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Social responsibility, consumption and production patterns in textile and cloth industry in Poland

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Abstract: The beginning of the systemic transformation was a period of structural challenge for Polish industry. In case of the textile industry it meant almost total collapse. Polish textile and clothing enterprises were supplanted by producers offering products of often poor quality, mainly from Asia. This paper presents results of research carried out in years 2014-2015 among young customers (up to 32 years of age), and entrepreneurs from textile and clothing industry in the Lodz voivodeship concerning the concept of social responsibility. The results of survey enable to formulate the conclusion, that the textile industry in Poland is able to meet the high standards of corporate social responsibility. Although it is still common practice in clothing industry to offer very low wages, labour in the informal economy and the lack of stable employment guarantees, it is possible to find factories operating in accordance with the CSR standards. However, young generation of customers shows little interest in socially responsible purchase of clothes, due to of lack of knowledge about social responsibility of producers and consumers. This attitude changes, if only customers become aware of the consequences of socially irresponsible behaviour of producers.

Keywords: textile and clothing industry, social responsibility of production and consumption, Poland

JEL codes: D12, J71, L67

1. Introduction

Inspiration for research on textile and clothing sector in Poland was a book written by Pietra Rivoli (2005): *The Travels of a T-Shirt in the Global Economy: An Economist Examines the Markets, Power, and Politics of World Trade*. The author, provoked by students of American universities demanding a check under what conditions shirts and caps with the logo of the universities are sewn, decided to check for herself the functioning of the global market for cotton

shirts. The students were protesting against low wages and poor working conditions of workers employed in factories in less developed countries (LDC). The book of Pietra Rivoli and further own research have brought to light the painful truth. It's hard to believe, but for thousands of girls and young women moving from the countryside to the city and work under terrible conditions for poverty wages is the social advancement and even allows them to do some savings and send money to parents and siblings. This raises questions: Whether it is possible to change these conditions?; What to do in high developed countries with production and consumption of cheap clothing, when in LDC every day thousands of new workers are willing to work for tens of cents per hour?

Let's look at movement for socially responsible production and consumption. In the 1990s it developed parallel to the idea of sustainable development. Sustainable production and consumption (SPC) has been on the international agenda since Agenda 21 (1992). The 2002 Johannesburg Summit called for a ten-year framework of programs with support of national and regional initiatives to accelerate the shift towards sustainable production and consumption.

Sustainable production and consumption (SPC) is not just about environmental concerns - sustainability should be perceived holistically. In this view, the social and economic aspects of SPC were also raised. In the article we are going to focus on the aspects of social responsibility of producers and consumers of textiles and clothing. The global market for textiles and garments for many years is of interest of specialists in the field of social responsibility (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs Division for Sustainable Development Policy Integration and Analysis Branch, 2007: 3.). There are examined both sides of the market - supply and demand sides.

On the supply side of the global market of textiles and clothing characteristic is the presence of producers from most countries in the world, both those whose primary advantage is cheap labor (e.g. India, Pakistan, Philippine and Bangladesh), as well as those who achieved success in international competition due to the superior technology, design, or specialization in niche products (e.g. the majority of European Union countries).

On the demand side it is the biggest market in terms of the number of buyers. Due to the fact, that the consumer of textiles and clothing is actually everyone, the impact of human population as purchasers can determine the success or failure of the implementation of this concept of development.

The value of the global market for textiles and clothing in 2014 was estimated at 2560 billion USD, including children's clothing 186 billion, men's clothing 402 billion USD, women's clothing 621 billion and wedding clothing \$ 57 billion. Textiles and clothing are also an important part of world trade, what is demonstrated in Table 1. It is worth noting that the EU as a whole is also an important player in this market.

