

Sustainable Consumption and the Fair Trade Idea Versus the Consumption Behavior of Young Singles in Poland

Tomasz Zalega

Faculty of Management, University of Warsaw, Poland

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7488-1184>

Submitted: 04.07.2022 | Accepted: 15.11.2022

Abstract

Purpose: The article is a research paper. The aim of this study is to provide some insight into the consumption behavior of young Polish singles that conform to the idea of sustainable consumption and the fair trade movement.

Design/methodology: The methodological part synthetically discusses the conceptualization of research and selection of the research sample. The empirical part, based on the research conducted by the author, examines young Polish singles' pro-environmental behaviors that can be defined as sustainable consumption and are aligned with the fair trade idea. The analysis is based on a survey questionnaire administered from 1 October to 30 March 2022 in a sample of 2587 young singles who made independent decisions in the market.

Findings: The methodological part synthetically discusses the conceptualization of research and selection of the research sample. The empirical part, based on the research conducted by the author, examines young Polish singles' pro-environmental behaviors that can be defined as sustainable consumption and are aligned with the fair trade idea. The analysis is based on a survey questionnaire administered from 1 October to 30 March 2022 in a sample of 2587 young singles who made independent decisions in the market. The information from the survey shows that young Polish singles implement the idea of fully sustainable consumption to a small extent and that some of them interpret the essence of sustainable consumption incorrectly. The proportion of young respondents who declared that they acted in line with the idea of sustainable consumption was much higher among women than men as well as among university graduates, those earning a monthly income of more than PLN 4000.00, and mostly living in large urban agglomerations. Furthermore, the information obtained reveals that sustainable consumption is not fully understood by the respondents, as evidenced by the fact that nearly half of young singles indicated financial costs as the main barrier to sustainable consumption. In turn, for those with the highest income, the main obstacle in this respect was a lack of time. The results of the survey have confirmed

Correspondence address: Faculty of Management, University of Warsaw, Szturmowa 1/3, 02-678 Warszawa, Poland.

Suggested Citation: Zalega, T. (2022). Sustainable Consumption and the Fair Trade Idea Versus the Consumption Behavior of Young Singles in Poland. *Problemy Zarządzania (Management Issues)*, 20(4), 28–67. <https://doi.org/10.7172/1644-9584.98.2>.

that young singles have poor knowledge of labels referring to eco-friendliness, the environment and fair trade, showing that the sample surveyed is characterized by low awareness of eco-labeling, that is the idea of placing green labels on products that are least harmful to the environment.

Research limitations/ implication: Given the limited financial capacity, the study of sustainable consumption and fair trade in the consumption behavior of young singles was confined to an online survey. This affected the research sample (N = 2587). Thus, the conclusions should not be treated as representative of the population of young Polish singles. They only provide some insight into their actual consumption behaviors as part of sustainable consumption and fair trade.

Originality/value: Despite the indicated limitations, the obtained results allowed for partially filling the gap ensuing from the lack of primary research on sustainable behavior of young Polish singles.

Keywords: sustainable consumption, conscious consumption, fair trade, consumer behavior, young singles.

JEL: D7, D12, D16, D18, R22.

Zrównoważona konsumpcja i idea Sprawiedliwego Handlu a zachowania konsumpcyjne młodych singli w Polsce

Streszczenie

Cel: artykuł ma charakter badawczy. Celem opracowania jest uchwycenie zachowań konsumpcyjnych młodych polskich singli wpisujących się w ideę zrównoważonej konsumpcji i ruchu *Fair Trade*.

Metodologia: artykuł składa się z trzech części: teoretycznej, metodologicznej i empirycznej. W pierwszej z nich omówiono pojęcie i istotę zrównoważonej konsumpcji i ruchu *Fair Trade*. W części metodologicznej, w sposób syntetyczny, omówiono konceptualizację badań i dobór próby badawczej. Natomiast w części empirycznej, na podstawie wyników badań własnych, skoncentrowano się na przeanalizowaniu zachowań proekologicznych młodych polskich singli wpisujących się w ideę zrównoważonej konsumpcji i ideę Sprawiedliwego Handlu. Podstawą analizy jest kwestionariusz ankiety przeprowadzony w okresie od 1 października 2021 r. do 30 marca 2022 r. na próbie 2587 młodych singli, którzy podejmowali suwerenne decyzje na rynku.

Wyniki: z informacji uzyskanych z przeprowadzonego badania wynika, że młodzi polscy single w niedużym stopniu ulegają w pełni zrównoważonej konsumpcji, a część z nich niewłaściwie pojmuje istotę zrównoważonej konsumpcji. Odsetek respondentów identyfikujących się ze zrównoważoną konsumpcją był dużo większy wśród kobiet niż mężczyzn, a także wśród osób legitymujących się wykształceniem wyższym i dysponujących miesięcznym rozporządzalnym dochodem powyżej 4000,00 zł, mieszkających najczęściej w dużych aglomeracjach miejskich. Ponadto z pozyskanych informacji można wnioskować, że zrównoważona konsumpcja nie jest w pełni zrozumiała przez respondentów, czego dowodem było wskazywanie przez prawie połowę młodych singli kosztów materialnych jako głównej bariery w prowadzeniu zrównoważonej konsumpcji. Z kolei dla badanych o najwyższych dochodach zasadniczą przeszkodą w prowadzeniu zrównoważonej konsumpcji okazał się brak czasu. Wyniki przeprowadzonych badań potwierdziły także słabą znajomość wśród młodych singli oznaczeń związanych z ekologią, środowiskiem i uczciwym handlem, pokazując, że badaną próbę cechuje niski poziom świadomości w dziedzinie eko-labelingu, czyli idei wprowadzania towarowych oznaczeń ekologicznych na produktach, które najmniej szkodzą środowisku.

Implikacje badawcze: ze względu na ograniczone możliwości finansowe, uchwycenie zrównoważonej konsumpcji i ruchu *Fair Trade* w zachowaniach konsumpcyjnych młodych singli ograniczyło się wyłącznie do badań online. Miało to istotny wpływ na próbę badawczą (N = 2587). Z tego też względu, wniosków płynących z przeprowadzonego badania nie należy traktować jako reprezentatywnych dla populacji polskich

młodych singli. Pozwalają one jedynie przybliżyć rzeczywiste zachowania konsumpcyjne respondentów, wpisujące się w założenia zrównoważonej konsumpcji i ideę Sprawiedliwego Handlu.

Oryginalność/wartość: pomimo wskazanych ograniczeń, uzyskane wyniki pozwoliły na częściowe wypełnienie luki stanowiącej konsekwencję braku pierwotnych badań zrównoważonych zachowań konsumenckich młodych polskich singli.

Słowa kluczowe: zrównoważona konsumpcja, świadoma konsumpcja, *Fair Trade*, zachowania konsumpcyjne, młodzi konsumenci.

1. Introduction

The turn of the 20th and 21st centuries is marked by intense and profound changes in consumers' behavior in the market as regards various aspects of their everyday lives. These changes are largely the result of many determinants such as: economic and cultural globalization, integration processes (including the emergence of the European Union as a single market with free movement of people, capital, goods and services), processes favoring consumer mobility, technical progress, urbanization processes, the development and spread of the internet and mobile phones, ageing and singlization of societies, and the policy of sustainable development. In particular young singles form an important part of today's societies. They are specific market participants since – unlike family households – they feel their needs, perceive the world, understand the messages addressed to them differently, have different systems of values and exhibit different behaviors.

Progressive singlization (making singles) of societies is no longer surprising. Patterns that were still sharply criticized, rejected, disapproved of until recently are now an expression of positively evaluated freedom. The sense of self-efficacy, the pursuit of emancipation and individualism make it necessary to search for alternative life paths in the name of the axiological and normative order considered to be right. Singlehood is becoming increasingly common. It is a sign of independence rather than a cause for shame, it offers the opportunity to build diverse relationships and strike up acquaintances as opposed to a sole focus on the family (Ruszkiewicz, 2008, pp. 9–10). There is, therefore, a chance of choice contrasting with the old, uniform pattern. Changes in mentality, distance from the institution of family, the cult of independence and the building of one's own social and professional position make up the socio-cultural landscape of the 21st century.

Contemporary expectations of the society towards young people are in contradiction with the natural model requiring marriages and procreation. In the era of rampant consumerism, career, economic stabilization and comprehensive education that are the keys to success occupy prominent positions. Ideological and cultural changes manifesting independence require more and more commitment at the professional level. The reasons for the

growing number of singles include progressive individualization of societies and weakened social control (Ruszkiewicz, 2008, p. 134). The modification of purchasing patterns ensuing from these changes is characteristic of young singles. Therefore, by taking active roles in the purchasing process, they are susceptible to new consumption trends including sustainable consumption and related fair trade, which mean a new structure, new forms and ways of consumption but also the emergence of new needs and motives for satisfying them.

Many variables can be used to identify sustainable consumption and the fair trade idea. The simplest ones include demographic variables such as: gender, age, education level and disposable income. However, these variables have some limitations as they only provide information on the state and structure of consumer attitudes that are in line with sustainable consumption and fair trade, without explaining their sources at all. Nonetheless, related literature provides information on the correlations between the said variables on the one hand and sustainable consumption and fair trade on the other.

The aim of this article is to identify the consumption behavior of young Polish singles that conform to the idea of sustainable consumption and the fair trade movement. Following the research, the focus was on verifying whether young people living alone correctly understand sustainable consumption and to what extent they therefore implement its assumptions in their consumption behavior. In addition, the relationship between lifestyle and pro-environmental consumption behavior of young singles was analyzed, as was their knowledge of eco-labels placed on products. With this in mind, five research hypotheses were formulated:

- H*₁: Sustainable consumption is the most popular among wealthier and better educated young Polish singles.
- H*₂: Disposable income is a key determinant of the positive attitude of young singles to sustainable consumption and fair trade. The higher the income, the more positive the attitude of young singles to sustainable consumption and fair trade.
- H*₃: Young female singles exhibit greater environmental awareness than their male counterparts. Hence, their consumption behaviors are more strongly aligned with the idea of sustainable consumption and fair trade.
- H*₄: When shopping, young single women pay more attention to eco-labels than their male counterparts.
- H*₅: People living alone pay little attention to labels referring to eco-friendliness, the environment and fair trade.

The article consists of three parts: theoretical, methodological and empirical. The first one explores the concept and essence of sustainable consumption and the fair trade movement. The methodological part

synthetically discusses the conceptualization of research and selection of the research sample. The empirical part examines young Polish singles' pro-environmental behaviors that can be defined as sustainable consumption and are aligned with the fair trade idea. Finally, a conclusion of the analysis and major findings end this article.

2. The Concept and Essence of Sustainable Consumption – Theoretical Background

The issue of sustainable consumption first arose at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro in 1992. The Rio Summit was a breakthrough as the issues discussed there were clearly divided into those related to consumption and production: the terms “sustainable consumption” and “sustainable production” were introduced (Sedlacko et al., 2021). The next steps in the evolution of the concept of sustainable consumption were: the Earth Summit+ 5 held in New York in 1997 and the 2000 UN Millennium Summit. The current policy framework for action on sustainable consumption and production is based on the Johannesburg Declaration adopted at the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg in 2002 and the Marrakesh Process initiated in 2003. The EU Sustainable Development Strategy, updated in 2006, recognized sustainable consumption as one of seven key challenges to be tackled in the modern world. In 2012, the Rio+20 Conference held in Rio de Janeiro acknowledged that the implementation of sustainable consumption patterns should accompany the reduction of global poverty.

