

# The importance of corporate image and social responsibility for consumer engagement in sustainable consumption

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**Abstract:** Rampant consumption and society's growing demands are leading to ever-deteriorating quality of environment and life. Changing consumption patterns is essential to reduce the effects of climate change and create a more sustainable environment for generations to come. The rise of fast fashion is leading to overconsumption of clothing and textiles, which leads to high levels of pollution. In order to promote public awareness and the implementation of sustainability in all areas of life, companies need to contribute to the promotion of sustainable consumption. The way in which fashion sector creates its image and sees social responsibility has an impact on consumers' decisions to use sustainable products. The aim of the research is to identify the impact of corporate image on consumer engagement in sustainable consumption and to investigate the impact of social responsibility in creating corporate image. A questionnaire-based survey was conducted. 406 respondents from Lithuania were interviewed. The results were analysed using descriptive statistical methods. The study shows that a positive corporate image and engagement in social responsibility are important factors in consumers' engagement in sustainable consumption. Weak but statistically significant relationships were found between these variables. Social responsibility has been found to have a positive impact on corporate image, with corporate environmental responsibility being the most important. Also, it was found that more than 90% of respondents have a positive view of the company's corporate social responsibility and that the implementation of corporate social responsibility initiatives changes their perception of the company itself.

**Keywords:** Corporate image, social responsibility, sustainable consumption, consumer engagement.

**JEL Classification:** M14, M30.

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## Introduction

Corporate image can be one of the most important criteria for consumer engagement in sustainable consumption and corporate social responsibility (CSR) plays an important role in today's concept of corporate image.

CSR is a strategic element in the formation of a positive corporate image (Cha & Jo, 2019). The implementation of socially responsible initiatives is an important part of each company's strategy, not only to build long-term and trusting relationships with consumers, but also to attract

potential consumers who prefer sustainable consumption. Consumers may be inclined to have a positive perception of the corporate image and to engage positively with the company's products or services. Scholars have different views on the corporate image (Belas et al., 2023; Lee, 2019; Özkan et al., 2020; Rozsa et al., 2022; Triatmano et al., 2021; Yu et al., 2021) but some identify the components of that create the corporate image. Corporate social responsibility can lead to the image of companies and make an impact on consumers' engagement in sustainable consumption. The literature examines the impact of corporate social responsibility on corporate image (Chen et al., 2012; Stoyanov, 2017; Wang, 2018; Wong & Kim, 2020), presents the concept and meaning of corporate social responsibility (Brin & Nehme, 2019; Hassan et al., 2022a; Jung, 2020; Sharma, 2019), discusses the importance and benefits of corporate social responsibility for companies and their stakeholders (Ali et al., 2019; Asiaei et al., 2021; Chen et al., 2012, 2021; Prentice et al., 2019; Rodriguez-Gomez et al., 2020), and identifies the areas of CSR (economic, ethical, legal, philanthropic and environmental) (Gürlek et al., 2017; Hadi & Udin, 2021; Kumar, 2018).

Researchers are focusing in particular on the sustainable clothing industry in order to reduce the negative environmental consequences of fast fashion have led to rapid consumption through frequent and affordable clothing changes, which has led to the fashion industry being recognised as one of the most polluting industries in the modern world (Hassan et al., 2022b), and the increase in garment production over the past few decades has also led to serious concerns about the contribution of the fashion industry to the climate change crisis (Mizrachi & Tal, 2022). CSR developed by fashion companies has a significant positive impact on corporate image (Jeon, 2021). When consumers perceive a company as socially responsible, they are more likely to engage positively (Chen et al., 2012).

In the fashion market, more attention is paid to such factors as price, size, value, quality, style, ease of purchase, materials, durability, and environmental aspects, which are of little importance in the choice of fashion products. Studies have already found that CSR is an important part of the image of companies, and that it is the economic and ethical CSR initiatives

that are the most important in creating a positive image of companies in the minds of consumers (Zhang & Cui, 2018). According to a study conducted in China, CSR has an impact on consumer engagement in sustainable consumption. A study in Pakistan (Huo et al., 2022) revealed the direct impact of CSR initiatives on sustainable purchase intention and also that brand trust and brand loyalty can act as mediators between CSR and consumer intention to purchase sustainable clothes.

Lee and Lee (2018) determined that companies' CSR initiatives can improve their corporate image and increase sales revenues. A positive corporate image can also increase consumers' decision to purchase the goods or services in question. The importance of CSR in creating a positive corporate image was also found by Vătămanescu et al. (2021). According to the insights from the study, consumers' choice to engage in sustainable consumption is influenced by the attitudes of fashion companies' towards social responsibility.

The aim of the research is to identify the impact of corporate image and social responsibility on consumer engagement in sustainable consumption. To achieve the aim of the study, the following objectives were formulated: i) to identify the links between corporate social responsibility and corporate image; ii) to determine the impact of corporate image components on consumers' engagement in sustainable consumption when choosing sustainable clothing and textiles. The study highlights the theoretical contribution to explaining the links between corporate image and corporate social responsibility and between consumer engagement and sustainable consumption.

An online survey was carried out and 406 responses were received from Lithuanian respondents. Correlation, linear regression, and multiple regression analyses were performed to evaluate the hypotheses and establish the significance of the relationships between the variables under investigation.

The remainder of the paper is structured in the following way. Section 1 provides a literature review, explains basic concepts, conceptualises the links between corporate image and social responsibility and explains sustainable consumption meaning, presents a model for studying the influence of corporate image and social responsibility on consumer engagement in sustainable consumption. Section 2

presents the research methodology. Section 3 presents results of empirical study for assessment of the impact of corporate image and social responsibility on consumer engagement in sustainable consumption in Lithuania and develops discussions.