Table 1. World trade of textiles and closing in years 2012-2013

Exporter	2012 r.			2013 r.		
	textiles	clothing	change compared to 2011 [%]	textiles	clothing	change compared to 2012 [%]
China	159,6	95,5	+18	106,6	177,4	11,3
EU 27	108,9	69,4	-7	72,2 ^a	118,0	6,6
India	15,3	13,8	-3	18,9	16,8	22,6
Turkey	11,1	14,3	2,3	12,2	15,4	8,6
Bangladesh	1,6	19,9	3,8	1,9	23,5	18,1
USA	13,5	5,6	0,2	13,9	5,9	3,6
Vietnam	4,1	14,1	7,5	4,8	17,2	20,8
South Korea	12,0	1,9	-2,3	12,0	2,1	1,4
Pakistan	8,7	4,2	-5	9,3	4,5	6,9
Indonesia	4,5	7,5	-6,1	4,6	7,7	2,5

Source: Authors' own elaboration based on WTO 2012, 2013.

Social responsible production requires taking into account not only benefits of shareholders (owners), but also satisfying expectations of employees, customers, suppliers, investors, competitors, society, government and protection of natural environment. These issues have already been widely described in the literature (Carroll, 1996; Rok, 2004; Kotler and Lee, 2005; Bernatt, 2009; Roszkowska, 2011; European Commission, 2001; BIO Intelligence Service, 2012), and different guides published by international organizations (Global Reporting Initiative, 2013a, 2013b; United Nations, 2011; European Commission, 2015).

In the text the thesis was formulated, that socially responsible production in clothing industry has no *raison d'être* without socially responsible consumption. The research question was formulated as follows: Is the demand for clothing "pushed" by the supply, or the supply is "pulled" by the demand? In other words, if customers buy what they find in the shops without thinking about how, in terms of social responsibility product was made, or manufacturers must reckon with the fact that the non-compliance of CSR will result in rejection of the product.

This article is based on the following analyses:

1) a literature review of social responsibility of production and consumption; 2) an analysis of research conducted among producers of textiles and clothing; 3) an analysis of questionnaire–study conducted among the young generation of clothing buyers (up to 32 years of age).

The main aim of research is to verify the existence of different profiles of socially conscious producers and consumers. In order to meet these objectives, a study was conducted in Poland in Lodz voivodeship in years 2014-2015 with 10 respondents on the supply-side and 100 respondents on the demand-side of textiles and clothing. There were also used long-term observations of the textile and clothing industry conducted by the author.

2. Social responsibility of production and consumption - theoretical approach

The idea of socially responsible production and consumption (SRPC), understood as the wish to express social and/or environmental concerns through management practices and consumption choices is spreading around the world. Nowadays it is the subject of interest of theorists and business practitioners, policy makers, NGOs and ordinary citizens. In the article following definitions were adopted.

Corporate social responsibility (CSR) is defined by the European Commission (2011) as "the responsibility of enterprises for their impacts on society. Respect for applicable legislation, and for collective agreements between social partners, is a prerequisite for meeting that responsibility. To fully meet their corporate social responsibility, enterprises should have in place a process to integrate social, environmental, ethical, human rights and consumer concerns in to their business operations and core strategy in close collaboration with their stakeholders, with the aim of:

- maximizing the creation of shared value for their owners/shareholders and for their other stakeholders and society at large;
- identifying, preventing and mitigating their possible adverse impacts”.

In other words, CSR is an initiative to assess and take responsibility for the company's effects on the environment and impact on social welfare. The term generally applies to company's efforts that go beyond what may be required by regulators.

CSR is also interpreted in terms of "corporate citizenship". This idea is not new and has been already discussed after the great crisis of the late 1920s and early 1930s years (Kieżun,

1997). Corporate citizenship is usually seen in four perspectives of responsibility: economical, legal, ethical and discretionary. Economic responsibility relates to business partners and customers and is concentrated on maintaining economic goals and meeting consumption needs. Legal responsibility refers to maintaining within the frame of legal requirements. Ethical responsibility requires compliance with business moral rules defining appropriate behaviors in society. Discretionary responsibility includes these business activities that are not mandated and not required by law and not expected from business in an ethical sense.

