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AS AN AREA OF CSR AND BUILDING
THE IMAGE OF RETAILERS' PRIVATE LABELS***



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ENVIRONMENTAL ASPECTS AS AN AREA OF CSR AND BUILDING THE IMAGE OF RETAILERS' PRIVATE LABELS

Zbigniew Spyra, Ph.D.

University of Economics in Katowice, Poland

Faculty of Informatics and Communication, Department of Market and Marketing Research

zbigniew.spyra@ue.katowice.pl

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Summary

The article attempts to analyze the environmental concern as one of the dimensions of CSR used by today's retailers in the process of creating the image of their own brands. In order to fully present the purpose of the article, it was divided into parts. Firstly, the conditions for the implementation of the concept of CSR in the strategies of developing retailers' private labels were presented. Secondly, the author identified the most commonly used tools for the construction of "environment-friendly image" by today's retailers. The final section of the article presents selected examples of retailers' involvement in building the "social" value of their brands using "environmental care". The article argues that modern retailers are increasingly aware of the importance of the environmental aspect in creating the image of their brands. This article is based on in-depth studies of domestic and foreign literature of the subject and on the analysis of content of society reports of the 10 largest retail chains in Poland operating on the FMCG market.

Keywords: retailer's private label, retailer's private label image, CSR, environmental care, environmental protection, social reporting

Introduction

There is no unequivocal definition of CSR either in literature on the subject, or in practical experience¹. However, it seems there is certain unanimity with regard to its essence, which, as it seems, is reflected best by the ISO 26000 norm. It was prepared in 2010 and can be used voluntarily by all organizations, regardless of the form of ownership, size, kind and location. It can be applied also in both big and small public, private and non-profit organizations. ISO 26000 is also one of three documents recommended to European companies by the European Commission for the implementation of CSR. It contains guidelines concerning social responsibility defined as "the responsibility of an organization for the impact of the decisions and actions it takes (products, service, processes) on the society and the environment through transparent and ethical behaviour, which contributes to sustainable development, health and welfare of the society, takes into consideration the expectations of stakeholders, complies with the binding law and is coherent with international norms of conduct, as well as is integrated with the actions of the organization and practiced in its relations, which concern the actions of the organization taken within the sphere of its influence" (www.pkn.pl/sites/default/files/sites/default/files/imce/files/discoveringiso26000.pdf, accessed on 10.06.2017). The norm contains seven areas. Each area is described in detail. One of these areas is the area of "care for the environment", which is linked to four basic issues: preventing pollution, sustainable utilization of resources, counteracting climate change and adapting to climate change, as well as protection of the environment, biodiversity and restoration of natural habitats. The implementation of the concept of "care for the environment" is closely related to the so-called 3P model, that is People-Planet-Profit., or the 3R concept (reduce, reuse, recycle) and even 4R (+ rethink) (Laseter et al. 2010) as tools for the minimization of negative influence on the environment and sustainable waste management. It is also worth emphasizing that the growing role of environmental aspect in the CSR concept leads to a situation in which some authors expand the coverage of the CSR concept to the component concerning the protection of the environment (Environmental Corporate Social Responsibility — ECSR) and this way they suggest that in this

concept "care for the environment" is the key issue (Chodyński et. al, 2008). What is also highlighted in literature on the subject is the environment as the so-called "mute stakeholder" (Jastrzębska, 2015) at the same time its expectations are emphasized (limiting the negative influence on the environment by reducing the consumption of resources and generation of waste, as well as protection of ecosystems) and it is emphasized that "its interests" are represented mainly by ecological non-governmental organizations. Rexhepi et al. pointing out that now CSR and innovativeness constitute the basis of business competences emphasize the importance of ecological innovations for the purpose of describing products and processes contributing to sustainable development (Rexhepi et al.2013).

Environmental aspects have by now been analysed by many researchers (Stefańska, 2016, p.161–173, Thompson, 2007, p.281–286., S. Robinson, p. 287–290, Lai et al., 2010, sp. 6–31, De Brito et al., 2008, p.534–553, Kotzab et al., p.658–681, Sands, Ferraro, 2010, p.567–577, Martinuzzi et al., 2011). According to the author of this article, they keep generating new areas of research for the theory and practice of management. One of such new areas of research is certainly the area of the use of environmental aspects in the process of building the image of retailers' private labels. It is because private labels more and more often go beyond the business dimension associated solely with the product category and start getting involved in in the social dimension, including the environmental aspects, recognizing potential for the future in them. It is also worth pointing out that some authors claim that some sort of standards for retail trade in the area of "care for the environment" have been defined by the Wal-Mart chain, which has formulated the following long-term goals in the area of protection of the environment: using only renewable energy sources, producing zero waste and selling only products which contribute to the preservation of global resources and the natural environment (Armstrong, Kotler, Marketing, 2016, p.730). At the same time, the chain, striving to achieve these goals, obliges all its suppliers (over 61 thousand) to take pro-environment measures on a large scale, imposing defined "environmental norms"².

The goal of this article is the analysis of one of the dimensions of CSR used by contemporary retailers in the process of building the image of their private labels — the "care for the environment" dimension. The research question formed here goes as follows: "Are CSR concepts covering the

dimension of "care for the environment" present in the contemporary strategies of building retailers' private labels and how do they influence their image?

