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Environmental Management and Its Impact on CSR Activities in the Field of Sustainable Development

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Abstract: The way in which both renewable and non-renewable resources are used, and the speed at which these are being exploited, are rapidly eroding the planet's capacity to regenerate the resources and environmental services on which our prosperity and growth are based. The clothing and textile industry is characterized by a linear (take-make-waste) economic model and huge use of non-renewable resources. In order to integrate circular economy as one of the challenges in the clothing and textile industry, we must boost past research directly to innovation to bring about a higher quality of life for all. Corporate social responsibility (CSR) has gained special importance among researchers, the business community, and customers in recent years. Today, manufacturers have to take another step forward to promote their positive social attitude and take care of their responsibility towards society. In the framework of sustainable development, CSR is carried out by achieving economic, social, or environmental goals. Consumers and shareholders currently expect a responsible approach from clothing and textile companies in the production of sustainable clothing, recycling, or ensuring suitable working conditions for employees. It is important not only to support socially responsible businesses but also to raise awareness of the negative

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environmental impact of the clothing and textile industry. Based on the recognition of the importance of shifting from a linear to a circular approach in the clothing and textile industry, we see potential in recycling the textile fiber in order to close the loop and use innovative technology to transform the textile waste into recycled material by keeping in mind barriers in technology. This article evaluates the social responsibility of a selected company in the field of sustainable development by setting a good example in the Slovak market through the results of a questionnaire survey.

Keywords: *circular economy, clothing industry, CSR, environmental management, sustainable development*

1. Introduction

Industrial production and human activities, in general, have an increasingly negative impact on society. A linear economic model based on high consumption of non-renewable raw material resources, production in unsatisfactory conditions, mass sale, use, and subsequent disposal of products that usually end up in landfills prevails in our society (Marín-Beltrán *et al*., 2022). The transition to circular and green economy is determined by the reduction of the consumption of natural resources, reducing the production of industrial waste and emissions (Kajanová & Nováček, 2022).

The clothing and textile industry is characterized by a linear economic model and the huge use of non-renewable resources. Historical facts prove that this industry is one of the oldest processing industries (Koszewska, 2018). Huge development in the clothing and textile industry has resulted not only in a change in the nature of production but also an increased impact on the environment. Over the past decades, we have experienced changes in textile and clothing production mainly influenced by factors such as changing consumer habits or a short life cycle caused by fashion trends (Vecchi, 2020).

Clothing and textile production is one of the foremost contaminating industries in the world; this has raised queries and concerns from various actors and establishments in the corporate, government, civil society, media, and private spheres (Gazzola *et al*., 2020; *Sustain Your Style*, 2022). Due to lower prices and a greater variety of clothing, Europeans consume substantially more clothing today than they did two decades ago (Remy, Speelman & Swartz, 2020).

The way in which both renewable and non-renewable resources are used and the speed at which these are being exploited are rapidly eroding the planet's capacity to regenerate the resources and environmental services on which our prosperity and growth are based (Dong, Liu & Bian, 2021). In order to integrate circular economy as one of the challenges in the clothing and textile industry, we must boost latest research directly to innovation to bring about a higher quality of life for all (Koszewska, 2018).

The clothing industry has a significant negative environmental, social, but also economic impact, whether during the process of clothing production itself or its accumulation in landfills (Bick, Halsey & Ekenga, 2018). Manufacturers in the clothing industry should therefore work to promote their positive social attitude and take care of their responsibility towards society. In the framework of sustainable development, CSR is carried out by achieving economic, social, or environmental goals (Thorisdottir & Johannsdottir, 2020; Jutidamrongphan *et al*., 2021). Consumers and shareholders currently expect a responsible approach from companies in solving serious social problems. In the area of the clothing industry, this social responsibility manifests itself primarily in the production of sustainable clothing, recycling, and in ensuring suitable working conditions for employees (Wren, 2022). From this point of view, it is important not only to support socially responsible businesses but also to raise awareness of the negative environmental impact of this issue.

The main goal of the article is to evaluate the social responsibility of the selected company in the field of sustainable development and, at the same time, evaluate the responsible behavior of consumers based on the analysis of consumer behavior in the clothing market. As part of fulfilling the main goal, we also set the following partial goals: analyzing and evaluating consumer behavior in the clothing market, carrying out a statistical analysis of the achieved results, and creating a SWOT analysis of the situation in the clothing market. Then we selected and characterized a suitable business entity, familiarized ourselves with the CSR and sustainable activities of the selected company, and proposed solutions to mitigate the negative impact of the clothing industry on society.