The term “sustainable consumption” was derived from the concept of sustainable development. It was initially assumed that sustainable consumption was a set of rational purchasing choices aimed not only at maximizing consumer utility but also at achieving sustainable development goals. The source materials suggest that the first working definition of sustainable consumption was coined during two international UN sessions initiated by the Norwegian Ministry of the Environment and later held in Oslo in 1994 and 1995. The first one was the Oslo Symposium on Sustainable Consumption and the second was the so-called Nordic Roundtable (the Oslo Ministerial Roundtable on Sustainable Production and Consumption). According to the participants in those roundtables, sustainable consumption can be defined as “the use of goods and services that respond to basic needs and bring a better quality of life, while minimizing the use of natural resources, toxic materials and emissions of waste and pollutants over the life cycle, so as not to jeopardize the needs of future generations” (Roundtable on Sustainable Production and Consumption, 1994). During the second meeting, this working definition was supplemented by stating that sustainable consumption is a general term that combines several key issues such as meeting needs, improving resource efficiency, increasing the

use of renewable energy, minimizing waste, perceiving products from the perspective of their whole life cycle and following the principle of equity (equal access to resources) (Report of the Oslo Ministerial Roundtable, 1995). It may thus be said that sustainable consumption is defined as a holistic approach that is aimed at minimizing the environmental impact of social consumption and production systems and that involves individuals deliberately seeking to minimize adverse effects of consumption of consumer and investment goods and services through rationalization and utilization of production factors (resources) and reduction of generated post-production and post-consumption waste (Zalega, 2015, pp. 82–83).

The definition of sustainable consumption formulated in Oslo was sharply criticized by many academic researchers and some politicians. The quoted definition does not explain clearly what should be understood by the “needs of future generations”. Furthermore, no attempt was made to explain the essence of this statement at the UN Conference on Environment and Development held in Rio de Janeiro in 1992. In the second half of the 1990s, taking into account the shortcomings of the Oslo definition, many researchers dealing with broadly understood sustainable development began to suggest that sustainable consumption should be construed as the degree to which individual actions regarding choosing, acquiring, using and disposing of or prosuming goods support the creation or maintenance of exogenous conditions that enable all people to meet all their current and anticipated needs Di Giulio et al. (2014, p. 54).

According to the Global Development Research Center, sustainable consumption is construed as the consumption of goods and services that have a minimal impact on the environment, are socially equitable and economically viable, while meeting the basic needs of people around the world (United Nations, 1987).

According to Spangenberg (2014, p. 63), the concept of sustainable consumption encompasses all free consumer choices made within the available environmental space¹ which spans between the boundary of social sustainability and the boundary of environmental sustainability. According to J. Moisander and S. Pesonen (2002, p. 336), in turn, sustainable consumption is such where its form and volume define a set of consumers’ environmental values and attitudes that lead to green awareness (or broader social awareness) and an environmentally (and socially) responsible process of making market decisions. On the other hand, A. Dąbrowska and M. Janoś-Kresło are of the opinion that sustainable consumption is based on a conscious, responsible lifestyle perceived on a micro and meso scale as well as on responsible consumption that allows the development of current and future generations without disturbing the sustainable functioning of nature (Dąbrowska & Janos-Kresło, 2022, p. 47).

According to D. Kielczewski, sustainable consumption is a structure where the shape of individual systems and relationships and dependencies

between them enable the achievement of sustainable development goals. Consequently, consumption of today's generation does not limit the possibilities of consumption for future generations (Kiełczewski, 2008, p. 60). In other words, sustainable consumption means optimum, conscious and responsible use of available natural resources, goods and services at the level of individuals, households, local communities, business communities, local, regional and national governments and international structures, in accordance with the principles of sustainable development, bearing in mind the good of future generations (Zalega, 2014, p. 314). It should be emphasized that sustainable consumption is based on the wish to reduce wastage as well as waste and pollution generation (best practices in the field of waste management, water and waste water management, renewable energies and development of eco-friendly products) and to choose goods and services which comply, as far as possible, with certain ethical, social and environmental criteria (Heinzle, 2012, pp. 43–64; Paetz et al., 2012, pp. 23–41; McDonagh et al., 2012, pp. 267–282). In a broader sense, it can be said that sustainable consumption bears the following characteristics (Pearce, 2000; Lorek, 2007):

- maintenance of restorability of renewable resources;
- efficient use of non-renewable resources;
- gradual elimination of hazardous and toxic substances from economic processes and other applications;
- reduction of environmental burden and respect for the limits determined by environmental resilience,
- constant protection and restoration (if possible) of biological diversity at four levels: landscape, ecosystem, species and genes;
- creation of conditions for economic operators to compete fairly for access to limited resources and possibilities of discharging pollutants;
- socialization of decision-making, especially regarding the local environment;
- aspiration to provide people with a sense of environmental security understood as creating conditions conducive to physical, mental and social health.

In practice, a distinction is made between the so-called weak and strong sustainable consumption (Seyfang, 2011, p. 56). Weak sustainable consumption, also known as mainstream sustainable consumption, chiefly involves a reorientation of consumption towards its rationality and efficiency (especially the use of scarce resources) at various levels, in particular environmental, yet with a general increase in consumption. Furthermore, it is assumed that sustainable consumption will be achieved through improved energy efficiency of equipment and other technological solutions. On the other hand, strong sustainable consumption is based on the postulate of consumption reduction in general, requiring consumers to give up consumption at the current level for the benefit of future generations

(Seyfang, 2011, p. 59). Strong sustainable consumption assumes that in order for this to be achieved, significant changes must also occur in the levels and patterns of consumption. The concept of quality of life (meaning good life), human non-economic activity is also of key importance (Lorek & Spangenberg, 2014, pp. 33–34; Spangenberg, 2014, pp. 63–64). In literature, the dominant view is that instruments and conditions for weak sustainable consumption can be developed in the longer term, yet strong sustainable consumption is merely a postulate (Lorek & Fuchs, 2013, pp. 37–40; Tukker et al., 2010, pp. 1–3).

Similarly to sustainable development, sustainable consumption should be characterized by stability and (self-)sustainability. Stability means that consumption processes ensuring maximum consumer satisfaction become well-established within an unlimited period of time (Jackson 2005, pp. 19–36; Krantz, 2010, pp. 7–9; Schrader & Thøgersen, 2011, pp. 3–8; Leßmann & Masson, 2015, pp. 64–72). This implies that consumption processes should include mechanisms minimizing the risk of internal disturbances that limit or prevent further consumption. Self-sustainability means the presence of mechanisms that minimize the risk of endogenous disturbances limiting or preventing further consumption. On the other hand, consumption sustainability requires balancing the following aspects (Kielczewski, 2008, p. 61):

- economic: the proportion between current and future consumption is determined so that consumption processes do not materially disturb the economic equilibrium;
- environmental: maximization of satisfaction with consumption while preserving the quality and utility of natural resources and the natural environment; the material level of consumption is adapted to the requirements of circular economy, which is tantamount to the imperative to prefer such forms of consumption that are least harmful to the environment;
- social: a fairly even distribution of consumption among all people, regardless of time and space, at least for socially desirable goods; such sustainability requires the preference for consumption forms that are least socially problematic or that contribute to solving such problems;
- psychological: finding the optimum balance between material consumption and satisfaction of non-material needs, which requires an appropriate system of values, awareness and education to be developed;
- demographic: demographic determinants are not a permanent barrier to consumption growth, and membership of a demographic or socio-occupational group is not a significant barrier to consumption of socially desirable goods;
- spatial: possible ways of addressing needs must not interfere with the spatial order;
- intertemporal: these dimensions of sustainable consumption are achievable in the long run.

These aspects show that sustainable consumption primarily seeks to ensure that desirable forms of consumption prevail over undesirable ones and that mechanisms exist that would limit the occurrence and consequences of unsustainable consumption. Many authors (Hertwich, 2005, p. 4675; Dueby et al., 2016, pp. 78–89) simultaneously stress that the implementation of sustainable consumption requires sustainable action at all stages of the life cycle of goods and services (not only in the production phase), as often reflected by the terms “cradle-to-cradle” or “cradle-to-grave” in the literature.

3. Sustainable Consumption and Conscious (Ethical) Consumption

Sustainable consumption is possible only when consumers have a high level of environmental awareness and does not mean consuming less, but in a different way, more efficiently, leading to an improvement in the quality of life. The basic condition for the practical implementation of the sustainable consumption concept is the reorientation of consumer behavior which consists in encouraging consumers to change the quality of life – that is, a shift from egocentric to eco-centric attitudes and choices that take into account the needs of other people and protection of the natural environment.

Literature most often defines sustainable consumption as:

- an *alternative lifestyle* that, on the one hand, is based on sharp criticism of the postmodern society and, on the other, on proposals for a lifestyle inspired by the religions of the Far East (Buddhism, Hinduism). Such an understanding of sustainable consumption stands in sharp opposition to excessive consumption (consumerism) and relies on high awareness and ecological conscience of consumers. It is postulated to define the maximum level of meeting material needs and quite radically change life priorities. Examples include environmental (eco-Buddhism, eco-Hindusim), anarchist (squatters) and consumer² (freeganism) movements that are most often accepted and practiced by young people;
- *pro-environmental consumption macro-trend*, which emphasizes the interest in environmental issues on the part of consumers such as limitation and sustainable use of consumer goods, use of only renewable and inexhaustible energy sources, purchase of second-hand goods, avoidance of environmentally harmful goods, etc. (Southerton et al., 2004). This concept of sustainable consumption identifies it with the dynamic development of consumer eco-trends related to the consumption of eco-friendly goods and services, such as conscious consumption and collaborative consumption;
- a *holistic type of thinking*, whereby consumers, when making purchase decisions, take into account issues that go far beyond the protection of

the natural environment, thus considering social issues (the fair trade idea, equitable remuneration for work, boycott of products manufactured in violation of animal rights, e.g. natural fur, goose liver pâté, cosmetics tested on animals, etc.), political issues (consumption of goods and services that do not support regimes, military juntas, etc.) and economic aspects (preference for regional or national products).

Conscious consumption is directly correlated with eco-consumption. An extremely significant barrier to its development is certainly the limited financial capacity of consumers and an even greater obstacle is the lack of reliable information, not to mention the discrepancies that result from the difference between people's declarations and their actual behavior. This implies that the acceptance of certain environmental or social values translates into actual consumer decisions only to a negligible extent (Wildowicz-Gigiel, 2009, p. 12).

Conscious consumption is dictated by a change in values and attitudes, increased consumer knowledge and greater sensitivity to social and environmental needs. M. Micheletti (2003, p. 32) claims that these changes are directed at non-economic issues (justice and fairness) and are related to the well-being of individuals. In addition, it becomes important for people to assess institutional activities and model their consumption on the basis of these (positive or negative) evaluations, which results in consumer activism. An expression of this is negative consumption, practiced as a boycott of goods and a temporary or permanent cessation of the purchase of some products. Opposite to a boycott is positive consumption resulting from the approval of a given company or product, i.e. a preference for certain goods or producers. The broad scope of the definition of conscious consumption induces its consideration as an "umbrella" concept rather than as an imposed framework. Such a blurred approach is supported, for example, by K. Humprey (2011, pp. 43-44) and J. Litter (2011, pp. 31-32).

Literature construes conscious consumption also as a deliberate choice by consumers based on personal and moral beliefs. It includes three basic forms of action (Devinney et al., 2006, pp. 32-33):

- readiness to engage in protests and boycotts;
- purchase of ethical products and avoidance of unethical ones;
- expression of critical opinions about unethical behavior of enterprises in surveys or other forms of market research.

The above definitions show that conscious (ethical) consumption largely involves a life in harmony with the natural surroundings (both the environment and the socio-cultural surroundings) and all life on the planet (by respecting other species) so as to reduce the consumption of available resources (sustainable development). Wishing to prevent adverse climate change, environmental pollution or genetically modified food, more and more modern consumers, especially young ones, express their willingness and conviction to introduce radical changes in their everyday life in order

to reduce the negative impact of humans on the environment (Bostrom & Klintonman, 2011, pp. 1–2). The fundamental values of conscious consumption are intra-generational and intergenerational justice and responsibility (Rogall, 2010, pp. 130–132).