## 1. Theoretical background

### 1.1 Corporate image and social responsibility

Corporate image is an important factor in attracting and retaining consumers. It is an important company's objective to attract consumers and also create a favourable public perception. The right corporate image can ensure market competitiveness. A satisfied and loyal consumer can contribute to an increase in supply, which is the hallmark of the development of competitive firms. Corporate image can help to improve the public's perception of the company itself, which is why many companies are actively working to create a positive image and convey it to the public (Obioma, 2019).

Corporate image can be defined as a concept that refers to consumers' perceptions of a company through the media or through direct and indirect experiences (e.g., from acquaintances and word-of-mouth recommendations; Dokmaipum et al., 2019). Different scholars (Horng et al., 2018; LeBlanc & Nguyen, 1996; Lee, 2019; Özkan et al., 2020; Triatmano et al., 2021) put the consumer at the centre of the concept of corporate image, as consumers determine the perception of the corporate image based on their own personal experiences, recommendations and perceptions. This means that corporate image is evaluated by the consumer, and communication to other consumers can become an important aspect in defining corporate image. However, the consumer is not the only important representative that should be focused on. In the context of corporate image development, it is important to understand the structure of corporate image – the parts that make a positive image possible. Scholars (Triatmano et al., 2021) identified emotional (managerial reputation and corporate identity) and functional (service offering, physical environment, accessibility and communication) attributes that create a corporate image, but when looking at the components of corporate image, it is possible to find quite different variations.

The components of corporate image that are often identified in the literature are: institution/

corporate image, functional image and brand image. Corporate image is understood as consumers' perception of the company and includes consumers' attitudes towards corporate social responsibility practices. The functional image covers business and marketing aspects related to product innovation, pricing, marketing strategy and consumer service. Product image refers to consumers' impressions of a company's products or services (Stoyanov, 2017; Teng, 2019).

Service or product quality, differentiation, price, technology, culture and recognition (Gouji et al., 2016), consumer recommendations, sharing of experiences and consumer satisfaction (Sallam, 2016), and the importance of the brand in the image of companies (Latif et al., 2016) are also factors that contribute to the image of companies. The literature often focuses on the characteristics of a product or service that create a positive or negative corporate image. It has been noted that corporate image refers to the consumer's perception of the characteristics of the goods or services offered (Duje & Carvajal, 2018), or it has been pointed out (Ismail et al., 2021) that corporate image is composed of several components: tradition, ideology, the company's name, its reputation, the level of price of the goods or services, the perceived quality of the consumer, and the advertising. Corporate image also refers to the group of people who create the company in terms of its objectives, work ethic, methods, strategy and relationship with employees (Pérez & Torres 2017).

The Scholar (Rubtcova & Pavenkov, 2019) identifies eight components that create corporate image: 1) product/service image (includes the specifications of the product or service being sold, includes the name, design elements, packaging, quality, additional services/features); 2) consumer image (defines the consumer who chooses a particular service or product; this is influenced by personal qualities, character traits, lifestyle choices, the pursuit of needs, and status in society); 3) the internal image of the organisation (reflects the attitudes of those working in the company to the working environment, the psychological environment, communication between team members, and the relationship between managers and subordinate employees); 4) the image of the founder and/or key managers of the organisation (focusing on the verbal and non-verbal behaviour

and social traits of the key representatives of the company); 5) the image of the staff (collective, generalised; the behaviour, culture and communication manners of the company's employees in communicating the overall corporate image); 6) the visual image of the organisation (covering the aesthetic highlights of the company); 7) social image of the organisation (includes participation in social, community, projects, cooperation with other institutions); 8) corporate image (business image; includes building corporate reputation, ethical standards, fair play, competitive market presence, sales promotion, innovation, modernisation).

Corporate social responsibility is related to corporate image. Corporate social responsibility is part of corporate image, which contributes to the image of companies and is becoming one of the more important factors in determining consumer engagement in the context of sustainability these days. Corporate social responsibility is defined by different authors (Brin & Nehme, 2019; Hassan et al., 2022a,b; Sharma, 2019) in a similar way, as the pursuit of activities that are fair, legally just, ethical, socially relevant and that minimise negative environmental impacts. Corporate social responsibility is becoming an important aspect of creating a positive corporate image that leads to consumer engagement in sustainable consumption. Corporate social responsibility plays an important role in a company's profits, its reputation and consumers' perception of the company (Wang, 2018). It is identified as an essential marketing strategy for the sustainable development of a company. Chen et al. (2012) argued that CSR can have a positive impact on a company's interaction with consumers, creating a positive reputation and consumer satisfaction. CSR is often associated with the elimination of the effects of climate change in the literature. Companies whose activities have a negative impact on the quality of the environment need to focus on mitigating the negative effects.

Carroll's pyramid used in the literature to explain social responsibility (Carroll, 2016), which includes the four areas of social responsibility, but adds the area of sustainability, i.e., environmental responsibility, which is one of the most important in the context of sustainable consumption (Aldeia, 2021; Wang, 2018). The economic dimension refers to the ability of an enterprise to ensure the supply of goods

or services to consumers, at socially appropriate prices, while at the same time being able to sustain economic growth. The legal domain defines the implementation of legal regulations in the business, the fairness of the tax system and the responsible conduct of business. Ethical responsibility refers to social norms and ethics, while the philanthropic sphere is defined as the "voluntary" sphere, which is manifested through the provision of assistance in the fields of education, health, art and culture (Gürlek et al., 2017; Hadi & Udin, 2021). Many authors have analysed and modified the triple bottom line theory. This theory defines three important aspects of CSR: the planet (environmental), profits (economic) and people (social) (Shim et al., 2021). Together, these domains provide an important implementation of CSR.

