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SOCIALLY RESPONSIBLE CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR

PONAŠANJE DRUŠTVENO ODGOVORNOG POTROŠAČA

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this paper is to examine the concept of social responsibility and to contribute to understanding of socially responsible consumer behaviour, that is, to determine the connection between certain models of behaviour of socially responsible consumers and movement of their income. The paper uses existing knowledge in the field of consumer preferences and utility, altruism and responsibility of an individual towards society and community. Methodologically, the paper relies on the consumer behaviour measurement scales of other researchers and TPB theory of human behaviour. The paper defines three dimensions of consumer social responsibility, socially responsible investment, green products, and good consumers, deepening the understanding of consumers social responsibility as qualitative basis for further scientific research, confirming the main scientific hypothesis of paper, and rejects the research hypothesis about positive correlation between consumers income and their willingness to allocate income for products of socially responsible companies.

Key words: consumer behaviour, social responsibility, altruism, measurement scales, income

SAŽETAK

Svrha ovog rada jest istražiti koncept društvene odgovornosti te doprinijeti razumijevanju ponašanja društveno odgovornog potrošača, odnosno utvrditi poveznicu između određenih obrazaca ponašanja društveno odgovornih potrošača i kretanja njihovog dohotka. U radu se polazi od postojećih spoznaja iz područja izbora potrošača i korisnosti, altruizma i odgovornosti pojedinaca prema društvu i zajednici. Metodološki, rad se oslanja na mjerne ljestvice ponašanja potrošača drugih istraživača te TPB teoriju o ljudskom ponašanju. Rad je definirao tri dimenzije društvene odgovornosti potrošača, društveno odgovorno ulaganje, zelene proizvode, te dobre potrošače, produbljujući spoznaje o društvenoj odgovornosti potrošača kao kvalitetne podloge za daljnja znanstvena istraživanja, potvrđujući tako temeljnu hipotezu rada, te odbacio pomoćnu

hipotezu rada o pozitivnoj vezi između dohotka potrošača i njihove spremnosti za izdvajanjem dohotka za proizvode društveno odgovornih poduzeća.

Ključne riječi: *ponašanje potrošača, društvena odgovornost, altruizam, mjerne ljestvice, dohodak*

1. Introduction

Socially responsible customer behaviour is relatively unexplored field of research. Other researches are mainly focused on corporate social responsibility on which one can find a large number of data sources. The aim of this paper is to determine the behaviour of socially responsible consumers, to examine whether consumers are truly altruistic how they represent themselves, whether they are willing to sacrifice themselves for higher goals or think that this is someone else's responsibility. In the field of altruism, the question that arises is why and when people help others, who will help and so on.

From the above mentioned theoretical problem of the lack of research papers from the primary research areas of this paper, the following research objectives are determined: to investigate, identify and elaborate social responsibility, to examine the extent to which consumers are willing to give up their income for the purpose of social benefits and to establish a link between certain patterns of behaviour of socially responsible consumers and movement of their income.

Within the framework of defined research objectives, the following research hypothesis is set: with science-based existing knowledge about social responsibility, particularly social responsibility of consumers, it is possible to identify models of behaviour of socially responsible consumers as a useful foundation for further research in this area. Research hypotheses of paper is following: consumers are more willing to allocate income for goods that offer socially responsible companies. The hypothesis is set according to the assumptions of modern theories of consumer behaviour, according to which consumers demand products due to their characteristics that maximize their utility, and not because of the product as such.

2. Rational customer preferences and utility

Economic theory of allocation of resources is based on the utility function which represents consumer preferences over baskets of goods and each consumer maximizes his or her utility, taking into account their budgetary constraints. The term utility refers to subjective pleasure or satisfaction that consumer feels spending some good, and is different from consumer to consumer, depending on his needs. The assumption is that consumers are rational in their preferences. This implies that consumers are entering the market with pre-defined preferences on prices of goods and in accordance with them spend their earnings on one or the other product. Therefore, the purchasing power of consumers depends on their income and prices they face on the market.

Consumer behaviour is the area of interest of different scientific fields, such as social psychology, economics especially microeconomics, marketing and others. From a microeconomic point of view, there are different approaches to consumer behaviour and are consequently developed different theories of consumer behaviour that in its analysis include variables such as the choice between different products, features, disposable income, utility, preferences, etc. Unlike traditional theories, in which a consumer obtains utility from consumption of goods as such, the modern theory of consumer behaviour starts from new approach which has its foundation in demand for features.