In the 1990s business and customers have been pushed to promote positive social and environmental change in accordance with the concept of sustainable development. Sustainable production is production of goods and services through use of processes and systems that are:

- oriented on a money-saving use of energy and natural resources,
- characterized by low emissions,
- realistic from an economic point of view,
- safe in terms of health for workers, consumers and society,
- rewarding for people working with because of its pro-social and creative orientation (Veleva and Ellenbecker, 2001: 519-549).

Defining sustainable consumption poses more difficulties. There are two different approaches to this issue. According to the first, development of sustainable consumption is associated with the behavior of buyers and preferred by their lifestyle. In this approach, consumerism, overconsumption and penchant for collecting material goods in order to demonstrate social status are seen rather as a threat to sustainable and socially responsible consumption. Supporters of the second option, turning to the production processes of consumer goods, seeing opportunities for the development of sustainable consumption by providing access to goods produced in a sustainable way. There are also advocates of a combination of both positions. There is the agreement that sustainable consumption requires a combination of social, economic and political actions implemented at the level of individuals, households, communities, and also in business and political circles in order to: reduce the intensity of use of the natural environment and its resources in production processes and consumption and in post-production and post-consumption phases, providing all the basic necessities of consumer related to access to water, food, clothing, shelter, education and health, promote lifestyle more oriented rather on "to be" than "to have". It is connected with laying the emphasis on building social cohesion and responsibility for the

far-reaching consequences of their own behavior and development of practices aimed at taking into account the life cycle of products when making consumer decisions. To become a socially responsible consumer, shoppers require knowledge about the impacts of a variety of goods and services available in the market, on the environment and health during production, transportation, consumption and product-life after use, impossible to achieve without the commitment of producers, importers, retailers and state authorities.

3. Social responsibility among Polish companies in textile and clothing industry – practical approach

The research was inspired by Global Reporting Initiative (GRI G4 Sustainability Reporting Guidelines) and ISO 26000 standard. However, the scope of the research was narrowed down to three categories: *Environment*, *Employees* and *Society*. In the study the results of questionnaire survey and also information available on the websites about enterprises as employers were used.

The category *Environment* covers impacts related to inputs (such as energy and water) and outputs (such as emissions, effluents and waste). In addition, it covers product and service-related impacts, as well as environmental compliance (GRI G4 Part 2: 84).

The aspects in the category *Employees* are based on internationally recognized universal standards, including conventions and declarations of United Nations and International Labour Organization in general concerning issues of human rights and problem of forced labor and child labor (UN Declaration 1948, UN Convention 1966, UN Convention 1979, ILO Convention 29, 1930, ILO convention 87, 1948, ILO Convention 98 , 1949, ILO Convention 100, 1951, ILO Convention 105, 1957, ILO Convention 111, 1958, ILO Convention 138, 1973, ILO Convention 182, 1999, ILO Declaration 1998).

The category *Society* concerns impacts that an organization has on society and local communities.

The results of research are summarized in the Table 2. The research was conducted in Lodz voivodeship from December 2014 till March 2015. All participant companies were medium sized enterprises with employment between 50 - 250 employees. Four of them belong to textile industry, six remaining to clothing industry. All companies were involved in international cooperation on different stages of supply chain. Two of them were owned by foreign capital and

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were operating in Poland in the textile industry, others had Polish owners. Three companies subcontracted sewing clothes in Asian countries. Questions concerned the last five years.