More broadly, conscious consumption is based on several key principles, with the most important role assigned to (Norton et al., 2012, pp. 454–456):

- balance, that is the human ability to build homoeostasis inside human body and create a dynamic balance between a human and the natural environment;
- locality – people are attached to their specific local environment to which they adjust their diet, taking into account the seasons of the year, climate, local tradition;
- eco-friendliness – respect for nature, preference for food from local green (natural) crops grown without chemicals or industrial fertilization, environmental awareness when shopping, waste segregation;
- a holistic approach – a comprehensive, systemic approach to humans and the world;
- efficiency, including the consumption of all the food bought, avoidance of refined, purified, highly processed products, efficient use of energy and water, ensuring proper thermal insulation of buildings;
- responsibility – for the world, natural environment and one's health;
- use of mass transport;
- use of recycled paper.

Thus, conscious consumption is present not only when we buy products and services that are friendly to people and the environment but also when we refrain from buying to look for better solutions. The aforementioned consumption trend explores solutions such as reduction of use, sharing and re-use of products. This means that consumers do not buy products in plastic packaging and choose glass or paper packaging, actively participate in waste segregation, which allows its reuse. Moreover, they show great interest in pro-environmental campaigns that not only make people more sensitive to such issues and raise the level of knowledge in this respect but also lead to specific environmentally friendly actions. As argued by W. Patrzalek (2022), conscious consumers display pro-environmental consumption patterns, e.g. non-smoking, avoiding drugs and other stimulants, active lifestyle, giving up car driving for cycling, reducing time spent watching TV, refraining from excessive purchases of clothing, development of housing in suburban areas, etc.

In ethical consumption, it is also important to consider the entire life of a product, not only how it was made but also what will happen to it when it is no longer needed. Products related to the above-mentioned trend are handicrafts and low-processed products, a whole group of products known as slow food, i.e. slow life, slow travel, slow parenting and slow city. Recently, due to the economic crisis, exchanges of clothes and upcycling (processing

waste into something of even greater value) have returned to fashion in many countries of the world (Zalega, 2015, p. 19).

Conscious consumption also manifests itself through greater care for one's own health and fitness. According to W. Patrzalek, the growing awareness of consumers and the interest in healthy diets result in attention being paid to the labeling and information displayed on product packaging. Buyers look for information on the composition of the product, used preservatives, dyes, improvers and the degree of processing and genetic modification (GMO) (Patrzalek, 2016, p. 159). Consumers are paying more and more attention to grooming and the proper functioning of the body. Greater consumer interest in this issue is mainly reflected in the increase in spending on health, nutrition control (preference for natural products, avoidance of those containing preservatives, a diet with various nutritional values), exercise (sports, active leisure and recreation), compliance with the rules of personal hygiene, cosmetic procedures and life in harmony with nature (Rachocka, 2003, p. 19).

D. Goleman has recently articulated the idea of ecological intelligence. He argues that man is not beyond nature, but is part of it. Man not only acts but also adapts to its system (Goleman 2009, p. 44). It can therefore be said that ecological intelligence, perfectly integrated into conscious consumption, is construed as the ability to learn from experience and rationally deal with the environment, which one understands and feels. This means that ecological intelligence makes it possible to use the environment and modify actions in such a way that will cause the least environmental damage and losses. In that theory, ecological intelligence provides information about a lifestyle that does not undermine the fragile balance between human activity and the ecosystem.

However, it should be borne in mind that ethical consumption is a societal model that is a pure postulate since it cannot be fully put into reality. Contemporary societies are so lost in the materialistic approach to life that no revolutionary change for the better can be expected in the near future. The dynamic development of conscious consumption is hindered by consumerism of households, as manifested in excessive materialism in all spheres of life. According to Z. Bauman (2007, p. 22), consumerism is an economy of fraud, a lack of moderation and waste. Individuals in a consumerist society see consumption as a solution to all problems because one just has to go to the right place and get the right item or service (Bauman, 2004, p. 221). People are told that consumption is a sign of success, a path leading directly to public applause and fame and they are taught that the possession and consumption of certain items and adherence to specific lifestyles are a necessary condition for happiness (Bauman, 2009, p. 140). Moreover, poor people are marginalized and humiliated in a consumerist society. The poor are completely useless in such a society. Decent and normal members of society – bona fide consumers – want and

expect nothing from them. Nobody needs them for anything. For people like them – zero tolerance. Society would be much better off if the poor burned their tents and burned with them, or if they just went away out of their sight. It would be nicer and more pleasant to make yourself at home in a world without them. Since they are not needed, the poor are unwanted (Bauman, 2009, p. 136). Bauman also argues that immoderate desires and created needs that are characteristic of the consumerist lifestyle are, in fact, a torment for people. That is a great torment because nothing that is achieved is fully satisfying and what one achieves can always be better. And one will never arrive at such a point where one can say: I have come, I have arrived, I can sit down, smoke, and I do not to do anything else (Bauman, 2009, p. 138).

Nowadays, many people, including young ones, often do not think about whether they really need the goods they acquire or whether such goods could significantly contribute to the improvement of the quality of their life. The main motive for a purchase is frequently the desire to impress others and accumulate as many goods as possible. It seems that the life goal of modern man is to have as many goods and as much money on the account as possible.

4. The Emergence and Development of the Fair Trade Movement – A Brief Historical Overview

Fair trade is not a new movement as its history has unfolded for more than half a century. However, it did not instantly take the form that it has today. The first attempts to create an alternative way of exchanging goods in Western Europe date back to the 1940s, shortly after the end of World War II. The initiative in this regard was taken by various religious communities, missionary and non-governmental organizations known as Alternative Trading Organizations (ATOs) (e.g. the British Oxfam). All these institutions wanted to support marginalized farmers often using quite primitive agricultural machinery. The first fair trade organization, Ten Thousand Villages, was established in 1948 in the United States, while SERRV (Sales Exchange for Refugee Rehabilitation and Vocation), founded in 1949, began trading with poor communities in the South. In 1958, in the USA, the first “Fair Trade” store selling handicrafts was opened. Thereafter, in the 1960s, under the slogans “Trade not Aid” or “Aid for Trade”, international organizations and groupings such as UNCTAD were called upon to replace development aid for Africa, parts of Asia and Latin America with fair trade relations. Church organizations in the UK and the Netherlands were involved in this idea from the very beginning. Initially, the trade partnership based on offering better conditions to the poor countries of the South concerned ethnic handicrafts (sculptures, baskets,

tapestries), but the idea of fair trade quite quickly spread to new market segments, including food products.

In Europe, fair trade began to operate at the earliest in the United Kingdom and the Netherlands. It was in these countries that the sale of handicrafts from Africa, parts of Asia and Latin America, initially treated as help for poor societies rather than trade, contributed to the establishment of “third world shops” or “developing country shops”, called from the early 1990s “worldshops” or “Weltladen”, which delivered products from the countries of the poor South to a wider group of consumers. The first shop of this type was opened in 1958 in the USA and a year later in the Netherlands. The emergence of “world shops” played a key role in building awareness of the fair trade idea. That was the first stage of fair trade development. In 1994, “world shops” operating in Europe merged to form the NEWS! organization (Network of European Worldshops). It should be noted here that NEWS! – contrary to its name – it is not limited only to sales. It is also actively involved in various promotional and educational campaigns aimed at promoting fair trade and responsible consumption and helping to understand their meaning and principles. In addition, it shows what specific effects can be achieved thanks to the purchasing power of northern consumers, what impact people choosing fair trade products have on international trade, and – finally – how their choices can help individual communities in the countries of the South. It also allows the interested parties (awareness and involvement of consumers to play a key role here) to find out about the culture and everyday life of producers of goods that can be bought in “world shops”. It makes people aware that the purchase of these products actually contributes to an improvement of the financial situation and working conditions of their producers and to the gradual elimination of poverty in the regions of the poor South whose inhabitants have joined cooperatives operating on the basis of fair trade.

The second stage of fair trade development is related to the certification system which allowed mass distribution of fair trade products. Thanks to the establishment of a set of standards the achievement of which was a condition for placing an appropriate graphic symbol on the product, consumers could have a guarantee of appropriate qualities of the purchased product. From 15 November 1988, the first certification initiative was introduced through the efforts of the Dutch ecumenical development agency Solidaridad. The sign “Max Havelaar”³, named after Eduard Douwes Dekker, a Dutch writer and activist fighting against the exploitation of workers in colonial states, was used for coffee from Mexico. Since then, standards for other products have undergone a dynamic development and the system of various fair trade organizations has been unified. In 1997, FLO (Fairtrade Labeling Organizations International) was founded in Bonn, later renamed Fairtrade International. It has become an umbrella organization that brings together organizations involved in the certification of fair trade products. Thanks to

FLO, it was possible to unify the standards used by various organizations and to introduce a common graphic version of the logo. The fair trade movement also includes IFAT (International Fair Trade Association), which brings together fair trade producers and distributors and grants them the right to use the FTO (Fair Trade Organisation) mark.

For nearly two decades, we have been witnessing the third stage of fair trade development, which is related to the mass sale of products with the fair trade logo and the so-called “civilized corporations” (<http://www.fairtradeinfo.pl/baza-wiedzy-o-fair-trade/> access: 03/05/2019), i.e. transnational corporations that – to a greater extent – comply with government regulations in the field of employee wages and working conditions in the supply chain⁴.

The main organizations contributing to the growth and reach of fair trade in the European market include the Fairtrade Labeling Organizations International (FLO), the International Fair Trade Association (IFAT), the Network of European Worldshops (NEWS!) and the European Fair Trade Association (EFTA) (Table 1).

Table 1
International Fair Trade Organizations in Europe

Characteristics	FLO	IFAT	NEWS!	EFTA
Year of establishment	1997	1989	1994	1987
Members	National labeling organizations	Producers, importers, others	National Worldshop associations	Importing organizations
Number of countries	20	62	13	9
Number of countries in Europe	15	12	All	All
Based in	Bonn (Germany)	Culemborg (the Netherlands)	Mainz (Germany)	Maastricht (the Netherlands)

Source: Krier, 2005, p. 26.

In 2009, the Fair Trade Coalition was established in Poland. It brings together non-governmental organizations, companies and individuals from all over the country. On 2 October 2012, the then loose cooperation within the Coalition was formalized and the Fair Trade Coalition foundation was set up. Its objectives were to (<http://biokurier.pl/aktualnosci/1739-powstala-fundacja-koalicja-sprawiedliwego-handlu> access: 01.05.2021):

- 1) disseminate and promote the fair trade idea,
- 2) achieve the recognition and build a positive image of the fair trade idea,

- 3) create a representation of the Polish fair trade movement,
- 4) support entities interested in acting for fair trade,
- 5) support initiatives ensuring the availability of certified products in Poland,
- 6) support research on the functioning of fair trade and its impact on producers.

5. The Concept and Principles of the Fair Trade Movement

Fair trade is a global social movement whose primary objective is to promote a fair exchange based on dialogue, transparency and respect among all economic actors involved in international trade. The first international definition of fair trade was coined in 1999 by FINE⁵ – an informal cooperation platform established in 1998 that coordinates and harmonizes the activities of member networks, including lobbying for fair trade. According to the definition proposed by FINE in 2001, Fair Trade is a trading partnership, based on dialogue, transparency and respect, that seeks greater equity in international trade. The participation in the fair trade system of producers, intermediaries and consumers enables fair distribution of trade benefits among them, which in turn implies following the principle of partnership contributing to sustainable development by offering more favorable trade conditions for marginalized producers and workers in the world's least developed countries (especially in the countries of the poor South). S. Lyon and M. Moberg (2010, pp. 21–24) understand fair trade in a narrow and broad sense. The first approach sees fair trade as a rational consumer choice made in the realities of a neoliberal economy in the state of crisis and deregulation. In a broader sense, on the other hand, it is defined as an alternative to progressive globalization based on the belief that consumer purchase decisions can change society and, more generally, improve the terms of trade in the global market and lead to an ethical behavior pattern that places the doctrine of social solidarity above the liberal assumption of economic profit maximization (Zalega, 2015).