Modern theories of consumer behaviour were introduced by K.J. Lancaster, as he assumes that the consumer demands goods because of their characteristics that provide him utility, and not for good as such. According to this theory, one good can have more than one characteristic, and one characteristic can be found in more than one good, with the fact that the goods which have common characteristics, may have other characteristics quantitatively different or may have the same characteristics, but in quantitatively different combination, or in different proportions. Apart from Lancaster theory of demand for characteristics, new theory of behaviour of ethical consumers was

developed by Amanor-Boadu and Schnitz in their paper "Consumers and Evolution of New Markets: The Case of the Ethical Foods". The theory of behaviour of ethical consumer is an extension of the Lancaster theory, and the authors also included socio-psychological factors of consumer behaviour. The theory has proved that an ethical consumer develops in the phase of psychological self-realization and that today there are large number of that kind of consumers, so they actually represent a specific market niche. When ethical consumer makes a decision, it is according to this theory driven by external characteristic of a product, changes the role of producer, it considers the impact of the product on the community and choosing the products that are in line with its ethical principles (Amanor-Boadu & Schnitz, 2008).

3. Altruism and consumer responsibility towards society and the community

Altruism can be defined as understanding for the interests of others, self-sacrifice showed for others, a willingness to help in various ways (Croatian Encyclopaedic dictionary, 2004). Altruism undoubtedly exists according to Gilboa (2010). Altruists are people who are focused on helping, even when they do not expect any benefits in return (Myers, 2005). But altruism is not necessarily connected only to the public goods in economic sense, but also with social responsibility, given that it also involves care for other economic individuals.

The basic question that arises is why and when people will help others, who will help and what can be done to increase helping others. Several theories about helping agree that in the long run, both the donor and recipient benefit from helping. In addition to the exchange of material goods, people also exchange social goods (love, information, etc.) and are guided by min-max strategy - to minimize costs and maximize reward (benefit) (Myers, 2005). Table 1 provides an overview of the theory of altruism and shows that there are three levels of explanation in which helping can be achieved: on *the psychological level* people usually help others in need or if they expect a reward for helping, on *the sociological level* helping is based on reciprocity that is socially responsible standards if the pleasure is motivated by internal factors, while at *the biological level* people usually help their relatives with the purpose of extension of a kind.

Table 1 Comparison of altruism theories

How can altruism be explained?			
Theory	Level of explanation	External rewarding for helping	Internal rewarding for helping
Social exchange	Psychological	External rewards for helping	Trouble – internal rewards for helping
Social norms	Sociological	Reciprocity norm	Social-responsible norm
Evolutionary	Biological	Reciprocity	Helping others

Source: adapted from Myers, 2005, pp 489.

Today's consumer is characterized by its focus on making decisions that are of a wider impact on society as a whole, and so are consumers characterized as ethical consumers. In this sense, it can be observed that the ethical consumer is more altruistic than traditional consumer, and is ready to sacrifice its own well-being for the realization of ethical results that will satisfy him in the non-material way (Cerović, Stašić & Galović, 2009).

Devinney et al. define consumer social responsibility as a conscious and deliberate choice based on personal and moral convictions. It provides answers to the question of whether consumers are really noble as they present themselves, whether they are willing to sacrifice themselves for higher goals or find that it is someone else's responsibility. Devinney et al. (http://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=901863) identify two components of consumer social responsibility:

1. ethical component that is related to the importance of non-traditional and social components of the product of a certain company or business process,
2. consumer component, which implies that the preferences and desires of the consumer segments are partially responsible for the increased influence of ethical and social factors,

and state that the consumer social responsibility occurs in three forms:

1. as expressed activity related to specific causes - such as donations or willingness to participate in protests and boycotts,
2. as expressed activity in terms of consumer and non-consumer behaviour, and
3. as expressed opinions in surveys or other methods of market research.

Consumer social responsibility is relatively unexplored field of research. Researches are mainly focused on corporate social responsibility on which one can find a large number of data sources. However, consumers have greater responsibility for social development, if this issue is viewed from the point of view of numbers. So, consumers have an extraordinary impact on companies and their adaptation to the customer's needs and requirements. Accordingly, in order to socially responsible companies fulfil their purpose, they must be supported by the positive attitudes of consumers which positively evaluate their efforts in corporate social responsibility (Morrison & Bridwell, 1999).

4. Socially responsible consumer behaviour

This part of paper conducts the research of previous achievements in the creation of consumer behaviour measurement scales, as a basis for the formation of the questionnaire. The data were collected in accordance with the research objectives, in order to prove the research hypothesis.