While the economic, legal, ethical and philanthropic domains are equally important in the context of CSR, the environmental domain is given special attention. CSR can be identified with corporate sustainability and this is the main driver of CSR (Singh & Misra, 2021). It is for this reason that CSR is an important part of corporate image in the context of sustainable consumption.

In summary, corporate image has a significant impact on consumers' engagement as corporate image can attract and retain consumers. Corporate image is determined by many factors: quality of service, feedback, internal environment (employees), name, reputation, and communication methods. As sustainability is becoming more important, corporate social responsibility can be one of the factors contributing to a positive image of a company, which can contribute to consumer engagement in sustainable consumption.

### 1.2 Consumer engagement in sustainable consumption

Consumer satisfaction is one of the most important "antecedents" of consumer engagement, as it is satisfied consumers who can create a positive relationship with the firm, but in the current literature, consumer satisfaction cannot be considered synonymous with consumer engagement, but rather as a determinant of consumer engagement (Gligor, 2019). Companies need to focus on slightly different management solutions because, in today's business world, achieving consumer satisfaction is not enough to maintain consumer

loyalty (Rosado-Pinto & Loureiro, 2020). Creating a positive relationship between business and consumer is crucial. This highlights an important objective for companies to ensure consumer engagement.

Consumer engagement, which refers to the investment of consumer resources in interacting with a brand (Hollebeek et al., 2019), has been proclaimed as one of the company's key objectives (Chang et al., 2019). Researchers (Kumar et al., 2019) argue that consumer engagement contributes to increased sales, increased share of wallet, improved corporate reputation and competition.

A rapidly changing world, a growing population and increasing consumption mean that people's consumption habits are closely linked to environmental changes. Declining quality of agricultural production, global warming, loss of biodiversity, depletion of non-renewable natural resources, are driving societies to rethink their consumption patterns and adopt environmentally friendly consumption. Sustainable consumption is a very important goal of sustainable development, which is linked to sustainable lifestyles and, according to the United Nations, is expressed as doing more and better with less (Simeone & Scarpato, 2020).

Sustainable consumption can be defined as the choice of environmentally friendly products also includes resource efficiency, promotion of the use of renewable resources, and the improvement of the quality of life. According to Quoquab et al. (2019), the concept refers to the ongoing action of managing desire by avoiding extravagant purchases. Sustainable consumption requires that society, companies, and individuals individually reduce their footprints in the interest of environmental protection (Anantharaman, 2018). In summary, sustainable consumption can be associated with consumer behaviour (choosing to buy from companies whose activities are more sustainable), limiting consumption, recycling products and materials, and choosing environmentally friendly consumption patterns such as the use of public transport, purchasing services and products that reduce the negative impact on the environment and society.

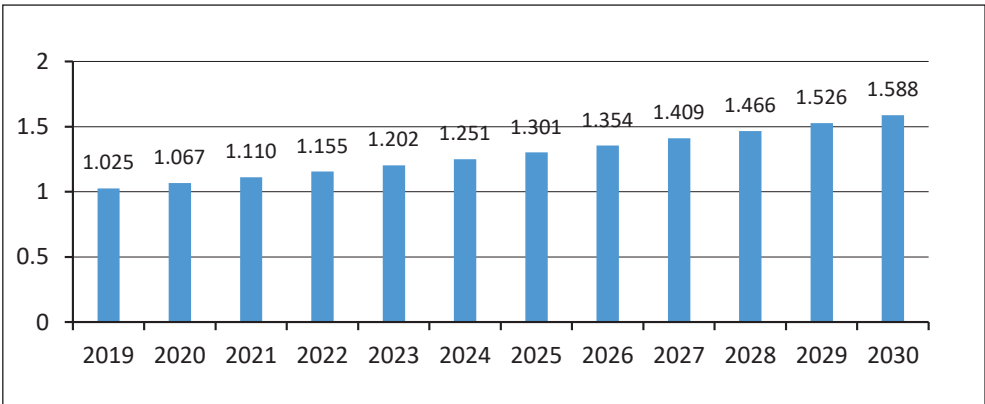
Sustainable consumption can be defined as the avoidance of non-essential purchases, responsible travel choices (e.g., public transport), the reuse of packaging and materials, the reduction of chemicals in the home,

waste separation, the conservation of natural resources and the choice of environmentally friendly products or services (Jonkutė, 2015). One of the most important areas of sustainable consumption in the current literature and a cause of environmental change is the use of sustainable clothing. Throughout the entire life cycle of clothing, from production to use, there is a negative impact on the ecosystem and the environment (Connell & Kozar, 2014), which is why it is important to ensure sustainable consumption in the clothing and textiles sector (Jacobson & Harrison, 2022). In the context of sustainable consumption, key aspects (e.g., meeting basic human needs, caring for environmental well-being, caring for quality of life, caring for future generations, adopting a life-cycle thinking approach) are identified that convey why it is important to make sustainable consumption choices in today's society (Marques & Coelho, 2022; Quoquab & Mohammad, 2020).

Sustainable consumption patterns can be defined as consumer behaviour based on sustainable aspects. It shows how consumers behave in order to minimise their negative impact on the environment. Three important dimensions can influence sustainable consumer decisions (Shin & Bull, 2019): decision-making power, information (feedback) and motivation.