According to the *A Charter of Fair Trade Principles* published by FLO and WFTO in January 2009, the key principles specific and inextricably linked to the development goals of this movement include (World Fair Trade Organization & Fairtrade Labelling Organizations International, 2021, p. 6):

- 1) market access for marginalized producers;
- 2) balanced and fair trade relations that take into account all production costs, both direct and indirect, e.g. protection of natural resources and establishment of long-term trade relations;
- 3) the building and strengthening of production capacity, which involves support for manufacturers in order for them to better understand market conditions and trends and to develop knowledge, skills and resources;
- 4) greater awareness and support among consumers who should actively support the fair trade movement by buying products with fair trade

logos, asking about such products in shops and promoting them in their environment;

- 5) fair trade as a „social contract”. This means that buyers agree to pay more than required by the conventional market, in return for which producers in the poor South use the benefits of fair trade to improve the economic and social conditions of the most disadvantaged members of their organization.

On the basis of these principles, two organizations with different approaches to fair trade have developed independent, reliable and verifiable standardization systems. WFTO has developed standards (Sustainable Fair Management System) that must be met by fair trade organizations distributing fair trade products through an integrated supply chain. The activities of these organizations are based on the fair trade idea, which they use as a tool serving the support and development of disadvantaged producers and reduction of poverty in the countries of the South, while their trade activities are combined with information campaigns. In turn, FLO has developed a fair trade certification system (Fairtrade-Certified) that is based on the standards of production and trade in relation to specific products (World Fair Trade Organization & Fairtrade Labelling Organizations International, 2021, p. 11).

5.1. Fair Trade Standards

Fair trade involves searching for opportunities to establish fair trade relations between the rich North and the poor South. The goal of the fair trade movement is to support trade of the poorest countries in the world by creating appropriate conditions for the development of exports and production consistent with the principles of sustainable development and leading to the improvement of working conditions. Other objectives include the cessation of activities causing degradation of the natural environment, the support for local traditions and culture and improved quality of life of local manufacturers and producers. Limited export opportunities of these countries could therefore be counterbalanced under fair trade.

The fair trade concept is aimed at promoting solutions that, in the long term, would serve to create better conditions for trade, thereby supporting the values consolidated in developed countries. For this reason, the World Fair Trade Organisation has established 10 principles that should be followed in everyday practice by all fair trade organizations. They comprise (<http://www.wfto.com> access: 20.04.2022):

1. ***Creating opportunities for economically disadvantaged producers.*** The goal of fair trade is to create development opportunities for producers who are economically disadvantaged or marginalized by the conventional trading system.
2. ***Transparency and accountability.*** Fair trade implies transparent management and trade relations to ensure fairness and respect in cooperation with trading partners.

3. **Providing capacity building.** Fair trade is a solution that enables the development of producers' independence through the continuity of relations allowing producers to develop their management skills and broaden access to new markets.
4. **Promoting fair trade.** Fair trade organizations raise awareness in this regard by providing their customers with information about themselves, products and production conditions, applying honest advertising and marketing strategies and striving for the highest standards of product quality and packaging.
5. **Fair payment.** A fair price is negotiated through dialogue between the buyer and the seller and not only covers production costs but also allows for production that is socially equitable, safe for the environment, ensures fair wages for producers and takes into account the principle of equal wages for women and men, and is paid to producers on time.
6. **Gender equity.** Fair trade means that women's work is properly valued and rewarded. Women always receive equitable pay for their contribution to the production process and have the relevant rights in their organizations.
7. **Working conditions.** Fair trade means a safe and healthy working environment for producers.
8. **Child lab our.** Fair trade organizations abide by the provisions of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, local laws and social standards so that children's participation in the production of fair trade products (if any) does not adversely affect their well-being, safety, educational requirements and the need to play. Organizations that work directly with informal producers report the involvement of children in the production process.
9. **Environment.** Fair trade helps to improve environmental protection and apply responsible production methods.
10. **Trade relations.** Fair trade organizations trade with the social, economic and environmental welfare of marginalized small producers in mind, maintaining long-term relationships based on solidarity, trust and mutual respect, without abusing such relationships to maximize their own income.

5.2. Fair Trade Product Certificates

Products with a fair trade logo must be certified at every stage of trade, from the manufacturer to the product ready for sale, to guarantee that consumers receive a product meeting all fair trade standards. The requirements set by fair trade organizations differ depending on whether they apply to owners of small agricultural areas, plantation owners or sellers. They concern environmental protection, workers' rights, product quality and improvement of the production process. Certificates are issued by certification organizations such as FLO-CERT and the certification system is

independent and compliant with ISO principles. The fair trade certification mark is used in over 50 countries around the world.

In 2021, a fair trade certificate was awarded to over 6000 products from various groups, including:

- agricultural products: bananas, coffee, cocoa, cotton, cut flowers, fruit, nuts, rice, herbs and spices, sugar cane and sugar, tea and grapes;
- food products: fruit juices, wine, ice cream, chocolate, cookies, muesli, honey, dried fruit, jams, syrups, sweets and oil;
- handicrafts: carpets, jewelry, clothes, leather goods, toys, and sports balls.

In the case of food products, most organizations certifying fair trade products enforce eco-friendly forms of cultivation: no chemical fertilizers and pesticides and a ban on deforestation, pollution of the environment with waste, and excessive energy consumption. Therefore, rich consumers from the North are more and more willing to pay a higher price for fair trade products as they can be sure that they get a high-quality, full-value, green, tasty product in contrast to mass-sold goods branded by large corporations which hike their financial results and save on eco-friendliness (using chemical fertilizers) and on their employees (worse wages; fewer people to care for crops, which also translates into worse quality of the final product).

Currently, most fair trade food products (approximately 75% worldwide) also have a certificate of organic production, as confirmed by a separate certification mark. In the case of carefully designed and hand-made artisanal products, the principles of awarding a fair trade certificate apply only to working and trading conditions. FLO successively sets guidelines for other products from the poor countries of the South.

Increased sale of certified products results from greater demand. In 1988, the non-profit organization Max Havelaar was established in Utrecht (the Netherlands) to license fair trade products. Its activities led to greater availability of this type of goods mainly in large retail chains. Over 70% of shops in the world that offer products with a fair trade logo are super- and hypermarkets, which ensure wider availability of products and the possibility of direct comparison of fair trade, organic and standard products, so customers can more willingly choose goods that guarantee the right price to producers. Products with such a logo can now be found in 55 thousand supermarkets all over Europe and their market share has become significant in some countries, e.g. in Switzerland about 47% of all bananas, 28% of flowers and 9% of sugar are fair trade certified. In the UK, where the domestic market is eight times larger than in Switzerland, certified products have won 5% of the sugar market, 5.5% of the banana market, and 20% of the ground coffee market (Grabowiecki, 2009, pp. 231–232).

Consumers most commonly buy fair trade certified food products such as: coffee (beans and instant), tea, cocoa, yerba mate, chocolate, nuts (cashews, groundnuts and Brazil), dried fruit (mango, pineapple, guava,

quince, dates, blueberries), bananas, honey, preserves, spices (sea salt, vanilla sticks, peppercorns), sweets (spelt biscuits, crispy bars), wine, cocoa oil and ornamental plants. As regards non-food products, the most frequently purchased goods with a fair trade logo include: textiles (tablecloths, tapestries), clothing and home furnishings⁶ (Monitoring..., 2021).

5.3. The Fair Trade Movement Versus Sustainable Consumption and Competent (Ethical) Consumers

Fair trade fits perfectly with the concept of sustainable development and is closely linked with sustainable consumption. The most desirable type of sustainable consumption is consumers rationalizing their consumption and reducing consumption of all products, taking into account the protection of the natural environment (consumption greening) and the principles of social responsibility. Examples of sustainable consumption include: healthy food, the purchase of reusable bags, transport and tourism that do not degrade the natural environment, and the purchase of fair trade products. The interest in certified products on the part of consumers who are committed to sustainable consumption largely results from the fact that many fair trade certified goods are produced by means of organic methods, with no pesticides or other fertilizing or pest control chemicals. Ethical aspects are also important to such consumers. They include:

- guaranteeing producers that the minimum price will be paid for the sale of their products, enabling them to conduct economic activity at the level of production profitability in the long term;
- ensuring high labor standards and equal pay for women and men;
- respecting the principle of protecting children from forced labor.

In practice, products with a fair trade logo are bought by the so-called competent (socially responsible) consumers who take conscious purchase decisions (I know what I am buying and I know who I am buying it for). Through their lifestyles and consumer choices, such consumers primarily prefer eco-friendly forms of consumption and engage in activities falling within the scope of sustainable consumerism, which draws attention to global consequences of consumption growth, correlations between lifestyle and consumption style, clean production, etc. According to I. Szmigin and M. Carrigan (2006, p. 608), conscious purchase decisions result from spiritual, political, social and environmental considerations. What they have in common is consumer concerns about the impact of their purchases on the environment in which they function in everyday life. It is socially responsible consumers who are and can be not only initiators of future positive systemic changes towards sustainable development and sustainable consumption but also promoters of fair trade. Moreover, it should be noted that sufficiently strong and effective associations of socially responsible consumers may ultimately contribute to the rise of a sustainable society through their actions for sustainable consumption and fair trade (Zalega, 2015). According

to T. Jackson and S. Stymne (1996, pp. 79–80), such a society may be described as post-industrial, having a high national income, educated, pro-environmental, living in a clean natural environment, with resource circulation, uncorrupted, with a high level of social and medical care.

6. The Notion of Young Singles

Singlization of the population is becoming ever more common. Singlehood is a sign of independence rather than a cause for shame; it offers the opportunity to build diverse relationships and acquaintances as opposed to a sole focus on the family. There is, therefore, a chance of choice contrasting with the old, uniform pattern. Changes in mentality, distance from the institution of family, the cult of independence and the building of one's own social and professional position make up the socio-cultural landscape of the 21st century.

The diversity of singles makes researchers redefine them for their purposes in scientific research, referring to different variables (e.g. age, marital status, economic independence). However, social sciences lack a uniform conceptual framework for singlehood. The adoption of legal, economic and lifestyle-related criteria describing the category of singles should be considered necessary, yet insufficient.

The first attempts to define it scientifically were made in the 1930s in American literature (Hillis, 1936). The classic American definition of a “single” assumes that it is a person who is not married or in an informal heterosexual or homosexual relationship (Stein, 1981). In English, “single” usually refers to all unmarried people, that is spinsters, bachelors, the divorced, widows and widowers (Stein, 1976). Due to an increased number of cohabitation relationships in the countries of Western culture, people in permanent informal relationships formerly treated only as preceding marriage have been recently excluded from the category of singles (Chambers-Schiller, 1999, p. 678). It is controversial to consider people living alone who have informal partners in LAT (living apart together) relationships as singles (Hertel et al., 2007). In addition, singlehood is defined as a specific lifestyle covering diet, way of spending free time and, above all, the worldview (Bauereiss & Bayer, 1995, pp. 35–60). L. Rosenmayr and F. Kolland (1997, pp. 256–287) also emphasize that the notion of single encompasses not only the physical form of living alone but also a lifestyle in which individual values and relationship patterns materialize. It should also be noted that the term “single” is used in English in a narrower sense, referring to people following a lifestyle devoid of any family responsibilities and resulting from a conscious choice (under this approach, singles do not include old bachelors and spinsters who are unsuccessfully looking for life partners) (Watters, 2003). German literature most commonly defines a single as a person who lives without a lasting, deep relationship in a single-

person household, regardless of the voluntary or enforced nature of such a lifestyle (Deml, 2009). In Polish, in turn, given that the word “single” is a borrowing, it has acquired cultural connotations and refers only to some people living alone. Living alone is not only considered as an alternative form of married and family life but as a thought-out and ultimate life project for a growing group of women and men. This subcategory is formed by inhabitants of large cities who are educated and earn wages guaranteeing economic independence and who are at an age enabling intense, both professional and social, activity and most often (however, this is not a *sine qua non* condition) live in single-person households.