The intention of the present study, therefore, is to emphasize the negatives of the linear economy model and propose solutions to mitigate the detrimental effect of the clothing industry on the environment and society. In order to validate the survey instrument, a pilot test was conducted on a small focus group to correct the questionnaire, then experts from the field were

interviewed for data validation, and the findings compared with studies carried out in other countries.

2. Literature review

China in particular has assumed a dominant role in the global clothing market. In 2018, China's global apparel exports accounted for 31%, a higher share than the apparel exports of all 28 member countries of the European Union (28%) and also higher than the combined share of Bangladesh, Vietnam, India, Turkey, Indonesia, and Cambodia (Islam, 2022).

The mass production of clothing is also evidenced by the data published by the European Environmental Agency in 2019. Expenditure on clothing and footwear accounted for 5% of household expenditure, of which about 80% were on clothing and 20% were on footwear (Krings *et al*., 2018). It is estimated that in 2015, EU citizens bought 6.4 million tonnes of new clothing, which is 12.66 kilograms of clothing per person (Lindgren, 2015). The European Environment Agency estimates that from 1996 to 2012, the amount of clothing purchased per person increased by 40%. At the same time, more than 30% of the clothes in Europeans' wardrobes have not been worn for more than a year (EEA, 2012). The biggest problem is that after being thrown away, more than half of the clothes are not recycled, but end up in municipal waste and, subsequently, in incinerators or landfills (Juanga-Labayen, Labayen & Yuan, 2022).

The beginning of the 21st century was good for the fashion industry. Thanks to falling costs, operational efficiencies, and rising consumer spending, apparel production doubled between 2000 and 2014, and the amount of apparel purchased per capita increased by about 60% between 2000 and 2014 (Remy, Speelman & Swartz, 2020). Fast fashion is a particularly attractive segment and an enviable source of growth for some apparel companies. By shortening production cycles and creating the most up-to-date designs, these companies have enabled buyers to not only expand their wardrobes but also update them quickly (Crumbie, 2021). In almost all clothing categories, consumers wear their clothes half as often as they did 15 years ago. Some estimates suggest that consumers consider less expensive garments almost disposable and throw them away after only seven or eight uses.

The environmental impacts of textiles include water use, water pollution, greenhouse gas emissions, and textile waste going to landfills. Textile

production requires a lot of water and land to grow cotton and other fibers. The global textile and clothing industry is estimated to have used 79 billion cubic meters of water in 2015, while the needs of the entire EU economy reached 266 billion cubic meters (Garton, Thow & Swinburn, 2020). It takes 2,700 liters of fresh water to produce a cotton T-shirt, which is estimated to cover one person's drinking water needs for two and a half years (Parvin *et al.*, 2020). Textile manufacturing is estimated to be responsible for about 20% of the world's clean water pollution from dyeing and finishing products (Zaw *et al.*, 2020). In fact, textile dyeing is the second largest water pollutant worldwide. Companies dump millions of gallons of this dye-laden wastewater as hazardous toxic waste, loaded with organic chemicals and colored with dyes and fixing salts. Sulfur, naphthol, cadmium, nitrates, acetic acid, soaps, chromium compounds, and bulky substances such as copper, arsenic, lead, cadmium, mercury, nickel, and cobalt make all wastewater highly toxic at the same time (Apsari & Purnomo, 2020).

When washing synthetic fabrics, around 0.5 million tons of microfibers end up in the oceans every year. The washing of synthetic clothing accounts for 35% of the primary microplastics released into the environment (European Parliament, 2018). A single load of polyester clothing can release 700,000 microplastic fibers that can end up in the food chain.

The textile industry produces toxic and non-toxic solid waste. Examples of non-toxic solid waste are packaging, fabric waste, machine parts to be replaced, coils, etc. (Aishwariya & Jaisri, 2020). Toxic or hazardous waste such as bleach and sludge causes immediate damage to us and the environment. The way people dispose of unwanted clothing has also changed—items are thrown away rather than donated. Since 1996, the amount of clothing purchased per person in the EU has increased by 40% after prices fell dramatically, shortening the lifespan of clothing (Nimon, 2020). Europeans use almost 26 kilograms of textiles each year and throw away around 11 kilograms. Used clothing can be exported outside the EU, but the majority (87%) is incinerated or landfilled. Globally, less than 1% of clothing is recycled as clothing, in part due to insufficient technology (Atstāja *et al.*, 2021).

Another environmental impact of the textile industry is the generation of greenhouse gas emissions. Textile production generates 1.2 billion tons of greenhouse gases each year (World Bank Group, 2019). Synthetic fibers like polyester emit more greenhouse gases than natural fibers because they have a more significant carbon footprint. The consequences of wet processing of

fabrics are that large amounts of fossil fuels are consumed. Ultimately, this leads to acidification, depletion of natural resources, and global warming (Deedster, 2022). The fashion industry is estimated to be responsible for 10% of global CO_2 emissions, more than international flights and shipping combined. According to the European Environment Agency, textile purchases in the EU caused around 654 kg of CO_2 emissions per person in 2017.