The fashion industry and sustainability are an integral part of today's sustainable development. It is important to influence sustainable consumption when choosing clothing and textile products. The environmental impact of the fashion industry is confirmed by the European Union's Sustainable and Circular Textiles Strategy, which aims to develop a greener use of textiles to combat the consequences of fast fashion and to reduce the negative environmental impact. The European Commission's (2022) report states that it is important to curb the consumption of textiles because the textile production almost doubled between 2000 and 2015, and consumption of clothing and clothing-linen is projected to increase by as much as 63% by 2023 (Lazaric et al., 2020). It can be argued that growing consumer demands and fast fashion goods are encouraging wasteful and unsustainable consumption and negative impacts on environmental quality.

According to the World Bank, the fashion industry consumes around 93 m<sup>3</sup> of water each year, the dyeing and processing of fabrics



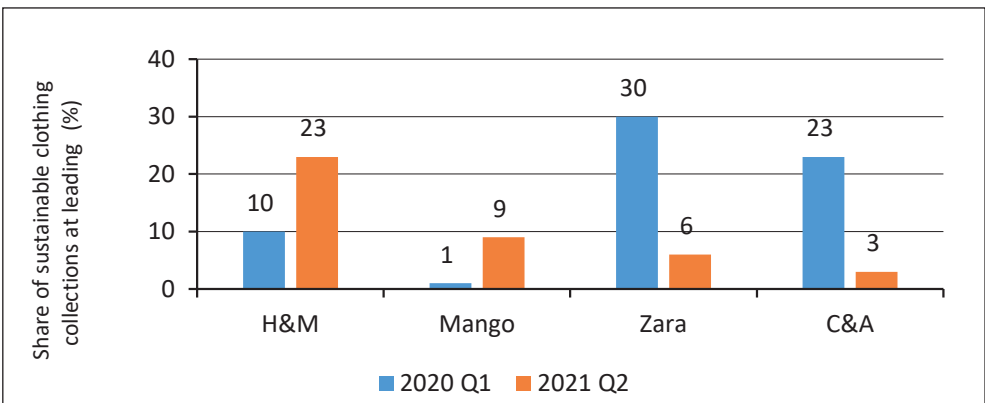
**Fig. 1: Carbon dioxide equivalent emissions from the global apparel industry 2019–2030 (Gt)**

Source: Projected carbon dioxide equivalent emissions of the apparel industry worldwide from 2019 to 2030 (Statista, 2022a,b)

account for 20% of the world's wastewater, and 10% of the an-carbon dioxide emitted annually is from the fashion industry (The World Bank, 2019). It is estimated that if rates continue, the fashion industry's greenhouse gas emissions could increase by more than 50%. Rapidly growing and changing demands mean that rates may increase due to fast fashion and unsustainable clothing. For this reason, promoting sustainable consumption is the first step towards reducing the negative environmental

impact of the expansion of unsustainable production by companies in the clothing and textile sector. The high carbon emissions in the fashion industry are confirmed by the latest estimates of the Statista data portal (Fig. 1; Statista, 2022a,b).

Fig. 1 shows that in 2019, the fashion industry emitted 1.01 Gt of CO<sub>2</sub>; without drastic action, it could reach 1.6 Gt by 2030. Although the clothing industry is one of the most polluting industries, a sustainable clothing market is



**Fig. 2: Share of the sustainable clothing collection in leading fast fashion stores in Europe (%; Q1 2020–Q1 2021)**

Source: Share of sustainable clothing collections at leading fast fashion retailers in Europe in the first quarter of 2020 and 2021 (Statista, 2022a,b)

not yet well developed. According to data from Statista (2022a,b) in 2021, sustainable clothing accounted for around 3.9% of global market sales and this is expected to increase to 6.1% in 2026.

Although sales in the fashion industry are growing, sustainable clothing represents only a small share of the total, as evidenced by the range of clothing sold by the most popular fashion chains, where sustainable clothing collections represent a small percentage of total sales (Fig. 2; Statista, 2022a,b). H&M offered the highest share of sustainable clothing in its range in Q1 2021 and the percentage of sustainable clothing increased by 13% year-on-year. Zara and C&A saw a significant decrease in the percentage of sustainable clothing between Q1 2020 and Q1 2021. The lowest proportion of sustainable clothing in the total range was offered by Mango chain stores, which accounted for only 1% in Q1 2020. The H&M group states that 95% of the cotton used is recycled and that they aim to use 100% renewable electricity by 2023 and to produce only from 100% recycled or other sustainably produced materials (H&M Group, 2018).

In summary, one of the tools to engage consumers in sustainable consumption is corporate

image, which reflects consumers' attitudes towards a company. For this reason, the aim is to investigate whether corporate image can influence consumer engagement in sustainable consumption and which components of corporate image are most influential. The analysis of the empirical studies has shown that corporate image is influenced by socially responsible corporate actions, which are important for sustainable consumption. As companies can create a favourable image and gain the trust of consumers by implementing social responsibility, the impact of corporate image is examined by looking at how social responsibility relates to corporate image in terms of the perceived importance of social responsibility by consumers. Social responsibility is examined as an overall factor, but five areas of social responsibility are also identified.

The model (Fig. 3) also reflects the relationship between corporate image and consumer engagement in sustainable consumption.

In the light of the aspects examined, the following hypotheses are put forward:

H1: Corporate social responsibility has a positive impact on corporate image.