Particular parts of the article are devoted to achieving the goals of this work. First, the conditions for the implementation of CSR concept in the retailers' strategies of private label development are presented, next the tools used most often by contemporary retailers for the construction of an "ecological image" are identified. In the final part of the article chosen examples of the retailers' involvement in the process of building the "social" value of their private labels by means of measures from the area of "care for the environment" are presented.

The article formulates a thesis that what is becoming one of the important dimensions of CSR used by contemporary retailers to build the image of private labels is the area of "care for the environment". In this dimension retailers recognize a big potential for building and raising trust for them as market entities and their private labels, as well as the fact that it is becoming crucial in the context of choice of products marked as private labels by contemporary consumers.

The deliberations in the article are based on in-depth studies of Polish and foreign literature on the subject, current results of research and the analysis of the contents of social reports (and/or information concerning CSR contained in Internet websites) of 10 biggest retail chains in Poland operating on the FMCG market.

Conditions for the implementation of CSR concept in the retailers' strategy of private label development

Retailer's private label can be defined as a brand "for which the retailer is fully responsible from the moment of creation to sales and marketing"(Dhar, Hoch, 1997, p.208). In the process of identifying the "genetic code" of contemporary private labels they are often compared to the brands of producers and it is suggested that they are regarded by consumers as "less emotional" than producers' brands, cheaper, rational and reasonable and they are recognized as aspirational in character (Spyra 2016). As has been observed, in the recent years retailers have been putting

"more effort" in the development of private labels. In order to change the perception of private labels on the market they take multidirectional measures. They cover, among others, measures aimed at systematically raising the quality of private labels, increasing the range of private labels and introducing product innovations, even "trans-sectoral migration" and taking up investments in production activity. (e.g. the French Les Mousquetaires group has 64 production plants in France producing private labels and Biedronka offers private label "Zupy z Naszej Kuchni" which is produced in its own factory (<http://biznes.onet.pl/wiadomosci/handel/biedronka-otwiera-pierwsza-w-polsce-fabryke-dyskont-będzie-produkowac-zupy/87r04x>, accessed on 10.07.2017). What is also currently becoming an important element of these activities are actions from the area of CSR. Retailers are finding out that what should turn into the desired attributes of their private labels are not just price, or functional values, but also values resulting from their involvement, as managers of these brands, in solving various social problems. For this reason they keep integrating all key dimensions of CSR in the process of building the image of their private labels. Among these labels there are: care for the natural environment, fair operational practices in the chain of supply, actions serving the development of local communities and consumer issues (education, protection of health).

Among the factors contributing to the growth of retailers' interest in the CSR concept in the process of building the image of private labels there are:

- globalization and internationalization of trading companies, which leads, among others, to the formation of global supply chains, in which particular elements are connected through mutual relations (Ćwik, 2011, Andersen, Skjoett-Larsen, 2009, p.75–86, Maloni, Brown, 2006, p. 35–52). Under such conditions many chains recognize the fact that the success of forming the "social value" of the whole portfolio of their private labels in a responsible manner doesn't depend only on themselves. At the same time retailers express the desire to assume the function of leader and architect of the supply chain³, in which they try to combine both economic issues (honest contract terms, preventing corruption, not taking advantage of economic superiority, punctual payment of liabilities etc.) and social standards (respecting employees' rights, decent salaries etc.) and environmental standards. What plays an

important role in this area is continuous dialogue with the suppliers and surveying the opinions of business partners e.g. Supplier Viewpoint Survey at the Tesco chain;

- the phenomenon of concentration in retail and changes in the balance of power in supply chains, as reflected by growing bargaining power of retailers towards suppliers, including the suppliers of their private labels. European research has shown that growing bargaining power of retailers has led to unfair commercial practices and that they are comparably common. What creates favourable conditions for the emergence of such practices is, among others, the fact that the number of EU Member States where 65–90% of the market is controlled by 3–5 retailers is growing. Unfair commercial practices are most often directed against companies from the SME sector (see Communiqué of the European Commission (2014), Opinion of the European Economic and Social Committee, (2016). As these companies started vocalizing more and more loudly the fact that retailers are taking advantage of their dominant bargaining position and their dissatisfaction with such practices, this led to the deterioration of the "social" image of retailers, but also enforced regulatory changes. Taking into consideration high significance of image for success in the retail sector, it was necessary to take measures that would allow rebuilding trust in supply chains based on the rules of equivalence of considerations and the rule of profitability. In the longer perspective entities in the supply chain have to maintain balanced relations and mutually counteract any disturbances. This results from the "transfer" from competition between companies to competition between supply chains. Under such conditions the ability to establish close and lasting relations with suppliers and other strategic partners becomes a key factor for building a competitive advantage (Christopher, 2011);
- growing competition from other retailers, who recognize market opportunities in the implementation of the CSR concept. The CSR concept as an area of "competition for standards" is currently becoming one of important competitive advantages and may be a source of market success, even though it is hard to build it. It is also worth pointing out here that building competitiveness through transparent CSR activities is becoming a more and more common requirement on global (European) markets;