The diversity of singles makes researchers redefine them for their purposes in scientific research, referring to different variables (e.g. age, marital status, economic independence). However, social sciences lack a uniform conceptual framework for singlehood. The adoption of legal, economic and lifestyle-related criteria describing the category of singles should be considered necessary, yet, as previously demonstrated, insufficient. In this article, young singles will be understood as adults who are aged from 18 to 34, live alone by choice (in a single-person household or a separate flat), have no parental responsibilities, are economically independent, most often have higher or secondary education, a large group of friends and acquaintances, and are strongly focused on themselves (Zalega, 2019). In addition, this study assumes that singles cannot remain in informal LAT or distant relationships and their possible romantic relationships cannot be lasting⁷. This definition thus excludes those who are in a permanent heterosexual or homosexual relationship and narrows the group of singles, allowing research uniformity (Zalega, 2020, pp. 118–119).

7. Research Conceptualization

The tool used to conduct the research was the author’s original questionnaire comprising 48 closed-ended questions regarding consumer trends, including consumption behavior of young Polish singles that can be classified as sustainable consumption. The survey was carried out from 1 October to 30 March 2022. The difficulty lay in appropriate definition of the study subject because the category of “young single” is not clearly specified in literature. In this article, those between 18 and 34 years of age are considered to be the population of young singles. The upper age limit, that is 34 years, is regarded as the end of youth in the Polish literature. The participants were recruited via the “ankietka.pl” website and social media such as Facebook, Whatsapp, Messenger, and e-mail. In order to partake in the survey, those interested had to visit a specific website containing the survey questionnaire. It was also distributed across special forums, university and private school fanpages. In accordance with the research assumptions, the sample included only persons aged 18-34 living alone by their own

choice and representing Generations Y and Z⁸, who took independent purchase decisions in the market. The article assumes that the subject of research covers all young singles, not only those who are sustainable. In order to select the sample, the selective quota sampling procedure was used. The characteristics (quotas) covered by the research were: gender, age, education, monthly disposable income, and place of residence⁹. It should be noted here that the key methodological problems in the study of sustainable behavior of young singles result from non-random sampling and the chosen research technique, namely an online questionnaire. During data processing, information from the respondents was eliminated if the questionnaires were incomplete or incorrect (26 instances). From among 2613 initial survey questionnaires, 2587 were considered eligible, representing 98.61% of the total sample. Further, they were coded, and the data set thus created was processed by a statistical package. For the statistical analysis of data, the statistical package SPSS, version 29, was employed. Using Pearson's rank correlation test and Spearman's rho correlation, relationships between selected factors characterizing young singles and their behavior consistent with conscious consumption were examined. The results were considered statistically significant at the significance level of $p < 0.05$ and $p < 0.01$.

8. Selection and Characteristics of the Research Sample

"Young singles" were chosen for the research in view of their growing importance and decision-making power in today's societies and because, as market participants, they respond to the changing environment, globalization and its impact on consumption, lifestyle and emerging new consumer trends with more and more intensity. Undoubtedly, understanding their reasons, behaviors and market attitudes can help enterprises not only to decide on appropriate innovative marketing strategies but also to determine the right development path, allowing companies to remain in the market and make their product (service) offer attractive to new customers, especially young people, despite dynamic changes in consumption and ever faster development of mobile technologies and applications.

2587 people who regarded themselves as single took part in the survey, including 1531 women and 1056 men (Table 2). All participants declared that they lived alone and were not in informal relationships such as LAT or distant relationships and all their romantic relationships were impermanent. Over half of respondents lived in cities of more than 500 000 inhabitants. Every third participant had completed secondary education, 2/5 of respondents had a bachelor's or engineering degree, and one in three respondents held a master's or PhD degree. The average age of respondents was around 25.8 years. They were mostly students who combined studies with work. As regards monthly disposable income, the largest group earned from PLN 4001.00 to PLN 5000.00. Every third respondent assessed their

Table 2
Structure of Young Singles

Items	Number of respondents (N = 2587)	Percentage share
Age:		
18–23	1068	41.3
24–29	717	27.7
30–34	802	31.0
Gender:		
Female	1531	59.2
Male	1056	40.8
Education:		
Secondary	766	29.6
Bachelor's/engineering degree	1006	38.9
Master's or PhD degree	815	31.5
Monthly disposable income in PLN:		
Up to 3000.00	308	11.9
4001.00–5000.00	960	37.1
5001.00–6000.00	755	29.2
More than PLN 6000.00	564	21.8
Place of residence:		
Rural area	140	5.4
City of up to 10 000 inhabitants	207	8.0
City of 11 000–20 000 inhabitants	261	10.1
City of 21 000–100 000 inhabitants	277	10.7
City of 101 000–200 000 inhabitants	297	11.5
City of 201 000–500 000 inhabitants	463	17.9
City of more than 500 000 inhabitants	942	36.4

Source: The author's research.

current financial situation as good (Pearson's rank correlation coefficient $r = -0.247, p < 0.01$), and every fifth as very good (Pearson's rank correlation coefficient $r = -0.358, p < 0.01$). It should be noted here that people born at the end of the 1980s and in the 1990s are well prepared to start living independently, are focused on achieving financial success and prestige, concentrate on the development of a professional career rather than family life. It is also important that representatives of the Y and Z Generations decide to get married between 25 and 30 years of age on average. In addition, the burden of anticipated financial costs is often the reason for delaying decisions about marriage or giving up the idea whatsoever.

9. Implementation of Sustainable Consumption in Consumer Behavior of Young Singles

Sustainable consumption is a consumer trend that is becoming stronger in the context of consumption behavior of young singles. The research described herein examined the attitudes of young consumers towards sustainable consumption. It essentially checked whether young people understood the concept and idea of sustainable consumption and whether their possible competences translated into practical behavior. To this end, the respondents were asked about their understanding of the term “sustainable consumption” (Table 3).

Table 3
Sustainable Consumption as Understood by the Young Consumers Surveyed

Items	Number of respondents (N = 2587)	Percentage share
Sustainable consumption means rational and efficient use of scarce resources at various levels, in particular environmental, yet with a general increase in consumption.	525	20.3
Sustainable consumption means consumption involving its reduction in general, requiring consumers to give up consumption at the current level for the benefit of future generations.	1542	59.6
Sustainable consumption means making, as far as possible, sociologically and environmentally responsible consumer choices based on information on products and services, including practices used by their providers, production process and recycling possibilities.	520	20.1

Source: The author's research.

In the light of the survey results, it can be stated that 3/5 of young singles understand sustainable consumption as its strong form. This answer was more often indicated by women (62.3%), mostly aged 24–29 (58.2%), singles with higher education (58.4%) and a monthly disposable income of above PLN 4000.00 (56.8%), most frequently living in cities of over 500 thousand inhabitants (57.2%). Every fourth respondent misunderstands sustainable consumption, identifying it with conscious consumption, also known as ethical consumption or responsible consumption in Anglo-Saxon countries. This answer was mainly indicated by men (21.3%) and those aged 18–23 (22.1%), earning a monthly disposable income of below PLN 4000.00, secondary education graduates (20.8%), and those living in cities of up to 100 thousand inhabitants (21.4%). It should be made clear that the terms “sustainable consumption” and “conscious (ethical) consumption”

carry different systems of meanings. While sustainable consumption involves environmental discourse, conscious consumption refers to individualistic and moral discourses. The survey found that only every fifth single construed sustainable consumption as its weak form. This answer was more often chosen by women (20.7%) than men (19.9%), by respondents with secondary education (20.9%), a monthly income not exceeding PLN 4000.00 (21.2%), living in rural areas (20.9%) and small towns of up to 20 thousand inhabitants (20.7%). However, the relatively poor knowledge of the term “sustainable consumption” and its identification with conscious consumption does not negatively affect the studied singles’ attitudes towards key assumptions and principles of sustainable consumption.

Another point was to examine to what extent sustainable behaviors of young singles are linked with their lifestyle and pro-environmental attitudes. In order to investigate the issues related to the lifestyle of young singles, five statements were used. The reliability of the scale (reproducibility of the measurement results) was analyzed by employing a technique of measuring its homogeneity, estimating internal compatibility on the basis of the determined Cronbach’s α – coefficients (Table 4).

Table 4
Main Components of the Lifestyle of Young Singles

Statements	Partial loads
I lead a healthy lifestyle	0.841
I take care of my shape	0.899
I try to be physically active	0.901
I am satisfied with my lifestyle	0.792
I try to establish and maintain contacts with closest relatives, friends and acquaintances	0.699
α – Cronbach’s α	0.826

Source: The author’s research.

The analysis of the main components of partial loads of five variables concentrated around one factor allowed for estimating Cronbach’s α coefficient at 0.826, which proves high reliability of the scale.

Another issue was whether young singles follow the assumptions of sustainable consumption in their consumption behavior (Table 5).

The survey shows that young singles implement the idea of fully sustainable consumption to a small extent. Only every fifth single acts fully in line with its postulates when making consumption decisions. On the other hand, almost 2/5 of the respondents gave a negative answer. Every tenth of them found it difficult to say whether their consumption behavior

was consistent with the assumptions of sustainable consumption. This share of indecisive singles can be explained by their misunderstanding of what sustainable consumption essentially means.

Table 5
Subjective Perceptions of the Young Consumers Surveyed on Whether They Put Sustainable Consumption Into Practice

Items	Number of respondents (N = 2587)	Percentage share
My consumption is fully sustainable	525	20.3
My consumption is slightly sustainable	810	31.3
I cannot say whether my consumption is sustainable	256	9.9
My consumption is not sustainable	996	38.5

Source: The author's research.

The trend of sustainable consumption may form a certain lifestyle, and a specifically oriented way of buying products may (though does not have to) represent a particular ideology of life for some young singles. The proportion of respondents who declared that they acted fully in line with the idea of sustainable consumption was much higher among women (23.1%) than men (17.5%) as well as among single university graduates (22.9%) and those earning a monthly disposable income of more than PLN 6000.00 (21.8%) and living in cities of over 500 thousand inhabitants (22.9%). In contrast, respondents who considered their consumption behavior to be unsustainable were singles with secondary education (41.9%), mostly men (42.1%), aged 18–23 (40.7%), with a monthly disposable income not exceeding PLN 3000.00 (40.6%), living in towns of up to 20 thousand inhabitants (40.4%).

Young singles who follow the principles of sustainable consumption can be referred to as competent, conscious consumers who make deliberate purchase decisions (I know what I am buying and I know who I am buying it for). Through their lifestyles and consumer choices, such consumers primarily prefer eco-friendly forms of consumption and engage in activities falling within the scope of sustainable consumerism, which draws attention to global consequences of consumption growth, correlations between lifestyle and consumption style, clean production, etc. (De Pelsmacker & Janssen, 2007, p. 369; De Pelsmacker et al., 2005, pp. 365–366; Crane & Matten, 2007, pp. 343–344). It is socially responsible consumers who are and can be not only initiators of future positive systemic changes towards sustainable development and sustainable consumption but also promoters of fair trade.