H2: Corporate economic responsibility has a positive impact on corporate image.

H3: Corporate legal responsibility has a positive impact on corporate image.

H4: Corporate ethical responsibility has a positive impact on corporate image.

H5: Corporate philanthropic responsibility has a positive impact on corporate image.

H6: Corporate environmental responsibility has a positive impact on corporate image.

H7: Corporate image has a positive impact on consumer engagement in sustainable consumption.

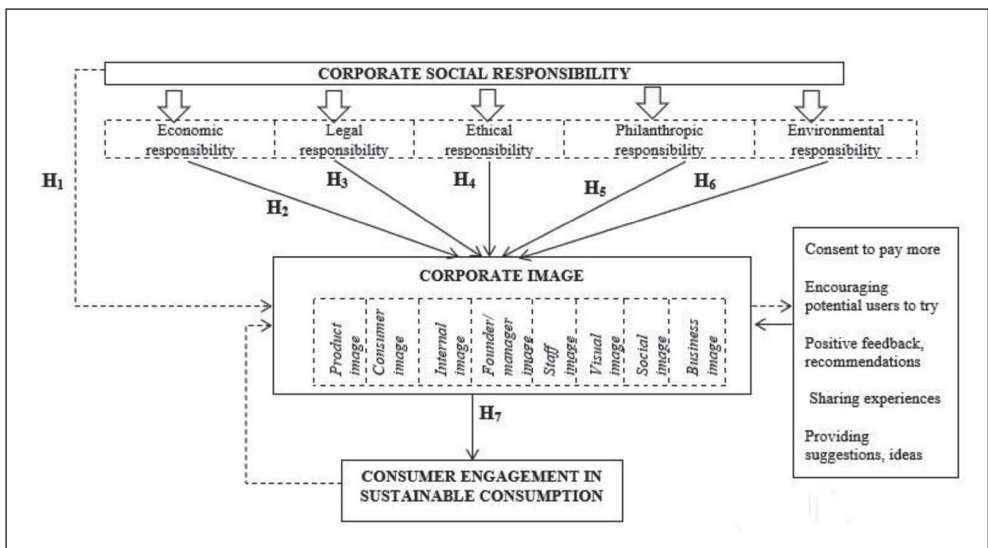


Fig. 3:

A model for studying the impact of corporate image and social responsibility on consumer engagement in sustainable consumption

Source: own

*H3: Corporate ethical responsibility has a positive impact on corporate image.*

*H4: Corporate legal responsibility has a positive impact on corporate image.*

*H5: Corporate philanthropic responsibility has a positive impact on corporate image.*

*H6: Corporate environmental responsibility has a positive impact on corporate image.*

*H7: Corporate image influences consumers' engagement in sustainable consumption by choosing sustainable clothing and textiles.*

## 2. Research methodology

The statistical information confirms the relevance and importance of the topic. Pollution levels in the clothing and textile industry are increasing rapidly and sustainable clothing collections in fast fashion stores are not replacing conventional clothing. In order to reduce negative environmental impacts, it is important to raise consumer awareness of sustainable consumption and to promote the choice of sustainable clothing and textiles.

In order to investigate consumers' attitudes towards sustainable consumption, the meaning of social responsibility and the impact of corporate image on consumer engagement, the survey was carried out between March and April 2023. The questionnaire was posted online, and the survey link was shared on various social platforms. This research method is modern, scientifically valid and can be considered a reliable and appropriate method of data collection. The availability of social media is wide, which allows it to reach respondents with different socio-demographic characteristics and to speed up data collection.

The questions are grouped according to themes that address different aspects of the study, and a Likert scale (with a maximum of 5 and a minimum of 1) is used to rate the questionnaire statements.

The concept of corporate image is assessed based on an analysis of the literature (Lee, 2019; Özkan, 2020; Triatmano et al., 2021; Yu et al., 2021). The components of the corporate image (product, consumer, internal, managerial, personnel, social, and business image) are identified (Rubtcova & Pavenkov, 2019). Consumer behaviour determined by a positive corporate image is analysed by adapting the statements: "I only say positive things about the company to others"; "I encourage friends and relatives to buy and use it"; "I recommend

this product to others, when I am approached for advice," etc. (Leckie et al., 2021). In order to make consumers evaluate a socially responsible company, the questions and answers are based on the statements identified by Chen et al. (2021): "I have a positive view of a company that carries out CSR"; "CSR activities developed by a company change my view of the company," etc.). The importance of corporate social responsibility is explored through the statements developed by Lee (2019) and Cha and Jo (2019), who define the domains of social responsibility.

To assess consumer engagement, the statements describing consumer engagement by Mandarić et al. (2022) are adapted from theoretical and empirical material. Criteria for assessing sustainable consumption are used to assess the understanding of the concept of sustainable consumption (Jonkutė, 2015). In order to investigate consumers' engagement in sustainable consumption when choosing sustainable clothing and textiles, the statements developed by D'Adamo and Colasante (2022): "My choice to buy sustainable clothing and textiles is influenced by the positive image of the companies"; "Before buying clothing and textiles, I seek information about the sustainability policies and socially responsible practices of these companies," etc.). The study defines sustainable clothing and textiles as clothing and textiles that are environmentally friendly, less harmful to the environment and made from recycled, natural materials, in accordance with all the principles of social responsibility (Jacobson & Harrison, 2022).

The Paniotto formula is used to determine the sample for the quantitative survey. A sampling error of 5% is chosen, with a probability of 95%. The age of the sampled population in 2023, the population of Lithuania was 2,428,680 at the beginning of the year, so the sample size of the survey is 384 respondents.

