Kasza-Kelemen, K., & Piskóti, M. (2019) Examining the motivations behind environmentally friendly consumer behavior and the effects of psychographic factors in Hungary. *Marketing & Menedzsment*, 47(3), 34-42
- [35] Li, J., Chen, Y., & Qing, Q. (2021) Differentiated consumer responses to corporate social responsibility domains moderated by corporate social responsibility perceptions: A Kano model-based perspective. *Corporate Social Responsibility and Environmental Management*, 28(6), 1606-1619, <https://doi.org/10.1002/csr.2126>
- [36] Garai-Fodor, M., & Popovics, A. (2023) Analysing the Role of Responsible Consumer Behaviour and Social Responsibility from a Generation Specific Perspective in the Light of Primary Findings. *Acta Polytechnica Hungarica*, 20(3), 121-134, <https://doi.org/10.12700/APH.20.3.2023.3.8>
- [37] Reppmann, M., Harms, S., Edinger-Schons, L. M., & Foege, J. N. (2024) Activating the sustainable consumer: The role of customer involvement in corporate sustainability. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 1-31, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11747-024-01036-7>
- [38] Klimczuk-Kochańska, M., & Marczevska, M. (2024) Navigating Responsible Consumption: Unveiling Consumer Perceptions and the Role of Bio-Based Products in Sustainable Decision-Making. *Journal of Marketing and Consumer Behaviour in Emerging Markets*, 2024(2), 37-52, <https://doi.org/10.7172/2449-6634.jmcbem.2024.2.4>
- [39] Avis, M., Konopka, R., Gregory-Smith, D., & Palakshappa, N. (2022) Disentangling Consumers' CSR Knowledge Types and Effects. *Sustainability*, 14(19), 11946, <https://doi.org/10.3390/su141911946>
- [40] Zhang, Z., & Lee, J. (2022) Consumer behavior and corporate social responsibility: The effect of sustainable and ethical business practices on consumer choice. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 48(2), 236-251
- [41] Correia dos Santos, A; Mickosz Ravedutti, M; Maia Marinello, R; Fracasso Moraes, G; Nakoneczny Moraes, R; Denes-Santos, D. (2025) Is ESG the New Corporate Social Responsibility? A Comprehensive Literature Review. *Revista De Gestão Social E Ambiental*, 19(3) <https://doi.org/10.24857/rgsa.v19n3-078>
- [42] Shavina S. N., Andryani, K., Febrianty, Y. (2025) Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) Communication Strategy in an Effort to Form Corporate Image at PT. Resilient Superpower. January 2025, *Asian Journal of Management*, <https://doi.org/10.55927/ajma.v4i1.13563>