Table 2. Social responsibility in surveyed enterprises

Category	Enterprises										Total
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
Environment:											
acting in accordance with law	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	10
taking actions beyond the law	-	-	-	x	x	-	-	x	-	-	3
taking water saving initiatives	-	-	-	-	x	-	x	-	x	x	4
taking an energy saving initiatives	x	x	x	-	x	-	-	x	-	-	5
having an efficient system for the disposal of waste	*	*	x	x	x	x	*	x	x	x	7
making the product and the process of production as environment-friendly as possible	-	-	-	-	x	-	-	x	-	-	2
adopting eco-friendly packaging	-	-	x	-	x	-	-	x	x	-	4
Employees:											
using the “junk” labour contracts	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	10
guarantying freedom of association	*	*	x	*	*	x	*	*	*	*	2
employing without a contract	x	x	-	-	-	-	x	-	-	-	3
regular payment of insurance fees	*	*	x	x	x	-	*	x	-	x	5
using forced labor and child labor	*	*	-	-	-	-	*	-	-	-	0
Society:											
using the hazardous substances that impact on the environment and human health	x	x	-	-	-	x	-	-	x	-	4
creating new job opportunities	x	x	-	-	x	x	x	x	x	-	7
ensuring a safe working environment for the employees	*	*	x	x	x	x	*	x	x	x	7
supporting employee volunteering	-	-	-	-	x	-	-	-	-	-	1

Source: Authors' own elaboration

(x) – category confirmed by owners, (-) – category not confirmed by owners, (*) - the lack of compliance with the declarations of the owners and information from other sources.

In the category *Environment* all companies declared operating in accordance with law and in three cases they were taking action beyond the law: implementation the ISO 14001 standard (two

companies) and investing in own waste water treatment system and heat recovery system (one company). These investments were made because of a higher profitability compared to paying the mandatory environmental charges. In three cases there was no knowledge about efficiency of waste disposal system in sewing companies abroad. In other companies there were rather symbolic investments in environmental protection: replacement of lighting on energy-efficient, modernization of taps and flushing toilets.

In the category *Employees* all companies admitted to the use of “junk” labor contracts. The scale of these practices was different – from “very little” in three companies, to “rather broad” in others. Labor without contracts as a quite common practice has been found in three cases in Asian countries. Only a half of enterprises have declared regular and on time payment of insurance fees. Sometimes it was a problem, because of temporary financial difficulties. In case of three companies there is a suspicion of forced labor. During the realization of large orders/contracts for sewing clothes extensions of working day without proper payment, even against the will of workers, threatening immediate dismissal were taking place. In this study group of companies claimed not to exploit child labor. Trade unions work in two companies, in other cases it is difficult to say whether or not, there was freedom of association.

In category *Society* use of hazardous substances that impact the environment and human health was observed in four companies. All companies declared ensuring a safe working environment for the employees. But it's hard to believe, knowing from other sources how conditions of work in Asian factories look like (Clean Clothes Polska, 2014). Seven enterprises during last five years have created new job opportunities, but some were pushed to limit employment, because of difficult economic conditions. Only in one case, the owner was known and honored for his charity work for the local community. The same person also supported employee volunteering.

4. Social responsibility among buyers of clothing in Poland

To identify the behaviors of buyers of clothing with regard to the issue of social responsibility in December 2014 and January 2015 in Lodz voivodeship study on a group of 100 respondents aged 18 – 32; 59% of respondents were women (41% men) was carried out. In the study group, 9% had secondary education, 47% higher undergraduate, 40% have master's degree and 4%

continued their education on doctoral studies. In terms of place of residence, respondents were represented: city below 20 thousand of residents - 16%, city over 20 thousand and less than 100 thousand of residents – 24%, city over 100 thousand of residents – 55%, and residents of villages – 5%.

The analysis of the answers to the survey questions allowed to identify the following facts:

1. 76% of respondents have heard about CSR and 45% were able to give examples, mostly known for TV commercials (e.g. planting trees by Żywiec Co., feeding children by Danone, promoting the natural environment protection by Yves Rocher).
2. None of the respondents met earlier with the idea of social responsibility in relation to the textile and clothing industry, what's more, the overwhelming majority did not realize that in these industries violations of human rights in many countries around the world is an everyday practice. They also have not wondered about the negative impact on the environment.
3. None of the respondents did consider the issue of social responsibility in respect of their purchases of clothing.

Then respondents were acquainted with the facts concerning construction disaster of the Rana Plaza building, that took place on 24th April 2013 in Savar, an industrial suburb of Dhaka in Bangladesh, which killed 1,127 people. In official report written after investigation it has been found, that the factory owners urged workers to return to their jobs despite evidence that the building was unsafe. “They compelled them to start,” said Main Uddin Khandaker, a high-ranked official in Bangladesh’s Home Ministry, who led the investigation (Yardley, 2013).