Four hundred six respondents completed the questionnaire, of which 49.8% were male and 48% female. 9 respondents, i.e., 2.2%, did not wish to disclose their gender. More than half of the respondents, i.e., 54.2%, stated that their monthly after-tax income was between EUR 1,001 and EUR 1,500, 27.8% stated that their monthly after-tax income was between EUR 1,501 and EUR 2,000. 85.5% of the respondents were employed, 11.1% were students. The largest share of respondents in the survey was in the 25–44 and 45–64 age



Tab. 1: Evaluation of the internal consistency of the questionnaire

	Number of statements	Cronbach's alpha coefficient	Spearman-Brown coefficient
The impact of corporate social responsibility on corporate image	21	0.973	0.974
The impact of corporate image on consumer engagement in sustainable consumption	5	0.792	0.797
Full questionnaire		<b>0.892</b>	<b>0.916</b>

Source: own

groups (43.1% and 44.1%, respectively). It was noted that the majority of the respondents have a university degree (35%) or a post-secondary education (30.3%).

The questionnaire questions are grouped according to themes dealing with different aspects of the study and a Likert scale (with a maximum value of 5 and a minimum value of 1) was used to evaluate the questionnaire statements. The assessment of the consistency and reliability of the statements is very high, with a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.973 (Tab. 1).

It can be concluded that the questionnaire has adequate reliability for data analysis and generalization of results.

Correlation, linear regression and multiple regression analyses are carried out to test the hypotheses and to determine the significance of the relationships between the variables. Pearson's correlation coefficients for linear correlation and Spearman's correlation coefficients for rank correlation are calculated. These methods of analysis are used to examine one dependent and one independent variable and to construct a linear regression equation, which is used to predict the values of the dependent variable (Hae-Young, 2018):

$$y = b_0 + b_1x + e \quad (1)$$

where:  $b_0$  – constant;  $b_1$  – direction coefficient;  $e$  – random error.

The regression equation can be used to determine how much of the variance of the variable  $y$  depends on the value of the variable  $x$ , i.e., how the values of the dependent variable will vary with the values of the independent variable.

The statistical significance of the regression model is checked against the values obtained

from the ANOVA table produced by the SPSS. The regression model is statistically significant when the  $p$ -value of the  $F$ -criterion is 0.000. To check the reliability of the regression, the  $R$ -squared – coefficient of determination ( $R^2 < 0.25$ ) is used. This indicator shows the proportion of one variable that is determined by the other variable, and therefore provides a check on the adequacy of the regression analysis.

In summary, it can be argued that social responsibility can influence corporate image, which can lead to a positive corporate image that encourages consumer involvement in sustainable consumption.

### 3. Results and discussion

#### 3.1 Results

The first questions of the questionnaire were designed to explore the importance of sustainable consumption for the respondents and how they individually pursue sustainable consumption. The most important aspects of sustainability for respondents were that the products they use are environmentally friendly (90.9% of respondents agreed with this statement) and that they are concerned that the planet's resources are not wasted (86.7%). As many as 23.9% of respondents strongly disagreed with the statement that they can be described as environmentally responsible consumers.

When looking at how respondents themselves contribute to sustainable consumption, it was found that they mainly pursue sustainable consumption by sorting waste (48.5%), reducing the use of chemicals in the household (50.2%), reusing packaging materials, shopping bags, etc. (64%), and choosing environmentally friendly products (57.1%). Fewer respondents agreed with the statement that they choose to travel

responsibly, with only 7 respondents strongly agreeing with this statement. Women gave the highest average score of 4.42 to the statement “I separate my waste,” while men gave the highest average score of 4.29.

Consumers were asked to indicate what they think makes a corporate image. 54.7% of respondents said that corporate image is defined as the evaluation of a company through consumers’ direct and indirect experiences with the company. This answer was chosen by 59.9% of women and 39.2% of men. The most important components of corporate image, according to the respondents, are the image of the product (i.e., name, design, packaging, quality and other product characteristics; average score 4.38) and the image of the staff (behaviour of staff, culture; score 4.33). Visual image (the company’s physical environment, the style of its employees; 4.29) is slightly less important, while consumer image, i.e., what characterises the company’s consumers, was the least important to respondents (mean score of 2.61).

When assessing the importance of CSR for corporate image, it was found that more than 90% of respondents have a favourable view of a company that is engaged in CSR. When looking at the different areas of social responsibility that can affect corporate image, consumers gave the highest average score to the economic area (4.49) and the lowest to the philanthropic area (4.17; Tab. 2).

Respondents believe that companies should comply with laws and regulations (4.52), operate in a transparent manner (4.5), reduce environmental damage (4.49), increase employment (4.49) and improve the quality of services (4.49). It is important to note that women aged 19–24 were the most likely to strongly

agree with these statements. Women scored higher on average than men in terms of the importance of CSR areas for corporate image.

Also, it was found that 37.5% of women aged 45–64, 18.4% of women aged 25–44 and only 5.4% of women aged 19–24 prefer only sustainable clothing products. 51% of men aged 25–44 and 36.4% of men aged 45–64 strongly disagreed with the statement that they prefer to buy only sustainable clothing products. Only 7.4% of respondents said that they prefer clothing and textile companies that have sustainable clothing lines and only 10.1% strongly agree with the statement that they look for information on companies’ sustainability policies and social responsibility initiatives before buying clothing and textiles. 22.4% of respondents had a negative view of corporate sustainability and social responsibility and strongly agreed that such actions are just a marketing tool. More than 57.1% of respondents strongly agreed that corporate image influences their choice to buy sustainable clothing and textiles. 49.5% of men and 65.6% of women strongly agree with the statement that corporate image influences the choice to buy sustainable clothing and textiles.