Corporate social responsibility (CSR) has gained special importance among researchers, the business community, and customers in recent years (Klaysung, Klaysung & Promsiri, 2022). CSR is a management concept whereby companies integrate social and environmental concerns into their operations and interactions with their stakeholders. CSR is generally understood as the way in which a company strikes a balance between economic, ecological, and social requirements and, at the same time, responds to the expectations of shareholders and stakeholders (Mayorova, 2021).

As well as being widely discussed by researchers, the business community is increasingly reorganizing it as a factor affecting the competitiveness of companies, which, if absent, can practically disable their long-term functioning (Thorisdottir & Johansdottir, 2020). Although CSR is a challenge for all industries today, only a few sectors feel the pressure exerted by consumers, the media, and NGOs to implement socially responsible business standards as strongly as the textile and clothing industry does (Sudolska *et al*., 2020). In order to identify the significance of standardization and labeling for textile and clothing goods differentiation in the globalizing and increasingly saturated markets, this article reviews and analyzes major international, national, and community initiatives in this area, as well as investigations of buyers' behavior (Koszewska, 2013).

Setterwall Rydberg (2016) argues that the circular economy is a term first coined in 1990 by environmental economists David W. Pearce and R. Kerry Turner. The concept is gaining popularity as a new way of thinking in business. Today's economy is based on a linear take, make and throw system that is unsustainable. Circular economy research for textiles has so far mainly focused on the technical cycle, and the biological cycle is less explored. Within the technical cycle of the circular economy model, textile recycling is structured into mechanical and chemical processes (Ribul *et al*., 2021). Daňo, Drábik and Hanuláková (2020) define circular fashion as clothing, shoes, or accessories that are designed, delivered, manufactured, and provided with the intention of using these in inefficient circulation for as long as possible, in their most valuable form, and, in any event, in a society,

which can no longer be used by humans, and then returned safely to the biosphere.

In the fashion industry, the circular vision consists on the one hand in supporting the extension of the end of life of textile and clothing products, their recycling and reuse in other production cycles, and on the other hand the use of ecological and sustainable raw materials. Sandvik and Stubbs (2019) distinguish between two basic methods of textile recycling, namely mechanical and chemical. However, textile recycling is still limited and evolving.

For some synthetic fibers, chemical recycling occurs through depolymerization. Polymer chains split into monomers, which are purified and separated before rejoining to form new polymers. Additives are removed during the purification process (often distillation). Polyethylene terephthalate (PET) and nylon 6 are currently recycled to a limited extent (Thiyagarajan *et al.*, 2022). The starting material for the production of polyester is usually PET from food packaging and industrial waste. The input material for nylon is typically nylon derived from carpet, fishing nets, and other industrial waste. Recycled fibers have the same properties as newly manufactured synthetic fibers (Madani, 2021).

Mechanical recycling occurs in two ways: either by melting synthetic fibers into pellets that are used to spin new fibers (thermo-mechanical recycling) or by tearing fabrics to regenerate the fiber (mechanical processing) (Ribul *et al.*, 2021).

The production of acoustic and thermal insulation materials from textile waste is one of the most efficient sustainable recycling processes. Based on scientific research, it has been shown that the physical properties of textile waste are very similar to the physical properties of conventional building insulation materials (Csefalvayová, 2018). For this reason, the use of textile waste as an input raw material for the construction industry is directly recommended. Recycling textile waste into building insulation materials has potential advantages in the environmental, health, social, or economic direction. The use of high-quality thermal and sound insulation materials can reduce environmental impact, energy consumption, landfill space requirements, new materials requirements, greenhouse gas emissions, overall pollution (noise, air, soil, water), oil, fuel, and natural resource consumption. In addition, the production of thermal insulation materials can reduce the energy needed to heat and cool our buildings and cars (Islam & Bhat, 2019).

3. Material and methodology

The methodology consisted of several research methods aimed at achieving the set main goal. The article used mainly the method of synthesis, analysis, and selection. Within this point, primary and secondary sources of information were used, which consisted of professional literature, scientific articles, statistical data, scientific studies, and various relevant publications. The whole methodology can be divided into three main parts. In the first part, a questionnaire survey of the randomly selected sample was conducted. We used snowball sampling as one of the popular and widely spread sampling techniques to obtain data from respondents for our pilot survey. The questionnaire survey aimed to collect information from the respondents to better understand the market situation and to analyze and evaluate their behavior. In the questionnaire, we focused mainly on the analysis of consumer behavior, specifically on finding out the approach of consumers to worn or discarded clothing, to the process and method of its disposal, and the purchase of clothing. In the second part of the questionnaire, we focused on their knowledge and opinions about sustainable clothing and the impact of the clothing industry on the environment.