4.1. Consumer behaviour measurement scales

To measure the organizational behaviour of individuals, researchers use OCB (Organizational Citizenship Behaviour) scale, which was developed in 1983 and tested in 1997 (Johnson & Rapp, 2010). OCB scale is multidimensional scale in which each dimension displays a set of behaviour that is consistent with the type of individual behaviour. It was originally intended to measure the behaviour of individuals in companies and its application is most common in management, human resources management and related areas (Lo & Ramayah, 2009). However, any behaviour defined in the scale is not applicable to all behaviours and for any organization. Due to this the OCB scale is broadly applicable, and researchers take only those dimensions that are appropriate and applicable for their research questions. OCB scale includes five dimensions: civil virtue, conscience, altruism, courtesy and bravery. Because of mentioned dimensions of altruism, this scale is interesting for use in the formation of the socially responsible consumers scale. Johnson and Rapp (2010) introduced several types of consumer behaviour in their paper, that can be adapted to OCB scale, and have accordingly developed CHB scale (Customer Helping Behaviour) whose purpose is to detect the behaviour of consumers focused on helping: donations of money to non-profit organizations, volunteering, spreading positive information by-mouth-to-mouth, promotions and recommendations of good brands to other consumers, forgiveness of negative shopping experiences and participation in marketing researches of companies for their feedback. All these behaviours are part of the altruistic behaviour of consumers and are eligible for inclusion in the scale of potential consumer behaviours that would detect their socially responsible behaviour.

Besides CHB scale, another theory is emerging as a potential source and foundation for the construction of the consumer social responsibility scale, and that is the TPB theory (Theory of Planned Behaviour) whose creator is Ajzen in 1985. According to this theory, human behaviour is guided by three dimensions: beliefs about the likely consequences of behaviour (behavioural beliefs), beliefs about the normative expectations of others (normative beliefs) and beliefs about the existence of factors that could affect the performance of a behaviour (control beliefs) (Ajzen, 1991). So Fishbein & Ajzen (2010) suggest assembling a 7-stage bipolar scale of claims (adjectives) that adapts to the research topic, and includes direct measurement of attitudes, subjective norms, perceived behavioural control, intention and actual behaviour. The relative contribution of attitudes, norms, perceptions, intentions and prediction of behaviour can be determined by using multiple regression analysis and structural equation.

Very little researches were conducted in the area of developing appropriate measurement scales that could identify a specific consumer behaviour in the field of helping. To accurately determine the characteristics of socially responsible consumers it is necessary to conduct a series of tests in the domain of psychology, and one way is to synchronize already developed measurement scales to form a scale adapted for this research.

According to theoretical knowledge about social responsibility in general, as well as knowledge about the consumers social responsibility, using a combination of the above described measurement scales, three main areas of consumers social responsibility were derived (Figure 1).

Figure 1 Dimensions of consumer social responsibility



Source: own results

Socially responsible investment dimension is derived from the TPB theory, CHB scale (donations of money and volunteering), OCB scale (altruism) and additional theoretical knowledge of altruism (helping, sensitivity to exploitation of vulnerable groups), and assumes that the categories which consumers can partially give away are income and leisure time. It consists of the willingness of consumers to spend their income for the products of socially responsible companies and free time for social well-being.

Green products dimension is derived from knowledge of the corporate social responsibility (environmental dimension) and consists of the consumer readiness to spend income for organically produced products and products that protect the environment.

Good consumers dimension is derived from CHB scale (the willingness of consumers to communicate with other consumers and producers). It consists of spreading positive information about the products by mouth-to-mouth, promotions and recommendations of good brands and forgiveness of negative experiences. Given that such consumers (demand side) are desirable from the point of enterprises (supply side), dimension is called "good consumers".

4.2. Measures

The questionnaire consists of three types of questions, from the list of statements to which respondents can answer by expressing their agreement/disagreement, which used Likert scale with five levels determined by the scale from "always" to "never", from the statements to which respondents can answer by expressing their agreement/disagreement by choosing answers "yes" or "no", and from the questions that included free data entry.

A questionnaire was made according to detected dimensions of social responsibility, and consists of four parts:

1. socially responsible investment – first part of the questionnaire included seven questions that were related to the degree of agreement with certain statements about donations to charity, dedication of free time for volunteering, and care of the exploitation of vulnerable groups; two questions with yes/no formation, which were related to product selection of products of socially responsible companies; and one question in which the consumer states the amount of money that he spends monthly for products of socially responsible companies; a total of ten questions;

2. green products – second part of the questionnaire included four questions in which respondents expressed the level of agreement with statements about the purchase of organic products and products that protect the environment;
3. good consumers – third part of the questionnaire included nine questions in which respondents expressed the level of agreement with statements about the transfer of positive shopping experiences and sharing negative experiences with producers;
4. sample profile – fourth part of the questionnaire included information on gender, age and monthly income of the respondents through the choice of the information provided.