In summary, respondents recognise the importance of sustainable consumption, especially in terms of not wasting the planet’s resources and not having a negative impact on the environment. Respondents pursue sustainable consumption in a variety of ways, e.g., sorting waste, reducing the use of chemicals in the home, and reusing packaging materials. Respondents consider that corporate image is mainly driven by the image of the product and the image of the staff, and that a positive corporate image leads to positive feedback, recommendations, and encouragement to buy

**Tab. 2: Assessment of the importance of social responsibility for corporate image (average score)**

CRS	Female	Male	Total average score
Environmental responsibility	4.55	4.35	4.44
Economic responsibility	4.63	4.38	4.49
Ethical responsibility	4.63	4.36	4.48
Philanthropic responsibility	4.18	4.18	4.17
Legal responsibility	4.62	4.37	4.48

Source: own

and use. Respondents have a favourable view of a company with corporate social responsibility and highlight the importance of economic and legal responsibility.

The analysis of the correlation between the two variables corporate image and corporate social responsibility, showed a moderate correlation ( $r = 0.423$  and  $p = 0.000$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ), suggesting that hypothesis  $H1$  is true. There is a statistically significant and positive moderate relationship between corporate image and corporate social responsibility. Corporate social responsibility (CSR) improves corporate image.

The regression model is statistically significant with an  $F$ -criterion of  $p = 0.000$  (Tab. 3).

The coefficient of the variable corporate image in the regression model is statistically significantly different from zero at  $p = 0.000$ .

The coefficient of determination ( $R = 0.179$ ) shows that corporate social responsibility is a 17.9% determinant of corporate image.

The correlation of individual CSR areas with corporate image is statistically significant (Tab. 4).

The strongest correlation was found between corporate environmental responsibility and corporate image, with a correlation coefficient of  $r = 0.436$  and  $p = 0.000$  ( $p < 0.05$ ), which means that hypothesis  $H6$  was confirmed and that corporate environmental responsibility has a positive impact on corporate image (Tab. 4). The weakest correlation ( $r = 0.268$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ) was found with philanthropic social responsibility and corporate image, but this correlation is statistically significant, so it can be concluded that hypothesis  $H5$  has been supported.

**Tab. 3: Results of linear regression**

Model	Unstandardised coefficients*		Standardised coefficients*	<i>t</i>	Sig.
	B	Std. error	Beta		
(Constant)	12.409	0.614		20.194	0.000
Corporate social responsibility components	0.164	0.017	0.423	9.392	0.000

$F = 88.201$  ( $p = 0.000$ ),  $R = 0.423$ ,  $R$ -square = 0.179, adjusted  $R$ -square = 0.177

Note: \*Dependent variable: components of corporate image.

Source: own

**Tab. 4: Statistical assessment of the impact of social responsibility on corporate image**

Hypotheses	Correlation coefficient ( <i>r</i> )	<i>p</i> -value	Regression equation
<b><math>H1</math> – Corporate social responsibility has a positive impact on corporate image</b>	0.423	0.000	$12.409 + 0.164x$
<b><math>H2</math> – Corporate economic responsibility has a positive impact on corporate image</b>	0.366	0.000	$17.930 + 0.543x$
<b><math>H3</math> – Corporate ethical responsibility has a positive impact on corporate image</b>	0.420	0.000	$16.730 + 1.023x$
<b><math>H4</math> – Corporate legal responsibility has a positive impact on corporate image</b>	0.412	0.000	$16.557 + 0.757x$
<b><math>H5</math> – Corporate philanthropic responsibility has a positive impact on corporate image</b>	0.268	0.000	$22.368 + 0.466x$
<b><math>H6</math> – Corporate environmental responsibility has a positive impact on corporate image</b>	0.436	0.000	$16.390 + 0.619x$

Source: own

Philanthropic corporate responsibility explains only 0.72% of the changes in the other variable, i.e., corporate image. It can be seen that there is a weak but statistically significant relationship with economic responsibility, and the coefficient of determination shows that economic responsibility is likely to have a 13% effect on corporate image. This means that hypothesis *H2* is confirmed. A moderate statistically significant relationship was found with legal and ethical responsibility, which means that hypotheses *H3* and *H4* were confirmed.

Corporate image may have a small influence on consumer engagement in sustainable consumption when choosing sustainable clothing and textiles; therefore, *H7* – corporate image influences consumer engagement in sustainable consumption when choosing sustainable clothing and textiles – is not supported. A moderate relationship was found between consumer engagement in sustainable consumption when choosing sustainable clothing and textiles and social image (correlation coefficient 0.474); a moderate relationship (correlation coefficient of 0.471) was found between consumer engagement in sustainable consumption when choosing sustainable clothing and textiles and product image, and a weak relationship (correlation coefficient of 0.471) was found between consumer engagement in sustainable consumption when choosing sustainable clothing and textiles and staff image (correlation coefficient of 0.325), a weak relationship (correlation coefficient of 0.298) was found between consumer engagement in sustainable consumption when choosing sustainable clothing and textiles and visual image. Considering all the components of corporate image (product, consumer, internal, managerial, staff, visual, social, business image) and respondents' engagement in sustainable consumption when choosing sustainable clothing and textiles together, there was a very weak, although statistically significant, correlation ( $r = 0.183, p = 0.000$ ). The linear regression model shows that corporate image is only a 0.33% predictor of consumer engagement in sustainable consumption when choosing sustainable clothing and textiles products.