4. The respondents did not know that in the ruins labels of Polish manufacturers were found. When they learned about it, they said that in the future it will have impact on their assessment of the well-known clothing brands and their shopping. Only three respondents said that their choices will remain the same.

Results of research confirmed the assumption that the knowledge of buyers of clothing about corporate social responsibility in the textile and clothing industry is negligible among Polish buyers.

5. Social responsibility of producers and consumers of textiles and clothing in Poland - an attempt to assess

The Rana Plaza disaster has drawn for a while global attention to unsafe conditions in the garment industry in LDCs, such as Bangladesh, India, Philippines, Honduras, and others, in which tens of thousands garment factories, orders for nearly all of the world's top brands and retailers are handled. They have become an export powerhouse largely by delivering lower costs, partly by having the lowest wages in the world for garment workers. Rapidly growing consumption of clothing in highly developed countries is accompanied by the emergence of innovation strategies towards what is called "fast fashion" (Bhardwaj and Fairhurst 2010). From the beginning of the 1990s retailers started focusing on expanding their product range with updated products and faster responsiveness to new fashions from the fashion shows. Addition of three to five mid-seasons, which put pressure on suppliers to deliver fashion garment in smaller batches with reduced lead time, is observed. Pioneers in adoption of this strategy were Zara and H&M. Their goal is to introduce new collections to the shops within 3-5 weeks after fashion show. Bhardwaj and Fairhurst (2010) argue that this change towards more seasons was in contradiction to the practice of outsourcing production to low-cost countries. This is a chance, inter alia, for Polish producer, because it helps to avoid lengthy trade procedures in cooperation with LDCs. However, this causes a greater market volatility and requires high flexibility of manufacturers in the realization of contracts. This can affect negatively the stability of employment, what was observed in the described survey in Poland. The execution of orders must be fast, which requires short-term hiring of new employees. Their employment in periods of waiting for the next order is from the point of view of entrepreneurs completely unprofitable. Polish producers also exhibit no interest in membership in international organizations for the development of sustainable, socially responsible production of textile and clothing.

On the demand side of the market, interest in socially responsible purchasing of clothing is very, very poor. The young generation of buyers likes to keep up with fashion, however, the primary criterion for purchasing is the price of clothing. Socially responsible shopping does not belong to the standard behavior of Polish buyers of apparel. Behavior of Polish buyers is very different in comparison with results of survey conducted in 2002 in France by Delpal and Hatchuel, (2007), in which: 44% of people responded they "take account of social awareness issues when shopping" (not buying products involving child labor, not causing suffering to

animals, not polluting, etc.), 61% are “prepared to pay 5% more in order to respect such commitments”, 31% have “boycotted a particular product at some point” and 52% have “bought a committed product in the last six months”. Sensitivity to the ethical aspects of consumption has grown, particularly among young people, up 15% since 2002 as against 6% for the population as a whole.

However, there is some similarity in the behavior of Polish and Danish buyers of clothing. As it was described by Jørgensen and Jensen (2012: 171-172) “The clothing practices of the group of young women (...) are influenced by fast changing fashion and low-price strategies in interaction with the expectations of colleagues and friends about frequent clothing changes. (...) Some purchased clothing items are used only once or never used at all.”

Poland has no single, specific strategy on CSR. Lack of broad education for socially responsible consumption was demonstrated in the research. Undertaking actions are concerned on CSR promotion system, education, responsible investment and sustainable consumption.

Polish public policy on social responsibility is based on three pillars and associated actions: (European Commission, ICF, GHK, 2013: 3-4).