Prior to the research, the questionnaire was subject of verification by expert from the field of psychology, and as such was approved. The verification was related to the logical order of questions and assumptions about the formation of scale in terms of defining the degree of agreement of respondents with specific claims.

4.3. Research objectives and hypothesis

From the above mentioned theoretical problems of the lack of research papers from the primary research areas of this paper, the following research objectives were determined:

To investigate, identify and elaborate social responsibility, to examine the extent to which consumers are willing to give up their income for the purpose of social responsibility and to present a link between certain patterns of behaviour of socially responsible consumers and movement of their income.

The following econometric model was set in the study:

$$y_i = \alpha + \beta x_i \quad (1)$$

where y_i is the dependent variable, ie the monthly amount which respondents allocated for the products of socially responsible companies, while x_i is independent variable, or the amount of the monthly net income.

Within the defined research objectives, following basic scientific hypothesis was set: With scientifically based knowledge about social responsibility, especially on the social responsibility of consumers, it is possible to determine the pattern of consumer behaviour as a useful basis for further research in this area.

The auxiliary hypotheses of scientific research is following: Consumers are willing to spend more income for goods that offer socially responsible companies.

Hypotheses are set according to the assumptions of contemporary theories of consumer behaviour according to which consumers claimed goods because of the qualities that they bring maximum utility, not because of goods as such. According to these theories, one good may well have more than one feature, and one feature can be found at more goods (theory of demand for features), and also in addition to external, goods can have internal features that consumers value when they choose goods (theory of ethical consumers). Further to this theory, it is possible to develop a theory of behaviour of socially responsible consumer which represents a "step" over the theory of behaviour of ethical consumer, because the ethical consumer is just one dimension of socially responsible consumer. All this assuming the introduction of budget constraints and the fact that the consumer is limited by monthly income that is distributed according to their preferences and possibilities.

4.4. Research methodology

The survey was conducted in February 2014. Online questionnaire was used and distributed via email and social networks. Research included population with a common feature that all respondents are employed, ie, that they generate regular monthly income. The sample was intentional and chosen based on the availability of units for testing.

From 200 sent questionnaires, 66 of them were fulfilled (33%), which is considered a relevant response, considering that the data was collected electronically (Cook, Heath & Thompson 2000). Table 2 shows the structure of the sample according to a monthly net income of respondents.

Table 2 The structure of the sample according to a monthly net income of respondents

Net income in HRK	Frequency	Percent	Valid percent	Cumulative Percent
Up to 1999	2	3,0	3,0	3,0
2000-3499	6	9,1	9,1	12,1
3500-4999	4	6,1	6,1	18,2
5000-6499	23	34,8	34,8	53,0
6500-7999	13	19,7	19,7	72,7
8000-9499	9	13,6	13,6	86,3
9500 and more	9	13,6	13,6	100,0
Total	66	100,0	100,00	

Source: own results

The table 2 shows that the predominant part of the sample consists of respondents with monthly income ranging from 5000.00 to 6499.00 HRK, that is 34.8%. All respondents who entered the sample generate monthly income and are considered to be employed persons, which was the only condition for their inclusion in the sample. Answers of respondents who do not receive a regular monthly income, were excluded from further processing.

Data were analyzed using the statistical package IBM SPSS Statistics 20. The results are presented descriptively and using tables.

4.5. Research results and hypothesis testing

Research results are presented in the context of pre-defined three dimensions of social responsibility of consumers.

Field of research on *socially responsible investment of respondents* has shown the following results: 51% of respondents occasionally anonymously donates money to charity, while 54.5% of respondents never dedicates its free time for the activities of social benefits (eg. volunteerism), which proves that respondents are more willing to separate money than their free time for social benefit. Even 60% of respondents occasionally selects a product whose purchase donates one product to charity instead of buying the product they constantly purchase, and on the other hand more respondents, 72.7% of them, prefer to select a product whose purchase donates a part of the profits to charity, instead of the product they constantly buy. Surprisingly small percentage of respondents (28.8%) often takes care that the in the production process of product they buy, different vulnerable groups are not exploited (eg. women, children, etc.), because 77.3% of respondents believe that institutions should prevent such production processes.

Field of research on *green products* has shown the following results: even 69.7% of respondents occasionally buy organically produced products, while also large percentage (60.6%) occasionally buy products that protect the environment. Further research wanted to determine if this result is consequence of disbelief of respondents towards green products, but large number of respondents (around 44%) never disbelieves so further researches must be done to determine possible causes of this behaviour.