Young consumers' pro-environmental behavior as part of sustainable consumption was measured by means of 22 statements (Table 6).

Table 6
Young Consumers' Consumption Behavior as Part of Sustainable Consumption
 (% of answers)

No.	Statements	Whenever possible	From time to time	Never
1	I buy carefully, only as much as needed at the moment	38.5	46.2	15.3
2	Before I buy a product, I gather product information confirmed by other consumers	25.1	38.6	36.3
3	Before I buy a product, I always check its expiry date	81.2	15.0	3.8
4	Before I buy a product, I check if it is biodegradable (recyclable)	15.3	51.1	33.6
5	I use reusable bags	67.3	30.8	1.9
6	I choose products in green, minimized packaging	19.5	56.2	24.3
7	I avoid purchasing disposable items (plates, cups, cutlery, plastic bags)	60.2	24.0	15.8
8	I regularly sort waste	65.2	25.9	8.9
9	I use water sparingly	60.7	28.3	11.0
10	I throw out used batteries into special containers	51.2	28.5	20.3
11	I replace light bulbs with energy-saving ones	72.3	21.2	6.5
12	I limit gas consumption	65.0	22.6	12.4
13	I buy energy-efficient equipment	63.5	28.5	8.0
14	I use electricity sparingly	65.2	24.2	10.6
15	I throw out expired drugs into special containers	65.6	19.1	15.3
16	I collect waste separately	30.8	50.0	19.2
17	I return glass bottles to collection points	40.3	30.2	29.5
18	I buy drinks in recyclable packaging	22.9	28.5	48.6
19	I pay attention to eco-labels	24.0	40.7	35.3
20	I reduce car use for public transport or bicycle	26.7	36.1	37.2
21	I do not leave electronic devices in the standby mode for longer	26.3	29.6	44.1
22	I sort drugs and throw out expired drugs into special containers	15.8	23.4	60.8

Source: The author's research.

The survey results indicate that the behaviors forming part of sustainable consumption are exhibited (albeit with varying frequencies) by the majority of young singles. The largest group of respondents said that they used reusable bags (98.1%), with 67.3% doing so whenever possible. Many young singles use electricity (89.4%), water (89.0%) and gas (87.6%) economically. As many as 91.1% of the respondents regularly sort waste, of which 65.2% admitted doing so always. The responses show that those surveyed most commonly segregate plastic packaging, metal and paper. These actions, which are in line with the requirements of sustainable consumption, are quite often taken up by the respondents for financial reasons (they save water and electricity due to their low income and use their own bags to avoid additional spending on disposable bags at the point of sale, etc.). The survey results confirm that money saving is, indeed, the key motive for young singles' eco-friendly behaviors, but the resultant environmental protection is often an additional, secondary advantage.

The findings indicate changes in young singles' attitudes. Before making any decision, in particular before buying products, respondents who display consumer behaviors that are in line with sustainable development assess whether their purchase is actually necessary or whether it is solely intended to raise their own material status. Over 84% of them declare that they buy carefully – just as much as they need at a given moment, which reduces the risk of wastage. In the decision-making process, almost 64% of young singles gather product information confirmed by other consumers. Such behaviors should probably be assessed positively since they reduce the risk of buying a wrong product that is contrary to expectations. Over 66% of those surveyed say that they are more likely to buy an eco-friendly product that has eco-labeling. Nonetheless, research into fair trade clearly confirms that this outcome should be regarded as a wish to present oneself as a more modern and responsible consumer whose consumer decisions are consistent with sustainable consumption rather than actual behavior.

Research by foreign authors demonstrates that the concern for rational use of available natural resources and the reduction of post-consumption waste generation are some key determinants of consumers' purchasing behaviors that ideally fit in sustainable consumption (Diamantopoulos et al., 2003; Young et al., 2010). English-language literature describes the profile of a "sustainable consumer" by means of different variables, namely geographic and cultural indicators, personality and socio-demographic characteristics. Among young singles, certain cognitive reactions and beliefs about pro-environmental behaviors can be noted. Based on their research, some authors (Krantz, 2010; Schrader & Thøgersen, 2011; Leßmann & Masson, 2015) believe that such actions contribute to more rational management of scarce resources, reduced consumption of toxic materials and pollution emissions, thus allowing the current and future generations to live in a less polluted environment with all the related consequences.

It was noted that the respondents displayed ambivalent attitudes towards the principles of sustainable consumption. For example, on the one hand, they declare that they save energy (89.4%) and, on the other, they often leave electronic devices in the standby mode for longer (44.1%); on the one hand, they sort waste, wishing to protect the environment (90.8%) and, on the other, they hardly ever sort drugs and throw out expired drugs into special containers (39.2%).

Their sustainable consumption behavior is determined by demographic and social characteristics. In the light of the obtained results, the key statistically significant determinants of pro-environmental behaviors include age ($\chi^2 = 28.92$ at the significance level of 0.01), education ($\chi^2 = 25.67$ at the significance level of 0.01) and monthly disposable income ($\chi^2 = 18.98$ at the significance level of 0.02).

The next stage of the research was an attempt to define the strength of the relationship between pro-environmental behavior of young singles and their lifestyle. Table 7 shows the calculated correlation coefficients.

Table 7
Coefficients of Correlations Between Variables Regarding Pro-Environmental Behavior of Young Singles and Their Lifestyle

Statements	Lifestyle of young singles
I buy carefully, only as much as needed at the moment	0.271
Before I buy a product, I gather product information confirmed by other consumers	0.189
Before I buy a product, I always check its expiry date	0.335
Before I buy a product, I check if it is biodegradable (recyclable)	0.170
I use reusable bags	0.472
I choose products in green, minimized packaging	0.411
I avoid purchasing disposable items (plates, cups, cutlery, plastic bags)	0.121
I regularly sort waste	0.383
I use water sparingly	0.259
I throw out used batteries into special containers	0.191
I replace light bulbs with energy-saving ones	0.261
I limit gas consumption	0.319
I buy energy-efficient equipment	0.273
I use electricity sparingly	0.336

Table 7 – continued

Statements	Lifestyle of young singles
I collect waste separately	0.269
I return glass bottles to collection points	0.132
I buy drinks in recyclable packaging	0.112
I pay attention to eco-labels	0.251
I reduce car use for public transport or bicycle	0.149
I do not leave electronic devices in the standby mode for longer	0.101
I sort drugs and throw out expired drugs into special containers	0.112

N.B.: All values are significant at the level $p \leq 0.05$.

Source: The author's research.

Linear, statistically significant, relatively weak correlations were found between young singles' lifestyle and consumption behavior that can be classified as sustainable consumption. The survey reveals that lifestyle influences everyday pro-environmental behavior of singles to various degrees. An average-strength relationship occurs between lifestyle and using reusable bags, regular waste sorting, checking the expiry date of the product before buying it, choosing products in green packaging, and saving gas and electricity. A weak relationship can be observed between lifestyle and careful shopping, economical use of water, replacement of light bulbs with energy-saving ones, selective waste collection, and paying attention to eco-labels. In other cases, the correlation coefficients showed a very weak relationship.

The survey asked respondents to indicate the main obstacles to sustainable consumption. They admitted that the most important obstacle to making decisions consistent with the sustainable consumption idea was the financial constraint (41.9%). This answer was most often indicated by respondents in financial difficulty, primarily students with a monthly disposable income of less than PLN 3000.00 (49.7%), mostly women (53.2%), aged 18–23 (53.9%), with secondary education (52.9%) and living in cities of up to 100 thousand inhabitants (49.7%).

It can be supposed that the young singles surveyed do not fully understand what sustainable consumption behaviors essentially involve. On the basis of the information obtained, it can be concluded that sustainable consumption is too expensive for a large group of respondents since it is generally associated with higher current expenditure on, for example, organic food, energy-efficient equipment, etc. At the same time, those surveyed have forgotten about longer-term positive effects and savings

arising from consumption of organic food, energy, gas and water savings, and more efficient use of items in their households. Another major barrier that was pointed out by every fourth respondent was poor information on how to act in line with sustainable consumption. Following the economic barrier, it was the most important obstacle for those aged 18–23 (21.8%), chiefly men (23.4%) with secondary education (23.7%), earning a monthly income of up to PLN 3000.00 (23.9%) and living in cities of up to 50 thousand inhabitants (23.5%). The least significant obstacles were those connected with the effort (15.1%) and time (13.2%) needed to stick to sustainable consumption assumptions. The latter were primarily reported by respondents aged 30–34, mostly men earning a monthly disposable income of above PLN 4000.00 and living in cities of over 500 thousand inhabitants.

10. Behavior of Young Singles That Fits Into the Fair Trade Idea

As mentioned above, what is indirectly connected with sustainable consumption is the idea of fair trade. According to J. Brinkmann and K. Peattie (2008, p. 27), consumer behavior related to buying fair trade products is one of the key manifestations of not only sustainable but also ethical consumption, which opinion is confirmed by numerous studies on fair trade conducted among inhabitants of highly developed countries (Shaw & Shiu, 2002; Raynolds, 2002). The survey shows that more than 2/5 of the survey participants heard about this idea. These were mostly respondents aged 30–34 (42.6%), chiefly women (44.7%), those with higher education (48.3%), a disposable income of over PLN 4000.00 a month (46.9%) and living in large urban agglomerations (46.7%). On the other hand, the fewest respondents exhibiting consumer behavior in line with sustainable consumption and the so-called ecological intelligence lived in rural areas (10.4%) and towns of up to 20 thousand inhabitants (11.8%). More than 30% of those surveyed said that they had attended an event promoting sustainable consumption or fair trade at least once in their life. They were primarily women (35.3%) aged 30–34 (33.6%) who had completed higher education (32.9%), earned a monthly disposable income exceeding PLN 4000.00 (33.8%), and lived in cities of over 500 thousand inhabitants (36.2%). It should be noted here that the sustainable consumption movement is developing dynamically in Poland, in particular in large cities. Yet, in smaller towns and rural areas, this trend is still negligible.

The singles surveyed most commonly buy Fairtrade-certified food products: coffee (beans and instant), tea, cocoa, yerba mate, chocolate, nuts (cashews, groundnuts and Brazil), dried fruit (mango, pineapple, dates), bananas and sweets (spelt biscuits, crispy bars). As regards non-food products, the most frequently purchased products with the FairTrade logo include craft products, mainly clothing and home furnishings.

Taking into account the entire population of respondents, the motives behind the decisions of consumers buying fair trade products are interesting. High quality was the main determinant of the purchase of products marked with the FairTrade logo (41%), and every 8th person indicated the price. Respondents often took into account the utility of the product (9%), their own habits (8%), advice from family members or friends (7%) and information about the composition displayed on the packaging (6%). These results are consistent with the research conducted by M. Radziukiewicz on a group of 400 people with knowledge of the fair trade movement, the idea and principles that promote this movement (Radziukiewicz, 2015, p. 217).

Product information on the packaging is the most important source of product information. For 1/4 of young singles who buy fair trade products, the method of production and composition of the product are also important. Undoubtedly, information about the product on the label gives consumers a chance to make a fully informed choice.











The survey also reveals that less than 20% of the respondents, when shopping for clothes and footwear or electronics, pay attention to information about compliance with employee/human rights in factories of clothing, footwear and electronics manufacturers and to eco and/or social labels (e.g. Fairtrade certificate, Ecolabel) informing that the product is organic and/or comes from Fair Trade. Slightly greater importance is attached to eco-friendliness and responsible production in the case of food, although it is nutritional values and composition of the product that primarily matter. While shopping for food products, young singles are mostly concerned about the method of food production (43%), especially the use of chemicals in production, the way animals are fed, and the use of additives. Nearly half of the respondents who buy clothing and footwear, electronics and food would be willing to pay more if they were certain that these products were manufactured in a more responsible manner. In the case of young singles buying clothing and footwear, this proportion was 48.6%, and 47.9% for electronics. This percentage stood at 49.7% for those buying food. Women (42.8%) aged 24–29 (37.2%) with higher education (38.4%), earning a monthly disposable income of above PLN 4000.00 (39.1%) and living in large urban agglomerations (38.1%) declared eagerness to pay more for products manufactured in a responsible manner more often than their male counterparts (31.6%).