The statistical method of the chi-square test of goodness was used to test the relationships between categorical variables (Hess & Hess, 2017). We performed a statistical analysis using Addinsoft's XL Stat statistics program (version 2019.2). We defined our null and alternative hypotheses and decided on the alpha value ($\alpha = 0.05$). The null hypothesis is rejected and the alternative hypothesis is confirmed if the critical value (p-value) is less than a significant level (α). In case of confirmation of the dependency between the examined features, we then determined the degree of dependency using Cramér's V coefficient and Pearson's correlation coefficient (Moradi & Mehdinejadiani, 2020).

Knowing the importance of transformation from a linear economic model to a circular economy, we found a representative example of best practices in the market. As an example of best practice and usage of innovation, we chose the company SK-TEX, which deals with the return of used clothing to circulation. This company annually returns almost 4,500 tons of textile waste and converts it into various forms of insulation and fibers, intended mainly for the automotive, furniture, and construction industries.

When evaluating CSR and the sustainable activities of SK-TEX, we relied on a structured interview with the company's manager. Due to the coronavirus

pandemic, the interview was carried out online. The interview consisted of questions focusing on the company's sustainable activities, the company's measures in the field of environmental protection, certification, questions about the issue of excess clothing in the world, and the benefits of recycling (SK-TEX, 2022).

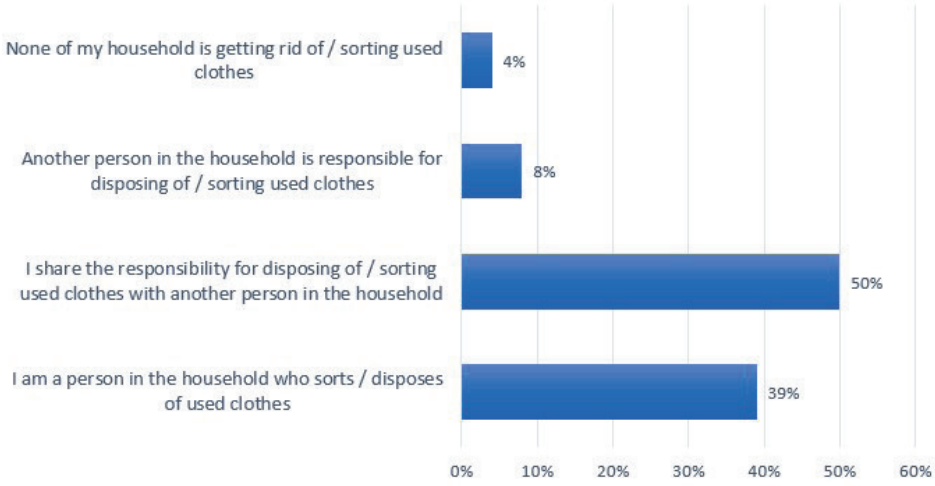
Based on the results obtained from the questionnaire survey and in cooperation with the knowledge of the representatives from the SK-TEX company, a SWOT analysis of the situation in the clothing market was carried out. The SWOT analysis as the main tool of strategic planning helped us evaluate internal weaknesses and strengths, as well as external opportunities and threats in this market (Kim & Jang, 2015). Strengths represent the positive attributes in the apparel market that lead to improved market conditions and create room for opportunity (Garrett & Wrigley, 2019). Weaknesses show shortcomings in the clothing market which, if not addressed, can lead to threats (MacCarthy & Dery, 2016). So, our goal was to maximize internal strengths and external opportunities while minimizing internal weaknesses and external threats as much as possible.

4. Interpreting the final results

The total number of respondents surveyed was 130. The largest share of the respondents were women (101; 78%) followed by men (29; 22%). The gender percentage is not balanced. The higher share of women in the questionnaire survey is due to the higher interest of women in current fashion trends and shopping or sorting clothes. Nevertheless, we gained also a male view of the issue, although in a smaller representation.

The results of the first research question focusing on the respondent's responsibility for sorting or removing used clothes from the wardrobe can be seen in Figure 1. The majority of respondents share the responsibility for sorting or discarding used clothing with another person in the household (65; 50%). The second-largest group of respondents is those who perform this process independently (50; 39%). Only 5 respondents, which represents 4%, do not sort or discard their used clothes in any way. After confirmation that respondents decommission clothes, we can find out the relationship of respondents to textile recycling in other questions.

Figure 1. Distribution of respondents in terms of their approach to the clothing decommissioning process.