- growth of the significance of non-governmental organizations and "consumer movements" working toward sustainable development, responsible consumption, as well as respect for human rights and rules of environment protection in business. These organizations effectively put pressure on retailers and "constructively stimulate" them to introduce changes, to become more and more responsible towards the environment. For this purpose they use mainly their skills of engaging public opinion and attracting the attention of the media to the identified practices of international retailers (e.g. Greenpeace⁴, campaigns, activity of Fundacja Kupuj Odpowiedzialnie⁵, MSC — Marine Stewardship Council (<https://www.msc.org/o-nas/kim-jestesmy-i-co-robimy>, accessed on 10.07.2017), Rainforest Alliance ([www. http://rainforest-alliance.org](http://rainforest-alliance.org), accessed on 10.07.2017) etc.;
- consumers and local communities change what the society expects from retailers. Surveys show that consumers expect from all companies, including retailers, active involvement in the process of solving social issues (Dobiegała-Korona, Doligalski, 2010, p. 360–361), at the same time, local communities expect from retailers and their brands, among others, participation in financing social campaigns, sponsoring social assets and services, sports, cultural and educational events, they more and more often include this involvement in the criteria defining "good companies";
- growing awareness and requirements of consumers concerning the origin of products and the conditions in which they are produced⁶, taking into consideration international standards of quality, as well as continuous growth of the number of "ethical consumers" (Dobiegała-Korona, Doligalski, 2010, p. 340–341). For such ethical consumers not just price, but above all, e.g. fair practices within supply chains, following the rules of fair trade in dealings with partners from less developed countries, protection of the environment, respecting employees' rights, honest and ethical advertising etc. are becoming important criteria for the assessment of the value of retailers' offers.⁷
- development of new technologies and media based on them, which allow fast spread of information (Janeczek, 2016, p.42) and the possibility of "quick verification" of information coming from retailers, concerning their brands. This situation in a way "takes away" from retailers control over the message and to a large extent eliminates their influence on the conveyed information⁸. Thanks to social media consumers more often turn

from passive to active buyers of retailers' private labels. Access to many information channels, freedom of expressing opinions by means of the social media facilitate organizing protests, expressing social disapproval and "punishing" companies behaving in an unethical way by, among others, abstaining from buying their products/brands and recommending such behaviour to others. It is worth pointing out here that in social media consumers more often share negative, rather than positive information;

- growth of interest in the subject of CSR on the international arena, Poland's activity in the formation of EU's CSR policy, the fact that the assumptions of CSR are regularly included in the directions of Poland's economic development, introducing market and administrative regulations, which make it possible to achieve the desired ecological effects (Stefańska 2014, p.49, Romanowska, Trocki, 2002, p.293);

The phenomena presented above as conditions for the implementation of the CSR concept in retail companies are external in character. However, it is worth pointing out that among the reasons for taking actions in accordance with CSR also internal factors play an important role. More and more retailers notice that CSR treated as a long-term investment contributes to, among others, raising the level of organizational culture, increasing the motivation of employees, their work efficiency, decreasing rotation and increasing the loyalty of employees and making them identify themselves more with their company. This effect gets additionally strengthened when employees are convinced that their company looks after their families, and communities in which they live.

Summing up the deliberations concerning the conditions for the implementation of the CSR concept in retailers' strategy of development of private labels, it is necessary to emphasize that contemporary consumers, local communities, non-governmental organizations, business partners and other stakeholders are more and more interested in what rules retailers follow while building their private labels. This way they have a substantial impact on the fact that retail companies become more interested in applying the CSR concept in the process of building their image. At the same time, retailers notice the fact that disregarding "social issues" may lead to the decline of sales revenues due to, for example, a consumers' boycott, similarly as due to running the "risk of breaking the law".

Subject and methodology of research

For the purpose of this article research using the quantitative–qualitative method of content analysis was conducted. The attempt was made to find answers to three basic questions: do retailers inform the environment about their activities in the area of CSR, what information do they provide and how do they do it? The research involved the analysis of CSR practices in purposefully chosen international retail chains functioning in Poland. The analysis covered such issues as: functioning of the CSR tab on the website of a chain, including the dimension concerning care for the environment, the preparation and publication of CSR reports by the surveyed chains, including the period covered by a report and the identification of tools for the creation of an "ecological image" of retail chains, as well as the definition of the scope of actions from the area of "care for the environment" by retailers in the process of building the "social" value of the whole portfolio of their private labels. In table 1 "research material", which constituted the basis for deliberations in following parts of the article is presented.

Analysis of the research material (answer to the question whether retailers inform about their activities in the area of CSR) shows that all surveyed companies publish on their homepage information about socially responsible activities, which may suggest that the CSR concept is rooted in the value systems of the surveyed companies. Eight out of ten surveyed companies have separate sections informing about their activity in the area of protection of the environment and present there various activities from this area. This shows that contemporary retailers notice that natural resources are precious, limited and not always renewable, as well as that every product offered to consumers is often in essence produced "at the cost of the environment" Moreover, it is worth pointing out that some activities in the area of "care for the environment" are highly creative⁹ and assume a view of the natural environment not just from the perspective limited to the so-called neighbourhood, but on the scale of the nature's ecosystem.