When buying products, in particular food, more aware consumers pay attention to eco-labels that can indicate both positive and negative impact of the product on the natural environment. The latter inform about the risks posed by production or use of the product (Connolly & Shaw, 2006, pp. 357–358; Koenig-Lewis et al., 2014, pp. 96–98). There are also neutral symbols that are designed to inform consumers about environmental issues as such. They all raise environmental awareness of buyers (and also teach them how to read and distinguish such symbols) and help them choose the best products or services in this respect. Almost half of the young singles

surveyed claimed that when they saw various symbols and certificates placed on products, especially food, even if they did not have enough knowledge about their meaning, the mere presence of any label – including eco-labels – evoked their positive feelings.

In the context of the survey, it can be concluded that over 2/5 of young singles pay attention to labels referring to eco-friendliness, the environment and fair trade¹⁰. Every fifth survey participant admitted that they did not pay any attention to eco-labels on packaging while shopping. Among ten labels that can be found on different products (see Table 8), young respondents mostly recognize the following logos: “Recyclable” (67.8%), “Organic farming” (61.2%), “Ozone-friendly” (55.3%), “Fairtrade” (46.3%), “Eko” (33.9%) and “Energy star” (31.2%). The least recognizable certificates are: “FSC” (4.3%), or Forest Stewardship Council, guaranteeing responsible management of forest resources, and “MSC” (3.1%), or Marine Stewardship Council, confirming that a given fish product comes from sustainable fisheries.

Table 8
Types of Labels Placed on Products

Meaning	Graphic sign	Meaning	Graphic sign
Recyclable		Energy star	
“Eko”		FSC	
Organic farming		Daisy	
Ozone-friendly		Fairtrade	
Blue Angel		MSC	

Eco-labels are more often spotted by women (45.3%) than men (39.9%), respondents aged 24–29 (44.1%), university graduates (44.6%), those earning a monthly disposable income of above PLN 4000.00 (45.1%) and living in cities of over 500 thousand inhabitants (45.6%). In contrast, eco-certificates on various types of packaging are least often recognized by singles aged 18–23, mostly male graduates of secondary schools, from the PLN 4001.00–5000.00 income group, living in rural areas or towns of up to 20 thousand inhabitants.

The survey conclusions regarding the frequency of involvement in various acts of sustainable consumption and the assessed eagerness to undertake specific actions are largely consistent with surveys conducted among young American consumers (Hafstrom et al., 1992; Kuchinka et al., 2018), young people living in Western Europe (Sener & Hazer, 2008; Vemeir & Verbeke,

2008; Papaoikonomou et al., 2011; Fischer et al., 2017), Australia (Fien et al., 2008) and Asian countries (Kang et al., 2013; Lee, 2014).

Taking into account the presented survey results, some limitations ensuing from a small research sample should be borne in mind. Following the conclusions made, they should not be treated as representative of the population of young Polish consumers. They only provide some insight into actual consumer behaviors of young people as part of sustainable consumption. Despite the indicated limitations, the obtained results allowed for partially filling the gap ensuing from the lack of primary research on sustainable behavior of young Polish singles.

This publication should contribute to a broader discussion and exchange of views on sustainable consumption and fair trade, thereby encouraging other Polish scholars and researchers from various scientific and research centers to carry out extensive research in this area.

11. Conclusion

Changes in consumer purchasing behavior occur slowly, yet their pace is strongly dependent on economic, political, psychological and sociological factors. Sustainable consumption means that individuals deliberately seek to minimize the adverse effects of consuming consumer and investment goods and services through rationalization and utilization of production factors (resources) and a reduction of generated post-production and post-consumption waste. This consumer trend is based on the wish to reduce wastage as well as waste and pollution generation and to choose goods and services which comply, as far as possible, with certain ethical, social and environmental criteria.

The majority of young respondents reported the discussed pro-environmental behaviors that are consistent with the sustainable consumption idea, albeit to varying degrees and with different frequencies. Subjective perception of sustainable consumption by the respondents is significantly differentiated – strongly correlated factors are: gender, education, place of residence and perceived financial situation. Pro-environmental consumption behaviors of the surveyed singles primarily include: saving electricity, gas and water, sorting waste, throwing out used batteries into special containers, purchasing products in recyclable packaging, using reusable or biodegradable bags while shopping, and avoiding products tested on animals.

The increase in pro-environmental behaviors and actions of young singles should be assessed positively. Simultaneously, it is worth noting that such behaviors are often driven by economic rather than environmental considerations.

The survey shows that the proportion of singles who declared that they acted in line with the idea of sustainable consumption was much higher among women than men as well as among university graduates, those

earning a monthly disposable income of more than PLN 4000.00, and mostly living in large urban agglomerations. Furthermore, a preliminary analysis of the empirical material obtained in the survey reveals that sustainable consumption is not fully understood, as evidenced by the fact that nearly half of the respondents indicated financial costs as the main barrier to sustainable consumption. In turn, for those with the highest income, the main obstacle in this respect was a lack of time.

The results have confirmed that young singles have poor knowledge of labels referring to eco-friendliness, the environment and fair trade, showing that the sample surveyed is characterized by low awareness of eco-labeling, i.e. the idea of placing green labels on products that are least harmful to the environment. Eco-labels are more frequently spotted by female university graduates aged 24–29 who earn a monthly disposable income of above PLN 4000.00 and live in large urban agglomerations. In contrast, eco-certificates on various types of packaging are least often recognized by the youngest singles, mostly male graduates of secondary schools living in rural areas or small towns.

The results clearly indicate the need to intensify the education of young people that has been provided in Poland for years, education that should foster the development of their more sustainable environmental attitudes and consumption behaviors consistent with such attitudes. This is because pro-environmental attitudes manifest themselves as a positive affect towards eco-friendliness, knowledge and beliefs (an element of the so-called environmental awareness) and as declared and actual pro-environmental behavior.

Acknowledgements

This research received no funds.

Endnotes

- ¹ The environmental space was proposed by H. Opschoor in 2001 and then developed by J.H. Spangenberg. It defines the scope of consumer opportunities of market participants, with the upper limit imposed by the reproductive capacity of the environment and the lower limit imposed by the minimum quantity of resources needed for the proper functioning in a given society. More in: Spangenberg 2002.
- ² Environmental and consumer movements are firmly acknowledged by consumer organizations (e.g. Consumers International, European Consumers' Organisation, Association of Polish Consumers), pro-environmental organizations (e.g. Polish Green Network, eFTe Warszawa Group, Greenpeace), organizations working for social responsibility (e.g. World Fair Trade Organization, Fair Trade Coalition), and anti-consumerist movements that perceive excessive consumption as a threat to the spirituality of modern man and a factor destructive to the civilization (e.g. Voluntary Simplicity, the hobo movement, Ethical Consumer Research Association, Workshop for All Beings).
- ³ Eduard Douwes Dekker (1820–1887) was a writer and government official employed in the Dutch East Indies. In 1859, under the pseudonym Multatuli, he wrote a book

published in 1860 under the title *Max Havelaar: Or the Coffee Auctions of the Dutch Trading Company*, in which he opposed the enormous abuses that had occurred under the Dutch rule in the Dutch East Indies. The book was translated into 42 languages and, in 1976, filmed by Fons Rademakers under a Dutch-Indonesian partnership. In 1999, the novel by E.D. Dekker was recognised by the Indonesian writer P.A. Toer as a book that contributed to the elimination of colonialism.

- ⁴ Transnational corporations relying on the free market behave similarly to the authorities of the northern countries, which speak loudly about the liberal economy, yet use a number of clever tricks such as free trade zones, subsidies and financial support (for domestic producers) and customs duties, taxes and other fiscal, compensatory or special charges targeted at importers that prevent the market entry of producers from the poor South who initially offered competitive prices. More in: A. Paluszek, *Odpowiedzialność w globalnym łańcuchu dostaw (Responsibility in the global supply chain)*, in: *Raport. Odpowiedzialny biznes w Polsce 2009. Dobre Praktyki (Report. Responsible business in Poland 2009. Good practices)*, FOB, Warszawa 2010.
- ⁵ FINE consists of four major network organizations working for fair trade: Fairtrade Labeling Organizations International – FLO, International Fair Trade Association – IFAT (now World Fair Trade Organisation – WFTO), Network of European Worldshops – NEWS and European Fair Trade Association – EFTA. The abbreviation derives from the first letters of the names of the organizations which established this association in 1998.
- ⁶ A network of shops and cafés selling fair trade products across Poland can be found at: <http://www.sklep.sprawiedliwyhandel.pl/web/guest/rekomendowane-sklepy>.
- ⁷ This definition of a “young single” was presented to people participating in the survey before they filled in the survey questionnaire.
- ⁸ Consumers representing Generation Y (people born between 1978 and 1994) and Generation Z (those born after 1994) primarily communicate through social media such as Facebook or Twitter and their purchase decisions are determined by their peers’ opinions posted on online forums. What is characteristic of this group is impulse buying and a large share of online transactions. Generation Y consumers excel at modern technologies and feel good in virtual communities. They expect diverse products, competitive prices, new experiences and pleasure, and products and services tailored to their individual needs and preferences. Generation Z, on the other hand, is the youngest group of consumers in the market, with such characteristics as: connected, computerized, always clicking, community-oriented, and content-centric. Compared to Generation Y, they use new technologies even more. More in: Cohen (2009, pp. 57–59) and Williams and Page (2011, pp. 1–17).
- ⁹ Due to the nature of the chosen research technique, it was impossible to define the composition of the sample before measurement. In order to determine the representativeness of the sample, the information from the report *E-commerce in Poland 2018* was used. *Gemius dla e-Commerce Polska (Gemius for e-Commerce Poland)* (<https://www.gemius.pl/e-commerce-aktualnosci/ile-i-w-jaki-sposob-polacy-placa-za-e-zakupy.html>, access: 02.02.2021). As the distribution of the sample approximately corresponds to the structure of the studied population, it was assumed that the sample could be considered representative in terms of gender. As the age structure of the sample did not significantly deviate from the planned distribution, the sample can be considered representative in terms of age with caution in interpretation. However, the sample cannot be deemed representative in terms of education of the respondents, their disposable income and place of residence.
- ¹⁰ The labels were chosen on the basis of their significance and the frequency of their occurrence on the packaging of products available in the market.