According to our survey, the most common way of disposing of used clothing among our respondents was donation: donation to family or friends (94 respondents, 72%), clothing donation container (86 respondents, representing 66%), or charity donation (39 respondents, 30%). There is also a group of respondents who try to sell their clothes through bazaars/markets (25 respondents, which represents 19%). Rarely did respondents place unwanted clothing in the trash (9; 11%); however, if the respondents chose trash disposal, it was for the reason that the pieces were damaged, stained, or worn out. The least popular methods included repurposing garments into another item of clothing (upcycling, 9 respondents, representing 7%; see Fig. 2).

The respondents were asked about the frequency of using clothing donation containers. The majority stated that they use the clothing donation containers just once a year (58; 45%); 46 respondents use the clothing donation containers every 4–6 months, which represents 35%; and only 3% of respondents use clothing donation containers once a month (Fig. 3). This question indicates the frequency with which consumers sort their clothes. Considering the results, the incidence of sorting the clothes is most likely every 4–12 months.

Figure 2. The most commonly used methods of disposing of used clothing.

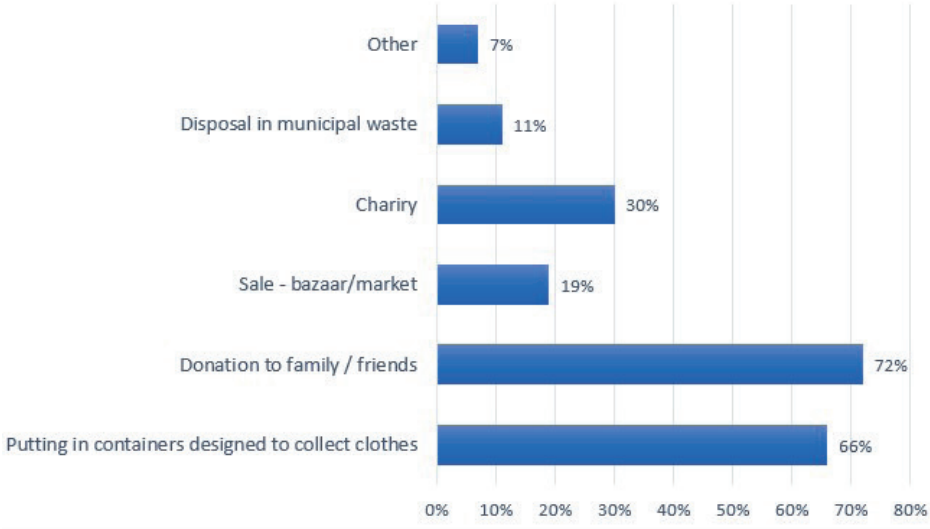
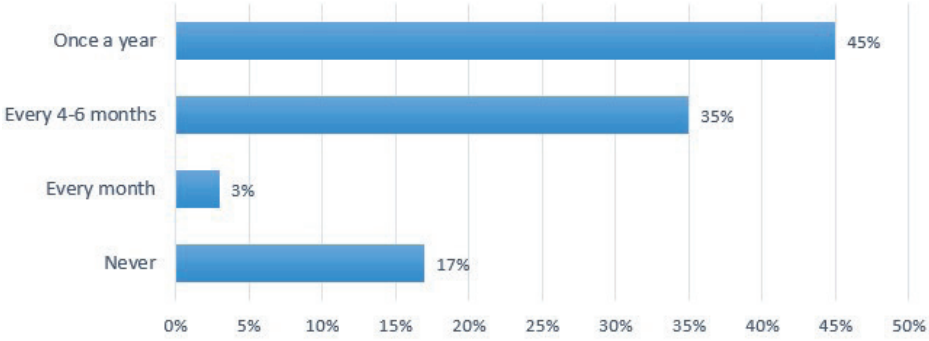


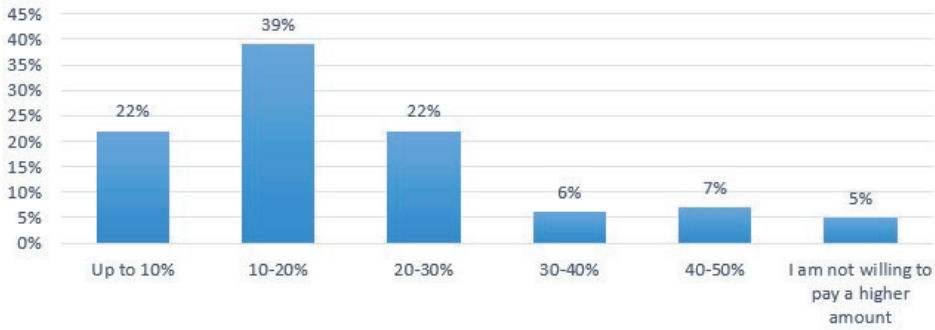
Figure 3. Frequency of using clothing donation containers.