Table 1. The scope of reporting on CSR and the environmental dimension (as of 10.07.2017)

Name of retail chain	Website	CSR report	Description of the path to the tab concerning the environment (ecology) as a dimension of CSR
Aldi	aldi.pl	yes (for 2015, concerns the whole group of companies, including Poland)	Part of a the report devoted to the environment "W drodze ku lepszemu ochronie klimatu i środowiska naturalnego" — "On the way to better protection of the climate and natural environment (p. 66-78 of the report)
Auchan	auchan.pl	yes (the company has been publishing reports since 2009, the last CSR report from 2014 concerns only Poland)	Life of Auchan - Sustainable development (in this subsection it is highlighted that the company implements its CSR strategy in four areas, including the area of natural environment by reducing the negative impact on the natural environment, associated with reasonable use of the media, segregation of waste, pro-environmental education among clients and employees. In the report there is a part devoted to the environment titled "We care for the environment" (p. 62-71 of the report)
Biedronka	biedronka.pl	no*	Social responsibility - Respect for the environment - Trustworthy member of the natural environment (environmental policy, organic shop), Ecological shopping (multiple-use shopping bags in shops, containers for clients' waste). Pro-environmental activities (segregation of waste, ecological education)
Carrefour	carrefour.pl annual report	yes (Carrefour's report, in which chapter XI devoted to CSR activities)	CSR - Strategy of Socially Responsible Business - Protection of the environment; In the strategic report environmental aspects are exposed in, among others, the point "Actions for the protection of the environment" p.98 and following pages, as well as "Responsible fishing" p.100
E. Leclerc	leclerc.pl	no	In the "About us" section there is only little information about the fact that the chain pays special attention to social issues (e.g. using the services of local suppliers, efficient participation in the life of local communities and support for regional development, "fighting" for the rights of consumers). In "Our brands" tab there is a section titled "Ecology for the demanding", which contains scant information, namely, that "protection of the environment is very important" for the company and that the company recommends its section with BIO and EKO products to all clients who live an environment-friendly lifestyle.

cont. table 1

Name of retail chain	Website	CSR report	Description of the path to the tab concerning the environment (ecology) as a dimension of CSR
Les Mousquetaires	muszkiete-rowie.pl	yes, report on the actions for sustainable development for 2015 (concerns the whole group, including Poland)	Social responsibility - Sustainable development (where it is emphasized that the central goal of the Group in the area of environmental policy is creating programmes, methods and actions making it possible to run activities in a way friendly for the environment). In the report environmental aspects are heavily emphasized in, among others, the section "Actions for climate" (p. 6 and following), Building strong relations with the client" (p. 8 and following) and "Minimization of the environmental footprint" (p.24 and the following pages)
Kaufland	kaufland.pl	no	About us - Responsibility - Protection of the environment (Our environment-friendly actions, System of heat recuperation equipment - active contribution to the protection of the environment, Protection of fish)
Lidl	lidl.pl	no	CSR - Ecology - (subsection "Lidl has BIO, because BIO is better", Environment-friendly cleaning, Fairtrade bananas, Recycling materials, Policy of purchasing fish and sea food, Approach to sale of eggs from hens held in cages, We protect oaks)
Netto	netto.pl	no	In subsection "Achievements" to the "About us" section there is limited information concerning obtained certificates and distinctions associated partially with social responsibility, e.g. Reliable Employer of the Year, lack of a section referring to care for the environment
Tesco	tesco.pl	yes (report for the years 2014–2017, concerns only Poland)	Around Tesco- Ecology in Tesco (Tesco's care for the environment, Reduction of CO ₂ , Recycling at Tesco, Environment-friendly bags, Ecological education, Partners). In the report you can find environmental aspects e.g in the emphasis that the foundation of the company's activity is, among others, minimizing the impact on the natural environment, as well as in CSR priorities (reducing the waste of food, delivering high quality products friendly for the environment etc.)

Source: Own materials prepared on the basis of Internet websites and CSR reports of the surveyed retail chains

*CSR report for 2016 can be found on the website of Jeronimo Martins Portugal — the owner of Biedronka chain. The report is in English and contains references to the Polish market.

Actions taken by retail chains in the area of protection of the environment as an element of the process of building corporate image — chosen examples of activity

The analysis of the research material presented in table 1 makes it possible to conclude that contemporary retailers don't try to evade liability for the effects of their activities on the natural environment. It's just the opposite — they stimulate and support environment-friendly transformation of the market. "Care for the environment" constitutes one of the important pillars of CSR for most of the contemporary retailers operating on an international scale. Taking broad actions in this area they gain many image-related, but also economic benefits. The analysis of the research material allowed identifying among the surveyed companies a few dozen particular initiatives from the area of "care for the environment", which were grouped into eight basic categories of areas. The goal of retailers' actions within the identified categories of areas are mainly building and strengthening the "ecological image" of the corporate brand (brand of retail chain). The results of the research are presented in table 2.

Table 2. Chosen examples of the activities of contemporary retailers in the area of "care for the environment" used to build an "environment-friendly image" of their corporate brand (brand of retail chain)