Field of research on good consumers has shown the following results: 80% of respondents often talks about good experiences with products to other people, colleagues and friends, in comparison to 74% of respondents who often talk about negative purchase experiences. Even 33% of respondents never forgives negative purchase experiences, but 45.5% of them contact producers on their positive purchase experiences in comparison to 54.5% of respondents who talk to producers only on their negative experiences.

Simple linear regression analysis was used to test the research hypothesis, where the dependent variable is monthly amount of money which respondents allocate for the products of socially responsible companies, and the independent variable is the amount of monthly net income of respondents.

Table 3 shows descriptive statistics for sample used in research. The table shows that the average value for *amount of income* variable, which respondents monthly allocate for the products of

socially responsible companies, is 393.18, while the standard deviation is 531.47. For *monthly net income* variable average value is 4.55, which means that the majority of respondents are in income category from 5000.00 HRK to 6499.00 HRK.

Table 3 Descriptive statistics

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
What amount of income do you monthly allocate for purchase of products of socially responsible companies?	393,18	531,466	66
Monthly net income	4,55	1,551	66

Source: own results

Table 4 summarizes the econometric model, shown in equation (1), which shows the coefficient of determination $R^2 = 0.022$, and confirms that the model explains 2% variation in the amount of monthly income that is allocated. So, 2% variation in monthly income can be explained by variations in the amount which respondents allocate for the purchase of products of socially responsible companies.

Table 4 Coefficient of determination

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	,148 ^a	,022	,007	529,725

a. Predictors: (Constant), monthly net income

Table 5 shows the analysis of variance and F value that indicates the significance of the model. According to the analysis, the F value indicates that the model is not significant at a significance level $\alpha < 0.05$.

Table 5 Analysis of variance

ANOVA ^a						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	400696,876	1	400696,876	1,428	,237 ^b
	Residual	17958934,942	64	280608,358		
	Total	18359631,818	65			

a. Predictors: (Constant), monthly net income

b. Dependent Variable: What amount of income do you monthly allocate for purchase of products of socially responsible companies?

Table 6 shows the t value or significance of variables. According to the findings, monthly net income is not a significant variable at a significance level $\alpha < 0.05$.

Table 6 Model parameters

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	163,081	203,298		,802	,425
	Monthly net income	50,622	42,363	,148	1,195	,237

Source: own results

From conducted regression analysis it can be concluded that the monthly net income is not linked to the amount that consumers are willing to allocate for the products of socially responsible companies. From these results it can be concluded that the research hypothesis is rejected.

By rejecting research hypothesis, the contribution to scientific hypothesis is made, in the field of establishing patterns of behaviour of socially responsible consumers. That is, the fact that the monthly net income is not linked to the amount that consumers are willing to allocate for the products of socially responsible companies, is new in a series of understandings necessary to ensure

a good foundation for further research in this area. The above raises a number of research questions, among which the issue of the income elasticity of demand, ie categorization of these goods inside / outside the existing group of normal / inferior goods, and many other issues in economics, social psychology and other.

4.6. Research limitations

In addition to contribution for further researches and getting knowledge of interesting facts about the behaviour of socially responsible consumers, research also has some limitations on the choice of units of the sample. Convenience sample was used in research in which the sample units were selected with according to their availability, rather than randomly. Limitation of research is also the size of the sample of which is relatively small according to the length of research conduction. The inclusion of a large number of respondents would give more representative results.

5. Conclusion

The research shown that there are three basic areas that are part of social responsibility of consumers, and that are socially responsible investing, green products and good customer domain. All three areas were included in the research questionnaire which was distributed among the respondents. Research has shown that the majority of respondents (84.8%) would choose the product of socially responsible companies despite a higher price compared to products of competition, which was confirmed by the control questions on the frequency of purchase of such products.

Hypothesis that consumers are more willing to allocate their income for goods that offer socially responsible company research is rejected, as was shown by the analysis of simple linear regression. The model could explain only 2% variation in the amount of monthly income that is allocated, while the F value indicated that the model is not significant with a significance level $\alpha < 0.05$.

According to limitations of research and assumptions according to which the research hypothesis was set, it can be concluded that the behaviour of socially responsible consumer is not determined by the amount of their income, but by other factors, such as, for example, lifestyle, learned behaviour, ethics, moral and other. Therefore, it is necessary to carry out further researches which would include a larger number of respondents and determine the other factors that influence the consumer's choice. The research results have led to important insights in confirmation of the hypothesis that starts from defining patterns of consumer behaviour as a useful basis for further research in this area.

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