A specific part of the questionnaire focused on the approach to purchasing clothes. The majority of respondents did not mind buying used clothes (76; 58%). When it comes to the negative impact of the textile industry on the environment, the large number of respondents who solely purchase new clothing is an enormous downside (54; 42%). This negative attitude that the respondents may have towards second-hand clothes may simply be subjective to each individual and depend on their prior education and previous knowledge because, by buying second-hand clothes, members of society can change their lifestyle to promote responsible consumption.

In our survey, we looked at the respondents' willingness to pay a higher price for sustainable clothing (clothing produced from organic materials, biomaterials, or recycled materials). Most respondents were willing to pay 10–20% higher price for sustainable clothing (51 respondents; 39%). Several respondents were willing to pay 40–50% more (9 respondents; 7%). Only 5% of respondents are not willing to pay for sustainable clothes. The results show that the decisive factor in buying clothes is no longer the lowest possible price, but consumers are willing to pay a higher price for a product that is sustainable (Fig. 4)

Figure 4. Willingness to pay a higher price for sustainable clothes.



Based on the results obtained from the questionnaire survey, a SWOT analysis of the situation in the clothing market was carried out. Table 1 shows the internal strengths and weaknesses of the clothing market. Strengths include the increase in consumer interest in sustainable fashion, the existence of an effective certification system that includes the ISO 14001:2015 standard, the FAIRTRADE brand, and many others that support environmental safety and corporate responsibility. A strong point is certainly the increase in consumer interest in upcycling or recycling, which we consider to be one of the most suitable ways of dealing with textile waste. We consider the bureaucratic and financial difficulty of obtaining the aforementioned certification the weak side of the clothing market. Another weakness is the fact that the main place for buying clothes is large shopping centers, which are mainly dominated by fast fashion brands. However, we consider the lack of awareness about the excess of textiles in the world and its environmental consequences to be the weakest point.

Table 1. SWOT analysis table: internal environment.

INTERNAL ENVIRONMENT			
Strengths			
		Weight/Scale	**Evaluation**
1	Growing consumer interest in sustainable fashion	0,3	4
2	The existence of an effective certification system guaranteeing environmental safety (ISO 14001:2015, FAIRTRADE brand and others)	0,3	3
3	Increasing interest in upcycling and recycling products by consumers	0,4	5
	Sum	**4,1**	
Weaknesses			
		Weight/Scale	**Evaluation**
1	Bureaucratic complexity of obtaining certification	0,2	-2
2	Financial difficulty of obtaining a certificate	0,2	-3
3	The main place to buy clothes - shopping centers with Fast fashion brands	0,3	-4
4	Lack of awareness about the negative effects of excess clothing in the world	0,3	-5
	Sum	**-3,7**	

Source: Authors' elaboration, 2022.

Table 2 shows the SWOT analysis of the external environment, specific opportunities, and threats in the clothing market. Among the opportunities, we can include the increase in demand for products made from recycled materials or stricter regulation of clothing manufacturers by the EU. Raising awareness and education in the area of environmental protection and the negatives of the clothing industry is also an opportunity to solve the situation in the clothing market. Rising living standards can be seen as both an opportunity and a threat. With the growth in living standards and the increase of the middle class in the population, on the one hand, people will be able to pay a higher price for recycled or ecological products. On the other hand, however, the rise in the standard of living can cause an ever-increasing need to buy new products. In addition to the increase in the living standards, we also see as a threat the unceasing interest in fast-fashion trends, as well as the insufficient or misleading labeling of products about their ecological origin, which we know as greenwashing. A significant threat is insufficiently regulated production in the clothing industry from an ecological and social point of view. Inadequate regulation of production leads to excessive production in unsatisfactory working conditions mainly in developing countries.

Table 2. SWOT analysis table: external environment.

EXTERNAL ENVIRONMENT			
Opportunities			
		Weight/Scale	**Evaluation**
1	Increase in demand for products made from recycled materials	0,2	4
2	Growth of the middle class of the population (ability to pay a higher price for a sustainable product)	0,2	2
3	Stricter regulation of producers by the EU	0,25	3
4	Raising awareness and education in the field of environmental protection and negative aspects of the clothing industry	0,35	5
	Sum	**3,7**	
Threats			
		Weight/Scale	**Evaluation**
1	Insufficiently regulated production in the clothing industry (from an ecological and social point of view)	0,3	-5
2	Insufficient or misleading labeling of sustainable products (Greenwashing)	0,25	-2
3	Unceasing interest in Fast fashion trends	0,25	-4
4	Increasing the standard of living of the population (need to buy new products all the time)	0,2	-3
	Sum	**-3,6**	