The correlation analysis between corporate social responsibility image and consumer engagement in sustainable consumption in sustainable clothing and textiles also shows a weak but statistically significant relationship

( $r = 0.384, p = 0.000$ ). It can be argued that corporate social responsibility has a stronger influence on consumer engagement in sustainable consumption when choosing sustainable clothing and textiles, but that this influence is also not strong. The coefficient of determination shows that the socially responsible corporate image explains only 15% of the consumers' engagement in sustainable consumption when choosing sustainable clothing and textiles.

To summarise the results of the study, it can be concluded that social responsibility has an impact on corporate image and clothing and textile companies should not only strive to create a socially responsible corporate image but also contribute to promoting sustainable consumption through communication and consumer awareness.

### 3.2 Discussion

The link between corporate image and corporate social responsibility has emerged in the study of sustainable consumption aspects. Many authors (Chen et al., 2021; Stoyanov, 2017; Wang, 2018; Wong & Kim, 2020) have highlighted the importance of corporate social responsibility in creating a positive corporate image, and the results of the studies already carried out have shown that in the context of sustainable consumption, corporate image is seen through the exercise of social responsibility. This is supported by Yu et al. (2021), who investigated the influence of the corporate image of organic products on consumer purchasing behaviour and corporate social responsibility. These authors highlighted that a positive corporate image will attract and retain consumers, while high-quality products and social responsibility practices will ensure consumer trust. As corporate social responsibility increases, i.e., as more corporate social responsibility initiatives are undertaken, corporate image, i.e., what consumers see, understand and value, improves.

Scholars (Gürlek et al., 2021; Hadi & Udin, 2021; Kumar, 2018) have looked at social responsibility in several areas: economic, ethical, legal, and philanthropic, or have identified one of the most important areas today, environmental responsibility. A statistical assessment of the impact of social responsibility on corporate image has shown that the strongest link also exists between environmental corporate responsibility and corporate image. Corporate environmental responsibility has a 19% impact

on corporate image. The weakest relationship was found between philanthropic social responsibility and corporate image (changes in philanthropic corporate responsibility explain only 0.72% of the changes in corporate image). However, different insights can be found in other authors' studies. A survey of the Chinese population (Zhang & Cui, 2018) showed that economic and ethical CSR initiatives are the most important in creating a positive image of companies in the minds of consumers.

The analysis of empirical studies (Hassan et al., 2022a,b; Mizrachi & Tal, 2022; Quoquab & Mohammad, 2020) has shown that the apparel and textile sector and consumers' engagement in sustainable consumption of apparel and textile products are particularly important in the context of sustainable consumption. The promotion of fast fashion and the use of unsustainable clothing and textiles have a negative impact on the quality of the environment and contribute to the year-on-year increase in pollution levels. In order to promote consumer engagement in sustainable consumption, companies need to focus on corporate image development (James & James, 2022; Mandarić et al., 2022). However, the results of the study showed a very weak but statistically significant relationship ( $r = 0.183$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ) between all components of corporate image and respondents' engagement in sustainable consumption when choosing sustainable clothing and textiles products. Moreover, engaging in sustainable initiatives involves higher costs for the consumer, and it's also important to have a product offering that gives the consumer a choice – something that fast-fashion clothing and textile production allows.

Social responsibility is important not only for corporate image but also for consumer engagement in sustainable consumption. The assessment of the relationship between the image of socially responsible companies and consumer engagement in sustainable consumption when choosing sustainable clothing and textiles shows that the image of socially responsible companies has a stronger influence on consumer engagement in sustainable consumption when choosing sustainable clothing and textiles, but that this influence is also not strong.

In developing sustainable business models, companies need to integrate environmental, social, and economic considerations to create

sustainable and long-term value for their businesses, society, and the environment. Future questions include: what sustainable business models can encourage consumers to engage in sustainable consumption? A further line of research is planned to include corporate labelling and certification tools that can influence consumer engagement in sustainable consumption.

## Conclusions

The concept of corporate image can be defined by looking at two key concepts in the context of corporate image: corporate individuality and corporate identity, and explained through eight components. It is important to ensure the development of social responsibility in corporate image building, as it can contribute to a positive corporate image. Consumer engagement is a consumer behaviour that is favourable to the company, which is important for the business in terms of benefits such as increased consumer traffic, profitability, competitiveness, improved image, and reputation.

A positive corporate image can lead consumers to choose sustainable consumption. Consumers whose engagement is driven by corporate image are more likely to share positive recommendations and respond more flexibly to price changes. A positive corporate image can lead to consumer satisfaction and long-term consumer retention, i.e., loyalty, which can influence positive consumer engagement with sustainable consumption.

Corporate social responsibility plays an important role in the context of corporate image. Corporate social responsibility has a positive impact on corporate image, and clothing and textile companies implement social responsibility not only by ensuring the production of sustainable clothing and textile products, but also by participating in social activities, supporting environmental organisations and improving the working environment. The study highlights the importance of economic, ethical, legal and environmental responsibility. Corporate image was found to have an impact on consumers' engagement in sustainable consumption through the choice of sustainable clothing and textiles, but correlation-regression analysis showed a weak relationship.

This study confirmed the theoretical insights that highlighted the positive impact of corporate image on consumer engagement in sustainable consumption. It also confirmed the importance

of social responsibility in creating a positive corporate image and in encouraging consumers to choose sustainable consumption.

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