Area of activity	Examples of activity
Reducing the consumption of energy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● introducing environment-friendly organizational innovations in shops e.g. the concept of implementation of energy monitoring and management system (Aldi, Kaufland), developing the generation of energy from renewable sources (Auchan, Tesco) or FREE COOLING SYSTEM — using low, or high temperatures of subterranean water to cool, or heat the air in shops and introducing an innovative cooling system using carbon dioxide as the cooling agent (this solution uses 25% less energy) (Carrefour); ● abandoning technologies which don't satisfy environmental criteria and replacing them with new technologies e.g. installing energy-saving fridges, cooling systems and using LED lightbulbs (Carrefour, Aldi, Biedronka, Les Mousquetaires); ● training employees in the area of energy saving, "Energy Leader" programme — in every shop there is a person who plays the role of a leader in energy saving — the person's task is to check the efficiency of electric equipment, report failures, turn off unused devices, promote appropriate behaviour among the personnel (Tesco);

cont. table 2

Area of activity	Examples of activity
Reducing CO ₂ emissions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● introducing environment-friendly organizational innovations in shops, e.g. the KKV system (Kalte-Klima- Verbund) makes it possible to abandon a conventional boiler and burning fossil fuels — the heat is produced thanks to recuperation of heat from cooling installations, the KKV system, according to the reading of the eco-meter from 31.05.2017 brought energy savings equal to the consumption of energy by 3,369 houses (reduction of CO₂ emissions by 17.513 tons per year) (Kaufland); ● abandoning technologies which don't satisfy environmental criteria and replacing them with new technologies, e.g. replacing old lightbulbs with energy-saving lightbulbs made it possible to reduce CO₂ emissions by 7 tons per year (Tesco); ● introducing environment-friendly, innovative solutions in the area of Logistics and transport — TMS (Transport Management System) and the Backhoulung & Fronthoulung programme. TMS is a knowledge database providing information on, among others, the time of delivery, quantity of ordered goods, number of cars engaged in transport, or the cost of delivery, it contributes to improving the quality and efficiency of planning, but above all makes it possible to optimize routes, reduce the number of lorries and the distance covered by vehicles. At the same time Backhoulung&Fronthoulung programme makes it possible to eliminate empty runs by adequate management of reloading (Carrefour);
Recykling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● collecting recycling materials (paper, cardboard, foil, wood, styrofoam) to use them again (Kaufland, Tesco, Carrefour, Biedronka, Lidl, Les Mousquetaires); ● Eco Points — special containers, where you can leave used batteries, cartridges, chargers, cables, CD's and DVD's etc.; the possibility of leaving all kinds of used devices, even if you're not buying a new one (Tesco, Biedronka); ● "green construction site" — selecting and recovering valuable waste from construction sites, reducing the harmful influence of construction activity (Auchan);
Reducing the consumption of water	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● reducing the consumption of water in shops (Carrefour, Auchan); ● saving water by using efficient technology e.g.: automatic ovens, which clean themselves without using water, using economic cleaning machines equipped with efficient dosing devices and using biodegradable cleaning agents reducing the production of sewage (Aldi); ● the choice of plants for green areas around shops, which are suitable for the local climate and have low demand for water (Aldi in Spain); ● responsible rainwater management (Auchan);

cont. table 2

Area of activity	Examples of activity
Lower consumption of packaging and bags	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● using collective, reusable packaging for transporting fresh produce (Kaufland); ● offering a few kinds of environment-friendly reusable bags (Tesco), in addition, bags made from recycled materials and suitable for recycling (Aldi); ● introducing biodegradable bags — for example, a Carrefour bag was distinguished in the PAKSTAR 2012 contest (Carrefour); ● shaping the structure of packaging taking into consideration environmental aspects in the area of transport packaging (collective) and unit packaging (defining already in the purchasing process the requirement that suppliers should use possibly most sustainable materials and should abandon the use of plastics and composite materials and in case of wood, cardboard and paper they should focus on recycled materials and resources from sustainable forest management) (Aldi);
Cooperation and support for dialogue with environmental institutions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● cooperation with companies which provide substantial contribution to the protection of the environment (Tesco) and supporting dialogue by inviting clients, employees and other groups of stakeholders to discuss the subject of environment protection (Aldi); ● cooperating at the stage of development of architectural designs of shops, in order to prepare such projects that fit in well with the natural environment, landscape, city, etc. and maintaining local balance by securing continuity between the project and the surrounding environment (Auchan, Les Mousquetaires);
Educational programmes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● forming environment-friendly attitudes and behaviours among clients, employees by means of special markings in shops, information campaigns, organization of events, trainings in the area of reducing energy consumption, media, resources, recycling and the efficient use of resources (Tesco, Carrefour, Biedronka);
"Green office"	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● using in shops and offices office materials friendly for the environment, making sure that they are reused, using devices reducing the consumption of electric energy in offices and shops (Kaufland, Lidl, Aldi); ● placing special containers in offices and social rooms, so that employees can sort recyclable materials (Les Mousquetaires); ● using biodegradable products for cleaning office space (Les Mousquetaires); ● creating an Internet platform for organizing car-pooling for employees (Les Mousquetaires, in which about 10% of employees use such a platform), organizing days without car, or promoting the change from car to bicycle; ● reducing the number of documents (reducing the quantity of used paper, toner, energy etc.); ● printing advertising leaflets on environment-friendly paper (Kaufland);

Source: own materials prepared on the basis of Internet websites and CSR reports of the surveyed retail chains.

Summing up, it is worth pointing out that contemporary retailers have at their disposal many tools that they can use to reduce their negative impact on the natural environment. At the same time, the conducted analysis of the tools used by them to build an "environment-friendly image" makes it possible to conclude that the basis for their philosophy in approach to issues associated with "care for the environment" may be the words of M. Bauchmüller, namely that "the economy is and remains a 100-percent subsidiary of the environment" and that "we should not only save resources, but also think about them in the whole circulation" (Bauchmüller, 2014, p. 6, quote by Kozuch 2015, p.10).