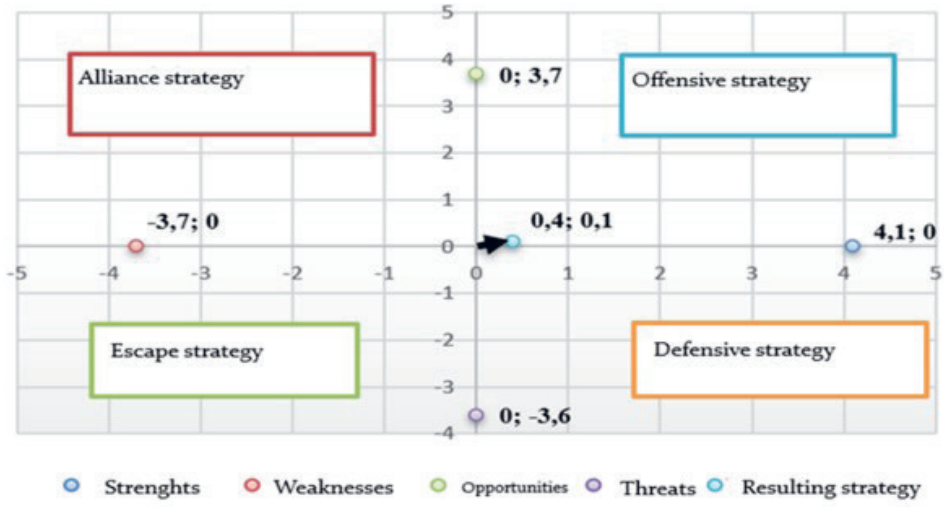
Source: Authors' elaboration, 2022.

The calculation of the resulting strategy can be seen in the table, which shows individual values of the total internal environment, value 0.4, and of the total external environment, value 0.1. After placing these values on the graph, we found the resulting strategy.

Based on the results shown in Table 1, we can state that from the point of view of the internal environment, the strengths outweigh the weaknesses, and the external environment provides more opportunities than threats, which is very positive. For this reason, it is necessary to focus on an offensive strategy and continue to strengthen internal strengths and external opportunities.

After understanding the market situation and pointing to the limitations of the survey, we were able to set up and carry out the structured interview. SK-TEX has been recycling textiles for more than 20 years and second-hand clothing for more than 15 years. During this period, the company was able to recycle and reuse more than 20,000 tons of clothing. The company has been developing and promoting thermal and acoustic materials, which are created by recycling used clothing, for more than 8 years. With their parameters, these thermal and acoustic materials not only reach, but also exceed the parameters of mineral fiber-based insulation. In this way, the

Figure 5. SWOT analysis: A graphic representation.



Source: Authors' elaboration, 2022.

company strives to reduce the consumption of such materials and thus reduce their negative impact on the environment. On the one hand, it is a matter of reducing the energy intensity of production, but also of protecting the environment by reducing the extraction of mineral resources needed to produce mineral wool. The company also produces water-retaining materials from recycled clothing, which can be used in green roofs and can thus reduce the effects of climate change with the help of materials produced in the process of the circular economy. In addition to textile processing and the production of recycled materials, the company seeks to demonstrate its pro-environmental approach by writing articles on clothing recycling, publishing in newspapers, and proposing changes to legislation. In addition, SK-TEX cooperates with the second-hand project Nosene, which donates 15% of the price of products to non-profit organizations, such as My Mamy. SK-TEX helps to transport clothes that are unusable for sale and then recycles them. The selection process before the operation is to first select the fabrics suitable for the production of insulation (fabrics with a high cotton content), then the remaining fabrics that are used for the production of acoustic insulation or as synthetic tears, and finally the fabrics that the company cannot process (for example, sequined garments or leather) are given for energy recovery, where they will probably end up as cement.

In addition to Nosene, SK-TEX also cooperates with other second-hand companies, hotels, or other companies where textiles are fast-moving goods (SK-TEX, 2017b). At present, there is a growing interest in the recycling of used clothing by large food chains such as Kaufland, Tesco or Lidl, with which SK-TEX also cooperates. All these chains are involved in recycling their work clothes with the intention of turning them into other usable products such as ecological building insulation. In addition to Slovak branches, SK-TEX already cooperates with foreign branches of these chains and also participates in the recycling of, for example, Polish work clothes (SK-TEX, 2020). The company not only strives to constantly improve its innovations, but also plans further measures to protect the environment in the future. SK-TEX has set itself the following 3 goals: dust reduction; increasing energy efficiency; and transition to zero-waste production.