“1. Creating an integrated system of CSR promotion - actions include dialogue with stakeholders on CSR, developing a system of CSR indicators and ensuring that public procurement involves public, private and social partners;

2. Increasing public administration responsibility - actions include implementing the ISO 26000 standard, implementing Environmental and Social Governance in state shareholder companies by pursuing socially responsible investment and risk management, and including environmental and social criteria in public-sector tendering;

3. Raising awareness and increasing responsibility of market participants - actions include creating sustainable consumption attitudes (through product labeling, supply chain tracking and food waste scale tools) and education (such as training the teaching workforce and including CSR in the curricula of schools and universities)”.

We can hope that this supported by the government initiative will contribute to the wider acceptance of socially responsible actions on the Polish market both on the supply and demand sites. More sustainable forms of clothing could be promoted as an expression of fashion and identity, however, the low price of clothing may make consumption patterns difficult to change.

6. Conclusion

After examining the supply and the demand aspects of textiles and clothing market in Poland in terms of respecting the principles of social responsibility, it may be stated that both producers and consumers are not particular about this issue. Manufacturers are oriented mainly on survival on this competitive global market. The struggle to acquire new contracts and then the necessity of their very rapid fulfilling, are so absorbing, that social responsibility issues, seen as doing something for the environment, employee and society that goes beyond the law, is regarded as a costly extravagance. Therefore only a few companies associated with capital from Western Europe have shown this type of activity. Sewing clothing in Asia is due to lower costs, which is the result of lower standards of safety and environmental protection in LDCs. As for now, Polish producers are not interested in collaboration with emerging around the world organizations focused on promoting higher standards of labor and environmental protection in textile and clothing industries. Polish enterprises in the textile and clothing sectors competing in the global market require the definition of their relation to the issue of social responsibility.

For the young generation of buyers of clothing the most important issue is to follow the fashion, and the main criterion for selection is the price. The study showed lack of knowledge about the social responsibility of purchasers in respect to the clothing market.

Answering the question posed in the introduction of research: Is the demand for clothing "pushed" by the supply, or the supply is "pulled" by the demand?, it may be concluded, that in Poland customers buy what they find in the shops without thinking about how, in terms of social responsibility, product was made. For manufacturers the risk that product will be boycotted due to violation of the principles of social responsibility, actually does not exist. It is a consequence of still very low interest in SRPC issues among Polish society. Change of this situation requires a consistent pursuit for education and development of adequate labeling systems, but efforts in this area are still inadequate.

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Spoleczna odpowiedzialność, wzorce konsumpcji i produkcji w przemyśle włókienniczym i odzieżowym w Polsce

Streszczenie

Początek transformacji systemowej był okresem zmian strukturalnych w polskim przemyśle. W przypadku przemysłu włókienniczego oznaczało to totalne załamanie. Polskie przedsiębiorstwa włókiennicze i odzieżowe zostały wyparte przez przedsiębiorstwa, głównie z Azji, często dostarczające wyroby niskiej jakości. Artykuł prezentuje wyniki badań na temat społecznej odpowiedzialności przeprowadzonych w latach 2014 – 2015 wśród młodej generacji nabywców (do 32 roku życia) i przedsiębiorców z branży włókienniczej i odzieżowej z województwa łódzkiego. Wyniki badań pozwalają sformułować wniosek, że polski przemysł tekstylny jest w stanie spełnić wysokie standardy społecznej odpowiedzialności. Pomimo, że częstą praktyką w przemyśle odzieżowym jest wciąż oferowanie niskich wynagrodzeń, praca w szarej strefie i brak gwarancji stałego zatrudnienia, to jest możliwe wskazanie przedsiębiorstw działających w zgodzie ze standardami CSR. Jednakże młoda generacja nabywców wykazuje małe zainteresowanie społecznie odpowiedzialnym kupowaniem odzieży. Spowodowane jest to brakiem wiedzy na temat społecznej odpowiedzialności producentów i konsumentów. Taka postawa zmienia się, kiedy konsumenci stają się świadomi konsekwencji społecznie nieodpowiedzialnych zachowań producentów.

Słowa kluczowe: przemysł włókienniczy i odzieżowy, społeczna odpowiedzialność produkcji i konsumpcji, Polska