It is also worth pointing to the fact that in the context of the discussed subject area, one of the paradoxes of strategic management emerges (de Wit, Meyer, 2007, p. 354–370) as an important problem which has to be solved. This is a paradox associated with organizational priorities — the so-called paradox of profitability and responsibility. Its essence can be expressed by the necessity to "reconcile" long terms of return on innovative parts of "environment-friendly" investments, e.g. investments in the reduction of energy consumption, or reduction of CO₂ emissions (investments expected by stakeholders — responsibility more important at the cost of profitability, serving everybody, looking after common interests) with securing an acceptable level of return on invested capital in a comparably short term (shareholders' expectations — profitability more important at the cost of responsibility, economic efficiency).

Retailers' area of activity and building the "social" value of their private labels

Analysis of the content of research material presented in table 1 makes it possible to form the thesis that, while carrying out actions aimed at building and strengthening of the "environment-friendly" image of their corporate brand (brand of a retail chain), the retailers notice that what should become the desired attributes of their private labels are values resulting from the involvement of them as managers of these brands in solving various environmental problems. Thus, they pay attention to balanced organization of the whole offered range of products, in which private labels constitute an important element. Table 3 presents chosen

examples of activities in the area of "care for the environment", which have a significant impact on the "social value" of retailers' private labels. The analysis of research material made it possible to identify five basic categories of areas, in which the goal of activities is focusing on the construction and strengthening the "environment-friendly image" of private labels.

Table 3. Chosen examples of activities of contemporary retailers in the area of "care for the environment" used for building "environment-friendly image" of private labels

Activities	Examples
Designing environment friendly products and production processes, which lead to products bearing private labels	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● gradual elimination of chemicals harmful for the environment from the production of private label clothes, shoes and textiles (Kaufland, Aldi); ● eliminating particular active substances suspected of co-responsibility not legally forbidden) for the reduction of bee and butterfly populations (Aldi); ● gradual withdrawal of eggs from hens held in cages from the offer, as well as removing such eggs from private label products containing eggs (Lidl, Biedronka, Aldi); ● changing recipes for the production of private labels (among others, margarine, chocolate, pre-cooked meals) and replacing palm oil with other types of oil in association with the reports of environmental organizations signalling the phenomenon of clearing tropical forests for new plantations of African oil palms (Kaufland, Aldi); ● creating the so-called negative lists and gradual withdrawal of some products which are made at the cost of well-being of animals (e.g. lobsters, langoustes, eels, shark meat, rabbit meat, quail and quail eggs, meat of ducks and geese meat, which are subject to forced feeding, or plucked when still alive) (Kaufland, Aldi); ● replacing wine corks from the bark of cork oak with synthetic corks and metal caps (Lidl); ● abandoning the use of wool from Angora rabbits and natural furs for the production of private label textiles (Aldi); ● regularly expanding the offer of so-called big home appliances by adding energy-saving devices of A++ and A+ class (Auchan)
Rational utilization of natural resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● shaping the private label offer in a way which secures the protection of endangered species of fish, support for the consumption of fish products obtained in compliance with the rule of sustainable development; ● abandoning, or gradual withdrawal of endangered species of fish and sea food, the so-called "Greenpeace red list of marine species"(Lidl, Kaufland, Biedronka, Auchan, Carrefour, Aldi);

cont. table 3

Activities	Examples
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● obligation to achieve zero net deforestation by the end of 2020, which means that palm oil, soy, timber, wood derivatives used to produce private label products will be acquired in a sustainable way and won't contribute to deforestation (Biedronka);
Product certification and labelling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● MSC certificates (Marine Stewardship Council) guarantee that private label products come from sustainable fishing (Lidl, Kaufland, Les Mousquetaires, Biedronka, Aldi); ● labelling private label chocolate with the "UTZ Certified" certificate signalling that cultivation and production of cocoa is conducted in a responsible and environment-friendly way. "UTZ" programme is also supposed to help farmers generate regular income from the cultivation of cocoa and serve the purpose of improving their quality of life; (Lidl, Kaufland, Aldi, Biedronka (in 2016 the chain offered 15 private label products containing UTZ cocoa); ● marking private label products with the Fairtrade label, Rainforest Alliance Certified (RAC) seal, which signals the application of environment-friendly farming methods protecting soil, water and natural habitats (Kaufland, Lidl, Aldi Biedronka (in 2016 the chain offered 4 private label teas with the RAC certificate); ● adding to the private label offer products bearing the FSC (Forest Stewardship Council) symbol, which means support for responsible treatment of global forest resources (Kaufland, Les Mousquetaires, Aldi (in 2015 almost 40% of private label products of the chain had the FSC certificate); ● Eco Label certificate, the so-called Daisy (European distinction awarded to products satisfying higher environmental norms) W5 brand in the Lidl chain;
Reducing the quantity of produced waste and pollution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● active participation in various environmental programmes e.g. "Healthy Seas", which involves collecting and recycling in an innovative process "damaged nets drifting around the seas". They are used to produce polyamide ECONYL® fibres, which are a resource for the production of high-quality goods e.g. socks (Kaufland);
"Environmental" assessment of suppliers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● considering the environmental aspects in the process of choice and with suppliers and partners by, among others, introducing the International Ethical Purchasing Charter - an external document regulating the rules of cooperation between a chain and its suppliers, constituting an integral part of the trade contract and the internal Ethical Purchasing Charter defining the requirements and norms (including environmental norms), which should be satisfied by all entities in supply

cd tabeli 3

Activities	Examples
	<p>chains, willing to establish business relations with the company, as well as norms obliging employees to build the offer and cooperate with suppliers in a way that can guarantee responsible and sustainable development of the company (Auchan, Aldi);</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● audits of private label suppliers covering also the environmental aspects (all chains); ● codes for suppliers e.g. BSCI (Aldi, Les Mousquetaires); ● trainings for private label suppliers concerning the protection of natural environment and demanding from suppliers compliance with the chain's internal standards in the area of CO₂ emissions and consumption of energy (Tesco);