When it comes to the company's certification, SK-TEX does not currently have any but is considering starting the certification process. The company considers easier access to the market to be the main benefit of certification. SK-TEX could consider implementing the ISO 14001:2015 standard, as this standard still has a very small presence in Slovakia and is the most popular environmental certification. The ISO 14001:2015 standard helps in complying with legal regulations or in the overall improvement of the company's environmental behavior. Given its production focus, SK-TEX could also consider introducing GRS. GRS helps to increase the use of recycled products in the EU, which could also lead to increased interest in SK-TEX products and thus to a growth in sales.

The SK-TEX company listed several reasons for the excess of textiles in the world: population growth, ease of production, people's need to distinguish themselves through fashion, employment, and the general growth of the living standards of the population.

However, all this applies to every single sphere of business, not only the clothing industry. In an industry where there is high demand, there is also high supply. However, SK-TEX considers as the main problem the lack of awareness of the need for a circular economy, that is, the need for the most efficient use of already invested resources and the use of all properties of already produced materials. According to SK-TEX, we can contribute mainly to the main solution to this problem and to an increased rate of recycling by focusing on secondary raw materials and using their value and properties instead of focusing on waste.

"People must realize that things only become waste when they end up in a landfill. If we stop treating products like waste, the amount of it will also decrease." (SK-TEX, 2017b) The basis for is to look for possibilities for their further use in the products. What we can consider as a big positive is that SK-TEX is currently witnessing an increased demand for products made from recycled materials, which is proof that the public is increasingly looking for ecological alternatives to conventional products. This fact was also confirmed by our questionnaire survey, where consumers demonstrated interest in sustainable products produced from recycled materials.

5. Conclusions

The main objective of this article was to evaluate the social responsibility of the company selected in the field of sustainable development. For this purpose, we carried out an indirect interview with the Slovak SK-TEX company, which deals with the recycling of textile waste and the production of different forms of insulation or fibers. The interview consisted of questions that focused on CSR and sustainability, certification, the problem of excess textiles in the world, and the advantages of recycling. SK-TEX supports the circular economy with its activities and at the same time demonstrates its social responsibility through its favorable approach to the environment in the area of lighting, transport, or proposals for changes in legislation. SK-TEX recycling clothes not only helps reduce the amount of textile waste in the world but also contributes to reducing minerals, or using materials that have a negative impact on the environment. In addition, it motivates recycling and also cooperates with other companies that are mainly stores or even with large hypermarkets such as Tesco or Lidl.

Uncontrolled clothing production and developing trendy fast fashion is a major threat to the environment. Pollution caused by the production process itself, people working in unsatisfactory conditions, or the accumulation of textile waste in landfills, is shown to have a significant impact on the society, not only ecologically but also socially and economically. Based on analyses, surveys and interviews, we can identify specific proposals and measures needed to alleviate the negative impact of the clothing industry on the environment and society as a whole.

Based on the obtained results, one of the most important recommendations is awareness and education. Increasing awareness of how clothing is

produced (how much energy is consumed in its production, dyeing, how much new cheap clothing needs to be thrown away, recycled, or burned) can be achieved through increased consumers' interest in environmental protection, recycling or upcycling clothing, through purchasing less clothing, increasing the availability and supply of sustainable clothing, and supporting more local producers.

Another recommendation is to introduce stricter regulation of producers in the clothing industry by the EU (ecological and social) for the import, but also export, of clothing. Possible proposals are legislative measures, for example, in the form of financial penalties for producers who violate the fundamental rights of their employees in the process of producing clothing, or stricter and more frequently carrying out the control of compliance with legislative measures.

Simplifying the certification process from a bureaucratic and financial point of view would motivate society to take a greater interest in a certificate, which will not only help improve environmental behavior in the society but will also help achieve environmental objectives.

A potential weakness of the presented study is the methodological limitation of using a questionnaire method to collect data. Social desirability may affect respondents' answers. This means that respondents answer what they think looks good instead of telling the truth. There are two major limitations in this study that could be addressed in future research. First, it is important to have an appropriate sample size in order to draw a valid conclusion. We understand this research as a pilot survey aimed at evaluating the situation in the clothing market in Slovakia. There is a potential to expand our sample size. After a certain period of time, we plan to repeat the survey and expand the number of respondents beyond Slovakia. The second limitation that could be addressed in future research is the gender distribution of respondents. The majority of the respondents were women (101; 78%), followed by men (29; 22%). The gender ratio is not balanced. In future research, we should focus more on men's opinions. We need to address them directly in order to have a balanced gender distribution of respondents. Another limitation we can see lies in carrying out a SWOT analysis. At the same time, the use of it would allow us to address weaknesses, deter threats, capitalize on opportunities and on our strengths. We understand that this is only one stage of the business planning process. In the future, we will need to conduct more in-depth research and analysis.

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