References

- Bauman, Z. (2004). *Socjologia*. Wydawnictwo Zysk i S-ka.
- Bauman, Z. (2007). *Płynne życie*. Wydawnictwo Literackie.
- Bauman, Z. (2009). *Konsumowanie życia*. Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego.
- Bostrom, M., & Klintman, M. (2011). *Eco-standards, product labeling and green consumerism*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Brinkmann, J., & Peattle, K. (2008). Consumer ethics research: Reframing the debate about consumption for good. *EJBO-Electronic Journal of Business Ethics and Organization Studies*, 13(1), 22–31.
- Certification Process. (2021). Retrieved from www.flo-cert.net/flo-cert/main.php?id=82.
- Cohen, A.M. (2009). The emergence of a global generation. *The Futurist*, 43(1), 57–59.
- Connolly, J., & Shaw, D. (2006). Identifying fair trade in consumption choice. *Journal of Strategic Marketing*, 14, 353–368.
- Crane, A., & Matten, D. (2007). *Business ethics*. Oxford University Press.
- Dąbrowska, A., & Janoś-Kresło, M. (2022). *Spoleczna odpowiedzialność konsumenta w czasie pandemii. Badania międzynarodowe*. Oficyna Wydawnicza SGH.
- De Pelsmacker, P., & Janssens, W. (2007, November). A model for fair trade buying behaviour: The role of perceived quantity and quality of information and of product-specific attitudes. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 75(4), 361–380.
- De Pelsmacker, P., Driesen, E., & Rayp, G. (2005). Do consumers care about ethics? Willingness to pay for fair trade coffee. *Journal of Consumer Affairs*, 39(2), 363–385.
- Devinney, T.M., Auge, P., & Eckhardt, G. (2006). The other CSR: Consumer social responsibility. *Stanford Social Innovation Review*, 4(3), 30–37.
- Di Giulio, A., Ficher, D., Schäfer, M., & Blättel-Mink, B. (2014). Conceptualizing sustainable consumption: Toward an integrative framework. *Sustainability: Science, Practice, & Policy*, 10(1), 45–61.
- Diamantopoulos, A., Schlegelmilch, B.B., Sinkovics, R.R., & Bohlenc, G.M. (2003). Can socio-demographics still play a role in profiling green consumers? A review of the evidence and an empirical investigation. *Journal of Business Research*, 56, 465–480.
- Dubey, R., Gunasekaran, A., Childe, S.J., Papadopoulos, T., Wamba, S. F., & Song, M. (2016). Towards a theory of sustainable consumption and production: Constructs and measurement. *Resources, Conservation and Recycling*, 106, 78–89.
- Fien, J., Neil, C., & Bentley, M. (2008). Youth can lead the way to sustainable consumption. *Journal of Education for Sustainable Consumption*, 2(1), 51–60.
- Fischer, D., Böhme, T., & Geiger, S.M. (2017). Measuring young consumers' sustainable consumption behavior: Development and validation of the YCSCB scale. *Young Consumers*, 18(3), 312–326.
- Goleman, D. (2009). *Inteligencja ekologiczna*. Wydawnictwo Rebis.
- Grabowiecki, J. (2009). Handel sprawiedliwy jako koncepcja zrównoważonych stosunków handlowych. In D. Kielczewski (Ed.), *Od koncepcji ekorozwoju do ekonomii zrównoważonego rozwoju*. Wydawnictwo Wyższej Szkoły Ekonomicznej w Białymstoku.
- Hafstrom, J.L., Chae, J.S., & Chung, Y.S. (1992, summer). Consumer decision – making styles: Comparison between United States and Korean young consumers. *The Journal of Consumer Affairs*, 26(1), 146–158.
- Heinzle, S.L. (2012). Disclosure of energy operating cost information: A silver bullet for overcoming the energy efficiency gap? *Journal of Consumer Policy*, 35, 43–64.
- Hertwich, E.G. (2005). Life cycle approaches to sustainable consumption: A critical review. *Environmental Science & Technology*, 39(13), 4673–4684.
- Humphery, K. (2011). The simple and the good: Ethical consumption as anti-consumerism. In T. Lewis & E. Potter (Eds.), *Ethical consumption: A critical introduction*. Routledge.
- Jackson, T. (2005). Live better by consuming less? Is there a “double dividend” in sustainable consumption? *Journal of Industrial Ecology*, 9(1–2), 19–36.
- Jackson, T., & Szymne, S. (1996). *Sustainable economic welfare in Sweden*. Stockholm Environment Institute.

- Kang, J., Liu, Ch., & Kim, S.-H. (2013). Environmentally sustainable textile and apparel consumption: The role of consumer knowledge, perceived consumer effectiveness and perceived personal relevance. *International Journal of Consumer Studies*, 37(4), 442–452.
- Kielczewski, D. (2008). *Konsumpcja a perspektywy zrównoważonego rozwoju*. Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu w Białymstoku.
- Koenig-Lewis, N., Palmer, A., Dermody, J., & Urbye, A. (2014). Consumers' evaluations of ecological packaging – Rational and emotional approaches. *Journal of Environmental Psychology*, 37, 94–105.
- Krantz, R. (2010). A new vision of sustainable consumption. *Journal of Industrial Ecology*, 14(1), 7–9.
- Kuchinka, D.G., Balazs, S., Gavriletela, M.D., & Djokic, B-R. (2018). Consumer attitudes toward sustainable development and risk to brand loyalty. *Sustainability*, 10, 997.
- Lee, K. (2014). Predictors of sustainable consumption among young educated consumers in Hong Kong. *Journal of International Consumer Marketing*, 26(3), 217–238.
- Leßmann, O., & Masson, T. (2015). Sustainable consumption in capability perspective: Operationalization and empirical illustration. *Journal of Behavioral and Experimental Economics*, 57, 64–72.
- Litter, J. (2011). What's wrong with ethical consumption? In T. Lewis & E. Potter (Ed.), *Ethical consumption: A critical introduction*. Routledge.
- Lorek, E. (2007). *Polska polityka energetyczna w warunkach integracji z Unią Europejską*. Wydawnictwo AE w Katowicach.
- Lorek, S., & Fuchs, D. (2013). Strong sustainable consumption governance: Precondition for a degrowth path? *Journal of Cleaner Production*, 38(1), 36–43.
- Lorek, S., & Spangenberg, J.H. (2014). Sustainable consumption within a sustainable economy: Beyond green growth and green economics. *Journal of Cleaner Production*, 63(1), 33–44.
- Lyon, S., & Moberg, M. (Eds.). (2010). *Fair trade and social justice. Global ethnographies*. New York University Press.
- McDonagh, P., Dobscha, S., & Prothero, A. (2012). Sustainable consumption and production: Challenges for transforming consumer research. In D.G. Mick, S. Pettigrew, C. Pechmann, & J.L. Ozanne (Eds.), *Transformative consumer research: For personal and collective well-being*. Routledge.
- Ministry of Environment Norway. (1994). *Report of the Sustainable Consumption Symposium*. Ministry of the Environment Norway.
- Ministry of Environment Norway. (1995). *Report of the Oslo Ministerial Roundtable*. Ministry of the Environment Norway.
- Moisander, J., & Pesonen, S. (2002). Narratives of sustainable ways of living: Constructing the self and others as a green consumer. *Management Decision*, 40(4), 329–342.
- Monitoring the scope and benefits of fairtrade report (5th ed.). (2021).
- Norton, M.I., Mochon, D., Ariely, D. (2012). The IKEA effect: When labor leads to love. *Journal of Consumer Psychology*, 22(3), 453–460.
- Paetz, A.-G., Dütschke, E., & Fichtner, W. (2012). Smart homes as a means to sustainable energy consumption: A study on consumer perceptions. *Journal of Consumer Policy*, 35(1), 23–41.
- Paluszek, A. (2010). Odpowiedzialność w globalnym łańcuchu dostaw. In *Raport. Odpowiedzialny biznes w Polsce 2009. Dobre Praktyki*. FOB.
- Papaoikonomou, E., Ryan, G., & Ginieis, M. (2011). Towards a holistic approach of the attitude behavior gap in ethical consumer behaviors: Empirical evidence from Spain. *International Advances in Ecological Research*, 17, 77–88.
- Patrzałek, W. (2016). Proekologiczne zachowania gospodarstw domowych. *Marketing i Zarządzanie*, 3(44), 157–166.
- Patrzałek, W. (2022). *Konwestycja jako forma de konsumpcji*. Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Ekonomicznego we Wrocławiu.
- Pearce, D. (2000). *Ecological economics and the ecology of economics*. Edward Elgar Publishing.

- Rachocka, J. (2003). Dekonsumpcja, domocentryzm, ekologizacja życia – nowe tendencje konsumenckie w rozwiniętych gospodarkach rynkowych. In T. Bernat (Ed.), *Problemy globalizacji gospodarki*. PTE.
- Radziukiewicz, M. (2015). Zachowania i preferencje konsumentów produktów FairTrade. *Handel Wewnętrzny*, 3(350), 215–228.
- Raynolds, L.T. (2002). Consumer-producer links in fair trade coffee networks. *Sociologia Ruralis*, 4, 404–424.
- Rogall, H. (2010). *Ekonomia zrównoważonego rozwoju. Teoria i praktyka*. Wydawnictwo Zysk i S-ka.
- Ruszkiewicz, D. (2008). *Życie w pojedynkę – ucieczka od rodziny czy znak naszych czasów?* Wydawnictwo WSHE.
- Schrader, U., & Thøgersen, J. (2011). Putting sustainable consumption into practice. *Journal of Consumer Policy*, 34(1), 3–8.
- Sedlacko, M., Martinuzzi, A., Røpke, I., Videira, N., & Antunes, P. (2012). Towards a systemic understanding of sustainable consumption and economic growth. In *Sustainable Consumption Transitions Series, (1). SCORAI Europe Workshop Proceedings: Sustainable Consumption During Times of Crisis* (pp. 20–41). First Trans-Atlantic SCORAI Workshop, May 1, 2012, Bregenz, Austria.
- Sener, A., & Hazer, O. (2008). Values and sustainable consumption behavior of women: A Turkish sample. *Sustainable Development*, 16, 291–300.
- Seyfang, G. (2011). *The new economics of sustainable consumption. Seeds of change*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Shaw, D., & Newholm, T. (2002). Voluntary simplicity and the ethics of consumption. *Psychology & Marketing*, 19(2), 167–185.
- Southerton, D., Chappells H., & Van Vilet B. (Eds.) (2004). *Sustainable consumption: The implications of changing infrastructures of provision*. Edward Elgar Publishing.
- Spangenberg, J.H. (2002). Environmental space and the prism of sustainability: Frameworks for indicators measuring sustainable development. *Ecological Indicators*, 2, 295–309.
- Spangenberg, J.H. (2014, spring). Institutional change for strong sustainable consumption: Sustainable consumption and the degrowth economy. *Sustainability: Science, Practice & Policy*, 10(1), 62–77.
- Szmigin, I., & Carrigan, M. (2006). Exploring the dimension of ethical consumption. *European Advances in Consumer Research*, 7, 608–613.
- Tukker, A., Cohen, M.J., Hubacek, K., & Mont, O. (2010). Sustainable consumption and production. *Journal of Industrial Ecology*, 14(1), 1–3.
- United Nations. (1987). *Our common future: Report of the World Commission on Environment and Development*.
- Vermeir, I., & Verbeke, W. (2007). Sustainable food consumption among young adults in Belgium: Theory of planned behaviour and the role of confidence and values. *Ecological Economics*, 64, 542–553.
- Wildowicz-Gigiel, A. (2009). Etyczny wymiar konsumpcji w świetle wyzwań XXI wieku. *Optimum. Studia Ekonomiczne*, 1(41), 3–17.
- World Fair Trade Organization & Fairtrade Labelling Organizations International. (2021, January). *A Charter of Fair Trade Principles* Retrieved from www.fairtrade-advocacy.org/images/stories/publications/ftao_charter_of_fair_trade_final_en.pdf.
- Young, W., Hwang, K., McDonald, S., & Oates, C.J. (2010). Sustainable consumption: Green consumer behaviour when purchasing products. *Sustainable Development*, 18, 20–31.
- Zalega, T. (2014). Sustainable consumption and innovative consumption in consumer behaviour of Mazovian households. *Handel Wewnętrzny*, 4(351), 311–323.
- Zalega, T. (2015). *New consumer trends*. In M. Burchard-Dziubińska (Ed.), *Towards a green economy. From ideas to practice*. Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Łódzkiego.
- Zalega, T. (2019). Consumer behaviour of young Polish singles – Selected issues. *Marketing i Rynek*, 4, 3–14.
- Zalega, T. (2020). The sharing economy at the behaviour of young Polish singles: The case of BlaBlaCar. *Gospodarka Narodowa. The Polish Journal of Economics*, 4(304), 105–134.