Source: own materials prepared on the basis of Internet websites and CSR reports of the surveyed retail chains.

Summing up the above deliberations it is necessary to emphasize that the chains recognize the fact that "nature is the most important supplier: and build their private label offer so that it doesn't just respond to the consumer's current expectations, but also provides them with long-term value. They achieve this through activities aimed at, among others, active participation in developing products and production processes which are friendly for the environment, rational use of natural resources, including support for sustainable agriculture and ecosystem protection (marine resources, forests) and reducing the production of waste and pollution, certification of products as evidence of responsible and environment-friendly production. What plays a major role within the scope of these activities is paying particular attention to the "environmental" assessment of private label suppliers by taking into consideration the environmental aspects in the process of selection of suppliers and during cooperation with them. It is also worth pointing out that in the area of "care for the natural environment", most of the mentioned initiatives and activities of retailers are characterized by a "tangible dimension". It is also worth emphasizing that contemporary retailers "have at their disposal" many tools that they can use to reduce their negative impact on the environment.

Summary

Displaying care about the resources and the condition of the natural environment is a priority issue for many contemporary retailers. Environmental criteria are included in the process of building the image of a chain as a corporate brand and the image of retailers' private labels. Many actions and initiatives pursued by contemporary retailers (recycling, reduction of CO₂ emissions, reducing the consumption of energy, water etc.) have a "tangible dimension", that is, they are measurable and within this area, in their reports, retailers prepare and inform clearly about their "environmental" goals and programmes aimed at achieving their goals. Next, they are subject to monitoring and regular assessment and their results are regularly interpreted and published. This way retailers, building their product offer, including private labels, are becoming more transparent not just for the employees and consumers, but also for the stakeholders. It is also worth emphasizing the fact that many initiatives from the area of care for the environment is an expression of retailers' creative and innovative approach and that more and more intensively they are supporting dialogue and cooperation with their stakeholders (local authorities, community, consumer organizations, environmental organizations etc.) by inviting them to participate in the implementation of their various "environmental" ventures (collection of waste, environmental education etc.).

The analysis of the material presented in this article also shows that "environmental activities" are a source of a whole range of benefits, not just image-related benefits (strengthening the image of private labels, the possibility of building competitive advantage based on distinction, improving credibility in the eyes of internal and external stakeholders), but also measurable benefits of economic character (reduction of costs through more rational resource management, energy saving, reduction of environmental fees etc.) for the contemporary retailers. This leads to the question about the motives for the engagement of retailers in an activity for the benefit of the natural environment (whether they are really displaying a "selfless approach" to the environment, or whether the expected economic effects and the necessity to comply with regulatory requirements are the key here) and the related question whether the relations between economic

and "environmental" results (whether "measurable" environmental effects are the side effect of activities associated with the reduction of costs and the will to improve economic results, or whether environmental innovations in the areas of reducing the consumption of energy, reduction of CO₂ emissions, or recycling are "primary" and economic results constitute a side-effect).

Nevertheless, regardless of the motives for the implementation of activities in the area of "care for the environment" by the contemporary retailers, we should expect that in the coming years there will be even more initiatives in this area. This results, above all, from the fact that along with the growth of the number of "ethical consumers" and the growth of awareness of the necessity to "care for the environment", among the consumers the demand for products and brands characterized by a "sustainable approach" will be growing. If retailers manage to offer private labels as products friendly for the environment (image benefits) and produced based on more rational resource management, saving energy, reduction of environmental fees etc. (economic benefits), they can position them as products for which the clients will "pay less to live better".

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¹ This is highlighted by, among others, M. Stefańska. The author broadly analyses and carries out an in-depth assessment of the evolution of the CSR concept and identifies the place of the CSR concept in economic and management sciences (see: Stefańska, 2014, p.15–47).

² An analyst from the retail trade branch has concluded in response to this that Wal-Mart has transformed into a private agency focused on the protection of the environment. What makes Wal-Mart different from a state agency, which can impose multi-million fines, is that it can "wipe out a quarter of its supplier's business with a single move". (Armstrong, Kotler, 2016, p.731).

³ For example, Aldi formulating its CSR policy emphasizes that it assumes the responsibility for the area of its supply chain. Aldi has also created the so-called matrix of significance. It presents in a graphic way the significance of a given issue for the internal and external stakeholders. The matrix shows that the highest importance has been attributed to the subject from the area of "Responsibility within the supply chain". This area covers, among others, the utilization of social and ecological standards in the Division of Food and Non-Food Purchases, as well as sustainable formation of the product range (including the private label offer, which constitutes over 90% of the regular product range of the chain), Report on the sustainable development of the Aldi chain for the year 2015.

⁴ Greenpeace is an independent non-governmental organization working since 1971 for the natural environment. Campaigns conducted by Greenpeace cover six main areas of the protection of environment - protection of forests, protection of oceans and seas, protection against toxic substances, actions for climate,

promotion of renewable energy sources and counteracting the spread of genetically modified organisms in the environment. The organization publishes, among others, a ranking titled "Oceans for sale" in which it assesses the biggest retail chains in Poland in terms of the conditions of acquiring fish, fish products and sea food, in the ranking the organization shows, among others, which retail chains have in their product range marine species at risk of extinction, or species in which case fishing is associated with the destruction of marine habitats and whether products are properly marked. In 2011 Greenpeace launched the "Kampania Detox" (Detox campaign), which is aimed at eliminating the pollution of waters caused by chemicals harmful for the environment, which are used in the processes of production of various goods in, among others, textile industry. One of the retail chains that has signed the voluntary obligation "Detox-Commitment" is the Kaufland chain. On its basis the trainings of the employees of Kaufland and its suppliers are conducted. In factories producing private labels of the chain water samples are taken regularly and production processes, as well as applied chemicals are tested in course of audits. The results of audits are the basis for formulating actions, which are supposed to optimize processes. (www.kaufland.pl. Accessed on 10.06.2017, www.greenpeace.org/poland/pl/ accessed on 10.06.2017).

⁵ Fundacja Kupuj Odpowiedzialnie is a nationwide organization working for the sustainable development and protection of the environment, responsible consumption and production, as well as respect for human rights and rules of environment protection in business, (http://www.ekonsument.pl/s56_co_robimy.html, accessed on 10.07.2017).

⁶ An interesting initiative, which is a response of retail chains to the growing requirements of consumers concerning the origin of private label products, or the conditions in which they are produced, is the implementation of the so-called code of identifiability ALDI Transparenz Code (ATC) by Aldi. At the website transparenz.aldi-nord.de consumers can find detailed information concerning meat products and products containing meat sold in German shops. This application allows obtaining such pieces of information as, among others, where a particular animal was raised, where the animal was slaughtered and processed, information about suppliers and product certificates. In 2015 already over 200 meat products and products containing meat bearing Aldi's private labels had the ATC mark (over 80% of all products). The chain plans to expand the application to further groups of products. Raport zrównoważonego rozwoju sieci Aldi za rok 2015, p. 52.

⁷ An example of major "causative power" of ethical consumers was forcing big fashion chains producing their brands in less developed countries to improve the work conditions in factories - the so-called "Bangladesh case". This example contributed to Aldi's decision to qualify chosen manufacturing plants producing Non-Food products under ALDI private labels for the so-called qualification programme ALDI Factory Advancement (AFA) Project, which is supposed to improve work conditions through support for dialogue between employees and managers in Bangladesh.

⁸ For example, the first online guide for consumers in Poland named "Dobre Zakupy" (Good shopping) contains a ranking of the most environment-friendly and socially responsible brands. Brands are assessed in two basic categories: ecology and social responsibility. The category of "ecology" concerns the influence of used resources, production technologies, environment management, used packaging, and the size of the carbon footprint on the environment. The category of "social responsibility" covers three areas: work standards in the whole supply chain, social economics and transparency. The goal of the guide is to help the consumers solve their shopping dilemmas. (<http://dobrezakupy.ekonsument.pl>, accessed on 10.07.2017).

⁹ Visser emphasizes that creativity in the implementation of the CSR concept is one of important factors distinguishing the so-called CSR 1.0 concept from CSR concept 2.0. More on this subject, see: . Rewolucja... (2011).

¹⁰ BSCI is an initiative of industrial and trading companies founded in 2003, which is supposed to secure safe and socially right conditions within the supply chain. This common understanding for the responsibility of business has been defined in a special code of conduct. It is also worth pointing out that what partially supports "responsibility" within the supply chain is the so-called "positive cascade effect" of the BSCI code along the whole supply chain. This means that all participants of the BSCI initiative not only oblige themselves to follow the code of conduct, but they also require this from their partners. In some retail chains signing the code of conduct is a part of the business contract with suppliers, who pass on the obligation to act according to the code of conduct also to their subcontractors (<http://www.bsci-intl.org/>, accessed on 10.07.2017).

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Zbigniew Spyra, Ph.D., University of Economics in Katowice, Poland — doctor of economic sciences and management sciences, employee of the Department of Market and Marketing Research at the University of Economics in Katowice. Supervisor of a postgraduate course titled "Management in culture, art and culture tourism", the supervisor of the Meritum Students' Marketing Research Club, organizer of the National Doctor-Student Conference "New media and technologies in marketing communication". His scientific interests focus on the issues of marketing communication and relations in supply chains managed by retail traders. Coordinator of the University of Economics in Katowice for research projects concerning business practices in the area of programmes of standardization of client service and brand building. The author of, among others, "Kanały dystrybucji. Kształtowanie relacji" — "Channels of distribution. Shaping relations" (published by CeDeWu) and co-editor of "Zarządzanie w kulturze, sztuce i turystyce kulturowej" — "Management in culture, art and culture tourism" (published by CeDeWu).



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al. Krakowska 110/114
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